

COVERSTORY





Photo: Pierre Guersing

By systematically investing in a high-quality service and infrastructure, the family-run Sport-Hôtel Leweck in Lipperscheid recently became the only Luxembourg establishment awarded the "Logis Hôtel d'Exception" label which brings together "extraordinary places, rich in singular stories, embodied by devoted and passionate owners and chefs who are passionate about transmitting their art, a vector of strong and authentic emotions".

HORECA SECTOR

BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Almost 20,000 people work in Luxembourg's hospitality industry. Add to this people who live indirectly from the business of hotels, restaurants and cafes – such as suppliers and breweries – and the number rises to 33,000 employees, about 8.8% of total employment of the country. Whilst the sector is generally doing well and continues to offer both interesting business opportunities and opportunities for professional growth, there are numerous challenges.

Text: Patrick Ernzer

At 90, Marguerite Leyen, owner of the "An Demessen" pub in Steinfort, continues to welcome her customers with a smile every day – except Wednesday, day off. In a touching portrait published by the online "Reporter", Madame Leyen, who has had

her pub for more than 60 years, admits that she continues partly out of habit, but mostly because she still enjoys working and loves to get into animated discussions with her customers, the majority of whom are regulars. Her meagre takings do not allow her to employ any help, nor even draw a salary from her work. The day Madame Leyen stops serving her clients will also be the day when the establishment – opened in 1883 – will close permanently, thus ending an entrepreneurial adventure that has been a part the village's history for more than 135 years.

"An Demessen" is just one of those emblematically traditional village pubs which we are in the process of inexorably and irremediably losing. A look at the statistics is enough to illustrate the scale of the problem. Luxembourg still had 1,641 ►



Wellkomm Label

The "Wellkomm" quality label was launched at the end of 2015 by Horesca in partnership with the Ministry of Economy and the Chamber of Commerce. It aims to revitalise the brand image of the Hospitality sector, to improve the quality of the establishments and to facilitate the choice for the customers, whilst promoting its members. To obtain the label, establishments sign a charter in which they undertake to respect quality criteria in the areas of service, hygiene and sustainable development. The signatories then follow training that puts a special emphasis on food security, explains good hygiene practices and presents a wide range of regional products so that the companies involved can offer more local products to their customers. Once the charter is signed and the training completed, members can affix a sticker in the colours of the label on their front door. The signed charter is posted inside the establishment so that the customers can take note of the commitments made.

More information on www.wellkomm.lu.



Photo: Matic Zorman, Reporter

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pubs in 1985, but by the turn of the millennium there were only 1,400. The latest data available (2013) has just 1,095 with a clear downward trend ...

THE "LOCAL": ON THE ROAD TO EXTINCTION

The traditional local to which the Luxembourg songwriter Serge Tonnar dedicated the song "Bopebistro" (granddad's pub) in 2012 before starting a farewell tour of the country's remaining "Bopebistros" is no longer popular. Its essential role as a meeting place and source of information for the village's inhabitants has been lost for good. Today the latest gossip is to be found live on social media. No need to go to the pub in hope of hearing "the latest". The rapid development of information technology and the profound changes it has brought to our communications and lifestyles is, however, only one of the many reasons for the gradual extinction of an institution which for many decades - together with the church and sports and cultural clubs - has been the motor of village life.

Among the many other reasons that have accelerated the fall of the traditional pub, we can mention the soaring land prices, low profitability, demographic changes, the ban on smoking, the introduction of stricter legislation on the subject alcohol consumption, the multiplication of administrative burdens, the increase in the price of water or the rise in VAT (from 3% to 17%) in 2017.

