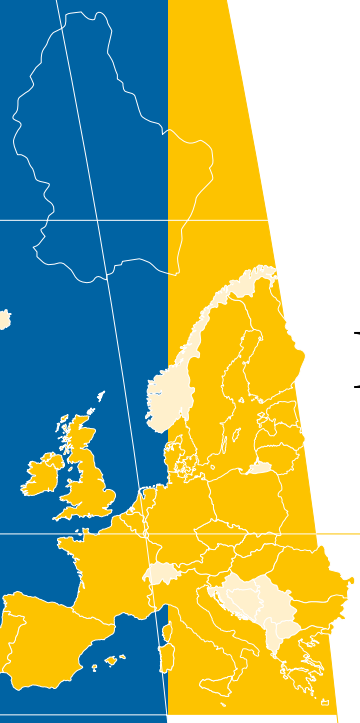


About…

Multicultural Luxembourg

Among all the member states of the European Union, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is home to by far the highest proportion of foreigners, who make up more than 42 % of its population. Of a total population of 483,800, foreign residents account for a presence of 205,900 – with numbers on the rise. And yet the cohabitation of more than 160 nationalities, which could lead to political, social and cultural tensions, is perceived in and by Luxembourg as an opportunity to maintain its two fold European-Luxembourg self-image, to draw new strength from the peaceful living together of all those involved and to serve as a model for a harmonious Europe of the future.

Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Form of government: constitutional monarchy

Neighbouring countries: Germany, Belgium, France

Area: 2,586 km^2

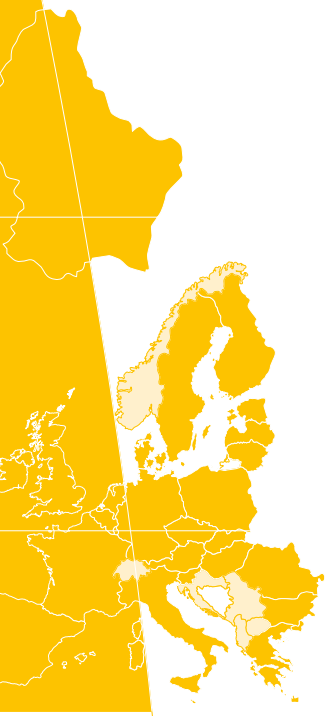
Population: 483,800 inhabitants, of which 205,900 are foreigners

Population density: 184 inhab./km^2 (2007)

© Office national du tourisme

Half the world within a range of a few hundred metres! This is what daily life looks like in Bonnevoie, for instance, a suburb of Luxembourg City. Here, within a radius of less than a kilometre, people from all four corners of the globe come together. The most visible indication of this multicultural neighbourhood comes from the signs and logos above the entrances of various pubs and shops: the brasserie Caçarola, the café Los Amigos, the grocery shop Bengal Store, the delicatessen Au Gourmet Grec, the Pizzeria Matese, a Thai restaurant, a Cape Verdean hairdresser...

Hardly anywhere else in the world does one encounter so many and such diverse traces of internationality put into practice, which find their expression in



the population structure and working world as it does in community life and sporting activities.

The cultural scene and media landscape are no less international, not to mention the much praised Luxembourg gastronomy, which combines French refinement with German opulence, while happily allowing itself to be enriched by southern European and Asian influences.

It is in particular the harmonious living together of people from various backgrounds that is typical for a country that has always played a key role as a crossroads and meeting point of cultures and mentalities and has so far been spared ethnic and religious conflicts.

A lengthy historical process

Due to its varying political and territorial adherences, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg boasts a rich experience of foreign immigration. Deemed a pawn and bone of contention between enemy powers, over the course of history the region often fell victim to bitter confrontations, while the identity of its inhabitants was time and again co-determined by outside influences – quite apart from the fact that in the meantime, historians have voiced their doubt as to whether a "pure-blooded" Luxembourg ethnic group with a uniform language and linear course of history has in fact ever existed.[1] Thus, since time immemorial, Luxembourg has been an entity essentially shaped by foreign powers and it took a long time before a claim to independence could develop.

From the 5th to the 1st century BC, first the Celts and then the Romans inhabited the region that today forms the Grand Duchy. They were succeeded by the Franks from 476 onwards. Around 963, Count Siegfried had a castle ("Lützelburg") erected on a rocky outcrop, and this was to develop into the city and later the country of Luxembourg. At this time, the region between the Moselle and the Meuse was part of the Holy Roman Empire. During the mid-14th century, Luxembourg was elevated to the rank of duchy. It was then successively integrated into the Burgundian confederation of states and later became part of the Spanish Netherlands, before it was passed to the Austrian Habsburgs in 1715. Following the conquest of the fortress by the French revolutionary troops in 1795, Luxembourg was annexed to France as the Département des Forêts (Forests Department).

Gradually emerging national sentiment

The Vienna Congress in 1815 nominally declared Luxembourg an independent grand duchy, linked to the United Kingdom of the Netherlands in a personal union. In contrast with the other regions of the newly created kingdom, however, Luxembourg became part of the German Confederation and, as a federal fortress, the capital was given a Prussian garrison. Luxembourg also joined the German Customs Union (Zollverein) in 1842. When Belgium broke away from the Kingdom of the Netherlands between 1830 and 1839, Luxembourg lost more than half its territory to the newly founded state, but at the same time was granted a higher degree of autonomy. Up until then, Luxembourg had been governed more or less as a Dutch province. In 1841, the country was given a corporative constitution and in 1848 a parliamentary constitution, which subsequently underwent numerous revisions. In 1867, Luxembourg was declared neutral and its fortress dismantled. Luxembourg achieved complete separation from the Netherlands following the death of King-Grand Duke William III in 1890. With Adolf of Nassau-Weilburg ascending the throne, the country acquired its own dynasty.

