



Gleichstellungsbeauftragte der Universität Tübingen  
Gleichstellungsbeauftragte der Medizinischen Fakultät der Universität Tübingen  
Beauftragte für Chancengleichheit der Universität Tübingen  
Beauftragte für Chancengleichheit des Universitätsklinikums Tübingen

## Statement on the shortage of qualified staff in childcare and the planned cuts in childcare hours in childcare facilities of the city of Tübingen

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Members of the university and the university hospital are also greatly affected by the planned cuts in childcare hours in the municipal childcare facilities. We are extremely concerned.

A recent survey at the **Faculty of Medicine and the University Hospital** shows that approximately 70% of participants with children aged 0 to 6 years rely on the municipal and private childcare facilities in the city and district of Tübingen. In many cases working hours at the University Hospital include shift work; early, late and night shifts. A reduction in opening hours increases the burden on the family network disproportionately. Scientific work or studies also entail special needs regarding the opening hours of childcare facilities. In many cases, the afternoon childcare hours are crucial due to the laboratory/experimental work as well as the participation in courses.

From an equality perspective, we must point out that a loss of childcare options **is essentially compensated by women**. Covid19 and the associated closure of childcare facilities have shown this very clearly already.

What are the consequences for families and for women in particular?

In many cases, women are the ones who (due to already well known reasons - earnings, social perceptions) will **reduce their working hours**. The immediate consequences are a **reduction in family income** that is hardly or no longer bearable for many in times of extremely increased costs of living, as well as **personal career losses**, and in the long term, even a **reduction in later pension provision**, going as far as old-age poverty.

The impact on the university hospital and the university is serious. If employees have to reduce their working hours to a large extent, it will exacerbate the general shortage of specialists and has a negative impact on the **services provided by the university hospital, i.e., nothing less than health care for the population**, as well as the **performance of the university's excellence** in terms of research and teaching.



The lack of childcare facilities already has a **negative impact on Tübingen as a location for science and research**. As a university of excellence, we are dependent on providing childcare for scientists who come to Tübingen. We know examples where women professors went through an elaborate appointment process and received a call to Tübingen but had to make the **acceptance of the call (Annahme des Rufes) dependent on the availability of sufficient childcare**. We know of international scientists with children who cancelled their research stays in Tübingen because they could not get childcare. We know women who do not take up positions in the scientific support service because they cannot get a daycare place. And we know renowned women scientists who are considering moving to other locations because of inadequate childcare.

**The equality goals** that the university and the university hospital have set regarding increasing the proportion of women in science **cannot be achieved this way!**

This also threatens the **competitiveness** of Tübingen as a location of science because applications for collaborative research projects, such as Collaborative Research Centers and Clusters of Excellence, have little chance of being approved by the German Research Foundation (DFG), - the most important provider of third-party funding – without a sufficient proportion of female scientists involved.

The shortage of skilled workers in childcare thus leads to a **massive roll-back**: Equal opportunity goals that have been reached so far are at risk. The **constitutional mandate** to implement equal rights for women and men and to eliminate existing disadvantages can no longer be fulfilled considering the shortage of skilled workers in childcare.

Safe and comprehensive **childcare is systemically relevant**. If childcare services fall away, there will be a shortage of system-relevant workers in other places once again. The pandemic has shown that most of the system-relevant workers are typically women: Childcare, nursing, schools, sales. All these areas are now threatened by the shortage of skilled workers in childcare again.

For a modern society, comprehensive childcare is an important foundation of prosperity and simply a social obligation. Scientific and economic performance, gender equality and, not least, tax revenues depend – to a large extent – on available childcare.

Moreover, studies show a clear **correlation** between sufficient childcare provision - especially in the infant sector - **and birth rate**. Experiences – in recent years in Tübingen – shows that women have more children if sufficient childcare is available. They have fewer children or even none if childcare is barely or not available at all. The shortage of skilled workers in childcare thus exacerbates the general shortage of skilled workers not only currently, but very sustainably for many years to come, because children who are not born today cannot become skilled workers tomorrow.



**Nevertheless, there is no general outcry.** Although a better balance between family and career is named as an important measure to combat the general shortage of skilled workers, too little attention is still paid to the importance of the issue. It is no coincidence that the training and working conditions as well as the pay for women educators is not attractive enough, because it simply is not good enough in times of general labor shortage. Society does not invest enough money in this area, and this has fundamentally to do with the fact that it is women who work there and who benefit most from the work done there. There simply is a lack of appreciation!

We are aware that the **city of Tübingen cannot counteract the shortage of skilled workers on its own.** The shortage of educators is a problem throughout the state of Baden-Württemberg and in other states as well. And it didn't happen overnight; the data on demographic trends and baby boomers, as well as the lack of childcare expansion, were known for a long period of time.

The shortage of skilled workers in childcare is therefore a problem **for society as a whole**, which will develop into a massive economic problem, affecting many areas and has constitutionally questionable consequences beyond this. This shows that the **problem must be solved with the highest priority.** We hope that the political actors will be aware of these problems! The elimination of the shortage of skilled workers in childcare must have the highest priority within the measures to combat the general shortage of skilled workers.

Many knowledgeable associations and institutions have submitted good proposals for solving the problem. We demand that these be examined and implemented with the utmost urgency.

Examples:

Short-term solutions:

- Unbureaucratic coverage of off-peak hours by staff who do not necessarily have to be professionals
- Cooperation with parent councils in developing creative alternative solutions

Mid-term solutions:

- Attractive salaries and incentive systems for educators in an appropriately designed collective agreement
- Continuous development of sufficient own personnel resources by means of an adapted training concept (several trainees as well as interns per facility)
- Evaluation of successful staff recruitment and retention concepts of successful daycare centers and sponsors and transfer to municipal childcare facilities.



Long-term solutions:

- Adjusting the training paths for educators from purely school-based concepts to more practice-oriented concepts with corresponding performance-based remuneration
- Lowering the access threshold to these training paths

The cuts in opening hours must therefore be seen in a larger context. We therefore expect the city of Tübingen, but above all the **state government (which we measure against its goals regarding childcare in the coalition agreement)** and the federal government to ensure that sufficient childcare must be available for all children, - and our own institutions, – the University of Tübingen and the University Hospital Tübingen – to be supportive as far as possible.

Prof. Dr. Ruth Scoralick  
Gleichstellungsbeauftragte der Universität Tübingen

Prof. Dr. Birgit Derntl  
Gleichstellungsbeauftragte Medizinische Fakultät der Universität Tübingen

Christl Glauder  
Beauftragte für Chancengleichheit der Universität Tübingen

Anke Weischer-Kip  
Beauftragte für Chancengleichheit des Universitätsklinikums Tübingen