

# Greece extends lockdown measures to January 7

December 7 2020

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Greece on Monday extended its coronavirus lockdown measures until January 7, citing the slow impact of restrictive measures announced a month ago.

The shutdown affects schools, restaurants, clubs, courts and most professional sports. There is also a ban on travel between geographical regions.

Incoming travellers must furnish a negative PCR test and self-quarantine for 10 days.

"The improvement of epidemiological data and the reduction in the virus burden is slow, slower than expected," government spokesman Stelios Petsas told reporters.

"The return to normality must be done gradually and safely," he said.

Petsas noted that public mobility was 20 percent higher than during a previous lockdown in the spring.

An exception to the shutdown restrictions will be made for Christmas decoration shops.

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Monday said Christmas parties of nine people maximum would be allowed.

More than 3,000 people have died of the virus in Greece and 600 people are in intensive care.

Over 11,500 people have been infected.

The government spokesman on Monday said the weekly average infection rate was over 1,600 cases compared to over 2,300 a month earlier.

"The national health system is still under pressure," he said.

"We've done the best we could," Mitsotakis told Alpha TV, insisting that the second wave hitting Greece was not related to his decision to open the country to tourism.

The PM dismissed as "a lie" media reports alleging that daily government coronavirus tallies have been distorted because of shoddy bookkeeping at the state health organisation.

"I see the same (tallies)," the PM said. "We have very good data."

A magistrate has ordered a preliminary investigation into the media reports.

Vaccines are expected in Greece by early January and the government has said more than 2.1 million people will be able to be inoculated per month.

The vaccine will arrive 48 hours following approval by the European medicines agency at the end of the month, Mitsotakis said.

Vaccination will be on a voluntary basis.

January 7 has been set as a target for schools to reopen, he said.

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