European Elections monitor

The Christian Social People's Party could return to office in Luxembourg after the general elections on 14th October

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Analysis

On 6th December last it was announced that the next general elections in Luxembourg would take place on 14th October 2018. On the same day the legislators of the Grand Duchy also decided that the House of Deputies, the only house of parliament, would no longer be dissolved on the day of the general elections, but only when the new MPs were sworn in.

The official campaign for the election started on 10th September. Philippe Poirier, a political expert from the University of Luxembourg, believes that the Grand Duchy has been campaigning since the last general election on 2nd October 2013 *"in the sense that a share of the Luxembourg electoral body, whether they voted for the Christian Social People's Party (PSC/CSV) – and even those who voted for the other parties – never deemed the present government coalition (Democratic Party (PD/DP), Socialist Workers' Party (POSL/LSAP), The Greens/Dei Greng (LV-DG), to be totally legitimate. Conversely the share of the electoral body, which has supported the coalition to date has always believed that it achieved something historic, by excluding the Christian Social People's Party from government."*

According to the most recent poll by TNS, the Christian Social People's Party should win in the election on 14th October taking 36 seats (+ 3 in comparison with the last election). The Democratic Party is due to take second place with 10 seats (-3), followed by the Socialist Workers' Party, 9 seats (- 4), the Greens/Dei Greng 7 seats (+ 1), the Alternative Democratic Reformist Party (ADR), 5 (+ 2) and the Left (LG/DL), 3 (+ 1).

Many political observers are counting on the constitution of a government that brings together the Christian Social People's Party and the Greens/Dei Greng. However, at this stage, any configuration involving the four main parties in Luxembourg is possible at this stage.

The parties in the outgoing government coalition

The present government coalition led by outgoing Prime Minister Xavier Bettel (PD/DP) took office to lead the Grand Duchy in 2013 with the goal of *"governing differently"* and to *"put an end to the State of the Christian Social People's Party."* The results of the referendum on 7th June 2015 on the vote of non-Luxembourg residents in the general elections and on giving voting rights to people as of 16 years of age[1] tempered his ambitions somewhat.

Indeed, only 21.98% of the electorate voted in support of foreigners' voting rights and 19.13% for the reduction of the voting age to 16. The Luxembourgers rejected outright the proposals made to them, although the latter were backed by the three parties in government. The Christian Social People's Party called to vote "no" however to the three questions, likewise the Alternative Democratic Reformist Party (ADR). Foreigners comprise 46% of the Grand-Duchy's population, and around 35,000 of them could have taken part in the upcoming general elections if the "yes" had won.

After the referendum on 7th June 2015, Prime Minister Xavier Bettel opted to slow the pace that he set the government, since he could not afford to upset the electorate, who undoubtedly had chosen

1. The Luxembourgers were supposed to answer three questions on 7th June 2015: «Do you approve the idea that Luxembourgers aged between 16 and 18 should have the right to register facultatively on the electoral rolls for the House of Deputies, in the European and local elections as well as in referendums?», «Do you approve the idea that residents who are not Luxembourgers should have the right to register facultatively on the electoral rolls in view of taking part in the elections for the House of Deputies, on the double condition that they have lived in Luxembourg for at least 10 years and that they have previously taken part in local or European elections in Luxembourg?» and «Do you approve the idea of limiting the maximum, continuous length of time that a person can be a member of government to ten years?»

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him by default to rid themselves of former Prime Minister (2005-2013) Jean-Claude Juncker (PSC/CSV), rather than out of a real desire for change.

The Democratic Party

The outgoing head of government Xavier Bettel hopes to continue his work as Luxembourg's leader. With the slogan "A future in Luxembourg" the Democratic Party's campaign (PD/DP) is based on five main themes: employment and quality of life, education and the family, Luxembourg identity and culture, mobility and infrastructures and finally the economy and finance.

The PD/DP wants to offer lessons in Luxembourgish to employees and notably to those working in the sectors of education and healthcare. It also wants to make obligatory lessons in Luxembourgish in private schools, which take State subsidies. It supports free public transport, a neutral tax system (and the tax breaks for SMEs), greater flexibility in working hours so that professional and private life can be reconciled better and greater access to housing via the introduction of a "one-stop-shop".

