

May 2025

Evaluation of the Research Part of the University of Luxembourg: Evaluation Report

**The Luxembourg Centre for
Contemporary and Digital History (C2DH)**



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Lucy Noakes (Chair), Pim Huijnen, Claudia Weber

Executive Summary

The Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH) was founded in 2017 and is an interdisciplinary research centre (IC) of the University of Luxembourg. C²DH has four main research groups ("research axes"): Contemporary History of Luxembourg; Contemporary European History; Digital History & Historiography; and Public History and Outreach. These axes are supported by the Digital Research Infrastructure unit that provides expertise in data management, analysis and visualisation as well as design, production and hosting of digital research outputs. At the end of 2023, C²DH had a head count of 46 academic staff (44,5 FTE), consisting of five full professors, two associate professors, six assistant professors, six research scientists and 27 postdocs. In 2023, C²DH had a total of 47 PhD students. The state endowment has increased over the years, from €4,320k in 2018 to €6,846k in 2023. External funding is mainly from the Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR), and the Luxembourg public sector (€2,411k and €1,090k in 2023 respectively). International funding is limited.

C²DH has become an established and highly innovative research centre. Its objective – to act as an international hub for the development and experimentation with new research tools and infrastructures for doing historical research in the digital age – is clear and entirely in line with the scientific transformation requirements of our time.

The research at C²DH is high-quality, ambitious and forward-looking. The challenging dynamic interplay between traditional historical inquiry and new digital technology and their interdisciplinary and cooperative approach is reflected in the activities of all four research axes. Outputs range from publications to software, conferences, innovative publication series, podcasts and online exhibitions. Interdisciplinarity is a defining characteristic of C²DH and an important component of all research conducted there.

C²DH has built excellent partnerships and collaborations with leading research institutions (interdisciplinary, national, international, non-academic) to produce high-quality research. It has also developed strong partnerships with local stakeholders, and is strongly engaged in knowledge transfer, providing innovative research and products for a variety of stakeholder and citizen groups.

The organisation and structure of C²DH is welcoming and supportive of staff and research students, shaped by a culture of shared authority and responsibility. The high-level technical support and facilities available to C²DH through its Digital History Lab and access to the University's well-resourced Media Centre allow researchers to access expertise and a good range of resources in support of their work.

The further development of C²DH is important for the strategy and the international reputation of the university. A long-term strategy would enable the Centre to identify key strategic objectives and aims, including grand challenges such as those identified by the EU Horizon programme and the new challenges and opportunities of AI. It will be important to maintain a balance between ambitious innovation, feasibility and resources, and a strategic focus. The Centre should continue discussions on the impact it aims to achieve and how the success of its research projects is defined. As it moves into its next phase, C²DH should place greater emphasis on the strategic direction of its research to ensure it does not take on more than its resources allow. There is potential to establish a spin-off company focused on contract research. The organisational structure of C²DH is not fully consistent with the research strategy and the innovative approach. Instead of the four research axes, it might be better to establish



digital data approaches and digital methods as an overarching element and not as a separate axis. The Centre and the University should be proud of what they have achieved so far and continue to build on and develop this.

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1 Introduction and background

1.1 Introduction to the evaluation

The Ministry of Research and Higher Education (MESR) of Luxembourg mandated Technopolis Group with the evaluation of the research part of the University of Luxembourg. This evaluation was conducted from May 2024 to June 2025. According to Art. 50/2 of the modified law on the organisation of the University of Luxembourg of June 27th, 2018, based on the original law of 2003, the University is subject to external evaluation every four years. The present evaluation assesses both the research and institutional aspects of the University. The main time period to be covered by this exercise is 2018-2023. In addition to a retrospective assessment of achievements, the evaluations' prospective elements include the evaluation of the strategies and plans of the University as well as the evaluators' and the panels' assessment of challenges and opportunities ahead.

The University's mission, as defined by law, is threefold: to offer higher education courses leading to degrees, diplomas and certificates; to conduct research; and to contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of Luxembourg.

