The European Public Schools (EPS) as a response to demographic changes in Luxembourg? (Integral version)

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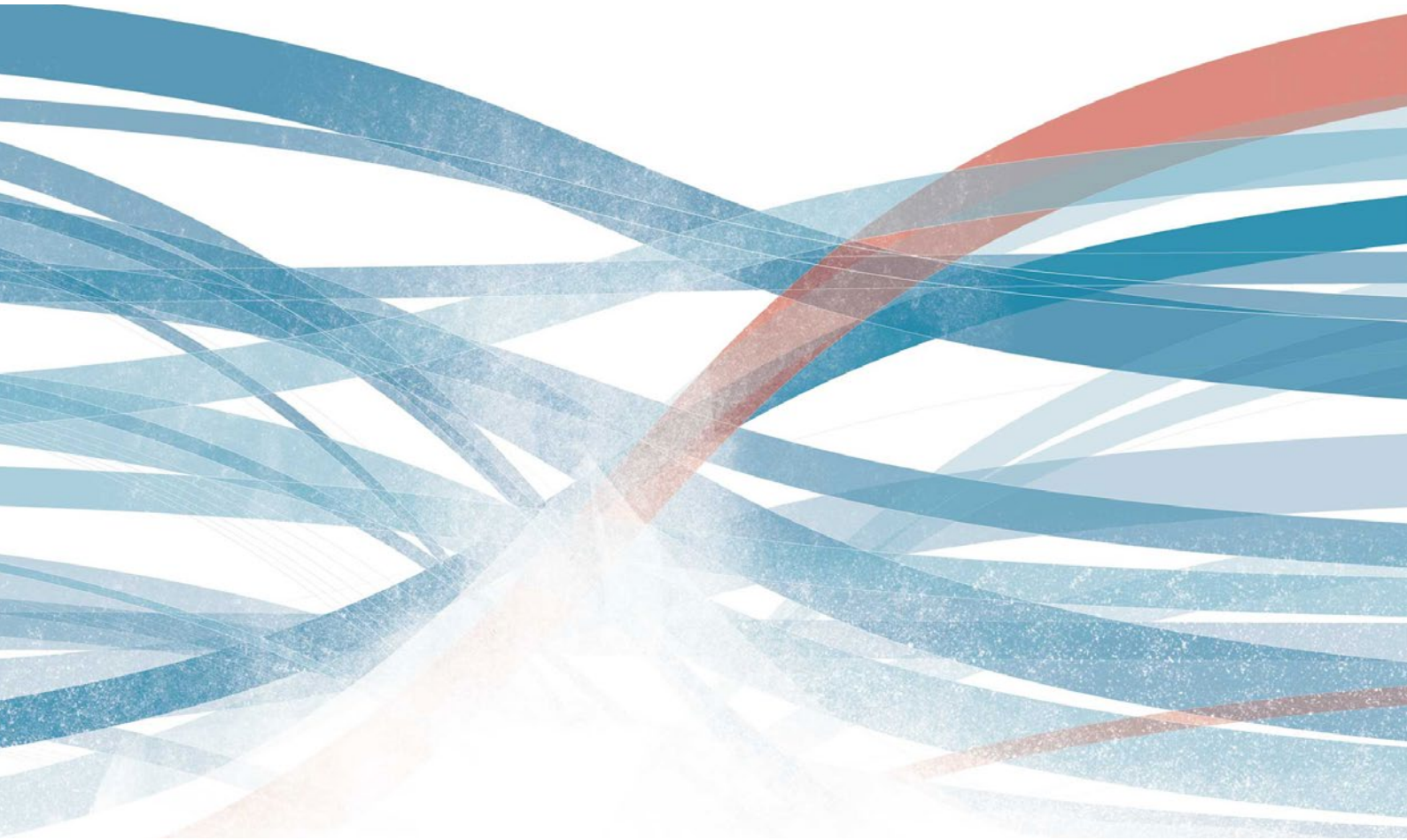

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The European Public Schools (EPS) as a response to demographic changes in Luxembourg? (Integral version)[1]

Elif Tuğçe Gezer, Susanne Backes, Ulrich Keller & Thomas Lenz

Luxembourg is a very diverse country in terms of the socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of its inhabitants (Eurydice, 2024; MENJE, 2024b). The growing linguistic diversity in Luxembourg leads to educational inequalities, as the trilingual public education system is no longer sufficiently adapted to the country's multicultural and multilingual population (e.g., Hadjar et al., 2018; Hornung et al., 2021). The need for change has led to initiatives to diversify language provision (MENJE, 2024b), paving the way for the creation of European Public Schools (EPS).

This article provides an overview of the conceptual and empirical foundations of the newly established EPS[2] in Luxembourg. The main research interest of the article focuses on the question of which groups of pupils take advantage of the new public school offer - i.e., who decides to attend the EPS -, what the careers of EPS pupils look like, and whether these careers are characterized by continuity or discontinuity. This is interesting from the perspective of educational sociology, as educational decisions are made in a socially selective manner (Boudon, 1974; Hadjar & Backes, 2021).

This article therefore presents descriptive analyses of the demographics of the student population and their educational careers based on administrative student data (*Fichier élèves; Scolaria*) and data from the national school monitoring program *Épreuves Standardisées* (*ÉpStan*). The administrative student data are based on full cohort information collected from students/parents in public and private schools implementing the Luxembourgish curriculum and in public schools implementing international curricula. The data include demographic variables such as nationality, country of birth, language primarily spoken at home, and gender. The *ÉpStan* (Martin et al., 2015) is administered to all students in grades 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9 (C2.1, C3.1, C4.1, G7, and G9 in schools following the Luxembourgish curriculum and P1, P3, P5, S1, and S3 in EPS; see Figure 1). The data include the occupational status of the parents.

1. The European Public Schools (EPS)

The very first European School was established in Luxembourg in 1953 with the initiatives of the European Coal and Steel Community and the support of the Luxembourg Government. The school aimed to provide education in native language for the children of staff working in European institutions through the European Curriculum, which was developed in cooperation of the six governments and Education

[1] This article is the extended version of the article *„Die Öffentlichen Europaschulen (EPS) als Antwort auf demographische Veränderungen in Luxemburg?“* published in „Nationaler Bildungsbericht Luxemburg 2024“ (LUCET & SCRIPT, 2024; see also Backes et al., 2023; Gezer et al., 2023, 2024).

[2] The European Public School (EPS) is the terminology used in Luxembourg to distinguish the public schools that implement the European Curriculum in Luxembourg. However, the EPS are a part of a wider provision, officially called the *Accredited European Schools* (AES), which also exists in the other EU Member States.

Ministries. The European School's success encouraged the European Commission and Euratom (European Atomic Energy Community) to expand this educational model and open more schools in other locations (Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools, 2025a). With this expansion, there are in total 13 European Schools[3] currently offering the European Baccalaureate to approximately 29.000 students in six EU-countries (Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools, 2025b).

In 2005, the European School system was opened up to national schools in EU Member States based on the recommendations of the European Parliament, especially to accommodate the needs of children who reside in areas where it is not feasible to offer the European Curriculum in fully-fledged European Schools. This recommendation led to the establishment of Accredited European Schools (AES) which implement the European Curriculum and are obliged to meet its pedagogical requirements within their own national school networks, without being subject to the European Schools' compulsory legal, administrative, or financial frameworks (Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools, 2025c). Currently, there are 24 Accredited European Schools (AES)[4] in 14 EU Member States, with 2 more in the process of accreditation. Among these schools, 19 have the European Baccalaureate cycle and 14 have experienced at least one Baccalaureate session. As of 2024-25 school year, there are 16.209 students in AES, with *École Internationale de Differdange* in Luxembourg being the largest one (N = 2332). Besides, Luxembourg hosts more AES than other EU Member States (Schola Europaea, 2024), with a slightly different motivation than the rest of these countries.

