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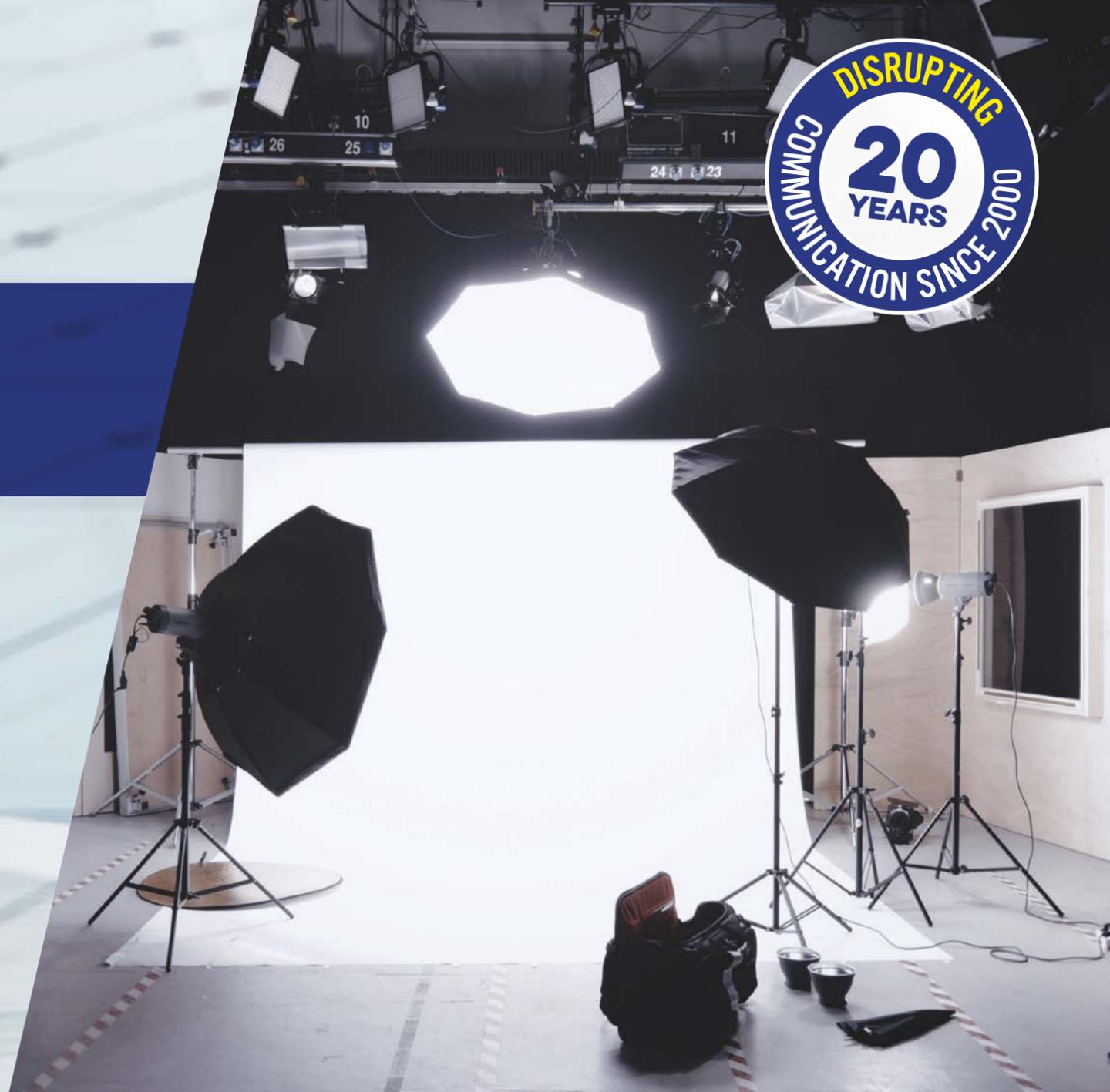
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Dear readers

We are proud to publish Duke 18, and share with you inspiring stories and interviews.

We relentlessly explore the Luxembourg economy to identify decision makers with a positive mindset and a tangible track record. In the following pages, you will find great stories about private equity, governance, fund management services and others with a special focus on cryptocurrencies.

We hope that you will enjoy this new opus!



Rachel Belorgane

DUKE 18

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JULIEN PRADELS
Christie's France

The Art of Selling NFTs

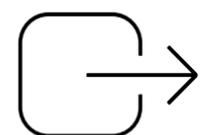


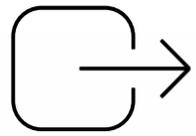
MORE INFORMATION

www.duke.lu/christies
www.christies.com

"AFTER NEW YORK, WE LAUNCHED NEW INITIATIVES IN TERMS OF SELLING NFTS IN HONG KONG AND LONDON, WHICH HAVE BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL. WE ARE ALSO PLANNING SALES IN FRANCE SOON," SAYS JULIEN PRADELS, MANAGING DIRECTOR CHRISTIE'S FRANCE.

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The Art of Selling NFTs



Can you introduce Christie's in a few words?

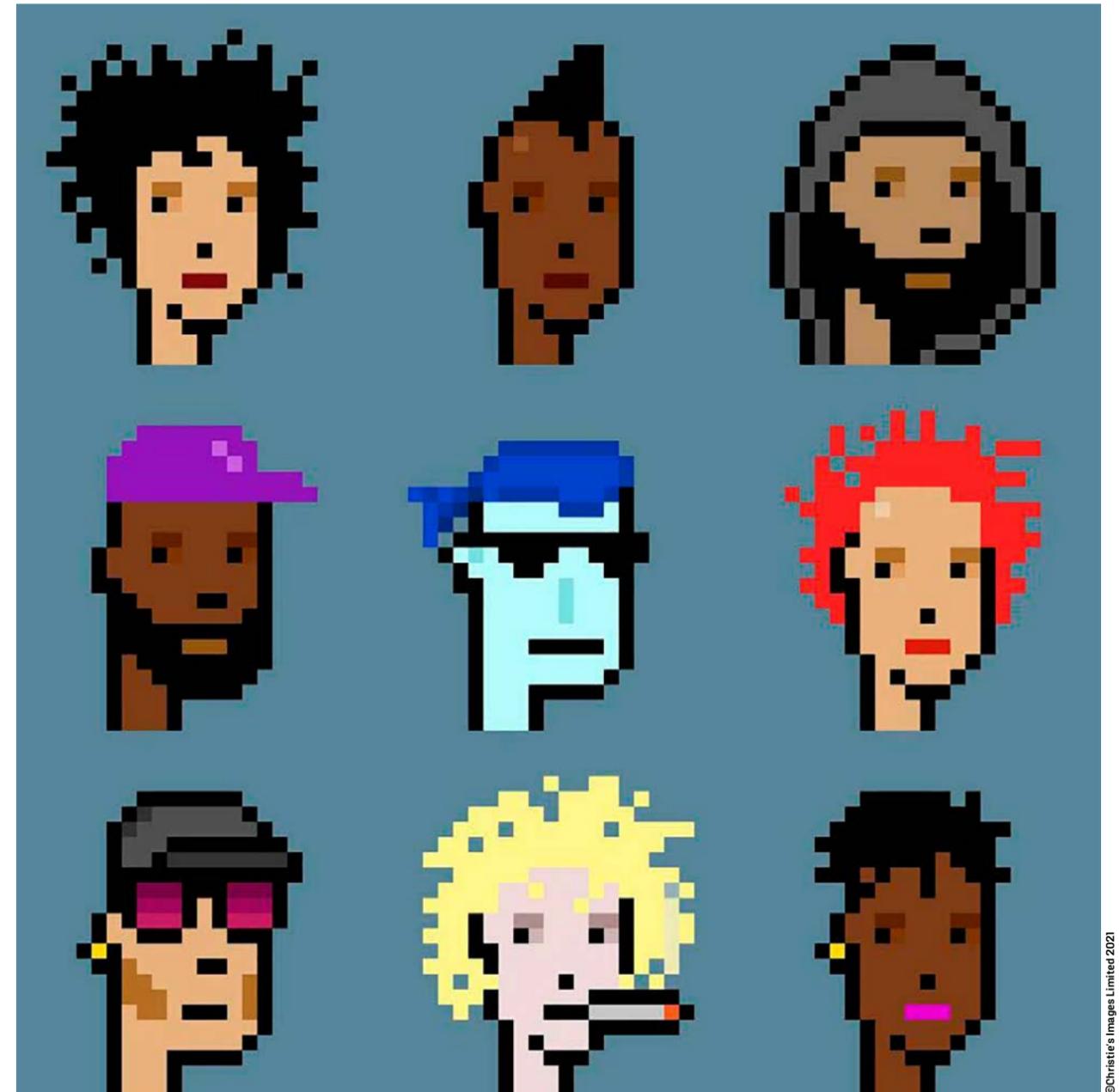
Founded in 1766, Christie's is a world-leading art and luxury business. Renowned and trusted for its expert, live and online auctions. As well as its bespoke private sales, Christie's also offers a full portfolio of global services to its clients, including art appraisal, art financing, international real estate and education. Christie's has a physical presence in 46 countries, throughout the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and the Asia Pacific, with its flagship international sales hubs in New York, London, Hong Kong, Paris and Geneva. It is also the only international auction house authorized to hold sales in mainland China (Shanghai). Christie's auctions span more than 80 art and luxury categories at price points ranging from \$200 to over \$100 million. In recent years, Christie's has achieved the world record price for an artwork at auction (Leonardo da Vinci's Salvator Mundi, 2017), for a single collection sale (the Collection of Peggy and David Rockefeller, 2018) and for a work by a living artist (Jeff Koons' Rabbit, 2019).

How are you adapting to the impact of NFTs on supply and demand in your industry?

For Christie's, New York remains the benchmark marketplace for NFTs since the historic sale of Beeple's The First 5,000 Days and CryptoPunks. Since then, we have launched new initiatives in Hong Kong and London which have met with great success. In Europe, Beatriz Ordovas, one of our specialists, will participate in NFT Day on April 12 in Paris, during the Paris Blockchain Week Summit. We also expect sales of NFTs in France soon.

How do you see the evolution of your sector in the next two years?

We anticipate a dynamic market around the world, driven by the conjunction of the post-pandemic period, the craze for art, and, particularly in France, a certain post-Brexit effect leading collectors in Continental Europe to consider Paris as a central marketplace for years to come.



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“For Christie's, New York remains the benchmark marketplace for NFTs since the historic sale of Beeple's The First 5,000 Days and CryptoPunks.”

JULIEN PRADELS,
CHRISTIE'S FRANCE

JÉRÔME BLOCH
360Crossmedia

The Keys to Virality



MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/keys-to-virality

THE IMMEDIACY OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE CONSTANT FLOW OF PUBLISHED INFORMATION INDUCE GREAT EPHEMERALITY OF CONTENT. JÉRÔME BLOCH, CEO OF 360CROSSMEDIA, SHARES THREE KEYS TO GIVING YOUR PUBLICATIONS MAXIMUM IMPACT. INTERVIEW.

What are the keys to virality on LinkedIn?

When we take stock of social networks around the world, many bloggers achieve millions of views and thousands of likes. Alongside this phenomenon, Luxembourg seems to find itself in another dimension. Indeed, opinion leaders like Xavier Bettel reach an average of 500 likes and many peak at 50. LinkedIn remains an extraordinary tool for developing a business or its network, but you still have to use the right techniques. In my opinion, three of them stand out for their almost infallible impact: To inspire, share and win. And by choosing the ideal context, you increase performance even further.

Can you give us examples?

Inspiration is mostly about talking about things that affect us and evoke quite strong emotions. I am thinking, for example, of themes on a personal experience, human transformation or even on achieving ambitious challenges. In the field of sharing, "thought leadership" can be developed by making complex subjects accessible through a good article, a video, or even the publication of a book or a white paper. And obviously winning a gift, a publication, or an invitation to an event remains an old spring that still works very well.

What was your record last year?

There were two. The first was with François Masquelier, president of ATEL, whose post has exceeded 37,000 views. This performance was the result of a multi-year strategy combining the increase in the number of connections on LinkedIn from 5,000 to 16,000, a regular publication strategy and involvement in the posts of several influential players in the treasury industry. The second-best score was achieved during our last publication of the year in which I contributed 20 copies of my latest book "No Bullshit" to be won. The gift rule once again applied. In addition, by winning my work, I could inspire, share and offer a prize in the ideal context of the Christmas holidays.



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"LinkedIn remains an extraordinary tool for developing a business or its network, but you still have to use the right techniques."

JÉRÔME BLOCH,
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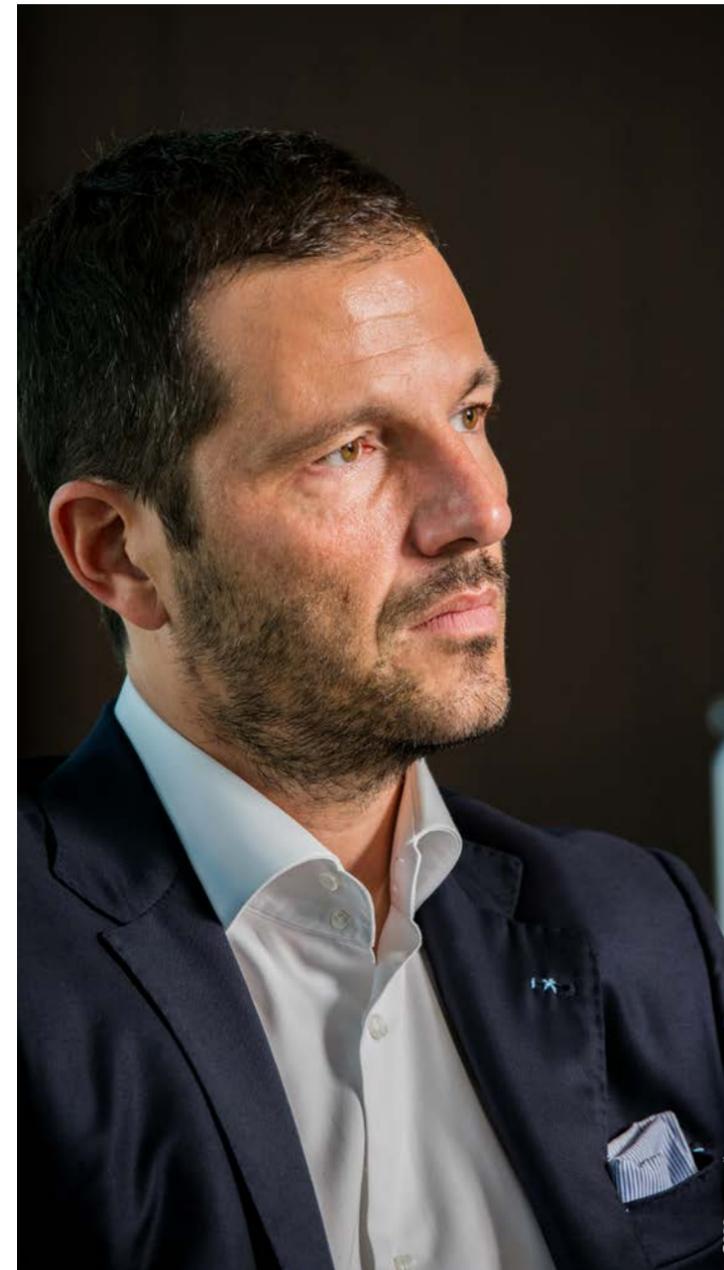
Supporting Private Wealth Businesses

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/pascalrapallino
www.lafo.lu

SINCE HIS ARRIVAL, THE NEW PRESIDENT OF LAFO, PASCAL RAPALLINO, HAS GIVEN HIMSELF TWO PRIORITIES: TO STRENGTHEN AND REVITALIZE HIS NETWORK. BY UNITING THE LARGEST NUMBER OF PRIVATE WEALTH PLAYERS AROUND THE ASSOCIATION, LAFO INTENDS TO CREATE A FOCUS FOR PRIVATE WEALTH PROFESSIONS WITH ITS ECOSYSTEM IN THE LUXEMBOURG FINANCIAL CENTER AND ABROAD.

Can you describe LAFO in a few words?

LAFO (Luxembourg Association of Family Offices) was created in June 2010 on the initiative of the outgoing President and current Honorary President, Serge Krancenblum and its former President, Jean Fuchs. It aims to actively contribute to the recognition of the profession of family office professionals by the authorities of the country. The association carries out three main missions: It interacts with the Ministry of Finance and regulators, protects the interests of the professions represented by its members and offers continuous training to the sector. Training takes place through the production of studies and content and organizing conferences and seminars. Until the end of 2021, no professional association or federation existed in Luxembourg to represent and defend the interests of local private heritage professionals. Private wealth was unregulated and had no professional representation despite its strong development and its current significant contribution to the Luxembourg economy. The last General Assembly in December 2021 ratified a modification of the statutes allowing LAFO to be more inclusive and to go beyond the sole professions of the family office by opening up to those managing private wealth. This major development will enable LAFO to contribute to the promotion of Luxembourg as a financial center at the international level as well as supporting and promoting the excellence of its private wealth players.



Watch the video interview of Pascal Rapallino and Claus Mansfeldt on www.duke.lu



“Participating in the promotion of Luxembourg at the international level by supporting local players in order to contribute to their professional excellence.”

PASCAL RAPALLINO,
LAFO

networking. This desire will be subject to the vagaries of the health situation. Similarly, I will dedicate myself to strengthening the network of major associative and institutional partners in order to pool our initiatives and create disciplinary synergies.

What are your priorities as the new President of LAFO?

My action will obviously be an extension of that of Serge Krancenblum. However, my priority will be to implement the openness strategy of our ecosystem voted for last month. As such, I want to make the association known to new eligible players and revitalize the existing network through events such as conferences, thematic breakfasts – around subjects such as art, responsible investment or some new asset classes. We will also rely on cocktail parties, exclusive visits and other formats dedicated to

What challenges and opportunities do LAFO members face?

Our businesses face many challenges, particularly in terms of digitalization, responsible investment and continuing education. Macroeconomic elements such as inflation and the possible rise in interest rates are also sources of risk for private equity and real estate businesses. Thus, we will best support our members on these questions so as to transform these risks into opportunities through exchanges with recognized players, training and the development of synergies between members. Together we can face these economic but also structural changes in our private heritage.

INTERNATIONAL BANKERS CLUB

Bringing together the leading executives of the Luxembourg financial centre for over 50 years

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/ibc
www.bankersclub.lu

IN CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL BANKERS CLUB'S (IBC) 50TH ANNIVERSARY, JOHAN LINDBERG, PRESIDENT OF IBC, SHARES THAT WHILE IT HAS PREDATED THE UCITS FUND REGIME AND THE EXPANSION OF THE BANKING SECTOR, THE IBC STILL REMAINS A KEY FORUM FOR SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE FINANCIAL SECTOR TO SHARE IDEAS AND DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF LUXEMBOURG'S FINANCIAL INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE.

When was the IBC founded?

The International Bankers Club Luxembourg was founded in 1972 at the initiative of Constant Franssens, Managing Director of Kredietbank Luxembourg, who would later become its honorary president. The IBC was initially established under the aegis of the Association of Banks and Bankers Luxembourg ("ABBL"), in 1939, as a centre of contact for banking industry leaders and other members of the executive management of both domestic and foreign banks and financial institutions in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, offering a platform for open dialogue and presentation of thought leadership. In 2016, the IBC became independent of the ABBL, reflecting its emergence as a distinct community. Today, the IBC has more than 200 corporate members and 30 individual members. Its aim, then and now, has been to contribute to the industry's development and share ideas on issues of interest and importance to member institutions. Over the years, it has regularly organised meetings, get-togethers and other events focusing on professional, cultural and social themes, and has developed a programme of yearly traditional and regular activities and events.

How are the needs of your members evolving?

The IBC members are an important community that provide the drive for its dedicated Board members to set out its yearly programme. They expect the club to continue to offer high quality speakers covering interesting and relevant industry topics and to continue being a forum where individuals can network and share ideas with equals in a relaxed setting. Our yearly program of events aims to cover this as well as numerous private events of more social character. Today, we are a significant community that continues to evolve along with the financial industry. IBC members are all senior professionals that hold or have held senior executive positions in Luxembourg. We bring together institutions across the financial sector as a whole, reflecting its development over the years, and now encompass not only banks but audit and advisory firms, the asset manager and fund service providers, IT companies and fintech firms, while individual members include academics and independent directors. Despite the constant change we see in the industry, the IBC takes its cue from Luxembourg's national motto, *Mir wëlle bleiwe wat mir sinn*. The organisation, too, wants to stay what it is



Nasir Zubairi



Xavier Bettel



Luc Frieden



Norbert Becker



Johan Lindberg



Marco Zwick

“We bring together institutions across the financial sector as a whole, reflecting its development over the years.”

JOHAN LINDBERG,
 PRESIDENT OF IBC

in the sense of staying true to its roots and purpose set down by Franssens and the other pioneers of Luxembourg as a financial centre half a century ago.

How do you see the association evolving in the coming years?

We intend to continue to evolve as a distinct specialised community to respond to the ongoing growth of Luxembourg's financial industry as it faces up to the

challenges of the 21st century, such as the new international focus on transparency to the central role of the sector in helping to lead the economies of Europe and the world toward a sustainable future. In between, like everyone else, we have adapted to the global Covid-19 pandemic, during which the financial sector has pioneered innovative working patterns that are likely to continue to shape the coming years. Luxembourg's financial community, local and global, remains in the forefront of innovation in terms of financial products, regulation and international interaction, and we expect the IBC to continue to play an important role at the industry's heart for many more years to come. We take our cue from the distinguished anthropologist Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

MARC LAUER
ACA

The Insurance Industry Defines its Priorities

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/marclauer
www.aca.lu

ACCORDING TO MARC LAUER, VICE-PRESIDENT AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE ACA (2020-2022), REGULATION, CSR AND DIGITALIZATION ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES FACING THE INSURANCE AND REINSURANCE INDUSTRY IN 2022. AFTER A YEAR OF GENERAL PROGRESS, THE SECTOR MUST MAINTAIN ITS EFFORTS TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. INTERVIEW.

