

Overview of Covid-19 measures taken by the City of Vienna

As of April 24th, 2020

The corona crisis affects Vienna's economy heavily and as a result, short-time work and unemployment have risen dramatically. The City has adopted support measures that amount to more than 100 million euros in order to save jobs and business and to mitigate the effects of the crisis. Thousands of shops in retail and gastronomy were closed since mid-March, which has led to an extremely critical situation for local suppliers and small shops. Employees have been put in short-time work or lost their job. The national government allowed for a first relaxation of the imposed measures in commerce starting from April 14th, starting with shops under 400 square meters that can re-open under certain conditions. However, schools are left out of the relaxation package, causing trouble for parents who need to go back to work and concerns as how children will be able to catch up. In order to organise this well and also to enable children to have social contacts with their peers again, Vienna has developed a step-by-step plan for the further opening of kindergardens by the beginning of May. However, the city eagerly awaits the national government's concrete plans for the gradual reopening of schools by the end of May.

The education sector is heavily burdened by the Corona crisis. The city government has ensured sufficient childcare facilities for children and young people, financial relief for parents and improved online learning facilities within a few weeks. The most important thing, however, was always to guarantee equal educational opportunities for all children - regardless of their social or economic background. Learning and doing tasks at home poses great social and technical challenges for children - especially for those who do not have access to a computer at home. "In order to provide the best possible support for Vienna's school children in this difficult situation, we are reacting quickly and are making 5,000 new laptops available for loan to those who need them," Mayor Michael Ludwig stated on April 15th at a press conference.



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Current key figures from Vienna

As of April 24th there are 2.338 confirmed cases of the disease in Vienna. 106 people died due to Covid-19, 1.716 people have recovered.

Health and social care

- The City of Vienna provides 1 million euros for application-oriented research on the topic of coronavirus. Mayor Michael Ludwig announced at the beginning of March to provide this sum from the medical-scientific funds. Now the first seven research projects are being funded from this initiative (21.4).
- City of Vienna is taking a stand for prevention of domestic violence and granted the associations "White Ribbon" and "Männerberatung" which have been to prevent male violence against women and children, with 50.000 euros each (13.4.)
- Currently around 2.000 patients are affected by the backlog of operations, as due to Covid-19 measures, many planned operations had to be postponed in the hospitals of the "Vienna Association of Hospitals" (KAV). Now the surgical services in the municipal hospitals have gradually resumed and the availability of operations and hospital beds is expanded in collaboration with Vienna 's private hospitals (18.4.).
- Early April, a total of 12 tons of much needed protective gear from Shanghai arrived in the city (6.4.).
- The Ministry of Health and the provincial councillors of social affairs agreed on a special bonus for round-the-clock caregivers. Vienna is going to make a one-time payment of 500 euros to those caregivers who extend their service by at least four weeks following their usual regular cycle (2.4.).

Public services: energy, water, waste and transport

- Since April 14th, passengers in public transport are required to wear face masks, and public transport increases the intervals, thus providing more room in the vehicles (7.4.).
www.wienerlinien.at (English)
- Waste disposal is possible at nine Viennese waste disposal sites. However, it is only allowed in urgent cases and the rules about wearing facemasks and keeping the necessary distance still apply. (9.4.).

Helping the economy and people to keep jobs

- The Vienna Employment Promotion Fund (waff), the city 's labour market organization helps in case of job losses. Budget has been increased by 3 million euros. If a company becomes insolvent, the affected staff can now get help to start a new career (19.4.).
- Vienna established a new company with the name "StolzaufWien BeteiligungsGmbH" (lit. "Proud of Vienna associated company ltd.") with the aim to temporarily invest in companies in Vienna whose existence is at risk due to the corona crisis. The capital volume of the associated company is expected to be around 50 million euros, with 20 million euros coming from the City of Vienna (5.4.).
<https://stolzauf.wien.gv.at/site/> (German)

- The support campaign “Wien Online” addresses small Viennese companies in the fields of local supply, creative industries and personal services with a maximum funding amount of 10.000 euros. It aims to strengthen the competition with big international online shops. 15 million euros are available in total; the maximum amount per company is 10.000 euros. (22.4.).
viennabusinessagency.at (English)
- Assistance with repairs: The staff of the around 80 companies of the repair network come to people’s homes if needed (22.4.).
- The whole rent for May is dropped for shops that are located in buildings of municipal housing and that are not allowed to open before the middle of May. Shops that are allowed to open already at the beginning of May are asked to pay the half of the rent for May (21.4.).
- Funding of teleworking jobs exhausted: 2.050 Viennese SMEs have taken advantage of the funding of teleworking jobs. This quick and not bureaucratic help was highly appreciated by the companies; the 2.050 applications are currently being evaluated by the "Vienna Business Agency". With this number of applications the available total of 10 million euros is exhausted, new applications can no longer be accepted (2.4.).
- As important local suppliers in times of the corona crisis, the Viennese markets guarantee a supply of fresh vegetables and fruit, often offering products from Viennese gardeners and farmers in the Vienna region. The market authority has imposed a strict mask requirement for market traders and customers (10.4.).

