

this included those of 100 local personalities. However, among the medical community, 54 percent of AMMD members are in favour. So from a country that was once known for its conservatism, only its restriction on abortion prevents it from having one of the most liberal social laws in the world.

Kosovo recognised

Luxembourg joined the majority of EU states to recognise the independence of Kosovo on 21st February, six days after the ex-Serbian region officially broke away. Foreign minister Jean Asselborn promised the Chamber of Deputies that the government would "take its responsibilities and participate actively in a common EU policing mission." He stressed the one-off nature of this independence saying the province had had considerable autonomy when it was part of Yugoslavia, an independence which was breached with the formation of Serbia in 1989. The Chamber voted to support this line unanimously.

RTL 2's new

Den 2.RTL not only has acquired a new logo, but also a new role. As well as the usual repeats, there is an aim to offer more in the way of public service broadcasting and sport. There will be more locally made programmes and films, 13 Champions League matches plus more local football, cycling, handball and basketball.

Poll registration deadline extended

Immigrant groups had complained that the deadline of 31st March 2008 for registration for the June 2009 European Parliament elections was too distant to encourage non-Luxembourgers to get involved. Interior minister Jean-Marie Halsdorf agreed and deadlines for both European and local elections has been changed to 13 weeks before the vote. Registration for the EP elections is open to all EU citizens who have lived in Luxembourg at least five years and it requires a relatively simple procedure at your local town hall.

Frieden sets out dual nationality criteria

More clarity has been given to the issue of dual nationality by justice minister Luc Frieden, but still questions remain as to how this will work in practice and whether the measure will have the desired effect of boosting immigrant integration. Speaking at a Chamber of Commerce conference on this subject in February, Frieden revealed the language requirements; the aspect of this measure which has proved to be the most controversial. He said candidates would need to be able to understand radio and TV news bulletins

in Luxembourgish, but that their spoken proficiency should run to just being able to give basic personal details. An exception would be made for people arriving before Luxembourgish was made an official language in 1984 and for those having completed a local secondary education.

In addition, there would be a seven-year residency requirement (up from the current five years needed for full nationality) and applicants would need to attend "two or three" civics courses, but there would be no test. In an aside, Frieden also indicated his desire to see English taught in primary school.

Sixteen months have passed since the draft law was originally tabled, and public and political opinion has divided mainly on the language issue. Some see Luxembourgish as a key aspect of national identity that should not be toyed with, but others fear that having this language requirement will hamper efforts at integration. With over 40 percent of the population currently being non-Luxembourgish, some see the potential for social and political dislocation if more is not done to favour integration and that the language requirement will deter most from seeking joint nationality. Some argue that knowledge of any of the official languages (French, German and Luxembourgish) should suffice. Others have pointed to the high failure rates at Luxembourgish classes organised nationally and locally, indicating there may be a problem with the teaching methods. Also, courses will need to be redesigned to fit the tests.

Frieden did not reveal any details of how, if at all, the government plans to encourage and enable more foreigners to learn Luxembourgish. When they delivered their verdict on the draft law last Spring, the four professional chambers representing employees and workers in Luxembourg argued that language classes should be conducted during working hours and that the state and/or employers should compensate employees for any loss of salary incurred by attending classes.

The impression given is of the government seeking to broaden participation in public life, but that joint-nationality is unlikely to solve all the problems in one. But some bodies such as the Cercle Joseph Bech (CJB), a traditionally conservative think-tank, argue that all EU citizens should be given the same rights as Luxembourgers irrespective of nationality. Indeed, with EU citizens now eligible thanks to a European Commission directive – to work in the civil service and also able to vote in local government elections, the only argument for a foreign EU citizen to take on Luxembourgish nationality is that it would allow them to vote and stand in national parliament elections.