



**EKONOMISK FÖRENING  
ASSOCIATION**

Page 1 (4)

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Revision of the Community Guidelines Decision No 1692/96/EC

Dear Ms. Loyola De Palacio  
President for Directorate-General for Energy and Transport

The committee, which has been given the name of “the High Level Group”, suggested in its report, on 30 June 2003, projects to be prioritised in the enlarging transport system in the European Union. The projects suggested, similar to the earlier TEN-T projects, do not really concern the transportation systems in the northernmost Europe.



Figure 1. The Bothnian Arc

The Bothnian Arc association represents five Finnish sub-regions consisting of altogether 27 cities and municipalities and 7 Swedish cities and municipalities around the Gulf of Bothnia. There are 600,000 people living in the Bothnian Arc region, and being the most Northern cluster of industry and cutting-edge expertise in the European Union, it is the growth and development engine of the entire Northern Europe. Also, the Bothnian Arc has always been a strategic junction, in terms of transportation, between the Baltic Sea and the Barents region. The development of the Bothnian Arc is important both from the national and European point of view.

Large amounts of ore and raw materials of the forest industry are transported via the Bothnian Arc to be upgraded into finished and semi-finished products before they are exported to the European and global markets. In addition, the Bothnian Arc is one of the most important areas of high technology in the world in, among others, development of mobile phones. It is important for the competitiveness of the European Union that passenger transport and information communication networks are determinedly developed into clusters of cutting-

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edge technology. This, together with the growing amount of transport from the Barents area via the Bothnian Arc, results in the fact that the Bothnian Arc plays a significantly more important role in the European transportation systems than could be expected based on the population and Northern location of the area.

An important weakness of the earlier transport system strategies of the European Union has been that they have not defined the corridor connecting the regions of the Baltic Sea and the Barents. The planning of the strategic traffic corridors in the Baltic Sea region has not crossed the St. Petersburg–Helsinki–Stockholm–Oslo altitude. The sub-regions and municipalities in the Bothnian Arc suggested already in the final report of the European Union funded project

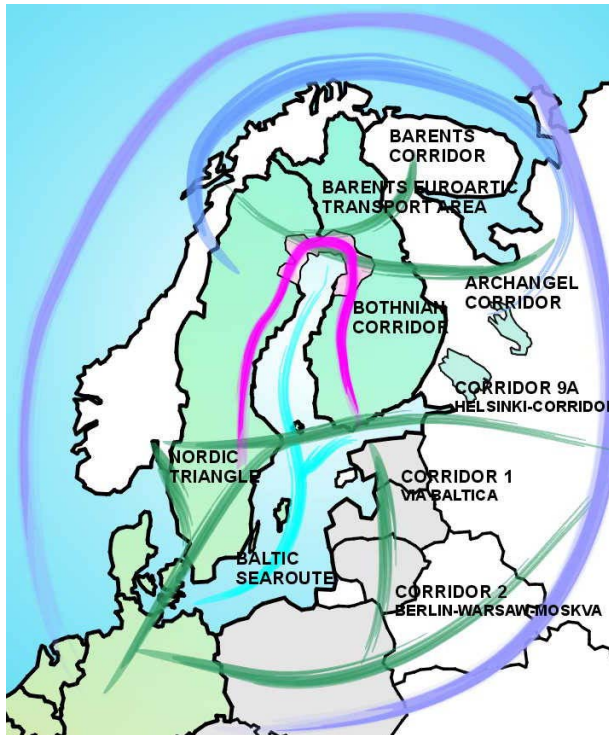


Figure 2. The Bothnian Corridor connecting the Barents Euro-Arctic transport area and the Nordic Triangle.

“Bothnian Arc – Communication Systems” in 2001 that a **Bothnian Corridor** should be created to connect the Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area (BEATA) and the Nordic Triangle in the southern part of the Baltic Sea. The Bothnian Corridor means a corridor that includes the road, rail, sea, air and information communication connections. The suggested corridor would go around the Gulf of Bothnia via the Bothnian Arc, North from Åland. It also includes a sea route to the northernmost ports of the Baltic Sea.

