

Will the Christian Social Party (CSV) return to office in Luxembourg?

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ANALYSIS

On November 16 2022, the Luxembourg authorities announced that general elections would be held in the Grand Duchy on October 8. As in 1999 and 2017-2018, when both elections were held in under a year, 2023 will be an electoral "super year" for Luxembourg, as the population will be called upon to renew the 60 members of the Chamber of Deputies, the single chamber of Parliament, after appointing the representatives of the country's 100 communal councils on June 11.

The Christian Social Party (PCS/CSV), the leading opposition party, won the [local elections](#). It took first place in the Grand Duchy's 56 largest cities. The Socialist Party (POSL/LSAP) held its ground throughout the country, with its southern stronghold recording its highest results. Although the Greens may be disappointed by their candidates' scores, the Democratic Party (PD/DP) of outgoing Prime Minister Xavier Bettel is satisfied. History teaches us, however, that the context and stakes of the two elections are very different, and that the communal ballot of June 11 does not provide a basis on which to make forecasts about what will happen on October 8 at national level.

643 [candidates](#) from 12 political parties are vying for the legislative ballot; 57 of the 60 current MPs are standing for re-election. The election campaign began on September 4.

The last general elections on October 14 2018 witnessed a decline on the part of the traditional parties. The three main parties - the Christian Social Party, the Socialist Workers' Party and the Democratic Party - lost seats. The "small" parties and, to a lesser extent, the populist or radical parties made gains, and the Greens/Dei Greng (LV-DG) were considered the winners of the election. Following this legislative election, the outgoing coalition government, led by Xavier Bettel and comprising the Democratic Party, the Socialist Workers' Party and the Greens, was re-elected.

The Polindex 2023 study, carried out by the *Chaire de recherche en études parlementaires* and the *Ilres* opinion institute, which paints a socio-demographic portrait of the electorate, revealed that housing was the priority issue in the election for Luxembourgers, the vast majority of whom are homeowners. The study showed that older voters were more likely than their compatriots to vote for the Christian Social Party and the Socialist Workers' Party. The least affluent and least educated voters were more likely than others to vote for the Reformist Democratic Alternative Party (ADR).

According to an opinion poll carried out by the *Ilres* Institute for the RTL multimedia group and the daily *Luxemburger Wort* last August, the Christian Social Party (CSV) would take first place in the October 8 elections with 28.3% of the vote. It has been gaining ground in the polls in recent weeks. The Socialist Workers' Party would come 2nd with 19.8%, followed by the Democratic Party with 17.4%. The Greens are trailing with 10.7%; the Pirate Party (PPL) is credited with 9.9%, up in recent weeks; the Reformist Democratic Alternative Party with 6.9% (down) and finally The Left/Dei Lenk (LG/DL) with 5%.

The outgoing Prime Minister, Xavier Bettel, is still the most popular politician among his compatriots, with 34% who support him. Finally, 39% of those questioned said they would prefer a 2-party coalition, while 29% would like to see 3 parties in government. In Luxembourg, as elsewhere, there is political

fragmentation and an increase in the number of parties.

THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

The Democratic Party is campaigning on the results of its time in government. In its program, it has defined 6 themes, including housing, energy transition and purchasing power. It maintains its tax reform project, an unfulfilled promise from the previous legislature, which proposes the establishment of a single tax bracket. It is opposed to reducing the working week to 36 hours and increasing corporate taxation and would like to exempt civil servants' overtime from taxation. It is open to all proposals for collaboration with other parties, but rejects any alliance with the extremes, i.e. the Reformist Democratic Alternative Party and The Left/Dei Lenk.

Deputy Prime Minister Paulette Lenert, for many years Luxembourg's favourite politician (now dethroned by Xavier Bettel and Christian Social Party list leader Luc Frieden), has been appointed leader of the Socialist Party. The Socialists' program focuses on housing, healthcare and taxation. It plans to combat property speculation and is fighting to ensure that incomes below the minimum wage are not taxed. It wants to create two additional tax brackets for the highest incomes, i.e. those in excess of €300,000 or €500,000 a year. It favours a reduction in the working week from 40 to 38 hours, and the introduction of a sixth week of annual leave. It is open to an alliance with the Christian Social Party in a future government. The 2 parties have governed together for 43 years since the end of the Second World War.

A small surprise: former Finance Minister (1998-2013) and Justice Minister (1998-2009) Luc Frieden has been chosen to head the Christian Social Party list. Having retired from the political scene some ten years ago, he is currently President of the Chamber of Commerce and Eurochambre. For him, the Christian Social Party is a "*great party of the centre and the people*" that he wants to see a

return to business after two legislatures spent in opposition. The CSV has set itself 10 priorities. It wants to reform health policy (by setting up medical centres open every day), housing (by bringing the State into partnership with the private sector to create housing and by reducing VAT from 17% to 3% for investors in the construction sector) and internal security (by recruiting 700 police officers over 5 years and reinforcing video surveillance). It aims to increase Luxembourgers' purchasing power and make the tax system fairer by reducing taxes for all taxpayers (by slowing down the progression of tax brackets). Finally, it proposes tax deductions during the first 3 years of employment for young people starting out in the workforce.

While the three parties making up the government feel that they have done a good job together in finding "*good compromises*", Luc Frieden considers that "*the 3-party coalition can no longer move forward, with one party blocking the other*".

Sam Tanson, outgoing Minister of Justice and Culture has been appointed by the Greens/Dei Greng as head of the list. The party, which is slipping in the polls and whose results in the June 11 local elections were disappointing, is campaigning on its record in government. It points out that investment in the ecological transition had reached €174 million in 2022 (it was just €40 million in 2017). It supports the doubling of individual financial aid and the energy protection of buildings, as well as investment in rail infrastructure. It likes to point out that renewable energy production rose from 3.5% to 12% in Luxembourg during the last legislature. Its program focuses on the measures needed to support the ecological transition for Luxembourgers.