Decades after its first implementation in 1953 with *Ecole Européenne Luxembourg I* and its extension in 2004 with *Ecole Européenne Luxembourg II*, the European Curriculum "traveled" back as an additional public school offer to better reflect the country's diversity and multilingualism. The AES in Luxembourg (*European Public Schools, "EPS", hereafter*) function in a similar way to the two European Schools established in Luxembourg (*Ecole Européenne Luxembourg I* and *Ecole Européenne Luxembourg II*), which were created and financed by the governments of the EU Member States. EPS adapt the European curriculum (MENJE, 2024b) of the European Schools - but unlike them, they are fully funded by the state and open to all.

[3] *Luxembourg I* (Kirchberg) and *Luxembourg II* (Mamer) in Luxembourg; *Brussels I* (Uccle + Berkendael), *Brussels II* (Woluwe + Evere), *Brussels III* (Ixelles), *Brussels IV* (Laeken), and *Mol* in Belgium; *Frankfurt am Main*, *Karlsruhe*, *Munich* in Germany; *Bergen N. H.* (Petten) in Netherlands; *Alicante* in Spain; *Varese* in Italy (Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools, 2025b)

[4] *Accredited European School Tyrol* in Austria; *Ecole Européenne de Bruxelles-Argenteuil* in Belgium; *European School of Copenhagen* in Denmark; *Tallinn European School* in Estonia; *European School of Helsinki* in Finland; *École Européenne de Lille Métropole*, *École Internationale Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, European School of Paris La Défense,* and *European School of Strasbourg* in France; *Europäische Schule RheinMain* and *European School Saarland* in Germany; *School of European Education* in Greece; *Centre for European Schooling* in Ireland; *Istituto Omnicomprensivo Scuola Europea di Brindisi* and *Scuola per l'Europa di Parma* in Italy; *École Internationale de Differdange*, *Edward Steichen International School*, *Lënster Lycée International School*, *École internationale Gaston Thorn*, *École internationale Mersch Anne Beffort, École Internationale de Mondorf-les-Bains* in Luxembourg; *International European School Warsaw* in Poland; *European School Ljubljana* in Slovenia; *Europese School Den Haag Rijnlands Lyceum* in the Netherlands (Schola Europaea, 2024)

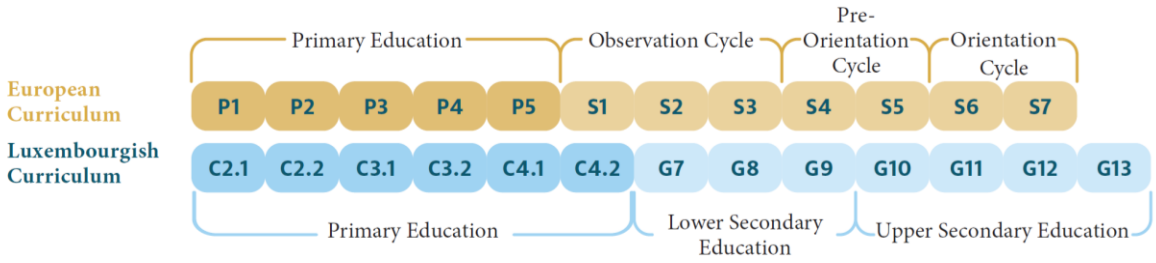
2. Structure and language of instruction of the EPS

The organizational structure of the European school system differs in key aspects from the traditional education system in Luxembourg, which is characterized by a high degree of vocational specificity and stratification (Backes & Hadjar, 2017). After primary school (C4.2, *Cycle 4.2*, or grade 6) in the traditional system, students are oriented in an academic track (*enseignement secondaire classique*, ESC), a general track (*enseignement secondaire général*, ESG), or a preparatory track (*Voie de preparation*, a part of ESG). Moreover, ESG students receive further orientation at the end of lower secondary school in grade 9. Depending on their performance in grade 9, they are admitted to certain school tracks in grade 10. These tracks lead to different school-leaving certificates (*diplôme de fin d'études secondaires générales, diplôme de technician*, *diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle*, or *certificat de capacité professionnelle*) and future educational and professional options (MENJE, 2024b).

On the other hand, the European curriculum offers a comprehensive school system, which means that EPS do not have a formal orientation process or stratification. The European curriculum organizes its studies into three cycles: early education, primary education (P1-P5), and secondary education (S1-S7), which in turn is divided into three sub-cycles. These are the observation cycle, with a common core approach, the pre-orientation cycle, which allows for additional subject choices, and the orientation cycle, also known as the European Baccalaureate cycle (Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools, 2025d).

The corresponding grade levels of the European curriculum compared to the Luxembourgish curriculum are shown in Figure 1 (Backes et al., 2023). For instance, P1, the first grade level of primary education in the European curriculum, corresponds to C2.1, or *Cycle 2.1*, in Luxembourgish primary education.

Fig. 1: **Organization of studies in the European vs. Luxembourgish curriculum**



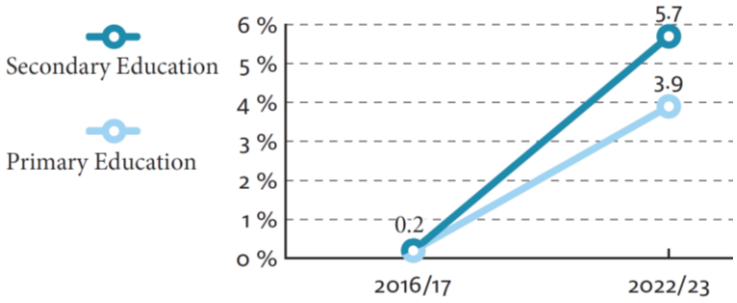
In addition to the structural differences, EPS differ from the Luxembourgish curriculum regarding their approach to language education and the languages used for instruction. EPS offer German, French and English language sections. This allows pupils to choose from among these three languages the language of instruction that corresponds to their first language or is most closely related to their home language. Students pursue their education mainly in this language, except for some courses (e.g., Human Sciences and Religion or Ethic) in secondary school in which the students use their first foreign language (L2). Students choose their L2 in the first year of primary and their second foreign language (L3) in the first year of the observation cycle in secondary school. In addition, Luxembourgish is a compulsory subject for all

pupils. However, these languages are taught at different proficiency levels (MENJE, 2024a; Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools, 2025d). On the other hand, the three official languages of the country (Luxembourgish, German, and French) are successively taught in schools at a quasi-native level in the Luxembourgish curriculum. For majority of the students in the Luxembourgish curriculum, the main language of instruction is Luxembourgish in pre-school and German (also the language of literacy acquisition) in primary and lower secondary school[5]. Students are taught French starting from C2.1 onwards, and the language of instruction becomes French for most subjects in upper secondary education in the *Enseignement secondaire Classique* (ESC, the highest academic track in the Luxembourgish curriculum), while it remains German in the *Enseignement secondaire général* (Eurydice, 2024; Gehring et al., 2022). Thus, while both curricula provide multilingual education, they differ in the flexibility they offer in language choice and the level of language proficiency required.

3. EPS development in terms of pupil numbers and locations in Luxembourg[6]

Since the establishment of the first EPS (*École Internationale Differdange et Esch-sur-Alzette*) in 2016, five more have been opened[7]. The expansion of the European Public School system has resulted in a significant increase in the proportion of pupils in EPS compared to the total number of pupils in public schools (from 0.2 % to 3.9 % at primary level and from 0.2 % to 5.7 % at secondary level; see Figure 2).

Fig. 2: **Percentage of pupils in EPS as a proportion of the total pupil population in public schools**



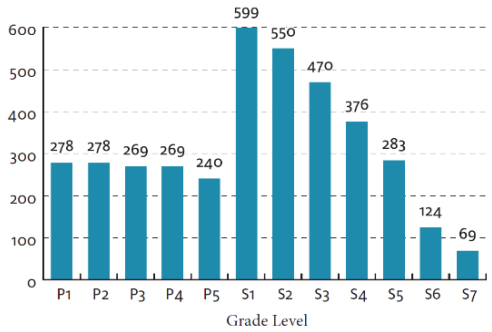
The newly opened EPS initially offer classes at the lower primary (P1-P2) and secondary (S1-S2) levels. As a result, the number of pupils in the different grades of the 2022/23 school year varies with even fewer pupils in the higher grades (see Figure 3).

