

Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

ABOUT

... Languages in Luxembourg



Contents

Origins and development of multilingualism in Luxembourg	6
Use of languages in the Grand Duchy	12
Languages in the cultural sphere	22
Measures to promote the Luxembourgish language	26



North Sea

Netherlands

Germany

Belgium

Luxembourg

France

Switzerland

Italy

There are precious few countries where, as in Luxembourg, multiple languages are in daily use throughout the entire national territory, both orally and in written form, and in every aspect of life. Luxembourg is characterised by its multilingualism: Luxembourgish, German and French are spoken on a daily basis alongside the languages of the 180 nationalities living in the Grand Duchy, in particular Italian, Portuguese and English. These languages reflect the migratory flows and the country's institutional and financial development. Together, they form an important part of the Luxembourg identity and serve as a basis for social cohesion.

Want to know more? Scan the QR code

Discover additional content throughout the chapters to enhance your reading experience.



Origins and development of multilingualism in Luxembourg

Luxembourg is a linguistic melting pot. Its heritage has been shaped by the major European powers over the centuries, and enriched by the migratory trends of the 19th and 20th centuries as well as the country's commitment to the European project. Luxembourgish is strongly influenced by elements of Germanic and Romance languages. Having existed primarily as a spoken language throughout most of its history, Luxembourgish is now well established in written form and serves as the main language of integration for foreign communities.



© LMIH/Visit Éislek | Aerial view of Vianden Castle.

The history of the Luxembourgish language from a linguistic point of view

The history of the Luxembourgish language dates back to the Early Middle Ages, more precisely the 5th and 6th centuries. At that time, the Franks – a Germanic tribe – established themselves throughout a large part of what is now France, Germany and Belgium. Their language was not uniform: dialects varied considerably from region to region. The Franconian variety spoken in our regions underwent phonetic changes, eventually giving birth to Moselle Franconian (*Moselfränkisch*). Over the centuries, that language gradually evolved into what is now known as Luxembourgish. Thus, like Dutch and English, Luxembourgish is part of the West Germanic language family.

Scan me →

For more
information on
this chapter.





The map shows the fan-like distribution of West Franconian dialects, following historical phonetic borders that developed after Germanic colonisation. Four isoglosses (phonetic boundary lines) separate the dialectal areas ranging from Dutch Franconian to Rhenish Franconian; Luxembourgish (a variety of Western Moselle Franconian; *Westmoselfränkisch*) lies between the *Dorp/Dorf* and the *dat/das* isoglosses.

Phonetic changes in Luxembourgish as a Germanic language

At the beginning of the Middle Ages, a phonetic shift gradually spread within the Frankish dialects of Western Europe. In Old Luxembourgish, this sound change occurred only partially, as shown by various specific transformations:

t (between vowels) → s(s)

Luxembourgish: **Waasser**
In English, the “**t**” subsists: **water**

p → f

Luxembourgish: **Duerf** (en. village)
In Dutch the “**p**” subsists: **Dorp**

p ≠ pf

Luxembourgish: **Päerd** et **Kapp** (en. horse and head)
German: **Pferd** et **Kopf**

Lexical influences on Luxembourgish

Between the 10th and 15th centuries, the County of Luxembourg – at that time, considerably larger than Luxembourg today – was part of the Holy Roman German Empire. It is worth noting that Luxembourg lies at the crossroads of the Romance and Germanic linguistic zones. As a result, the Moselle dialect has been influenced by the French language. In addition, Latin has also enriched the Luxembourgish vocabulary.

<u>Luxembourgish</u>	<u>Latin</u>
Mauer	murus
Wäin	vinum
Fënster	fenestra
Keller	cellarium

Words of French origin

The imprint of French and German on Luxembourgish has not faded over the course of time. Thus, the Luxembourgish language lies not at the border between those two tongues, but rather at the point where the Germanic and Romance linguistic spheres meet. Thanks to continuous interaction at both the cultural and the political level, numerous words emanating from those two languages have made their way into the Luxembourgish lexicon. Some have been adopted unchanged but with a local accent. Others, by contrast, have undergone a phonetic modification, such that it is not always easy to trace the corresponding French word.

... with a new accent

<u>Luxembourgish</u>	<u>French</u>
Bi -jou	bi- jou (en. jewel)
Pou -let	pou- let (en. chicken)
Trot -toir	trot- toir (en. pavement/sidewalk)
(Stressed syllable in bold)	

... with phonetic transformation

<u>Luxembourgish</u>	<u>French</u>
Forschett	fourchette (en. fork)
Suen	sous (en. money)
picken	piquer (en. to sting/to poke)
fëmmen	fumer (en. to smoke)

Examples of foreign words integrated into Luxembourgish

Luxembourg’s military history has also left its mark on the language, with terms such as *Fort*, *Glacis* and *Redoute*. The years following World War II have seen a further increase in the integration of foreign words into Luxembourgish. International exchanges, trilingual education (in German, French and English), immigration, Luxembourg’s multicultural character and the influence of the media have all contributed to the rapid adoption of words from a wide range of languages:

Grande surface (en. supermarket)	Elteren (en. parents)	Bungalow
Sans-abri (en. homeless person)	Printer	
Abseits (en. offside in sports)	downloaden (en. to download)	

The history of the Luxembourgish language from an institutional point of view

1,000 years of multilingualism

The country takes its name from *Castellum Lucilinburhuc*, a Latinised Old High German term meaning “small castle” and mentioned in a medieval Latin text. The castle was established by Count Siegfried (-919 to 998). Over the centuries, the territory of the county – which later became a duchy – grew to encompass 10,000 km² and a multilingual population in the 14th century.

The French presence, first under Louis XIV in 1684 and later under the Revolutionary troops in 1795, led to the use of French as an administrative and legislative language, at the expense of Latin, which saw its influence wane. The introduction of the Napoleonic Code in 1804 established French as the dominant language in legal matters. In everyday life, however, Luxembourgish remained the predominant spoken language.



© LMIH/Focalize | The Bock fortifications and Neimënster Abbey.

19th century

Following the Belgian Revolution, the territory of Luxembourg was divided in 1839. The western portion of the country was incorporated into the Kingdom of Belgium, while the eastern part became an independent country. In 1842, Luxembourg joined the *Zollverein*, an economic union dominated by the German Confederation. This resulted not only in an inflow of German capital and companies, but also attracted skilled German workers into the country. Subsequently, German established itself as the preferred language in economic circles. As for the workforce, it came from Italy. Between 1875 and 1910, some 10,138 Italians settled in Luxembourg, mainly in the south of the country, and left their mark on society and the language.

