



**National summary sheets on
education systems in Europe
and ongoing reforms**

2008 Edition



LUXEMBOURG

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1. Education population and language of instruction

In 2008, the number of young people aged under 29 was 171 099 (35.37 % of the population), and 66 867 pupils were of compulsory education age (10 784 pupils in pre-primary, 34 476 pupils in primary and 21 607 pupils in secondary education).

The language of instruction depends on the level of education. In pre-primary school and the first two years of primary school, Lëtzebuergesch is the language medium. German is introduced as the language of instruction during the first year of primary school and French from the beginning of the second.

2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

In 2007/08, 87.42 % of pupils attended public-sector schools, 4.61 % private institutions (which, although set up and controlled by non-governmental bodies, received more than 90 % of their subsidy from the public sector, specifically to cover their operational expenditure) and 7.97 % private institutions with 40 % public grant-aid.

Overall responsibility for all sectors lies with the Ministry for Education and Vocational Training, which takes all major decisions as regards curricula, school books, timetables, budgetary matters and teacher training.

Responsibility for primary education is shared by the Ministry and the municipal authorities (in particular the municipal school commissions); there are no school heads at this level.

In secondary education, the Ministry for Education and Vocational Training exercises control via the directors of lycées and *technical lycées*.

As regards higher education, the Ministry for Culture, Higher Education and Research is responsible for all matters concerning higher education and research.

The law of 25th June 2004 relating to the organization of secondary schools has considerably developed the autonomy of secondary schools.

School inspectors visit primary schools and report to the Ministry. At secondary level, inspection is under the responsibility of school heads, in accordance with ministerial regulations.

3. Pre-primary education

The Ministry for Education and Vocational Training has introduced optional pre-primary education for children aged 3.

Attendance at the *Spillschoul* (pre-primary schools) is compulsory from the age of 4. These schools are described in section 4.

4. Compulsory education

Education is compulsory between the ages of 4 and 16.

(i) Phases

<i>Spillschoul</i> (pre-primary schools)	4-6 to six years of age
Primary education	6-12 years of age
Secondary education General secondary education Technical secondary education	12-16 years of age

(ii) Admissions criteria

To enter pre-primary (or pre-school) education, children must be aged 4 on September 1st of the year they enrol. Children entering primary school must be aged 6. Admission to secondary education is dependent on a recommendation made at the end of primary schooling. Pupils in pre-primary and primary education must attend a school near their home in their residential catchment area.

At secondary level, there are in principle no restrictions as regards either the choice of school or formal admission procedures.

All state pre-primary, primary and secondary public schools are free.

(iii) Length of school day/week/year

The school year comprises 212 days between 15 September and 15 July at primary and at secondary level. Primary schools are open at least three full days and two half-days a week. Secondary schools are normally open five days a week from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Primary and lower secondary levels give 30 lessons lasting 50-55 minutes a week. The annual minimum number of class hours is 936 at primary level and 900 at secondary level.

(iv) Class size/student grouping

The maximum size of classes at primary level is 26 pupils, while the minimum is usually 17. Classes are generally small with, on average, between 17 and 18 pupils grouped according to age. Primary classes have a (non-specialist) teacher for all subjects, while secondary school pupils have teachers who have specialized in each subject.

In general and technical secondary school, the minimum is usually 16 while the maximum size of classes is normally 29 pupils.

(v) Curriculum control and content

The curriculum and schoolbooks are determined by an ad hoc committee and approved by the Ministry for Education and Vocational Training. Teachers choose their own teaching methods, which must conform to formal curricular requirements.

At primary level, the basic subjects are the three national languages (Lëtzebuergesch, French and German), mathematics, science, history, geography, religious education or moral and social instruction, handiwork, music and physical education.

General secondary education offers classical and modern streams, whose essential difference is their linguistic provision; in addition to the three national languages, Latin and English is taught within the classical curriculum and English in the modern one. Technical secondary education entails a compulsory three-year general curriculum including mathematics, languages, science, technology, art, music, religious education religious or moral and social instruction, and physical education.

(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

There are no formal national-level examinations during compulsory schooling. Primary school teachers conduct ongoing assessment in groups of subjects and an overall summary assessment (periodic tests, generally written) in broader curricular areas. Pupils move on to the next year on the basis of their results. Since 1996, the entrance examination has been replaced by a selection procedure (entailing standardized and psychological testing), in which pupils and their parents receive a recommendation regarding the kind of education they should choose.

At secondary level, teachers organize up to three tests a term in each subject, the results of which determine continuation to the next stage. Pupils receive a certificate at the end of compulsory schooling.

