

"Ireland was rightly seen as a role model in the fight against the coronavirus until some weeks ago. There were days in December when not a single patient died of Covid-19 in the Republic. Ireland achieved this through a very intelligent lockdown. Unfortunately, Ireland opened up too early. It changed the stage from the highest level 5 not to the second highest level 4, but straight to the third highest level 3. Thus, from 01.12.2020 restaurants, hairdressing salons, cinemas, gyms and many other things were open again. At the same time, there has apparently been a strong spread of the new virus mutation B117 from Great Britain. Now 50% of the detected cases in Ireland are due to the novel mutation. This means that there are three lessons to be learned from the development in Ireland. First, the measures that were in place until the end of November are highly effective. Secondly, even with low infection numbers in the current situation (winter) and novel viral mutations, one should definitely not open everything up too quickly. And thirdly, the novel virus mutation aggravates the situation if you don't have the virus completely under control," said Liese.

In Great Britain, the novel viral mutation was only discovered at all because there was an increase in the number of infections in parts of England despite the lockdown, albeit with schools open. This is a danger now in other European countries as well. If we do not strictly enforce the measures or even tighten them, it is possible that the current trend, namely that the infection figures are slightly decreasing, will quickly turn into the opposite.