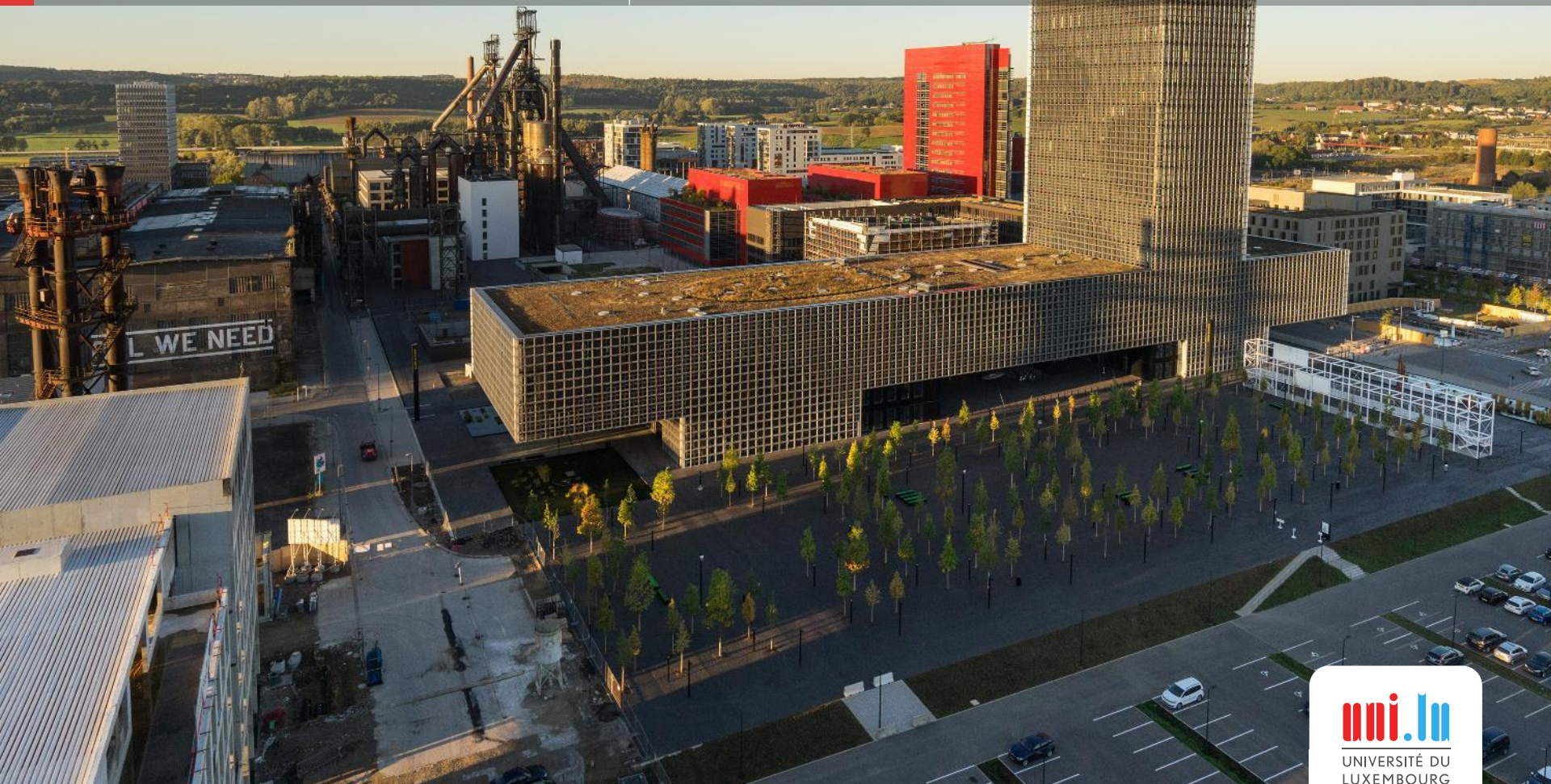


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34th annual AEMI Conference - Beyond Work: Sports, culture,
and arts within diverse societies in Europe across time

Topic: Sport as a means to promote intercultural
and interreligious dialogue - 26.09.2024



Beyond Work:

