

Translation of the original document

Prioritisation of the Fehmarnbelt link for closer economic and security ties with Scandinavia

Dear Mrs Scharrenbach,

Dear Mr Bartol,

Dear Mr Ulrich,

The opening of the Fehmarnbelt tunnel in 2029 is approaching and Denmark is determined that the first trains and cars will be able to travel through the tunnel in 2029. Construction work is progressing well and is expected to be completed on time. However, Denmark and the rest of Scandinavia are concerned about the situation regarding the rail link to the Fehmarnbelt Fixed Link (FBQ) in Germany. The incoming German government must prioritise the timely completion of the rail link from Lübeck to Puttgarden to leverage the tunnel's potential fully.

The Fehmarnbelt tunnel is one of the largest infrastructure projects in Europe and will significantly improve the connection between Germany and Scandinavia. After completion the journey time between Hamburg and Copenhagen will be significantly reduced to 2.5 hours by train and 2 hours and 40 minutes by car, which will increase travel cost efficiency. Significantly higher loads are expected on both road and rail on the route between Hamburg and Copenhagen, and the feeder lines must be able to cope with this load and secure fast and smooth transport.

For the rail link, the Schleswig-Holstein planning authority chose a new route to bypass towns, meaning that 73 per cent of the 89 km long route has to be rebuilt. Construction began in December 2023 and completion parallel to the Fehmarnbelt tunnel is planned for the end of 2029. However, due to the complex planning legislation in Germany, there is a risk that this deadline cannot be met. This applies in particular to the Fehmarnsund crossing, where construction is scheduled to begin in 2026.

Bottleneck Fehmarnsund crossing

The status of the Fehmarnsund will especially affect rail freight transport. Load tests have shown that the existing bridge will not be able to cope with the increased volume of railway traffic after completion of the Fehmarnbelt Fixed Link, despite ongoing repairs. This applies in particular to the support of rail freight traffic. The EU has set a target of reducing emissions caused by transport by 90 per cent by 2050. This means that rail freight transport has to increase by 50 per cent by 2030 and by 100 per cent by 2050 compared to 2015. The completion of a new and more resilient Fehmarnsund crossing is therefore essential to achieving these targets.

The key points are:

- a. Fulfilment of EU targets regarding the modal shift
- b. Reduction of CO2 emissions in the transport sector
- c. Reducing congestion, which will increase with road transport
- d. Enhancing road safety

Economic and geopolitical aspects

The Fehmarnbelt fixed link will significantly reduce transport costs and create a more integrated transnational labour market between Denmark and Germany. In addition, increased cooperation in research and innovation as well as a significant increase in tourism and trade between Scandinavia and Central Europe is anticipated.

If the potential of the Fehmarnbelt fixed link, including the rail and road connections, is fully utilised, freight traffic is expected to increase by 18%. Trade between Scandinavia and northern Germany could increase by up to 1 billion euros per year, which corresponds to additional annual economic growth of 0.3 % in this region.

Additionally, this connection has gained importance from an international security perspective - not least because of the latest developments - as it offers a valuable addition to the connection via the Danish mainland. The Fehmarnbelt Tunnel will strategically strengthen contact and exchange with European NATO partners, both with the established partners such as Denmark and Norway and in particular with the new partners Sweden and Finland. It should therefore be a priority for the incoming German government to strengthen the connection to the Scandinavian nations as soon as possible.

Denmark and Germany are responsible for ensuring adequate hinterland connections for the increasing traffic through the Fehmarnbelt tunnel in good time. This is especially important for the Fehmarnsund bottleneck. The incoming government should therefore ensure that approval procedures proceed as quickly as possible and that the necessary funds are made available to realise the project on time.

Yours sincerely,



Thomas Becker

Managing Director, STRING



Ulf Kämpfer

Lord Mayor of the City of Kiel
Chairman of STRING

STRING - Cross-border organisation for green infrastructure

STRING is a political organisation of regions and cities in Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. It promotes sustainable infrastructure, green mobility and the hydrogen economy, especially along the Fehmarnbelt axis, in order to strengthen the competitiveness and green transformation of Northern Europe.