

**Telephone conference  
between the Federal Chancellor  
and the Heads of Government of the Länder  
on 15 April 2020**

**Decision**

**Item 2      Restrictions to public life in order to curb the spread of the  
Covid-19 epidemic**

The Federal Chancellor and the Heads of Government of the Länder have adopted the following decision:

The rapid spread of the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) in Germany in the first half of March prompted the Federation and the Länder to impose drastic restrictions on members of the public in order to protect people against infection and to prevent the healthcare system from being overburdened. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the overwhelming majority of the population who have complied with these measures in a spirit of solidarity and with patience, and especially those who are ensuring the practical implementation of these measures, as well as, of course, those working in the healthcare system.

With these restrictions, we have managed to slow down the rate of infection in Germany. This is good news. At the same time, we have also established that, without restrictions, the rate of infection increases very rapidly whereas slowing it down takes a great deal of time and requires drastic measures.

We must therefore do everything we can to safeguard the successes of recent weeks.

For the time ahead, the guiding principle of our actions is that we want to protect all people in Germany as much as possible against the risk of infection. This especially applies to elderly people and those with pre-existing medical conditions. Severe symptoms have also been reported among young people, however. A particular focus is therefore on infection control and hygiene measures across the board, and

especially where coming into contact with other people is necessary, for instance in specific working environments.

We will take small steps in our efforts to restart public life, to enable members of the public to enjoy greater freedom of movement once again and to restore disrupted value-added chains. This must be thought through carefully, however, and accompanied in each individual case by protective measures to help prevent new chains of infection from emerging as far as possible. Our yardstick here continues to be to ensure that the rate of infection remains low enough for our healthcare system to be able to offer each and every infected patient the best possible treatment and to minimise the number of patients with severe symptoms as well as fatalities.

We must all be aware that we have not overcome the epidemic by slowing down the rate of infection in recent weeks and that the epidemic is ongoing. We therefore cannot return to life as it was before the epidemic, but we must learn how to live with it for a prolonged period of time.

The Federal Chancellor and the Heads of Government of the Länder have therefore agreed to the following:

1. The **joint decisions** of 12, 16 and 22 March 2020 and the accompanying decisions by the Head of the Federal Chancellery and the Heads of the State and Senate Chancelleries of the Länder as well as the decisions taken by the Corona Cabinet will continue to apply. The provisions set out in these decisions will be extended until 3 May unless other stipulations are made below (Annex 1 provides an overview of the measures to remain in place).
2. The most important measure for the time ahead remains to keep our distance from others. It therefore continues to be vital that members of the public keep a minimum distance of 1.5 metres from one another in public and that they either be in such places alone, with one further person not living in their household or accompanied by members of their own household. This continues to be binding, and violations of these **contact restrictions** will be penalised accordingly by the authorities responsible for public order.
3. In order to identify chains of infection rapidly in the future, carry out targeted testing, ensure comprehensive **contact-tracing** and offer those affected

professional care, considerable additional personnel capacities will be created on the ground in **public healthcare services** with, as a minimum, a team of five people for every 20,000 inhabitants. In particularly affected areas, additional teams from the Länder are to be deployed and the Bundeswehr will also support such regions in their contact-tracing efforts and healthcare work with trained personnel. The objective of the Federation and the Länder is to identify all chains of infection and to break them as quickly as possible. The Federal Office of Administration is conducting online training courses with a view to optimising reporting of cases and to improve the cooperation between healthcare services and the Robert Koch Institute with regard to contact-tracing. Furthermore, the Federal Ministry of Health is planning a funding programme for technical equipment and upgrading, as well as training for local healthcare services. In order to improve our understanding of the contexts in which infections take place and to achieve an improved basis for making decisions as to where contact restriction measures are particularly necessary, the suspected chains of infection must, as set out in the Infection Protection Act, be recorded as comprehensively as possible.