Sports, culture, and arts within diverse societies in Europe across time

Sport as a means to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue

Elke Murdock, University of Luxembourg

Elke.murdock@uni.lu

Ingo Hanke, Bistum Luxembourg

- *Diverse society:* Luxembourg - Context
- *Sport:* InterFaith - Project



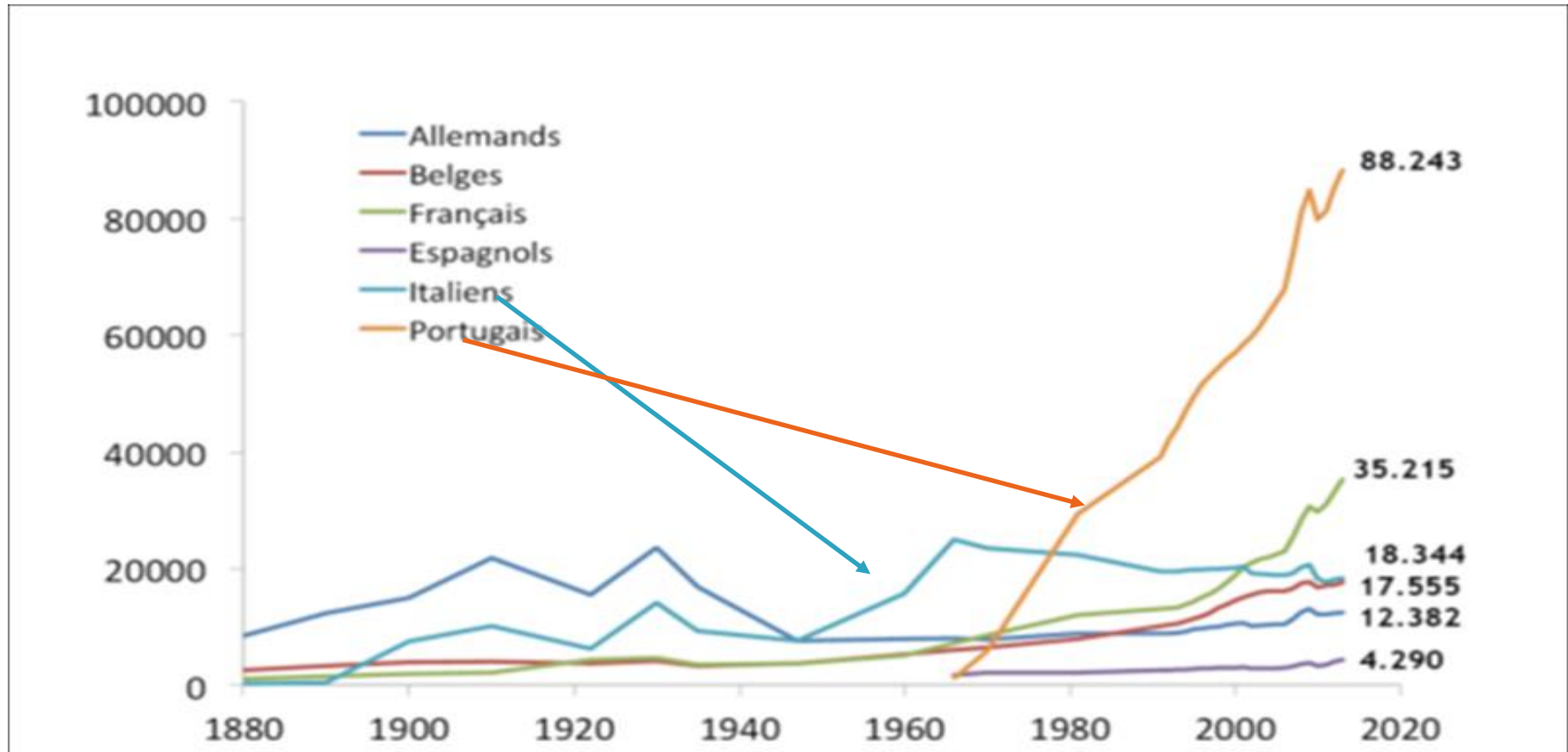
- Challenges and outlook



- Small (N-S – 82 km E-W 57 km)
- Shares borders with 3 countries
- Foreign population percentage: **47,1%** (Statec, 2022)
 - Largest foreign population group: Portuguese (15%)
 - Different immigration waves

