

*by Ralph Schroeder*

## **An overview of the history of youth work in Luxembourg**

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the history and development of youth work in Luxembourg.

Youth work, in Luxembourg as much as anywhere else, can only exist if youth exists. In Luxembourg, again, like in most other places, the category “youth” began to exist with the industrialisation of the country. This industrialisation took place quite late, in the second half of the 19th century. Within 10 to 20 years, Luxembourg transformed from being a very rural country to one in the midst of industrialisation through the mining and steel industry. Until 1870, Luxembourg was a country of emigration. Poverty and famine in the rural areas compelled many people to leave the country for better opportunities. After 1870, with the beginning of industrialisation, the movement of people slowly reversed and Luxembourg became a country of immigrants. This development took place mainly in the south and the centre of the country. Thus, the conditions for emerging youth work only began to exist in the beginning of the 20th century.

Another important thing to understand is that Luxembourg society of that period was polarised into two

ideological camps. The liberals and socialists formed a left-wing ensemble of progressive forces opposed to the conservative, clerical, Catholic part of Luxembourg. The Catholic Church was a very powerful organisation that deeply influenced social life in Luxembourg. This division played an important role in the birth of the youth movements, which were all on one side or the other.

The youth movements, at a time when youth were emerging as a social category, for the first time seen as important for the future of society, wanted to give youth a place for self-organisation. But they were also part of a wider context where ideologies wanted to attract young people to their side. The progressive movement wanted young people to be part of a movement of individual and mass liberation, whereas the more conservative movement wanted to make sure young people stayed on the path of God and the Church. The main concern of this period seemed to be: to whom does youth belong?

There were contradictory aims present at the birth of youth organisations and youth work, between young people in the organisations who might have seen their youth work as spaces for self-organisation within the larger social context, and probably the adults in the organisations, who wanted to give young people the opportunity and a path to grow into society. Today's youth policy, too, exhibits that tension between giving space to young people's self-development and effectively integrating them into society. Indeed, when we look at the government's position on the Luxembourg national youth report from 2011, we see two main objectives to youth policy. On the one hand, youth policy should "accompany young people through these transitions, facilitate them, and must propose measures that allow adolescents to successfully see through their passage to adulthood". On the other hand, "youth policy will, therefore, place the concept of participation at its centre. It is a question of the social and political participation of individuals and the means placed at their disposal for them to assure their role in society, to influence their environment, and play a part in the future of our society." There we have a very similar dichotomy between integration and participation, similar to what we find at the birth of youth work and youth organisations.

The earliest youth organisations were student organisations. On the Catholic side there was the Katholischer Akademikerverein, or Catholic Organisation of Luxembourg Students, founded in 1910. On the left the Association Générale des Etudiants du Luxembourg, the so-called ASSOSS, was founded in 1912, bringing together students from liberal families in Luxembourg city.

The scout movement also started its existence quite early in Luxembourg. A teacher of English called Joseph Tockert, upon his return from England, introduced scouting during a conference of ASSOSS in 1913. Several scout groups began their activities thereafter.

It is interesting to note that not only scouting, but also football and tennis, were brought to Luxembourg from England in this way. The Football and Lawn Tennis Club, still running under the name of CS FOLA, was founded by another teacher of English after his return from England in 1906.

The first scout groups founded the National Federation of Luxembourg Scouts in 1916. By that time, the Catholic elite had understood that the scouting movement was attracting many young people. While at first scouting was considered with suspicion by the Catholic Church because of its Protestant roots and non-religious

leaders, local scout groups soon began to be founded within the Catholic youth organisations (Jünglingsvereine) and then in parishes throughout Luxembourg. These groups were later brought together in the Luxembourg Scouts Federation. The Association of Luxembourg Girl Guides was founded in 1915, whereas the Catholic Luxembourg Guides were founded in 1938.

After the First World War, and especially in the 1930s, a number of other organisations developed youth sections. It is interesting to note that in the Catholic movement particularly, an important number of organisations were founded for all sorts of groups. Examples include the young farmers group, and the Jeunesse Etudiante Chrétienne (JEC) for young Catholic students and then later young Catholic workers. After the Second World War, groups were developed for girls as well, which led to an impressive number of Catholic youth organisations in Luxembourg. The 1930s also saw the beginning of the youth hostel movement in Luxembourg with the opening of the first youth hostel and the establishment of the national federation of youth hostels. Like other youth movements, it had its roots in an international movement.

