

**AMCHAM NEWSLETTER 14<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2020**

Dear AMCHAM members and friends,

We know we speak for all of you to most sincerely congratulate Stéphanie and Guillaume of Luxembourg who welcomed their first born child, a son, this past Sunday morning at 5:13 am! The new future heir to the throne will bear the first names of Charles Jean Philippe Joseph Marie Guillaume. Welcome your highness! Live long, be happy and well!

During this Corona crisis, the Luxembourg AMCHAM team has rapidly re-organized itself based on work-from-home and video conferencing strategies to focus heavily on managing and influencing the big issues of the day. We are internally discussing within our committee structure and then interacting with the appropriate government decision leaders to ensure the interests and needs of the expat communities and international companies with their employees are appropriately identified and considered when decisions are made for the national good. To inform and communicate with our members, AMCHAM launched six weeks ago this digital weekly Newsletter, distributed via our 5,000 member data base, our website, [www.amcham.lu](http://www.amcham.lu) and our LinkedIn and Facebook social media sites, Our goal has been to aggregate together and quickly get into your hands all of the available economic and governmental policy information and guidance (fully translated into English), augmented by articles of interest to employees and their families which promote their quality of life, health, happiness and psychological well-being , with maybe a good food recipe as well!. We hope you enjoy and find useful what we are doing to support our members and friends during this difficult period. Please re-transmit this Newsletter to your work colleagues and your personal friends. Please also send your compliments, criticisms, suggestions and ideas to [jane@amcham.lu](mailto:jane@amcham.lu), along with any draft articles you would like us to publish on a space available basis.

Recently AMCHAM has begun to focus on return-to-work considerations including the resumption of the work permit approval process necessary to ensure Luxembourg warmly welcomes in a timely manner the highly skilled foreigners needed to maintain the economy, but in insufficient supply locally. As a result of the AMCHAM interactions with responsible government officials in several of the key ministries, we are very pleased to publish the following article authored by Anne-Catherine Thill, the responsible official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the work permit approval process who explains the government's thinking and plans for resuming the approval process for external work permits. Thank you Anne-Catherine for this excellent and timely article.

We hope you like the other included articles as well.

Stay strong! Be brave and stay healthy, successful and happy!  
Paul Michael Schonenberg  
Chairman and CEO

## 1. New Financial Aid available

The Luxembourg government has decided to strengthen the support system for the **self-employed** affected by the financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. On May 6, 2020, the Government Council approved, on a proposal from the Minister for the Middle Classes, Lex Delles, a draft Grand-Ducal regulation aimed at implementing new financial assistance, unique and non-repayable. The amount of the new aid varies according to the contributory income bracket in which the person is located, these amounts being fixed at 3,000, 3,500 and 4,000 euros.

This aid is in addition to the certified emergency compensation which was created by Grand-Ducal regulation of 8 April 2020 in favour of the self-employed. It will also benefit insurance brokers and agents who were excluded from the scope of the first aid. In addition, the aid may be granted regardless of the number of employees employed by the self-employed. The condition of not receiving professional income exceeding the threshold of 2.5 times the minimum social wage is maintained.

Detailed information will be available on the Guichet.lu website. The form for submitting requests will be available on Guichet.lu from Tuesday 12 May 2020.

Footnote: In a Paperjam Webinar dated 12<sup>th</sup> May Prime Minister **Xavier Bettel** said " *In any case, there will be a fund for the self-employed and SMEs.* " *"We continue to invest a lot in the economy because it is important that it works."*

So to all the Self employed and small enterprises lets keep our fingers crossed for you!

## 2. Interview with Giovanni Patri – Our “Man of the Moment”



**Giovanni Patri has burst onto the Luxembourg landscape scene as a leader to be reckoned with for rapidly and largely personally signing up 6,000 members to his newly formed advocacy platform for Independents. Clearly he has found a constituency with grievances that felt ignored, abandoned and left out by the government and quasi government decision makers during this profound crisis**

**period. AMCHAM has reached out to Giovanni and his supporters to give him and them the opportunity to tell their story, explain their concerns and grievances and to lend support. Here, in his own words, Giovanni answers questions from AMCHAM Chairman Paul Schonenberg:**

