

# OECD REVIEW OF CAREER GUIDANCE POLICIES

## COUNTRY NOTE



## LUXEMBOURG

**JUNE 2003**

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## 1. Introduction

1. The national visit to Luxembourg, as part of the OECD's thematic review of national policies for career information and guidance services, took place between 23 June and 28 June 2002<sup>1</sup>. The interesting and varied programme for the visit included meetings with: both the Minister for Employment and Labour and the Minister for National Education, Vocational Training and Sports; senior officials of these two Ministries; the key agencies that provide guidance services; the staff of several lycées; the social partners; staff of one of Luxembourg's two continuing vocational training centres; and representatives of non-government organisations. Prior to the visit Luxembourg had completed a national questionnaire on its policies for career information and guidance services. This proved to be extremely useful in providing the review team with essential background information.

2. This Country Note gives a brief description of the Luxembourg economy, labour market and education system, and follows this with an outline of the ways in which career information and guidance are provided in that country. It contains one principal recommendation: the creation of a body to improve the co-ordination of national career information and guidance services, with the initial task of developing a national strategy for these services. It concludes by suggesting some of the features that such a strategy might include.

## 2. The Luxembourg context

### 2.1 *The economy and the labour market*

3. With a population in 2001 of 441,000 (Statec, 2001) and a GDP per capita in 2001 of US\$49,800 (OECD, 2002), Luxembourg is the second smallest and the wealthiest of OECD countries. Its economy was once dominated by a steel industry that went into severe decline in the 1970s, and Luxembourg owes much of its present wealth to its ability to switch rapidly to a range of other high value added industries, and in particular to the creation of legal, regulatory and taxation regimes that have helped to make it a major international financial services centre. The Grand Duchy's 185 banks have assets of €720bn and 24,000 employees, and in February 2002 its 1,922 investment funds held net assets of €949bn<sup>2</sup>. It is also host to a number of important European Union institutions such as the European Investment Bank.

4. Labour force low participation levels are low in Luxembourg, particularly among women and those over the age of 55<sup>3</sup>. The latter owes much to generous pension regimes that make early retirement an easy option<sup>4</sup>. Unemployment is also very low: 2.4% in 2000 compared to an OECD average of 6.4%. Expanding employment levels since the 1990s have been made possible by an influx of cross-border workers<sup>5</sup>. In addition to these cross-border workers, Luxembourg has long had a large immigrant

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1. Appendix 1 gives details of the review team, and Appendix 2 gives the full programme for the visit.

2. *Financial Times*, 6 June 2002.

3. In 2000 the participation rate in Luxembourg was 64.2% compared to an OECD average of 70.1%. Among women it was 51.7% compared to an OECD average of 61.3%

4. Attractive conditions for early retirement are linked to efforts in the 1970s to wind down the steel industry.

5. OECD (2001a) reports cross-border workers to be around 70,000 out of a total workforce of around 250,000, but in May 2002 the number of cross-border workers had grown to 95,000 (Administration de l'emploi, 2002). One result of this high influx of cross-border workers is that Luxembourg's labour market is now very much a regional one, closely linked to the labour markets of neighbouring countries (Belgium; France; Germany), and not simply a national one.

population, particularly from countries such as Portugal and Italy but more recently from the ex-East bloc countries, especially the ex-Yugoslavia. Each of these groups presents specific sets of issues. Around 36% of its population was born in countries other than Luxembourg compared to an EU average of five per cent. In 1999 cross-border workers and resident foreigners accounted for 62% of total employment (OECD, 2001a), but this is now likely to be even higher given recent growth in the size of the cross-border labour force. A labour force in which the majority are either cross-border workers or immigrants reduces pressures upon the national education and training system to act as the primary mechanism for addressing skill shortages, and for firms to invest heavily in training.

5. Many of the key labour market institutions in Luxembourg operate on a consensual basis, and the role of employer and trade union chambers is strong. Formal educational qualifications seem to play an important role in the labour market, with the qualifications required to enter particular occupations being specified in national regulations.

## 2.2 *The education system*

6. The Luxembourg education system has a number of distinctive features, the most evident of which is language diversity. Luxembourg is a multi-lingual country, with three official languages: Lëtzerburesch, French and German. Whatever pupils' native language<sup>6</sup>, pre-school teaching normally begins in Lëtzerburesch, German is the language in which they first begin to read and write, and oral teaching of French begins in the second half of the second year. The interaction between language diversity and small population size creates particular problems for some parts of the education and training system: for example in order to form classes of a viable size, some areas of vocational training cannot be offered in both French and German.

7. Another distinctive feature is the lack of a complete university in the country. Some higher education courses are available, but in general students must go abroad to obtain tertiary qualifications. In 1998-99 there were 1,116 tertiary education students in Luxembourg itself, but 4,723 Luxembourg students were studying at foreign universities. Of these 1,240 were in Belgium and 793 in France (Euridyc, 2002).

