



**Religion**

**Population**

**Area**

- Christians : **79.3%**
- Agnostics : **16.7%**
- Muslims : **1.9%**
- Atheists : **1.6%**
- Others : **0.5%**

576,000

2,586 Km<sup>2</sup>

## Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

Luxembourg is a secular state which in its constitution guarantees freedom of religious expression, provided no crimes are committed in the process. Article 20 of the constitution enshrines opposition to coercion with regard to religious practice.<sup>[1]</sup>

While there is no official state religion, a 2015 law formally approved conventions between religious communities and the state.<sup>[2]</sup> Official recognition is granted to six religious communities: Anglicans, Catholics, Jewish, Muslims, Orthodox, and Protestants.<sup>[3]</sup>

The 2015 law ends the practice of government-funded salaries and pensions for new religious workers; it commits the government to providing religious groups with financial support with amounts depending on the number of members. In addition, the law abolishes previous legislation that made regional government responsible for local religious communities which get into debt. The law also gives the government the right to cancel funding for religious communities which fail to respect human rights, national law and public order.<sup>[4]</sup>

To sign a convention with the state, a religious community must establish an official and stable representative body with which the government can interact. The body must be from a recognised world religion. Members of non-recognised communities can practise their faith freely but are not eligible for government funding.<sup>[5]</sup>

Religious instruction in school also changed under the 2015 law. Previously, religious curricula were established and managed locally by representatives of the Catholic Church together with municipal authorities. Students could opt either for instruction in Catholicism or an ethics course. Under the new law, religious education in public schools was abolished and replaced by an ethics course entitled 'Life and Society', which was implemented throughout primary and secondary

schools in 2016 and 2017.<sup>[6]</sup>

Additionally, local church councils or vestries (fabriques d'église) were to be abolished.<sup>[7]</sup>

In August 2017, Luxembourg Justice Minister Felix Braz proposed a draft parliamentary bill banning the use of face coverings in certain public spaces, including schools, educational establishments, hospitals, nursing homes, public institutions and public transit. The draft bill stipulates that managers of institutions have the option of temporarily suspending the ban. The proposed law sets out fines of between €25 and €250 for any violation of the ban.<sup>[8]</sup> Across the country, 47 municipalities have introduced a ban on the use of the veil.<sup>[9]</sup> The Assembly of the Muslim Community of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg opposes the draft legislation, stating that it violates freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and expression. The assembly also states that the bill contravenes a prohibition against discrimination.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Incidents

In October 2017, a young woman wearing a hijab did not take the lawyer's oath, the Assembly of the Muslim Community of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg reported.<sup>[12]</sup>

In June 2016, a lawsuit was filed against the president of the Luxembourg Alliance of Humanists, Atheists and Agnostics, with a request for damages. The president faced a possible prison sentence in connection with a Facebook post which used the phrase "religious fanatics" to describe a group calling for confessional (religious) instruction in public schools.<sup>[13]</sup> A court later dismissed the case.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Prospects for freedom of religion

As Luxembourg's religious demographics change, state-church relations are shifting toward the French model of secularism. Luxembourg's efforts to reach individual agreements with various religious groups and the inclusion of the Muslim community for the first time reveal an intention to maintain strong relations and open communications. An example of this is the creation of an inter-faith body called the Council of Recognised Religious Communities.

## Endnotes / Sources

[1] Luxembourg's Constitution of 1868 with Amendments through 2009, [projectconstitute.org](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Luxembourg_2009.pdf?lang=en), [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Luxembourg\\_2009.pdf?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Luxembourg_2009.pdf?lang=en), (accessed February 2018).

[2] 'Religious Communities', The Official Portal of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, [http://www.luxembourg.public.lu/en/le-grand-duche-se-presente/religion/communautes\\_religieuses/index.html](http://www.luxembourg.public.lu/en/le-grand-duche-se-presente/religion/communautes_religieuses/index.html), (accessed February 2018).

[3] 'Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 'Luxembourg, International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, U.S. State Department, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>, (accessed February 2018).

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] B. Tasch, 'Last step taken toward separation of church and state', Luxembourg Times, 18th January 2018, <https://luxtimes.lu/luxembourg/32510-last-step-taken-toward-separation-of-church-and-state>, (accessed February 2018).

[8] R. Mironescu, 'Luxembourg law foresees partial ban of face veils in public spaces', Luxembourg Times, 7th August 2017, <https://luxtimes.lu/archives/1381-luxembourg-law-foresees-partial-ban-of-face-veils-in-public-spaces>, (accessed February 2018).

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[9] Ibid.

[10] 'Commentaires de la Shoura par rapport au projet de loi portant modification de l'article 563 du Code pénal en créant une infraction d'interdiction de dissimulation du visage dans certains lieux publics', Shoura, August 2017, <http://shoura.lu/?p=155>, (accessed February 2018).

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[12] 'Rencontre avec le barreau dans le cadre du refus d'assermentation d'une candidate avocate', Shoura, October 2017, <http://shoura.lu/?m=201710>, (accessed February 2018).

[13] 'Luxembourg humanists sued for massive "damages", could face prison, over a Facebook post', International Humanist and Ethical Union, 3rd June 2016, <http://iheu.org/luxembourg-humanists-sued-for-massive-damages-could-face-prison-over-a-facebook-post/>, (accessed February 2018).

[14] 'Laurent Schley, le président de l'AHA acquitté dans une affaire de diffamation', Le quotidien, 16th June 2016, <http://www.lequotidien.lu/faits-divers/laurent-schley-le-president-de-laha-acquitte-dans-une-affaire-de-diffamation/>, (accessed 16th March 2018).