

OECD Country Note

Early Childhood Education and Care Policy

in

The Federal Republic of Germany

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy

1. The *Country Note for Germany* is an output of the *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy*, a project launched by the OECD's Education Committee in March 1998. The impetus for the project came from the 1996 Ministerial meeting on *Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All*. In their communiqué, the Education Ministers assigned a high priority to the goal of improving access to and quality in early childhood education and care, with the aim of strengthening the foundations of lifelong learning (OECD, 1998). A detailed description of the review's objectives, analytical framework, and methodology is provided in OECD (1998).

2. To date, twenty countries have volunteered to participate in the review: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. These countries provide a diverse range of social, economic and political contexts, as well as varied policy approaches toward the education and care of young children. Early in the review process, representatives from the participating countries reached agreement concerning the framework, scope and process of the review, and identified the major policy issues for investigation. Between 1998 and 2003, OECD review teams had already conducted visits to 18 participating countries. Information on the visits and several country reports may be viewed on the project web site: <<http://www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood>>. A first Comparative Report entitled *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care*, was released at an international conference held in Stockholm, 13-15 June 2001.

3. In scope, the reviews cover children from birth to compulsory primary school age, as well as during the transition to primary schooling. In order to examine thoroughly what children experience in the first years of life, the reviews adopt a broad, holistic approach. In addition to an analysis of policy and services, consideration is given to national social policies and various environmental influences on children's early development and learning. In sum, with the aid of ministries and the major actors in ECEC in each country, the reviews aim to:

- Distinguish and investigate the ECEC contexts, major policy concerns, and policy responses to address these concerns in participating countries;
- Explore the roles of national government, decentralised authorities, NGOs and other social partners, and the resources devoted to planning and implementation at each level;
- Identify and evaluate feasible policy options suited to different contexts;
- Highlight particularly innovative policies and practices; and

- Contribute to the INES (Indicators of Education Systems) project by identifying the types of data and instruments to be developed in support of ECEC information collection, policy-making, research, monitoring and evaluation.

More specifically, the expert teams investigate concerns about *quality*, *access* and *equity*, with an emphasis on policy development in the following areas: regulations; staffing; program content and implementation; family engagement and support; funding and financing.

The review process

4. In preparation for the visit of the OECD review team, the national ministries responsible for early childhood education and care commission *Background Reports* on ECEC policy and services in their countries. Guided by a common framework that has been accepted by all participating countries, *Background Reports* are intended to provide a concise overview of the country context, the major issues and concerns in ECEC policy and provision, innovative approaches, and the available quantitative and evaluation data. The *Background Reports* are an important output of the review process. Their preparation should normally be a participative exercise at country level, and should provide a forum of debate for the different stakeholders in early childhood in each country.

5. After analysis of the *Background Report* and other relevant documents, review teams composed of an OECD Secretariat member and experts with diverse analytic and policy backgrounds (see Annex I) visit each participating country. The visit is co-ordinated by the sponsoring ministry or ministries. In the course of the visit, the team interviews the major actors involved in ECEC policy and practice, and are invited to observe a number of examples of early childhood programs. The selection of particular sites reflects in general not only a concern for geographical diversity but also the desire to show the review team a representative selection of both typical and innovative services. After the country visit, the OECD produces a *Country Note* that draws together the national background materials and the review team's observations.

The review procedure in Germany

6. Germany was the 19th country to be reviewed by the OECD. Prior to the visit a *Background Report* on ECEC policy was commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend* or BMFSFJ). The OECD team was well-served by the German *Background Report*, which provided a wide-ranging account of services across Germany and a comprehensive analysis of current policies and provision in what is clearly a highly devolved federal state. From 6th to 16th June, 2004, a review team, comprising an OECD secretariat member and three experts with diverse research and policy backgrounds (see Annex I), visited Germany. The visit was co-ordinated by the Federal Ministry, a former member of which also accompanied the team throughout the visit. The OECD and the review team are very grateful for the smoothness of the organization, and the comprehensiveness of the documentation that was provided in all the Länder visited.

7. During the course of the visit, the team met with many of the major actors involved in ECEC policy and practice in Germany. Although invited to almost all the Länder, the team – due to time constraints - had to be content with visiting five states in more depth: Baden-Württemberg; Brandenburg; North Rhine-Westphalia; Rhineland Palatinate and Thuringia. Together, these Länder gave the OECD team an insight into the socio-geographical diversity that characterizes early childhood education and care in Germany. In each, the team had the opportunity to observe numerous examples of early childhood programs and services for children aged 0-6 years. The team also visited Berlin to meet with the Chair of the Children's Committee of the German Parliament (*Kinderkommission, Deutscher Bundestag*).

Structure of the German Country Note

8. This *Country Note* presents both a description and the review team's analysis of key policy issues related to ECEC in Germany. It draws considerably on the information provided in the *Background Report*; and on formal and informal discussions, document analysis, relevant research literature, and the observations of the review team. It is structured as follows:

Chapter 1: An introductory chapter, outlining the rationale of the OECD thematic review, and describing the goals and framework of the review visit.

Chapter 2: Contextual issues shaping ECEC policies in Germany, describing demographic developments, the labour market and employment situation and related policy areas, economic factors; recent historical events and governance.

Chapter 3: Current ECEC policy and services, describes the immediate policy environment of ECEC in Germany; the structure of ECEC services in West and East; the broad forms of provision and the providers; access, staffing and funding and how the forms of provision compare with one another across these dimensions; the workforce in ECEC in Germany; regulation and quality features; children with special learning needs; parents and services.

Chapter 4: Issues for ECEC in Germany explores selected critical issues, such as, the need to develop the German ECEC system; the tension between national and local powers in relation to regulation and standard setting; the relationship between early services, schools and out-of-school provision; workforce issues; research and data collection.

Chapter 5: Conclusions offers some orientations and policy suggestions in critical domains for consideration both by the authorities and ECEC stakeholders in Germany.

Acknowledgements

9. The OECD wishes to thank the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend*), and the governments and ministries responsible for early childhood services for making the review of Germany possible. In all Länder, the responsible ministries had organised meetings with a wide range of well-informed stakeholders and officials who gave us a comprehensive picture of the organisation of ECEC in each province. We wish to thank these ministries, as well as the ministers and chief executives who took time off from their busy agendas to meet with us; the managers and pedagogues in kindergartens and childcare centres who responded with patience to all our questions; and the family day carers who invited us into their homes. In particular, we thank Dorothee Engelhard, M.A., for leading the OECD team with tact and comprehensive knowledge of the complex German ECEC system and Marion Kraemer for efficiently and smoothly organizing the program of visits.

10. Throughout the *Country Note*, the suggestions offered by the review team are tentative, in recognition of the difficulty facing a visiting team—no matter how well briefed—in fully grasping the variety and complexity of a country-wide system and the range of issues that need to be taken into account. Even when multiplied by the number of members of a team, a ten-day review is limited in terms of the amount of data that can be collected and verified. For this reason, our recommendations are offered to the sponsoring ministries not as hard and fast conclusions, but in a spirit of professional dialogue for the consideration of German administrators, specialists and stakeholders. We trust, however, that our external perspective, based on many years' experience in the early childhood field, will prove to be a useful basis for discussion and progress. To lessen the potential for misunderstanding or error, it is assumed that this

Country Note will be read in conjunction with the German *Background Report*, as the two documents are intended to complement one another

Terminology and definitions

11. Compulsory schooling generally begins at age 6 in Germany. For ECEC, we have drawn on the definitions outlined in the *Background Report* to describe Germany's ECEC programs. On the basis of legislative status, programs for young children in Germany fall into three broad categories:

Krippe or nursery services for children under 3 years

Kindergarten or centres for children between 3 and 6 years

Hort or out-of-school provision (OSP) for children up to the age of 12 years (beginning of the secondary cycle) or 14 years.

The *Old Federal Länder* are abbreviated in the text as ABL (*Alte Bundesländer*). The ABL are the western *Länder* that formed the Federal Republic of Germany before unification.

The *New Federal Länder* are abbreviated in the text as NBL. The NBL are the eastern *Länder* that formed the German Democratic Republic before unification.

ECEC – refers throughout the text to *early childhood education and care*, a term adopted by OECD in its thematic reviews, to stress the importance of learning at all stages of the child's development. While the focus of ECEC is on children below compulsory school age, it also refers to out-of-school provision (OSP) for children up to 14 years.

Throughout the text, 'childcare' is written in single inverted commas. In this way, we wish to draw the attention of readers to the limitations of the term, which primarily connotes a labour market conception of children's services and does not refer to the developmental and learning goals which are their purpose as well.

CHAPTER 2

NATIONAL CONTEXT

12. Politically, Germany is a recent creation, coming to statehood only in 1871 and assuming its current form as recently as 1990 with the unification of the two German states – the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic – that emerged after the end of the Second World War. Yet the presence and influence of Germany goes back far further, being felt strongly and over the centuries in many fields: culture, philosophy, religion, science – and education and care. In the 19th century, Humboldt (1767-1835) had a profound influence on the concept and form of the university, while Froebel (1782-1852) was a pioneer in the field of early childhood theory and practice, opening the first kindergarten in 1840, in what is today the *land* (or state) of Thuringia. For the review team, the Froebel museum in Bad Blankenburg was a very special part of our programme, a reminder of the historical context which has shaped early childhood education and care and of the important German contribution to understanding early learning.

Demographic, economic and social contexts

Population

13. Germany today, after unification, is the most populous country in Europe, with a population of 82.5 million (2002). Within this total, some 4.6 million are children under 6 and a further 3.2 million are children aged 6 to 10; 87% of the former and 90% of the latter live in the former West Germany (referred to today as the old Federal *Länder* (ABL), in contrast to the new Federal *Länder* (NBL) in what was previously East Germany: *Länder*, as will be explained further below, are the 16 states and city-states into which the Federal Republic is divided).

A falling child population

14. Germany's population and families show a typically European pattern: women and men have fewer children, later in life; there are fewer and later marriages and more marital breakdown; non-marital unions are increasing with rising numbers of births outside marriage; and as part of a trend to smaller households, more children live with just one adult. Within this broadly common picture, Germany stands out for having one of the lowest birth rates in Europe (and indeed the world - see Table 2.1 below). Part of the reason for this low average is a high level of women who have no children, a third overall rising to 40% among graduates. Another factor is the slump in births that occurred in the NBL after 1990: in Brandenburg, for example, births more than halved at this time and have now stabilised at a low level¹. In households with children, roughly half have only one child.

¹ Births in Brandenburg were 40,100 in 1980 and had fallen to 35,900 in 1988 and 29,200 in 1990. They then plummeted to 17,200 in 1991 and 12,200 in 1993 – less than a third as many as 12 years previously. They then started to increase, but had only reached 17,700 in 2002.

Table 2.1: Demographic and household information, Germany and the EU 15*

	Germany	EU15
Total population	82.4 million	379.4 million
Of which% under 20	21.3	23.0
Population change 2000-15		
0-14	-11%	- 8%
80 and over	+49%	+49%
Crude marriage rate (per 1000 population)		
1960	9.5	8.0
2000	5.1	5.1 (1999)
Total fertility rate		
1960	2.37	2.59
2000	1.34	1.53
% of births outside marriage		
1960	7.6	5.1
2000	23.0	27.2 (1999)
Crude divorce rate (per 1000 population)		
1960	1.0	0.5
1999	2.3	1.8
% of couples in consensual union (16-29 years old)	35% (1998)	33% (1998)
Average number of persons per household		
1981	2.5	2.8
2001	2.1	2.4

Source: Eurostat 2003.

Note: *EU-15 refers to the 15 states which were members of the European Union prior to the enlargement to 25 member states in May 2004.

15. These changes in fertility mean that the child population has been falling and will continue to do so (though within this overall decline, there will be some small recovery in the NBL). With increasing numbers of elderly people, children's share of the population is falling and the share of children and young people in the German population is the lowest among Western European countries, except for Italy. Germany, in short, is ageing and more rapidly than most other countries.

Migration into Germany

16. A factor mitigating the process of falling population in Germany has been immigration. This post-war movement has had three main components: a large-scale movement of economic migrants in the 1960s and 1970s to meet the employment needs of an expanding economy; asylum seekers in the 1980s, with applications peaking in the early 1990s (at 438,000 received in 1992); and ethnic Germans (*Aussiedler*) from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, whose right of return was made possible in

the 1990s. Because, until recently², it has been difficult for migrants and their children to secure German nationality (except for *Aussiedler*), German figures on ‘foreigners’ give a better indication of the size of the ethnic minority population than in countries where citizenship has been more readily available. In 2002, there were 7.3 million ‘foreigners’, 9% of the population, nearly all living in the ABL; a quarter are of Turkish origin and the same proportion originate from other EU member states. Another trend, common to most European countries, is a growing number of ‘mixed’ households, with German and ‘foreign’ members; in 1999, these households accounted for nearly a third of all households with at least one ‘foreign’ member.

Income and poverty

17. Germany is in general a prosperous country, with per capita GDP about the average for the EU-15 and slightly above the average for the OECD member states (see Table 2.2 below). However there is considerable poverty among children. In 2001, 14% lived below 60% of median national income (compared to an EU-15 average of 19%). In 1999, the total income received by the 20% of the population with the highest income was 3.6 times higher than that received by the 20% with the lowest income. This, however, was less than the average for the EU-15, suggesting that Germany was among Western European countries with lower levels of income inequality (Eurostat, 2003, p.144). One source of poverty has been unemployment, which has been a serious problem since the 1980s, and stood at around 10% in April 2004. Another cause is the continuing lower living standards in the NBL, despite large financial transfer payments since 1990. This difference is also reflected in unemployment which is much higher in the NBL than in the ABL.

Table 2.2: GDP per capita, 2003, at current prices in US dollars

OECD Member Countries	Based on current exchange rates	Based on current purchasing power parities
Canada	23,100	30,300
Mexico	6,300	9,200
United States	36,100	36,100
Australia	20,700	28,100
Japan	31,300	27,000
Korea	10,000	17,000
New Zealand	14,700	21,800
Austria	25,500	28,900
Belgium	23,700	27,700
Czech Republic	6,800	15,100
Denmark	32,100	29,200
Finland	25,300	26,500
France⁽²⁾	23,400	27,200
Germany	24,100	25,900
Greece	12,100	18,400
Hungary	6,400	13,900
Iceland	29,600	28,400
Ireland	31,100	32,600
Italy	20,400	25,600
Luxembourg	47,200	49,100

² A law passed in 2000 grants German nationality to children born in Germany to foreign parents. Consequently, the number of children with foreign nationality has begun to fall.

Netherlands	25,900	29,000
Norway	42,000	35,500
Poland	4,900	10,700
Portugal	11,700	18,400
Slovak Republic	4,500	12,300
Spain	16,200	22,400
Sweden	27,000	27,200
Switzerland⁽¹⁾	37,400	30,500
Turkey⁽¹⁾	2,600	6,400
United Kingdom	26,400	28,000
OECD-Total⁽³⁾	23,000	25,000
Major seven	30,100	30,700
OECD-Europe	18,300	21,900
EU15	22,600	26,000
Euro zone	21,600	25,600

Source: *National Accounts of OECD countries, Main aggregates, Volume 1* (1) Countries still using SNA 68. (2) Figures include Overseas Departments. (3) OECD-Total includes 30 countries. Updated February 2003

Education and employment

18. As we shall discuss later, performance of 15 year olds in Germany in the OECD *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) was rather low and this has become a subject of considerable national debate and concern. However, on indicators of participation in education, Germany is above average at least in an EU context. More 18 to 24 year olds are in some form of education in Germany than in the EU-15 overall, and completion of at least upper secondary education among the 25 to 29 year old age group is also above the European average (see Table 2.3 below).

19. As already noted, Germany has high overall unemployment, though levels vary greatly between *Länder*, and are somewhat higher among women than men. The unemployment rate is above the OECD average for women and men and above the EU-15 average for men. At the same time, the overall employment rate (men and women combined) is slightly above the EU-15 average and women's labour force participation is above both the EU-15 and OECD averages, though again not by much. Germany, therefore, has high unemployment but also a high level of employment. Employment growth, however, has been low in recent years, averaging less than 1% per year between 1996 and 2001.

20. Statistics for fathers' employment are not available. However, among women with children there has been an overall increase in employment in recent years, which masks a divergent movement in the two parts of Germany: between 1991 and 2001, employment rose in the ABL and fell in the NBL. If we take as an example women with a youngest child aged 3 to 5 years³, the employment rate increased from 48 to 58% in the ABL but fell from 83 to 66% in the NBL. Employment among mothers is therefore still higher in the NBL, but the gap closed during the years after unification. Another difference between the two parts of Germany is in part-time working, with employed mothers in the NBL twice as likely as employed mothers in the ABL to have full-time jobs. This statistic points to how many families, especially in the ABL, manage the relationship between employment and childcare through a gendered division of labour.

³ Comparison of women with a child under 3 is complicated by the availability of a 3 year period of parental leave. Its effect on employment will be considered later.

**Table 2.3: Expected years in education and not in education for 15 to 29-year-olds (2001)
by gender and work status**

		Expected years in education			Expected years not in education			
		Not employed	Employed (including work study programmes)	Sub-total	Employed	Unemployed	Not in the labour force	Sub-total
OECD countries								
Australia	Males	3.0	3.6	6.6	6.9	0.9	0.5	8.4
	Females	2.9	3.5	6.4	6.1	0.7	1.8	8.6
	M+F	3.0	3.5	6.5	6.5	0.8	1.2	8.5
Austria	Males	3.6	1.8	5.4	7.9	0.5	1.3	9.6
	Females	4.3	1.1	5.4	7.6	0.4	1.6	9.6
	M+F	3.9	1.5	5.4	7.7	0.4	1.4	9.6
Belgium	Males	5.9	1.3	7.3	6.4	0.8	0.5	7.7
	Females	6.4	0.8	7.2	5.6	0.8	1.4	7.8
	M+F	6.2	1.1	7.2	6.0	0.8	0.9	7.8
Canada	Males	4.0	2.5	6.5	6.8	1.0	0.7	8.5
	Females	4.0	3.0	7.0	6.0	0.5	1.4	8.0
	M+F	4.0	2.8	6.8	6.4	0.8	1.0	8.2
Czech Republic	Males	3.7	1.2	5.0	8.6	1.1	0.3	10.0
	Females	4.4	0.7	5.1	6.0	1.1	2.8	9.9
	M+F	4.1	1.0	5.1	7.3	1.1	1.6	9.9
Denmark	Males	3.4	4.7	8.1	6.2	0.3	0.3	6.9
	Females	4.0	4.5	8.4	5.3	0.3	0.9	6.6
	M+F	3.7	4.6	8.3	5.8	0.3	0.6	6.7
Finland	Males	5.8	2.3	8.1	5.0	0.7	1.1	6.9
	Females	6.3	2.8	9.1	3.9	0.7	1.2	5.9
	M+F	6.1	2.6	8.6	4.5	0.7	1.2	6.4
France	Males	6.6	1.3	7.8	5.9	0.9	0.3	7.2
	Females	7.0	1.2	8.1	4.6	1.0	1.2	6.9
	M+F	6.8	1.2	8.0	5.3	1.0	0.8	7.0
Germany	Males	4.4	2.5	6.9	6.6	0.8	0.8	8.1
	Females	4.6	2.3	6.9	5.7	0.5	1.9	8.1
	M+F	4.5	2.4	6.9	6.1	0.6	1.3	8.1
Greece	Males	6.0	0.3	6.2	6.9	1.3	0.6	8.8
	Females	6.1	0.2	6.3	4.8	1.8	2.1	8.7
	M+F	6.0	0.2	6.3	5.8	1.6	1.3	8.7
Hungary	Males	5.4	0.6	5.9	7.0	0.9	1.2	9.1
	Females	5.6	0.6	6.2	5.1	0.5	3.2	8.8
	M+F	5.5	0.6	6.1	6.0	0.7	2.2	8.9
Iceland	Males	3.2	4.4	7.6	7.0	0.2	0.1	7.4
	Females	3.5	5.4	8.8	5.5	0.2	0.5	6.2
	M+F	3.3	4.9	8.2	6.3	0.2	0.3	6.8
Ireland	Males	4.5	0.7	5.2	8.8	0.5	0.5	9.8
	Females	5.2	0.9	6.0	7.2	0.3	1.4	9.0
	M+F	4.8	0.8	5.6	8.0	0.4	0.9	9.4
Italy	Males	5.6	0.4	6.0	6.4	1.3	1.3	9.0
	Females	6.1	0.4	6.5	4.6	1.4	2.5	8.5
	M+F	5.8	0.4	6.2	5.5	1.4	1.9	8.8
Japan ¹	Males	5.6	1.0	6.6	2.8	0.4	0.3	3.4
	Females	5.0	0.9	5.9	3.0	0.4	0.7	4.1
	M+F	5.3	1.0	6.3	2.9	0.4	0.5	3.7
Luxembourg	Males	6.1	1.1	7.2	7.1	0.4	0.4	7.8
	Females	6.1	0.8	6.8	6.4	0.2	1.5	8.2