It was under these circumstances that the previously almost non-existent Luxembourg national sentiment started to develop. It was in particular during the German occupation of the First and Second World Wars that the country expressed its will for autonomy. As a result of this increased self-conscience, Luxembourg developed into a nucleus of the Europeanisation of a Europe characterised by nation states after 1945.

Luxembourg has long since secured its place in the modern world, thanks to its ability to continuously assert its identity while simultaneously being open to outside influences and continuing to transform itself. The Luxembourg author and commentator on political and current affairs Guy Kirsch, who has been teaching new political economics at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) since 1972, recently stated in an interview: "For centuries now, the Luxembourg people have

[1] See "Un siècle d'immigration au Luxembourg": proceedings of a symposium organised by the CLAE and supervised by Fabrice Montebello.

been living in a globalised world, only in the past this world used to be determined less by economic than by military-geopolitical elements." Without foreigners, according to Kirsch, the Luxembourg people would never have found the identity that they are so proud of today: "Partly through open confrontation, partly through covert opposition to the foreigners, partly also in cunning cooperation with them and in a skilled imitation and assimilation of foreigners, the unknown, the others, the other, the Luxembourg people have, through a dynamic process, become who they are today."[2]

The first immigrants

A glance into the history books reveals that immigration is not a phenomenon of Luxembourg's more recent past, quite the contrary. As early as the 16th and 17th centuries, labourers, tradesmen and soldiers came to the country from Italy. During the 18th century, bricklayers and architects followed from Tyrol. Under Louis XIV's reign, financial incentives were even offered to encourage the move to Luxembourg in order to take part in rebuilding the fortress city after its destruction in 1684.

True immigration waves occurred from the end of the 19th century onwards, when on the one hand Luxembourg was still a struggling agricultural state, while on the other hand it needed a large influx of new manpower to work in its expanding steel industry. Labour arrived in the form of young single workers, initially from Germany, France and Belgium, shortly thereafter from Poland and Italy. Their numbers grew so fast that in 1910 the workforce of the steel industry already accounted for 15.3 % of the total population, which amounted to 260,000 at the time. And three years later approximately 60 % of the iron industry employees originated from abroad. Within 25 years, the population had increased by over 40,000 – primarily due to the influx of foreigners.

Shortly before the First World War, numerous German and Italian workers returned to their home country, but immigration increased once again during the interwar period. By 1930, the foreign proportion accounted for more than 18 % of the total population. As a result of the global economic crisis towards the end of the 1920s

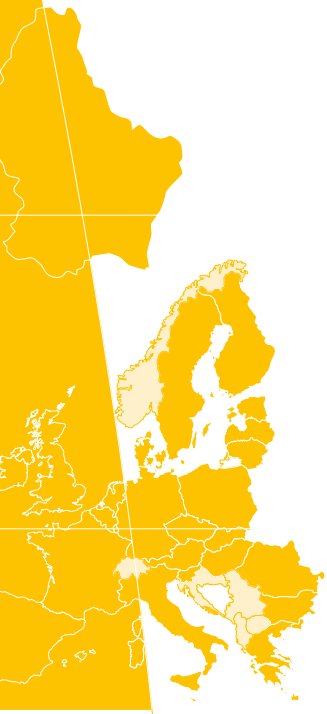
The first Italians arrived at the end of the 19th century to work in the steel industry. Today they account for the country's third largest foreign community.
© Nicolas Bouvy/SIP

and in the run-up to the Second World War, however, numerous foreign workers lost their jobs and left the country. The occupation of Luxembourg by Nazi Germany and the accompanying persecution of unwelcome foreigners led to the foreign proportion of the population amounting to a mere 10 % in 1947.

The influence of the Italians

The first to return to Luxembourg and help rebuild the country after the war were once again the Italians. Yet towards the end of the 1950s, this influx also died down, since the Italians were increasingly finding work at home or they headed for Germany where higher wages were paid.[3] Nevertheless, the Italian immigrants are those who up to the present day have left the most lasting impression. Between 1890 and 1910, their presence increased from 439 to over 10,000, and they settled mainly in the industrial south of the country.

[2] (free translation) "Seit Jahrhunderten globalisiert", interview with Guy Kirsch, in *Télécran* no. 6/2007.
[3] "Immigration au Luxembourg" (Lycée classique de Diekirch project), Diekirch, 2005.



Already before the First World War, the Italians made up a quarter of the population of Dudelange and accounted for 14 % of the population of Esch/Alzette – both cities being located in the south of the Grand Duchy, characterised by the steel industry and boasting a high proportion of foreigners even today.

The second generation of Italians learnt the Luxembourg language and the third generation secured their complete integration into Luxembourg society. Names such as Barboni, Ruscitti, Scuto, Di Bartolomeo, Pascucci, Di Genova, Ruffini, etc. have since become commonplace. In the meantime, out of all Luxembourg surnames, approximately 10 % are unquestionably of Italian origin.

Families from Portugal

In order to counteract the increasing numbers of Italians returning to their home country, the Luxembourg government decided in 1957 to sign an agreement regarding the consolidation of families. This subsequently proved to be particularly beneficial to the Portuguese who, in contrast with their predecessors, came straightaway with wife and children and worked primarily in the construction field, the industrial sector, in gastronomy and as tradesmen. With them, the second great immigration wave of the 20th century started. This enduring immigration trend began around 1964 and lasted until 1976, with the main influx concentrated in the years 1969 to 1974. But even after this time, the number of Portuguese immigrants continued to increase: from 5,745 in 1970 to 29,300 in 1981.