"There is also a clear evolution in consumer choice and customer habits. A night out is now preferably in the restaurant. The pub has lost a lot of its appeal. The restaurant simply offers an experience that a pub cannot compete with", explains Dave Giannandrea of Horesca, the National Federation of Hoteliers, Restaurateurs and Publicans in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. The statistics confirm this view, since the evolution in the number of restaurants is diametrically opposed to that of pubs. Whereas in 1985 there were only 417 restaurants in Luxembourg (compared with 1,641 pubs), the trend has been totally reversed in the last three decades; the country now has nearly 1,300 restaurants compared



Photo: restaurant Breedeweë

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to just 950 pubs according to Horesca. To stop the bloodletting of village pubs, Horesca has developed several initiatives and support measures. Thus, at the end of 2015, in partnership with the Ministry of the Economy and the Chamber of Commerce, the federation launched the quality label “Wellkomm” (welcome), which is addressed to all drinking establishments (village bistros, pubs, bars ... with or without alcohol) who wish to invest in quality and use this investment as a promotional tool and selling point (see box on page 44). The official website of the label (www.wellkomm.lu) also works as a promotional tool for members by publicising them with photos and explanatory text and allowing visitors to look up geographical and/or service criteria (terrace, parking, accessibility for people with reduced mobility, children and families welcome, skittles, snacks, newspapers ...).

Another initiative was launched last May with the setting up – also by Horesca with the support of the Chamber of Commerce – of “Up & Down”, a card game developed by the Luxembourgish ▶

01. 90-year old Marguerite Leyen, owner of “An Demessen” in Steinfort, continues to greet customers with a smile at her pub, which opened in 1883.

02. While some institutions rely on a privileged location and a high-end offer to attract their customers.



INTERVIEW
CLAUDE RIES
ADVISOR-TRAINER, HORESCA

“A more modern classification better adapted to market developments and customer expectations”

How does the new official classification system for hotels in Luxembourg, launched at the end of March 2017, work and how does it differ from the old one?

The new official classification system for hotels in Luxembourg is the result of close collaboration with the Ministry of the Economy, in association with “Hotelstars Union” which brings together 17 countries at the European level. The classification system assigns between 1 and 5 stars, with intermediate classes, called “superior”. In all, 270 criteria, divided into 7 areas, are reviewed periodically to best meet the expectations and needs of the clientele: general information on the hotel, reception and services, layout, gastronomy, event facilities, leisure, quality and online activities. The hotelkeeper must complete a self-assessment. This exercise allows the operator to become familiar with the criteria and to locate his establishment within the system. It will be used by the inspectors during the inspection. In order to ensure the necessary neutrality and objectivity, inspections of hotels will be carried out by at least two people, including a sworn official of the Ministry of Economy and a representative of Horesca. The accommodation committee, which includes representatives of the ministry, the professional association and the national tourist structures, then validates the evaluation, taking into account the inspection

file, as well as the comments of the hotel manager. After delivery of the sign the classified hotel undertakes to keep to the classification criteria for the 4-year period the classification is valid. This classification is voluntary, unlike the old “Benelux” classification which had become obsolete and which was a compulsory classification for hotels. The new classification is more modern and better adapted to market developments and customer expectations. The old classification (Benelux) is still valid until the end of this year. From January 2019, only hotels classified according to the criteria of the new classification system will be able to display their stars.

How was this new system received by hotels in the country?

With more than 50 hotels ranked in a good year, we are very satisfied with the result. A two-year transition period allowed hoteliers to familiarise themselves with the new system and in some cases to adapt their establishment. Hoteliers know that stars are a clear and simple message to guests about the standard of amenities and services. Only an official classification system offers established and confirmed criteria, international recognition and a legally flawless message. Even at a time when we can see subjective reviews of hosts on the Internet, the stars remain relevant.



INTERVIEW
FRANÇOIS KOËPP
Ceo & secretary-general, Horesca

“ Computerisation can improve customer comfort ”

Computerisation touches all sectors of the economy. What is its impact on the hospitality sector?

Computerisation must be seen by our sector as an opportunity to improve productivity and enhance profits. But the impact of computerisation in the hospitality industry will not be the same as it has been and continues to be in manufacturing industry. Indeed, some professions in our sector can only take advantage of the advances in computerisation with difficulty, if at all. For example, it will not be possible to computerise table service in a traditional restaurant, nor in the kitchen, nor many other services where customers expect personalised care. It is obviously different in terms of management which is an area where computerisation can bring real progress and productivity gains. But in general, we are talking about small-scale savings, from often large investments that smaller institutions are unfortunately not always able to make.

