

# Implementation constraints for past strategic transport initiatives

## Task 3.1 report

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## Problem identification

International and interregional projects usually include an extensive mapping of current situation as well as a stocktaking of problem issues. The purposes of interregional and international projects are usually, by anticipating a process, to give the participants a common understanding of the issues, which also can facilitate for networking and cooperation. Another purpose is usually also to create a common action programme to execute the proposals agreed to in the project. Past experiences of the issue show however that many of the good efforts put into the action programmes are not fulfilled or only partly fulfilled. The projects can, as previously mentioned, be of value in themselves to create a common picture and serve as a basis for network cooperation. With a common picture you will then be able to develop common objectives. The objectives then will function as a guide for how to priorities the proposed policy actions. Depending on the priorities and the development, the objectives can be partly or fully achieved. The priorities are however in need of decisions.

Our Baltic Sea region is located in the peripheral of Europe putting us under more pressure to really coordinate to be able to compete in the tough climate of globalisation. We need to have established good contacts and most of all facilitated for increased trade between the regions located around the Baltic Sea. Increased cooperation is a key issue for sustainable growth and needs to be on the agenda for future discussions. The regions in the Baltic Sea area belong to states with different backgrounds and with diverse decision-making structures. The involved regions therefore do not have the same mandate in the decision-making process. This affects the ability for implementation and must be taken into consideration in the various action programmes. The same goes for financial prerequisites and to what extent the public sector can or should be involved. This applies as well to the private sectors possible participation. The demand for a region's ability to coordinate depends on the number of stakeholders required to be involved.

The reasons to why action programmes do not reach an implementation or expected results have for many years been discussed in the scientific literature. Public actors - alone or together with other stakeholders - establishing a programme could be regarded as a political programme. The implementation is then rather a process in itself, and often a political such. This insight provides an understanding of the implementation just as much demanding and extensive process as the development of the actual action programme. It could even be argued that the implementation often requires more efforts than the development of the action programme since the implementation requires concrete steps in a way that an agreement does not.

The execution of programmes or decisions of political nature is incorporated into the concept of implementation. The concept is usually related to the American research by the political scientists Pressmann and Wildavsky; subsequently, a book on the issue was published in 1973. The book discusses why a federal project, designed to create work opportunities for inhabitants of the slum areas, failed even though a programme had been established, decisions were taken and funds available. An explanation was given by Sannerstedt (2001) that the risk for something to go wrong in the execution of extensive programmes (obstacles) increases with the number of actors involved. Could different actors execute only the part of the programme that concerns them? Do they really want to execute the action following an agreement when concrete steps are being asked for? Do they understand what they are expected to do?

If the action programme is a compromise between different stakeholders already from its origin, there might appear some contradictions, which most likely will make an implementation impossible. A programme itself may be inadequate in that it contains conflicts between different priorities and goals.

Löfmark (2012) makes references to a model from the 1980s based on the research by Hogwood and Gunn (1984), considered a critical recognition of the situation that the perfect implementation cannot be achieved. That does not mean, however, that the actors should commit less time to the implementation but rather the opposite.

The model consists of following 9 points;

- The applier is not prevented by any external circumstances (political or economic changes)
- Enough time and resources is available
- The necessary combination of resources is available
- The political decision is based on correct causal understanding of aims and means
- The relation between aim and means is direct without middlemen
- The applier is independent of other actors
- The different tasks in the implementation are specified in a correct order
- The coordination and communication is perfect (between involved parties)
- The decision-makers can demand and achieve perfect control over the process

As shown, the perfect implementation of an action programme does not exist. Consequently, its execution will never follow according to the plan. This means that more efforts have to be made in the implementation phase of the various initiatives. It could therefore be discussed if perhaps the programme should, already in the launching stage, feature a part dedicated to the implementation and how it should be supported by network meetings and follow-ups. It would be of value to study how the implementation was handled within some previous projects. Was there any designated body (partner, organisation, administration) taking care of these issues? Were a decision-making approach and the sequence of steps in that direction ever discussed?