One of the major annual gatherings of the Portuguese community: since 1968, every Ascension Day, the Portuguese embark on a pilgrimage to Wiltz in the north of the country, to worship the Blessed Virgin Mary
© Nicolas Bouvy/SIP

On the basis of two state agreements ("accords de main-d'œuvre") negotiated in 1972 between Luxembourg and Portugal, and Luxembourg and Yugoslavia, mainly Portuguese labourers made their way to Luxembourg (accompanied by their families for an unlimited time). A further increase of approximately 2,000 people per year, which has been sustained until the present day, occurred as a result of Portugal's accession to the EU in 1986. Since then the number of Portuguese living in Luxembourg has more than doubled. They currently account for approximately 37 % of all foreigners residing in the Grand Duchy.

In the meantime, the Portuguese, with just under 16 % of the total population (76,600 out of 483,800 inhabitants in 2008), represent the strongest foreign community in Luxembourg, benefiting from their own shops, supermarkets, cafés, restaurants, sporting associations and folklore groups, as well as Portuguese-language newspapers and a radio station.

In contrast to the Italian immigrant workers, who set up their new homes almost exclusively in their own quarters of the industrial cities of the south, the Portuguese settled down throughout the entire country. Nevertheless, they do show a preference for certain regions. The strongest Portuguese concentration can for instance be found in Larochette, where approximately 60 % of the inhabitants are in possession of a Portuguese passport. Many fellow Portuguese citizens have also settled in Ettelbruck and surroundings, in Echternach as well as in the south of the country, while only very few live in the western part of the Grand Duchy.

State committees

Commissariat du gouvernement aux étrangers

The Commissariat du gouvernement aux étrangers (Government Commission for Foreigners), part of the Family Ministry, was created by the law of 27 July 1993 on the integration of foreigners in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and on the social measures in their favour. The responsibilities of the commission lie primarily in incorporating foreigners into social, economic, political and cultural life. The commission furthermore supports and encourages initiatives and activities that aim to promote the intercultural exchange between Luxembourg nationals and foreigners. It also offers further education opportunities with a view towards social integration. The reception, accommodation and social care of asylum seekers also fall under the responsibility of the Commission for Foreigners.

The Government Commission for Foreigners is also assigned a National Foreign Advisory Committee. This consultative body puts forward proposals for improving the situation of foreigners and their families.

In addition, in communities with a foreign proportion of more than 20 %, municipal advisory boards for foreigners are prescribed. This is to be the case in each local community in future.

Conférence nationale pour étrangers

The first Conférence nationale pour étrangers (National Conference for Foreigners) took place in 1993 and has been regularly held since. It is based on a law adopted in the same year on the integration of foreigners in Luxembourg and is convened by the Government Commission for Foreigners in close cooperation with the National Foreign Advisory Committee. The primary goal of the National Conference for Foreigners is the promotion of regular exchange between the Luxembourg government, foreigners' associations and municipal committees. In these meetings, participants discuss current political topics such as double citizenship, integration criteria, the regularisation of refugees, work and residence authorisations.

Based on undertakings by members of the government, who on many occasions participate in these conferences, many political reforms have resulted.

Constant increase in immigrants

It took until 1970 for the number of immigrants once again to reach the high level of 1930. From then on, this level continued to rise constantly. In 1980 the proportion of foreigners amounted to around 25 %, in 1990 to approximately 30 %, in 1998 to almost 35 % and today it lies over 40 %. Between 1954 and 1996, out of the 398,000 immigrated people, 293,000 also emigrated again, which means that at the end of the day the number of new citizens amounts to 105,000 over a good forty years. As mentioned, most of them hail from Portugal, with numbers having risen to well over 80,000 since 1954.

The first Cape Verdean immigrant workers arrived during the 1960s. Luxembourg is currently home to around 1,650 Cape Verdeans.
© Nicolas Bouvy/SIP

Already in the 1960s, the first emigrants from Cape Verde, back then still a Portuguese colony, found their way to Luxembourg. Following their country's independence in 1975, numerous Cape Verdeans took on Portuguese citizenship so that they too could take advantage of the state agreement negotiated between Luxembourg and Portugal and have the opportunity to find work in their new home and lead a better life. Currently, close to 1,650 Cape Verdeans live in Luxembourg. It is noteworthy that many of the former citizens of this group of islands off the west coast of Africa decided upon naturalisation early on and exchanged their Cape Verdean or Portuguese passports for Luxembourg ones.

Situated on the Kirchberg Plateau, the European School welcomes in particular children of Eurocrats, providing them with a complete curriculum in their mother tongue
© Nicolas Bouvy/SIP

Bankers, Eurocrats and academics

Along with the increasing importance of Luxembourg's financial centre from the 1960s onwards, numerous financial experts from all over Europe, in particular from France, Belgium and Germany, also settled in the Grand Duchy. As Luxembourg City forms the "triumvirate" of the three EU capitals, along with Brussels and Strasbourg, at the same period many EU employees made the move to Luxembourg to work on the Kirchberg Plateau in the offices of the various European institutions. These include the Secretariat of the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice, the European Court of Auditors, Eurostat and the European Investment Bank. Luxembourg is currently home to around 9,500 Eurocrats who, in contrast with the Portuguese labourers and other immigrants, only rarely settle in their host country for good and in many cases have only minimal interest in learning its language and integrating in Luxembourg society. Over the course of the decades, therefore, an extremely heterogeneous social structure has developed in Luxembourg, displaying large social gaps and characterised at times by an almost Babylonian confusion of languages. Nevertheless it cannot be ignored that migration in the Grand Duchy has created an extraordinarily diverse and multifaceted human landscape – without this having at any point led to open hostilities.

In academic circles also, the coming years are expected to see a rapid increase of foreigners in the Grand Duchy. Since Luxembourg has in recent times started to make a name for itself beyond its national borders as the home of a university and various research centres, it is predicted that students, lecturers and scientists will find their way here in increasing numbers.

Peak values in Europe

In 2008, the foreign resident population in Luxembourg amounts to 205,900 people, out of a total population of 483,800. Statistical prognoses predict that the foreign quota will exceed the proportion of the local population between 2020 und 2030.

