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Draft chapter on

Germany

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Introduction

The past decade has seen an unprecedented rise in policy initiatives in early childhood education and care (ECEC), which in Germany spans the period up to the start of compulsory schooling at six years. This new prioritisation can be related to three main issues and policy concerns which have been changing the early childhood services landscape – not only in Germany, but across Europe. The first is the employment agenda, with the aim of providing more viable opportunities for combining work with family responsibilities. In Germany, this has led to an explicit focus on expanding provision for children from birth to three. The second is the early education agenda, emanating initially from the unexpectedly low performance of 15 year olds in Germany in the first round of the OECD-PISA study. This has resulted in first-time curricular frameworks for work in early childhood settings and increasingly regulated collaborations with the primary school sector. The third is the social inclusion agenda. With its strong links to education issues, this has led to a broadening of the remit of early childhood centres to cater more specifically for children from disadvantaged families – in some regions through new forms of integrated services for children and families and across the country through a particular focus on language enhancement programmes.

With these three inter-connected policy areas in mind, this chapter will attempt to show how children from disadvantaged families fare across the country in their access to and participation in early childhood education and care settings, and how this provision may differ in terms of key quality criteria.

By way of an introduction to the strongly decentralised face of early education and care in Germany, the chapter will start by giving a general picture of regional variations in the population size and composition across the country.

Setting the scene: population patterns in a regional perspective

Germany in the second decade of the twenty-first century is a federal republic with a population of 81.8 million (2011). Following the unification of the East and West German states in 1990, the country today comprises 16 federal states or Länder, each with its own regional government alongside the federal government. Berlin,
Bremen and Hamburg are regarded as city states. The other 13 Länder vary considerably in size, Bavaria being the largest in terms of land area.

Table 1 shows the number of pre-school age children living in each of the 16 federal states. These patterns reflect the population as a whole. Northrhine-Westfalia is the most highly populated federal state, and Bremen has the lowest number of inhabitants, with considerable variations across the eastern and western Länder. As the table illustrates, the majority of pre-school age children live in the western Länder.

Table 1
Germany: Children of pre-school age in the 16 Länder, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal state</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Children under 3 years</th>
<th>Children 3 to under 6 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northrhine-Westfalia</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>444.091</td>
<td>456.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bavaria</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>319.189</td>
<td>325.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baden-Wuerttemberg</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>274.527</td>
<td>282.759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Saxony</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>192.055</td>
<td>201.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hesse</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>155.019</td>
<td>157.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saxony</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>103.877</td>
<td>98.677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhineland-Palatinate</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>95.507</td>
<td>98.359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin (including former East Berlin)</td>
<td>W/E</td>
<td>97.191</td>
<td>88.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schleswig-Holstein</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>68.609</td>
<td>71.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandenburg</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>57.985</td>
<td>57.880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saxony-Anhalt</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>52.252</td>
<td>50.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuringia</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>52.002</td>
<td>49.914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>49.566</td>
<td>46.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>39.539</td>
<td>37.567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saarland</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>21.236</td>
<td>21.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bremen</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>16.320</td>
<td>15.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Germany</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2.038.965</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.060.656</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Other variations include the distribution of the immigrant population, which is mainly concentrated in the western federal states. The highest levels are to be found in Bremen (29%), Hamburg (27%), Baden-Wuerttemberg (26%) and Hesse (25%). Only

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In Germany, the term 'immigrant' is not in common usage, although it will be used occasionally in this chapter because of its international currency. Instead, the official terminology is ‘persons with a migration background’ (Personen mit Migrationshintergrund).
590,000 persons with a migration background live in the five eastern federal states, compared with 15.2 million in the western Länder and Berlin (Integrationsbericht, 2012, p.34, data from 2010).

7.1 million (8.7% of the total population) are foreign nationals. However, as many as 15.7 million (almost one fifth of the total population) are classified as ‘persons with a migration background’. The 2010 microcensus (a representative one per cent sample survey conducted annually by the Federal Statistical Office) shows that persons with a Turkish background comprise the largest group, accounting for 15.8% of the immigrant population. Families originating from states of the former Soviet Union comprise the next largest group (Russian Federation 6.7%; Kasachstan 4.6%; Ukraine 1.6%), followed by persons from four European Union countries (Poland 8.3%; Italy 4.7%; Romania 2.7%; Greece 2.4%) and two central European states (Croatia 2.1%; Serbia 1.7%) (Integrationsbericht, 2012, p.31).