This report is part of the assessment of the research performance of the Universities' 13 research departments and three interdisciplinary centres, and covers the interdisciplinary centre (IC) on contemporary and digital history, C²DH. The evaluation is based on international external peer review and covers the performance of the IC, taking into account various aspects such as inputs (e.g., finances, human resources, infrastructure, strategy) and outputs/impacts (e.g., research outcomes, innovation activities, services). A separate report covers the assessment of organisation, management, and governance at the level of the university as a whole.

The observations and recommendations presented in this report are based on a peer review by the following experts working in the research entities' research fields: Lucy Noakes (Chair), Rab Butler Professor of Modern History, University of Essex; Pim Huijnen, assistant professor of Digital Cultural History, Utrecht University; and Claudia Weber, Professor of Contemporary European History, Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt.

The assessment is based on a self-evaluation report submitted by the IC, background information on the Luxembourg research system information provided by Technopolis Group, and an on-site visit to the Centre in January 2025. The hearing, which was organised and moderated by Technopolis, consisted of a self-presentation by the research unit and its core research areas, as well as group interviews with external partners and clients.

The expert panel applied the following evaluation criteria and organised the present report accordingly: quality of the research; impact of the research (third mission); and future potential of the research in the IC.

The evaluation team would like to thank all those who helped us prepare the evaluation, those who provided information and those who were interviewed during the consultation.

1.2 The IC

C²DH was founded in 2017 and is an interdisciplinary centre (IC) of the University of Luxembourg. C²DH has four main research groups, that are called "research axes". These are: Contemporary History of Luxembourg; Contemporary European History; Digital History & Historiography; and Public History and Outreach. The four axes are supported by the Digital Research Infrastructure unit that offers expertise in data management, analysis and

visualisation as well as design, production and hosting of digital research outputs. Each research axis has a head and a vice-head who represent the group in the Management Team (MT). Other MT members are the director and vice-director, head of C²DH operations, personal assistant to the director and the head of the Digital Research Infrastructure unit. At the project level, principal investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs organise the daily management of projects.

At the end of 2023, C²DH had a head-count of 46 academic staff (44,5 FTE), consisting of five full professors, two associate professors, six assistant professors, six research scientists and 27 postdocs. In addition, the centre had 16 technical staff (14,75 FTE), 15 administrative staff (12,7 FTE) and one financial staff member (1 FTE). In 2023, C²DH had a total of 47 PhD students. This number has steadily increased since the foundation of the centre, which started with 21 PhD students in 2018. The number of PhD graduations per year ranges between two and four. The centre also had 29 student workers in 2023.

The C²DH publications that were presented in the self-evaluation are mostly books, among others with De Gruyter and Routledge. The self-evaluation emphasises that scientific publications in Digital and Public history can also have unconventional formats like documentaries and software. The Centre's online exhibitions and projects include a project website about the wartime experiences of young Luxembourgish men, a comic strip, a virtual exhibition on the history and identity of the Minett region, a memorial to victims and survivors of the Shoah, and an interactive documentary on the anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. Further, C²DH together with De Gruyter started the Journal of Digital History as forum for critical debate and discussion in the field.

C²DH's funding consists of state endowment, national funding and international funding. The state endowment has increased over the years, from €4,320k in 2018 to €6,846k in 2023. National funding comprises funding from the Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR), the public sector, industry, NGOs/associations/foundations and other sources, of which FNR and public sector funding are the biggest (€2,411k and €1.091k in 2023 respectively). International funding is limited, with no funding from ERC grants, EU agencies or industry. Most subsidies come from other EU research programmes such as EPFL/FNS and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This funding was exceptionally high in 2023 compared to the years before, and the combination of robust state sector support and success at winning national level external funding demonstrates the potential of C²DH to continue to expand and develop, with a renewed focus on identifying and securing international funding.

2 Research strategy and organisation

The panel found that C²DH's overall organisation and structure are highly effective. The self-evaluation report states that the Centre plans to continue to 'develop new innovative platforms and transdisciplinary initiatives, at the confluence of contemporary, public and digital history'. Importantly, given the expertise within C²DH, the Centre notes the 'critical positioning of our discipline against misuse/faking of historical facts, the training of our students in digital source criticism, the definition of new roles and responsibilities of historians in real-time archiving.'