Xavier Bettel said he was possibly prepared to govern with the Christian Social People's Party, if the latter committed not to challenge the reforms introduced by the outgoing government (parental leave, multilingualism, separation of State and Church, the law governing abortion).

The Socialist Workers' Party

On 13th July the Socialist Workers' Party (POSL/LSAP) presented its electoral programme covering 16 priorities, including the increase in the minimum wage by 100€, the 38 hour working week, thanks to the digitisation of the economy, which is leading to greater productivity, a 6th week of paid holiday (via one additional day of holiday per year for five years), free public transport, the upkeep of the age of retirement, the reduction of unemployment to under 4% (at the moment it totals 5.6%), the increase in family allowances and their indexation

against inflation, the extension of the vote to 16 year olds and to foreigners living in Luxembourg for at least 10 years and who have already voted in European and local elections.

Etienne Schneider, the outgoing Economy Minister pointed to three measures which the party would like to see implemented if they are to take part in the next government: an increase in the minimum wage, the increase in retirement pensions and no cap on the index (automatic indexation mechanism of salaries and wages to the cost of living, also called the flexible salary scale).

The POSL/LSAP aims to promote the 600 bills approved over the last legislature (450-500 during the previous legislature). It has chosen to campaign with the slogan "Zesummen" (Together) to show that it excludes no one and especially not those who do not speak Luxembourgish. "*Our role as socialists is to bring everyone together who want to move forward and make Luxembourg prosper,*" declared Etienne Schneider. "*I am calling on everyone not to shut out people from this country through the Luxembourg language but on the contrary to use it for integration,*" said Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Foreign and European Affairs, Jean Asselborn. Although debate over language and identity is not new in Luxembourg, the importance of this now shows that the Grand-Duchy is experiencing the same issues as other Europeans.

Just a few weeks ago Alex Bodry, chair of the Socialist group in the House of Deputies was the source of a polemic as he declared "*there is no longer a blue (PD/DP's colour), red (colour of the POSL/LSAP), or green (colour of the Greens/Dei Greng) project. Someone asked me whether there was a joint project for the coalition in the general elections. It is not the case, everyone is undertaking their own campaign based on his own ideas,*" he said adding "*Coalitions are negotiated after the elections.*"

Just one month before the election, the POSL/LSAP

and also the PD/DP are leaving the door open to a possible alliance with the Christian Social People's Party.

The Greens/Dei Greng

The only party to put up lists with equal numbers of men and women, the Greens/Dei Greng is also putting forward some new faces: 29 of the 60 candidates are standing for the first time in the national elections. The ecologist programme defends 100% organic agriculture (0 pesticides, 0 waste) and 100% renewable energies (0 nuclear). The Greens/Dei Greng also want to include the bill on housing in the Constitution and are asking for the mass building of housing by the State and communities.

The opposition

The Christian Social People's Party

"We have a plan for Luxembourg" (Mir hunn e Plang fir Lëtzebuerg) – this is the slogan chosen by the Christian Social People's Party (PSV/CSV). *"The thing that differentiates us from our rivals, is that we want to undertake a coherent policy. The party is undertaking a factual campaign with a coherent vision of Luxembourg for the next 20, 30 or 40 years. We are not limiting ourselves just to the next five,"* stresses Laurent Zeimet, an outgoing MP.

Access to housing, mobility, education, family and the improvement of Luxembourg's innovative capacity are the priorities in the campaign of the main opposition party. The PSC/CSV is promising to offer greater financial autonomy to the communities, to re-organise the hospital system and to reform retirement pensions. It believes that Luxembourgish is a vital element in the life of the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy. It is proposing that the State support financially lessons in Luxembourgish provided in businesses and to make this language one of the 24 recognised

by the European Union.

