

Disclaimer: We kindly ask to acknowledge that due to the diverse and heterogeneous nature of the questions and the dynamic pandemic situation some of the information might be incomplete or only correct for the time being. Thus, please consider the date and date of the last update with the below information. All available information was provided by a country representative from the PHIRI network during or in connection to the respective meeting.

Date: 20.12.2021 Last update: see 'Updated on'

Table 1: Part 1: Country response: VOC 'Omicron'

Country	VOC 'Omicron'	Updated on
Albania	Until now, no official cases of Omicron variant have been reported in Albania. The authorities have sent samples of infected people in different laboratories abroad and awaiting the results. There are no new measures in order to address the Omicron variant at the moment.	19.12.2021
Austria	Until 20.12.2021 297 infections with the Omicron variant have been detected based on either PCR genotyping or sequencing. Regular updates can be found here: https://www.ages.at/en/topics/pathogenic-organism/coronavirus/sars-cov-2-varianten-in-oesterreich/ NPI have been strengthened as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals with an Omicron infection, irrespective of their vaccination or recovery status, must stay in isolation at least 10 days and until a PCR test is negative or yields a Ct-value of 30 or more. • Individuals who have been in contact with an Omicron-infected person must stay in quarantine for 14 days, irrespective of their vaccination or recovery status. They must take a PCR test immediately upon their identification as a contact person and on day 13 of their quarantine. • School classes are closed if one teacher or pupil is infected with Omicron, irrespective of their vaccination or recovery status. 	20.12.2021
Belgium	The first case of Omicron was reported on November 22, since then cases are increasing very fast. 1300-2000 infections, i.e. 6% of positive cases are estimated to account for the Omicron variant. Contact tracing is in place with 10 days quarantine regardless of the vaccination or recovery status. In the upcoming days, stricter policy measures may be introduced. BE is starting vaccination for children 5-11 years old.	20.12.2021
Bulgaria	So far, no Omicron case was detected in BG. There are no plans for a lockdown, as cases are currently decreasing. People are being informed to get the booster vaccine shot. Nevertheless, Omicron is expected to appear in BG soon.	20.12.2021
Croatia	We have confirmed Omicron cases in Croatia. Quarantine is prolonged from 10 to 14 days for confirmed Omicron case contacts and vaccinated contacts are also quarantined. https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Postupanje-s-obiljelima-bliskim-kontaktima-obiljelih-i-prekid-izolacije-i-karantene-1.pdf	20.12.2021
Czech Republic	First cases of Omicron have been identified at the end of November. Positive cases are decreasing currently in CZ. Current measures: children are tested in schools every Monday. No special measures have been adapted so far. A new government is in place for only a few days, perhaps they are going to start acting in the coming days.	20.12.2021
Estonia	The number of Omicron variant cases is increasing. The situation as of Sunday morning is that 329 suspected positive samples have been identified in Estonia, 80% of which are local cases - Omicron variant is spreading within the country. Fortunately, the hospitalization has remained stable so far. At the same time there are plenty of patients from the last wave. No extra measures have been adapted so far as there were measures already in place: wearing a mask indoors, showing a COVID-19 certificate in indoors since 12-years and older. Bars/restaurants are opened until 11PM. Schoolchildren are tested regularly twice a week (up to 12 years), and 12-years and older ones only the unvaccinated pupils. After the Christmas break, since 10th of January, they all start to test 3 times per week (at least for 2-3 weeks). Campaigns for booster doses are in place.	20.12.2021
Finland	The number of Omicron cases is increasing and today [17.12.2021] it was announced that over 50% of the cases in capital region are already Omicron.	17.12.2021



