German Position Paper on future pandemics

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Outline

The country of Germany believes that the COVID-19 pandemic has been, and is still, a tremendous challenge for countries worldwide, calling for joint collaboration and problem solving with more pooled sovereignty to the European Union. To date, Germany has reported 2,782,925 coronavirus infections and 75,915 deaths, serving as a trial for both civic health and the domestic economy.

The developments surrounding the spread and controlling of the virus have had (and still have) a major impact on the economy, from employers, employees, insurance companies, landlords, tenants, the public sector and to all other economic operators. They are feeling the consequences and contractual liability issues which have arisen as a result of disruptions in production and supply chains. Regulatory measures, as well as the resulting personnel and infrastructure deficits in Germany as well and abroad in other EU states, may cause structural difficulties in coordinating operational processes, as well as enormous revenue losses in some cases. In addition, we see the unravelling of a manifold and far-reaching medical, economic, and social impact of the prevailing global health emergency.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the biggest short-term drop in economic activity in centuries, it has also caused changes in how businesses operate and customers behave, some of which are likely to outlast the current crisis. These, in turn, may have a long-term impact on aggregates like output, jobs, and prices – as well as the relationship between them.

Some countries have done well so far in limiting the effects of the virus, while others as have had a troublesome experience in tackling the pandemic. The solution to this gap, as well as the future pandemic tackling, is a stronger European Union to guide and support its members. The COVID pandemic has brought to light some of the European Union's long-standing issues, such as how much the European Commission's legislation propositions can interfere with individual countries policies, what kind of legislation ought to be passed by the European Parliament and Council, and the obligation of national governments to carry out these legislations.

German COVID-19 approach

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Germany has shown signs of progress across the four phases of preparedness and response framework: prevention, detection, containment, and treatment. The handling can be separated into two (three?) different waves:

A strong enabling environment with expert scientific institutions and a strong health care system both contributed to early success in the first pandemic wave. Germany reacted quickly. With early development of testing capacity and high levels of testing, an effective containment strategy among the elderly, and efficient use of sufficient hospital capacity, Germany's prevention protocols facilitated the country's rapid response to the epidemic. In addition, the robust network of local health authorities were also seen as key to keeping its death rate low. Hence, the country has widely been seen as a model-child for its pandemic approach during the first wave of cases that emerged in Europe in the spring of 2020.

The second wave hit however harder, leading to an imposed second lockdown to try to curb a surge in new cases in November of last year, like many of its European neighbours. This time around the country has not been as successful in its approach. In this round restrictions did allow schools and shops to stay open but put strict limits on social gathering and forced the closure of gyms, theatres, pubs, bars and restaurants (aside from takeaway). Germany has in addition enforced a further strict lockdown over the Easter week.

Our solution - "Doing much more together"

The country of Germany proposes that we should first lessen the negative effects previous policies have brought upon us, as well as learn from the past and prepare ourselves carefully and attentively for future health crises. The Covid-19 pandemic has strengthened citizens' beliefs that the European Union is the right place to develop effective solutions to tackle its effects, and Germany wants to use this positive attitude to gain support for more collaboration between the EU countries. This time we should thus include the citizens to a larger extent, especially experts in relevant fields, as U. von der Leyen stated: *"We will listen. And then, we will act"*. This way, we can engage with citizens to build a more resilient Europe and improve the Union's durability to crises, be it economic or health-related.

More concrete, we should aim to support the EU4Health program as a way to recover, and to fulfil fair and just expectations expressed by the many citizens. We should not accept more suffering on the behalf of the people, who have lost and been in distress due to the lack of efficient and common EU approach during this global risk, notably not foreseen despite being anticipated by our many experts within the field of epidemiology and crisis management. Hence, the individuals have suffered as well, in addition to the very economics of member countries. But, we will recover and be stronger than ever, due to experienced setbacks and acquired knowledge brought with the pandemic.

To recover we need to be further integrated, as together we will be robust and more adapt. For the future of the EU we need to choose the option of Carrying on (White paper on the Future of Europe by the European Commission), but we will carry on more efficiently, and we'll increase speed. Hence, Germany supports an EU recovery plan which would allow the member states and their representative economies to recover more rapidly from the negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic, while also strengthening the union's sovereign power. Germany supports the idea of covid passports, in order to avoid border closures and disruption of unitedness, however, further discussion is required regarding details.

Learning from past mistakes is the key to a future EU health related strategy, with common aims of success and, to a larger extent, less unfavourable and adverse outcomes. The COVID-19 crisis affects and affects all 27 member states, calling on the need for efficient and innovative solutions with goals of transparency and authorization mechanisms for tackling pandemics.

While EU4Health Policy will help the EU recover from the ongoing, as well as plausible future pandemic, further coordination will be required in the future. We need to act in accordance with our core principle, solidarity. That is what should be the drive of our EU policies.

Contract tracing is one of the key methods of combating coronavirus and one of the methods that will help us return to a normal Europe, yet the EU still lacks a common approach. With the introduction of coid passports and unified tracing methods, the movement of EU citizens could be restored to the levels before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Scientific research has always been one of the factors driving the development of Europe. However, more cooperation is still needed to combat the virus and other future challenges. An EU-wide research data-sharing platform regarding the information about the coronavirus should be created, so that data obtained by some member states could be shared among the whole union. Efforts of the private sector should be considered too and innovative companies should be given the support they need. The pandemic has shown the importance of cooperation. If the EU acts as one body, a stronger position on international markets can help provide its citizens with medical equipment and drugs of better quality and lower price.

In the end, a more united Europe is also a stronger Europe.