The field of early childhood education in Luxembourg is currently undergoing profound transformations. In recent years, a quantitative expansion has gone along with efforts to adapt the supply structure to a modern understanding of childhood and families’ needs (see Honig & Haag, 2012. *Education and Care for Children in Luxembourg*, p. 22). In 2009, formal ECEC became a part of a comprehensive elementary school (*école fondamentale*).

The process of transformation is far from over. Currently, new draft regulations on the accreditation (*agrément*) and quality of childcare services have been discussed and a quality approach for non-formal education has been introduced.

**General objectives**

Luxembourg’s current policy is based on an understanding of education which places the child and its entitlement to education in the centre of the attention. Children are understood as human beings who are naturally willing and eager to learn. National policy therefore aims at providing them with a stimulating environment and adapted learning opportunities within and outside school hours. The learning activities offered should endorse the children’s natural curiosity and respect their individual development while enabling them to pursue their own interests. Non-formal education should provide space for movement, discovery, free play and rest. During the children’s leisure time, tendencies towards school-like settings should be avoided.

In one of its publications, the former ministry of Family Affairs and Integration stated:

> 'Learning cannot be limited exclusively to formal processes taking place in schools and universities. Learning goes on in those institutions as well as in daily life and also comprises, besides the formal ones, non-formal and informal processes.'

(Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration, 2013. *Non-Formal Education with Children and Young People* [1].)

According to this understanding, a strong link between formal and non-formal education is most important. Formal and non-formal education are meant to complement each other. Continuity between formal and non-formal settings should be guaranteed and there is no hierarchy between formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Furthermore, national ECEC policies seek to enable parents to better combine work and family life. They also play an important role in combatting social exclusion, which is linked to the reproduction of social inequalities through educational performance.
Structure of ECEC in Luxembourg

ECEC in Luxembourg bears following characteristics:

- Distinction and thought for complementarity between formal and non-formal provisions (split system)
- Various forms of State support available
- Coexistence of various types of public and private structures.

Split system

ECEC in Luxembourg distinguishes non-formal education, which takes place in the child’s private 'leisure' time, from compulsory school attendance within the formal system.

Private time is spent in the child’s family, in day care centres (crèches, garderies, foyers du jour, maison relais), day care families (assistance parentale) or in other associations organising children’s activities (e.g. music, sports, scouts). It is generally fee-based, but the State provides financial support to parents and to certain types of structures. In the context of ECEC, non-formal education is understood as 'work with children and young people in day care centres, in youth facilities or in youth organisations, where it deliberately pursues learning goals' (Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration, 2012. Non-Formal Education with Children and Young People).

Formal education is delivered by elementary schools. School attendance within the formal system is free of charge. From the age of 3 years onwards, children may participate in an early childhood education programme (enseignement précoce), which is not compulsory, but has to be offered by each municipality. Compulsory schooling starts at the age of 4 with pre-school education (enseignement préscolaire). Together, the optional year of early childhood education and the two years of pre-school education form the first cycle of elementary education (enseignement fondamental).


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children under 3 years</th>
<th>Children over 3 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-formal system</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ministry of Education, Children and Youth)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day care centres</td>
<td>Day care centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(crèches, garderies)</td>
<td>(crèches, garderies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day care families</td>
<td>Day care families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(assistance parentale)</td>
<td>(assistance parentale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal system</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ministry of Education, Children and Youth)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3-4 years</td>
<td>4-6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>optional early childhood education programme (enseignement précoce)</td>
<td>compulsory pre-school education (enseignement préscolaire)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main characteristics of non-formal and formal provisions are summarised below
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-formal education</th>
<th>Formal education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• provided by public or private, non-profit or commercial childcare facilities, by associations or by day care families (assistants parentaux)</td>
<td>• provided by elementary schools within the formal school system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National framework for non-formal education of children and young people</td>
<td>• Curriculum framework for elementary education (règlement grand-ducal modifié du 11 août 2011 [2] fixant le plan d’études pour les quatre cycles de l’enseignement fondamental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cadre national de référence ‘Éducation non formelle des enfants et des jeunes’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• process-oriented</td>
<td>• pursuing specific learning objectives (basic skills levels; socles de compétences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• voluntary basis (‘private’ time)</td>
<td>• during compulsory school time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• fee-based but State-supported</td>
<td>• free of charge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Types of structures**

