

Feasibility Study on FinEst Link project introduced at the European Parliament

Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council and Estonian Harju County as well as Members of the European Parliament **Merja Kyllönen** (FI) and **Urmus Paet** (EE) organised a seminar on the recently published feasibility study on the Helsinki-Tallinn Railway Tunnel i.e. FinEst Link project on 27 February at the European Parliament in Brussels. The event was targeted at relevant EU stakeholders and EU institutions. Its objective was to provide latest information as well as increase awareness on the results of the FinEst Link study.



Seminar, which was organised in cooperation with Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications, Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, City of Tallinn, City of Helsinki and Union of Harju County Municipalities, served as a kick off event for further dialogue at the EU level on the project.

”The reason we are here today is that this has to be an European project”

Seminar started with an informative introductory video which presented the main results of the Feasibility Study. This was followed by a video clip of an opening message from the Prime Minister of Estonia **Jüri Ratas**. In his remarks, Ratas emphasised that both Rail Baltica and FinEst Link are important transport infrastructure projects for the whole Europe.



The same message was conveyed by the Regional Mayor of Helsinki-Uusimaa **Ossi Savolainen** and MEP Paet in their opening statements. Savolainen said that what used to be a vision has become a concept of a feasible railway tunnel. Both Savolainen and Paet pointed out Rail Baltica project is of great importance and a prerequisite for the FinEst Link railway tunnel. Therefore, Savolainen expressed full support of Helsinki-Uusimaa

region to the Rail Baltica project.

Richard Manninen, Head of Strategic Planning Division of the City of Helsinki among other speakers pointed out that FinEst Link project is first and foremost a European project. It would extend the core corridor transport network to the Northern parts of Europe creating a multimodal transport network from

the Arctic to Mediterranean, from North to South. Railway tunnel for passengers, freight and car shuttles would extend the existing TEN-T network between Helsinki and Tallinn, which currently consists only of a maritime and air connection.

Furthermore, the FinEst Link would enable the creation of a Helsinki-Tallinn twin city model which would serve as a best practice case study for the rest of Europe. **Jaan Männik**, Advisor to the Minister of Economic Affairs and Communication (EE), said that the project is ever closer to realisation due to the good regional cooperation and technological advancement. Manninen seconded the view and stressed that Helsinki sees the project as a great global opportunity for Europe. FinEst Link is a global project which could make Baltic Sea region a northern hot spot for the future Europe-Asia commerce.

In addition to European dimension and twin cities concept, several speakers stressed the multidimensional character of the project. FinEst Link is not solely a transport infrastructure project but entails environmental, social, and economic factors. Railway tunnel would have implications on both passenger flows and cargo. The report foresees that the total cost of the project would lie at around € 16 billion. However, the economic impact and growth potential are expected to be substantial. Further assessments are needed in order to estimate the impact on the environment, social cohesion, and the economy of the whole region.

MEPs called on further deliberations to take place Brussels

MEP **Petri Sarvamaa** (EPP) expressed his content with the report and congratulated both Ossi Savolainen and Chief Adviser **Malla Paajanen** at Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council for their outstanding work leading the project. Courage is needed in order to make infrastructure project of such magnitude a reality. Sarvamaa reminded, however, that the project has to convince also those decision makers who are more sceptical towards the realisation of the project, especially with regard to the EU funding which was estimated to cover 40 % of the total cost in the report. **Krista Taipale**, Head of International Affairs and Helsinki EU Office thus suggested an EU roadmap for influencing in order to address this challenge.



In the final remarks of the seminar MEP **Merja Kyllönen** (GUE/NGL) emphasized the importance of cooperation and working together. She stressed the importance of story telling in order to make the project more attractive and familiar for the wider audience. The seminar was moderated by Malla Paajanen and Eva Killar, Executive Officer at Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications.