

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

It is truly a great honour and privilege to welcome you today to this 3rd edition of the UIC Energy Efficiency Days. I am particularly pleased to note the great diversity of railway companies participating in this event ... from our neighbouring countries – France, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Germany – and from countries farther away, such as Iran, the United States, Denmark, Poland, Bulgaria, Spain... This is clear evidence that the railways constitute one big family, even at the global level. In this context, SNCB is proud to organise this conference, together with the UIC and Infrabel.

And, as the Chief Executive Officer of the “new” SNCB, created in January 2014, it is with great pleasure that I address you in order to share some thoughts on the future of the railway industry.

Our common challenge is to every day reaffirm the role of the train as an indispensable driver of mobility, and as a high-quality and ecological means of transport. By creating new mobility, redesigning the urban environment and promoting sustainable solutions, SNCB, as a public enterprise, is positioning itself as the motor of mobility in Belgium.

In the last 15 years, passenger rail transport has seen an increase of around 60%, which is significantly higher than the other modes of transport. The automobile has recorded 19% growth and the other modes, such as the bus, tram and metro, have increased by 22%.

In future, mobility needs will only continue to increase. We are facing future growth on average of 2% in the number of passenger kilometres per year. It is therefore imperative that the train responds effectively to this demand. At SNCB, we are continuously working to meet this demand and our collaborators are actively getting prepared.

By "we" I do not just mean SNCB. A closer collaboration between railway operator and railway infrastructure manager is one of the most important arrangements that I have made with Luc Lallemand when I became CEO of SNCB. This is not just necessary to offer higher-quality, more punctual and cost-efficient train services to our customers, but also to take further steps to a more energy-efficient and sustainable railway system. Let me give you some examples:

- Eco-driving and DAS (Driver Advisory Systems) can only be successful when the "on-board installations" of SNCB can communicate with Infrabel's "track installations".
- Brake energy recovery: we now have trains that can send back electric brake energy to the catenary, but with some adaptations to Infrabel's traction substations we can use more of this recovered energy in other trains.

- In the next 5 years, all trains will be equipped with meters. SNCB invests in these meters, Infrabel invests in a "settlement system" for more accurate charges for electricity consumption. In its turn, SNCB can use this information to direct measures for energy efficiency.

21st century mobility has also been transformed. These days, our clients expect a railway company to offer more than just train service.

They feel that the station must also include qualities that are intrinsically complementary to a rail mobility solution. In order to respond to these needs, SNCB has renovated and enhanced many of its stations, and has developed a strategic vision based on 5 pillars: intermodality, accessibility, sustainability, security and the development of activities.

To this end, our stations, which welcome approximately 4,750,000 passengers every week (*2013 figure*), offer our passengers and clients high-quality provisions, parking and business areas, convenient connections to the other modes of public transport (metro, bus), but also alternative and ecological transport solutions, such as bicycles or shared cars and charging terminals, all in a pleasant setting.

As concerns energy efficiency and sustainability, it should be pointed out that our station buildings have been insulated in order to prevent wasteful energy consumption. Some of them, moreover, have been equipped with solar panels (for example, at Charleroi Sud, they provide 15% of the required electricity).

With regard to these two conference days and the workshop, I invite you to visit Antwerpen-Centraal, one of our masterpieces that illustrates perfectly this new station model: practical, aesthetic and pleasant.

According to Newsweek magazine, it is notably ranked 4th among the most beautiful stations in the world.

I wish you all a very inspiring experience during your stay, and it is now my privilege to hand over the floor to Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, Director General of the UIC, my colleague-host. I would particularly like to thank him for having taken the initiative to bring together the railway world around a theme that is dear to all of us and holds big challenges but also opportunities for the future.