

IBNewsmagTM

International Business News

November-December 2021

The Supply Chain Bottleneck Is it easing? Solutions

***Also in this issue: Enchanting Estonia,
Practical Tips for Doing Business in Estonia***



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IBNewsmag

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..... *In God we trust!*

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Enchanting Estonia Potential Solutions for Bottlenecks



In addition to covering the contentious supply chain bottleneck, we want to take a minute to salute our fabulous graphic designer, Tom Gilland, who has brought *IBNewsmag* issues to life these past 14 years.

This is his last issue, and we wish him the best in all that he does. Tom and I go back to 2004 when we both worked to implement package design for a consumer products company. In fact, we began *IBNewsmag* in that same year.

Our very best wishes go to you, Tom, for bringing *IBNewsmag* international acclaim. Going forward we will continue to bring you practical news and information on our new website – www.ibnewsmag.com. Check it out.

Yes, the supply chain bottleneck appears to be easing somewhat, after months of desperation of our SME audience here in the US. In this edition of *IBNewsmag*, we look at what brought it on, and how the supply chain itself appears to be loosening up. Many SME manufacturers have solved some of their supply chain issues and are moving on with product sourcing and transportation alternatives.

We also bring you a look at the former USSR country of Estonia, which is now an integral part of the EU., with a vivid travel and recipe profile, along with the practical tips for doing business there.

We sincerely hope and pray that this new Covid infection does not stymie international sales and the health of our nation.

Frederick Baehner

Is the Supply Chain Bottleneck Really Easing? Potential Solutions



The Problem

It didn't start slowly. It came ashore like a Cat-5 hurricane. As soon as there was a Covid breakthrough last year, demand for practically everything skyrocketed. Hardly anyone saw it coming.

Consumer demand, demand for product components, automobiles, silicon chips, and more. About anything you can think of made a hundred-yard dash for immediate need.

Of course, suppliers here and abroad were completely unprepared for the tidal wave of demand. Many factories had scaled back, container vessels had been stranded, truckers had found new jobs or retired, and chassis and dock workers seemed to have vanished.

Once factories geared up, and ships began sailing, our West coast ports clogged up like molasses. At one point nearly 120 container vessels languished offshore at the ports of LA and Long Beach, dock workers were caught off guard and nothing moved causing US company executives to go into catharsis over lost revenues. Vessel crews are on

hold because they cannot leave their ships. Although some have access to wi-fi, most face weeks of boredom while their ships wait offshore. The carriers must continue to pay them.

Dock workers say there is nowhere to store all the containers coming from cargo ships, adding to the ongoing supply chain woes.

Now many are seeing an easing of the bottlenecks with goods moving faster from Asia, and even moving a bit faster from West coast docks.

The Ocean Carrier's Dilemma

by Jay Devers, *BESTWAY International*

As the fees start pouring in from the delayed cargo at the ports, logistics professionals say the retailers and cargo owners will ultimately pay the cost of the drastic new fees announced back in October in response to the mounting congestion disrupting the US supply chain. The fees purportedly penalize the ocean carriers for not quickly clearing out imported containers that are piling up in the terminals, even though the carriers were making record profits in November. The cumulative profit for the liner con-

tainer industry could be near the \$200bn mark this year, according to Lars Jensen, CEO of Vespucci Maritime.

Because of this, the carriers are perpetuating the issue of compounding fees by giving them out to their clientele to pay. The clientele in turn doesn't want to pay for what they didn't have a hand in doing. No one wants to pay these government-imposed fees, and it's going in circles of who will pay it and who will not. Will there be an end to this mess of putting off for someone else to pay? Or will a new solution be found?

The Added Burden of Inflation

Oh, did we mention inflation? The shortfall in product availability caused prices to soar. As measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the annual rate of inflation from October 2020 to October 2021 was 6.2 percent forcing consumers to pay more for everything from food to gasoline.

