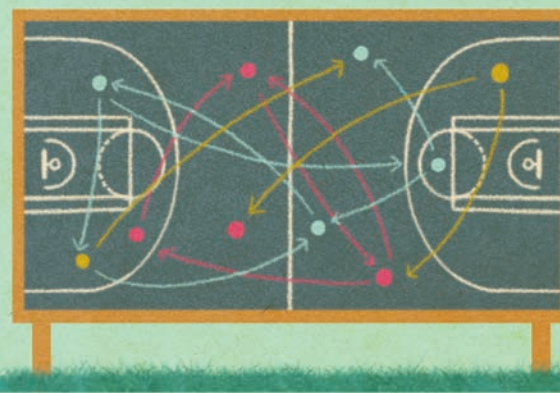


# Cover Story

## Economy and sport



# A sprint or a marathon?

TEXT Stéphane Étienne / Hypallages  
TRANSLATION FROM FRENCH Martin Davies

**The economic importance of sport is growing all over the world, and in particular within the European Union. It represents a significant part of the production of wealth. Many sporting disciplines such as football, basketball, tennis and rugby are part of Europe's cultural heritage. Amateur sports are no exception either. There are more than 700,000 sports clubs in the EU. As for Luxembourg, with its many sporting events, including charity races and walks such as the Relay for Life, Lëtz Go Gold, Broschkriibslaf, Business-Run Heroes or Darkness into Light, the country seems to be following the movement. But what is the reality? Is physical activity really king in Luxembourg?**

— In 2021, Luxembourg officially adopted the recommendations of the World Health Organisation (WHO) regarding physical activity for adults. These include 150 to 300 minutes of moderate physical activity and 75 to 150 minutes of intense physical activity per week. The country is one of the most active in the European Union with 98% of its inhabitants respecting the WHO guidelines. Only Germany and Finland do as well.

## **More than half of the day sat down.**

However, on closer examination, Luxembourgish residents are not as sporty as that! If their adherence to the recommended levels of physical activity is high, so is their sedentary time. On average, they spend more than 12 hours a day sitting! This is what emerges from a study carried out by the research group PASH (Physical Activity, Sport and Health) directed by Dr. Laurent Malisoux of the Luxembourg Institute of Health. During this study entitled ORISCAV-LUX 2 (Observation des Risques de la Santé Cardio-Vasculaire au Luxembourg), more than 1,100 adult participants wore an accelerometer, a device that measures movement, on their wrist for a week and were questioned about their lifestyle and

particularly about whether they practiced a sport or not. The data collected confirmed that the respect of the WHO recommendations by the majority of Luxembourg residents is very relative. According to the researchers, if only those episodes of physical activity exceeding 10 minutes are considered, the proportion falls to 25%. In other words, three quarters of residents do not devote much time to physical activity. The study also showed that more than a quarter of the total sedentary time is spent in periods of more than one hour, while this proportion is between 6 and 10% in the other European Union countries.

Even if this study has its limits, notably due to the fact that the accelerometers do not measure posture and can therefore record part of the time spent standing as sedentary, the researchers do sound the alarm. Long periods of sedentariness, which affect men more than women and older people more than young people, are detrimental to health and increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. According to the study, public health initiatives in Luxembourg should further encourage the breaking of sedentary time with periods of low-intensity physical activity, especially among people aged 50 and over.

## **Eat healthily and move more.**

However, there is no shortage of measures being taken by the public authorities to promote sport within the population. The latest is the presentation in February 2023 by Sports Minister Georges Engel and Interior Minister Tania Bofferding of the Luxembourg lives Sport Mindmap. This document contains examples of good practices intended to encourage municipal officials to support physical activity and movement in their areas. A multitude of projects are being proposed to anchor sport in the community, exploit the potential of active mobility, encourage physical activity on the way to school and organise trendy sports activities such as teqball (a cross between football and table tennis) or padel (a cross between tennis and squash).

