**The North Sea-Baltic Corridor** is one of the 9 transport corridors of Trans-European Transportation Network (TEN-T). It connects the ports of the Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea with the ports of the North Sea. The corridor will connect Finland with Estonia by ferry (or tunnel?), provide modern road and rail transport links between the three Baltic States on the one hand and Poland, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium on the other.

This 3200 km long corridor will connect the ports of the Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea with the ports of the North Sea. It starts at the modern harbours on the Gulf of Finland of Helsinki (Vuosaari) and Tallinn (Muuga), passing south through the three Baltic States and North Eastern Poland until Warsaw.  From there it follows the traditional East-West corridor to Lodz, Poznan and Berlin continuing to the ports on the North Sea coast. The corridor has branches to Ventspils in Latvia and to Klaipeda and Vilnius in Lithuania.

One link of the North Sea-Baltic Corridor is Rail Baltic(a) 1435 mm gauge direct line from Tallinn to the Lithuanian/Polish border. The total length of this is 700 km, 200 km of which is in Estonia.

According to the Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas Rail Baltic is a very substantial project, which is strategically important but also expensive, and its establishment is only possible if we involve the financial support of the European Union. At the same time, a modern, high-speed railway is important for both the unity of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and for Europe, because it will **facilitate** deeper integration of this region with Estonian allies and partners.

***Some facts about Rail Baltica:***

* *Rail Baltica is the projects of 3 Baltic states. It completes at the Lithuanian-Polish border.*
* *From Tallinn to Kaunas a new railway will be constructed. From Kaunas a new 1432 mm railway, parallel to the old 1520 mm track, is under construction. It is called Rail Baltica 1,with the maximum speed of 120 km/h. The line is due to be completed by the year 2015. For Rail Baltica to operate as designed, Lithuanians need to construct the third new railway line, Rail Baltica 2, capable of providing the speeds up to 240 km/h.*
* *The total length of Rail Baltica is 700 km, 200 km of which is in Estonia. The railway will go through Harju, Rapla and Pärnu counties.*
* *The European standard gauge of 1435 mm is used*
* *It is a modern railway with environmentally-friendly electric trains, which create less noise and vibration that the present trains.*
* *The railway operates both passenger and freight trains*
* *The passenger trains’ speed is 240 km/h, that of freight trains - 120 km/h.*
* *The stations are in Tallinn (Ülemiste) and Pärnu, with an additional option in Rapla. It takes 45 minutes to travel from Tallinn to Pärnu, less than 2 hours to Riga.*
* *The total cost of the project is 3.6 billion euro, Estonia’s share in the Rail Baltic project is about 1.3 billion euro, which is to be spread over ten years.*
* *There are 3 stages in the construction of the railway – planning, designing and construction. The construction will be completed in the period 2022 – 2025.*

**Project status in Europe**

“Rail Baltica” is considered a **priority** European Union Trans-European Transport Network **project** No. 27.

**Project description**

The **implementation** of the international transport project “Rail Baltica will connect by a high-quality railway line Warsaw, Kaunas, Riga and Tallinn, and also Helsinki by a railway ferry.

The modernized railway lines will enable effective land communication among the Baltic and Northern Europe countries (especially Finland). Improved communication by railway will have environmental advantages, reduce traffic congestion in European road network, **enhance access** to Baltic States and stimulate faster regional development in the **relevant countries**.

The long-term objective of the international project Rail Baltica is to provide favourable conditions for using **the most environmentally-friendly modes of transport**. In the future European Union the objective is to transport 30% by 2030, and 50% by 2050 of all transported freight with environmentally clean modes of transport as railway transport.

The Rail Baltica project is not only the creation of railway infrastructure, but also of **logistics chain** which will form the flows of freight and passengers. Particular international solutions have already been executed in this field (effective **handling of the increased flows of freight** and transportation intermodality, increasing the capacity of the existing logistics centres, construction of intermodal terminals).

The **objectives of the project Rail Baltica** are the following:

- improve communication among EU and Baltic countries, **increase mobility** of people and freight by providing **more favourable traffic conditions** to passengers, combined transport, logistics and intermodal transportation;

- on regional and national level stimulate economic development and support more cost-saving international transport services to passengers and freight transportation, by paying special attention to more effective performance of railway managers in international corridors and **compatibility with** other modes of transport;

- improve the use of railway infrastructure and the quality of transport services by reducing transportation time, by increasing the number of passengers, freight flow and number of trains;

- **enhance efficiency** by operating the line by using **new type rolling stock** and European gauge standards for intermodal transportation;

- **implement** **measures** for environment protection in “Rail Baltica” section;

- **enhance** safety by implementing multi-level junctions and implementing modern signalling and **video** **surveillance** systems;

- connect two railway systems (Russian standard wide and European standard gauges).