

Tackling Violence in Schools: A Report from Luxembourg

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SECTION A: BACKGROUND

What do we know at present about violence and the handling of violence in Luxembourgish schools? To answer this question one has to consider that violence is a phenomenon that can be seen from different angles. Because of their subjective individual experience, all those who are part of the school system look at the situation in a different way and come to different conclusions. To render the complexity of the problem realistically, it is necessary to take stock of the knowledge, findings and scientific results that are available and analyse them.

The following report is an exposition of the present situation in Luxembourg concerning the handling of violence in schools. Therefore we start by providing a description of Luxembourgish society as well as of the Luxembourgish school system. Secondly, the historical developments relevant to an understanding of the phenomenon and the efforts for a conceptual clarification are pointed out. Next the results of the first empirical studies of the subject are presented, as well as concrete measures that have recently been taken in Luxembourgish schools for the prevention and reduction of violence. The report closes with an analysis of the results under consideration and a preview of future developments of the subject.

The country

Luxembourg lies at the heart of Europe, bordering on Belgium, France and Germany. It is the smallest state in the European Union (2,586 km²) with a total population of 435,700 on January 1st, 2000. Luxembourg is a representative democracy in the form of a constitutional monarchy.

Within the European Union, Luxembourg has reached a high standard of living. Thus, the GDP at market prices (35,980 in Purchasing Power Standards in 1999) is the highest in Europe, above that of Denmark, Belgium and Ireland. The unemployment rate is traditionally very low. Over the last few years, the rate has oscillated around 2.3% (Statec, 2001).

After 100 years or more of immigration (the first migratory movements from northern Italy to the south of Luxembourg took place in the 1870s and 1880s with the emergence of the steel industry), a new immigration pattern which emerged at the end of the 1960s has had a major impact on social life. Today the demographic balance is maintained only by the influx of foreign residents. The foreign population resident in Luxembourg exceeds 159,400, or almost 36.6% of the population (compared to 17% in the 1960s). The great majority (upwards of 90%) are nationals of European Union Member States, mainly Portugal and Italy. Moreover, this figure is only a partial reflection of the true role of foreigners in the economic life of Luxembourg; what should also be kept in mind is the massive influx of commuters from the French, Belgian and German border regions since 1980. There are more than 80,000 frontier workers today, compared with only 8,200 in 1975. Altogether, of a total working population of 248,300, more than 50% are foreigners (i.e. immigrants and commuters). That proportion doubled between 1966 and 1992. Since 1998, an important flow of refugees (5,324 persons between 1996 and 1999) has arrived in Luxembourg, the majority of whom come from the Balkans (2,791).

Luxembourg is officially a trilingual country. A law of February 24th, 1924 states that the national language is Lëtzeburgesch, a Franconian/Moselle dialect that is the vernacular for the entire Luxembourg population. Legislation is drafted in French, administrative and legal affairs are dealt with in French, German and Lëtzeburgesch. The three official languages are supplemented by those of the country's immigrant population (Portuguese, Italian, etc.). The ability to switch readily from one language to another is part and parcel of everyday life for all residents.

The school system

Only national and local administrations are important for the school system in Luxembourg. The Luxembourg Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training controls the primary and the secondary schools. The curricula for the different types of schools are developed by this Ministry, on the basis of proposals made by several specialised commissions for school programmes. Since 1999, the newly founded Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research is responsible for higher education.

Parents and pupils are essentially faced with four alternatives to the public school system in Luxembourg: a) religious schools, b) the private Waldorf School, c) international schools and d) education in one of the neighbouring countries. The religious schools offer the same syllabus as the public system. The Waldorf School dispenses the official curriculum in accordance with its own teaching principles.

Normally a school year runs from September 15th to July 15th. The hours are the same for primary and lower secondary education: 30 hours a week, including breaks. Lessons are given over six mornings (Monday to Saturday) of four hours each and three afternoons of two hours (Monday, Wednesday and Friday). This relatively heavy workload is due in particular to the need to develop skills in the two official languages (French and German) to a satisfactory level and introduce children to the culture of the two main neighbouring countries.

All three languages are used from the earliest years of a child's schooling. Lëtzeburgesch is the auxiliary teaching language for reading and writing during the first one and a half years at school, but German is the language in which children first learn to read and write. Recently, several pilot projects on alphabetisation in French have been launched in several communities. Oral teaching of French starts in the second half of the second year, written French is introduced from the third year of primary school. German and French are both compulsory in schools in Luxembourg, and children seeking to avoid repeated exam failure often attend schools in neighbouring countries, particularly Belgium. Bilingualism at school and trilingualism in everyday life are systematic barriers for less privileged Luxembourgers and even more so for immigrant children, who have to learn the country's three official languages in addition to their own. The Minister for National Education and Vocational Training who was in office between June 1989 and January 1995 adopted a number of measures designed to improve the integration of immigrants into the Luxembourg school system.

The system is highly centralised, and the legislation is strongly based on the principle of free, universal (i.e. compulsory) education. Under the terms of the Act of August 10th 1912 on the organisation of primary education, universality is contained in the concept of obligatory schooling: "all children above the age of six on September 1st shall, for nine consecutive years, receive instruction in the subjects provided for in Article 23 of this act" (Article 1). Compulsory registration and attendance was extended to pre-school education in 1963. Pre-school education is now compulsory for all children over the age of four. In 1998-1999, the minister introduced the possibility for interested local communities to create one year of pre-school education for children aged 3. These provisions also apply to the children of residents who are not Luxembourg nationals and to those above the age for compulsory schooling but who continue to attend primary and secondary schools.

The Luxembourg school system comprises 2 years of pre-school education, 6 years of primary education, up to 7 years of secondary education and different possibilities for higher education.

Primary education

The aim of *early childhood education* is to facilitate the socialisation of the children and the integration of foreign children into the Luxembourg school system. It concerns children aged 3 and lasts one year only. It is not obligatory but must be available in all local communities as of 2004. There is no schooling: children are educated through play.