8. A further distinctive feature of Luxembourg's education system is the early age at which young people are divided between an academic or general education stream on the one hand and a stream leading to vocational education on the other. In Luxembourg this occurs at the end of primary schooling -- roughly at the age of 11 or 12 -- when students are sorted<sup>7</sup> into those who are to attend a *lycée classique* (roughly a third of each cohort) and those who are to attend a *lycée technique* (roughly two thirds of each cohort)<sup>8</sup>. Streaming or tracking not only occurs at an early age but is also an ongoing feature of the system, particularly during the first three years of secondary school, with the annual marks or grades required for promotion to the next level or for relegation to the level below being set out in national regulations<sup>9</sup>. Grade repetition is common but national regulations limit the number of times that students can repeat any one course. This progressive tracking (described as "selection by failure" in one of our meetings<sup>10</sup>) results in a

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6. In addition to communities that speak one of the three official languages Luxembourg has communities that speak the major immigrant languages such as Portuguese.

7. Section 3.2.2 provides further details of the mechanism that is used to carry out this sorting.

8. In addition a very small proportion takes part in special education.

9. Poor performance in some subjects can now be compensated for by good performance in others. This measure is relatively recent, and at the moment is subject to modification.

10. Many students, in both the *lycées classiques* and the *lycées techniques*, are reported to move to schools in neighbouring countries to complete secondary education in a less competitive environment.

finely graded hierarchy of categories of students emerging from the final stages of secondary education<sup>11</sup>. Students' location in this hierarchy basically determines which range of occupations they can prepare for.

9. There have been moves towards some reduction in streaming in recent years. The weakest students in the *section modulaire*, previously not included within the mainstream of secondary education, are now formally part of the *lycée technique*. Specialisation occurs somewhat later, and results in one subject can now compensate for poor results in another.

10. The Luxembourg school system has features borrowed from both France and Germany. However the vocational education and training system and the apprenticeship system have been strongly influenced by German traditions, and much of the teaching material (curriculum documents, resource materials) is in German. There is also a significant private, although government funded, school sector in Luxembourg. Private schools account for 11% of all post-primary school students, and 83% of these students are in private *lycées techniques*.

11. The existence of three official languages, the high proportion of immigrants in the population, and the high degree of streaming in secondary education pose particular problems for Luxembourg's school system. On a number of indicators Luxembourg's school system performs relatively poorly compared to other OECD countries' systems. For example:

- Luxembourg students scored the second lowest of all OECD countries on the PISA combined literacy score (OECD, 2001b);
- The percentage of 25-34 year-olds with a completed upper secondary education (62%) is below the OECD mean (72%). This difference is a long-standing one, being also observed in older age groups, but the difference has narrowed over time;
- The current upper secondary graduation rate of 60% is below the OECD average of 79%;
- Tertiary qualification rates are somewhat below the OECD average: 22% of men aged 25-34 have a tertiary qualification, and 20% of women of the same age, compare to OECD averages of 25% for men of this age and 27% for women<sup>12</sup>.

12. On balance, the outcomes for migrant youth are relatively weak. Performance on the PISA combined literacy scale was particularly poor among immigrant students, and a large gap was evident between the performance of native born students, first generation students whose parents were born abroad, and the foreign born. There was also a large gap between the performance of students who speak a language at home other than the language of assessment or the national language(s) and those who do not. Migrant students are disproportionately represented among those who repeat grades in primary school (4% of Luxembourgish repeat a grade compared to 9% of those of Portuguese origin and 12% of those from Cape Verde). The hierarchy of levels within secondary education is also reflected in the proportion of migrant students found at each level. The foreign born constitute only 14% of those in the *lycées*

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11. At the end of the first stage of secondary education, students can be found in one of five strands. The most prestigious of these is the *lycée classique*. Within the *lycée technique* the four streams are, in order of prestige: *théorique*, *polyvalente*, *pratique*, and *modulaire*. In the upper stage of secondary education the main tracks are the *lycée classique*, the *régime technique*, the *régime technicien*, and the *régime professionnel*. The latter can lead to three levels of certificates: a CATP or *Certificat d'Aptitude Technique et Professionnelle*; a CCM or *Certificat de Capacité Manuelle*; and a CITP or *Certificat d'Initiation Technique et Professionnelle*.

12. Source: OECD (2001) *Education at Glance: OECD Indicators*, Paris.

*classiques*, but 37% of those in the *lycées techniques* as a whole and 60% of those in the *modulaire*, or lowest stream of vocational education. In the upper secondary vocational programmes migrant students constitute 25% of the highest stream, 32% of the middle stream, and 42% of the lowest stream.

### 3. Career guidance in Luxembourg

#### 3.1 Why career information and guidance are important for Luxembourg

13. On some grounds career information and guidance might be thought to be less important in Luxembourg than in other countries. The economy is buoyant and jobs are plentiful; employers can recruit foreign labour easily to fill skill shortages; and within the secondary school system much of the occupational selection process occurs by default, through the operation of tight tracking and streaming systems, and for many students choice is, at least in part, a function of the pathways that they find themselves allocated to.

