



Royal Ministry of Transport and Communications

Programme for the Norwegian Chairmanship of the Steering Committee in the Barents Pan-European Transport Area (BEATA) in 2004

The BEATA Steering Committee decided at the 6th meeting in Umeå, February 2002, to extend the duration of chairmanship from one to two years. Thus, Sweden continued as chair in the BEATA co-operation through the 8th meeting in St.Petersburg in September 2003. Norway will chair the BEATA Steering Group until autumn 2005. Norway will in the same period hold the chair of BEAC.

1 Background

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

The governments of Finland, Sweden, Russia and Norway, as well as the EU Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the development of the Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area in Copenhagen in May 1998. The Memorandum of understanding was prolonged for another five years in 2003. The aim of BEATA is to promote international co-operation in the development of transport infrastructure in the Barents region. The objective of the co-operation is to create an efficient and integrated transport system in the region.

The BEATA Steering Committee works according to an Action Programme, currently for the period 2004-2008. The Steering Committee submits annual progress reports to the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the European Commission.

The communications working group established by the Barents Regional Council is invited to participate in the meetings of the BEATA Steering committee. The group is formed by the counties of Västerbotten and Norrbotten in Sweden, Finnmark, Nordland and Troms in Norway, the provinces of Lappland and Uleåborg in Finland, and the Oblasts of Achangelsk and Murmansk, the republics of Karelia and Komi and the autonomous district of Nenets in Russia.

2 Proposed activities

2.1 The Interreg IIIB project STBR and TACIS

In December 2002 the European Unions' Interreg-program granted funding for the Interreg IIIB project "Sustainable Transport in the Barents Region" (STBR). The project started in 2003 and will continue through 2005, with a total budget of 2.14 million EURO. The County of Norrbotten, Sweden, is lead partner of the project. The BEATA members have arranged considerable financial assistance for the project, and BEATA acts as its advisory board. The chair and permanent secretary are members of the STBR project Steering Committee. Two meetings in the Steering Committee for the STBR project were arranged in 2003.

Previous work in BEATA, the review of traffic volumes and the inventory of the priorities in each country serves as part of the input to the project, which aims at creating a strategic transport plan for the Barents region, and in turn a basis for common transport priorities in the area. Also the identified back-bone network will form a base in this work.

The BEATA Steering Committee will be closely involved in the further work with the STBR project in 2004. Results from STBR will be important input to the further work.

During 2003, efforts have been made to prepare project proposals and an application for TACIS projects that can coincide with the STBR-project. The next and last submission deadline for TACIS applications is April 2004. BEATA will follow the progress in this work closely.

2.2 Presentation of projects relevant for STBR

It is a task for BEATA to exchange information in order to achieve better co-ordination of the different project activities in the Barents area. Closely linked cross-boarder projects should be seen in connection with the STBR (and possible TACIS) projects. This among others includes the Interreg-projects "Northern Maritime Corridor" (NMC) and "Barents 2010" and the UIC-project N.E.W. (North East-West Freight Transport Corridor). Local projects could also be included, such as the Kirkenes Railport study.

Representatives for the above mentioned projects should be invited for a closer presentation at a Steering Committee meeting.

2.3 Review of national planning processes in the BEATA countries

As part of the work of exchanging information it would be fruitful to have a common understanding of planning and prioritizing processes in the participating countries. It is therefore proposed to present national transport plan processes in the BEATA-countries. This is in accordance with the action programme's focus on transport policies in addition to investment programmes. The presentation should be based on written contributions, which later on can form the basis for a report/paper. The work can also be of relevance for the STBR-project.

As part of this issue, and according to the Action Programme 2004-2008, financial co-operation is suggested as a topic for discussion in BEATA. The main intention will be to find out whether

financing support systems overlap and/or certain areas of relevance are not covered by financing support systems.

2.4 Road traffic safety

It is proposed to focus on road traffic safety as an issue in BEATA. The relative high level of road traffic accidents on the Russian side compared to the Nordic countries, calls for attention. Among others, it can be regarded as an obstacle for the development of transportation, if poor safety subdues international mobility of people and goods in the area. In BEATA an approach could be to compare national road transport safety policies, and possibly define common measures in the Barents region.

The lack of full GSM coverage in the Barents region has among others, safety aspects. It should be considered to invite main telecommunications companies to a seminar to discuss possibilities in the region.

Traffic safety and planning systems as thematic discussions represent a new direction in BEATA in line with the Action Programme 2004-2008.

2.5 Maritime transport

Focus on favouring maritime (and rail) transport as opposed to road is becoming an important element in our transport policies. In the Barents region the maritime sector along the Russian and Norwegian coastline, as well as out of and to Botnian ports, is of great importance. Sea transport will become increasingly important with the development in the oil/gas sector in the region, a situation that also gives rise to environmental concerns.

A seminar/conference with port representatives was proposed as a TACIS project at an earlier stage. It was concluded not to further this project in this context. BEATA could work with this topic, focusing on the possibility to develop a joint Barents seaport strategy. This issue should be seen in connection with the STBR-project. The chair will make preliminary inquiries as to the possibilities to arrange a seminar during the chairmanship, and report to the Steering Committee.

3 Proposed activities in 2004

It is proposed the main issues for the first meeting in 2004 is status for the STBR- project and the process of the TACIS-application, in addition to presentation of closely linked projects.

The second meeting in 2004 may focus on traffic safety and maritime transport in addition to status reports and discussion of the further work in STBR.

4 Meetings in the BEATA steering committee

Two meetings may be arranged in 2004. The first will take place in Kirkenes, Norway in April.

The second meeting may be arranged in autumn 2004, possibly in connection with the annual Transport conference in Narvik. Final date and location will be decided later.