

VET Study visit Luxembourg, 9 - 11 May 2012

Visit details

1st day morning

Study visit participants:

- Ursula Ortner (expert from Austria)
- Fernand Sauer (expert from Luxembourg and host)
- Gil Steinbach (expert from Luxembourg and host)
- Harald Weber (European Agency staff member)



Gil, Ursula, Fernand, (left to right)

1st day morning

Visit at Institut pour enfants autistiques et psychotiques (IEAP) in Leudelange (www.ediff.lu)

Welcome by **Fernand Karp**, director of IEAP.

Welcome and short introduction by **Marianne Vouel**, director of Education différenciée Luxemburg (Special School System, www.ediff.lu). She highlights that the special school system is not just to prepare young people to the labour market, it is also for those who will never be able to work or to be placed on the labour market. IEAP is also not just for pupils with Asperger syndrome, but also for others.

Introduction to the IEAP by **Fernand Karp**. The IEAP was founded 1981 by a parents initiative, who wanted their children to go where all the other children went to. It all started with 1 class and 3 or 4 pupils. In 1988 the State started to cover the costs, later on the teachers became State employees. It is now an acknowledged National School with several classes. The institute is organised in a decentralised way, with cohabitation classes in regular schools. Some pupils, however, show behaviour (e.g. being aggressive) so that they need to participate in separate classes. In 1996 the Gymnasium (grammar school) opened its doors to host a cohabitation class as well.

Older pupils often do not like to be integrated into classes any more. They do notice the difference to their class mates at some age. At primary school age mixing classes was never a problem, but at grammar school age there is more likely a separation, depending on the individual level of autonomy.

Once per week all pupils come to the institute. The services are based upon a yearly development plan for each child. The individual requirements are always the leading factor. In the institute, focus is put on structuring space and time for the target group of children with Asperger, and to train communication and social skills.

In total, there are 5 cohabitation classes in primary schools, 1 in grammar school, and since two years 1 in a special school for holistic development, a special school with focus on pupils with mental or learning difficulties / handicaps. So, only some of the children go to Fernand's school on a daily basis, while most are integrated into regular schools or into the special school.

To what extent this institute covers the needs of the whole country, however, is not clear, as there are no statistics available. The reason for this is that there are numerous local initiatives who focus on different target groups. These, unfortunately, not always show the necessary expertise, but as all initiatives need to be started by the parents, it is up to them if they make use of public offers or local initiatives.

With regard to supporting these initiatives or other schools, the institute has only few resources available. The entry diagnosis is done centrally in a clinic, where parents also receive information on school offers and options. A medical diagnosis is a precondition to be allowed to go to this school. Diverse professional opinions are needed for a commission which proposes different alternatives to the parents. Usually they issue a recommendation, but parents have the option to follow it or ignore it. The recommendation can be revised each year.

Children who show a certain level of social skills will be integrated into regular school or – for some time – in a special support school. They either follow the same curriculum in regular schools, or the main aim is on social integration.

Class size is usually 5 to 6 pupils with 2 teachers. Teachers are social pedagogues, pedagogues with diploma, nursery-school teacher. It is difficult to get well-educated

teachers today. Teacher education hardly touches special needs education. Therefore, in-service training is the dominating way to convey the knowledge. It is still an aim to place more emphasis on special needs education in teachers' initial education.

Special support schools (Förderschulen) are for children aged 4 to 16 (age of compulsory education), but can be prolonged for one or two years if parents request it. However, most of the children then go to sheltered workshops. Practical phases on the open labour market are hardly possible for people with Asperger, because no accompanying is available. Colleagues, for instance, cannot be prepared for the practical phase and how to deal with a colleague with Asperger. This is the point where usually private initiatives take over, and where the area of influence of the Ministry of Education ends.

At the Labour Agency there is an own commission to certify a disability (with regard to the ability to work). However, pupils from special support schools not necessarily have this official statement. There are also educational workshops (Anlernwerkstätten) for pupils between 16 and 18 (max. 20). They are not recognised as schools, and they are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Ministry of Families and Integration.

