



9th July 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 29th June 2021, the 61 states designated as Designated States under the provisions of Section 38E of the Health Act 1947 were:

Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chile, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, French Guiana, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Lesotho, Malawi, Maldives, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, The Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Venezuela, Zambia and Zimbabwe

An Expert Advisory Group on Travel (EAGT) was established on 1st March 2021. Following a Government Decision on 9th April, membership of this group was augmented to include expertise on border security, hotel quarantine logistics, international travel law and foreign relations. This entails official representation from the Department of Justice, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Defence. In keeping with the provisions of the Act, a methodological approach for risk assessments was established in collaboration with the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) of the Health Service Executive, and agreed by the EAGT. These assessments inform the advice of the Chief Medical Officer in relation to the designation of territories as designated states, within the meaning of the Health Act 1947, where *there is known to be a 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*, and where appropriate revocation.

The most recent data and assessments were reviewed by the Office of the CMO. These assessments take account of guidance and data from the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), and the HPSC, current international epidemiological data and most recent evidence relating to COVID-19 transmission from an extensive list of other specific sources.



Having considered the data, I am recommending that, being time-bound and considered interim in nature, travellers from both EU/EEA and non-EU countries should enter mandatory hotel quarantine based on the following prioritisation:

1. **Countries with known VOC**, based on individual country risk assessment using an agreed risk matrix, and alignment with the UK Red list, based on the common travel area, and likely onward contagion effect, and awareness of the processes and epidemiological intelligence underpinning such recommendations.
2. **Very high incidence** countries with a 14-day incidence ≥ 500 per 100,000, reflecting the ECDC high risk classification threshold.
3. **High incidence** countries with a 14-day incidence less than 500 per 100,000 and greater than 5 times the 14-day incidence rate of Ireland, reflecting the WHO recommendation to tailor restrictions based on epidemiological differences between country of origin and destination country.

Countries with known VOC

The latest assessment considered data relating to the Beta (B.1.351), Gamma (P.1), and Delta (B.1.617.2) variants of concern. Based on an individualised country-level review of the epidemiological situation, with respect to variants of concern, it is recommended to continue to designate **Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar and Russia**.

In considering these recommendations, the challenges with data quality and availability are highlighted, particularly with regards to limitations in or absence of genomic sequencing capacity and reporting in the majority of countries.

High or very high incidence

In addition to the direct data relating to VOCs, it is recognised that high or very high incidence is a risk in and of itself, given that viruses constantly change and that mutations may arise during the viral replication process. Recognising that a higher incidence rate represents an increased risk of a mutation arising, some of which, or combination of which, may provide the virus with a selective advantage, including increased transmissibility, the ability to evade the host immune response or the ability to impact on the potential effectiveness and benefits that it is hoped will be gained through our national vaccination programme for COVID-19.

Very high incidence

Based on the application of this criterion, the continued designation of **Kuwait** is recommended due to a 14-day incidence of 577.0 per 100,000.

High incidence

Based on a 14-day incidence rate < 500 per 100,000 and more than five times Ireland's 14-day incidence of 109.2 per 100,000 (based on data extracted from the ECDC as at 8th July), countries meeting this criteria are captured within the very high incidence criterion.

Revocation

Following individualised review of the data, no countries are recommended for revocation on the basis of either VOC or very high/high incidence.



These measures are recommended as proportional, justified and necessary in *preventing, limiting, minimising or slowing the spread of COVID-19 in the State* with particular regard to the following:

- the critical timepoint and increasing risk to the vaccination program in Ireland and to the control of the COVID-19 epidemic in Ireland from the importation of new variants of SARS-CoV-2, including from some EU countries with outbreaks involving new variants
- the inability of many countries both within and outside the EU to adequately monitor the emergence of new variants through systematic genomic sequencing and the difficulty therefore to obtain reliable information on the circulation of new variants in many countries
- the unknown and presumably inadequate compliance rate with the system of home quarantine as currently deployed in Ireland, and need for strengthening of existing measures including the passenger locator form and day five PCR testing post-arrival
- the uncertainty relating to the ability of some new variants to out-compete the predominant strain (Delta) currently circulating in Ireland
- the ongoing identification of new variant of concern cases in the community in Ireland, and the very significant public health resources that are being deployed to prevent further transmission
- the nature and potential impact of COVID-19 on individuals, society and the State, and current restrictions as they apply to the population.

Based on and having considered and assessed the data, it is my advice that **no additional countries be designated** under the provisions of Section 38E (1) of the Health Act 1947 and Health (Amendment) Act 2021 as a designated State within the meaning of the Act.

Based on and having considered and assessed the data, it is my advice that of countries previously designated, and in accordance with Section 38E(4) of the Health Act 1947, **no revocations are recommended** at this time.

Finally, as part of an updated risk assessment relating to the Delta variant, a review of the current approach to travel and recommended measures is being finalised and will be brought to the EAGT next week. This revised approach reflects the pre-dominance of the Delta variant in Ireland, and the proposal for relaxation of travel measures as previously signalled by Government with effect from 19th July 2021. I will advise you accordingly.

