

Safety monitoring during COVID-19 pandemic

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The Office of Rail Transport so far prepared 300 reports on the situation of the rail industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. These reports were prepared daily and submitted to the Polish Ministry of Infrastructure to inform about the condition of the rail sector.

The Office of Rail Transport reports are based on the reports of rail operators and infrastructure managers. So far the Office has received over 9 thousand analyses which contained data on trains cancelled, fluctuations in passengers' number and on employees diagnosed with COVID-19 or quarantined. On the basis of reports submitted by railway companies, the Office already prepared 300 data sheets.

Data collected show that in April and May 2020 rail operators launched only 60% of trains listed in timetables. From September 2020 the number of launched trains returned to the level before the epidemic (as compared to January and February 2020) and reached approx. 90-92%.

The lowest average daily passenger turnout (as compared to the average for the entire month) was recorded in March and April. The lowest average daily passenger attendance was recorded mid-April (April 11 - 5.5%, April 12 - 4.5% and April 13 - 5.20%). After April 20 a gradual increase in passenger attendance was visible. Since October 17, there has been a decrease in the number of travellers due to the outbreak of the second wave of epidemic. The highest number of passengers was recorded during summer holidays (July, August, September) when rail operators transported between 475 thous. and 600 thous. passengers (depending on the day) and the attendance oscillated around 40%.

In the reports the absence rate of railway employees was also examined. In all railway companies the highest absence rate was in the second half of March - 24.2% and in April - 21.4%. Lower absence rates were recorded at the turn of November and December (approx. 10-12%) and in August (approx. 12-13%). The forecasts for 2021 seem to be more optimistic - during the first days of January the absence rate reached 9-10%.

In the first months of 2020 it was hard to predict the scale of problems the COVID-19 epidemic would bring. For now the estimates for 2020 are: a 40% decrease in the number of passengers

and a 5% decrease in the total weight of transported goods.

At the beginning of the pandemic the President of the Office of Rail Transport organized a meeting with representatives of rail operators, the Chief Sanitary Inspector and of the neighbouring countries. This allowed for a quick preparation of recommendations agreed with the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate. From the beginning of the COVID-19 epidemic the Office of Rail Transport was involved in maintaining international rail freight connections. During the first wave of the pandemic the Office was responsible for distribution of personal protective equipment to railway companies from the resources of the Material Reserves Agency.