

# Webinars on policy challenges for SMEs and entrepreneurs during the COVID- 19 pandemic

The OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities is organising a number of hands-on webinars focusing on policy challenges for SMEs and entrepreneurship policy that governments are encountering in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. These webinars aim to facilitate open and informal discussions among policy makers in OECD countries and opportunities for mutual learning. The topics proposed reflect important challenges identified in the OECD overview paper on the [SME and Entrepreneurship policy response to COVID-19](#), as well as in the [OECD Scoreboard on Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs 2020](#). The typical format for a webinar will involve an introduction by the OECD Secretariat on the policy topic in question and brief presentations by policy makers from two countries on how they have addressed the policy challenge, followed by Q&A with participants.

12 MAY 2020	RE-BOOTING START-UP POLICY IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS	<a href="#">Register</a>
14 MAY 2020	THE GEOGRAPHY OF HIGHER EDUCATION: AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND COLLABORATION – HEIs AT THE TIMES OF THE COVID-19	<a href="#">Register</a>
19 MAY 2020	LEND FIRST, CHECK LATER	<a href="#">Register</a>
26 MAY 2020	SUPPORTING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH THE COVID-19 CRISIS: WHAT NEXT?	<a href="#">Register</a>
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**TUESDAY, 12 MAY 2020 (3PM-4:30PM)****RE-BOOTING START-UP POLICY IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

The COVID-19 crisis is causing a decline in the rate of new business start-ups and increasing closures of existing SMEs. This implies a need for stronger start-up policies, such as an expansion and adjustment of start-up finance, advice and mentoring and other support. The objectives of such initiatives are to increase start-up rates and foster more productive, innovative and sustainable entrepreneurship. This webinar examines how to adjust the current suites of start-up policy measures, taking account of the impact of the current crisis on the quantity and quality of business entries and exits in different countries, both in the short term and in the long run. The seminar also discusses ways to balance support measures to keep existing SMEs in business on the one hand, and “creative destruction” on the other, and how this balance is affected by a country’s institutional and economic conditions and policy stances. This webinar will explore issues such as: To what extent do governments need to boost their start-up policies in response to COVID-19? Should policy shift towards promoting greater start-up numbers or focus more strongly on start-up quality? What measures could be used to help re-start viable SMEs that have been mothballed or closed down as a result of COVID-19?

The draft agenda for this webinar is attached for your convenience. For further information or if you would like to volunteer to make a short presentation of the policy issues and developments in your country, please contact Jonathan Potter ([jonathan.potter@oecd.org](mailto:jonathan.potter@oecd.org)) and David Halabisky ([david.halabisky@oecd.org](mailto:david.halabisky@oecd.org)) in the CFE Secretariat.

To register for this meeting, click on [this link](#). After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. If you do not receive an email confirmation or have trouble registering, please contact Heather Mortimer-Charoy ([heather.mortimercharoy@oecd.org](mailto:heather.mortimercharoy@oecd.org)).

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**TUESDAY, 14 MAY 2020 (2PM-4PM)****THE GEOGRAPHY OF HIGHER EDUCATION: AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND COLLABORATION – HEIs AT THE TIMES OF THE COVID-19**

The OECD and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) have organised a series of webinars to discuss the role that entrepreneurial and innovative higher education institutions (HEIs) play in their ecosystems and networks, during the health crisis. In particular, these expert meetings assess the way in which HEIs have been helping communities and firms to weather the crisis, and the role that they could play in the “regeneration” phase, once the pandemic is over or under control. In particular, this webinar will discuss the possibility to increase the pace of research and the osmosis between HEIs and business, with senior representatives from the private sector.

For further information, please contact Raffaele Trapasso ([Raffaele.Trapasso@oecd.org](mailto:Raffaele.Trapasso@oecd.org)) in the CFE Secretariat.

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## TUESDAY, 19 MAY 2020 (3PM-4:30PM)

### LEND FIRST, CHECK LATER

Providing liquidity support to SMEs is a central objective of SME policy responses to COVID-19 so far. Policy makers have deferred payments of taxes, introduced moratoria on debt repayments, and offered loan guarantees and direct loans as well as grants and wage subsidies. A key challenge is to ensure that these measures reach SMEs as quickly as possible. Beyond ensuring the administrative capacity to handle the demand for such programmes, countries have also established relatively broad conditions under which financial support is granted. Going forward, how can policy makers strike a balance between rapid delivery and appropriate eligibility criteria and accountability? This webinar will explore different country approaches to tackling the challenges of emergency lending in the crisis.

Please contact Stephan Raes ([Stephan.Raes@oecd.org](mailto:Stephan.Raes@oecd.org)) in the CFE Secretariat if you would like more information or would like to propose to make a short presentation of the policy issues and developments in your country.

