

## **European Central Bank: Press conference on the chosen design for the New ECB Premises**

Introductory statements by Mr Jean-Claude Trichet, President of the European Central Bank, and Mr Lucas Papademos, Vice President of the European Central Bank, to the press conference on the chosen design of the international urban planning and architectural design competition for the New ECB Premises, Frankfurt, 20 January 2005.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

We have invited you today for the presentation of the chosen design proposal in the international urban planning and architectural design competition for the New ECB Premises.

In our introductory remarks we would like to do the following: first, to briefly recall the main steps that have led to the outcome of the competition. Second, to present the chosen design proposal in some detail. And third, to explain what happens next. Afterwards, we will be happy to answer further questions, as will the chosen architect when it comes to technical questions on the design proposal.

### **The decision of the Governing Council / the conclusion of the competition**

Last Thursday, on 13 January 2005, “the Governing Council chose the design for the ECB’s new premises out of the 3 revised design proposals of the 3 prize winners of the international urban planning and architectural design competition. After extensive discussion and a careful evaluation, the Governing Council concluded that the revised design concept of Coop Himmelb(l)au best meets the functional and technical requirements specified by the ECB, and has features that reflect the ECB’s values and transforms them into architectural language.” [Quotation of the Press Release]

On 13 February 2004 an international jury consisting of architects, Eurosystem representatives and a representative of the City of Frankfurt chose three winning designs in accordance with the following criteria, as laid down in the Competition Rules out of the 12 design concepts submitted in the Second Phase of the competition:

1. Overall town-planning, architecture and landscape;
2. Compliance with the main features of the functional and spatial programme, including modularity;
3. Feasible approach to an energy/environmental concept and compliance with the main features of the ECB’s technical requirements;
4. Compliance with the relevant rules, in particular in the field of building law and environmental law.

The first prize was awarded to Coop Himmelb(l)au, Vienna; the second prize to ASP Schweger Assoziierte, Berlin; and the third prize to 54f architekten+ingenieure, Darmstadt, in cooperation with T.R. Hamzah & Yeang, Selangor.

On 18 March 2004, the ECB’s Governing Council decided to invite all three prize winners to revise their design concepts in accordance with the Jury’s recommendations and the ECB’s requirements. The purpose of this Revision Phase was to remedy the remaining functional and technical deficiencies of the concepts. The final decision on the design concept to be implemented was made on the basis of the revised concepts and the criteria laid down in the Competition Rules.

In the Revision Phase each of the three teams has gone into depth of research and development, reaching a level of design for a new premises which would be suitable for the ECB and could be realistically constructed. I would like to thank them for their work and have great respect for what they have created. Each design proposal is unique in its own way. As we will, of course, only build one design, we, my colleagues from the Governing Council and myself, had then the difficult/challenging task to choose one of the revised design proposals.

We had then great pleasure to confirm the Jury's proposal and to announce Coop Himmelb(l)au as the winning architect of the international urban planning and architectural design competition for the new ECB premises.

I would like to ask now Mr. Papademos, as he was also the Chairperson of the international jury of the competition, to present the main elements of the Governing Council decision for the chosen design of Coop Himmelb(l)au..

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Ladies and gentlemen,

The Governing Council's decision on the winning design concluded the international urban planning and architectural design competition for the ECB's new premises. This means that a major step towards building a new, permanent home for the ECB here in Frankfurt has been completed. Over the past three years, we have made considerable efforts in preparing this competition and seeing it through to its successful conclusion last week. This process has involved not only our own experts, but also external consultants. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of them for the quality of their work and their genuine commitment to this project. We also very much appreciated the good working relations with the City of Frankfurt authorities, which were of great assistance, and we look forward to continuing this excellent cooperation.

We would also like to thank again all the architects who took part in the competition and submitted such a great variety of design proposals. We are especially grateful to the three prize-winning architectural offices which participated in the revision phase of the competition. Over the past 11 months, they have gone into substantial depth to elaborate the details of their design proposals. The high quality and professionalism of the work done in the revision phase was very much appreciated by the Governing Council.

The Governing Council's decision on the design of the ECB's premises was reached after extensive discussion and careful evaluation of the prize-winning designs. As a public institution, we are committed to performing our tasks effectively and to using our financial resources prudently. Therefore, it was essential to have a thorough and comprehensive assessment - even if that prolonged the process somewhat - so as to make the right decision on a matter of such symbolic and financial importance.

Let me now explain briefly the main reasons why the Governing Council chose COOP HIMMELB(L)AU's design. I am delighted that the architect, Prof. Wolf Prix, and his colleagues, Mr Dreiholz and Mr Halm, have joined us for this press briefing today.

### **The design chosen**

The Governing Council judged the revised design concept of COOP HIMMELB(L)AU not only to be superior from an overall aesthetic and urban planning perspective, but also to be the one that best met the functional and technical requirements specified by the ECB. It was felt that this expressive, dynamic and appealing design would serve as a unique landmark, and result in the ECB's new premises having a strong identity. In the Governing Council's view, this design concept had features that reflected the ECB's values - in particular, unity and transparency - and translated them into architectural language. Furthermore, the way in which the three elements of the design - the high-rise building of a twisted shape, the "groundscraper" and the Grossmarkthalle - formed a harmonious and well-proportioned ensemble was assessed very positively. We also considered that the integration of the Grossmarkthalle into this ensemble was addressed in an excellent way, while at the same time respecting the fundamental appearance of this historic building.

The design concept also met, in principle, the ECB's functional and spatial requirements. The Governing Council appreciated especially the good connection of the different functional areas and the excellent workplace quality, guaranteeing natural light for all members of staff. Using the atrium as a large communicative zone within the two tower buildings was also welcomed. The Governing Council noted that all requirements for the energy concept had basically been fulfilled and that the design complied with the relevant regulations in the fields of building and environmental law.

## **Next steps**

So where do we go from here? The Governing Council decided that the next step would be an “optimisation” phase in which the selected architect would again review his design on the basis of further guidance from the ECB. We will reassess the ECB’s functional and spatial requirements and, on that basis, seek to further optimise the design with the aim of reducing costs.

With regard to the cost, the estimates available at present, taking into account the optimisation potential, suggest that the construction costs will be about €500 million. The total investment costs, however, will be higher, since they include additional elements, such as the cost of purchasing the Grossmarkthalle site, planning fees and other infrastructural costs. Some of these additional cost items are related to the construction costs, while others depend on further deliberation and specification. More precise information on the cost aspects of the project will be provided at the end of the detailed planning phase.

I should like to emphasise that we will continue to work closely with the City of Frankfurt authorities in the coming phases of the project, especially in view of the urban development plan that will be adopted by Frankfurt’s City Council.

I am delighted that the Governing Council’s decision has been very well received; not only by representatives of the City of Frankfurt, but also by the local and international media.

Let me conclude by stressing that the Governing Council was very pleased indeed with the way the competition ran, with the quality of the designs and with the outcome of the competition. Of course, more challenges and many further decisions lie ahead. The successful completion of the competition is, however, an important milestone on the way towards building a new home for our institution. I am convinced that the winning design chosen by the Governing Council will become not only a Frankfurt landmark, but also a symbol of a united Europe and its single currency, the euro.

I would now like to invite Prof. Prix to present his design proposal.