Austria Fining People up to $16,000 a Year for Not complying with Vaccine Mandate, Creating Central COVID-19 Vaccination Register

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Austria is threatening stiff fines on citizens who do not comply with the country's new COVID-19 vaccine mandate. Austria will fine people up to $16,000 a year if they remain unvaccinated.

This week, the Austrian government became the first European country to announce it would implement a general vaccine mandate. Effective Feb. 1, all Austrian residents aged 14 and older are required to get vaccinated against coronavirus.

Health Minister Wolfgang Mückstein said that there would be exemptions for pregnant women, those who can't get vaccinated for medical reasons, and for people who have recovered from COVID-19 in the previous six months. The government will create a central vaccination register to track those who are exempt and unvaccinated individuals.

The COVID-19 vaccination register will be checked every three months. The first deadline will be March 15.

The Austrian government will issue fines of up to about $4,000 on people who are not vaccinated and who do not qualify for an exemption. Fines can be imposed every three months. Legal proceedings will be dropped if people provide proof of vaccination in the meantime.

"People's income and other financial obligations will be taken into account in calculating fines," ABC News reported. "Alternatively, officials can opt to impose a fine of up to [about $680] in shortened proceedings."

"Around 68% of Austria's population of 8.9 million is vaccinated, a comparatively low rate for Western Europe," Fox News reported. "Neighboring Germany, where the rate is just over 69%, also is eyeing the introduction of a general vaccine mandate early next year, though

plans have yet to be drawn up and officials say they will let lawmakers vote according to their conscience rather than along party lines."

Karoline Edtstadler – the Cabinet minister responsible for constitutional issues – said the government has "an obligation and a need to increase vaccination coverage so that we don't go from lockdown to lockdown, next year as well."

"There are still well over a million Austrians who aren't vaccinated. That is too many," Edtstadler added. "I say very clearly that we don't want to punish the people who aren't vaccinated. We want to bring them along, we want to convince them of this vaccination and we want them to show solidarity with everyone so that we can regain our freedom."

There have been just over 13,000 COVID-19 deaths in Austria since the pandemic started.

Last Saturday, over 40,000 people marched through Vienna to protest against COVID-19 lockdowns and vaccine mandates, according to Reuters.

> In #Austria, thousands have gathered to protest the mandatory vaccination passports. Take a look.pic.twitter.com/Wb3f1MePMm
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> — Steve Hanke (@steve_hanke) December 4, 2021

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