



KARIN SCHINTGEN



House of Startups: the new Innovation Campus in Luxembourg City

CHECK OUT THIS FIRESIDE CHAT WITH KARIN SCHINTGEN, CEO OF THE BRAND NEW HOUSE OF STARTUPS (HOST), THE ANCHOR POINT FOR YOUNG STARTUPS AND A LABORATORY FOR NEW IDEAS.



THE HOST IS FINALLY HERE! WHAT WERE THE MAIN CHALLENGES?

The two main challenges were defining the concept and choosing the location. Let's start with the concept. The concept in itself is the outcome of a strategic approach by the Chamber of Commerce to accelerate the development of entrepreneurial ideas way before the enterprise is actually launched. In line with this logic, the Chamber first set up a House of Training and then in 2016 the House of Entrepreneurship.

The very specific challenges faced by non-traditional innovative companies led to the decision to create the HoST. Today, these three Houses offer a full package: from training programs to guidance in entrepreneurship, including creation of new companies and diversification of the existing corporate substance.

The second challenge was finding an appropriate location and the equipment of these facilities within a quite conventional office building. We wanted a place that would inspire and boost creativity, somewhere that would enable people from extremely different backgrounds and nationalities to feel at home in Luxembourg. We therefore put together an unconventional team combining the skills of Luxembourgish artisans with an Israeli interior designer well versed in startup space aesthetic. The result is great and people love the place!

HOW WAS THE CITY OF LUXEMBOURG INVOLVED?

The City of Luxembourg is the partner of one of our five Innovation Hubs: the Luxembourg-City Incubator (LCI). After launching the HoST in September 2017, the Chamber of Commerce created the LCI as a more universal incubator. Due to the partnership with the City on one hand, and various other incubators in the country (with whom we want to cooperate and not compete!) on the other, a decision was made to focus on areas of close interest to the Chamber and the City: urban tech, business, tourism, logistics, construction and the environment.

The City also wanted to give special attention to female entrepreneurship and the support of social enterprises. For the City, as well as the Chamber, it was important not only to witness change but to take an active part in impacting this change. Both the economy of tomorrow and the cities of tomorrow will be very different from what they are today. It is important to anticipate that change by educating and attracting the right people to handle the change.

LHOFT, LCI, ICFA, NYUKO... THAT'S QUITE A FEW INITIATIVES UNDER ONE ROOF!

HoST is kind of an innovation campus where you find a mix of startups, corporates and experts. Starting with the innovation hubs or incubators that host startups over a longer period of time, we are very happy to have the Luxembourg House of Financial Technology (LHoFT) which focuses on RegTech, FundTech and InsurTech, in addition to FinTech. The LCI and the newly created Hub@Luxembourg - an initiative launched by Group Crédit Agricole and closely linked to the Villages by CA concept - will also be housing startups from a variety of sectors ranging from space to maritime, and cybersecurity up to new technologies in the agricultural sector.

We also host accelerators such as nyuko active in early or later stage startup support, and the International Climate Finance Accelerator which supports the Luxembourg fund industry's focus on green and climate issues. Next to the LHoFT you'll find Chinese FinTech, PingPong.

HOW DO YOU COORDINATE EVERYTHING?

First and foremost by catering as much as we can to their needs and trying to work together. Each initiative is autonomous in its actions but we try to find as many synergies as possible. Coordination is much easier when you're all in the same House.

WHAT ARE THE HOST'S MAIN OBJECTIVES?

We are expected to run a dynamic and interactive House that attracts the best players in the field. We plan to heavily promote the ecosystem at trade fairs and through our communication strategy, and we will definitely be a lobbyist for the ecosystem. Our aim is to be recognized as driver and unifier of the ecosystem.

WHY SHOULD A STARTUP JOIN THE HOST?

For everything it offers in terms of services, facilities and the dynamic nature of the House. The HoST is not an incubator - it is a campus, or a forum for innovation. Startups enjoy interaction with a broad range of professionals who do not only come from the startup world. A startup usually knows which incubator it wants to join otherwise we gladly make introductions and provide all the necessary information.

Furthermore, the HoST also supports a number of corporate initiatives including Business Mentoring and the Luxembourg Open Innovation Club. It should also be highlighted that the various innovation hubs have been quite successful in attracting major sponsors willing to support startups. This is fantastic! We have also set up a space called Check Point where startups (not only ours, but also those of other incubators) can have access to experts in a number of fields such as web design, intellectual property, data management, marketing and accounting. Of course, we also intend to run inspiring events for the community in a continuous effort to support networking and the exchange of expertise.

In a nutshell, startups should come to the HoST because it is THE place to be! ● ○