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Guidelines

RECOMMENDATIONS
ON PREVENTING TRANSMISSION
OF COVID-19 AT BUSINESS EVENTS

Updated September 14, 2020

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1. INTRODUCTION AND PREAMBLE TO THE COVID-19 GUIDELINES

The following plan was drawn up on the basis of the [COVID-19-Lockerungsverordnung \(10th Covid-19-Lockerungsverordnung amendment\) of September 14, 2020](#) and the subsequent amendment to the [COVID-19-Lockerungsverordnung](#) of June 13, 2020, as well as Version 2 of the [Empfehlungen für die inhaltliche Gestaltung eines COVID-19-Präventionskonzeptes für Veranstaltungen im Bereich von Kunst und Kultur](#) (Recommendations for the Content Design of a Covid-19 Plan for Events in the Field of Art and Culture; German only) issued by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (last updated on June 3, 2020).

These guidelines are aimed at organizers of business events and are intended to define key medical parameters for additional guidance. However, they also leave room for maneuver in terms of execution, while providing creative leeway depending on the specific situation and the experiences of the organizers and their service partners – from venue to agency.

The [nationwide and provincial regulations aimed at preventing the spread of Covid-19](#), in particular those relating to the hosting of events (Austrian events acts) must be observed.

These guidelines also contain measures that go beyond the statutory requirements in order to provide the best possible conditions from an epidemiological point of view for the safe hosting of the desired types of event. The guidelines cover all the key medical and organizational parameters that need to be considered when drawing up a tailored prevention plan for a specific event.

For all packages of measures, organizers must be aware of and fulfill their responsibility to ensure the best possible protection against transmission of the disease for participants and employees alike. However, event organizers are likely to come up against the limits of their own responsibility in certain areas. This is why participants must be made fully aware of their personal obligations as regards assuming responsibility for their own health and that of others, and can also be expected to do so.

A Covid-19 prevention plan must contain measures to reduce the risk of transmission of the disease based on a risk analysis, as well as, among other things, guidelines for training staff (see [Recommendations for the Content Design of a Covid-19 Plan for Events in the Field of Art and Culture](#)) issued by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection; German only).

Key points include:

1. Arrangements for managing visitor flows
2. Specific rules regarding hygiene and conduct
3. Regulations in the event of a SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) case
4. Arrangements for use of restrooms
5. Procedures for serving food and drinks

Prior to staging an event, organizers are urged to put together an overview of the following points in connection with the specific event format and/or the spaces it uses.

- A risk analysis for the event covering the following areas:
 - What is the intensity of contact when staging the event? How many contacts are possible in the various processes at the event?
 - Can distancing/hygiene regulations be adhered to during the event?
 - Which processes involved in staging the event can have an effect on at-risk groups?
- A program and a copy of the event set-up should be attached as an appendix to the prevention plan.

A Covid-19 prevention plan can also include a GDPR-compliant system to trace contacts e.g. in the form of a voluntary attendance register.

The term 'business events' is used in the international sector as a catch-all term for various types of meetings and events. It can be broken down into two segments:

- Corporate events → corporate meetings/events and incentives
- (Association) conferences → association meetings

While the precise composition of events and the names applied to them can vary, in principle business events always have a business or training background.

Private or public events, sporting or cultural events or public fairs (i.e. events as a purchasable product) and are not classified as business events and as such are excluded from these guidelines/list of criteria.

2. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

The following basic prevention measures must be observed to minimize the risk of transmission when staging an event:

- Maintaining a minimum distance of one meter at all times during the event.
- Wearing a mask: at entrances and exits, in situations where queuing is required, on all routes to and from seats.
- Other appropriate protective measures to reduce the risk of transmission, if the specific nature of the activity or the situation means it is not possible to wear a mask and/or observe the minimum distancing requirement.
- Regular, thorough hand washing (ideally with soap and water; if this is not practicable, hand sanitizer must be provided in areas where there is a higher potential risk of transmission for participants to use).

2.1 CHECKS

- Appointment of an expert safety officer and/or a Covid-19 officer.
- Monitoring and documentation in order to implement all of the relevant measures for Covid-19 prevention.