What are the ACA's current priorities?

I can identify four. First, our industry is currently facing a regulatory challenge. The Solvency II update, introduced ten years ago, has made the calculation of solvency requirements more complex. We are also closely monitoring new barriers that are being considered to limit the freedom to provide services. The possibility of strengthening the powers of the host authority from 5% of services provided abroad would make our activities even more complex. Our second priority is to support the sector in the implementation of CSR strategies. Our goal is to see a real CSR impact in the actions and services provided by the sector. We must therefore ensure that we clearly formulate our objectives in this area in order to act in accordance with regulations and political intentions. The third priority is that the inability of insurance companies to outsource their cloud services abroad (due to the current insurance secrecy provisions) is an obstacle to the digitalization of our sector and its competitiveness on the international scene. Of course, we will always ensure that we protect our customers' data in accordance with GDPR regulations, but the provisions of Article 300 on insurance secrecy are so demanding with regard to collecting customer consent that they are impossible to implement in practice. Finally, our last challenge focuses on increased vigilance in the fight against money laundering and terrorism. A visit of the FATF is still expected in Luxembourg and we are aiming for a clean slate!

How is the insurance sector in Luxembourg evolving?

Despite the regulatory difficulties, the sector is generally developing well in Luxembourg, because the environment



"A visit of the FATF is still expected in Luxembourg and we are aiming for a clean slate!"

MARC LAUER,
VICE-PRESIDENT AND FORMER
PRESIDENT OF THE ACA



here is more business-oriented than elsewhere. This is due in particular to a strong ecosystem, including the banking sector; a solid IT/Fintech set-up and a regulatory framework that complies with all European requirements and is enforced by a dedicated supervisory authority. 2021 was a very good year. Life insurance reached the same level as 2019, which promises us growth of over 40% compared to 2020. In non-life insurance, our business grew by 10%, especially with the arrival of new players following the Brexit.

What risks and opportunities do you see in the medium term?

Cumbersome regulations are the first risk that small

companies, of which there are many in Luxembourg, will find it more difficult to cope with. In addition, the climate crisis means that we need to develop models for assessing natural disasters, and we may need to think about public-private financing models, as observed abroad. Finally, we need to find the right talents to support us in these challenges. In terms of opportunities, digitalization offers new ways to communicate with clients and collaborate with our partners. It also has a positive impact on the production and processing of data that allows us to better understand our clients' expectations. We must seize this opportunity to prevent it from becoming a risk.

CORNELIUS BECHTEL
L3A

Family Offices and ESG: It's in their DNA

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/l3a2022
www.l3a.lu



FOR MANY, INVESTMENT DECISIONS BASED ON ESG HAVE RECENTLY BECOME “FLAVOR OF THE MONTH.” BUT AS CORNELIUS BECHTEL, PARTNER AT ANDERSEN AND PADDOCK CORPORATE SERVICES SA AND MEMBER OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF L3A EXPLAINS, ESG CRITERIA HAVE LONG BEEN PART OF THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF FAMILY OFFICES AND ARE SIMPLY BEING EMBRACED IN THEIR INVESTMENT STRATEGIES.

“ESG considerations have been in the DNA of family offices for generations.”

CORNELIUS BECHTEL,
L3A

How are ESG criteria impacting family office businesses?

“ESG” has been in the thoughts and minds of family offices long before it became the “flavor of the month” among investment professionals. Family offices that have been servicing several generations of the same family have long discussed values such as sustainability, governance and social needs if only for the benefit of the family itself. Family offices are driven by the need and desire of families to manage and administer their interests for two and more generations respectfully and responsibly. For family offices, ESG is less about a new investment criterion and what does or does not comply with ESG investment standards. ESG considerations have been in the DNA of family offices for generations.

Do social and governance criteria carry as much weight as environmental criteria?

The “E” is currently discussed most because emerging laws and regulations are primarily focusing on environmental criteria. When formulating investment strategies, one has to ensure they can be assessed, audited and reported as being ESG compliant overall. However, the efforts to focus first on environmental criteria

create the impression that social and governance criteria carry less weight. But that is not what occurs as any family officer will properly balance all three criteria in their investment decisions. These decisions can’t be made to solely comply with environmental criteria, social and governance considerations have to automatically and naturally form part of the decision-making process.

How do L3A members support clients in their compliance procedures?

L3A members are at the very heart of the process when supporting our clients in complying with ESG considerations. The support comes from many angles and covers all areas. These include helping our clients formulate and pursue the right strategies; helping our clients prepare the right reports; providing data to support the audit process; formulating the most appropriate policy and then designing the procedure best suited to comply with the chosen policy. For the time being, the “uninformed observer” may conclude that there is a veritable jungle of rules, regulations, obligations and pitfalls encompassing the discussion around ESG compliant investments. The role for the L3A, as an association, but also for the members of L3A, is to help our client find a safe pathway through that jungle.

THOMAS BARRETT
U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg

On the Importance of Shared Values

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/usembassy
<https://lu.usembassy.gov>

THE UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR TO LUXEMBOURG, THOMAS BARRETT, WHO RECENTLY PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS TO HRH GRAND DUKE HENRI, DISCUSSES THE US'S STRONG HISTORICAL, FINANCIAL AND CULTURAL TIES WITH LUXEMBOURG. HE STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMON VALUES ON ISSUES SUCH AS HUMAN RIGHTS, COMBATTING CLIMATE CHANGE AND EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES.

Can you describe your itinerary in Luxembourg in a few words?

The first step ambassadors must take when posted to a new country is the protocol of presenting their credentials. I had the honor of mine being received by HRH Grand Duke Henri in February. Since then, I have met with Prime Minister Bettel and many Luxembourg government officials. My staff have kept me very busy visiting a number of companies, media outlets, and other local organizations. My first public event was the 77th anniversary of the liberation of Luxembourg, celebrated in Vianden. I've been to the Luxembourg American Cemetery several times and aim to visit many more memorials and events to keep those memories alive.

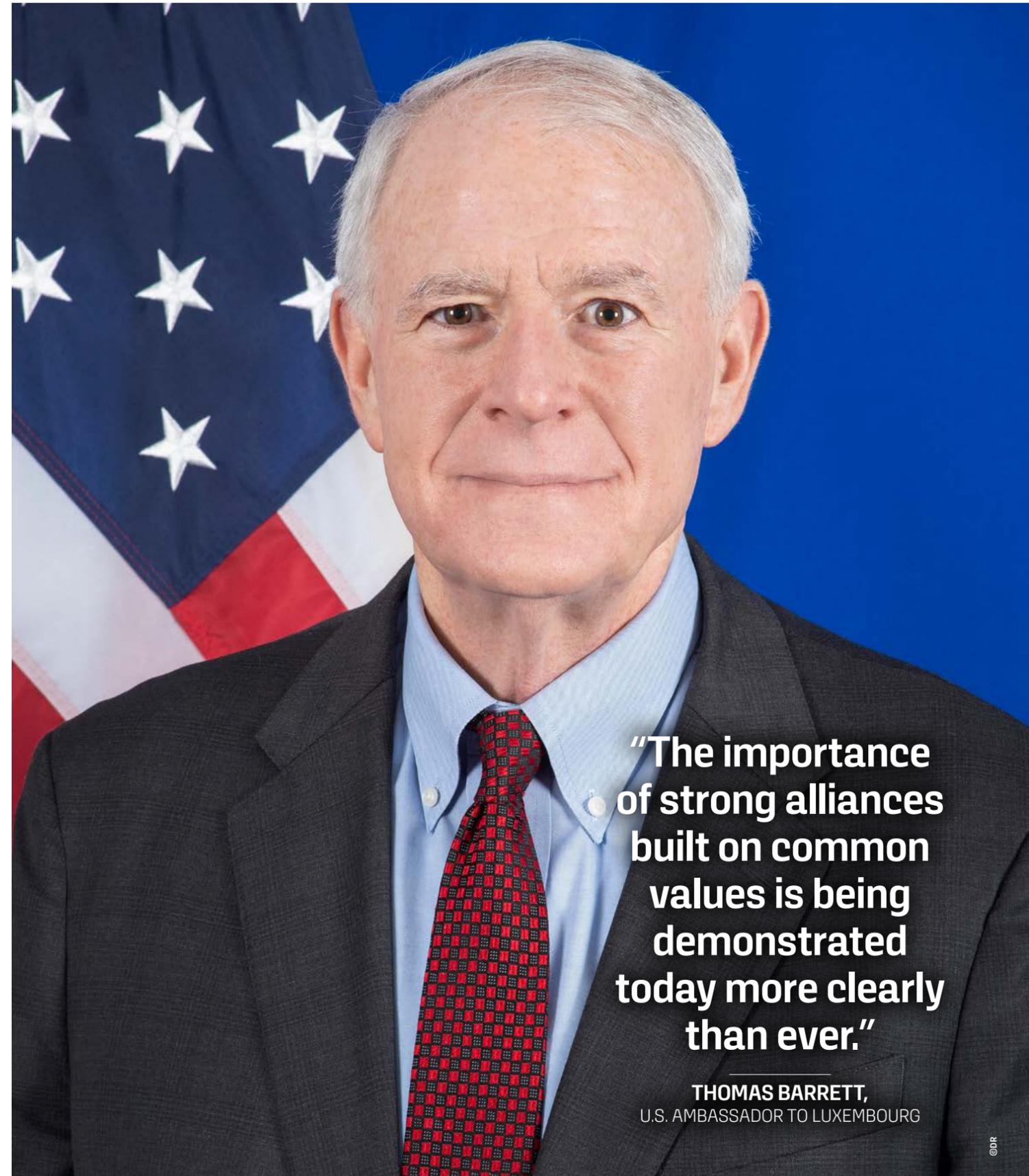
What are your priorities as U.S. Ambassador in Luxembourg?

The importance of strong alliances built on common values is currently being demonstrated more clearly than ever. I see opportunities to bolster the bilateral partnership between Luxembourg and the United States built on the cornerstone of trade and investment. I intend to expand cooperation in the frontier of space and in combatting climate change, a key priority for the Biden Administration.

This year the United States and Luxembourg are serving together on the United Nations Human Rights Council where we will work together to hold accountable those who violate these fundamental rights and freedoms. Another priority is our strong cultural connections including education, exchanges, popular culture and commemorative events. I'm excited about the Esch 2022 cultural events this year that will include a host of prominent American musical artists.

How would you describe the bilateral relations between your country and Luxembourg?

My role has been made easier because I can build upon the already strong and positive relationship between our two countries that stems from our shared history in World War II and that has flourished through cooperation in the areas of investment, trade and defense, as well as our shared cultural ties. Our countries will always stand firm to defend the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. As a founding member of the organization that led to today's European Union, as well as NATO, the UN, and the OECD, Luxembourg is part of the backbone of the international system that is and will remain key to U.S. foreign policy politically, economically, and culturally.



“The importance of strong alliances built on common values is being demonstrated today more clearly than ever.”

THOMAS BARRETT,
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO LUXEMBOURG

SAM TANSON
Ministry of Culture

Developing and Professionalizing the Luxembourg Cultural Sector

 **MORE INFORMATION**
www.duke.lu/samtanson

"LUXEMBOURG, DESPITE ITS SMALL SIZE, HAS AN ABUNDANT AND RICH CULTURAL SCENE", SAYS SAM TANSON, MINISTER OF CULTURE. ACCORDING TO HER, THE SECTOR HAS TWO CHALLENGES THAT THE MINISTRY SUPPORTS: ITS PROFESSIONALIZATION AND ITS DEVELOPMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. EXPLANATIONS.

Political itinerary

After studying law and political science, Sam Tanson's career began at RTL Radio Lëtzebuerg where she worked as a journalist. She then practiced as a lawyer at the Luxembourg Bar before entering politics and occupying several positions within the déi gréng political party. Starting as a councilor and alderman of the City of Luxembourg, she became a member of the Council of State and then a member of the Chamber. She entered the government following the legislative elections of 2018 as Minister of Culture and Housing. Most recently, she traded the latter ministerial portfolio for that of Justice during the government reshuffle of 2019.

Cultural Challenges

"The sector has been particularly affected by the Covid-19 health crisis, as the cultural sector lives on exchange and contact with the public. The restrictions and closure of cultural venues at the start of the pandemic had a considerable impact on artists and the scene in general," she says. At the same time, the cultural sector is faced with the challenge of professionalization, which has been going on for years and is deeply transforming it. In

addition, networking and international outreach are among the development priorities.

Ministry Support

"We strive to have a participatory approach; to listen to the cultural sector and to include the recommendations and ideas they provide. During lockdown, we supported the sector by triggering the Neistart Lëtzebuerg – Culture aid scheme that endowed €5 million and aimed, among other things, to compensate for the shortfall resulting from the cancellation of events. We were also among the first countries in Europe to reopen cultural venues," explains the Minister of Culture. Since 2016, the ministry has been organizing Cultural Conferences in order to include the sector in all political reflections and to better identify its challenges. These reflections are the basis of the Kulturentwécklungsplang 2018–2028, the development and professionalization plan for the sector. She adds: "The ministry has also ordered reports from several experts to build its future cultural policy." In terms of professionalization, the Kultur | lx promotes and accompanies the international approaches of artists to enable them to find audiences abroad. This association is intended to become a public institution.

"Networking and international outreach are among the development priorities."

SAM TANSON,
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

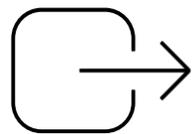
CLAUS MANSFELDT
SwanCap

Private Equity Opens Up

 **MORE INFORMATION**
www.duke.lu/swanCap2022
www.swanCap.eu

"AT SWANCAP, WE INVEST GRADUALLY: WE ARE NOT UNDERINVESTED IN HARD TIMES NOR OVERINVESTED IN EXUBERANT TIMES," SAYS CLAUS MANSFELDT, CHAIRMAN OF SWANCAP LUXEMBOURG. INTERVIEW.





Private Equity Opens Up

How is SwanCap doing?

Very well. We are pleased to see how PE has performed through the successive Corona lockdowns over the past two years. We are now facing a new – semi-cataclysmic – event with Russia's war, and yet financial markets are holding up. In general, private equity maintained its historical out-performance relative to public markets. This provides a great backdrop for SwanCap. With pooled funds performance of 25% net IRR, our funds are in the top quartile amongst our peers which drives continuous investment from our clients. And what we have learned in the past is that it is a good idea to remain invested in productive assets even during turbulent times, as Warren Buffet recently also reminded us. At SwanCap, we invest gradually: We are not underinvested in hard times nor overinvested in exuberant times.

Which trends are impacting the PE industry?

I identify three main trends. Firstly, large funds and large deals are driven by the appetite of pension funds, fueling the fundraising by mega-funds, sometimes exceeding €20 billion each. This clearly benefits big names, even though they have not always produced the best returns. Secondly, we witness very strong performance in the mid-market – where SwanCap is especially active. In our experience, this segment produces the highest returns. The challenge for investors is that mid-market funds, e.g. sized between €500 million and €5 billion, do not allow for unlimited subscriptions. However, SwanCap being in the market for more than 20 years allows us to gain access to desirable funds. The last trend is add-on M&A by investee companies for which private equity's stewardship is arguably best suited.



“From “Save the Planet”, governments are now switching to “Save Societies”.”

CLAUS MANSFELDT,
SWANCAP

What about ESG?

It remains a huge trend in the market. A spillover from trends that started in the public equity and bond markets was pushed by large institutional pension funds in northern Europe. Firstly, in the Netherlands and Scandinavia, institutions are demanding that managers address their business in terms of ESG on a global basis. The industry is scrambling to establish standards. It is a work in progress. The United Nations published the PRI and, in addition, the EU is driving the establishment of its own standards, which will discipline the market and ultimately pressure underlying corporate entities to comply. At the moment, given the war in Ukraine, there is a paradox evolving: Our free societies feel under threat. Governments are scrambling to catch up with their defense capacities. This spills over to the private equity sector being encouraged by authorities to also step up. This is a conundrum for PE managers who generally classified the defense sector as a no-go area only a few weeks ago. From “Save the Planet,” governments are now switching to “Save Societies.” You know, every morning, when I go to work, I can see the Luxembourg-American memorial in front of the airport, paying tribute to the 4th Infantry Division of General Patton's victory in the “Battle of the Bulge.” It reminds me that we have been through many wars in history, nearby, and that we should always remember who will come and save us when we need it. Finally, another very poignant ESG trend is the acceleration, spurred by the sanctions against Russia, of an energy-transition away from carbon-fuel towards renewable energy.

What risks and opportunities do you identify?

Generally, in private equity, concentration is a risk: Investing too much in one company, one fund, one sector. Remember

“We should always remember who will come and save us when we need it.”

CLAUS MANSFELDT
SWANCAP

that you can't switch easily, so diversification is the key. In terms of opportunity, I think that the inclusion of more investors is equally important. At the moment, private equity is a closed-shop reserved for pension funds, institutions and the richest people. Efforts are being made right now to facilitate the participation of more investors. ELTIF is driving investments towards infrastructure – which, by the way, is not completely safe, as it is dependent on e.g. public pricing schemes subject to political manipulations. At SwanCap we have teamed up with Antwort to lower the barrier of entry. I hope that this will allow more investors to participate in the premium returns available in the PE sector. Finally, I hope that regulation will not reach a point where only certain super-sized firms can participate. There are so many laws, directives, policies and audits right now that entrepreneurship and innovation are in danger of being limited. In time, over-regulation drives the whole industry into the hands of huge players and past performance does not assure that they are necessarily the best performers nor best innovators alone.

STEPHANE PESCH
LPEA

The new face of PE

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/lpea2022
www.lpea.lu

WITH PE AND VC THRIVING IN LUXEMBOURG, STEPHANE PESCH, CEO OF THE LUXEMBOURG PRIVATE EQUITY AND VENTURE CAPITAL ASSOCIATION, EXPLAINS HOW THE LPEA HAS BECOME A VALUABLE FORUM FOR PRACTITIONERS TO SHARE THEIR IDEAS, VIEWS WITH THEIR PEERS AS WELL AS WITH THE LUXEMBOURG GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.

Can you describe your association in a few words?

The LPEA was created in 2010 by visionaries who anticipated that alternative investments, including private equity (PE) and venture capital (VC) strategies, would represent the next big success for the Luxembourg investment funds' hub. The LPEA's 338 members comprise three categories: Full members, who are General Partners (GPs), Limited Partners (LPs) and family offices. Secondly, Associate members, who include service providers and advisors such as depositary banks, AIFMs, fund administrators, audit and law firms, tax experts and consultants. Finally, the Affiliate members are represented by non-executive directors with PE mandates, entrepreneurs and founders of innovative companies and independent PE specialists.

What is your mission as an association?

The main goal of our association is to represent, defend and promote the interest of our members and the PE/VC industries. The first mission of the LPEA encompasses public affairs and advocacy hand in hand with the representatives of other financial associations, with whom we discuss the latest directives and regulatory changes in order to share our common views with the authorities and

some public entities. Our second mission is thought leadership. Alongside our annual flagship conference, the *LPEA Insights*, we have launched more than 25 technical committees and clubs – composed of LPEA members and industry experts – which tackle the latest trends and developments. The topics range from legal to tax and also include operational matters, focusing on different investment strategies as well as analyse the latest ESG developments. Our third mission is talent attraction. Over the past two years, we have developed a specialized training academy and have organized two dedicated job fairs. We also opened an HR club where practitioners discuss their needs and the hottest profiles.

What major trends do you see emerging in private equity?

The most recent trends englobe the broader acceptance of technological innovation and the “democratization” of PE which enables new stakeholders to access private asset classes via specific products, vehicles or platforms, next to the traditional institutional and professional investors. Nowadays new players also include more family offices (many were already active in the field) Private bankers, Wealth Managers and insurers who have

“Democratization of PE will facilitate and enable new stakeholders to access the private asset classes.”

STEPHANE PESCH,
LPEA



strongly increased their share in private assets over the recent years due to a high demand from their clients. Digital platforms and innovators are offering tech-based solutions which for example facilitate the on-boarding of clients, help identify promising opportunities thanks to AI-driven tools, optimise the reporting and administrative deliverables, make the whole industry more data-driven or accessible (via APIs) and also automate the operational workflows. “Off the shelf” structures allow a quite personalised experience and exposure to PE/VC, which in certain cases, can even be extended to more “retail” types

of clients. The refurbishment of the European long-term investment fund (ELTIF) structure is also happening right now and could represent a very interesting catalyst, solution to cope with this increased appetite. Luxembourg start-ups with their inspired technologies have also been sprouting for some time now and have successfully rolled out their products, further proof that Luxembourg is further strengthening its position as an innovative ecosystem and a more transversal PE/VC hub which proposes efficient structuring solutions, the right entrepreneurial mind-set and new opportunities.

GOSIA KRAMER AND SEBASTIAN VAN OVERTFELDT
The Office

Growing Fast, Growing Lokaal

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/theoffice2022
<https://theoffice.lu>

"WE PROVED THAT THE OFFICE IS FLEXIBLE AND CAN ADAPT TO FACE WHATEVER KIND OF CRISIS THAT MAY OCCUR," SAYS GOSIA KRAMER, CEO, AND SEBASTIAN VAN OVERTFELDT, MANAGING DIRECTOR, OF THE OFFICE. INTERVIEW.

How is The Office doing?

It's doing perfectly well. I'm very proud to have seen it grow to become the key player it is today. The idea was called "crazy" five years ago, but I've learned that really meant "brave." The Office is now a stable business that's seeing more and more success every day. In fact, our 6,000 m2 co-working spaces divided across three locations are almost entirely occupied. During the past two years, we gained a lot of trust from our newly joined members. We offer them a workplace where they can visit and in which they trust and feel good. This is very refreshing and makes us think we're on the right path.

How do you explain the success of The Office?

Our success essentially comes from the fact that we brought a concept to the market that didn't exist in Luxembourg before. We also launched a food concept, with our brand "Lokaal." Since we spend most of our days at work, we decided to create restaurant corners at The Office, which became the heart of co-working. After successive lockdowns, people needed more conviviality at work. They also realized the impact of their food on the planet and the importance of healthy meals. We supply food locally and seasonally – as much as we can – and we also offer affordable meals.

