

Psychosocial Services for Vulnerable Families in Germany: Improving links between health and social service sector

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Germany – Part of European Union

- Population: 82,7 million
- GDP per capita: 44.469
- Highly decentralized
 - 16 Federal States
 - 600 municipalities

CHALLENGES

- 20 percent of children 3 - 17 show mental health problems (KiGGs)
- Gaps in the child protection system became obvious

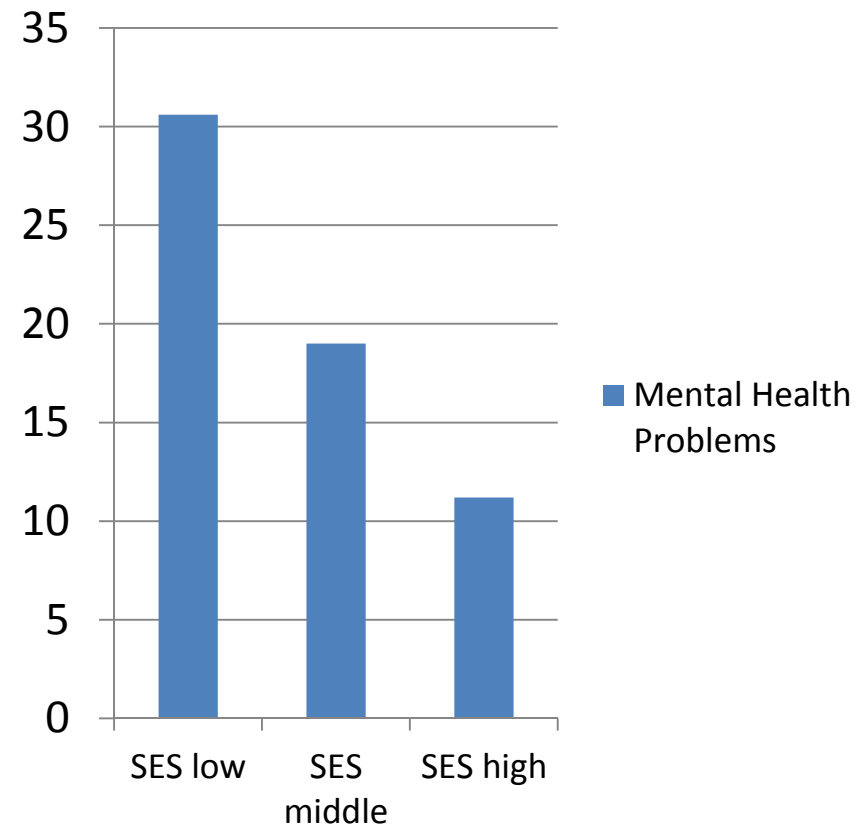
ANALYSIS

- Poor child health and developmental outcomes &
- Increased risk of adverse experience in childhood

are both closely linked to low socioeconomic status (SES)

- Despite overall prosperity: 15% of families low socio- economic status (proportion increasing)

Mental Health Problems in children 3 – 17 and SES (2006)



Source: Hölling H, Schlack R, Petermann F, Ravens-Sieberer U, Mauz E. Psychopathological problems and psychosocial impairment in children and adolescents aged 3-17 years in the German population. *Bundesgesundheitsbl.* 2014;57:807-19

Low SES is associated with an accumulation of psychosocial challenges

- High parental stress
- High impulsivity
- Symptoms of parental mental health disorders
- Parental adverse childhood experiences
- Frequent conflicts
- Young parenthood
- Unwanted pregnancy



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- Poor parental capabilities
- ↓
- Children's poor health and developmental outcomes &
 - risk of maltreatment

Vision: Every child is able to develop their full potential



Goal: Improved psychosocial care for families in need -> targeted support

Strategy: Support should be: prevention oriented; strictly voluntary



Early Childhood Intervention Measures – 3 core elements:

1. Cross Sectoral Early Childhood Intervention Networks in municipalities
2. „Pilotage Services“ in health care settings
3. Additional support measures especially designed for families in need

Why cross-sectoral collaboration?

