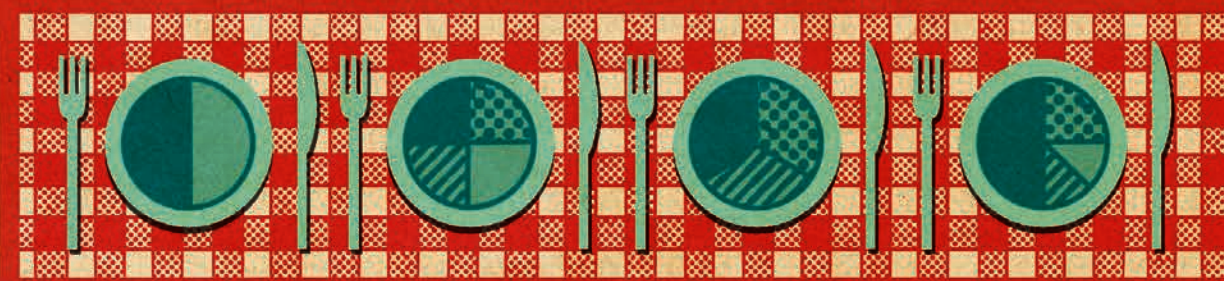
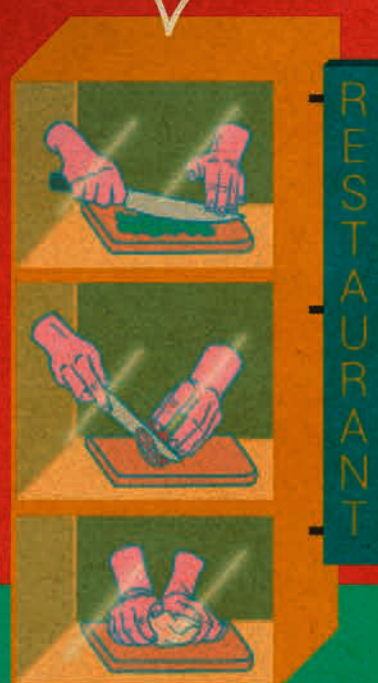
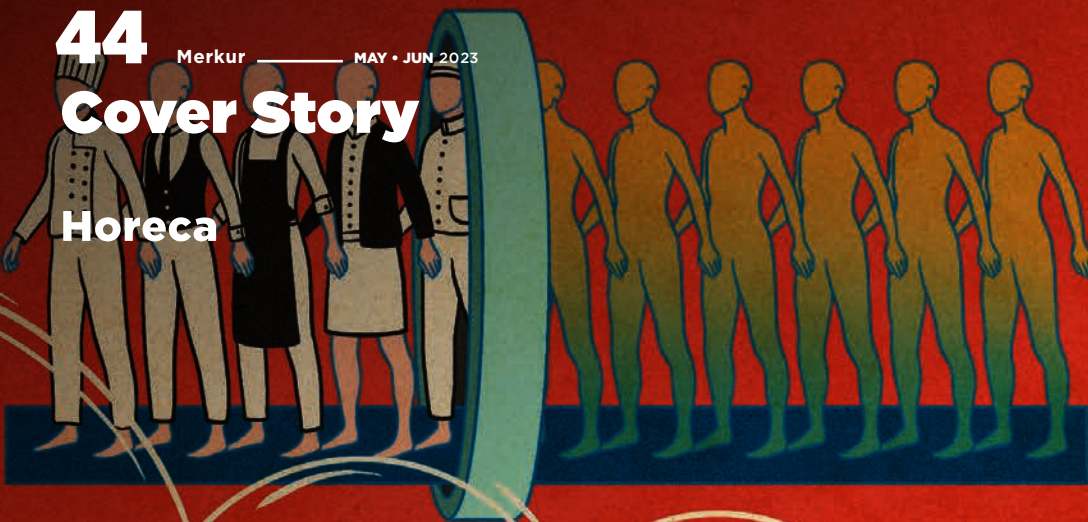


Cover Story

Horeca



The hosts' taste

TEXT Corinne Briault

TRANSLATION FROM FRENCH Martin Davies

Last March, the Retail Report 2023 (see Info Box) identified 2,557 establishments working in the Horeca sector, at the end of September 2022. If we also include companies that work indirectly with the sector, such as breweries and other suppliers, nearly 35,000 jobs depend on the sector and these generate more than 6% of gross domestic product (ADEM official figures and Horesca Federation, 2021). After going through a health crisis which was more than trying, Horeca professionals are now raising their heads above the ramparts and business is starting to pick up. However, the pandemic has left the sector facing many enduring challenges such as a shortage of labour and the need to incorporate the demands of digitalisation. In an economy that is experiencing incessant and rapid transformations, how is this sector, made up of numerous companies active in very different segments, changing ?

