

# LUXEMBOURG

## Key Contextual Data

*Compiled by*  
**Inge Schreyer and Pamela Oberhuemer**

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Sources are outlined at the end of each section. Full details of all sources are to be found in the references section at the end of the key contextual data profile. Individual statistical data used in tables are indicated by an asterisk\*, both in the table and in the sources.

## Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

### ECEC system type and auspices

Up to the end of 2013, early childhood education and care in Luxembourg was organised as a dual system, with separate ministerial responsibilities for early childhood and after-school childcare provision (Ministry of Family Affairs) and early childhood education (Ministry of Education).

Since December 2013, childcare settings are formally viewed as provision with an educational mandate. A distinction is now made between a sector of **non-formal education** and a sector of **formal education**. The non-formal sector includes (1) all public and private forms of provision for children below 4 years of age, (2) outside-school-hours provision for 4- to 12-year olds and (3) home-based settings. The formal sector comprises two classes within the compulsory school system (the term *éducation préscolaire* is used for the classes for 4- and 5-year olds) as well as a non-compulsory class within schools for 3-year olds (*éducation précoce*).

Since 2013, both the non-formal and the formal sector of early childhood education and care come under the overall responsibility of the Ministry for Education, Childhood and Youth (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse*). For the formal education sector, the State has an implementation responsibility and for the non-formal sector a guarantee responsibility; this is provided through the granting of operating licenses (*agrément*s) and through service agreements (*conventions*) with private providers.

**Sources:** Achten und Bodeving 2017.  
European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.  
Eurydice 2014, 2017.  
Honig, M.-S. and T. Bock 2017.

### General objectives and legislative framework

The system of early education and care in Luxembourg is guided by family policy and social policy goals. These include supporting parental participation in the labour market, gender equality and work-life balance. Offering flexible, high-quality and affordable childcare provision is high on the list of priorities and includes measures such as providing free childcare service vouchers or low enrolment fees for low-income families.

In terms of educational goals, the Luxembourg government views the non-formal and formal education and care sectors as complementary. Overarching goals or principles in the **non-formal sector** are: viewing children as competent persons with an individual biography who learn with and from others and are members of society with their own rights.

The ASFT Act of 1998 (*Loi du 8 septembre 1998 réglant les relations entre l'Etat et les organismes oeuvrant dans les domaines social, familial et thérapeutique*, amended on 28 July 2011) regulates the relationship between the state and the non-governmental providers. An implementation regulation (2013) of the ASFT Act, the so-called SEA Regulation (*services d'éducation et d'accueil pour enfants*, SEA), sets out the framework requirements for the non-formal sector.

Key legislation for the **formal sector** is the Education Act 2009 (*Loi du 06.02.2009 portant organisation de l'enseignement fondamental* with amendments), which reformed the Luxembourg school system. Since this time the 9-year primary school (*enseignement fondamental*) has been

organised into four cycles. *Éducation précoce* (for 3-year olds) und *éducation préscolaire* (for 4- and 5-year olds) belong to the first cycle.

The Education Act 2009 provides the framework only for the formal early childhood education sector. At the same time, it specifies that the communes/municipalities are obliged to provide outside-school-hours provision for school-age children (*encadrement périscolaire*). In order to further promote cooperation between schools and out-of-school services, since 2012 each commune is obliged to issue a so-called out-of-school care plan (*Plan d'encadrement périscolaire, PEP*).

**Sources:** EPIC 2016.  
Eurydice 2014, 2017.  
Honig, M.-S. 2015.  
MENJE 2016a, 2016b.  
Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration 2013.  
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010, 226.

## ECEC entitlement and compulsory enrolment age

Entitlements and compulsory attendance apply only to the **formal sector**. Since 2009, children aged between 3 and 4 years are entitled to a free place in the first cycle of primary education for 36 weeks per year (*éducation préscolaire*). Compulsory attendance was introduced in 1976 for all children who had reached their fifth birthday by the 1<sup>st</sup> September and in 1992 for all children who were 4 years old on the 1<sup>st</sup> September of the current year. Compulsory schooling begins at age 4 (despite the fact that the first two years in school are called *éducation préscolaire*).

**Sources:** European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, and Eurostat 2016.  
OECD 2015.  
Honig, M.-S. and T. Bock 2017.