In the post-war years, a new way of considering young people slowly emerged. Luxembourg was not occupied during the Second World War, but it was integrated into the administrative and territorial organisation of the Third Reich. A significant number of young people in Luxembourg were incorporated into the Wehrmacht and sent to the eastern front, deported to work in Germany, or sent to concentration camps. Young people, especially in the secondary schools, played a role in resisting the Nazi administration. The scout movement in particular played an important role in resisting the occupation and later contributing to the rebuilding of the country. Membership in youth organisations peaked immediately after the end of the war, from 1945 to 1946. This important contribution of young people to the sacrifices of the war led to the consideration, during the post-war decades, that young people had to be given more space and more voice in policy. Some young people themselves, feeling that they had suffered hardship during the war, felt that the generation that had been leading the youth organisations before the war had to make more room for the younger generation.

During the 1950s, the first attempts were made to bring 40 youth organisations under one Luxembourg council of youth movements. But these attempts failed because of the deep division between progressive and Catholic organisations. This council being dominated by left-wing organisations, conservative groups either never joined or left in the very early stages. This council of youth movements never ceased to exist, but it was never prominent or active. In 1960, members of the World Assembly of Youth (WAY) approached Luxembourg youth organisations in order to found a local chapter. This should have led to a new council of youth organisations, but the initiative was unsuccessful because it coincided with a government initiative to found a national youth council.

Indeed, in 1960, for the first time, the government consulted the youth organisations on the foundation of a Conférence Générale de la Jeunesse Luxembourgeoise. The name was chosen, it seems, to avoid association with the unsuccessful attempt to bring about a national council of youth movements in 1951. In October 1960, the Conférence Générale was founded by ministerial decree. But even before the end of the consultation process, divisions formed and a number of organisations refused to participate. This time, it was the left-wing organisations that opposed the proposed mode of operation of the council. Indeed, Catholic organisations

dominated those invited to work on the new structure. This was partly due to the fact that a number of sub-organisations had been founded within the movement from the 1930s onwards. It marked the beginning of 20 difficult years for this top-down youth council.

Another development during the 1950s and 1960s was the emergence of the central theme of leisure time for young people. This had to be taken into consideration by policy makers, and is probably linked to the development of the mass consumption society.

In this context, the Ministry for Education created the Service National de la Jeunesse, (National Youth Board) in 1964, with the explicit aim of proposing activities for young people who were not members of youth organisations. For the first time, public authorities created a separate body for youth work, within the Ministry of Education. According to its mission, Service National de la jeunesse (SNJ), as it was commonly known in Luxembourg, had to collaborate closely with youth movements. It was to build up an impressive programme of activities and also invest a lot of energy into the training of youth leaders and volunteer youth workers. However, from the beginning, and for a very long time, the youth organisations were not enthusiastic about the idea of a government youth work office. In the 1990s even, the leaders of the national youth council (Conférence Générale de La Jeunesse Luxembourgeoise) still demanded the dissolution of the SNJ and the reallocation of the support directly to youth organisations.

Another sign of the growing importance of leisure time in youth work was the appearance of so-called “youth clubs”, especially in the rural areas of Luxembourg, in the 1970s. These youth clubs were self-organised groups of young people, with no particular ideological or philosophical background, whose first aim was the organisation of leisure time activities for their members. Unlike a number of other, older youth movements, the “youth clubs” still have an important basis today, with approximately 120 existing throughout Luxembourg.

Generally speaking, the events of the late 1960s played an important role in youth work and youth organisations in Luxembourg. Especially for the student movement, it was a time of profound changes. ASSOSS, the progressive student movement, had a diverse membership of liberal and socialist students. But growing tensions between the different currents meant that this organisation did not survive the events of 1968 in Luxembourg. Catholic students also quit the National Union of Luxembourg Students, founded in 1919, which during the 1970s had become increasingly left wing. Indeed, organisations of Catholic persuasion appeared to lose importance after 1970. This may be linked to a general downward trend for all-encompassing ideologies and is to be seen in parallel with the rise of leisure time youth organisations such as the youth clubs.

The scout movement, on the other hand, came out of the 1960s in rather good condition. The reason for this seems to be that it succeeded in integrating its own internal protest movements by always adapting itself to changing times. Co-management with young people, co-education, abandonment of paramilitary habits, and the changing role and practice of religion were important developments within the scout movement during the 1960s and 1970s.

