

# GERMAN EVENT INDUSTRY STRUGGLING DUE TO RESTRICTIONS



The Covid-19 pandemic has taken its toll on the tourism industry worldwide. This is obviously also the case of German tourism. However, one sector of the industry, in particular, is currently voicing its dissatisfaction with regards to the governmental restrictions and insufficient aid. This sector is the event industry, which has struggled significantly in the last couple of months.

## Protests in Berlin

Last week around 6,000 people from the sector (as well as the whole tourism industry) demonstrated in Berlin for more comprehensive state aid during the crisis. Specifically, the sector's stakeholders called for aid programs **"which are more specifically geared towards the needs of companies than the government subsidy programs"**.

The protests moved from the Rotes Rathaus on Alexanderplatz. Under the motto #OnFire, the demonstrators drew attention to the poor economic situation of the event industry. "Culture is dying" or "Culture is relevant to the system" were just some of the slogans on the posters.

"The event industry is the sixth largest branch of the economy in Germany, with over a million of employees," said Michael Theurer, a member of the German Bundestag for the Free Democratic Party.

"The industry was one of the first to be hit with full force by the Corona crisis and is still in acute danger. Something has to happen quickly so that jobs and companies do not disappear permanently from the scene," he added.

## ITB Set to Take Place Online

Most events and fairs have been cancelled this year. At most, some of them, like IFA in Berlin, will only take place in a very slimmed-down form and predominantly digitally. In this sense, experts registered a decrease in sales of more than 20 billion euros in the last months.

And in this sense, besides the clear dissatisfaction of the industry with governmental support, another blow has arrived. The world's largest tourism trade fair, the ITB Berlin, after its cancellation this year, will return in 2021, but as an "entirely virtual event".

The virtual concept of ITB Berlin 2021 will include numerous high-level panel discussions and lectures broadcasted live, as well as digital networking opportunities. It is needless to say, however, that this online format will not be able to compensate the losses suffered by the event management sector in the last months and is yet another problem for the struggling industry.

## Lockdown to Bring Further Problems

Moreover, effective from November 2nd the German government has imposed further restrictions which will greatly affect the tourism and event industry.

The new regulations encourage citizens to refrain from private travel - both nationally and

internationally. Moreover, tourist accommodation in Germany will be prohibited for one month, while catering establishments will have to close for November and events will be banned.

This is a huge blow for the entire industry, as confirmed by Michael Rabe, Secretary-General of the Federal Association of the German Tourism Industry, **who labelled small and medium tourism companies in the industry as “victims of the pandemic policy for no reason”**.

“We call on politicians to refrain from these incomprehensible measures on the back of the tourism industry. However, should politicians stick to such an industry-specific lockdown, industry-specific compensation payments and rescue measures are an absolute must for the companies concerned,” he concluded.

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