

## Germany

**ABL** = *Alte Bundesländer* (former West Germany). **NBL** = *Neue Bundesländer* (former East Germany).

**Population:** 82.42 m. **Fertility rate:** 1.34. **GDP per capita:** USD 25 900. **Children under 6 years:** 4.23 million.

**Female labour force participation:** 66.1% labour participation rate for women aged 15-64, of whom 37% work part-time (6.3% of men work part-time).

**Labour force participation rate of women with a child(ren):** 42.3% of mothers with a child under 6 are employed, accounting for 28.4% of all part-time employment (Statistisches Bundesamt, Mikrozensus 2004).

**Labour force participation rate of women with a child under 3:** 31.2% of mothers with a child under 3 were employed in 2004 (Statistisches Bundesamt, Mikrozensus 2004).

**Maternity and parental leave:** Maternity leave is for 6 weeks before birth and 8 weeks after, at average annual earnings. Parents then have the option of a period of parental leave (*Elternzeit*) lasting until 3 years after the birth of their child. Parents taking leave may work up to 30 hours per week, with a reduction to their child-rearing benefit paid.

**Average duration of parental leave:** Not available.

**Compulsory school age:** 6 years.

**Social expenditure:** 27.4%. **Child poverty rate:** 10.2% after taxes and transfers (OECD average is 11.2%).

**Funding of pre-primary education (ISCED Level 0):** 0.53% of GDP, of which 0.4% is public funding. This corresponds to 9.3% of the education budget (*Ausgaben für den Bildungsprozess*), with kindergarten representing 14% of education enrolments.

**Unit cost per child** (in USD converted using PPP): USD 4 999 (OECD, *Education at a Glance*, 2005).

**Funding to children under 3:** As of 2005, according to calculations of the federal government, the municipalities will have at their disposal an annual amount of EUR 1.5 billion for the development of ECEC services for children below 3 (from savings generated through the consolidation of unemployment and social welfare benefits), but these funds are not earmarked.

**Average costs to parents:** On average across Germany, parents pay about 14% of costs, but parental contributions differ widely across regions, and even within *Länder*, mainly according to income.

**Legal entitlement to a free service:** From age 3, until entrance into school, children are entitled to a kindergarten place but this place is not free.

**Major service types and daily duration:** For children 0-3 years, the *Krippe* or centre-based crèche is the norm, with some family day care – *Tagesmütter* – also existing in the ABL. *Krippen*

are full-day services. For children from 3 years until entrance into school, the *Kindergärten* is the main service, almost always a full-day service in the new *BundesLänder* and tending in that direction (now about a quarter of kindergartens) in the old *Länder*. *Hort* – or out-of-school provision – is the third major service, catering for school-age children up to 10 or 12 years of age. These types of provision can cover half or full day (normally with lunch). *Krippen*, *Kindergärten* and *Horte* can be run as separate centres but also as a mixed form for children of different age groups (below and above 3 years).

**Rate of access to regulated services:** Children 0-3 years: there are available places in *Krippen* for 2.8% of children under 3 in the ABL, and 37% in the NBL. There are available places in the *Kindergärten* for 89.9% of children in the ABL (24% full-time places) and for almost all children in the NBL (98.4% full-time places). In the ABL, there are available places in after school care for 6.4% of children 6-10 years, but the service is growing, with new services tending to be placed within full-day schools. In the NBL, 67.6% of children have places in the local *Hort*. The overall figure for out-of-school provision across Germany is 14.2%.

**Designation and qualifications of key staff:** Staff in children's services are almost all female. *Erzieherinnen* (*kindergarten pedagogues*) form 64% of the personnel in the different types of services. In the ABL *Kinderpflegerinnen* (literally, children's carers) play a greater role, especially in services for children under 3. They receive a two-year training course at a vocationally-oriented secondary school, followed by one year internship in a day care centre. The vocational training of *Erzieherinnen* and *Erzieher* is placed at *Fachschulen für Sozialpädagogik*. The training is spread on three years and has either an integrated internship or one year of internship in the third year. Finally, there are *Sozialpädagogen* and *Sozialpädagoginnen* (social pedagogues, 2 %) who have had a tertiary level education in a *Fachhochschulen*. They work most often as leaders of centres, especially larger ones, but also sometimes with children with disabilities. A higher proportion of this group are men. Data are not available concerning the percentage of staff coming from minority backgrounds.