A total of 50 concrete ideas have been introduced to bring the LTAD (Long-Term Athlete Development) – Luxembourg lives Sport framework concept to the local level. This ambitious project, presented in January 2021, has the overall objective of

***“Between 2016 and 2020, the sports economy increased its output by 2% and its employment by 26%.”***



## E-sport is struggling to establish itself in Luxembourg.

Electronic sports are attracting more and more participants around the world. The greatest champions of these disciplines have even become multimillionaires. Since June 2020, Luxembourg has its own LESF (Luxembourg E-sports Federation) and several gaming competitions are organised regularly. Let's mention in particular the POST E-sports Masters (PEM) and the Tango Highschool Cup (THSC) exclusively dedicated to high school students. However, the prospects for development are rather limited. E-sport is still not recognised by officialdom and sponsors are not forthcoming. It's no coincidence that Rams, one of the more promising professional structures, decided to fold in March 2021!



## A sports clinic open to all.

Contrary to popular opinion, the sports clinic located at CHL's Eich site is not limited to high-level athletes. It can also be used by all patients, of all ages, who are looking for advice in relation to their sporting activity or who are faced with problems in relation to physical activity. The doctors and physiotherapists of the clinic offer examinations to assess, rehabilitate and prevent sports injuries. Tests are carried out on a treadmill or an ergometric bicycle to evaluate the tolerance to effort or the management of training. Assistance is even offered for patients undergoing cardiac rehabilitation, those with hip or knee prostheses or people suffering from significant weight gain.



contributing to the sporting development of high-level athletes and the entire population through quality offers, involving competent coaches and actors (Good People), who will implement or support sports activities with coherent programs (Good Programs) in an adapted environment (Good Places). It is based on the Integrated Concept for Sport in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, a document drawn up in 2014 by the Luxembourg Olympic and Sports Committee (COSL) and advocating a common strategy for sports policy, federations, coaches, athletes and their environment. The Luxembourg Institute for High Performance in Sports (LIHPS), one of the five partners behind LATD – Luxembourg lives Sport, which is also the result of this COSL reflection document. Created in 2019, its mission is to coordinate specialised services for high-level athletes.

In line with this LTAD framework concept, the Minister of Sports presented a bill in December 2022 aimed at transforming the National School of Physical Education and Sports (ENEPS) into the National Institute of Physical Activity and Sports (INAPS). The new institute will aim to change the mission from a school organising training for technical and administrative executives within different forms of physical activity



towards a skills and resources centre in the field of sport. According to the Minister, it will further professionalise sport in Luxembourg and will be able to guide anyone who lacks physical activity towards a more active lifestyle.

Since 2006, the government has also been involved in a national inter-ministerial action plan, "Gesond iessen, méi beweegen" (Eat healthily, move more) or GIMB. The result of collaboration between the ministries responsible for health, education, sport, the family and integration, this plan, renewed as a national framework plan for the period 2018-2025, aims to promote balanced diet and regular physical activity and to fight against the problem of obesity and sedentary lifestyle for the entire population. The plan, in addition to information and awareness-raising activities, also offers organisations committed to promoting healthy and active lifestyles the opportunity to become partners and to be labelled GIMB during their actions. In the context of the GIMB, the Night of Sport has also been organised since 2010, which attracts several thousand participants each year. As summer approaches, some forty municipalities are responding to the call from the National Youth Service (SNJ) and the Ministry of Sports and are



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offering, in collaboration with sports associations, youth centres or other structures, a range of physical and sporting activities.

### Cities and towns also go into overdrive.

Towns and municipalities are also very active and many are putting sport at the heart of their actions. Luxembourg City offers a Sports for All programme with more than 190 different indoor and outdoor courses, supports more than 160 sports clubs and hosts nearly 175 sports facilities, including the National Sports and Cultural Centre in Le Coque, the new Luxembourg Stadium (football and rugby) and the National Athletics Stadium located at the National Sports Institute in Cents/Fetschenhof.

Esch-sur-Alzette plays the integration and inclusion card with weekly classes for everyone, including those with disabilities, the Fit60+ program for people aged 50 and over as well as various sporting activities only accessible to women and girls from all cultures. In terms of infrastructure, the city is also thinking big with the future construction of a third extension of the Henri Schmitz Omnisports Centre, a fourth sports complex that can accommodate 2,000

**01. 02.** The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends 150 to 300 minutes of moderate physical activity and 75 to 150 minutes of intense physical activity per week for adults.

**03.** Luxembourg has numerous sports clubs and sports infrastructures (photo: D'Coque National Sports and Cultural Centre).