From the age 18 onwards an official certificate of disability can be requested. This is a precondition to be eligible to get the minimum wage, which is 1550 Euro plus 35 days of paid vacation. Employers can get up to 40% of the salary as a compensation for reduced productivity. The disability status is synonymous with a job guarantee, however, in most of the times in sheltered workshops.

The school system is faced with another challenge. Many families come from abroad due to the excellent services, especially for disabled children. However, there is a language problem, as children learn Luxemburgish as a spoken language, German from class 1 and French from class 2 onwards as spoken and written languages.



Round through the facilities

Clay workshop: Working with clay once per week, as it is a way to express but also very manual and tactile.



Wellness programme: young pupils aged 14 or 15 are taught to take care about themselves and to learn to comb, to use make-up or skin cream or to dress well. These are things others of the same age are doing as well (normality).

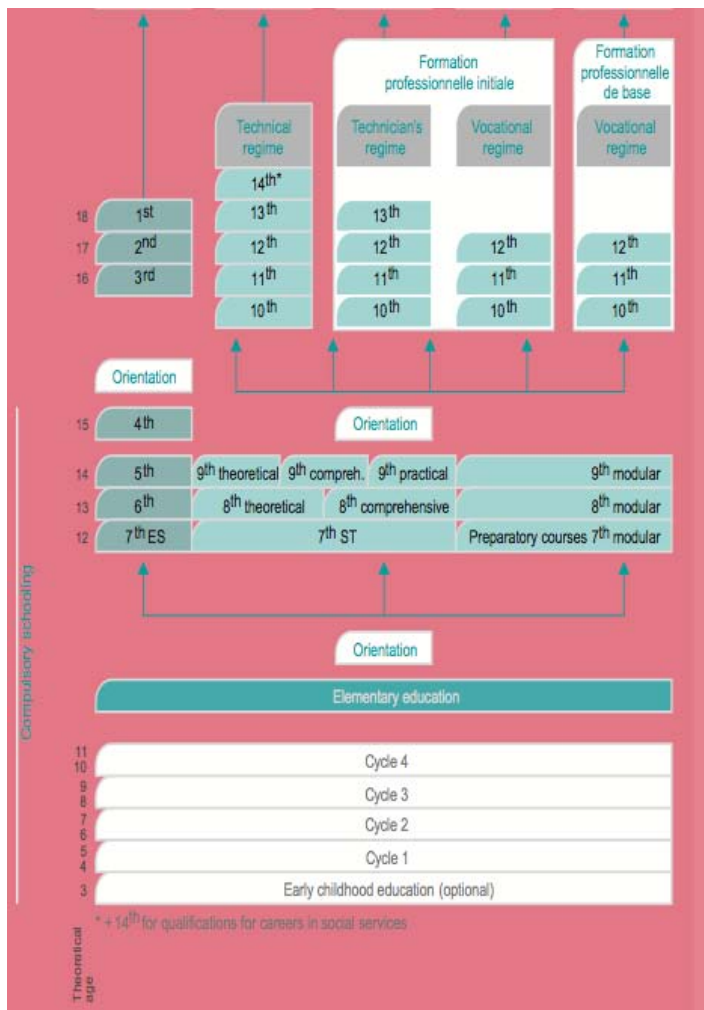
Day schedules are done with pictures, communicated to the class each morning to avoid surprises. If changes are necessary, they are done with the whole group.

Paper workshop: all tools and materials have fixed places to provide a known structure to the pupils.

Snoezelen room for relaxation and Shiatsu massage

Visit to room with washing machines (as they can be found in normal homes) and with a kitchen (to learn preparing simple food)

Explanation of the Luxemburgish educational system



From the age of 12 there is a phase for orientation. 'Modular' was secondary modern school in the past, i.e. addressing weaker pupils in general. The system became more open meanwhile, and the school-leaving certificate (Abitur) can be done also at later stages.

There is no forced repetition of years that were not successful anymore. However, pupils can decide for a repetition if they like. To enter vocational education and training, a certain basic level should be achieved, but exemptions are possible.

