

L U X E M B O U R G

SECTION A

Capital

Luxembourg 77,401 (1996 est.)

Area

2,586 sq km (998 sq mi)

Form of government

Constitutional monarchy with two legislative houses

GDP—per capita

Purchasing power parity—\$34,200 (1999 est.)

Population

429,080 (July 1999 est.)

Ethnic composition

Luxembourg	66.6%
Portuguese	12.5%
Italian	4.8%
French	3.5%
Belgian	2.6%
German	2.3%
Other	7.6%

Official language

Luxembourgian (national)

French (used for most official purposes)

German (lingua franca)

Minority languages

German, French, English

Strictly speaking, Luxembourgian cannot be considered a minority language. It is spoken as a native language by nearly the entire Luxembourg population (about 290,000 speakers). However, a considerable number of foreigners (110,000 residents, 65,000 working along the border) neither speak nor understand Luxembourgian.

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

The Constitution, adopted on October 17, 1868

The 1984 Language Act states that French is the only language of legislation, and that French, German as well as Luxembourgian can be used for administrative or judicial purposes. Official documents are usually not available in Luxembourgian. It is clear, then, that the language is considerably marginalized in certain domains, especially in its written form. The “loi sur les régimes de langues” (Languages Regulation Law) of 1984 recommends that employees in the Public Service answer queries in the language they have been received i.e. Luxemburg, German or French. On road signs, Luxembourgian is usually put beside the official French version.

Luxembourgian is the national language and, along with the French language, used for legislative texts, an official language of the State. It is not, however, a working language of the European Union. German, the main language of the press, maintains a certain official position as well.

Background notes

Letzeburgesh is a colloquial language spoken throughout Luxembourg. It first appeared in the year 963 when Luxembourg was mentioned in documents as Lutzelburg. All Luxembourgers from every stratum of society speak their own dialect, which they consider to be a type of standard language, in all areas of their private life and most areas of public life. Where there is greater intellectual content, and in technology and administration, German and French are also used. This “bilingualism” is a centuries-old tradition. From the 12th century onwards, the county of Luxembourg had a German-speaking sector (Quartier allemand) and a Walloon sector (Quartier wallon). French became the official national language, however, when the Burgundians (1443-1477) purchased the land. This situation continued through the centuries when Luxembourg was in the hands of the Hapsburgs (1477-

1684), the French (1684-1697), the Spanish (1701-1704) and the Austrians (1714-1719). After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Luxembourg became, at least in theory, an independent state. After the Belgian revolution in 1839, Luxembourg was divided into two parts. The Quartier wallon and the area around Arlon fell to Belgium, while the Quartier allemand achieved political independence for the first time. In 1939, celebrations were held for the centenary of the London Agreement, in which a deliberate attempt was made to create a sense of national identity in Luxembourg.

Luxembourg acquired, mainly in the wake of the Second World War, the status of an officially codified language and is, thus, considered to be an essential element in the linguistic and cultural self-perception of the people of Luxembourg today.

SECTION B

The use of language in everyday life e.g. education, broadcasting and other

SCHOOLS

Letzeburgesh is best represented in primary education, which is clearly governed by Article of the Education Act: "The teaching of Luxembourgian shall be compulsory in Luxembourg primary-school curricula".

It is for this reason that Letzeburgesh is the compulsory and principal language for children in nursery schools (with the exception of a few private schools).

In all primary schools (six years of education) Letzeburgesh is a compulsory subject (half a period a week) as well as the medium of instruction in some classes for various subjects. A relatively large number of textbooks are available in Letzeburgesh for each age range. The presence of the language has increased significantly over the past ten years.

Letzeburgesh is also taught experimentally in Belgian and French schools in the border area and is offered at evening classes and language institutes.

ADMINISTRATION

Letzeburgesh may be used in the courts and is used for oral communications in particular. Documents sent through correspondence

between authorities are usually written in German or French. Since the 1984 Languages Law, the use of Letzeburgesh has also been permitted in administrative acts and municipal ordinances. Although only French, as the language of Luxembourg legislation, has full and exclusive legal validity.

Article (Language of legislation) of the 1984 Languages Law reads:

“Legislative instruments and their implementing regulations shall be drafted in French. Where legislative instruments and regulations are accompanied by a translation, only the French text shall be authentic”....

As Letzeburgesh is the national language, parties summoned to appear in court may always express themselves in that language, although in criminal proceedings the judge will address the accused in Letzeburgesh only where the accused is a Luxembourger. Witnesses testify in Letzeburgesh. All other parties speak Letzeburgesh or French. Prosecution and defense pleadings and proceedings are in French. After the judgment is pronounced, the record of proceedings is drafted in French or German, however.

Even if counsel is a Letzeburgesh speaker, he may address the court in French or Letzeburgesh. Most Luxembourg judges also have a command of the language. Oral or written requests and statements in Letzeburgesh are admissible and legally valid. Documents in court proceedings are drafted in either French or German.

Letzeburgesh is not used a great deal in communications between the central government and the people. Most documents are in French and/or German, though Letzeburgesh is sometimes used as the third language. Articles 3 and 4 of the Languages Law (“Languages of administration and the courts”) read as follows (extracts):

“In contentious or non-contentious administrative matters and in judicial matters, French, German or Luxembourgian may be used without prejudice to the special provisions governing certain matters.”

“When an application is written in Luxembourgian, French or German, wherever possible the authority shall reply in the language used by the applicant.”

Letzeburgesh is permitted without question in communications between the regional government and the people. It is the main language in oral communications. The same principle applies at the local government level. The services offered in Luxembourg are generally monolingual (French). The telephone directory is in German and French but contains a trilingual list of place names. Electricity bills and signs in the local

hospital, local post office and local police station are usually only in French.

The situation in regards to road signs in Luxembourg is as follows: the signs at the entrance to the local town council are monolingual (French), as are the signs to the local school. The names of towns and adjacent towns on road signs are in French and Letzeburgesh. Since the 1970s many French road names have been replaced by Letzeburgesh names.

MASS MEDIA

Letzeburgesh is permitted by law in the mass media and is officially supported by financial or other forms of aid. The press is multilingual in theory but is very much dominated by German. German, French and Belgian television stations can be picked up in Luxembourg. RTL "Hei Elei" (a private TV station) broadcasts entirely in Letzeburgesh for about two hours a day and about four hours on Sundays. Television films are produced in Luxembourgian as well.

Did the country ratify any international treaty dealing with the protection of minorities?

Luxembourg signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages on November 5, 1992. Luxembourg signed the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities on July 20, 1995.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF LUXEMBOURG



APPENDIX B

LUXEMBOURG - CONSTITUTION

(Adopted on October 17, 1868)

(Document Status November 5, 1998)

Article 29 (Language)

The law shall regulate the use of languages in administrative and judicial matters.

Note: The complete text of the Constitution and further information on the constitutional background of Italy are provided by the International Constitutional Law Project at the University of Wuerzburg.

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