



Germany

Tackling child poverty and promoting the social inclusion of children

A Study of National Policies

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May 2007



On behalf of the
European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

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Summary

- The poverty rates between the different sources and analysis differ, but nevertheless they agree that the child-poverty rates are higher than those of the whole population and that they are increasing.
- Income poverty increases of the population living in poverty as a whole and among children and youths. In terms of social assistance, from 1994 to 2004 the number of recipients of subsistence grants has grown by a total of 29.7 %. The increase among German recipients amounted to 26.2 % and among foreign recipients to 44.2 %. Higher than the increase among all recipients was the rate among those between 18 and 21 years of age (+ 74.0 %) and those between 21 and 25 years of age (+ 49.6 %).
- Accordingly, ca. 8.4 % of the population live in a condition of *solidified poverty* and have an income at their disposal amounting to no more than ca. 43 % of the average of all incomes. Beside the disadvantages by the income (less than 50 percent arithmetical average) there are at least 2,3 more deprivations (of four: housing, consuming, savings and unemployment). This group is nearly all the last five years affected by poverty (solidified and/or an easier kind of poverty).
- The Study on Child Poverty by AWO/ISS has clearly shown that treating the poverty of the household/the family as equivalent to the poverty of children/youths is incorrect. Although a strong correlation between poverty of the family and of the children exists the authors provide evidence too that children in non-poor life situations may in fact live deprived, whereas conversely children coming from a poor life situation may actually live in a condition of well-being. This depends on the intra-familial-distribution, the social and cultural capital of the parents.
- As a rule, children experience their own situation in life “realistically”, with other words, they react somatically and psychosomatically in a similar way as adults experiencing the same life situation. Poverty means as a rule that the educational extension of the stage of childhood and adolescence carried through for middle-class children in the 19th century is significantly shortened. As in previous proletarian lives, these stages are more strongly brought to a head in terms of early material independence from the parents.
- The health status of children and youths from the lower social strata is clearly worse than that of children and youths from higher social strata. This refers for one to the attitude towards health. Children and youths from the lower social strata also live more dangerously.
- The German education system is socially selective to a significant degree. In this context, the long-term AWO/ISS Study has worked out the mechanisms and thresholds virtually bringing this selection process to a conclusion as early as at the end of the primary school age. To children from the lower social strata, an altogether closer tie to the nuclear family becomes evident, fewer friends outside the family, lower participation in sports and cultural events (clubs, leisure-time activities etc.). Children from the lower social strata, including those with a migration background, enter school late, more often repeat a year at primary school already and eventually get the less favourable recommendation for attendance of a secondary school at the end of the fourth school year.
- These points lead in a lesser integration of children and youths from the lower social strata into social processes and structures. In how far one can talk about a “Prekariat lagging behind” [a group/milieu of persons living in a precarious situation without a chance of being reintegrated into social life in the foreseeable future] in this context cannot yet be judged finally, although it is evident that excluding impulses for certain life situations are emanating from the large social systems labour

market, school and recreation to such an extent that they can only be compensated for - if at all - by employing massive means in the form of money and services.

- The federal government principally recognises poverty and social exclusion among children and youths in its objectives as important problem. But the prevention and combating of child poverty can not be described as political priority which would in fact be connected with concrete political goals and measures “to take necessary steps to rapidly and significantly reduce child poverty, giving all children equal opportunities, regardless of their social background”. A concrete goal for the development of crèches and day care has in fact been set, but with regard to the child benefit supplements no decision has been made as yet, whether this will go beyond mere technical changes. During the current political debate about minimum wages and/or add-on wages subsidised by the state, a family-oriented component going together with them does not play a role so far.
- Hardly a problem has so far been made in public debate out of the contradiction between the diagnosis of family policy that the birth rate must be increased, because otherwise a country lacking in raw materials would be threatened with a shortage of subjects of “human resource”, whereas on the other hand many children and youths living in Germany actually face great difficulties to avail themselves of their social and participation rights under poverty conditions and thus can hardly develop their potentials. Insofar, one can demand to supplement the existing viewpoint on family policy at least to a stronger degree by elements of a policy of children’s rights.
- In April and May this year a significant step has been done politically. All state levels had a day-care summit and had declared their consensus, that until 2013 a quota of day-care offers for one third (35 %) of all children under the age of three has to be reached. At the meeting of the coalition parties at the federal level, they underline this target and adopted their will to set up an act, which guarantees a legal claim on day-care for parents with children of this age from the year 2013 on. If such an act will be adopted, it would be a significant step to promote the combining of work and family life – especially for women – and would be a significant cultural chance for the family and gender policy in Western Germany.
- There is no lack of data on poverty among children and youths and on the mutual consequences for the different dimensions of social exclusion in Germany. There are also ideas and concepts what well-being for children and youths means. Numerous projects, models and initiatives exist. What is missing is an approach which would integrate dimensions of poverty and political levels. Time and again, a contradiction becomes apparent between a policy of social balancing with a fixation about the legal and social status of the family of origin, leading to considerable, socially graduating consequences, and a claim that poverty among children must not/should not exist. But if families with a history of migration, families of single parents and unemployed persons and even households of skilled workers are before all subjected to an especially high risk of solidified poverty and to life situations in poverty on the whole, a conclusive concept against poverty among children would have to start out exactly from these predetermined breaking points. However, the introduction of child benefit supplements in the context of unemployment benefit II reveals the very dilemma in the conservative welfare state: Poverty - the welfare payment unemployment benefit II - is warded off for the price of applying a means test in accordance with poverty policies, hence of poverty remaining poverty. But before all, a central modification of poverty policy in the conservative welfare state itself is needed, namely a departure from a causal policy, turning round to a purpose-orientated policy with the goal that poverty is to be avoided, prevented, overcome, first of all among children and youths. But this means children and youths from families or households of the socially underprivileged. Consequently, monitoring and policies must adapt to this perspective.

I. Framework

The 10th Report on Children and Youths of 1998 was a turning point in the discussion about poverty in Germany. Whereas enquiries on the development of poverty and wealth by the SPD and THE GREENS, while in opposition, were answered by the federal government made up back then by CDU/CSU/FDP to the effect that no social polarisation existed in Germany, the report itself revealed high poverty risk quotas among children and youths.¹ The term “infantilisation of poverty”² known so far only in scientific community became part of the public debate. The *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* (AWO - Workers Welfare Association), a voluntary welfare institution, then took the initiative and commissioned the *Institut für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik* (ISS - Institute for Social Work and Social Paedagogics) to prepare a long-term study on poverty among children in the age of the kindergarten. The publication of the final report on poverty in the pre-school phase in 2000³ touched off a response in the media which was without precedent in connection with poverty questions in Germany up to this date: Extending far into the politically conservative and economically liberal camp, it was branded as scandal that not only the chances for the future of these children, but of society as a whole would be greatly jeopardised. The SPD-Green federal government which was in office between 1998 and 2005 took up this subject in the political field and in addition to the 1st Report on Poverty and Wealth, among others by means of improving the direct financial transfers to the benefit of children, but also by getting down to extending the all-day offers for children of pre-school and primary school age. When the federal government intended to push up these plans after the publication of the results of the International Comparative PISA Study⁴ which were hardly flattering for Germany, the *Länder* vehemently pointed out their constitutional competencies and put the Federation in its place. Nonetheless, the policy pursued by the current Minister for Families, von der Leyen (CDU), essentially follows the tradition of this policy which has led, before all in the last few months, to a fierce public debate about the policy of the CDU/CSU for families.

Children and youths in Germany are not per se poor or rich. In this group we encounter to an increasing degree a social polarisation which is not only growing within society as a whole, but also shows a tendency to solidify. In a more recent study, the condition at the bottom of the social scale has been characterised as “precarious life situation” (“Prekariat”).⁵ Children and youths in Germany have never had as much money for spending as today. They have become a much sought-after group of buyers.⁶ But while some are inheriting, ca. 14 % of children and youths between 13 and 20 years of age have debts, on average € 426 per juvenile.⁷ Childhood and youth intended as a phase of primary and secondary socialisation and hence as preparation for taking over individual and social responsibility

¹ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (Hg.) (1998): Bericht über die Lebenssituation von Kindern und die Leistungen der Kinderhilfen in Deutschland. Zehnter Kinder- und Jugendbericht. Stellungnahme der Bundesregierung zum Bericht der Sachverständigenkommission. Bericht der Sachverständigenkommission, Bonn.

² Hauser, Richard (1997): Vergleichende Analyse der Einkommensverteilung und der Einkommensarmut in den alten und neuen Bundesländern 1990 bis 1995, in: Irene Becker und Richard Hauser (Hg.): Einkommensverteilung und Armut. Deutschland auf dem Weg zur Vierfünftel-Gesellschaft?, Frankfurt am Main, page 76.

³ Hock, Beate u.a. (2000): Gute Kindheit – Schlechte Kindheit? Armut und Zukunftschancen von Kindern und Jugendlichen in Deutschland. (Erster) Abschlussbericht zur Studie im Auftrag des Bundesverbandes der Arbeiterwohlfahrt, Frankfurt am Main.

⁴ OECD PISA, Programme for International Student Assessment: Schülerleistungen im internationalen Vergleich. Im Auftrag der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung. Internet: www.mpig-berlin.mpg.de/pisa.

⁵ Müller-Hilmer, Rita (2006): Gesellschaft im Reformprozess, Studie der TNS Infratest Sozialforschung im Auftrag der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn / Berlin; Reimann, Anna / Seith, Anne (2006): Verloren, verarmt, verdrängt. Unterschicht-Debatte, Untersuchung der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, SPIEGEL ONLINE, 16. Oktober 2006, www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/0,1518,442859,00.html.

⁶ Lange, Elmar (2006): Jugend und Schulden 2005, Studie im Auftrag der SCHUFA im Rahmen des Schulden-Kompass, Bielefeld.

⁷ Fries, Karin R. u.a. (im Erscheinen): Teure Jugend. Wie Teenager kompetent mit Geld umgehen, Opladen.

seems to become to a constantly increasing extent a phase of separation between those who are “in” and those who are “out”. Politics have so far just begun to recognise the socially explosive nature of this social polarisation co-determined by the intervening variables gender and ethnicity, and failed to develop till now a cohesive strategy in the welfare state graduated between the Federation, Länder and local authorities, including public and voluntary welfare work, how this process can be counteracted.

II. Extent and nature of child poverty and well-being in Germany

1. Income poverty

In Germany, there are many different sources to ascertain (child) poverty. The most important are the Income and Consumption Survey (EVS), the Mini-Census, the SOEP, the figures of social benefit receivers, of unemployment benefit II and special researches with an own data basis for example the AWO/ISS – Children-poverty study. All these sources differ in regard to the sample, the unit of investigation and the use of the old or the new OECD-scale etc. As poverty threshold mostly now is taken the 60 percent of the equivalence average income, but also 50 percent of the arithmetical equivalent income is used. The researcher of AWO-ISS-Study were not able to ask the children between 3 – 6 years in the kindergarten, so they made interviews with the nursery school teacher to get information about the family background of the children. That's why: The poverty rates between these sources and analysis differ, but nevertheless they agree that the child-poverty rates are higher than those of the whole population and that they are increasing. If one is interested in a long term reflection, one has to remain in one system, at least one has to compare the data of each system by itself.