However, over half of those officially classified as having a migration background have in fact acquired German citizenship (Integrationsbericht, 2012, p.28). A child is automatically granted German citizenship if one of the parents is a German national. Additionally, since 2000, children born into families in which both parents are foreign nationals are also entitled to German citizenship if certain conditions are fulfilled, although they are required by law to decide on a specific nationality by the age of 23. It is becoming clear that a hard-and-fast classification of ‘children with a migration background’ is a complex issue and definitions do in fact vary.

The following two sections will illustrate how these population patterns translate into general and more specific patterns of usage of early education and care services in the eastern and western Länder.

**East-west disparities in patterns of usage of ECEC services**

Table 2 illustrates the broad regional disparities relating to usage of centre-based settings and publicly subsidised family day care. For children under three years of age, the participation levels in centre-based EC settings are far lower in the western

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2 Federal Statistical Office definition: Persons not born within the borders of present-day Germany who entered the country in 1950 or later; and/or persons who are not German nationals or have not acquired German citizenship. Children who have been granted German citizenship are still considered to have a migration background if one parent fulfils at least one of the previously mentioned criteria (Integrationsbericht, 2012).
than in the eastern (44%) federal states, reflecting the historically different childcare cultures, but also the higher availability of provision in the eastern Länder. Similarly, participation rates in Berlin (38%), which since 1990 includes former East Berlin, are way above the national average (21.5%). These disparities even out when it comes to the older pre-school children, with participation rates in the western Länder being only slightly below the national average.

Table 2
Germany: Children in publicly subsidised centre-based settings and family day care according to age and region, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Centre-based settings</th>
<th>Family day care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 3</td>
<td>3 to under 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Länder (excluding Berlin)</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>95.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Länder (excluding Berlin)</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>91.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012, adapted; data from Federal Statistical Office, 2011 (01.03.2011)

Family day care is clearly the less-preferred option across age-groups for families in both the eastern and western Länder. Even for the under-threes age-group, only 4% are in family day care, whereas over 21% attend an EC centre.

In terms of age-disaggregated data, Table 3 illustrates the differences between the eastern and western Länder very clearly, particularly in terms of the participation rates for one and two year olds in early education and childcare provision. It also indicates that very few children (2.6%) are cared for outside the home before their first birthday, which can be explained by the parental leave benefit that families receive for the twelve months following childbirth. This amounts to 67% of average earnings over the previous year (a maximum of 1800 Euros monthly, and at least 300 Euros), with payments extended to 14 months if the father takes at least two months of leave (Blum & Erler, 2011).
Despite the impressive increase in places for the under-threes and in the participation rates in both early childhood centres and family day care in recent years (from 9% in 2002 to 15.5% in 2007 and 25.4% in 2011), the number of available places still falls seriously short of the government targets for August 2013. Envisaged is an overall participation rate of 38% (BMFSFJ, 2012). It is estimated that 174.300 places in centre-based settings and 87.800 in family day care are still needed in the western Länder (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2012, p.54) – an enormous challenge for the field.

Having firmly established the differences (participation rates of under-threes) and similarities (participation rates of three to under six year olds) in the eastern and western regions, the next section goes on to show more differentiated patterns across the 16 Länder in terms of the children’s background. In particular, it will be looking at how the incidence of usage among children with a migration background compares with that of children with two German parents.

**Equal access? Patterns of usage of ECEC services according to family background**

In terms of general rights of access to a place in early education and childcare provision, the legislative framework in Germany can be seen as a significant inequality-reducing feature of the ECEC system – compared, for example, with the
English-speaking countries. All children are eligible to a place in a centre-based setting or family day care from the age of three, and the government has pledged to extend this entitlement to one and two year olds by August 2013. Any other entitlement criteria are laid down by the regional government, local government administration, or by the specific service provider. Several federal states go beyond the basic requirement of providing a non-specified ‘place’. Some guarantee at least five (Hamburg, Saxony-Anhalt) or six hours of access daily (Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-West Pomerania), some have extended the entitlement to two year olds (Berlin, Thuringen), and Rhineland-Palatinate has expanded this even further to a full-day entitlement for two year olds. However, this basic right to access does not always translate into equitable access.

A longitudinal analysis of usage patterns in the western Länderei based on data from the years 1995-2008 revealed that the group of mothers who are profiting most from the expansion of places for under-threes are the higher educated mothers (Krapf and Kreyenfeld, 2010). During this period, roughly three times as many mothers with Abitur (the German equivalent of A-levels) were accessing places for their under-threes compared with mothers with a lower formal education. According to current procedures, places are generally allocated to parents in employment, and highly qualified mothers are more likely to take up employment when their children are still very young and therefore to seek a place in a day nursery. This suggests that the pattern of distribution of the restricted number of places available for this particular age-group appears to be privileging already privileged groups.

