

Introducing the Welcome and Integration Contract



The first orientation day was held on March 3.

By Stephen Evans

Photos: Julien Becker

THE NEW INTEGRATION CONTRACT

Integrating a highly diverse population of immigrants is a major challenge. It is necessary both to bind people into society and to give a greater voice to those who create much of the wealth in this country. After all, Luxembourgers account for only one-quarter of the private sector workforce. Last September, the government launched a Welcome and Integration Contract (CAI) to help address the issue.

“The objective is to give those foreigners who desire it a better chance to integrate into the society that has welcomed them,” says Marie-Josée Jacobs, Minister for Family and Integration at the launch of the CAI. The contract contains the following measures: language training, citizenship training courses and an orientation day. Organization will be through the Ministry’s Luxembourg Reception and Integration Agency (l’Office luxembourgeois de l’accueil et de l’intégration [OLAI]).

WHY APPLY?

Signing the contract is a symbolic act, by which the candidate demonstrates his/her desire to integrate. It will also help when an assessment is made on an application for long-term residence, as well as offering lower cost language courses and other advantages.

THREE BASIC LANGUAGES AT CUT PRICE

Basic level (A:1:1) in at least one of the three administrative languages—Luxembourgish, German and French—will be the goal. Signing up to the CAI will allow the immigrant to benefit from a reduced rate course. These courses will need to be approved through the Education Ministry, organized by a commune, an association or schools, including the Institut national des langues (INL).

LUXEMBOURG SOCIETY FOR BEGINNERS

Citizenship classes will be focused around the theme of integration and living conditions in multicultural Luxembourg. There will also be information on history, political organization, attitudes/mores and customs. Courses are to be run by the Education Ministry and OLAI and are free of charge. Applicants for Luxembourgish nationality will have an exemption of one of the mandatory citizenship training courses organized in the frame of the acquisition of Luxembourg nationality.

ORIENTATION: UNDERSTANDING THE SYSTEM

There are two orientation days per year (the last was on March 3, 2012). Held on the weekend over a half-day, they are organized in cooperation with various partner organizations to allow the immigrant to become more familiar with official systems and processes. So in a friendly environment the following will occur:

- Participants are taught how to better understand the administrative and social landscape, thereby enabling greater integration.
- Exhibition stands will help and inform candidates about access to public services.
- Representatives of the public sector, as well as civil society, will be on hand to give practical advice via information sessions.

The first session, held on March 3, had 152 registered candidates who were offered a choice of information:

- Presentations: there was a choice between a talk on the work of the ombudsman or one on the school system and adult learning
- Workshops: political participation; flourishing in a new culture; the recognition of higher education qualifications; charities in Luxembourg; joining society
- Interactive activity called “I can find myself in Luxembourg”: participants were helped by trainers to work in a small group on a case study to find solutions to various real life challenges. Representatives of government and society are on hand to give answers to the various questions raised.

WHO CAN APPLY?

Anyone over the age of 16, resident in Luxembourg and with the intention to remain on a long-term basis, and coming from the European Union as well as from third countries is able to sign up. You can be a new arrival or living here for several years. Acceptance is via a two-hour interview through which CAI will assess language and other needs.

THE WELCOME AND INTEGRATION CONTRACT: KEY POINTS

- An optional package designed to help non-Luxembourgers better integrate and show their commitment to the country
- Subsidized language courses, citizenship training courses and orientation sessions will enable foreigners to acclimatize culturally.

A QUARTER OF LUXEMBOURGERS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Last year, 43.2% of the 511,800 population from 107 countries did not have a Luxembourg passport. This is down from 43.7% in 2009 when double nationality was introduced. As for the 357,800-strong workforce, in 2010 STATEC (the national statistics institute) said that non-resident commuters accounted for 41.9%, resident foreigners 25.6% and Luxembourgers 32.5%. However, if the almost exclusively Luxembourgish public sector is removed, the share of nationals in the workforce fell to exactly 25%. Even this figure is exaggerated, as many Luxembourgers work for public enterprises, earning civil service salaries but with private sector work contracts.

WHO HAS SIGNED UP? *

Total: 532

EU nationals: 53.7%

Nationalities: 81

% of Nationalities:

Portuguese: 30.5%

French: 5.5%

American: 0.28%

Secondary/higher education: 45.3%

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