4. The **use of digital “contact-tracing”** is a vitally important measure with a view to supporting the rapid and most comprehensive tracing of contacts. The Federation and the Länder are supporting the architectural concept of Pan-European Privacy-Preserving Proximity Tracing as this pursues a pan-European approach that ensures compliance with European and German data protection regulations and only saves contacts relevant to epidemiological considerations from the past three weeks in anonymised form on the user’s mobile phone without recording the user’s movement profile. Furthermore, usage of the app is to be based on the principle of voluntariness. As soon as, based on the core software already presented, a widely applicable software (app) is available, it will be important that a large section of the population uses this technology in order to swiftly establish whether they have come into contact with an infected person so that they can quickly respond to this. The Federation and the Länder will call on members of the public to use this app. Moreover, all those who, irrespective of this, are working on tracing apps, are strongly encouraged to use the architectural concept mentioned above in order to ensure that all apps are compatible. A hotchpotch of separate systems would undermine the success of this measure.

5. Germany has a high **testing capacity** of up to 650,000 tests per week in order to identify coronavirus infections (PCR tests). The Federation is also ensuring additional testing capacities for Germany with the procurement of testing devices and – as far as possible in the current situation in global markets – by acquiring individual kits, reagents and supplies through tripartite agreements with the involvement of the Federation as a guarantor. An essential factor for success in fighting the epidemic is to conduct tests in a targeted manner and at the right time. Testing activities are therefore being closely coordinated between the Robert Koch Institute and the healthcare services of the Länder and the municipalities in order to swiftly and reliably identify those who have been infected and to put in place the necessary quarantine and contact-tracing measures as well as provide treatment without delay.
6. The Federation supports the Länder and the Associations of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians in the procurement of **personal protective equipment** for the healthcare system. Alongside procurement, chiefly abroad, intensive work is being done also in Germany to establish production capacities for the required products. Our priority is to provide blanket coverage for healthcare and nursing facilities with medical protective masks, which protect those wearing them from infection. Capacities above and beyond this should be deployed in areas of workplace safety in which, for occupational reasons, compliance with social distancing cannot be ensured across the board. With respect to the wearing of masks in public spaces on a day-to-day basis, the recommendations of the Robert Koch Institute apply, according to which the wearing of (non-medical) masks for everyday use or community masks in public spaces in which the minimum distance cannot be ensured as a rule (e.g. public transport) can reduce the risk of infection. In particular, such masks protect those in immediate proximity against solid or liquid particles expelled by (possibly asymptomatic, yet infectious) people wearing masks. Members of the public are therefore strongly recommended to wear masks for everyday use especially when taking public transport or when shopping.
7. Special protective measures must be taken for vulnerable groups and especially for **care homes, retirement homes and centres for people with disabilities** in accordance with the respective local conditions and in the respective institutions. The focus here must be on protecting vulnerable groups and the risk of the spread of infections in these institutions must be the most important benchmark.

However, it must also be taken into account that regulations to this end must not lead to the total social isolation of those affected. A specific concept should therefore be developed for the respective institution drawing on external experts, in particular specialist doctors for hospital hygiene, and this should be further elaborated and adjusted with close reference to the development of infections in the respective context.

8. Before **kindergartens, schools and universities** open, a period of time is needed so that the necessary preparations can be made in the buildings and, for example, transport can be organised for pupils. The school operators, transport organisations and school communities will be informed as soon as possible.

Emergency childcare will be continued and extended to further groups of professions and persons who need childcare.

Following the necessary preparations, the examinations and preparations for them are to be able to resume for the classes leaving school this year.

Furthermore, secondary and vocational school students who are leaving school this year or have qualification-relevant examinations in the coming school year, as well as pupils in their final year in primary school, can be taught as priority groups from 4 May 2020.

The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany will be tasked with presenting a concept by 29 April on further steps on how teaching can be resumed with special hygiene and protective measures in place, taking into particular account the need to maintain physical distance via reduced class sizes. In addition to classes, breaks and school-bus operations should be considered. Every school needs to have a hygiene plan. School operators are called on to create the necessary hygiene conditions in their schools and to ensure that they are constantly upheld. The Federal Chancellor will discuss the timings for starting teaching in the various year groups and childcare in kindergartens with the Heads of Government of the Länder in the light of developments in the numbers of infections.

In addition to holding examinations, universities can also resume practical courses that require special laboratories or work spaces in their buildings, with special hygiene and protective measures in place. Libraries and archives can be opened, subject to conditions for hygiene, organising admission and preventing queues from forming.

