

Report: Germany needs more than 200,000 day care spots ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

Germany is scrambling to accommodate an ever-growing demand for day care. A new study shows there isn't space for roughly one out of 10 children under the age of 3.

A report by the Cologne Institute of the German Economy (IW) says 10.4 percent of children under the age of 3 in Germany cannot be sent to day care by their parents. The German newspaper "Rheinische Post" noted the report on Friday.

The states with the highest percentage of children without a place in day care were mostly in the country's western region, with North Rhine-Westphalia - the most populous German state - reporting a rate of 13.4 percent. Former East German states had the lowest rates, at under 5 percent.

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) faction said the government will continue to improve funding for day care services. The faction says an additional 100,000 seats will sufficiently meet demand for day care. In mid-December, the cabinet adopted a draft bill to provide 1.126 billion euros (\$1.188 billion) in funding to the states for day care assistance.

Parents in Germany have had the right to send children under the age of 3 to day care since 2013. However, parents have expressed concern at relying on a system that assigns them a day care, rather than allowing them to select one.

Germany experienced a sharp decline in birth rates per women after 1966, falling from 2.53 births per woman to 1.45 births in 1976, according to the World Bank. A parental assistance program, Elterngeld was put in place to boost Germany's lagging birth rate. Since its implementation in 2007, the birth rate has climbed slowly from 1.37 in 2007 to 1.50 births per woman in 2015, still far below the suggested rate of 2.1 births per woman.

Neighboring EU nations have also reported similarly low rates, with none of them recording more than 2.1 births per woman in 2014.

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