

Childcare-policy responses in the COVID-19 pandemic: unpacking cross-country variation ^[1]

Author: Blum, S., & Dobrotić, I.

Source: Taylor & Francis Online

Format: Article

Publication Date: 13 Oct 2020

AVAILABILITY

Access full article online ^[2]

Excerpts from Abstract

From mid-March 2020, childcare services and schools were closed around the globe in the fight of the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation, unprecedented in the history of modern welfare states, brought striking cross-country differences in pandemic childcare-policy responses. They varied particularly in the re-opening phase – both in being more lenient or strict, and in being universal or selective. This article presents a conceptual framework that allows to unpack and classify variations in the design of immediate childcare-policy responses to COVID-19, which became (primarily) driven by public-health-related goals and therefore transverse existing conceptualisations. We argue that specific responses are resulting from a country-specific combination of pandemic prevention strategy (either focused on high-risk groups or the whole population), and childcare-related policy concerns (e.g. educational goals, or work-family reconciliation). The distinct childcare-policy responses are then developed, and empirically illustrated on the basis of data collected for 28 European countries. This provides a basis for future research into the cross-country variation of responses, as well as gender and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Related link: New study explores variation in COVID-19 school and childcare policies across Europe ^[3]

Region: Europe ^[4]

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