



Honorary distinctions of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Principal Luxembourg orders	3
The Order of the Gold Lion of the House of Nassau	4
The Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau	5
The Order of the Oak Crown	9
The Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg	12
Other orders, medals, crosses and insignia	15
Wearing of insignia	16
Return of insignia	16
Legislation	17

Honorary distinctions are an integral part of a nation's cultural traditions. They reward individuals in recognition of outstanding personal or professional achievement, manifested in deeds or works, defending a cause for the good of the community or in specific fields.

Principal Luxembourg orders

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg awards several orders, medals, crosses and insignia. Among this variety of honorary distinctions, the following four main orders of Luxembourg merit closer attention:

- the Order of the Gold Lion of the House of Nassau;
- the Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau;
- the Order of the Oak Crown;
- the Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

The Grand Duke is the grand master of these four orders, the highest title in the hierarchy of an order of chivalry, or of a civil or military decoration.

The marshal of the court is the chancellor, the head of the chancellery, of the Order of the Gold Lion of the House of Nassau and of the Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau.

The Minister of State, president of the government, is the chancellor of the Order of the Oak Crown and of the Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.



The Order of the Gold Lion of the House of Nassau

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Order of the Gold Lion of the House of Nassau is the highest Luxembourg decoration and the noblest distinction awarded by the grand-ducal house. It was instituted by royal grand-ducal decree on 31 March 1858 as an order shared by the two branches of the House of Nassau (Ottonian and Walramian), following an agreement concluded between William III, King of The Netherlands and Grand Duke of Luxembourg, and Adolph, Duke of Nassau.

In 1873, the number of grades was increased from one to four, corresponding to Grand Cross, Grand Officer, Officer and Knight (in descending order). A fifth grade, that of Commander, was introduced in 1882. Since these changes were initiated by William III without the prior consultation of Duke Adolph, the latter did not award any of the four grades and in 1892 – following his accession to the throne of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in 1890 – abolished all the modifications. Since then, the order has continued to consist of one grade only, as when it was first instituted.

Following an arrangement between Queen Wilhelmina of The Netherlands and Grand Duke Adolph, the Order of the Gold Lion of the House of Nassau was restored in 1905 as an order shared by the two branches of the House of Nassau.

INSIGNIA CHARACTERISTICS

The badge of the order consists of an eight-pointed gold cross enamelled in white. Between the arms of the cross are four gold initials “N” (Nassau), each marked by a rosette. At the centre is a blue-enamelled medallion, bearing on its obverse the Gold Lion of the House of Nassau and on its reverse the motto “Je maintiendrai” (I will maintain) in gold.

The plaque is a star featuring eight silver rays, with in its centre a blue-enamelled medallion bearing the heraldic lion of the House of Nassau, surrounded by the motto “Je maintiendrai” (I will maintain) in gold letters on white enamel.

The badge is suspended from a 105 mm wide orange moiré ribbon edged in blue.

AWARD CRITERIA

The Order of the Gold Lion of the House of Nassau can be conferred on sovereigns and on princes of sovereign houses and, nowadays, also on heads of state, for meritorious service to the Grand Duke and country.

The princes – sons and brothers of the heads of the two lines of the House of Nassau – are born knights of the order.

The bestowal of the insignia is carried out by the Grand Duke or his specially appointed official representative. The brevet is awarded in agreement with the head of the Ottonian branch of the House of Nassau (The Netherlands).

Badge, obverse



Badge, reverse



Plaque



The Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Created by Adolph, Duke of Nassau, the Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau was instituted for his duchy by ducal decree on 8 May 1858. The name was given to the order in reference to one of his namesake ancestors, the King of Germany who reigned from 1292 to 1298. In the wake of the annexation of the Duchy of Nassau by Prussia, the order ceased to be awarded from 1866 onwards, but Grand Duke Adolph restored the order to Luxembourg following his accession to the throne in 1890.

The statutes of the order underwent modification on five different occasions. The most recent grade change dates back to 1927, when the eight grades, in existence since 1909, were designated as follows: Grand Cross, Grand Officer, Commander of the Crown, Commander, Officer of the Crown, Officer, Knight of the Crown and Knight (in descending order). The Cross of Honour for Ladies is equivalent to the grade of Commander.

The following crosses and medals of merit are annexed to the Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau: gold and silver crosses, as well as gold, silver and bronze medals.

INSIGNIA CHARACTERISTICS

The badge is a gold cross, enamelled in white and featuring eight points, each of which ends in a gold pearl. The obverse features in its centre a white-enamelled medallion bearing the gold letter “A” in Gothic script surmounted by an imperial crown. The whole is encircled by a laurel crown on a blue-enamelled background on which the motto “Virtute” is inscribed in gold letters. The reverse bears the inscriptions “1292” (year in which Count Adolph of Nassau was crowned Roman King) and “1858” (year in which the order was created), in gold letters on a white-enamelled background. All the military grades feature two crossed swords under the central medallion (see example page 6).

