

REPORT

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY EXCHANGE PROGRAMME FOR CAREERS COUNSELLORS AND PERSONAL ADVISERS

This report offers an account of my participation at a one week work-placement in Luxembourg from 10 -14 May 2004. This placement was organised by Careers Europe (UK) as part of their *Academia* programme of exchanges and visits with the co-operation of other European countries.

The purpose of the visit was to give participants an overview of how information and guidance operates in Luxembourg. It provided an insight into the guidance systems in place within mainstream education as well as Job Centres and Vocational Training Centres. The transnational aspect of information and guidance was highlighted by the participating members of the group representing countries such as, i.e. Italy, France, Norway as well as Britain.

While the focus of the report is on Information and Educational Guidance, I feel this cannot be looked at in isolation without considering some significant features of the country visited, as outlined below, and the daily schedule of visits and briefings the placement entailed. The report concludes with a summary of the visit and other useful information.

Significant Features:

- (a) LANGUAGE– Luxembourg is a trilingual country – the national language is Luxembourgish (a mixture of Frankish-Moselle). The two other official languages are French and German, spoken by the majority of the population as well as the Luxembourg dialect.
- (b) EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM – similar to the tripartite system operated in parts of the UK. In Luxembourg the system covers Preparatory, Classical (general secondary) and Technical routes to academic and vocational

qualifications. German is the teaching language used in the educational system.

- (c) EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION - Unlike Britain where educational policy is administered from one government department, i.e. DfES, in Luxembourg it is divided into two separate ministries i.e. (1) Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training and Sport (2) and Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research. The most important decisions are taken at national level.
- (d) EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE – Guidance practitioners working in the educational system in Luxembourg are required to have a degree in psychology . Responsibility for educational and psychological guidance lies with the Ministry of National Education’s Educational Psychology and Guidance Centre (CPOS) and the Educational and Psychology Guidance Services (SPOS) found within general secondary schools and technical secondary schools.
- (e) IMMIGRATION – Luxembourg is a small country (pop. 430,000) surrounded by Germany, France and Belgium and within easy access of the wider European community. In recent years the number of immigrants to Luxembourg has increased - now estimated at 38% per capita. Countries such as Portugal and the Czech Republic represent the majority of the immigrant population. This development in what was once a homogenous society has led to educational reform in the area of language provision.

The base for the daily schedule of visits and briefings was at the Educational and Psychology Guidance Services (SPOS) at Mersch, a district 17kilos from the centre of Luxembourg, located in the town’s secondary school. This was also the office of the *Academia* programme co-ordinator.

Day 1

Purpose: Familiarisation tour of Secondary School (mixed) at Mersch.

Student number 450 - age range 12-15 years. The Psychologist/Counsellor (SPOS) available at the school four days per week. Briefing on how guidance

is administered within the secondary school system as well as explanation of the various aspects of curricular activity.

Outcome: Along with relevant information some salient features of the school were; it is unique in that it is the only state secondary school with boarding facilities (for girls only). Members of the guidance team included Psychologist/Counsellor, Social Worker, Education Worker, SEN Tutor and Class Tutor. The role of the Social Worker is seen as crucial to the educational system in Luxembourg
Guidance is offered by appointment only.

Day 2

Purpose: Visit to Kindergarten/Primary School in the town of Betrange - population 6000. Student population 600. The visit enabled participants to see how language is fostered and developed from pre-school age to enable the child to cope with language diversity in the future.

Outcome: Some interesting aspects of the visit, i.e. The Head of the Primary School is also the Mayor of the Town and has a background in teaching. Children physically divided into three separate buildings in the complex, i.e. Pre-school (Nursery School)– age 3; Kindergarten – age 3-4 yrs; Primary School (first stage) 5-6 yrs. Social workers also engaged at this level; at Kindergarten children use Luxembourgish as the main language then German from 5-6yrs and French from 7 yrs old; well equipped modern structures, e.g. 150 computers for 6rs olds; staff included a Nursery Teacher, Educational Worker and SEN Teachers.

Day 3

Purpose: Meeting at SPOS (Mersch) to discuss and critically analyse guidance procedures in Luxembourg and compare with other European countries including the UK.

Outcome: Discussed the different methods of communication in use in guidance as well as the morals and ethics of guidance; the significance of the OECD Review of Careers Guidance Report (Luxembourg June 2002), when Careers guidance was reviewed across 14 countries including North America, Australia and Asia. Information given on methods of evaluating guidance. Details of research projects and questionnaire development

currently being undertaken in collaboration with Mannheim University Germany, the University of Paris and the University of Manitoba, Canada.

Day 4 (Morning)

Purpose: Visit to the Ministry For Higher Education based at the Centre for Information and Documentation (CEDIES) in Luxembourg city. The reason for the visit was to see how the centre assists enquirers with information and guidance for HE course. Staff included Manager (Head of Centre) part-time and full time staff.

Outcome: Unlike Britain where this information is obtained in Careers Offices and HE institutions, the Centre in Luxembourg operates as the main source of information for students wishing to apply to University including the wider European Community. Found the application system is similar to Britain - applications are processed through UCAS. Although Luxembourg is a University city limited courses are offered and students tend to go outside the country, e.g to Germany and France or Switzerland to pursue qualifications. Despite Luxembourg's reputation as being one of the best educational systems in Europe, statistical information indicates that only a small percentage of students choose HE as a progression route to careers.