The 1970s also brought into existence more specific youth organisations closely linked to the rise of environmentalism. Out of Youth and Environment, founded

in 1969, would later rise Mouvement écologique, a major environmental lobby group today. While Youth and Environment later became the youth section of Mouvement écologique, other members eventually split away from Mouvement écologique to found Life – the eco-creative platform for young people.

Self-organised youth centres also began to appear in urban areas in the 1970s. They were part of the legacy of 1968 and provided space for young people to spend time with peers, organising their own activities. Policy makers felt that through self-organisation, young people would learn to take responsibility within society. These first open youth centres, however, quickly acquired a bad reputation with neighbours because of noise, and with the police because of drug use. They also suffered from the deteriorating quality of facilities and infrastructures. This led indirectly to the growing professionalisation of youth work in Luxembourg during the 1980s and 1990s.

Indeed, professionalisation had begun in the 1970s in Luxembourg in the social work sector. In 1973, the Service d'Éducation différenciée (office for differentiated education) was created within the Ministry for Education at the same time as compulsory education for disabled children was introduced (the law on fundamental schooling from 1912 excluded disabled children from the school system). To support teachers in the newly created centres for differentiated education, the new profession of *moniteur d'éducation différenciée* was created – professional educators. Religious organisations made room for professional organisations in the management of child and youth care structures and members of religious congregations were progressively replaced by professional educators. New developments in the social field had created the need for more professional work. Poverty, the need for counselling services, the rise in female employment and the need for day care structures for children, for example, led to more services being supported by public authorities. The profession of educator, originally created to help teachers with disabled children, quickly developed into a more diverse profession.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the Service National de la Jeunesse was given the status of a public organisation. Its constituting laws defined its mission as developing open youth work in Luxembourg, and stated that it could contribute to the development of meeting places for young people and youth centres. This contribution was to take the form of financial support, assistance and counselling, and training youth workers. As SNJ was still dependent on the Ministry of Education, the centres were staffed with teachers with an interest in youth work and the time to spare.

These new professional youth centres, and their youth workers, had four missions. Firstly, the youth workers were meant to develop activity programmes for young people in close collaboration with youth organisations and local authorities. The second mission for youth workers was to be a resource for the youth centres. These youth workers were, as stated, working under the direct authority of SNJ. The concept of a resource person here shows that young people were meant to be the main actors in these youth centres and youth workers, active at regional level and responsible for possibly more than one youth centre, would assist young people in developing initiatives. The third mission was that of counselling. A youth worker had to be a person that young people could approach with all sorts of issues, and someone who could help in locating other services or information. The fourth mission for youth workers was to stay in close contact with the field of formal education.

However, these teacher youth workers failed to reach young people aside from those that traditionally participated in the activities organised by SNJ, specifically young people with immigrant backgrounds. In addition, the time they were allowed to spend on youth work was limited to eight hours a week by the Ministry of Education. The limits of this model of youth centres run by teacher youth workers were clear.

Also, specifically in the youth field, the European programme “Youth for Europe” created new opportunities for development that went beyond the possibilities of the teacher youth workers who ran regional youth work in the 1980s. This led to the founding of a national resource centre in 1987, the Youth Information Centre (CIJ). This followed a government decision to use the structure of a private organisation for a new resource centre.

This is the general context in which professionalisation took place in the youth field, beginning in the 1980s.

After the 1989 general elections, when a state secretariat for youth was created (upgraded into a Ministry of Youth after the 1994 general elections), a movement to create local youth centres took place. They were staffed with professional educators and run by small local organisations, with the costs shared by the government and the local authorities. The local authorities were quite interested in these centres staffed with professionals, perhaps because of the lessons learned from the self-administered youth centres of the 1970s and early 1980s.

Youth information was to be the main mission of these youth centres. But quickly, other missions took up more space. The wave of immigration from Portugal to Luxembourg that took place in the 1970s created challenges unlike that with previous waves of immigration, as integration did not happen as naturally. Immigrant youth formed a significant proportion of the clients of these new youth centres, necessitating something of a switch from information provision to that of providing meeting places where integration issues could be addressed.

Youth work therefore moved away from a focus on education, with the creation of a Ministry for Youth. Professionalisation also contributed to this trend with the creation of “educators”, who were working in the field of child and youth care, administered by the Ministry for the Family. Youth workers were part of a professional field the salaries of which were defined in a collective agreement between trade unions and social work employers, thus allowing for numerous opportunities for mobility within the field of social work. After the 1999 elections, the government’s competence for youth policy and youth work was integrated into the Ministry for the Family. This ministry is a “generational” ministry, being also responsible for policies pertaining to children, young people, elderly people and disabled people. Youth work policy was thus closer than ever to social work policy, yet still seen as in between education, social security and employment policies.

