

Germany's conspiracy theory counseling centers combat COVID misinformation. | Slate

By Alessio Perrone

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In her office in Freiburg im Breisgau, a town in the sunny southwestern corner of Germany at the foot of the Black Forest, Sarah Pohl is overwhelmed. A woman has called in distress after her husband said he would divorce her if she got vaccinated. A man has lamented that his wife refused to send the kids to school, fearing that wearing masks would damage their brains. Another woman was alarmed after her partner insisted that they migrate to Paraíso Verde, a Paraguayan community offering newcomers a life “outside of the ‘matrix’ ” without 5G, chemtrails, and mandatory vaccinations.

Tending to such calls is Pohl's job. A blond-haired, soft-spoken therapist in her 40s, she holds what must be one of Germany's most peculiar taxpayer-funded jobs: She's a counselor on cult duty.

While the rest of the world tends to see German affairs as stable and even boringly predictable, in the last year and change of the Merkel era, the country has become a flashpoint for conspiratorial thinking.

[...]

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