The empirical evidence is clear: The data regularly ascertained by the *Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung* (DIW - German Institute for Economic Research) within the framework of the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP)⁸ reveal an increase of the population living in poverty as a whole and among children and youths:

Groups of persons affected by poverty in Germany, 1997 and 2004

Poverty threshold: 60 % average:	Poverty quota 1997	Poverty gap 1997	Poverty quota 2004	Poverty gap 2004
Population at large	10.9	20.1	12.7	21.9
Male	10.2	20.4	11.8	21.9
Female	11.6	19.8	13.4	21.9
Age up to 10 years	12.9	19.2	14.8	22.5
Age 11 - 20 years	16.2	19.7	18.4	21.4
German	9.8	19.3	12.0	22.0
Non-German	24.2	23.5	23.8	20.7
Secondary modern school, without leaving certificate	18.4	21.5	23.5	24.0
Unemployed	30.6	22.7	42.1	23.9
Single-parent household	37.2	19.2	35.8	24.7

Source: Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) 1997, 2004

Jan Goebel, Roland Habich, Peter Krause: Einkommen - Verteilung, Angleichung, Armut und Dynamik, in: Statistisches Bundesamt: Datenreport 2006, Bonn 2006, page 617 ff. (excerpt)

Almost every 6th child under the age of 6 and almost every 5th child and 5th juvenile under the age of 20 live in poverty. As becomes evident here, the distance of the income situation of children and youths living in poverty to the poverty threshold ("poverty gap") does not deviate significantly from the average of the population. Unfortunately, the SOEP does not provide figures for children according to gender and ethnicity. However, the poverty quotas for women as well as for non-Germans are all in all higher

⁸ Corresponding to the EU-poverty-definition the SOEP takes almost the 60 percent threshold (mean) of the equivalence-income of the households. The empirical base is a yearly survey with about 12,000 households with about 24,000 persons. Because the SOEP has an own sample the poverty rate differs from other, but it is the most actual statistical base for all households in Germany.

than those for men and Germans. The survey referred to here falls back upon the weighting of household members according to the more recent OECD scale. However, as already discussed in our previous reports, the older OECD scale - giving more weight to children - conforms better to the structures of expenditures in Germany. If this older OECD scale is taken as basis, higher-than-average poverty quotas (and hence target groups accorded political priority in the fight against poverty) virtually turn round between single-person households on the one hand and children, youths and young adults on the other hand, whereas single-parent households are affected by income poverty extremely far more than average according to both scales. Finally, three other social selection criteria which are highly relevant for the poverty of children and youths should be mentioned here, namely leaving the general education system without completing secondary modern school, unemployment and finally the life situation of single parents.

Judging by the recently published figures of the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) for 2005, this trend has even intensified.

Poverty, Prekariat and Prosperity in Germany, 2005

Zone from ...	Persons in p.c.	Income in p.c. of the average income
Sure prosperity	45,9	131,8
Unstable prosperity	26,1	89,0
“One side poverty”	3,8	68,2
Temporary poverty	5,7	68,6
Precarious living (Prekariat)	10,1	60,9
Solidified poverty	8,4	43,1
total	100	100

Source: Olaf Groh-Samberg: Armut in Deutschland verfestigt sich, in: DIW-Wochenbericht No 12/2007

Accordingly, ca. 8.4 % of the population live in a condition of *solidified poverty* and have an income at their disposal amounting to no more than ca. 43 % of the average of all incomes. Beside the disadvantages by the income (less than 50 percent arithmetical average) there are at least 2,3 more deprivations (of four: housing, consuming, savings and unemployment). This group is nearly all the last five years affected by poverty (solidified and/or an easier kind of poverty). Another 10 % of the population lives in a precarious situation and at an income level of barely 60 % of the average; together, this constitutes a poverty quota of ca. 18 %. These assessments also show that the risk to live in solidified poverty affects before all workers, extremely the unskilled but the skilled too.⁹ The risk-quotas are extremely arising since the nineties. Although this assessment does not make a statement on children and youths, it is evident that before all children from special risk groups have to suffer specifically from impoverishment. The DIW summarizes: “The zone of unsure prosperity declines the whole period. And the zone of extreme poverty is declining since the beginning of the nineties.”

⁹ Groh-Samberg, Olaf: Armut in Deutschland verfestigt sich, in: DIW – Wochenbericht Heft 12/2007, page 177 ff. In this study the DIW differs in several points from other studies: They are taking the arithmetical average income. They take the threshold 50 percent for extreme poverty, 50 – 75 % percent as easier kind of poverty and 75 percent and more one side poverty.

Social assistance and unemployment benefit II

From 1994 to 2004 - according to the relevant figures at the end of a given year -, the number of recipients of subsistence grants as part of the social assistance system has grown by a total of 29.7 %. The increase among German recipients amounted to 26.2 % and among foreign recipients to 44.2 %. Higher than the increase among all recipients was the rate among those between 18 and 21 years of age (+ 74.0 %) and those between 21 and 25 years of age (+ 49.6 %). In the age group from 18 to 21 years, the increase among German recipients of grants was even higher than among the foreigners. Altogether, 744,389 children under 11 years of age and 376,565 children and youths between 11 and 18 years of age, hence a total of 1.12 Mill. children and youths up to the age of 18, received subsistence grants in 2004.¹⁰

Because of the new regulations since 2005 concerning long-term unemployed persons and the introduction of unemployment benefit II (ALG II), including social assistance, the social statistics have become more honest. This means: The former covered part of poverty – persons who have the right for social support but who do not apply for it – has been diminished a little bit more, because the emotional threshold for ALG II seems to be less high than for social benefits, as researcher presume. On the other side there are quite different suggestions about the real volume of child poverty right now. Without any doubt we have now between 1,8 and 1.9 Mill persons under 18 years who receive social support in form of social benefits or in form of Sozialgeld (SGB II).¹¹ But also now the covered poverty last on. The *Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk* (German Children's Relief Association) estimates the number of children and youths affected by poverty in 2006 to 2.5 Mill., that means that the covered part of poverty remains rather high.¹²

According to scientific as well as practical insight, the participation in all-day care is of great importance for the social integration especially of socially underprivileged children. However, the Code of Social Law II (SGB II) fixes social assistance for children having attained the age of 14 at 60 % and for youths as from the age of 15 at 80 % of the standard rate in ALG II amounting to € 345. For children under the age of 15, this means an amount of € 209. This sum includes a daily amount of just € 2.38 for all food and beverages.¹³ Depending on the weighting of the individual meals, this means an amount of between € 1.31 and € 1.05 for a lunch. But the actual amounts for a lunch in an all-day facility, for example a day care centre or a crèche, range from € 1.80 to € 3.20. Obviously, participation in a fixed lunch is not provided for in the SGB II! If visiting a pre-school day care facility for children already fails because of the costs of a meal, how much more are these children falling behind in other areas of a child's life: contacts to friends, membership in clubs, materials for work in the kindergarten and in the school etc.: Although policy demands integration, all-day-care, the necessity of more contact to German children in the child facilities by migrants etc. here we see one mechanism to exclude especially children with a special need from practical integration! Some municipalities try to refinance these special costs for daily lunch, but it is voluntary and depends on the financial situation.

¹⁰ Statistisches Bundesamt: Sozialleistungen. Fachserie 13, Reihe 2.1: Sozialhilfe – Hilfen. This development is not new in Germany: The group between 18 and 25 years since the beginning of the long period of unemployment in the middle of the 1970ties has a higher increase than other groups. This depends mostly to the German vocational training system, because there are tow high thresholds: one between school and vokational training system and between this an the employment after vocational training.

¹¹ Source: Bundesagentur für Arbeit, Nuremberg, quoted by: Frankfurter Rundschau 12 May 2007, page 2: 2007 „at least 1,82 Mill. children“

¹² www.deutschland-fuer-kinder.de (01.12.2006).

¹³ Holz, Gerda (2006): Lebenslagen und Chancen von Kindern in Deutschland, in: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte. Beilage zur Wochenzeitung Das Parlament, Heft 26/2006, page 3.

Child-specific notion of poverty

The Study on Child Poverty by AWO/ISS – we reported several times in the past - has clearly shown that treating the poverty of the household/the family as equivalent to the poverty of children/youths is incorrect.¹⁴ Although a strong correlation between poverty of the family and of the children exist, the authors provide evidence too that children in non-poor life situations may in fact live deprived, whereas conversely children coming from a poor life situation may actually live in a condition of well-being. This depends on the intra-familiar-distribution, the social and cultural capital of the parents. Therefore, this study also asks what catches on with the children under poverty and non-poverty conditions, with other words how the intra-family distribution or the handling of the social and cultural resources of a family promotes or prevents manifestations of deprivation among children (“child-centred poverty research”).

Children according to economic situation and well-being or deprivation

Life situation	Poor children	Non-poor children	Total
Well-being	23.6	46.4	40.2
Deprivation	40.3	39.8	40.0
Multiple Deprivation	36.1	13.7	19.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Beate Hock u.a.: Frühe Folgen – langfristige Konsequenzen? Armut und Benachteiligung im Vorschulalter, 4. Zwischenbericht, Frankfurt am Main 2000, page 77 (excerpt)

Health

The EU poverty threshold - 60 % of the average income - is by now consistently used in Germany in the field of income poverty, but not for other indicators of the life situation. Here a distinction according to social strata is still made. Therefore, the social status of the parents is given more emphasis than the poverty threshold in the further course of the study.¹⁵

The health status of children and youths from the lower social strata is clearly worse than that of children and youths from higher social strata. This refers for one to the attitude towards health. Children from lower social strata and households of long-term unemployed persons make use of precautionary medical checks to a considerably lower degree. The vaccination status is also clearly worse. In addition, expenditures for dental hygiene and sports activities are lower. A significantly larger number of children from the lower social strata are obese, and the passive consumption of media is clearly higher. Besides, there are deficits in the provision of food. High-calorie, low-fibre meals and beverages containing sugar predominate. This correlates for one with the low household income, but is also connected to acquired behaviour patterns. Youths from lower social strata are smoking at an earlier age and more frequently than their age group in the middle and upper strata, emulating their parents in this regard as well.¹⁶

Psychosomatic illnesses are becoming apparent to an increasing degree. 11 % of the male youths and 19 % of the female youths between the ages of 11 and 15 who are affected by poverty suffer from headache several times a week. Stomach-ache and sleep disorders are observed as well. Anxieties up to depressions are clearly overrepresented. Finally, children and youths from the lower social strata live

¹⁴ The researcher of AWO-ISS-Study were not able to ask the children between 3 – 6 years in the kindergarten, so they made interviews with the nursery school teacher to get information about the family background of the children.

¹⁵ As a very large quantity of data on the individual life situations of children and youths are available in Germany, only the most important trends and, where applicable, deviations from them can be mentioned here.

¹⁶ Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk: Kinder und Jugendliche in Deutschland 2006. Zahlen, Daten Fakten; vgl. u.a. Sachverständigenrat zur Begutachtung der Entwicklung im Gesundheitswesen (2005): Koordination und Qualität im Gesundheitswesen, Gutachten, Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 15/5670 vom 09.06.2005, page 75 ff.

more dangerously: They are more frequently the victims of accidents. Among parents from the lower social strata we are likewise facing a clearly higher proneness to accidents. Apparently, the circumstances of life of the adults are already reflected in the pre-professional environment as well. There is only one field where children and youths from the lower social strata are leading a healthier life: They are suffering to a significantly lower degree from allergies than their peer group living in better social circumstances.

