

ID 2277 WG: Call for Submissions of Information Relevant to the SARS-CoV2 / COVID-19 Chronology

1. What is your understanding about the emergence, spread across countries and scientific understanding of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19?

On December 31, 2019, Germany received the first reports of an unusual accumulation of pneumonia of unknown cause in China. Initial investigations suggested an epidemiological link to the Huanan fish market in Wuhan (Hubei province, China) with zoonotic (animal) origin. A few days later on January 9, 2020, the WHO confirmed that it is a novel corona virus. Initially, limited human-to-human transmission was assumed for the respiratory transmissible pathogen. This assessment changed rapidly after the number of cases in China steadily increased and the virus spread to other countries. The scientific publications and body of evidence are continuity enlarged and monitored.

Relevant information on the scientific understanding of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 is compiled at the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) for German health professionals and can be found in the fact sheet of the RKI

(https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Steckbrief.html;jsessionid=09586CC9CFE2AA1E03DF7AAD5FC0234C.internet092?nn=1349088; in German)

2. When (date) and how (e.g. official correspondence, phone call, social media) did you learn about key information, alerts or recommendations from global or regional bodies?

- 31.12.2012: Epidemic Intelligence at RKI picked up media reports about cluster of unknown pneumonia in China in December 31st 2019.

- Germany was /is informed by the WHO and ECDC via various channels about a cluster of cases with pneumonia with an unknown cause and related information.

Channels include E-Mail correspondence, phone calls, regular meetings, intense use of technical exchange for a such as EWRS, official publications in journals and web pages.

3. What actions were taken by your country, and when, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19?

Since 6. January: Crisis management task group convened at RKI, to monitor the situation, gather information, compile technical guidelines on case detection, diagnostic etc, and intense report to public health professionals, politicians and the public.

Since early January 2020: development and continuous adaptation of national guidelines for novel coronavirus and relevant national legislation

January/ February: Repatriations of German citizens and their relatives from Wuhan/ China to Germany, no further spread associated with those repatriations

Since 26 January: Intense containment efforts to control of first cluster in Bavaria, (international) contact tracing, isolation of cases

February: Intense efforts of public health authorities to contain and mitigate numerous outbreaks associated with travel/mobility and domestic festivals/ events through case finding, isolation and quarantine

Kommentiert [GU1]: We did not know exactly which events/dates you were referring to. In general, the RKI receives information via WHO or ECDC rapidly. The information flow is very good.

Kommentiert [GU2]: Germany has a decentralized system which means that the federal states are responsible for implementing measures. Nevertheless, the national government and the federal states had meetings together to decide on general decisions on which we focused in this chronology.

12. March: Recommendations to general public: Call to reduce social contacts. Cancelling of mass gatherings with more than 1.000 participants as well as non-essential events.

12./13. March: Decision to postpone the start of the semester at universities and temporarily close kindergartens and schools, in particularly affected regions, due to the emerging dynamic outbreak. The gradual implementation started on the 16th of March.

16. March: Closing of pubs, clubs, cinemas, museums, opera, shops etc. Only grocery shops, drug stores, pharmacies, petrol station, banks, hairdressers and similar remain open. Meetings in sports and leisure facilities were prohibited. Religious events in churches, mosques and synagogues were also prohibited. Restaurants had to close at 6 p.m. at the latest and open at 6 a.m. at the earliest. There were special requirements for restaurants and hotels etc. Accommodation in Germany should only be used for necessary and explicitly not for touristic purposes.

16. March: Reintroduction of border controls to the five neighbouring countries (Austria, Switzerland, France, Luxembourg and Denmark). Crossing the borders was only allowed for persons with good reason, such as commuters.

17 March: The Foreign Office issues a worldwide travel warning. Repatriation of Germans.

22. March: extension of the agreed guidelines for restricting social contacts. People had to keep a minimum distance of 1.5 m in public. A nationwide ban on assembly was introduced and it was only permitted to be alone, with another person not living in the household, or with members of one's own household in a public space. Exceptions were gatherings of people who, for example, served the supply of food or the use of local public transport. In addition, restaurants and establishments for personal hygiene (hairdressers, beauty salons, etc.) had to close down immediately. These measures were initially to apply for 2 weeks; on April 1, it was decided to extend the nationwide contact restrictions until April 19.

25. March 2020: German parliament declares epidemic event of national concern

20. April: First easing of the measures in Germany: many federal states again allowed shopping in stores up to 800 m² in size. In 3 federal states (Berlin, Brandenburg and Saxony), schools were gradually resumed on April 20 (mainly classes for high school graduates to prepare them for their upcoming exam). As the first federal state, Saxony introduces compulsory masks.

27. April: At a meeting of the Conference of Youth and Family Ministers (JFMK), the states agreed on a common framework for a step-by-step process to open up day care for children, to be introduced in all states by 11 May at the latest.

29. April: (Non-medical) face masks must be worn on public transport and in shops in all federal states.

30. April: Further relaxation of corona protection measures, with a focus on opening up playgrounds, museums, zoos and places of worship. Major events such as public festivals or major concerts remained prohibited.

13. June: As the first federal state Thuringia lift the contact restrictions.

15. June: Introduction of the Corona Warn App

15. June: Borders are open within Europe, making travel possible again – provided the COVID-19 activity in destination countries permits this.

08. August: Returning travelers from designated risk areas have to be tested either before entering Germany (test result not older than 48h) or within three days after entry.

27. August: The federal and state governments agree on a minimum fine of 50 euros for violations of the mask obligation - only Saxony-Anhalt does not want to participate in this regulation.

14. October: Federal and state governments agree on new common containment rules. In regions with rapidly increasing corona numbers, private gatherings will in future be limited to a maximum of ten participants and two households. There will be a curfew in the catering trade at 23:00. The regulations are to apply from 50 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants in seven days. In regions with 35 new infections, masks will also be compulsory in areas where people come together more closely or for longer periods.

28. October 28: Federal and state governments decide on a "partial lockdown"/"lockdown light". Starting on November 2, social contacts will be limited to two households. The restaurant and tourism industry will have to close for the entire month of November, as will cultural institutions. Schools, shops and industry remain open.

02. November: start of the German-wide "lockdown light"; schools and businesses stay open, gastronomy and cultural events cancelled

7. November: The federal and state health ministers decide on a joint strategy for corona vaccination - among other things, the federal government is responsible for the procurement and financing of the vaccines.

25. November: The federal and state governments decide to extend and tighten the partial lockdown.