

Press release

5 July 2023

Baloise, BPI Real Estate and CLE inaugurate their new WOODEN headquarters in Leudelange

On Wednesday, 5 July the leaders of Baloise, BPI Real Estate and CLE symbolically cut the ribbon of their new WOODEN office building in Leudelange.

The event took place in the presence of Prime Minister **Xavier Bettel**, Minister of Finance **Yuriko Backes**, and S.E.M. Markus Börlin, Ambassador of Switzerland to Luxembourg, the Mayor of the City of Leudelange **Lou Linster** and 200 guests, gathered to celebrate the inauguration of the WOODEN building, but also to welcome the advent of new, more virtuous and sustainable construction methods.

“Wood is warm and alive”: the enthusiastic accounts of users

Baloise, CLE and BPI, the three tenants of the WOODEN building, moved there in early 2023. Six months after their installation, the feelings are unanimous: the presence of wood in the offices increases the feeling of well-being and positive emotions.

Pierre Ylief has been the Head of IT Architecture for at Baloise 7 years: *“WOODEN stands out for its cozy and peaceful atmosphere resulting from a structure made of wood. The combination of massive beams and large windows gives the impression of working in a natural space that is constantly open to the outside. It doesn’t feel like you’re closed in between 4 walls, but you have a view of a larger space, open to the surrounding nature.”* Studies confirm what he describes. The presence of wood and openness to the outside are beneficial for both the

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Inauguration of the WOODEN building in Leudelange

Baloise Luxembourg, CLE Compagnie Luxembourgeoise d’Entreprises and BPI Real Estate Luxembourg



body and the mind, which translates into a reduction in stress and better effectiveness at work.

Deborah Dominique has been a Management Assistant at BPI Real Estate for 15 years. WOODEN is already the 5th head office site where she has worked: *"It is undeniably the warmest setting, and it's thanks to the wood. It adds a natural touch, it's beautiful."* What she also appreciates is the brightness of the offices. With all the façades in glass, the level of natural light is optimal and this contributes to the visual comfort of the occupants. The many interior glazings also make it possible to create visual contact between floors and also between tenants. A matrix that would almost make you forget that the building is spread over 6 levels.

A welcoming place to be, between light and wood

Several decorative wooden staircases are placed in the interior spaces of WOODEN. They invite people to move about easily and offer great accessibility between levels.

Laurie Ensich, Project Manager at Baloise: *"The central staircases encourage me to walk more. I prefer them over the lifts to get from one floor to another. The layout of the various workspaces, particularly informal areas, also allows for more spontaneous exchanges and promotes communication across departments."*

Same feeling about the layout at CLE. **Julien Ekoret** is the Quality & Environment Manager with CLE and he noticed that his colleagues quickly settled into the premises: *"People are smiling more, the spaces are more welcoming and ergonomic, spatial organization improves communication between departments."* He also believes that the variety of layouts makes it possible to approach exchanges in different ways: *"It encourages breaking up the routine and formalism of a meeting room."*

An inspiring framework designed for scalable ways of working

The 530 employees who come to WOODEN every day (470 people at Baloise, 42 at CLE and 18 at BPI) have the chance to evolve in a very privileged work environment. Its design corresponds perfectly to the ideals of Baloise, which wanted to pay particular attention to the well-being of its employees, but also to provide them with co-working spaces suited to new agile and flexible ways of working. These spaces, like the *"Village"*, the central place of life within the building, promote encounters and friendly exchanges between colleagues

Christine Theodorovics, CEO of Baloise since 1 June, believes that *"after the pandemic, we needed a structure to relearn how to live and work together, also to strengthen the sense of belonging at Baloise. And what could be better than this new headquarters to enhance a sense of unity? WOODEN is the symbol of our commitment to our employees, it is a modern, stimulating and fulfilling work environment."*

Thomas von Planta, President of the Board of Directors of the Baloise Group, emphasises that *"it's not so much our strategy, our processes or our innovations that really make the difference. It's our collaborators who make and transform Baloise. It's the firm culture that supports the strategy, not the other way around. Our employees are our best assets and our best ambassadors. That's why we wanted them to enjoy a healthy, fulfilling environment that suits them. And also a welcoming setting to encourage reception of our customers, exchanges and collaboration."*

WOODEN is in the process of obtaining **WELL Building Standard® Gold** certification. It is the first construction label in the world that assesses the health and well-being of building users according to 10 criteria: air, water, food, light, movement, temperature, sound environment, materials, atmosphere and community. Thanks to its outstanding performance, WOODEN is also in the process of being certified **BREEAM Excellent**.

The major challenge of decarbonisation of construction

Across every stage of the building lifecycle, the real estate sector accounts for more than a third of CO₂ emissions. However, wood construction can significantly reduce the environmental footprint of buildings. This is currently the best in terms of eco-design.

Wood is indeed a natural and regenerative resource, especially when forests are managed sustainably. Wood used in the construction of WOODEN comes exclusively from PEFC-certified forests in the greater region. When one tree is cut down, two more are replanted.

In addition, the transformation of wood into a constructable element requires little energy (water, electricity, etc.). On the contrary, it is said to be "carbonivorous", because the carbon that has accumulated there during its growth, thanks to photosynthesis, remains trapped there until its end of life. Also, from a social point of view, wood allows off-site prefabrication, which offers better working conditions for workers; reduces the waste of raw materials to a maximum; also reduces the number of trucks needed for transport to a worksite and reduces nuisance to residences near construction sites.

WOODEN was able to be achieved thanks to the determination of its co-developers, IKO Real Estate and BPI Real Estate, and their firm determination to challenge the status quo. With 9,600 m² of office space, WOODEN is the first building for the service sector in Luxembourg to be built of wood. Currently, new projects are following suit in the country (including the mixed-use ROOTS project in Belval, a co-development between BPI Real Estate and Unibra).

Arnaud Regout, Managing Director of BPI Real Estate Luxembourg is thrilled that this is turning out to be more than a trend, but a necessity to decarbonise the construction sector: *"It's terrific if WOODEN paves the way for alternative construction methods in Luxembourg. I hope this private initiative, spearheaded jointly with our partner IKO Real Estate, will inspire the public sector to make timber construction the norm."*

Note that **Arnaud Regout** is President of the Advisory Committee of the brand new LCBI label, which brings together the main European real estate players to promote low-carbon construction and cut CO₂ emissions from European real estate in half.

Christophe Herrmann, Managing Director of the CLE construction company, concludes: *"CLE is extremely proud to have completed such construction with our own teams. Today, our headquarters is a great showcase of our group's know-how. It symbolizes the attention we pay to both the well-being of our employees and our environmental footprint."*

Construction of WOODEN began at the end of 2020 for delivery at the end of 2022 (including rental fittings). This is a co-development between IKO Real Estate and BPI Real Estate, CLE construction with the help of wood specialist Wood Shapers (also from the CFE group). The building is fully leased to Baloise, CLE and BPI and was sold at the end of 2022 to the Swiss investor ACRON.

A photograph of the WOODEN building, a modern multi-story office building with a glass and wood facade, situated on a grassy hillside under a clear blue sky. The word "WOODEN" is overlaid in large, bold, black letters on the left side of the image, with a small orange triangle above the 'O' and a green triangle below the 'N'.

WOODEN