14. However during our visit it was forcefully argued to us that career information and guidance are of great importance in Luxembourg, that they will become more important in the future, and that there is a strong case for their improvement and growth. We found these arguments to be very persuasive. Some of the arguments that were put to us for improving career information and guidance were based upon labour market needs. Whilst the economy is buoyant at the moment, there are signs that unemployment is beginning to rise<sup>13</sup>, and Luxembourg's position as Europe's prime financial services centre is under threat from countries such as Switzerland and Ireland. Adaptability and flexibility will be important for the labour force in the future, and career information and guidance need to play a key role. Even with very low levels of unemployment, a structural unemployment problem has persisted despite economic growth, and improved guidance is one of the ways in which those affected by it can be helped. Labour markets, it was said, are not static but dynamic, and career guidance is important in helping individuals adjust to change and to uncertain futures. It was pointed out that even with very low unemployment levels, it is still possible for many individuals to be mismatched, and that better guidance can help to improve individuals' job satisfaction

15. Other arguments were based upon the role that guidance can play in helping individuals to realise their potential and the role that it can play in improving equity. Schools, it was said, often base their advice to students upon social status and family background, parents make choices for their children on the basis of the status of particular pathways -- with the *lycée classique* being the most prestigious -- irrespective of the advice of the schools, and academic failure makes *de facto* decisions for them. It is important, we were told, to work towards a more open system of education in which young people's decisions are based more upon their interests and their competence. Guidance, it was said, must be an important part of more open education systems such as this.

16. An additional argument that was put to us in favour of improving career guidance is that whilst the *lycée classique* has considerable prestige as a pathway to tertiary study, many students in the *lycée classique* find that they do not want to go to university, or, once there, find that they do not like the course that they have entered. These are serious problems and better guidance is needed to address them.

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13. Between May 2001 and May 2002 the unemployment rate rose from 2.4% to 2.7%. Of perhaps even more concern, the numbers participating in labour market measures rose by 15% between 2000 and 2001, and by a further 18% between May 2001 and May 2002. More than half of those participating in such measures were in programmes targeted at those under the age of 30 (Administration de l'emploi, 2002).

Guidance, it was put to us, should not be seen just as something for those in the vocational education pathway, but as a service for all students.

17. As knowledge becomes increasingly important as a source of national economic competitiveness, a lifelong guidance strategy will need to be developed as an essential component of a national lifelong learning strategy. This will need to have both a labour market and an educational focus. The arguments in favour of guidance systems that are accessible throughout life become particularly important in a country such as Luxembourg, where relatively high rates of school failure and relatively low rates of labour force participation by women result in many talented people needing or desiring later in their lives to make more effective use of their potential through returning to study.

### 3.2 *Career guidance services in Luxembourg*

#### 3.2.1 *SPOS/CPOS*

18. The largest provider of guidance in Luxembourg is the Psychology and School Guidance Service, or SPOS (*Service de Psychologie et Orientation Scolaire*), which has 47.5 full-time-equivalent staff. 43.5 of these positions are located in the lycées, and four are located in the Psychology and School Guidance Centre, or CPOS (*Centre de Psychologie et Orientation Scolaire*). At present staff of the SPOS are administratively responsible to the lycée Directors, and professionally responsible to the Director of the CPOS<sup>14</sup>, who in turn is directly responsible to the Minister for National Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

19. 1987 legislation gives SPOS/CPOS a wide role. It is responsible for providing psycho-educational guidance for secondary education students, as well as for assisting in the transition of students in the final year of primary school to secondary education. This involves administering a series of psychological and educational attainment tests, as well as providing assistance with choice of institution. It is responsible for assisting young people to make the transition from school to working life, as well as for providing advice to students, their parents and school staff on all matters relating to the psychological, emotional and social aspects of the learning process (Eurydice, 2002). In addition to providing a specialised therapeutic and counselling service the CPOS co-ordinates the SPOS services in the lycées, and acts as a distribution centre for career information.

20. Within the lycées SPOS services are staffed according to a formula that allocates key staff on the basis of six hours for each 100 students in a *lycée classique* and ten hours for each 100 students in a *lycée technique*. In each lycée the SPOS works as a team, and teams generally consist of psychologists, social assistants who have a higher education qualification in the health field (Bac+3), teaching assistants (*éducateurs/éducatrices gradué-e-s*) who have a higher education qualification in pedagogy and the social sciences (Bac+3) that can include a guidance module, and teachers who work as part of the team on a part-time basis. As an example, the SPOS team at the Lycée technique du Centre, with 2,800 students, consists of four psychologists, two social assistants, one teaching assistant, and 13 teachers working on a part-time basis. We were impressed by the dedication and commitment of the SPOS staff that we met during the visit. The multi-disciplinary and team-based approach is also a very attractive feature of the SPOS. It is

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14. However the Minister for National Education, Vocational Training and Sports has announced her desire to have the SPOS staff fully responsible to the Directors of the lycées in which they are located.

made possible by the large size of lycées in Luxembourg<sup>15</sup>, but would be very difficult to support in countries where average school sizes are much smaller.

21. Alongside these very real strengths of the SPOS, there are also weaknesses. The requirement for its key staff to be qualified as psychologists gives it a strong bias towards providing personal and therapeutic services, to the detriment of an emphasis upon *career* guidance. Reinforcing this, its psychologists do not normally have a special training in vocational or occupational psychology, and appear in very many cases to have specialisations in areas such as psychotherapy or clinical psychology. This results in the service having an image problem: many students are reported to see it only as a service for those who have problems, and visits to it as exceptional, rather than as a normal part of their trajectory through school and life. An additional difficulty is that the wide range of roles that the SPOS has to fill can lead them to being reactive rather than proactive.