State of West Coast Ports

One of the most severe problems was the state of our West coast ports. Unlike the highly sophisticated ports of Shanghai, Rotterdam and Singapore, our highest rated port is Los Angeles at number 17 in the world according to the World Shipping Council, with Long beach dragging along at number 22.

In addition to vessels anchored or drifting offshore, truckers and railroads waited hours or even days to receive their allotted loads.

Even the highly touted Mexican West coast Port Lazaro Cardenas has reportedly been hampered by a striking dispute over teachers' back pay in Michoacan. Likewise, other Pacific coast ports are overloaded.

Ports of LA and Long Beach crisis

In California, in a letter, eight US House Representatives called for Gov. Newsome to declare a state of emergency, according to a recent AP article. The lawmakers called for Newsom to suspend several regulations for ports, warehouses, and truckers.

Eight US representatives, all Republican, signed a letter calling for Newsom to suspend or eliminate regulations for ports, warehouses, and trucking companies to combat the supply-chain crisis which shows "no signs of slowing."

The lawmakers' warning letter came a day after the largest ports in the US hit another record. Nearly 120 vessels were waiting off the coast to dock and unload at LA and Long Beach ports. Before the pandemic, the ports never saw a backlog greater than 17 ships.

"Unfortunately, California's own burdensome laws and regulations that restrict goods from moving to consumers, have contributed to this crisis," the letter said. The group also wants Newsom to waive several state rules designed to cut back on emissions, which the letter says places extra costs on warehouses and restricts the number of truck trips between the ports and warehouses.

According to Gov. Newsome, the state has begun allowing temporary weight exemptions for trucks on state highways to help companies move goods more efficiently.

According to the AP report, "One of the regulations that the lawmakers seek to suspend or eliminate includes California Assembly Bill 5 (AB5), a state law that restricts carriers from using independent contractors and is currently under review by the US Supreme Court. The lawmakers claim the law has forced truckers to leave the state."

"The lawmakers letter also wants Newsom to waive several state rules designed to cut back on emissions, which the letter says places extra costs on warehouses and restricts the number of truck trips between the ports and warehouses", the AP report claimed.

Reshoring – Use of Multiple Suppliers

If your current overseas component manufacturer is continually backed up, re-examine your supply chain to consider alternative sources of components. It may be beneficial to have your components made

here and investigate if more than one supplier is available to manufacture your components.

More Domestic Manufacturing

For many years, many companies have used "just in time" deliveries of materials and components needed for production. Reasons are cash flow and, in some cases, to lessen inventory taxes in certain states and countries. Those companies are particularly affected by the current situation if all or part of their raw materials and components are imported.

Of course, many non-manufacturers such as retailers almost totally depend on imports e.g., toys, clothing, household goods and others. Additionally, some countries such as China have a virtual monopoly on certain products e.g., pharmaceuticals.

As a result, many countries such as the United States and political and economic unions such as The European Union may decide to produce or mine crucial products and raw materials themselves and not totally depend on imports- e.g., pharmaceuticals, defense components, microchips, lithium, and processed foods to name a few.

Container Consolidation

Another aspect of supply chain efficiencies is to consider how you have those needed components packed for shipping. It may be that consolidation with other shipments into a single container can speed up the process.

One recent report we read claimed, "Yogibo, which sells toys, home decor and bedding, decided to prioritize shipping small items like Squeezibo, a gel fidget ball, and Mates — small, cuddly stuffed animals — instead of blankets and pillows 'as they take up much less space and offer a higher value for the same amount of volume,' said CEO Eyal Levy. In a 40-foot container, Yogibo can fit 200,000 Squeezibo units — \$1.6 million worth of sales — and 15,000 Mates worth \$400,000. But just 2,500 blankets worth \$200,000 in sales fit in a container."

If you are in the Midwest, what modes of transportation are you using to move your components? If rail is backed up at the port, perhaps look at using a trucking line to move it faster.

Of course, that too can be a bottleneck as the shortage of drivers continues to plague efficient supply chains. Use all available forms of transportation to move your products, including air, trucking, rail and ocean. For example, if trucking is backed up at the port use rail, or vice versa.