**Amcham: Please tell us the demographics of your constituency by nationality (what % are Luxembourg or non-Luxembourg citizens and where are your non-Luxembourg constituents from) , age categories with %s, and business activities (what percentage are self-employed independents in services sector, manufacturing, other categories)?**

*Giovanni: The members of AlliancUp, the alliance of independents and startups of Luxembourg, and also the members of the Facebook group « Rescue Independents & Startups » (here after Rescue) are the representation of the Luxembourg economical network with hairdressers, coaches, insurance agents, physiotherapists, translators and many others.*

*Based on our estimation we consider that 75% of the independents and startups in Luxembourg are owned by expats, although some, in light of their double nationality, are classified as Luxembourgish. The average age of an independent/ entrepreneur, in Luxembourg is late 30.*

**Amcham: What do your constituents appreciate about the actions of the government and quasi-government officials in support of their business survival during this difficult period?**

*Giovanni: First of all, it is important to point out that all the members of AlliancUp and Rescue very much appreciate the around-the-clock work of civil servants in processing the aid files received. There is however, a common sense of frustration since it seems that the government officials haven't understood in full the urgency we are all living. The requests have so many conditions and criteria to respond to, that the overall process of filling in and treating the requests for both the civil servants and the independents is cumbersome and long, thereby delaying the survival of their business.*

**Amcham, What governmental subsidy and support actions do your constituents consider insufficient and why?**

*Giovanni: At this stage the governmental subsidies look more like communication tools than economic support. I might sound hard but nearly 8 weeks after the beginning of the crisis the first non-refundable aid is still in treatment, which is unacceptable, and this same first aid has been refused to a large number of independents.*

*The major deception is that the government only puts in place emergency aid when they notice that the independents show their anger on the social networks like on our Facebook page Rescue Independents & Startups. This shows that they are absolutely not connected to the reality. The second deception is the treatment of the aid demands, which is so long that the government should never have named them « emergency aid ».*

*While we all appreciate emergency aid and responses, it is now time for viable solutions aimed at securing the survival of the business. Nearly 2 months after the beginning of the crisis, the first non-refundable aid is still being looked at. This timeline is hardly acceptable not only in terms of its timing but also in terms of its*

content, which has been deemed not appropriate by a large number of independents.

**Amcham: What additional actions do your constituents want the government and quasi-government officials to take?**

*Giovanni: At this stage there are three major points on which the government must act promptly in order to avoid an epochal economic, financial and real estate crisis*

**1.Social charges:**

*despite the fact the independents did not earn any money since mid March, they are obliged to pay their monthly social charges to the state. This situation is not sustainable for the majority of the business owners. I proposed to reduced them automatically to a minimum of € 100 during the 3 months of state of crisis, which would save a lot of business.*

**2.Rents:**

*as we all know, the rents are very high in Luxembourg, thus the government has to apply solutions to motivate the landlords to reduce partially or totally the rents during this state of crisis. Among others, I suggested to establish fiscal reduction at the benefit of the landlords in correlation to the reduced amount of the rent, but without the input of the government there's no reason for the landlords to not claim what is due to them.*

**3.Relaunch:**

*the establishment of a relaunch economic plan is the key to avoid a dramatic suit of crisis in Luxembourg. As we are confronted to a health crisis, all business will be subject to measure of protection with cleaning products and also reorganization of their activity. Those changes will reduce drastically their revenue of 30% - 40% and thus I proposed to establish a relaunch plan that can last until the end of the year.*

**Amcham: Are you personally satisfied with the way you and your constituents are being treated by government officials or by the quasi-governmental economic associations of the UEL (ABBL/ FEDIL/Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce/ALFI)? If yes, what are the good points? If no, what are the disappointments?**

*Giovanni: The Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce and House of Entrepreneurship have been taking very seriously the alerts and recommendations of AlliancUp and Rescue. They have been listening carefully since the beginning of the COVI19 pandemic. Their proposals to the Government have been reflecting the issues raised by thousands of self-employed independents and small businesses. The Facebook group we have created grew exponentially in only a couple of days and which helps self-employed independents and small businesses in the process to obtain the emergency aid.*

*Now for the other organisations, a lot of our members, me included, were very disappointed. The organisations that should have helped the independents in Luxembourg were absolutely not reactive. Once my Facebook group started to be nearly every day in the press, they also initiated communication campaign but without consulting their members or even understanding the situation.*

