



Analysis International Rail – Municipality of Amsterdam

Final report





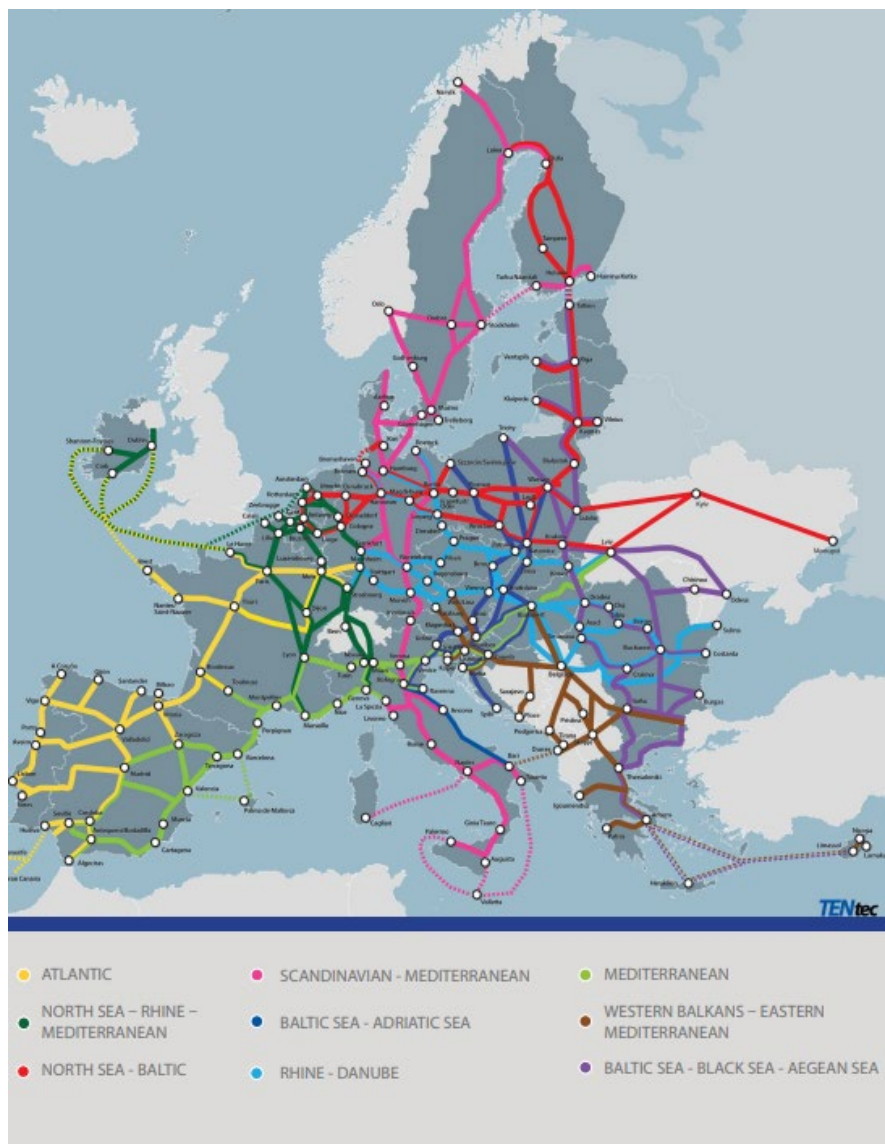
ITEM 10 years
Cross-border of expertise



Maastricht University

Analysis International Rail Municipality of Amsterdam

Final Report



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Introduction

“According to its own policy objectives, the City of Amsterdam aims to have decreased the city’s CO2 emissions by 60% in 2030 and by 100% in 2050, compared to 1990, which is used as a reference year. The city will move over to 100% renewable energy. In 2040, Amsterdam will no longer use natural gas and aims for all traffic to be emission-free as early as 2030. The municipal organisation will also be climate neutral by 2030.”¹

The ambition of Amsterdam related to international rail is directly linked to the climate policy ambitions of the city. However, different from the above-mentioned policies as municipal energy production and consumption, the question whether passengers and freight are transported by climate friendly trains is to some extent not in the hands of the municipality with respect to infrastructure, finances, services and technical provisions. Decision making on investments and the economic and legal framework is mainly at the EU and national level. Advocating more international train travel and transport, therefore means carefully monitoring and trying to influence political decisions at the national and EU level. In this sense, this report tries to describe the situation today with respect to international rail on the basis of political developments, policy objectives, legislation and policies in the EU and at the national level. The objective is to find out, how the present policy objectives of Amsterdam fit into these policies and where there are windows of opportunities to advocate for the interests of the municipality. In the first place, to strive for a successful involvement at national and EU level means that the municipality has clearly defined objectives related to the question how to increase rail passenger and freight transport that this can contribute to the climate policy and objectives of Amsterdam.

The report is structured as follows. In chapter 1, the general background of international rail related to the accessibility, services and infrastructure relevant for Amsterdam will be presented. What are the objectives of Amsterdam in the field of international rail that have been formulated up to date and what is in a broader sense the situation today with respect to services, destinations and infrastructure. In chapter 1.2, the different spatial levels will be described that are relevant for train connections. In chapter 1.3, the method and outline of the report will be described.

In chapter 2, the broader screening and analysis of policy documents and research reports will be presented with respect to passenger and freight transport. Chapter 2.1 will describe detailed findings on the current situation of international rail in the EU and in the Netherlands, chapter 2.2 will focus on current performance and future potentials. Chapter 2.3 will describe the findings for freight rail transport in the EU and in the

¹ See a comprehensive description of Amsterdam's climate policy targets on <https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/policy/sustainability/policy-climate-neutrality/>.

Netherlands in particular with respect to the developments at the EU level related to the TEN-T corridors. Chapter 2.4 identifies international bus transport as an opportunity in addition to passenger rail transport and finally, chapter 2.5 summarises the most recent policy developments. Finally, in chapter 3 conclusions and in chapter 4 recommendations are formulated and discussed.

The entire list of screened documents is presented as a sort of quick Scan in Annex A.

1 The policy background

1.1 Official objectives and strategies of Amsterdam

In the spatial vision 2050 of the Municipality of Amsterdam (omgevingsvisie) of 2021, it is mentioned that Amsterdam's sphere of influence extends beyond the borders of the metropolitan region. Increasingly, it extends to other Dutch cities but also to other European metropolitan areas. This emphasises the need of strong and high-quality connections, especially through rail.² Indeed, international rail has a prominent position in Amsterdam's spatial vision 2050 (omgevingsvisie). As part of the metropolitan region of Amsterdam, it envisions to be a sustainable and international attractive region.³ International connectiveness and accessibility are placed prominently, but in a sustainable manner. This means that ambitions are also articulated regarding the port of Amsterdam and Schiphol. The vision formulates to substitute short-haul flights by international rail.⁴

Also, in another position paper of 2020 the Municipality of Amsterdam seeks to establish a link between good high-speed connections and the expansion of the cross-border network in general.⁵ The paper formulates in addition the need to be better connected to the international rail network, both directly and indirectly. International mobility and accessibility by rail was not only important for the economy, but also for making mobility more sustainable. This is also translated into the formulation of one of the mobility objectives in Amsterdam's coalition agreement (2022-2026): "[...]we will strive to replace short-haul flights with rail travel as much as possible".⁶

Eurocities, of which the municipality of Amsterdam is also a partner, has also published a vision.⁷ At European level, many cities want stronger incentives and financial support for rail connections between large cities and (rural) regions. In October 2024, a policy statement was published that prescribes four lines of action.⁸

1. Ensure that planning, booking and paying for train tickets is made easier	2. Ensure sufficient investments to realise infrastructure for fast train connections
3. Ensure healthy competition to make travelling by train more affordable	4. Put a dedicated focus on the development of night trains across Europe

² Gemeente Amsterdam, Omgevingsvisie Amsterdam 2050 "Een menselijke metropool", p. 33.

³ Ibid, p. 67.

⁴ Ibid, p. 71.

⁵ Amsterdam (2020). Ontwerp Position paper internationale treinen en substitutie.

⁶ Amsterdams coalitieakkoord 2022-2026, p. 59.

⁷ See: EUROCITIES (2020): EU Vision on Mobility.

⁸ See: European Cities. Prioritizing Fast Trains as alternative to short-range flights.

International rail is also a priority for Europe's competitiveness and future, according to the prominent reports of Letta⁹ and Draghi¹⁰. While the establishment of an European Railway Area started 25 years ago, the rail markets remain too fragmented: *"The EU's milestones towards shifting more activity to more sustainable modes of transport are still far from being achieved."*

When zooming in to the performance of the international connectiveness by rail of Amsterdam, a Greenpeace report of 2024 critically assesses: *"Despite being geographically in a central position, Amsterdam is poorly connected by direct trains."*¹¹

The report analyses rail and air connections between 45 major European cities, including Amsterdam. When comparing rail and air connections, the report concludes that important rail connections from Amsterdam are missing:

- There is no direct rail connection for 69 per cent of cities that can be reached within 18 hours by rail.
- There are 200% more direct flights than direct trains to destinations that can be reached within 18 hours by train.
- The main direct missing train connection under 12 hours from Amsterdam is Barcelona, followed by Copenhagen, Milan and Manchester. Important shorter direct connections that are missing are to Hamburg and Luxembourg.

Today, at several levels, such as at the Municipality of Amsterdam, the Dutch government and the European Commission, ambitions are formulated regarding international rail¹². However international rail is challenged in many aspects. This is true for both passenger and freight rail transport. Problems are found for example in the field of infrastructure, legal provision, technical specifications, finances and governance.

What is the general framework in which Amsterdam can advocate for its current objectives and priorities? What are objectives that could be relevant in the near future? This report describes the rather complex policy background and summarises different strategies, projects, networks, programmes and funding sources for promoting passenger and freight transport by rail. The focus is on international rail connections from Amsterdam to other destinations in the EU and on the better connection to border regions. The objective is to explore various existing initiatives, European and Dutch

⁹ Letta, E. (2024). Much more than a market. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/ny3j24sm/much-more-than-a-market-report-by-enricoletta.pdf>

¹⁰ Draghi, M. (2024). The future of European competitiveness. Part B | In-depth analysis and recommendations. https://commission.europa.eu/topics/strengthening-europeancompetitiveness/eu-competitiveness-looking-ahead_en

¹¹ Greenpeace (2024). Connection failed. An analysis of existing and potential direct rail connections between major European cities compared to air connections.

¹² Such as the substitution of flights, competitiveness, connectivity, corridors and functional connections.

networks. This exploration focuses on the characteristics and opportunities of Amsterdam. The analysis is done for various levels of government and from various perspectives. The focus lies on objectives formulated by Amsterdam such as replacing tourism/holiday flights with rail travel and searching for ways to influence policy making with the appropriate responsible institutions and network partners.

A better understanding of the policy framework should help to formulate effective measure and priorities for the municipality of Amsterdam. Attention will be paid to international connectivity on the one hand and spatial effects and regional attachment on the other. Based on the analysis, the report will describe existing and potential objectives and priorities and formulate recommendations how achieve them. A distinction will be made between short-term, medium-term and long-term actions. This is particularly important for certain long-term lobbying activities at national and European level.

1.2 Different spatial levels and networks for Amsterdam

The city of Amsterdam cannot be seen separately when it comes to mobility and connectivity. This corresponds to the level of a Functional *Urban Area (FUA)* as described within the European TEN-T framework. The direct Functional Urban Area of Amsterdam could be demarcated as the Metropolitan Region of Amsterdam (MRA), as also presented in the Spatial Vision 2050.

This is one of the different demarcations for regions at different levels. Different regional levels for Amsterdam could be¹³: Mega-City Region Northwest-Europe (500km area London-Amsterdam-Frankfurt-Paris), Delta City-Region (100-300km area Amsterdam-Brussels-Cologne), Global City-Region (30-100km area Amsterdam-Arnhem-Eindhoven-Rotterdam) and city regions (daily urban systems of 3-50km). Therefore, Amsterdam can be placed in different geographical frameworks:

¹³ Van Wijmen, P. & Govers, B. (2015). Verbonden steden: Netwerkvisie Spoor 2050.

Table 1: Geographical levels relevant to Amsterdam

Regional	•City of Amsterdam •Vervoersregio Amsterdam •Metropoolregio Amsterdam
National	•Province of North-Holland •Detlametropool •Netherlands
Transnational	•Eurodelta •Benelux Union + Germany •'Blue banana'
European	•TEN-T corridors: NSB, RA, NS-MED •European Railway Area

This means that European initiatives in the field of international rail transport have to be seen in the context of these different dimensions, in the first place also with respect to more regional cross-border ambitions. The assignment of this research is to identify priorities for the Municipality of Amsterdam where the different needs of the geographical frameworks are combined and in the best way promoted.

In the MIRT report¹⁴, it is mentioned that “More than 2.4 million people live in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (MRA). The region attracts many people and businesses, which contribute to the growth of the regional and national economy. There is also an enormous housing challenge in the MRA area, which increases the pressure on the mobility system. In short, spatial and socio-economic pressure is described as high. The population growth cannot be facilitated by the existing public transport system. This leads to poorer accessibility, not only within the MRA itself, but also between the MRA and Rotterdam/The Hague, Utrecht and international train destinations.”

1.3 Method & outline

There are many policy papers, strategies, initiatives and research reports in the field of transnational and cross-border rail connections. The first approach is therefore to conduct a quick scan of the various reports, policy documents, initiatives and developments and to draw up an analysis based on them. Ultimately, the analysis should result in an understanding of the status quo, the interests for Amsterdam at a thematic

¹⁴ MIRT-verkenning OV-verbinding Amsterdam-Haarlemmermeer, Notitie Kansrijke Oplossingsrichtingen.

and geographical level, perspectives and developments, and what recommendations can be made.

The analysis was largely be carried out by desk research. In addition, ITEM engaged in dialogue with various stakeholders, taking the form of workshops (taken place in December 2024) and individual discussions with experts and relevant parties at municipal, regional, national and European level.

Central questions are:

- What are the challenges and opportunities of international rail for Amsterdam? Are there potential dilemmas to be aware of?
- What are the recent and new developments regarding international rail that are important for the positioning of Amsterdam?
- What could be the most important railway connections to and from Amsterdam? Which connections could be prioritised and what is the current situation that could influence the implementation of certain infrastructure and services today and in the future?
- Does the municipality currently have the right network partners? Who are the partners with added value for certain connections, policy choices, investment choices?
- What are relevant projects, sources or funds for Amsterdam?

2 Analysis

The analysis is based on the main findings and conclusions from the inventory of documents and reports scanned and presented in the Annex. The Quick Scan makes a distinction between possible dilemmas or trade-offs, identified and discussed with the Municipality of Amsterdam. These include for example:

- The possible tension between passenger and freight, given the fact that the majority is taking place on a so-called ‘mixed network’¹⁵, meaning that both operate on the same railway¹⁶;
- The possible tension between national and international rail, as the Netherlands has a relatively intensively used railway network¹⁷;
- There also may be tension between transnational and cross-border rail transport, where transnational is connecting capitals across the border and cross-border is serving the regional needs along the border;
- The substitute (im)possibilities for rail compared to other modes of transport (mainly road and air);
- Political priorities, shifting due to political and geopolitical developments, such as military mobility.

2.1 International rail in general: state of play

While the European Single Railway Area was declared 25 years ago, it is currently still far from complete. Two prominent recent reports (Letta on the future of the Internal Market and Draghi on EU’s competitiveness) emphasised the fragmentation of markets and infrastructure that is hampering the materialisation of the European Single Railway Area.

Letta’s Much more than a Market	• In order to address the remaining infrastructure gaps and bottlenecks, the TEN-T Regulation establishes deadlines for constructing the core, extended, and comprehensive networks by 2030, 2040, and 2050, respectively. However, there is a growing risk that Member States might not meet the 2030 targets. Differences among transport modes are evident: while the road network under TEN-T is largely completed, the rail network remains highly fragmented, particularly concerning high-speed rail. Moreover, there is a noticeable deficiency in multimodal connections, particularly in linking rail and road networks with ports and airports. • The investment needs associated with realizing the TEN-T core network by 2030 are estimated at around €500 billion, with a significant portion still lacking sufficient financial resources. Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), the principal EU funding mechanism for TEN-T projects, should go beyond its current structure and objectives, to be redefined as a European fund that can meet the major
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¹⁵ See for example the Letters ‘Toekomstbeeld Spoorgoederenvervoer 2050’ and ‘Ontwikkelingen internationaal personenvervoer per spoor’.

¹⁶ The Betuweroute is an example of an exemption in this regard: this is especially dedicated to freight.

¹⁷ Often mentioned in Parliamentary Letters, such as most recently ‘Ontwikkelingen internationaal personenvervoer per spoor’.

	investment needs as well as the new challenges that Europe will increasingly face over the coming years: the network of the future should guarantee the resilience of infrastructure which is at high risk because of climate change and build infrastructure capable of meeting military mobility needs. • However, the Single European Railway Area has not yet fully materialised. Rail market opening, which started 25 years ago, has been hampered by the fragmentation of markets and infrastructure, the persistence of legal and de facto monopolies, as well as formidable technical barriers. • To address these challenges and fully harness the potential of the rail sector, ensuring the deployment of rail's key digital enablers such as the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), Digital Automatic Coupling (DAC), and Digital Capacity Management (DCM) is paramount. • With ERTMS deployed on only a fraction of the Core TEN-T Network, accelerating its rollout is essential for realising a truly integrated European rail system. Alongside ERTMS, the deployment of DAC and DCM promises to revolutionise rail freight efficiency and capacity management, with substantial investments needed from the EU, Member States, and private investors to support their implementation. • Paradox of EU infrastructure: the impossibility of travelling by high-speed train between European capitals. This is currently impossible and seems unlikely to change in the near future, as concrete operational plans remain merely theoretical. Indeed, our continent quickly and effectively developed the high-speed rail system, but except for the Paris-Brussels-Amsterdam axis, it remained within national borders. An European approach to regulation and tax incentives, rather than a national one, is necessary. The coming years must prioritise the planning, funding, and implementation of a major plan to connect the European capitals with high-speed rail.
Draghi's Future of European competitiveness	• Administrative obstacles hinder projects. Complex and diverging administrative and environmental rules, namely those that apply to grant permits, constitute a barrier to the realisation of transport infrastructure projects. Challenges are amplified for transnational projects, such as those for inland waterways, 75% of which are cross-border in the EU. • The EU's milestones towards shifting more activity to more sustainable modes of transport are still far from being achieved. Despite EU policies seeking to accommodate growing traffic and to decarbonise the sector, transport by rail and inland waterways is not yet competitive compared to road transport, due to lower reliability and higher transport costs. Given the great volumes carried by road and the need to maintain the related infrastructure, Member States tend to prioritise investment in road infrastructure. • Rail markets remain fragmented. Passenger and freight capacity handling is not planned and coordinated across borders. Some 800 national rules still exist for rail across the EU. Moreover, operational requirements diverge (e.g. concerning the number of staff in driving cabins). Market barriers remain for new entrants who in some cases face high track access charges and difficulties in accessing equipment and ticketing systems. This weakens the ability of providers to scale up and operate across borders. Operators active in more than one national market remain the exception in the EU. Consequently, the number of long-distance cross-border rail services in Europe has hardly increased during the last two decades. Consumers experience a lack of fast connections, complexity in booking multiple legs of journeys and weaker consumer passenger rights. In addition, rail freight suffers a relative de-prioritisation compared to rail passenger services. This leads to issues with the speed and reliability of rail freight transport. • For rail, Member States should, as an example, remove unnecessary national operational rules and standards (the EU should continue providing support to this end, namely via the European Railway Agency), better coordinate rail

	capacity management both in freight and passenger transport (based on the Commission proposal on the use of railway infrastructure capacity), and implement the fourth Railway package, to ensure open, competitive markets at the national level.
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In conclusion, and commonly put forward in several screened documents¹⁸, whether it is passenger rail transport or freight rail transport, both are hampered due to several aspects, ranging from financing to technical barriers and from legislation to political priorities. In the following, we will zoom into the two separately, first passenger rail transport, followed by freight transport.

2.2 International passenger rail transport

2.2.1 International passenger rail connections

2.2.1.1 Status Quo

International passenger rail from and to Amsterdam is mainly taking place through three border crossings/corridors, these include¹⁹:

- South-West: the high-speed rail South (HSL Zuid) towards Brussels/Paris/London
- South-East: the route to Germany (Berlin) via border crossing Zevenaar/Bad Bentheim
- North-East: the route to Germany (Cologne/Frankfurt) via border crossing Hengelo/Emmerich

Next to the long-distance connections, there are several regional cross-border rail connections.

Table 2: Overview current international connections, source: Ministry of I&W (2025)

Connection	Frequency	Operator	Market regulation	Type
Amsterdam – Brussels/Paris	19 times per day	NS/Eurostar	Open Access	HSR
Amsterdam-London	3 times per day	NS/Eurostar	Open Access	HSR
Amsterdam - Frankfurt	7 times per day	NS/DB	Open Access	HSR
Amsterdam - München	1 time per day	NS/DB	Open Access	HSR

¹⁸ See Annex A.

¹⁹ ProRail (2025). Internationaal reizigersvervoer van en naar Nederland.; Ministry of I&W (2025). Analysedocument internationaal personenvervoer over het spoor.

Amsterdam - Brussels	16 times per day	NS/NMBS	HRN-Concession	Semi-HSR
Rotterdam – Brussels	16 times per day	NS/NMBS	HRN-Concession	Semi-HSR
Amsterdam – Berlin	6 times per day + 1 time to Hannover	NS/DB	Open Access	Semi-HSR
Roosendaal – Antwerp	16 times per day	NS/NMBS	HRN-Concession	Regional
Arnhem – Düsseldorf	1 time per hour	VIAS Rail	Regional Concession	Regional
Groningen – Leer	1 time per hour	Arriva	Regional Concession	Regional
Aachen – Maastricht – Liège	14 times per day	Arriva, NS and NMBS	Regional Concession and HRN-Concession	Regional
Enschede – Münster	1 time per hour	DG Regio	Regional Concession	Regional
Enschede – Dortmund	1 time per hour	DG Regio	Regional Concession	Regional
Hengelo – Bielefeld	1 time per hour	Eurobahn	Regional Concession	Regional
Venlo – Hamm	16 times per day	Eurobahn	Regional Concession	Regional
Amsterdam – Innsbruck/Vienna	1 time per night	ÖBB Nightjet	Open Access	Night train
Amsterdam – Zürich	1 time per night	ÖBB Nightjet	Open Access	Night train
Brussels – Amsterdam – Berlin/Dresden/Prague	3 times per week	European Sleeper	Open Access	Night train

Based on the overview of ProRail (2025), currently there are 53 international trains directly departing from Amsterdam and 2 night trains every night and 1 night train for 3 times per week. Especially the capital cities in Belgium and Paris are relatively well served, definitely since the introduction of the EuroCity and EuroCity Direct towards Antwerp and Brussels.²⁰

²⁰ ProRail (2025)

Figure 1: Current international connections, source: ProRail, 2025

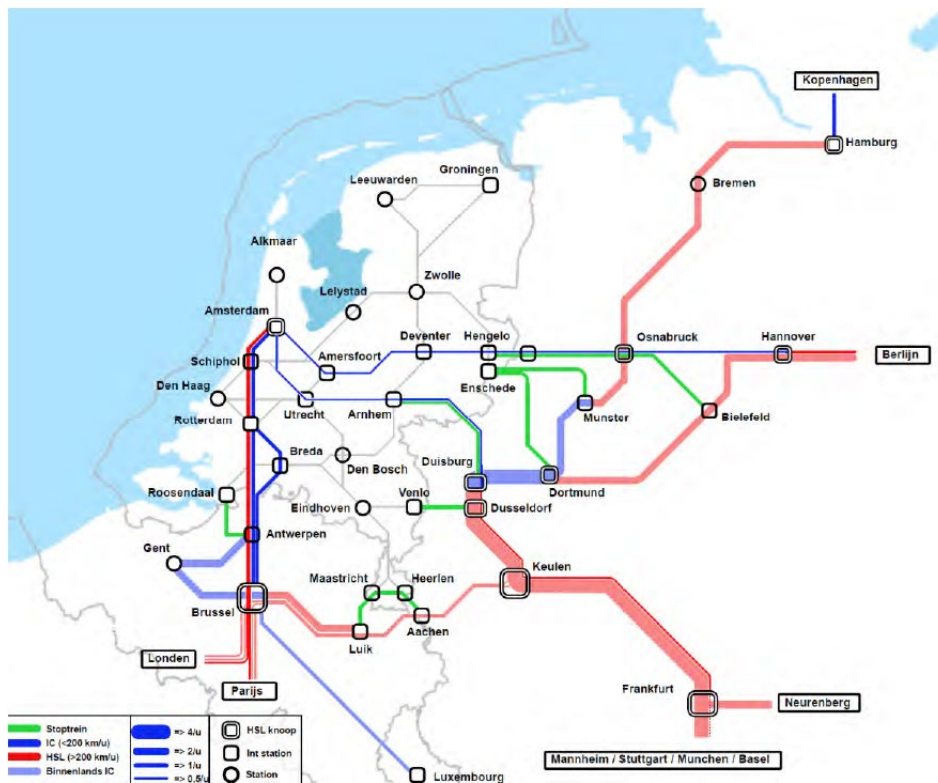
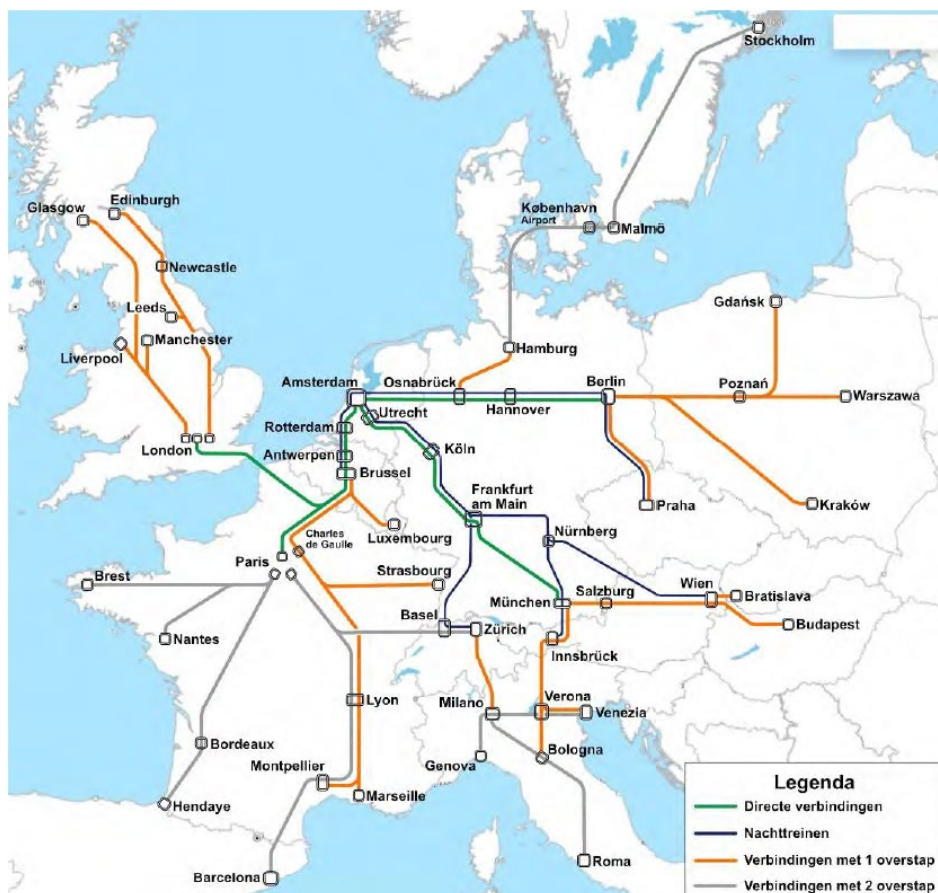


Figure 2: Current long-distance passenger rail network, source: ProRail, 2025.



2.2.1.2 Performance and Potentials

The current share of international train compared to air, car and bus is relatively small, but increasing with the distance travelled up to about 750-1000 kilometres.²¹ On distances of 300-500km, the train is competitive to the plane. Rail is environmentally friendly compared to car and air, but also relatively efficient in terms of land usage per passenger (as well as long distance busses). International passenger rail transport in the Netherlands is growing, between 2018 and 2050 from 9,6 to 20,8 million per year. More than two third travels on long-distance corridors. However, also border connections via Enschede, Venlo and Heerlen are heavily used.

In general, market opening on rail has resulted in positive effects on the development of international rail connections.²² Also, services and pricing were positively influenced by more competition on the rail market. Market opening could lead to Open Access – where an operator requests to execute a certain route – or by open public procurement by the government – where a government opens up a bid for a certain route. Similarly, market liberalisation has also led to a significant growth in the international bus transport market.²³ Under the rail market liberalisation, several rail operators have expressed interest in operating international connections from/to the Netherlands, mainly to and from Amsterdam. Of the, currently, seventeen notifications of new entrants to ACM (see table below), only one is not including Amsterdam. The notifications showcase both new direct lines, such as to Barcelona, Copenhagen, Basel and Brugge, as well as an intensification and diversification – in terms of pricing and service – on existing connections, such as Brussels, Berlin, Paris, Hamburg and Frankfurt. Nonetheless, while for example European Sleeper and Flixtain already should be running, both face significant delays in starting the connection and are not operational (yet).²⁴

Table 3: Overview ACM notifications new international trains, source: Ministry of I&W (2025)

Start date (requested)	Operator	Connection	Frequency	Type
2024	European Sleeper	Amsterdam – Barcelona	3 times per week	International night train
2025	Flixtain	Rotterdam – Oberhausen	2 times per day	International train with national function

²¹ ProRail (2025).

²² KiM (2025). Marktordening voor het personenvervoer per spoor. EY (2024). Study on passenger and freight rail transport services' prices for final customers. Rli (2020). Verzet de wissel.

²³ KiM (2025). Als bete uit de bus.

