

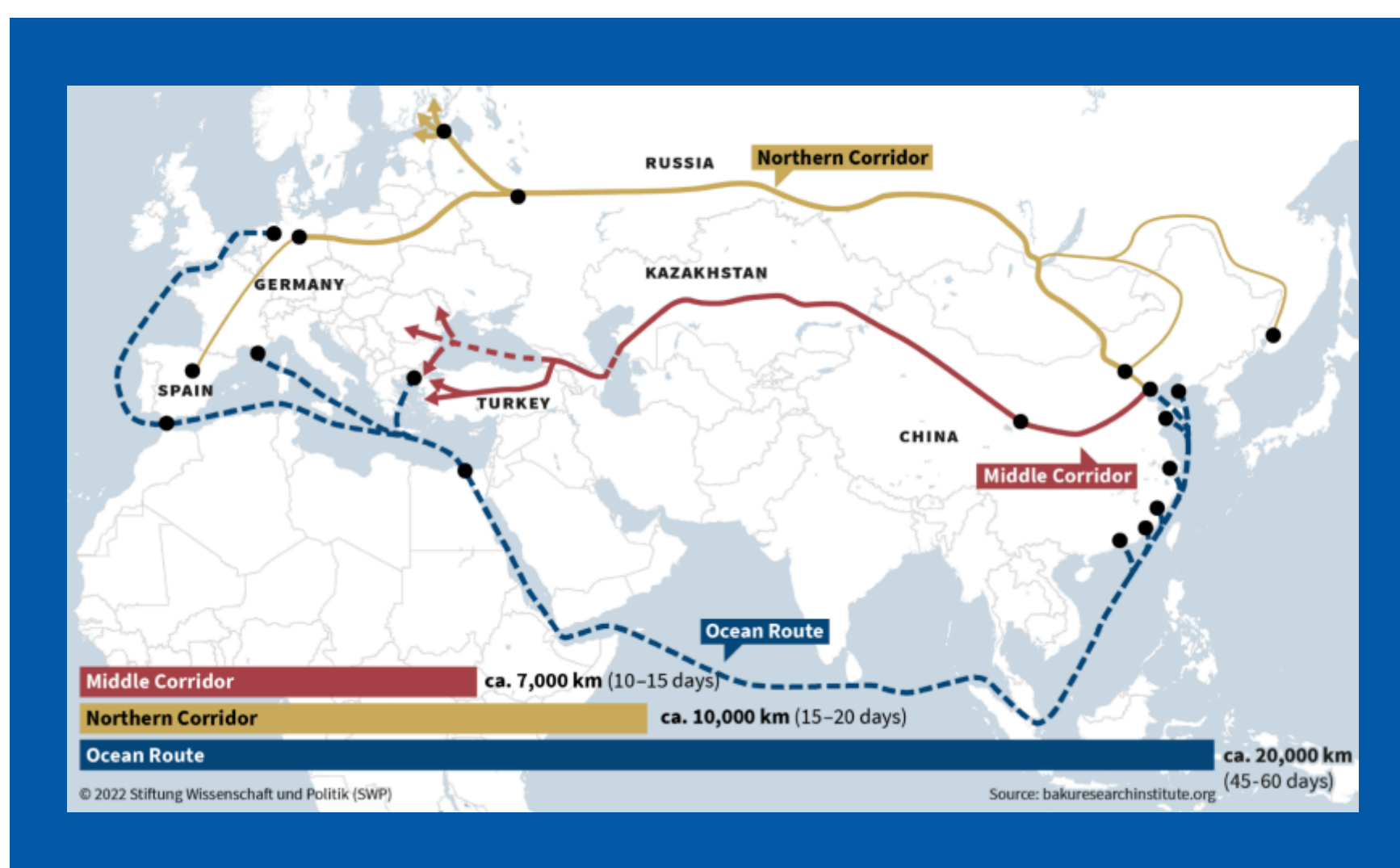


# OPPORTUNITIES ALONG THE MIDDLE CORRIDOR

*A practical guide to potential projects, lessons learned, and key contacts for Dutch companies*

The Middle Corridor, a transport route between China and Europe, has gained significant attention since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Previously considered a slower and more complex option – due to multiple border crossings, transshipments between transport modes, and operational inefficiencies – it was often overlooked in favour of the faster Northern Route via Russia. Today, however, shifting geopolitical dynamics are elevating the corridor's strategic importance. In light

of these changes, new momentum is driving investment, infrastructure upgrades, and international cooperation along the route. These developments not only improve reliability but also have the potential to significantly reduce overall transport time, making the corridor more competitive with alternative routes. This creates promising business opportunities for Dutch companies as demand for reliable, diversified trade routes continues to grow. As a result, there is growing scope for Dutch enterprises to play a role in enhancing connectivity and trade facilitation.





