

New study report on Green Corridors released

The prospects for transport in the BSR

One of the major focuses of the TransBaltic project is to raise awareness of transport planning incompatibilities between BSR countries as seen from a sustainable growth perspective. Activities are aimed

at developing regional level proposals for better harmonization and coordination of transport policymaking in the BSR, as stipulated by the EU Baltic Sea Strategy.

The project's Task 4.3: Sustainable Transport and Green Corridors is dedicated to

debates and follow-up investigations on environmental balance in transport operations. Following EU guidelines, the task looks into the issue of "green corridors", i.e. freight transport corridors characterised by low impact on the human and natural environment,

A vision to be brought to life

An interview with Urszula Kowalczyk, Head of the Economics and Law Department of the



Photo: TransBaltic

- *The study report recently released under TransBaltic is built on a research project carried out by a transnational working group. What was the contribution of task partners?*

The Task 4.3 Partnership involves 12 project participants from around the Baltic Sea region, namely from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. Its members realise the task's goals within their specific fields of professional activities and expertise. Their input includes participation in research studies, seminars and debates within the TransBaltic project framework.

- *What are today's main challenges to the development of ecologically balanced transportation in the BSR and how do the EU's regulatory tools respond to them?*

One of the main challenges is a lack of balance in traffic distribution, intensifying congestion in the main trans-European networks and cities. Traditionally, the remedies were focused on optimising individual modes

of transport, with regard to their specific problems. An approach like this hampered development of co-modality. Furthermore, the potential of rail or water transport is not sufficiently exploited, while access to peripheral regions and markets is limited and irregular. Other challenges, imposed by the climate change, scarcity of public finances and the need to secure growth and jobs, will force the EU and its Member States to reinvent their transport policies. The sector will have to be decarbonised – but without public money. This is an opportunity to move towards a truly sustainable and efficient transport system. Efforts will be required from all stakeholders, not just the Commission. Complementary measures need to be worked out to change transport behaviour and mobility, with the transport policy to incorporate the social element, by greater awareness towards environmental issues, prices of tickets and congestion.

- *In regards to these obstacles, what region-specific determinants can be distinguished in the BSR?*

It is obvious, that transport systems of the various BSR countries are dramatically different. This concerns the diversity of 'the old' and 'the new' EU countries, but even to a larger extent the differences between EU and non-EU countries – in all aspects: road networks, rail, ports, types and the standard of transport means, as well as information systems. Elimination of infrastructural barriers is not an easy task – developments are capital-intensive and often environmentally controversial. The pressure should be on finding common priorities to get rid of bottlenecks. The missing links of transport and information infrastructure have to be developed in Central and Eastern Europe, whereas the challenge for Western Europe is to use the existing system more efficiently. Besides, significant differences in the level of economic development in various BSR countries affect trade relations between them. Due to insufficient exchange of goods and the multitude of importers, small shipments of goods prevail, and road transport is preferred. The shift of transport 'from road to sea' is additionally blocked by a lack of logistics and distribution centres in many ports of new EU countries and Russia. The economic crisis of the recent years has also had a negative effect on the international exchange volume and consequently – on the volume of transport.

- *Green corridors are intended to be the main elements of a sustainable transport system, but the concept itself incorporates various approaches. What are the main findings presented in the study report?*

and promote ecological transport modes. The green concept becomes the essence of some maturing transport corridor projects initiated by the regional authorities (e.g. East West TC II, Scandria, etc.). Bearing TransBaltic's umbrella functions in mind, the task has been intended to provide guidance to them on green corridor experiences elsewhere in Europe and worldwide. Further, discussions may identify some specific issues not covered by the currently ongoing projects, concerning modal split and development of green solutions. Finally, the task will generalise

findings of both own and other projects' investigations at the Baltic Sea region level. This may become a basis for developing BSR blueprints and a policy response from this geographical area to the challenges of transport sustainability across Europe.

Leadership of the task has been entrusted to the Maritime Institute in Gdańsk – a backing partner involved in a number of Interreg IIIB and BSR programme projects. The institute is running extensive research and development work for several transport corridors and logistics chains and is therefore a meeting place

for other corridor projects and transport actors. MIG is also providing its own expertise on BSR blueprint solutions on this matter.

