



BSR Access project platform

Multimodality Agora on April 27, 2021

Multimodality Agora: Key messages on interoperability and multi-level governance

Summary by Malla Paajanen

Multimodality Agora – an intensive dialogue between stakeholders in transnational transport development – was hosted by Kvarken Council EGTC led by Director Mathias Lindström and moderated by Malla Paajanen. Total 48 professionals representing organisations in 10 countries had made their registrations. Approximately 40 online guests were present during the 90-minute program.

List of speakers:

Mathias **Lindström**, Director, Kvarken Council EGTC – European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation
Martin **Zeitler**, Policy Advisor, European Commission, DG Mobility and Transport, Unit for Transport Networks
Elena **Kolosova**, Project Officer and Advisor for External Cooperation, Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat of Interreg BSR Programme
Helka **Kalliomäki**, Associate Professor, University of Vaasa
Seppo **Laakso**, Managing Director, Kaupunkitutkimus TA Oy
Kristjan **Kaunissaare**, Rail Baltica Estonia coordinator, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications of Estonia
Inga **Gurries**, Project Manager, Port of Hamburg Marketing
Hans **Wolf**, Program Implementation Manager Sweden at ScanMed RFC (Rail Freight Corridor)
Jan **Bergstrand**, Shift2Rail Projects Coordinator at Trafikverket, Sweden
Thomas **Erlandson**, Policy Area Transport Coordinator, EUSBSR PA Transport
Ulrike **Schütz**, Deputy Head of Unit, Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin-Brandenburg
Isabelle **Maës**, European Commission, DG Mobility and Transport, Unit for Transport Networks
Mattias **Andersson**, Strategist, Region Blekinge
Malla **Paajanen**, Malla Paajanen Consulting, moderator of Multimodality Agora





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Session 1: The voice of stakeholders

The session focused on the role of stakeholder networks, which typically operate with questions on the transport development and regional development within the TEN-T Policy and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Topics of multi-level governance, stakeholder participation, financing and silo-breaking were discussed.

Mathias Lindström:

Stakeholder cooperation networks have proven their strong voice underlying the importance of transport development in cross-border regions and on the transnational scale. When politicians and decision-makers typically have the responsibility to represent the viewpoint of either local, national or EU (emphasis on 'or'), stakeholder networks have the power to represent all of them. Permanent structures such as European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) and Alliances (reference to Kvarken Council EGTC and Scandria Alliance) are gaining interest especially when transport development and policy-making are closely connected to each other.

Long-term commitment of partners in transnational and cross-border cooperation can build series of projects into a permanent process and above all develop into new permanent organisations. The influence of a permanent stakeholder organisation is vastly greater when negotiating local questions in the national and/or EU context compared to a more temporary and loose organisation structure.

Based on our long track record in transnational projects that are operating in a large stakeholder ecosystem, we offer our experience and knowledge to be disseminated among European stakeholders. For instance, we would be glad to volunteer to present our 'evolution process' of how we became an EGTC at one of the forthcoming Corridor Forum meetings or Working Group meetings chaired by European Coordinator.

Martin Zeitler:

Mr. Zeitler first conveyed greetings from two European Coordinators, Catherine **Trautmann**, leader of the North Sea – Baltic and Pat **Cox**, leader of the Scandinavian-Mediterranean core network corridors.

The invitation to Multimodality Agora with the newly published position paper has come on a timely moment, as we are in the process of revising the TEN-T Regulation and we have recently completed the revision on the CEF. These will result a more prominent position for many of the regions represented in today's dialogue.

The core network corridors are the main implementation tools for the transnational transport network. They are the main drivers to improve cross-border mobility and integration for interoperability, to remove bottlenecks and to improve the coordination of transport infrastructure. The corridor approach has both top-down and bottom-up structure in the multi-level governance





system between the EU, Member States and the regional and local stakeholders. With the aim to bring Europe closer to the regions and local stakeholders there are three elements in the governance of core network corridors: 1) Corridor Forum, which operates as a communication platform for all the stakeholders in the TEN-T system, 2) Working groups, in which experts focus on specific questions such as urban areas, freight rail, railway passenger and management of infrastructure and 3) Corridor Work Plan, presented by European Coordinator to the Member States and Ministries of Transport for the corridor implementation.