The Centre's strategy to date has focused on developing a collaborative and supportive research culture and identifying strategic initiatives and partnerships which enable C²DH to build its reputation and develop projects, alone and with key partners. As it moves on from this initial development and consolidation phase, it can develop a strategy that enables it to build on its many successes, including strong funding support to tackle contemporary grand

challenges such as the emergence and impact of AI, misuse of the past on social media, and digital literacy among ageing populations that will help it to achieve its aim of being a world-leading centre for contemporary and digital history.

Each of the Centre's four axes is led by an experienced academic researcher, and has an associated team of academics and PhD researchers working with them. The axes are part of a Centre structure in which the Director and Deputy Director oversee a creative and welcoming environment, encouraging and enabling collaboration and innovation. The inclusive nature of the Centre's structure is externally visible in the C²DH website where members are listed alphabetically rather than hierarchically.

The organisation and structure of C²DH is welcoming and supportive of staff and research students, shaped by a culture of shared authority and responsibility, embedded in practices of 'thinkering' and 'trading zones' which enable academic researchers to share knowledge and expertise and to work collaboratively on projects. The high level of technical support and facilities available to C²DH through its Digital History Lab and access to the University's well-resourced Media Centre allow researchers to access experts and utilise a good range of resources. This allows researchers to develop innovative approaches to their projects, gaining expertise in computer programming (where appropriate) and developing interactive websites as an effective tool for public history, seen, for example, in the virtual exhibition: Luxembourg During the Second World War.

C²DH has expanded quickly since its establishment in 2017. Staff numbers have grown from 52FTE in 2018 to 110 FTE in 2023, while income has grown from €6,000k to just over €10,000k in the same period, thus not quite keeping pace with the expansion in numbers. If C²DH wants to continue to expand, then increasing its income will be a key priority over the coming years; alternatively it may decide to focus on strategic priorities that help meet their ambition to be the world-leading Centre for contemporary and digital history.

The high profile of C²DH has enabled the Centre to recruit an international body of research students, largely from Europe but also from North America and Asia. Since 2017, PhD students benefit from the Centre's membership of a trinational Doctoral School with partners in Germany and France and seven current co-tutelles. Staffing is largely drawn from Europe, especially the countries geographically closest to Luxembourg.

Some of the history projects that the panel observed had a core international dimension (e.g. a history of Luxembourg steel production in Brazil; Jewish Studies in the Digital Age) while others had strong roots in the University's locality (e.g. Remixing Industrial Pasts in the Digital Age). C²DH has developed strong partnerships with local stakeholders. A partnership with DeGruyter Brill has shown positive benefits for open science through the OA *Journal of Digital History*, established in 2021 and the development of a new initiative in Digital Monographs. Collaboration with the Fondation luxembourgeoise pour la Mémoire de la Shoah has produced the Mémorial Digital de la Shoah au Luxembourg, funded a PhD fellowship and organised other events and publications while collaboration with BNL has seen partnership in digital projects, seminars, teaching and archives.

A commitment to Open Science runs through C²DH. Platforms and products created and shared by researchers in the digital history and historiography axis include Impresso and Tropy, while other open science projects include a video game introducing visitors to the history of a Nazi internment camp in Luxembourg and the interactive website World War Two Luxembourg. The Centre should keep in mind any potential stresses that could occur given its strengths in local history and its ambition to work at a global level.

In conclusion, the panel found that C²DH is performing well and its ambitions are strong. Its commitment to a flat hierarchy and a management style based on shared authority and

responsibility is appreciated by its members and creates an atmosphere conducive to collaborative and innovative research. The availability of well-resourced technical facilities and staff expertise also enables innovation and helps to make research outcomes accessible to the public. C²DH is well placed to work towards its ambition to be the world-leading Centre for contemporary and digital History.

Recommendations:

We recommend that C²DH

- Develops a clear strategy for the next five years. This could help it identify key strategic areas for development and growth, and focus resources on these to meet its ambition to be the global centre for contemporary and digital history.
- Continues to enable collaboration and innovation among its members, and to produce a range of Open Science resources in both history and digital tools.
- Continues to explore and develop partnerships with international organisations, shaped by priority areas for development in its strategy.
- Continues to work with local, national and international communities in the creation of its citizen science projects.

