

Bavarian town is first in Germany to impose full lockdown

March 19 2020

The streets are deserted and the church square empty in the small Bavarian town of Mitterteich, the first in Germany to go into total lockdown over the spiralling coronavirus outbreak.

The 6,500 residents are forbidden from leaving their homes without a valid reason, giving a foretaste of what could lie ahead for the rest of the country where many have defied confinement measures.

The people of Mitterteich, located in the district of Tirschenreuth in southern Bavaria, woke up to a different world on Thursday morning.

The benches stood vacant outside the town's picturesque 17th-century church.

Apart from the odd delivery van and police car, the cobbled streets remained clear, filled only with the sound of birdsong.

On the outskirts of town, police in high-visibility jackets stopped people in their cars as they attempted to drive in and out, granting entry only to residents.

According to district administrator Wolfgang Lippert, residents could only leave home if they have to go to work, see a doctor or go grocery shopping.

But they appeared to be taking it on the chin.

"It's good that we are the first town to have this curfew, and it's also great that it's being done so consistently," resident Sandra Wedlich said.

She said she worried about her mother and husband who were in the at-risk groups for the virus. "He wanted to go out today and I told him 'no'".

The drastic measures come after Mitterteich emerged as a [coronavirus](#) hotspot, accounting for around half of the roughly 40 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Tirschenreuth.

Officials believe many of the infections are linked to a recent beer festival.

'Corona parties'

The state of Bavaria is one of the worst-hit in Germany, according to official figures from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) disease control centre.

But the virus is spreading fast elsewhere too, prompting Chancellor Angela Merkel to appeal to citizens in a TV address on Wednesday evening to limit social interactions.

Germany reported an overnight increase of more than 2,800 official cases on Thursday, bringing the total to more than 10,000.

Borders have been shut to stem the contagion, while across the country shops have been closed, restaurants forced to operate restricted opening hours and people urged to work from home.

But not everyone seemed to have got the message.

In Berlin, reports of young people gathering in parks for so-called

"corona parties" prompted city mayor Michael Mueller to promise a total lockdown if residents did not start behaving themselves.

Bavarian premier Markus Soeder has threatened similar action, in line with lockdowns already seen in Italy, Spain, France and Belgium.

"If large numbers of people are not restricting themselves voluntarily, then in the end the only instrument left to react to this is a Bavaria-wide curfew," Soeder said.

For the people of Mitterteich, the unprecedented situation will take some getting used to.

"It's strange, because our streets were never so empty," said Andreas Degner. "It's an unsettling feeling, I must say."

But he was determined to look on the bright side.

"I'm going to watch films, read... I'll find something to do. I'll have enough time."

© 2020 AFP

Citation: Bavarian town is first in Germany to impose full lockdown (2020, March 19) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-03-bavarian-town-germany-impose-full.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.