In the printed press, German took a prominent position, while French remained the language of law and administration. Legislation was published both in German and French.

The first study plan, governing the functioning of primary schools in the Duchy of Luxembourg, was drawn up in the 1770s under the Austrian regime led by the Empress Maria Theresa, providing for the simultaneous learning of the German and French languages. In 1843, the law on primary education enshrined multilingualism in Luxembourg: from this point on, German and French were taught in primary school as mandatory subjects on an equal footing. Luxembourg then began to forge its own linguistic identity at the crossroads of the German- and French-speaking cultural spheres. Moreover, in the context of the academic reform introduced in 1912, the Luxembourgish language was mentioned for the first time in national legislation.

At the same time, Luxembourgish experienced a true cultural revival as a language of national identity. During this time, the first dictionaries were published. Countless poems, songs and stories were also written in Luxembourgish. Among the most notable works is *Ons Heemecht* (“Our Homeland”, 1859), a poem by Michel Lentz. In 1864, the composer Jean-Antoine Zinnen wrote an accompanying melody which later became the national anthem of Luxembourg. Equally noteworthy is the significant role played by theatrical works composed in Luxembourgish, in particular the extremely popular operettas and vaudeville shows written by Edmond de la Fontaine, better known under the name of “Dicks”.

20th century

During the German occupation from 1940 to 1944, in parallel with efforts to enforce the cultural assimilation of the Luxembourg people, the occupying regime sought to eradicate all traces of French from public life. Thus, French was no longer taught in school, and the names of streets were changed. Even individuals were assigned new names to meet the German requirements: Jean-Pierre became Johann Peter, Catherine became Katarina. In the same vein, Luxembourgish was officially relegated to the rank of a dialect to justify the incorporation of Luxembourg into the German Reich. But the 1941 census, in which the occupiers sought to impose responses that reflected their ideology – for example by declaring German to be the respondent's native tongue – resulted in failure. Despite the propaganda, censorship and intimidation, a significant proportion of the population replied "Luxembourgish" or left the boxes blank. In that context, the Luxembourgers also heard their Grand Duchess, then in exile in London, address them in Luxembourgish over the BBC airwaves.

After 1945, Luxembourgish further strengthened its position as the central cultural factor in Luxembourg's identity. The position of French as a widely used language was consolidated. This trend was due to a backlash against Germanification. Moreover, during this period, French words were favoured in the Luxembourgish language. The Constitution of 1948 also removed the provision that the German and French languages were on an equal footing and left it to the legislator to regulate their use.

The law on the language regime, adopted in 1984, marked a turning point. It promoted Luxembourgish to the rank of national language and stipulated that Luxembourgish, French and German share the status of administrative and legal languages of the country.

In 1989, Luxembourgish gained official recognition at the European level through the *Lingua* programme, affirming its sociocultural resurgence.

The economic boom in the second half of the 20th century and the hosting of European institutions in Luxembourg attracted a new wave of foreign workforce. This saw the arrival and establishment of sizeable communities of Portuguese-, Italian- and English-speakers, as well as significant numbers of speakers of Balkan languages, enriching the linguistic environment. At the same time, the establishment of European institutions in Luxembourg led to the emergence of various expatriate communities that further diversified the domestic melting pot.

21st century

While French, English and German are key languages in the workplace, Luxembourgish continues to benefit from measures to promote its use. Furthermore, the onset of digital media has considerably helped to broaden the use of Luxembourgish as a written language for the first time in its history. This has resulted in a large increase in the use of Luxembourgish in print and on the web.

When it comes to obtaining Luxembourg nationality, knowledge of Luxembourgish is required. The law of 8 March 2017 on Luxembourg nationality stipulates that passing a language proficiency test is one of the requirements for naturalisation.

As for its official status, Luxembourgish is enjoying a significant boom, being now expressly mentioned in the Constitution, the fundamental legal text defining the functioning of the State. Since 1 July 2023, the Constitution of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has recognised Luxembourgish as the country's national language, while stating that the use of the Luxembourgish, French and German languages is regulated by law. This change strengthens the legal basis for the promotion of Luxembourgish and confirms the country's multilingual character.



© LMIH/Aleksander Cano | Lighting of the restored blast furnaces at Belval.

Personenstandsaufnahme vom 10. Oktober 1941

Zählkarte für Ortsanwesende

(für alle Personen, eingetragen unter Abschnitt A der Haushaltsliste)

Von Zähler auszufüllen	Kreis :	Gemeinde :
	Wohnplatz (Ortschaft) :	
	Straße und Hausnummer :	
	Zählbezirk Nr. :	Haushaltsnummer : (d. i. lfde. Nr. in der Kontrolliste)
1.	Familienname (Zuname) : <i>Feyder Paul Wm</i> bei Frauen Geburtsname : <i>Lick</i> Vorname (Rufname) : <i>Elisabeth</i>	
2.	Stellung zum Haushaltungsvorstand : <i>Haushaltungsvorstand</i> (wie Spalte 3 der Haushaltsliste)	
3.	Familienstand : <i>ledig</i> , verheiratet, verwitwet, geschieden (wie Spalte 5 der Haushaltsliste — Nichtzutreffendes streichen) verheiratet mit : geborene : geboren am : in :	
4.	Geburtsjahr : <i>1887</i> Geburtstag : <i>12. 5.</i> Geburtsort : <i>Luxemburg</i> falls außerhalb Luxemburgs, Land und Kreis : (wie Spalten 7 und 8 der Haushaltsliste)	
5.	jetzige Staatsangehörigkeit : <i>Luxemburgerin</i> (wie Spalte 10a der Haushaltsliste, Doppelstaater haben beide Staatsangehörigkeiten anzugeben. Falls jetzige Staatsangehörigkeit nicht durch Abstammung erworben ist : Art des Erwerbs (z. B. Option, Heirat) : Zeitpunkt des Erwerbs : Etwaige frühere Staatsangehörigkeit : Zeitpunkt des Verlustes :	(Dieser Raum bleibt frei)
6.	Hauptberuf : Stellung im Hauptberuf : Nebenberuf(e) : " " Nebenberuf : (wie Spalte 11 der Haushaltsliste) Wo und bei wem beschäftigt : (wie Spalte 13 der Haushaltsliste)	
7.	Muttersprache : <i>luxemburgisch</i> (In der Regel besitzt jeder Mensch nur eine Muttersprache, in welcher er denkt und deren er sich in seiner Familie und im häuslichen Verkehr am liebsten bedient, weil sie ihm am geläufigsten ist, z. B. deutsch, italienisch, französisch, polnisch. Doch kommen auch besonders bei Personen in gemischt-sprachigen Gebieten Fälle von Doppelsprachigkeit vor. Kinder, welche noch nicht sprechen, und Stumme sind der Muttersprache der Eltern zuzuzählen. — Dialekte (Mundarten), z. B. luxemburgisch, platt-deutsch, gelten nicht als Muttersprache).	

