INTERIM UPDATE COVID-19

Following a Council of Ministers Meeting to discuss recommendations from the Communicable Diseases Supreme Council the following statement was issued.

Kudret Özersay, the Spokesperson of the Council of Ministers, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs explains the decisions taken after the Council of Ministers meeting on Covid-19.

Highlights from Özersay's statement:

- Changes have been implemented following the Communicable Diseases Supreme Council recommendations.
- The quarantine system has been re-introduced for everyone coming from abroad to the TRNC. This is to reduce the risk of new infections being introduced from outside the TRNC.
- Additional measures will be taken to ensure that the contact tracking team can focus on local contamination.

In addition to the new system, the following decisions were made:

- Entertainment venues, clubs, discos, casinos where crowded groups are together are closed until 1 OCTOBER.

- Bars, restaurants, and bistros will be open within the agreed seating arrangements. There will be restrictions on the number of people at these venues.

- Education, pre-school 1st and 2nd classes will continue with the necessary measures. Apart from this, the training will not start until October 1.

- Meetings will be arranged, and special flights will be organized for the gradual arrival of university students. Their gradual arrival will be provided in a planned manner

- VAT and withholding tax has been suspended on the sale of computers and tablets to facilitate the continuation of online education.

- Election rallies and mass meetings are CANCELED, they will not be held until 1 October.
- Sports competitions will be held without spectators until October 1.
- Children's playgrounds and parks will be closed until October 1.
- There is no obstacle to individual sports.
- It was decided to postpone weddings until October 1.
- It has been agreed that the police will make inspections on various issues. A meeting will be held with the District Police Boards. The inspection will start from tonight. The rules and criteria of opening and working businesses will be audited.
- Everyone who is in quarantine will pay the quarantine fee themselves.
- Citizens who go abroad with health referrals will not pay.

In another statement issued by the Ministry of Health there is a relevant change to the timeframe in which a PCR must be taken, which should make it easier to arrange.

The Ministry of Health has confirmed that, as of the 5 September 2020 the requirements for the PCR tests to enter the TRNC have changed.

Passengers from **Group B and C countries**, on arrival in the TRNC must present negative PCR tests done within **last 0-120 hours**. However,

Passengers from **Group B** countries will be subject to a mandatory **7-day quarantine**

Passengers from **Group C** countries will be subject to a mandatory **14-day quarantine period.**

ENTRY CONDITIONS INTO THE TRNC FROM THE UK

As a result of the current increase in cases of COVID-19 in the TRNC the following order has been introduced, **AND SUPERCEDES ALL PREVIOUS INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING ENTRY TO THE TRNC FROM THE UK**,

UPDATED GUIDELINES/DECISIONS ON ENTRY- EXIT INTO THE TRNC (05/09/2020).

For travellers coming from Category B countries (including Turkey and England), it has been decided to quarantine for a 7-day period in effect from 7 September 2020.

For those in any doubt, quarantine will be in a Government specified hotel for a 7-day period, where you will be provided with food and water. You will not be allowed to mix with other persons or use facilities except those provided in your room. You will not be allowed to receive goods or food from external sources nor be allowed visitors. You will be tested towards the end of the quarantine period and released if this is negative.

It will be in effect from 6 September 2020 23:59 until 20 September 2020 23:59. At the end of this date, this procedure will be assessed again.

It is an exceptionally low possibility for someone who has taken a PCR test on two separate occasions to test positive in a 3-day period and infect others with the disease. Thus, travellers entering to TRNC from Category B countries with 2 Negative PCR results are exempted from the quarantine procedures, given that they **stay in TRNC less than 72 hours (Hour 72 is included).** Again, people going to work from TRNC to Turkey, who complete their work in Turkey within 72 hours, are exempted from quarantine provided that they take 2 PCR tests with a negative result, 5 days before and after their travel.

C) Students coming to TRNC for higher education are to isolate in dormitories or hotels their universities decide on.

D) Quarantine procedures will be considered for those who travelled abroad for health reasons if they apply to the Ministry of Health.

E) People coming to TRNC from a Category C country are obliged to provide a negative PCR test result taken in 0-120 hours before travel, upon their entry to the country. They will be quarantined for a 14-day period.

2. As there have been an increased density of local infections in Vadili, İnönü and Akdoğan regions in the last couple of days, starting from 7 September 2020 (the date included) until 20 September 2020 (the date included), weddings, meetings, etc., crowd organizations have been banned in these areas for a period of 14 days. Opening of schools in those regions are postponed for a 14-day period.

3. Businesses will be shut down if at events such as beach clubs, birthday celebrations, henna nights (bachelor/ bachelorette parties) etc., activities are checked and found to be not following the social distancing rules.