Non-formal ECEC is provided by different types of day care centres which may be public (run by municipalities), commercial or run by non-profit associations. In addition, there is a growing number of day care families (parental assistants; assistants parentaux), who provide their services on a commercial basis. Since December 2013, the responsibility for the coordination, accreditation and supervision of these provisions lies with the ministry of Education, Children and Youth (MENJE [3]; ministère de l’Éducation nationale, de l’Enfance et de la Jeunesse). In order to bring the different fields of education and care closer together, the departments for Childhood and Youth, which formerly belonged to the ministry of Family Affairs and Integration (MFI [4]; ministère de la Famille et de l’Intégration), have been integrated into the ministry of Education.

Formal ECEC is provided by elementary schools. Formal education is governed by the ministry of Education, Children and Youth.
In 2012, Luxembourg has introduced a new legal provision aimed at coordinating formal and non-formal education and care at municipal level. Each municipality is now obliged to set up one or several Plans for Extracurricular Education (PEP; *Plan d’encadrement périscolaire*) which includes all local formal and non-formal activities for school-aged children (i.e. cultural activities, sports, learning, meals). The municipality is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the plan. The PEP should guarantee a continuous offer for education and care. Its main objective is to offer stimulating learning activities and environments to children. It is also supposed to allow parents to better combine their work and family life.

Based on a timetable, the PEP specifies
- formal school time
- optional non-formal offers.

The following figure shows a blank template, with the yellow fields for formal school time and the green fields for non-formal offers.

**Model for a Plan for Extracurricular Education**

![Plan for Extracurricular Education](image)


The framework foresees a sharing of responsibilities which goes along with an obligation for both structures to cooperate: School activities fall into the responsibility of elementary schools whereas day care centres are in charge of the non-formal activities. Municipal infrastructures may be used for both purposes; other premises should be shared if possible.

In order to strengthen their cooperation, the participating institutions should organise
- Common activities for pupils
- Regular exchange between school presidents and managers of day care centres
- Presentations to parents
- Common trainings for staff members of both institutions.

They may also conclude agreements which can go up to offering full-day care for children in one and the same setting.

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**State support**

Up to the age of 4, parents bare the primary responsibility for the care and upbringing of their children. However, non-formal education and care below this age and outside school hours is supported by the State through the following instruments:

- **Co-financing of childcare facilities**: The operational costs (*frais de fonctionnement*) of municipal day care centres are 75 % State-funded. The remaining 25 % as well as infrastructure costs are borne by the given municipality. The provider of a municipal day care centre may be
the municipality itself or a non-profit organisation which holds a tripartite agreement (*convention tripartite*) with the municipality and the competent ministry

- **Childcare-service vouchers:** In 2009, State-funded Childcare-service vouchers (*CSA; Chèques-Service Accueil* [7]) have been put in place in order to offer financial support to children and their families and to provide more equitable access to childcare. These vouchers offer differentiated price reductions for public and private day care centres, day care families and other non-formal activities. They are issued to parents of all children living in Luxembourg who are either younger than 13 years or who are still attending elementary education. Families benefitting from the Guaranteed Minimum Wage (*RMG; Revenu minimum garanti*) or who are identified as being at risk of poverty benefit from more favourable rates.

As part of the public school system, the optional (3- to 4 year-old pupils) and the compulsory (pupils aged 4 and over) years of elementary education are provided free of charge.

**Cycle 1 of elementary education**

Cycle 1 of elementary education is governed by the 2009 laws on elementary education.

**Compulsory school attendance**

- *Loi du 6 février 2009* [8] relative à l'obligation scolaire

**Organisation of elementary education**


**Elementary school staff**

- *Loi du 6 février 2009* [10] concernant le personnel de l’enseignement fondamental

**Transversal instruments and other provisions**

The legislative framework of ECEC is completed by the laws on childcare-service vouchers; the PEP; private schools; and on the National Children’s Office.

**Private schools**


**Child and youth welfare / National children’s office (ONE; Office national de l’enfance)**

- *Loi du 16 décembre 2008* [12] relative à l’aide à l’enfance et à la famille

**Childcare-service voucher**

Plan for extracurricular education


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**Links**