5. Post-compulsory education/upper secondary and post-secondary level**(i) Types of education**

<i>Lycée général</i> (general secondary school)	15-19 years of age
<i>Lycée technique</i> (technical secondary school)	
Intermediate stage/upper stage (2+2 years)	15-19 years of age
Intermediate stage (3 years)	15-18 years of age

Post-compulsory general secondary education continues in *lycées* and is organized in two stages: general upper secondary education during the fourth year of secondary school (15 to 16 years of age), and the period of specialization in the sixth and seventh years of secondary education (16 to 19 years of age).

Technical secondary education is offered in technical *lycées* and is sub-divided into an intermediate and upper stage. Some technical *lycées* also offer post-secondary vocational training (especially in the tertiary sector).

(ii) Admissions criteria

Pupils continue their studies free of charge in the school where they began their secondary education.

(iii) Curriculum control and content

Courses in various subjects are devised by committees and approved by the Ministry. The curriculum in the fourth year of general secondary education remains fairly similar to that of the first three years, but includes certain subjects in addition to give an idea of sciences like physics and chemistry. At the specialization stage of upper general secondary education, pupils have to choose from among several specialized sections:

- section A: languages
- section B: mathematics
- section C: natural sciences
- section D: economics
- section E: plastic arts
- section F: music
- section G: human and social sciences

During the intermediate stage of technical secondary education, the curriculum varies depending on the option chosen by pupils (technical stream, technicians' stream, vocational stream).

(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Assessment at post-compulsory level is based on regular testing given in each period and all subjects.

Pupils who pass a national examination at the end of their schooling in the general *lycée* are awarded the *diplôme de fin d'études secondaires* (general school-leaving diploma).

Pupils who satisfactorily complete their three years in the intermediate stage of the technical *lycées* receive the *certificat d'aptitude technique et professionnelle* (certificate of technical and vocational aptitude).

Pupils who pass the national examination at the end of the upper stage of the technical *lycées* receive a *diplôme de fin d'études secondaires techniques* (technical secondary school-leaving diploma) or a *diplôme de technicien* (technician's diploma).

Post-secondary education in the technical *lycées* leads to the award of the *Brevet de technicien supérieur* (BTS, or higher technician's diploma). Results determine whether pupils move on to the following year.

6. Higher education

(i) Structure

The University of Luxembourg was established on 12 August 2003 to carry out three principal activities: teaching, research and valorisation, at the highest international level, as stipulated in its mission statement and in its strategic plan. It integrates in one single institution the former *Centre Universitaire de Luxembourg* (University Centre of Luxembourg), the *Institut Supérieur de Technologie* (Higher Technological Institute), the *Institut Supérieur d'Études et de*

Recherches Pédagogiques (Institute for Higher Studies and Research in Teaching), the *Institut d'Études Éducatives et Sociales* (Institute for Educational and Social Studies).

In practice, students at the University of Luxembourg can choose from a range of courses which include 11 academic or professional Bachelors degree courses, 14 academic or professional Masters degree courses, all of which run completely in line with the Bologna system, as well as 6 specific courses.

The University of Luxembourg model is that of a university led by research: in particular, courses for Masters and Doctorates are supported by an environment of solid research, comprising Research Units within its three faculties: The Faculty of Sciences, Technology and Communication; the Faculty of Law, Economics and Finance; the Faculty of Language and Literature, Humanities, Arts and Education.

(ii) Access

Applicants for all courses must hold a secondary or technical secondary school leaving diploma, or other qualification recognized as equivalent. Only access to the pre-school and primary teacher training is restricted: students are admitted after being examined in their knowledge of the three national languages, as well as on the basis of their results in the secondary or technical secondary school leaving examination.

(iii) Qualifications

The university offers Bachelor and Master Degrees, and Doctorates in line with the Bologna agreement as well as other specific courses (For the Faculty of Sciences, Technology and Communication: *Formation spécifique en Médecine générale*; for the Faculty of Law, Economics and Finance: *Formation complémentaire CCDL* and *Formation complémentaire CCREEC*; for the Faculty of Language and Literature, Humanities, Arts and Education: *Formation Continue en Aménagement du Territoire*, *Formation Pédagogique* and *Formation continue 'Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch')*

Finally, the University of Luxembourg also issues diplomas and certificates to certify completion of short courses at different levels.

7. Special needs

Following legislation in 1991, pupils with special needs became subject to normal schooling for which special needs education now prepares them. In 2007/08, barely 1 % of all pupils in primary and secondary education attended special schools.