However, other determining factors such as the general economic situation of the family, the number of persons and siblings living in the household, migration background, and the amount of available time parents have to spend with their children and to complete household and other tasks, can also affect children’s chances of participation in early education and care services (Alt, 2012). According to the recent German Youth Institute AID:A Survey3 (Rauschenbach and Bien, 2012), if the household income is below 60% of the average income level (roughly 1700 Euros monthly for a family with two children), only 17% of the children attend some form of

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3 The AID:A Survey on ‘Growing Up in Germany’ conducted by the German Youth Institute (Deutsches Jugendinstitut, DJI) is planned as a replicative, cross-sectional study, drawing on a new random sample approximately every four years.
childcare, compared with approximately 30% of children from families with a higher-level income.

Table 4
Germany: Participation rates of children with and without a migration background* in early childhood centres and publicly subsidised family day care according to age-groups and Länder**, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal state</th>
<th>Under 3 years old</th>
<th>3 to under 6 years old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Proportion of these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in per cent</td>
<td>with immigration background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Länder</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Länder</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bavaria</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schleswig-Holstein</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Saxony</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baden-Wuerttemberg</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hesse</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northrhine-Westfalia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhineland-Palatinate</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
* 'Migration background' is defined here as having at least one parent of foreign origin.
** Two western Länder (Bremen and Saarland) and all eastern Länder are not included in the table, since there are no representative data available on the immigrant child population in these federal states.
Source: Fourth National Education Report (Bildung in Deutschland 2012, 2012), Table C3-11, adapted and translated by author; data from Federal Statistical Office, 2011

As previously mentioned, the immigrant population is concentrated in the western federal states. The proportion of immigrant children is highest in Hamburg, where children with a migration background account for 51% of the under-threes population and 43% of the three to under six year olds (Bock-Famulla and Lange, 2011, p.118). Table 4 compares the combined participation levels in centre-based settings and
family day care of children with and without a migration background by age-group and federal state. They are consistently lower for children with a migration background, particularly for the under-threes. Beyond that, the differences are especially marked in Hamburg, where the proportion of immigrant children is highest.

International studies have consistently shown that the links between school performance and disadvantaged or migrant family background are particularly evident in Germany (OECD, 2006), although there is some evidence that this is improving. A clearly important goal for the German ECEC system is to tackle social disadvantage and to combat inequality. In terms of educational chances and social inclusion, it is therefore disconcerting to note that, for example, among the three to six year olds in Hamburg, 30% of children with a migration background are not attending some form of early education or childcare.

The AID:A survey, focusing on childhood and adolescence in general and not just early childhood, suggests a so-called middle class bias in the use of state welfare services in general (Gottschall and Pothmann 2012, p.8). However, regarding the specific use of kindergartens, the high participation rates for the three to six year olds indicate that even for children from disadvantaged families, attending an ECEC centre has become a matter of course for this age-group. However, social background at least co-determines the duration of time spent in an ECEC setting in terms of years. Also, there continue to be considerable regional differences in the number of hours daily that children spend in ECEC centres and whether a meal is provided at mid-day. Some examples: (1) Whereas 73% of children of three to six year olds without a migration background in the eastern Länder and 70% in Berlin have contractual agreements for seven or more hours in a centre-based setting, this is the case for only 25% of the same population group in the western Länder. (2) For the same age-group with a migration background, 33% in the western Länder (excluding Berlin) spend seven or more hours in the centre, but this varies between 15% in Baden-Wuerttemberg to 43% in Hesse (Bock-Famulla and Lange, 2011, p.317).

Before proceeding to look at defining characteristics of the ECEC system, two key terms first need clarification in the German context in order to understand how the system of early education and childcare functions.
Federalism and subsidiarity – key organising concepts

Federalism and subsidiarity are core political concepts underpinning the structures, legislation, regulation, and funding of early education and childcare in Germany.

At the federal level, the Federal Ministry of Family and Youth Affairs has ‘stimulatory competence’ (Anregungskompetenz) regarding childcare issues. The key legislation is the Child and Youth Services Act 1990, which has been modified several times. The first significant amendment in terms of childcare was in 1996, when children aged three up to school entry age (six) were granted a legal entitlement to a place in a kindergarten. The most recent amendment is the Childcare Funding Act 2009 (Kinderförderungsgesetz) which pledges a legal entitlement to a place in a centre-based setting or family day care for one and two year olds by August 2013.

