



JOINT AUTHORITY OF
KAINUU REGION



REGIONAL COUNCIL OF
OULU REGION

09.03.2006 p. 1 (1)

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG ENERGY AND TRANSPORT
UNIT B2 – TRANS-EUROPEAN NETWORK POLICIES
B-1049 BRUSSELS**

NETWORKS FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Public Consultation on the report of the High Level Group on the extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions and the way forward

As executive directors representing the Joint Authority of Kainuu and Regional Council of Oulu regions respectively, we herewith present our notions on the report from the High Level Group (HLG), and hope them to be expressly considered in the HLG's future work on the way forward.

The northern regions of Finland appreciate the report by the HGL alongside with the extensive consultations made during the preparations, highly essential and of great importance in its primary objective in guaranteeing future sustainable transport networks in the EU and beyond. Here, the report gives a very good work product.

We also credit the HLG of giving a very well deserved attention to the link of the Northern Axis comprising multimodal connection St Petersburg – Vartius – Tornio –Haparanda – Narvik. That is to say, when speaking of the community added-value in terms of economic, social and environmental benefits, the Northern Axis contribute a dynamic development linkage and growth potential both for the Barents region, the rest of the EU and Northwest Russia. Moreover, the axis provides an environmentally friendly alternative for heavily congested areas especially in regards with the sea shipping across the Gulf of Finland and for the various kinds of railroad connections passing the East Europe.

However, even though the Northern Axis is partially included to the new, two-way global transport corridor (N.E.W) between Russia, Far East, Europe and North America, it also serves in developing the full potential of the economic and social development within the Barents region itself. Let us note that Barents region is a future growth area pooled to the EU due to vast natural and energy resources, and R&D driven industries.

The Lisbon strategy calls for new openings and viable new options, and that is precisely what the Northern Axis is all about. Such a development plans, however, to be the most effective, needs to be addressed in all the regions in the Northwest Russia, including Arkhangel and Komi regions as we see fit. The Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area (BEATA) and its cross-cutting connection "*Barents Link*" provides a major cooperation stimulus for transport and logistics issues in the Northern Dimension of the EU, and the Northern Maritime Corridor aspects as well. Thereby, the Northern Axis is equipped for the intermodality aspects both in political and operational senses. But at the time being, there is a great need to establish a viable collaboration forum on the horizontal measures the HLG's highlighted in its proposal.

In this perspective the concept of BARENTS LINK - through, which the networking of all the Barents Regions from Komi to Nordland is connected to the EU, is highly recommended to be under further consideration in regards with the decision-making of DG TREN, investment policy of EIB, and national and regional sourcing recently made or planned by the actors associated by the Northern Axis. Therefore, there is a great interest to develop a horizontal railroad transport and logistics strategy for the Barents region, put into a place and brought it to being a viable in order to expand the networks for peace and development for Europe.

With best regards

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