22. The policy and strategic impact on the ground of the CPOS appears to be weak. There is considerable scope for wide variation in services, as decisions about the balance of services to be provided are very much a function of individual lycée directors and of SPOS staff rather than of central policies. While this has the positive benefit of encouraging local initiative, it can also lead to gaps. For example it would be possible for very little career guidance to be provided in one lycée, but a lot in another, largely as a result of the interests and priorities of the lycée Directors or the SPOS staff.

23. There also appear in practice to be some tensions in its role. On the one hand staff see it as their job to meet the needs of students and to help them to make their own choices. But on the other hand they are closely involved, through their role in the *conseils de classe*, in helping the school system to select and stream students in a way that constrains their choices<sup>16</sup>. A further tension appears to be between helping students to make career choices in ways that meet their interests and aspirations, and helping to shape their aspirations to what are perceived to be labour market needs. For example in our meeting with the social partners strong concern was expressed at young people's reluctance to choose blue collar careers, and we detected some of the same concerns in conversations with SPOS staff and senior lycée staff.

### 3.2.2 *The conseil d'orientation and the conseil de classe*

24. The *conseil d'orientation*, or guidance council, is an important institution in considering the role of guidance in Luxembourg, as it determines, at a key choice point within schooling, which track the student will be able to enter or progress in. As such it plays an important role in streaming, in educational decisions, and in occupational choices and outcomes. It operates in the transition from primary to secondary education. Chaired by a school inspector, the council includes the students' sixth grade teacher, a secondary school teacher, and a psychologist (who can be from the CPOS/SPOS, but can also be an independent psychologist). The council decides which track the student is to be placed in (the lycée classique; the lycée technique in the standard stream; the lycée technique in the adapted stream; or the

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15. The 23 public lycées have an average of 1,200 students (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de la Formation Professionnelle et des Sports, 2002, p.119).

16. Article 52 of the act of 22 June 1989, amending the revised educational reform act of 10 May 1968, states that "class councils shall, in conjunction with the psychology and guidance service in each secondary school, advise pupils on their decision to opt for the literature- or science-based stream and on their choice of pre-specialisation". And "Class councils shall also give an opinion on the choice of specialisation for which the pupil seems most suited, and on additional optional courses; where necessary, it shall enlist the assistance of the school guidance and psychology service" (title VI: secondary education). Source: Euridyce (2002).

lycée technique in the modular stream) on the basis of a combination of the student's primary school results, performance on a national test, and the results of psychological tests. The results of the council are communicated to parents in writing. If they disagree with the decision they can appeal, and the student can sit a test, the results of which are decisive.

24a. The *conseil de classe* operates in the post-primary schools. It must be formed from a member of the school management and from class teachers. They have voting rights, and in the decisions of the *conseil de classe* abstention is not allowed. A member of the SPOS takes part in an advisory capacity. In principle the *conseil de classe* meets at the end of each trimester or semester in order to consult on the results of students and classes. At the end of the year, it decides upon student promotion and guidance. A guidance advice -- which must be provided, but which it is not compulsory for the student to follow -- is provided to each student at key choice points within schooling (the 6<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades within secondary school, and the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades in the EST. The SPOS takes part in the elaboration of this advice. Decisions on promotion or on changing track (in other words only towards certain programmes) must be followed by students. They are based upon the school results obtained in the course of a year and from the annual grades that result from them.

25. A similar process, but based largely upon school marks, takes place at the end of each school year to decide who can move up to the next grade, and also at the transition between the ninth and tenth grades of the lycée technique.

### 3.2.3 Projets d'établissement

26. An important recent initiative, with significant implications for the development of career education and guidance in Luxembourg, has been the introduction of *projets d'établissement*, or school work plans. Designed to introduce a substantial degree of decentralisation into the school system, these allow each school to develop its own project. These can be of various types, and can be directed towards a range of educational issues: for example language learning. They are supported by a Co-ordination Centre within the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training and Sports. Ten of the 17 projects that are operating in the lycées are concerned with career education and guidance. While these projects differ from one another, they have a number of impressive features, and they include some excellent examples both of good practice and of best practice. One of their most important features is that their approach to assisting students to make career choices is not based only upon one-to-one guidance, but is curriculum-based, experiential and developmental.

27. The project that was visited by the review team at the Esch Lycée Technique<sup>17</sup> has been in operation for three years, and all students in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades take part in it for two hours per week. It includes strands on the transition from primary to secondary school, life and social skills, study methods and tutorial support in addition to career education. Borrowing from a model developed in Québec that is based on sound career choice theory, it takes a developmental approach to career choice, aiming to teach students decision making skills and career management skills in addition to assisting them to make specific choices. This feature is particularly important in the context of lifelong learning. The project is delivered by a large team drawn from the lycée's teaching staff, specially trained for their role, as well as from the SPOS and other actors. A particularly important role is assigned to the *régent tuteurs* or form teachers, who perform a strong pastoral care and support role. There is also a strong involvement of employers and parents: for example to explain occupations to students. The involvement of parents is particularly

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17. Details are provided in Lycée Technique d'Esch (2002) *Avanti: Projet pédagogique du Lycée Technique d'Esch*. Additional details of guidance-related projects are found in Centre de Co-ordination des Projets d'Établissement (2002).

important given the impression that we gained that parents have a relatively weak role in the policy making process, at either the systemic or the school level. The project is being professionally evaluated, both to improve its processes and to assess its outcomes. Additional features include periods of work experience or job shadowing, mentoring by students in higher grades, and personal projects. Many of these features are common in other projects.