## Main types of provision

Provision in the **non-formal sector** is characterised by different kinds of settings. Of particular significance are the relatively new, mixed-age 'children's centres' (*maisons relais pour enfants*) for 4- to 12-year olds, sometimes also for under 3-year olds (see *Table 1*). Since 2005, these centres have aimed to act as a link between family, school and community, providing for children during out-of-school-hours times and during the midday break at school. The predecessors of the *maisons relais* are the *foyers de jour pour enfants*, which offer school-age children a midday meal and homework support. The services provided by the *maisons relais* are much broader. They are also open for younger children, i.e. for under 4-year olds. As non-formal education provision, they provide a comprehensive mix of social pedagogy and education services.

*Crèches* generally provide for children below the age of 3 years. *Garderies* are a form of sessional care for a maximum of 16 hours per week, and have been losing importance during recent years.

As from mid-2019, all provision will fall under the SEA Regulation requirements. It is probable that the terms *maison relais*, *crèche* und *foyer de jour* will gradually disappear, since they will all fall under the umbrella term of 'education and care services' (*services d'éducation et d'accueil*).

According to the ASFT Act, all settings are required to have an operational licence (*agrément*). Some (the majority of settings for 4- to 12-year olds) enter into a contractual agreement (*convention*) with the State. However, these contracts are not mandatory. It is still possible for settings to be run just on the basis of an operational licence.

Non-formal sector settings are usually open for at least 46 weeks per year, mostly from 7:00 until 19:00.

The non-compulsory **early education groups** for 3- to 4-year olds (*éducation précoce*) are part of the school system (cycle 1) and therefore belong to the formal sector, along with the compulsory first two years of primary school as **pre-primary groups** for 4- to 6-year olds (*éducation préscolaire*). They are open for 36 weeks in the year, offering 26 hours per week of educational activities. They are usual open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8:00 to 12:00 and from 14:00 to 16:00, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays mornings only. During school holidays they are closed. During this time the children may attend a setting in the non-formal sector (*services d'éducation et d'accueil* - SEA).

**Sources:** Eurydice 2014.  
Honig, M-S. 2015.  
Honig, M.-S. and T. Bock 2017.

## Provider structures

Settings belonging to the **non-formal sector** are operated either by communes or by private non-profit and private for-profit providers. According to the ASFT Act (1998, amended 2011), all providers need a state-granted operating licence (*agrément*). Non-profit providers that enter into a contractual agreement with the State (*convention*) receive public funding.

Since the introduction of childcare service vouchers for parents in 2009 (*cheque-service accueil*, see also below), the number of private for-profit providers in the non-formal education sector has increased substantially. This development regarding the commercial providers is a significant structural change which, although not intended through policy measures, has been accepted\*\*. Nearly two-thirds of places for under 4-year olds in *crèches* are provided by these commercial entities.

Table 1

Luxembourg: Children in non-formal education settings, 31.12.2016\*

	Number of places for children under 4 year olds	Number of places for children over 4 year olds (school children)	Total number of places
Services d'éducation et d'accueil conventionnés	5,282	33,005	38,287
Services d'éducation et d'accueil commerciaux	9,853	1,723	11,576
<b>Total</b>	15,135 (30.4%)	34,728 (69.6%)	49,863

Source: MENJE 2017b, 31.

The **formal education** settings for 3- to 6-year olds in the first cycle of primary education are, as part of the school system, almost exclusively state-maintained. Very few private schools exist in Luxembourg.

**Sources:** Honig, M-S. 2015.  
\*\*Honig, M.-S., A. Schmitz, and M. Wiltzius 2016.  
\*MENJE 2015b, 12.

## Participation rates in regulated provision

In the **non-formal sector**, the number of places provided by *maisons relais* (MREs) and *crèches* (and also home-based family day care) increased from less than 8,000 in 2004 to more than 42,000 in 2012\*.

In the year 2012, nearly 49% of under 3-year olds and over 72% of children between 3 years and the minimum school entry age (4 years) were enrolled in a non-formal education setting (or a family day care setting)\*\*.

According to data provided by the Ministry for Family Affairs, the settings with a contract with the state (*conventionnés*) provided almost four times the number of places in 2013 than those without a service agreement (*non-conventionnés*) (Table 2). These are mostly places for school-age children (4-12 years old). For children under 3 years of age, most of the places provided are by commercial entities which have no service agreement with the State.

