

Introductory statement by the Minister of Health, Mr Constantinos Ioannou, at the announcement of extraordinary measures for handling the pandemic

When we made the decision last May to gradually restart society and the economy, we had made it clear that we had to continue adhering to the measures so that the transmission of the virus would be controllable and not get out of hand. To reinforce this effort, a series of measures had been announced as early as August, with a timeframe lasting up to January of next year.

Although the measures taken were the appropriate ones to stop the spreading of the virus, unfortunately this was not made possible. The situation in our country, albeit extremely difficult at this time, can be controlled and normalized again. It is imperative, however, that we take immediate action once again, while taking into account social and psychological factors.

The extraordinary measures decided by the Council of Ministers today are aimed in that direction. The measures are focused both on containing the outbreak of cases across Cyprus and also on restricting the spreading locally, where an increased epidemiological load is detected.

In planning the measures, besides the psychological and social factors, the epidemiological data we have before us were taken into account, and especially the geographical distribution of the incidents. Due to Cyprus' small size, it is not possible to contain the spreading to the desired degree, while the virus is easily being transmitted from one District to another.

Moreover, the spreading in the community was evaluated and taken into consideration, as well as the danger posed by certain activities where there is an increased risk that the virus could be transmitted was taken into account.

More specifically, the measures are categorized into three groups as follows:

Category A. Medium-term measures in force **across Cyprus** for the period **5 November 2020 – 15 January 2021**:

1. The regulation for the operation of indoor and open-air cinemas, theatres and performance halls **at 50% capacity**, continues to be in force.
2. The holding of conferences, assemblies and/or events in indoor conference venues, is allowed **with a maximum number of participants set at 250 persons**, in accordance with the protocol and the measure for social distancing at 3 sq.m. per person, regardless of the square metres of each facility. **Intermissions or coffee/snack/cocktail breaks within the framework of the event are not allowed.**
3. Retail businesses of beverages and foodstuffs (supermarkets, minimarkets, butcheries, etc) and pharmacies, **shall only serve persons who are over 65 years old and persons with disabilities, from opening time until 9am and from 1pm until 2pm.**
4. The use of a facemask by the general population, aged 12 years and above, **becomes mandatory in indoor and outdoor areas**, according to the instructions issued by the Ministry of Health.

5. As regards the holding of weddings and christenings, **from 13 November 2020 until 15 January 2021, cocktail parties and well-wishing ceremonies are not allowed. Physical presence is only allowed at lunch or dinner, with a maximum number of attendees set at 150 persons.** It is understood that the maximum number of persons per table **cannot exceed 6 persons.**

Category B. Contingency **island-wide** measures, in force as of the **5th until the 30th of November**:

1. The maximum number of persons allowed to gather in houses and public places, with the exception of catering establishments, is set at **10 per house/group, inclusive of under-aged children.**
2. **Operation of catering establishments and enterprises is permitted until 10:30 p.m.** Catering services are considered the following: restaurants, catering services in hotels and tourist accommodations, catering services in malls and department stores, taverns, cafeterias, pizzerias, pubs, snack-bars and bars, coffee shops, canteens and/or refectories of sports clubs, cultural clubs, associations, societies, etc. It is clarified that the above establishments may provide delivery services after 10:30 p.m. Catering services at the Airports of Larnaka and Pafos are excluded from the prohibition.
3. The maximum number of persons allowed in catering establishments is set to **75 persons in indoor areas** and to **150 persons in outdoor areas.**
4. **The maximum number** of persons per reservation/table/group in catering establishments **is not to exceed 6 persons.**
5. The movement of citizens is banned from **11 at night until 5 in the morning of the following day**, excluding movement for emergency medical reasons (to/from a pharmacy, hospital) or for work purposes by presenting a relevant certification or documentation.
6. Church services and other form of religious worship in churches, mosques and other religious places, as well as religious ceremonies shall be performed in the presence of **maximum 75 persons** and according to the relevant protocols in force for the places of religious worship.
7. The holding of matches in sports establishments in the context of sports championships is permitted, **without spectators**, subject to the relevant protocols.
8. The operation of children's playgrounds is permitted, with a **maximum number of 50 persons in indoor playgrounds and 150 persons in outdoor playgrounds**, subject to the social distancing measures in force based on the square metres of each establishment. It is understood that organizing events at playgrounds (e.g. children's birthday parties) with more than 10 persons – including adults and children - per event is forbidden.
9. **The use of changing rooms in gyms is forbidden.**