Housing and homelessness

- The city of Vienna had decided already end of March that its municipal housing company will stop evictions for its stock of 220,000 flats with half a million inhabitants in case they have problems with rent payment due to Corona measures. The cooperative and for limited-profit housing sector in Vienna with another 180,000 flats followed this example immediately. City government has since then appealed to the national government to protect tenants also in the private rental sector as this is a national competence. Eventually, mid-April, the national government also prohibited evictions in the private rental market in the corona crisis (15.4.).
- Vienna’s municipal competence centre in the field of housing with its three main action fields - information on funded flats, tenants’ assistance and neighbourhood service - has registered around 14.000 consultations since the beginning of the coronavirus crisis (11.4.).

Education, arts and culture

- At the end of March, the City has set up work scholarships of 1 million euros for freelance artists and freelance scientists as a provisional assistance for the time of the corona crisis. Two weeks later, the interest in them remains strong. So far, 1.100 applications from all fields of art have been made. Due to this strong demand, the funds for these work scholarships are increased by 2 million euros to a total of 3 million euros (21.4.).

- Wien Museum started historical corona collection: How will future generations know what the Corona crisis has meant for Vienna? Wien Museum is asking for the help of citizens and invite them to send photos of object that explain the new private or professional life in the times of corona (16.4.).
<https://www.wienmuseum.at/en/corona-collection-project>(English)
- Adult education online: The courses by adult education centres (VHS) are available online for free; bookings are possible from April 20th (17.4.).
- 5000 laptops for home schooling have been made available to help families, needs assessment by the class teachers. The next step is to create a comprehensive digital learning platform for Vienna. According to City Councillor Jürgen Czernohorszky, responsible for education, , around 15,000 children need additional support in learning. City will also set up a central platform for teachers and a helpline for parents who need educational support (15.4.).
- As of early April the event database of the City of Vienna also includes all online events. With no publicly accessible events, event organizers are particularly affected. The event database of the City of Vienna now offers the possibility to promote online-events (8.4.)
www.veranstaltungen.wien.at (German)

Communication, citizen engagement and neighbourhood initiatives

- FAQ 's on the city 's Covid-19 website are available in 22 languages, including sign language:
<https://coronavirus.wien.gv.at/site/faq-english/>

More room outdoors

- A political argument between the City of Vienna and the Austrian national government has eventually come to a good end after Easter. While all parks owned by the city remained open and accessible after the beginning of the corona crisis, public parks owned by the national government were closed. After a wave of citizen's protest, petitions and appeals of the city government, national government showed readiness to reopen the parks after Easter weekend (7.4.).
- The new Alma-Rosé-park in Floridsdorf, the north-western district of Vienna, covering a 3.500 m² green area opened mid April. The park adds to the green areas of Vienna and is named after the musician Alma Rosé who was a prominent Viennese violinist of the interwar period and conducted the famous "Girls Orchestra" of Auschwitz, where she was murdered in 1944. (16.4.).
- The "Donauinsel" (Danube Island) with a shore length of 42 km as well as the "Alte Donau" (Old Danube) are some of Viennese people 's most favourite oases of leisure at this time of the year to catch some fresh air and remained all the time. Physical distance has to be kept, making barbecues is strictly forbidden (10.4.).

Administration

- As of 15th May, Vienna city administration will gradually reopen for customers under to certain conditions, a making an appointment beforehand, wearing of mask and keeping the safety distance of 1 meter.

- Employees of the City of Vienna decided to sew 2,500 masks in order to protect the partially exposed staff of the facility management department. The team decided to take matters into their own hands and to produce the masks to equip the colleagues with reusable (and washable at 60 degrees) cotton masks.
<https://www.wien.gv.at/presse/2020/04/09/mitarbeiterinnen-der-stadt-wien-naehen-corona-schutzmasken-2-500-stueck-werden-fuer-die-ma34-hergestellt>
(German)

Urban life after corona

After having tasked the Vienna Economic Council, a board of stakeholders from the fields of economy and innovation with representatives of social partners and academia, to see into post-corona scenarios, Mayor Michael Ludwig also promotes to have a similar discussion on EU level, especially with the partner cities in EUROCITIES, the associations of towns and cities as well as in the Committee of the Regions.

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