

The Start of Construction of Rail Baltica Central Hub in Riga

Published: 23.11.2020.

Industry news

Rail Baltica



Construction of Rail Baltica Central Hub in Riga has begun as expected – in November 2020, while strictly following all restrictive measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. On 23 November 2020, the newly developed building site of the Central Hub in Riga was formally opened by Agnis Driksna, Chairman of the Management Board of RB Rail, i.e. the Rail Baltica project coordinator, Kaspars Vingris, Chairman of the Management Board of the project implementer in Latvia Eiropas Dzelzceļa līnijas (European Railway Lines), and Pascal Joseph, a representative of the supervisory team of civil engineersEgis-Deutsche Bahn, by welcoming the builders and congratulating them on the commencement of construction works. The residents of Latvia and Riga, as well as the builders and project implementers were also remotely addressed by the European Commissioner for Transport Adina Ioana Vălean, Latvian Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš, the Minister for Transport Tālis Linkaits and Mayor of Riga Mārtiņš Staķis. .

“The launch of Rail Baltica construction in Riga represents a milestone in the entire history of integration of the European Union. A modern railway network will soon bring us all closer together. Rail Baltica is one of the European Union’s priorities, since this infrastructure project is critical for the Europe. It is as essential for the welfare of people, business opportunities and start-ups, as for the economy. Congratulations to Latvia on starting construction works on time despite the global pandemic. Congratulations to the entire team – national and municipal authorities, project implementers, designers and builders, local and international suppliers. This is a truly remarkable day,” says the EU Commissioner Adina Ioana Vălean in her opening speech.

November 2020, which coincides with celebrations of the National Independence Day, has been a significant milestone for the development of Rail Baltica in Latvia. General partnership of constructors BERERIX commenced one of the most important construction phases of Rail Baltica project, namely, the Central Hub in Riga that includes reconstruction of Riga Railway Station complex, construction of a railway bridge across the River Daugava, construction of the European standard gauge tracks, removal of embankments and construction of an overpass, as well as construction of the adjacent infrastructure. The previously scheduled ceremonial opening of construction works has been postponed until it is safe and possible to hold such events.

“Rail Baltica is the largest infrastructure project, not only in the Baltic region but throughout the European Union. The importance of it has only increased in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. This project is of strategic and geopolitical importance: it will connect our economy to the European Union's single market, increase our international competitiveness and also the security of the region. It should be acknowledged that the Rail Baltica project is also one of the most complex in terms of its scale and technical solutions Latvia has been involved in after the regaining of its national independence. I would like to commend the ability of all the parties involved to come to an agreement in the name of a larger target, so that all would benefit from the opportunities provided by Rail Baltica, both for our economy and for the population,” Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš says in his congratulations to the project implementers.,” emphasises the Latvian Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš.

Tālis Linkaits, Minister for Transport: “We have started the implementation of this century's biggest railway project so that the Baltic transport system could be part of the European network again. Rail Baltica will enable us to improve the Latvian public transport system that connects Baltic metropolises with the largest cities of Latvia, and ensure transport connections between Riga city centre and its suburbs. Rail Baltica trackwork is designed for both international and regional, as well as local trains, reaching speeds of up to 200 km/h. Rail Baltica loop to Riga International Airport will strengthen Riga's central role in the Baltic aviation industry.”

“The biggest project of the century has started, and it will be very significant not only for Riga but also for the entire Latvia. It is difficult to imagine another infrastructure solution that would change the capital city, transport system and daily habits of the residents of Riga so much, namely, our work, commuting and leisure activities. Hence, it is important that Rail Baltica is something more than just an infrastructure project — rather the result of joint efforts that creates a modern and pleasant environment for all commuters, road users and travelers. Let's continue our active work by listening closely to all stakeholders and balancing their interests with the available resources. The next few years will be quite challenging both for the builders and the residents and visitors of the city, as well as for the local government. Besides, I'd like to emphasize that this is a time of opportunities also for entrepreneurs. I wish the best of luck to the builders in their work and kindly ask the residents of Riga to be understanding and patient! Together we will succeed, and it will be admired by many generations to come!” Mārtiņš Staķis, the Chairman of Riga City Council.