Research activities performed under this component of TransBaltic have yielded the study report on Implications of the EU Transport Policy on Development of Sustainable Transport in the BSR. The case study has been compiled based on contribution from TransBaltic project partners: the Economics and Law Department of the Maritime Institute in Gdańsk, the Institute for Transport Planning and Logistics of Hamburg University of Technology as well as Øresund Logistics. ■

Maritime Institute in Gdańsk

As outlined in the EU documents, the key objective of the green corridor approach is to minimize external impacts of transport. Thereby, fighting climate change, reducing noise and pollution, enhancing transport safety and security as well as facilitating congestion relief are of particular importance. As co-modality implies shifting goods between transport modes, it imposes specific infrastructure-related requirements, since green corridors do not reflect physical connections only. Efficient transshipment facilities are needed at defined strategic locations to enable consolidated long-distance transport flows between major hubs. Another approach is to supplement the green corridor concept with the use of innovative green technologies. Especially the ITS has continuously been mentioned as a key element for efficient, seamless transport in Europe. Applications could be electronic toll collection systems, journey planning, dynamic in-vehicle navigation or eco-driving support. Later on, green propulsion technologies (e.g. bio fuels) and the required infrastructure could also be included.

Green corridors should serve as a ground for experimentation with and implementation of green technologies. Generally, so far, green corridors merely constitute a vision that still has to be brought to life. The concept should be more transparent and applicable in practice as an example of an effective solution ensuring sustainable transport and in a broader sense – also sustainable mobility.

As regards conceptual integration of this approach into broader EU freight logistics and transportation policy, it will be most interesting to see how green corridors will be integrated in the TEN-T policy review. So far, the concept has been mentioned in the 2009 green paper and the work of installed expert groups, also as an element of the aspired TEN-T core network.

■ *Socio-economic and technological development has resulted in a changed attitude towards supply chain management. What role does this new approach play in the transport sector?*

It means being aware of the natural environment and its needs. Today, increasingly more businesses are using ecologically-friendly policies to monitor their suppliers. The companies are introducing these policies not only for PR reasons, but also to make their supply chain more transparent. The turn to sustainability is often enforced by clients concerned about their business partners' environmental standpoint and products' impact on the natural surroundings. Addressing these issues results in

improved customer relationships and eventually – in business growth. Green politics may not necessarily be particularly innovative, but good supply chain management can go a long way to reaching environmental compliance, while seeking cost-saving alternatives. Innovations in these areas, in transport supply chains, bring about investments in new equipment, modernization of old engines and use of alternative fuels, such as biodiesel and other blends lowering emissions.

■ *The BSR-level findings summarized in the report are generalized in the form of some conclusions and recommendations for EU transport policies. Would you highlight the main focus areas suggested?*

They oscillate around several major issues. Where road transportation is prevailing, an imbalance between different transport modes should be addressed towards co-modality. More attention should be given to developing nodal access points, such as seaports or dry ports and their hinterland connections. The green corridor concept should be further developed and supported through coordinated plans and actions. The business environment ought to be encouraged to introduce innovative transport and logistics solutions improving their global competitiveness as well as their competitive position of the entire European economy. And finally, too many legal and administrative regulations in the EU regarding the transport sector are discouraging achievement of expected policy targets. We should focus on the successful implementation of objectives already chosen before we select new ones.

To focus only on developing appropriate physical features – the hardware – of the transport networks will not solve the problem. At least equally important is to improve the performance of transport operators and auxiliary services and also – to change the commercial behaviour of users. More focus should be on introducing innovative relations between public institutions and transport providers and users – the software – of international trade and transportation.

All regulations and EU recommendations necessitate an interdisciplinary approach. Extensive coordination is required at various levels, including institutional, operational and physical development of networks. Because of the variety of political, economic, and technological issues, a dialogue between the parties concerned becomes essential to elaborate acceptable transport and trade-related policies.

Małgorzata Nosorowska