

## **Statement by the Minister of Health, Mr Michalis Hadjipantela, on the decisions of the Council of Ministers**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The epidemiological indicators have been rapidly deteriorating in the last days, and there is possibility of an increase in patient admissions in state hospitals, in the next few days. The positivity rate is above 2.5% and specifically during the last three days 7,168 positive cases were recorded in the community. The Omicron variant is already in the community and is expected to further burden the epidemiological situation.

Unfortunately, the data indicate that many of our fellow citizens do not comply with the personal protective measures, while a lot of establishments and entertainment places do not follow the health protocols, with the result of increased overcrowding.

**As we have already agreed with the members of the Scientific Advisory Committee, the situation will be reviewed next Tuesday, 4 January 2022, depending on the outcome of the epidemiological indicators.**

Taking into account the above, the Council of Ministers has decided, during its extraordinary meeting, to take stricter measures at the points of entry into the Republic, to abolish the Safe pass for those individuals who have not completed their vaccination scheme and to take additional measures to prevent the spread of the virus in gathering places:

The Council of Ministers has decided:

- a. In effect from 4<sup>th</sup> January to 15<sup>th</sup> January 2022, passengers arriving in the Republic of Cyprus must have undergone a 48-hour PCR laboratory test before their departure. It is recalled that all passengers regardless of vaccination history, will undergo a PCR laboratory test upon arrival, the cost of which will be borne by them.
- b. As of 3 January 2022, 40% of persons employed in a company or a service-providing organization shall work remotely. It is clarified that this percentage includes persons who are self-isolated because they are sick or declared as close contacts of a confirmed positive case and work from home, as well as persons who make use of their leave of absence. Clarifications will be given tomorrow concerning the essential services that will be excluded.
- c. As of 30 December 2021, access to entertainment venues, music and dance clubs, reception halls, weddings and christenings will only be allowed to persons holding a 24-hour Rapid test negative result. It is

- recalled that access is allowed only to vaccinated persons. **Citizens who received the booster/3rd dose of a vaccine are an exception.**
- d. As of 30 December 2021, a maximum of 300 persons is allowed in catering establishments, entertainment venues, dance and music halls, in compliance with the health protocols and the maximum number of persons per square meter that is in effect. **Citizens must be seated while dancing is prohibited. It is clarified that the measure concerning weddings and christenings will apply as of 3 January 2022.**
- e. As of 30 December 2021, the presence of fans in stadiums is set at 50% of the stadium capacity, with the mandatory use of a protective face mask. In case the protection measures are not complied with, the competent authorities may withdraw the stadium's operation license.
- f. As of 30 December 2021, visits to all state and private hospitals and closed structures are prohibited, unless a permission is given by the management and upon presentation of a negative PCR test result with a 24-hour validity for urgent and exceptional cases. Citizens who received the booster/3rd dose of a vaccine are an exception.
- g. As of 30 December 2021, a change in the COVID -19 management protocols concerning positive cases and close contacts **for health professionals who have not received any dose of a vaccine, or have received two doses of the two-dose vaccines or a single dose of the single-dose vaccines and 7 months have elapsed, without having received the booster/3<sup>rd</sup> dose.** Close contacts of a confirmed positive case will undergo a PCR test on the 5<sup>th</sup> day and on the 6<sup>th</sup> day a Rapid test after their contact with the positive case, and if they receive a negative result, they will be discharged. Positive coronavirus cases may undergo a Rapid test on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> day and if the result is negative, they can be discharged on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, provided that they do not show symptoms for a 48-hour period. (This decision concerns doctors, nursing staff and medical staff).

**In addition, the following are recommended:**

- that citizens use a double surgical mask or a high protection mask (i.e. KN95 or FFP2 type).
- The use of a fabric protective face mask should be avoided.

It is reminded that the use of a protective face mask is mandatory in all areas, both indoors and outdoors.

- Distance learning and online examinations in tertiary education.

Dear fellow citizens,

We must realise that the pandemic crisis concerns all of us. With more than 3000 positive cases daily in our small population it means that coronavirus is threatening each and every one of us and we need to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

We need to understand that it is necessary to comply with the measures in order to be protected and only in this way we will be able to return to normality, as soon as possible.

With this message, I wish you all a Happy New Year, with health and safety.

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