

'The Kiem Conference Centre, venue for the meetings' from La Voix du Luxembourg (28 December 2004)

Caption: In an article published on 28 December 2004, one week before the launch of the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the daily newspaper La Voix du Luxembourg describes the Kiem Centre as being the main venue for the holding of Council meetings in Luxembourg.

Source: La Voix du Luxembourg. 28.12.2004. Luxembourg. "Le centre Kiem, pilier des réunions", auteur:Dionnet, Olivier , p. 6.

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The Kiem Conference Centre, venue for the meetings

Preparations for the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) began in April. So, with the Presidency due to start in a week's time, it is important to describe the arrangements for the meetings to be held by the Luxembourg Government in the next six months.

Olivier Dionnet

Certainly the presidency of the EU Council is a great event for any Member State. But for the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg it is especially important. Luxembourg is one of the seats of the EU; over 9 000 officials are based there and European Commission and Council offices have been relocated there.

The Luxembourg Government has therefore been preparing itself to face this challenge since last April, through all its ministries and administrative departments and with the support of the Council Secretariat, whose assistance has become more and more essential.

A plan has been worked out and two committees have been set up. The first, the steering committee, is responsible for the general arrangements for the Presidency. The second, the interministerial committee, which did not exist in previous presidencies (the last was in 1997), is the logistical contact point for all the ministries. Luxembourg has taken on 240 extra *chargés de mission*.

Right from the start, this Presidency has been seen as more difficult to organise than the previous ones. Three factors were particularly important in the arrangements for the 220 or so meetings planned: the growing integration within the EU, the enlargement to 25 members since May, and the security aspect.

The first factor means that there will be more meetings on more and increasingly varied subjects.

The entry of ten new Member States requires appropriate infrastructures, since a total of 20 000 delegates and 4 000 journalists will have to be accommodated. Arrangements will also have to be made for attendance by the four candidate countries and non-member countries such as Switzerland and Norway, which are normally invited to the meetings.

Special attention has been paid to security, with, for the first time, cross-border police cooperation with Belgium. In fact, Belgian police officers will be seen in Luxembourg.

But the possibility of decentralising is much more limited than in 1997. Many meetings between officials and experts will certainly be held at Neumünster Abbey (about 80 on 145 days out of the 180 of the Presidency) and in Mondorf (around 40). Other, more marginal meetings will be in Echternach and Vianden. But Kiem will be the conference centre for the Luxembourg Presidency.

It is on the LuxExpo site on the Kirchberg and can accommodate 1 600 people in an occupied area of about 9 000 square metres. It has 58 booths that can each hold four interpreters, so it has room for 232 interpreters.

Hall 5 is the actual conference centre. It has three meeting rooms housing 444 people, 52 interpreting booths and two overflow rooms for 100 people.

Hall 4 houses the press centre, with a room for 300 people and six interpreting booths, a press briefing office for each Member State, 25 offices in all, 300 work stations with individual telephone links for the press and 20 editing desks for the audiovisual media.

As regards the cost of the Presidency and who pays it, the financial arrangements vary between financing entirely by the EU and joint financing, the percentage of which can also vary.

Although Luxembourg (like every other country) is obviously anxious to impose its own style during this Presidency, Georges Santer, secretary-general at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, points out that 80 % of the timetable is already decided. The European programme for 2005 has been drawn up in collaboration with the United Kingdom, which will take over the Presidency in the second half of the year. He also says that the Benelux delegations deputise for Luxembourg abroad when there is no bilateral representation.

He confides with some relief that ‘everything is finally ready for the six months that Luxembourg has been so proud to organise’.