



Central Sweden
DALARNA, GÄVLEBORG OCH ÖREBRO LÄN



BOTHNIAN CORRIDOR

WEST FINLAND
EUROPEAN OFFICE

Seminar Report

Future of the TEN-T Core Network Corridors - Tapping the potential of the North

On Wednesday the 18th of October 2017 the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian regional offices around the Gulf of Bothnia organized a seminar in the European Parliament in cooperation with the Bothnian Corridor project about the Future of the TEN-T Core Network Corridors. The EU offices represent the regions of East and North Finland, West Finland, Tampere Region, Helsinki-Uusimaa Region, Central Sweden, Mid Sweden, North Sweden and North Norway. The hosts of the event were the Members of the European Parliament Jens Nilsson (S&D) and Merja Kyllönen (GUE/NGL). Around 50 people attended the event. The seminar was moderated by Malla Paajanen, chief adviser at Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council and Joakim Berg, project leader of Bothnian Corridor.

The event was organised to highlight and discuss the fact that, while the TEN-T Core Network reaches the Northern parts of Europe along the pre-identified sections in the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), the current Core Network Corridors (CNC) are not covering the whole Union, leaving out important parts of Northern Europe. The absence of CNCs in almost the whole of Finland and Sweden, and thus also the lack of a coordinated approach to financing infrastructure, endangers the timely implementation of the TEN-T Core Network. In addition, this is not in coherence with the structure of the national economies of Finland and Sweden and the importance this area has for the European economy.

Member of European Parliament (MEP) **Jens Nilsson** opened the seminar by informing the audience about a mission with members of the European Parliament's Committee on Transport to northern Sweden in July 2017. During the visit, the Bothnian Corridor project was presented to the MEPs, and Nilsson highlighted Karima Delli's, Chairwoman of the Committee on Transport, description of the event as a "*complete success*". Nilsson urged the representatives of the Member States to take action and emphasised the importance of cooperation between different levels of administration. Nilsson also urged the Finnish and Swedish governments to work together on this and to have an open dialogue between the countries.

Herald Ruijters, Director DG MOVE, European Commission gave an overview of the ongoing work, the preparation of the post-2020 multiannual financial framework (MFF) and the revision of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) regulation. Ruijters confirmed that there is an opening for adjusting the TEN-T Core Network Corridor (CNC) routes in the CEF-revision and he underlined that the corridors are important vehicles, lining up for future developments. The Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) is a strong framework with clear goals and high standards to be completed by 2030 for the core network and by 2050 for the comprehensive network. There are also clear instruments (CEF) to implement the network. He also emphasised that the TEN-T goes far beyond transport, the policy is of great importance for the European citizens, industry and environment. Ruijters stressed that it is one common network, not 28 different policies from the EU's member states. 96 percent of the CEF budget has already been allocated in the current

programming period, 2014-2020, which makes it a very successful and solid programme. The “use it or lose it”-policy applied in the programme is an important feature.

Ruijters advocated an extension of the Scandinavian-Mediterranean (ScanMed) and the North Sea-Baltic (NSB) corridors that would optimally overlap at the border. The NSB corridor would be extended northwards from Helsinki, via the Swedish-Finnish border and further on via the Iron Ore line to Narvik in Norway. The ScanMed corridor would extend further north, from Örebro and Stockholm, along the core network sections and cross the Finnish border. Ruijters mentioned discussions within the European Commission of streamlining the policy in the next programming period, by creating a two-layer system; one for the comprehensive network and one for the core network corridors, including "other parts of the core network", and thus compressing the current three-layer system. This implies that the member states concerned by "other parts of the core network" must make a formal request to the Commission to include these sections in the core network corridors.

Regarding the corridor extensions, Ruijters emphasised that this is a competence for the member states and a formal request should be sent by the national governments involved to the European Commission. Any proposal for extending the ScanMed and NSB core network corridors should therefore be requested by the governments of Sweden and Finland, preferably before the end of the year (2017).

