

## Foreword by the President of the European Central Bank

In 1998, the European Central Bank (ECB) began operations in the Eurotower, in the heart of the financial district of the city of Frankfurt am Main, Germany. In the year 2000, as the organisation grew rapidly, we had to rent additional space in a nearby building, the Eurotheum. Both buildings have hosted us in our first steps, but from the beginning it was clear that a long-term solution for the institution's premises would have to be found. The coming enlargement of the European Union with new Member States and the increase in the tasks to be fulfilled mean that the time has come to provide the ECB with a new home especially designed to support the functions of a central bank.

An important step in this direction was taken on 5 March 2002 when the ECB signed an agreement with the City of Frankfurt to acquire the site of the Grossmarkthalle, which has served for decades as Frankfurt's wholesale fruit and vegetable market. As the Grossmarkthalle itself is a listed building, under historical preservation order, its fundamental appearance must be retained as an integral part of the overall project. Our plan is to erect an additional building - or several buildings - on this site to meet the require-

ments of a modern central bank in the 21st century serving an enlarged euro area.

As central bankers, we have been entrusted with the task of maintaining price stability in the euro area in the interest of the citizens of Europe. This task is demanding and complex in a rapidly changing environment. It requires work ranging from economic, statistical and legal analysis to multifold operational activities. We use sophisticated, modern information and communications technologies. We perform our tasks in close cooperation with the other members of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB), and also in close contact with the financial markets, institutions of the European Union and its Member States, international bodies and academic fora.

These characteristics point to some of the requirements for our new premises, including the flexibility to serve diverse working styles and to foster interaction and communication.

The design of our future premises should reflect the values we regard as essential to our activities. We are committed to transparency, integrity, excellence and efficiency.

The level of security, safety and health of the users of the new premises is a priority for the ECB. The proposed design should take into account not only the security requirements but also people's reasonable concerns for their safety.

The ECB has a strong obligation to use its resources responsibly. In addition, as a public institution the ECB not only aims to provide its staff with the optimal working environment, but is also committed to the City of Frankfurt to ensuring the ECB premises integrate well into their urban surroundings. The citizens of Europe expect the ECB to create a building that is environmentally sustainable.

The requirements spelled out in this competition brief pose an interesting albeit challenging task to talented and innovative designers. We hope that they will know how to interpret our vision and translate our functional needs into an exceptional design. I am sure that many of the best architects from every continent will rise to this challenge and submit outstanding proposals. Welcome to the Competition.