**Child-staff ratios and maximum group size:** Child-staff ratios depend on varying factors, but in general, kindergarten groups do not exceed 25 children, and will have two adults in charge, one of whom must be a trained *Erzieherin*.

### Auspices

Two fundamental political principles underlie the organisation, funding and regulation of early childhood policy in Germany, namely, *federalism* and *subsidiarity*. *Federalism* characterises Germany as a federal State with three levels of government: federal; the *Länder* (16 states/city-states); and the municipalities (some 13 000). The municipality level must plan and ensure the provision of ECEC services, but under the principle of subsidiarity, which requires that societal tasks should be undertaken by the smallest possible social unit – in this case the voluntary sector and the family – municipalities do not take in charge direct provision of early childhood services if private organisations are available. For this reason, the majority of services in the ABL are delivered by non-profit bodies (mainly religious), the *Freie Träger der Jugendhilfe*. They receive public money from *Länder* and municipalities to fulfil this task. The old *Länder* (11 of 16) have traditionally interpreted subsidiarity with relation to child-rearing as requiring a marked division of labour on gender lines with the majority of mothers taking leave to care for children, or taking part-time paid employment. Further, this principle endorses the

provision of children's services by numerous small, non-statutory, non-profit providers of ECEC services, which generally cluster within six *Freie Träger*. In the new eastern *Bundesländer*, the NBL (5 former GDR areas), subsidiarity does not apply to the same extent.

The *Länder* governments normally regulate, provide funding and direct children's services both through the ministry responsible (usually child and youth services or education) and through the autonomous *Land* Youth Welfare offices (*Landesjugendämter*). The Federal government has the competence of concurrent legislation as well as a competence of stimulus in the area of child and youth welfare, including children's services. Funding, however, is the sole responsibility of the *Länder* and the municipalities, but the *Freie Träger* and the parents bear a part of the costs. The responsible Federal ministry, the *Bundeministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend*, may influence the development of the early childhood field by initiating and funding projects (in collaboration with *Länder*) in areas deemed in need of more attention. The *Länder* governments fill in, complete and expand the frame which is set by the federal government in SGB VIII law. They set the regulatory and funding frameworks that guide the planning and provision of ECEC services, both by clusters within the *Träger* and directly by the *Länder*. Administration of ECEC within different *Länder* may be through education ministries or other child and youth services ministries. In all *Länder* special bodies (*Landesjugendämter*) exist. They are also responsible for the protection of children in the centres. The provision with day care facilities is task of the municipalities. The German system therefore, is complex and highly decentralised. The three layers of government intersect and communicate with the six *Träger*, allowing great scope for diversity (OECD Country Note for Germany, 2004). Constant debate and negotiation exist about the roles and responsibilities of different levels of government for ECEC, particularly regarding the application of the subsidiarity principle.

### Context

*Labour force rates:* In 2004, the labour participation rate for women aged 15-64 was 66.1%, increasing from 55.5% in 1990. Of those, 37% work part-time, while 6.3% of men work part-time (OECD, *Employment Outlook*, 2005). Mothers with a youngest child under 6 years had an employment rate of 42.3% in 2004 (active working mothers), and constituted 28.4% of part-time employment (Statistisches Bundesamt, Mikrozensus 2004). Mothers with a child under 3 had an employment rate (active working mothers) of 31.2% in 2004 (Statistisches Bundesamt, Mikrozensus 2004).