At the regional level (Länder), the 16 governments are responsible for adapting federal legislation requirements into individual childcare laws and providing a regulatory framework for service provision and financing.

At the local level, the municipalities (Kommunen) are in charge of organising and securing funding for early education and childcare provision. However, provider structures are strongly linked to the so-called subsidiarity principle. According to this principle, which was first anchored in the Youth Welfare Act 1922, re-endorsed thirty years later in West Germany in the Youth Welfare Act 1952 and again re-authorised in unified Germany in the Child and Youth Services Act 1990, public authorities are only obliged to provide social services if non-governmental agencies are not in a position to do so. Around two thirds of centre-based early education and childcare provision across the country are run by these voluntary child and youth welfare providers (Freie Träger der Jugendhilfe).

In other words, Germany has a strongly decentralised system of early education and childcare. Responsibility is shared between the federal government, the 16 regional governments, and local government bodies in partnership with a wide range of non-profit agencies and service providers. However, it is at the local level where the real power lies and where issues of access are decided. For example, data at the local level (child and youth welfare authorities) shows a variance of between 7% and 38%
in the participation rates of under-threes in the western Länder (Riedel et al, 2012; Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2012, p.56). The next section looks at aspects of this local level in terms of the main types of provision and the providers of early childhood services in more detail.

**Provider diversity: provision profiles, public/private**

The most common types of publicly subsidised early education and childcare services in Germany are day nurseries (*Kinderkrippen*) for children from roughly six months up to three years of age; kindergartens (*Kindergärten*) for three to six year olds; age-integrated groups for children from six months to six years or beyond; and family day care or childminding services (*Kindertagespflege*), mostly for children up to the age of three. In recent years the age-boundaries between day nurseries and kindergartens have been variously adapted to local needs, and many kindergartens now take in two year olds and some also provide for school-age children during after-school hours (which are still not full-day institutions in many parts of the country).

Provision in the eastern Länder is predominantly full-day (thus continuing the childcare culture before unification), whereas in the western Länder the trend in recent years has been to move away from the classical kindergartens for three to six year olds which were mostly only open for part of the day, to flexible and multiple forms of provision with longer opening hours.

As previously mentioned, the larger majority of children’s services (including out-of-school childcare provision for school-age children) are provided by non-governmental agencies. Private, for-profit providers and employer-provided childcare services have only a very small share of the market. Federal level statistics for 2011 indicate that roughly two thirds of centre-based settings (including those for school-age children) are run by these voluntary or ‘free’ providers. This can be seen in Figure 1, which illustrates how only 33% of services are provided by public agencies (municipalities), whereas 35% are affiliated to one of the two main churches.

The traditional dominance of the non-governmental sector has in fact increased in recent years. An independent survey (Schreyer, 2009) of the providers of centre-based services for children in 13 Länder registered an increase of almost 42% since
2002. According to this study, the decrease in numbers of public, municipality-run centres is particularly marked in the eastern part of the country, whereas in the western Ländere the absolute number of church-affiliated centres has decreased. However, the proportion of other kinds of voluntary providers has increased significantly in both parts of the country.

Figure 1
Germany: Providers of children’s services (early childhood and out-of-school) – voluntary and public agencies, 2011

The emerging picture of regional disparities concerning the availability, usage and organisational structures of ECEC is also reflected in the overall funding and funding procedures, and in the costs for families. The next section will look at the way funding is distributed at different levels and outline some of the issues arising relating to children from disadvantaged families.
Funding disparities: Federal, regional and local level procedures and issues

The federal level (Bund) is not involved in the day-to-day funding of service provision – this is the responsibility of the Länder and the municipalities, and parents pay towards costs. However, the Federal Ministry of Family and Youth Affairs – in its ‘stimulatory role’ – may provide incentives for reform initiatives of national priority. In the case of the expansion of childcare places for the under-threes, it was agreed that the Bund would provide one third of the 12 billion Euros projected funding, as well as contributing towards the running costs for new places during the expansion phase. 770 million Euros are transferred annually to the Länder for this purpose (BMFSFJ, 2012). At the time of writing, the Federal Ministry reports that a further 580.5 million Euros have been allocated for an additional 30,000 childcare places for the under-threes, and that an agreement has been met with the Länder to distribute the grant in areas of most need if certain Länder do not fully access the funds. This should guarantee more equitable access for the under-threes.