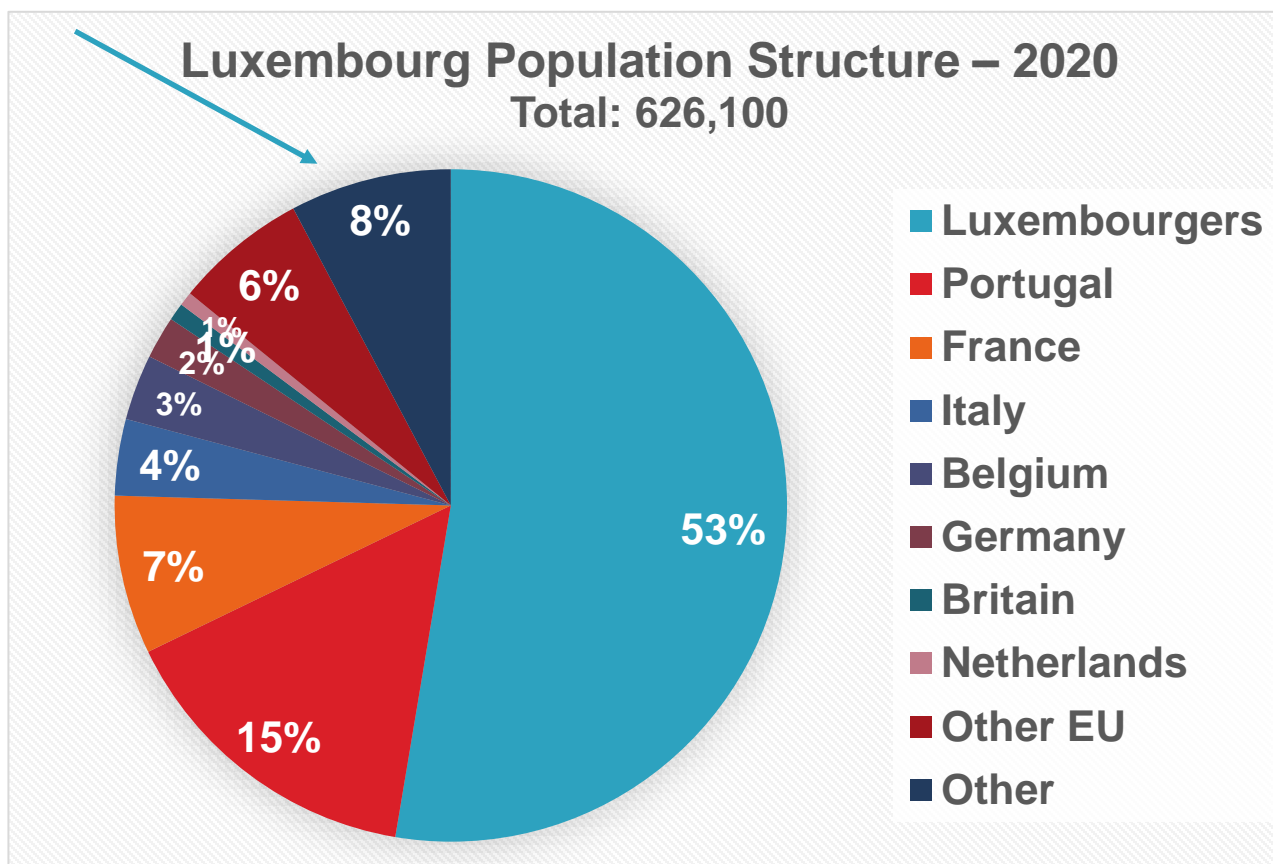


Different immigration waves (1875 – 2013) :





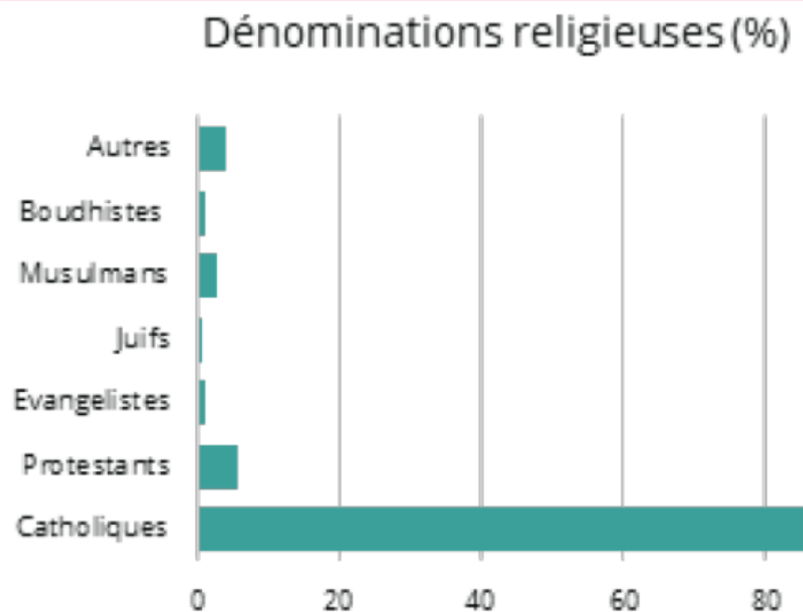
- Foreign population percentage 47.1% (Statec, 2022)





- Predominantly catholic country, but the religious landscape is changing.