Horeca presents a variety of different economic dynamics: small independent family firms rub shoulders with large-scale establishments often associated with chains, working in sectors as different as collective catering, small village cafes, campsites, caterers or food trucks. Recent economic, regulatory and technological developments may have a considerable influence on the future of the sector. They also pose new challenges for both employers and for current and future workers, but they may also represent opportunities to be seized.

After the pandemic...

A genuine dynamic sector, Horeca was severely impacted by the months of closure provoked by the health crisis. All businesses suffered and, as highlighted in an opinion issued by the Economic and Social Council on October 6, 2022, the health restrictions put in place in Luxembourg from March 2020 to contain Covid-19 infections weighed particularly heavily on some business sectors in Luxembourg, particularly in trade, transport and Horeca (-8.8%), in construction (-5.7%), and in other services (-6.0%). In terms of turnover, a survey

conducted by the Chamber of Commerce shows that the loss of business amounted, to an average of 63% for Horeca companies, 42% in the services sector (excluding finance), 39% in transport and 35% in trade. On average, business managers saw their cash flow reduced by 33% but more than one in five Horeca businesses lost more than 80% of their cash, seriously jeopardizing their very existence. In addition, over the whole of 2020, Horeca activity, in terms of added value, fell by around a third. The accommodation sector – hotels, inns, campsites – saw the volume of its turnover fall by around 45% (compared with a fall of around 30% for restaurants, which were equally hard hit by the consequences of the pandemic). In terms of the number of arrivals and overnight stays in accommodation establishments in Luxembourg, an equivalent decrease can be observed over the entire year, and this trend continued over the first three months of 2021 before improving from April with a peak in August 2021 (more than 120,000 arrivals and almost 375,000 overnight stays). Despite everything, 2021 ended, for the hotel sector, with a 60.5% drop in revenue per room. For restaurants and cafes, turnover fell by more than 20%. However, there is evidence that the number

of bankruptcies in the sector fell thanks to state aid schemes, namely reimbursable aid, recovery aid, aid for costs not covered and even the partial unemployment scheme. This aid therefore mostly had the effect desired by the government. It remains to be noted that, in some cases, the aid did not achieve its objective. (Sources: opinion of the Economic and Social Council, October 6 2022; Economic Barometer S1 2020 based on results obtained from 431 companies with 6 or more employees, representative of the Luxembourg economy; The survey was conducted from 3rd to 16th June 2020 by the TNS-ILRES institute under the direction of the Chamber of Commerce.)

... new crises?

It is undeniable that the sector is highly sensitive to economic conditions which influence consumers' behaviour through their purchasing power and spending on leisure, accommodation or catering. Thus, in times of "crisis", it is quite logical to see consumers weigh up how to reduce their Horeca expenses (reducing the number of visits to establishments, searching for good deals, etc.). For professionals in the sector, the cost of raw materials and energy is one of their main priorities in the months to come. A recent study in France (January 2023) by KPMG, Gira and the Addition notes that, compared to 2019, the cost of raw materials now represents 34.2% of restaurant owners' turnover excluding tax. Among the top 8 raw materials whose prices have exploded and weigh heavily on purchasing strategies are, for example, cooking oil +400%,

mayonnaise and mustard +300%, pastries +150% and butter +100%! In addition, according to this study, the rise in energy costs could by 2023, no longer be absorbed by increasing turnover, thereby degrading profitability. Finally, in Luxembourg, the hotel business is often linked to real estate investment and therefore depends directly on the evolution of real estate prices (*ADEM sector study and Horesca Federation, November 2021*).

Changing lifestyles?

While the sector has already had to adapt to certain constraints that have negatively impacted it (smoking ban, increase in VAT on alcoholic beverages and compliance with European directives), it should also be noted that in recent years - and the pandemic has only accelerated the trend - lifestyles and behaviours have changed rapidly. Consumers now have new concerns relating to sustainable development, the environment, the circular economy and even health, particularly food safety, in addition to increasingly frequent food intolerances and allergies. These concerns cover broader areas than simple food issues since they also cover issues such as waste management and human resources. Many new challenges thus arise for the sector, which must constantly renew

"A genuine dynamic sector, Horeca was severely impacted by the months of closure provoked by the health crisis."



itself in order to attract and retain customers. Moreover, increasingly connected and informed via social media, consumers feel invested with powers and demands that they do not fail to share, sometimes unfairly, to the detriment of businesses. As early as 2018, Horesca, in an official note, requested a change in business regulations concerning malicious comments, arguing that some customers were using this means of pressure to reduce their bill in establishments!

