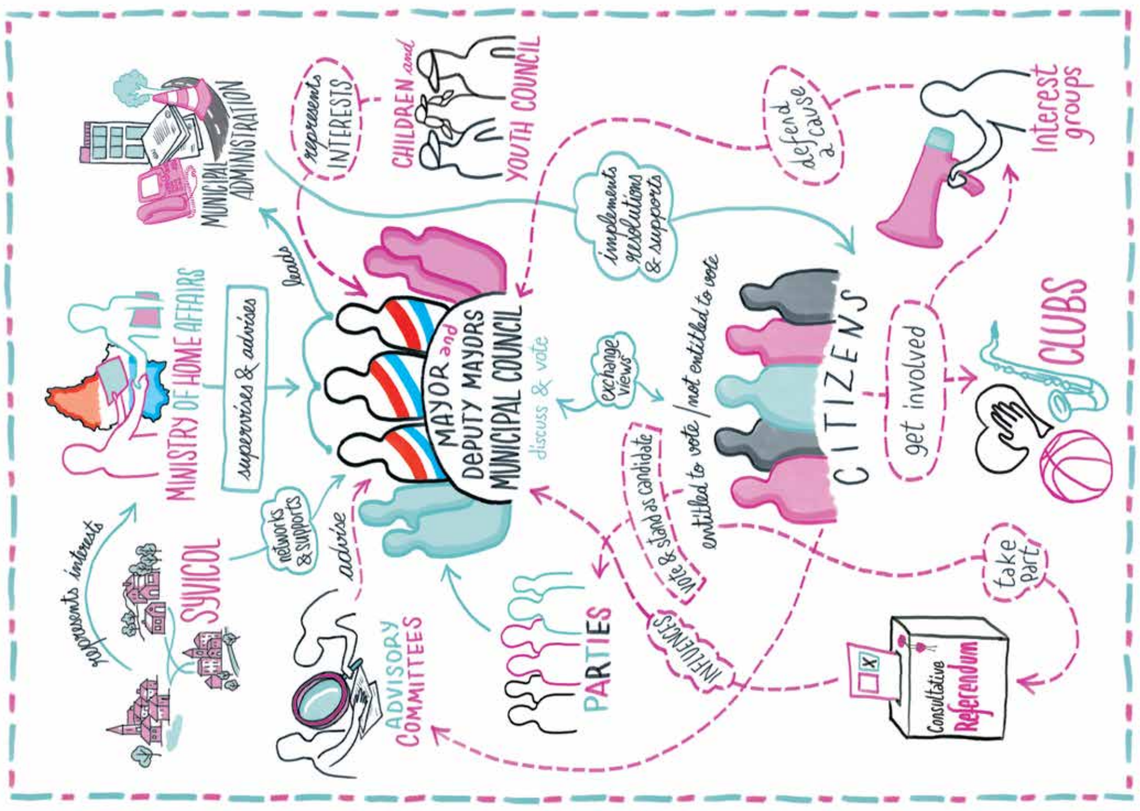


MUNICIPALITIES IN LUXEMBOURG

Made up in most cases of one or more towns or villages, a municipality runs local communities and represents the interests of its citizens. The smallest territorial administrative unit, municipalities are the lowest level of political decision-making in Luxembourg.

Municipalities decide themselves on matters they are in charge of (local autonomy). Yet, they have to adhere to overriding national legislation. The Ministry of Home Affairs checks that what they do complies with national legislation (government supervision / *surveillance de la gestion communale)*.

The Luxembourg Constitution and the Municipality Act of 13 December 1988 define how a municipality is organised and how it should function.

Municipalities have the following tasks:

- **Mandatory tasks:** the administration of the municipality, spatial planning, housing, public order, waste collection, water and power supplies, traffic policy, environmental policy, primary schools, social assistance, etc.
- **Optional tasks:** leisure offer, tourism, offer for youth and children as well as senior citizens, social housing, 'green' initiatives, etc.
- **Activities performed on behalf of the government:** citizen registration, civil registry affairs, etc.

Many municipalities find it difficult to shoulder certain tasks alone. In such cases, municipalities often work together, thereby reducing the financial and administrative burden. This is often the case with waste disposal and recycling, water supplies, nature parks, leisure facilities, public transport, etc. The resulting associations are also known as *syndicats* (in French) or unions.

A municipality's political decisions and administrative work have a direct impact on the everyday lives of its citizens: waste collection, the maintenance of municipal streets, the construction of a new sports centre, organising a cultural event, developing a strategy to promote integration and inclusion, issuing new ID cards, etc. To stay informed about what is happening in a municipality, citizens can attend public municipal council meetings and information events or can read the information made available by the municipality in brochures *(Gemengebuet)*, on its website or possibly on a municipal app.

They can also play an active role, contributing to the local community's public life and helping shape municipal policy, for example by:

- voting for their municipal council representatives and standing themselves as candidates in municipal elections,
- taking part in referenda,
- signing or submitting petitions,
- contributing to advisory committees,
- speaking up for the interests of young citizens in children's and youth councils,
- actively participating in political parties,
- creating an interest group,
- playing an active role in local clubs,
- participating in surveys, workshops, discussions, etc. in the context of new community development projects.

