Building a New Hungary

Siemens has traditionally been a pioneer in Hungary, having built the first subway on mainland Europe in Budapest in 1896. It also provided the Hungarian capital with its first electric street lighting system in 1911 and its first PET/CT imaging system in 2005.

Twelve years ago, Siemens participated in the implementation of a forward-looking lighting concept designed by lighting planner Christian Bartenbach for Budapest’s southernmost Danube bridge, the Lágymányosi. There are no lamps above the bridge that directly light the road; instead, light emitted from below reflects off mirror systems mounted 35 meters above the ground on five poles.

Each light reflector consists of two wings, one of which is equipped with around 50 small mirror components. Each mirror wing is illuminated by a one-kilowatt metal halogen lamp from Osram. The advantage of this lighting system is that the mirrors are positioned in such a way that light is reflected onto the road in a completely even manner. Additional light sources for pedestrians are installed in the bridge parapet.

Siemens is also helping Hungary with parking. Back in 1999 and 2000, the company initiated a pioneering program to network parking meter vending machines in Budapest and other Hungarian cities in order to enable remote monitoring. Siemens delivered and installed nearly 1,250 advanced vending machines, which are linked via GSM modem with the operator’s control center, to which they send information on proceeds, battery power status, the amount of paper left for printing, and functional defects. The data is processed at the center with the help of “Sity Control” software, which is able to identify each machine based on the SIM card in its GSM modem. The data enables operators to efficiently plan staff routes for collecting money, refilling paper, and replacing batteries.

LED Traffic Lights. Siemens’ pioneering spirit is still alive and well in Hungary. In particular, the company is now participating in a financing concept for new traffic light systems in Budapest that could become a model for many cities around the world. Traffic lights in the Hungarian capital are not only set to get brighter in the future; they will also be saving the city money and helping to protect the environment.

Siemens & Halske established a company in Budapest to build the city’s first streetcar line. Today, Siemens has 2,100 employees in Hungary who generate annual sales of approximately €420 million. Their work focuses on providing innovative product solutions for all Siemens business areas.
The former PSE (Program and System Engineering), which became a part of IT Solutions and Services in January 2007, is another major Siemens outpost in the region. With the help of its 500 employees in Budapest and Szeged, the company focuses on worldwide information technology services for Siemens sales and service organizations.

Projects are spread across several locations. In addition to its offices in Hungary and Vienna, Austria, the company has branch offices in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and Croatia. “A typical project involves three or four countries,” says Martin Nedved, the company’s managing director in Hungary. “In Szeged, for example, we worked with colleagues from China, who came to learn about our system solutions.”

Electronic Authorities. Siemens develops solutions for industrial automation, information and communication systems, the energy sector, traffic and transport applications (including toll collection systems), building systems technology, medical systems, space programs, and biometric applications. More than 90 percent of its project volume is accounted for by Siemens Groups, with the remainder consisting of services for local companies, government authorities, and various public facilities. In February 2007, Siemens delivered an IT system to the city of Szeged (population: 200,000) that now enables authorities to carry out administrative processes more efficiently. Local residents who register with the city government can take advantage of things like online forms and tax returns that save them time and money. By the spring of 2007, about 10,000 Internet subscribers in Szeged had signed up to use the new electronic services offered by the city government.

Another project — this one with the European Space Agency (ESA) — focuses on the analysis, storage, and processing of data collected by earth-monitoring satellites. IT Solutions and Services archives all software tools and expert knowledge in detail on its intranet, access to which is open to all employees. Staff can log in and discuss new technologies, ideas, and concepts with colleagues. The platform is also used to recruit experts to new projects, which is how developers from Szeged found themselves supporting colleagues in Jakarta, Indonesia, for example.

The company has also been working with Budapest University of Technology for many years. One joint project is the Mobile Innovation Center established two years ago. The center — a consortium of companies, universities, and research and development institutes — is working on a cross-system mobile radio infrastructure.

Siemens contributes its expertise in communications here, giving Nedved reason to be optimistic about the future. “The integration of PSE offers us the possibility to globally market our expertise in areas such as embedded software. We expect this to result in numerous business opportunities, which we plan to exploit,” he says. — Sylvia Trage

New LED traffic lights (left) save power; parking ticket vending machines (right) can be remotely monitored.