2.2 INFORMATION

- Transparent communication of the risks to all participants (general health and safety situation, information on all the preventive measures put in place by the event organizer) both in advance and on site.
- Individuals with typical Covid-19 symptoms (specifically a high temperature, cough, shortness of breath, loss of sense of taste or smell, muscle pain, new and unexplained skin changes) are not permitted to participate in the event and/or enter the premises (this also applies to employees).
- People who are in quarantine in line with the official Covid-19 protection measures are likewise excluded from participating in the event.
- Before the event, an announcement should be made that participation in the event is generally not recommended for people from at-risk groups.
- All participants are to be notified of the need to carry with them and wear a mask in accordance with the guidelines issued by the event organizer.
- All internal and external employees must be briefed in advance on the safety measures in place and provided with appropriate equipment.
- Information for visitors on site: clearly visible notices and/or signs regarding the hygiene and protective measures and/or control rules implemented; announcements via the house PA system should also be considered.

2.3 DISTANCING AND MANAGING VISITOR FLOWS

- For all types of events and rooms, it must be ensured that everyone has enough space at all times, and/or that sufficient space is available for a minimum distance of one meter to be observed.
- If necessary, distance markings or signage systems (cordon tapes, steel barriers) to maintain the minimum distance (e.g. entrance, exit areas, restrooms, etc.) can be used.
- Entrances and exits should be separated if possible.
- At potential bottlenecks (e.g. waiting areas, cloakroom areas and restrooms), suitable measures (such as cordon tapes, stewards and signs) should be in place to ensure that gatherings of people are avoided.
- Physical separation of meeting → catering → exhibition areas.
- Seating recommendation: with fixed row seating, every second seat can be occupied in a chessboard pattern, to the extent that it is possible to still access seats while observing distancing requirements. If movable seating is used, it should be ensured that a distance of one meter is observed both to the front and rear.
- Program design and event schedule taking into account the minimum distancing requirement of one meter. In the case of presentations (speakers, stage artists), panel discussions and the like on a stage, a greater distance is required between the stage and the audience area. In this case, the minimum requirement is three meters.
- Rapid registration, payment and entry management, ideally contactless.
- Managing visitor flows: the flow of people should be actively managed and monitored before, during and after the event. This can be achieved through various measures designed to reduce the size of gatherings or prevent people from congregating. Depending on the specific situation and space, these can include signage systems, barriers, floor markings, one-way systems, room dividers, separate entrances and exits, staggered admission times, and opening of additional entrances and exits.
- If necessary: staggered admission times; information about spaces; providing visitors with information when invitations are sent out and during preliminary communication with participants; sequenced and/or staggered exit times.
- If necessary: staggered finishing times; orderly departure management identical to arrival procedures.
- Managing processes, reducing movement within the venue, managing visitor flows: one-way systems, if possible no longer than 10 minutes spent in waiting areas.
- Admission control/general measures for elevators: limited elevator service due to space restrictions (reduction in maximum passenger numbers); signage on all levels to remind participants to wear a mask if they use the lift.
- Stairs should be given preference over lifts. Consider a one-way system for stairs.
- Minimize promotional material and brochures, focus on digital communication media.
- (Automatic) headcount and continuous monitoring of participant numbers. Measures must be put in place to ensure that the maximum number of people per room under the distancing rules is not exceeded.

2.4 HYGIENE

- General hygiene and cleaning measures in line with the latest regulations issued by the Federal Government must be ensured at all times (see section 1). The following points must also be observed:
 - Frequently used contact surfaces (railings, banisters, door handles, toilet seats etc.) must be cleaned regularly, with cleaning and hygiene schedules adapted to reflect this.
 - Soap dispensers must be mounted next to sinks for visitors (if they have not been already) and must be regularly topped up. Special hand sanitizing facilities are only required if no other handwashing materials are available.
- In accordance with [section 10\(7\) of the recommendations](#) issued by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, visitors must wear a mask when waiting outside the entrance, when entering rooms, inside and outside restrooms, and on all routes leading to and from their seat. A certain number of masks should be kept at the venue to be handed out to participants who do not have their own mask with them.
- It is medically advisable for all employees who are not protected by screens to wear a mask or face shield.
- Screens (e.g. plexiglass walls) should be installed at registration desks, cloakroom counters, info points and ticket desks.
- Constant, regular cleaning of all contact surfaces and restrooms.
- Soap dispenses need to be refilled regularly.

2.5 VENTILATION – AIR CHANGE

- Measures for mechanical ventilation
 - Adjusting the automated control system by manually increasing the ventilation frequency or ventilation volume (air exchange rate) – at least 35 m³ of air exchanged per person per hour assuming a seated audience.
 - Evidence of actual intake and output air volumes for auditoriums in the form of a certificate not older than two years from an authorized testing body.
- Measures for natural ventilation
 - Increased ventilation of event spaces (airing out spaces fully for a short period of time) to ensure sufficient air exchange. E.g. in meeting rooms: if natural ventilation is available, ideally any windows should be opened to allow fresh air to enter, defined regular ventilation breaks (min. five minutes per 60-minute meeting).