Alternative Shipping Lanes for Coffee

As an importer of Ethiopian coffee, **Emily McIntyre**, a certified Coffee Q Grader*, utilizes the Djibouti to New York shipping lane, which is new for her. Prior to the holiday season of 2020, she predominantly brought her 20' shipping containers to Houston or Oakland but made the shift away from those ports in order to improve on shipping times from origin. However, by bringing her specialty coffee to the East Coast, she now must use LTL and rail solutions to support her Midwest and West Coast customers.

While adapting her shipping lane has helped speed up importing timelines a bit, she still must double her time allowance for drayage and devanning, while expecting up to triple the transport times (depending on number of transshipments) since pre-COVID 2020. In addition, her transport costs have tripled in one year.

For the coffee industry in North America, the backlog of container vessels off California's coast has long-term implications as other importers like Catalyst Trade shift their port of entry, increasing in-country shipping costs by as much as \$.40/lb. for roasters on the West Coast. Ongoing shipping delays mean that supply and demand rhythms are disrupted, which has a domino effect for projecting revenue and purchasing in future years.

Overall, the interdependency of the international shipping industry has had a heavy effect on both her and her customers' businesses, and there's no end in sight.

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Supply Chain continued on page 8

OUR CONNECTIONS RUN DEEP

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- » On-dock intermodal rail via CN and KCS to Memphis, Chicago, Dallas, St. Louis and Toronto.
- » Alignment with New Orleans Public Belt Railroad, connecting you to six Class I railroads.
- » Four new 100-foot gauge gantry cranes under construction.



Learn more at portnola.com.



Supply Chain continued from pg 6

Use an Alternative Port

While West coast ports cave in because of logjams, other ports like the Port of New Orleans (PortNOLA) and Florida's Port Tampa Bay and Port of Jacksonville (JAXPORT) are completely open. Of course, coming from Asia, it means additional sailing time through the Panama Canal; but in terms of origination to destination, it just may mean faster docking and unloading.



Port New Orleans

Port NOLA

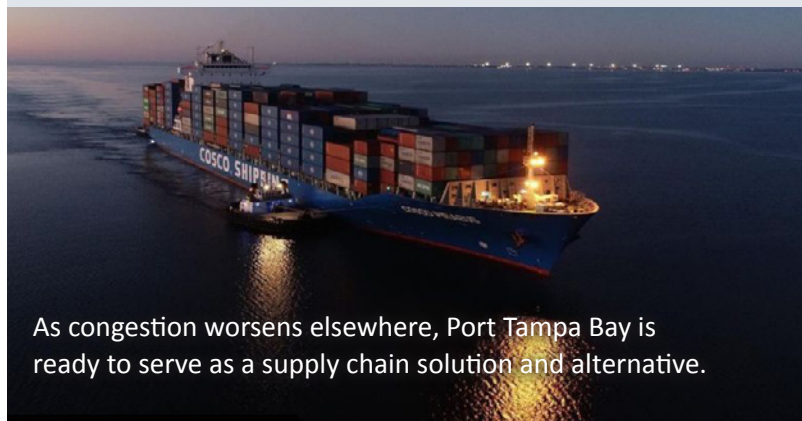
As it sees supply chain disruption throughout the West and East Coasts, the Port of New Orleans has not experienced backlogs and the congestion that other major ports have experienced this year. In fact, Port NOLA has available capacity and is positioning and marketing the region so shippers realize that New Orleans is a true alternate gateway.

It is seeing the strong growth curve of e-commerce, just in time delivery as a very positive trend for warehousing and distribution center demand in New Orleans and its entire region. Retailers are planning larger networks for distribution to have faster access to markets and Port NOLA is primed to grow in this space.