Table 2

Luxembourg: Number of places in non-formal education sector according to type of setting, 2013\*\*\*

Type of setting	Number of places
<b>With contractual agreement with the State (<i>conventionnés</i>)</b>	
<i>Crèche</i> (0-3 years)	1,606
<i>Maison relais</i> (0-3 years)	2,928
<i>Garderie</i> (0-8 years)	37
<i>Foyer du jour</i> (4-12 years)	438
<i>Maison relais</i> (4-12 years)	29,044
Total	34,053
<b>Without contractual agreement with the State (<i>non-conventionnés</i>)</b>	
<i>Crèche</i> (0-3 years)	8,084
<i>Garderie</i> (0-8 years)	206
<i>Foyer du jour</i> (4-12 years)	904
Total	9,194

Source: Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration 2014.

Although there is at least one setting in each commune for under 3-year olds and provision for this age group was expanded during recent years, the demand for places in 2012 exceeded the supply\*\*\*.

Table 3 shows the development of participation rates in the **formal education sector** (cycle 1, 3- to 6-year olds). Over the past decade, a slight increase in the participation rate of 3-year olds can be observed who attend a non-mandatory early education group (*éducation précoce*). For the school year 2015/2016 this applied to nearly two thirds of children below 3 years of age (64.5%). The number of 4- to 6-year olds in mandatory primary education (*éducation préscolaire*) has also increased slightly. Because of the compulsory nature of attendance, it can be assumed that 100% of 4- and 5-year olds respectively were enrolled in this kind of provision.

Table 3

Luxembourg: Number and quota of enrolment in formal educational settings (Cycle 1, 3- to 6-year olds)

Year	Cycle 1			
	<i>Éducation précoce</i> Early education in primary school, 3-year olds		<i>Éducation préscolaire</i> Primary school, level 1 4- to 6-year olds	
	Number	Proportion of 3-year olds, in %	Number	Proportion of 4- to 6-year olds, in %
2005/2006	3,492	62.4	10,411	100% (=compulsory schooling)
2010/2011	3,961	67.8	10,195	100% (=compulsory schooling)
2015/2016	4,183	64.5	11,027	100% (=compulsory schooling)

Source: MENJE 2017b, 130

**Sources:** \*EPIC 2016.  
\*\*Eurydice 2014.  
Honig, M.-S. 2015.  
\*\*\*Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration 2014.  
Ministère de la Famille, de l'Intégration et à la Grande Région 2016.

## Financing and costs for parents

In some **non-formal education** settings, the running costs are subsidised by the state up to 75%, in others up to 100%. The differences depend on various factors, including who met the costs of building the setting (state or commune). The remaining costs are covered by the commune or the specific provider.

Since 2009, childcare service vouchers (*chèque-service accueil*) have been issued to enable all parents and their children (under 12 years of age) to have access to a place in non-formal provision. The main goals of this measure are to support social integration and equality of opportunity at the local level as well enhancing the children's (language) competencies for school. With the vouchers, parents can enrol their child free of charge for a certain number of hours daily in a setting of their choice (the exact number of hours depends among other things on whether the child is already attending a setting in the formal sector). The commercial settings are funded exclusively over these vouchers; all other costs must be covered by the service provider. Low-income parents pay reduced fees for additional hours which exceed those covered by the vouchers. Since the introduction of the childcare service vouchers, utilisation of services has increased considerably, particularly in the non-formal settings without a contractual agreement with the state.

Private providers can decide on the fees they wish to charge. In general it is the case that parental fees in the commercial settings are markedly higher than those for enrolment in public or non-profit provision.

The **formal education** sector settings (*précoce*) are free of charge for parents, apart from the costs for meals\*.

Costs for the setting infrastructure and equipment are borne by the communes; the state contributes to staff salaries through annual budgets. In general, private schools which may or may not work according to the national curricula receive state subsidies, but these are not as high as for the state-maintained schools.

**Sources:** \*European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.  
Eurydice 2014.  
Honig, M.-S. 2015.  
MENJE 2017.

## Staff-child ratios

The following regulations apply for the non-formal settings:

Under 1 year and 1-year olds: 6 children per staff member, max. 12 in one group  
2- and 3-year olds: 8 children per staff member, max. 15 in one group  
4- and 5-year olds: 11 children per staff member, max. 15 in one group

In some settings children are organised in mixed-age groups.

In *éducation précoce* and *éducation préscolaire* ratio requirements apply only to the 3-year olds: 10 children per staff member, max. 20 children in one group. For home-based settings (*assistance parentale*) the ratio requirement is 1:5.

**Sources:** European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2015.  
Eurydice 2014.  
Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration 2007; 2013.

## Curricular Frameworks

A national framework plan (*Cadre national de référence "Éducation non formale des enfants et des jeunes"*) was issued for the **non-formal sector** in 2012. This includes general goals and basic educational principles. It foregrounds the children's learning process, not a standardisation of educational methods or children's achievements. The framework plan was developed by the Charlotte Bühler Institute in Vienna. It was made mandatory within the context of the Quality Act (2016) and will be revised every three years by representatives from the Ministry of Education, the municipalities/communes and the provider organisations as well as by parents and other experts.

Four areas are particularly highlighted: (1) an understanding of learning as a dynamic and age-related process; (2) an image of the child as curious, responsible and autonomous; (3) a process-oriented understanding of learning based on the principles of openness and voluntariness; and (4) an emphasis on language, creativity, technology and values as key learning activities. The following dimensions of learning are highlighted: emotions and relationships; language, communication, media; aesthetics, creativity, the arts; values and participation; science and technology; movement, body awareness, health. The staff decide on the appropriate methods and materials. The National Youth Service has compiled examples for daily practice in the settings. Service providers are required to adapt their centre-specific programme to the framework plan.

Learning areas and goals for the first school cycle in the **formal sector** are specified in a curricular framework for the four cycles in primary education (*Plan d'études pour les quatre cycles de l'enseignement fondamental, 2011*). These are: logical thinking and mathematics; language; discovering the world through the senses; psychomotor skills and health; creative expression; aesthetics and culture; living together and values. Staff are to a certain extent free to choose appropriate didactic approaches within the framework of the Ministry of Education specifications, but they have to fit into a competence-based approach. Particular emphasis is placed on play-based learning.

For children with special educational needs there is a general educational programme (*plan d'études commun, 1996*) which relates to the children's developmental needs and includes ten psycho-pedagogical areas: personal independence, communication, basic school-oriented learning, culture, psychomotor development, health and hygiene, affective and social development, personal responsibility, starting employment, leisure-time activities.

**Sources:** Achten und Bodeving 2017.  
Eurydice 2014.  
MENJE 2016a, 2016b.  
Service National de la Jeunesse 2016b.

## Inclusion agenda

### *Children with special educational needs and disabilities*

In the **non-formal sector** there are no legislative requirements regarding the inclusion of children with special educational needs. The specific programme for individual settings is – at least for the settings with a contractual agreement – specified in this agreement.

For the **formal sector** legislation specifies that children with special educational needs should receive all the support measures that they need and that only when these prove to be insufficient they should be offered a place in a special education institution. This means that children, wher-

ever possible, are first admitted to a regular setting. In some cases special provision is integrated within the regular setting building.

At the local level, specialist staff from the multi-professional special education service (*service d'éducation différenciée*) provide mobile support. An individual educational programme (*plan d'éducation individualisé*) must be compiled for each child which describes and goals and further developmental steps. Since 2009, the Commission for School Inclusion (*Commission d'inclusion scolaire*) also compiles an individual support plan (*plan de prise en charge individualisé*) based on the individualised educational plans.

#### *Children with a background of migration*

In Luxembourg, the total proportion of the population with a foreign passport is the highest in Europe (2016: 46.7%). Over 85% of these persons come from EU28 countries (with persons from Portugal making up the largest share of over a third); approximately 3% respectively originate from Asian and African countries. Within the group of under 5-year olds, in 2016 also almost half (49.2%) were children with a background of migration. Here also, 85% came from other EU countries.

In 2013/14\*, 43.7% of children in the early education groups and 47.2% of children in *éducation préscolaire* groups were children with a background of migration. Of these, Portuguese children (19.9% and 24% respectively) comprised the largest group. In cycle 1 groups with a particularly large number of Portuguese children, a Portuguese-speaking Assistant is employed for a number of hours weekly in order to support the children in learning the French, German and Luxembourg languages. This represents a huge challenge both for the children and also for the Luxembourg education system.

In the light of the growing number of asylum seekers, so-called 'welcome classes' (*classes d'accueil étatique*) have been established. The main goal of these classes is to support children in the acquisition of the necessary language competencies.

**Sources:** Eurydice 2014.  
Le Portail Statistique, 2016a, 2016b.  
\*MENJE 2015a, 8

## Monitoring – Evaluation – Research

The structural quality of **non-formal settings** (e.g. staff-child ratios, infrastructure) is regulated through the previously mentioned ASFT Act (1998). Measures to guarantee pedagogical and structural quality are anchored in the Youth Act (*loi sur la jeunesse, 2008*): Private providers of settings which accept the childcare service vouchers or receive State subsidies on the basis of a contractual agreement are required to produce a centre-specific educational programme based on the framework plan. This programme has to describe the educational goals, self-evaluation measures and staff professional development plans and has to be published on the relevant website. The programme is valid for three years. Moreover, a so-called log book (*journal de bord*) is also required which contains daily and weekly documentation entries. Also included is the division of responsibilities among the staff, the activities with the children and staff participation in continuing professional development activities. Pedagogical staff employed on a full-time basis are required to attend at least 32 hours of professional development within a period of two years.