The plaque of the Grand Cross of the civil division consists of a silver star featuring eight rays. The central medallion is identical to that of the badge. The plaque of the Grand Cross of the military division bears two crossed swords under the central medallion, with gold hilts and silver blades.

The ribbon is blue moiré edged in orange. The badge of the Grand Cross is suspended from a 100 mm wide ribbon. The Grand Officer and Commander wear the badge suspended from a 43 mm wide ribbon, while the Officer and Knight wear it suspended from a 38 mm wide ribbon. The ribbon of the Officer features a rosette in identical colours.

GRAND CROSS

Badge of the Grand Cross, obverse



Badge of the Grand Cross, reverse



Plaque of the Grand Cross



The Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau

AWARD CRITERIA

The Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau recognises, in addition to foreign heads of state, individuals for their meritorious service to the Grand Duke, the Grand-Ducal House and Luxembourg, as well as for their outstanding loyalty to the Grand Duke or his House. The order also rewards those who have excelled in the arts and sciences, as it does residents of Luxembourg or foreign nationals as a sign of benevolence.

The princes and princesses of the Grand-Ducal House are born members of the order, but do not wear its insignia until the age of 18.

All the grades of the Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau are bestowed by a decree signed by the Grand Duke and countersigned by the chancellor of the order. When the order is conferred on foreign nationals, the consent of the foreign government must be sought.

MILITARY GRAND CROSS

Badge of the military Grand Cross, obverse



Badge of the military Grand Cross, reverse



Plaque of the military Grand Cross



GRAND OFFICER

Badge of the Grand Officer



Plaque of the Grand Officer



The Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau

COMMANDER

Badge of the Commander of the Crown



Badge of the Commander



CROSS OF HONOUR FOR LADIES

Cross of Honour for Ladies



OFFICER

Badge of the Officer of the Crown



Badge of the Officer



The Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau

KNIGHT

Badge of the Officer of the Crown



Badge of the Officer



CROSSES

Gold cross



Silver cross



MEDALS

Gold medal



Silver medal



Bronze medal



The Order of the Oak Crown

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Order of the Oak Crown was instituted by royal grand-ducal decree on 29 December 1841 by William II, King of The Netherlands and Grand Duke of Luxembourg. History has it that, during a visit to Luxembourg, William II expressed his wonder at the effect of the flowering broom against the green of the Oesling forests, which would explain the choice of the ribbon colours (yellow-orange and dark green). The order originally comprised four grades: Knight of the first class, or Grand Cross; Knight of the second class, or Knight of the Star of the order; Knight of the third class, or Commander; Knight of the fourth class, or Knight (in descending order).

1858 saw various changes. Knights of the second class were awarded the title of Grand Officer and a fifth grade, that of Officer, was instituted between the grade of Commander and the grade of Knight. A gold, silver and bronze medal of merit was also annexed to the order. In 1872, a silver-gilt medal replaced the gold medal.

Currently, the Order of the Oak Crown comprises the following grades: Grand Cross, Grand Officer, Commander, Officer and Knight (in descending order).

INSIGNIA CHARACTERISTICS

The badge consists of a cross with four arms enamelled in white and edged in gold. The centre of the badge features a green-enamelled medallion with the letter “W” (William) in gold and surmounted by a royal grand-ducal crown. The cross, which is identical for all grades, but of lesser dimension, bears gold oak leaves between its arms for the officer grade.

The plaque of the Grand Cross consists of a silver star with eight rays. At its centre is a green-enamelled medallion bearing on its obverse the letter “W” (William) surmounted by a royal grand-ducal crown. The motto “Je maintiendrai” (I will maintain) encircles the medallion on a red-enamelled background, surrounded in turn by the branches of an oak crown featuring green-enamelled leaves.

The ribbon is yellow-orange moiré with three dark green stripes. The badge of the Grand Cross is worn suspended from a 100 mm wide ribbon, while that of the Grand Officer is worn from a 50 mm wide ribbon. Commander, Officer and Knight wear the badge suspended from a 37 mm wide ribbon. The ribbon of the Officer grade is embellished by a rosette featuring the colours of the order.

The medals of merit, awarded in silver gilt, silver and bronze, are of an octagonal shape and feature the cross of the order on their obverse and the oak crown on their reverse.

GRAND CROSS

Badge of the Grand Cross



Plaque of the Grand Cross



The Order of the Oak Crown

AWARD CRITERIA

The Order of the Oak Crown rewards outstanding civil and military services rendered by Luxembourg citizens as well as achievements of distinguished artists.