²⁴ See for example: Treinreiziger.nl (2024) Flixtain voorlopig niet in Nederland. <https://www.treinreiziger.nl/flixtain-voorlopig-niet-in-nederland/>; Treinreiziger.nl (2025) European Sleeper gaat naast Barcelona straks ook naar Milaan rijden. <https://www.treinreiziger.nl/european-sleeper-gaat-naast-barcelona-straks-ook-naar-milaan-rijden-steun-tweede-kamer-helpt-bij-plannen/>

2026	GoVolta	Amsterdam – Paris	2 times per day	International train (slower)
2026	GoVolta	Amsterdam – Berlin	2 times per day	International train (slower)
2026	GoVolta	Amsterdam – Basel	1 time per day	International train (slower)
2026	GoVolta	Amsterdam – Copenhagen	1 time per day	International train (slower)
2026	GoVolta	Amsterdam – München	1 time per day	International train (slower)
2026	Arriva	Groningen / Amsterdam-Zuid – Paris	1 time per day from Groningen, 3 times from Amsterdam-Zuid	International train (national Amsterdam - Groningen)
2027	GoVolta	Amsterdam – Frankfurt	2 times per day	International train (slower)
2027	GoVolta	Amsterdam – Hamburg	2 times per day	International train (slower)
2027	GoVolta	Amsterdam – Brugge	2 times per day	International train (slower)
2027	Arriva	Amsterdam Centraal – Den Haag Centraal – Brussels Midi	2 times per hour	International train (comparable to IC Brussels)
2027	Qbuzz	Amsterdam – Paris	7 times per day	International train (comparable to Eurostar including national function)
2027	Qbuzz	Amsterdam – Frankfurt	6 times per day	International train (comparable to ICE Frankfurt)
2027	Qbuzz	Amsterdam – Berlin (via Deventer)	7 times per day	International train (comparable to IC Berlin with national function)
2028	Heurotrain	(Groningen) – Amsterdam – Paris	16 times per day	International train (comparable to Eurostar)
2028	Heurotrain	Amsterdam – London	15 times per day	International train (comparable to Eurostar)

Despite market opening with the implementation of the Singel European Railway Area, several screened reports and documents highlight the differences between the

connectivity by rail compared to bus and air. In general, the performance of cross-border direct passenger rail connections are lower compared to direct flights and car.²⁵

A Greenpeace report (2024) analysed 990 routes between 45 major European cities, comparing direct train connections to direct flight options.²⁶ The study concluded that only 12% (114 routes) are connected by train, while 69% have direct flights, offering air travellers six times more direct connections. According to the study, of the 990 routes, 419 routes (42%) could be served by direct train under 18 hours travel time using existing rail infrastructure. When investments in rail infrastructure would allow a minimum average speed of 80km/h on the entire route, an additional 120 routes would be accessible within 18 hours – up to around 1,500 km. For Amsterdam, the report concludes that nine²⁷ of the 45 (in fact 44) investigated cities could be reached by an existing direct train, while 29 of the 45 cities could be directly reached within 18 hours (connectivity of 31%). Finally, the report concludes the most important missing train connection from Amsterdam under 12 hours to be Barcelona, which is the most used short-haul flight route from Amsterdam without a direct train alternative, followed by Copenhagen, Milan and Manchester. Other important missing and rather short train connections are to Hamburg and Luxembourg. Regarding night train destinations, it would be Madrid, which is the second most used short haul flight from Amsterdam without a direct train alternative, followed by Stockholm, Oslo and Rome.

A follow-up study of Greenpeace in 2025 analysed 142 cross-border routes in Europe and compared the ticket prices of travel by air versus rail. All routes were below 1500km and including a destination with international airport and railway station. The general findings were that 39% of the routes were cheaper by train. Most expensive countries for cross-border rail are France, Spain, the UK and Italy, and multiple operators and separate tickets increased train travel expenses. For Amsterdam (to and from), nine cross-border routes were analysed: 56% of the routes were cheaper by train than by plane. Routes including the UK and France made rail more expensive compared to the plane.

Issued by the Ministry of I&W, ProRail (2025)²⁸ analysed the three aspects of the high-speed rail junctions across the border, the relevance of high-speed rail hubs and the opportunities and preconditions for improvements on the main corridors. In general, ProRail warned that the performance of international rail is below par, based on punctuality and reliability. Also, the cross-border train offer is currently the weak link between high frequent national networks, meaning that national networks between the neighbouring states are weakly interconnected to each other. An increase of international passenger rail is still possible on all three corridors (HSL-Zuid, Bad Bentheim and

²⁵ Rli (2020).

²⁶ Greenpeace (2024). Connection failed. An analysis of potential and direct rail connections.

²⁷ We note that Amsterdam is connected to more than 9 international cities, the Greenpeace study is limited to Origin-Destination connections, as it compares to flights.

²⁸ ProRail (2025).

Emmerich) up to 2035. Possible destinations for intensification and expansion according to ProRail are included in the table below.

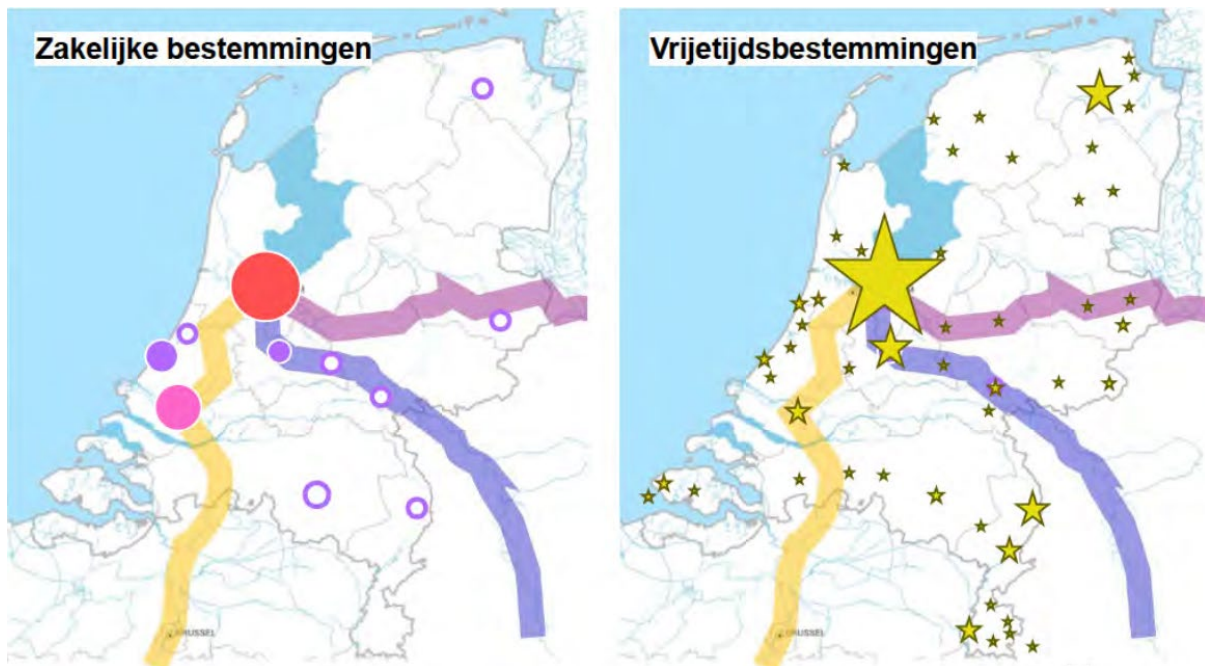
Table 4: Current and possible corridors, source: ProRail (2025)

Connection	via	To
South-West HSL Zuid	Amsterdam, Schiphol (excluding London), Rotterdam and Breda (only IC/EC)	Antwerp, Brussels, Paris Nord & Roissy Charles de Gaulle, Strasbourg, Genève, Lyon, Marseille and Barcelona, and via London St. Pancras to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Edinburgh
South-East Zevenaar	Schiphol (potentially), Amsterdam, Utrecht and Arnhem	Duisburg, Düsseldorf, Köln, Frankfurt, Mannheim, Stuttgart, Nürnberg and München, Basel, Zürich, Vienna, Innsbruck, Milan, Rome
North-East Hengelo	Schiphol (potentially), Amsterdam, Amersfoort, Deventer and Hengelo	Osnabrück, Hannover, Hamburg and Berlin to Copenhagen, Warszawa and Praha

ProRail also analysed the connectiveness to major destinations according to the Globalization and World Cities-index (GaWC), that indicates the socio-economic importance of destinations. About 14% is reachable within 4-6 hours by rail. This could be 28% directly and 50% with 1 change within 6-8 hours. The UK and south-east corridor towards Cologne and Frankfurt was found to be insufficiently serviced. Of the GaWC-destinations, 16% could be reached through the corridor passing Hengelo, 31% through the corridor passing Zevenaar and 53% via the HSL-Zuid.

Vice versa, ProRail also looked at the connectivity of Dutch cities in the European context, distinguishing between business and leisure. The analysis shows, that in general the corridors serve the connections needed – especially for business – but connections in the south and north are lacking, particularly for leisure.

Figure 3: Mapping of Dutch destinations in European context, source: ProRail (2025)



Reflecting on the modal shift, favouring train over flights, ProRail identified London, Paris, Berlin, Frankfurt, Stuttgart and München as well as Hamburg, Bremen, Lyon and Marseille as important destinations. Brussels and Paris are destinations already relatively well undertaken by train instead of air.²⁹ While there is a train to London from Amsterdam, in general air is still very often used. This is especially true for business travellers (prominently represented in travels to London), who in general are still more inclined to choose for air instead of rail – even when there are competitive rail alternatives. Also, travellers from the UK/London, favour the plane over train, while for example French travellers most often use the train.³⁰

With the AirRail Agenda³¹, partners furthermore invest in both Air&Rail integration (integration rail as continued mode of transport for air) and Air-Rail modal shift (substituting air by rail). In this agenda, first order destinations are London, Paris, Brussels, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Berlin. Substitution is found to be most likely to these destinations. Second order destinations include destinations that do not have a direct rail connection (yet), such as Bremen and Hamburg, and destinations exceeding a travel time of 4,5 hours or requiring a change, such as Lyon, Strasbourg, Bordeaux, Marseille, Zürich, Copenhagen and Manchester. Preconditions to this agenda are a stop at Schiphol, the usage of existing infrastructure, investments in infrastructure (especially

²⁹ Ministry of I&W, KLM, ProRail, NS and Schiphol (2025). De potentie van AirRail in Nederland. Actieagenda trein en vliegtuig.

³⁰ Ministry of I&W (2025).

³¹ Ministry of I&W, KLM, ProRail, NS and Schiphol (2025).

ERTMS), ticketing/booking, passenger rights and vision and policies from the government.

Finally, we note the discussion around the Lelylijn, which would be a new connection between the Randstad and the north of the Netherlands (Groningen/Leeuwarden to Lelystad and Amsterdam).³² The coalition Rutte IV reserved 3 billion euros for the project, but the latest government Schoof allocated 2,9 billion euros of the reserved funds to the Nedersaksenlijn. The Lelylijn is expected to cost at least 14 billion euros, therefore currently research is done to the possibilities for covering these costs and what the socio-economic and regional effects would be.³³ The Lelylijn is already taken up in the list of the TEN-T extended network, which would allow for European CEF funding. With the latest elections, the party D66 already indicated that the Lelylijn should be extended to Bremen and Hamburg.³⁴

Figure 4: Possible connection Lelylijn in the European corridors, source: De Lelylijn, <https://delelylijn.nl/nieuws/lelylijn-definitief-op-europese-spoorkaart/>



³² <https://www.lelylijn.nl/>

³³ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/openbaar-vervoer/betere-verbindingen-openbaar-vervoer/uitbreiding-spoor/lelylijn>

³⁴ <https://www.rtvnoord.nl/politiek/1359088/dit-zeggen-de-partijen-over-de-lelylijn>

2.2.2 Challenges for passenger rail transport

2.2.2.1 *Obstacles international rail*

The screening of the documents and reports showed the complexity of international rail. Draghi concluded on some 800 national rules, making the European Single Railway Area actually still a very fragmented market. The latest analysis of Ministry of I&W³⁵ approached the difficulties regarding international rail from the point of view of the passenger, the operator and the infrastructure manager. In the following, we will also adhere to this distinction, summarising the report of I&W, complemented with other screened literature.

Passenger

International appetite

Between 2018 and 2050, the amount of international rail passenger is expected to increase from 9,6 to 20,8 million per year.³⁶ The international rail passenger in the Netherlands is generally comparable to the national rail passenger: more likely than average to come from the higher social classes, young and live in highly urban areas.³⁷ The international passenger wishes to have a fast, comfortable and easy booking travel. The exact priorities differ from passenger to passenger, distinguishing for example between travellers, travelling for leisure, for work, or other professional obligations. The latter attach value to reliability and punctuality, fast travels with high frequencies and as much direct as possible. Regarding comfort, the possibilities to work (such as space, silence and wifi) are seen as valuable. On the other hand, travellers for leisure value comfort, catering and flexibility.³⁸ Furthermore, cross-border regional connections serve different functions (regional economies, work, shopping and family) compared to transnational connections (leisure, professional travel). In general, passengers value direct connections over ones with a change, this is even found to be true when a connection with a change is faster.³⁹

As discussed earlier, professional travellers may still value the airplane over the train for professional journeys or at least overly use the plane, even when rail is a competitive alternative in terms of time and price. This was in particular concluded for the connection with London and the UK.

Obstacles

International rail is often too complicated for passengers. In many reports, the problem of negative passenger experiences is highlighted. **Reliability and punctuality** was seen

³⁵ Ministry of I&W (2025).

³⁶ ProRail (2025).

³⁷ KiM (2024). Keuzen voor het spoor.

³⁸ Ministry of I&W (2025).

³⁹ Rli (2020).

as a major obstacle for international travellers.⁴⁰ Furthermore, **finding and booking** international train journeys is perceived as too difficult. This is especially the case when it is not offered through NS (for Dutch passengers) or other national operators, and/or especially including different operators during the journey (using different modes of transport (multimodal) or within the same mode (multi-operator)). For rail, 43% of the recent Eurobarometer respondents indicated that they have never booked journeys with multiple operators.⁴¹ The complexity regarding booking and ticketing stems from two main reasons. First, main ticketing platforms belong to incumbents, which restricts the visibility of other operators on their platforms. For example, the Dutch ministry of I&W indicated to be in close contact with NS to make journeys with other operators visible and bookable. While the ambition is formulated by the national operators in the CER Ticketing Roadmap⁴², the implementation appears to be insufficient. For example, recently NS indicated not to make GoVolta findable and bookable through their website and app – to discontent of passengers’ organisation Rover.⁴³

As a result, planning a cross-border trip by rail is found to be difficult and unclear. There are various apps, but in general still suffer from poor access to travel information and passenger data. Regarding the technical possibilities, an analysis by Worth for the European Parliament concludes that these are well in place. EU legislation allows for data sharing between operators, enabling booking and purchasing tickets across operators and platforms possible.⁴⁴ Thus, it is the actual implementation and use of these legislative frameworks by operators or the legal enforcement to do so, that is currently lacking. Secondly, ticketing itself is also a problem, meaning the impossibility of buying tickets of other operators through the main ticketing platforms or buying a trip with multiple operators under one single ticket (both through tickets). Separate tickets are found to be more expensive than one direct ticket.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the purchase-horizons for rail tickets often do not align with the behaviour of international travellers: booking tickets further in advance is often not possible.

Also the **information provision and passenger rights** are seen as problematic.⁴⁶ Just like for domestic journeys, passengers require real-time information on the journey. For international journeys, this may be too complicated due to: possible different languages, different booking and information platforms or apps, and the lack of an integral overview on disruptions and alternatives in international journeys. This is in particular the case,

⁴⁰ Ministry of I&W (2025).

⁴¹ European Commission (2025). Flash Eurobarometer 551: Multimodal Digital Mobility Service.

⁴² <https://www.cer.be/cer-eu-projects-initiatives/cer-ticketing-roadmap>

⁴³ Rover (2025). Rover blij met komst GoVolta op het spoor. <https://www.rover.nl/actueel/31-internationaal/2707-rover-blij-met-komst-govolta-op-het-spoor>

⁴⁴ Worth, J. (2024). Simplifying European Ticketing. A chance for a green transformation of public and multimodal transport in the European Union.

⁴⁵ Greenpeace (2025).

⁴⁶ Worth, J. (2024), Greenpeace (2024), Volt (2024), Ministry of I&W (2025), Rli (2020), Haskoning (2025),

when multiple operators are responsible for different rail legs. Also in this respect, Worth concluded that the current legislation, a 2010 Directive, a 2017 Delegated Regulation and a 2023 Delegated Regulation, provides for a legal and technical basis to better exchange data on disruptions across platforms and operators.⁴⁷ Finally, passenger rights are inadequately safeguarded with multiple operators and/or in a multimodal journey and unclearly implemented. Passenger rights are separately regulated for air, rail and road. A proposal for a European regulation for multimodal journeys was made in 2023, but is still under discussion. The latest legislative text only covered multimodal journeys, but not multi-operator journeys.⁴⁸ An international journey predominantly requires a change of train or operator. From a legal point of view, it matters whether there is multimodality (or not) and a through ticket (or not). It is concluded, that there is a need to clarify and update passenger rights, when using multi-operator rail journeys.

Finally, train stations are insufficiently designed for international travellers.⁴⁹ These include among others services, waiting and transfer areas, travel information and safety. International passengers have different needs than domestic passengers.

Recommendations and developments

Often presented recommendations are therefore to make international rail journeys more reliable, punctual and easier. These include among others:

- Make train tickets available at least nine months in advance;
- Make international train an attractive product through pricing;
- Improve booking and ticketing, through re-selling and data exchange between platforms;
- Improve passenger rights, through legislation and through tickets, and disruption information;
- Improve international railway stations for international passengers, through languages, information provision, services for waiting and transfer.

Regarding booking and ticketing and passenger rights, the European Commission is aiming at presenting a proposal for a Single Digital Booking and Ticketing Regulation and Multimodal Digital Mobility Services legislation in early 2026.

In terms of booking and ticketing there is already a best practice in the Netherlands: EasyConnect. EasyConnect is a digital solution via a router, that streamlines and processes the different fares and data of operators. It can be implemented in any app and currently allows already to check in in Germany and check out in the Netherlands with

⁴⁷ Worth, J. (2024).

⁴⁸ Worth, J. (2024).

⁴⁹ ProRail (2025).

the apps of a German transport provider (AVV Aachen) and Arriva's Glimble app. Today this possibility is restricted to the Euregio Meuse Rhine from Cologne, to the Dutch Province of Limburg and Liège. However, the solution could be expanded to other operators, covering the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium entirely or even bigger. At the moment, possibilities for an extension to NL (including NS and other rail service operators) and BE are actively sought. There is attention to mobility as a service (MaaS) across NL, BE and DE. The specific Glimble app is in the Netherlands hosted by Arriva, but can function for all train operators if they open up their systems. Amsterdam could use the good relation to Heerlen/Parkstad to lobby jointly for the broader application of cross-border check-in/check-out solutions that would be an important step towards more consumer-friendly train travelling across the borders.

Operator

International appetite

As already shown in the table on future new connections by new entrants, many operators have expressed interest in international rail. It was also shown in studies that the open market and competition has led to a growth of international rail connections, services and options for passengers.

However, some literature also hints at reluctant national incumbents when it comes to international connections. For example, the Dutch stakeholders were found to be insufficiently succeeded in establishing international connections, both transnational and cross-border.⁵⁰ The Dutch NS for instance has obviously no appetite to run IC-trains across the border to the first (big) city, connecting to the high frequency or HSR network across the border. This would for example be the case by expanding the train to Maastricht to Liège, Heerlen to Aachen and Venlo to Düsseldorf. However, national stakeholders are not willing to do so, mainly due to the fear of interrupting with domestic passenger traffic and costs and complexity of interoperable stock. Also the NightJet Amsterdam-Vienna showcases the reservedness of NS regarding international rail. The connection was extended from Düsseldorf to Amsterdam, with a subsidy of the ministry of I&W demanding the NS to cooperate. It became a success, continued by NS without subsidy.⁵¹

When analysing the international rail connections, new entrants operate international connections by themselves. However, national incumbents mainly operate cross-border rail connections through cooperation. As shown in the list of current international connections, as presented earlier, these are often operated by two or more national,

⁵⁰ Rli (2020).

⁵¹ Haskoning (2025). Potentie internationale nachttreinen.

state-owned, operators. Examples are the EuroCity Direct with NS and NMBS or IC Berlin with NS and DB. The local cross-border *Drielandentrein* between Aachen-Heerlen-Maastricht-Liège is operated by NS, NMBS, DB and Arriva. On the one hand, a high level of cross-border cooperation is being associated with cross-border public transport services.⁵² On the other hand, the question may arise why not one of the national operators can operate the entire cross-border journey and to what extent the operation is made more complicated by divers partners.⁵³

Obstacles

Railways have traditionally had a strong national focus, which limits international train connections and the accession of new entrants. Differences in infrastructure, rolling stock, legislation and regulations, and the coordination of train paths make it complex to operate a train in several countries. Presented as one of the biggest challenges for international high-speed rail (HSR) is the lack of compatibility across borders.⁵⁴ Legal and governance barriers are diverse, including for example language requirements for train drivers, capacity allocation regulations and safety requirements. These challenge operators, by incurring additional operational costs. Technically, there are different safety systems, voltages and heights and widths for rail and carriages. Rolling stock, that is interoperable across border, is also a prominently presented obstacle – there is no open flourishing market for this (second hand) rolling stock.⁵⁵

International operators are furthermore faced with construction works, coordinated or not, resulting in disruptions or delays. Ideally, construction works should be well-coordinated between neighbouring states or along corridors. National services are often also prioritised over international ones and in the Netherlands mainly treated separately.

Especially new entrants face multiple challenges and uncertainties. Haskoning investigated international night trains in this respect⁵⁶: availability of rail paths for mid- to long-term, lack of capacities for maintenance and storage areas, lack of capacity in rail planning (especially with high frequency schedules), old materials and lack of new rolling stock, challenges related to financing and investments. As a result, ProRail warns for a stagnation of the development of international rail products. Operators need security and perspective.⁵⁷ An example is the cancellation of the line Zwolle-Groningen by Arriva, due

⁵² European Commission (2022). Study on providing public transport in cross-border regions – Mapping of existing services and legal obstacles – Final report.

⁵³ Such was the case with the *Drielandentrein* in 2025: <https://www.treinreiziger.nl/passagiers-drielandentrein-vier-uur-lang-gestrand-in-eijsden-samenwerking-vervoerders-loopt-fout/>

⁵⁴ CER (2025). A High-Speed Rail Master Plan for Europe.

⁵⁵ Ministry of I&W (2025).

⁵⁶ Haskoning (2025).

⁵⁷ ProRail (2025).

to the fact that it was uncertain whether the student public transport product, provided by the Dutch government, would be applicable to this open access rail connection.⁵⁸

Finally, schedules are hard to be coordinated. For instance, cross-border public transport services are often weakly coordinated with the national rail schedules. National incumbents may be reluctant to deviate from their national schedule, due to concerns of punctuality and high usages of the rail network.

Recommendations and developments

First and most prominently, many reports recommend to work on harmonisation of technical and safety standards. A very relevant aspect in this regard are the TEN-T packages, such as the introduction of harmonised systems like ERTMS. Indeed, interoperability would benefit both extending national rail routes across borders as well as exploiting new cross-border routes by new entrants. Interoperability and a level-playing field could also be better aimed for in the legal and administrative sphere. Some European regulations may help here, such as the intended European legislation on capacity allocation and drivers licensing. Yet, Member States could also better coordinate and streamline these requirements along corridors or networks (with neighbouring countries or the Benelux). Also the capacity could be improved and better coordinated in the framework of a corridor, with neighbouring countries/Benelux or Europe. Mentioned in multiple reports, a better functioning and connected cross-border rail network can already be achieved by the existing network and better coordination of time schedules, train paths and construction works.⁵⁹

Infrastructure manager

“Infrastructure managers are perceived as inflexible and transport operators are only willing to cooperate with each other to a limited extend.”, concluded Rli in 2020.⁶⁰ While, ProRail indicates to be working together across borders and in European context, cross-border cooperation and coordination is concluded and recommended in all reports and emphasised by the ministry of I&W.⁶¹

The expressed obstacles are more or less equal to the ones summarised for operators. KiM expects a more prominent role for infrastructure managers, such as ProRail, in the future: “[...] the EU is working on a regulation on capacity management, which may render

⁵⁸ <https://www.treinreiziger.nl/geen-arriva-sneltrainen-zwolle-groningen-door-onzekerheid-over-geldigheid-studentenkaart/>

⁵⁹ E.g. KiM (2024), ProRail (2025), Rli (2020).

⁶⁰ Rli (2020).

⁶¹ Ministry of I&W (2025).

the Dutch capacity allocation rules superfluous. International passenger and freight corridors will be better coordinated internationally, creating capacity for additional trains. Interestingly, this regulation envisages a different, much more powerful role for infrastructure managers, including ProRail. In future, it will be the market regulator who will have to weigh up the capacity requests of all transport operators, with and without concessions, both in the long and short term. This makes ProRail the most important party in the timetable-setting process.”⁶²

Specifically, with respect to the substitution of flights it should be noted that currently the Schiphol rail tunnel is a bottleneck, limiting the national and international ambitions on rail. The rail capacity is too limited between Schiphol Airport and Amsterdam Zuid. Also, the transfer area at Schiphol Airport and Amsterdam Zuid is not equipped to the predicted passenger amounts, conflicting with safety prescriptions. As part of the MIRT study ‘OV-verbindend Amsterdam-Haarlemmermeer’, this matter is currently analysed.⁶³

2.2.3 Brief summary and discussion

This section showed that passengers, operators and infrastructure managers are all still faced with obstacles and complexities when dealing with international rail. In summary:

- International rail is complex and railways are still very much national.
- Passengers face difficulties when booking and ticketing an international rail journey, especially with multiple operators and are insufficiently serviced with passenger rights and disruption information.
- National incumbents are hesitant to develop international rail products or extend national lines across the border, due to fear of interruption of domestic connections and costs related to interoperability.
- New entrants are faced with technical, legal, governance, financial and administrative obstacles.

Finally, in the documents that have been screened, better cross-border cooperation is unanimously recommended as an important measure.

2.2.3.1 *Serving different needs*

As presented, rail is serving different needs and functions. This may bring some dilemmas and different points of attention.

⁶² KiM (2024).

⁶³ MIRT-verkenning OV-verbindend Amsterdam – Haarlemmermeer (2025). Notitie Kansrijke Oplossingsrichtingen.

National/cross-border/international

Multiple reports pinpoint the need for making ambitious decisions on rail, which is up to the political level.⁶⁴ Rail capacity is limited and thus this requires priorities when needed. Here, there is a perceived dilemma between national connections and international connections, possibly competing with each other. In national legislation regarding capacity allocation, domestic connections currently prevail over international ones. Also, in the operation of services, this tension is vivid. National stakeholders have shown that they prioritize domestic traffic over international traffic. When the decision was made to introduce a Randstad-metro-model by having one train every 15 minutes, running between the cities of the Randstad, this had implications for the availability of slots for cross-border trains. This for instance may negatively affect the quality of existing cross-border rail connections, e.g. in case of delays (across the border). Today, passengers of night train connections (Vienna-Amsterdam) already confirmed these tensions. According to recent experiences, the arrival of night trains is very unreliable and often heavily delayed. This indicates that today the willingness to adapt the operation in favor of cross-border rail routes is limited. There is for instance a strong focus on the punctuality of national trains. This for instance makes the coordination of time schedules of regional cross-border rail connections, such as the *Drielandentrein*, very difficult.⁶⁵

However, often the same reports present also solutions to these dilemmas, as there were still significant room for improvements and efficiency regarding capacity allocation, usage and coordination. KiM (2024) for instance advises to make better use of existing capacities and infrastructure, as well as Greenpeace (2024) does. In this regard the Rli (2020) for instance recommends to coordinate regional, national and international rail transport, by giving international trains a more prominent role in the national and regional rail schedule. More intelligent interventions can be also made by combining or extending certain national routes (for example IC trains) across borders, in particular to international hubs in the neighbouring country. Furthermore, cross-border regional connections in combination with HSR-hubs across the border may be a faster connection for several regions in the Netherlands than the HSR connection departing from Amsterdam. However, international connections and cross-border regional connections are currently separately addressed in policy documents, missing potential synergies. In fact, currently the opposite may be true: the development of regional cross-border connections may be hindered due to transnational rail ambitions and developments ('tunnel effect'). For the HSL-Zuid for instance, it was found that this had negative effects on the connectivity of the cross-border region.⁶⁶ Even more, based on the literature review, so far TEN-T has not been supportive for the development of cross-border connections at a more regional level. Investments under the framework of TEN-T

⁶⁴ KiM (2024), Rli (2020)

⁶⁵ As presented in an interview with the working group *Drielandentrein*.

⁶⁶ Vickerman, R. (2015). High-speed rail and regional development: the case of intermediate stations.

have in the first place supported the capital regions, who already demonstrated a high level of accessibility. This also shows a certain cross-border paradox: the development of high-speed rail and direct transnational connections between capitals has in some cases led to disadvantages for cross-border connections.

Among others, Greenpeace and Rli⁶⁷ pinpointed the potential of serving cross-border and national connections through transnational lines (A to C, via B), prolonging existing, national lines across the border (extending A to B to C) and/or connecting two lines, operated by the same or different operators (A to B + B to C = A to C). This requires more ambitious and international coordination of routes and timetables, what is currently missing.

While the EuroCity Direct or EuroCity may be seen as a model, at least for Belgium, that connects both national destinations as well as transnational ones. However, the tension with national services may be showcased: a Belgian local train was cancelled for realising the EuroCity Direct.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Belgian passengers with a domestic ticket are not permitted to travel on the Eurocity Direct, e.g. between Antwerp and Brussels. Indeed, ticketing with multiple operators on the same connection may lead to more confusion for passengers. This also has the attention of the Dutch government, exploring a legal basis to oblige all operators to accept the OV-chipcard or OV-pas as national method of payment.⁶⁹

2.3 International freight rail transport

2.3.1 International freight rail connections

2.3.1.1 *Status Quo*

In general, rail freight transport plays a modest role in the Netherlands.⁷⁰ This is also true in comparison to other EU countries, where an average of 20% of train-km is accounted for by freight trains (compared to 5% in the Netherlands). This has also to do with the location in the delta and importance of inland waterway transport. Nevertheless, the Port of Amsterdam is multimodal, also connecting to rail. It is the expectation of the port that the amount of freight trains will increase, also with a growing volume of new energy related goods.⁷¹

The future connection of Amsterdam with other European cities is very much dependent on priorities and investments determined at the EU level. The EU is promoting a

⁶⁷ Rli (2020), Greenpeace (2024)

⁶⁸ <https://www.treinreiziger.nl/meer-treinen-naar-belgie-door-snelle-eurocity-direct/>

⁶⁹ Minister of I&W (2025), Borging van publieke belangen bij open toegang in het spoorvervoer.