Finally, widespread teleworking has also had a significant economic impact on restaurants and local businesses, as indicated in the CES Opinion of 6th October 2022. Thus, the Horeca sector (*see also Side Interview with François Koepf*) estimated that the daily expenditure of an employee at the workplace corresponded to approximately 25 euros spent in the Horeca sector and 15 euros in other businesses, i.e. 40 euros per day. Horesca concluded that teleworking would reduce the turnover of the local businesses concerned by around 350 million euros per year. This drop in revenue would result in this sector alone in the loss of more than 1,000 jobs, 7.5 million euros in social security contributions, 5 million euros in VAT receipts and nearly 3 million euros in income tax receipts. (*Source: Horesca, editor's*

note). In addition, in an article published in Le Figaro (summer 2022), the Food Service Vision study noted that in addition to teleworking, concerns about purchasing power also led to "workers to make greater use of the Tupperware and the lunch box, either preparing their lunch at home or buying it at the supermarket".

Digital competition?

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have changed consumers' behaviour and their relationship with the local business environment. For the accommodation and hotel sector, the debut of the digital age has above all been marked by the sudden appearance of a new form of competition based on the digitisation of services. The new online booking platforms such as *booking.lu* and platforms for renting and booking accommodation between individuals such as *Airbnb*, have reshuffled the cards because they compete directly with the traditional accommodation sector by calling into question its commercial model. Indeed, this new accommodation offer does not create - unlike the traditional hotel industry - any new jobs and therefore has no effect on reducing unemployment. Traditional accommodation businesses believe that the



business model and practices of new digital players constitute unfair competition, given that they escape the many obligations that established businesses must comply with or face penalties under the law. Many cities around the world have therefore decided to apply specific legislation to these new “commercial practices”. However, players in the sector must find a happy medium when it comes to ICT. It is becoming almost impossible today not to use them, the challenge is to find the right balance: it is thus necessary to ensure that you are present on the web in order to make yourself known and to attract non-local customers, but it is now also necessary to take advantage of the multitude of spaces for dialogue or commentary in order to take care of one’s e-reputation. Catering companies, drinking establishments and hotels are the most affected by this problem. Obviously, the smallest establishments are the least well equipped financially or humanly to ensure a presence on social networks or the various platforms and therefore take care of their e-reputation.

Not all bad!

Although the digital transition has been implemented and accelerated in a dazzling way in the dramatic context of the

01. 02. 03. 04. The Horeca sector covers small independent family businesses, large-scale establishments associated with chains or collective catering and small village cafés.



Helder Couto Guedes
Waiter, Légère Hotels
Luxembourg

*“I love doing what I do!
I love interacting with
customers!”*

Can you tell us about your learning path?

I arrived in Luxembourg 11 years ago. I found it difficult to choose a profession when you are only 15 years old! Then, I did an internship in a restaurant, and I immediately liked it! It was almost like a revelation! I then passed a Certificate of Professional Competence (CCP) as a server under an apprenticeship contract, managed in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, at the Lycée Technique de Bonnevoie (LTB). It is practical professional training in a company under an apprenticeship contract. I want, maybe one day, to have my own establishment, so I decided to continue my training at the LTB by passing a Diploma of Professional Aptitude (DAP) as a server, still under an apprenticeship contract, with practical in-company training. I finished my three-year training in February this year!

What do you like about this profession?

I love doing what I do! I love interacting with the customers, being able to give them advice, being autonomous in giving service or putting everything in place. In addition, when I arrived in Luxembourg, as a 10-year old, I did not master the languages of the country well. This training allowed me to work with a team of several nationalities and has helped me to express myself in several languages today. I did my first internship at the Légère Hotel, then in another establishment, and the Légère Hotel contacted me after my graduation to offer me a position. The atmosphere is very good in the team and the big advantage is that the schedules have been arranged so that we can work continuously. So I start very early in the morning and I don’t have a break between the different services. This allows me to have a good balance between my professional life and my private life!

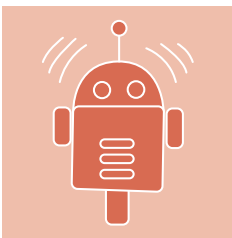
Before choosing this course, did you have any preconceptions?

Obviously, I heard, including from within my family, a lot of clichés before starting: these professions are very difficult, poorly considered, poorly paid, etc. In reality, you can learn a lot of things, and since there are a lot of opportunities, you can go to work in very different establishments and why not, discover the world if you want to! In reality, I think that if, like me, you love what you do, it’s a very beautiful job with many facets!