Pre-school education is expected to foster the physical, intellectual and social development of the children and to prepare them for entry into primary school. The Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training contributes to the financing of about two thirds of all schools, of which no more than 1% are privately run. The local communities are responsible for administrating and maintaining schools. Pre-schools are mostly attached to primary schools.

Primary education covers a period of six years. The philosophy of primary education in Luxembourg is not really different from that in the other European Member States. Teaching methods and procedures are unique because of the linguistic particularity of the country.

Special education offers parallel courses to pre-school and primary education for children with disabilities. The aim is to provide any child who cannot keep up with the mainstream system due to its mental, behavioural or sensorial capacities with an education appropriate to its condition and personal circumstances. The Ministerial Directive of November 4th 1991 favours integrating children with special needs into mainstream education. This will involve closer co-operation between special education and the prep-school and primary school sectors.

Secondary education

Children attend secondary school from the age of 12. The Reform Act of May 10th 1968 for secondary education introduced the principle of coeducational schooling. It further stipulated that "secondary education for boys and girls shall provide sound general training, chiefly in preparation for higher education". This marked a break with the system's traditionally dual role, namely preparing young people for both higher education and professional life. The secondary education is separated into 3 main streams: general secondary education, technical secondary, and the so-called preparatory stream that operates on a flexible model geared to individual abilities and applies specific teaching and supervision methods.

Full *general secondary education* lasts seven years, and is therefore completed at the age of 19 at the earliest. The changes introduced by the Act of June 22nd 1989 reorganised the system into three levels: a) a lower level (the first, second and third year), b) a general upper level (the fourth and fifth year) and c) a specialisation (the sixth and seventh year). In this cycle of specialisation, pupils choose a section within the literary or the scientific orientation. The studies of the general secondary education are completed with an exam which is held throughout the entire country. There are 12 national schools offering general secondary education.

The *technical secondary education* prepares pupils for professional life and also offers the possibility of taking up higher education or university studies. The duration of schooling at this level depends on the stream and/or trade/profession chosen. The technical secondary education system is also divided into three levels: 1) lower secondary school, lasting three years; 2) intermediate secondary school, comprising a vocational stream (lasting three years), a training for technicians or a technical stream (both lasting two years); 3) upper secondary school, comprising a training for technicians stream or a technical stream (both lasting two years).

There are 16 institutions of technical secondary education, some of which are specialised (agricultural college, hotel and catering school, etc.). Recently, the reorganisation of state-run and private nursing colleges, has led to the foundation of a new technical college for the medical professions.

The *preparatory stream* is especially for students with low school performance. The creation of the preparatory stream and its integration into the structure of the technical secondary education is based on a policy aiming to allow a broader qualification to young people. This new modular stream, which lasts 3 years, gives these pupils the opportunity to be admitted either to a class of the inferior or middle level of the technical secondary education or to enter vocational training.

Higher education

The structure of higher education in Luxembourg is in permanent development. It comprises at present: a) the "Centre Universitaire" (CUNLUX), which offers a first and, in some departments, a second year of university studies. Post-graduate studies in law are possible, too, as is a two-year training course in business and computer science; b) the "Institut universitaire international", which organises different seminars at post-graduate level; c) the "Institut supérieur de technologie" (IST), which offers a 4-year course for industrial engineers; d) the "Institut supérieur d'études et de recherches pédagogiques" (ISERP), which trains prep-school and primary-school teachers; e) the "Institut d'études éducatives et sociales" (IEES), which offers training for graduate educators; and, finally, f) the "Brevet de technicien supérieur" (BTS), a two-year higher-education technician training course run by two secondary schools.

Brief history of the interest in the topic of violence in school

The international events of the 1990s relating to violent behaviour in schools, especially in the USA, France and Germany, made the Luxembourg authorities sensitive to the subject. The first official interest in violence in schools and activities against it came at the beginning of 1998, when a Member of Parliament, referring to a European conference on violence that had been held in the spring of 1997, requested information about activities against violence in Luxembourg schools. In March 1998, the president of the Global Security Council transmitted a first report about "violence and adolescence" to the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (Thill, 1998).

In February 1998 the Director of the National Centre for Psychology and School Guidance (CPOS) was delegated by the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training to represent Luxembourg in the European work group on violence in schools set up by the European Commission (DGXXII). The Ministry also set up a national work group to examine the problem of violence in Luxembourg schools. After producing a written report that analyses the theoretical and clinical aspects of the subject (Colling et al., 1998), the work group put forward a prevention plan focusing on teaching communication skills to everyone involved in school life, primarily by: 1) giving initial and continuing training to teachers and counselling staff, and 2) getting head teachers interested. All actions taken to prevent or diminish violence in schools are closely co-ordinated with the educational health and environment promotion programmes that the Ministry has been implementing actively since 1997.

In December 2000, the Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research founded the Research Center for Conflict Resolution (CRRC). In the future, this commission is intended to formulate recommendations for prevention and intervention to reduce social conflicts. The first topic of interest this commission works on are the social aspects of violence in schools.

Definition of violence in school in legal texts and official reports

In school regulations and other official or legal texts, matters such as discipline, violence or aggressive behaviour are referred to as "prevention of vandalism, aggressions and spiteful acts" (modified rule of 19.03.88), violation of disciplinary rules or breach of peace, e.g. through "insults, being rude, refusal to obey, refusal to follow security measures, refusal to attend classes or to participate in an exam, unjustified lateness or absence, fraud, thieving or stealing, forgery of documents or signatures, incitement to disorder or disturbances, organisation of unauthorised public demonstrations and meetings inside school buildings, damage or destruction of public or private goods, violation of good morals, consumption of alcohol during class hours or during breaks, consumption or dealing with drugs" (Réglement grand-ducal du 29.06.98). The class tutor is responsible in matters such as "order, application, security, respect of others and good manners" (Réglement grand-ducal du 1.06.94).

