

Baltic Transport Ministers' Meeting

Tallinn, 23.01.2023

**Joint Statement of Cooperation on Key Transport Challenges between the
Minister of Economic Affairs and Communications of the Republic of Estonia**

and

the Minister of Transport of the Republic of Latvia

and

the Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania

Stressing the importance of strategic transport infrastructure within the changing geopolitical context and **acknowledging** the need to coordinate with a long-term view the future actions concerning the development of the TEN-T network, we welcome the goal to migrate and understand the need to look for potential solutions for migrating the Baltic railway network over time to the European 1435 mm standard, considering it important to jointly prepare a plan and undertake a coordinated process for analysing the potential options and steps towards this goal.

Highlighting the need for further coordinated actions to support Ukraine, we continue joint efforts towards creation of alternative transport corridors between The Baltic Sea ports and Ukraine that would bypass Russia and Belarus, in order to contribute to the functioning of Solidarity Lanes and to further reduce the dependency from the Russian and Belarussian transit cargo flows in our region.

Confirming our readiness to take resolute action to further isolate Russian Federation from the international transport decision-making processes and from the management bodies of the relevant international organisations.

Emphasizing that strengthening of the economic relations between the Baltic States and the other regions of the European Union relies heavily on adequate modernised transport infrastructure, we **reiterate** the completion of Rail Baltica and Via Baltica as our highest priority.

We will jointly seek for possibilities to improve the connectivity between our capitals, such as direct train Vilnius-(Šiauliai)-Riga-Tallinn, based on the existing infrastructure, also in connection with the new projects such as the Vilnius-Warszawa train.

Stressing that the Rail Baltica Project has the highest geopolitical and economical priority, including in the context of applying for infrastructure investment financing in the ongoing and in the next MFF, we will concentrate all our efforts necessary to accelerate the project implementation as much as possible with the objective to prepare all sections of the project for construction by 2024 and complete the project in line with the TEN-T regulation deadline for the Core Network Corridor implementation by 2030.

Aiming for an early start of operations, we will take the necessary action to firstly complete the construction of the North-South axis of the Rail Baltica railway mainline as a major missing cross-border link on the TEN-T Core network, while taking all the necessary measures with the objective to start transport of freight and passengers on international routes at least in some sections by 2028 at the latest.

Acknowledging that the Rail Baltica Project has entered into a new implementation phase – construction – that requires highly efficient and robust decision-making processes in order to timely reach the ambitious goals of the project. We **note** that this transformation requires to evolve and adapt the project management system of the Rail Baltica implementation setup. Therefore, in order to make optimum use of the existing technical expertise for efficient implementation, **we consider, where necessary**, integrating project management of both design and construction, including the construction of the cross-border sections, into the bodies responsible for Rail Baltica construction in our states. Maintaining the coordination role and cross-cutting technical supervision task of the Rail Baltica joint venture RB Rail AS will continue to ensure the development of an interoperable railway infrastructure, which shall comply with the objectives and parameters agreed earlier.

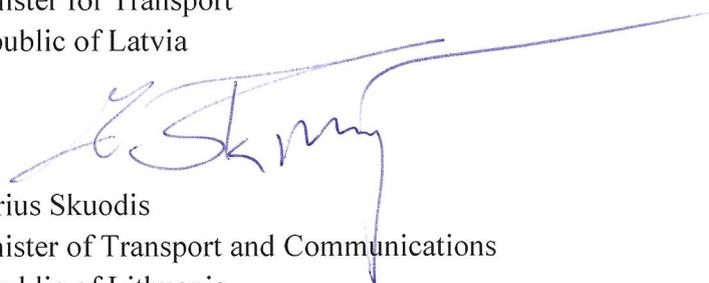
We reiterate the high importance of continuing close regional cooperation in transport affairs and projects implementation for facilitating and improving the functioning of our transport system.



Riina Sikkut
Minister of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure
Republic of Estonia



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Minister for Transport
Republic of Latvia



Marius Skuodis
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