*The deconfinement has started in Luxembourg, now, the business starts worrying even more. What will happen to us?*

*If we thought that the 2008 crisis was a big one, COVID-19 will change our lives and our business forever, and it will have an impact on our business for a long time. All the public instances should take it seriously and address the SMEs and independents that heavily contribute to the wealth of the national economy. We are in a tough period and there's no place for selfishness.*

**Amcham: Do your constituents believe the government and quasi-governmental officials understand their situation and are treating them fairly? If yes, why? If not, why?**

*Giovanni: In light of the responses so far, I believe there is still a lot of work to be done to explain how COVID-19 will impact the business.*

*Unfortunately, I don't think the government is taking the economical situation seriously enough. The expression of the majority of our members of AlliancUp and Rescue is that if the government would have acted as diligently for the economy as they did for the health crisis, the independents would have felt understood. It started with the 1st sentence of the Ministry of Economy who stated that they will not be able to save everybody, then the Ministry of Labor who makes a difference between rich and poor independents, followed by the ministry of Transportation who stated 3 days before May 11th that the Police control will be strengthened on the business owners and to finish the Prime Minister who supports the collaboration of the journalist by allowing them a €5'000 aid with nearly no conditions.*

*These sequence of statements, and the exclusion of a big part of the business community, that of the expats, is creating a negative surrounding and a feeling of exclusion.*

**Amcham: What % of your constituency believe they are at risk to go out of business during the coming year?**

*Giovanni: Based on the first AlliancUp and Rescue survey, 55% of our members are not able to survive after May 15th which means hundreds of lost of jobs. The situation is very confusing, because we are not talking about the coming year, the problem is now. It should be tackled now, with viable, equal, and fact-based solutions. Independent and small businesses are scared, and this is not good.*

**Amcham: What can AMCHAM and the rest of the business community and the general population do to help?**

*Giovanni: I have to say that I'm very grateful and proud to collaborate with AMCHAM and to notice that through our conjunct vision we can already help the American business community and the English speaking community.*

*Such a crisis demands a joint and united response. AMCHAM understood it directly and the rest of the business community shall continue to join forces like we have done, to request measures to safeguard the survival of their business. If their business surrender, the economy in Luxembourg will be heavily affected.*

**Amcham: What else would you like to say the audience reading this interview?**

*Giovanni: In every tragedy there's a way to find something positive and this historical crisis we are all living, I discovered that real solidarity still exists. We all thought that the social network did separate us and today we all learned that thank to the social networks some beautiful initiatives have emerged, among others AlliancUp and Rescue. I discovered desperate people and courageous people and also that the voice of the people can move mountains. In mid-March no aid were established by the government to save the independents of Luxembourg and now, 8 weeks later, we achieved to obtained 6 various financial aid and 5 of them are non-refundable. This is the proof that even if we know that next years will be hard, we will make it and we will come out of this crisis stronger.*

**Amcham would like to thank Giovanni Patri for this exclusive interview. See also 10 Inspiring Business Leaders to Watch Out For in 2020 » <https://www.mirrorreview.com/giovanni-patri-a-resilient-leader-approaching-his-vision-irreproachably/>**

### **3. United States Ambassador J. Randolph Evans Commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day**



*"Like those 75 years ago, it [was] impossible to truly 'celebrate' [last Friday] amidst such, pain, suffering and death. But, to ignore such sacrifice as we begin to finish that which we began - to defeat this virus - the Coronavirus or COVID 19 - and to liberate the world from its scourge would be to ignore how far we have come and how far we must still go."*

It was a true honor to share this reflection with the great citizens of Luxembourg and the world on the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day with these trying times now. But remember these words from our commemoration: ". . . none of us now know how this all will end. But, end, it must, and end, it will. And when it does, let us look back on this day as the day when we both took measure of what prior generations had done, and the sacrifices we ourselves have made to achieve our own victory over the invisible enemy that threatens us today."

Please enjoy with us what we share with the world on VE Day and, may God bless you and your family, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and the United States of America.

All the best!