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**Yves Marchello**  
Managing Director,  
Jims Luxembourg

***"The health crisis has provoked a renewed interest in sport."***

### Can you introduce Jims to us in a few words?

Our group has more than 100 employees, 34 gyms in Belgium and 4 in Luxembourg. Service quality is essential for us. That's why we recently founded the Jims Fitness Academy. It will notably aim to provide certified training (EREPS Level 3 and EREPS Level 4) to sports coaches, whether internal or external to Jims.

### You have been active in the fitness world for over 25 years. How do you see its future?

Fitness has become much more democratic in the past ten years with the appearance of so-called low-cost gyms. Thanks to their more attractive rates, but with services reduced to a minimum, they have allowed many people to take up sports. That being said, the average penetration rate in fitness rooms in Europe remains much lower than that of countries such as the United States or Australia. There is still an important margin for development and I think that this will be progressively filled in the years to come.

Covid has indeed caused a renewed interest in the practice of sport. Many people began to worry about their health and, after lockdown, wanted to move and feel their bodies. This passion became a habit, then a lifestyle. This is particularly the case for the younger generation. Our clubs are more and more invested by young people who are disciplined, involved and interested in training methods thanks to social networks that flood them with information.

### Have you also noticed a change on the part of companies?

Absolutely. We are approached more and more by companies that want to invest in the health and well-being of their employees. This investment can take several forms: either the company pays the entire subscription to our fitness rooms, or it pays part of it, or it asks us to organise team building sessions for it.

### Digitalisation is becoming more and more present in all sectors of activity. What about yours?

Like other sports centres in Luxembourg, we accelerated our digital transformation during the lockdown period. Today, thanks to our application, it is possible to combine training in the gym and at home thanks to programmes based on each person's personal goals.



**Olivier Delrieu**  
Coach sportif

***"The race to perform no longer applies to employees, especially the younger generations"***

**You became a sports coach after a career in gastronomic cuisine. Why the change?**

I found myself unemployed and decided to return to my first passion: sport. Since January 2020, I have been a sports instructor, specialising in running, athletics and fitness, mainly for individuals. I also work with companies and public institutions where I look after groups. I collaborate in particular with the City of Luxembourg within the framework of the Sport for All programme. I run classes for groups of seniors and children from diverse backgrounds. I also organise workshops for parents/children from the age of 3. The particularity of my training is that they are done in the open air. I travel to the home or workplace of my clients and choose a place in the surroundings to carry out the sports session.

**You have been involved in sporting activities since your youth. Do you think sport is perceived in the same way today?**

Previously, many companies gave their employees the chance to participate in team building activities or sporting events such as marathons or half-marathons with the objective of pushing them to improve their performance. At the moment, especially since the outbreak of Covid in our lives, this race to perform is no longer attractive to employees, especially the younger generations. To attract talent, good pay is not enough. Companies must also offer recreational activities, including sports, but without any pressure.

This new requirement also has repercussions on the way in which the profession of sports coach is exercised. Today, it is necessary to communicate more with clients, adapt to them with personalised programs that take into account their time use and sometimes show psychology by analysing their mood and mental state. For example, if you feel that the person needs to re-energise, I will take him to a forest. Sport must find a playful and convivial side that it has lost a little in recent years.

**What impact does sports training have on your clients?**

For many, it changed their lives. They realised that with method, regularity and above all pleasure, they feel better in their body and learn to respect it.



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people in the Lankelz district and a National Sports Museum which will be operated by the state and will extend over an area of 3,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

Differdange, awarded the title of European City of Sport in 2018, has since November 2022 hosted a structure which is unique in Luxembourg and in the Greater Region, the Sportfabrik (Sports factory). This structure is managed by the Luxembourg Institute for High Performance in Sports (LIHPS) with the expertise of its scientific partner, the Luxembourg Institute of Research in Orthopaedics, Sports Medicine and Science (LIROMS). It aims to be at the forefront of research in functional biomechanics, movement analysis, motor control, diagnosis of motor function, return to sport and injury prevention. Its mission is twofold. Firstly: to help top-level Luxembourg athletes improve their performance in the best possible conditions. Second: to pursue the development and dissemination of its scientific knowledge through projects, programs or educational activities in collaboration with other sectors and ministries in Luxembourg and also internationally.