[5] The literacy pilot project "Zesumme Wuessen!" allows for literacy acquisition in French in C2.1 (Colling, Hornung et al., 2024; MENJE, 2022).

[6] Data Source: Administrative student data.

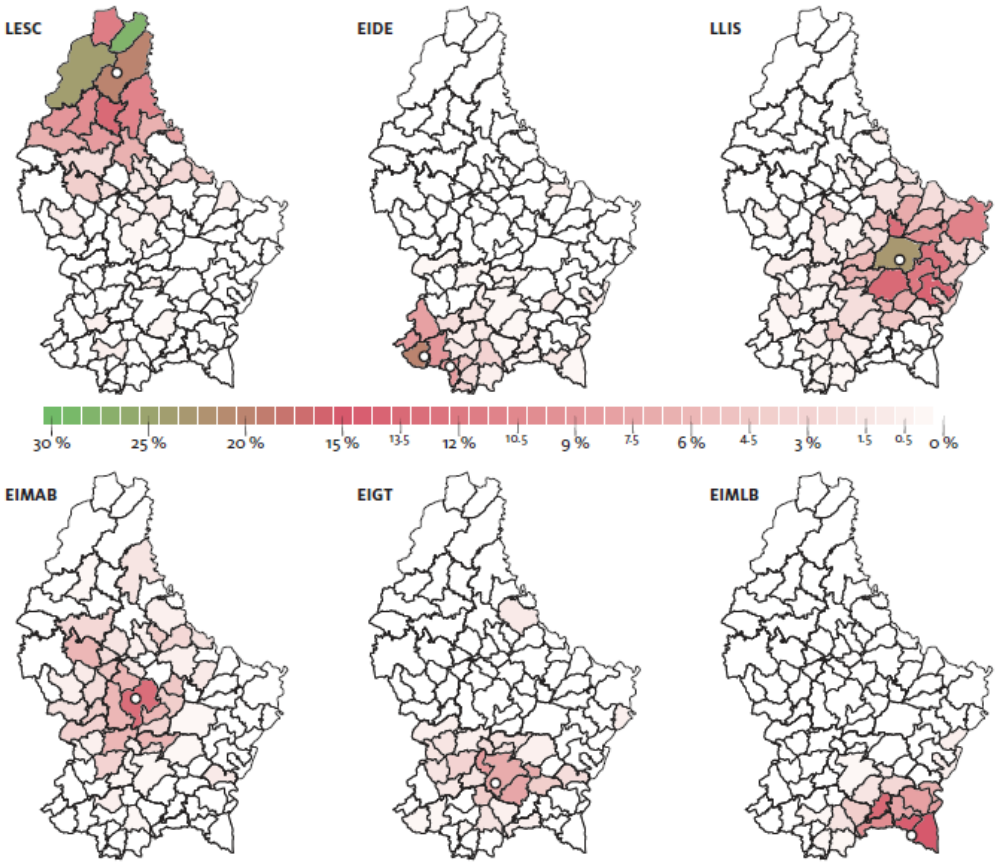
[7] *École Internationale Differdange et Esch-sur-Alzette* (EIDE) since 2016; *École Internationale Edward Steichen* (LESC), *Lënster Lycée International School* (LLIS), and *École Internationale de Mondorf-les-Bains* (EIMLB) since 2018; *École Internationale Mersch Anne Beffort* (EIMAB) since 2021; *École Internationale Gaston Thorn (EIGT)* since 2022. Among these schools LESC and LLIS offer both the European Curriculum and the Luxembourgish curriculum. All the analyses were carried out based on the number of students following the European Curriculum in the respective EPS.

Fig. 3: **Number of pupils in EPS per grade level (2022/23)**



The six EPS that exist in Luxembourg in the 2022/23 school year are spread across the country and have catchment areas of different sizes. The maps in Figure 4 show the locations of the EPS and the municipalities of origin of the pupils in each school. The shading indicates the proportion of pupils per municipality who attend the marked EPS instead of another public school, which is measured by the number of all pupils in lower secondary level in state schools. It can be seen that the proportion of pupils in the European Curriculum varies significantly in the municipalities in which an EPS is located

Fig. 4: **Locations and catchment areas of the EPS in Luxembourg (2022/23)**



For example, in Clervaux (where the LESC is located), 20 % of lower secondary school pupils attend the European Curriculum at LESC. In the two neighboring municipalities, the proportion of pupils attending

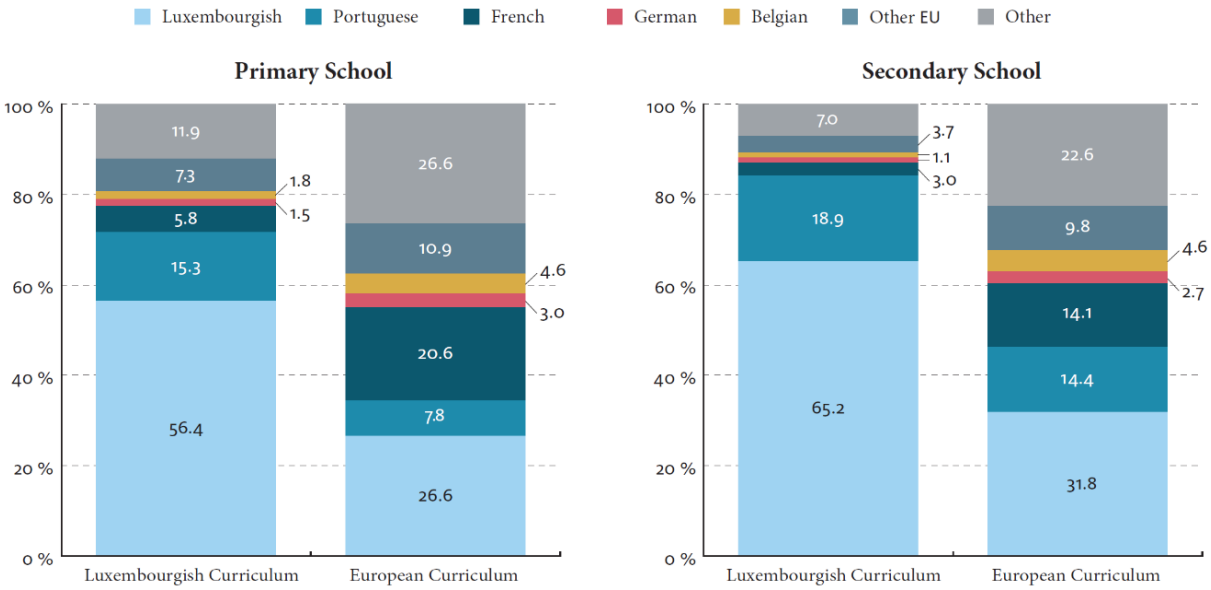
the European Curriculum at LESC is higher, ranging from 24% to 28%. In the municipality of Junglinster (where the LLIS is located), 23% of pupils attend the European Curriculum at LLIS; in Differdange (one of the two locations of EIDE), the figure is 20%. The proportion of EPS pupils is lower in those municipalities where other public secondary schools are located. For example, only 6.8% of lower secondary school pupils from Luxembourg City are enrolled in the EIGT.

The demographic composition of the student body varies greatly from one school to another, which is due to the location of the schools, as well as the language sections offered in the primary and secondary schools (Gezer et al., 2023).

4. Demographics[8]

The demographic background characteristics of students are of great importance for their educational trajectories (Lenz & Backes, 2021). Figure 5 compares the different nationalities of pupils in primary and secondary education in all schools with the European Curriculum (EPS) and in all schools with the Luxembourgish curriculum. Portuguese pupils make up the largest group of foreign nationals in schools with the Luxembourgish curriculum (15.3 % at primary level and 18.9 % at secondary level). In the EPS, on the other hand, pupils with a non-EU nationality make up the largest group (26.6 % at primary level and 22.6 % at secondary level), followed by French pupils at primary level (20.6 %) and Portuguese pupils at secondary level (14.4 %).

