

Information note from the General Secretariat on the Council's buildings programme (27 February 2003)

Caption: On 27 February 2003, the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union proposes to the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper II) that the Council's buildings programme be updated with a view to future enlargements. This information note sets out the required conversion work on existing buildings as well as possible construction projects required to meet the requirements connected with the forthcoming enlargements.

Source: Note d'information du Secrétariat général du Conseil au Comité des Représentants Permanents (2ème partie). Objet: Programmation immobilière dans la perspective des prochains élargissements, 6864/03, IMM 1. Bruxelles: Conseil de l'Union européenne, 27.02.2003. 13 p.
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/fr/03/sto6/sto6864fr03.pdf>.

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Information note from the General Secretariat of the Council to the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Part II) on the property programme (Brussels, 27 February 2003)

I. Introduction

With future enlargements in mind, the Committee of Permanent Representatives took some policy decisions in 2001 and 2002 on the Council's property programme on the basis of figures drawn up by the General Secretariat.

Given the developments which have taken place since then, the General Secretariat of the Council hereby notifies the latest information on this issue and proposes to update the programme.

II. Brussels

1. Current situation and future requirements

At present, the Council uses a total surface area (superstructure) ⁽¹⁾ of 165 090 m², broken down as follows:

• owned:

— Justus Lipsius Building, Conference Wing:	55 680 m ²
— Justus Lipsius Building, Secretariat Wing:	82 280 m ²

• rented:

— Frère-Orban Building:	11 100 m ²
— Kortenbergh 150 Building:	9 020 m ²
— Kortenbergh 158 Building:	6 250 m ²
— Froissait Building (2nd floor):	<u>760 m²</u>
	165 090 m ²

The current premises are all fully occupied, with the result that no spare space is available to meet current needs and certainly not to absorb the envisaged increase in activities and staff numbers.

With future accessions in mind, the General Secretariat, in conjunction with the Antici Group, has already evaluated conference room and office requirements and the timescale involved. ⁽²⁾

As a result of these studies, the Committee of Permanent Representatives felt that the Justus Lipsius Building should continue to be the Council's main building and therefore agreed to a programme of alterations to this building, largely concerning conference rooms and press areas. ⁽³⁾

It was also noted that, should 10 new Member States accede, a total surface area (superstructure) of 65 000 m² would be needed to meet estimated office requirements; if the Frère-Orban and Kortenbergh buildings were relinquished, this figure would increase to approximately 90 000 m². As a result, the General Secretariat of the Council has already been authorised to proceed with the rental of the 2003 section of the additional office buildings scheduled for 2003 and 2004. ⁽⁴⁾

2. Alterations to the Justus Lipsius Building

The following programme of works is under way or planned so as to enable the Justus Lipsius Building to meet the requirements of future enlargements and to enable European Council meetings to be held there:

(a) The fitting out of two, or even three or four, conference rooms with 22/25 interpreters' booths.

This programme includes:

- fitting out of Room 35.4 (2 x 75 places for the delegations and 22 interpreters' booths); these works were started in 2002, and the room will be available from 1 July 2003;
- enlargement of Room 50.1 (2 x 92 places for the delegations and 25 interpreters' booths); provided that the building authorisation is issued in time, conversion works will start in July 2003 so that the new room is available from 1 May 2004;
- changes to the interpretation equipment in Rooms 50.6/50.7 so that, when joined together, interpretation in 22 languages may be provided in this room; these alterations could be started in June 2004 so that the two rooms are operational again in September 2004;
- possibly, the development of a room identical to Room 35.4 (2 x 75 places for the delegations and 22 or even 24 interpreters' booths) in the spare area on level 20; where appropriate, these works could be scheduled for 2005.

(b) Building of an additional level at SG.70.

It is planned to accommodate 10/13 new delegations on this level in more or less identical conditions to those enjoyed by the current delegations. This additional level will take approximately 18 months to build.

Given that the building authorisation has yet to be issued for these works, temporary accommodation will have to be found for the new delegations in another part of the Justus Lipsius Building.

(c) Extension of the Press Centre

The Press Centre will have to be extended to take account of enlargement and the fact that European Council meetings are to be held in the Justus Lipsius Building. ⁽⁵⁾

These works include:

- extending the Press Centre's working areas, briefing rooms and radio/TV cabins by taking over the parking areas in CO.01/02; although these works were more or less completed in 2002, some additional work still remains to be carried out at these levels (addition of cabins, sliding partitions in some briefing rooms, TV studio);
- roofing over of the main entrance courtyard and relocation of the access control point; provided that the building authorisations are obtained, these works are scheduled for 2003, 2004 and 2005; these new structures should make it possible both to improve the Justus Lipsius Building and to provide a multipurpose area which could be used as a press working area during European Council meetings. ⁽⁶⁾

Delays in obtaining the building authorisations for these conversion works are, however, holding up building work, in particular:

- as of now, the construction of the new floor for the new delegations at level 70 and the relocation of the access control point at the main entrance,
- in the near future, the extension of conference room 50.1 and the roofing over of the main entrance courtyard.

