

# MINETT

## LUXEMBOURG'S SOUTH

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Candidate region to the UNESCO  
programme 'Man and the Biosphere'

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Located in the southern part of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, the 'Minett' is a densely populated region of Luxembourg and known as an industrial powerhouse with a long and rich history of mining and steel production. Boasting the country's largest and most biodiverse natural reserves, an exceptional social diversity and rich cultural life, the region today pursues the diversification of its economy, reconverts parts of its industrial heritage, protects its natural environment on a large scale and hosts hubs of science, research and innovation.

Well placed to develop and integrate innovative approaches to sustainable development, the region is currently preparing an application for the UNESCO programme "Man and the Biosphere". This candidacy is coordinated by the 'MAB Committee' created to this effect and comprising a variety of local, regional and national stakeholders. It enjoys the support of PRO-SUD, the alliance of all the eleven municipalities concerned by the application, the University of Luxembourg, research institutes, local NGOs, the Luxembourgish National Commission for UNESCO and the Luxembourg Government.

## A setting more than suitable

The Southern region of Luxembourg, called Minett in reference to its iron mines, is undergoing major changes: until recently, it had been a thriving center for steel production and is now gradually changing into a center for research and academia. Known for its rich biodiversity and the various habitats for flora and fauna in the former open pit mines, it offers great opportunities to study the impact human life and work has on nature. This region is an ideal setting for a biosphere because of:

- ▶ its rich **history** ranging from paleontological sites, Celtic settlements to Roman travel routes,
- ▶ the great social, linguistic, cultural and urbanistic diversity of its **agglomerations** and habitants due to consecutive waves of immigration and continued cross-border movement,
- ▶ the **natural reserves** 'Haard' in Dudelange, 'Prënzebiërg' in Pétange and 'Lallénger-Broucher-Bësch' in Schifflange, to name just a few,
- ▶ the **exceptional sites** of former open pit mines such as the now renatured 'Giele Botter' next to Differdange,
- ▶ numerous **Natura 2000** zones,
- ▶ the presence of both an **industrial history and heritage** and an **on-going industrial production**,
- ▶ the proximity of the **university campus** Belval and national **research institutes**, facilitating research, knowledge transfer and in situ analyses,
- ▶ the lively and extensive network of diverse **local structures and initiatives** spanning various fields of interest such as culture, education and sustainability,
- ▶ exemplary **grass-roots movements** encouraging urban gardening, up-cycling and circular economy,
- ▶ the **institutional structures** in place, above all the alliance PRO-SUD, the regional tourist office 'Red Rock Region' or the headquarters of 'Esch2022', the European Capital of Culture 2022.



In other words, the 'Minett' biosphere will draw upon the **extraordinary proximity** between the natural environment, places of or shaped by the mining and steel industries undergoing progressive and notable reconversion projects, various zones of economic activity, habitats and new, innovative and resourceful spaces turned towards the promising perspectives of the post-industrial era.

## Objectives of a biosphere reserve 'Minett'

By bringing together different disciplines and parties within a **unique framework** for cooperation, a UNESCO biosphere reserve 'Minett' would amplify the national and international interest in the region, promote exchanges and facilitate synergies between all stakeholders, thereby ensuring:

- ▶ the preservation and monitoring of the **biodiversity**,
- ▶ the exploration of **different models of sustainable development** and education and awareness-raising on sustainability in general,
- ▶ **in-depth research** on the effects of human activity and the **sharing of knowledge**, teachings and best practices,
- ▶ an **analysis of landscapes** undergoing reconversion,
- ▶ **community-based initiatives** fostering social learning for SDG implementation,
- ▶ constructive **dialogue** between local populations, organisations, associations and institutions on this transformational process,
- ▶ **participation in the international MAB network** and collaboration with other UNESCO biosphere reserves.

## An added value

IN BRIEF, A BIOSPHERE RESERVE MINETT WOULD CONSTITUTE AN UNPARALLELED ADDED VALUE FOR THE REGION'S BIODIVERSITY AND SOCIETY, BY INTRODUCING A UNIQUE PLATFORM FOR COOPERATION, NETWORKING AND SHARING. FURTHERMORE, ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK LEADS TO GREATER COMPREHENSION OF SUCH EFFORTS AT THE REGIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVEL.