Fig. 5: **Distribution of pupils by their nationality in the Luxembourgish vs. European curriculum (2022/23)[9]**



[8] Data Source: Administrative student data and ÉpStan data.
[9] The data are based on the first nationality indicated in the administrative data set. It should be noted that 18 % of the Luxembourgers in the population have more than one nationality (STATEC, 2023; see also Klein & Peltier, 2024).

Figure 6 shows the distribution of pupils at primary level with regard to the language predominantly spoken at home[10], broken down by schools with the Luxembourgish curriculum and schools with the European curriculum. As can be seen, Luxembourgish is the most commonly spoken language in the Luxembourgish curriculum (45.2 %), while French (43.8 %) is the language most frequently spoken at home by pupils enrolled in the EPS. 14.5 % of EPS pupils do not speak any of the five languages (Luxembourgish, German, French, Portuguese, and English) at home but speak one or more other languages.

Fig. 6: **Distribution of pupils by language spoken at home at primary level in the Luxembourgish vs. European curriculum (2022/23)**

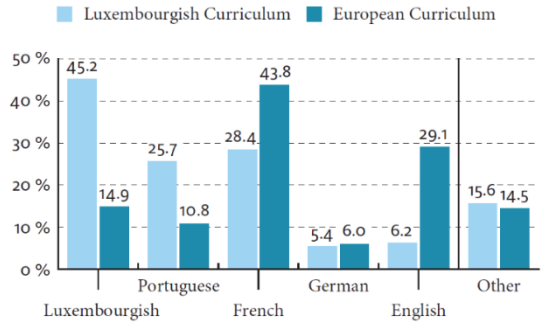
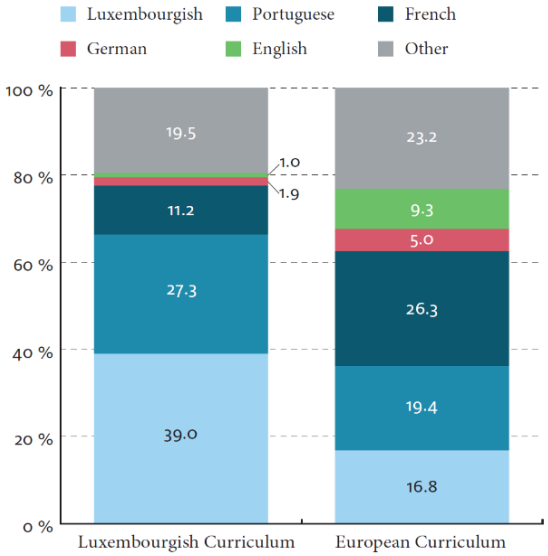


Fig. 7: **Distribution of the main language spoken at home at secondary level in the Luxembourgish vs. European curriculum (2022/23)**



A similar picture emerges for the language predominantly spoken at home by pupils at secondary level (see Figure 7)[11]. In the Luxembourgish curriculum, 39.0 % predominantly speak Luxembourgish, while in the European curriculum, the largest proportion (26.3 %) predominantly speak French. 23.2 % of students in the European curriculum mainly speak a language other than Luxembourgish, German, French, Portuguese, and English. Among this group, 6.0 % speaks a Romance Language (other than French or Portuguese), 3.7 % speaks Ukrainian, 1.6 % speaks Russian, and 0.4 % speaks an Indian language at home.

Overall social inequality in Luxembourg has tended to increase in recent years, as shown by the rising risk of poverty (STATEC, 2024). This increasing inequality in society as a whole is also reflected in schools.

[10] Since parents can report several languages, the data presented here are based on the languages spoken at home, without prioritizing the main language spoken. This means that pupils who speak more than one language appear several times in Figure 6 and the data do not add up to 100 %.
[11] Only one main language spoken at home can be reported in the administrative data set for secondary education. It should be noted that no information on the language spoken at home is available for 23.4 % of pupils in the European curriculum and for 2.1 % of pupils in the Luxembourgish curriculum.

Figure 8 shows the distribution of the socio-economic status index (HISEI)[12] of pupils in public schools in the Luxembourgish and European curricula. Students' SES was classified by using the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI, Ganzeboom, 2010), which is based on the parents' occupational status on ÉpStan data. According to this, the socio-economic status of pupils at the primary level of EPS (with a mean value of 59.4) is higher than that of the pupils in the Luxembourgish curriculum (50.3) (see also Loureiro & Neumann, 2024). The same applies to the secondary level, where the HISEI average for all pupils in the EPS (55.7) is above the average value of all pupils in schools with the Luxembourgish curriculum (44.9). However, an examination of the average HISEI values in the different school types of the Luxembourgish curriculum (ESC, ESG and ESG-VP) shows that the value of the EPS is slightly lower than that of the pupils in the academic track in the Luxembourgish curriculum (ESC).

Fig. 8: **Mean index of the socio-economic status of parents in the Luxembourgish vs. European curriculum (2022/23)**

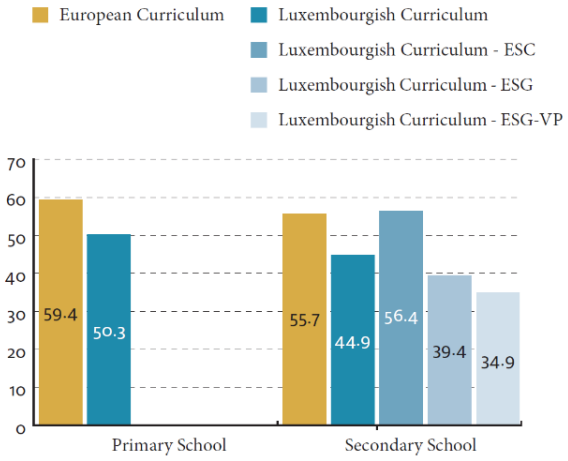
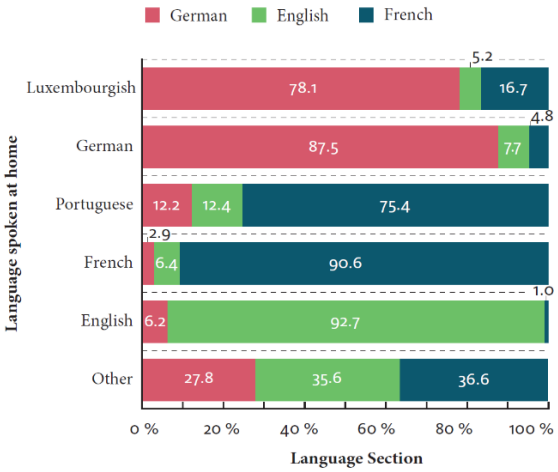


Fig. 9: **Main language spoken at home at secondary level in the EPS, broken down by language section (2022/23)**



5. Language sections in the EPS[13]

The following section focuses on the different language sections in the EPS, as they represent an essential characteristic of the new educational provision. The EPS offer three language sections which allow students to choose the language of instruction that corresponds to their first language or dominant language. Figure 9 shows the German, English, and French language sections attended by the different groups of pupils at

[12] HISEI maps the occupational socio-economic status of the parents and can have values between 10 (e.g., kitchen helpers) and 89 (e.g., doctors). The higher of the values of both parents is used in each case. HISEI was calculated based on the parents' occupational status on ÉpStan data.
[13] Data Source: Administrative student data.

the secondary level in all six EPS, broken down by the main language spoken at home in the 2022/23 school year[14].

Not surprisingly, French-speaking pupils mainly attend the French language section (90.6 %, *N* = 494), English-speaking pupils mainly attend the English section (92.7 %, *N* = 179) and German-speaking pupils mainly attend the German section (87.5 %, *N* = 91). Interestingly, however, Luxembourgish and Portuguese-speaking pupils show more variation in their choice of language section. While 78.1 % (*N* = 271) of Luxembourgish-speaking pupils attend the German section, a significant proportion also attend another language section (21.9 %, *N* = 76), with the majority attending the French section. Similarly, three quarters of Portuguese-speaking pupils are found in the French section (75.4 %, *N* = 303), while the remaining group is evenly distributed between the English and German sections.