The allocation of funding for ECEC services at the regional level (Länder) has risen steadily over recent years. However, variations between the federal states are considerable. Whereas in 2008, Berlin allocated 4.145 Euros for each child under six years of age, the highest sum in all 16 Länder, allocation in Schleswig-Holstein amounted to only roughly half this sum (2.180 Euros) (Bock-Famulla and Lange 2011, p.20).

The large voluntary sector of childcare providers receives public subsidies from the regional governments and municipalities. Parents also bear the costs of childcare by paying mostly income-related fees, conceived as a way of securing access for children from low-income families. However, as can be seen from the AID:A Survey findings in Table 5 which are presented in the 2012 National Education Report, the fees are highly variable and range between no costs at all for parents (7.5%, including nearly 3% of fee exemptions) to fees of more than 200 Euros monthly (14.4%). Surprisingly, fees are on average higher in the eastern Länder where income levels are generally lower. Over 69% of parents in the eastern regions pay

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4 [www.bmfsfj.de](http://www.bmfsfj.de) (Federal Ministry of Family and Youth Affairs), accessed on 23.08.2012
upwards of 101 Euros compared with just over 56% in western Germany (although this could be related to the longer usage times in the east). 24% of families with the lowest income pay a fee of up to 50 Euros compared with only 6.6% of those in the highest income bracket. However, the difference between these two income groups paying between 51 to 100 Euros monthly is much smaller (26% of the lowest income group and 23% of the highest income group). Also, according to these data, 14.5% of those in receipt of social benefits are paying between 101 and 150 Euros a month. Clearly, there are social justice concerns at issue here.

Table 5
Parental fees according to regions, net monthly income and receipt of benefits, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly costs for parents for a place in childcare</th>
<th>0 Euros</th>
<th>1 to 50 Euros</th>
<th>51 to 100 Euros</th>
<th>101 to 150 Euros</th>
<th>151 to 200 Euros</th>
<th>Over 200 Euros</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No fee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee exemption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Länder and Berlin</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Länder</td>
<td>(2.0)</td>
<td>(1.8)</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monthly household net income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(lowest and highest income groups)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 1.400 Euros</td>
<td>(6.9)</td>
<td>(9.9)</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>(18.4)</td>
<td>(8.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4000 Euros plus</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>(0.4)</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In receipt of social benefits?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>(7.0)</td>
<td>(9.1)</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>(10.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The items in brackets cannot be interpreted because the case number is too small.  

It has been estimated that parents contribute 2.7 billion Euros per year towards the cost of financing ECEC services (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2012, p.54). Rhineland-Palatinate (RLP) was the first federal state to introduce free access for children in the year before school entry, and this is now practice in six federal states. In the meantime, access in RLP is free for all children as from the age of two.
The inflexibility of the funding of early education and care in Germany was one of the criticisms in the evaluative report of the OECD review team when they visited the country in 2004 (OECD, 2004), and in recent years several federal states have been reassessing their funding policies. Bavaria was the first federal state to change from earmarked funding for provision regardless of the specific profile such as opening hours and quality of programme, to a demand-side funding option, in this case to a per capita funding, which has since also been introduced in Northrhine-Westfalia (Diekmann et al, 2008). In Bavaria, a so-called ‘base value’ (Basiswert) is calculated according to specific weighting factors, including the number of hours spent at the centre. The longer the child attends, the more funding the service provider receives. No state funding is provided in cases of less than three hours’ daily attendance.

Weighting is calculated for specific groups of children: children under three (2.0); children aged three years up to school entry (1.0); school-age children (1.2); children with disabilities (4.5); children whose parents are both of non-German-speaking origin (1.3). For children in family day care, the weighting value is uniformly 1.3.

Other federal states have been experimenting with another kind of demand-side funding – the voucher system. To date, four federal states have made this move (Baden-Wuerttemberg, Berlin, Hamburg, Thuringia). In Hamburg, a voucher system has been in operation since 2003. This was a highly controversial move at the time, and initially was heavily criticised for not helping to ease access for children from disadvantaged families whose parents were workless (Diekmann et al, 2008). The state-regulated eligibility requirements were subsequently linked to social criteria (such as having a migration background) rather than just the employment status of the parent/s, and participation rates rose. Eligible parents apply for a child-specific voucher through the local authority and can exchange it for a place at an accredited early childhood centre of their choice. The centre provider is then allocated the appropriate funding. The weighting criteria, an overall budget volume which allows for good staffing ratios and regular continuing professional development of the staff, and quality monitoring procedures are central to the success of this kind of funding in terms of supporting children from disadvantaged families. However, as has already been indicated in Table 4, the proportion of immigrant children in centres and family day care in Hamburg is in fact the lowest among the western Länder, suggesting that
the voucher system may still be favouring families with a German-speaking background.

