



German parliament votes to make measles vaccination mandatory

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The German parliament has agreed to make the measles vaccination compulsory for hospital staff, children and teachers in schools and nurseries, and staff at community facilities such as asylum seeker centres and holiday camps.¹

The measles protection act—which will come into force in March 2020 after being approved by the Bundestag—will make measles vaccination mandatory for healthcare workers and other affected staff groups born after 1970.

Parents will have to show proof of vaccination for their children to be admitted to schools and nursery schools. Those that do not vaccinate their children will face a fine of €2500 (£2140; \$2760).

In Germany the measles vaccine is given as the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine or as a quadruple shot, also including chicken pox.

Measles vaccination coverage rates among both children and adults in Germany are below the 95% coverage levels needed for herd immunity.² In 2018 there were 543 measles cases in Germany,³ and more than 400 cases have been reported so far this year.⁴

In May, England's health secretary Matt Hancock said the government was looking at making MMR vaccinations

compulsory for state school pupils to drive up vaccination levels,⁵ despite many experts arguing against compulsory vaccination.⁶

Measles vaccination was compulsory in 1970 in East Germany, federal health minister Jens Spahn said. For the western states, it is the first compulsory vaccination since 1874 when mandatory vaccination against smallpox was introduced. That mandatory vaccine helped eradicate smallpox in the world, Spahn said.

- 1 Bundestag report. 14 November 2019. <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btp/19/19127.pdf>.
- 2 Robert Koch Institute. Annual Status Update on Measles and Rubella Elimination Germany 2018. www.rki.de/DE/Content/Kommissionen/NAVKO/Berichte/Bericht_2018_en.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.
- 3 Robert Koch Institute. Annual Status Update on Measles and Rubella Elimination Germany 2018. www.rki.de/DE/Content/Kommissionen/NAVKO/Berichte/Bericht_2018_en.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.
- 4 Connolly K. German parliament approves compulsory measles vaccinations. *The Guardian* 14 November 2019. www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/14/german-parliament-approves-compulsory-measles-vaccinations.
- 5 Mostrous A, Stoneman J. Compulsory vaccinations for children considered by health secretary. 2019. www.thetimes.co.uk/article/whitehall-considers-compulsory-vaccinations-g2wkgr96w.
- 6 Draeger E, Bedford HE, Elliman DAC. Should measles vaccination be compulsory? *BMJ* 2019;365:l2359. doi:10.1136/bmj.l2359 31167804

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