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Gradual commencement of coronavirus pandemic measures / Minister President Armin Laschet presents North Rhine-Westphalia Plan

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The state government has issued the following statement:

Anti-coronavirus measures are to be gradually implemented in North Rhine-Westphalia in the coming days and weeks. The North Rhine-Westphalia Plan earmarks different levels with target data for the individual areas, which are to be implemented depending on the continued development of the pandemic. This approach gives residents in North Rhine-Westphalia the opportunity to plan and rely on economic and social life, while protecting their health. The state government has included in the gradual implementation all areas of social and economic life, as well as regional development. The central goals of the strategy remain inhibiting the spread of the virus, and expanding the capacities of the health care system. We are appealing to everyone's sense of responsibility. Implementations will take place under constant evaluation of the pandemic. Minister President Armin Laschet presented the North Rhine-Westphalia Plan on Wednesday, 6 May 2020, following consultations in Düsseldorf with the federal government and other states.

"I am pleased that the federal and state governments have unanimously started on this path toward responsible normality," says Minister President Armin Laschet. "I have always said that we must remain conscious of the social, economic and health-related consequences of combating the pandemic. Our regulations must be purposeful and proportional, and must appreciate and represent the vastly different regional levels of severity. Today, this idea was met with consensus.

"Our stable health care system and the low rate of new infections in North Rhine-Westphalia give us the opportunity to responsibly open back up, which we are implementing gradually and with special focus on specific spheres of life. Our basic principle is relieving those areas where distance and hygiene or suitable safety rules must be ensured. In doing so we are taking more great steps toward responsible normalcy while protecting our health and combating infections.

"The current, positive developments in the infection rate are possible thanks to the responsible actions of the residents of North Rhine-Westphalia. I am grateful for this. Sadly, this is still not a guarantee for the future. In this spirit we in North Rhine-Westphalia are continuing the responsible course toward a gradual opening in the coming weeks.

"The North Rhine-Westphalia Plan is a clear action strategy for overcoming the many aspects of the coronavirus pandemic together. With its specific time windows and clear requirements, it is defined by its planning security and flexibility. At the same time we are counting on the trust and reason of the people in our state. The goal is less regulation, and greater personal responsibility among our citizens."

The North Rhine-Westphalia Plan in detail

The North Rhine-Westphalia state government's North Rhine-Westphalia Plan stipulates the following gradual approach, the implementation of which is subject to the caveat of how the pandemic develops:

1. Contact ban and rules for conduct

With the target date of **11 May 2020**, the current contact restrictions shall be altered so that relatives from two households can meet in public (adjustment to the federal and state regulation). The general distance regulation of 1.5 metres will still apply, as will the obligation to wear mouth and nose protection in certain areas.

2. Food service, hotels, tourism

A gradual opening for food service, hotels and tourism is being worked toward.

As of 11 May 2020 the following shall be possible once more:

- Gastronomical service in food service facilities, provided adherence to the distance requirement is ensured indoors and outdoors, and the respective facility has an infection protection and hygiene concept.
Buffets with exposed foods will remain prohibited.
- Tourist use of and accommodation in holiday homes and campgrounds (with adherence to contact restrictions).
- Opening amusement parks, cruise vessels (with hygiene concept), tourist information offices, bicycle and boat rental services.

Hotels will reopen for tourists on Ascension Day. This will be accompanied by strict requirements for food service, with an obligatory hygiene concept as well as adherence to distance requirements and contact restrictions.

Thermal baths and pools, leisure pools and wellness centres are intended to open starting on Pentecost (30 May 2020), with infection protection concepts for each respective facility.

Bars, clubs, discos and brothels will remain closed until further notice.

3. Retail and services

Businesses will be allowed to reopen **as of 11 May 2020** regardless of size, and with adherence to distance and hygiene regulations (1 person per 10 m² of sales space).

Specific infection protection concepts will be created for "bodily contact services" such as massage studios, salons and tattoo studios in coordination with the occupational representatives in order to allow a gradual reopening here as well.

