

COVID-19 infections on the rise in Germany

Marianne Arens
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There were 3,086 new cases of COVID-19 reported within the span of 24 hours in Germany yesterday—one of the highest rates since April. As of Monday, there have been 304,657 cases, of which 31,341 are active. Of the active cases, 414 patients are currently in a serious or critical condition. The age of the infected, for both mild and severe cases, has been decreasing as infections rise. The average age of those hospitalised has dropped to 37 years.

Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) made an ominous calculation in a press conference last week. There, she showed that the daily infection rate, which has doubled every month since July, following the current trend would reach 19,200 new infections per day by Christmas. This makes abundantly clear that Merkel's administration knows full well the risk it is exposing the working population to by fully opening the economy.

Like every other bourgeois government, the Grand Coalition is dead set on fully opening schools, businesses and events as well as train service and public transport, come what may. State and federal administrations have prescribed “herd immunity” for the population—that is, letting the virus spread freely. This was stated with uncommon candor by virologist Hendrik Streeck, who has a long history of playing down the virus.

On the TV show “Anne Will,” on September 20, Streeck depicted a scenario in which the virus would become “part of our lives” and in which every social measure to fight its spread—testing, isolation, contact tracing—would be discontinued and the virus allowed to take its course. “The infection numbers will go up in the fall and winter,” said Streeck, “then we will no longer be able to follow up with testing. We will reach the capacity of our labs.”

The German Ministry of the Interior made the meaning of this clear in a report from March 18 in which most scientists answered “the question: ‘what happens if we do nothing?’ with a worst-case scenario of over one million deaths in 2020—just in Germany.”

Worldwide, the number of deaths from the coronavirus passed 1 million last week with close to 230,000 deaths from COVID-19 in Europe. In Germany, too, the number of deaths from the virus is rising, with double-digit deaths per

day. Yesterday, another 14 patients died within 24 hours, bringing the sum total to 9,616.

With their reckless re-opening of the economy, the governments of Europe have “paved the way for a devastating resurgence of the virus,” as stated in the latest declaration of the European sections of the ICFI. The joint statement of the German Sozialistischer Gleichheitspartei, Socialist Equality Party (UK), Parti de l'égalité socialiste (France) und Sosyalist E?itlik (Turkey) begins with the words: “It is urgent to mobilise the working class across in Europe and internationally in a general strike to halt the ongoing resurgence of COVID-19.”

Independent political action by the working class is the only way to stop the life-threatening laissez-faire politics of all European governments. The Merkel administration is no exception. With worried words, Merkel is trying to slip into the role of the fretting mother to nip nascent public disquiet in the bud. In the general debate of Parliament, she appealed to the population to “hold out during the Corona crisis and act responsibly,” because, “free and open society as a whole” depends on it.

Merkel is reacting to the growing resistance in the working population and the schools. The occupation of schools in Greece is expanding. In Germany, teachers, parents and students are reacting with disbelief and growing anger to the life-threatening chaos being thrust upon the schools. In the two months since schools began reopening in July, more than 5,000 school children and 1,600 educators have been infected.

These numbers come from a comparison of the *RKI-Tagesbulletins* from the end of July and September, according to which the number of infections of children “in kindergartens, preschools, schools, children's homes and summer camps” has risen by 5,235 during this period, while the number of confirmed infections among those working in these facilities has risen by 1,638. Fifty-six children and 46 educators have been hospitalised with at least one death from COVID-19.

Angry comments are piling up on social media about the official policy of opening schools without even the possibility of maintaining pandemic guidelines. Affected

parents, teachers and students point out that there are neither air filters nor CO2 measurements, class is still held in fixed groups and the necessary corona tests are no more available than before and anything but universal.

On the teachers' website *news4teachers*, one "concerned citizen" notes: "No air filter, no distancing, no masks, almost no ventilation in many room, no concept for the winter, nothing. ..." He comments on the speech by Education Minister Anja Karliczek (CDU), who called on "those concerned in the schools" to "unconditionally adhere to this discipline [pandemic rules]" with the words: "What's with the demand for more discipline among school kids? They can't distance themselves in classrooms—because politics has deemed full classes essential. All the rules and measures in place in every bakery, every supermarket, in every government agency—they don't apply to schools."

Klaus H. wrote: "School = care and storage facility. What happens there doesn't matter, as long as it doesn't cost anything. ... Every checkout, every gas station, at every counter in the country there are plexiglass shields and a mask requirements, but here an open window suffices. Slowly it's getting laughable and pitiful."

A teacher from the state of North Rhine-Westphalia told the WSWS the city of Duisburg denied the family of a schoolgirl viral tests after her father tested COVID-positive. The reason given was that "she supposedly shows no symptoms. The family is now quarantined in its apartment for two weeks. I don't know if the family's getting tested but it's doubtful since the student herself was automatically considered a non-concern as long as she's not showing symptoms. The Ministry of Health is just negligently waiting out this possible spreading event and doing nothing to prevent an infection of the student."

Many posts on social media note the systematic cover-up of infections in schools. The Charité virologist Dr. Christian Drosten confirms the existence of outbreaks in schools in his latest blog for the broadcaster *NDR* and calls for "complete transparency" and "disclosure of the dataset," calling it urgently necessary, at latest now, during the fall break, to prepare for the situation in autumn and winter.

In practice, there is not a trace of "transparency." Many parents report just the opposite, although compulsory attendance is rigorously enforced on threat of action by the courts and the youth welfare office.

One mother published a message from her school's administration about an infected child in the class that literally reads: "The school administration is being urged from a higher level not to release a statement. If you have any questions, please contact me."

Natin, a student in the state of Lower Saxony, related that her school has had a number of cases, "but it is being hushed

up so that the schools stay open. ... The main thing is that people can go to work. Nobody is in quarantine because they reacted fast enough—what a joke! ... At school you don't hear anything."

Marie, a teacher, warned on *news4teachers*: "If you want to see where this is going this fall, you don't have to look far: France, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Austria—all around us the numbers are shooting up again. ... In Vienna the first intensive care unit has announced that it is completely occupied and cannot accept any new Covid patients." She added sarcastically: "But the virus will take a wide path around German schools, that's what the Ministry of Education decided, that the virus isn't allowed to go in there."

And Stefan wrote: "Here in our school a girl is positive. Five others are in quarantine. Other districts are taking entire classes out of school, to keep from endangering others. If no one cares that the buses to school are totally overfilled then they don't have to care if our kids get sick. The digital setup of our school is miserable."

Ever more of those affected are recognising the capitalist calculus behind the general policies of wage cuts, unsafe work environments and the systematically unhindered spread of the coronavirus. Conny F. states: "Starting regular operation of schools and kindergartens is an economic rescue program so that parents can go to work." With a jab at the refusal of the state government to install ventilation systems in schools and kindergartens she adds: "And obviously it can't cost anything."

Milla, a mother from the state of Baden-Württemberg, likewise noted the rising number of infections: "As long as schools are open it will get worse. I don't think that parties and weddings are the problem. That is just propaganda! It makes me sick to see how teachers and children are being treated. Politics are endangering their lives. That parent have to just keep working, often like captives for a starvation wage! So that those up top can keep getting fatter!"

The user "Palim" arrived at the conclusion: "Obviously this is not about education and not about children or work safety but only about ensuring the parents' ability to work."



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