	M+F	6.1	0.9	7.0	6.8	0.3	0.9	8.0
Mexico	Males	3.3	0.9	4.2	9.9	0.3	0.6	10.8
	Females	3.3	0.5	3.9	4.9	0.2	6.1	11.1
	M+F	3.3	0.7	4.0	7.3	0.3	3.4	11.0
Netherlands	Males	2.8	3.0	5.8	8.4	0.2	0.5	9.2
	Females	2.5	3.1	5.7	7.6	0.3	1.5	9.3
	M+F	2.7	3.1	5.7	8.0	0.2	1.0	9.3
Norway	Males	4.4	1.8	6.2	7.8	0.5	0.5	8.8
	Females	4.8	2.4	7.2	6.5	0.3	1.0	7.8
	M+F	4.6	2.1	6.7	7.2	0.4	0.7	8.3
Poland	Males	6.2	1.0	7.2	5.2	2.0	0.6	7.8
	Females	6.5	1.0	7.5	3.8	1.9	1.8	7.5
	M+F	6.4	1.0	7.4	4.5	1.9	1.2	7.6
Portugal	Males	4.5	0.8	5.3	8.7	0.4	0.6	9.7
	Females	5.2	0.8	6.0	7.0	0.7	1.3	9.0
	M+F	4.8	0.8	5.6	7.8	0.6	0.9	9.4
Slovakia	Males	3.6	0.8	4.3	6.2	3.0	1.5	10.7
	Females	4.1	0.4	4.5	5.5	2.1	2.9	10.5
	M+F	3.8	0.6	4.4	5.9	2.6	2.2	10.6
Spain	Males	5.5	0.8	6.3	7.2	1.0	0.5	8.7
	Females	6.3	0.9	7.2	5.0	1.2	1.5	7.8
	M+F	5.9	0.9	6.8	6.1	1.1	1.0	8.2
Sweden	Males	5.6	1.6	7.1	6.8	0.5	0.5	7.9
	Females	5.8	2.0	7.8	6.1	0.4	0.7	7.2
	M+F	5.7	1.8	7.5	6.5	0.5	0.6	7.5
Switzerland	Males	3.0	4.3	7.3	6.7	0.2	0.8	7.7
	Females	3.2	3.4	6.6	6.7	0.3	1.4	8.4
	M+F	3.1	3.9	7.0	6.7	0.3	1.1	8.0
Turkey	Males	3.1	0.3	3.4	8.2	1.5	1.9	11.6
	Females	2.3	0.2	2.4	3.4	0.6	8.6	12.6
	M+F	2.7	0.2	2.9	5.9	1.1	5.0	12.1
United Kingdom	Males	3.4	2.4	5.8	7.7	0.8	0.6	9.2
	Females	3.5	2.7	6.2	6.2	0.5	2.0	8.8
	M+F	3.5	2.6	6.0	7.0	0.6	1.3	9.0
United States	Males	4.1	2.4	6.5	7.1	0.7	0.8	8.5
	Females	3.8	2.9	6.7	5.8	0.5	2.0	8.3
	M+F	3.9	2.6	6.6	6.4	0.6	1.4	8.4
Mean	Males	4.5	1.8	6.3	7.2	0.8	0.7	8.7
	Females	4.7	1.8	6.5	5.7	0.7	2.1	8.5
	M+F	4.6	1.8	6.4	6.4	0.8	1.4	8.6

Source: Education At a Glance, OECD, 2003.

Note: 1. Data refer to 15 to 24-year-olds.

Taxation and public expenditure

21. Germany spends proportionately more than any other country in the EU-15 on health, total expenditure accounting for 10.3% of GDP. Germany is lower down the European league table for expenditure on social protection (this covers pensions, sickness, disability, unemployment, housing and family benefits), but still spends a larger share of its GDP on social protection than the EU-15 average. Germany is found in the upper third among European peers when it comes to direct family transfers. Per capita expenditure is also 14% above the average. However, at 4.6% of GDP, public expenditure on education in Germany in 2000 was below the EU-15 average of 5%. When it comes to tax take – tax receipts as a proportion of GDP – Germany in 1999 was similar to the OECD average (both around 37-38%), but below the EU-15 average (42%).

Impact of recent history on ECEC in Germany

22. The post-war history of Germany is marked by two momentous and extraordinary events. First, the emergence of a democratic German state, with a strong economy, and behind the iron curtain a socialistic state with a centralized economy, after the catastrophe of the National Socialist regime and the Second World War. Then, the unification in 1990 of East and West to form a new Germany, an event few people thought they would ever live to see. These events form a strong and unique historical context that impacts significantly on the current situation in early childhood education and care in Germany. As we shall see in the next section, the Federal Republic constituted after the War was founded on certain principles, such as *subsidiarity*, that have had a strong influence on structures and policy making and continue to do so. At the same time, the large differences between early childhood provision in the ABL and the NBL are the result of divergent policy and service development in the period up to unification, within two very different regimes: democratic capitalism in the West and centralist socialism in the East.

23. The differences between East and West in ECEC go beyond the issue of quantity of provision. As we shall see below, the two ECEC systems differed in the way services were structured, funded and regulated; in the way the workforce was deployed, trained and valued; and in parental leave entitlements and in the way that the relation of leave to services was conceptualised. Behind these divergences were different ideas or understandings about childhood, parenthood and family. In the West, there was a powerful ideology of motherhood - what has been termed *maternalism* (Randall, 2000) – that is, a strong belief that the young child should be cared for in the family, and in particular by the mother. At the age of 3, children might go to kindergarten, but then only on a part-time basis, being home for lunch. In this way of thinking, the kindergarten was a support to the essentially family-based upbringing of children. Even when children reached school age, *maternalism* was still the underlying assumption. School hours, at least in the first four grades, were short and children were expected to finish at midday, then go home for lunch and homework – both involving a central role for mothers who, it was assumed, would be non-employed or else work part time.

24. In the East, by contrast, it was assumed and expected that parents – women and men – would be employed, and further that the State would provide services for children from 12 months of age upwards. Moreover, as parents needed to be free to devote their energies to employment, these services were expected to be run by well-trained, professional staff, in whom parents could place their trust. Rather than supporting the family, these services complemented the family. Furthermore, they had the responsibility of starting the process of forming future citizens fitted to the values and needs of a socialist society⁴.

25. Since unification, this distinction between West and East has become less pronounced. Attitudes /to maternal employment are changing in the West, while some women in the East prefer to spend more time at home. The strengths of the system in the NBL are now receiving wider recognition. At the same time, staff in the NBL appreciate working and living in more open and democratic conditions, where they have more freedom to explore different ways of working and are not regulated prescriptively by a centralised state. Yet, the traces of difference remain and were apparent to the review team. In the West, ambivalence towards the idea of mothers going to work, especially those with young children, was still sometimes to be found. People we met – politicians, officials, parents – would sometimes talk of parents ‘giving away’ young children when talking about the use of ECEC services. A dualistic way of thinking was often apparent: either parents were responsible for bringing up children or else they surrendered their responsibility to the State. The concern was often expressed to the team in these terms: “we must not

⁴ Emphasising this aspect of ECEC under the former GDR does not imply that services in other types of regime, including liberal democracies, do not play a similar role of creating subjects. It has been argued, for example, that many pedagogic practices that are widespread today in liberal democracies serve to form the child as a particular type of ‘flexible’ subject, suited to current forms of capitalism (see, for example, Fendler, 2001)

relieve parents from responsibilities”, revealing an underlying anxiety about the future role of families and the breakdown of *maternalism*.

Subsidiarity and federalism

26. Just as little understanding of early childhood policy in Germany is possible without some knowledge of post-war history, so too it is necessary to grasp two fundamental political principles underlying its organisation, funding and regulation, namely, *subsidiarity* and *federalism*.

Susidiarity and pluralism of providers

27. In Germany, ECEC is part of the children and youth welfare system. For a long time, the various fields of child and youth welfare were exclusively or almost exclusively the domain of voluntary providers, especially the churches and charities close to them. They still provide the bulk of child and youth welfare services, and in some sectors almost 100%. In 2002, for example, 60.6% of all places in day-care facilities for children of nursery age and 47.4% of places in day-nurseries for the under-threes were provided by voluntary providers (although to a large extent publicly funded). While the provision – drawing upon Catholic social thinking – was originally based upon the principle of voluntary providers taking precedence over municipalities in providing day-care facilities for children, this principle was modified by the Federal Constitutional Court’s judgement of 1967 and the overall responsibility of the municipalities for a diverse provision allowing parents and children to choose a facility coming closest to their values and principles in child-raising was henceforth stressed. The modified principle puts first the interests of parents and children, not the providers. Accordingly, districts and towns as providers of public youth welfare are supposed to ensure that the facilities required for fulfilling the tasks of child and youth welfare are available with regard to the various child-raising principles in time and to a sufficient extent (Art. 79, Para 2, Social Code VIII).

28. The principle of subsidiarity determines the institution or level of government having priority in delivering services, which in the case of early childhood, has been fixed at *Träger* level, that is, as the responsibility of the private welfare organisations (see below). The principle also determines the responsibility of the various levels in the Federal system, including their funding responsibility. This allocation of responsibility results from the *Grundgesetz* (the Federal Constitution), which sets out the competences, tasks and responsibilities of the Federal level, the *Länder* and the municipalities.

Federalism

29. Germany is a federal state with three main levels; the federal level; the *Länder*; and the municipalities (local authorities). There are 16 *Länder*, including three city states (Bremen, Berlin and Hamburg). Of these, five are new *Länder* in what was formerly East Germany or the German Democratic Republic (GDR).⁵ The *Länder*, with their own state institutions, have adopted the *Grundgesetz*, the Basic Law, as the federal constitution and combined to form the Federal Republic of Germany. The Basic Law provides for the basic rights of all citizens and there it is laid down how the state is organised, including the allocation of responsibilities between Federation and *Länder*. Pursuant to Art. 20 of the Basic Law, the Federal Republic is a democratic and social federation. Below the *Länder* come the municipalities, constitutionally part of the *Länder*, but with the right to “self-administration” within the legal framework. The municipalities are the level that is directly responsible for ECEC services. There are some 13,000 municipalities, ranging in population from small villages to large cities. In practice though, because smaller

⁵ The GDR was a centralised state and after unification a whole system of *Länder* administration had to be developed, just one aspect of the enormous task posed by unification.

municipalities are grouped to form larger administrative districts for service delivery, there are 619 local units that have a direct bearing on ECEC services.

30. The Basic Law's allocation of authority leads to the following allocation of responsibilities: The Federal level has concurrent legislative authority in the field of ECEC, based upon the authority for public welfare (Article 74 Para 1 No 7 of the Basic Law). This article enables the Federal government to pass the Social Code VIII Child and Youth Welfare Act (*Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz*), often referred to as KJHG. ECEC services are defined as belonging to the child and youth welfare system, thus assignable to the title of competence of public welfare. The Federal government has the right of legislation for this area to the extent that the establishment of equivalent living conditions throughout the country or the preservation of a legal and economic union requires a regulation under Federal law in the nation's overall interest. This aside, the *Länder* have their own legislative authority. If the Federal level makes use of its authority to legislate, the *Länder*, by issuing their own statutory regulations, may fill in, specify or supplement the statutory framework given to them by the Federal government on these conditions, and they may issue statutory provisions for areas not provided for by the Federal government.

31. The implementation of federal law, which includes financing, is the *Länder's* responsibility. At this level, the tasks of child and youth welfare are carried out, including ECEC responsibilities at the level of local authorities (districts, towns, municipalities), and financed by their own tax revenues and the allocation of funds by the *Länder*. At the federal level, with regard to ECEC provision responsible for further development of laws and pilot schemes, the department responsible for ECEC is the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend* referred to below as BMFSFJ).

32. In contrast, the entire (school) education system is the exclusive responsibility of the *Länder*, and the federal government could lose its competence if ECEC were assigned to pre-school education instead of public welfare⁶. However, as we shall see below, educational issues are discussed and voted upon at national level by the Standing Conference of Education Ministers (*Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister*), which brings together the 16 *Länder*. In the field of ECEC, this is done by the Conference of Youth Ministers.

The Träger

33. On the basis of the historical commitment of the churches, charities, social groups and associations, there is a real pluralism of in ECEC providers (*Träger*) in the old *Länder*. After unification, many formerly public facilities in the new *Länder* are now also run by voluntary providers. The most important ones, combined in the *BAG der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege* (federal working group of voluntary welfare providers), are the following:

Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO) (Workers' Welfare Organisation)

Deutscher Caritasverband (DCV) (German Caritas Association, the charitable association of the Catholic Church)

Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (the association of non-affiliated private providers, for instance parent initiatives)

Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (DRK) (the German Red Cross)

Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (DW der EKD) (Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany)

⁶ In the former GDR, ECEC services for children over 3 years (kindergarten and out-of-school provision) were the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Services for children under 3 years were the responsibility of the Ministry of Health.

Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland (ZWST) (Central Jewish Welfare Agency in Germany)

34. The role of these non-statutory welfare organisations is not confined to ECEC. They are major providers of hospitals and services for young people, families, disabled people, elderly people, and training colleges for workers in ECEC.

Federal competence in ECEC

35. At present, the competence of the federal government in the field of ECEC is limited and exercised in a number of ways.

- Ensuring an entitlement to a part-time kindergarten place for children aged 3 to 6 years;
- Supporting the districts and towns to provide facilities for children under three and of school age;
- Providing for the protection of children in facilities, e.g. licenses to operate facilities, controls...
- Stimulating, initiating and funding pilot schemes (mostly in collaboration with some *Länder*) to stimulate and further develop ECEC.

36. However, the Federal government cannot earmark funds for regular ECEC projects or ECEC provision to the *Länder* or municipalities. As we shall see, the new proposal – through which, as of 2005, the municipalities will have at their disposal an annual amount of €1.5 billion for the development of ECEC services for children below 3 (as the result of savings generated through the consolidation of unemployment and social welfare benefits to the amount of €2.5 billion per annum) - is not in fact an earmarked allocation of funds. Rather, the municipalities will be able to use the funds saved through the statutory measures of the Federal government mentioned above, and may do so for additional ECEC places, though in principle this is at their own discretion, regardless of the fact that municipalities are already obliged to provide places as needed. However, the Federal government has an influence in this regard, proposing the introduction in SGB VIII of a more concrete obligation to provide ECEC places as needed for children below 3. (Day-Care Expansion Act as passed by the Lower House; Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz in der vom Bundestag beschlossenen Fassung; Bundesratsdrucksache 834/04 of 05.11.2004; as of 23.11.2004)

37. Two recent examples of federal initiatives concern education and quality in ECEC. Realising the increasing importance of the educational element of ECEC, and concerned that the prevailing pedagogical approach in German services – the situation approach (discussed further below) – has often lacked precision and rigour, the Federal Ministry funded a ‘model project’ running from 1997 to 2000, ‘On the education task of children’s daycare 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 (e.g. children under 3, children from 3 to 6 and school-age childcare).

Funding and regulation

38. 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. As noted above, the Federal level in principle cannot provide ‘earmarked’ funding to support the provision of ECEC services. Any ‘earmarked’ Federal funding for ECEC or other services is only possible on the basis of Article 104a of the Constitution. However, this is subject to specific conditions and applies to capital costs only. Recent examples include: funding of €510

million to the NBL after unification to maintain ECEC services; and, more recently, funding of €4 billion to all *Länder* to support capital costs of developing All-Day Schools.

39. In addition, the *Länder* may further interpret Federal law by issuing their own statutes. All the *Länder* have made use of this opportunity. The municipalities have the overall responsibility for implementing the Federal and *Länder* statutory provisions. In particular, this makes them responsible for planning, but also (alongside non-statutory welfare organisations) for providing ECEC services themselves, which means they have services of their own. At the *Länder* level, departmental responsibility for ECEC services varies, sometimes being in education ministries together with other child and youth services, sometimes in welfare ministries. In three of the five *Länder* we visited, the former arrangement applied (with a recent transfer to education in two cases). The German system, therefore, is complex and highly decentralised, with three levels of government intersecting with many voluntary providers who are organised into six main groupings. There is great scope for diversity, for example between *Länder* and between individual providers.

Co-ordinating mechanisms

40. However, there are institutions that provide connections and set some limits on diversity. At the national level, there are Conferences of Länder Ministers, where issues are discussed and frameworks agreed within which *Länder* often work, albeit having wide scope for interpretation. In the field of education where the *Länder* have a sole responsibility, the Standing Conference of Education Ministers (*Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister*) carries more clout than the similar body on child and youth welfare, which is a field where responsibility is divided between all three levels of government.

41. Another example of a co-ordinating mechanism is the structure of State Youth Welfare offices referred to above as required by Federal Law in each *Länder*. These offices are not part of *Länder* governments, but autonomous agencies funded by both *Länder* and municipalities, charged with certain state-wide functions such as regulation and planning of services. To some extent, therefore, they connect the two lower levels of government.

A centripetal tendency

42. The German federal system makes therefore for a decentralised and democratic system of government, full of checks and balances. Navigating in the system requires extensive negotiation skills because of the differing interpretations of broad frameworks, with the role and responsibilities of different levels of government being constantly debated. It is not a context conducive to the uniform implementation of national policies and standards, as tensions are generated easily between the different levels. For example, discussion of the 'educational' role of ECEC is bound up with the power struggle between different levels of government. There are some *Länder* who would like to see Federal responsibility for ECEC removed to *Länder* level, which would have the consequence of moving ECEC from being part of youth welfare system to being part of education - already the sole responsibility of the *Länder*. However, the Federal Constitutional Court has stated that it assigns childcare to the field of public welfare. Similarly, some at the municipal level resent the involvement of the *Länder* in children's services and advocate complete responsibility for ECEC to be passed to them, cutting out the role of the *Länder*, for example, with respect to regulation and funding. This is part of a wider 'municipalisation' movement, intended to hand greater responsibility and power to the most local level of government. The question of the role and responsibilities of different levels of government in Germany for ECEC is thus a key issue for the future.

The concept of social pedagogy

43. An essential part of the national context is how each country understands and talks about the subject of the OECD review process. For example, the term ‘early childhood education and care’ reflects the conceptualisation of the field in the English language, which up to the present lacks an integrative term for talking about the subject. Its adoption by an international organisation such as OECD reflects the increasing dominance of the English language, and of English-language research in the early childhood area. Although understood in a holistic way by OECD teams, the term itself suggests a divided or split way of thinking – ‘education’ and ‘care’ as separate areas, unlike the concept of *social pedagogy* found in the German language.

44. Originating in 19th century Germany, *Sozialpädagogik* (social pedagogy) is a theory, practice and profession for working with children (but also often young people and adults). It has become established in many Continental European countries, though varying somewhat in form and role from country to country. The social approach is inherently holistic. The pedagogue sets out to address the whole child, the child with body, mind, emotions, creativity, history and social identity. This is not the child only of emotions - the psycho-therapeutical approach; nor only of the body - the medical or health approach; nor only of the mind - the traditional teaching approach. For the pedagogue, working with the whole child, *learning*, *care* and, more generally, *upbringing* (the elements of the original German concept of pedagogy: *Bildung*, *Erziehung* and *Betreuung*) are closely-related - indeed inseparable activities at the level of daily work. These are not separate fields needing to be joined up, but inter-connected parts of the child’s life.

45. Space precludes going into this concept of social pedagogy further. However, it is important to emphasise its importance in the German context – and to note, in passing, how the concept has been rendered invisible to the English language world by the frequent translation of pedagogy as ‘education’ and pedagogue as ‘teacher’. It is also important to understand how fundamental the concept of social pedagogy is to ECEC in Germany. The basic education for ECEC workers (*Erzieherinnen*) takes place in *Fachschule für Sozialpädagogik* (Colleges for Social Pedagogy)⁷. Every ECEC worker we asked said without hesitation that they were ‘pedagogues’, different to school teachers (*lehrer*)⁸. Last but not least, ECEC centres are social pedagogic services, a concept expressed for example in the law in one of the *land* we visited (Thuringia) which states that “*Ein Kindergarten ist eine sozialpädagogische Einrichtung*“ (a kindergarten is a social pedagogic institution).

46. This concept of the social pedagogic institution is of fundamental importance, because it gives ECEC centres a particular and broad identity which, *inter alia*, differentiates them from schools. Oberhuemer (2004) defines this identity as having a strong social and community purpose:

The dominant educational philosophy [of kindergartens] has never been one of preparing children for school, or of focusing on academic skills. It has always been a wider understanding, one with a strong belief in the importance of social learning skills, and one which in recent years has seen kindergartens developing more and more into community resource centres, into neighbourhood centres for children and families (18).

⁷ In fact the study of social pedagogy takes place at all levels of the German further and higher education. *Erzieherinnen* are educated at the lowest level. Another profession called social pedagogues (*Sozialpädagoginnen*) are educated at a higher level. Their role in ECEC services will be considered in the next chapter.

⁸ To illustrate how pedagogy gets lost in translation, *Erzieherinnen* was translated into English, in the Background report, as ‘kindergarten teachers’, when the term is not specific to workers in kindergartens and refers to an occupation that is quite distinct from teachers.