## Action programmes in various projects

This study is based on an analysis of processes leading to strategies, plans and action programmes in various transport-related projects. The action programmes are usually ambitious. They are developed out of extensive studies and cooperation regimes, with the intention to be implemented by the various actors individually, yet - to collectively create the added value. That requires however that the programmes are realised or implemented. The question is whether or to what extent that is happening. Do the actors encounter any problems and do they possess the needed tools? To investigate this issue further, a questionnaire was distributed to a number of transport initiatives.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to elaborate on the above-mentioned factors and let the respondents reflect on the implementation phase (e.g. whether the initiative had any resources to execute the programme and if there is an actual will to implement or even understand the programme).

The questionnaire was distributed to 18 concluded/ongoing transport initiatives.

Transport initiative	Problem	Effects	Critical factors	Lessons
Baltic Gateway	Lack of power for regional authorities to implement the strategy	Consensus on the regional body No instrument for implementation	Human and financial resources, roles and responsibilities, political ownership, Lack of instrument at regional level	Tools at the national level are a problem Need transnational processes for implementation Need recommendation how to create this process
Framework for a BSR multimodal transport strategy (BSSSC)	Lack of joint strategies Low activity and poor coordination from national level	Good - several project to raise this problem	Political ownership, will of stakeholders, stakeholders understanding	Easy to receive results if it is a question to reach a common policy
South Baltic Development Zone- South Baltic Arc	To create conditions for making Polish coastal regions competitive	Very good - joint position for Polish regions and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Human and financial resources	Adaption of a number of propositions
The Swedish Green Corridor Initiative	Solutions based on the concept "green corridors"	Very good	Political ownership, Quality of networking, stakeholders understanding	-
Baltic Palette	Cross-border urban networking	Satisfactory - joint learning platform, arenas for exchange of experience	Human and financial resources, roles and responsibilities, political ownership, Lack of instrument at regional level Will of stakeholders, stakeholders understanding	Make a deliberative choice
ÖRUS	Common cross-border strategy	Very good as it is seen as a process, not so good regarding implementation	Human and financial resources, roles and responsibilities, political ownership at Lack of instrument on regional level	Clarify the purpose from the beginning

Transport initiative	Problem	Effects	Critical factors	Lessons
			Will of stakeholders,	
EUSBSR	Connect the region improving internal and external links	Good - increased and sustainable cooperation among Baltic sea region states	Human and financial resources Political ownership	Ongoing learning process, evolve macroregional level and national ministries
CPMR-BSC Transport Working Group	EU transport policy	Good, TEN-T process identified this initiative as competent partner	Roles and responsibilities Political ownership Quality of networking, stakeholders understanding	Do not overestimate the will of stakeholders to cooperate Important is that stakeholders need clear and real benefits
EWTCA	Strengthen cooperation between transport stakeholders	Good - catalyst role in establishing an intermodal transport corridor	Stakeholders understanding	Necessary to involve a spectrum of stakeholders
Scandria	Develop a green transport and a development corridor and linking BSR to Central Europe	Very good - successful integration of regional corridor interests	Human and financial resources Political ownership Knowledge of the future market Stakeholders will, the initiative must be backed up from the political level	Political back-up a must
Coinco	Improve the railway connection Oslo-Gothenburg-Copenhagen	Satisfactory - the project known by stakeholders	Human and financial resources Roles and responsibilities Political ownership Monitoring mechanism involvement of users	To activate the political network

## Analysis

The result of the questionnaire shows that a number of common critical factors can be identified. The respondents stated that the “political ownership and leadership” is the most important critical factor and a crucial prerequisite for implementation. Stated as almost as important was the availability of “human and financial resources”, meaning enough available resources to execute the actions agreed in the action programme. The third most important factor was identified as the “stakeholders’ understanding” of the

agreed actions as well as “designation of roles and responsibilities” (in the implementation phase) of what stakeholders can/should do and if they have the political ownership needed to back-up the actions or policies.

