

Germany moving towards gradual reopening as virus cases drops

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Germany is moving towards a progressive lifting of restrictions linked to the coronavirus outbreak as new infections fall and the number of deaths remains far below its European neighbours.

The nation's Academy of Sciences Leopoldina recommended Monday a

gradual relaxing of restrictions in stages if new infections stabilise at a low level and personal hygiene measures to avoid spread of the coronavirus are maintained.

The Academy's findings are to form the basis for a decision Wednesday by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the heads of Germany's 16 regions about whether to extend restrictions imposed in mid-March that are set to expire on Sunday.

The latest figures by the Robert Koch public health institute indicate new infections are indeed slowing, dropping to 2,537 on Monday, taking the total to 123,016.

With 2,799 deaths from COVID-19, the disease caused by the new [coronavirus](#), Germany is far behind other big European nations.

Over the weekend, Germany's Health Minister Jens Spahn had already cued up a phased easing of restrictions that may vary by region.

He did not specify which sectors in Europe's largest economy could first see loosened restrictions.

For its part, the Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, recommended reopening schools as soon as possible, starting with primary and middle schools, although most child care facilities should remain closed. The academy includes [social scientists](#) as well as medical researchers among its team of experts.

It recommended reopening shops and restaurants as long as social distancing measures are rigorously respected, and for government offices to get back to work.

The head of the Academy, Gerald Haug, said these measures could only

go forward accompanied by an obligation to wear a [face mask](#) while riding in [public transport](#) to prevent a resurgence of infections.

"Every citizen should in the future have this type of protection for their mouth and nose and wear it each time social distancing measures can't be respected," he told the weekly Der Spiegel.

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