What are the challenges of entrepreneurship in Luxembourg?

Luxembourg is a very welcoming country for innovation. While entrepreneurship is a journey that never gets easier,



Watch the video interview
of Gosia Kramer and
Sebastian Van Overtfeldt
on www.duke.lu



"While entrepreneurship is a journey that never gets easier, it is always getting more interesting!"



it is always getting more interesting! The challenge in the hospitality business is finding people with the right mindset. When you work for a growing company, your staff must be very flexible and motivated. You have to be consistent and have a genuine motivation that will translate your vision, to your co-workers and your customers. Our advice to other entrepreneurs is to concentrate on their core business and outsource everything that doesn't relate to it. The more time you focus on your business, the more it will grow. Focus, enthusiasm, ambition and patience are key to success! It's also important to take care of yourself and practice starting every day with the right mindset.

What's next?

We're pushing the development of our online co-working offer because metaverse is one of the trends that's getting bigger in office management these days. We're also working on the implementation of new technologies in the real estate market in our 2022 strategy. Our world is evolving very fast and we proved that we are flexible and can adapt to face whatever kind of crisis that might come.

LOÏC LE FOLL
La Mondiale Europartner

Anticipating and Supporting the New Needs of High-Net-Worth Customers

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/la-mondiale-europartner
www.lamondiale.lu



ACCORDING TO LOÏC LE FOLL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF LA MONDIALE EUROPARTNER, A SUBSIDIARY OF THE AG2R LA MONDIALE GROUP "AIMS TO BECOME THE BENCHMARK 'PHYGITAL' WEALTH SOLUTIONS PLATFORM IN EUROPE FOR ITS PARTNERS AND THEIR CUSTOMERS." INTERVIEW.

"With the development of digital, people will play an increasingly important role in the relationship and advice given to high-net-worth customers!"

LOÏC LE FOLL,
LA MONDIALE EUROPARTNER

Can you describe your company in a few words?

The Luxembourg subsidiary of the AG2R LA MONDIALE group, La Mondiale Europartner specializes in high-end savings and life cover solutions for a sophisticated clientele. Established in Luxembourg for more than 30 years, it has a team of 200 employees. The firm is experiencing very strong growth and has reached over €19 billion of assets under management as of 31 December 2021. This makes La Mondiale Europartner one of the top insurers in Luxembourg, and a leader in the French and Italian markets.

How are the needs of your wealth clients changing?

Our wealthy clientele often includes entrepreneurs who have successfully sold their businesses, but also geographically mobile athletes or clients with large inherited wealth. Our environment is changing, and the needs of our customers are changing too. For example, the health crisis and the conflict in Ukraine are two fear factors that caused people to lose their bearings. This means that customers are, more than ever, seeking advice and solutions customised to their needs. For example, they could be seeking a wider range of investments, particularly among the class of "private equity." Some are also increasingly attracted to the ESG dimension of their investments, provided that this is not detrimental to financial performance. With this choice and this complexity, having the right advice is essential and this is also stressed by the development of digital technology. Indeed, customers now have access to all kinds of information very quickly, whether financial, legal or tax. However, this access to information must be supported so that the client is able to make the right analyses and decisions. Even if the basic needs of our high-net-worth

customers remain relatively stable, the ways and means La Mondiale Europartner is meeting them are evolving towards what we call a "phygital" model. With the development of digital, people will play an increasingly important role in the relationship and advice given to high-net-worth customers!

What impact does digitalization have on your culture and the performance of your company?

The impact is significant insofar as we have the ambition to become the "phygital" wealth solutions platform of reference in Europe for our partners and their customers. However, digitization cannot, from our point of view, be an end in itself. We want it to contribute to optimizing the customer experience and the service offered to our partners and not simply to reducing costs. Therefore, digitalization has not fundamentally changed our customer culture but has made it evolve by accentuating our culture of excellence in customer and partner service. It also allowed us to apply agile methods and to develop our organization efficiently and pragmatically.

SEAN O'DRISCOLL
GAM FMS

The pure player

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/gam
www.gam.com/fms

SEAN O'DRISCOLL, CEO OF GAM LUXEMBOURG AND HEAD OF GAM'S FUND MANAGEMENT SERVICES BUSINESS (FMS), REVEALS THE COMPELLING PREMISE ATTRACTING SOME OF THE WORLD'S LEADING FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TO RELY ON GAM'S EXPERTISE. GAM'S FMS OFFER ALLOWS ITS CLIENTS TO FOCUS ON THEIR CORE COMPETENCIES OF INVESTMENT DECISION-MAKING AND EFFICIENT FUND DISTRIBUTION.

Can you describe GAM FMS in a few words?

GAM is an Asset Manager created in 1983. It has 3 core business lines: Investment Management, Wealth Management and Fund Management Services, which was created in 1992 as the Private Label Funds business (PLF). GAM FMS is a pure player for two reasons: first of all, asset management is in our DNA allowing us to understand our clients' needs in depth, and second, it does not provide additional services such as fund administration or transfer agency, which allows us to focus on our core activities. With CHF 68.0 billion of third-party fund assets under management at the end of 2021, GAM FMS is one of the largest bank-independent, third-party fund solution providers in Europe. While its global footprint delivers services to over 45 clients around the world, GAM FMS has built incomparable local expertise through its operations in the Switzerland, Luxembourg, Ireland, UK and Italy as well as through partnerships in Australia and Singapore. Our clients know they can rely on us to assist them in the design and delivery of their customized investment strategies.

How are your clients' needs evolving?

GAM FMS' clients include banks, wealth managers, asset owners, such as pension schemes and insurance



Steve Kieffer, Sean O'Driscoll, Ludmila Careri, Marie-Christine Piasta, Hakim Bendriss and Susanne D'Anterrosches.



Sean O'Driscoll

“Our clients know they can rely on us to assist them in the design and delivery of customized investment strategies.”

SEAN O'DRISCOLL,
GAM FMS

companies as well as independent asset managers. It operates with a simple, but compelling premise: our clients outsource the establishment and operation of their funds to GAM FMS, which then efficiently and cost-effectively manages the day-to-day fund operations on their behalf. Our clients can concentrate on their core competencies:

Efficient fund distribution and investment decisions that drive intended returns. Increasingly, clients see the benefit of a partnership where we provide robust services meeting their needs in all asset classes and offering all types of strategies, including complex ones featuring hedge funds for example. We act as a one-stop-shop for all their needs.

Which challenges and opportunities do you identify in the current context?

In a rapidly changing global environment, we assist our clients navigate the ever-increasing regulatory and substance requirements. GAM is in a position to leverage economies of scale giving clients some regulatory headroom that allows them to concentrate on their core business. As clients assess their needs against this dynamic background, we also have the ability to meet a wide range of specific investor needs across all asset classes including the burgeoning environmental, social and governance space. To meet these challenges of our times, GAM's approach can be summarised by our credo that, “If you're seeking fund management services beyond the ordinary, you need to look beyond the obvious”. With GAM, you shouldn't expect any less; indeed, you can confidently expect more. But you should always expect something different.

GILLES MORO & OLIVIER HOEN
SysCommerce Group

The Technical Partner of Payment Establishments and Neobanks

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/syscommerce

ACCORDING TO GILLES MORO AND OLIVIER HOEN, WHO HEAD SYSCOMMERCE GROUP: "THE WORLD OF CRYPTOCURRENCIES IS SET TO GROW MORE AND MORE AND WE WANT TO GROW WITH IT BY OFFERING A REAL PARTNERSHIP TO OUR CUSTOMERS." INTERVIEW.

Olivier Hoen



What is SysCommerce Group's strategy?

Our group consists of two subsidiaries, Kayros (formerly EMP Corp) and SysPay, an electronic money issuer and payment institution in Europe. 2021 was a pivotal year for the group since two major shareholders joined us, namely Olivier Hoen, former Chief Financial Officer of eBay and PayPal, as well as Ronan Girard, from the world of private banking. In addition, we have adapted our strategy by moving from a position of a payment service provider (PSP) to that of technical service provider. Thanks to our network and our knowledge of the market, we advise our customers – mainly active in the hospitality, rental agencies and e-commerce sectors – to choose the most suitable payment solution for their activity. We then assist them in the technical installation of this PSP. At the same time, SysPay focuses on issuing electronic money and installing payment solutions.

What are the main trends in the field of e-payment?

Three main trends are emerging. Firstly, we note that traditional banks are struggling to meet the demands of our partners because they do not place their trust in fintechs, however solvent they may be. We therefore make sure to put them in contact with neobanks and we support them technically in this venture. The second trend undoubtedly remains the need for e-commerce sites to open up

"Traditional banks do not trust FinTechs, however solvent they may be."

GILES MORO,
SYSCOMMERCE GROUP

payment possibilities with alternative payment methods and cryptocurrencies. We can implement tailor-made, back-offices in a few days thanks to our network and expertise as a former PSP. Finally, we note a growing need on the part of our partners to outsource all the management of their payment flows. They do not want to internalize this part anymore because it becomes increasingly difficult to recruit and retain the necessary IT talent. We therefore propose managing this activity for them in the Cloud. A classic, complete service for an e-commerce site thus consists of opening an account at a neobank, choosing and technically installing the PSP. In terms of rates, we offer remuneration representing a percentage of flows. The costs are thus reduced for sites starting their activities and we offer them a real partnership over time, during which we can grow and evolve together.

Where do you see your group in a few years?

Today our ambition is to become the leading technical service provider in Europe in the market between

Gilles Moro



neobanks and fintechs. Our market experience gives us a real advantage in these segments. The world of cryptocurrencies is set to grow more and more and we want to grow with it. Keep in mind that an error in the choice of PSP can be fatal to our customers: On the one hand, they would never be able to touch their money. On the other, it would take them months to switch to a more suitable PSP. In addition, as the financial sector evolves very quickly, we can analyze in an agile way the new means of payment emerging in the market and implement them very quickly for our customers when we have ensured their maturity. This demonstrates that our startup temperament remains anchored in our DNA.

JOHAN LINDBERG
RBC Investor & Treasury Services

Helping Family Offices become custodian agnostic

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/johanlinberg
www.rbcits.com

“RBC CAN HELP FAMILY OFFICES TO MANAGE MULTIPLE CUSTODIAN RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH ONE SINGLE ACCESS WITH OUR MIDDLE OFFICE”, SAYS JOHAN LINDBERG, MANAGING DIRECTOR FOR CLIENT COVERAGE AT RBC INVESTOR & TREASURY SERVICES IN LUXEMBOURG. INTERVIEW.

What are the evolutions regarding middle office outsourcing?

First of all, I would like to connect today's interview with our last conversation where we discussed how Family Offices were becoming more institutional in their behavior. We estimate that Middle Office outsourcing will double over the next five years. The reason for that and the link to the institutionalization of Family Offices are decoupling from the “one provider” approach. Family Offices want to be self-sufficient, control their destiny and focus on their core competencies of investment and stock picking. We developed our Middle Office offering so that they can do exactly that.

How do you help Family Offices become custodian agnostic?

In essence, Family Offices and Asset Managers can become custodian agnostic in a few steps. They deal with many accounts with several custodians, so they need to have one model for transactions, one for corporate actions and one for reporting. Imagine that you have two mandates with a custodian, another one with another custodian and therefore you have to instruct them 1:1 for each of the three models through different methods with different deadlines. With the outsourced Middle Office, you have a link between



“We estimate that middle office outsourcing will double within the next five years and we have seen this acceleration on the back of the pandemic as clients focus more on their operating models to be more resilient and support growth.”

JOHAN LINDBERG
RBC INVESTOR & TREASURY SERVICES

the front office and your entire range of custodians with a single point of entry for all these relationships. Technology plays a big role in this centralized approach as we help Wealth Managers to connect through APIs while providing scale through cloud-based technology. In theory, you could do this on your own, but it is expensive, difficult and you are left with associated risks. By choosing an outsourced Middle Office model, you will instead offset those risks, secure regulatory compliance, access new technology and improve efficiency.

How is RBC Investor & Treasury Services adapting to this context?

We have been investing in a new platform for several years. We now see our clients move towards intraday updates. As a minimum, Portfolio Managers need an end of day view of all transactions and corporate events across multiple market counterparties. The outsourced Middle Office service includes an IBOR (Investment Book of Records) that consists of all this – end of day as well as intraday! Our offering allows our clients to focus on their core business while enjoying a state-of-the-

art client experience. The end game is to empower Multi Family Offices with relevant reporting for their underlying clients. A digital experience through an online portal for corporate action notification and election (centralized for all client custodians), and oversight dashboards offers clients near real-time oversight and exception monitoring. This allows Family Offices to be more efficient and focus on other valuable parts of the business instead of identifying errors. The new technology ultimately reduces capital costs and risk for our clients in order to enable growth.

FRÉDÉRIC PÉRARD
SuisseTechPartners

Enhancing Wealth Management with Cloud-Native Technology

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/fredericperard2022
www.suissetechpartners.com

FRÉDÉRIC PÉRARD JOINED SUISSETECHPARTNERS (STP) TO WORK FOR A FINTECH OFFERING PRODUCTS WITH THE CAPACITY NOT ONLY TO SEAMLESSLY FACILITATE CLOUD-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR THE WEALTH AND ASSET MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY, BUT THAT COULD MEET THE SECTOR'S NEEDS THROUGH THE OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY ITS EVOLVING TECHNOLOGY.

Why did you decide to join SuisseTechPartners?

For my last operational position, I wanted to be in the shoes of a real entrepreneur with real empowerment, short chains for decision making and a partnership approach. STP operates in my area of expertise – asset servicing in the wealth and asset management sector. Joining STP gave me the chance to run developing activities in a complex, matrixed organization in a fintech. It also gave me the opportunity to contribute to products with the capacity to evolve and serve clients in the key domains of the industry. I was attracted by the prospect of working with Mrs. Van Ta who is one of the best systems' architects in the financial industry.

How is cloud-native technology impacting the financial industry?

Cloud-native technology, like Mrs. Van Ta's new platform PMplus, is revolutionizing the financial industry. Using open-source and modern languages to develop software makes it more efficient and cheaper. Users gain access to

the software via a hardware-agnostic model (PC, tablet or mobile phone) using the SaaS mode (software as a service) as well as the web. This is particularly attractive with the growth of remote working. The technology not only speeds up the time between an idea and its implementation but also allows users to collaborate with the developers to manage the software's evolution and the continuous availability of new versions of the application. Its use on the public or private cloud reduces the cost of running the application and makes the onboarding of additional activities easily scalable.

How are you helping your clients to grow their businesses?

PMplus is a real cloud-native application. Plain vanilla clients can implement it "out of the box" and it swiftly allows the migration of existing businesses or the onboarding of new clients. PMplus has a unique database and functional richness that includes the widest range of asset classes. This offers great consistency across its



"Its use on the public or private cloud reduces the cost of running the application and makes the onboarding of additional activities easily scalable."

FRÉDÉRIC PÉRARD,
SUISSETECHPARTNERS

architecture facilitating unified processes, as well as providing front, middle and back office needs by replacing legacy applications. PMplus's cloud-native nature allows clients to use only a specific function within existing architecture or replace a particular component among legacy applications. Clients, their cloud provider and STP can collaborate in the rapid development of new functions.

FRANÇOIS MASQUELIER
Simply Treasury

The necessary digitization of treasury functions in Private Equity

GOING DIGITAL QUICKLY IS OR AT LEAST SHOULD BE “THE” PRIORITY. WHAT ABOUT THE PRIVATE EQUITY (PE) INDUSTRY? NO ONE COULD CONTEST THEY ARE BEHIND. TECHNOLOGY OVERHAUL IS REGARDED AS CRUCIAL TO A STRATEGY OF SELLING IN A FEW YEARS. COMPANIES THAT UNDERGO DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION CAN BECOME MORE ATTRACTIVE FOR INVESTORS BUT WHEN IT COMES TO BUSINESSES OWNED BY PE’S, TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE. PARADOXICALLY, PE’S AND THEIR SERVICE INDUSTRY ARE DELAYED ON THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF THEIR OWN ORGANIZATION. EXPLANATIONS WITH FRANÇOIS MASQUELIER, CEO OF SIMPLY TREASURY.



MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/simplytreasury2022
www.simplytreasury.com

From analogue to digital

Going digital quickly is a priority for number of companies, but more particularly for Private Equity industry. No one could contest this opinion. Technology overhaul is regarded as crucial to a strategy of selling in a few years. I am convinced that companies that undergo digital transformation can become more attractive for investors but when it comes to businesses owned by Private Equity, time is of the essence. PE owners are often in a rush to transform analogue enterprises into companies that have been thoroughly modernized using technology, as they consider this crucial for their strategy of increasing value of an asset before selling it within a few years of acquisition. Isn't it a paradox to search for digitization of assets a PE buys to sell it in couple of years at a higher price when the same PE does not invest in its own digitization? Some large PE's have started to engage on this digital journey. Nevertheless, it looks that it is culturally complicate to initiate for some PE's.

Don't forget to transform your own business too

By the way, this digital transformation is not only necessary for PE's but also for the industry servicing PE's and VC's or family offices. No one could contest that this industry remains in general highly manual. Being manual may generate problems: e.g., weak internal controls, need

“Going digital does not just mean replacing human by machines. It is about rethinking the whole business of the company.”

FRANÇOIS MASQUELIER,
SIMPLY TREASURY

for more human resources, more risks of errors and internal frauds, lower reliability of data and reports produced, more difficulties to be on-boarded by traditional banks, poor customer experience, higher internal costs, less visibility, and no possibility to adopt a dynamic treasury management. Technology power may also provide better management. For example, if you get access to dynamic real-time dashboards, including KPI's and KAI's, decision-making solutions, and more predictive analytics. Digitization is virtuous in various ways. The objective is to concentrate efforts on execution and not to spend time collecting and potentially interpreting data. Behind digitization, there is the real-time access to data. Time is the issue, as quality of the data collected and analyzed.

Going digital is not a choice anymore

Digital transformation of a business industry results in one that uses technology from data analytics, or RPA's to AI, to enhance products and services, and ultimately all-in revenues. Alas, the execution of such a transformation can also come with additional challenges and issues for the private equity funds and the PE service companies. Managers should instill employees that going digital is a necessary component of future of the business. And going digital does not just mean replacing human by machines. It is about rethinking the whole business of the company but to question how to do things better. I remain convinced that at PE level, it is mainly a question of

cultural change(s). I still do not understand why a PE looks for a company to digitally transform while it does not digitalize its own management and business. That is the PE digital paradox they must change soon to survive.

Benefits of digitization of treasury

Automation of treasury processes for front-office activities enables PE's/RE's or fund servicers, for example, to enhance internal controls, to mitigate risks of frauds and cyber-risks, to improve customer experience, to reduce costs and to increase efficiency, while reducing human resources too. Digitization also helps enhancing bank connectivity (which is useful to preserve relationships with banks), improving reporting given higher data quality and formats, offering real-time visibility on all (consolidated) accounts and eventually opportunity to scale up the business easily and without additional human resources.

“This is the way” (The Mandalorian)

Financial advisers and services must fill the digital gap to remain competitive. The financial advice sector and alternative fund service industries are sometimes perceived as laggard on the digital journey. They are often attached to traditional ways of working. Digitization may play a huge role in reshaping this service industry business models. The speed of digital transformation is accelerating but not at the same speed in every industry. PE's and the service industries to alternative funds are behind corporates when it comes to digitalization. However, we know that it is difficult to achieve economies of scale without digitization. It remains a necessity and not a luxury. If we do not embrace digital shift to a greater extent, we will kill activities in the mid run. There are so many areas where digital can enhance the customer/user experience (UX). It helps meeting regulatory requirements on top of all advantages. Do not claim that there is for older customers a reluctance to use technology. Until COVID, many executives thought that ZOOM meetings with customers did not work, but now we know all it does, at least for existing relationships. Customers too have changed their behaviors and service model are changing or must change fast. For the COO's of such service companies or PE's, digitization should help determining the balance between modernizing overall services without compromising client satisfaction. Therefore, we believe it is time to accelerate digital business transformation to keep competitive advantages on peers.

VALÉRIE KOPÉRA
Vandenbulke

Why risk management is entering the mainstream business practice

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/valeriekopera
www.vdbl.com

WITH CONTRACT AND PERFORMANCE DISPUTES MORE LIKELY THAN EVER END UP IN COURT, VALÉRIE KOPÉRA, HEAD OF VANDENBULKE'S LITIGATION AND RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICE, SAYS IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING POTENTIAL LEGAL RISKS RIGHT FROM THE START OF CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS IS BECOMING CENTRAL TO COMPANIES' BUSINESS APPROACH.

What does risk management mean and what do its practitioners do?

Across our legal practice, risk management consists of identifying, assessing and dealing with the potential legal risks relating to matters as diverse as the content of a contract, the execution of corporate restructuring, or the establishment of a financial structure. It involves considering legal risks before they arise, assessing the likelihood of their occurrence, and minimising the impact if they do by anticipating remedies. The ability to understand and manage risks gives clients greater confidence in their business decisions and in assessing whether they are willing to take those risks, depending on their risk appetite. To give the clients informed and pragmatic advice, it is essential to have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their business. This implies maintaining a close relationship with the clients and almost becoming a business partner, sharing their commitment and success.

Why is risk management an essential practice in a business law firm?

Every area of business law is concerned by risk management – nothing is free from it. Identifying and

managing risk throughout the lifecycle of a contract is critical for any company. A contract of any nature, from shareholders' and share purchase agreements to commercial and financial contracts, includes fundamental clauses that must be considered carefully and negotiated by the parties to reach a provision that satisfies them both. Risk management arises not only when a contract is drafted but also in the negotiation phase, in which litigation lawyers that deal daily with court decisions have the experience to identify the risks to which their clients are exposed. An acute risk scrutiny from a litigation lawyer brings a new perspective to the review of contracts that are customarily negotiated by transactional lawyers. The experience acquired in handling complex cases in court also reinforces the prudential and critical approach of a business structure. Through a solid risk management practice, business law firms can meet the demands of clients that increasingly realise the needs for contract risk management strategies.

