

Press Release

Why apprenticeship rates in micro-enterprises are declining

IfM Bonn: Apprenticeship readiness is higher than official data suggest

Bonn, 3.11.2020. A lack of applicants, rising costs and organisational efforts have contributed to the fact that the number of apprentices has been declining in the micro-enterprises for years. Whereas in 2005 around 383,000 apprentices were still being trained in companies with a maximum of 9 employees, by the end of December 2019 only around 246,000 people were still completing their apprenticeships in micro-enterprises. By contrast, the number of apprentices in large companies has been rising since 2014.

"Although apprenticeship rates of micro-enterprises are declining, micro-enterprises did not reduce their apprenticeship readiness, as the employment statistics of the Federal Employment Agency suggest. On the contrary: According to company surveys, the proportion of micro-enterprises offering apprenticeship has increased over the past 15 years. However, it has not been possible to find apprentices. But if a company without apprentices only offers one apprenticeship and cannot occupy it, the company is not recorded in the official data," explains study leader Dr Annette Icks. On the other side, if micro-enterprises deliberately withdraw from apprenticeship, this is often due to (opportunity) costs: for example, it appears to be cheaper for individual micro-enterprises to recruit trained qualified workers on the external labour market than to prepare young people themselves.

"Another problem for micro-enterprises is that apprentices terminate their contracts after the probationary period more frequently than in medium-sized and large enterprises. In addition, apprentices leave micro-enterprises after successful completion of their apprenticeship despite employment guarantees," says Dr Annette Icks. Given the competition for qualified workers, micro-enterprises are trying to improve their attractiveness. Nevertheless, it remains difficult for micro-enterprises to improve their competitive position in the training market because companies of other sizes were also increasing their efforts.

The study "Challenges of apprenticeship in micro-enterprises" is available on the homepage of the Institut für Mittelstandsforschung Bonn ([www. ifm-bonn.org](http://www.ifm-bonn.org)).

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