The first written report on violence of adolescence of the president of the Global Security Council (Thill, 1998) stated "that violence has to be understood as a brutal and illegitimate voluntary action that physically or morally offends a person that tries to resist it". Further, this report defines psychological, moral and social aspects involved in violent behaviour.

The report of the ministerial work group (Colling et al., 1998) goes further: it quotes different experts: Pain, Barrier and Robin (1997): "We understand violence as violent actions or attitudes, or actions or attitudes perceived as such, which directly or indirectly make use of force and constraint, or such actions or attitudes which permit this. This definition also includes more open or diffuse actions or attitudes such as institutional abuse." Through Olweus (1996), Anglo-Saxon terminology is introduced with the word "bullying". This is generally understood as the abuse of power and is translated as "malmenances" in French. The report then emphasizes the psychological and moral aspects involved in this kind of abuse. Communicational, social and relational means are presented as the most promising tools to work with, especially from a preventive approach. In a further document issued by the work group, violence is defined as the "non-legitimate use of force by an agent (person, group, institution) in a position of abusive power through actions in which this agent exerts constraint on a victim (person, group, institution) that is abused and hurt. We insist on the fact that violence isn't only physical: it can be moral, verbal, psychological and also symbolical, political and environmental".

It is clear that, in these definitions, violence is understood in a broad sense that doesn't restrict violent behaviour to physical aggression but also includes verbal aggression, physical damage to property, institutional violence and vandalism.

SECTION B: KNOWLEDGE

Research on the prevalence and frequency of violence in school

There has been little systematic research on the specific topic of violence in schools in Luxembourg. Awareness of the problem is also still in its initial stages (Steffgen, 2000a). In 1994, an inter-regional study comparing 323 pupils from Luxembourg with 346 students from Germany and 315 from France showed that the various types of violence in schools are also common in Luxembourg (Scherer, 1996). In 2000, a survey on "Health behaviour among school-aged children" - a cross-national survey by the WHO - was conducted for the first time also in Luxembourg schools. Among other topics, children of primary and secondary school level were asked questions about violence and bullying in school. The results of this survey are the first to address the question of violence in schools representatively. For 2001, a more extensive national survey on violence among primary and secondary-school children and teachers is planned (Steffgen, 2000b).

Findings from research studies in primary schools

In recent years, two empirical studies have been conducted with teachers of primary schools. The first study measured frequency of violence in school from the teacher's point of view (n=90; using a questionnaire from Schubarth & Melzer, 1994). To the question *How often did the following behaviour occur in the current school year?*, the teacher answered:

- physical aggression: never = 41.1%; rarely = 42.3%; sometimes = 13.3%; often = 3.3%; very often = 0%
- bullying: never = 23.3%; rarely = 43.3%; sometimes = 17.8%; often = 12.2%; very often = 3.3%.

The majority of teachers believed that the incidence of violent behaviour (59%) and bullying (66.3%) had remained the same over the previous five years. However, 28.9% believed that violence and bullying had increased. Finally, 5.6% of the teachers noticed violent behaviour from teachers (actor) to children and 14.4% from children (actors) to teachers at school (Steffgen, 2000b).

In the second study, the role that teachers play in the occurrence of children's aggressive behaviour was examined (Steffgen, in press). This work indicates that the way in which the teacher expresses anger influences aggressive behaviour in the classroom. The self-report questionnaire (n=158; using a questionnaire from Humpert, Tennstädt & Dann, 1987) also provided indications on whether teachers had experienced aggressive behaviour in their classrooms. The comparison with the findings of the

first study confirms that teachers at primary school level are confronted with a substantial level of aggressive behaviour at school (see Table 1).

Table 1. Teachers' perceptions of aggressive behaviour (percentages)

	entirely true	largely true	partially true	hardly true	not at all true
pupils' aggressive behaviour in class has become increasingly frequent recently	10.1	26.6	29.7	28.5	5.1
the climate in class is often aggravated by aggressive pupils	15.8	19.0	19.6	37.3	8.2
pupils behave aggressively in class fairly frequently	7.0	20.3	22.2	40.5	9.5
pupils behave aggressively in class fairly rarely	6.3	30.4	23.4	27.2	12.7

Findings for the secondary school level from the first nationwide survey

At the moment, we can only present results for the secondary school level from the cross-national survey by the WHO. Results for the primary school level aren't available.

Data were collected from 7,397 children of the secondary level (6 grades without the final 7th grade). This sample represents 26.5% of the population. The sample was selected from all secondary-level schools. Parents were informed about the survey and had the opportunity of declining participation. Questionnaires were given to pupils in their regular classrooms by research assistants. Teachers were absent from the classroom, and anonymity was guaranteed. Eight questions were used to measure the frequency of situations in which the pupil was a perpetrator or victim of violence and instances of bullying in school.

The report from this survey has not yet been published. However, we already have some findings from the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training. This first set of data gives estimates of the frequency of violence in boys as compared to girls in different school types and in different grades.

Table 2. Percentages of boys and girls who reported being hit by or hitting another child

Response categories	being hit		hit others	
	boys	girls	boys	girls
it never happened	81.7	91.2	70.8	88.8
happened once or twice this year	9.0	3.3	15.9	4.7
sometimes, but not every week	2.6	1.2	3.7	0.9
about once a week	0.6	0.2	1.2	0.2
several times a week	1.0	0.3	1.9	0.5
missing values	5.1	3.9	6.4	4.9

The gender difference is considerable in these statistics. Boys were more likely to be hit or to hit others than girls (Table 2). Also, boys consistently bully other children more often than girls. 7.8% of boys vs. 2.8% of girls bully other children at least once a week. But there is little difference between boys and girls as victims of bullying or in the impression of feeling safe in school.