The party also hopes to adopt a common European legislation on asylum and immigration policy. Its chair, Marc Spautz stressed that it is vital for the European People's Party (EPP), to which the PSC/CSV belongs, discuss the possibility of excluding Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban (Alliance of Young Democrats-Civic Union FIDESZ-MPP) from the EPP. He indicated that the values of the latter do not match those of Social Christians.

"It is our goal to take our revenge over the present government but not to overturn everything that has been done over the last legislature," repeats Claude Wiseler, appointed by 90.8% of the parties' members as the candidate for the post of Prime Minister.

The Alternative Democratic Reformist Party

The populists of the Alternative Democratic Reformist Party (ADR) are focusing their campaign on two themes: the type of economic growth (qualitative or quantitative) and Luxembourgish. *"We want to choose businesses that will be established in the Grand-Duchy. We hope to introduce a kind of check-list with environmental, societal criteria etc. to analyse their impact on infrastructures, resources before accepting them,"* declared the party's chair, Jean Schoos.

Moreover, the conservative, identity-oriented ADR defends the Luxembourg identity, which in its opinion means learning the language and respecting Luxembourg values and traditions. The party also believes that immigration should be reduced. *"We are not high-handed with our citizens. We are not disconnected from the reality of the field, we are not like the government which believes that everyone is doing fine in this country,"* indicates Jean Schoos.

Fernand Kartheiser (outgoing ADR MP) maintains that the Christian Social People's Party and the

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ADR are close in terms of their ideas. If the latter gained a lot of ground in the elections, a discussion might come from the need for rapprochement.

On 2nd March last, ADR announced that it would stand with Wee 2050-Nee 2015, a movement created by Fred Keup in 2015 to counter the vote for resident foreigners in the general elections, put forward by the referendum on 7th June 2015. Eight candidates from this movement feature on the list of candidates put forward by ADR, whose aim it is to win five seats in the House of Deputies.

The small parties

The Pirate Party is standing in alliance with the Party for Integral Democracy (PID). Their programme is based on three pillars: the introduction of a universal revenue, transparency and citizens' participation.

The Left/Dei Lenk (LG/DL) has three priorities: an increase in the minimum salary, a 6th week of paid wages and better access to housing. It is also fighting for a reduction in working hours and 100% renewable energy.

Finally, two other parties are running: the Communist Party (PCL/KPL), which has not been represented in the House of Deputies in over 20 years (1994), and the Conservatives led by Joe Thein, a member of the ADR, who was excluded from the party (and former town councillor in Pétange), who has made the defence of the Luxembourg language his priority.

The Luxembourg political system

Luxembourg is a constitutional monarchy led by Grand Duke Henri. There is only one house of parliament: the House of Deputies has 60 representatives, elected for five years from a proportional list according to the principle of the smallest electoral quotient. Single candidates, deemed each to be a list, are also accepted.

In the general elections, the Grand Duchy is divided into four constituencies: the South (the cantons of Esch-sur-Azette and de Capellen) elects 23 MPs; the Centre (cantons of Luxembourg and Mersch) elects 21; the North (cantons of Diekirch, Wiltz, Clervaux and Vianden) 9 and the East (cantons of Grevenmacher, Remich and Echternach) 7.

Candidates have to be aged at least 21. According to article 135 of the Electoral Law, lists that want to put candidates forward must be presented by at least 25 voters in the constituency in which the list is based, or by an MP from the same constituency or by three locally elected councillors, in one or several town of the constituency. Each list has to be filed at least 60 days before the election.

In the Grand Duchy each voter has a number of votes equal to the number of MPs to be elected in his constituency. The voter can attribute a vote to each of the candidates on the same list. He can also vote for candidates from several different lists and even has a "double vote", i.e. he can vote twice (maximum) for one of the candidates on the same list. Finally, he is free to mix the last two means of voting, for example by using the double vote on several candidates from different lists. The distribution of seats is undertaken to the Hagenbach-Bischoff method.