How do you see risk management practices evolving in the coming years?

With an increase in litigation relating to the performance of contracts and the fulfilment of commitments by business



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“Through a solid risk management practice, business law firms can meet the demands of clients that increasingly realise the needs for contract risk management strategies.”

VALÉRIE KOPÉRA,
VANDENBULKE

partners, clients have realised the strategic importance of contract management in achieving their business objectives. They want to avoid long and expensive legal proceedings and their hazards they can entail and to control risks at all costs. Whereas in the past litigation lawyers were consulted only when things went wrong, today the trend is to request their advice pre-emptively to anticipate risk and manage it better. In recent years we have seen a significant increase in preventive

consultations by clients before establishing a partnership or concluding a contract, and we are convinced this trend will intensify in the future, making risk management more than ever an essential facet of any project. Litigation lawyers will then be in the position of Chinese healers offering preventive remedies to their customers. Clients are more ready to pay for pre-emptive advice that protects the health of their business than for court expenses and damages that could affect their viability.

MARCEL LEYERS
BIL

Partner of the Luxembourgish Economy

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/bil
www.bil.com

“ONE OF OUR PRIORITIES IS THE PROTECTION OF OUR CLIENTS. THEY NEED A STRONG AND RELIABLE PARTNER IN A MORE AND MORE COMPLEX BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT,” SAYS MARCEL LEYERS, CEO OF BANQUE INTERNATIONALE À LUXEMBOURG (BIL). HE EXPLAINS THAT BIL CAN BE THAT PARTNER.

Can you describe your company in a few words?

Banque Internationale à Luxembourg (BIL) is a bank deeply rooted in Luxembourg and with international clients. Founded in 1856, we have been a strong partner for the Luxembourgish economy and for the people living in this region. We are connected to the positive development of Luxembourg and have a strong international business. We build bridges for our clients through our subsidiaries including BIL Manage Invest, BIL Lease and Belair House. Like Luxembourg, we embody the values, the rules and the solidity of Europe. One of our strengths is our support for entrepreneurs, in day-to-day business and in realizing opportunities and plans. This includes a 360-degree service, connecting private banking and wealth management services with corporate banking: An ideal solution for business owners and entrepreneurs.

What risks and challenges do you identify for your company and the competitiveness of Luxembourg?

Luxembourg has a long and successful history of adapting to changes and turning them around into sustainable business models. Luxembourg, and BIL, have shown substantial resilience even during the Covid pandemic. The past two years have helped us to fast-track digitalization and the way we work together. It is our obligation to continue these

developments and I feel both Luxembourg and BIL are on a good track. One of the key challenges for Luxembourg is rising inflation, especially in combination with shortages in the supply of necessary goods. This is a threat for many of our clients and we are all asked to support the Luxembourgish economy. Luxembourg will also need to attract more talent. We are not short of work here in this prosperous region.

Which financial trends do you identify and how are you adapting to them?

Our clients are facing a more and more complex world. This is true for our private banking clients as well as for our corporate clients. “Simple” solutions are an exception: Frequently we need to combine our teams of experts to find the best support for our clients. We need to focus on their needs and we need more specialists. While we see growing demand for digital services for standard banking transactions, we also need to develop tailor-made solutions to meet clients’ expectations for more complex projects such as loans, investments, etc. BIL has adapted to those needs in a very concerted way: We bring together experts to develop the best solution and the best service. Here we benefit from our internal bench strength as well as from our international capacities with offices in Luxembourg, Switzerland, Hongkong and Beijing.

““Simple” solutions are an exception: Frequently we need to combine our teams of experts to find the best support for our clients.”

MARCEL LEYERS,
BIL



BOGDAN GOGULAN
NewSpace Capital



Down-to-Earth Investments

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/fuchs2022
www.fuchsgroup.com

“WE HAVE LIFT-OFF.” THE SPIKING INTEREST IN SPACE TECHNOLOGY AND TRAVEL HAS COINCIDED WITH LUXEMBOURG’S ADOPTION OF RULES ALLOWING SPACE RESOURCES TO BE PRIVATELY OWNED. SPACE IS A HOT TOPIC AND NEWSPACE CAPITAL IS SEIZING THIS OPPORTUNITY TO INVEST IN DOWN-TO-EARTH COMPANIES THAT ARE DEVELOPING SPACE TECHNOLOGIES FOR WHICH THERE ARE USEFUL AND PROFITABLE APPLICATIONS ON EARTH.

Who is NewSpace Capital?

NewSpace Capital is a private equity firm based in Luxembourg that is identifying the potentially stellar investment opportunities offered by the growth in deep-tech, space companies. The space industry now spans multiple markets; has become integral to our everyday lives and is critical to the growth of the global economy. The technology in satellites orbiting our planet provides the essential space infrastructure for our communications, networking, imaging, weather monitoring and navigation to only name a few. The 60-year-old space industry has been significantly transformed in the last decade by cheaper access to space, the emergence of satellite platforms for lower earth orbit, the miniaturization of electronics, the changing regulatory environment and the booming demand for commercial and consumer applications. NewSpace Capital focuses on investing in technologies that are valuable to customers on Earth.

“Space holds the key to further digital transformation and is becoming a major positive element in the technological and economic transformation of our society.”

BOGDAN GOGULAN,
NEWSPACE CAPITAL

What attracted NewSpace Capital to Luxembourg?

Space holds the key to further digital development and is becoming a major contributor to the technological and economic transformation of our society. Luxembourg has led the way with its space law that came into effect on 1 January 2021. The Duchy is Europe’s first adopter of a legal and regulatory framework that provides the launchpad for space resources utilisation. Luxembourg is creating an ecosystem that benefits a broad range of space start-ups including private equity investors like NewSpace Capital which also benefits from the long-standing expertise of the country in the operations of satellites with the presence of SES, one of the worldwide leading operators of geostationary satellites.

What has been your experience of Luxembourg?

NewSpace Capital has the advantage of Fuchs Asset Management acting as its AIFM. FAM’s entrepreneurial spirit significantly helps our operations in Luxembourg. At the heart of Europe, the Duchy offers stability and a robust regulatory environment that is attractive to the establishment of innovative private equity funds. Luxembourg is certainly an expensive jurisdiction and imposes some administrative burdens that could be alleviated through the digitalization of processes, but the advantages greatly outweigh. The image of Luxembourg internationally is also very important for investors. The fact that Luxembourg is at the heart of Europe, home to the European Court of Justice and the European Investment Bank confirms that the right ecosystem is in place. International cooperation between Luxembourg and other countries plays an important role in the choice of jurisdiction too. Many countries look towards Luxembourg and the way it placed itself at the heart of the global space economy, so establishing our headquarters here was a very natural choice.

CHARLES DEGEN & CARLO COCUZZOLI
Cardif Lux Vie

Agility, the Key to the Transformation of the Life Insurance Sector

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/cardifluxvie2022
www.cardifluxvie.com

CARDIF LUX VIE IS CURRENTLY CARRYING OUT A PROFOUND TRANSFORMATION OF ITS MODEL BASED ON A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP CULTURE. INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES DEGEN, CHIEF DEVELOPMENT & LOCAL MARKET OFFICER AND CARLO COCUZZOLI, CHIEF WEALTH MANAGEMENT OFFICER.

Create value at all levels

In recent years, the expectations of partners and customers regarding life insurance have changed profoundly. Giving meaning to your investment while demanding flawless quality of service are at the heart of all concerns. "Our clients are indeed looking to invest differently. To illustrate the subject, for example, more and more of them are choosing investments that respect ESG criteria to support efforts related to the fight against global warming. Others have the will to move towards Private Equity investments in order to have a real impact on society. Customers also want to be able to have more fluid and digital journeys. To do this, we must demonstrate great agility by continuously adapting our offer and our tools to these new needs. Luxembourg life insurance is a platform of tailor-made solutions that cannot be found anywhere else. Our mission is to make it more accessible, in particular by forging lasting partnerships with all the players in our ecosystem, by digitizing our journeys and by developing our product and service offers," explains Charles Degen.

Digitize your journeys

Aware of the technological challenge it had to face, Cardif

Lux Vie has greatly accelerated its digital transformation over the past two years. The entire value chain has been redesigned. To carry out this major collective project, the company relies, in particular, on several "Digital Squads" directly attached to the wealth management business. The members of these teams work in a "Tribe" that is an agile way adapting to the needs identified and sprints organized to achieve rapid deliveries. "Our priority is to simplify and sustainably streamline the journey of our customers and partners. For this, we have just deployed a 100% digital interface with electronic signatures and uploading of documents online. It will gradually be available for all management activities, in all of our geographies and in all of our market segments. We also ensure the standardization and harmonization of data exchanges with our partners. The Penelop standard that exists on the French market and that we are in the process of deploying to a large number of our partners, makes it possible to significantly reinforce this homogeneity. Working with FinTechs is also essential. The current work for the implementation of APIs in the coming months will allow us to offer innovative, flexible and secure solutions that perfectly meet the needs,



organizations and systems of our partners," explains Carlo Cocuzzoli.

Be close to the market

One of Cardif Lux Vie's strengths resides in a culture of unique partnership and this can be seen in all the distribution markets in which the company operates. "We rely on our know-how to develop high-quality partnerships, to provide support, solutions and optimal quality of service," emphasizes Carlo Cocuzzoli. Until now, insurance solutions were partly based on guaranteed rates and a logic of capital available at any time. Our sector is currently facing an environment of lasting low interest rates. Faced with this, the Company's ability to offer complete wealth and estate structuring solutions, with a modern and flexible investment offer, makes all the difference. Cardif Lux Vie has thus expanded its unit-linked offering by carrying out significant work on media such as the Specialized Insurance Fund (country of residence, universe of assets, target customers, etc.) or thematic Collective Internal Funds (CSR, real estate, protected capital, etc.). Finally, we put all our expertise into making asset classes such as ETFs,

"We have just deployed a 100% digital interface with electronic signatures and online document upload."

CARLO COCUZZOLI,
CARDIF LUX VIE

private equity, real estate or private debt more accessible. "To make these adaptations quickly concrete, our agility translates into a state of mind open to change, a great sense of listening, and cross-functional mobilization to offer a very good time to market," concludes Charles Degen.

TAMAS MARK
IQ-EQ

The real estate funds' gatekeeper

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/tamasmark
www.iqeq.com

"OUR PROMINENT POSITION IN THE GLOBAL FUND ADMINISTRATION ECOSYSTEM IS PUTTING DATA AT THE CENTRE OF IQ-EQ'S SERVICING MODEL," SAYS TAMAS MARK, HEAD OF REAL ESTATE FOR IQ-EQ LUXEMBOURG. IN THE INTERVIEW, HE SHARED WITH US NEW CHALLENGES THAT REAL ESTATE FUNDS ARE FACING AFTER THE PANDEMIC, HOW IQ-EQ IS ADAPTING, AND HOW HE SEES THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY.

What are the main trends in real estate at the moment?

The amount of dry powder on the market remains very high. So, when an attractive asset presents itself, investors are very keen to allocate their capital to it. Predictably, this results in fierce competition and brings down yields. As a result, and despite the pandemic, real estate remains, on the whole, expensive. When we talk about real estate these days, we cannot avoid mentioning the current buzz word: ESG. ESG considerations are now having an impact across all levels in a real estate structure. This is perhaps no surprise when you consider that, based on available data, ESG-compliant funds are already generating higher returns than non-ESG-compliant ones, and investors expect even higher ROI over the five or six years to come. Covid-19 has definitely accelerated this, too. Nevertheless, the high carbon footprints of buildings – in terms of construction and energy consumption – is clearly an issue for the industry. A question remains to be answered: how can the decarbonising of existing buildings be reflected in valuations? Lowering the carbon footprint of real estate as



"ESG-compliant funds are already generating higher returns than non-ESG-compliant ones."

TAMAS MARK,
IQ-EQ

an asset class will be key for the coming years. It is a positive and welcome move from the regulators that new rules and reporting requirements are being implemented to boost environmentally compliant investments.

How is IQ-EQ adapting to this evolution?

The rise of ESG investing, and the regulatory changes this brings, require new skillsets. The variety of structures, investor requirements and regulations are becoming more and more complex. Besides our core services, we act as

gatekeepers for our clients. Our duty is to remain up-to-date and proactively help clients to tackle the challenges they face and meet all regulatory obligations. Our prominent position in the global fund administration ecosystem, in touch with all of the key players in the market, is putting data at the centre of IQ-EQ's servicing model. We are constantly expanding our service lines, developing new products, training our people and implementing new technology-enabled solutions. For instance, we have IQ-EQ Cosmos, which provides analysis

and visualisation of live investment data across multiple asset classes, so that our clients receive relevant, consolidated data on their assets' performance 24/7 and are well-equipped to make informed investment decisions. More recently we've also launched IQ-EQ Compass, an integrated service offering that simplifies ESG compliance with ESG health checks, reputational assessments, policy drafting and reporting.

It is essential for fund administrators to continuously invest in their technology. Our world is evolving fast and we can only keep up with the trends, work efficiently and meet LP and GP demands if we invest in state-of-the-art solutions. To give you an example, the onboarding of 40 investors in a fund should not take twice as much time as the onboarding of 20. To achieve this, we needed to develop our own solution.

How do you see the real estate asset classes evolving in the future?

I am very positive about real estate and its future. We see for example that large family offices and pension funds are allocating a higher portion of their portfolio to real estate. If the pandemic has shown us anything, it's that buildings play a vital role in our social life. Offices, for example, are now seen as a place where people can interact in real life, exchange opinions and have creative discussions. Beside the social aspects, the environmental impact of buildings will be at the centre of investors' attention. Decarbonisation of buildings will create some challenges for owners. Buildings that were built decades ago will become unattractive for investors if their refurbishment to comply with ESG criteria is seen as too complex and expensive.

The elephant in the room is the retail sector. The growth of online retail and the evolution of consumers' habits has resulted in a challenging environment for 'bricks and mortar' retailers. However, the development of new, safe and attractive architecture combined with dynamic product/service offerings are maintaining the appeal of the sector.

Let's not forget the core role that bustling central markets played in ancient economies and societies: a place for people to meet. That's what real estate will continue to represent.

NABIL BRIGHET, DAMIEN GIRET AND ROMAIN GRILLET
 BearingPoint

The Client Lifecycle, a stake of Operational Effectiveness and Commercial Efficiency

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/bearingpoint2022
www.bearingpoint.com

NABIL BRIGHET, MANAGER – LUXEMBOURG, DAMIEN GIRET AND ROMAIN GRILLET, SENIOR CONSULTANTS – SWITZERLAND AT BEARINGPOINT (BANKING & CAPITAL MARKETS), REVEAL THE RESULTS OF THEIR STUDY INTO THE SEARCH FOR EFFICIENCY IN THE CLIENT LIFECYCLE.

What is “Client Lifecycle” and why is it so important for banking institutions?

Client Lifecycle Management (CLM) is the set of processes that are related to the cycle of a business relationship. The cycle starts at the account’s opening, ends at the account’s closure and includes all the actions taken in the meantime such as periodic reviews and change in circumstances. These processes are centric to the client experience, and they capture the reputational and regulatory risks faced by all financial institutions. In addition, they mobilize up to 30% of full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) continuously within the Client Management & Compliance departments, and with a varying intensity in the Front Office teams. By optimizing these processes, private banking players want to improve client satisfaction and free up commercial time. This is the last big step in the industrialization of this industry.

What are the issues?

Take a player in the private banking industry, with several bookings and sustaining tens of thousands of business relationships. The main challenges revolve around the continuous collection and processing of a very large amount of client’s data and documents. Contrary to popular belief, client onboarding represents a volume of activity that is not very intense and diffuse, because it is spread over a large



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Damien Giret and Romain Grillet

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population of wealth managers. This is despite the 350 to 600 data which are collected – including around 100 relating to regulatory aspects (MiFID) – in addition to the 15 to 25 documents collected when opening an account in the simple case of a natural person. The periodic review represents a much higher volume of activity with the processing of tens of thousands of KYC files per year. Finally, the workflow related to change in circumstances remains by far the most dense and constant of all, as it involves hundreds of thousands of events per year. Growing regulatory requirements, to which are added ever more extensive client centric requirements, will increase the volume of information to be collected and processed.

So what answers are banking institutions currently providing?

Many banking players have undertaken projects, such as the implementation of CLM solutions, that simplifies processes and which will ultimately involve the client through self-care. Robots coupled with AI are also applied to automate certain tasks, such as the reading and analysis of results related to the screening activity. Finally, several actors are investing to further digitalize workflows, ranging from the dematerialization of documentation to the deployment of the client’s electronic signature. Although these solutions lead to productivity gains, they are not sufficient to achieve the necessary quality that is

“By optimizing the life of accounts, private banking players want to improve client satisfaction and free up commercial time.”

needed to move towards “first time right” on standard KYC files. With this point in mind, our study has highlighted that the most important efficiency leverage is a greater accountability and an increase in skills of the Front Office. Amongst heritage, innovation and changing client needs, the search for efficiency in the processes linked to the lifecycle of the accounts, leads players to revert to the fundamental concepts of private banking, namely, building a long-term and high-quality relationship while guaranteeing an excellent service.

MATTHIAS GUTKNECHT,
PHILIP CHRIST,
GABI ROEDER-ILLIES
Prime Alliance Consulting Group

Acquisition of ILBA Fiduciaire: First Mover Advantage

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/andersen
<https://lu.andersen.com>



Philip Christ, Gabi Roeder-Illies and Matthias Gutknecht.

LONG-STANDING COOPERATION BETWEEN PRIME ALLIANCE CONSULTING (THE PARENT OF ANDERSEN TAX S.À.R.L. AND PADDOCK CORPORATE SERVICES S.A.) AND ILBA FIDUCIAIRE S.À.R.L. HAS BEEN FORMALIZED WITH THE ACQUISITION OF THE ECHTERNACH-BASED TAX AND ACCOUNTING SPECIALISTS THAT, WITH ITS GERMAN-SPEAKING CLIENT BASE, EXPANDS PRIME ALLIANCE'S ACCESS TO NEW INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.

How was the idea of acquiring ILBA Fiduciaire S.à.r.l. born?

Matthias Gutknecht, Partner and Office Managing Director at Andersen Tax S.à.r.l., says there was already an enduring relationship between the partners of the firms with a history of cooperation on dealings with individual clients. "We saw integrating ILBA as an opportunity to access a team of highly-qualified and motivated specialists. It allows us to take the next step to position ourselves in the Luxembourg market. We are very pleased to have found in Gabi a new partner in our organization. It will help drive our efforts to increase diversity, both with regard to governance and service offering. It's a win-win situation: it provides us with an additional location outside Luxembourg-City while reinforcing the team to serve German-speaking clients and granting access to a worldwide network and expertise in international transactions."

What will the benefits of this new collaboration be for your clients?

Philip Christ, Partner and Head of Corporate Services at Paddock Corporate Services S.A. says that the integration of ILBA will allow clients to benefit from the broad array of

expertise building up under the roof of Prime Alliance Consulting Group. "It will lead to the optimization and harmonization of client processes and the creation of synergies that will benefit each member of the expanded group." He adds that the acquisition will strengthen Prime Alliance's local market presence by offering accounting and tax services to small, medium and large size enterprises and private individuals in both Luxembourg and Germany.

What new types of services are your clients accessing?

From the effective date of the new relationship, on New Year's Day next year, Gabi Roeder-Illies, Founder and Managing Partner of ILBA Fiduciaire S.à.r.l. says, "Clients will recognize the familiar and personal interactions that are the confirmation of many years of diligent work rendering high-quality services to our clients. But they will also feel the advantages of the new flexibility of action of the new unit as they gain access to the expertise and international network of Andersen and Paddock Corporate Services." In particular, the acquisition will allow for the extension of payroll-related services and additional expertise in serving commercial clients and individuals.

"It's a win-win situation: it provides us with an additional location outside Luxembourg-City while reinforcing the team to serve German-speaking clients and granting access to worldwide network and expertise in international transactions."

MURJEL BREEDVELD JAGESSER
& ZUZANNA ZIELINSKA-ROUSSEAU
ZEDRA

A helping hand for hands-on, high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs)

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/zedra2022
www.zedra.com

ACCORDING TO THE TOP 2 FEMALE DIRECTORS OF ZEDRA LUXEMBOURG, MURJEL BREEDVELD JAGESSER, CLIENT DIRECTOR AND ZUZANNA ZIELINSKA-ROUSSEAU, DIRECTOR TRUST SERVICES, SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS SEEK A HANDS-ON APPROACH TO MANAGING THEIR MULTIFACETED WEALTH. HOWEVER, ADDRESSING DIVERGENT, INTERGENERATIONAL ATTITUDES IN WEALTHY FAMILIES REQUIRES A SENSITIVE BALANCE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND INNOVATIVE SERVICING REQUIREMENTS AND CONVENTIONAL AND MORE SOCIALLY AWARE INVESTMENT STRATEGIES.



Can you describe ZEDRA's contribution to the family office environment?

Murjel Breedveld Jagesser (MBJ): The last decade has seen a global explosion of wealth with much of it arising from starting and running successful family businesses. Entrepreneurs' hands-on approach to managing their businesses has translated into their desire to oversee their wealth directly through family offices. A growing number of them have turned to ZEDRA, which offers a centralised holistic approach, bespoke services combined with personal care and financial expertise. ZEDRA's innovative and flexible approach to address the dynamic and rapidly changing economic and regulatory environment, helps families adapt quickly. ZEDRA have the full experience and expertise to tailor their assistance and services to meet both family and business needs.

What challenges do intergenerational wealth transfers pose and how are they being addressed?

Zuzanna Zielinska-Rousseau (ZZR): The global wealth management market is changing, as are the ways in which different generations approach investments, as well as the strategies by which wealth is managed. It is a challenge to ensure that while ZEDRA continue to service more traditional clients, ZEDRA also ensure the



Zuzanna Zielinska-Rousseau and Murjel Breedveld Jagesser.

“HNWIs have turned to ZEDRA, which offers a centralised holistic approach, bespoke services combined with personal care and financial expertise.”

