

Luxembourg

Country Overview

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Country name

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Introduction

The Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth is responsible for the Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in Luxembourg. It is also responsible for the pedagogical principles and educational framework for early ECEC of both formal and non-formal preschooling. Luxembourg explicitly monitors children's development of socio-emotional skills by implementing a wide range of monitoring practices for the services provided and quality of the staff. However, some challenges remain, such as the absence of the children's view in the assessment.

Development

In Luxembourg Early Education and Care is provided in two types of systems, depending on the age of the children. From birth up to 4 years of age, children are welcomed in crèches, which are run by the (local) government, municipalities or commercial initiatives, under private law. Small crèches are small settings with a limited number of children and staff. There is also the option of 'home-based provision,' where childminders, also known as parental assistants, are self-employed and look after children in their homes.

The second type of ECEC-setting is part of the educational system. From 3-years of age, children have the legal right to be enrolled in the elementary school system, which consists of three years. The first year is optional, while the second and third years are mandatory. That means that preschool is compulsory for children from 4-years of age. The optional year, and the two following mandatory years, constitute the first cycle of education: pre-primary education. Each municipality is responsible for providing children with a place in elementary school, and children are expected to attend school on a regular basis. Public education is provided free of cost.

In Luxembourg, the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse) is responsible for ECEC. It sets out the pedagogical principles of ECEC for collective childcare facilities and elementary education.

For the collective childcare facilities, there is a national framework on non-formal education in childhood and adolescence from 0 to 12 years of age (Cadre de référence nationale sur l'éducation non formelle des enfants et des jeunes). It dates from 2017, and three of the four main annexes focus on ECEC. The use of this reference framework is mandatory for all facilities that are subsidised by the government.

For cycle 1 of elementary school, the pedagogical guidelines are published in the study plans of the four cycles of elementary school (Plan d'études de l'école fondamentale). It covers children between 3 to 12 years of age in formal education, including early childhood education programmes and compulsory preschool education. The study plan specifies the foundational skills that have to be attained by the end of each cycle. The study plan has a binding character, also for the first cycle.

ECEC services (0-3 years): the national framework on non-formal education specifies the age-specific characteristics, the role of pedagogues, and the framework and context of educational processes and the action areas for non-formal education.

Children and young people are characterised as follows:

They are capable individuals and each person has a unique (educational) background;

They are social and cultural beings;

They are equal members of society. (Cadre de référence nationale sur l'éducation non formelle des enfants et des jeunes, 2017)

The focus lies on the competences developed in three areas:

Self-determination

Participation in social development

Responsibility. (Cadre de référence nationale sur l'éducation non formelle des enfants et des jeunes, 2017)

The main fields of action that are specified in the framework are emotions, social relations, language, communication and values, such as democracy, participation and interculturality. The key values in the framework are comprised of inclusion, diversity and multilingualism (Cadre de référence national sur l'éducation non formelle des enfants et des jeunes, 2021).

In the study plan for cycle 1 of elementary education, the areas of development and learning are specified. In addition to domains such as language and mathematics, the focus also lies on the development of social and emotional skills. These transversal skills contain relational and emotional attitudes.

Assessment

Luxembourg implements a range of monitoring practices in ECEC, with variations across settings. ECEC and early education provisions for family day care and day care centres are monitored by regional officers. Early educational programmes and preschool education fall under the responsibility of the Ministry, and are monitored by national inspectors.

The inspections and self-assessments are used to assess services and staff. To monitor the quality of the services, the focus lies on a broad spectrum of areas, ranging from structural aspects, hygiene and health, materials used, safety guidelines, and planning, time management and curriculum implementation.

In formal ECEC settings, inspectors use tools such as observations, interviews, and the analysis of internal documentation. Sometimes, the results of self-evaluation are taken into account. Regional officers also use these tools for monitoring non-formal ECEC-settings.

In general, children's views are not included in the monitoring process. It is also challenging to ensure that the monitoring informs policies and practices. An increase in data and information collection could guarantee evidence-based policymaking.

The Grand-Ducal Regulation (2009) sets out the pupil assessment in the first cycle of elementary school. It determines the method of pupil assessment, and the content of the assessment portfolio in elementary education. During the first cycle, the assessment of the children is formative, based on observation and documentation of the child's behaviour, development and learning. The assessment is carried out by the teachers and the members of the pedagogical team. The main objective is to ensure that these competences of the child are attained in order to guarantee that the transition to the second cycle will be successful. At the end of the first cycle, the assessment becomes summative. In a variety of works, the child will demonstrate their competences in order to enter the second cycle.

Each child has a personal evaluation portfolio with a variety of documents illustrating their developments and competences. The assessment of children under 3 years of age is formative.

Intervention

Luxembourg supports the participation of all children in ECEC. Efforts are made to ensure there is free access for children to receive an education, especially for children under 3 years of age, and selected target groups in the population, such as those from low socio-economic backgrounds and vulnerable family status of the parents. Participation in the group from 0 to 2 years of age, and in the group from 3 to 5 years of age is notably higher than The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average.

Pre-primary school teachers are required to have four years of induction programme, and hold a Bachelor's degree.

In the Plan d'études école fondamentale (2011), learning goals are presented in various categories. Learning goals concerning language awareness (l'éveil aux langues), and moral and social education (La vie en commun et les valeurs, l'éducation morale et sociale), are explicitly included in the first cycle of formal education.

However, experts recommend prioritising actions that address segregation, as well as providing more focus towards/shifting the focus to aiding disadvantaged groups: 'Luxembourg needs to reform the basic educational structures and improve the educational quality and performance, particularly in the light of the continuing increase of children and youth not having one of the Luxembourg languages as their mother tongue' (Frazer & Marlier, 2014).

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