

Duncan Roberts

# Building bridges

## The role of media in bringing local and international communities closer together

The number of English speakers living and working in Luxembourg has grown significantly in recent decades, especially with the growth of the financial services sector and since the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, when eight Central and Eastern European countries as well as two English-speaking Mediterranean countries joined the union.

English-speakers are defined here as those who chose English as their first or second language – that is to say, the language that expats from different countries use to communicate with each other and the language in which they prefer to receive information from the media in Luxembourg. The growing significance of English has also been recognised by the government, most obviously in building a new state school in Differdange that will allow students to take the international baccalaureate in English – this is in addition to existing English-language programmes at the Athénée and Lycée Michel Lucius.

### 50 000 English speakers

Estimates by Statec put the number of English-speaking expats living in the Grand Duchy at around 50 000. Most of them work in the institutions of the European Union, in the financial services sector or in international companies that have set up offices in Luxembourg.

Providing these expats, for want of a better word, with essential information is a

complex challenge. Their requirements vary wildly depending on how long they have already been in the country, how long they plan to stay, how integrated they choose to be and their family circumstances. Thus, the editorial team of *Delano*, a magazine launched in 2011, faces the challenge of selecting topics that could be interesting for this diverse community. They can relate to anything from changes in legislation that will directly affect expats to providing an insight into how local politics works; from writing

---

**(...) in the case of *Delano* close to 20 % of the readers are actually Luxembourgish.**

---

about the latest developments in innovation and entrepreneurship to an article explaining the rights of employees; from examining the local funds industry to reporting on the real estate market; from interviews with experts on health issues to talking with Luxembourg-based fashion designers; from previewing English-language theatre productions and concerts to suggesting ways that readers can get involved in local volunteer work.

The only constraint imposed on ourselves is that the topics must have a Luxembourg angle and must be relevant to the English-speaking international community. Writing about national elections in a third country may not be an option, but something like the UK referendum on remaining in the European Union can be

covered as its outcome will not only affect British expats living in Luxembourg but could also impact the financial services sector.

### Tone of voice

Striking the right tone of voice is equally important as choosing the relevant topics. Some readers are brand new arrivals; others have lived in Luxembourg for as long as thirty years or more. Therefore, it is important to strike the right balance between being informative without being condescending, to explain the context for those who may not yet understand the intricacies of how Luxembourg works, and to find a fresh approach for those familiar with a particular subject.

English-speaking publications may encourage expat readers to integrate as much as possible, providing them with the information they need to understand Luxembourg and to sate their curiosity about their host country. But, a 2015 readership survey, and personal experience, has also revealed that in the case of *Delano* close to 20 % of the readers are actually Luxembourgish. This shows that publications in English have the potential to build bridges between the local and international communities as they give Luxembourgers an insight into what expats think about their country – which could be a vital contribution to the nation branding exercise – and providing them with information about activities and innovation in the international community. ♦