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Function, shock or resources? – Organised Business and the Covid-19 crisis in Germany

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Abstract

The paper investigates the role of German business interest groups in the Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020ff.). Taking the perspective of interest group research, we focus on the 'logic of membership' and examine the associations' portfolios and the range of services they offer their members. For this purpose, (a) information, (b) concrete service offers of support to overcome the crisis, and (c) political demands of employers' associations, business associations, and economic chambers (chambers of industry and commerce, chambers of craft) were systematically collected in a comprehensive examination of the associations' websites in spring 2020. The sample includes 136 business associations and economic chambers from all three 'pillars' of the German business interest group system and represents a large part of the German economy (measured by the economic sectors covered according to NACE Rev. 2). A quantitative overview of the scope and content of Covid-19-specific information, services and political demands is followed by an analysis of the variations within the sample. This is guided by three hypotheses. First, the *pillar and organisational structure hypothesis* assumes that variances can be explained by the functions and task portfolio in the 'three pillar model' of German trade associations. Second, the *shock hypothesis* assumes that differences in the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on business sectors and regions (mainly changed consumer behaviour) and the political measures to cope with the crisis (restrictions on economic activity, social distancing, etc.) explain variances across associations. Third, the *resource hypothesis* assumes that information supply and demands differ according to the capacities of the organisations. Following exchange theory, the study provides new insights into the services business interest groups provide to their members, not only in times of crisis, but also beyond. The hypotheses were only partly confirmed. While differences of the service portfolio of business interest group can partly be explain by the function of the association, shock and resources are of minor importance. It became apparent that chambers of industry and commerce as well as chambers of craft offer a particularly broad service portfolio to their members. Furthermore, it has been shown that the process of de-differentiation between business and employers' associations has also been evident in the Covid-19 crisis.

Key words: Organised business, Economic chambers, Interest groups, Association services, Covid-19

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1 Introduction

How are business interest groups coping with the Covid-19 pandemic? How do they deal with the health protection requirements on the one hand and the economic consequences of the crisis and the accompanying restrictions (lockdowns) that arise for businesses on the other? Our analysis aims at answering those questions. Similar to many contributions in 2020, ours deals with the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis but adopts the specific perspective of interest group research, especially research on organised business. On the one hand, one can look at the "logic of influence" (Schmitter and Streeck 1999), which raises the question of which business interest groups are particularly assertive in the context of economic distribution and regulation. On the other hand, the "logic of membership" (Schmitter and Streeck 1999) can be taken into consideration. In concrete terms, this involves two questions: Why are companies members of business interest groups and why do they maintain their membership during the crisis despite the associated costs? What services do those groups actually offer to their members in order to strengthen their business capacities? This last question will be the focus of our investigation. Specifically, we are looking at portfolios and the range of services of German business interest groups, i.e., business associations, employers' associations and economic chambers (chambers of industry and commerce and chambers of craft). These portfolios consist of three types of services for the groups' members: a.) information about the Covid-19 pandemic, infection control regulations and regulations for businesses, b.) concrete service offers such as hygiene protection concepts or legal advice, and c.) political demands articulated by the groups. They are examined on the basis of the publicly accessible websites[4] of 136 business and employers' associations and economic chambers. We draw on data primarily collected in spring 2020.

As "agencies for cooperative competition" (Schroeder and Weßels 2017, p. 10, own translation) German business interest groups have been seen as important actors, for policy intermediation as well as for their members, not only in times of crises (Urban 2012; Rehder 2021), but also beyond. Our paper empirically focuses on the associations' services in the Covid-19 crisis, but more generally contributes to the debate about what benefits associations offer to their members in exchange of resources (i.e., their financial contributions). The "exchange perspective" (Salisbury 1969; Berkhout 2013) focusses on the goods and services that are needed by members and offered by the organisation (i.e., the interest group) as "benefits" to retain membership (Salisbury 1969). Among the resources that are delivered by the association are information, expertise, political influence, access to governmental funding, standards, or arbitration but also "weak" assets like community-building, trust, corporate social responsibility, or mediation between conflicting members. Services and goods are hardly "given" but are rather the product of interpretations and communicative processes (Sack and Strünck 2016). Against this backdrop, our study investigates the services provided by business interest groups in this exchange relationship in the context of a (crisis) situation that is condensed in terms of time and urgency. Beyond the need to provide immediate support, the crisis can also be understood as a window of opportunity were current and path-dependent structures and developments of the German business

[4] In view of the fact that associations also increase their attractiveness for members by offering them exclusive services that are only accessible to members (Olson 1965), it should be noted that our research did not reveal any restrictions on information and service offers (e.g., through password-protected member areas); though, we did not record internal mailing lists, networking or cloud offers not visible via the associations' websites.

interest group system become visible. Thus, the study provides new insights into the offers and capacity of German business interest groups for their members.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we give an overview of the state of the art and derive our central hypotheses. In order to explain the existence and diversity of the services offered by the business groups, we follow three explanatory approaches. We then explain the case selection method and the design of our dataset. We then turn to the analysis, beginning with descriptive statistics. The following analysis applies bivariate correlations and regression models to test our hypotheses. The paper ends with the interpretation and discussion of the results.

2 Services of business interest groups: State of the art and hypotheses

What do we know about the services business interest groups offer to their members? What factors shape the groups' services, their scope and diversity? As "intermediaries" between the state and their members, business interest groups have to cope with two different, but equally important environments (Schmitter and Streeck 1999). With regard to the groups' activities, interest group research has widely focussed on one of those environments and the related activities – lobbying and 'influencing' public policy (e.g., Baumgartner et al. 2009; Dür et al. 2019; Cross et al. 2021). In this study, we take the wider spectrum of services business interest groups offer to their members into account. While lobbying surely is an important part of those activities, it is complemented by a diverse range of services for the groups' members. Those services and activities have been predominantly regarded either as contributions for implementing policies (e.g., implementation and monitoring of regulation; Traxler 2010) or as incentives for overcoming the 'collective action problem' of organising business interests. The latter view is based on Olsons (1965) influential theory of collective action. In his take, collective organisations offer "club goods" or "private goods" as "sufficient incentives" to members to overcome the free-rider problem. Only members can profit from these services, while "public goods" provided by organisations (e.g., by lobbying on regulation) are accessible or beneficial to all companies without paying for it. Sack and Strünck (2016) recently argued that the portfolio of goods and services for members include not only tangible and commensurable goods like information, consultancy, or facilities but also "soft" goods like community building and mediations between the members. In addition, they emphasized that "goods" are hardly given but a result of mind-making and framing of relevant services.

Building on this Olsonian view of associations' goods, Bennett (2021) proposes the idea of "bundling" services. He states that both sides of associations' activities – lobbying which can result in public goods and services as mostly club or private goods – are closely interrelated: "The fees or incentives for membership to access individual services [..] provide the resources to deliver non-excludable services." (Bennett 2021: 50). The "bundling" of organisations' services is advantageous as it allows not only for "economies of scale and scope", but also to "mitigate[.] free rider behaviour by restricting access to some services to incentivise membership" (Bennett 2021, p. 50). Bundling as a "managerial strategy" to centralise services and broaden its offers also helps existing interest groups to strengthen

their position vis-á-vis newcomers in a field (Bennett 2021, p. 50). This perspective focusses on managerial strategies combining a portfolio of services in order to secure the retention of members and attract new ones.