MURJEL BREEDVELD JAGESSER,
ZEDRA

engagement of the younger generation. ZEDRA achieves this by providing digital tools to develop an engaging and innovative client experience that reinforces the strength of long-standing client relationships. To better engage with and retain future generations as clients, ZEDRA ensures

that they fully understand the dynamics of the family. Solving the intergenerational puzzle is not just about catering to different client needs; it is also about flexible communication styles.

What investment trends do you identify among family-owned businesses?

MBJ: Families with entrepreneurial roots are drawn to the versatility and potential profitability of special-purpose acquisition companies (SPACs). Many family businesses have also enjoyed a profitable relationship with cryptocurrencies, which they see as a good investment opportunity. ZEDRA have also seen an increase in interest in sustainable and impactful investing, particularly among family businesses undergoing intergenerational leadership. **ZZR:** Families are gearing up to deploy their capital among eco-conscious businesses tackling critical social and environmental challenges, with the top sustainable investment theme being climate change. We also observe that geopolitical context has an influence on their priorities in terms of investment. From an impact and investment perspective, technology and digital platforms represent a fundamental part of the business landscape. The growing demand for diversity is resulting in wealthy investors becoming increasingly appealed by ethnically and female-led funds.

ERIC CHINCHON
mebs

Governance in Times of Crisis

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www.duke.lu/mebs2022
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ACCORDING TO ERIC CHINCHON, FOUNDING PARTNER OF MEBS, "THE SALVATION OF A COMPANY IN TIMES OF CRISIS PRIMARILY DEPENDS ON THE HUMAN FACTOR." IN THIS INTERVIEW, HE DETAILS HOW TO ANTICIPATE THE RISK OF A CRISIS AS WELL AS THE ADVANTAGE OF HAVING AN INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR IN SUCH A SITUATION.

What are the challenges of good governance in times of crisis?

Basically, the stakes do not differ much from everyday life. The principles governing the split of roles and responsibilities between executive and non-executive functions remain. The board must continue to focus on the long-term strategy – and to prepare crisis exit, whilst management fulfills day-to-day responsibilities and aims to implement the strategy to meet the set objectives. That being said, the necessity of an independent director demonstrates its full importance when a company faces adversity and structurally critical decisions must be taken quickly. In times of crisis, the management environment is turned upside down by the sheer scale and speed of information flying around (sometimes contradictory). As challenges multiply, the board is under more pressure to make quick decisions. The risk of loss increases drastically, often fueled by emotional biases which can significantly alter the judgement of governing bodies. The independence of a director becomes then the added value necessary to make objective short- and long-term decisions, risk-adjusted in the best interests of shareholders.



“The multicultural vision of a professional independent director truly becomes invaluable in times of crisis.”

ERIC CHINCHON,
MEBS

ensure its human capital is committed to efficient execution of procedures. Building, spreading and accepting corporate culture is key; same applies to ongoing training and knowledge of one’s staff. In this context, a clear leadership from governing bodies will further its compliance by the teams.

In this context, what are the advantages of using an independent governance body?

I see three main advantages, namely objectivity, regulatory know-how and experience. First, in terms of objectivity, an independent director is, by definition, free of any executive roles and possible conflicts of interests. In its purest form, the mandate of an independent director is to act as an insurance policy at board level for shareholders. Second, given that in times of crisis, compliance standards evolve rapidly (sometimes through texts which are difficult to interpret), an independent governance structure like mebs can offer clients real-time transparency on the evolution of regulations and provide tailor made solutions to mitigate new risks. Finally, a professional independent director is exposed to multiple mandates and therefore to various business strategies. He/she can provide a helicopter view on the ins and outs of sometimes radically different strategies to deal with a crisis. Thanks to an intrinsic understanding of current market practices, he/she can leverage his/her “know how” to promote the most appropriate solutions for each governing body and organization. The multicultural vision of a professional independent director truly becomes invaluable in times of crisis. Confucius summed it up very well: “Experience is a lantern that you carry on your back and that only illuminates the path taken.”

How do you anticipate this type of risk before hand?

We cannot always predict the scope and magnitude of the challenges we will face. Therefore, governing bodies must remain flexible, agile and adaptable, and implement a clear, shared and understood crisis management framework. Such a framework will facilitate (as much as possible) rapid and informed decision-making, ensure control and monitoring of decisions so as to adapt them if required, and optimal internal and external communication. Implemented strategies must be expressed through relevant and recognized leadership. Risk anticipation also entails solid, transparent procedures that are adhered to across the organization (including business continuity plan). Their regular (stress) testing and evaluation is thus critical to ensure their robustness. Governance bodies should detect and analyze signals that could announce a crisis. Lastly, an organization must



WOLFGANG SCHMID, CHRISTOPH LUDWIG,
WERNER HUMPERT AND DR. MANFRED BEINHAUER
Prime Capital

Building on specialisation in private market strategies

AS PRIVATE MARKETS AND SPECIFICALLY PRIVATE DEBT PRODUCTS ARE BOOMING, PRIME AIFM LUX HAS CARVED OUT A SPECIALIST ROLE SERVING MANAGERS OF INNOVATIVE AND BESPOKE STRATEGIES WITH AN EXPERTISE – AND PARTNERSHIP WITH GERMAN ALTERNATIVE ASSET MANAGER PRIME CAPITAL – THAT BIGGER PLAYERS STRUGGLE TO MATCH.

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/primecapital
<https://primecapital-ag.com>

“We offer genuine expertise in private debt, including real estate and infrastructure debt and corporate direct lending.”

What is Prime Capital's background in the alternative investment sector and in Luxembourg?

Prime AIFM Lux is a fund management service provider specialising in private markets. A subsidiary of German alternative fund manager Prime Capital AG, it is part of a privately-owned group with around 110 staff in Frankfurt and Luxembourg, a track record of more than 15 years, and currently €4.1bn in assets under management, plus €6.9bn under administration for the AIFM. Established in 2016, the Luxembourg firm manages a range of multi-compartment structures and offers fund solutions to asset managers and their clients. Prime AIFM Lux also manages Luxembourg securitisation entities holding more than €2bn in multi-compartment companies as well as providing tailored securitisation. In recent years we have focused particularly on private debt, including corporate, infrastructure, real estate and aviation lending. We serve European institutional investors in alternatives such as insurance companies and pension funds, especially from German-speaking countries, who draw on our structuring expertise and deep understanding of regulatory, legal and tax requirements. As an AIFM, we also offer additional in-house services including advice, structuring and valuation to third-party managers.

How do you view the market outlook for AIFM services?

There are many large AIFMs serving managers that deal with all liquid and illiquid asset classes, but they lack the focus and specialisation required with private market strategies, especially for emerging managers. Meanwhile, the small and medium-sized AIFMs that do claim to specialise in alternative investments in fact mostly focus on private equity and real estate investment, which are asset classes with multiple players and relatively standardised processes. By contrast, Prime AIFM Lux is an independent provider that offers genuine expertise in private debt, including real estate and infrastructure debt and corporate direct lending. This focus is increasingly important given the dynamic development and innovation of the private debt business in terms of strategies and structures. This is a key factor in our rapid development over the past six years, which is enabling us to expand our client base as the market expands.

How have you responded to the market's evolution?

Over the past few years, we have broadened our offerings in private markets to cover new private debt sub-asset classes, notably including real estate whole loan, senior and junior strategies. In partnership with our German-based parent, for example, we have established a new fund platform for Private Market investments, incorporating a range of sub-funds whose portfolio management is outsourced either to third party managers or to Prime Capital AG. Supporting and co-operating with third-party managers in designing and managing their product has therefore become a well understood process within Prime AIFM. This structure illustrates the separate but complementary services of Prime Capital and of the Luxembourg AIFM, offering third party managers our experience in structuring and investment process solutions for different asset classes. We've also created a sustainability team to advise managers on SFDR implementation and requirements, and positioning investment strategies for investors.

WOMEN'S CYBER FORCE

Tackling Growing Cybercrime with Increased Diversity

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/womencyberforce
www.womencyberforce.lu

JELENA ZELENOVIC MATONE, PRESIDENT OF THE WOMEN'S CYBER FORCE DESCRIBES HOW THE GENDER IMBALANCE HAS PROMPTED WOMEN TO WORK FOR GREATER DIVERSITY IN THE CYBERSECURITY WORKFORCE. SHE ADDS THAT INCREASED CYBER THREATS, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE ARRIVAL OF COVID-19, REQUIRES INCREASED VIGILANCE AND GROWING INVESTMENT IN CYBERSECURITY AND CYBER PROFESSIONALS.

Can you describe the Women's Cyber Force in a few words?

The gender imbalance and pay grade variance in cybersecurity is evident across the globe – no less so in Luxembourg. WCF aims to bridge the social and economic gaps this causes. Women's Cyber Force brings together cybersecurity professionals, of different nationalities, education and backgrounds, who want to raise their voices, inspire and help future generations to better understand the importance of women in cybersecurity. We are setting the ambitious but also urgent goal of leveraging the role of girls and women in this sector and supporting their choice of careers in ICT. WCF wants to create durable career choices for women by mentoring and empowering; keeping a network of work opportunities within the field and by helping each other. This motivates us to continue mounting our campaigns and addressing awareness of the important issue: diversity in cybersecurity.



“We are setting the ambitious but also urgent goal of leveraging the role of girls and women in this sector and supporting their choice of careers in ICT.”

JELENA ZELENOVIC,
 WOMEN CYBER FORCE

With cybercriminals evading most companies' defenses, are hackers ahead of the technological game?

The Internet has grown so much that it attracts hackers to all parts of life who explore new possibilities and play with “mere mortals.” Hackers use their knowledge, unauthorized or illegal methods to find loopholes to harm people or organizations for financial, reputational purposes or even simply for fun. As the jobs of CISOs are to prevent such attacks, the jobs of hackers are to try to stay a step

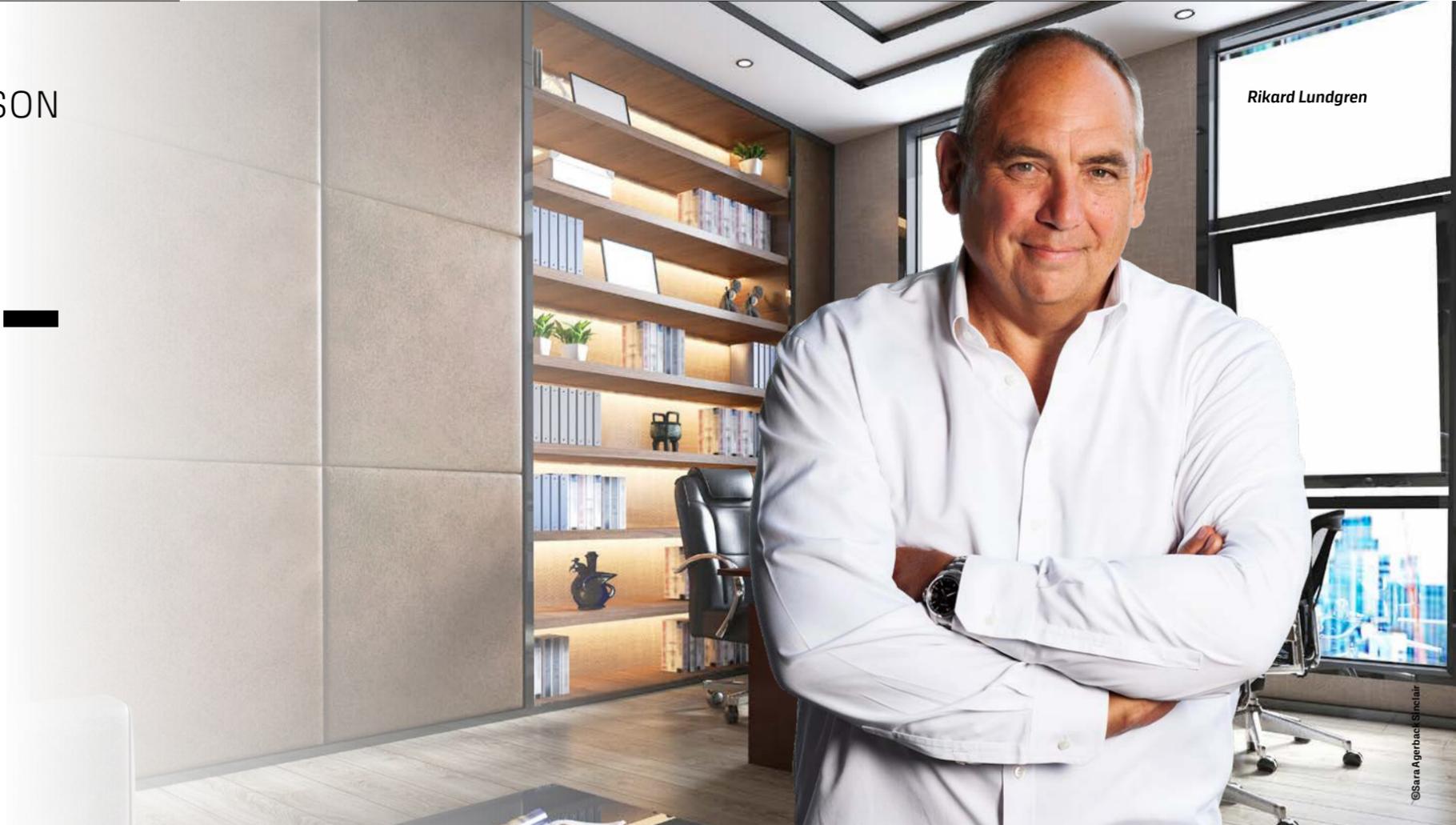
ahead and exploit the vulnerable areas. Given rapid advances in technology, we might still be lagging. With Covid-19, threats multiplied and diversified. These attackers have no limits; they attack hospitals and other organizations critical for society. We, therefore, need more practitioners in our field.

Regardless of the size of a company, what would you recommend to CEOs to create a safe IT setup?
 Cybersecurity is not a one-stop solution or product. If you

want to be completely bulletproof, then unplug yourself from the Internet. But we can't function without it so, CEOs must proactively engage be aware of diverse threats; learn the terms and cyber lingo like doxing, DDoS, hackers, phishing, etc. and invest in cybersecurity. This includes not just training sessions but the need to build a strong HR infrastructure in IT to nurture the human capital in this high-risk area. CEOs should understand that in our field the status quo is not an option – not for the company and not for the cyber human capital they employ.

RIKARD LUNDGREN AND HÅKAN KARLSSON

Liquidity Mismatch Risk – The Fund Treasurer's dilemma



MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/steendier2022
www.steendier.com

“REGULATORS ACROSS ALL MAJOR FINANCIAL CENTERS ARE FOCUSING ON FINDING STRUCTURAL REMEDIES TO LIQUIDITY MISMATCH RISK (LMR)” SAY RIKARD LUNDGREN, INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR AND OWNER OF STEENDIER, AND HÅKAN KARLSSON, CONSULTANT AND ADVISOR TO THE UK FUND MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY.

LMR Definition: The risk that a fund is unable to sell assets or otherwise generate sufficient cash to satisfy the Fund's obligations, especially the settlement of investor redemption requests.

Why LMR matters

Private savings, managed in collective funds, are increasingly needed to compensate for shortfalls in public pensions, education and health care. The shrinking role of banks in financing for SMEs means Corporate Bond markets need to grow. Funds are a doubly important part of the societal contract. If funds fail to give investors access to their money as promised, confidence could be compromised. Several recent scandals illustrate this. The Woodford funds scandal in the UK has high-lighted the role (and short-comings) of fund service providers. The FCA has conducted an industry-wide review of oversight,

governance and resourcing with a particular focus on the role and responsibility of third-party AFMs. The review highlighted significant shortcomings and the FCA signaled that more and tighter rules for the fund industry will follow. EU regulators have launched similar reviews. Before describing an alternative solution, we need to distinguish between two fundamentally different reasons for why a fund gets into a liquidity crisis.

Dishonest by Design

Some fund have a product design with liquidity mismatch built in. To attract investors, some funds promise investors easy access to their capital on short notice. Some of these funds hold investments that cannot be turned into cash until some time long into the future. But they may still promise investors quick, even daily, access to cash. In any but the most benign market such promise is clearly

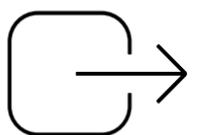
misleading as the main source of cash may be new investor subscriptions. Funds with such a design should be not be allowed to operate without either changing their redemption promise to reflect the liquidity of their assets or change the content of their portfolios. Swing pricing, Anti-Dilution Levies or other like mechanisms will not change the fact that some fund are dishonest in their very design.

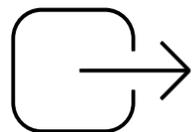
Screwed by markets

Some funds are investing in assets that are mostly liquid but then turn illiquid during market disruptions. The corporate bond market is a good example of this. In the world's second largest fund center, Luxembourg, UCITS fund governance has taken big steps to identify, reduce, measure, monitor and manage liquidity mismatches. With rules and guidance provided by the local regulator, the CSSF, based on the ESSMA recommendations, the work of turning out policies, procedures, analytical tools, reports etc. has been led by the larger local 3rd party AIFM. The methods and tools created are well suited to such highly liquid, listed assets eligible to UCITS funds. These mechanisms are not suited to capture the more

“In the past 40 years, every financial crisis has created different and unpredicted liquidity disruptions in corporate bond markets.”

RIKARD LUNDGREN,
 STEENDIER





Liquidity Mismatch Risk – The Fund Treasurer’s dilemma

unpredictable changes in liquidity of some alternative assets, such as corporate bonds. In addition to shifts in issuer credit performance there is often idiosyncratic risk on individual bond issues and on market participant behavior. When these all move in distressed market conditions, the consequences for the possibility to liquidate a portfolio of corporate bonds can be dramatic. In the past 40 years, every financial crisis has created different and unpredicted liquidity disruptions in corporate bond markets. The scenario-based liquidity risk models based on historical price data are therefore often inadequate predictors of liquidity in a future crisis. There

are just too many “unknown unknowns” in corporate bond markets.

The Fund Treasurer function

When uncertainty and unpredictability is high, there is no good substitute for human experience and judgement. The investment manager is best positioned to assess the real liquidity of a portfolio. But how can investors be sure that their interest to keep the portfolio liquid enough so they can have the access to cash they have been promised is not compromised by the conflicting interest of the investment manager to keep investors’ capital in the fund?

Håkan Karlsson



“How can investors be sure that their interest to keep the portfolio liquid enough is not compromised by the conflicting interest of the investment manager to keep investors’ capital in his fund?”

HÅKAN KARLSSON,
CONSULTANT AND ADVISOR TO THE UK FUND
MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY

A fund Treasurer’s primary task is to manage the balance between the actual liquidity of his assets and the promise to investors to get access to cash. If market liquidity changes, the Treasurer may need to change his portfolio. The same goes if he has reason to believe that investors will ask for more cash. Balancing the two is a dynamic process with one eye on the markets and the other on investors.

Such a Fund Treasurer needs to have sufficient competence, appropriate authority and backing by a set of rules/guidelines and reporting lines. With such a Fund Treasurer function, the problem of liquidity mismatch could in all likelihood be significantly reduced even if market liquidity behaves unpredictably. The best defense against changing market dynamics, is a human brain with good judgement and skin in the game. So how could this Fund Treasurer function be created and made to work?

The How

By introducing a mandatory designated Fund Treasurer function, inspired by the RC/MLRO mandatory function within funds’ AML & CFT governance. A Fund Treasurer function would be a designated and regulator approved person with focus on the fund’s assets and liabilities matching.

The Fund Treasurer can organisationally belong to the AIFM/AFM, be an Independent specialist or a member of

staff of the Investment Manager. The individual will be responsible for the ongoing analysis of both assets and liabilities, ie investors and would ensure that there are regular and appropriate updates and reports to the Fund Board and to the regulator. In times of market disruption or deteriorating portfolio liquidity, the Fund Treasurer would give input to the Board regarding possible actions such as gating etc. As with an RC/MLRO there could also be an escalation possibility for the Fund Treasurer to the regulator for exceptional situations.

The Fund Treasurer will be responsible for liquidity management policies and procedures that are adapted to the fund’s investment strategy and portfolio composition. The Fund Board may also need to be strengthened. At least one Independent Director should have adequate experience and expertise to question the Treasurer’s liquidity management proposals, policies and management.

Finally, disclosure to investors need to be improved. Those marketing a fund must explain more clearly the potential impact of low liquidity in the market on an investor’s ability (and cost) to redeem fund holdings. Such information should describe any tools and mechanisms available to the fund in certain market conditions to manage liquidity, e.g. gating/suspension, swing pricing and anti-dilution Levies.

Final remarks

For funds, such as UCITS, who are only invested in highly liquid assets, the new liquidity risk framework, as formulated by Luxembourg AIFMs, is a good approach. This could be used by other jurisdictions. Liquidity Mismatch Risk should get the same attention in professional training, regulatory guidelines, licensing processes, sanctions etc as AML/CFT has.

The role of the independent Director for ensuring proper LMR management cannot be enough emphasized. The Independent Director is best placed to, together with a dedicated Fund Treasurer, raise concerns about potential mismatch risk in a portfolio and ensure that such issues are dealt with in line with certain principles such as the Prudent Person principle and the fair and equal treatment of investors, even during severe market disruptions.

ERNEST FREYLINGER
Human Capital Focus

The Importance of Being (not too!) Earnest

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/humancapitalfocus
www.hc-focus.com

AT THE HEAD OF HUMAN CAPITAL FOCUS FOR TWO DECADES, ERNEST FREYLINGER HELPS COMPANIES TO CREATE TAILOR-MADE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS, WHILE ALSO INSPIRING PEOPLE OF VARIOUS PROFILES THROUGH HIS COMMITTED COACHING!

A rock and roll character

Passionate about vintage cars, music and sailing, Ernest also loved dancing and practiced acrobatic rock and roll, Latin and Standard dances, but also Argentine tango at a competitive level. He launched himself with the same passion into Human Resources, where he still appreciates the exchanges necessary to attract, train, motivate, develop and ultimately inspire. During his career he officiated at Auchan, Kühne & Nagel, Sodexo. During a karting session with colleagues, he had difficulty applying the brakes. A little later, during walks, he gradually found himself at the back of the group. The diagnosis of multiple sclerosis changed his life. In the same year, 2003, he joined the company "Human Capital Focus."

