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EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN, A SOCIETAL AND LEXICOGRAPHICAL ISSUE

Bringing the content of the *Lëtzebuerger Online Dictionnaire* in line with the realities of the world and society

Keywords Luxembourgish; multilingualism; gender equality; lesser used language; XML/XSL technologies

The *Lëtzebuerger Online Dictionnaire* (*LOD*, https://lod.lu) is a quintilingual dictionary (Luxembourgish, German, French, English, Portuguese) describing the Luxembourgish language. It is edited by the *Zenter fir d'Lëtzebuerger Sprooch* (*ZLS*, https://portal.education.lu/zls), a department of the Luxembourgish Ministry of Education.

The *LOD* is a specific lexicographical production as it is set in a rather particular multilingual context:

Luxembourg, a small country in terms of surface area, is officially trilingual (Luxembourgish, German, French). Economic activity depends on more than 200,000 cross-border workers from France, Germany and Belgium, which corresponds to ~46% of employees working in Luxembourg. Some sectors also employ a large number of resident expatriates whose mother tongue is not one of the three official languages.

In the *LOD*, the use of translation equivalents, disambiguated by the addition of semantic clarifiers, enables the dictionary to function as a tool for decoding the Luxembourg language both for native speakers (many of whom are bilingual or more often trilingual) as well as for allophones mastering at least one of the four target languages.

Fig. 1: *LOD* entry **Band**

Examples, glossed phrases, synonyms and phonetic information (IPA transcriptions and an audio feature) complete the dictionary entries and make it possible to envisage secondary lexicographical functions (encoding, translation, etc.) (Fig. 1):

The dictionary is becoming increasingly successful with almost one million entries consulted per month.

In order to strengthen the societal roots of this popular service, the team responsible for its production has undertaken a major project to improve the lexicographical treatment of terms describing female persons in their professions.

These terms were initially treated within cross-reference entries, a method used for instance for some terms in the *Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (*DWDS*, https://dwds.de):

Bäckerin, die

Grammatik	Substantiv (Femininum) · Genitiv Singular: **Bäckerin** · Nominativ Plural: **Bäckerinnen**
Aussprache	['bɛkəʀɪn]
Worttrennung	Bä-cke-rin
Wortzerlegung	↗Bäcker ↗-in[1]

Bedeutung

∨ entsprechend der Bedeutung von **Bäcker**

Fig. 2: *DWDS* entry **Bäckerin**

This led to a faster production and result. The female form of a profession would simply refer the user back to the male form of a given term:

Agentin substantif féminin (*pluriel* Agentinnen) - forme féminine de ↗Agent
synonyme Spiounin

Fig. 3: *LOD* entry **Agentin**

Agent substantif masculin (*pluriel* Agenten)

1. FR *agent* [représentant]
   exemples
   ech muss dem Agent vu menger Assurance nach uruffen
   den Agent huet endlech eng Wunneng fir mech fonnt

2. FR *agent secret*
   exemple
   den Agent ass a geheimer Missioun ennerwee
   synonyme Spioun

3. FR *agent de police*
   exemple
   et waren zwee Agenten op der Plaz vum Accident

Fig. 4: *LOD* entry **Agent**

This treatment is not satisfactory for the following reasons:

In the example above (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4), the user can only hypothesize about the relevance of the semantic descriptions of the word *Agent* for *Agentin*.

Furthermore, the feminine forms of the French translational equivalents (in this case *agent*, *agent secret* and *agent de police*) are not found in the translation indexes, nor are the German, English and Portuguese translations. As a consequence, the user's access to various lexicographical features for the terms in question remains limited.

The improvement was planned in two stages:

1) Systematic addition of translation equivalents and cross-references in both directions (from female to male and vice versa), breaking with the previous cross-reference structure:
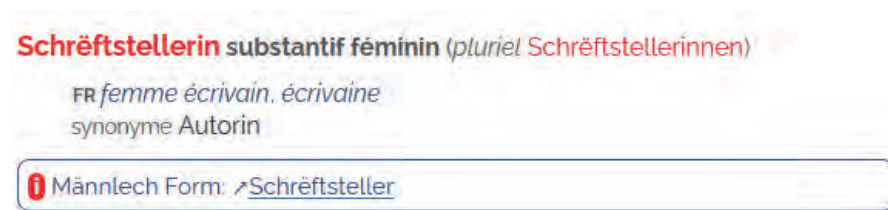
Schrëftstellerin substantif féminin (*pluriel* Schrëftstellerinnen)

   FR *femme écrivain, écrivaine*
   synonyme Autorin

ⓘ Männlech Form: ↗Schrëftsteller

Fig. 5: *LOD* entry **Schrëftstellerin**

Schrëftsteller substantif masculin (*pluriel* Schrëftsteller)

   FR *écrivain*
   exemple
   et gëtt Schrëftsteller, déi all Joer e Buch schreiwen
   synonyme Auteur