47. Social pedagogy in German ECEC encompasses and integrates at least three concepts: *Betreuung* (care), *Bildung* (education) and *Erziehung* (upbringing). Indeed the KJHG defines these three concepts as the tasks of ECEC. This is significant politically: this broad social pedagogic conceptualisation distinguishes ECEC as part of the youth welfare field and as distinct from the education system - and therefore sustains a Federal role in the system. But it is also significant as an expression of the holistic pedagogic approach in which care, education and upbringing are inseparable.

48. We have neatly defined these three German words with three English words. But this is too simple, partly because the English words do not capture the German terms and partly because there is no one agreed meaning for these words. This is particularly so for *Bildung*, a concept (like social pedagogy) which emerged two centuries ago in Germany and has played an important role in discussions about the meaning of education in many other European countries. In one tradition, *Bildung* has a very broad meaning, a process of personal development, the cultivation and unification of character involving cognitive, social, cultural and ethical aspects, what might be termed, in English, 'education in its broadest sense'.⁹ Something of this broad concept can be seen in a recent definition provided by a joint policy statement by experts in the field which defines *Bildung* as "a comprehensive process of developing the abilities which enable human beings to learn, to develop their achievement potential, to act, to solve problems and to form relationships" (Bundesjugendkuratorium u.a., 2002). However, *Bildung* can also be understood in a much narrower sense, as 'school education' or even the idea of filling children with knowledge, learning as transmission. Several informants mentioned to us that it is in this way – education in its narrowest sense – that *Bildung* is often understood and used today.

49. Partly because of a perceived under-development of *Bildung* in the ECEC 'trinity' of *Betreuung*, *Bildung* and *Erziehung*, the Federal Government in the late 1990s initiated a study already referred to: *Zum Bildungsauftrag von Kindertageseinrichtungen*. This project, led by Hans-Joachim Laewen and working in kindergartens in both the ABL and NBL, has produced an understanding of education which stresses children's (and adult's) participation in their educational and developmental processes, a concept of self education (*Selbstbildung*) that draws on social constructionist theories (similar in this respect, for example, to the pedagogical work in Reggio Emilia Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999). This concept of *Selbstbildung* was frequently mentioned in ECEC centres we visited as influencing their work.

50. Most people we spoke to emphasised the close relationship between *Bildung* and *Erziehung*: as one informant vividly described the relationship "they dance around each other". The close relationship has always been present, being found for example in Froebel's work: one of his most important books was titled *Menschenbildung*, but sub-titled '*die Erziehung, Unterricht and Lehrkunst*' (Upbringing, Instruction and the Art of Teaching). *Erziehung* refers more to the role of the adult in relation to the child (e.g. the idea of the pedagogue as 'upbringer') while *Bildung* is both the process and end product of education or formation of character.

51. The significance of the terminology was illustrated by the process in one *Land* of developing an educational framework for kindergarten. The original title simply referred to *Bildung*, without reference to *Erziehung*, but this generated a lively debate. Experts from ECEC argued that though historically *Bildung* was a broad concept, today it had become narrower, more associated with the school and a transmission approach to education (i.e. putting knowledge into children). The addition of *Erziehung* would express a broader understanding of education in which the child was an active participant. The result was to change the title of the document to *Bildungs- und Erziehungsempfehlungen für Kindertagesstätten*.

⁹ This broad sense is still contained in the use of the term *Bildungsroman* in English literary criticism, which denotes a novel form describing the coming of age of the young protagonist as a person and artist.

52. One further concept should be mentioned in setting the German context. In most of the ECEC centres visited by the review team, the pedagogues referred to *Situationsansatz* (the ‘situation approach’) when asked what pedagogical ideas and theories shaped their practice. Developed in Germany in the 1970s, following another debate about the need for a stronger educational focus in kindergartens, the situation approach emphasises a strongly child-centred approach and the role of the ECEC centre as a space for families and communities.

*The concept of the situation approach is aimed to help children to find life in self-determination and in full use of their potential. The challenges of everyday life are to be regarded as an impetus to gain competences and successes...The [ECEC centre] is understood to provide space to live in and an exemplary learning field in which the principles of **participation by children, reduction of disadvantages and learning in serious situations** are directly implemented. It is to be open to and for the community, take parents seriously as educationalists and involve them, and children should also be able to benefit from competencies of other people. Children are regarded as the engine for their own development...[and] children’s interest and commitment are considered to be a precondition for sustained learning successes which are to be made more profound by means of long-term projects (Background Report, English version: 49; original emphases)*

53. While the situation-based approach has given rise to many innovative projects, it has also often been simplified and therefore criticised for being too arbitrary in its practice. It was partly to respond to this criticism and provide the situation-based approach with an educational definition that the Federal government initiative - *Zum Bildungsauftrag von Kindertageseinrichtungen* – was introduced. The concept of *Selbstbildung* that has emerged from this project can be seen, therefore, as addressing the question of the meaning and practice of the situation approach. The situation approach has also been one of the five areas that have been the subject of the *National Quality Initiative*, involving collaboration between the Federal government and the ten *Länder* governments.

54. In sum, the concepts in use in Germany, and their inter-relationships, are complex and cannot be given full justice in this short note. We have, however, tried to suggest that the context of ECEC in Germany involves German concepts produced and discussed in the German language, which do not translate readily into English, not least because they start from a holistic perspective. These concepts shape how many people in Germany think about early childhood services and practice within these services. Like most important concepts in all languages they have no clear, generally agreed and historically constant meaning, but are necessarily the subject of disagreement and debate.

CHAPTER 3

POLICIES AND SERVICES

The immediate policy environment of ECEC in Germany

Current political concerns

55. From the beginning of our review, we were told frequently that Germany today is in ‘a situation of transition’. Part of this is brought on by the demographic, social and economic changes we have already mentioned: fewer children and more one child families, an ageing society, more women working and so on. Several informants spontaneously mentioned the high rate of childlessness among graduate women as a particular cause of concern. These changes in society are seen as requiring fundamental changes in policy, in particular a new emphasis on support for working parents, especially through the development of ECEC. Financial support for families is already good; what is now needed, we were told on several occasions, is more investment in infrastructure – more services for children under 3, more full-time kindergarten places for 3 to 6 year olds, more school-age childcare. Or, to be more precise, investment to build up services in the ABL, while maintaining the extensive infrastructure already in place in the NBL.

ECEC important for labour market reasons

56. Among other issues, ECEC is high on the political agenda in Germany for ‘childcare’ and labour market reasons. As part of its support for working parents, the Federal Government was taking two important childcare initiatives at the time of our visit. The first initiative aims to increase ECEC services in the ABL. Since 2002, linked to a coalition agreement between parties forming the Federal government, the Federal government has had a target of building 230 000 places for children under 3 in the ABL by 2010. To achieve this goal, the Federal government had proposed new legislation (the Daycare Expansion Act – *Tagesbetreuungsbaugesetz*), which has now been passed by the Lower House and sets out broad national criteria for determining need for services, especially for children under 3, including parental employment or study, as well as referring to the need for service quality. For the above-mentioned legal reasons it was unable to allocate money directly to municipalities to fund the new services required to meet these proposed criteria (see paragraph 34), the Federal government linked the legislation to reform in the field of employment, which would save municipalities 2,5 billion € a year, of which in the opinion of the Federal government, 1,5 billion € should be spent on child care. The Federal strategy, depended, therefore, on both measures going through, and on municipalities being prepared to use savings in one area to fund expansion in another. The municipalities meanwhile complained that the €1.5 billion was insufficient, and that those municipalities likely to achieve larger social security savings (i.e. those with many income support recipients) were not necessarily those with the greatest need for increased childcare.

57. The second Federal initiative was to stimulate the growth of All Day Schools which, among other possibilities, could provide for school-age childcare. Once again, though, the federal system introduced complexities. The €4 billion made available by the Federal government could only be used for capital investment *Länder* and municipalities would then have to pay for recurring running costs from their own resources. Both of these initiatives provide further illustration of the problems faced by the Federal government in attempting to stimulate ECEC.

ECEC important for educational reasons

58. ECEC is also high on the policy agenda for educational reasons. Germany was jolted by its performance in the cross-national PISA study, finding itself in the lowest third of the 32 country league tables for all three basic skills assessed: reading competence, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy. Moreover, the results also indicated that the existing education system is failing to compensate children from socially disadvantaged or ethnic minority backgrounds.

59. PISA received high media coverage and has led to a heightened priority being given to improving German education. In this post-PISA context, the educational role of ECEC receives more attention, both generally and more specifically in relation to preparing children for compulsory schooling. Immediately after the publication of the PISA results, the Standing Conference of Education Ministers made a public statement which proposed measures in seven areas, two specifically focused on early years: improving language and literacy competence among pre-school children and improving the link between kindergarten and school. This has been followed up by all *Länder* preparing educational guidelines or plans for kindergartens (for children aged 3 to 6 years). Initially developed by the Youth Ministers Conference, the fundamental elements were brought together in an outline plan and then accepted and published by the Education Ministers Conference.

60. At around the same time, the report of a national group of experts on all aspects of education (*Forum Bildung*) also emphasised the need for comprehensive educational reform:

Particular emphasis is placed [in this report] on formulating – at a national level – clearly defined educational goals for the early childhood sector, investing in support systems for transferring these goals into practice, conducting more research on early childhood issues, and debating the abolition of parental fees (Oberhuemer, 2004: 15).

This review of Germany, therefore, took place when the need for more and better ECEC services, especially in the Western part of Germany, was not in dispute. The question posed was how to achieve this goal, given the costs involved and the complexities of a devolved system based on the principles of federalism and subsidiarity.

Maternity and parental leave

61. As in all European countries, Germany has well-established, statutory parental leave policies with a potential bearing on demand for and use of ECEC services. There is a period of maternity leave (6 weeks before birth and 8 weeks after, or 12 weeks if there is a multiple or premature birth) 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 birth. 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 18.¹⁰ Four *Länder*

¹⁰. This payment can be extended up to the age 27 years if the child is being trained or educated during this period

(Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Saxony and Thuringia) continue payments of the *Erziehungsgeld* into the third year from their own funds: Baden-Württemberg for the whole of the year, Saxony for nine additional months, and Thuringia pays for six additional months (a kindergarten place is offered in Thuringia from the age of two-and-a-half years). In Bavaria, the child-rearing benefit is paid for 6 additional months for the first child and for up to 12 additional months for any further child.

62. Parental leave in Germany has two elements of flexibility. First, parents taking leave may work up to 30 hours per week, with a reduction of benefit paid. The wages earned in part time are taken into account when determining the child rearing benefit. Second, the third year of leave may be 'saved' with the consent of the employer and used at any time until the child is 8 years of age, for instance during the child's transition to school. As in most other countries, leave is taken, in practice, overwhelmingly by mothers, only about 2% of fathers using the entitlement. We do not have information about what proportion of mothers do take some period of leave or for how long. However, in 2001 just under a fifth of mothers with a child under 3 were on leave (49% of mothers were employed or taking leave – 31% employed, 18% on leave). As leave taking is usually higher the younger the age of the child, it seems likely that a substantial proportion of German women with very young children (i.e. under 18 months) are at home on leave.

63. Current parental leave policy was developed in West Germany before unification. A very different policy developed in the GDR, culminating in 1986 in 12 months of post-natal parental leave, paid at 90% of earnings, the so-called 'baby year'. At the end of this period, children entered ECEC services; leave policy and ECEC services were, therefore, closely linked. Following unification, however, the former GDR's leave policy was replaced by West Germany's leave policy, which was longer, less well paid and not coordinated with ECEC access.

Compulsory school age and school hours

64. ECEC services are affected not only by leave entitlements but also by the structuring of compulsory school: these policies shape the age at which children enter and leave ECEC services. Compulsory school age is 6, which means that children who are 6 by the end of June start school in the next September; but many children in practice enter school well into their seventh year. Children can start earlier at the request of their parents, but this is rather uncommon accounting for only 6% of children. There has been some discussion of lowering school starting age, but we were told that this is no longer on the agenda.

65. Once started, children in the first two grades spend 23 hours a week in school, rising to 27 hours a week in third and fourth grade. The school day, therefore, is relatively short, and has been premised, at least in West Germany, on children going home for lunch and then doing homework and on the mother's presence for both of these activities. School-age childcare services are not only necessary for most working mothers, unless they can find part-time work that matches school hours, but may well occupy nearly as much time in the child's day as school itself. Homework – starting with about 30 minutes a day in the first grade – must also be accommodated.

The structure of ECEC services in East and West

66. Centre-based ECEC services in both West and East Germany have been of three main kinds: centres for children under 3 years (*Krippen*); centres for children aged 3 to compulsory school transfer (6 years) (*Kindergarten*); and services providing school-age childcare (*Hort*). In the former GDR, these services were strictly separated: even if a *Krippe* and *Kindergarten* shared the same premises, they were run as separate centres with no contact between children or staff. *Krippen* and *Kindergärten* were the responsibility of different Ministries (health or education) and staff in all three services (*Krippen*,

Kindergarten and *Hort*) received a different specialised training. However, as we shall discuss further, the contact between *Kindergarten*, primary school and *Hort* was close (all being under the Ministry of Education), with *Hort* pedagogues being competent to supervise homework, and even able to teach certain subjects in the primary school.

67. Since unification, the separation in the NBL between *Krippe* and *Kindergarten* has broken down, as today most centres are run as ‘mixed age services’ for children under and over 3, often including some provision for school-age children. We visited three centres which had previously been divided but were now run as ‘age-integrated’ services. In contrast, the relationship between the primary school and *Hort* has weakened somewhat, as with *Hort* pedagogues now coming under a different ministry, equivalences and competencies are no longer as easily recognised by the school system. Yet, as the *Hort* in the NBL are quite often located within schools (in Thuringia under the Ministry of Education), close co-operation between the school and the *Hort* continues to exist.

68. Before unification, centre-based services differed in three main ways between East and West. First, levels of provision were far higher in the East, a point to which we will return. Second, services in the East were explicitly geared to working parents and therefore open on an all day basis; by contrast, in the West, significant levels of *Krippen*, *Hort* and all day *Kindergartens* were only found in larger cities. The most common service in the West, the kindergarten, was usually a part-time service, with children attending up to 4 hours a day and with no lunch provision (see Box 1 for examples). Indeed, the legal entitlement to a kindergarten place for children aged 3 to 6 years that was introduced in 1996, was specifically for a part-time place. Third, *Hort* provision in the West, where it existed, was mostly separate from the school.

A merging of the traditions

69. With changing conditions, developments in the West are moving ECEC services there closer to the pattern found in the East. The emphasis is on developing services that will meet the needs of working parents: provision for children under 3, *Kindergartens* with longer opening hours; school-age childcare, with a tendency to move the *Hort* into the school as part of the All Day School initiative. An example of this diversification process was provided by one *Land* we visited, which set out the range of groups now found in its *Kindergärten*:

- Half day groups open either morning or afternoon, up to 4 hours per day – 2% of groups (this was the ‘traditional’ kindergarten form in much of Western Germany and here, as elsewhere is fast disappearing);
- Open morning (4 hours) and afternoon (2-3 hours), but closed at lunchtime – 45% of groups (and also reducing);
- Extended opening in the morning for at least 6 hours, sometimes offering a meal at lunchtime – 28% and increasing;
- All day groups, open without a break for 7-10 hours with lunch – 5% and rising.

Furthermore, there are ‘mixed age groups’ (i.e. taking children under and over 3 to 6 but also for children from 3 to 10) and ‘integrative groups’ in which children with and without disabilities are together.

70. Services in the ABL, therefore, increasingly offer longer opening hours or provide for wider age groups of children (see Box 1 for examples). There has been a large reduction in the number of centres just for under 3s (*Krippen*), with the number of places more than halving between 1990 and 1998 (from 28,200 to 12,300). This has been matched by a large increase in mixed-age centres¹¹. The development of All Day

¹¹ There have always been some mixed-age centres in the ABL. Nordrhein-Westfalen, the most populous State in Germany, for many years supported the development of this form of ECEC centre.

Schools in the ABL (see Chapter 2) also means that an increasing proportion of after-school provision in the West will take place in schools, which can offer the service more cheaply than *Hort* provided away from the school. A term that is increasingly used is *Kindertagesstätte*, applied to centres which provide a wider range of provision than the traditional part-time *Kindergarten*.

Family day care services

71. In addition to these centre-based services, there are also family day care services, termed *Tagesmütter* (day mother), who provide in their own homes care for children. Before unification, this form of provision was found only in the West but has since appeared in the East, often undertaken by centre-based workers who lost their jobs when many centres in the NBL had to be closed because of declining numbers of children after unification. However, family day care still remains much less common in the East than the West (whether this is simply because there are far more centres in the East or because parents in the NBL have developed a preference for centre-based services or the tradition based upon the services is unclear).

Box 1: The range of ECEC services

In one western Land, we visited a church-run kindergarten typical of the part-time model that has predominated in this part of Germany. It offered parents a range of hours, in the morning and afternoon, but the longest was from 7 am to 1 pm (a recent development), and children could not stay for lunch. The head told us that about a third of the children attended morning and afternoon session, but that parents (usually mothers) had to take them home for lunch. The kindergarten parents had requested all day opening, and though supported by the provider (the local parish), the municipality had declined to provide the necessary funding.

In contrast, two other church-run kindergartens that we visited, in another Land, were now both providing all day places (from 7 am to 5 pm in one case and 7.15 am to 4.30 pm in another), both as a result of parental demand. However, neither provided for children under 3. In the second case, a kindergarten serving a village and its rural surrounds, we were told by the leader that there was no need for provision for under 3s; parents, she thought, did not expect the kindergarten to provide places but expected to make their own arrangements. For those who did want a centre-based service, the nearest service was 12 kilometres away and that centre offered only 6 places for children under 3.

By further contrast, in a large city that we visited, a *Kindertagesstätte* provided by the local authority combined services for children under and over 3 years, including school-age childcare, with all day opening hours. There were 'mixed age' groups for children from 4 months to 6 years, as well as groups for children between 3 and 6 years. The centre was open from 7.30 am to 5 pm, with the possibility of opening and closing half an hour later if needed by parents.

All three centres for children under 6 years that we visited in the eastern part of Germany took children under and over 3 and were open all day; One also provided school-age childcare (while a second provided 'open' recreation services for older children). More typical of this part of Germany, we also visited a *Hort*, which was situated in and served a primary school.

Provision, providers and access

Differences in provision between East and West

72. Before unification, levels of provision of ECEC services differed greatly between the West and East. While kindergarten places in the West had risen to 70% of the 3 to 6 year-old population by 1989, in the East there was almost complete coverage and all places were available on a full-day basis. The West had places for less than 5% (*Krippe* and *tagesmutter*) for children under 3 years, and these were largely in West Berlin, Hamburg and Munich, compared to 56% coverage in the GDR (linked to the one year post-natal leave entitlement, this meant practically full coverage for children from 12 months upwards). The same situation applied in school-age childcare: places for about 6% of children in the West, and for all

children needing them in the East. In short, the West had some of the lowest levels of provision in Western Europe while the East had levels found elsewhere only in the Nordic countries. Moreover while there was considerable ambivalence about all-day ECEC services in the West, services were widely accepted and valued in the East.

73. After unification, there was a large fall of places in the NBL, as parental employment and numbers of children fell reducing demand. The situation might well have been worse without special Federal funding to support ECEC services in the NBL, a sum of half a billion euros which provided a substantial subsidy to local authorities. Today the situation has stabilised after the initial post-unification drop in places, while the falling child population has ensured that the coverage rate has remained constant or even increased. At the same time, there was some increase in provision during the 1990s in the ABL, especially in *Kindergarten* places stimulated by the entitlement to a part-time place introduced in 1996.

74. Today, however, there still remains a striking difference in provision of centre-based places between the NBL and the ABL (see Box 2 for specific examples), a difference that always has to be borne in mind when considering levels of provision for the country overall. National data often hide large local differences:

Places for children under 3 (2002): ABL = 2.7% (from 2.2% in 1994); NBL= 36.9% (from 41%);
Germany = 8.5% (6.3% in 1994)

Places for children 3-6 (2002): ABL= 88% (from 73% in 1994); NBL=105% (from 96%); *Germany* =
89.8% (77.2% in 1994)

Of which, proportion available on a full-day basis: ABL=24.2%; NBL=98.2%; *Germany*=36,4%

Places for children 6-10 (2002): ABL=6.4% (from 5.1% in 1994); NBL=67.6% (from 58.2%);
Germany = 14.2%

These figures are for places and in centre-based services, and do not include family day care. It should be emphasised also that there are no regular or comparable statistics on the use of services. Data does not exist that would facilitate a nationwide comparison, or the characteristics of users and non-users (see section on data collection in Chapter 4 below).

Box 2: Provision and providers in 5 Länder

Baden-Württemberg (ABL): Population – 10.7 million. ECEC services are the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Places for children (2002): under 3 years = 2.3%; 3 to 6 years =103.7%; 6 to 10 years = 4.8%

Just over half of all places (56%) are run by voluntary providers, most of which (86%) are church run.

