

Oslo 10 Oct 2005

## **Draft Proposal for the Programme of the Finnish Chairmanship in the Barents Pan-European Transport Area (BEATA) in 2006 - 2007<sup>1</sup>**

### **Background**

BEATA cooperation started in 1998 with the Norwegian Chairmanship. Finland followed in year 2000 and this is now Finland's second term as BEATA Chair.

In 2004 - 2005, there have been considerable changes in the working environment of BEATA. This will be reflected in the activities under the Finnish Chairmanship. One of the major developments is the High Level Group on the Extension of the Major Trans-European Transport Axes to the Neighbouring Countries and Regions (chaired by Mm Loyola de Palacio), which is in the process of defining the main transport axes between the EU and its neighbouring areas, particularly Russia. The Group has identified the Northern East-West railway corridor, located in the Barents region, as a long-term axis between Norway, EU (Sweden and Finland) and Russia. The report on of the High Level Group will be finalised by the end of 2005

The Sustainable Transport in the Barents Region (STBR) project will be finalised at the end of 2005 and its results will be presented during this autumn. The application for the second phase of the STBR (2006-2007) has been finalised and forwarded to the EU Commission in September.

In November 2005, Finland will assume the Chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), which will form the framework of cooperation also for BEATA Steering Committee. One of the aims of the Finnish BEAC Chairmanship is to streamline the BEAC framework and reduce the number of its working groups. In this framework, it has been proposed that the Task Force on Trade Barriers should be combined with BEATA Steering Committee. It is envisioned that this change would strengthen both BEATA and customs cooperation in the Barents region. Simultaneously, it would necessitate certain changes regarding how the work in BEATA forum will be organised. The preliminary suggestion of the Finnish Chairmanship is to call the new group "Working Group on Transport, Logistics and Border Crossings".

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<sup>1</sup> Ohjelmaluonnos esitelty BEATA Steering Committee -kokouksessa Oslossa 10.10.2005. Kommentit pyydetty 31.01.2006 mennessä. Käsittely seuraavassa Steering Committee -kokouksessa huhtikuussa 2006.

## **Activities under the Norwegian Chairmanship in 2004-2005**

Under the Norwegian Chairmanship in 2004-2005 the proposed activities have progressed as outlined in the work programme. The Norwegian priorities have been as follows:

1. Supporting the Interreg IIIB project STBR as its Advisory Board
2. Review of national planning processes in the BEATA countries
3. Road traffic safety
4. Maritime transport.

## **Proposed activities under the Finnish Chairmanship in 2006**

The Finnish Chairmanships of BEAC and BEATA agreed tentatively that BEATA forms the basic framework for the work in the field of transport. Furthermore, co-operation in the area of transport, logistics and border crossings will be built on the work already carried out and organised in the ways that have proved most successful at national and regional levels. Special attention will be paid to the promotion of accessibility across borders and the facilitation of border crossings. Lastly, it will be important to improve structures for information exchange and support cooperation in data collection.

In line with the above the general objectives and the work accomplished under the Norwegian Chairmanship the Finnish Chair proposes to concentrate in 2006 on the activities listed below:

1. Supporting the implementation of STBR Phase II in 2006 and 2007, if approved by the Interreg III B programme
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 programme is due for drafting in 2008)
6. Monitoring the progress of activities started under the Norwegian Chair

More detailed programme for the year 2007 will be presented at the autumn meeting 2006.

## **Meetings in 2006**

The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of BEATA Steering Committee (or “Working Group on Transport, Logistics and Border Crossings”) will be held in April 2006 in Oulu.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting will be held during the autumn 2006 (date to be confirmed).