



## Luxembourg Child-And Youth-Daycare Policies as A Transformative and Gender Equitable Social Policies: A Case Study

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### Abstract

In nowadays Europe, many countries are carrying out thorough reforms to curtail their respective welfare states due to budget cuts and fiscal debt. Regrettably, the first domain in which cuts are made are child- and youth-policies, despite their scientifically proven potential in boosting both countries' demographic trends and GDPs. In contrast, Luxembourg stands out as a country slowly but progressively embarking on a social revolution, aiming at ensuring both female full employment and universal childcare. Since 1998, with the enactment of a law called “Activité Sociale, Familiale et Thérapeutique”, the State took on the direct financing of both private and public kindergarten. It doubled-down in 2009 with the “Cheque-services” (or vouchers) law, granting all families up to 40 hours/week childcare in facilities of their choice. Finally, in 2017 and 2018 it closed the circle by introducing three reforms – the “1-4 years old free childcare and the multilingual programme act; the parental assistance activities act and that on mini-nurseries – ensuring universal, free and tailor-made coverage of different types according to family needs. The aim was exposing children since age 0 to pre-schooling to enhance their non- cognitive skills and, accordingly, their life-time opportunities. As a result, Luxembourg has climbed up many positions in international rankings on childcare, going so far to be hailed in 2023 as the best country out of 194 nations by the KidsRights NGO. The paper will analyze these reforms' bright and dark sides to assess their weight and sustainability beyond what international rankings and statistics show.

The current paper indeed contends that Luxembourg quiet revolution in welfare is substantial but incomplete as it should be read against a backdrop of historical path dependency, that is the theory whereby historical decisions and inherited institutional frameworks often shape the way social protection programmes develop over time. Path-dependency theory explains why, notwithstanding the number of successive reforms with a growing universalistic approach introduced in child- care and protection since 1998 by successive government, a corporatist governance culture sticking to the principle of subsidiarity and the allocation of resources to the private sector persist, resulting in a highly fragmented system of child- and youth-care which no longer fits current societal needs, such as large provisions of spots and high quality standards.

**Keywords:** Children's rights; gender equity; social protection; sustainability, welfare state.