Fred Keup heads the list of the Democratic Alternative Reformist Party (ADR). The party's slogan is "*Loving Luxembourg*", and it hopes to win at least 5 seats on October 8 to be able to form a parliamentary group. Its program focuses on growth, housing, security and the family. The party wants to get out of the "*growth trap*", i.e. it advocates "*moderate growth*". "*If the party succeeds in joining the next government, we intend to propose a referendum on*

the growth model," says Fred Keup. He also wants to hold a referendum on immigration, because *"in the space of 20 years, we've gone from a population of 400,000 to 650,000, and that's causing us a number of major problems. High property prices are a result, as are the almost constant traffic jams on our roads, but also the overloaded healthcare system, lack of personnel, etc."*

The Pirate Party, whose slogan is *"Fair solutions for today and tomorrow"*, is aiming for 5 seats and the formation of a parliamentary group. It is fighting for the abolition of tax brackets and *"for a tax system in which everyone is treated equally"*, says party list leader Sven Clement. *"Our proposals would relieve around 90% of households,"* he stressed. The Pirates support the payment of a monthly climate bonus that would reward environmentally friendly behaviour *"instead of always putting sanctions in place"*. *"We are a radically centrist party, we don't have a protest electorate"*, says Sven Clement.

The Left/Dei Lenk (LG/DL) has not chosen a head of list. The party is fighting for a rent cap, a minimum wage increase of €300 per month, a 32-hour working week by 2030 with no loss of pay, and the reintroduction of a wealth tax. It is also supporting Luxembourg's withdrawal from NATO.

THE LUXEMBOURG POLITICAL SYSTEM

Luxembourg is a constitutional monarchy headed by Grand Duke Henri. The parliament is unicameral: the Chamber of Deputies has 60 representatives, elected for 5 years under the proportional list system based on the principle of the smallest electoral quotient. Individual candidates, each considered as a list, are accepted.

For general elections, the Grand Duchy is divided into 4 constituencies: the South (cantons of Esch-sur-Azette and Capellen) elects 23 deputies; the Centre (cantons of Luxembourg and Mersch) 21; the North (cantons of Diekirch, Redange, Wiltz, Clervaux and Vianden) 9, and the East (cantons of Grevenmacher, Remich and Echternach) 7.

Candidates must be at least 21 years old. According to article 135 of the Electoral Law, lists wishing to stand for election must be presented by at least 25 electors from the constituency in which the list is running, or by an elected deputy from the same constituency, or by 3 municipal councillors elected in one or more towns in the constituency. Each list must be submitted at least 60 days before the election.

In the Grand Duchy, each voter is entitled to a number of votes equal to the number of deputies to be elected in his or her constituency. Voters may cast a *"first past the post"* vote, i.e. allocate one vote to each candidate on the same list. They can also vote in support of candidates from several different lists, or cast a *"double vote"*, i.e. vote twice (maximum) for one of the candidates on the same list. Voters are free to combine the latter 2 voting methods, for example by casting a double vote for several candidates from different lists. Seats are distributed according to the Hagenbach-Bischoff method.

Voting is compulsory. Luxembourgers living abroad or outside the commune where they are called to vote, or over 75 years of age, are exempt from this obligation. Unjustified abstention is punishable by a fine of between €100 and €250, rising to €500 or €1,000 in the event of a repeat offence within 5 years of the vote. Voters may also be struck off the electoral roll or refused any appointment, promotion or distinction. Voting by proxy is not allowed. In reality, it is very rare for abstainers to be prosecuted.

In Luxembourg, all bills are subject to a double vote in parliament. Article 59 of the Constitution requires deputies to vote twice on a bill. There must be an interval of at least 3 months between the 2 votes.

7 political parties are represented in the Chamber of Deputies:

- the Christian Social Party (PCS/CVS), founded in 1944, is chaired by Claude Wisler and Elisabeth Margue, and has 21 seats;

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- the Democratic Party (PD/DP) of outgoing Prime Minister Xavier Bettel, founded in 1955 which is led by Lex Delles, has 12 seats;
- the Socialist Workers' Party (POSL/LSAP), founded in 1902 and a member of the outgoing government coalition, is chaired by Dan Biancalana and Francine Closener, and has 10 seats;
- The Greens/Dei Greng (LV-DG), a party founded in 1983 and led by Djuna Bernard and Meris Sehovic, is a member of the outgoing government coalition. They have 9 MPs;
- the Democratic Alternative Reform Party (ADR), a right-wing populist party founded in 1987 and led by Fred Keup, has 4 seats;
- The Left/Dei Lenk (LG/DL), a far-left party founded in 1999, has 2 seats;
- the Pirate Party (PPL), a centrist party founded in 2009 and chaired by Starsky Flor and Rebecca Lau, has 2 seats.

Reminder of the results of the October 14, 2018 general elections in Luxembourg

Turnout: 92.76%

Political Parties	Number of votes obtained	Percentage of votes received	Number of Seats
Christian Social Party (PCS/CVS)	999 360	28.31	21
Socialist Workers' Party (POSL/LSAP)	621 221	17.60	10
Democratic Party (PD/DP)	597 075	16.92	12
Greens/Dei Greng (LV-DG)	533 919	15.13	9
Democratic Alternative Reform Party (ADR)	292 364	8.28	4
Pirate Party (PPL)	227 551	6.45	2
The Left/Dei Lenk (LG/DL)	193 591	5.48	2
Luxembourg Communist Party (KPL)	44 912	1.27	0
Democracy	10 328	0.29	0
The Conservatives (K)	9 516	0.27	0

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

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