

Passing the test

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“Preparations in Poland for the Euro 2012 football championship are closely tied to similar undertakings in Ukraine. The event will be hosted by both countries, so we are talking about projects that are connected with each other.

On our side this will mainly involve building and modernising stadiums in cities in which the games will take place – Warsaw, Gdańsk, Poznań, Wrocław and Cracow – and preparing good transport routes between them”, Kazimierz Peryt, head of the Euro 2012 team at PKP Polskie Linie Kolejowe SA (Polish Railways) tells Polish Market’s Jerzy Bojanowicz.

Q: How are the Euro 2012 projects progressing?

A: Our master plan consists of 21 projects. Luckily most have been underway for some time now as investment procedures in this case take from 7 to 9 years. The main projects will take place on the E65 route from Warsaw to Gdańsk, the Warsaw Rail Junction, where among others we will be upgrading an over 8-kilometre railway line from central Warsaw to Okęcie Airport (after modernisation the trip will take no more than 20 minutes), the E20 route to Belarus (Siedlce – Terespol), the Poznań Rail Junction and Poznań’s main railway terminal, the railway terminal in Gdynia, and the Poznań-Wrocław line.

The biggest task, which, in fact, we have almost completed, is the 2003-launched modernisation of the E30 route. All we have to do here is finish a bridge in Bolesławiec and two stretches of the line from Legnica to Środa Śląska. We spent more than PLN 2.8 billion on upgrading lines from Zgorzelec on the German border to Legnica and from Środa Śląska to Wrocław and Opole. Now trains can travel these routes at speeds of up to 160 km/h. Still to be finished on this line is a small stretch from Rzeszów to Medyka-Mościska on the border to Ukraine, which is quite important for rail traffic between both countries, and a terminal extension on line from Cracow to Balice Airport.

The modernisation of a part of the Łódź -Warsaw route has reduced travelling times by 30 minutes over some sections, and when we’ve finished the whole project, which is planned for the 2nd quarter of 2012, it will take only 60-65 minutes to travel from Łódź to Warsaw. We’re also developing the Poznań junction, which among

others involves modernising tracks and traffic control systems. We should be ready with this by the end of 2011.

All the above-mentioned upgrade projects will help raise travelling speeds. Passenger trains will be able to travel the modernised lines at 160 km/h, freight trains at 120 km/h. The E65 route will be adapted for tilting trains and will allow speeds up to 200 km/h. When all the modernisation work is finished, travel from Warsaw to any Euro 2012-hosting city will take between 3 and 3.5 hours (e.g. the trip to Gdansk will be cut to 3 hours).

Q: How long will it take to travel from Warsaw to Wrocław?

A: Today you have to go via Poznań or change at Katowice and the trip takes over 5 hours. Modernisation will reduce this to about 4.5 hours. We are also considering a connection from Warsaw to Włoszczowa via the Central Railway Route, which would continue to Częstochowa and Opole. Then the journey would last only about 4 hours. This, however, requires the reactivation of the Włoszczowa – Opole stretch, for which we are currently seeking funds. The costs here are estimated at PLN 0,5 billion.

Q: How did you finance the projects you've completed?

A: These projects, whose total cost comes to about PLN 18 billion, were co-funded by the EU, which on average covered 70-75% of the necessary outlays. Some were still financed under the Sector Operational Programme Transport 2004-2006. A part of the funding comes from government funds and the Railway Fund, which mostly finances smaller undertakings.

Q: What about routes to Ukraine with its wider track gauge?

A: The trip from Wrocław to Lviv in Ukraine has been cut by almost 3 hours thanks to the Polish-designed and built gauge-switching SUW 2000 system, which was installed on the Ukrainian border in June. SUW 2000 automatically adjusts train wheels to tracks. Travelling times through Poland could be further reduced, but this will call for the modernisation of Rzeszów - Przemyśl and Cracow - Rzeszów lines. The SUW 2000 system is also installed on the Trakiszki – Mockava crossing to Lithuania, where it worked successfully from 2000 to 2005. Now rail traffic there has been suspended.

SUW 2000 is also undergoing tests on the railway crossing in Dorohusk leading to Ukraine. The modernisation of the Warsaw – Lublin – Dorohusk route will reduce travelling times for trains bound for Ukraine.

The installation of SUW 2000 on the border to Belarus (Terespol) and the system's reactivation in Trakiszki (on the way to Lithuania) will depend on carrier interest.

Q: And what can we expect on the Ukrainian side?

A: The Ukrainian railways plan to adapt their network to 120 km/h speeds, however this will only reduce travelling times by minutes.

Analysts from Poland's Railway Research Centre as well as Ukrainian experts are currently analysing expected road and rail passenger and cargo flow, as well as air transport efficiency.

We assume most Euro fans will fly to Poland and move from city to city by rail. I am sure we'll be up to their expectations. After all, railways in Portugal, Germany, Austria and Switzerland have passed such tests, so why shouldn't Polish railways?

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