9. **Large events** play a major role in the infection momentum and must therefore be banned until at least 31 August 2020.
10. The following **shops** can additionally reopen, subject to conditions for hygiene, organising admission and preventing queues from forming:
- all shops with a shop floor of up to 800m<sup>2</sup>
  - all car dealers, bicycle shops and book shops, irrespective of the size of their shop floor.
11. With regard to service providers in which physical proximity is unavoidable, **hairstyling salons** are to begin preparing to reopen from 4 May, subject to conditions for hygiene, organising admission and preventing queues from forming, as well as the use of personal protective equipment.
12. The Federal Chancellor and the Heads of Government of the Länder are aware that the **practice of religion** is of particular importance and that active faith provides strength and hope, especially against the backdrop of the difficulties that this epidemic and its impact pose to many people. However, given everything we know about the role of gatherings in spreading the virus and about the danger of infection and the severe development of the disease among vulnerable groups, it remains urgently necessary to restrict religious services, prayers and study to media methods. It remains the case that gatherings in churches, mosques, synagogues, as well as religious celebrations and events and gatherings by other faith groups, are not to be held for the time being. The Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, along with representatives from the group of Minister-Presidents, will begin talks with the major faith groups before the end of the week in order to lay the groundwork for a path based on the greatest possible consensus.
13. We want to ensure **safe working practices** during the pandemic in as wide a range as possible of industry and small and medium-sized enterprises. The exception remains economic activities with a large number of visitors. Employers have a particular responsibility for their staff in order to protect them from infections. Chains of infection that develop in a company are to be identified quickly. Every company in Germany must therefore implement a hygiene concept based on an adapted risk assessment and company pandemic planning. One of the aims of this is to prevent unnecessary contact between staff and with customers, to implement general hygiene measures and to minimise the risk of infection in necessary contacts via special hygiene and protective measures.

Companies remain called on to enable staff to work from home wherever possible. The health and safety authorities and the accident insurance companies will advise firms on this and conduct inspections. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is discussing this matter with the social partners, the Länder and the DGUV (German Social Accident Insurance) and will present a concept in the near future.

14. Independently of the closures imposed, there have been many production problems and occurrences of downtime in the past weeks because key components have not been delivered. The Federation and the Länder are helping the business sector to **restore** disrupted international **supply chains**. To this end, the federal and Land economic affairs ministries are setting up contact points for companies affected by this situation. The aim is that these contact points will help at the political level to ensure that the production and delivery of the necessary components run smoothly again where possible. On the Federation side, the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure, the Federal Ministry of Finance, which is responsible for customs, and the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community will be involved in this contact point.
15. In order to help prevent the virus from spreading widely, the public remains called on to generally refrain from **travelling for personal reasons or visiting people**, including relatives. This also applies in Germany and to touristic day trips to other regions. The worldwide travel warning remains in place. Accommodation in Germany will continue to be provided only for necessary and explicitly non-tourism purposes. The two-week quarantine period in accordance with the provisions of the agreement of 8 April 2020 between the Federation and the Länder will continue to apply to people entering or returning to Germany. Goods, commuters and other people travelling for work may continue to enter and leave Germany as before.
16. In the future, we will need to take into account that the epidemic is not spreading evenly in Germany. While some districts are still hardly affected, the healthcare systems and public healthcare services in other regions are overburdened. This leads to a dynamic infection development, which furthers the spread of the virus in Germany. The Federation and the Länder will therefore provide rapidly available support measures for **particularly affected regions** and liaise closely on this matter with the federal and Land crisis task forces. If the achievements in

slowing down the infection development are not to be jeopardised, there must be an immediate response to regional developments featuring high numbers of new infections and a rapid increase in the infection rate. This also includes maintaining the current wide-ranging restrictions in these places or reintroducing them immediately across the board following their temporary relaxation. Furthermore, restrictions on non-essential travel to and outside the particularly affected regions may be required in specific cases.

