

GERMANY

Key contextual data

Compiled by

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Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

Please note

In alignment with country-specific usage, the general term used in this synopsis for the main forms of provision is **ECEC centre** (*Kindertageseinrichtung, Kita 0–5¹*). The term **nursery** (*Kinderkrippe*) is used for settings specifically for under 3 year-olds and **kindergarten** for settings for children aged 2/3–5 years. Any additional forms are described where appropriate.

Historical milestones in ECEC in Germany

1802	Founding of the first custodial institution (<i>Kleinkinderbewahranstalt</i>) for children up to the age of four in Detmold by Princess Pauline zu Lippe-Detmold
First half of 19th century	Institutions (also known as <i>Kleinkinderschulen</i>) are founded along confessional lines and by philanthropic associations for neglected children of the poor.
1840	Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) founds the first “kindergarten” in Blankenburg (Thüringia) with a comprehensive approach towards early childhood education – intentionally open for children of all social classes, but fees in effect excluded poor families.
1848	Public discussion of Froebel’s proposal to integrate the kindergarten into the general education system. There is no state financial support for either confessional <i>Kleinkinderschulen</i> or non-confessional kindergartens.
1851-1860	Kindergartens are banned by the Prussian government until 1860.
Late 19th century	There is still virtually no financial support for kindergartens from the state.
1910	Around 13% of 3 to 5 year-olds attend a kindergarten, with marked regional variations.
1920	The Reich Schools Conference (<i>Reichsschulkonferenz</i>) debates whether kindergartens should be part of the school system or assigned to social welfare.
1922	National Youth Welfare Act (<i>Reichsjugendwohlfahrtgesetz</i>) assigns kindergartens to the social welfare sector and provides a prerogative for private (confessional) provision. ECEC settings come under the responsibility of the youth office as part of the municipal welfare authorities and are thus excluded from public education. To this day, the majority of child and youth welfare services are provided by non-governmental organisations.
1933	With the onset of the Nazi regime, progressive approaches in kindergartens (<i>Reformpädagogik</i>) come to an abrupt halt. Kindergartens are gradually appropriated by the National Socialist Welfare Organisation and come under the influence of Nazi ideology.
Post WW2 – 1990	In the socialist and centralised <i>German Democratic Republic (GDR)</i> the participation of women in the labour market is a declared political goal, supported by the development of a system of full-day kindergartens and nurseries, both of which have an explicitly educational mission. The decentralised <i>Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)</i> follows a distinctly different policy agenda. Expansion is slow and provision levels are much lower than in the GDR. Kindergartens for 3 to 6 year-olds are open on a predominantly part-time basis only.

¹ **Editors’ note:** International data sources use varying ways of presenting the age range of children enrolled in ECEC settings. We have chosen the following age-inclusive format for the SEEPRO-3 reports: **0–2** years for children up to 3 years of age and **3–5** years for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds in countries with a primary school entry age of 6 years, as in Germany.

1990	Following the unification of the two German states, a new federal-level law, the Child and Youth Services Act (Book Eight of the Social Code), comes into force (1990 in the eastern and 1991 in the western <i>Länder</i>).
1996	Legal entitlement to a kindergarten place for 3 to 6 year-olds is introduced, leading to a steady expansion of kindergartens. The level of services for under 3 year-olds improves only minimally during this time. By 2002, the overall level of provision has risen to 9%, but differences between the eastern <i>Länder</i> (37%) and the western <i>Länder</i> (3%) remain significant.
2002	Early childhood education starts to move up the policy agenda. Two strategies in particular mark a significant change of direction in the history of ECEC in Germany. One is the decision to introduce official curricular guidelines for the early childhood sector, which are successively issued between 2003 and 2008 in all 16 <i>Länder</i> ; the other is a government commitment to expand places for under 3 year-olds to provide coverage for 35% of this age group by 2013 and guaranteeing entitlement to a place for children aged 1 and 2 years.
2004	Inter-ministerial (Youth Affairs/Education) agreement at federal level on a (non-mandatory) <i>Common Framework for Early Education in ECEC centres</i> . The Childcare Expansion Act comes into force.
2008	The Childcare Funding Act (<i>KiFög</i>) comes into force.
2013	All children in Germany from the age of 13 months are entitled to a place in centre-based or home-based ECEC provision.
2013 - 2018	Increased federal funding leads to a rapid expansion of ECEC settings, especially of places for under 3 year-olds. By 2018, the enrolment rate for this age group has risen to 33.6% (compared to 9% in 2002).
2019	A "Law for the advancement of quality and participation in ECEC" (<i>Gute-Kita-Gesetz</i>) comes into force, aiming to improve quality in 10 areas through written contracts between the federal government (<i>Bund</i>) and the 16 regional governments (<i>Länder</i>) and to introduce new monitoring and evaluation measures.
2019	From 2019 to 2022 the federal government funds a comprehensive "Staffing Campaign" programme to help towards easing the shortage of staff in the ECEC sector.
2021	The Act on All-Day Provision for Children of Primary School Age (<i>GaFöG</i>) of 2 October establishes a legal entitlement to all-day education and care provision for primary school-age children on a staggered basis up to 2029.
2022	Revised version of the 2004 (non-mandatory) <i>Common Framework for Early Education in ECEC centres</i>
2023	The KiTa Quality Act comes into force on 1 January. In 2023 and 2024, the federal government is supporting the <i>Länder</i> in the implementation of quality enhancement measures and improving participation in ECEC with a total of around 4 billion euros.

Sources: Erning 1987; Ebert 2006, 2021; BMFSFJ 2013; Franke-Meyer 2016, 2024; Destatis 2019; Willekens and Scheiwe 2020; BMFSFJ 2023a

ECEC system type and auspices

In the Federal Republic of Germany, ECEC settings for the years before compulsory schooling starts are part of the child and youth welfare system. Over 100 years ago, the Reich Youth Welfare Act (1922) established that kindergartens were not part of the public education system (Franke-Meyer 2024). This decision remains valid up to the present day and was only overturned during the 40-year existence of the German Democratic Republic.

The system of early childhood education and care in Germany comprises not only centre-based ECEC settings (nurseries, kindergartens, multi-age centres), but also home-based childcare provision as well as complementary education and care services for school-age children. Federalism

and subsidiarity are the underlying political and organisational principles with regard to the legislation, regulation and funding of these different types of setting.

In a system of multi-level governance, responsibilities are shared between the federal government, the 16 *Länder* and the local authorities – in partnership with non-governmental, voluntary child and youth welfare agencies.

At the **federal level** (*Bund*), the main responsibility lies with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, which has "stimulatory competence" (*Anregungskompetenz*) regarding ECEC. At the **regional level** (*Länder*), the federal states implement the federal-level requirements through the supreme state youth authorities, which are usually a unit within the social affairs ministry or (less common) the ministry of education. They are responsible for regulating the issues not determined by federal law. At the **local level** (*Kommunen*), the municipalities (districts, towns, boroughs) are in charge of organising and securing funding for early education and childcare provision. To this end, they work together with non-governmental agencies, mainly voluntary youth welfare associations and church organisations. The public youth welfare authority has the basic overall responsibility for ensuring the implementation of child and youth welfare policies. This multi-level policy-making can lead to considerable regional differences (Diskowski 2006; Oberhuemer 2014; ICEC 2023).

General objectives and legislative framework

The overarching goals at federal level are set out in Book Eight of the Social Code (*Sozialgesetzbuch VIII, Kinder- und Jugendhilfe*) (BMFSFJ 2020a) - also known as the Child and Youth Services Act (KJHG 1990, with amendments). These include supporting children in their individual and social development; complementing family upbringing practices; and supporting parents in balancing employment and family duties. The overall approach combines three interlinked dimensions: education (*Bildung*), care (*Betreuung*) and upbringing (*Erziehung*). ECEC settings are to be adapted to the needs of the children and their families in terms of pedagogy and organisation. Parents are to be included in key decision-making processes.

