

## GUIDANCE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME 2004 - LUXEMBOURG

I was invited to attend the Guidance Exchange programme in Luxembourg during May 2004. The programme is a one-week training placement within a European careers organisation for Personal Advisers and Careers Advisers. It is an opportunity to gain an invaluable insight into the way that other European countries organise guidance for young people and to explore the ways that common issues have been dealt with across Europe.

My trip was organised by Careers Europe in conjunction with the Luxembourg Education Ministry and funding was provided via the Leonardo programme. For further information on exchange opportunities see [www.careerseurope.co.uk](http://www.careerseurope.co.uk).

My colleagues on the exchange programme were:

Jean-Jacques Ruppert from Luxembourg (the host). He is the head of a guidance team based in a secondary school in Esch-sur-Alzette. Jean-Jacques is employed by the Centre de Psychologie et D'orientation Scolaires (SPOS) which is part of the Ministry of Education. His team is made up of a careers guidance counsellor, a social worker and a youth worker and several teachers with an interest in guidance. Although the team work within a school, they are independent from it, and students can drop-in or make an appointment as often as they wish. He is a psychologist by profession, as are all guidance counsellors in Luxembourg, and he has done extensive research for St Andrews University in Scotland.

Anna-Greta Dahlen from Norway. She is employed by the Employment Service and works in a Job Centre where she gives careers advice and jobs information. She is qualified to degree level. Anna-Greta works in a small town in Norway where she has special responsibility for refugees; organising language classes for them and assists them in finding suitable employment.

Martine Frehaut from France. She is Director of a group of psychologists who give advice and guidance to young people. Prior to this she was a French teacher for 4 years, followed by 10 years as a Careers Adviser. She has a psychology degree and a guidance qualification as all careers counsellors in France must hold a psychology degree. Martine manages a Guidance Centre in Versailles.

Trudy McClellan from London. She works in a college of further education in Brent (Central London) within the Student Services Department. She gives advice and guidance to existing students and those wishing to enrol on courses and is involved with outreach work in the local community. Brent has a high number of asylum seekers and therefore, her college has a vocational rather than an academic focus. Trudy holds a Degree and a Masters as well as the Diploma in Advice and Guidance.

Marco Giugliano from Italy. He manages a private recruitment company called 'Cross' who are active in eight cities in Italy. The company specialise in offering a transitional service for people wanting a career change. They offer individual coaching, work placements, careers counselling and labour market information. Marco also undertakes consultancy work for the National Employment Service. There is currently no guidance service in Italy but new laws have just come into force to reform education and to introduce a national guidance system.

It has to be said that I learned as much about the education and guidance system in these countries, due to the input of my colleagues, as I did about the Luxembourg system.

### Luxembourg - The Country

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is a small country situated in the heart of Europe and bordering Germany, France and Belgium with a population of only 430,000. Considering that the population of the UK is about 59 million, it is in fact a *very* small country. It is characterised by two very special features: a large immigrant population (30%) and multi-lingualism.

Luxembourg is officially trilingual, a feature that has been established for many generations, with the national language being Luxembourgish. The other two official languages are French and German.

Despite recession in many neighbouring countries, Luxembourg continues to enjoy a steady rate of economic growth and low levels of unemployment. Foreigners living in Luxembourg and commuters from neighbouring countries make up over 50% of the current workforce. A major source of employment is banking and finance with Luxembourg's

financial centre comprising around 190 banking institutions and nearly 100 insurance companies. The majority of immigrants come from Italy, Portugal and those countries bordering Luxembourg. Wage levels are high and residents of Luxembourg enjoy the highest level of GNP per capita of any EU country.

### **The Luxembourg Education and Guidance Systems**

I have included the education and guidance systems together as they are inextricably linked. All teachers and guidance counsellors are employed directly by the Department of Education and therefore indirectly, by the government. They are all civil servants.

Children in Luxembourg have 11 years of compulsory education: two years of pre-school education, six years of primary education and three years of secondary education (they can leave school at 15).

Early education is relatively new, being introduced in 1998, and its function is largely to integrate immigrant children into the language (Luxembourgish) and culture of the country. It is not compulsory. At the age of three children can enter early education for one year before continuing on to pre-school education (infant school) which is compulsory for children aged 4.

Primary education is structured in a similar way to our own although children are introduced to languages relatively early on. They begin German in year 6 and French in year 7. Interestingly, there are no head teachers - the teachers within a school make decisions as a collective. However, the most significant differences compared to our own education system occur within the secondary school system.

