



Saarland — Va-PoReg Country Report

Kailitz, Steffen, et al., 2026: Varieties of Political Regimes (Va-PoReg). Country Report Saarland, Dresden: Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/JYEL7U>

07/10/1945 Start Indirect Rule Occupation Regime [France, Democratizing Regime]: Following the withdrawal of U.S. forces, French occupation troops entered the Saar region on 07/10/1945, establishing a separate occupation administration under French control. Although the Saarland was initially administered as a military occupation zone, France soon initiated a process of controlled liberalization that differentiated the Saar from the more directly governed territories of occupied Germany. By early 1946, the French authorities permitted the formation of political parties, and on 09/15/1946 the first postwar democratic municipal elections were held. These developments created indigenous representative institutions with genuine though limited authority over local governance. While ultimate sovereignty, foreign affairs, and control over major economic and security policies remained firmly in French hands, domestic administrative and political life within the Saar began to operate through bodies that possessed domestic legitimacy and a measure of autonomous decision-making capacity.

17/12/1947 End Indirect Rule Occupation Regime [France, Liberal Democracy]/Start Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under France, Liberal Democracy]: With the promulgation of the Saar Constitution on 17 December 1947, the Indirect Rule Occupation Regime formally ended, and the Saarland was transformed into an autonomous political entity under French protection. The new constitutional framework established a parliamentary democracy with a freely elected Landtag, a government responsible to it, and fundamental rights guarantees, thereby fulfilling the institutional criteria of a liberal democracy. However, this democracy operated under significant structural limitations that justified its classification as an electoral democracy. Despite the existence of democratic institutions and electoral competition, the Saarland's sovereignty was incomplete: France retained decisive influence over foreign policy, defense, customs, and monetary matters. The Saar economy was integrated into the French economic sphere through customs and currency union, and French authorities exercised substantial leverage over major policy domains, including industrial and trade policy.

01/01/1957 End Saarland [Electoral Democracy]: The regime persisted until 01/01/1957, when the Saarland joined the Federal Republic of Germany.

For the time after 01/01/1957, see Germany, West.