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Comments to the Public Consultation on the Extension of the Major Trans-European Transport Axes to the Neighbouring Countries and Regions

BALTIC GATEWAY is a trans-national project part-financed by the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG IIIB Neighbourhood Programme. The project involves 38 partners - including ports, local and regional authorities, national transport authorities as well as private companies - from seven countries. The aim is to develop strategic initiatives to promote economic growth and a sustainable development in the South Baltic Sea area by improved use and availability of transport resources.

The Steering Committee of the BALTIC GATEWAY project welcomes the initiative "Public consultation on the extension of the major Trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions" taken by the Commission and hereby present its comments.

In sum, the principle points highlighted by Baltic Gateway are:

- The South Baltic Sea area is an important gateway for especially maritime transport, connecting TEN-T with the Pan European Transport Corridors.
- There is no coherent trans-national system of ports and hinterland connections in the area, which hamper the development of efficient and sustainable intermodal transport concepts.
- TEN classified ports in the area must be better connected to the European transport system by improved hinterland connections. Investments are needed.
- Kaliningrad region needs to be better integrated into the transport system.
- The regional political tiers of government in the South Baltic Sea area are determined to co-operate with each other, as well as with the European Union and national governments, for an improved transport system in an enlarged Europe and beyond.



South Baltic Sea area – a gateway between east and west

In the worldwide process of globalisation, the South Baltic Sea area is predestined to play a gateway role, bridging old and new members of the European Union and the neighbouring countries in the Eastern Europe. By means of its economic, demographic and cultural potential the area may not only provide services for transit flows but produce and receive commodities from all over the world. The gateway function of the South Baltic Sea area is therefore to be perceived in three dimensions: (1) intercontinental – as an alternative route for exchanging goods between two core economic markets of the North America and Far East; (2) interregional – at a scale of enlarged European Union and its external neighbours of the former NIS; and (3) macroregional – on the domestic Baltic Sea Region arena.

One of the crucial factors determining performance of gateway regions is quality and accessibility to the transport infrastructure. Therefore, the project explores the European Commission's guideline laid down in the White Paper on European Transport Policy for 2010: that the transport system needs to be optimised to meet the demands of enlargement and sustainable development. It also needs to be more harmonised and integrated at European, national and regional level to counteract unequal growth in the different modes of transport, congestion on the main transport arteries and harmful effects on environment and public health. In these respects, there are several deficiencies in the transport system in the South Baltic Sea area.

Major axes of relevance for the South Baltic Sea area

Studies made within the Baltic Gateway project show a substantial growth in trade between countries in the South Baltic Sea area. For the coming ten years trade volumes are expected to more than double. The growth, although starting from a low level, is especially rapid in the east-west direction where a number of new transport links have emerged. These corridors/axes are heavily dependent on waterborne transportation. Hence, ports and hinterland connections on both sides of the Baltic Sea are of vital importance for developing the gateway function of the South Baltic Sea area. Ports and other logistical centres on the eastern shore of the South Baltic Sea operate as hubs for transport services connecting the Pan European Transport Corridors in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine with the Trans-European Transport Network in southern Sweden, Denmark and northern Germany. On account of the conveyed traffic, some of these links may fall under the definition of the motorways of the sea within the TEN-T.

In addition, a new market for ferry services has emerged between old and new member states in the area. These services have a considerable growth potential (see appendix 2). The east-west connections between Scandinavia and Poland, Lithuania and Latvia record the highest growth dynamics in the whole area, while the freight flows between Germany and Lithuania dominates the market in terms of volumes.



Integrating Kaliningrad region

The spatial isolation of Kaliningrad region from the mainland Russia on one hand and the EU enlargement on the other significantly affect development perspectives for this area being located on the periphery of the national economy. The region is lagging behind neighbouring territories of Poland and Lithuania (not to mention advanced economies of the old Member States) in terms of socio-economic growth and, particularly, living standards. After Lithuanian and Polish accession into the EU even greater disparities of regional development standings could be expected, resulted from magnified EU financial assistance for the neighbouring regions of Poland and Lithuania.

At the same time, favourable geographical location of the Kaliningrad region under conditions of the comprehensive development of trans-national and cross-border co-operation allows for a mutually beneficial use of the areas' potential for strengthening economic connections between Russia and EU. Integration of Kaliningrad region into the transport system of the South Baltic Sea area is one of the most promising directions of such co-operation. Development of the transport complex of the Kaliningrad region and participation in the pan-European transport planning process are regarded major priorities in the development strategy for the Kaliningrad region as the region of co-operation.

Need for investments - Towards a Quick Start Programme for the South Baltic Sea

From a South Baltic Sea area perspective, transport investment proposals formulated at European and national levels are yet far from being satisfactory. Counteracting peripherisation and ensuring efficient circulation of goods and people will not be achieved if transport policy measures are placed aside and not integrated with regional economic development. Trans-national regional cohesion in the South Baltic area requires provision of fully-fledged connections across the sea, which would tie together inland sections of the transport corridors. A network of national and regional road and rail links shall supplement them and give access to from those parts of the South Baltic area, which are located in a distance from the main transport axes. All investments shall be planned in compliance with the principle of interoperability between the transport modes and shall respect strategic interests of the private sector.

The South Baltic Sea regions are determined to assist in the harmonisation of European, national, regional and local goals for development of the transnational transport system and increasing territorial cohesion, including the consolidation of TEN-T and TINA in the enlarged European Union and further transport integration with the Russian Federation. Political leaders gathered at the South Baltic Sea area conference in the year 2004 declared willingness of the respective regions to participate in the task of defining and planning priority projects to develop the area as a gateway between east and west, as well as north and south.



The agenda for this year's political conference of the South Baltic Sea regions is to develop and agree on the regional Quick Start Programme , which building on the already decided TEN-T investments would promote complementary measures to achieve the aim of the efficient transport system in the area. The Programme is expected to include prioritised intermodal infrastructure projects, as well as logistical solutions, intelligent transport solutions and service oriented projects in the South Baltic Sea area of European and Baltic Sea value.

Yours Sincerely,



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Chairperson Steering Committee
Baltic Gateway



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Appendix 1 – Map of the regional transport co-operation in the South Baltic Sea area

Appendix 2 – Growth in trailer volumes on ferries services in the east-west direction



Appendix 1 – Map of the regional transport co-operation in the South Baltic Sea area



Appendix 2 – Growth in trailer volumes on ferries services in the east-west direction

Trailer Connection	2003	2015	Annual growth
Sweden – Latvia			
Karlshamn-Liepaja	17 000	67 000	10%
Stockholm-Riga			
Sweden – Lithuania			
Karlshamn-Klaipeda	19 000	50 000	8%
Germany –Lithuania			
Kiel-Klaipeda	407 000	1 210 000	8%
Sassnitz-Klaipeda			
Germany –Latvia			
Rostock-Liepaja	122 000	501 000	10%
Kiel-Riga			
Denmark –Lithuania			
Århus/Aabenraa-Klaipeda	13 000	47 000	10%

Source: Baltic Gateway report "The Sea Transport Infrastructure" produced in co-operation with Mariterm, Loyds Register Fairplay Research, Shipping Analysis Institute 2004.

