Successful conclusion of negotiations between CEU and the City of Vienna

The future of the Otto Wagner site as a University location is now assured, with classes to begin in 2025

Intense negotiations between the Central European University and the City of Vienna regarding the possible use of the Otto Wagner site as a university campus have been going on for almost three years now. Finally, with the agreement of the CEU board last weekend and today's municipal council decision, contract negotiations are complete and the implementation phase of the university campus is ready to begin.

“The future of the Otto Wagner site starts today”, said mayor Michael Ludwig. “Vienna is seizing this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to write a new chapter of history at the Otto Wagner site. The new university campus and academic facility, centred on the prestigious CEU, will change the international face of our city.”

A hundred-year contract with the option to extend

The property development agreement with CEU will expire after a period of 100 years, and stipulates that the university will be responsible for the renovation of the buildings in the “core area”, which are to be used exclusively by the university – around one third of the available site area. The Vienna Business Agency, a service offered by the City of Vienna, is the owner of the property. The Agency conducted negotiations with the University on behalf of the City.

“Today, we have successfully secured the future of the Otto Wagner site as a university location for the next 100 years”, said Executive City Councillor of Finance and Business, Peter Hanke, with satisfaction. “This decision sends an important economic signal, and the realisation of this campus by 2025 will generate significant economic value for the city in years to come. The Otto Wagner site will become a meeting-place for researchers, academics, lecturers, students and citizens of Vienna – a flagship project for Vienna as a modern, cosmopolitan and international city.”

The contract provides for the possibility of an extension of the CEU’s rights to the Otto Wagner site for a further 100 years.

The next steps

The construction phase will begin on completion of the planning phase in December 2022, and construction work is expected to finish in mid-2025. CEU classes will begin at the Otto Wagner site in autumn 2025, with around 2,000 students expected to attend the campus. Student and staff accommodation facilities, to be constructed by WSE (Wiener Standortentwicklung GmbH, a subsidiary of Wien Holdings), are expected to be ready for occupation by this time. The entire Otto Wagner site will remain open to the public.
Gerhard Hirczi, CEO of the Vienna Business Agency, had this to say: “On behalf of my entire team, it gives me great pride and happiness to play a significant role in such a unique event as the establishment of a university in Vienna, and to help support the development of a site like the OWS. 118 years after the Steinhof sanatorium was first opened on the former quarry site, the 2025 opening of a new university campus will see the beginning of a new chapter for the historic property.”

The process:

- Autumn 2017: first contact by CEU/George Soros; Vienna Business Agency assigned to negotiations
- April 2018: City of Vienna and CEU sign a memorandum of understanding for the establishment of a university campus on the Otto Wagner site
- September 2019: CEU begins delivering classes at Quellenstrasse 51 (Favoriten) as an interim solution
- June 2020: completion of a property development agreement for the CEU core campus
- September 2020 to December 2022: planning stage
- January 2023 to mid-2025: construction phase
- Autumn 2025: CEU classes expected to begin at the Otto Wagner site

Vienna, 24 June 2020