Brandenburg (NBL): Population - 2.6 million. ECEC services are the responsibility of the Ministry for Education, Youth and Sport.

Places for children (2002): under 3 years = 44.8%; 3 to 6 years = 96.8%; 6 to 10 years = 72%. All services are available at hours as needed, mostly all day.

Less than one-third of services (30%) are run by voluntary providers

Nordrhein-Westfalen (ABL): Population – 18 million. ECEC are the responsibility of the Ministry of School, Youth and Children.

Places for children (2002)¹²: under 3 years =2.1%; 3 to 6 years =99%; 6 to 10 years=5.6%. Just over a quarter of places are in a service open at least 8½ hours a day.

¹² Federal Statistics Office. Official Statistics 2002, corrected version.

Three-quarters of services are run by voluntary providers of which the Catholic and the Protestant churches are the main providers accounting for half of all services in the land.

Rheinland-Pfalz (ABL): Population - 4 million. ECEC services are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Women and Youth.

Places for children (2002): under 3 years =2.7%; 3 to 6 years =105.7%; 6 to 10 years=4.7%. Just under a quarter of the places are in a service open at least 8½ hours a day.

Just over half of services are run by voluntary providers, the rest by local authorities.

Thüringen (NBL): Population – 2.5 million. ECEC services are the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs, family and Health.

Places for children (2002): under 3 years =22.4%; 3 to 6 years =126.3%¹³; 6 to 10 years=52.6%. All services open at least 10 hours a day.

Just over half (55%) of services are run by voluntary providers.

75. One consequence of the very different levels in provision between the ABL and the NBL is that working parents have greater difficulty finding an ECEC place with sufficient opening hours in the former than in the latter. This was confirmed in the services we visited, especially for children under 3; services in the West had substantial waiting lists, while those in the East could offer places on demand (or else, if not available in a particular centre, places were available in other services in the same municipality). The additional provision in the NBL is also reflected in enhanced entitlements. In Brandenburg, for example, the right to a *Kindergarten* place has been extended to at least 6 hours a day; while in Thüringen, there is an entitlement to an ECEC place from 2½ years of age¹⁴ (rather than 3 years) and to a full-day place.

Who are the providers of services?

76. As already discussed in Chapter 2, historically, voluntary organisations have been highly committed to work in this field. In the ABL, this means that in 1998 almost two-thirds (60.6%) of kindergarten places and almost half (47.4) of places for children under 3 are offered by voluntary providers (*freie Träger*), while local authorities provide almost two-thirds (59.9%) of Hort places. The main voluntary 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. Church-run services are usually open to any family; but where there are insufficient places to meet demand, priority will usually be given to the children of church members who pay a church tax.

77. In the NBL, with its very 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 providers. In one town we visited, for example, seven centres had been transferred by the local authority from its direct control to that of a non-profit company in which, however, the local authority retained a controlling interest. This town was situated in the *Land* of Thüringen, where the role of voluntary providers in ECEC centres has increased from 5% in 1991 to 55% in 2004. On the other hand the *Land* of Brandenburg has placed more emphasis on public provision of services, most services continuing to be provided by the municipalities.

¹³ Thuringia's laws provide for a legal right from the age of 2. The additional provision of half a year accounts for the apparent "surplus".

¹⁴ Thüringen pays for an additional 6 months of parental leave, i.e. from the end of the period paid by the federal government at 2 years to when a child is 2½ years when the full-day *kindergarten* entitlement begins, thus providing a close linkage between the two policies.

78. Three other types of provider should be noted to round off this section. First, there are a number of ECEC services run by parent groups – parent initiatives (*Elterninitiative*). We visited an example of this type of service that provided places for 50 children from 12 months to 12 years. While the workforce were paid employees, as in any other ECEC service, parents were expected to contribute some time to help in the centre in various ways and the centre was managed by a committee elected by and drawn from parents.

79. Second, there are some ECEC services provided by employers for members of their workforce, though this is not very common. We visited a centre in the ABL run and financed by a textile company, located in the grounds of a factory employing 400 workers. The centre had places for 18 children from 2 to 6 years of age, and was provided free of charge to staff. In fact demand for the centre was less than the places available (because, it was explained, most parents prefer to make arrangements where they live and/or with relatives), so some places were used by an adjoining company.

80. Finally, there appear to be only a few ‘for profit’ private services (*privat-gewerbliche Träger*) – with little influence on the overall system.

Funding of services

81. Like many aspects of ECEC services in Germany, it is possible to give a broad overall picture of funding - but any attempt to present a more detailed picture becomes embroiled with the complexities of a system in which 16 *Länder* are each responsible for funding arrangements in their own territory. This means, in effect, 16 arrangements, some of them quite at odds with each other. This makes it difficult to get a clear picture of funding. As one expert on the labyrinthine funding system put it, “there is no German funding system!”

82. The broad picture is as follows: unlike most other European countries, the Federation, due to the allocation of authority, has no direct role in the basic funding of ECEC services. This means that funding of running costs comes from four sources: *Länder*; municipalities (local government); providers and parents. In case the local authority is the provider, it has to add the provider’s share. Broadly speaking (but only as a figure averaged out across all 16 *Länder*), the first two pay 75-80% of costs, parents around 14%¹⁵ and *freie Träger* the remainder¹⁶. The providers’ share, however, is decreasing because they have hardly any revenues of their own. Church tax, for example, is on the decline. Overall, the principle is that parents should contribute to all services, including *Kindergarten* for 3 to 6 year olds which is an entitlement. Parental fees, however, are related to income, so low income families may not have to pay fees, and usually to the number of children from a family attending a service (i.e. fees are reduced for second or subsequent children). However, we were informed on at least two occasions that even with fee reductions, some low-income and immigrant families hesitate to send their children to kindergarten. Whether this is due to financial or other reasons was not made clear. It seems that there is little research on the issue.

83. To gain public funding, an ECEC centre has both to be licensed by the *Land* youth welfare office (*Landesjugendamt*), as meeting the *Land*’s standards for ECEC services, and be accepted as part of the plan for local services drawn up each year by the municipal youth welfare office (*Kreisjugendamt* or *Jugendamt*). One of the services we visited, a parent initiative, was in the difficult position of not being accepted into the plan of its local youth welfare office, possibly because the office had insufficient funding.

¹⁵ Federal law stipulates that “attendance contributions or fees *may* be set” (emphasis added), which suggests that parental payments are not to be considered a general obligation. However, parents are charged a fee in all parts of Germany.

¹⁶ The actual costs of ECEC services cannot be currently determined because official statistics do not include the contribution to costs made by private providers.

The parents and staff at this centre considered themselves fortunate that they had received for some time now a direct grant from their local authority – but recognised that this grant could be taken away at any time, so leaving the centre very insecure.

84. Within this broad picture, each *Land* has its own funding formula. Box 3 gives examples of the variations in the five *Länder* we visited. One of the most obvious differences is in the amount paid by municipalities (varying from 30% to 83%) and parents (from about 10% of total running costs to 20%), an amount which varies widely between *Länder* and also between the type of services (with costs for services for children under 3 years of age being substantially higher than for older children). In some *Länder* (e.g. Nordrhein-Westfalen), parental fees are regulated by the Land government, whilst elsewhere the amount parents pay can vary from municipality to municipality and even within one municipality (e.g. Baden-Württemberg).

85. Within this complex system, changes are occurring – though again at different rates in different places. The German system is broadly based on supply funding to centres, but there is some movement towards a more demand-side approach. One *Land*, Hamburg, has taken the demand-side approach further by recently introducing a voucher system based on several eligibility criteria.

Box 3: Funding and costs of ECEC services

Baden-Württemberg - Distribution of costs for children 3-6: Land funds nurseries and mixed age facilities within the framework of the Financial Equalisation Act from 2004 with €394 m p.a.; local authorities = 83%; voluntary providers = 7%; parents = 10% (see paragraph 82 for explanation of distribution of costs between the Land and local authorities).

Parental fees (set by each municipality) for children 3 to 6 years: In municipality A = €73 for first child, discounts for subsequent children up to €0. Children below three and all-day care: €0 to 150 per month. Contributions in accordance with care time and number of children in the family. (Half-day nursery)

Brandenburg - Distribution of costs for children 3-6 years. Land funds local authorities (in 2002 the amount was €128,845,554), about 27% of total. Local authorities sponsor each supervised child up to 84% of staff costs; these are about 50% of costs (incl. the 27% from Land, thus own share is 23%). Parents with about 15% of costs and providers below 5%. Municipalities bear remainder of costs (in accordance with appraisal of demand situation). Parental contributions are decided upon and collected by the provider within the legal framework.

Parental fees: children under 3 years = €13 to €190/month; children 3 to 6 years (full day care) = €13 to €160/month. These are usual parental contributions – however, higher contributions are often levied.

Nordrhein-Westfalen - Distribution of costs: Land = 30%; local authority = 30%; voluntary providers = 21% (but less for parent initiatives and other less well funded organisations); parents = 19%. (in fact 13.5%; difference shared between Land and local authorities)

Parental fees: children under 3 = no payment to €313/month (depending on income); 3 to 6 years = no payment to €151/month + €84/month for full-day; 6 to 10 years = no payment to €151

Rheinland-Pfalz - Distribution of costs for children 3-6: Land = 27.5-32.5%; voluntary providers = 10-12.5%; public providers = 12.5-15%; parents = 17.5% maximum; local authority = remainder. For children under 3 and from 6-10 years: Land = 35%; voluntary providers or public provider = 10%; parents = contributions according to no. of children and income; local authority = remainder

Parental fees: children 3 to 6 years = Land average ca. €80 for part-time or €150 for full-day care (as of summer 2004), discounts for subsequent children and, as a rule, no fees levied for 4th child and up. For children below 3 and between 6 and 10: no. of children and income-related contributions (from €46 to more than €400 per month.

Thüringen - Distribution of costs: Land = 30 – 35%; parents = 15-20%; local authority and voluntary providers = 50 – 55% (provider contribution agreed with each local authority)

Parental fees: children 3 to 6 years = €85/ month on average. Price depends on hours attended, family income and number of children from family attending.

The workforce

86. The main part of the workforce in centre-based early childhood services in Germany is provided by a particular occupation: the *Erzieherinnen*. Other types of worker are also found in the range of ECEC services, and we discuss them later. But we begin by discussing this ‘core’ worker who makes up well over half of the workforce.

The Erzieherinnen

87. The name *Erzieherin* derives from the German term *Erziehung* – upbringing – and the term might best be translated as social pedagogue, both to emphasise the discipline with which workers identify and to distinguish them from ‘teachers’, a term associated with school and a very different type of relationship with children focused on the transmission of certain types of knowledge (see the discussion on social pedagogy in Chapter 2). Today, *Erzieherinnen* may work as social pedagogues with children and young people in a range of services, not only all types of ECEC services, but also for example in residential care work and various forms of youth work. It is therefore a broad, generic training and occupation, although 40 years ago the term *Erzieherin* was limited to a narrower training for work in residential child and youth care. It was only in the 1970s that a range of occupations and trainings were brought together to create the current integrated and wide-ranging training and occupation – and then only in the West; as we shall discuss later, the former GDR followed a different and more specialised approach to the workforce in its ECEC services.

A relatively low level of training

88. Despite being a broad occupation, the training of *Erzieherinnen* is at a relatively low level in the German system of further and higher education. Training takes place at colleges specialising in this field of work – the *Fachschule für Sozialpädagogik* (roughly translated as technical college for social pedagogy). This is below the tertiary level of education, the *Fachschule* being separated from *Fachhochschule* (polytechnics or higher education institutions for applied science) and universities (where school teachers are trained). There is, therefore, a considerable gap between the training of *Erzieherinnen* and both the training of other professionals working with children (not only teachers but also those educated in higher education institutions as *Sozialpädagogen*, a profession of social pedagogue discussed below) and the world of research. A further consequence is that because the field of early childhood pedagogy is relegated to a low level in the further and higher education system, it has little representation in higher levels, with only five professors of early childhood in the whole university system and a small pool of specialist researchers, a point to which we shall return.

Lower secondary certificate plus 4 years

89. Students training to be *Erzieherinnen* will start college at 17 or 18, and will mostly come with a lower school qualification, the intermediate leaving certificate, having studied at the lower secondary stage at a type of school which emphasises vocational rather than academic education¹⁷. The training period is generally 4 years. Mostly this has consisted of gaining an initial year’s experience working in a kindergarten or some other form of service, which involves leaving school at the end of grade 9; followed by two years at college; then concluded by a year’s ‘internship’, where the student spends a year working

¹⁷ After a common system of schooling up to the end of grade 4, German schooling divides into four main types; the more academically-oriented *Gymnasium* (which accounted for 30% of grade 8 pupils in 2001), which leads towards tertiary education; the more vocationally-oriented *Hauptschule* (23%) and *Realschule* (24%) which leads towards vocational further education in *Fachschulen*; and a fourth type of school – *Gesamtschule* (9%) – which integrates academic and vocational approaches

in a service under some degree of supervision. Although training requirements are, again, defined by each *Land*, some conformity has been achieved by a common frame for training the *Rahmenvereinbarung über Fachschulen* agreed by the Standing Conference of Education Ministers (see Chapter 2) in 2002.

Some modest pilot reforms

90. Some *Länder* are currently making changes to this training format, though in only two cases (Berlin and Brandenburg) is there any proposal to introduce a training course at a higher education level (*Fachhochschule*), and then what was being proposed were pilot courses rather than a general reform. Two of the five other *Länder* that we visited were introducing more modest changes. In Rheinland-Pfalz, from August 2004, the initial 1 year of experience has been replaced by students completing a 2 year course at school, as a social assistant; this means they will start their college course social education somewhat later (at 18) and with a higher school qualification. The three-year training with two years at school and a subsequent year of internship has not been changed. The Fachschule Sozialpädagogik curriculum now features modules (doing without subject-related lessons) and has thus been adapted to the job requirements. In Baden-Württemberg, again from later this year, the previous 2 year period at college followed by the 1 year internship will be replaced by 3 years of college, including longer periods of practice.

Erzieherin earnings

91. The *Erzieherinnen* accounted for nearly two-thirds of the workforce (62%) in all ECEC services in Germany in 1998, followed by *Kinderpflegerinnen* (11%) (see paragraph 96), staff without any relevant education (8%), other social and educational professionals (10%, including 3% social pedagogues) and students gaining experience and practice (6%). However within these national figures, there were substantial differences between the ABL and NBL, the latter having a higher proportion of *Erzieherinnen* (79% compared to 58%) and consequently fewer assistants, trainees and staff with no qualifications.

92. *Erzieherinnen* earn around the average wage, which is roughly in line with the earnings of other occupations with a similar level of education. After completing training and with three years of experience, an *Erzieherin* would normally earn around €1363/month, rising to €1793/month at age 33 and €1924 at age 45 (figures are for the end of 2003). The last increment is awarded at age 41. Promotion prospects are limited, usually confined to becoming the leader of a centre. The highest pay rate as a leader, only likely in a large centre, is €2738 at age 33 rising to €3085 at 45. By comparison, school teachers are usually to be found on this higher pay scale, and further benefit from lower social insurance contributions as they are treated as having 'lifetime tenure'.

The downgrading of the former GDR training system

93. This way of structuring the workforce and its training - that is based on a generic approach qualifying workers for employment in a wide range of settings and across a wide age range - is very different to the system that prevailed in the former GDR, which was swept away after unification. Then occupations and training were more tightly drawn, focused on particular age groups and settings. Separate training for the different work profiles existed: for professionals in services for children under 3; in services for children aged 3 to 6; and for school-age childcare services with children from 6 to 16. This workforce structure complemented the separation that existed between the services for these different age groups, although as the example below shows, a great deal of professional co-operation existed between the school and the *Hort* in the former GDR.

94. Because of the closure of many services after unification and ensuing large cuts in staff, the workforce in the NBL are, on average, older than in the ABL. Most therefore were trained in the days of

the GDR¹⁸. While those with whom we spoke appreciated the less authoritarian climate in early childhood services in Germany today, many also believed that their training under the former regime, focussed on educational work with specific age groups, had real strengths. They felt also that this training and their experience had been devalued following unification, e.g. to become recognised in the new unified Germany as a qualified *Erzieherin*, they had been obliged to attend 100 hours of 'adjustment' training. Many found this unhelpful, feeling it implied that their own original training was not considered good enough.

95. The clearest example we came across of the devaluing of previous training and occupation was the case of workers in school-age childcare services. In the GDR, there was a specialist training to work in these services, with children from 6 to 16, leading to a qualification as a *Hortlerzieher*. The training was at the same college and for the same length as a primary school teacher, and once trained, *Hortlerzieherinnen* were qualified not only to work in a *Hort*, but also to teach certain subjects in school (sport, music, art). Teachers and *Hortlerzieherinnen* were close to parity in training and social recognition. With unification, the special training for *Hortlerzieherinnen* ended. In its place, training for this work became part of the general *Erzieherin* training, in a lower level college away from teacher training. Moreover, *Hortlerzieherinnen* were no longer considered qualified to teach in school.

Other professionals in ECEC services

96. *Erzieherinnen* are not the only workers in ECEC services. Three other groups can be found. First, there is a group of assistants called *Kinderpflegerinnen* (literally, children's carers). Froebel first used the term to denote workers trained to work in families (somewhat akin to children's nurses or nannies). The training today consists of a two year course at a vocationally-oriented secondary school. In the example of Rheinland-Pfalz, quoted above, this training is to become a prelude to entering the course to train as an *Erzieherin*, replacing the previous requirement of one year's practical experience working with children. Young people doing this one year's 'pre-college' experience and students finishing their training as *Erzieherinnen* form another group working in ECEC services, supplemented by some young men who work in ECEC services in place of doing military service.

97. Finally, there are *Sozialpädagogen* (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.

Other features of the ECEC workforce

98. The workforce in ECEC centres also has three other features. First, less than half (44%) work full time, the figure being as low as a fifth in the NBL, where reduced working hours were introduced after unification to limit job losses. This means that most ECEC workers cannot rely on their employment alone to support themselves financially. Second, 14% have temporary contracts and the proportion is increasing. Here again, the ABL with 17% of temporary contracts compare less well with the NBL at 7%. Finally, and this is not particular to Germany, the great majority of workers are women – about 95% in 1998. Also, as is common elsewhere, the younger the children the fewer the men, while the more senior or prestigious the work, the higher the proportion of men (in the review team's visit to services, we saw only one male worker, but about half of the people we met from government ministries, training colleges and universities were men. The OECD review team itself was half men and half women).

¹⁸ German labour laws meant that young staff were the first to be made redundant. In 1998, 62% of the workforce in the NBL were aged 40 or more compared to 36% in the ABL.

Family day carers (Tagesmütter) - workers without a living wage

99. We have so far focused on the workforce in centre-based services, but the ECEC workforce also includes family day carers – *Tagesmütter*. This group of generally home-based workers had often in the past received no training. Some change is taking place, however, as more organisations for family day carers are established, which provide some form of initial training, with possibilities for on-going support and training (see Box 5 below for an example).

100. Pay and other employment conditions for this part of the workforce have not been similarly improved, although organisations may try to impose some common level of charges in their locality. In the area we visited, the pay ran from €150 to €435/month per child, depending on the hours of care provided. Moreover, the bulk of this money is supposed to cover expenses, rather than being a salary, in the usual sense, for work undertaken. The *Land* official with us confirmed that the standard charge was not expected to provide a living wage, while a worker with the local family day care organisation said that she would counsel applicants against being family day carers unless they had a partner with a steady income (and who would provide the applicant with health insurance cover). The precariousness of the job is further increased because there is no guarantee of filling places on offer on a long-term basis, nor are family day carers covered by unemployment insurance, as they are in a legal sense – as a rule – self-employed.

Regulation, professional development and practice consultants

101. *Länder* set standards for ECEC services in their territory, and these standards are supervised by *land* Youth Welfare Offices (*Landesjugendamt*), which as already mentioned are independent of *Länder* governments and funded by both *Land* and local government. Standards may cover a range of items, including calculation of the number of places needed, hours of opening, parent fees, building requirements and maintenance, group size, staff:child ratios and space both inside and outside. Though essential to ensuring structural requirements in centres, child well-being and pedagogical work, the standards set by the German *Länder* are in general undemanding, and in the judgment of the OECD team, have not contributed sufficiently to ongoing improvement of quality. Yet, now that the quality debate has begun, the potential to build upon them and use them to ensure better quality is real. However, this potential may be undermined by the move toward ‘municipalisation’ and the corresponding weakening of the supervisory responsibility of the *Landesjugendamt*, which according to some informants may lead to falling standards at municipal level.

102. Further, standards can and do vary between *Länder*. Box 4 shows staff:child ratios in the different *Länder* visited. As a general rule, staff numbers depend 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. It should also be noted, reflecting the earlier discussion on the workforce, that the NBL placed stronger emphasis on trained staff.

