

Entry to the Republic restricted due to new SARS-COV-2 virus strain

Taking into consideration data arising regarding the new variant of the SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.529 virus that was traced to Botswana and which is alarming due to the large number of mutations it presents, and in order to safeguard public health, the Ministry of Health informs that as of **26 November, 2021**:

The arrival and/or entry to the Republic of Cyprus is prohibited for any person, who within 14 days prior to arrival to the Republic has either visited, or passed through the following countries:

- South Africa
- Namibia
- Lesotho
- Eswatini
- Zimbabwe
- Mozambique
- Malawi
- Botswana

Entry to the Republic of Cyprus is permitted **only to the following categories of passengers**:

- i) Cypriot citizens and members of their families (alien spouses and their underage children),
- ii) citizens of EU Member States, European Economic Area countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway) and Switzerland, and
- iii) passengers of third countries, legally residing in the Republic,

The passengers who fall into categories i) to iii) must abide with all the following measures, regardless of whether they possess certification of vaccination or of recovery from COVID-19:

- i) they must possess a negative laboratory COVID-19 test, with sampling having taken place within 72 hours of their departure to the Republic and present relevant proof and undergo laboratory testing (at their own expense) upon arrival to the Republic,

It is noted that persons under the age of 12 are exempt from the obligation of laboratory testing,

- ii) they will be transported to hotels and/or tourist facilities contracted by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, in which they must remain in mandatory self-isolation for a period of 10 days from their arrival, with the date of their arrival counting as day "0",

It is noted that the cost of transportation to said hotels and facilities is borne by the passengers,

- iii) they must undergo laboratory testing on the 10th day after their arrival, at the Republic's expense, and upon negative result they can then terminate their mandatory isolation,

The Ministry of Health clarifies that the specific strain has not been detected at the moment, and that it has increased lately the sequencing and analysis of samples, as conducted in cooperation with a European Center of Disease Control (ECDC) laboratory, a private laboratory in Cyprus, and the Laboratory of Biotechnology and Molecular Virology of the University of Cyprus. Based on thorough genetic analysis of sequencing in the period of October – November (up to 11/11/21) in Cyprus, only evolved sub-strains of the Delta strain have been discovered, with the AY.43 as the most prevalent (around 50%). None of these strains seems to present increased transmissibility compared to the standard Delta strain (B.1.617.2).

The Ministry of Health is constantly monitoring the developments and arising data regarding the new strains, and if deemed necessary, it will proceed with appropriate action.

26.11.2021