



Opening of the Liège Guillemins Station

Liège, 17 September 2009. SNCB Holding, Infrabel and Euro-Liege-TGV are this week inaugurating the Liège Guillemins Station, an architectural gem designed by Santiago Calatrava. *"This station corresponds to the specifications we had drawn up before we called on the architect",* says Vincent Bourlard, Stations general manager at the SNCB Holding. *"It is in line with the philosophy that we pursue for each of our three high-speed train stations: to use the most advanced technologies and the highest standards in engineering so as to put high speed at the service of our domestic network and our daily customers, the train passengers."* The inauguration of these two stations constitutes the final piece of high speed in Belgium, making it the first European country with a HST infrastructure from border to border.

Things have come a long way in Belgium since President Mitterand came to visit and brought the North European HST project in his briefcase. *"Under the Pompidou government, France launched a genuine social and technological revolution with the high speed train (HST) between Paris and Lyon. The development of the HST meant profound changes for the power relations between the different modes of transport. For the first time since the age of the "automobile" the train gained market shares anew."* Bolstered by the results obtained between Paris and Lyon, France embarked on exporting its technology to the North.

This was the start of a real international (the connection of the European capitals Paris, London and Amsterdam, as well as Cologne, with Brussels at the very heart of this network) as well as national chronicle, where Belgium made choices that today, 20 years later, look no less than ingenious. For it was decided that the HST in Belgium should not exist independently on its own tracks and its own stations. The high speed lines could not just run through the countryside, directly between the European capitals, where stations would be relegated to the edge of the city like airports. The HST had to connect capitals in the heart of the city with a heart for the city via Liège and Antwerp. The HST lines had to be pay off for the domestic network, the cities and commuters. In Belgium, the HST would not be there for businessmen alone, but for the benefit of everyone. *"This can be seen today in the lines that Infrabel has modernised and is still modernizing, but in particular in the Liège station that we will inaugurate",* says Vincent Bourlard.

Station of the 21st century

The Liège station has a threefold ambition: to constitute the centre of the intermodal organization of the city; to connect the neighbourhoods by improving mobility and to rationalize rail technology so as to put high speed at the service of the domestic rail network and thus improve comfort for the daily user.

In Liège, the old station dating from 1958 had to be razed to the ground. The undertaking got underway with the real technical need to modernize the rail complex of Liège Guillemins. The rail lines criss-crossed without rhyme or reason, the platforms were not straight and the most used rail lines were relegated to the back of the station. The trains ran from one track to another, zigzagging between dead-end rails. The slope was crossed at the speed of a local train. To these technical requirements, Euro-Liège TGV, a subsidiary of the SNCB Holding, set up in 1993, added some more: the necessary intermodality with the connection to the nearby motorway via the car park on the hill and with the other modes of transport, as well as the openness of the station to its environment (the Guillemins and Frangée districts in front, Mandeville, Cointe and Observatoire in the back). *"Only when we had these detailed*



specifications did we launch an international architectural competition, in which the name of Santiago Calatrava came on top," explains Vincent Bourlard.

At a certain moment, it was suggested to modernize the existing station from 1958, designed by the architects Charles Carlier, Hyacinthe Lhoest and Jules Mozin. But that solution would never be able to meet the technical requirements. *"To increase the speed when coming into the station (from 70 to 120 km/h) and to get straight platforms for more comfort and safety, the lines had to be straightened. Consequently, the station had to be moved 200 metres towards the Meuse."* Rail engineers from the SNCB Group and Santiago Calatrava did the rest - without having to interrupt train traffic for a single day. No one has ever managed to build a football stadium while matches were being played. But here, a station could be raised directly above the trains and the activity. This naturally explains the longer execution periods, but also underscores the excellence of the Belgian rail engineers. Today, they are actually exporting their know-how to the rest of the world.

Presently Liège has a showpiece of contemporary architecture, a gem of Belgian bluestone, white concrete, glass and steel, a station with pure and light forms, white and transparent. A station that invites travel and encounters. *"It is also a beacon of the economic revival of the Liège region. "*

Stations for a century

Belgian history is closely connected with that of the railways. The first railway line on the continent was laid in 1835 between Brussels and Mechelen. In 2010, we will be celebrating the 175th anniversary of that event. A few years earlier, John Cockerill was already thinking about this new mode of transport. The Cockerill facilities in Seraing would provide the first rails, coaches and locomotives of the European continent. Then came the first stations under H.R.H. Leopold II, the construction of stations as "beacons," such as Antwerp Central, in the golden age of the Belgian economy, when various world expos were organised here.

