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Abstract

In Germany, expanding early childhood education and care (ECEC), both quantitatively and qualitatively, is high on the political agenda. The goal is to ensure all children have effective and fair opportunities to develop right from the start. The relevance of ECEC can be seen in the increased investments being made: In the 2015 fiscal year, €26.4 billion were made available for ECEC by public-sector institutions throughout the country – almost two-thirds of all funds spent on child- and youth-welfare programs nationwide. In 2009, the figure was €16.2 billion.

Yet educational opportunities in Germany are still highly dependent on where a child lives. There are differences in the quantity and quality of ECEC facilities not only among the country's states, but within each state as well. In order to shed light on these differences, the Bertelsmann Stiftung project State by State: Monitoring Early Childhood Education evaluated official child- and youth-welfare statistics for the first time at the level of Germany's counties and cities and its youth-welfare districts. At these levels, staffing ratios (children per educator) and the personnel available for carrying out administrative tasks can vary considerably within any given state.

These differences clearly show that additional efforts are needed to ensure high-quality ECEC is available throughout Germany on an ongoing basis. Achieving this goal in all states will mean putting uniform national standards in place for the structural framework governing ECEC facilities. Such standards include child-centered staffing ratios, suitable working conditions and sufficient personnel for handling leadership tasks. According to the Bertelsmann Stiftung's calculations, an additional 107,200 full-time educators must be recruited nationwide and an additional €4.9 billion allocated annually for a staffing ratio to be reached that can ensure the desired quality of education and care. Moreover, it is already clear that more educators and ECEC slots will be needed due to changing birth rates and the increasing number of refugee children arriving in the country. To provide all directors in Germany's ECEC facilities with the hours of working time that we recommend, the equivalent of 21,800 full-time educators would have to be hired throughout the country. That represents an increase in personnel costs of up to €1.3 billion each year.

The ongoing need for a quantitative and qualitative expansion of ECEC requires continual monitoring of whether every youngster in Germany has access to child-centered education and care that is of reliably high quality. Since 2008, the Bertelsmann Stiftung project State by State: Monitoring Early Childhood Education has been publishing information on ECEC in all 16 of Germany's states, thereby taking a yearly look at the considerable quantitative expansion that the country's federal, state and local institutions are achieving together with educational sponsors and parents. Grouped by the topics "Ensuring Participation," "Investing Effectively" and "Promoting Bildung – Ensuring Quality," numerous facts and figures are presented in 16 state profiles using a new user-friendly interface. This management-relevant information is available through the recently relaunched online portal www.laendermonitor.de, along with regional monitorings documenting developments on the county/city level and by youth-welfare district. The Bertelsmann Stiftung is making this knowledge available in order to promote an open and ongoing dialogue among all actors so they can shape and expand ECEC in Germany in a way that increases quality and, ultimately, supports the education and development of all children to the greatest degree possible.

We are very pleased to be using the 2017 State by State Report to help achieve these goals. We therefore hope you find the information presented here both engaging and informative.

Dr. Jörg Dräger

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