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LUXEMBOURG ON THE MOVE

If, up until now, I had known Luxembourg more from a personal point of view, I had the pleasure earlier in June to discover what makes the meetings industry of this small country so dynamic. As one of Europe's best-kept secrets -most people only see it as a financial haven- Luxembourg has a lot more to offer than just a place for bankers and diplomats, and the current government has clearly understood this, strongly supporting initiatives to make the destination one of choice for association planners. Rémi Dévé reports

A country full of attractions and contrasts, where tradition and modernity coincide harmoniously, Luxembourg is well connected to the major European cities and hubs, whether by car, train or plane. Located at the crossroads between Belgium, France and Germany, the country boasts a trilingual and multicultural population of more than 500,000, and has historically been open to the world. As you would expect English is widely spoken - making business and meetings smooth and easy, with the locals always friendly and eager to help.

FULL OF CONTRASTS

For Luxembourg, being small is actually an asset as you can get the whole "country" experience in a short amount of time. As pressure is getting stronger and stronger for delegates to use their time wisely when out of the office, this is definitely an add-on. Anne Hoffman, CEO of Luxembourg for Tourism, explains: "Luxembourg is one of the few European countries to present and foster the human dimension. This means all its hotels, its tourism and business infrastructure are within easy reach, which represents a major advantage for MICE organisers: the costs and loss of time associated with lengthy journeys are not on the Luxembourg agenda and delegates can make the most of their stay when meeting here."

Due to a certain skill to regenerate over the last decades, Luxembourg prospers today from the talent of its people, their ability to innovate. The purpose of my trip was indeed to find out how much the country is moving forward. If modern

and well-equipped conference infrastructure to suit your requirements are to be found all over Luxembourg, there's always a new addition or a new expansion/renovation to its already diversified meetings portfolio to be discovered. One popular site for events downtown Luxembourg is the bock casemates inside the city's fortifications, with old stone walls and deep rocky caverns - perfect for cocktails or gatherings for up to 100. On a side note, in order to meet the growing demand for overnight stays, the country is also constantly looking for new investors in the hotel industry.

But for Tom Bellion, director of Luxembourg City Tourist Office & Luxembourg Convention Bureau, meetings are also more than just about renting space in a conference centre or booking rooms in a hotel: "We always talk about the financial impact meetings can have on a destination or what legacy they can leave. But MICE goes beyond this. In Luxembourg we see it as a getaway for future investments. Our government has clearly understood this aspect and supports our efforts to attract more European and international associations."

MEETINGS AT THEIR BEST

It's obvious when you drive around Luxembourg: many projects are underway throughout the city and beyond, from venue extensions to hotel renovations to the construction of a new line of tram or a new high-end hotel next to the airport. This upgrade is a testament to Luxembourg becoming a serious contender in the MICE industry, with a wide range of meeting options to be found all over. >



ANNE
HOFFMAN



TOM
BELLION



Rockhal, Belval



Neimënster

▷

Opened in 2012, the **European Convention Centre Luxembourg** (ECCL), with a total of 80,000 m² of usable space, boasts over 30 breakout rooms and 2,600 m² exhibition space. As part of a new "joint venture" concept, ECCL is well connected with nearby attractions such as the Philharmonie Concert Hall, and MUDAM (the Museum of Modern Art), and part of the aptly-named Place de l'Europe Convention Park, with 600 hotel rooms within walking distance and more to come in the near future – but shh it's a secret! What I personally liked and what Patrick Hoffnung, Managing Director, emphasized greatly is the different atmospheres you can create in the distinct, separate sections of the venue – a definite add-on. "The ECCL is closed for 3 months each year for EU related activity. Outside of these times, however, it offers a compelling solution for association conferences for up to 800 attendees, the capacity of its main auditorium. And Luxembourg's presidency of the European Union, which concluded in December 2015, it helped put Luxembourg on the map as never before." said Patrick Hoffnung. (www.luxcongress.lu)

