Germany ends free coronavirus tests and reopens universities

Tamino Dreisam
12 October 2021

Following September's general election, the ruling class is aggressively pushing forward its policy of mass infection that has already cost the lives of more than 94,000 people in Germany.

Despite new infections continuing at a high level of about 8,000 per day on average, and virologists warning of a severe wave this autumn and winter, the federal and state governments are eliminating even the last protective measures against COVID-19. Significant steps are the ending of free coronavirus tests beginning this week and the reopening of universities in the winter semester of 2021/22.

Officially, the reason given for abolishing free tests is to increase vaccination rates by putting pressure on the unvaccinated. In fact, this does not increase the vaccination rate, but rather systematically dismantles the infrastructure for combating the virus. A large number of testing centres across the country are now closing. The detection and tracing of infections are thus made more difficult and the ground is being prepared for the massive spread of the virus.

On Monday, the Marburger Bund doctors' union warned of new chains of infection developing because of the abolition of free coronavirus tests. "Paid coronavirus tests will lead to fewer people with symptoms getting tested in the future," union President Susanne Johna told *Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland* (RND). "This is a gateway for further transmission of the virus."

The reopening of universities is also particularly threatening in this context. Just like the reopening of schools before, the return of nearly 3 million students to German universities will not be accompanied by increased safety measures. On the contrary, they will be further reduced.

The specific regulations differ in detail from state to state and from university to university. However, the majority of courses are being held in person everywhere. At the universities where online options are still offered, these are only intended to supplement face-to-face courses.

Compulsory testing applies only in the form of the inadequate 3G rule (vaccinated, recovered from COVID-19, tested) which, with the abolition of free tests, also represents a heavy financial burden for students. Distancing rules apply only at some universities, and even there it is almost impossible to comply with them. Even the requirement to wear a mask does not apply at most universities.

The situation is particularly deadly due to the lack of air filtration. Exact figures on how many rooms are equipped with air filters often do not exist. In addition, facilities exist that are not designed to reduce viral loads. Hardly any universities provide information on whether and how many more new filters are to be installed.

A few days ago, process engineer Lutz Böhm of the Technical University (TU) of Berlin warned of the potentially deadly consequences. In a tweet, he explained, "If in-person attendance is (politically) wanted for a semester, the absolute minimum is that the ventilation works, especially in rooms without windows. Anything less potentially puts students and faculty in mortal danger."

He refers to studies by aerosol researchers at the TU Berlin. Martin Kriegel, head of the TU's Hermann Rietschel Institute and an expert on indoor health, explained in an FAQ on aerosols and coronavirus that simple ventilation is not enough. What is needed, he said, are filtration systems with HEPA filters, as well as CO2 traffic lights that give a realistic impression of the actual air quality.

© World Socialist Web Site

Among other things, the “return to normalcy” at the universities is justified by the allegedly high vaccination rate among students. This is a dangerous sham in two respects. On the one hand, the vaccination rate of 71.1 percent in the 18 to 59 age group is comparatively low. Secondly, figures from the US show that even a very high vaccination rate does not prevent the spread of the virus.

At Duke University in North Carolina, where 98 percent of students and 92 percent of all faculty have been vaccinated, 365 people became infected in one week. At the University of California, Berkeley, the vaccination rate is 97 percent. Despite this, the rate of those testing positive rose from 0.5 to 5.8 percent in one week.

In Germany, reports of infection breaking through the vaccine are mounting, with sometimes fatal consequences. A total of 67,661 vaccine breakthroughs have already been reported. According to the Robert Koch Institute’s (RKI) latest weekly report, 28.4 percent of all symptomatic infections in the 18- to 59-year-old age group represent vaccine breakthroughs.

Fatal outcomes are not ruled out. Last week, seven employees and 18 residents, all of whom were fully vaccinated, became infected at a nursing home in Zell. Seven residents died.

The murderous policy of mass infection, which is supported and pushed by all parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament), goes hand in hand with vicious social attacks. With the reopening of universities, financial support for students is also dropping off.

Until the end of September, students could still apply for up to €500 in grants per month. The aid was completely inadequate from the start, and a calculated fraud that excluded many students from the outset. The fact that a total of 619,200 applications were nevertheless submitted shows how much students depend on such support payments. In addition, 50,000 student loans of up to €650 were issued during the pandemic. These must be repaid in full.

With the end of these measures, hundreds of thousands of students—in addition to the unsafe conditions in their education—will be forced to work in jobs under unsafe conditions as well, risking their health and their lives.

Resistance to this “profits before lives” policy is growing around the world. Lisa Diaz, a mother from the UK, called for a school strike on October 1. Worldwide, the strike was supported by thousands of students, teachers and parents. Diaz is now calling for more school strikes this Friday and all other Fridays. Protests are developing internationally against unsafe learning and working conditions.

This movement needs a clear perspective and strategy. The whole experience of the pandemic shows that the fight against the virus depends upon building an independent movement of the international working class.

On October 24, the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees are organizing an online webinar with leading scientists and epidemiologists to explain the urgent need for policies to eradicate COVID-19. Register here and also inform friends, classmates, and co-workers about this important event.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site