

Early Childhood Interventions. Figures, Data and Facts 2019. FRÜDOK Annual Report

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Summary

Background

Since the beginning of 2015, regional early childhood intervention networks were started to be set up and expanded to all provinces according to a national model. The aim of these regional networks is to provide needs-based support to (expectant) parents and families with small children in stressful life situations and to promote health equity.

Regional implementation is accompanied by the National Centre for Early Childhood Interventions (NZFH.at). Its tasks include the provision of uniform documentation and the statistical analysis of the data collected.

Methods

A descriptive data analysis of contacts with early childhood intervention networks and families supported for the year 2019 was performed and structural characteristics of the regional networks as well as feedback of families on the satisfaction and benefit of the offer are presented.

Findings

Early childhood intervention networks are implemented in all nine provinces since 2016. As of 31 December 2019, regional early childhood intervention networks were active in a total of 64 political districts. In 2019, there were 2,058 families in Austria who were placed with regional early childhood intervention networks by professionals in the health and social sector or friends, acquaintances, and relatives or who made contact themselves. 2,320 families were supported throughout the year, and 1,171 family supports were completed.

The primary target group – pregnant women and families with infants and young children up to three years of age – is reached very early, as in the previous years: 26 percent of contacts were made during pregnancy; more than a third of the youngest children in the family were under three months old. In line with the objective of early childhood interventions, families with social, psychological and/or medical burdens were in focus: e.g. half of the families were at risk of poverty, one third of the mothers had a migrant background, one quarter had at most a compulsory school leaving certificate, one fifth were single parents and ten percent of the mothers showed signs of postpartum depression, almost one fifth of the children were born premature and twelve percent were multiple births.

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Women who are already reached during pregnancy were found to be particularly burdened. Often these women are unplanned pregnant, single parents, very young, often have a low level of education and are rarely employed. They are even more often in a precarious financial situation and have worse psychosocial health than families whose support begins after the birth of the child.

Conclusions

The target group of early childhood interventions continues to be well reached at early stage. The networks are aiming at a further increase in the coverage of needs and regions, so that all families in stressful life situations are given the opportunity to receive tailored support. The data set may be used for further in-depth evaluations in the upcoming years (e.g., analysis of small subgroups such as single parent households, families who have prematurely terminated their support), to provide further insight into the life situation of families supported and into the functioning of family support.

Keywords

Frühe Hilfen, early childhood intervention, documentation