Yours sincerely

Dr Tony Holohan
Chief Medical Officer



Annex A. Restriction of travel from non-EU/EEA and EU/EEA countries with prioritisation of Mandatory Hotel Quarantine as follows:

1. VoCs		2. Very high incidence		3. High incidence ¹	
Afghanistan	Mongolia	Kuwait	577.0		
Angola	Mozambique				
Argentina	Myanmar				
Bahrain	Namibia				
Bangladesh	Nepal				
Bolivia	Oman				
Botswana	Pakistan				
Brazil	Panama				
Burundi	Paraguay				
Cape Verde	Peru				
Chile	Philippines				
Colombia	Qatar				
Costa Rica	Republic of South Africa				
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Russia				
Dominican Republic	Rwanda				
Ecuador	Seychelles				
Egypt	Somalia				
Eritrea	Sri Lanka				
Eswatini	Sudan				
Ethiopia	Suriname				
French Guiana	Tanzania				
Guyana	Tunisia				
Haiti	Trinidad and Tobago				
India	Turkey				
Indonesia	Uganda				
Kenya	United Arab Emirates				
Kyrgyzstan	Uruguay				
Lesotho	Venezuela				
Malawi	Zambia				
Maldives	Zimbabwe				

¹ Based on 14-day incidence of 545.8 per 100,000 (being 5 times the 14-day incidence of 109.2 per 100,000 in Ireland for week 26, extracted from ECDC on 8th July 2021)



Annex B: States designated on the basis of variants – Summary of Risk Assessments

A summary of the risk matrices for Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar and Russia is presented below.

Indonesia

Indicator	Green	Amber	Red
VOC			
VOC proportion overall			93.5%
B.1.351 proportion			
B.1.617 proportion			93.5%
P1 proportion			
Meets indicator standard for reporting VOC i.e. (WGS of 10% samples or >500 per week)			No Increasing prevalence
Variant trajectory/trends			
EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SITUATION			
Incidence rate (7 day) per 100,000		73.1	
Incidence in last 7 days (% change)			44.5%
Incidence rate (14 day) per 100,000		107.6	
Incidence in last 14 days (% change)			44.2%
Test positivity rate in last 7 days (%)			25.6%
Testing rate in last 7 days per 100,000			254
VACCINATION			
Fully vaccinated (total population)			5.3%
Vaccination rate First dose (total population)		11.8%	
TRAVEL			
Typical numbers arriving in Ireland in 14-day period	6		

Kyrgyzstan

Indicator	Green	Amber	Red
VOC			
VOC proportion overall			N/A
B.1.351 proportion	Both Beta and Delta identified in samples set to WHO in March		
B.1.617 proportion			
P.1 proportion			
Meets indicator standard for reporting VOC i.e. (WGS of 10% samples or >500 per week)			No
Variant trajectory/trends			N/A
EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SITUATION			
Incidence rate (7 day) per 100,000			157.9
Incidence in last 7 days (% change)			58.6%
Incidence rate (14 day) per 100,000			252.2
Incidence in last 14 days (% change)			48.0%
Test positivity rate in last 7 days			16.6%
Testing rate in last 7 days per 100,000	953		
VACCINATION			
Fully vaccinated (total population)			1.1%
Vaccination rate, first dose (total population)			0.4%
TRAVEL			
Typical numbers arriving in Ireland in 14-day period	2		



Myanmar

Indicator	Green	Amber	Red
VOC			
VOC proportion overall	11 cases sequenced in June		
B.1.351 proportion			
B.1.617 proportion			Reported in June 2021
P.1 proportion			
Other nationally designated VOC proportion			Kappa also reported
Meets indicator standard for reporting VOC i.e. (WGS of 10% samples or >500 per week)			No
Variant trajectory/trends			N/A
EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SITUATION			
Incidence rate (7 day) per 100,000	49.0		
Incidence in last 7 days (% change)			116.0%
Incidence rate (14 day) per 100,000	31.9		
Incidence in last 14 days (% change)			130.0%
Test positivity rate in last 7 days			16.5%
Testing rate in last 7 days per 100,000			117
VACCINATION			
Fully vaccinated (total population)			2.8%
Vaccination rate, first dose (total population)			3.4%
TRAVEL			
Typical numbers arriving in Ireland in 14-day period	1		

Russia

Indicator	Green	Amber	Red
VOC			
VOC proportion overall			90.6%
B.1.351 (Beta) proportion	0.3%		
B.1.617.2 (Delta) proportion			90.3%
P.1 (Gamma) proportion	0%		
Other nationally designated VOC proportion			
Meets indicator standard for reporting VOC i.e. (WGS of 10% samples or >500 per week)			No Increasing Delta
Variant trajectory/trends			
EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SITUATION			
Incidence rate (7 day) per 100,000			118.1
Incidence in last 7 days (% change)			20.9%
Incidence rate (14 day) per 100,000			201.5
Incidence in last 14 days (% change)			17.4%
Test positivity rate in last 7 days			4.2%
Testing rate in last 7 days per 100,000	2,200		
VACCINATION			
Fully vaccinated (total population)		12%	
Vaccination rate, first dose (total population)		18%	
TRAVEL			
Typical numbers arriving in Ireland in 14-day period	85		