The SportFabrik complements the services offered by the High Performance Training & Recovery Centre (HPTRC). Created in 2019 and also managed by the LIHPS, this centre located in La Coque provides elite athletes with innovative equipment as well as diagnostic equipment that meets the

**04. 05. 06.** The larger fitness centre groups in the country have formed the Luxembourg Fitness Federation (FLDF), affiliated to the Confédération Luxembourgeoise du Commerce (cic). Sports infrastructure is the most important pillar of the sports sector. It includes both the construction of new infrastructure and the management of existing structures public and private, i.e., fitness centres, golf and tennis courts, public swimming pools, etc. (Photo 06 CK Group)

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***“The World Cyclo-Cross held in Belvaux in 2017 had a positive impact on the Luxembourg economy to the tune of 12.746 million euros, at a cost of 1.8 million euros, and reached an audience measured at 60 million viewers worldwide.”***

requirements of professional training: pulley system for sprints, strength platforms for jump tests, extreme heat cabin, altitude chamber, ergospirometer for exhaled gas analysis and a camera system for video analysis.

In addition to the velodrome project in Mondorf-les-Bains – a covered track for cyclists at the heart of a vast complex comprising an aquatic centre, a sports hall, restaurants, shops and a storage centre for the Federation of Cycling Sports – , one could cite many more, but the list would be too long and its exhaustiveness temporary. On January 24, Sports Minister Georges Engel presented his five-year sports infrastructure plan for the period 2023-2027. Under this twelfth programme, a budget of 135 million euros is provided for large-scale construction and renovation projects exceeding 2 million euros. A total of 35 potential projects, including two open swimming pools in Vianden and Wiltz and a national beach volleyball centre in Bissen, should be subsidised in this way.

However, if we take a look at government spending. The Ministry of Sports has one of the smallest budgets, the proportionality of which has tended to decrease over the past three years: 0.34%, 0.33% and 0.21% of the total budget for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023.

**A heavyweight in the field of leisure.**

Should more be done? In any case, certainly no less, according to the "Integrated Concept for Sport in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg" of the Luxembourg Olympic and Sports Committee. Apart from the fact that it has a positive effect on the entire population and the health system, sport would also be a heavyweight in the field of leisure. Much more than a cost centre, this economic sector with strong dynamic growth would even contribute significantly to the country's productivity.

As if to testify to this positive economic impact, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (STATEC) published in December 2021, in cooperation with the Ministry of Sports, statistics for the period 2016-2020 as part of the pilot project establishment of sport satellite accounts. Regularly used by many countries in the European Union, sports satellite accounts are based on the following principle. The order of magnitude of the contribution of sport cannot be deduced directly from national accounts. Unlike other sectors of activity, sport is a transversal sector, like tourism and health, and consists of a multitude of elements from different economic branches. To produce these statistics, STATEC has therefore included all the activities to which sport contributes: sporting activities in the proper sense of the term, but also all actions

contributing to sporting activities. It also considered several aspects specific to the economy of Luxembourg sport. First of all, the vast majority of clubs and federations operate in amateur mode. Second, productivity in the sports economy is high – even higher than national productivity – and requires little labour. Finally, the country does not have other natural assets such as high mountains to attract mass sports tourism. Based on these specificities, STATEC has divided the sports economy into seven categories: sports infrastructure; clubs and federations; sports-related services; public administration, sports education, research and development; production and trade of sporting goods; sports media; and sports medicine.

The results of this study are revealing. Between 2016 and 2020, the sports economy increased its output by 2% and its employment by 26%. Even if its weight in the national economy has dropped from 1.2% to 1.1% of the gross domestic product (GDP), the sector presents productivity and employment growth above the national average. In 2020, it employed 4,454 full-time people professionally. Unsurprisingly, the sports infrastructure category is the most important pillar. It includes both the construction of new infrastructure and the management of existing infrastructure (public and private, i.e., fitness centres, golf and tennis courts, communal swimming pools, etc.). In 2020, sports infrastructure alone accounted for 52% of production (i.e. 335 million euros) and 46% of the workforce. The performance of this category can be explained above all by construction, the production of which has tripled in volume in the space of five years. The two other big employers in the sports economy are clubs and federations on the one hand and on the other, the production, sale and trade of sporting goods. If, for the former, the increase is explained by the fact



## The Luxembourg army, a factory of champions

Created in 1997, the Army's Elite Sports Section (SSEA) aims to give high-level sportsmen and women who volunteer for the army the opportunity to pursue two careers at once. After a basic military training of 4 months, they sign a contract that allows them to have a salary, to be covered by social security and to contribute to their pension while being released from the service to concentrate on their sports. If needed, the army can interrupt these privileges. This was the case during the Covid-19 pandemic when the elite athletes worked in the distribution and testing centres. The SSEA currently has 30 high-level volunteer sportsmen and women, among whom the racing driver Dylan Pereira and the table tennis player Sarah De Nutte, elected sports personalities of the year in 2022.



