It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to TransBaltic’s North Baltic Foresight Debate.

Nordland County Government think it is important to position the North Baltic Area in all discussions and strategies of the Baltic Sea, whether it is the EU Baltic Sea Strategy or in the role of the Barents Area or in the Baltic Sea Commission.

In all such positioning, it is important to have good cooperation with one’s neighbours. In Nordland we have a long history of cooperating with our neighbour Counties in the Barents region.

Historically the first formal arena was the North Calotte Council.

In 1993 the Barents Regional Council was established. But since the mid eighties, Nordland County Council had already had very good regional relations with Leningrad Oblast and St.Petersburg. Nordland was the first county in the north to establish such relations with a county in Russia.

The latest arena for cooperation in the north is the NSPA: The Northern Sparsely Populated Areas, which was started by the Brussel’s regional offices, and consist of the regions in North Norway, North and Mid Sweden and North and East Finland. The population density is this area is 4.6 persons per square kilometre.

Nordland County Council is promoting the Arctic Policy and the Northern Dimension, and our engagement in the Baltic Sea area will continue. The international perspective east-west is important in all international future infrastructure planning. The demands of our businesses and especially our export industry is a challenge for giving priority to new infrastructure, whether it is out of the region or to bind the regions in the north together.

The ARE-train is transporting fresh salmon from Narvik to Oslo through Sweden and has been a running success for more than fifteen years. The NEW-corridor has been a vision for 10 years, but is now closer to reality than ever, after the Chinese showed great interest for the project one year ago. There is now an international working group on ministerial level working on the project.

Nordland will continue to have our attention eastward. The Baltic Sea Commission will for the next two years have its presidency in Västerbotten, which I think is an advantage for us and will enhance the relationship with our neighbours.

In your debates today I would also challenge you to put on the agenda whether it is possible to have a “Green scenario” and an Arctic perspective.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you a fruitful debate today!