

## **EU to spend £850m on ‘pointless extravagance’ with new HQ**

*Bojan Pancevski, 14 November 2010*

### **Giant new office complex in Luxembourg will extend to 3.1m sq ft and be inhabited by lawyers, translators and other European support staff**

The European Union is spending almost £850m to replace one of its three headquarters in a project that has been condemned as “pointless extravagance”.

The giant new office complex in Luxembourg will extend to 3.1m sq ft and be inhabited by lawyers, translators and other support staff for the European commission and European parliament, which are based in Brussels and Strasbourg.

The building, which will be completed by 2016, adds to the 24.8m sq ft already occupied by European officials.

The decision to go ahead with the complex will kill off moves to force the EU to save money by having its headquarters in one location in Brussels rather than splitting itself between the Belgian capital, Luxembourg and Strasbourg.

The result is that MEPs and officials will have to spend much of their time shuttling between the three locations.

Many of the more than 7,000 eurocrats in Luxembourg will regularly make the three-hour journey to Brussels at an estimated cost of £255 each in travel and nightly accommodation.

The full scale of the project emerged last week as David Cameron was locked in a battle with the European parliament over demands for a 6% increase in the £105 billion annual EU budget at a time when national governments are being forced to make painful cuts.

“This is a gigantic and rather pointless extravagance that will cause permanent damage to the EU’s reputation” said Ingeborg Graessle, a senior German Christian Democrat MEP, who was also highly critical of the need for regular shuttling between the three EU headquarters.

Brussels documents justify the project by saying that EU buildings should “reflect competence, dynamism and transparency vis-à-vis the European public” and open a “door to the future”.

The project will see the demolition of the existing EU building in Luxembourg, erected only two decades ago.

“It’s not at all clear why the EU needs to knock down a seemingly perfectly adequate building for sparkling new offices,” said Vincenzo Scarpetta, an analyst at Open

Europe, the London-based think tank. “This is incredibly out of step with what is happening across the rest of Europe.”

Construction has already started on the first block in the complex, a £498m, 1.8m sq ft building called Konrad Adenauer 2, after the post-war West German chancellor who, together with Jean Monnet, was a founding father of European integration. It will house more than 3,000 employees of the European parliament over 18 floors.

The second building, Jean Monnet 2, spreading over 1.3m sq ft, belongs to the European commission, headed by the former Portuguese prime minister Jose Manuel Barroso. The British architect Lord Foster is one of the bidders for the tender, which is estimated to be worth more than £340m.

It is understood that the buildings will have their own fitness and recreation areas including spas for the eurocrats to relax in after their busy days.

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