Problems with these permits therefore need to be resolved so that they can be issued as soon as possible.

3. Additional buildings

The total surface area (superstructure) which the Council will need to cope with the forthcoming accessions is approximately 90 000 m², assuming that the peripheral buildings are vacated. ⁽⁷⁾

These requirements are to be met by using:

- the LEX Building,
- the Résidence Palace Building.

(a) LEX Building

The General Secretariat undertook a survey of the property market in Brussels in July 2001 with a view to purchasing or leasing a building designed to meet its requirements. ⁽⁸⁾

Following this survey, negotiations started with the developers of the LEX Building (rue de la Loi 145) with a view to purchasing this building. This building, which has a total surface area (superstructure) of 58 000 m², will include:

- enough space for the fitting out of seven conference rooms (2 x 70 places for the delegations, 30 interpreters' booths): ⁽⁹⁾ 9 600 m²
- offices for General Secretariat departments: 39 200 m²
- a restaurant and kitchen area: 4 000 m²
- a multipurpose area on the ground and first floors: 2 600 m²
- basement technical areas: 3 200 m²

Negotiations with the developer have been more or less completed to the General Secretariat's satisfaction, especially as regards quality, timescale, cost and financing issues. Provided that the documents can be satisfactorily finalised, the contract will be signed in mid-March. Barring the unforeseen, the LEX Building could therefore be ready for occupation by the Council by late 2006.

Payment for the purchase of this building will take the form of instalments during the construction period and a 27-year mortgage facility after the building has been delivered.

(b) Résidence Palace Building

On 21 October 2002, Belgian Government representatives submitted a technical file on the possible transfer of Block A of the Résidence Palace Building (rue de la Loi 155) to the Council.

This file describes the current state of the building and some works already planned. The file includes:

- the plans and technical specifications of the existing building,
- town-planning possibilities and constraints,
- planned works (railway),
- the various easements on the property (in particular, the railway and links with the other Résidence Palace blocks).

According to the file, a building with a total surface area (superstructure) of some 35 000 to 45 000 m² could be provided (by renovation, demolition and rebuilding and/or by new building).

Following a study of this technical file by the staff of the General Secretariat, discussions are under way with Belgian Government representatives with a view to clarifying:

- town-planning issues (possibility of obtaining authorisations, transfer of any obligation to build replacement housing, listing of some historic parts of the building, consequences of certain easements);
- security issues (underground station and railway, rights of way);
- the issue of the future use of the building (seat of the European Council and/or of the Council, Coreper, Press Centre, offices);
- building timescale and procedures;
- cost issues and financing methods.

The General Secretariat plans to submit this file to the Committee of Permanent Representatives as soon as it has been able to clarify the various issues listed above with the competent Belgian authorities.

4. Temporary buildings

In line with the strategy already approved by the Committee of Permanent Representatives, from 2003 the Council will need temporary 'replacements', over and above the areas which it already occupies, until the LEX Building is complete (late 2006) and the Résidence Palace Building has been refurbished (after 2007).

According to the figures drawn up in 2002, ⁽¹⁰⁾ a total surface area (superstructure) of 26 280 m² (offices) will be needed as well as an extra surface area of 2 400 m² for temporary accommodation for the new delegations. ⁽¹¹⁾ This additional space should make it possible both to meet existing requirements and to provide the additional areas necessitated by enlargement.

For the 2003 section of these requirements, the General Secretariat surveyed the rental property market in 2002. From the 40 proposals received, and on the basis of the price/quality ratio and timescale, the General Secretariat selected the Rolin Building (corner of chaussée de Wavre and boulevard Louis Schmidt in Etterbeek). This is a building with a total surface area (superstructure) of 18 800 m² rented for nine years from 1 April 2003, the lease for which may be terminated on an annual basis from 1 April 2007.

As regards the 2004 section of temporary requirements (26 280 m² + 2 400 m² – 18 800 m² = 9 880 m²), the General Secretariat is planning to carry out a new survey of the rental property market in July 2003.

5. Crèche building

The situation as regards crèche places for the children of European Union officials has become much worse and is now reaching an intolerable level. Enlargement is likely to exacerbate the current shortfall in the number of places, as the numbers of younger staff are likely to increase.

From an interinstitutional point of view, there is no doubt that sufficient crèche places will not be available in 2004 or, possibly, in 2005. ⁽¹²⁾

In view of this situation, the European Parliament has already initiated procedures to set up its own crèche in 2004. The General Secretariat considers that the Council should also have its own crèche.

On the basis of a study of the current situation and the foreseeable impact of enlargement, the General Secretariat will need a minimum of 135 crèche places in 2004. Children of members of the Permanent Representations could also use the crèche if places were available.

The rental (for six months) and fitting out of such a crèche (total surface area (superstructure) of ± 4 000 m²) will therefore be included in the property appropriations requested for 2004. As a result, the General Secretariat is planning to explore the property market in July 2003 with a view to renting or purchasing a crèche building.