28. The *projets d'établissement* have been greeted with great enthusiasm by the staff of the lycées that have introduced them, and have involved a lot of co-operation between different lycées in order to maximise the choices available to students. They are an important mechanism for change in the Luxembourg school system. As just one example, they have led many teachers to realise that they need further training in the guidance role. They are important pointers to directions that can be taken to improve career assistance for youth, and they have wider implications for the school system as a whole.

### 3.2.4 *The Employment Administration's Career Guidance Service (ADEM-OP)*

29. In parallel to the SPOS/CPOS that is administered by the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training and Sports, the Employment Administration of the Ministry of Employment and Labour contains a small career guidance service with eight staff, who are located in three centres in Luxembourg. Unlike the majority of the SPOS/CPOS staff who are psychologists, the staff of the ADEM-OP (*Administration d'Emploi-Orientation Professionnelle*) are generally recruited under normal civil service conditions, and are not required to have specific career guidance or other occupational qualifications<sup>18</sup>. No specific occupational profile or qualifications profile has been established for this group. Opportunities for in-service training for the ADEM-OP staff appear to be relatively limited, and most of their skills and knowledge appear to be gained from experience and from colleagues. However through experience, and on-the-job learning, they have acquired considerable knowledge of the labour market, and their principal focus is *career* guidance, rather than personal counselling or psychotherapy.

30. The ADEM-OP has a number of roles. It operates a Career Information Centre (Berufs Informations Zentrum, or BIZ) which concentrates upon careers in the skilled trades, and which is largely a replica of the similarly named centres run by Germany's Federal Employment Service. The BIZ clients come largely from the *modulaire* and *professionnelle* streams of the lycées techniques, and to a lesser extent from the *polyvalente* stream. The ADEM-OP assists in apprenticeship placements<sup>19</sup>, provides individual guidance, in particular to job seekers, and does some work in the lycées, for example through helping to arrange work placements for clients of the *Action locale pour jeunes* service (see Section 3.2.5 below), through assisting in some of the *projets d'établissement* described in Section 3.2.3, and through helping students to prepare for visits to the BIZ. (These visits, as in Germany, frequently take place in entire class groups).

### 3.2.5 *The Action locale pour jeunes*

31. The Action locale pour jeunes (ALJ) service was created in 1984 to co-ordinate action at the local level for young people who are unemployed or otherwise in difficulty in the labour market. It is administered by the Vocational Training Service of the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training and Sports. It has a staff of 12, who are qualified as *éducateurs/éducatrices gradué-e-s*. The service has a preventative role, and works closely with the *modulaire* classes of the *lycées techniques*, in

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18. However some staff of the service have qualifications as *éducateurs/éducatrices gradué-e-s*. See national questionnaire Section 6.3.

19. Employers in Luxembourg are required to notify the ADEM-OP of all apprenticeship vacancies.

which the weakest students who are most likely to be at risk of unemployment, are concentrated<sup>20</sup>. In addition it systematically follows up those at risk on an individual basis once they have left school and assists them to develop action plans to help them integrate into employment<sup>21</sup>. This assistance can take a variety of forms including individual guidance, the development of action plans, and training in job seeking skills.

### 3.2.6 Other

32. In addition to the main services described above there are a number of other smaller career guidance services, projects, or staff who undertake a guidance role, in Luxembourg. These include:

- The Higher Education Documentation and Information Centre (*Centre de Documentation et d'Information sur l'Enseignement Supérieur*, or CDIES). This Centre is administered by the Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research. It has a small staff of two (with qualifications as psychologists and *éducateurs/éducatrices gradué-e-s*) and provides a specialised information service on higher education opportunities in Luxembourg and neighbouring countries. In addition it provides, in association with teachers, an advice and guidance service to students and parents on matters that relate to choice of a higher education course.
- Apprenticeship advisers attached to the professional chambers and chambers of trades, who work both with employers to help improve the quality of vocational training in the enterprise and with apprentices to provide individual advice with problems.
- Local action projects run by voluntary and not-for-profit organisations such as the Full Employment network (*Reseau Objectif Plein Emploi*), a programme for women who are victims of domestic violence (the *Femmes en détresse* project) and local and regional development projects such as that run by the Zarabina Association (Prism Research and Consulting, 2002). Such projects are financed from a range of sources<sup>22</sup>, and generally are staffed by personnel without specific training in guidance, and whose roles include a wide range of functions in addition to information and guidance.
- Elements of career guidance sometimes are provided informally in association with enrolment in adult education courses provided by organisations such as local authorities, the professional chambers and charitable organisations.
- There are also some private fee-charging services such as the *Centre de Psychologie Appliquée* in which professional psychologists provide career guidance in the context of recruitment and outplacement services, although their full extent is unknown.