How can the sector seize the opportunities offered by computerisation?

There are many opportunities for those who have the will – and the means. Computerisation can be put at the service of customers to increase comfort, for example with smart TVs, and Wifi, which is a must in our sector today. But first and foremost, small businesses can improve service with electronic connections, automated check-in and check-out or electronic key locks that can be sent to the customer's smart phone to access the hotel and their room in case of late arrival, without the hotel having to ensure a 24-hour physical presence at the reception.



Photo: Pierre Guersing

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designer Jean-Claude Pellin and made in 2,000 copies to revive the tradition of playing cards in pubs and contribute in this way to the promotion of pub culture.

PROBLEMATIC PROFITABILITY

While these initiatives are all laudable, they can sometimes seem derisory in the face of the many challenges publicans are confronted with today. It is obvious that without further help the number of traditional pubs will continue to fall. The government, which in the past has been forced to take several decisions against the interests of publicans – the smoking ban, VAT increase, lowering of drivers' blood alcohol level – is aware of the problems encountered by the sector and is trying to intervene. Last March, it announced that investments made by pubs adhering to the “Wellkomm” charter would, in future and under certain conditions, be eligible for investment aid, in the same manner as are investments currently made by restaurateurs,

04. The younger generations are becoming increasingly aware of their quality of life and are often not ready to accept the constraints imposed by certain professions in hospitality. Faced with a shortage of skilled labour, some hoteliers are innovating to attract new talent. 05. ... others rely on concepts to retain customers – from the aperitif to the dance floor – in the same establishment. This is the case of Hitch which is part of the Concept & Partners group, which currently operates eleven of the most popular institutions such as Bowls, Brauhaus, Meat Point, Siegfried, Kin Khao, Schränerlei or Barrels.



Photo: Pierre Guersing

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hoteliers and other SMEs. But it still means that publicans must have the resources to invest, which for the smallest establishments is, more often than not, simply not the case.

Francis Koeppe, CEO and Secretary General of Horesca, points to a widespread deterioration in profitability in the horeca sector by explaining that “The proportion of expenses on personnel in turnover only increased from 32.4 to 38.7% between 2008 and 2015. This ratio is stable for Luxembourg’s neighboring countries. The accommodation, restaurant and pub sector is suffering from a decline in profitability without any possibility of adapting the costs of its workforce. Between 2005 and 2015, prices in hotels, pubs and restaurants increased by 35%. That’s more than overall inflation in Luxembourg. Our sector, which provides a gateway for many unskilled people, accounts for more than 50% of minimum social wage (MSW) workers. The unskilled MSW rose from 1,467 euros in 2005 to 1,998 euros in 2018, an increase of 36%. Prices have thus adjusted to the workforce. However, this is

not the case for business volume by employee, which has tended to decrease. So, this decline has caused a continuous increase in the share of personnel costs in relation to turnover and, consequently, the inexorable deterioration of profitability.”

ONLINE COMPETITION

For the accommodation and hotel sector, the digital age has been marked by the sudden appearance of a new form of aggressive competition based on the computerisation of services formerly offered directly only by their sector. The new online booking platforms such as booking.lu and the community rental and booking platforms for private homes such as Airbnb, CouchSurfing and BeWelcome, are of particular concern to hotels and other accommodation professionals as they use commercial practices considered to be unfair.

These new online platforms compete directly with the traditional lodgings sector by challenging its business model. Airbnb, the largest of the new ►



Expogast

An overview of international gastronomy and a reflection of culinary refinement, the Expogast salon is held every four years to celebrate the professions. This is a 5-day drumroll for emerging chefs, 5-star protagonists and fascinating dishes worthy of the most prestigious restaurants. This culinary event is the place to be for specialists in the sector and will delight guests with a warm atmosphere, innovative cuisine and gastronomic contests. Organised in the 24,700 m² Luxexpo - The Box, the next edition will take place from 24 to 28 November. The Chamber of Commerce will host a large information booth on the hospitality industry professions.

Information at www.expogast.lu.