Another positive trend has been shippers' realization of the importance now more than ever of supply chain diversification. Using only one gateway, one ocean carrier, one railroad, is too risky when supply chains are stressed. With the extreme vessel delays on the West and East Coasts, Port NOLA has become a much more attractive option for Asia imports into Dallas or the Midwest via our connections from the

New Orleans Public Belt Railroad to the KCS and CN. The Port has been specifically working on targeted-customer engagement particularly with importers as well as ocean carriers. They are spreading the word about the Port's capabilities at conferences and industry speaking engagements. Targeted social media outreach to inform these partners can be found on [Port NOLA's LinkedIn page](#).

The Port's commercial team is also offering port tours to customers and new partners who are interested in doing business here, letting them know the time is now for customers to request from the ocean carriers that New Orleans is added to their services.



As congestion worsens elsewhere, Port Tampa Bay is ready to serve as a supply chain solution and alternative.

Port Tampa Bay

In 2013, Port Tampa Bay had a bold vision to grow into a major container port on Florida's west coast and encouraged shippers and retailers to reroute their thinking. Port Tampa Bay has emerged as a more efficient way to serve the growing Florida market. As congestion worsens in California and on the West Coast, Port Tampa Bay stands ready to serve as a supply chain solution and alternative. Its container volume has increased by over 30% over the past year and has accommodated the growth to stay ahead of the curve thanks to its terminal build-out program. Perhaps it's time to reroute your supply chain thinking and serve Florida's consumers and business customers from Port Tampa Bay.

According to a November 1 White House report, the number of containers sitting on the docks at LA and Long beach for at least nine days has fallen over 20 percent. It may be premature to think many of the supply chain bottlenecks will clear in the same way.



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Enchanting Estonia

As you enjoy a steaming cup of coffee and rest comfortably in a quirky sidewalk café, nervously monitoring the pigeons overhead steadfast on stealing your warm pastry from the small round table in front of you, it is a beautiful summer day.

A fresh, clean (among the cleanest in the world) breeze is gently waving the tourist map clenched in your left hand and occasionally, when the wind hits just right, lifting the corner of a disposable napkin, partially anchored by a chipped ceramic breakfast plate. Inhaling the unsullied air, you catch the sweet aroma of the nearby bakeries and soak up the charming atmosphere of Tallinn, Estonia's bustling capital city. A modern street is a few feet to the right, and a medieval cobblestone road up ahead. The two intersect seamlessly, much like the medieval, Russian-era, and modern architecture seen in all directions.

Estonia is home to some of the most creative and successful developers of modern technology, and it is one of the only countries in the world to provide free Wi-Fi to everyone country-wide, even in the middle of the forest. As such, this underrated European gem is a perfect destination for those who want to work on vacation, check in on the kids, read news and post on social media.

Estonia delicately blends old culture with new progressive spirit, creating both a lovely and interesting place to explore. Visitors in urban areas can choose from a wide selection of museums, showcasing anything from local history to modern art, or learn about Estonia by joining a walking tour. Those seeking a more rural experience can enjoy plenty of room to roam, as roughly half of the land is forested and home to Europe's highest concentration of large wildlife, including deer, wolves, moose, lynx, foxes and brown bears.

The following is a list of not-to-be-missed places and experiences in Estonia:

1. When in **Tallinn**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, **take a walk in the old city** and admire the **medieval**

houses and alleys, surrounded by the remains of **city walls**. Have a look at **Fat Margaret's Tower** and **St. Olaf's Church**. Step back in time and stroll through **St. Catherine's Passage**, walk through the iconic **Viru Gate** and catch a glimpse of **Town Hall** as you wander through **Town Hall Square**. Capture the beauty of both the **Alexander Nevsky Cathedral** and **Kadriorg Palace**, and then visit the **Lennusadam Sea-plane Harbour**.



Cobblestone street in Tallinn



Alexander Nevsky Cathedral

2. Visit the breathtaking **Sooma National Park**. Make sure to take the famed nighttime **Beaver Safari**.
3. Relax in an **Estonian sauna**. Cover yourself with honey and be whisked with tree branches and leaves, take a mud bath, or sweat out your stress in a steam room.