Child care, education, vocational training

Since 1999, each child between 3 and 6 years of age is by law entitled to a (half-day) place in a kindergarten. Accruing fees are to be paid by the parents, however, impecunious parents can be exempted from these fees wholly or partially. But in fact, it can be observed that fewer children from the lower social strata, and especially those with a migration background, are attending a day care centre, especially among the group of three-year-old and four-year-old children.¹⁷ One reason for this is the key criterion of being employed as a parent to get one of the few places in many municipalities (the unemployment rate differs significantly between Germans and migrants and between social strata). The cost for a day-care place might be another reason for parents with low income (above the social assistance threshold), but also the family situation and cultural values seems to play a role.¹⁸ Nevertheless, a set of criterions for access which is sensible against social exclusion, the increasing of the supply and the cost reduction for parents seems to be possibilities to remedy this situation. As a consequence of the current situation, timely practicing of the German language often does not take place at all or only with delay in this particular target group. During the last few years, a clear appreciation of the problem has developed in Germany that crèches for children under the age of 3 and all-day care facilities for children as a whole up to the age of 10 also need to be made available to an increasing degree. The supply with such facilities is low in West Germany, whereas in East Germany it has already reached the level aimed at throughout Europe for the year 2010 (for resent policy action to increase the supply see Chapter III.2).

PISA has made it clear by worldwide comparison: The German education system is socially selective to a significant degree.¹⁹ In this context, the long-term AWO/ISS Study has worked out the mechanisms and thresholds virtually bringing this selection process to a conclusion as early as at the end of the primary school age. Among children with a migration background, these are essentially the linguistic deficits which are also solidified by the late integration into groups with native German speakers. Among other children from the lower social strata, an altogether closer tie to the nuclear family becomes evident, fewer friends outside the family, lower participation in sports and cultural events (clubs, leisure-time activities etc.).²⁰ Whereas attendance of kindergarten is voluntary, school attendance is compulsory in Germany as in all EU states. However, the AWO/ISS Study on Child Poverty shows empirically that before all children from the lower social strata, including those with a migration background, enter school late, more often repeat a year at primary school already and eventually get the less favourable recommendation for attendance of a secondary school at the end of the fourth

¹⁷ Statistisches Bundesamt: Bildungsbericht 2006, page 150.

¹⁸ Deutsches Jugendinstitut (2006): Wer betreut Deutschlands Kinder? DJI-Kinderbetreuungsstudie, Medieninformation, 7 November 2006, www.dji.de.

¹⁹ OECD PISA, Programme for International Student Assessment: Schülerleistungen im internationalen Vergleich. Im Auftrag der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung. Internet: www.mpig-berlin.mpg.de/pisa; vgl. aktuell: Groh-Samberg, Olaf: Armut in Deutschland verfestigt sich, in: DIW Wochenbericht Nr. 12/2007, page 177 ff.

²⁰ Holz, Gerda / Skoluda, Susanne (2003): Armut im frühen Grundschulalter. Abschlussbericht der vertiefenden Untersuchung zu Lebenssituation, Ressourcen und Bewältigungshandeln von Kindern im Auftrag des Bundesverbandes der Arbeiterwohlfahrt, Frankfurt am Main, page 135 ff.

school year.²¹ It seems that quite a few pupils draw their consequences from this situation very fast: They evade this selection filter through irregular school attendance or by playing truant. There are estimates that ca. 10 % of children and youths of school age follow this “career scheme”.²²

The figures on the training situation of youths are varying considerably. Whereas the Federal Agency for Employment reports 15,700 youths still without a training place in January 2007 (2006: 11,900), the trade unions proceed on the assumption of clearly higher figures: during the last few years, they say, a total of ca. 30,000 - 50,000 young people each year had not been provided with a training place.²³ At the same time, ca. 500,000 youths are covered by vocational substitute measures with low professional perspectives according to a recent study by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The number of youths managing the leap from school into a regular apprenticeship is declining as well (at the moment ca. 43 %). Before all, poorly qualified youths with or without having completed secondary modern school are put on hold.²⁴ In addition, a “generation practical training” is emerging in Germany. Affected are (often even well qualified) youths and young adults who either hope to have better chances to find a training place, when they can show evidence of practical (unpaid) experience, or thus want to improve entry into working life after completion of their training.

Recently published figures of the Federal Statistics Office show the result of these processes: 43 % of the recipients of unemployment benefit II who are under the age of 25 did not finish school or only completed secondary modern school, and 73 % did not complete vocational training.²⁵ Attempts to provide these young adults subsequently with general educational and/or vocational qualifications are on the one hand sensible, but on the other hand promise success to a limited degree only, because they improve the perspectives of gaining a foothold in working life only marginally in view of high mass unemployment.

Housing and safe environment

The supply with housing has, all in all, improved in Germany. At the moment, each person is on average entitled to ca. 41 sqm living space. However, the housing supply is regionally and locally distributed very unevenly. Housing which is affordable for the lower social strata is frequently lacking before all in the West German conurbations and particularly for families. Very often, children and youths from poor households do not have a domestic place of retreat nor a social and ecological living environment promoting their development.²⁶

Socio-physical studies for individual German cities reveal a clear socio-physical segregation of residential quarters where a higher-than-average number of people with social integration problems are living. Heavy competition for affordable, but poor housing, places in day care centres, jobs etc. is taking place there. These town districts are frequently located in the busy city centre and at large arterial

²¹ Holz, Gerda u.a. (2005): Zukunftschancen für Kinder. Wirkungen von Armut bis zum Ende der Grundschulzeit. Endbericht der 3. AWO-ISS-Studie im Auftrag der Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband e.V.; Berlin.

²² Vgl. hierzu Hinweise etwa des Senats von Berlin sowie Berichte in verschiedenen Tageszeitungen; Butterwegge, Christoph u.a. (2003): Armut und Kindheit. Ein regionaler, nationaler und internationaler Vergleich, Opladen, page 127 ff.

²³ cf. Knapp 50.000 Jugendliche ohne Ausbildungsstelle, www.bildungsklick.de/a/33948/knapp-50-000-jugendliche-ohne-Lehrstelle/Artikel; cf. Größere Lücke bei Lehrstellen, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 30 January 2007.

²⁴ Vgl.: Immer mehr Schulabgänger drehen Warteschleifen, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 2 February 2007.

²⁵ Die Welt, 28 December 2006, page 11.

²⁶ Holz, Gerda / Skoluda, Susanne (2003): Armut im frühen Grundschulalter. Abschlussbericht der vertiefenden Untersuchung zu Lebenssituation, Ressourcen und Bewältigungshandeln von Kindern im Auftrag des Bundesverbandes der Arbeiterwohlfahrt, Frankfurt am Main, page 150.

roads; life is clearly more dangerous there than in green housing districts at the periphery. Strain caused by noise, odour and dust is higher, and the possibilities to play in fresh air are considerably limited.²⁷

Other social services

Studies on individual cities prove that especially socio-educational and socio-psychological assistance is increasingly offered in the “better” town districts, whereas it is lacking in the problem areas. As this assistance is, as a rule, based on middle class-related preconditions of socialisation (oral expression, medium-term job perspective etc.), children and youths from the lower social strata are more than others put at a disadvantage in two ways: For one, the access hurdle is locally higher, and secondly, there are access barriers specific to their social class.²⁸

Culture

How can an appropriate cultural supply and the access to cultural offers be defined? So far, there is a lack of adequate notions of culture relating specifically to social strata, but also to youths. In view of the predominance of a definition of culture orientated towards the middle class, children and youths from lower social strata remain, as a rule, excluded by definition, because they are socialised in other formative environments which are normally more remote from education. However, this does not necessarily have to be tantamount to worse conditions of life, especially if a subjective level of experience is taken as basis.

What is problematical in this context in any case are the cutbacks in the funding of voluntary services of child and youth work in many towns (and *Länder* as well). The first successful citizens’ initiative in North Rhine-Westphalia in 2005, opposing the cutbacks in child and youth work, made it clear²⁹ that these cuts affect before all recreation facilities for youths which can no longer offer their programmes to their full extent or must even close completely. But the closure of swimming pools, public libraries, library buses, holiday programmes for children and youths etc. also affects in the first line children and youths from households with low income.

Sports

“Romping around makes smart!”³⁰ Whereas sports activities are for the most part related as a variable to health and physical development, their contribution to the intellectual development needs to be paid attention to at least to the same degree. With the development of physical forces and skills, new scopes and possibilities are conquered and at the same time new modes of assimilation and intellectual stimuli are provided. Therefore, children and youths whose living space and environment already provide them with less space to live out their physical abilities are facing not only worse health conditions, but also worse start-off chances for the development of their own intellectual abilities. And this is frequently

²⁷ cf. Sozialberichte aus den 1990er Jahren etwa der Städte Essen, Hamburg, Hannover etc.

²⁸ Holz, Gerda / Skoluda, Susanne (2003): Armut im frühen Grundschulalter. Abschlussbericht der vertiefenden Untersuchung zu Lebenssituation, Ressourcen und Bewältigungshandeln von Kindern im Auftrag des Bundesverbandes der Arbeiterwohlfahrt, Frankfurt am Main, page 156 ff.

²⁹ Huster, Ernst-Ulrich / Benz, Benjamin / Boeckh, Jürgen (2004): Implementation of the National Action Plan of Germany against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPincl) on the Regional and Local Level. Second Report 2004 of the Non-governmental Experts, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/3de_en.pdf, page 17 ff.

³⁰ Zimmer, Renate (2005): Toben macht schlau! Bewegung statt Verkopfung, 2. Aufl., Freiburg im Breisgau.

accompanied by strain profiles among the adults (shift work, hard physical work, double strain caused by job and family etc.) which greatly impair the role of the parents as models.

The AWO/ISS Study on Child Poverty reveals a clearly lower participation of poor children in activities of sports clubs and also other clubs. This is connected for one to the financial contributions, but also to habits, traditions etc. Within the limits of their financial possibilities, local authorities are attempting to make access to public sports facilities, for example public swimming pools, easier for children and youths. But it appears that this is a financial relief affecting the middle class households more strongly than the lower social strata, as the latter refrain from making use of these sports offers either because of their attitude and/or the additional own payments to be made.³¹ It seems that football clubs are best able to tie children with a migration background to themselves.

Recreation facilities

Because access to certain cultural and sports activities is restricted, the field of recreation is all in all limited to the family sphere, the media-related possibilities given there and the peer groups to be found in the social living environment. This has consequences for the consumption of media, with media competence being increasingly limited to merely receptive use, whereas the use of more complex possibilities is rather not taking place, even if the digital hardware, including access to the internet, is there. More than thirty per cent of the German population is excluded from the opportunities of the digital media. This correlates in a specific way with school education and the professional position. But it is also a consequence of the uneven technical equipment of the different school forms.³²

There still are leisure-time activities offered by the local authorities, welfare associations, churches and others, for example within the framework of open youth welfare work and holiday programmes. Open youth clubs are often visited by a clearly disproportionate number of youths from lower social strata and with a migration background. These voluntary services, for example those offered by the municipalities, are often facing the necessity to prove their worth to the public budget holders. On the other hand, these clubs sometimes also cannot minimize social exclusion, because youths from the higher social strata prefer other forms of leisure-time activities. And on occasion, some groups - often ethnically cohesive - try to keep other youths out of these clubs.

Discrimination

The Shell Youth Study of 2006 enquires about experience with discrimination and violence. Although this study warns not to assess each scuffling on the school yard as violence, it nonetheless becomes clear that children and youths from the lower social strata have more experience with discrimination and also with violence than children from the upper strata. A distinguishment needs to be made here between horizontal discrimination among equals and hierarchically vertical discrimination, with the variables gender and ethnicity playing a large role again.³³

³¹ Holz, Gerda / Skoluda, Susanne (2003): Armut im frühen Grundschulalter. Abschlussbericht der vertiefenden Untersuchung zu Lebenssituation, Ressourcen und Bewältigungshandeln von Kindern im Auftrag des Bundesverbandes der Arbeiterwohlfahrt, Frankfurt am Main, page 143 ff.