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101018317

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	<p>Due to increasing number of Covid cases, new restrictions are taking place in different regions (https://thl.fi/en/web/infectious-diseases-and-vaccinations/what-s-new/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-updates/situation-update-on-coronavirus/the-covid-19-epidemic-regional-situation-recommendations-and-restrictions and https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/information-on-coronavirus/current-restrictions). At the national level, new rules for entry to country will be in place from 21st December onwards. This means that travellers (https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410869/passengers-arriving-from-third-countries-who-have-received-a-full-course-of-vaccination-required-to-carry-proof-of-a-negative-covid-19-test-as-of-21-december) from outside EU and Schengen area need a negative COVID-19 test issued less than 48 hours before.</p>	
Ireland	<p>The first confirmed Omicron case was announced on 1st December. There are 39 confirmed cases of Omicron (through whole genome sequencing) in Ireland as of Thursday 16th Dec, but it is estimated that 52% of reported cases are now due to the Omicron variant (identified by the number of PCR results with S gene target failure).</p> <p>Has your country implemented new/adapted measures specifically to address the threat posed by the spread of the Omicron variant? (Or are such measures planned?)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Booster vaccine programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interval between primary vaccine course and booster dose has been reduced to 3 months • Currently being offered to people aged 40 and older, those who are pregnant, people living in a nursing home or a long-term healthcare facility, healthcare workers, & people aged 16 to 49 with an underlying condition. <p>A number of additional public health measures have been introduced over the last couple of weeks, with the latest announced last Friday. The current restrictions in place include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. EU Digital COVID Cert <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required for indoor hospitality/events, cinemas/theatres, gyms/leisure centres, bars/restaurants 3. Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor venues must close at 8pm (including cinemas & theatres). Attendance is limited to 1000 people or 50% of the venue's capacity (whichever is lower). Face masks should be worn at all times • For outdoor events, attendance is limited to 5000 people or 50% of the venue's capacity (whichever is lower). This includes sporting events. 4. Hospitality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pubs and restaurants must close at 8pm (not including takeaway/deliveries), nightclubs closed • Strict social distancing in all bars & restaurants, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Table service only ○ Maximum 6 adults per table (no multiple table bookings and no intermingling) ○ Masks when not seated at table 5. Weddings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance is now limited to 100 guests. Receptions must end at midnight. 6. Work from home unless necessary 7. Close Contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those with booster dose: restrict movements for 5 days and do 3 antigen tests • For those with no booster dose: restrict movement for 10 days • For close contacts of a VOC: self-isolate and get a PCR test regardless of vaccination or symptom status. Self-isolation can only end if you have had a negative PCR test at least 10 days after contact with the confirmed case, and you have no symptoms. 8. International Travel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All passengers arriving in Ireland must have a negative test (vaccinated/recovered can provide PCR or antigen; unvaccinated can only provide PCR) • All passengers arriving in Ireland are now advised to conduct antigen testing on a daily basis for 5 days from day of arrival. 	20.12.2021