© Private collection of Sven Knepper

The census form of October 10, 1941, included questions on nationality, native language, and ethnic affiliation. Even though Luxembourgish was classified as a dialect by the occupying forces and therefore not recognised as a mother tongue, "Luxembourgish" is still indicated here in that very field.

Use of languages in the Grand Duchy

Moien,
bonjour, hallo,
bom dia, hello,
buongiorno...

Welcome to Luxembourg! Thanks to its cosmopolitan character, the Grand Duchy enjoys a highly unique position in Europe. With a growing number of residents from the four corners of the globe, it is hardly surprising that the number of languages spoken is ever growing. Luxembourg stands out owing to its linguistic diversity, visible in everyday life, in politics, at work, in school and in the media.

Scan me

For more
information on
this chapter.



Multilingualism in daily life

People in the Grand Duchy use several languages on a daily basis to express themselves or to understand others – at any time of day and in any situation.

Luxembourgers therefore live in a true linguistic melting pot. A short stroll through the capital is enough to experience this. Listen closely, and you'll hear the world's languages blending seamlessly into a multicultural soundscape. Whether it's on café terraces, in the streets, on public transportation, in supermarkets, at a football match or during an outing with friends. It is a genuine linguistic wonder that begins in the

morning at the bakery where you order your croissant in French, switch to Luxembourgish for lunch and then move to English when asking the barman for the bill in the evening.

This practice – known as code-switching, the fluent transition from one language to another – is therefore a normal part of daily life for all residents of the Grand Duchy. This is hardly a surprise: with foreign residents making up 47% of the population and nearly a quarter of a million cross-border commuters travelling to Luxembourg each day, multilingual communication has become the norm.



© SIP | Bilingual street signs in French and Luxembourgish.

Language use: it all depends on the context

Multilingualism is omnipresent in the Grand Duchy. Luxembourgish, French, German, English, Portuguese, Italian and Spanish are the most common languages. However, the linguistic landscape is characterised by trilingualism, with Luxembourgish occupying a central position as the predominant language, i.e., the language most frequently used in everyday life.

A similar linguistic spread is reflected in a promotion project carried out within the University of Luxembourg, entitled *Étude variationniste sur la communication des jeunes au Luxembourg: une analyse des structures d'usage dans les interactions par messagerie instantanée* ("Variationist study concerning communication of young people in Luxembourg: analysis of usage patterns in interactions via instant messaging"). This research is based on a sample, with a view to analysing the ways in which languages are used by young people on social networks. It shows that, in their written exchanges on platforms such as *WhatsApp*, *Snapchat* or *Instagram*, young people mainly use the following languages: Luxembourgish, followed by English in second place, French in third, and

German in fourth. The languages of the communities with the greatest presence in the Grand Duchy, such as Portuguese, Italian and Spanish, and the languages of the countries of the former Yugoslavia, bring up the rear. Whilst this project highlights the linguistic practices of young people online, the study mentioned below broadens the perspective by exploring the use of languages in everyday life.

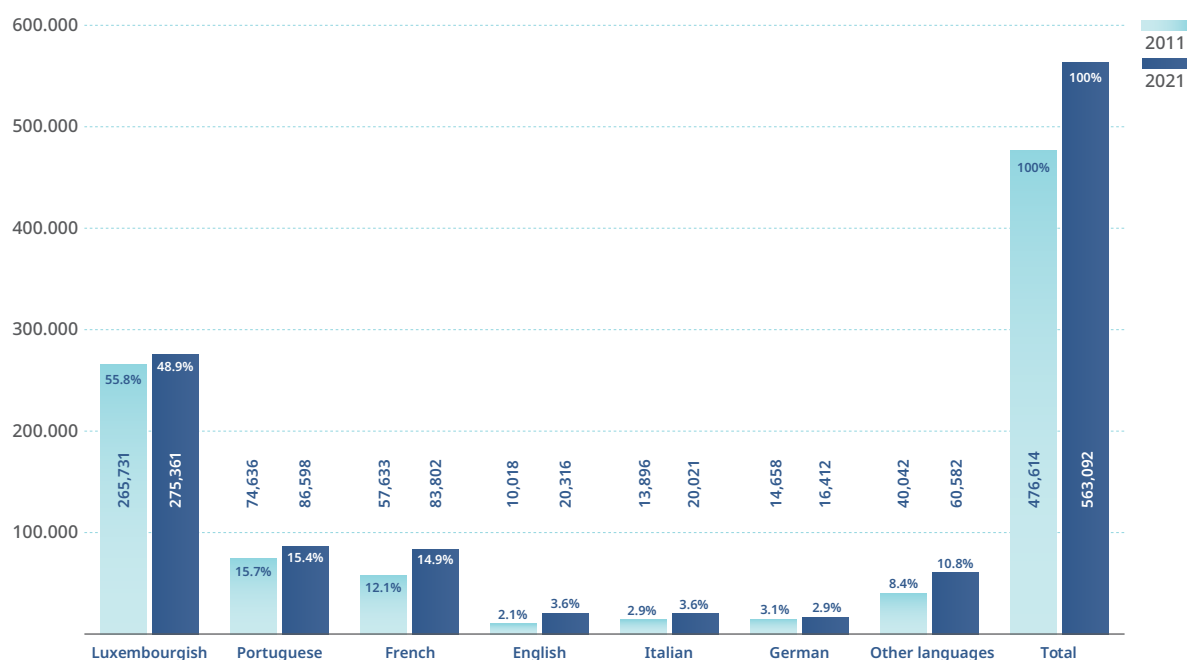
According to the study by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (Statec), entitled *Une diversité linguistique en forte hausse* ("Linguistic diversity on the rise"), based on the 2021 population census, Luxembourgish remains the main language used by those who have been living in Luxembourg for a long period of time – generally, people also possessing Luxembourg nationality. By contrast, only a tiny fraction of immigrants has any knowledge of Luxembourgish upon arriving in the country. Some of them, and above all their children, learn it gradually. Others become integrated mainly through French, which remains the language most used on the labour market today.

