



Mayor Bettel Wants to See “Multiplicity” in Action

At the October ABAL lunch event on Monday, Luxembourg City Mayor Xavier Bettel presented some of the latest building projects in the capital, also addressing some of the challenges the sprawling city is facing.

By Cordula Schnuer, wort.lu/en

Photos: Robert Prendergast

Since the 1970s the capital has seen a big increase in population, climbing from just over 76,000 inhabitants to over 96,000 in 2011. The mayor also revealed that the 100,000th inhabitant should be registered over the coming weeks.

While the population has been climbing, the foreign population in the City has also been increasing from just over a quarter in 1970 to 66 percent last year.

In addition to this increase in population, more workers are flocking to the capital, with the population of Luxembourg City roughly doubling during working hours.

Speaking to an audience of over 90 people, Bettel commented that both these aspects placed particular challenges on the capital. While Luxembourg had to live up to the expectations of being a European capital, as well as ensuring a thriving business sector, it also faced more particular challenges, such as housing, integration and transport.

“MULTIPLICITY SHOULD BE A REALITY”
Integration, the mayor pointed out, does not just involve integrating foreigners, but also people with disabilities, as well as the financially or socially disadvantaged.

In a bid to avoid the ghettofication of parts of the center, Bettel said it was important to build smaller support structures in different parts of town, bringing people from different spheres together.

But, while the mayor conceded that integration was not an easy issue to tackle—not least because of Luxembourg’s language problem—he also criticized the fact that foreign communities tended to set up separate clubs and organizations.

He pointed out that especially for children and teenagers, who often go to international schools even further separating them from the local community, it was important to create an environment where they can get involved, maybe even learning Luxembourgish at the same time.

Parallel societies, in any way, were not the right way forward, Bettel said, adding that the City’s slogan Multiplicity “sounds nice, but it should be a reality.”

URBAN DEVELOPMENT UNDER CONSTRUCTION

It’s not just the people living in Luxembourg the mayor wants to see better integrated, but also the commuters who cross the borders of the country every day. Through initiatives such as Summer in the City or this year’s outdoor cinema season, the mayor hopes to convince commuters to spend a few more hours in Luxembourg after work, rather than rushing home.



Finally, Bettel offered a sneak peek at some of the building projects happening in Luxembourg at the moment. While most locals are by now familiar with the plans for the Royal Hamilius and the Ban de Gasperich, which are already being put into action, the mayor also presented projects which paint a different view of Luxembourg’s center for the future.

From a reorganization of the Place de l’Etoile to creating a traffic-free zone outside the central train station and new green spaces in Bonnevoie and Hollerich, there are still plenty of plans for the City. And while not all of them will see the light of day, the urban development of the country’s capital is far from finished.


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