



# BSR TransGovernance

Multi-level governance to better align transport policies

The aim of the BSR TransGovernance project is to demonstrate how multi-level governance models, tools and approaches can help improve the alignment of transport policies in the Baltic Sea Region, at various administrative levels, and improve integration with the commercial sector.



## Multi-level governance in brief

Governance in society has changed from a hierarchical one, with regulations and administrative policy instruments, to a more horizontally defined, characterised by cooperation and negotiation between stakeholders. Political institutions have become more dependent on other societal actors (firms, households, interest organisations) and international organisations. Central policies are no longer done in isolation; several autonomous initiatives are implemented at the regional and municipal level (e.g. greening of city logistics, mobility management, development of alternative fuels) and they are to various degree connected to policies at national and EU levels. Also, the responsibility for the design and implementation of policy measures is increasingly delegated to other levels, both upwards (e.g. the EU), downwards (regions, municipalities) and outwards (market, civil society).

The decision-making process itself is crucial for the implementation of programmes and measures of various kinds. They may come in effect of joint projects involving partners with different decision-making powers. Multi-level governance is a way to improve the decision-making.

The concept has two dimensions, the **'vertical' dimension** means an interaction between the different levels, namely EU, state, region and municipality, in some cases also sub-regional and sub-municipal level, in other words – the ones that have a decision-making power (governing). Since the different levels may be direct-

ly involved in the implementation of the decisions, they ought to participate in the decision-making process. However, they should also be invited for collaboration. Here, states differ in the degree to which they allow sub-national levels to participate in decision-making.

The other dimension, named **'horizontal'**, refers to cooperation arrangements between entities at the same governance level and includes also so called non-governmental organisations. The decision-making capacity is in that dimension weaker.

Both dimensions can be combined and evolve into various network forms. The emerged networks may aspire to take independent decisions but also may serve the leading actor to gather sufficient knowledge before making a decision. However, sometimes the networks can become efficient and focused on the members' interests rather than on more general policy interests.

Multi-level governance is – in the opinion of many researchers – an approach to utilise the potential of hierarchical, market and network governance by bringing a mixture of reasoning, knowledge, responsibility, awareness, engagement and action. It has to look into the future in contrast to conventional systems where – due to their focus on institutions and regulations – the **'sudden change'** and the unforeseen impact are frequently excluded.

## Background and problems

One of the thematic areas in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region – Priority Area Transport (PA Transport) – addresses a need to **'improve internal and external transport links'** and sees national transport policy and implementation coordination as a way of ensuring harmony in transnational development of the transport system.

Strategic processes facilitated by the EU Baltic Sea Strategy have resulted in a number of platforms and meeting places in which partners can discuss solutions to transport development challenges. Greater integration of approaches would help improve the development and alignment of transport policies at various governance levels, but there are a number of challenges including.

### Challenges:

- **Lack of tools** with which to convert recommendations from the joint studies, e.g. Baltic Transport Outlook, into national transport planning procedures.
- **Lack of operational concepts** on how to streamline implementation of PA Transport with the joint transport planning process of the Northern Dimension (Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics) and the EU Eastern Neighbourhood Policy.
- **Absence of a joint framework** for national, regional and local transport policies in dynamically developing cross-border integration areas.
- **No clear systems for integrating** previous transnational project input, implemented by public and private sector partners from several countries, into the national transport planning process.
- **Lack of systems for embedding** the results of jointly prepared strategic documents, such as programmes or action plans, into political and administrative structures at all levels (transnational corridors, cross-border areas, the entire macro-region) in order to prevent the initiatives from being repeated in the event of new political elections or organisational changes.
- **Lack of operational systems** that align transport policies at different governance levels with business concepts, in order to achieve seamless handling of freight flows in transnational multimodal corridors.

*Source: Szydarowski, Wiktor and Tallberg, Pontus (2013) Multi-level governance - European experience and key success factors for transport corridors and transborder integration areas. Final draft report task 3.2 BSR Trans-Governance project*

## Challenges and improvements

### Territorial cooperation projects and national transport planning processes

- room for improvement

*Strategic transport planning in the Baltic Sea Region is carried out at several levels, by different partners - from both the public and the private sectors. Although government authorities have been established to facilitate joint action at different levels, the transfer of knowledge between the various decision-making levels and across borders has not been effective. In order to change this, the topics addressed, lessons learned and results achieved by the various transnational transport initiatives must find their way into well-established planning procedures at a local, regional, national and European level.*

This challenge has been the focus of the work conducted by WSP, the Swedish Transport Administration and Region Skåne, resulting in BSR TransGovernance Task 3.3's report, 'How can territorial cooperation projects support national transport planning? - Reflections and recommendations'. The government authorities that have been established to enable joint action are visible on a macro level, as demonstrated by NDPTL (the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics) and in the EU Baltic Sea Strategy's implementation structures. Plenty more have been established at cross-border level, with the Öresund and Helsinki-Tallinn regions as good examples. Joint transnational organisations are also being established in order to manage things like specific transport corridors.