Box 4: Staffing levels set out in Länder standards

Baden-Württemberg

Kindergarten (children 3 to 6): In multiple group centres, the presence of at least 1.5 *Erzieherin/Kinderpflegerin* per group of over 20 children is required.

All other centres: The principle applies that during the prime care period (i.e. when more than half of the permitted children of the group is present) there must be 2 qualified staff per group.

It is still not known what impact the 2004 transfer of funding responsibility from the Land to the municipalities will have on such child-staff ratios and other standards in Baden-Württemberg.

Brandenburg

Kindergarten children (3 to 6 years): 1 Erzieherin for 16.25 children (or 13 children where care times exceed 6 hours per day);

Children under 3 years: 1 Erzieherin for 8.75 children (or for 7 children where care times exceed 6 hours per day);

School-age childcare: 1 Erzieherin for 25 children (or for 18.75 at care times of more than 4 hours per day).

Nordrhein-Westfalen

Kindergarten (children 3 to 6): 1 Erzieherin + 1 assistant for a group of 25 children at opening hours of more than 7 per day (at 8.5 opening hours 20 children)

School-age childcare and mixed-age groups (3 to 14 years): 2 Erzieherinnen for a group of 20 children

Nursery children and mixed-age groups (4 months to 6 years): 1 Erzieherin /Erzieher, 1 Kinderpflegerin, 1 more Erzieherin or paediatric nurse for a group of more than 15

Rheinland-Pfalz

Kindergarten children (3 to 6 years): 1.75 staff in a group of 15 to 25;

Children under 3 = 2 staff in a group of 8 to 10;

School-age childcare = 1.5 staff for a group of 15-20 children

Thüringen

Kindergarten children (3 to 6 years): 1.6 Erzieherinnen in a group for 15-20 children open for 10 hours a day;

Children under 3 years: 'sufficient trained staff', maximum group size 8;

School-age childcare: 1 Erzieherin in a group of 15-20 children open for 5 hours.

Provision and use of space

103. As a review team we were struck by the substantial amount of space – both inside and out – in all the centres we visited (although we were told that space would be more at a premium in centres in some of the large cities). When we commented on this aspect and on the pedagogical structuring of outdoor space in the Froebel kindergarten in Bad Blankenburg, we were told that, in the NBL, the generous space was a legacy of the former GDR regime. Since many children spent long periods at ECEC centres, national rules emphasised the need for children to spend time outdoors, even to the extent of setting a minimum time per day that children should be outside. While today such rules are considered by some as the discredited aspect of an authoritarian regime, the OECD team considered that the space left to the centres was a valuable asset. In addition, several kindergartens in the NBL continued to encourage the children to take part outdoors in an active exploratory curriculum, in contrast to the more "free play" practice in the ABL. In both sets of Länder, a sound appreciation that young children need space to move and to physically express themselves was evident.

Family day care - a low level of regulation and support

104. An exception to the German system of regulation by standard setting is family day care. *Tagesmütter* with three children or less hitherto did not need to be licensed and were therefore unregulated. However, as the German *Background Report* points out: even if a family day carer looks after more than three children, "in many cases, a care licence is not applied for. No further monitoring takes place. In this sense, there is a considerable grey market of day-care relationships that are exclusively negotiated between parents and day carers." There is a widespread presumption that the state should not interfere when parents arrange with other families the care of a child. Another opinion widely expressed was that caring for less than four young children was similar to what many mothers did on a daily basis, and

therefore likely to be safe without the state regulating it. More reassuringly, as the Box below indicates, support is given to the family day carers in several *Länder*, although in all cases, their remuneration remains extremely low. The recent KJHG development draft by the government prescribes a care licence for the first child for whom a caring arrangement has been negotiated.

Box 5: Family day care support in Reutlingen, B-W

Tagesmütter e.V. Reutlingen (TVR) is a non-profit organisation that has been organising family day care in and around the town of Reutlingen in Baden-Württemberg since 1973 (the *Land* of Baden-Württemberg now has 52 such organisations, more than in most other *Länder*). It provides a range of services for local family day carers: advising potential recruits to family day care; an initial training programme; subsequent support and further training; informing parents about available services; and promoting public awareness of this form of ECEC.

Funded by local authorities, TVR in effect organises the local system of family day care, although family day carers are self-employed workers. No parent, we were told, would use a family day carer who was not a member, which meant having been trained and accepted by TVR. TVR also sets the local rate for family day carers to charge. The work of TVR (incl. training and advice for family day carers) is undertaken by eight *Sozialpädagogen* or social pedagogues (i.e. professionals trained at a higher education level). These have a higher qualification than an *Erzieherin* for the range of work (including training and advice) that is required.

Professional development

105. Standards usually ensure only the most rudimentary conditions for fostering good pedagogical work. Equally, if not more important, are the provisions made to support the workforce in their current work and in improving their future work. One part of the provisions might be grouped under the heading of training and consultation. Both public authorities and private provider organisations offer further training, and *Länder* statutes generally allow workers a quota of days for attending such courses, as a rule up to 10 days every two years. All the staff from one kindergarten we visited, for example, had attended two 3 day training courses as part of process of meeting a need, identified by the staff group, of improving their practice. At the same time, ECEC staff usually have a quota of ‘non contact’ time a week, for doing work away from the children, for example staff meetings, seeing parents, doing administration and preparing work; in one *Land* we visited, this worked out at about 8½ hours a week.

Practice consultants (Fach- or Praxisberater)

106. Finally, both the *Land* Youth Welfare Offices, youth welfare offices and voluntary providers employ practice consultants (*Fachberater* or *Praxisberater*). They supervise standards in all services (public and private) but youth welfare office staff also provide managerial and practice support for centres run by local authorities. As a variant on this consultation task, both *Länder* visited in the East had additionally established a system of what were termed ‘consultation centres (*Konsultationskita*)’, centres offering examples of good and innovative practice that staff from other centres could visit.

Action in support of pedagogical quality

107. Another set of provisions that have become increasingly prominent in the last 15 years are plans and programmes intended to shape the pedagogical work of centres in a more systematic way. Oberhuemer (2004) notes the development of this interest:

During the 1990s, a number of research studies looked at the programme development side of early childhood centres in both eastern and western regions...The result was a data-rich evidence base which helped to qualify an emerging debate on improving programme quality. Two years later, the first empirical study focussing explicitly on pedagogical quality appeared with the title ‘How good are our kindergartens’

(Tietze et al., 1998)...[Its overall conclusion] was that German kindergartens can be described as only just a little better than mediocre, that only one third can be said to be of good quality, and that a third are of poor quality (13)

108. A further critique of early childhood programmes in Germany has been delivered in a recent book which achieved a mass readership. Starting from people's views of what young children should have the chance to experience, Donata Elschenbroich (2001) "criticizes the early childhood system in Germany for failing to offer not just some, but *all* children really stimulating and curiosity-triggering experiences" (Oberhuemer, 2004: 14).

109. The other stimulus to the increased attention being paid to education and quality in ECEC services has been the post-PISA questioning about educational standards, which has placed the educational role of ECEC under the spotlight. While there is a national increase in interest in these issues – quality and education – the response is again diverse, in some cases emphasising more standardised and prescriptive approaches, in others emphasising a common approach but leaving more space for interpretation and implementation to various stakeholders.

The Länder education plans

110. We have already mentioned how all *Länder* are developing education plans (*Bildungspläne*) for kindergartens, within a broad framework produced by ministerial conferences for youth welfare and for education. A national consensus has been reached that such guidelines are needed. At the time of writing, plans have been produced and are in operation in three *Länder*; in draft form and being tested in four more; and being drafted in the remaining *Länder*. They vary considerably in terms of form and content, reflected for example in the considerable differences in length, e.g. 24 pages for the 'education agreement' (*Bildungsvereinbarung*) already introduced in Nordrhein-Westfalen, compared with the 167 pages of the proposed Bavarian plan. The Education and Youth Ministers Conferences have meanwhile come up with an outline paper on these education plans.

The National Quality Initiative

111. Similarly, attention is being paid to various methods intended to improve quality. Quality is a normalising concept (it seeks to achieve conformity to a set of criteria) whilst Germany places strong value on decentralisation and diversity. Oberhuemer (2004) has discussed how these potentially contradictory directions have played out:

Diversity of services, organisation structures and programmes are key characteristics of the early childhood sector in Germany. Concepts of uniformity and standardisation do not fit easily into the landscape. And yet there has been a growing interest in recent years, not just from the policy administration side, but also from professional organisations within the voluntary sector, in more systematic assessment and documentation, and in more binding criteria for assessing the quality of work in the early childhood field. In this context, both self-evaluation procedures and external evaluation measures have taken a new significance. During the late 1990s, a number of different approaches influenced the professional debate. These included a German-language adaptation of the American rating scale ECERS; a discursive approach based on a conceptualisation of quality as a construct to be negotiated by key stakeholders; and a client-centred management approach adapted from commercial sector systems. Many voluntary organisations have in the meantime developed their own 'quality handbooks' to guide practitioners through the maze of different approaches and encourage them to review their work more systematically (17).

112. Against this background, the Federal government in collaboration with most of the *Länder* introduced a National Quality Initiative (*Nationale Qualitätsinitiative im System der Tageseinrichtungen für Kinder*) (NQI). Begun in 1999, the NQI has consisted of five separate projects, each addressing quality

in a different area: services for children under 3; kindergarten; school-age childcare; the situation approach to pedagogical work; and the work of the provider. Each project was required to identify quality indicators and develop and test methods of self and external evaluation. Being led by different researchers, these projects have taken somewhat different approaches, once again varying in the extent to which they have sought normative standards or left space for interpretation from different perspectives.

113. The NQI has now completed its first phase focused on the development and trial of quality criteria and of instruments for evaluation. It is now moving into a dissemination phase, where the different methods developed are to be applied – though not as an obligation, but by providers and services who choose to work with them.

114. How and to what extent *Länder* work with these different approaches to regulation, development and quality varies. In Box 6 we provide an example of one *Länder* we visited which appeared to be following a particularly broad and vigorous approach, to illustrate how the different possibilities could be taken up and worked with.

Box 6: Standards, development and quality in Brandenburg

Brandenburg has the highest level of ECEC services in Germany, with places for nearly half of all children under 3 years, nearly all children aged 3 to 6 years and for nearly three quarters of 6 to 10 year olds in school-age childcare. It is also unusual in Germany in the high level of provision by public providers, accounting for around 70% of all ECEC centres

Since unification, Brandenburg has been developing a system for promoting the development and quality of services. A Centre for Continuing Education in Social Pedagogy provides further training for ECEC staff, supplemented by more local courses and courses provided by voluntary providers. In addition, a pilot course to qualify graduates to work in ECEC services is being introduced in a *Fachhochschule* from Autumn 2005.

These initiatives driven from the centre are complemented by a system of practice support and consultation at local level. The Youth Welfare Offices and major providers employ 60 practice consultants (*Praxisberaterin*) and eight ECEC services have been designated as ‘consultation centres’ (*Konsultationskita*), each focusing on a particular theme. We visited one of these consultation centres, whose specialisation is group organisation, environment and design, both inside and outdoors. The centre receives visits from groups from other centres, arranged through local youth welfare offices and voluntary providers. For its work, the centre is granted an extra €10,000 annually.

Since unification, Brandenburg has initiated a range of projects to develop its ECEC services, focusing on their educational role and cooperation with the school system, the diversification of services and quality monitoring. In the last case, Brandenburg has been developing since 1992 a system for monitoring quality in its ECEC services. It uses KES (*Kindergarteneinschätzungsskala*), a rating scale developed in Germany, based on the American Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale. It has developed an educational plan entitled *The Principles of Elementary Education in Child Daycare Centres (Grundsätze der Förderung elementarer Bildung in Einrichtungen der Kindertagesbetreuung)*. This document identifies areas for educational work in kindergartens (body, movement and health; language, communication and the culture of the written word; music; creativity; mathematics and natural sciences; social life) with supporting examples, rationales and explanation of how centres can support children’s development in each area. The plan was produced on the basis of an expert report and widespread consultation with practitioners.

Children with special learning needs

115. Where do children with special learning needs fit into this general structure? According to the OECD definitions, children with special learning needs may be divided into three categories:

Category A are children with organic disabilities - such as blind and partially sighted, deaf and partially hearing, severe and profound mental handicap, multiple handicaps. These are conditions that can affect students from all social classes and backgrounds, and are considered in medical

terms to be disorders attributable to *organic* pathologies, that is, in relation to sensory, motor or neurological defects. Countries normally fund in this category, 5-10% of the school populations.

Category B are children who have difficulties in learning which do not appear to be directly or primarily attributable to factors that would lead to categorisation as 'A' or 'C'. For instance, children with benign learning disabilities (e.g. dyslexia...) and traumatised children are classified here. They constitute a very small percentage.

Category C are children whose educational need arises primarily from socio-economic, cultural and/or linguistic factors. There is present some form of background, generally considered to be a disadvantaged, for which education seeks to compensate. Countries may fund in this category 5-30% of the school population.

116. Official policy in Germany recommends integration of Category A children, and increasing numbers of children with disabilities have been admitted into mainstream services in the last decade. This recent shift has been particularly strong in the NBL which have had to catch up with the West, children with disabilities having been mainly placed in segregated institutions in the former GDR. Between 1994 and 1998 the number of places in integrated kindergartens increased nearly 60%, and today the NBL have overtaken the ABL in the provision of integrated provision. It seems then that much progress has been made in every part of Germany to ensure that children with disabilities may be part of regular groups in centres, with additional staffing provided. A second option for integrated provision is in centres designated 'integrative services', which will have a specific 'integrative group' consisting of children with and without disabilities. This group will have fewer children than the usual group, and may have additional staffing. Finally, some separate services continue to exist providing for children with the most severe disabilities.

117. However, according to several of our informants, uncertainties exist about the actual participation of both Category A children, and the much larger group of Category C children in early childhood services in Germany – an issue that we shall discuss in more detail in Chapter 4.

Parents and services

118. In Germany today, ECEC services are opening themselves further to parents, with greater recognition given to their significance. A new emphasis is placed on centres as places for children and parents, as (in Oberhuemer's words) "neighbourhood centres for families and children". The KJHG states that parents are to be involved in decisions concerning major matters in early childhood centres and that they have the right to choose between whatever services are available to them (though the extent of this choice, of course, will vary depending on the level of provision available). They also have the right to information on the development of their child.

119. Although there are examples of innovative ways of working co-operatively with parents, more traditional methods remain widespread such as parents' evening for a group or lectures by outside experts. This partly reflects insecurity of staff, who often find themselves working with parents who are older and better educated than themselves, as well perhaps as the low level of training of pedagogues which, according to several informants, gives insufficient attention to methods of working with adults.

120. Collectively, some services, as we have mentioned above, are run by parents, so called parent initiative centres. Parents can also be represented on committees or councils, although these vary in many respects, for example their areas of competence, responsibilities and powers (from a right to information at one end to decision-making rights at the other), composition and selection processes. However it is only in parent initiatives that parents can be said to have wide and significant influence on centres (see Box 7 for an example of parent involvement).

121. In general, parental involvement is higher when children are younger, then increases again at the time of transfer to school. We gathered no information on whether parental involvement was equally spread across all social and ethnic groups. However, despite some successful examples of increasing participation by fathers, in most cases ECEC services co-operate with mothers.

Box 7: Parent involvement in ECEC services in Baden-Württemberg

A Land law requires each ECEC centre to have a parent council with a minimum of three parent representatives, at more than three groups one parent representative from each group. Parent representative are elected by parents and together make up the centre's parent council. State law also now confirms the right of parents to organise above the level of the centre, but unlike the situation in schools parents must organise at this level without assistance. Each area organises itself as best it can, if at all. The aims of the parent councils are to be heard at all levels and on all issues, before decisions are made. They also oppose any weakening of standards and want to see parents better informed through, for example, classes and materials.

CHAPTER 4

ISSUES FOR ECEC IN GERMANY

122. This chapter and the next focus mainly on challenges and possible improvements in the German ECEC system. It is, however, important to balance this side of the review with the many strengths and resources in the system that were apparent to the team. These include:

- *Rich concepts, with deep historical roots* provide a strong basis for a broad and integrated system of ECEC services. Kindergarten itself is a German construct, and the model in various forms has spread throughout the world. Contemporary concepts like social pedagogy and *Bildung*, and understandings of ECEC centres as social pedagogic institutions, have much to contribute not only to debate and development in Germany but also elsewhere, not least in the English-speaking world. They are a reminder that our understandings of early childhood institutions or of terms such as ‘education’ and ‘care’ are partial, contestable and provisional. In Germany and other countries, there are strong traditions in the early childhood field that emphasise the importance of viewing the basic concepts as wide ranging and holistic – about more than the acquisition of specific skills and competences.
- *The well developed ECEC system in the NBL and its gradual extension toward the West.* The New Federal *Länder* already have one of the most extensive ECEC systems in the world, second only to some Nordic countries in extent of provision. It has been an important achievement to maintain much of this provision following unification. At the same time, the ABL have achieved almost universal kindergarten provision, at least on a part-time basis, and the concept of *entitlement* to an ECEC place has been introduced. Changing conditions in the West, are further moving ECEC services there closer to the pattern found in the East. In addition to the move to increase childcare places, there is a renewed emphasis on developing services that will meet the needs of working parents, that is: greater and more proximal provision for children under 3; longer opening hours in *Kindergartens*; school-age childcare, with a tendency to increase leisure time care by opening new school *Hort* as part of the All Day School initiative. Several *Länder* are also moving toward *Kindertagesstätten*, that is a mixed-age service combining care for children under and over three years, out of school provision and with all-day opening hours.
- *A relatively good resource base.* Material resources in most ECEC centres are satisfactory by international standards, and many centres are generously endowed with outdoor space. There is a committed workforce, open to new ideas. In particular, the review team was impressed by the ability of the workforce in the NBL to have maintained their commitment to children over the years and to be open to new possibilities in the unified regime.
- *The non-profit nature of the system.* The German system as a whole is run on non-profit lines and with a desire to reach all children - irrespective of income or background - in an equitable manner. In contrast, for-profit early education and care in the English-speaking countries tends to cater for the upper end of the market, that is for children from higher income families, and are much less represented in localities where the greatest need for quality socio-educational services

exist. In addition, profit in the market system of 'childcare' is often derived from keeping wages low, which in turn has adverse effects on levels of training, although one may note that wages in both public and non-profit childcare systems can also be very inadequate in view of the importance of the work being undertaken. The link between quality and the presence of well-trained, well-remunerated staff has been demonstrated many times in research (see, for example, Bowman *et al.*, 2000).

- *A deep commitment to decentralisation and local autonomy.* The twin principles of federalism and subsidiarity produce an ECEC system that gives considerable responsibility to state and local levels, and to individual services. This carries considerable risks, and we discuss later the need for more entitlements and greater uniformity at national level, especially in those areas which concern the rights of children. However, there are also great strengths in decentralisation and local autonomy, including possibilities for experimentation and innovation, responsiveness to local needs and conditions and the practice of local democracy in ECEC services.
- *An openness to working with families and communities:* Only in one instance was the OECD team able to witness the work of a centre with parents and a community, namely, the successful Mo.Ki initiative in Monheim, which has since been awarded the national Prize for Prevention. However, in all centres the discourse of working with parents was present, and it was our impression that the consultation of parents was ongoing and taken for granted. This open attitude to parents contrasts favourably to more school-like services in other countries, to which parents have little access and are consulted predominantly through formal committees. (See Box 7 above)
- *Recognition of the need for change,* both quantitative and qualitative, in the system. Widespread public concerns, for example about demography, childhood, education and gender equality, have left little room for complacency in Germany. There is an openness to the need for change, including more services and services that better respond to the needs of children and families. Unification has also shown the ABL what can be done in terms of developing ECEC services; Germany is in the unique situation of having well developed services in one part of the country. But there is also a clear recognition that what is needed is not only more but better. Those arguing for the development of ECEC services are pushing, therefore, at an open door. The key question today is more 'how' than 'whether'.

It is also important to emphasise in the discussion that follows that the issues facing Germany in ECEC are not unique. They may, in some cases, take a particular form because of the particular conditions in Germany, but in one or other form, they emerge on a regular basis in other OECD reviews.

Developing the ECEC system

123. Germany has come to a recognition today of the need to develop the ECEC system, both in terms of quantity and content (the quantitative aspect being a particular issue in the ABL). This is driven by a dual concern: the need for 'childcare' for working parents and the need to improve early promotion. Demographic trends, with a falling child population, will help to increase coverage rates. There are also a number of very useful initiatives being taken by different levels of government, for example, the Act to increase services for under 3s (a necessary step toward building a coherent system of child care) just passed by the Lower House; the curricula/educational plans being undertaken by the Länder; and the various quality projects and initiatives. However, there did not appear to be a long-term and coherent view agreed upon at national level about where Germany wants to get to and about what will be required to achieve this goal. For example, there does not appear to be a longer-term goal than achieving places for 230 000 of children under 3 in the ABL by 2010 – even though this level of provision in the ABL is already far exceeded in the NBL. Nor is it clear how expansion will be achieved in the longer term, including for example a clear estimation of the additional funds needed for its achievement. The extension of places to 230 000 is linked to an extra €1.5 billion available to municipalities through savings in other social programmes. However, the municipalities, having had for the past ten years, a legal obligation to

provide childcare as needed for all age groups, and who will be responsible for funding the extra services, claim that this is insufficient to cover costs. They point out also that there may be a mismatch between the amount saved on one programme and the amounts needed for extra expenditure on ECEC services.