Category C. Contingency measures for the **Districts of Lemesos and Pafos** in force as of the **5th until the 16th of November**:

Due to the deterioration of the epidemic situation and the increased epidemiological load that continues to be recorded, and taking into consideration the latest data

showing that for the period 17-30 of October in the Lemesos District, the cumulative impact is 420 persons per 100.000 and the accumulative impact for the Pafos District is 294 persons per 100.000, thus presenting tripled numbers in relation to the previous fortnight in consideration, the following measures have been decided **additionally** to the island-wide measures:

1. **All team sports and social activities for children under the age of 18 (e.g. football, dancing, swimming, martial arts, theatre, choir, etc.) are prohibited.**
2. **Championship matches for athletes below 18 years of age, based in the Districts of Lemesos and Pafos, are suspended.** For example, if a team based in the District of Lemesos or Pafos is playing with a team of the Lefkosia District, the match shall be suspended until the measures are lifted.
3. **The operation of all children's playgrounds, indoor or outdoor, is suspended.**
4. **The operation of gyms is suspended.**

In addition, with the main aim of reducing the number of employees and, consequently, limiting their exposure to the virus in the workplace and maximizing the protection of their health, it is recommended to adopt a series of practices, such as the following:

1. Teleworking / working from home where possible (for example, circularly in a significant percentage of 30-50% of the total staff, etc.) with priority given to people belonging to vulnerable groups of the population.
2. Separation and grouping of staff, so that they do not have contact with each other, with different working hours during the day or with circular hours, different workstations or otherwise.
3. Separate staff / group breaks and avoidance of common areas for breaks.
4. Remote meetings and teleconferences and limiting, as much as possible, the number and length of stay of outside visitors.

To this end, in consultation between the Ministries of Health and Finance, the Public Administration and Personnel Department is preparing relevant arrangements for the Departments / Services, so that persons who fall into the categories of citizens with risk factors for serious illness from COVID-19 and come in contact with the public or work in an office with more than one person and it is not possible to maintain the appropriate distances, may be able to be in a position to carry out their work in an individual working area. In the event that such an arrangement is not possible, then such persons will be able, with the approval and in full consultation with their Supervisor, to perform remote work, where the nature of the work allows it, alternately and to the extent that will not exceed 50% of the individuals belonging to vulnerable groups, for each Service.

Ladies and Gentlement,

The health measures we are taking from the beginning are hard and we acknowledge that. We had and have, however, the duty to set health and safety of

every citizen above any other choice. The measures taken are preventive and repressive, and we all realize how the situation would be like without the measures.

We are in a state of readiness and we have a plan. We have been alert for months now to deal with an increasing number of cases at the hospitals and there is greater experience now. Nevertheless, I would like to repeat, once again, that our Health System's capabilities are not limitless, and that is why we have to safeguard our System, in order to be able to respond in case of an increased number of cases that need to be hospitalized.

Our concern was and still remains to safeguard the vulnerable groups, the friend who has a transplant, the neighbor who is a heart-patient, our mothers and fathers, our grandfathers and grandmothers, who are more likely to suffer from a severe disease.

Friends,

I address to each and every one of you and ask you, once again, for your contribution. We need once more to remain alert. It is not our aim to burden you psychologically. We acknowledge and are experiencing too, the fatigue after this long battle. Our target at this point is to find that fine balance that will allow us to co-exist with the virus, always taking those precautions with the less possible impact on our social life and psychology.

In this marathon we are all running this whole time, we are called upon, once again to choose if in the end, we will all stand together or if we will leave some behind in the course. We are taking measures for our health and safety. For our protection. For the people we love. It is time that we all search inside us and with a feeling of responsibility towards ourselves and others, show our perseverance again and prove through our actions that we are serious and mature to overcome this adventure.

#We continue_we can.