

The HST Concordat

The HST Concordat is a memorandum of understanding for signature by partners and supporters of the European High Speed train network projects. The HST projects are core contributors to the European Commission's spatial development expectations for transport and connectivity as well as European-wide cross-border access and activity. The Concordat expresses the signatories' intention jointly to strive for further improvement of the quality of High Speed Train mobility in Europe and the better connection of regions and cities to the HST network.

The HST projects come within the INTERREG IIB North West Europe "Community Initiative" Programme that stems from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and provides funding to tackle planning-related issues of trans-national concern that are best handled by cooperating across national frontiers.

The HST network was set up in 1997 with funding from the ERDF INTERREG IIC programme to identify strategic issues relevant to the cities and regions straddling the existing and developing high speed train network. The first example of this was the HST Platform project which brought strategic regional and national partners together to develop partnership possibilities and investment opportunities. HST4i and HSTconnect are the major investment projects so far representing the HST network aspirations.

The idea for the HST Concordat grew out of the partnership-building experience of collecting the Letters of Intent required of all partners joining in the HST4i and HSTconnect projects. The HST Concordat celebrates the creation of those partnerships – jointly one of the largest

and most diverse transnational investment programmes within INTERREG. It also indicates the joint purpose of public and private sector organisations in a network focusing on improving economic, environmental and social regeneration through the development of the HST network and access to it.

The HST Concordat itself and news of new signatories are innovative means of publicising the HST network and communicating its aims and objectives. It is a valuable document when lobbying for policy change or the development of funding programmes at national and European government levels as it demonstrates the commitment of a significant and growing number of transnational agencies and organisations to the HST cause.

Four main groups are invited to express their commitment to the principal, aims, objectives and aspirations of the HST network by signing the HST Concordat.

HST Project Partners

The 24 strategic and investment partners in the HST4i and HSTconnect INTERREG IIB NWE projects, who have already signed Letters of Intent and who, in the case of the investment partners, are receiving ERDF co-funding. Partners who participated in the HST Platform project are also warmly encouraged to sign.

Other Government Agencies

All agencies at local, regional, provincial, Länder and national government levels that have a vested interest in access to and use of the HST network in their territories.

The Rail Industry

Rail infrastructure providers, high speed train operating companies, travel agencies and user groups.

Professionals and Academics

Architects, engineers, planners, research and development specialists and consultancies that have a substantial involvement in delivery, implementation and improvement of the HST network.

The HST Concordat is not a contract and does not require any resource or financial commitment from signatories.

It can be signed at any suitable occasion such as a benchmark, best practice, or investment project visit, or an HST network milestone event such as the final meeting of the HST Platform project in The Hague in June 2005.

The key aim for the HST Concordat is to strengthen and empower the continuing development and effectiveness of the HST network.

The first signing of the HST Concordat took place on HSTconnect Day, 14 April 2005 – the formal launch of the HSTconnect project – at the table where the 1992 Maastricht Treaty creating the European Union was signed.

Representatives from the following partners and supporters signed on that occasion: SEEDA, the Lead Partner, the cities or boroughs of Aachen, Dover, Eindhoven, Liège, Maastricht, Reading, Kent County Council, Intercommunale Leiedal and the Province of Limburg.