³² Statistisches Bundesamt (2006): Informationstechnologie in Unternehmen und Haushalten 2005, verfasst von Ulrich Greiner u.a., Wiesbaden.

³³ Shell AG (Hg.) (2006): Jugend 2006. 15. Shell Jugendstudie, Frankfurt am Main.

Subjective poverty, children's view about poverty, personal

As the AWO/ISS Study on Child Poverty has shown, poverty can be "kept" from the children by at least some parents for a certain time; and conversely, children can experience negative developments, although their parents could be of greater assistance to them at least materially. As a rule, children experience their own situation in life "realistically", with other words, they react somatically and psychosomatically in a similar way as adults experiencing the same life situation.³⁴ Poverty means as a rule that the educational extension of the stage of childhood and adolescence carried through for middle-class children in the 19th century is significantly shortened. As in former proletarian lives, these stages are more strongly brought to a head in terms of early material independence from the parents.

2. Problem groups

People with a migration background

Great differences need to be made within the large group of people with a migration background. In internationally active business enterprises there are numerous persons with a migration background. Foreigners from EU countries and their children in Germany usually have no problems or only minor problems of social integration. Among the young foreigners staying in Germany, Turks and South Italians are especially affected by the risk of social exclusion. Studies show that even children of the third generation are not integrated any better than their parents and grandparents. The main cause among children and youths of Turkish origin are language problems. For example 68 percent of the Turkish and 67 percent of the Italian and Portuguese pupils are visiting only the secondary modern school (Hauptschule) and only 10 percent of the Turkish and Italian and 11 percent of the Portuguese pupils are going to the grammar school. In comparison: Only 22 percent of the German pupils are going to the Hauptschule, but 45 percent into the grammar school.³⁵

A second non-homogeneous and relatively small group which is nonetheless significantly threatened with discrimination are persons of Asian, but before all of African origin. This includes people from EU states and North America with black African ancestors. When even children and youths with a dark skin holding German citizenship are discriminated, their peers with foreign citizenship are all the more the target of occasional xenophobia. For all that, everyday discrimination often begins even some stages prior to that, when searching for a flat or a job and elsewhere.³⁶

Another problem in Germany are immigrants of German origin from Eastern Europe, before all from Russia. Whereas the older ones among them, unless already drawing a pension, accept work at almost every condition in order to finally obtain a certain standard of living, the children and youths are sometimes facing great difficulties - depending on their age at the time of moving to Germany - to gain a foothold at school and in their environs in view of great difficulties with the German language. Often cliques are forming who speak Russian in daily life. Their integration at school and in vocational training

³⁴ Zenke, K.G. / Ludwig, G. (1985): Kinder arbeitsloser Eltern. Erfahrungen, Einsichten und Zwischenergebnisse aus einem laufenden Projekt, in: Mitteilungen aus der Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung, Heft 2/1985, page 265 ff.

³⁵ Erich Stutzer: Bildungsintegration von Migranten, in: Statistische Monatshefte Baden-Württemberg, Heft 9/2005, page 7; Wolfgang Jeschek: Ausbildung junger Ausländer in Deutschland, in: DIW-Wochenberichte Nr. 27/2007; Mit dem Heimatland verbunden. Integration von Ausländern in Deutschland 1985/2000, in: WZB-Mitteilungen, Heft 101, September 2003

³⁶ cf. Sabetta, Giuseppe (2005): Ausländerdiskriminierung auf dem Wohnungsmarkt, Hamburg; Cyrus, Norbert / Vogel, Dita (2002): Ausländerdiskriminierung durch Außenkontrollen im Arbeitsmarkt?, in: Mitteilungen aus der Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung, Jg. 35, Heft 2, page 254 ff.

leads to considerable problems, as does the spreading of deviating behaviour and offences by juveniles within these cliques.³⁷

Violence against children

According to German law - Civil Code - humiliating punishment of children is prohibited. The times where a thrashing "has not done harm to anybody yet" - a maxim as late as during the 1950's - are largely gone. Nonetheless, there are reports time and again that children are beaten, tormented and partially even injured by their own parents with such intensity that they die. It is conspicuous that it were - so it seems - almost exclusively German parents who were responsible for the cases of most severe child abuse and infanticide.

Nonetheless, deviating patterns depending on ethnicity sometimes exist. As an example, it is estimated that a significant number of unreported cases of murders decided by a clandestine family tribunal in the name of honour are committed, when for instance young women of Turkish origin refuse to follow the institute of prearranged marriage and marry the man chosen by their father. One can assume that below this stage of violence other forms of mental and physical oppression especially of young Turkish women exist. They result from the sometimes strong discrepancy between traditional, occasionally fundamentalist ideas of the parents or male siblings on the one hand and the experience and demands of everyday life facing young Turkish women in the German society. On the other hand, studies also reveal that the large majority of Turkish girls experience the relationship to their own family as quite good, affectionate, protective and supportive.³⁸

All in all, it can be said that (regardless of ethnic affiliations) the sensibility of the public towards the use of violence has increased at least with regard to children. Hints from the public to the authorities as well as reports in the media that violence is used in families are becoming more frequent. The number of cases of gross neglect, child abuse and infanticide eventually documented in the crime statistics has not increased significantly during the last few years. Abduction and trafficking of children are fortunately a rather peripheral problem in Germany.

Other problem groups

Before all the early and then increasing consumption of alcohol and nicotine strongly depends on the social class. Addiction to stuff among older children and youths can also be observed in Germany. Whether the excessive consumption of alcohol up to unconsciousness ("coma boozing") is more of a youth-related or class-related problem needs urgently to be observed further in future.³⁹

The road scene of big cities - as for example Berlin - is meanwhile characterised by urchins as well. Some of them come from abroad, mostly from Eastern Europe and especially from Russia. But children and youths without a migration background are also on the streets. The number of urchins in Germany is estimated at ca. 1,500 to 2,500. But the number of children and youths who partially still live at home - whatever this may mean in particular - and partially change their whereabouts rather frequently is likely

³⁷ Zwischenwelten. Russlanddeutsche Jugendliche in der Bundesrepublik. Archiv der Jugendkulturen Verlag KG Berlin 2003; Generell zu Migration und Kriminalität: Bukow, Wolf D u.a. (2003): Ausgegrenzt, eingesperrt und abgeschoben. Migration und Jugendkriminalität, Wiesbaden.

³⁸ Boos-Nünning, Ursula / Karakasoglu, Yasemin (2004): Geborgen mit hohem Anspruch. Junge Migrantinnen fühlen sich in ihren Familien nicht eingeeengt, Dokumentation, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 21 December 2004, page 7.

³⁹ cf. Vollrausch mehrmals die Woche, Themenseite, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 17 March 2007.

to be much higher. To be added are also children and youths who are accommodated as in-patients in institutions of the youth welfare system, then stay away, until they eventually end up in such institutions again - up to reaching majority. In this connection, typical forms of drug-related crimes, irregularities and administrative offences are occurring, as are the consumption of drugs and sometimes even prostitution.⁴⁰

Circles of organised crime sometimes misuse children and youths from Southeastern Europe systematically for burglaries in Germany. In addition, there are also gangs and groups resident in Germany who systematically steal, threaten and partially extort money. Here again, they often are, in almost all cases, the victims of adults who take advantage of their difficult situation.⁴¹

But there is also original crime, although for the most part in the form of drug-related crime and property offences to provide for everyday life - up to the theft of cars. In the field of juvenile delinquency taken on record, no trend towards an increase of acts of violence can be observed as far as the number of criminal offences is concerned. However, a special problem are the so-called "intense offenders" who become conspicuous time and again in spite of educational help and sanctions provided for under criminal law relating to young offenders. Besides, the practice of juvenile court assistance shows that before all in the case of personal injury it is not so much the number, but rather the intensity of individual offences which is increasing. New technical possibilities lead to new manifestations in this regard as well. For example, videos of acts of violence are shot with mobile phones and exchanged. The internet offers a multitude of possibilities escaping any kind of control and empirical recording. The extent and intensity of property offences between juveniles is not clear. Newspaper reports point out time and again that children and youths are systematically robbed or forced to hand over money (so-called "skinning") by other juveniles.⁴²

3. Intervening variables

Intervening variables influence general trends in a special way without reversing this overall trend. They do not form problem groups, but effect them in a general and particular sense.

Regional differences

The living conditions of children and youths, like those of adults, are regionally determined to a considerable degree. They depend on the regional and local economic data, educational and vocational training offers, the living environment etc. In East Germany, the economic structural change has at best come to a standstill, but has not yet reached a turning point at all. Consequently, perspectives for children and youths are lacking there more than elsewhere, although the offer of pre-school day care is much better than in West Germany. Therefore, many youths and young adults try to find work and a livelihood in West Germany.

⁴⁰ bettelarm: Straßenkinder in Deutschland, www.st-ursula-attendorn.de/Klassen/sowi/ba/badoku02.htm; Terre des hommes: Straßenkinder in Deutschland: Kein Vertrauen in Erwachsene, www.tdh.de/content/themen/schwerpunkte/strassenkinder/deutschland.htm&te...

⁴¹ Leclerc, Florian (2005): Kinderbanden räumen Wohnungen aus, in: FAZ.NET, 27 June 2005, www.faz.net/s/RubFAE83B7DDEFD4F2882ED5B3C15AC43E2/Doc...; Zur Diebin erzogen. Kinder werden von kriminellen Banden nach Österreich gebracht und hier zum Stehlen gezwungen, www.kripo-online.at/portal/0505diebin.asp; Auf dem Weg zur Prävention. Eindrücke aus Rumänien, <http://home.snafu.de/strohalm/files/pdf/September99.pdf>

⁴² Gallwitz, Adolf von / Zerr, Nobert (Hg.) (2000): *Horrorkids? Jugendkriminalität: Ursachen und Lösungsansätze*, Hilden; Richter, Daniela (2006): *Die Biografie jugendlicher und heranwachsender Mehrfachtäter. Ursachenforschung von Jugendkriminalität und Rückfalltäterschaft*, Berlin.

The strong North-South divide in Germany is also reflected in the perspectives of children. The PISA studies have demonstrated this for the field of education. At locations where the unemployment rates are only about half of the nationwide general rate, the possibilities of vocational training are better as well. With regard to the urban-rural divide, it is still true that the problem cases are rather moving away from the countryside and to the cities.

The socio-physical segmentation then becomes especially obvious in the large cities, where districts with well-off people are sharply segregated from districts where problem cases are accumulating.

Gender differences

Gender plays an important role in all elements of exclusion, although this does not lead to a particularly large difference for instance with regard to the poverty risk quotas or the drawing of social assistance. As a rule, girls in Germany have higher secondary school qualifications than boys; in particular, the rate of pupils who fail to complete secondary modern school is much lower among girls than among boys. Nonetheless, when it then comes to searching for apprenticeship trades and to secondary qualifications in the tertiary education sector, selection filters are taking effect which, all in all, give female youths a worse perspective on the labour market. Another example is the health sector: Girls are more often feeling unwell than boys. Quite obviously, they assimilate their social exclusion much more introspectively than boys who rather draw attention to their situation by way of protesting behaviour. And finally, male youths - before all when they are socially excluded - try more to team up in cliques, whereas young women rather look for individual "protection" by a partner.