The preparations of the next multi-annual financial framework (MFF) have already started and it is of highest importance to act now. The Brexit scenario makes the negotiations difficult and it is important that not only the European CNC-coordinators and DG MOVE defend the policy, the importance should also be highlighted by the industry and the national ministers for infrastructure. Otherwise, the Bothnian Corridor regions might find themselves in a situation where they would have the extended core network corridors but the CEF2 would not have the money to support the implementation. Ruijters encouraged the regions to reach out to the national governments, including finance ministries, and ensure they are well informed about these matters. Ruijters stated “*Go for it, the battle has started – it will be short, but hard!*”

Finally, Ruijters highlighted the importance of the northernmost regions for the EU as a whole, how these regions contribute to the overall policy development, and the importance of better linking the north and the south. Ruijters mentioned the extension of the ScanMed and NSB corridors as “very logical” and he underlined the importance of making the voices of the Nordic regions heard in the upcoming public consultation. He said that “*the North is not far, Umeå and Rovaniemi should be as well connected as Köln*”. Connectivity is of major importance in the EU; good transport connections and smart specialisation can help bring out the value of each region.

Mervi Kaikkonen, Senior Specialist at the Permanent representation of Finland to the EU underlined that for a country like Finland whose economy is mostly depending on exports and accessibility to the markets, the Bothnian Corridor project is important and necessary. She added that one third of the Finnish exports pass through ports that are not connected to the TEN-T Core Network at the moment, but that they should be in the future. Improvements to the rail infrastructure are needed to increase the capacity.

Kaikkonen clearly stated that extending the CNCs is a logical step for Finland and that it is supported by Anne Berner, the Finnish minister of transport. The extended North Sea-Baltic Corridor would be a multimodal corridor, supporting EU trade and connecting the EU to the rich natural resources of the North. “*Despite being remote and sparsely populated, it has potential to provide new access to the global shipping routes*”, she highlighted. She also mentioned that studies by the Finnish transport authorities show great potential for EU level access to global markets via the transport hubs along the extended corridor. Helsinki has the shortest flight routes to Asia from Europe and Oulu is already an important multimodal hub. The extension must also be seen as part of the larger

Arctic which should be viewed as a crossing point for data and people, providing considerable EU added value.

As for the future of the Connecting Europe Facility instrument Kaikkonen emphasised that Finland is convinced of its added value and that the continuity of CEF should be ensured also beyond 2020. She concluded by repeating the recent message of the Finnish transport minister Anne Berner: *‘in our view the network will not be completed without the extension’*.

Åsa Webber, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden to the EU, informed that the Swedish government is currently working on the 12-year national transport plan for the period 2018-2029. The Swedish Transport Administration presented the draft plan at the end of August 2017, it is currently on open consultation and the final version of the plan will be decided by the Swedish Government in spring 2018. Webber underlined that Sweden is committed to the CEF and believes it has been successful and will continue to be so also in the future. Sweden has benefitted from the EU Transport Policy in various ways, among others to deploy the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) and to finalise the Öresund fixed link. Webber also highlighted the Fehmarn belt and the great importance it will have for Sweden.

As for Swedish support for the extension, she stated that she unfortunately was not yet in a position to offer a clear answer. She emphasised that any possible indication on the contents of the 12-year plan will be provided only upon the publication of the approved plan in spring 2018. Nonetheless, she promised to convey the important message of the European Commission and the Finnish government to Stockholm.

Indrek Tarand, Estonian MEP, was supportive of the Bothnian corridor project and he especially underlined the importance of transparency in big infrastructure projects with many actors and stakeholders involved.

Kaspars Briskens, Business Development Manager for Rail Baltica, RB Rail AS, sees Rail Baltica as a service in a macro regional transport system. He emphasised that Rail Baltica can serve as a platform for continuous integration between the Baltic and Nordic regions, and the Baltic Sea region as a whole. He also pointed to the potential extension of the ScanMed corridor, and also the North Sea Baltic, which could create a strong integration and connectivity effect in the area. Briskens highlighted the critical involvement of Finland in the Rail Baltica project. He pointed out that Rail Baltica has identified a large amount of freight that could be imported and exported to and from Finland through Rail Baltica, both from industrial regions and from the Arctic regions. He thereby pointed to the potential for development of northern passages, which can become a part of a larger global supply chain where Rail Baltica plays a role, e.g as a platform for integration in the EU transport network. Briskens also highlighted the importance of having a transparent and open process, a constructive dialogue with citizens, industries, environmental organisations and other relevant actors, in these kind of big infrastructure projects affecting many.