Day 4 (Afternoon)

Purpose: Tour of Guidance and Information Centre for Employment and meeting with Manager For Young Peoples Action Group. A Euroguidance Centre for Information and Counselling has existed in Luxembourg since 1919.

Outcome: This centre is comparable to the JobCentre Plus service implemented in recent years in the UK with some differences, for example:

- Serves the younger age group to bridge the gap between the age of 16 and 18 yrs. Separate JobCentre for adults.
- Mission of this Centre is to provide vocational guidance to enable applicants to access the labour market.
- Counselling is obligatory for all applicants.

- Apprenticeship scheme in operation. Applicants have to pass training course and get certificate before accessing job market.
- Strong links with secondary/technical school. Staff visit schools in years 7, 8 and 9. Staff in regular contact with Psychologist/Counsellor.
- Strong link with employers in community. Panel of employers in Centre.
JobCentre actively invites employers to train applicants.
- Centre provides Job Clubs, CV Workshops and projects in schools for 12year olds.
- Parents are involved.
- Apprentice scheme in place. Apprentice who completes a vocational training course (.e.g. mechanic, craftsperson, etc.) under this system is not considered fully qualified until they reach Master level. This entails a further three years training in the workplace. A Master qualification enables trainees to open their own business and train new apprentices.
- Allowances: 450 euros is paid by the employer to the young trainee. When qualified this is increased to 1,400 euros of which 1,000 euros is substituted by the government. Adults do not receive an allowance but a minimum wage while training.
- The centre has a separate IT room where 24 WPs are available for applicants to access employment and information websites.
- Staff are educated to secondary school level and undergo further training organised by the JobCentre.

Day 5

Purpose: Tour of Centre for Professional Vocational Development. Number of students enrolled – 3,000 of which 400 are girls. Age range 16-22.

Outcome: The courses offered were comparable to an FE College in the UK. These included, building crafts, electrical and air conditioning, art, hairdressing and beauty. Social education is provided to groups with learning difficulties. Students were required to attend 80% of the time and received an allowance of 380 euros per month.

Examples of awards:

CITP – Intermediate Certificate of the Institution

CATP – Qualified Electrician status

SUMMARY

The placement I felt was worthwhile and provided valuable transferable information for colleagues and the workplace. When comparing the role of the guidance worker in Luxembourg to Britain, I found differences as well as similarities. These may be found in the context of the report and from the following observations (I hasten to add that these only constitute some of my findings as a result of this visit).

- There is a psychological bias in the delivery of guidance in Luxembourg to the neglect of the social and broader areas of information. The work is based on methods of testing, e.g. psychometric tests.
- Psychotherapy is now seen as an additional requirement to the profession and is being met with resistance from Psychologists. This extraneous work is, in my opinion, comparable to the broader remit for careers work in Britain with the introduction of PAs..
- In Luxembourg there is no training scheme in place for careers guidance as we know it in Britain, e.g. PgDip, QCG, NVQs.
- Inspection is not carried out to standards as we know it in Britain, e.g. MATRIX.
- Similar to Britain it does not fully address the needs of adults both in and out of education and the special needs of particular groups, e.g. migrants, special needs students or women.
- Luxembourg has a very selective complex educational system to the point of elitarianism. The segregation manifests itself very early in the child's development to be realised at post –primary level by separating the high achiever from the low achiever. When the student is at the

stage of making choices labels are already in place for guidance to be given in a directional manner rather than an exploratory method.

- Luxembourg is a small country and is solvent both financially and economically with well equipped modern educational and training centres. It is considered to be among the best educational systems in the EU.

For the effective delivery of guidance and information and the professional aspect of the role, it is important to consider the players e.g. the educational system within which the service operates, the community and partners, government policy and labour market information.

It may be of interest to look at a brief description of how information and guidance is delivered by two other European countries, i.e. Italy and France.

ITALY

There is no provision for careers guidance in the country's educational system. However proposals for future government reforms include a merger of educational and vocation training and the law of the labour market. Information and guidance is provided by agencies registered with the Department of Employment (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy) and networked across eight Italian cities. Standards are government controlled. These agencies work with teams including consultants and have an interdisciplinary approach to the service. The agencies are looked on as *institutional social shock absorbers*. Service provision includes outplacing, a holistic approach; coaching (empowering, tutoring, mentoring); looking at competencies, career options and labour market information. In Italy projects for Refugees and Asylum Seekers have had considerable success compared to other European countries. For instance the "Refugees in Progress" project is one of 63 projects operated nationally as part of the National Asylum Seekers Plan.

FRANCE

Information and guidance in France is operated from Centres geographically located under the French Ministry For Education. 500 such centres exist throughout the country. These centres are staffed with an IAG manager who is required to have teaching qualifications and prior knowledge of the educational system. Managers are trained Counsellors. The Manager also provides training in guidance work for teaching staff. The other key staff are Psychologists. The Adviser and Psychologist have separate roles in this system. The Adviser acts as a Counsellor only. The work of the Psychologist is to prepare an action plan and profile of each client by means of tests and individual interviews. Psychologists based at the centres also visit secondary schools six-twelve hours per week to work with the education teams. The parent is involved at this stage of development.

These centres specialise in different areas, e.g. Centre for Education and Employment and Centres for Special Educational Needs (e.g. young offenders, victims of abuse etc).

Useful websites and references material

www.careers-europe.com

www.oecd.org/edu

www.berufskunde.com

International Journal of Educational and Vocational Guidance (2004)

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