Italy	<p>On the 18th of December 2021 the Italian National Institute of Health-ISS confirmed 84 cases of VOC 'Omicron' in Italy (https://www.iss.it/web/guest/primo-piano/-/asset_publisher/3f4alMwzN1Z7/content/id/5912052).</p> <p>The sequences of the Omicron variant analyzed and deposited on the ICoGen platform, which receives reports from the network of over 70 laboratories coordinated by the ISS, have risen to 84. The figure is growing strongly compared to the 55 of the previous day. Most of the reports (updated at 9 am on 18th December) are arrived from Lombardy (33) and Campania (20, of which 7 related to the 'index case' of the end November), while in general the variant is reported in 13 regions (Lazio 8, Puglia 7, Veneto 5, Piedmont and Emilia Romagna 2, Abruzzo, Calabria, Liguria, Sardinia, Sicily, Tuscany 1) and 1 in the Autonomous province of Bolzano.</p> <p>Today, Monday the 20th of December a new flash survey will be carried out to estimate the prevalence of the variant.</p> <p>The control room with Prime Minister Mario Draghi will meet on Thursday to discuss new measures - with spotlights on outdoor masks and tampons also for vaccinated people in relation to certain events and places - and will evaluate the data that will be collected in the coming days, starting with from those of the specific investigation on the Omicron variant. The recommendations given so far, to start or complete the vaccination course also with the third dose, to use the mask when indicated and to follow the individual and collective measurements remain fundamental to minimize the spread of the virus.</p>	20.12.2021 1
Malta	<p>Around half of the cases identified in Malta are being sequenced - to date no trace of Omicron. Nonetheless, we have noticed a sharp inflection in our case rate and positivity rate as of the 13th December which could be either due to increased gatherings in the runup to Christmas (also 8th and 13th December are bank holidays in Malta) or Omicron, or both. That said, we continually monitor the imported infection rate, and this has remained consistent.</p> <p>To date the main two measures implemented in Malta have been - reintroducing the requirement to use masks, both indoors and outdoors, and accelerating the deployment of booster vaccination. To date, 40% of the population has been vaccinated in Malta, with over 80% of the 60+ being vaccinated. The latest age group (50-59) is already 50% vaccinated. Today, registration for booster vaccination amongst the 35+ has started, whilst vaccination of the 5-11 has started.</p>	20.12.2021 1
Netherlands	<p>Please find here two links from RIVM with information on Omicron: https://www.rivm.nl/en/coronavirus-covid-19/virus-sars-cov-2/variants https://www.rivm.nl/en/coronavirus-covid-19/omicron-variant</p> <p>The summary of current measures is available at the following link: https://www.government.nl/topics/c/coronavirus-covid-19/tackling-new-coronavirus-in-the-netherlands/coronavirus-measures-in-brief: Brief overview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic hygiene rules • At home and at work (staying at home as much as possible) • Most locations are closed • Ban on events • Education and childcare: Daycare centres for children aged 0 to 4 are open; schools will be closed until Sunday 9 January 2022 • Sports: All indoor sports venues are closed; outdoor sporting locations may open between 05:00 and 17:00. • Travel abroad: the Dutch government issues travel advice per country 	20.12.2021 1
Norway	<p>Here is statistics about occurrence of OMICRON in Norway: https://www.fhi.no/en/id/infectious-diseases/coronavirus/statistikk-over-meldte-tilfeller-avny-virusvariant-omikron/</p> <p>Here is information about the measures that are changing although the main message is to reduce close contacts with people outside the own households: https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/new-national-measures-to-keep-the-pandemic-under-control/id2891395/</p>	15.12.2021 1
Portugal	<p>Data from Ministry of Health shows, that approximately 10% of positive cases are expected to be Omicron infections. Most of them are still imported cases. Still, Omicron is not the dominant variant in PT. There is obligatory quarantine, borders are much more controlled now. Also, there are restrictions planned for Christmas and New Year's Eve. The vaccination rate in PT is on a high level.</p>	20.12.2021 1



Romania	<p>On 12 December 2021, National Institute of Public Health reported 8 cases of Omicron. https://insp.gov.ro/centrul-national-de-supraveghere-si-control-al-bolilor-transmisibile-cnscbt/infectia-cu-noul-coronavirus-sars-cov-2/analiza-cazuri-confirmate-covid19/</p> <p>The recommendations given so far, are to start or complete the vaccination course also with the third dose, to use face masks when indicated and to follow the individual and collective measurements remain fundamental to minimize the spread of the virus.</p> <p>In order to identify the contacts of a person infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus and to prevent the exposure of persons to COVID-19, no later than 24 hours before entering Romania, persons have the obligation to complete the Digital Entry Form in Romania. https://insp.gov.ro/download/CNSCBT/docman-files/Coronavirus%20nCoV/legislatie_si_jurisprudenta/HCNSU-nr.-113-din-10.12.2021.pdf</p>	20.12.2021 1
Slovakia	<p>On 11 December we identified 3 Omicron positive persons returning from risky countries. Their samples are being sequenced with priority. We continue in sequencing. Other samples are also sequenced: retesting samples of persons returned from abroad in the past, if they are suitable.</p> <p>More over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive samples of persons, already vaccinated with second dose against COVID-19, • Positive samples of persons, with reinfection, • Positive samples of persons with atypical course (severe course, younger persons), • Positive samples of contacts • Random selection of positive samples 	14.12.2021 1
Slovenia	<p>The first cases of Omicron were confirmed on 14 December 2021. On 15 December, National Institute of Public Health and Institute of Microbiology and Immunology reported 10 cases of Omicron. There have been no new reports on number of cases since that date. Slovenia (Minister of Health) started Vaccination Days campaign, which will take place between 19 and 23 December and one of the messages of the campaign is also that a third booster dose seems to be effective against VOC Omicron. The high-level advisory group and the government are currently discussing possible new measures to limit the spread of Omicron, but no final decisions on new measures has been made.</p>	20.12.2021 1
Spain	<p>On December 13, up to 36 Omicron cases have been detected in Spain. Nineteen out of them had no links with high-risk countries, so it is assumed that there is already community transmission of this variant https://www.mscbs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/documentos/COVID19_Actualizacion_variantes_20211213.pdf.</p> <p>In general, Spanish regional authorities implement measures according to the epidemiological situation (mostly based on incidence and hospitalization and ICU occupancy rates) irrespective of the type variant behind the cases. For example, responding to the growing number of cases, some regions are requesting the COVID certificate to enter restaurants, pubs, or other gatherings.</p> <p>On December 16, the Public Health Commission approved the recommendation of administering a mRNA vaccine booster to people from 59 to 50 years old, followed by those from 49 to 40 years old, prioritising by age. In addition, it was also recommended a third dose of a mRNA vaccine for those people below 60 that were vaccinated with Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca) https://www.mscbs.gob.es/gabinete/notasPrensa.do?id=5607.</p> <p>As specific measures to limit the spread of the Omicron variant (B.1.1.529), flights from South Africa, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Malawi and Zambia are restricted to Spanish and Andorran residents or passengers in transit to a non-Schengen country with a stopover shorter than 24 hours. These passengers are not allowed to leave the airport. Moreover, those travellers coming from these countries must stay in quarantine for 10 days after arrival or during all their stay if it was less than this period. (Order PCM/1400/2021 Exceptional measures to limit the spread and infection of COVID-19, by limiting flights between certain southern African countries and Spanish airports https://boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2021-20637; Order SND/1376/2021 Quarantine conditions that people from high-risk countries must undergo upon arrival in Spain, during the health crisis caused by COVID-19 https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2021-20372)</p>	20.12.2021 1