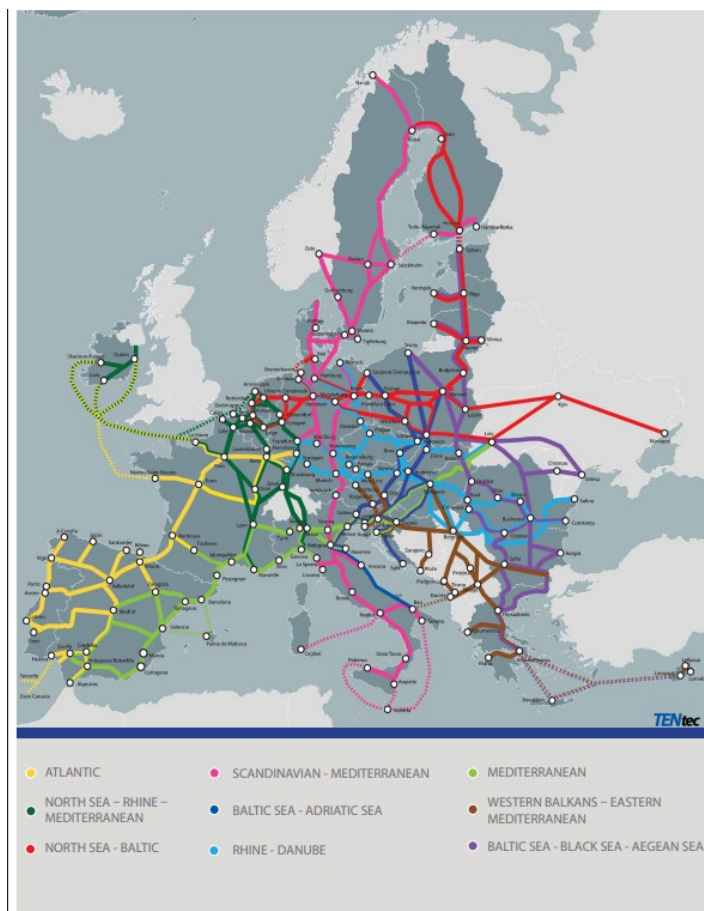
⁷⁰ KiM (2024). European Union Agency for Railways (2022). Cross-border Rail Transport Potential.

⁷¹ Port of Amsterdam (2024). Position Paper Het belang van spoorgoederenvervoer voor Amsterdam.

consistent transnational European rail network with the so-called TEN-T corridors. This Trans-European Network (TEN-T) is laid down as a European regulation for cross-border transport networks. There are currently 26 Dutch urban nodes under the framework of TEN-T. This classification requires that cities have to make a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan to receive subsidies such as the Connecting Europe Facility. The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for Transport is the funding instrument to realise European transport infrastructure policy. It aims at supporting investments in building new transport infrastructure in Europe or rehabilitating and upgrading the existing one. Today, funding goes for instance to major projects to improve cross-border rail connections along the TEN-T core network – in the Baltic Member States (Rail Baltica), between France and Italy (Lyon-Turin), and between Denmark and Germany (Fehmarnbelt tunnel).⁷² An overview of the TEN-T corridors and MIRT projects can be found here: <https://ez.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=33b1acd65fa84a6593fc6332b20f0935>

⁷² See: European Commission 2024, EU invests record €7 billion in sustainable, safe and smart transport infrastructure, https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/eu-invests-record-eu7-billion-sustainable-safe-and-smart-transport-infrastructure-2024-07-17_en#:~:text=Work%20on%20inland%20waterway%20infrastructure,railway%20system%20into%20the%20EU.

Figure 5: TEN-T Corridors in Europe



In total, there are nine European Transport Corridors and two horizontal priorities structures that support the completion of the trans-European transport network. They guide the implementation of the European Transport Corridors and the horizontal priorities and involve a wide number of stakeholders throughout the process. For each corridor, a European Coordinator has been nominated who establishes a work plan for the specific corridor or a horizontal priority. The work plan contains an analysis of the state of the corridor or horizontal priority, and serves to monitor progress, identify bottlenecks and to set priorities for its future development. The work plans are the basis for implementing decisions which the Commission will adopt for each corridor. The Coordinator has also been strengthened in the 2024 TEN-T Regulation, in terms of overseeing the completion of the core network by the member states and the formal consultation in the allocation of EU co-funding to infrastructure projects.

There are two Network Corridors that are relevant for Amsterdam: the **North Sea-Baltic Corridor** and the **North Sea-Rhine-Mediterranean Corridor**.

North Sea-Baltic Corridor (NSB): connects the ports of the Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea with the ports of the North Sea, crossing 9 countries (the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Sweden).

The total length of the North Sea - Baltic corridor (NSB) is 9 030 km.

ERTMS European Deployment Plan (EDP)

According to the European Commission, the lines currently in operation in the Netherlands had been already commissioned. According to the Dutch plans, most of the remaining NSB Dutch sections (i.e., Rotterdam – Utrecht – Hengelo – German border line) are expected to be operational beyond 2030. According to the German plans, German sections planned in the EDP have been delayed. The Köln node has no planned date in the last German plan. All the German network is expected to be equipped by 2040.

In Belgium, most of the NSB sections are already operational, including one cross-border section with the Netherlands and another one with Germany. Although some sections planned in the EDP by 2023 will be delayed, the Belgian authorities planned the entire Belgian network to be equipped by 2025.

European Coordinator for the TEN-T North Sea-Baltic Corridor is Ms Catherine Trautmann. During her political career, Catherine Trautmann held various posts, including mayor of Strasbourg, state secretary and minister in the French government, Member of the French National Assembly, and Member of the European Parliament. Catherine Trautmann has extensive experience with transport projects and was appointed European Coordinator for the North Sea-Baltic Corridor on 29 October 2014 and reappointed on 9 September 2024. She is certainly for Amsterdam an important contact if it is about the future strategy and projects under the North Sea-Baltic Corridor.

Any policy initiative has better chances of being taken on board if it fits into the defined challenges of the NBC. The following objectives have been formulated by Ms Trautman in the Workplan of the NBC (Version 2022).⁷³

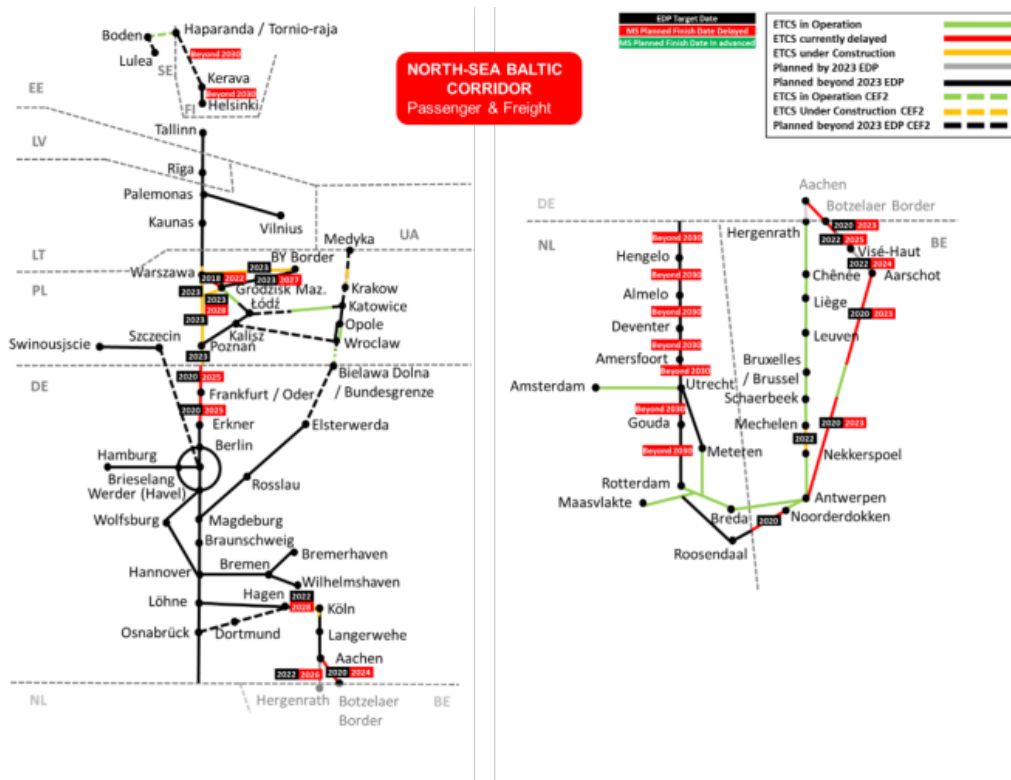
- Driving forward a more digitalised and connected transport and logistics system on the NSB Corridor for long-distance traffic and within urban nodes;
- Driving forward an integrated planning of transport, energy, and digital infrastructure, and

⁷³ The work plans can be found here: https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/infrastructure-and-investment/trans-european-transport-network-ten-t/north-sea-baltic-corridor_en.

- Re-evaluating the wider geopolitical context of the NSB Corridor following the Russian attack on Ukraine.

In particular, it is stated that interoperability issues on rail have to be prioritised, especially at border crossings, and reducing railway noise near heavily populated areas have to be solved.

Figure 6: ERTMS deployment on North-Sea Baltic Corridor, source: European Commission



The **North Sea – Rhine – Mediterranean European** transport corridor (NSRM) was established by the Regulation (EU)2024/1679 that merged two former TEN-T core network corridors: Rhine – Alpine and North Sea – Mediterranean. The NSRM corridor stretches across eight European countries, namely Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. It comprises about 12 150 km of railway lines, 5 000 km of roads and 5 030 km of inland waterways.

According to the European Commission, the Corridor's railway network is mature and only a few missing links remain.⁷⁴ This concerns in particular the EuroCap railway link which should modernise the connection Brussels-Luxembourg-Strasbourg to achieve a high-performance line between the three European capitals. Further missing links

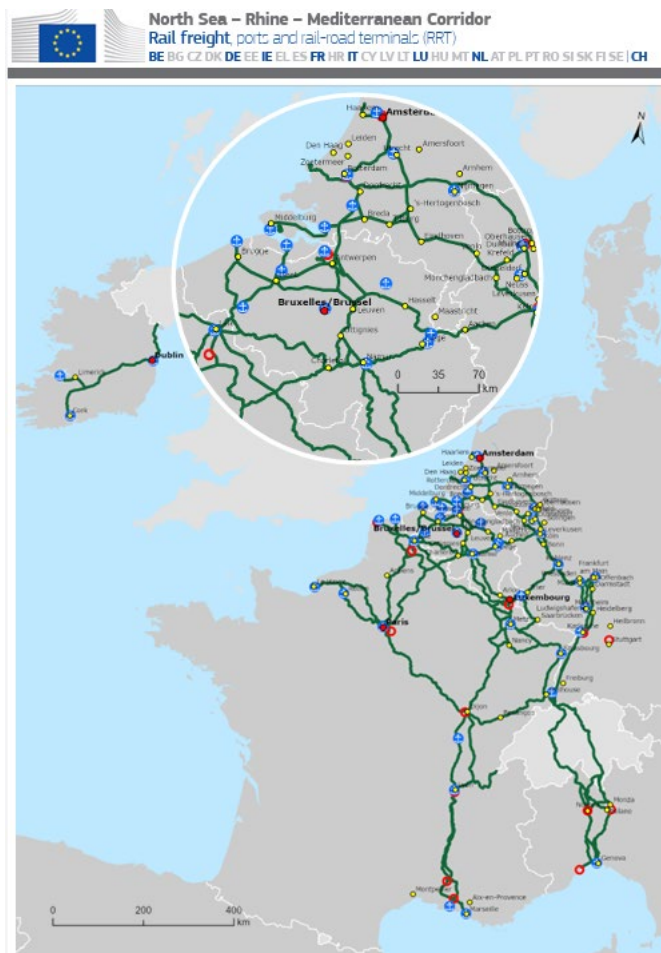
⁷⁴ See the European Comissions general description of the Corridor on: https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/infrastructure-and-investment/trans-european-transport-network-ten-t/north-sea-rhine-mediterranean-corridor_en.

include the reinstatement of the connection from Limerick to Foynes in Ireland and the Antwerp bypass between Lier and the Port of Antwerp in Belgium. There are also remaining capacity bottlenecks on the entire corridor, especially in and around urban nodes. It is striking that according to the European Commission major achievements have been achieved related to Dutch infrastructure.

Major achievements include:

- the Betuwe line improving the hinterland connection of the Port of Rotterdam;
- the new sea lock in IJmuiden connecting the Port of Amsterdam to the North Sea;

Figure 7: Rail freight on North Sea-Rhine-Mediterranean Corridor, source: European Commission



European Coordinator for the TEN-T North Sea – Rhine – Mediterranean transport corridor, is Prof. Paweł Wojciechowski. He was appointed European Coordinator for the North Sea – Rhine – Mediterranean Corridor in September 2024.

The work plan 2022

According to the recommendations of the Coordinator, compared to other core network corridors, the Rhine-Alpine Corridor is described as largely compliant with the requirements defined in the TEN-T guidelines. However, certain critical infrastructure characteristics had to be upgraded.

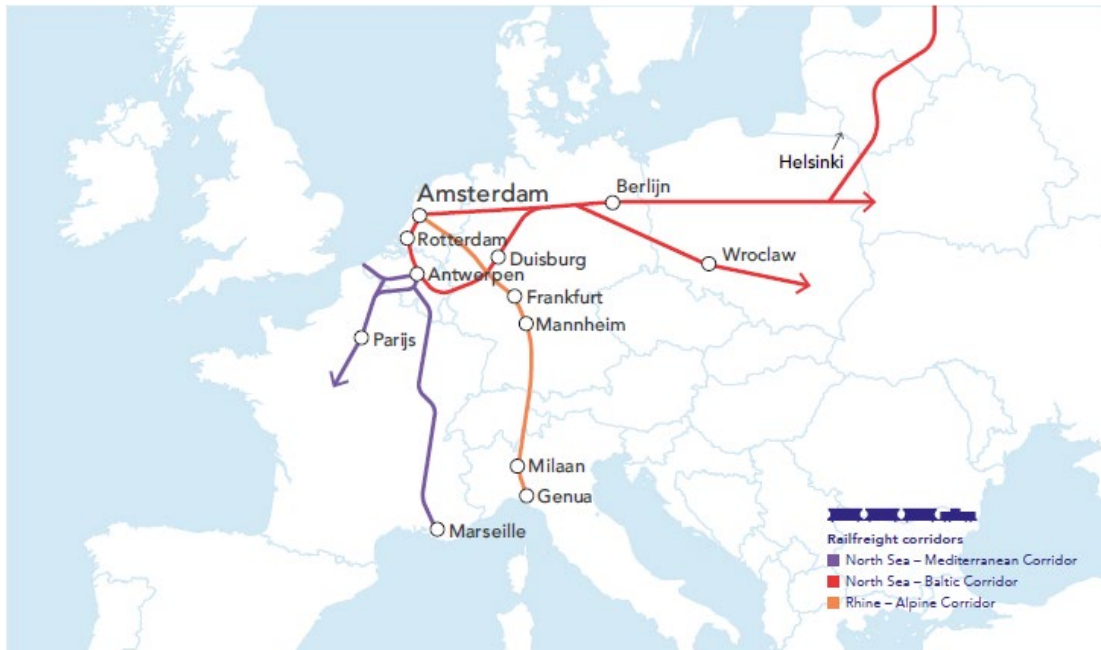
1. Rail capacity was already stretched to maximum at certain sections. In order to accommodate heavy mixed passenger/freight traffic, Member States should speed up implementation of major rail infrastructure projects at cross-border sections between Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland on the one hand and between Italy and Switzerland on the other hand. Similarly, extensions of capacity of hinterland connections to the Port of Zeebrugge and Port of Genova remain a priority.
2. Finally, as regards rail, there were still operational barriers stemming from the historically founded interoperability issues in the national rail networks. These issues occur in particular on cross-border sections, where voltage, signalling and safety systems change. The deployment of ERTMS would only partly solve these problems. Furthermore, language requirements would pose an extra barrier. As a result, the continuity of traffic is jeopardised, requiring railway companies to use dedicated locomotives or train outfits. This would lead to longer travel time and higher transport costs.
3. Rail noise remained an important negative externality. It would require a European, harmonised solution, while avoiding unilateral actions, which would hamper the functioning of the internal market.

In addition, a minimum line speed of 160 km/h is proposed for passenger lines of the core and the extended core network and the installation of ERTMS on the entire network by 2040, while decommissioning existing national class B systems is made mandatory.

The Consultative Forums

The European Coordinators chair consultative fora which bring together Member States, regions, cities, infrastructure managers of all transport modes, including ports, airports and terminals. The discussions during the forum meetings can include a variety of topics, such as modal integration, interoperability, the coordinated development of infrastructure in cross-border sections, urban nodes, or the greening of transport. The coordinators usually convene the forum twice per year.

Figure 8: The connection of Port of Amsterdam to the European rail freight corridors, source: Port of Amsterdam (2024)



2.3.1.2 Some developments

The future outlook for rail freight transport, published by the Ministry of I&W (2025), has multimodal transport as the norm in 2050, meaning that for long-distance transport (domestic and international), it is common practice to use lorries only for pre- and post-transport and inland waterway or rail transport for long distances. Also the Port of Amsterdam emphasises multimodality in its position paper.⁷⁵ Multimodal freight transport is mainly focussed on the top corridors East, South-East and South. These include important rail connections, such as the border crossings of Zevenaar, Venlo and the Belgian border. Implementation agreements are (to be) made with Tilburg, Venlo, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, North Sea Port, Moerdijk and Chemelot/Stein. For rail, especially the destinations Northeast-Europe and North-Italy rely on rail, as inland waterways are not an (good) option.

Particularly, the ongoing research on GNOE (Goederencorridor Noordoost Europa) is of relevance. The rail corridor is situated from West and South of the Netherlands to Germany and Northeast-Europe, part of the North Sea-Baltic Corridor. The actual routing is taking place via Weesp and not complying with the basic conditions for freight, including nuisance and noise, nor the TEN-T requirements.⁷⁶ Furthermore, capacity obstacles are expected with increasing growth in passenger rail traffic via the Randstad. When looking at the predictions for freight rail traffic, ProRail expects that towards 2040 the freight traffic over the German border crossing at Bentheim will more than double (22-

⁷⁵ Port of Amsterdam (2024). Position Paper 'Het belang van spoorgoederenvervoer voor Amsterdam'.

⁷⁶ Appm (2022). OAO-notitie GNOE.

26 trains in 2020 to 55-73 trains in 2040).⁷⁷ However, the freight traffic from Amsterdam to Bentheim is relatively small (<3 trains per day). Indeed, during an interview with the Port of Amsterdam it was communicated that the North Sea – Rhine – Mediterranean corridor was of main importance in terms of freight traffic.

Nevertheless, GNOE may be relevant for Amsterdam, as it explores the different options for rerouting the rail freight traffic towards Germany and Northeast-Europe. The different options also have implications for international passenger rail, expecting to increase for Amsterdam/Randstad. Three of the five analysed GNOE options explore the possibilities of shifting rail freight transport from the Bentheimroute to the Betuweroute. As the Betuweroute is particularly dedicated to rail freight transport, this would overcome potential capacity problems between freight and passenger transport. Since the Port of Amsterdam is connected to the Betuweroute⁷⁸, these options are relevant for Amsterdam. However, eastern Dutch regions fear an increase of nuisance and disadvantages.⁷⁹ The Port of Amsterdam calls for a suitable compensation.⁸⁰ Currently, a feasibility and necessity study is being concluded and expected for publication in 2026. As part of the investigation, a public consultation was launched. Based on the results of the study, the further development of GNOE will be debated. In the framework of GNOE, a governance structure has been created, as also portrayed in the OAO-notitie, with a programme team, a steering committee and working groups.

In relation to the routing of rail freight, the Platform Spoorgoederenvervoer en Leefomgeving (*Platform Rail freight transport and the environment*) of the Overlegorgaan Fysieke Leefomgeving (*consultative body for the physical living environment*)⁸¹ advised the ministry of I&W to make use of the Betuweroute as much as possible and to incentivise operators to do so.⁸² The Dutch government has taken over this advice in its recent policy document ‘Future outlook for rail freight transport’.

⁷⁷ ProRail (2022). Goederenroutering Noordoost Europa (GNOE). Probleemverkenning.

⁷⁸ According to the Port of Amsterdam: <https://www.portofamsterdam.com/nl/business/bereikbaarheid/spoorgoederenvervoer>

⁷⁹ See e.g.: <https://regiostedendriehoek.nl/project/spoorgoederen-gnoe-robuuste-oplossing-nodig/>; <https://8rhk.nl/achterhoek-aan-ministerie-onderzoek-noordtak-staat-mijlenver-van-nieuwe-bestuurscultuur/>

⁸⁰ Port of Amsterdam (2024).

⁸¹

<https://www.overlegorgaanfysiekeleefomgeving.nl/actuele+projecten/actuele+projecten+overzicht/platf ormspoorgoederenvervoerenleefomgeving/default.aspx>

⁸² Overlegorgaan Fysieke Leefomgeving (2025). Spoorgoederenvervoer en Leefomgeving.

Figure 9: Five options investigated in GNOE, source: Appm (2022)

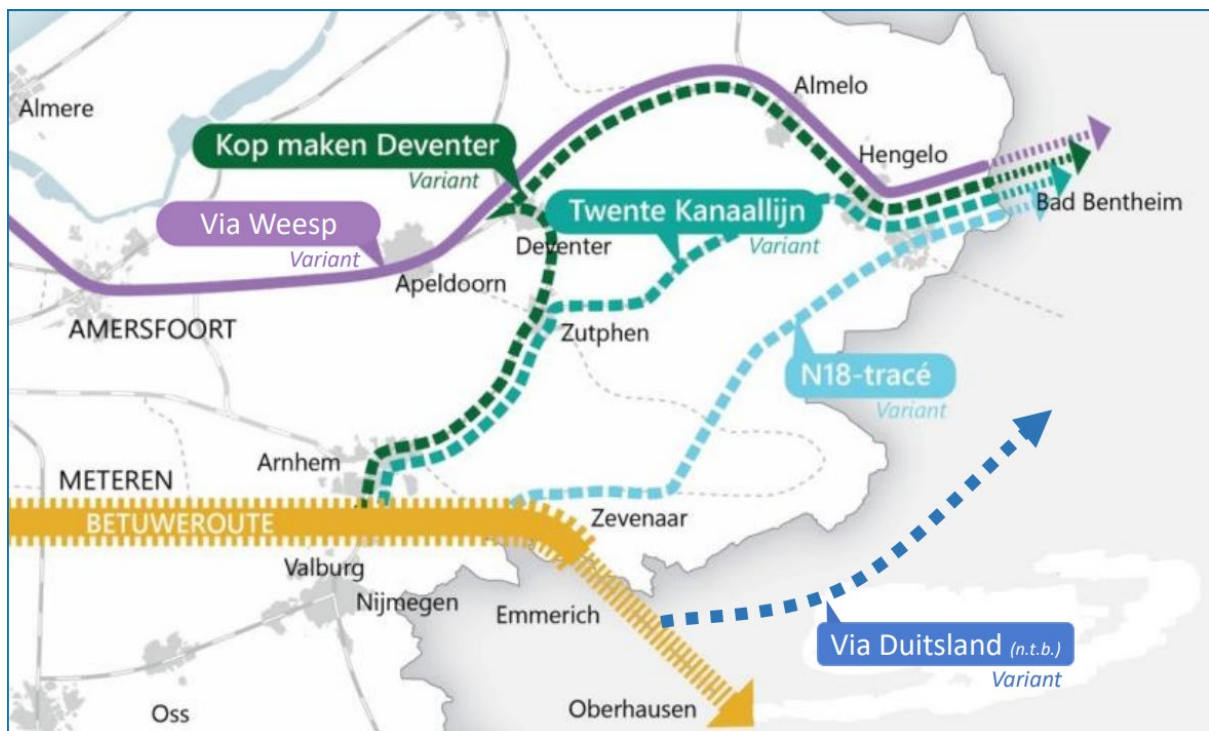


Figure 10: the passenger and freight corridors to Germany, source: ProRail, <https://www.prorail.nl/projecten/meer-ruimte-goederentreinen-betuwroute-zevenaar-oberhausen>



2.3.2 Challenges for freight rail transport

The latest findings of the European Court of Auditors: TEN-T money goes to a few big projects

The European Court of Auditors has published at the beginning of 2026 a report on the situation of investments in the framework of the TEN-T network.⁸³ The European Court of Auditors concludes that since the publication of its 2020 special report, the combined cost of the eight flagship projects it reported on has further increased. This has been mainly driven by significant cost increases for two, while the other six flagships contributed to a limited extent to the total increase (costs increased for two TFIs and decreased for four). The Court of Auditors observed additional delays in the implementation of five TFIs. Given the fact the TFIs are key transport links, this implies that the 2030 deadline for the completion of the EU core network will not be met. Nevertheless, it shows that if flagship projects are accepted, the investments from the side of the European Union can be massive.

Figure 11: European Court of Auditors Overview of the cost developments for each ‘transport flagship infrastructures’ (in million euros), source: European Court of Auditors (2026)

Transport Flagship Infrastructure	Special report 10/2020		Status in November 2025		
	Original estimate (in 2019 values) (a) ¹	Latest estimate (in 2019 values) (b)	Revised estimate (in 2019 values) (c)	% increase compared to SR 10/2020 estimate (c/b - 1)	% increase compared to original estimate (c/a - 1)
Rail Baltica ²	4 648	7 000	18 189	+ 160 %	+ 291 %
Lyon-Turin rail link	5 203	9 630	11 828	+ 23 %	+ 127 %
Brenner Base Tunnel	5 972	8 492	8 373	- 1 %	+ 40 %
Fehmarn Belt fixed link ³	5 016	7 711	7 630	- 1 %	+ 52 %
Basque Y	4 675	6 500	6 888	+ 6 %	+ 47 %
Canal Seine Nord Europe	1 662	4 969	5 400	+ 9 %	+ 225 %
A1 motorway	7 244	7 324	6 410	- 12 %	- 11 %
E59 railway line ⁴	2 113	2 160	1 737	- 20 %	- 18 %
Total	36 533	53 786	66 455	--	--
Total increase				+ 24 %	+ 82 %

Notes:

All cost figures have been reindexed at 2019 values using the year-appropriate price deflator from the Commission's [AMECO database](#).

¹ The original estimate is the earliest existing one for each TFI, which can correspond to a different scope or level of maturity of its design. As an example, the Lyon-Turin rail link was initially envisaged as a single-tube tunnel and afterwards designed as a two-tube tunnel; similarly, the estimate presented for the Canal Seine Nord Europe was identified before feasibility studies were conducted.

² The revised estimate refers to the completion of the entire TFI by 2030. The project has since been split into phases ([Box 1](#)).

³ The estimate was not revised by the project promoter since our 2020 special report. The different new value reflects only the indexation.

⁴ Costs excluding the Świnoujście-Szczecin section as in our 2020 special report.

Source: Commission, national authorities, and project promoters.

The Court expects that the TEN-T rail freight requirements will probably not be fulfilled by 2030. Meaning that requirements as electrification, at least 22.5 tonne axle load,

⁸³ ECA (2026). EU transport infrastructure. Special Report 02/2026. <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications/SR-2026-02>.

minimum speed of 100km/h, at least 740m train length, 1435mm track gauge and the use of ERTMS will not be implemented entirely on the investigated infrastructural works, including connecting infrastructure.

This latest report of the Court of Auditors (ECA) does not stand alone. The completion of TEN-T rail corridors and the implementation of TEN-T requirements, such as ERTMS is costly and facing delays. Letta (2024) warned that ERTMS is deployed on only a fraction of the Core TEN-T Network and that the investment needs associated with realizing the TEN-T core network by 2030 are estimated at around €500 billion, with a significant portion still lacking sufficient financial resources. The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) should go beyond its current structure and objectives.⁸⁴ The ECA also issued a report on EU military mobility⁸⁵, stating that there is a 94 % overlap between the EU military mobility network and the TEN-T network (combined average for all modes), meaning that transport infrastructure on the TEN-T network would directly improve military mobility. However, the EU funding for military mobility as well as CEF has been exhausted.⁸⁶ There is still strong fragmentation, limiting military mobility. In this respect, all screened documents recommend a stronger focus on dual-use investments, benefiting both military mobility and freight.

For the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the Commission proposed €81.4 billion for CEF, including €22.9 billion euros for transport, €17.6 billion for military mobility and €29.9 billion for energy. Military mobility projects profit from a tenfold increase in budget compared to the previous period.⁸⁷ With dual-use in mind, transport totally has a budget of €51.5 billion. The dialogue between the Council and European Parliament will start soon.⁸⁸

Tension with passenger rail

Another tension mentioned was between passenger and freight rail transport. Indeed, several reports highlight this point as the capacities on rail are limited. The considerations here are the same as with respect to national versus international transport: choices have to be made. The Rli refers to this not as an operational problem, but as a matter of political prioritization. Among others, Draghi mentioned the problem that freight transport suffers from de-prioritization compared to passenger transport, resulting in delays and unreliability. On the other hand, the TEN-T development is very

⁸⁴ Letta (2024). Much more than a Market.

⁸⁵ European Court of Auditors (2025). EU military mobility. Full speed not reached due to design weaknesses and obstacles en route.

⁸⁶ EPC (2024). Military mobility 2.0 revisited: Lessons learnt.

⁸⁷ European Parliament Research Services (2025). Briefing. Connecting Europe Facility 2028-2034.

⁸⁸ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/connecting-europe-facility-2028-2034-moves-forward-2025-12-16_en

much focused on freight transport. Often existing cross-border rail connections are first used for freight transport and later (or not) applied for passenger transport as well.

In terms of political attention in the Netherlands, both passenger and freight rail transport are dealt with separate strategies. Our research has shown that the tension between passenger and rail infrastructure is not that significant in Amsterdam. In our talks with representatives of the port of Amsterdam, interviewees indicated no major operational tensions within Amsterdam or with the rest of the Netherlands. Instead, reference was made to the joint challenges of freight and passenger rail.

Indeed, passenger and freight rail transport face common obstacles when it comes to the patchwork of legal, administrative, operational and technical requirements to cross-border rail transport. In this light, they have joint interests in for instance the development of ERTMS, electrification of the entire TEN-T corridors and infrastructural investments. Also, both means benefit from better coordination across borders and along corridors. In this respect, it is certainly possible for the Municipality to bundle priorities and lobbying objectives.

A general concern in the field of freight rail transport is public opinion. In general, grounded or not, the broader public is not always in favour of freight rail transport projects due to concerns about safety and noise.

Common obstacles

Challenges identified for operators and infrastructure managers under passenger transport also apply to freight. Also, for freight transport, operators face problems related to interoperability, legal differences and financing. An example is the pricing of rail usage and fees for holding yards. Particularly the latest appear to be relatively expensive compared to the fees across the border. In fact, often road is still more attractive in terms of costs than rail to transport operators and therefore according to the Rail freight Platform declining.⁸⁹

2.4 Out of the Box: the relevance of bus

Compared to rail, buses are very flexible and low in costs. After the opening of the international bus market, there is an exponential growth of international bus routes across Europe. In Amsterdam, the direct international connections via bus are significantly higher than rail. The offer of night buses is also greater than night trains. In terms of pricing, bus tickets are often competitive to flights and often cheaper than rail (although depending on the route). Interestingly, different from the rail sector, the

⁸⁹ Overlegorgaan Fysieke Leefomgeving (2025).