Weddings and similar open-air organizations will receive restrictions if at these organizations, the rules are not followed.

4. Restaurants, cafes and businesses providing food service are to continue serving if they follow the hygiene and social distancing rules. If they are detected to not to, they are subjected to shut down.

5. Precautions for transportation sector; drivers' section is to be separated from the travellers by an apparatus. Meanwhile, the windows will be open, no air-conditioning will be used and everyone on the vehicle should wear face masks. Travellers' name-surname and address records must be taken on a date basis.

COVID-19

We continue to see the increase in the number of new cases of Covid-19 here in the TRNC and suspected that tighter controls needed to be applied to the validity of 'negative' PCR tests for persons arriving in the TRNC from the Mainland.

These have now been introduced with anyone beginning their journey to the TRNC from Turkey being required to have a QR code being included on their 'negative' PCR tests. Also, we have seen a reduction in the number of flights and ferries arriving which underlines the desire to control the virus.

We appreciate that the economy of the TRNC is fragile so please do not expect to see a total closure of the air and sea borders or another lockdown. For however long the virus is with us we need to cope. If you take the appropriate precautions this will reduce your risk.

Please abide by the rules and your risk will be greatly reduced.

PCR TESTING - TRNC

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health, said in a statement that those people who want to have a PCR test will have to go to Lefkosa (Dr. Burhan Nalbantoğlu) State Hospital and should apply and pay at the Outpatient Diagnosis Centre.

Tests can be completed during the day or the next day, the Undersecretary also advised those with Negative Results should carry the receipt for the TL 300 payment with the PCR test result.

PCR Tests can also be undertaken at the Near East hospitals at a cost of 200tl

PCR TESTING – UK

There has apparently been some confusion caused in some comments appearing from other sources about changes in the PCR test with effect from the 13th August. To be clear there has been no change in the criteria for a PCR test, since the 16thJuly, when the last reference to PCR tests was issued by the TRNC Health Ministry.

For absolute clarity, the PCR Test sample must be taken 0 - 120 hours (5 days) before the flight departs from the UK. However, when having the test taken on the 5th and maybe even late on the 4th day, be mindful that you must arrive in the TRNC before 120 hours (5 days) has elapsed as otherwise the validity of the test will have expired, and don't forget to factor in the 2 hour time difference between the UK and the TRNC.

The latest official entry regulations specifically refer to a PCR **TEST DOCUMENT.** This may well mean that showing the TRNC Health Official your mobile phone upon arrival, with a text message, with your PCR test may no longer be acceptable.

It you undergo a UK NHS PCR test this is NOT sufficient for your entry into the TRNC in itself, without further documentation and written authentication by your GP in the UK, which must be attached to the NHS test result. Having seen an example of an NHS test result, **they do not contain the relevant information**. Please see the following link

www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk (Pre travel COVID-19 testing)

The NHS 'Fit to Fly' website clearly says that "COVID-19 testing for the purposes of international travel is not available on the NHS. Pre-travel COVID-19 tests may be available in the private sector, however, private testing processes and accuracy of results may vary".

For those who opt to use the NHS testing facility do so at their own risk. Some NHS GP surgeries do offer a Private Administration service where charges will be applied for any supporting documents to support travel.

A list of UK clinics offering private PCR tests is available on the BRS Website Members Area under the Tab COVID-19.

FACEBOOK GROUP PAGE

As you have seen already in this Update you will, by now, realise how quickly things change in the TRNC in relation to travel and Residency.

The best way to ensure you are up to date is via our Facebook Group page – British Residents' Society – Official.

We do issue weekly email updates but please be aware that if anything important happens you will have to wait for the Weekly Update/Newsletter to be published.

We now have 760+ members – these are actual paid-up members of the BRS – NOT purely 'followers' of a Group!

Join us – it will give you accurate answers to your questions quickly!

If you have questions regarding these changes you can visit one of our BRS Clinic

CLINICS

- Lapta (Lambousa Market every Saturday morning10.00-12.00)
- Girne (The Hut every Saturday morning 10.00 to 12.00)

- Catalkoy (Creditwest Bank – Monday mornings 09.30 to 11.30 am)
- Alsancak (Creditwest Bank – Wednesday 0930am to 1130am)
- Esentepe (Stone Castle – 3rd Tuesday of every month)
- Kücük Erenköy The BRS Clinic at Charlie's Bar will be held at the Stone Castle, Esentepe until further notice, at the earlier time of 11am until 1pm.
- Bogaz (Eddie's Restaurant – 19th September 11am–1pm)