4. **Island hop** to one or more of Estonia's 2,000+, mostly uninhabited islands.
5. Soak up the Gothic atmosphere at the **Kuresaare Episcopal Castle**. This gorgeous property is one of the best-preserved fortifications in the Baltic region.

Welcome the rich aroma and palate pleasing taste of Estonia into your home with this delicious recipe. Mulgipuder (barley porridge) is a typical Estonian main dish that is easy to prepare and a perfect winter dinner.

By Lisa Osborne Blalock
Footloose Travel & Tours
lisa@footloosetravelandtours.com



Lisa in front of the
14th century wall
in Tallinn

Hau'oli
Lanui

Frohe
Feiertage

Boas
festas!

Joyeuses
fêtes !

Kellemes
Ünnepeket!

iFelices
fiestas!

Thanks! Danke!
¡Gracias! Merci !
Obrigado! Grazie!

Whatever your language, we want to thank all of you, our clients for their business, our translators and interpreters for their great help and our friends and colleagues for their kindness.

And to all of you:
Wonderful holidays
and good wishes for
the New Year!

Transimpex

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Mulgipuder Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 cup pearl barley
- 5 1/3 cups peeled, finely cubed potatoes
- 3 cups water
- ½ cup milk
- 1 tsp salt (or salt to taste)
- 8 oz cooked bacon, finely chopped
- 2 large onions
- 2 tbsp cooking oil of choice

1. Wash and soak the pearl barley for a minimum of 2 hours.
2. Drain the pearl barley and place inside a large pan together with the water and potatoes. Simmer over low heat until the barley is completely cooked (25-30 min).
3. Slowly add the milk while beating the potato and barley mixture until the consistency is smooth. Add salt to taste.
4. Dice the onion and fry in the cooking oil until almost done. Add the bacon and heat with the onions.
5. Stir ½ of the bacon/onion mixture into the porridge and serve with the remaining half on top.



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PROFILE: Estonia

A Few Practical Tips for Doing Business in Estonia

- Use titles and surnames in addressing business people.
- Building personal relationships is ideal.
- No high pressure sales tactics.
- Businesses are hierarchical.
- Provide agendas for meetings.
- Normal greeting should include eye contact with firm handshake.
- Patience is necessary.
- Self-restraint is highly valued.
- Business presentation should be straightforward.
- Estonians are usually reserved and formal and rarely show emotion.
- Try not to be angry or impatient.
- Politeness combined with competence is ideal.
- Nearly everyone speaks a foreign language, most commonly English and Russian, but also Finnish, German or Swedish.

INTRODUCTION

Brief History

- Many centuries of foreign occupation by the Danes, Swedes, Germans, Russians and Poles
- 1918 - Attained independence
- 1940 - Taken over by USSR
- 1991 - Obtained freedom after collapse of Soviet Union
- 1994 - Last of Russian troops left country
- 2004 - Joined NATO and EU
- 2010 - Joined the OECD

Location

- In Eastern Europe bordering the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland between Latvia and Russia.
- Borders on Latvia and Russia.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Government

- Capital City - Tallinn
- Literacy Rate: 99.8%
- Size: Twice the size of New Jersey. Includes 2,222 islands in the Baltic Sea
- Population: 1.22M
- Population Growth: 0.69% (2021 est.)

- Population Distribution: Evenly distributed throughout most of country with exception of Tallinn which has 449,000 inhabitants. (2021 estimate)