8. Teachers

Would-be pre-primary and primary school teachers undergo a bachelor at the University of Luxembourg (Faculty of Languages, Human Sciences, Arts and Educational Sciences), for the award of a teaching certificate (CEP) corresponding to pre-primary or primary education. Those intending to teach in general secondary education have to complete a master (abroad) and then theoretical and practical training (the teacher placement) in Luxembourg (at the teacher training department of the University of Luxembourg). The placement cannot last less than 24 months or more than 40 months.

Those intending to teach in technical secondary education undergo a master (abroad) and a teaching placement in Luxembourg. Vocational trainers (*maîtres d'enseignement technique*)

must have a master's diploma and five years of professional practice. The vast majority of teachers have the status of civil servants or public-sector staff.

9. Current reforms and priorities

The double special feature of Luxembourg schools – the multilingual tradition and the number of foreign children – continue to be an exceptional source of educational wealth, but at the same time a huge challenge for the educational system in Luxembourg. Educational politics must be firmly focussed on efficiency, while aiming to promote equality of opportunity and meeting the needs of an increasingly mixed school population. National education must deal with the problem of students dropping out of school and substantially reduce the number of students leaving early. Another major challenge is the strong link between educational success and social status.

National education in Luxembourg therefore continuously and determinedly concentrates on improving the consistency, effectiveness and fairness of the education system. This policy results in particular in the following actions:

Action plan for the adaptation of languages ⁽¹⁾

After developing a language education policy profile in collaboration with Council of Europe experts in 2006, an action plan for the adaptation of languages covering all types and levels of education was drawn up in 2007. The action plan includes 66 measures to improve students' language skills, particularly including the setting out of core language skills to be achieved by all students at varying stages of their education and depending on the type of education or training selected. A differentiated approach will allow each student to aim at a maximum level of language skills while ensuring that those students who do not achieve this level still have access to vocational training.

Education based on the acquisition of skills ⁽²⁾

In 2004 the ministry instigated an in-depth reform aimed at moving Luxembourg schools away from knowledge-based education towards skill-based education. During 2006 core competencies to be achieved by each student in languages and mathematics at varying stages of their education started to be defined at primary level and in the lower classes of post-primary education. They were empirically tested in 2007-2008. Curricula and evaluation methods will be modified accordingly (in 2008-2009). These competencies will be the basis of a differentiation which will allow more students to achieve academic success.

Diversification of public education to meet increasingly varied needs

In order to meet the needs of an increasingly mixed school population, public education has been progressively broadened and diversified since 2004 by pilot projects exploring new approaches in the field of training and student assessment:

- Start of the new school year 2008: Opening of the pre-primary and primary school "Eis Schoul" in Luxembourg-Kirchberg. This new all day public school, for children aged from three years old to twelve years old, is based on inclusive pedagogy. "Eis schoul" develops

⁽¹⁾ http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/enseignement_langues/index.html

⁽²⁾ <http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/competences/index.html>

new forms of teaching and evaluation through a tight collaboration with the University of Luxembourg ⁽³⁾.

Reforms in pre-school and primary education ⁽⁴⁾

The responsibilities conferred on schools are demanding, especially during the first years of school: to teach and socialise all children and guide them to the competencies needed for the next stage of their school careers.

For almost a century the law of 10 August 1912 has provided the framework of primary education. Yet the context in which schools operate has changed significantly. Challenges faced by schools include in particular: the increasingly mixed school population and therefore the protection of social cohesion, the multilingual requirements of Luxembourg schools, reducing academic failure and the need to learn how to continuously modify the knowledge and experience gained.

In August 2007 three reform projects involving the law of 1912 were proposed to the Chamber of Deputies:

- a legal project relating to educational responsibility
- a legal project covering the organisation of basic education
- a legal project concerning the staffing of basic education.
- These projects have not been adopted: the procedure is still in process.

Vocational training reform within the framework of lifelong learning ⁽⁵⁾

In November 2008, the Government has adopted a law which reforms the vocational training. As far as adult general education is concerned, a strategy plan was drawn up within the ministry for Education and Vocational Training in 2007.

A proposal for a national framework of certification, including the entire educational and training system, is in the process of development. This national framework is being completed in close collaboration with social partners and all those involved in the education and training system (later by the end of 2009).

For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult the EURYDICE data base, EURYBASE (<http://www.eurydice.org>)

⁽³⁾ http://www.men.public.lu/publications/primaire/brochures_information/080114_eis_schoul/080114_depliant_eis_schoul.pdf

⁽⁴⁾ http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/loi_primaire/index.html

⁽⁵⁾ http://www.men.public.lu/priorites/formation_professionnelle/index.html