In the field of interest group research, 'exchange theory' constitutes a complementary perspective on services offered by associations to their members. Exchange theory has conceptualized the offers of interest groups as exchange goods, creating and upholding members' commitment to the organisation and hereby securing organisational survival (Salisbury 1969; Berkhout 2013, p. 234) – in exchange for certain benefits, members become and stay a member. In his seminal article, Salisbury (1969) develops the concept of "entrepreneurs" or "organizers" who supply those benefits and attract members. While Salisbury (like Olson) primarily focusses on an organisation's founding, the basic idea can also help to understand how associations' services are shaped in the long run. Salisbury implicitly states that the successful maintenance of an association[5] is the result of the continuous offering of benefits: "If, and *as long as*, enough customers buy, i e, join, to make a viable organization, the group is in business. If the benefits fall, or are inadequate to warrant the cost of membership, or the leaders get inadequate return, the group collapses." (Salisbury 1969, p. 11, italics added). As such, the perspective of exchange theory can offer insights into associations' activities beyond simply overcoming problems of collective action in the moment of an organisations' founding (c.f. Halpin 2014, p. 22-25).

If we regard associations as steady organisations at a point in time (here: the beginning Covid-19 pandemic), we can assume that the specific set of benefits (i.e., its scope and diversity) at this moment is the result of ongoing calculations and perceptions of an organisation and its leaders (i.e., the associations' staff) of the needs and expectations of its members. The size and shape of an associations' portfolio of services is a result of the specific exchange relationship between organisers and members. While this process is essential for associations with voluntary membership, it can also be applied e to mandatory associations, like the German economic chambers (Bernhagen 2021). Even with mandatory membership, the ongoing support of the members is important for maintaining the organisation, both internally and externally. Internally, because members' commitment to the chambers activities is of high importance, e.g., for ensuring voluntary activities in committees or members' expertise. And externally, because mandatory membership (which is regulated by law) depends on the ongoing political support, which is also conditioned by the general perception of the chambers' performance and legitimacy (Sack 2021).

While Salisbury differentiated between different types of benefits – material, solidary and expressive (Salisbury 1969: 15-16) – exchange theory does not specify, which *specific* services – or 'benefits' – are distributed and which factors *shape* the set of activities of an association. Later theoretical contributions shed light on this question. Berkhout (2013) argues that exchange relations are not only the result of the specific interactions between 'organizers' and 'members', but are influenced by contextual factors, e.g., competition between interest groups, the size of an associations' domain or features of the interest group system and/or the policy process (Berkhout 2013, p. 234-239). In this view, exchange relations are conditioned not only by organisational properties and processes within a group,

[5] While Salisbury only implicitly deals with "maintenance", Clark and Wilson (1961) as well as Wilson (1973) focus on this aspect in a distinct, but related approach of organizational 'incentives' (c.f. Salisbury 1969, p. 15, fn. 25; Halpin 2014, p. 22-25).

but by practices of the respective system of interest intermediation and the structures of the interest group system (e.g., neo-corporatism).[6]

In the German case, this system-perspective is of central importance, regarding the 'neo-corporatist' structure of the interest group system. It has been shown that the structure of the (business) interest group system has an effect on the groups' behaviour and structures (Schmitter and Streeck 1999; Grote et al. 2008).[7] German business interest groups are highly intertwined and coordinated, not only with regard to policy-making, but also structurally. They are integrated in a dense, ordered system of regional and sectoral differentiation and coordination between groups and a 'three-pillar' structure (Lang and Schneider 2007; Grote et al. 2007; Schroeder and Weßels 2017; Kohler-Koch et al. 2021): In the *first pillar* business associations with voluntary membership represent different economic sectors such as manufacturing or trade. Traditionally, these associations focus on their members' issues related to product market, e.g., regulation of production and trade, technical standardization or research and development. The *second pillar* consists of employers' associations with voluntary membership, also differentiated by economic sectors. They are responsible for labour market issues, and collective bargaining. The regional German chambers of industry and commerce together with the chambers of craft constitute the *third pillar*. As organisations with mandatory membership regulated by law, they incorporate all businesses of a certain region and are therefore generalist associations (Sack/Schroeder 2017). They are predominantly responsible for the regional interests of their members (e.g., infrastructure, local business taxes), training programs (including vocational training), arbitration and certification, as well as foreign trade (mainly via the foreign chambers of commerce, *Auslandshandelskammern*).

As this 'pillarisation' of the German business interest group system is not only a factor shaping organisational structures, but also implies certain functions and tasks of the associations, an effect on the associations' activities is highly plausible: The *pillar and organisational structure hypothesis* therefore assumes that variations can be explained by the functions and task portfolio in the three-pillar model of German business associations. Thus, the services (and their differences) are path dependent. In line with the functions within the three-pillar system of the German business interest groups, we therefore assume that

- the business associations provide general or sector-specific information and services to member companies and make demands, which mainly relate to product market related regulations and distribution,
- the employers' organisations address in particular industrial relations, wages, and tariffs, and
- the chambers of industry and commerce as well as chambers of craft tend to be more generalist due to their membership, but also focus on regional (infrastructure) concerns, vocational training, and foreign trade.

[6] Berkhout predominantly focusses on the lobbying activities of interest groups and does not take into account other services provided by associations. But the concept is without question applicable to all services of interest groups.

[7] Indeed, this effect can be bi-directional. Schmitter and Streeck (1999) highlight that associations' properties also shape the system of interest intermediation.

However, the last two decades have seen a notable de-differentiation within the three pillars, in particular when it comes to business associations regulating the product market on the one hand and employers' associations actually focusing on industrial relations on the other (Behrens 2017; Vorholt 2019: 208). Repeated merger discussions between the BDI and BDA (Bührer 2016; Schroeder and Weßels 2017) at the federal level point to this development. This de-differentiation results from a long cycle of decreasing collective bargaining coverage and state intervention in the wage system (Ellguth and Kohaut 2020; Lesch 2017). However, it is reflected in the growing awareness that product market related regulation, for example in environmental law, equality or human rights issues, (can) have a direct impact on company labour relations. Thus, the *null hypothesis* of the above-mentioned pillar and organisational structure hypothesis is that the service portfolio cannot be explained by the functional differences of the German business interest groups.

Interest group research in the tradition of population and organization ecology approaches has shown that the economic situation and development of an economic sector generally influences the prospects of organising business interests (Aldrich and Staber 1988; Lowery and Gray 1995; Gray and Lowery 1996; Berkhout et al. 2015; Lowery et al. 2015; Klüver and Zeidler 2019). E.g., in the US case it has been shown that economic growth was closely related to the number of business associations (Aldrich et al. 1994). Also, in the European Union and Germany the link between the economic situation of association's domains (i.e., the members) and their organisation has been proved (Berkhout et al. 2015; Klüver and Zeidler 2019). While those studies were mainly interested in interest group growth or decline, we follow their basic argument, but apply it to the associations' activity. We assume that (in the current crisis) it is not the number and wealth of the constituents that matter most, but the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the respective domain of an association. We do not argue here that the economic situation of the association's members (i.e., the impact of the Covid-19 crisis) is a factor *directly* shaping associations' activity. But it can be understood as a proxy indicating specific demands of members that are perceived and translated into the activities of an organisation.
As such the second hypothesis (*impact hypothesis)* assumes that differences in the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on economic sectors and regions (especially changed consumer behaviour) and the political measures to overcome the crisis (restrictions on economic activity, social distancing etc.) explain differences between the associations. Being affected by the crisis is likely to result in both more services to the members and more demands for governmental support. Thus, services depend on the degree to which a sector or region is affected.

