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ICSW Expert meeting

**Poverty in families – Approaches for social mobility in
Germany, Austria and Switzerland**

November 16–17, 2017

Berlin

German Association for Public and Private Welfare

Michaelkirchstraße 17/18
D-10179 Berlin
Germany

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I. Programme

November 16, 2017		
2 p.m.	Opening and Welcome - Tour de Table	<u>Moderation:</u> Inge Michels (Bildung moderieren) Cornelia Markowski Secretary-General ICSW Germany Mag. Michael Chalupka President ICSW Austria Bettina Seebeck ICSW Switzerland
2.30	Indroduction: Poverty in families	Prof. Dr. Gerhard Bäcker University Duisburg-Essen
3.15	Social Mobiltiy and solidification of poverty	<u>Austria</u> Prof. Dr. Christine Stelzer-Orthofer Johannes Kepler University Linz and Mag. Martin Schenk Diakonia Austria <u>Germany</u> Prof. Dr. Olaf Groh-Samberg University Bremen / Research Center on Inequality and Social Policy SOCIUM <u>Switzerland</u> Yann Bochsler University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland / University Geneva
5.30	Discussion of the keynotes <u>Moderation:</u> Inge Michels	
	Joint Dinner of the experts and representatives of ICSW	

November 17, 2017		
9 a.m.	New approaches and best practice to promote social mobility	<u>Germany</u> Christina Wieda Bertelsmann Foundation
11.15	Coffee break	
11.30	New approaches and best practice to promote social mobility (cont.)	<u>Switzerland</u> Dr. Kaspar Burger University Geneva / Interfaculty Centre for Studies of Childrens' Rights
12.00	Discussion with an comparative view on the approaches in Germany, Austria and Switzerland <u>Moderation:</u> Inge Michels	
1 p.m.	End of meeting	

II. Report

by Cornelia Markowski, Head of Department for International Affairs at German Association for Public and Private Welfare

On 16-17 November 2017, the offices of German Association for Public and Private Welfare in Berlin were the venue for a meeting of ca. 20 experts from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, working in poverty research and reporting or drawn from welfare organisations delivering social services for people with experience of poverty. The event was at the invitation of the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) in Europe and its members in Germany (German Association - DV¹), Austria (Austrian Committee for Social Work - ÖKSA²) and Switzerland (Swiss Conference for Social Welfare - SKOS³).

The three institutions have worked together repeatedly over a number of years, with the support of ICSW Europe, taking a comparative view on selected social policy developments in the German-speaking region. Earlier meetings have addressed questions relating to how social assistance is organised, to strategies and instruments for combating poverty, reporting on poverty, implementation of the UN convention on disability, particularly in care and guardianship legislation, and funding of care services.



Cornelia Markowski (Secretary General ICSW Germany). Dir. Mag. Michael Chalupka (President ICSW Austria), Bettina Seebeck (ICSW Switzerland)

¹ <https://www.deutscher-verein.de/en/>
² <http://www.oeksa.at>
³ <https://www.skos.ch>

The subject of the 2017 seminar was poverty in families in the three countries and, in particular, approaches via which solidified poverty can be effectively combated. The expert meeting was a joint event of the three national organisations, supported by ICSW Europe.

1. Germany

1.1 Situation and trend in poverty of families in Germany

Professor Gerhard Bäcker, an expert with extensive experience in poverty research at Duisburg-Essen University, provided a comprehensive introduction to the subject. Even if the poverty debate in Germany is currently more dominated by the theme of poverty of the elderly, the discussion of child poverty remains relevant. Life-long disadvantages can come about for children from poor families if their opportunities for development are neglected. The “5th Poverty and Wealth Report” by the Federal government clearly establishes the connection between poor starting conditions in the early years of life and social mobility as an adult⁴.

Professor Bäcker urged that the concept of the family should not be tied too closely to the parent-child arrangement. Just 25 % of communal forms of living involve children. The majority do not involve caring for children (i.e. no longer, or not as yet).

He pointed out that investigations into income poverty have shown that childhood poverty is found primarily in families with several children and in single-parent households⁵. In families with a background of migration, the risk of poverty is on average 2.5 times higher. Despite all efforts to expand public infrastructures and services for disadvantaged families and children, the socio-economic status of the parental home continues to have a decisive impact on educational pathways, success in school and the future income prospects of children in Germany⁶.