Municipality of Amsterdam has more competences to influence the attractiveness of international bus travel. Therefore, there should be more attention to the topic.⁹⁰ Flixbus emerged in 2013 as a competitor to long-distance coach companies like Eurolines and Megabus. As the biggest player on the market in Europe Flixbus has today an extensive network with over 400,000 daily connections to over 3,000 destinations in 35 European countries.⁹¹ From Amsterdam, Flixbus offers many direct relations to international destinations where no direct (day) train connections are offered, as for instance Copenhagen, Hamburg, Dortmund, Nürnberg, Zürich, Lyon, Vienna, Leeds, Prague, Zagreb, Bucharest, Budapest, Warsaw, Bremen, Gdansk, Bialystok. In general, the Flixbuses end or start from Amsterdam Sloterdijk. When passing through the Netherlands, Maastricht and Eindhoven are popular Dutch destinations. Interestingly enough, the rapid growth of cross-border and international bus relations was triggered by deregulation legislation without major strategic planning of national governments or the EU. International bus connections are also very often not part of national or European mobility strategies.

Nevertheless, bus is performing well in terms of pricing, connectivity and climate impact. KiM therefore concludes that it could benefit sustaining international travels, for distances up to 500km or to 1000km during the night. However, the international bus passenger is similar to the ones travelling by international train. KiM estimates that there are annually 3,2 to 3,6 million travellers' buses to and from the Netherlands but does not expect that a significant share of air passengers will move to the bus. Instead, if they will choose other modes of transport, it will more likely be the train or car, especially the professional passenger.

Thus, while the international bus has the potential to play a greater role in the international travels to destinations within 500km, certain preconditions have to be met. First, there is a negative perception of international buses, especially concerning comfort and travel time. Also, the bus stops are weakly designed for international buses, in terms of facilities as toilets, waiting areas and safety. Therefore, KiM calls upon policymakers to improve the image of international buses through improving bus stops, stimulating the development of international buses and communication campaigns. In regional cross-border settings, the buses are seen as an option to connect national rail systems across borders, when well-coordinated.⁹²

⁹⁰ KiM (2025); Rli (2020); Buck Consultants International (2025)

⁹¹ See: <https://www.flixbus.com/service/european-services>.

⁹² Ministry of I&W (2024). Situatieschets Toekomstbeeld Openbaar Vervoer 2040.

2.5 Summary of recent policy developments

Annex A.6 provides an overview of several policy documents of the Dutch government, reflecting on both freight and passenger rail. These documents are summarised in the Annex. Freight and passenger rail are generally separately dealt with in Dutch policy documents. However, it is often emphasised that the governmental approach is an integral one, meaning that both passenger and freight transport is taking place on the ‘mixed rail network’ resulting a need for an integrated mobility system. Due to the caretaker status of the present government, it is up to the next government to make decisions regarding ambitions and measures on international rail. Nevertheless, the priorities regarding both freight and passenger rail are to invest in existing rail, more efficient use of existing rail capacity, to concentrate on dual-use (military mobility and freight transport) and implementing an integral approach (freight and passenger transport).

Regarding the choices for the next government, this is a summary on what is currently done and what could be done, as identified by the Ministry of I&W in ‘Future outlook for rail freight transport’:

Table 5: Overview of measures adopted and proposed in 'Future outlook for rail transport'

Priority	What is done:	What could be done:
A reliable rail freight network	• In 2024, the basic standards for railways are adopted, meaning that is chosen for maintenance of existing rail network • Attention for port-rail: mainly regarding Rotterdam • Improvement Zee-Zevenaar: programme continued until the end of 2026 • Vision public transport 2040: general discussion on maintenance and improvements	• Introduce KPI, by formulating indicators measuring the performance of freight transport • Regular and structured consultations between ProRail, transport companies and stakeholders • Improve bilateral cooperation, with consultation between ProRail and other infrastructure managers

Smooth traffic flow on corridors	• Execution of projects as ‘Derde Spoor’ in Germany and ‘Boog van Meteren’ • Implementation of TEN-T, for freight especially allowing 740 meters long trains, electrification and implementation ERTMS. The first priority is North Sea Rhine Mediterranean and the North Sea Baltic corridors (by 2030) and then the extended core by 2040 and the rest by 2050 • Monitor usage fee system, to ensure that rail is competitive to road • Rules on capacity allocation: a revision aims to give more room for freight transport • International consultation, where the Netherlands is represented in European and international consortia. The focus is on TEN-T, the European rail freight corridors, capacity managements, CEF funds and military mobility. Bilaterally the focus is Germany, Belgium/Luxembourg, Switzerland/Italy, Poland and France. • Stimulate European innovation	• Implementing Vision on public transport 2040 and the network investments. The priorities are facilitating 740 meters trains on the main corridors, make a decision about GNOE and improving the capacity of Sophiatunnel. • Accelerate implementation of 740 meters trains • Improve affordability, in relation to road • Dual-use investments, mainly for military ports • Intensify bilateral cooperation, coordinate investments and improve the flows at the border sections • Routes with border section Oldenzaal towards East-Europe need particular attention, as both quantity and quality is lacking. Much is dependent on the GNOE report, expected in 2026.
Efficient settlement first and last mile	• Capacity increasing projects • Implementation 740 meter trains • Reduce fees for holding yards, by providing a subsidy. Still costs are high compared to other states • Last mile pilots • Optimisation Kijfhoek, the biggest emplacement of the Netherlands • Improve data exchange	• Expand 740m potential, such as emplacements Botlek, Pernis and Tilburg • Better usage capacities • Digitalise freight transport • Reduce fees even more, through subsidies and the financial frameworks for ProRail.
Optimal usage Betuweroute	• Construction of ‘Derde Spoor’ • Construction of ‘Boog van Meteren’ • Investigation of GNOE • Investigation pricing options, to make the Betuweroute more attractive to relocate to from the Brabantroute and Bentheimroute.	• Pilots pricing options • Improving the routes towards the Betuweroute • Investigation of licencing as instrument to use the Betuweroute

Also, for passenger transport, it has been identified what scenarios could guide the future policy decisions. Four different scenarios are highlighted in the analysis of the Ministry of I&W:

Table 6: Ambition scenarios for next government, source: Ministry of I&W (2025)

Scenario	Core elements
Development existing corridors	• The three main corridors are maintained; the focus is efficiency. Trains running faster, more often and longer, with an increase in the offer of night trains. • Policies mainly aim at improving existing infrastructure and ticketing and customer experience. The connectivity improves, without major scale changes. • Cooperation with neighbouring states and market regulation results in a better usage of capacities and clarity for operators. • The modal shift from air and car to rail is limited, while rail is a qualitative alternative. • Important developments: increase the frequencies to Brussel/London/Paris to four HSR-trains per hour, including the realisation of Amsterdam-South and ERTMS; more and longer trains to Germany
European network HSR-	• Driven by climate-neutral international transport, tripling the amount of international rail passengers. • Significant investments in infrastructures, through connections to German and French HSR, the expansion of HSL-Zuid and a central international railhub at Amsterdam Zuid/Schiphol. • New HSR from Utrecht and Eindhoven to Germany, higher frequencies to London and Paris, investments in connecting infrastructure. • Professional ticketing, multimodal possibilities. • Active cooperation with neighbouring states. • Active policy to promote the modal shift.
Daily urban systems in border regions	• Focus on border regions growing to strong agglomerations, intensively cooperating with neighbouring regions. • Improvement of regional connections Terneuzen-Gent, Roosendaal-Antwerpen, Heerlen-Aken, Venlo-Düsseldorf and Enschede-Münster. • Improvement of connections between cross-border regional trains and national networks. • Investments are limited, but structural exploitation subsidies might be necessary. • Ticketing has to be made easy, modal shift from car to rail.
The border region as regional hubs	• As an answer to the housing challenges mainly in the Randstad: the focus is on the border regions of the country. • This requires that both the connection between border regions and the Randstad and across the border with cities and HSR-networks should be improved.

It is interesting that in the analysis of the ministry, international rail connections between capitals are seen separately from cross-border regional connections, despite research also illustrates the possibilities of better coordinating and linking the two (e.g. through extending national IC-trains across the border or use cross-border regional connections to bridge national HSR-hubs).

In the same Annex A of this report, also some plans of Belgium and Germany are presented. It is obvious that the planning of the German *Deutschlandtakt* has direct consequences on the quality and frequency of international trains to and from the Netherlands. Among others: higher frequency Amsterdam-Cologne (hourly service), faster connection Amsterdam-Berlin (reduce travel time by an hour) and prolong connection Amsterdam-Frankfurt to Stuttgart. Belgium aims at expanding their international rail connections, making Brussels an important hub and connecting to HSR-hubs across the border.

Priorities for strengthening the High-Speed rail network at the European Level

At European level, the European Commission announced to present a Single Digital Booking and Ticketing Regulation and amended Multimodal Digital Mobility Services proposals in early 2026. Also, the post-2027 CEF budgets have been published. Furthermore, the Commission published on 5 November 2025 its Communication on Connecting Europe through High-Speed Rail.⁹³ It aims at being a roadmap to achieve the vision of a well-functioning and faster high-speed rail network by 2040. The measures are based on four pillars defined by the European Commission:

Table 7: Actions proposed by the Commission in the Communication on HSR of 5 November 2025

Pillar I - The EU high-speed rail network – need for acceleration and harmonisation
The Commission will: ➤ by mid-2026, based on a consultation process led by the European coordinators, adopt the European transport corridor work plans, identifying key cross-border and national infrastructure bottlenecks on the TEN-T rail network and proposing measures and recommendations for their timely and coordinated removal; ➤ by 2027, set binding timelines in the Corridor Implementing Decisions for eliminating key cross-border and national infrastructure bottlenecks for each European transport corridor, identifying sections to be developed for very high speeds along these corridors; ➤ in 2026, review the implementation of the Streamlining Directive to improve its effectiveness in speeding up cross-border permitting and procurement;

⁹³ COM(2025) 903 final.

- in 2026, coordinate, on the basis of a strategic dialogue, a financing strategy for the rollout of the high-speed rail network, which could be supported by the EU budget, national and private funding, and stakeholders through a ‘high-speed rail deal’;
- **in 2026, prioritise high-speed rail projects in the 2026 CEF reflow call;**
- as of 2026, together with the EIB, facilitate access to advisory services for project promoters and in support of Member States’ HSR investment plans;
- from 2026, use EU funding to boost the deployment of climate resilience measures and reduce the environmental impact of transport infrastructure construction, and promote green public procurement best practices;
- as of 2025, support Member States in the implementation of the Commission Notice on innovative technologies and forms of renewable energy deployment and the preparation of their noise action plans;
- by 2028, develop harmonised life-cycle assessment and climate resilience methodologies for transport infrastructure projects.

TEN-T coordinators will:

- **by mid-2026, draw up dedicated high-speed rail chapters in their corridor work plans, focusing on the completion of the cross-border high-speed rail network.**

Member States are invited to:

- support the proposed CEF Regulation 2028-2034, with the associated funding envelope;
- go beyond the minimum speed requirements set out in the TEN-T Regulation and aim for higher design speeds;
- fully use the flexibilities linked to permitting under the Streamlining Directive;
- prioritise cross-border projects to accelerate high-speed rail projects.

Pillar II - An attractive and competitive regulatory framework for rail services

The Commission will:

- **as of 2026, facilitate the purchase and leasing of rolling stock (in compliance with EU State aid rules) through innovative financial instruments;**
- enforce and, in 2026, assess the rules on access to service facilities to review them subsequently;
- **in 2026, propose legislation on ticketing and improved passenger rights when travelling with different transport companies;**
- **by 2026, identify investment priorities in 40 major airports for better air-to-rail connectivity and put in place multimodal passenger hubs for improved integration with public transport, cycling and shared mobility.**

Member States are invited to:

- provide infrastructure managers with sufficient and stable funding, enabling them to lower track access charges for certain market segments;
- promote a level playing field across different modes of transport, especially when setting VAT rates.

Pillar III - A competitive, harmonised and innovative EU rail supply industry

The Commission will:

- **in 2026, adopt an ambitious new ERTMS European deployment plan;**
- set out a single set of requirements for high-speed trainsets;
- in 2026, launch a dedicated Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking call to co-create the next generation of European harmonised high-speed rolling stock with multi-network capability for efficient and uninterrupted train operations across networks;
- **in 2026, propose revised legislation on common training and single certification for train drivers of EU high-speed trains and other rail services;**
- in 2027, propose legislation on reselling and decommissioning rolling stock.

Member States are invited to:

- complete the roll-out of ERTMS on all remaining sections of the high-speed network and prioritise eliminating other technical differences between high-speed lines and access routes to ensure efficient and uninterrupted train operations;
- ensure the efficient use of public funds, in particular EU funds, for infrastructure projects and rolling stock procurement by prioritising standardised railway system solutions and the latest system versions;
 - make use, through their relevant entities as appropriate, of the proposed European Competitiveness Fund and State aid, including Important Projects of Common European Interest to fund the next generation of high-speed rail rolling stock;
- ratify the Luxembourg Protocol to the Cape Town Convention.

The European rail supply industry is invited to:

- anticipate demand and expand production capacity in affordable, harmonised, high-performance products.

Pillar IV - Effective EU governance for high-speed rail

The Commission will:

- by 2026, propose a revised ERA Regulation to strengthen safety, digitalisation and cost-efficiency;
- by 2026, set up a scoreboard to monitor progress on high-speed rail development;
- as of 2026, bring discussions currently within the Commission expert group on the competitiveness of the rail supply industry to the political level;
- **as of 2026, set up roundtable discussions with stakeholders on selected city connections to find solutions for challenges in developing specific corridors, such as technical barriers, availability of service facilities, capacity constraints and track access charges.**

In fact, the Dutch national government and the European Commission have recently provided relevant documents that describe priorities and processes (in the case of the Commission) and policy options (in the case of the Dutch government). For Amsterdam, that means to actively support the priorities and options that match their own objectives and relate their own initiatives and interventions together with national and European network partners on selected elements of the EU and Dutch debate.

3 Conclusions and Discussion

3.1 Conclusions

The analysis dealt with a wide range of aspects. In the conclusion, we will discuss the central questions:

- What are the challenges and opportunities of international rail for Amsterdam? Are there potential dilemmas to be aware of?
- What are the recent and new developments regarding international rail that are important for the positioning of Amsterdam?
- What could be the most important railway connections to and from Amsterdam? Which connections could be prioritised and what is the current situation that could influence the implementation of certain infrastructure and services today and in the future?
- Does the municipality currently have the right network partners? Who are the partners with added value for certain connections, policy choices, investment choices?
- What are relevant projects, sources or funds for Amsterdam?

3.1.1 What are the challenges and opportunities of international rail for Amsterdam?

The analysis already highlighted the several obstacles and developments to international passenger and freight rail transport. Briefly, it concerns among others:

Challenge A (passenger + freight): International rail is complex and technical harmonisation is key

Although the project of the European Single Railway Area was initiated 25 years ago, it is currently still far from complete. While open competition on the rail market had a positive impact on pricing, product development and international connections, rail is still very nationally dominated.

The analysis showed that both for freight and transport rail transport, international journeys are still hampered by a patchwork of national rules, technical standards and administrative requirements. Especially operators are faced with issues regarding interoperability, rolling stock, financing and legal/administrative barriers. Furthermore, new entrants face additional financing uncertainties and challenges to enter national rail markets.

On the other hand, national incumbents, especially NS, have little international appetite due to fear of interruptions on domestic connections and costs. This hampers the development of international rail products. In fact, ProRail warned against a stagnation of the development of international rail products. Also, in relation to rail freight, operators warn against a stagnation of rail freight as it is too complex and expensive compared to other modes of transport.

The first conclusion, on how to promote international rail is therefore to improve the harmonization and coordination of regulations, technical operations and administrative aspects. In this context, the roll-out of the European safety system ERTMS is of great importance. This will benefit both freight and passenger rail transport as well as military mobility, improve interoperability and allows for intensifying the use of rail by trains – as also presented in the position paper of the Port of Amsterdam. Unfortunately, the full implementation of ERTMS is facing delays as described by the European Commission:

“However, a non-harmonised multisystem approach by Member States has led to the cost of ERTMS products doubling in the last five years. The TEN-T legislation requires national signalling systems to be phased out in favour of the ERTMS on the TEN-T network by 2040. A few Member States, including Belgium, Czechia and Denmark, have decided to make the ERTMS the only signalling system in their networks, and Spain, Austria and Poland are investing heavily in deploying radio-based ERTMS. Nevertheless, other Member States are falling behind.”⁹⁴

In this respect, supporting a faster implementation of the ERTMS roll-out in the Netherlands is an essential element if Amsterdam wants to benefit from more international connections.

Opportunity A: European developments with respect to High-Speed Rail (HSR)

ERTMS was recently emphasized by the European Commission in its Communication on HSR, announcing a revision of the European deployment plan for ERTMS, with stricter ERTMS roll-out obligations. Also, the Commission is stimulating cooperation and competition, boosting the development of international rail products. Hence, Amsterdam could support the ambitions of the European Commission within the national and European debate.

Challenge B (passenger): Rail is not passenger-friendly and very national

As shown by recent research, passengers face difficulties in terms of booking and ticketing, making international rail less attractive and not consumer friendly. In addition, train stations and services are not well-equipped to the needs of international rail

⁹⁴ COM(2025) 903 final, p. 16.

passenger. In this respect, the expected legislative proposals of Commission on information, ticketing and booking are relevant prospects. However, already within the existing frameworks important improvements are possible. First, through-tickets, reselling tickets of other operators and exchange of disruption information is already possible within the existing legislative and technical framework. The national incumbents also made agreements to do so. Nevertheless, the NS is lagging behind in its implementation. Amsterdam should lobby for a faster implementation of improvements with respect to information exchange on international journeys and the booking of through tickets.

Opportunity B (passenger): potential improvements by EasyConnect, European legislation on ticketing (SDBTR) and market opening

With the introduction of the OV chipkaart system in the Netherlands, cross-border passengers were faced with new challenges. Most prominently, passengers must have the possibility to open an exit gate at a Dutch station with an international paper ticket. Starting in the cross-border region, the idea of MaaS (Mobility as a Service)-pilot was developed in the form of EasyConnect. This is a digital solution via a router, that streamlines and processes the different fares and data of operators across the border. It can be implemented in any app and currently allows already to check in in Germany and check out in the Netherlands with the apps of a German transport provider (AVV Aachen) and Arriva's Glimble app. Today this possibility is restricted to the Euregio Meuse Rhine from Cologne to the Dutch Province of Limburg and Liège. The solution can be expanded to other operators, covering the whole of the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium. At the moment, possibilities for an extension to NL (including NS and other rail service operators) and BE are actively sought. EasyConnect is also further developed under the umbrella of the Benelux Union. Supporting the roll-out of EasyConnect as a practical cross-border ticketing solutions could be an interesting option for Amsterdam.

The same goes for the new legislative initiatives of the European Commission. At the European level, in early 2026 the Commission will come with proposals for Multimodal Digital Mobility Services (MDMS) and a Single Digital Booking and Ticketing Regulation (SDBTR), focussing on booking and ticketing of multimodal and/or multi-operator journeys, as well as an update of passenger rights. These are legislative proposals, that should be closely followed by Amsterdam and supported if there is the change of improving the situation of passengers with respect to information, booking and liability in case of delays and distortions. Also nationally, this may have implications, as the current debate in the Netherlands refers to the question whether to oblige rail operators to accept the national OV-chipcard as method of payment. In this respect, Amsterdam could advocate solutions that make the purchase of international and cross-border tickets easier and not more complicated. Amsterdam has already put the future EU legislative proposals on its internal list of lobbying priorities.

Based on the notifications at the *Autoriteit Consument & Markt* (ACM), there is an appetite by new entrants for serving Amsterdam internationally. International connections will be more attractive if passengers have easy access to travel information, can easily purchase through tickets via sound booking systems (corresponding to national systems) and are protected by the same consumer rights as in the case of national tickets.

Challenge C (passenger): realising modal shift from air to rail

With the AirRail agenda, national partners in the Netherlands work on the modal shift from short-distance flights from/to Schiphol to rail. There may be multiple challenges, connecting to the ones mentioned above (ticketing, technical, legal etc). However, in terms of infrastructure it is the Schiphol-tunnel, connecting Schiphol Airport with Amsterdam-Zuid that is seen as a bottleneck. With respect to the objectives of the AirRail agenda it is regarded preconditional that international trains stop at Schiphol Airport. In the MIRT-investigation, five alternatives are studied ranging from a separate tunnel for local metros or Bus Rapid Transit. Furthermore, it has been stated that the transit area at Schiphol Airport should be improved, allowing more rail passengers to move across platforms.

As shown by the example of the connection Amsterdam-London/UK, professional travellers still often travel by airplane. There seems also to be a cultural aspect, where for instance inhabitants from the UK prefer flights while French inhabitants generally prefer rail. Substitution of flights are in this respect very much dependent on the perception of the quality of international train travel. Amsterdam could support all initiatives that improve the quality of the travel experience that are in particular relevant for business trips.

Opportunity C (passenger): AirRail Agenda and EU plan HSR

The AirRail Agenda itself is an opportunity, as partners are actively working on the objective of stimulating rail and discouraging flights for short-distances. It clearly has a step-based approach, with first-order destinations with higher success rates, gradually expanding to second-order destinations. As also the air sector and the Ministry themselves are involved, it has higher potentials of making air less attractive compared to rail. Also the recent EU plan on HSR, with implementing actions to be expected in 2026 are an opportunity – as it aims to actively promote rail over air in terms of service, punctuality and pricing.

Opportunity D (passenger + freight): Infrastructural developments in the framework of the GNOE-process and the Lelylijn

Both passenger and freight rail transport can be boosted internationally within the existing infrastructure. A better coordination and use of capacities can improve the current situation. Yet an important infrastructure development in the Netherlands refers to the process of the “Goederencorridor Noordoost Europa” (GNOE). While freight rail transport to Bentheim (DE) is limited from the Port of Amsterdam, the rerouting might be relevant for passenger rail from/to Amsterdam. Three out of the five options discussed explore the use of the Betuweroute, which is dedicated to rail freight. This would provide more capacity on the other rail tracks for passenger transport, mainly connecting Amsterdam/Randstad which could be beneficial for Amsterdam.

Also, the Lelylijn might be an important infrastructural development. First, it may lead to a better spreading of jobs and housing opportunities outside Amsterdam – as envisioned in the Omgevingsvisie 2040. Second, it may be the missing rail link connecting Amsterdam to North-Germany and Copenhagen/Denmark.

These are ongoing processes where Amsterdam can advocate options and investments that have an added value for its connectivity. Finally, the report identified relevant infrastructural works and investments or policies in neighbouring countries, such as *Deutschlandtakt*. In this respect, joining forces with German partners, cities and regions could be an important element if it comes to the overall improvement of infrastructure.

Opportunity E (passenger + freight): new government with policy options

At the end of 2025, the Dutch government have shared a visionary document on international freight rail transport and one on international passenger rail transport. Both provide an overview of policy options and future scenarios to pursue or choose from. The decisions are left to the next government. With the new government formation, this may be an opportunity to take in a position on the policy options and influence the new government.

Opportunity F (passenger): Bus as successful alternative

Amsterdam could use the opportunity of a rapidly expanding sector and include international bus connections into their cross-border passenger rail or mobility strategy. The obvious advantage of bus connections is, that they are not dependent on long-lasting development projects or huge investments. For instance, there are today already many direct night bus connections from Amsterdam to different locations abroad. It is an opportunity that Amsterdam develops a particular strategy or vision vis-à-vis international bus travel: how to exploit the potential of international bus travel and what

are the synergies with national and cross-border train travel. Based on expert-interviews, we conclude that there are important opportunities for Amsterdam. However, up to date due to the lack of coordination and strategy, no effective policies have been developed.

An important regional actor seems to be the VRA, with whom the Municipality should formulate joint priorities and objectives related to the facilitation of international buses. One of those objectives should be the bus stops/bus stations, namely the question where to place these bus stops in Amsterdam (possibly strategically connected to (international train stations) and to make sure the facilities are adequate (e.g. bathroom, wait area etc.)

With respect to some train destinations, it is today already evident that improvements will take decades due to a lack of infrastructure. For these “missing rail links” Amsterdam could be proactive and think about attractive bus services that could play a prominent role with respect to these destinations. It would be interesting to define a combined night train/night bus strategy with respect to the above-mentioned destinations that are so far not served by direct train connections. It is obvious that a company as Flixbus could play a major role with respect to destinations where the lack of rail infrastructure is a major problem. In addition, there are other innovative players who want to bring the attractiveness of night buses closer to a night train experience. Outside Europe, comfortable night buses are already established. Today, for instance the Swiss company Twiliner started with an interesting concept of comfortable sleeper night buses, inter alia Zurich-Basel-Brussels-Amsterdam in the fall of 2025.⁹⁵

In many cities, municipalities do not show much interest in investing in proper infrastructure to make the travel experience more comfortable. In this respect, the estimation is that Amsterdam can make a big difference with comparable little investments in attractive bus station facilities.

3.1.2 Are there potential dilemmas to be aware of?

During the discussion with the Municipality of Amsterdam, attention was drawn to possible dilemmas, trade-offs and developments that are foreseen. In the following, we will touch upon the most relevant ones briefly.

Tension between national and international rail

The first tension or dilemma is between national and international rail priorities and performances. In many reports and documents, it was indeed mentioned that ‘not everything is possible on rail’, thus choices have to be made. In general, traditionally all

⁹⁵ <https://twiliner.com/faq/>

railways in Europe are very much national focused and thus limit transnational rail mobility. Indeed, rail has limited capacities serving different needs on regional, national and transnational scale. When investing in infrastructure there may be a trade-off between national and international priorities or national decisions can hamper cross-border ambitions. An example is the recent discussion on the budget for the development of the Lelylijn versus the development of the Nedersaksenlijn. Where the Lelylijn falls under a TEN-T corridor and may be part of an improved connection between Amsterdam and the north-east of Germany as well as Copenhagen, the Nedersaksenlijn is entirely serving national/regional needs. In the end, the decision was made first to invest in the Nedersaksenlijn and not in the Lelylijn.

Also, in the operation of services, this tension is vivid. National stakeholders have shown that they prioritize domestic traffic over international traffic. When the decision was made to introduce a Randstad-metro-model by having one train every 15 minutes, running between the cities of the Randstad, this has implications for the availability of slots for cross-border trains. This may negatively affect the quality of currently running cross-border rail connections, e.g. in case of delays (across the border). Today, passengers of night train connections (Vienna-Amsterdam) already experience these tensions. According to recent experiences, the arrival of night trains is very unreliable and often heavily delayed. This indicates that today the willingness to adapt the operation in favour of cross-border rail routes is limited. There is for instance a strong focus on the punctuality of national trains.

However, the screening showed that this type of conflicting interests does not always have to be the case. In this regard the Rli for instance advises to coordinate regional, national and international rail transport, by giving international trains a more prominent role in the national and regional rail schedule. As already mentioned, more intelligent interventions can be also made by combining or extending certain national routes (for example IC trains) across borders, in particular to international hubs across the border. There is certainly a big lobbying effort needed to change the strategy of the NS that is today very much focused on the national arena. Extending existing IC routes across the border is so far not part of their programme, nor did the national government support this idea so far.

Tension between passenger and freight rail transport

Another tension mentioned was between passenger and freight rail transport. Indeed, several reports highlight this point as the capacities on rail are limited. The considerations here are the same as with respect to national versus international transport: choices have to be made. The Rli refers to this not as an operational problem, but a matter of political prioritization. Among others, Draghi mentioned the problem that

freight transport suffers from de-prioritization compared to passenger transport, resulting in delays and unreliability. On the other hand, the TEN-T development is strongly concentrated on freight transport preferred over passenger transport. Often existing cross-border rail connections are first used for freight transport and later (or not) applied for passenger transport as well. In terms of political attention in the Netherlands, both passenger and freight rail transport are dealt with own strategies. In the case of the Municipality Amsterdam, the infrastructural needs for the corridor connected to the port of Amsterdam are also taken into account. Our research has shown that the tension between passenger and rail infrastructure is not that significant in Amsterdam. In the talks with the port of Amsterdam, interviewees indicated no major operational tensions in the case of Amsterdam or with the rest of the Netherlands. Instead, reference was made to the joint challenges of freight and passenger rail.

Indeed, passenger and freight rail transport face common obstacles when it comes to the patchwork of legal, administrative, operational and technical requirements to cross-border rail transport. In this light, they have joint interests in for instance the development of ERTMS, electrification of the entire TEN-T corridors and infrastructural investments. Also, both benefit from better coordination across borders and along corridors. In this respect, it is certainly possible for the Municipality to bundle priorities and lobbying objectives.

A general concern in the field of freight rail transport is public opinion. In general, grounded or not, the broader public is not always in favor of freight rail transport projects due to concerns about safety and noise.

Tension between transnational and cross-border rail transport

Finally, there is a tension between transnational rail transport and cross-border connections. Transnational connections are very often high-speed rail and/or direct connections with only a few stops connecting bigger cities and capitals. Whereas cross-border rail is of a more regional and local character, with the objective to better connect places in a cross-border territory. It is obvious that TEN-T corridors are very much focused on transnational connections. Based on the literature review, so far TEN-T has not been supporting the development of cross-border connections at a more regional level. Therefore, investments under the framework of TEN-T have benefited the capital regions most, who already demonstrated a high level of accessibility. This also shows a certain cross-border paradox: the development of high-speed rail and direct transnational connections between capitals has in some cases led to disadvantages for cross-border connections. This is described as the ‘tunnel effect’, where transnational routes between capitals and national centres pass the (border) regions, but do not stop there. For example, the development of the North-west Europe HSR was found to be supporting the

connection between major metropolitan areas, but not the intermediate and border towns.

As funding is often linked to TEN-T corridors, regional cross-border connections still face a lack of funding for the improvement of existing or the building of missing infrastructure. Studies have shown that there is a general lack of European Funds for cross-border ‘missing links’.⁹⁶ In addition, cross-border connections are often weakly integrated in domestic services, e.g. in terms of timetables, frequencies, ticketing, fares, operating times and stops.

Nevertheless, cross-border and transnational appear not to be opponents from each other by definition, especially not for the Netherlands where HSR is less relevant compared to other countries. An important step would be to combine the so far separated arenas. Transnational needs can be facilitated through making smart use of cross-border connections (e.g. the Drielandentrein in combination with the Intercity from/to Amsterdam for connections to Aachen and Liège, or the Wunderline from Groningen to Bremen). Cross-border connections can also be better integrated into a national timetable, improving reliability and travel times.

Development: military mobility

Military mobility has the political attention and is planned to have a substantive part in the EU’s next budget. As is the case of international rail in general, also military mobility by rail is found to be complex and hampered by the fragmentation across the EU. The EU funding for military mobility was insufficient in the current period but as proposed by the European Commission will be substantive under the next budget period. While there may be the concern that this shifts the attention away from freight and passenger rail transport, this must be not the case. It was found that there is 94% overlap between the EU military mobility network and the TEN-T network. Thus, infrastructural improvements may benefit both means. This is also made explicit as the infrastructural improvements should be of *dual-use*, that it is compatible for both military mobility and freight/passenger transport.