Table 3. Percentages of children from different types of schools feeling safe in school

Response categories	feeling safe in school		
	general	technical	preparatory
always	46.7	36.2	32.3
often	34.6	30.6	23.9
sometimes	10.6	18.7	19.4
seldom	3.5	6.3	7.8
never	1.5	4.4	7.5
missing values	3.1	3.9	9.0

The types of schools included in this study are divided into three categories: general, technical and preparatory. The study found differences between the three types, as much with regard to bullying and hitting others as to being bullied or hit, see Table 3.

10.3% of the children questioned said that they "seldom or never" feel safe at school, 38.4% reported that they "always" feel safe at school. Children from schools with the highest requirements reported being bullied less and bullying others less than their peers from the two other types of schools. Children from the schools with the lowest requirements yielded the highest percentages.

Table 4. Percentages of school children from the first and second grades who reported being victim of bullying or having bullied

Response categories	victim of bullying		bullying	
	first	second	first	second
it never happened	58.8	71.2	51.0	60.4
happened once or twice this year	19.9	13.7	23.8	18.0
sometimes, but not every week	10.6	8.7	14.4	13.0
about once a week	2.3	1.0	1.9	1.7
several times a week	3.0	1.1	4.0	2.7
missing values	5.4	4.2	5.0	4.1

Secondary-school children were split into two grades: a) first grade, the lower level (3 years) and b) second grade, the upper/intermediate level, including the first year of specialisation (3 years). Bullying and being bullied are less frequent in the higher grades (see Table 4). The results confirm other studies (Smith et al., 1999) that find that bullying and being bullied decrease as children move upwards in school grades.

It is apparent that violence is a problem in Luxembourg schools also, and it affects a considerable number of pupils. The average results from some data of the first survey show that violence and bullying in schools appear to be less extensive in Luxembourg than in northern or southern European countries (Olweus, 1999; Fonzi et al., 1999; Ortega & Mora-Merchan, 1999). Nevertheless, we must recognise that more than a third of Luxembourg's schoolchildren don't feel safe at school and that a considerable amount of children are confronted with the violent behaviour of peers.

The results also indicate that it would be advisable to support further research in which the various forms and degrees of violence should be differentiated thoroughly. While the report of the first national survey is still in preparation, there won't be any official educational intervention proposals to tackle violence.

All in all there are a lot of gaps in the empirical knowledge about violence in school. At the moment no findings about the effects of specific risk factors, differences between ethnic groups or the increase/decrease of violence are available. It is commonly agreed that the school system in Luxembourg is very selective: many pupils are faced with failures, orientation to less demanding courses or the need to leave the national system. Data on school failures for the secondary schools in the technical secondary education shows that between 20% and 25% of pupils fail during the intermediate level and 18% to 25% in the first year of the upper level (Lévy, 2000). Especially for Luxembourg it could be very useful to examine the relationship between school failure and violence in school.

SECTION C: ACTION

Prevention and intervention in Luxembourg schools

Current national policies regarding violence in school

As mentioned above, the Ministry for National Education and Vocational Training established a national work group in 1998 to analyse the situation in Luxembourg. The group's aims were to create a greater awareness and understanding of violent behaviour and to provide advice, counselling and resource materials seeking to prevent and combat violent behaviour in school. This group undertook different initiatives:

- drawing-up of a document establishing the status-quo in Luxembourg and the definition of violence in schools
- organisation of lectures by international experts on the topic of violence
- offering training to teachers with the support of the Ministry for National Education and Vocational Training
- starting research activities concerning violence and bullying in schools
- the publication, in 2000, of a booklet, "Vers une école de la communication". This booklet is distributed free of charge to all primary- and secondary-school teachers.

The group advocated a "communication" approach to the problem of violence in schools supported by the ministry.

At the Council of Ministers, the presentation of the topic by the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training has found an echo among other political leaders. The Ministry for Youth, in particular, is interested in the co-production of a socio-educational programme to provide support for young people.

On a concrete level, more psychological and socio-educational counselling staff is currently being recruited for secondary schools in order to react more adequately to social and school-related problems. The issue "violence in schools" is as well getting more and more included in national events for pupils organised or supported by the Ministry of Education, as in thematic one-day gatherings or film festivals for youth. As yet, however, no clear guidelines exist, nor has any official anti-violence initiative of the kind conducted in a number of European countries been implemented. It appears that the politicians and the ministry in charge are presently in an orientation phase.

Local initiatives

In parallel with the work undertaken by the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training on a national level, local authorities have been participating in the discussion about violence in schools since 1998, addressing the problem more specifically in terms of juvenile delinquency. The city of Luxembourg (about 80,700 inhabitants) in particular has been interested in the problem in view of its population of approximately 20,000 adolescents, to which must be added the thousands of secondary-school children that travel into town every day. Local investigations concerning delinquency amongst

young people have brought together representatives of the local authorities, city schools, the police force, legal authorities, social-assistance services as well as pupils' parents. On the strength of information provided by the police, the municipal representatives feel there is a need to avoid dramatising the problem, at the same time they warn that one should not trivialise a worsening situation against which effective action must be taken. The general feeling is that the role of the police should be more prominent while the exchange of information between the different groups involved should be improved, with particular emphasis on a closer co-operation between schools and the police.

Municipal policy on the prevention of violence in schools thus stresses the notion of partnership. This is the approach that has been pursued since the start of the school year 1998-99 by distributing a document on committed partnership at school ("Engagement pour un partenariat de vie scolaire") to parents, pupils and teachers. Moreover, while communication between teachers is crucial in solving problems, external aid, particularly in support of the victims of acts of violence (e.g. racketeering) is envisaged.

The most recent developments have been observed at a regional level: networks have been created between schools respectively from the south and the north of the country. These schools are making common efforts to organise and set up various information and prevention activities about violence in school.

School initiatives to prevent and combat violent behaviour

In preparation for this report, an exploratory study was conducted to collect data about all initiatives for the prevention or reduction of violence in Luxembourg schools. The "collège des inspecteurs", responsible for primary schools, was contacted, too, but had no interest in participating in the study and the clarification of the types of various initiatives undertaken nationally. So only those responsible for secondary schools participated in this study.