The principles and requirements of Book Eight of the Social Code (SGB VIII) are transposed into regional legislation by the parliaments of the 16 federal states (*Länder*) and implemented by the state ministries/state youth welfare offices. A significant amendment made to the Child and Youth Services Act in 1996 was the provision of a legal entitlement to a kindergarten place for children between the ages of 3 and school entry. Some *Länder* had already established legal entitlements by this time. Further changes in federal-level legislation include the 2005 Day Care Expansion Act (TAG), the 2005 Child and Youth Welfare Development Act (KICK), and the 2009 Childcare Funding Act (KiFög).

In 2019, the Act on the Further Development of Quality and Participation in ECEC (KiQuTG) – known as the *Gute-KiTa-Gesetz* – came into force (BMFSFJ 2020b). The goals are (1) to improve quality in 10 fields of action² through written agreements between the federal government and the 16 state governments, and (2) to introduce new monitoring and evaluation measures. Up to 2022, the federal government invested 5.5 billion euros in this project.

The subsequent KiTa Quality Act (1.1.2023) has extended the provisions of the *Gute-KiTa-Gesetz* beyond 2022 until the end of 2024. In 2023 and 2024, the federal government is supporting the *Länder* with a total of around 4 billion euros in measures to further develop quality and improve

² The 10 fields of action are: needs-based services; good child to staff ratios; qualified professionals; strong ECEC management; child-friendly spaces; growing up healthy; language education; good home-based provision; networks for more quality; diverse educational services.

participation in ECEC (BMFSFJ 2023a). The *Länder* can decide for themselves on which fields of action³ to focus.

In addition, the Act on All-Day Provision for Children of Primary School Age (*Ganztagsförderungsgesetz - GaFöG*) was passed in October 2021. For the first time, children of primary school age will be granted a legal entitlement to a place in an all-day education and care programme. The entitlement begins in 2026 for children in the first grade and will apply to all grades on a staggered basis up to 2029.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory attendance

In Germany, there has been a federally defined legal entitlement since August 2013, as well as relevant regulations in the individual *Länder* for a place either in a centre-based or home-based ECEC setting for children from their 1st birthday until they start school (BMFSFJ 2018).

When children aged 3 years and upwards were granted this right under federal law (1996), the guaranteed "place" was not further defined in hours or days. In the meantime, ten of the 16 *Länder* have specifications which range from a guaranteed place between four to 10 hours a day. The higher levels tend to be found in eastern *Länder*. In five western *Länder* and one eastern federal state there are no specifications regarding the hourly duration of a guaranteed place. In the city state of Berlin, the guaranteed hours are extended for children who are in a facility for the homeless. In the city state of Hamburg, the total amount of guaranteed enrolment is limited to 60 hours per week (Bock-Famulla et al. 2023).

Attending an ECEC setting is not obligatory in Germany. Compulsory schooling begins at around 6 years of age. However, some *Länder* have provisions in school education legislation for compulsory language assessments; these may specify attending an ECEC setting prior to school enrolment (see also *Monitoring* section).

Main types of provision

On 1st March 2023, there were 60,045 (E)CEC facilities in Germany, with various organisational structures (Destatis/Genesis 2023⁴).

(E)CEC centres (*Kindertageseinrichtungen* – literally 'day centres for children' and increasingly referred to as *Kitas*) is an umbrella term for a broad spectrum of centre-based education and care settings, both for young children and school children up to age 12. In addition to the classic forms of nurseries and kindergartens, multi-age facilities for 0 to 6 year-olds or 0 to 14 year-olds are increasingly common, as are, for example, parent-child groups in various forms, in-company childcare services, cooperation networks between ECEC centres and other services in the neighbourhood, and foreign-language kindergartens. The number of centres which offer ECEC exclusively for children from the age of three until they start school has decreased, whereas more and more multi-age settings cater for both under 3 year-olds and 3 to under 6 year-olds. As a

³ In the KiTa Quality Act (2023), the previous 10 fields of action have been reduced to 7 core fields of action: needs-based provision; staff to child ratio; recruiting and maintaining qualified staff; strong management; language education; measures for child development, health, nutrition and movement; strengthening home-based provision.

⁴ The cut-off date for all Federal Statistical Office figures (Destatis/Genesis 2023) used in this report is 01.03.2023. However, at the time of reporting, some more differentiated data were only available in the 2022 edition (Destatis 2023a), with a cut-off date of 01.03.2022.

rule, they open between 7:00/7:30 (70.4%) and close between 16:30/18:00 (61%) (Destatis/Genesis 2023, own calculations).

The opening hours of (E)CEC centres vary considerably; 70.4% open between 7:00/7:30 and 61% close between 16:30/18:00 (Destatis/Genesis 2023, own calculations).

Nurseries (*Kinderkrippen*) are ECEC settings for children under 3 years of age. The difference in the relative proportion of available places for under 3 year-olds as well as their participation rates in the eastern and western *Länder* continues, although a strong expansion of places in western Germany has helped to mitigate these disparities (see section on *Participation rates*).

Kindergartens were traditionally the classic and predominant form of institutional care for children from the age of 3 until they started school in the western federal states. In recent years, as a result of the extension of legal entitlement in 2013, admission procedures increasingly include 2 year-olds. The opening times of kindergartens vary considerably.

Centres for children and families (known mostly as *Kinder- und Familienzentren*, but with a variety of local names), provide both education/care services for children and family support for parents. This relatively new form of integrated provision in Germany has been expanding over recent years. Such centres have now been established in most federal states, either with state-wide funding or targeted funding at the municipal level (Schlevogt 2021). Profiles vary considerably; however, a key aim of all such settings is to provide accessible and reliable childcare services for families and to network with relevant agencies and organisations in the community (Rauschenbach 2008).

Deferred school-entry provision known as *Schulkindergarten* or *Vorklasse*, is available in some *Länder* or municipalities as a specific type of institutional setting provided for 6 year-old children considered not yet ready for school. In some federal states these come under the responsibility of the school sector (e.g. since 2018 in Hesse), in others under child and youth welfare. According to Statista data (2024a, b), in 2022/23 there are 1,207 *Schulkindergärten* and *Vorklassen* in Germany in which 10,205 children are enrolled.

Home-based ECEC provision (*Kindertagespflege*) is an integral part of the child and youth welfare services for young children and has the same legal status at the federal level as centre-based ECEC provision. Four main forms are available: (1) as a service in the parents' own home; the parents are the employers, and no operational license is required; (2) as a service in the child carer's house: up to five children are allowed to participate at the same time (regulations differ in some *Bundesländer*); the Childcare Funding Act 2009 (*Kinderförderungsgesetz*) stipulates that if more than five children are enrolled, a pedagogical qualification is necessary. For this type of home-based provision, a local authority license is required which has to be renewed every five years; (3) a service located in third-party rooms: local authorities decide on the room suitability; (4) as a family child care network (*Großtagespflege*): In some regions several child carers may join up to provide a service for more than five children. Sometimes special regulations exist for this kind of setting, since it is sometimes difficult to distinguish it from a regular ECEC centre (BMFSFJ 2010, 10ff; Bundesverband für Kindertagespflege 2021).

Provider structures

In Germany, the child and youth welfare services, including ECEC, have traditionally been provided by non-governmental, non-profit providers (mainly the welfare associations and the Protestant and Catholic churches). Even today, they play a prominent role in the provision and organisation of early childhood education and care facilities, especially in the western *Länder*, where in 2021 there were 25,768 ECEC centres (excluding out-of-school provision) run by non-

profit providers compared to 5,960 ECEC centres in the eastern *Länder* (Bock-Famulla et al. 2023).