In this specific situation, it is clear that

- the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has hit some sectors (such as tourism, aviation, catering and retail) particularly hard,
- other sectors have been affected by the economic crisis, and
- some sectors (such as the health sector or e-commerce) have hardly been affected at all, if not benefited.

The same applies to the regions

- where "Covid-19 hotspots" have appeared,

- many regions have been affected without any extraordinary incidence of infection, and
- in some regions (particularly eastern German) there have been hardly any infections and deaths in spring 2020.

With the impact hypothesis we suggest that a higher impact of Covid-19 is accompanied by more Covid-19 specific information, service offers and political demands. Within the three degrees of concern that we have identified for economic sectors and regions, there is a quantitatively strong "average group". This corresponds to a general "crisis mood" that is not linked to precise estimations and statistical forecasts. For methodological reasons, we therefore specify our hypothesis: We assume that sectors and regions with very strong (upper 10 per cent of decrease in economic climate/Covid-19 infection/weeks) and very low levels of affectedness (lowest 10 per cent of decrease in economic climate /Covid-19 infection/weeks) differ notably with regard to their services.
Third, one may argue that it is the organisational strength of business interest groups that matter. Available resources are a fundamental source for organisational capacity (Bernhagen 2021, p. 28-29). Therefore, the *resource hypothesis* argues that differences in resource endowments have a significant impact on the capacities organisations can act with in the Covid-19 crisis, i.e., provide information and specific service offers to their members or make political demands. Our assumption is straightforward: The higher the number of members, the higher the level of a groups' activity.

3 Sampling and data collection

3.1 Case selection

Our sample covers all three pillars of the German business interest group system and includes 45 business associations, 46 employers' associations and 40 economic chambers (chambers of industry and commerce and chambers of craft) as well as 5 special issue-business associations (n = 136). Our sampling strategy aimed at including a wide range of German business interest groups whose domains cover many economic sectors and regions respectively. In this analysis we are not interested in differences resulting from organisational differentiation (e.g., level of the (horizontally) differentiated business interest group system, see below).
The four peak associations of the three pillars were the starting point of the sampling process,

- the Federation of German Industries (*Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie* (BDI), pillar I),
- the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (*Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände (BDA)*, pillar II),
- the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (*Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag (DIHK)*, pillar III), and

- the German Confederation for Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses (*Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks (ZDH)*, pillar III,) respectively.

Our sample covers the members of these four peak associations. Because of the different membership models (voluntary vs. mandatory) and representation principles (economic sectors vs. regions), procedures for case selection differed for pillar I/II and pillar III.

3.1.1 Pillar I/II – business and employers' associations

All member associations (as at 22.4.2020) of BDA (n = 48) and BDI (n = 34[8]) as well as the two peak associations themselves were included in our sample. We did not include regional or *Länder*-associations of BDI or BDA nor sub-units or member organisations of the BDA-/BDI-member associations.[9] We controlled for double members and treated them as employers' associations. Those associations that represent economic sectors not covered in our analysis (see below) were also excluded ex ante.

Our analysis aimed at covering a wide range of business activity by including the respective associations. We used the NACE rev. 2.0 "classification of economic activities" (Eurostat 2008) and included associations whose domains cover the statistical *sections* A-L and their respective *divisions*.[10][11] This statistical classification scheme encompasses "agriculture", "manufacturing", "construction", "wholesale and retail trade", "information and communication" as well as "financial and insurance activities" and real estate businesses (see table 1). Sections M-U and the respective divisions were not included for conceptual reasons: We expect business interest groups in those sectors to differ from the groups focused here in many regards. For example, in sectors like "Professional, scientific and technical activities" (M) or "Arts, entertainment and recreation" (R) associations generally represent individuals, not companies. Other sectors like "public administration and defence" (O) or "education" (P) feature a predominant role of 'third sector' or state (led) companies with public servants, not private corporations with employees. This same applies to "Human health and social work activities" (Q). Perhaps more importantly, this sector has a special role and function during the Covid-19 crisis, which makes it different from other economic sectors with regard to possible interest group activities.

[8] The "AG Industriengruppe" is a working group of six smaller business associations sharing membership in BDI. It was excluded, because it differs fundamentally to other members.

[9] Following the terminology and systematization of Kohler-Koch et al. (2021), member organizations of BDI are sector associations (Branchenverbände). This holds also true for most members of BDA. Other BDA-members are peak associations (Spitzenverbände) themselves, representing broader economic sectors such as retail trade, accommodation and catering or insurances. The members of BDI and BDA in many cases organize associations themselves, but to highly varying degrees. Because our analysis did not aim at investigating differences regarding the different levels of the horizontally differentiated German associational system and taking into account that there are many different models and structural configurations within the three pillars (Kohler-Koch 2016; Kohler-Koch et al. 2021). While we recorded those differences in our data for later purposes, we did not systematically include them in our analysis.

[10] *Sections* of the statistical classification cover broad economic areas such as "agriculture, forestry and fishing" (Division A) or industry (Division C). *Divisions* cover more specialized branches, e.g., "Forestry and logging" (Division A2) or "Manufacture of textiles" (Division C13). Further differentiation at the ‚group' level was not considered.

[11] For a discussion of the differentiation business interest groups along statistical classifications (for the case of German industry associations) see Kohler-Koch et al. 2021.

Table 1: Overview of economic sectors (sections and divisions, NACE Rev. 2.0)

Section	Denomination	Divisons	Number of divisions encomp.
	INCLUDED		
A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	01 – 03	3
B	Mining and quarrying	05 – 09	5
C	Manufacturing	10 – 33	24
D	Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	35	1
E	Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	36 – 39	4
F	Construction	41 – 43	3
G	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	45 – 47	3
H	Transportation and storage	49 – 53	5
I	Accommodation and food service activities	55 – 56	2
J	Information and communication	58 – 63	6
K	Financial and insurance activities	64 – 66	3
L	Real estate activities	68	1
	EXCLUDED		
M	Professional, scientific and technical activities	69 – 75	7
N	Administrative and support service activities	77 – 82	
O	Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	84	1
P	Education	85	1
Q	Human health and social work activities	86 – 88	3
R	Arts, entertainment and recreation	90 – 93	4
S	Other service activities	94 – 96	3
T	Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	97 – 98	2
U	Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies	99	1

Source: Eurostat 2008, p. 57, information added by authors.

We controlled whether all sections were represented in our sample by at least one employers' association *and* one business association *or* by an association with mixed functions. We are aware of the fact that associations' domains and statistical classifications do not match entirely in many cases (Grote et al. 2007; Kohler-Koch 2016; Kohler-Koch et al. 2021). Nonetheless, we opted for a pragmatic approach and verified the economic sector-association-fit by examining data from previous research projects (Kohler-Koch et al. 2021), conducting plausibility checks via in-depth online research, and systematically accounting the member-lists of the associations.