Of those people who are currently drawing basic benefits for jobseekers (“Grundsicherung für Arbeitssuchende”), 40 % have been doing so for four years or more. If you examine the question of how many people succeed in overcoming their

⁴ Lebenslagen in Deutschland – Der Fünfte Armuts- und Reichtumsbericht der Bundesregierung, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (ed.), 2017, p. 265 (Report only available in German)

⁵ Familienreport 2017 – Leistungen, Wirkungen, Trends, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women und Youth (ed.), 2017, p. 48 et seq. (Report only available in German)

⁶ 5. Armuts- und Reichtumsbericht, p. 278

precarious situation over time, you find that the available data only rarely permits conclusions even on the pattern of a person's experience of poverty over time or on social mobility⁷. At this point, he introduced the presentation by Professor Olaf Groh-Samberg, from Bremen University.

1.2 Facts on solidified poverty

Professor Groh-Samberg presented findings by the SOCIUM Research centre on Inequality and Social Policy at Bremen University, looking at the solidification of poverty in Germany. To describe solidified poverty, the researchers started from a multi-dimensional poverty indicator: if income poverty persists over five years and qualifying criteria apply in two out of the three conditions of life housing, savings or unemployment, then poverty is solidified. To be able to apply the indicator, Professor Groh-Samberg and his team evaluated data from the Socio-economic Panel (SOEP) from the period 2004 to 2014.

The evaluation showed that 67 % of people remained in solidified poverty over the ten-year period. The number of those progressing into assured prosperity declined continuously, to around 2 % (2009-14). However, what is particularly noteworthy is the increase in people falling out of a precarious situation (income fluctuations of around 60% of median income) into solidified poverty. The risk of solidification was particularly high for "blue-collar" households as well as households of skilled workers, for people with a certificate of secondary school with no further vocational qualifications, and people with a background of migration.

To consider the aspect of poverty being passed on to the next generation, the study also looked at children (12-16 years) living in the families being tracked: fewer than 5% of the children managed to progress into guaranteed prosperity. Half progressed into the range defined as precarious. Around 30% did not succeed in escaping solidified poverty.

Summing up, Professor Groh-Samberg put the point that it was inaccurate to assume that in individualised, modern societies, temporary experiences of poverty or fluctuations in status would increase around the poverty line. Instead, he noted,

⁷ Exceptions are e.g. Holz, G., Laubstein, C., Stahmer, E.,: Lebenslange und Zukunftschancen von (armen) Kindern und Jugendlichen in Deutschland – 15 Jahre AWO-ISS-Studie, Institut für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik e.V., 2012; Tophoven, S., Lietzmann, T., Reiter, S., Wenzig, C.: Armutsmuster in Kindheit und Jugend, Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung (IAB), 2017

solidified poverty had been on the increase since the end of the 1990s. The observations showed that the solidification of poverty was a self-reinforcing process: it was not uncommon for one difficult material situation to induce another. He noted that while poverty took root in individual biographies, it also held in the environment, in city districts and milieus, in turn reducing the opportunity for upward social mobility.

1.3 Ways out of poverty for families in Germany

It is precisely the opportunities for shaping and defining urban districts and milieus that the practically-based German project “KeKiz”⁸ addresses – a project carried out by the Federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia jointly with 18 local authorities through to 2015. The Bertelsmann Foundation provided academic support for the project. Mrs Christina Wieda from the Foundation presented the findings. The starting question was how to effectively break the cycle of “inheriting poverty” in families, using existing instruments by the local authority. The fundamental point underpinning every consideration was that child poverty constitutes a demonstrable risk in the development of children⁹. In order for every child to have prospects and a path out of poverty, the project was aimed at supporting the development of “chains of prevention” offers operating seamlessly from birth through to the school-work transition.

In theory, prevention offers within a local authority area in the spheres of health, social welfare, education and culture should be well-networked and should build on one another, geared to the life pattern of children and young adults. In practice, this networking often falls down due to the different responsibilities within the local authority administration or in the relationship with higher-level tiers, e.g. district level (healthcare) or Federal state level (education). A further complicating factor is the “pillarisation” of welfare systems for minimum income and social insurance in German law. It makes children’s claims to various prevention offers dependent on the social status of their parents.