*Parental leave:* There is a period of maternity leave – 6 weeks before birth and 8 weeks after, during which mothers receive, if applicable, maternity pay from public funds supplemented by an employer's allowance, which brings up their income to average annual earnings. After this period of leave, parents have the option of a period of parental leave (*Elternzeit*) lasting until 3 years after the birth of their child. Under Federal law, a "child-rearing benefit" (*Erziehungsgeld*), depending on income, may be paid during the first two years of this leave period and an additional child benefit (*Kindergeld*) is made for children up to the age of 18. Some four *Länder* continue the *Erziehungsgeld* payment in the third year using *Länder* budgets. Parents taking leave may work up to 30 hours per week, with a reduction in the benefit paid. In addition, the third year of parental leave may be taken any time until the child is 8 years. Parental leave is used primarily by mothers, only about 2% of fathers availing of the entitlement. A notable difference between the two parts of Germany is that in the NBL (new *Bundesländer* or former GDR), the leave policy of 1 year

was closely connected with ECEC services, that is, after 12 months parental leave, a place was available for the child in an early childhood service. In the ABL (old *Bundesländer*), the 3-year period of leave is not generally co-ordinated with child services.

### **Access and provision**

The *subsidiarity principle* as interpreted in Germany means that non-profit, private organisations are given priority in the provision of services, with local authorities stepping in only when private organisations are unable to provide. In the ABL in 1998, about two-thirds (64%) of kindergarten places and 55% of places for children under 3 were offered by private providers (*freie Träger*), while local authorities provide just over half (55%) of *Hort* places. The main private providers are churches – Catholic or Protestant – making Germany unique, at least within Europe, in the major role that religious bodies play in the provision of ECEC services. In the NBL, with its different history, the public sector was the main provider (*öffentliche Träger*) in 1998, with about two-thirds of places for children under 3 and from 3 to 6, and 86% of places in *Horte*. This figure, however, will have fallen since 1998, as most *Länder* and local authorities have encouraged a move to private, non-profit providers.

Centre-based services comprise three types: *Krippen*, that is centre-based crèche services for children under 3; *Kindergärten* or centres for children aged 3-6 years; and *Hort* services, which provide out-of-school provision for children from entry to school up to 10 or 12 years. *Krippen* and *Kindergärten* services are run in most NBL as full-day, mixed-age services, a change from the strict separation of *Kindergärten* and *Krippen* prior to unification. The old federal *Länder* are also following suit: one quarter of kindergartens are now full-day, and there is the emergence of the *Kindertagesstätte*, that is, kindergartens taking in mixed-age children (below 3 years), and providing a range of services, including *Hort* and more intensive parent outreach. In the new *Länder*, the links between *Hort* and primary schools are now weaker, as they currently operate under separate ministries, although these services were under one ministry (education) prior to unification. Family day care services, normally made available by *tagesmütter* in their own homes, are also available. ECEC access and provision vary widely in western (ABL) and eastern (NBL) *Länder*, due to different development histories. Before unification, kindergarten (sessional) places in the west addressed 70% of the 3- to 6-year-old population, whereas there was almost complete full-time coverage in the east. For children under 3, the west had places for < 5% of the child population and there was 56% coverage in the east. A similar pattern was evident in school-age child care. Today, availability of centre-based places remains varied.

### **Rates of provision**

**0-3 years:** Places for this group in all Germany cover only 8.6% of the children, although national data hide large regional differences. In 2002, ABL places catered for only 2.8% of the child population, while in the NBL, there were places for 36.9% of the age group. In the ABL, almost all children 0-3 years are cared for by their families (mothers), with the help of informal care arrangements. In the NBL, the situation is more flexible, as a strong link had been forged between a leave policy of 1 year and ECEC services; over one-third of children still have access to *Krippe* places.

**3 years to school entry:** Places for this group in Germany cover 93% of the child population. In 2002, places were available in the ABL for almost 90% of the child population (24% available as full-time places); in the NBL, places were available for all children (98.4% available as full-time places). Compulsory school age is 6 years. Children who are six at the

end of June can begin school in September, but in practice, most children are well into their seventh year on commencement at school. Of the 5-6 year age group, 8% are not enrolled, but clear data are unavailable concerning who these children are. The 2001 Microcensus found that non-German children enter kindergarten less and later than German children.