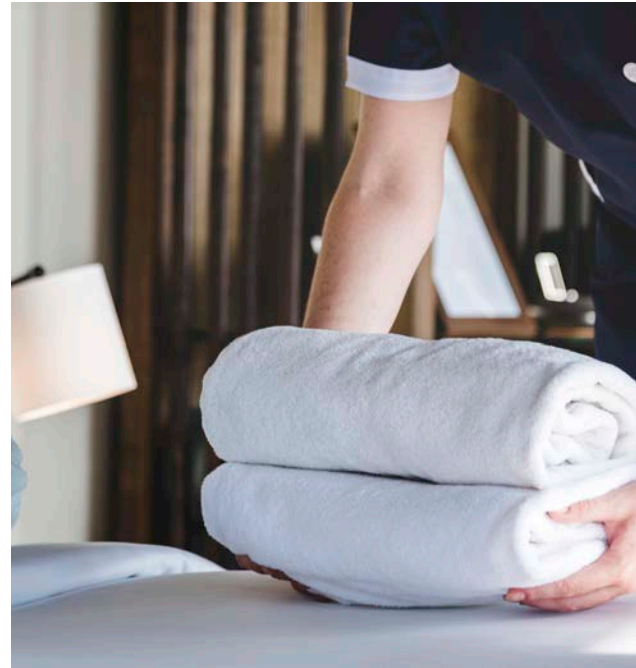
Apprenticeship, it's Win Win

Work-linked vocational training is a royal way to enter the world of business to the business world, and its success is undeniable. Each year, the Chamber of Commerce manages some 2,000 active contracts covering a wide range of professions, including those in the hotel and catering sector (see interview, Practical Apprenticeship Guide and winwin.lu website). Dual apprenticeship allows young people to acquire skills that are essential in a rapidly changing world and allows companies to cover their skills needs, it is characterised by the systematic integration of practical training in a professional environment in the training course. This is its main strength with particularly rapid and sustainable access to the labour market. Alternating presence school and in the company for 1 to 4 years, depending on the diploma, apprenticeship enables young people to be trained, but also adults wishing to complete or acquire a professional training through this through apprenticeship.



Nothing replaces people!

A little less than ten years ago, some Japanese hotels caused a sensation by using robots and "humanoid" staff to perform certain tasks (registering customers, carrying suitcases, etc.) in order to make up for the shortage of staff. This was launched with some fanfare, and some already predict the disappearance of redundant humans. It seems that a few years later, the experiment was not altogether conclusive. Robots, it seems, ultimately reduced productivity because they too often needed repairs to fix their many bugs and malfunctions and frequent customer complaints! They too experience the fate of humans by being quite simply fired!



"Professional prospects in Horeca are varied because they cover many areas of expertise."

pandemic, it has not only had negative impacts on the Horeca professions. Initially, during the lockdown, digitalisation enabled many establishments to recover at least a part of their turnover with click&collect and to maintain contact with their customers. Some less familiar professionals (more traditional gastronomy for example) were also to adapt and develop a take-out offer. Still practiced today in many establishments, the digitisation of menus, through QR codes, made it possible to manage this new large flow of customers while limiting physical contact as much as possible and ensuring quality service. For more and more establishments in the sector, reservations are now most often made online, via their own website or a platform on which they are listed. This system makes it possible to optimise the management of reservations and has many advantages for customers such as the possibility of taking reservations

outside opening hours, and the sending of automatic notifications to remind them of their reservation.

Finally, there are now many software programs that offer technical automation of inventory management, accounting (invoices, charges, supplier payments) or the planning and management of personnel thanks to adapted schedules which take account of holidays, delays, absences or partial unemployment. All these tools can save a lot of time.

In addition, changes in customer behaviour and the attraction of novelty have also seen the birth of great initiatives in Luxembourg, which now has establishments that are "well off the beaten track": there is a plethora of food-trucks with quite varied offers; home deliveries have gained ground; and we have seen flourishing initiatives such as the Pétiche Lauer ecolodge on the banks of the River Attert, which embodies slow



05

05. 06. Hotel and catering businesses are struggling to find recruits in the local market.



06

tourism with rooms in mushroom-shaped huts and the Escher Bamhaiser, which offers accommodation perched in the trees, in the heart of the Escher Deierpark animal park. Finally, campsites have not been outdone and have changed accommodation styles in recent years, particularly with the arrival of pods (a kind of hut or cabin) and other special structures such as wine barrels transformed into rooms welcoming wine-lovers to the banks of the Moselle.

