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## SPRING REPORT AUSTRIA – FEMS MAY 2021

### **Covid-19 situation in Austria**

Status: 26.04.2021 (00.00)  
Tests performed so far: 30.688.612  
Cases confirmed overall: 606.890  
Current active cases: 40.006  
In hospital: 1.800  
Intensive care unit: 521  
Persons recovered: 557.030  
Confirmed deaths: 9.854

Much like other countries across the globe, Austria is currently dealing with the third wave of the Corona virus, with cases remaining high throughout the country. Regional measures have been implemented to control the further spread as vaccinations are administered.

### **Overview of measures since the beginning of the pandemic**

In March 2020, the Austrian government enacted a new law aimed at reducing the spread of Covid-19 (“Bundesgesetz betreffend vorläufige Maßnahmen zur Verhinderung der Verbreitung von COVID-19”) and adapted a number of other laws to tackle the pandemic. A large number of regulations were released over the course of the last year, providing rules for the population aimed at restricting the spread of the virus. This was followed by a gradual loosening of restrictions in April 2020 and over the summer.

In the fall, the Austrian government re-introduced certain stricter measures, such as the mandatory wearing of nose-mouth-protectors in certain areas of public life and released a number of non-binding recommendations, including social distancing, with stricter regulations gradually being implemented with rising numbers.

On November 3<sup>rd</sup> the government announced a “lockdown light”, with commercial businesses, personal service providers and schools up to advanced level remaining open, but a curfew being put in place from 20.00 to 6.00 and all other businesses, incl. gastronomy, cultural institutions and advanced level schools and universities, being closed.

The second hard lockdown was implemented on November 17<sup>th</sup>: all commercial businesses except for essential services were closed, curfew was implemented around the clock and social contacts were limited to the closest reference persons. Schools as well as sports and entertainment venues were closed, events, incl. religious services, were forbidden.

On December 3<sup>rd</sup> Austria returned to the rules of the light lockdown from November 3<sup>rd</sup>, with further exceptions during Christmas. Furthermore, ski lifts were allowed to open for day trips (no winter holidays permitted as accommodations remain closed).

A third hard lockdown started on December 26<sup>th</sup>, with exceptions for certain outdoor sports such as skiing and ice-skating, provided social distancing (10 m<sup>2</sup> per person) is possible. On

January 25<sup>th</sup> the government announced that nose-mouth-protectors are no longer sufficient and FFP2 masks must be worn instead.

The nation-wide hard lockdown ended on February 8<sup>th</sup>, but gastronomy and event-venues remained closed. Personal service providers were allowed to open, but patrons had to provide a negative test that was no older than 48 hours.

Since then, a regionalisation of measures has taken place, with certain districts or regions around the country requiring negative tests for entry to/exit from the area. The Easter weekend brought a hard lockdown for three regions in the East of Austria (Vienna, Burgenland and Lower Austria), which was extended until May 2<sup>nd</sup> in Vienna and Lower Austria, but ended on April 18<sup>th</sup> in Burgenland.

In the area of travel, entry restrictions remain in place for travellers arriving from high-risk areas, who are obligated to provide a negative PCR test and entry is prohibited for third-country nationals, with certain exemptions.

Despite the lockdown, large protests have taken place in Vienna in opposition to the government's measures, with the largest counting approx. 10.000 participants.

### **Vaccinations**

Austria currently averages around 40.000 vaccinations a day, currently approximately 10% of the vaccinable Austrian population is fully immunised while 27% have received the first dose. With May, the third phase of the Austrian vaccination plan has started. This includes the general population below 65 getting vaccinated based on age as well as other risk factors such as age or employment.

For the second quarter of 2021, Austria is expecting the delivery of 7 Million vaccination doses.

Austria has not stopped vaccinations with the Vaxzevria/AstraZeneca vaccine for younger women.

### **Way ahead**

With 1 Million extra doses of the Biontech/Pfizer vaccine and negotiations ongoing for the Sputnik V vaccine progression, the Austrian government hopes to accelerate the vaccination process across Austria. The goal is to ensure that anyone willing to get the vaccine will receive a first dose by mid-July 2021.

The Austrian medical chamber has called for a more ambitious goal, i.e. full vaccination of the vaccine-ready population by end of May as well as a sustainable vaccination strategy for the next few years, which would include adaptations of the current vaccines and booster shots.

The Austrian government was initially hoping to have the digital green certificate envisioned by the EU ready by the end of April for use within Austria. However, the required revision of the Austrian Pandemic Law was vetoed by the opposition, and the government now expects the full certificate to be ready in June at the earliest, which would be in line with the EU's timeline for its implementation.

Austria plans to re-open starting on May 19<sup>th</sup>, with strict security measures, such as the wearing of FFP2 masks, hygiene standards and entry tests, planned for a wide range of services, such as sport or cultural institutions.

### **New Health Minister**

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, the Federal Minister for Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Rudolf Anschober resigned from his post due to exhaustion. Minister Anschober served in government for 15 months during the COVID-19 pandemic. He is replaced by Dr. Wolfgang Mückstein, a general practitioner and head of a primary care facility in Vienna. He was inaugurated on April 19<sup>th</sup>. The Austrian Medical Chamber welcomed the appointment of Dr. Mückstein, who has extensive experience in the Austrian medical system, and his prioritization of COVID vaccinations in Austria.