⁸ More information about the project „Kein Kind zurücklassen!“ (KeKiz) at (in German only): <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/unsere-projekte/kein-kind-zuruecklassen-kommunen-schaffen-chancen/>

⁹ Gross, T., Jehles, N.: Der Einfluss von Armut auf die Entwicklung von Kindern - Ergebnisse der Schuleingangsuntersuchung, Working Paper of the Bertelmann Stiftung for the project „Kein Kind zurücklassen!“ (KeKiZ), 2015, p. 30 et seq.

The project findings indicate that access by families (including strong burdened families) to prevention offers is most successful where facilitated by public health establishments, i.e. via paediatricians, midwives or via offers closely connected with birth. Early intervention is a critical success factor¹⁰. However, healthcare is the area where prevention offers are considered to be least developed. Thus healthcare affords as yet unexploited opportunities for improving access by all children and families. Data gathered by the project shows that parents most commonly get information about possible offers from relatives and friends, and then from paediatricians and teachers at school. Consequently, it is recommended that prevention work should be linked locally to regular establishments such as the (primary) school, and also childcare facilities, instead of undertaking a large number of separate stand-alone projects for poverty prevention in the local authority area. It is clear that the “access points” can only take on this prevention role in future if their staff have been trained for it and are equipped in such a way that they are able to recognise and address the need for prevention and then gear their advice or collaboration with the families and children to that.

The key message from Mrs Wieda, based on the experiences of the “KeKiz” project, was that poverty prevention via “prevention chains” - as a strategic decision - needs to start clearly from the top at the local authority level. Otherwise the hurdles involved in cross-agency networking of offers are very difficult to overcome. Local authority control over the shaping and defining of an urban district or milieu requires adapted monitoring in order to make the connection between social environment and the development opportunities of children and young adults transparent and to find suitable measures. As an example, Mrs Wieda cited the “Netzwerk INFamilie” in Dortmund¹¹. Colleagues in a primary school, a family centre and a family project run by the Dortmund city administration built up a network in a socially-deprived city district of Dortmund in 2011, under their own initiative, and in 2016 it was adopted as part of the scope of action of the programme “Social City” (Programme “Soziale Stadt”) under a decision by the City Council. The network connects up a series of offers aimed at promoting equal chances, e.g. “Dortmunder Kinderstuben” (care and intensive support for children from 0 to 3 with a migrant background and for their

¹⁰ ibid. p. 48

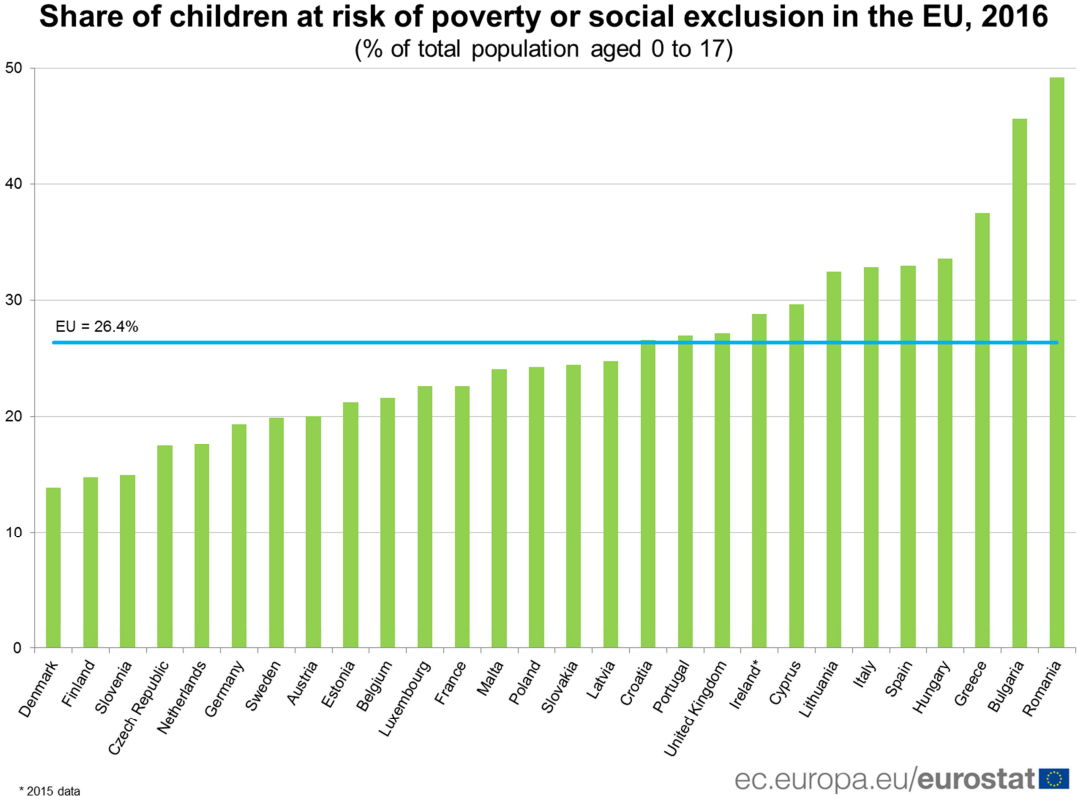
¹¹ A short description of the “INFamilie” project can be found here (in German only):
https://www.dortmund.de/de/leben_in_dortmund/familie_und_soziales/familienportal/kein_kind_zuruec_klassen/netzwerk_infamilie/projektbeschreibung/index.html

