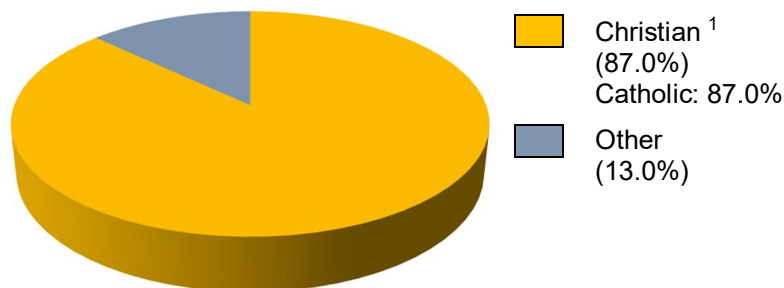


LUXEMBOURG



Area: 2,586 km ²	Population: 570,252	Political system: Monarchy	Major Language(s): French, German, Luxembourgish, Portuguese ²
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Legal framework on Freedom of Religion and actual application:

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Following a convention signed with the state, financial support is given to Christian groups including Catholics; Greek, Russian, Romanian, and Serbian Orthodox; Anglicans; the Reformed Protestant Church of Luxembourg; the Protestant Church of Luxembourg; and Jewish congregations.

After several years of negotiations in which the government aimed to drive forward the separation of church and state, on 26th January 2015 Luxembourg's faith groups and the government signed an agreement reorganising their mutual relationship.³ Accordingly, a new funding plan will severely cut state subsidies for the Catholic Church, but will be extended for the first time to the Muslim community.⁴

Under the deal reached, the following payments are set to be made: Catholic church – €6.75 million (from €23.72 million); Jewish community – €315,000; Protestant church – €450,000; Orthodox church – €285,000; Anglican church – €125,000; Muslim Shura – €450,000. Overall, however, funding would substantially decrease under the new agreement, from €24.6 million in 2014 to just €8.3 million in 2015 and beyond.

The agreement also foresees that the Centre Jean XXIII seminary in Weimerskirch will continue to benefit from state funding; however, it will be turned into an interfaith training centre under the auspices of the Higher Education Ministry. The Catholic Church's buildings and other assets are set to be transferred into a public fund, owned and managed by the Church. Talks about the future of buildings in communes are set to begin 1st January 2017 at the latest. Should a church owned by the diocese be put up for sale, the state and communes will have a first right to buy for one symbolic euro. Excluded from this rule are the Notre Dame Cathedral in Luxembourg City and the Basilica in Echternach.

Incidents

Research showed that there were no reports of incidents.

Catholic religious education at schools meanwhile is set to be replaced with a so-called ethics and morals course, including units on world religions. Prime Minister Xavier Bettel hailed the agreement, saying that negotiating partners “made history”. The Premier added that the intention had always been to create a modern and contemporary relationship between the partners.

Prospects for Religious Freedom:

Catholic Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg said in an interview that, in order to avoid a “cultural fight”, the Catholic Church was obliged to show it could preach the gospel as a significantly poorer institution. He added that his principal regret was the abolition of religious instruction in state schools in favour of general teaching of philosophical and ethical values: in his view, the state has taken away the rights of parents to determine the values their children are taught in school. He concluded that Luxembourg had moved closer to the French model of *laïcité* and suggested that this was partly because its politicians were heavily influenced by France.

In a statement on 3rd March 2016, the Association Luxembourgeoise d’Enseignant(e)s d’Education Religieuse et Morale dans l’Enseignement Fondamental (ALERF) strongly criticised the organisation of the new courses in “Life and Society”.

¹ http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_135_1.asp

² Luxembourgish (official administrative and judicial language and national language) 88.8%, French (official administrative, judicial, and legislative language) 4.2%, Portuguese 2.3%, German (official administrative and judicial language) 1.1%, other 3.6%

³ Accord du gouvernement avec les communautés religieuses établies au Luxembourg, 20/01/2015, <http://www.gouvernement.lu/4369493/20-cdp-accord>; <http://www.gouvernement.lu/4369567/Convention.pdf>
Élise Descamps, Au Luxembourg, l’Église et l’État se séparent en douceur, La Croix, 26/01/2015, <http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Actualite/Au-Luxembourg-l-Eglise-et-l-Etat-se-separent-en-douceur-2015-01-26-1272973>

⁴ <http://www.wort.lu/en/politics/church-state-funding-government-extends-state-funding-to-muslim-shura-54be525e0c88b46a8ce51cf0>