



## Position paper on east-west communications in Northern Sweden

*Within the framework of Europaforum Northern Sweden, political representatives in municipalities and county councils have actively participated in the debate on EU cohesion policy after 2006.*

*Europaforum Northern Sweden has now also decided to give priority to the work area east-west communications. We in Northern Sweden therefore welcome the opportunity to participate in the strategic planning of future European transport policy and the European strategic transport network (TEN-T).*

### Northern Sweden's position

The White Paper "European Transport Policy for 2010" stresses the need for change in today's transport situation, towards more long-term sustainable development. Intermodality, road safety, cohesion with rim areas, congestion and the removal of bottlenecks are among the priority issues for TEN-T. Based on the White Paper, Northern Sweden sees many infrastructure development possibilities. Through investments in the transport system, road, sea and air transport can be improved within the internal market and integrated more rapidly with the candidate countries' transport system in the east of Europe, above all in the Baltic States and Poland. This will achieve an intermodal and environmentally sound transport system and good logistical solutions. In addition, it will create an alternative to the transports that today pass through Denmark and northern Germany, bringing considerable congestion costs in the transport sector.

Before reviewing TEN-T in 2004, we in Europaforum Northern Sweden consider it important to obtain regional consensus for giving priority to specific projects bringing added value to cohesion in Europe. We wish also to participate in the work aimed to identify future transport corridors. Europaforum therefore gives priority to seven areas in the continued work for inclusion in the European transport network.

- Our region is strategically located in northern Europe. The region acts as a bridge between east and west Europe and is a natural link on towards markets in Russia. It is therefore crucial that transport alternatives via Norway and Finland can be secured.
- The main roads E10, E12 and E14 are key transport routes, where the E10 and E14 have TEN status. It is a primary concern that continued priority should be given to the TEN network in



Northern Sweden. We consider also that the E12, which has TEN status in Finland, should be TEN classified on the Swedish side of the border. Further, the sea route for the E12 and E14 needs to be secured.

- An east-west intermodal transport system, in which the E10, E12, E14, the Ore Line and the Mid Sweden Line form the backbone to meet the goods transport needs of the business sector, is vital to the whole of Northern Sweden. The railway links the Norwegian Atlantic coast with Finland.
- Currently in Northern Sweden, investments are being made in a high-speed rail link along the coast of Northern Sweden, and it is of major importance that the investment includes the entire stretch from Stockholm to Haparanda (-Tornio), on the Finnish border. The rail link to Norway and, in its extension, to Finland and on to Russia will in the future be an important corridor in an east-west transport system. Moreover, shipping has good development potential with high transport capacity.
- It is important, ahead of work on the new transport corridors within TEN-T, to secure intermodal transport corridors in the whole of Sweden in a north-south and east-west direction.
- Aviation is a vital part of the infrastructure, which permits rapid transport of passengers and goods. Increased competition and continuity in aviation contributes also to stimulating the travel and tourism industries. Furthermore, air cargo operations give the region a new transport-related economic role.
- The completion of the Nordic Triangle is of major importance to Northern Sweden.

### Europaforum's position - background

Northern Sweden through the centuries has had lively contacts with the east across the Bothnian Sea and the River Torne, as well as westerly trade contacts with Norway. It is well known that the communications system in Scandinavia during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, because of the Iron Curtain, has developed a structure with relatively strong north-south links in each respective state, and with poorly developed east-west links between the states.

Of the east-west exchanges in Northern Sweden today, most make use of E-roads 10, 12 and 14. The E10 links Narvik with Luleå. The E12 stretches from Mo i Rana in Norway in the west, through Västerbotten County, on to Vaasa in Finland and then continues to Helsinki in the east. The E14 links Trondheim with Jämtland and



Västernorrland counties. Parallel with the E10 and E14, there is also a railway between Norway and Sweden and the rest of Europe.

By tradition, domestic policies still excessively favour north-south links and only to a limited degree promote east-west links north of a line running through Oslo-Stockholm-Helsinki-St Petersburg.

In the post-war period, ferry traffic on the Bothnian Sea and lateral air connections have not developed to the same degree as north-south land transport. The explanation for this is above all:

- Politically-motivated barriers to movement
- Subsidies on recreational international transport (Tax-free)
- National transport regulations

One can instead make the observation that, in the region surrounding the Baltic Sea, there is a population base and economic potential such that the abolition of these three obstacles to communication would mean a growth in trade between Sweden and eastern Europe in the order of several hundred per cent. North Norway's mariculture production alone, which includes fish farms, is expected to grow tenfold in the next decade. These products demand rapid transport to the European market.

Few places in the world today have greater growth potential in commerce and interaction than in a deregulated Baltic Sea region. There is also a unique opportunity Northern Sweden to develop business relations in the Barents Region, among other things through the Barents transport co-operation, that began in 1998 and which has been put in focus by the EU Commission initiative BEATA (Barents Euro Arctic pan-Transport Area). The purpose of the co-operation is to create an effective and integrated transport system of international stature in the Barents Region.

A key factor for sustainable development is the balance between transport forms that can be offered through investments in the region. Investments in Northern Sweden create conditions for an eventual link-up of the entire internal market to improve competitiveness, establish new markets and create new jobs.

Northern Sweden's position paper should be seen in this context.