Manpower - the sinews of war

If professional prospects in Horeca are varied because they cover many areas of expertise, ranging from administrative management, to supervisory jobs or those of execution, all the professionals in the sector have noted that staffing needs have become glaring whilst at the same time, labour is becoming increasingly scarce. If the Horeca professions are often regarded as “passionate professions”, the constraints linked to them are very strong and it is very difficult to shake off their bad reputation. Salaries in Horeca

do not have the reputation of being among the highest on the market and the working conditions are often difficult. The problem is even more accentuated in Luxembourg as the hotel and catering industry struggles to find staff locally and has to recruit within the Greater Region. This poses a series of new problems related to long and often difficult journey times, as well as the fact that the Horeca sector often works in split shifts. The sector is, since the pandemic, experiencing even greater tension. The Horesca Federation estimates that the sector lost some 2,000 employees during the pandemic, who either found jobs in other professions or simply left Luxembourg (interview with François Koepp, Secretary General of the Horesca Federation in the Land from May 2022). The closure of businesses and the fall in tourism (-60% on 1st May 2020 compared to 2019) has amplified a vast movement of disaffection in these professions. Thus, since the crisis, staffing needs have been so dire in Horeca that some establishments have had to consider reducing their reception capacity or reviewing their

opening hours. Although the pace of change is now rather calmer, the Horeca sector has had to reinvent itself by drawing on the lessons from this period: the aspirations of employees have to be better taken into account and need to respect the work-life balance better. Many establishments have not hesitated to adapt their schedules, or even to close on certain days. An effort has also been made to raise salaries. This trend can be seen in many countries.

Which jobs pose problems?

A study by ADEM (November 2021), in collaboration with the Luxembourg Horesca Federation, outlined the distribution of professions in the sector according to different categories. Thus, culinary production (cooking and dishwashing) represents half of the recruitment in the sector (48% according to the positions declared to ADEM), followed by serving professions in catering (restaurants and cafés) which represent around a third. Then, the rest is divided between cleaning (5%), hotel reception (2%), delivery drivers (2%), management staff (2%), hotel house-keeping staff (2%) and food retailing (2%). According to this study, the most sought-after profiles were by far kitchen staff (cooks, chefs de partie, kitchen assistants, etc.) who made up 28% of all declared positions over the period 2015-2020), as well as serving staff (waiters, restaurant clerks) with 23%, followed by dishwashing staff and kitchen help (9%), café servers, bartenders (8%) general-purpose staff (canteen and fast food) (7%), cleaning staff (5%), pizza makers (3%), chefs (2%), hotel reception (2%) and delivery drivers (2%). Obviously, trades such as delivery drivers and food sales saw a lot of growth during the pandemic because of the high demand created by the restrictions. Those corresponding to employees in fast food and canteens experienced a significant drop over the period 2015 - 2020, perhaps due to automation in fast food production lines. Finally, professions have emerged in recent years in the sector for management control, organisational consulting, business strategy, IT, supply chain organisation, and the profession of “barista”. The kitchen and



The professional training courses of the House of Training in figures

The House of Training offers 60 training courses, 11 certification courses and 1 diploma program in the field of Horeca. Its offer revolves around 5 professional profiles: manager of hotel activities, regulated access, designated worker, staff in the dining room, bar and kitchen.

In addition to this catalogue offer, a tailor-made training is also available to people in the sector.

customer@houseoftraining.lu

www.houseoftraining.lu



Expogast, promotional platform!

An overview of international gastronomy and a reflection of culinary refinement, the Expogast fair is held every 4 years to celebrate the food trades. For 5 days at break-neck speed, the show welcomes aspiring chefs, 5-star protagonists and fascinating dishes worthy of the most prestigious restaurants. Organised over a total area of 24,700 m² at Luxexpo - The Box, the last edition was held in November 2022 and was also an opportunity for the various federations and employers' chambers, including the Chamber of Commerce, to host a large information stand on catering professions. The event naturally aims to promote vocations in the sector through numerous activities.

"Information and communication technologies (ICT) have changed consumers' behaviour."



07

service functions experience the strongest degree of shortage, while those of valets/chambermaids, hotel receptionists, dishwashers, bar staff and cleaners are some of those where candidates are more numerous than vacancies: this being explained mainly by the fact that these functions require fewer qualifications.

The Horeca sector is indeed unique in that for the above-mentioned functions, a diploma is often not a selection criterion during recruitment. In addition, language skills, in particular for dining room and reception staff, as well as technical skills, which vary according to the job sought, are generally in demand and can therefore be more easily lacking in the absence of training for job seekers in these trades. Then, to this may be added more subjective and arbitrary "requests" during recruitment such as personality (motivation, etc.), physical appearance, relational and behavioural skills (sense of service, autonomy, initiative, ability to integrate in a team, respect for hierarchy, etc.).

