

Latvia to commence construction of Rail Baltica mainline

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Latvia has reached another milestone in the Rail Baltica project by beginning construction of its mainline. On 21 May the Rail Baltica team, representatives from the European Commission and international partners from France, Italy, Poland, Lithuania and Estonia gathered in Riga. They marked the occasion by sending messages to future generations through a time capsule to be embedded at the construction site.

"The significance of the Rail Baltica project in ensuring a fast and reliable connection for the Baltic region with Western Europe is particularly high in the current geopolitical conditions. The delivery of our shared ambition is to ensure a cross-border connection during the first phase of the Rail Baltica project by 2030, including the integration of Riga. Thus, the construction of the mainline is a top priority. We have undertaken the necessary preliminary work to hand over the subsequent tasks to experienced builders. I wish success and achievement to our partner teams from France, Italy and Poland!" explains minister of Transport of Latvia Kaspars Briškens.

"Rail Baltica brings us a step closer to the "Europe of trains" mentioned by French President Emmanuel Macron, that we are building, for a concrete, powerful, sustainable, and united Europe. It is an honour for France to be able to showcase the knowledge and expertise of its industrial champions in the rail sector, together with Latvian and European partners," said Minister of Foreign Trade of France Franck Riester.

"We need Rail Baltica for economic development and to bring the Baltic countries closer to Europe. Rail Baltica has strong support from the European Commission, especially since the war, as its importance has increased even more," says European Coordinator for the North Sea-Baltic TEN-T Corridor Catherine Trautmann. "It is not just a priority; it is a necessity. Rail Baltica is often cited as an example of transitioning to a new railway system. It is crucial to mobilize knowledge and expertise, and Latvia has successfully done that for the mainline construction."

The joint venture ERB Rail JV, employed by the Rail Baltica national implementing body in Latvia - Eiropas Dzelzceļa līnijas will oversee the construction of approximately 230 km of the mainline railway. This includes 175 engineering structures, 11 animal crossings, 42 viaducts, 81 road bridges, and 32 rail bridges.

The construction will proceed in sections, beginning with the first set of works in the Bauska region near Iecava, where the future Rail Baltica infrastructure maintenance facility will be located. The maintenance center will cover an area of approximately 16.5 hectares. These infrastructure maintenance points will serve as logistic bases during the construction of the Rail Baltica mainline, facilitating the construction of connections to the existing 1520 mm track network and maximizing the use of the railway for transporting construction materials and machinery.

"Latvia starts mainline construction with considerable experience under the belt – we build on the experience of construction in RIX Riga Airport and Riga Central Hub sections, and have a calibre of partners – Contractor, Engineer – to tackle this next project phase with confidence," underlays Chairman of the Management Board of Eiropas Dzelzceļa līnijas Ēriks Dīļevs.

The commencement of construction on the Rail Baltica mainline marks a significant milestone, demonstrating the project's progress and making it more tangible. "This year, over 150 km of the Rail Baltica mainline will be under construction. While many milestones remain to be achieved and challenges to be faced, the success of the next phases will hinge on the collaboration between the various project partners and contractors involved. I extend my best wishes for success to our newly onboarded partner and all the teams," says interim Chairperson of the Management Board of RB Rail AS Marko Kivila.

The construction works for the Rail Baltica mainline will encompass railway substructures, embankments, road crossings, and railway superstructures, including tracks and other related infrastructure. This Red FIDIC contract estimates the total cost at approximately 3.7 billion euros. The specific cost scheme for each section will be determined after the Design Review Phase, which will be conducted by the contractor ERB Rail JV. The client, Eiropas Dzelzceļa līnijas, along with the construction engineer Italferr (part of the Ferrovie dello Stato Italiano Group), will manage the contract, supervise the works and associated costs. The Ministry of Transport will oversee the overall execution of the contract.

Joint venture has extensive experience and expertise in the construction of strategic facilities in Europe, with the ability to deliver world-class quality in a cost-effective and timely manner across a wide range of countries. This international consortium, registered in Latvia, is composed of three of Europe's leading engineering and construction companies specializing in road, railway, steel structures, and major concrete works: Eiffage Génie Civil SAS (France), Budimex S.A. (Poland), and Rizzani de Eccher S.p.A. (Italy). The Project & Construction Director of E.R.B. Rail JV Andy Swift: "Given the scale of the work, national construction companies will also need to be involved in the main construction works. Another important direction will be the cooperation with the Technical University of Riga, attracting students who will have the unique opportunity to gain experience in a European railway infrastructure construction project. It should be noted that this is a multi-year project, so ERB Rail's collaboration with local engineers and current and future students is essential to the success of the project."

About Rail Baltica

Rail Baltica is one of Europe's largest high-speed infrastructure projects, aiming to establish a modern and sustainable rail link that connects the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania with the European rail network. It is also a part of the trans-European transport corridor.

Rail Baltica will be a fully electrified, double-track railway with a standard gauge of 1435 mm and will be equipped with ERTMS (European Rail Traffic Management System) and designed to meet European standards. With a design speed of 249 km/h, Rail Baltica will significantly reduce travel times between the Baltic States and major European cities. It will serve as a modern infrastructure for passenger, freight, and military mobility, promoting accessibility and facilitating business, tourism, and cultural exchange. Additionally, the project will enhance the Baltic region's position as a vital transit hub, fostering stronger trade connections and promoting regional cooperation.

RB Rail AS is a multinational joint venture of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania established to lead and coordinate the implementation of the Rail Baltica Global Project, the first infrastructure development project of this scale in the Baltic region. More about Rail

Baltica global project: www.railbaltica.org

About JV ERB

ERB Rail JV, an international consortium, is registered in Latvia and has been formed by three of Europe's leading engineering and construction firms in road and railway, steel structure, and major concrete structures works: Eiffage Génie Civil SAS (France), Budimex S.A. (Poland), and Rizzani de Eccher S.p.A (Italy).

Eiffage is a major player in construction and concessions in Europe and constructed the Bretagne- Pays-de-la-Loire high-speed line in France and is participating in works on the UK High Speed 2 railway line connecting London to Birmingham. Budimex is one of the leaders in railway construction in Poland. The company is currently undertaking such contracts as the new Warsaw West Station, one of PKP Polish Railways SA's largest investment projects. The General Contractor is also responsible for the construction of the Gdynia Port railway station, the Elk railway station, and the Czechowice-Dziedzice station. Rizzani de Eccher is already working in Latvia on the construction of the Rail Baltica Riga Central Hub. One of Rizzani's strong points is the construction of bridges and viaducts. This driving specialization enabled the Group to build over 4 million m2 of decks and to provide its engineering services and relevant equipment for construction of over 7 million m2 of decks.

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