Historically an iconic venue for trade shows, **Luxexpo** has been undergoing a massive revamp, which was on the verge of being finished when I visited the premises. Whatever you want to call it – a renovation, a rejuvenation – most of the venue layout has been rethought, with the recreation of the exhibition halls, the upgrading of the conference space and logistics (two separate entrances instead of one), and the improvement of public access and parking facilities, for a total of 35,000 m² of usable and very flexible space. Luxexpo is located 7km

from the airport and 5km from the city centre, and is set to become of the most versatile venues in Luxembourg. (www.luxexpo.lu)

In the UNESCO-listed historic old town of Luxembourg City, formerly known as the "Gibraltar of the North", lies the beautifully restored **Neimënster**, a former Benedictine Abbey, which was also once a prison! It was inaugurated as a culture, meeting and event centre in 2004, and, within its 12,000 m², about 700 events are organised every year. The site is open to all and looks to be a place of exchange by allowing "the dialogue of cultures and the culture of dialogue". In terms of conference space, Neimënster can accommodate a crowd of 500. Open air events there are quite popular, I must say. (www.neimenster.lu)

If you'd like to give your meeting a musical twist, I suggest you went for the **Rockhal**. Located in the southern industrial city of Belval, it is screaming with rock-star glam as a popular venue for concerts, up to 6,000 people or events - the "Aquarium" is perfect for exclusive receptions for up to 150 people, but the other areas are available as well. And what a backdrop from the foyer! The neighborhood was once best known for its steel production and they have kept the plant in its original, glorious condition. The area also features shopping complex and the science faculty of the University of Luxembourg. (www.rockhal.lu)

MORE INFO
VISITLUXEMBOURG.COM

A CLUSTER MICE FOR LUXEMBOURG

Almost two years ago, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg launched an ambitious cluster project called CML (Cluster MICE Luxembourg), in which 25 organisations, including hotels, venues, transport companies and local DMC/PCO, joined forces to promote the country's meetings industry. The goal is clear: to federate and coordinate all partners' expertise and know-how regarding the MICE segment, to better contribute to a common national strategy or improve the visibility of Luxembourg as a destination.

FAST FACTS FOR ASSOCIATION PLANNERS

LUXEMBOURG CITY
ideal for mi-range association conferences, up to 700 participants

HOTELS
36 and about 3,600 rooms, mostly in the four- and five-star category

CONFERENCE VENUES
108 (including hotels)

GETTING THERE
By air: Amsterdam (1h30), Berlin (1h20), Frankfurt/Geneva (50min), London (1h10);
By train: Paris (2h), Metz (1h), Brussels (3h), Trier (43min) and Strasbourg (1h39)

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For more information or reservation, please visit: www.luxcongress.lu
or contact **Luxembourg Congrès** via email: info@luxcongress.lu or by phone : +352 430 257 751