The tensions are particularly felt for positions whose skills can be acquired through training, but need to be supplemented by "on the job" experience". In addition, as consumers are increasingly demanding in terms of hospitality, friendliness, recognition and unique customer experience, the sector is even more particularly "dependent" on candidates having soft skills (language skills, communication skills, hospitality, adaptability, creativity, cooperation and team spirit, ability to manage a team, etc.) Knowledge of one's profession, soft, personal and interpersonal skills, greater professionalisation, interpersonal skills, know-how... training in these professions covers many areas and is gaining in importance.

Maintaining competitiveness and satisfying a more demanding clientele through continuing professional training

The Horeca sector is vital for the Luxembourg economy. Despite its post-pandemic



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recovery, this sector nevertheless faces major challenges that require special attention. Among these challenges, the shortage of skilled labour as well as changing consumer habits and customer expectations are of concern to the sector. Qualified professionals are highly sought after in the Horeca sector and recruiting them can prove difficult for companies due to the shortage of talent. In such a diverse and specific sector, the skills required are numerous and demanding.

A multidisciplinary sector with advanced skills

In culinary terms, chefs, cooks and commis must have practical experience and be able to create innovative menus to satisfy demanding customers. Culinary skills include knowledge of ingredients, proficiency in cooking techniques, and the ability to work quickly and efficiently in a busy kitchen environment.

In the area of service, waiters, sommeliers and baristas are also key talents in the sector. They must have communication, time management, prioritisation and customer service skills to deliver an exceptional customer experience. More specifically for sommeliers, it is essential that they have expertise, know the origins and types of wines in their cellar as well as the dishes offered, in order to be able to advise and guide customers in their choices.

07. 08. In recent years, the lifestyles and behaviours of customers have been changing rapidly.



Aline Bourscheid and Clovis Degrave
Managing partners and chef, Hostellerie du Grünewald

“We are in perpetual renewal, we are constantly reinventing ourselves”.

You took over the establishment in 2017 by completely modernising it. You have moved upmarket and made it through the pandemic. Where are you today?

Since we took over the establishment, we have not stopped investing to modernise and develop: we have enlarged the restaurant area to 80 seats, reorganised the kitchen, we have reviewed the decoration of the rooms, we installed a terrace... we are in perpetual renewal, we are constantly reinventing ourselves and the lockdown enabled us to undertake some heavy work that we would not have been able to do in normal times. All this also required reinforcing our workforce to maintain a high level of quality, both for the service and for the kitchen: from 14 we went to 32 people, in addition to the two of us!

You are at the same time a hotel, a bar and a restaurant. Three pillars of the sector in which the lack of labour is felt. What is the situation in your establishment?

There too, we have had to adapt because we are experiencing difficulties in recruiting although this is nothing new, and it also affects other sectors. We try to find the right balance between the professional and private lives of our employees, and we listen to them as much as possible, even if in our profession we simply cannot give an à la carte schedule to everyone, by offering, for example, continuous schedules without interruption during the day, with a team in the morning and a team in the evening. For the hotel, we use an external cleaning company and at the reception, we obviously always have to have someone to welcome people.

Upcoming projects?

Yes ! We bought the house across the road from the Hostellerie! The opportunity presented itself and we seized it! The work should be completed in June and we will be able to open 7 additional rooms on the upper floors, and on the ground floor, offer a top-of-the-range Chef's Table concept four evenings a week for 18 places installed at a counter, in front of which the chef will prepare their meals. It is a question of offering a new experience to the guests both in taste and in terms of wine. It is also a great challenge for the people who will work there!

**Michel Lanners**

Director of the École d'Hôtellerie et de Tourisme du Luxembourg (EHTL)

"We implement a pedagogy in line with the real needs of the professional market."

The École d'Hôtellerie et de Tourisme du Luxembourg (EHTL) is the only school in Luxembourg to provide courses in Horeca. Can you, in brief, explain to us the specificities of the EHTL?

Located in Diekirch since our beginnings in 1949 - we will celebrate our 75th anniversary in 2024 - the school now has some 300 students who are acquiring skills specific to the hospitality sector. Our ambition is to offer students modern and dynamic training, to build and offer future prospects to the young people we welcome. We are not a traditional high school, but a school that operates quite differently by offering internships and participation in international competitions... The small size of the EHTL allows us to personalise support for young learners, promoting privileged links with teachers and conviviality. These specificities have been recognised by the authorities as the Ministry of National Education have announced that the school will, in the next few years, be given a second campus in the south of the country installed in the castle of Sanem.