The majority of inhabitants with a non-Luxembourg passport are EU foreigners, headed by the Portuguese

(76,600), French (26,550), Italians (19,050), Belgians (16,500) and Germans (11,600). Luxembourg is also home to, among others, 2,200 Danes, 1,850 Poles, 1,050 Chinese, 1,250 Irish, 250 Canadians and 200 Indians. Only 14 % of foreigners living in Luxembourg hail from outside the European Union.

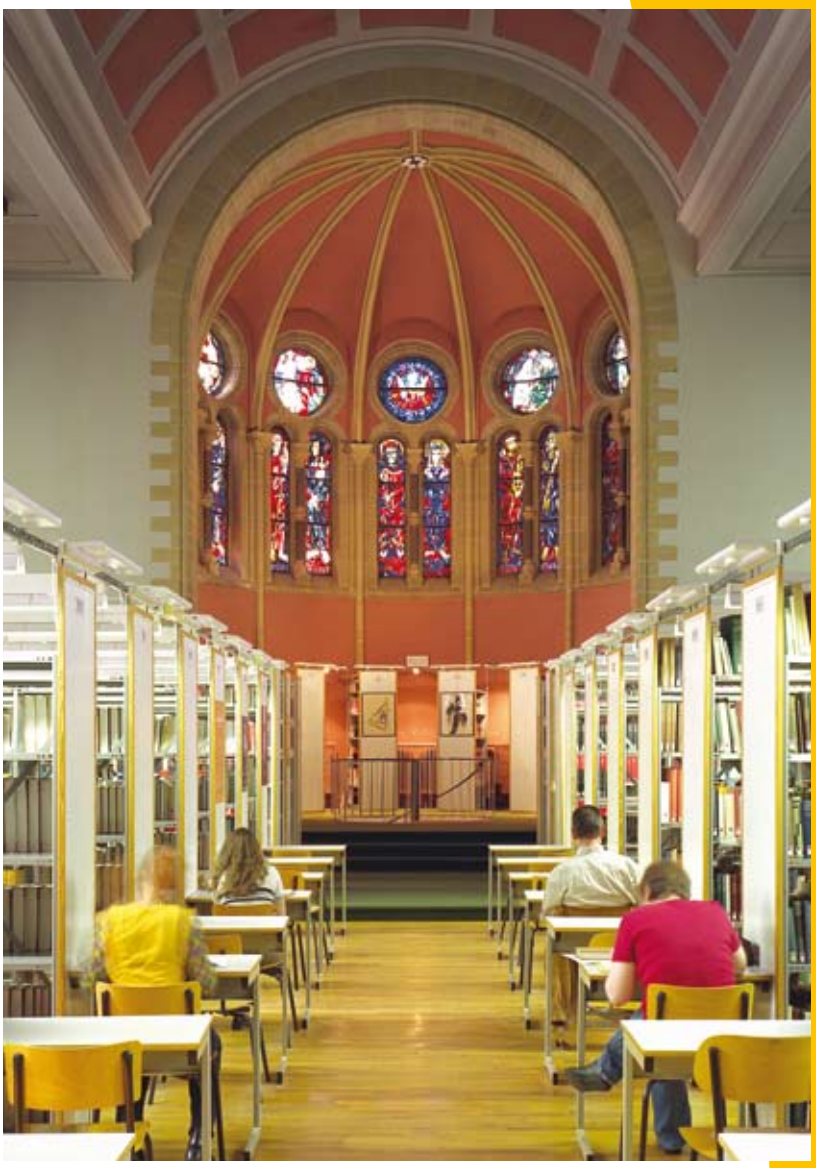
In this context, it is also worth mentioning that, according to the latest statistics, 27 % of all marriages in Luxembourg are concluded between Luxembourg and foreign nationals, while 26 % of marriages are celebrated between foreign partners.

Commuters from the Greater Region

Luxembourg has not only the highest proportion of foreigners in the EU, but also the most commuters. The number of those who each day arrive as cross-border commuters to work in the Grand Duchy has increased more than tenfold over the last quarter of a century. It has grown from 13,800 in 1980 to 141,000 today. Half the commuters come from France and a quarter each from Belgium and Germany, all of them thus from the so-called "Greater Region", an economic region newly created in 1991 and including – in addition to Luxembourg – the German federal states of Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland, Belgium's Wallonia and France's Lorraine. According to a prognosis by the Interregional Labour Market Surveillance Centre, the number of commuters will increase to 300,000 by 2050. Already today, this massive increase is sometimes seen as a threat and does not always meet with acceptance, in particular during times of increased unemployment. The commuters have long overtaken Luxembourg nationals on the local employment market: around 70 % of the newly created positions in the Grand Duchy are held by cross-border commuters. In particular the service sector would be unthinkable nowadays without them.

Migration and prosperity

It is also a fact, however, that foreigners, who account for over 50 % of all the people employed in Luxembourg, make a significant contribution to the Luxembourg economy, which is one of the strongest growing in the entire EU, thus allowing it to continue to flourish.



The library of the still young University of Luxembourg is home to a collection of approximately 150,000 volumes. The most important collections focus on the courses of study involving law, economics, history and literature.
© Christof Weber/SIP

Hardly anyone disputes the fact that without the foreign workforce, Luxembourg's home economy would collapse in a short space of time and that there is a close link between immigration and the country's economic prosperity. The foreigners' output contributes to the Luxembourg per capita gross domestic product continuing to remain approximately twice as high as the EU average. Furthermore, foreigners ensure that the Luxembourg social network does not fall apart, since

Foreign aid organisations

Association de soutien aux travailleurs immigrés (ASTI)

The non-governmental organisation Association de soutien aux travailleurs immigrés (ASTI) (Association for the Support of Foreign Workers) came into being in 1979 as a result of the Portuguese workers' association União, established seven years previously, and advocates equal rights and the right to vote for everyone, with an emphasis on the political participation of immigrants. Furthermore, ASTI is committed to promoting anti-discrimination and is involved in the problems facing refugees, asylum seekers and "illegal" immigrants. For this purpose, the association has initiated numerous projects and assistance services involving children, young people and adults of all nationalities.

