



Priority axis No 3 – Ongoing



High-speed railway axis of south-west Europe

Three new high-speed lines will link major cities on the Iberian peninsula with the French high-speed network, bringing the Spanish capital to within four hours of the French border. The new lines will slash current journey times by as much as 60 %, providing significant new competition to both air and road transport on key routes.

What is the axis?

Three new high-speed railway lines will establish connections between major cities on the Iberian peninsula, and link them with the French high-speed network. New high-speed railway lines (built to standard European gauge in Spain and Portugal) will link Lisbon and Porto to Madrid. From Madrid, two branches – Atlantic and Mediterranean – will connect to the French high-speed rail network.

The Lisbon–Porto line will link to a Portuguese/Spanish cross-border connection from Aveiro to Salamanca, as well as to a direct Lisbon–Madrid line. The Atlantic branch connects Madrid–Vitoria–Irún/Hendaye–Dax–Bordeaux–Tours, joining the existing Paris–Tours high-speed line. The Mediterranean branch links

Madrid–Zaragoza–Barcelona–Figueras–Perpignan–Montpellier–Nîmes, connecting to the existing Paris–Lyons–Marseille/Nîmes high-speed line.

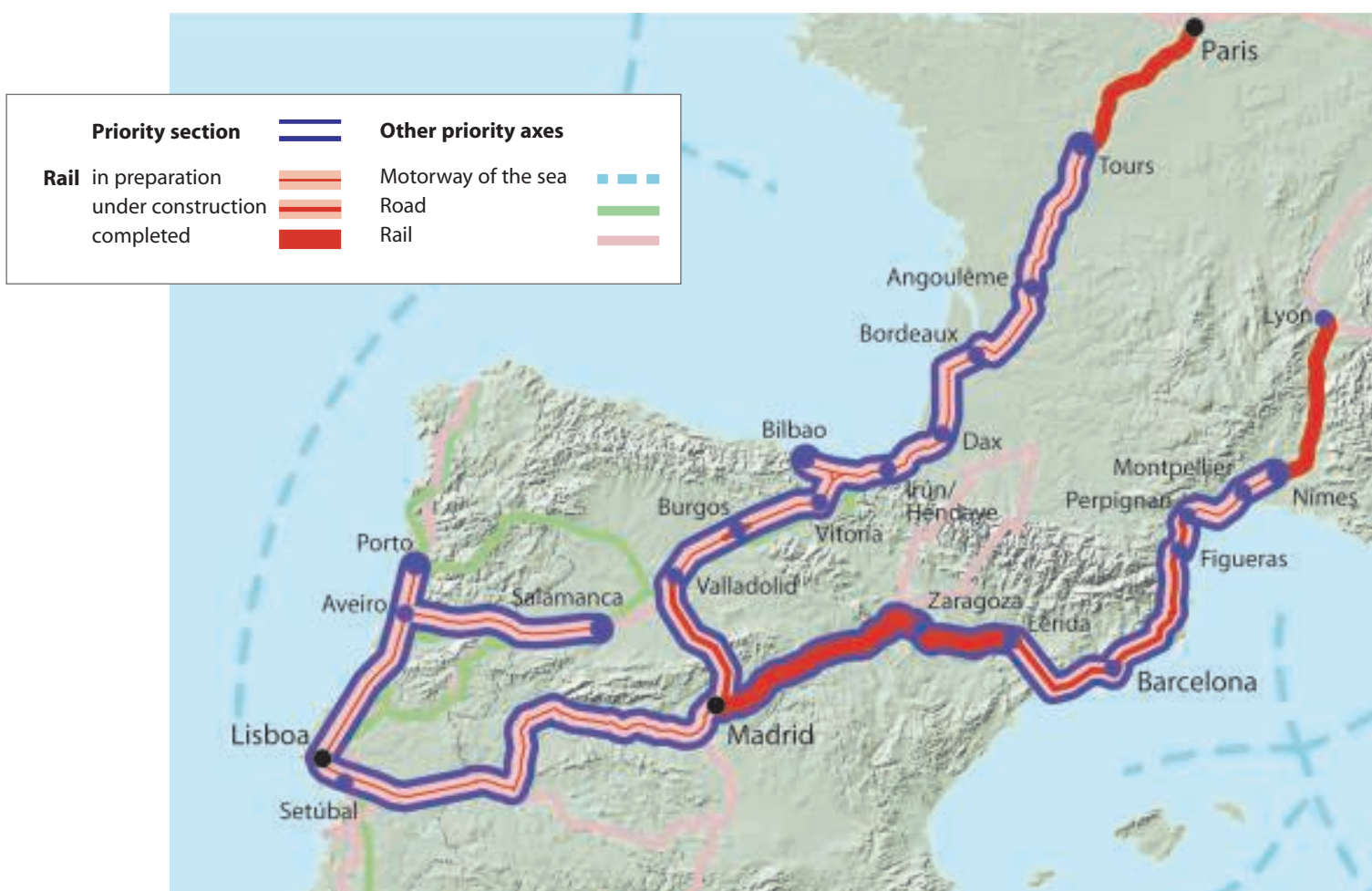
What are its expected benefits?

