

IRELAND, ITALY, SPAIN, GREECE, UK, SWITZERLAND AND SLOVENIA ALL CUT QUARANTINE PERIODS

SME Chamber calls again to immediately revise Malta's Quarantine rules to 5 days for those testing positive only, in line with the recommendations of the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The way the illness has developed with the Omicron variant, which is now the prevalent variant in Malta, offers such a possibility and Malta needs to move fast, like other countries are doing before circumstances change, as sometimes happens with new variants, and Malta would end up missing out on this important window of opportunity.

The Omicron variant, whilst still considered of concern, has been recognised as milder by the major health institutions such as WHO. This, coupled with the fact that Malta has the best record when it comes to vaccination take-up and booster take up, puts Malta in a position to operate closer to normality and reduce the most difficult measures which are causing harm to the economy and society.

The side effects of such a long quarantine period has great repercussions on mental health and damages our social fabric. The prevention of persons from interacting, families from supporting each other as they would usually do and making ones' ability to earn their livelihood more difficult requires serious consideration.

ABOUT MALTA CHAMBER OF SMES

Malta Chamber of SMEs (Formerly known as GRTU) is the largest social partner in Malta representing over 7,000 SMEs from over 90 different sectors. The SME Chamber has been established for over 70 years and its aim is of safeguarding the interest of businesses at large.

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Businesses are reporting great difficulties in dealing with quarantine and this comes with a big cost for workers unable to work online. The human resources difficulties our country was facing before the manifestation of thousands of quarantines has made the problem impossible. Businesses cannot cope with quarantine and this is forcing businesses to rescind on their operation.

Switzerland and the UK have just yesterday announced an immediate reduction of the quarantine periods to 5 days. Greece took this step before, on the 1st of January. Ireland, Spain and Slovenia reduced their 10 days to 7 days as of the start of this year. Italy has totally scrapped quarantine for any close contact if the person is vaccinated.

These countries have all based their decisions on the recommendation of the CDC and in view of the challenges their countries are facing, which are outweighing the current risk posed by the Omicron variant. As such, whilst keeping a recommended level of quarantine, since Omicron is still of concern, they are reducing the quarantine periods to avoid doing more harm than good.

Malta's is at the front to take these steps with additional security, having the backing of Malta's successful vaccination strategy which is incomparable to the levels of other countries. Moving towards the CDC recommendation in the immediate is therefore essential.

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