

CATCHING UP
WITH...

CARLO THELEN

Defending the interests of more than 50,000 member companies is all in a day's work for the chamber chief.



As director general and chief economist of the Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce, it is fair to say Carlo Thelen's days are fuller than most. The chamber's membership represents 80% of Luxembourg GDP and 75% of total employment. "We've many different nationalities within our business creators, 74% of whom are not Luxembourg nationals, so we've a very international and multicultural business environment, which is quite unique in Europe."

Having worked with the chamber for more than 20 years, Thelen has witnessed first-hand a number of profound changes in line with the economic and political climate. "We are primarily a service provider, and in that sense we need to constantly adapt our services to the needs of the future." He cites by example a number of new megatrends such as digitalisation, decarbonisation, and the sharing and circular economies. In order to address such challenges, it entered into a partnership with the ministry of the economy and IMS last year to launch the "Third Industrial Revolution" project, based upon the theories of the economist Jeremy Rifkin.

"Accompanying our members in their transition towards new economic models is one of our priorities. We constantly strive to improve the national business climate for the benefit of existing and future entrepreneurs." The outfit has numerous projects in store this year, the highlight being the launch of its new one-stop-shop providing assistance to businesses and project initiators within the House of Entrepreneurship. "The aim is to provide added value by integrating public and private stakeholders in the process of business creation and development--to offer a fully-fledged and customer-oriented solution to businesses."

The new one-stop-shop will be officially inaugurated during the chamber's 175th anniversary celebration: the "30th September 2016 is going to be a great, festive evening with an internationally renowned keynote speaker, in the presence of His Royal Highness the Grand Duke, government officials and many of our members--not all of them of course, because we cannot fit 50,000 into one room." And Thelen's one wish for the future? "That we will have more young people who dare to pursue innovative ideas, go off the beaten track and start their own businesses."

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