THE EPOCH TIMES

A demonstrator holds a placard reading, "No to compulsory vaccination," during a protest against COVID-19 vaccine lockdowns in Vienna, Austria, on Nov. 14, 2021. (Georg Hockmuth/APA/AFP via Getty Images)

EUROPE   PREMIUM

Austria Orders Lockdown for the Unvaccinated, Directs Police to Carry Out Spot-Checks

BY JACK PHILLIPS November 14, 2021 Updated: November 14, 2021   A Å   🖨 Print

Austrian Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg on Sunday announced the country is placing millions of people who aren't fully vaccinated for COVID-19 on lockdown starting Monday.

About 65 percent of the Central European nation's population is vaccinated, according to government data. Under the measures revealed on Sunday, unvaccinated people are ordered to stay at home except for limited reasons.

The rules, the government said, will be enforced by police officers who will be out on the streets carrying out spot-checks on people who are in public. Unvaccinated people are already excluded from entertainment venues, bars, restaurants, and similar venues and businesses.

"We are not taking this step lightly but it is necessary," Schallenberg told a news conference announcing the new measures.

Schallenberg admitted that the government essentially "told one-third of the population: you will not leave your apartment any more apart from for certain reasons. That is a massive reduction in contacts between the vaccinated and the unvaccinated."

Now, unvaccinated people can only leave their homes for a limited number of reasons like going to work or shopping for essentials. It's not clear how that would be enforced. Austria's lockdown does not apply to the under-12s, to people who have recently recovered from COVID-19, and will last 10 days, Health Minister Wolfgang Mueckstein said.

On Friday, Schallenberg alleged that the country's COVID-19 vaccination is "shamefully low" and indicated the government should give the "green light" for the sweeping restrictions over the weekend.

A sign warns visitors about controls of their status—vaccinated or healed from COVID-19—at the entrance to the "Christkindlmarkt," Vienna's classic Christmas Market, on the square in front of the City Hall in Vienna, Austria, on Nov. 12, 2021 (Georg Hockmuth/APA/AFP via Getty Images)

According to video footage posted online, crowds of people were seen demonstrating against the vaccine mandate in Salzburg and other Austrian cities, criticizing the "lying media" on Saturday. More protests occurred Sunday, footage shows.

Interior Minister Karl Nehammer said there will be thorough police checks and fines of up to 1,450 euros ($1,660) for breaches, and all interactions with the police will include checking people's vaccination status. The move drew considerable condemnation online, with some commentators noting that it would severely limit freedom of movement for potentially millions of people.

"As of tomorrow, every citizen, every person who lives in Austria must be aware that they can be checked by the police," Nehammer told the news conference.

Showing an official COVID-19 pass proving that you have been vaccinated, recovered from COVID-19, or recently tested has been required for months in various places including restaurants, theaters, cafes, and hairdressers.

In nearby Germany, despite having its "2G" vaccine pass system in place for months now, COVID-19 cases surged to their highest levels last week. More than 50,000 cases were confirmed by health officials.

German Chancellor-in-waiting Olaf Scholz told Parliament on Thursday that new measures are needed "to get through this winter ... we must shelter our country from the winter." Also, government spokesman Steffen Seibert was quoted by VOA News as saying that the virus is "spreading dramatically" and asserted that a "quick and unified response" was needed.

Reuters contributed to this report.

	Jack Phillips	Follow
	BREAKING NEWS REPORTER	

Jack Phillips is a breaking news reporter at The Epoch Times based in New York.

EPOCH▶*TV*

Featured Channels