**4th Working Meeting on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region**

Proposed concept for parallel session on Connectivity

Date: 11 April 2013 11:00–12:45 and 13:45–15:15

Venue: Aalto University Dipoli Congress Centre, Otakaari 24, 02150 Espoo, Finland

Participants: approximately 50

**The objective of the 4th Working Meeting on the EUSBSR:**

Key stakeholders of the EUSBSR and Member State representatives responsible for national strategic planning and implementation of Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, will meet to identify concrete areas of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region for mutual benefit in 2014-2020.

**Background information:**

*1. The EU transport policy*

The policy framework is presented in the White paper on transport[[1]](#footnote-1) published by the Commission in 2011, whereby the European Commission aims at building a competitive transport system that will increase mobility, remove major barriers in key transport areas and promote economic growth and employment. At the same time, establishing a sustainable transport system has the potential to substantially reduce Europe's dependence on imported oil and cut carbon emissions in the transport sector by 60% by the year 2050.

The White Paper goals and principles have shaped the drafting of the new TEN-T Guidelines and the proposal for establishing a Connecting Europe facility (CEF), which will finance projects filling the missing links in Europe's energy, transport and digital backbone.

In the context of the new TEN-T Guidelines, the Commission is also currently developing a new approach for "Greening" TEN-T Corridors. Greening TEN-T corridors is understood as providing the necessary infrastructure basis to enable a transformation towards a higher share of clean modes of transport, overall higher efficiency of transport operations and lower impacts on society and the environment *(See more details in paper attached)*.



*2. Transport issues in the Baltic Sea Region*

In the Baltic Sea region, transport is particularly important as the distances – internally, to the rest ofEurope and to the wider world – are great and the conditions for traffic are often difficult (forests, lakes, snow and ice in the winter, etc.). The Region, which is located on the periphery of the economic centre of Europe, depends strongly on foreign trade in goods and needs well-functioning transport infrastructure to achieve economic growth.

As the Region is made up of many relatively small countries, national actions are not enough, and even bi-lateral cooperation does not provide the necessary solutions. Wider regional cooperation is needed to overcome the transport bottlenecks. Many of the planned major infrastructure projects only make sense if they are looked at from a macro-regional perspective. Regional collaboration structures need to reflect these benefits to make sure that sufficient investment in infrastructure is made.

Moreover, the Baltic Sea is a sensitive ecosystem, and this makes environmental issues important when developing transport infrastructures. The designation of the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) allows the development of particular and specific measures for the Baltic Sea to ensure the sustainability of maritime transport.

The main challenge regarding transport development in the Baltic Sea region is to reduce its remoteness by improving links within the region and to the rest of the EU. Without jeopardising the work under the Strategy’s first objective ‘Save the Sea’. East-West links are needed to overcome the infrastructure shortfalls of the eastern and south-eastern sides of the sea. The North is very remote and therefore dependent on efficient transport. Better connections to Russia and other neighbours are needed. Further connections to Asia, to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean regions should be developed. This could increase the region’s potential as EU’s gateway to Asia.

*3. The Action Plan replies*

The main priorities of the Action Plan of the EUSBSR are as follows:

* ***Timely completion of major infrastructure projects in the macro-region, including:***
* Upgrading of road, rail and maritime infrastructure in Sweden and Finland across borders on the **Nordic Triangle** multimodal corridor;
* **Rail Baltica** linking Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (as well as Finland through a rail-ferry service);
* **Fehmarnbelt Fixed Link** between Denmark and Germany with the improved access to railways from Copenhagen and Hannover/Bremen via Hamburg (a part of Green STRING Corridor);
* Railway axis Gdańsk-Warsaw-Brno/Bratislava-Vienna **(Rail freight Corridor No 5**);
* Motorway axis Gdańsk-Brno/Bratislava-Vienna;
* Railway axis Stockholm-Malmö-Copenhagen-Hamburg-Innsbruck-Verona-Palermo **(Rail freight corridor No 3)**.
* ***Facilitate efficient and sustainable Baltic passenger and freight transport solutions***

Freight transport solutions can be supported through a number of initiatives, e.g. by removing non infrastructure-related bottlenecks, promoting inter-modal connections, developing the Green Corridor concept by implementing specific projects, developing infrastructure, supporting logistics service providers, establishing coordinated electronic administrative procedures or harmonising control procedures.

