

Germany's biggest state to reopen restaurants, hotels

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Germany's biggest state Bavaria will allow restaurants to reopen from May 18, the state premier said Tuesday, after the shutdown to limit transmission of the novel coronavirus that crippled the economy.

In the progressive plan to restart the gastronomy and hospitality sectors, Markus Soeder said restaurants would first be allowed to offer outdoor dining from May 18, before extending the opening to indoor dining a week later.

Hotels would also be allowed to welcome guests again from May 30, in time for the Pentecost holiday long weekend.

"The time has come for a cautious reopening," said Soeder, pointing to the "success" in containing the spread of the virus.

Pressure has been growing on Chancellor Angela Merkel to ease stay-at-home measures that have sunk the economy into a deep recession.

While shops have reopened over the last weeks, critics have complained that the pace of easing was too slow with many sectors still locked down.

On the eve of a key meeting between Merkel and leaders of Germany's 16 states, several regions have preempted the talks by announcing plans to relax the curbs.

Eastern state Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania will allow restaurants to reopen from Saturday and hotels to follow from May 18.

Another eastern state Saxony-Anhalt has meanwhile eased restrictions on keeping gatherings in public to two people unless they are from the same household.

On Saturday, the state's regional government decided to allow up to five people to gather outside.

Germany has been hailed for its success so far in preventing its [health services](#) from being overwhelmed.

Authorities began relaxing restrictions after the infection rate fell under 1.0—meaning each person is infecting less than one other—as opposed to each infecting up to five or six people in March.

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