There is dual VET available but it is differently implemented. VET can also happen completely school-based. All official VET courses are coordinated and monitored by the Ministry of Education.

Children with special educational needs have three general options for schooling:

- Full integration in regular school, with special support if

needed

- Co-habitation, i.e. a special class in the building of a regular school, with staff from a special school and individualised curricula
- Special schools / special support schools, i.e. separation of learners with and without disabilities in learning with the aim of social integration

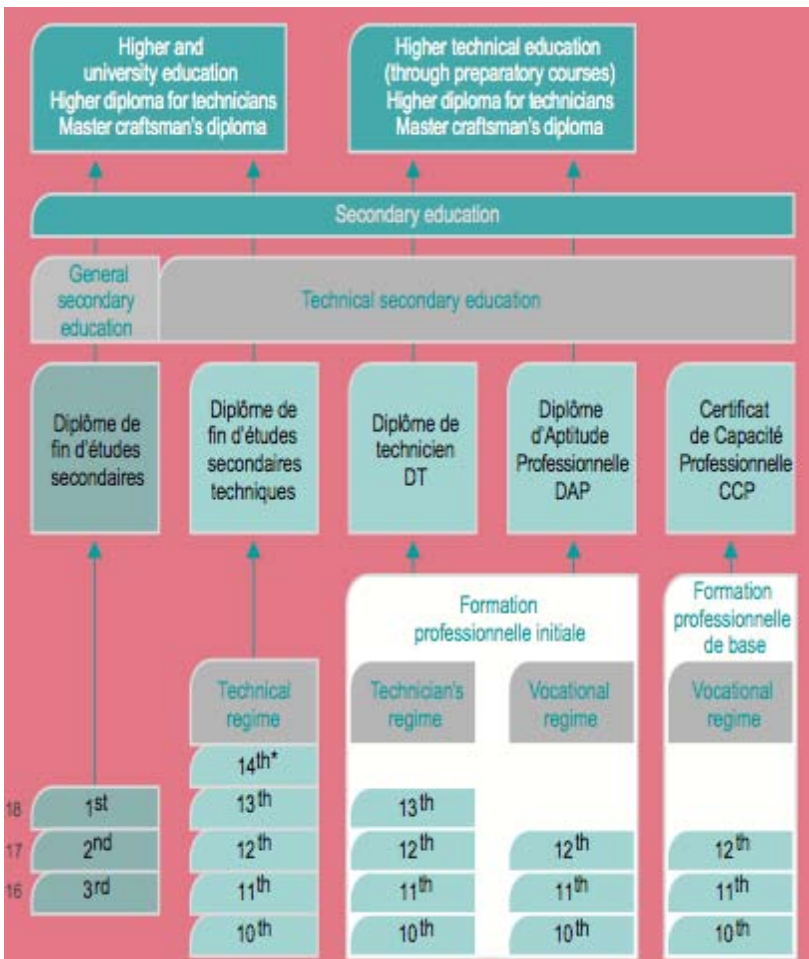
An individualised educational plan provides for the following possibilities: adaptation of tuition in a class; support in the classroom; limited participation in a separate class; tuition in a class of *éducation différenciée*; education in a special institution in Luxembourg or abroad.

About 1 % of all children at compulsory school age visit schools of the *éducation différenciée* (approx. 500 children), another 1 % (500 children) is taken care of by the Service *ré-éducatif ambulatoire* (SREA) and the Institut pour Déficients visuels in integrative settings, and about 2500 children aged 3 to 12 and their families are taken care of by the multi-disciplinary teams of Service de Guidance de l'Enfance (SGE). About 130 children receive education abroad.

1st day afternoon

Meeting at the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Formation professionnelle (www.men.lu)

Presentation by **Jos Noesen** (www.men.lu), Formation professionnelle MEN, on the VET in Luxembourg. The reform of the vocational education from 2008 was necessary as the



previous stemmed from 1929. The main aims of the reform were to raise the quality of VET, to support personal and vocational development, and to contribute to lifelong learning.

Basic vocational training is for those pupils who do not fulfil the criteria to be admitted to a vocational training at the end of the lower cycle of technical secondary education.