ECONOMY

Introduction

- It is a modern market-based economy and has a high per capita income level. It has strong electronic and telecommunications sectors. It is challenged by a labor shortage (skilled and unskilled).
- The government is pursuing efforts to boost productivity by focusing on innovations that emphasize technology start-ups and e-commerce.
- Its natural resources include oil shale, peat, rare earth elements, phosphorite, clay, limestone, sand and dolomite.
- Unemployment Rate: 6.46% (2020)
- Currency Exchange Rate: 1 US Dollar = 13.9470 Estonian Kroon (November 26, 2021)
- GDP: \$30.65B (2020)
- GDP Growth Rate: - 2.9% (2020)
- Labor Force: 648,000 (2020 est.)
- Labor Force Breakdown: Agriculture - 2.7%, Industry - 20.5%, Services - 76.8% (2017)
- **Major Industries:** oil shale, food processing, engineering, electronics, wood and wood products, textiles, information technology, agriculture (wheat, milk, barley, rapeseed, rye, oats, peas, potatoes, pork

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Total Product Exports: \$16.4B (2020)

Major Product Exports (2020):

- Electrical machinery & equipment - 14.5%
- Mineral fuels including oil - 11.7%
- Wood - 10.5%

- Machinery including computers - 9.1%
- Furniture, bedding, lighting, signs, prefab buildings - 7.8%
- Vehicles - 6.3%
- Articles of iron & steel - 3.8%
- Optical, technical, medical apparatus - 3.2%
- Plastics, plastic articles - 2.6%
- Iron & steel - 2%

Major Product Exports Partners: Finland - 15.6%, Sweden - 10.4%, Latvia - 9%, US - 7.9%, Germany - 6.3%, Lithuania - 5.7%, Russia - 5.6%

Total Product Imports: \$17.7B (2020)

Major Product Imports (2020)

- Electrical machinery & equipment - 12.4%
- Mineral fuels & oils - 11.2%
- Machinery - 10.2%
- Vehicles - 9.3%
- Plastics & articles - 4.4%
- Wood & articles - 3.8%
- Pharmaceuticals - 3.6%
- Iron & steel - 3%
- Articles of iron & steel - 2.7%
- Optical, photographic, medical equipment - 2.4%

Major Import Partners (2020): Russia - 12%, Germany - 10%, Finland - 9%, Lithuania - 7%, Latvia - 7%, Sweden - 6%, Poland - 65%, China - 6%

English Language Online News Sites

- News/Err - general news - <https://news.err.ee>
- The Baltic Times - general news - www.baltictimes.com/new
- Estonian World - general news online magazine - www.estonianworld.com