The priorities in corridors may differ though, as for military mobility the Baltic corridor is of most relevance.

⁹⁶ DG Regio (2028): Comprehensive analysis of the existing cross-border rail transport connections and missing links on the internal EU borders Final report. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/studies/cb_rail_connections_en.pdf.

Summary of tensions

Some of the possible objectives are not always supplementing each other. There are certain tensions between policy goals:

1. In Amsterdam, improving passenger rail infrastructure is intended to stimulate international rail travel and the number of rail passengers with Amsterdam as the destination. With respect to the phenomenon of overtourism, the simultaneous substitution of less sustainable modes of transport (car/flights) is an essential element.
2. The increase in both passenger and freight rail transport are two justified goals with respect to changing the modal split and reducing carbon emissions, however due to limited capacities of infrastructure choices between the two must be made at some point. However, currently there is still enough capacity to expand both.
3. There are also tensions between regional, national, transnational and European priorities. A certain European corridor asks for investments that are not always the favourite investments from a regional perspective.
4. The European dimension of ports, military mobility, spatial implications of trans-European infrastructure do also not always entirely fit into regional or even national developments,
5. And there is always the tension between competition and supplementation between modes of transport.

3.1.3 What are the recent and new developments regarding international rail that are important for the positioning of Amsterdam?

As already mentioned, the infrastructure debate related to GNOE and the Lelylijn may be relevant developments for Amsterdam. Currently, Amsterdam is not very much involved in these governance structures.

In terms of services, policy and legislation, multiple relevant developments are identified. First, at the European level legislation for SDBTR and MDMS will be proposed in 2026. Also, several actions, resulting from the communication on HSR, will be proposed, such as an amendment to the TEN-T regulations for a faster rollout of ERTMS.

On national level, the Dutch government has identified other policy options, possible scenarios and ambitions, as a basis for the next government to make decisions on. With the installation of a new government, this provides momentum for lobbying.

3.1.4 What could be the most important railway connections to and from Amsterdam? Which connections could be prioritised and what is the current situation that could influence the implementation of certain infrastructure and services today and in the future?

Corridor freight

The Port of Amsterdam is connected to the North Sea – Baltic Corridor and the North Sea – Rhine – Mediterranean Corridor. The latter appears to be of main importance in terms of freight rail travel. In general, Northeast-Europe and North-Italy are best to be connected by rail as inland waterways are no (adequate) option. With military mobility, it is expected that mobility and infrastructural investments are mainly concentrated on the North Sea – Baltic Corridor. As shown, rail freight is in general still modest (about 5%) in the Netherlands, mainly due to the location in the delta. However, as part of the EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, the general rail freight traffic should increase by 50% in 2030 and double by 2050. In general, Germany is the most important country of origin and destination for the Netherlands (63% in 2022), followed by Italy (15% in 2022). It is expected that rail freight will mainly increase towards Northeast-Germany, Poland and Czech Republic, but the share of rail in the modal split will remain small.

As discussed, GNOE is of relevance, especially with increasing flows towards Northeast-Germany, but appears to be less decisive for rail freight from/to Amsterdam. GNOE aims at improving the connection crossing the border at Bentheim, where expectingly less than 3 trains per day cross the border departing from / arriving at Amsterdam. Depending on the chosen route, GNOE may result in more capacity for passenger rail to and from Amsterdam/Randstad.

Corridor passengers

Currently, Amsterdam is served by 53 international trains and 2 night trains (and 1 night train 3 times per week). Especially the capital cities in Belgium and Paris are relatively well served. When analysing the major corridors for Amsterdam, it very much depends on the type of passenger and the methodology used for analysing destinations.

ProRail analysed the connectiveness to major destinations according to the Globalization and World Cities-index (GaWC), that indicates the socio-economic importance of destinations, and found that the UK and the south-east corridor towards Cologne and Frankfurt were insufficiently connected. About 14% of the GaWC-destinations is currently reachable within 4-6 hours by rail. This could be 28% directly and 50% with 1 change within 6-8 hours. ProRail namely indicates that international passenger rail can be increased on all three main corridors.

Connection	via	To
South-West HSL Zuid	via Amsterdam, Schiphol (excluding London), Rotterdam and Breda (only IC/EC)	Antwerp, Brussels, Paris Nord & Roissy Charles de Gaulle, Strasbourg, Genève, Lyon, Marseille and Barcelona, and via London St. Pancras to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Edinburgh
South-East Zevenaar	via Schiphol (potentially), Amsterdam, Utrecht and Arnhem	Duisburg, Düsseldorf, Köln, Frankfurt, Mannheim, Stuttgart, Nürnberg and München, Basel, Zürich, Vienna, Innsbruck, Milan, Rome
North-East Hengelo	via Schiphol (potentially), Amsterdam, Amersfoort, Deventer and Hengelo	Osnabrück, Hannover, Hamburg and Berlin to Copenhagen, Warszawa and Praha

Within the AirRail Agenda, first order destinations are London, Paris, Brussels, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Berlin and second order destinations include destinations that do not have a direct rail connection (yet), such as Bremen and Hamburg, and destinations exceeding a travel time of 4,5 hours or requiring a change, such as Lyon, Strasbourg, Bordeaux, Marseille, Zürich, Copenhagen and Manchester.

A Greenpeace study investigated the connections between major capitals, comparing rail to flight options. For Amsterdam, it found that important substitution could take place for Barcelona, Copenhagen, Milan, Manchester, Hamburg and Luxembourg. For night trains, this could be Madrid, Stockholm, Oslo and Rome.

3.1.5 Does the municipality currently have the right network partners? Who are the partners with added value for certain connections, policy choices, investment choices?

The networks of the two relevant TEN-T corridors

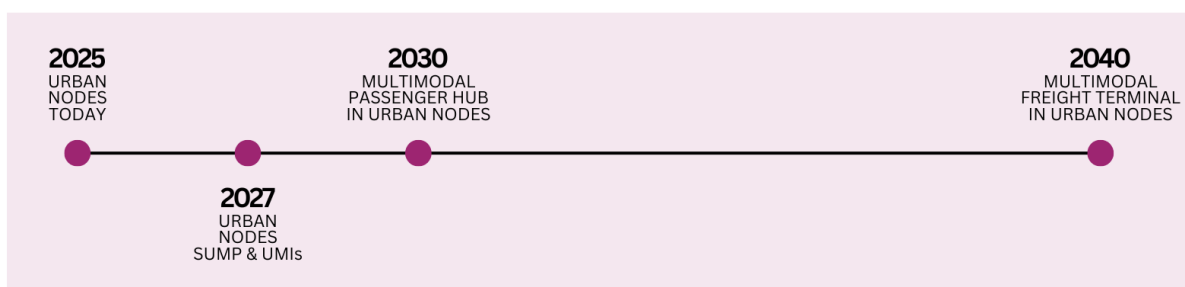
As described in detail, there are European coordinators nominated for the TEN-T corridors who are developing work programmes, formulating priorities and organising events. The coordinators chair consultative fora which bring together Member States, regions, cities, infrastructure managers of all transport modes, including ports, airports and terminals. The discussions during the forum meetings can include a variety of topics, such as modal integration, interoperability, the coordinated development of infrastructure in cross-border sections, urban nodes, or the greening of transport. The coordinators usually convene the forum twice per year. So far, Amsterdam's engagement

in the framework of the two relevant corridors (North Sea/Baltic, North Sea – Rhine – Mediterranean) is not that intensive. It could be of great value to be better involved in the process and invest capacities to advocate priorities with an added value for Amsterdam with network partners from the national and European level (Polis, Eurocities, etc.).

Urban Nodes and TEN-T

Amsterdam is an urban node under the TEN-T regulation, one of the 431 cities in total. In the Netherlands, there are in total 26 urban nodes. This brings certain requirement, such as a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) by 2027 and multimodal hubs for passengers (2030) and freight (2040).

Figure 12: Timeline TEN-T obligations to Urban Nodes, source: Polis



Amsterdam is involved in Polis and EUROCITIES. Both were found to be very relevant networks when it comes to TEN-T and the corridors. For instance, press releases and lobby activities were taken up in the recent Letter to the Parliament of the Dutch government and relevant projects are developed.

Overlegorgaan Fysieke Leefomgeving – Platform Spoorgoederenvervoer en Leefomgeving / GNOE governance bodies

The *Overlegorgaan Fysieke Leefomgeving* is a consultative body to the Dutch government, bringing together partners from the government, citizens, enterprises and societal organisations to discuss about the living environment. Under its umbrella, a Platform on rail freight transport and the living environment was established. The Platform issued an advice to the Dutch government in 2025, that was included in its latest strategy on rail freight transport. The members of the platform are 4 members of residents' organisations; 4 members of rail transport operators, shippers and seaports; 1 member of ProRail; 4 persons from local authorities in the provinces of Overijssel, Gelderland and Brabant and from the municipalities of Venlo and Dordrecht; 4 persons from the national government from the Ministries of Infrastructure and Water Management, Housing and Spatial Planning, and Economic Affairs/Climate and Green Growth.

As their advice was integrally included in the latest policy documents, the platform appears of relevance. Amsterdam so far is not represented hence it may be relevant to engage with the platform.

The same is true for the GNOE, which has a detailed governance body with a programme team, a steering committee and working groups. Members of the programme team are representatives of:

- The Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management
- The eastern Netherlands, including four sub-regions* (Cleantech Region, Arnhem-Nijmegen Region, Achterhoek Region, Twente Region)
- The Randstad conurbation
- Residents'/interest groups
- Freight transport
- Ports/chemical clusters
- Passenger transport
- ProRail

It could be certainly beneficial to closely monitor the work or to be engaged in these networks, as the choice of rerouting may affect international rail for Amsterdam, mainly for passengers.

The Benelux Union as an important arena

One often forgotten arena is the Benelux Union. So far, Amsterdam is not involved in working groups of political processes at the Benelux level. However, whereas at EU level many stakeholders try to influence policies, programmes and funds, the stakeholders at level of the Benelux Union in the transport sector are rather limited. As a recent workshop organized by ITEM and the Benelux Secretariat has shown, there is an interesting working group on public transport/mobility as a service with representatives of national ministries, regionals stakeholders and railway companies. And there are still opportunities to better connect the strategies of the Benelux Member States (with the associated Nord-Rhein Westfalen). Also, the Benelux could benefit from the involvement of the bigger cities. Amsterdam could aim at involving other cities as Brussels, Antwerp, Luxembourg, Cologne or Düsseldorf in a broader Benelux Union discussion on priorities in the field of public transport.

The Benelux plus neighbouring regions/countries is of great importance, as highlighted in many documents. Strengthening the cooperation with the neighbouring countries is also a common recommendation. With policies being developed in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, it is of importance to connect and coordinate. Indeed, by better

coordination a lot can already be achieved in terms of connectivity and performance for both passenger and freight rail. The Benelux(+) is also an important geographical area for Amsterdam, including the Eurodelta. The further improvement of rail connections across the borders in the Benelux (and NRW) is less complex as in the case of the EU, however linked to the Benelux parts of the European corridors. Three of the nine European transport corridors are passing through the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg connecting the European transport nodes Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Brussels, Luxembourg with other European transport nodes.⁹⁷ This means that closer cooperation at the Benelux level is also profitable with respect to the EU corridors. Especially with the support of the Secretariat-General of the Benelux Union.

Coordination within the Municipality and VRA

In multiple interviews, it was also raised that the coordination within the Municipality of Amsterdam could be improved. For example, international bus travel is currently addressed outside the framework of international public transport. Also, the cooperation and coordination with the VRA has been mentioned. They're an important regional actor, but the governance structure has not been clearly defined when it comes to tasks and responsibilities. For example, the VRA is responsible for granting permits for bus stops but does not maintain the bus stops as such. In the field of international buses, there is the attempt within the Municipality to develop a strategy on long-distance and international buses for Amsterdam. Indeed, it is important that the Municipality is actively cooperating with VRA on the formulation of visions and ambitions for all modes of transport.

3.1.6 What are relevant projects, sources or funds for Amsterdam?

As shown, the Municipality of Amsterdam is very active in the field of EU funded projects under different Interreg programmes. So far, the involvement does not follow a consistent list of policy priorities. In this sense, one recommendation would be to streamline present and future priorities and select EU funded projects that consistently support chosen priorities. Relevant is the new proposal for CEF under the post-2027 MFF, allocating €81 billion to transport with €17 billion earmarked for military mobility. In the Communication on HSR, the Commission announced to prioritise proposals for high-speed rail. Depending on the new government, additional funds and/or projects will be developed to realise the chosen ambition scenarios. In the screening, also relevant

⁹⁷ See also: H2Benelux: "Connecting Europe Facility transport corridors", <https://h2benelux.eu/project-information/connecting-europe-facility-transport-corridors#:~:text=The%20European%20Union%2C%20through%20the,Horizon%202020%20and%20INTERREG%20programme>.

Interreg project and funds were taken up. The Municipality of Amsterdam is very active in the framework of several Interreg programmes. So far, the involvement does not follow a consistent list of policy priorities. In this sense, one recommendation would be to streamline present and future priorities and select EU funded projects that consistently support chosen priorities for instance with respect to promoting cross-border rail.

3.2 Discussion on policy objectives

The screening analysed different internal documents of Amsterdam or that of stakeholders, such as the Omgevingsvisie 2040, coalition agreement and position papers. Several policy objects can be identified:

- connectivity to Europe and important (socio-)economic destinations and hubs,
- substitution of flights to rail,
- a competitive but sustainable port,
- and more spreading of population and jobs to neighbouring regions, resulting in a more balanced growth for Amsterdam.

It was already discussed that Amsterdam could potentially be connected to about 50% to important destinations (for instance GaWC). On substitution of flights to rail, there is potential for growth. There are already destinations as Brussels and Paris that operate well. However, for more intensive shift from flights to rail certain preconditions first have to be met such as ticketing, booking and passenger rights. Also pricing is very relevant, especially for leisure travellers. In this respect, journeys through France, Spain and the UK were found to be (too) expensive. Also, nationalisation of rail markets limit open competition, that could have positive effects on services and prices. Thus improvements to services, the open market and infrastructure use appear to be preconditions to this policy objective. For professional travellers, mainly to London/UK, it appears to be more challenging to realise a modal shift to rail. Since many professional travels take place between Amsterdam and the UK, additional policies, soft (such as agreements with employers, communication etc.) and hard (pricing, legislation), may be needed.

With a multimodal port, also for freight transport Amsterdam has the right conditions. Yet, as ProRail concludes, the connectivity could be improved by making better use of existing infrastructure and expanding and intensifying certain corridors.

Finally, the Omgevingsvisie 2040 describes a balanced growth for Amsterdam, emphasising also spreading growth to neighbouring regions. This may be of particular importance to future choices. For example national scenarios on international passenger rail have different effects on Amsterdam and the objective of sustainable growth. With the national scenario 2, a HSR-network, it is more likely that growth is strongly centralised to Amsterdam and other European capitals. On the other hand, scenario 4 (regional

hubs) result in a more balanced growth with distribution to other regions, such as border regions. In this respect, a combination of scenario 2 and scenario 4 (or 3) appears to be most beneficial for Amsterdam's priorities.

4 Recommendations

The screening of policy papers, strategies, legislation and research studies shows that there is a rather complex debate at the national and European level on the future of rail transport. However, there are clear overarching policy objectives: the Netherlands aims to achieve a fully climate-neutral transport sector by 2050 as part of an overall climate neutrality. Also the EU has formulated an overall objective for the transport sector: to achieve climate neutrality, transport emissions have to be reduced by 90% by 2050. As shown by the analysis of the documents, the stimulation and increase of the market share of passenger and freight rail is formulated as a priority at all levels of government. The same is true with respect to the improvement of different related aspects: improvement of cross-border rail by higher and coordinated infrastructure investments, more attractive services and competition and more ambitious legislation. This means that Amsterdam's own ambitions with respect to freight and passenger rail do match with ambitions formulated at the national and European level. However, given the multitude of political initiatives and specific details of rail policies, it is very much a question of formulating priorities for Amsterdam's engagement. In the following we will describe a list of recommendations that is certainly not exhaustive but should indicate what the options are with respect to certain policy objectives.

The objectives are not formulated by the authors of the report, but are the main objectives formulated in official documents by Amsterdam or related stakeholders. They are analysed with respect to recent developments, policy documents of other levels of government and research studies. The question is what the current development are in a certain policy field and how these developments are in line with the specific objectives. And finally, by comparing the ambitions, or objectives with the present situation, we formulate recommendations with respect to the position and the activities of Amsterdam and its potential partners at the municipal, national and European level. It is obvious, that Amsterdam can have more influence where they can make their own investments decisions, whereas in other cases, for instance the development of European corridors, Amsterdam can only try to influence the political process by an active involvement in the political process in Brussels and/or joining networks. For most of the recommendations, a strategic ad-hoc partnership with different stakeholders (like Eurocities, Polis, Benelux, etc.) is an added value. In this respect, the recommendations also refer to possible network partners if it comes to the support of a certain policy. The recommendations are grouped according to the mode of transport: freight or passenger rail. And secondly, they refer to different challenges with respect to the general policy field, the question of infrastructure, the quality of services and the need for innovative legislation. Most recommendations are relevant for the short- to mid-term. With recent developments and policies at EU and national level, there is currently a certain momentum.

Objectives – Analysis – Recommendations	
Passenger	
General	<i>Objective: Improvement of major connections with other European cities/regions (substitution of short distance flights) (Selection of sources: Omgevingsvisie 2040; AirRail Agenda, Ministry of I&W)</i>
	Analysis: whereas the connection to Brussels has been positively improved, Amsterdam is still lacking direct (or at least competitive) train connections with many European cities where short distance flights and economic/leisure ties are relevant (Copenhagen, Barcelona...) Recommendation: • Reach out to the national government to update the strategy of the NS to run more trains across the border (following the example of the Brussels connection); • Reach out to Germany/German cities (in particular in NRW, Lower Saxony, Hamburg) and France, to improve cross-border cooperation and coordination towards respective governments; • Engage in the Benelux Union as platform for coordination of the national strategies (NL, BE, LUX) and joint lobby activities in Brussels; • Support initiatives for more competition in the field of long-distance connections; • Support the positive development in 2026 with respect to night train connections from and to Amsterdam. Especially future night trains to Milan, Barcelona, Copenhagen could have the potential to substitute flights. Support developments of more and better night train connections as described by I&W in the analysis “Internationaal personenvervoer over het spoor”, September 2025 as part of scenario 2; • Support a mid- and long term scenario for more HSL connections from and to Amsterdam in according with the above mentioned document of I&W (scenario II). This could mean the enlargement of the HSL South route and the construction of a central international railhub (‘The Netherlands International’) at Amsterdam Zuid/Schiphol and regional hubs in other parts of the

	country. In a mid- and long terms scenario: four main corridors with neighbouring countries, including new connections to northern and central Germany, southern Germany and France/London. <i>Objective: Improvement of cross-border connections in border regions to stimulate rail connection from and to Amsterdam (with University cities like Aachen, Münster, Bremen) (Sources: Formulated mainly by cities in border regions; Scenario 4 in “Internationaal personenvervoer over spoor”; connected to Omgevingsvisie 2040)</i> Analysis: Amsterdam could be better connected to the German side of the Dutch-German border regions (in Groningen/Eindhoven/Venlo/Heerlen/Maastricht) and benefit from functioning cross-border “regional hubs”. This would also contribute to regional spreading of jobs and housing. Recommendation: • Strengthen the strategic relationship with important border cities, such as Groningen, Enschede, Heerlen, Eindhoven and Maastricht for the coordination and lobbying vis-à-vis the Ministry of Infrastructure, as well as towards neighbouring countries (e.g. via the cross-border cooperation forums of NL-NRW and NL-Niedersachsen); • Support the idea of “Daily urban systems” and “Regionale Draaischijf” (“regional hubs”) described in Scenario III and IV of the analysis “Internationaal personenvervoer over het spoor” of the Ministry (Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, September 2025).
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infrastructure	<i>Objective: Improvement of infrastructure for faster and more frequent cross-border connections (Source: precondition for substitution of flights; Port of Amsterdam position paper; ProRail analysis)</i>
	Analysis: the full introduction of ERTMS in the Netherlands is rather late and seen as a precondition by ProRail, Port of Amsterdam, new EU plan on HSR and is necessary for more competition/new entrants in both freight and passenger rail transport Recommendation: • Support a faster introduction of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) in the Netherlands in particular also in (corridors for) Amsterdam/Port of Amsterdam, together with wide of range of stakeholders including municipalities, provinces, rail operators, infrastructure managers, the ports; • Support the EU plan on HSR and implementing activities as the ERTMS European deployment plan, in a coalition with Eurocities and/or Polis.
	<i>Objective: investments that also facilitate mid-term and long-term improvements of the connection of Amsterdam with alternative routes to the north Germany (Hamburg/Kopenhagen) and an enlargement of HSL connections to and from Amsterdam (Source: ProRail)</i>
	Analysis: Recent political decision where not in favour of future alternative cross-border options to the north of Germany (the case of the Lelylijn) Recommendation: • Support investments in strategic projects with mid- and long term cross-border potential (i.e. the Lelylijn) as part of the HSL European Network described in Scenario II of the analysis “Internationaal personenvervoer over het spoor” of the Ministry (Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, September 2025);

	• Support further short-term investments in small-scale cross-border improvements, well connected to the high-frequent national networks of the Netherlands and across the border (like Groningen-Bremen, Venlo-Duisburg, Maastricht-Aachen, Regional Hub idea).
services	<i>Objective: frequent and faster connections to cross-border destinations with competitive prices in relation to short distance flights (Source: Gemeente Amsterdam)</i>
	Analysis: Long distance train connection are not always competitive in comparison to short-distance flights, frequency is limited, there is often a single company offering services Recommendation: • Support competition on High Speed/long distance train routes (Amsterdam-Paris/London, Amsterdam-Berlin, Amsterdam-Köln-Frankfurt); • Explore actions to make the connection to London/UK more attractive and visible by rail, as it is still a popular destination for professional flights.
	<i>Objective: Direct International bus travel could be an alternative for destinations where train connections are today poor, or where connections over night could be even an alternative to short distance flights (Source: Conclusion KIM study; Rli; Buck Consultants)</i>
	Analysis: Bus companies (in particular Flixbus) are providing already today international direct connections to many European destinations. They play an important role in low-cost international travel. However, the quality of the service and attractiveness for other target groups (travellers' experience) could be improved by upgrading bus stations and supporting innovative business models (i.e. more comfortable night buses). Recommendation:

	• Amsterdam could develop a strategy for international busses and connect this to a wider strategy on international transport and connectivity, well-coordinated and developed with VRA; • Select the most appropriate stop locations, possibly connected to rail or air hubs, and invest in modern bus stations with adequate facilities and connection to other means of public transport; • Amsterdam could also support companies developing innovative business models, like comfortable night busses.
	<i>Objective: Make rail travel more attractive through attractive train stations (Source: indicated by ProRail for substitution, as mentioned in Omgevingsvisie 2040, Letter of I&W, AirRail-Agenda)</i> Analysis: Train stations are currently not designed for international passengers, as they require more services in terms of waiting areas, information provision and transit areas. Recommendation: • Emphasise the needs and perspective of the international traveller in the development of Amsterdam-Zuid with ProRail and NS.
legislation	<i>Objective: Make cross-border train travel as easy as booking flights and improve passenger rights (Source: Part of a present EU lobby priority of the Gemeente Amsterdam; EU priority; Eurocities)</i> Analysis: Cross-border train travel is cumbersome with respect to information, booking and liability for delays and cancellation Recommendation: • Support the improvement of passenger rights, booking and ticketing of international rail routes through proactive input on the Single Digital Booking and Ticketing Regulation, in cooperation with Eurocities, the Benelux working group on ticketing and through the Ministry of Infrastructure; • Possibly engage in the Benelux working group on ticketing to explore current MaaS-pilot actions.
Freight	

Infrastructure	Objective: involvement in EU strategic decision making within relevant corridors, firsthand information about the latest developments and funding programmes, better use of EU networks
	Analysis: Important strategic decisions and financial programmes are discussed within the two relevant fora of the TEN-T corridors. So far, Amsterdam is not very actively engaged in the governance of the corridors. There are today two corridors important for Amsterdam with a rather transparent governance and consultation structure. Due to the recent EU developments, the role of the TEN-T Coordinators has been strengthened. Recommendation: - Engage in the two relevant TEN-T corridors (North Sea Baltic/North Sea Rhine Mediterranean) and their coordination/Fora in order to be updated on EU priorities, developments and financial programmes. Closer relations to the coordinators and participants of the meetings can contribute to the establishment of networks of like-minded cities. Close cooperation with network partners (Dutch Provinces, Eurocities, Polis, Benelux Union etc.); - The first half of 2026 is a very important period: by mid-2026, based on a consultation process led by the European coordinators, the European transport corridor work plans will be adopted, and key cross-border and national infrastructure bottlenecks will be identified on the TEN-T rail network and measures and recommendations will be formulated for their timely and coordinated removal.
	Objective: Developing a policy with respect to the dual-use of rail infrastructure (formulated by ITEM)
	Analysis: Military aspects play an important role in the corridor discussions and the question of dual-use infrastructure, for example with ear-marked investment in the new CEF-proposal and in the latest Dutch policy documents. Recommendation:

	• Stimulate an internal debate on Amsterdam's position on dual-use and whether there are strategic priorities in favour of searching for new investments opportunities. <i>Objective: Include Amsterdam, including the port area, in the roll-out of ERTMS (Source: Position Paper Port of Amsterdam)</i> Analysis: the full introduction of ERTMS in the Netherlands is rather late Recommendation: • Support a faster introduction of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) in the Netherlands that serves also freight transport including in the Port of Amsterdam. Supporting the position of the government: priority for ERTMS roll out for the two relevant corridors; • Support the EU plan on HSR and implementing activities as the ERTMS European deployment plan, in a coalition with Eurocities and/or Polis. <i>Objective: evaluation of the improvement of the freight rail connection to North-Eastern Europe via Amsterdam Zuidoost and Weesp via Bad Bentheim in the framework of the GNOE assessment (Goederencorridor Noordoost Europa) (Source: Objective formulated in the Position Paper Port of Amsterdam)</i> Analysis: The GNOE assessment is an open process with opportunities for input and comments Recommendation: • Permanent involvement in the assessment process (GNOE) and the results for the variants that would be beneficial for Amsterdam. Currently, Amsterdam is not involved in the governance bodies;
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	• Involvement in the Platform ‘Spoorgoederenvervoer en Leefomgeving’ may also be beneficial in future developments of rail freight transport in the Netherlands and formulation of policy advises; • Discuss prospective goods and flows and formulate scenarios for rail with Port of Amsterdam.
Services	<i>Objective: Modal shift freight transport from road to rail, support multimodal freight transport (Source: Objective formulated in the Position Paper Port of Amsterdam, Omgevingsvisie 2040, Letter of I&W)</i> Analysis: Multimodal freight transport should become the standard, with an important role for rail – in particular to North-Italy and Northeast-Europe. Currently implementation agreements are (to be) made with important transport hubs, including Amsterdam. The trend is currently that transport operators face higher costs for rail compared to road. Recommendation: • Formulate a position regarding the policy options that could be done, as presented in the Letter to the Parliament (<i>Kamerbrief</i>) ‘Future outlook for rail freight transport’, such as pilots for pricing, reducing fees through subsidies and licensing – in light of the new coalition formation.
Legislation	Objective: Having a grip on the developments of EU legislation with respect to freight rail transport Analysis: The Implementation of the Fourth Railway package (2016) permanently monitored by the EU Commission. These includes very technical debates on infrastructure, equipment and price structures. Recommendations: • Rely on the expertise of the Dutch national government with respect to the implementation and review of EU legislation related to the Forth Railway Package.