Ethnicity

For years, Germany has been an immigration country, even though this has officially not been taken into account by politics - despite the Immigration Act - to the necessary extent. German politics oscillate between the upholding of a "German guiding culture" and the notion of a multicultural society, without having the former and already being the latter. This affects before all those people whose socialisation takes place in this field of tension and who are, therefore, not obtaining a clear socialisation either on the basis of ethnic origin or from the immigration country. Children and youths for the most part remain "travellers between two worlds", although they before all others need to have values and norms clearly imparted. And these uncertainties then lead to the situation that the poverty risk quotas of foreign inhabitants and hence also of foreign children and youths are particularly high. This is continued by the (non-)attendance of pre-school child care facilities, the late date of school enrolment etc. In addition to the ethnic components, there are also religious, family-related and other elements closely connected to the various ethnic groups.

Differences between sub-groups by age

Childhood and adolescence are processes related to each other. If one follows the AWO/ISS Study, the danger that poverty situations among children solidify increases the longer they last - tautological, but logical! Conversely, case studies demonstrate that there are in fact ways out of the life situation poverty. In this connection, the systematic analysis of (family-related) resilience factors gains in importance,

which can explain why children and youths are able to realise clearly different degrees of participation in society in spite of an objectively similar material, social and ecological endowment during their life stages. In continuation of the AWO/ISS Study on Child Poverty, the AWO Federal Association has commissioned a current research project on this subject.

Participation in society

All of the above results in a lesser integration of children and youths from the lower social strata into social processes and structures. In how far one can talk about a "Prekariat lagging behind" [a group/milieu of persons living in a precarious situation without a chance of being reintegrated into social life in the foreseeable future] in this context cannot yet be judged finally, although it is evident that excluding impulses for certain life situations are emanating from the large social systems labour market, school and recreation to such an extent that they can only be compensated for - if at all - by employing massive means in the form of money and services. This can already be demonstrated symptomatically by the fact that before all youths from the lower social strata are clearly lagging behind in the acceptance of voluntary posts. But there is one - decisive - exception: the voluntary fire brigades and emergency relief organisations. In these groups, where strength, determined intervention and hierarchy are called for, male youths from lower social strata before all others find an important field of activity enabling them to be socially integrated.⁴³

4. Comparison with other EU states

Compared with other EU states, Germany is almost in an average position in the social statistics, without significant deviations downwards or upwards. For example, according to a study by Eurostat, the quota of people threatened with poverty was 13 % in Germany in 2004, whereas it amounted to only 11 % in Denmark, Finland, Luxemburg and Sweden; France, Belgium and Italy had a higher quota.⁴⁴ The latest UNICEF study also assigns a place in the middle to Germany: 18 % child poverty before taxes and transfers and 10.2 % thereafter. An important difference becomes apparent here: Finland, Norway and Sweden have a similarly high quota as Germany prior to the secondary distribution through the state, but after the distribution the quota in these states is significantly lower than in Germany. Quite obviously, there are differences in politics - as far as approach, implementation and obtained target are concerned.⁴⁵

⁴³ Shell AG (Hg.) (2006): Jugend 2006. 15. Shell Jugendstudie, Frankfurt am Main.

⁴⁴ Statistisches Bundesamt: Leben in Europa 2006, Wiesbaden.

⁴⁵ UNICEF: Child Poverty in Rich Countries, Innocenti Report Card No. 6, UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, Florence 2005

III. Political framework and main policies to prevent and alleviate child poverty and to promote the well-being of children in Germany

1. Policy framework

Prevention and combating of child poverty: political priority with political goals?

Under the guiding idea that Germany needs “more children in the families and more families in society”, the federal government identifies three priorities with regard to children, youths and families for the current legislative period (2005 - 2009): support of young parents during the family formation phase (see the Day Care Development Act and the new Parental Benefit Act), strengthening the bond between the generations (see the new federal model programme “multi-generation facilities”) and more attention to be paid to children “born on the dark side of life” (meaning children who grow up under difficult social and economic conditions).⁴⁶ Accordingly, the federal government principally recognises poverty and social exclusion among children and youths in its objectives as important problem. From an operational point of view, the following projects may be mentioned as examples for the third priority identified above:

- the extension of crèche and day care offers for children under the age of 3 to promote children at an early stage in their development and to create better preconditions for gainful employment for parents, before all single mothers,
- the “further development of the child benefit supplement” to combat material poverty because of children,
- the federal model programme “Social Early Warning Systems” to help children who must grow up under difficult social conditions.

However, important decisions of the Federation and the *Länder* setting the further course for employment, social, educational and family policy take poverty among children and youths into account insufficiently or even threaten to augment it. The following examples may be mentioned here:

- measures increasing child-related expenses for families (increase of contributions by the parents for crèches and the kindergarten, cutbacks in the free supply of educational aids at schools and the introduction of tuition fees in several *Länder*),
- the omission to raise educational and vocational grants and child benefit since 2002 and the officially recognised subsistence minimum for children and youths since 2001,
- the reduction of the target group large families to the “family with several children which does not depend on social transfers”, when the family benefits were checked by a “Competence Centre Family Benefits” set up at the Federal Ministry for Families,⁴⁷
- the redistribution of cash benefits from poor families to families in the medium and higher income brackets, when the educational allowances were replaced by the parental benefit since 2007.

The prevention and combating of child poverty can so far not be described as political priority which would in fact be connected with concrete political goals and measures “to take necessary steps to rapidly and significantly reduce child poverty, giving all children equal opportunities, regardless of their social background”.⁴⁸ A concrete goal for the development of crèches and day care has in fact been set

⁴⁶ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2006): Politik für die Zukunft. Ziele des Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, Berlin, page 3.

⁴⁷ Bekanntmachung der Ausschreibung zur Einrichtung eines wissenschaftlichen Kompetenzzentrums für Familienleistungen durch das Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 22 June 2006, page 4.

⁴⁸ March 2006 European Council, see: Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2007, page 5.

(230,000 new places by 2010), but with regard to the child benefit supplements no decision has been made as yet, whether this will go beyond mere technical changes. During the current political debate about minimum wages and/or add-on wages subsidised by the state, a family-oriented component going together with them - for example through the child benefit supplement - does not play a role so far, to name only a few examples.

Relationship of universal and target group-oriented policies

The introduction of the supplement on child benefit for families which would be dependent on supplementary unemployment benefit II without this additional payment, but earn enough own money to supply the necessities of life for the parents themselves, was - looked at systematically - a very important target group-oriented measure in 2005, supplementing the (almost) universal system of child benefit. But de facto the child benefit supplement reaches only very few families so far in spite of high administrative expenses. For instance, in 2005 only 53,500 out of 621,000 applications for payment of the child benefit supplement (8.6 %) were granted. According to estimates by the *Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband*, the administrative expenses came to ca. 18 % of the total expenses for the child benefit supplement in the amount of Euro 102 Mill.⁴⁹ This can be explained before all by the fact that the child benefit supplement - deviating from an initial conceptual proposal⁵⁰ - was passed with very restrictive minimum and maximum income limits as well as a very close tie to unemployment benefit II. As a result, the group of entitled persons is very narrowly defined so far, and in addition it is hardly possible for many families to assess in advance whether they might be entitled.

In the current setting of political targets, the SPD and the Greens before all are pleading for a “change of paradigms” in social and family policies: away from direct cash transfers, towards more social services.⁵¹ It is argued that the development of child care offers would benefit the children directly, whereas this is regarded as doubtful in case of the child benefit payments. No party in the *Bundestag* still denies that the further development of infrastructure offers, investments in their educational quality as well as a flexibility of opening hours meeting actual demands would be reasonable, and there is also consensus on this among the experts. But on the other hand it is also pointed out, and rightly so, that the elementary field (differing from the child benefit) refers only to the target group of children of pre-school age and that many families with low income in fact make attempts to use the family budget for needs of the children as a matter of priority. Besides, child benefit is said to cover only about one half of family expenses for children considered necessary for subsistence according to the official calculation. The average private expenditures amounting to € 549 per child are even almost four times higher. Therefore, it cannot be a reasonable way, seen from the perspective of poverty policy, to further develop target group-oriented services in the field of social and poverty policy at the expense of universal cash benefits in these political fields. When in the course of restructuring individual cash benefit systems are shifted from being target group-oriented (educational allowances) to being universal (parental benefit), their efficiency in terms of poverty policy remains doubtful, if it leads to a considerable loss of income in case of particularly poor families (receiving ALG II). It is perfectly clear that West Germany, especially in comparison with the Nordic member states of the EU which are the most successful in the field of poverty policy, has a lot to catch up on in the way of social services specifically for children under the

⁴⁹ Martens, Rudolf (2006): *Der Kinderzuschlag: Modellrechnungen und Verwaltungskostenschätzungen*, hrsg. vom Paritätischen Wohlfahrtsverband, Berlin.

⁵⁰ Hauser, Richard (2003): *Familienlastenausgleich als Instrument der Armutsbekämpfung. Zum Modell eines einkommensabhängigen Kinderzuschlags*, in: *Nachrichtendienst des Deutschen Vereins*, Heft Mai 2003, page 178-185.

⁵¹ SPD(2007): *Gute Betreuung ab ein! Abschlussbericht der gemeinsamen Arbeitsgruppe „Neue Akzente in der Familienpolitik“ von SPD-Bundestagsfraktion und SPD-Parteivorstand*, Berlin; Sager, Christa (2006): „Das Elterngeld allein nutzt nichts“, Interview, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 14 February 2006, 4; vgl. auch den *Länderbericht zu Deutschland im Gemeinsamen Bericht über Sozialschutz und soziale Eingliederung 2007*.

age of 3. However, comparisons also show that the Nordic states do not obtain this high degree of development at the expense of transfer benefits. They invest more than Germany in cash benefits as well. Before all, they steer their education, tax and transfer system in such a way that it specifically reduces poverty.⁵²

With regard to education policy, a clear strategic reorientation has taken place for several years already. Concepts of “compensatory education” and the safeguarding of universal access to education through special support for underprivileged children and youths are more and more pushed into the background.⁵³ Instead, the promotion of educational elites is accorded increasing importance, and the structural budget deficit and privatisation of educational services has a negative effect especially on underprivileged target groups. Here again, the claim to reach a social balance and social participation through a policy which universally aims at social inclusion is increasingly replaced by a policy on the level of the *Länder* which jeopardises even the access to standard elements in the education system for underprivileged children and youths. For instance, the free supply of educational aids (school books etc.) is partially restricted or abolished even for children from families dependent on unemployment benefit II in some *Länder*. Families receiving unemployment benefit II also report about problems to get support for the participation of their children in school trips. This was still guaranteed under the old system of social assistance. Just above the age group on which this report focuses (0-17 years), the financial promotion of students (BAföG) which is an important factor for the educational chances of lower and middle income groups has not been adjusted to the increased cost of living since 2002. Moreover, tuition fees are currently introduced in some *Länder* with conservative governments, jeopardising the chances of access for young adults from families with a low income even more.

Family policy - children's rights policy?

Hardly a problem has so far been made in public debate out of the contradiction between the diagnosis of family policy that the birth rate must be increased, because otherwise a country lacking in raw materials would be threatened with a shortage of subjects of “human resource”, whereas on the other hand many children and youths living in Germany actually face great difficulties to avail themselves of their social and participation rights under poverty conditions and thus can hardly develop their potentials. Insofar, one can indeed demand to supplement the existing viewpoint on family policy at least to a stronger degree by elements of a policy of children's rights. For example, the extension of offers in the elementary field (*crèches*, day care centres) and of all-day schools in Germany is mainly discussed under aspects of gender and employment policy, although the access to such education offers may also be regarded at least as expression of a child's right to education. But the political debate is currently still dominated by an ideological battle coined in West Germany about the acceptance of gainful employment and the role as housewife of mothers with small children.

