

United in diversity:

ANTHEMS AND FLAGS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

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Luxembourg

1. Flag

- Created in 1830
and adopted in 1972

The collective memory of the people of Luxembourg celebrates the date of 1839 as marking the Grand Duchy's independence, but in fact it was only in 1848 that the grand ducal family symbolising its unity was to institute ministerial responsibility for the government's "administrators general", thus certifying the country's autonomy. And it was only much later, in 1972, that the national symbols consisting of the coat of arms and the flag were to be officially recognised.



A large part of the population of Luxembourg having backed the Belgian Revolution against William I in 1830, the flag is said to have first seen the light of day during those uprisings. But the jury is still out on the real origin of the choice of horizontal red, white and blue bands for the national flag. The flags of Luxembourg and Holland being very similar, it may well be that the Grand Duchy deliberately chose to keep the *Prinsenvlag*, the symbol of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, for a transition period. Yet the coat of arms of the counts and dukes of Luxembourg in silver, blue and red, established in the 13th century by Henry V, also has within it the three colours which may have determined the national flag. Other scholars argue that it was inspired by the French revolutionary flag. The choice of a light sky blue is always underscored in an effort to distinguish the flag's colours from those of Holland, whose blue is decidedly more ultramarine.

Two national flags have been authorised on Luxembourg territory since 2007 following a proposal submitted by a deputy named Michel Wolter to replace the tricolour flag, difficult to identify at a distance, by the country's naval ensign. Thus the emblem of a red lion rampant sporting the grand ducal crown (*Roude Leiw*) on a background of horizontal blue and white stripes, created in 1990, may also be considered a civilian flag when it is adapted to the official dimensions of the tricolour flag.

2. Anthem

- *Ons Heemecht - Unser Heimatland - Our Homeland*
- Written by Michel Lentz and composed by J. A Zinnen
- Composed in 1864 and adopted in 1993

After years of fighting, King William I of the Netherlands recognised the independence of Belgium and of Luxembourg, which had backed the Belgian Revolution of 1830. The Conference of London in 1839 separated the Belgians from the Luxembourgers along a linguistic line enshrined in the Treaty of Maastricht. With their backs to the wall, the Luxembourgers proceeded to rapidly build themselves a new state. Ever since its constitutional separation from the Netherlands in 1848, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has been a nation state whose legitimation has taken on concrete form thanks both to national symbols and through coexistence. The official languages, which are Lëtzebuergesch, French and German, define multilingualism as a political act linked to a strong national sentiment.

The Luxembourg national anthem, *Ons Heemecht*, “Our Homeland”, should thus be seen in the context of the European nations’ desire for

independence in the face of hegemonic imperial powers. Originally inspired by a rather good-humoured operetta, this song is a call for peace. It was sung for the first time by four chorus singers during a fanfare concert conducted by Jean-Antoine Zinnen in the main square of Ettelbrück on 5 June 1864. To mark the occasion, Zinnen had set to music a text written by Luxembourg writer Michel Lentz in 1859. The song was an instant success. In addition to the melody inspired by the final part of Mozart’s *Ave Verum*, the words encouraged the people’s unity and cohesion against the yoke of foreign domination. Placing itself under God’s protection, the people express the wish to prosper in peace on the banks of the Alzette, the Sauer and the Moselle.

Sung on national day, the date of which varies according to the birthday of the reigning member of the ducal family, the official national anthem comprising the first and last stanzas constitutes the national emblem endorsed by the Constitution in 1993.

Ons Heemecht

Wou d’Uelzecht durech
d’Wisen zéit,
Duerch d’Fielsen
d’Sauer brécht.
Wou d’Rief laansch
d’Musel dofteg bléit,
Den Himmel Wäin ons
mëcht.
Dat as onst Land, fir
dat mir géif,
Heinidden alles won.
Ons Heemechtsland,
dat mir sou déif
An onsen Hierzer dron.
O Du do uewen, deem
séng Hand
Duurch d’Welt
d’Natioune leet.
Behitt Du
d’Lëtzebuenger Land
Vru friemem Joch a
Leed!
Du hues ons all als
Kanner schon
de fräie Geesch jo gin.
Looss viru blénken
d’Fräiheetssonn
déi mir sou laang gesin.

Unser Heimatland

Wo die Alzette durch die
Wiesen zieht,
Durch die Felsen die
Sauer bricht,
Die Rebe längs der
Mosel blüht,
Der Himmel Wein
verspricht:
Dort ist das Land, für
dessen Ehr
Kein Opfer uns zu
schwer,
Die Heimat, die als
teures Gut
In unseren Herzen ruht.
O Du dort droben,
dessen Hand
Den Völkern gibt Geleit,
Behüt das Luxemburger
Land
Vor fremdem Joch, vor
Leid!
Als Kind empfangen wir
von Dir
Den freiheitlichen Sinn,
Die Freiheitssonne,
unsre Zier,
Laß leuchten fernerhin!

Our Homeland

Where the Alzette slowly
flows,
the Sauer plays wild
pranks,
Where fragrant
vineyards amply grow
on the Moselle’s banks;
There lies the land for
which we would dare
everything down here,
Our own, our native
land which ranks deeply
in our hearts.
Our own, our native
land which ranks deeply
in our hearts.
O Thou above whose
powerful hand makes
States or lays them low,
Protect this
Luxembourg land
from foreign yoke and
woe.
Your spirit of liberty
bestow on us now as of
yore.
Let Freedom’s sun in
glory glow for now and
evermore.
Let Freedom’s sun in
glory glow for now and
evermore.

