



Future of the Core Network Corridors - The extension of the North Sea-Baltic and Scandinavian-Mediterranean Core Network Corridors around the Gulf of Bothnia

This is a joint position paper of the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian regional offices around the Gulf of Bothnia, in cooperation with the Bothnian Corridor, on the mid-term evaluation of the Connecting Europe Facility. The EU offices represent the regions of East and North Finland, West Finland, Tampere Region, Helsinki-Uusimaa Region, Central Sweden, Mid Sweden, North Sweden and North Norway.

Introduction

The TEN-T Regulation¹ stipulates that the trans-European transport network shall strengthen the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the Union and contribute to the creation of a single European transport area. It shall also demonstrate European added value by contributing to accessibility and connectivity of all regions of the Union, including remote, peripheral and sparsely populated areas. To better achieve these goals, the EU - under the current legislation - moved from the 30 geographically scattered, individual priority projects to an approach of **establishing and developing an integrated Core Network** together with **nine strategic Core Network Corridors**. The CEF Regulation specifies that: “*Core Network Corridors* means an instrument to facilitate the coordinated implementation of the Core Network.”²

While the TEN-T Core Network reaches the northern parts of Europe, along the pre-identified sections in the CEF, Annex 1 "Other Sections on the Core Network", through the so called Bothnian extension and the Iron ore line, the current nine Core Network Corridors are not covering the whole Union; leaving out important parts of Northern Europe, i.e. almost the whole of Finland and Sweden. The absence of the TEN-T Core Network Corridors in the North, and thus the lack of a coordinated approach to financing transport infrastructure, endangers the timely implementation of the TEN-T Core Network. In addition, this is not in coherence with the structure of the national economies of Finland and Sweden and the importance this area has for the European economy. The main sections of the transport infrastructure in these regions are included in “Other Sections on the Core Network” as identified in the Regulation of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF, 1316/2013).

The joint position of the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian regions

In order to secure a timely implementation of the TEN-T Core Network, an extension of the Scandinavian-Mediterranean Core Network Corridor (Scan-Med) along the Gulf of Bothnia in Northern Sweden, and an extension of the North Sea-Baltic Corridor along the Gulf of Bothnia in

¹ REGULATION (EU) No 1315/2013 Article 4

² REGULATION (EU) No 1316/2013 Article 2

Northern Finland should be implemented in the next CEF Regulation. In addition, the Scan-Med Corridor should also include a connection to the port of Narvik in Norway.

The proposed extensions would ensure and align the involvement of the two Member States and Regions in cross-border development and TEN-T policy objectives, as well as promote the objectives of the EU's cohesion policy. This would enable an inclusive planning structure and would better mirror the needs that exist today in the entire Core Network and ensure that the Member States are systematically working towards the CEF and TEN-T priorities. The European Coordinators of the Scan-Med Corridor and the North-Sea Baltic Corridor, as catalysts to transport development, would lead the harmonization of the transport planning in the Northern parts of the EU and with Third Countries.

The extensions of these Corridors would consolidate the engagement of the EU and its' role as a key player in the development of the Arctic region. The proposed extensions, in view of forming a strategic gateway to the Arctic region, connecting the Scan-Med Corridor with the North Sea-Baltic Corridor at the border between Finland and Sweden, is supported by the European Coordinators for the Scan-Med³ and North Sea-Baltic⁴ Corridors. The extensions would help in tapping the potential of the Northern Dimension in transport and logistics to the benefit of the Union as a whole.

Northern Europe providing crucial raw materials to European industries

The proposed extensions of the Core Network Corridors would consolidate the engagement of the EU and its' role as a key player in the development of the Arctic region. They would allow for new important arteries from the Arctic region in a North-South axis towards Rail Baltica and the continental core of the EU.

The North Sea-Baltic Core Network Corridor is marked by its strong role in short sea shipping. The Corridor includes major ports in all Member States along the Corridor. Approximately one third of international trade in Finland passes through the seaports north of the existing Core Network Corridors. The multi-modal North-South axis, 'the Finland Corridor', from Helsinki to Oulu is vital to the economy and to international trade.

Northern Sweden and Finland are located in the middle of the new global crossroads East-Westbound and North-Southbound with major infrastructure challenges and opportunities. These regions have a long tradition of mining and forestry activities. North Sweden alone stands for 90 percent of the iron ore production in the EU and together with Finland and northern parts of Russia supply substantial amounts of other necessary critical minerals for European industry, e.g. copper, gold and lithium as well as forestry raw materials. In addition, over 25 percent of global oil and gas reserves are located in the European Arctic, 70 percent of the forest area, being the main source of wood for pulp, paper, timber and biomass in Europe. The accessibility to the EU core markets for raw materials require functional rail and maritime connections. The infrastructure in the region connects the northern part of the Northern Axis with the Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor and the North Sea-Baltic Corridor. The Corridors create an important fundamental structure for the European transport system for the transport of crucial raw materials and other refined products to the European market.

³ [Second Work Plan of the European Coordinator Pat Cox](#), December 2016, p. 41.

⁴ [Second Work Plan of the European Coordinator Catherine Trautmann](#), December 2016, p. 51.

Northern Sweden is connected by the Iron Ore line and Ofoten Railway line to the TEN-T core port of Narvik. The connection between Narvik, which is an all-year ice free port at the Atlantic coast, and northern Norway and Sweden form a vital route of international trade in the production of iron ore, minerals and other industrial production, fisheries and aquaculture, vital for the Norwegian and EU economy. The cost and time savings bring major benefit especially to fresh produce, such as seafood, from the northern production plants, which can be delivered fast and efficiently to their European markets.

The potential of the Northern Dimension for the EU

The extensions of the Scan-Med and North Sea-Baltic Corridors connect the EU macro-regional strategy of the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and the EU's integrated policy for the Arctic, which creates important synergies between transport and regional development. The CNC extensions implement the European added-value by improving transport connections and logistics, international trade and sustainable economic growth in the Northern Dimension region.

The CEF programme strongly stimulates the cross-border cooperation between the EU Member States and regions. Strengthened possibilities for Finnish and Swedish actors to be part of the Core Network Corridors are of interest not only from the transport point of view, but there is also a strong interest to develop the transport projects in close cooperation with the energy and ICT challenges outlined in the CEF. In regions with long distances, topics such as energy and biogas as well as the need for efficient ICT networks will be crucial for the development of these regions' economies. The economic and transport forecasts show remarkable growth potential in the Northern parts of Finland and Sweden and the currently untapped resources of the Arctic region add to this potential. The Arctic region shows importance especially in investments in energy production, mining, intelligent transport, data storing, space technology and research, sustainable tourism and fisheries. The extensions of the Scan-Med and North Sea-Baltic Corridors will link the national transport investment plans and strategies more closely to the priorities of the CEF, which would further ensure that the Member States are systematically working towards the CEF and TEN-T priorities.

The supply of iron ore and forest products is crucial for Europe's industries and the lion's share of the raw materials comes from the Northern part of Europe. The raw materials are crucial, not only for the European industries, but also for the economies of Finland and Sweden and they generate growth both domestically and in goods passing through Europe as a whole. Sweden and Finland are growth engines that contribute to a strong Europe and the extensions of the Scandinavian-Mediterranean and the North-Sea-Baltic Core Network Corridors would ensure that the EU can make full use of the potential of the Northern Dimension.