



Documents from Germany's public health agency reveal the decision to "lockdown" was political

Description

GERMANY : On 17 March 2020, at the beginning of the covid hysteria, the Robert Koch Institute ("RKI") changed its risk assessment from "moderate" to "high" overnight. Five days later, on 22 March, public life in Germany came to a standstill.

The RKI is Germany's government agency public health agency responsible for disease control and prevention. Documents relating to its crisis team's proceedings were previously regarded as confidential.

However, investigative journalists from the magazine Multipolar submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to find out what information the RKI had when they made their decisions.

When the RKI failed to respond, Multipolar filed a lawsuit which compelled RKI to produce the documents. But the documents have been heavily redacted.

The documents that have now been forcibly published by the RKI obviously have political explosive power, Deutschland Kurier reported, because a name that is critical to the decision made on 17 March is blacked out. What are they covering up?

As Deutschland Kurier noted, the lockdown imposed in Germany on 22 March 2020 led to restrictions on fundamental rights that were unprecedented in the history of the Federal Republic: daycare centres and schools were closed; there were bans on visiting old people's homes and general curfews.

"Public life came to a standstill. A quarter of children and young people are still suffering psychologically from the consequences of the covid hysteria," Deutschland Kurier said.

The RKI, which is subordinate to the German Federal Ministry of Health, was forced to make more than 1,000 pages public after a lawsuit from the online magazine 'Multipolar'.

The pages include the minutes of the covid crisis team meetings from January 2020 to April 2021, mostly led by the then president of the RKI, Lothar Wieler, and his deputy, Lars Schaade, who is now

head of the authority.

Multipolar's Freedom of Information Act request, on which the subsequent lawsuit was based, was made in May 2021.

It said: In accordance with § 1 IFG, Art. 10 ECHR, in the name and in the attached power of attorney (...), we hereby request access in the form of making copies of all information, regardless of the embodiment:

All minutes, agendas, lists of participants and other notes of the RKI Corona Crisis Team since its foundation – according to the RKI on 6.1.2020 – until 30.4.2021;
all documents, notes and correspondence (other than drafts) of the Authority dealing with the planning and convening of the crisis unit prior to the first meeting;

in particular, all documents and notes (except drafts) that deal with the change in the risk assessment on 17.3.2020 from “moderate” to “high”, including correspondence within the RKI as well as between the RKI and the Federal Ministry of Health and, if applicable, other authorities of the Federal Government.

RKI failed to answer. So, Multipolar filed a lawsuit and a long tug-of-war between Multipolar's lawyers and the RKI's lawyers ensued.

In February 2023, the Administrative Court of Berlin warned the RKI that it should conclude the processing of the documents as the court would “probably fully uphold” Multipolar's claim.

In April 2023, the RKI provided heavily redacted documents, seemingly to avoid a verdict by the court. According to Multipolar, it is estimated that more than a thousand passages have been blacked out.

“The redactions go so far that in some cases even the simple participation of Health Minister Jens Spahn in a crisis team meeting is concealed, even though at the time the ministry made its participation publicly known on Twitter,” Multipolar said.

In July 2023, Multipolar filed a lawsuit against the redactions.

In January 2024, the court announced a date for the oral hearing and taking of evidence. The hearing is scheduled for Monday, 6 May 2024.

Multipolar was initially going to wait for the court's verdict before publishing the redacted documents but as they explained:

After the court date was announced earlier this year, we decided to bring forward the publication. We hope that the court will decide in the interests of the greatest possible transparency, so that, at best, the documents that have been less or no longer redacted will be available in May.

Deutschland Kurier summed up the sequence of events according to the documents that Multipolar has now made public and what can be deduced from the documents so far:

On 17 March 2020, the RKI upgraded the risk assessment for the health of Germans from

“moderate” to “high”. A day earlier, the documents noted that the new risk assessment had been prepared and should now be “scaled up.” In this context, it literally says: “The risk assessment will be published as soon as (person’s name redacted) gives a signal.”

The magazine ‘Multipolar’ draws the conclusion from this redaction that the risk assessment was not carried out by the RKI but by an external person.

The tightening of the risk assessment from “moderate” to “high” – the basis of all lockdown measures and court rulings – would therefore not have been based on a technical assessment by the RKI, but on the “political instructions of an external actor,” the journalists who were successful in their lawsuit speculate.

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