This integration model, well established ever since the 30-year post-war boom (1945-1975), today faces two new challenges:

- Luxembourg's economic growth has accelerated sharply, bringing with it a rise in population unparalleled elsewhere in the European Union – and an even greater increase in the working population. Since the 2011 census, the population has increased by 33.1%, rising from 512,353 to 681,973 inhabitants.
- The linguistic profile of the new immigrants is increasingly diversified. English and other languages are gaining ground, both as “main languages” and as “languages usually used”.



Comparison of the population by main language in 2011 and 2021



Source: Statec, Census 2021, No. 08

Statec's study distinguishes between the notions of “main language” and “language usually used” for the purposes of analysing the linguistic landscape in Luxembourg. Whilst this approach is undoubtedly useful when it comes to identifying linguistic minorities, it nevertheless makes it difficult to arrive at an accurate reading of the real situation in the Grand Duchy, whose population is regarded as being broadly multilingual. Consequently, the study does not make it possible to estimate the number of Luxembourgish speakers.



© LMIH/Focalize | Linguistic diversity accompanies Luxembourg's demographic growth.

Official languages

Since 2023, the Luxembourgish language and multilingualism have been enshrined in the Constitution. The use of languages is governed by the law of 24 February 1984 on the language regime. This law officially established Luxembourgish as the country's national language and also determined the use of other languages in official documents. Therefore, legislative acts and their implementing regulations are drafted in French. In administrative and legal matters, French, German and Luxembourgish can be used.

Citizens have the same choice when contacting administrations. However, the administration is not strictly bound to respect the citizen's linguistic preference. For example, "when an administrative request is drafted in French, German or Luxembourgish, the administration must use, as far as possible, the language chosen by the applicant for its response." (Art. 4 of the law of 24 February 1984 on the language regime)

Languages in politics

In the parliamentary context, no formal rules govern language use. This freedom of choice demonstrates the importance of the linguistic rights of the deputies. Nevertheless, in recent years, French has been gradually disappearing from the parliamentary floor, in favour of Luxembourgish. Thus, the standard debates and public session reports of the Chamber of Deputies are, in the majority of cases, conducted in Luxembourgish.

In written communications – notably, important statements and declarations or parliamentary questions – ministers previously tended to use French rather than Luxembourgish. Today, however, Luxembourgish is increasingly used in these written exchanges. Overall, the relatively infrequent use of German in national public life is counterbalanced to a certain extent at the municipal level. In the *Gemengebuett*, the municipal publication that keeps citizens informed about the social, cultural, political and financial activities of their municipality, German is commonly used, often together with French, Luxembourgish and, in some cases, Portuguese and English. The choice of language largely depends on the linguistic profile of the municipality concerned.



© LMIH/Sabino Parente | The working language may vary depending on the professional context.

Languages in the professional world

The business environment in Luxembourg is as multilingual and diverse as the country itself. The languages at work may vary, depending on the company, the sector of activity, the type of service provided or the specific role of the administration. Luxembourgish, French, German, English and Portuguese are the languages spoken most regularly on building sites, offices, among colleagues or in meetings. It is also common to use more than one language at work.

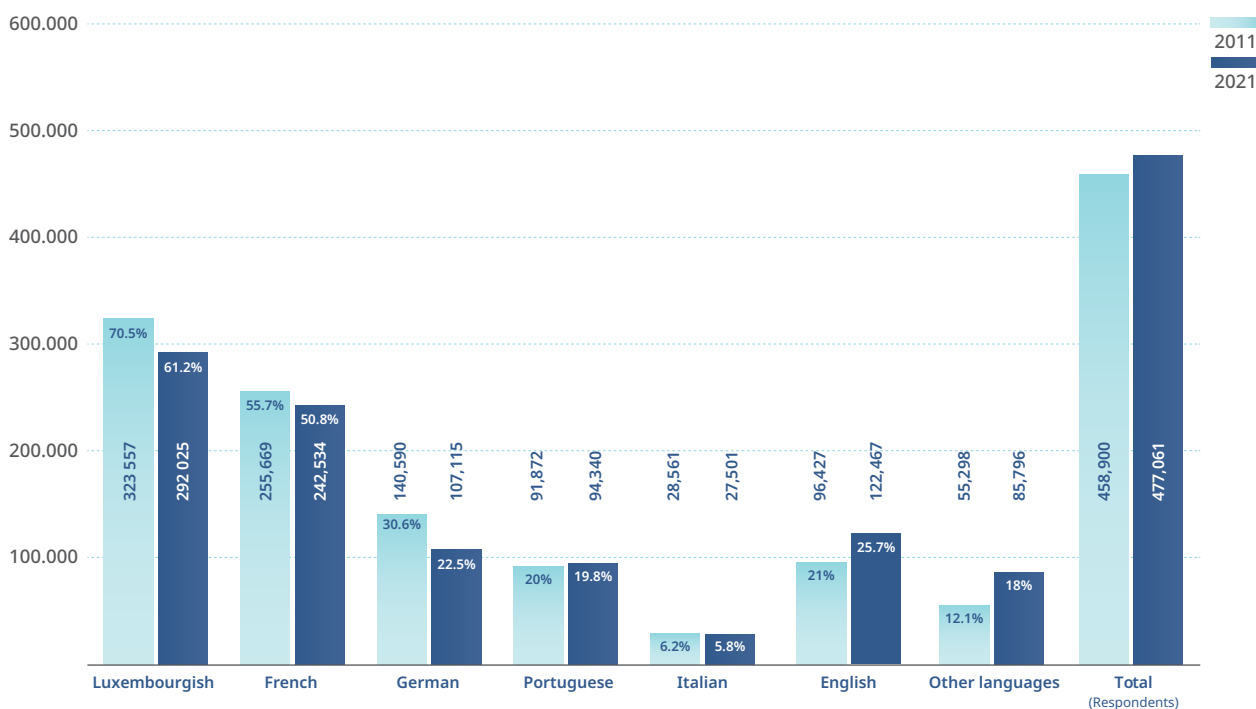
Over the past few decades, Luxembourg has been enriched by the mother tongues of its residents and foreign professionals. English, in particular, is increasingly used in sectors such as finance, insurance or research. In similar fashion to French, it is often used as a *lingua franca* during meetings.

Multilingualism is considered a real asset by employers. French remains the most sought-after language in all professional fields of activity. Luxembourgish is most in demand in public administration, the public transport sector, education, the health and care professions, communication-related roles and all other sectors where Luxembourgish citizens are important customers.