In case of no economic sector-association-fit (one business association and one employers' association or double-function), additional associations were selected. This is especially important in the case of voluntary business associations (BDI, Pillar II): BDI's domain only encompasses industry and indus-

trial services (Kohler-Koch 2016; 24 of 68 statistical divisions). Therefore, further additions to our sample of business associations were necessary. Additions were made on the basis of organisational directories (Oeckl Online 2020) and the findings of previous research projects (e.g., Kohler-Koch et al. 2021). Additional business associations representing agriculture (A), the food and drink industry[12] (C10-11) as well as financial and insurance activities (K) were included. For one section no business association or employers' associations could be identified ("Programming and broadcasting activities", J60), for another one only the employers' association was included ("Motion picture, television and video productions", J59). In two divisions (tourism, logistics) the representation seemed incomplete, because well-known and highly visible associations were not included. We therefore added three associations from tourism and logistics.[13]

A further addition was made with regard to the 'special issue'-business associations that represent special interests of particular status groups cross-cutting economic sectors (e.g., "Familienunternehmen", "Mittelstand"). At this point, associations that address certain 'types' of companies (e.g., SMEs, collectives) were not included, although associations representing SMEs in particular are highly relevant to our analysis. Based on the compilation made by Krickhahn (2017, p. 122), we therefore added three general SME- and family business associations[14] ("Allgemeine Mittelstandsverbände") with no party affiliation (e.g., SME-association of the CDU) or branch-specific focus (e.g., SMEs in the building industry).

In a next step we validated our case selection. Because we expect public visibility and perception to indicate the general activity of associations, we also controlled for associations that were present in the media on Covid-19-related issues, but not included in our sample after completing the previous steps. Our media research covered newspaper and online articles of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (F.A.Z.) [15] between 1.2.2020 and 20.4.2020. We searched for business associations that were mentioned in Covid-19-related articles (search terms: *verband*, *verbände*). 13 associations were added that were frequently part of media reports and fit in the scope of our sample (business and employers' associations, representing sections A-L of NACE Rev. 2).[16]

3.1.2 Pillar III – economic chambers

To select the cases in pillar III we considered all chambers member of DIHK and ZDH and proceeded with the selection. Member associations are regional chambers of industry and commerce (n = 79) and chambers of craft (n = 53) with mandatory membership. The chambers' domains therefore are not differentiated by economic sectors. A representative approach measuring the economic sector-

[12] The food and drink industry clearly fits into the domain of the BDI, but the Association of German Food and Drink Industries (*Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Ernährungsindustrie (BVE)*) quit membership in 2019 (Kohler-Koch et al. 2021).

[13] *Bundesverband der Deutschen Tourismuswirtschaft* (BTW; former member of BDI), *Bundesverband Spedition und Logistik (DSLV),* and *Bundesverband Güterkraftverkehr, Logistik und Entsorgung (BGL)*.

[14] *Bundesverband mittelständische Wirtschaft* (BVMW), *Bundesverband der Selbstständigen* (BDS) und *Die Familienunternehmer* (ASU).

[15] We chose F.A.Z as a media source with well-known expertise in economics and close contacts to economic policy makers as well as business associations.

[16] As we do not differentiate between different levels of business interest groups (e.g., sector associations, peak association; see above), this step also led to the inclusion of some smaller associations from the sub-sector level that are themselves members of other groups in our sample.

association-fit (see above) was not applicable. The selection of the cases was therefore made on the basis of the Covid-19 impact and the size of the chambers.

As a proxy for the Covid-19 *impact* in the respective region we used the officially published infection rate by the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) for the week of 10.3.2020-17.3.2020 (RKI 2020 and https://corona.rki.de/). We distinguished between regions with low (< 50 infections / 100.000 inhabitants) and relatively high (> 50/100.000) infection rates. Taking into account the resource hypothesis, we controlled for the chambers' *size* and therefore differentiated between 'small' and 'large' chambers, measured by the number of member companies. We then selected 22 chambers of industry and commerce and 16 chambers of craft respectively, considering all possible combinations of 'impact' and 'size' for each chamber type (low/small, low/large, high/small, high/large). DIHK and ZDH were also included. Our selection of single cases was made on the basis of previous research findings (Sack et al. 2014; Sack 2017; Sack 2021).

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Phases of data collection

Data collection was conducted in four steps. First, a **pretest** with a selection of associations and chambers was done in March 2020 (25.3.2020-4.4.2020), which gave a first impression of data availability and possible problems in our planned proceeding. Second, the **main phase of data collection** was conducted in May 2020 (30.4.2020-8.6.2020). Third, because of additions to our sample or incomplete data **additional research** was done in June and July 2020 (9.6.2020-19.7.2020). Fourth, **further data** on the number of members of business interest groups and the impact of Covid-19 on economic sectors was compiled in September and October 2020.

3.2.2 Main data: information, services and demands

We collected information on (1) Covid-19-specific information, (2) services offered by business/employers' associations and chambers, and (3) political demands issued in March, April and May 2020.[17] We searched the associations' websites[18] to collect relevant information in the three areas. We systematically included the start pages, special 'Covid-19'-sections as well as 'policy statement-' and 'press release'-sections of each website. The collected material was archived (PDF and HTML-webarchives), relevant information was transferred to a central data file and then coded for data analysis.

To code the data, a categorial scheme was developed inductively. We differentiated categories of information, services and political demands. Single items (e.g., 'information on home office regulation' or 'the demand for suspending insolvency law') were assigned to higher categories (e.g., 'company organisation' or 'law'). The assignment of single items to categories was reviewed in a three-step pro-

[17] We only included website information, that was dated in this timeframe. Throughout additional research in June and July we did not include later statements, even if they were accessible.

[18] For a discussion of the usefulness of online sources for interest group research see Rasch et al. 2020.

cess: a first assignment by the data collector was reviewed by one researcher and then discussed by the research team in regular meetings. We identified twelve categories of information (including 'miscellaneous'), three categories of Covid-19-specific service offers and twelve categories of political demands (including 'miscellaneous'; see table 2).

Table 2: Categorization of information, service offers and demands

Category		Variable name
INFORMATION		
1	Financial aid	Info_FinancAid
2	Sector-specific information	Info_Sector
3	Law (labour)	Info_LawLabour
4	Company organisation	Info_CompanyOrg
5	Law (Covid-19-regulations)	Info_LawCoronaReg
6	Education	Info_Education
7	Logistics and supply chain	Info_Logistics
8	Foreign Trade	Info_ForeignTrade
9	Law (general)	Info_LawGen
10	Travel, events and trade fairs	Info_TravelEvents
11	Law (rent)	Info_LawRent
12	Miscellaneous	
SERVICES		
1	Covid-19-specific services	Serv_CoronaGen
2	Manuals and guides	Serv_Manuals
3	Legal advice	Serv_LegalAdvice
DEMANDS		
1	Financial aid	Demand_ FinancAid
2	Industrial relations	Demand_IndRelations
3	Exit	Demand_Exit
4	Taxes	Demand_Taxes
5	Implementation	Demand_Implementation
6	Law	Demand_Law
7	State investments	Demand_StateInvest
8	Logistics	Demand_Logistics
9	Accountancy	Demand_Accountancy
10	Sustainability	Demand_Sustainability
11	Public Procurement	Demand_Procurement
12	Miscellaneous	

Source: Own compilation.

