

WEEKLY NEWS UPDATE

The latest news summarized by Pia Zekay



GLOBAL HEALTH

**START OF NEXT
GENERATION EU FUNDING**

**EUROPEAN DIGITAL GREEN
CERTIFICATE CONFUSION**

**SPREAD OF COVID-19
DELTA VARIANT**

EUROPE IN THE WORLD

**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
MEETING**

**WESTERN BALKAN
ENLAREMENT**

**BROADER CARBON MARKET
CRITICISED**

COUNTRY FOCUS: BELARUS

GLOBAL HEALTH

On Monday the European Union handed out the first installments of its Covid-19 recovery fund, Next Generation EU through grants with the aim to create jobs and support businesses. The money will fund 41 national and regional programs aimed at bridging the gap between emergency response measures and long-term investments.

Several European airlines and airports stated concerns over the roll-out of the EU's Digital Green Certificate. There is a need for better coordination among the Member States as there is no coherent concept for the Covid-19 certificate right now. The certificate will be implemented as of 1st of July however there are 10 different certificates planned by various countries.

The so-called Delta variant of the Covid-19 virus spreads quickly around the globe. In the United Kingdom, about 90 percent of new cases are related to the variant, in Germany, it's around every second new case. Israel and Portugal are considering new lockdown measures to curb the spread and Austria too reported that 13 percent of new cases are related to the Delta variant.



COVID IN NUMBERS AUSTRIA

Confirmed infected: 650,353

Confirmed recoveries: 637,613

Deaths: 10,700

Hospitalized: 185

In Intensive Care: 57

New Infections This Week: 100

Total Number of PCR Tests Administered: 12,631,655

Total Vaccinations: 7,537,771*

*Vaccinations recorded in the e-vaccination card

EUROPE IN THE WORLD

Last week the Heads of State of the European Union Member States met for a two-day European Council summit. Among the most prominent topic was the Hungarian anti-LGBTQ+ law which prohibits the portrayal of homosexuality to minors. Multiple EU leaders voiced outrage and harsh criticism, the Dutch Prime Minister even asked Hungary to leave the Union.

After the Western Balkans Summit in Vienna on Friday, Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic showed some disappointment over the outcome, as “some Member States oppose enlargement despite supporting it verbally”. So far Croatia is the only Western Balkan state that joined the European Union in 2013, even though the EU confirmed in 2003 that all countries in the region are potential candidates.

The Australian Minister for Trade Dan Tehan criticised the EU’s plans for a carbon market reform. According to Tehan a “carbon border adjustment mechanism” could accelerate protectionism and will be rather difficult to align with the rules of the World Trade Organization. The EU wants to extend the carbon market by a “polluter pays” principle to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

COUNTRY FOCUS

BELARUS

As a response to the imposed sanctions by the EU, Belarus announced on Monday that it will no longer support the Union in its efforts against illegal migration. Belarus further imposed an entry ban to the country for those EU officials responsible for the sanctions and expelled the EU's representative in Minsk. Belarus also decided to drop out of the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative.

Alexander Lukashenko who has served as the Belarusian President since 1994, shows increasingly repressive behaviour, as he violently cracked down on protests last year after an election that was regarded as corrupt and the forced landing of a passenger plane.

Analysts stated doubts on the effectiveness of the newly imposed sanctions by the European Union, as there have been several unsuccessful attempts to stop human rights violations and repression in the past. Democratic opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya called for "consistent pressure on the regime until it responds to calls for dialogue".