



Luxembourg — Va-PoReg Country Report

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04/19/1839 Start (Monarchical) Electoral Oligarchy (Patriarchal): The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg became an independent sovereign state on 04/19/1839 with the Treaty of London (Schroen 2009).¹ According to the constitution, executive power is vested in the Grand Duke, who ensures the implementation of laws by issuing the necessary decrees. In practice, however, this task was already in this early regime period carried out by the government. The constitution also grants the head of state absolute freedom to choose his government members. However, the democratic principle requires that ministers enjoy not only their confidence but also that of the parliamentary majority. The right to vote was subject to a poll tax, in other words, a certain amount of tax paid, and restricted to the male population aged 25 and over.² Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Elections were considered competitive until 1913 by LIED. However, according to V-Dem's EF&FI, no elections were held until 1914, resulting in no cleanliness scores in V-Dem's CEI. Additionally, while LIED reports that political liberties are absent, the PCLI indicates that some political liberties were present. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive's constraints fell into Intermediate Category 3, between substantial limitations and executive parity or subordination. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were comprehensive.

08/02/1914 End (Monarchical) Electoral Oligarchy (Patriarchal)/Start Indirect Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Constitutional Monarchy]: In August 1914, amid World War I, Imperial Germany breached Luxembourg's neutrality by invading it with the objective of defeating France. However, despite being under German occupation, Luxembourg retained a significant degree of its independence and political structures.³ According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held during this period. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive's constraints fell into Intermediate Category 3, between substantial limitations and executive parity or subordination. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. LIED continued to code political liberties as absent. V-Dem's PCLI decreased into a range which we interpret as an ambiguous presence.

11/11/1918 End Indirect Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Constitutional Monarchy]/Start (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy: According to the Constitution, the Grand Duke retained executive authority. In this capacity, he oversees the enforcement of laws and the establishment of necessary regulations. However, in practice, these responsibilities are carried out by the government, which makes the necessary decisions and takes initiatives.⁴ The 1919 amended version of the constitution of 1868 implemented a working system of checks and balances with an independent judiciary.⁵

09/28/1919 End (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy/Start (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy: Universal voting rights were introduced in May 1919 and first applied in a referendum on 09/28/1919, then in the parliamentary elections on 10/26/1919.⁶ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Since 1918 electoral competitiveness is achieved (LIED). V-Dem's CEI affirms somewhat cleanliness until 1919. Since 1920 the

country's elections were clean. Freedom and fairness for the elections was achieved since 1919 according to V-Dem's EF&FI. Additionally, LIED still considers political liberties as absent. V-Dem's PCLI scores ambiguous outcomes until 1919. Since 1920, political liberties were somewhat present. In 1919, according to Polity5, during this period, the executive's constraints fell into Intermediate Category 3, between substantial limitations and executive parity or subordination. Since 1920, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were comprehensive.

05/10/1940 End (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]: In 1940, following the outbreak of World War II, Luxembourg's neutrality was once again violated as the Wehrmacht of Nazi Germany entered the country. Unlike the First World War, Luxembourg was considered a part of German territory during the German occupation in World War II and was informally annexed to the neighboring province of Nazi Germany, Gau Moselland.⁷ Based on our observations, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Besides, political liberties were coded as absent per LIED and can be interpreted as not really present per V-Dem's PCLI. For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.

09/10/1944 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]/Start (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy: On this date, Luxembourg City was liberated. Luxembourg is in all regime datasets classified as a democracy. RoW as well as LIED classify Luxembourg as an electoral democracy and not a liberal democracy. Luxembourg's constitutional amendment in 1948 ensured that the constitution was: „up to date with the social and economic changes that had materialized in the country by that time.”⁸ With the constitutional amendment of 1972, Article 52 was modified, the voting age was reduced to 18 years and the age for election to 21 years.⁹ Luxembourg is a parliamentary (monarchical) democracy with a unicameral system, the Chamber of Deputies.¹⁰ Political parties operate freely and independent and civil liberties as well as political rights are protected by the constitution. Luxembourg's judiciary works independent, and the grand duke appoints the judges. Per FH, for this regime period, the country is classified as free, scoring between 2 and 4, which we also place in the free category. Furthermore, both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI confirm that Luxembourg constantly achieved political liberties ever since 1946. On 10/08/2023 general elections were held. Subsequently, a coalition government consisting of the Christian Social Party (CSV) and the Democratic Party (DP) was formed. Luc Frieden (CSV) became president.¹¹ Only citizens may vote, and voting is compulsory in Luxembourg. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. In addition, since 1945 the elections score constant competitiveness (LIED). V-Dem's CEI scores full cleanliness ever since the end of German occupation. The overall election conditions are constantly free and fair according to V-Dem's EF&FI. Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust between 1945-1949 and comprehensive for the rest of the period, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were comprehensive. The Grand Duke's role is largely symbolic, with responsibilities such as representing the state on formal occasions and signing legislation (which is primarily a formality). Actual political power resides in the democratic institutions of the state.

(Monarchical) Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Notes

- ¹ <https://gouvernement.lu/en/systeme-politique.html>; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luxembourg>
- ² <https://gouvernement.lu/en/systeme-politique.html>
- ³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luxembourg#Two_German_occupations_and_interwar_political_crisis_\(1890%E2%80%931945\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luxembourg#Two_German_occupations_and_interwar_political_crisis_(1890%E2%80%931945))
- ⁴ <https://gouvernement.lu/en/systeme-politique.html>
- ⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Luxembourg#Nature_of_the_Constitution;
<https://gouvernement.lu/en/systeme-politique.html>
- ⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37
- ⁷ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luxembourg#Two_German_occupations_and_interwar_political_crisis_\(1890%E2%80%931945\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luxembourg#Two_German_occupations_and_interwar_political_crisis_(1890%E2%80%931945))
- ⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Luxembourg#1948_Amendment
- ⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Luxembourg#1948_Amendment
- ¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Irish_general_election#:~:text=Sinn%20F%26eacute%20made%20significant%20gains,and%20in%20first%20D%20preference%20votes.
- ¹¹ <https://luxembourg.public.lu/en/society-and-culture/political-system/government.html>

References

- Schroen, Michael (2009): Das politische System Luxemburgs, in: Ismayr, Wolfgang (Hrsg.), Die politischen Systeme Westeuropas. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 483-514.