3.2.3 Additional data: impact and size

Regarding the impact and resource hypothesis additional data was collected and assigned to the cases. The *number of member companies* is used as a proxy for the associations' resources. We are aware of the limitations of this operationalization and additional information would be more appropriate to obtain a precise picture of the associations' resources (staff, budget). But this proxy was chosen for resource and pragmatic reasons.[19] To estimate the impact of Covid-19 we used regional infection statistics (chambers) and data on the perception of the economic situation in April/May 2020 (associations).

While the case selection procedure for the economic chambers already included data collection on chambers' *resources* and the *impact* of Covid-19 (see above), additional data was collected for business/employers' associations. The procedure and data used for business/employers' associations and chambers differed because of the respective membership models (voluntary vs. mandatory) and representation principles (economic sectors vs. regions). For business/employers' associations the following two steps were conducted.

First, we used the organisation directory "Oeckl" (Oeckl Online 2020 as at 12.10.2020) as a coherent source of information on the number of members. When no information for an association could be found here, further research included the respective website of the association and media reports. Members of business and employers' associations in our sample are companies, other associations or both.[20] In those cases where membership of companies primarily consists of independent member associations, we summed up the number of member companies in every member association to reach an aggregated score for the association in our sample. We then classified our sample in three groups with 1) low number of members, 2) average number of members and 3) high number of members (in relation to the average number of members of the associations in our sample).[21]

Second, we used data of the 'ifo Business Climate Index for Germany'[22] to determine the impact of Covid-19 in March/April 2020 in the different economic sectors represented by the business and employers' associations in our sample (ifo Institut 2020). The ifo-index provides an overview of economic developments and prospects as perceived by German companies, differentiated by economic sectors. It is used here to capture the perception of the economic situation at the time of data collection in April/May 2020. We compared the average index scores of April/May 2020 with the scores in February 2020, just before the aggravation of the Covid-19 crisis in Germany. The difference between the score in February 2020 and the average score for April/May 2020 is used to assess the impact of Covid-19 on the different economic sectors. We calculated the deviation between both values for each economic sector. The average deviation of all sectors (all-sector-deviation)[23] was used as a point of reference for classifying the impact in different branches: The higher the deviation of a certain sector differed

[19] For example, a limited survey that would best suit our information needs, would probably not have been successful in the initial corona-situation due to the enormous liabilities within organisations at this time.

[20] In a few cases, even the individual membership of entrepreneurs (e.g., owners of family businesses, professionals like lawyers) is possible. For our purposes, we regarded them analogous to associations with company memberships.

[21] Chambers were not included for calculating the average due to mandatory membership and therefore extraordinary high numbers of member companies.

[22] https://www.ifo.de/en/survey/ifo-business-climate-index (16.4.2021)

[23] This average also includes sectors not included in our sample of associations intentionally. It takes the economic situation in general into account and the perceptions of the included sectors in relation to it.

from the all-sector-deviation, the higher the impact. We then classified all sectors, ranging from 1) comparatively low impact, 2) average impact to 3) comparatively high impact. Because the impact of Covid-19 on the economy in general was obviously high (see ch. 2), we opted for small 'extreme' groups of cases that make up the upper/lowest 10 percent of the distribution. The classification of the respective sectors was validated by online and media research and discussed in the research team. After this review process we re-classified two sectors (construction (buildings, civil engineering) and chemical industry) from '2) average' to '1) low'. The business and employers' associations in our sample were then classified according to their respective domain. In cases with no clear fit of the associations' domain and the classification scheme used in the ifo-data[24], we researched for further information (economic research reports, business surveys, media reports), considered data of other sectors and then classified those associations manually in the research team. Our measure of impact is therefore based on the ifo-data but validated carefully through additional research.

4 Information, service offers, and political demands of business interest groups in the Covid-19 pandemic

4.1 Description of the sample

In the period March-May 2020, i.e., during and shortly after the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in Germany, we collected Covid-19-specific information, service offers, and political demands made by business/employers' associations and economic chambers on their respective websites (see ch. 3).
Table 3 shows the sample, the type of organised business, the size of the association and the impact of the crisis on the associations. At first glance, two observations stand out: First, the number of organisations is distributed relatively equally across the categories of the three-pillar model (business associations, employers' associations, economic chambers). Second, the groups we differentiated regarding the interest groups' resources (number of members) and the impact of Covid-19 are constructed in such a way that rather small number of cases must be assigned to the distinct expression (low/high number of members, low/high impact). This results, on the one hand, from imprecise data on the associations' membership and, on the other hand, from the fact that the pandemic had a fairly broad impact on sectors and regions. Given a general concern with the Covid-19 pandemic in its early stage in the economy, the sample adjusts 'extreme' characteristics assuming that differences are likely to be identified in the highest and lowest 10 per cent of a variable.

[24] The partition differed slightly from the statistical classifications of NACE Rev. 2.0 used for case selection.

Table 3: Sample

Type of business interest group (Type_OrgBusiness)	**Code**	**Freq.**	**Percent**
Business association	1	45	33.09
Employers' association	2	46	33.82
Chamber of commerce, industry or craft	3	40	29.41
Other, special issue-business associations (e.g., family business assoc.)	4	5	3.68
N =		136	100.00
Size of the association			
Low number of members	1	15	11.03
Average number of members	2	100	73.53
High number of members	3	21	15.44
N =		136	100.00
Impact of the crisis			
Low impact	1	20	14.71
Average impact	2	97	71.32
High impact	3	19	13.97
N=		136	100.00

Source: Own compilation.

Table 4 displays the number of different information offers, service offers, and political demands per organisation. Notably, nearly a half of the business interest groups (46.3%) did not offer Covid-19-specific services to its members via internet, a third (35.3%) of the websites did not provide Covid-19-specific information, and a quarter (25.7%) did not publish particular demands addressing the crisis. Additionally, it appears evident that Covid-19-specific services were either less demanded by the members or less organised by the associations than information or political demands.

Table 4: Number of information offers, service offers, political demands

Information (info)	Class	Freq.	Percent
	0	48	35.29
	1-3	20	14,71
	4-6	27	19,85
	7-9	21	15,44
	10-12	20	14,71

Service offers (serv)	Class	Freq.	Percent
	0	63	46.32
	1-3	73	53.67
Political demands (demand)	Class	Freq.	Percent
	0	35	25,74
	1-3	49	36,03
	4-6	39	28,68
	7-9	12	8,82
	10-12	1	0.74

Source: Own compilation. **Note:** The table displays the number of information, service offers, and political demands per organisation.

We did not only take into account information, services, and political demands, but also differentiated and allocated these offers to different issue- or functional categories, such as information on company organisation or foreign trade and demands in the area of logistics or accountancy (see above). *Table 5* shows the descriptive data on the distribution of the different categories.