families in preparing for a child-care centre attendance), Brother “Maiko” (providing hot lunches for primary school children), the civic garden, coach for outings, “Erdmännchen” play group for children, etc.

2. Austria

2.1 Situation and trend in poverty of families in Austria

In Austria and Switzerland, the primary data used in measuring poverty comes from the European Union Statistics on Income and Life Conditions (EU-SILC) or from the OECD. It is noteworthy that the proportion of children threatened by poverty has fluctuated over the past ten years for all three countries, but more recently (2016) has been at practically the same level as in 2007 in Germany and Switzerland. In Austria, the proportion rose continuously through to 2014, and despite a clear downturn in 2016 ultimately it remains well above the 2007 figure. Over the same period, public expenditures on families and children rose continuously in Germany and Austria.



In her presentation, Professor Christine Stelzer-Orthofer from Linz University outlined family policy in Austria. The focus is on measures aimed at supporting the change from the male family breadwinner model to a model where women in a family role have the opportunity to earn additional income, and not on combating poverty in families per se. Horizontal redistribution is aimed at enabling public services for families to safeguard their ability to manage financially and to compensate for loss of income, to enable them to balance family and work-life, and to expand childcare services. Nearly two-thirds of public expenditures for families in Austria are transfers of money (2013: 64.5 %). Tax reliefs play a subordinate role, at just 6.3 %. The share of public expenditures committed on childcare was 18.8 % in 2013.

In Austria, social mobility is largely understood as educational mobility, since the educational opportunities of children are heavily dependent on the level of education of the parents here too. In families with a background of migration, this is particularly noticeable. Professor Stelzer-Orthofer added that this phenomenon had not changed even with the generally-rising level of education (“Escalator effect”).

2.2 Ways out of poverty for families in Austria

Given the finding that pre-school support is very important in terms of educational achievement and educational mobility, the focus of Austrian policy in this area is on expanding infrastructure of childcare services. Compared with Germany and Switzerland, Austria has made the slowest progress in pursuing the EU’s “Barcelona targets” on childcare services for children under 3 years of age. According to Eurostat, in 2014 the level of provision was 16% (Germany: 27 %, Switzerland: 34%). For childcare for children aged 3-6 the figure is significantly better, at 90 %.

Alongside expanding the care infrastructure for young children, another key goal in opening up paths out of poverty in Austria is removing educational barriers in the school system. Most recently, as part of the current education reform, there is a newly-specified “opportunities index” (“Chancen-Index”). In view of the need for language support for children with a migration background, following the influx of refugees in 2015/2016, an index was developed which allows the possible additional demand to be calculated objectively and transparently per school. The “Chancen-Index” takes account of the make-up of the school’s intake, using the family background of the individual pupils (level of education, occupation and income level

of parents, language used by the child in the home, etc.). The school receives additional funding depending on the Index level, in order to be able to offer all pupils good opportunities. In 2018, a sum of EUR 80 million is available to the regional authorities in Austria for distribution in accordance with the “Chancen-Index”. The Hamburg City Administration in Germany has been pursuing a comparable path for well over 20 years, in two schools in socially disadvantaged areas. Evaluations show that the additional funding there has meant that pupils in areas experiencing strong social pressures learn just as much new material as children and young persons at schools where the social pressures are less, although the level of learning remains higher in the latter schools.