Similar to the break with compensatory education and training services for underprivileged children and youths, child-related questions are subordinated to an activation-centred logic of “demanding” aiming at adult welfare recipients and a more and more restrictive spending policy with regard to the right of social assistance as well. The above example of the insecure funding of school trips demonstrates this trend in

⁵² Fertig, Michael / Tamm, Marcus: Kinderarmut in reichen Ländern, n: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte. Beilage zur Wochenzeitung Das Parlament, Heft 26/2006 vom 26. Juni 2006, page 18 ff.

⁵³ See for example the cutbacks in budgets for youth clubs and youth libraries, non-profit family holiday facilities and family education measures; Rauschenbach, Thomas (Hg.) (2005): KOMDAT - Kommentierte Daten der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe, Informationsdienst der Dortmunder Arbeitsstelle Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik, Heft 3/2005, page 5; Benz, Benjamin (2006): Bildungsleistungen und Bildungskosten von Familien, in: Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband (Hg.): Chancengerechtigkeit durch Bildung. Chancengerechtigkeit in der Bildung. Sozialbericht 2006, Essen, page 52-72.

the same way as the offsetting of cash gifts on occasion of religious festivals of the children (confirmation, first communion) against the ALG II payment for their parents.⁵⁴

Legal starting points for a discourse orientated to children's rights can be found in some state constitutions⁵⁵ and in the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights. The latter is used in Germany as well. For example, various institutions united in the National Coalition speak up for the full validity and implementation of the Convention time and again.⁵⁶ Besides, the federal government has presented a National Action Plan "For a Germany Meeting Children's Demands 2005-2010"⁵⁷ further to the Children's World Summit in 2002. However, it becomes clear, before all with a view to the German proviso regarding the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights, that in the final analysis children's rights are also subordinated to goals in respect of aliens' rights.

Mainstreaming and coordination of different governmental levels

There are a few mechanisms and institutions in Germany to facilitate or guarantee a coordination of different governmental levels. For example every new federal act, influencing the competencies of the *Länder* or the municipalities, has to be adopted through the second chamber of the parliament (*Bundesrat*) first. The *Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge* (German Association for statutory and non-statutory welfare) acts as a clearing organisation between the states levels and the non-statutory welfare organisations. On the other side, the German federalism reserves competencies for different tasks for only one or two of the states levels (school system, law on migration, local supply of social services and so on). Following the reform of the distribution of competencies in the federal system in Germany in 2006, education policy comes under the responsibility of the *Länder* even more than before. So far, coordination between the different *Länder* and between the Federation and the *Länder* in educational questions has succeeded only partially, and this is likely to become even more difficult now. In fields sensitive for the combating of child poverty, the relationship between the *Länder* and their local authorities unfortunately reveals examples of insufficient coordination of the various levels of government as well. In order to consolidate the state budget, the government of North Rhine-Westphalia for instance shifts costs arising in the form of contributions by the parents in the elementary field and the free supply of educational aids to the local level. The local authorities in turn pass costs partially on to the families because of their own budget restraints. But that, conversely, the German right to local self-government and the federal structure of the state also constitute innovation potentials in respect of poverty policy and barriers against restrictive poverty policies, has already been made clear by us in previous reports.

A new attempt to come to a policy and distribution of funds harmonised among the various levels of government is the process for the currently beginning second part of the reform of federalism which is to reorganise the financial relationship between the Federation and the *Länder* by 2009. In addition, the "Competence Centre Family Benefits", a scientific advisory taskforce which was introduced through the Federal ministry for family affairs in 2006, has been mandated to take a critical look at the range of cash benefits and tax reductions for families and present suggestions by the end of 2007 how these policies could be reformed. But in both processes the rise of the contribution of tax, social and family benefits for the combating of poverty in the age of childhood and adolescence has not played a prominent role so

⁵⁴ Bischöfin kritisiert Hartz-IV-Regel, in: Hamburger Abendblatt, 10 March 2007.

⁵⁵ Berger, Gundel (2006): Synopse der Kinderrechte in Landesverfassungen sowie Kinderbeteiligungsrechte in einfachgesetzlichen Vorschriften, Typoskript, www.national-coalition.de.

⁵⁶ See: www.national-coalition.de.

⁵⁷ See: <http://www.bmfsfj.bund.de/Politikbereiche/kinder-und-jugend,did=31372.html>.

far, although the 7th Family Report of the Federation⁵⁸ also points out the need for reforms in Germany in respect of poverty policies. The government as well as the opposition parties make frequent reference to its analyses and conclusions at the moment. It pleads for a new triad of temporal, cash and infrastructure policies for families. The report has rightly drawn attention to the imbalance existing, on the one hand, between the social and fiscal budget of state benefits for marriage and families in the form of tax relief, cash benefits and the promotion of infrastructure which is indeed quite respectable and, on the other hand, the goals - not the least the prevention and combating of poverty - which have been reached in this way to a mediocre degree at best. It remains inexplicable why in view of this the fight against poverty among children and youths is hardly used as criterion for a reform of the range of family benefits in the mandate to the "Competence Centre Family Benefits".

2. Analysis of main policies

Primary income for the prevention of child poverty

Until this day, the safeguarding of wages and salaries above the poverty threshold constitutes an open flank in the fight against income poverty (not only for families with children). Therefore, the government is currently working on concepts with regard to minimum wages and income from gainful employment subsidised by the state (add-on wages). But as long as such minimum or add-on wages do not surpass the income needs of the individual gainfully employed person preventing poverty, the effective interplay of (minimum) wages on the one hand and child benefit/child benefit supplement on the other hand remains decisive for the goal of a household and family income preventing poverty.

Right of maintenance to prevent income poverty among children

The large number of families with single parents affected by poverty clearly illustrates the importance, but also the insufficiency of the private right of maintenance. Assistance with regard to maintenance for children up to 12 years of age and for a maximum period of three years is provided only by the Law on Advance Maintenance Payments. It is part of the prevention of poverty under the civil law of maintenance to limit the amount of obligatory maintenance payments to such a level that a person liable for maintenance does not become destitute himself. The high number of so-called deficiency cases⁵⁹ where the available income does not suffice to cover all maintenance claims shows that the law of maintenance alone cannot prevent poverty due to separation. A bill already initiated two years ago by the federal SPD-Green government and taken up again by the current government tries to react to this situation through a reform of the law of maintenance. The sequence of priority of maintenance claims is to be changed in favour of children and parents looking after children. While this would not lead to a decrease in the number of deficiency cases as such, the fight against poverty during childhood and adolescence would become the priority goal in such cases. Following the first reading of the bill in the *Bundestag* and *Bundesrat* and the holding of hearings, possible amendments to the bill prior to the final reading in both chambers of Parliament are currently discussed internally by the coalition.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2006): Familie zwischen Flexibilität und Verlässlichkeit. Perspektiven für eine lebenslaufbezogene Familienpolitik. Siebter Familienbericht, Berlin.

⁵⁹ There are no exact percentages available, but it is clear, that deficiency cases are more the rule than an exception; see www.laurischk.de/meldung.php?id=13260&tag=Nachgefragt!&BackURL=/freierubrik1.php&printversion=1&PHPSESSID=917719a2011628596e64bf23c20cf4e2.

⁶⁰ Union läuft Sturm gegen Reform des Unterhaltsrechts, in: Recklinghäuser Zeitung, 16 March 2007, page 2.

With regard to unemployment benefit II, the obligation to provide family maintenance has been extended against the security obligation of the state in several respects since the Hartz IV legislation. For example, the Law Concerning the Further Development of Basic Security for the Unemployed of 20 July 2006 provided for a shifting of the burden of proof according to which it must no longer be officially proven to welfare recipients (e. g. single parents) that they get support from third persons. Now it is rather up to the welfare recipients themselves to prove that they do not get such private support. In addition, against repeated warnings by the Associations of Voluntary Welfare Work⁶¹ and others, the federal government has by the same law introduced an obligation in paragraph 9 of the Code of Social Law II, requiring stepparents to provide maintenance to their stepchildren which is not provided for in civil law. After the Social Court of Berlin has considered this new regulation to be unconstitutional, it has now been submitted to the Federal Constitutional Court for a decision.⁶² Another - older - new regulation in the Code of Social Law II is likely not to reach the Constitutional Court only, because it not applied. According to Article 31 paragraph 5 Code of Social Law II, a welfare recipient under the age of 25 is to be denied cash benefits completely for three months by way of sanction in case of misconduct, which is regarded by experts as a violation of Article 1 of the Constitution (human dignity).

Equalisation of family burdens under tax law and social law

The tax law takes precedence over social benefits for the consideration of family maintenance needs (child benefit). With regard to income tax, the principle of taxable capacity applies. According to rulings by the Federal Constitutional Court, this principle implies that those portions of the income are to be exempted from taxation which are necessary solely to secure the subsistence of oneself and of the children. For this purpose, the income tax laws provide for tax-free allowances for children amounting to (converted) € 484 per month. If a person liable to income tax pays the maximum tax rate of 42 % due to high income, the tax-free allowances result in a tax saving of € 203.

For families with a low or medium income, lower tax rates apply, starting with the minimum rate of 15 %, which leads to a decreasing cash value of the allowances. Most families with children still requiring maintenance (ca. 90 %)⁶³ therefore receive child benefit in the amount of € 154 per child (or € 179 for the fourth and all further children). With this amount, child benefit could so far limit, but not overcome the spreading of family-related poverty. The last rises of child benefit in the years 1999, 2000 and 2002 led to a gradual increase from € 112 to € 154 and thus reduced the poverty (risk) quota of families drawing child benefit considerably by almost 9 % (single parents 8 %).⁶⁴ At the moment, the government parties are debating whether child benefit is to be adapted to the cost of living as risen from 2002 at all in the next few years, whereas they had still announced further increases to € 200 (SPD) and € 300 (CDU/CSU) during the federal election campaign in 2002.⁶⁵

A mixed contribution to the prevention of poverty among children and youths is achieved, as already mentioned, through the replacement of the educational allowances (1986 - 2006) by the parental benefit since 2007. Instead of a benefit at a lump sum of € 300 per month (which was not increased since its introduction in 1986) paid over two years and tied to narrow income limits, a one-year benefit in lieu of wages is paid as basic allowance in the same amount of € 300. The problem that due to family obligations no income from gainful employment or, in case of part-time employment, less income than

⁶¹ See: Schriftliche Stellungnahme der Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege zur öffentlichen Anhörung von Sachverständigen am 29. Mai 2006 in Berlin, page 2 und 8.

⁶² Unterhaltshaftung auf Prüfstand, in: Die Tageszeitung, 9 January 2007, page 6.

⁶³ Deutscher Bundestag (2001): Berichtigung zu Bundestagsdrucksache 14/5990. Lebenslagen in Deutschland. Erster Armuts- und Reichtumsbericht, Berlin, page 3.

⁶⁴ Bundesregierung (2005): Lebenslagen in Deutschland. Zweiter Armuts- und Reichtumsbericht, Berlin, page 47.

⁶⁵ Die Kita-Finanzpläne der SPD liegen vor, in: Die Tageszeitung, 27 February 2007, page 2.

prior to the birth of the child can be obtained (indirect costs of a child), although conversely the income needs of the family even increase (direct costs), is approached by the parental benefit system via the transfer income. Besides many families in the medium and higher income brackets which are now entitled to receive benefits for the first time, the one-year benefit in lieu of wages can be higher than the former two-year lump sum for persons in lower wage brackets as well, the more so as the rate of the benefit in lieu generally amounting to 67 % of the former market income rises to 100 % below a market income of € 1,000. However, social assistance recipients (income support, unemployment benefit II) who can only get the minimum amount of parental benefit are faced with a cutback in assistance because of the benefit period cut in half.