### *Children with diverse needs*

*Children with disabilities:* Children with special learning needs fall into two main categories: children with disabilities and children with learning challenges stemming from various at-risk indicators such as low-income, ill health, immigrant status, or family dysfunction. Data about these children are not readily available, and hence, the actual state of integration of the children is not always known. Official policy recommends integration of children with organic handicaps into mainstream services. In the old *Länder*, special integrative groups consisting of children with and without disabilities were established in many kindergartens, with more staff. Statistics available suggest, however, that little expansion in the supply of places has taken place in recent years, except in the NBL which now maintain almost 3% of integrated places for special needs children, compared to 0.84% in the old *Bundesländer*.

*Children from low-income families:* For children from poor, at-risk backgrounds, free or subsidised places are often provided, but data indicate that 36% of children from the lowest income families (EUR 500-900 monthly) do not attend a kindergarten. The downstream results from PISA also suggest that a challenge exists in this domain. The challenge is met in some municipalities by well-planned outreach programmes, e.g. MoKi in Monheim. A new federal-wide initiative in favour of these children is recommended by the OECD review.

*Ethnic and bilingual children:* The German Social Code sets out the right of young persons to promotion, conditional on foreigners having lawful habitual residence in Germany. However, data on progress achieved are generally not available. The Background Report for Germany indicates “children with a migration background enter kindergarten later than German children. Roughly 25% of foreign children between the age of 3 and 6 do not attend kindergarten at all, whilst this figure is almost 19% for German children (with a migration background)” (p. 71).

## **Quality**

*Licensing and regulatory regimes:* Each *Länder* sets standards for children’s services in its areas, these standards being monitored by the independent *Landesjugendamt* – the Youth Welfare Office. Standards generally cover number of places, opening hours, parent fees, building requirements and maintenance, group size, staff-child ratios and space, both indoor and outdoor. Space allocation and scope for outdoor engagement is substantial in most kindergartens. Pedagogical standards vary, however, between *Länder*, while monitoring depends on the focus, expertise and number of staff available to the *Landesjugendamt*. Family day care (*Tagesmütter*) services have a low level of regulation. *Tagesmütter* with 3 or fewer children do not need to be licensed and hence, are unregulated.

*Funding:* According to *Education at a Glance* (OECD, 2005), expenditure on pre-primary educational institutions as a percentage of GDP is 0.53%, with over 91% of this expenditure coming from public sources and 8.7% from private sources. 9.3% of total educational expenditure is allocated to pre-primary (kindergarten) whereas 14% of the children/students are enrolled at this level of education (OECD, *Education at a Glance*, 2005). Federal

government funding of ECEC is only possible in narrowly defined circumstances, and the *Länder* and municipalities determine how resources are deployed. Across the country, this leads to a significant difference in resources allocated to young children.

*Staffing:* Staff in children's services are overwhelmingly female (95% in 1998). *Erzieherinnen* (the name *Erzieherin* derives from the German term *Erziehung* – upbringing – and the term might best be translated as kindergarten pedagogue) form 64% of the personnel in the different types of services. In general, after obtaining the lower secondary school diploma, *Erzieherinnen* receive three years vocational training with either an integrated internship in a centre or one year of internship in the third year. In the ABL *Kinderpflegerinnen* (literally, children's carers) play a bit more bigger role, especially in services for children under 3. They receive a two-year training course at a vocationally-oriented secondary school, followed by one year internship in a day care centre. Finally, there are *Sozialpädagogen* and *Sozialpädagoginnen* (literally, social pedagogues) who have had a tertiary level education in a *Fachhochschule*. With their higher level qualification, they are most likely to be found working as leaders of centres, especially larger ones, but also sometimes with children with disabilities. A higher proportion of this group are men. Data are not available concerning the percentage of staff coming from minority backgrounds.

