

Progress Report 2006
on the Barents Euro-Arctic Pan-European Transport Area
(BEATA)

Submitted by the Chairman of the BEATA Steering Committee
to the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the European Commission

Steering Committee:

Mr. Kjell Rosanoff	Ministry of Transport and Communications, Norway, Chairman
Mr. Mikko Ojajärvi	Ministry of Transport and Communications, Finland
Mrs. Kerstin Lokrantz	Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, Sweden
Mr. Alexander Kurtov	Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation
Ms Elena Kushnirenko	Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation
Mrs. Michael Schwartz	European Commission, Directorate-General for Energy and Transport

The Barents Euro-Arctic Pan-European Transport Area (BEATA) is a multi-modal transport area established in the Pan-European Transport Conference in Helsinki in 1997. The BEATA covers the northern provinces of Finland, Sweden and Norway, as well as the northwest part of the Russian Federation: the Republic of Karelia and Komi, the Oblasts of Murmansk and Archangelsk, and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug.

Progress Report

This is the eight Progress Report of the Steering Committee of the Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area (BEATA) to be submitted to the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the European Commission.

The Ministers of Transport of the BEATA countries and the Transport Commissioner of the EU Commission signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Copenhagen in May 1998. In the MoU the Ministers established a Steering Committee for BEATA co-operation.

Finland is the current Chair and has held the BEATA chairmanship since October 2005. The Finnish Ministry of Transport has also supported the permanent secretariat in Helsinki, which provides assistance for the Steering Committee.

Action Programmes

The BEATA Action Programme 2004-2008 was drawn up and approved by the Steering Committee at the end of 2003. The new Programme has been followed starting in 2004. The Chair countries have drafted annual Action Programmes, Finland for the year 2006.

The Finnish Chairmanship

In 2006, two Steering Committee meetings have been held. The first was in Oulu, Finland, April 5, 2006, and the second in Helsinki, Finland, November 22, 2006. Both of these meetings have been held jointly with the STBR Steering Committees. In addition, the representatives of the regions have participated.

In 2006, the main focus of the BEATA Steering Committee has been to support and monitor the implementation of the second phase of the Interreg IIIB project, *Sustainable Transport in the Barents Region, STBR II*. As Interreg III B is primarily a program for and between the regions, the members of Communications Group of the Barents Regional Council were the main partners in the project. The process has, however, at all times been very closely coordinated with and strongly supported by the BEATA Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is Advisory Board of the STBR II project, as was the case also in phase I.

In the period 2006-2007, the STBR II project addresses all the modes of transport (road, rail, air and sea) at more detailed level as before and produces recommendations for concrete improvement actions of the Barents transport system. A presentation of STBR II is in the appendix of this Progress Report (Appendix 1).

At the request of the BEATA Steering Committee the Norwegian Ministry of Transport and Communications compiled a report about national planning processes in the participating countries, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The report was presented in the Helsinki meeting, November 22.

Evaluation of the BEATA Steering Committee work

The agenda of the Finnish Chair calls for the evaluation of BEATA cooperation and making proposals for improving the Committee's work. The main outcome of the evaluation is that its deliberations should lead to more concrete results. To this end, the Chair's proposal addressed this concern with two remedial measures as follows:

1. Setting up a system of project cards, which can be used to show the overall status and development needs of any sub-corridor or selected subject matter in the BEATA countries. In addition, the project cards must specify the BEATA projects in adequate detail so that the projects can be taken duly into the national decision making process.
2. Reorganisation of the BEATA work, and the Barents transport cooperation in general, so as to make it more efficient and effective. It is believed that the current situation will be improved by bringing regional transport authorities into cooperation as equal partners.

The members encouraged further dialogue on these matters and it was decided that the Finnish Chair prepares a new proposal by the next Steering Committee meeting.

Other developments

In June 2004, the European Commission established a High Level Group to extend the concept of European Neighbourhood Policy into the transport field and to find ways to better connect the European Union with the neighbouring countries and regions. The Group concluded its work in November 2005 and produced a report *"Networks for peace and development; Extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions"*. In the report the Group identified five major transnational axes, which included the *Northern Axis* connecting the northern EU with Norway and Russia (in the Barents region).

