

Opinion of the Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge e.V. (German Association for Public and Private Welfare) regarding the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030

The opinion (DV 09/26) was adopted by the Executive Committee of the German Association on 10 June 2026.

**Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge e.V.
(German Association for Public and Private Welfare) – the forum for the social sector since 1880.**

The German Association for Public and Private Welfare (Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge e.V.) is the joint forum of municipalities and non-statutory social welfare organisations and their social services in Germany, the Länder (federal states) and academia in all fields of social work and social policy. Through its experience and expertise, it monitors and shapes policy and legislation in relation to children, young people and families, the social insurance system, social assistance, assistance for the elderly, care and rehabilitation, social volunteering, the planning and management of social work and social services as well as international and European social policy and social legislation.

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1. Preliminary remarks

On 5 March 2026, the European Commission published the communication ‘Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030’,¹ which sets out the policy framework for gender equality at European Union level and within the Member States, including their regions and local authorities. It is based on the objectives of the European Treaties and on the European Union’s ‘Roadmap for Women’s Rights’ of March 2025, with its eight principles.² In the EU strategy, the European Commission calls on Member States to draw up National Action Plans (NAPs) for gender equality by the end of 2027, in order to advance the implementation of the principles of the Roadmap for Women’s Rights at national level. In Germany, the coalition agreement states: “To achieve gender equality more quickly, we will continue the cross-departmental gender equality strategy ‘³.” The German Federal Government has announced that the revised gender equality strategy is to be adopted by the Cabinet in 2026. Against this backdrop, the German Association comments on selected aspects of the EU strategy and sets out its positions and demands regarding its implementation in Germany, not least to strengthen European expert dialogue in these important areas of action. The statement is addressed to the German Federal Government, both regarding its actions within the Council of the EU and its implementation in Germany.

2. Committed to achieving gender equality

The German Association welcomes the European Union’s initiative to once again adopt a ‘Gender Equality Strategy’ (EU Strategy) and to make it the common basis for policy and practice at EU level and in the Member States for the next five years. The EU Strategy is not legally binding, but rather sets out a political framework. This makes it all the more dependent on decisive action by all levels of government and civil society to achieve genuine progress and improvements in people’s everyday lives. The German Association supports the EU Strategy’s objective of realising a gender-equal society. It regards the initiative as an important sign of the high priority given to gender equality in the European Union. The Strategy is right to pursue a two-pronged approach, combining targeted measures with systematic gender mainstreaming across all policy areas.

The German Association welcomes the fact that, with the adoption of the EU strategy, the European Union has taken a further step towards implementing the ‘European Pillar of Social Rights’⁴ (EPSR). The German Association supports the EU’s objective, as set out in the ESSR proclaimed in 2017, of achieving upward social convergence in the sense of improved economic and social cohesion, and calls for

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1 European Commission Communication, Gender Equality Strategy, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52026DC0113> (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

2 European Commission Communication, A Roadmap for Women’s Rights, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2fbb2780-fb4e-11ef-b7db-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

3 The Federal Government’s Gender Equality Strategy, 18 October 2020, <https://www.bmbfsfj.bund.de/resource/blob/158356/b500f2b30b7bac2fc1446d223d0a3e19/gleichstellungsstrategie-der-bundesregierung-data.pdf> (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

4 European Pillar of Social Rights, https://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Internationales/instrumentelle-proklamation-zur-europaeischen-saeule-sozialer-rechte.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2 (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

European social policy at EU level and in the Member States to be aligned with its 20 principles.⁵ In the view of the Deutscher Verein, the new EU strategy can make an important contribution, in particular to ensuring that the following principles of the ESSR are better implemented in practice:

- Principle 2 on equal treatment and equal opportunities for women and men in all areas, particularly with regard to labour market participation and working conditions;
- Principle 9 on the reconciliation of work and private life, according to which parents and people with care responsibilities should have the right to appropriate leave arrangements and flexible working hours, as well as access to childcare and care services, and men and women should have equal access to special leave for care responsibilities and be encouraged to make use of this in a balanced manner;
- Principle 11 on childcare and support for children, which states that children should have the right to high-quality, affordable early childhood education and care;
- Principle 18 on long-term care, which states that every person should have the right to affordable and high-quality long-term care services, in particular home care and community-based services.

