

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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RENTING OF A CONFERENCE CENTRE BY THE COMMISSION

(Communication from the Commission to the Council)

RENTING OF A CONFERENCE CENTRE BY
THE COMMISSION

1. Current facilities for conference rooms equipped for simultaneous interpreting no longer meet all the Commission's requirements. The Commission has therefore decided to enter into an agreement with the Association Momentanée Delens/François, developer of a plan for a conference centre to be built near the place Jourdan (between rue Froissart and the chaussée d'Etterbeek, 600 m from the rond-point Schuman), with a view to renting.

2. In 1970 the Commission acknowledged that the fourteen rooms in the Berlaymont basements were not suitable for holding meetings with simultaneous interpreting.

Following various reports from experts and negotiations with the Belgian authorities, a temporary solution was adopted. This consisted in converting five rooms for conferences with simultaneous interpreting on the seventh floor of the Cortenberg building, three rooms on the upper floors of the Berlaymont (by the Belgian authorities) and renting seven additional conference rooms at the Manhattan Center (where three were already occupied)¹.

This measure was only to meet immediate requirements pending availability of a conference room complex.

Meantime the Commission's needs have continued to increase, and every month fifty or so meetings have to be cancelled for lack of available rooms.

Organizing these meetings is one of the Commission's essential activities, and there is an urgent need for it to have a proper conference centre near the rond-point Schuman (where most of its other activities take place) that would satisfactorily meet current requirements and those foreseeable in the medium term.

3. In 1974 the Commission published a notice in the Official Journal¹ seeking suggestions from interested parties on the basis of which it could rent the conference centre it needs.

The suggestions received were considered by a group of international experts in 1975; their conclusions were examined by a Commission working party which recommended a project located in the Parc du Cinquanteenaire. The Belgian authorities rejected this project, and the Commission had to reconsider the other suggestions. It then requested new plans for buildings on two sites which had been mentioned and seemed particularly suitable (place Jourdan and square de Mérode).

The same group of international experts re-examined the plans, and the Commission working party concluded that the conference centre near the place Jourdan would be best for the Commission. Moreover, taking the rental terms best suited to our interests, annual rent for that project would amount to Bfrs 125 million over the twelve years of the proposed lease (falling to Bfrs 57 million thereafter), while the rent for the square de Mérode project would be Bfrs 150 million per year.

4. The suggestion adopted also has the advantage of being very close to the rond-point Schuman (600 m away), where most of the Commission's other departments are situated.

¹ OJ No C 59, 21. May 1974.

The complex contains no superfluous luxuries; the Commission does not need a prestige building but a working tool. The main requirements have been met as follows:

- (i) eighteen conference rooms to accommodate 80 active participants, with six booths for simultaneous interpreting (plus technician);
- (ii) one conference room to accommodate 125 active participants, with nine booths for simultaneous interpreting (plus technician) and one projection booth;
- (iii) one conference room to accommodate 160-200 active participants or 300-350 persons without tables, with nine booths for simultaneous interpreting (plus technician) and a projection booth.

These rooms are equipped with individual tables and technical equipment, chairs and full simultaneous interpreting facilities. Adjoining essential services include small meeting rooms (one to every two conference rooms), offices for the conference chairmen and the administration of the centre, offices for technical services, maintenance, reproduction, mail, telephone, caretaker and so on; reception hall, cafeteria and 120 parking spaces.

The complex is located in one separate building, and people entering can be properly received and checked.

5. The developer has stated that he would be able to make the centre available to the Commission between thirty and thirty-six months after signing an agreement. If an agreement could be concluded by the end of 1977, this would mean that the new centre could be occupied some time in 1981.

The rooms at the Manhattan Center could then be vacated, and with the three rooms in the Berlaymont and the five in the Cortenberg building the Commission would have a total of twenty-eight fully equipped conference rooms in the immediate vicinity of the rond-point Schuman.

6. At 1977 prices, the annual rent for the centre will be Bfrs 125 000 000.

7. In view of the foregoing the Commission has decided to enter into an agreement with the Association Momentanée Delens/François, developer of the Conference Centre to be built near the place Jourdan (between the rue Froissart and the chaussée d'Etterbeek), with a view to renting the Centre for an initial twelve-year period.