

A field trip for the representatives of the North East Cargo Link II project (Midnordic Green Transport Corridor) in Finland, 28–30 September 2011.

DECLARATION

The comments and proposals included in this declaration are directed to the central administration of Finland, the headquarters of The Finnish Border Guard, Finnish Customs, responsible organisation of the regional cooperation of Finland and Russia and the council of ministers of the Nordic Countries and the Mid Nordic Committee, as well as to the provinces, municipalities and cities of the project region.

The background and goals of the NECL II project

The NECL II project detects and solves the logistic bottlenecks on the railways and highways, sea connections and border-crossing points, in addition to the ports of the development corridor that reach from Norway to Russia / the Far East via Finland and Sweden as well as via Trondheim to the rest of the world. The project aims to develop new business opportunities for the transportation field together with cost-effective services for international transportation in various fields. A more in-depth description of the project can be found at www.midnordictc.net.

The supporting voluntary background organisation of the project is the North East Cargo Link alliance – NECLA. It includes export companies, port owners, transportation businesses, municipalities and provinces, etc., from Norway, Sweden and Finland.

The purpose of the field trip in Finland (28–30 September):
to receive additional information on the Finnish locations of the green corridor: Vaasa, Kaskinen, Seinäjoki, Ähtäri, Multia, Jyväskylä, Parikkala and Imatra. The information received during the trip is publicly presented on the web pages for the project at www.midnordictc.net.

The key conclusions and comments:

There is a clear need for the swift development of the west to east-based transportation systems along Finland's west coast as well as in central, east and southeast Finland. The ports on the west coast of Finland already have good prerequisites for specialisation as well as for raising their utilisation rate.

The electrification of the Vaasa railway line is almost ready. The route plans for the basic repairs of the Seinäjoki-Kaskinen railway line as well as for deepening the port channel of Kaskinen port have also been prepared. By carrying out these investments and building the NLC Vaasa logistics central, the operational conditions for international export companies along the coast of Ostrobothnia are being ensured. Both areas are also planning large business investments, and one prerequisite for these is an infrastructure built for international transportation that is highly functional.

The current border-crossing points of Southeast Finland are becoming more and more rushed, and the participants of this Study Tour felt that the rush cannot be helped, even after the already resolved investment plans have been implemented and more resources for inspections have been allocated. More forceful measures need to be taken. These can come to fruition through negotiations and agreements between Russia and Finland. One way to cut down the ever-increasing traffic jams of Southeast Finland is to turn not only the temporary border crossing point in Parikkala but Imatra as well into a permanent international station for both passenger and freight traffic.

Already one key conclusion of the first phase of NECL project was that it was necessary to build terminals for combined transport in Jyväskylä and Seinäjoki for the purposes of both national and international transportation. Now is the time to build these terminals. Implementing the railway and highway infrastructure for the aforementioned terminals is the most important target for state funding. Other funding necessary for building the terminals is acquired through funding from companies.

On a national level, it is necessary in this field to compile a separate strategy programme which meets the needs of the national and international transportations of economic life. The programme should focus on combined transportation, the 'green' traffic systems, the gradual privatisation of railway traffic on quiet railways, national port and Inland Port inland terminal solutions, and the related questions concerning quality certifications and standardising on the European level. The need for such a national programme was brought up several times during the journey.

Conclusion:

The participants are all in agreement that it would be to the benefit of Finland as a whole if common development actions were to be directed to promoting both national and international transportation and to adopting the supportive European quality systems. By this means, new permanent employment opportunities would arise and the operational conditions of export companies in Finland would be improved.

Funding must be allocated for implementation of the basic rehabilitation of the Seinäjoki-Kaskinen railway starting from 2012. Deepening the port channel of Kaskinen is part of this work, and it ensures the conditions for the transportation of new streams of goods from the port.

Parikkala-Syväoro's border-crossing station must promptly be given the status of a permanent international facility of this kind. This will enable it to fully serve the passenger and freight traffic traversing the border between Finland and Russia.

The participants in the NECL II field trip, 28–30 September 2011

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