For those cases where the regional or local level is given the responsibility, a question arises whether such a level has the mandate to realise the requested measures. This is especially important for transnational projects, which cover states with regional and local levels of more or less strong mandates. It is not unusual that the programmes and policies are determined with no all stakeholders onboard although some of them may be committed to implement the programme. Another case might be that the programme is agreed by consensus with perception that the agreement will not lead to any implementation. It may also be that the actors do not really understand what is to be implemented and therefore the programme is not carried out further.

## Further insights

As a supplement to the questionnaire some phone interviews were executed to get a deeper insight of how the various transport initiative look upon the implementation and to further elaborate upon the critical factors. This part of the investigation confirmed what was shown in the questionnaire.

Successful implementation requires that actors assume their responsibilities by contributing with both human and financial resources. But, it also requires engaged individuals with feeling of responsibility or ownership that personally establish contacts. The interviews also showed the importance of functional networks with the ability to make its own decisions. The involvement of the national level is considered as utterly important, which is connected to the question of allocation of mandate in the different states.

## Discussion

It can be concluded from the questionnaire that the national level often holds the necessary tools. Theoretically it could be questioned if that really should be considered as a problem for implementation since with the national level’s involvement the prerequisites for an implementation of issues depending on national rules and regulations increase, but the national level might on the contrary have their own problems with implementation because of insufficient resources etc.

It is, however, still a problem from a regional and local perspective.

The initiatives we investigate in this study are of transnational nature, which is a problem for implementation in itself with different responsibilities, financial and human resources - the conditions for execution are - overall - diverse.

It is not unusual that the project objective is not defined from the beginning, which in consequence causes various problems. The purpose with a project can, however, be to create knowledge and by doing so - to achieve a common understanding of the problems (it may be particularly relevant in the BSR). But that should be clarified at an early stage and before the project even starts. Such a project can have a clear learning perspective, but should be viewed as such and treated as such.

The result of the questionnaire shows, however, clearly the importance of the vital actors' early involvement and the difficulties in doing so. But without such involvement (usually political) the project will have difficulties to be assigned budget resources for the follow-up implementation and the ownership will be vague and unresolved.

As mentioned above, the Baltic Sea Region is a periphery in Europe and has to be connected to the more central parts by means of infrastructure. At the same time, it is also of importance to increase the trade exchange as export and import could be seen as drivers for economic development and innovation.

This paper leaves Russia or, more specifically, St. Petersburg, outside the scope. However, it must be emphasised that the development in the north-western part of Russia shall be underestimated for the Baltic Sea Region. The area around St. Petersburg is experiencing a fast metropolisation process, and metropolitan areas can be seen as drivers for growth and development. The question how to cooperate with Russia and involve the Russian stakeholders in developing and implementing joint initiatives must be raised.

## Recommendations

It is important to understand that the perfect implementation of the joint initiatives is not possible but that does not free the involved stakeholders from a necessity to discuss the implementation phase at an early stage of the project, and then ongoing.

First of all, the project aim needs to be clarified whether it deals with the achievement of a concrete action/policy programme. The project's task could also be to achieve a common knowledge base. The strategy for the implementation phase is then depending on the profile of the project. Many efforts must, regardless, be put on identifying the important actors and to involve them in an early stage of the project to settle the ownership and later, the needed resources. This paper does not discuss the role of the private sector in the programmes and decisions made as their result. It is, however, crucial how and in what way to cooperate with the private sector. This must also be clarified from the beginning of a project as the private sector could and should be regarded as important actors.

It is of significance to understand that the implementation stage must be preceded with some kind of decisions. One way to make decisions in case of more than one stakeholder involved (e.g. transnational projects) is multi-level governance, addressed in Task 3.2 report on experience throughout Europe.

The paper left out an issue of Russia but flag up a need to cooperate with Russia and involve the Russian stakeholders in developing and implementing joint initiatives. The EU neighbourhood policy may provide right instruments for that purpose.

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