Annex A - Screening

A.1: Screened internal documents

Stakeholder	Document	Content
Gemeente Amsterdam	Ontwerp Position paper internationale treinen en substitutie, 2020 Map wethouder Dijkema 18 augustus 2020	• Amsterdam is committed to strengthening its international accessibility. • Amsterdam wants to create preconditions for increasing the share of train passengers in the international modal split. • Amsterdam is committed to replacing air travel up to 750 km with train travel. • Amsterdam is committed to substitution for both origin-destination² (O/D) and transfer passengers. • Amsterdam commits to a combination of stopping international trains at Zuid station and Schiphol station. • Amsterdam commits to two high-speed/high-frequency rail-border crossings, while also supporting expansion of the cross-border network in general. • Amsterdam sees night trains as a nice complementary product for substitution. Amsterdam Centraal is a good place for night trains. • Amsterdam is committed to additional measures for substitution: including price, ease of booking, and comfort.
Gemeente Amsterdam	Omgevingsvisie 2050	Amsterdam's spatial vision for 2050 describes five strategic choices: Multi-core development, Growing within boundaries, Sustainable and healthy exercise, Rigorous greening and Creating cities together. This includes that the city aims to spread employment and facilities beyond its borders and want to limit growth of inhabitants, housing and employment within its existing borders. Several ambitions relate to rail. • At the same time, Amsterdam's sphere of influence extends beyond the metropolitan region. An increasing number of jobs in Amsterdam are being filled by residents of large and medium-sized cities further afield, such as Rotterdam, Zwolle and Den Bosch. The relationship with other European cities has also grown stronger. This in turn requires cooperation with central government and the provinces. Local, regional and (inter)national interests do not always coincide naturally. For example, fast connections between the centres of large cities have become more important. However, fast intercity and international trains compete on the railways with local and regional trains. (p.33) • Improving regional accessibility requires a step change in public transport. New metro connections will open up major development sites in Amsterdam. Together with sprinter trains, fast regional buses and express trams, they will handle a large part of regional traffic to and from Amsterdam. To the south, there will be more space on the railways for intercity and international trains. International connections are indispensable for

		Amsterdam as a knowledge metropolis. Trains will replace many flights within Europe. Amsterdam Zuid and Schiphol are the most important international train stations. (p.55) • Commuting between Amsterdam and larger Dutch cities further afield, as well as the increasing importance of international accessibility, requires more space on the national rail network. Together with the metropolitan region and the government, we are investigating how we can make room on the national rail network on the south side of the city for more intercity and international trains. This space can be obtained by partially providing regional transport in the direction of Hoofddorp, Zaanstad and Almere by metro. (p. 70) • The North/South line will strengthen the public transport connection between the city and Schiphol Airport. We want shorter-distance flights to be replaced by international trains. To make this possible, the NS stations at Schiphol and Amsterdam Zuid will become international train stations, from which trains will depart via the south-west of the Netherlands to Belgium, England and France, and via the east of the country to Germany and beyond. The railway also has an international function as a connection to the European hinterland for goods transhipped at the port. (p. 71) • A stop for international trains at Schiphol will strengthen the Netherlands' international hub function and international connectivity. The aim is to replace short flights with train connections wherever possible. It is therefore important that Schiphol railway station can develop. In order to accommodate all passengers, capacity at Schiphol station and Amsterdam-Zuid station must be increased. Work will therefore be carried out on both the road and rail networks until 2030. At Schiphol, the transfer for passengers will be improved, the A10-Zuid will be widened and placed in a tunnel, and Zuid station will be thoroughly renovated, with two tracks for international trains. (p. 195)
Lobbystrategie prioriteit 7, Januari 2025, Team Public Affairs EU-Internationaal Angelique Blom – Meyer	2025 Promote at European level more work (policy, legislative and financial) on a faster and more user-friendly European train offer	• Via new European rules (Single Digital Ticketing & Booking Regulation, planned for the end of 2025) realise a user-friendly planning, booking and payment system for travellers. (PA EU-IB has pulling role) Realisation of the regulation and a working planning, booking and payment system should be achieved by the end of the Commission's term (2029). • The European Commission's plan to connect capitals and major cities by fast international rail doubles the connections between Amsterdam, London, Brussels, Paris and Frankfurt/Berlin. (Other parties, Amsterdam municipality (V&OR, R&D and PA EU-IB) supports objectives) The new plan should ensure that: 1. By 2035, connections between Amsterdam, London, Paris and Frankfurt/Berlin are doubled.
Lobby Strategy Spring 2025		We expand the current task force (12 cities and Eurocities) with at least 5 new members. 2. We also focus on involving cities on the corridors on which Amsterdam is located (North-Sea Baltic and North Sea - Rhine - Mediterranean). 3. campaign via Eurocities to keep the importance of rail high on the European agenda

		4. We ensure further dissemination of the joint statement to the European Commission (DG Move), European Parliament (TRAN Committee) and to the permanent representations of the cities from the task force. 5. We ensure dissemination joint statement to other stakeholders such as T&E, ALLRAIL, European Passenger Federation 6. We will go on a joint mission to Brussels in May - June 2025 with 3-5 directors of cities from the task force. This visit will include a meeting with Eurocommissioner Tzitzikostas, a discussion with EP members of the TRAN committee and an event together with the CER in Brussels. 7. We will again enter into official talks with the Ministry of IenW on the importance of sharing infra priorities between the Netherlands and Brussels. Administratively via team Rijk-Regio
Lobby Contacts		<i>Lokaal / regionaal</i> MRA – Utku Kucukosmanoglu VRA – Ines Piersma - Calixto G4 – Herbert Tiemens (Utrecht), Jeroen Haver (Den Haag), Kevin van der Linden (Rotterdam), Netty Baartman (coordinator mobiliteit G4) <i>Nationaal</i> Ministerie IenW en EZ - Coalitie Duurzame mobiliteit vanuit MinEZ (Renske Klunder) en MinIenW (Carolien de Groot) – verkennen hoe we elkaars standpunt kunnen versterken/ondersteunen richting Brussel. Door kabinetswissel, mogelijk shift in prioriteiten bij nationale overheid Ministerie IenW – duurzaam en internationaal OV bij de directie Openbaar Vervoer en Spoor - Yvonne Boesten en Robert Boot TK – Marieke Koekkoek (Volt) ProRail – Theo Stoop Schiphol – Klaas Boersma <i>Cross-border/Benelux</i> <i>NRW Dortmund/Düsseldorf/Köln?</i> <i>Cities</i>

		International Rapid International Rail Task Force of 5-10 European cities: Amsterdam, MRA, The Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Lyon, Strasbourg, Helsinki, Karlsruhe, Berlin, Dortmund, Munich, Mannheim and London - Amsterdam (Angelique) and MRA (Utku) are leading the way <i>Europe</i> Eurocommissaris Tzitzikostas Coordinators TEN-T corridors DG Move – Land Directorate (Single European Rail Area) – Sandro Santamato DG Move – Land Directorate (Investment, Innovative Sustainable Transport) - Herald Ruijters (TEN-T) DG Regio – Unit for cross-border Ricardo Ferreira TRAN Commissie EP – waaronder Tom Berendsen, Lara Wolters, Rachel Blom EP- Raquel Garcia (D66)
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A.2 Screened literature and documents

Author/org.	Year	Document	Content	Relevance
Ministry of Infrastructure, Prorail, NS, Schiphol and KLM	2020	Actieagenda Trein en Luchtvaart (Action agenda Train and Flights)	- The Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (IenW), Schiphol Airport, ProRail, KLM and NS aim to promote the choice of international trains for medium-distance travel (up to 700 kilometres). - It has the aim to improve international train as alternative for so-called Origin-Destination passengers as well as for transfer passengers. - Prioritised destinations are Brussels, Paris, London, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Berlin. - In terms of travel time, the train is competitive, with the exemption of Berlin. - However, the frequency is very variable between destinations. Due to low frequency or a missing link to Schiphol, the train to London, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Berlin are inadequate for transfer passengers. - AirRail ticket is important for transfer passengers, limitations to integral booking and information system for train and flight.	On flights versus rail

			• The agenda has less and very specific actions per destination. • In the future, Hannover, Copenhagen, München, Basel, Zürich, Luxembourg, Strasbourg and Birmingham are mentioned as possible additional destinations for the action agenda.	
Dutch air sector	2025	Toekomstbestendige luchtvaart voor Nederland (Future-proof airtraffic for the Netherlands)	One of the priorities is more international trains for short distances: • Stop on flights to Brussels, if there is enough train capacity from Schiphol • Invest in AirRail agenda. The connection to Paris, London, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Berlin has to improve, with international trains arriving/departing more often from Schiphol • Connect the North-Southline to Schiphol	On flights versus rail
Port of Amsterdam	2024	Position Paper 'Het belang van spoorgoederenvervoer voor Amsterdam'	• It is the expectation that more renewable energy related goods will be transported, multimodality is emphasised. • The amount of freight trains in 2023 was 4.650 in the MRA, it is expected to grow in 2040 to 6.850. • The port of Amsterdam is one of the greatest energy ports in the world. It calls upon taking freight transport into account in the spatial planning. In MRA functions as the port, living and mobility are closely linked due to spatial limitations and rapid growth. • Ten recommendations: ○ Given the social challenges, pay more attention to rail freight transport and create sufficient capacity. ○ Invest in robust capacity for rail freight transport on both the TEN-T corridors that run through Amsterdam Central Station and Amsterdam Sloterdijk Station, as well as capacity at the yards and tracks in the Amsterdam port area itself. ○ Prevent the growing number of international and national passenger trains from taking away capacity for rail freight transport. Facilitate both freight and passenger rail transport. One should not be at the expense of the other. ○ Prioritise the realisation of a robust connection between the port railway and the passenger yard at Transformatorweg to the mixed network by constructing two tracks to separate incoming and outgoing train traffic. The current single-track connection creates a bottleneck in the event of incidents and/or maintenance, with the risk of trains becoming trapped in the port area and/or being unable to enter the port area. ○ Ensure that freight trains can pass through Amsterdam Central Station efficiently during the renovation (until 2028). There is no alternative route for freight trains to and from the port of Amsterdam and the North Sea Canal area. ○ Ensure that the environmental permits for the freight yards in the Amsterdam port area are expanded and that Basisnet is revised so that the growing number of	On freight versus passenger rail transport

			trains with new energy-related cargo flows can be handled safely and responsibly, both in the port area and on the national and European rail corridors. ○ Invest in capacity gains by equipping the Amsterdam port railway with sensors and smart cameras, so that the tracks can be used more intensively and the location of trains can be tracked. ○ Support the restructuring of the railway tracks in the Coen-Vlothaven area, among other things, through MIRT research, based on the urbanisation task of the Port-City. ○ Include Amsterdam, including the port area, in the roll-out of ERTMS. ○ Investigate the broad social added value of a new freight rail connection to North-East Europe (GNOE). In doing so, also identify the opportunities for new spatial developments near Weesp, in addition to the benefits of more efficient handling of the growing number of passengers and freight trains. Also investigate the compensation options for the eastern regions where the new connection would have to be integrated.	
European Rail Freight Association	2025	European Industry and Transport Associations call for change on Railway Capacity Management	To achieve this, trilogue negotiators should ensure that: • European Frameworks are adopted through a process which allows them to be binding, and any deviations would need to be proposed in a transparent process and ultimately require approval by Regulatory bodies. • The Regulation introduces strong and robust incentives through reciprocal commercial conditions which effectively encourage capacity to be managed with a focus on the running of cross-border trains in line with their original train path. This is particularly important to offset the avoidable negative impacts of capacity restriction related bottlenecks. • Any changes to a train path must be treated in its entirety, particularly those train paths which involve more than one infrastructure manager. • The Regulation requires the use of objective, transparent and balanced European socio-economic and environmental criteria for capacity allocation as an allocation method of last resort. This ensures more effective cross-border traffic management and balanced infrastructure usage compared to disparate national rules during both the annual timetabling and when devising the bypass regime around temporary capacity restricted sections and other bottlenecks. A harmonised methodology should be added in Annex to the Regulation. • The Regulation defines a clear and independent governance structure which is steered by KPI's with a focus on improved performance. The KPIs on cross-border freight train punctuality and the time required to complete a border crossing process on internal	On EU and national policies

			borders contained in the TEN-T Guidelines Regulation should be recited in the Rail Infrastructure Capacity Management Regulation in recognition of the impact of the latter on their delivery. • A decisive role is granted to existing and potential path capacity applicants through an RU Platform which should be consulted throughout the process of creating European Framework rules and prior to any updates. • The new Regulatory Framework should guarantee an improvement on the status quo achieved by the existing Rail Freight Corridors given that the Rail Freight Corridor Regulation is foreseen to be revoked under this legislative proposal. Under no circumstances can a deterioration compared to the current status quo be accepted.	
Overlegorgaan Fysieke Leefomgeving	2025	Spoorgoederenvervoer en Leefomgeving	Advice • The current market situation makes rail transport a less attractive option for shippers compared to road transport. Rail freight transport is declining, partly due to high infrastructure costs, a lack of connections and an uneven playing field compared to other modes of transport. Consider, for example, the costs of setting up trains, whereas lorries incur no costs for using parking spaces. • Interoperability: between the Netherlands and neighbouring states, different voltages, lengths and safety systems are used. Advice • Improve rail freight transport through strategic alliances with Belgium and Germany (together the biggest chemical cluster), fair pricing and harmonisation, investments in 740m rails and ERTMS. • Make the Basis net robust and safe • Invest in less nuisance through norms • Steer on the usage of the Betuweroute • Create a policy for 2050, create a network in the North West-European Delta area in coordination with Belgium and Germany, prioritising the connections of ports, multimodal hubs and industrial centra	On road versus rail On European and national policies
Social Sectoral Dialogue on Railways	2025	Transforming Rail Freight: A Joint Call for Sustainable and Efficient Transport	The European Transport Federation (ETF) and the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) call for: • ensuring a level playing field between all modes of transport • long-term investment in rail freight • promoting single wagon load and combined transport operations • digitalization for efficiency of the railway sector • a strong railway sector cooperation	On EU and national policies

CER	2025	A High-Speed Rail Master Plan for Europe	The CER has responded to the EU ambition for high-speed rail (HSR). • Next to HSR lines, the TEN-T core and comprehensive network should be upgraded and completed • Accelerate full ERTMS rollout, harmonising national rules and enabling easy seamless ticketing: one of the biggest challenges for international HSR is the lack of compatibility across borders	On EU and national policies
Urban Nodes Initiative	2024	Urban Nodes: empowering cities and regions to build the TEN-T	• New TEN-T approach identifies 432 Urban Nodes along TEN-T, upscaling of current 88 Nodes. By 2027, a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan should be in place. • Appropriate governance structure of Urban Node: city versus Functional Urban Area • Stimulate a more active collaboration between stakeholders vertically across governance levels and horizontally across sectors and disciplines • Strengthening CEF, but also diversification of funding resources • Mechanisms for common learning, capacity building and innovation related to Urban Node issues, including Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP), integrated planning and mobility of people and goods should be expanded through programs like Horizon Europe, LIFE and INTERREG, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing.	On EU and national policies
J. Worth	2024	Simplifying European Ticketing. A chance for a green transformation of public and multimodal transport in the European Union.	Multimodal and multi-operator digital mobility services are a very long way away from being ideal in the European Union. There are deficiencies at every stage – Trip Planning, Trip Purchase, Disruption Information and Passenger Rights. • Regarding Trip Planning and Disruption Information there was no need for additional legislation at EU level found, but instead more systematic action from Commission to ensure that Member States deliver on their commitments and data is provided to National Access Points. • An earlier MOTIS project showed what is possible for Trip Planning and Disruption Information on the basis of a 2010 Directive, a 2017 Delegated Regulation and a 2023 Delegated Regulation. • Regarding Trip Purchase and Passenger Rights, the legal framework is inadequate. • “The most obvious re-selling obligation is to mandate transport operators (including all state incumbent operators, but potentially exempting some SMEs that technically may struggle to comply) to make available all their ticketing data to third parties (the easiest way to do this is using Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) that each transport operator would provide – this way there is no need to develop some sort of central database of ticketing data), including all special offers and reduced fares. This would allow platforms – whoever owns them, either private enterprises or state owned authorities – to develop true multimodal and multi-operator trip planners that	On EU and national policies

			include ticket sales, knowing the data they could access would be adequately complete.”	
M. Draghi	2024	The future of European competitiveness	• Administrative obstacles hinder projects. Complex and diverging administrative and environmental rules, namely those that apply to grant permits, constitute a barrier to the realisation of transport infrastructure projects. Challenges are amplified for transnational projects, such as those for inland waterways, 75% of which are cross-border in the EU. • The EU’s milestones towards shifting more activity to more sustainable modes of transport are still far from being achieved. Despite EU policies seeking to accommodate growing traffic and to decarbonise the sector, transport by rail and inland waterways is not yet competitive compared to road transport, due to lower reliability and higher transport costs. Given the great volumes carried by road and the need to maintain the related infrastructure, Member States tend to prioritise investment in road infrastructure. • Rail markets remain fragmented. Passenger and freight capacity handling is not planned and coordinated across borders. Some 800 national rules still exist for rail across the EU. Moreover, operational requirements diverge (e.g. concerning the number of staff in driving cabins). Market barriers remain for new entrants who in some cases face high track access charges and difficulties in accessing equipment and ticketing systems. This weakens the ability of providers to scale up and operate across borders. Operators active in more than one national market remain the exception in the EU. Consequently, the number of long-distance cross-border rail services in Europe has hardly increased during the last two decades. Consumers experience a lack of fast connections, complexity in booking multiple legs of journeys and weaker consumer passenger rights. In addition, rail freight suffers a relative de-prioritisation compared to rail passenger services. This leads to issues with the speed and reliability of rail freight transport. • For rail, Member States should, as an example, remove unnecessary national operational rules and standards (the EU should continue providing support to this end, namely via the European Railway Agency), better coordinate rail capacity management both in freight and passenger transport (based on the Commission proposal on the use of railway infrastructure capacity), and implement the fourth Railway package, to ensure open, competitive markets at the national level.	On EU and national policies On passenger versus freight rail transport
E. Letta	2024	Much more than a Market	• In order to address the remaining infrastructure gaps and bottlenecks, the TEN-T Regulation establishes deadlines for constructing the core, extended, and comprehensive networks by 2030, 2040, and 2050, respectively. However, there is a growing risk that Member States might not meet the 2030 targets. Differences among transport modes are evident: while the road network under TEN-T is largely completed,	On EU and national policies

			the rail network remains highly fragmented, particularly concerning high-speed rail. Moreover, there is a noticeable deficiency in multimodal connections, particularly in linking rail and road networks with ports and airports. • The investment needs associated with realizing the TEN-T core network by 2030 are estimated at around €500 billion, with a significant portion still lacking sufficient financial resources. Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), the principal EU funding mechanism for TEN-T projects, should go beyond its current structure and objectives, to be redefined as a European fund that can meet the major investment needs as well as the new challenges that Europe will increasingly face over the coming years: the network of the future should guarantee the resilience of infrastructure which is at high risk because of climate change and build infrastructure capable of meeting military mobility needs. • However, the Single European Railway Area has not yet fully materialised. Rail market opening, which started 25 years ago, has been hampered by the fragmentation of markets and infrastructure, the persistence of legal and de facto monopolies, as well as formidable technical barriers. • To address these challenges and fully harness the potential of the rail sector, ensuring the deployment of rail's key digital enablers such as the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), Digital Automatic Coupling (DAC), and Digital Capacity Management (DCM) is paramount. • With ERTMS deployed on only a fraction of the Core TEN-T Network, accelerating its rollout is essential for realising a truly integrated European rail system. Alongside ERTMS, the deployment of DAC and DCM promises to revolutionise rail freight efficiency and capacity management, with substantial investments needed from the EU, Member States, and private investors to support their implementation. • Paradox of EU infrastructure: the impossibility of travelling by high-speed train between European capitals. This is currently impossible and seems unlikely to change in the near future, as concrete operational plans remain merely theoretical. Indeed, our continent quickly and effectively developed the high-speed rail system, but except for the Paris-Brussels-Amsterdam axis, it remained within national borders. An European approach to regulation and tax incentives, rather than a national one, is necessary. The coming years must prioritise the planning, funding, and implementation of a major plan to connect the European capitals with high-speed rail.	On road versus rail
International Transport Forum	2025	Passenger and freight transport trends compared around the world.	• Road freight transports is steadily increasing, also compared to other inland transport modes. In the Netherlands the share of transport by rail has not increased between 2013 and 2023, while by road did increase slightly.	On road versus rail

			• The spatial analysis of rail infrastructure density (track kilometres per sq. kilometre) in the Netherlands shows about 15km per sq. km, ranking fifth in the OECD countries. • The spatial road infrastructure density (road kilometres per sq. kilometre) in the Netherlands is 422km per sq. km, ranking third of the OECD countries.	
Rli	2020	Verzet de wissel (Move the switch)	• Although significant investments have been made in the construction of European rail infrastructure over the past century, passenger rail traffic has grown less rapidly than car and air traffic. • Improving international rail accessibility is important for both economic development (accessibility, business climate) and making transport more sustainable. • One bottleneck in this regard is that the combination of freight and passenger transport leads to conflicts on busy parts of the rail network. This also applies to national and international traffic. According to the Council, this is not an operational but a political consideration: politicians set priorities. • Rail in four layers: mobility services, transport services, traffic services, physical and ICT infrastructure • Passenger experience: access to the system is difficult, trains are perceived as expensive, changing trains is perceived as a barrier (even if it is faster), travel time • Interoperability problem: This can largely be explained by the different (technical) systems along the railways in each country. However, the major differences in (process) culture also play a role. Rail appears to be a mode of transport that is firmly rooted in history. Infrastructure managers are perceived as inflexible and transport operators are only willing to cooperate with each other to a limited extent. Recommendations: 1. Corridor coordination: focus on good international coordination on the main rail links 2. Improve the findability and bookability of international train journeys: there are already various apps, but they suffer from poor access to travel information and passenger data. This must be made public 3. Make train tickets available at least nine months in advance. 4. Improve passenger rights: agreements on through ticketing. 5. Encourage new international transport services: Dutch stakeholders have not succeeded in establishing the originally desired high-speed rail service and allowing intercity trains to continue to the next city across the border. The reason for this is said to be that offering such cross-border services would be too much at the expense of domestic passenger traffic. The costs and complexity of interoperable rolling stock are also cited as arguments. This is an issue on the Eindhoven-Venlo-Düsseldorf and Eindhoven-Heerlen-Aachen routes, among others. The implementation dates for this are being pushed further	On passenger versus freight rail transport On EU and national policies

			and further into the future. In the council's opinion, the ministry must take a firmer stance on this. 6. Make international trains an attractive product: pricing 7. Improve the coordination of train paths for international train passengers: the council believes that more intelligent use can be made of existing capacity. An example of this is the current basic hourly pattern with a repetitive fixed schedule of train services. Within this pattern, there is scope to increase train frequency on all international routes so that an international train can run every hour (or half hour). 8. Encourage the use of information technology 9. Invest in cross-border rail: rail infrastructure investments are needed for Eindhoven-Düsseldorf, Heerlen-Aachen/Maastricht-Liège and Groningen-Bremen. These will give the Netherlands access to high-speed rail networks in Germany and Belgium. 10. Invest in a single eastern corridor: there is no fast rail connection to Germany. Invest in an eastern corridor to Germany for both Berlin and the Ruhr area/Frankfurt, for example by increasing the speed to 160 to 200 km/h. The Council recommends linking up with German investments. 11. Unbundle regional, national and international rail transport: one option is to give international trains a prominent role in national rail traffic. In this way, an international long-distance train can take over the function of a domestic long-distance train.	
Greenpeace	2024	Connection failed. An analysis of existing and potential direct rail connections between major European cities compared to air connections	General: 1. Of 990 routes between 45 European cities that Greenpeace analysed, only 12% are currently served by direct trains, while 69% are served by direct flight. This is almost than six times as many direct flights as direct train connections between European cities. 2. Of the 990 routes, 42% – 419 routes – could easily be served by direct train of under 18 hours travel time using existing rail infrastructure. Direct trains could be more than tripled. 3. Top five best connected cities by direct train: Vienna (17 direct train connections), Munich (15), Berlin (14), Paris and Zurich (13 each). 4. Six worst connected cities by direct train: Athens, Lisbon, Pristina, Sarajevo, Skopje and Tallinn (each with zero direct train connections to other European cities). 5. With investments in rail infrastructure allowing a minimum average speed of 80 km/h on all train routes, 54% of all routes could be travelled by a direct train within 18 hours in the future. These are 120 more routes. With an average speed of 80 km/h, around 1,500 km can be travelled. 6. On the existing high-speed rail network in Europe, much longer distances than 1,500 km can be travelled by train within 18 hours. For example, the Madrid–Amsterdam route is	On flights versus rail On EU and national policies

			almost 2,300 km long and can already be travelled by train in 14h4m, including the time for two transfers in Barcelona and Paris. Policies: • Factors influencing few direct train connections: lack of infrastructure investments (mainly eastern countries), lack of rolling stock (due to different national systems), lack of political will, belief and support, shortcomings in European regulatory framework for cross-border rail (more than 11000 national rules apply to the EU rail market), high rail tolls (suspending the toll could reduce costs by 20% for night trains, Belgium has skipped this toll for night trains), unfair competition with flights, lack of cooperation (dominated by national public railway companies), lack of data (Eurostat has data on European air routes, but not for rail transport). • Recommendations: combining a train from A to B with a train from B to C to form a train from A to C; prolong train routes from A to B to from A via B to C. For Amsterdam: • Despite being geographically in a central position, Amsterdam is poorly connected by direct trains. Only nine cities analysed can be reached by an existing direct train, while 29 cities could be reached by a direct train within 18 hours. This is a direct train connectivity of only 31%. • Only five cities analysed can be reached by a direct night train, Berlin, Munich, Prague, Vienna and Zurich. • There is no direct train connection to 69% of the cities that could be reached by a direct train within 18 hours. • The most important missing train connection from Amsterdam under 12 hours is Barcelona, which is the most used short-haul flight route from Amsterdam without a direct train alternative, followed by Copenhagen, Milan and Manchester. Other important missing and rather short train connections are to Hamburg and Luxembourg. • The most important missing night train destination is Madrid, which is the second most used short haul flight from Amsterdam without a direct train alternative. Other important missing night train connections are to Stockholm, Oslo and Rome.	
Greenpeace	2025	Flying cheap, paying dear: how airlines undercut rail and fuel the climate crisis	The analysis compares for 142 cross-border routes in Europe travel by air versus rail in terms of ticket prices. All routes were below 1500km, with destinations with international airport and railway station. General findings were: • 39% of the 109 routes were cheaper by train	On flights versus rail

			• Most expensive countries for cross-border rail are France, Spain, the UK and Italy; • On the route Barcelona-London was the cheapest air ticket found, while also relatively the most expensive train ticket (26 times higher than flight) • Multiple operators and separate tickets makes train travel more expensive Regarding the Netherlands, 9 cross-border routes were analysed – to and from Amsterdam: • 56% of the routes were predominantly cheaper by train than by plane. The routes involving the UK and France remain significantly more expensive by rail compared to plane. • Destinations to Warsaw, Luxembourg, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Berlin are relatively cheap by rail compared to air. However, only Berlin is served by a direct train connection. Copenhagen and Luxembourg are bookable via one ‘through-ticket’, Warsaw and Stockholm involves multiple tickets. • Destinations of London, Nice, Prague and Ljubljana are relatively more expensive on rail compared to air.	
VOLT	2024	Initiatiefnota Alle Seinen op Groen (<i>Initiative memorandum All Signals Green</i>)	Key points: 1. The ambition to become an international rail hub requires choices to be made in relation to other forms of rail transport, financing and project prioritisation. 2. Putting passengers first: integrated ticketing and passenger rights. 3. Availability and distribution of capacity. 4. Creating new connections and improving existing ones. 5. Improving interoperability and a level playing field.	On EU and national policies
Vickerman, R.	2015	High-speed rail and regional development: the case of intermediate stations	1. As we have shown, the development of the North-west Europe HSR has been largely driven by the objective of joining the major metropolitan areas. The network is an international one and as such has tended to ignore intermediate and border towns in favour of rapid, city to city, links. 2. But what is clear is that the development of HSR has not led to the reduction in inequalities in accessibility and any associated economic consequences claimed for in EU policies. Thus it is not distance which is the major obstacle, but rather the cross-border nature of the problem facing intermediate regions. New infrastructure and new types of service do not seem to have been able to effect change. This outcome is consistent with the expectations outlined by Vickerman et al. (1999) where it was shown that relative accessibilities would change very little as a result of the implementation of the TEN-T and that the main gainers would be those regions which already demonstrated the highest levels of accessibility. 3. We may wish to conclude from this that HSR is actually only about the high-level inter-metropolitan traffic where it acts as an alternative to air and that HSR is inappropriate for shorter distance or inter-regional flows over distances up to 200 km.	On transnational versus cross-border On EU and national policies

Bertram, D., Chilla, T., Hippe, S.	2023	Cross-border mobility: rail or road? Space-time-lines as an evidence base for policy debates	Case study on Germany - For the majority of cross-border connections, travel by car is faster than travel by train. In contrast, the train is faster for domestic connections without border crossings. - This reflects the role of priority axes, often linked to the trans-European transport network. This phenomenon is known as the “tunnel effect”, in the debate on spatial integration. This means that European integration is more likely to improve linkages between domestic centers than those within border regions in the local sense.	On transnational versus cross-border On road versus rail
European Commission	2018	Comprehensive analysis of the existing cross-border rail transport connections and missing links on the internal EU borders	- Seventeen recommendations for cross-border rail transport, including transport data by Eurostat, long-term planning and financing for ‘small-scale’ cross-border railway projects, funding of cross-border infrastructure projects for lines that are not part of TEN-T, making better use of Interreg A, passenger information - Identifies several ‘missing links’. Listed as beneficial projects: Gent-Terneuzen, Sint-Niklaas-Terneuzen, Antwerpen-Tilburg, Hasselt-Eindhoven, Mönchengladbach-Roermond, Krefeld-Nijmegen.	On EU and national policies
European Commission	2024	Providing public transport in cross-border regions	- TEN-T planning for railway links are ambivalent for border regions. On the positive side is the infrastructure development. But it also brings risks to border regions, since TEN-T looks primarily at time savings between agglomerations rather than at the local and regional level. This may call for bottom-up initiatives, e.g. by cross-border institutions, to include the regional cross-border perspective in the planning for railway services along TEN-T corridors from the beginning. - the CBPT inventory reveals that even though many CBPT exist on a border, they are often poorly embedded in domestic services. The lack of integration relates to aspects such as stops served, the location of stops (i.e. CBPT stops are away from stops of national services), lack of coordinated timetables and frequencies, lack of integration into domestic ticketing systems, increased fares as well as different operating times (during the day and throughout the year)	On EU and national policies On transnational versus cross-border
European Commission	2020	Long-distance cross-border passenger rail services	- The total number of long-distance cross-border rail services in the study area, the EU, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, appears to have changed little since 2001, with around 4,500 train pairs per week, but within this total there have been two major changes: - There was a pronounced shift from night trains (down 65%) to high-speed trains (up 95%), which may have made some journeys too brief by day for a dedicated night train to remain viable. - The number of routes served has declined, with a focus on more frequent services on core routes, which have less splitting and joining of trains to serve two or more destinations	On EU and national policies