These responsibility structures are based on the principle of subsidiarity, under which the public sector is obliged to support non-governmental agencies and only provide social services if the NGOs are not in a position to do so. In former East Germany (GDR), public and employer-based ECEC settings were the norm. In the meantime, the number of settings in the eastern *Länder* run by independent organisations is increasing.

Currently, a further diversification of the provider landscape can be observed (Fuchs-Rechlin and Riedel 2021). In the last two decades, since about 2000, the number of "other" non-profit providers (besides the welfare and church organisations) has increased significantly. These are often smaller providers which are not members of any umbrella organisation. The share of private commercial providers is also growing, although this still makes up a small part of the overall picture (3.0%, see *Table 1*).

In 2023, there were a total of 60,045 (E)CEC centres, of which 19,930 were run by the public sector (33.2%) and 40.115 by independent providers (66.8%). The latter are divided in roughly equal parts into church and non-church providers. Overall, there is a threefold division into approximately one-third public, one-third church and one-third non-church settings, i.e. two-thirds of all (E)CEC settings are run by non-profit child and youth welfare organisations (Destatis/Genesis 2023, own calculations).

Table 1

Germany: (E)CEC provider distribution, centre-based provision, 2023

Provider type		Distribution in %	
Public			33.2
Church affiliated, non-profit	Protestant (<i>Diakonie</i>)	15.6	31.7
	Catholic (<i>Caritas</i>)	15.	
	Other church affiliated	0.4	
Non-church affiliated, non-profit	The <i>Paritätische</i> (non-governmental welfare association)	9.1	32.1
	Workers' Welfare Association (<i>Arbeiterwohlfahrt</i>)	4.6	
	German Red Cross (<i>Deutsches Rotes Kreuz</i>)	3.2	
	Other non-profit (e.g. parent initiatives)	15.2	
Commercial, for-profit			3.0

Source: Destatis/Genesis 2023, own calculations

In 2022, 220,539 under 3 year-olds and 1,020,875 children aged 3 up to school entry⁵ were enrolled in **public** sector *Kitas*. In the same year, 485,254 of under 3 year-olds and 1,800,251 children aged 3 up to school entry, were attending **private**, mainly publicly subsidised non-profit ECEC centres (Destatis 2023a). In 2022, 28,963 (4%) of the 0–2 year-olds were enrolled in parent initiatives as were 95,007 children (4%) over 3 years of age (Bock-Famulla et al. 2023).

In 2023, a total of 721,551 children under 3 years of age and 2,670,366 children aged 3 up to school entry were enrolled in an ECEC centre. 1,441,101 were in public and 2,485,322 in private non-profit ECEC centres (Destatis/Genesis 2023).

⁵ Including some children under 8 years of age not yet attending primary school.



Participation rates in regulated ECEC provision

Table 2 shows the overall participation rates across the country broken down into single age-groups for 2022, whereas Table 3 indicates the distribution patterns across the western and eastern *Länder*. While there are still considerable differences in enrolment levels in centre-based settings in the western and eastern *Länder* for children up to age 3, participation rates even out for children aged 3 up to school entry. Overall, participation rates have risen over the past few years in Germany, particularly in the case of children under age 3⁶.

Table 2

Germany: Enrolment rates (in %) in centre-based settings by age, 2009-2022

Age group	2009	2015	2022
Under 1 year	1.5	1.8	1.3
1 year-olds	16.1	28.8	30.8
2 year-olds	34.8	54.7	57.7
3 year-olds	83.1	90.0	85.3
4 year-olds	94.3	96.0	93.1
5 year-olds	97.1	96.5	95.3

Source: Bock-Famulla et al. 2023

Table 3

Germany: Participation rates (in %) in centre-based and home-based settings, 2009–2022

Year	Regional distribution	Under 3 years in %	3 to under 6 years in %
2009	Western <i>Länder</i> , without Berlin	12.0	91.1
	Eastern <i>Länder</i> , including Berlin	41.3	94.6
	Germany, total	17.4	91.7
2015	Western <i>Länder</i> , without Berlin	23.6	94.4
	Eastern <i>Länder</i> , including Berlin	46.8	96.0
	Germany, total	28.2	94.7
2022	Western <i>Länder</i> , without Berlin	25.8	90.8
	Eastern <i>Länder</i> , including Berlin	49.4	93.3
	Germany, total	29.9	91.3

Source: Bock-Famulla et al. 2023

In 2022, more than one third of children from age 3 up to school entry (39%) spent between 25 to 35 hours weekly in centre-based ECEC provision, slightly more than half (52.5%) spent more than 35 hours and 8.5% less than 25 hours. In the same year, 11.2% of under 3 year-olds spent less than 25 hours, 33% between 25 and 35 hours and 55.8% more than 35 hours per week in an ECEC setting (Destatis 2023a). Across both age groups, most children (38%) attended an ECEC setting for 25 to 35 hours per week in 2023, 30% spent more than 45 hours there and just under 16% attended for less than 25 hours (Destatis/Genesis 2023).

For both age groups, in 2021, the amount of time was markedly higher in the eastern federal states (including Berlin) than in the western part of the country: Of the children who spent over 45 hours in an ECEC centre, the respective proportions were 60% and 27% for the under 3 year-olds and 63% and 28% for children from age 3 up to school entry (Bock-Famulla et al. 2023).

⁶ Following a data correction, the national statistics report that in 2023, a total of 856,600 children under age 3 (36.4%) and 2,821,126 children between age 3 and school entry (90.9%) were enrolled in ECEC centres (Destatis 2023c).



Financing and costs for parents

The ECEC system in Germany is mainly publicly funded (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2018). Funding procedures are regulated by state-level legislation and vary considerably across the country. Primarily, the municipalities and the federal states are involved in financing ECEC; providers and parents also contribute to the costs. In addition, the federal government is increasingly financing special investment programmes.

In 2022, federal, state and local government spending on education totalled €176 billion. The planned expenditure for 2023 totals €181 billion or 4.6% of gross domestic product (Statista 2023). Public expenditure on (E)CEC in 2022 amounted to €43.5 billion, 6.4% more than in the previous year (Destatis 2023d).

Nationwide, the **municipalities** bore slightly more than half of the expenditure for ECEC in 2021 (51.1%) and the *Länder* 47.6% (Destatis 2022, 48f). However, there are considerable regional disparities in municipal budgets with regard to tax revenues from trade tax, which accounts for about half of the financial capital and is dependent on the presence of industry and economic fluctuations. In addition, further tax revenues are redistributed from the federal government and the *Länder* to the municipalities. This leads to regional differences in municipal budgets and thus also in the provision of ECEC (Scholz et al. 2019).

At the level of the **Länder**, significantly more funds have been made available for ECEC in recent years. Between 2010 and 2022, expenditure on ECEC more than tripled in three federal states and at least doubled in 13 *Länder* (Destatis 2022, 127). However, there are still considerable differences, not least in the expenditure per child expenditure. At the end of 2020, this varied between €9,469 in Berlin and €6,550 in Bayern (Bock-Famulla et al. 2023).

Although the **federal government** has a legally limited role with regard to ECEC financing, the factual importance of the *Bund* in this regard has increased in recent years. Since 2008, the *Länder* have been supported with grants via a "special fund for the expansion of childcare". These programmes provide financial incentives for specific reform initiatives of nationwide significance. After considerable investment in the expansion of places for under 3 year-olds, the federal government funded a comprehensive "Staffing Campaign: Recruiting Young Talent, Retaining Professionals" from 2019 to 2022 (Evaluation Report: Weltzien et al. 2022). From 2022 to 2024, the federal government is funding the implementation of the KiTa Quality Act in the *Länder* with approximately 4 billion euros (BMFSFJ 2023a).

