

MERIDIAN Newsletter VIII, March 2026

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Throwback to the Steering Committee in Trieste

On 24–25 March 2026, MERIDIAN partners gathered in Trieste for the Steering Committee Meeting.

The programme started with a guided visit to the Port of Trieste, organised by the Port Network Authority of the Eastern Adriatic Sea (PNAEAS). Participants received insights into the port’s role as a key intermodal hub connecting the Adriatic region with Central and Eastern Europe. The visit highlighted the port’s extensive logistics infrastructure, Free Port regime and strong rail connections across Europe.

Presentations by terminal operators, including DFDS Trieste Terminal, Trieste Marine Terminal and HHLA PLT Italy, showcased how multimodal transport and integrated logistics services support efficient freight operations within the TEN-T network.

During the Steering Committee Meeting, partners discussed key project developments, including updates on project management, milestones and deliverables, reporting activities and the upcoming amendment process. Additional sessions focused on cross-corridor cooperation, evaluation progress, communication activities, implementation updates and Smart Cycling actions.

The joint conference on 25 March focused on the digitalisation of road freight transport at ports and multimodal terminals. Topics included congestion management, interoperable data exchange and intelligent transport solutions for last-mile freight operations.

MERIDIAN contributed from a corridor perspective, emphasising the importance of ITS deployment, digital infrastructure and cross-border cooperation in creating smarter and more efficient freight transport systems across Europe.



Welcome in Trieste / Urgent News

Björn Siebert welcomed all participants to the MERIDIAN Steering Committee Meeting in Trieste on 25 March 2026 and introduced the agenda for the afternoon, following the on-site visit on the previous day and the joint ACCESSMILE and MERIDIAN conference held in the morning.

He provided an overview of the main topics of the meeting. These included updates on overall project management (WP1), particularly regarding the status of Milestones and Deliverables as well as their formal acceptance. Further updates covered administrative and financial aspects, including the reporting process and the upcoming amendment.

In addition, several tasks were presented throughout the meeting, including cross-corridor cooperation activities, evaluation progress and communication developments. Implementation activities were presented with a focus on Italian partner contributions. The Smart Cycling activities were also addressed.

The meeting concluded with organisational clarifications and a final Q&A session.



On-site Visit to the Port of Trieste

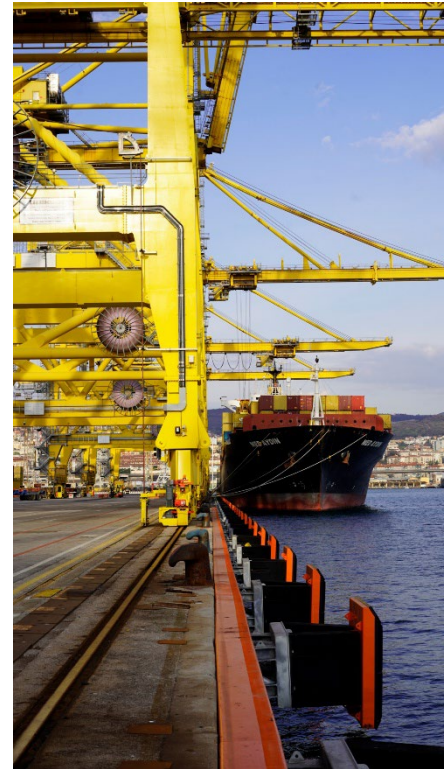
The Steering Committee Meeting in Trieste commenced on 24 March 2026 with an on-site visit to the Port of Trieste. During a guided tour through the port facilities, participants gained insights into the port’s infrastructure, operations and strategic role within the European transport network.

Roberta Manzi (Strategic Development and Innovation Department, PNAEAS) presented the integrated port system of Trieste and Monfalcone, highlighting its strong intermodal and logistics focus. As the closest Adriatic port to Central and Eastern Europe, the Port of Trieste plays a key role as a commercial, industrial and logistics hub for European freight traffic.

The visit showcased the port’s diverse cargo operations, including containers, Ro-Ro, general cargo and liquid bulk, as well as its Free Port regime and extensive rail network with more than 200 weekly rail connections to European logistics hubs.

Additional presentations were provided by terminal representatives along the route. DFDS Trieste presented its activities as a major Ro-Ro and freight hub within the Free Port area, while Trieste Marine Terminal introduced its role as the port’s main container terminal and intermodal gateway. HHLA PLT Italy showcased its integrated logistics services and direct rail connections supporting multimodal freight transport.

Overall, the visit offered participants a valuable overview of the Port of Trieste and its importance as an intermodal hub within the European transport system.



