# Early Childhood InterventionsFigures, Data and Facts 2022FRÜDOK 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. In 2022, the expansion to a nationwide service has begun.

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 2022 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 children, the entire period from 2016 to 2022 is included in the evaluations.

Findings

Early childhood intervention networks are implemented in all nine provinces since 2016. As of 31 December 2022, regional early childhood intervention networks were active in a total of 73 political districts. In 2022, there were 2,397 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. 2,541 families were supported throughout the year, 1,347 of them were newly supported and 1,206 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: 25 percent of supports started during pregnancy and nearly 40 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, 39 percent of the mothers had a migration experience, 22 percent each had at most a compulsory school leaving certificate and 25 percent lived without a partner. 14 percent of the children were born premature and 12 percent were multiple births.

Between 2016 and 2022, more than 8,500 children under the age of 3 were accompanied by early intervention networks. The relationship between the children and their parents/primary caregivers was very good in most families, but the perception of emotional needs and an adequate response to them was often difficult. This was particularly the case when the mother’s mental health was also under strain or she was overwhelmed with her situation. In addition to difficulties in accepting the child and caring forit, increased demands on the child’s care can also indicate the need for early intervention support. Thus, 14 percent of the children had an increased need for care or therapy, e.g., due to prematurity or illness; and about 7 percent of the children each had an illness or disability, a regulation disorder and/or a developmental problem.

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 childhood interventions.

Conclusion

In 2022, after the particularly challenging pandemic years, the regional early childhood intervention networks were again able to support significantly more families in their specific life situations, reduce their burdens as much as possible and activate (existing) resources. The nationwide expansion of early prevention in Austria was made possible with funding from the EU program “NextGenerationEU” in the framework of the Austrian Resilience and Recovery Plan and will be completed in 2023.

Keywords

Frühe Hilfen, early childhood intervention, documentation