In light of its existing positions, the German Association advocates the committed implementation of the EU strategy in Germany and the Member States, in order to capitalise on the opportunities offered by the joint approach based on the EU strategy and to achieve the desired improvements in the areas of action.

3. Principle 1 of the Roadmap: A life free from gender-based violence – the right to safety and dignity

3.1 Consistently implement the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence

The EU strategy places the chapter ‘A life free from gender-based violence – the right to safety and dignity’ at the forefront of measures to promote gender equality and women’s rights. The German Association regards this as an important commitment by the European Commission to ensuring that protection against gender-based violence remains a high priority for action at EU level and in the Member States. A key focus here is the implementation and application of the Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence⁶ in the Member States. The Directive serves to apply the objectives and instruments of the Istanbul Convention within the European Union and aims to establish minimum standards for prevention, law enforcement, victim protection and support – for example, through helplines, crisis centres, specialist counselling and safe houses. This is in line with the German Association’s calls for sufficient shelter places and

⁵ Statement by the Deutscher Verein on the Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights and the ‘Porto Declaration’, NDV 2021, 465 ff.

⁶ Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202401385 (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

counselling services, and its recommendations on the implementation of the Violence Assistance Act, which aim to ensure that the support system is structured as uniformly as possible across the country and that regulations at the federal state level are coordinated.⁷ The Violence Assistance Act (GewHG) established, for the first time in Germany, a federal legal framework for a support system addressing gender-based and domestic violence. It provides for the expansion and improvement of the existing support system, which has so far exhibited gaps in provision regarding protection, intervention and counselling. For the Deutscher Verein, the drafting of ‘National Action Plans for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence’ as provided for in the Directive – which must be in place by June 2029 (at the latest) – is a key element of implementation, even though it considers action in the shorter term, before 2029, to be urgently necessary. e plans should promote transparency within the national protection system. Regular evaluations ensure that prevention, victim protection and work with perpetrators are not only planned but also implemented. The German Association calls here for binding regional planning and quality assurance within the support system. In the German Association’s view, effective planning and monitoring require clear criteria, adequate funding and sanctions for failures to act, so that they can actually make a difference.

3.2 Developing guidelines on networking and cooperation to combat violence

In the EU Strategy on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence and Femicide, the European Commission announces the drafting of guidelines for the prevention, detection, efficient handling and criminal prosecution of cases of violence against women. The Deutscher Verein welcomes the development of such guidelines for law enforcement agencies and public prosecutors’ offices and regards them as a crucial building block for achieving a uniform approach to violence against women across all Member States, as well as for ensuring effective protection and prosecution – including in cases involving cross-border offences. Violence does not stop at national borders, and those affected need reliable protection even when they move house or find themselves in cross-border situations. The German Association supports the emphasised need for coordinated measures, because protection against violence only works if the police, the judiciary, child and youth welfare services, the health service, women’s refuges, counselling centres and social services work closely together.⁸

7 Statement by the Secretariat of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare (Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge e.V.) on the draft bill for a reliable support system for gender-based and domestic violence issued by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, https://www.deutscher-verein.de/fileadmin/user_upload/dv/pdfs/Empfehlungen_Stellungnahmen/2024/DV-25-24_Stellungnahme_haeusliche_Gewalt.pdf (last accessed: 9 June 2026); Recommendations of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare (Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge e.V.) on the implementation of the Violence Assistance Act (GewHG), NDV 2026, 207 ff.

8 Recommendations of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare (Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge e.V.) on the implementation of the Violence Assistance Act (GewHG), NDV 2026, 207 ff.

3.3 Taking appropriate account of domestic violence in cross-border family disputes

In its cross-border advisory and case work, the German Association, in its role as the organisation responsible for the International Social Service (ISS), also intervenes in situations of domestic violence. In its view, an effective equality policy must, in such contexts, take into account protection against structural inequalities across national borders. In the field of protection against violence, this means taking intersectionality into account: for those affected, gender interacts with other factors such as origin, poverty, migration or disability. In the context of binational families, power imbalances (economic, relating to residence rights, linguistic) can make access to help even more difficult and further exacerbate the risk of violence. To ensure comprehensive protection for, the German Association recommends incorporating the following aspects, building on the ISS Ottawa Principles⁹:

- The establishment of standardised risk assessments in international child custody proceedings,
- Prioritising the child's welfare and safety over access rights,
- Avoiding conflicting decisions in different countries (through inter-state cooperation, e.g. via the European Judicial Network and the Hague Liaison Judges),
- low-threshold access to legal representation, translation and psychosocial support, including for individuals with uncertain residence status or in situations of dependency under residence law; and
- (mandatory) training for all stakeholders on gender-based violence in transnational contexts.