3 Quality of Research

In general, C²DH is an excellent, established and highly innovative research institution at the University of Luxembourg. Its clear objective – to act as an international hub for developing and experimenting with new research tools and infrastructures for doing historical research in the digital age – is entirely in line with the scientific transformation requirements of our time. The quality of research at C²DH is high, ambitious and forward-looking. The challenging dynamic interplay between traditional historical inquiry and new digital technology is reflected in all the activities of its four research axes as well as the interdisciplinary and cooperative approach among them. This interplay represents a common foundation on which all research at the institute is built. The panel was particularly impressed by the willingness to experiment, the risk-taking approach, and the openness with which C²DH conducts cutting-edge projects. We are convinced that these qualities contribute significantly to the Centre's success. It is this research culture of "playful experimentation" that creates an inspiring environment, enables out-of-the-box thinking and impactful scholarship.

C²DH describes itself as the world's leading centre that places contemporary history – European and Luxembourgish – public and digital history in a fruitful and innovative interrelationship. Based on the information in the self-evaluation report and the results of the site visit, this terminology does not seem exaggerated. Research at C²DH consists of high-risk and interdisciplinary projects that, among other things, ask how historical and social research questions, such as the crisis resilience of the European continent, can be addressed using digital methods and tools. The Centre advances the field epistemologically through its 'digital hermeneutics' research programme, which has become a distinctive mode of knowledge production at C²DH and is inscribed into flagship "products" such as the Journal of Digital History. It has, further, led to the establishment of a doctoral training unit and a book series. In addition, the Centre makes significant investments in infrastructure and technology, serving as the home for commercial-grade research software like Zotero and Tropy, as well as tools such as Impresso. Its Digital Research Infrastructure unit enables C²DH to make long-term investments in the development and maintenance of tools and techniques that push the boundaries of digital historical research.

C²DH hosts international conferences and workshops in all its fields of activity, promoting the centre as a hub of global exchange and innovative scholarship. The annual organisation of the “Digital History Conference” in collaboration with the German Historical Institute Washington and the Roy Rosenzweig Centre for History and New Media at George Mason University serves as a successful transatlantic bridge between leading digital history institutions in the USA and Europe. Currently, C²DH is working on a stronger collaboration with researchers in the Global South and developing strategic partnerships with institutions in Brazil and Japan. Particularly noteworthy in the area of digital humanities are international research collaborations with European and global consortia such as OPERAS-P, DARIAH and the Revue3.0 project.

In contrast, the Public History and Outreach and the Contemporary History of Luxembourg research axis focuses on regional research collaborations in Luxembourg and the Greater Region, and has produced excellent results to date. Examples are sensitive social and political projects like “Souvenirs d'Ambassadeurs” (2020-2022) funded by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, “CHILDLUX” (starting in the Autumn of 2024) funded by the Ministry of Education and “Soviet Forced Labourers in Luxembourg during the WW2” (2021-2024). While the collaborations in the field of public history and contemporary history of Luxembourg strengthen the visibility of research, the Contemporary European History research axis focuses more on innovative academic and content-related collaborations in academia. These include projects in the field of history of technology, history of social and industrial transformation and border studies, such as for instance the CD-Hist project (funded for 2 years (2024-26) by the FNR). The CD-Hist project which is led by the research axis contemporary European history stands at the intersection of media history, digital studies, the history of digital technology and media archaeology. Another promising example of collaborative border studies, which is led by the axis of Luxembourg's contemporary history, is the C²DH working group on the history of passports that also highlights C²DH's interdisciplinary approach.