*Training requirements:* Training requirements are defined in each *Länder* although some common features are apparent. The three-year course for *Erzieherinnen* takes place in *Fachschule für Sozialpädagogik* (Colleges for Social Pedagogy), which are secondary level vocational colleges. In contrast, primary teachers are trained at tertiary level, generally in higher education institutions. A considerable gap exists, therefore, between *Erzieherinnen* and the teaching profession, in training, status and conditions of work. Moves to upgrade training are generally rejected on the grounds of cost, although it is generally recognised that current societal demands on *Erzieherinnen* and the framework of lifelong learning impose a re-thinking of their training. Early indications of change to this system are apparent in two *Länder* (Berlin and Brandenburg). *Kinderflegerinnen* complete a two-year course at a vocationally oriented secondary school, followed by a one year internship. *Hort* (out-of-school care) staff have similar training to *Erzieherinnen*. In the NBL this is a substantial cutback from the original (GDR) requirement that *Hortlerzieher* should be trained alongside primary teachers and receive specialist training. Staff in the NBL are generally older than staff in the ABL, because of differing histories and processes. The *Tagesmütter* (family day carers) may have no training although this is changing.

*Work conditions:* *Erzieherinnen* earn about the German average wage, a salary similar to those in other occupations who hold similar level qualifications. Promotion prospects are limited other than progressing to become a centre director. By comparison, school teachers achieve a similar salary to that of directors of kindergarten and benefit from lower social insurance expenses as they are deemed to be tenured staff. In Germany, less than half of ECEC staff work full-time and hence, do not rely on ECEC work alone for a living wage. Around 15% have temporary contracts only. Pay and conditions (e.g. health and employment insurance) for *Tagesmütter* are particularly low. ECEC staff are normally given a period of non-contact time each week, varying according to *Länder*, for completing administrative work.

*Child-staff ratios:* Child-staff ratios differ considerably across *Länder*. Apart from the *Länder* regulatory framework, the number of staff per group depends on the group size, the hours the group is open for, and other circumstances, for example staffing may be higher

where there are children from non-German backgrounds or with disabilities. In general, groups do not exceed 25 children, and will in such cases have two adults in charge, one *erzieherin* and one assistant.

*Curriculum and pedagogy:* *Situationsansatz*, or situation-oriented pedagogy, in which learning, care and upbringing are inseparable activities, has been the guiding practice of working with children in Germany. Realising the increasing importance of the educational element of ECEC, and concerned that the situation approach lacked precision and rigour, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth funded a “model project” running from 1997 to 2000, “On the education task of children’s day care centres” (*Zum Bildungsauftrag von Kindertageseinrichtungen*). This was followed by a National Quality Initiative (*Nationale Qualitätsinitiative im System der Tageseinrichtungen für Kinder*), starting in 1999, which involved five projects each focused on the development of methods for assessing and improving quality in different parts of the ECEC field, viz. services for children under 3; kindergarten; school-age child care; the situation approach to pedagogical work; and the work of the providers (the *Träger* and municipalities). Today, almost all *Träger* have engaged in quality improvement policies.

*Monitoring, evaluation and research:* National monitoring and reporting at population level is managed by the *Federal Statistical Office* which compiles data on the basis of surveys to *Länder*. Structural characteristics of services (type of facility by age groups, and type of place by age-group) are primarily the focus of data collection. These data have limited application as places may be counted but without knowledge of the extent of occupation or whether new places are needed. In some *Länder*, e.g. Hamburg, 5-year-old children are allocated to the school system and are therefore not included. With respect to evaluation and accountability, pedagogical monitoring is often carried out by the providers, that is, not by an external body but by the *Träger* and communities themselves. In addition, there is limited research on ECEC in Germany, particularly as universities are removed from the training and supervision of ECEC staff. Only five university chairs exist in the discipline for the whole of Germany. A large number of project evaluations and small investigations are funded by the Federal government and by individual *Länder*, but access to reports is said to be difficult.

*Parent and community involvement:* There is a strong predominance of traditional ways of working co-operatively with parents, e.g. through information evenings and presentations by specialists. Recognising the importance of parent and community involvement, some *Länder* require parent committees or councils to be formed in conjunction with the services, and parent voices must be part of the strategic decision-making process.