*4. The overall coherence*

The link between the priorities of the EUSBSR in the transport area, the issues highlighted in the position paper sent by the Commission to Member States end of last year, and the thematic objectives listed in article 9 of the draft common provision regulation (CPR) can be summarised as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **The EUSBSR activities** | **Commission Position papers** | **Thematic objective (CPR regulation)** |
| Cooperate on national transport policies and infrastructure investments (timely completion of major infrastructure projects in the macro-region) | Connections, transport links (travel time)  Transport infrastructure and logistics | (7) (a) supporting a multimodal Single European Transport Area by investing in the TEN-T network  (7) (c) developing environment-friendly and low-carbon transport systems |
| Facilitate efficient and sustainable Baltic passenger and freight transport solutions | Environmental impact of transport systems  Accessibility and attractiveness |
| Increase the role of the Baltic Sea in the transport systems of the region (Motorways of the Sea network) | Sustainable maritime transport |

It is also worth noting that The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) will complement EU direct support with financial instruments in order to optimise the impact of funding.

**The objective of the session:**

The session will address cooperation, synergies and complementarities between the EUSBSR and the different national and regional transport strategies and policies in the Baltic Sea region.

The overall aim of the session is to identify actions and projects that can be implemented jointly or in a coordinated way by regions or Member States in order to improve at the same time transport connections both at national and at macroregional level, in the context presented above. For the CSF Funds, this means focusing on sustainable forms of transport and investing in areas with the greatest European added value, the Trans-European Networks.

**Consequently, the session should address three main questions:**

1) What are the infrastructure projects (or sections of projects) listed in the EUSBSR Action Plan that Member States intend to finance in the next programming period? Does the sum of these projects allow the completion of one or several transnational projects?

2) What actions are Member States going to implement in their programmes in order to support the "greening TEN-T approach"?

3) What necessary coordination and cooperation processes must be set-up between the Member States in order to maximise the complementarities and minimise the fragmentation of their decisions?

**Proposed structure of the session:**

It would be useful to know beforehand what projects Member States want to prioritise in the next programming period at national level to discuss the intervention logic at macroregional scale.

The session can give room for two presentations and then room for discussion on synergies and aim at encouraging complementarities between the EUSBSR and the national policies.

The presentations can be asked to be given along a template. The template might be used by all the Member States as a self-assessment tool in order to reflect upon the synergies between their national priorities and those of the neighbouring countries and the EUSBSR.

The template can be developed along the following lines:

1. What are your national priorities?

2. How do they reinforce the EUSBSR objectives and/or the Priority Areas?

3. Within your priorities, how do youcollaborate with partners in the Baltic Sea region?

4. Within our priorities, how would you like to collaborate with partners in the Baltic Sea region?

5. How can the EUSBSR and the programmes or other instruments support each other?

Given the time constraint, plenary session might be preferred. The discussion can be organised along the three main questions listed above.

**Moderation:** Priority Area coordinator for the Priority Area TRANSPORT of the EUSBSR Action Plan (tbc)

DG MOVE (Gudrun Schulze/Helmut Adelsberger (tbc))

**Proposed Agenda of the session:**

11:00 – 11:45 Introduction: objectives of session, short intro to the EUSBSR and Priority Area Transport; Map of the projects

11:45 – 12:45 Example 1 on presentation of infrastructure projects decided by a Member State, and of the intervention logic (national/crossborder/transnational) followed by a discussion (20+30 min)

12:45 – 13:45 Lunch

13:45 – 14:45 Example 2 on presentation of greening approach in a Member-State followed by a discussion (20+30 min)

14:45 – 15:15 Comments from the Priority Area coordinator from Priority Area TRANSPORT

Comments from other Member States on their progress and to what extent it is connected to the EUBSR

Can we draw conclusion on cooperation opportunities and work to be done with regard to stimulate Baltic Sea region cooperation?

Is this cooperation likely to give value added for both - programmes and the EUSBSR?

What is the way forward?

1. COM(2011) 144 final, 'White Paper: Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area — Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system [↑](#footnote-ref-1)