Ambassador J. Randolph Evans  
United States of America

**The video commemoration is posted**

**here:** <https://lu.usembassy.gov/ambassador-evans-commemorates-ve-day-2020/>

**4. Article from Anne-Catherine Thill Advisor -Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Luxembourg.**



The COVID-19 pandemic currently affects Europe and the world as a whole, including, inevitably, the Grand-Duchy. Like its counterparts in the three neighbouring countries, the Luxembourg Government has reacted by rapidly rolling out a confinement strategy. The measures taken to protect public health have severe consequences for the national economy, entrepreneurs and workers. Many of the Luxembourg-based companies employing third country nationals are more heavily affected as their employees are stranded in Luxembourg or abroad after some countries imposed travel restrictions to and from their territories. The European Union has recently reevaluated entry regulations at its external borders which are maintained until 15 June 2020.

As Luxembourg is entering the next stage of easing confinement rules, the Immigration Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs is well aware of the impact of the measures, which had to be taken, for entrepreneurs and understands their concerns, concerning both human resources management and talent attraction to the Grand Duchy. In order to alleviate the situation, the following immigration procedures concerning third country nationals employed by Luxembourg companies, entrepreneurs, researchers and their family members have been put in place:

The Règlement grand-ducal of 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 introducing a series of measures aimed at tackling the COVID-19 crisis has introduced – for the duration of the crisis – a derogation to the law of 29 August 2008 on the free movement of persons and immigration by prolonging the validity of visas, temporary residence permits, residence cards and permits expiring after

1<sup>st</sup> March 2020. Likewise, the stay of third-country nationals not subject to the visa requirement and whose stay has just exceeded 90 days has been authorized for the duration of the state of crisis. Now the return to normal is currently prepared even if some uncertainties regarding the precise timeline persist. It is advisable to follow the official communication by the Government in that regard. Thus the processing of files submitted before, during and after the state of crisis will be ensured by priority system; once the backlog is cleared, new requests will be processed.

In parallel to the cessation of visa issuance, procedures in view of granting permanent and temporary residence permits were stopped. However, the Administration continues to process urgent requests (for family or medical reasons). Processing of requests for researchers urgently recruited by research centers, especially for COVID-19 related research has, of course, also continued.

In order to allow a resumption of the usual procedures, temporary residence permits (“autorisation de séjour temporaire”) that have been granted are reshipped on demand after the end of their period of validity. Those concerned are advised to inform themselves in their country of origin (local authorities, Embassies, consulates, airlines) about the timing of the lifting of the confinement measures. The procedure for the enrollment of residence permits has been revised in order to allow the control of the flow of people at the counters. Those concerned will receive letters indicating an appointment for the enrollment. First appointments will be available for mid-May. Needless to say that of course all temporary residence permit holders are allowed to work during the validity period of their permit. Thus third country nationals will be able to work in Luxembourg right after their arrival in Luxembourg.

Current staffing allows the “Service Etrangers” to reach out to the public, primarily via email. Even if processing times being inevitably longer during the sanitary crisis, the department of “travailleurs salariés, entrepreneurship, chercheurs, regroupement familial” strongly bothers to maintain the usual flexibility towards urgent requests by those in need for assistance in the context of their arrival in Luxembourg.

Further the validity period of residence and work permits expiring shortly before or during the „state of crisis“ has been automatically prolonged until the end of the “state of crisis”. Further extensions are currently planned concerning the applications for the renewal of residence permits as well as the handling of overstayers.

The Administration stays in close contact with Luxembourg Embassies and consulates abroad in order to facilitate the return of workers to Luxembourg. Regular exchanges between the Immigration Directorate, the Ministry of the Economy, the Department for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and the Social and Solidarity Economy as well as other local partners allow to identify the respective needs of the employers and to sketch pragmatic solutions to their concerns.

I strongly recommend that, as in the past, companies or their agents should contact their file manager and report any “emergency” or concern related to a request for a residence permit for a third country national whose recruitment is essential for the company’s activity.

If it is impossible to submit the documents because of the current situation, sending by email is accepted. Likewise, if certain documents cannot be obtained, the applicant is invited to contact the Immigration Directorate in order to agree on a temporary solution. In addition I estimate that the respective advisory committees (the Advisory committee for salaried workers and the Advisory committee for entrepreneurs) will reconvene as soon as possible.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that in terms of immigration procedures in general, the constraints linked to the exceptional situation, such as the exceptional aid granted to the self-employed, will not be prejudicial in the analysis of the requests for residence permits of the employee, his or her employer, the self-employed person or the family members. In terms of immigration procedures, all efforts aim to contribute to the smooth running of businesses. Finally, let me emphasize that talent attraction by local partners will also be decisive in ensuring the relaunch of the Luxembourg economy.