Praise of logistics

With his direct style, Ernest does not beat around the bush. To those who ask him if the disease has any positive aspects, he replies bluntly: "I have been living in a form of confinement for twelve years." Receiving friends at home, going shopping, going for a walk, a professional meeting, even the smallest project involves heavy organization and logistics. Nothing positive, but nothing negative either. "In life you always have a choice: you just have to want to see it. I could have ordered 365 bottles of

wine in the first year, closed the shutters, live in seclusion and seen how things change every day. Or I had the choice to observe and analyze what I could bring and achieve on my scale." A few decades later, Human Capital Focus celebrates its 20th anniversary. Ernest keeps the same energy, the same passion to share his skills and desires intact. "I think a lot of people understand the lessons from my story – that setting our goals in life don't mean that the path is clear. We have to constantly make adjustments, while continuing to move forward."

20 years

NLP, graphology, hypnosis, neurosciences, business strategy, psychology. To remain effective in the field of human resources, Ernest and his team are constantly training in the techniques that can help them accomplish their mission. "Recruitment and training in Luxembourg are becoming critical issues within companies. When people come to see us, they are looking for a salary. We help them to re-motivate themselves in order to find a passion beyond a simple function!" But Ernest defines himself above all as a man on the ground: "What gives me the most pleasure is meeting people who have taken our courses and who have found their professional vocation."

"What gives me the most pleasure is meeting people who have taken our courses and who have found their professional vocation."

ERNEST FREYLINGER,
HUMAN CAPITAL FOCUS



ALINE MULLER
LISER

Supporting societal transformations with its socio-economic players and citizens

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/liser
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"WE CAN REALLY CLAIM TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF RESEARCH AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL TO IMPROVE THE WELL-BEING OF POPULATIONS," SAYS ALINE MULLER, CEO OF THE LUXEMBOURG INSTITUTE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESEARCH (LISER). EXPLANATIONS.

Tell us about your background in a few words

After a doctorate in international finance at the University of Maastricht almost twenty years ago, I had an academic career at universities in the Netherlands, Belgium and finally here in Luxembourg. My area of specialization and my commitment to university development cooperation very quickly emphasized the international character of my career. This led me to spend most of my time outside Europe. Very early on I had the chance to be involved in the strategic development of research management. Above all I worked in close collaboration with very inspiring figures driven by a desire to make institutions evolve. Throughout my career, I have been educated, trained. I have grown to become an instrument for the blossoming and promotion of research: Blossoming to create the conditions for the development of researchers; blossoming to allow research to have the means to push back the frontiers of our knowledge. I have helped contribute to the tenfold increase in the impact research has had on society through innovations that enrich its transformation.

"Luxembourg offers us a particularly rich field of observation in the heart of Europe."

ALINE MULLER,
LISER



How do you define LISER's missions?

LISER's mission focuses on the development and promotion of fundamental and applied research in the social sciences. It aims to meet societal challenges and provide tangible and concrete answers to meet the social and economic needs of our society. LISER seeks to contribute to sustainable socio-economic development based on knowledge, but it does not wish to do so in isolation, locked in an ivory tower. We are convinced that the transformations of society must be co-created with society's citizens and actors. By collecting, analyzing and exploiting information provided by our fellow citizens we aspire to improve the quality of life of the population and to support society in its evolution. LISER thus aims to enlighten and inform society, as well as to inform the actions of public authorities and socio-economic actors, at national and international levels.

What is the future for public research in Luxembourg?

Public research in Luxembourg has distinctive assets. These must be exploited to produce tangible and concrete impacts for the economy. More broadly, these assets also mean that Luxembourg can forge its identity on the international scene. The close links between public research and the political and socio-economic actors of the country offer us the possibility of moving forward more quickly and coordinating ourselves more effectively. Luxembourg also offers us many opportunities to advance to the forefront of our European partners by offering us a particularly rich field of observation in the heart of Europe. We can combine these strengths with our ever-increasing ability and agility to coordinate research among institutions. In this way we can combine complementary skills in an unprecedented and innovative way (see what happened through the Luxembourg Research Task Force during the Covid-19 crisis). We can also contribute to the advancement of research at the international level to improve the well-being of the population. This is especially the case as all these distinctive elements are attracting more and more talent to Luxembourg! In my view, a virtuous circle can be set in motion.

CLIFF KONSBRUCK
POST Telecom

Answering the Call of Transformation

“POST ensures close contact with companies in order to align our network, cloud and IT services with their current and future needs.”

CLIFF KONSBRUCK

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"POST IS COMMITTED TO BEING A RELIABLE PROVIDER OF INNOVATIVE SERVICES AND SOLUTIONS FOR THE POPULATION AND BUSINESSES," SAYS CLIFF KONSBRUCK, DIRECTOR OF POST TELECOM AND DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR OF POST LUXEMBOURG. HE EXPLAINS HIS VISION OF THE TELECOM SECTOR AND ITS CHALLENGES, AS WELL AS THE GROUP'S ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THEM. INTERVIEW.

What are the challenges facing the telecoms sector?

POST tries to anticipate technological evolutions in order to better satisfy its customers. Indeed, the company's portfolio, started in 1880 with the first telephone network in the Grand Duchy and has since then continued to develop and diversify. We now offer beyond high-performance connectivity a wide range of services such as Tier IV data centers, IT integration and development, as well as cloud solutions, cybersecurity and data intelligence. The digitisation of our economy is accelerating exponentially with a stable, redundant and secure high-performance telecom and IT infrastructure as the backbone. The challenge remains the same: To anticipate the connectivity and IT needs of citizens and businesses.

How does POST adapt to this context?

Our "Network of the Future" benefits from a continuous effort including the increase of the coverage of our fiber-optic network, complemented by the deployment of the capacity of our 4G and 5G mobile networks. Thus, this whole package allows us to meet the growing data traffic needs of private and business customers while also offering the possibility of developing new applications and services. In this way, POST fulfils its role as enabler for the digitalisation of the economy. In this context, POST, together with its partners, ensures close contact with companies in order to align our network, cloud and IT services with their current and future needs.

What has been POST's strategy in the face of recent events?

For the past 180 years, we have proven our strong capacity to adapt to economic, technological and societal changes. This was demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic, thanks to the significant investments in the telecommunication network over the past years. In addition, the Luxembourg government has recognised our three areas of activity – postal, telecommunication and financial services – as essential to maintaining the vital interests of the population and the country. Our telecom infrastructure, for instance, was able to easily manage nationwide teleworking and the sharp rise in data traffic.

360CROSSMEDIA

Enter the Matrix 360!

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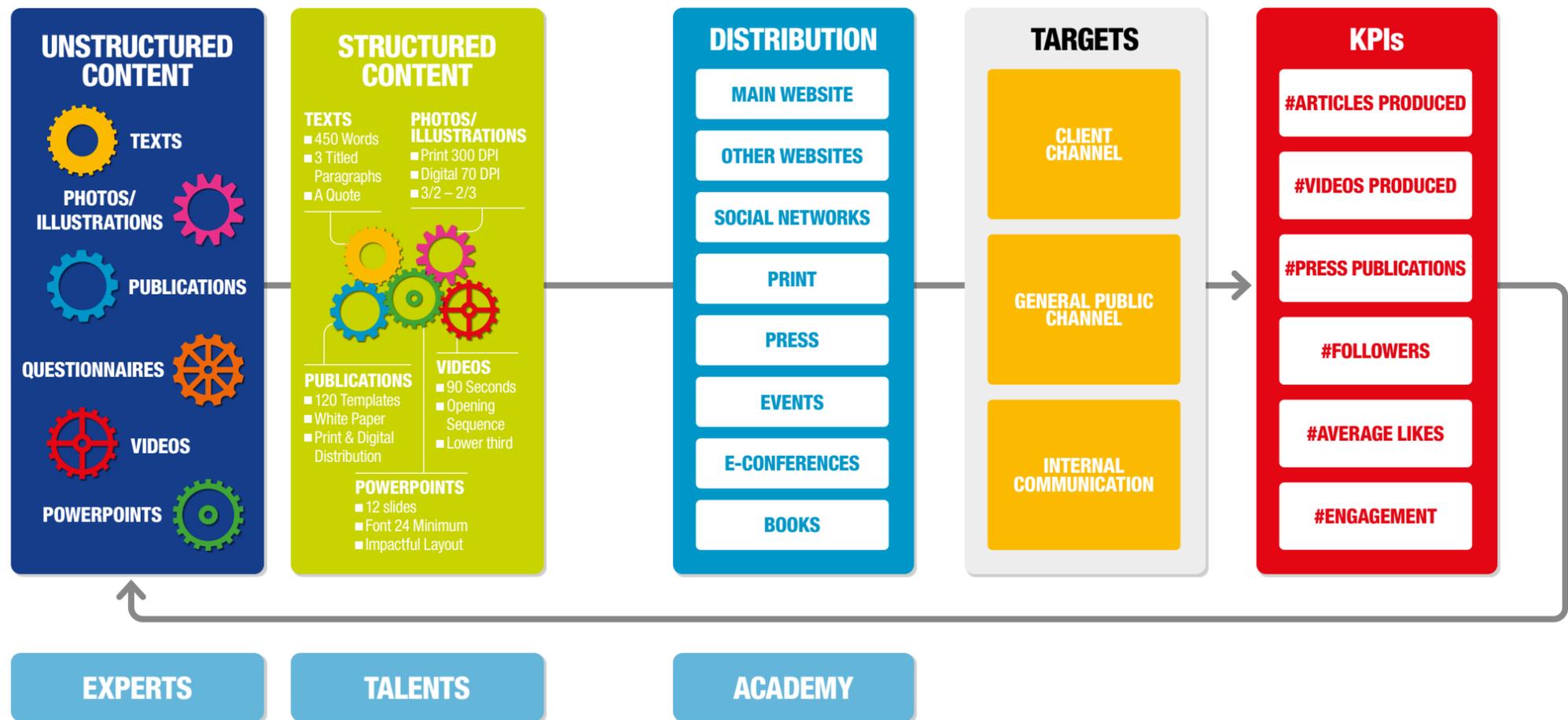
360CROSSMEDIA IS CELEBRATING ITS FIRST 22 YEARS IN BUSINESS WITH THREE SUCCESSIVE RECORD YEARS. WE DIFFERENTIATE OURSELVES FROM OUR COMPETITORS THROUGH OUR VERY EFFICIENT PRODUCTION SYSTEM AND INNOVATIONS AT ALL LEVELS.

A software called Trinity

The production manager develops software called "Trinity." This allows the automation of repetitive tasks – in particular reminders to authors – and the implementation of efficient workflows for our projects including magazines, videos, conferences and consulting assignments. This optimization enables us to operate in ways that are in tune with the times. Our experienced team in the Luxembourg office interacts around the world with demanding clients as well as coordinating hundreds of talented graphic designers, photographers, copywriters, videographers and computer scientists. The power of 360Crossmedia comes from the formats we have used for 22 years. For example, 99% of our articles contain 500 words and are structured in three parts. Photos and videos also follow specific formats. We therefore have a huge bank of preformatted content that we can combine at will to create LinkedIn posts, magazines, books or e-conferences in just a few clicks. Our customers save time and money.

Solving the content conundrum

Communicating has never been easier, but the crux of the matter has remained the same for centuries: Creating the first content. We serve high-level experts in finance, private equity, law or technology, yet most of them find it difficult to write articles that are readable and which can convey memorable messages. The role of the content manager is to solve this problem with all the techniques available. He first helps the client company to plan how to tell a good story through six or twelve articles. We define the subjects, the authors and the deadlines. The authors then complete a questionnaire that takes about twenty



minutes. They can return the questionnaire to us by email, over the phone or by filming themselves on their phone. This raw material is structured by 360Crossmedia before being sent to a specialist writer, trained by us. Forty-eight hours later, the customer receives a proofread article, ready to use, which they can refine as they see fit. The beauty of this model lies in how this article can be reused in almost unlimited ways: We can send it out as a press release, publish it on LinkedIn, in Andy or Duke magazines, develop a magazine, a video or an e-conference. Creating

article content remains difficult but all-around distribution today is a snap.

Videos from 30€ per day

On the one hand, the head of videos helps our clients to make all their videos: Interviews, corporate videos, animations, production of live conferences and e-conferences. For this, he relies on a network of screenwriters, videographers and editors located in major cities around the world. On the other hand, he makes life easier for our customers with our flagship

product: The 360Box. We are very proud of the partnership we have signed with the European Convention Center of Luxembourg, which validates the robustness of the technology that we invented. Our customers can use the 360Box in our studios in Luxembourg and Paris or their company offices. The full studio with two cameras, lamps, microphone, MacBook and 360Box costs only €30 per day including €10 for hardware, €10 for training and €10 for technical support. No assembly is necessary, and customers can often use it on their own!

“Creating prime content remains difficult but all-around distribution today is a snap.”

METAVERSE

Symbol of the Advent of Web 3.0?



MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/metaverse

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF INVESTMENTS IN THE METAVERSE BY LARGE GROUPS SUCH AS FACEBOOK HAVE MADE THE CONCEPT POPULAR WITH THE MASSES. CONSIDERED AS THE ENGINE OF AN ONGOING DIGITAL REVOLUTION, THESE VIRTUAL WORLDS COULD SHAKE UP OUR INTERACTIONS EVEN IN THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD. HERE ARE SOME EXPLANATIONS.

A concept from video games

First, Web 1.0 allowed access to information, then Web 2.0 favored collaboration between users, especially via social networks. Today, the Metaverse is part of the transition to Web 3.0, a technology that will rely on artificial intelligence and machine learning as well as data mining. The Metaverse – a contraction of the Latin meta (beyond) and "universe" – is considered by a large community of experts as the major digital revolution of the past decade. The term refers to a fictional virtual universe, an immersive 3D, parallel world in which users create their virtual double and evolve in a world they

compose, thanks to an economy based on the use of cryptocurrencies.

Real places of exchange

Metaverses are places of exchange and trade where the principle of supply and demand is applied. Each user can buy or sell virtual objects of all kinds called NFTs; to date, virtual objects have been sold for astronomical sums: A virtual mega yacht has been sold for \$650,000 in the United States and virtual real estate has been sold for over \$2 million. Thanks to their authentication by the blockchain, these NFTs are like property titles that a user

can carry from one universe to another. Interoperability between thousands of worlds will attract more and more big brands from traditional markets.

Ready to shake up the professional world

The creation of Metaverses is not reserved for video games: These virtual worlds are also landing in the worlds of tourism, education, culture, and commerce. Users from all over the world are already visiting meta-museums, meta-theaters and classrooms. The company Virbela has already implemented this model at the professional level by creating a meta-company where employees only visit through their

avatars. A revolution that Microsoft is also considering for its co-workers. Metaverses are becoming increasingly popular as places to live, consume, entertain, learn and communicate. They are attracting thousands of users every day. According to Bloomberg Intelligence, this market could reach \$800 billion by 2024. Products can be sold in larger quantities: Travis Scott, for example, earned \$20 million in a 9-minute concert on Fortnite, which equates to the revenue of ten live concerts. The possibilities for innovation remain endless and many new applications are bound to emerge in the coming years. The competition between cryptocurrencies and the Metaverse looks to be fierce.

“Thanks to their authentication by the blockchain, these NFTs are like property titles that a user can carry from one universe to another.”

ERIC LARCHEVÊQUE
Ledger

Embracing the Crypto Revolution Safely



MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/ericlarcheveque
www.ledger.com

ACCORDING TO ERIC LARCHEVÊQUE, CO-FOUNDER OF LEDGER, CRYPTOCURRENCIES HAVE IMPACTED OUR ECONOMY IN TWO ESSENTIAL WAYS: THE DECENTRALIZATION OF FINANCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE REDEFINITION OF MONEY. INTERVIEW.

Can you introduce Ledger in a few words?

I co-created Ledger in 2014 to address the major problem of securing crypto assets. We have therefore designed a secure "Hardware Wallet" to protect the private keys. Holding cryptocurrencies is tantamount to possessing information that, like any type of property, must be protected. The public Blockchain network uses the founding principle of the cryptographic signature, which requires proving knowledge of the password necessary for a transaction, without ever revealing it. In this context, our hardware guarantees password protection even in the event of the hacking of a device used to connect to the Internet. We are the world leader in these solutions with several million individual and professional users, securing 15% of all crypto assets on the planet.

How are cryptocurrencies impacting our economies?

Through two essential elements: The decentralization of the financial infrastructure and the redefinition of the currency. The Blockchain is indeed a mechanism for exchanging values on an open system without the need to transact through a centralized body such as a bank or a financial institution. From this first impact came the

redefinition of money. From a legal point of view, cryptocurrencies are not considered official currencies. However, they represent a real economic alternative to the fundamental notion of money, which until now has been managed by states and central banks. Crypto assets are now managed by a predictive mathematical system reduced to a few equations and no longer dependent on central state power. If the value of traditional currencies is based on the confidence in the ability of the government to be able to raise taxes and ensure the value of the currency, that of a cryptocurrency is based on the confidence of the population in the network. The more individuals, companies or even states, that place their trust in a cryptocurrency, the more it will increase in value.

What risks and opportunities do you identify in the long term?

Crypto assets involve many risks, particularly related to their very high volatility. They do not represent any promise of wealth but rather a philosophical and economic promise of conservation of their value compared to traditional currencies that are traditionally subject to extremely high inflation. Technological risks are also linked to decentralization. Indeed, by becoming your own bank,

you take responsibility for your own security. Just as we protect our valuables in a vault, we need to protect our crypto assets in a digital vault, like the one Ledger provides. Users must also guard against social engineering by educating themselves on the subject and mastering its fundamentals before resorting to this technology. But

crypto assets also represent investment opportunities for creating new business models. They make it possible to tokenize all types of goods as NFTs do by associating a token with an object with the aim of marketing it. We are only at the dawn of this revolution which will create countless entrepreneurial opportunities!



“Just as we protect our valuables in a vault, we must protect our crypto assets in a digital vault.”

ERIC LARCHEVÊQUE,
LEDGER

ARNAUD WENGER
AND WIM STALMANS
Letzblock

Blockchain in a nutshell

MORE INFORMATION
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“DUE TO ITS SPECIFICITY, BLOCKCHAIN WILL PUSH OUR STANDARDS AHEAD FOR THE BENEFIT OF EVERYONE BY ENABLING NEW APPLICATIONS IN MULTIPLE SECTORS”, SAY ARNAUD WENGER, HEAD OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, AND WIM STALMANS, EVENTS LEADS AT LETZBLOCK. INTERVIEW.

What is LëtZBlock?

LëtZBlock defines itself as a Luxembourg non-profit association founded by a group of blockchain and crypto experts aiming at promoting blockchain technology from all its aspects including from legal, technological, and practical standpoints. The association strives to explain in a simple way what blockchain is and what can be done with it through cooperation with stakeholders in Luxembourg, the EU and at the international level. The association also fosters collaboration with other blockchain associations. Last but not the least, LëtZBlock strongly encourages blockchain-experimentation with and by members, supports the creation of interdisciplinary working groups and organises training courses, seminars, and other events with specialists on a myriad of Blockchain-topics. Particularly loved by LëtZBlock's members are the Blockchain Tuesdays – set up every first Tuesday of the month – giving the floor to professionals and experts to present and exchange about a project or topic linked to the blockchain.

How do you define the blockchain and what is its potential?

In its very essence Blockchain is a transaction database. So, you can imagine it as an excel sheet in which you have on each line a transaction that describes the transfer of



Arnaud Wenger and Wim Stalmans.

**“For the first time,
assets and liabilities
can exist and be
transferred directly
from person to person
within the infrastructure
of the internet.”**

ownership of a certain asset from one individual or entity to another individual or entity. Now, traditionally, transaction journals are maintained by third parties who are trusted to create a truthful record of the history of the ownership of an item. The difference that Blockchain introduces is that, instead of the trusted third parties, it's the users of the register, that maintain it collectively. The authenticity and integrity of transactions is ensured by using cryptographic signing algorithms, while the honesty, immutability, and unchangeability of the Blockchain is enabled by imposing on the maintainers a schema of investment-and-return. This schema yields a positive economic result when the users maintain the Blockchain honestly and yields a negative result when done dishonestly. The direct consequence of the emergence of the Blockchain technology is that, for the first time in history, assets and liabilities can exist and be transferred directly from person to person within the internet infrastructure. Shortly said, Blockchain enables the Internet of Value.

What trends do you identify in terms of the use of this technology?

Blockchain technology will scale up our current standards. The keywords are decentralisation, smart contracts, and security. The blockchain technology can support the development of new businesses and financial models, by moving, for example, the distribution of services and products, or even the organization itself, to a decentralized model. This has the potential to enable more direct, efficient, and independent interactions between value creators, stakeholders, and clients. Another interesting trend in the use of this technology are the non-fungible assets or NFTs, used by both traditional artists and the young generation to tokenise their virtual art and develop a new economic model based on the traceability of smart contracts. The technology has also been applied in areas like FinTech and supply-chain. The application of cross-border payments, direct asset transfers from person to person and stakeholder identification, can improve considerably the procedural efficiency and reduce previously existing frictions due to the intervention of a multitude of intermediaries. In terms of security, there are two additional trends: one related to voting protocols, where companies or states can protect shareholders, participants and citizens against unwanted interference and guarantee a safe electronic voting system; and one related to medical research, where research projects can ensure the traceability and the origin of the data and analyse automatically research related parameters.

NASIR ZUBAIRI
LHoFT

Supporting the Future of FinTechs

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www.lhoft.lu

"WE ARE DEVELOPING LHOFT 2.0'S STRATEGY TO ANTICIPATE THE NEXT FIVE YEARS IN RELATION TO EVOLVING CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND INNOVATION SUCH AS CRYPTO-CURRENCIES, TOKENIZATION, DEFI AND BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY", SAYS NASIR ZUBAIRI, CEO OF LUXEMBOURG HOUSE OF FINANCIAL TECHNOLOGY (LHOFT). INTERVIEW.