Interdisciplinarity is a defining characteristic of C²DH and an important component of all its research. C²DH is designed as one of the interdisciplinary centres (IC) at the University of Luxembourg, fulfilling the University's mission to promote digital literacy and to train teachers and students in multi-modal skills for critical education and research in the 21st century. The panel was impressed by the commitment of the institute members courageously to put this goal into practice, despite all the well-known challenges of interdisciplinary work. C²DH understands itself as an interdisciplinary trading zone where, in line with its basic idea, disciplines are experimentally related to each other to pursue innovative research paths. Against the background of its mission and research practice, its division into four research axes seems mainly to be necessary for administrative reasons. In connection with the development of a long-term research strategy, restructuring could be advisable here.

C²DH maintains a flat hierarchical structure and operates based on a culture of trust. This fosters the creativity and innovation essential for an emerging field like digital (and) public history. The panel commends the centre for its healthy and productive work environment, further exemplified by its commitment to groundbreaking publishing formats, public impact, and open access—prioritising these alongside, or even above, more traditional measures of high-quality publications.

Recommendations:

- The panel considers the further promotion of the C²DH to be indispensable for the strategic development and the international reputation of the University.

- A clear strategic focus must be maintained and, if necessary, reflected even more strongly in the structure. Instead of the four research axes, it might be useful to establish the development of digital data approaches and digital methods as an overarching element and not as a separate axis.
- Continue discussions on the impact and define success of research projects. Consider developing innovative methods to discover the long-term impact of research.
- The establishment of a Chair in Migration Studies can act as a good model for C²DH moving forward, as it creates strategic appointments that address grand challenges and support its ambition to fully cement its position as the world leading centre for contemporary and digital history.
- As it enters its next phase, C²DH should consider tackling grand challenges. By leveraging its impressive expertise and resources, the centre is uniquely positioned to demonstrate how digital history methods can address contemporary global issues such as climate change and inequality. This would help sustain and further its reputation as a global hub for digital history.
- The centre should keep its focus on artificial intelligence to remain at the forefront of advancements in digital history. The establishment of a Chair on AI is an excellent step in this direction.

4 Resources

4.1 Financial resources and infrastructure

C²DH has a solid financial base which is used effectively to enable and support a wide range of research projects. It is also able to make good use of the University's Media Lab, and its own Digital History Lab provides expertise and resources to support these projects.

The Centre has been very successful in attracting grants from within Luxembourg; both from central government projects and from other partner organisations and commissioning bodies. External funding and state allocated funding for C²DH have both grown substantially since the Centre began to operate fully in 2018. According to the self-assessment, in 2018, the Centre attracted €4,320k in state allocated funding and €1,375k in external funding; in 2023 these had grown to €6,846k in state allocated funding and €3,852k in external funding. It has also developed successful partnerships with a range of other institutions and organisations, with contract research providing a proportion of the external income stream.

The panel saw evidence of an impressive technical infrastructure to underpin and support interdisciplinary research in the Centre. The Centre's own Digital History Lab provides specialised support for digital history while the University's Media Centre is well equipped with a range of resources and specialised staff and is thus able to provide additional support to staff and students in C²DH who want to develop 'non-traditional' outputs such as interactive websites or podcasts.

Recommendations:

- The Centre has grown very quickly with staffing and student levels outstripping income levels, though both have grown since C²DH was first established. The Centre could consider cutting back on its external partnerships and commitments to focus on developing research and funding bids in areas identified as strategically important. One way to manage the requests for contractual research received by the Centre could be to establish a spin-off

company to undertake these. This would aid the Centre in developing a strategic focus on grand challenges outlined above.

- The Centre could consider providing internal grants specifically targeted at encouraging and supporting research projects that work across axes. These could be run as on a pilot basis for one or two years in order to evaluate their success.
- The Centre should continue to build on its early success and momentum by developing a bid to the EU Horizon project as a lead partner.
- Working at the cutting edge of digital history, C²DH is well placed to work with the Government of Luxembourg to advise upon sustainability issues of tools and solutions.
- The panel recommends the University continues to support the development of C²DH by ensuring sufficient physical space and material resources in the future.

4.2 Human resources, careers, and related policies

The panel observed a supportive culture and environment which seems to work well for all members of the Centre, with research students expressing a sense of being members of a community and feeling well supported. The culture of shared authority and shared responsibility aims to create an environment in which individuals and teams can take risks and experiment. This is essential to such a new and developing field. The commitment of the management to this model, and the sense of community expressed by many members of the Centre, should be praised.