Child-related assessments for children under the age of 3 years are only carried out from a medical perspective on their development.

External evaluations are generally carried out once a year by regional advisers of the National Youth Service (*agents régionaux*), which is affiliated to the Ministry of Education. They examine the alignment between the framework plan and the centre-specific programme, the professional development strategies of the staff, the overall quality development and the rooms and buildings.

Settings are given notice of the supervisory visits two weeks beforehand. On the basis of these inspections the supervisory prepare a written report which also includes comments made by the provider.

For the **formal sector**, a Quality Agency (*Service de Coordination de la Recherche et de l'Innovation pédagogiques et technologiques – SCRIPT*) was established in 2009. Its tasks are to support the primary schools in evaluating their performance and in compiling a quality development programme. The agency is integrated into the Ministry of Education and cooperates closely with the University of Luxembourg. External evaluations of the compulsory *école préscolaire* groups are conducted at least twice a year.

Within the context of self-evaluation measures, school development plans (*plan de réussite scolaire*) are compiled every four years. A school-specific analysis is prepared, based on the recommendations of the district inspector and the Quality Agency and on the requirements made by the Ministry of Education. Alongside quantitative data about finances, facilities and infrastructure, they also describe the strengths and weaknesses of the specific institution.

In cycle 1, formative intermediate assessments (*bilans intermédiaires*) are carried out for all children every three months and handed over to the parents. These assessments include: (1) staff observations about the child's development and learning processes; (2) observations made by the parents; (3) further goals to be worked towards. At the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle a summative report (*bilan de fin de cycle*) is prepared, describing the child's achievements in basic skills. A supporting observation instrument for staff (*LBK1 - Lëtzebuurger Beobachtungskonzept für den 1. Zyklus*) and advice on continuous assessment (*L'évaluation au quotidien à l'école fondamentale*) have been issued by the Ministry of Education.

In Luxembourg, research and development of formal and non-formal education and care is conducted by the country's only state university; the state also commissions scientific services from research institutions in other countries. Before the university was founded in 2003 this was the norm. The university has declared empirical research in education to a research priority, with a focus on multi-lingualism and diversity in the Luxembourg education system. Since 2008, a research unit called *Early Childhood: Education and Care*, has been monitoring and analysing the activities and qualification of non-formal education in centre-based and home-based settings. The research and scientific monitoring projects are funded partly by research sponsorship institutions and partly in the context of commissioned projects with state funding.

**Sources:** Achten und Bodeving 2017.  
Eurydice 2014.  
OECD 2015, 83, 105.  
Service National de la Jeunesse 2016a.

## Parental leave arrangements

Compulsory **maternity leave** (*congé de maternité*) is for 16 weeks, eight of which must be taken before the expected date of birth. If the mother has been paying social insurance during the six months preceding birth she is paid 100% of earnings.

There is no statutory entitlement to **paternity leave**. However, fathers are entitled to two free days at the time of the birth ('exceptional circumstances'), paid by the employer.

**Parental leave** (*congé parental*) is granted for a period of four up to 20 months per parent (depending on the working hours and chosen option). Parents can choose between different options in terms of length and payment: they can take four or six months of full-time parental leave or eight or 12 months on a part-time basis. During the full-time option, 1,922.96€ are paid for the six month option or 3,204.93€ for four months, on the condition that the parent has worked without a break for at least one year before the start of parental leave.

There are few data available regarding the take-up of parental leave. In the Annual Report of the Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration (MFI), some trends are reported: Women utilise parental leave more frequently than men (on average 79% between 1999 and 2015); they prefer the first six months of parental leave and usually choose the full-time option. Between 1999 and 2015 the proportion of fathers who made use of parental leave rose from 6.3% in 1999 to 24.1% in 2015.

