# Early Childhood InterventionsFigures, Data and Facts 2021FRÜDOK 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 data analysis with a description of the results of contacts with early childhood intervention networks and families supported for the year 2021 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. In the chapter on single‐parent families, the entire period from 2016 to 2021 is included in the evaluations.

Findings

Early childhood intervention networks are implemented in all nine provinces since 2016. As of 31 December 2021, regional early childhood intervention networks were active in a total of 65 political districts. In 2021, there were 2,043 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. 2,281 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 in particularly stressful life situations – is reached very early, as in the previous years: 28 percent of contacts were made during pregnancy; 34 percent of families had children under three months. In line with the objective of early childhood interventions, families with social, psychological and/or medical burdens were in focus: e. g. 60 percent of the families were at risk of poverty, 37 percent of the mothers had a migration experience, 25 percent each had at most a compulsory school leaving certificate and 26 percent live without a partner. 16 percent of the children were born premature and ten percent were multiple births.

Teenage mothers who are supported by early childhood intervention networks not only tend to have more stresses than mothers over 20 years, they also have fewer resources. Teenage mothers are more likely to have unplanned pregnancies, are more likely to be without a partner, are more likely to have a low level of formal education (mainly due to their age), are less likely to be employed, and have fewer financial resources. In addition, they have more frequent experiences with violence (even at the beginning of the support) and the custody situation is more often stressful. Teen mothers often have experience with child welfare, past and/or current. Fortunately, however, they are reached comparatively early: 57 percent of all supports of teenage mothers began during pregnancy.

In summary, it can be said that a particularly large number of single‐parent families, families at risk of poverty and families with children with increased care requirements make use of early help.

Conclusion

In 2021, after the particularly challenging previous year, the regional early prevention networks supported many families in their specific life situation and tried to reduce the burdens as much as possible and to activate (existing) resources. A nationwide expansion of early childhood intervention networks is in preparation so that all families in stressful situations have the opportunity to receive tailored support.

Keywords

Frühe Hilfen, early childhood intervention, documentation