The role of permanent specialist staff in each of the four axes of research and in the Digital History Lab has created a culture in which individual researchers are able to seek help and advice from specialists. This is further enabled by the culture of 'thinkering' and the concept of a 'trading floor' of ideas and knowledge. The number of Professors employed in the Centre has almost doubled; from seven in 2018 to thirteen in 2023. While the Centre had no female professors in 2018, it now has two women employed as Full Professors and one female Assistant Professor. Staffing strategy is forward looking with the ongoing recruitment of a specialist in AI and History. Of 46 FTE academic staff, 57% are women, and of 27 Postdocs, 70% are female. Elsewhere a more traditional gender structure can be seen, with 87% of administrative staff employed being female, and 63% of technical staff being male. Senior academic leadership in the Centre is male. The number of PhD researchers working in the Centre has grown from 21 to 47, of whom 70% are female. While there remains work to be done, recent developments are positive and to be recommended as evidence of good practice in the aim of gender equity and employment.

Recommendations:

- The Centre should begin to develop a succession strategy to ensure continuity and continued success as senior members of staff retire.
- The creation of a gender representative role, and ongoing work to develop a dynamic visual dashboard to display metrics and information relating to equity in the Centre are excellent ideas and should continue to be supported.
- The Centre should find a means to ensure that female colleagues, who were praised by Doctoral students for their accessibility and supportive attitude, do not carry an extra, invisible workload of emotional labour.
- The Government's 'five-year rule' imposes limitations on and creates difficulties for younger staff and doctoral students who may need to take parental leave.

5 Contribution to teaching

Knowledge transfer through teaching is an integral part of the centre's DNA. Its staff is engaged in teaching at various levels, including the university's undergraduate and graduate programmes. C²DH has an effective model for staff training through its Training Trading Zone and maintains a strong focus on educational output, particularly in the form of innovative, open-access materials such as Ranke 2.0. Many of these efforts align with the Centre's ambition to enhance digital literacy through teaching and training.

The establishment of the MA in Digital and Public History further enhances C²DH's visibility and leverages its strengths by offering training to a new generation of digital and public historians from Luxembourg and beyond. The opportunity for a relatively high number of student assistants to participate in the centre's work fosters a productive integration of teaching and research while equipping students with knowledge and skills that extend beyond any BA or MA programme.

The teaching load for C²DH's permanent staff appears to be well-balanced, supporting the realisation of the centre's ambitions. It is commendable that PhD researchers are not required to teach but have the opportunity to do so if they wish. Gaining teaching experience is an important factor in academic career development. The compensation provided for PhD researchers contributing to training within the Training Trading Zone demonstrates how effectively this initiative stimulates early-career researchers to develop pedagogical skills. Likewise, for postdoctoral researchers, the Training Trading Zone serves as a productive environment for acquiring and refining skills essential for career opportunities both within and beyond academia.

Recommendations:

- Fostering teaching experience among PhD researchers could be further encouraged by awarding ECTS credits for their teaching efforts.
- The panel recommends expanding the general course offerings of the doctoral school as part of PhD training.
- The panel expresses concern over the five-year restriction on temporary contracts, as this may discourage researchers from investing in teaching experience. Further, the recent doubling of the semester fee for students risks negatively affecting the University's attractiveness, particularly given its already relatively small student population.

6 Contribution to the third mission

The third mission is an area of applied research that enhances the visibility in society, not only of C²DH but also of the University as a whole, and supports the research policy and research investments of Luxembourg. C²DH is a very engaged player in impressive activities and knowledge transfer. It offers innovative actions and products for a variety of stakeholder and citizen groups, based on shared interest and in some cases exchange of services. The list of activities and concrete examples provided by the self-evaluation report is a remarkable catalogue, which was confirmed through interviews with institutional stakeholders during the site visit. There is no doubt about C²DH's importance in Luxembourg for cultural life in the broadest possible sense.

