

Food for thought on the SARS Cov 2 pandemic.

## **The opposite of a success story**

By Erfan Ali

14.01.2021

Preliminary note: The author is a sixteen-year-old teenager who would like to share his experiences and thoughts in light of the political decisions made and the situation in Germany in the context of the Covid-19 crisis.

Back in 2015, Bill Gates warned about the lack of preparation for a possible epidemic. Only the spread of SARS-CoV-2 would confirm his assumption, but this realization probably follows much too late, unfortunately. While we are gradually approaching an end to the pandemic, this is all the more reason to analyze the response to the virus from a retrospective perspective and to draw a conclusion about the decisions made last year.

### **Patient Zero**

When the first official German case was confirmed on January 27, 2020, action was swift; all contacts were identified and their steps carefully reconstructed. Subsequently, 16 people were diagnosed with the virus, plus 217 contacts outside the households of those already ill who might have been infected. These 16 were isolated and kept under control; as a result of the quick and correct action, only just under six percent of the contacts at risk subsequently contracted the virus, but in retrospect, control should not have stopped there. The author wonders why the relevant authorities did not pay more attention to preventing the spread in the spring of 2020. Strict measures in controlling the virus would have been more effective in time. The highly criticized lockdown over the month of December can be attributed to this wrong decision; because the current measures could definitely have been avoided if action had been taken earlier.

### **Role models from abroad**

In South Korea, the right action was taken early. All Corona sufferers were located through official care, GPS tracking of their mobile devices, tracking of their credit card statements, and an intensive analysis of their social contacts over the past 14 days. But the distinctive feature that had set South Korea apart from nearly all countries in the Covid 19 crisis was their rate of early Corona testing. The country led the way with 7000 tests per 1 million population, which allowed them to keep the number of people with the disease low for most of the year. In the fight against the virus, South Korea was reasonably well prepared through SARS-CoV-1 or MERS-CoV; but here the author again wonders why Germany did not join these measures when it was already clear that a country like South Korea had experience in disease control.

## **Digital development**

While the Corona warning app launched on June 2020 was initially helpful in Germany for contact tracking, it is by no means an effective tool in the fight against SARS-Cov-2 or comparable to the advanced methods used abroad. In South Korea, for example, the tracking app records a movement profile, which is then compared with images from surveillance cameras to specifically identify possible contacts; this highlights old issues, such as the need to catch up in the technical and digital sector that Germany has had for some time. In any case, there have been several incidents in which the German Corona warning app could not be called up or even crashed. In addition, the fact that data protection continues to be considered a supreme sanctuary in Germany in the context of such a crisis is disturbing, even though human lives are suffering as a result. The author also criticizes the fact that although some positive developments can be observed, such as the increasing digitization of many workplaces, such a turnaround could nevertheless have taken place earlier and not only when a global crisis gave us a reason to do so.

## **Lack of bureaucracy**

Before the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic, health offices were probably a foreign concept to most Germans. At the same time, these health offices were very low-tech, which is why initially for the pandemic the German Corona case numbers were supplied by John Hopkins University, an American university. As the pandemic progressed, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) gradually regained its status as the primary source of information regarding the Covid 19 crisis, although reliability was by no means the order of the day; for days, the RKI gave incorrect information about the 7-day incidence value. An error that does not necessarily seem fatal, but simply must not occur in an office with such great importance. In addition, the health authorities do not even come close to assuming the role in the 2020 pandemic for which they were originally intended, because they do not provide more than information. If again South Korea is taken as an example, where in a quarantine by officials daily rounds are carried out and these check whether the decided measures are kept and inform themselves about the well-being of the ill. Whereas the officials of the Ordnungsamt available for such visits in Germany are rather set to impress on the streets and to create a feeling of control. The author himself was in quarantine for 10 days, with no sign of care or supervision. But here the question arises, what if no family or acquaintance is available, for example, to do my grocery shopping, should the emergency call be made because the stomach growsl?