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20. Teachers in the *lycées techniques* also receive time release to work with the ALJ.

21. In this respect it closely resembles the local safety net services for at-risk youth in Scandinavian countries (OECD, 2000b), although unlike these services there is no requirement for young people to take part as a condition of receiving income support.

22. Including the European Social Fund, the Ministère du Travail et de l' Emploi and the Ministère de la Promotion Feminine.

## 4. Towards a lifelong guidance system in Luxembourg

### 4.1 *The nature of the challenge*

33. We gained the impression that career guidance services in Luxembourg remain rather under-developed compared to other countries, somewhat weakly professionalised, and somewhat fragmented. The resources that are devoted to *career* guidance seem fairly limited, even though the resources available for personal and educational guidance for secondary school students seem to be rather good. And there are gaps in services, particularly for groups such as adults and migrants. There is much good co-operation between services on the ground, and there have been many interesting one-off initiatives. Where it matters there are some positive embryonic developments that are very interesting: for example the *projets d'établissement*. But it is clear that all staff who work in these services need and want training, and frequently lack access to modern guidance tools that have developed over the last 30 years.

34. During our visit we received frequent comments on the need for improved co-ordination of services, particularly between the education and labour sectors. While on the ground, and informally, co-operation between the two key Ministries seems excellent, it is not an institutionalised co-operation. Neither are guidance services represented in the key social partnership bodies. However what also seems to be lacking, perhaps even more than co-ordination, is an overall framework for career information and guidance services: a national strategy that can be used as a basis for improving and further developing these services. There is a lack of a clear concept of guidance and its role, and a lack of clear direction from the centre.

35. All career guidance services are a reflection of the educational and labour market contexts within which they operate, and the school system in Luxembourg is one in which strong processes of selection and streaming help to constrain the choices that individuals can make. As was suggested in Section 3.2.1 above, there is a tension apparent in the approach to career guidance in Luxembourg between a relatively traditional view that its role is to help sort and stream students and to adjust them to the perceived realities of the labour market, and a more modern view, reflected very much in the spirit of the *projets d'établissement*, that its role is to help individuals to realise their potential, and to make satisfying educational and occupational choices (Watts, 1996).

36. This could be interpreted as implying that the role for career guidance is more constrained in Luxembourg than in other countries in which the choice of learning pathway, and of its occupational destinations, is a more open process. A more positive interpretation would be to say that improving career guidance services is one of the elements of reforming pathways and of extending the scope for individuals to make their own choices according to their interests and their potential. Nevertheless the conceptual basis and fundamental purposes of career guidance in Luxembourg are not clear, and as part of the improvement of these services it will be very important to develop and to clearly articulate -- to those that work in the field, to those that manage services, and to students and the population at large -- a rationale and strategy for career guidance that places individual need, rather than system needs, clearly at the centre<sup>23</sup>.

37. We were also struck during our visit by the relatively weak information base within which guidance services work. There is, for example, no systematic follow up of ex-students that can be fed back to the lycées in order for them to gauge their effectiveness and impact upon students. There appears to be

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23. Such a rationale would recognise that the efficiency and effectiveness of education systems and of labour markets are likely to be well met by the accumulation of well informed individual decisions.

no formal knowledge of who is having an impact and an influence on young people's decision making<sup>24</sup>, little knowledge of the frequency of job changing or the reasons for this, and little formal research on labour market trends or future needs that could help schools to adjust their programmes to labour market requirements.

38. A very positive aspect of our visit was the clear impression that we gained that there is agreement that the time is ripe for developing a national strategy for improving and extending career information and guidance services.

#### **4.2 A national co-ordination body**

39. We offer basically one recommendation in this Country Note. It is that Luxembourg create a national body to develop, advise upon and co-ordinate career information and guidance services. We do not recommend any mergers or re-arrangements of existing services: for example through a merger of the services located in the education and labour portfolios<sup>25</sup>.

40. The new body should have a number of features. It should:

- Be an institutionalised body, with a formal, statutory basis;
- Represent all key stakeholders. These should include senior members of the relevant Ministries<sup>26</sup>, the social partners, parent representatives, teacher representatives and representatives of guidance professionals.
- Report jointly to key Ministers; and
- Have as its initial task the development of a national strategy for career information and guidance.

41. In considering what it might look like and how it might work, there are some models in other countries that Luxembourg might consider, even if some of their features might not suit its own circumstances perfectly. For example in Denmark the National Council for Educational and Vocational Guidance (RUE) performs a similar role<sup>27</sup>. And the ways in which in Australia the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs sets national policies and strategies for career guidance might also be considered<sup>28</sup>.

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24. However we were frequently told that in a small country such as Luxembourg personal and family connections play an important role both in gaining information about occupations and in finding jobs themselves.

25. Not the least reason for this is that existing administrative boundaries tend to be strongly defended in Luxembourg, and previous efforts to modify them have not been well supported. And in any case a merger of existing services would not by itself solve the key problems that we have identified.

