Abstract:
According to the information from the Robert Koch-Institute (RKI), there were 95,391 COVID-19 cases and 1,434 COVID-19 deaths on the 6th of April 2020 in Germany. Within three months, with the first confirmed case at the end of January, the virus spread widely and gained a very strong influence on society and economy as in many other countries around the world. In response to COVID-19, schools in Germany were closed as of March 16, and the Federal government imposed a lockdown on March 22th, restricting public life to the minimum. The objective of this intervention was to reduce the transmission rate and thus prevent a possible overloading of the German health care system. However, the Bavarian government decided to hold a local election on March 15, 2020 despite the existing danger of infection.

Compared to the other German states, Bavaria has the highest number of COVID-19 cases since the 26th March. In this research project we investigate whether the municipal elections in Bavaria have had an influence on the speed of the distribution of COVID-19 and can possibly explain why Bavaria has the highest case numbers in Germany. In order to investigate the impact of the municipal election on the speed of the distribution we employ an epidemiological model controlling for other factors at the local level combined with different econometric methods to account for the likely endogeneity of participation in the election.

Data:
Our database consists of three datasets: (I) from the Robert-Koch-Institute (RKI) on COVID-19 (RKI COVID19 and RKI Corona Landkreise), (II) regional-level data on participation in the Bavarian municipal elections of 15.03.2020 and (III) further municipal data from the INKAR – database (“Indikatoren und Karten zur Raum- und Stadtentwicklung”). The data is used in a merged form for the analysis.

JEL codes: I18, I10, H12

Keywords: COVID-19, Municipal Elections, Transmission Rate, Basic Reproduction Number