Our suggestion includes concrete measures for development of a Bothnian Corridor, which can be seen in the report. The sea transports from the Bothnian Arc is almost 27 million tons per year and that is why it is important to develop the ports, ice-breaking services and logistic centres around the Gulf of Bothnia. The suggestion of a new coastal “Norrbotnia” railroad in Sweden, electrifying the railroad

between Kemi and Tornio and a high-speed train connection to Oulu in Finland is also important parts in developing the Bothnian Corridor. The road E4/E75 needs to be improved especially between Oulu and Kemi and the coastal national road 8 in Finland should be added to the TEN networks. Development of the international airports in Oulu in Finland and Luleå in Sweden are of crucial importance for air transports in south-north direction between Baltic Sea region and Barents region but also to relieve the Mid-European airports from traffic jams.

The question of the corridor connecting the entire Baltic Sea region from South to North will become even more crucial when the new states enter the European Union and the Baltic Sea will almost become an inland sea in the area of the European Union. We have also presented our proposal to the Finnish and Swedish Governments.

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Sweden, supported by Finland, has suggested a railway project Boden–Kemi that could be an important step in creating the Bothnian Corridor. However, it has not been prioritised in the High Level Group’s report. Also, in the figure we received, the Motorway of the Baltic Sea ends at the level of Vaasa–Umeå. Nevertheless, it is particularly the ports on the Northern part of the Gulf of Bothnia that are in the key position in terms of exploiting the immense natural resources of the North. Due to ice, shallowness of the sea and uplifting of the land, it is particularly challenging to maintain and develop a sea route and ports in the Bothnian Arc area. For this reason, it needs to receive special attention from the European Union.

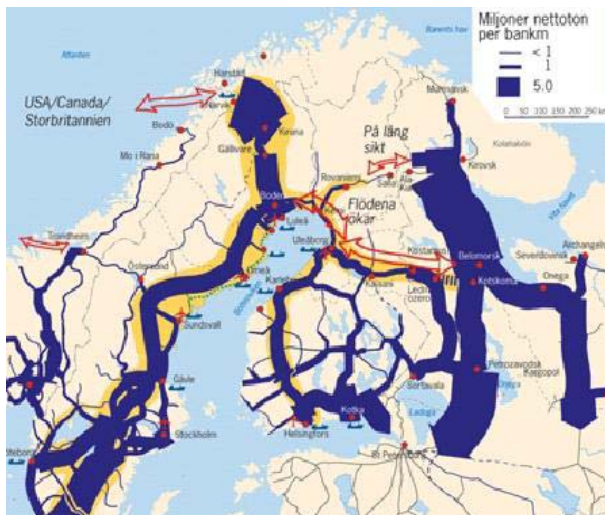


Figure 3. Amount of goods transported by rail in the northernmost Europe



Kuva/Figur 10. Hamnar och godsolymer/Satamat ja tavaramäärät

Figure 4. Ports and amounts of goods in the northernmost Europe

Even though it is assumed that exploiting the immense energy and natural resources of the Barents area will be of great importance for the development of the economy and competitiveness of Europe, paragraph 6.5 “Develop links with neighbouring countries” in the report does not present concrete suggestions on how transport between the European Union, North Western Russia and Northern Norway will be developed. The Bothnian Corridor and the related Boden–Kemi railway project and extending the Motorways of Baltic Sea to cover the Northern parts of the Gulf of Bothnia create bases for the practical development of transport connections towards Northern Norway and North Western Russia.

The spirit of the European Union entails that the European integration will be extended to cover the border, and even the neighbouring, areas of the European Union. Economically, socially and ecologically sustainable development in the northernmost Europe also requires good infrastructure. Due to the population, long distances and the arctic climate, major investments in transport and logistic centres need the support of the European Union. Good

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transport and information communication connections via the Northern Europe would also decrease the traffic-related rush and pressures to the environment in Central Europe. Improved transport system will also increase the cross border co-operation in the Bothnian Arc strengthening the European integration.

We hope that the High Level Group's report will be revised so that Bothnian Corridor and Northern Europe will be marked on the maps as a part of the strategic transport systems in Europe. Therefore we would like to see the railway project "Boden-Kemi" to be included among the priority projects and we suggest that the "Motorways of the Baltic Sea" will cover also the northernmost parts of Gulf of Bothnia.

Yours sincerely,

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