Parental contributions vary considerably depending on the provider, municipality and federal state. The *Gute-KiTa-Gesetz* specified an obligatory income-related adjustment of parental contributions and extended the criteria for fee exemption. Municipalities have a statutory duty to provide advice on the possibility of applying for a fee exemption. Nevertheless, parental contributions vary greatly across Germany at the municipal level (Mühleib et al. 2021). Even in the case of settings offering the same service for the same age range of children and where parental income levels are similar, the costs for parents can sometimes differ by several hundred euros per month. In 2020, for example, the monthly parental contributions for a full-day place (more than 35 hours) for children under the age of 3 varied – with a wide range within the federal states – between an average of €0 (in Berlin, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Rhineland-Palatinate) and €360 (North Rhine-Westphalia) or €335 (Baden-Württemberg) (Klinkhammer et al. 2022, 227).

With the extended fee exemption in the course of the amendment of the Child and Youth Welfare Act (§ 90 SGB VIII), significantly more families have become eligible for fee exemption. However, in August 2022, there were only three federal states with full exemption from fees: Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and the city state of Berlin; in three *Länder* (Baden-Württemberg, Saarland and Saxony) there is no exemption at all and in the remaining ten *Länder*

there is a partial exemption linked to certain criteria (e.g. age of the child or length of attendance at the facility) or a subsidy system (Bock-Famulla et al. 2023).

In 2022, a couple with two children spent about 1% of net household income on childcare costs⁷ (OECD.Stat 2023).

Staff to child ratios and group size

In Germany, it is not possible to calculate a specific staff to child ratio or current group size through the official child and youth welfare statistics. This is because the pedagogical work with children is not separated from other work tasks (e.g. planning, cooperation with parents). Instead, a staffing ratio can be calculated, which relates the contractually agreed weekly working hours of the educational staff to the contractually agreed weekly hours of childcare in a *Kita*.⁸ In this respect, the differences between the federal states are considerable.

The staffing ratio calculation in ECEC settings is carried out at group level, i.e. only settings with a fixed group structure are taken in account.

In 2021, one staff member in Germany was responsible for an average of 3.9 children under 3 years of age, but there are marked differences between the federal states, ranging from 2.9 children per qualified staff member in Baden-Württemberg to 5.8 children in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

There were similar differences for children between 3 years and school entry: overall, a staffing ratio of 1:8.4 applied here, ranging from 6.5 children per specialist in Baden-Württemberg to 12.9 children in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. In mixed-age groups from 0 years onwards, the national average staffing ratio was 1:6.3 (from 1:5.2 in Baden-Württemberg to 1:10.5 in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania). Overall, the staffing ratio in the eastern *Länder* is less favourable than in the western *Länder* (Bock-Famulla et al. 2023).

Table 4

Germany: Average staffing ratio by region and age of children, 2021

	1 qualified staff member for ... children		
	0 to under 3 years	3 years to school entry	Mixed-age groups
Western <i>Länder</i>	3.3	7.8	5.9
Eastern <i>Länder</i> (including Berlin)	5.3	10.7	8.3
Total average	3.9	8.4	6.3

Quelle: Bock-Famulla et al. 2023

Curricular frameworks

Traditionally, unlike the situation during the German Democratic Republic (GDR) era, there were no official curricular frameworks for the pedagogical work in ECEC settings in former West Germany. This was primarily a matter for the providers, even if guiding principles were set out in the few *Länder* with specific kindergarten legislation. However, after the so-called "PISA shock"

⁷ The calculation is based on: full-time working parents (average wage); two children aged 2 and 3 years in full-time childcare; childcare benefits included.

⁸ The calculation of staffing ratios in ECEC settings is based on a standardised calculation of full-time equivalents of the children enrolled (full-time care equivalent) and the pedagogical staff in the setting (full-time employment equivalent) for the different types of groups (Bock-Famulla et al. 2023).

in 2001, when Germany performed worse than expected in the OECD tests for 15 year-olds, the urgency of “laying firm foundations” through early childhood education became a hot topic across the country. Gradually, from 2004 onwards, the first early education frameworks were introduced. In the meantime, these have been revised at least once in most of the *Länder*.

These 16 curricular frameworks see children as agents of their own learning – in a co-constructive process with adults and other children. They are not prescriptive catalogues of learning goals, but rather descriptive accounts of varying aspects of pedagogy, based on research literature. They differ in length and the degree of obligation. Most *Länder* regard these framework plans as a guiding orientation for ECEC centres. In Bavaria, Brandenburg, Saxony and Thuringia, ECEC settings are obliged by law to integrate the main principles into their centre-specific programmes. The implementation of the principles and goals is the responsibility of the respective provider. All curricular frameworks specifically cover the age group up to school entry; in some *Länder* they also include guidelines for out-of-school education and care for children up to age 10 (Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hesse, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt), in Thuringia even up to age 18 (Bock-Famulla et al. 2023; Deutscher Bildungsserver 2023; see *Appendix 1* for links to the individual curricular frameworks – in German).

Meanwhile, all curricular frameworks contain areas on language, mathematics or science education; more than half also on health, music, movement and sport, technology, body, religion and values, media, environment, as well as art/presentation and design. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of comprehensive data on how the theoretical educational concepts are implemented and evaluated in the everyday life of ECEC settings (Autor:innengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2022, 98).

In addition to these state-level curricular documents, the 16 Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and the 16 Ministers of Youth Affairs also agreed in 2004 on a *Common Framework for Early Education in ECEC centres*, which was updated in 2022 (JMK 2004; KMK 2022). The basic principles of this non-binding common framework include a holistic approach to learning, the participation of children in decision-making processes, intercultural pedagogy, gender-sensitive practices, and targeted support for children with developmental risks or impending disabilities as well as for highly gifted children. Areas of learning include language, literacy and communication; personal and social development; values education/religious education; mathematics, natural sciences, technology; music education and media; physical development, movement, health; nature and culture. These areas of learning are to be embedded in an integrated and holistically organised approach in the ECEC setting. In addition, special emphasis is placed on the transition between kindergarten and primary school. In this respect, a significant challenge for the future is to strengthen cooperation at all levels: the steering level, the local and institutional level and the curricular level.

Digital education

Although digital media are omnipresent in children’s lives from a very early age, the way they are handled both in families and in ECEC settings varies considerably. Experts and pedagogical staff see aspects of digital media that on the one hand promote education (cf. Blossfeld et al. 2018; Knauf 2018; Reichert-Garschhammer 2018) and on the other hand impair child development (Fröhlich-Gildhoff and Fröhlich-Gildhoff 2018). Overall, the acceptance of digital media in ECEC environments is still rather hesitant from the perspectives of all stakeholders involved, i.e. providers, educational professionals and also parents (cf. Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2020).



Digital media have become established in most ECEC settings as a support and facilitator for organisational tasks or for communication within the team and with parents - as the Corona pandemic in particular has shown. However, it is still rather uncommon for them to be available as a tool for children in the same way as pens and paper are. No one is born a “digital native”. However, it is still not widely acknowledged that children have to learn how to use digital media, and ECEC centres face the challenge of finding an appropriate approach towards supporting children’s digital competence.