In 2021, Luxembourgish remained the most spoken language in Luxembourg, despite a proportional fall-off in its use. French is widely used, followed by English, the use of which is on the rise. The use of German has decreased significantly in terms of the number of speakers, whereas Portuguese continues to be widely spoken. Lastly, there has been a considerable increase in the use of “other languages”, reflecting a growing linguistic diversity.

Languages spoken at work, at school and/or at home

(Multiple answers possible)



Source: Statec, Census 2021, No. 08

Languages at school

The education system in Luxembourg is multilingual. In general, German is the *lingua franca* in primary education and in the lower classes of secondary school. In the upper classes of secondary education, the majority of lessons are taught in French. This multilingualism is a key asset in an open and diverse world, but also a challenge for students from different language backgrounds. Therefore, public schools also offer French- and English-speaking international classes, as well as reception classes and the assistance of intercultural mediators.

Introduction to multilingualism from an early age

In Luxembourg, the cost of attendance at a bilingual crèche receives generous State support. Early childhood education (from the age of three) is optional. Mandatory primary education begins at the age of four and consists of four cycles of two years each.

During early childhood education and cycle 1 of primary education, teachers speak Luxembourgish as much as possible. The main aim is to develop the language skills of all children, especially those of foreign origin for whom school is often the first contact with Luxembourgish. Since the introduction of a multilingual educational programme in crèches, the introduction to the French language has also become one of the objectives of cycle 1.

In cycles 2 to 4 of primary education, other languages are introduced and taught. Literacy is taught in German, while French is introduced as a spoken language in cycle 2 and in writing in cycle 3. The language of instruction is German. Starting in the 2027/2028 school year, the option to choose between German and French instruction is set to be offered at schools, with certain subjects taught in Luxembourgish.

English and other modern languages

Secondary education is intended for adolescents from the age of 12. It includes public institutions – most of which are secondary schools (usually *lycées*), private schools (following either the official curricula set by the Ministry or alternative programmes) or European schools. Depending on the option chosen, the curricula vary in their multilingual scope, offering an impressive variety of language-learning possibilities. Secondary education lasts seven years if completed without repeating a year.

In secondary school, German remains the language of instruction in the lower classes, with the exception of French and mathematics. English is taught from the second year of secondary school, except for students in the Latin section who start to learn English one year later. Some secondary schools also offer an introduction to the Chinese language. In classical secondary education, French becomes the *lingua franca* from the fourth year onwards. From the fifth year onwards, students can add a fourth modern language, such as Italian, Spanish or Portuguese. In general, secondary education, German remains the language of instruction, with the exception of certain subjects or classes with a specific language regime, which are taught in French.

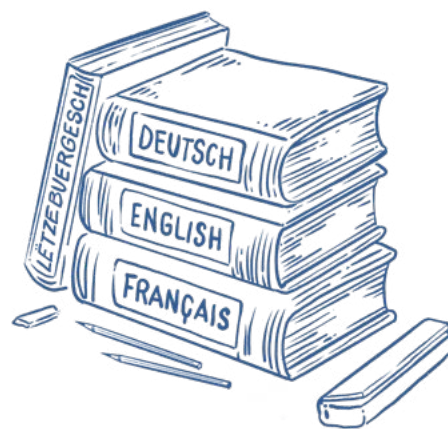
General and classical secondary education include specific programmes for pupils who have completed part of their schooling abroad and who do not speak one of the Grand Duchy's three administrative languages.

Extracurricular activities

For both primary and secondary school students, around fifty cultural institutions and organisations offer language and cultural heritage classes. Some organisations also certify acquired skills, helping students gain access to higher education in their home countries.

Studying in several languages

The University of Luxembourg also actively fosters multilingualism, which is one of its fundamental principles. In general, French and German are the languages of instruction. Nevertheless, some courses may require a working knowledge of English. The University also offers a programme in Luxembourgish Linguistics and Literature.





© Unsplash/Nathan Cima | A multilingual, diverse, and constantly evolving education system.

The Luxembourgish school system

Educational level	Age of pupils	Details
Primary education		
Cycle 1	3 years	Preschool education (optional)
Cycle 2-4	4-5 years 6-11 years	Preschool education (mandatory) Primary school education (mandatory)
Secondary education	12-18/19 years	School is mandatory until the 1st of September following the 16th birthday. Starting in the 2026/2027 school year, it will be mandatory until the age of 18.

Luxembourgish is also taught as a foreign language. All international schools are obliged to provide Luxembourgish classes for their students.

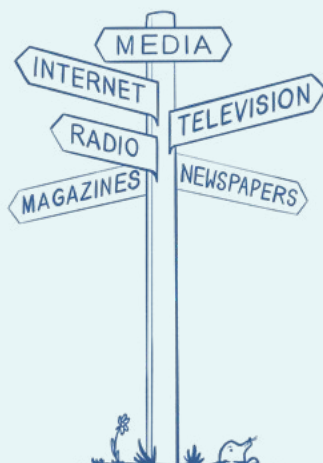
Public international schools are open to all students and charge no registration fees. They offer French, English, or German sections at both primary and secondary levels. Some of these establishments also offer preschool classes for children from the age of 3 in a multilingual environment, following the programme of the European schools. Private international schools supplement the multilingual range of education on offer in the country.



© SIP | A print media range adapted to linguistic diversity.

Languages in the media

Multilingualism is also prominently reflected in the Luxembourg press, which mirrors the country's linguistic diversity. In response to this social, cultural and multilingual context, national media have adopted a multilingual approach. Thus, the written press, as well as radio and television channels, offer content in several languages, including French, German, Luxembourgish, Portuguese and English.



Written press

In the print media, German remains the most widely used language, especially in the country's multilingual daily newspapers, such as the *Luxemburger Wort*, the *Tageblatt* or the *Zeitung vum Lëtzeburger Vollek*. Other newspapers are printed exclusively in French, such as *Le Quotidien* or *L'essentiel*. The first newspaper for the large lusophone community, *Contacto*, which started out as a monthly, is now a weekly newspaper.

In terms of weeklies and periodicals, the situation is quite similar. The oldest of the general news weeklies, *d'Lëtzeburger Land*, is published in several languages, including French, English and Luxembourgish. The same applies to *Woxx*, a weekly newspaper which publishes news articles mainly in German and French. Language choice also depends on the publication's target audience: the weeklies *Revue* and *Télécran*, aimed at a family readership composed mainly of Luxembourgers, are published in German. *Delano*, an English-language magazine, caters to Luxembourg's international community.

In short, Luxembourg's publications can be characterised as an "omnibus" press. They are indeed aimed at all social categories and cover news ranging from international news to national politics, the economy and sports, and are published in the most common languages of the country. This is also the case with the online press.

