

Clarifications on the decisions of the Council of Ministers - July 2, 2021

Pillar 1: Incentives to encourage and accelerate the vaccination plan

Within the framework of efforts to **speed up the vaccination program** and to **encourage citizens, especially of younger ages to proceed with the vaccination against COVID-19**, the following incentives have been decided at this stage:

1. **Vacation allowance to those vaccinated** from July 15 to August 31. The details of the vacation allowance plan will be announced by the competent Deputy Ministry of Tourism on Monday, July 5.
2. **A five-day honorary leave to soldiers who have been vaccinated or will be vaccinated until August 31st 2021**. The honorary leave will be granted both to the soldiers of the 2020 ESSO, as well as to the conscripts of the 2021 ESSO. The decision was taken, after a suggestion by the Minister of Defence Mr. Charalambos Petrides, and more details will be given in the coming period by the Ministry of Defence.
3. Aiming to encourage the vaccination of employees, in order to ensure that the workplaces will continue to operate as safely as possible, it was decided to **grant a special leave of absence on the days of vaccination to employees of the public, wider public and private sector**. These days (one for the vaccination with the Johnson&Johnson single dose vaccine and two for the vaccination with AstraZeneca, Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines) **will be extra and will not be deducted from the employee's annual leave of absence**.

The same applies in the case of **working parents/legal guardians of minors** who will get vaccinated. It is noted that the parent/legal guardian who will accompany his/her minor child for vaccination must present to work a copy of the child's Vaccination Card for confirmation.

Pillar 2: Authorization of the Minister of Health to continue the consultation with Public Law organizations and private organizations and businesses

With the main aim of **finding additional incentives to encourage young individuals aged 18-30** to get vaccinated, the Council of Ministers authorized the Minister of Health to proceed in the coming days to consultations with private and Public Law organizations, as well as with private businesses and organized economic bodies. The Minister of Health, after the completion of the consultation, will present to the Council of Ministers at its next meeting the framework of suggestions for discussion and/or decision making.

Pillar 3: Stricter measures in places of increased assemblage and increased risk of virus transmission and in places where influxes of positive cases have emerged

According to the data of the Tracing Unit, in the last few days, **large numbers of positive cases have been recorded in places of increased assemblage**, such as bars, clubs, entertainment venues, etc., as well as in **social events**, such as weddings, graduation parties, birthday parties, etc. Indicatively, positive case chains connected to entertainment venues amount to more than 50 individuals, and this makes the task of tracing difficult. In many cases, the necessary cooperation of positive cases in declaring their contacts does not exist, and as a result, **valuable time is wasted and the likelihood of the virus spreading in the community increases**.

Therefore, in order to minimize the creation of large chains of positive cases, but also to give the right to all citizens, vaccinated or not, to socialize safely, the Council of Ministers decided the following:

1. As of July 9th, **the possession of a SafePass is required in indoor and outdoor spaces, where there is an increased risk of transmission and more than 20 persons congregate** (i.e. work places, bars, clubs, weddings, graduation and birthday parties, etc.).

It is recalled that the SafePass is required for individuals aged 12 and over and the preconditions for obtaining it are: the possession of a certificate of completion of the vaccination scheme, or the possession of proof of recovery from COVID-19 in the last six months, or the possession of a negative PCR or rapid antigen test result. It is clarified that **as of July 9, and in cases of SafePass possession with a negative PCR or rapid antigen test, the test shall be valid for 72 hours**.

2. From July 9th until July 20th, **entrance to football games, at 50% of stadium capacity, will only be allowed for individuals who have completed their vaccination scheme** or have been vaccinated with the 1st dose of the vaccine and three weeks have elapsed, or for individuals holding a negative **PCR test result valid for 72 hours**, or for individuals who have been infected with COVID-19 during the last six months. The 50% of space capacity applies with the same criteria to cinemas, theatres and concerts.

3. As of July 21st, **entrance to football games, at 75% of stadium capacity, will be allowed only for individuals who have completed their vaccination scheme** and for individuals who have contracted COVID-19 in the last six months. The 75% of space capacity applies with the same criteria to cinemas, theatres and concerts.

4. As of **August 1st 2021**, passengers who are **Cypriot citizens and permanent residents of the Republic of Cyprus** must follow the protocols that apply for all passengers, unless they have been vaccinated with the 1st dose of the vaccine. Specifically, **only individuals vaccinated with the 1st dose of the vaccine will be allowed to undergo a molecular test at the airports of the Republic upon arrival in Cyprus**.

For example, if a Cypriot citizen or a permanent resident of the Republic of Cyprus travels to Cyprus from a country of the **Orange Category** (one negative PCR test), he/she **will be able to undergo a PCR test at the airports upon arrival, only if he/she has been vaccinated with at least the**

1st dose of the vaccine, or if he/she possesses a certificate of recovery from COVID-19 in the last six months. If neither one of the above conditions applies, the passenger must present a **valid for 72 hours negative PCR test result from his/her country of origin.**

Respectively, passengers who are Cypriot citizens and permanent residents of the Republic of Cyprus traveling to Cyprus from a **Red Category** country (two negative PCR tests), will be able to **undergo one of the two PCR tests at airports upon arrival, only if they have been vaccinated with at least the 1st dose of the vaccine, or if they possess a certificate of recovery from COVID-19** in the last six months. The 2nd test will be performed after 72 hours have elapsed from the time of arrival at the passengers' own expense. If neither one of the above conditions applies, the passenger must present a **valid for 72 hours negative PCR test result from his/her country of origin, and undergo a 2nd test upon arrival at the airports of the Republic at his/her own expense.**

Minors aged 12-15 and individuals aged 16 and over who have serious health problems and thus cannot be vaccinated, are **exempted** from this decision.

Pillar 4: Intensification of the information campaign for public awareness concerning vaccinations, focusing on the younger ages. The purpose of this decision is to provide valid information to the public about the benefits of vaccination, according to scientific data, in order to allay concerns about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines.

Pillar 5: Stricter controls and supervision of the implementation of the protocols and health guidelines. The checks by the Police and the competent Ministries will be intensified in the following period, in order to determine the degree of observance of the decisions and of the health protocols, especially in areas of high congregation, where the risk of transmission of the virus is increased.

In addition to the above, the Council of Ministers decided to **abolish the provision of free rapid antigen testing as of August 1st**. Minors aged 12-15 and individuals aged 16 and over, who have serious health problems and thus cannot be vaccinated, are exempted from this decision. It is clarified that the program of the Ministry of Health will continue after August 1st, however, other than the two groups of the population that are excluded, **the cost of undergoing the tests will be borne by the citizen.** It is noted that along with the program of the Ministry of Health, citizens who wish to undergo a rapid antigen test, still have the option to do so in private clinical laboratories and pharmacies that meet the criteria of the Ministry of Health (relevant announcements regarding the list are issued regularly). More details on the cost and the procedure that will be followed will be issued in the coming days.

Finally, it is noted that the above will be regulated by a Decree that will be issued next week.

03.07.2021