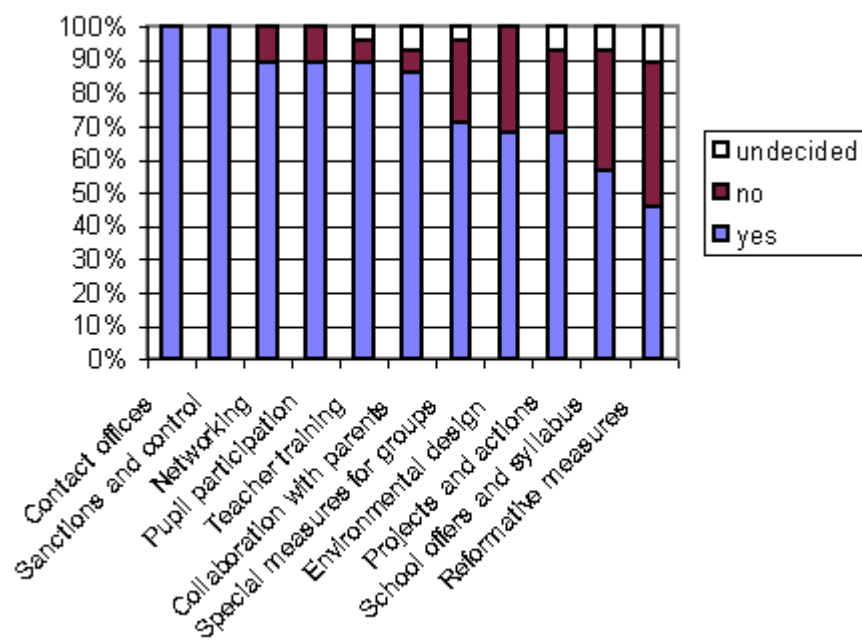
Thus, a short telephone interview with the headmaster/-mistress of every Luxembourg secondary school was carried out. 33 schools were contacted, of which 28 were involved in this study. The questionnaire drawn up beforehand was of a semi-directive nature, and the questions provided information on all the measures that had been taken so far to prevent or reduce the phenomenon of violence in schools directly (i.e. in direct relation to violence) or indirectly. From their personal point of view the interviewees were asked to specify the nature of any measures taken in each of 11 categories of intervention (see differentiation from Jäger, 1999) and to indicate any activities concerning violence they would like to realize in their respective school.

Of the 28 schools that participated, 21 were public national schools (nine general secondary schools, twelve technical secondary schools), four private national schools (two technical secondary schools, two general and technical secondary schools) and three private international schools. The sample of people contacted consisted of 19 headmasters, one assistant headmaster, one direction assistant, one chief educational consultant, four psychologists, one teacher, and, for one of the schools, a headmaster and a psychologist.

Findings about initiatives in secondary schools

The various activities in different secondary schools are outlined here (extensive report by Steffgen, Russon, Kieffer & Worré, in press). Initiatives have been characterised to solve problems at several levels: from the school as a system, through the class up to individuals. Jäger (1999) has proposed a classification that roughly differentiates eleven areas of intervention (see figure 1). Following is an indication for each of these areas, specifying if and in which manner violence has been the subject of direct or indirect measures in schools so far. The proposals concerning necessary initiatives expressed by the interviewees are also indicated.

Figure 1. Percentages of schools having undertaken activities in different areas



- Contact offices

Contact offices, off or on school premises, are necessary, keeping in mind that the use of such facilities by pupils should not jeopardize their development in school or the confidentiality of their relations with teachers. All interviewees (100%) indicated that the primary contact persons at their respective schools were the members of the School Psychology and Orientation Service staff (SPOS), followed by the head teacher, teachers, form teachers and educational assistants. The educational counselors, the Guidance Centres and classmates were also often mentioned.

- Sanctions and control

Sanctions are successful in a dynamic institution when there is agreement about what kind of behaviour is deserving of sanctions. All interviewees (100%) indicate that sanctions are the consequence of violent behaviour. The following procedure is adopted in such cases: a first contact with the aggressor is established by the form teacher, the teacher, the head teacher, the psychological service (SPOS), the chief counsellor, or the disciplinary representative. The causes and circumstances of the situation need to be clarified. Classroom discussions are held by the teacher, the head teacher or the psychological service. Then, the parents are contacted by the head teacher, the SPOS or the teacher. The application of disciplinary measures (class and disciplinary council) is recommended in the majority of cases.

Punishment and sanctions such as kitchen work, detention, object repair and cleaning are other options. The suspension or expulsion of re-offenders, the lodging of a formal complaint, or calling the police for an investigation are actions that are rarely mentioned. In one school, a work group was set up to revise disciplinary measures.

One of the indirect measures (39.1% of 133 initiatives mentioned) is the supervising of the pupils by various members of staff. This is essentially the supervising during the breaks of corridors, classrooms, school grounds and refectories. In individual cases, pupils were moved to different classes, while in others, classroom guidance was installed, with the aim of establishing a particular disciplinary regulation. There is an educational council in which pupils, parents, teachers and the head teacher are represented. An administrative committee is responsible for the school administration. There is a confidence committee composed of

teachers and pupils. The various nationalities in a particular school are represented by teachers.

- Networking

In case of acute problems, connections to institutions outside the school make it easier to save time, to see clearly who is responsible for what and they make experts readily available. 89% of the interviewees indicate that they have installed a network. Concerning direct measures (83.3% of 54 measures mentioned), we observed a contact with the police in 47% of the cases. 13% of the cases consist of a collaboration with special homes. A regular and close relation with another school is observed in 11% of the cases. In 29% of the cases, there is contact with social workers, juvenile court judges, sixth-year primary-school teachers, the Ministry of National Education and relevant social and parents' associations.

With regard to indirect measures, we observed the integration of pupils from social institutions in the general educational system, contact with different social institutions, the invitation of professionals from outside (schools with supervision of handicapped people), the police, and professionals active in "health promoting".