Child and Youth Welfare Sector:

„We (can) provide adequate psycho-social support, **but we do not reach the target group.**“

In Germany the use of support from the child and youth welfare sector is highly stigmatized, in contrast to using the health care sector

Health Care Sector:

„We want to help our patients, **but we cannot further improve their situation with our medical means.**“

To further improve children's health, psycho social support is needed like it is offered by the child and youth welfare sector

1

Cross-Sectoral ECI Networks

- 600 municipalities: ECI network coordinator for each municipality
- Network members: stakeholders from the health, social services, and other sectors



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“Pilotage services”: information, early identification of mothers or families in need, counselling, and referral to appropriate support services

- Maternity clinics
- Practice based pediatricians & gynecologists
- Welcome Visits



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- Long term home visiting services by healthcare professionals with additional qualification (e.g. by family midwives or nurses)

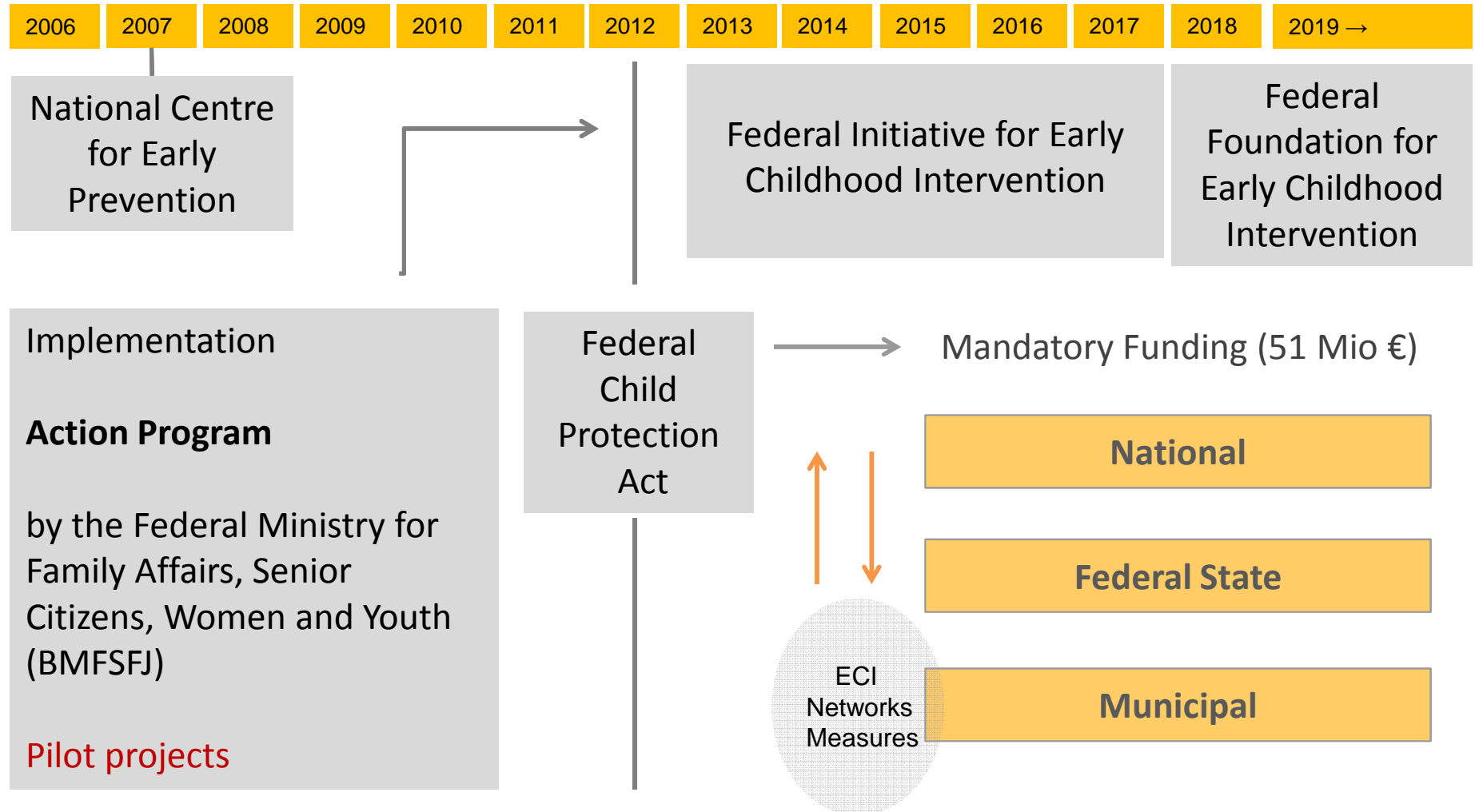
- Home visiting services by volunteers (often) to complement support provided by professionals

