

Arguments for the inclusion of the „Bothnian Corridor“ into the “Scandinavian-Mediterranean Core Network Corridor”

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1 The TEN-T Core Network and the Core Network Corridors

The principle of the following explanations is the fact that, since the TEN-T Policy Review 2009 – 2013, the EU transport infrastructure policy (TEN-T Policy) has been resting on two legal pillars:

- **TEN-T Regulation no. 1315/2013** (TEN-T = “*trans-European Network for Transport*”), indicating all planning aspects, the geographical scope as well as technical parameters, and
- **CEF Regulation no. 1316/2013** (CEF = “*Connecting Europe Facility*”), concerning the implementation of the TEN-T.

TEN-T Regulation no. 1315/2013 specifies the two layers of the TEN-T, which is the **Comprehensive Network** and the **Core Network**.

The **Core Network** is a subset of the Comprehensive Network, a selection of its strategically most important nodes and links. It is the result of systematically applying a specific planning methodology in a uniform way throughout the EU. TEN-T Core Network must be implemented by 2030, fulfilling all technical parameters specified in Regulation no. 1315/2013. With no change to become effective before this planning horizon, the Core Network is the stable, long-term objective of EU infrastructure policy.

In addition, the TEN-T Regulation also provides (Articles 42 – 48) some basic principles of forming Core Network Corridors within the Core Network, however at the same hierarchical level, with the same technical parameters and the same time horizons. The goals are coordinated implementation across borders, enhanced modal integration and interoperability, as well as improved efficiency and sustainability, all with view to European added value. This also includes the provisions on the governance of the Core Network Corridors.

CEF Regulation no. 1316/2013 covers the implementation tools for the Core Network:

- the provisions for funding and financing and
- the definition (in Annex 1) of currently 9 **Core Network Corridors**.

While it is an obligation of the Member States to do, what is possible to implement the Core Network by 2030, the EU will focus its financial resources (CEF budget and innovative financial instruments) on the funding and financing of Core Network projects.

Contrary to the TEN-T Regulation, the CEF Regulation covers only one EU financial period, currently 2014 – 2020. The new CEF Regulation 2021 – 2027, with a new Annex 1, will allow modifying the Core Network Corridors. Whereas the target is fixed, the way of implementation is flexible.

Although Core Network Corridors do not prevail the rest of the Core Network legally, they do have a higher visibility at European level, as if labelled as “confirmed strategic importance”. With their particular governance structure, comprising a “**Corridor Forum**” and a “**European Coordinator**” with political power, Core Network Corridors give Member States special support for implementation. This includes political assistance in border crossing issues, as well as a stronger position with view to obtaining CEF funding and financing, in particular for so-called “pre-identified projects”.

Furthermore, Core Network Corridors, with railways and waterways as their backbones and with their multimodal interfaces, are an important instrument of EU transport policy, for a more sustainable transport system. In this sense, the particular governance structure of Core Network Corridors also facilitates integrating soft measures and innovation (“smart technologies”) into infrastructure implementation, to achieve **a more sustainable transport system (“Green Corridors”)**, at the benefits of environment and climate. This is a great **added value** of Core Network Corridors.

2. Core Network Corridors with direct relevance for Scandinavia:

The **Scandinavian – Mediterranean Core Network Corridor** connects Southern Finland from the Russian border via Helsinki and Turku across the Baltic Sea to Stockholm, from where it continues southbound via Malmö and Copenhagen and the planned “Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link” to Germany. There several branches pass Hamburg, Hannover, Berlin, Leipzig, Nuremberg and Munich. Its further itinerary leads southwards through the planned Brenner Base Tunnel to Italy, through Bologna, Florence, Rome and Naples, until Bari and Palermo. Malta (La Valletta) is connected by ferries.

The **North Sea – Baltic Core Network Corridor** does not directly cross Scandinavian regions. It starts in Helsinki with a ferry link to Tallinn, and continues southbound to Riga, Kaunas (with a branch to Vilnius) and Warsaw, where it bends west to Berlin, Hannover and the North Sea ports Hamburg, Bremen, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Antwerp. Branching off in Warsaw, the **Baltic-Adriatic Core Network Corridor** follows in southern direction to Bratislava, Vienna, Ljubljana, Venice and Bologna.