Together with the Education Ministry and the City of Luxembourg, ASTI runs the Centre de documentation et d'animation interculturelles (CDAIC) (Intercultural Documentation and Activities Centre) for instance, which incorporates not only a library boasting 12,000 titles, but also initiates educational projects for primary and secondary school classes.

The European Refugee Fund and the Government Commission for Foreigners support ASTI's snack and catering service go4lunch. This pilot project addresses asylum seekers and offers employment and training opportunities. The initiative go4craft furthermore enables asylum seekers to become familiar with Luxembourg's cultural life. On offer are photography, art, writing and music courses, which the European Refugee Fund also helps to support.

The ASTI youth centre provides leisure activities, which include the publication of the magazine *Friends news* and homework assistance. Info-ensemble is the name given to an information platform on the Internet concerned with various aspects of immigration and foreigners. Here opinions, press articles, statistical and bibliographic data are collected on topics which change on a monthly basis.

The pilot project go4lunch started by ASTI offers employment as well as training opportunities to asylum seekers, who prepare and deliver snacks throughout Luxembourg City
© Nicolas Bouvy/SIP

Comité de liaison des associations d'étrangers (CLAE)

The CLAE was established in 1985 as the Comité de de liaison des associations d'étrangers (Liaison Committee of Foreign Associations) in Luxembourg. The committee supports equal rights for all those living in Luxembourg and the recognition of the cultures of all immigrants. For this purpose, meetings and discussion rounds are organised and various projects are implemented. In addition, the association runs a free "Internetstuff" (Internet café), accessible to all, in Luxembourg-Gasperich. The CLAE also regularly organises festivals and fairs, such as the Festival des migrations, des cultures et de la citoyenneté (Migration, Culture and Citizenship Festival), the Salon du livre et des cultures (Book and Culture Fair), the Festival Citoyenneté ouni Grenzen (Citizenship Without Borders Festival) and the Fête de la musique (Festival of Music). The book series published by Éditions CLAE Services includes titles that deal with the subject of foreigners and immigration in a variety of ways. A research and production centre on migration issues in Luxembourg is currently in the project phase.

to a large percentage it is being co-financed by their contributions and taxes. It is thanks to this that annuities and pensions can continue to be financed. And last but not least, the higher birth rates among foreign co-residents is at present the only factor contributing to a positive population growth in Luxembourg.

Yet what connects the banker from Brussels, the shoe saleswoman from Lorraine who crosses the Luxembourg-French border twice a day, the Portuguese garden-centre employee who has lived in Luxembourg for many years, his wife who works as a home help, the EU translator from Finland, the Iranian cardiologist, the Danish furniture tradesman, the Polish webmaster, the Croatian car mechanic, the Indian restaurant owner – other than the fact that they have, at least for a certain period of time, chosen Luxembourg as the focal point of their lives?

Political far-sightedness

To all immigrants – whether in Luxembourg for the long or the short haul – the following applies: they are needed in Luxembourg and are also welcomed here. As stated recently by German journalist Klaus Brill: "Luxembourgers have always been masters of diplomatic calculation […] They sought their survival in the greater context and looked out for alliances."[4]

Indeed, Luxembourg's politicians recognised early on that a small country could survive only in a supranational entity, in which rights and obligations are clearly regulated and in which any form of nationalism, as witnessed during the two World Wars of the 20th century, is doomed to end in disaster. It is therefore no coincidence that Luxembourg became a founding member of the United Nations Organisation (UNO)

[4] (free translation) Klaus Brill: "Ein Zwerg zeigt Größe", in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 9 January 2007.

14% of foreigners living in Luxembourg hail from non-EU countries
© Nicolas Bouvy/SIP

in 1945, of Benelux, the Brussels Pact and the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) in 1948, as well as of the Council of Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949. From 1951 onwards Luxembourg was significantly involved in the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community, the precursor of the later European Union. On 25 March 1957, Luxembourg's Prime Minister at the time, Joseph Bech, sat at the table with representatives from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands to sign the Treaties of Rome, heralding the era of the new Europe. By doing so, Luxembourg set the course for what it represents today: a multilingual country resolutely devoted to the European cause and looking toward the future, a country where, since time immemorial, extreme forms of patriotism are deemed an alien concept.

Radio Latina, established in 1992, has become an essential cultural and commercial player for contacts within the Portuguese community. The station also broadcasts programmes in Spanish, French, Cape Verdean Creole and Italian.
© Nicolas Bouvy/SIP

The Portuguese account for almost 16 % of the total population and as such represent the strongest foreign community in Luxembourg
© Christof Weber/SIP

Refugees and asylum seekers

In addition to migrants, who leave their home country for political, social, economic or ecological reasons, and cross-border commuters, who travel to Luxembourg on a daily basis for work from the neighbouring regions of Lorraine, Saarland, Rhineland-Palatinate and Wallonia, there are also refugees and asylum seekers who seek protection in Luxembourg.

The Geneva Refugee Convention, relating to the status of refugees, was signed in 1951 and entered into force in 1954 with Luxembourg participation. According to its stipulations, a refugee is any person who, "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion", is outside his or her country of origin. The protection offered by this convention was of benefit in particular to asylum seekers from former Czechoslovakia, Chile, Vietnam, Romania, Zaire, Poland and Iran, who came to Luxembourg during the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The 1990s, on the other hand, primarily saw asylum seekers from the Balkans.

