

# INTEGRATION ISSUES

The Chambre des salariés Elections



A person with brown hair is holding a large white rectangular sign in front of their face. The sign is held up by both hands, and the person's arms are visible. The background is a solid orange color. The text on the sign is in a serif font, with the main title in orange and the author/source information in a smaller, lighter orange font.

# The Chambre des salariés Elections: Let Your Voice Be Heard!

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*By Neel A. Chrillesen*

*Source: CSL*

While much attention will be given to the Luxembourgish parliamentary elections in October, other elections—much larger in terms of the number of people allowed to vote—will take place in the Grand Duchy in November. You may already have seen billboards around town or at your workplace mentioning the *Chambre des salariés* (CSL, Chamber of Salaried Employees) elections, but in all likelihood you're not fully aware of what they are or why you should vote. In fact, it's possible you don't even know you can vote.

If you've been in Luxembourg for less than five years, this is normal. CSL elections take place every half decade, so until now you haven't even had to think about it. But let's be honest: even if you've been here longer, chances are you've never voted in them anyway. Why? Last time, voter turnout was only 35%—not very impressive, considering the importance of these elections. If you're working or have retired from working in Luxembourg, what the CSL does and who its representatives should interest you.

So whether you consider voting to be a right, a privilege or a duty, don't miss out on the possibility to have your voice heard this time around. Keep reading to get answers to common questions on the CSL elections!

## What is the CSL anyway?

All employees in Luxembourg and retirees from the Luxembourgish system, no matter what nationality they are or where they live, are mandatorily affiliated to a professional chamber, the CSL (excluding civil servants and public employees who fall under a different sys-

tem). An annual levy is automatically deducted from your salary by your employer (or from your pension) to ensure that the CSL can complete its various activities.

The primary mission of the CSL is to represent and safeguard the interests of salaried and retired employees of the private sector. For example, the CSL participates in government consulting bodies and presents opinions on bills and regulations. It also designates employee representatives to the social security organizations and helps provide continuing adult education and design professional training programs. Above all, the CSL informs its members about their rights in all areas, keeping them up to date with what is being decided politically and works to obtain what is best for them.

## Why vote?

The main reason for voting in the upcoming elections is simple: the CSL is your voice in the legislative process and in an important number of socio-economic institutions in Luxembourg. If you're not a national here, it's even one of your rare opportunities to challenge the decisions made by government bodies and that have an impact on your everyday life.

"We have more than 430,000 members representing the whole working world: employees of all nationalities, residents and cross-border workers, as well as pensioners," explains Jean-Claude Reding, President of the CSL. "We therefore have a large say in the socio-economic debates in our country, but of course our weight and legitimacy would be even larger if more of the people we represent would vote."

The CSL defends your purchasing power, fights to maintain and expand the social security services to which you're entitled and closely monitors any economic or social trends in order to counter those that could have a negative impact on its members. "The next years will be crucial in many ways, and we will be taking an active part in a great number of issues," Reding says. "There's the voting of the upcoming 2014 budget, the tax reform announced for 2015, the various education reforms and the reform of occupational rehabilitation procedures ... not forgoing the new legislation regarding student grants for higher education. The matter has not yet been settled and should be reviewed from A to Z. We have therefore recently issued a very critical stance on the subject."

## What am I electing?

In numbers, the CSL is made up like the Luxembourgish Parliament, with 60 elected members. Only of course, for the CSL, you elect representatives, not



deputies, and they are from nine different socio-occupational categories and various trade unions instead of different political parties.

The number of employees each group represents determines the number of seats it is entitled to occupy in the CSL (see Table 1). Each voter is asked to choose candidates from within his or her own socio-occupational category.

**Table 1**

Group Number	Category (with Number of Employees Represented)	# Seats in CSL
Group 1	Steel industry (4,122)	5
Group 2	Other industries (20,074)	8
Group 3	Construction (38,083)	6
Group 4	Financial & intermediation services (40,973)	8
Group 5	Services (170,332)	14
Group 6	Government and public companies (15,206)	4
Group 7	Health & social services (31,724)	6
Group 8	CFL - railways (5,551)	3
Group 9	Pensioners (101,022)	6

## Where do the candidates come from?

Generally, the unions active in the various sectors prepare a list of candidates. The biggest union confederations, like OGBL (Independent Trade Union Confederation of Luxembourg) or LCGB (Luxembourg Confederation of Christian Trade Unions) present a list in nearly every socio-occupational category, while the smaller ones like ALEBA tend to concentrate on the sectors from which they originate (see below).

In the last elections, in 2008, OGBL obtained the overall majority (36 seats out of the 60), followed by LCGB (16 seats), ALEBA (5 seats), FNCTTFEL (2 seats) and SYPROLUX (1 seat).

