



TOP STORIES

## NEWS

# Merkel: Coronavirus is Germany's greatest challenge since World War Two

In an extraordinarily rare nationwide TV address, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has called on citizens to do their part in helping to overcome the COVID-19 outbreak. Germany is now one of Europe's hardest hit states.

In a once-of-kind televised nationwide address delivered Wednesday evening, German Chancellor Angela Merkel called on German citizens to recognize the gravity posed by the coronavirus and to do their part in helping to slow its spread.

Her speech came one day after Germany instituted restrictive measures in an attempt to curb transmission.

Read more: [Coronavirus: First German town imposes lockdown](#)

On Wednesday, Germany registered a jump of over 1,000 infections of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, from the day before. Just under 12,000 individuals have been

## Merkel: Germany facing worst crisis since WWII

infected in Germany, according to the John Hopkins Coronavirus Research Center.

### 'Greatest challenge'

Merkel spoke directly to the camera in the pre-recorded remarks. She described the fight against the virus as Germany's greatest challenge since the end of WWII and appealed for national unity.

"The situation is serious. Take it seriously. Since German unification, no, since the Second World War, there has been no challenge to our nation that has demanded such a degree of common and united action," she said.

Unlike countries such as Italy, France and Spain, Germany has not instituted a lockdown. However, it has closed its borders to non-EU citizens, restricted travel and ordered the closure of many public, commercial and educational spaces.



Read more: [UN — 24 million jobs could be lost because of coronavirus](#)

Merkel urged Germans to follow these measures, underling that successful defeat of the virus depended on every person doing his or her part.

"I truly believe that we will succeed in the task before us, so long as all the citizens of this country understand that it is also THEIR task," she said. "I also want to tell you why we also need YOUR contribution and what each and every person can do to help."

Earlier in the day, German health experts warned that the total infections could reach as high as 10 million individuals in the next months if citizens do not follow the measures to

slow the spread of the virus.

Merkel had previously said that up to 70% of Germany's population of roughly 83 million people could eventually be infected.

### Maintaining an 'open democracy' in times of crisis

It was the first time in her 15 years as chancellor that Merkel has delivered an unscheduled address directly to the German nation. She struck an untypically personal note and promised transparency.

"I am addressing you today in this unusual manner, because I want to tell you what is guiding me as chancellor and all of my colleagues in the government at this time. That is part of an open democracy - that we explain our political decisions and make them transparent."



Merkel also drew on her own personal history as a former East Germany citizen:

"Let me assure you: for someone like myself, for whom freedom of travel and movement were hard-won rights, such restrictions can only be justified when they are absolutely necessary. In a democracy, they should not be enacted lightly – and only ever temporarily. But at the moment they are essential – in order to save human lives."

Read more: [Few Germans afraid of coronavirus](#)

### THE SPORTS PLAYING ON DESPITE CORONAVIRUS

## Turkish Super Lig

The most prominent European top-flight football competition that has continued holding matches is the Super Lig in Turkey, albeit behind closed doors. Former German international Lukas Podolski, who started for Antalyaspor on Monday, criticized the decision, telling German tabloid Bild: "Football without fans is nothing."

As of Wednesday, a total of 28 individuals had died from COVID-19 in Germany, according to John Hopkins.

"We are a community in which every life and every person counts," she said.

### 'We are not doomed'

As in her previous statements on the virus, Merkel emphasized the necessity

of social distancing. "It's down to each and every one of us. We are not doomed to helplessly watch the spread of the virus. We have a means to fight it: we must practice social distancing out of consideration for one another."

*Read more:* [Coronavirus — How Germany is showing solidarity amid the outbreak](#)

Experts have recommended keeping at least a two-meter distance between individuals and avoided congregating in groups.

Merkel praised the work of medical professionals and supermarket employees and also assured Germans there would continue to be food in stores. Germany has experienced panic buying in the last week.

She also stressed that Germany "will do whatever it takes" to help get the German economy and business back on their feet. The health crisis has caused set stock markets tumbling and choked off business activity around the world. German banks have predicted that the country's GDP for the year will fall by 5%.

With numbers continuing to rise every day, the chancellor called it a "dynamic situation" and said the government "will continue to learn as we go along, so that we can change tack at any time and take different steps using different tools."

*Keep up to speed with the day's events when it comes to coronavirus with our [live updates page](#).*

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#### DW RECOMMENDS

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##### Coronavirus: Germany pledges €1 billion to tackle outbreak

Germany has pledged €1 billion to fight COVID-19 virus, the whole of Italy is on lockdown and coronavirus cases have been confirmed in every EU member state. Read DW as it happened. (10.03.2020)

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##### The sports playing on despite coronavirus

While many sporting events across the world have been postponed or canceled, some have not stopped for the coronavirus outbreak. Here are those still going ahead for now — even if no one is there to watch them. (17.03.2020)

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##### Hands off! What can we touch during the coronavirus outbreak?

If you find yourself suspiciously staring at your pets, your potatoes and even those birthday cards on the mantelpiece, you aren't alone. Coronavirus is seemingly everywhere. What's safe to touch? Here are some answers. (17.03.2020)

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#### AUDIOS AND VIDEOS ON THE TOPIC

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Merkel: Germany facing worst crisis since WWII

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