

# Press release

## Mittelstand has a stabilising effect in times of crises

### Research project of the IfM Bonn investigates the contribution of Germany's Mittelstand to society

**21.09.2020.** Due to its economic importance, the Mittelstand is often described as the backbone of Germany's economy. However, the contribution of Mittelstand companies to society goes far beyond measurable effects. For example, most of Mittelstand companies are particularly attached to their local environment. This regional anchoring can significantly contribute to the regional development.

In times of crises – as is in the current corona crisis – Mittelstand has a stabilising effect on the economy and society. "Keeping their employees for as long as possible is an important concern for large parts of the Mittelstand", explains Prof. Dr. Friederike Welter (IfM Bonn/University of Siegen). "It remains to be seen whether Mittelstand companies will be able to avoid dismissals in this crisis, as they did during the financial crisis of 2008/09 despite economic disadvantages. The values that Mittelstand companies can convey credibly – commitment and reliability – are particularly important in times of crises, because they can reduce the uncertainty of all market participants and mitigate negative expectations. In the current corona pandemic, in turn, parts of the society shows solidarity with Mittelstand companies. As an example, the IfM President cites the numerous on-site purchasing initiatives during the acute crisis. "This way, society rewards the engagement of Mittelstand companies during and outside times of crisis," says Prof. Dr. Friederike Welter. Together with her team, she is currently investigating the impact of German Mittelstand companies on society. So far, research has primarily focused on the measurable effects of societal engagement, e.g. by applying concepts such as Corporate Social Responsibility.

The research team of the IfM Bonn takes a wider view of societal contribution: It understands societal contribution as the added value or additional benefit

Institut für  
Mittelstandsforschung

**IfM**  
BONN

[www.ifm-bonn.org](http://www.ifm-bonn.org)

Das IfM Bonn ist eine Stiftung  
des privaten Rechts.

Gefördert durch:



Bundesministerium  
für Wirtschaft  
und Energie

aufgrund eines Beschlusses  
des Deutschen Bundestages

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



that entrepreneurship can generally provide to society. "The scope of the societal contribution does not only depend on the economic result of the individual business. In Mittelstand companies, the personal goals of the entrepreneur also play an important role," explains Prof. Dr. Friederike Welter. "For example, if the entrepreneur attaches importance to personally, socially and culturally diversity, this fundamental attitude can have a long-term impact on other areas of the employees' lives and can thereby lead to greater acceptance of diversity in society."

Nevertheless, it is possible that the diversity of the German Mittelstand is currently being tested if certain forms of Mittelstand do not survive – and, in turn, important parts of their societal contribution.

In the further course of this project, the IfM researchers will investigate, among other things, how to record the multi-layered impact of Mittelstand on society.