

German federal and state governments cut quarantine period to five days

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Despite official propaganda about the “end of the pandemic,” 1,500 people are falling victim to the coronavirus every week in Germany. New strains are spreading that are even more infectious than the BA.2 Omicron variant.

Nevertheless, all the parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament) are removing the last remaining protective measures and are prepared to accept tens of thousands more deaths. This is illustrated by the recent decisions of the federal and state governments to shorten the isolation period to five days.

The new Infection Protection Act passed in mid-March reduces coronavirus measures to “basic protection”—mandatory mask-wearing on short- and long-distance transport, as well as in nursing homes and hospitals. At the beginning of April, Federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (Social Democratic Party—SPD) also tried to completely lift the quarantine requirements but had to withdraw this proposal just one day later due to public anger.

On 28 April, the federal and state governments nevertheless decided to shorten the isolation period to five days. On 2 May, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) updated its guidelines on isolation and now recommends a quarantine period of only five days. A negative test after the five days is only a recommendation. Previously, a quarantine period of 10 days applied, with the possibility of release after seven days.

The concrete implementation of these guidelines is left to the individual federal states. In Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Bremen, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein and Thuringia, the quarantine period has already been reduced to five days. Berlin, Brandenburg, and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania follow on 6 May.

What is also new is that quarantine is completely waived for all contact persons—even if they are unvaccinated and live in the same household as an infected person.

The cut in the quarantine period is emblematic of the profits-before-lives policy of the ruling class. Following the lie of the “end of the pandemic,” coronavirus protective measures have been all but abandoned. As a result, infections have spread massively in the population, causing a loss of working hours due to illness that threatens to reduce the profits of the banks and corporations. Therefore, even potentially infectious people must be forced to continue working.

By spreading mass infection in workplaces, the government is putting the health and lives of tens of thousands of workers at risk. Yet it is fully aware of the consequences of its policy.

Lauterbach himself regularly warns on Twitter of the effects of a COVID infection. On 1 May, for example, he wrote, “Even if you are in top shape, a coronavirus infection can change everything for you. A well-trained body usually protects you from severe COVID disease. Unfortunately, not nearly as well from Long Covid.”

That does not stop him from immensely increasing everyone’s risk of COVID by shortening the quarantine period.

The federal government is still pursuing the plan to abolish quarantine altogether. Liberal Democrat (FDP) parliamentary group leader Christian Dürr, for example, told the *Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland* that the rules on isolating infected people should be lifted completely. “Anyone who has tested positive but is symptom-free should be allowed to leave the house with a mask while observing social distancing,” he said. “I am firmly convinced that people can make a

decision on this issue on their own responsibility. There is no longer a need for government regulation for this.”

In addition to cutting back quarantine, other pandemic measures were dropped in numerous German states on 1 May. In Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hesse, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Schleswig-Holstein, testing is no longer mandatory at schools.

In Saarland, the number of tests was reduced from three to two per week. Berlin follows on 9 May. Thuringia even plans to test only once a week from 6 May. There is no longer a mask-wearing requirement for schools in any of the federal states. Hamburg and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania are also no longer considered hotspots, so wearing a mask is no longer compulsory in retail outlets there.

Contrary to the claims of politicians and the media, however, the pandemic is far from over. Although the number of registered infections has fallen—after testing capacities were reduced and compulsory testing was abolished in almost all areas—it is still at a very high level. The seven-day incidence rate per 100,000 inhabitants is close to 600, with more than 750,000 infections reported in one week.

In medical treatment facilities, as well as old people’s homes and nursing homes, the number of outbreaks increased compared to the previous week—from 94 to 101 in medical treatment facilities and from 314 to 368 in old people’s homes and nursing homes. Between 35 and 160 people died in each of these outbreaks.

However, due to overburdened health authorities and because not all infected persons have a PCR test—only those tested appear in the statistics—experts assume a very high rate of under-reporting. This is underlined by the figures of the RKI. According to the institute, 55 percent of all transmitted test results are positive.

The situation at hospitals also remains extremely fraught. The adjusted number of hospitalised COVID-19 patients is about 7,000 per week, with 1,446 people currently needing intensive care.

The number of deaths is particularly alarming. Since the reduction of coronavirus measures to the level of so-called “basic protection” in March, 12,000 people have already died. Every week, about 1,500 people fall victim to the virus.

Numerous scientists warn that the situation is getting worse. Lars Kaderali, a bio-informatician and member of the Coronavirus Experts Council, believes it is possible that the Delta variant could return in autumn. “That would be problematic because Omicron infection does not protect well against an infection with Delta—unlike vaccination. So there really is an immunity gap.”

The recombination of Delta and Omicron strains and the emergence of new variants are also a danger, he said. “It could be that we get another Omicron variant or even a completely new variant. I think the only thing that can be said for sure is that by autumn the coronavirus pandemic will not be over.”

In South Africa, Omicron mutations BA.4 and BA.5 are already causing a rapid increase in infections. According to current information, the two variants are considered significantly more contagious than their Omicron siblings.



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