Subsidised services

Children and youths from families with a low income enjoy rebates or even exemptions from contributions, for example with regard to fees for the kindergarten and educational aids at school. Conversely, the standard rates of social assistance and unemployment benefit II fail to make allowance for any costs for the education of children and youths. However, the regularity with which education is tied to costs - for these children as well - and the general emphasis put by politicians on the necessity of life-long learning would rather suggest that a minimum amount of education costs should be regarded as essential component of securing subsistence and its exemption from taxation.⁶⁶ As far as the costs of services for households with a low income are concerned, not only families living on minimum security must be considered. Assistance, reduced admission fees and exemption from contributions - if there are any at all - are often cut at or just above the threshold of social assistance. Tax exemptions also have merely a limited effect in this income group. Starting points for taking the costs of educational, cultural and recreational activities into account are rather offered here by the amount of child benefit and the possibilities of a supplement to them, hence by social transfer systems. There are strong indications that problems with such costs would arise in a special way for families just above the threshold of social assistance. It becomes clear again that a political strategy putting its stakes increasingly on services *instead of* transfer payments is insufficient.

In many municipalities, low-threshold offers of social services for children and youths (open youth work) as well as for families (family education and recreation) with whose assistance the effects of poverty can be reduced and the self-help potential of people affected by poverty can be strengthened have been left operating under precarious staffing and financial situations and cut back.⁶⁷ The statistics for youth welfare services have shown clear decreases in youth work and youth social work since the mid-1990's.⁶⁸ The precarious financial situation of facilities also leads to a rise of costs of the offers for the addressees and thus to socially more selective use.⁶⁹ How much weight a reduction in family education and recreation measures and in offers of open youth work carries in terms of poverty policy, is

⁶⁶ See: Becker, Irene (2006): Bedarfsgerechtigkeit und sozio-kulturelles Existenzminimum. Der gegenwärtige Eckregelsatz vor dem Hintergrund aktueller Daten, Arbeitspapier Nr. 1 des Projekts „Soziale Gerechtigkeit“, J. W. Goethe Universität, Frankfurt, Typoskript, page 9f.

⁶⁷ Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge (1995): Empfehlungen des Deutschen Vereins zur Familienbildung und zu der Umsetzung des gesetzlichen Auftrages in der Jugendhilfe, Nachrichtendienst des Deutschen Vereins, Heft 6/1995, page 221-225; Benz, Benjamin (2006): Bildungsleistungen und Bildungskosten von Familien, in: Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband (Hg.): Chancengerechtigkeit durch Bildung. Chancengerechtigkeit in der Bildung. Sozialbericht 2006, Essen, page 52-72; Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge (2007): Bestandsaufnahme und Empfehlungen des Deutschen Vereins zur Weiterentwicklung der Familienbildung, Berlin, Typoskript.

⁶⁸ Rauschenbach, Thomas (Hg.) (2005): KOMDAT - Kommentierte Daten der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe, Informationsdienst der Dortmunder Arbeitsstelle Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik, Heft 3/2005, page 5.

⁶⁹ Pettinger, Rudolf / Rollik, Heribert (2005): Familienbildung als Angebot der Jugendhilfe. Rechtliche Grundlagen - familiäre Problemlagen - Innovationen, Schriftenreihe des Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, Band 120, 2. Auflage, Berlin, page 131.

demonstrated by the AWO/ISS Studies on Child Poverty. They emphatically point out that income poverty of a family is the strongest factor influencing the situation of children. This is to be the starting point for access to income from gainful employment, social transfers and the equalisation of family burdens. Already in second place comes, according to the ISS: "Family activities (e. g. eating, learning, shopping, playing, watching TV, going on trips etc. together with the parents) are the second most important factor explaining the different situation of children ..."⁷⁰ They are even more important than individual protection and risk factors (e. g. cognitive skills) and such factors outside the family (e. g. living environment). In several cases and during a certain period these – second - factors – according to the social and cultural capital of the parents – could soften the consequences of poverty for the children. But nevertheless the poverty of the family is the first and strongest factor influencing the situation of the children.

The stimulation, promotion, supplementation and, if necessary, substitution of these helpful activities are central fields where the offers of youth work and of education and recreation offers for families should take effect. This is all the more true as many recreational activities outside these offers are connected with costs. The children's panel of the German Youth Institute reports that every fourth child from families of the lowest social strata has not experienced trips, travels or bicycle tours.⁷¹ Insofar, the cancellation of individual services enabling participation in family recreation measures by the *Länder* North Rhine-Westphalia (2002), Hesse (2004) and Baden-Württemberg (2005) is certainly contraproductive in terms of poverty policy.⁷²

Following the reform of federalism, competencies for structural questions of child and youth welfare services are placed even more clearly on the *Land* level. No larger political initiatives by the Federation and the *Länder* to structurally improve the conditions prevailing in youth work as well as family education and recreation are discernible at the moment. However, family counselling and education play a role in the federal model programme "Social Early Warning Systems", and several *Länder* strive for improved linking up of family education and counselling offers with day care centres (as part of so-called Family Centres). Besides, stronger attention to the possibilities of a more intensive promotion of linguistic skills in family education and day care centres is recognisable.

As far as childcare facilities are concerned, there were fee reductions for parents during the last few years (Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland), but also many examples for fee increases (Baden-Württemberg, Berlin, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony, Thuringia). The fees payable by the parents vary greatly all in all, depending on the *Land* and partially also on the town: "Where the fee payable by the parents has been fixed on the *Land* level, the amount of fees ranges from kindergarten places free of charge for the last year in the Saarland up to fees in the amount of 30 % of operating expenses for instance in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. (...) Partially, there is no public support for crèche and day home care, partially there are no differences in the financing of the different types of care facilities in some *Länder*."⁷³ At ca. 20 %, the share of parents in the financing of the offers is much higher than the rate of some of our European neighbours (Netherlands 1.8 %, Italy 3 %, France 4.1 %, Tschechia 8.2 %, Finland 9 %, Hungary 9.4 %). The existing day care facilities for children cost ca. €

⁷⁰ AWO Bundesverband (Hg.) (2005): Zukunftschancen für Kinder. Wirkung von Armut bis zum Ende der Grundschulzeit. Endbericht einer Langzeitstudie (1997-2004) im Auftrag des AWO-Bundesverbandes e.V., Bonn / Berlin / Frankfurt am Main, page V.

⁷¹ http://www.dji.de/cgi-bin/inklunde.php?inklunde=kinderpanel/highlights/Familie_Freizeit.htm#3.

⁷² http://www.katalog-familienurlaub.de/start/index_zuschuss.php.

⁷³ Jaich, Roman (2002): Finanzierung der Kindertagesbetreuung in Deutschland. Gutachten im Rahmen des Projektes „Familienunterstützende Kinderbetreuungsangebote“ des DJI, Kassel, Typoskript, page 72.

13.5 Bn. in total in 2003, with the public sector assuming ca. € 10.5 Bn. and the private institutions ca. € 500 Mill. Insofar, € 2.5 Bn. would be needed for an exemption from contributions for all existing offers.⁷⁴

Some *Länder* continue to pursue the goal to make educational aids at schools available free of charge. Some state constitutions even stipulate this explicitly (e. g. Hesse). In other *Länder*, such a free supply of educational aids has no longer been practiced for some time now, for instance in Rhineland-Palatinate and the Saarland. During the last few years, more and more *Länder* have adopted a policy out of budget reasons to restrict the free supply of educational aids, for example Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg (although the free supply of educational aids is even stipulated in the state constitution) and Lower Saxony. In North Rhine-Westphalia, the *Land* no longer exempts the recipients of ALG II from the parents' contribution, but leaves it to the municipalities whether to assume these shares; but this is de facto hardly possible for many municipalities, because their budget is incapable of approval. As a result, indigent persons must even pay for school books from the standard ALG II rate. A current *Bundesrat* initiative to amend the law in respect of price fixing for books indicates that more than 50 % of the costs of school books are to be borne by the parents in future.⁷⁵

About one out of four pupils takes privately paid lessons at least once during his or her school years. Pupils attending secondary modern schools, East German pupils and children from low-income families receive this assistance considerably more seldom than pupils attending grammar school, West German pupils and children from high-income families.⁷⁶ Considering that, all in all, every fourth pupil takes private lessons, they must be regarded as intermittent, but nonetheless almost regular supplement to the German school system. Therefore, access to them should be possible for all families, either via offers of all-day schools, youth facilities or privately organised and financed. In view of the non-consideration of the costs of education in the standard rates of social assistance and ALG II, the question arises whether in these cases perhaps gratuitous help with homework by school authorities or agencies providing youth welfare services should be provided? Although it is known that many youth facilities offer help with homework and some also private lessons, the question must remain open here; it can only be answered locally.

Health

In Germany, youths are not allowed to smoke until they reach the age of 16. With effect from 1 January 2007, mandatory identification by means of a chip card was introduced for cigarette machines in order to guarantee observance of this age limit. As regards threats to the mental and physical health of small children in families living in socially difficult circumstances, an intensive professional and political debate has developed, following cases of neglect and maltreatment of children and even infanticide dealt with in great detail in the media. On the federal level, the federal model programme "Social Early Warning Systems" is searching for effective warning and support systems in cooperation before all of health services and youth welfare services. The chances, limits and possibilities of adaptation of regular precautionary medical checks during childhood for the purpose of preventing and revealing health and psycho-social jeopardies are also broadly discussed at the moment.

⁷⁴ Schilling, Matthias (2005): Ausgaben für Tageseinrichtungen für Kinder, in: Deutsches Jugendinstitut (Hg.): Zahlenspiegel 2005, München, page 209.

⁷⁵ See: Rabatt bei jeder Finanzierungsart, in: Das Parlament, 16 January 2006, page 17.

⁷⁶ Schneider, Thorsten (2004): Nachhilfe als Strategie zur Verwirklichung von Bildungszielen. Eine empirische Untersuchung mit Daten des Sozio-ökonomischen Panels (SOEP), DIW Discussion Papers Nr. 447, Berlin.

Child care, education and training

In the pre-school phase, care offers in crèches and through children's nurses (0-2 years) and in day care facilities (3-6 years) play an important role with regard to the possibilities of gainful employment - and thus the prevention of poverty - for the mothers and fathers of small children. So far an institutionalised offer of care existed for less than three out of 100 children under the age of 3 in some West German *Länder*; however, according to the Day Care Development Act, this quota (including children's nurses) is to be extended to ca. 20 % until 2010. (Estimates rather assume an actual demand of between 30 and 40 %.⁷⁷) Most recent preliminary figures of the Federal Statistics Office would suggest that, under inclusion of children's nurses, at least a slow process of catching up is taking place here (due to changes in the statistics, reliable current time series are not available nationwide at the moment): accordingly, for almost 8 out of 100 children under the age of 3 (7.8 %) an offer in a facility or through children's nurses was available in the old *Länder* in 2006. With regard to the kindergarten, at least half-day places are guaranteed for children over the age of 3 in West Germany and East Germany to an extent matching the demand by means of the legal claim to a place. Criticism is uttered here rather about the time scale and the lack of flexibility with regard to time. Several *Länder* attempt to react to this criticism by way of changes to the structure of the offer.