One of the most controversial issues over the past year or so has been the centre-right coalition government’s intention to introduce a monthly childcare allowance (Betreuungsgeld) of 150 Euros for parents (mothers) who choose to stay at home rather than sending their child to an ECEC setting. The debate has brought to the fore some of the still deeply conservative undercurrents in German society, although overall it would seem that a majority would rather see the money invested in the childcare infrastructure. The proposed legislation was debated for a second time in parliament at the end of August 2012. Critical analyses have pointed out that the move could lead to exactly those children being kept at home who would benefit most from attending ECEC provision, i.e. children from low-income, single parent and low-skilled households (Gathmann & Sachs, 2012, p.2).

**Disadvantaged families – child poverty in a rich country**

Germany is known internationally as a rich country. Less is known about the incidence of child poverty. According to a recent UNICEF survey in 35 economically advanced countries, 8.5% of children aged 0 to 16 in Germany are living in relative poverty (compared with 6% in The Netherlands, 12% in the UK and 23% in the US) - defined as living in a household in which disposable income, when adjusted for family size and composition, is less than 50% of the national median income (UNICEF, 2012, p.3). Germany has a similar per capita income to Denmark and Sweden, but child deprivation rates\(^5\) are considerably higher (see Table 6).

A national study on the well-being of children in Germany has pointed out that if the definition preferred by the European Union is used (less than 60% of the national median income) then approximately 14% of all children are living in relative poverty (Bertram *et al*, 2012). However, calculating a national average does not take into account regional differences and the generally lower incomes in the eastern Länder. On the basis of the 60% definition, the highest levels of poverty (20% and higher) are

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\(^5\) As measured by the UNICEF Child Deprivation Index charting 14 items considered affordable, normal and necessary for a child in an economically advanced country
to be found in Hessen, Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein, all in the western part of the country.

Table 6
Child deprivation rates in at-risk groups in Sweden, Denmark and Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deprivation rate for children…</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>…lacking 2 or more items</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…living in single parent families</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…living in families with low parental education (none, primary and lower secondary)</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…living in jobless households (no adult in paid employment)</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…living in migrant families</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data refer to children aged 1 to 16. 

Detailed, nation-wide social reporting on children’s living conditions and education are fairly recent practices in Germany, particularly related to young children. How ‘disadvantaged’ families and children are defined depends on the criteria applied. In general, children growing up in ‘precarious life conditions’ (Walper and Riedel, 2011, p.4) are those often subjected to cumulative risk factors such as family income poverty, parental unemployment, low levels of parents’ education, an immigrant background or single parent family unit. 2.2 million children under 18 (17% of the same-age population compared with 13.5% ten years ago) live with just one parent. 90% of single parent family units are headed by women⁶.

With children in at-risk groups in mind, in April 2011 the Federal Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment introduced a kind of general educational voucher (Bildungspaket). It is specifically for children in families eligible for the ‘Hartz-IV’ benefits system for long term unemployed (2.5 million children across the country).

⁶ [www.berlin-institut.org/?id=817](http://www.berlin-institut.org/?id=817) (Berlin Institute for Population and Development)
The initiative took a while to get off the ground, but according to surveys by local authorities, it has now ‘kicked in’ and by March 2012 around 56% of all Hartz-IV children were making use of the voucher (BMAS, 2012). The voucher can be exchanged for a variety of options, e.g. a warm mid-day meal in kindergarten or school, class trips, or membership fees for local clubs (sports, music). As yet there are no data available on the proportion of families with pre-school age children using the Bildungspaket.

**Quality ECEC: universal frameworks and group-specific initiatives**

A National Quality Initiative (NQI, 2000-2006) – with major federal-level funding and support from 10 Länders - developed, published and disseminated self-assessment and external assessment procedures for evaluating both programme and management quality in early childhood services. However, with the publication of the first OECD-PISA findings in December 2001 on the unexpectedly low performance of 15 year olds in German schools, particularly in reading, the innovative work of the NQI was overshadowed by a highly mediatised debate about the education system as a whole. Through the ‘PISA shock’ early childhood education was catapulted into a hitherto unknown public limelight.

