



High-speed railway axis Paris–Brussels–Cologne–Amsterdam–London

The new high-speed railway network is already providing a real, competitive alternative to air travel between these major cities. When all sections are fully completed, passengers will benefit from quicker and easier links between the major population centres at the heart of Europe.

What is the axis?

Linking a number of capitals and other major cities, Europe's first cross-border high-speed rail project was launched in 1989 with the signature of an agreement between France, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. It will dramatically reduce rail journey times between these countries, providing travellers with a competitive alternative to air transport.

What are its expected benefits?

The PBKAL network will be reserved for passenger traffic, offering substantial reductions in journey times between the five countries and attracting passengers away from air travel and the roads. It will also provide improved connections between some of Europe's key airports – Brussels, Frankfurt, Cologne/Bonn, Paris Charles de Gaulle and Amsterdam Schiphol. This will make a significant contribution to the promotion of intermodal air–rail journeys, in line with Community transport policy objectives.

The high-speed Brussels–Paris line, in full service since 1997, now serves more than six million passengers a year, having attracted very large numbers from road and air, with some flights being taken out of service as a result.

What is its current status?

Construction of the Dutch line began in 2000, through a public–private partnership. The southern part, from Rotterdam to the Belgian border, is scheduled for completion in 2006, and the northern section – from Amsterdam to Rotterdam – in 2007.

In Germany, a 175 km long dedicated passenger line opened in July 2002, linking Cologne and Frankfurt in an hour and a quarter at a speed of 300 km/h. A new 250 km/h twin-track section from Düren to Cologne has been operational since 2003. Upgrading from the Belgian border to Düren will be completed by 2007.

In the United Kingdom, the 113 km Channel Tunnel rail link (CTRL) to London is under construction. Section 1 (from the Channel Tunnel to the outskirts of London) opened at the end of September 2003. Section 2 (Southfleet to London St Pancras) is due to be completed by early 2007.

In Belgium, the line from Brussels to the French border came into operation in 1997, with high-speed services now operating to Paris, and through the Channel Tunnel to London. Since 2002, Liège has been connected to Leuven by high-speed line. Upgrading of the Brussels–Leuven line is expected to be finished in 2006, and the high-speed line from Liège to the German border by the end of 2006.

Upgrading of the Brussels–Antwerp line is almost complete. Nevertheless, some relatively small additional projects are planned (Zaventem (Brussels airport)–Mechelen) which will slightly reduce journey time, and will be completed by 2010. The high-speed line from Antwerp to the Dutch border, including a new tunnel beneath the city of Antwerp, should be finished in 2006. Although commercial services will start in 2007, trainsets equipped with European train control systems (ETCSs) will only be available in 2012.

The French sections linking Paris, Lille and Calais and the Channel Tunnel are complete, and have been in service since 1993.

Priority section	Type of work/status	Distance (km)	Timetable	Total cost as of end 2004 (million EUR)	Investment up to 31.12.2004 (million EUR)	TEN-T contribution, including studies, up to 31.12.2004 (million EUR)
Channel Tunnel-London	Rail (new)	113	1999-2007	8 011	7 080	255.9
Brussels-Liège-Cologne	Rail (new)	210	1996-2007	2 734	2 062	78.2
Brussels-Rotterdam-Amsterdam	Rail (new)	187	1998-2007	6 319	5 635	81.3
Amsterdam station			2008-14	270	0	0
Rotterdam station			2006-10	123	0	0
TOTAL		510		17 457	14 777	731.4 ⁽¹⁾

Projects that were part of the original list of 14 priority projects (1996)

Lille-Brussels	Rail (new)		1992-2006	1 423	1 341	0 ⁽¹⁾
Cologne-Frankfurt	Rail (new)		1990-2004	6 015	6 015	148.8

⁽¹⁾ Note that the total TEN-T contribution includes EUR 316 million, which has been allocated to the Netherlands and Belgian sections (e.g. Lille-Brussels) in general, and cannot be associated with a specific section of the axis.

