

Position paper (15/9–2011) from the European Offices for the network of Northern Baltic Sea Regions in Northern Sweden and Western parts of Finland

The Bothnian Corridor – an indispensable part of the TEN-T core network

Efficient transports are imperative for Europe. A functioning infrastructure is essential to secure the EU's future transports of raw material. The Bothnian Corridor (BC), i.e. the transport corridor through Northern Sweden and Finland is a strategically important link in the transnational transport system of goods in Northern Europe. It extends on both the Swedish and the Finnish sides of the Bothnian Gulf. It connects east-westbound and north-southbound transnational links in Sweden, Finland, Norway and Russia¹.

European added value

The Bothnian Corridor contributes to the development and implementation of a functioning infrastructure in Europe. The Bothnian Corridor:

- connects European raw material deposits to the European markets,
- is a major supplier of strategic material for the European industry, e.g. ore and minerals, forestry industry products and other industrial products,
- addresses territorial disparities and strengthens links and connections,
- connects the northern part of the Northern Axis with the Nordic Triangle,
- contributes to a balanced development of European regions,
- will help the EU to fulfil the implementation of the 20-20-20 targets set by the "EU's Climate and Energy Policy", in particular the targets to cut greenhouse gases from the transport sector by 10% below 2005 levels,
- contributes to an integrated, efficient, sustainable and environmentally friendly European transport system.

The missing link

Several factors limit the efficiency of transports along the Bothnian Corridor. Steep inclines limits the speed and weight of the trains, insufficient carrying capacity and lack of capacity in general create competition disadvantages and market obstacles for the raw material supply of EU's industrial market. The Bothnian Corridor will also have great impact for the possibilities for working force commuting between the cities situated on the coastline of Sweden and Finland.

The Bothnian Corridor is already of great importance for trans-national flow of goods – in EU and to/from the EU. As the extended European integration continues, the importance of the corridor will further increase. Northern Axis and the Nordic Triangle will be connected through the Bothnian Corridor and together they create an important fundamental structure for the European transport system, from raw material, e.g. ore, metal and forest, via refining to market. The governments of Sweden and Finland have also put forward their commitment to the Bothnian Corridor and the need of making it a strategic northern link of the future TEN-T core network.

¹ The Bothnian Corridor connects the Northern Axis with the Nordic Triangle. The Northern Axis connects the Trans-Siberian railway with the harbour in Narvik(N) via Haparanda(S)/Tornio(SF) and the Iron Ore Line passing Kiruna(S). The Nordic Triangle connects the capitals of Sweden, Norway and Denmark to the European railway system and by sea also Helsinki(SF). The Bothnian Corridor is also important for the east-west transport routes of Finland-Sundsvall(S)-Östersund(S)-Trondheim(N) and Vaasa(SF)-Umeå(S)-Mo I Rana(N).



Coherence to EU-policy

The Europe 2020 Strategy has ambitious goals for European growth and competitiveness for the next decade. The Bothnian Corridor contributes fully to the strategy and its goals and is vital to the proper functioning of the EU internal market. The Bothnian Corridor enhances economic growth, cohesion and job creation in the EU, in coherence to EU-policy.

- It tackles the challenges mentioned in the report 'A New Strategy for the Single Market' (Mario Monti, 2010) as it addresses the main bottlenecks related to the working of the internal market and infrastructure.
- The Commission President José Manuel Barroso, in his political guidelines, has acknowledged the gaps and missing links that hamper the functioning of the Single Market. As mentioned in the Monti report, missing links and bottlenecks mean that e.g. in the transport area, the potential for greater economic gain is frustrated by lack of physical infrastructure. The Bothnian Corridor is hence vital to interconnect Member States' capacities.
- The Bothnian Corridor is of immense strategic importance for the European Union because it links one of the main European raw material depositories to the European markets. As the Communication "Tackling the Challenges in Commodity Markets and on Raw Materials" also highlights (2.2.2011), access to raw materials is essential to maintain the productive capacity of the economy and to secure the wellbeing of EU citizens.
- The Bothnian Corridor is therefore of vital interest in connection to the Raw Material Initiative launched by the Commission in 2008. North of Sweden stands for 88% of the iron production in EU and together with Finland and northern part of Russia substantial amounts of other for European industry necessary and over time more and more critical minerals, as the competition of raw materials will increase in the world. The Barents region is the main source of wood for pulp, paper and sawn timber for EU and also energy supplies such as oil, gas and increasingly also biomass.
- It is of interest for the whole of Europe, having corridors within and connecting to Europe's neighbouring countries and strategic trading partners, e.g. Russia and Asia, facilitating increased freight flows on railway other than overloaded central European corridors. That is not least also a question of long-term risk management, having alternative corridors spread out over the continent.

The selection criteria for the new core network focus on facts and figures which are related to densely populated areas of central Europe. It is essential that also other criteria are used in the selection of strategically valuable projects to become part of the core network. Assuring supplies of goods for All-European growth, socio-economic figures on transnational regional level and infrastructural balance for all of Europe, also the northern parts, should be among these criteria.

The Bothnian Corridor links the existing European corridors and axes together. It is a crucial missing link that should be an essential part of the future TEN-T core network.