



Elbe Philharmonic Hall

**Jakub Leško**jalesko@deloittece.com

In early January, the traditional Hamburg monuments such as St. Michael's church or the city hall were joined by the brand new building of the Elbe Philharmonic Hall. It is located in the HafenCity quarter on the territory of the former free harbour, which lost its importance with the development of free trade in the European Union and thus provided space for new development. The philharmonic hall building is located in the western corner of the new quarter and its total height of 110 metres makes it the tallest building in the city.

The history of Hamburg's new landmark began in 2003, when Alexander Gérard, developer and architect, charged the architect duo Herzog & de Meuron to design a new concert hall. The hall was to be built at the location of the old 1966 harbour warehouse by the architect Werner Kallmorgen. The concept intended to retain the original building of the cocoa bean, tea and tobacco warehouse. In the end, only the building's façade was kept, complemented by a glass superstructure with a wave-shaped roof, three concert halls and a hotel.

The foundation stone was laid on 2 April 2007 with anticipated completion in 2010 and planned costs of EUR 241 million. The construction was carried out by the Adamanta consortium composed of Hochtief and Commerzbank.

However, the estimated costs reached almost EUR 450 million already in November 2008, due particularly to the technological solution of the connection of the glass part to the existing structures. The construction of the ninth floor on the newly reinforced roof therefore did not start until 2009, and the costs rose with it. After many issues with static and fire-protection arrangements of the building, the general supplier reached an agreement with the city of Hamburg to finish the work by the end of June 2016 with total costs of EUR 575 million. An additional luxury hotel was designed for the eastern part, the price of which had not been included in the original cost calculations. The premises were opened to the public on 4 November 2016 and a trial concert was held two days later. The inauguration took place on 11 January 2017, i.e. seven years later than originally planned. The inauguration was attended by the German chancellor Angela Merkel and federal president Joachim Gauck. The building is dominated by the wave-shaped roof and façade, but these are not the only interesting aspects of the new

philharmonic hall. The curved escalators of more than 80 metres in length are also worth noting, as is the concert organ with 5,000 pipes. The main concert room – the Great Hall – has a specific shape with the stage in the centre, so the audience is not seated further than 30 metres from the performers. The acoustics of this space were ensured by the Japanese company Nagata Acoustics using 10,000 acoustic panels for the most realistic experience of classical and electronic music.

The total floor area of the philharmonic hall, nicknamed "Elphi", now amounts to 120,000 m², the three halls have the capacity of 2,100, 550 and 150 spectators, respectively, there is a car park for 433 passenger cars and to ensure financial efficiency of the project, 45 residential units were built as well, the most expensive one bearing a price tag of EUR 12 million. The hotel part was acquired by Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, which operates there under the brand Westin and manages 244 rooms, of which 39 are luxury suites. The hotel lobby is located on the eighth floor and is accessible from the public plaza.

After more than 10 years, the wait was finally over and Hamburg acquired a unique building and a new city symbol at the cost of EUR 789 million. And while the opinions of the cost and length of realisation may be mostly negative, it is certain that the investment has enriched the city and in particular the new HafenCity quarter, and Hamburg is thus well on its way to become the cultural and social metropolis of the region. This is further attested by the fact that by the end of February 2017, the philharmonic hall had been visited by a million visitors.

Elbe Philharmonic Hall in numbers

3	concert halls
26	storeys
244	hotel rooms
1 000	tailor-made curved windows
10 000	acoustic panels
120 000 m ²	of floor area
7 200 000 eur	annual facility management fee
241 000 000 eur	originally planned total costs of the philharmonic hall
789 000 000 eur	total costs of the philharmonic hall