Luxembourg has the 7th highest rate of unionization in Europe. An estimated 38-42% of active workers in the Grand Duchy are members of a trade union; you can, of course, vote in the CSL elections without belonging to a union!

## How do I know what each list represents?

At every election, each union gets allotted a “list number”. This year, the draw gave the numbers outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2**

List 1	OGBL Onofhängege Gerwerkschaftsbond Lëtzebuerg	<a href="http://www.ogbl.lu">www.ogbl.lu</a>
List 2	LCGB Lëtzebuerger Chrëschtliche Gerwerkschaftsbond	<a href="http://www.lcgb.lu">www.lcgb.lu</a>
List 3	ALEBA Association luxembourgeoise des employés de banque et de l'assurance	<a href="http://www.aleba.lu">www.aleba.lu</a>
List 4	SEA Syndicat des employés de l'aviation	
List 5	NGL-SNEP Neutral Gewerkschaft Letzebuerg - Syndicat national des employés privés	<a href="http://www.ngl-snep.lu">www.ngl-snep.lu</a>
List 6	SYPROLUX Syndicat professionnel des cheminots luxembourgeois	<a href="http://www.syprolux.lu">www.syprolux.lu</a>
List 7	FNCTTFEL - Landesverband Fédération Nationale des Cheminots, Travailleurs du Transport, Fonctionnaires et Employés Luxembourgeois	<a href="http://www.fncttfel.lu">www.fncttfel.lu</a>
List 8	CLSC Confédération luxembourgeoise des syndicats chrétiens	
List 9	NVGL Neutrale Verband Gemeng Lëtzebuerg	<a href="http://www.nvgl.lu">www.nvgl.lu</a>

## Are there electoral programs?

Yes, each union presenting lists has a program, a set of issues it especially wants to defend. Staff representatives at your workplace should be able to give you an idea of the programs, or you can refer to the unions' websites where you will also, in most cases, find the lists of the 2013 candidates. It is also worth mentioning that although Luxembourgish unions have ideological differences, they cooperate fairly closely both at the national and European levels, and many of their key concerns are the same.

## Who normally votes?

If you work as an employee in Luxembourg or are a retired employee you can vote in the CSL elections, no matter whether or not you live in Luxembourg or if you're Luxembourgish or not. In fact, non-nationals represent 73% of the CSL's potential voters (cross-border workers alone represent 47%)—but in the last elections, less than 25% of non-nationals participated. Hopefully, that figure will increase for the next elections!

## Do I have to register?

No—and you don't even have to make your way to the ballots: you'll receive all the voting material in your letterbox automatically.

## Do I have to vote?

Nobody will force you: voting in the CSL elections is not mandatory (but that doesn't mean it isn't useful)!

## How does the voting take place?

CSL representatives are elected by universal direct suffrage, with a system of proportional representation. The elections take place "by correspondence", meaning you receive an envelope via post with the lists of people you can choose from, representing the socio-occupational category to which you belong.

Despite the fact that the Grand Duchy is small, chances are you won't know many of the candidates. You may then want to choose to vote for a list (whereby every candidate on the list gets one vote), but you can also give votes to specific candidates (by putting one or two crosses after their name).

Depending on which socio-occupational category you belong to and the number of candidates in each group, you give a total of eight to 28 votes in total. For example, if you belong to Group 1 you have 10 votes, whereas if you belong to Group 5, you have 28 votes. It sounds more complicated than it is. You actually just need to fill out a few boxes—and then you're done!

## Is it anonymous?

Of course! Once you've filled out your anonymous ballot, you put it in the envelope provided, pop that into the postage-paid envelope that is also part of the voting material you received, sign it and send it all off.

## When do the elections take place?

The ballots are sent out during October (the last ones will arrive to their destinations before November 7) and must be sent back latest November 13.

**DO YOU WANT TO MAINTAIN  
YOUR LEVEL OF PURCHASING  
POWER?**

**EMPLOYED IN LUXEMBOURG?  
RESIDENT OR CROSS-BORDER  
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**YOU HAVE THE RIGHT  
TO VOTE: USE IT !**

The social elections explained to you in english:  
**[www.election.csl.lu](http://www.election.csl.lu)**

**I AM  
VOTING**



**ELECTIONS**  
**CHAMBRE DES SALARIÉS**  
**NOVEMBER 2013**



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THE CHAMBRE DES SALARIÉS ACTING IN THE INTEREST OF ACTIVE AND RETIRED EMPLOYEES

## For more information

On the CSL website, you'll not only find all the services the professional chamber offers and more information on your rights in general, but also a special information brochure about the 2013 elections, available in four different languages (English, French, German and Portuguese).

For more information in English, visit  
<http://elections.csl.lu/index.php/en>



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**A M C H A M LUXEMBOURG**  
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