We are headed towards better times and meanwhile stay safe and healthy.

Anne-Catherine Thill

Conseiller , MAEE Direction de l'Immigration

Préposé du service «Salariés, entrepreneurship, chercheur, sportif, regroupement familial, vie privée, résident longue durée »

## **5. Teleworking – Luxembourg law in relation to this.**

During this pandemic period we are all going through, many of us have adjusted our work habits and environment to remote distancing work options from our homes.

Although the rules and requirements for home working were agreed and put into effect four years ago and are still legally applicable today, we expect that many of you have been unaware of these requirements since, after all, who would have thought that circumstances would bring such a fundamental change into our lives today!

Please find hereafter the link to the Grand-ducal regulation on the declaration of general obligation of an agreement relating to the legal regime of telework-remote work from home concluded between the UEL (Union of Luxembourg Companies), on the one hand and the OGB-L and LCGB unions, on the other hand.

<http://data.legilux.public.lu/file/eli-etat-leg-memorial-2016-45-fr-pdf.pdf>

## **6. Sextortion Scam E-mails: "I Know Your Password"**

Have you ever received an e-mail stating that the sender knows your password? What is more, your password is shown in your e-mail? Pretty scary, right?

What is 'Sextortion'?

Generally speaking, sextortion is a type of extortion involving sexual material. This cybercrime is a growing concern, can affect anyone, and the majority of cases become unreported since the victims are too embarrassed to act in any way.

Please note that this is an opportunistic attack, and you did not get hacked! Don't worry and follow the instructions described in the section 'What should I do?'

<https://securitymadein.lu/news/sextortion-scam-e-mails-i-know-your-password/>



## **7. Ikea Meatball & Sauce recipe**

Many people go to Ikea just to eat their iconic Swedish meatballs in the cafeteria!

Without a doubt, meatballs are the best known of all Swedish dishes, traditionally served with potatoes, lingonberry jam and cream sauce. The dish is an unexpected meeting of flavors as the lingonberry sweetness contrasts, yet harmonizes, with the meatballs, while the cream sauce serves as a neutral "mediator" between the two.

This is what you need (30–40 meatballs, serves 4): 250 g minced beef 250 g minced pork 1 egg 2–3 cups cream (or milk) and water, 2½ tbsp fine chopped onion, ½ dl unsweetened rusk flour, 2 boiled potatoes, cold 4–5 tbsp butter, margarine or oil salt white pepper (allspice).

This is how you do it: Heat the onion until golden in a couple of tablespoons of lightly browned butter. Mash the potatoes and moisten the rusk flour in a little water. Fully mix with the beef and pork and all the ingredients until smooth and flavor generously with salt, white pepper and (optional) fine-crushed allspice. Shape the mix into round balls and transfer to a floured chopping board, then fry them quite slowly in plenty of butter.

This is what you need for the cream sauce,( serves 4): 1 cup double cream 2 cups water or beef stock, soy, salt, white pepper (1 tbsp white flour).

This is how you do it: Swirl out the pan you cooked the meat balls in with boiling water or meat stock. Strain the pan juices and dilute with cream. Thicken with white flour if preferred. Season well, and serve this and the meatballs with freshly boiled potatoes, lingonberry jam, a green salad and salted or pickled gherkins.

Enjoy!!!

**8. AMCHAM offers to each of you and your families our best wishes for your health and happiness. Be strong. Stay connected with your families and friends by phone and email. Use this time wisely and productively so you come out of this crisis stronger than when you started.**

**For all those who don't know AMCHAM yet, please find our website**

**here: <https://www.amcham.lu> and particularly our mission statement  
here: <https://www.amcham.lu/about-us/mission-statement/> and how  
you can join AMCHAM here: <https://www.amcham.lu/membership/>**

**If you need us, we are here and will do all we can do to help.**

**Feel free to pass on our newsletter to your colleagues and friends and  
if you would like to make a contribution to our next newsletter contact  
[jane@amcham.lu](mailto:jane@amcham.lu)**

**With respect and our very best regards,**

**Your AMCHAM team**