3.4 Preventing and combating trafficking in children in a gender-sensitive manner

The EU Strategy announces an action plan to protect children from crime, which is intended, amongst other things, to help combat violence against girls. The EU Directive on combating trafficking in human beings, which has already been adopted¹⁰, is due to be implemented in Member States and is to be supplemented in 2026 by the adoption of a new EU strategy to combat trafficking in human beings, which is intended to further strengthen the protection of its victims, particularly women and children. The experience of the International Social Service (ISS) within the Deutscher Verein shows that girls are more frequently affected by sexual exploitation and also by forced marriages, whilst boys are more often forced into forced labour or criminal activities. Programmes and public discourse often focus on girls as victims of human trafficking. As a result, boys are more easily overlooked, even though they too are affected. This stands in the way of genuine equality if support is not equally accessible to all. The Deutscher Verein is therefore committed to consciously taking into account the different needs of boys and

9 ISS Ottawa Principles – For protecting children and parents subject to family violence in cross-border situations, https://www.issger.de/fileadmin/user_upload/issger/pdfs/ISS-OTTAWA-PRINCIPLES-Final.pdf (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

10 Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202401712 (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

girls in terms of prevention, identification and support. All measures in these areas of action must be child-friendly, gender-sensitive and tailored to particularly vulnerable groups in order to be effective and fair. This also includes national contact points with clear mandates for international case coordination.

3.5 Pursuing effective protection against violence for women with disabilities

The European Commission states that the EU strategy aims to “adopt an intersectional approach to gender equality by taking into account that biological and social gender intersect with other grounds of discrimination, leading to specific inequalities and varying experiences of discrimination”. Particular attention is paid to women with disabilities.¹¹ The German Association supports an intersectional approach, but notes that the everyday realities of many women with disabilities are not consistently taken into account: they are affected by violence to a significantly greater extent.¹² In Germany, the 2024 research report on violence and protection against violence in disability care facilities¹³ highlights the relevance of this issue. From the German Association’s perspective, violence against people with disabilities and the resulting measures to protect against violence must therefore be considered and developed in a more nuanced manner at EU level and within the Member States. In doing so, greater account should be taken of differences relating to gender as well as the various care settings. The German Association therefore welcomes in principle the ‘Guide to Protection against Violence for People with Disabilities’¹⁴ published by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in November 2025 and acknowledges the activities already underway among funding bodies and service providers in the field of integration support for people with disabilities. This guide provides a sound basis for strengthening protection against violence for people with disabilities. For protection against violence to be successful, the measures must actually be implemented. As the guide lacks binding force in this respect, it will be up to the relevant stakeholders to drive the measures forward accordingly. The implementation of the measures set out in the guide should therefore be closely monitored by the federal government.

4. Principle 3 of the Roadmap: Equal pay, strengthening economic standing and financial independence

4.1 Strengthening economic independence

In the EU strategy, the European Commission points out that women – particularly those in situations of special vulnerability – are at increased risk of poverty and

11 “The strategy places particular emphasis on women belonging to ethnic minorities, migrant women, women with disabilities, women from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, young and older women, and LGBTIQ+ women.”

12 See Schröttle, Monika et al.: Living Conditions and Stresses Faced by Women with Impairments and Disabilities in Germany, published by the BMFSFJ, Berlin 2012.

