

# Press Release

## Providing perspectives for the Mittelstand

### IfM Bonn pleads for more transparent communication with SMEs

**2.3.2021.** In the opinion of the IfM Bonn, regionally differing opening strategies could be considered – especially if the incidence of infection can be traced back to specific clusters. Due to Drittes Gesetz zum Schutz der Bevölkerung bei einer epidemischen Lage von nationaler Tragweite of November 2020, regional relaxations can be implemented in principle, as long as threshold values are not exceeded and as long as higher-level federal state interests do not conflict with this.

Nevertheless, in their background paper " Perspectives for SMEs in the Covid 19 pandemic, Part 1: Challenges for Mittelstand policy", Prof. Dr. Friederike Welter and Hans-Jürgen Wolter argue for gradually opening up the Mittelstand in view of the current virus mutations. However, the political approach and concrete solutions for the individual sectors must be communicated in a more comprehensible way.

"Appreciative communication towards Mittelstand businesses includes not only offering the prospect of openings, but also clearly communicating which sectors cannot yet be opened due to their business model and the risk of virus mutations spreading," explains Prof. Dr. Friederike Welter (IfM Bonn/University of Siegen). According to the authors, this includes businesses where the business model is based on crowds or is linked to the mobility of the population, such as certain areas of the cultural sector, tourism and, to some degree, the gastronomy sector. For these sectors with a high risk of infection, the IfM president currently sees a chance for openings only when a comprehensive testing strategy effectively complements the hygiene concepts of the companies. "For the survival of these sectors and companies, it would therefore be important to provide financial support over a longer period of time – and as unbureaucratically as possible. Also, longer-term slumps in business development may have to be considered because consumer behaviour can change in the long run." Otherwise, there is a risk of a greater number of insolvencies, which could

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Gefördert durch:



Bundesministerium  
für Wirtschaft  
und Energie

aufgrund eines Beschlusses  
des Deutschen Bundestages

Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Innovation,  
Digitalisierung und Energie  
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen



endanger the diversity of the Mittelstand. "However, the Covid 19 pandemic in particular has shown the social contribution made by the diversity of the SME sector: Through values such as reliability and commitment, SMEs have helped to reduce the uncertainty of all market participants," says Friederike Welter. Examples of this are the prevention of staff layoffs as well as the creative adaptation of business models and entrepreneurial processes to the crisis situation.

According to Prof. Dr. Friederike Welter and Hans-Jürgen Wolter, however, national border closures make little sense, as they hardly prevent the spread of virus mutations. Instead, they are connected with considerable costs for small and medium-sized industrial enterprises. The authors would therefore welcome an EU-wide coordinated strategy of testing and tracking around national borders.

→ **Background paper**