Regarding language use, consumers are most frequently given a choice between German-, French- and English-language versions. For example, the *reporter.lu* portal offers a mixture of languages and regularly publishes articles in Luxembourgish. As for *rtl.lu*, its publications are entirely available in Luxembourgish, whereas *RTL Infos* offers a selection in French and *RTL Today* in English.

Television

Inevitably, multilingualism also influences the consumption of audiovisual media, especially television. While the choice of television channels was limited in the 1970s, today's screens offer a vast array of multilingual programming. Thanks to satellite and digital television, Luxembourg is connected to the whole world, giving viewers access to a wide variety of cultures.

Nevertheless, the majority of residents watch French and German television. Among French-speaking viewers, channels such as *TF1*, *France 2*, *M6*, and *RTBF La Une* are particularly popular. Among German-speaking audiences, channels such as *ARD*, *ZDF*, *RTL*, and *Pro7* are the most popular. By contrast, the Portuguese channel *TVI Internacional* has a more modest audience.

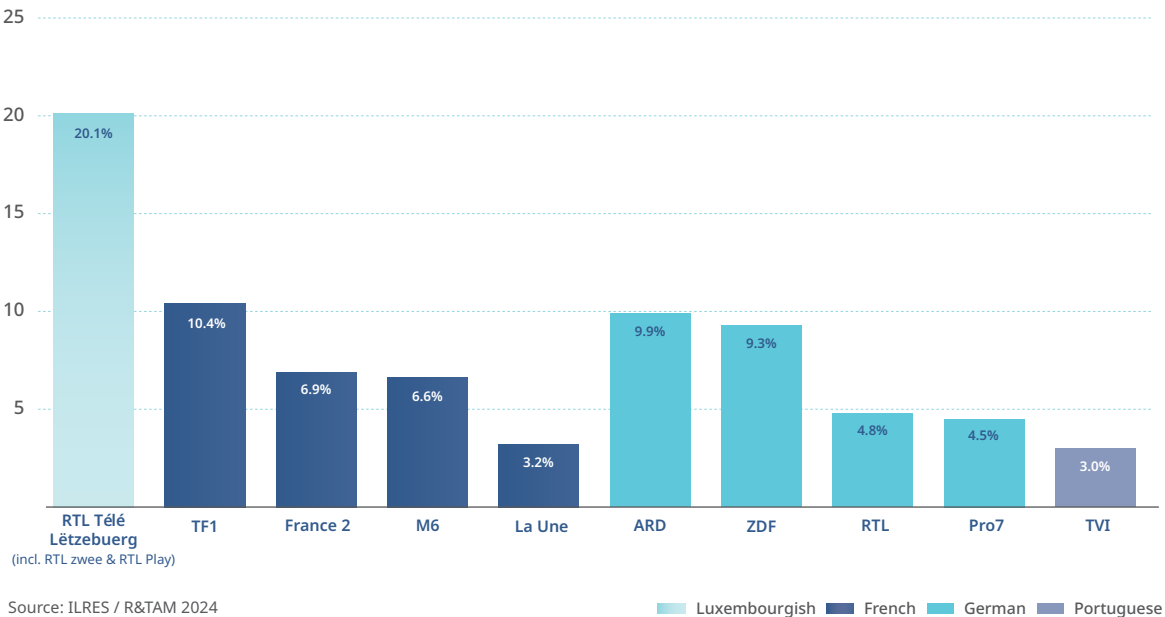
In 1991, Luxembourg took a huge leap forward on TV with the launch of a daily news bulletin and television programme on *RTL Télé Lëtzebuerg*. Today, the RTL group's channels – *RTL Télé Lëtzebuerg*, *RTL Zweek*, and *RTL Play* – reach 20.1% of the Luxembourgish population.

Radio

Radio stations in Luxembourg reflect the socio-cultural fabric of the country. The range of broadcasters reflects the diversity of their audiences. *L'essentiel Radio*, which reaches around 10.5% of the population daily, broadcasts in French. *Radio Latina* (2.4%) broadcasts in Portuguese and Spanish, while *RTL Radio* (6.2%) offers its programming in German. Although it has a more modest daily audience, *Radio ARA* broadcasts in French, German, English and Luxembourgish, as well as in Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and other languages.

Unlike other media, radio in Luxembourg offers the widest range of programmes in Luxembourgish. *RTL Radio Lëtzebuerg* (31.3%), *Eldorado* (16.2%) and *Radio 100,7* (5.2%) all give pride of place to the Luxembourgish language and record the highest daily reach.

Popularity of TV channels by language
(Based on most popular channels – daily reach)



Languages in the cultural sphere

Emblematic of its place at the heart of Europe, Luxembourg's commitment to the European project and its openness to other cultures are reflected in its multilingual cultural scene. In a globalised world, cultural rootedness is especially important for a small country like Luxembourg, shaped by its multilingual history and society. Located at the crossroads of Germanic and Romance influences, and shaped by migration, Luxembourg has developed a distinctive culture born of linguistic and cultural exchange – a key element of its national identity today. The wide range of events on offer in various languages serves as a means of integration for all residents.

Luxembourgish literature

Literary works in Luxembourgish, such as Anton Meyer's *E' Schrek ob de' Lezeburger Parnassus* ("A step up the Luxembourg Parnassus", 1829) and Michel Rodange's national epic *Renert oder de Fuuß am Frack an a Ma'nsgrëßt* ("Renert, the Fox in a Sunday Suit and in Human Shape", 1872), are prime examples of the golden age of literary production in Luxembourgish at the end of the 19th century. However, the term "Luxembourg literature" is not limited to works written in the Luxembourgish language. In fact, the various influences of other languages contribute to shaping the literary landscape of the Grand Duchy. Thus, authors in Luxembourg often opt for a particular language depending on their individual preferences. This is the case for Jean Portante, who mainly writes in French; Claudine Muno and Jemp Schuster, whose work is mostly in Luxembourgish; and Ulrike Bail and

Elise Schmit, who mainly express themselves in German. However, it is also common for authors to switch between languages from one work to another, as is the case with Anise Koltz, Guy Rewenig, Nico Helminger, Carine Krecké and Lambert Schlechter. In 2018, Jeff Schinker published *Sabotage*, a novel written in four languages, in which the characters and the plot take a back seat. Instead, the languages, in similar fashion to everyday life in Luxembourg, are the real protagonists.

While Luxembourgish, French, and German remain the most popular languages among writers, there is strong interest in foreign-language books in Luxembourg. Bookshops and libraries regularly offer publications in English, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish.