The new Liège Guillemins station is built to the standards of the 21st century - and perhaps beyond, because stations - and Antwerp Central stands proof - often have to last more than a century. On condition that they are properly maintained - something that SNCB Holding is keen on. "Rather than renovate the stations entirely after a certain period of time, we should invest in maintenance and in keeping up the technological level of the infrastructure," says Jannie Haek, CEO of SNCB Holding. "Our stations will not only be the most beautiful but also the most up to date."

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"This station is for you!"

The Liège Station, designed by Santiago Calatrava, is unveiled to the public this weekend

September 2009



"This station is for you!"

The high speed network in Belgium, from border to border.
Wager won!



United Kingdom

France

The Netherlands

Germany

2



"This station is for you!"

Belgium at the centre of the European HST network



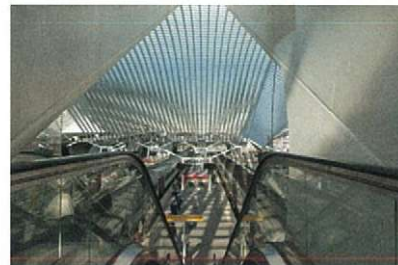
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"This station is for you!"

The specifications for the new Liège station:

1. Accommodate high speed/link with the domestic network
2. Intermodality
3. Conveyability
4. Modernity
5. Beacon of the renewal of Liège



4



"This station is for you!"

1. Accommodation of high speed/link with the domestic network

- Optimization of traffic to Liège
- New "grid" at the Guillemins station with less crossings and greater comfort
- Rectilinear platforms
- New signal box
- High speed line to Louvain and Aachen



➤ Investments in high speed pay off for the domestic network

5



"This station is for you!"

2. Intermodality

- Motorway junction
- 800-place car park in la colline de Cointe (Cointe Hill)
- Direct link from car park to the platforms
- Close connections with public transport
 - BUS
 - Taxis
- Slow mobility promoted
 - Pedestrians (platform to the Rue des Gullemins)
 - Bikes/covered car parks

➡ Investments in the station pay off for all commuters

6



"This station is for you!"

3. Conveyability

- Before: the 1958 station had one facade, with three entrances on the Guillemins side
- After: the 2009 station is open to Guillemins, Fragnée, Mandeville, Cointe, the Rue de l'Observatoire, le Plan Incline



Investments in the station pay off for the City's inhabitants

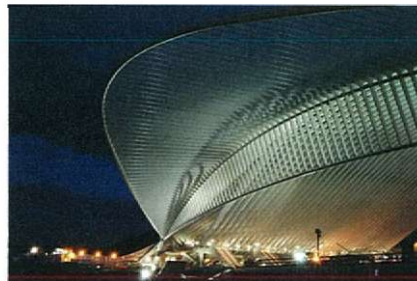
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"This station is for you!"

4. Modernity

- The important lines on the platforms in the front façade
- Access facilities (footbridges, terraces, conveyors, escalators, etc.)
- Luminosity
- Accessibility for PRM
- Commercial and service offer
- Cultural location



Investments in the station pay off for all users

8



"This station is for you!"

5. Beacon for the renewal of Liège

- Showcase for Liège expertise thanks to the technology used (push-towing ...)
- Showcase for Liège thanks to its quality architecture
- Showcase for Liège thanks to its exhibition of works of art
- Showcase for regional materials (bluestone)
- Considerable repercussions for tourism



Investments in the station pay off for the city, the region, the Euregio and the country

9



An advertisement for MLI® September. The main image shows the Liège railway station at night, with the text "CETTE GARE EST POUR VOUS !" prominently displayed. The ad includes a "SPÉCIAL GRATUIT" badge and a list of logos at the bottom: iWi, la Carte®, VivaCity, La Meuse, and hfabd. The text "Cae de Liège" and "Cuirfl«njns" is visible at the top of the ad. The number "10" is in the bottom left corner of the slide.

10