CLUSTER MICE LUXEMBOURG

members

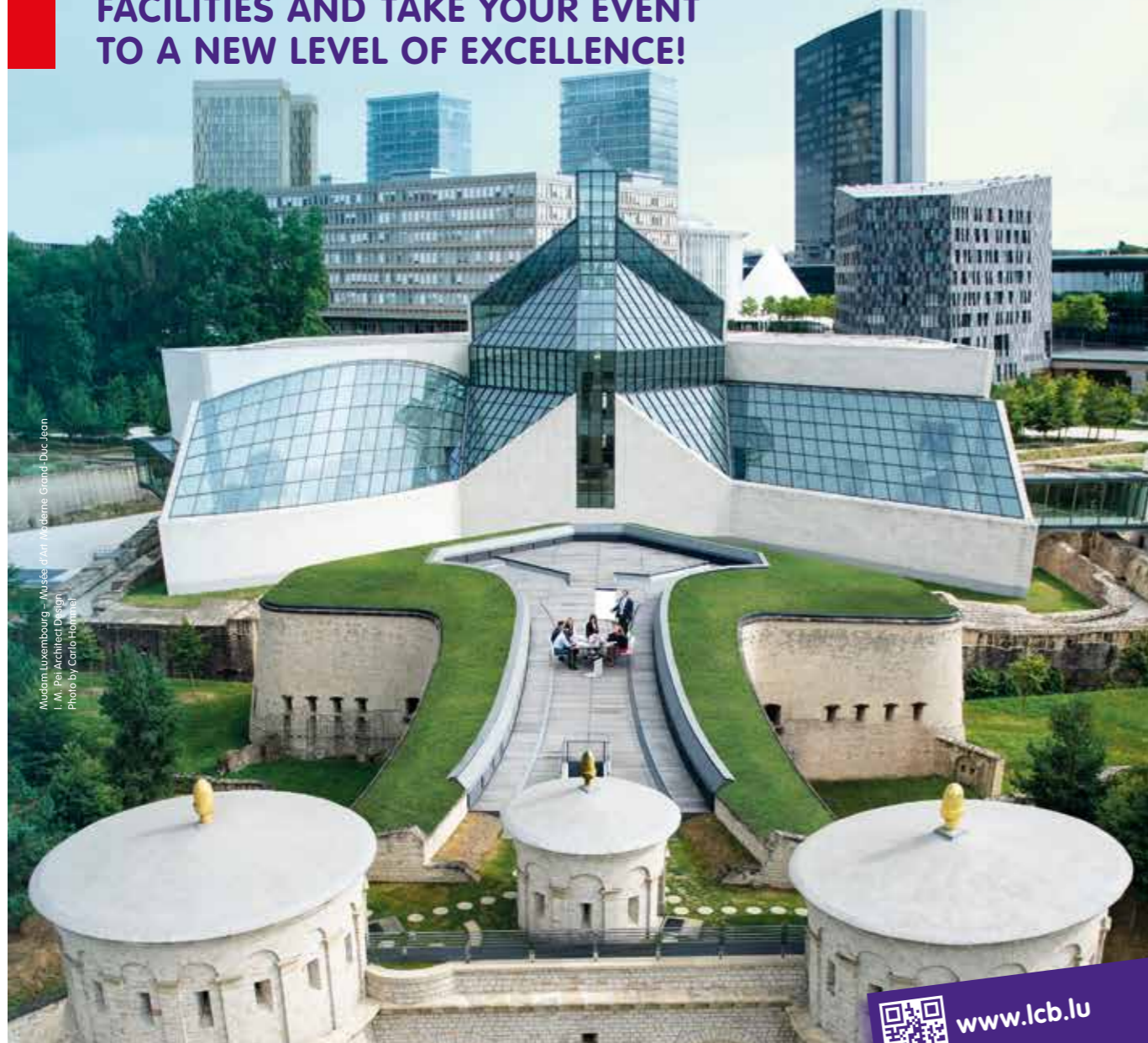
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- MELIA HOTEL
- MUDAM
- PARK INN BY RADISSON LUXEMBOURG-CITY
- PHILHARMONIE LUXEMBOURG
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UP NORTH AND HOSPITABLE

Despite its small size, Luxembourg features an amazing variety of hotels (about 3,600 hotels rooms, mostly in the four-and five-star category) and venues in unique settings. During my way too short visit, I also had the opportunity to visit the northern part of the country, which has nothing to blush about when it comes to meetings.

Some of the hotels in Luxembourg are newly renovated or refurbished to cope with an increasingly savvy clientele. Recently, **Le Royal Luxembourg**, part of the "Leading Hotels of the World", opened its doors to a brand-new accommodation experience. Within walking distance to all the sights, it might be the only kind of its category in the city. 170 renovated rooms, a Piano Bar with a contemporary design enhanced by original lights and music and the new restaurant Amélys make the property worth discovering. In terms of meetings, facilities hosting up to 1000 people are available, covering 900 m² of space.

ALL-AROUND ACCOMMODATION

Located on the edge of the forest just a short drive from Luxembourg, **Parc-Hotel Alvisse**, a four-star hotel, is your straight-forward business hotel and a local favourite because of its open-to-public swimming pool. 320 well-appointed rooms with

parking space for 400 cars make it a convenient spot for conferences for up to 1,500 guests. The hotel also had a recent makeover with refurbished rooms, indoor pool and spa facilities.