As can be seen in Figure 9, many students choose a language section corresponding to their dominant language. This indicates that EPS offer a better linguistic fit and greater flexibility for their pupils, which would potentially help reduce educational inequalities.

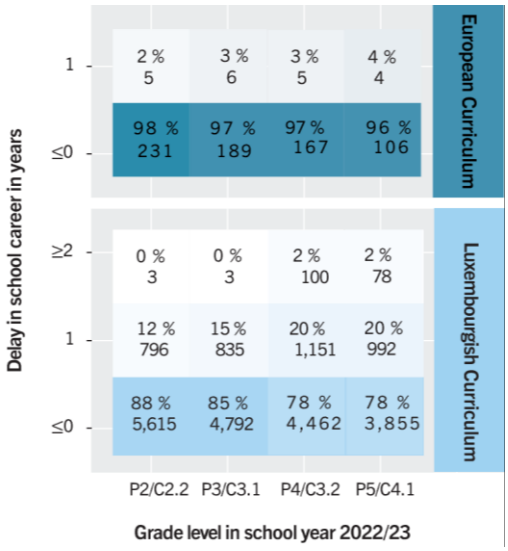
6. Educational careers[15]

In addition to the demographic composition (see Section 4) and the skills/competencies of the student body (see Colling, Grund et al., 2024), the educational trajectories of pupils are also of interest when analyzing newly created educational opportunities such as the EPS. For this reason, the delayed careers (*allongement de cycle, retard scolaire*) of primary and secondary school students are considered. Figure 10 shows the proportion and number of primary school students with a delayed career in schools following the European curriculum compared to schools following the Luxembourgish curriculum. The analysis includes all students enrolled in the school year 2022/23 who started their school career in grade 1 (C2.1, respectively P1) and remained in the same curriculum. A delay in 2022/23 was then calculated from the year in which the student first started grade 1. Accordingly, 12 % of the students following the Luxembourgish curriculum in C2.2 had a delay, while 2 % of the EPS students in P2 had a delay. The lower rate of delay in EPS (darker shaded) is also observed in later stages of primary education.

[14] Figure 9 includes 2,009 pupils (97 % of pupils following the European curriculum at secondary level) who are enrolled in one of the three language sections. The remaining 3 % are enrolled, for example, in classes for pupils who need to receive support in their transition to the regular system (e.g., *Classe d'accueil* or *Classe d'initiation professionnelle*). In order to avoid misleading interpretations, the figure is not generated for the primary school students in the EPS. This is because the administrative data for the primary level are based on the languages spoken at home, without any prioritization according to the main language spoken.

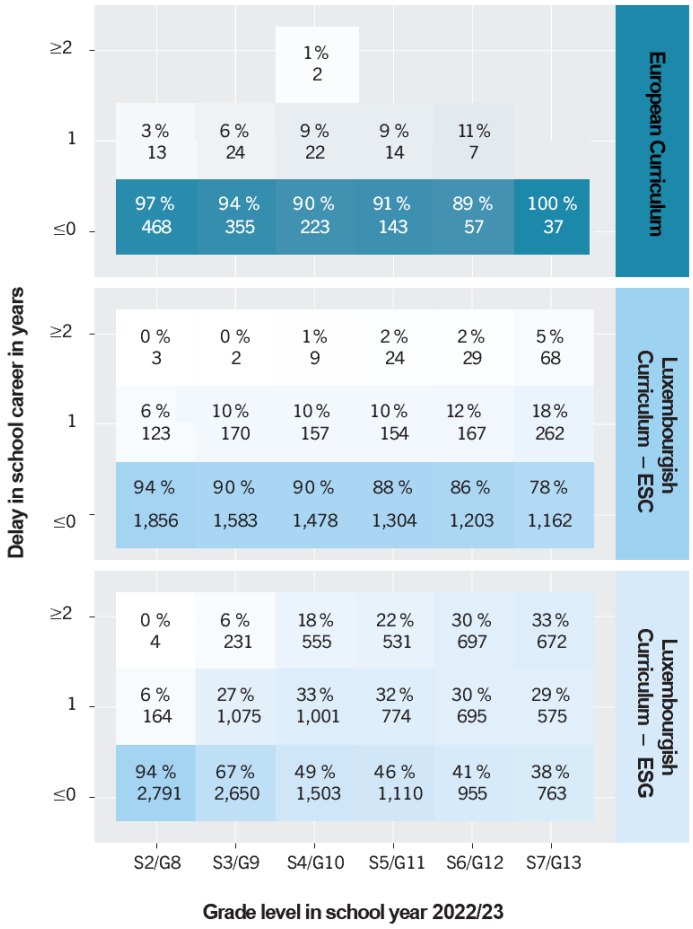
[15] Data Source: Administrative student data.

Fig. 10: **Delayed careers (number & percentage) at the primary level in the Luxembourgish vs. European curriculum (2022/23)**



At the secondary level, the delay status was calculated for those students who were enrolled in the 2022/23 school year and remained in the same curriculum since the start of secondary school (i.e., either enrolled in the EPS or in the Luxembourgish curriculum for the entire time). Figure 11 shows that EPS pupils are more likely to have an uninterrupted secondary school career (darker shaded) than secondary school pupils in the Luxembourgish curriculum. For example, in grade S5 of the European curriculum, 91.0 % of pupils have a career without delay (≤ 0), whereas in grade 11 in the ESC of the Luxembourgish curriculum 88.0 % and only 46.0 % in the ESG have a career without delay (≤ 0). The repetition of grades is therefore much less common in EPS than in schools following the Luxembourgish curriculum. It should be noted, however, that since EPS is still a relatively new school offer, only a part of its secondary school students moves from primary education in EPS. Thus, the (potential) delay in primary school was not taken into account when calculating the delay in secondary school. Considering the fact that dropout is more common among students who have already repeated a grade (MENFP, 2012), this analysis provides preliminary information on students' educational trajectories in EPS.

Fig. 11: **Delayed careers (number & percentage) at the secondary level in the Luxembourgish vs. European curriculum (2022/23)**



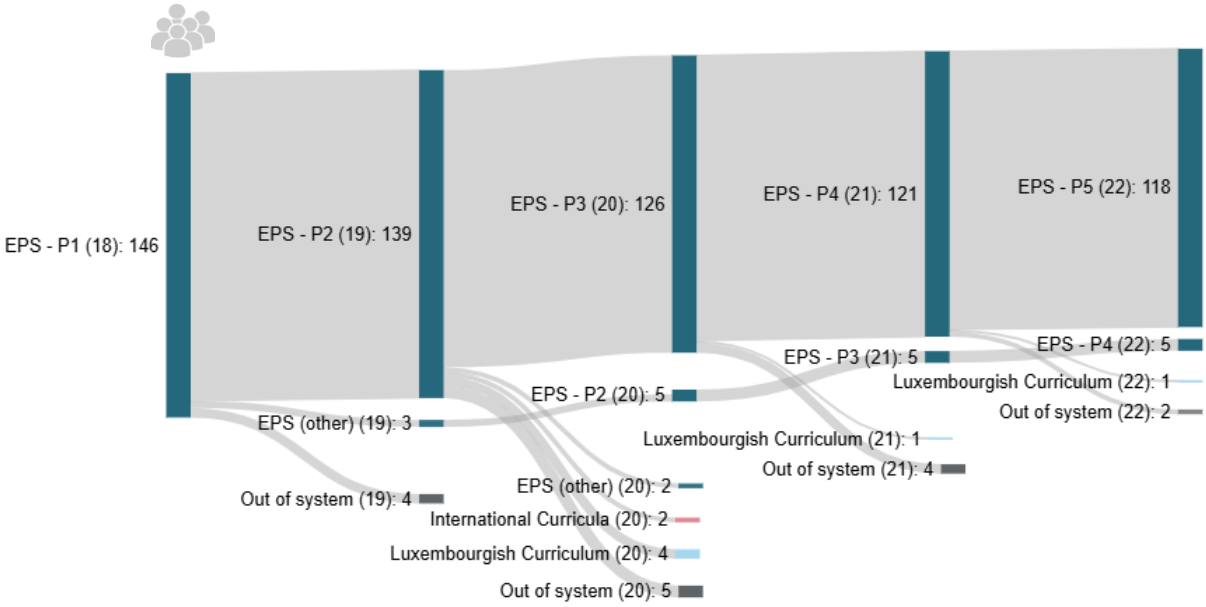
The following part examines the extent to which students' careers in EPS are characterized by continuity or discontinuity, especially in the form of changes in school type[16]. This is because a change of school or school type can be a central/critical event or a challenge to adapt to new learning methods and new requirements and to find one's own role within the new class (Koch, 2006).

