# National Fiche – Germany

## COVID-19 cases

On 11 September 2020, Germany registered 9,342 COVID-19 related deaths[[1]](#footnote-1) out of around 83.2 million people[[2]](#footnote-2). Data on deaths and cases of COVID-19 were not disaggregated by disability status.

Regarding deaths and cases in care homes, the only data available is from the Robert Koch Institute which has been notified of 3,678 COVID-19 related deaths in care facilities for older persons, persons with disabilities and other persons in need of care including in homeless shelters. However, the Institute warned that this data should be considered with caution “since information on occupation, accommodation or care in these facilities is missing in 25% of cases”[[3]](#footnote-3). In a Conference of Health Ministers held on 18 June 2020, it was announced that 86% of people who died from COVID-19 were over 70 years old[[4]](#footnote-4).

## Emergency, lockdown, and confinement

At Federal level, Germany did not declare a state of emergency but some regions did. Stay-at-home orders were implemented and measures for physical distancing imposed[[5]](#footnote-5). Measures taken impacted disability services since individual appointments and therapy were either cancelled or reduced[[6]](#footnote-6). Day and respite centres closed but services in many federal states were available for emergency situations[[7]](#footnote-7). In terms of exceptions, persons with disabilities could be exempted from wearing masks for medical reasons[[8]](#footnote-8). When restrictions have been partially lifted for most of the population, many sheltered workshops reopened with specific measures and stay-at-home orders were maintained for persons with disabilities belonging to the risk groups[[9]](#footnote-9).

The German Disability Council was opposed to the call for persons with disabilities, chronically ill and older persons to keep following strict rules while the rules for the rest of the population had been eased considering that the rules of living should be applied to all in the same way. Each citizen should apply hygiene standards and adhere to protective clothing without any exclusion.[[10]](#footnote-10)

## Involvement of organisations of persons with disabilities

As of the day of drafting the fiche (19 September 2020), information about the involvement of DPOs in the development of national policy or task forces was not found but it could be there.

The German Disability Council raised the lack of accessible national information about COVID-19 and requested complete accessibility of content and information about the pandemic. The Council also recalled the necessity to take into consideration persons with disabilities when adopting COVID-19 related measures. The restrictions on outings imposed had a disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities since it worsened their exclusion..

## Communications and announcement

At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the German Government did not provide accessible information for persons with disabilities.

On 13 March 2020, the German Disability Council called on the Government to provide accessible information, press conferences and recommendations about the coronavirus. The Council reminded that many persons with disabilities needed information in easy-to-read, sign language and captioning and that they must not be excluded from the current situation and information about the pandemic[[11]](#footnote-11). In this regard, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency received complaints concerning the lack of accessibility of COVID-19 related information[[12]](#footnote-12).

In response to the call for accessible information, the German government provided national information in accessible format: easy-to-read information, email service, fax and helpline, subtitled videos and videos in German sign language were made available. Lebenshilfe, an organisation supporting people with intellectual disabilities to participate in society, provided information about how to handle the COVID-19 in relation to persons with intellectual disabilities[[13]](#footnote-13).

## Institutions and closed settings

Visits in older persons’ and nursing homes and homes for persons with disabilities, were not allowed and excursions were suspended[[14]](#footnote-14). The ban on visits had repercussions on mental health and wellbeing of residents. The government addressed this issue by announcing that special protective measures have to be taken to allow contact with residents in nursing homes, homes for the older persons and institutions for persons with disabilities[[15]](#footnote-15). On 6 May 2020, the Federal Government and the Governments of the Länder authorized visits by a permanent contact person to nursing homes when there were no COVID-19 cases in the facility[[16]](#footnote-16). The Health Ministers of 16 Länders called on institutions’ operators and association to adopt a balance between the protection and the need for persons with disabilities to maintain contact with relatives, friends and families through visits[[17]](#footnote-17).

As per a survey conducted on care homes and COVID-19 in Germany, 98.7% of the 824 care homes that responded, declared that they took “steps to reduce contact within the facilities and 96.1% set up crisis management teams”. Despite these measures, half of COVID-19 deaths in Germany were care home residents. However, the situation varied depending on care homes since 80% of care homes have not registered any confirmed COVID-19 cases[[18]](#footnote-18).

## Health care

While Germany did not adopt any law on patient triage[[19]](#footnote-19), experts made recommendations in this regard. The German Ethics Council released an ad hoc recommendation “Solidarity and Responsibility during the Coronavirus Crisis” advising to avoid triage situations where doctors will have to choose who will get access to intensive care. The Council also added that “uniform rules for clinical emergencies are needed that should be based on well-considered, justified and transparent criteria”[[20]](#footnote-20). Other recommendations were made by the German Interdisciplinary Association for Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine mentioning that main criterion in case of triage are “the urgency of the treatment and its chances of success”[[21]](#footnote-21). The absence of triage policy in Germany had been criticized and an interest group representing persons with disabilities considered that ethically controversial issues should not be left to expert associations[[22]](#footnote-22).

## Social Protection

The government implemented a compensation for loss of income due to child care at home. Parents of children with disabilities or children who need special support can ask for compensation for their loss of income if they have to stay at home to take care of them due to the closure of schools and day care centres. The compensation is limited to a maximum of six weeks and 67% of the income losses[[23]](#footnote-23). For people with care needs that cannot get their usual care at home, they will be able to reimburse another person to provide them with the assistance they need for up to three months through their long-term care insurance[[24]](#footnote-24). The Federal Government made €70 million available for integration offices to support people in sheltered workshops who suffered a loss of income due to the closure of workshops[[25]](#footnote-25).

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