

GUIDELINE

Signed digitally by
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TO: Event Promoters; event participants, general public
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Mass event risk during the COVID-19 outbreak

According to the latest Rapid Risk Assessment from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (March 2,2020), Portugal is undergoing a situation of multiple introduction and local transmission regarding infection by the new coronavirus in which cancellation of mass events is only justified in exceptional circumstances.

However, the dynamic of the epidemiological evolution observed in certain areas of the north of Portugal indicates a more complex scenario including a rapid spread of the viral disease which suggests that gradual measures should be implemented in accordance with the precautionary principle and without prejudice to the principle of proportionality.

In fact, cancellation or postponement of mass events which, due to the number of participants, their origin or the conditions under which they are performed, are likely to pose inadequate risks, may be implemented at the initial stages of an epidemic threat especially when the number of confirmed cases is still small. Evidence suggests that greater measures should be taken now rather than at later stages.

Cancellation or postponement of mass events should not be viewed with alarmism but rather with the caution and responsibility that everybody should have in times like these.

We recognise the potential social and economic impact of these decisions and therefore its maintenance and duration should be reviewed on an ongoing basis based on the developments on COVID-19 and taking into account the local, regional and national epidemiological situation.

So, as it is recognised that mass events may contribute to increase the risk of infection, and having public health protection as a priority, the following guidelines are established:

- Postpone or cancel all the events that attract or may attract more than 150 people in areas where there are clusters (or foci) of secondary transmission of COVID-19 or where there are confirmed cases for which no epidemiological connection could be found.

- Postpone or cancel all the events that involve or may involve the concentration of more than 1000 people in indoor spaces.
- Postpone or cancel all the events gathering less than 1000 people that involve or may involve the participation of people that have been, in the last 14 days, in areas with active, steady community transmission of the virus such as Italy, China, South Korea, Iran, Japan and Singapore, to be updated in accordance with the epidemiological evolution.
- Without prejudice to the previous guidelines, postponing or cancelling all events in open air environments that involve the participation of more than 5000 people.
- Restrict the participation of health professionals in events such as congresses, conferences, symposia or other scientific meetings given their importance for the good operation of the healthcare system in current epidemic context and the need for them to protect themselves in line with what has been done in other countries.
- The Directorate General of Health also recommends that everybody complies with the rules of social distancing, hand-washing and respiratory etiquette in all circumstances involving people gatherings of any size.

It is reiterated that the risk to be controlled is defined according to the nature of the events including the possibility of identifying contacts of cases that may be confirmed among participants and therefore a risk assessment may exceptionally be carried out at the request of the promoter/organiser.

These guidelines shall have immediate effect and should be implemented until April 3, 2020 being reviewed as a function of the epidemiological evolution.

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