## **School closings**

If the 7-day incidence value exceeds 50, schools will be closed, it was long said. But for a long time after this value was exceeded, schoolchildren still regularly attended their place of instruction in Germany. The reasoning of the Ministry of Education and the decision-making politicians pointed out that school closures would inevitably lead to many working parents being sent home, and the economy would suffer as a result. Ultimately, it was recognized that such a decision could not be justified when the approximately 10 million adolescents and young adults in German schools play a major role in the spread of the virus. The author was himself affected by the school closures and the previously applied concept of hybrid teaching; the salient observation made is that the necessary measures were taken too late.

During the period in which classes continued in the regular way, instead of making them completely digital, there were many Corona cases among students and, further, their households. These definitely could have been prevented. And the switch to homeschooling using communication platforms, which was considered unrealizable for years, currently seems to be working well.

### **Social impact**

In times of crisis, one concept becomes increasingly important: solidarity. But it is precisely this that is currently lacking in Germany. Without common cohesion, we will not survive this pandemic. Lateral thinkers and Corona deniers should not plead freedom of speech when people are dying in hospitals. People should not meet in large groups, even if they put their well-being above that of all German citizens. Such actions only show how impoverished in morals we Germans are. With nearly 45 thousand deaths, according to the current status, attributed to COVID-19, this virus has caught Germany unprepared and left its citizens in suffering. The politics of Germany failed in many aspects, but it must not be ignored that we as a society must stick together. In addition, another thought that the Social Democrat Renate Schmidt formulates is the lack of commitment to various other social problems in Germany. Thus, attention is drawn to an "absolute smoking ban (170,000 deaths annually), alcohol ban (74,000 deaths) and a drastic speed limit (300,000 accidents with personal injury)...", as stated in the article by Alexander Jungkutz in the Nuremberg News issue of January 13, 2020. This pandemic has shown many shortcomings of our society in Germany, which should not be neglected after the end of this crisis.

### **Conclusion**

The pandemic has taken a toll and, even if much is over and we are nearing the end of the crisis, it is far from over. It is of utmost importance to learn from the mistakes of the past and take an example from other countries. Bill Gates also said in 2015 during his Ted Talk that if there is a possible crisis from microbes, we need to start working now because time is working against us. But even if the pandemic has been going on for a long time, these words have great meaning for Germany now as never before.

### **Bibliography**

Heigl, Jana: We are not ready for a pandemic. In: Der Tagesspiegel, 26.03.2020, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/bill-gates-wusste-es-schon-2015-wir-sind-nicht-bereit-fuer-eine-epidemie/25684792.html> (12.01.2021).

Merlot, Julia: The Unhappy Journey of Patient Zero. In: Spiegel, 16.05.2020, <https://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/medizin/erster-corona-fall-in-deutschland-die-ungluueckliche-reise-von-patientin-0-a-2096d364-dcd8-4ec8-98ca-7a8ca1d63524> (12.01.2021).

Schröder-Kim, Soyeon: Corona in South Korea. In: ZDF, 15.11.2020,  
<https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/panorama/coronavirus-suedkorea-schroeder-kim-100.html>  
(12.01.2021).

This is how different other countries' corona warning apps are. In: Ärztezeitung, 15.07.2020,  
<https://www.aerztezeitung.de/Wirtschaft/So-unterschiedlich-sind-die-Corona-Warn-Apps-in-anderen-Laendern-411295.html> (13.01.2021)

Covid-19: case numbers in Germany and worldwide. In: Robert Koch Institute, 14.01.2021,  
[https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges\\_Coronavirus/Fallzahlen.html](https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Fallzahlen.html)  
(14.01.2021).

Incorrect Corona case numbers: Software problem not only in Nuremberg. In: BR24,  
13.01.2021,  
[https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges\\_Coronavirus/Fallzahlen.html](https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Fallzahlen.html)  
(14.01.2021)

School policy in lockdown "This is a failure". In: Tagesschau, 11.01.2021,  
<https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/schulpolitik-corona-reform-101.html> (14.01.2021)

Corona app disrupted on quite a few Android smartphones. In: Ärzteblatt, 13.01.2021,  
<https://www.aerzteblatt.de/nachrichten/120130/Corona-App-auf-etlichen-Android-Smartphones-gestoert> (14.01.2021).

Jungkunz, Alexander: Angry about Corona. In: Nürnberger Nachrichten (13.01.2021).