The new Transport Strategy of the Russian Federation was approved on April 28, 2005. It focuses on issues like efficiency of the transport system, access to transport services, and safety and sustainability of transport. The Strategy does not change the priorities of Russia in the BEATA region, but contributes to economic growth and mobility of its citizens in the region. Specific development priorities of the Russian Federation in the Barents region are:

1. Development of the N.E.W. Railway Corridor and connecting it with the transport links of the Archangel Region and the Komi Republic having completed the construction of the Kochkoma – Ledmozero line.
2. Development of the regional aviation between Tromsø, Luleå and Rovaniemi on one side and Murmansk and Archangelsk on the other.
3. Development of the coastal shipping and enhancement of the sea safety.
4. Implementing of the pre-project phase of the pipeline system Siberia – the port of Murmansk.
5. Modernisation of the main railroad to Murmansk.
6. Construction of a bridge across the Kola Bay in Murmansk.
7. Construction of the road St. Petersburg – Perm with its branches.
8. Reconstruction of the main road M-18 "Kola" St. Petersburg – Petrozavodsk – Murmansk.
9. Reconstruction of the road Kirov – Syktyvkar.
10. Development of the Murmansk merchant seaport, including construction of new terminals to handle coal, fuel oil and oil products.
11. Reconstruction and improvements of airports in Syktyvkar, Archangelsk, Petrozavodsk and Naryan-Mar.

In Sweden, the transport policy bill of 2005 contains the strategy for ports. As regards the railway development, the Haparanda railway will start in 2005-2006. The section Umeå – Luleå is slated to start in 2010, and the Bothniabanan south of Umeå has already a detailed plan prepared.

In April 2005, the Norwegian northern issues report from the Foreign Ministry was presented to the Parliament. The report contains some transport development issues, such as the N.E.W. corridor and the Kirkenes port.

Completed Projects

Transport improvements impacting more than one country include but are not limited to the following:

1. With the help of the EU the preparation of a full-scale test of the railway gauge changing system at the Finnish – Swedish border (Tornio/Haparanda) is underway. Tests have been prepared in 2005 and will be carried out with cargoes of steel products and paper in 2006.
2. Construction of the new railway Ledmozero – Kotchkoma (Karelia, Russia) was completed at the end of 2001, but further procurement and installation of appurtenances (electricity, train control system and stations) have not yet been completed.
3. The North East West Freight Corridor (N.E.W.) has been established as a company. The company plans a demonstration run with container trains from China to Narvik, Norway.
4. The bridge over the Kola Bay (Murmansk, RUS) has been completed.
5. Finalisation of the project for improving communications between Finnmark and Murmansk Counties, with completion of improvements on the road stretch Storskog (Norwegian border) - Nikel (RUS) and traffic safety measures on the stretch Storskog (Nowegian border) – Murmansk (RUS)
6. Aviation project Tromsø – Luleå
7. Continuation of the road project E10 Lofast archipelago (started in 2003, expected opening for traffic in 2007)
8. Establishment of a vessel traffic central in Vardø (started in 2004, operative in 2007)
9. Interreg-project Northern Maritime Corridor - finalised in 2005

Future Work

In 2007, the Finnish Chair plans to continue the activities launched in 2006 as follows:

1. Supporting the implementation of STBR Phase II in 2007.
2. Integrating the customs cooperation (former Task Force on Trade Barriers) in the BEATA work, particularly in the cooperation of improving east-west road, aviation and railway connections at the borders.
3. Defining the development objectives and needs of the NEW Corridor
4. Promoting data and information cooperation
5. Evaluation of BEATA cooperation and proposals of the objectives and structures for the future work (Note: the third five-year BEATA program is due for drafting in 2008)
6. Monitoring the progress of activities started under the Norwegian Chair

The Finnish chair plans to organise two Steering Committee meetings during 2007.

Mikko Ojajarvi
Chairman of
the BEATA Steering Committee

Martti Miettinen
Secretary of
the BEATA Steering Committee

Helsinki, January 31, 2006

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Appendix 1: Presentation of the STBR II project, 2006-2007