Basic vocational training leads to a CCP certificate (*certificat de capacité professionnelle*) while initial vocational training leads to either a DT (*technician's diploma*) or a DAP (*diploma of vocational aptitude*) certificate. Further trainings, occupational re-training and validation of non-formal and informal qualifications (VAE) are also available.

CCP can lead to DAP, and DAP can lead to DT, to allow

any kind of horizontal links in the system.

Characteristics of the reform are the focus on competences (knowledge + skills + attitudes), modularisation of the education and training (some modules can be taken at schools, others in companies), and closer interlocking between the VET world and the labour market.

The benefits of modules are: acknowledgement of previously acquired modules in case of change of the place of living; easier transition to further qualification; no need to take classes again, only modules can or need to be repeated (any time); successfully finished modules stay active for currently 5 years, i.e. can be used for certification within that time span.

All competences are divided into a compulsory and a selective group for assessment. Each competence is described via indicators and standards. Integrated projects replace the intermediate and final examinations in the DT and DAP certificates. These projects have a duration of maximum 24 hours.

The validation of non-formal and informal qualifications (VAE) is a new offer. It allows the full or partial certification of acquired competences. Partial certification offers the opportunity to show the missing parts within the coming 3 years. At present, 900 requests

for VAE have been received, of which approximately 50% received a full or partial certificate. Most of them pursued this due to personal reasons, but some also because the employer requested it.

Presentation by **Claudine Colbach**, authorised representative of Action locale pour jeunes (ALJ, www.alj.lu), on the transition support from school to employment. ALJ started in 1984 as a project and is a regular offer since 1987. ALJ becomes always active in difficult situations, when problems occur. This refers to social or vocational instable situation, e.g. when apprenticeship positions are needed or a risk of drop-out becomes visible. The action has 10 regional offices with less than 15 social pedagogues and 40 teachers who contribute one or several hours to the service.

Their main aim is to create a framework in which transition can be successful. Pupils at the end of the 9th grade are the main target group, as this is before the age of compulsory education. The key problem is that they need to have a VET position to enter the 10th level, else they have to leave the school. ALJ and the labour office cooperate and provide detailed information for finding a VET position during the 9th level for all pupils in Luxembourg. ALJ support to find a VET position, to write a CV, to train interviews, and to get in touch with other authorities if needed. They also deal with problems external to the educational system, if these are influential on the VET prospects.

Drop-outs are automatically identified. ALJ then goes to their homes, analyses their situation (educational and social), and develops together with them a 'job project'. This project involves practical phases, the compilation of application documents, and guidance through the whole project.

After successful completion of the CCP certificate ALJ can accompany people for up to 3 years, and support them in case they do not get a permanent contract after certification. In general a follow up is done with all clients. This service is open also to people with special educational needs.

Presentation by **Mrs Garavelli**, authorised representative of CNFPC Ettelbrück (www.cnfpc.lu), on vocational orientation and preparation courses (Cours d'orientation et d'initiation professionnelle COIP). These courses are for learners aged 16 to 18 years who do not have the skills needed for entering the labour market. This includes also learners with low social competences and skills, and drop-outs forwarded from the ALJ. Since 2007, these classes can be integrated in schools for low achievers for those who did not get a VET position or who did not manage all required modules.

The course duration is usually 1 year, but the teacher conference can decide for another year if needed. The learner can decide on the preferred workshop and work there for 18 hours per week plus 10 hours regular tuition. The course also includes 6 to 8 weeks of practical training in companies. Each class has a maximum of 10 learners, with 3 to 4 different teachers. The head of the workshop is also the guidance teacher, as he/she knows the learners best, plus 1 socio pedagogue for an efficient exchange.

Teaching is competence focused, and the assessment is comprehensive over all subjects. Tuition is individual, previously acquired achievements are recognised. An individual curriculum is developed by the teacher and the learner, and twice per year progress is evaluated.

The whole system is designed such that learners can return to the regular system anytime. Practical phases are considered the most effective way in finding a job or an apprenticeship. However, meanwhile there are waiting lists to enter the courses.

