

RÉSIDENCE PALACE

Project Factsheet

1. Origins of the project

In 2000, at its meeting in Nice, the European Council¹ decided that all its meetings would be held in Brussels from 2002/2003 onwards. Since negotiations on the "big-bang" enlargement of the European Union were already well advanced at that time, the Council of the European Union drew up an extensive buildings programme in order to meet those new requirements.

Under that programme, significant adaptations were made to the Justus Lipsius building between 2001 and 2006 in order to host delegations from the new Member States, meetings of the European Council and representatives of the audiovisual and written media attending such summit meetings. It was also under that programme that, in 2003, the Council decided to acquire the Lex building, which has housed all of the General Secretariat's translation units since 2007.

However, it was clear that, despite all the adaptations which had been made to it, the Justus Lipsius building could not meet all the security and operational requirements indispensable for the organisation of meetings of the European Council. At its meeting in March 2004, the latter therefore agreed to the Belgian Government's offer to let it use block A of the Résidence Palace complex after refurbishment and restructuring in accordance with a timetable to be defined by the Council. The building in question is situated on rue de la Loi between the Justus Lipsius and Lex buildings.

¹ Summit meetings of the Heads of State and/or of Government of the Member States of the European Union, accompanied by their Foreign Affairs Ministers and by the President and one member of the European Commission.



The programme of requirements approved by the Council provided for the creation of rooms for meetings of the European Council, the Council of the European Union and other high-level bodies, offices for the Presidency, Member States' delegations and the General Secretariat and catering and reception facilities¹. The programme also laid down requirements relating to functionality, security, design, technical features and sustainable development.

It was on the basis of that programme that the General Secretariat of the Council launched a European architectural and engineering competition in 2004 under the auspices of the International Union of Architects. In January 2005, in consultation with the Public Buildings Administration², 25 teams of project authors were selected to take part in the competition. Subsequently, in June 2005, an international selection board appointed by the Council chose 7 projects from among the 25 proposals received, the designers of which were invited to take part in the second round of the competition.

¹ Because of the substantial adaptations which had recently been made to the Justus Lipsius building, the Council decided to keep the Press Centre in that building and to provide additional press facilities in the Résidence Palace.

² Designated by the Belgian State as the contracting authority.

Finally, on 2 September 2005, the selection board chose the joint venture "Philippe Samyn & Partners - Studio Valle Progettazioni - Buro Happold, architects and engineers" as the winner of the competition. The Council subsequently invited the Belgian State to conclude the study contract for the new project with that joint venture.

2. Design of the building

The Résidence Palace was built between 1922 and 1927 by the promoter Lucien Kaisin on the basis of plans drawn up by the Swiss architect Michel Polak. The project comprised luxury apartments and associated services¹. After World War II, the building was converted into offices and used to house Belgian Government departments.

At the end of the 1960s, as part of work to modernise the area during the construction of an underground railway line beneath rue de la Loi, a new aluminium façade was added on that side under the supervision of Michel Polak's sons. Finally, in 1988, the eastern part of the building was demolished to make way for the construction of the Justus Lipsius building. The original façades of the Résidence Palace building, the entrances and the central ground-floor corridor are now listed as a national heritage site.



¹ Theatre, swimming pool, restaurant, shops and catering services.

In accordance with the planning regulations, the aforementioned Samyn/Valle/Happold team¹ plans to extend the building on its north-eastern (rue de la Loi) side by adding two new façades which will transform the original L-shaped building into a cube. The atrium, which will be situated between those new façades and the original building, will house the main entrance and the cafeteria, together with a new urn-shaped space which will host the meeting rooms.



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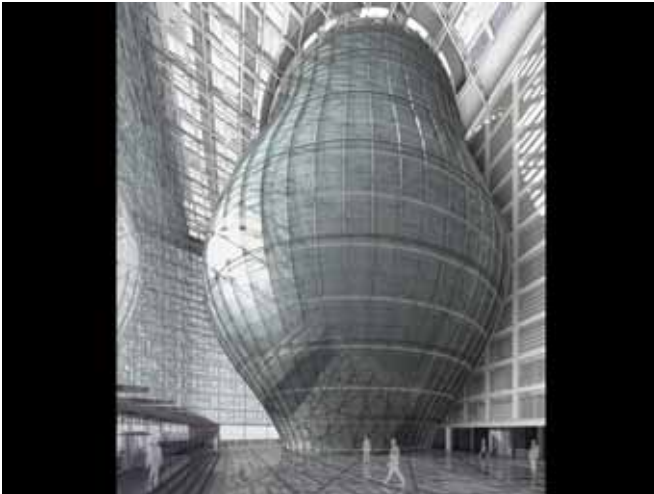
The new north-eastern façade will be a double façade, and its external surface will be composed of a patchwork of restored wood-frame windows from various European countries. The architectural aim of reusing these traditional old windows is twofold: to contribute towards sustainable development and to demonstrate the Union's cultural diversity. This patchwork will also provide the first layer of acoustic and thermal insulation for the internal space. The new façade surrounding the atrium and the urn-shaped meeting room area housed within it will together form an urban "lantern" which will be visible as a European landmark in the city.