III. Other sites

1. Luxembourg

In 2001, the Luxembourg authorities began working on the extension and complete refurbishment of the Kirchberg Conference Centre.

Under this programme of works, the Council will be able to use the existing infrastructure until late 2003/early 2004. Additional space will be made available in this building from April 2003 so as to accommodate the new delegations on a temporary basis.

Thereafter, from 2004 to 2007, Council meetings will be held temporarily in the buildings of the Luxembourg International Trade Fair. Conference rooms with 20/22 interpreters' booths, space for 25/28 delegations and areas for the press will be fitted out in these buildings.

The Council should be able to reoccupy the refurbished Kirchberg Conference Centre premises in 2007.

2. Geneva

The Council of the European Union has been accommodated since 1973 in the Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG). The current premises are not sufficient to cope with future enlargements, and there are also plans to close the CICG in 2004 for major renovation works. ⁽¹³⁾

With this in mind, the General Secretariat of the Council surveyed the property market in Geneva in July 2001, in conjunction with the Commission, with a view to renting space for conference rooms and offices able to meet both institutions' requirements.

Among the 15 proposals received, the two institutions selected the Grand Pré project, since it best matched requirements and offered the best price/quality ratio.

As negotiations with the developer started in early 2002, it was possible to specify how the building should be designed, in particular access arrangements and the layout of the conference rooms, in a total surface area (superstructure) of 3 180 m².

Technical specifications, cost issues and timescales were then finalised, as were the legal aspects. The lease has now been finalised for signature in March 2003. If this is the case, the new premises will be available by late 2004, i.e. at the time when the CICG renovation works are scheduled to start.

3. New York

As in the other sites, enlargement of the European Union will mean that the space available (especially conference rooms) will be inadequate.

The current location of the Liaison Office (823 UN Plaza) is certainly not the most appropriate from the point of view of information security.

The local rental property market was surveyed in December 2002 with a view either to moving the Liaison Office or to extending and redeveloping the current building and improving its security.

The building at 222 E 41st Street was selected after a detailed analysis of functional, security, cost and timescale issues. Provided that space in this building is actually available, ⁽¹⁴⁾ the General Secretariat will shortly be in a position to confirm this choice to the site owner. If this were the case, the Liaison Office could move into these

new premises in late 2003.

IV. Conclusions

As the above report shows, the General Secretariat of the Council made considerable progress in 2002 as regards the provision of buildings to cope with future enlargements. Provided that building authorisations (conversion of the Justus Lipsius Building) and budget appropriations are obtained, the property programme may be summarised as follows:

(a) Brussels

- Conference rooms: the General Secretariat has already embarked on major works to convert the Justus Lipsius Building, which will continue in 2003, 2004 and 2005.
- New delegations: temporary accommodation will be provided in the Justus Lipsius Building while the additional floor is being built.
- Press: initial extension works took place in 2002, and further works are scheduled for 2003, 2004 and 2005.
- Temporary offices for the General Secretariat: the Rolin Building has been rented, and there are plans temporarily to rent a further building in 2004; there are also plans to rent a crèche building.
- In the long term, the General Secretariat is planning to conclude, around mid-March 2003, the lease/option to purchase contract for the LEX Building, and negotiations have begun with the Belgian authorities for the Council to take over Block A of the Résidence Palace Building.

(b) Other sites

- In Luxembourg, the Luxembourg authorities will provide temporary accommodation until the Kirchberg Conference Centre has been extended and refurbished.
- In Geneva, the General Secretariat is planning to conclude, in early March 2003, a lease under which new premises should be available by late 2004.
- In New York, negotiations are well advanced, and, provided that the choice is confirmed, the Liaison Office could move to new premises in late 2003.

The budgetary consequences of the building works, rentals and purchases discussed above will be included in the documentation to be forwarded shortly to the Committee of Permanent Representatives in connection with the establishment of the 2004 budget. They are summarised in the attached table.

Annex

[Table]

1. Excluding basements and the storage facilities at Overijse.
2. In particular, documents 14365/3/01 and 7301/02.
3. In particular, document 15473/01.
4. Document 10869/02.
5. Until permanent areas are built or redeveloped, for instance in the Résidence Palace Building.
6. Making it unnecessary, during important events (in particular European Council meetings), to rent and install temporary facilities (containers and marquees) and to use the conference rooms on levels 20 and 25.
7. These requirements assume that 10 new Member States will accede; given the ongoing negotiations concerning further potential enlargements, the General Secretariat of the Council considers that the figures will be obsolete in a few years.
8. Document 12836/01.
9. At an initial stage (2006), only two or three rooms could be completely fitted out; the remaining rooms could be fitted out as needs arise in areas set aside for that purpose.
10. Document 7301/02.
11. See above, point II.2(b).

12. The Commission has been looking at the possibility of building a large crèche for 350 children since 2001; no progress has been made with this plan because of difficulties in obtaining authorisations for such a building.

13. Document 12808/01.

14. This building has just been purchased by the United Nations Pension Fund.