Table 5: Distribution of categories (information, service offers, political demands)

Information (info)				
Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Info_sum	0	12	4.088235	4.072438
	Yes	No	Mean	SD
Info_FinancAid	68	68	0.5	.5018484
Info_Sector	61	75	.4485294	.4991823
Info_LawLabour	60	76	.4411765	.4983633
Info_CompanyOrg	60	76	.4411765	.4983633
Info_LawCoronaReg	49	87	.3602941	.4818605
Info_Education	44	92	.3235294	.4695522
Info_Logistics	41	95	.3014706	.4605931
Info_ForeignTrade	36	100	.2647059	.4428074
Info_LawGen	32	104	.2352941	.4257507
Info_TravelEvents	25	111	.1838235	.3887722

Info_LawRent	17	119	.125	.3319415

Service offers (serv)				
Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Serv_sum	0	3	.9117647	1.007164
	Yes	No	Mean	SD
Serv_CoronaGen	73	63	.5367647	.50049
Serv_Manuals	36	100	.2647059	.4428074
Serv_LegalAdvice	15	121	.1102941	.3144141

Political Demands (dem)				
Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Demand_sum	0	11	2.867647	2.685513
	Yes	No	Mean	SD
Demand_FinancAid	73	63	.5367647	.50049
Demand_IndRelations	40	96	.2941176	.4573296
Demand_Exit	38	98	.2794118	.450369
Demand_Taxes	36	100	.2647059	.4428074
Demand_Implementation	35	101	.2573529	.4387917
Demand_Law	28	108	.2058824	.4058397
Demand_StateInvest	26	110	.1911765	.3946814
Demand_Logistics	22	114	.1617647	.3695961
Demand_Accountancy	20	116	.1470588	.3554738
Demand_Sustainability	17	119	.125	.3319415
Demand_Procurement	11	125	.0808824	.2736623

Source: Own compilation.

All in all, the data shows that the service catalogues of the business/employers' associations and economic chambers consist mainly of the (publicly accessible) information, Covid-19 specific services for the members, and the demands to the political decision-makers in the initial phase of the pandemic. Most of the information was related to financial help for the companies or the situation in the respec-

tive economic sector. Furthermore, practical issues like aspects of labour law and company organisation were central. A second group of information included issues on the current regulations and restrictions for business, education (including vocational training), logistics, and foreign trade. The services for the members included sector-specific hygiene protection rules, recommendations regarding the purchase of protective clothing, practical advice on storage and transport, and much more. Not surprisingly, securing liquidity and financial bridging aid dominated the organized business' list of demands by far in the initial phase of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.2 Bivariate correlations

The three assumptions (the pillar, size, and shock hypotheses, see ch. 2) relate information, services, and political demands to the characteristics of organized business. *Table 6* shows the bivariate correlations.

Table 6: Pillar, size and shock hypotheses – bivariate correlations

	Type_OrgBusiness_Sum	Size_Organisation	Concern_Organisation	Info_sum	Serv_sum	Demand_sum
Type_OrgBusiness_Sum	1.0000					
Size_Organisation	0.0618	1.0000				
Concern_Organisation	0.0944	0.1083	1.0000			
Info_sum	0.5915	0.1890	0.1052	1.0000		
Serv_sum	0.4711	0.1362	0.1493	0.7261	1.000	
Demand_sum	0.0302	0.3420	-0.0366	0.3323	0.2914	1.0000

Source: Own compilation.

Three reflections on the correlations deserve closer attention. First, information and services for the members display a parallel trend and appear to be interrelated. Second, information and services are intertwined with the type of business interest group, i.e., economic chambers are more likely to deliver information and services, which results from its legal tasks and regional character (Sack 2021). This points to the pillar assumption. Third, it appears that size matters. When looking at the resource hypothesis, a higher number in membership is positively correlated to information and political demands.

4.3 Regression analysis

To test the hypotheses, we performed a linear OLS regression. The following variables were included in the regression: *Infoallg* is used to describe the ability to provide a comprehensive range of infor-

mation in a short time after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. This ability is introduced here as the explanandum.

According to the hypotheses above, the following variables are included: The variable *Type_OrgBusiness_Sum* describes the allocation of the corresponding cases within the three-pillar system of German business interest groups, namely the product market-oriented business associations, the industrial relations-oriented employers' associations and the generalist and regionally oriented chambers of industry and commerce. The variable *Size_Organisation* captures the size of the respective organisation and thus (indirectly) its resource strength to test the resource hypothesis. The variable *Concern_Cor* captures the differences in the sector-specific and regional concern of the business associations and chambers.

Table 7: Regression analysis

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	=	136
Model	1615.03318	8	201.879148	F(8, 127)	=	41.09
Residual	623.907992	127	4.91266136	Prob > F	=	0.0000
Total	2238.94118	135	16.5847495	R-squared	=	0.7213
				Adj R-squared	=	0.7038
				Root MSE	=	2.2165

Info_sum	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf. Intervall]	
Serv_sum	1.526443	.2498726	6.11	0.000	1.03199	2.020896
Demand_sum	.1854923	.1104878	1.68	0.096	-.0331432	.4041277
Info_TravelEvents	3.633601	.5827652	6.24	0.000	2.480414	4.786788
Demand_IndRelations	.5998136	.5461653	1.10	0.274	-.480949	1.680576
Demand_Sustainability	-.1202002	.6671918	-0.18	0.857	-1.440452	1.200052
Type_OrgBusiness_Sum	1.326767	.2514853	5.28	0.000	.8291227	1.824411
Size_Organisation	.1665808	.4021075	0.41	0.679	-.6291174	.962279
Concern_Organisation_Cor	-.4021051	.3682917	-1.09	0.277	-1.130888	.3266776
_cons	-.9063486	1.10539	-0.82	0.414	-3.093716	1.281019

Source: Own compilation.

We include the following controlling and specifying variables: The variables *Serv_sum* and *Demand_sum* are included to clarify the likelihood of a high level of information being associated with a strong supply of service and policy demands with the aim of controlling for a generally high level of associations' activity, i.e. covering information, service offers and demands, as an influencing factor. The variables *InfoTravelEvents* and *DemandIndRelations* control for particular specifics of organisational activity to verify whether the mobility restrictions associated with the crisis had a particular effect on the offered information. *DemandIndRelations* controls for the functional hypothesis since these

were established mainly by employers' associations. *Demand_Sustainability* has been introduced to account for aspects of (future related) sustainability, which is likely to discriminate between “traditional” and “future-related” demands.

5 Interpretation of the results

With a significance and explanation of the dispersion of the dependent variables of approx. 70%, the regression model has a high explanatory strength. In terms of content, however, there are only a few significant correlations. The fact that a good information offer is significantly positively associated with corona-specific service offers and information on travel activities is not really surprising. The first significant finding is that those interest groups that are already well positioned in terms of information on the Covid-19 situation in the population and the economy are also more likely to have member-oriented offers.

The function and pillar hypotheses are confirmed insofar as the comprehensive information offers are often provided by the chambers of industry and commerce. However, we cannot confirm that the employers' associations provide specific information in the field of industrial relations. This points to a de-differentiation of the information (and, incidentally, of the demand catalogues) in the three-pillar system of German organised business.

The hypothesis of concern has not been entirely confirmed. Already in the first wave of the pandemic, a region- and sector-unspecific impact of Covid-19 can be observed. In the first phase of the shock caused by the pandemic, a general concern is perceived. With a sector-specific impact becoming evident in the subsequent waves since November 2020 (the lockdowns particularly affect the retail trade and the leisure industry), further research would have to clarify whether an influence following from the effects of the pandemic on economic activity can be identified over time, at least for the economic sectors.

The resource hypothesis is also not confirmed, as the coefficients point in the assumed direction (the more members, the more information, service offers, and demands), but are not significant.