- More intensive professional support by social workers like STEEP



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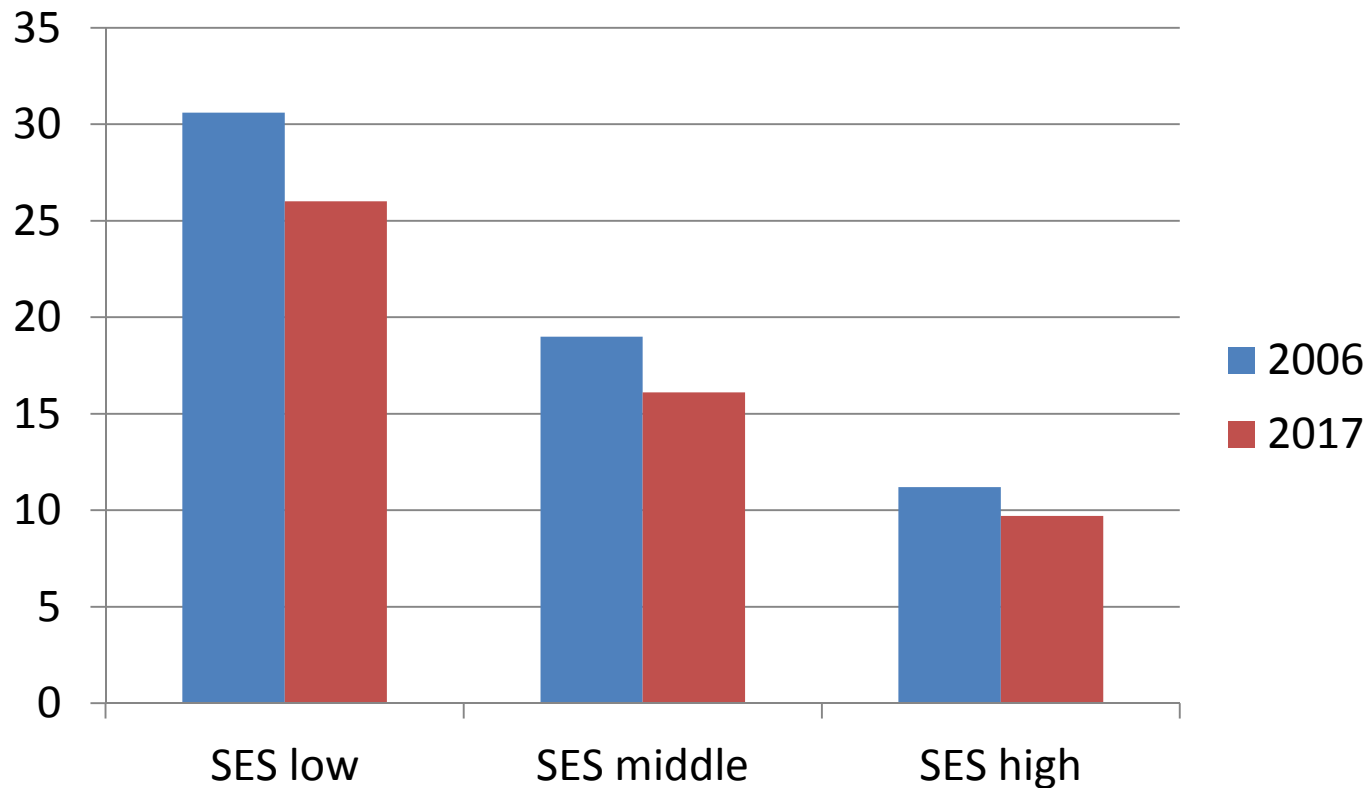
Early Childhood Intervention



What did we achieve? Remaining challenges?