ACCESSMILE & MERIDIAN Joint Conference

On 25 March 2026, MERIDIAN participated in the joint conference *“Digitalising the Road Last Mile for Ports and Multimodal Freight Terminals”*, hosted in Trieste by the Port Network Authority of the Eastern Adriatic Sea in cooperation with regional and international partners.

The conference focused on the challenges of managing road freight flows at key nodes of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), particularly ports and multimodal freight terminals. Increasing traffic volumes, congestion at access points and fragmented data exchange were identified as key challenges requiring interoperable digital solutions and coordinated governance approaches.

From a corridor perspective, MERIDIAN highlighted its role in supporting the digitalisation of mobility systems along major TEN-T corridors through ITS deployment, digital infrastructure and cross-border cooperation.

The programme included institutional contributions, keynote speeches and operational best practices, with a focus on public investments in digital transformation and real-world implementations in port and logistics environments, such as real-time slot management and intelligent traffic control systems.

A dedicated session explored synergies between European and national funding instruments. Projects including MERIDIAN, ACCESSMILE, MILEPORT, PRESPORT and ELODIE demonstrated how complementary funding frameworks can accelerate digitalisation and improve interoperability between corridors, ports and logistics nodes.

The event concluded with a round table discussion between corridor managers, port authorities and logistics operators, addressing operational experiences and future perspectives for digital road freight transport.

MERIDIAN Short Film

Björn Siebert and Ralf Scheiber presented the current status of the MERIDIAN short film, which will illustrate a journey across Europe and highlight how project activities contribute to a broader European perspective. The film underlines MERIDIAN's objective of ensuring safe and sustainable traffic flow across transport corridors.

The production is based on contributions from all project partners. Participants are invited to provide visual material such as short video clips showcasing their regions, project activities and teams.

Partners were encouraged to submit their material by the end of June to allow sufficient time for processing. It was also highlighted that all partners should carefully check the spelling of names and organisations in the material already produced and contact the Project Management Team in case of questions. **So, get your cameraman or woman or your smartphone and send those video's to Ralf!**

In addition, the use of short video clips for social media was presented as part of the project's wider communication approach.



WP1 Project management

An overview of MERIDIAN’s Milestones and Deliverables for the period October 2025 to March 2026 was presented. The update showed that 76% of the 140 Milestones have been achieved, while 24% are still delayed. For Deliverables, 61% of the 49 have been completed and 39% remain delayed.

Prior to the meeting, the Coversheets of all completed Deliverables since the last Steering Committee Meeting in Utrecht were shared for review. During the session, these Deliverables were presented for formal acceptance. All listed Deliverables (D16, D22, D24, D27, D44 and D46) were approved unanimously, following a QR-based voting process and in the absence of objections from Steering Committee members.

The meeting also provided an update on upcoming events and activities. Attention was drawn to the Connecting Europe Days (29 September–1 October 2026, Brussels), where VERKKO will be represented with a stand. Additional updates included participation in recent and upcoming events such as the C-Roads Urban C-ITS Training Session, the X4ITS Technical Workshop in Klagenfurt, and the ITS European Congress in Istanbul.

Finally, it was announced that the MERIDIAN Closing Event and final Steering Committee Meeting are planned for 6–7 October 2026 in Cork, subject to final confirmation.

MERIDIAN Updates

Bjorn Siebert provided an update on the RPO2 reporting process, highlighting several reasons for current delays. These included minor technical issues during data uploads, incomplete updates of EU contribution data, and late submissions by some partners. It was noted that overall progress depends on timely input from all partners.

To support the process, the “Guide to submitting financial reporting data” has been updated. Partners were invited to provide feedback to further improve the guidance. Some technical issues with the SyGMa platform were also mentioned.

Partners were reminded to keep contact details up to date and to ensure that a backup contact person is available when needed. After full data is uploaded, the reporting will proceed through the required signature process and will subsequently be subject to CINEA sampling.

In addition, an update was provided on the planned project amendment in 2026. The amendment is necessary due to under- and overspending across partners. It was emphasized that final funding allocations will be assessed by CINEA on a partner-by-partner basis, making accurate financial forecasting essential.

Different budget scenarios were presented to illustrate potential impacts. It was highlighted that both over- and underestimations may lead to a loss of funding, either at partner or consortium level. Budget increases are only possible if other partners reduce their allocations, and subcontracting costs must be fixed within the amendment process.

Partners were encouraged to provide realistic forecasts and to contact the Project Management Team in case of expected difficulties.

Task 1.05 – Evaluation

Francesco Varone presented the status of the evaluation activities and outlined the next steps.

