

Germany

# A moratorium on digitalisation in schools and daycare centres!

**Reason: Declining learning performance, negative health, psychological and social effects**

*Press release by the "Society for Education and Knowledge"\**

(Frankfurt am Main, 22 November 2023) More than 40 leading scientists from various disciplines have joined forces with paediatricians and adolescent physicians to call for a moratorium on digitalisation in schools and pre-school educational institutions.

Among the first signatories are leading experts such as Professor Klaus Zierer (University of Augsburg), Professor Manfred Spitzer (Ulm University Hospital) and Professor Thomas Fuchs (Jaspers Chair at the University of Heidelberg) as well as media educator Professor Ralf Lankau (Offenburg University of Applied Sciences).

"We are calling on the education ministers of all 16 federal states to impose a moratorium on digitalisation in schools and daycare centres," says Prof. Ralf Lankau, one of the initiators of the appeal:

"The scientific evidence now shows that teaching with tablets and laptops doesn't make children up to Year 6 smarter, it makes them dumber. According to studies, the increased use of digital devices in the classroom also has negative health, psychological and social effects. Now is the time for school policy makers to listen to the educationalists and paediatricians in this country and stop trying to teach digitally! The time has already come in Sweden: The Swedish Minister of Education has stopped the use of tablets in primary schools. The education ministers in the federal states can now do the same."

The moratorium in full length and with all initial signatories is available at:

\* Gesellschaft für Bildung und Wissen e.V. founded in June 2010, serves to analyse the main features, prerequisites, and consequences of the current comprehensive educational reform of schools and universities. It aims to contribute to the public debate on the aim, content, and methods of this reform. <https://bildung-wissen.eu>



*So far, the risks and negative consequences of digitalisation on our children have not been taken seriously enough.  
(Picture keystone)*

<https://bildung-wissen.eu/fachbeitraege/wissenschaftler-fordern-moratorium-der-digitalisierung-in-kitas-und-schulen.html>

The Scandinavian countries were pioneers in the digitalisation of educational institutions. However, in 2023, the Swedish government reversed the decision of its predecessors to make it compulsory for the country's preschools to be equipped with digital devices. The reason for the rethink is the *statement of five professors from the renowned Karolinska Institute (Stockholm)*,<sup>1</sup> who criticised the strategy of digitising schools as wrong in a report:

The report concludes that the claimed positive findings cannot be proven. Instead, research has shown that "the digitalisation of schools has a major negative impact on pupils' knowledge acquisition". The goals (equal education and opportunities, improved teaching, social participation) are not being achieved, on the contrary: "It is obvious that screens have major disadvantages for young children. They hinder learning and language development. Too much screen time can lead to difficulties concentrating and replace physical activity."<sup>2</sup>

In 2023, the German Society for Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine (DGKJ) published the

*“Guideline for the Prevention of Dysregulated Screen Media Use in Childhood and Adolescence”*,<sup>3</sup> which is supported by the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) and many professional associations from the fields of medicine, psychology, and addiction prevention. The most important recommendation for all age groups: Reduce screen time, no personal devices for children and no uncontrolled, unaccompanied access to the internet.

In 2023, the *U.S. Surgeon General* (the highest health authority in the USA) published a *study on the mental health of children and adolescents*.<sup>4</sup> It shows in detail how strongly young people are influenced and addicted to digital media. The ever longer period of use and the ever earlier age of entry have consequences for the mental health of children and young people: Body dissatisfaction, disturbed eating behaviour, sleep

and concentration disorders, low self-esteem, depression.

Source: <https://bildung-wissen.eu/fachbeitraege/pressemitteilung-40-wissenschaftlerinnen-fordern-moratorium-der-digitalisierung-an-schulen-und-kitas.html>, 22 November 2023

(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://die-paedagogische-wende.de/karolinska-institut-schweden-stellungnahme-zur-nationalen-digitalisierungsstrategie-in-der-bildung/>

<sup>2</sup> From a 2023 survey of the *Karolinska-Institut*, one of the most renowned research institutes worldwide.

<sup>3</sup> <https://register.awmf.org/de/leitlinien/detail/027-075>

<sup>4</sup> <https://die-paedagogische-wende.de/soziale-medien-und-psychische-gesundheit-von-jugendlichen/> and <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/youth-mental-health/social-media/index.html>