In the curricular frameworks of the 16 *Länder* (see *Appendix 1* for links in German), the terms “digital education” or “digital media” have been included in very different ways (see, e.g., Lienau and van Roessel 2019). Only four of the 16 curricular documents explicitly refer to “digital media” or “digital education” in a separate section. In all others, there are only general references to “media” – either unspecifically or only mentioning analogue media. Mostly they are subsumed under another section, such as “language” or “communication”. A definition of media literacy and a differentiation of objectives of media education are provided by ten of the curricular frameworks. While some highlight the dangers and disadvantages of “excessive media use”, others emphasise the constructive coexistence of analogue and digital experiences or postulate very specifically that it “makes no sense to exclude children's media experiences... they must become the subject of pedagogical work...” (Bildungsplan Saarland 2018, 84). Twelve of the 16 *Länder* emphasise the importance of an age-appropriate or critical accompaniment of the children's media experiences by the professionals.

In order to strengthen the presence of “digital education” in the early childhood field on the basis of knowledge and experience, a pilot project was carried out in Bavaria from 2018 to 2020, aiming to sensitise ECEC settings to it and to support the professionals in developing the necessary knowledge and skills. Commissioned by the Bavarian Ministry of Social Affairs (StMAS), the State Institute for Early Childhood Research and Media Literacy (IFP) was responsible for the conceptual framework and implementation. In terms of the number of participating ECEC centres (100) and “media coaches”, it was the most extensive pilot project in Germany to date⁹. Following the successful completion of this pilot project, its findings are now being implemented state-wide. Starting in September 2021, ECEC settings in Bavaria (in the second year of the campaign 308) will be supported professionally through a multi-year qualification programme “Kampagne Startchance digital” in the use of media with children and the involvement of parents (IFP 2024).¹⁰

Monitoring – evaluation

One of the main goals of the Good Childcare Act 2019 was to improve quality and participation in ECEC settings nationwide. Improved monitoring (BMFSFJ 2020b) and improved evaluation were further goals. From ten fields of action, the 16 *Länder* selected the issues that were particularly relevant for the development of quality in their federal state. Two comprehensive evaluation studies also examined the impact of the Good Childcare Act itself (BMFSFJ 2021).

Under the new KiTa Quality Act (2023), the *Länder* receive funds from the allocated 4 billion euros until the end of 2024, provided that at least 50% of the funds flow into the new seven

⁹ More information (in German) about this project can be found under the following link: <https://www.kita-digital-bayern.de/>

¹⁰ More information (in German) about the implementation can be found under the following link: <https://www.ifp.bayern.de/projekte/qualitaet/startchancekitadigital.php>



priority fields of action (see footnote 3). New measures from 2023 onwards may only be implemented in these fields of action. The *Länder* determine the specific measures together with the federal government (BMFSFJ 2023a).

Child-related assessment

The starting point for an increase in documentation and assessment of children's performance and progress in Germany is, on the one hand, concern about early language development in general and, on the other hand, about the language acquisition of children with a family language other than German. To assess the developmental progress of children in ECEC settings, observations, tests or portfolios are among the tools used. In some *Länder*, mandatory language assessments and, if necessary, support measures are laid down by law. In Bavaria, for example, the use of an assessment tool called Seldak ("Sprachentwicklung und Literacy bei deutschsprachig aufwachsenden Kindern" - Language Development and Literacy in German-speaking Children) is obligatory for 4 to 5 year-olds (IFP 2016).

Centre-based self-evaluation

Self-evaluation procedures include, for example, assessing the general quality of the setting, how the centre team cooperates, liaising with parents, or the implementation of the centre programme based on the state curricular framework. There are no recommendations regarding the frequency of evaluations. The respective ECEC provider decides whether to publish the results or not.

The city state of Berlin was the first of the 16 *Länder* to introduce steps regarding monitoring related to the Berlin curricular framework, in which evaluation is prescribed. An agreement with the providers, linked to the funding of the ECEC settings, requires a number of self-evaluations and (every five years) an external evaluation. The Berlin Kita Institute for Quality Development (BEKI 2022) is responsible for monitoring and evaluations, the results of which contribute to ongoing developments and improvements in early education. The providers finance the evaluation, are informed about the results and measures and have to adapt their professional development programmes accordingly.

External evaluation

There is no national inspection system in Germany. External monitoring is carried out at the regional and municipal level. Since 2008, the Bertelsmann Foundation has conducted an independent and detailed annual review of the most important structural features of the early childhood education system in Germany, focusing on quality-related aspects. Sources are mainly federal statistics and federal state reports (Bock-Famulla et al. 2023).

In general, control measures to check compliance with state regulations are low key and based mainly on agreements with the provider organisations. The frequency of external evaluations or the submission of written reports is rarely prescribed. The main responsibility for the quality of monitoring lies with the providers, who have developed their own systems of quality management and pedagogical guidance. At the municipal-regional levels there are also some guidelines for both external and self-evaluation procedures.



Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which was ratified in Germany in 2009, reignited the discussion on inclusive education at the political level.

"Children with and without disabilities should be able to learn together in one group, as far as the specific need for individual support allows" (SGB VIII 2012) – this is laid down in federal legislation. In doing so, providers have a duty to ensure that the staff in ECEC settings work together with families, community organisations and schools. The federal states have their own guidelines and/or legislation for implementation.

The inclusion in mainstream settings of children with special educational needs, developmental risks and (pending) disabilities has developed steadily since the 1970s. In all 16 federal states, the care of children with special educational needs and disabilities is regulated by law, either in ECEC legislation or under social law. In order to expand and strengthen inclusion and accessibility, corresponding laws (e.g. Disability Equality Act, General Equality Act, Accessibility Strengthening Act, Participation Strengthening Act) are to be further developed in the new coalition agreement of the government (BMAS 2021).

In 2022, 39.4% of all *Kitas* (23,374 out of 59,323) operated according to an inclusive approach while the number of special facilities for children with special needs decreased from 691 in 1998 to 229 in 2022 (Destatis 2023a). In 2022, 40.3% of ECEC centres care for at least one child who receives "inclusion support" (Bock-Famulla et al. 2023). 2.4% of children in (E)CEC settings were recipients of inclusion support in 2022: only 0.5% in the under-three age group and 3.2% in the group of over 3 year-olds (FKB 2023, 161).

Various projects initiated by ECEC providers also deal with the topic of inclusion in *Kitas*, e.g.:

In Baden-Württemberg, the Protestant Regional Association carried out the project "Shaping participation – avoiding disadvantage – *Kitas* develop an inclusion-oriented practice" in 24 *Kitas* from 2016 to 2019 as part of the action plan "Living inclusion". These were to be supported by professional supervision in the sustainable anchoring of an inclusion-oriented practice (Evangelischer Landesverband 2016).

In a pilot project of the city of Munich and Upper Bavaria, four ECEC centres in the city committed to offering at least five places for children with special needs in 2020/21. These centres were accompanied by specialists in inclusion issues and were also additionally staffed. Following the evaluation of the project, the model is to be transferred to other ECEC settings in Upper Bavaria (City of Munich 2021).

Children with a migration background – children from Roma communities

Pedagogical approaches in early childhood education are increasingly being framed in a paradigm that emphasises inclusion and the recognition of diversity of all kinds. This includes children with a migration background (defined as "at least one parent is of foreign origin").

In 2022, a total of 13.1% people with non-German nationality lived in Germany. Of these, 41.5% came from other EU27 countries. In the under-5 age group, these proportions were 14.1% and 34.7% respectively (Eurostat 2023c, own calculations).

Of the children under 3 years of age attending an ECEC centre in 2022, 22.8% had a migration background; in the group of children over 3 years of age 31.2%, i.e. almost one third. German is the language mostly spoken at home in 37.8% and 31.8% of these families respectively (Destatis 2023a, own calculations).

