

Germany: Angela Merkel urges patience with lockdown rules

Merkel has thanked families for their “huge effort” during the pandemic in the face of school closures, but has asked for more patience. A senior lawmaker has suggested Germany’s lockdown will go beyond February 14.

Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday recognized families have had to carry an increased burden during the pandemic as Germany closed its schools, as well as asking parents to work from home.

However, she indicated it’s still too early to reopen Germany’s places of childcare and education.

“We are not yet ready to reopen daycare centers and schools,” she said in her weekly video podcast released on Saturday. “But the more consistent we are now, refraining from contact and keeping our distance, following hygiene rules and wearing masks, the sooner it will be possible again.”

‘Huge effort’

Speaking ahead of her Monday meeting with Germany’s 16 state premiers to discuss the pandemic, Merkel said the crisis had required a “huge effort” from families in the face of the weeks-long lockdown, but she appealed for more patience.

“We are doing everything we can to be the first to reopen daycare centers and schools in order to give children back a piece of their familiar everyday life and to relieve families,” Merkel said.

At the same time, Merkel warned against “a very real danger from highly contagious virus mutations.”

The German government has come under increased pressure over its slow vaccine rollout. There have been supply bottlenecks on the part of pharmaceutical companies, as well as uncertainty over the AstraZeneca vaccine’s efficacy in people aged 65 and over, at least in Germany.

Lockdown set to continue beyond mid-February

According to the Robert Koch Institute, the number of new infections reported within a seven-day period per 100,000 inhabitants is currently at 90.9. The federal government's target is 50.

Until this number is significantly reduced, there is little end in sight for Germany's lockdown, which is due to end on February 14, according to Ralph Brinkhaus, the leader of Merkel's conservative bloc in the German parliament.

"Better to take a little tougher action now for a little longer than an out-in-out-in-out situation, which ultimately wears everyone down," he told the Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland on Saturday.

On Friday, Germany announced entry restrictions for travelers from the UK, Ireland, Brazil, Portugal, and South Africa, as concerns continued to rise over more contagious coronavirus variants.

Source:

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