3. The Bothnian Corridor:

The Bothnian Corridor Mjölby – Hallsberg – Örebro (freight)/Stockholm (passengers) – Sundsvall – Umeå – Luleå – Boden – Haparanda – Tornio – Tampere – Helsinki, both on road and on rail, has been adopted for the Core Network, formally because it is the only land connection between Sweden and its neighbour Finland. It further includes Luleå Core Network seaport.



Functionally, the Bothnian Corridor – together with the branch line Boden – Kiruna – Narvik (which is also part of the Core Network) is strategically very important, even at European level, as the connection from the large regions in the north of Scandinavia, which are extremely rich in minerals, in particular in **iron ore, heavy industry** and **timber**. The potential of the line on the Swedish side is in the order of several million tons per year. In addition, with only about 8 km standard gauge line in Tornio, about 1 million tons stainless steel products from a local mill could be transported towards the ports in Southern Sweden, to Denmark, Germany, Benelux, France and the Mediterranean. In its northern sections, it also overlays with potential traffic flows between the Russian Federation and the port of Narvik.

In passenger transport, relatively small cities (Umeå, Luleå etc.) might not deploy much traffic demand, even with shorter travelling times. But on the other hand, strengthening the railway links from the north to more central and southern regions in Sweden, as it is foreseen in TEN-T Regulation 1315/2013, would contribute to a prosperous economic development in the north. (There is proven evidence that at this scale, improved accessibility has a strong positive impact on regional economic development.) Furthermore, the scarcely populated north is increasingly becoming an attractive destination for tourists. The rail connection is also important as a sustainable alternative to road and maritime transport, which is affected by ice in the Bothnian Bay in winter periods.

4. Linking the Bothnian Corridor with the Scandinavian-Mediterranean and the North Sea-Baltic Core Network Corridors:

In this context, one has to distinguish between the physical upgrading of the infrastructure of the “Bothnian Corridor”, according to TEN-T Regulation 1315/2013, and its formal inclusion as a branch of the Scandinavian-Mediterranean and the North Sea-Baltic Core Network Corridors.

The corresponding government structures would not only facilitate infrastructure implementation in terms of coordination, funding and financing, but also allow embedding it in a wider political surrounding, by optimising traffic flows in terms of multimodality, efficiency and sustainability. A particular benefit of applying a “corridor policy” would emerge from extending the existing **Rail Freight Corridors according to Regulation 913/2010** to the Bothnian Corridor, following the real traffic flows:



Attaching the Bothnian Corridor to the Scandinavian-Mediterranean and the North Sea Baltic Core Network Corridors would create a logical congruence between the freight flows patterns and the configuration of the Core Network Corridors’ system: Both in Finland and Sweden, the dominant freight flows feeding into the Scandinavian-Mediterranean and the North Sea-Baltic Core Network Corridors, are coming from north, along the “Bothnian Corridor, whereas only little freight volumes, mainly on trucks, are crossing the Baltic Sea ferry Turku – Stockholm along the existing Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor itself.

In this context, apart from the Bothnian Corridor, one also to pay due attention to the Boden – Kiruna – Narvik railway. It is the main artery of iron ore transport both towards Narvik at the North Sea and to the steel mills in Sweden. And it is the backbone of the transport system in the northwest of Sweden and towards the North Sea. This is the strategic and functional background and reason why it has been identified as TEN-T Core Network elements.

These important functionalities – and the option of greening the transport system – would make it desirable or even logical, to add the Bothnian Corridor and the Boden – Kiruna – Narvik line to the existing Scandinavian-Mediterranean and North Sea-Baltic Core Network Corridors.

