German Network of Action Committees for Safe Education: “The situation in primary schools is alarming”

Our reporters
19 September 2021

Following the opening up of schools across Germany and a subsequent surge in infections, the Network of Action Committees for Safe Education met on Thursday. Its online audience included students, teachers, parents and child care workers.

“Our meeting today is confronted with the fact that the German federal and state governments, along with all the governments of Europe and America, are pursuing a policy of contaminating children,” declared Gregor Kahl, Bundestag election candidate for the Socialist Equality Party, in his introductory speech.

Despite the explosive increase in the number of cases among children and young people due to the policy of opening up schools, even basic protection measures were being dismantled. “This policy is tantamount to forcing unvaccinated children to become infected and puts tens of thousands of lives at risk.”

Gregor Kahl also addressed the need to eradicate the virus—a strategy advocated by leading scientists: “In every country, incidence levels must be systematically reduced to zero and the virus eradicated, as has been the case with other diseases throughout history.”

The disastrous consequences of opening up schools was underlined by the report given by David Brown on the situation in the United States. David Brown is a member of the Socialist Equality Party in California and the local Action Committee for Safe Education.

“The number of hospital admissions of children have risen to record levels,” Brown explained. He said this was due to the more infectious Delta variant, combined with the return to face-to-face teaching. Despite vaccinations, over 2,000 people die every day. The incidence of hospitalisation among children is 0.5 [per 100,000]—in Germany this would be equivalent to almost 70 children in intensive care units.

A series of spontaneous protests have broken out against this opening policy, he said, to which the Socialist Equality Party has responded with the creation of Action Committees for Safe Education. “Committees have formed in California, Texas, Tennessee, New York, Pennsylvania and Canada.” Brown stressed that teachers and students around the world face the same dangers and therefore called on participants at the meeting to link their struggles globally and unite in the International Workers Alliance of Action Committees.

An overview of the catastrophic situation in schools was given by Anna, a primary school teacher from Hesse and mother of three children under 12. “The situation in primary schools is very alarming,” she said.

“The Ministry of Education in Hesse declared last school year that we have to ventilate every 20 minutes to allow children to make a break from their masks. The teachers set an alarm clock for that purpose. Basically, between all the ventilation pauses and advising the children to use their masks properly I hardly have any time to teach.” In addition, the children are usually wearing overly large surgical masks that “don’t protect them from anything.”

“The mask requirement was issued at the beginning of this week because the area where we live has a incidence of just under 50 [daily cases per 100,000],” she said. “Even a simple health rule like distancing is not possible because the classrooms are usually far too small. One is usually sitting together with 25 children in a classroom.”

Hygiene conditions are also poor, because there is only one sink with cold water in the room. “And when 25 seven year olds have to wash their hands several times, it takes a tremendous amount of time,” she explained. “The children hardly get to study between all the mask breaks and hand washing.”

© World Socialist Web Site

Regular ventilation is not possible everywhere because the windows can often only be tilted rather than opened fully. Despite this, no air filters had been installed at her primary school or in the whole district.

Anna described how the authorities rebuffed her and other parents when they offered to buy air filters themselves. The flimsy argument used was that there was not enough evidence of the usefulness of filters, so the district decided not to buy them and has also forbidden parents from doing so. “This means we are now sitting in poorly ventilated rooms without masks under poor hygiene conditions.”

Many colleagues had dropped out over the past year after becoming mentally ill due to the high levels of pressure. “I have felt for some time that we teachers are often only looked upon as mere service workers,” Anna said. “As for the autumn, we are not optimistic at all.”

The government’s coronavirus policy also puts parents in an impossible position. One participant, Andreas, asked what impact the policy of permanent partial lockdowns has on children, especially those stemming from working-class families.

In response various participants in the discussion replied that school closures must be accompanied by the closure of all non-essential businesses with full wage compensation and other guaranteed job security. With a strategy of eradication, the pandemic could be ended in one or two months.

The conditions in the schools described by Anna were confirmed by the reports given by the students Florian and Tamino. Both are members of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and are in grade 12 at schools in Baden-Württemberg.

“We still have a mask requirement in classes for a fortnight, after that it will be dropped,” Florian explained in his contribution. “The incidence here in Baden-Württemberg is about 90 [daily cases per 100,000] and is twice as high among pupils,” Tamino explained. “The quarantine rules are also under siege: In case of infection, only the infected person has to be quarantined, but not even those sitting directly next to him or her.”

Martin Mauer, candidate for the Socialist Equality Party for the federal elections and a teacher in the state of Saxony, reported on the conditions prevailing at kindergartens. “Similar to schools, only the affected child has to go into quarantine,” he said. Tests are supposed to be conducted, but none have been delivered so far.

Participants also warned against the imminent opening up of universities—a measure justified by the vaccination rate. Christopher, a student from Leipzig, commented that measures such as vaccinations alone cannot stop the pandemic: “There are more and more reports of infections amongst the vaccinated and this is being taken into account and accepted with face-to-face teaching at universities.”

The ruthless contagion policy is being enforced by all of the Bundestag parties, endangering millions of people; these issues are sidelined in the current campaign for the federal elections. This fact was pointed out by Eylem, a father of two who last worked as a taxi driver. He had observed that young people were becoming increasingly politicised. This is “an election without any content,” his children had told him. Eylem also reports from his circle of acquaintances that many no longer know who or what to vote for because all of the parties are the same.

The Socialist Equality Party is standing for election against this criminal coronavirus policy of all the parties in the Bundestag and supports the building of action committees for safe education and safe jobs.

The meeting made it clear that the pandemic is a disaster for workers from all sectors and that the virus must be eradicated. For this, students, teachers and parents must fight together and unite in action committees.

What is needed are the closures of schools and non-essential factories with full wage compensation. With the help of quarantine, targeted mass testing, contact tracing and internationally coordinated lockdowns, the pandemic can be stopped.

As Kahl explained for the Socialist Equality Party at the end of the meeting, this programme must be financed by expropriating the pandemic profiteers. Building a society that puts lives before profits is possible if workers and youth take up the struggle.

The appeal was made to register to build action committees, join the Facebook group of the Network of Action Committees for Safe Education and follow the SGP’s last election meeting, which will also address the struggle against the pandemic.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site