



BUNDESPRÄSIDENTIALAMT

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**Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
in a televised address discussing the current situation with
regard to the COVID-19 pandemic
on 3 April 2021
in Schloss Bellevue**

Good evening to all of you on this second Easter weekend of the pandemic.

One year ago we were looking forward to the next Easter, to enjoying a new spring free from the pandemic. But the situation did not progress as we had hoped. On the contrary, we are currently experiencing a ferocious third wave.

I know that after 13 months, words of encouragement do nothing to help. All of the calls for patience and prudence and discipline ring hollow in these exhausting times. People increasingly feel frustrated and helpless, and this adds another dimension to worries about health, school, work and the economy – a crisis of trust. This, above all, is why I am addressing you today.

Trust – in a democracy, this rests on a very fragile agreement between the people and their state: “You, the state, do your part and I, the citizen, will do mine.”

I know that you, the people of Germany, are doing your part in this historic crisis! You are making great efforts, and great sacrifices. For some people, the lockdown has long since ceased to be a question of lost income. It is now their livelihoods being lost. And so I truly understand the impatience, the frustration over the setbacks of recent months. A great deal has been done, a great deal has been achieved. At the same time, mistakes have been made – when it comes to testing, to vaccinations, to digital solutions.

The pandemic has held up a mirror to our country, reflecting our compulsion to lay down rules for everything, our fear of taking risks, the shunting back and forth of responsibility. How we can change that, and how we can make our institutions more resilient, too, is something that we will have to address. At the moment, however, we are in the midst

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of the third wave! And it will take all of our strength, all of us together, to break this wave.

The coming weeks will once again require harsh restrictions; you know that as well as I do. But I want to assure you that, just as the pandemic has demanded a great deal of you, you have the right to demand a great deal of your political leaders. It is clear what you would like to say to them: pull yourselves together!

There is, of course, no one silver bullet to end the pandemic. And that is why we need political debate – but this debate must not become an end in itself. Federal Government or Länder, party or coalition, up or down in the polls ... These considerations must not take centre stage! We need clarity and resolve, we need transparent and pragmatic rules so that people know where they stand, so that this country can once again draw on all of the potential which it possesses.

However, let us be honest. “Pull yourselves together!” is justified, but it is not enough. We must all pull together, my dear fellow Germans! We must give it everything we have! It is no use settling for outrage about what our neighbours or our leaders are doing. Rather than constantly pointing out what doesn’t work, we should be pointing out that things do work when everyone does their part. This is important to me when I talk about trust. Because ultimately, trusting in a democracy means nothing other than trusting in ourselves.

And we have every reason to do so. Vaccines have been developed in record time – including, quite notably, in Germany. We are now moving to the next stage. Deliveries of vaccines will increase significantly in the coming weeks, production in Europe is being expanded and general practitioners are joining the vaccination campaign. The day before yesterday I received my first dose, and I have faith in all – I reiterate, all – of the vaccines approved in Germany. Vaccination is the most crucial step on our path out of the pandemic – so please take advantage of it! We need you to take part!

The path, unfortunately, is longer than we had hoped. Not only for us – indeed, many of our neighbours have been hit much harder than we have. Some, meanwhile, have made more progress than us. But nobody has yet reached the finishing line. And we should not take stock until we have done so.

Do you remember how, some months ago, after the first wave, we were already complacently deeming ourselves “pandemic world champions”? And now? It is precisely the opposite. Now we are practically vying to outdo one another in doom and gloom.

I do wonder: Does everything really have to be superlative in Germany? As Goethe put it, “now shouting in triumph, now sunk in despair”?

The fact of the matter is that we are not “pandemic world champions”, but nor are we an utter failure. No, we are the Federal Republic of Germany. We may often have our doubts, but there is plenty we are capable of! And it is our capabilities, not our doubts, which matter now.

We live alongside one another in this country, and we want to share a bright future. And so we must trust in one another and look out for one another!

My dear fellow Germans – for Christians, Easter represents the certainty that death and gloom do not have the final word. And this occasion should be a celebration of hope for everyone in our country. We do indeed have plenty of reason to hope. I wish you all a happy Easter.