

# Rail Baltica: the Baltic States’ rail connection to Europe

Rail Baltica is a significant infrastructure project that aims to develop a high-speed rail network linking the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with the European Union for both passenger and freight transportation purposes. This initiative is being implemented as a joint venture between the three countries and is receiving support from the European Union. Specifically, the Rail Baltica project entails the construction of an 870-kilometre-long railway line that will run from Tallinn in Estonia through Riga in Latvia to Kaunas in Lithuania. It will then connect with the existing European rail network. The new railway line will comprise both high-speed and conventional rail, allowing trains to travel at speeds of up to 240 km/h. The advantages of the Rail Baltica initiative include improved connectivity between the Baltic States and the rest of Europe, heightened trade and economic development, and reduced reliance on road transport. This project will generate thousands of employment opportunities during the construction stage and contribute to economic progress in the region.

## Project details

### Rail Baltica

**Location**  
Riga (Latvia)

**Client**  
Eiropas Dzelzceļa līnijas  
(Executive agency of the  
Latvian Ministry of Transport)

**Partners**  
SIA RERE BŪVE,  
Rizzani de Eccher

**Contract type**  
Design & Build

**Construction period**  
2019 - 2027



## BESIX’s scope

The BERERIX consortium, comprising of BESIX from Belgium, Rizzani de Eccher from Italy and SIA RERE BŪVE from Latvia, was granted the contract to design and construct the Rail Baltica Central Station project located in Riga, Latvia. The scope of the project includes the creation of the new Central Station building, a significant railway bridge spanning the Daugava River, railway embankments and track works.

The Central Station building features a 12,600 m² area, designed as a long-span steel structure with a 2,100 m² glazed roof. The project also involves the construction of passenger platforms, the refurbishment of the existing station building, pedestrian tunnels, the junction between the Timoteja and Elizabetes streets, and the associated demolition works.

Additionally, the consortium is tasked with installing a new railway bridge that spans 1,056 metres alongside the existing one over the Daugava River, connecting Maskavas to Jelgavas Street. The bridge has a slender design that complements the city’s architectural style.

The consortium is also responsible for installing new rails and a new catenary system over a 2.5-kilometre stretch within the city of Riga. The installation of the new rails involves the reconstruction of the 1,520 millimetre gauge track and the construction of 1,435 millimetre gauge infrastructure to comply with the European rail network standard.

## Community engagement

Along the way, the consortium has regularly involved the local community, international stakeholders and future users of the project. “All suggestions from the public and NGOs in the context of functionality and accessibility solutions have been discussed and considered and more than 80 % have been incorporated into our design. We can therefore proceed with the construction of the station with confidence and certainty. The new station will be modern, compliant with international requirements, safe, sustainable and, last but not least, successfully integrated into Riga’s skyline”, says Guntis Ābolīņš- Āboliņš, Managing Director of BERERIX. “We insist on this important aspect of cooperation with society at large, because only by respecting the interests of future users and international professionals of high calibre can a good result be achieved”, he adds.

### Did you know? Relocation of a 57 years old oak tree

In the winter of 2022, a 50-tonnes, 15 metre-high oak tree planted in 1964 next to the bus station in central Riga was moved and replanted away from the construction site. An unusual operation, deemed necessary as the oak tree is the national symbol of Latvia.

## Piling and concreting works in full swing

The consortium has made stable progress all along the year.

In July 2022, BERERIX began demolishing the Titāniks shopping centre and parking complex to create a new square on Prāgas Street. The site was cleared of debris in September 2022 and preparation works for the construction of the railway embankment retaining wall and landscaping began.

BERERIX started active surface works in the Central Station area in October 2022 and the new station building’s location is becoming more visible. The team has completed several works since then, including the piles on the southern side of the track and the excavation of 45,000 m³ of railway embankment. In addition, 43 kilometres of new telecommunications and power cable networks and more than 100 kilometres of railway signalling cable network have been installed.

By the end of 2022, most piling works and all temporary retaining walls had been completed and deck construction of three different viaducts and bridges had started. The bridge over Lāčplēša street will be the first completed overpass in the entire Rail Baltica project.

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**This modern railway link connecting the Baltic States to Western Europe is of particular significance in current times. Events in the region are invigorating our determination to see it through.**

Xavier Debruche, BESIX Project Director

### Leaving a legacy for future generations

In the summer of 2022, all parties involved in the Rail Baltica project - the European Commission, representatives of all 3 Baltic States, railway operators and contractors - buried a time capsule in the foundation of the new station building grounds, to leave a message for future generations. “We inserted a copy of the day’s newspaper and two pieces of artwork from the children’s drawing competition we organised, visualising today’s children’s predictions of what the future Rail Baltica train in Riga would look like”, tells Xavier Debruche.