124. Again the question of responsibility for the provision, the desired volume and quality of this expansion needs to be raised. Public investment in ECEC services is low, both in absolute terms and relative to a number of other European countries. An active strategy would need to question the current allocation of public funds for ECEC services; and estimate the level to which it may need to increase over the long term. Moreover such estimation would need to take account of the additional costs involved in raising the educational level of the ECEC workforce, a requirement universally recognised and discussed further below.

125. A longer-term view might also need to consider various options for the future direction of ECEC policies and services. At some point, should the current national entitlement to a part-time kindergarten place be extended, for example to longer hours for 3 to 6 year olds and/or for younger and older children? Given the increasing relevance attached to kindergarten in terms of early promotion and its universal provision, should parental fees be reduced or removed altogether (as is the case in most other European countries in provision for the 3-6 age group)? Should parental leave policy be reconsidered to offer a shorter but better paid period of leave, linked to an entitlement to an ECEC place?

126. When the review team raised some of these issues, such as staff training and parental fees, a regular response among informants was to rule out change especially on grounds of cost. While this is clearly an important consideration and may limit the pace of change, the appeal to cost seems symptomatic of the difficulty experienced in taking a long-term view. Comparisons with expenditure in other parts of the social and education systems indicate that the hesitation may not be so much a question of cost, but one of underestimation of the value added by early childhood services (see for example, the financial study undertaken by Müller-Kucera in Zurich, 2001,¹⁹ or that by Cleveland and Krashinsky in Canada, 2001: *Our Children's Future*. For these Canadian economists, the issue is essentially: can we afford not to invest?)

Clear goals for the system, improved pedagogy and support for workers

127. Growing ECEC services, in our view, requires therefore a long-term strategy, which combines a vision of where Germany wants to get to with a programme for how to get there. It also needs an effective system for improving pedagogical work in these services. As we have seen, increased priority has been given in the last decade to the pedagogical work in ECEC services, spurred by debates about their educational content and quality. Educational plans are being put in place, new methods of evaluation devised and applied and more attention is given to further training. What seems lacking, or at least inadequate, is a strong system for supporting workers in their daily work and in their efforts to change and improve their practice. There is a gap, a lack of connection, between the context of plans, training and evaluation on the one hand and everyday practice on the other. In sum, there are relatively few effective systems in place to support practitioners in the analysis, discussion, evaluation and improvement of their practice.

¹⁹ The Müller-Kucera and Bauer study: *Costs and benefits of childcare services in Switzerland – Empirical findings from Zurich* (2001) shows that the city's public investment of 18 million SF annually in childcare services is offset by at least 29 million SF of additional tax revenues and reduced public spending on social aid (Müller-Kucera and Bauer, 2001). Where affordable childcare was available, the rate of hours worked by mothers almost doubled, especially for single-headed households with one or more children. In sum, publicly funded childcare resulted in 1) Higher productivity and earnings due to maintaining productive workers in work; 2) Higher contributions to social security and savings; 3) Less dependency on social assistance during both the productive and retirement ages (without affordable childcare, many families would fall below the poverty line). However, it is well to remember that most of these benefits return to the federal state, and the interest of the municipality is not so directly served.

128. A good example of the gap concerns the position of practice consultants (*Fachberater* or *Praxisberater*) employed by *Land* youth welfare offices and voluntary providers. Although they have some responsibility for practice (as well as supervising standards set by *Länder*), their role appears to be very peripheral to the actual experience of individual centres. There are far too few of them to be able to visit except very occasionally. In one *Land* which placed great emphasis on service development and the role of practice consultants, there were in fact 60 such posts serving over 1700 centres. The end result, as in most other countries, is that workers in centres have to get on with their work without close and regular engagement with a ‘pedagogical adviser’. They must work on their own to implement the theories, methods and objectives contained in plans, their courses, or in various quality initiatives. This is a great deal to expect of a profession which is very demanding both physically and mentally, and at the same time is not excessively remunerated. In addition to the lack of a sufficient number of “pedagogical advisers”, the decentralised nature of the system and the high commitment to local autonomy function acts as a further barrier to the knowledge flow toward and from the practitioners.

Ambivalence about ECEC services

129. One further issue should be mentioned as it affects the development of the system. Especially in the ABL, there remains some widespread ambivalence towards services that go beyond the ‘traditional’ part-time kindergarten. They can still be discussed, not least by politicians, in terms which imply disparagement, that such services are an inferior substitute to the norm of parental (maternal) upbringing. Like many countries, Germany (or at least the ABL) will have to find new ways of thinking and talking about services and, by implication, childhood and parenthood. Over time, new norms will emerge (as they have done in countries like Denmark and Sweden but also as in the NBL); but this will take time and effort and a willingness to appreciate the value of different forms of bringing up children.

Tensions between national standards and local autonomy

130. We have already identified decentralisation and local autonomy as a strength of the German system. However, for this to be a strength rather than a weakness, requires two conditions. First, a practice of diversity – whether in pedagogical work or evaluation - which would involve an equally rigorous and critical process of development and evaluation of all approaches. We shall return to this issue later, having already raised it in relation to the connection (or lack of it) between theory and practice. Second, there would appear to be sound arguments for adopting certain common, national standards, in particular in those areas that concern equity between families, and the right of children to provision and quality. At the moment, other than an entitlement at kindergarten level, families and young children have few guarantees. It seems inappropriate that the volume and quality of early services should be substantially uneven across the country, and that families in different *Länder* cannot expect roughly equal support and socio-educational opportunities for their children.

Common national standards

131. The issue of common national standards involves questions of access, funding and certain conditions within ECEC services across the *Länder*. Only access to kindergarten is covered by a national norm, taking the form of a limited entitlement to part-time kindergarten for children from 3 upwards. While federal law has been obliging local authorities to provide a sufficient number of places for the under-threes and children of primary school age for the past ten years, implementation in the old *Länder* has been slow. In addition, there are large differences between *Länder* in levels of both quality and provision. Similarly, funding arrangements vary between *Länder*, including what parents are required to pay.

132. In the long-term, such multiplicity seems unacceptable and not in the interests either of children or families. ECEC services operate under different regulations and with different education plans, albeit defined within a broad common frame. Where to draw the line between diversity and standardisation here is a fine issue, but the review team found it difficult to understand why there should be such different expectations concerning access to non-kindergarten services or, in kindergarten services, such different norms in basic structural matters relating to quality, such as policy orientation, group size, staff:child ratios and in-service training.

133. Our discussion here concerning an agreed national framework or common guidelines takes place against an actual backdrop of pressure to decentralise responsibility for ECEC services even further, with some advocating the removal of any Federal level involvement and others even arguing for a ‘municipalisation’ of ECEC services. Taken to its extreme, this would remove not only Federal involvement but also the *Länder* contribution, with unfortunate consequences for the quantity and quality of the child care system. In addition, the removal of Federal level involvement from ECEC services would have the effect of decoupling ECEC services from the level of government charged with the implementation of the rights of children as citizens in Germany, bearing in mind in particular those articles of the UNCRC which deal with equity and the provision of services to children including childcare, education and health.²⁰ Further, extreme municipalisation would make it more difficult to create common frames for young children in Germany, which could stimulate improvements and ensure some degree of equity across the country. In sum, while supporting the principle of local responsibility for local services, the review team considers that early childhood services in particular are important for the future of a country and in consequence, inputs from the *Länder* and the Federal government are needed.

134. From an early childhood systems perspective, other issues are also at stake:

- If further decentralisation takes place, which bodies will underwrite the infrastructure of what could credibly be called a German early childhood system - its policy steering, financial and statutory regulation, data collection and quality monitoring? It is doubtful that small municipalities could undertake such functions in any cost-effective manner. Even the present state of data collection and monitoring of services suggests that the *Länder* would be much helped if the Federal government were to assume the basic, system-level tasks.
- A second issue that could arise in the context of unregulated decentralisation is the possibility of individual municipalities, with little interest in providing early childhood services, opting out of the present non-profit system. Transforming ‘childcare’ into a market system can be attractive for municipalities, but as noted in the introduction to this chapter, may have serious disadvantages, not least for low-income and immigrant populations. These are precisely the groups whose children need support and appropriate socio-educational services from an early age. In this regard, it may be useful to study the experience of other countries (see for example, the OECD Notes on Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States at <<http://www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood>>). The option to privatise the ‘childcare’ system has frequently led to an increase in provision, but on the downside may induce a general lowering of standards, a weakening of educational vision for the younger children, and a further widening the gap between ‘childcare’ and the publicly funded kindergarten system. Studies from Canada and other countries tend to confirm these outcomes (Doherty *et al.* 2001).

²⁰. For the United Nations monitoring committee, the implementation of these articles is the responsibility of the Federation, although the municipalities are responsible for many aspects of the Convention.

The relationship between ECEC, school and school-age childcare

135. The new emphasis on the educational role of ECEC and closer co-operation with the school, in the post-PISA context, raises critical questions about the relationships between ECEC services and compulsory schooling. Before proceeding to discuss this issue in Germany, it is worth recalling the words of the OECD report, *Starting Strong* (OECD, 2001):

The needs of young children are wide, and there is a risk that increased co-operation between schools and ECEC could lead to a school-like approach to the organisation of early childhood provision. Downward pressure on ECEC to adopt the content and methods of the primary school has a detrimental effect on young children's learning. Therefore, it is important that early childhood is viewed not only as a preparation for the next stage of education (or even adulthood), but also as a distinctive period where children live out their lives. Stronger co-operation with schools is a positive development as long as the specific character and traditions of quality early childhood practice are preserved (ibid. 129).

136. Germany, like many other countries, is having to confront this relationship. For example, Oberhuemer (2004) notes that:

a positive offshoot of the PISA debacle is that both schools and early childhood institutions are in the process of re-assessing their respective roles. Most certainly, the early childhood community needs to reflect critically on how to support children's learning more effectively and how to document and to demonstrate the value of that support. Equally, schools are in the process of reflecting on their traditional roles, and there are signs of a beginning dialogue on overarching roles (18)

137. What is at issue in Germany today is whether the rethinking of relationships between ECEC and schools will produce what was advocated in the earlier OECD report – ‘a strong and equal partnership’, which avoids what has been termed elsewhere a ‘schoolification’ of ECEC by the powerful school sector working with a narrow concept of *Bildung*. If this occurs, then the ECEC services may not only develop a narrow concept of education, but also risk losing their holistic, social pedagogic approach to working with children, families and communities. Tasks beyond a narrow educational preparation for school might become ‘add ons’ rather than an integral part of the work of centres, and targeted on certain children rather than part of the work with all children.

138. The new debate puts the spotlight on the educational task of ECEC services, and emphasises the need for infrastructure and processes that support not only the development of the educational element of their work but also all parts of their social pedagogical work. At the same time, it also places the spotlight on the school. Does it need to become more social pedagogic in its approach? Does it need to change in both content and method, not least for children from low-income groups, while keeping expectations high for these children? If kindergartens need to devote more attention to preparing children from school, do schools need to devote more attention to better preparing themselves for children?

139. These questions are raised by many ECEC practitioners, who would like better co-operation between themselves and school teachers and between their centres and schools. This was epitomised by the leader of an age-integrated centre that takes children both of school age and below. The *Hort* part of the centre enables children to do their homework. The centre's leader said that she would like to see homework set by schools tailored to each child but instead schools sets standard homework for all. Unlike ECEC centres, she remarked: “schools don't have the individual child in view”. Their idea of education is "to pour in knowledge."

140. The OECD team is aware, of course, that this is not true of either good schools or good teachers. In fact, many early childhood practitioners in Germany were aware of a change underway in at least some schools, in particular in the first two grades, a change that is bringing them closer to the social pedagogical approach of kindergartens. This somewhat contradictory situation was discussed by parents and staff at one

centre we visited in one of the NBL. They spoke of good relations and co-operation with the local schools, with staff from the centre and local schools visiting each other, discussing children about to enter school, while children who have recently entered school come back to the centre to tell younger children about school life.

141. On the other hand, the centre parents and staff felt the school has a particular approach which they, in the centre, try to resist. They attempt instead to persuade the teachers to adapt the centre's pedagogical approach, at least in the first two grades. Schools, they thought, were just beginning to move on this, changing their way of working to open up more to the developmental and special needs of children – in short, treating the child more as an individual. What was needed, they suggested, was a model project focused on changing the early years in school. Taken together with discussions about the educational role of kindergartens, there are perhaps signs here of a new relationship gradually taking shape, though still in an early and vulnerable stage.

The All Day school and the Hort

142. Another development that may lead to changes in the school – or to increased schoolification – is the development of All Day Schools, a policy actively supported by the Federal government and most *Länder*. One consequence of this development is the likely reduction of separate *Hort* provision, mainly on grounds of its higher costs. Staff involved with non-school *Hort* were often critical of this prospect, expressing concerns that school-based services would not be able to provide children with the same pedagogical opportunities, offering instead an impoverished environment emphasising 'care' and homework.

143. On the other hand, officials from one *Land*, which is actively pursuing a programme of All Day Schools, were at pains to paint a different picture. They argued that some years ago there was much conflict over the concept of the All Day School, but that it has today (with more working mothers and post-PISA) gained more popularity, partly because these schools do provide more time for learning. But they also emphasised that for them the concept meant developing a qualitatively different kind of school which would allow more time for children to relax, opportunities for children to develop their many talents and a new, more equal relationship between teachers and others working with children. They want the school and the social pedagogical approach of school-age childcare services to be merged, as well as encouraging renewed interest and participation by parents. The experience of the NBL shows also that the school-based *Hort* is a viable model, allowing both school and *Hort* to develop their own distinctive pedagogies.

144. If the relationship between the school and ECEC services is on the agenda, with some recognition of the need for a more equal relationship involving change on both sides, there are a number of barriers to be overcome. First, schools are more powerful and prestigious institutions, and teachers are a more powerful and socially valued group of workers than *Erzieherinnen*, with a higher level of education, better pay and more status. This is not a good basis for developing a 'strong and equal relationship' between two systems.

145. Secondly, responsibility for ECEC services and schools is divided. There is a federal responsibility for ECEC services in the sense of a framework legislation for child and youth welfare. Schools are the exclusive responsibility of *Länder*, within the education system. Moreover *Länder* differ in whether they locate their responsibility for ECEC in education or other departments. Last but not least, provision and direct funding of ECEC services rests with yet another level of government, municipalities and private providers.

Transfer of ECEC responsibility to the education system?

146. During the review visit, the team observed that several Länder had transferred responsibility for ECEC services to the Land Ministry of Education in terms of organisation. It has to be pointed out, however, that in the Länder responsibility for ECEC and youth welfare is sometimes assigned to one ministry, sometimes to another. The issue was raised whether a similar transfer should not be made at federal level. The question is a complex one in all countries, and, as our earlier discussion indicates, in Germany it is further complicated by political and legislative implications. As matters currently stand, a transfer of ECEC services from child welfare to (school) education is not simply a shift of Federal responsibility for ECEC from one ministry to another. In the German context, given that the Federation lacks legislative authority for school education, a shift toward education within the Länder's responsibility would not necessarily lead to progress in terms of a standardisation of conditions and opportunities for children growing up. On the contrary, unless the allocation of authority sees a shift toward the Federation, a reinforcement of different standards in early childhood services across the German Länder and partly between municipalities could take place.

147. For example, in Sweden, where the ECEC service (including school-age childcare) comes under the responsibility of the national Ministry of Education, it is seen to be the first step in lifelong learning. Improved funding, reduced costs for parents, enhanced training for ECEC workers and a universal entitlement to a place for all children from 12 months of age have all followed the transfer of responsibility for these services from welfare to education, and the basis is in place for a stronger and more equal partnership between ECEC and schools. Investments were carried out accordingly. It should, however, be emphasised that none of this is inevitable, and that, given very different basic conditions, these developments would not necessarily follow a transfer of responsibility for ECEC services to education in the German Länder.

148. In sum, there is easy answer to this question. Much depends on the traditions of a country, the energy and professionalism of the ministries in question, and the desires of parents. A country such as Finland has maintained early childhood in the social sector, and yet its children perform extremely well in educational testing (including PISA) at primary and secondary level. And there are risks in moving toward education auspices. Firstly, the danger of a *schoolification* process, that is, of making ECEC services become like school. There is no inherent need for this to happen in a joined-up system, but unfavourable child-staff ratios and the loss of the socio-pedagogic tradition are features of the infant school in many countries. Without good leadership, such 'schools' can become closed institutions and pursue academic programmes to the neglect of the broader - and equally important - goals of early childhood centres, namely: the health and well-being of children; an active, peer-driven socialisation; a broad education for children (*Bildung* in its original sense), and an active outreach by pedagogues to families and their communities.

149. What must be avoided is the splitting of ECEC, that is, of education taking responsibility for kindergarten and another ministry being in charge of *Krippen*, as if early learning began at the age of three years! This can have a negative impact on both kindergarten and other ECEC services. An unthinking transfer of the kindergarten into education, for example, risks ECEC becoming 'lost' as the poor relation of the powerful school system, and ECEC staff becoming a small and marginalised group struggling to make their voices heard.

150. Further, and more seriously, splitting the system into two has frequently had the consequence of condemning the services for children under 3 years to low quality conditions, such as weak investment, low levels of training and pay for staff, and the lack of an educational vision. This type of situation tends to move public 'childcare' into the realm of being a welfare service limited to low income families, and to drive middle-class parents to find alternative solutions, often in the private, non-regulated market. The

mixing of children from all social classes that public systems in egalitarian democracies strive to maintain is then no longer possible. In extreme cases, societies become locked into dualistic ways of thinking – public versus private, home care versus ‘childcare’, kindergartens versus school. A longer-term, more intelligent vision of early childhood services – whatever the auspices – should be able to imagine other possibilities.

The workforce

151. It is widely acknowledged that current training of *Erzieherinnen* is inadequate, with many professionals arguing that it should be at a higher level (in the *Fachhochschule*). This becomes an increasing issue as the expectations placed on ECEC workers increase – to provide family support and work with parents, to develop educational work, to observe and document children and their development, to reflect on their practice and to understand and participate in various evaluation methods. However despite much debate and recommendations from many professional organisations, no substantial changes were made when the Standing Conference of Education Ministers produced a new framework plan for the education of *Erzieherinnen* in 2002. A major reason put forward for not raising the level of education is cost, but policy-makers also query whether simply moving training into the higher education level will produce a qualitative improvement. In addition, it is said that a change in this direction might have complex implications within the current German system (discussed above).

152. The focus of the present debate is then about the future level of training and its downstream costs, a debate in which the issue of the sustainability of the current approach may be overlooked. Basically, the present recruitment situation depends on drawing students and staff from a group of young women with lower levels of school qualification – a group whose numbers are diminishing as levels of educational qualification among women increase. This opens up a very large question, apparent in many countries: *who will work with young children (or indeed other groups such as elderly people) in the future?* Up to now, Germany has had some breathing space, both because of the relatively low level of services in the ABL and because services in the NBL have been laying off staff. Newly qualified *Erzieherinnen* in the East have therefore had to find some alternative form of work or look West for employment in ECEC services. These conditions are, however, coming to an end. Services in the ABL are expanding and services in the NBL are now, for the first time for some years, recruiting new staff. Moreover as so many staff in the NBL are over 40, large numbers will be lost through retirement in the next few years. Without in-depth study of the question, it is difficult to make a serious prognosis, but the issue of the sustainability of the present recruitment and training regime needs careful attention in the view of the OECD team.

The recruitment of men

153. In all countries, one untapped source of workers is men. The case for recruiting more men workers, however, goes beyond the need to find new sources of labour; there are social, cultural and pedagogical reasons for diversifying the workforce and bringing more men into work with children. Within the Nordic countries where engaging men is rather more successful than elsewhere, their recruitment seems to be linked to the socio-pedagogical tradition, which favours a broadly trained pedagogical occupation employed in many settings. Within the early education field, there may also be links with how staff are remunerated and how programming is conceived. So far, as in many other countries, Germany has not begun to tackle seriously the question of how to recruit more men into ECEC services. Nearly everyone regrets their absence, but hardly anywhere are any measures being taken to achieve a better gender balance in training and employment. During our visit, we came across just one local training initiative targeted at men; the project ‘young men working in the kindergarten’, in Brandenburg, aims to bring young unemployed men into kindergarten work while at the same time qualifying them through on-the-job training.

