



**ROYAL NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS**

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Joint Barents Transport Plan - Norwegian position

Norway took the initiative to develop a Joint Barents Transport plan during our chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area (BEATA) from the autumn of 2011 to the autumn of 2013. An expert working group with representatives from the transport authorities in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia was established, supported by a Norwegian secretariat.

The Expert Group presented their recommendations in Narvik, 24. september 2013 for Transport minister Marit Arnstad and State secretaries from Finland, Russia and Sweden. The declaration from the meeting states that the plan forms a good foundation for priorities and further work on better cross border connections. The document has been sent on consultation to relevant Norwegian stakeholders. Enclosed is a brief summary of the comments.

Some of the stakeholders state factual errors in JBTP. We will forward these comments to the Finnish BEATA chair in a separate letter.

Comments from the consultation

- JBTP is generally positively received.
- The document should be revised on a regular basis.
- Regional administrations are concerned about corridors/measures within their own region.
- The issue of economic development and the development of the natural resources has been given adequate attention.
- JBTP contributes to a necessary and reinforced focus on East-West relations in the North and creates expectations of concrete results.
- Provides a good basis for the follow up nationally and internationally.
- Too little attention is given to the impacts of climate change on infrastructure. The

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recently adopted Climate action plan for the Barents region states that the consequences for the transport sector of climate change should be assessed, such as risk for more extreme weather. This is a work that BEATA should start up in 2014. BEATA should establish a working group with representatives from the four countries with the task to analyse possible effects of climate change on transport infrastructure and assess the need for infrastructure measures

- The Barents region has a large Sami population. Intervention in vulnerable arctic nature, as increased economic activity and transportation infrastructure, can come into conflict with indigenous peoples' interests. In the planning of new infrastructure, or substantially upgrading the existing, it must be a prerequisite that adequate clarifications with affected indigenous interests and the Sami Parliament is carried out.

Assessment of the JBTP

The Norwegian Ministry of Transport regards JBTP as a good step in the direction of a integrated transport system in the Barents region. The analysis of future transportation needs, which emanates from the reviews of transport demanding industries, is a useful complement to the traditional forecasts that are used in national planning. The designated corridors form a comprehensive network in and between the countries. We agree to take the Swedish four-step principle into account when planning the transport system in the Barents region.

JBTP refers to a number of challenges, such as demanding winter operations, too little capacity and short opening hours for customs clearance, different national regulations for vehicle dimensions, different track gauge and poor flight connections between the largest cities in the Barents region. JBTP proposes a number of concrete measures, which should be followed up in the short and long term by the four countries.

JBTP is not a binding agreement but an expert analysis on how cross-border relations in the Barent region can be improved. The largest and most important decisions, investments in new infrastructure and major upgrades, are done nationally in the annual budgets and planning systems. However we assume that JBTP will play an important role in the upcoming transportation plans in the four Barents countries.

JBTP has outlined several new railway connections that are recommended for further analysis. On the Norwegian side this includes new connections between Kirkenes-Nikel and Rovaniemi-Kirkenes. It is the opinion of the Ministry that the foundation for concrete planning of new rail links is still too weak. The main priorities of the Norwegian railway system should still be expansion of the capacity on the Ofoten line and upgrade of the Nordland line. However, if a formal initiative is taken from one of our neighbouring countries, or from important industrial actors, Norway may be positive to contribute in joint feasibility studies.

JBTP points to the increasing importance of sea transport, both in the Gulf of Bothnia and along the Norwegian coast towards Russia. Increasing maritime activity in the Barents Sea presents challenges for emergency response, search and rescue services. It is thus necessary to

stress that the amount of traffic, risk and image use must be taken into account when maritime infrastructure is decided. An update of our White paper on marine safety and oil spill is scheduled to be presented to the Storting in the spring of 2016. In that regard, the Ministry has asked the Norwegian coastal administration to prepare a comprehensive analysis of preventive maritime security along the Norwegian coast by the end of 2014. The analysis will constitute a central basis for the sizing of the prophylactic sea security and prioritization between different types of measures.

We consider these issues sufficiently followed up in arenas such as the Arctic Council, IMO, and through bilateral agreements. It is important to avoid overlap of work and uncertainties in the follow up when several multilateral arenas are involved.

JBTP should be the central document that structure the work of the BEATA in the years to come. Finland has signaled a revision in the autumn of 2015, this is a good proposal. The expert group has proposed a revised version every four years as a contribution to the national transport plans in the four countries. The document should be updated on a regular basis, but how often and how extensive should be discussed during the Finnish chairmanship.

Norway supports the common objective for the development of the transport system in the Barents region, which reads: **"Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway have the ambition to develop an efficient transport system in the Barents region, with good internal relations between the Barents countries and with good external links to the world's markets. The Transport system should pave the way for regional development in the Barents region and create new opportunities for key industries. The Transport system should be developed in an environmentally sustainable manner and with an emphasis on safety and accessibility for all."** The objective could be implemented as a BEATAs main purpose and joint ambition.

Suggestions for BEATA to follow up

1. Development of specific connections

The cross-border corridors of JBTP is analyzed in terms of transport flows and development needs. Such structuring provides a good basis for concrete follow-up. Proposals for developing strategies for specific corridors or connections should be worked out. Such strategies could be governed by bilateral agreements. An example of such an agreement is the work of upgrading of the E105 Kirkenes-Murmansk from 2007. Bilateral agreements with this purpose should be anchored at policy level, based on input from the transport authorities. A development strategy must be understood as a *common intention* where one, as far as possible, promise to follow up with the appropriate measures according to the development strategy for the connection. There should be appointed a couple of connections between Norway, Finland, Russia and Sweden where such development strategies could be established. We are aware that there are applications from road authorities in Finland and Norway on the development/upgrading of the two connections to the Northern Dimension Partnership for Transport and logistics (NDPTL). The Ofoten line is also a natural candidate, an ongoing cooperation is already taking place.

2. Better flight connections East-West

Better flight connections between the major cities in the area is constantly brought up from business community as well as representatives from the public sector. It is a fact that most have to travel through the Capital cities in order to reach their destination on the other side of the border in the North. Improved flight connections will contribute to a better integration of the labour market and promote business cooperation. The challenge is that the traffic volumes seems too small for commercial routes. JBTP recommends that the aviation authorities keep an active dialogue with the relevant airline companies on the development of flight connections. The task for BEATA should be to keep a high attention to the issue together with the regional authorities.

3. Better information exchange of traffic information

BEATA should elaborate how information exchange about traffic information/weather/road conditions can be improved. Conditions during the winter can be demanding for the road users, and better information on a cross border connection can be of great value. In order to manage this, a closer cooperation between road operators should be elaborated. This can be a development project that may apply for support from various sources, e.g the NDPTL.

4. Elaborate the impacts of climate change for the transport infrastructure

According to the Barents Climate Action Plan BEATA should establish a working group with representatives from the four countries with the task to analyse possible effects of climate change on transport infrastructure and assess the need for infrastructure measures. There are available many relevant studies and analysis for this work. A synthesis of existing knowledge and possible recommendations for measures could be the most important new content for a new version of JBTP in 2015.

Yours sincerely,



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