Further measures to promote social mobility in Austria are aimed at improving the income situation of families, above all via better integration of women in the labour market. Unlike in Switzerland, the proportion of women participating in the labour market in Austria is very low (that said, the proportion of women in Switzerland working part-time is quite high). Studies have shown that the risk of poverty amongst single parents reduces by two-thirds if the person is in employment.

In a European comparison, Austria exhibits a particularly wide gender pay gap. Differences in salary and precarious employment are intended to be reduced via the introduction of minimum wages in Austria.

Mr Martin Schenk, from Diakonie Austria and a member of the Anti-Poverty Conference in Austria, gave a brief overview of examples of good practice in promoting social mobility in that country. “Nachbarinnen”¹² (neighbours) are women with a background of migration who receive theoretical and practical training over several months, so that they can then connect with families and women with a background of migration, provide support with issues relating to bringing up children, attending childcare facility, school, contact with public agencies, etc., advise on health matters and signpost pathways to key information and helpful offers. This support is aimed at helping to enable women to take up opportunities for themselves and their families and escape the risk of poverty. Another successful project is the

¹² More information at (in German only): <http://www.nachbarinnen.at/index.html> (Vienna) or “Nachbarinnen – Aufsuchende Familienarbeit im transkulturellen Kontext”, a joint project of the “Zentrum für MigrantInnen Oberösterreich (migrare)”, Volkshilfe and University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria.

“Nightingale” project¹³: originally launched well over 20 years ago in Malmö, it takes volunteer students at teacher training colleges to act as mentors for school children with a background of migration, e.g. in primary schools (Volksschule) in Vienna, Graz, Salzburg and Linz. The aim, in addition to “learning from each other”, is to increase the pupils’ motivation to learn.

The project “Hunger auf Kunst und Kultur”¹⁴ (“Hungry for Art and Culture”) is based on better access for poor people to art events and cultural events, and is thus aimed indirectly at learning and the motivation to learn. Anyone on income support or unemployment benefit can apply for the requisite “culture passport” (“Kulturpass”), as can asylum-seekers and anyone with children over 10 years of age, where their household income is below the poverty threshold. The “Kulturpass” gives them free admission for six months to (participating) cultural facilities, and now operates in seven of the nine Federal states in Austria.

3. Switzerland

3.1 Situation and trend in poverty of families in Switzerland

The situation in Switzerland was described by Mr Yann Bochsler, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland, and Dr Kaspar Burger, University Geneva. In Switzerland, social assistance statistics are the definitive basis for measuring poverty. These statistics indicate that 3.2 % of the population in Switzerland, some 266,000 people, are in receipt of social assistance. One problem with this is where the help is not taken up, despite clear entitlement. If a level of 60% of median income is taken as the measure of risk of poverty, then according to Mr Bochsler the figure of those in poverty would be significantly higher, and would be over one million people. The proportion of those receiving social assistance is particularly high amongst single parents and families in precarious employment. After a separation, female single parents are often reliant on obtaining social assistance, since in Switzerland the model of the man being the main earner in the family is still widely encountered.

¹³ More information at (in German only): <http://www.kinderfreunde.at/Gemeinsam/Projekte/Nightingale-SchuelerInnen-Mentoring>

¹⁴ More information at (in German only): <http://www.hungeraufkunstundkultur.at/wien>

In Switzerland too, social mobility is primarily measured as educational mobility. Despite democratisation in access to education, it remained unchanged during the 20th century. Social origin, as in Germany and Austria, has a decisive influence on the prospects of children and young adults. Even where a similar level of educational achievement is attained, social origin can be an obstacle to upward social mobility, and the onward educational pathways diverge. People in a lower social stratum tend to opt for on-the-job qualifications and shorter training courses, in order to avoid social regression. People in higher social strata, by contrast, tend to choose relatively more intensive and longer educational routes, to achieve high status.