The sector has experienced fairly significant recruitment problems since the pandemic. Have you noticed any changes on your side (fewer registrations, less interest in these professions) since the Covid crisis?

Yes and no! Indeed, our registrations for tourism training courses did drop but we took advantage of the Covid period to set up a new Tourism and Communication training course in order to attract young people to this sector. For gastronomy, we did not experience a drop in registrations; indeed we saw the contrary thanks to our innovative marketing policy. We do everything to present the sector in an attractive way, for example, by participating, in collaboration with Horesca, in operations such as DreamJobs Ambassadors aimed at promoting and enhancing the hospitality professions in Luxembourg. Then, we implement a pedagogy in line with the real needs of the professional market. At the end of their training course, graduates master all the knowledge and skills necessary to practice their profession and this allows us to guarantee everyone a job at the end of the training. But indeed, it is true that the sector is experiencing a huge shortage of labour and we should train twice as many people to meet the needs of the sector.

The EHTL has developed numerous initiatives in recent years (participation in the Universal Exhibition in Dubai, publication of cookbooks, participation in international events, etc.). What are the objectives?

All these initiatives and projects aim to give even more meaning to the training we offer. They are real drivers of motivation, both for the teaching team and for the learners. Winning a medal, being rewarded with a prize in a competition - all this boosts the pleasure of learning. It is in the DNA of our training and it is also, for the teams, a great recognition of the work accomplished!



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09. 10. 11. Many new challenges have arisen for the sector, which must constantly renew itself in order to attract - and retain - customers. Increasingly connected and informed via social media, consumers share and comment on their experiences.

Finally, skills in business management, project management and human resource management are also crucial for businesses. Professionals must have the strategic planning, budgeting, and leadership skills to maintain the operations of the establishment. They must also be able to manage people, solve problems and maintain a positive company culture.

Skills and reorientation

How to ensure the upgrading of skills and the reorientation of professionals? *"This is where the House of Training can come in, by offering professional training to guarantee the upskilling and development of kitchen and room staff, as well as programs for floor staff in structures offering accommodation,"* explains Marie-Laure Ferster, Senior Training Advisor of the House of Training. *We offer regulated training in our online catalogue but also can also offer tailor-made training to meet the specific*



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needs of employers and employees. For future professionals in the sector, we offer – with professional partners in the country and the University of Lorraine – a Bachelor’s degree in hotel business management. This training allows students to strengthen their managerial skills, by offering them both technical and practical competences in the hotel industry. The diversity of the preliminary courses allows for a mutual enrichment of the students during the many group tasks to be carried out”.

Finally, to meet the challenge of growing customer expectations, companies must constantly adapt and offer ever more personalised services. “The House of Training works in collaboration with professional and academic partners in the sector to offer innovative training that helps companies meet the needs of their customers”, concludes Marie Laure Ferster.

Redorer le blason !

Aware of the challenges it has to meet, the sector, professional chambers and public authorities have developed numerous initiatives in recent years to upgrade the Horeca professions.

With registrations having just closed a few days ago, the second edition of the *Dream-jobs Ambassadors* campaign was launched by the Horesca Federation and the Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Ministry of Economy – General Directorate for the Middle Classes and the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth. This campaign aims, among other things, to stimulate a desire to learn one of the hotel professions, to promote know-how, to strengthen information on the branches of the hotel industry in Luxembourg and to provide a platform to increase the visibility of the sector. A jury, made up of representatives from the Horesca Federation, the École d’Hôtellerie et de Tourisme du Luxembourg

(EHTL), the Lycée Technique de Bonnevoie (LTB), a delegation from the Chamber of Commerce as well as partners and sponsors of the campaign, will, in the near future, select eight candidates eligible for the title of ambassador: four cooks and four waiters/bartenders (m/f), who will be rewarded at an autumn ceremony.

The École d’Hôtellerie et de Tourisme du Luxembourg (EHTL) (see side interview with Michel Lanners) has expanded its training offer and enhanced the quality of the courses offered to improve its national and international influence and, in this way, contribute to motivating more young people to choose this professional path, which opens up a good number of prospects. The School has multiplied both its initiatives and its participation in many events in recent years: it took part in the last Expogast (with the publication of a book of vegetable recipes *Mmmmh*), it developed the gastronomic concept of *The Schengen Lounge* restaurant and students actively participated in the Universal Expo Dubai 2020 (also producing *The Schengen Lounge* cookbook) and in many international competitions, making EHTL olive oil, ... “We try to offer students extraordinary formative experiences, and we were lucky enough to be able to participate in the Luxembourg pavilion at the Dubai World Expo 2020 by sending students to work in the classroom or in the kitchen. The experience has been visibly positive because various ministries have already asked the EHTL to repeat the experience at the next Universal Exhibition in Osaka 2025. We have also been asked to attend other major world events, but for the time, nothing is officially confirmed. The next challenges will concern the consolidation



