Mid-term event of the Amber Coast Logistics project

**East-west transport operations: the challenge of cross-border thinking**

**Copenhagen, April 2013: Boundaries in the head are slower to disappear than frontiers between countries. This was the realization of the mid-term event participants of the EU logistics project Amber Coast Logistics (ACL), held at the end of April in Copenhagen, Denmark. The potential for growth in the flow of goods between Western Europe and the Baltic Sea region nonetheless remains high.**

Around 60 participants attended the event, organised by the ACL project partners: the Aalborg-based FDT Association of Danish Transport and Logistics Centres, Port of Hamburg Marketing and the Baltic Sea Forum, an international association that promotes economic, political and cultural cooperation between the Baltic seaboard countries. The event was held with a view to assessing progress at the halfway point of the project, which is funded under the EU's Baltic Sea Region Programme.

Lectures and discussions between speakers and visitors to the event revolved around the question with which the ACL project has been preoccupied for more than a year and a half: As well as promoting international transport operations, how can the growth of personal networks between Western Europe and the Amber Coast Region, with its neighbouring states like Belarus and the Ukraine, be further encouraged?

**Taking up challenges to exploit potential**

A study by the Bremen-based Institute of Shipping Economics and Logistics (ISL), commissioned by the Amber Coast Logistics project partners, came to the conclusion that container traffic in the Amber Coast countries will rise dramatically from its 2011 level of 3.4 million TEUs by the year 2030. The research institute is predicting an increase of between 8.6 million and 9.9 million TEUs, attributable above all to the rapid economic growth of the Baltic hinterland regions.

Apart from practical obstacles in the daily transport of goods – like lengthy customs procedures, and time spent waiting at international border crossings – growth forecasts of this kind are also and above all challenged by existing opinions. This was the unanimous conclusion of those attending the ACL mid-term event. ‘One of the biggest challenges is that of changing the attitude of western European logistics companies to the Belarus logistics sector. People are often inclined to pass judgment on the political system of the country,’ said Dzmitry Babicki, leading economist of the Warsaw research institute Case Belarus, explaining the problems facing Belarusian logistics operators. ‘At the same time, if we are to promote the essential expansion of logistics centres in Belarus and get them effectively working, foreign investments are crucial and western companies need to be persuaded to settle in the region,’ added Dr Anatoly Molokovitch, Head of the Logistics Faculty of the School of Business and Management of Technologies of the Belarusian state university.
Benefiting from shifting transport patterns

A similar problem was referred to by Denmark's former Minister of Transport, Mr. Flemming Hansen. During his period of office he was significantly involved in negotiations for the Fehmarnbelt Fixed Link, one of the objects of which is to cope with the rising volume of transport going to Scandinavia as a result of the EU's expansion to the east. ‘Rail above all stands to benefit from the new Fehmarnbelt Fixed Link. But this posits a shift of transport from road to rail. It will probably take a good while to change people's rooted preference for carrying goods to and from the Baltic and Baltic hinterland regions by lorry and ferry. With more traffic on both road and rail it is important to create added value services along the link to support the development of the corridor from Scandinavia to the Continent.’ As an example of a needed service Mr. Flemming Hansen mentioned the establishing of a new combined rail/road terminal on the corridor in Koege (Denmark), which could function as a Nordic Hub giving service to Denmark, as well as other countries along the corridor.

A positive example of a port with multimodal facilities which is growing dramatically in consequence of the rising volume of transport between eastern and western Europe was mentioned by Thomas Elm Kampmann, Managing Director of the Scandinavian Transport Centre, located four kilometres away from Køge. ‘Right now the Port of Koege is being expanded to more than twice the size. 400,000 square metres of new port premises are being created, of which 80 percent have already been leased out to companies,’ Kampmann reported. ‘Against this background, we are working to make the Scandinavian Transport Centre one of the most important transport hubs for combined transport in Denmark.’

Amber Coast Logistics

The Amber Coast Logistics project brings together 19 project partners from Belarus, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, as well as another 25 associated partners. Founded with EU support, the project is designed to strengthen and exploit the existing potential of the transport and logistics sector in the southern and eastern Baltic Sea regions.

The principal objective of Amber Coast Logistics is to support the development of multimodal logistics centres in the southern and eastern regions of the Baltic Sea region and so improve the accessibility of outlying areas.

Further information about the project, together with the detailed study by ISL, may be found at www.ambercoastlogistics.eu.
Press Release

Picture 1:


Picture credit: FDT - Association of Danish Transport and Logistics Centres