



26th March 2021

Mr Stephen Donnelly TD
Minister for Health
Department of Health
Block 1, Miesian Plaza
50-58 Lower Baggot Street
Dublin 2

Dear Minister

As you will be aware, the Health (Amendment) Act 2021, which was signed into law on 7th March 2021, provides for a system of mandatory quarantine in designated facilities, having regard to a number of factors including the advice of the Chief Medical Officer and following consultation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to designate in writing any state where there is known to be sustained human transmission of COVID-19 or any variant of concern or from which there is a high risk of importation of infection or contamination with COVID-19 or any variant of concern by travel from that state.

As of 22nd March 2021, the 33 states designated as Designated States under the provisions of Section 38E of the Health Act 1947 were:

Angola, Austria, Argentina, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chile, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Eswatini, French Guiana, Guyana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Paraguay, Panama, Peru, Republic of South Africa, Rwanda, Seychelles, Suriname, Tanzania, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Venezuela, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

An Expert Advisory Group on Travel (EAGT) was established on 1st March 2021 and was charged with developing a methodology for risk assessments to inform the categorisation of countries and consider the broader issues relating to travel. The EAGT's most recent recommendations are:

1. That Ireland adopts the Council of the European Union recommendation (EU) 2020/912 on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restriction¹. This approach permits travel of non-EU/EEA citizens from third countries as determined by the following criteria:
 - a) the "14-day cumulative COVID-19 case notification rate", that is, the total number of newly notified COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the previous 14 days,
 - b) the trend of new cases over the same period in comparison to the previous 14 days is stable or decreasing,
 - c) the "testing rate", that is, the number of tests for COVID-19 infection per 100,000 population carried in the previous seven days,
 - d) the "test positivity rate", that is, the percentage of positive tests among all tests for COVID-19 infection carried out in the previous seven days,
 - e) the nature of the virus present in a country, in particular whether variants of concern of the virus have been detected. Variants of concern are assessed as such by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) based on key properties of the virus such as transmission, severity and ability to escape immune response.

¹COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION (EU) 2021/132 of 2 February 2021 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32021H0132&qid=1616597189220&from=en>



A comprehensive review informs amendments to this list and is conducted every two weeks, offering a predictable and transparent approach to categorisation. EU residents/citizens coming into Ireland from non-EU/EEA countries, excluding third countries, should be required to enter mandatory hotel quarantine. Those travelling from third countries are required to follow testing and home-quarantine requirements, as they currently apply to Category 1 countries.

2. Recognising that the above preferred recommendation may take some time to implement, it is recommended that travellers be subject to mandatory hotel quarantine on arrival in Ireland if they have travelled from (in order of priority):
 - a) Countries with outbreaks involving known variants of concern
 - b) Countries with a very high 14-day incidence (≥ 500 per 100,000)
 - c) Countries with a high 14-day incidence (greater than 2.5 times Ireland's 14-day incidence but $< 500/100,000$).

Tables are attached, indicating the states that would currently fall into each of these categories.

As such, it is my advice, based on ECDC epidemiological data to the end of week 10, 2021, that the following countries and territories be designated under the provisions of Section 38E(1) of the Health Act 1947 and Health (Amendment) Act 2021 as designated states:

- a) Angola, Argentina, Austria, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chile, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Eswatini, Ethiopia, France, French Guiana, Germany, Guyana, Italy, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Republic of South Africa, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Suriname, Tanzania, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Zambia, Zimbabwe
- b) Bahrain, Bonaire, Saint Eustatius and Saba, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Montenegro, Palestine, Poland, Serbia, San Marino, Slovakia, Sweden, Wallis and Futuna
- c) Albania, Andorra, Aruba, Bulgaria, Isle of Man, Israel, Kosovo, Kuwait, Latvia, Luxembourg, Moldova, Monaco, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Puerto Rico, Saint Lucia, Slovenia.

In addition, the EAGT has recommended that there should be mandatory PCR testing for all inbound travellers. The EAGT will now give further consideration to the precise nature and timing of such testing.

The EAGT has emphasised the ongoing risk presented by variants of concern, and variants of interest, and the challenge posed by the limited availability of information relating to the location and spread of VOCs. This situation is being kept under close review. The Group has also indicated that it will give ongoing consideration to any other measures that may be warranted with a view to reducing the risk of imported cases of COVID-19.

Yours sincerely

Dr Ronan Glynn
A/Chief Medical Officer
IMC 343604



Table A
Non-EU/EEA countries

1. VOCs	2. Very high incidence 14-day incidence ≥ 500 per 100,000		3. High incidence 14-day incidence < 500 per 100,000 and $> 2.5 \times$ Ireland's (360 per 100,000)	
Angola	Bahrain	506	Albania	362
Argentina	Bonaire, Saint Eustatius and Saba	1369	Andorra	442
Bolivia			Aruba	481
Botswana	Jordan	783	Isle of Man	421
Brazil*	Lebanon	636	Israel	483
Burundi	Montenegro	1264	Kosovo	447
Cape Verde	Palestine	554	Kuwait	437
Chile	San Marino	636	Moldova	471
Colombia	Serbia	823	Monaco	456
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Wallis and Futuna	1574	North Macedonia	475
Ecuador			Puerto Rico	363
Eswatini			Saint Lucia	361
Ethiopia				
French Guiana				
Guyana				
Lesotho				
Malawi				
Mozambique				
Namibia				
Nigeria				
Oman				
Panama				
Paraguay				
Peru				
Philippines				
Qatar				
Republic of South Africa				
Rwanda				
Seychelles*				
Somalia				
Suriname				
Tanzania				
United Arab Emirates				
United States of America				
Uruguay*				
Venezuela				
Zambia				
Zimbabwe				

* These countries also meet the criteria for very high or high incidence.

Table B
EU/EEA countries

1. VOCs	2. Very high incidence 14-day incidence ≥ 500 per 100,000		3. High incidence 14-day incidence < 500 per 100,000 and $> 2.5 \times$ Ireland's (360 per 100,000)	
Austria*	Cyprus	557	Bulgaria	453
France*	Czechia	1518	Latvia	398
Italy*	Estonia	1464	Luxembourg	392
Germany	Hungary	934	Netherlands	403
	Malta	693	Slovenia	489
	Poland	542		
	Slovakia	532		
	Sweden	546		

*These countries also meet the criteria for high incidence.