2.6 DATA COLLECTION

- GDPR-compliant collection of participants', employees' and external contractors' data and storage for at least 28 days by the event organizer.
- Seats – if possible (mandatory for 50 or more people) – need to be assigned individually to allow for the fastest possible tracing of individuals who have come into contact with someone suspected of having or confirmed to have had the infection. This system should be adapted to reflect the specific situation (e.g. workshops), so any subsequent contact tracing efforts are not hampered.

2.7 REGULATIONS IN THE EVENT OF A SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASE

- In the event of a suspected case during or after the conference/event, the health authority responsible – Municipal Department 15 in Vienna – must be notified immediately and a report submitted. The organizer must provide the necessary data to support subsequent contact tracing. The organizer should prepare a record of the contact details of anyone in the vicinity of the individual suspected of having contracted the infection (i.e. contact details of both employees and participants) and, where possible, information on their whereabouts within the venue.
- In the event of an obvious case of illness during the event, clear procedures must be in place that are also communicated to employees (clarification in cooperation with the Red Cross/Samariterbund).
- In principle, the hygiene or Covid-19 officer ([see section 2.1](#)) can handle contact with the person suspected of having contracted the disease, ideally this could also be a member of the on-site medical service. These safety officers have a list of questions to run through (contact details/symptoms/whereabouts at the event/people they have come into contact with at a distance of less than two meters and of more than two meters).

2.8 CATERING

- The latest official requirements for caterers must be observed. Regulations for the restaurant and hotel industry can be found online at [sichere-gastfreundschaft.at](https://www.sichere-gastfreundschaft.at).
- The following measures are recommended for lunches, dinners, etc.
 - If possible, a set-up with tables and chairs should be chosen which ensures that the distances between the tables and the maximum number of people per table can be observed and that the risk of crowding can be minimized.
- Catering providers must be briefed on the organizer's specific requirements in advance.

2.9 SUSTAINABILITY

In the interests of comprehensive health protection, it is recommended that environmental health and sustainability aspects are also taken into account when planning the event. In particular, the measures required to minimize the risk of transmission should not stand in opposition to other efforts, such as climate protection, resource conservation and environmental friendliness.

Avoiding excessive use of disinfectants, plastic packaging, plastic bottles and other single-use items is explicitly recommended. As a rule, disinfectants should only be used sparingly, carefully and selectively, as their indiscriminate use carries health and environmental risks (entry into the environment with a negative impact on natural ecosystems, bacterial resistance and targeting of all microorganisms, etc.).

If you are interested in obtaining [green meeting certification](#) for your event, the [Vienna Convention Bureau](#) can provide you with expert consultation.

3. SPECIALIST MEDICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE GUIDELINES BY THE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA



To
Vienna Tourist Board
Invalidenstraße 6
1030 Vienna

Medical University Vienna
Center for Public Health
Department of Environmental Health
Kinderspitalgasse 15, 1090 Wien
T: +43 (0)1 40160-34930
hans-peter.hutter@meduniwien.ac.at
www.meduniwien.ac.at/umwelthygiene
OA Assoc.-Prof. Priv.-Doz. DI
Hans-Peter Hutter, M.D.
Deputy Head

Vienna, August 2020

Covid-19 guidelines for event partners of the Vienna Tourist Board Medical evaluation

Dear Madam or Sir,

You requested our involvement in developing guidelines to enable your event partners to draw up a Covid-19 prevention plan, as well as our assessment of the proposed packages of measures from a public health and epidemiological perspective.

1 Background and aim

The substantial efforts taking place at all levels of the public health system are still aimed at curbing the number of new SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) infections in Austria to the greatest possible extent. This requires society as a whole to take steps at all levels and in all sectors with a view to avoiding transmission of the disease.

Staging business events, i.e. events held for commercial or continuing education purposes, should still be possible even during the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, holding planned events at appropriate facilities must only take place on the understanding that the risk of infection will be minimized. That said, full protection against infection with a pathogenic microorganism or virus has never been possible, and SARS-CoV-2 is no exception.

This means that a "100 percent protection" cannot be demanded, nor can it be guaranteed. On the other hand, event participants can expect not to be exposed to a higher degree of risk than would be the case in other public settings.

