

Federal government aims to make Swiss childcare cheaper ^[1]

Switzerland has the world's fourth most expensive childcare according to UNICEF. The federal government is working on a package of financial subsidies costing CHF 530 million a year to reduce the cost to parents, reported RTS.

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

A 2021 UNICEF study of childcare in rich nations ranks Switzerland as having the fourth most unaffordable childcare, a measure that considers the cost relative to income. The only places with more unaffordable childcare are Cyprus, the US and Slovakia. Switzerland also ranks in the bottom one third on quality.

Switzerland, Ireland and New Zealand have the least affordable childcare for the middle class. Two earners on average wages would need to spend between a third and a half of one salary to pay for two children in childcare.

Parents in Switzerland rely heavily on informal care, or care provided without remuneration by relatives, friends or neighbours. In rich countries, 27% of children under 3 and 29% cent of children from age 3 up to school age rely on such care for at least an hour a week. However, in Switzerland this percentage for children under 3 is 40%. Only Romania (53%), Slovenia (47%) and Czech Republic (47%) have higher percentages. Low rates of informal care in the countries with the most affordable childcare suggest that friends and grand parents are not helping out of love of the task. Third-ranked Sweden and fourth-ranked Norway show informal care percentages of only 0.1% and 0.4% respectively.

To improve Switzerland's ranking the federal government aims to make childcare more affordable by subsidising it. The plan presented on Tuesday includes subsidies of between 10% and 20% of the average cost, which would be paid directly to parents regardless of their income. The payments would be combined with subsidies paid at the cantonal level and are forecast to cost CHF 530 million. Cantons currently offer payments of between 5% and 10% of the cost. The federal government is urging cantons to increase these amounts.

In addition, a current project aimed at creating more childcare places is expected to be extended. CHF 160 million of federal money is being earmarked for this purpose.

Region: Europe ^[3]

Tags: child care ^[4]

cost ^[5]

subsidy ^[6]

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