			• More or less same obstacles and recommendations identified as below	
European Commission	2025	Flash Eurobarometer 551: Multimodal Digital Mobility Service	• Quarter of respondents have travelled regionally or long-distance for leisure about at least a month. More than four in ten responds to travel regionally or long-distance for work (13% once a month or more frequently), but 56% never travels for work; • 82% of respondents uses the car. Collective modes of transport is usually the train (53%); • Cost is the top-ranking factor (61% of respondents) for selecting mode of transport, followed by travel duration (47%), departure or arrival time (36%) and comfort (29%); • Contrast between willingness to travel more sustainable (more than three-quarters) and their actual behaviour (just 21% is adapting their journey). Costs (46%), time (29%), departure/arrival times (28%) and ease of planning/booking (22%) are selected factors; • When asked, a majority of the respondents indicated to have used combined different collective transport modes, as well as different transport operators within one mode. Most commonly, combination train and bus (42%), followed by air/rail (36%) and air/bus (29%); • Over a third find it difficult to book multimodal travels (30% 'rather difficult'), 31% have not booked such journeys. • For those who have not booked it: it was too long (25%), more expensive (20%), not suitable (17%), or didn't want to buy separate tickets (13%); • A majority have combined two or more rail legs with different rail operators. A quarter found it 'rather' or 'very difficult' to book their journey, 43% haven't booked it at all. When not booked: mainly due to it was not needed (42%), followed by it would have taken too long, no suitable combination, more expensive.	On EU and national policies On car versus rail On air versus rail
European Union Agency for Railways	2022	Cross-border Rail Transport Potential	• When solving technical and operational issues, time savings for rail freight could be from 50 minutes to 6 hours. • Lack of interoperability in the rail sector is one of the main barriers when considering cross-border transport. It is a complex barrier as it is the combination of a series of technical, administrative and infrastructural issues that generate operational problems resulting, for example, in: (i) slower transport operations; and (ii) an increase of the operating costs borne by railway undertakings. • Focusing on freight transport, the Issues Logbook (ILB) study identified 15 main technical and operational barriers to interoperability which hamper international rail freight traffic. • In Europe, only 6-7% of total rail passenger-kilometres involve crossing one or more borders and only a proportion of these cross-border rail passenger journeys are long-distance services. Several obstacles: infrastructure charges vary widely, limited infrastructure capacity, lack of suitable rolling stock, ticketing systems, passenger rights, difficulties in	On EU and national policies

			tendering, technical and operational differences, different prioritisation for different market segments, suboptimal timetable coordination	
KiM	2023	Substitutiemogelijkheden van luchtvaart naar spoor in 2030 en 2040	• More modest expectations of substitution: Overall, the potential for substitution from air to rail transport in 2030 is estimated to be half of what was estimated in 2018. Main reason: decrease of flights to the Covid Crisis. • By 2030, between 5,600 and 16,000 flights are expected to be replaced by train travel. With an average aircraft occupancy of 150 passengers, this means that between 0.8 and 2.4 million flights per year could be replaced by train travel. By 2040, this figure will rise to between 11,000 and 23,000 flights, representing 1.6 to 3.4 million air journeys. These air journeys account for 6% to 22% of all air journeys on 13 routes studied by KiM. The extent to which this substitution can be achieved depends heavily on improvements in rail services between the Netherlands and various European cities. • This was based on future developments on various developments in rail services between Amsterdam and 13 cities in Europe: London, Bristol, Birmingham, Paris, Basel, Brussels, Berlin, Hanover, Hamburg, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Munich and Copenhagen. Six per cent of air travel on those 13 connections could be substituted by train in 2030, and 10% in 2040.	On flights versus rail
KiM	2024	Keuzen voor het spoor (<i>Choices for rail</i>)	• Railways have traditionally had a strong national focus. Although international connections have existed in the Netherlands since 1856, difficult coordination between neighbouring countries has hampered intensive cross-border traffic since the inception of the railways. Differences in infrastructure, rolling stock, legislation and regulations, and the coordination of train paths make it complex to operate a train in several countries. • International train passengers are similar to domestic train passengers. They are more likely than average to come from the higher social classes, are young and live in highly urban areas. • Nevertheless, rail freight transport still plays a modest role in the Netherlands. This is true both in terms of the share of weight transported on Dutch territory (5.8% by rail in 2022/24) and in terms of the share of train-km (5% for goods). The share of rail in freight transport is also considerably lower than in other European Union (EU) countries, where an average of 20% of train-km is accounted for by freight trains. This is, of course, entirely due to our location in the delta. For heavy loads transported over long distances, inland waterway transport is often a more attractive option. • For the longer term, the EU is working on a regulation on capacity management, which may render the Dutch capacity allocation rules superfluous. International passenger and	On flight versus rail On EU and national policies On freight versus passenger transport

			freight corridors will be better coordinated internationally, creating capacity for additional trains. Interestingly, this regulation envisages a different, much more powerful role for infrastructure managers, including ProRail. In future, it will be the market regulator who will have to weigh up the capacity requests of all transport operators, with and without concessions, both in the long and short term. This makes ProRail the most important party in the timetable-setting process. • In addition to more market forces, Europe is also focusing on technical harmonisation, so that a single European railway area is created and barriers to international freight and passenger transport are removed. This is an attractive prospect, but it comes at a price. Railways that are suitable for all types of transport have to meet many stringent requirements. This limits flexibility and increases costs. • Although it initially seems like a sustainable choice to really improve international rail, including new European high-speed rail links, based on the long-term qualities of rail in Chapter 4, a different outcome is more likely. Although rail will remain greener than flying for a long time to come, it still takes a lot of energy to run heavy trains at high speeds. New high-speed rail lines are expensive to build, and this money could probably be spent more cost-effectively in other ways to reduce emissions. Of course, there is much room for improvement by better coordinating timetables on an international scale, but this does not require expanding the infrastructure. • Based on four scenario outlines: ○ <i>Declining importance of rail freight transport.</i> Except in the Globally Active scenario, the importance of current international rail freight transport declines in all scenarios. ○ <i>Stimulating international passenger transport.</i> In all scenarios, international passenger transport is improved through better European coordination. In the Regionally rooted scenario, this focuses primarily on short cross-border and intercity traffic to German and Belgian cities. In the other scenarios, all connections improve. Only in the Globally Active scenario is there a focus on new high-speed rail connections. In the other scenarios, the sustainability argument loses its appeal. After all, this involves large investments with relatively low passenger numbers for the <i>happy few</i>.	
KiM	2025	Als beste uit de bus (<i>come out on top</i>)	The analysis is focussed at the possibilities and usage of international bus transport, that can be specified to package trips and separate bus tickets. Regarding separate bus tickets, FlixBus and to a lesser extent BlaBlaCar are the active companies. • International bus transport is an opportunity cross-border travel to destinations about 500km away. With night options this can be extended to 1000km.	Other

			• The offer and network of international bus transport has increased significantly over the last years since the liberalisation of the market. • Compared to rail, the bus does not have a decreasing network of destinations. • Flixbus offers direct bus connections to 14 European countries from the Netherlands, if the indirect connections are included (sometimes even faster) the offer increases exponentially. • The majority of buses starting/ending in the Netherlands do so from Amsterdam (Sloterdijk). Bus routes that cross the Netherlands, often do via Maastricht or Eindhoven and rarely via Amsterdam. • In terms of emission, bus and train both score relatively well related to passenger/km. Flights and cars have 4 to 8 times higher emissions. • The combination of bus and train are actively offered by Flixbus and it is the ambition to increase this combination. • The awareness of international bus transport with separate tickets is relatively small (69% of respondents) and only 15% has used it for cross-border transport from the Netherlands. The group is relatively young. • International bus transport is mostly used for day trips, short holidays or visits to families. • For international bus transport is mainly chosen on the basis of ticket prices, followed by travel time and comfort. The same argumentation, with travel time on the first place, are brought forward when not choosing for a bus. • Next to the awareness, is also the reputation of the international bus questionable. Conclusions • International bus is extremely flexible, without investments • There is a great potential for destinations up to 500km and up to 1000km with night buses and specific destinations (hard to reach by air) • International bus can help the shift from flights to rail. This is expectingly less the case for business travel, but bus can support managing the demand on rail. • There is action needed for raising awareness and improving the reputation of international bus transport. • The comfort at bus stops have to be improved.	
KiM	2025	Marktordening voor het personenvervoer per spoor	Study on market ordering of passenger rail transport, meaning the organisation of competition on the (rail) market.	On EU and national policies

			• Possibilities for market regulation are vertical unbundling of the maintenance of the infrastructure and railway operators; open access for operators; public procurement with multiple operators. • Vertical unbundling is connected to higher costs with busy rail systems, while lower in costs for less used systems. It cannot be estimated what the consequences are for the Netherlands. Vertical unbundling is necessary for more competition among operators. • Open access is often connected to lower prices, also the services are improved. There is no evidence that the demand of passengers are stimulated. • Public procurement may have positive effects on the costs, but is not always the case. The necessary subsidies are limited.	
Ministry of I&W	2025	Internationaal personenvervoer over het spoor – Analyse ten behoeve van een visie	This document focuses on international rail connections for passenger transport. The document provides an overview on the importance of the international train in the Netherlands, the challenges from the point of view for the passenger, operator and infrastructure manager, the policies employed and the ambition scenarios and policy options for the next government. It is an excellent summary, included in Chapter 4. When it comes to scenarios, the report distinguishes: • Development existing corridors: the three main corridors are maintained, with trains running faster, more often and longer. Policies mainly aim at improving existing infrastructure and ticketing and customer experience • European HSL-network: significant investments in infrastructures, through connections to German and French HSR, the expansion of HSL-Zuid and a central international railhub at Amsterdam Zuid/Schiphol • Daily Urban Systems: focus on border regions growing to strong agglomerations. Improvement of regional connections Terneuzen-Gent, Roosendaal-Antwerpen, Heerlen-Aken, Venlo-Düsseldorf and Enschede-Münster. Improvement of connections between cross-border regional trains and national networks • Regional Hubs: as an answer to the housing challenges, focused in the Randstad: the focus is relocated to the borders of the country. This requires that both the connection between border regions and the Randstad and across the border with cities and HSR-networks should be improved.	On EU and national policies
ProRail	2025	Internationaal reizigersvervoer van en naar Nederland	Advice on the improvement to and from the Netherlands. Which high-speed rail junctions across the border connect to border junctions in the Netherlands? Which connections are possible via these junctions? • The cross-border train offer is currently the weak link between high frequent national networks, higher frequencies align with ambitions in France, Germany and Belgium. • Destinations for long-distance:	On EU and national policies On flights versus rail

Connection	via	to
Zuidwest via HSL Zuid	Amsterdam, Schiphol (exl. Londen), Rotterdam and Breda (only IC/EC)	Antwerpen, Brussel, Paris Nord & Roissy Charles de Gaulle, Straatsburg, Genève, Lyon, Marseille and Barcelona, and via London St. Pancras to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Edinburgh
Zuidoost via Zevenaar	Schiphol (potentially), Amsterdam, Utrecht and Arnhem	Duisburg, Düsseldorf, Köln, Frankfurt, Mannheim, Stuttgart, Nürnberg and München, Basel, Zurich, Wenen, Innsbruck, Milaan, Rome
Noordoost via Hengelo	Schiphol (potentially), Amsterdam, Amersfoort, Deventer and Hengelo	Osnabrück, Hannover, Hamburg and Berlin to Kopenhagen, Warszawa and Praha

- Local cross-border connections: Wunderline Groningen – Leer/Bremen, Enschede – Münster/Dortmund, Eindhoven – Düsseldorf, Drielandentrein and Roosendaal – Antwerp

What is the relevance of the various connections to high-speed rail hubs (socio-economic relevance?) across the border?

- International rail transport is growing, between 2018 and 2050 the amount increased from 9,6 to 20,8 million per year. More than two third travels on long-distance corridors. Also border connections via Enschede, Venlo and Heerlen are heavily used.
- Leisure is the greatest travel motif, but the share of professional traffic is relatively high in train and airplane.
- The modal shift, favouring train is possible for destinations as London, Paris, Berlin, Frankfurt, Stuttgart and München as well as Hamburg, Bremen, Lyon and Marseille.
- The train covers about 14% of the Globalization and World Cities-index (that indicates the socio-economic importance of destinations) within 4-6 hours. This could be 28% directly and 50% with 1 change within 6-8 hours. Mainly the UK and south-east corridor towards Cologne and Frankfurt is insufficiently serviced.

			What is needed to improve connections? Opportunities and preconditions. What is already in place? In addition to updating the main corridors, if necessary, also the picture for the other border crossings. • The existing rail network still offers many opportunities via the HSL Zuid and the routes to Germany via Zevenaar and Hengelo. Rapid action is both possible and necessary in this regard: ○ Focus on short-term growth by filling up paths on the existing infrastructure (cooperation with transport operators, international coordination and open access frameworks). ○ Implement ERTMS with priority on the main routes. ○ Investigate the long term for further growth (and make choices). • But there are some preconditions: ○ International performance is below par in terms of punctuality and reliable departure and arrival times. ProRail is concerned about this and is asking for support from the Ministry to take steps in the Netherlands, for example on the HSL Zuid high-speed line, and to ask its partners in neighbouring countries and in Europe to take action. ○ The introduction of new train products is stalling. Transport operators indicate that they need a clear perspective and more certainty in order to be able to make the large investments in equipment and organisation. Assistance from the Ministry is needed in developing a policy harmonised with neighbouring countries in order to fill in the preconditions for the market (e.g. guarantees on capacity and priority order in capacity allocation for open access instruments such as framework agreements). ○ The services on the stations need attention: the international passenger is different from the national one.	
Haskoning	2025	Potentie internationale nachttreinen	Research on international night trains, conclusions: • Capacity of infrastructure: the availability of railway paths, not possible to make long-term agreements on pathways, delays and construction works • Material: availability of rolling stock, financing and accessing the market • Distribution and ticketing: different booking systems Possible policy instruments: • Subsidies or guarantees by the government for night trains due to the challenging business model in the start • International agreements for corridors, booking.	On EU and national policies

Buck Consultants International	2025	Memo Mobiliteitsvisie – Internationaal Personenvervoer (<i>Memo Mobility Vision – International Passenger Transport</i>)	• When considering international passenger transport, the concept of scarcity must also be taken into account, shifting the focus from “providing the capacity demanded” to “balancing scarcity”. • However, there are several reasons why international passenger transport occupies a unique position, making it inappropriate to apply the variants for achieving a fair distribution of scarce capacity. For example, there is much less scope for free consideration and interpretation of accessibility objectives in international passenger transport (objectives in an international and European context; EU regulations). • In addition, it is important to note that the distribution of scarce space for international passenger transport serves the individual citizen, but also the general strategic and economic interests of the Netherlands • Four perspectives described: traveller/citizen (motives of travellers), broader public interest of the Netherlands and the EU (economic/strategic position of the Netherlands), EU context, international accessibility related to national passenger transport (including cross-border hubs such as Düsseldorf, Cologne, Brussels and Liège). • Also focus on international bus transport and related policy.	On EU and national policies
TwynstraGudde	2022	Verkenning naar infrastructuurprojecten met een grensoverschrijdend component tussen Nederland, België en Duitsland	<i>Goods</i> The projects with potential for the Netherlands are: • Northern branch of the Betuweroute: the ongoing corridor study on freight routing in North-East Europe mentions the construction of a new route through the eastern Netherlands towards Bad Bentheim as a possible option. This would be on Dutch territory. The possible connection and any necessary infrastructure adjustments in Germany are highly relevant. • Preparing freight routes for 740-metre freight trains: from 2020, trains with a length of 740 metres must be able to be accommodated on the railways due to the European TENT obligation. To this end, the facilities (e.g. longer sidings and buffer tracks) on the railways must be adequate. • VEZA-Boog: there is no direct connection between Vlissingen and Antwerp and destinations further south, which means that the journey time is too long (from a commercial point of view) due to detours and turning around. The VEZABoog (an infrastructure measure) will provide a direct rail connection between Vlissingen and Antwerp. The SCBA for this project is not positive. • Integrated approach to the Venlo railway yard (including passenger transport): implementation of the integrated approach for the Venlo railway yard, which will accommodate the demand for capacity growth and resolve bottlenecks for, among other	On EU and national policies

			things, the Brabant route (freight) and the international connection (passengers) between Eindhoven and Düsseldorf. Projects with potential for the Netherlands that are already underway or have been given preferential consideration are: • Doubling of the railway line between Kaldenkirchen and Dülken: railway capacity via the Venlo border is currently limited in Germany for both freight and passenger transport. The route is currently single-track and capacity can be increased by doubling the track. This has already been decided in the German Federal Transport Infrastructure Programme (BVWP). Accelerating the decision-making process for the current project may be part of the follow-up process. • Third track Zevenaar-Oberhausen Germany: this project is already being implemented. The implementation of the project will result in major service disruptions; it may be possible to accelerate the implementation of the current project as part of the follow-up process. However, given the challenges surrounding this dossier, this possibility is slim. • Montzenroute railway line and Aachen junction (making it suitable for 740-metre trains): the Montzenroute runs between the port of Antwerp and Aachen and does not cross the Netherlands. The railway line is used for freight transport. From 2020, 740-metre-long trains will be introduced on the line, but this is only possible on tracks where the facilities are adequate (e.g. long sidings and buffer tracks). • Rail Ghent-Terneuzen: this involves improving the existing freight rail link between Terneuzen and Ghent and a possible new link between Axel and Zelzate as part of NorthSeaPort. Agreements have been made on the start of the implementation of sub-projects depending on the level of economic growth in the region. The final decision has not yet been made. <i>Passengers</i> The projects with potential for the Netherlands are: • HST connection (high speed > 200 km/h) Arnhem-Oberhausen: increasing the speed between the Dutch border and the Ruhr area is not part of the DeutschlandTakt plans. This project is closely related to the third track and concerns the same route. • HST connection (high speed > 200 km/h) Utrecht-Arnhem: speed increase between Utrecht and the German border as an upgrade to an HST connection between the Randstad and the Ruhr area. • Capacity improvement on the Antwerp-Brussels railway line for HST and IC-Brussels: in order to increase the frequency of HST trains to Brussels/Paris/London and/or provide a faster connection for the IC-Brussels, additional infrastructure capacity is needed	
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			between Antwerp and Brussels. This could also be achieved by constructing a second rail tunnel on the north-south connection in Brussels. Sufficient infrastructure capacity and available train paths on this connection between Antwerp and Brussels are important for robust international rail access to the Netherlands for passenger transport. Projects with potential for the Netherlands that are already underway or for which a preliminary decision has been made include: • Doubling of the railway line between Kaldenkirchen and Dülken: railway capacity via Venlo is currently limited in Germany for both freight and passenger transport. The railway line between Kaldenkirchen and Dülken is single-track, which limits capacity. The project involves doubling the railway line. This project is included in the German Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan (BVWP). • Third track Zevenaar-Oberhausen Germany: This project is already being implemented. The implementation of the project will result in major service disruptions. It may be possible to accelerate the implementation of the current project as part of the follow-up process. However, given the challenges surrounding this dossier, this possibility is slim.	
EY	2024	Study on passenger and freight rail transport services' prices for final customers	• Freight rail is almost exclusively organised through open-access competition, while competition in the passenger railway market is organised through both types (open-access and Public Service Obligation) • new entrants are faced with barriers to entry. Most notably in the passenger segment, the dominance of incumbent operators on ticket platforms limits the visibility of the non-incumbents to the customers. Bidders for PSO contracts do not always have access to data (e.g. passenger data or rolling stock maintenance data) that are necessary to prepare their bids. • Furthermore, for both passenger and freight segments, access to rolling stock and access to services facilities, such as maintenance centres and track sidings, remains a major obstacle for new entrants given the high costs associated with the investment • A common challenge is the state and capacity of the infrastructure to absorb the increased traffic on the network. • Competition in railways seems to trigger an increase ridership and brings about significant benefits to society. The benefits of competition in railways depend on the form of competition (PSO or OA). • For passenger services, the main ticketing platforms belong to incumbents, which restricts competition's visibility to customers. Increased focus on assuring equal access to ticket platforms for all operators is deemed to be an important aspect with the view to spurring demand for railways.	

			• Rail freight: Competition has resulted in increased market segmentation with non-incumbents focusing on block trains and intermodal transport. Moreover, there is a trend towards vertical integration in the market with shippers and specifically raw material producers setting up their own rail freight operators. The effect of competition on demand varies. • interoperability improvements among the member states' railway networks, including speeding up cross-border procedures and deploying ERTMS, will be needed to foster international rail traffic	
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A.3 Selection on military mobility

Institution	Year	Document	Content
European Commission	2022	Action Plan 2.0	The strategic approach of this Action Plan is centred on the need to develop a well-connected military mobility network consisting of: • multi-modal transport corridors, including roads, railways, air routes, and inland waterways with dual-use transport infrastructure capable of handling military transports; • transport nodes and logistical centres that provide the required host- and transit nation support and sustainment to facilitate the deployment of troops and materiel; • harmonised rules, regulations, procedures, and digitalised administrative arrangements; enhanced sustainability, resilience and preparedness of civilian and military lift and logistical capabilities.
Netherlands Ministry of Defence	2021	National Plan Military Mobility - The Netherlands as a transit nation	• The Netherlands will establish three nationwide multimodal corridors including three logistic hubs to support (large scale) military movements. These corridors will be aligned with the military requirements for military mobility, both physically and geographically, and supported by effective processes and regulations in order to meet the timelines to which the Netherlands has committed itself internationally
Netherlands, Germany, Poland	2024	Agreement to create a military transport corridor	• The agreement supports the development of a military Schengen • The declaration agreed on simplified, standardised and accelerated Europe-wide procedures. It aims to reduce red tape.

European Court of Auditors	2025	EU military mobility Full speed not reached due to design weaknesses and obstacles en route	• Analysis by the Commission and the EEAS found a 94 % overlap between the EU military mobility network and the TEN-T network (combined average for all modes), meaning that transport infrastructure on the TEN-T network would directly improve military mobility. • Overall, we conclude that Action Plan 2.0 lacked sufficiently solid foundations, and progress towards its objectives has been variable. The Commission consulted all key stakeholders to develop the action plan but did not make a robust estimate of the funding required to reach the objectives set. • We found that governance arrangements for military mobility in the EU are complex. There is no single point of contact for military mobility measures • For the three military mobility dual-use infrastructure calls, we found that the military assessment only accounted for a small part of the overall assessment score in the selection process. • In addition, different member states directly bordering one another focused on different types of projects (rail, air, road, etc.), meaning consistency between member states was lacking. Overall, 70 % of EU funding went to rail and road projects • Recommendations: ○ improve the governance arrangements for military mobility in the EU; ○ monitor and report on the progress of each action included in Action Plan 2.0; ○ assess the possibility of using Connecting Europe Facility transport calls to finance dual-use infrastructure projects under the current MFF (2021-2027); ○ take steps to improve the predictability of possible funding for military mobility under the post-2027 MFF; ○ improve the selection process for dual-use infrastructure projects under the post-2027 MFF; ○ make the design of the EU's military mobility actions more focused.
European Commission	2025	White Paper for European Defence	• For their movements, the armed forces need access to critical transport infrastructure that is fit for a dual-use purpose. They need both the availability of all transport modes and multiple routings across the European Union and connections to partner countries. For this reason, the EU has identified four priority multi-modal corridors (rail, road, sea and air) for military mobility for short-notice and largescale movements of troops and equipment. These corridors need substantial and urgent investments to facilitate the movement of troops and military equipment. Within these four priority corridors, 500 hot-spot projects have already been earmarked that need to be upgraded urgently (such as widening railway tunnels, reinforcing road and railway bridges, expanding port and airport terminals).

European Commission	2025	Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2025/675 of 4 April 2025 amending Regulation (EU) No 1302/2014 concerning a technical specification for interoperability relating to the rolling stock — locomotives and passenger rolling stock subsystem of the rail system in the European Union and Implementing Decision 2011/665/EU on the register of authorised types of railway vehicles	New legislation facilitating the authorisation of personnel carriages that can be integrated in freight trains. This means that in military transports, personnel will be able to travel with their equipment and ammunition across all of Europe's main rail networks.
CER	2025	Rail's Vital Role in Enabling the Future of EU Defence	• Improving civilian and enhanced military transport services requires a systemic approach to the railway system, Improve the overall interoperability of the railways system as a whole • Increase financing, mainstreaming railways into defence programmes and adopting efficient procurement will be key. Mainstreaming defence needs into relevant transport policies, programmes and funding instruments • Enhanced Cooperation for better understanding of needs and efficient planning of military logistics and activities. Create a functional governance system (at the EU and Member State level, as well as with relevant institutions such as NATO) to enable military and civilian regular coordination and cooperation

EPC	2024	Military mobility 2.0 revisited: Lessons learnt	• In total, for the three calls, the Commission supported 95 military mobility projects with €1.74 billion.³ The available budget has been exhausted. • A further notable development was the signing of a trilateral agreement to establish a corridor for military mobility⁴ in late January 2024 by the Netherlands, Germany and Poland. The aim of the agreement is to speed up processes and simplify procedures. • Another significant development took place in July 2024 when Romania, Bulgaria and Greece signed an agreement to speed up cross border movement of troops and equipment by “enhancing transport corridors to respond to military mobility needs, by creating road and rail supply lines between the participating states, reducing peace time bureaucracy and maximising efficiency in case of emergency situations”. • Efforts to advance military mobility in some member states are taking place at a higher pace than in others. This is partly due to the fact that the strategic thinking about military mobility occurs in silos and there is limited cooperation among stakeholders at national level. The Lithuanian and the Finnish cases stand out among the best practices that overcome these challenges • The EU future funding for military mobility should be increased (as well as from Member States).
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A.4 Relevant projects in the cross-border region

Project	Aim	Content
EUREKARAIL	Aim: the improvement of concrete cross-border rail connections in Limburg and North-Brabant.	• In an effort to improve train connections between major cities in Limburg and North Brabant with other countries, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment joined forces with the provinces of the two regions between 2018 and 2022 to launch EurekaRail. • The connection between Liège - Maastricht - Heerlen - Aachen was improved with some delay (investment in doubling the railway line between Heerlen and Landgraaf). • EurekaRail also worked on two IC connections with German cities: Eindhoven - Düsseldorf and Eindhoven - Aachen - Cologne. Both routes currently require a transfer, which increases the total travel time. • Result: it is not yet certain whether a direct train from Eindhoven to Düsseldorf will be running by the end of 2026. When and whether there will be a direct train from Eindhoven to Aachen and on to Cologne is currently unclear.

EMRConnect	Interreg Project 2019-2023	- To create a sustainable network, EMR Connect is tackling existing challenges in cross-border local transport. These range from improvements in fares and services, digitisation of ticket and passenger information, to the use of e-buses and the networking of different modes of transport. Activities - Preparatory work for the direct train connection between Aachen and Liège from December 2023 - Best practice workshops for cross-border mutual learning in the field of transport planning - Introduction of a cross-border bicycle ticket (Euregio ticket Fahrrad) - Marketing and information about valid fares and tickets for the launch of the direct train connection between Aachen and Maastricht (RE18) - Integration of bus line 350 between Aachen and Vaals into the AVV fare system - Preliminary study on the introduction of cashless payment options on ASEAG buses
MaaS Mobility as a Service	Plan, book and pay for your trip with a single app, even if it involves cross-border travel.	- Arriva launches MaaS pilot in Limburg - Arriva has been selected through a tender process as the service provider for the MaaS pilot in Limburg. In collaboration with its client, Arriva launched campaigns in 2021, starting in Limburg, to encourage consumers and businesses to switch to sustainable forms of mobility. - After Limburg, Glimble by Arriva will also be introduced in the rest of the Netherlands.
Easy Connect	Ticketing-Project easyConnect Lead partner AVV Aachen with partners in the Netherlands	- In the second pilot of the innovative ticketing project easyConnect, the German electronic fare (eTarif) 'eezy' is linked to the Dutch fare. This means that both fares can be used with the check-in and check-out system via an app. - Until now, different apps and tickets were required to travel by train on the RE 18 between Germany and the Netherlands. Now, with easyConnect, it is possible to book tickets entirely digitally in the naveo app. - Ambition: expansion of the digital check-in and check-out option to Belgium and the Netherlands.

A.5 Funds

Fund		Description
Interreg	Interreg North-West-Europe Interreg Europe	European Territorial Cooperation is organised under four strands of Interreg (cross-border, transnational, interregional and outermost regions). As Amsterdam is not located in a border region, nor a outermost region, the programmes under the strands transnational (Interreg B) and interregional (Interreg C) are possible. Specifically Amsterdam is covered under the B-strand of Interreg North-West-Europe and

	Interreg North Sea	Interreg North Sea and the C-strand of Interreg Europe. Given the objective of sustainable transport, Interreg North-West-Europe and Interreg Europe may be most interesting, as Interreg North Sea is more limited in geographic scope and focused at the maritime border. Interreg NWE has for example the priority to enhance the inclusivity of society and labour markets through integration and enhance sustainable tourism. Interreg Europe also has Sustainable TEN-T and sustainable mobility specifically as topics, next to e.g. sustainable tourism, policy governance and social inclusion. Amsterdam is or was already participating in the following transport related projects: • Integrated transport solutions to steer NWE's just energy transition • ASSET: zet in op begripsvorming rondom het concept circular built environment (CBE) middels het zoeken van innovatieve ruimtelijke oplossingen binnen samenwerkingen op meerdere schalen binnen de Eurodelta • IN MOBILITY - Reducing Mobility Poverty in Urban Areas • MoLo Hubs Project - combines mobility hubs and logistics services to improve quality of urban life and boost mobility transition • Shared & Digital Mobility Hubs (ShareDiMobiHub) is an Interreg North-Sea project that focuses on increasing the introduction and uptake of shared mobility hubs.
	Interreg post-2027	Cohesion policy post-2027 is currently debated. In the EU budget proposal of the European Commission, €10 billion is budgeted for Interreg cooperation for the years 2028-2034. This is slightly higher compared to the current programming period.
Proposal Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034	European Competitiveness Fund	A new European Competitiveness Fund will invest in strategic technologies, to benefit the entire Single Market, as recommended in the Letta and Draghi Reports. The Fund, operating under one rulebook, and offering a single gateway to funding applicants, will simplify and accelerate EU funding and catalyse private and public investment. It will focus its support on four areas: - clean transition and decarbonization; - digital transition; • health, biotech, agriculture and bioeconomy; • defence, and space.

		In the proposal €131 billion is earmarked for Defence and Space, that is 5 times higher than the current period. The expenses should also result in dual-use infrastructure improvements, including through the Connecting Europe Facility.
Connecting Europe Facility	Current period	€25.8 billion From 2021-2027 to support transport infrastructure projects €11.2 billion From the cohesion fund for eligible countries €1.75 billion For military mobility to make infrastructure fit for military & civilian use Responsible: CINEA (European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency): For CEF Transport and CEF Energy, CINEA manages the calls for proposals Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO): For CEF Transport and CEF Digital, projects must be approved by the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. Open calls Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Facility (CEF AFIF) Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Facility (AFIF), formerly known as CEF Transport Blending Facility, is an instrument intended for projects that are ready for market but still need funding. The focus within this instrument is on the rapid deployment of zero emission alternative fuels. This instrument covers both the TEN-T Core Network and the Comprehensive Network. CEF AFIF has been open for applications again in 2025 and 2026. Contact RVO. Example: The public hydrogen refuelling stations at Rhooen and Arnhem (the Netherlands) have been established through the Connecting Europe Facility funding programme
	Future period (as proposed)	Within the €2 trillion post-2027 MFF, the Commission proposes to maintain a dedicated budget line for European transport with a newly configured CEF. The Commission proposes to endow the Facility with €81

		billion, €51.5 billion of which will be dedicated to the transport envelope, including €17 billion for military mobility. ⁹⁸
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⁹⁸ See: <https://www.cer.be/cer-press-releases/european-commission-confirms-continued-support-for-rail-in-proposed-2028-2034-eu-budget-framework>.

A.6 Summary of screening Dutch policy documents

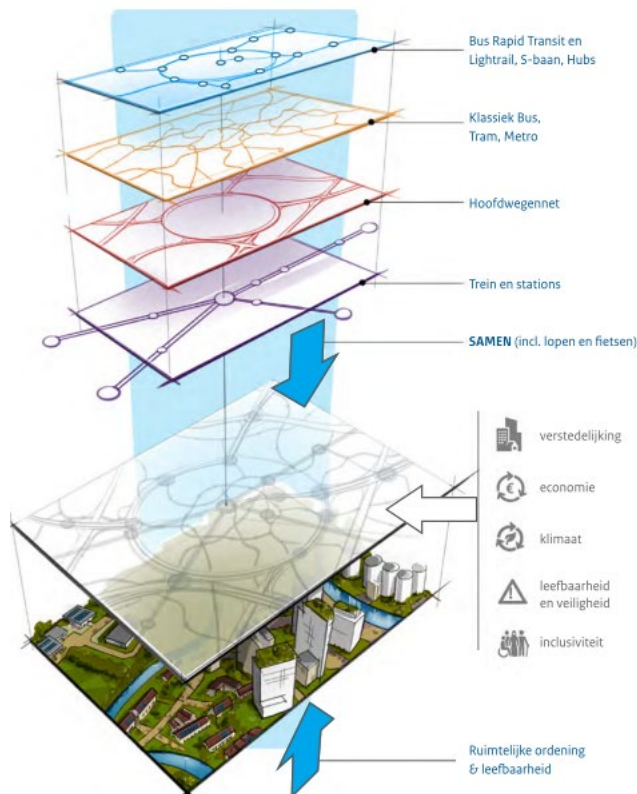
Minister I&W	2024	Reactie op initiatiefnota 'Alle seinen op groen'
Ministry I&W	2022	Werkprogramma Internationaal Spoor 2022
Ministry I&W	2023	Naar een Toekomstbeeld Spoorgoederenvervoer
Ministry I&W	2021	Ontwikkelagenda Toekomstbeeld OV, nu instappen naar 2040
ProRail	2024	Rapportage Mogelijkheden voor beter lange afstandstreinvervoer van en naar Nederland en advies voor mogelijke strategie
Ministry I&W	2024	Situatieschets Toekomstbeeld Openbaar Vervoer 2040
Ministry I&W	2025	MIRT Overzicht 2025
Ministry I&W	2025	Toekomstbeeld Spoorgoederenvervoer 2050
Ministry I&W	2025	Ontwikkelingen internationaal personenvervoer per spoor

The logic and coherence of the documents should be considered as the following: there is a Mobility Vision 2050, with wider visions for public transport and freight transport separately and strategy documents per modality specifically. Due to the fact that it is a caretaker government, the visions are less visionary but more descriptive.