**Sources:** EPIC 2016.  
Zhelyazkova, N., M. Loutsch, and M. Valentova 2017.

## Luxembourg: Highlights in the history of formal and non-formal education and care

Approx. 1850	First custodial institutions ( <i>écoles gardiennes</i> ) established through caritative foundations and commercial enterprises
Approx. 1860	First public kindergartens established
1963	First legislation on preschool education ( <i>jardins d'enfants</i> , later; <i>éducation préscolaire</i> ), specifying the role of the communes
1976	Compulsory preschool enrolment ( <i>éducation préscolaire</i> ) for 5-year olds
Beginning of 1980s	First state subsidised centre-based childcare settings
1992	Compulsory preschool enrolment for 4-year olds
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of non-compulsory early education groups (<i>éducation précoce</i>)</li> <li>• ASFT Act comes into force, regulating the relationship between the state and private providers of educational and therapeutic services, and also the organisational and funding framework for childcare provision</li> </ul>
2005	Establishment of the first <i>maisons relais pour enfants</i> (MREs)
2007	Home-based family day care is regulated by law.
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Education Act and restructuring of the school system into cycles: <i>éducation préscolaire</i> is included in the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle</li> <li>• Entitlement for 3-year olds to a place in <i>éducation précoce</i></li> <li>• The communes are required to provide outside-school-hours care (<i>encadrement périscolaire</i>) for school children.</li> <li>• Introduction of childcare service vouchers (<i>chèques-service accueil – CSA</i>)</li> </ul>
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ministry of Education, Children and Youth takes over responsibility from the Ministry of Family Affairs for all provision outside the school system as well as for formal education settings.</li> <li>• The SEA Regulation (implementation decree, ASFT Act 1988, amended 2012) introduces common requirements for all centre-based and home-based settings for children in the non-formal education sector (<i>services d'éducation et d'accueil pour enfants</i>). The Regulation specifies the criteria for the contractual agreements (<i>agrément</i>) – staff-child ratios, staff qualifications, maximum capacity, size, etc.</li> <li>• Framework plan for non-formal education for children and young people introduced</li> </ul>
2016	Child and Youth Welfare Act amended, regulating among other things quality assurance in all non-formal education settings.

**Sources:** Honig, M.-S. 2015.  
Honig, M.-S. und Bock, T. 2017.

## Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Luxembourg

Country expert assessment by Michael-Sebastian Honig

Legislation for institutions aiming to prepare children for school (*jardins d'enfants*) was first introduced in Luxembourg in the early 1960s. Provision for extra-familial care can be traced back much further to the mid-nineteenth century, but up to the 1980s this remained a field of sporadic initiatives provided by caritative organisations and commercial enterprises for socially disadvantaged families. A comprehensive system of (early) childhood education and care, regulated by law and (co-) financed by the state, does not fully emerge in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg until the beginning of the 21st century. In this sense Luxembourg can be described as a *latecomer* to the field of ECEC. In the twenty years or so since the turn of the century, state and communes, as well as private non-profit and private for-profit providers, have made considerable efforts in terms of legislative, financial, organisational and conceptual measures.

The conditions of formation influence self-perception and operating principles. Today's organisation of early childhood education and care in Luxembourg emerged from a concept of childcare provision for school-age children in out-of-school hours. Offering compensatory and early education facilities in the sense of an 'other' kind of education than school education traditionally played a secondary role in a country with conservative family values. The Luxembourg system therefore does not follow a developmentally related logic of 'younger' and 'older', but instead a cross-age logic of school and non-school. The internationally widespread debates about *early* childhood are therefore only relevant for the situation in Luxembourg to a certain extent, and the controversies about the relationship between education and care are rather confusing when it comes to trying to understand the organisational and conceptual developments. Characteristic for this development is the more recent *programmatic distinction between formal and non-formal education*. This distinction combines the complementary and compensatory function of early childhood services in relation to families and the task of preparing children for school under the leitmotif 'education' and situates non-formal education in relation to families and schools. In this context, the term 'early' education is applicable to all types of formal and non-formal education for children who are not of compulsory school age, i.e. who are not yet 4 years of age.

However, it is not just the path dependencies which shape the contemporary system of education and care in Luxembourg, but the conditions under which its expansion and differentiation has taken place since the turn of the century. To put it pointedly, these conditions have been influenced through supranational processes, particularly through a dynamic political-economic development which has been strengthened and formalised through resolutions of the European Union. Within this framework, Luxembourg began with the reconstruction of its welfare state architecture. With the expansion, qualification and programmatic conceptualisation of early childhood and out-of-school childcare provision as a sector of non-formal education, the Luxembourg welfare state has developed a new sector of human services and has re-regulated the relationship between family, children, state and market. This re-regulation is shaped through a social investment understanding of welfare state responsibilities, through gender mainstreaming issues and, last but not least, through a re-positioning of the child in relation to parents and state. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child plays a significant role in constructing an image of the child as a person with individual rights and as a participating actor in his/her social relationships and living conditions and not just as a learning person in need of protection.

