

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Update on Corona Crisis and Resumption of Instruction

Date: **January 18, 2021**
Follow-Up Information: As Required

Dear AIS-Salzburg Community Members;

The Austrian government announced yesterday afternoon that the following measures are in place and to be implemented/followed by all:

General Regulations and Measures

Due to (1) the present, unacceptably-high levels of Covid-19 infections in Austria following nearly four weeks of lockdown, and (2) the identification of the British Corona mutation (B 1.1.7) among those infected recently, the government has decided not to end the present lockdown on Monday as planned. Instead, the lockdown has been extended and requirements have been intensified.

1. The present lockdown is extended by three weeks to February 7, 2021.
2. As of February 8, the government will review the situation and decide on a relaxation of some of the restrictions if the infection threat is significantly lower. Key targets given were a 7-day incidence rate per 100,000 persons of 50 or less (we are presently at 130 Austria-wide and at 239 in Salzburg Province), a daily infection rates below 500 and a significant reduction in the numbers of cases requiring hospitalization. If these targets are met, the government will release a plan for the gradual re-opening of some elements of the economy under strict regulations.
3. The present curfew regulations, in place since December 26, 2020, remain in place through February 7, 2021.
4. Personal distancing is extended to two meters minimally; a FFP2 mask must be worn at all times on public transport, taxis and private buses or airplanes.
5. All businesses of trade and service remain closed except for pharmacies, grocery stores, gas stations and doctor's offices through February 7, 2021. As of January 25th, all visits to such stores as are open is possible only for those wearing a FFP2 mask.
6. All restaurants, cafes and other elements of the gastronomy sector remain closed until March 1, 2021 minimally.
7. Hotels remain closed until March 1, 2021 minimally.
8. Participation in all sport, free-time and cultural events is prohibited until March 1, 2021 minimally.
9. All tourist attractions with the exception of ski lifts are closed until March 1, 2021 minimally.
10. Museums, libraries and archives may open on February 8, 2021 tentatively.

Travel Requirements

All those entering Austria from any other nation except for Australia, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, South Korea and the Vatican must undergo a 10-day quarantine. After the fifth day of quarantine, a PCR or antibody test can be taken and, if negative, the quarantine can be ended.

The Present Infection Situation in Salzburg Austria

The present, 7-day incidence rate per 100,000 is 218 in Salzburg Province. There are presently 497 active infections in the city of Salzburg recorded; 130 patients are hospitalized, 16 of which are in intensive care. All regions of Salzburg Province are listed at health-risk level **RED** presently. Salzburg Province continues to have the highest infection rate in Austria.

Schools in Austria

The government has announced that all Austrian schools will be allowing students to return to classes tentatively following the public schools' semester break. In Salzburg, the semester break is from February 8-12, 2021. Therefore schools will open in Salzburg province—if the health risk situation is within defined parameters—as of February 15, 2021. However, the government also announced that the opening will be gradual with shift scheduling and with testing of all students and instructors. The government is also sending out simple, quick-tests to all schools and they are to be used on a weekly basis as soon as in-class instruction is allowed. In the meantime, instruction is at distance and online.

Schools in Austria are allowed to supervise young children in grades 1-8 in school during the day. High school students are allowed, under strict guidelines, to come to schools in shifts occasionally for tutoring but this is presently discouraged by the education ministry through the next three weeks or until the lockdown measures are reduced by the government.

AIS-Salzburg Policies and Plans

In light of this very discouraging announcement, the administration of AIS-Salzburg has little room to maneuver in re-opening our classrooms for direct, face-to-face instruction at this time. As an officially-recognized, private educational institution dependent upon the Austrian government for the allowance to operate our programs and accommodate students from around the world, we are committed to maintaining all requirements in accordance with Austrian law. These requirements include:

1. the suspension of regular, in-class instruction for all students.
2. the requirement of providing online instruction in replacement of direct schooling.
3. the maintenance of staff isolation either at home or in their classrooms individually.
4. the suspension, postponement or cancellation of events, activities and excursions that are presently not allowed.

As stated above, these restrictions are in place through February 7, 2021. Therefore, ***online instruction will continue for all students enrolled through the next three weeks minimally***. When instruction on campus is again allowed, restrictions will be in place in accordance with any and all government requirements as well as our Corona Policy at health-risk level **RED**, or otherwise. This will likely include FFP2 masking both in and out of classrooms as well as weekly testing.

AIS-Salzburg students are allowed to enter Austria to continue their education as an exemption to the present travel requirements and the school will provide a statement of confirmation of this as well as residence, enrollment and insurance status to all students before they travel to Salzburg.

In the meantime, the school administration and staff are discussing the organization and scheduling of occasional, on-campus tutorial assistance sessions for day students and others nearby who can attend. As soon as this schedule is completed, it will be communicated to all students who can voluntarily attend such tutorial assistance sessions.

Other Points of Concern

1. The school administration will uphold and respect the refund policy revision put into place for the present school year as well as updates of this policy as communicated recently. All refunds will be carried out at the end of the school year when all factors can be calculated.
2. According to the vaccination plan in Austria, all elderly as well as at-risk persons should receive the vaccine by the end of March. This should have a significant and positive effect upon the easing of restrictions. Teachers and others whose duties bring them into contact with school children on a regular basis should receive the vaccination in April, 2021.
3. Because hotels remain closed through March 1, 2021, the winter excursion of the school is postponed. If possible, it will be organized during the first half of March. If it is cancelled, a refund to those whose tuition and fees rates include such excursions will be returned at the end of the year.
4. Outdoor activities, including winter sports, may be included in our programming once students return to campus, provided the school administration can guarantee the health of our students and staff is protected at an appropriate level.
5. Presently, further changes in the school calendar are not under consideration. The Winter Trimester will conclude on February 26, 2021, the Spring Break will be from April 3-11, 2021 and the school year will be concluded at the end of May as previously published.

The Austrian government has informed the population that the most difficult and frustrating period of dealing successfully with this pandemic is upon us now and will continue through the next few months. This will not change significantly until a high enough percentage of the population is vaccinated. Patience, focus and cooperation is required of all of us.

Thank you for your attention. As the situation develops, I will continue to provide updates.

Yours,

Paul McLean
Headmaster
AIS-Salzburg