6 Conclusion

On the basis of the information, service offers and lists of demands from 136 business associations and chambers, the paper came to the following findings. The business community was perceived as generally affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in the first wave from March 2020. Not all business associations in the sample have provided Covid-19-specific information and made political demands: 25 organisations did neither the one nor the other. If we take into consideration the group of organisations that have only provided one piece of information and/or made one political demand, 39 associations can be identified. Among them, there is no chamber of industry and commerce.

Differences in Covid-19-specific information, services for members, and political demands are neither explained by differences in the degree of concern nor by the number of members. Two additional considerations can qualitatively account for this latter finding. On the one hand, the digital dissemination of information, services and demands allows for their low-cost imitation and diffusion. On the other hand, the external shock potentially led to the mobilisation of all available organisational resources. Qualitative case studies could yield valuable insights into this development.

With regard to the function of business/employers' associations and economic chambers, the analysis shows that the chambers of industry and commerce and of craft offered a broad portfolio of information and services early on in the crisis. This corresponds to their institutional function and their organisational strength (derived from their compulsory membership). However, the null hypothesis of the pillar hypothesis is partly confirmed since a noticeable de-differentiation can be observed in particular between business associations regulating the product market and employers' associations focusing on industrial relations. This is not a new finding (Behrens 2017; Vorholt 2019, p. 208).

All in all, the Covid 19 crisis should not be understood as a window of opportunity, which displays outstanding change or surprising insights. The majority of business interest groups showed their capacity to act and to offer services to their members. Of course, this is only a snapshot from the first months of the crisis. Given that the second wave of infection starting in late October 2020 was accompanied with a notable discontent with the policies of the government, more research is needed to reflect on the change in business interest groups' service portfolios during the whole cycle of the crisis. Future research could also take upon a comparative perspective. From a preliminary comparison of chambers of industry and commerce, we have learned that the Austrian and French chambers have played a role similar to the German chambers (Sack 2021), which calls for a further exploration of the broader picture of business interest groups.

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Supplement I – Directory of business associations, employers' associations and economic chambers (sample)

	Business interest group	Acronym	Organisation type	Membership type	Membership size	Impact of Covid-19
1	Bundesverband der Deutschen Entsorgungs-, Wasser- und Rohstoffwirtschaft e.V.	BDEW	10	2	2	2
2	Bundesverband der Deutschen Luftverkehrswirtschaft e.V.	BDL	10	2	1	3
3	Bundesverband Informationswirtschaft, Telekommunikation und neue Medien e.V.	BITKOM	10	3	2	2
4	Verband der Automobilindustrie e.V.	VDA	10	3	2	2
5	Verband der Chemischen Industrie e.V.	VCI	10	2	2	1
6	Verband Deutscher Maschinen- und Anlagenbau e.V.	VDMA	10	3	3	2
7	Verband Forschender Arzneimittelhersteller e.V.	vfa	10	3	2	1
8	Wirtschaftsverband Stahl- und Metallverarbeitung e.V.	WSM	10	1	2	2
9	Zentralverband Elektrotechnik- und Elektronikindustrie e.V.	ZVEI	10	3	2	2
10	Bundesverband Baustoffe – Steine und Erden e.V.	BBS	10	1	2	1
11	Bundesverband der Deutschen Luft- und Raumfahrtindustrie e.V.	BDLI	10	3	2	2
12	Bundesverband der Deutschen Sicherheits- und Verteidigungsindustrie e.V.	BDSV	10	3	2	1
13	Bundesverband der Pharmazeutischen Industrie e.V.	BPI	10	3	2	1
14	Bundesverband der Tabakwirtschaft und neuartiger Erzeugnisse	BVTE	10	3	2	2
15	Bundesverband Erdgas, Erdöl und Geonergie e.V.	BVEG	10	3	2	3
16	Mineralölwirtschaftsverband e.V.	MWV	10	3	2	3
17	Verband der Deutschen Verbundwirtschaft e.V.	VdV	10	3	1	2
18	Verband Deutscher Papierfabriken e.V.	VDP	10	3	2	2
19	Vereinigung Rohstoffe und Bergbau e.V.	VRB	10	2	2	2
20	Wirtschaftsvereinigung Stahl	WVStahl	10	3	2	2
21	Zentraler Immobilien Ausschuss e.V.	ZIA	10	2	3	2
22	Biotechnologie- Industrie- Organisation Deutschland e.V.	BIO	10	3	2	1
23	Bundesverband der Deutschen Gießerei- Industrie e.V.	BDGuss	10	3	2	2
24	Bundesverband Glasindustrie e.V.	BVGlass	10	3	2	2
25	Verband Beratender Ingenieure e.V.	VBI	10	3	3	2
26	Verband der TÜV e.V.	VdTÜV	10	3	2	2
27	Wirtschaftsverband Anlagenbau und Industrieservice	SET	10	3	2	2
28	Wirtschaftsvereinigung Metalle e.V.	WVMetalle	10	3	2	2
29	Bundesverbands Digitale Wirtschaft	BVDW	10	3	2	2
30	Bundesverbands Freier Immobilien- und Wohnungsunternehmen	BFW	10	3	2	2
31	Deutsche Reiseverband	DRV	10	3	3	3

32	Deutsche Sparkassen- und Giroverband	DSGV	10	3	2	2
33	E-Commerce-Verband	BEVH	10	3	2	1
34	German Fashion	GerFash	10	3	2	2
35	Immobilienverband Deutschland	ICD	10	3	3	2
36	Internetwirtschaftsverband Eco	ECO	10	3	2	2
37	Bundesverband Paket und Expresslogistik	BIEK	10	3	1	1
38	Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie	BDI	10	1	2	2
39	Die Deutsche Kreditwirtschaft	DK	10	1	2	2
40	Deutscher Bauernverband	DBV	10	1	3	2
41	Bundesverband der Deutschen Volksbanken und Raiffeisenbanken	BVR	10	2	2	2
42	Bundesverband Deutscher Banken	bankenverband	10	2	2	2
43	Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Ernährungsindustrie	BVE	10	2	2	2
44	Gesamtverband der Deutschen Versicherungswirtschaft	GDV	10	3	2	2
45	Bundesverband der Deutschen Tourismuswirtschaft	BTW	10	2	3	3
46	Bundesarbeitgeberverband Chemie e.V.	BAVC	20	1	3	1
47	Arbeitgebervereinigung Nahrung und Genuss e.V.	AGNN	20	1	2	2
48	Gesamtverband der Deutschen Land- und Forstwirtschaftlichen Arbeitgeberverbände e.V.	GLFA	20	1	2	2
49	Gesamtverband der metallindustriellen Arbeitgeberverbände e.V.	MEA	20	1	2	2
50	agv comunity, Arbeitgeberverband für Telekommunikation und IT e. V.	AGVC	20	3	1	2
51	Arbeitgeberverband der Cigarettenindustrie	AdC	20	3	1	2
52	Arbeitgeberverband der Deutschen Immobilienwirtschaft e.V.	AGDI	20	3	2	2
53	Arbeitgeberverband der Deutschen Kautschukindustrie e.V.	ADK	20	3	2	2
54	Arbeitgeberverband der Versicherungsunternehmen in Deutschland	AGVE	20	3	2	2
55	Arbeitgeberverband des privaten Bankgewerbes e.V.	AGVB	20	3	2	2
56	Arbeitgeberverband Deutscher Eisenbahnen e.V.	AGVDE	20	3	2	2
57	Arbeitgeberverband Luftverkehr e.V.	AGVL	20	3	2	3
58	Arbeitgeberverband Postdienste e. V.	AGP	20	3	2	1
59	Arbeitgeberverband Stahl e.V.	AGS	20	3	2	2
60	Bundesarbeitgeberverband Glas und Solar e. V.	BAGS	20	3	2	2
61	Bundesverband Digitalpublisher und Zeitungsverleger	BDZV	20	2	2	2
62	Vereinigung der Arbeitgeberverbände energie- und versorgungswirtschaftlicher Unternehmungen	VAEU	20	1	2	2
63	Arbeitgeberverband der Deutschen Lederindustrie e.V.	AGDL	20	3	2	2
64	Hauptverband Papier- und Kunststoffverarbeitung e.V.	HPV	20	1	1	2
65	Sozialpolitische Arbeitsgemeinschaft Steine und Erden	SPA	20	1	2	2
66	Sozialpolitische Arbeitsgemeinschaft Verkehr	SAV	20	3	2	2
67	Vereinigung der Arbeitgeberverbände der Deutschen Papierindustrie e.V.	VAP	20	1	1	2
68	Bundesverband des Deutschen Lebensmittelhandels	BVLH	20	2	2	1
69	Handelsverband Textil	BTE	20	1	2	2
70	Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände e.V.	BDA	20	1	3	2
71	Hauptverband des Deutschen Einzelhandels	HDE	22	1	2	2
72	Deutscher Hotel- und Gaststättenverband	DEHOGA	22	2	3	3
73	Bundesverband Großhandel, Außenhandel, Dienstleistungen e.V.	BGA	22	1	3	2

