

## Corona Update: Latest Information

Date: March 2, 2021

Dear AIS-Salzburg Community Members;

The Austrian government held another high-level (national) meeting to discuss the current Corona situation and made determinations as to what can be expected in terms of restrictions or the relieving of the same in the coming weeks. As expected, the announcement included both the promise of further release from restrictive measures as well as some dispiriting extensions of present measures. While further lockdowns or closures were not put into place, the government made it very clear that the situation is tenuous and that the infection numbers and incidence rates are still much too high.

### 1. Current Situation

All public schools, retail businesses, grocery stores, banks, and pharmacies remain open under distancing and masking restrictions. Hotels, restaurants and cafes remain closed through the month of March. Ski areas remain open under masking and distancing restrictions. Entry restrictions at the national borders have been increased and are being enforced more rigorously. Here are the latest numbers:

Number of pos. infections nationwide in the past 7 days:	@ 2,000+ per day/average
Nationwide incidence rate per 100,000 over the past 7 days:	161.0 (was 145.2 on 25.02)
Incidence rate: Salzburg (province) per 100,000 over past 7 days:	181.8 (was 155 on 25.02)

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Vaccination doses received in Austria:	685,957 (was 595,045 on 25.02)
Registered vaccinations in Austria (total)	670,208 (was 556,506 on 25.02)
Registered double vaccinations for immunization	235,497 (was 213,779 on 25.02)
Total vaccine-eligible population (over 16)	7,757,564
Percentage of total vaccine-eligible population vaccinated	5.6% (was 4.42% on 25.02)

Registered vaccinations in Salzburg (province)	24,798 (4.44%)
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When all those over 80 years of age will be vaccinated in Salzburg (province)	April 15, 2021
When all those over 80 years of age, those at risk and health professionals will be vaccinated in Salzburg (province)	April 30, 2021

#### Commentary:

Three aspects of the present situation are causing a good deal of concern: (a) the increasing incidence rate over 7 days per 100,000 persons; (b) the number of infections tied to the South African and British mutations of the virus; and (c) the lower-than-expected vaccination rate in Salzburg and Austria generally.

In January, 2021, the government's stated target for ending restrictions in Austria was an incidence rate of 100 infections per 100,000 persons over 7 days. As you can see, we are now at 161 nationally and over

180 in Salzburg—nearly twice the desired level. This increase is undoubtedly due to the expanded freedom of movement associated with the opening of retail shops, schools and hairdressers' boutiques. However, a portion of this increase is also due to the very high rate of testing in Austria which has now reached an average of 3.5 million tests per week. The government seems to see this incident rate as the most important indicator of the public health threat. If it increases dramatically in the coming weeks, measures will have to be taken to try and stabilize or reduce it and may include reinstating lockdowns.

It is also a significant concern that a majority of the positive infections reported in the past week have been from the British and South African mutations. These mutated Corona viruses are between 25% and 35% more infectious than the 'original' strain. It is also of concern that the highest incidence of positive infections nation-wide is among those 15 to 25 years of age and has been for some time now.

Vaccinations continue to be given in accordance with the provincial and national immunization plans, but insufficient supplies have slowed progress significantly. At present, the government is doing what is possible to expedite this process but most of the relevant factors can only be affected on a global scale and are difficult if not impossible to influence positively at the national level. Recently, provincial officials in Salzburg postponed target dates as to when those over 85, health professionals and those with high health-risk conditions would be vaccinated.

Despite these three aspects of the current situation, the government announced yesterday that it may be possible to allow outdoor youth sports participation as of March 15 (with testing) if the numbers of infections remain somewhat stable. Further, it was announced that it may be possible for some restaurants with sufficiently-distanced outdoor seating to provide services as of March 17th. Again, the infection rates need to justify this possible easing off of current restrictions. Finally, the government announced that hotels are likely not to be allowed to open until after the Easter holidays (April 4, 2021).

There appears to be some indication that if the incidence rates of positive infections increases, they may be responded to locally or regionally rather than at a national level. It appears that the government would like to consider lockdowns, school closures and other restrictions only in those areas where high infection rates are evident and put more effort into contact tracing in order to contain any outbreaks. The government seems unwilling to impose further national restrictions at this time, at least.

## **2. AIS-Salzburg and Present Conditions**

Here at AIS-Salzburg, we continue to strictly adhere to the requirements of health and government officials. We are testing all resident staff and students weekly and all non-residents twice weekly. To date, we have had no positive results from these antigen tests. Restrictions on free time off campus as well as distancing, masking, etc., remain in place at the present time and are likely to remain in place up to the Spring Break starting on April 3rd minimally.

The school is planning on accommodating students who cannot travel here on campus over the week-long Spring Break and is working on supervision, meal and activities planning for this period. If any parents or guardians remain uncertain as to whether their children will be able to come home over the break, stay in touch with us: from our side, we can remain flexible and offer accommodation up to the last minute for any residents who need to remain here over the break period. We recommend that all those planning on their children traveling check travel restrictions and regulations that may affect plans.

After recently checking official Austrian border entry requirements, the law remains the same and students enrolled and resident at AIS-Salzburg are given an official exemption from quarantine requirements. However, many of you are also aware that despite this, some of our students were told at the border that

they needed to quarantine for a minimum of five days followed by a negative test result. We do not expect this situation to be clarified any time soon and—as long as infection rates in Europe remain relatively high—AIS-Salzburg students returning to Austria should expect to be allowed into the country with a negative Covid-19 PCR test and confirmation of enrollment/residence at the school; a quarantine period will likely remain required, however.

### **3. Winter Excursion**

The Winter Excursion has been cancelled. The government's announcement yesterday that all hotels must remain closed through early April minimally, eliminates the possibility for us to offer the planned, 4-day ski and winter sports event in Lungau. We had hoped that hotels might be allowed to open in March and within the ski season, but nearly all lifts will close on Easter weekend this year, making further postponement impossible. At the end of the school year, a € 350 refund will be made to all full-boarders who have this excursion included in their payment of tuition and fees. We are sorry to have to announce this cancellation and regret that it was not possible to reschedule.

Thank you again for your attention and your support. The way the situation appears presently, we will need to maintain a high level of compliance and disciplined behavior through the next month, hoping that by the time April rolls around, the numbers of those vaccinated will begin to have a stronger effect on the numbers of infections. In the meantime, we have to be satisfied with the fact that we can hold our classes and run most of our programming despite the continuing pandemic.

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Yours,

Paul McLean  
Headmaster  
AIS-Salzburg