For rail passengers, the completion of the lines will lead to noticeable capacity increases (e.g. 400 % for Madrid–Barcelona) and reductions in travelling time: Madrid–Barcelona (from 6 hours and 50 minutes to 2 hours and 25 minutes) or Lisbon–Madrid (10 hours and 40 minutes to 2 hours and 45 minutes).

The new high-speed lines will release substantial capacity for freight transport on existing conventional lines, complementing priority axes No 8 and No 19.

Moreover, the cross-border French–Spanish sections will be combined passenger and freight lines. Significant additional trans-Pyrenean freight capacity – up to 25 million tonnes per year on each branch – will be created in the long term.

Improved transport links will provide a substantial boost to economic development across the Iberian peninsula, in particular allowing through traffic from France without gauge changes.



Priority section	Type of work/status	Distance (km)	Timetable ⁽¹⁾	Total cost as of end 2004 (million EUR)	Investment up to 31.12.2004 (million EUR)	TEN-T contribution, including studies, up to 31.12.2004 (million EUR)
Lisbon/Porto–Madrid ⁽²⁾	New line	670	2006–11	11 355	24	11
Madrid–Barcelona–Figueras–Perpignan	New line, including new cross-border 8 km tunnel	895	1998–2009 (2005/08)	10 064	5 853	82
Perpignan–Montpellier	New line	140	2006–09 (2015)	2 200	0	7
Montpellier–Nîmes	New/upgraded line	80	2006–15 (2010)	1 130	0	0
Madrid–Vitoria–Irún/Hendaye	New line	652	2002–10	8 581	1 475	42
Irún/Hendaye–Dax	Upgraded line	85	2006–15 (2010)	100	0	0
Dax–Bordeaux	New line	130	2010–20	2 400	0	0
Bordeaux–Tours	New line	304	2008–15	3 900	0	0
TOTAL		2 956		39 730	7 352	142

⁽¹⁾ In brackets, completion date listed in the 2004 guidelines, if different from the date notified in 2005 by the Member State.

⁽²⁾ Including Lisbon–Porto (2013), Lisbon–Madrid (2010) and Aveiro–Salamanca (2015).

What is its current status?

Construction started in 1998 on the Madrid–Barcelona line, with the Madrid–Zaragoza–Lérida section (445 km) opened in 2003. The Lérida–Barcelona section was scheduled to open in 2005, but works were delayed due to discussions on the route into central Barcelona. Work on the Barcelona–Perpignan line has also started and it will be operational by 2009. The Figueras–Perpignan cross-border section, including an 8.2 km twin-tube tunnel, will be financed by a PPP scheme and operated by the ‘Euroferro’ concession.

Improvements and capacity enhancement on the Perpignan–Montpellier section are due for completion by 2009, as France has notified at the beginning of 2005 its intention to upgrade the existing line to coincide with the Figueras–Perpignan line coming into operation. France, however, has not confirmed the date of 2015 for the completion of the new line between these two cities. Work on the Montpellier–Nîmes section (70 km of new passenger/freight line) is due to start in 2006 and be completed by 2010. However, France notified in 2005 that the completion date would be delayed until 2015.

On the Atlantic branch, works on the Madrid–Valladolid–Burgos section, including the twin-tube tunnel at Guadarrama, are under way. Design studies are ongoing for the rest of the Spanish sections, including the Basque triangle (Bilbao–Vitoria–San Sebastian), with the aim of completing all the Spanish sections by 2010.

The critical link is the Irún/Hendaye–Dax cross-border section, which should be completed by 2010, but France notified in 2005 that the completion date has been put back to 2015. French and Spanish railway infrastructure managers plan to set up a European group of economic interest (EGEI) to undertake common studies.

On the French side, work is less advanced. Preliminary studies for Dax–Bordeaux are in preparation. Preliminary studies on the Tours–Bordeaux line are under way, with a public enquiry for the Bordeaux–Angoulême section opened in early 2005. Completion of this line is expected in 2015.

Detailed design studies are under way for the Lisbon–Porto and Lisbon–Madrid lines. Spain and Portugal have created an EGEI to prepare the cross-border sections. Starting construction in 2006 is an important goal for connecting Lisbon and Madrid by 2010. Future operation of these lines will be managed by a joint commission.

In Spain, in addition to support from TEN-T funds, development work is also receiving substantial support from the Cohesion Fund.

On 20 July 2005, the European Commission designated Mr Etienne Davignon as European coordinator for priority axis No 3.