

# Address to the nation by Taoiseach Micheál Martin, 21 January 2022

From [Department of the Taoiseach](#)

By: [Taoiseach](#); [Micheál Martin](#)

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Dia Dhaoibh.

On this day in 1919,

a short distance from here,

the representatives of the First Dáil of the Irish Republic met and formally declared our country's independence.

The journey to that point was not easy, and our journey as a nation after it was often very difficult.

In the intervening century we have made the progress we have made as a country because our citizens have entrusted successive governments to work for them and the common interest, and to keep them safe.

That relationship and that trust is a very precious and powerful thing.

It meant that when our country was hit with this unprecedented health emergency, when your government asked extraordinary things of you, introduced previously unimagined restrictions on your lives, you responded.

You did what you were asked to do.

I understand deeply the grief that is felt by so many who lost loved ones, but no one should be in any doubt that your collective efforts have saved many thousands of lives.

Trust is also a fragile thing.

It requires confidence that the government will do what is needed in an emergency, but it also requires people to know that their government will not impose restrictions on their personal freedoms for any longer than is necessary.

At every stage of this crisis, I have been straight with you and made clear that your government will be guided by the science; that our decisions will be guided first and foremost by the need to protect lives and public health.

Our journey through the pandemic has brought many twists and turns, and I have stood here and spoken to you on some very dark days.

But today is a good day.

Earlier, my government colleagues and I met to consider the latest report from the National Public Health Emergency Team.

That report confirmed that we have weathered the Omicron storm.

It confirmed that the rate of infection is reducing, and that all of the key indicators on which we base our decisions have stabilised and are going in the right direction.

It confirmed that Ireland's world class vaccination programme and the roll-out of boosters has utterly transformed our situation.

It was our vaccinations and boosters that prevented the recent wave of infection translating into much more serious levels of illness and death.

Based on this evidence, we've concluded that the rationale and justification for continuing most of our public health restrictions are no longer in place.

Therefore, from 6am tomorrow morning, the majority of public health measures that we have had to live with, will be removed.

- guidance in relation to household visiting will no longer apply
- restrictions on capacity for all indoor and outdoor events will no longer apply
- closing time for hospitality and events will return to where it was before the pandemic

- the COVID pass requirement for access to hospitality and indoor activities will no longer apply
- the various requirements around managing people's movements at indoor hospitality and entertainment venues will no longer be required
- and a phased return to the physical workplace for all staff can now commence

Because of the international situation, there are no changes to the current measures in place in relation to international travel.

And a limited number of protective measures will remain in place for the coming month:

Based on the advice of NPHET, the wearing of masks where they are currently required will continue.

Similarly, protective measures will remain in place in primary and secondary schools.

Also, the advice for those with symptoms, positive cases and close contacts remains in place.

These will be reviewed before the end of February, by which time all children aged between 5 and 11 will have had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated.

I want to strongly encourage all parents to engage with their GP. Talk to them about the vaccine, ask any questions and tease out any concerns you may have. The vaccine is safe for children and will keep them safe.

Indeed, my message to everyone could not be clearer: vaccination is key.

The evidence is there to see: the unvaccinated and the un-boosted suffer the most.

Please, if you haven't already, get your vaccine, get your booster.

I want to be clear that the pandemic isn't over – it will still require all of us to be vigilant.

The changes we are making will likely lead to a temporary rise in infections in the short term, but we are advised that the impact of this rise will be limited by the scale of vaccination in the population.

It is important also to say that I can't promise you there won't be further twists in this pandemic requiring different decisions in the future.

But I do know this: solidarity with each other and trust in science has got us to where we are today, and will get us through whatever else this virus may throw at us.

In the meantime, part of the job of Government will be to make sure that we are prepared for any future wave of the disease.

We will continue to expand our hospital and ICU capacity.

We will continue our investment in an expanded public health service and we will embed the lessons learned in the pandemic into community and primary care services.

We will ensure that we are ready for any future surges.

Our vaccination programme will continue and work is underway to ensure that a flexible and robust vaccine delivery system is in place for the future.

The recovery of our society and economy is already underway and we will continue to do what is necessary to support it. The government decided today to continue and extend the provision of a number of key supports, particularly the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme.

And I will continue to work with colleagues at a European and International level to ensure the rapid deployment of vaccines and therapeutics across Africa and the developing world.

None of us will be fully safe until we are all safe.

There is much to do.

But today is a good day,

and we should all take a moment to appreciate how far we've come;

to appreciate the effort and sacrifice of those who put themselves in harm's way to keep us safe;

to remember and appreciate the lives and contribution of those we lost.

We think of all those who died with COVID, and indeed all those who passed away over the course of the last two years, who we were not able to mourn as we would have liked or as they deserved.

Today's news will be warmly welcomed by many, but I'm conscious that some among us, including our more vulnerable, will be feeling some anxiety about re-engaging with others.

For those who do feel like that, I'd ask you to be open about it, share it.

We all need to be open with each other, be supportive of each other.

Mind each other.

Is dea-scéal atá agam daoibh anocht.

Tá an Rialtas sásta glacadh go hiomlán le treoracha sláinte poiblí nach bhfuil gá leis an gcuid is mó de na srianta sláinte anois agus mar sin is féidir linn leanúint orainn láithreach le próiseas athoscailte na tíre.

Braithim gur féidir linn a bheith dóchasach le breacadh gach lae as seo amach. Ar scáth a chéile mar phobal, éireoidh linn agus beidh laethanta geala amach romhainn.

Tá ré dóchasach nua ag déileáil leis an víreas romhainn. Bímis cúramach. Glacaimis misneach agus tá spiorad na saoirse le brath arís.

Spring is coming.

And I don't know if I have ever looked forward to one as much as I am looking forward to this one.

Humans are social beings and we Irish are more social than most.

As we look forward to this spring, we need to see each other again, we need to see each other smile, we need to sing again.

For all our faults as a country, we have come a long way since this day in 1919.

Ireland is now firmly established as an equal among all the nations, and we've been a positive force in the world through our arts, our culture, our peace keeping and our commerce.

We've done this by having the confidence to be ourselves.

As we face into our second century as a free democracy, and as we navigate this new phase of COVID, it is time to be ourselves again.

Go raibh míle, míle maith agaibh go léir.