In the new CEF Regulation, the North Sea – Baltic and Scandinavian-Mediterranean core network corridors are extended around the Gulf of Bothnia and this will greatly improve the position of the local stakeholders in these regions. The regions in this area will be invited to become part of the Corridor Forum and benefit from this dialogue on a high level. Also the working groups run by European Coordinators become available for experts to exchange best practices and shortcomings. Finally, with the new CEF Regulation the regions along the extended core network corridor structure will have a much better position to apply for financing for transport infrastructure in the forthcoming Calls.

The collaboration structure already existing in BSR Access project platform has performed well and with the new emerging opportunities in the corridor governance there is a positive situation to bring the work into the future.

Elena Kolosova:

Within the thematic framework of selected topics transport has been in an important role throughout the existence of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. The Programme encourages project ideas from experienced project partnerships, such as is present in BSR Access project platform, but also from newcomers. The Programme has been one of the frontrunners in funding extensive cooperation across the borders in the EU and beyond. This cooperation has involved partnerships representing several funding Programmes besides Interreg, for instance Horizon funding among others.

A new funding instrument called ‘project platforms’ was introduced in the Programme to link results from different projects and different funding schemes in one thematic area. Due to their wide contact surface the project platforms disseminate efficiently new knowledge to their stakeholders, such as authorities, sectorial agencies, NGOs, businesses and citizens. BSR Access as one of the project platforms has brought together knowledge from a multitude of projects representing several funding periods and funding programs including Interreg and CEF. The project platforms, including BSR Access, are in an exceptional position benefitting from streamlined communications, which can enhance the dissemination of results into the policy dialogue with the Policy Area Coordinators of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and other decision makers on the EU, national and local levels.

The first successful results give good cause to introduce the concept of project platforms also in the new Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2021-2027. Experience from the existing project platforms will form a valuable asset for the Programme in understanding the management of stakeholder relations in various policy environments and across funding programmes.





Session 2: Increasing corridor awareness

Corridor governance consists of two aspects: governance by leadership and governance by contents. While European Coordinators are the political leaders of core network corridors, academics and research institutions can feed in valuable knowledge and new insights into the corridor governance and political processes. Increasing corridor awareness can benefit from the triple-helix approach, i.e. collaboration between public, private and research sectors. The second part of the session discussed wider impacts of large transport infrastructure projects with a special focus on Rail Baltica.

Helka Kalliomäki:

While the corridor governance traditionally uses statistical data on physical flows of goods and people, a new approach is introduced, which underlines the need to broaden the understanding of flows, interactions and functionalities along corridors. Besides the physical flows, the focus is also on the digital flows on corridors, which encompass various kinds of social interactions, for instance, collaboration between stakeholders and projects. This wider evidence base is important for the legitimization of corridors as frameworks for integrated planning.

In order for us to drive the use of big data (larger, more complex data sets) in governance and decision-making we need to increase the capacity building practices on different levels of corridor development (locally, in organisations, and on corridor level). This requires a mental change from data management to data-driven governance culture.

Associate Prof. Kalliomäki conveyed the following key messages:

- Big data can act as an eye-opener about new spatial realities. Big data is a significant source of new insights.
- The existing gaps in the knowledge-base could be significantly complemented by utilizing big data sources
- Increasing corridor awareness can be reached through research
 - By broadening of knowledge-base to increase corridor-awareness
 - By enhancing data-driven governance culture to improve the legitimacy of corridor development

Comment by Martin Zeitler:

It is well acknowledged that core network corridors are currently largely seen from the perspective of infrastructure and transport flows. This is largely due to the existing TEN-T- Regulation, which has the focus on the infrastructure of different transport modes. However, the recent patterns of transport development in Europe including digitalization, which is strong, have brought on the need to





understand also social interactions between people. While the on-going TEN-T Revision again has a strong focus on infrastructure, there digital elements still need to be better incorporated. To meet this challenge, the line of research on big data and data-driven governance is certainly interesting and welcome as a potentially useful tool in corridor governance. Existing stakeholder networks, such as BSR Access, are excellent platforms for the dialogue between the TEN-T policy-makers and academics to continue.

