

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

Ladies and gentlemen,

The predictions for the prevalence of the Omicron variant have been confirmed. Millions of cases are detected around the world every day, and inevitably, the relevant indicators have also rocketed in our country, as well. The increased contagiousness of Omicron compared to the Delta variant registered a record of cases, **but our country's Health System will survive. And it will continue to withstand, if all of us together, join forces for the general good.**

Yesterday, five fellow citizens died from COVID-19; two of them at a young age. We will never tire of saying and stressing that health is the most valuable asset and that life itself is the ultimate gift. **Human life cannot be negotiable!** That is why we will continue the effort at all levels.

The President of the Republic listened carefully, yesterday, to the members of the Scientific Advisory Committee regarding the epidemiological situation of the country. The Council of Ministers has approved today the experts' recommendations aiming to contain the pandemic.

**The Council of Ministers' message is clear: We must trust science and support collective work.**

**There's no other way!**

Doctors and scientists cannot defeat the pandemic alone. They have done their duty by offering humanity the necessary "weapons", but the pandemic can only be defeated by people, ordinary citizens, following the instructions of the scientific and medical community.

We will defeat the pandemic using the effective means we have at hand: Taking advantage of the life-saving vaccines and strictly following the protection measures to limit the spread of the virus. It is only in this way that we can rid ourselves from the greatest scourge that has been afflicting the planet in the last two years.

The Council of Ministers has decided the following:

- (a) the re-opening of all public and private primary and secondary education schools on 10 January 2022, as announced in a previous decision of the Council of Ministers. It is recalled that all students, teachers and other staff must hold a negative 48-hour Rapid test result, upon return to schools. It is recalled that nursery schools, kindergartens and pre-primary schools will operate as of 7 January 2022.
- (b) as of 10 January 2022, pupils of private and public primary schools should hold a negative 72-hour Rapid test result.
- (c) as of 6 January 2022, gatherings in private residences shall be limited to 10 persons. Children under the age of 12 are excluded from this number.
- (d) as of 10 January 2022, a maximum of 200 persons is allowed in catering establishments, entertainment venues, dance and music halls, weddings and christenings, in compliance with the health protocols and the maximum number of persons per square meter that is in effect. Service shall be provided exclusively at table seating. The maximum number of persons per table is set at 8 persons. It is recalled that in the abovementioned places dancing is prohibited.
- (e) As of 6 January 2022, a maximum of 200 persons is allowed in churches and places of religious worship, in compliance with the health protocols and the maximum number of persons per square meter that is in effect. It is recalled that during the Epiphany doxology, citizens must use a protective mask and keep the necessary distance, as it applies to all indoor and outdoor areas. It is recommended to avoid the use of a fabric protective face mask.
- (f) as of 6 January 2022, the mandatory presentation of proof of identification (identity card, passport, driver's licence) during the Safe pass check in the places where required; the managers of premises/businesses shall carry out the identification check.
- (g) as of 10 January 2022, the increase of the percentage of teleworking to 50%.
- (h) as of 10 January 2022, only individuals who have begun or completed their vaccination scheme and the period required for the administration

of the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> dose of the vaccine has not elapsed, will be allowed to stay in and visit hotels/tourist accommodation units.

- (i) the provision of an additional package of 5 self-tests to persons aged 12 years and over who have completed their vaccination scheme.
- (j) as of 6 January 2022, close contacts of positive cases regardless of their vaccination or recovery history, will have to undergo a rapid antigen test instead of a PCR laboratory test, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> day from the last date of contact with the positive case.
- (k) as of 6 January 2022, the residents of closed structures and Senior People's Homes cannot leave the premises or stay outside the premises overnight.
- (l) as of 6 January 2022, the lifting of the mandatory state quarantine of passengers arriving from South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Botswana, since, based on the country's epidemiological picture, the Omicron variant is transmitted into Cyprus through various countries.
- (m) as of 6 January 2022, individuals who arrive in the Republic of Cyprus and refuse to undergo a PCR laboratory test, will be placed in state quarantine for a period of 14 days, and can be discharged on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, provided that they undergo a PCR test. The quarantine and the test costs will be borne by the passengers themselves.
- (n) as of 6 January 2022, all passengers over the age of 12 arriving in the Republic of Cyprus must possess a PCR laboratory test conducted no more than 72 hours prior to their departure.
- (o) the extension of the existing measures until 31 January 2022.

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