

Germany

Country Profile on the European Semester and COVID-19 crisis from a children's rights perspective

Contributor:

Arbeitsgemeinschaft für
Kinder- und Jugendhilfe (AGJ)

15%

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Children at risk of poverty or social
exclusion (AROPE) in 2019

Alternative Recommendations

Supporting children and families in the context of COVID-19 in the short term:

- The government should develop a road-map for upcoming waves of the coronavirus and for future crises in close cooperation with civil society. It should also set up support services for children and families in the event of a lockdown.
- It should ensure the participation of children and youth in political processes during times of crisis.

- It should enable NGOs to offer their services to all children and young people and support the professionals with adequate protection measures and greater flexibility in providing services.

Supporting children and families in the context of COVID-19 in the long term:

- The government should secure financial stability for all NGOs and service providers.
- It should include children and youth in finding solutions and take their views into account.
- It should support more flexibility in providing services.

Summary of Ratings

Government's support for families and children during the COVID-19 pandemic:



Positive EU impact on more child-centred legislation at national level:



2020 Country-Specific Recommendations:



Child Poverty

Impact of the COVID-19 crisis

Government support

The government's support to families and children during the crisis was sufficient. Indeed, the government provided an allowance of 300€ for every child under 18, and made it easier to get access to an additional allowance for families in difficulty. The government also provided compensation for loss of income due to child care (for a maximum of 20 weeks)

Negative developments

Children were heavily affected by the loss of social contact with peers, which sometimes resulted in loneliness among children and young people. For parents it has been increasingly difficult to manage their work and take care of their children at the same time.

Children and young people are not visible in public discourse and

have lost a significant part of the participation rights they had before. Hence, the participation of children and youth in Germany didn't seem to be a priority during a crisis.

Although social organisations were very engaged in finding creative solutions, we registered restricted access to social services to support children and families in need due to lockdown and a rise in cases of domestic violence against children and/or women.

Numerous NGOs are facing an important loss of funding, although there are some measures in place to support such organisations. Furthermore, there is a considerable administrative effort to be made in order to receive supporting resources. Civil society organisations also had to face great uncertainty over how services can be maintained/continued and how professionals can be protected.

Good practice

- Video messages and letters from teachers and educators were sent to children in their care.
- Online platforms were set up to allow professionals working in the crisis to share best practices and find creative solutions to adapt their job to the safety measures.
- Numerous support services were offered via online tools or telephone.

Policies for Investing in Children

National strategy to tackle child poverty

- Germany does not currently have a national strategy to tackle child poverty, although there are debates about a system that covers all services for children under one single framework (Kindergrundsicherung).
- There is a crucial need for a national strategy to tackle child poverty. The AGJ is currently asking for a long-term strategy to tackle the high risk of poverty for children, young people and families.
- A priority would be to strengthen the education and care system, taking in due consideration early childhood education and care. There is an urgent need for a more inclusive and just educational system in combination with social policies that prioritise the reduction of social inequalities.

- In the last few years the government's approach towards children's rights has improved. There is indeed a debate going on about the inclusion of children's rights in the constitution of Germany, which was agreed on in the coalition agreement of the current government. Nonetheless, there seems to be no consensus among the two coalition parties about the wording and the scope of this change, so hopes about the reform of the constitution during this legislative period are actually dwindling.

EU influence on national developments

The involvement of the EU in promoting children's rights has been adequate. Yet, the EU could play an active role in supporting the current process of including children's rights in the constitution. Showing strong support for this constitutional process as well as financial

incentives via specific programmes would make a difference.

The Country Specific Recommendation states that Germany should invest in digital skills and digital infrastructure. AGJ supports this statement and highlights that Germany needs to invest more into equal living conditions in rural and urban areas. The 'digital divide' needs to be addressed. Furthermore, the digital skills of the young generation as well as the professionals working with children and youth need to be enhanced, which makes further financial support necessary.

For more information, please consult the [2020 Eurochild Report](#) or contact Enrico.Tormen@eurochild.org and Zuzana.Konradova@eurochild.org.