Seppo Laakso:

A study has been carried out in the BSR Access project platform focusing specifically on the wider economic and social impacts. Traditionally, cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is used to analyse the impacts of large infrastructure investments and projects with the aim to evaluate the use of transport and producer of transport services benefits from the investment. The CBA, however, does not focus wider impacts, which may appear. For instance, lower transport costs provided by new transport infrastructure may lead to lower production costs to companies and enhance their production processes. Better accessibility between regions or big cities may produce larger labour market areas and affect the local employment rate and income. Transport infrastructure may cause changes in regional structure and give an impulse to the growth of node cities around a transport zone. Real-estate development and urban structure may be stimulated especially around railway stations in the case of new rail infrastructure. In the long run, direct impacts can lead to indirect impacts and changes in the urban structure. Finally, induced by wider impacts, there can be an increase in tax revenues for the state and municipalities.

Kristjan Kaunissaare:

For many decades, since the mid-1990's, wider impacts have been documented in the wider spatial planning documents, for instance in the Baltic Sea Region and also nationally in Estonia. Transport infrastructure has been recognized as an enabler for better connections and economic growth. Simultaneously, rail infrastructure has been considered an ecologically sound investment.

On the concrete project level, when Rail Baltica was first investigated, there was an attempt to identify the wider impacts as well as the costs and benefits using CBA. The difficulty, however, was to isolate the wider impacts caused by Rail Baltica vs. other infrastructure projects and the overall development in the Baltic Sea Region, in three Baltic States and locally. Wider impacts were part of the decision-making but rather as a means to underline the importance of integration and accessibility to the neighbouring countries and the EU. In this sense wider impacts were considered but not calculated locally when deciding, for instance, about the alignments of Rail Baltica through different cities in Estonia.

Like all large transport infrastructure projects, Rail Baltica is considered as a strong asset by some and as a cause for concern by others. The most optimistic voices for Rail Baltica come from the municipalities that are direct recipients of the investment and therefore positively affected by the project. From the business perspective Rail Baltica is not only a railway track but a multitude of additional investments and services including passenger and cargo terminals, public infrastructure





and new business opportunities during the project's construction and operation. The business potential is well recognized by the private sector. For instance, Hamburg Hafen and Logistic Ag has settled at Muuga Port inducing higher economic value to the area. The negative voices reflect concerns of environmental issues or the overall question of international accessibility – questions, which the project also needs to address.

Session 3: From projects to process

The session focused on the Rail Freight Corridors, which are part of the TEN-T Policy. RFCs form an example of a long-term transnational transport development process.

Inga Gurries:

Port of Hamburg Marketing led the activity of 'Enhanced Supply Chains through multimodal integration' in the BSR Access project platform. By studying projects and lobby organisations on the EU, national and regional levels we collected best practice examples of interoperability and integration of multimodal transport in supply chains. Our aim was to find untapped potential in inland waterway transport, short sea shipping and rail transport (the position paper is available at bsraccess.eu).

The European Rail Freight Corridors (RFC) are part of EU strategic policy to create a European rail network for competitive freight by means of cooperation between the rail infrastructure managers. RFCs are integrated within the TEN-T core network corridors and the European Railway Traffic Management System (ERTMS) framework. RFCs as joint EU co-financed platforms are of vital importance. The relative cost competitiveness of road transport versus rail transport is likely to increase and RFCs are needed to level the game. RFCs are also in an essential role in finding the most marketable routes for customers and in setting similar standards throughout the EU.

The continuity of stakeholder cooperation in cross-border and transnational matters has become increasingly important as permanent structures as for instance the RFCs and EGTCs and other Alliances have proven – especially when transport development and policy-making are closely connected to each other. The idea 'from projects to process' is gaining momentum. However, in order to secure the benefits of dynamism and speed, which are advantages of a project-like structure, the importance of a bottom-up approach deserves to be underlined. Well-functioning stakeholder communication and cooperation networks seldom resemble any fixed structure given top-down and we need the addition of a bottom-up approach – and this is what has been under discussion for quite some time with Horizontal Action Coordinators and Policy Area Coordinators.