At age 11 or 12, pupils can choose between three different 'branches' of secondary education (See Appendix I). Each branch offers a specific type of education. Luxembourg did have an equivalent examination to our 11+ exam but this has now been abolished and instead, a psychologist (who is also a careers guidance counsellor) together with primary school teachers, decide on which stream a child will enter into in secondary school based on their aptitude and knowledge. This means that the system is still very selective. Incidentally, all careers guidance counsellors must also be psychologists (hold a psychology degree!).

Parents can appeal against the schools decision and pupils can then sit an exam. However, there is only a 2% pass rate and statistically none of these children actually stay in the higher stream.

Students in the Secondary Classical stream complete qualifications similar to our 'A' levels and then go on to university degree programmes. There is only one university in Luxembourg and it is relatively new. It only runs diploma level programmes and only in particular subject areas such as teacher training. Therefore the majority of Luxembourg students have to go abroad for a university education, often to France, Germany and the UK. As a result, there is an Information Centre in Luxembourg City, part of the Ministry of Higher Education, which gives HE careers advice and houses the university prospectuses for the majority of European countries.

Those pupils who enter the Technical and Preparatory streams go into more vocational employment and some do go on to university to study degrees in subjects such as nursing or engineering. At age 15 (official school leaving age) pupils decide what type of vocational area they wish to study. Students spend some of their time studying at large Vocational Training Centres, similar to our FE colleges, where the tutors are experienced trades people. There are similarities with our Modern Apprenticeship scheme as some young people receive a training allowance which increases each year. If there is a skills shortage in Luxembourg then those apprenticeships attract a higher training allowance. Those with low academic ability also do basic skills and the centres also employ social workers to help with non-educational issues. This route is most like the e2e programme.

Within the school system, students are introduced to the idea of guidance much earlier than in the UK, mainly because of the input of guidance counsellors into the selection process at age 11, but also because they receive some guidance in Year 6 (final year of primary school).

Each secondary school has a guidance team located within it. They are part of the school and have a 'drop-in' centre where students have access to service such as advice and guidance and counselling. The team is made up of a guidance counsellor (psychologist), a social worker, a youth worker and teachers, one of whom must be a Special Educational Needs teacher. In the school we visited the guidance team was made up of 8 people, with the majority of young people calling in for advice and guidance and only a

few to access services such as counselling. All guidance counsellors are civil servants, as are teachers, and they are allocated a school in which to work rather than applying directly to schools for jobs. Guidance counsellors are much more involved in making decisions about children's progress whilst in school and part of the social worker role is to make home visits to parents. Amazingly, there is presently no system for inspection of guidance services or secondary schools.

We also visited a Job Centre where young people can get information on jobs, training and apprenticeships. The centre is specifically for young people, a conscious decision by the Ministry of Employment not to mix adults seeking work with young people seeking information, and is similar to a Connexions centre. Staff do not have to be as highly qualified as guidance counsellors. The centre has computers so that young people can access information and there is a web site where students can access job descriptions and see a short film about different occupations. There are also training rooms for group sessions in subjects such as CV writing and interview techniques.

Overall, I found the exchange worthwhile and interesting. It allowed me to experience another culture and learn, first hand, about the education and guidance systems in another European country, particularly one as unique as Luxembourg. Although there are similarities with the UK systems, there are also vast differences and I believe that there are valuable lessons to be learnt from elements of the Luxembourg structure. The exchange enabled me to meet colleagues from other countries and share information, as well as our individual experiences, of working within a guidance organisation. I feel that I learnt as much from them as I did from the exchange as a whole. I would highly recommend the experience to all of my colleagues at Connexions Lancashire.

## APPENDIX I

The three streams are outlined in the table below:-

<b>Secondary Classical</b>	<b>Technical Stream</b>	<b>Preparatory Scheme</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This stream is the most academic and prepares students for university.</li> <li>• As there is no university in Luxembourg a main focus of the curriculum is language.</li> <li>• There are no equivalent exams to our GCSE's.</li> <li>• Students study to 'A' Level standard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is for the more average students who continue with their general education for the first 3 years before progressing towards the training or career that suits their ability and taste - usually more vocational type work.</li> <li>• Some students will go onto apprenticeships, combining study in school with study in a vocational training centre.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This stream is for less academically able students and was introduced in 1994.</li> <li>• It allows students to study at their own pace and they do not have to achieve the same level in each subject they study.</li> <li>• They can advance more quickly in their stronger subject areas and spend more time on those they find difficult.</li> <li>• There is also the opportunity for some to enter the lower end of the Technical stream.</li> </ul>
No's of students = 35%	No's of students = 50%	No's of students = 15%
*Foreign Students = 13%	Foreign Students = 37%	Foreign Students = 60%

\*It is clear that immigrant children do not flourish within the Luxembourg system, possibly due to lack of language skills.