26. Under current portfolio arrangements this should include the Ministries of National Education, Vocational Training and Sports, of Employment and Labour, of Culture, Higher Education and Research, as well as Ministries responsible for the economy, industry and women's affairs.

27. However RUE has a role in providing career information in addition to its role in providing advice and shaping policy.

28. Details can be found in the Danish and Australian Country Notes written for this review. See [www.oecd.org/els/education/reviews](http://www.oecd.org/els/education/reviews).

### 4.3 *A national strategy for career information and guidance*

#### 4.3.1 *What such a strategy will need to address*

42. In a lifelong learning context, a national strategy for career information and guidance will need to address:

- The needs of both youth and adults;
- The needs of those both in and not in education;
- The special needs of particular groups: in particular the needs of migrants and migrant youth, the needs of those with handicaps, and the needs of women;
- Needs across all sectors of education and training: the lycées classiques too as well as the lycées techniques; tertiary education; adult education; workplace training;
- Ways of encouraging and supporting initiatives at the local level within a national framework;
- The qualification and training needs of guidance workers and the standards upon which such qualifications should be based;
- The balance, within schools, between curriculum or developmental approaches on the one hand and approaches based largely upon personal interviews on the other;
- The balance, within schools, between services provided in and by the school on the one hand and services provided by external specialists in career guidance on the other;
- The involvement of parents and other parties such as employers;
- The information base needed for implementing such a policy; and
- The human and financial resources required to implement the strategy.

#### 4.3.1 *What might be included in such a strategy*

43. It is not our task here to attempt to write such a strategy for Luxembourg. However we do make a number of suggestions that might be taken into consideration when it is being developed.

##### *Within-schools strategies*

44. A national strategy should recognise that all young people have a right to professional and high quality careers assistance during their secondary education. This should be provided in a way that combines career education and the development of career management skills in the curriculum, opportunities to obtain experience in work places, the provision of occupational and educational information, the involvement of parents and employers, and personal advice and guidance.

45. The specialised labour market knowledge and career guidance capacities of the ADEM-OP should be an integral part of such an approach. A model in which external expertise, such as that

represented by the ADEM-OP, is combined with that of the school and the community should be encouraged. Examples of countries in which career education as part of the school curriculum, including periods of work experience in firms, is combined with specialised guidance provided by external agencies include the United Kingdom and Germany. If such an approach is to be available within all lycées there will need to be a strengthening of the capacity of the ADEM-OP. Such an approach would also have the advantage of freeing the SPOS to focus more on the personal counselling and advice that is its real strength.

46. The direction that has been charted by the *projets d'établissement* provides a solid basis for the future development of careers services within schools, and it should both be supported and extended to all lycées.

#### *Adult guidance*

47. A number of options are available to strengthen adult guidance in Luxembourg:

- One option would be to rely upon the market. However experience in countries where intensive efforts have been made to encourage a market for guidance services -- for example the United Kingdom and the Netherlands -- shows that such markets are very difficult to develop, and that individual adults are rarely willing to pay for career guidance services, and certainly not at a level that makes such services profitable for providers. The major clients of private services tend to be large firms that pay for outplacement and retrenchment services. In a labour market such as Luxembourg where most enterprises are small there appears to be even less potential than in other countries to develop such a market.
- Another option would be to rely upon enterprises to provide such services for their staff. This is certainly an element that is worth including in a national strategy. However its limitation as a major basis for adult services is that, again, it is normally only large enterprises that provide career development services for their own staff, and then largely for development within the firm rather than for external career mobility. And this option does not address the needs of those adults who are not in employment.
- A third option would be to expand the capacity of ADEM-OP to provide career guidance services to adults. In view of the existing expertise of ADEM-OP this is an option that we support, but by itself it should not be the only option included in a strategy for adult guidance.
- There are many local initiatives and initiatives taken by voluntary associations that need to be continued and strengthened. A fourth option, then, would be to provide the resources (in the form of training as well as finance) to community groups that work with those who are in particular need such as the long-term unemployed, women wishing to return to work, and low-skilled migrants, and have these groups provide services. Many adults who are seeking to change or develop their careers will first approach adult education and training institutions rather than labour market organisations or community groups, and so the ability of such institutions to provide advice and guidance should also be strengthened. And in many countries trade unions and employer associations play a strong role in providing career advice and information to their members. They should not be ignored in a strategy for adult guidance. A strategy for adult guidance should, then, consider strengthening the capacity of non-government agencies as well of government agencies.

#### *Qualifications and training*

48. At the moment the training and qualifications of those who provide career information and guidance in Luxembourg are unbalanced. On the one hand there are psychologists who are highly professional and well trained in their own field, but who lack the specialised training and qualifications needed for careers work. And at the same time there are many who work in the career guidance field on a full-time basis such as ADEM-OP and ALJ staff, as well as many who provide career guidance as part of their work such as the teachers who form part of the SPOS teams or who work as part of the *projets d'établissement*, who have no formal qualifications in career guidance, no opportunity to have such qualifications recognised even if they were obtained, and limited opportunities for in-service training. Luxembourg's small population makes solving these problems harder than would be the case for larger countries.

