

German government ends COVID-19 measures despite BA.2 wave

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Contrary to the claims made by politicians and the media that the peak of the Omicron wave has passed, the daily COVID-19 infection and death rates have risen again massively since the beginning of the month. The even more contagious Omicron sub-variant BA.2, which is considered by experts to be the most dangerous of the SARS-CoV-2 variants, already accounts for 48 percent of all COVID-19 infections in Germany.

The latest weekly report from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) states that the “current renewed increase in transmitted COVID-19 cases” is “due to the easier transmissibility of the sub-variant BA.2 and the withdrawal of contact reduction measures.” The number of people currently affected by COVID-19-related acute respiratory disease has increased in almost all age groups and is estimated to be “between 1.2 million and 2.1 million.” More than a million new cases were reported last week.

The number of new infections is greater than ever before. According to the RKI, the highest incidence rates are still found in children and adolescents aged 5 to 24 years, with 7-day incidence rates of around 2,000 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by the age groups of 0 to 4 years and 25 to 44 years with incidences of around 1,800 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. The number of outbreaks in old people’s and nursing homes has also continued to increase compared to the previous week. The RKI warns that around 2.2 million and 7.7 million people in the oldest and second oldest age groups respectively have not yet received a single vaccination.

Despite this catastrophic situation, the Federal Government of the Social Democrats (SPD), Greens and the Free Democrats (FDP) is insisting on eliminating almost all protective measures by March 20, ending mask mandates and completely excluding lockdowns. A corresponding bill by Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (SPD) and Justice Minister Marco Buschmann (FDP) was passed on Wednesday in the government cabinet and is due to pass through the parliament and Federal Council, Germany’s upper house, in the next few days.

As Lauterbach and Buschmann confirmed to ZDF, the state governments will in future only be able to impose mask and test regulations in care homes and hospitals, as well as tests in schools and masks in public transport, in general. In particular, the draft law of the ministers provides for an end to the mask

mandate in schools and supermarkets, as well as the requirement for restaurants, bars and other “offers to the public” to create an effective hygiene plan to prevent infections.

As part of a “hotspot regulation,” the state parliaments will only be allowed to reintroduce mask rules, social distancing rules and access restrictions locally and for a limited period of time in order to respond to “new outbreaks,” worrying virus variants, or “high numbers of cases.” To this end, however, the relevant state parliament must first determine a “concrete risk of a dynamically spreading infection situation”—a formulation that places virtually no limit on the discretion of the state politicians.

After the parties of the traffic light coalition government decided in November to lift the law declaring an epidemic emergency of national significance, they are now going one step further with the amendment of the Infection Protection Act. Justice Minister Buschmann stated to the press with satisfaction that in everyday life “there will be virtually no more restrictions.”

Health Minister Lauterbach’s assertion that the new law still allows states to “react appropriately” to “new outbreaks” and a possible “summer wave” of COVID-19 is nothing more than a smokescreen. His cabinet colleague, Mr Buschmann, emphasised that the states will not be able to “invent” more far-reaching measures that are not provided for in the draft law, such as curfews and lockdowns, as well as business and school closures.

When asked why neither incidence rates nor hospitalisations play a role in the amendment to the law, Lauterbach provocatively stated that “explicitly no figures were mentioned,” since this would “make no sense from a medical point of view.” In other words, no matter how many people become infected, hospitalized or die in the future, there will no longer be any mandatory measures.

In the past, the government tried to argue that incidence rates and infections were no longer decisive due to vaccinations. Now, even hospitalizations and deaths no longer play a role. For a policy whose primary objective is to safeguard the capitalist economy in order to generate profits, the loss of human lives is of little consequence.

In total, more than 125,000 people have already died of COVID-19 in Germany alone, and 250 more are added every day. While the incidence rate on Thursday was 1,388 infections per 100,000 inhabitants, the adjusted incidence of hospitalisations has been in the range of the highest warning level for weeks and is increasing. The number of cases is also exploding in other European countries. In Denmark, where the government stopped all measures at the beginning of February, the number of deaths is higher than ever before.

The new law will massively intensify the spread of COVID, especially in schools and families. Although leading federal politicians—including Lauterbach himself—repeatedly cited the alleged primacy of the federal states in school policy in order to beat back demands for better protection of children and young people, the federal government is now immediately preparing to enforce the abolition of mask mandates in schools. In Austria, a similar policy has led to more than 50 percent of all schoolchildren being infected with the coronavirus, of which more than 250,000 have been infected since the end of the Christmas holidays.

Since the test capacity will be used as a priority for public institutions, and will not be increased, a particularly large number of the elderly and people with pre-existing conditions who live with their children and grandchildren, or are cared for by them, are at risk of dying. This is in line with a policy that does everything it can to reject responsibility for mass death and shift it to the “private sphere.” To use the language of the FDP, people should die “freely” and “autonomously” in the circle of their relatives.

In a popular post, an account called “Risk Family” wrote on Twitter: “How are the seven million at-risk patients under the age of 60 protected? Like the 700,000 high-risk patients under the age of 18? Fundamental rights such as the right to life and integrity no longer count? With these regulations, at-risk patients who do not live in the nursing home, but among us, are endangered. By what right are their fundamental rights further and massively curtailed?”

A foster mother of two children with disabilities wrote: “Without masks in the supermarket we will no longer go shopping. Leisure activities, it’s impossible, except for walks in the woods. So we will be completely isolated, [our child], my wife and I. How long are we supposed to live like this? Is this even a life? What is the alternative? Risk our son infecting his little sister? Then both lives would be destroyed.”

Under the slogan #SchwereSchuld (severe guilt), countless social media users are demanding that politicians be held accountable for their murderous decisions. Other users point out that infected people who survive a COVID-19 infection often fall into the category of a “vulnerable group” due to Long Covid—a vicious cycle that points to the eugenic principle of “survival of the fittest.”

The web developer Markus M. tweeted: “It is not ‘personal responsibility’ if nurses continue to burn out, life-saving

surgeries are postponed, pupils are infected every few weeks, millions are ill with long covid and so on—but rather inhumane madness!” Another Twitter user added: “More illness, more death, more suffering and misery. Speak the truth and confront the politicians who actually want to walk over corpses and talk some bullshit about ‘normality’ and ‘freedom.’”

The traffic light coalition is fully aware of the catastrophic consequences of its policies. Even the day before the announcement of the amendment to the law, Lauterbach indicated his agreement with a British study, according to which even “relatively light” courses of COVID-19 can be associated with the loss of grey matter in the brain, which means a massive increase in the risk of dementia. On Wednesday, the Minister of Health even stated that if the vaccination rate remains unchanged—and the government does nothing to increase it—“there will be 200 to 300 deaths every day for many weeks.”

A study by the University Hospital Tübingen, which interviewed around 1,900 people infected with the coronavirus, concluded that the risk of Long Covid is higher the more pre-existing conditions a patient has. Forty-six percent of the outpatients still suffered from symptoms 12 weeks after the infection, compared with 73 percent of hospital patients. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents stated that they had survived their COVID-19 infection at home.

While the children and their relatives are being infected and killed in the interest of the profit economy, the federal and state governments are also slashing funds from public services in order to invest them in rearmament and war. This is most striking in the capital city of Berlin, where the SPD/Left Party/Green state government, the so-called Red-Red-Green Senate, recently decided to cut up to 90 percent of annual funding for public schools across the board.



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