GRAPHIQUE 5 : DÉNOMINATIONS RELIGIEUSES EN % AU LUXEMBOURG



Source: European Value Survey (EVS), réalisée fin 2020 début 2021.

STATEC, 2023



- Divergent development:
- People who **identify** with traditional religious beliefs and practices, particularly Catholicism, have fallen sharply from **75%** to **48%** between 2008 and 2021.
- The **importance** of religion has also fallen over the same period from **42%** to **24%**.
- For younger generations without a Christian background, their **religious and cultural identities are closely intertwined**. Compared to Christian cultures, Muslim or Hindu communities are quicker to identify themselves as religious.
 - STATEC, 2023
- **Religion is portable!**

I'Observatoire de l'Islamophobie au Luxembourg (OIL)

4th report of the Observatory of Islamophobia in Luxembourg

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- **73.24%** of participants believe that individuals of Muslim faith are socially well integrated in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg,
- **77.92%** feel they are safe in the Grand Duchy and
- **64.54%** think they are less discriminated against here than in neighbouring countries (France, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands).

BUT

The OIL report also notes:

During the year 2023, 22% (21% in 2022) of respondents reported being victims of Islamophobic acts and 29% (34% in 2022) of them witnessed such acts without being directly affected.

These incidents are often underreported – incidents may be higher.

- *Diverse society:* Luxembourg - Context

- ***Sport:*** InterFaith - Project



- Challenges and outlook

- **27.05 2006: First ING Night Marathon in Luxembourg**
- **=> Geistlicher Startschuss – “starting gun” Prayer for Peace**
before the event by two priests & running enthusiasts (religion is not confined to churches)
- **18.05.2007:** Priest-United – (ordained priests)
 - Initial patrons: Jean-Claude Juncker (Prime minister of Luxembourg)
 - Margot Kässmann (Protestant bishop, Germany)
- **03.05.2008: First InterFaith-Weekend**
 - Patron: His holiness the Dalai Lama)
 - Patron: Cardinal Hollerich (Since 2015:
- Since 2008 – every year in association with the ING Night Marathon (break during COVID)

The idea of InterFaith

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■ The InterFaith Project:

Message to InterFaith by His Holiness the Dalai Lama



THE DALAI LAMA

MESSAGE

Warm greetings to everyone participating in the “*Interfaith Run for a United World*” as part of the ING Night Marathon, Luxembourg, on 31st May this year. I am very moved to hear that so many people are planning to take part in this run. I am always impressed when, in addition to words of support, people actually undergo some physical effort and hardship to express their support for some cause. It takes courage. I am reminded of the way down the centuries in Tibet, people would set out on pilgrimage, or embark on a journey to join a monastery to further their education. Either way, like those who are running on this occasion, they would dedicate their efforts to the welfare of others.

In our world these days we are ever more interdependent and yet we spend too much time dividing people into ‘us’ and ‘them’, thinking that overcoming ‘them’ will be a victory for ‘us’. As human beings we are all the same. We all want a happy life and have a right to lead it, which is why it is important to remember that we all belong to one human family.

Similarly, since religious faith is one of the factors that help us temper our negative emotions, it is particularly sad when religion becomes a source of conflict. I think this occurs when there is not enough contact and understanding between us. We need to make greater efforts to emulate the Indian example of many religions living together in harmony. Religious harmony is not just a matter of making diplomatic gestures but of demonstrating our respect and mutual admiration in action. Your coming from different faiths and running together sets a strong example to millions of religious followers all over the world. It expresses our need to reach out to each other and work together for the common human goal of peace and happiness.

The key to genuine world peace is inner peace and the foundation of that is a sense of understanding and respect for each other as human beings, based on compassion and love. As you take part in the Luxembourg Night Marathon and gather at the end, let us pray that these qualities grow within us all, contributing to a happier, more peaceful world for all sentient beings now and in the future.