Presentation by **Mike Richartz**, on the school of the second chance (www.e2c.lu). This school is based on a law from 2009 and addresses learners aged 16 to 24 years, i.e. after the age of compulsory education. The school is designed for 150 learners, currently it has 49 learners. They come either from the drop-outs (about 9% in 2009/2010, equalling about 500 persons) or from those who finished school without certification (about 1660). The aim of the school is to get a recognised certification for each learner.

Underlying problems are often that learners cannot cope with pressure, that the labour market is too demanding, or that they have general problems with the educational system. In consequence, a primary objective is to stimulate motivation again, to be able to continue education.

The number of subjects is reduced to those considered essential, and tuition is individualised. Each week, a tutor gives recommendations to each learner (1 hour / week). They create a portfolio and cross-check expectations with reality. The school has not yet received national acknowledgement of its certificates, as it is still in its evaluation phase.

Each learner will have an individual information meeting, then he/she gets information on the school, followed by an interview to analyse his/her motivation. Two weeks in the beginning are used for orientation and assessment and to get an overview on (social) skills. Afterwards, an individual VET plan is compiled, which becomes essential part of a contract between the learner and the school. This ensures that learners understand own rights and duties, and that they take responsibility for their education and training. They are expected a minimum attendance rate of 80%. Learning is to be directed by each learner, supported by teachers (18 hrs/week) and social pedagogues (12 hrs/week). 12 different specialisations are available. Assessments are formative, and to some extent parents are involved as well.

Presentation by **Dany Linden**, head of special school in Clervaux, on support workshops for learners with SEN. CED Clervaux is one of 9 special support schools (CED) in Luxembourg for children aged 4 to 16 (age of compulsory education). It also has also an educational workshop (CPP) for learners aged 16 to 21 to provide practical training for preparation for employment in Luxembourg (only 3 in the whole country).

The curriculum covers independence, communication, basic educational skills, cultural skills, psycho motorics, health, social and affective development, responsibility, introduction to employment, leisure activities.

The school, parents and learners are working closely together. Each learner has a person of trust. For each an individual development plan is made, portfolios are used and a diary is kept. Practical phases are documented, and future planning is part of the process as well.

Three groups are in the workshop, dealing with woodwork, metal work and house keeping. A fourth group on gardening has moved to the Lyceum (co-habitation class with 9 learners). Learners can change between the groups.

In year 1, learners have one practical phase, and they create a future plan. In year 2, practical phases of 2 to 3 weeks are scheduled, and less tuition takes place. From year 3 onwards, long-term practical placements of 2 to 3 months are scheduled, with intensive planning between learners, parents and the school. Practical phases are organised by the teacher of trust, who usually is a master craftsman or technician with good links to the labour market.

Although some learners succeeded in getting a job on the open labour market (e.g. in super markets), almost all are forwarded to sheltered workshops currently. There are 3 big sheltered workshops in the North with vacancies. Since last year, those workshop expenses are fully state covered. Especially between 16 and 18, those educational workshop bridge the gap as people need to be 18 before they can apply for getting the official status of being handicapped.

Presentation by **Jackie Hauffels**, coordinator of the multi-professional team (www.ediff.lu), on the integration of Asperger syndrome learners in the regular educational system. The work is based on a law from 1994 to set up a mobile service for providing individualised support for learners in regular educational settings. The National commission described earlier creates a dossier based on various professional opinions, after which parents are asked which of the four school options (special school, private school, regular school with support, special school with attendance for some time in regular schools) they prefer for their child. After that, the commission issues a recommendation. However, support is not always available as much as it is individually needed.

Some observations: schools welcome the cooperation in general; learners with Asperger syndrome cannot be easily assigned to one of the four types of schools; individual decisions are needed for each case; school and parents need to coordinate their educational actions.

The mobile service develops an individualised development plan, taking into consideration the whole personality and skills already available. The service has 11 integration companions, who are educated remedial teachers or social education workers with an additional qualification. Their task is to create and safeguard a suitable framework so that the learner can stay in the school and participate in education.