Tallinn old town on a clear winter day



Sampling of Estonian Companies

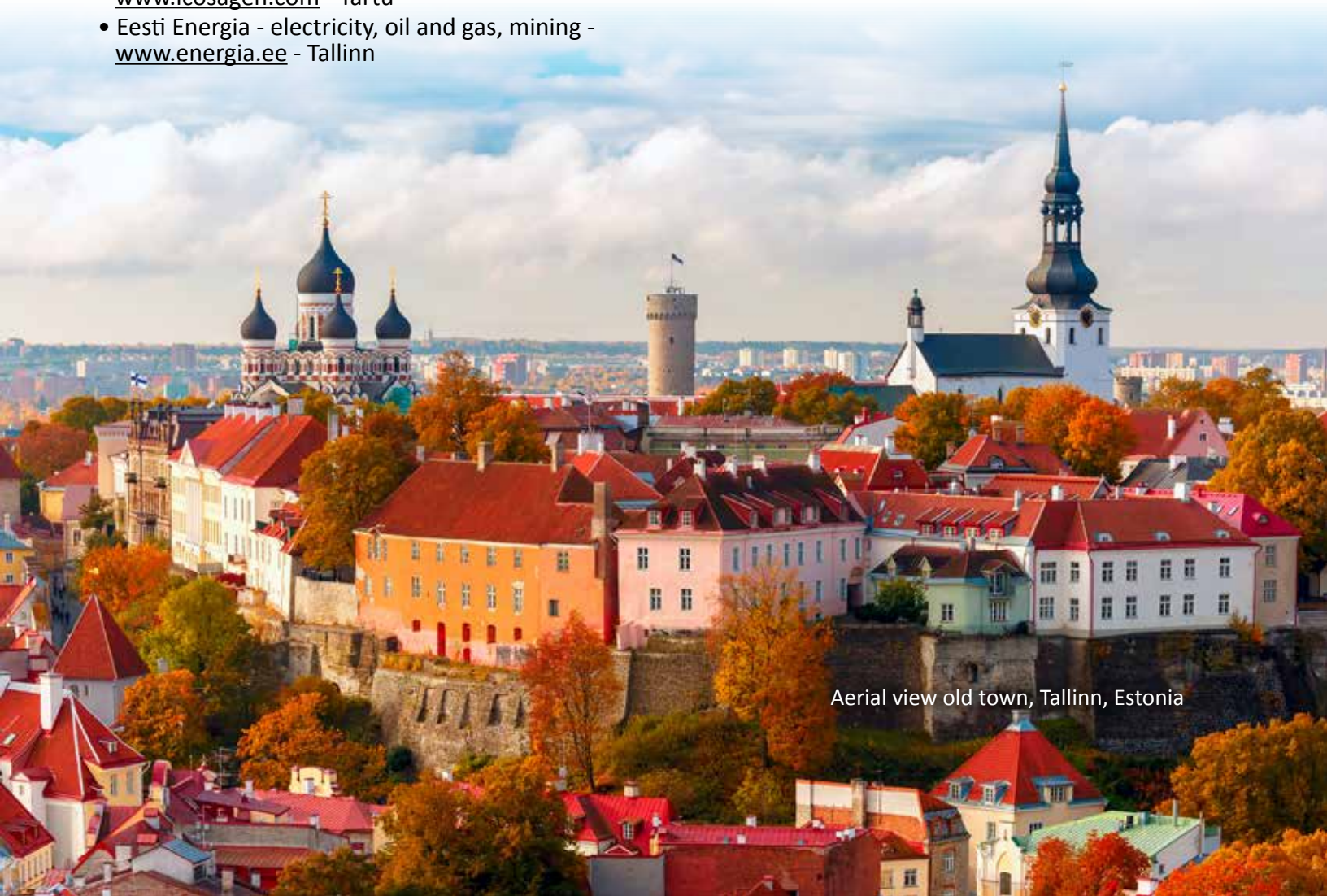
- VKG - holding company - oil shale industry & power generation & public utility companies - www.vkg.ee - Kohtla-Järve
- A. Le Coq – brewery - www.ale.coq.ee - Tartu
- Donte Acenduse AS - hearing aids - www.donte.ee - Tallinn
- Alexela Group - holding company - energy, metals, property management - www.alexela.ee/en - Tallinn
- Tartu Mill - wheat & rye flour, pasta, feed for animals etc. - www.tartumill.ee - Tartu
- Aquis - software development - www.aqis.com - Tallinn
- Saku Brewery - many types of beverages, bottled water, energy drinks - www.saku.ee - Saku
- BLRT Group - shipbuilding, oil rigs, cranes etc. - www.blrt.ee - Tallinn
- Rakvere Lihakombinat - meat processing - www.rik.ee - Roodevalia
- Baltika Group - clothing - www.baltikagroup.com - Tallinn
- Icosagen AS – biotechnology - www.icosagen.com - Tartu
- Eesti Energia - electricity, oil and gas, mining - www.energia.ee - Tallinn

- Estonia Piano- pianos - www.estoniapiano.com - Tallinn
- Kalev - confectionery company - www.kalev.eu - Lehmja, Rae Parish
- AS Liviko - distillery - www.liviko.eu - Tallinn

2022 National Holidays

- January 1 - New Year's Day
- February 24 - Independence Day
- April 15 - Good Friday
- April 17 - Easter Sunday
- May 1 - Labor Day
- June 5 - Pentecost
- June 23 - Victory Day
- June 24 - Midsummer Day
- August 20 - Independence Restoration Day
- December 24 - Christmas Eve
- December 25 - Christmas Day
- December 26 - Boxing Day

**By Paul Mastilak
InterMark3, Inc.**



Aerial view old town, Tallinn, Estonia