

# **LUXEMBOURG 2015 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, including the right to practice it in public and manifest religious opinions. It provides for regulation of state-religious group relations via legal conventions with religious communities. Under these conventions, the state participates in the appointment of clergy and pays their salaries and pensions. In January the government signed an agreement with several of the principal religious communities, as a precursor, subject to parliamentary approval, to form new conventions between each community and the government, including for the first time with the Muslim community.

There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

Embassy officers discussed issues related to religious freedom as part of their ongoing dialogue with religious groups.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population is 570,000 (July 2015 estimate). A 2011 study by the Center for Studies of Population, Poverty, and Socio-Economic Policy estimates more than 70 percent of the population is Roman Catholic. According to this study and local religious groups, approximately 2 percent of the population is Protestant (Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican), 2 percent Muslim, 1 percent Christian Orthodox (Greek, Serbian, Russian, and Romanian), and 0.3 percent Jewish. There are small numbers of Bahais, Jehovah's Witnesses, and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and the Universal Church.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal Framework**

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, including the freedom to practice it in public and to manifest religious opinions, as long as no crime is committed in exercising that freedom. The constitution prohibits compulsory participation in or attendance at church services or observance of religious days of rest and stipulates that religious marriages must be preceded by a civil marriage ceremony to be

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recognized by the state. The constitution provides for the regulation of relations between religious groups and the state, including the role of the state in appointing and dismissing religious clergy and the publication of documents by religious groups, through conventions between the state and individual religious groups. The constitution stipulates the state shall pay the salaries and pensions of religious clergy as regulated by law. The government only recognizes and pays the salaries and pensions of clergy from religious communities that have signed a convention with the government.

To qualify for a convention with the state, a religious community must establish an official and stable representative body with which the government can interact. The following religious groups have signed conventions with the state, and therefore receive support: Catholic; Greek, Russian, Romanian, and Serbian Orthodox; Anglican; the Reformed Protestant Church of Luxembourg; the Protestant Church of Luxembourg; and the Jewish community. Groups without signed conventions may operate freely but receive no state support.

Religious instruction in public schools is managed locally, coordinated between representatives of the Catholic Church and 105 communes. Parents and pupils may choose between instruction in Catholicism or an ethics course. There are government-salaried Catholic religious instructors at all levels in public schools. Schools grant exemptions from the Catholic or ethics instruction on an individual basis.

The government subsidizes all private religious schools affiliated with a religious community that has signed a convention with the state, including subsidies for facilities expenses and in some cases teacher salaries. The government also subsidizes a Catholic seminary.

### **Government Practices**

The government continued to implement reforms regarding state-religious group relationships. On January 25, the government signed an agreement with the principal religious communities stipulating the replacement of the existing conventions with new ones, as well as the establishment of a convention with the Muslim community for the first time. With establishment of a convention, the Muslim community would receive state funding like other religious communities with which the government has conventions. The government stated the agreement aimed to increase the separation between religious groups and the state.

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Parliamentary approval of the implementing legislation would result in reduced state funding for religious groups, particularly the Catholic Church, and Catholic instruction in public schools would be abolished. According to the government, state funding for religious groups would gradually decrease from approximately 25 million euros (\$27.2 million) in 2015 to approximately eight million euros (\$8.7 million) over the ensuing two decades. At year's end, parliament was still reviewing the implementing legislation.

The government is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

there were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

Embassy officers discussed issues related to religious freedom as part of their ongoing dialogue with religious groups.