In April and May this year a significant step has been done politically. On 2 April 2007 all state levels had a day-care summit and had declared their consensus, that until 2013 a quota of day-care offers for one third (35 %) of all children under the age of three has to be reached. At the meeting of the coalition parties at the federal level on 14 May this year, they underline this target and adopted their will to set up an act, which guarantees a legal claim on day-care for parents with children of this age from the year 2013 on. To reach this, the federal government wants to pay one third of the related costs. Until now, such an act is nevertheless not been put in place and there has to be further negotiations with the *Länder* and the municipalities, to realise it. If such an act will be adopted, it would be a significant step to promote the combining of work and family life – especially for women – and would be a significant cultural chance for the family and gender policy in Western Germany.

In the political discussion, education is increasingly recognised as a decisive dimension of poverty. Following the PISA studies and most recently the report on education in Germany at the UN Council on Human Rights, the socially selective effect of the graduated school system is discussed more and more as problem. The Federation is prevented from exerting influence on this variety - only the *Länder* have the right to make decisions in this field. Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein are by now considering an amalgamation of secondary modern schools, secondary schools leading to intermediate qualifications and comprehensive schools.⁷⁸ In cooperation of the Federation and the *Länder*, the federal programme of the SPD-Green government for an extension of all-day schools is still continued at the moment. Following the reform of federalism, the Federation is prevented from further similar initiatives. The *Länder* continue to make efforts to reduce the number of pupils who leave school without secondary qualifications. The Federal Ministry for Families has initiated a model programme "Truancy - The Second Chance" with the assistance of ESF funds.⁷⁹

In the field of vocational training, the federal government has extended the Training Covenant between the Federation and the trade associations in March 2007 by another three years. The trade unions do not participate in this covenant - as already in the first three-year phase -, because they do not believe that this instrument is sufficiently effective to redress the lack of apprenticeship places having lasted for

⁷⁷ Deutsches Jugendinstitut (2006): Wer betreut Deutschlands Kinder? DJI-Kinderbetreuungsstudie, Medieninformation, 7 November 2006, www.dji.de.

⁷⁸ Schleswig-Holstein führt Gemeinschaftsschule ein, in: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 27 September 2006, page 6; Hamburger CDU will zweigliedriges Schulsystem, in: Der Tagesspiegel, 24 February 2007, page 6.

⁷⁹ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2007): Gerd Hofe: „Erfolgreicher Kampf gegen Jugendarbeitslosigkeit wird noch verstärkt“, Pressemitteilung Nr. 173/2007, Berlin, 6 March 2007.

years in a really meaningful way. The Federal Audit Office recently called the effectiveness of the measures promoted within the framework of the Training Covenant into question as well.⁸⁰ In addition to this covenant, the Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youths also intends to increase the number of so-called competence agencies for unemployed youths from 150 (about one-third of them in the new *Länder*) to 200.⁸¹ It is the goal of these competence agencies promoted with ESF funds to integrate youths into training, employment or qualification measures who cannot be reached through other regular systems of assistance.

Policies to promote the participation of children in social, cultural, recreational and sporting life

Besides the questions of social participation of children and youths through offers of the youth welfare system, many good individual examples for the local commitment of politics, administrations and the civil society in these areas could be mentioned. For example, in an underprivileged town district in Bremen contributions to clubs are deliberately subsidised for poor children so as to improve their chances of access. Together with voluntary welfare associations and sports clubs, many towns organise local holiday recreation programmes for children who cannot go on vacation because of lack of income. Others offer a social pass to children and youths of low-income families, allowing them to use for instance swimming pools for a low price. But looking at this area as a whole, the offers of music schools, libraries for children and youths, clubs, town meeting places, youth clubs and public swimming pools as services of the local social state which are not guaranteed by law with regard to type and extent suffer from the budgetary emergency situation of many municipalities. However, there are great differences according to regions and among individual municipalities, including opposite examples of good practice, where these offers are saved from cutbacks or even being extended.

⁸⁰ Rechnungshof beanstandet Ausbildungspakt, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 6 February 2007.

⁸¹ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2007): Gerd Hofe: „Erfolgreicher Kampf gegen Jugendarbeitslosigkeit wird noch verstärkt“, Pressemitteilung Nr. 173/2007, Berlin, 6 March 2007.

IV. Arrangements for monitoring the implementation and the impact of policies

1. Arrangements for monitoring and reporting on the situation of children experiencing poverty and social exclusion

Poverty can be made the subject of discussion attracting the most publicity, when focusing on children. Conversely, the spreading and further increase of poverty among children does not prevent objections that, when compared to the Third World, a problem is being made of questions of inequality in a rich and by comparison socially homogeneous society which, by means of social assistance, would not allow any child to be reduced to poverty, anyway (with the Law in Respect of Benefits for Asylum-Seekers remaining unmentioned). The voluntary welfare associations more than others contribute here to a matter-of-fact debate aiming at the possibilities for action of politics and the own member associations; as example, the studies on the consequences of poverty and the personal strategies of coping at nursery school and primary school age mandated by the Workers Welfare Association (AWO) may be mentioned. The *Deutscher Kinderschutzbund* (German Child Protection League) also brings the subject of child poverty to the attention of the political public time and again.

As central subject in the reports on poverty and wealth, but also in the reports on children and youths and the family reports of the Federation, poverty and social exclusion of children and youths are constantly made a subject. These reporting systems are strongly developed in Germany (partially also on the *Land* and municipal levels) and stimulate the treatment of the social situation of children and youths at least among the experts time and again. For example:

- The *Tenth Report on Children and Youths* (1998) revealed high poverty risk quotas among children and youths.
- The *First Report on Poverty and Wealth* (2001) covers a Chapter on “Living conditions of families and children”.
- The *Second Report on Poverty and Wealth* (2005) had analysed the poverty reduction through the improvements of the *Kindergeld* (childrens benefit) in the years 1998 to 2001.
- The *Seventh Report on Families* (2006) compare family policies in different European countries and their effectiveness also in reducing poverty; “Families in precarious living conditions”, “Relative poverty” and “Perspectives of prevention” are Chapters of the Report.

All these reports work with indicators to measure poverty and different dimensions of social exclusion. As independent reports (on Youth and on Family) they make recommendations to policy measures; as governmental reports (on Poverty and Wealth) they also operate with targets.

Finally, scientific opinions and studies are one of the reasons why relatively much empirical material on the social situation of children and youths, including their self-assessment and desires, is available in Germany.⁸²

⁸² See: DJI-Kinderpanel <http://www.dji.de/cgi-bin/projekte/output.php?projekt=71>; Shell-Jugendstudie www.shell-jugendstudie.de

2. Arrangements for evaluating the impact and adequacy of politics

In the meantime, especially ex post evaluations of the efficiency of new federal laws or amendments to laws already in force have almost become standard in Germany; they are provided for the Day Care Development Act (the ex post evaluation will take place in 2008) as well as for the parental benefit (the report on a first ex post evaluation will be sent to the *Bundestag* until 1 October 2008). The supplement on child benefit has already been evaluated⁸³, as has the above-mentioned effect in terms of preventing poverty of the last increase in child benefit. However, on the *Land* level a systematic evaluation, before all with regard to the social services of the Child and Youth Welfare Act which remain vague in nature and extent (Code of Social Law VIII), is not as widespread. While the social reports which are usual in some *Länder* analyse this at least partially and a statistical reporting system has been established for child and youth welfare services,⁸⁴ gaps are remaining or only old data are available. So nobody knows the exact progress in increasing the number of day-care offers for children under the age of three since March 2006 – this data may be available at the end of this year. The exact number of children, youths and young adults, who had received child benefit in the year 2005 and 2006 is not available until now.

3. Involvement of stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation process

The involvement of non-governmental actors in the reports on poverty and wealth is limited to commissioned studies by scientists in the preliminary stage of drawing up the report and to the possibility of the Welfare Associations and others to comment on the draft report. But when preparing the 7th Family Report, the government chose a new way of participation. Prior to writing the report and running parallel to it, the dialogue with social actors was explicitly invited. Publicly supported workshops on certain subjects contributed to this, as did advance reports by Commission members and discussions with them. All involved parties (Departments, Report Commission and actors independent of the government) subsequently emphasised that this process of dialogue was positive and helpful both for the preparation of the report and for its public reception.

Hearings were also held on the readjustment of the standard rates in the Code of Social Law XII (social assistance). However, the criticism of the failure to provide for an increase of the West German standard rate and of the procedure how this rate is determined, as expressed by the Welfare Associations, was not taken up. In part, the Welfare Associations perform their own evaluations of the effect of social policy measures, e. g. the *Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband* with analyses of the standard rate of social assistance⁸⁵ and the Caritas with studies on the effects of the “Hartz Reforms” on families.⁸⁶

⁸³ Forsa (Hg.) (2005): Evaluation des Kinderzuschlags. Studie im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, Ergebnisbericht, Berlin.

⁸⁴ See: www.akj-stat.fb12.uni-dortmund.de

⁸⁵ Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (Hg.) (2006): Der Vorschlag des Paritätischen Wohlfahrtsverbandes für einen sozial gerechten Regelsatz als sozialpolitische Grundgröße. Neue Regelsatzberechnung 2006, Berlin.

⁸⁶ Deutscher Caritasverband - Referat Familie, Frauen, Kinder (Hg.) (2006): Ergebnisse des Sozialmonitorings - Auswirkungen des SGB II auf Familien und familienunterstützende Dienste und Einrichtungen, Informationsservice Nr. 39/2006, Freiburg im Breisgau.

4. Suggestions to strengthen the arrangement

With regard to the next reports of the government on poverty and wealth, it has occasionally been suggested to divide them into an empirical-analytical part to be written by independent Commission members and a political-administrative part dealing with current and planned political measures. As for the reports on children and youths and the family reports of the Federation, an independent Commission report is always published together with a statement by the federal government.

Several times, the short time periods allowed for the participation of the national stakeholders in the Open Method of Coordination process, resulting from the tight time schedules of the European reporting process as well as the coordination requirements in a federally structured state, were criticised.

It can be said in summary that there is no lack of data on poverty among children and youths and on the mutual consequences for the different dimensions of social exclusion in Germany. There are also ideas and concepts what well-being for children and youths means. Numerous projects, models and initiatives exist, from local politics via the *Land* level to federal politics. What is missing in political practice is an approach which would integrate dimensions of poverty and political levels. Time and again, a contradiction becomes apparent between a policy of social balancing with a fixation about the legal and social status of the family of origin, leading to considerable, socially graduating consequences, and a claim that poverty among children must not/should not exist. But if, as demonstrated by the most recent analysis of poverty by the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) quoted at the beginning, families with a history of migration, families of single parents and unemployed persons and even households of skilled workers are before all subjected to an especially high risk of solidified poverty and to life situations in poverty on the whole, a conclusive concept against poverty among children would have to start out exactly from these predetermined breaking points. However, the introduction of child benefit supplements in the context of unemployment benefit II reveals the very dilemma in the conservative welfare state: Poverty - the welfare payment unemployment benefit II - is warded off for the price of applying a means test in accordance with poverty policies, hence of poverty remaining poverty (including the offsetting of cash gifts for children against welfare payments). Certainly, making a change right here, is always also a question of intensifying the observance of exclusion processes. But before all, a central modification of poverty policy in the conservative welfare state itself is needed, namely a departure from a causal policy, turning round to a purpose-orientated policy with the goal that poverty is to be avoided, prevented, overcome, first of all among children and youths. But this means children and youths from families or households of the socially underprivileged. Consequently, monitoring and policies must adapt to this perspective.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband e.V. u.a.: „Wir brauchen eine Politik, die alle Kinder fördert“ 16 deutsche Verbände wollen sich nicht mehr abfinden mit dem familienpolitischen Durcheinander, Kontakt: Zukunftsforum Familie e.V., in: Frankfurter Rundschau 15 May 2007, page 7