

## **Interview with Marc RAUCHS, local councillor and president of the CSV Bertrange**

Marc took over the presidency of our section in the spring of this year. "Op de Punkt" asked him a few questions.



**Marc, can you briefly tell us about your political involvement in the municipality of Bertrange to date?**

Oh, I'll have to think about that. I've been a member of the CSV since 1988 and have been active in the Bertrange CSV section ever since. I was first sworn in as a councillor in 1999 by the mayor at the time, Niki Bettendorf.

I also had the honor of representing our section in the national chamber elections in 1999, 2004 and 2009.

However, I was also able to gain a lot of experience in the party over the years where I worked as District Secretary and later as Deputy General Secretary.

Later, I also had the great honour of managing the office of the Honorary Minister of State Jacques Santer and then of the Honorary President of the Chamber Jean Spautz in the European Parliament.

**"Feel Europe, love Luxembourg, live Bertrange."**

**What are your priorities as the new president of the section?**

It is very important to me that we remain an active village in which all citizens are integrated. That is why we need to create our own targeted concepts and support the activities of associations and private initiatives in particular.

Our workshop about inclusion on October 3 is a small contribution to this.



In the coming months, we will also be focusing more on the development of our village in the Helfent area. In addition to a sensible development plan and a traffic concept, this district needs to be made more lively. We had already presented ideas on this in our election program. Together with Nadine and Guy, I will remind the local council of these ideas.

Our park should, if possible, be enlarged and made more attractive: more flowery, greener! It should become a stronger attraction for the whole population of Bertrange, for all age groups, by offering more facilities. Why not at least open a small bar in summer or even create a small beer garden? In any case, it needs to become livelier. The playground needs to be expanded. Table tennis tables, a chess board, but also gymnastics and fitness equipment should be installed. Balls, nets and other sports and play equipment should be lent out on site.

Events should be held regularly on Helfent as part of a cultural summer and a sports summer. I am not thinking of loud, large-scale events, but of activities that enliven the district and offer all Bartring residents a more varied range of leisure activities, taking ecological criteria into account.

### **But it's certainly not just about Helfent Park. Isn't it?**

No, not at all! For us at CSV Bertrange, it's about the whole neighbourhood. That's why we want to organize another open workshop for interested parties in spring 2025. The aim is to develop concrete ideas for a more vibrant Helfent, which we will then present to the local council. I want people to be involved in the planning right from the start. We will listen to the people and present our own ideas for discussion. I am thinking, for example, of municipal sports infrastructures that offer clubs additional training opportunities, but are also made accessible to recreational sports.

Experience shows that it often takes a long time for ideas to be implemented. So it's not for tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. But it is time for the Bertrange community to start planning more comprehensively. As the past has shown, the majority needs some pressure from the opposition.

### **The past? What are you thinking about?**

I remember, for example, that we as CSV submitted the "Proposal for a cross-party initiative in the interests of older people" with regard to our care home back in 2012. It then took years before the decision to build a new home was made and it will be another few years before the new care home is completed. It is therefore now urgently necessary to get down to business in the urban planning of Helfent and the Helfent triangle.



**In the CSV election manifesto, the CSV called for a “CENTRE MÉDICAL” for Bertrange. Do you see a chance for this?**

All 4 parties had spoken out in favor of a “Maison Médicale”. The DP used the term "medical centre". Unfortunately, the college of aldermen has not yet presented any plans in this regard. However, I would like to address this issue in the municipal council very soon.

I don't think we should waste too much time buying building land and then with the planning and approvals. As a first step, the municipality should therefore now buy into a construction project that has already been planned. The planned retirement homes "Im Brill" would certainly be well suited for this. But Helfent would also be a good location. That might be the best place to realize our idea.

**What should such a centre offer?**

I can refer you to our election program. A "Centre médical" could bring together various players from the health sector (general practitioners, specialists, psychologists, dieticians, psychomotricians, etc.). Looking ahead, we should guarantee optimal healthcare for a rapidly growing population and possibly make it easier for young people to enter the profession. In addition to medical care, emphasis should be placed on prevention. Such a center would gradually expand the services on offer. In a further stage, for example, it would focus on the follow-up treatment of illnesses that require prolonged rehabilitation. In the longer term, a "Maison Sport-Santé" could be integrated into the complex.

