

RESPONSE TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S CONSULTATION ON THE GREEN PAPER ON TEN-T

Eastern Norway County Network (ENCN) is a political alliance of 8 counties in South East Norway including the capital city of Oslo. Eastern Norway covers 1/3 of the Norwegian land area and is home to half of Norway's population. It is the national centre of growth in terms of population and business development, as well as being the core of the national transport system. Eastern Norway functions as the main gateway to foreign regions and countries. Our regional alliance has worked since 1998 with the ESDP (European Spatial Development Perspective) as a basis and well developed and sustainable transport and infrastructure is one of our major issues of concern. The overall aim of ENCEN is to:

- Further develop Eastern Norway as a sustainable and competitive region in Europe.
- Secure a balanced and sustainable development within the region through polycentric development. This will help to ease the pressure on the capital region and strengthen the rest of the territory.

The importance of transport and infrastructure for sustainable economic, social and territorial cohesion

Transport and communication is a key factor to facilitate integration and unlock potentials in Europe. It is difficult for an economy to be competitive without a well-developed transport network. ENCEN underlines that actions to improve regional accessibility by means of transport infrastructure are necessary for the development of the European territory. Regional and local authorities can play an important role in the planning and development of infrastructure crossing national borders.

A solid and environmentally compatible transport system will contribute substantially to sustainable productivity improvements in Europe. Trans-boundary cooperation is indispensable to develop transport corridors, to overcome bottlenecks and to eliminate existing weak links. ENCEN finds it crucial that all the transport systems of Europe should be developed into an integrated and efficient system.

The Nordic Triangle transport corridor is of vital importance for Eastern Norway

The Nordic Triangle transport corridor links the Nordic countries and their capital regions together as well as linking the Nordic countries to the rest of Europe. The Nordic Triangle is of major importance and forms the backbone of the transport system in Scandinavia. ENCEN underlines the importance of this transport corridor and to keep it as major prioritized project within the TEN-T. ENCEN also emphasizes the importance of linking up the Nordic Triangle with the TEN-T corridor project crossing the Fehmarn Belt - where the fixed link will be completed in 2018. ENCEN stresses the need to speed up the investments in these corridors to secure a sustainable and efficient transport system within and to/from the Nordic countries – based on rail, road and maritime transport.

Support to proposal of incorporation of a “priority network” in the EU transport policy

The transport policy and TEN-T are interconnected with other policy fields and objectives of the EU. The cross sectoral and holistic approach used in the EU Maritime Policy as well as in the work with an EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region could give important input to the future transport policy of EU.

A geographical focus to the development of European macro regions could ensure a joint and coordinated approach, where environmental, economical, social and territorial concerns are taken into account. Transport and infrastructure are major elements in such an approach.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is very relevant for accessibility issues and the Strategy will especially place emphasis on a move from recommendations to action and a better alignment of policies and investments in the region. Building more coherent and efficient transport, energy and communication networks - overcoming bottlenecks - will be a major objective. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region will better coordinate the process of designing policies at national, regional and local levels to ensure that they complement each other. This could be evident for transport infrastructure and the policies could be based on prior commitments made by stakeholders (e.g. via the TEN-T or TEN-E networks).

ENCN points to the fact that harmonisation of the TEN-T policy and the pan-European transport corridors should allow for better integration of the Russian and Belarusian parts of the Baltic Sea Region as well as Norway into the European transport system. The Nordic Triangle railroad/road axis as well as the maritime infrastructure in the Baltic Sea Region is of high importance in this respect.

The transport communications with Asia needs to be strengthened as the European trade with China is growing rapidly. Chinese companies are looking for partners and investments in Europe. The Baltic Sea Region will play the primary role in serving transport flows between the European Union, Russia and the Far East countries, not only on account of the geographical location but also due to availability of technical standards enabling smooth transfer of goods.

The Northern Dimension (ND) policy framework connects the EU with its neighbours in the Baltic Sea Region – Norway and Russia. In the first Ministerial meeting of the renewed ND in Saint Petersburg 28th October 2008, the ministers decided to establish a Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDTLP). The main goal of the NDTLP will be to improve the major transport connections and logistics between the ND partners to stimulate sustainable economic growth at the local/regional and global level.

With this in mind ENCN supports the idea of a priority network within a geographical defined macro region. ENCN thinks that such a network will make stronger commitments for the member states in the region fulfilling their obligations in the TEN-T investment plans. The stakeholder in the region could jointly identify gaps and prioritise the needs for infrastructural investments. A geographical priority network in the Baltic Sea Region could be truly multi-modal and focus on improving the internal as well as the external accessibility in the region.

The treats of the climate change requires changes in the transport policy and a need for more environmental friendly transport modes

Global warming is already threatening many vital interests of human beings all over the world. The consequences of rapidly changing climate conditions have become a major concern for all of us, and the transport sector is vital in this picture. The transport policy must be closely linked to the measures combating the climate change and the reduction of CO₂ emissions by 2020. ENCN emphasizes the need to come up with concrete measures and actions - to change in the transport pattern in Europe and globally - in connection with the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen in December 2009.

ENCN proposes that TEN-T development should have a particular focus on the development of sustainable, affordable and intermodal public transportation, in order to comply with environmental, economic, social and territorial requirements. Transferring goods and passengers from road to rail should be focused, and investments in more climate friendly transport infrastructure must be speeded up to secure a more sustainable transport for the future.

The Motorways of the Sea concept that aims at improving cohesion and access to peripheral regions and states and reducing road congestion should be further developed. Particular attention should be paid to intermodal connections between ports and their hinterlands.

The railroad should form an important part of the future transport system and interoperability between the different modes of transport should be further improved. High speed trains can make rail transport more competitive compared to air transport, and should therefore be high on the agenda for the future transport policy. Green transport corridors should be promoted.

New energy sources in transport should be taken into account when planning future transport infrastructure.