



Peer Review on “Furthering quality and flexibility of Early Childhood Education and Care”

Denmark, 13-14 December

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Contact: Alberto Cortellese

E-mail: EMPL-SPSI-PEER-REVIEWS@ec.europa.eu

Web site: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1024>

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1 Introduction

This paper has been prepared for the Peer Review on "Furthering quality and flexibility of Early Childhood Education and Care". It provides a comparative assessment of the policy example of the Host Country and the situation in Luxembourg. For information on the Host Country policy example, please refer to the Host Country Discussion Paper.

2 Situation in the peer country

In Luxembourg, the creation of the first childcare services, the *crèches* (ECEC) and the *foyers de jour* (day-care centres for schoolchildren) goes back to the early 1980s. At that time, the access for children to the ECEC services was primarily based on social criteria. The 1990s were marked by a dramatic expansion of the employment market, and Luxembourg, in line with the European Union's Lisbon Strategy, supported the establishment and expansion of childcare services to allow parents to reconcile work and family life. In 1998, the Ministry of Education introduced the *éducation précoce*: a non-mandatory pre-school year for three years olds. In 2005, a more flexible and widespread model of day-care services (including ECEC) was introduced at municipal level, the *maison relais pour enfants*. With the introduction in 2009 of the *Chèque-Service Accueil*, a partial State-funding of parents' childcare costs, ECEC services and home-based provision became affordable for all parents but the consequence was an enormous expansion of profit-orientated private *crèches* and *foyers de jour*. As the increase was more on quantity of centres rather than their quality, the Luxembourgish government introduced the first legal steps to ensure a high-quality childcare from 2012 onwards. In 2013 the newly formed government brought all education and care institutions under the authority of one single Ministry, the *Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse* (Ministry of Education, Children and Youth) in order to overcome the existing split-system. Previously, the responsibility for childcare settings and schools was within the competencies of two different ministries, the Ministry for family for the childcare services and the Ministry of Education for the formal education. The offer of child-care services having traditionally been more care-oriented, the focus lies now on the aspect of *non-formal education* where the child occupies a central position as a competent social actor, co-constructor of knowledge, identity, values and culture.

In 2016, the modified Youth Act (*loi modifiée du 4 juillet 2008 sur la jeunesse*¹) introduces a quality framework for the entire non-formal education sector for children and youth, as we will describe below.

3 Assessment of the policy measure

3.1 Luxembourg's ECEC quality framework for the non-formal education of children

In line with the EU Quality Framework, the modified Youth Act from 2016 introduced in Luxembourg a model of quality assurance measures for the non-formal education sector for children and youth (including all ECEC services).

Quality assurance measure at national level

The national curriculum framework² *cadre de référence nationale pour l'éducation non formelle des enfants et des jeunes* is in many points comparable to the Danish common pedagogical foundation.

¹ <http://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/loi/2016/04/24/n3/jo>

² <http://www.men.public.lu/fr/actualites/publications/enfance/infos-generales/180219-rahmenplan/index.html>

Luxembourg's national curriculum framework is child-centred and has a specific view of the child:

- Children are competent individuals. They learn with all their senses from birth onwards. Curiosity, creativity, joyful play are driving forces of their development.
- Children are social and cultural beings and are seen as co-constructors of knowledge, identity, culture and values. They are equal partners to the adults and they contribute with their individual experiences and competencies.
- Children are equal members of the society and have their own rights

Moreover, according to the national curriculum framework pedagogues support children in their complex process of multidimensional learning. Pedagogues and children are equal partners in the process of co-construction.

Another similitude between the Danish common pedagogical foundation and Luxembourg's national curriculum framework for non-formal education is the emphasis on "pedagogical learning environment". Children's learning is a central aspect of the curriculum. Non-formal education includes any organised form of educational activity outside the formal educational context. Non-formal education is characterised by the educational principles as individualisation and differentiation, diversity, inclusion and multilingualism. Other main characteristics of this non-formal education concept are the voluntary basis of all educational activities, as well as openness, participation, subject-orientation (this means, that methods and objectives are adapted to needs and interests of the child), learning by discovery, process orientation, partnership learning, relationships based on esteem and dialogue and finally self-determination and self-efficacy.

The non-formal education defines six "areas of action" to foster learning processes, which are very similar to the Danish curriculum themes:

- emotions and social relations;
- values-orientation, participation and democracy;
- language, communication and media;
- aesthetics, creativity and art;
- movement, body-consciousness and health; and
- natural sciences and technology.