Against the background of these complex and multifaceted conditions, the current challenges for the system of early childhood education and care in Luxembourg, including the contradictions and controversies, can be identified more precisely:

- (a) Luxembourg has an unemotional relationship to the **political-economic function of childcare services**. Long opening hours, high flexibility, a broad spectrum of care provision ranging from commercial to state/communal are not only funded but also organised, enabling support for the employment conditions of mothers and fathers. On the one hand, in many areas

the approach to pedagogical quality is problematic, but accepted. On the other hand, recent legislative initiatives are focusing on the issue of quality development.

- (b) This makes it all the more important to clarify the question of what **‘non-formal education’** as a pedagogical programme implies. What does it mean for the shaping of the relationship between family, school and childcare settings in different phases of children’s development, and how should the criteria regarding the quality of this relationship be articulated? Non-formal education cannot be thought of as a separated field in this relationship, it is not about a pedagogy of child care. Instead, it confronts the school with the challenge of no longer regarding itself only from an instructional perspective; considering the dominance of the education system, this is much easier said than done. At the same time, childhood education and care settings are also facing challenges. It is no longer sufficient to follow the idea of age-specific learning needs. Instead, it has become necessary to foreground the children and the diversity of their living conditions and experiences. What is needed is a cross-sector, differential didactical approach towards non-formal education. Deliberations in this direction are only just beginning.
- (c) **Early education** is accordingly a *task* for the sectors of non-formal *and* formal education, for childcare settings *and* school, albeit in different ways. How can the criterion of developmental appropriateness be re-defined under these cross-sectional conditions? How can it be supported from an organisational point of view? For school-age children Luxembourg has provided an answer to this question by establishing an organisational link between school and childcare provision through the *maisons relais pour enfants* (MRE, for children up to age 12); in the meantime this decision is provoking vehement disputes about the extended task of the MRE as a non-formal educational institution. For *early* childhood, which means for children who are not yet obliged to attend school, there is a parallel form of provision: the *éducation précoce* groups are preschool settings for 3-year olds. The *éducation préscolaire* groups (for 4- to 6-year olds) have even been integrated into the primary school. *Crèches* und *maisons relais* provide non-formal, outside-school-hours settings for these children. Early education is education prior to school and requires integrated, non-formal learning and living spaces – integrated here meaning not only in terms of the specific locations of education and care, but also in terms of the social-ecological environment, including the children’s families – and it requires specialist staff who are sufficiently prepared for these new tasks.
- (d) Part of the inheritance of the system of early childhood education and care in Luxembourg is the marginalisation of **extra-familial care of children who are not of compulsory school age**. Although the situation today cannot be compared with that of twenty years ago, the care of young children has remained up to the present day in the domain of commercial providers and family day carers. The concessional terms under which they can offer their services are their competitive advantage. The consequences are diverse; they relate for example to the issue of staff recruitment: many childcare staff come from neighbouring countries, do not speak all the national languages and work for low wages. The transformation of the childcare field into a field of non-formal education will need to include commercial providers and family day carers. First steps have been made; the state is making attempts, most recently through the Quality Act\*, to incorporate commercially-run provision; one example is that the granting of childcare service vouchers (*cheque-service accueil*) is linked to adherence to the official ‘Guidelines for the non-formal education of children and young people’.
- (e) More than in many other European states, Luxembourg is a **multicultural and multilingual** country (see the demographic data in the next section). The language and cultural diversity of the children is a socio-political challenge, entailing social inequality and the danger of institutional discrimination. The problem of the production and re-production of social inequality has long been discussed in relation to school education, but it also applies to childcare settings. This includes the issue of access to the diversity of provision and also how diversity is handled in the everyday practices in settings. As a cross-sectional task of school and childcare provision, the idea of non-formal education is particularly appropriate for grappling with this

challenge. Approaches have already been initiated, particularly in the area of language support in a multilingual environment.

