

Study shows improvements in German pre-school care ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The child to preschool teacher ratio in Germany has decreased, possibly improving the level of care, according to a new study. Despite the positive national trend, there are still large differences among German states.

More teachers are caring for children in nurseries and kindergartens across Germany, according to a Bertelsmann Foundation study released on Wednesday.

The national average for 2015 showed that for every full-time kindergarten teacher, 9.3 children were under their care. Compared to 2012, the national average for kindergartens was 9.8 children per teacher.

Ratios in nurseries improved in 2015 as well, with 4.3 children per full-time caregiver, compared to 4.8 in 2012.

The numbers still fell short, however, of the Bertelsmann Foundation's recommended ratio of three nursery-age children or 7.5 kindergarten-aged children per teacher. In Germany, children from a few months to 3 years are generally seen as nursery-aged, and kindergarten children are generally between 3 years old and 6 years old.

The study authors said the staff proportions can be an indicator of care quality in nurseries and kindergartens, since children receive more individual treatment when teachers and caregivers have fewer children in a group.

East-west divide

Despite this year's positive trends, the study authors lamented the large regional differences between German states. Educational opportunities differ greatly based on where the child lives.

Researchers found that ratios in the southwestern state of Baden-Württemberg were lower than other regions with 7.3 kindergarten-aged children per teacher. Conversely, in the northeastern state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the ratio was almost twice as high with 14.1 children per teacher.

"Attending a daycare center alone does not improve children's educational opportunities. It depends on the quality that is on offer," said Jörg Dräger, an executive board member of the Bertelsmann Foundation.

The foundation, therefore, has recommended that an additional 107,000 full-time positions for teachers in nurseries and kindergartens which would cost upwards of 4.8 billion euros (\$5.32 billion) per year. Dräger admitted that funding such a measure would be difficult and would require the cooperation of federal, state and local governments.

Germany's Family Minister Manuela Schwesig welcomed the results of the study, but also stressed the need for equality between the states, saying that the governments need to develop "a common understanding of quality" for daycare facilities.

The minister added that child to teacher ratios are an important indicator, but not the sole measure of care quality.

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Region: Europe ^[3]

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