## Studies to make a career in sport and health.

Sport and health are sectors of the future and can open the doors to an international career, not just for high-level athletes. This is the credo of LUNEX University. This private university, based in Differdange, offers different courses in English at the license and master level. Three of them combine the two levels: physiotherapy, sports and movement sciences and sports management. The other two are only bachelors: one in nutrition, fitness and health and the other in health and quality of life at work. The university is also involved in research projects, including EXALT (EXercise gAming for eLderly and Telehealth), which aims to develop easy-to-use exercise games for the elderly to prevent falls.

that technical (coaches) and administrative management positions are labour-intensive, the second category owes its growth to household spending on sports products. These increased by 22% from 2016 to 2020 to reach 184.1 million euros and most of them - 77% - were made on the domestic market. The main items of increased expenditure are bicycles, in particular electric bicycles, and membership fees for clubs and associations. Even in the midst of a pandemic in 2020, the latter increased by 2%. The members remained loyal to their clubs and did not stop contributing.

## A runner with increasingly fragile feet.

That said, even if the figures seem eloquent for the economy of sport in Luxembourg, they must nevertheless be put into perspective. With its 1.1% of GDP, the country is still far from the European average which fluctuates, according to estimates, at between 3.4% and 3.7% of GDP. In addition, volunteers occupy a very important place in the Luxembourg sports economy. In parallel with the creation of satellite accounts, STATEC also conducted a survey on volunteering in the sports sector. This survey shows that the sports movement in the Grand Duchy could not exist without the commitment of thousands of volunteers. Compared to other sectors such as culture, political parties or trade unions, the number of volunteers as well as the intensity of voluntary activity is very high in sport. In 2020, just under 20,000 people worked as volunteers in sports associations, i.e., a total of 4.5 million hours worked without any pay! However, the number of volunteers is declining from year to year and the establishment of the "Du bass de Veräin Géff Benevole" campaign (The club is you. Become a volunteer) by the previous Minister of Sports Dan Kersch in October 2021 did not stem the downward movement. In other words, the sports economy in Luxembourg is a bit like a runner whose feet become more and more fragile over time.

## The fitness industry puffs out its chest.

Is there a catastrophe coming in the world of muscle and sweat? No not necessarily. A certain professionalisation will in any case be necessary if Luxembourg wants to become a more sporting nation. Moreover, not everyone is in the same boat. After the health crisis and the resulting lockdown, fitness clubs are gradually finding a smile



and new customers. With more than 500 employees and more than 40,000 subscribers, the sector even puffed out its chest with the creation in December 2020 of the Luxembourg Fitness Federation (FLDF). Affiliated to the Confédération Luxembourgeoise du Commerce (clc), the FDLF counts among its founders the eight most important fitness centres in the country (Factory4, CK Fitness, Just Move, KickYouFit, Luxfit, Vitaly-Fit, Pain World Fitness Centre and Jims). It intends to defend the interests of its members, promote the beneficial effects of sport for health and be the sole interlocutor with ministries and administrations. Fitness clubs are therefore doing quite well and often play the innovation card, as is the case with Touch&Play, a studio that combines light effects, music and adapted training and offers LED light markings and pressure sensors.

And that's not counting the many sports coaches and other independent personal trainers who offer their services individually or in groups in fitness clubs, at home, outdoors or even online. Since the health crisis, virtual training proposals have indeed become legion and are meeting with growing success. The only problem, and it is a major one, is that the profession, whether online or face-to-face, is absolutely not regulated by law in Luxembourg. In the eyes of Luxembourg legislation, the profession of sports coach does not exist and no diploma is required to practice it. Anyone who is an adult can give sports coaching lessons or claim to be a personal trainer and ask for any price for their services.