49. A national strategy for career information and guidance needs to introduce a more modern and relevant basis for the initial qualifications of career guidance workers than psychology. It should also introduce mechanisms to value and recognise the skills that those who already work in the field have acquired through experience, through short courses of in-service training, through professional development opportunities such as attending conferences, and by learning from their peers.

50. We suggest that a three-step strategy might be considered. As a first step we suggest that a competency framework for careers workers could be developed, or adapted from one of the existing models such as the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners<sup>29</sup>. Such a framework should include the competences required by all of those who work in the careers field in Luxembourg, in whatever role. It should encompass the competences needed by those who provide career guidance on a full-time basis as well as the competences needed by those for whom career guidance is only part of their work.

51. As a second step, such a competence framework could then be used as the basis for developing two formal qualifications. One such qualification could be developed for those who work as career professionals on a full-time basis: for example in the ADEM-OP, in the ALJ or some of the staff in the SPOS. Given the differences between these, consideration might be given to developing a common core of essential modules, together with options that reflect the particular needs of those working in different settings.

52. Another qualification could be used for developing and upgrading the skills of those for whom careers work is only one of their functions: for example teachers provided with part-time hours to do guidance; or workers in community agencies and the voluntary sector. Again, a model in which core and optional modules are combined could be considered. In other words it could be very helpful to have two levels of qualifications available. These qualifications should be made available both to new entrants to career guidance and to those already working in the field.

53. Given the difficulty of making courses available in a country with a small population and a small labour force, a very flexible way of working towards such qualifications would be important. To obtain qualifications of the type outlined above, it should be possible to have skills and knowledge assessed and credited whether they have been acquired through experience, through short courses or in-service training, through distance education and web-based instruction, or through face-to-face instruction. A very traditional model in which a single institution provides all instruction in a full-time, face-to-face mode is unlikely to meet Luxembourg's needs. Nevertheless it could be a good idea to give one institution the responsibility for assessment and certification of these qualifications.

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29. Details can be found at <http://www.career-dev-guidelines.org>.

54. Given the present nature of Luxembourg's career services, an entry requirement of a Bac for the qualification designed for full-time career guidance workers would seem more practical than a requirement, such as that which applies in France for those who work in the *Centres d'Information et Orientation*, to obtain specific qualifications in career guidance only after obtaining an initial university degree. The entry requirements for the second qualification, designed for those who provide guidance as only part of their work, should be more flexible.

55. Third, we suggest that in the future the foundation qualification for those entering the guidance field, for example in the SPOS, should be broadened beyond psychology to a qualification in one of the social sciences or in pedagogy. It would be important, for example, to widen the recruitment base so that those who have an understanding of the ways that the labour market operates, or of how schools and learning processes operate, could be appointed. Psychology could, of course, continue to be one of the disciplines that new entrants to career guidance could possess, but it should not necessarily be the only one. And of course it should continue to be a requirement for those who provide very specialised therapeutic services and for those who do specialised psychological assessment.

#### *Resources*

56. Any questions of additional resources should not be decided until the basic national strategy has been developed. However there will need to be at least some increase in resources. Additional resources will be necessary both to meet increased needs for specialised career advice within schools, and to meet needs for adult guidance.

57. Information is another important resource needed for good policy implementation. We were struck during our visit by how little information is regularly gathered and used for career guidance policy development: for example tracer studies of former students of educational institutions. We believe that gathering this information on a regular basis would be an important ongoing part of the evolution of a national strategy for career information and guidance services in Luxembourg.

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## **Appendix 1: Members of the Review Team**

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## **Appendix 2: Programme for the National Visit**

### **Monday 24 June**

- 9.30 Meeting with M. Jean Zahlen, National Co-ordinator and with officials of the Ministry of Employment and Labour and the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training and Sports
- 14.30 Meeting with officials of the Local Action for Youth programme and of the Employment Administration

### **Tuesday 25 June**

- 8.30 Meeting with the Psychology and School Guidance Services (SPOS) of the Bonnevoie and Centre technical lycées
- 10.30 Meeting with Mme Anne Brasseur, Minister for National Education, Vocational Training and Sports and with M. Francois Biltgen, Minister for Employment and Labour
- 12.30 Lunch with M. Biltgen
- 14.30 Meeting with officials of the Centre for Psychology and School Guidance

### **Wednesday 26 June**

- 9.00 Meeting with the Vocational Chambers and the Chambers of Trades
- 12.00 Lunch with Mme Mariette Scholtus, Director of the Employment Administration, and with M. Aly Schroeder, Director of Vocational Training
- 14.30 Meeting with Mme Scholtus and M. Schroeder

### **Thursday 27 June**

- 9.30 Meeting with the management and the Psychology and School Guidance Services of the Diekirch and Ettelbruck lycées
- 12.00 National Centre for Continuing Vocational Training, Ettelbruck
- 17.00 Meeting with non-profit organisations working to reintegrate people into the labour market, Mondorf

### **Friday 28 June**

- 9.00 Meeting with M. Nic Alff, Director of the Esch-sur-Alzette technical lycée and with M. Gilles Estgen of the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training and Sports on pedagogical projects being carried out in the lycées