It is obligatory to vote in the Grand Duchy. Luxembourgers living abroad or aged over 75 years are exempted from this however. Unjustified abstention is punishable with a fine of 100 to 250 € and can rise to 500 or 1000 € in the event of a repeat incident within the five years following the election. The voter can also be removed from the electoral lists and can even be refused all types of appointment, promotion and distinction. One cannot vote by proxy. In reality, it is very rare for abstentionists to be prosecuted. This year, for the first time ever, Luxembourgers will be able to vote by post without having to justify their absence on the day of voting.

In Luxembourg all draft bills are submitted to

parliament via a double vote. Article 59 of the Constitution obliges MPs to vote twice on the proposal. An interval of at least three months must pass between the two votes.

6 political parties are represented in the House of Deputies:

– the Christian Social Party (PCS/CVS), founded in 1944 and led by Marc Spautz, with 23 seats;

– the Socialist Workers' Party (POSL/LSAP), a party created in 1902, a member of the outgoing government coalition, chaired by Claude Haagen, with 13 MPs;

– the Democratic Party (PD/DP) of outgoing Prime Minister Xavier Bettle founded in 1955 and led by outgoing Family and Integration Minister, Corinne Cahen, with 13 seats;

– the Greens/Dei Greng (LV-DG), a party created in 1983 and led by Christian Kmiotek are members of the outgoing government coalition. The party has 6 MPs;

– the Alternative Democratic Reformist Party (ADR), a right-wing populist party in 1987, led by Jean Schoos, with 3 seats;

– the Left/Dei Lenk (LG/DL), a far-left party founded in 1999, has 2 seats.

Reminder of the general election results 2nd October 2013 in Luxembourg

Turnout: 91.15% (it is obligatory to vote in Luxembourg)

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won	No of seats
Christian Social People's Party (PSC/CSV)	1 103 636	33,68	23
Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party (POSL/LSAP)	664 586	20,28	13
Democratic Party (PD/DP)	597 879	18,25	13
The Greens (LV/DG)	331 920	10,13	6
Alternative Democratic Reformist Party (ADR)	217 683	6,64	3
The Left (LG/DL)	161 759	4,94	2
Pirate Party (PPLU)	96 270	2,94	0
Luxembourg Communist Party (PCL/KPL)	53 669	1,64	0
Party for Integral Democracy (PID)	49 290	1,50	0

Source : https://elections.public.lu/fr/elections-legislatives/2013/resultats-officiels.html

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The Christian Social Party comes out ahead in the general elections in Luxembourg but is not sure to return to office

Results

The Christian Social Party (PCS/CSV), the main opposition party led by Marc Spautz, came out ahead in the general elections on 14th October in Luxembourg. It won 28.1% of the vote and 21 of the 60 seats (-2 in comparison with the previous general elections on 2nd October 2013) in the House of Deputies, the only house in Parliament, i.e. its lowest score since 1974. Although it is still the country's leading political force, the party, in the opposition for the last four years, does not seem to have benefited as much as it had hoped since it was ousted from office.

The Socialist Workers' Party (POSL/LSAP), member of the outgoing government coalition and chaired by Claude Haagen came second with 17.6%, a result below the 20% mark – a first in its history – winning only 10 seats (-3), its lowest score since the Second World War. The Democratic Party (PD/DP) of outgoing Prime Minister Xavier Bettel, led by the outgoing Minister for the Family and Integration and the Greater Region, Corinna Cahen, won 16.91% of the vote and 12 seats (-1). The electoral boundaries explain the distribution of the results

The Greens/Dei Greng (LV-DG), member of the outgoing government coalition, has emerged as one of the winners in this election. With 15.12% of the vote and 9 seats (+3), the party has gained ground reaching this score for the first time in its history.

The Alternative Democratic Reform Party (ADR), a populist right-wing party led by Jean Schoos, which stood alongside Wee 2050, which was born of Nee 2015, a movement founded by Fred Keup in 2015 to counter the vote by foreign residents in

the general election put forward by the referendum on 7th June[1], is still gaining ground: the party won 8.28% and 4 seats (+1).

The Left/Dei Lenk (LG/DL), a far-left party recorded a slight increase, even though it failed to achieve its goal of winning an additional seat. It did not benefit as forecast from the decline of the Socialist Workers' Party taking only 5.48% and 2 seats (=).

