

PRAGUE, 3 January 2023

Správa železnic celebrates 20 years since its establishment this year

The Year 2023 will be an extraordinary year for Správa železnic. The pace will be set by the highest budget ever, which this year will be directed to the railways, among all transport sectors, thus enabling the launch of other key projects. The milestone, which puts the ecological way of travelling and transport at the forefront, moreover, comes at a time when Správa železnic is celebrating 20 years since its foundation. This year will be marked by the anniversary.

Today's Správa železnic was established in 2003 after the division of České dráhy (ČD) into two separate entities. While ČD started to operate as a carrier, Správa železnic was put in charge of the infrastructure. A year after its establishment, it became an investor in railway construction projects. Since 1 September 2011, it has been responsible for railway traffic management, and several thousand train dispatchers and traffic controllers have joined its staff. In mid-2016, it took over more than 1,500 station buildings.

The number of employees gradually grew as the agenda expanded. Today, there are more than 17,000 employees, making Správa železnic one of the largest employers in the Czech Republic, not only in the transport sector. Moreover, it is constantly working to be a progressive and customer-oriented company. *"With the transfer of the station buildings, train passengers have become our direct customers, which we consider a great commitment. We have therefore focused on improving the condition of the station buildings from the beginning. To date, we have renovated almost 300 of them, and another forty are currently being worked on,"* says Jiří Svoboda, Director General of Správa železnic and continues: *"Even the largest listed station buildings in the Czech Republic are being fully reconstructed, for example at the Prague Main Station, in České Budějovice or in Plzeň. The services offered in the renovated buildings are also changing for the better."*

A highly monitored area not only from the passengers' point of view is the modernisation of lines and stations. In the two decades of its existence, Správa železnic has reconstructed sections with a total length of over 1,600 km. Of these, 621 km were located on one of the four railway corridors. Their reconstruction is almost completed.

Increasing traffic safety is also a major issue. One of the factors contributing to this is the installation of the European Train Control System (ETCS), an important function of which is the automatic stopping of the train in case of the red light signal. In the past year alone, 417 km of lines were equipped with it, and almost 800 km of lines are already in trial or live operation. In addition, the exclusive train operation under the supervision of this state-of-the-art signalling equipment has been implemented at the section between Olomouc and Uničov for the first time in the Czech Republic.

The topic of safety is also related to the issue of level crossings. The ideal solution is to replace them with overpasses or underpasses, let us mention here, for example, the construction of overpasses in Dluhonice or the replacement of all level crossings during the modernisation of the line sections of Corridor IV between Soběslav and Doubí and Sudoměřice and Votice. At the same time, the safety of level crossings is also being increased by installing protection equipment with lights and barriers. For example, barriers have recently been added to all level crossings on first-class roads.

An indisputable benefit of railway is its environmental friendliness. In the last year, it has been possible to introduce direct connections in ecological electric traction across the Ústí nad Labem region or on the entire line from Olomouc via Uničov to Šumperk. The electrification of another 588 km is planned for the next period, for example between Otrokovice, Zlín and Vizovice or Prague and Kladno as part of the modernisation and construction of the connection to Václav Havel Airport.

Within the framework of sustainability, Správa železnic continuously works on reducing the energy consumption of buildings, recycling metal waste or reusing materials – rails, sleepers or aggregates.

"Our main goal is to ensure a fast, safe and environmentally friendly mode of transport at all times. Raising the standard of our lines and station buildings brings with it unpopular restrictions and closures. You, passengers, and our staff have to deal with them. But let's not forget that every such restriction ultimately brings improvements," adds Jiří Svoboda.

Thank you for staying faithful to the railway. We have been with you for 20 years and we are moving on!