The movement of professionalisation led in 2011 to a professional youth work field with about 130 professional youth workers in some 50 local youth centres, up from 24 professional youth workers in local youth centres in 1995. Public financial support grew by 200% between 2001 and 2011. A number of national resource centres have been built around this network, for example for youth information or legal questions for young people.

The latest development is that as a consequence of this professionalisation, youth organisations are increasingly hiring professional youth workers. This is the case not only for the scout movements, but also for example the *Conférence Générale de la Jeunesse Luxembourgeoise*, the national youth council.

As noted earlier, the *Conférence Générale* that was founded in 1961 had difficulties right from the beginning due to ideological divisions between youth organisations. During most of the 1960s, left-wing youth organisations stayed out of the national youth council. During the second part of the 1960s and the first part of the 1970s, the council appeared to be inactive, with the left-wing organisations even founding their own “confederation of the youth organisations of the left”. In 1974/75, an attempt by SNJ to reunite the youth organisations into an NGO that would work as a youth council was unsuccessful, despite several meetings. Another attempt was made by SNJ under a new director in 1977, and this led to the establishment of a renewed national youth council on the basis of the 1960 ministerial decree on establishing a national youth council. This organisation survived, even though it was still avoided by a number of left-wing youth organisations that felt this council was projecting an illusion of generational solidarity while circumventing the more important questions of social and class solidarity. During the late 1970s and the 1980s, the *Conférence Générale*, accompanied by the national youth work administration, developed a number of activities in co-operation with SNJ, represented Luxembourg youth on an international level, and took up positions on political issues in Luxembourg.

In 1987, the *Conférence Générale de la Jeunesse Luxembourgeoise* was transformed into a private organisation, structurally independent from the government. At the same time, a consultative body composed both of youth organisations and government representatives was established. Though the internal tensions between youth organisations still existed, they appeared to be less divisive than in previous decades. After the foundation of the youth council as an NGO, gradually, the left-wing youth organisations began to join.

Since 2000, the national youth council has developed a role closer to that of “citizenship education”. Indeed, it had an important consultative role in the drafting of the European Commission White Paper, among other developments related to youth policy. With the professionalisation of its staff, this focus on citizenship education has grown. Today, the national youth council is certainly the most active organisation in the youth field in citizenship education. Political lobbying has become less important, and this represents a shift in the agenda of the youth council and youth organisations in general. Recent developments within the *Conférence Générale*, however, tend to indicate that the youth council wants to create a new balance between citizenship education and political lobbying.

Nevertheless, the general trend in youth work in Luxembourg over the last few decades is that of movement from a political role to a more educational and social work role, due to professionalisation and growing public support for youth organisations. While youth work has always had this double identity, it is probably important to keep a balance between these elements today.

We will now move to a more personal view on the challenges that lie ahead of us in youth work in Luxembourg, both internal and external.

We now actually have two almost separate youth work fields in Luxembourg – the youth organisations and the professional youth centres, or what is commonly known as open youth work. These two fields work with different groups of young people and it is probably important to bring them into closer contact. When the professional youth centres were founded, they met significant resistance from local youth organisations who saw them as illegitimate and a threat to their own existence because they were seen to be drawing from their own membership. The founders of the local youth centres did not feel that they were competing, as they believed they would be able to act as bridges for young people to find their way into youth organisations. In general, this bridging role of youth centres has not materialised. Considering how separate these two fields of youth work are today, one might almost wish that there actually had been competition between professional youth centres and youth organisations, for it would have led to interaction, with the same young people to be found in both formats.

The open youth centres work a lot with young people from immigrant backgrounds, including those from Portuguese backgrounds and those from later waves of immigration, particularly the former Yugoslavia. The challenge that these youth centres face is to increase participation of these young people in Luxembourg society, and make them more visible as social actors. It is to help them go from participation in youth work initiatives to participation in society. In other words, youth centres have to find a way to not only carry out social work to help young people with immigrant backgrounds, but also perform the political role of helping young immigrants integrate themselves into Luxembourg society. Critical opinions on the youth centres and the population they attract state that these centres are creating islands from where the clients of youth work don't depart. In terms of equal access to infrastructure and equal opportunity policies, however, the open youth centres are a good tool. There is evidence that young people from immigrant backgrounds, especially boys, participate less in Luxembourg's society, be it in education, employment, youth organisations, or culture. The open youth centres attract just these people and can work from there.