The high number of asylum seekers from former Yugoslavia and the African continent has in recent times placed huge demands on Luxembourg's politics and society. The daily political escalation of the foreigners' issue focusing on refugees and global regularisation

Luxembourg, country of emigration

To the present day, migrations have been a significant component of Luxembourg's population history. But before the country became the target of numerous immigrants during the 20th century and in recent times that of refugees and asylum seekers also, it was for a long time a land shaped by agriculture and of no great wealth, which had been temporarily or permanently abandoned by its inhabitants.

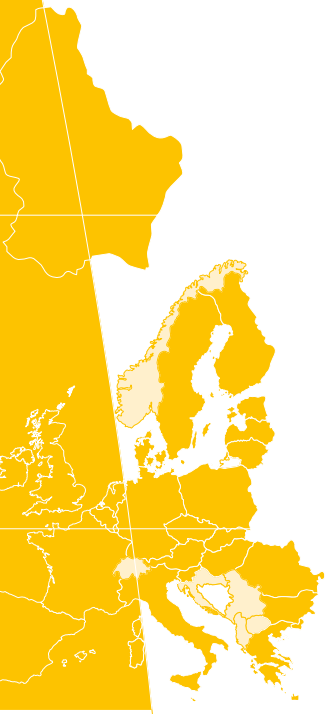
Already during the 17th century, many Luxembourg journeymen undertook a so-called "Tour de France", which led them through French cities, where they learnt to perfect their skills with masters of the trade.

The 18th and 19th centuries saw real waves of emigration. As a result of an improved state of nutrition, medical care and hygiene standards, most European countries saw their populations double. In Luxembourg also, the number of inhabitants increased from 134,000 in 1821 to 213,000 in 1891. The increasing prosperity of the towns, however, entailed that this rapid population growth was simultaneously accompanied by supply shortages in the rural population. This resulted in the fact that already during the 18th century, numerous Luxembourg farmers emigrated to the Banat region, in present-day Romania. From 1841 to 1891 alone, and in particular between 1868 and 1870, approximately 72,000 Luxembourgers emigrated to the USA and France.

Most of those emigrating to America left their homeland for good. Since Luxembourg's population figures back then numbered between around 175,000 and 213,000, it can be assumed that approximately every fifth Luxembourger headed for the United States. The reasons for this were primarily of an economic nature. At the time, the Grand Duchy was an underdeveloped agrarian country, in which day labourers, village tradesmen and small land owners could barely survive. Transport infrastructure was more or less non-existent. The first banks, driving forces of the economy, were founded in 1856, while the iron industry did not witness its upswing until around 1890. To many, therefore, America appeared to be a dreamland, in particular to those young, working generations who were no longer prepared to suffer the hardships of their predecessors.

Like many other Luxembourg citizens during the 19th century, the Dahm family left its homeland for the United States in search of a better future. Taken around 1900, the photograph features family members posing in their greenhouse in the state of Illinois.
© Skokie Historical Society

During the early days of industrialisation and the upsurge of Luxembourg's heavy industry from 1870 onwards, emigration trends resulted in a great shortage of young labour. Foreign labour had to be recruited and this led to the Grand Duchy gradually changing from a land of emigration into a land of immigration.



debates often led to a distortion of the analysis and to the socio-political debate regarding the high number of foreigners in Luxembourg reaching a critical point. On the other hand, voices from the ranks of non-governmental organisations also started to be raised, expressing their criticism of Luxembourg's future immigration policy guidelines and the planned harmonisation of European refugee policies. They pointed out, among other things, that at a time when social relations were becoming hardened against a background of unemployment and security debates, attention had to be paid to ensure that the "stranger" was not being held responsible for all society's evil. And that in future the basic principles of law had to apply to each and every citizen, regardless of nationality. In view of the current global political situation, this applies in particular to Luxembourg, which will have to prepare itself to also welcome more and more non-Europeans in the future.

Lëtzebuergesch courses have been taught to foreign residents and cross-border commuters for several years
© Nicolas Bouvy/SIP

Pragmatic integration policy

For a long time, an elaborated "integration policy" or indeed controversial debate on different forms of integration and/or assimilation existed only to a limited extent in Luxembourg, yet in return there was a pronounced pragmatism.

An almost classic example of Luxembourg's pragmatic immigration policy, which would be absolutely unthinkable in other EU member states, is the increase of the Luxembourg army through the recruitment of EU foreigners, Luxembourg being a NATO member after all. Since the legally prescribed size of the Luxembourg army (1,131 soldiers) cannot be supplied by the local population itself, it has now been possible since 2002 for German, French, Spanish and other EU citizens to be recruited. This is on the condition that applicants have resided in the Grand Duchy for at least three years and master the three administrative and judicial languages, *Lëtzebuergesch*, German and French. Those who so desire can benefit from additional coaching. After five years in uniform, these EU Europeans can, moreover, become Luxembourgish citizens.

The integration of foreigners is undoubtedly facilitated by the country's multilingualism. Many locals master all three administrative and judicial languages: *Lëtzebuergesch*, German and French. Furthermore, no aggressive assimilation policy is consciously implemented, rather emphasis is placed on integration in the sense of a mutual comprehension and fusion of cultures. Admittedly, representatives of foreign groups tend to interpret this declaration of multicultural diversity as indifference. The cross-border commuters, Eurocrats and other highly qualified people are not affected by this, but rather the immigrants from the south and south-east of Europe, who tend to live in humble circumstances.