Finally, the surprise in this election, the Pirate Party (PPLU), led by its founder Sven Clement made a noteworthy entry into parliament. Allied with the Party for Integral Democracy (PID), it won 6.45% of the vote and 2 seats.

Turnout was slightly inferior to that recorded in the election of 2nd October 2013 rising to 89.7%, i.e. 1.45 points less. It is obligatory to vote in Luxembourg, but for the first time this year Luxembourgers were allowed a postal vote without having to justify their absence on the day of voting. This explains why more than 40,200 voters registered to vote this way, i.e. 15.7% of the electorate (five years ago it lay at 7.6%).

1. On 7th June 2015 more than three-quarters of Luxembourgers (78.02%) voted against the vote for foreign non-Luxembourg voters in the general elections and 80.87% against bringing the legal voting age down to 16.

General Election Results – 14th October 2018 in Luxembourg

Turnout: 89.7% (it is obligatory to vote Luxembourg)

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won	No of seats
The People's Christian Social Party (PSC/CSV)	999 381	28.31	21
The Socialist Workers' Party (POSL/LSAP)	621 332	17.60	10
Democratic Party (PD/DP)	597 080	16.91	12
The Greens/Dei Greng (LV/DG)	533 893	15.12	9
Alternative Democratic Reform Party (ADR)	292 387	8.28	4
Pirate Party/Party for Integral Democracy (PPLU/PID)	227 549	6.45	2
The Left/Dei Lenk (LG/DL)	193 594	5.48	2
Communist Party (PCL/KPL)	44 916	1.27	0
Democracy (D)	10 320	0.29	0
The Conservatives (DK)	9 516	0.27	0

Source : https://elections.public.lu/fr/elections-legislatives/2018/resultats.html

"The trend is not towards euphoria. The major parties lost votes to the benefit of the small ones. And yet with The Greens/Dei Greng and the Democratic Party we worked well … It is a shame that this has not gone together with a positive outcome in the ballot box" declared Francine Closener (POSL/LSAP), outgoing Secretary of State for the Economy, Domestic Security and Defence and Lydia Mutsch (POSL/LSAP) outgoing Minister for Healthcare and Equal Opportunities when the results were announced.

In Luxembourg, as elsewhere in Europe, the traditional parties, and notably those on the left, are struggling and have all recorded losses in the ballot boxes as the elections go by. However, the "small" parties, and to a lesser degree, the populist or radical parties are gaining ground.

The CSV emerges as the winner in the election but it is not in a strong position however. Already four years ago it was in this situation, a victim of a tripartite coalition which wanted to change Prime Minister (Jean-Claude Juncker for 18 years).

It might consider forming a government coalition with the Democratic Party (together they won 33 seats in Parliament). But the leader of the DP and outgoing Prime Minister would have to assume a junior partner role however.

It could also form a coalition with the LSAP as it did before 2013. They have just the number of seats to do this (31 out of 60).

The Greens/Dei Greng might be asked to join a coalition like this. The only party in the outgoing government coalition to record an increase in their number of votes, the ecologists have demanded participation in the next government via the outgoing Sustainable Development and Infrastructures Minister François Bausch (LV/DG).

"The Christian Social Party is by far the strongest in the Luxembourg political arena and I believe that it is clear and legitimate for us to ask to take part in the next government," declared Claude Wiseler, the CSV's candidate for the post of Prime Minister. *"We are open to all discussion, without me being able to tell you in which direction it might go,"* he added.

However, the outgoing government coalition led by Xavier Bettel might just be able to regroup the latter with 31 seats out of 60. The democratic leader

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stressed that *"the Luxembourg electorate sent a clear signal to continue the work we started five years ago."* It is therefore possible that the outgoing government will return to office. In this event, given the results of each of the three parties, Xavier Bettel seems best placed to aspire to the post of Prime Minister and return to office as such.

The Grand Duke Henri has received the chairs of the different political parties on 15th October and has appointed an 'informateur' Martine Solovieff to determine the coalition that will form the next government.

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