The youth organisations, on the other hand, mainly work with young people whose parents are from Luxembourg. This is a dangerous situation in a country where at present, about 50% of the young population does not have roots in Luxembourg. Their challenge is to open up more to young people from other communities. A number of initiatives developed lately show that youth organisations are conscious of this challenge and are willing to act. This is not an easy task though and needs further reflection and action.

Furthermore, a recent law on youth policy has deepened the differentiation among actors in the youth field. In 2008, the Luxembourg Parliament adopted the so-called Youth Act, which is actually more a law on youth policy because it states the aims and instruments of youth policy in Luxembourg, as well as the mechanisms through which the youth policy of the government should be developed. This law had first been suggested by the youth department of the Ministry for the Family in its 2004 concept paper "Youth and Society". This document itself was part of an evolution that had been influenced by the European Commission's White Paper process as well as an international review of Luxembourg's youth policy conducted by the Council of Europe.

The Youth Act is an attempt to strengthen the triangular relationship between youth policy making, youth research and youth work. Indeed the act states in its second

article that youth policy is transversal, and that it has to be evidence-based and take into account the opinions of young people. Specifically, the government has to produce a report on the situation of young people in Luxembourg every five years. This report is to be the basis for a governmental action plan on youth. The act also created a national assembly of young people, with the role of voicing young people's opinions on all questions related to youth. The government gave the national youth council the mandate to work on the concept and later implement the youth assembly, today called the youth parliament.

So when we look at today's youth work landscape in Luxembourg, we actually see three sub-ensembles. Professional open youth-work centres are close to educational and social work in so far as they help young people, especially those with fewer opportunities, to find their way into society. The traditional youth organisations are mainly active in the field of leisure time opportunities for young people. The youth parliament covers the more political side of youth work. But it is also a citizenship education project run by the national youth council, with a project officer whose role it is to assist, support and guide the youth parliament. This creates tension within the project between its political and educational aspects. These elements have to be in balance in order for the parliament to be a success. Besides these private actors in the youth field, the public body, SNJ, is now a full-fledged youth work administration active on all these three levels, with a focus on the educational and leisure time aspects.

A challenge for the future will probably be to bring these sub-fields closer together. Attempts are being made to connect young people in open youth centres with the youth parliament through a mobile youth information unit. This is certainly an important tool for the future. But it is not only young people in youth centres that have to be reached. The same holds for professional youth workers, among which a number do not recognise the use of political youth work for "their" clients. In the same way, local youth centres and youth organisations could be better connected on a local level. There have been efforts to this end, and they need to be continued and deepened. In 1995, in a dossier on open youth work published in the magazine *Forum*, the then chairman of the network of open youth centres expressed the following opinion: "I don't want to define the general objectives of youth policy [meaning this was of course just what he was going to do], but I still want to develop some ideas that would be helpful for the work of our youth centres. It would be good if young people could participate in local elections at the age of 16, and if there were permanent representations of young people like the local youth consultative bodies, which need to have more influence on local policy making. That way, there could in the future be local youth centres that would not only see their mission as organising dance evenings." The youth work field has developed since then, but the chairman of the youth centres still felt obliged to qualify a statement on youth policy. Today, such a statement would be even more unlikely.

The external challenge to youth work is linked to the current gradual integration of the fields of youth work and work with children. Within the Ministry for the Family, these two fields have been integrated and current discussions are leading to closer co-operation and integration of these policy fields. This is useful, as children are of course the future beneficiaries of youth work and better linking the objectives and tools of these fields can have large benefits. The direction taken recently with a legal act initiative highlights the non-formal education aspect in youth work and work with children. This will have the benefit of better

demonstrating the work that is done in open youth centres. Still, public opinion too often holds that the main objective of youth centres is to get young people off the streets. It seems important, today, to be able to legitimate youth work by underlining its educational aspects. There are, however, also risks. The field of out-of-school care for children is, in quantitative terms, much larger than the youth work field. The aims and objectives also differ, from being more education driven in the field of child care to more political in terms of participation and citizenship in the youth field. It will be important to keep this focus on citizenship in youth work, especially when co-operating with a field that is much larger and more reliant on political pressure and lobbying.

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