## Some of the current initiatives

- ▶ **Consultation process:** a series of public consultations is currently being held in all eleven participating municipalities to raise awareness among the local population on the programme and to collect input and feedback on and for the candidacy. Additionally, this process helps to identify local initiatives in fields relevant to the programme, just as it fosters communication and collaboration between the participating stakeholders.
- ▶ **Biodiversity:** the creation of a regional MAB biodiversity observatory is currently under consideration by the Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology.
- ▶ **Red Rock Trail:** this initiative pursues the objective of facilitating the discovery and exploration of the region by way of a network of walking and cycling trails covering the entire region. It is coupled with an architecture competition for developing tourist accommodation in decommissioned buildings.
- ▶ **Eise Stol:** the aim of this on-going project is to identify existing industrial heritage in the region with a view to preserve and reconvert them for new purposes, be they cultural, housing or other.
- ▶ **Local guides:** programme for training local people as guides to tourists wishing to explore the region, thereby promoting tourism in the area in general.
- ▶ **Local products:** an inventory is being established about local products in cooperation with the producers, striving to create a Minett Unesco Biosphere label and to raise awareness for local products.

**MINETT**  
**UNESCO**  
**BIOSPHERE**

LOCATED IN THE SOUTH-WEST  
OF LUXEMBOURG, THE CANDIDATE  
REGION IS COMPOSED  
OF THE ELEVEN MUNICIPALITIES  
FORMING THE PRO-SUD ALLIANCE.



## THE MAB COMMITTEE

Initiated in spring 2017 by the Luxembourg National Commission for UNESCO, the MAB committee is composed of members from a variety of institutional, administrative and cultural actors. This composition emphasises the MAB's underlying idea: rather than being an additional layer of protection and burden on top of existing initiatives and organisations, the MAB essentially is a bottom-up approach recognising the achievements made by local actors and strengthening national nature protections that are already in place (natural reserves and Natura 2000 zones).

### KEY DATES:

- △ 2016, first considerations
- △ 2017, September: beginning of the application working schedule, definition of stakeholders and collaborators
- △ 2018, spring: presentation to local city councils
- △ 2018, April to December: activation of various thematic working groups
- △ 2018, autumn: creation of the MAB steering committee under the PRO-SUD alliance
- △ 2018, winter: inscription of the project in

- the national Government programme
- △ 2019, January to December: roll-out of concrete projects related to the candidacy (biodiversity inventory, local produce, industrial heritage, sustainable tourism, ...)
- △ 2019, February to May: public consultations in all eleven municipalities and information sessions in local schools
- △ 2019, January to June: elaboration of candidacy

## LUXEMBOURG AND THE UNESCO

Luxembourg currently is represented in five UNESCO programmes:

- △ In 1994, the old quarters and fortifications of the City of Luxembourg were inscribed on the UNESCO 'World Heritage' list, because, as the UNESCO notes, 'they enable a complete representation of its historical significance as a fortress and historic city'.
  - △ In 2003, the photographic exhibition 'The Family of Man', curated by the Luxembourg born American photographer Edward Steichen for the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMa) and on permanent display at the castle
- of Clervaux in the north of the country, was inscribed on the 'Memory of the World Programme'.
  - △ In 2010, the 'Hopping Procession of Echternach' was admitted by a unanimous vote on the 'Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity'.
  - △ In Luxembourg, eleven schools in total are currently part of the UNESCO 'Associated Schools Project Network' (ASPnet). This network, which counts more than 10,000 members spread across 180 countries, encourages education on matters relating to UNESCO's objectives of furthering 'peace and international understanding'.
  - △ In 2011, a UNESCO Chair in Human Rights was established at the University of Luxembourg. Based on an interdisciplinary approach, this Chair seeks to facilitate synergetic links between research on the one hand and public policy on the other, on issues pertaining to UNESCO's objectives and the UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights.



OLD QUARTERS AND FORTIFICATIONS OF THE CITY OF LUXEMBOURG



THE PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION 'THE FAMILY OF MAN'



THE 'HOPPING PROCESSION OF ECHTERNACH'

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE GRAND DUCHESS OF LUXEMBOURG  
HAS BEEN UNESCO GOODWILL AMBASSADOR SINCE 1997.

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