Since the beginning of the war in February 2022, 1,099,905 refugees from **Ukraine** have sought protection in Germany (as of 30.09.2023). Of the 347,000 children and young people, 38% are



of primary school age (Mediendienst Integration 2023). According to the second survey of the study "Refugees from Ukraine in Germany (IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Survey)" at the beginning of 2023, about every second child up to 6 years of age attended an ECEC centre, with large differences depending on the age of the children: While only 7% of 1 year-olds and 16% of 2 year-olds are enrolled in a centre, the proportion of 6 year-olds is 72%. The proportion of children attending a Kita is also higher in the eastern federal states (66%) than in the western states (46%). The results of the survey indicate that attendance at an ECEC centre is more frequent when one parent is employed or taking part in a language course (DIW 2023). The legal entitlement to a place in ECEC from the age of 1 also applies to refugee children. Upon application, the Youth Welfare Office pays the childcare costs for refugees (BMFSFJ 2023b).

A study by the DIW (Gambaro et al. 2019) examined the effects of children's attendance at ECEC centres on the integration of their parents on the basis of surveys¹¹ of refugees (N = 5,859, 2016 and 2017). It was found that especially mothers of children attending an ECEC centre were significantly better integrated, had higher language skills and a stronger labour market orientation. Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that the children of families who have fled to Germany are given the opportunity to attend an ECEC setting as early as possible.

A current project "Kitas and Ukrainian mothers with Kita children" is conducting an online survey of (a) 500 mothers each with questions on, among other things, the well-being and life of the mothers and their children in Germany, and (b) an online survey of Kita managers on the children enrolled (DJI 2023).

Reliable statistics on the number of **Roma** living in Germany are not available, as statistical data on ethnicity are not collected. Estimates range from 70,000 according to the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma (Frietsch 2018) to 120,000 (Statista 2010).

At the EU level, seven targets have been set for national Roma inclusion strategies for the period up to 2030, based on evidence from surveys of Roma communities, covering equality, inclusion, participation, education, employment, housing and health. With regard to early childhood education, the main aim is to improve access for Roma children (European Commission 2021). A measure for the integration and participation of Sinti and Roma in Germany within the framework of the ESF federal programme "Elternchance II" (Parental Opportunity II) also relates to improved access to early childhood education by strengthening cooperation with parents. To this end, persons, some of whom also belonged to the Roma, were trained as parent guides (BMI 2019).

Parental leave arrangements¹²

Fully paid **Maternity leave** (*Mutterschutz*) begins six weeks before the birth and lasts until eight weeks afterwards. These eight weeks are compulsory for all mothers. During that time 100% of the income is paid, with no upper limit.

There is no legal provision for **Paternity leave** (*Vaterschaftsurlaub*). However, fathers can take two months of exclusive parental leave. An entitlement to Paternity leave is being prepared for 2024.

Parental leave (*Elternzeit*) is regulated by the Federal Parental Leave and Parental Benefits Act (*Bundeselternzeit- und Elterngeldgesetz*, BEEG) and can be taken by both parents as an individual

¹¹ These surveys contained data from the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF).

¹² The brief summary in this section is based on the country note for Germany by Pia Schober and colleagues in the *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2023* (see *References*).

entitlement for three years up to the child's 3rd birthday. 24 months of this can also be taken up to the child's 8th birthday.

Parents who take Parental leave on a full-time or part-time basis can choose between two allowance options or combine them: (a) Basic parental allowance (*Basiselterngeld*) and (b) Parental allowance plus (*ElterngeldPlus*).

Basic parental allowance: The income-related Basic parental allowance is paid for twelve months - for 14 months if both partners take parental leave for two months (partner months). A minimum of €300 per month is paid, a maximum of €1,800. Parents with a previous net monthly income between €1,000 and €1,240 receive 67%, above €1,240 the share is 65%, below €1,000 they receive a higher share. Parents can work part-time for up to 32 hours per week.

ElterngeldPlus is paid for 24 (+four) months in the first two years of the child's life as partial compensation for the salary lost through part-time work. Up to four additional months (partnership bonus) are paid if both parents work part-time between 25 and 30 hours per week for up to four consecutive months. As with the Basic parental allowance, 65% or 67% is paid, depending on income - but only for the difference from the previous income. Both parents can take Parental leave at the same time and divide it into up to three blocks.

In Bavaria and Saxony, an income-related so-called state child-raising allowance of €150 to €300 per month and child is paid.

The main aim of the 2007 Parental allowance reform was to increase the proportion of fathers taking Parental leave. Overall, 38.7% of eligible women and 16.1% of men chose the *ElterngeldPlus* option in 2022. An average of 26.1% of eligible fathers made use of parental allowances. The average duration of Parental allowance receipt for mothers remained at 14.6 months; for fathers, this period was significantly shorter at 3.6 months and even decreased somewhat in recent years. However, there are significant regional differences with regard to the proportion of fathers: While 30.2% of eligible fathers received parental benefits in Saxony in 2022, in Saarland the relevant share was only 20.8% (Destatis 2023b).

Current challenges for the ECEC system in Germany

Country expert assessment by Sigrid Lorenz

In public discourse, the high systemic relevance of early childhood education, care and upbringing within the complex and federally organised German society of today is undisputed. This has not only been the case since the experience of nationwide closures of (E)CEC centres and schools to contain the coronavirus pandemic, although this once again sharpened the focus on specific professions and people (cf. Kaldewey 2022). The urgent question of current and medium-term challenges facing the (E)CEC system must be answered in particular against the backdrop of current social and lifeworld characteristics and developments. These are often described as uncertain, complex, ambiguous, diverse and dynamic and are essentially generated by the effects of globalisation, digitalisation and climate change (cf. OECD 2019; Fritz 2020).

Accordingly, two fundamental challenges need to be highlighted for the early childhood education system: On the one hand, the system itself has a responsibility to develop even more strongly into a dynamic, flexible system in order to be able to respond adaptively to these social developments, as well as providing its own impetus. On the other hand, it is linked to the concrete task of early education in the present to prepare all (!) children for a world described in

this way with as many opportunities as possible, on the basis of corresponding pedagogical concepts. With regard to the in-depth structure, this results in multiple developmental tasks for early education; three tasks are discussed below with subjective preference.

Challenge 1: High quality early education must remain in focus.

Currently, scarce financial and human resources dominate the situation and discussion of institutional ECEC in Germany. The associated focus on ensuring the care of children tends to marginalise qualitative aspects of early childhood education and upbringing, aspects of education that have been fought over for decades and which are enshrined in law and in the state-specific regulations. It is necessary to focus more strongly on this quality again in the future, because "the most important factor in a child's development that can be influenced by society is education" (Fritz 2020, 8; Rauschenbach und Meiner-Teubner 2019).

Challenge 2: Educational content must be conceptualised as future-oriented.

Early childhood education needs to follow a positive narrative and in this respect be understood as a formative, not a preventative pedagogy (Durand and Birnbacher 2021). This is linked to the challenge of ensuring the development of children's individual potential and enabling them to participate and shape their lives in a committed and responsible manner under the conditions of a dynamic, complex future (as outlined). For this reason, particular emphasis should be placed on exploring which forward-looking educational topics should be included in early education concepts.

In addition to cross-cutting problem-solving skills, such as collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking (OECD 2019/2020), which support children in finding their own (knowledge) path even in the face of uncertainty, the areas of "digital education", "education for sustainable development and climate protection (ESD)" and "democratic education" should be given special visibility in the curricular frameworks of all federal states in the future. "Digital education" is an indispensable key competence in a digitally permeated world; "ESD" supports children in thinking and acting sustainably and is therefore important for the future and for survival; "democratic education", understood as making it possible to experience and practice a democratic set of values and a values-based way of life, is of enormous importance for the continued existence of a democratic way of life in view of increasing anti-democratic tendencies. (cf., for example, SWK 2022; Schipprack 2021; Wunderlich et al. 2023; Deutscher Bundestag 2020).