3.2 Ways out of poverty for families in Switzerland

Roughly half of those in receipt of social assistance in Switzerland have no vocational training. The figures show that the risk of poverty and reliance on income support is particularly high at the transitions from school to training and then on into the employment market. The opportunity for entry into vocational training for young adults is therefore currently viewed in Switzerland as a key factor for combating poverty. The remedy for this might be the introduction of a “right to training for all” that would empower those affected, as is currently being discussed in the Swiss cantons. However, it will only achieve the desired impact so long as sanctions in the context of active labour market integration or the reduction in social assistance during this phase of life do not generate opposite effects. Given that the life situations involved are highly diverse, implementing a potential “right to training for all” requires an adequate case management in the cantons for young adults with no training.

In addition, consideration is being given in Switzerland to how to improve the situation of families at risk of poverty through financial support. In five cantons, supplementary benefits were introduced for low-income families. The advance maintenance payment arrangements for single parents are set to be improved. The minimum income level is only tax-free in ten cantons, and an extension of tax exemption is being considered.

4. Summary

The exchange of views amongst the experts has shown that the facts regarding family poverty and solidification of poverty are well-known, even if there is still a need for long-term studies in order to better understand social mobility. In practice, however, no comprehensive success of initiatives to avoid or reduce poverty has been observed to date. In Germany, Austria and Switzerland, it is essentially the social origin and the level of education of the parents that determine the level of education and later earnings potential of the children. Social mobility is therefore primarily understood as educational mobility. Accordingly, across all countries the key areas for initiatives to support children and young adults are in the sphere of education, specifically in expanding early child education and care offers (particularly Austria) and schooling and appropriate equipping of staff in (primary) schools and childcare facilities to enable them to take preventive action.

For the school phase, the view of the experts was that it is important to avoid too early divergence in the educational pathways (particularly in Switzerland and Germany). This is because the earlier divergence occurs, with regard to the ultimate educational goal, the more it lowers the decisive influence of the child's achievement and motivation and heightens the influence of parental interest in the respective educational goal. There is a presumption of informed, engaged parents during the school phase, and some part of the task of education is delegated to them. Where parents are unable to fulfil these expectations, it is necessary to reinforce the parental competence and to support children from households with limited experience of education in some other way. According to the "5th Poverty and Wealth Report", efforts in Germany to integrate and support the weakest pupils appropriately are not proving comparatively successful¹⁵. In Switzerland, to improve the transition to vocational training after completing school consideration is currently being given to introducing a "right to training for all" which can then be implemented by a needs-appropriate case management.

In addition to measures for improving educational attainment and overcoming barriers to education to realise greater social mobility, the expert discussions

¹⁵

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focussed on expanding prevention offers. These prevention offers should be “docked” with regular establishments such as childcare services, (primary) schools or public healthcare facilities and lead to the creation of “prevention chains”, in order that all families with children (including those with strong burdens) have access to advice and information on offers of help in each phase of life.

Last but not least, improving the income situation of families in poverty plays a role. This can be achieved through greater integration of women into employment (particularly in Austria) or via incentives to increase work intensity amongst women (Switzerland and Germany). In all three countries, work is underway to improve advance maintenance payment arrangements, in order to target improving the income situation of single parents. Further measures are aimed at introducing minimum wages, which should help to equalise gender-specific pay differences (Austria) or to break down precarious employment and thereby forge paths out of poverty for families and their children.

III. List of participants

Bäcker, Professor Dr. Gerhard, University Duisburg-Essen

Bochsler, Yann, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland

Burger, Dr. Kaspar, University Geneva

Chalupka, Dir. Mag. Michael, Diakonia Austria

Erbeldinger, Katharina, Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs

Fenninger, Erich, Volkshilfe Austria

Groh-Samberg, Professor Dr. Olaf, University Bremen (SOCIUM)

Hess, Ingrid, Swiss Conference for Social Welfare, Bern

Köhler, Irene, Austrian Committee for Social Work, Vienna

Krampe, Andreas, German Association for Public and Private Welfare, Berlin

Lamei, Nadja, Statistik Austria, Vienna

Mair, Barbara, University Salzburg

Markowski, Cornelia, German Association for Public and Private Welfare, Berlin

Michels, Inge, Bildung Moderieren

Plewka, Jörg, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

Schenk, Martin, Diakonia Austria

Seebeck, Bettina, Swiss Conference for Social Welfare, Bern

Stelzer-Orthofer, Professor Dr. Christine, Johannes Kepler University Linz

Wieda, Christina, Bertelsmann Foundation

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