



The study addresses the following main questions:

- What digital infrastructure is available in day care centres and what infrastructure is accessible to the children in care? (hardware and software)
- How are digital media used in the day-to-day pedagogical activities of day care centres? What factors influence the use of digital media in day care centres?
- What attitudes are in evidence among individual professionals and teams of professionals as well as among parents/guardians regarding the pedagogical use of digital media in their institutions?
- What forms of cooperation exist on the topic of digital media between day care centres and parents/guardians of the children in their care?
- What challenges, problems and needs do professionals face regarding media education in day care centres?

The MEKiSmini study is a cooperation project of the School of Social Work FHNW, the BFF Kompetenz Bildung Bern and the Marie Meierhofer Institut für das Kind. The study was funded by the Federal Social Insurance Office FSIO and the Palatin Foundation.

In the following, the most important results of the study are presented briefly.

#### **Infrastructure and use of digital media in day care centres**

- > Digital media are available in almost all the Swiss day care centres surveyed. Different types of use can be distinguished: Administration, communication with parents/guardians, documentation and media education with the children.
- > Digital media are usually only freely accessible to the professionals in day care centres, not to the children.
- > The professionals see little need for equipping day care centres further with digital media.
- > Creative or learning-oriented activities with screen-based media are carried out with the children in only a minority of the day care centres surveyed. However, tablets or mobile phones are used to listen to stories or music in around half of the day care centres.
- > Email is used by the majority of day care centres to communicate with the parents/guardians, but day care apps are rarely used.
- > There have been changes in Swiss day care centres as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic: professionals more frequently communicate digitally with each other and with parents/guardians, while the use of digital media in their pedagogical work has increased to a lesser extent.

### Media as a topic raised by children and discussed with them in day care centres

- > Digital media are very present in the everyday life of young children, which is also evident in the day care centres: Around two-thirds of the professionals state that the children raise the topic of digital media content regularly (daily or weekly).
- > Professionals talk directly to children about screen-based media much less often: around a quarter of the professionals interviewed talk regularly to the children about screen-based media.

### Attitudes of professionals and parents/guardians toward digital media in day care centres

- > A large majority of professionals in Swiss day care centres and parents/guardians are not in favour of using screen-based media in their pedagogical work with children. Around nine out of ten professionals and an equally high proportion of parents/guardians think it is important that the day care centre is as screen-free a place as possible for children.
- > Professionals who have attended training courses on the topic of digital media are less negative about screen-based media in day care centres.
- > Professionals who are open to the use of screen-based media in the day care centre have more frequent conversations with the children and report engaging in more activities using screen-based media with children.
- > There is relatively little discussion of professional questions related to screen-based media in the teams: around a quarter of the institutions address this regularly.
- > Differences of opinion regarding the pedagogical use of screen-based media exist in around one in five institutions.
- > Parents/guardians are clearly of the opinion that children need clear rules regarding the use of screen-based media.

### The day care centre or parents/guardians? - Responsibility for media education

- > parents/guardians and professionals agree that it is mainly the parents/guardians and not the day care centres who are responsible for ensuring that children learn how to use screen-based media.
- > About one fifth of the parents/guardians think that they are well supported by the day care centre staff regarding questions about «children and digital media», while the majority of the respondents do not answer this question.
- > The children's use of media is rarely a topic of discussion between the professionals and the parents/guardians, as it is only regularly discussed with the parents/guardians in one fifth of the institutions surveyed.

### Concepts, information and training on digital media in day care centres

- > Only around one in twenty of the institutions has a detailed media education concept.
- > The most frequent sources of information on screen-based media in early childhood are discussions with colleagues, books and magazines.

- > On the whole, professionals have relatively little support in working with digital media in the day care centres, either through training courses, instructions and guidelines provided by the day care centre management or from available specialist literature in the organisations.
- > Professionals indicate that their need for information through training courses is greatest in the areas of basic knowledge about media in childhood as well as legal aspects and risks related to the use of media.

### Media education in day care centres

- > Only a few professionals and parents/guardians have a positive attitude towards digital media in the day care centres and are of the opinion that media education is the task of the day care centre.
- > The professionals comment on obstacles to the use of digital media in the day care centre, stating that digital media are not appropriate for the target group, that there is no mandate for their use and that there is a lack of available time.
- > Professionals, like parents/guardians, see the central task in guiding children in their use of media as protecting them from media-related risks, rather than helping them develop skills, learn how to use screen-based media or have new experiences.

Against the background of existing research, the results of the study make it clear that there is a discrepancy between the increasingly early contact of young children with digital media in their everyday life and the relative lack of guidance of young children in Swiss day care centres on the use of digital media. Professionals need more knowledge, through their education or in training courses, in order to address the many aspects of the topic of media education in day care centres. More intensive cooperation between day care centres on issues related to digital media is needed in order to ensure that young children are adequately supported in their use of digital media.