# PORTS, PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

*The focus for opportunities lies predominantly in the maritime sector, as the Netherlands hosts world-leading companies in dredging, port development, shipbreaking, and offshore energy. These are among the industries that align with the emerging infrastructure needs along the Middle Corridor.*

## Project 1: The Ship Recycling industry in Türkiye

Most EU-owned ships continue to be dismantled in South Asia under hazardous and polluting conditions. To bypass EU ship recycling regulations, many shipowners reflag their vessels under non-EU flags, weakening both environmental safeguards and EU policy credibility. Turkish ship recycling yards, located just outside the EU, offer a practical and more sustainable alternative. With existing infrastructure and lower operational costs, Turkish yards—especially in Aliaga—can be upgraded to meet EU standards at a fraction of the cost of building new facilities within the EU. These yards can become viable destinations for the growing number of aging EU vessels in need of compliant end-of-life processing. Dutch companies, with their maritime, technical, and environmental expertise, are well-positioned to support these upgrades. By helping Turkish yards align with EU regulations, Dutch firms can advance the circular maritime economy, reduce environmental harm, and gain a foothold in a strategically important regional market.



## Project 2: Greening the Caspian Sea

Azerbaijan, long known as a gas-exporting country, is now actively shifting toward green energy, with offshore wind central to its 2030 sustainability targets. This transition aligns with EU priorities to diversify energy sources and accelerate the shift to renewables. The Caspian Sea holds an estimated 158 GW of offshore wind potential—around 20 times Azerbaijan's current power capacity. With six wind farms already in development and strong government backing, the foundations of a renewable energy sector are taking shape. For Dutch companies with offshore expertise, this presents a timely opportunity to contribute to Azerbaijan's energy transition, strengthen EU energy partnerships, and help to establish a renewable corridor connecting the Caspian region to Europe.



## Project 3: Poti vs. Anaklia Port

Georgia plays a key role in the Middle Corridor, but its limited economic scale makes it unlikely to sustain two competing deep-sea ports. As transit volumes grow, an upgrade is needed. The main to help shape the region's transport infrastructure. The decision between Anaklia and Poti depends on cost, risk, and readiness. Anaklia is a \$2.5+ billion greenfield megaproject with high risk and long timelines. Poti, on the other hand, benefits from established governance, prior EU funding, and scalable upgrade options. While both ports offer strategic value, Poti currently aligns better with Dutch and EU development finance criteria, offering a lower-risk, faster-return alternative. contenders are the existing

Poti port—owned by APM Terminals—and the proposed Anaklia port, still in early development. For Dutch firms in maritime logistics and engineering, this presents a unique opportunity



## Project 4: Kazakhstan's Port Development

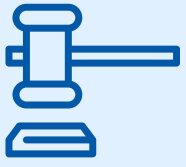
The rapid decline of the Caspian Sea, particularly in northern areas around Kazakhstan's key ports Aktau and Kuryk, is severely impacting port operations. Shallow berths now limit ships to around 70% capacity, while critical infrastructure such as dock fenders has become unusable. These conditions highlight an urgent need for external expertise, creating opportunities for Dutch involvement to help safeguard this vital route. Aktau and Kuryk require ongoing, technically advanced, and environmentally responsible dredging to remain operational. Dutch companies, renowned for their dredging expertise, can also contribute by modernising and expanding port infrastructure to boost efficiency. With strong EU backing and substantial public-private investments in the pipeline, the moment is right for Dutch firms to play a central role in securing the long-term viability of Kazakhstan's maritime logistics.





# WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

*Based on interviews with leading companies in the maritime sector - Van Oord, Damen Naval, Heerema, Royal HaskoningDHV, APM Terminals, and Acta Marine - the following key lessons have emerged.*



## Regulation & Compliance

Legal requirements differ across countries. To avoid project delay, investigate the following topics early:

- Whether local presence is required
- What import/export rules apply
- Whether special licences, such as export permits, are needed



## Market & Cultural Knowledge

Business culture and practices vary across countries—speak with the RVO or Dutch embassy for local insights.

- Assess geopolitical risks, as political volatility can affect operations. Regular updates are recommended
- Explore financial support options; RVO advises on credit, insurance, and funding opportunities.



## Procurement Processes

Procurement practices differ by country and are often less transparent than EU practices. Early contact with embassies can help SMEs to navigate these systems and make key introductions. To strengthen your position consider the value of:

- Local presence
- Trade missions
- Collaboration with other Dutch firms

***Also, early engagement with Dutch embassies in the region is highly recommended. They can offer timely advice and support across all topics outlined below.***

## Useful websites

- Discover EU funding and tender opportunities in the [online portal](#)
- More information on national and European development banks for your project can be found in this [table](#)

*A detailed report has been prepared, providing further insights into the projects as well as other relevant sectors. To obtain the full report, please contact The West Wing.*

## Contact details

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