Concerning their propositions for improvements, a great majority of people interviewed stressed the current lack of networking. The majority (58%) of interviewees would like to receive more information on professionals and institutions specializing in the phenomenon of violence that can be contacted in case of a problem or the occurrence of violence in their establishments. Certain (42%) interviewees also expressed their wish for greater collaboration with the police and other schools in Luxembourg.

- Pupil participation

As class representatives, pupils share responsibilities and can help to reinforce the responsibility of social units. 89% of the interviewees indicated that pupils were allowed to take part in their school's activities. Concerning direct measures (26.3% of 38 measures mentioned), pupils participated actively in several activities, such as the production of greeting cards, telephone cards, cartoon books and brochures related to projects against violence, the design of a questionnaire on verbal and physical violence directed at pupils (what type of violence, frequency, origin), the production of statistics and a brochure, the organisation of round-table talks with class representatives, the psychological services and the head teacher on the subject "How do pupils react to violence?", the production of a video against racism and xenophobia that was shown on cinema screens, an exhibition and conference on violence in African countries, and the organisation by pupils and the teachers' committee of a petition against racism.

Amongst the indirect measures (73.3%) taken to actively involve pupils, most were discussion groups held by pupils' committees on the subjects of safety conditions in school and violence approached in an indirect way, and talks organised to give pupils the opportunity to voice their opinions on various subjects.

As far as proposed improvements are concerned, many (72%) would like to see pupils more actively integrated in, and committed to, projects and activities dealing directly or indirectly with the phenomenon of violence [e.g. talks (12%), pupils' committee (11%), guidance (5%), etc].

- Teacher training

The aim is to give teachers more practical training and to increase the teaching of socio-educational concepts and competences, for instance through training aimed at improved conflict management. 89% of the interviewees indicated that some of their teachers participated in vocational training courses.

Of the direct measures (28.8% of training courses of 80 measures mentioned) taken with respect to training courses, 48% represent courses dealing with violence in schools taken by

School Psychology and Orientation Service staff (SPOS). 26% of the training measures followed by teaching staff dealt with the question "How to manage conflict?", and 22% consisted of conferences and educational activities on the subject of violence that were organised for teachers.

Of indirect measures taken in respect to training, 35% were courses given on relational communication and mediation, 12% dealt with listening skills and interviewing technique and 33% were training classes on the education of choice; all of these were followed by School Psychology and Orientation Service staff. 8% of these measures were courses on the subject of communication and attitude to pupils, taken by teachers, and 2% represent teachers who also followed training on the education of choice.

We have also been able to see that more than a third (36%) of interviewees would like to see education that is related to violence integrated in training courses or teachers' workshops. There is also a demand for teachers to be trained (29%) in areas such as communication and behaviour with pupils and the management of attitude and prejudice towards pupils. Likewise, a desire was expressed for more training in violence management (12%) for headmasters and School Psychology and Orientation Service staff.

- Collaboration with parents

Parents need to be integrated in the planning and implementation of activities via parents' associations. 86% of the interviewees said that they established collaboration with parents.

Of the direct measures (62.5% of 40 cases), there is regular contact between the head teacher and pupils' parents in the case of a violent act in 76% of cases. 24% of the measures taken consist of a close collaboration between SPOS and pupils' parents in the case of a violent act. 87% of indirect measures concern regular contacts between SPOS and parents' associations. We observe the organisation of contact and information meetings organised by SPOS for the benefit of pupils' parents in 33% of cases.

- Special measures for problem groups

There are two groups that need to be considered in particular, namely perpetrators and victims of violent acts. 71% of the interviewees indicate that special measures are taken for problem groups. Of these, 97% are of a direct nature: in 46% of such direct measures, individual interviews with the aggressor and/or victim are conducted by an educational assistant, SPOS, the head teacher or educational counsellors. Discussion groups are held by SPOS and tutors in 26% of the cases. SPOS also organises class interventions following violent acts to discuss the situation (8.5%). Collaboration with parents is established by SPOS, the head teacher and educational counsellors (11%).

Concerning proposed changes, interviewees express the desire for a better guidance for victims and aggressors (for instance by organising discussion groups for violent pupils).

- Environmental design inside schools

Each school has the possibility of creating its own environment. This environment is defined in particular by school yards, lounges, corridors and classrooms. 68% of the interviewees indicate that special environmental design activities have been organised inside their schools. In 28.1% of cases (9 out of 32), these measures were in direct relation to the subject of violence. Direct measures undertaken are the putting up of posters in school corridors and classrooms. These posters are designed as part of campaigns dealing with the phenomenon of violence.

Concerning indirect activities (71.9%) that were mentioned most often, pupils are given the opportunity to decorate their classrooms with posters, pictures and paintings (39%), or else they are free to decorate their school, i.e. with paintings and graffiti in school yards, stairwells and playgrounds (39%). Apart from this, 13% of activities consist in turning school grounds into a pleasant environment, e.g. as by planting greenery or installing ponds and paths.

Amongst the suggestions and desires that the interviewees expressed in relation to violence in their schools, we observed that concerning environmental design, the majority would like to arrange the school grounds in a more pleasant way by planting greenery and installing ponds and paths. Many would also like to see meeting rooms and fitness and recreational facilities in which pupils have the possibility to relax and unwind. Receiving brochures and posters on the subject of the phenomenon of violence (awareness campaigns) was also one of the main desires expressed. At the same time, it was stressed how important it is that pupils should participate in the production of these posters, making them more colourful and attractive to fellow pupils.

- Projects and actions

These have the function of provoking awareness. Through questioning, problems can be identified, experts are invited to come to schools, open-door events are organised, etc. 68% of the interviewees indicate that specific projects are conducted in their schools. Of these, 36.6% (26 out of 71) bear a direct relation to the subject of violence. The main part of such activities relate to the topic of violence only indirectly.

