

WEEKLY COVID-19 UPDATE

The latest news summarized by Pia Zekay



European Union & Global

**VIRTUAL EUROPE DAY
CELEBRATIONS**

**UK EASES LOCKDOWN
RESTRICTIONS**

**MISINFORMATION BUBBLE
IN BRAZIL**

Österreich

**AUSTRIA'S POST
LOCKDOWN PLAN**

**LOCAL BORDER TRAFFIC
BETWEEN AUSTRIA AND
BAVARIA**

**INDIAN COVID VARIANT IN
AUSTRIA**

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Confirmed infected: 632,766

Confirmed recoveries: 607,712

Deaths: 10,413

Hospitalized: 1,617

In Intensive Care: 366

New Infections This Week: 909

Total Number of PCR Tests Administered: 9,179,532

Total Vaccinations: 3,677,618*

*Vaccinations recorded in the e-vaccination card

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As the lockdown restrictions in Austria will be eased on May 19th, the government presented a detailed plan on opening steps. Curfews will no longer be in place, restaurants, hotels, sports facilities, and museums are allowed to open up for guests and visitors again. To keep the risk as low as possible one either has to be tested negative for Covid-19, be vaccinated, or recovered from an infection, in order to gain access to any of the mentioned locations.

From Wednesday (12th May) on local border traffic between Austria and Bavaria will be possible again. Visiting family and friends or doing the groceries across the border will be possible without the mandatory quarantine, announced Markus Söder during a press conference in Bavaria together with chancellor Kurz.

There have been three confirmed cases of the Indian Covid variant in Burgenland on Tuesday. However, the cluster is assumed to be under control and vaccinations are still effective. The WHO has set to conduct further research on the variant and examine potential challenges.



EUROPEAN UNION

Philip Lane, European Central Bank's Chief Economist, predicts an inflection point for the European economy to be growing quickly in May and June. However, right now the economy is four to five percent below its 2019 level which is a huge downturn. Lane said: "It is a long journey, which requires a sustained effort by fiscal and monetary policymakers to support the recovery".

Due to the pandemic this year's Europe Day celebrations on May 9th, took place mostly virtually with live streams from across the continent. Europe Day was also the official start of the Conference on the Future of Europe with an inaugural ceremony at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Until May 18th the European Parliament will discuss the most popular proposals from citizens.

The Visegrád Four have the worst cumulative death rates from Covid-19 in Europe. While the mortality rate in Hungary and the Czech Republic is almost twice the EU average, Slovakia's is about 40 percent higher and Poland's 20 percent (this includes all deaths since the pandemic started). This can be traced back not only to the UK variant which hit Europe earlier this year but mostly to political malfunction within the countries.

GLOBAL

Downing Street announced that there will be further relaxations of pandemic restrictions in the country from 17th May on. Pubs and restaurants are allowed to have guests indoors as well as cinemas and even large (sports) events will be allowed to resume with a reduced capacity. In the UK the infection rate is at its lowest since September and so far 35 million people received at least one dose of vaccine.

On Monday India reported a slow decline in new Covid-19 cases, which are down to 366,000 as well as fewer - 3,700 - fatalities. However, the situation in the country is hardly under control, with the health care system struggling to provide oxygen to all patients. Meanwhile, the WHO classified the Coronavirus variant first found in India as a “variant of global concern”, as it causes more severe illness and easier transmission.

Misinformation regarding Covid-19 vaccinations is spreading across Brazil. Indigenous people and people living in remote villages are especially exposed to misinformation as it is shared mainly via WhatsApp which is often free to use. Much of the false vaccination information originates from politicians and religious leaders including Brazil’s president Jair Bolsonaro. WhatsApp announced it provides free information about Covid-19 within the app to challenge misinformation.