Photo: Pierre Guersing

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06. In two decades, consumer choices and customers' habits have evolved tremendously. Evenings out are now preferably in the restaurant (photo: Elch) to the detriment of the traditional pub which has lost much of its appeal.

07. While the numerous culinary TV shows have given the chefs a new image, many young people underestimate the commitment and the sacrifices demanded by a profession that demands, above all else, great passion.

lodging platforms, has more than 700 references for Luxembourg and Horesca estimates Airbnb sell more than 150,000 nights a year in the Grand Duchy. This figure may be difficult to verify but it is undeniable that Airbnb have had resounding success in our region. Moreover, hosts who currently offer their property on Airbnb and other similar platforms do not need to comply with legislation on checking travellers and pay neither local taxes nor VAT. Although in Luxembourg the income from short-term leases must be declared as commercial profit, there are no systematic checks to verify taxpayers comply with this obligation, even if there is nothing to prevent the tax office from looking up the offers for Luxembourg on the Airbnb site ... Moreover, this new accommodation offer does not

create - unlike traditional hotels - any new jobs and therefore has no effect on reducing unemployment. Indeed, it has a completely undesirable effect on the Luxembourg real estate market, as it exacerbates a shortage in the supply of rental housing, manifested for consumers by a rise in rents.

Traditional housing providers believe that the business model and the practices of the new online platforms constitute unfair competition, since they escape many of the obligations that established businesses must comply with under penalty of incurring the sanctions provided for in the law. To create a level playing field between new and old players in hospitality and therefore fair working conditions for all, Horesca demands a rapid regulation of the collaborative economy sector. While



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waiting for a common European regulation, several member countries have already taken the lead and introduced national rules.

AVOIDING ABUSE OF A DOMINANT POSITION

If the arrival of Airbnb is almost unanimously regretted by the traditional accommodation providers, they take a more nuanced look at online booking platforms like booking.lu. Although these new platforms allow local actors to obtain global visibility and thus attract new customers, the commission requested – which varies from 12 to 25% of the price of the room – is considered too high and weighs too much on the already reduced margins of the hotels. Without a limit on commissions imposed by national or, preferably, European regulation, the sector has ►



INTERVIEW
FRANCINE CLOESENER
Secretary of state for economy

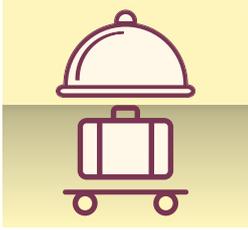
“**Conference tourism is an important pillar in the country’s economic diversification**”

As part of the second “Meet Luxembourg” trade fair in mid-September, you presented a conference tourism development strategy aimed at getting Luxembourg into the Top 50 of the world’s destinations for organising international congresses. What are the main pillars of this strategy?

The MICE sector has significant growth potential and is an undeniable driver in terms of developing the Grand Duchy’s priority economic sectors. To exploit this potential, we have defined a strategic ambition with MICE stakeholders around three objectives: to reinforce the image and visibility of the Grand Duchy at the international level through flagship events; contribute to the consolidation and development of priority economic sectors and generate maximum direct and indirect benefits for the national economy. One of the key examples for strengthening the sector is the forthcoming creation of a national convention office which represents the last link in the process of professionalising the tourism sector and will be both the driving force and the face of the MICE sector in Luxembourg.

What is the potential impact of this strategy on the hospitality industry?

The 3 million nights spent in Luxembourg in 2017 show that Luxembourg is a destination of choice not only for leisure tourism but also for convention tourism. The importance of the MICE sector in Luxembourg is undeniable as 13.2% of the overnight stays in our hotels in 2017 were related to the holding of conferences and congresses. Convention tourism is an important pillar in the economic diversification of the country and generates economic spin-offs in hotels, restaurants and small businesses, which are on average three times higher than for leisure travellers. The MICE development strategy will allow more targeted soliciting of conference organisers to strengthen Luxembourg’s position and increase its international profile.



