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World Architecture in Brno: Dutch Architects Benthem Crouwel Won International Competition for New Main Station

It has been decided - the new Brno main station will be built according to the design of the Dutch studio Benthem Crouwel Architects, which is behind the design of the railway station in Rotterdam or the reconstruction and extension of the station in Amsterdam. According to the winners, the Brno station will become a new gateway to the city and a positive impulse for the emerging Trnitá quarter on the banks of the Svatka River. The citizens of Brno will gain a modern transfer junction and a guarantee of further development of the local rail transport. The choice of the expert jury, which included architect Eva Jiřičná and urban planner Peter Gero, was confirmed this week by the Brno city administration and Správa železnic. The City of Brno Architect's Office, as the organiser of the competition, will exhibit all the designs, including a large model of the new city quarter, in the Cross Corridor of Brno's New Town Hall at the end of September.

The award-winning main stations in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague in the Netherlands are all linked by the name of Benthem Crouwel Architects. *“The authors of the winning design will oversee the quality of the project documentation for the new building. They will guarantee that when completed, the new station will not only be the pride of South Moravia, but also a place that passengers will really enjoy to use. The current assumption for the completion of the new main station building is between 2032 and 2035, by which time part of the new Trnitá quarter will also be completed,”* says Mojmír Nejezchleb, Deputy Director General for Infrastructure Modernisation from Správa železnic.

Seamless integration into the urban network and enrichment of the public life of the new city quarter, comfortable and easy to use with excellent transfer options and a representative building that strengthens the identity of the city of Brno. This is what the winners of the international competition from Benthem Crouwel Architects believe the new main station in Brno should look like as well.

“According to the jury, the winning design combines a reference to historical public buildings with a modern transfer junction and high quality public space. It emphasises Brno's genius loci and a careful assessment of the practical functioning of the new station building and its surroundings,” is added by city architect Michal Sedláček, who also sat on the expert jury. *“In addition, during the competition we recommended that some parts of the design should*

be further refined, so that the result will even better meet the current strict requirements for the new station building,” he adds.

“I am very pleased with the cooperation between the City of Brno and Správa železnic on this key project,” says the Mayor of Brno Markéta Vaňková and emphasizes: “The modernised heart of the Brno railway junction in its new location by the Svratka River will significantly influence the further development of the city. Simplifying the track network will remove barriers and free up large areas in the city centre for parks, recreation and larger housing development. The historic railway viaduct will become a promenade between the city centre and the transformed waterfront. The new railway station will be surrounded on both sides by high quality public space and connected to the city centre by a new boulevard with alley and tramway line.”

Petr Hladík, 1st Deputy Mayor, recalls next benefits: *“One of the goals of the new station is to enable a quick transfer between train, bus and public transport in one place. This includes favourable conditions for the introduction of lines of the upcoming high-speed railway in the direction of Prague, Ostrava and Vienna. At the same time, comfort for pedestrians, cyclists, passengers and the new neighbours of the station building is essential.”*

Today's Brno railway junction meets no more the capacity and technical requirements and its modernisation is needful. Without it, Brno would have stagnated at the end of the previous century, when the last major change took place with the construction of the freight transit. Brno had already been prepared for the construction of a new station in a relocated position several times, but the plans were repeatedly halted by unfavourable situations, from the Great Depression through the Second World War to the Soviet occupation in 1968. *“The demands on rail transport are now significantly different than 180 years ago. Brno therefore deserves an investment in its future and the results of the international competition presented today confirm that the city will get the most modern European railway station,”* Deputy Mayor Tomáš Koláčný said.

The new main station is the most important part of the modernisation of the Brno railway junction. Its location by the river was prioritised by the Central Commission of the Ministry of Transport on 30 May 2018. Earlier in the year, the city and region councillors decided on it. Currently, the modernisation of the Brno-Židenice railway station, which will be moved closer to public transport, is in preparation, as well as the creation of a new terminal in Brno-Černovice in Olomoucká Street.

“The international urban planning, transport and architectural competition for the design of the new main station in Brno was announced on 31 August 2020 and the jury decided on the winning designs at a two-day meeting on 1 and 2 July 2021. It was the largest architectural competition in the history of the Czech Republic, where the competitors were tasked with designing the station building including a complete solution for the adjacent public spaces, buildings for administration, housing and public amenities, a bus station, a public transport terminal and pedestrian connections,” Filip Chvátal, the councillor for spatial planning and development, reminded.

This was a two-stage shortlisted design competition. A total of twelve teams participated in the first phase. Three were invited directly; the other nine were selected by an expert jury from 46 applications and architects' portfolios. The authors of stations in Vienna, Berlin, Rotterdam, The Hague, Bologna, London and Birmingham were among them. Twelve competitors developed their designs in the first phase. Four of them were selected for the second phase of the competition, where the participants worked them out in greater detail. The competition was organised by the City of Brno Architect's Office and jointly contracting authorities City of Brno and Správa železnic.

All designs from both phases of the competition will be on display in the exhibition in the Cross Corridor of Brno's New Town Hall. The opening ceremony with the participation of the winning team will take place on 30 September 2021. A large model of the new Trnitá city quarter, which was used by the expert jury during its evaluation, will also be presented. The competition models of the individual teams were inserted directly into the model with the designed buildings and the adjacent public space.

Brno new main railway station – International urbanistic-transport-architectural two-phase shortlisted design competition:

1st Prize

Bentham Crouwel International B.V.
Daniel Jongtien, Martin Biewenga and Jan Bentham

2nd Prize

Association Pelčák and partner architects – Müller Reimann Architekten

3rd Prize

ingenhoven architects GmbH, architectural office Burian-Křivinka, architects Koleček-Jura

4th Prize

BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group + A8000 s.r.o.

All designs can be found at www.kambrno.cz/souteze, www.kambrno.cz/novenadrazi

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