

A New Vision for High Speed Rail in Europe

A high-speed rail revolution is taking place all over Europe. France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands are already linked by the same High-Speed Network. This European High-Speed Network has the potential to reduce travel times and harmful emissions compared to road and air traffic, while increasing mobility and creating jobs.

However, while billions of Euros of public money has been spent on high-speed infrastructure - justified by the prospect of new jobs and environmental benefits - we will not deliver such benefits unless we develop a new vision for high-speed rail.

Our concern rests on three key observations

1. If the high-speed lines are to provide value for money by supporting balanced regional growth and sustainable development, we need to ensure that the regions and localities they pass through have access to international services. In North-West Europe, for example, since our towns and cities are close together and there is a high population density, high-speed services should be adapted to ensure that the widest possible public is served.
2. The Japanese example shows us that intermediate stops and high speed rail are not incompatible. At the present time in Europe, however, there is a widely-held belief that high-speed rail can only perform over long distances and with non-stop services. Indeed, some rail operators say non-stop services between terminus cities are the only way to compete with airlines. Such views have already led to bitter conflicts between stakeholders and are not supported by the evidence from elsewhere.

3. With high-speed rail originally a national development, it is understandable that national assumptions may have influenced the picture across Europe. However, with the advent of international networks, it is vital that we work together to create a better vision for making best use of these assets and serving the interests of our citizens. As yet, no effective governance body exists for cross-border dialogue between the relevant stakeholders. A new forum for discussion, decision and action is urgently needed.

On the 13th of February 2009, Kent County Council, the Conseil Régional Nord-Pas de Calais, Gemeente Breda and BrabantStad decided to create a **European Network of High-Speed Regions**, the first vital step towards building this new forum.

The Network represents cities and regions that are concerned by the future of high-speed rail in their territory. This platform for dialogue will :

1. Work together to secure the right level of high-speed services at intermediate stations.
2. Become a recognised partner for the EU institutions in the development of future transport policies that respect territorial cohesion and regional development.
3. Work in partnership so that high-speed rail reaches its potential to contribute to economic development, a low carbon future and a fully accessible Europe.

If you share our goals, join us to create this new vision for high-speed rail in Europe.

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