

'Conference centre falls behind schedule' from Le Quotidien (2 October 2003)

Caption: In an article published on 2 October 2003, the Luxembourg newspaper Le Quotidien reports that, from Monday 6 October, because of the renovation work being carried out on the conference centre in the Tower Building in Kirchberg, the Kiem Conference Centre, in the Kirchberg district in Luxembourg, will host meetings of the Council of the European Union.

Source: Le Quotidien. 02.10.2003. Luxembourg: Lumedica S.A. "Le centre de conférence a pris du retard", auteur:Reinson, Florence , p. 11.

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Conference centre falls behind schedule

The new complex for the Council of the European Union in Luxembourg will open its doors to EU Ministers on Monday next. A problem with interpreters' booths has caused the delay.

Florence Reinson

The new conference centre in Kirchberg will open for meetings of the Council of the European Union next Monday — somewhat later than planned.

The new centre, a temporary replacement for the former conference facility beside the tower in the old European quarter, has taken over 9 000 m² — in Halls 4 and 5 of the *Foires Internationales*, in the domaine du Kiem, Kirchberg.

In the run-up to enlargement of the Union by ten new Member States, the existing conference centre had become too cramped. A decision was therefore taken to construct temporary premises — which must serve until 2007 — pending completion of the (proper) new centre.

Work on the temporary centre began six months ago and will cost a total of EUR 6 million. That 'limited' budget means that much of the office equipment will be second-hand. And in four or five years' time, this stage setting for European Ministerial pow-wows (held in October, April and June) will be stripped bare and as much as possible will be recycled.

The first Council meeting due to take place at the Kiem Conference Centre, scheduled to start today, has been transferred to Brussels. **'Yesterday [Tuesday] the company in charge of the interpreters' booths could not confirm that they would be 100 % operational today [yesterday]'**, explained architect Jim Clemes.

Reeking of fresh paint and brand new carpet, the Kiem centre will host the European Ministers from next Monday.

Jean-Michel Collignon, newly appointed head of the *Société des Foires Internationales de Luxembourg* was amazed by the speed with which the work was completed. **'The architect has done a terrific job,'** he commented.

Minister for Public Works Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, meanwhile, was making no comment.

The Kiem conference centre comprises a hall that can seat 184 people, with 25 interpreters' booths; a further space capable of accommodating 140 people, with 22 booths; and a third with seating for 120 and six booths. Hall 5 also houses two 100-seater overflow rooms; two dining rooms which can seat 50 people and include six interpreters' booths; and a third, 60-place dining room.

Hall 4 is to function as the international press centre: it includes an auditorium that can hold 300 people; 25 briefing rooms (one for each Member State); 300 work stations and 20 editing consoles.

The entire site can accommodate 1 600 people.

The *Société des Foires Internationales de Luxembourg* — rumoured to be considering relocation — is thus sacrificing a significant slice of its floor space and has had to turn away would-be exhibitors for next autumn's fair.

There is, however, some recompense, in the form of rent at the rate of EUR 1.2 million annually, to be paid by the Luxembourg Government. **'Just enough to make good what we will lose through the reduction in space'**, Jean-Michel Collignon assures us.