In addition, especially at events that draw large gatherings of people, a guarantee should be given that in the case of a participant subsequently testing positive, contacts should be easily traceable or, at the very least, it should be possible to inform people of their contact status, while also ensuring that their personal data are protected to the fullest extent possible. This is the only way of preventing an uncontrolled resurgence of the epidemic.

The aim of this collaboration is to implement scientifically sound, practicable guidelines for various event formats within the scope of business events, with specialist medical, advisory support as part of an iterative, joint process.

2 Method and Approach

Following a telephone discussion on June 27, 2020 and a description of the matter at hand by the Vienna Tourist Board, we were provided with various documents for information and assessment purposes.

After examining these documents, a face-to-face discussion took place on July 8, 2020. During this discussion, the next steps and some initial questions were addressed and discussed from a specialist medical viewpoint, as were the following aspects related to Covid-19 prevention:

- Principles for drawing up guidelines based on the list of criteria provided, which are intended to offer guidance to various event organizers in Vienna by setting out medical parameters for the prevention of Covid-19 infections
- Event organizers' responsibilities with regard to raising any questions that arise in connection with implementation of the guidelines
- Involvement in information events in order to present the guidelines to stakeholders after completion

Questions related to the following points were also discussed:

- Necessary procedures from a medical perspective in the event of Covid-19 infections
- Essential medical 'infrastructure' at events and the related frameworks to be considered in this respect
- Data collection in various situations at events for the purpose of contact tracing
- Structure of the guidelines

Subsequently, the draft proposals, in particular the proposed measures outlined in the draft, were assessed, clarified, structured and refined in order to enhance their practicability.

3 Medical assessment and evaluation

The final version of the guidelines contains a comprehensive package of measures which are now be presented in detail in the final version (i.e. as of August 18, 2020).

Besides both general and specific hygiene and behavioral requirements, the guidelines include recommendations for managing visitors' flows, specifications for ventilation strategies (mechanical, natural ventilation), requirements in the event of SARS-CoV-2 infections, data collection, environmental health perspectives, and sustainability-related aspects promoting more sustainable staging of business visits.

Each of the proposed measures was evaluated, in some cases jointly discussed, and gradually adapted in accordance with the current requirements regarding infectious diseases.

One of the main challenges was the wide range of event settings (lectures, workshops, etc.), which each requires different frameworks in order to provide protection against infection. This heterogeneity is also discussed.

Of course, all official recommendations have been taken into account in the guideline. In addition, the recommendations derived are strongly precautionary in order to be on the safe side, because the epidemiological situation could deteriorate quickly, possibly resulting in stricter measures.

In terms of support measures, there was also a strong emphasis on ensuring the greatest possible degree of consistency with measures introduced in other sectors, in order to simplify implementation for all concerned and generally increase the willingness of visitors to comply with the guidelines.

There is a consensus that the medical parameters agreed during the specialist medical consultation process provide sufficient scope regarding the way in which suitable measures can be implemented and also allow for a degree of creativity, although clearly this must take into account the situation on the ground at the event, as well as the experience of both the Vienna Tourist Board and the event organizers at whom the guidelines are aimed.

In conclusion, it should be noted that while the Vienna Tourist Board is aware of its responsibilities in this regard, and aims to/must live up to them, in certain areas it is being stretched to its limits, as is also the case in some other sectors. Therefore, event organizers and participants must be reminded of the need for them to assume responsibility for their own health and that of others, and they should also be expected to do so.

In summary, from a medical perspective we underline that the current guidelines provide a framework for preparing prevention plans and represent a sound, comprehensive and practical approach ensuring that events held in cooperation with the Vienna Tourist Board



can take place again, in accordance with the accompanying protective measures drawn up in collaboration with the medical community.

OA Assoc.-Prof. PD DI H-P Hutter, M.D.
Specialist in hygiene and microbiology
Public Health Officer

Doz. H Moshammer, M.D.
Specialist in hygiene and microbiology
Public Health Officer

4. CONTACT AND PUBLICATION DETAILS

4.1 CONTACT

Vienna Convention Bureau

Vienna Tourist Board

Invalidenstrasse 6

1030 Vienna

Austria

Tel. +43-1-211 14-555

convention@vienna.info

www.vienna.convention.at

www.linkedin.com/company/vienna-convention-bureau

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CONVENTION BUREAU

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Invalidenstrasse 6

1030 Vienna

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