

Lucas D Papademos: Presentation of the three prizewinning design proposals for the New ECB Premises

Introductory statement by Mr Lucas Papademos, Vice-President of the European Central Bank and Chairman of the Jury for the international urban planning and architectural design competition for the New ECB Premises, at the Deutsches Architektur Museum, Frankfurt am Main, 20 February 2004.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

We have invited you today to the Deutsches Architektur Museum for the presentation of the three prizewinning design proposals in the international urban planning and architectural design competition for the New ECB Premises. In addition, you will have the opportunity to preview the exhibition of all design proposals entered in the competition, which will be on display to the public here at the Deutsches Architektur Museum from tomorrow until 14 March 2004.

In my introductory remarks I would like to do the following. First, to briefly recall the main steps that have led to the outcome of the competition and today's event. Second, to present the three prizewinning design proposals in some detail. And third, to explain what happens next and suggest a tentative timeframe for implementing the New ECB Premises project. Afterwards, I will be happy to answer any further questions, as will the three prizewinners when it comes to technical questions on the design proposals.

1. The choice of the Großmarkthalle site

What we have on display at this exhibition today documents a process that began some years ago with the decision that the ECB should have a permanent home. The search for a suitable location began in 1998, and - following the assessment of 35 different sites across the City of Frankfurt - the Großmarkthalle site was judged to meet the ECB's requirements in a number of ways:

- it provides sufficient space at a reasonable cost (especially when compared to the financial district);
- it is large enough to accommodate potential future growth modules and fulfils the ECB's security requirements;
- it is well-situated in terms of public infrastructure;
- and, of course, it has a real asset, the Großmarkthalle itself, which is a true landmark.

In March 2002, a purchase contract for the site was signed between the City of Frankfurt and the ECB. This formed the basis for the international urban planning and architectural design competition which was launched in November of that year.

2. The phases of the competition

At the start of the competition, more than 300 candidates from 31 countries representing four continents submitted their applications. Of those, 80 architects - 70 "established" architects and 10 "emerging young" architects - were selected to participate in the first phase of the competition, although only 71 actually presented outline proposals for the New ECB Premises. All proposals had to be submitted anonymously. A notary was involved to make sure the identities of the candidates remained secret throughout the competition.

In August 2003, the 12 members of the international Jury - which was made up of architects, and representatives of the City of Frankfurt, the ECB and national central banks, and that I had the honour to chair - examined the outline proposals. Twelve candidates were selected out of the 71 to participate in the second phase and were invited to submit more detailed design concepts.

On 12 and 13 February 2004, the Jury reconvened and evaluated all 12 design concepts on the basis of the criteria set out in the Competition Brief:

- the overall town-planning, architectural and landscaping concept;

- compliance with the main features of the functional and spatial programme, including modularity, in line with the ECB's needs;
- the energy and environmental concept and compliance with the main features of the ECB's technical requirements; and
- compliance with the relevant building and environmental laws.

In its evaluation, the Jury placed particular emphasis on whether the design concepts reflected the values of the ECB and conveyed an appropriate image for the ECB; and to what extent the fundamental appearance of the historic Großmarkthalle building was preserved.

The Jury's choice of winner for the first prize was based on a very large majority within the Jury (10 in favour out of 12). Thereafter, Jury members expressed their preferences for the two designs to be awarded the second and third prizes, and the votes cast established a clear ranking. Given this unambiguous outcome, all members of the Jury accepted the final ranking of the three prizewinning designs as the consensual choice.

Let me now briefly present to you the three winning designs. I am delighted that the prizewinning architects were able to attend today and they will be happy to answer more detailed questions about their designs in a moment.

3. The three prizewinning designs

The first prize was awarded to Coop Himmelb(l)au. Their design concept was viewed by the Jury as a powerful image, reflecting values of the ECB, such as transparency, communication, efficiency and stability. It is also an appealing and sophisticated design, which is easily readable and establishes a strong and unique identity in Frankfurt's skyline. The high-rise is a sculptural hybrid of two towers connected by an atrium. We felt that this multi-purpose atrium reflected the values of transparency and communication. We believe this project to be compatible with the City's urban design concept for the whole river Main area. The Großmarkthalle itself is well preserved, both in terms of external visibility and its interior architectural articulation. The overall functionality of the design proposal, including workspace quality and fulfilment of technical requirements, was appreciated. Overall, the members of the Jury considered this project to be the most appropriate concept for the ECB's future headquarters.

The second prize was awarded to ASP Schweger Assoziierte. This design makes a strong statement. It combines three buildings into one unified composition, which aggregates its constituent parts into a clear, simple structural entity. The building represents a new urban typology for high-rise buildings, which would ensure a unique and individual expression for the ECB. The occupants and visitors would be enveloped and inspired by the ECB. The architects propose replacing the concrete roof of the Großmarkthalle with glazing. This modification is feasible and adds a new aesthetic quality to the overall appearance of the Großmarkthalle. The contrast between it and the new buildings is striking. Overall, the Jury considered this project to have a strong identity.

The third prize was awarded to 54f architekten in association with T. R. Hamzah & Yeang. Through the contrast between the north-south axis of the tower buildings and the horizontality of the lower elements, this design offers a clear contrast to the east-west orientation of the Großmarkthalle. The free-standing position of the historic building shows respect for the local urban environment. As a discrete high-rise cluster the project integrates well into the skyline: the orientation allows both openness to the river Main, and visibility from the city centre. While elsewhere the best workplaces are located in the southern portion, here the multi-storey gardens are accessible to everybody. The idea of combining the climate concept with a public zone was found very convincing. Overall, the Jury judged that this design was efficient and commendable.

4. The way ahead

So where do we go from here? In a revision phase to follow, the Governing Council of the ECB will invite one or more prizewinners to review their design proposals. A final design will be agreed in cooperation with the City of Frankfurt. After this revision phase, the Governing Council of the ECB will award the contract for planning its new premises to one of the three prizewinning architects.

Once this decision has been made, the ECB will take the next steps, again in cooperation with the City of Frankfurt. This will involve developing an urban development plan to allow for the implementation of the design concept. In parallel, the detailed planning of the project will get under way.

I am sure you will appreciate that it is very difficult, at this early stage, to predict the exact timing of the next steps. The current users of the Großmarkthalle site - the wholesalers - are scheduled to move to a new location in Kalbach this summer. Thereafter, the City of Frankfurt will "clean up" the site, which means, for instance, demolishing adjacent technical structures that do not form part of the historic Großmarkthalle building. We expect that the City will be able to hand over the site to the ECB, as agreed, in January 2005. After completing the planning phase and obtaining the relevant permits from the authorities, we hope to start construction during 2006 and look forward to moving into our new home around 2008/2009.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by emphasising that the Governing Council of the ECB is very satisfied that the results of the international architectural competition have fulfilled its expectations. Our new home will be functional, aesthetically appealing and, at the same time, reflect the core values of our institution. I am confident that the New ECB Premises will give us all - the ECB, the City of Frankfurt, and the architectural profession - a reason to be proud.

Thank you for your attention.

It now gives me great pleasure to hand over the prizes to the three prizewinners:

- 1st prize: Coop Himmelb(l)au, represented by Prof. Wolf Prix.
- 2nd prize: ASP Schweger Assoziierte, represented by Prof. Peter Schweger.
- 3rd prize: 54f architekten in association with T. R. Hamzah & Yeang, represented by Prof. Johann Eisele.

I am now at your disposal for questions.