	<p>Currently, if you are coming from a high risk country, at the health controls on arrival in Spain you will have to present a SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic test certificate with a negative result, regardless of having a vaccination or recovery certificate. (https://www.mscbs.gob.es/en/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/spth.htm)</p> <p>Since December 1st, fully vaccinated close contacts of cases produced by Omicron variants have to quarantine (generally they are exempt from quarantine in Spain). Confirmation of the type of variant is usually not available at the time of diagnosis, so this measure should also be applied to those cases in which there is suspicion either by preliminary information through specific PCR or because the case is part of an outbreak that include cases produced by these variants.</p> <p>http://www.mscbs.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/documentos/COVID19_Estrategia_vigilancia_y_control_e_indicadores.pdf</p>	
<p>United Kingdom</p>	<p>Omicron is spreading rapidly and by the end of this week it is likely to be the dominant strain across the UK.</p> <p>Yes, measures have been adapted, and again these differ across the UK:</p> <p><u>England</u>: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/measures-against-omicron-variant-come-into-effect-30-november-2021 this includes testing for travel before entering the UK, face masks mandated in crowded public places and vaccine/-test requirements for large crowded venues</p> <p><u>Scotland</u>: https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/ includes more than in England with advice not to mix more than 3 households</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limit the amount of social contact you have with other households - gather in groups of no more than 3 households • avoid crowded places – shop at quieter times and follow safety measures in shops and other places • if you don't have symptoms take regular lateral flow tests - especially before mixing with other people - get LFD tests • if you have symptoms - self isolate and book a PCR test • wear a face covering where required • work from home if you can • you need proof of a negative LFD test to visit someone in hospital or a care home • wash your hands regularly, and cover your nose and mouth if coughing or sneezing • open windows when meeting indoors <p><u>Northern Ireland</u>: https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-and-guidance-what-they-mean-you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • book a test and self-isolate for 10 days if you have COVID-19 symptoms • get a PCR test if you've been identified as a close contact and self-isolate if you haven't been fully vaccinated • wash your hands • wear a face-covering • keep your distance from others • limit your contacts • avoid large gatherings and busy places • spend time outdoors rather than indoors • don't travel to or from places with higher COVID-19 infection rates <p><u>Wales</u>: currently being discussed</p>	<p>15.12.2021</p>

