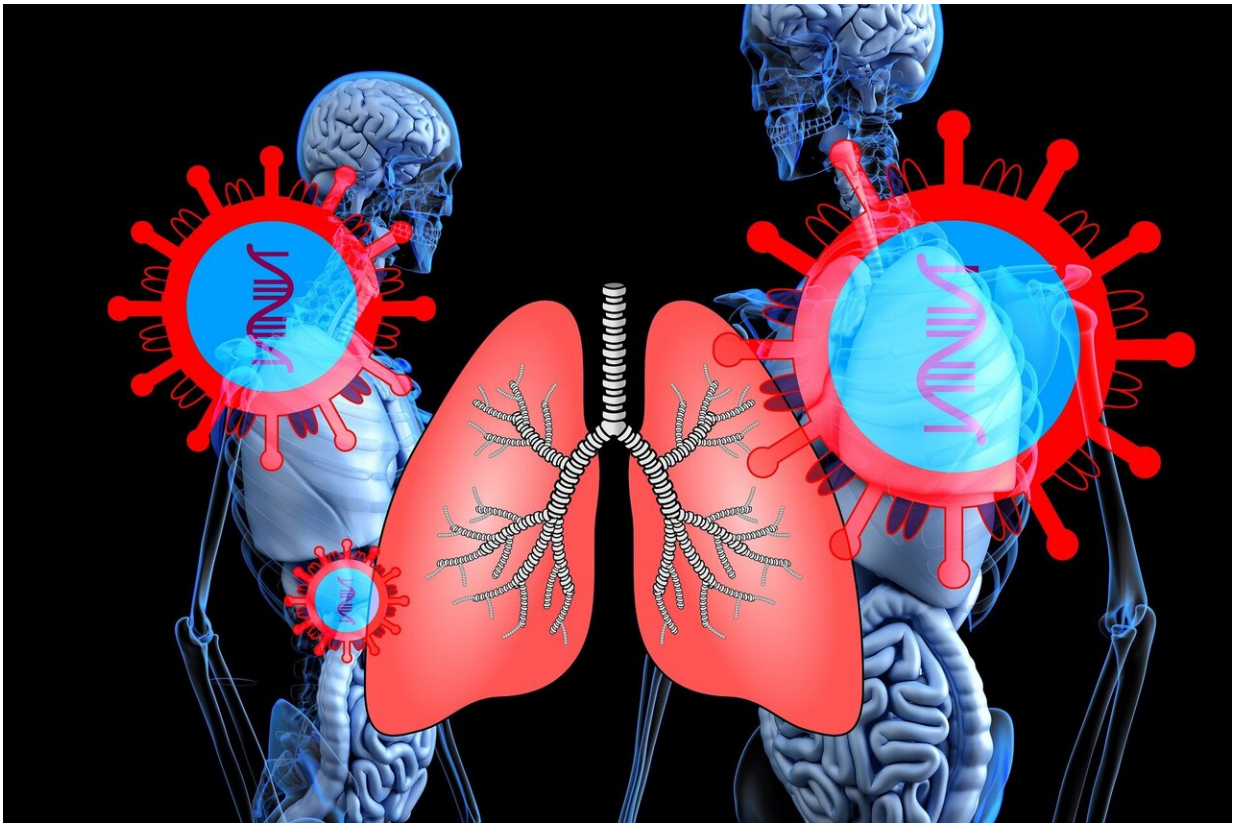


Merkel urges caution as Germany eases more virus curbs

April 30 2020



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Germany announced further plans to ease coronavirus curbs on public life Thursday, with religious institutions, playgrounds, museums and zoos given the green light to reopen.

After a meeting with state premiers on Thursday, Chancellor Angela Merkel said the relaxing of measures was just a "step", with a more far-reaching plan to be agreed next week.

"It remains absolutely important that we stay disciplined," said Merkel, adding that the effects of the new relaxations would be watched carefully.

In order to receive visitors, the institutions will have to meet "requirements for hygiene, [access control](#) and avoidance of queues".

Other decisions, such as when to open schools and restaurants and resume Bundesliga football, were pushed back until next week.

Merkel said that "clear decisions" would be made on May 6 on reopening schools and kindergartens, as well as allowing "certain sporting endeavours" to resume.

Next week's meeting is therefore expected to produce a final decision on whether the Bundesliga can become the first of Europe's major football leagues to resume play next month.

The top flight league has already presented a blueprint to resume the season behind closed doors, and clubs began testing players on Thursday.

'Caution'

Germany has in the last weeks began to unwind stay-at-home measures aimed at stemming the spread of the [coronavirus](#), with shops allowed to receive customers again since last week.

Restrictions were relaxed after the infection rate fell under 1.0—meaning each person is infecting less than one other—as opposed

to each infecting up five or six people.

With a relatively low death rate of four percent, Germany has been hailed for its success so far in preventing its [health services](#) from being overwhelmed.

As the situation improves, voices are now growing louder within Europe's biggest [economy](#) for the government to move faster on lifting the restrictions that have seriously crippled the economy.

The shutdown lasting more than a month has sunk the economy into a recession, which the government estimates will reach 6.3 percent for the full year.

The ranks of jobless people have also swelled significantly, reaching 2.6 million in April from 2.3 million in March.

Late Wednesday, authorities also suffered a setback on their lockdown plans after the constitutional court a ban on [religious services](#) amounted to "a serious infringement of religious freedom".

But like other countries seeking a way out of their lockdowns, Merkel is treading the fine line between allowing the economy to reboot while preventing a new wave of infections.

On Thursday, the chancellor insisted that "caution is the order of the day".

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