

TRANSPORT

Briefing

Deutsche Bahn secures access to Channel Tunnel

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International ambition: DB wants to run trains between London and Germany/Netherlands

The introduction of direct train services between the UK and Germany has edged a step closer after the Intergovernmental Commission granted Deutsche Bahn an operating certificate allowing it to run passenger services through the Channel Tunnel.

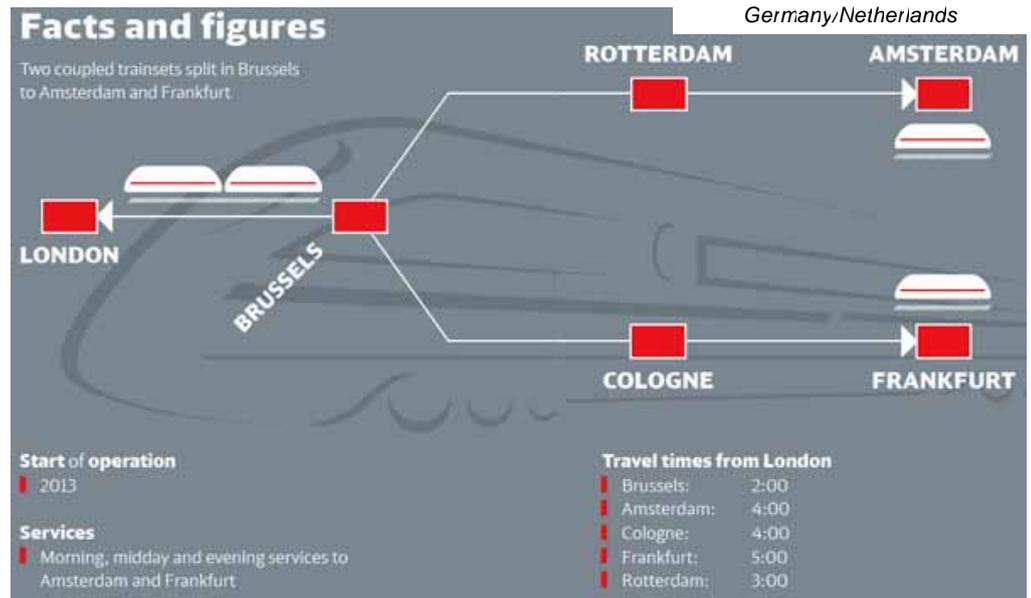
Eurotunnel, which owns and operates the tunnel, said the decision by the commission - made up of representatives of the UK and French governments - to award a 'B' certificate "will considerably enhance exchanges between the UK and northern Europe", including Germany and the Netherlands. It said it expects this could increase the number of passengers using services through the tunnel by more than 30%.

Jacques Gounon, chairman and chief executive of Groupe Eurotunnel, said: "Twenty years after the start of commercial services, the authorities have finally opened the Channel Tunnel to all. This is wonderful news for the millions of passengers in northern Europe who can now use this most environmentally friendly means of transport to travel to London."

A statement from the company added: "The request by one of the foremost railway operators to open up direct services via the Channel Tunnel is proof of the significant attraction that the infrastructure offers... Groupe Eurotunnel's access charges, set out by the two states in 1987 under the framework of the Railway Usage Contract (RUC), which runs until 2052, are particularly favourable to the development of new services: based principally on a charge per passenger, they limit start up costs for new operators whilst they build up their load factors."

Deutsche Bahn had planned to launch services linking London with Amsterdam, Cologne and Frankfurt this year (TB 7178) (TB 7179) but a succession of technical, legal and regulatory complications has seen this postponed and the new service is now not expected to launch before 2016. The operator plans to use pairs of Siemens Velaro D trainsets which are not yet authorised to run outside Germany or in multiple formation.

Before a launch date can be agreed Deutsche Bahn will also need to reach an agreement with the UK Border Agency regarding immigration control. The agency has previously ruled out further controls similar to those already provided to Eurostar passengers in Lille, Paris and Brussels and is also unlikely to agree to passport checks being carried out on board trains.



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