The recruitment of Erzieherinnen from different backgrounds

154. Likewise, as the proportion of immigrant children grows in the early childhood centres, it is appropriate to ensure a correct representation of migration background personnel, not only as assistants and technical staff but also as *Erzieherinnen*, social pedagogues and managers. Again, we were unable to find figures on the recruitment levels of staff with a background of migration in kindergartens and childcare, and strategies to bring young pedagogues from these backgrounds into the centres were rarely discussed. The experience of other countries with mixed populations would suggest that immigrant families will often retain their young children at home until school age, fearing that they will be alienated from their language and culture in mono-cultural kindergartens. The presence of minority *Erzieherinnen* is reassuring to them, and is seen as a sign of the openness, diversity, and relevance of early childhood services. In addition, *Erzieherinnen* with a background of migration serve as important role models for the young children in their care.

Family day carers

155. A final workforce issue concerns the position of family day carers (*Tagesmütter*). They currently play an important role, especially in providing for children under 3, and the Federal government envisages that they will play an important role in the expansion of ECEC services. This role goes beyond the family day carer as a substitute mother; it assumes that they will take on a social pedagogical role comparable to that of ECEC centres, including an educational function. This raises issues about whether and how individual carers, with small numbers of children, can be enabled to attain this role and why they are –at least of now - exempted from regulation (unless they have four or more children). It also raises issues about their pay and status. As we have seen, at the present moment both are extremely low, and in effect family day carers are viewed more as informal carers than professionals undertaking a proper job. A family day carer in Germany today could not live independently off her work. Once again, any long-term direction for Germany will have to factor in how this sector of the ECEC workforce can access better training and support (and there are clearly good models emerging of how this might be provided, e.g. the widely circulated DJI's curriculum for family day carers), and enjoy secure and better paid employment within the mainstream labour market with all the benefits and conditions that apply. The review team hopes that the expert analysis commissioned by the Federal government will contain important hints for a better development of family day care.¹⁹

Funding issues

The overall level of spending

156. The background report and an expert on ECEC funding both quoted a figure of €11.5 billion spent on children's services in 2000. The expert added that this consisted of €9.3 billion from public funds, the remainder from parents and voluntary providers – but also emphasised the figure was only an estimate and could be an understatement. At face value, the figure suggests that public expenditure in Germany on ECEC amounts to around 0.42% of GDP, which would place Germany – discounting the parental and *Träger* contributions - below the average level of spending for OECD countries, and well below the levels spent by governments in neighbouring countries where ECEC services for children aged 3 to 6 years are generally free. Providers' and parents' contributions added, revenues and expenditures of ECEC facilities amount to €11.5 bn or 0.57% of GDP.

²¹ Jurczyk, K. /Rauschenbach, T. /Tietze, W. u.a.: Von der Tagespflege zur Familientagesbetreuung. Die Zukunft öffentlich regulierter Kinderbetreuung in Privathaushalten. Weinheim/Basel 2004.

Variation in spending levels and funding regulations across Länder

157. Länder and communes are responsible for funding ECEC services in Germany. This leads to a variety of formulae for allocating resources and variations in how costs are distributed between different levels of government, voluntary providers and parents. We have already noted the wide divergences in costs to both municipalities (varying from 30% to 83%) and parents (from about 8-9% of total running costs to 20%) in the different Länder (see Box 3). In terms of regulations, most Land control only the subsidies that are provided by the state, whereas communities can themselves frequently decide how and to what extent they support the providers. This generates different resource levels and different levels of quality and access in different regions of Germany, and even between communities in the same state.

158. According to experts consulted by the team, the situation gives rise to negative consequences for young children and their families. One consequence – arising particularly from the low level of funding for services for children under 3 years in the ABL - is that conditions for balancing family and work responsibilities are unequal for parents across the country. Again, quality initiatives, such as the current move toward formulating and implementing a curriculum in each state, may or may not – depending on location – be accompanied by additional funding. More significantly, the wide variation in funding levels may also affect funding for children from low income and immigrant families. The team was informed that the extra staff and funding needed for these children is not foreseen in every community. In this situation, outcomes for young children may depend more on where one lives than on a comprehensive country-wide policy to address the issue of additional learning needs, an issue which needs a response from central government in countries with large immigrant and/or low-income populations.

159. The situation may be further aggravated by new approaches to funding services. Whereas previously it was usual for public funding to be calculated on the basis of actual costs per group provided (e.g., a kindergarten might provide for 2, 3 or 4 groups of children), the current trend is to pay according to how many children actually attend and to apply a notional (or average) cost per place. According to several informants, this has the effect of financially disadvantaging a centre with more experienced, and therefore more costly staff. The trend has the further effect of loading more of the risk onto providers, who can lose financially if they fail to fill all available places at all times of the year, or if they incur above-average costs by taking in children with additional learning needs, e.g. low-income or second-language children.

160. The variety of financial regulations leads also to uncertainty for the *Freie Träger*. In some states, for example, *Träger* receive only 20% of personnel costs from the Land, and are obliged to negotiate with communities for the rest. Such negotiations incur transaction costs, but there is little data on such costs, and in fact, on the real costs of centres provided by the *Träger*. In yet other situations, the *Träger* may receive 100% of costs, but without, in so far as we could judge, a link being made between these public subsidies and quality outcomes to be achieved. In fact, funding discussions seemed to focus more on business management perspectives and on increasing access rather than on quality outcomes for children and families. In this environment, moves toward improving the training and working conditions of staff – a vital component of quality – have been resisted at Land and local levels. ECEC goals seemed often to be determined by currently available budget, rather than attempting to match budget to the growing challenges and quality requirements of children's services today. The National Quality Initiative launched in 2001 provides hope that this approach will change and that training, systematic participatory assessment and the documentation of quality will come to the fore.

The prospect of the 'municipalisation' of funding

161. Another trend, just beginning to emerge, involves what might be termed the 'municipalisation' of funding. This involves a Land withdrawing from a direct role in funding, but instead transfers funds to municipalities who then take on the complete public funding role. However, just as federal funds to other

levels of government cannot be earmarked, neither can transferred Länder funds be earmarked for ECEC services. In sum, local authorities are free to decide how to use the money. This new system had recently been introduced in one of the Länder we visited; following new legislation which came into force in 2004, Baden-Württemberg has shifted complete financial responsibility for ECEC services to municipalities, from 2004 onward, transferring €394 million for this purpose within the framework of the Financial Equalisation Act. This development has been criticised by many experts as the quality of childcare may become dependent on the political priorities or the balance of powers within a municipality, which may lead to even greater funding differences among local authorities than already exist.

Weaknesses in research and data collection

162. The divorce between education of most ECEC workers and the tertiary sector where most research is conducted has already been mentioned. According to Oberhuemer (2004)

Academic staff in tertiary level institutions are expected to conduct research in their specialist area. In the early childhood field in Germany, this specific group of professionals with a cumulative knowledge of the field from a teaching, supervisory and research point of view is non-existent.

163. It is not surprising then that few university chairs in early childhood exist, fewer we were told than in Japanese Language, and only a small fraction of the number of chairs in other fields of education. This is matched by few postgraduate programmes, few dissertations and no academic journals with an early years focus. In consequence, the German research base in early childhood is unduly small, with no obvious means in current conditions of increasing its size; as one researcher put it, the area “lacks critical mass” while another researcher remarked “there is very little up and coming research talent in the field”, while a former government funder of research remarked that the shortage of specialist researchers presented problems when wanting to develop new projects.

164. Another consequence is that such research as there is has become highly dependent on funding from government (at either federal or *Länder* levels). It is focused on policy or evaluation-driven projects, where funders define the research questions, and there is little opportunity to undertake other forms of research. Most researchers we met agreed that there was “simply no university-level basic research to speak of in the area of early childhood pedagogy” (Schäfer, 2004; 1). Furthermore, the small size of the research base makes it difficult to break into the main source of basic research funding, the German Science Foundation, which is highly competitive and where the few early years researchers are competing with well established fields including large numbers of university-based researchers. This perpetuates a dependency on government funding.

165. In addition to a small research base, information on ECEC services at a national level is poorly developed. According to several informants at ministry and research levels, there are no regular or comparable data collected on use of ECEC services by children and families across *Länder*, either their numbers or their backgrounds. The same goes for comparable information on the costs of services and how these costs are met; one expert added that only a handful of people in Germany have an overall understanding of the funding system. As we have seen above, this is certainly linked to the federal structure of the German system where no clear responsibility exists for the research and monitoring infrastructure, on which effective systems must to a great extent rely.

166. The result is that the exact number of children actually attending services is not known, nor are the characteristics of users and non-users sufficiently researched. The Micro-census of 2001 did throw some light on actual use: at that moment, only 5% of children under 3 in the ABL attended a centre-based service compared to 36% in the NBL, while for 3 year olds (i.e. the first year for kindergarten) the figures were 54% and 87% respectively. After that attendance rates equalised (though there is no information on hours of attendance). Overall in Germany, 8% of 5 to 6 year olds were not attending kindergarten (despite

this being an entitlement), but there is little information on which children and families fall into the ‘non-attender’ group. The Micro-census found that non-German children entered kindergarten later than German children (though it should be remembered that the category ‘German children’ also includes some children of German origin but whose families have recently migrated to Germany) and were slightly less likely overall to attend kindergarten (25% compared to 19%). This may be an important piece of information in the context of PISA, which found a significant deficit in learning achievement among low-income children in German schools, while noting that low-income children achieved significantly better if they had attended a kindergarten.

Children with special learning needs

167. In Chapter 3, we saw that children with special learning needs fall into two main categories: children with disabilities (Category A) and children with learning challenges stemming from a combination of at-risk indicators, such as low income, ill-health, immigrant status, or family dysfunction (Category C). Book 8 of the German Social Code, the so often mentioned KJHG, confirms and encourages the inclusion of Category A children in mainstream services, as is their right in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In practice, however, there is, according to the German Background Report “no statistical base for a precise examination of the supply rate (of places in services actually used by these children). Estimates presume a share (participation) of 4-5% of children with disabilities, virtually unchanged for decades”. This seems a low rate of participation, an impression confirmed by our visits to services where, with one or two exceptions, children with disabilities were not to be seen. From figures supplied to the team, a much stronger effort to include has been made in the NBL, which maintain almost 3% of places for these children in mainstream services, compared to 0.84% of places in the Western Länder. But even these figures are uncertain about actual attendance, which is not reassuring.

168. The situation for Category C children – children from at-risk backgrounds - is equally unclear, although the German Background Report provides some telling figures, such as that only 64% of children from the lowest income families (€500-900 euros per month) ever attend a kindergarten. In general, insufficient data on these children exist at the official level – their actual numbers, their enrolment rate in services, the extent of proactive services in their favour at the *Land* level. It is evident – as with children with disabilities - that good will is present, but without data it is extremely difficult to make sound policy for these children, who above all, need high quality socio-educational services that practice outreach to their families and communities. Once again the necessity of a better data basis for the whole system of ECEC is stressed.

169. The results from the PISA study also indicate that a challenge exists in their regard. “The German education system has just not been successful enough in redressing the imbalances caused by inadequate, unfavourable family and social backgrounds.”(Schleicher, 2002). The study observed that there were often major differences in the cognitive and social conditions of children when they *begin* to attend school, which then tend to be amplified later in their schooling career. Low achievement scores were mostly recorded by children from at-risk, low-income backgrounds, but these performances were much improved by a previous attendance at kindergarten. As the PISA study also points out, “the German education system has definite strengths that allow for further development.” For example, The OECD team did visit an excellent programme – the Mo.Ki project in Monheim - an example of sound socio-educational practice in a very challenging area (see Box 8).

Box 8 – The pilot project Mo.Ki (Monheim für Kinder) – Monheim for Children

Monheim is a city of 44,000 inhabitants, situated on the Rhine in Nord-Rhein Westphalia. Approximately 11.5% of the population is foreign born, and the overall unemployment rate is almost 8%. The Mo.Ki project – Monheim for Children – is located in Berliner Viertel, a district of 11,000 inhabitants, many of them immigrants. Before entering school, 82% of the children from this district showed deficiencies that could more or less be attributed to socio-

economic and cultural factors. The Youth Welfare Office (Jugendamt) of the city and the Workers' Welfare Service (Arbeiterwohlfahrt) came together in 1999 to launch the pilot project "Mo.Ki" with the financial help of the State Youth Welfare Office. The main objective of the project is to prevent and overcome the consequences of poverty on young children from birth and throughout the education period. The project is highly integrated and is based on the cooperation of many agencies, e.g. school-, health-, drugs-, social pedagogy-, family- and employment-services.

The ISS, a research institute for social work and pedagogy, undertakes the scientific documentation of the project. It supports and follows the project from a participatory research perspective, and has contributed to the development of the child development and poverty prevention concept. It also collects and analyses the data, documents and tests the effectiveness of activities and approaches, and puts forward new hypotheses for consideration.

Mo.Ki then adopts a comprehensive approach to poverty, and has developed a series of inter-connecting programmes:

- The creation of a network of childcare centres across the district;
- The development of out-of-school provision;
- Enlarged programmes for parents and children together (open lunch, parents café...);
- Strengthening parental competences through parenting (pregnancy, birth, parenthood...) and adult education courses;
- Poverty sensitivity training for teachers, doctors, parents;
- Tackling the housing and socio-spatial challenges posed by this large concentration of poor families;
- Connecting with the main social and counselling services in Monheim;
- Integration of the entire project (its concepts, approach and activities) into the municipal youth services;

In sum, there are three main fields of action:

- *Preventive programmes for children: care and early promotion.* The expansion of preventive programmes for children in the sense of qualitative institutional day care fitting to the demand. To take early education of children seriously means to provide enough capacities for the children under twelve appropriate to their needs. This includes more flexible hours, more personnel especially in centres with a high percentage of poor and socially excluded children.
- *Strengthening parent's competencies:* The following factors contribute to the child's well being: - Regular activities within the family, - good atmosphere in the family, - at least one parent with good German knowledge, - no family debts, - adequate living conditions. Measures for parental counselling and education are included in order to strengthen the resources of families.
- *Building up a network of cooperation "Monheim for Children":* the city of Monheim developed an extensive programme of measures in order to ameliorate the image of the Berliner Viertel as a place for living. This has meant coordinating and connecting existing programmes in the district as well as motivation and support for new initiatives.

Childcare centres were chosen as the first line of action, not only because poor families use them at one time or another but also because of the greater impact of poverty on young children, as compared to its impact on parents and older children. In this regard, good quality early childhood services have a proven preventive effect, and provide not only security, care and early education for young children but also improve the family functioning and social participation of their parents, many of whom are unemployed.

For more information: <http://www.monheim.de/stadtprofil/moki/index.html>

170. This type of programme – and the background municipal policy – offers a better deal to immigrant families, who often have insufficient information about German early childhood services, and fear that their children may be alienated from their families and culture in mainstream mono-cultural kindergartens. Likewise, many of these parents – as is true also of some parents from all backgrounds – may have insufficient knowledge of early childhood developmental processes, and not least of language development. The Mo.Ki project confronts these challenges openly, but with respect for diversity and parental wishes.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

171. As we have already emphasised in Chapter 4, Germany has many strengths in the ECEC area, which provide a strong basis for the future. In particular we noted: rich and integrative concepts; a socio-pedagogical approach that includes outreach to parents and communities; extensive provision in part of the country; and an awareness of the need for change including more and better services, improved outcomes for young children, new relations between ECEC and school, and improvements in the situation of the workforce. At the same time, the problems Germany faces to some extent revolve around the complex German system and how this system can deliver the changes that many recognise are needed. In the conclusions that follow, we suggest a number of approaches as points of discussion for the major ECEC stakeholders in Germany. We are hopeful that these conclusions will be read in conjunction with Chapter 4, which discusses these issues in more detail.

1. Defining the field broadly

172. In this review we have considered not only services for children below school age but also school-age childcare services, relations between ECEC services and compulsory schooling (especially the first four grades in primary school), and parental leave. In considering future developments, we recommend that the field should be defined in a similarly broad way, i.e. for children from birth to at least 10 years: everything connects and it is no longer desirable (if it ever was) to consider pre-school services in isolation. Research tends to concur that, if possible, infants should be in a loving family environment during the first crucial year of life.²² If such is the case, societies need to put into place remunerated parental leave, thought out and financed in terms of the best interests of young children and equality of opportunity for women. Where toddlers and pre-school children are concerned, early services should maintain their unity and be given the professionalism to support developmental outcomes for young children suitable to their age and particular circumstances. The breadth of the field also concerns how the services in the field are conceptualised. In this respect, social pedagogy provides an admirably broad and integrative concept, with its outreach to families and communities, and its understanding of the importance and inseparability of *Betreuung*, *Bildung* and *Erziehung*.

2. Opting for a long-term strategy

173. As well as broad, there is a need to think long term. This means constructing an agreed view of (a) where Germany wants to get to over a period of 10 to 15 years in the broad field proposed above, and (b) the resources and processes needed to achieve this long-term goal. Current attempts to boost services in

²² Attachment theorists, such as Belsky (2001) advise a rather longer period – up to 2 years – for an infant to remain with the mother, but most researchers agree that children can benefit greatly from quality early childhood experiences during their second year. Sweden has adopted a remunerated parental leave of 480 days, of which 390 days are paid at 80% of the parent's qualifying income, and 90 days at a universally applicable flat rate of SEK 60/day; this is linked to a universal entitlement to a place in an ECEC service from 12 months of age. Only when there has been some crisis will children below the age of 12 months be seen in ECEC services in Sweden.

the ABL (e.g. the initiative to increase services for children under 3 and develop All Day Schools) are necessary as the corresponding percentage of provision in respect to demand is too low compared to present European standards, not to mention the access levels envisaged by the Barcelona European Council meeting, 16-17 March 2002.²³ These initiatives indicate a first step to be taken but do not really deal with a sustainable expansion of care.

3. Developing the Federal role

174. The development of ECEC services within the context of the broader field we have defined in Section 1 above needs, in the opinion of the review team, to involve all the current players. As well as the current private providers (*freie Träger*), this means all levels of government: Federal, *Länder* and municipal. The Federal government has played an important role and should continue to do so. We conclude this for a number of reasons: Developing ECEC, quantitatively and qualitatively, is in the national interest. The effectiveness of Krippe and Kindergarten contributes strongly to the whole education system and thus to developmental opportunities for children and society's innovation potential. The provision of ECEC services also involves issues concerning children's rights, which are a Federal responsibility and require certain common entitlements across the country. In the complex German system, it is helpful to have one player with an overview of national goals, and the ability to bring the *Länder* together, collect national data and monitor progress in reaching those goals.

175. Within the framework of the Constitution, the Federal government has exercised its responsibility for ECEC services through legislation, including defining common entitlements and requirements; indirect participation in funding; and the promotion of 'impulses' or initiatives, which have focused the attention of other players on important current issues. We think that these form the basis for a continuing Federal role: we suggest below possible future developments in the area of entitlement, funding and initiatives. In addition, the review team recommends that the Federal government should take a lead in four other areas, though in all cases working with other players;

- Develop a long-term strategy across the whole field defined in (1) covering both ends and means;
- Create a comprehensive research infrastructure in the ECEC field;
- Improve the data collection and information base, for example concerning the use of services and their funding;
- Monitor the quantitative and qualitative development of ECEC services, with special attention to children's rights issues, e.g. the achievement of defined outcomes for special needs and low-income children, and when necessary, the funding of affirmative action on their behalf.

As outlined in Point 13 below, if the Federal ministry is to respond adequately, serious consideration will need to be given to critical mass, that is, to endow the unit responsible for early childhood matters with sufficient resources both human and financial to undertake basic system tasks.

4. Creating effective mechanisms for partnership

176. The approach recommended above requires close collaboration between different levels of government and across different areas of policy and provision (parental leave, ECEC, primary schooling). As well as the Federal government, we also recognise the important role played by *Länder* governments in ensuring the development of services in their territory and by conferences of *Länder* ministers in creating common frameworks that provide a degree of national coherence. The review team concludes that it is

²³. The Barcelona conclusions state that Member States should remove disincentives to female labour force and strive, in line with national patterns of provision, to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years and mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age.

important to explore the development of these mechanisms. One possibility would be for the Standing Conferences of Education and Youth Welfare Ministers to establish a joint sub-group, with Federal government representation. This sub-group would have the remit to develop and oversee the implementation of long-term strategy across the field defined in (1), i.e. policies and services for children from birth to 10; it would provide a meeting place between education and youth welfare and between Federal and *Länder* governments.

5. Bringing negotiated solutions to conflicts of competence

177. In all democratic countries there is an unavoidable tension between centralisation and decentralisation, uniformity and local preference, and this tension is particularly apparent in federal states. In democracies, this tension is subject to constant debate and negotiation – there is never a final point, where all parties are satisfied. There is a strong value in decentralisation, not only as an expression of different perspectives and interests, but also as a means for stimulating innovation and change – where everything is the same, there is nothing left to provoke new thinking and practice.