13 Study conducted by the Institute for Empirical Sociology at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS).

14 <https://www.bmas.de/DE/Service/Publikationen/Broschueren/a715-wegweiser-gewaltschutz.html> (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

social exclusion, and that, for example, single parents in the EU are affected twice as often. With regard to the implementation of the strategy in Germany, the Deutscher Verein reaffirms that full-time or near-full-time employment subject to social security contributions strengthens economic independence and pension entitlements sufficient to secure a livelihood – particularly for women. In the Deutscher Verein’s view, regulations governing forms of employment with very low pay (so-called ‘mini-jobs’ and ‘midi-jobs’), tax law and the currently debated issue of contribution-free co-insurance of spouses under statutory health insurance must also be taken into account.¹⁵

4.2 Providing targeted support for single parents

The German Association welcomes the fact that the EU strategy recognises the various financial and economic barriers faced by women in the context of gender equality. The reference to the particular vulnerability of certain groups, such as single parents, and to their increased risk of poverty and social exclusion is also entirely justified. In Germany, the Deutscher Verein advocates specific support for the integration of single parents receiving basic income support into the labour market, which, by aiming to improve labour market integration, also contributes to gender equality across society as a whole.¹⁶ Single parents often find themselves in a particularly challenging situation, partly due to very limited time available as a result of having sole responsibility for childcare, and are exposed to an increased risk of poverty. This makes integration into the labour market more difficult. As single parents may face complex and multifaceted challenges, the German Association recommends the increased use of holistic support under Section 16k of SGB II. The holistic approach makes it possible to develop tailor-made solutions for complex problems that cannot be adequately addressed by individual integration measures. The use of this instrument is particularly beneficial for single parents, as, for example, the family situation can be taken into account more fully when developing an integration strategy. In this way, employability can be restored in a long-term and sustainable manner. The provision of support under Section 16k of SGB II requires adequate funding for the integration programme; which, in the view of the German Association, the federal legislature should ensure in order to guarantee the needs-based application of the instrument for the integration of single parents. The availability of flexible childcare and family-friendly working conditions are also particularly important framework conditions for single parents’ integration into the labour market and their financial independence.

¹⁵ Statement by the German Association for Public and Private Welfare (Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge e.V.) on the recommendations of the Commission on Social State Reform, NDV 2026, 175 ff.

¹⁶ Recommendations of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare (Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge e.V.) on support for single parents receiving benefits under Book II of the Social Code (SGB II) in their integration into the labour market through job centres, NDV 2025, 521 ff.

5. Principle 4 of the Roadmap: Work-life balance and gender equality in care and support responsibilities

5.1 Achieving a work-life balance

The EU strategy identifies insufficient or even non-existent access to long-term care services and to high-quality, affordable early childhood care, education and upbringing as a barrier to women's participation in the labour market. The German Association concurs with this analysis and once again welcomes the fact¹⁷ that, from the European Union's perspective, progress towards gender equality is also to be achieved through qualitative and quantitative improvements in these two key areas of action, both through a more balanced participation of women and men in care work and through improved opportunities to participate in working life by providing high-quality care services for their relatives. From the German Association's perspective, framework conditions that enable a good work-life balance are an essential prerequisite not only for a successful family life and the economic independence of women and carers, but also for securing a skilled workforce, particularly in social professions such as childcare and care work. These professions play a key role in enabling others to achieve a work-life balance and are, at the same time, particularly affected by shortcomings in this area.

5.2 Strengthening parental leave, parental allowance, carer's leave and family carer's leave

The EU strategy identifies the Work-Life Balance Directive¹⁸ as a sound legal framework for ensuring the availability of flexible working time arrangements and adequate paid leave entitlements for family reasons for parents and family carers, and for encouraging fathers to take 'paternity leave' and 'leave'¹⁹ for family reasons. In Germany, the federal legislation on parental allowance and parental leave, care leave and family care leave is a necessary prerequisite for ensuring time off for care work. The coalition agreement provides for reforms in this area, such as raising income thresholds, adjusting wage replacement rates and changing the distribution of the months during which parental allowance is paid. The Deutscher Verein advocates incentives for a partnership-based division of paid work and care work.²⁰ It is also necessary to index-link minimum and maximum amounts. The Deutscher Verein recommends merging care leave and family care leave so that the leave, which has so far been available for up to 24 months, can be taken in an uncomplicated and flexible manner.²¹ Leave of up to three months during the final

17 Statement by the German Association for Public and Private Welfare (Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge e.V.) on the European Strategy on Care, NDV 2023, 225 ff.

