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### **Issuing restrictions is one thing, enforcing them is another**

The Malta College of Family Doctors (MCFD) is a Voluntary Organisation (VO/0973) that strives to improve the academic and clinical performance of family doctors (known as “it-tobba tal-familja” or “general practitioners”) and the standards of primary health care in our country.

The MCFD on one hand understands the reasoning for trying not to follow in the steps of other European Union member states who went into partial lockdowns, but on the other hand does not understand the scant enforcement of the restrictive measures aimed to circuit break the current high numbers while keeping the country out of a lockdown.

It is ironic that most schoolchildren, who are the least affected by COVID-19, are diligently wearing face masks, staying in bubbles and regularly cleaning hands and desks, whilst a substantial part of the vulnerable elderly, who are most at risk of COVID-19, are aggregating in groups in broad daylight without appropriate wearing of masks and without the recommended social distancing. The MCFD encourages an educational campaign targeted towards why and how the elderly should help themselves.

Additionally, whilst valuing privacy issues, the MCFD does not approve of social gatherings in private homes and other premises in a blatant circumvention of social distancing recommendations. This nullifies the big sacrifices of owners and employees of small businesses that had to close down because of the same social distancing recommendations.

The MCFD calls on policy makers to learn from their mistakes of the summer when they shot the country in the foot by allowing incoming tourists to enter the country without prior testing for COVID-19 and allowing mass events. Restrictive measures issued by national authorities must be enforced by the same national authorities. The cultural and historical trend of a society that lacks discipline needs to be reversed if we are to get out of this pandemic together.

Finally, the MCFD calls for the health care system to be protected. Already characterised by decreased and/or stalled services, our country cannot risk to have the health care system overwhelmed, not only to maintain care of COVID-19 patients but to continue to provide sterling care to patients with all the other diseases which continue to exert their usual toll. It is to be noted that the health care system will shortly be preparing for a COVID-19 vaccination program, a new and challenging endeavour, that ideally runs in a process smoother than the current influenza vaccination program.