This year the LHoFT turns 5. What's your assessment?

The initiative has achieved a great deal, but there is still much more to be done – we are running a marathon, not a sprint. Five years marks a great milestone to look at strategy revisions for the next five years and LHoFT 2.0. We will mark our five years anniversary later this year with a celebration and launch the next phase of our strategy to drive digitalization for the Luxembourg financial services center.

What are the trends you identified in the FinTech world for 2022?

The major focus in Fintech is on crypto-currencies, tokenization, DeFi, and the underlying technology, blockchain. More mainstream, there is also a trend in "buy now, pay later" solutions. From the Luxembourg and broad EU perspective, the LHoFT concentrates on B2B and specifically on RegTech; solutions that reduce costs for incumbent institutions. European Banking is the worst performing banking sector in the world; In 2020, the

average across performance across Western Europe was Return on Equity (RoE) 2.75%, Return on Assets (RoA) 0.16%, Return on Capital (RoC) 3.1%. Costs need to be addressed through automation in order to ensure the survival of many institutions and their continued competitiveness.

Could you share some Luxembourgish FinTech startups success stories?

Certainly. Next Gate Tech, focusing on data harmonization within Asset Management, is growing incredibly fast and has attracted some impressively senior-level finance executives to their team. HQLAx continues to build and gain traction with its blockchain-based collateral mobility solution for the securities lending market. Tokeny and Stokr, both active in the tokenization arena, impress with the increasing number and scale of token offerings they are facilitating. Riverbank, a regulated credit institution providing debt solutions to businesses, has built a team of over 60 in Luxembourg, is well-funded, and is scaling quickly.



"European Banking is the worst performing banking sector in the world; costs need to be addressed through automation."

NASIR ZUBAIRI,
LHOFT



LUC FALEMPIN
Tokeny

A Bridge Between Blockchain and Finance



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“Blockchain infrastructures will become the norm for private markets.”

LUC FALEMPIN,
TOKENY

"IN THREE TO FIVE YEARS, OUR STANDARDS WILL BE USED FOR MOST ISSUANCES OF FINANCIAL SECURITIES", EXPLAINS LUC FALEMPIN. THE AMBITIONS OF TOKENY'S CEO ARE AT THE HEIGHT OF THE SUCCESS ENCOUNTERED BY THE FAST-GROWING COMPANY. INTERVIEW.

Can you introduce Tokeny in a few words?

Tokeny defines itself as a software publisher enabling financial institutions to issue, manage and transfer financial assets and products on blockchain.

How are your customers' needs changing?

Year after year, we observe that the benefits brought by blockchain are better understood by the financial industry. Initially, our solutions were primarily used to facilitate investor onboarding and to create proof of ownership with blockchain. Now our clients can carry out

all the operations necessary for the life of a financial security. Whether issuers, agents or distributors, our white label solutions enable full control of digital securities management. New services are provided to their investors who can now discover investment opportunities on digital marketplaces, trade P2P on the secondary market and easily manage their portfolio of tokenized securities. Many possibilities are emerging with decentralized finance. We are gradually trying to open up new uses while automating compliance with investor and consumer protection rules.

Where do you see Tokeny in three to five years?

Tokeny wants to be the blockchain infrastructure access provider for financial institutions. We want to be the bridge between the technical and secure infrastructure and the operational needs of financial players in activities such as compliance, transfers and corporate actions. In three to five years, our standards will be used for most issues of financial securities. Blockchain infrastructures will become the norm for private markets and Tokeny will enable easy access by providing a set of necessary technical, legal and operational solutions.

TOM KETTELS
Infrachain

Building a Strong Interconnected Blockchain Ecosystem

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<https://infrachain.com>

“WE CONSIDER THE EUROPEAN BLOCKCHAIN ECOSYSTEM EXTREMELY LIVELY,” STATES TOM KETTELS, PROJECT LEAD OF INFRACHAIN. INDEED, DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS ARE INVOLVED IN THE PROMISING EVOLUTION OF THE BLOCKCHAIN IN EUROPE. INTERVIEW.

Can you describe Infrachain in a few words?

Infrachain characterizes itself as a privately driven, non-profit for any organization – mainly European – interested in Blockchain. It was created on the initiative of “Digital Luxembourg.” Infrachain contributes to the decentralized data economy by promoting the take-up of Blockchain and Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLTs) through operational projects and information sharing. In addition, our corporate community works on operational blockchain projects and operates nodes in different Blockchains, including the European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (EBSI). Currently, we are also running projects related to digital IDs and the adoption of Blockchain in the public sector. For instance, we are developing the EBSILUX project with the Ministry of Digitalization, LIST, and SnT. Infrachain allows registration of diplomas on EBSI to increase student mobility and fight against fraud.

How would you define the European Blockchain ecosystem?

We consider the European Blockchain ecosystem extremely lively. For example, EBSI will host cross-border services facilitating citizens’ and companies’ lives. As such, Infrachain partly focuses now on public sector-led initiatives like EBSI and EBSILUX. Moreover, the Ministry of Digitalization and SIGI launched the Public Sector Blockchain in Luxembourg. On top of

that, the EU and national governments are also sending a positive signal by actively developing the legal framework for Blockchain. Indeed, the EU legislators will likely adopt the digital finance package in the next months. This decision will provide legal certainty related to digital assets and the use of DLTs in the finance sector. This will boost the competitiveness of the European Blockchain ecosystem.

What trends do you identify in the use of this technology?

Decentralized identifiers rank among the hottest topics. Nowadays, one person may carry several decentralized identifiers used in various contexts like financial services, social media, and gaming. Thus, users regain control over their personal data as they can decide which data to share and with whom. These behaviors complexify the tracking of individual users across platforms. Discussions around central bank digital currencies are ongoing. Moreover, Luxembourg’s so-called Blockchain laws provide a legal basis for security tokens and the Luxembourg Stock Exchange has admitted the first security token registered on a public DLT. Finally, widespread tokenization also constitutes a strong trend, be it in real estate or in the metaverse which offers almost endless possibilities for tokenization.



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Cercle Municipal



JEAN DIEDERICH
APSI



Impact of Sanctions and Changes in Payments

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"DISCONNECTING RUSSIAN BANKS FROM SWIFT MEANS RUSSIA WILL CHANGE PAYMENT CHANNELS. THAT RISKS WEAKENING THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS AND WILL CAUSE THE CREATION OF TWO DISTINCT SYSTEMS TO LIMIT SANCTIONS IN THE FUTURE," SAYS JEAN DIEDERICH, PARTNER AZZANA CONSULTING, PRESIDENT OF APSI AND MEMBER OF DIGITAL EUROPE. INTERVIEW.

What is the impact of sanctions on payment systems and more particularly SWIFT?

Disconnecting Russia from SWIFT impacts businesses and financial institutions on both sides. However, the impacts of sanctions in relation to the concept of debit and credit must be differentiated. Of course, the sanctions imposed are aimed at blocking Russian assets in banks, but many financial institutions have also financed Russian companies and granted huge credits. This means that strict sanctions or a general disconnection from SWIFT would lead to difficulties, even the risk of default by certain European banks, whose outstanding Russian loans amount to more than \$76 billion. Moreover, the short-term impact of sanctions on Russia is limited by the fact that they do not affect payment transactions in the Russian energy sector, Russia's lifeblood and on which Europe largely depends. Therefore, payments denominated in euros and dollars continue to flow to Russia, which has even requested

payments in rubles to counter the imposed sanctions. This seems to be a bad political idea that may change soon!

Can the international payment systems fundamentally change?

There is a risk because sanctions are likely to fundamentally change the geopolitics of cross-border payments. Since 2014, Russia has prepared for international sanctions by establishing its own payment

infrastructure, the Russian SPFS financial message transfer system. Beijing is also set to dramatically accelerate efforts to establish new payment channels through the renminbi-denominated China-led China National Advanced Payment System (CNAPS) across Asia, including Russia. Knowing that more than 50% of Chinese exports to Russia were denominated in dollars in 2020, while two-thirds of Russian exports to China were

"A general disconnection from SWIFT would lead to difficulties, even the risk of default by certain European banks."

JEAN DIEDERICH,
APSI

denominated in euros, and most of the rest were denominated in dollars, one understands the disadvantage for our banks. So, by disconnecting Russian banks from SWIFT, trade between Russia and its main trading partner, China, will change payment channels, and given the current free fall of the ruble, the renminbi will probably be chosen as the new currency pivot. Consequently, this will gradually weaken the influence of American and European institutions in these regions and will risk the creation of two distinct systems to limit sanctions in the future. The question then arises: Will interoperability be guaranteed with current systems?

Is it possible that Russia is using cryptocurrencies to circumvent sanctions?

Indeed, some believe that Russia also uses cryptocurrencies to circumvent sanctions. Vladimir Putin had hinted that Russia had certain competitive advantages especially in mining transactions (that are dependent on the price of electricity) as well as having many IT experts in cryptocurrencies. But as China has banned cryptocurrencies, Beijing is likely to accelerate the deployment of its "central bank digital currency" (CBDC) to counter them and force Russia to adopt it instead of dollars or euros for its exchanges cross-border.

JEAN-BAPTISTE GRAFTIEAUX
Bitstamp

How Cryptocurrencies Can Better Meet Clients' Evolving Needs

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"THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL AND CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN THE GLOBAL CRYPTOCURRENCY MARKET LIES IN EDUCATION, TRANSPARENCY, AND SECURITY," STATES JEAN-BAPTISTE GRAFTIEAUX, CEO OF BITSTAMP EUROPE. HE EXPLAINS HOW BITSTAMP TRIES TO ADAPT ITS SERVICES TO CUSTOMERS' NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS. INTERVIEW.

Can you describe Bitstamp in a few words?

Bitstamp represents the world's longest-running cryptocurrency exchange, supporting investors, traders and leading financial institutions since 2011. In fact, more than 500 employees work in the following five offices: Ljubljana, Luxembourg, New York, Singapore and Amsterdam. This number should reach 700 by the end of the year, which testifies to Bitstamp's accelerating growth. In addition, over four million customers worldwide trust Bitstamp's secure and reliable trading venue. Indeed, the company provides a proven track record, cutting-edge market infrastructure and demonstrates dedication to personal service. Furthermore, Bitstamp combines crypto and finance through its intuitive web platform and mobile app or industry-leading APIs.

How are your clients' needs evolving?

Cryptocurrencies are becoming increasingly mainstream, and that means growing numbers of investors. We also see rising use of our mobile app versus the web interface. As a matter of fact, our clients show interest in digital assets beyond BTC and ETH. Therefore, we have added 50 of them after an internal review. Users also want to earn an additional passive income from their holdings. In this case, we provide Bitstamp Earn for users to earn

staking rewards for ETH and ALGO. Finally, we plan to add more assets in the future. Effectively, the key to successful and continued investment in the global cryptocurrency market lies in education, transparency and security for all investors so that they can trade with confidence. This will ensure that assets and services in the crypto space are provided in the best interests of customers and address the concerns of key players.

What trends do you identify in the trading of cryptocurrencies?

First, we observe strong institutional adoption ranging from banks, prop trading firms, hedge funds to FinTech's offering crypto to their clients via Bitstamp. Cryptocurrencies have become crucial to every investor's portfolio, especially with more banks offering crypto services. Moreover, several governments are now looking to introduce regulations to protect customers and provide a proper framework for digital money. Secondly, the retail customer base also continues to diversify, from people investing hundreds of euros monthly to early adopters with large balances. Lastly, Bitcoin remains the most traded asset, but its dominance tends to erode as new entrants seek higher returns in smaller market cap assets.

"Cryptocurrencies have become crucial to every investor's portfolio, especially with more banks offering crypto services."

JEAN-BAPTISTE GRAFTIEAUX,
BITSTAMP

LOÏK LE FLOCH-PRIGENT

The Importance of European Energy Independence

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ACCORDING TO LOÏK LE FLOCH-PRIGENT, AN INDUSTRIALIST, "GERMANY'S GAS SUPPLY DIFFICULTIES WILL HAVE REPERCUSSIONS FOR ALL OF EUROPE, WHICH IS INDUSTRIALLY DEPENDENT ON THAT COUNTRY." INTERVIEW ON ENERGY ALTERNATIVES TO RUSSIAN GAS.

Can Europe do without Russian gas?

Europe will not be able to do without it for several years. The principle of energy independence presupposes the availability of abundant energy from diversified sources and countries. Over the past 40 years, Europe has made the strategic mistake of putting this principle aside. Germany offers us a flagrant example; the country does not have a

gasification terminal allowing it to obtain supplies of liquefied natural gas by LNG tanker and is therefore 60% dependent on the gas pipeline linking it to Russia. Similarly, the coastal countries have not taken the precaution of building this type of terminal. Four years will be necessary for them to equip themselves with these infrastructures. On a European scale, we will continue to be dependent on Russia for 40% of our

gas. Only France has three gas terminals and a solid storage infrastructure allowing it to import liquefied gas from several countries. Its nuclear power plants will also allow it to ensure its autonomy, but not that of all of Europe.

What are the possible energy alternatives?

One solution for Germany would be to turn more to coal

Watch the video interview of Loik Le Floch-Prigent on www.duke.lu



"Germany does not have a gasification terminal allowing it to obtain supplies of liquefied natural gas by LNG tanker."

LOÏK LE FLOCH-PRIGENT

– although it also comes mainly from Russia. Germany has also reduced the number of its refineries for environmental reasons, which makes it dependent on foreign producers. For 30 to 40 years, its anti-nuclear policy pushed it to bet on wind power – which only operates at 25% of its nominal power and requires the action of a gas, oil or coal to be used. However, Germany's supply difficulties will have repercussions throughout Europe, which is industrially depend on that country.

How do you imagine the European energy map in five years?

If, like Belgium, Germany does not reconsider its position on nuclear power, we will still be in difficulty in five years. It should rehabilitate its three nuclear power stations or run the risk of having to reopen or commission new coal-fired power stations and vary its sources of fuel supply. This is a very un-ecological solution.

LUCA POLVERARI
Marks & Clerk

Intellectual Property Adapting to Technological Changes

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"AT EVERY STEP OF THE LIFE OF A COMPANY, SPECIFIC INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP) RELATED DECISIONS WILL NEED TO BE MADE AND WE ARE HERE TO HELP OUR CLIENTS WITH THESE DECISIONS," SAYS LUCA POLVERARI, MANAGING PARTNER AT MARKS & CLERK LUXEMBOURG. INTERVIEW.

"New technologies are appearing, like for example blockchain, 5G Technology, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence."

LUCA POLVERARI,
MARKS & CLERK



Can you describe your company in a few words?

Marks & Clerk LLP is a well-established international intellectual property firm, with offices all around the world, including Luxembourg. We help clients enforce and maximize the value of their IP. With over 300 patent attorneys, trademark attorneys and IP lawyers globally, we have a team unparalleled in size, diversity and technical expertise. So, whatever your sector or specialism, whether you are a startup or a global business, we'll select experts exactly right for your needs. Locally we are spending a lot of time in the startup environment, including the space tech cluster, and are advising these companies on IP. Hopefully, we can help them secure their IP rights, and so increase the value of these

companies. IP is an important asset of a company and our aim is to ensure that adequate protection is in place.

Which risks and challenges do you identify for your company and the competitiveness of Luxembourg?

The market is always changing and we need to be able to adapt quickly and adapt our offer according to these new needs. Are we still competitive in a growing market? New technologies are appearing, like for example blockchain, 5G Technology, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence. What impact will 3D printing have on IP rights? Our IP attorneys need to be on top of these technologies to offer the best possible

service to the client. Luxembourg is already turning towards the future (e.g., space technology, cleantech, ...), committed to digitalization and sustainability. Investing in new technologies, especially in "niche" products and services, has always been a strength of Luxembourg and this will help keep the country competitive. Moreover, a dynamic environment leads to innovation, and innovations need to be protected, which keeps Luxembourg as an attractive market for IP.

Which compliance trends do you identify in intellectual property and how are you adapting to them?

Intellectual property is changing with the advance of

technology. 20 years ago, filing a patent including part of a software program, was impossible. Nowadays, we file patents for core artificial intelligence where the code is the invention. Our task is to follow these changes and adapt quickly as we must be on top of these changes. The pandemic resulted in a change of working policy with data protection became an issue. Homeworking implies sharing data across borders and outside of the secured office environment. We needed to adapt our processes and comply with data protection laws. We also need to keep a close eye on changes in the legislation. Unitary Patents will enter into force later this year and will change the way IP will be secured in Europe. We will need to be able to advise our clients accordingly.



ARNAUD WENGER

Dealing with China

“DEALING WITH A COUNTRY FAR FROM WESTERN CULTURE MIGHT BE DIFFICULT. TO AVOID ANY BLUNDER, IT IS KEY TO UNDERSTAND THE HISTORY AND THE CUSTOMS OF THIS COUNTRY”, SAYS ARNAUD WENGER, COMPLIANCE AND BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL WITH A SPECIALIZATION TOWARDS ASIAN AND CHINESE MARKETS. INTERVIEW.

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“Negotiation is the start of a new relationship; it is used to evaluate the credibility of the counterparty and create a trust between the parties.”

ARNAUD WENGER

Introduction and Brief Summary of the Chinese history

From its beginnings as an ancient civilization to the present day, China (中国 Zhōngguó, the Middle Kingdom – exactly since 1949, the People’s Republic of China (中华人民共和国 Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gònghéguó)) has been an exemplary excellence to the Asian continent in its provision of technologies and legacies, such as the first mechanical clock (机械钟 jīxièzhōng) dated 723 CE; banknotes (纸币 zhǐ bǐ) and gunpowder (火药 huǒ yào – Tang Dynasty 618–908 CE); or the Traditional Chinese Medicine (中药

zhōngyào – Zhou Dynasty 475–221 BCE). The Chinese also developed a strong commercial route between China and Europe known as the Silk Road (丝绸之路 Sīchóuzhī Lù), beginning with the Han dynasty. The legacy of this ongoing Eurasian network is the interconnection that the populations were able to develop through their cultures, languages, customs, and commercial exchange.

Integration of the Chinese culture

Respecting the politics and the regional cultural difference will help you build an amicable relationship with Chinese

people. China is rich with diverse culture and customs. As a result, each city and each region or province has its own customs and practices alongside the national habits. Throughout the centuries China has kept some key principles. Three of them are the following:

- Trust, which can be granted only after you have proven yourself worthy of it, this is also called as inner circle.
- Honor, which is a form of prestige that adheres to a person within his personal and professional circle. This principle has two results: Chinese might refrain to do something if they think they are not good enough (like

speaking in English in front of a foreigner). This is also known as losing face (丢脸 diū liǎn). In turn, if you can help a Chinese person to keep his face (面子 miànzi) by rescuing him/her in a socially awkward situation, he/she will be very grateful and may recognize you as a great friend; and always keeping its promises.

- Private Network (關係 guānxi): Chinese people always prefer to deal with friends and people within their network rather than with an unknown person. As a result, work time and private time can merge to nurture this guānxi. Beside these principles, each company also respects the following fundamentals: hierarchy, golden mean, flexibility, entrepreneurial mindset, and teamwork (the group prevails on the individual). Any misunderstandings of these aspects can critically affect the relationship.

Tips and Tricks

Negotiation: Negotiation is the start of a new relationship; it is used to evaluate the credibility of the counterparty and create a trust between the parties.

“Golden Week” (黄金週 Huángjīn Zhōu): It refers to the three main public holidays in China: Chinese New Year (春节 chūnjié, also known as the Spring Festival), the National Day of the People’s Republic of China (国庆节 guóqìng jié), and Labor Day (劳动节 láodòngjié). These holidays are important in China for meeting family and friends; therefore, during the Golden Week, everything is closed. As an example, from my own experience, the service provider for my payroll in Luxembourg didn’t take this point into consideration; as a result, my salary was not paid in time as all banks in China are closed during these holidays.

Communication: Chinese people express themselves in a moderate way in order not to embarrass their interlocutor and respect the authority. To keep the harmony of the group they will follow the order instead of challenging it. As a result, they will take less initiative, and do not express their feeling to other.

Gifts: Giving gifts in Chinese culture is a sign of showing respect and trust. You normally give a red envelope with cash in it in a wedding or a funeral (white envelope in funeral). It is common to receive a red envelope with a small amount of cash for different festivals from one’s employer but also from one’s business partners. Therefore, it is common for Chinese companies to offer gifts to all their partners (this sending cash in envelope now typically is done by sending money via Wechat wallet). When meeting clients in China, you should not be surprised that your client has bought you a gift or even pay for restaurant bill. While such gift-giving can unfortunately be seen as bribery in Europe, in China, it is only a sign of recognition.

FRÄNK SCHLECK

Nutrition is the central element of a top athlete's lifestyle



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THE ORGANISER OF THE SCHLECK GRAN FONDO AND OTHER CYCLING EXPERIENCES, FRÄNK SCHLECK, TALKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD NUTRITION IN THE DAILY LIFE OF A TOP ATHLETE AND HIS PLANS AFTER THE TOUR DE FRANCE.

How important is nutrition in the diet of a top athlete?

It is critical for a high-level athlete, especially during competitions like the Tour de France. A high-calorie intake becomes necessary, along with nutrient-rich foods and healthy fats. Pasta is often mentioned, but foods such as oils and dried fruits also have their place because they are easy to digest and eat on the go when competing. Outside of competitions, professional cyclists can cycle up to 35,000 km for their training, so it's important to maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout the year and receive guidance from a nutrition coach.

What is your favourite anecdote from the Tour de France and why?

There are many, but the best one would be sharing the podium with my brother Andy during the Tour de France. Cycling is a family affair for us. My father participated in the Tour de France seven times. For as long as I can remember, sports, especially cycling, have been a big part of my life at home. My older brother raced, I started a cycling career, and then my other brother Andy followed in our footsteps. We shared this passion throughout our careers, though Andy had to stop three years before me because of a knee problem. These choices required a lot of sacrifices from not only us but our families as well. We really grew up with cycling!

"I remain a sportsman above all and try to concentrate as much as possible on cycling."