Challenge 3: Educational disparities must be reduced and effective action plans developed.

Despite the constitutionally guaranteed right to equal education for all, the educational biographies of children and young people in Germany are still unequal in terms of opportunities and strongly linked to social background and parental education. Counteracting this and organising education in such a way that all children can develop according to their skills and interests continues to pose major challenges for the education system (Bertram 2021).

Even if there are clear limits to the compensatory influence of institutional early childhood education (Rauschenbach und Meiner-Teubner 2019), ECEC needs to (be able to) make an even greater contribution to reducing disparities in the future. This includes reducing existing barriers to access, as enrolment in ECEC varies according to the economic resources of families. To this end, a solid framework, relevant concepts and specialist knowledge must be promoted, as many

professionals are still uncertain about how to deal with heterogeneity and the associated support for children from disadvantaged families (Spensberger und Taube 2022).

Overcoming these and other challenges requires a well-equipped and competent education system in order to avoid "implementation dilemmas" (cf. Viernickel und Weltzien 2023). It also requires an intensification of vertical and horizontal coordination between the federal government, federal states and local authorities (including other groups), as regional and supra-regional differences in quality can still be observed (BMFSFJ 2023c). In order to reduce such fluctuations and ensure good educational and participation opportunities for children regardless of location, legally defined, cross-state minimum quality standards accompanied by monitoring and evaluation are likely to be an adequate control instrument. One example of such a cross-state agreement is the "Common Framework of the *Länder* for Early Education in ECEC Centres" (JMK/KMK 2004; KMK 2022); it should be actively promoted in the future, as the first years of early childhood development are crucial.

Demographic data

Please note: For reasons of comparability, data on children are always reported up to 6 years of age, even if compulsory schooling starts earlier or later in some countries.

Total population

In 2022, the total population in Germany was 83,237,124.

Between 1995 (81,538,603) and 2005 (82,500,849) there was a slight rise in the overall population. After a peak of 81,802,257 in 2010, numbers since then have decreased slightly (2015: 81,197,537; 2020: 83,166,711) (Eurostat 2023a).

Total fertility rate

In 2021, the average total birth rate in the EU27 (as of 2020) was 1.53. The highest total birth rate of the 33 SEEPRO-3 countries was in France (1.84), the lowest in Malta (1.13). At 1.58, Germany is close to the EU27-average (Eurostat 2023b).¹³

Children under age 6

In 2022, 2.8% of the total population were children under 3 years of age, and 5.8% were children under age 6. For the first time, these relative shares are slightly above the respective EU-average (see *Table 5*, Eurostat 2023a).

¹³ Data for **Ukraine** and the **UK** (2021) are from Statista (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/296567/fertility-rate-in-ukraine/> and <https://www.statista.com/statistics/284042/fertility-rate-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/>). Data for the **Russian Federation** (2021) are from WorldBankData (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?locations=RU>).

Table 5

Germany: Children under 6 years of age, 2022

Age	Number of children
Under age 1	791,254
1 year-olds	780,795
2 year-olds	789,145
3 year-olds	803,334
4 year-olds	810,805
5 year-olds	816,142
0 to 6 year-olds total	4,791,475

Source: Eurostat 2023a

Table 6

Germany: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population compared with EU averages, 2000-2022, in %*

Year	Comparison Germany/EU	Under 3 year-olds	3 to under 6 year-olds	0 to under 6 year-olds
2000	Germany	2.9	2.9	5.8
	Ø EU15 ¹⁴	3,2	3,2	6,4
2005	Germany	2.6	2.8	5.4
	Ø EU25	3.1	3.1	6.2
2015	Germany	2.6	2.5	5.1
	Ø EU28	3.0	3.2	6.2
2022	Germany	2.8	2.9	5.8
	Ø EU27	2.7	2.9	5.7

Source: Eurostat 2023a, *own calculations

Single households with children under age 6

The majority of households with children under 6 years of age were couple households in 2022. Households with single parents accounted for only 4.4% - as a rule, these are single mothers, the share of single fathers is very low at 0.4%.

Table 7

Germany: Households with children under age 6 in Germany, 2022

Household type	Total households	Share of total households, in %*
Single and couple households	7,136,200	
Couple households	6,078,900	85.2
Other household type	714,600	10.0
Single households, total	342,700	4.8
Single households, women	313,700	4.4
Single households, men	29,000	0.4

Source: Eurostat 2023h, *Own calculations

¹⁴ The data for 2000 include the EU15-Länder at that time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK). The 2005 data (EU25) include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2015 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR. Data for EU27 (from 2020) comprise the countries of the EU28 without the UK.

Employment rates of parents with children under 6 years of age

In Germany, in 2022, the employment rate (15–64 years) of men as a whole was 83.7%, that of women 75.6% (Eurostat 2023g).

In 2022, 65.8% of women and 90.4% of men with children under 6 were in employment (18–64 years). The shares of fathers in employment were thus above the average (87.2%) of the 27(2020) EU countries, as were those of mothers (EU average 63.6%) (Eurostat 2023d).

Table 8a

Germany: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU countries, 2010 and 2022

	2010	
	Mothers, in %	Fathers, in %
Germany	54.6	90.4
Highest employment rate in the EU27 ¹⁵	Denmark: 82.7	Netherlands: 93.4
Lowest employment rate in the EU27	Hungary: 31.7	Latvia: 72.7
	2022	
	Mothers, in %	Fathers, in %
Germany	65.8	90.4
Highest employment rate in the EU27(2020)	Luxembourg: 81.9	Sweden: 95.1
Lowest employment rate in the EU27(2020)	Czech Republic: 42.5	Romania: 78.5

Source: Eurostat 2023d

For the SEEPRO-3 countries that were not part of the EU27(2020) in 2021/2022, data are displayed in Table 8b.

Table 8b

Employment rates in non-EU SEEPRO-3 countries, 2021/2022/2023

Countries	Parents with children under 6 years		Overall employment rate	
	Mothers in %	Fathers in %	Women in %	Men in %
*Norway (2022)	82.9	94.3	75.4	80.1
***Russia (2021/2022)	67.1 (2021)	k.A.	55.6 (2022)	70.4 (2022)
*Serbia (2022)	64.4	78.3	57.9	71.0
**Switzerland (2022/2023)	46.9	95.3	60.0 61.1 (2023)	83.5 84.2 (2023)
*Ukraine (2021)	n.d.	n.d.	60.7	69.9
+++United Kingdom (2021/2023)				
with dependent children	75.6	92.1	++72.3	++79.2
with children under 2 years	72.4	93.1	++72.1 (2023)	++79.4 (2023)
with children 3–4 years	70.7	95.0		

*Eurostat 2023d, 2023g

**[BFS] Bundesamt für Statistik. 2023. *Erwerbsquoten in Vollzeitäquivalenten nach Geschlecht, Nationalität, Altersgruppen, Familientyp* [Full-time equivalent employment rates by gender, nationality, age groups, family type]. <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/asset/de/je-d-03.02.00.01.03>

***Rosstat. 2022. *Statistical annex SDG in Russia 2022*. <https://eng.rosstat.gov.ru/sdg/report/document/70355>;

BRICS. 2023. *Joint Statistical Publication 2023*. https://brics2023.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/BRICS-2023-JSP_Final_Web.pdf

*[SSSU] State Statistics Service of Ukraine. 2022. *Employed population in 2021, by age group, sex and place of residence*. <https://ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2017/rp/eans/eanse/Archznsnmve.htm>

**Statista. 2023. *Employment rate in the United Kingdom from June 1971 to January 2023, by gender*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/280120/employment-rate-in-the-uk-by-gender/>

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Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion¹⁶

In 2022, 24.3% of children under 6 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This proportion was slightly above the EU27 average (23.3%) for this age group. The share of all persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the total population was 20.9% (EU27: 21.6%). In 2020, 2.6% of children under 6 and 1.2% of the total population suffer from severe material deprivation (EU average 6.1% and 4.3% respectively) (Eurostat 2023e, f).

