



LUXEMBOURG'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

Institutions, Organisations, Citizens

The Constitution defines how the Luxembourg political system is organised. The citizens elect delegates who represent them in Parliament and who vote on legislation (representative democracy). The Grand Duke is the head of state (constitutional monarchy). In practice, the Grand Duke's power is restricted to a symbolic role.

The diagram shows the current situation in a simplified form, so some regulatory bodies and institutions are not shown, for example the Court of Auditors which monitors whether the state's expenditure is legal, proper and efficient. Nor are certain public institutions (*établissements publics*) shown, such as the supervisory authority of the financial sector, and the Central Bank, which operate independently.

Furthermore, this diagram only reflects the situation at the national level. That is somewhat misleading, because the majority of our national laws are in fact predetermined by, for example, European legislation (European directives and regulations) relating to environmental and climate protection, energy, financial affairs, economy, agriculture and consumer protection.

Luxembourg's involvement in a great many international organisations further restricts the freedom of the Luxembourg Parliament. It means that national laws and regulations must not be in breach of binding international conventions which Luxembourg has signed. For example, commercial legislation is predetermined by Luxembourg's membership of the World Trade Organisation, while the country's involvement in NATO results in certain obligations in terms of military policy.

To be complete, the diagram should also show the situation at the local level, but that is only hinted at here. In fact, local authorities make most of the decisions that directly affect their citizens (building authorisation, waste disposal, bus services, etc.).

Finally, the diagram also fails to reflect the spontaneous element in policy-making: citizens have the right to mobilise – on the street, in the press, on social media – in order to influence policy and steer it in a different direction. Spontaneous agitation, for example in the form of strikes, petitions, demonstrations or even digital campaigns, can sometimes result in the political cards being radically reshuffled.

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PROFESSIONAL CHAMBERS

In addition to the Chamber of Employees (*Chambre des salariés*) and the Chamber of Civil Servants and Public Service Employees (*Chambre des fonctionnaires et employés publics*), there are also Chambers of Commerce, Skilled Trade and Crafts as well as Agriculture. Under the law, the professional chambers must give an expert opinion when it comes to new legislation or Grand Ducal regulations which primarily affect the professional group whose interests they represent.



The Economic and Social Council, (*Conseil économique et social*) made up of delegates representing employees, employers and administrative authorities, gives its opinion on important legislation affecting the economic or social order.



MEDIA

carry out research, inform the people and comment on political events. By exposing irregularities, they play a role in monitoring elected officials and institutions. The media may have their own agenda, for example if they support a particular party or represent a specific world view.



THE GOVERNMENT

is formed on the basis of a majority in Parliament. It:

- prepares draft legislation which is presented to Parliament in the name of the Grand Duke.
- executes existing legislation, i.e. government ministers and secretaries of state are in charge of their respective departments and must ensure that the objectives defined under the law are implemented.



THE COUNCIL OF STATE

checks whether draft legislation complies with current laws and the Constitution. If it objects, it can lead Parliament to amend the text. The 21 members are appointed by the Grand Duke but selected by the political parties, the government and the Council of State itself.

Who does WHAT

POLITICAL PARTIES

take part in political decision-making and help to structure political life. At election time, they prepare a manifesto stating their demands and they establish lists of candidates.



CITIZENS

elect their representatives on the local council as well as in the national Parliament (*Chambre des députés*) and the European Parliament. All Luxembourgers over the age of 18 who have not had their right to vote removed *must* vote. Under certain conditions, non-Luxembourgers are allowed to take part in local and European elections.



JUDICIARY

The courts administer justice on the basis of the current legislation.



INTEREST GROUPS

Trade unions, business associations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) acquire their legitimacy through the involvement of their members. They generally represent the views of their members or they claim to represent the public interest without trying to make a profit (humanitarian, social, ecological or church groups). By taking targeted action, for example in the form of petitions, demonstrations, surveys, press work, etc., they attempt to exert influence on the government and Parliament.



THE GRAND DUKE

- formally appoints the members of the government.
- appoints judges, either directly or on the basis of advice from the relevant court of justice. Judgments are passed in his name.
- formally dissolves Parliament.
- promulgates laws.



ADVISORY BODIES

are established by the government to advise on policy-making. This kind of expert committee exists for almost every aspect of society: from the Permanent Council for the Luxembourgish Language and the National Council for Sustainable Development to the Nature Conservation Council. Their expert opinions may be written at the request of the government or on their own initiative. They are non-binding in nature.



CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

The government is based on a majority of deputies in Parliament. Parliament:

- votes on legislation proposed by the government (after it has been scrutinised by parliamentary committees). Deputies can also put forward their own proposals for legislation.
- can amend the constitution if there is a 2/3 majority.
- can demand that the government takes particular action or can criticise it (by submitting written requests (*motions*)).