The order is awarded on National Day to members of government, deputies, state councillors, civil servants, elected representatives and personnel of municipal administrations, key players of the economic, social, cultural or sport sectors as well as to volunteers. In special cases, the order can be awarded to foreign nationals; in this event, the consent of the foreign government must be sought.

Nominations in favour of one and the same person may succeed one another only following a minimum five-year interval.

The Grand Duke awards the order upon the recommendation and with the countersignature of the Minister of State, president of the government.

GRAND OFFICER

Badge of the Grand Officer



Plaque of the Grand Officer



COMMANDER

Badge of the Commander



The Order of the Oak Crown

OFFICER

Badge of the Officer



KNIGHT

Badge of the Knight



MEDALS

Silver-gilt medal



Silver medal



Bronze medal



The Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The creation of the Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg fulfilled a need felt since the end of the Second World War. Indeed, unlike France and Belgium, Luxembourg had no order rewarding professional achievements or meritorious services rendered in other sectors. In addition, the frequency with which the Order of the Oak Crown was being awarded risked diminishing its value. Several projects aiming to create a new order saw the light of day, but never succeeded in advancing beyond the stage of the Council of Ministers.

Instituted by grand-ducal decree on 23 January 1961, the Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has since made up for this absence. The statutes of the order have not undergone any modification since the order's creation.

The order comprises the following grades: Grand Cross, Grand Officer, Commander, Officer and Knight (in descending order). A silver-gilt medal is annexed to the order.

INSIGNIA CHARACTERISTICS

The badge consists of a cross with four white-enamelled arms edged in blue. On the obverse, the central medallion bears the lion gules of the Grand Duchy, crowned, open-clawed and langued gold, surrounded by a border featuring a laurel crown on a blue-enamelled background. The reverse shows two interlaced and gilded letters "C" (in reference to Grand Duchess Charlotte), surmounted by the grand-ducal crown. The whole is in gold on a red-enamelled background, surrounded by a blue-enamelled border.

The plaque is a silver-gilt star with twelve rays bearing in its centre the badge of the order.

The ribbon is red with white and blue edges. The Grand Cross wears the badge on a 105 mm wide ribbon. The Grand Officer, Commander, Officer and Knight wear the badge on a 37 mm wide ribbon, with the ribbon of the Officer being surmounted by a rosette.

The medal exists only in silver gilt and consists of a four-armed cross angled by five rays, also in silver gilt. The obverse and reverse of the medal are identical to the badge of the order and embossed.

The cross and the medal are suspended from a ribbon by a ring.

GRAND CROSS

Badge of the Grand Cross, obverse



Badge of the Grand Cross, reverse



Plaque of the Grand Cross



The Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

AWARD CRITERIA

The order is awarded on National Day to deputies, state councillors, civil servants, elected representatives and personnel of municipal administrations, key players of the economic, social, cultural or sport sectors as well as to volunteers. In special cases, the order can be awarded to foreign nationals; in this event, the consent of the foreign government must be sought.

The silver-gilt medal is awarded to centenarians and can also be awarded for acts of rescue.

Nominations in favour of one and the same person may succeed one another only following a minimum five-year interval.

The Grand Duke awards the order upon the recommendation and with the countersignature of the Minister of State, president of the government.

GRAND OFFICER

Badge of the Grand Officer



Plaque of the Grand Officer



COMMANDER

Badge of the Commander



The Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

OFFICER

Badge of the Officer



KNIGHT

Badge of the Knight



MEDAL

Silver-gilt medal



Other orders, medals, crosses and insignia

The other orders, medals, crosses and insignia (with the exception of the Resistance badge) are conferred by the Grand Duke, upon reference of the competent member of government:

- the Prime Minister, Minister of State, for the Order of the Resistance (upon recommendation of the Steering Committee for the Remembrance of the Resistance) and for the Medal of National Recognition;
- the Minister of Sport, for the National Order of the Medal of Merit for Sport (upon recommendation of the council of the order);
- the Minister of Health, for the Medal of Merit for Blood Donation (upon recommendation of the council of the order);
- the Minister for Home Affairs, for the Medal of Merit of Emergency Services (upon recommendation of the director of the Rescue Services Agency);
- the Minister of the Armed and Police Forces, for the Service Cross for members of the army and the police (following the endorsement of the recommendations made by the heads of the two forces) and for military decorations;
- the Minister of Finance, for the Service Cross for customs officials (following the endorsement of the recommendations made by the director of the Customs and Excise Services);
- the Minister of Justice, for the Service Cross for security guards and officers of penal institutions (following the endorsement of the recommendations made by the delegate of the state public prosecutor);
- the Minister of the Environment, for the Service Cross for the officials of the Water and Forest Services (following the endorsement of the recommendations made by the director of the Water and Forest Services).