18 Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L1158> (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

19 The German Association considers the official wording "Urlaub" [holidays] in the Directive to be technically unconvincing and therefore refers to 'Zeiten' [leave].

20 Key Issues Paper by the Deutscher Verein on the Further Development of the System of Financial Support for Families and Children, NDV 2013, 348 ff; Statement by the Deutscher Verein on the draft bill by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth for a law introducing 'Elterngeld Plus' with a partnership bonus and more flexible parental leave under the Federal Parental Allowance and Parental Leave Act, NDV 2014, 462 ff.

21 Recommendations of the German Association on the Further Development and Sustainable Financing of Care, Part I, NDV 2026, 39 ff.

stages of a relative's life should not be counted towards the maximum duration of 24 months for care leave and family care leave.²² For working relatives and family members providing care, in addition to the option of taking leave, there is a need for protection against significant loss of income in the event of leaving the labour market. In this regard, the German Association supports, in principle, the recommendation of the independent Advisory Board on the Compatibility of Care and Work to replace the care loan with an income replacement benefit similar to the federal parental allowance. However, the question of whether such a benefit can be financed from tax revenue must be clarified. Against this background, the German Association suggests examining whether the duration should be reduced to 24 months. Furthermore, should a wage replacement benefit be introduced, its relationship to the care allowance must be clarified.²³

5.3 Gaining new momentum through a 'European Deal for Care and Support'

In its EU strategy, the European Commission announces that it will present a 'European Deal on Care and Support' in 2027. This is to build on the 'European Strategy on Care and Support'²⁴, which was adopted in 2022 and aims, amongst other things, to improve work-life balance and provide better support for women in paid and unpaid care work. The European Commission will publish implementation reports in 2027 on the two main measures: the 'Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on access to affordable and high-quality long-term care'²⁵ and the 'Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on early childhood care, education and upbringing: the Barcelona targets for 2030'²⁶. The findings are to be incorporated into the New Deal, which is to include a strong gender perspective. The German Association welcomes the fact that the European Commission intends to revisit and further develop the cross-sectoral approach and processes of the 2022 strategy. It will support the design and implementation of the announced comprehensive package of measures to address the challenges facing the care sector and its workforce. The German Association welcomes the announcement that the Care Deal will also promote the equal participation of men and women in formal and informal care work.

5.4 Increasing participation in accessible, affordable and high-quality early childhood care, education and upbringing

The EU strategy emphasises that, in the Council Recommendation on the Barcelona Targets for 2030, Member States have committed to achieving the targets for participation in early childhood care, education and upbringing, as well as standards for quality and affordability. In Germany, a reliable and high-quality childcare and education infrastructure is of central importance in this regard. The Deutscher

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Communication from the European Commission on the European Strategy for Care and Support, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0440> (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

25 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H1215\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H1215(01)) (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

26 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H1220\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H1220(01)) (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

Verein calls on the Federal Government to make a long-term contribution towards the costs of high-quality childcare that is equally accessible to all children.²⁷ It is essential to support local authorities and providers so that they can fulfil the existing legal entitlement to early childhood education, care and support. In the view of the Deutscher Verein, the so-called ‘demographic dividend’ should first and foremost be used to improve the quality and accessibility of services. Research shows that, for parents, the quality of childcare is a decisive factor in whether they make use of these services and are thus able to effectively balance family life with paid work.²⁸

5.5 Improving access to affordable and high-quality long-term care

In the field of long-term care, the EU strategy states that, in the Council Recommendation, Member States have committed themselves to improving services and addressing the challenges facing the workforce. In Germany, the circumstances and conditions have changed fundamentally since the introduction of long-term care insurance 30 years ago. A rising number of people in need of care, a growing shortage of qualified and available professional carers, and changing care needs mean that the focus today is no longer solely on providing financial relief for those in need of care, but fundamentally on ensuring that care is available across the board. Care shortages already exist today, albeit to varying degrees across regions, as there are insufficient care and support services to meet demand. From the German Association’s perspective, further developments and significant reforms are therefore urgently needed to ensure good, comprehensive and cross-sectoral care provision and the sustainable financing of care.²⁹ In particular, the focus must be on strengthening home care and securing professional care provision structures in the long term through reliable infrastructure planning. The German Association reaffirms its recommendation to introduce legal provisions to effectively and sustainably reduce care-related co-payments for both outpatient and inpatient care.³⁰ Furthermore, it reiterates its recommendation to the federal states to take greater responsibility for their statutory infrastructure obligations in the care sector, in order to secure and further develop a comprehensive and efficient care infrastructure. Specifically, it recommends that medical treatment care services be funded through SGB V and that the training cost levy be removed from care remuneration. Furthermore, it recommends an annual and regular indexation of benefits in line with price trends in the care sector to counteract a creeping loss of value. Fundamentally, the care system must be subjected to a review of its functions, the funding base must be expanded – for example, through a tax subsidy for non-insurance-based services – and ways of reducing ‘ ’ expenditure must be examined.³¹ In order to achieve a nuanced cap on the growth in long-term care insurance expenditure, the German Association recommends, on the basis of its