May 22, 2014

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- **Psychological concepts –**
 - **Categorization – Minimal group paradigm/ Social Identity Theory (Tajfel 1970; Tajfel et al. 1971 ...)**
 - **Contact hypothesis – reduction of prejudice (Sherif's Robbers Cave Experiment, 1950)**
 - **Zero-Sum Theory (Rozycka-Tran, J. et al, 2015)**
 - **Collective identity processes (Ashmore et al., 2024) ...**



THE DALAI LAMA

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- We are all the same- focus on commonality rather than difference
 - Focus on an activity we all share
 - **Physical** effort – *Grenzerfahrung* – *embodiment*
 - Walking/ Running – those who take the first step will find their path

Similarly, since religious faith is one of the factors that help us temper our negative emotions, it is particularly sad when religion becomes a source of conflict. I think this occurs when there is not enough contact and understanding between us. We need to make greater efforts to emulate the Indian example of many religions living together in harmony. Religious harmony is not just a matter of making diplomatic gestures but of demonstrating our respect and mutual admiration in action. Your coming from different faiths and running together sets a strong example to millions of religious followers all over the world. It expresses our need to reach out to each other and work together for the common human goal of peace and happiness.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'H. M. ...', written in a cursive style.

May 22, 2014

- Focus on religion – source of conflict and potential

InterFaith – Project Aspiration – Preamble:

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- Numerous conflicts, social and economic inequality and climate change pose key global challenges. At the same time, modern mobility and communication technology have made humanity so **interconnected** that different social systems, nations, cultures and religions are influencing each other to an unprecedented extent.
- Thus, the promotion of a **peaceful culture of encounter** is imperative.
- Interfaith - Run for a United World a.s.b.l. contributes by organising **intercultural and interreligious encounters** in the field of **sport**.
- We aim to create spaces for the exchange of knowledge and understanding, as these are the basis for respect and tolerance.
- In particular, peace between religions is seen as an indispensable prerequisite for humanity to grow together.
- InterFaith-Run for a United World a.s.b.l.' supports and initiates the coexistence of cultures and religions in Luxembourg, Europe and worldwide.

Core Components: Continuity and Change

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■ Continuity

<https://interfaith.eu/>

- TEAM
- Participants – Regulars representing different faith groups
- **Hosts** to InterFaith participants (Host coordinator)
- Ethics Foundation – Charity project

■ Elements of the InterFaith Weekend

1. Pasta Party (Friday eve)
2. Visit of a Faith Group (Saturday morning)
3. Press Photo (16:00)
4. Prayer for Peace (17:00)
5. RUN (19:00 ...)
6. Prize Giving ceremony (Sunday at 10:00)



Core Components: Continuity

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- Elements of the InterFaith Weekend
 1. Pasta Party

<https://interfaith.eu/>

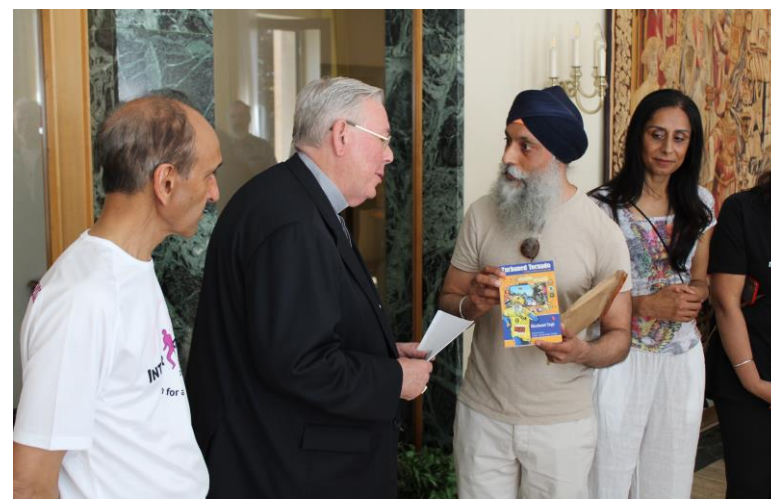


NOTE: All photos – InterFaith copyright.

