

Comment on the White Paper on European Transport Policy

Last year EU published a White Paper on European Transport Policy. The aim is to create a transportation policy and a transportation network that increases the competitiveness and efficiency of Europe, including all modes of transport. The approach, on which the White Paper is based, comprises a series of measures, ranging from pricing to revitalising alternative modes of transport to road and targeted investment in the trans-European network.

The White Paper proposes some 60 specific measures to be taken at Community level under the transport policy. Most of the measures are aimed at increasing the capacity and efficiency of road transport, railway transport, air traffic and the inland canal system in the continental Europe.

The Baltic Sea Region is hardly mentioned in the White Paper context, except for an investment in a new bridge across Fehmarn Belt between Germany and Denmark, and a ferry line between Poland and Germany.

2004 the Commission will present a more extensive review of the trans-European network aimed among others at introducing the concept of "Sea motorways", developing airport capacity, linking the outlying regions on the European continent more effectively and connecting the networks of the candidate countries to the networks of EU countries. However, the concept "Sea Motorways" refers to improvement of the canal system in Continental Europe, and not to ferry connections in the Baltic Sea.

We who live in the Baltic Sea Region know the importance of ferry traffic. Large parts of the region can from all practical perspectives be regarded as islands since most of the foreign freight and passenger transportation must pass across the sea at some point.

The Northern part of the Baltic Sea Region will be a peripheral European region also in the future enlarged European Union. Better transportation conditions are essential to utilise the potential of the Baltic Sea Region and to create a better functioning region.

It is important for a sustainable transportation policy to include all transport modes and to judge them from all aspects, including environmental aspects, safety, efficiency and productivity.

It is also important to assess the effects of the different modes on the regional economy. It is, for us who live in the Baltic Sea Region, clear that efficient and modern ferry connections is of vital importance for our region. The lack of good ferry connections across the Baltic Sea in large parts in the region is a severe obstacle for development.

It is also clear that ferry connections are integrated parts of the communications network for freight as well as passengers and vital for the region to be an integrated part of the European Union.

We therefore

Call the European Union to

- Include ferry lines in the Trans European Network (TEN) as part of an integrated network on the same level as roads and railways
- Extend the concept of "Sea Motorways" also to include ferry connections

- Facilitate investments in ferry connections on the same level and conditions as the other components in the TEN: Roads and railways. Investments can be ferry terminals, connecting roads and railways, maritime safety, environment and perhaps even the ferries themselves.

This document was unanimously adopted by representatives from major Baltic Sea Region organisations in a meeting in connection with the 10th BSSSC meeting in Lillehammer 24-26 October 2002.

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