4. Large events and gatherings

Large events will remain prohibited **until 31 August 2020**. The existing distance requirements apply to gatherings.

With a target date of **30 May 2020**, conferences and conventions will be able to take place with safety concepts and restricted visitor and participant numbers.

5. Athletics and leisure

The following phases apply to athletics and leisure:

Starting on Thursday (7 May 2020), non-contact popular and leisure sports will be permitted, provided the sport takes place in public or private open-air facilities or in public.

A distance of 1.5 metres between individuals and adherence to strict hygiene and infection protection measures must be ensured. Showering/washing/changing/community areas and other shared spaces must not be used. Spectators are also prohibited for the time being. However, children under 12 years of age are allowed to access the sports facility when accompanied by an adult.

Equestrian sports are permitted in indoor equestrian facilities and spaces.

As of 11 May, it will be possible to open fitness studios, dance schools and sports halls/training spaces for athletic clubs, under strict adherence to distance and hygiene regulations.

Open-air pools can open up **as of 20 May**, under strict adherence to distance and hygiene regulations. This excludes pools used solely for leisure.

Starting on 30 May, it will be possible to engage in sports involving unavoidable bodily contact in indoor areas, including indoor swimming pools. Athletic competitions in children, youth and amateur leagues will also be permitted, and the usage of changing and sanitation areas will be permitted with restrictions.

6. Cultural services

As of 11 May, small concerts and other public performances will be permitted outdoors, or indoors with strict regulations, mouth-and-nose protection and a safety concept approved by the local authorities.

Ensembles with no more than six participants will be allowed in music schools.

Rehearsals will be permitted in cultural facilities with adherence to safety requirements. Extended distance regulations apply to choirs and orchestras.

Starting on **30 May**, cinemas, theatres, operas and concert halls will be allowed to open, provided a minimum distance of 1.5 metres between visitors is ensured and there is an admission plan. Increased presence of security personnel will prevent gatherings in waiting and break areas.

7. Childcare

Based on today's decrees, Families Minister Joachim Stamp will coordinate his ministry's prepared roadmap for a gradual opening of childcare and day care facilities with the operators and municipalities and present it this week.

8. Schools

As of Thursday, **7 May**, fourth graders will be able to attend school in person.

Starting on **Monday, 11 May**, classes 1 to 4 will resume class on an alternating daily basis.

Also on Monday, 11 May, students taking their final exams in the 2020/2021 school year will return to class. Secondary level I schools (e.g. secondary, PRIMUS and community schools) will resume class for grades 5 to 9 on an alternating daily basis.

Comprehensive schools and *Gymnasiums* will resume in-person instruction for classes 5 to students in the introductory phase on an alternating daily basis **as of 26 May**.

9. Colleges

As of 11 May, the restrictions on in-person instruction for educational and testing operations will be limited to "special spaces, amenities or other special conditions".

Educational and testing operations at medical schools and schools, institutes and similar facilities for public servants are now permitted with restrictions.

Colleges will mainly conduct lectures online for the summer semester.

10. Extracurricular educational facilities

As of 11 May, events at adult education facilities and other public, official and private extracurricular educational facilities, incl. testing, will also be permitted in large spaces if there are distance and hygiene regulations in place and fewer than 100 participants. Athletic services for children and youth work may also resume.

As of 30 May, medical instruction at adult education centres and other public, official and private extracurricular educational facilities will be permitted as well. Restricted normal operations will also be possible for youth work, youth cultural work, youth social work, and child and youth protection services.

Trips may be taken mainly to nearby destinations, including group trips (e.g. youth associations).

11. Inpatient health and care facilities

Starting on Mother's Day (10 May 2020), visits to senior care facilities will be possible and subject to strict hygiene requirements. This will also be permitted in hospitals as well as care and integration facilities as of 11 May. Further openings by 30 May will be considered based on the initial experience with these loosened regulations.

12. Religious services

Religious services have been authorised since 1 May, under consideration of the churches' and religious communities' hygiene and safety concepts.

This press text is also available online on the state government website at www.land.nrw

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