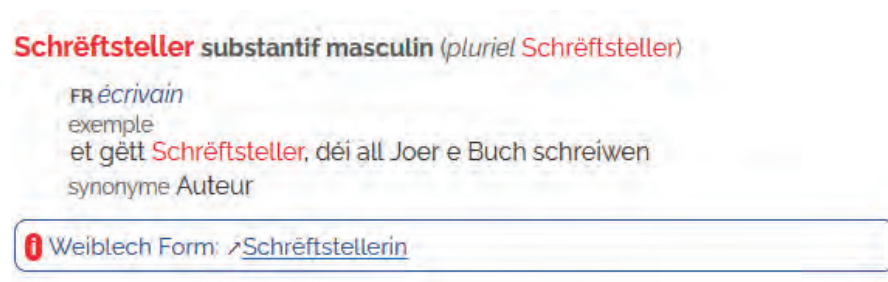**ⓘ** Weiblech Form: ↗Schrëftstellerin

Fig. 6: *LOD* entry **Schrëftsteller**

This step revealed differences in the female form of job names across languages.

2) Systematic addition of examples in order to achieve a perfectly identical treatment:
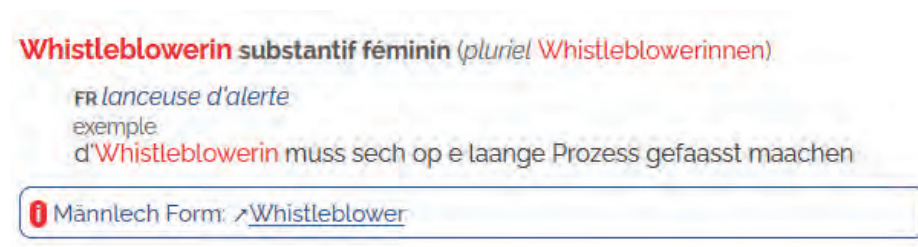
Whistleblowerin substantif féminin (*pluriel* Whistleblowerinnen)

   FR *lanceuse d'alerte*
   exemple
   d'Whistleblowerin muss sech op e laange Prozess gefaasst maachen

ⓘ Männlech Form: ↗Whistleblower

Fig. 7: *LOD* entry **Whistleblowerin**

Whistleblower substantif masculin (*pluriel* Whistlebloweren / Whistleblower)
FR *lanceur d'alerte*
exemple
de Whistleblower muss sech op e laange Prozess gefaasst maachen
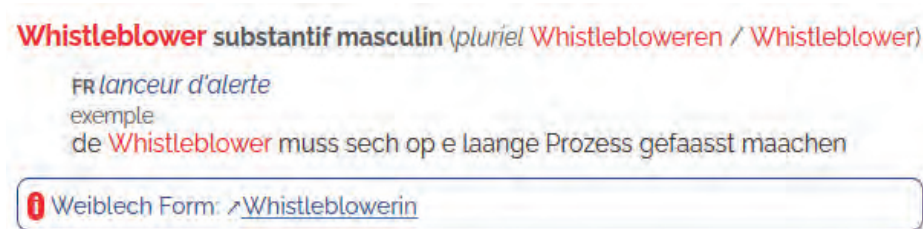
ⓘ Weiblech Form: ↗Whistleblowerin

Fig. 8: *LOD* entry **Whistleblower**

This step led to an in-depth reflection on the use of the generic masculine form in Luxembourgish.

The undertaking has had effects on both the LOD workflow and output:

a) during the steps taken, from a (meta)lexicographical point of view

‒ identification of candidate terms,

‒ necessary differentiation between mono- and polysemous terms,

‒ impact on the numerous variants (orthographic and homosemic),

b) during the steps taken, from a technical point of view

‒ use of XML/XSL technologies,

‒ partial automation,

‒ control procedures,

c) due to the difficulties encountered

‒ in the target languages (feminine form of job names),

‒ examples (generic masculine).

It is interesting to note that in an effort to systematically propose a feminine equivalent for professions, the *ZLS* team has broken with a basic *LOD* principle by showing certain Luxembourgish terms without a trace in the corpora that feed the content of the dictionary:
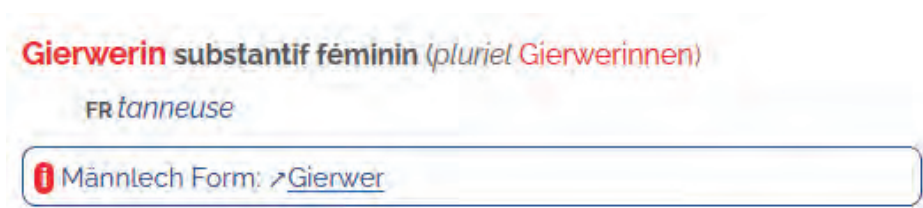

Gierwerin substantif féminin (*pluriel* Gierwerinnen)
FR *tanneuse*

ⓘ Männlech Form: ↗Gierwer

Fig. 9: *LOD* entry Gierwerin

The word *Gierwerin* is easily formed on the basis of other common words (*Astronaut*, *Astronautin* [*astronaut*]), but could not be attested.

More than a thousand entries are currently affected by these changes.

The results obtained may help other publishers to better plan similar work, aiming to achieve a more equal treatment of women and men in their lexicographic production.

References

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