

# German government plans to remove all coronavirus protections

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In an interview with *Tagesspiegel* towards the end of December, virologist Christian Drosten declared that in his view, the pandemic in Germany was “over.” Within a very short time, politicians from all major parties took this as an opportunity to call for the removal of the remaining protective measures.

Federal Justice Minister Marco Buschmann (Liberal Democratic Party, FDP) wrote on Twitter: “We are in an endemic state. As a political consequence, we should end the last #Coronavirus protections.” FDP deputy chairman Wolfgang Kubicki told *Tagesspiegel* that there was no basis for “any [...] restriction of fundamental rights to contain the coronavirus” and called on the federal and state governments to end their limited protective measures as soon as possible.

Green Party health politician Janosch Dahmen also joined in the propaganda in *Tagesspiegel* about the end of the pandemic: “At the moment, there is much to suggest that the coronavirus is hardly changing and that its currently still strong spread will finally decrease significantly with the end of this winter.”

Federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (Social Democratic Party, SPD), whose position is generally portrayed in the media as more moderate, in fact fully endorses this narrative. In an interview with broadcaster ZDF’s *heute journal* news programme, he stated:

It is true that we are now moving into an endemic state. That is, the waves that are coming now no longer cover the entire population, but only the parts that are not sufficiently vaccinated or have previous damage. So, a big wave that would cover the whole population again is not to be expected at the moment. The new variants are not as

contagious or as dangerous as they appeared to be in the laboratory a few months ago. This defuses the situation somewhat.

At the same time, Lauterbach knows exactly how dramatic the situation is: “We still have full hospitals at the moment, even children can’t be cared for well. We have a high excess mortality rate; people die every day from coronavirus who didn’t necessarily have to die.”

In this situation, however, Lauterbach is not suggesting taking serious measures to save lives and prevent hospitals from collapsing. He simply advocates postponing the lifting of all measures for a few weeks. This is completely in line with his previous policy. Lauterbach himself actively promoted and implemented the almost complete winding down of protective measures as Minister of Health.

Support for the lifting of the remaining measures is also coming from the opposition. The Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) are calling for a special conference of federal and state governments at the beginning of January at which the last protective measures—such as mandatory mask wearing in doctors’ surgeries and hospitals and on public transport (in most states)—are to be lifted.

The CDU/CSU’s parliamentary health spokesperson Tino Sorge told *RedaktionsNetzwerk Deutschland (RND)*: “It is time to declare the pandemic finally over. The coalition [government] can no longer shirk this above all political decisions.”

Apart from a few exceptions, the obligation to wear a mask and quarantine must be replaced in the New Year by recommendations, demanded Sorge. Europe was returning to normality, only the coalition government did not have the courage to do so, he said. “A

conference of the chancellor with the heads of the state governments at the beginning of January would be the appropriate format to coordinate such a step together with the federal states,” the CDU politician said.

Contrary to government and opposition claims, however, the pandemic is by no means over. Currently, more than 100 people are dying from COVID on average every day in Germany and hospitals are on the verge of collapse. The adjusted hospitalization rate is 15 (per 100,000 inhabitants), which corresponds to almost 12,500 hospitalizations per week.

Intensive care units have been filling up for weeks, with 1,230 people currently receiving intensive care. Only 9.3 percent of intensive care beds are currently free. Ten percent is considered the threshold value for the responsiveness of hospitals, below which it should not fall.

The president of the German Society for Internal Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine, Christian Karagiannidis, warned that the situation will worsen. “We will certainly have regional bottlenecks [on New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day], but not across the board,” he said in an interview with *RND*. “I’m more concerned about January and the mood that’s resonating right now. Hospitals will be running at full capacity in January, and staff are slowly starting to resign under the constant burden.”

Additionally, a growing staffing shortage is putting a strain on hospitals. In the last two years alone, he said, hospitals have lost 25 percent of high-care intensive care beds because of a lack of staff. “It’s an illusion to think those beds will ever be reinstated,” Karagiannidis said. This capacity has been lost forever, “This is the new reality for which we have to find a solution.”

However, the consequences of the pandemic still go far beyond the immediate situation in the hospitals and the number of deaths. Even seemingly harmless infections attack organs and can seriously damage them. Hundreds of thousands of people in Germany are already struggling with the consequences of Long COVID. Life expectancy has fallen by half a year and excess mortality is reaching record levels.

In the future, the murderous “herd immunity” policy of allowing the virus to rip through the population, which has already led to more than 160,000 deaths in Germany alone, is to be implemented even more brutally. In addition to the planned elimination of

protective measures, numerous vaccination centres will also be closed in 2023. Yet more than one in five people are still not vaccinated. Only 63 percent of the population has received one booster vaccination, and only 15 percent has received two.

The impact of China abandoning its Zero COVID policy, which Western governments and the media have long called for, can now be added to this. The ever-escalating COVID disaster and the rapid infection of millions of people with the virus threaten to lead to the emergence of new more infectious, dangerous, and resistant variants.

In a recent perspective, the WSWs warned:

The laws of viral evolution are objective and detached from baseless claims of governments that COVID-19 will gradually become less dangerous. At any point, a new variant could evolve that combines increased immune-resistance, transmissibility and virulence, producing an even greater global wave of infections and deaths.

And drew the necessary conclusions from the dangerous situation:

In 2023, the international working class must draw the political and scientific lessons from the first three years of the pandemic, reject the lies of the capitalist ruling elites and their pliant media, and take up a global struggle to stop the spread of COVID-19 and massively expand public health in every country. The capitalist subordination of human life to profit and the accumulation of wealth must be ended.



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