

German parents' associations protest against dangerous school openings

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Twenty of the largest parents' associations in Germany have written a letter to Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) and other leading politicians to express their "serious reservations about current decisions" regarding the resumption of in-person teaching in schools.

They write that the current situation endangers "our children and thus the entire population" and is "irresponsible." They go on, "The hygiene measures developed by the federal states for school openings are—as the past few weeks have shown—insufficient to ensure protection for the school community against infection."

The letter is an expression of the growing anger and indignation among parents, teachers and students—not only in Germany, but throughout Europe. More and more workers and young people oppose the policy of herd immunity decreed by ruling circles, a policy that will result in the death of hundreds of thousands of people. Media outlets have remained conspicuously and ominously silent. With the exception of the teachers internet portal news4teachers, not a single major German publication has reported on the letter drafted by parents' representatives.

The letter begins with an analysis of the actual situation. "The number of people infected with SARS-CoV-2 [COVID-19] in Germany is increasing dramatically. This affects our schools in particular. Many thousands of students have been infected with SARS-CoV-2, as have a large number of teachers and other educational specialists and other school staff. We currently expect at least 50,000 students and an additional large number of teachers to be in quarantine."

The parents' associations criticise the indifference of school and health authorities and write that it is increasingly apparent "that respective school classes or year-groups are not being completely quarantined, but often only those pupils close to the infected person." The

letter continues: "The ministries have failed, however, to trace the routes of infection on the basis of scientific sequence analyses. Symptom-free infections cannot be tracked or detected because entire groups are, in many cases, not tested."

At a state level, the parents' associations complain that various similar appeals have fallen on deaf ears and have failed to elicit any "recognisable reaction." Particularly serious is "the education ministers' persistent ignoring of findings, such as those of Prof. Dr. Christian Drosten, on the infection and illness of children, adolescents and young adults with SARS-CoV-2."

Against this background, the prospect of infection in schools assumes dangerous proportions: "It must be possible to apply the AHA rules [*Abstand, Hygiene, Atemschutz* = distance, hygiene, respiratory protection] consistently in schools, especially with regard to those in particular need of protection."

Among other measures, the parents' associations call for a "state-specific binding, step-by-step plan" for hygiene measures, an "extension of the policy of the compulsory wearing of masks," a "reduction in the size of learning groups," and the "possibility of hybrid instruction in shifts" with "the greatest possible digital support" while "taking the needs of minorities into account."

In addition, the letter declares that the "installation of room air filter systems," the "provision of high-quality masks (FFP2) for all persons with increased risk" and the complete transparency of infection figures in schools, "as well as the subsequent testing of all those groups affected," are all indispensable.

The public appeal by parents is an expression of the resistance developing among workers and youth across Europe against the criminal policies of their respective governments. As the *World Socialist Web Site* reported in the middle of a media blackout, students in both Poland

and Greece have organised broad protest actions, school boycotts and occupations in recent weeks. In the Czech Republic, where infection rates are also rising exponentially, schools have recently been closed nationwide.

Millions of students, teachers and parents in Germany and Europe are increasingly conscious that their worries and demands bring them into direct conflict with education ministers and governments, which are more and more openly pursuing an inhumane policy of herd immunity.

A typical expression of the mood among teachers is an anonymous comment on the news4teachers portal. The author thanks the parents' associations and demands that control over "group size, division, organisation, form of teaching" should no longer be exercised by education ministers and the school authorities. Instead, "the respective colleagues should be allowed to contribute ideas and make decisions together with the school management and parents."

"We demand that current occupational safety regulations be implemented in schools," writes teacher Marie on Facebook. "This would also benefit your children, by the way, because it would minimise their risk of infection. If you want to see where we are heading, you don't have to look that far: France, Holland, the Czech Republic, Austria—the numbers are exploding all around us.

On Tuesday, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), the German government's central institution for the identification, surveillance and prevention of infectious diseases, published a non-binding "Recommendation for Action" for schools, which explicitly states that outbreaks are increasingly being observed in schools following reopening.

A compilation of the *World Socialist Web Site's* coverage of this global crisis, available in epub and print formats.

The document proposes that further preventive measures—such as the introduction of compulsory masks in class—should be taken, depending on a 7-day assessment of cases at a district level. On October 15, the president of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, Stefanie Hubig (Social Democratic Party, SPD), told the press that she vehemently objected to such an "automatism," which, the assembled ministers agreed "makes no sense."

On news4teachers, one teacher, Georg, writes: "Keeping schools open is a top priority for politicians,

apparently at any price! Severely ill students and teachers are then just unfortunate collateral damage to be accepted. You feverishly bend in any direction to avoid measures that would cost money."

He suggests "shortening the curriculum to main subjects," "halving classes one to seven" and "using the teachers of minor subjects" to supervise these classes. From the eighth grade onwards, Georg says, lessons in the main subjects should take place online when possible.

Another teacher adds: "The (secondary) schools in all other European countries are a crucial factor in the spread of Corona. With rising infection numbers and mortality rates, it is no longer possible to speak of effectively controlling infection. This irresponsible education policy is becoming the driver of the pandemic."

One parent explains: "The economy comes first, that's why everything in schools should remain as it is. Our child goes to first grade, all are without a mask and without the advised 1.5 meter distance to one another. There are 2 children sitting at one table. After the autumn vacations the plan is to ventilate classrooms every 20 minutes—but it is getting colder and colder! As a result children and teachers soon be lying flat with a bad cold or even pneumonia. This is just playing with lives!"

"It is clearly not about education, children or safety at work, but only about ensuring that parents can go to work," writes Palim, another teacher. The task now must be to demand the "renting of rooms" and the exclusive use of "gymnasiums, refectories and other rooms" to teach small groups. In light of "mouldy rooms and ceilings in danger of collapsing," Palim adds, it is "apparent how many classrooms do not even meet the standards for ventilation."

Neither education ministers nor the German Chancellor will take such measures. In order to enforce small groups, tests and quarantine, parents, teachers and students must organise themselves into independent action committees to ensure safe conditions for education. They must join forces internationally and prepare a general strike. Contact us **here** to participate in setting up such committees.



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