

National Breastfeeding Committee discussing ways towards standardised breastfeeding monitoring for Germany

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On 20 November 2017, the National Breastfeeding Committee at the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) organised an interdisciplinary conference with participants from various areas of the health system, as well as from research and politics, with the purpose of exchanging information of the collection of breastfeeding data in Germany. In addition, the conference should point out possibilities for establishing a standardised breastfeeding monitoring system in Germany.

All participants agreed that breastfeeding has positive effects on the health and wellbeing of the child and the mother. Exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 months provides sufficient nutrition for the majority of infants. Depending on the child's growth and development, complementary food should be given no later than at the beginning of the 7th month of life and no earlier than the beginning of the 5th month. In general, breastfeeding should continue even after complementary food has been introduced. Reliable information on nursing behaviour in Germany is required in order to promote breastfeeding effectively. This includes information on the beginning and duration of breastfeeding, as well as breastfeeding rates and the chronological trends and influencing factors on breastfeeding behaviour. As it should relate to the general population, it should also include vulnerable groups which have an increased risk of low breastfeeding rates.

As far back as 2008, there were demands on European level that all EU countries establish a national breastfeeding monitoring programme in order to make international comparisons and justify needs-orientated breastfeeding promotion measures on a national level. Despite this, Germany still does not have a standardised breastfeeding monitoring system. With the current data situation it is not possible to estimate the development of nursing behaviour in Germany in a timely and reliable manner. Information on breastfeeding frequency and duration is collected mainly on a local level using various methods and with different objectives, and for this reason, the National Breastfeeding Committee at the BfR has been advocating for years the establishment of a standardised national monitoring programme. Only on this basis will it be possible to analyse which measures efficiently and sustainably promote a high breastfeeding duration and frequency in society.

In addition to the regular collection of breastfeeding data in paediatric practices and epidemiological studies, questions about nursing could play a part in future during school entrance examinations. For this reason, the subject was discussed in depth with public health experts after the conference on 21 November 2017 in the workshop "Breastfeeding monitoring during the school entrance examination".

The full version of this BfR opinion is available in German on <http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/nationale-stillkommission-diskutiert-wege-zu-einem-standardisierten-stillmonitoring-fuer-deutschland.pdf>

More information on the subject of breastfeeding at the BfR website

A-Z Index Breastfeeding
http://www.bfr.bund.de/en/a-z_index/breastfeeding-130181.html

Breastfeeding Monitoring in Germany; Concept of the National Breastfeeding Committee, 21 December 2009 (in German only)

http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/still_monitoring_in_deutschland_konzept.pdf

Positive messages for undisturbed breastfeeding in public; Opinion of the National Breastfeeding Committee of 29 June 2017

<http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/349/positive-messages-for-undisturbed-breastfeeding-in-public.pdf>

Breastfeeding recommendations for infants, 14 August 2015 (in German only)

<http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/350/stillempfehlungen-fuer-die-saeuglingszeit-deutsch.pdf>



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About the National Breastfeeding Committee at the BfR

The National Breastfeeding Committee was founded in 1994 with the aim of promoting a new breastfeeding culture in the Federal Republic of Germany and helping to ensure that breastfeeding becomes the normal form of nutrition for infants. The Committee is composed of members of medical professional associations and organisations who are committed to the issue of breastfeeding in Germany. You can find more information on the work of the National Breastfeeding Committee on the Internet at:

http://www.bfr.bund.de/en/national_breastfeeding_committee-742.html

About the BfR

The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) is a scientifically independent institution within the portfolio of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) in Germany. It advises the Federal Government and Federal Laender on questions of food, chemical and product safety. The BfR conducts its own research on topics that are closely linked to its assessment tasks.

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