



**Future Transport System in the Barents region
BEATA Transport Ministers Declaration
Narvik 24th September 2013**

Preamble

On September 24th 2013, the Ministers of transport and infrastructure in Russia, Finland, Norway and Sweden (the BEATA Ministers) discussed challenges for the transport system in the Barents region at the Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area Ministerial meeting in Narvik. The ministers agree to promote a well-functioning, efficient, safe, sustainable and coherent transport network between the four countries in the region.

Throughout history, people in the Barents region have regarded crossing borders as part of everyday life. During the last twenty years, trade between the northern regions of Norway, Sweden and Finland and North-West Russia has increased substantially. Hence, reference to the former Pomor trade can be made. Barents cooperation has, especially through people to people cooperation, strengthened the regional integration.

The quality of the current transport system in the Barents region differs. Many roads, rail links, airports, ports and fairways have a good standard, but there are also major shortcomings. There is room for improvement in several areas, especially regarding capacity, safety and reliability. There are also specific challenges related to geography and climate. These issues are dealt with in national planning processes and addressed through investments and improvements of infrastructure. Strengthened regional integration calls for more cooperation on transport infrastructure between the neighboring countries in the Barents region.

The challenge to bring products like seafood, ore, industry goods and oil / gas to the markets includes covering long distances, often across one or several borders. The same challenges are valid for passenger transport, a prerequisite for tourism, service industries and for people in the region.

A well-functioning transport system is a prerequisite for interaction and making the Barents Region an even better place to live, an even more attractive region for business. Improved cross border connections will stimulate the mobility for the Barents workforce and thereby strengthening the competitiveness for Barents business and industry. Transport challenges in the Barents region should be considered in a Barents context, across national borders. Preconditions for the transport system in the Barents region

We, the BEATA Ministers:

Regard the Kirkenes Declaration of June 4th 2013, approved by the four countries' prime ministers marking 20 years of the Barents Cooperation, as an important statement encouraging the development of the transport system in the region.

Acknowledge the message from the prime ministers to enhance the cooperation in order to improve the transport system.

Share the ambition to develop a sustainable transport system in the Barents region with good internal connectivity between the Barents countries and with good external links to world markets. The transport system should facilitate Barents regional development and create new opportunities for important industries. The transport system should be developed in a manner that safeguards the environment and improves safety and accessibility for all.

Acknowledge that the transport system in the Barents region should be agreed and coordinated between the countries of the region, as well as to take into account the already developed a variety of regional and international organizations' projects on transport networks.

Acknowledge the simplified procedure of border resident visas, as a positive first step.

Stress the importance of first identifying, and then reducing, the barriers to border crossing, both of practical and legal nature.

Better transport links for all transport modes

We, the BEATA Ministers:

Welcome the ongoing work on draft Joint Barents Transport Plan prepared by the expert working group.

Agree that the proposal for a Joint Barents Transport Plan can serve as input for cooperation on transport issues in the Barents region. Future transport planning in the Barents region, on national as well as regional level, may consider the recommendations from the Joint Barents Transport Plan.

Underline the relevance of working with transport corridors focusing on all relevant transport modes in combination with the important objectives; efficiency, accessibility, the environment and safety.

Stress the importance for maintenance and development of existing infrastructure in the Barents region. This will reduce the number of accidents and lead to a more robust and reliable infrastructure.

Acknowledge the ongoing upgrading of important connections, such as the further development of transport networks covering all transport modes and focusing on transport corridors between Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway in the Barents region.

Underline the importance of a sufficient network for aviation in the Barents region. A functioning network of air services will help to overcome some of the challenges with large

distances and high travel costs within the Barents region and contribute to make the region more integrated.

Are aware of the huge importance of maritime transport. Improvements of maritime transport is crucial, both from the environmental and efficiency perspective.

Will strengthen maritime safety, taking into account the expected growth in maritime transport, while considering sufficient capacity for rescue and safety measures.

Give recognition to the Barents Climate Action Plan, environmental regulations and concerns shall be integrated in planning and implementation of infrastructure.

Further cooperation, concerned arenas

We, the BEATA Ministers:

Regard BEATA as a unique arena for the development of this important region focusing on the specific transport challenges that has to be addressed.

Emphasize the importance of the coordinated development for all BEATA transport modes to ensure step-by-step movement towards a sustainable Barents transport system.

Affirms our aspiration to facilitate expert contacts and consultations to complete the development, acception and realization of the Plan with the involvement of central and local (regional) authorities, the private sector and the academia.

Will activiely engage in promoting coherence and cooperation between the many regional arenas and institutions in Northern Europe in order to enhance the development of the Barents region and the well-being of its people.

Will continue the transport cooperation within the frames of the Barents Council and want to underline the importance of close interaction with the Barents Regional Working Group of Transport and Logistics.

Thus we stress in particular BEATAs need for close interaction with NDPTL and recognizes that NDPTL via their newly established fund provides means to elaborate projects and bring them closer to implementation.

Will actively contribute to the work of the IMO regarding maritime safety and the environment in the Polar regions.