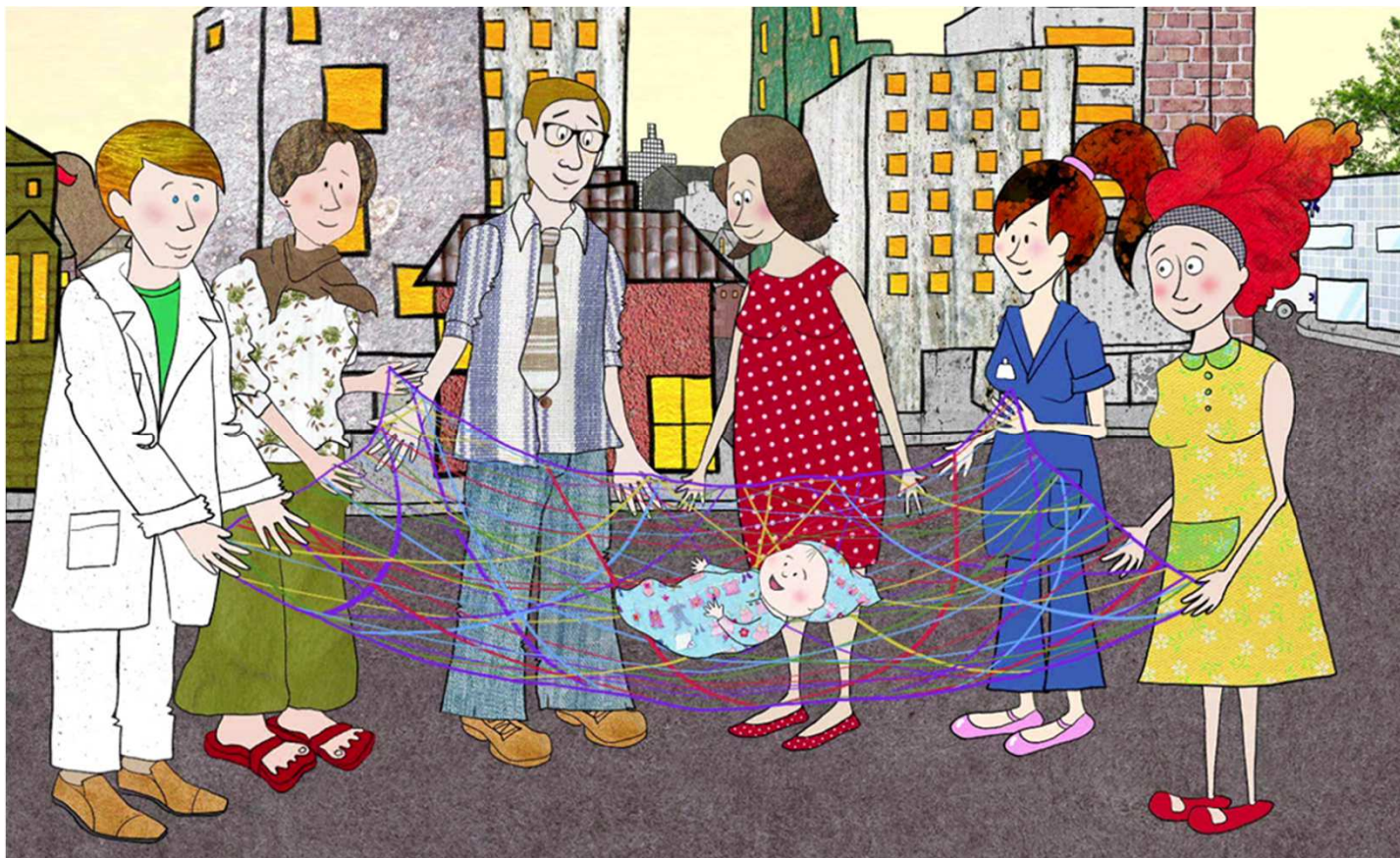
Achievements	Further Challenges
98,4% municipalities established ECI	
ECI Networks are mainly cross-sectoral ✓ 76,9 % maternity clinics are included ✓ 76,4 % practice based pediatricians	❖ 36,8% of municipalities: ECI network needs further development
Pilotage Services become common, e.g. ✓ 28,9 % of maternity clinics have implemented pilotage services	
Target group is reached ✓ Low SES families are more likely to use long term home visiting services	❖ But: the difference in use between vulnerable and non vulnerable families is still not as profound as expected
Long term home visiting services are successful ✓ 87,9 % municipalities implemented LTHS ✓ LTHS are highly accepted by target group ✓ LTHS is effective	❖ 53% municipalities: Not enough professionals to meet the needs of families (lack of family midwives and nurses)

Mental Health Problems in children 3 – 17 and SES (2006 and 2017)



Source: Lampert, Thomas (18.10.2018) Perspektive Gesundheit – Unmittelbare und langfristige Auswirkungen von Kinderarmut. Vortrag auf der NZFH Kooperationstagung „Kinderarmut“, Berlin.

Thank you!



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