### **OECD policy issues**

Among the issues for policy attention identified in 2004 by the OECD review team for Germany were:

- *Defining the field broadly:* It is desirable to consider pre-school services in the context of surrounding services (including primary school and *Hort* or out-of-school provision), and to ensure cohesion between parental leave policies, children’s services and social policy. In this respect, the social pedagogy tradition provides an admirably broad and integrative concept, with its outreach to families and communities, and its understanding of the inseparability of *Betreuung*, *Bildung* and *Erziehung*.

- *Opting for a long-term strategy:* The team encouraged construction of an agreed view of where Germany wants to be in 10-15 years in this broad ECEC field, and to set in place as early as possible the resources and processes to achieve this.
- *Developing the federal role:* The Federal Government has played an important role thus far in building a united ECEC service. The review team encouraged this role to be developed in areas related to ECEC entitlement, funding, equality of opportunity and policy initiatives.
- *Creating effective mechanisms for partnership:* Close collaboration between different levels of government and across the different areas of policy and provision is deemed essential for ECEC to build and assure services of quality. A wider and more difficult issue concerns whether there should be more standardised regulation of ECEC systems across Germany.
- *Supporting quality through in-service training, practice consultants and other well-trying quality measures:* Processes that could support the development and improvement of quality were suggested by many stakeholders: in-service training; more consultation centres; a strong network of practice consultants with a reasonable number of centres to support; emphasis on observations of children; training and work conditions of pedagogues. Development of these for systematic review and reflection is encouraged.
- *Increasing public funding to ECEC:* Public funding to ECEC at large is well below the target proposed by the EC Child care Network (1996) of 1% of GDP. The governments – and not least, the Federal Government – have an important role to play in raising the public contribution to ECEC funding.
- *Improving participation and outcomes for children with additional learning needs:* While recognising the policy of integration that is in place, the review team encourages more evaluation and follow-up on the appropriate inclusion of special needs children (children with organic handicaps and children at-risk) into the services. Encouragement of intervention for children at-risk is given on the basis of evidence of effective results demonstrated by research elsewhere.
- *Revaluing the workforce:* By European standards, the German ECEC workforce remains at a low level of training. The argument that higher recruitment and training will be too costly downstream is unsustainable in the longer term. Cost scenarios developed elsewhere demonstrate that if high quality is desired, it is necessary to upgrade professionals if they are to deliver improved outcomes for children across the system.
- *Improving the relationship between ECEC and school, while respecting the independence of each:* Encouragement was given to defining the age-range from 0 to 10 as a field for development. The issue of building the relationship goes far beyond preparing children for school.
- *Creating a focused learning environment in ECEC centres:* Research suggests that young children who have acquired basic competences in kindergarten – basic general knowledge (for the society in question); good social skills; aural and oral competence in the language of school instruction; and an understanding of the uses of literacy and numeracy – generally do well in school. These competences are particularly important for children from challenged backgrounds, and are most effectively acquired when part of the day is devoted to structured, early learning programmes or projects, complemented by individual learning plans. This implies: raising the pre- and in-service training of staff; improving goal setting and monitoring of services; and re-appraising situation pedagogy approach to take into account clearly defined outcomes.

- *Building up research*: The current research represents a range of interests and approaches but is extremely small in volume given the importance of the field and Germany's size. The review team encouraged development and improvement of data and information, and the establishment of a strong link between teacher education and research.
- *Ensuring critical mass, particularly in the policy and monitoring field*: The present position of ECEC services is more marginal than their importance to the economic, educational, social and cultural development in any modern society. Policy units for ECEC development are either small or non-existent at central and local levels. The review team argued for recognition of the field and enhancement of its place within government thinking and decision making.
- *Stimulating exchange*: Recognition was given to the value of sharing experiences between and among *Länder*, and between Germany and other countries. Outreach to other countries could enhance networks and developments, particularly for activities related to: initial training; a more gender-mixed workforce; more effective support in the field for practice and evaluation; and to linking ECEC services and schools. In addition, other OECD countries could profit from Germany's rich history and conceptualisation of early childhood education and care.