

Merkel announces sweeping curbs to keep Germans home in virus fight

March 16 2020

German leaders on Monday urged citizens to stay home, as the government announced unprecedented nationwide measures to radically scale back public life in order to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Chancellor Angela Merkel called on Germans to cancel any holidays at home and abroad, while president Frank-Walter Steinmeier told people to "stay at home".

The government banned gatherings in churches, mosques and synagogues and ordered non-essential shops as well as playgrounds shut.

The number of virus cases in Germany rose to 6,012 on Monday, a leap of 1,174 in 24 hours, according to the tally posted on disease control agency Robert Koch Institute's website.

So far the country has seen 16 fatalities.

At a press conference in Berlin, Merkel said that under the new measures, "there shouldn't be any holiday trips undertaken inside the country or outside it".

"There have never been measures like this in our country before. They are far-reaching, but at the moment they are necessary."

Meanwhile, Steinmeier called on Germans to "work together to ensure the virus spreads as slowly as possible".

"So wherever possible: stay at home! Avoid close contact... and have understanding for all restrictive measures," he said in a statement.

The sweeping restrictions aimed at "limiting social contact in public places" will leave most sites from museums to swimming pools to gyms shuttered.

But supermarkets, banks and post offices will stay open, as will pharmacies and petrol stations.

Hairdressers, construction supply stores and laundromats will also keep operating, the government said.

Restaurants and cafes can stay open, but only until 6 pm daily.

Hotels will only be used for "essential and explicitly not for tourist purposes", the government added.

Authorities had last week ordered schools shut, and regional trains have been curtailed in a bid to reduce travel.

Germany also from Monday re-introduced checks on its borders with Austria, France, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Denmark, turning back motorists without an essential reason to enter Germany.

With most of Europe now in lockdown, and stock markets in a tailspin, Berlin on Friday promised companies "unlimited" credit to keep them afloat.

The economic package is worth at least 550 billion euros (\$614 billion) initially—the biggest in Germany's post-war history.

Citation: Merkel announces sweeping curbs to keep Germans home in virus fight (2020, March 16) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-03-home-german-citizens.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.