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New priority section of the trans-European transport network completed: the Betuweroute starts operating between the Netherlands and Germany

On 16 June 2007 about 160 km of dedicated rail freight line will start moving freights between the port of Rotterdam and Germany at a speed of 120 km/h. Through this new railroad, an average of 160 trains per day is expected to cross the Dutch-German border, carrying around 37 million tons of freight a year. "Today's celebrations mark a major milestone in the completion of the trans-European transport network. By contributing to this important project, the European Commission has supported not only the revitalisation of rail transport in Europe but the overall development of a region", said Jacques Barrot, Commission Vice-President in charge of transport, welcoming the first example of railway track in Europe solely dedicated to freight transport.

The Betuweroute is a conventional double track 160 km long electrified rail link, dedicated to freight transport between Rotterdam and the European hinterland. The new rail section allows a maximum speed of 120 km/h and it is designed to satisfy all possible future innovations (by using, for example, the latest generation of the harmonised European train control system, and by designing the infrastructure for double stack containers).

The Betuweroute will have a positive impact on the competitiveness of the Rotterdam-Genoa freight corridor, increasing reliability and capacity by 52%, as well as reducing journey time¹. These achievements will allow rail cargo to become more competitive, to increase its market share and to double the freight volume on the Rotterdam-Genoa corridor over the same period.

The Commission has always supported the idea of a dedicated rail freight network, as a precondition for revitalising rail transport in Europe. Therefore, it has from the beginning of the project promoted the realisation of the Betuweroute, by financing both studies and works for a total contribution of € 170 million. This project has served as a test bed for new technical, financial and operational solutions, which can now be used all over Europe. As a next step, the concept will be extended to the whole corridor, supporting both infrastructure improvements and the implementation of European Rail Traffic Management.

¹ An expected reliability increase of 26%, a capacity increase of 52%, and journey time reductions of 20%.