Concerning direct measures, the main emphasis is on the organisation of round-table talks, discussion groups in class and, especially, an artistic approach to the subject.

Indirectly, the subject was treated via projects dealing with the working atmosphere inside the schools and those relating to the various types of communication. Other projects, in which the emphasis is put on artistic dialogue and physical activities, have positive effects on violent behaviour in schools. In order to organise projects and activities dealing directly or indirectly with the phenomenon of violence, the majority of schools (63%) expresses the desire to receive greater financial means in order to decorate and design classrooms more pleasantly (through the installation of relaxation rooms).

- School offers and syllabus

Many schools offer a multitude of workshops along with regular classes. These allow pupils to increase their general knowledge and help to create a corporate identity for the school. 57% of the interviewees indicate that violence is a topic in their syllabus. In 96.9% of the cases (31 out of 32), the subject of violence is dealt with directly.

In the majority of cases (86%), the subject of violence is treated regularly in mandatory classes. In only 7% of cases, specific classes are held by SPOS staff and form teachers. Besides this, a few relaxation classes are offered to violent pupils and self-defence classes are proposed for female pupils.

Concerning their proposals for changes, 83% of the interviewees would like to invite professionals from outside the school to hold courses on the subject of violence. 11% of the interviewees would also like to offer classes on communication aspects and social competences to pupils.

- Reformative measures

Measures of this kind serve to modify a school in its functions and tasks. 46% of the interviewees indicate that reformative measures were taken in their schools. 78.6% of these (11 out of 14 descriptions) were related to the subject of violence indirectly. Amongst the indirect measures, the emphasis is put on the responsibility and the active and autonomous organisation of pupils. In most cases, the importance of favouring communication between all involved, i.e. pupils, teachers, head teacher, SPOS and technical assistants, is mentioned. Here, it is important to hear everybody's opinion on various subjects. Information on school life on all levels is passed on in most cases. One of the main aspects of the culture of Luxembourg schools is the consideration and encouragement of the pupil as the main active force in the realisation of personal projects.

Concerning proposed changes, some (12%) expressed the desire to create a facility for the supervision of teachers and headmasters. The idea is to create a forum for all involved that would enable the exchange of information and experiences relating to violence and that would provide a possibility to address problems and to receive aid and counsel.

Two specific projects

Of the educational and pedagogical projects indexed in the aforementioned study (Steffgen, Russon, Kieffer & Worré, in press), we retained two for a more detailed description. These two projects illustrate typical approaches favoured by secondary schools in Luxembourg for tackling violence in school.

The first project exemplifies a direct action/intervention that aims to encourage pupils to reflect on the phenomenon of violence. Which different kinds of violence are there? From which point on can one talk of a violent act? This analysis attempts to remain close to life in school: which human and school-related aspects are involved in situations of conflict? Which concrete and reflected propositions can pupil make? The "*Youths and Violence*" ("Jeunes et violence") project described below addresses this attempts to provoke awareness, reflection and research relating to violence via artistic expression.

The second project, "*Life Code*", takes a different, indirect, approach, illustrating an essentially preventive measure relating to violence in schools. Amongst other things, emphasis is placed on the concept of "communication". This is translated by educational activities that, for example, stimulate reflection on social relations, the development of socio-emotional competences and mutual respect, or the responsabilisation of pupils in the formulation of personal projects.

«*Youths and Violence*», art and cultural activities

In the academic year of 1998/99, an educational project called "*Youths and Violence*" was installed by members of the SPOS in one of the technical schools in Luxembourg. The objective of this educational project was to stimulate creative expression in young people and thereby to encourage the development of social and relational competence. One of the first aims was to allow pupils to externalise their experiences and personal impressions relating to school, family and social life, with the help of music, writing, representative arts and corporal expression. The exploration of pupils' relational spheres, i.e. listening, communicating emotions and thoughts, conflict-solving, and, generally, the confrontation of pupils with their own mode of functioning, was a further aim of this project.

The project was organised and supervised by professional actors from Luxembourg who supported and guided teachers in the execution of the project. The major role of these actors, however, was to help pupils think beyond a purely institutional context and to project themselves in specific situations in an individual manner.

Concretely, the first part consisted of a theatre play called "Disjoncté" ("Disconnected"). This production, a kind of cabaret for young people, was presented by a German theatre company that attaches as much importance to the play itself as to the discussion with the audience following the play. In this manner, these actors-educators propose a general educational concept.

The second part of the "*Youths and Violence*" project consisted of an art show where music was also played, divided into smaller exhibitions that displayed the results of various activities. One of these activities was a *Fine Arts Exhibition* that had been prepared as part of an artistic expression project with pupils. While this exhibition had an inherent therapeutic value, it mainly also permitted youths to express and materialise ideas beyond a simple acquisition of knowledge. An *Exhibition of Photos* was prepared with pupils from a photography workshop and pupils of the preparatory stream. The organisation of this exhibition had the aim of familiarising pupils with the camera, but, most of all, was intended to permit pupils to "externalise" violent scenes from every-day school life from an observer's point of view. The "*Ghetto*" *Exhibition* was prepared as part of the history class and the photography workshop. This exhibition was the result of a project that could be called "multi-disciplinarian". Indeed, a variety of documents (texts, images, interviews, sketches, music, etc.) dealing with the problem of "violence" in Luxembourg, France, and the USA, resulted in a collage illustrating the situation of

youths inside and outside of schools, their perspectives for the future, and their attitude to the law. The *Graffiti Wall* was organised as part of language classes of all ages. In contrast to the other activities for the exhibition, this project allowed pupils to use a support, a format, which is in direct relation to the expressive means and consumer habits of youths. The aim was to spontaneously display expressions, ideas and opinions, deliberately opposing certain points of view. The *Musical Expression Workshop* was organised with the participation of pupils from an extracurricular music workshops and other interested pupils. This workshop was not dedicated to musical expression, or improvisation in a traditional sense, since this type of expression requires important basic musical knowledge. The joy of expression and a playful approach stood in the foreground. Nonetheless, this project allowed pupils, just as in more professional musical improvisation, to express moods, impressions and conflict situations in a very personal way and to see themselves confronted with the opinions and problems of others.