He provided an overview of progress across participating countries, noting that evaluation activities are ongoing in all partner countries, with varying levels of advancement depending on the implementation status.

The planned evaluation timeline was also presented. A main evaluation workshop is scheduled for June or July 2026 (date to be confirmed) and is expected to bring together all partners to present results. The workshop is currently planned in a remote format.

In addition, the Final Evaluation Report will be presented at the next MERIDIAN Steering Committee Meeting in Cork. It will include both results from individual implementations and an overall project-level assessment. Feedback gathered during the meeting will be used to finalize the report, which will then be circulated for final review and approval, with the aim of completing it before the end of the project.



Task 1.03 - Cross Corridor Cooperation

Bjorn Siebert provided an update on cross-corridor cooperation activities within Task 1.03. The overview covered ongoing exchanges with related European initiatives and projects, aiming to strengthen coordination across corridors and support alignment in the field of digital transport and ITS deployment.

Planned activities for 2026 include continued collaboration with other projects and participation in relevant European events to further promote cooperation, exchange of knowledge and alignment of approaches.

Updates were also provided on related activities within other frameworks, including cooperation under NAPCORE, with a focus on stakeholder coordination, gap identification and alignment across working groups and topics.

Clara Rybin presented an update on Smart Cycling activities, which are integrated into the VERKKO Working Group 1.03.1, with additional participation through Active Observer Agreements. The topic has been presented at several recent events, where the Smart Cycling roadmap and related activities were shared.

Smart Cycling continues to gain relevance at European level, with ongoing work focusing on data, infrastructure and the exchange of best practices.

Partners were encouraged to reach out proactively in case of cooperation opportunities supporting ongoing activities or MERIDIAN working groups.

Task 1.02 - Communication

Peter van Dop provided an update on communication activities.

He reported that the MERIDIAN website has been further updated, with news and events now clearly separated into dedicated sections, and Milestones and Deliverables made available online. The connection between the website and LinkedIn was also highlighted as part of the overall communication setup.

An increase in online visibility was noted. The project’s social media following has grown over the past 30 days, reaching 93 followers, while the website recorded 597 visits during the same period.

Partners are strongly encouraged to actively support communication activities by sharing updates, news and project results using the agreed communication format.

It was also noted that Adamo Ferro remains the most active contributor on LinkedIn.



Contributions from the Italian partners

Several implementation activities were presented, focusing on practical experiences and progress within MERIDIAN, with a particular emphasis on Italian partners.

Alberto Cozzi presented the implementation activities at the Port of Trieste. A mandatory truck pre-arrival notification system has been in place since October 2022, and further digitalisation is currently being implemented through an ongoing Italian RRF project. This includes automated gate processes, integrated transit management and real-time data exchange with authorities, supporting improved traffic flow, reduced congestion and enhanced handling of dangerous goods. MERIDIAN and ACCESSMILE activities are being implemented through a joint tender covering pre-exit notification and slot booking management, with completion expected by September 2026. A key challenge remains the need for a formal governance structure through a Port Authority Order.

Simone Pacciardi presented the implementation at the Port of La Spezia, focusing on congestion issues at the port entrance, particularly in the Varco Stagnoni area. The project aims to improve traffic management and reduce waiting times for trucks during registration processes, thereby reducing impacts on both port operations and urban traffic.

Adamo Ferro, Mirko Vindimian and Fabrizio Zeni presented the Municipality of Trento. The city faces high traffic volumes and operates multiple traffic monitoring systems that have historically functioned in isolation. The project focuses on integrating and upgrading this infrastructure through fibre optic expansion, a new video management system, modernised loop detection and AI-based video sensors. Results include improved real-time data availability, although challenges remain regarding procurement delays, system migration and AI fine-tuning.

Andrea Minardi presented the Port of Ravenna implementation, focusing on new smart port gates using virtual gate technology and AI-based video analysis for vehicle and pedestrian detection, classification and tracking. The system is linked to the Port Digital Twin and supports monitoring of traffic flows and performance indicators such as congestion, journey time and CO₂ emissions. While parts of the project are already operational, other components are still under development, with challenges related to permitting, underground infrastructure and design constraints.

Administration & Q&A

Bjorn Siebert thanked all participants for their active participation and engagement, with special appreciation to A. Cozzi and his team for hosting the meeting in Trieste.

Next Steering Committee



Our next Steering Committee is scheduled to take place in Cork, Ireland on the 6th and 7th of October. Hopefully we will see all our partners there!

Thank you for your continued support and interest in MERIDIAN! We look forward to sharing more updates with you in the next edition of the newsletter, on our [MERIDIAN website](#). And did you know we have a new [LinkedIn](#) page! Follow us for more information.