

Talent and the downturn

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The challenges of the Luxembourg labour market and managing the HR in a company with 112,000 were two of the themes explored in this year's HR One conference, which preceded the gala prize dinner. Labour Minister François Biltgen insisted that Luxembourg should continue to work hard to attract and retain the best minds, despite the downturn, as this is the best way to secure the country's long term future.



Labour Minister François Biltgen



Hallstein Moerk, executive vice president, human resources at Nokia

Earlier, Hallstein Moerk, executive vice president, human resources at Nokia spelled out how his company goes about identifying and developing talent internally.

Despite what he termed as a "cyclone passing over the Luxembourg financial sector" François Biltgen stressed that Luxembourg has to keep its eyes on the long term picture. Since the end of Luxembourg's industrial era around 1985, employment has risen from 150,000 to 340,000 now, with the 15,000 frontaliers becoming 140,000 but with just 10,000 more Luxembourgers. Of the new jobs being created, 55% require further education, but only a quarter of those leaving education here have the required certificates. This compares to immigrants, over half of whom

have a post-secondary education.

Brains needed despite slowdown

"There are three challenges: promote research and development, attract and retain brains and create new jobs," said Biltgen. He said he wanted Luxembourg to remain a high pay, low social charges economy but he realised that more effort is needed. With his other hat as minister for research, he is behind the effort to boost high value adding activity and he is happy that the new immigration law should help with the global search for talent. However, he recognised that more work will be required to slow the rate at which people take early retirement. He also

reminded the audience of the measures contained in last year's law 5611 designed to help people avoid unemployment.

He recognised that there could be the threat of job losses and slowing employment in coming months following the financial crisis. Initially, it had appeared that Luxembourg was to be spared the worst effects of the sub-prime crisis, but the problems which led to the part nationalisation of Fortis and Dexia ended any such suggestion.

Biltgen likened this investment to that in Arbed, saying he hoped this move would only be temporary and profitable for the state. There was part consolation too that this local crisis was caused by problems at the level of the parent companies

rather than with the conservative Luxembourg banks.

He also praised the government's planned tax cuts and spending increases which he hoped would boost the economy next year during the expected downturn.

Really understand your people's desires

Hallstein Moerk's speech dealt with how Nokia goes about managing human resources within a 50 billion euro firm with R&D and production facilities in ten countries, selling to 150 countries. He said the first step in getting the best out of their workforce is to understand peoples' professional desires and to match these with where the company believes it



Networking at the HR One cocktail



HR Manager Of The Year, Petra Brockers, KPMG

will be over the next five to ten years. Central to this process is a database which classifies people based on their achievements and potential, with managers then being able to comment on this "talent map" as to their potential suitability for different roles.

Talent watch

The firm has a process called "talent watch" where executives meet and exchange views about selected members of staff. Through this they hope to find out who is ready to take executive positions either now or after 1,2,3... career "rotations", so building a successor candidate pool. He mentioned the idea of 70/20/10 regarding skills, saying how people receive 70% of their learning by doing

things (a new job, a change of country, a new project, making mistakes), 20% comes from others (assessment, mentoring, coaching...) with just 10% from training courses. So those requiring more experience asked what new challenges they would like to face and then they are helped to achieve these goals via a database.

Asked how to keep people engaged with the company, Moerk spoke of the "Nokia cafés", where around 2-3,000 staff meet to discuss how they see the company's values and strategies evolving. For those unable to attend these conferences, there are internet chat rooms. He said these tools were a good way to come up with ideas and to define the company from the bottom up. Senior managers then discuss these ideas.

Luxembourg HR Awards; the votes of the 50-strong jury

- HR Manager Of The Year, Petra Brockers, KPMG, 16 votes
- Lifetime Career Award: Dominique Schmitt, Soludec S.A., 20 votes
- Young HR Talent: Peterson Sylvain, BNP Paribas, 18 votes
- Socially Responsible HR Initiative: Dexia BIL, 15 votes
- HR Team Of The Year: Axa Assurances Luxembourg, 15 votes
- Best Expat Services: European Relocation Services, 17 votes
- Best Incentive & Motivation Solutions: Sodexo, 17 votes
- Best HR Survey Company: KPMG, 23 votes
- Best HR Software: Microtis, 15 votes
- Best HR Administration Solution: BDO Compagnie Fiduciaire, 22 votes
- Best Health & Safety Solutions: Foyer Santé, 18 votes
- Best Assessment Company: Deloitte, 16 votes
- Best Outplacement Firm: Galilei A Randstad Company, 16 votes
- Best Training Services: IFCC, 17 votes
- Best Recruitment Media: Monster, 46 votes
- Best Pension Solutions: Swiss Life (Luxembourg), 15 votes
- Best Leasing & Fleet Management: Leaseplan Luxembourg S.A., 31 votes
- Best Interim Services: Randstad Interim, 18 votes
- Best Recruitment Services: Ajilon SA, 9 votes
- Best Executive Search Firm: Deloitte, 10 votes
- Best Labour Law Firm: Arendt & Medernach, 20 votes
- Best HR Consulting Firm: Deloitte, 14 votes

For details of the jury and full results see www.hrone.lu