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Transport Working Group



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Future European Transport Policy

Mandate for the chair of Transport Working Group
Final version (v 03), 14.07.2008, author: Karl Schmude

Background

The Baltic Sea Region as defined e.g. by the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013 (<http://eu.baltic.net>) has got a unique transport-geographic position: It has direct access to the world market via deepsea and shortsea shipping, it covers large arctic regions, and two neighbours to EU (Norway and Russia) play a quite important role for the regional transport system.

Transport volumes in this region are escalating especially as regards shipping, road and air transport. This is mainly driven by the integration of former "Eastern Europe" into EU, by economic growth in Russia and by further integration of the Baltic Sea Region into global economy ("globalisation").

At the same time, infrastructure investment can not cope with the growing demand, and climate change together with increasing energy prices is an additional challenge.

Consequently, policies for transport and freight logistics in the Baltic Sea Region have changed from "business as usual" to a highly challenging task. The key importance of efficient freight transport and logistics for regional development is being recognised.

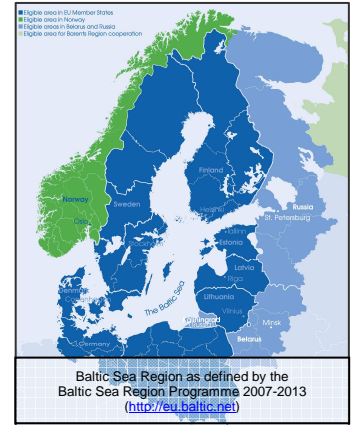
It comes not by surprise that EU's transport policy will see fundamental changes until 2009. Already the "White Paper" from 2001 has shown the high ambitions of DG TREN. The concept "Motorways of the Sea", the recent discussion about infrastructure charging and the policy package from late 2007 (e.g. "Freight Logistics Action Plan") have revealed that EU's transport policy is much more than infrastructure planning, and that freight transport / logistics and the important role of private players receive more attention than in the past.

Against this background, DG TREN will present a Green Paper in late 2008 on the future European transport policy. The ambition is to develop innovative concepts for prioritisation and implementation, and not to discuss new priority axes or corridors. CPMR has been asked to deliver policy proposals. This concise paper shall provide some orientation.

Motivation of CPMR-BSC

The mission of CPMR is to raise a strong voice for cohesion and regional competitiveness while enhancing Europe's maritime dimension. The mission of CPMR-BSC is to highlight issues which are of special concern in the Baltic Sea Region, as compared to other European regions. For future transport policies, these are e.g.

- low population density and long distances, leading to low efficiency of mass transport, low transport volumes in individual transport and a special role of air transport;



- large quantities of raw materials of high importance to EU (e.g. mining, forestry, oil) especially in the north and in Russia, leading to large freight flows;
- harsh climatic conditions especially in the north, leading to high investment and maintenance costs (e.g. frost damage, icebreaking);
- high importance of shortsea shipping for the majority of international transport links, especially when it comes to freight transport, together with an extraordinarily dense and frequent ferry / RoRo network in parts of the region;
- the current and future modal split in freight transport, where environmental arguments speak for rail and sea transport which has however several obstacles to face;
- congestion in some major ports (e.g. Hamburg, St. Petersburg) and routes;
- not yet satisfactory interoperability and considerable “administrative bottlenecks” especially at the EU/RU borders.

Mandate for the chair of Transport Working Group and the members of CPMR-BSC

With this paper, the chair of the Transport Working Group and all member regions of CPMR-BSC are requested to influence the forthcoming “Green Paper” and the “EU Baltic Sea Strategy” via all appropriate channels predominantly in the following fields:

- Selection criteria respecting cohesion objectives:
Concerning the selection of infrastructure investment, the CPMR-BSC members recognize the need for an objective method of setting priorities. It is however highly probable that a pure cost-benefit approach will conflict with cohesion principles. Transparent criteria which take into account the special need of peripheral regions for better transport connections will have to be integral part of any decision process. Freight transport as well as public transport must be considered.
- Integrated transport system taking into account the maritime dimension:
A coherent system of roads, railways, freight terminals and ports, frequent and “greener” ferry and RoRo services and air connections has to be part of the future TEN-T. Particular attention will have to be paid to rail and sea transport, to the efficiency of intermodal hubs and to the clients’ perspective: Taking a ferry must be as easy as to use a bridge.
- Less bureaucratic funding schemes:
The “Motorways of the Sea” and similar programmes are highly welcome. Their implementation will have to be accelerated by less bureaucratic procedures.
- More attention for administrative bottlenecks EU / Russia:
~40% of the sea transport in the Baltic has Russia as origin or destination. Unnecessary delays or costs in freight transport are not caused by inadequate infrastructure, but by an organisational mismatch (“administrative bottleneck”). This issue is too important to be displaced to specialists’ fora – it should get a central place in future EU Transport Policy.
- Integrate the Northern Transport Axis into EU Transport Policy:
The Northern Transport Axis approach is of utmost importance for the Baltic Sea Region. It must however be brought together with sea links and land transport axes; the current situation where NTA, Motorways of the Sea and TEN-T axes seem to be different concepts is far from being satisfactory.
- Take into account the global dimension of transport:
Transport policies for the Baltic Sea Region have to take into account the gateway function of the region for deepsea container trade and for long-distance land transports from Asia via Transsiberian Railway, TRACECA and other corridors.