178. We make these points in support of the devolution of powers, but also as a prelude to arguing that there is a need to review the present balance between diversity and national standards in ECEC. In particular, the review team questions the wisdom of proposing that children's access to services should be entirely dependent on *Länder* or local policy. The risks of such a proposal have already been recognised to some extent by a legal entitlement to part-time kindergarten enshrined within Federal law, and by the proposed new law setting down certain common criteria for admission to services for children under 3 beyond current obligations. As part of a long-term strategy for developing services, entitlement in federal law should be extended in stages until there is a universal entitlement from the age of 12 months. Although not an entitlement, this is already the *de facto* situation in the NBL, which at present can mostly ensure access for all children whose parents want a service.

179. Access also needs to be combined with a common system of funding, rather than the current situation where, for example, the amount parents pay varies from place to place. A standardised funding system should be put in place which ensures that services are either (in the longer term) free of charge to parents or that the fee system does not inhibit the use of services. To some extent, a move to such a situation will depend on seeing early childhood services as the foundation stage of lifelong learning, and as such, a right for children and a sound investment in Germany's future.

180. A wider and more difficult issue concerns whether there should be more standardised regulation of the ECEC system across Germany, for example through common standards, a shared curriculum or education plan and/or some generally applied system of evaluation. The review team see this as an ongoing debate, involving all players and which can be taken forward through the sub-group proposed in (4) as well as in many other forums. Whatever the negotiated position here, there will continue to be considerable diversity in these areas between *Länder*, though we can see no case for this diversity to be extended to differences between municipalities, through complete decentralisation of responsibility for services to this lowest level of government. This diversity could be productive, but only if it is associated with the rigorous development, application and evaluation of different approaches, and with ongoing monitoring by an external body. The Federal government could – and should - play an important part in this work of monitoring the practice and consequences of diversity across the country, a role which its present lack of critical mass (see Point 13) and the allocation of authority between the levels of the state largely prevent it from doing.

6. Supporting practice through in-service training, practice consultants and other well-trying quality measures

181. An important component of “rigorous development, application and evaluation of different approaches” is the improvement of systems and processes to support the development and improvement of practice. The basis for such support can already be discerned in Germany: in-service training; ‘consultation centres’; practice consultants; a new emphasis on observations of children; non-contact time built into the working week; systems of self evaluation. But further work is needed on all of them to ensure they work effectively. For example, it is important to know how staff use their non-contact time: how much, in practice, is available and used for reflection, reading, discussion and preparation? Oberhuemer (2004) also points out that in-service training has long been censured for its lack of coordination, while the general education of students and pre-service training are both criticised for not preparing “students adequately for systematic self-review or [informing] them sufficiently about various evaluation concepts and procedures” (16).

182. One area we would highlight in particular is the need to develop the role of practice consultants so that each works more intensively with a small group of centres, supporting workers to develop a deeper and critical understanding of their practice and its relation to theory. This in turn requires the development of tools such as pedagogical documentation which make practice visible and subject to analysis and evaluation (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999; Rinaldi, 2001) What we are recommending therefore is not only an expansion in the number of practice consultants, but a redefinition of their role alongside new methods of working. Experience from other countries shows that improvements across a system need the support of an experienced group of professionals who can work alongside centre staff to gain new understandings of pedagogical work and of children’s learning processes.

7. Increasing and stabilising the public funding of early childhood

183. The public funding of ECEC services in Germany appears relatively low (0.42% of GDP), compared to investment in the education system (5.3% of GDP) and to the level of investment in early childhood services of other European countries, e.g. Belgium, France, Denmark, Sweden, United Kingdom, which supply a part-day early education services free to children, generally from the age of 3 years. It is well below the target proposed by the EC Childcare Network (1996) of 1% of GDP (which comes to about a fifth of current public expenditure on education in most OECD member states). This is not surprising given the limited development of services for under-3s in the ABL, the low level of training and pay in the workforce as a whole, and the reliance across the system on parental fees. As part of a strategy to achieve the long-term development and education of young children and to encourage women to return to the labour market, the level of expenditure will need to increase substantially over a 10 to 15 year period. Already, the government is aware of the challenge and, within the bounds of what the law permits, is investing heavily in broadening access to children’s services below the age of 3 years, although as we have noted, several Länder and municipalities criticise the funding mechanism.

184. As presented to the OECD review team, the funding situation in the German kindergarten also needs attention. Although buildings, indoor and outdoor space, and materials are generally well resourced, investment in initial staff training and salaries needs a thorough review if kindergarten is to gain in quality and be considered as the foundation stage of lifelong learning. Staff working with children in ECEC programmes have a major impact on children’s early development and learning. Research shows the links between the quality of ECEC services and the training and support available to staff, including appropriate pay and conditions (Bowman et al., 2000; CQCO Study Team, 1995; EC Childcare Network, 1996a; Whitebook et al., 1998). In particular, staff who have more formal education and more specialised early childhood training provide more stimulating, warm, and supportive interactions with children, not least in the area of language (CQCO Study Team, 1995; NICHD, 1997; Phillipsen et al., 1997). The present

situation also has the disadvantage that as training takes place outside the university, the early childhood field remains to a great extent outside the field of university research.

185. Again, as our analysis in Chapter 4 concludes, the complexity of the German system of funding causes supplementary tensions and inequalities. Wide variations in funding to ECEC services exist across both Länder and communes, accentuated by new approaches, e.g. the “municipalisation” of funding, and calculations based on actual attendance by the children. This generates different resource levels and different levels of quality and access for children across the country and even between communities in the same state. The variety of financing procedures and support also leads to uncertainty for the *Träger* and limits their ability to respond adequately to new needs. Although precise data and information was again lacking, the review team was informed that the neighbourhoods most likely to experience difficulties in access or a lowering of quality (due to larger groups with less experienced personnel) were low-income and immigrant districts. Yet, children from such neighbourhoods require, in fact, not just equal but enhanced investment to pay for special activities, individual learning plans and extra staff that they need (see Box. 8 above on the Mo.KI project).

186. To our mind, these are challenges which need the leadership of the Federal government to resolve: i) to bring transparency and consistency into present funding arrangements; ii) to create the conditions through which the public contribution to ECEC funding can be raised; and iii) to ensure equitable treatment for at-risk children; and iv) to bring additional resources into early childhood education and care. Given the Federal system, this is not a straightforward matter as under present rules, the Federal government cannot transfer funds directly to the operating costs of ECEC services. We would encourage, however, the Federal ministry, the Länder, the local authorities and major stakeholders to develop together common funding standards and to put into place effective funding mechanisms, seeing children’s services as the foundation stage of lifelong learning and an opportunity for German society and economy.

8. Improving participation and outcomes for children with additional learning needs

187. In Chapter 3, we outlined the two major categories of children with special learning needs, namely, Category A children with disabilities, and Category C children who accumulate a number of risk factors, such as low-income, immigrant or second language status, a dysfunctional family, or ill-health. Much good work has taken place in Germany for both groups. We conclude for Category A children, however, that more information and follow-up on their actual inclusion in early childhood services is needed. This implies a proactive stance toward these children to ensure that they and their families have – as in many other countries – first call on services, and that their rights are protected by appropriate entitlement laws. Among other suggestions made to the team were requests for better funding to all kindergartens needing to employ specialised pedagogues, who would accompany these children with individual learning plans and provide support to families - this funding to be made available to *Träger*-run centres as well as to municipal ones.

188. Where low-income, children at-risk are concerned, research from other countries suggests that interventions toward at-risk children are more effective when:

Early learning programmes take place within a general framework of anti-poverty and community development policies. (Kagan and Zigler, 1987, Morris *et al.*, 2001, Sweeney, 2002). To break the poverty cycle and thus protect the socio-emotional development of young children from disadvantaged homes, wider issues such as employment and jobs training, social support, income transfers, housing policies, substance abuse and community resources need to be addressed.

Programmes are multi-functional and engage families as well as children: that is, programmes are strong on family engagement and support as well as providing high quality learning experiences to

the children. A national evaluation of the Early Excellence Centres in England has shown that integrated socio-educational services bring multiple benefits to children, families, and practitioners (Bertram *et al.*, 2002; Pascal *et al.*). In Germany, the Federal government is experimenting with and promoting this form of multi-functional services.

Programming is intensive: research indicates that the effectiveness of programmes for young children is enhanced by intensity (Leseman, 2002) and year-long duration (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2003). There is evidence to show that a structured, half-day, early learning programme on a school-term basis can be effective, and should be incorporated into all full-day services.²⁴

Programmes are pedagogically sound and conducted by appropriately trained professionals. A high quality programme in early childhood implies child-initiative, play and involvement, as well as structured programming. If a programme is over-focused on formal skills, it is more likely to provide opportunities for children to fail, and to develop a higher dependency on adults, promoting in them negative perceptions of their own competencies (Stipek *et al.* 1995).

Depending on the degree of disadvantage, *enriched health and nutrition inputs may be necessary to ensure that young children can take full advantage of the early childhood service.*

These elements, as can be seen from Box 8, are already being put into practice by projects such as Mo.Ki. The review team encourages such initiatives and recommends their dissemination toward all the *Länder*. Their results are important not only in terms of social cohesion but also in improving the life chances of the children involved, through ensuring their health and successful inclusion in school when the time comes.

9. Revaluing the workforce

189. By European standards, the German ECEC workforce has a low level of training. Germany and Austria are the only western European countries where there is no significant presence of workers in the ECEC sector with a basic education at a tertiary level. The inadequacy of the present education is widely recognised, as can be seen by widespread calls for moving the education to a higher level and a number of *Länder* introducing reforms although not moving the level at which education takes place.

190. Whatever course is followed, in the long term it might be inevitable that workforce costs will increase, in recognition of improved levels of education as well as to ensure adequate recruitment. The argument that improved recruitment and training will be too costly downstream is not sustainable in the longer term. Cost scenarios have been developed in other OECD countries, generally concluding that if high quality is desired, then it is necessary to upgrade professionals to deliver improved developmental and learning outcomes for children across the system. Once the long-term goal is decided, then the level, length and content of training can be defined, and the process and timing for achieving the goal can be determined. Because of the complexity of the work and the increasing demands made of ECEC workers, the review team recommends that future education should be at the tertiary level. This would have further benefits: supporting an equal relationship between ECEC services and schools; enabling ECEC workers to move on to take further qualifications; and developing an academic and research presence for ECEC in the university sector. The OECD team is aware of the responsibility for training being exclusively a *Länder*

²⁴ The Dutch research conducted by Leseman (2002) indicates that five half-day, structured programmes per week produces more effective learning than shorter sessional programmes. Full-day programmes are even more effective especially in at-risk circumstances. The Chicago research underlines the efficacy of bridging programmes across holiday periods.

task. This again is an area that could be the subject of a Federal-led initiative, promoting and evaluating a range of model projects to help determine the best way (or ways) forward.

Increasing the diversity of the workforce

191. Among the initiatives could figure a policy to increase the diversity of the workforce, bringing it more into line with the actual composition of the families and young children whom it serves, both from a gender (see the recruitment of men, below) and migration perspective. As explained in Chapter 4, the access of children and the relevance of services could be improved in immigrant neighbourhoods through the recruitment of more *Erzieherinnen*, social pedagogues and managers with a migration background. Both curriculum and the important task of outreach to families are enhanced when socio-cultural diversity is actually put into practise as a conscious policy, and not least in recruitment policies. In addition, when attention is given to diversity in early childhood centres - the beginning of the child's induction into society - there is greater probability that the successful inclusion of young children from immigrant backgrounds will take place, and continue into school. To increase rapidly the diversity of the workforce may present certain challenges, but an approach to the issue in consultation with the training colleges and *Träger* could quickly become an opportunity for students from immigrant backgrounds, and a valuable resource for public education and society.

Family day carers

192. Re-valuing the workforce also means addressing the position of family day carers, who will have an important part to play in the future development of ECEC services, especially in areas with few children where centre-based services may prove difficult to sustain. However, the team is strongly of the opinion that the present situation of family day carers is unsatisfactory, and provides little basis for future development. A proper basis must start from the recognition that they are part of the ECEC workforce engaged in important work. This means improved training (and there are good examples already in place that can be extended); secure employment; a proper wage (related to training and no lower than that of an assistant in a centre); a full inclusion in the labour market, including access to health, unemployment and pension rights; and the development of organisations to support and connect family day carers.

Men in ECEC services

193. Finally, the near absence of men in ECEC work should not be taken for granted: it reduces the diversity of the workforce and, in the long run, will make recruitment increasingly difficult. The review team is aware there are no instant solutions to this problem. However, around Europe there are a range of projects seeking to find ways to attract more men into education and employment, and Germany can and should be developing similar projects. Once again, this is an area where a Federal initiative, in collaboration with interested *Länder*, could lead to the development of a range of model projects. Consideration should also be given to setting a long-term target for men in the workforce; the EC Childcare Network (1996) proposed 20% as a level providing 'critical mass', and the Norwegian government has also settled on this target.

10. Improving the relationship between ECEC and school, while respecting the independence of each

194. We began by recommending that Germany should define the age range from birth to 10 as a field for development, and that this development should include the relationship between ECEC services and schools. The issue is not just about better cooperation and 'preparation for school': it goes deeper. These two services – ECEC and school - have different traditions and understandings, for example about education and their image of the child. The school may think kindergartens fail to prepare children adequately, but the kindergartens may themselves think the school has a limited view of education and

pays insufficient attention to the individual child. This situation can lead to bad relations and the fear of 'schoolification' – the domination of ECEC services by a powerful but unreformed school system. This applies not just to services for children below compulsory school age but also to non-school services for school-age children. The situation is further exacerbated by the greater social and economic status of teachers compared to practitioners in ECEC.

195. The issue comes back to the meaning of a 'strong and equal' relationship between ECEC services and schools and how this might be achieved. The alternative to school domination is what Dahlberg and Lenz-Taguchi (1994) call 'the vision of a new meeting place' based on an understanding of each sector's traditions and existing culture and the search for new and shared understandings of the child, knowledge, learning and education. There is some evidence in Germany of a recognition of this issue and a willingness on all sides to reflect and reform. These positive indications need to be further encouraged, and the review team encourages the Federal government and the *Länder* to launch a project linking kindergarten and school in a more effective way. This is one reason why we have recommended a broad policy field and an inter-ministerial government forum that encompasses ECEC and primary schooling. It is also the reason why we highlight relations between ECEC and school as a key area for research. Ideally, as is the case today in many countries, there should be continuity between the kindergarten and primary school curricula. This calls for the collaboration of representatives from both systems in this and other fields. We also think the relationship should form the basis for a third Federal-led initiative, picking up on the suggestion made in one of the centres visited that there was a need for model projects on ECEC/school relations.

11. Creating a focussed learning environment in ECEC services

196. Following on from the characteristics of effective intervention in favour of children with special learning needs, the OECD team is encouraged by the present focus on quality and learning in services for young children in Germany. This involves moving forward on several fronts, e.g.

- *Raising the pre- and in-service training of staff* to enable them to deliver ambitious developmental and learning outcomes for children from 1-6 years;
- *Improving goal-setting and monitoring of services both at local and national levels.* Important policy levers here are: to formulate clear developmental goals and standards for early childhood services; to monitor adherence to these within each Land and feed back monitoring results annually to the principal stakeholders (*Träger*, *Erzieherin* and parents); to establish support systems to which staff and centres have easy and regular access;
- *A reappraisal of the situation approach to take into account cognitive necessary competences for children, including readiness for school.* The situation approach – based on the actual or foreseen life situations of children with the aim of helping them to develop an understanding of the situation and an ability to deal with it – is a rich and useful approach to kindergarten education. At the same time, research shows that young children who have acquired basic competencies 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 competencies 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. In parallel, this implies: raising the pre- and in-service training of staff; improving goal setting and monitoring of services; and re-appraising the situation pedagogy approach has to take into account more clearly defined outcomes.

197. However, these findings should not blind policy makers to other essential features of early childhood learning. PISA concludes, for example, that positive staff-child relationships are an important component in successful learning at any age. Other research shows that where young children are

concerned, involvement in freely-chosen play, intentional planning of activities, social participation and direct interaction with the environment are important components of learning (Zigler *et al.*, ed.s, 2004). Children's play is a key to learning, but one which is easily misunderstood. Intentional, extended play conducted by children promotes cognitive development, including language skills and vocabulary, problem solving, perspective taking, representational skills, memory and creativity - but this type of play needs the presence, support and inputs of professional staff. Social interaction with other children is equally important for young children and fosters the development of non-cognitive factors that are essential for learning, including emotional self-regulation. Zigler concludes: "...political winds allow one extreme view to quickly rise to popularity, only to be replaced by another view. Clearly, what is needed is a balanced approach that is based on the best child development research and sound educational practice."

198. The OECD team noted with satisfaction that much progress is being made in theorising early learning in Germany, whether through the National Quality Initiative, the conduct of mixed-age and integrated kindergartens, and through the ongoing discussion about the training and qualifications of the professional staff.

12. Building up research

199. Germany has good researchers in the ECEC field, doing important work. It is clear, however, that the research base is quite incommensurate to the size of the field and that it has become too dependent on government funding. Attention needs to be given to how the research infrastructure can be developed. One route proposed was through a research programme funded by the German Science Foundation, although it seems uncertain that this can be guaranteed given the problems of a small and isolated field being able to compete effectively for funding with more developed fields. It may be necessary therefore for consideration to be given to government funding (Federal and *Länder*) for strengthening the existing base, for example through funding more chairs and departments in universities, perhaps connected to a reform of education for the ECEC workforce. This should form part of the long-term vision and strategy that we have proposed.

200. An important feature of the current research scene is a range of interests and approaches, combined with a respectful relationship between researchers working within different research paradigms (perhaps facilitated by the current research community being so small that it seems possible for everyone to know everyone else). The existing research community, or those members of it that we met, already have a range of research subjects that they would like to develop. This diversity seems an important feature that should be sustained. Other areas of research that we recommend include: the study of childhood and the consequences of increased institutionalisation; the relationship between ECEC and school; and policy analysis in a number of areas, including co-ordination, funding, training and programming for low-income and immigrant children. We would also encourage moves to make research accessible to practitioners – as, for example, in Finland - through initial training in research methodologies and through ongoing action research at the local level in collaboration with research professionals.

201. It will be also necessary in the coming years to develop and to improve the data and information systems both at Federal and *Länder* levels. This may require, at least at Federal level, the development of national data sets on young children and their services in Germany, and the use of sophisticated statistical analysis models.

13. Ensuring critical mass, particularly in the policy and monitoring field

202. ECEC services cover a large part of the child population and are increasingly recognised to play an important role in modern societies – economically, educationally, socially and culturally. Yet in Germany (as also in many other countries) the present position of these services is more marginal than

their importance merits. They receive a small share of public funding, the workforce have lower levels of education and training, and throughout the system there is an absence of what might be termed 'critical mass' – not least in the policy-making field. By this we mean that key groups are small in size and often isolated. They continue to struggle to make their voices heard when putting forward the interests of young children in competition with longer-established groups. We have already mentioned several instances of this, e.g. the small research base in ECEC, insignificant in numbers and volume of research compared to school education.

203. The same is true in government, at all levels, where the concept of 'critical mass' should form part of the long-term development of ECEC services. In England, for example, the number of administrators engaged at central level in ECEC policy and administrative matters is substantial, as early childhood is given top priority. Even taking into account differences in structure and volume of the ECEC system, this is not the case in Germany. At local level, according to our interviews, the situation is one of concern: some municipalities have knowledgeable and committed officials trained in early childhood policy and organisation, but this is not generally the case. Even within the professional workforce, there are few persons with higher levels of qualification who might form a cadre of well educated and articulate practitioners able to forge links with areas such as research and policy.

204. The concept of critical mass also raises strategic questions about how best to develop particular areas. Should research, for example, be built up across a range of universities and institutes – or be concentrated in a small number of large centres? Should attempts be made to concentrate the education and employment of men in designated courses and centres, rather than spread them around colleges and centres in ones and twos?

14. Stimulating international exchange

205. There is a recognition in Germany of the value of sharing experience, reflected for example in the concept of 'consultation centres' in the NBL or in the collaborative approach adopted in Federal initiatives. This should continue to form part of the development of services in Germany. This exchange process should be extended to encourage the development of sustained relationships, covering theory and practice, between *Länder* and between Germany and other countries. This is already happening to some extent: to take just one example, German centres are actively involved in a European network of researchers, policy makers and practitioners concerned with diversity issues in early childhood services (DECET).

206. At this time of transition in German ECEC, with a recognition of the need for development and change, these foreign exchanges should be extended and supported. To take four examples:

- The development of initial training for ECEC workers in Germany might well benefit from ongoing dialogue with Denmark and Sweden, neighbouring countries whose ECEC work is based on comparable pedagogical theory and practice. In past decades, they have conducted similar debates about the pros and cons of more specialist or more generic education for early childhood professionals. Although coming to different conclusions, both countries have maintained a unified vision of services for children from 1-6 years, open to families and communities.
- The development of a more gender mixed workforce in Germany would benefit from participating in the network of projects which is beginning to take shape in Northern Europe (including the Nordic countries, Belgium and the UK).
- The development of more effective support for practice and its evaluation would benefit from exploring approaches adopted in parts of Northern Italy, in particular Reggio Emilia. For example, an analysis of the tool of 'pedagogical documentation' and the role of the 'pedagogista'

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