Municipal representatives in Luxembourg are for the most part not full-time politicians. However, they receive a certain financial compensation or attendance fees for their work. To reconcile their job with their municipal work, they can be released from their job for a certain number of hours. This can be considered as a form of political leave *(congé politique)*, whereby the employer receives compensation for the employee's absence.

The poster shows the situation in simplified form. For example, the election principles and appointment procedures for political representatives are not shown. Similarly, the organisation of the municipal administration cannot be shown in detail. Nevertheless, the diagram does help readers better understand how they can participate and the relationships between a municipality's key players, possibly leading them to ask further questions or look for further information.

THE DIFFERENT PLAYERS

CITIZENS

All citizens in Luxembourg live in one of the country's municipalities. All citizens entitled to vote elect their representatives to the municipal council. These elections take place once every six years.
Voting: Luxembourgers aged 18 or older are automatically registered to vote in the municipality in which they reside. Non-Luxembourgers aged 18 or older can register to vote, if they have resided in Luxembourg for at least 5 years. Citizens registered to vote are obliged to vote in municipal elections.
Standing as a candidate: Luxembourgers and non-Luxembourgers entitled to vote can stand as candidates in municipal elections, insofar as they have resided in the municipality for at least 6 months.
Foreign citizens not entitled to vote can play an active role in a municipality through actively contributing to advisory committees, clubs and interest groups.

Ways to participate in the municipality:

MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYORS

Following an election, the members of the municipal council elect the mayor and his/her deputies on the basis of political majorities and coalitions.
The mayor assumes the political leadership of the municipality: i.e., together with the deputy mayors, he/she works to achieve the policy goals and realise certain projects during the term of office. For example, he/she

- leads the municipal council,
- chairs the board made up of the mayor and the deputy mayors,
- handles civil registry matters,
- is responsible for maintaining public order.

The deputy mayors are elected members of the municipal council and support the mayor in administering the municipality.

The board of mayor and deputy mayors is the executive and has the following tasks:

- managing the municipality's finances,
- implementing state legislation and municipal council resolutions,
- coordinating municipal activities and services,
- convening the municipal council (at least once every three months).

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

The municipal council is made up of directly elected representatives of the municipality. Its size is dependent on the size of the municipality's population. Resolutions are passed by majority vote.
The municipal council

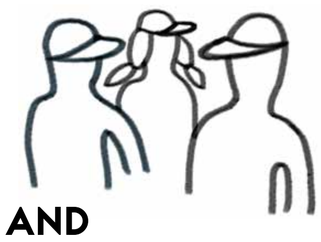
- issues regulations for the municipality,
- votes on financial matters,
- makes decisions regarding municipal taxes and municipal property,
- decides on questions related to human resources in the municipal administration.

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

The municipal administration is responsible for implementing municipal and national decisions and regulations. It is the point of contact for citizens for local offers (leisure offer, information events, schools, care services, etc.) and services (e.g. the issuing of ID cards, the maintenance of municipal streets, parks, woods, etc.). The administration is made up of a secretariat and various administrative and technical services (Biergerzenter, accounts, forestry, waste disposal, maintenance of public spaces and buildings, water supplies, etc.).

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The committees provide the municipal council and board of mayors and deputy mayors with advice. Furthermore, they can organise their own events or start initiatives. Citizens can participate in their work. A distinction is made between mandatory committees (e.g. for integration, schools and rental matters) and optional committees (e.g. for culture, building matters, the environment, equal opportunities).



CHILDREN AND YOUTH COUNCIL

A children and youth council is made up of children and/or young people willing to speak up for the interests and needs of their peers in the municipality (e.g. playgrounds, sports facilities, environmental projects, own events). They draw up recommendations which are then passed on to the municipal council. This work helps them better understand local politics. However, municipalities are not obliged to establish a children and youth council.

INTEREST GROUPS

Citizens may create an interest group if they feel that a problem is not being solved in their favour and they want to draw public attention to it. These groups are usually limited in time and are used to exert pressure on the local council and influence a political decision.

CONSULTATIVE REFERENDUM

In matters of local interest, the municipal council can call for a referendum to consult the local population on a specific political issue and gain an insight into reigning opinion. The outcome of a referendum in Luxembourg is not binding, i.e. the municipal council can take a decision after a referendum which does not reflect the local population's opinion. The initiative for a referendum may also come from the citizens themselves. At least 1/5 or 1/4 of the eligible population (depending on the population size) must make an application to the municipal council, with the questions to be voted on.

PARTIES

Parties are political groups made up of people with similar political ideas and goals. Parties contribute to forming a political opinion. In municipalities with more than 3,000 inhabitants, candidates are organised in lists for the respective parties. In municipalities with less than 3,000, candidates are not listed by party.

SYVICOL

SYVICOL means *Syndicat des Villes et Communes luxembourgeoises*, the national union of Luxembourg municipalities. It is made up of representatives from municipalities, an executive bureau, committees, and experts. Promoting cooperation between municipalities in Luxembourg and abroad, it also supports municipal council members in their work (e.g. trainings) and represents municipalities vis-à-vis the state and European and international organisations.