In order to determine EPS students' primary school trajectories, continuity rates were calculated by using the administrative data from the school year 2018/19. Figure 12 shows that in the school year 2018/19, 146 students were registered in grade P1 of the European curriculum. Accordingly, most students remained in

[16] Students' educational trajectories are represented with Sankey diagrams, created by using SankeyMATIC. They show the number of students transitioning between school years. Each Sankey starts with a specific EPS grade level cohort in a particular school year, represented by a group symbol. The vertical bars show the distribution of students in different school years. On the left side of each bar, river arms indicate where the students were in the previous year, while those on the right show their destinations the following year.

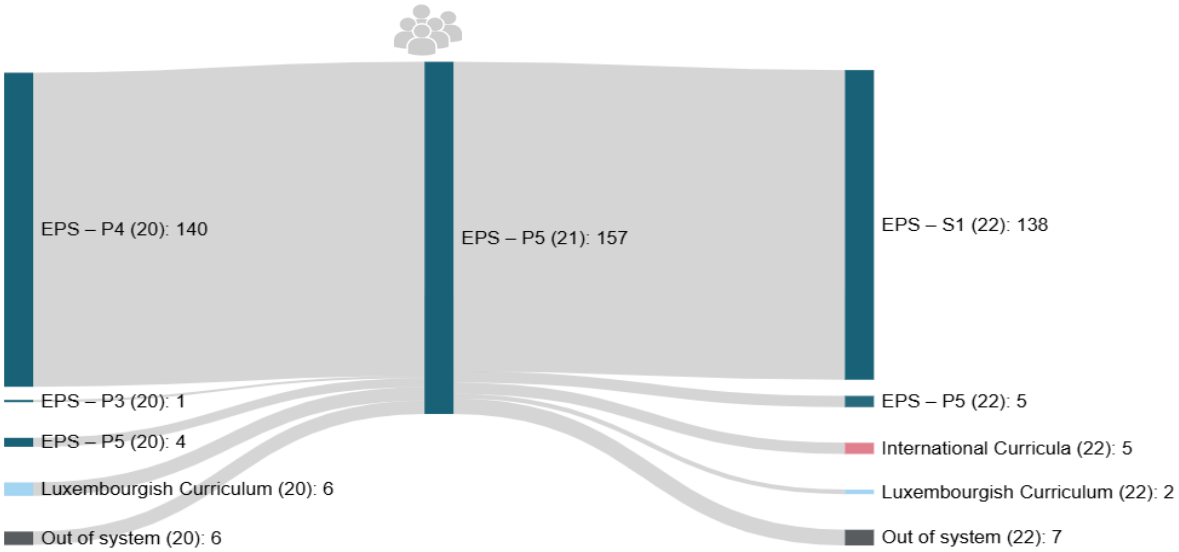
EPS in the following years and proceeded to the next grade. At the end of the school year 2018/19, 139 out of 146 EPS students (95.2 %) moved from P1 to P2. In the consecutive years, 126 students (90.6 %) moved from P2 to P3, 121 students (96.0 %) moved from P3 to P4, and 118 students (97.5 %) moved from P4 to P5. In addition to the continuity rates, survival rate (Boudon, 1974) was calculated for the same student group as a product of the continuity rates. The resulting survival rate was 80.7 % from P1 to P5 (.952 x .906 x .960 x .975), meaning that 80.7 % of the students starting in P1 in EPS in the school year 2018/19 made it to P5 in the school year 2022/23 without delay.

Fig. 12: **Primary school trajectories of P1 EPS students (2018/19 Cohort, N = 146)**



As aforementioned, in contrast to the Luxembourgish curriculum, there is no orientation in EPS after primary education, which is presented as an opportunity for a smooth transition from primary to secondary education within one school. To analyze EPS students' future educational trajectories upon completion of primary school, P5 EPS students' continuity rates were calculated. Figure 13 shows that 157 students were enrolled in P5 in the school year 2021/22. Of these students 92.4% (N = 145) were enrolled in EPS in the school year 2020/21, with 89.2 % (N = 140) transitioning from P4. Besides, some students transferred from the Luxembourgish or other curricula. Regarding P5 EPS students' further career path in the 2022/23 school year, 138 pupils (87.9 %) continued their education in the next grade level (S1) of EPS, the remaining pupils repeated the grade level in EPS (N = 5), switched to the Luxembourgish curriculum (N = 2), switched to another international program (N = 5), or left the Luxembourgish public education system (N = 7).

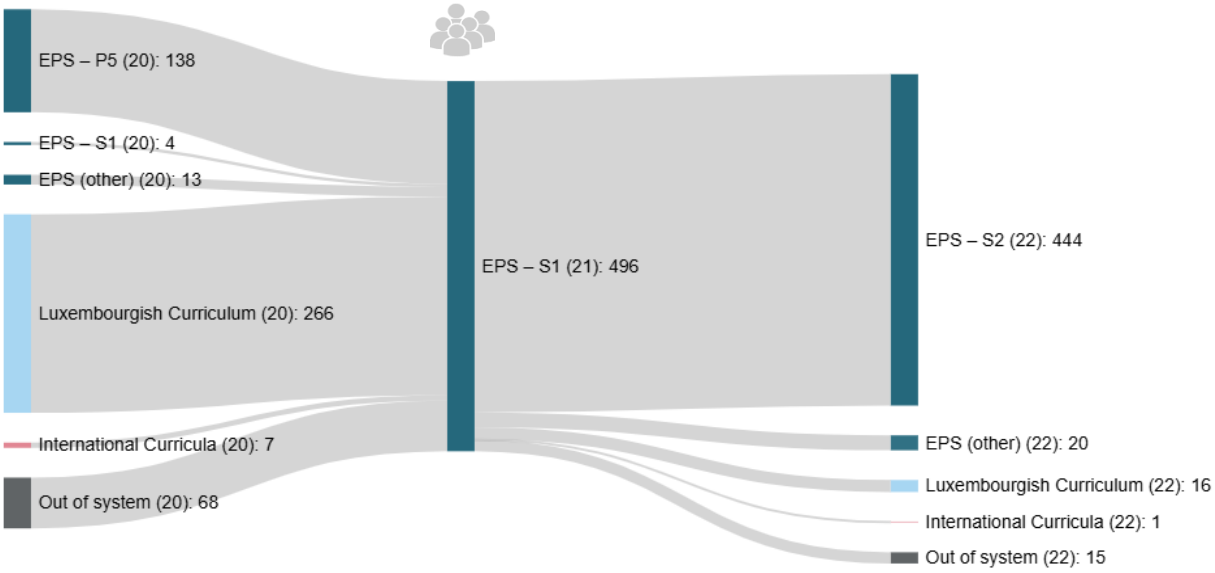
Fig. 13: ***School background and progression of P5 EPS pupils (2021/22 Cohort N = 157)***



Similarly, Figure 14 shows the further educational trajectories of the 496 pupils starting their secondary school education at EPS in 2021/22. It should be noted that, given the new establishment of the EPS, the pupil population of the first year of secondary school was partly made up of former primary school pupils of the EPS (*N* = 155, 31.3 %) (as expected, mainly coming from P5), while the majority of pupils (*N* = 266, 53.6 %) came from schools that follow the Luxembourgish curriculum, where they mostly attended C4.2 last (*N* = 251, 50.6 %)[17]. Accordingly, they were one year older at the start of secondary school than those who have already completed their primary school years at an EPS as a result of the structural differences between the two school systems (see Figure 1). 68 of S1 pupils (13.7 %) in the 2021/22 school year were newly enrolled in the school system, suggesting that EPS is also a school offer that is attended by internationally mobile pupils. Regarding these cohort's further career path in the 2022/23 school year, 444 pupils (89.5 %) continued their career path in the next grade level (S2) of the EPS, the remaining pupils repeated the grade level in the EPS or attended another offer in the EPS (e.g., *classe d'accueil*) (*N* = 20), switched to the Luxembourgish curriculum after the first year of secondary school (*N* = 16), switched to another international program (*N* = 1), or left the Luxembourgish public education system (*N* = 15).