Primary and secondary education implements specific measures and classes to accommodate foreign children and integrate them into Luxembourg's school system
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School and education

The multilingualism in Luxembourg daily life is a specific aspect that foreign visitors highlight time and again in deferential astonishment. This diversity is based among other things on the fact that in their first year of primary school, i.e. at the age of six, Luxembourg school children are taught to read and write in German before then also starting to learn French in their second year. However, it is in particular in the areas of school and education that this complex language situation often presents a problem for foreigners living in the Grand Duchy. Since the Luxembourg school system requires a significant linguistic knowledge, an insufficient mastery of German and/or French, as well as of the English language during secondary school, sometimes impedes the obtaining of a school-leaving certificate or other qualification. According to critics, high drop-out numbers and the difficulties experienced by immigrant children in coping with the multilingual school system are evidence of the fact that, even in economic wonderland Luxembourg, integration is not without its problems.

The Coordination de la scolarisation des enfants étrangers (Coordination Office for the Schooling of Foreign Children), a contact point and orientation place for newcomers to the Luxembourg school system, is incidentally responsible for dealing with the difficulties experienced by foreign pupils. Furthermore, early linguistic integration is also fostered in pre-school classes ("enseignement précoce"), unique in the entire European education landscape. These classes were introduced into the Luxembourg education system a few years ago.

A day like any other in Luxembourg

Multilingualism and the frequent change from one language to another are characteristic features of daily life in Luxembourg, as can be seen in the following fictitious, but therefore no less true, account of a typical day.

The alarm goes off in the morning between six and seven, with the radio piping up at the same time. *"Gudde Moien, hei ass RTL"* – the host wishes listeners a nice day, in *Lëtzebuergesch*. The news follows, also in the national language, but possibly with interview snippets in French or German, while the songs that follow are mainly in English.

The Festival des migrations, des cultures et de la citoyenneté in March 2008: for 25 years, this festival has been highlighting Luxembourg's cultural diversity with a rich and varied programme (music, dance, theatre, meeting with writers…)
© CLAE/Paulo Lobo

No bread in the house, so a trip to the bakery is called for: *"Eng Baguette, wann ech gelift."* The employee behind the counter has travelled in from Lorraine at the crack of dawn, can understand a few words of *Lëtzebuergesch*, possibly attends a Luxembourgish language course after work. Two elderly ladies are also waiting to be served. They came to Luxembourg as young girls with their parents from northern Italy, speak the language of their adopted home perfectly, yet continue to talk to one another in the language of their birth country: *"Ciao. Come stai?"*

On the way to work – the first traffic jam. Surrounded by a multitude of varied car registration numbers: B, D, F and L, among them the odd NL, maybe even a PL, a DK. The traffic info is once again given in *Lëtzebuergesch*, while the warning and diversion signs are displayed in Voltaire's language. Meanwhile the radio is playing a song by Jennifer Lopez – in Spanish.

Colleagues are already at their desks. *"Bonjour Jean-Marc, ça va?"* Steffi from Trier flashes a friendly smile, while Sophie from Arlon just nods her head briefly and Salvador, a Chilean by birth, is already busily typing away at his keyboard.

A quick browse through the daily papers, the *Le Monde*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, but naturally also the local paper, which contains a colourful mix of articles in German, French and occasionally also *Lëtzebuergesch*. Then the first business calls. Later an old school friend rings up. *"Moie Jemp. Gi mir den Owend no der Aarbecht een huelen?"* Okay, that's the evening sorted out. Then a client from Prague is on the phone, talking perfect English. During late afternoon, Andrés, the Spanish Basque, calls round: *"¡Hola! ¿Qué tal?"* Details are best left to be sorted out in French…

Lunch at the Greek place around the corner with Antonella and Gianna, her cousin from Milan, who happens to be here on a visit. The waiter's name is Mario. He jokes in Italian with the two young ladies. *"Ah, ragazze!"* Inger, a Danish colleague, can't understand

a single word. She talks to Tommi, an Alsatian, in German. The daily special consists of beef carpaccio and chips. Washed down with an Argentinean red wine. The speakers broadcast the programme of Radio 21, a Belgian radio station.

During the afternoon, further telephone calls in the office: to Piet, a bookseller from Saarbrücken, to a Dutch photographer who lives in Paris, to a Luxembourger who translates into English and has recently moved to Ireland.

Finally, time to knock off! Rendezvous in an American-style lounge bar, *"Salut, wéi geet et?"*, to drink Mojito or Caipirinha, smoke Spanish cigarettes, while nibbling at a few Greek olives with feta cheese or slices of Dutch tomato. Then off to a pizzeria, before possibly calling into a homely pub, where each night traditional Luxembourgish songs are sung to a piano accompaniment.

Before hitting the hay, a quick bout of TV zapping, right across almost fifty international channels. Then off to bed, to read a few pages of John Grisham, Marguerite Duras or Daniel Kehlmann – all in the original of course. Or why not bury oneself in the latest novel by Luxembourg author Roger Manderscheid? Not forgetting to set the alarm for the next day of course. *Gutt Nuecht!*

Language as an integration factor

A further discussion point is the language of the locals, *Lëtzebuergesch*. Linguistically seen, this is a Moselle-Franconian dialect, which was elevated to the rank of national language in 1984 and since then has enjoyed equal rights alongside French and German as one of the country's administrative and judicial languages. The learning of *Lëtzebuergesch* often proves very cumbersome, in particular for those immigrants hailing from Romance language regions. Added to this is the fact that in many immigration circles it is neither the language, nor the national symbols, nor even a common history that bind foreigners to their host country, but solely the will for economic prosperity. It has been recognised in the meantime that while the Luxembourg language alone is not sufficient as a connecting link, a relevant knowledge thereof can go a long way to contributing to integration. As a result *Lëtzebuergesch* courses have for decades been offered by public and private institutions and are without exception well attended.

In the recent debates surrounding legislation concerning nationality, immigration and asylum seekers, double citizenship and integration criteria, the question kept arising as to whether a knowledge of *Lëtzebuergesch* is an absolutely necessary requirement for obtaining Luxembourg nationality. In this context it is often emphasised that the promotion of the Luxembourg language is certainly an important element of the overall strategy, but should not be overestimated as an individual measure.