Preconditions are:

- Participation of learners in planning and decision making
- Acceptance of distinctiveness of learners by teachers and co-learners
- Holistic support approach
- Continuous reflection and adaptation of measures

To achieve this a close cooperation with parents is needed, as they have longer experiences with the child. Regular exchanges and feedback are therefore part of the process. They are also involved in the set-up of an individual educational plan (IEP).

Basic design guidelines for tuition:

- Clear structuring of space and time
- Extensive use of visualisation
- Regular schedules
- Unambiguousness / clearness of instructions
- Continuity (e.g. no changes of teachers)
- Individual support offers (e.g. opportunities to retreat, breakdown of tasks, interpretation of social situations)
- Respectfulness to the specific world of, and their specific view on humans by, learners with Asperger syndrome

The work of the mobile service is supported by school-internal offers, e.g. psychologists, social pedagogues or social workers.

Finally, a general discussion on different topics took place. Since July 15, 2011, a new law was enforced. In its context, a new commission on disadvantage compensation (CAR) was set up, with the participation of parents and learners. The main aim is that no measure taken lowers the level of the educational standard. Acknowledged measures are e.g. more time for an assessment, or a different time and place for the assessment, use of a computer, oral examinations etc. Those adaptations are attached to the certificates, although there are initiatives to change this. A result of this explicit mentioning of adaptations in the certificate is, that learners prefer to not request adaptations any more to avoid this.

2nd day

Visit of a co-habitation class at IEAP in Lycée Michel Rodange, Campus Geesseknäppchen



The class the team visited was similar to the one seen the day before while cooking together. The class meets each Wednesday to transfer into practice what they have learned in theory. Else all teaching happens in a co-habitation class, situated in a small building on the premises of a large campus, for 1373 students and 142 teachers in 57 classes (24 students in average). The class has 5 students, and 2 teachers are working with them. Currently they are learning skills of independent living and basic skills:

- Simple aids like smileys to understand and express emotions
- Clear rules and structures
- Exact explanations in folders
- Pictures of how things should look alike (e.g. wardrobe)
- Many visualisations, and learning also with DVD
- Everyone is entitled to use a PC for 15 minutes per day; in case of breach of the rules, time is deducted from this quota (bigger impact than rewarding positive behaviour)



Visit of the support workshop (Förderwerkstatt) and the sheltered workshop (beschützte Werkstatt) for adolescents and adults with autism or Asperger syndrome at Beckerich (www.autisme.lu)

Welcome by Marc de Geest, director.

The non-profit organisation cares for people with invasive developmental disorders (Asperger syndrome, non-typical autism, etc). Adolescents and young adults are being offered vocational and employment training after compulsory school in order to prepare and facilitate their access to either the open labour market or into one

of the organisation's own workshops (e.g. gardening, marmalade production etc). The duration of the training is about 2, maximum 3 years. Skill assessments allow to establish individualised training programs. Beyond general skills, these emphasise the improvement of communication and social skills, as well as student's psychological identity.

Visit of the workshops, in the fields of graphics / print, paper, catering / menu service, gardening, housekeeping and ceramics.

The key elements of their work:

- Suitable tools: use of a competence sheet to evaluate skills and competences (general skills like hand washing; specific skills like gardening skills; skills for

independent living like health and leisure activities), and planning of specific vocational objectives

- Clear timing: each person has reference dates from which an individualised calendar can be derived. There are global and specific dates until which certain tasks should be performed.
- Activities / procedures: global procedures (planned for 2 years) and specific activities (1 programme per year). In the competence evaluation sheet for instance aims are described in a set of smaller steps to be reached between the reference dates.

More specific evaluation sheets are available to describe skills very detailed to allow a matching with skills and knowledge required in certain professions.

Objectives are divided into two categories: objective A and objective B. Objective A contain technical aims, e.g. to learn how to open the tub and to wash the hands. Objective B relates to bigger aims, e.g. in case that not washing the hands is related to fears of water; these aims have then a longer duration to be reached.

People with disabilities have a contract with the workshop. They receive the minimum wage of about 1550 Euro and all work full-time in the workshop.