However, territorial planning that stretches across a country's border cannot be dealt with by an interregional authority alone. A more proactive national stance is required for the integration of cross-border and wider international territorial perspectives, which is relevant in a lot of transport planning projects. The lack of systems and methods of collaborating with foreign

colleagues during the planning process reduces the capacity for sharing information, knowledge and experiences with neighbouring foreign regions. It is therefore difficult to determine future demands for a specific link, hub or network.

One particular challenge for regional planners is that national planners control most of the resources for implementation in terms of financing, organisational capacity, expertise, regulatory powers, etc. In order for implementation to be successful, therefore, cross-border interaction between national and interregional planning projects must improve. From a national perspective, however, planning that crosses national borders is often difficult to accommodate within established structures and procedures. So focusing on the national role in this type of cooperation is crucial.

Interreg, one of the main EU instruments for stimulating territorial development within functional areas that bridge national borders, could serve as a link between the planning authorities. It would be an important channel, perhaps even for transport planning at a national



level in future - take the TEN-T policy implementation, for example. However, a general observation from interviews and workshops is that territorial and transport-related cross-border projects, co-financed via Interreg, are surprisingly unknown to many people involved in the transport planning process, both at regional and national level.

#### BSR TransGovernance project recommendations

National authorities should adopt a systematic approach to the planning and management of international transport processes. Therefore, a better response to the results of transnational projects may be achieved through a number of solutions that demonstrate the specific benefits of collaboration between the two groups.

#### For national ministries and administrations

National representatives that wish to use macro-regional and transnational cooperation initiatives to improve transport strategies should consider the following suggestions:

- Make use of macro-governance frameworks such as territorial cooperation programmes, the EU

#### Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the NDPTL

The recurring intergovernmental meetings for the implementation of the NDPTL's (Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics') priorities and networking actions carried out by the various partners as part of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region's Action Plan provide good arenas for cooperation and knowledge sharing. These collaboration environments enable national ministry representatives in the Baltic Sea states to collaborate on proposals and decisions for their respective governments and at European level.

Many of the activities in the two macro-regional cooperation frameworks rely on the availability of funding, including territorial cooperation programmes. Consequently, these programmes must incorporate transportation issues and be willing to implementing the results of collaboration decisions.

- **Extend the exchange of national plans across the BSR**

Another way to streamline cross-border transport planning processes is through transnational consultation with regard to national and local/regional transport plans and strategies. Sweden and Finland already have experience of consulting on national transport plans.

- **Develop cross-border flow data analysis tools**

There is a clear need for relevant, up-to-date information about transport flows in the Baltic Sea Region, as well as common performance evaluation methods for the transport networks. This could be achieved through joint transportation model processing and visualisation of current and future flow patterns.

- **Integrate transnational aspects in national planning processes and facilitate institutional learning**

A more systematic approach to transnational issues is needed in national transport planning. If national planners were more involved in territorial cooperation projects, project partnerships would be more motivated to achieve results that are of relevance and interest to national planning processes. In addition, the results of these projects are more likely to be implemented into the planning practices, routines and strategies of the national transport administrations.

#### For Interreg project developers

Project developers looking for more commitment at a national level should consider the following suggestions:

- **Focus on important challenges that are of common interest**

The key to developing and running a successful Interreg transport project, and one that also benefits transport planning at a national level, is to combine local/regional perspectives with the national and European/international perspectives. For example, providing a good analysis that is based on reliable, up-to-date information can serve as the basis for both private and public sector decisions.

- **Be patient and think long term**

Rewarding partnerships need to be maintained. It takes time to establish dependable networks, identify common interests and implement joint actions.

- **Involve national transport planning agencies**

A direct involvement of national transport planning agencies in Interreg projects is important. By including perspectives, challenges and opportunities pursued by national planners and decision makers, it becomes easier to implement results in the daily work. This can, for example, be achieved by ensuring that representatives for national level organisations can meet their counterparts in other countries.

- **Share and communicate new findings**

Another important aspect is the learning process – for everyone involved. How can the project facilitate this process to ensure that all accumulated knowledge is more widely available?



## About the project and its focus

### Challenges of multi-level governance in the Baltic Sea Region

The BSR TransGovernance project is based on previous collaborations at macro-regional, meso-regional (cross-border) and corridor level, and is a direct follow-up to the TransBaltic, EWTC II and Scandria projects, which were benchmarked in the 2011 progress report on the EU Baltic Sea Strategy.

The project began in 2012, with 23 partners from 9 countries and an overall budget of €1.865 million. Its main goal is to demonstrate how multi-level governance methods can help improve the alignment of transport policies in the Baltic Sea Region, at various administrative levels, and improve integration with the commercial sector for the sake of greener and more efficient transportation.

The project is particularly committed to the development and testing of joint planning and implementation frameworks for transport policies in areas with a long history of cross-border cooperation between public and private sector partners, and areas that have accumulated extensive evidence for multi-level governance actions.

#### Areas of study:

- **MACRO** – The overall Baltic Sea Region (BSR) area, including Norway, Northwest Russia and Belarus.
- **MESO** – Cross-border integration areas with high volumes of passenger and freight traffic, including transit traffic.
- **CORRIDOR** – Transnational multimodal transport corridors that transverse the BSR territory.
- **MICRO** – Areas where intermodal terminals have been/will be localised.



## Project partners

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