[17] Further analyses show that the proportion of S1 pupils who have already spent their primary school years in an EPS increases with each new EPS cohort (not shown here).

Fig. 14: **School background and progression of EPS pupils at the start of secondary school (S1) (2021/22 cohort, N = 496)[18]**



As aforementioned, the European curriculum offers a comprehensive school model with no formal orientation process upon completion of primary school education. This offers a smoother transition to secondary school education within the same curricular structure. On the other hand, the Luxembourgish curriculum necessitates an orientation process for its students which orients them into different school types (see Section 2). The end of P5 in the European curriculum and C4.2 in the Luxembourgish curriculum mark the completion of primary school education, which would potentially give students an opportunity to switch systems. Therefore, it is interesting to compare the students' transition after the last year of primary school in EPS (P5 to S1) with the Luxembourgish curriculum (C4.2 to 7e, or grade 7) (see Table 1). It is also interesting to compare the retention rates after the first year of secondary school in EPS (S1 to S2) with the retention rates after the first year of secondary school in the ESC of the Luxembourgish curriculum (7e to 6e, or grade 8) to examine to what extent the students move continuously in the trajectories they have selected (see Table 2). The tables also provide further information on the progression of pupils, namely the percentages for other educational events in the curriculum (e.g., repeating a class, acceleration or changing within the same system), switching to other curricula and leaving the school system.

Looking at the progression of P5 pupils according to their language background (see Table 1, upper part, "European Curriculum"), the rate of continuous progression from P5 in the year 2021/22 to S1 in 2022/23 varied slightly in the different language groups (see bold text/numbers). For example, students who mainly speak Luxembourgish at home had a higher continuity rate (100.0 %) than their French-speaking

[18] The analysis refers to pupils in the EPS courses that lead to the European Baccalaureate. Therefore, 34 pupils attending the *Voie de préparation* at an EPS are not included here.

classmates (91.0 %), who in turn had slightly higher continuity rates than their Portuguese-speaking peers (90.0 %) or English-speaking peers (81.7 %). The progression of C4.2 pupils according to their language background depicted a slightly different picture (see Table 1, bottom part, "Luxembourgish Curriculum"). In terms of continuous trajectories, Luxembourgish, French and English-speaking pupils were oriented towards 7e in the ESC of the Luxembourgish curriculum more often than other educational paths (e.g., 7e in the ESG of the Luxembourgish curriculum or EPS), as opposed to their Portuguese-speaking peers who were mainly represented in 7e in the ESG of the Luxembourgish curriculum. Besides, their rate of continuous progression from C4.2 to 7e in the ESC varied across language groups (see bold text/numbers). For example, students who mainly speak Luxembourgish at home had a higher continuity rate (49.5 %) than their English-speaking peers (44.7 %), who in turn had slightly higher continuity rate than their French-speaking peers (42.6 %).

Tab. 1: **Transition of pupils (number & percentage) after primary education by language group in the European vs. Luxembourgish curriculum (2021/22 cohort)** [19]

	2021/22→2022/23	All Students	Luxembourgish Language Group	Portuguese Language Group	French Language Group	English Language Group
European Curriculum	Regular P5 → S1	**87.9** % (*N* = 138)	**100** % (*N* = 22)	**90.0** % (*N* = 9)	**91.0** % (*N* = 61)	**81.7** % (*N* = 49)
	EPS (other) (e.g., Repetition)	**3.2** % (*N* = 5)			**1.5** % (*N* = 1)	**3.3** % (*N* = 2)
	International Curricula	**3.2** % (*N* = 5)			**3.0** % (*N* = 2)	**8.3** % (*N* = 5)
	Luxembourgish Curriculum	**1.3** % (*N* = 2)				**1.7** % (*N* = 1)
	Out of system	**4.5** % (*N* = 7)		**10.0** % (*N* = 1)	**4.5** % (*N* = 3)	**5.0** % (*N* = 3)
Luxembourgish Curriculum	Regular C4.2 → 7e (ESC)	**38.7** % (*N* = 2,043)	**49.5** % (*N* = 1,333)	**18.9** % (*N* = 282)	**42.6** % (*N* = 577)	**44.7** % (*N* = 105)
	Regular C4.2 → 7e (ESG)	**43.4** % (*N* = 2,287)	39.6 % (*N* = 1,065)	**58.1** % (*N* = 868)	37.9 % (*N* = 513)	23.8 % (*N* = 56)
	Luxembourgish Curriculum (other) (e.g., Repetition)	8.0 % (*N* = 423)	5.3 % (*N* = 143)	13.4 % (*N* = 200)	5.6 % (*N* = 76)	6.0 % (*N* = 14)
	EPS	7.0 % (*N* = 371)	3.9 % (*N* = 106)	6.6 % (*N* = 98)	10.7 % (*N* = 145)	15.7 % (*N* = 37)
	International Curricula	0.6 % (*N* = 32)	0.3 % (*N* = 8)	0.1 % (*N* = 1)	0.3 % (*N* = 4)	6.8 % (*N* = 16)
	Out of system	2.3 % (*N* = 119)	1.4 % (*N* = 37)	3.0 % (*N* = 45)	2.9 % (*N* = 39)	3.0 % (*N* = 7)

As for the continuity rates after the first year of secondary school, pupils who started in ESC 7e in the 2021/22 school year and moved on to ESC 6e in the 2022/23 school year had a higher continuity rate (91.5

[19] Three Luxembourgish-speaking, four French-speaking, and 17 Portuguese-speaking pupils attending the *Voie de préparation* at an EPS are not listed here.

%) than pupils who moved from S1 to S2 in EPS (89.5 %) (Table 2, see bold text/numbers). When comparing the language groups, it is also clear that Portuguese-speaking pupils had higher continuity rates in the EPS (90.0 %) than in the ESC (84.9 %). French- and English-speaking pupils had slightly higher continuity rates in the EPS (93.0 % and 87.8 %, respectively) than in the ESC (91.3 % and 85.2 %). Besides, in the EPS proportionally more pupils left the system, which could be related to their demographic background and the higher level of mobility of their parents.

Tab. 2: **Continuity rates of pupils (number & percentage) in lower secondary education by language group in the European vs. Luxembourgish curriculum (2021/22 cohort)**[20]

	2021/22→2022/23	All Students	Luxembourgish Language Group	Portuguese Language Group	French Language Group	English Language Group
European Curriculum	Regular S1 → S2	**89.5 %** (*N* = 444)	**85.7 %** (*N* = 66)	**90.0 %** (*N* = 63)	**93.0 %** (*N* = 120)	**87.8 %** (*N* = 43)
	EPS (other) (e.g., Repetition)	**4.0 %** (*N* = 20)	**6.5 %** (*N* = 5)	**4.3 %** (*N* = 3)	**3.9 %** (*N* = 5)	**4.1 %** (*N* = 2)
	International Curricula	**0.2 %** (*N* = 1)			**0.8 %** (*N* = 1)	
	Luxembourgish Curriculum	**3.2 %** (*N* = 16)	**6.5 %** (*N* = 5)	**5.7 %** (*N* = 4)	**0.8 %** (*N* = 1)	
	Out of system	**3.0 %** (*N* = 15)	**1.3 %** (*N* = 1)		**1.6 %** (*N* = 2)	**8.2 %** (*N* = 4)
Luxembourgish Curriculum -ESC	Regular 7e → 6e	**91.5 %** (*N* = 1,901)	**93.5 %** (*N* = 975)	**84.9 %** (*N* = 185)	**91.3 %** (*N* = 304)	**85.2 %** (*N* = 23)
	Luxembourgish Curriculum (other) (e.g., Repetition)	7.3 % (*N* = 151)	6.1 % (*N* = 64)	14.2 % (*N* = 31)	6.0 % (*N* = 20)	11.1 % (*N* = 3)
	International Curricula	0.1 % (*N* = 2)	0.1 % (*N* = 1)			
	EPS	0.3 % (*N* = 7)	0.1 % (*N* = 1)	0.5 % (*N* = 1)	0.9 % (*N* = 3)	
	Out of system	0.8 % (*N* = 17)	0.2 % (*N* = 2)	0.5 % (*N* = 1)	1.8 % (*N* = 6)	3.7 % (*N* = 1)