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## TUESDAY, 26 MAY 2020 (3PM-4:30PM)

### SUPPORTING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH THE COVID-19 CRISIS: WHAT NEXT?

Young entrepreneurs are among the hardest hit in the COVID-19 crisis. International surveys suggest that nearly 90% of young entrepreneurs report a negative impact on their business, including reduced customer demand, supply chain disruptions, and distribution disruptions. About one-quarter of those surveyed reported that they have stopped their business completely. In the short term, policy makers need to ensure that measures for micro businesses are available to, and appropriate for, young entrepreneurs, who are increasingly working as freelancers or combining self-employment with education and/or employment. Looking further into the future, policy makers should anticipate the implementation of measures to address rapidly growing youth unemployment and greater barriers to labour market entry for young people. Youth entrepreneurship can be part of the policy response to help young people gain labour market experience and build professional networks to help build their business activity or transition into employment. This webinar will explore issues such as: How should support measures for micro businesses be tailored for the needs of young entrepreneurs? What should policy makers do to scale up youth entrepreneurship support to respond to growing youth unemployment? What are the key lessons from the youth unemployment crisis of the early 2010s?

Please contact David Halabisky ([david.halabisky@oecd.org](mailto:david.halabisky@oecd.org)) and Jonathan Potter ([jonathan.potter@oecd.org](mailto:jonathan.potter@oecd.org)) in the CFE Secretariat if you would like more information or would like to propose to make a short presentation of the policy issues and developments in your country.

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**TUESDAY, 2 JUNE 2020 (3PM-4:30PM)**

**MOBILISING PUBLIC GUARANTEES FOR THE SME POLICY RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

Loan guarantees are a widely used instrument across OECD countries to improve SME access to credit. Governments have extended the amount of funding available for guarantees, eased conditions, and raised public guarantee levels. However, despite the availability of guarantees, in some cases banks appear reluctant to lend to SMEs because of their risk assessment. Some countries have now introduced a 100% public guarantee for some SME loans. This minimises the risk for banks, but may have negative consequences if lending goes to SMEs that are not viable. What are country experiences with levels of public guarantees and accessibility? How, and for what reasons, have governments introduced 100% public guarantees? In what ways have eligibility criteria been simplified, and how are potential risks relating to additionality and sustainability being addressed?

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**TUESDAY, 9 JUNE 2020 (3PM-4:30PM)**

**WOMEN ENTERPRISE POLICY AND COVID-19**

While traditional recessions tend to affect male-dominated sectors more acutely (e.g. manufacturing, construction), the current COVID-19 crisis and associated policy responses (social distancing) have had a major impact on the hospitality and retail industries, where women entrepreneurs are over-represented. The current crisis has also drastically reduced access to out-of-home childcare, which has the potential to affect many women entrepreneurs' ability to ensure business continuity. As such, women entrepreneurs, who were already under-represented in most OECD countries before the crisis stand to be affected disproportionately. Because they tend to rely less on bank funding than their male counterparts, they also are at a higher risk of "falling between the cracks" of mass emergency relief programmes that rely on existing products in commercial banks for speed, or leave out the smallest businesses. Policy makers need to ensure that their short and medium-term relief programmes accurately take into account the needs of women entrepreneurs. However, most policy responses so far have not been gender-sensitive. What are the best strategies to respond to the needs of women's entrepreneurship in an efficient manner?

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**TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2020 (3PM-4:30PM)****SME POLICY RESPONSE TO COVID-19: LEVERAGING ALTERNATIVE FINANCE PROVIDERS**

The financial support for SMEs impacted by the Covid-19 crisis has thus far been channelled primarily through commercial banks. However, some jurisdictions have partnered with non-bank financial actors to act as intermediaries for their support measures, to leverage rapid innovation in financial services in recent years and the increasing importance of alternative providers of finance for SMEs. This webinar puts a spotlight on these experiences, including the advantages and risks, and aims to distil lessons for measures to be implemented going forward. It will also explore the potential for greater use of alternative data in order to better target the measures.

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**TUESDAY, 23 JUNE 2020 (3PM-4:30PM)****FINANCIAL RELIEF FOR SMEs: AVOIDING LONG-TERM OVER-INDEBTEDNESS**

In their policy response to COVID-19, many countries have deferred taxes and other payments for SMEs and have increased lending facilities. While this provides relief from the acute liquidity problems they face, these interventions may also result in a deterioration of firms' equity ratios. As a result, heavily indebted SMEs may struggle in the years to come. At the same time, the use of grants or subsidies to SMEs may not be feasible or desirable. This seminar aims to showcase innovative policy responses to provide liquidity support, while at the same time not excessively indebting SMEs in need of public support.

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**TUESDAY, 30 JUNE 2020 (3PM-4:30PM)**

**THE SILVER LINING – HOW POLICY RESPONSES CAN HELP SMEs FAST-TRACK THEIR RECOVERY AND GROWTH**

In their SME policy responses to the pandemic, governments have placed an immediate focus on supporting liquidity. However, countries are increasingly developing structural policies as part of their responses, such as those aimed at strengthening the digitalisation of SMEs and their capacity for teleworking and online sales. Such measures could help SMEs overcome the next wave of challenges and also lay the foundations for post recovery productivity and competitiveness. How have countries introduced structural policy measures in their COVID-19 SME policy responses? Are there links between these measures and those aimed at financial support? How can “smart conditionality” be applied to ensure that support through the crisis and recovery serves to strengthen SME resilience and competitiveness over the longer term?

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