A short drive from Luxembourg City and nestled in a beautiful greenery setting, **Mondorf Parc Hotel** was designed as a haven for spa lovers, with many old thermal baths occupying a 100-acre private estate, all refined and elegant, where you can relax after a hard day's work at a conference. The 108 newly renovated rooms feature a warm earthy-toned décor, while meeting facilities include 15 flexible function rooms all filled with natural daylight, for up to 350 delegates, and even more should you want to use the many outside lawns Mondorf boasts. I personally liked L'Orangerie, an elegant venue facing a lushly landscaped French garden, perfect for cocktails and banquets alike.



Parc-Hotel Alvisse



Chalet, Sport Hotel Leweck



Chateau d'Urspelt



'Rent-A-City' in Clervaux



Orangerie, Mondorf
Domaine Thermal

© mondorf.lu



The Family of Man, Clervaux

Marco Kany © ONT

UP THERE

As we drove up north away from the capital city, I realised how much Luxembourg has to offer thanks to its compact size and ease of access, beyond the scenic landscapes, the meandering rivers and the meadows and forests. It seems indeed so easy to gather in the city during the day and wander off to the country for a social function at night. This combination makes the Luxembourg experience very unique.

Situated in the heart of the Oesling in a beautiful landscape, **Sport Hotel Leweck** effortlessly combines business, comfort, wellness and gastronomy in pure nature. With 51 rooms and suites as well as a large wellness and sport area with an indoor and outdoor swimming pool, different saunas and sport facilities, it's the perfect place for residential meetings, with a 'retreat' aspect. Available function rooms are aplenty, from the Château and the Jardin, up to 150 people standing, to the Chalet, my personal favorite because of the view, which easily accommodates 400. The large park and the various facilities are perfect for team-building activities – should you want to give a hands-on experience to your participants!

A bit further north lies the sparkling **Château d'Urspelt**, a family-owned hotel set in a 300-year-old castle. Now boasting 55 guest rooms all designed in contemporary yet classical style, the property has recently almost doubled its number of rooms, with a new extension that is so well-done you think it's been there the whole time! There is even a rooftop "infinity spa" and social functions in the elegant interior courtyard are a must. An eclectic choice of venues is for hire, including meeting rooms and a large reception hall for up to 500 people.

Last but definitely not least, I was made familiar with the original 'Rent-A-City' concept of the small but innovative city of Clervaux. As the name indicates, it gives the opportunity to rent an entire city for a breathtaking event for a few hundreds of people. The street become yours and instead of hosting your event in a traditional indoor location, you can customise your event in an outdoor setting. In collaboration with the town's mayor, local representatives and other organisations, the **Le Clervaux Boutique & Design Hotel** and the **Hotel International** came up with the idea so as to make the most of the city's attractions.

This synergy enables Clervaux to unite all participants to professionally and efficiently organise activities or events in just one single place with just one single contact person.

CASE STUDY

7TH INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE CONFERENCE

Around 400 policymakers, regulators and insurers from over 40 different countries around the world gathered at the Conference Centre Kirchberg in May 2015 for Insurance Europe's 7th International Insurance Conference.

Insurance Europe is the European insurance and reinsurance federation. Through its 34 member bodies, the national insurance associations, Insurance Europe represents all types of insurance and reinsurance undertakings, eg pan-European companies, monoliners, mutuals and SMEs.

Globalization of the insurance industry - this was the key topic which was on European insurers' agenda at their biggest annual conference organised in Luxembourg in the presence of HRH Prince Guillaume of Luxembourg. Sergio Balbinot, President of Insurance Europe emphasised on the role of the insurance industry: *"Given challenges society faces, as a tool to provide stability & growth, insurance is more relevant than ever. Regulation should see insurance as part of the solution, but sometimes it seems like it views it as part of the problem."*

The challenges of international regulation, its enforcement, coherence and effectiveness were not the only topics discussed during the event. The debates also focused on the opportunities and challenges that the insurance industry faces from globalisation, the global insurance protection gap and how the insurance industry can make the most of smart technology.

Luxembourg Finance Minister, HE Pierre Gramegna, discussed the importance of insurers in Europe in general and in Luxembourg in particular. He also pointed out the importance of the European insurance industry as long-term investors.