



**Fédération Européenne
des Médecins Salariés**
European Federation
of Salaried Doctors

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SPRING REPORT AUSTRIA – FEMS MAY 2020

Covid-19 situation in Austria

Status: 30.04.2020 (11.00)

Tests performed so far: 256.399

Cases confirmed: 15.388

In hospital: 500

Intensive care unit: 128

Persons recovered: 12.907

Deaths: 584

Starting on March 16th 2020, the Austrian Federal Government imposed restrictions on the freedom of movement, including a curfew, with the population being asked to stay at home and only leave if absolutely necessary, incl. for grocery shopping, visits to a doctor or the pharmacy, unavoidable work commitments or care of animals. In any case, a safety distance of one meter was to be observed. Meetings between persons not living in the same household were prohibited. The government also imposed quarantine in certain provinces and changed a number of rules and regulations in order to limit person-to-person contact. For example, doctors were allowed to give their patients sick notes after a telephone anamnesis and send prescriptions via email directly to patients and pharmacies.

Shops that did not serve the basic supply as well as restaurants, cafes and other public places were closed until further notice or converted their services to pick-up only. Universities changed their curricula to online courses and schools and kindergardens were closed. Strict measures were in place until April 14th, when small shops for the sale of goods and craft businesses with sales areas of under 400 m² as well as home improvement and garden centres (regardless of their size) were re-opened under strict conditions, such as the mandatory wearing of mouth and nose protectors, regular disinfection, and inlet control. Mouth and nose protectors are also mandatory on public transport.

Starting on May 1st, the strict curfew was lifted. New rules were put in place: leaving the house is now generally permitted, provided the safety distance of one meter is observed. Small gatherings of up to 10 persons are allowed, as are funerals of up to 30 persons. Furthermore, tourist attractions as well as hotels and other accommodations will reopen on May 29th. Restaurants will allow no more than four persons and their children at a table, with service personnel wearing nose and mouth protectors and opening hours limited to 6.00 – 23.00, as was already agreed in April. Schools have gradually started to open since May 4th, with certain schools implementing alternating schedules for students.

The strict measures were loosened based on the success of previous steps taken. Despite the mitigation of measures in April, the reproductive factor of the virus remained below 1 and other indicators, such as clusters, also indicated positive developments in Austria. The current measures will be in place until the end of June.

With the loosening of restrictions, procedures and surgeries that were postponed due to COVID-19 can now once again be carried out. It is therefore imperative that not only doctors and other medical professionals working in hospitals are tested, but also patients coming in. In a recent statement the Austrian Medical Chamber underlined the importance of ensuring that sufficient testing capabilities are available for all industries that are re-opening, including the health sector. The Medical Chamber also called on patients to speak to their primary care physicians or self-employed specialists should they feel sick. In order to mitigate the risk of having to visit an emergency room, it is important to seek professional help early, while not overwhelming hospitals and emergency rooms. The Medical Chamber underlined that this distribution of labour between hospitals and primary care and self-employed doctors was one of the reasons Austria managed to avoid a collapse of its healthcare system due to COVID-19.