

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Update on Corona Crisis and Resumption of Instruction

Date: **January 13, 2021**
Follow-Up Information: As required

Dear AIS-Salzburg Community Members;

Unfortunately, I do not have good news to report...

Yesterday evening, the national news agencies in Austria reported that a number of infection cases in three provinces of Austria were suspected of being caused by the mutated Corona virus first identified in Great Britain (UK B.1.1.7). Health officials are presently working to confirm this which takes some time due to the necessity for extended gene sequencing.

The arrival of this mutation in Austria would be a setback which could directly influence the government's plans for ending the present lockdown as well as opening public schools here. According to researchers, this mutation is nearly 60% more infectious and seems to spread more quickly amongst young people under the age of 30. In Ireland, following an extended lockdown and very low infection numbers, the British mutation arrived and has been responsible for an incredibly rapid rise in the number of daily infections. Although the symptoms experienced by those infected with the mutated virus are the same as with the normal Covid-19, nearly all European nations have taken steps to stop the spread of this mutation including stopping all air travel between Europe and the UK as well as banning some imports. It is feared, however, that these measures will not be enough and that the mutation will spread throughout Europe in the coming weeks and months.

The Austrian government announced that discussion was currently being held on the possible extension of the present lockdown as well as delaying the opening of schools. There is ongoing consideration as to whether or not the present lockdown, due to expire on the 24th, should be extended into February and, since the Austrian secondary schools' fall semester will end at the start of February, whether or not public schools should be opened for in-class instruction after the break following the end of the semester in February. In Salzburg Province, the semester break is from February 8th to 14th.

An announcement by the government concerning these issues is expected in the next 48 hours and I will forward information concerning this immediately upon hearing. Obviously, the potential extension of the lockdown (with attendant quarantine requirements for those entering the country) as well as a delay in the allowance for schools to open their doors has a direct impact on us and our plans. Until a decision is communicated to confirm what the government will decide to do in the coming weeks, I can only say that we are 'on hold' and have to be patient. At any rate, ***online instruction will begin on Monday, January 18 for all students enrolled. When boarding students can arrive will be announced at a later date after we have a clear picture concerning the possible extension of the present restrictions.***

My apologies for being unable to be more specific and helpful in your planning at this time.



Paul McLean
Headmaster