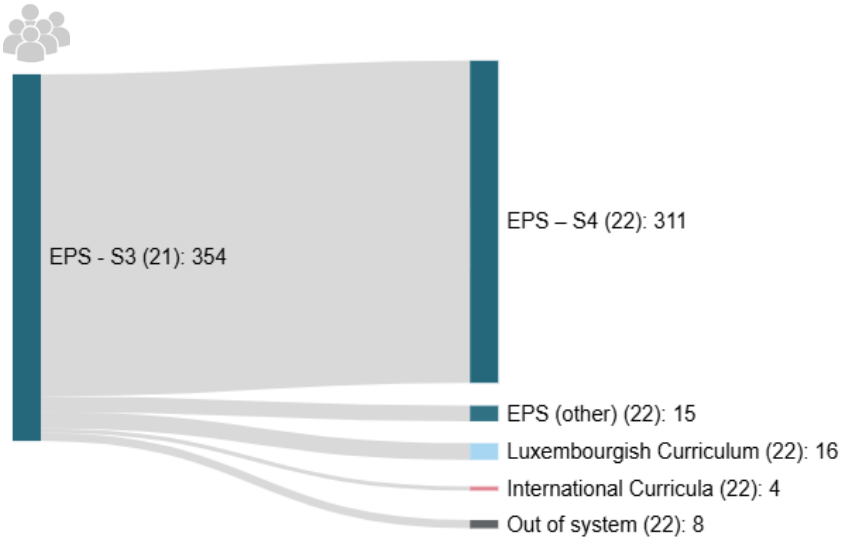
In the ESG (not shown here), the continuity rate is slightly higher. However, further interpretations are difficult because the different school types within the ESG prepare for different diplomas, and transitions between the school types are possible, which cannot be considered in detail here. Given the recent introduction and gradual expansion of the EPS, the numbers are still too small to generalize. Therefore, more data are needed for a more meaningful comparison.

Another question concerns the progression of the EPS student body after S3 (observation cycle, see Figure 1). The majority of pupils in S3 (*N* = 311, 87.9 %) subsequently continued their education in the next grade

[20] Three Luxembourgish-speaking, four French-speaking, and 17 Portuguese-speaking pupils attending the *Voie de préparation* at an EPS are not listed here.

level of an EPS (see Figure 15). A total of 20 pupils (5.6 %) changed the type of school and 8 (2.3 %) left the Luxembourgish school system.

Fig. 15: **Progression of the EPS student body after completion of the orientation cycle (S3) (Cohort 2021/22, N = 354)**[21]

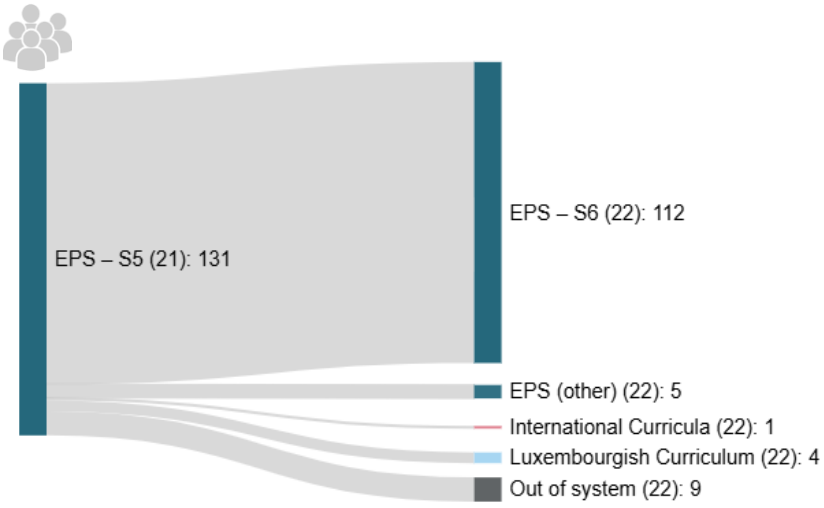


As the language of instruction in the Luxembourgish curriculum at secondary level tends to be German (in vocational education) or French (in the ESC academic track) depending on the track chosen, this may mean that those who change school type and attend a different curriculum in the following year are taught in a different language of instruction than before. Future research will therefore focus on analyzing the subsequent trajectories of those who leave EPS for another curriculum. It should then be investigated whether and to what extent a possible change of language of instruction, depending on the EPS language section previously attended and the new school track, affects the further course of educational progression. However, this requires a larger number of pupils who have already reached the upper secondary level.

A further secondary school phase in the European curriculum is completed after S5 (pre-orientation cycle, see Figure 1), so the continuation after this point should also be considered. Progression analyses of the 2021/22 cohort (see Figure 16) indicate that 85.5 % of pupils in S5 continued their career in the EPS without repeating a grade (i.e., S6). Furthermore, 6.9 % left the school system and 3.1 % switched to the Luxembourgish curriculum.

[21] It should be noted that these interpretations are based on students in regular tracks in EPS leading to the European Baccalaureate. Therefore, 20 students attending the *Voie de préparation* at an EPS in the school year 2021/22 are not reported.

Fig. 16: **Progression of the EPS student body after completion of the pre-orientation cycle (S5) (Cohort 2021/22, N = 131)**



7. Conclusions

The EPS show some differences from the public schools that follow the Luxembourgish curriculum, particularly in terms of their approach to multilingual teaching and the organization of the studies. Due to their recent history, their locations and their own curriculum, they attract certain groups more often than others. As a result, they differ from the public schools following the Luxembourgish curriculum in terms of the nationality of their pupils, the main language spoken at home, and their socio-economic background. Although there are also some differences in the demographic composition of pupils within the EPS group (see also Sattler et al., 2024), in most cases they seem to offer a better linguistic fit for their pupils, as they can choose the language section based on their dominant language. There also tends to be greater continuity in the educational trajectories of different language groups in the EPS, as well as generally fewer career delays and fewer decision-making and orientation phases. The "better linguistic fit", together with the organizational structure of the EPS, which offers a comprehensive school system without tracking, results in a school system that differs significantly from the traditional one. This system also appears to be better adapted to the current student population in Luxembourg due to these two characteristics. This is because the pupils can follow their educational progress from primary to secondary level and graduate in the language of their choice, without the language of instruction changing depending on the secondary school track chosen, as is the case in the Luxembourgish system. Changing languages of instruction can be a major obstacle to overcome, especially for pupils who do not have good access to Luxembourgish, German, and French due to their family or migration background.

At present, however, the first challenges can also be assumed for those pupils for whom the EPS do not work due to their level of aspiration or interest. The transition to a school that follows the Luxembourgish curriculum can be difficult if the predominant language of instruction there (e.g., German in the more

practice-oriented vocational training courses) does not correspond to the language section chosen in EPS and has not been studied intensively as an additional foreign language.

The statistical analyses in this article were conducted by using administrative student data (*Fichier élèves, Scolaria*) and data from the national school monitoring program (*ÉpStan*). However, due to the recent establishment of EPS and their relatively small number of pupils, further analyses for a more detailed picture or intersectional comparisons are not yet feasible. Similarly, some analyses (e.g., educational careers) had to be carried out separately for primary and secondary school levels in schools implementing the European Curriculum and the Luxembourgish curriculum or cross-sectionally for a chosen cohort. Thus, more data and longer observation periods are needed to report robust and longitudinal results and to draw stronger conclusions on this new school offer.

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