

Vaccine Mandates for Health Care Workers

In many countries in the world, including Greece, governments have imposed COVID-19 vaccine mandates for health care workers. Please discuss the following questions:

Are COVID-19 mandates for health care workers: a) ethically imperative; b) ethically permissible; or ethically unjustifiable?

What are the best moral arguments for, and against, vaccine mandates for health care workers? (Appeal to the principles framework if/when appropriate.)

If vaccine mandates for health care workers should be imposed, should any exceptions be permitted? If so, for what moral reasons?

To facilitate discussion, Alan Regenberg and Emmie Hood have prepared a timeline of events specific to vaccine mandates for health care workers in Greece, as well additional information on similar mandates in other European countries and in the U.S.

Timeline: Mandatory Health Care Worker Vaccinations in Greece

- **June 14, 2021** - The National Committee on Bioethics and Technoethics released [recommendations](#) on compulsory vaccinations of doctors and nursing staff, as well as all those who staff health structures (public and private sector) or care structures of vulnerable groups (elderly, people with chronic diseases or disability) These were issued. They recommended a staged approach (three stages) 1) targeted information and awareness campaigns for voluntary vaccinations. 2) Encouragement/discouragement measures (e.g., facilitating vaccine appointments, flexible work schedules to accommodate vaccinations, mandatory double masking/PPE) and 3) Mandatory vaccination as a final resort - with a specific time horizon and only implemented if the prior measures don't work. They note that these recommendations only apply to healthcare/nursing home workers. (~27% of the general population [fully vaccinated](#))
- **July 12** - the Prime Minister (Kyriakos Mitsotakis) [announced](#) that nursing home staff would need to be vaccinated immediately (with suspensions to take effect beginning August 16), while healthcare workers would need to be vaccinated by September 1. (~42% of the general population fully vaccinated).
- **August 24** - Greece's health minister [announced plans](#) for new testing requirements and attendance restrictions on people who are not vaccinated against COVID-19. The measure requires regular testing for unvaccinated workers. The measure is in effect Sept 13, 2021 - Mar 31, 2022 and applies to all private and public sector workers.

Workers in academia, tourism, restaurants, cafes, bars, entertainment productions, and (eligible) students without a certificate verifying that they have recovered from COVID-19 in the past 6 months will require twice-weekly testing. Other workers without certification will need weekly testing.

- Masks are mandatory for everyone in indoor public areas and crowded outdoor areas.
- Access to certain indoor venues is limited to those who are vaccinated or have a certificate.
- A certificate or a negative rapid test within 48 hours is required for travel by plane, train, boat or long-distance bus for anyone age 12 and over.
- **September 1** - 5,895 unvaccinated health workers were suspended without pay (or were in the process of being suspended). The law was amended on September 2 to allow workers to immediately be removed from suspension upon receiving a first dose (and with the condition that the workers get the second dose). (~55% of the general population fully vaccinated)
- **September 11** - The mandate/suspensions led to [protests](#) coinciding with an annual economic address by Mitsotakis. This annual address typically attracts protesters on a range of issues. (~56% of the general population fully vaccinated)
- **October 21** - A [24-hour strike](#) by 500 hospital workers to protest suspensions and staff shortages. (~61% fully vaccinated)

Vaccine Mandates in Europe

- **Albania** - vaccination of students, teachers, professors, and healthcare workers was made mandatory in August, with a deadline of [September 30](#).
- **France** - On July 12 (the same day that Greece announced their mandate) Macron announced a requirement for mandatory vaccination applying to anyone who comes in contact with vulnerable people (including doctors, nurses, office staff, and volunteers) .
 - Requirement for vaccination by September 15, or risk not being paid.
 - Macron also announced that as of July 21, anyone visiting a theater, cinema, sports venue, or festival with an audience over 50 would need a pass proving they were vaccinated or tested negative. And as of Aug 1, this extends to bars, cafes, restaurants, shopping malls, and long distance trains.
 - [~3000 workers](#) were suspended without pay on September 15 for not complying.
- **Hungary** - Prime Minister Viktor Orban [announced](#) July 23 that COVID-19 vaccinations would be added to the list of vaccines that are mandatory for people working in the healthcare sector. The mandate took effect [September 15](#).
- **Italy** - The first country in Europe to make vaccination against COVID-19 mandatory for healthcare workers via an [April 1, 2021 emergency decree](#).
 - Healthcare workers refusing vaccination have the option of being transferred to duties that do not risk spreading the virus or suspension without pay for as long as a one year.

- **UK** - Has enacted legislation that will require care home workers to be vaccinated and is considering mandatory vaccination for all healthcare workers.
 - [Legislation](#) takes effect Nov. 11 requiring all people working in care homes to be COVID-19 vaccinated (applies to all employees, agency workers, volunteers, healthcare workers, and tradepeople engaged by care homes, with an allowance for medical exemptions)
 - Launched a [public consultation](#) on mandatory vaccination for frontline health and care staff on September 9. (Planned as a 6-week consultation, so this should be just about completed).
 - A vaccine mandate for front-line health and social care workers in England is considered “[highly likely](#)” as part of planning to contain COVID-19 through the winter.
- **Kosovo** - Proof of vaccination, or COVID-19 antibodies, or a negative PCR test is [required](#) to enter all workplaces including hospitals, schools, universities, offices, shops, factories.

Vaccine Mandates in the US - Federal

- July 23, President Biden [announced](#) plans to combat the spread of the Delta variant.
 - Dept of Veterans Affairs requires doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers to be vaccinated. The VA mandate was [expanded](#) Aug 13 to include most VHA employees, volunteers, and contractors. As with the prior mandate, employees were given 8 weeks to provide proof of vaccination.
 - Every federal employee and contractor must attest to their COVID-19 vaccination status. Those not attesting to being fully vaccinated must physically distance from others, comply with weekly or twice weekly testings requirements, and will be subject to travel restrictions.
- Aug 18, The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that it was developing an emergency rule to require staff vaccinations within the more than 15000 Medicare and Medicaid participating nursing homes.
- Sept 9, Biden [announced](#) additional measures,
 - The Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was to issue an [Emergency Temporary Standard](#), and develop a new rule, requiring all employers with 100 or more employees to require any workers to be fully vaccinated or produce a negative test result on at least a weekly basis.
 - The CMS [expands](#) prior vaccination requirement to include workers in most health care settings that receive Medicare or Medicaid reimbursement.

Vaccine Mandates in the US - State

- There is a patchwork quilt of US state level health worker vaccine mandates or mandate bans. [US State Efforts to Ban or Enforce COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates and Passports](#) - NASHP (updated Oct 8).

- 23 states have some form of vaccine mandate for health workers.
- 6 states have formal bans on vaccine mandates that include health workers.
- 4 states have formal bans of vaccine mandates that exempt healthcare organizations from the bans.
- The remainder have no state mandates or mandate bans.

July 26 - [AMA](#) announced its support for vaccine mandates for health care workers

[Additional countries with mandates](#)