

Interview: Jean-Paul Schuler CEO, Luxinnovation, Luxembourg

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Jean-Paul Schuler, CEO of Luxinnovation Luxembourg's National Agency for Innovation and Research, explains how his team is working hard to

contribute to Luxembourg's economic development by fostering innovation, fueling international growth and attracting foreign direct investment. He also explains why Luxembourg is an excellent place for companies looking to develop a western European hub.

As an introduction to our international audience, can you please introduce the remit of Luxinnovation and the services it provides?

Luxinnovation was created in 1984 to promote and facilitate innovation in a bid to make our country more competitive and economically diverse. Since then our role has evolved. We now focus on stimulating Luxembourg's economy by proposing an extensive range of high-value, complimentary services to companies of any size and by driving major cooperation projects in partnership with research and technology organisations.

Helping companies to establish research initiatives and advising on possible areas where they can receive financial support is a big part of what we do. To put this into context; European funding has grown in importance. Europe has developed some very good and strategic initiatives such as [Horizon 2020](#). This means that the support is there for ambitious and deserving projects in line with national and European directives. The Luxembourg Ministry of Research mandated us to provide national contract points (NCPs) in all the Horizon 2020 committees in Brussels. In this way Luxinnovation helps companies in Luxembourg gain access into European projects and establish connections and participate in consortiums with other companies across Europe.

We also have developed a department focused on SMEs because they often have greater difficulties fostering innovation than larger companies due to resource restraint (finance, people, time).

How has Luxinnovation evolved in more recent years?

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In 2008 and 2009, Luxembourg developed an official cluster initiative with a keen focus on becoming much more globally competitive by leveraging the potential of six targeted sectors considered most important for the development of Luxembourg's economy. Key companies and research laboratories were regrouped into clusters to foster increased productivity R&D, product and service development and the identification of new business opportunities.

Today, the Luxembourg government offers long term support and commitment to the development and growth of these sectors. There are now seven clusters in total of which Luxinnovation manages six: automotive components, life sciences, eco-technologies, ICT, materials and production technologies and space technologies. The other cluster, logistics, is managed by the Chamber of Commerce.

Since I joined Luxinnovation, both the mandate and team have grown in size and diversity. We are now comprised of a large range of nationalities and languages, an advantageous diversity often found in Luxembourg. Recently we have been further tasked by the Minister of the Economy to build upon our broad knowledge across our six sectors by developing a department responsible for attracting foreign investors.

What is the importance of Life Sciences to Luxembourg?

Luxembourg has progressed rapidly into life sciences and technologies in recent years, especially in the fields of personalised medicine (specifically in cancer, diabetes and Parkinson's disease), diagnostics, bioinformatics and digital health or Health IT. The country has established a personalised Medicine Consortium (PMC) which includes the IBBL (Integrated BioBank of Luxembourg), the Centre de Recherche Public 'Santé' (CRP 'Santé') Luxembourg Institute of Health and the Luxembourg Centre for Systems Biomedicine (LCSB) at the University of Luxembourg.

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It is our government's firm commitment to establish Luxembourg as an attractive destination for health sciences research and innovation backed by substantial public investment and a supportive business environment. A key initiative is Luxembourg's new House of Biohealth, a unique hosting facility with office and lab spaces for both established and start-up companies in the field of biotech, clean-tech and ICT. With its proximity to the Luxembourg Centre of Systems Biomedicine (LCSB), the future location of Luxembourg and the future Hôpital du Sud and direct access to the highway, train and airport, this facility will have a lot of impact on our life sciences sector and our national healthcare system.

Alongside this, Luxembourg has an extremely supportive environment for R&D and innovation as well as favourable Intellectual Property policies. Luxembourg's unique location makes it an ideal European hub and a perfect platform for EMEA Coverage Europe (Middle East and Africa), With our multilingual population and easy access to highly skilled labour, our excellent logistics hub and our world class ICT infrastructure including secure data centres we anticipate a lot more development in the future.

Finally, what is Luxinnovation's role in promoting the life science's sector specifically?

Luxinnovation's role is to promote this industry and make academics, commercial entities and research organisations aware of our emerging presence. We want to attract investment and companies to install in Luxembourg and collaborate with Luxembourg research organisations.

Luxinnovation manages the life sciences cluster and we would like to see this sector grow and achieve critical mass. To support this, we encourage the government to invest more in this area. They have been successful in attracting tremendously talented people to the public research sector, but this is only the first step. The foundations are there but there is still work to be done including more and better financial incentives to attract investment into Luxembourg.

Life sciences in Luxembourg is a dynamic emerging and fast evolving market. Our country is perfectly situated for companies that want to develop a western European hub. Our well known quick decision-making process is a great advantage and we are a uniquely international country that is extremely open to foreigners. With the opportunities we offer now, and the new initiatives we are developing for the future, this will be an exciting area to watch.

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