The beginning of the construction is a significant milestone of Rail Baltica project in Latvia. The design and construction work that took place over last years in the offices of local and international architects, engineers and constructors to bring the “design-and-build” concept to life, now reaches the next level - construction works. Rail Baltica project now becomes visible and tangible for citizens and guests of Riga.

Agnis Driksna, Chairman of the Management Board of RB Rail explains: “With the beginning of works in Rīga Central Railway Station, we mark the beginning of construction works of Rail Baltica in Latvia. As of today, Rail Baltica construction works are taking place in all three Baltic States. As a result of the reconstruction of Rīga Central Station and surrounding infrastructure, Latvia will gain new high-speed, environmentally friendly international and local railway services. Furthermore, the travel time between the capitals of the Baltic states will be reduced by half.

Kaspars Vingris, Chairman of the Management Board of Eiropas Dzelzceļa līnijas: “Investment in sustainable transport infrastructure these days is more important than ever. I am very pleased that on the occasion of our country's 102nd anniversary which is celebrated in November we can now say that we have started construction work of the most significant project in Latvia's centenary, namely, Rail Baltica. Not only implementation of Rail Baltica will boost the economy and help to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic crisis but also we are developing a convenient and modern railway infrastructure which will serve the Latvian economy in the longer term. At the same time it will be a significant contribution to the national economy as it will create lots of new jobs, as well as promote the development of other directly and indirectly related sectors.”

THE COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION WORKS OF RAIL BALTICA CENTRAL HUB IN RIGA

“Construction company BERERIX has started building works on the southern side of Riga Central Railway Station. The building site is set up to enable continuous work and social distancing for about 100 workers employed on the site and working in day and night shifts. In order to meet all requirements, to prevent carrying and spreading of COVID-19 on the building site, and to ensure timely construction process of the Central Hub in Riga also in an emergency situation, BERERIX has assessed all on-site

construction processes, performed a risk assessment for the work processes and intensity of worker interactions, as well as has prepared solutions and a work organisation plan in line with the WHO guidelines and the Latvian government instructions,” explains Xavier Debruche, BERERIX project leader.

To ensure strict adherence to the rules, operations of the BERERIX team and its contractors will be controlled by an Officer responsible for COVID-19 matters, and the monitoring results will be recorded in a specially developed BERERIX COVID-19 app. To enable workers to keep the required physical distance in communal premises, they will be divided in teams of 12 to work on the building site.

In addition to the general mandatory requirements regarding social distancing, personal hygiene and face coverings, on-site workers are specially trained and instructed about the nature of the virus, its symptoms and ways of spreading. The greatest attention on the BERERIX construction site will be paid to three main health and safety factors specific to the construction environment and work process:

Each worker's health condition and PPE before starting the work by measuring temperature and ensuring that personal hygiene items and disinfectants, as well as face coverings and gloves are available at all times.

Control of the number of people using communal premises according to the schedule, arrangement of divider screens and ensuring the required physical distance and space.

The use and disinfection of tools and equipment. It means that the use of construction machinery will be organized in a strictly arranged order and the machinery will be disinfected after each shift. Individual work tools will be ensured for each worker.

The first construction works of Rail Baltica Central Hub in Riga will be performed on a building site located between the Riga Central Railway Station and the building of the Ministry of Transport, and along the railway line between Maskavas and Lāčplēša streets. Throughout the entire period of construction both the pedestrian and vehicular traffic arrangements around Riga Central Railway Station will remain uninterrupted and safe. Those who are interested in the process of construction may follow it on the website edzl.lv where an interactive real-time flowchart will be published. Information about the scheduled traffic restrictions will be available both on the website edzl.lv and the Global Project website info.railbaltica.org.

The contracting authority of construction works is the Rail Baltica project implementer in Latvia, i.e. Eiropas Dzelzceļa līnijas (European Railway Lines).

81-85% of the project funding is provided by the EU's Connecting Europe Facility and the rest is financed from Latvia's state budget. The EU aid beneficiary and project implementer is the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia.

<https://www.sam.gov.lv/en/article/start-construction-rail-baltica-central-hub-riga>