

# Sexuality Education in the WHO European Region

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## GERMANY

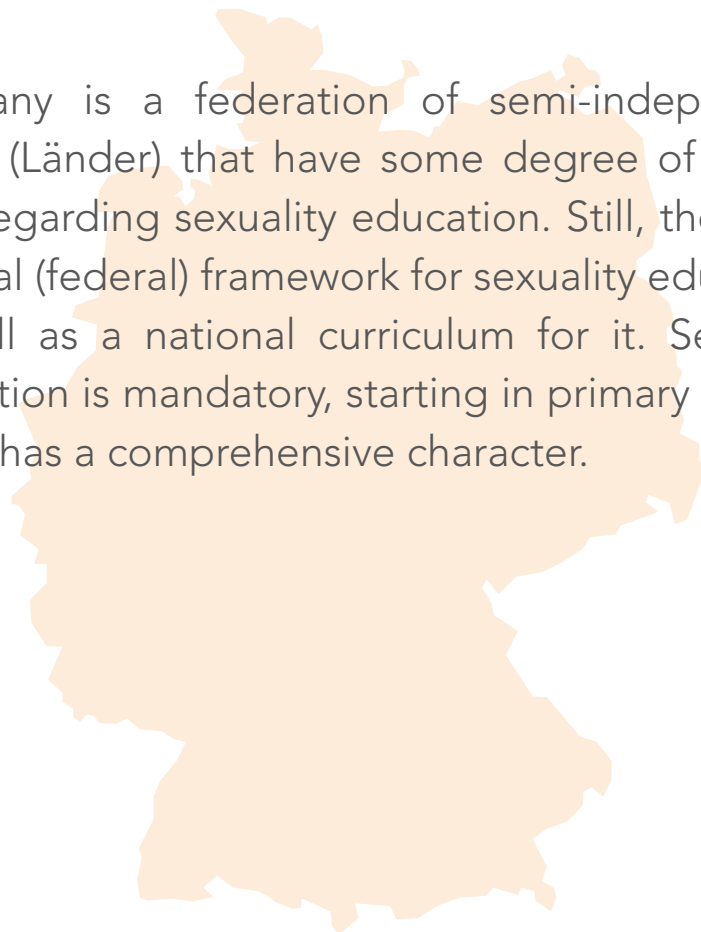


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## Status of sexuality education

Germany is a federation of semi-independent states (Länder) that have some degree of autonomy regarding sexuality education. Still, there is a general (federal) framework for sexuality education as well as a national curriculum for it. Sexuality education is mandatory, starting in primary school, and it has a comprehensive character.





### Laws and policies

At the state level, sexuality education in schools is mandated by legislation and comes under the authority of each individual state. Laws and guidelines support comprehensive sexuality education, which is regarded as part of general education and hence as a relevant issue for all learners<sup>1</sup> in public schools. There is a national curriculum for sexuality education as well as several curricula for schools in the individual states. The *Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe* (2010)<sup>2</sup> are widely used for curriculum development and revision, advocacy work and training educators.

The Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA), a governmental organisation, and the authorities of the 16 federal states are by law charged with implementing and conducting sexuality education, in close cooperation with German family counselling institutions and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the field.

### Implementation of sexuality education

Sexuality education is mandatory for learners from primary school onwards. The content of sexuality education is age- and development-appropriate. Because of differences between the federal states, the total duration of teaching varies. Sexuality education is usually integrated into broader subjects, including biology, ethics, religion and the social sciences. In a very few states, it is taught as a stand-alone subject.

A number of topics are covered in detail, e.g. biological aspects, pregnancy, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, gender roles, love, marriage, etc. In practice, the topics chosen and the intensity of discussion differ among the individual states – and even among individual schools. Information on available health services and counselling is also provided.

Parents are informed before sexuality-education classes start in school. However, they are not allowed to take their children out of the classes, as this is a mandatory subject.

NGOs are also involved in school-based sexuality education. In addition there are information events for parents, courses for teachers/tutors in schools and other institutions, caring for young people with disabilities, counselling for teachers, collaboration with social workers in schools and organised visits of school groups to counselling centres.

**Sexuality education in schools has been evaluated extensively through the representative survey ‘Youth Sexuality’, which is periodically repeated (the latest version dates from 2015). The results showed a high level of knowledge of sexuality, and school-based sexuality education was mentioned as one of the most important sources (83 %)<sup>3</sup>.**

### Training of teachers on sexuality education

Few teachers have been specially trained, though this varies throughout the country. There are some special courses and training programmes in sexuality education.