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of the school's internal values, promoting its know-how and acting on its intrinsic values. We must aim for a real quality approach to our learning in collaboration with our teachers. In this context, the EHTL was recently awarded the Apple Distinguished School (ADS) label, for having implemented innovative projects aimed at putting new technologies at the service of pedagogy in order to make the subjects taught more tangible and to develop the capacity of students to learn semi-autonomously. ADS institutions around the world are hubs of innovation, leadership and educational excellence. Finally, still with this in mind, we are going to develop and expand our training offer to professions such as butler, concierge, sommelier and bartender which does not yet exist in Luxembourg"

emphasises Michel Lanners, director of the EHTL.

For the past two years, the *Luxembourg Tourism Awards* have rewarded establishments that excel in their ability to innovate in making Luxembourg a first-rate tourist destination. Other labels can be put forward by the sector in order to promote their know-how. The EcoLabel Lux, for example, has been supporting tourists in their ecological choices since 1999. The label is awarded by the Ministry of the Economy. To obtain it, candidate accommodation must meet sustainability criteria in terms of environmental, energy, water, waste and purchasing management. This label was created thanks to several partners, including the Ministry of the Environment, Climate and

Sustainable Development. It is managed by the Oekozer Pafendall, the eco-centre of the city of Luxembourg.

Recently, the Minister of Tourism, Lex Delles, officially presented the *EureWelcome* label brochure. This label, which is awarded by the General Directorate of Tourism in collaboration with the National Centre for Information and Encounters with Disabilities (Info-Handicap), is awarded to tourist establishments or events to recognise their efforts in terms of accessibility and 'hospitality. This approach is based on the concept of "Design for all", aiming to meet the needs of all visitors, including visitors with disabilities, the elderly and families with children. 17 new establishments have successfully met the criteria for the label, bringing the



François Koepf
Secretary General
of Horesca

“The sector will succeed in overcoming the crises!”

Pandemic, inflation, war in Ukraine. Crises follow one another... In your opinion, what is the current situation in the sector?

Even though we see that customers again want to consume, to meet up and have a fun time in our establishments, we can also see some major drawbacks. First of all, the sector is still recovering. Of course, state aid has saved it, but many businesses are still paying today for the losses accumulated during the health crisis. Then, the increase in the price of raw materials, combined with the indexation of wages, rents, etc. mean that costs have risen sharply, while margins have fallen, because we just cannot pass everything on to customers. Before the health crisis, it was estimated that profits in the sector before interest and taxes were around 18%, whereas now they are more around 5%. All establishments are under pressure still!

Pressure also with hard-to-recruit labour?

These recruitment difficulties affect all sectors! In Horeca, we have known this shortage for years, but the Covid crisis has accentuated things! Our sector has suffered for years from a lack of valuation. There are certainly many young people who could be very talented or who could have a real passion for these “manual” professions, but they are referred to so-called intellectual courses because they are more prestigious! The sector must build on training, upgrading and recognition of its different branches and careers and show that there are many Horeca professionals who love what they do!

What are the prospects?

I am confident about the future! The sector will overcome the crises and will benefit from the fact that customers want to take full advantage of their free time and invest in leisure. Then, one of the good pieces of news is that, despite the war in Ukraine and the fact that travellers from certain countries are not quite back yet, business tourism is starting to pick up. We note that digitisation has not completely taken over from real contacts and exchanges. Meetings, conferences and events are once again being held face-to-face.



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total number up to 191 establishments in the country.

You can bet that, as Minister Lex Delles pointed out at the press conference to launch the second edition of the *DreamJobs Ambassadors*, the hospitality professions in Luxembourg are constantly evolving and very closely following all innovations that may interest and positively impact the sector. As the Horesca Federation points out, in a country which, by tradition, cultivates the art of “living well and eating well”, and which has one of the highest concentrations of starred restaurants in the world, the Horeca sector – hotels, cafes and restaurants – will remain extremely buoyant. —

12. 13. New professions in the sector have emerged in recent years ranging from organisational consulting to business strategy, to “barista”.

14. 15. Aware of the challenges that have to be met, the sector, the professional chambers and the public authorities have developed numerous initiatives to enhance the value of Horeca professions, such as the second edition of the *DreamJobs Ambassadors* and the *Expogast* campaign.