



CPMR

BALTIC SEA COMMISSION

Public consultation on the report: “Networks for peace and development –Extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the Neighbouring countries and regions”

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Introduction

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission was founded in 1996 and at present, the BSC has member regions from all Baltic Sea States and Norway, but except Russia - in total 27 member regions. The Baltic Sea Commission fundamental objectives are to utilise strategic positions and resources of its Member Regions in order to contribute to the integration and progress of the whole region and to co-operate among themselves in order to achieve balanced development so that all peripheral and maritime regions have the opportunity to develop their own culture and values and at the same time offer their inhabitants a safe and rich life. Hence, transport connections are of great importance for achieving the objectives of the Baltic Sea Commission and thus support the work of the European Union in this area.

Background

The Baltic Sea has gone through a historical transition period. The enlarged European Union around the Baltic Sea strengthens not only the Union. It also opens new prospects for economic development and the gateway positions of the regions in the Baltic Sea area. In May 2005 the European Union and Russia agreed, as part of their strategic partnership, on the road maps and thus of further integration between the European Union and Russia.

The enlargement of the European Union and the integration process in Europe as well as a further integration with neighbouring countries depends on a far-sighted transport strategy.

Future scenarios

The Baltic Sea Region has long been among the forerunners of economic integration and advanced transport solutions. Here, the RoRo vessel was invented, and the “Motorways of the Sea” initiative has been conceived.

We are convinced that the following trends will shape the economic future of the Baltic:

- Globalization will lead to new divisions of labour between European high-wage countries and the Far East. The Transsiberian Railway opens new options for intercontinental cargo transport and puts the Baltic in a gateway position.
- EU enlargement will create an unprecedented economic growth in the new member states. So far, this has resulted in a high pressure on the road transport infrastructure, whereas intermodal and rail transport have diminished.

- Economic integration EU-Russia will increase, resulting in higher transport volumes.
- Maritime Safety issues will gain more attention, especially in the Baltic.

These trends call for better transport solutions and a far-sighted transport strategy.

The CPMR - Baltic Sea Commission supports the development of the trans-European transport axes and welcomes the future development of concrete projects.

The Northern axis

The Baltic Sea is centred in the heart of Northern Europe and thus also part of the Northern Dimension. The overall objectives of the Northern Dimension policy is to strengthen peace through intensified cross border co-operation and economic integration and development, which will increase the welfare in the whole Northern Dimension area as well as in the whole European Union. The policy is thus a process in which contacts cross border intensifies. Regional integration depend on good transport connections and the Baltic Sea Commission are therefore satisfied to see that the Northern axes not only brings the south of north Europe together but also recognizes the importance to connect the far north of the Union with its neighbours eastwards and westwards as well as with the central Europe.

The CPMR - Baltic Sea Commission is therefore satisfied to see that the extension of transport axes in Europe's North recognizes the importance to connect the far north of the Union with its neighbours, especially with Russia. The CPMR - Baltic Sea Commission supports a Northern Transport Corridor which deals with future cargo flows due to increased trade between Russia and China on the one side and Western Europe and USA on the other.

The Motorways of the Sea

The introduction of Motorways of the Sea to the list of priority projects offers a realistic objective both to reach intermodal shift effects and better connect geographically disadvantaged regions by transnational maritime links.

The CPMR - Baltic Sea Commission suggests the development of efficient transport systems which take advantage of existing transport infrastructure – i.e. the Transsiberian Railway and the efficient short-sea shipping system in the Baltic. By building efficient and environmentally sustainable transport systems that uses rail and sea, we believe that it is possible to create regional development through out the region. At the same time, the Motorways of the Sea can avoid heavy loads on public budgets, as it would be the case if long-distance haulage were put onto the road.

Horizontal measures

The CPMR - Baltic Sea Commission supports the suggested horizontal measures to speed up border control procedures. This will promote a secure and efficient management of borders that allows an easy passage for legitimate trade and travel, reducing waiting times, improving infrastructure, increasing co-operation between border authorities and harmonisation of legislation, standards and procedures through implementing international conventions and standards.

Implementation and coordination

Completing the proposed system is not possible without the active involvement and contribution of regional and national actors. The Baltic Sea Commission supports suggestions of regional workshops to exchange best practice. However, the Baltic Sea Commission also recognises that the European Commission's commitment and active role as a coordinator is central.

Initiated by the Baltic Sea Commission, the Interreg III B project "InterBaltic" is now starting up with 43 partners from 10 countries around the Baltic Sea and will run till the end of 2007. The key objective of this project is to develop a common transport strategy for the whole region, including pointing out actions that may promote modal shift from road to rail and sea and mapping future transport flows and important transport axes as means for prioritising future transport infrastructure investments (TEN-T). For the activities in the InterBaltic project, the HLG report is very important as a policy document and a basis for more detailed analysis of the different elements and concrete projects seen also in a regional perspective.

The Baltic Sea Commission thus welcomes the High Level Group's report and proposed projects which have a positive impact on the Baltic Sea Region, and express hope that the report will be seconded by the Commission basically in the form it has as foundation for the future development of transport infrastructure in the Baltic Sea region.

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