

## **Statement by the Minister of Health, Mr Michalis Hadjipantela, following a meeting of the Council of Ministers – Decisions on new measures**

The large response of our fellow citizens to the call for vaccination in all districts sends encouraging messages for the management of the pandemic and the shielding of public health. This can be seen from the mass attendance of citizens at the vaccination centres over the last few days. In particular, in the last 10 days, about 10 thousand of our fellow citizens rushed to receive the 1st dose of the vaccine, while 70 thousand people rushed to receive the 3rd/booster dose.

However, last Friday, the whole planet was put on alert, in the light of the new data presented after the appearance of the “Omicron” mutation, which alerted health authorities around the world. It is our duty as Ministry of Health and as Government to respond to these developments, by taking additional measures for the defence of public health and the protection of vulnerable groups.

With regard to the week 20-26 November, 26% of positive cases concern minors. It is for this reason that the Ministry of Health, following experts' recommendations, proceeded to take protective measures to ensure our children's health, and also to continue the smooth operation of schools with physical presence. At this point, as the Ministry of Health and as Government we respect the opposite view and the right to freedom of expression, however, we strongly condemn all forms of violence, whether physical, verbal or psychological, in relation with the events that came to light in the last few days.

In view of the above, and the fact that additional measures need to be taken to curb the spread of the virus and allow society and the economy to function, the Council of Ministers decided:

a) from Monday 6 December until 10 January 2022, all passengers, without exception, entering the Republic of Cyprus through the airports will undergo a mandatory PCR test. The cost of 15 euro will be borne by the passenger.

b) from Monday 6 December until 31 December 2021, teleworking for the 20% of the staff of each company or organisation in the service sector, excluding essential services as defined in the Decree.

It is clarified that this percentage includes people who, due to sickness or a declaration as close contacts of a confirmed case, are self-isolated and working from home, and persons who make use of their annual leave.

c) from Monday 6 December until 28 February 2022, the suspension of all presentations of army reserve soldiers and national guards.

d) from Monday 6 December to 10 January 2022, the suspension of all Christmas or other events inside and outside shopping centres.

e) any other events, which will be held by municipalities, communities and places of religious worship, will be allowed provided that local authorities and the organisers will be responsible for observing the health protocols and the decree. In case of non-compliance with the protocols, events will be suspended.

f) the recommendation that all school excursions are not carried out by private parties. School excursions have already been suspended by previous decisions.

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