**You regularly stand up for the needs of local associations. At the July meeting of the local council, you showed a certain amount of frustration. Why was that?**

Our municipality and all members of the municipal council are always interested in supporting our associations in the best possible way. With this in mind, I sent some ideas to the members of the finance commission by email, asking them to discuss them at their meeting. However, the mayor refused to allow me to speak, as I am not a member of the finance commission and was therefore only invited as a guest, but not to speak or to help shape the meeting.

**However, the internal regulations of the commission meetings also provide for this.**

Yes, that is correct. But it has never been interpreted that way in the past 30 years. On the contrary, opposition politicians in particular have been encouraged to put forward their ideas and

criticism in the commissions and not just in the municipal council, where it is often too late to make significant adjustments or changes.

I see a clear turnaround in the way the majority and opposition work together. I am all the more disappointed about this, as I have attended a great number of commission meetings since my re-election in order to keep myself informed and participate proactively. So I had no choice but to put forward my suggestions again at the last municipal council. Unfortunately, they were not discussed, but only briefly commented on by the mayor. However, my contribution can be viewed on our homepage by anyone who is interested: <https://bartreng.csv.lu/diskussionsbeitrag-vum-marc/>.

**What other points in the CSV election program do you think could help the village of Bertrange?**

In addition to the “Centre Médical”, we had two important projects in the election program that have really grown on me and that I have increasingly concrete ideas for. I hope that we can motivate the College of Aldermen to work on these ideas in the coming months and years.

We should now build our new community studios as planned. The existing studios can then be converted into a centre of ecology and solidarity in the short term. We have described this project with its many directions in our election program. Affordable rental offers should also be made for private initiatives in the areas, but also for start-ups and pop-up stores. We would also like to encourage our fellow citizens to help shape this project.



**Please explain the idea of the CENTRE OF ECOLOGY AND SOLIDARITY in more detail!**

Bertrange needs a structure for activities with a social and ecological character. Ecology and solidarity go hand in hand. With regard to the ecological focus, the centre will have the task of taking responsibility for the implementation of both the Climate Pact and the Nature Pact. Specifically, information, advice, courses and exhibitions on the environment, biodiversity and animal protection are to be considered. It is also conceivable, for example, to set up a local second-hand store and a swap shop as well as a repair café.

In terms of solidarity, this structure will focus on togetherness and a dignified life - even beyond one's own backyard. As a first step, the following projects could be implemented there: a social store, a food sharing point, a contact point for integration and reintegration into the job market, a meeting place for different groups (young parents, families, refugees, other interested parties) or simply a coffee shop for informal meetings or playing board games.

### **And you think the DP will go along with that?**

I am quite confident. On the one hand, the political majority has relied on cooperation in the past and taken up ideas. On the other hand, there are projects that simply have to be implemented due to time constraints. In addition, a majority must be keen to take into account the interests of the large section of the population represented by the opposition. That is just a matter of political prudence.

### **So you are very confident?**

Yes, absolutely! I'm even thinking of another project! A municipal house of the arts!



### **A house of the arts?**

This is CSV's second project for the town center. I would also like to take this further. It's about a House of Arts with an integrated art school. Like the music school, this project could later be run in cooperation with other municipalities in the interests of all age groups. Systematic training in the arts could take place here. The infrastructure should offer artistic, creative design opportunities that our music school (music, singing, dance, theater) does not offer: Courses and workshops in painting, visual arts, film, creative writing. It will be a house with an equipped workshop, an exhibition space and a public library or media library. Readings for young and old, a reading club or a book club are conceivable. In synergy with our ArcA cultural center, this communal house of the arts will add a new dimension to culture in Bertrange and make a further contribution to integration and inclusion" - to the "Vivre ensemble", as it is rightly called today.

### **One last question: What are the reasons for you to join the CSV?**

Our village is beautiful and our community functions quite well, but there are still many ideas to be developed. We have to keep reinventing Bertrange, make it more lively and adapt it to new needs. There is still a lot to do and everyone is welcome to join us. We have ideas, as outlined here in this discussion, and we believe that they are good projects. Anyone who wants to work on them should come and join us! But we are also open to new ideas from our fellow citizens.