27 Recommendations of the German Association on Quality Issues in Childcare Facilities, NDV 2013, pp. 447 ff.

28 Kaye, Theresia/Wieschke, Johannes/Kuger, Susanne: Early Years Education and Care: Parental Needs and Inequalities in Access. DJI Childcare Report 2025, Study 1 of 8, German Youth Institute e.V., Munich 2025.

29 Recommendations of the German Association on the Further Development and Sustainable Funding of Care, Part II, NDV 2026, 68 ff.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

2025 statement, that the thresholds for care levels 1 and 2 be reviewed in light of the findings of the current evaluation.³²

6. Principle 6 of the Roadmap: High-quality and inclusive general and vocational education and training

6.1 Improving vocational training for refugee women

The German Association welcomes the fact that the EU strategy addresses gender-specific challenges in the education sector, including vocational education and training, and that the Commission highlights the removal of barriers for under-represented groups as particularly important, explicitly mentioning people with a migrant background in this context. With regard to vocational training, the German Association draws attention to the following: Refugee women in particular face both refugee-specific and gender-specific challenges arising from their refugee experiences, which must be taken into account equally when preparing for and supporting vocational training.³³ The German Association suggests that vocational training measures should address not only a migrant background in general, but also the specific challenges related to displacement and gender that arise from refugees' life stories. Reliable childcare is an essential prerequisite for parents to be able to take part in pre-vocational training programmes. In practice, this applies above all to mothers. Childcare and work-life balance must be taken into account when learning German, undertaking preparatory measures and undergoing vocational training.

6.2 Taking into account the gender-specific challenges faced by boys in education and supporting their choice of social care professions

In the EU strategy, the European Commission points out that girls and boys often face gender-specific challenges in education, leading to unequal educational outcomes. It recommends gender-sensitive education as a tool to combat gender-specific inequalities and ensure that all children, regardless of their gender, have access to high-quality and inclusive general and vocational education. In the field of education, the European Union has set itself the target, amongst others, of reducing the proportion of early school leavers by 2030.³⁴ In Germany, 11 per cent of young women but 15 per cent of young men are affected by this early school leaving^{35 36}. From the perspective of the Deutscher Verein, the Federal Government should therefore pay particular attention to the needs of boys within the educa-

32 Ibid.

33 Recommendations of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare e.V. on the preparation and support of vocational training for refugees, NDV 2024, 526 ff.

34 European Commission, Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b7c08d86-7cd5-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

35 People aged 18 to 24 who are not in education or training and do not hold an upper secondary qualification.

36 Federal Statistical Office, International Education Indicators: A Cross-Country Comparison 2025, https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bildung-Forschung-Kultur/Bildungsstand/Publicationen/Downloads-Bildungsstand/bildungsindikatoren-1023017257004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3 (last accessed: 9 June 2026).

tion system in its new gender equality strategy and, together with the federal states, pursue appropriate strategies to improve their educational outcomes.

In the EU strategy, the European Commission announces that it intends to promote the 'Boys in HEAL' (Health, Education, Administration, Literacy) initiative and will publish a handbook in 2028 containing information on evidence-based solutions to reduce gender disparities in subject choice and educational outcomes. In the view of the Deutscher Verein, in the interests of gender equality and securing a skilled workforce, there is a need for targeted support to encourage the involvement of boys and men in the social professions, and for the consistent implementation of relevant strategies and programmes at national, regional and local levels.

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