

Courtesy Translation: Lena Stange, Public Affairs Specialist

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Protective masks, schools, shops, restaurants, churches

This is how Hessen will proceed in the Corona crisis

In the fight against the corona virus, the federal and state governments have decided on further measures: the contact restrictions will be extended until at least May 3, smaller shops are allowed to reopen on Monday. School might start again for older students April 27. In addition, citizens should wear protective masks.

Spring season without company: The current contact restrictions for people in Hessen and other federal states have been extended until at least May 3. That means that people in Hessen are only allowed to go out in public alone or in pairs. The federal and state governments decided this on Wednesday.

"The contact ban remains as is," said Minister President Volker Bouffier (CDU) on Wednesday evening. The measures have already taken effect, but the danger has not yet been averted, he said.

It continues to be a matter of not overloading the health system and not jeopardizing successes that we've had so far, said Bouffier. "It is better to take small steps than to take big steps now without knowing how it will actually work out." On April 30, the federal and state governments want to discuss further steps.

Protective masks recommended

The federal and state governments recommend that citizens wear protective masks when shopping and in public transport. However, there is no Germany-wide general mask requirement.

The next few months will be tough for soccer and concert fans: Due to the corona pandemic, big events in general will be prohibited until August 31 - public festivals and soccer games included. Specific regulations, such as the size of the events, are to be determined by the federal states.

School in Hessen expected to start April 27

Schools in Hessen can resume classes beginning April 27, starting with the final year of Gymnasien, Real- and Hauptschulen. Then, according to Bouffier, upper and intermediate levels follow. Elementary schools will reopen later. "We start with the older students because we believe that it is easier for them to stick to the distance and hygiene rules than it is for elementary school children," Bouffier said.

Childcare centers will have to remain closed for quite some time, Bouffier said. But they are planning to expand emergency childcare - especially for single parents. So far, there is emergency care for children,

who are normally in childcare facilities and students, classes 1 to 6, during work time if their parents have a certain profession. These professions include police, geriatric nurses or judges.

Recommendations from the federal government were already leaked before the federal-state discussion began. In the draft resolution for Chancellor Merkel's video conference with the minister presidents, it was said that the Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK) is supposed to present a concept by April 29 on "how school with reduced group sizes - under special hygiene and protective measures, especially taking into account the distance requirements - can be resumed."

Many shops are allowed to reopen on Monday

Economic life should also gradually start again: Beginning Monday, shops with a sales area of up to 800 square meters may reopen. Regardless of the sales area, this also applies to car dealers, bicycle dealers and bookstores. "It is important that the distance rules are followed," said Bouffier.

Beginning May 4, hairdressers may also reopen in Hessen under certain requirements. Restaurants, bars and pubs should remain closed. According to Bouffier, there was no agreement on this point at the federal-state discussion. According to Bouffier, ice cream parlors will be able to offer a delivery service beginning next week like restaurants. Ice cream parlors are currently not allowed to sell anything in Hessen.

Economy partly agrees

The Hessian Chamber of Commerce and Industry sees these measures as an encouraging sign. This could revitalize the city centers, said HIHK President Eberhard Flammer. "However, it is difficult for us to understand the specific requirements on sales areas and individual sectors." They lead to a lack of clarity, legal uncertainty and unnecessary distortions of competition, he said.

Churches, mosques, synagogues remain closed for the time being

The ban on gatherings in places of worship due to the corona virus remains in effect until further notice. For the time being, no religious celebrations and events should take place in churches, mosques, synagogues or locations of other religious communities.

The states want to discuss with the churches and religious communities how religious events in their places of worship could be made possible again in the future under distance and hygiene regulations.

The chairman of the German Bishops' Conference, Bishop of Limburg Georg Bätzing, was disappointed. "Given the measures in other areas of public life, I cannot understand." He announced a proposal on how "religious practice and protection against infection could be guaranteed".

Visitor ban in retirement homes stays in effect

In Hessen's retirement and nursing homes, the strict visitor and contact ban shall remain. However, Bouffier said it is hard to justify keeping elderly people away from relatives for weeks or months. He is against a curfew for the elderly. It is important to develop concepts for maximum protection with contact options at the same time.

After a recent moderate increase, the number of registered coronavirus infections in Hessen has risen again more significantly: According to the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Covid-19 virus was detected in 6,334 people by Wednesday, 155 more than the previous day. The number of deaths rose by 27 to 174.