© SIP | A literary scene enriched by multiple languages.

On stage

In Luxembourg's theatre scene, local productions, international co-productions, and performers from both the Grand Duchy and abroad share the stage. The wide range of languages used in performances allows plays to be staged in their original version, reflecting the openness of Luxembourgish society towards other cultures. This linguistic diversity, combined with world-renowned companies and performers appearing in the Grand Duchy, attracts international audiences to Luxembourg's theatres.

Scan me

For more
information on
this chapter.

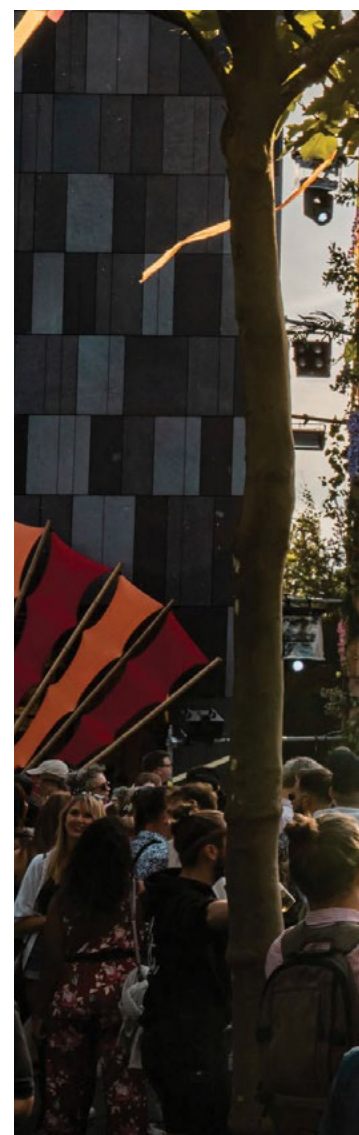


Audiovisual productions

In Luxembourg, film enthusiasts can enjoy movies in their original version with French and German or French and Dutch subtitles.

In recent years, national film and TV series production has become increasingly successful. Multilingualism also plays a vital role in these productions, and there is a noticeable emergence of films shot in the various languages spoken in Luxembourg, as well as of multilingual productions. The second season of the *Capitani* series perfectly illustrates the way people regularly switch between languages – sometimes within the same sentence – a hallmark of everyday social life in the Grand Duchy.

Luxembourg's linguistic diversity is also reflected in international co-productions, where it once again proves to be a real asset, contributing to the country's reputation well beyond its borders. *Mr Hublot*, the winner of the 2014 Academy Awards in the best short film category, was not only a triumph for audiovisual production in Luxembourg but also a fine example of cross-border cooperation (Luxembourg/France). *Bad Banks*, another successful multilingual project, is a German-Luxembourgish co-production that was nominated in the "Best Drama Series" category at the International Emmy Awards. Similarly, the television series *Capitani*, a coproduction between Samsa Film, RTL Télé Lëtzebuerg, Artémis Productions and Shelter Productions, reached the top ten in numerous countries after being streamed on Netflix.



© SIP/Jean-Christophe Verhaegen | Behind the scenes of the filming of *Capitani* Season 2.



© LMIH/Aleksander Cano | With its international artists and unique atmosphere, the Luxembourg Open Air (LOA) attracts a cosmopolitan audience.

Multilingual music scene

The music scene in Luxembourg benefits from the linguistic wealth of the country. Whether it is rock, pop, jazz, rap or metal, artists from the Grand Duchy perform in the language of their choice – and always find an audience for their music in Luxembourg. *Adriano Selva*, formerly known as *CHAILD*, began his career singing in English before branching into French-language music. The hip-hop group *De Lâb* and the artist *Nicool* rap in Luxembourgish, while *Maz Univerze* has decided to do so in English. The wide range of events on offer at music venues such as the Philharmonie, the Rockhal and Den Atelier, as well as the numerous festivals and concerts throughout the country, attract people from beyond its borders.

The diversity of languages in cultural production reflects the richness of the linguistic make-up of Luxembourgish society. This polyphonic production is listed by the National Library of Luxembourg under the collective term “Luxemburgensia”. This name encompasses all literary works and printed documents either written by Luxembourgish nationals or produced in Luxembourg or with Luxembourg as their subject, irrespective of the language of creation. To further research in this area, a specialised institution has been set up: the National Literature Centre (*Centre national de littérature*).

Measures to promote the Luxembourgish language



© LMIH/Sabino Parente | Daily life naturally unfolds in several languages.

Luxembourgish plays a significant role in the multicultural and multilingual context of the Grand Duchy. In fact, it facilitates integration and social cohesion while strengthening cultural identity. The objective of the measures implemented to promote the language over the last few years is to create a linguistic and cultural policy that is in harmony with all stakeholders in society.

Standardising Luxembourgish and emphasising its importance

Since the 1980s, the role of Luxembourgish has shifted in the Grand Duchy. Its official recognition as a national language in the law of 1984 on the language regime marked a decisive step, firmly consolidating its position as a language of communication, a language of integration and a language of cultural output as evidenced by its mention in the 2023 Constitution.

For years, Luxembourg has been committed to promoting Luxembourgish as well as the multilingual context. In 2017, a strategy to promote the national language was set up, along with guidelines for a long-term policy. A year later, that commitment was confirmed by the law of 20 July 2018, together with the 20-year action plan and the setting-up of authorities tasked with implementing the measures for the promotion of Luxembourgish: the Commissioner for the Luxembourgish language and *the Zenter fir d'Lëtzebuurger Sprooch* (ZLS – “Centre for the Luxembourgish language”), as well as the Permanent Council for the Luxembourgish language (CPLL), established in 1998, which continues to support efforts to promote the language.



© ZLS/Flo Döhmer | The traveling exhibition "D'Lëtzebuergeser Sprooch(en)" by the ZLS.

The principal mission of the ZLS is to support and bolster the use of Luxembourgish. It plays a key role in the standardisation and evolution of Luxembourgish by drawing up and updating spelling and grammar rules for the language. The Centre also undertakes awareness-raising and training initiatives, organising educational events and projects designed to promote the language amongst both the general public and professionals. Moreover, it contributes to the enrichment of the language and fosters research in this area by publishing works and linguistic resources that help people to better understand and master the Luxembourgish language.

The ZLS provides innovative digital tools to support the use of Luxembourgish:

1. *Lëtzebuergeser Online Dictionnaire – lod.lu*

An online dictionary offering translations in four languages (German, French, English and Portuguese), with examples of the way the words are used, synonyms, audio pronunciation and sign language.

