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"NOT PROPORTIONATE"

Government suspends compulsory vaccination

The obligation to vaccinate against the coronavirus is suspended. The government decided on Wednesday in the Council of Ministers. As Constitutional Minister Karoline Edtstadler (ÖVP) said, the obligation in the prevailing omicron variant was "not proportionate". A new decision should be made in three months, said the new Health Minister Johannes Rauch (Greens). Actually, violations of the duty should have been punished from mid-March. The basis for the decision is the report of a commission of experts, which warns of a new wave in autumn.

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The recommendations contained therein would "of course" be implemented, according to Edtstadler. She underlined that "not the last chapter in terms of compulsory vaccination" was written on Wednesday: "Just as the virus is very mobile, we have to be flexible and adaptable." The law on compulsory vaccination therefore remains in the background. "Constitutionality" and "scientific evidence" are the basis of the decision, according to Rauch.

The government's phased plan would have provided for the unvaccinated to be punished from March 15th. In phase two, the police should check the vaccination record as part of their controls and report a violation to the district administration authorities. In phase three (without a specific date) there could then be an automated data comparison in order to identify the unvaccinated in principle.

appeal for vaccination

Health Minister Rauch appealed to be vaccinated in any case. "Get the vaccination," he said. A new variant could come again in autumn, one does not know how the virus will continue to behave. A broad "system of incentives" is still needed, said the Minister of Health.

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The new Health Minister Rauch and Constitutional Minister Edtstadler

The four-member commission based in the Federal Chancellery is to continuously evaluate whether the implementation of compulsory vaccination is expedient and justified from a legal and medical point of view. The committee includes the epidemiologist Eva Schernhammer, the infectiologist Herwig Kollaritsch, the constitutional and medical lawyer Karl Stöger and the legal scholar Christiane Wendehorst. The further assessment will begin "today", said Rauch.

Report warns of new wave in autumn

In its 25-page report, the Commission warns that a new, potentially massive wave is "very likely" to come in the autumn. If you are not prepared for this, drastic measures, including lockdowns, could come up again. Immediate vaccination is nevertheless "not necessary" or "not appropriate".



What happens to compulsory vaccination?

According to the experts, their current implementation would only be legally possible for people who are neither vaccinated nor recovered. However, the experts write that there are also medical and legal arguments for postponing the implementation of compulsory vaccination for this group.

Vaccination obligation "still useful in principle"

However, it is also stated that vaccination is a central element in overcoming the pandemic: "The basic obligation to vaccinate as a tried and tested means of ensuring a high vaccination rate still makes sense in principle in order to avoid overloading the health system," says the report.

However, whether and when depended on several factors, such as the epidemiological development, the extent to which immunity decreases as a result of vaccination or illness, the value of therapies as a possible substitute for vaccination and the further development of vaccination acceptance.

It is therefore crucial to continuously monitor and re-evaluate the situation in three months at the latest, taking into

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and at the same time there should still be enough time to initiate the implementation of compulsory vaccination at the medically optimal point in time.

Kickl: "Postponed is not cancelled"

Critical tones came from the opposition: For example, the FPÖ is not satisfied with the suspension of compulsory vaccination. Party leader Herbert Kickl saw a success for the Freedom Party, but fears that the obligation will be implemented later, as he explained in a broadcast. The decision to suspend was "a success of the FPÖ's policy and a result of the pressure on the street against this compulsory vaccination," said Kickl. "But one thing is also clear: Postponed is not cancelled.

Kickl still considers the compulsory vaccination law to be "unconstitutional" - and "nothing will change in a few weeks or months". He also emphasized that "in no other European country" is "even being considered" about a general vaccination requirement. In any case, the political fight of the FPÖ against the compulsory vaccination law continues "at all levels".

NEOS for incentives, summer inactivity warning

NEOS pandemic spokesman Gerald Loacker now wants clarity from the government regarding the goals of pandemic management. "People have to understand all the measures and continue to be encouraged to vaccinate, because the number of first vaccinations is currently below ground." In addition, the common goal is still missing: "How high does the vaccination rate have to be? By when does the goal have to be achieved and how do you want to achieve it?" All of this remains unclear.

He expects the new Minister of Health "to answer all these questions quickly". It must not happen again, "that the government and the provincial governors sit back and do nothing for months and do nothing in the warm season, otherwise we'll have the salad again in the fall".

Infection and hospital numbers are increasing

However, the number of infections in Austria remains high. The Ministry of Health and the Interior reported almost 31,000 new cases within 24 hours on Tuesday. The 7-day incidence recorded by the Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES) has increased in recent days and is currently over 2,470 per 100,000 inhabitants.

The numbers also increased significantly in the hospitals: On Tuesday, a total of 2,760 CoV patients were treated in the hospitals, 168 more than the day before. The number of people treated in the intensive care units remained the same. It is currently 195.

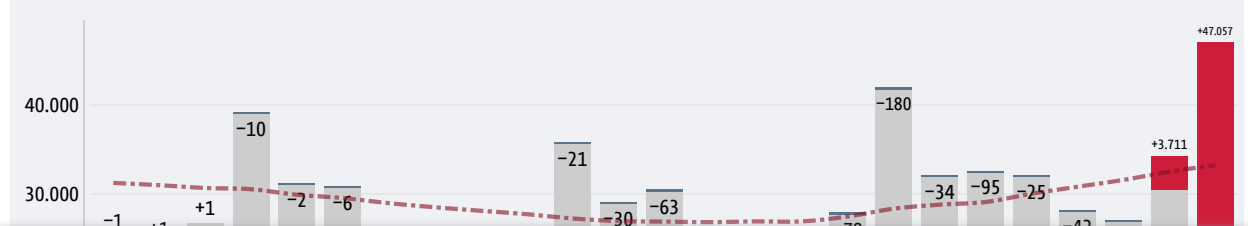
Continued high death toll

According to the ministries, more than 15,000 people have died in Austria as a result of a coronavirus infection since the beginning of the pandemic. The number of deaths reported daily has been rising steadily since mid-January and is of a similar order of magnitude as during the alpha wave in early 2021, when the vaccination campaign in Austria was just starting.

Distribution of new cases over the last few days

With the reporting date 8.3. the number of laboratory-confirmed cases in Austria changed by **49,999**, the number of the deceased by **23** and the number of recovered cases by **33,003**.

This is how the cases are distributed over the past reporting days:





According to the lung specialist Bernd Lamprecht from the Kepler University Hospital in Linz, "unprotected" people are particularly affected. This refers to people who have not been vaccinated and have not yet been infected. "In unprotected people, we also see very similar courses of the disease as we saw in Delta, with involvement of the lungs and correspondingly more severe consequences," Lamprecht told the "Kurier".

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Links:

- [Federal Chancellery](https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/) (https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/)
- [Ministry of Social Affairs](https://www.sozialministerium.at/) (https://www.sozialministerium.at/)
- [AGES](https://www.ages.at/) (https://www.ages.at/)