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¹⁶ ‘At risk of poverty or social exclusion’ refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or (severely) materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Material_deprivation)

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Appendix – Federal state curricular frameworks 2023

Baden-Württemberg	<p>Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport. (Hrsg.). 2011. <i>Orientierungsplan für Bildung und Erziehung in baden-württembergischen Kindergärten und weiteren Kindertageseinrichtungen</i> [Orientation plan for education and upbringing in Baden-Württemberg kindergartens and other ECEC settings]. https://kindergaerten.kultus-bw.de/site/pbs-bw-new/get/documents/KULTUS.Dachmandant/KULTUS/Projekte/kindergaerten-bw/Oplan/Material/KM-KIGA_Orientierungsplan_2011.pdf</p>
Bavaria	<p>Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung, Familie und Frauen & Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik (Hrsg.). 2019. <i>Der Bayerische Bildungs- und Erziehungsplan für Kinder in Tageseinrichtungen bis zur Einschulung</i> [The Bavarian framework plan for the education and upbringing of children in centre-based ECEC settings up to statutory school age]. https://www.ifp.bayern.de/veroeffentlichungen/books/bildungs-erziehungsplan/</p>
Berlin	<p>Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft. (Hrsg.). 2014. <i>Berliner Bildungsprogramm für Kitas und Kindertagespflege</i> [Berlin education programme for centre-based and home-based ECEC settings]. https://www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/kindertagesbetreuung/berliner_bildungsprogramm_2014.pdf</p>
Brandenburg	<p>Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg. (Hrsg.) 2011. <i>Grundsätze elementarer Bildung in Einrichtungen der Kindertagesbetreuung im Land Brandenburg</i> [Principles of early childhood education in ECEC settings in the state of Brandenburg]. https://mbjs.brandenburg.de/media_fast/6288/grundsätze_elementarer_bildung.pdf</p>
Bremen	<p>Freie Hansestadt Bremen. Der Senator für Arbeit, Frauen, Gesundheit, Jugend und Soziales. (Hrsg.) 2012. <i>Rahmenplan für Bildung und Erziehung im Elementarbereich</i> [Framework plan for education and upbringing in the early childhood sector]. https://www.soziales.bremen.de/sixcms/media.php/13/Jugendsenatorin_Rahmenplan_2012_web.pdf</p>
Hamburg	<p>Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg - Behörde für Arbeit, Soziales, Familie und Integration. (Hrsg.). 2012. <i>Hamburger Bildungsempfehlungen für die Bildung und Erziehung von Kindern in Tageseinrichtungen</i> [Educational recommendations of the city state of Hamburg for the education and upbringing of children in ECEC centres]. https://www.hamburg.de/content-blob/118066/2a650d45167e815a43999555c6c470c7/data/bildungsempfehlungen.pdf</p>
Hesse	<p>Hessisches Ministerium für Soziales und Integration & Hessisches Kultusministerium (Hrsg.). 2019. <i>Bildung von Anfang an. Bildungs- und Erziehungsplan für Kinder von 0 bis 10 Jahren in Hessen</i> [Education right from the start. Framework plan for education and upbringing for children from 0 to 10 years in Hesse]. https://bep.hessen.de/sites/bep.hessen.de/files/2022-11/BEP_2019_Web.pdf</p>
Lower Saxony	<p>Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium. (Hrsg.). 2018. <i>Orientierungsplan für Bildung und Erziehung</i> [Orientation plan for education and upbringing]. https://www.mk.niedersachsen.de/download/4491</p>
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	<p>Ministerium für Soziales, Integration und Gleichstellung. (Hrsg.). 2020. <i>Bildungskonzeption für 0- bis 10-jährige Kinder in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern</i> [Conceptual framework for the education of 0 to 10 year-old children in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania]. https://www.regierung-mv.de/serviceassistent/download?id=1645616</p>

North Rhine-Westphalia	<p>Ministerium für Kinder, Familie, Flüchtlinge und Integration des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen & Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen. (Hrsg.). 2018.</p> <p><i>Bildungsgrundsätze für Kinder von 0 bis 10 Jahren in Kindertagesbetreuung und Schulen im Primarbereich in Nordrhein-Westfalen</i> [Educational principles for children from 0 to 10 years in the early childhood and primary sectors in North Rhine-Westphalia]. https://www.kita.nrw.de/system/files/media/document/file/Bildungsgrundsätze_Stand_2018.pdf</p>
Rhineland-Palatinate	<p>Ministerium für Bildung, Frauen und Jugend. (Hrsg.). 2018.</p> <p><i>Bildungs- und Erziehungsempfehlungen für Kindertagesstätten in Rheinland-Pfalz</i> [Education and upbringing recommendations for ECEC centres in Rhineland-Palatinate]. https://kita.rlp.de/fileadmin/kita/04_Service/BEE/index.html#p=Titel</p>
Saarland	<p>Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur. (Hrsg.). 2018.</p> <p><i>Bildungsprogramm mit Handreichungen für saarländische Krippen und Kindergärten</i> [Educational programme with guidelines for Saarland nurseries and kindergartens]. https://www.saarland.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/mbk/Bildungsserver/Bildungsprogramm/Bildungsprogramm_mit_Handreichungen_zur_Ansicht.pdf?__blob=publication-File&v=1</p>
Saxony	<p>Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus. (Hrsg.). 2011.</p> <p><i>Der Sächsische Bildungsplan – ein Leitfaden für pädagogische Fachkräfte in Krippen, Kindergärten und Horten sowie für Kindertagespflege</i> [The Saxony Education Plan – a guide for pedagogy professionals in nurseries, kindergartens, after-school care centres and home-based ECEC settings]. https://www.kita-bildungsserver.de/wp-content/themes/kita-bildungsserver.de/inc/dokumente_zum_download_ausliefern.inc.php?did=37</p>
Saxony-Anhalt	<p>Ministerium für Arbeit und Soziales. (Hrsg.). 2014.</p> <p><i>Bildungsprogramm für Kindertageseinrichtungen in Sachsen-Anhalt. Bildung: elementar – Bildung von Anfang an</i> [Education programme for ECEC centres in Saxony-Anhalt. <i>elementar</i>: Education right from the start]. https://ms.sachsen-anhalt.de/fileadmin/Bibliothek/Politik_und_Verwaltung/MS/MS/Presse_Dialog_Kita/2014/bildungsprogramm_2014.pdf</p>
Schleswig-Holstein	<p>Ministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Jugend, Familie und Senioren. (Hrsg.). 2020.</p> <p><i>Leitlinien zum Bildungsauftrag in Kindertagesstätten</i> [Guidelines for the educational mandate in ECEC centres]. https://www.schleswig-holstein.de/DE/landesregierung/ministerien-behoerden/VIII/Service/Broschueren/Broschueren_VIII/Kita/BildungsleitlinienDeutsch.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2</p>
Thuringia	<p>Thüringer Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport. (Hrsg.). 2019.</p> <p><i>Thüringer Bildungsplan bis 18 Jahre</i> [The Thuringia Education Plan up to 18 years of age]. https://bildung.thueringen.de/fileadmin/bildung/bildungsplan/thueringer_bildungsplan_18_dasnetz.pdf</p>