Core Components: Continuity

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- Elements of the InterFaith Weekend =>
 - 2. Visit of a Faith Group – Opportunity for encounters



Core Components: Continuity

□ FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, HUMANITIES, ARTS AND EDUCATION

- Elements of the InterFaith Weekend
 - 3. Press Photo



Core Components: Continuity

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■ Elements of the InterFaith Weekend - Prayer for Peace



Core Components: Continuity

□ FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, HUMANITIES, ARTS AND EDUCATION

1. RUN

Interreligious Teams



Full Marathon

Half Marathon

Core Components: Continuity and Change

□ FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, HUMANITIES, ARTS AND EDUCATION

- Continuity

Prize Giving ceremony

RESULTS

Pokal 1st per category

Medals

Ranking of teams

Core Components: Continuity and Change

□ FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, HUMANITIES, ARTS AND EDUCATION

■ Continuity

Prize Giving ceremony

Good Byes



Core Components: Continuity and Change

□ FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, HUMANITIES, ARTS AND EDUCATION

■ Continuity

- Length – since 2008
- Providing anchors (predictability/ continuity)
- **TRUST**
- Meaningful exchanges
- Friendships
 - Between runners
 - Between runners & host families



- New Groups
 - 2012 Delegation from Japan - Buddhist monks
 - 2024 visually impaired runners & Luxembourg Muslim Scouts



- Increasing Focus on **TEAM** runs
- The InterFaith project has become more and more inclusive:
 - .Due to the strong participation of the Dutch prison chaplains, the project now includes representatives of the world's religions, as well as humanists, agnostics, and atheists.
 - InterFaith opened up to representatives of different world views and schools of thought and has thus developed more into an intercultural project.

=> The project evolves – discussion about logo



- **Resources – limited**
 - Reliance on a small team to make it happen (all volunteers)
 - Difficulty in recruiting younger members (lack of media competence)
 - Difficulty in finding sponsors
 - Only 1 main event – how to stay in contact in between?
- **SIZE**
 - Small – manageable – personal contacts but impact?
 - Scaling up??? Multiplier events? Different schools of thought among Team
 - Preaching to the converted?
- **Inter-religious or intercultural?**
 - Some refugee groups – reluctant to join *interreligious* event
 - Ethics Foundation - *religious* education important during conflict ridden times.

Outlook –Bridgebuilders

10th Anniversary message by our patron:

... Your commitment to peace is a necessary contribution in a world in which polarisation - especially in the European House - between locals and foreigners, between people of different cultures and religions is increasing. There is an urgent need for people to create spaces for encounters so that mutual understanding and peace can flourish. This is not possible without dialogue.

As you know, the Pope is also called 'Pontifex'. That means bridge builder. **You too are bridge-builders between people's hearts.** I encourage you to continue your commitment as architects of peace. The world with its many conflicts is in dire need of this.



Der Erzbischof von Luxemburg

Liebe Freunde des interreligiösen Dialogs,

Liebe Organisatoren und Teilnehmer und Teilnehmerinnen des InterFaith-Wochenendes!

Ich gratuliere Ihnen herzlich zum 10-jährigen Wirken Ihres interreligiösen Projekts. Ihr Engagement wurde bis auf den heutigen Tag von sportlichem Ausdauergeist und von der Begeisterung der Teilnehmer und Teilnehmerinnen getragen. Die Kombination von Sport und Religion hat sich segensreich ausgewirkt. Die Gastfreundschaft von Familien und Einzelnen hier in Luxemburg vertiefte die Begegnungen. Langfristige Beziehungen und sogar Freundschaften sind entstanden. Nicht wenige Läufer – und Läuferinnen kommen fast jedes Jahr wieder. Sie sind infiziert!

Ein familiärer Geist ist über Länder- und Religionsgrenzen hinaus gewachsen.

Ich drücke das alles so aus: Ihr Projekt steht unter Gottes Segen.

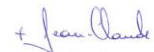
Ihr Friedensengagement ist ein notwendiger Beitrag in einer Welt, in der die Polarisierungen – gerade auch im Europäischen Haus – zwischen Einheimischen und Fremden, zwischen Menschen unterschiedlicher Kulturen und Religionen zunehmen. Es bedarf dringend der Menschen, die Räume der Begegnung schaffen, damit gegenseitiges Verständnis und Frieden gedeihen können. Ohne Dialog ist das nicht möglich.

Sie wissen ja, dass der Papst auch „Pontifex“ heißt. Das bedeutet Brückenbauer. Auch Sie sind Brückenbauer zwischen den Herzen der Menschen.

Ich ermutige Sie darin, als Brückenarchitekten des Friedens Ihr Engagement fortzusetzen. Die Welt mit ihren vielen Konflikten hat das bitter nötig.

Den Segen Gottes dazu haben Sie bereits!

Luxemburg, im Mai 2018



+ Jean-Claude Hollerich
Erzbischof von Luxemburg

THANK You

Any QUESTIONS?

Elke.murdock@uni.lu

<https://interfaith.eu/>

