What is the axis?

The axis will streamline rail journeys along one of Europe’s major transport routes, between Germany and Italy, across the Alps. Increased rail freight capacity in particular will contribute to sustainable development.

A mixture of upgrades of existing track and new sections will increase speeds and capacity along the route Berlin–Nuremberg–Munich–Innsbruck–Verona–Florence–Rome–Naples, and onwards to the Messina Straits where a new road/rail bridge will connect Sicily to the Italian mainland.

Between Austria and Italy, a new 56 km rail tunnel – the so-called Brenner base tunnel – will be built, considerably increasing the speed of the Alpine crossing and the line’s freight capacity.

What are its expected benefits?

Improvements will cut journey times significantly – by as much as two and a half hours between Berlin and Munich, for example. The additional capacity and improved quality of service will attract new rail traffic, helping to reduce road congestion along this key corridor by shifting freight and passengers to the railway. This is especially important in the ecologically sensitive Alpine region, where heavy road traffic has serious environmental impacts.

In Italy, faster rail travel along these busy routes is expected to contribute to the transfer of long-distance freight from the roads to rail, while 30% growth in passenger traffic on the railway will half the number of flights between Milan and Rome. Better connections to the peripheral regions of southern Italy and Sicily will help improve the flow of goods and people.
What is its current status?

Speeds of up to 200 km/h are already being achieved on the upgraded line between Berlin and Halle/Leipzig, while work continues on the sections between Halle/Leipzig and Nuremberg. Further upgrading of the Munich–Kufstein section is currently scheduled between 2010 and 2015. In Austria, work to bring the Wörgl–Innsbruck section up to four tracks has started.

Technical studies for the Brenner base tunnel are due to be completed in 2006. Brenner base tunnel SE was established at the end of 2004 (the first firm with the new legal status of European company – *Societas Europeae*, SE) to manage the works on the tunnel, with a target completion date around 2015.

In Italy, between the southern end of the tunnel and Verona, the 190 km railway line has been partially upgraded with new tunnels and bypasses.

The Munich–Verona corridor has received EUR 200 million in EU support over the last 10 years.

Between Verona, Bologna and Florence approximately 200 km of high-speed line is under construction, to come into service by 2007, while the linked section from Milan to Bologna will be completed in 2008 (rather than 2006, the delay being due to environmental impact issues). The 430 km high-speed line between Florence and Naples will be operational by the end of 2007.

A mixed rail/road bridge covering the 3.3 km over the Messina Straits is due to be completed by 2015. On the mainland, the bridge will connect to a new section of the Salerno–Reggio Calabria motorway (A3), and to the existing 400 km Naples–Reggio Calabria railway line, which will be upgraded to increase speed and capacity. On the island, the 230 km railway line between Messina and Palermo will be substantially upgraded or rebuilt.

On 20 July 2005, the European Commission designated Mr Karel van Miert as European coordinator for priority axis No 1.