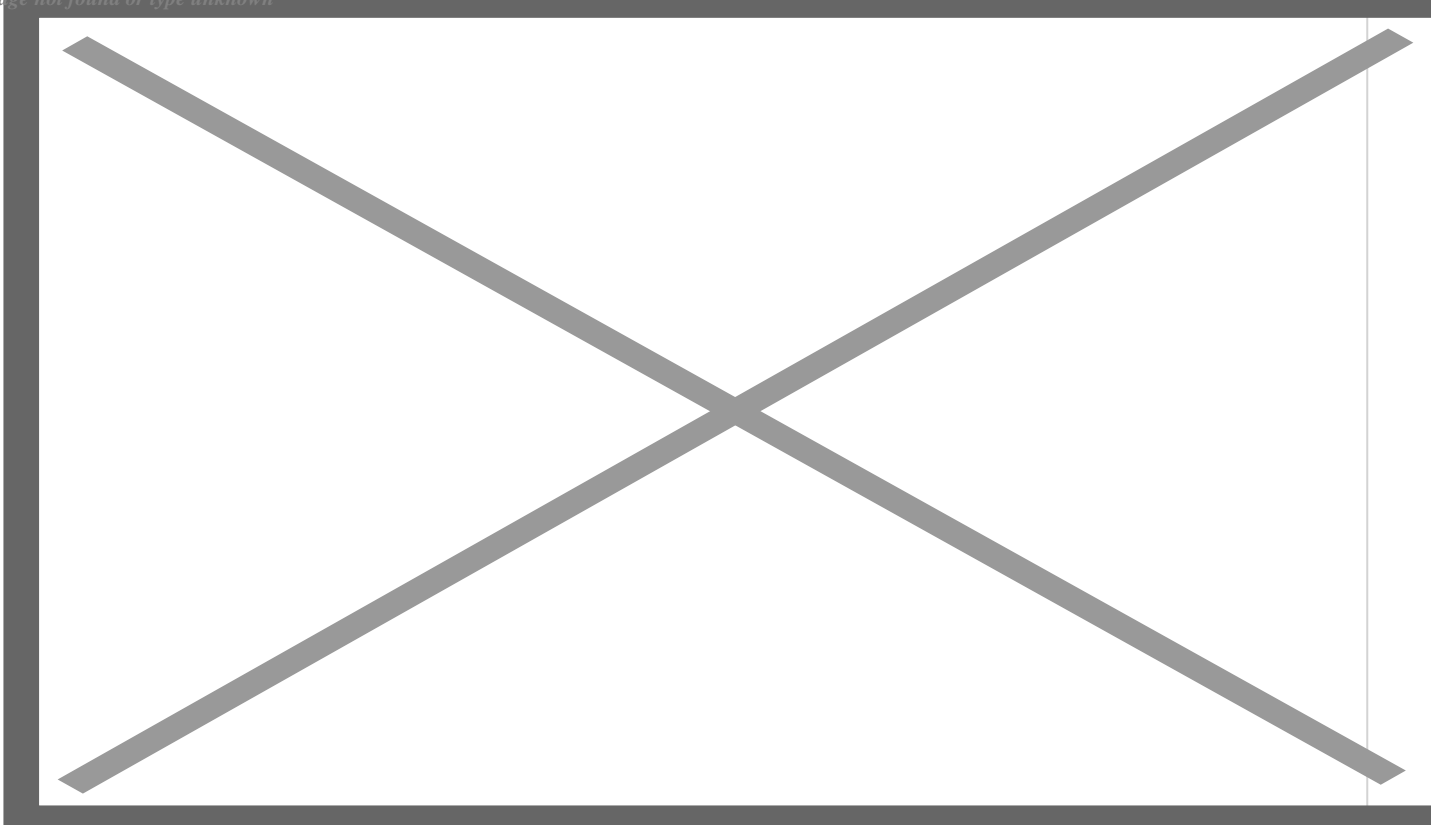


Austria begins COVID-19 vaccinations

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Austria begins COVID-19 vaccinations

Vienna, December 28 (RHC)-- In Austria over the weekend, the first person vaccinated against COVID-19 was an 84-year-old pensioner in Vienna who says she wants to see her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren again without hesitation.

The first five volunteers who received the initial doses of the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine included three elderly patients with underlying health conditions and two health care personnel. According to the manufacturer, a certain protective effect should already exist seven days after the first of the two doses is injected.

Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and Health Minister Rudolf Anschober, who were present for the vaccinations at Vienna's Medical University spoke of an historic day. But the two officials warned of challenging

months ahead.

Anschober said that by the summer over four million doses of the vaccine would be available in Austria, which has a population of almost nine million. The vaccination is expected to be rolled out in three phases starting with those in high risk groups, over 80-year-olds and medical personnel in the first few weeks of January and continuing with front-line workers and from April the rest of the population excluding those under 16 years of age.

Austria entered into its third hard lockdown on Saturday with the Chancellor warning against a third corona wave and a massive increase in infection numbers across Europe. Officials have made it clear that another year of recurring lockdowns is not an option and the hope is that with more vaccinations, this can be avoided.

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