Wearing of insignia

The wearing of insignia is regulated as follows:

GRAND CROSS

Badge: on a sash (riband) passing from the right shoulder to the left hip

Plaque: on the left chest

GRAND OFFICER

Badge: around the neck, suspended from a sautoir (or as a necktie)

Plaque: on the left chest

COMMANDER

Badge: around the neck, suspended from a sautoir (or as a necktie)

OFFICER AND KNIGHT

Badge: on the lapel (or on the left chest for the Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau; no indication is given regarding the Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg)

CROSSES OF MERIT AND MEDALS OF THE ORDER OF CIVIL AND MILITARY MERIT OF ADOLPH OF NASSAU

On the left chest or on the lapel

MEDALS OF MERIT OF THE ORDER OF THE OAK CROWN

On the lapel

OTHER CROSSES, MEDALS AND INSIGNIA

With regard to the wearing of other crosses and medals, no indication is given in their governing statutes; tradition, however, dictates that they be worn on the left side of the chest. The shape of the Resistance badge suggests it is to be worn on the lapel.

Return of insignia

The statutes of the four principal orders require that insignia be returned following the death of a member. The Order of the Oak Crown and the Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg must be returned to the Ministry of State, while the Order of the Gold Lion of the House of Nassau and the Order of Civil and Military Merit of Adolph of Nassau are to be returned to the marshalcy of the Court.

In the event of a promotion to a superior grade within the same distinction, members of an order and recipients of a service cross are also obliged to return their insignia.

By contrast, civil crosses and medals, as well as military service crosses and medals, remain in the possession of their recipients.



Legislation

Article 41 of the Constitution specifies the rights of the Grand Duke in awarding the orders:

« *Le Grand-Duc confère les ordres civils et militaires, en observant à cet égard ce que la loi prescrit.* » (unofficial translation: “The Grand Duke confers civil and military orders, while complying with the provisions of the law.”)

The royal grand-ducal ruling of 25 November 1857 on civil and military decorations stipulates in its Article 1:

« *Le Roi Grand-Duc institue les ordres civils et militaires. Il en détermine les insignes et en arrête les statuts. La collation et le retrait des décorations ont lieu conformément aux statuts.* » (unofficial translation: “The King Grand Duke institutes civil and military decorations. He determines their insignia and formulates their statutes. The conferment and withdrawal of decorations are carried out in accordance with the statutes.”)

ORDER OF THE GOLD LION OF THE HOUSE OF NASSAU

Arrêté royal grand-ducal du 31 mars 1858 concernant l’institution d’un Ordre commun aux deux branches de la Maison de Nassau sous le nom de : « Ordre du Lion d’Or de la Maison de Nassau »

Arrêté royal grand-ducal du 13 mars 1873 modifiant les statuts de l’ordre du Lion d’Or de la Maison de Nassau

Arrêté royal grand-ducal du 29 mars 1882 portant modification des statuts de l’Ordre du Lion d’Or de la Maison de Nassau

Arrêté grand-ducal du 22 février 1892 qui rétablit une seule classe pour l’Ordre du Lion d’Or de la Maison de Nassau

Arrêté grand-ducal du 27 août 1905 concernant l’Ordre du Lion d’Or de la Maison de Nassau

ORDER OF CIVIL AND MILITARY MERIT OF ADOLPH OF NASSAU

Arrêté ducal du 8 mai 1858 portant institution de l’Ordre de Mérite civil et militaire d’Adolphe de Nassau

Arrêté ducal du 2 novembre 1860 créant une croix de mérite en argent et une médaille de mérite pour arts et sciences toutes les deux annexées à l’Ordre de Mérite civil et militaire d’Adolphe de Nassau

Extrait des statuts des 5 avril 1914 et 16 avril 1927 modifiant les statuts du 8 mai 1858 et 27 juillet 1909

ORDER OF THE OAK CROWN

Arrêté royal grand-ducal du 29 décembre 1841 portant institution, pour le Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, d’un ordre de la Couronne de Chêne

Arrêté royal grand-ducal du 8 juillet 1845 statuant que les insignes de l’ordre de la Couronne de Chêne doivent être renvoyés à la Chancellerie d’État à La Haye après le décès des membres de l’ordre

Arrêté royal grand-ducal du 5 février 1858 qui modifie l’arrêté royal portant institution de l’ordre de la Couronne de Chêne

ORDER OF MERIT OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG

Arrêté grand-ducal du 23 janvier 1961 portant institution de l’Ordre de Mérite du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg

USEFUL ADDRESSES

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L-1352 Luxembourg

Grand-ducal palace
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L-2013 Luxembourg

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Within the same grade, the size of the insignia (badge and plaque) is shown in proportion. In an effort to enhance detail, however, the size of the insignia between the various grades is not shown in proportion.

The colours of the insignia reproduced in this brochure may differ from the original.

