



↑ All offices are situated in the high building, while the lower building houses rentable area and a restaurant. The car park is underground.

Office building, Podgorica

'Unpretentious and appropriate' is an apt description of ARCVS's Europoint office building.

■ MONTENEGRO — TEXT: VESNA VUČINIĆ, PHOTOGRAPHY: LAZAR PEJOVIĆ

Branislav Redžić of ARCVS architects regards appropriateness as a valuable and – especially in Podgorica – corrective quality that may help counteract the prevailing trend towards obtrusiveness and immoderation. These are not only the troublesome side effects of a country in transition, but are also very often the characteristic features of the building boom that has gripped the city since the late 1990s and especially since Montenegro's independence in 2006. The means the architect employs to achieve his objectives sound simple, yet they are not easy to reconcile: reference to the surroundings and utilization of all of the advantages of the location; an attractive, functional and sustainable spatial programme; sensible use of the available resources; and a measured architectural design and materialization.

Europoint is situated near to where Sv. Petar Cetinjski boulevard, one of Podgorica's main traffic arteries, crosses the River Morača, which flows through the city in a north-south direction. The building lies on the western bank of the river in

an area characterized by 1960s and '70s Modernism and by a diverse mix of uses: a sports centre and the Hotel Podgorica are freely disposed in the adjacent public park, while government buildings and new retail and office premises are obliged to submit to the strict geometry of the street grid. That said, however, Europoint mostly takes its cue from the adjacent Telecom building, adopting the latter's building line and overall volumetric arrangement of two rectangular blocks of different heights.

Europoint is a freestanding building facing the River Morača, providing a panoramic view of the whole city from its upper floors. Care has been taken to provide an interesting visual experience inside the building, too. The focal element of Europoint is a glazed atrium which connects the public functions in the lower volume at the front with the seven-storey office block behind. The atrium forms the visual and spatial connection between the public and non-public areas, thereby contributing to two essential aspects of modern working environments: spatial impact and social qualities. When successful, they can enhance teamwork and the exchange of information, which are becoming increasingly important and often take place in informal communication. The atrium, which rises above the shorter building, provides access to the latter's roof terrace on the second floor, which houses workstations as well as a small auditorium. The added height of the atrium also makes it visible from the outside, though in the restrained, appropriate manner typical of the architect.

The shops and restaurant in the lower building can be accessed from the street as well as from the atrium. Access to the offices is via two entrances: one leading directly into the →





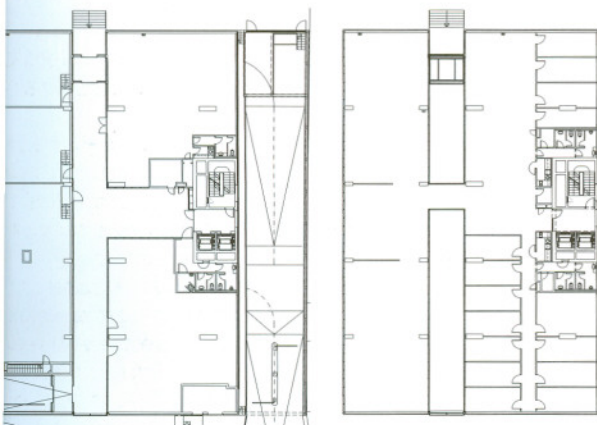
Central atrium



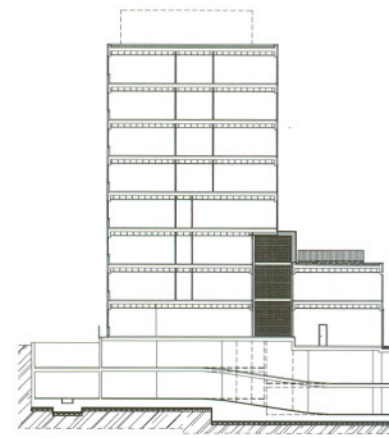
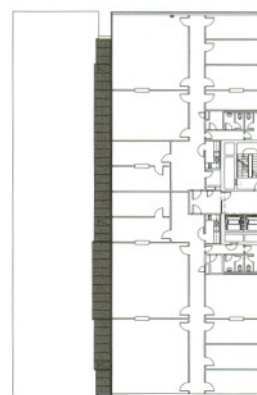
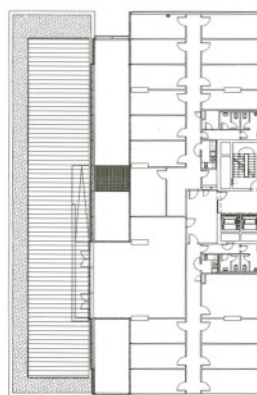
↑ South end facade with entrance to the offices



↑ View from an office over the River Morača



From left to right: ground floor; first, second and third floor



↑ Section

Office building, Podgorica)

atrium, and one from the street in the form of a barrier-free ramp bridging the 90 cm height difference between the public and semi-public areas. The access ramps to the two underground car park levels are at the rear, while the main circulation core is in the middle of the north-west elevation.

The position of the circulation core, together with the reinforced concrete skeleton, offer a high degree of internal flexibility and sustainable use. The floor plans are adaptable and allow a diverse range of office layouts, including cubicles, open plan or a combination of both. At the same time the floors can be divided into two or more rental units. With a building depth of 16 metres, all areas are well provided with natural light. The elegant, smooth facade consists of a ventilated curtain-wall system. Because of the earthquake risk, the construction plays an important role here. Reinforced 50x180 cm concrete pil-

lars were generally used for the building, while the glazed construction of the atrium rests on neoprene bearings to absorb both seismic shocks and thermal fluctuations.

Another feature of special importance is the energy- and thus long-term money-saving approach used in the building services system. To reduce the energy required for heating, ventilation, air conditioning and water heating, a heat pump has been installed to utilize the groundwater of the River Morača as a heat source. A similar energy concept was designed in 2006 for the new United Nations building in Podgorica (A10 #14), not far from Europoint. Nothing special, someone with a strong environmental awareness might object. But for Montenegro, which is still slowly feeling its way as a self-declared environmentally-friendly state, these advances and projects are well worth highlighting. ←

EUROPOINT OFFICE BUILDING, 2007–2009

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