Hotrec

The HOTREC is the European federation of hoteliers, restaurateurs and publicans and represents an industry currently comprising nearly 1.8 million establishments, of which 99% are SMEs and 91% are micro-enterprises with fewer than 10 employees, but with a total business volume of 250 billion euros. The hotel and catering sector accounts for some 10.2 million jobs in the European Union. HOTREC currently brings together 43 European federations and associations representing the interests of the hospitality sector in 30 countries.



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no choice but to accept the conditions dictated by the new giants of online booking. One of these conditions states that hotels are obliged to always offer the platform the best price, which removes the possibility of offering customers the best price on their own websites. Horesca regrets that Luxembourg has still not banned this so-called “best-price” practice, unlike many other countries such as France, Italy or Austria which have adapted their respective laws to stem any abuse of dominant position.

As the commercial practices of the new online tourism giants are not regulated, the sector has reacted by seeking alternatives. Thus, Horesca has partnered with the Belgian service provider stardekk to offer professionals in Luxembourgish accommodation, via the hotel.lu (and hotels.lu) website, the possibility of using Cubilis, a commission-free booking engine that allows hotels, campsites and youth hostels that already have their own websites to include

a customisable booking module allowing customers to book rooms easily and quickly on any type of device (computer, mobile phone or tablet). Instead of a commission for each room sold, hotels that already have their own website only pay a monthly fee of EUR 10 and those who do not have their own site pay EUR 70 to create one using a solution offered for this purpose by Cubilis.

For the hospitality sector, however, the challenges brought by the computerisation of the economy are not limited to the emergence of new, overwhelming global players, but are also reflected in a sometimes-radical change in customer expectations. With the advent of online evaluation sites, they suddenly have enormous power to influence the reputation of a touristic or gastronomic establishment. Some customers do not hesitate to monetise this power against benefits in kind and/or substantial discounts, sometimes even threatening the establishment with a nega-



Photo: Jan Schwarz

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tive evaluation if they do not comply with the customer's – sometimes fanciful – requirements. One more phenomenon that needs to be regulated by adapted legislation.

A CRYING LACK OF A QUALIFIED WORKFORCE

Despite the many challenges and constraints facing the hospitality sector, the number of jobs is constantly increasing, so that it is faced with a serious lack of skilled labour. In 2017, the sector created 585 new jobs. At a press conference in early October, the Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Economy, Nicolas Schmit, said that there are currently 1,000 unfilled positions in the hotel and catering sector. Francis Koepf, also present at the press conference, estimated the number was closer to 2,000.

While it is still fairly easy to find candidates for positions of great responsibility as well as for positions

requiring very few qualifications, such as dishwashers or maids, the situation is very different for intermediate positions requiring serious job qualifications from the hired staff who might be in direct contact with customers and who would directly influence the establishment's image. Competition is particularly tough for cooks and waiters. A cook can make or break the reputation of an establishment; as can the reception staff and dining room staff, who must be multilingual, friendly, smiling and perfectly informed about the service and products on offer.

As wages paid in the hospitality industry are not among the highest in the labour market, and given that working conditions are often difficult, hotel and restaurant professionals are struggling to find candidates in the local market and turn to the Greater Region for their recruitments. This, however, poses new problems linked, of course, to long and often difficult journeys to work, and to the tendency ►

08. The MICE sector (meetings, incentives, conventions, exhibitions) accounted for 13.2% of overnight stays in Luxembourg's hotels in 2017. By adopting a convention tourism development strategy, the government wants to make Luxembourg one of the Top 50 global destinations for the organisation of international congresses.

09. A project recently unveiled by the government and the municipality of Schengen plans for the State to purchase Schengen Castle – currently empty – and turn it into a restaurant and a hotel of quality while installing a hotel school built on the model of integration developed by the famous French chef Thierry Marx to offer training in hotel and catering to people who are out of work or in precarious situations.



INTERVIEW
GREGORY TUGENDHAT
Managing director, RegiÔtels

“ RegiÔtels enhances the digital presence of its partner hotels ”

What do you do at RegiÔtels and how was it launched?