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¹ Under the leadership of Philippe SAMYN & Partners, architects and engineers, study team representative and coordinator.

The internal urn-shaped space, symbolising the lantern's flame, will provide the minimum surface area required for each room: from the press room on level R+1 to the smallest room for official lunches and dinners on level R+11, via the large meeting rooms with interpreting cabins on the intermediate floors. Each floor of the urn will be elliptical in shape, varying in dimension but sharing the same centre and principal axes. Although it may not look it, the structure of this object will in fact be rigorously symmetrical.



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The new façade composed of restored wood-frame windows is one example of the way in which the design team has incorporated the Council's desire that its new headquarters should be compatible with sustainable development. Other examples of this include the preservation and refurbishment of as many parts of the historic building as possible, the umbrella of solar panels, a design which is very much orientated towards natural and recoverable materials, highly-efficient, energy-saving technical equipment and the recycling of rainwater. The Résidence Palace project is also the first building site in Belgium to be monitored continuously by auditors with a view to being accorded "high environmental quality" certification.

Finally, it should be noted that the new building's design makes allowance for the construction of a new underground railway line and the enlargement and reconstruction of the multimodal Schuman station. This work will reduce the current Résidence Palace's basement area by around 1/3, and the new underground developments will necessitate major work to support the historic building and highly sophisticated metal structures for the new constructions (in particular the urn and the atrium façades).

3. Contractual aspects

In November 2005, following the aforementioned architectural and engineering competition, the Belgian State and the European Union concluded a Memorandum of Understanding on the execution of the project for the refurbishment and reconstruction of block A of the Résidence Palace complex. Subsequently, in March 2009, once the environmental and planning permits had been granted, the two parties signed a final Agreement.

This Agreement, which defines the parties' rights and obligations in connection with the execution of the project until the moment ownership of the completed building is transferred, covers the following key aspects:

- the obligations to be met in developing the project: the programme of requirements, quality requirements, town planning, monitoring of studies;
- the financial arrangements for the operation: budget, prefinancing by the Belgian State, reimbursement by the Council;
- the conditions for the sale of the completed building;
- the timetable of operations and the deadlines to be complied with;
- the arrangements for cooperation between the Public Buildings Administration, representing the Belgian State as the contracting authority for the execution of the project, of the one part, and the Council, of the other part.

4. Status of the project (July 2009)

- Asbestos removal and demolition work completed.
- Foundation work in progress.
- Procedure for awarding the reconstruction contract in progress.



5. Facts

5.1. Surface areas:

In terms of gross floor areas:

- superstructure : 54.265 m²
- infrastructure : 16.780 m²

In terms of net floor areas:

- conference and meeting rooms: 4.672 m²
- offices for the Presidency and delegations: 8.236 m²
- press facilities¹: 1.550 m²
- offices for the General Secretariat: 6.652 m²
- general catering and reception facilities: 5.795 m²
- parking spaces: 147

5.2. Timeline:

- Launch of the European architectural and project competition: August 2004
- Announcement of the competition winner: September 2005
- Approval of the sketch design: May 2006
- Approval of the preliminary design: March 2007
- Start of asbestos removal and demolition work: November 2007
- Granting of the environmental permit: April 2008
- Granting of the planning permit: May 2008
- Start of infrastructure work (foundations) : December 2008
- Approval of the procedure for awarding the reconstruction contract: May 2009
- Award of the reconstruction contract: scheduled for October 2009
- Date on which the building will be available for use: scheduled for the beginning of the second half of 2013.

5.3. Budget:

Under the Agreement, the Belgian State will hand the land and existing buildings over to the Council for the symbolic price of one euro. The project budget (costs of work, studies and ancillary services), for which the Council will be liable, was set at EUR 240 million (at 1 January 2004 prices). That budget is still being adhered to at present, despite having risen to EUR 315 million in the meantime due to the impact of the contractual price revision. Within that budget, the reconstruction work *per se* has been estimated at EUR 240 million.

¹ In addition to the main Press Centre, which will remain in the Justus Lipsius building.