

Parents and teachers in Germany support students protesting mass infection pandemic policy

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The student movement against the profits-before-lives policy under the slogan #WirWerdenLaut (We're Getting Loud) has been welcomed with overwhelming solidarity from parents, teachers and other workers. A team of reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* reported from Frankfurt about the latest student strikes over the unsafe conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The WSWS subsequently received countless statements of support.

"Finally!" wrote Susanne L. on Facebook. "That's right, you all have to do it, every student, every teacher!" Uwe S. from Landshut added, "Tremendous from the young ones! It provides hope for a viable future!" A user commented on TikTok: "It's really great and I think your views are very reasonable! I am fully on your side and I understand you!"

On Facebook, the WSWS reports on the student protests were "liked" by hundreds of users in various groups and commented on by dozens.

Ulrike W. wrote: "The students have been neglected throughout the coronavirus period. Schools were open for the benefit of the children, was what they always said. It sounds like a joke. Statements like 'Schools are not a pandemic driver' were made with full conviction—a joke. Lip service was paid to equipping schools for digital distance learning. With the current failure due to quarantine and illness of teachers and students, it is hardly possible to reach learning goals. How many students have been left behind by this stressful situation because they received no support and could not get the assistance they required? How many students will leave school without a qualification? What do you intend to do for them?"

Monika M., a member of the Network of Rank-and-File Committees for Safe Education, wrote of the student protests: "What this government is doing is anti-children and anti-family. In the hope that Karl Lauterbach [Germany's federal health minister] would protect my grandchildren and children, I actually voted for the SPD [Social Democrats] in the last election—for the first time in many years. What can I say: It really hurts when you realize that our government only defines the health and education of our children by having them attend dilapidated schools instead of introducing innovative

educational concepts."

Jennifer, a child care educator from Hesse, stated: "If at least children from the vulnerable group were offered the possibility of home schooling, you could perhaps question whether they are pursuing deliberate mass infection for the benefit of the economy. However, since coercion is also used here, and parents are threatened with reprisals up to and including their children being taken into the care of the state, although everything is available for distance learning, those responsible have lost all credibility."

The anger at Schleswig-Holstein's Education Minister Karin Prien (Christian Democrats, CDU), who as president of the Conference of Education Ministers (KMK) is also responsible for the profit-driven infection policy at schools and day care centers nationwide, is particularly strong on social media. Kirsten E. explained on Facebook under the WSWS report:

"At the end of the day, it's all about the parents going to work. As far as Mrs. Prien is concerned, she didn't give a damn about the children's health from the start. By the time the children who are ill today have received their diagnoses of the permanent damage caused by Long COVID, her post will have been taken over by someone new, and she and all her other ministers will be happy with their salaries, while these children will soon be out of school and thus forced for the rest of their lives to eke out an existence at the subsistence level."

Yessi H. reported on how children and their relatives are literally forced to become infected despite their best efforts, writing: "Because Ms. Prien wants the schools to be open by hook or by crook, my children have now also been infected. My daughter just before her vaccination and my son just before his booster. For two years, we tried everything to prevent it from happening. Now the parents and children were not even given a choice. Vaccination for children under 12 was only approved shortly before Christmas. So we got an appointment in January, and we then asked to leave our children in home schooling until after the vaccination. That was not approved—it was only allowed in cases of hardship. And exactly four days before the appointment, my daughter got sick. What choice did I have as a parent?"

A petition supported by several parent groups which calls for Prien's resignation as education minister and president of KMK (Conference of Ministers of Education) had already received hundreds of signatures within a few hours. Prien had called for "tests and masks in schools" to be ended everywhere and spread the long-debunked lie that children die "only extremely rarely because of COVID-19." According to the politician, the fact that "children die" is "tragic," but one has to "differentiate" based on the pre-existing conditions of these children.

The minister avoided the overwhelming criticism of her positions by deactivating her Twitter account. She received support from right-wing media and commentators, who slandered parents and teachers who criticised her as "crazy terrorists" and "completely unrestrained Twitter mobs," and called for them to be "locked up" and receive "treatment."

The reason for Prien's outrageous statements was the contribution of a Twitter user who had found out that according to the official data from the RKI (Germany's federal infectious disease agency), the number of children dying from COVID-19 is increasing ever more rapidly. More children have died since October alone than in the entire previous period of the pandemic. Of the 65 officially registered COVID-19 deaths among people under the age of 20, 17 have died in the past four weeks. The authors of the petition point out that "deaths among [those] under 20 years old are even individually checked and validated by the RKI," so that the RKI's statistics only include those children whose deaths "can be traced back to COVID-19."

However, the official number of COVID-19 deaths among children is only the tragic tip of the proverbial iceberg. The UK's Office for National Statistics estimates that 12.9 percent of infected children aged 2 to 11 and 14.5 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 16 still complain of symptoms five weeks after infection. Scientists and medical professionals have long emphasized that COVID-19 is one of the most dangerous diseases for children.

"We do not know of any childhood illness that is as stressful as the COVID-19 disease," said Karl Zwiauer, paediatrician and member of the Austrian vaccination committee, to the Austrian broadcaster ORF last September. "None of the conventional childhood diseases that can currently be combated by vaccination has such a high disease burden as the SARS-CoV2 infection," commented the longstanding head of the Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine at the University Hospital St. Pölten.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, aggressive denial of scientific evidence has characterized the actions of all government politicians, regardless of their party affiliation. Education ministers have repeatedly resorted to pseudoscientific studies to fulfill their mandate to "do everything possible to keep schools open," while targeting students, parents and teachers who criticise them with official

attempts at intimidation. Prien herself recently tried to play off the concerns of the students and the interests of particularly at-risk patients against each other.

Against this background, it is significant that Prien's federal state of Schleswig-Holstein is already planning far-reaching reopening steps that will lead to a devastating surge in cases, in line with developments in Denmark. In the country that borders Schleswig-Holstein to the north, the exponentially increasing number of deaths is already higher than at almost any time during the pandemic. If the number of deaths lags behind the number of infections by about two weeks, as can be seen in Denmark, then in a few weeks around 1,000 deaths a day could be expected in Germany.

The country's adjusted hospitalization incidence rate is 11.75 per 100,000 inhabitants, which is at the threshold of the RKI's highest warning level. The hospitalization incidence rate is currently increasing most rapidly in the over-80 age group (23.9, an increase of 4.35 compared to the previous week), but it is also increasing rapidly in the second highest age group and among 0- to 4-year-olds as well.

The even more contagious Omicron subvariant BA.2, which was first detected in Denmark, was responsible for 8.1 percent of all new infections at the end of January in Germany, according to the current RKI weekly report, and threatens to further prolong the mass deaths. Israel, which usually precedes European developments by a few weeks, recently recorded more daily deaths than at any other time during the pandemic.

The inhuman positions expressed by KMK President Prien are in fact those of the entire ruling class. At the end of January, Federal Minister of Health Karl Lauterbach (SPD) spoke in a quickly deleted Twitter post of an "acceptable level of deaths," which the current "plan" of his ministry envisages. Federal Minister of Justice Marco Buschmann explained last week on the talk show "Sandra Maischberger" that the aim of government action was never to minimize the number of deaths but to allow everything that would not lead to an "overburdening of the health system."

On Monday, the *Ärzteblatt* reported on the submission of a "gradual plan," which is to be approved on Wednesday by the federal and state governments. The new "plan" calls for all public health measures to be "gradually" removed by March 20, starting with the lifting of restrictions on unvaccinated people entering retail outlets.



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