**In Merseburg, the University of Applied Sciences offers a master’s degree programme on sexology: sexual health and counselling. In Dortmund, the ‘Institut für Sexualpädagogik’, and in Frankfurt am Main ‘pro familia’ (Federal Association of Family Planning and Counselling, IPPF member association) offer training for sexuality educators.**

The state Ministries of Education develop the guidelines and materials whose use is mandatory. In addition, educators can choose to use other materials, provided, for instance, by the BZgA or by NGOs such as pro familia. There is also an online platform ([www.schule.loveline.de](http://www.schule.loveline.de)) where teachers and experts can access information and materials on various topics.



## Sexuality education outside the formal school setting

A large number of governmental organisations and NGOs, with more than 1 600 counselling centres, work actively in the field of sexuality education and counselling on sexual and reproductive health and rights. A variety of educational activities take place outside school settings, employing mass media (TV/radio), social media and youth magazines. Several efforts are directed at reaching young underserved people or young people at risk, including disseminating information materials in many languages, videos and training for professionals working with young people with disabilities, etc.

## Challenges

Although there is a broad acceptance of sexuality education, there is also growing opposition in Germany, particularly from the right-wing party Alternative for Germany (AfD). Opponents argue that rights-based sexuality education leads to the early sexualisation of children. They also strongly oppose gender diversity and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

## Good-practice example

[www.loveline.de](http://www.loveline.de) offers information about love, sexuality, contraception and partnership. This homepage is mainly frequented by boys and girls from about 12 to 17 years. The content, design and manner of addressing the users appeal to both sexes, though gender-specific aspects are dealt with, too. Readers can get many answers and, for example, find the addresses of counselling services throughout Germany.

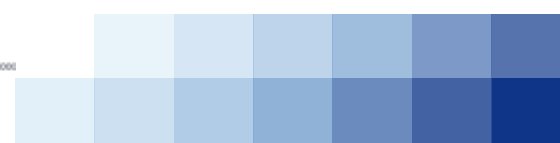
# Country facts



Germany

Total population <sup>4</sup>	80 767 000
Population aged 15–19 years (% of 15–19-year-olds in total population) <sup>4</sup>	4 054 000 (5 %)
Government expenditure on education (% of GDP) <sup>5</sup>	4.9
Youth unemployment rate (% of labour force aged 15–24 years) <sup>6</sup>	7.1
Gender Inequality Index rating <sup>7</sup>	0.066
Births per 1 000 women aged 15–19 years <sup>8</sup>	6
% of 15-year-olds who have had sexual intercourse <sup>9</sup>	boys: 22 % girls: 19 %
Average age of mother at birth of first child <sup>10</sup>	29.3

For references go to last page



## References / Definitions

- 1 **Learner:** a child or young person who is enrolled or attends classes in school, including primary (basic/elementary), secondary (middle) and high school.
- 2 Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe. Cologne: WHO Regional Office for Europe/BZgA; 2010.
- 3 BZgA (2015). Youth Sexuality 2015: The outlook of 14- to 25-year-olds. Cologne: BZgA.
- 4 Population by age, sex and urban/rural residence, 2016 [online database]. New York: United Nations Statistics Division; 2017 (<http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=POP&f=tableCode%3A22>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 5 Human development report 2016: human development for everyone. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Government expenditure on education:** current, capital and transfer spending on education, expressed as a percentage of GDP. Range in the region is approx. 2.0–8.5.
- 6 Human development data, 2015 [online database]. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2017 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/data#>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Youth unemployment rate:** percentage of the labour force population aged 15–24 years that is not in paid employment or self-employed, but is available for work and has taken steps to seek paid employment or self-employment.
- 7 Human development report 2016: human development for everyone. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Gender Inequality Index:** a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. It varies between zero (when women and men fare equally) and one (when men or women fare poorly compared with the other in all dimensions).
- 8 Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1 000 women ages 15–19). Washington (DC): World Bank; 2016 (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 9 Growing up unequal: gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being. HBSC 2016 study report (2013/2014 survey). Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2016 (<http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/growing-up-unequal.-hbsc-2016-study-20132014-survey>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 10 Women in the EU gave birth to their first child at almost 29 years of age on average. Luxembourg: Eurostat; 2015 [2013 data] (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6829228/3-13052015-CP-EN.pdf/7e9007fb-3ca9-445f-96eb-fd75d6792965>, accessed 25 March 2017).