

Controversial new German Minister of Health 'performing well' so far

healthcarebusinessinternational.com/controversial-new-german-minister-of-health-performing-well-so-far

January 27, 2022

[HBI Deals+Insights / News](#)

Six weeks after a new government took office in Germany, HBI catches up with Dr. Stephan Rau, partner at McDermott Will & Emery in Germany, to find out how things are going for the new and somewhat controversial Federal Minister of Health, Karl Lauterbach.

[Click here to go to HBI Intelligence](#), a repository of 187 reports covering 33 countries and 23 sub-sectors, all backed by a global database of 4,000 private health and care operators across 116 countries.

“To my knowledge he has only focused on Covid since taking office,” says Rau. “I think he’s doing well. He appears very professional. He is not exaggerating. What I like about this new government is that they come from such different backgrounds, but they listen to each other and are accepting of divergent opinions. This is quite different from the previous government. Things are much more balanced now.”

Lauterbach has made no secret of his faith in vaccination as the only route out of the pandemic – something which endeared him to the general public in previous months thanks to his numerous appearances on German television. This increased his profile and popularity substantially, but within his own party even, he has not always been universally liked.

Last month he stated that he believes a fourth dose will be necessary, kickstarting the European debate about whether people should be given a second booster dose.

He has also been a staunch supporter of a vaccine mandate for health workers, which he had no trouble in getting passed by the Bundestag within his first week in office – 571 of 689 members of the lower house voted in favour.

But a vaccine mandate for the entire population, which so far only one country – Austria – has implemented, may be harder to pass. The new chancellor, Olaf Scholz, said before taking office that he would put one to the Bundestag within the first few weeks of his term, but pledged to allow a free vote and not whip government MPs into supporting it.

“Lauterbach is advocating for a vaccination mandate but he will not prepare the law,” says Rau. “My personal view is that we will probably not get a vaccine mandate, because it is very difficult to implement. And especially given the fact that many vaccinated people have contracted Covid, it is harder to justify a mandate outside of hospitals. I think legally it is also not justified.”

And what about his stance towards private healthcare?

“Allegedly he has made statements that he does not know why there are so many private investors in the outpatient sector, suggesting he has some reservations against them,” says Rau. “But whether he is going to change anything with regards to regulations on private investments into healthcare, I don’t know. He says that he only wants to make decisions based on evidence. If he takes that seriously, he could not impose more restrictions because there is no evidence that private investors harm the outpatient sector.”

Germany has a law that restricts non-medical business people from opening outpatient centres. Legally, you have to already own a hospital before being allowed to open an outpatient centre, unless you are a medical professional.

“I don’t think the current restrictions are going to be removed. Maybe there will be more transparency obligations for the owners of clinics, which I think would be acceptable. But I don’t expect additional restrictions on this.”

We would welcome your thoughts on this story. Email your views to [Martin De Benito Gellner](#) or call 0207 183 3779.

