

26th March 2021

Dr Ronan Glynn  
Acting Chief Medical Officer  
Department of Health  
Block 1, Miesian Plaza  
50-58 Lower Baggot Street  
Dublin 2

Dear Dr Glynn,

Following on from the most recent meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Travel (EAGT), and as part of its remit to consider the broad issues relating to travel, the group notes:

- 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
- the uncertainty relating to the ability of some new variants to out-compete the predominant strain (B.1.1.7) currently circulating in Ireland
- the ongoing identification of new cases of novel variants in the community in Ireland, and the very significant public health resources that are being deployed to prevent further transmission.

While the group acknowledge divergent views within the EAGT, as to the optimal approach to prevent importation of SARS-CoV-2, with some recognising the need for even stronger measures, and recognising the terms of reference and current legislation, the following recommendations, being time-bound and considered interim in nature, are proposed:

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 restriction<sup>1</sup>. 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,

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<sup>1</sup>COUNCIL 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>

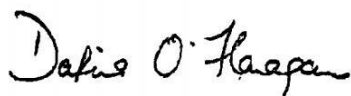
- b) the trend of new cases over the same period in comparison to the previous 14 days is stable or decreasing,
- c) the “testing rate”, that is, the number of tests for COVID-19 infection per 100 000 population carried in the previous seven days,
- d) the “test positivity rate”, that is, the percentage 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.

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 the above preferred recommendation may take some time to implement it is recommended that for travellers from outside the EU/EEA that they enter mandatory hotel quarantine based on the following prioritisation:
  - a) Known countries with VOC outbreaks
  - b) Very high incidence countries with a 14-day incidence  $\geq 500$  per 100,000
  - c) High incidence countries with a 14-day incidence less than 500 per 100,000 and greater than 2.5 times the 14-day incidence rate of Ireland
3. In relation to travel from within the EU/EEA, mandatory hotel quarantine should be required based on the following prioritisation:
  - a) Known countries with VOC outbreaks
  - b) Very high incidence countries with a 14-day incidence  $\geq 500$  per 100,000
  - c) High incidence countries with a 14-day incidence less than 500 per 100,000 and greater than 2.5 times the 14-day incidence rate of Ireland
4. Strengthening of existing travel measures including mandatory testing for all inbound travellers, with genomic sequencing of all positive PCR cases

The Group also wishes to advise you that it is in the process of finalising its review of the existing travel measures and will advise the outcome in due course.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Darina O'Flanagan**  
**Chair Expert Advisory Group on Travel**

**A. Based on recommendation 2 - Restriction of travel from non-EU/EEA countries, to Irish citizens or residents, with prioritisation of Mandatory Hotel Quarantine as follows:**

1. VOCs	2. Very high incidence		3. High incidence <sup>1</sup>	
Angola	Bahrain	506	Albania	362
Argentina	Bonaire, Saint	1369	Andorra	442
Bolivia	Eustatius and Saba		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
DRC	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				

<sup>1</sup> Based on 14-day incidence of 360 per 100,000 (being 2.5 times the 14-day incidence of 144 per 100,000 in Ireland for week 10)

**B. Based on recommendation 3 - Restriction of travel from EU/EEA countries with prioritisation of Mandatory Hotel Quarantine as follows:**

<b>1. VOCs</b>	<b>2. Very high incidence</b>		<b>3. High incidence<sup>1</sup></b>	
Austria	Cyprus	556.8	Bulgaria	453.4
France	Czechia	1518.3	Latvia	398.1
Italy	Estonia	1464.1	Luxembourg	391.6
Germany	Hungary	934.2	Netherlands	402.9
	Malta	693.4	Slovenia	489.3
	Poland	542.1		
	Slovakia	532.0		
	Sweden	545.9		

<sup>1</sup> Based on 14-day incidence of 360 per 100,000 (being 2.5 times the 14-day incidence of 144 per 100,000 in Ireland for week 10)