**Quality programmes: Early childhood curricular frameworks and language/literacy enhancement initiatives**

Consequently, between 2003 and 2008, all 16 regional governments issued early childhood curricular frameworks. This represented a major new regulatory step for the western Länders in an ECEC system dominated by the voluntary provider organisations. It was also a move to ensure that access to ECEC settings is framed within a set of universally endorsed (i.e. across providers) and applicable (i.e. for all children) principles of educational quality. Also, for the first time, a non-binding Common Framework for Early Education was agreed on by the 16 Ministers for Youth Affairs and the 16 Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Standing Conference, 2004). Whereas most curricular documents are considered to be ‘guidelines’, in some federal states EC centres are obliged by law to include the main principles, aims and areas of learning in their own centre specific philosophy.
statements. In the city state of Berlin, implementing the curriculum is combined with prescribed evaluation procedures. An agreement between the state administration and the service providers requires the use of specific self-assessment procedures and (every five years) an external assessment. A specialist institute\(^7\) is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the overall assessment procedures. In order to ensure the inclusion of parents with a migration background, self-assessment materials have been developed in six languages - German, English, Turkish, Arabic, Vietnamese, Russian.

The 16 Länderr-curricula vary in terms of content, length and age-group addressed. Most are aimed specifically at the 0-6 age-group, but some go beyond this to include school-age childcare services – and in Hesse, the same principles are valid both for the pre-school and the primary school sector as well as for family day care services. All are based on a holistic, participatory and an inclusive approach, and not on a narrow, ‘school readiness’ agenda.

At the same time, all federal states are focusing more specifically than before on language and literacy development. Around one quarter of three to six year olds are considered to be in need of language support, in particular children learning German as an additional language (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2012, p.66). In a number of Länderr, it is now a requirement for children to participate in a language screening assessment prior to school entry. In Bavaria, for example, a screening test is not required, but since 2008, the language competence of all children is assessed through a prescribed instrument before the start of their final year in kindergarten. Beyond this, an extensive network of early childhood language co-ordinators across Bavaria was launched in 2008 with considerable funding support from the regional government and the Confederation of Bavarian Industry. The Bund is also currently providing 400 million Euros up to 2014 for a policy initiative to provide language support services in 4000 EC centres across the country - with the aim of increasing the educational chances of all children, particularly those from disadvantaged families (BMFSFJ, 2012).

Quality staffing: Qualifications and structural issues

\(^7\) http://beki.ina-fu.org (Berlin Institute for Quality Improvement in ECEC)
The qualifications and working conditions of staff in early childhood centres are widely recognized as perhaps the most significant contributory factor towards achieving and maintaining high quality services. Three issues have dominated the debate in Germany in recent years.

The first is a direct outcome of the PISA debate and the expectations directed towards ECEC centres in terms of high quality early education as set down in the new curricula. It has long been argued that the current requirement for contact staff in centres – a three-year post-secondary course at vocational training schools – is not sufficiently theoretically grounded for the challenging work of decision-making on a day-to-day basis about appropriate and individualised pedagogical strategies with a young children from a wide range of social backgrounds. Whereas in Germany only 3.8% of staff in children’s services have a university-level qualification (2010, excluding Berlin), in most European countries a Bachelor qualification is the minimum requirement for working with young children – at least with three to six year olds (Oberhuemer et al, 2010). Within the framework of the Bologna process, many universities of applied sciences therefore built on these drivers and began to offer Bachelor level courses with a focus on early childhood education (0-6) or childhood education (0-12). Such degree courses have mushroomed since 2004 and there are now over 80 of them across the country.

The second is the issue of continuing professional development, which in Germany comprises predominantly non-mandatory, one-off, short-term and non-formal activities without an acknowledged system of credit transferability across providers (who all run their own courses) (Oberhuemer, 2012). A large-scale, nation-wide early years workforce initiative with a focus on improving the quality, transparency and transferability of CPD activities was set up in 2009. It is to be funded through to the end of 2014 by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and ESF, and receives publicity support from the Robert Bosch Foundation. The German Youth Institute (DJI) is responsible for commissioning studies and expert reports, supporting advisory groups and developmental work and generally co-ordinating the initiative.

*www.weiterbildungsinitiative.de*
The third is the acute issue of staff recruitment in the wake of the current drive to expand provision for the under-threes. It has been estimated that in the western Länder approximately 12,400 additional staff will be needed in centre-based settings and between 22,000 and 29,000 persons in family day care services if the targets for 2013 are to be achieved (Schilling & Rauschenbach, 2012; Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2012, p.61). Acute shortages in the larger cities have been hitting the headlines, particularly since some federal states have decided to tread new and often controversial pathways in terms of short-term qualifications for those with non-traditional childcare qualifications.