With the introduction of the national curriculum framework, the role of pedagogues changed. As the focus now lies on non-formal education, and as the view of the child is a central element of the national curriculum, pedagogues have to make sure that children can achieve their potential by creating a learning environment. Pedagogues have to be aware of all children's needs and they have to constantly adapt the learning environment. This implies that pedagogues have a high capacity of self-reflection, reflect about their own learning biographies, and are willing to learn throughout the entire career. The acceptance of the child as an expert of his own learning process is a change of paradigm, as pedagogues have been considered for a long time being themselves the experts about children's learning process'.

Another important role of the pedagogue is the partnership and collaboration with the parents and other key people in the life of the child. Since parents are the main experts about their children, the pedagogue should establish with them a regular dialogue, always focused on the child's development.

One aim of the Danish pedagogical curriculum is to "prevent the vicious circle of deprivation and exclusion" of children and to take into account children in vulnerable positions. The national curriculum framework in Luxembourg does not have any

specific provision for children in vulnerable positions. However, by focussing on non-formal education and inclusion, the national curriculum framework takes in consideration all children with their specific needs, guiding pedagogues in creating an educational environment in which all children can progress individually. In order to provide this kind of educational environment, inclusion and participation are main principles of the pedagogical practice. Children are active partners in the sense of co-constructors of their own educational processes. This means that participation, in a large sense, has to be assured. Pedagogues create daily opportunities for the children to participate, for example, by having transparent decisions, regular questioning of the needs, fields of interests of the children etc. It is precisely by adjusting the pedagogical practice to the needs and aspirations of every child, that inclusion is taking place.

Quality assurance measures at ECEC provision level

Structural quality has been assured in every ECEC provision since the "ASFT" Act, « *Loi du 8 septembre 1998 réglant les relations entre l'Etat et les organismes oeuvrant dans les domaines social, familial et thérapeutique* »³ from 1998 defining professional staff ratio, physical environment, conditions regarding security to be respected in order to obtain an *agrément*, an official authorisation to run an ECEC provision.

The modified Youth act of 2016 introduces different measures to ensure the process quality of all ECEC provisions, including home-based facilities. These quality measures are linked to the publicly-funded subsidies.

According to the modified Youth act, ECEC provisions have to:

- elaborate a general pedagogical concept ("*concept d'action général*") that describes how non-formal education is taking place in the provision according to the principles, the characteristics and the areas of action of the national curriculum framework;
- ensure that all pedagogical staff members have accomplished 32 hours of continuous professional training during a period of two years;
- document their pedagogical actions.

Regional agents are responsible to advise the content and the formulation of the pedagogical concepts, to visit the providers at least once a year and to produce reports of their visits.

Social inclusion and access: the voucher-system "*chèque service accueil*"

The introduction in 2009 of the voucher-system *chèque-service accueil* was a major step of the Luxembourgish government towards increasing the number of ECEC provisions on the one hand and to encourage families to use them on the other hand. This measure ensures that all children have access, regardless of their parents' social and economic situation. The State contributes to the cost of ECEC provision by funding subsidies in relation to the parents' income. A certain amount of hours is free according to the economic situation of the parents. The *chèque-service accueil*-system is constantly evaluated and adapted. In order to bind the funding of the provisions to the quality assurance, the *chèque-service accueil* system has been linked to the quality assurance in the modified Youth act of 2016. Furthermore, with the introduction of the plurilingual education programme (see below), all children of age one-four attending a non-formal ECEC service benefit from 20 hours of free access to the plurilingual education programme.

³ Loi du 8 septembre 1998 réglant les relations entre l'Etat et les organismes oeuvrant dans les domaines social, familial et thérapeutique. Available at: <http://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/loi/1998/09/08/n4/jo>. Last accessed on 06.12.2018.

Multilingualism: a reality in Luxembourg

Luxembourg is a very small country known to have a high rate of immigration. In 2018, 48 % of the population are immigrants, represented by 170 different nationalities. In 2017, the mother tongue of 59 % of all schoolchildren in Luxembourg was not Luxembourgish.

Multilingualism is omnipresent in Luxembourg's everyday life. Children are confronted with many languages. Besides their home language(s), children enrolled in the Luxembourgish fundamental school-system (compulsory education) have to learn German and French simultaneously.

To offer all children the best chance of a good start in life, the government introduced the mandatory plurilingual education programme in 2017. This programme aims at giving children of age one-four and attending ECEC provision a playful contact with two of the national languages, Luxembourgish and French. The programme targets to give them more opportunities and more time to develop skills in these languages. The purpose is to develop their language skills in the every-day life and to familiarise the child with the linguistic particularity of the national educational system. In terms of transition, this will help to reduce children's apprehension of leaving ECEC and moving on to school. A long-term objective of the plurilingual program is to give children equal opportunities in life and to enhance social cohesion.

Implementation measures

Compared to the Danish model of implementation, Luxembourg's quality framework has a similar concept of implementation.

