



## New routes through Europe

# The north-south corridor

The Rotterdam/Antwerp–Zeebrugge corridor is one of the most important routes for freight traffic in Europe and this is why it is currently being expanded. The New Rail Link through the Alps (NRLA), which includes the Lötschberg and Gotthard base tunnels, forms part of this corridor.



The Rhine-Alpine Corridor passes through the industrial heart of Europe.

There are close political and economic links between the countries of Europe. One consequence of this is that huge volumes of goods move through the continent across different national borders. The plan is for most of these goods to be transported on nine rail freight corridors that have been identified by the European Union. These corridors are currently being developed and expanded.

### **The volume of freight will double**

The most important north-south route is the Rhine-Alpine Corridor that links Rotterdam/Zeebrugge and Genoa. The corridor follows the route of the Rhine through the industrial heart of Europe and connects rapidly growing economic regions, including centres such as Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Duisburg, Cologne, Frankfurt, Mannheim, Basel, Zurich, Milan and Genoa. No other

railway line in Europe transports more goods; forecasts indicate that the volume of freight is likely to increase. For this reason, the EU has made the expansion of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor a high priority and plans to invest 30 billion euros in major projects over the next few years.

The objective of the five countries that the corridor passes through – the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy – is to provide a cost-effective, reliable and competitive route for rail freight on the Rhine-Alpine Corridor. They signed their first agreement on a coordinated programme of action in 2003. In the years that followed, the corridor was incorporated into the European policy for the development of trans-European transport networks (TEN-T), in which it plays a pioneering role.



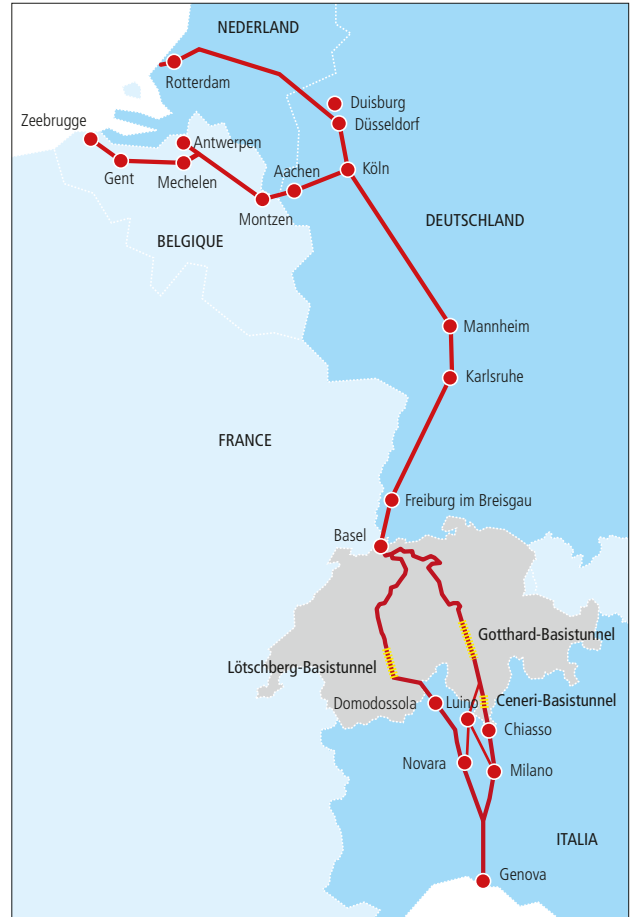
### Building new infrastructure

The programme for developing the corridor consists of a range of projects across a variety of areas. The construction of new infrastructures will mean that borders can be crossed more easily and bottlenecks reduced or eliminated. New routes include the Betuwe route in the Netherlands, a third track between Zevenaar and Emmerich/Oberhausen, two additional tracks between Karlsruhe and Basel, the Katzenberg tunnel and the Milan south-east belt.

Switzerland is building the centrepiece of the corridor in the form of the New Rail Link through the Alps (NRLA) and the Lötschberg, Gotthard and Ceneri base tunnels. The Lötschberg base tunnel has been in operation since 2007 and is being used almost to full capacity. At 57 kilometres in length, the Gotthard base tunnel, which opened in 2016, is the longest rail tunnel in the world. The Ceneri base tunnel will open in 2020.

### Increasing competitiveness

The base tunnels, which provide a level route through the Alps, allow heavy freight trains to cross the mountains at high speed and without the need for additional locomotives. This further increases the competitiveness of rail freight transport. One of the main reasons behind the measures taken by Switzerland is to promote the modal shift from road to rail for freight crossing the Alps, a policy supported by the Swiss people in several popular votes. Rail transport has advantages over road transport both in terms of its energy consumption and its environmental impact.<sup>1</sup>



The Rhine-Alpine Corridor is 2,500 km in length.

| The corridor <sup>2</sup> in figures       |   |
|--|---|
| Geographic distance:                       | Rotterdam–Genoa 1,400 km<br>Zeebrugge–Genoa 1,500 km                    |
| Length of the route:                       | Main route 2,500 km<br>Total corridor length 3,900 km                   |
| Five countries:                            | The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy                   |
| Six infrastructure companies:              | ProRail (NL), Infrabel (B), DB Netz (D), RFI (I), SBB and BLS Netz (CH) |
| Seven sea ports, more than 10 inland ports |   |
| Around 100 intermodal terminals            |   |

<sup>1</sup> Source: [www.ecotransit.org](http://www.ecotransit.org)

<sup>2</sup> Source: [www.corridor-rhine-alpine.eu/facts-figures.html](http://www.corridor-rhine-alpine.eu/facts-figures.html)

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### Further information

- On the north-south corridor: [www.corridor-rhine-alpine.eu](http://www.corridor-rhine-alpine.eu)
- On Swiss transport policy: [www.bav.admin.ch](http://www.bav.admin.ch)
- On rail-to-road policy: [www.bav.admin.ch](http://www.bav.admin.ch) → Topics A - Z → Transalpine freight traffic
- [www.alptransit.ch](http://www.alptransit.ch)