New legal requirements

Luxembourg's politicians are fully aware of the fact that a society with foreign residents making up more than 40 % of its population cannot afford to exclude these people from political decision-making processes. Since 1999 foreigners hailing from within the EU can register on the electoral roll, enabling them to cast their vote in municipal and EU elections. Non-EU citizens have been entitled to take part in municipal elections since 2003. The law on the free movement of persons and immigration adopted by Parliament in July 2008 replaces that of 1972. For the time being, a draft reform of the 1993 integration law is

The Bazar international is an annual event, at which representatives from all around the globe introduce themselves by way of culinary specialities, for instance. The money raised is donated to over 160 charity organisations.
© Nicolas Bouvy/SIP

going through the official channels. These new legal regulations are based on the assumption that any immigration policy must be accompanied by ambitious efforts at integration, in which significant importance is also attributed to education policies. Against this background, the right to vote in municipal elections is currently being reassessed and newly conceived.

Multicultural diversity

The entire world under one roof! Cuban rum with a Luxembourg sausage, Asian delicacies straight from the wok next to African pastry rolls, huge Latin American steaks, Moroccan tabbouleh and sweet Arabic cakes… Tasty, colourful, cheerful and cosmopolitan – this sums up the Festival des migrations, des cultures et de la citoyenneté (Migration, Culture and Citizenship Festival), an annual event organised since 1983, in which well over a hundred local and foreign associations from various cultural, political and religious backgrounds participate. Over the course of a weekend, by means of music, dance, culinary specialities, presentations and discussion rounds, the foreign residents of Luxembourg present their culture and their traditions, inviting people to join them in a mutual and integrative get-together. This multicultural festival is organised by the Comité de liaison des associations d'étrangers (CLAE) (Liaison Committee of Foreign Associations), an umbrella organisation for foreign associations in Luxembourg that was established in 1985. It aims – in a light-hearted, entertaining and informative manner – to show that immigration is not synonymous with the fusion of cultures and certainly not with the renunciation of one's own traditions.

Similar goals have been pursued for over forty years by the annual charity event, Bazar international de Luxembourg, and the traditional gathering of the anglophone community, Britain in Luxembourg.

More recent is the Fête des ateliers des cultures (Festival of Cultural Workshops), organised each year by the Association de soutien aux travailleurs immigrés (ASTI) (Association for the Support of Foreign Workers), the Action solidarité tiers monde (ASTM) (Action Alliance for the Third World) and the Neumünster Abbey Cultural and Exchange Centre. This celebration, which has been taking place at the beginning of each summer since 2004, is the concluding event of a series of artistic, cultural and thematic workshops, spread over several months and held primarily in schools and by private associations. Here children, young people and adults alike learn for instance how to play music on traditional instruments from foreign continents. They can in addition familiarise themselves with dances, songs and gastronomic traditions from faraway countries, in particular from Africa, South America and Asia. In a light-hearted and fun context, course participants are sensitised to the problems facing developing countries and can engage in an intercultural dialogue together with representatives from these countries.

Luxembourg, a European model

Just as Luxembourg during all the centuries of its turbulent history was more than a mere transit country and was also always regarded as a connecting link between enemy powers, today the Grand Duchy is once again preparing to serve as the testing ground, if not a model, for peaceful coexistence in tomorrow's Europe. In particular in the context of an enlarged European Union and worldwide globalisation, this EU member state, the second smallest after Malta, proves that in a multicultural society, with integration potential from both sides, material prosperity can certainly go hand in hand with tolerance and mutual respect, paired with an expansion of cultural horizons.

No country in Europe handles the immigration and integration of foreigners with such self-assurance and in such a matter-of-fact way as the little Grand Duchy in the centre of the European Greater Region. And nowhere else do members of such diverse nations live together with hardly any social conflicts. This "miniature Europe" gives us the chance to study, like in a microcosm, how a multinational community can function.

A football match pitting the Portuguese against the Luxembourg national team causes a stir in the sporting and association world
© Nicolas Bouvy/SIP

As a cultural crossroads, Luxembourg has always been characterised by manifold and complex migration trends. The exhibition "Retour de Babel", organised in the context of Luxembourg and the Greater Region, European Capital of Culture 2007, illustrated the subject of migration.
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Useful addresses

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Coordination de la scolarisation des enfants étrangers
c/o Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Formation professionnelle
29, rue Aldringen
L-1118 Luxembourg
Tel.: 247-85207
www.men.public.lu

Service de l'éducation préscolaire et de l'enseignement primaire
c/o Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Formation professionnelle
29, rue Aldringen
L-1118 Luxembourg
Tel.: 247-85125
www.men.public.lu

Association de soutien aux travailleurs immigrés (ASTI)
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Comité de liaison des associations d'étrangers (CLAE)
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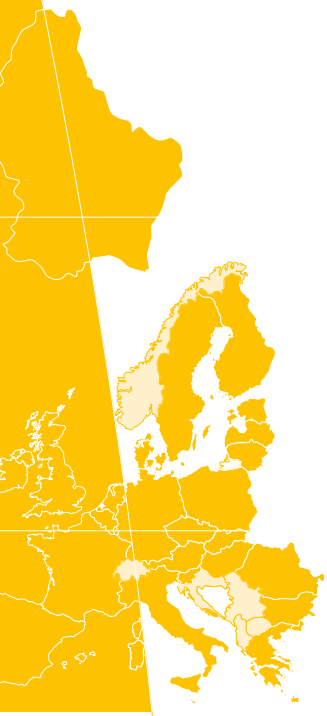

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All the current figures in this brochure were collected on 1 January 2008, except for those referring to non-EU citizens, which are from 2001 (source: STATEC). In order to facilitate reading, these figures have been rounded up or down as appropriate.
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