"RegiÔtels was launched in June 2017 with the support of the Ministry of the Economy, Luxinnovation, the House of Entrepreneurship and the BIL. With funding in place, we set about building the team and launched our services as of January 2018. RegiÔtels supports small to medium sized independent hoteliers who represent the quality and culture of their respective regions. We guide and deliver through the whole commercial process, from customer segmentation and pricing, through technology infrastructure, to online presence and direct sales activities. Our team has global experience, and we are particularly strong in Europe and Asia which we leverage for our partner hotels. In Luxembourg, we are a key partner of the government in driving improved digital performance by regional hotels. As well as supporting individual hotels, RegiÔtels also develops regional campaigns involving digital advertising and direct sales representation. Developing tourism and ultimately employment in this way can help stimulate the economies of local communities.

What have you achieved and what are your future goals?

"RegiÔtels enhanced the digital presence of the eight partner hotels that joined the initiative in its start up phase, an additional four properties have joined in September. We now represent properties in

the North, East and South of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. The websites for the eight original partner properties were visited by more than 100,000 individual visitors in between January and September in 2018, generating over €255,000 in revenue directly through the new websites. Direct hotel bookings came at a rate on average of €28 more than through the online travel agencies. As well as providing the partner hotels with a direct channel for guests to book, RegiÔtels assisted in driving an enhanced social media presence, to find and inform new clients, increasing followers by over 9% on average per property. RegiÔtels launched a completely innovative and highly targeted Facebook campaign to promote the region of Mullerthal that was seen by more than 2.3 million people less than three hours drive from the region. RegiÔtels has recently received the 'Made in Luxembourg' label and has a long-term goal of taking its digital methodology abroad to other regions of Europe."



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in the hotel and catering sector to work split shifts, as Philippe Scheffer, General Manager of the Royal Hotel in Luxembourg explained in an interview with Merkur (see page 98): *"The younger generations are very attentive to their quality of life and are not always ready to accept the time constraints of our jobs as well as having the work day cut by the break between lunch and dinner. This is especially so as many live far from their workplace because of the high cost of housing in Luxembourg and they therefore cannot return home to rest. Added to this is the fact that early in their careers young people are very mobile and want to multiply their experiences to consolidate their CV. This adds another difficulty in retaining good staff."*

Split shifts require employees to effectively work two half-days, for example, to provide both lunch and evening service, all interrupted by a long break, which in some cases can be up to four hours. Employees resident in the country can still quite easily use this long break to take care of family or personal tasks, to shop (and take the shopping home) or simply to relax; cross-border staff feel this break as a complication, since it is difficult for them to go home and use this free time usefully.

ENHANCING PROFESSIONS IN HOTELERY AND CATERING

To help hoteliers and restaurateurs in need of staff, Horesca has long demanded a simplified procedure to declare casual employees and more flexible working hours, arguing that many employees would like to be able to work overtime throughout the year. *"We could imagine - with the agreement of employees - raising the*

10. On March 2018, the Lycée hôtelier Alexis Heck changed its name to become the Ecole d'hôtellerie et de Tourisme du Luxembourg (EHTL). Following his new motto (striving for excellence), the EHTL plans to extend its training and enhance the quality of the courses offered. In late September, a cooperation agreement was signed with Ducasse Education, the 18 stars chef, Alain Ducasse training, to offer high level courses to professionals from the world of gastronomy.

limit of working hours by 8 hours per week, as allowed by the European Directive, to reach 48 hours per week. With the supplement for overtime, employees would then be paid 52 hours a week. An employee paid at the qualified MSW could therefore make a gross salary of €3,146 per month” explains Francis Koepp.

