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'A' ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: COVID-19 coordination
Council Recommendation amending Council Recommendation (EU) 2020/1632 as regards a coordinated approach to facilitate safe travel during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Schengen area
- Statement by the Austrian delegation

The following statement will be entered in the minutes of the Council.

Statement by Austria on Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to facilitate safe free movement during the COVID-19 pandemic and replacing Recommendation (EU) 2020/1475 and on Council Recommendation (EU) 2020/1632 as regards a coordinated approach to facilitate safe travel during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Schengen area.

Austria supports in principle the coordinated approach with the aim of creating greater uniformity with regard to travel restrictions. This should allow coordinated measures to be taken to protect public health and enable the right to free movement to be exercised. Austria is in favour of maintaining the Digital Covid Certificate requirement in principle for travel within Europe.

In general, Austria would like to note that the weakening of vaccine protection must also be taken into account when fixing a uniform acceptance period of vaccination certificates and that the possibility of different rules regarding the domestic use of the vaccination certificate must continue to exist. Thus, Austria is currently planning to reduce the validity of “Grüner Pass” (term for the national implementation instrument of the EU Digital COVID Certificate) for persons who have been vaccinated twice from 270 to 180 days as of 1 February 2022. However, for persons who have been vaccinated three times the validity period of 270 days will remain.

From Austria’s perspective, the proposed EU-wide uniform validity period of 270 days after completion of a first vaccination series should not be applicable to individuals that received a single dose of the COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen. Based on scientific evidence, only a second dose of an EMA-approved vaccine justifies the issuance of a certificate valid for 270 days.