- (f) An under-estimated and little regarded feature of the Luxembourg system of non-formal education over the past twenty years is the fact that the nation made available its own resources for **research and scientific monitoring** only in parallel to these developments in the field. The Grand Duchy has a state-maintained university since 2003, and only since 2008 a professorial chair and a working group which guarantees research and teaching in childhood studies and childcare provision. Research into school education and the professional education/training of school teachers are more broadly established at the university. State, communes and provider organisations work closely together. The development of an appropriate research and development infrastructure which combines theory-based basic research with applied aspects remains a considerable challenge. A fundamental issue, for example, is a sustained monitoring of the education and care system; first steps towards educational reporting have been made in the context of recent legislation.

**Sources:** Honig, M.S. 2015.  
\*MENJE 2016a.

## Demographic data

### Total population

In 2016, the population in Luxembourg totalled 576,249. This is a further indication of a steady increase in numbers over the past 20 years (1995 total: 405,650 and 2005 total: 461,230).

### Children under 4 years of age (i.e. before compulsory schooling)

Since children in Luxembourg enter the compulsory school system at the age of 4 years, the following tables show the number of children under 4 years of age and their share in the total population of the age group.

In 2016, children under 4 years of age accounted for 4.4% of the total population in Luxembourg. Since 2005, these percentage rates have been above the EU average.

Table 4  
Luxembourg: Children under 4 years (below compulsory school-age), 2016

Age of children	Number of children
Under age 1	6,100
1-year olds	6,342
2-year olds	6,558
<b>Under age 3 total</b>	<b>19,000</b>
3-year olds	6,490
<b>Total 0- to under 4-year olds</b>	<b>25,490</b>

Table 5

Luxembourg: Children under 4 years of age – share in total population compared with EU average, 1995 to 2016, in %<sup>+</sup>

	1995	Ø EU15 <sup>1</sup>	2005	Ø EU25	2016	Ø EU28
under 3-year olds	4.1	3.3	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.0
3-year olds	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.0
0- to under 4-year olds	5.4	4.5	4.8	4.1	4.4	4.0

\* own calculations, deviations due to roundings

**Source:** Eurostat 2017a.

## Single households with children under age 6

There are no data available on the number of households with children under 4 years of age. In order to enable comparison with other countries, the data in *Table 5* are for households with children under 6 years of age.

In 2015, 84.4% of households with children under age 6 were couple households. Single parent households accounted for 2.9%, whereby these were almost exclusively single mother households (2.5%).

Table 6

Luxembourg: Households with children under age 6, 2015

Household type	Total households	Total households in per cent <sup>+</sup>
Households – total	55,700	
Couple households	47,000	84.4
Other types of households	7,100	12.7
Single households, total	1,600	2.9
Single households, women	1,400	2.5
Single households, men	200**	0.4

<sup>+</sup> Own calculations, \*\* data computed

**Source:** Eurostat 2017e.

## Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In 2015, the employment rate of men (aged 15 to 64) in Luxembourg was 71.3% and that of women 60.8%.

Of the women with children under 6 years of age, 72% were employed in 2015, whereas 89.1% of men with children of the same age were in the labour market. Both employment rates were higher than the EU28 average in 2015, they are among the highest in Europe.

<sup>1</sup> Für die Daten von 1995 wurden die damaligen EU15-Länder (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK) berücksichtigt, die Daten von 2005 (EU25) umfassen zusätzlich CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK und die Grundlage der Daten von 2014 sind die Länder der EU28 mit zusätzlich BG, RO und HR.

Table 7

**Luxembourg: Employment rates of parents with children under age 6 compared with other EU states, 2005-2015<sup>†</sup>**

	Year	Mothers in per cent	Fathers in per cent
Luxembourg	2005	61.1	95.2
	2010	67,6	93.3
	2015	72.0	89.1
European Union	EU15 – 2005	77.3	93.5
	EU27 – 2010	75.2	92.7
	EU28 - 2015	61.0	87.3
Highest rate of employment	2005	Slovenia – 76.8	Cyprus – 95.3
	2010	Slovenia – 76.7	Netherlands – 93.5
	2015	Sweden – 78.9	Malta/Czech Republic – 93.0
Lowest rate of employment	2005	Malta – 29.3	Bulgaria – 72.4
	2010	Hungary – 32.7	Latvia – 74.8
	2015	Hungary – 38.8	Bulgaria – 77.3

<sup>†</sup>own calculations

**Sources:** Eurostat 2017b.  
Oberhuemer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010.

## Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion<sup>2</sup>

In 2015, 22.8% of children under age 6 in Luxembourg were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is below the EU28 average (= 24.7%) for this age group. The proportion of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion within the overall population totalled 18.5%.

**Source:** Eurostat 2017d.

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<sup>2</sup> 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

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