

WEEKLY NEWS UPDATE

The latest news summarized by LIVIA BENKO



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COVID IN NUMBERS

World

CONFIRMED INFECTED

328.969.289

RECOVERED

267.803.699

DEATHS

5.558.966

EUROPE

Europe has reported 104,163,000 Covid-19 cases so far; Europe is once again seeing a surge in COVID-19 cases with the start of the new year. Several nations have been reporting record numbers of new daily cases, the increase is compounded by the emergence of the new Omicron variant, first detected in South Africa. Some countries have taken measures targeting the unvaccinated, while programmes are also being navigated to vaccinate young children.

However, vaccine skeptics angered by COVID curbs have protested in Brussels, Prague, Vienna and other European cities again with the start of the new year. Omicron is driving up cases across the EU, with experts warning unvaccinated people are at risk the most.



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AUSTRIA

“Mandatory vaccination starts in February,” said Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer as he presented the new law on the 16th of January. This was followed by large-scale protests in several Austrian cities. In a three-phase process, households will be randomly checked and those found not to be vaccinated will be charged and can expect a fine ranging from €600 to €3600.

Should it be epidemiologically necessary, the Austrian government will launch the third phase, where unvaccinated people will be assigned a vaccination appointment. If they then fail to appear, they will automatically be fined. After criticism the government amended the age limit: instead of mandatory vaccination starting at 14, the current legislation envisions beginning with 18-year-olds.

COVID IN NUMBERS

Austria

CONFIRMED INFECTED

1.459.306

RECOVERED

1.304.003

DEATHS

13.922

IN SERIOUS CONDITION

212

FRANCE

France is preparing hospitals for drastic measures to brace for patient surges and the government is strained to avoid a new lockdown.

With Europe's highest-ever single-day confirmed infection count, the Omicron-driven surge has put a strain on the country's health care system. The number of virus patients in hospitals has been on an upward trajectory for two months, and more than 72 per cent of French ICU beds are now occupied by patients with COVID-19.

The French parliament passed legislation, meanwhile, to turn the health pass into a "vaccine pass" requiring vaccination or recovery from COVID-19 to access much of public life. It is to be examined by a cross-parliamentary committee after the Senate added conditions to when the vaccine pass could be implemented.

COVID IN NUMBERS

France

CONFIRMED INFECTED

14.172.384

RECOVERED

9.019.484

DEATHS

126.967

IN SERIOUS CONDITION

3895

SPAIN

Madrid will make mask-wearing outdoors mandatory once again, with the prime minister set to pass a law by decree.

The country reported record-high COVID-19 infections as the Omicron variant takes hold. Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez also offered to deploy the armed forces to help regions step up vaccinations. Sánchez said he is targeting 80 per cent of the 60-69 age group to receive booster shots.

COVID-19 tests for professional use will temporarily be placed on sale at pharmacies, amid a reported shortage of tests as well.

More than 80% of the Spanish population is already immunised, but fears of the Omicron variant have triggered a vaccination drive.

COVID IN NUMBERS

Spain

CONFIRMED INFECTED

8.093.036

RECOVERED

5.249.372

DEATHS

90.759

IN SERIOUS CONDITION

2.224