Hans Wolf:

The Regulation concerning Rail Freight Corridors came into force in 2010. The first six RFCs were launched in 2013 and three other RFCs including Scandinavian-Mediterranean RFC were launched in 2015.

Each RFC has the purpose to set up the corridor with an offer of pre-arranged railway capacity and to operate as a one-stop-shop for international customers. The aim is to match the offer of international railway capacity and the need for it. The railway capacity can be easily booked using an international system tool (called PCS Path coordination system), which takes into account temporary capacity restrictions. As part of the service we also help customers with their access to terminals, for instance. Locally, the RFC works in regional groups along the corridor to discuss management and coordination issues. The value-added provided by RFC is a concept called 'international contingency management' meaning that there is 24/7 coordination on the capacity for any destruction or disturbance. We facilitate an easy to access and service to international railway users. In practice we work together with the railway infrastructure managers to enhance cooperation instead of competition.

Jan Bergstrand:

Shift2Rail (co-funded by EU's Horizon programme) is a research and innovation program consisting of six areas including freight (innovation program Nr 5). We run projects of members (e.g. by Trafiverket which one of the founding members) or projects by open calls. We have now for five years worked with academia and companies, for instance, industrial partners like Siemens and ALSTOM, railway undertakings like Green Cargo, Deutsche Bahn and SNCF and infrastructure managers like Trafikverket, Network Rail and DB Netz. With this wide collaboration environment we have a fully aligned research agenda. Compared to earlier framework projects, which usually ended with a pre-study, feasibility study or market study our aim is to take the work one few steps further and develop products even, or technical demonstrations.

Shift2Rail is now coming to an end and the work continues in the next phase, which is called Europe's Rail. We aim to work more closely with the different corridors, which are seen as arenas testing and making use of existing research findings. With a dialogue with Scandinavian-Mediterranean corridor we want to investigate what existing or upcoming results we could use and how we could join forces for instance to jointly seek for funding in CEF and other programs.

Thomas Erlandson:

The Flagship process is an operation concept that aims to fulfill one or several objectives of the Policy Area Transport Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. A Flagship is expected to work on a continuous basis, show flexibility and endurance. A Flagship offers additional capacity for stakeholders by operating as a cooperation platform. Activities by stakeholders will remain to be organized as projects but they are coordinated and stimulated in a joint process driven by the Flagship. Currently, we don't have an official Flagship yet, but the first experiences have been





collected in project called LISA (Seed Money Facility funded), which seeks to improve the integration between land and sea transport.

The long-term perspective is to have a Flagship process for at least each Action of the Action Plan. The projects and Flagship process are the body and soul of the Policy Area Transport. All of us collaborating as stakeholders are needed in its implementation.

From the viewpoint of Policy Area Transport Coordinator, the Rail Freight Corridor concept is also type of a permanent process within transnational transport and therefore gives valuable insight to the discussion on the Flagship.

Session 4: First and last mile connections

The session focused on the definitions and functionality of urban nodes, on one hand, and first mile connections, on the other. Urban nodes are acknowledged in the TEN-T Policy while the question of the first mile still remains largely untouched.

Ulrike Schütz:

There are currently 88 urban nodes according to the current TEN-T Regulation. A quarter of them are located in the Baltic Sea Region and 15 of them are located directly at sea.

Joint Spatial Planning Department of Berlin-Brandenburg has led an activity in BSR Access project platform focusing on the integration of urban nodes in the Baltic Sea Region into the TEN-T Policy. The position paper (available in BSR Access project library) concludes the following key message to be considered in the on-going TEN-T Policy Revision:

Urban nodes are a key element of the transport system, where different development interests coincide. Efficient urban nodes are needed for a well-functioning, multimodal transport system. Transport planning in urban nodes requires a multi-level governance approach, reflecting functional relationships like first and last mile as well as stretching across administrative borders. Urban nodes provide a huge potential for innovation in terms of the transition to zero-emission transport.

The key message leads to three major actions lines:

1. A concise yet flexible definition of urban nodes, which takes into account the spatial dimension, multi-functionality, access points as well as first and last mile connections.
2. Smart financing of transport infrastructure development, which includes innovative financing instruments, pre-allocation of budget and synergies among funding programmes.
3. A multi-level governance approach, which refers to the expansion of the geographical scope of urban nodes, and the Baltic Sea Region as a platform for urban node development.