Development agenda for the future of public transport: getting on board now for 2040 (2021)

This document is a follow-up that gives substance to the aims and ambitions formulated in the 'Contouren van het Toekomstbeeld OV 2040'. It contains different options and choice.



4.1 Overzicht menukaarten

	MENUKAARTEN
Eerste stappen vanuit autonome ontwikkelingen	Een robuuste basis
Hoofdkeuzes netwerk: Focus op de kracht van het OV	- Hoogfrequente stedenring - Versnellen naar de landsdelen - Internationaal verbinden - Kort grensoverschrijdend verbinden - OV in hoogstedelijke gebieden - Hoogwaardig OV in en tussen de regio's
Hoofdkeuzes: Drempelloos van deur-tot-deur	Knooppunten van de toekomst
Hoofdkeuzes: Veilig, duurzaam en efficiënt OV	Innovatief en duurzaam

Robust Basis

Regarding a robust basis, it is mentioned that, among others, a choice has to be made for the route of the freight transport between, mainly, the port of Rotterdam and Germany (and North-East Europe). The current routing is via Bad Bentheim, but there are five other routes. Furthermore capacities need to be enlarged for nodes such as Utrecht Centraal, Amsterdam Sloterdijk, 's Hertogenbosch, Maastricht, Nijmegen, Schiphol, Zwolle en Eindhoven.

International connection

There is also a 'menu' on international connections, where a focus is placed on a select number of high-quality connections from the Netherlands to surrounding European strategic hubs and economic core areas or metropolises, connecting to networks in neighbouring countries. Via the HSL-Zuid, there is a good connection to Belgium and France. Gains in terms of time is possible when skipping certain stations. Good connections to Germany should be made, where the spatial-economic focus is places on Amsterdam-Arnhem-Duisburg-Keulen-Frankfurt and further. An adequate connection to the Ruhrarea entails minimally an hourly service with good connections to ICE-nodes such as Hamburg and Berlin. Night trains are promoted with the European Commission for services to 1250 kilometres.

Why	What
• Is crucial for the competitiveness of the Netherlands as part of the Eurodelta region. • Makes the Netherlands more attractive to tourists from Western Europe. • Provides a sustainable, attractive and reliable alternative for short-haul air traffic up to 6 hours travel time in Northwest Europe and strengthens Schiphol's position as an intercontinental hub. • Meets the European Union's commitment to an international rail network.	• HSL-Zuid: Brussel, Parijs, Londen – increase frequency • IC Amsterdam-Frankfurt: increase frequency and speed • Den Haag – Eindhoven – Düsseldorf: new direct connection • Amsterdam-Brussel: increase speed • IC Berlin: routing via Zwolle • Wunderline Groningen-Bremen: new direct connection • Eindhoven-Brussel: new direct connection
It is acknowledged that the Netherlands is geographically not centrally located in Europe and therefore not a natural destination for all international day/night connections. It is therefore important that the Netherlands is well-connected to international nodes across the border, such as Brussels and Duisburg. This requires cooperation and coordination with Germany (such as Deutschlandakt) and Belgium and European Commission	

Short cross-border

This contains proposals for new short connections in border regions as well as proposals for prolonging existing train connections across the border to a strategic node. Here, the bus - also in the form of Bus Rapid Transit - is emphatically an option. The best opportunities (and ambitions) are in those places where cities on both sides are close to the border and thus have a potential transport tension. Exploitation costs can be limited by connection strategic nodes in the Netherlands to strategic nodes across the border (not too far away). These strategic nodes include: Breda, Eindhoven, Arnhem, Enschede/Hengelo, Maastricht and Groningen.

Why	What
• Strengthens the economic position of the border regions and increases the reach of facilities and educational institutions. • Makes living in the border region more attractive through better access to facilities, greenery, work and education across the border. • Stimulates cross-border activities and social cohesion in the border region. • Ensures the connection of national networks in the border areas of Belgium and Germany.	• Roosendaal-Antwerpen: improve connection • Randstad – Aken: new connection by prolonging • Weert-Hamont (Antwerpen): new connection • Extra Drielandentrein: improve connection • Amsterdam-Luik: new connection by prolonging • Zwolle-Münster: new connection

Work programme International Rail 2022

The work programme starts with an overview of current and future train connections. There are nine border crossing points for trains, where about 10 million passengers crossed the border in 2018 and 2019. About 4 million passengers travelled long distances, for example Paris, London and Frankfurt.

Figure 1: Current and future train connections



Policy developments

- Investigation of open assess for international connections, that fall under the concession of NS: IC Brussel, IC Berlin, HSL-Zuid, ICE to Frankfurt, night train to Vienna and the cross-border connections Roosendaal-Antwerpen and Maastricht-Luik.
- Lobby for Lelylijn as part of TEN-T corridor
- Ticketing: OV card works on Heerlen-Aken, Enschede-Gronau, Groningen-Bremen. MaaS-app works on NRW-Limburg, explore to expand to rest of Netherlands (NS) and Belgium.

Infrastructural developments North

- Wunderline Groningen-Leer-Bremen: by 2024 increase of speed and rebuild Friesenbrücke. Investigation to the added value for connection to Bremen and further to Hamburg and Scandinavia.
- Emmen-Coevorden-Bad Bentheim-Rheine: planned exploitation by end 2025

Infrastructural developments East

- Amsterdam-Berlin: ambition to increase speed by 2024 by half an hour. On long-term also a different route via Zwolle next or instead of current route via Utrecht-Arnhem-Ruhrgebiet possible. As of 2030 more gains in speed can be achieved via investments in Deutschlandtakt (possibly even hourly service).
- Hengelo-Bielefeld: monitoring accuracy service
- Zwolle-Enschede-Münster/Dortmund: lobby for including connection in TEN-T comprehensive network, elektrification Münster-Gronau by 2028.
- Amsterdam-Frankfurt/Basel: multiple ambitions for this corridor, including increase in speed and frequency with bottlenecks. Deutschlandtakt might have positive impact as of 2030 (hourly service).
- Arnhem-Düsseldorf: as 2025 start concession RE19 to 2035, next to ICE Frankfurt
- Nijmegen-Kleef: no ambitions currently to reintroduce the cross-border rail connection

Infrastructural developments South

- Eindhoven-Düsseldorf: Arriva RE13 is currently running between Venlo and Düsseldorf, planned to have a direct connection between Eindhoven-Düsseldorf as of end 2026.
- Eindhoven-Heerlen-Aken: Currently possibility to travel from Heerlen to Aken and Herzogenrath (connecting to Aken and Düsseldorf). It is the ambition to improve the connection Eindhoven-Aken.
- Drielandentrein Maastricht-Heerlen-Aken
- Weert-Hamont: plans to reactivate the rails also for passenger transport, currently only freight transport
- Roosendaal-Antwerpen: ambition to increase frequency and speed. Realisation of ERTMS is crucial (planned 2027-2028).
- Amsterdam-Brussel: the new ICNG-trains are compatible for Belgium
- Amsterdam-London: via Amsterdam South by 2036
- Amsterdam-Paris: via Amsterdam South by 2036

Vision of the future on freight rail transport (2024)

Figures

- Rail freight transport in the Netherlands is almost entirely internationally oriented.
- Most transport is to Germany, from port of Rotterdam via the Betuweroute to Germany.
- Rail freight transport has increased by 4,3% in 2022 compared with a year earlier. Almost 75% had as destination Germany, followed by Italy. The expected growth is towards (north)east of Europe (such as Poland).
- In the Green Deal, the European Commission sets the goal of a 50 per cent increase in goods transported by rail by 2030 and 100 per cent by 2050 compared to 2015. For the Netherlands, this means a volume of 60-65 million tonnes in 2030 and a volume of 80-90 million tonnes in 2050.

Challenges

- One train can replace 50 trucks. Yet, the progress is slow and decreasing.

- Investments in sustainable trains are regarded as too expensive.
- In the Netherlands, ERTMS is currently being implemented on about eight routes. Besides sections like the Betuweroute where ERTMS is already available, for freight transport, construction up to the border crossing with Belgium and on the Brabant route is particularly important. Rolling out ERTMS throughout the Netherlands will take at least until after 2040.
- About 10% of freight transport contains dangerous products, it is to be investigated how measures could help, such as making more optimal use of the Betuwe Route, the use of pipelines for the transport of hazardous substances and the realisation of Freight Routing North-East through Eastern Netherlands (GNOE) and other new rail freight connections to spare urban areas and thus spread the burden more.
- There are also concerns about available capacity on the railways. After all, rail space is scarce and growth in domestic and international passenger traffic is also anticipated. The industry would therefore like to see investment to increase capacity on the current rail infrastructure. This can be done, for instance, by making the track suitable for trains with a length of 740 metres, by making smarter use of available capacity at railway yards, and by investing in anticipated bottlenecks in the network.

Situation overview Vision for public transport in 2040 (2024)

This report does not include international rail as such. It only mentions the developments regarding ERTMS:

“At the same time, a single European rail system that meets and contributes to Europe's agreed climate targets is being jointly worked on within Europe. An international system that fits together well, in technology and in cooperation, in order to create more and more sustainable international connections. In which replacement of old techniques, innovation and digitalisation play an important role. At European level, agreements are regularly made on this which member states implement in their own countries, and regulations are made or updated that apply (directly) to each member state. This includes regulations with general requirements, such as the TEN-T directive and capacity allocation. In ProRail's estimation, for example, to fully comply with TEN-T requirements on the networks as envisaged in the revision, an investment of €15.4 billion is needed.¹⁰⁰ There are no funds available for this now. In addition, technical and operational requirements are also formulated by Europe, such as the Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSIs). These European requirements not only contribute to a single European rail system, but are also a necessary development for the national system. An example is the roll-out of the digital train protection system European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS).

At European level, it has been agreed that each member state will implement this system. This will benefit safety, capacity and uniformity on the European rail network. ERTMS is also an important development nationally. For instance, ERTMS replaces the current ATB system. This is outdated and based on technology from the 1950s. Eventually, breakdowns increase towards the end of its service life, there are fewer and fewer mechanics available who can still handle this old technology and parts are no longer available. It is no longer allowed to implement a train protection system other than ERTMS. ERTMS also forms the platform for further digitalisation of the railways. The rollout of ERTMS is a long-term and complex task. Recent revisions of the planning and cost estimate showed that a higher amount of money and longer time is needed to make train protection and related systems ready for the future. Indeed, the rollout of ERTMS does not stand alone. With unchanged milestones, the costs until 2031 could exceed the budget available

in this period (€3.5 billion) by a rounded €1.5 billion (price level 2022). Therefore, an update of the ERTMS programme is currently taking place.”

Reaction on initiative memorandum ‘Alle seinen op groen’ (2024)

- The outline agreement also announced that the government will work on a vision for international rail transport. The aim is to present this vision to Parliament in the first half of 2025.
- For this reason, the government will present a proposal for cross-border rail transport, including the connection of five train stations to stations on high-speed lines just across the border. Various studies are being carried out for this purpose and this proposal for cross-border rail transport will be shared with Parliament in the first half of 2025.
- The Ministry is currently working with its partners on improving international connections on the basis of the international rail work programme. Within the International Rail Passengers Platform.
- In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of international train passengers. The growth is mainly on medium-distance connections to Brussels/London/Paris and to Frankfurt.
- For example, the Netherlands (including Schiphol as an important hub) is already connected to the high-speed rail network to the south and west, and the Dutch network is connected across the eastern border to a number of important high-speed rail hubs just across the border in Germany, such as Duisburg and Cologne.
- The ProRail study⁹⁹ shows that there is still potential for growth in the number of trains and passengers towards 2035 within the existing and available international train paths.
- International rail traffic will, so to speak, “piggyback” on larger network interventions. It is important that a good connection is found with the plans of our neighbouring countries. This analysis can serve as a basis for more in-depth consultations with transport operators, stakeholders and partners across the border, which are yet to be organised. The House will be informed in more detail about the possibilities and impossibilities that the government sees in this regard in the proposal on cross-border rail transport.
- In addition, 17 major European railway companies have drawn up an agreement (Agreement on Journey Continuation, AJC) on the continuation of train journeys in the event of disruption. Although the AJC is an agreement between different transport operators, it does not mean that passengers can automatically use another transport operator in the event of disruption. The (willingness to) cooperate between transport operators is still limited in this respect.
- Good examples can fuel this discussion. As part of the MaaS pilot in Limburg, an application has been developed that allows passengers to check in and out via their mobile phones. This application has also been rolled out to the international connection to Aachen/Cologne. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management is currently in talks with its Belgian partners about scaling up this initiative to the Belgian side of the Aachen-Maastricht-Liège connection.

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<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/openbaar-vervoer/documenten/rapporten/2024/12/01/bijlage-2-onderzoek-prorail-internationaal-reizigersvervoer-geredigeerd>

- The Capacity Allocation Decision sets minimum service levels for international train services to ensure that they can run alongside concession transport.¹⁰⁰
- In the coming years, we hope to take visible steps towards improved or new connections for international passengers with the IC Amsterdam-Brussels, the IC Eindhoven-Düsseldorf and the regional connection between Coevorden and Rheine.
- Eindhoven-Heerlen-Aachen: The first step has been taken; passengers can now travel between Aachen and Eindhoven twice an hour with a cross-platform transfer at Heerlen station. The second step (and the final goal) is a direct intercity service. It has become apparent that this is more complicated than expected, both legally and financially. At the recommendation of the province of Limburg, the IC Aachen steering group has decided to focus primarily on a full IC connection. In parallel, Arriva has submitted a notification for open access for the Eindhoven-Aachen service throughout the day from December 2025. In mid-2025, ProRail will assess whether the necessary capacity is available for this.
- Weert-Hamont-Antwerp: Based on the cost estimate, a decision on how to proceed will be made with the regional partners, the Belgian government and the sector.
- Zwolle-Twente-Münster: Diesel trains currently run on the Enschede-Gronau section, with connections to Münster and Dortmund. On the German side, the decision has been made to electrify the Gronau-Münster connection. Germany wants this to be completed by 2030. Given the importance of these connections for the region, the national government and the region are striving to continue to offer this connection for passengers travelling to and from Germany and, where possible, to further develop it by electrifying the railway between Enschede and Gronau and connecting connections at Enschede station so that incoming German trains can continue towards Hengelo/Zwolle.
- Groningen-Oldenburg-Bremen: For the Wunderline, work is underway to complete construction phase 1, which will reduce travel time by 17 minutes by 2025. In addition, the German partners are working on the restoration of the Friesenbrücke. These projects are expected to be completed on time so that train services between Groningen and Leer can resume in mid-2025, with a 17-minute reduction in travel time compared to before. Groningen-Bremen is part of the extensive TEN-T network. The international potential of the Lely line is currently being investigated.
- Ticketing: ticketing. In Limburg and North Rhine-Westphalia, it is already possible to travel easily across borders with various MaaS pilots. This could also be applied to the Wunderline.
- Improving interoperability and a level playing field: One of the biggest challenges in realising an international connection is taking into account the differences between regulations, systems and requirements that apply in the Netherlands and in other countries (in particular neighbouring countries). The Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management is working on a policy framework for open access, which will be sent to parliament at the end of this year.
- The new TEN-T Regulation stipulates, for example, that the core rail network must be electrified by 2030 at the latest, the extended core network by 2040 and the comprehensive network by 2050. Electrification stands for a sustainable energy supply that is attractive for cross-border transport, precisely in order to improve interoperability. The Ministry of

¹⁰⁰ https://www.internetconsultatie.nl/capaciteitsverdeling_dienstregelingsjaar_2027/b1

Infrastructure and Water Management is now considering the further implementation of the recently revised TEN-T Regulation, for example for ERTMS.

- The European Commission is preparing a proposal to revise the train driver's licence. This will also address language requirements. During the consultation on this revision, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management argued for more flexible solutions for language requirements for train drivers, so that, for example, train drivers and traffic controllers can use English.

Future outlook for rail freight transport (2025)

The future outlook for Rail Freight Transport provides an overview of the added value of rail freight transport, the direction in which rail freight transport should develop, and what can be expected from the national government in this regard. However, due to the caretaker status, it is up to a next government to decide on the level of ambition and implementation agenda (starting 2026-2030).

In 2050, multimodal transport is the norm, meaning that for long-distance transport (domestic and international), it is common practice to use lorries only for pre- and post-transport and inland waterway or rail transport for long distances. Towards 2050, the government aims to develop rail freight transport towards a qualitative mode of transport, with five starting points:

- Invest in existing rail: challenges regarding the maintenance, limitation of spatial effects and new challenges as military mobility and climate adoption. These investments are made in a corridor-oriented approach;
- Optimally use existing rail capacity: the construction of new rail is limited as much as possible. Instead, measures aiming at the better use and organisation of capacities are prioritised;
- Invest in measures with a structural effect;
- Concentrate on dual-use: the challenges regarding military mobility overlap with those of rail freight transport. Measures benefitting both (win-win) should be prioritised.
- Rail freight transport should be considered integrally, meaning in connection with other modes of transport and railway in general.

The government invests in the connection between different modes of transport, stimulating multimodality. Rail freight transport is largely depending on pre- and post-transport, demanding a qualitative connection between transport by road and rail. In the Agenda freight transport, the focus is placed on the multimodal freight on the top corridors East, South-East and South. These include important rail connections, such as the border crossings of Zevenaar, Venlo and the Belgian border. Implementation agreements are (to be) made with Tilburg, Venlo, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, North Sea Port, Moerdijk and Chemelot/Stein. Destinations such as Northeast-Europa and North-Italy rely on rail, as inland waterways are not an (good) option.

The policy strategy for rail freight transport is structured around three strategic objectives that form the pillars of rail freight transport policy, namely: 1) ensuring good connections with other modes of transport, 2) strengthening its strengths, and 3) ensuring good connections for rail

freight transport. Resulting in the following priorities, distinguishing between what is done and what could be done:

Priority	What is done	What could be done
A reliable rail freight network	• In 2024, the basic standards for railways are adopted, meaning that is chosen for maintenance of existing rail network • Attention for port-rail: mainly regarding Rotterdam • Improvement Zee-Zevenaar: programme continued until the end of 2026 • Vision public transport 2040: general discussion on maintenance and improvements	• Introduce KPI, by formulating indicators measuring the performance of freight transport • Regular and structured consultations between ProRail, transport companies and stakeholders • Improve bilateral cooperation, with consultation between ProRail and other infrastructure managers
Smooth traffic flow on corridors	• Execution of projects as 'Derde Spoor' in Germany and 'Boog van Meteren' • Implementation of TEN-T, for freight especially allowing 740 meters long trains, electrification and implementation ERTMS. The first priority is North Sea Rhine Mediterranean and the North Sea Baltic corridors (by 2030) and then the extended core by 2040 and the rest by 2050 • Monitor usage fee system, in order that rail is competitive to road • Rules on capacity allocation: a revision aims to give more room for freight transport • International consultation, where the Netherlands is represented in European and international consortia. The focus is on TEN-T, the European rail freight corridors, capacity managements, CEF funds and military mobility. Bilaterally the focus is Germany, Belgium/Luxembourg, Switzerland/Italy, Poland and France. • Stimulate European innovation	• Implementing Vision on public transport 2040 and the network investments. The priorities are facilitating 740 meters trains on the main corridors, make a decision about GNOE and improving the capacity of Sophiatunnel. • Accelerate implementation of 740 meters trains • Improve affordability, in relation to road • Dual-use investments, mainly for military ports • Intensify bilateral cooperation, coordinate investments and improve the flows at the border sections • Routes with border section Oldenzaal towards East-Europe need particular attention, as both quantity and quality is lacking. Much is dependent on the investigation GNOE, expected in 2026.

Efficient settlement first and last mile	• Capacity increasing projects • Implementation 740 meter trains • Reduce fees for holding yards, by providing a subsidy. Still costs are high compared to other states • Last mile pilots • Optimisation Kijfhoek, the biggest emplacement of the Netherlands • Improve data exchange	• Expand 740m potential, such as emplacements Botlek, Pernis and Tilburg • Better usage capacities • Digitalise freight transport • Reduce fees even more, through subsidies and the financial frameworks for ProRail.
Optimal usage Betuweroute	• Construction of 'Derde Spoor' • Construction of 'Boog van Meteren' • Investigation of GNOE • Investigation pricing options, to make the Betuweroute more attractive to relocate to from the Brabanthroute and Bentheimroute.	• Pilots pricing options • Improving the routes towards the Betuweroute • Investigation of licencing as instrument to use the Betuweroute

It is up to the next government to decide upon the levels of ambition per policy priority. A possible revision of the strategy could be implemented by end 2026/begin 2027, depending on the results of GNOE and the Integral Mobility analysis 2026.

Developments in international passenger transport by rail (2025)

The letter emphasises that choices about ambitions and measures on international rail are up to the next government. Thus, the letter is less visionary as envisioned under 'Strategy International Rail'. The secretary of state acknowledges the role of international rail transport and the fact that the Netherlands has an intensively used rail network, with regulations forming the basis for capacity allocation. According to ProRail, growth in the number of trains is still possible until 2035. Although the letter is focussed at passenger rail, it is strongly emphasised that it is closely linked to the Future outlook for rail freight transport: rail transport is taking place on a mixed rail network, where capacity has to be divided between national passenger transport, international passenger transport and freight transport. Also the challenges to rail are related, resulting in an integrated mobility system pursued by the government.

In the caretaker status, the following developments were shared:

- Investments in the cooperation with neighbouring states are continued, as on all three international corridors (HSL-Zuid, Bad Bentheim and Emmerich) all have more growth potential;
- On the corridor Amsterdam-Frankfurt-Vienna-Budapest, discussions are started on how to better align rail paths and schedules;
- In the framework of regional cross-border connections: Coevorden-Bad Bentheim will run again as of end 2026, activities are employed on the improvement of the connection Groningen-Leer-Bremen and ProRail is investigating the electrification of Zwolle-Münster.

Finally, it is aimed to have an IC-connection running from Eindhoven to Düsseldorf as of 2026, in close cooperation with Verkehrsverbund Rhein-Ruhr (VRR).

- Regarding ticketing, the government shares that is working actively on improving international ticketing by providing input to the European developments but also by discussions with NS on reselling tickets of other operators and offering through tickets (one ticket with multiple operators).

It is up to a next government to make political decisions regarding the ambition and policy instruments. In this regard, a supporting analysis of the Ministry provides an overview of four possible ambition scenarios (discussed under Chapter 4).

Some plans across the border

Deutsche Bahn, Konzept Deutschlandtakt

By the second half of 2020, long-distance trains will arrive in Germany's biggest cities every 30 minutes - and always at the same time. Connections in regional transport will be perfectly synchronised with the frequency of the hubs. This brings benefits: more trains, better connections, shorter journey times. If you were travelling from Mannheim to Munich, you could catch a train every 30 minutes and reach your destination in just over 2 hours. Nowadays, that takes almost 3 hours.

Thanks to the integrated timetable, bottlenecks in the rail network can also be accurately identified and prioritised, and the infrastructure measures needed to solve them can be implemented in phases. This also benefits the competitiveness of freight transport. From the outset, freight capacity requirements have been included in the German timetable on an equal footing at regular intervals - for higher, more predictable and more flexible transport capacity.

German railways are changing: More rail freight and an integrated timetable at regular intervals for passenger transport - so that all train connections run smoothly. To this end, Germany's largest cities will be connected by regular long-distance passenger trains - and reliably every 30 minutes at the same time. Regional transport will be aligned with the half-hourly frequency at hub stations. This will also ensure extended mobility in rural regions.

To this end, our rail network will be purposefully expanded. The goal: more travel connections, optimised, well-coordinated connections and, all in all, shorter journey times in passenger transport.

Examples:

- **Stuttgart-Berlin 4:34 instead of 5:38 (-1:04)**
- **Berlin-Düsseldorf 3:32 hours instead of 4:13 hours (-0:41 hours)**
- **Görlitz-Nuremberg 4:08 instead of 5:25 (-1:17)**
- **Lübeck-Berlin 2:12 instead of 2:40 (-0:28 hours)**
- **Eisenach-Cottbus 2:52 instead of 3:46 (-0:54 hours)**

However, it is not only rail passenger transport that will benefit from the Deutschlandtakt, but also rail freight. This is because rail passenger transport and rail freight have equal rights within the Deutschlandtakt. Therefore, the Deutschlandtakt is planned in such a way that freight transport capacity, speed and flexibility are also increased at attractive travel times. This allows more freight to be transferred from road to environmentally friendly rail transport.

See also the annotation of *Treinreiziger*: <https://www.treinreiziger.nl/deutschlandtakt-toekomstige-duitse-dienstregeling-naar-nederlands-voorbeeld/>

Belgian federal coalition agreement

- The federal government reaffirms the public service contract with NMBS, the performance contract with Infrabel, and the multi-year investment plans. It will make maximum use of the degrees of freedom available within these contracts to bring them into line with the objectives of the coalition agreement. The rail vision will be adjusted in accordance with the coalition agreement so that the targets of 30% more passengers, punctuality above 90%, 50% new trains and a 30% reduction in the number of trains taken out of service can be achieved. We will provide sufficient resources and personnel to implement this.
- We will improve the international high-speed rail connection between HST hubs and Zaventem airport and also improve the Brussels-Luxembourg line.
- We will encourage European cooperation in the field of rail transport in order to achieve more and better European rail connections, both for freight and passenger transport. We therefore advocate a genuine European strategy to make the train a viable alternative to air travel. In this context, it is crucial that the national airport is better connected to international train services. We are therefore connecting Zaventem airport with direct high-speed train connections between the high-speed train hubs in all our neighbouring countries. We are also committed to night trains operated by private companies. The government undertakes to remove all possible technical and regulatory obstacles to the development of night trains, as well as to the development of competition or new lines on high-speed connections. We are taking into account the impact on domestic rail traffic.
- Brussels is recognised as an international hub and a connection between different rail lines. The government will look into how investments can be planned to increase the transit capacity through the capital.
- The Belgian market for international passenger transport, which was liberalised years ago, is currently not very competitive, which means that consumers are currently unable to benefit from the quality of service and competitive fares they are entitled to expect. This situation also makes rail transport less competitive than other modes of transport (air, bus, car). A study will be carried out to analyse the conditions for establishing healthy competition on international routes, and the necessary measures identified will be implemented by the government.
- Significant growth in both freight and passenger transport is expected in Belgium over the next decade. We are aiming for a significant improvement in rail freight transport with a view to doubling its volume by 2030. In order to meet capacity needs, a number of bottlenecks on the network need to be resolved. The government reaffirms the projects provided for in the multi-annual investment programmes and will allocate the necessary resources for this purpose. This will enable passenger and freight transport capacity to be increased where necessary, such as in, around and between the four major AnGeLiC cities (Antwerp, Ghent, Liège and Charleroi), for the Brussels North-South connection, and to ensure that the accessibility of the ports is guaranteed in the future. We are also continuing to focus on good rail access to our seaports, airports and inland terminals in order to increase freight transport by rail.
- We are investigating the possibility of simplifying access to the profession (e.g. train drivers).
- Negotiations on the realisation of 3RX / IJzeren Rijn will be restarted both at the political level within Belgium and with the neighbouring countries and regions concerned, as well as at the administrative level.

Belgian Spoorvisie 2040 (from 2022)

- Our country is located in the heart of Europe and its rail network is crossed by three major European freight corridors: the Rhine-Alpine corridor, the corridor between the North Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, and the corridor between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. The Belgian network also has high-speed lines divided into three branches: a western branch connecting Brussels to the French border (line 1 - 88 km); an eastern branch connecting Brussels to the German border via

Liège (lines 2 and 3 - 139 km); and a northern branch connecting Brussels to the Dutch border via Antwerp (line 4 - 87 km). Thanks to this configuration, the railways play a crucial role in the development and consolidation of our seaports and inland ports, making them a stronger driver of prosperity for our country.

- The Belgian rail network is one of the most advanced in Europe in terms of equipment, with the interoperable automatic safety system ETCS (European Train Control System). The ETCS Master Plan provides for the completion of the entire network's equipment by 2025.
- Due to its size and central location in the heart of Europe, Belgium's railway network is only one link in a much larger network. This Railway Vision 2040 has a dual ambition at international level.
- The current international network will be supplemented with connections to cities such as Berlin, Hamburg, Zurich, Basel, Malmö, Copenhagen, Bordeaux, Marseille, Rome and Milan.
- The aim is to offer a level of service on cross-border connections that is equivalent to that of domestic traffic (basic frequency of 2 trains/hour by 2040), and to strengthen this around neighbouring conurbations that play an important role as centres of attraction for Belgium (Aachen, Maastricht, Luxembourg, Rijssel, Breda).
- This requires investment in the compatibility of our network with neighbouring networks, in signalling systems and power supply systems. All technical, financial or regulatory barriers restricting the movement of trains between countries must be removed. Although the leverage for decisions lies mainly at European level, Belgium can nevertheless play a proactive role in European policy in this area. In terms of regulation, the Belgian network will be aligned as much as possible with the rules of the Single European Railway Area by abolishing national rules that are not in line with the European system. This work is already underway and will need to be continued in the coming years.
- For short-distance cross-border transport, the pricing of routes will be determined in accordance with the national tariffs of the neighbouring country. Bilateral agreements will be concluded and regularly updated to improve the customer experience. This will enable customers to travel smoothly without feeling that they are crossing a border. Passengers will be able to book the necessary tickets to continue their journey in the neighbouring country, well beyond the first border station, with the same ease as for a journey within Belgium. For international long-distance journeys, passengers will have access to information on connecting trains for the entire journey, from departure to final destination, via the passenger transport operator. Even when travelling to a neighbouring country, they will be able to purchase their ticket or tickets in a single transaction, including for local journeys in the destination country abroad.
- These ambitions will be made possible by the development of Mobility as a Service (MaaS). MaaS is not just an application. It is a distribution model for mobility services. Since mobility does not stop at the borders of the regions or even of Belgium, this ecosystem will become inter-federal or European.

ITEM is an initiative of Maastricht University (UM), the Dutch Centre of Expertise and Innovation on Demographic Changes (NEIMED), Zuyd Hogeschool, the city of Maastricht, the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR) and the (Dutch) Province of Limburg.

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