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CONSULTATION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANS-EUROPEAN TRANSPORT NETWORK (TEN-T)

Background

The European Commission has distributed the guidelines on Trans-European Transport Network for consultation. The deadline for submissions is set to 9 November 2017. The consultation aims at gathering the input of the general public and stakeholders as regards the main problems and proposed solutions for facilitating the implementation of the TEN-T projects.

Norway participates in the TEN-T Network as part of the European Economic Agreement (EEA). The Norwegian Ministry of Transport has encouraged Norwegian actors and regions to take part in the Consultation of *Streamlining the implementation of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)*.

Eastern Norway is the national centre of gravity in terms of both population and commerce and the Oslo region is one of the fastest growing capital regions in Europe. The region is also the hub for all transportation activities in Norway - on road, rail, by air and by sea. The Oslo Region Alliance and the Eastern Norway County Network are regional political organizations and will hereby give our response on the consultation.

The Eastern Norway County Network (ENCN) is a 25-year old co-operation between the eight counties in the south-eastern part of Norway, including the capital Oslo and the surrounding counties. The Oslo Region Alliance (ORA) is a strategic partnership consisting of 79 municipalities and 5 counties in the Greater Oslo Metropolitan Area. The region represents more than 50% of the population in Norway. The organizations have a common aim in strengthening the region as a competitive and sustainable region in Europe. Our main areas of operation are development of transport infrastructure, spatial planning, business development and international collaboration and branding.

Consultation Response

ENCN and ORA would like to give our response on the consultation and have completed the on-line survey where we have relevant experience and viewpoints. In addition we hereby give some input on the survey and suggestions on the consultation and the further development of the TEN-T. ORA and ENCEN have not been involved in implementation of TEN-T core network projects, but

our region is connected to the Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor, the Jutland corridor and the Nordic Triangle.

Our response is divided in three main points:

1. The further development of the core network corridors and the Nordic Triangle
2. Challenges on planning and financing cross-border projects and the need for technical assistance
3. The responsibility of national governments and the need for involving regional governments and actors.

1. The further development of the core network corridors

The Scandinavian – Mediterranean Corridor, Oslo – Gothenburg connection

More than 2500 heavy trucks cross the Norwegian/Swedish border at Svinesund every day, and it is considerable growth in both passenger and freight traffic between Norway and the rest of Europe. In order to succeed in the ambition to shift more freight from road to rail, there is a need to give the rail connection between Oslo/Norwegian border and Gothenburg, and further on to the European continent high priority. As a comparison, one freight train crossing the Norwegian/Swedish border can carry the same number of containers as 40 trucks.

Norwegian and Swedish authorities should therefore as soon as possible, formalize the cooperation by establishing a common feasibility study, in order to start the planning of the rail link on the distance between Oslo and Gothenburg, and further south to the continent. In the further planning, there is also a need for assistance and support from experts in the TEN-T-program/European Commission.

The connection between Oslo and Gothenburg is in the Northern part of the Scandinavian Mediterranean Transport corridor, which is a prioritized corridor in TEN-T Network. We will emphasize the importance of strengthening the Oslo-Gothenburg connection in the revision of the TEN-T Network in 2021.

Oslo-Stockholm connection

Establishing a modern and more effective railway link between Oslo and Stockholm can reduce travel time between the two cities from 5 hours to 3 hours. This will lead to strengthened cooperation between the two capitals and increased growth and business development along the whole transport corridor. At present more than 1,4 mill passengers travel by air between Oslo and Stockholm. A strengthened railway link between the two cities will also improve the possibility for more freight on rail, especially between Europe/Continent and the northern part of the Nordic countries.

The Swedish and the Norwegian Government see the need for an improved railway link between Oslo and Stockholm, and are both in the process of feasibility studies on the railway link. The Norwegian Parliament made a resolution in June 2017, as part of the Nation Transport Plan, to carry out a feasibility study between Oslo and Kongsvinger in Norway. It should now be possible to initiate a comprehensive and coordinated study with regard to an improved railway link between Oslo and Stockholm.

However, the current TEN-T Network has omitted the northern leg of Nordic Triangle between Oslo and Stockholm. This is very unfortunate, not only for the development of the Nordic Triangle, but also for the development of the adjacent main transport infrastructure (Comprehensive network) in the Northern part of Nordic countries. In the planned revision of the TEN-T Network in 2021, we emphasize the importance of including the northern leg of the Nordic Triangle between Oslo and Stockholm.

The Jutland corridor

For the counties west of Oslo, it is an overall objective to shift more freight from road to rail/boat. Thus, the Jutland corridor is an important connection to the continent for Norwegian hubs like the port of Larvik, Grenland harbor and the Langesund ferry terminal. The infrastructure in these hubs is now modernized and the capacity is increased in order to foster a modal shift from road to rail/boat.

The Jutland corridor is connecting Norway through the northernmost part of Jutland and further to the continent. The roads and railways to the ferry ports in Hirtshals and Fredrikshavn are part of the TEN-T core network and the connection should be given priority when the EU TEN-T strategies and plans are revised. It is also important to include and visualize the corridor in the TEN-T documents and plans.

2. Challenges on cross-border projects and the need for assistance.

Norway participates in the TEN-T Network as part of the European Economic Agreement (EEA), but Norway do not participate in the funding scheme Connecting Europe Facility. Some of the border-regions in Norway and Sweden have started to analyze how different financial and organizational solutions can be relevant for their cross border infrastructure projects. In this context the assembled competence and experience in EU would be of great benefit for the clarification and design of relevant infrastructure projects. This applies also to technical and wider economic benefit assessments and the clarification of possible financial support and contribution from EU in the planning and building phases of projects.

Challenges on cross-border collaboration, involving national governments and transportation authorities in different countries, might imply regulatory and administrative barriers, and therefore create uncertainty and delays in the implementation of projects. EU has attained a considerable competence and experience regarding the planning and involvement in the development of different infrastructure projects. We encourage EU to include in the TEN-T guidelines how to overcome the barriers and how to take these challenges into account in an appropriate/beneficial manner.

3. The responsibility of national governments and the need for including regional governments and actors.

When discussing cross border infrastructure projects EU has primarily communicated with the National Transport Authorities. It is our perception that the TEN-T guidelines and procedures have probably not been clear enough about the importance of a close and constructive cooperation with the *regional level* in third countries like Norway.

In its future TEN-T guidelines, EU should therefore encourage the national transport authorities to involve the relevant regions at an early stage in the process. This means information about the required process for proposing projects and information about the available administrative and technical support where EU can contribute. EU should further ask the national transport authorities to give an annual status report on TEN-T project(s) included in national transport plans. The national transport authorities should also organize annual meetings to clarify the status and progress for the relevant TEN-T projects. These procedures should be integrated in the revised TEN-T guidelines.

Final comments

The Oslo Region Alliance and the Eastern Norway County Network will emphasize that the railways should be the backbone of the future Nordic transport system. Cross-border infrastructure and railways were also central themes at the meeting of the Nordic Council in Helsinki last week. In the planned future revision (2021) of the TEN-T Network, the Nordic Triangle connecting Oslo, Gothenburg and Stockholm should be included. Hence, EU should invite/ask the Nordic countries to start a process in order to clarify the possible alternative extensions to the present “Core Network” in TEN-T Network.

Yours sincerely

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