

Vienna, January 2021

## **113,000 rapid tests at Austria's largest testing centre over the holiday season: event industry set to benefit going forward**

**Since December, the Austria Center Vienna has been supporting the City of Vienna by hosting the nation's largest testing facility. In the two weeks in the run-up to Christmas and New Year, around 113,000 rapid tests were conducted at the venue. Due to heavy demand, the number of testing lanes was increased, with up to 20 now available. Thanks to its highly encouraging experiences, Austria's largest congress centre is hoping that the system will provide palpable relief for the ailing event industry this year.**

"Between 18 and 31 December we conducted around 113,000 rapid tests at the Austria Center Vienna. As expected, demand was strongest before Christmas and New Year's Eve, when up to 17,000 tests were performed each day," explained Susanne Baumann-Söllner, Managing Director of the Austria Center Vienna. There were 266 positive antigen tests, which equates to around 0.24% of the total. From an organisational point of view, managing broad swings in the number of people coming for tests was a particular challenge. Significant demand on the weekend before Christmas – particularly at the drive-through testing lane – called for swift action to add capacity. "In a very short space of time we upped the number of walk-in lanes from the initial three to 16. Thankfully, we were also able to quickly hire and train staff to support the medical personnel, as well as additional marshals and security stewards. In total, up to 200 people were involved in running the facility each day. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the whole team, who proved that they were up to the challenge both indoors and outdoors in wintry temperatures," Baumann-Söllner said.

### **Heavy traffic on testing facility website**

In addition to managing the facility and taking care of storage logistics on site, the Austria Center Vienna was also responsible for the website, which included an explanatory video and FAQs for residents of the capital, as well as a link to the City of Vienna's registration and appointment booking platform. More than two million page impressions were logged in December. "Our usual congress business sees us host events for up to 20,000 people, who are all highly active online. But this level of interest and the amount of feedback on social media and every other media channel was something we had not experienced before," Baumann-Söllner confirmed.

### **Rapid tests and vaccinations: hope for the event industry**

The Austria Center Vienna carried out Europe's first large-scale rapid testing pilot project in partnership with the Vienna University of Economics and Business back in September. The insights gained from the trial run, which involved 2,000 participants, were then used to optimise the City of Vienna testing facility. "We have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic as a congress centre and have high hopes for the newly introduced vaccination programme which, in combination with rapid testing, will act as an 'entry ticket' for events. As an international

pioneer, we have shown since September that this kind of ‘testing before admission’ is possible from an organisational and practical point of view. The notion of rapid testing has gone on to be very well received by the population, as well as politicians and the business sector. Which is why we are confident that we can use this arrangement to gradually reintroduce larger events this year,” Baumann-Söllner added.

**The rapid testing lanes (walk-in and drive-through) will remain available to use free of charge for everyone living and working in Vienna. Information and registration: <https://www.acv.at/en/rapid-testing/>**

### **About IAKW-AG**

Internationales Amtssitz- und Konferenzzentrum Wien, Aktiengesellschaft (IAKW-AG) is responsible for maintaining the Vienna International Centre (VIC) and operating the Austria Center Vienna. The Austria Center Vienna is Austria’s largest conference centre, with 24 halls, 180 meeting rooms, and some 26,000 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space, and is one of the top players on the international conference circuit.

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*Walk-in and drive-through testing lanes at the Austria Center Vienna.*

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