

Germany to chart way out of coronavirus restrictions

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German Chancellor Olaf Scholz speaks during his talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022.
Credit: Mikhail Klimentyev, Sputnik, Kremlin Pool Photo via AP

Chancellor Olaf Scholz is conferring with Germany's 16 state governors

Wednesday to map a way out of coronavirus restrictions as official figures show new infections beginning to drift downward.

Germany saw infections caused by the [omicron variant](#), which is highly contagious but generally causes milder illness than previous variants, surge later than in several other European countries.

Officials have attributed this to restrictions that include curbs on private gatherings, the closure of night clubs and requirements for people to show proof of vaccination or recovery to enter restaurants and bars.

But other countries, including neighboring Denmark, also have moved faster to lift restrictions, and there are growing calls for Germany to follow suit. Already, many German states have moved to scrap [rules that prevented people without proof of vaccination or recovery](#) from visiting nonessential stores.

At Wednesday's meeting, Scholz and the governors are expected to consider proposals to drop most restrictions by March 20, moving in several steps.

Germany's national disease control center has reported several days of slight drops in the country's infection rate, though it remains far above pre-omicron levels.



A doctor vaccinates an employee of MKT Krankentransport OHG in a mobile vaccination station at Wettersteinplatz in Munich, Germany, Monday, Feb. 14, 2022. Mobile vaccination station change the location in the city every day and offer vaccination against the coronavirus to citizen. Credit: Sven Hoppe/dpa via AP

"We are past the peak of the omicron wave, pretty much exactly on the day I predicted a month ago," Health Minister Karl Lauterbach told the Bild daily on Tuesday. That, he said, makes "modest loosening" of restrictions possible.

As Germany moves toward easing its latest restrictions, prospects of a vaccine mandate for all adults appear to be receding. Scholz came out in favor of such a mandate just before he became chancellor in December,

but his three-party coalition is divided on the issue and he left it to parliament to come up with proposals.

At present, it's unclear when lawmakers will vote on legislation and what if any kind of mandate would muster a majority.

Even already-approved legislation requiring health sector workers to present proof of vaccination or recovery by mid-March has run into difficulties, although Germany's highest court last week refused to temporarily block its implementation.

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