

# Miro Hrušovský (Penta Investments): The Zaha Hadid brand wasn't our priority



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In connection with this extraordinary occasion, Stavebné fórum.sk asked Miro Hrušovský, the head architect at Penta Investments as well as of the Čulenova project, several questions. He pointed out the participation by the world's major architects as an example of how property developers and city authorities should strive to find the best possible architectural concept.

**How did you manage to persuade such an icon of contemporary world architecture as Zaha Hadid, or more precisely Zaha Hadid Architects, to participate in the competition on the development project in Bratislava's Čulenova?**

It is due to several factors. This was not the first international architectural competition which we organized so we are not an entirely unknown developer within the European architectural space. The participants and winners of competitions are current representatives of both the architectural elite (Massimiliano Fuksas - project of Bory shopping centre) as well as young and extremely talented studios (Serie Architects - residential project in Ružinov). At the same time the quality of real estate projects is a priority aspect which is visible on the completed project Digital Park II. And, of course, the actual land and its location, location programme and competition brief, correct presentation of the competition.

**Similarly, other competition participants are top names. Did the jury face a difficult dilemma, or were the qualitative differences between the winner and other proposals so significant that there was no reason to delay the final verdict?**

In the final, we considered 9 proposals and the evaluation lasted 4 months. The projects were analyzed and discussed until the last minute when we reached a broad consensus of the jury. The result was therefore not clear from the beginning.

**World-renown architects and Bratislava. How many of them have been here and what have they actually done for Slovakia and its capital so far?**

In this regard, we truly have a lot to catch up on. Despite having had a few famous foreign architects in Bratislava, I don't think that the result is positive, although it is certainly yet another enriching experience.

**Relatively little information about the multi-functional project Čulenova itself has reached the public yet. At what stage of preparation is it currently - in terms of project documentation and the expected phase of zoning proceedings?**

Since the competition finished just a few days ago, it is obviously too early to talk about zoning proceedings. Work on the project is just starting.

**The historical heritage in the form of an industrial monument - the former Jurkovičova heating plant - moves your investment plan into a possible combination of the new building with a creative type of brownfield. In this respect, what structure, subdivision, functional, architectural and urbanistic connection with the upcoming projects in the neighbourhood should it have? (projects such as Eurovea II, Chalupkova zone, Panorama City, Twin City, Klingerka)?**

This question cannot be answered today. What is the future of Eurovea II, Chalupkova and Klingerka? A good example is Twin City where the developer fundamentally reconsidered the functional content. In a situation where there is no proactivity in addressing such a complex area, it is very difficult to predict further development.

**It must also be acknowledged that the tentatively ongoing financial and real estate crisis has suspended the above mentioned projects until further notice. References of their developers to unapproved changes to the city zoning plan sounded more like a disguise of their own inability to gauge the potential demand. Do you feel bold enough to believe that the Čulenova project has its target customers in the segments of administration and residential precisely identified and it will therefore succeed despite the uneasy times?**

If we did not believe it, the land would be for sale today.

**Given the „conservative spirit“ of old Bratislava lovers, it is not clear how the presence of the original, but somewhat provocative architecture in Old Town will be accepted by the chronically complaining civic activists, conservationists and archaists who couldn´t function without the motto „A petition a week“.**

The question is not whether this architecture and intensity belongs to Čulenova but whether it belongs to Bratislava. If yes then the choice of the location is definitely right. I think that the retention of the heating plant in the programme of a cultural institution of citywide and regional importance is a clear reference to the attitude of the developer to certain values to be maintained in the area.

**Chief Architect of Bratislava and also chairman of the jury Prof. Štefan Šlachta noted that it is “was the most complex and the most convincing solution, meeting best the given criteria“ and that it “will bring a world-renown name, which will move the city onto the pages of world architectural press“ to Bratislava. What would you add to this?**

I agree. The name of the architect was not and is not our priority. As I mentioned, it was not the first international architectural competition which we organized and we always have foreign ‚stars‘, talented young studios and representatives of Slovak architecture among the finalists. We have had winning architects from each of these groups. It is funny that if the winner is a star such as Zaha Hadid, you must explain that it is not about the „brand“ and if the winner is a small Bratislava studio such as Vallo Sadovský, you must explain that the stars were not invited as a token gesture. In any case, Zaha Hadid is certainly an asset for Čulenova as a tried and tested „brand“, especially in connection with the planned conversion of the heating plant.

**Jury members**

**Jozef Oravkin (Partner, Penta Investments)**

Juraj Šaštinský (Project Manager, Penta Investments)  
Miro Hrušovský (Project Chief Architect, Penta Investments)  
Linda Trembová (Project Architect, Penta Investments)  
Prof. Ing. arch. Štefan Šlachta, PhD. (Chief Architect - City of Bratislava)  
Dipl. Ing. Peter Gero (Chief Architect - City of Hamburg)

#### Finalists

Dominique Perrault Architecture  
Farshid Moussavi - Foreign Office Architects  
Neutelings Riedijk Architects  
Bothe Richter Teherani Architekten  
Cigler Marani Architects  
JDS  
GMP international architects and engineers  
Vaillo+Irigaray  
Zaha Hadid Architects

**Who is Penta?** The developer of the zone Čulenova is Penta - Central European investment group (founded 1994), which entered the real estate sector in 2005 with an exclusive project Digital Park. Currently it has a portfolio of two completed and 11 ongoing projects implemented in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. It focuses on the segments of office space, retail and leisure activities as well as preparing land for new projects. Penta operates in more than 10 European countries and has offices in Bratislava, Prague, Warsaw, Limassol and in Amsterdam. Penta Investments acquired the Bratislava's location on Čulenova street in January 2008 with the intention to build a multi-functional building for administrative and housing purposes.

Visualisations - Penta Investments / Zaha Hadid Architects

*As said Lea Krčmáriková of Penta Investments to Stavebné fórum.sk, other visualization of in the competition will be published later on, for example in the form of an exhibition.*

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