Making working hours more flexible and a corresponding increase in wages, however, would not be enough to attract many more young people to hotel and restaurant businesses. The problem in the hospitality industry is deeper, explains Michel Lanners, director of the EHTL, the Luxembourg School of Hotels and Tourism in Diekirch: “*The image of the hotel and catering sector is often wrongly considered as lacking modernity and therefore unattractive to young people looking for a job. This challenge is the most important and the most difficult since it involves a reaction at the level of social representations, that is to say the set of values, social norms and cultural models as they are believed and experienced by society. (...) Even if TV shows have helped to give a good image of the ‘chefs’, many jobs suffer from a poor image (waiters, receptionists, etc.) that must be enhanced to motivate young people to move into these professions. But let’s be careful, we must not forget that today’s generation is characterised by an evolution in the relationship to work. They approach entry into the labour market with a different spirit than previous generations.*” (See also the Carte Blanche, page 130)

Today’s young people aspire to “achieve personal fulfilment” and attach great importance to operating autonomy, flexibility of schedules and holidays and career prospects. They also like to change jobs frequently to acquire new experiences and accelerate the development of their professional skills. These ambitions are often incompatible with the expectations of employers who demand high availability and company loyalty. Michel Lanners summarises the situation as follows: “To make a young person dream, he must be given attractive life opportunities. It is precisely here that employers must also share responsibility.”

INVESTMENTS TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

Fully aware of the problems that concern the sector, the government, the federations, the professional chambers and the various training institutes have taken – often in concert – measures to try to improve the situation.

Last March, the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth, the Alexis Heck Hotel Technical College (LTHAH) and Horesca announced that the LTHAH would change its name to become the School of Hotels and Tourism of Luxembourg (EHTL). The only school in the country offering courses in the hotel, catering and tourism sectors, the EHTL is changing its positioning and adopting a new leitmo-

tiv (Striving for Excellence) which will now apply to all courses, to all the students, but also to all the professionals in the school.

Concretely, the EHTL intends to widen its training offer and reinforce the quality of the courses offered to improve its national and international influence and thereby help to motivate more young people to choose this career path, which would open up many future opportunities. Thus, from the start of the 2018-2019 academic year, the EHTL offers its first programme of general secondary education: a new section called “management of hospitality”, which leads to a general secondary education diploma and which gives access to higher education while preparing for a profession in hospitality management. It is also planned to set up training at BAC + 2 level, in the form of the technician certificate (BTS) in “hospitality management”. This BTS will allow students to pursue higher education that will be consistent with their previous training and students from other sections of secondary education to study in this new subject in Luxembourg. It also plans to offer this training in English.

To modernise the learning methods, all students of the School of Hotels and Tourism are now equipped with an iPad to access computerised school material. Investments to modernise LTHAH’s current infrastructure are also planned to eventually accommodate up to 400 students, improving on the current capacity of 300 to 320 students.

Just a week after announcing the modernisation of the EHTL, the Secretary of State for the Economy, Francine Closener, at the opening ceremony of Springbreak, made a resolutely positive assessment of the assets and the potential of the gastronomy and hotel industry in Luxembourg and announced that investments made by pubs will, in the future and under certain conditions, be eligible for investment aid, in the same way as current investments made by restaurateurs, hoteliers and other SMEs.

No later than at the beginning of October, the Secretary of State was back, together with Nicolas Schmit, Minister of Labour and Employment and Michel Gloden, Mayor of Schengen, to announce a project that would have, at the same time, a touristic economic, cultural and social objective. It plans for the State to buy the currently empty Schengen castle and to turn it into a high-quality restaurant and hotel with a hotel school based on the insertion model developed by the famous French chef Thierry Marx. This model, which has been applied with great success in France, plans to offer hotel and restaurant training to people who are remote from employment or in precarious situations. These training courses will last about four months and enable participants to re-enter the labour market. In France, the professional reintegration rate for people who have completed the training is 90%. An idea to follow up. ●



MICE Strategy

The importance of the MICE sector (meetings, incentives, conventions, exhibitions) in Luxembourg is undeniable, since 13.2% of nights spent in Luxembourg’s hotels in 2017 were related to the holding of conferences and congresses. Given the significant growth potential of convention tourism, the Ministry of the Economy and its partners in the sector have set themselves an ambitious goal: to enter the Top 50 global destinations for the organisation of international congresses. The strategy to develop conference tourism called “Perspectives and ambitions of the MICE sector”, presented last September, outlines the priority fields of action and the projects that will enable Luxembourg to meet this challenge. Read also interview p. 49



Hotels, pubs, restaurants...

Find key figures for the hospitality industry in Luxembourg in the detachable poster at the end of the magazine.