The societal impact of C²DH is already excellent at this stage due to the agenda-setting role of C²DH in the field public and digital history. The institute is pursuing several collaborations with national industry partners, such as the "A Colonia Luxemburguesa" or the "LuxTime/FNR Initiate" project. If C²DH continues to succeed in establishing itself as a place for big data in the field of history in the future, the economic impact will undoubtedly increase. Projects such as "Impresso", "Tropy" (also for the economic impact) or "DHARPA" can be mentioned here. C²DH is a centre for academic education and training in the field of digital and public history. It creates digital teaching programmes, organises workshops and has held exhibitions.

One of the core missions of C²DH is to engage civil society in Luxembourg with historical research and knowledge produced at the centre. To this end, the C²DH has introduced Forum Z (Z for Zeitgeschichte), a public platform for critical and open discussion of current issues in contemporary Luxembourgish and European history. Interested citizens are invited to debate society-related topics, new approaches and new sources in history with experts. In a similar vein, the Centre curates its own column on contemporary history in the daily newspaper Tageblatt titled "L'histoire du temps présent" and regularly features a radio show called "Den Zaithistoriker" on the public broadcasting station 100.7. Studying the many facets of World War II history is a distinctive key priority of C²DH third mission activities with a lasting impact on national and European debates. Recent examples are the virtual exhibition "Luxembourg during the Second World War" and the collaboration with the "Fondation luxembourgeoise pour la Mémoire de la Shoah" (FLMS) on the "Digital Shoah Memorial Luxembourg". The Centre also studies other contested periods and topics like the colonial past and the industrial heritage of Luxembourg.

Recommendations:

- C²DH is recommended to continue discussions on the impact and define success of research projects.

7 Overall assessment and recommendations

The panel very much enjoyed the site visit in January 2025 and appreciated the provision of detailed documentation in support of this, both ahead of the visit and during it. The overall impression of C²DH – as can be seen from the preceding sections – was very positive. It is an impressive example of the University as a public good: engaged with a range of external partner; working with local and other communities in ways that provide both tangible and intangible benefit; developing and disseminating a range of open access materials and

programmes that support both engagement with contemporary history and the practice of digital histories.

Excellent research is produced at the Centre, with impressive evidence of societal impact and the provision of useful open access resources for teachers and researchers. As discussed above, the creation of Open Access resources, such as Ranke.2 (a resource for teaching digital history) and OA software like Tropy and Impresso makes use of the expertise in the Centre to support historians making use of digital tools.

As stated in this report, the panel was impressed by the research environment observed while visiting the Centre. The commitment of shared authority and shared responsibility seems to have created a research culture that inspires and enables in particular younger researchers to undertake innovative research in a supportive environment. We saw multiple examples of this: the creation of an educational card game for schoolchildren by doctoral students; interactive websites such as Luxembourg in the Second World War; and the production of comic strip books to communicate research in Luxembourgish and European history.

C²DH has made a very impressive start over the past seven years. It is now established in Europe, and has a swiftly developing reputation globally, as a world leading centre in contemporary and digital history. The interaction between the its axes is absolutely central to this, as this enables researchers at the Centre to work together and draw on one another's expertise to produce innovative and engaging research. The creation of the Journal of Digital History, the ongoing Digital Histories monograph series (deGruyter) and software and teaching materials such as Ranke.2 and Impresso are all helping to ensure that C²DH's stated aim of being the world leading centre for contemporary and digital history is well on the way to being fulfilled. The Centre has consistently sought to address emerging key issues in the field (for example by appointing the first Professor in AI and History) and has provided leadership in many areas of digital and contemporary history, in particular by demonstrating how these fields can be brought together to enable research and produce accessible and imaginative outputs that have societal as well as academic impact.

Overall recommendations:

1. The Centre and the University should be proud of what they have achieved so far and continue to build on and develop this.
2. The development of a five-year strategy would enable the Centre to identify key strategic objectives and aims (e.g. cementing its emerging position as the world-leading centre for contemporary and digital history) and focus its work towards these as effectively as possible.
3. An exercise in 'blue sky' and 'dark sky' thinking could help the Centre to identify opportunities and also dangers that it might encounter in the next phase of its existence.

