

# Small States Challenges to democracy

Your country  
Luxembourg

Created by: Anna-Lena Högenauer  
Presented by: Anna-Lena Högenauer

Index	Luxembourg
V-Dem project, 2019; rank and score from 0 to 1, with 1 representing higher quality	
Liberal Democracy Index	22/ 0.765
Electoral Democracy Index	9/ 0.874
Liberal Component Index	38/0.862
Egalitarian Component Index	5/0.934
Participatory Component Index	117/0.443
Deliberative Component Index	5/0.969
Sustainable Governance Indicators (2020)	
Quality of Democracy	7.6/ ranked 13th
The Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy index, 2018; rank and scores between 0 to 10, where 0 to 4 are Authoritarian regimes, 4.01 to 6 hybrid regimes, 6.01 to 8 flawed democracies and 8.01 to 10 full democracies	
Electoral process and pluralism	10.00
Functioning of government	8.93
Political participation	6.67
Political culture	8.75
Civil liberties	9.71
Regime type	12/8.81

# Small States The quality of democracy in the country

“Objective” measures

## Small States

### The quality of democracy in the country – Subjective perception

- Trust in political institutions is high: (Standard Eurobarometer July-August 2020)
  - 73% trust the national government (compared to 40% across the EU-27)
  - 66% trust the national parliament (compared to 36% across the EU-27)
- According to a Statistica survey of 2019, 89% of respondents were satisfied with the quality of democracy in Luxembourg.  
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/586133/public-opinion-about-democracy-in-luxembourg/>

# Small States

## Social cleavages

- This is difficult to analyse in detail due to a lack of detailed data over time on who votes for whom
- However, Luxembourgish politics are generally very centrist and an overwhelming majority of votes go to the four centrist parties.
- There are no ethnic minority parties.
- A potential hidden cleavage is between nationals and foreign residents, who now make up almost 50% of the population. There are thus large minority groups, but they do not vote in national elections.
  - Finding a way to politically integrate the large group of foreign residents will be one of the major challenges in the future.

# Small States

## Mobilisation of anti-democracy sentiment

- This is not an issue in Luxembourg
- The ADR (Alternative Democratic Reform Party) mobilizes some anti-elite sentiment on the right, but this is not a large movement
- There are no large anti-government or anti-elite protests.

# Small States

## Corruption and inefficiency

- Corruption is not a major problem in Luxembourg.
  - In 2019, it was ranked 9/180 countries and had a corruption score of 80/100 (here a score of 100 means 'clean').  
<https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/luxembourg#>
  - This is largely supported by other evaluations:  
<https://www.ganintegrity.com/portal/country-profiles/luxembourg/>

# Small States

## Extremist and populist parties

- Luxembourgish politics are very centrist
- Parties on the far right/left are small:
  - Kommunist Party of Luxembourg (not represented in parliament)
  - Déi Lenk (far left, but not extremist – 5.5% of the vote in 2018)
  - ADR (Alternative Democratic Reform Party, populist right-wing party, 8.3% in 2018)
  - Déi Konservativ (leans towards the extreme right, 0.5% in one of the four electoral districts in 2018).
- The ADR has populist tendencies as regards the debates on immigration and foreign residents. It also tends to oppose stringent Covid-19 measures.

# Small States Direct Democracy

- In Luxembourg, it is possible to hold referendum. Recent examples include
  - The referendum on changes to the constitution (2015)
    - Giving foreign residents the right to vote in national elections (rejected)
    - Limiting ministers to two terms in office (rejected)
    - Lowering the voting age to 16 years (rejected)
  - The referendum on the Draft Constitutional Treaty of the European Union (2005: accepted)
- In addition, Luxembourg has a petition system that allows citizens to push topics that collect enough signatures onto the parliamentary agenda



# Small States

## Democracy and COVID-19

- The impact of Covid-19 on democracy was not too extensive
  - A state of emergency was called
    - But limited to 3 months by the constitution (non-renewable)
    - The government can only impose a state of emergency for 10 days, then the prolongation by 3 months has to be approved by parliament
    - Parliament cannot be suspended – it continues to meet and deliberate.
    - Parliament can lift the state of emergency whenever it wants
    - The government can rule by decree, but only where decrees are necessary and they cannot be used to suspend parts of the constitution.
    - Parliament can vote laws whenever it likes and can also overrule decrees if necessary
    - However, there were some complaints by the opposition that the government did not always inform parliament to the fullest possible extent.
  - Personal data was still being protected. The names of infected people were not published, nor was information that made them identifiable published
  - Willingness to accommodate demonstrations and political activity as long as safety rules are respected (masks, social distancing rules etc.)

# Small States

## Prospects of democracy

- Luxembourg has a very centrist political landscape and consensual politics
- Participation in elections among Luxembourgers is very high, as mandatory voting has socialized people into active participation.
- The democratic system is very stable even in times of crisis (e.g. Covid-19; financial crisis and eurozone crisis).
- There are, however, some challenges ahead:
  - The integration of foreign residents into Luxembourgish politics:
    - Luxembourgers only make up about half of the population, so politics may soon be determined by a minority of residents.
    - Where foreign residents have the right to vote (European Parliament elections, local elections), the participation rate of foreign residents is very low.
  - Are politics too centrist and consensual?
    - The last elections (2019) triggered complaints about the extent of agreement of the four biggest parties.
    - There is a risk that the lack of debate may encourage protest votes.