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Admittedly, approved organisations such as the National School of Physical Education and Sports (ENEPS) or the Fitness Academy provide training, but these are not a prerequisite for becoming a sports coach. The same is true for the European accreditation EREPS (European Register for Exercise Professionals). Launched in 2007, this fully independent registry has made it its mission to ensure that every instructor, coach and teacher working in the fitness and physical activity sector in Europe has the required qualifications. Registration with EREPS is therefore a guarantee of quality for the customer, but it is payable and without obligation. Clearly, your sports coach may not be EREPS accredited and yet may have followed all the training or have the experience necessary for the exercise of his profession. To put an end to this cacophony, a reflection was launched in 2016 by the Ministers of Health and Sports at the time, but nothing has changed since.

**A great sounding board for business and the country.**

As a vector of strong values, sport is also an undeniable communication asset for companies. The best examples of brands given value by sport include the ING Marathon,

**07. 08.** Fitness clubs are therefore doing rather well in Luxembourg, which also has many sports coaches and other independent personal trainers who offer their services individually or in groups in sports structures, clubs, at home, in the open air and even online.

**09.** Sport allows the country to build its reputation abroad during international events in which personalities from the Luxembourg sporting world participate (ping pong, cycling, tennis...).



**Erich François**  
Director of the ING Night Marathon Luxembourg and CEO of Step by Step

***"The ING Night Marathon, a nice shop window for the city and the country"***

**What makes the ING Night Marathon Luxembourg different from others?**

When I launched the first edition with my company Step by Step in 2006, there were already more than 350 events of this type in Europe. To distinguish ourselves from the competition, we therefore developed a new concept: a marathon that takes place in the evening, ends indoors and where the musical ambience occupies an important place. At each edition, more than 500 musicians playing in very different registers mark the course. The ING marathon is first and foremost a popular party.

**What are the economic benefits of the marathon for the city of Luxembourg and the country in general?**

They are difficult to figure out. However, we can use two studies to come up with an estimate. A student from the University of Trier showed that on average, a foreign athlete participating in the marathon – that is 60% of the entire group of runners – spends 2.1 nights here and is accompanied by 1.6 people. A professor at the University of Hamburg carried out research on the Berlin marathon. According to him, the event, with its 40,000 participants, generates economic returns of the order of 65 million. In Luxembourg, the average is 16,000 participants. As for the positive impact that the marathon brings to the image of the country, it is incalculable, but very real.

**Did the recent health crisis affect the popularity of the event?**

In 2022, when the marathon resumed after three years of absence, the total number of participants decreased by 25%. This decline was particularly noticeable among companies. Previously, they had registered up to 5,000 runners. In 2022, there were no more than 800. This deflection is due to the fact that teleworking is becoming the norm in the world of work. More and more employees no longer have the necessary motivation to do sports because they work more at home and benefit less from the collective dynamics of training with their colleagues. To counter this negative trend which, in the end, can have an important impact on the health of employees, we have launched this year the "From Office to 42" initiative in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the Chamber of Commerce and the European Commission. Twice a week, during the lunch break, our personal trainer David Steffes offers a free one-hour training session.





### Christian Jung

Director General of D'Coque, National Sports and Cultural Centre

*“D'Coque is for everyone: federations, schools, high-level athletes, private customers and companies”*

#### Can you briefly introduce us to the Coque?

It is the largest sporting infrastructure in the country. It has, in an area of 6000 m<sup>2</sup>, several sports halls and swimming pools used by federations, schools, top athletes, individuals and private companies, whether for daily training, sports competitions or other events. There is also the High Performance Training & Recovery Centre (HPTRC), a training and recovery space for top athletes. The Coque's offer is completed by a restaurant, a hotel, a relaxation centre, a climbing wall, fitness rooms and various meeting rooms and event spaces that can be rented.

#### How do your sports lessons differ from what can be found elsewhere on the market?

Our offer meets all objectives, whatever the level. We offer lessons for different age groups, from swimming for babies to personal training for adults. In all, D'Coque organises 99 group lesson sessions per week, including 13 new lessons launched in 2022. Our advantage is the possibility of practicing several sporting activities in the same place, which can be combined with a meal in the restaurant, a moment of wellness at the relaxation centre or even a hotel stay!

#### La Coque also hosts sporting and cultural events. Which?

On average, D'Coque hosts between 60 and 65 events per year. Sports competitions organised by Luxembourg federations represent the vast majority of these events. We also host other international sporting events such as, for example, the "Luxembourg Ladies Tennis Masters" which was organised for the first time at La Coque in 2022. At the cultural level, La Coque regularly hosts large-scale events, such as "Our Planet - Live in Concert" which took place in the Coque's Arena in October 2022.