«Life Code», a project on social rules and human relations in school

The school that developed this project is a technical school in Luxembourg town. More than 30 nationalities are represented among its pupils. For several years already, the head teacher and teachers have brought particular attention to the educational aspects of their work, for example by proposing tailor-made guidance to pupils from the lower level or to foreign pupils that have just arrived in the country. After having drawn up an inventory of qualities and weaknesses of their school, several work groups were constituted, one of which was "*Life Code*". The professionals in this group developed the objective of establishing a new code respected by the entire school community that would express the values they wanted to establish in their school.

The objective of the project is to facilitate teachers' work, to improve relations between teachers and pupils and amongst pupils, and to define a common spirit by raising everybody's awareness of responsibility. This project is intended to guarantee relations inside the school, to achieve a greater identification with the establishment and to facilitate communication between all involved in view of a peaceful solution to conflicts. The school's *Life Code* is meant to reflect the values that regulate school life. In order to draw up a *Life Code* document, members of the work group published rules that have been an implicit reference for everyone inside the school. The rules established by the *Life Code* work group are formulated in the first person and deal with self-respect, the respect of others and the respect of things.

From the beginning of the project, the emphasis was put on the implication of all the people inside the school (pupils, teachers, administrative and technical staff, socio-educational staff). The code is like a tool that allows to find a common line of conduct in class, between teachers and pupils and between other people in school, and to create an instrument that is characteristic to the school and is present in every-day work. Teachers have the possibility of using the Code with their pupils as it stands, or they may isolate certain important points in accordance with their pupils, or create a code that is entirely specific to individual classes. There are, thus, different versions of the *Life Code*.

In order to stimulate interest and reflection in pupils concerning the project, various actions were organised: Posters were designed and posted. A first poster presents the project with the school seal and the project logo. Another poster displays the text and rules of the *Life Code*. A last poster, personalised by class, leaves blanks where people can fill in individual initiatives undertaken by classes, activities initiated by the group and all kinds of ideas relating to the project.

Following the rules established by the *Life Code*, classes are given the opportunity to sign a veritable contract. This contract binds pupils and teachers to the respect of certain rules that they hold to be particularly important which they will draw up in the form of a contract and sign. This contract can be filled into one of the blanks left on the personalised poster.

Teachers can also incite pupils to partake in various activities in relation to the project, such as by drawing, poetry or writing competitions dealing with one or several aspects of the *Life Code*, or via radio broadcasts.

Alongside the *Life Code* text, two questionnaires were elaborated with the aim of encouraging dialogue between all involved (pupils, teachers and parents). These questionnaires are intended to raise awareness of the situation of everybody inside the school and to question one's own behaviour

as well as the school's social structures.

Various exercises and interactive games were organised in relation to certain subjects raised by the questionnaires. These exercises stimulate reflection on the teacher-pupil relationship. They offer the possibility of not only facilitating discussion between those involved, but also to receive feed-back on their own action and behaviour. Consequently, teachers and pupils are given the opportunity of becoming more aware of their actions and of the repercussions of these actions in others.

Finally, the Pupil-Forum activity has the objective of grouping some 100 pupils and to encourage expression on topics that they feel are important. The results of these discussions are presented to the school head teacher in view of giving them concrete expression. The head teacher commits to realise these propositions as far as possible.

CONCLUSION

With regard to violence at school in all its various explicit or implicit forms, our exploratory study shows that in the opinion of the interviewees there have been numerous and varied initiatives at secondary schools. However, one should also keep in mind that these findings don't address the depth, the duration or the efficiency of the undertaken actions.

Still, our study shows that activities and projects conducted in the various schools aim at a direct confrontation of the pupils with the problem of violence as it currently exists in Luxembourg. Some projects aim to encourage the pupils' research into the meaning of the concept of "violence", and other projects attempt to increase pupils' awareness of the phenomenon in their schools and personal environment. The idea is to project the pupils' into the situation at hand and encourage them to make suggestions about solving the problem.

The majority of Luxembourg schools put emphasis on the importance of guidance for aggressors and victims alike, and, in some cases, of the entire class. The idea is to re-establish communication that has broken down, and to increase the capacity for listening and emotional expression.

The training proposed to the various professions involved, aims at increasing awareness levels for the problem of violence. The objective is the acquisition of listening and mediation skills and, generally, the capacity to manage conflicts in a pertinent and well-adapted manner. Future work against violence in schools will benefit substantially from more effective training of more teachers.

At the same time, the headmasters contacted made various suggestions that are imperative and necessary to the development and evolution of current institutional policies. These are: the installation of a forum reserved for the exclusive use of pupils, the availability of more educational material dealing - directly or indirectly - with the subject of violence, the invitation of professionals specially trained in the field, the encouragement of a more active and regulated participation of pupils in school activities, the development of available training and networking, and financial support for more advanced measures and actions.

In terms of concrete actions, we note that the policy of most decision-makers in schools is still at the stage of empirical development, experimentation and reflection. A further need indispensable to handling the problem is change at the "school policies level" and the implementation of project management and project evaluation activities. As yet, no systematic scientific evaluation of any intervention programme has been carried out in Luxembourg. The model for evaluation of effective treatments from Kazdin (1997) could be helpful.

The state of knowledge on violence in school and on the effects of initiatives taken is still at an early stage but there is a growing emphasis on the topic violence in school. Even if individual representatives from ministries support or try to initiate actions to tackle violence in schools, all in all a shared concept or programme on this issue is still non-existent on governmental level. There is no straightforward political commitment to develop national resources (experts, budgets, intervention-tools, research etc.) nor to increase means to take action. Many projects and initiatives have been

launched at all kinds of levels, but no academic or political reference or structure is available in Luxembourg to assess, develop and co-ordinate them.

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