17. Without a **vaccine**, it is not possible to achieve immunity against SARS-CoV-2 in the population in the near future without overburdening the healthcare system and running the risk of a large number of fatalities. That is why it is crucial to develop a vaccine. The Federal Government is supporting German companies and international organisations as regards developing a vaccine as quickly as possible. A vaccine is the key to returning to normal daily life. As soon as a vaccine is available, sufficient doses for the entire population must be available promptly.
18. In addition to its work on developing a vaccine, the **research sector** is making other important contributions to overcoming the pandemic. With the support of federal and Land research institutions, a SARS-CoV-2 database is being set up in order to document and evaluate hospital treatment. In conjunction with studies on various medicines, this will make it possible to identify the best ways to prevent and treat severe cases of the disease. With this initiative, Germany is taking part in the WHO Solidarity Trial. A further priority is to determine immunity to SARS-CoV-2 in the population as a whole and in certain population groups. To this end, testing capacities will be expanded and the development and optimisation of the tests will be supported. The first regional studies have already begun and extensive studies are being planned. This information is constantly being fed into the assessment of the further course of the pandemic in Germany.
19. With this decision, the Federation and the Länder are taking a large number of measures to control the chains of infection even more effectively. Some of these measures have an immediate impact, while others require more time. That is why it is right to inspect the infection momentum at regular intervals, approximately every two weeks, and in particular to look very closely at capacities in the healthcare system (particularly ventilation capacities) and the capabilities of the public healthcare services (particularly tracing all contacts). Each time after this, a decision will be made on whether and which further steps can be taken.



Accordingly, the first steps described here will initially apply until 3 May. The Federal Chancellor and the Heads of Government of the Länder will reassess the development of the infection and the economic and social situation in Germany together again and decide further measures in light of the findings before 4 May.

## Annex 1:

### **General overview of measures remaining in place from earlier decisions**

(This list is designed to provide an overview and makes no claim to be complete. It is not part of the decision.)

Before 15 April 2020, the Federal Government and the Minister-Presidents of the Länder repeatedly agreed on guidelines on a uniform approach aimed at further limiting social contacts in the public area in the light of the coronavirus epidemic in Germany. The following key aspects are not separately referred to in the above-mentioned decision and therefore continue to apply unchanged pursuant to paragraph 1:

1. The following retail outlets will **not** be closed and will also be allowed to open on Sundays. They must comply with rules for maintaining hygiene, manage access and avoiding queues:
  - a. grocery stores, open-air food markets, delivery services, beverage shops,
  - b. pharmacies, medical supply shops, drugstores,
  - c. petrol stations,
  - d. banks and savings banks, post offices,
  - e. cleaners, laundromats,
  - f. newsagents,
  - g. home improvement stores, garden supply stores, pet supply stores and
  - h. wholesalers.
2. Crafts and trades businesses can continue to operate.
3. Service providers can continue to operate. However, service providers in the personal care sector such as cosmetic studios, massage salons, tattoo parlours and similar establishments (with the exception of hairdressers following today's decision) will remain closed, because physical proximity is unavoidable in these professions. Necessary medical treatments will still be permitted.
4. All public health facilities will remain open subject to increased hygiene requirements.
5. The following are closed to the public:
  - a. restaurants and cafés. This does not include the delivery and collection of food that can be taken away and consumed at home.
  - b. bars, clubs, discotheques, pubs and similar establishments
  - c. theatres, opera houses, concert halls, museums, galleries, exhibitions, zoological and botanical gardens and similar establishments
  - d. trade fairs, cinemas, leisure parks and providers of leisure activities (both indoor and outdoor), specialised markets (unless explicitly regulated otherwise in the decision of 15 April), amusement arcades, casinos, betting offices and similar establishments
  - e. places of prostitution, brothels and similar establishments
  - f. sporting activities at all public and private sports facilities, pools,
  - g. fitness studios and similar establishments
  - h. outlet centres
  - i. playgrounds.
6. The following are prohibited:

- a. gatherings in clubs or other sport or leisure facilities, participation
  - b. in activities offered by adult education institutions, music schools and other extracurricular activities of public and private educational institutions.
7. The following rules are still to be issued:
- a. rules for visiting hospitals and facilities for prevention and rehabilitation, care homes and special types of accommodation as defined in Book IX of the Social Code and similar institutions in order to restrict visits (e.g. one visit per day for one hour, no visits by children under the age of 16, no visits by persons with respiratory infections, etc.)
  - b. a general ban on entering the above-mentioned institutions as well as universities, schools and child day-care centres which remain open, at least for persons who have been abroad or in particularly hard-hit regions in Germany within the past 14 days
  - c. rules for hotels (only for business trips, not for tourism purposes) to reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus, for example by requiring a certain distance between tables, limiting the number of guests, requiring hygiene measures and information