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

Contributor: EuropaForum Northern Sweden

EuropaForum Northern Sweden is a partnership consisting of political representatives at local and regional level in the four northernmost counties of Sweden – Jämtland, Västernorrland, Västerbotten and Norrbotten. EuropaForum Northern Sweden has continuously followed the work on the revision of the TEN-T programme and welcomes the high-level group report on the extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions.

Background

Despite the geographical and demographical constraints in Northern Sweden, the region have assets and opportunities that brings European added value. There are unique opportunities for recreation and exploration of nature and resources in the form of minerals, forestry, hydropower, wood, pulp industry, mineral exploration, space research and bio-fuels, well-developed IT infrastructure, high quality natural environment, highly advanced knowledge and skills as well as a rich cultural and traditional heritage

Even though sparsely populated, with a density of population as low as 2 inhabitants per sq. km in some areas and other permanent geographical and demographical constraints such as long distances within the region and cold climate, there is a huge potential from developing the transport infrastructure in this area. The geographical area EuropaForum represents has a strategic position in northern Europe. The area serves as a bridge between east and west and is a natural link connecting to the Russian markets. It is therefore of greatest importance that the transport connections between Norway and Finland and beyond are secured.

Consultation/questions

1. Do the five main transport axes highlighted in the High Level Group (HLG) report, in your view, represent the main axes for international traffic and what you add/delete, if given the opportunity and why?

EuropaForum Northern Sweden would like to stress that:

- The northernmost trans-national transport connection within the northern axis; Barents link, that connects the Barents region (Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia) is of uttermost importance for the future supply of natural resources to Europe and as a link between Asia/Russia and the Motorway-of-the Sea Port of Narvik. It would also be an efficient way of redirecting goods from Asia/Russia to the American market from the overloaded southern axis. Thus, the link should not only be mentioned as a foreseen connection in the northern axis, but as a forthcoming trans-national transport corridor of highest priority within the northern axis.

- We welcome the extension of Motorways of the Sea to the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Bothnia. For efficient distribution of vast natural resources from this area to the European market it is essential with TEN-T support to the ports of the Gulf of Bothnia. Thus, it is important with inter-modality to the axes of Barents link and North East Cargo Link.
- The completion of the Nordic Triangle is of great importance for northern Sweden and also the extension to the northern link.
- The harbour area of Trondheim should be added as a Motorways-of-the-Sea port. Further TEN-T support should also be planned for the North East Cargo Link (NECL) connecting through Sweden to the Baltic Sea MoS corridor and further on to Finland and Russia. Considering increased volumes of cargo, both from the Nordic countries and Russia, only two MoS ports in Norway would not be sufficient. Furthermore, the NECL link is of uttermost importance for the coherence of the TEN-T network with inter-modal connection to the railway Bothnia link connecting to Barents link and the Nordic triangle.

2. The HLG report outlines a number of measures, on so-called horizontal issues, are these the most important ones and do the recommendations made by the Group help to solve the problems?

EuropaForum Northern Sweden would like the following issues to be taken into account:

- In areas of cold winter the issue of ice-breaking is a prerequisite for efficient sea transport systems. In the northern part of Europe this applies both to the port areas and to the areas of open sea. For The Motorway-of-the Baltic Sea TEN-T support for icebreaking is essential.
- Protection of the environment from pollution from ships is of uttermost importance and we recognise with satisfaction that this is treated in section 6.3.3 of the report. It is as important that this issue is given a very high priority in the further TEN-T programme.

EuropaForum Northern Sweden also welcomes the proposed mid-term review in 2008 and would like to contribute in the forthcoming process for the success of the extended TEN-T network.

On behalf of the EuropaForum Northern Sweden



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