

Speech at the topping out ceremony of the ECB premises on September 20th, 2012

Klaus Pöllath, Ed. Züblin AG, Board of Directors

Dear Mr Asmussen, dear Lord Mayor Feldmann, distinguished guests, colleagues,
ladies and gentlemen,

Imagine you are leafing through a recipe book: autumn mushroom salad with roasted rabbit wrapped in ham; catfish sautéed in a herb butter on a bed of pumpkin with a truffle mousseline; venison cutlet with a chestnut crust, celeriac purée and cherries in port; apple tart with a cinnamon parfait. Ladies and gentlemen, simply reading the titles is bound to make your mouth water! And together with the glossy photos of the artistically presented dishes, you may even start to think you can smell them! But that is not going to fill you up! Printed recipes and glossy photos of mouth-watering delights will still leave your stomach feeling empty. Such an exquisite meal would remain a dream – without a chef!

The same can be said of spectacular, colourful architectural models made of moulded plastic and elaborate designs in glossy brochures. Nobody can live or work in them! Two polygonal towers, an eye-catching architectural addition to Frankfurt's skyline, a bonus in terms of urban development in the east of Frankfurt, 2,300 workstations, conference rooms, a staff restaurant, an atrium and an amazing view from a height of 180 metres: this is the new headquarters of the European Central Bank. As a plastic model, all that would remain a dream and would eventually gather dust in a corner if construction companies and all the people working on the construction project did not exist.

While chefs work to a recipe and transform quality ingredients into outstanding taste sensations, civil engineers and skilled construction workers are working to a design, turning huge amounts of high-performance concrete and high-strength steel into two polygonal towers and ultimately a unique working environment for the staff of the European Central Bank.

Every respectable, ambitious chef diligently selects his ingredients. Equally, a responsible civil engineer carefully checks the materials he is using. If gravel and sand, cement and water are to be turned into concrete, everything depends on the quality of the raw materials and the mixing ratio. Concrete cannot be compared with a soufflé, but with concrete too, it is vital to always keep a close eye on its temperature. On cold winter days, we even use hot water to mix the concrete. It is particularly important to ensure the fluidity of the high-performance concrete being used for the new ECB premises, as we need to be able to pump it up to a height of 180 metres.

Every one of us involved in the ongoing construction works is bringing the plastic model to life, not only with a lot of enthusiasm and wit, but also a good deal of strenuous physical exertion. Those carrying out the formwork and concreting works have continued to create exposed concrete surfaces through strong winds and bad weather; and producing such aesthetic surfaces, i.e. smooth and even concrete walls, using a formwork system, is already almost an art in itself. Welders have joined together, sometimes at dizzying heights, steel trusses of several tonnes weight. These steel trusses, which are at the heart of the entire single structural framework, serve to keep the two towers stable, despite their strong inclination. Using hammers and chisels, concrete repairers are carefully removing the mortar course from the roof built onto the former wholesale market hall (*Grossmarkthalle*) in 1928, so that the latter can become an integral part of the new ECB premises and once again an icon for the City of Frankfurt.

On an average day, there are 900 people on this construction site, with 400 working in the offices and 500 carrying out manual labour on site. There is a saying that “too many cooks spoil the broth”, but that is certainly not the case with this construction project! These 900 people are from a wide range of professional backgrounds and carry out a variety of tasks in every corner of the site. Nevertheless, they are all working towards the same goal. Of course, coordinating all the different tasks is particularly challenging. Our construction site may look like chaos and confusion at first glance, but we are indeed following a well thought-out plan. The site has attracted a lot of attention over the past few months, with people coming to look over our shoulders as we work – a bit like “show cooking”.

We have worked hard and made a lot of progress. The construction of the structural framework is on schedule and will be completed as planned. Like all good chefs, we will have everything ready on time.

On behalf of all the staff of the companies involved in the structural works, Züblin, Spannverbund and Torkret, as well as all sub-contractors, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the excellent cooperation that has been shown. I would also like to express my gratitude to the overall project management: Mr Rinderspacher of the European Central Bank, Ms Pudwitz of Drees & Sommer and Mr Brandstetter of Gassmann + Grossmann, as well as to the entire team. Finally, I would like to thank everyone involved in this construction project for their hard work and I hope that you continue to work successfully and safely.

Ladies and gentlemen, I trust that I have succeeded in unveiling something of the importance and wonder of the world of construction and in giving you a small insight into our work as civil engineers and skilled construction workers.

I hope that you find your tour of the construction site interesting and that you enjoy the topping out ceremony. The traditional topping out speech will be given by Mr Thomas Schnetzer, construction foreman of Ed. Züblin AG. Thank you very much.

(Check against delivery)

Ed. Züblin AG
Albstadtweg 3
70567 Stuttgart
Telephone +49 711 7883-0
Telefax +49 711 7883-668
www.zueblin.de