2. *Spellchecker.lu*

A spellchecker enabling users to correct texts in Luxembourgish.

3. *Sproochmaschinn.lu*

This website combines two complementary tools:

- *Schreifmaschinn* – an automatic transcription tool (speech-to-text) that converts spoken language into written text.
- *Liesmaschinn* – a vocal synthesis tool (text-to-speech) that reads aloud texts written in Luxembourgish.

Scan me

For more
information on
this chapter.



Learning Luxembourgish at all levels

Measures to promote the Luxembourgish language and culture are integrated into the education system from an early age. The Ministry of Education, Children and Youth is in the process of developing multilingual teaching aids for primary education and optional courses such as *Orthographie, Lëtzebuergesch Kultur a Literatur* ("Orthography, Culture and Literature of Luxembourg") and *Kreatiivt Schreiwen am Lëtzebuergesch* ("Creative Writing in Luxembourgish") are gradually being introduced into secondary education.

Outside mandatory education, Luxembourgish is taught primarily by institutions such as the National Institute for Languages (INLL), particularly for adult learners. Since 2023, the INLL has been recognised as the national authority for learning Luxembourgish.

The institute:

- offers courses ranging from level A1 to level C1 in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Courses are also available in other languages.
- organises the *Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch* (LaF, "Luxembourgish as a Foreign Language") and *Sproochentest* exams, which are required for naturalisation, and certifies linguistic skills in Luxembourgish.
- develops teaching materials and digital tools, including the *llo.lu* platform.



© INLL | The INLL, a key player in learning Luxembourgish and other languages in Luxembourg.

In addition, the Department of Adult Education (*Service de la formation des adultes, SFA*) provides support for the provision of courses in municipalities and partner organisations, thereby facilitating wider access to training across the country.

Employees and self-employed people are entitled to 200 hours of language-learning leave per career to learn or improve their Luxembourgish. Through this initiative, the government not only offers support to individuals wishing to learn the national language, but it also helps to promote Luxembourgish as the primary language of integration.

The *Biergerpakt* ("Citizens' Pact"), created by the 23 August 2023 law on intercultural living together, is open to all adults living or working in Luxembourg, regardless of nationality,

residence status or length of stay. Joining the *Biergerpakt* is voluntary and gives access to the intercultural living together programme. The programme consists of three introductory modules to life in Luxembourg, including a language module enabling participants to get to know the country's official languages in an informal way. Through a diverse range of activities, participants can reach at least introductory level A.1.1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in one or more of Luxembourg's administrative languages (Luxembourgish, German and French). There are also advanced modules, taking into account the diversity of participants and offering a choice of activities and training courses aimed at encouraging exchanges and the practice of languages.



© INLL | Learning materials from INLL: The series *Schwätzt Dir Lëtzebuergesch?* ("Do you speak Luxembourgish?").

Tomorrow is multilingual

The Luxembourgish language is thriving. Its development and the learning of the language are actively supported by the State, which sees it as both a living part of the national heritage and a pillar of social cohesion. For that reason, the promotion of Luxembourgish goes hand in hand with the encouragement of multilingualism. This complementarity lies at the heart of the Luxembourg linguistic model, where multilingual proficiency is seen as a major asset for society. After all, languages bring people together – and Luxembourg may well claim to be a real "peaceful Babel", in which Luxembourgish and linguistic diversity reinforce our ability to live and thrive together.

Bibliography

- Blasen, P., & Scuto, D. (2024, May 26). *L'histoire du temps présent „98 Prozent dreimal 'luxemburgisch'" bei der Personenstandsaufnahme 1941? – Teil 2*. Tageblatt. <https://www.tageblatt.lu/headlines/98-prozent-dreimal-luxemburgisch-bei-der-personenstandsaufnahme-1941-teil-2/>
- Chambre des députés. (1984). *Loi du 24 février 1984 sur le régime des langues*. Mémorial A, n° 16.
- Hoensch, J. K. (2000). *Die Luxemburger: eine spätmittelalterliche Dynastie gesamteuropäischer Bedeutung 1308-1437*. Kohlhammer.
- ILRES. (2024). *Le paysage des médias audiovisuels au Luxembourg* (Unpublished study). IP Luxembourg.
- Mujkić, M. (2025). *Étude variationniste sur la communication des jeunes au Luxembourg: une analyse des structures d'usage dans les interactions par messagerie instantanée* (Unpublished doctoral project). Université du Luxembourg, in collaboration with the Zenter fir d'Lëtzebuerger Sprooch.
- Pauly, M. (2011). *Geschichte Luxemburgs*. C.H. Beck.
- Heinz, A., & Fehlen, F. (2016). Regards sur les langues au travail. *Regards*, (11). Statec.
- Reiff, P., & Neumayr J. (2019). Le luxembourgeois reste la langue la plus utilisée à domicile. *Regards*, (9). Statec.
- Fehlen, F., Gilles, P., Chauvel, L., Pigeron-Piroth, I., Ferro, Y., & Le Bihan, E. (2023). Une diversité linguistique en forte hausse. *Regards*, (8). Statec.
- Peltier, F., & Klein, C. (2023). Une population de plus en plus cosmopolite: Une nouvelle représentation de la situation démographique du Luxembourg. *Regards*, (5). Statec.
- Statec. (2025, avril). *Évolution de la population selon la nationalité 1875–2021*. Lostat. <https://lustat.statec.lu>

Additional sources

- Fehlen, F. (2009). *BaleineBis: Une enquête sur un marché linguistique multilingue en profonde mutation. Luxemburgs Sprachenmarkt im Wandel*. SESOPI (RED 12).

Editor and author

Information and press service of the
Luxembourg government

33, boulevard Roosevelt
L-2450 Luxembourg
(+352) 247-82181
edition@sip.etat.lu

www.gouvernement.lu
www.luxembourg.lu

Print

Imprimerie Centrale

Translation

Traducta

ISBN 978-2-87999-301-0
September 2025

With the support of

Kommissär fir d'Lëtzebuenger
Sprooch

4, boulevard Roosevelt
L-2450 Luxembourg
(+352) 247-86600
info@mc.etat.lu

www.mcult.gouvernement.lu

Zenter fir d'Lëtzebuenger Sprooch

163, rue du Kiem
L-8030 Strassen
(+352) 247-88600
lod@lod.lu

www.zls.lu

Institut national des langues
Luxembourg

21, boulevard de la Foire
L-1528 Luxembourg
(+352) 26 44 30 1
info@inll.lu

www.inll.lu

