

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

Unfortunately, the numbers are relentless: More than 400 fellow citizens died from the COVID-19 disease. Today, more than 80 of our fellow citizens are hospitalized in public hospitals in serious condition. More than 40 of our fellow citizens are in the Intensive Care Unit; a record number, unprecedentedly high for the size of our country.

Society imposes on us, commands us and compels us to stop the rapid spread of the deadly virus that endangers the lives of all of us.

We must overcome two great obstacles that threaten public health; one is to contain the Delta mutation and another is the reluctance of some of our fellow citizens to get vaccinated.

We do not implement political positions, nor do we put forward political views. We will not be tired of saying that these are guidelines by the most competent. They are the result of research by the scientific community around the planet.

The only way to stop the emergence of new aggressive strains is through vaccination.

The only way to protect ourselves and those around us from the virus, from the Delta mutation, and other possible variants that will appear, is by completing our vaccination scheme. The danger is lurking for everyone. As a whole, the scientific community around the globe warns that most at risk are those who are unvaccinated.

We particularly invite our young people to take the big step and get vaccinated in order to protect their grandparents, their parents, themselves and the whole of our society.

The Council of Ministers studied all the data, processed the experts' recommendations and decided to take additional measures. We have decided to tighten up some measures to contain the lethal virus before it brings the collapse of the health system.

These are social protection measures, social sensitivity measures, social responsibility measures. They are decisions that respect the choice of every citizen.

The Council of Ministers therefore decided to extend the provisions of the current Decree until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021, with the following variations:

- The presentation of the SafePass will be required in places where more than 10 people are present, including employees of the establishment/enterprise.

- Mandatory presentation of the SafePass by all persons aged 12 years and over, including patients, visitors and employees, for admission to the State Health Services Organization hospitals and private hospitals.
- Mandatory presentation of a certificate of vaccination or recovery from COVID-19 within the last 180 days or a negative result from a PCR test valid for 72 hours by all persons aged 12 years or over, including workers and visitors, for entry to nursing homes and other closed facilities.
- Non-permanent residents entering through the legal points of entry must undergo a PCR or rapid antigen test from the 7th day after their arrival. Holders of a COVID-19 vaccination or recovery certificate within the last 180 days are excluded.
- Holding festivities is allowed only in adjacent spaces of religious places of worship, provided that all attendees hold SafePass, including workers.
- Vaccination for people aged 12 years and over will begin as of Monday, August 2, 2021, with mRNA (Pfiser/BioNTech and Moderna) vaccines, following the recommendation of the Cyprus Paediatric Society and the Scientific Advisory Committee on Coronavirus. The vaccination will be voluntary and with necessary consent from parents or legal guardians. Already in several European Union countries, such as France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania and Greece today, they are proceeding with the vaccination of children aged 12-15, in an effort to achieve greater protection of the population.
- Free rapid antigen test for citizens holding a COVID-19 recovery certificate within the last 180 days.

The above decisions will be regulated by a Decree and will be in force until 31 August. Further details and information will be provided in a press release that will be issued later by the Ministry.

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