

SNCB/NMBS enhances customer service and security with the range of Banksys countertop and unattended terminals



« Banksys provides us with reliable electronic payment solutions that suit all our needs, for large and small stations and for both manned and unattended ticket purchases. »

Jean-Paul Henrion, Distribution Manager Stations
SNCB/NMBS Travellers

Company profile

The SNCB/NMBS Group is an autonomous public corporation operating as a limited liability company that runs rail services in Belgium. Since 1st January 2005, the Group consists of three separate entities: one part that manages the infrastructure, a second that operates the trains and a third that acts as an umbrella holding company.

The SNCB/NMBS Group is one of Belgium's largest investors in technology and is constantly improving service quality. For the seventh year in a row, domestic passenger traffic volume rose to a new record with 173.4 million customers in 2005. The rail network's 537 stations and stopping points handle more than 700,000 passengers a day.

➤ The Challenge

- To increase the ease and convenience of payment for customers
- To replace payments by cheque and reduce cash payments
- To give counter staff more time for customer service

Customers at SNCB/NMBS ticket offices can be divided into two groups: travellers purchasing tickets for a relatively small amount – usually paying in cash – and season ticket-holders. As you would expect, the latter group spends larger amounts.

People used to settle season tickets and international train tickets with cheques. Processing these cheques was time-consuming, both at the ticket window itself and in the back-office. At the same time, administrative costs were rising, while payment security was by no means guaranteed.

Ticket office staff also have to make themselves more available to deal with customers and this can only be achieved if they have fewer administrative tasks to perform and can work more efficiently, such as by handling fewer cash payments through the introduction of electronic and automated payments. This in turn also reduces the risk of incorrect change being given at the ticket window.



Automatic ticket machines can help ensure a smoother throughput of customers at peak travel times, enabling travellers in a hurry to buy tickets on their own using debit or credit cards. This reduces the number of routine transactions at ticket windows.

➤ The solution

- Banksys payment terminals at every station ticket office
- Networks of payment terminals in major stations
- Stand-alone payment terminals with a PSTN link in smaller stations
- Automatic ticket machines for self-service

“Electronic payments were introduced gradually quite early on at SNCB/NMBS,” explains Jean-Paul Henrion, Distribution Manager Stations at SNCB/NMBS Travellers. “As early as 1995, Banksys installed payment terminals in the ticket offices of our 23 largest stations. From 1997 onwards, all of our other stations had them and passengers could also pay using Proton – the Belgian electronic purse – for small amounts. In 2000, automatic ticket machines were installed in many stations and these were upgraded a few years ago with the C-ZAM/SPIN payment terminal.”

By mid-2006, Belgian railway stations have almost 600 Banksys payment terminals: 350 C-ZAM/SMASH at large stations, which are part of an Ethernet network at each station, 111 XENTA devices in stations with just one ticket window and 127 automatic ticket machines integrating a C-ZAM/SPIN terminal. Customers can use Bancontact/ Mister Cash debit payment cards, as well as Proton and all credit cards commonly used in Belgium.

➤ Business benefits

- More ease and convenience of payment and better service for travellers
- Time-savings and greater payment security at ticket windows
- Smaller risk of cash errors as a result of fewer cash payments

“Replacing cheques by electronic payments was a particular relief for our ticket window staff,” says Mr Henrion. “They can now work more quickly and help travellers better. Our back-office also saves time and payment security is greater. The introduction of the EMV standard is now also solving the problem of checking signatures when people pay by credit card.”

Paying electronically has become the rule with season tickets and international traffic. Approximately half of ticket office sales turnover is paid by electronic means.

Jean-Paul Henrion also underlines the reliability of Banksys equipment and the availability of customer support. “Our ticket office staff have the greatest faith in the devices. The very low number of interventions needed on the terminals helps us provide uninterrupted service to our customers. And should a problem occur, we are also very happy with the Banksys helpdesk and their fast interventions.”

“We expect to see the next step in efficiency improvement by integrating Banksys payment solutions with our cash register system. This is currently not possible due to the SNCB/NMBS proprietary IT system, but by the beginning of 2008, integration should be achieved.”

Configuration

- Banksys C-ZAM/SMASH payment terminals in Ethernet network in large stations
- Banksys XENTA countertop terminal in smaller stations
- Banksys C-ZAM/SPIN terminals in automatic ticket machines