However, including the Swedish section into the Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor and the Finnish section into the North Sea-Baltic Corridor (as it is currently taken into consideration) may not be an optimum, because it would result in an interface at the border at Haparanda/Tornio. This would affect cross-border coordination and cooperation, so to avoid this, it is recommended to consider adding the entire Bothnian Corridor to the Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor (because the latter one comprises Finland and Sweden already).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations:

1. The basic requirements for upgrading the existing or construct new infrastructure are laid down in **TEN-T Regulation 1315/2013** and apply to the entire TEN-T Core Network, regardless if part of a Core Network Corridor or not. The requirements specified for Core Network Corridors concern governance issues, to help Member States to fulfil the technical specifications in a well-coordinated way, in particular facilitating funding and financing.

Cooperation in the governance structure of a Core Network Corridor would open the view from a project-oriented to a more policy-oriented approach, in the sense of the objectives laid down in **EU White Paper on Transport** (2011). A well-structured fine-tuning of accompanying measures in the field of multimodality, with infrastructure managers, port authorities, representatives from the regional industry and other stakeholders would allow integrating soft measures and smart technologies into a broader planning perspective. This would contribute to greening the corridor.

2. National and regional authorities could take advantage, first because of the enhanced visibility itself, secondly from a streamlined governance and **better access to funds and financing instruments**, and in the best case, thirdly by an earlier availability of upgraded or new infrastructure. One has to take into account that the enhanced visibility of the extended Core Network Corridor may “rub off” to the corresponding regions and, acting as a marketing instrument, contribute to their attractiveness and prosperity.

For the **national governments in Sweden and Finland**, getting EU funds for investments along the Bothnian Corridor would become more likely with the latter being part of a Core Network Corridor, as a “pre-defined project”. As the corresponding Rail Freight Corridor **according to Regulation 913/2010** would probably be extended accordingly, this would improve capacity exploitation on rail and enable smooth rail traffic flows throughout the whole country.

Furthermore, the European Coordinator could support cross-border coordination with Finland and contribute to connecting Finnish industry in Tornio to the standard gauge part, which would increase capacity utilisation in the Swedish section of the Bothnian Corridor.

The regions may benefit from a higher visibility, to become more attractive for new industries and jobs, as well as for tourism. The **regional governments** would be members of the corresponding Corridor Fora, where they would get first-hand information on all relevant issues and be actively involved into the discussion. In substance, they could profit from a better coordinated, maybe even advanced implementation of the infrastructure and its better integration into the entire regional transport systems.

This field of open collaboration among **shippers, operators, industries** etc. would contribute to a better economic developments in the northern regions and to their attractiveness as locations for new productions and services. All this would not only yield a higher standard of life, but also contribute to a more efficient and sustainable exploitation of transport infrastructure, consistent with environmental and climate targets.

3. Although there is formally no hierarchical difference between the Core Network and the Core Network Corridors, the latter are more in the focus of EU transport policy and given a higher level of attention. This also includes that, with the perception of higher strategic relevance and the support by a European Coordinator in the background, it may be easier to get access to the corresponding funding and financing resources. This does mainly and directly concern the **CEF** funds and its financing instruments, but also **EU Structural Funds** and the **European Fund for Strategic Investments** (EFSI, “Juncker Plan”).
4. As a conclusion, it is recommended to add Bothnian Corridor and the Boden – Kiruna – Narvik line to the TEN-T Core Network Corridors. As exposed above, these links are of the highest strategic importance for the regions concerned, for Sweden and Finland and for entire Europe. This would underline the priority which, as parts of the Core Network, do have anyway. At the same time, it would facilitate access to CEF and EFSI funds and allow a better holistic planning approach, by considering their function within a multimodal, efficient and sustainable transport system. **Assuming that national priorities are in line with the prescriptions of the TEN-T Regulation, no disadvantages can be seen, with respect to national priorities.** Whereas with respect to project funding only advantages may be expected.

Finally and in line with EU transport policy, it is recommended to consider extending the idea of the Bothnian Corridor to a fully multimodal **“Bothnian Transport Area”**, comprising not only the land infrastructure (road and rail) and the port of Luleå that are already parts of the TEN-T Core Network, but also the **“Motorways of the Sea”** (e.g. Umeå -Vaasa), north-south navigation and icebreaking in the Bothnian Bay, as well as the regional airports and other aviation infrastructure in Arctic Europe.



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