FRÄNK SCHLECK

What are your professional projects after the Tour de France?

I remain a sportsman above all and try to concentrate as much as possible on the practice of cycling. Aside from that, I am the national cycling coordinator for the Luxembourg Cycling Federation and, as such, I coach and support our future athletes, especially in their nutrition. Through the Federation, I also promote the practice of cycling in Luxembourg according to three main objectives. First, to encourage soft mobility in a country like Luxembourg which is notorious for its difficulties with traffic management. Secondly, to show how cycling as a sports practice can play an important preventive role in the field of health. And finally, how Luxembourg has a great card to play in cycling tourism so we can make this sport a real attraction for tourists from around the world.



KEI KOBAYASHI

The Sense of Detail


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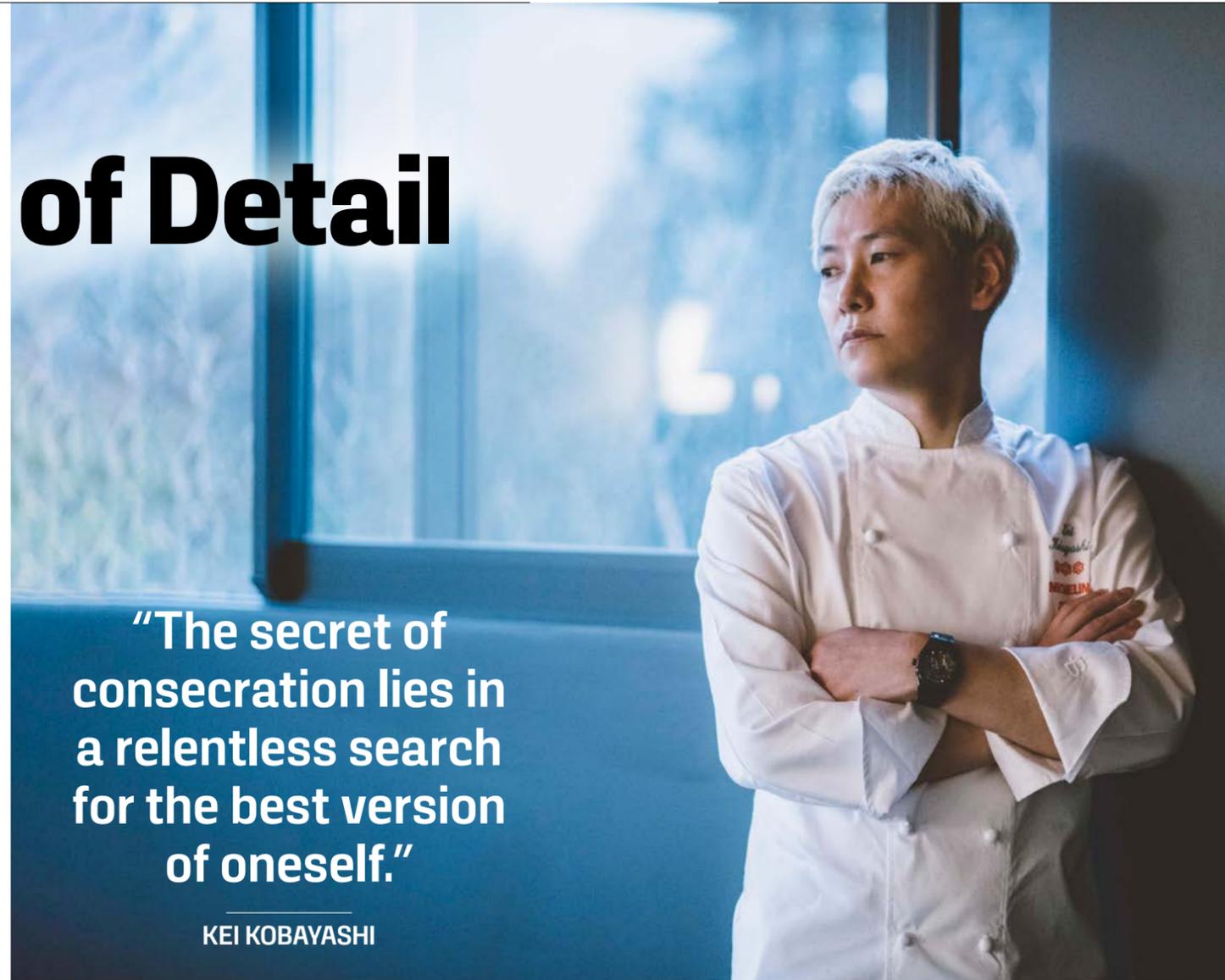
THE GRAY AND DISCREET FACADE OF THE THREE-STAR KEI RESTAURANT IN PARIS IN NO WAY SUGGESTS THE EXTENT OF THE EXPERIENCE AWAITING VISITORS: A MOMENT OUT OF TIME, WHERE THE TEAMS IN THE KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM COORDINATE IN AN ENCHANTING BALLET TO MAKE CUSTOMERS DANCE TO THE RHYTHM OF SEVEN-MILLIMETER DISHES.

3-star culture

The dining room is intimate, with barely 30 seats. Any action around the table is revealed in the image of the chef. Framed and precise. Nothing is left to chance and the spirit of Kei Kobayashi shines through at all levels: From the decor to the atmosphere and ultimately, on the plates. "When I stopped comparing myself to other chefs and understood that the real competition was with myself, the stars aligned," he explains. The secret of his consecration lies, according to him, in the quest for singularity and a relentless search for the best version of oneself, expressed through one's cuisine. Timing is also very important in cooking and tasting. The arrival – to the minute – of customers is noted in the kitchen and the rate at which meals are sent is carefully calculated.

Convey an emotion

The transmission of a striking emotion constitutes a promise that the chef wants to keep individual, for each client. And to do this, each ingredient is carefully selected according to the season. Climate change is also impacting this process and the chef is fully aware of this. He respects the rhythm of nature and regularly consults the weather to adapt his menu to the tastes of the products and the general tasting conditions. The kitchens, built longitudinally, leave little room for chance and require great team coordination. The chef can place himself at the end of the chain, check all the dishes that come out of the kitchen and send back those that have not reached perfection.



"The secret of consecration lies in a relentless search for the best version of oneself."

KEI KOBAYASHI


The ingredients of a three-star plate

If Japan is discreetly reflected in a touch of Shiso at the turn of an amuse-bouche, through the "Oh! so surprising" cooking of an Iberian pig in tataki or even in the surprising but pleasant combination of a hay-smoked lobster with round amber sake on the palate, chef Kobayashi's cuisine remains resolutely French. As a skillful virtuoso, the chef intends to mobilize all the senses of the visitor and make him find a balance in the fifth taste: Umami. His signature dish, "Garden of crunchy vegetables, Scottish smoked salmon, arugula mousse and lemon emulsion," is a good illustration of this principle. Its airy and floral visualization must first be contemplated. The customer is then invited to destroy the work of art by mixing until a creamy consistency is obtained, while smelling the odors that emerge from it to the sound of the crackling of the foam, before finally tasting it. "You have to destroy visual harmony to rebuild taste harmony," explains Louis-Marie Robert, Head Waiter. However, Chef Kei Kobayashi's quest



"When I stopped comparing myself to other chefs and understood that the real competition was with myself, the stars aligned."

KEI KOBAYASHI

for excellence knows no bounds: "Seeking to obtain three stars represents a great pressure that only increases when the objective is reached. To keep them we must constantly reinvent ourselves, without ceasing to seek perfection."

Venice: The Currents of Power

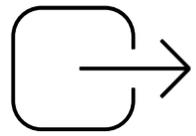


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**Venice:
The Currents
of Power**



**GIAN ANGELO BELLATI:
A Walk Around
Venice's History**

"VENICE CAN ALSO BE DESCRIBED AS A SORT OF 'DISNEYLAND' BECAUSE ITS WHOLE ECONOMY IS BASED ON TOURISM," SAYS GIAN ANGELO BELLATI, HONORARY CONSUL OF LUXEMBOURG IN VENICE. HE TAKES US THROUGH THE NARROW STREETS AND THE ROMANTIC LAGOONS OF THE FAMOUS CITY WHILE TELLING US ABOUT ITS HISTORY.

Can you describe Venice in a few words?
For more than 1,000 years Venice represented the capital of an empire. Today it stands as the district of a different and larger city, Mestre, because it has not maintained its autonomous municipality. Furthermore, it has no political representation because it has 50,000 inhabitants compared to the 200,000 of Mestre and cannot manage the complex and typical problems of an island and ancient city. Venice can also be described as a sort of "Disneyland" because its whole economy is based on tourism. Its population is decreasing at the rate of 1,000 per year and has fallen from 170,000 in the 1950s to less than 50,000 today.

How would you describe life in Venice?
You'll enjoy living in Venice if you love walking, struggling physically, accepting not having a car at home and if you have enough income to live with double the average cost of living compared to the mainland. I have the privilege of owning a parking slot in Piazzale Roma, which was built during fascism when there was one car compared to about 10,000 today. No municipal administration has ever built a garage with reserved spaces at low prices for residents near the houses of Venice! I love living in Venice because it's a wonderful city where I can row and sail on the lagoon. I also like running into the numerous international characters who frequent the city.

Which visits would you recommend to a businessman visiting your city?
A businessman has little time. I would recommend several activities: First walk around the city for at least one day, secondly visit the Doge's Palace, some Churches, the Correr Museum, lastly take a day trip to the islands of Murano, Burano and Torcello.

Could you tell us a story that illustrates the character of Venice and its inhabitants?
The last "real Venetians" are people who do not want to exploit their city, but to embrace all its diversity compared to the mainland: Use the boat, walk and, in general, make the physical effort to sail on the lagoon. One of the most beautiful episodes in the recent history of Venice is the organization of the "Red regatta." This independent public art project was born from a collaboration between a great artist from New York, Melissa McGill, and the Associazione vela al Terzo. It shows that the associative world is important for the recovery of traditional crafts, for the preservation of traditional boats, for the protection of the Arsenal, etc.

The vertigo of history

The history of Venice begins with the announce of the arrival of Attila from the Vandals and the Goths who force the inhabitants to find refuge on the islands of the lagoon. It goes through eleven centuries – from 697 to 1797 – of a very oligarchic "Republic." A visit to the Doge's Palace and the dungeons on the other side of the Bridge of Sighs recalls the era's violence. Venice takes us on journeys to the end of the world with Marco Polo, Francesco Morosini or more recently with the meteoric and tragic destiny of flour magnates, the Stuckys. Here, aristocrats and merchants are one. To survive, Venice multiplied alliances, diplomatic missions and wars – for which it employed mercenaries – not hesitating to join forces in 1204 with the Crusaders to conquer Constantinople, a Christian mission, illustrating the priorities of the time. Venice's innovations, especially in its Arsenal, allowed the city to build ships industrially and take control of the Mediterranean at a time when it still occupied a central place in the world.

The constancy of change

Facing St. Mark's Square, the viewer no longer knows what era he is in, as the image of the basilica and its bell tower has remained unchanged for centuries. But the impression turns out to be misleading because five major changes came to transform the life of this city. Firstly, the discovery of America, which redrew the maps of world trade. Then, progress was made in shipbuilding by the enemies of the Serenissima, inventing larger boats, capable of carrying many guns and causing Venice to lose the hegemony won over the Mediterranean with its fast and maneuverable galleys. In 1797, after centuries of resistance, Venice yielded to Napoleon



before falling under the Austrian yoke in 1815. Then, the unification of Italy in 1870 plunged the city into a lagoon where it had already been swimming laboriously for decades. And finally, the advent of tourism with its carnival trinkets, its overnight stays in Airbnb and its cruise ships: This short-term financial windfall representing a real challenge for the inhabitants of the city and the diversification of its economy.

Head above water

When it was built in 1792, the owners found a premonitory name for La Fenice (The Phoenix). The opera house where Maria Callas, in particular like to sing, would be destroyed by fire twice – in 1836 and 1996 – before being rebuilt, just like the mythical phoenix. In the same spirit, after two years of confinement due to Covid-19, Venice is starting to drown again in tides of tourists and peddlers. Global warming threatens its survival and its declining population is melting like snow in the sun. To keep her head above water, Venice will have to reconnect with what made the city famous:

**"For more than
1,000 years Venice
represented the
capital of an empire."**

Innovation, diplomacy, the spirit of conquest and the exercise of power. And to make its economy sustainable, it will have to find a new 'Doge' capable of uniting local energies around a project for the future, defending it in Rome before selling it to its target population.

Visit

A trip to Venice for a few days is absolutely essential. Opt, for example, for accommodation in Dorso Duro and immerse yourself in websites or guides to understand the history of the city. Lose yourself in the meandering alleys and sottoporteghi of Cannaregio, San Polo, San Marco and Castello, taking a guide at least once! The list of must-see points is so long that I propose to share just five of them: The Peggy Guggenheim Museum, the Doge's Palace, a sunset at the panoramic bar of the Hilton, the site of the old 'Stucky' mill in Giudecca, a boat trip in the lagoon – or a gondola ride – and the theater of La Fenice. Not to mention of course visiting the cafes, restaurants and various traditional shops. Just avoid the ultra-touristy avenue that leads from the station to Rialto.

SIMON BERGER

Touch and Break - The Art of Symbolizing Emotions

MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/simonberger
www.simonberger.art

HE MADE HIS MARK WITH HIS PORTRAIT OF KAMALA HARRIS FOR THE WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM IN WASHINGTON, D.C. AND THE "WE ARE UNBREAKABLE" EXHIBITION IN BEIRUT. HIS PORTRAITS ON GLASS IMPACT VIEWERS WITH THE VIOLENCE AND PRECISION THAT EMERGE FROM THE ARTISTIC PROCESS. MEETING WITH THE SWISS ARTIST SIMON BERGER, VISITING LUXEMBOURG FOR THE LUXEMBOURG ART WEEK.

Can you tell your story in a few words?

I started my career as a carpenter. However, my work never really brought me satisfaction. In parallel, I continued to develop my creativity. My main artistic activity was then focused on the creation of graffiti. However, I quickly realized that the art world was saturated with this kind of production. I then wanted to innovate, by launching myself into a domain that had never been explored before. My first portrait on glass was born in 2016. I have not practiced any other art form since.

How does your work resonate in these troubled times?

My artwork aligns perfectly with our times. I always say that I create beauty through destruction. Through these faces of



"I seek to create a universal impact through these broken glass faces."

SIMON BERGER



broken glass, I seek to create a universal appeal and awaken emotions that make my work meaningful. My greatest reward is to see a deep connection to my work in the eyes of a viewer or collector. I try to create this connection through my work. My experience in Beirut, with the #weareunbreakable project, represents one of the most significant moments in my life as an artist. More than just a campaign slogan, "We Are Unbreakable" expresses a constant reminder of Lebanese resilience. I carved the portraits of the victims on recycled glass sheets from the blast to express a powerful reality: the people's need for truth and justice.

Can you tell us about your portrait project of Kamala Harris?

I was contacted by the Women's History Museum in Washington via my Instagram account. Making a glass portrait of Kamala Harris symbolized how she was "breaking the codes." By being the first female Vice President in U.S. history, she broke the glass ceiling that restricted women's access to the profession. This piece took several hours to create in my studio in Switzerland. It was then shipped to the United States and displayed for three days on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

JOÃO CARLOS

Dealing with mental illness in a post-Covid world



MORE INFORMATION
www.duke.lu/joao-carlos

"EACH PICTURE REPRESENTS A WEEK OF ISOLATION AND THE EMOTIONS IT GENERATED," SAYS PHOTOGRAPHER JOAO CARLOS ABOUT HIS SERIES: "STAGES OF ISOLATION". HIS EXHIBITION IS HELD AT THE KIRCHBERG HOSPITAL.

Can you describe your background in a few words?

I was born in New York to Portuguese parents. These two cultures have permeated me throughout my life. As far back as I can remember, photography has always held an important place in my life. When I was six years old, I asked my parents for a camera they gave me a disposable camera, it did not have a flash so I gave it back and asked for a real camera. Six years later, I was shooting my first horror and science fiction movie. Later, I studied painting and photography at the Visual Communication Art Center (ar. co) in Portugal. Then I worked with big brands like TAG Heuer and Nike with magazines like Elle or more recently, Forbes. Since the beginning of the pandemic, I have refocused on my personal and artistic productions. At the same time, I continued to work internationally, for example by photographing the heads of EU member states for the Porto Social Summit.

What was your inspiration for this series?

In March 2020, as I was returning from a trip to Italy and Slovakia, I visited my father for his birthday. What was supposed to be a simple visit turned into a 4-month stay, in confinement with my parents, without photo material. I hadn't spent this much time with my parents in over 20 years, and I observed their different reactions during that time. As for my work, everything came to an abrupt end: all my appointments were canceled and I did not get a contract for more than 5 months. In one year, I lost 85% of my income. Back in the studio, I capitalized on the fear I felt and started working on the series "Stages of Isolation" with two model friends. Each with a different expression and range of emotions that I wanted to express. Each picture in the series represents a week of isolation and the emotions it generated. All the pictures were taken in less than two hours and without a

photoshoot crew. It was only me and the model, Rodrigo Castelhana. The choice of nudity is explained by the fact that I did not want the clothes to interfere in the transmission of emotions.

How has your work been received by the public?

The visitors easily identify with this exhibition, because it deals with the subject of mental health undermined by the pandemic. We have all felt at least one of the emotions expressed by each picture, no matter our age or background. I also created glass domes, in which the pictures appear in three dimensions. Each of the two exhibitions in Portugal had a particular set-up; the Luxembourg one has this particularity that it is held in a hospital, on a single long wall. By exhibiting in a hospital, as many people as possible will be able to access it and be made aware of the impact of the pandemic on mental health.

How do our societies deal with the issue of mental health?

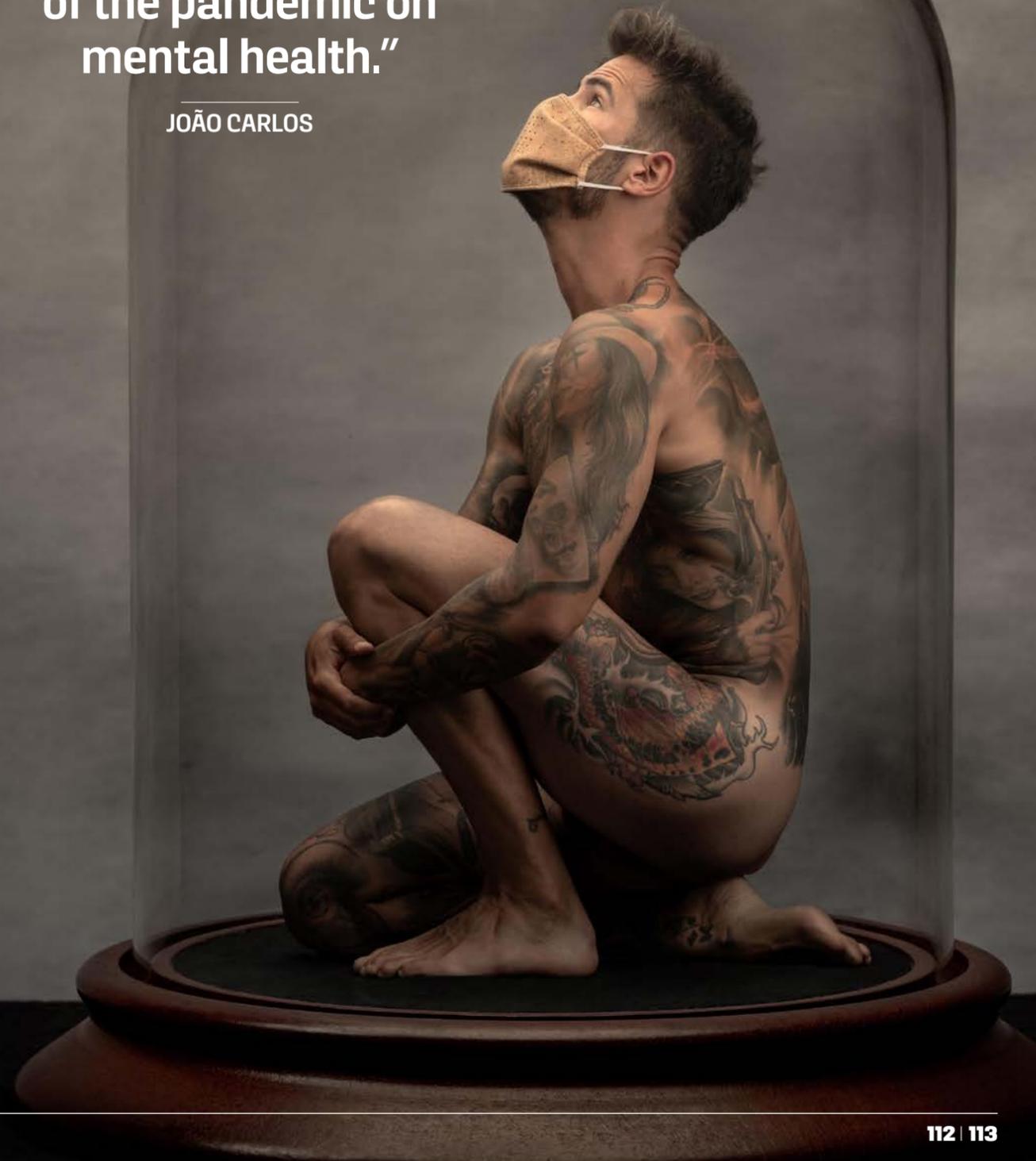
Mental health remains a taboo subject in our society. Yet everyone has been affected by the pandemic and can connect on different levels to the emotions expressed in this series. In a way, the exhibition will allow them to identify the emotions they have felt and to accept them because months later, the discomfort is still revealed. We've all tended to close in on ourselves before accepting the situation. The goal of my work is to create awareness, to help the spectators identify their emotions, and to force them to talk about them. Through these pictures, they can understand that they are not alone in this situation.

MORE...



"By exhibiting in a hospital, as many people as possible can be made aware of the impact of the pandemic on mental health."

JOÃO CARLOS



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