



First mile corridor areas

Conclusions and recommendations from final report

Work Package 3 | Activity 3.1

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Organizer: Mattias Andersson,
Region Blekinge

Authors: Lars Brümmer, Thomas Ney, Oliver Miilus-Larsen
Ramboll Sweden AB



Conclusions

The BSR Access platform facilitates linkages between smart transportation solutions traditional infrastructure nodes to further develop the TEN-T Core Network Corridors (CNC) and contribute to sustainable growth in the region.

Activity GoA 3.1 in BSR ACCESS is dedicated to first mile interoperability solutions, and tackles challenges, needs and improvement proposals for interconnectivity between the CNCs and so-called first mile areas. Such areas have never been defined or delineated in any of the EU-level policy documents.

First mile areas are defined as:

- areas located outside commuting distance of corridor hubs and nodes
- areas containing substantial export industries, thus dependent on international transport chains
- areas with scattered, low density, population settlement.

When applying the definition on Local Area Units only commuting distance can be calculated. If industries are 'substantial' and if areas have 'low density population settlement' has to be assessed arbitrary. Furthermore, freight of national or regional importance should be added to the definition.

A survey of projects financed by interreg programmes – and in one case Horizon 2020 – resulted in identification of 15 projects with possible relevance for first mile areas, whereof 11 have been further analysed. Only two of these explicitly address first mile issues. While TENTacle emphasizes the importance of multi-level governance structures to spread benefits from CNCs to first mile areas, the project SubNodes focus on how to expand the CNC hinterland.

With priority on implementing CNCs there is no or little attention to areas that will not benefit from accessibility improvements following the implementation of the CNCs. The territorial divide between nodes along the CNCs and areas outside can increase without policies addressing how developing CNCs and how they can contribute to sustainable growth in a larger hinterland. Among EU funded projects there are almost no findings on best practices. However, at national and regional level best practice solutions are to be found.

The GoA 3.1 Activity had the ambition to highlight best practice solutions for first mile areas. The findings after inventory of EU funded projects are however a general lack of knowledge and awareness of first mile issues. EU funding programmes should therefore support policy development by elaborating the concept on first mile areas in the corridor approach as well as promoting analysis of transport interoperability analysis. Furthermore, existing multi-level governance structures provides a framework for reaping benefits from CNC development and its contribution to sustainable growth. These structures can be called upon to develop first mile area policies and actions by promoting these issues in interreg programmes.

Based on the findings in this report the following recommendations can be suggested to the BSR Access partnership, and in extension to EU institutions (commission, secretariats for the programmes for territorial cooperation and coordinators of TEN-T core network corridors:

Increase awareness!

Since first mile issues are rarely addressed improved knowledge is essential. Building knowledge can be made by identify and analyse first mile areas that might be affected by the implementation of CNCs. The challenges might be about boosting potentials as well as mitigate relatively decreased accessibility. Furthermore, both best practice and learning examples should be identified among national and regional projects which are not to be found with Interreg or Horizon funding.

Develop the concept of first mile area!

Apart from "outside commuting distance from CNC hubs and nodes" is a criterion that is simple to calculate. Defining "substantial exporting industries" provides challenges to measure whether industries are to be regarded as substantial and to what extent production is aimed for non-domestic markets. At the same time the definition is excluding clusters of small and medium sized industries which together can be considered as substantial. Furthermore, the importance of freight hubs in first mile areas are not acknowledged. The perception of "dense population settlement" and "medium or large urban centres" might differ considerably between EU member states. Classifications as for example developed by ESPON can be misleading as they are often based on NUTS3 or NUTS2 administrative areas.

Formulate first mile policy!

In EU policy urban core nodes are considered connecting CNCs to its hinterland. However, along the corridors several nodes have the function connecting to a larger geographical area, whether classified as TEN-T, national or regional infrastructure. In EU policy, and especially regarding the CNCs, first mile connections need to be acknowledged and addressed in policy documents.

Clarify governance and responsibilities!

With the variety of preconditions in different areas first mile issue should be addressed with a bottom-up approach. The well-developed governance structures in the Baltic Sea Region provides a framework gathering national, regional and, many times, local actors. The interreg programmes can promote analysis of first mile issues by explicitly give priority to project applications with integrated first mile perspectives. Giving priority to first mile issues should be based on a clear policy formulation based on the interface between EU and national interests.