#### How far does the influence of the Coque go: national, greater-regional or international?

It is very wide. Schools and regional federations are an important part of our identity. But we also organise very high-level international sports competitions and regularly welcome international sports groups as part of training camps or preparation courses to our premises.



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the Skoda Tour Luxembourg and the BGL BNP Paribas Luxembourg Open, which since 2022 has become the Luxembourg Ladies Tennis Masters. Organised by the International Women's Tennis Promotion (IWTP) in partnership with BGL BNP Paribas, this invitational tournament sees eight internationally renowned players compete, two of whom have reached the top of the WTA rankings at least once in their career (Women's Tennis Association).

The government is also counting on sport to increase the country's reputation abroad. As part of the Nation Branding process, the Minister of Sports signs partnership agreements at regular intervals with several high-level athletes as well as with federations. In exchange for financial compensation, the signatories agree to display the "Luxembourg - Let's make it happen" signature on their outfits or at international events. Like his predecessors, the current Sports Minister Georges Engel has recently concluded partnership agreements with several personalities from the Luxembourg sports world, including table tennis players Sarah De Nutte and Ni Xia Lian, cyclist Christine Majerus, player tennis player Mandy Minella, as well as with the Luxembourg Tennis Federation (FLT).

Hosting international sporting events is another important challenge for the country and its economy. It is no coincidence that the Council of Government mandated Sports Minister Georges Engel in July 2022

10. Cycling is one of the most popular sports in Luxembourg.

11. 12. From now on, Luxembourg is creating new structures that will help its elite sportsmen and women to improve their performances in the best possible conditions and to continue the development and dissemination of scientific knowledge through projects, programs and educational activities.

13. A sports offer in a professional environment also offers multiple advantages, such as developing a group dynamic.

*“With its 1.1% of GDP, the country is still far from the European average which fluctuates, according to estimates, at between 3.4% and 3.7% of GDP.”*



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to continue discussions with the organisers of the Tour de France with a view to hosting the arrival and departure of stages in Luxembourg. Cycling is one of the most popular sports and can bring huge positive benefits. To give an idea, a study has shown that the World Cyclo-Cross held in Belvaux in 2017 had a positive impact on the Luxembourg economy to the tune of 12.746 million euros, at a cost of 1.8 million euros, and reached an audience measured at 60 million viewers worldwide.

**Sport and business: a marriage of convenience.**

But sport is not just of interest to companies as a marketing tool. A sports offer in a professional environment also offers many advantages, as evidenced by Valérie-Anne Copine, of the CDCL Sports Committee (Compagnie de construction luxembourgeoise). “Since moving to our new building in Leudelange in January 2022, we have had premises entirely dedicated to sport. It has been designed as a real fitness room with appropriate ventilation, a treadmill, a rowing machine, an indoor cycle, weights, weight machines, separate changing rooms and showers. Twice a week, at lunchtime, sports coaches give group lessons, one is



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dedicated to relaxation and yoga and the other to fitness and muscle strengthening. We offer our colleagues the opportunity to participate in recurring sporting events such as the Relais pour la Vie, LëtZ Go Gold or the ING Night Marathon Luxembourg and also organise our own events. All of these initiatives have an impact on the health and well-being of our colleagues. They promote group dynamics. The simple fact of participating in a sporting event with a CDCL T-shirt makes it easier to identify with the company. They also create links by multiplying the opportunities to meet colleagues that we rarely meet in the exercise of our respective functions. Finally, they offer the possibility for colleagues to maintain a better balance between private and professional life by integrating a good dose of sport. When you're a parent, you don't necessarily have the time or the motivation to engage in physical activity when you get home."

So, does sport have a bright future in Luxembourg? It all depends on the point of view taken. If we consider the glass as half empty, we cannot take this for granted. The

pandemic has accentuated the downward trend in volunteering, without which many sports federations and events could not exist. Teleworking has increased the sedentary lifestyle of workers and counteracts the positive effects of sport in the workplace. As for the lifestyles of Luxembourg residents, they are struggling to evolve in a healthier way. According to a report published in 2021 by the OECD and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, more than a third of all deaths in Luxembourg are attributable to behavioural risk factors, such as such as smoking, poor diet (too much sugar and salt and not enough fruits and vegetables), alcohol consumption and lack of physical activity. It is true that grey and white heads are far from constituting the majority in fitness clubs. —