Add to these three issues the considerable variations in the staff-child ratios (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012, Tab.43A), which – for work with the under-threes in day nurseries – range from a median of 6.2 children per adult in Brandenburg and 6.0 in Saxony, both in the east, to 3.3 in Bremen and 3.2 in Saarland, both in the west, then it becomes obvious that staffing is one of the central quality issues.

**Quality of family inclusion: ECEC centres as family centres**

Explicitly oriented towards supporting socially disadvantaged families are the fairly recently developed Family Centres, which were initially inspired by the first Early Excellence Centres and Sure Start Children’s Centres in England. Profiles vary, but a key goal of these centres is to provide easily accessible and low-threshold services for families and to network with relevant agencies and organisations in the community (Rauschenbach, 2008). In most cases an early childhood centre is the hub of such service networks, with the centre head taking responsibility for the provision as a whole. Depending on the preferred approach, the centres provide either targeted services in disadvantaged areas, or follow a more universal concept. Northrhine-Westfalia has been promoting Family Centres since 2006. Current funding per annum is 12.000 Euros for each centre and in the meantime almost 2000 centres have been accredited by an external rating agency. Hamburg supports centres for parents and children under age three (Eltern-Kind-Zentren) in disadvantaged areas. Since 2007 funding has been steady and to date there are 41 such centres in Hamburg. Currently, quality standards are to be developed by 2014 by researchers in close collaboration with the centres. Since September 2011, Hesse
has also been funding family centres with an annual grant of 12,000 Euros per centre. An interim evaluation of the Family Centres in Northrhine-Westfalia reports overall positive feedback from the directors of centres, despite noting lack of space and funding for certain services and the need for more investment in the overall management of services (Stöbe-Blossey, 2011).

**Research on quality in the German context**

With the tremendous drive towards expansion, many experts are concerned about the quality of the places on offer. A small-scale study in Munich/Bavaria concluded that, for a successful transition to high quality practices, work with under-threes needs to be more strongly represented in initial and continuing professional development and to be well resourced in terms of space and personnel (Wertfein *et al.*, 2009). Another regional but longitudinal study – with a focus on ethnic-related inequality in ECEC settings in Hesse – conducted standardised tests with approximately 1000 children from age three to age seven as well as interviews with their parents. Roughly half the children came from a Turkish background (Becker, 2012). The study revealed that not only did the Turkish children start kindergarten somewhat later than their German contemporaries, but they also tended to attend settings where the quality of the learning environments was less favourable. Although centre attendance had a positive effect on the acquisition of German language skills, the extent of this depended on the quality of the specific conditions in the centres.

With the same basic issue of quality services in mind, the first National Study on Education, Care and Upbringing in Early Childhood (*Nationale Untersuchung zur Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung in der frühen Kindheit, NUBBEK*) was initiated in 2009 and is to be published in Autumn 2012 (Tietze *et al.*, in press). A multi-methods approach was used to gather data on approximately 2000 two and four year old children in a variety of settings, including the family setting, across the country. Approximately one quarter of the children came from families with a Turkish or Russian background. A preliminary report on the findings (Kalicki and Egert, 2012) shows usage patterns in terms of age and region which reflect the national and regional data previously presented in this chapter. New, however, are the findings which show that overall, families with a Turkish migration background start attending ECEC settings later than other families and spend less time daily in the settings.
However, in those Turkish families where the mother works outside the home, has a higher level of education and a less traditional role model perception, usage patterns in terms of the starting age of children and length of time spent in the centre do not differ from those in families without a migration background. This turned out to be a consistent pattern across a number of NUBBEK findings: not migration status as such, but social status, education level, maternal employment patterns and normative orientations determine usage patterns.

The NUBBEK study also assessed the quality of 403 centre-based settings and 164 family day care settings with widely-used rating scales. It was found that more than 80% of settings were judged to be ‘mediocre’ in terms of educational process quality, less than 10% of ‘good’ quality, and more than 10% of ‘below average’ quality (Kalicki and Egert, 2012). According to the instruments used, groups in the eastern Länder fared less well than those in the western federal states. Family day care settings were also judged to be predominantly of mediocre quality. The NUBBEK study questions whether the various quality improvement initiatives and curricular frameworks have had the expected effects. It is suggested that a systematic and continuing monitoring of quality is necessary in order to provide service agencies, local authorities and Länder ministries with the information necessary for effective steering. This seems to be one of the most promising ways forward in order to ensure that – in particular - children from disadvantaged families remain at the forefront of policy initiatives.

References


