

Hackers on a House Hunt

Just six weeks ago building a hackerspace in Luxembourg was but an idea lurking in the minds of a few technology enthusiasts. Since then, the dream of establishing their own venue has been striding towards realisation in giant leaps. Fuelled by caffeinated beverages and driven by sincere fervour, a handful of people have been contributing every iota of free time towards “SYN₂cat”, as the project has been aptly named. The founders of the undertaking, David Raison, a student at the University of Innsbruck and Steve Clement, an IT entrepreneur situated in Bertrange, want to establish a location where creative minds from many different disciplines can meet and interact to playfully innovate both technologically and culturally.

A passionate triathlete, Clement is quick to point out how the term 'hacker' has been misrepresented in popular media for a long time: “Hacking has nothing to do with criminal activities such as identity theft and electronic trespassing! Rather, it [hacker] has been coined at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) as a term for curious individuals for whom every device or piece of software is full of exciting challenges to develop potential improvements or discover alternative uses.” Raison, who reads political sciences at university, adds jokingly: “Anyone who remembers the childhood curiosity and excitement of taking apart radios and other devices to find out how they work should get in touch with utmost urgency!”

The hackerspace is envisioned to bring together artists, IT professionals, scientists and others to collaborate on projects, organise workshops, give and attend talks or to simply have fun. It should be a social platform for people to interact and exchange ideas. “We believe that the hackerspace can fill a cultural void by providing an environment that has no analogue in the Greater Region.”, Raison reflects.

The team working on the endeavour currently counts about 20 people, many of whom are members of the Chaos Computer Club Lëtzebuerg (C3L), the recently founded, Luxembourgian section of the highly popular Chaos Computer Club (CCC) that originated in Germany. “We were very surprised to find such an organisation in this country - and we've been cooperating splendidly ever since!”, the founders say. As a result, the hackerspace will be integrated into the organisational structure of C3L once it is established.

The group acknowledges taking inspiration from successful hackerspaces abroad, the most popular of which are the 'C-Base' in Berlin and the 'Metalab' in Vienna, which Raison has visited in April. The number of spaces is growing constantly and new ones are about to be created in other major cities such as Leipzig, Paris or Munich.

As a way of introducing themselves to potential sponsors and contributors, they have created an information booklet which has been sent out to various people in politics and industry. It is available to anyone electronically on the project website or in print form upon request.

The hackers are still on the lookout for a 'space' and would greatly welcome any form of support: “The property should have a surface area of 100 to 200 square meters and must have sanitary facilities. A kitchen to cook and eat in company would be great as well! It should also be located centrally and be accessible by public transport”, Clement clarifies.

www.hackerspace.lu