Paul Hegge, Director for Public Affairs & Corporate Social Responsibility at Lineas, highlighted the need for a change in the mentality of infrastructure managers in order for railway transports to compete with trucks. Goods from Northern Europe are better transported by rail, but today's average transportation speed of 18 km/h must be greatly improved. He emphasised the need for transnational management of traffic flows with increased digitalisation and sharing of information. He highlighted that the transport sector today is so much more transnational than it used to be in the past and that they no longer talk in national terms when it comes to transport; the transport sector is interconnected, and most countries are highly dependent on other countries, both for imports and exports. Hegge mentioned that the future design of the ScanMed and NSB corridors is of great interest to Lineas when planning the development of the firm's scope and that the corridors are high on their list of priorities to develop further. Hegge highlighted that the TEN-T network and the corridors are very important in order to realise a European train network, in order

to avoid congestions, for the growth of the transport sector and in order to reach the climate objectives.

Jan Lahenkorva, first vice chair of the sustainability committee in Region Gävleborg, Sweden, pointed out collaboration as the main part of success in these issues. Cooperation is important on all levels, he stated, even more important for regions and other small-scale actors. All in need of the infrastructure must unite around common issues as these. He also pointed out his region's strategic position as a gateway to the Arctic, and when asked about the added value that Region Gävleborg could bring to the rest of Europe as a part of the Corridors, he emphasised his region's frontline position in alternative fuels. Region Gävleborg's target is to have fossil free public transports, and as a means to achieve that goal the region has identified hydrogen and fuel cells as one of the possible solutions. Moreover, there is an ongoing cooperation project with Scania and Siemens in the development of electric highways, which is already being tested on public highways in the region, resulting in lower emissions from the transport sector, less noise and better working conditions for the truck drivers, to mention a few benefits.

Esa Halme, the Mayor of Tampere Region, highlighted Finland's role as a leader in smart systems and fast economy. Many Finnish cities are specialized knowledge centers and therefore interconnectedness along the whole value chain is essential to the Finnish economy. Halme lamented the fact that travelling from Tampere to North Norway for example, takes as much time as a trip, twice the distance, to Southern Europe. The networks that connect the northernmost parts of Europe to the South are needed to efficiently transfer goods and to connect people. Halme also underlined the importance of a stronger Northern policy in the wake of Brexit, with the Union losing one of the key actors in Northern Europe.

Svein Eggesvik, Executive of Transportation in Nordland County Council, argued that the Bothnian Corridor – with its' Arctic link to Narvik – can bring much added value to Europe. He specifically mentioned three key elements: food security, regional development across borders and employment in the marine industry. The Ofoten Line from Narvik transports fresh seafood from North Norway to the European market, and the freight of this produce has increased by more than tenfold in the last 20 years. *“Today, every tenth salmon consumed in the world is produced in Nordland,”* Eggesvik stated. The already high demand will continue to increase, he believes, and thus argued that investments in better infrastructure in the Arctic is necessary to cover the surging demand. In turn, he suggested closer political cooperation between the northern regions of Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

Member of European Parliament, **Merja Kyllönen**, highlighted the importance of cooperation between Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the Baltic countries in relation to the Bothnian corridor project - the countries shouldn't be on opposite sides. Kyllönen stated that we need to act together and be smart and innovative to find a positive solution, in order to win this battle. The Nordic dimension needs to be strongly visible in the EU maps. Kyllönen argued that our ministries and authorities on all levels need to cooperate to create ideas; the Bothnian corridor is important and offers huge possibilities for regional development. Kyllönen concluded the seminar on a positive note on Nordic cooperation: *“Let's cross the limits and act together, cooperate, cooperate, cooperate with peace and love!”*