The initial version of the curriculum framework has been a guidance paper (non-mandatory) for all ECEC services from 2013 onwards. A 2017 regulation⁴ introduces the final mandatory version of the curriculum. During the period between 2013 and 2016/17 a range of implementation measures have been developed in parallel to the legal project of the national quality framework. This enabled a familiarisation with the content of the curriculum, especially with the change of paradigm: from a childcare to a non-formal education system.

The following implementation measures have been developed and partially implemented:

- www.enfancejeunesse.lu is a specific site for all provisions and professionals of non-formal education. It gathers information, offers for continuous professional training and material (films, documentation, legal texts, ...);
- in 2017, the Ministry started the campaign "staark Kanner" (strong children) targeting parents, with the website www.staarkanner.lu, created for the parents. The aim of the campaign is described by the government as below:
- *"The Luxembourg State wishes to offer all children the same chances when starting out in life, and the same opportunities to succeed, irrespective of their backgrounds and origins. For this reason, childcare facilities are tasked with fulfilling a public service mission, namely to integrate children in the life of their community and to prepare them for entry into Luxembourg society and its schooling system."*⁵
- revision and adaptation of initial training for pedagogues to be in line with the content of the national curriculum framework (this measure is still ongoing);

⁴ Règlement grand-ducal du 28 juillet 2017 portant établissement du cadre de référence national « Éducation non formelle des enfants et des jeunes, available at : <http://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/rgd/2017/07/28/a760/jo> last accessed on 06.12.2018

⁵ <http://www.men.public.lu/fr/enfance/en/index.html>

- specific training for non-qualified practitioners, which introduces them with the concept of "non-formal education" as prescribed by the national curriculum framework;
- video-material about non-formal education;
- elaboration of thematic handbooks for the practitioners based on the national curriculum framework; and
- yearly national conference for non-formal education on the 22th of November.

4 Assessment of success factors and transferability

The Danish and the Luxembourgish quality framework seem to be very similar. Therefore, it is difficult to find success factors that are applicable to Luxembourg. Nevertheless, the combined day-care system, if related to the quality framework could be interesting for the Luxembourgish ECEC system. More information about this system could be of interest for Luxembourg.

5 Questions

- We would like to learn more about the Danish practice of outdoor activities and education.
- We would like to have an exchange about the Danish model of monitoring and evaluation to support continuous improvements in the quality of national policy and practices.
- More details about the combined day-care system (qualification of the caretaker, common pedagogical foundation, funding etc.).
- Are there profit-oriented ECEC provisions in Denmark?

6 Liste of references

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Annex 1 Summary table

The main points covered by the paper are summarised below.

Please summarise the main points covered by the paper. Give a maximum of five bullet points per heading.

Situation in the peer country

- Split-system between two ministries is abandoned in 2013
- The national curriculum moved from a childcare to a non-formal education approach
- The modified Youth Act (2016) introduced a quality framework for the entire non-formal education sector for children and youth (all ECEC provisions, out-of-school and youth provisions including homebased activities)

Assessment of the policy measure

- Quality assurance measures for the non-formal education sector for children and youth at national level in form of a national curriculum framework
- The curriculum is child-centred and has a specific view of the child as a competent individual, social and cultural being, equal partner to the adult in the learning and development, and a person with own rights
- Quality assurance measures for the non-formal education sector for children and youth at provision level
- Social inclusion and access is assured by the voucher system "chèque-service accueil"
- To offer all children the best chance of a good start in life, the government introduced the mandatory plurilingual education programme
- The implementation approach is based on provision of guidelines and outreach to all stakeholders including in particular pedagogical staff and parents

Assessment of success factors and transferability

- Combined day-care system

Questions

- We would like to learn more about the Danish practice of outdoor activities and education
- We would like to have an exchange about the Danish model of monitoring and evaluation to support continuous improvements in the quality of national policy and practices
- More details about the combined day-care system (qualification of the caretaker, common pedagogical foundation)
- Are there profit-oriented ECEC provisions in Denmark?

Annex 2 Example of relevant practice

Short summary of a relevant policy practice/example, key fields indicated below (max. 1 page)

Name of the practice:	National conference for non-formal education
Year of implementation:	From 2012, always on the 22th of November
Coordinating authority:	National Service of Youth and Ministry of Education, Children and Youth
Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Target group: practitioners in the sector of non-formal education for children (including ECEC)• Implementation measure for the non-formal education• Specific non-formal education topics• Knowledge acquirement from experts• Exchange of good practices• Meeting platform for the professionals
Main activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keynote speaker presentations• Practice examples• Round table• Information and practice stands
Results so far:	Creation of a common identity for the non-formal sector