Isabelle Maës:

The current Regulation, which is largely based on a geographical definition, recognizes 88 urban nodes. The definition and selection of urban nodes, which constitute the economic hotspots on the corridors, is actively considered in the review of the TEN-T Regulation. However, the availability of supporting statistics sets a technical limitation and therefore a full spectrum of functionality of urban nodes cannot be observed. An administrative definition has been designated based on population size. In the new TEN-T Regulation, it is envisaged that cities with a minimum population of 100'000 inhabitants will be defined as urban nodes. In NUTS 2 regions which do not have a city of this size, the largest city will be defined as its urban node. With this reviewed definition, all NUTS 2 regions will have at least one urban node. The new TEN-T Regulation will so recognize in total 460 urban nodes.

In the financial framework of the TEN-T, the Connect Europe Facility (CEF) provided by DG MOVE is dedicated to the implementation of the TEN-T with the main focus on the European network and international cross-border transport flows. In long-distance transport, the role of urban nodes is less visible although the first and last miles often specifically locate in urban nodes, as do some of the physical or technical bottlenecks as well. In CEF II there is a slight increase for financing for urban nodes while the main focus remains on the cross-border connections. For urban nodes, the financing programmes provided by DG REGIO for regional development (e.g. ERDF and Cohesion Fund) remain in an important role.

Mattias Andersson:

Region Blekinge has led an activity in BSR Access project platform focusing on the first mile areas. Unlike urban nodes, the question of first mile areas is not clearly defined in the TEN-T Policy.

Geographically, the 'first mile' defines as an area, which is not on the corridor but in the catchment area of the corridor and it covers first leg of the transport route of goods and passengers between the origin and destination. The first mile areas are outside the daily commuting distance of corridor hubs and urban nodes (i.e. areas within the daily commuting distance from the corridor are considered 'on the corridor').

Functionally, there are substantial export industries in the first mile areas, both single establishments and clusters of export industries. The first mile areas are typically scattered, and they have low-density population settlements.

On the policy level, while a clear definition of the first mile is lacking from the TEN-T Regulation, the question of first mile is mentioned in Issues Papers ('TEN-T Corridors: Forerunners of a forward-looking European Transport System compiled', 2016). The implementation of core network corridors shows low attention on areas with a reduced accessibility. On the operational level, the evidence of projects that specifically study aspects of first mile questions and best practice examples is also scarce.





The work on the first mile areas concludes that there is a need for more attention in order to mitigate the potential territorial divide between areas on and outside the main corridors. To support territorial cohesion, the following policy options are underlined:

- There is a need for knowledge and systematic research on first mile issues.
- The corridor approach (or corridor governance) should observe the first mile issues even if the first mile areas are geographically outside the corridors.
- The corridor approach could gain from the support of existing multi-level stakeholder governance structures that are specialized in the first mile questions, such as Kvarken EGTC and East-West Transport Corridor Association (EWTCA), for instance.

Thomas Erlandson:

It is important to recognize the first and last mile issues in corridor governance. In the remotest areas, the length of the first mile is much longer than in less remote areas that are relatively closer to the corridor. As Policy Area Transport Coordinator, I would much like to see that the investigation into the first mile issues could become part of the Flagship process in the next Programme period. The question of the first mile is largely untouched and therefore in the first phase it would be important to start with a wide stakeholder dialogue and gain active positions from both DG MOVE and DG REGIO.

References

Multimodality Agora is part of BSR Access project platform, Group of Activities (GoA) 2.2 led by Kvarken Council EGTC. GoA 2.2 consists of total three elements: an empirical survey on the integrated planning along transport corridors (2020), a webinar with selected cases of transnational stakeholder collaboration (2020) and Multimodality Agora. The activities have been carried out in collaboration between Kvarken Council EGTC, Ramboll SE and Malla Paajanen Consulting. The documents are available at www.bsraccess.eu:

[Survey report 'Integrated planning along corridors' \(March 2020\)](#)

[A short summary of the survey report](#)

[Summary of Webinar held in October 2020](#)

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