74	Gesamtverband der deutschen Textil- und Modeindustrie e.V.	T+M	22	1	2	2
75	Hauptverband der Deutschen Bauindustrie e.V.	HDB	22	1	2	1
76	Verband Deutscher Reeder e.V.	VDR	22	3	2	3
77	Arbeitgeber- und Wirtschaftsverband der Mobilitäts- und Verkehrsdienstleister e.V.	Agv MoVe	22	3	2	2
78	Bundesverband Briefdienste e.V.	BBD	22	3	2	1
79	Bundesverband der Systemgastronomie e.V.	BVSYS	22	3	2	3
80	Bundesverband Druck und Medien e.V.	BVDM	22	1	2	2
81	Bundesverband Keramische Industrie e.V.	BVKI	22	1	2	2
82	Hauptverband der Deutschen Holzindustrie und Kunststoffe verarbeitenden Industrie und verwandter Industrie- und Wirtschaftszweige e.V.	HDH	22	1	2	2
83	Verband Deutscher Zeitschriftenverleger e.V.	VdZ	22	3	2	2
84	Deutscher Braunkohlen-Industrie-Verein e.V.	DEBRIV	22	3	2	2
85	Gesamtverband Steinkohle e.V.	GVSt	22	3	1	2
86	Verband der Kali- und Salzindustrie e.V.	VKS	22	3	1	2
87	Verein der Zuckerindustrie e.V.	VdZi	22	3	1	2
88	Zentralverband des Deutschen Baugewerbes	ZDB	22	1	2	2
89	Verband der Milchindustrie	MIV	22	3	2	2
90	Bundesverband Spedition und Logistik	DSLV	22	1	2	2
91	Bundesverband Güterkraftverkehr, Logistik und Entsorgung	BGL	22	1	2	2
92	Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks	ZDH	30	1	3	2
93	Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag	DIHK	30	1	3	2
94	IHK Hamburg	IHK HH	31	3	3	2
95	IHK Coburg	IHK Cb	31	3	1	3
96	IHK Würzburg	IHK Wg	31	3	2	3
97	IHK Köln	IHK K	31	3	2	2
98	IHK Erfurt	IHK Et	31	3	2	1
99	IHK Limburg	IHK Lg	31	3	1	1
100	IHK Halle	IHK Hal	31	3	2	1
101	IHK Bielefeld	IHK Bi	31	3	2	2
102	IHK Kassel	IHK Ks	31	3	2	2
103	IHK München	IHK M	31	3	3	3
104	IHK Düsseldorf	IHK D	31	3	2	2
105	IHK Aachen	IHK Aa	31	3	2	3
106	IHK Berlin	IHK B	31	3	3	2
107	IHK Cottbus	IHK Cs	31	3	2	2
108	IHK Dresden	IHK Dd	31	3	2	2
109	IHK Neubrandenburg	IHK Nbg	31	3	2	1
110	IHK Hannover	IHK H	31	3	2	2
111	IHK Gießen-Friedberg	IHK GiFb	31	3	2	2
112	IHK Fulda	IHK Fd	31	3	1	2
113	IHK Stuttgart	IHK S	31	3	2	3
114	IHK Münster	IHK Mü	31	3	2	3
115	IHK Emden	IHK Edn	31	3	2	2
116	HWK Hamburg	HWK HH	32	3	2	2

117	HWK Oberfranken	HWK Ofn	32	3	2	3
118	HWK Unterfranken	HWK Ufn	32	3	2	3
119	HWK Köln	HWK K	32	3	2	1
120	HWK Erfurt	HWK Et	32	3	2	1
121	HWK Halle (Saale)	HWK Hal	32	3	2	1
122	HWK Wiesbaden	HWK Wi	32	3	2	2
123	HWK Ostwestfalen-Lippe zu Bielefeld	HWK Bi	32	3	2	2
124	HWK Kassel	HWK Ks	32	3	2	2
125	HWK München und Oberbayern	HWK M	32	3	3	3
126	HWK Düsseldorf	HWK D	32	3	3	2
127	HWK Aachen	HWK Aa	32	3	2	3
128	HWK Berlin	HWK B	32	3	2	2
129	HWK Cottbus	HWK Cs	32	3	1	2
130	HWK Dresden	HWK Dd	32	3	2	2
131	HWK Ostfriesland	HWK Ofl	32	3	1	2
132	Bundesverband Deutsche Startups	BVDS	40	3	2	2
133	Die Familienunternehmer	FamUnt	40	3	3	2
134	Bundesverband der Selbstständigen	BDS/DGV	40	1	2	2
135	Bundesverband mittelständische Wirtschaft	BVMW	40	3	3	2
136	Lebensmittelverband Deutschland	LebensmittelD	40	2	3	2

Code keys: Organisation type: 10 business association, 11 business association (sub-sector level, *Fachverbände),* 20 employers' association, 21 employers' association (sub-sector level, *Fachverbände),* 22 business/employers' association (mixed function), 30 economic chambers (peak association, *DIHK, ZDH*), 31 chamber of industry and commerce (IHK), 32 chamber of craft (HWK), 40 special issue-business association/other / **Membership type:** 1 associations as members, 2 mixed (associations and companies/individuals (entrepreneurs)), 3 companies/individuals (entrepreneurs) as members / **Membership size:** 1 comparatively low number of members, 2 average number of members, 3 comparatively high number of members / **Impact of Covid-19:** 1 relatively low impact, 2 average impact, 3 relatively high impact.