

## Press release

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# Foster and Partners win competition to design Zénith in Saint-Etienne

The Saint-Etienne Mtropole has announced that Foster and Partners are the winners of an International Architectural Competition for the design of a new large-scale music and cultural venue - or Zenith - for the City of Saint-Etienne. Other competition entrants included the Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA/Rem Koolhaas), Odile Decq and Benoit Cornette, and Francis Soler (Paris). The 25 million euro Zenith will be the first such cultural venue to be built in the Rhone-Alpes region of central southern France. The project has two aims: to be a catalyst for the major cultural and regeneration initiatives being planned by St Etienne Mtropole; and to provide a new landmark for the Mtropole.

The distinct aerodynamic form of the Foster design will be an instantly recognisable symbol. It responds to ecological concerns, with the cantilevered roof acting as a scoop to channel and intensify the wind flow, directing it through the building to ventilate the auditorium naturally, reducing energy use. The system is fully reversible and can handle the prevalent winds from both the northerly and southerly directions.

Access to the concert hall will be via a large external ramped plinth that bridges the busy Rue Scheurer Kestner and allows audience members to enter and exit quickly and efficiently. A glazed foyer organises internal circulation and provides access to all floors and visitor amenities. The auditorium can be configured for an audience ranging from 1100 to 7500. Augmenting this will be the VIP reception, stage/backstage areas, changing

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and production spaces, staff refectories and delivery areas. A comprehensive landscape strategy links the Zenith facility to 2000 car parking spaces and a proposed pedestrian boulevard, which leads to existing rail transport.

Foster and Partners were assisted by Dominique Berger, Peutz, Changement a Vue, Thales, Battle McCarthy, Saunier, Michel Desvigne and Cyprium. The project budget is 25 million euros and the venue is scheduled to open at the end of 2007.

## Note to Editors

The Zenith facilities are a partly government funded concept to bring cultural amenities to regions that currently lack such facilities. The most well known Zenith was constructed by Bernard Tschumi for the Park de La Villette in Paris, other constructions have also been built in Montpellier, Caen, Toulouse, Marseilles, Pau, Orleans, Nancy, and Toulon.