



Photo: Robert Prendergast

Luxembourg as an ICT Hub: The Pillars of Success

Luxembourg's Minister for Communications and Media François Biltgen was the special guest speaker at AMCHAM's ComIT networking event held at RTL Studios.

Source: Luxembourg for Business—Proud to promote ICT

François Biltgen reflected in front of Luxembourg's international community on what makes Luxembourg so competitive as an ICT hub. He said that flexibility and dynamism are just a few of the qualities which make the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg a data hub and thus the ideal place for content and data management functions.

There are many other factors contributing to this success. Luxembourg has over the last years successfully diversified its economy: building on the expertise of the financial sector and media sector, Luxembourg has created a sound environment for ICT and e-commerce, and "a strategy for the future" based on the following pillars presented by Minister Biltgen.

STATE-OF-THE-ART INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE

Luxembourg now has ten different high-capacity routes which connect the country to the main European ICT hubs. Luxembourg is thus not only physically situated at the heart of Europe but also "digitally" through a network of redundant fiber optics which guarantees reliable connectivity at very high speed with all major European centers. The seventeen data centers currently established in Luxembourg form one of the best data center parks in Europe, as they all are quite new and adapted to the latest requirements. Green IT is their priority: environmentally speaking, high-end data centers comply with energy-saving measures to help reduce CO2 emissions. Energy costs are favorable.

The Luxembourg government's strategy for the next generation Internet networks further supports the vision of a future-proof Internet. The government pushes for providers to immediately increase the speed of existing networks, while asking them to ensure 100 Mbit Internet connection for everybody by 2015 at the latest. In the long run providers are aiming for 1 Gbit connection. This strategy fits perfectly into the new European strategy Digital Agenda which seeks intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth and goes even further in its objectives.

POWERFUL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK ADAPTED TO E-BUSINESSES

ICT and e-commerce are constantly evolving businesses. They challenge the legislator in every possible aspect. By anticipating future trends, Luxembourg created the legal environment to promote cross-border trading and hence development of e-commerce at the EU level.

Luxembourg was the first European country with a national public key infrastructure, providing online certification for both e-government applications and the private sector (e-banking, e-commerce, etc.). Luxembourg was also the first country to adopt a fully-fledged regulatory framework for e-commerce. What's more, Luxembourg is an attractive IP destination. In 2008, Luxembourg instituted an innovative legal IP regime, one of the most favorable in Europe.

CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH

Interdisciplinary, forward-looking research—which cuts across the many different technological domains of the Future Internet—is key to anticipate in a timely manner the upcoming trends in the area of ICT-related services. The government has therefore placed information security and high performance telecommunication networks as new R&D priorities. The interdisciplinary research on security and trust is a political priority. Research allows the development of the necessary methods for anticipating and detecting new risks and new challenges. The activities of a dedicated and excellent department at the University of Luxembourg, the SnT (the Interdisciplinary Centre for Security, Reliability and Trust), are of high importance to the country.

Thanks to Luxembourg's political stability, successful banking sector and excellent ranking with regards to personal safety, Luxembourg is the right place to inspire e-security and foster trust in the future digital society. What's more, Luxembourg is strongly committed to efficiently fighting cybercrime and recently signed a declaration of intent for cooperation on cybersecurity as an integral part of the country's continuous efforts to foster IT security, together with Belgium and the Netherlands. Our governments, business sectors and the academic community will cooperate very closely with further public-private initiatives and regular meetings. The better the preparation, the better the capacity to anticipate; the more efficient the response structures, the less the need to revert to repressive measures. Luxembourg is currently finalizing a modernization of the national cybersecurity structures.

PROMOTION

The government bundled its promotion efforts for the ICT sector under the branding "Luxembourg for Business—proud to promote ICT". But promotion isn't the privilege of the government only—everyone can be a promoter of Luxembourg!

In addition, Minister Biltgen welcomed the entrusting of the Media and Communications Department and of the Ministry for Higher Education and Research in the hands of one Minister, also Minister for Justice, which illustrates the political objective to constitute a real "Ministry of the Future" able to anticipate future challenges by ensuring a coordinated approach.

The Luxembourg efforts now pay off, as the minister explained: a study through the International Telecommunications Union places Luxembourg as the second most advanced ICT economy. Luxembourg is also the most connected OECD country. Luxembourg ranks first among twenty-eight countries for share of ICT-using occupations.

Minister Biltgen concluded by saying that, some years ago, pioneering companies in Luxembourg led the way in the development of online services, e-commerce, Internet applications and the latest communication systems. "We now must ensure their long-term success," he said. "Luxembourg keeps being enthusiastic about ICT. We are dedicating not only a lot of money and time into the development of ICT infrastructure, but also real passion and enthusiasm!"

For additional photos from this event, see page 30.

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