

## ICEC Conference

# Reducing access barriers in Early Childhood Education and Care: International perspectives on local governance

22nd – 23rd October 2019

Hotel Aquino, Berlin

## Plenary discussion

### How to deal with local inequalities in access?

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Ursula Krickl, German Association of Towns and Municipalities, Berlin

Angela Schweers, AWO Bezirksverband Potsdam e.V.

Dr Vivianne Vidot, ECEC Planning, Herford

Ulrike Kloiber, Bildungshaus Lurup, Hamburg

Several stakeholders from policy and practice have been invited to contribute to the plenary discussion in order to discuss unequal access conditions at the local level and opportunities of governance from different perspectives. Thereby, various approaches to improve access conditions were touched (e.g. counselling for parents in ECEC centres, child-care free of charge from age two). At the same time, the discussants identified the necessity of social data (poverty reports) as well as the continuous lack of places and staff as key challenges to achieve equal access. In particular, they discussed discrepancies resulting from legal entitlement. On the one hand, they reflected the responsibility of municipalities for providing and financing ECEC, while meeting the increasing demand on child-care. On the other hand, the discussants problematised the objective of the legal entitlement: although it is aimed at the children, parental employment is a main criterion for the allocation of places in practice. In the course of the discussion, participants saw various factors to improve access conditions. Firstly, the ECEC system should be seen as part of the social and educational structures rather than as a welfare provision. Secondly, multi-professional teams composed of different occupational groups working together in ECEC are increasingly needed. Thirdly, children should be in the spotlight, especially when planning ECEC. Fourthly, ECEC services of high quality should be located in particularly disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

**Xenia Roth** is a psychologist and theologian. She has been working for the State government of Rhineland-Palatinate in Mainz since 1999. She is head of the department “Grundsatzfragen der Kindertagesbetreuung” (*General Issues in Early Childhood Education and Care*) at the State Ministry for Integration, Family, Children, Youth and Women.

**Ursula Krickl** works for the ‘Deutscher Städte- und Gemeindebund’ (*German Association of Cities and Municipalities*) since January 1998 and is head of the unit for social, youth, health and equality affairs. Since January 2008, she is also the association’s assistant spokeswoman.

**Angela Schweers** is chief executive of the Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bezirksverband Potsdam e.V. This local association of the Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO) was founded in 1990 and acts as non-profit provider of various social services and consulting centres, such as family centres or consulting services for families.

**Dr Vivianne Vidot** studied political sciences and works as a social planner of the city of Herford in North Rhine-Westfalia. In her PhD thesis, she analysed transformation processes in local family policies. Her interests include family policy, social policy and enabling participation for socially disadvantaged people in (urban) societies.

**Ulrike Kloiber** is a pedagogue and co-director of Bildungshaus Lurup in Hamburg. There, she is responsible for the early childhood education and care centre, the parent-child-centre, all-day school care, school support, integration support and Lurup's service centre South-East.