

WEEKLY NEWS UPDATE

The latest news summarized by Pia Zekay



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GLOBAL HEALTH

**230,000 ADDITIONAL
DEATHS IN EUROPE**

**GLOBAL VACCINATION
INEQUALITY**

**NEW RESTRICTIONS FOR
INCOMING EU TRAVELERS**

EUROPE IN THE WORLD

**OECD PUBLISHES NEW
ECONOMIC DATA**

**TECH LOBBYING
EXPENDITURES IN EUROPE**

**EU REACHES VACCINATION
GOAL**

COUNTRY FOCUS: SERBIA

COVID IN NUMBERS AUSTRIA

Confirmed infected: 684,058

Confirmed recoveries: 662,330

Deaths: 10,772

Hospitalized: 510

In Intensive Care: 130

New Infections This Week: 1,071

Total Number of PCR Tests Administered: 16,543,772

Total Vaccinations: 10,438,639*

*Vaccinations recorded in the e-vaccination card



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GLOBAL HEALTH

The World Health Organization estimates more than 230,000 additional deaths in Europe until December this year. The director of the European WHO branch office stated concerns about the stagnation of vaccinations campaigns across the continent and central Asian countries. So far about 1.3 million people have died from Covid-19 in Europe.

NGOs are pointing out an emerging global vaccine inequality as the WHO is considering using half-doses in low-income countries to improve coverage in those countries that have a vaccine shortage. About 82 percent of vaccines have gone to high- and upper-middle-income countries and the rollout of booster-jab campaigns in some countries might negatively affect donation capacities.

The European Union advised imposing new restrictions on incoming travelers from the United States, Israel, Lebanon, Montenegro and North Macedonia due to a rise in Covid cases in these countries. However, this is merely a suggestion and not mandatory for the Member States to implement.



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EUROPE IN THE WORLD

The Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published new data showing that the GDP in the Eurozone is still three percent below the pre-pandemic level and in the European Union below 2.6 percent. Only the United States reached a plus of 0.8 percent compared to the pre-pandemic level.

Facebook Inc, Microsoft Corp and Alphabet Inc lead the list of lobbying expenditures in Europe. These tech companies spend a combined total of €16.5 million according to a new study, leaving the pharma, fossil fuels, finance and chemicals sectors behind. Representatives of the tech sector were present at the majority of meetings the Commission had on two legislations that would affect the potential influence of the companies.

The European Commission's President Ursula von der Leyen announced that 70 percent of the adult population in the Union are fully vaccinated. This equals 250 million immunized people which von der Leyen called "a great achievement" and appealed to those who are not yet vaccinated.



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COUNTRY FOCUS

SERBIA

Even though Serbia has been a candidate country for European Union membership since 2009 which is Serbia's long-term strategic goal the country becomes increasingly close to China. For now, the EU remains Serbia's main trading partner and largest provider of financial assistance but the economic ties with China have grown continuously in the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The effects of Serbia's new orientation, especially on EU membership, remain to be seen. However, the country accumulates an increasing amount of debt towards China which could grow into a potential field of tension.

This change is accompanied by a dispute between Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and Twitter, as the platform decided to tag several media outlets as "pro-government". As a reaction, Vučić compared himself to Donald Trump. Experts discovered an erosion of the media landscape in Serbia and a significant increase in disinformation. These developments could hinder the European enlargement negotiations that are already stagnating.



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