

Development of international passenger traffic on the railways of the OSJD member countries in 2023

In 2023, the railways of the OSJD member countries continued their activities towards the development of international passenger traffic in the post-pandemic period. The outcomes of these activities, as well as many other issues and tasks related to the organisation and implementation of international passenger traffic, were considered during the final meeting of the representatives of the OSJD railways gathered in the OSJD Committee to review the results of work of the OSJD Commission on Passenger Traffic for 2023. More details about in this regard are presented in the article prepared by the Commission Chairman Aleksandr SERGIENKO.

The final meeting of the OSJD Commission on Passenger Traffic for 2023 was held from 24 till 26 October 2023 in the OSJD Committee with the participation of the representatives of the following OSJD railways: Azerbaijani Railways CJSC (AZD CJSC), Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA), Byelorussian Railway (BC), Vietnamese Railway State Company (VZD), Georgian Railway JSC (GR), “Kazakhstan Temir Zholy National Company” JSC (KZH), China State Railway Group Co., Ltd. (KZD), Ministry of Railways of the DPRK (ZC), Korea Railroad Corporation (KORAIL), “Kyrgyz Temir Zholu National Company” State Enterprise (KRG), Latvian Railway SJSC (LDZ), Railway of Moldova State Enterprise (CFM), Ulan-Bator Railway JSC (UBZD), Russian Railways OJSC (RZD OJSC), Railways of Slovak Republic (ŽSR), “Rohi Ohani Tojikiston” State Unitary Enterprise (TDZ), Turkmenistan Railways (TRK), “O‘zbekiston temir yo‘llari” JSC (UTI), Ukrainian Railways JSC (UZ), Estonian Railway JSC (EVR), as well as OSJD affiliated enterprises – “Post of Russia” JSC, Gepard Express SE, and the OSJD Committee.

Welcoming the participants when opening the meeting, Chairman of the OSJD Committee Mirosław Antonowicz informed about a number of important decisions taken by the OSJD governing bodies – session of the OSJD Ministerial Conference and the Conference of General Directors

of OSJD Railways, which took place in 2023 in person/intramurally in Busan and Warsaw, respectively. He noted that since December 2022, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic has become a full member of the OSJD, and in 2023, members of the OSJD Ministerial Conference, who are also parties to the SMPS and/or SMGS Agreements, agreed to the accession to the SMGS and SMPS Agreements of the Government of the Republic of Korea. Chairman of the OSJD Committee thanked all those present for their participation in the works and noted the importance of the decisions taken in the interests of all OSJD railways and the development of international passenger traffic in the OSJD space.

In his welcoming address to the meeting participants, Secretary of the OSJD Committee Attila Kiss thanked the representatives of the OSJD railways for their participation in the works aimed at further development of railway



Final meeting of the OSJD Commission on Passenger Traffic (24-26.10.2023, OSJD Committee, in a hybrid mode)

passenger traffic in the Eurasian space.

Chairman of the OSJD Commission on Passenger Traffic Aleksandr Sergienko, who chaired the meeting, informed about the progress in the implementation of the Commission's Work Plan for 2023, stating that this year there has been an increased interest in the participation of a number of OSJD railways and affiliated enterprises in the works of the Commission. He also drew attention to the fact that a number of planned meetings were held in a hybrid format, having addressed the OSJD railways with an invitation to more actively switch over to a face-to-face format of participation in the meetings and make maximum use of the OSJD platform for the implementation of new projects in the field of international passenger traffic.

When considering the subject ***“Coordination of traffic timetables and coach sequence indicators for passenger trains in international traffic of Groups I and II of OSJD railways for 2023-2024”*** it was noted that in 2023, the OSJD Commission on Passenger Traffic organised and held a meeting to develop and approve the passenger trains timetables in international traffic for 2023-2024 of group II of OSJD railways from 11 till 15 September 2023 in St. Petersburg (for more details, see OSJD Bulletin No. 4-5/2023).

The meeting has stated that the process of resuming international passenger traffic in the Asian region began in 2022 with the running of trains Nos. 306/305 formed by the FPC JSC and UBZD JSC on the route Irkutsk (RZD) – Ulan-Bator (UBZD). In 2023, starting from 31 August, train No. 22/21 has resumed its service on the route Ulan-Bator (UBZD) – Erlian (KZD).

The OSJD Railways of Group II have agreed on the operation of passenger trains and direct coaches in international traffic on 14 routes.

In the traffic between China and Russia in the timetable for 2023-2024, it is planned to run train No. 20/19 formed by the FPC JSC on the route Moscow – Beijing, as well as a group of direct coaches on the route Chita – Manchuria through the border crossing Zabai-



Presidium of the final meeting of the OSJD Commission on Passenger Traffic (24-26.10.2023, OSJD Committee, in a hybrid mode)

kalsk (RZD) – Manchuria (KZD). The new schedule has also preserved the running of trains Nos. 3/4 Beijing – Moscow of the KZD formation through the border crossings of Erlian (KZD) – Zamyn-Uud (UBZD) and Sükhbaatar (UBZD) – Naushki (RZD). In cross-border traffic, the timetable for train No. 402/401 on the route Suifenhe (KZD) – Grodekovo (RZD) of the KZD formation has been agreed upon.

In connection with the planned replacement of the rolling stock of train No. 3/4 Beijing – Moscow by KZD, the representatives of KZD, UBZD and RZD OJSC confirmed their intention to conduct a test run with the new rolling stock in the direction Beijing – Ulan-Bator – Moscow and back as soon as possible after the resumption of international passenger trains traffic.

In the Mongolia-Russia traffic, the running of trains Nos. 5/6 Ulan-Bator – Moscow of the UBZD formation and of trains Nos. 306/305 Irkutsk – Ulan-Bator by trains of the FPC JSC and UBZD formation through the border crossing point Sükhbaatar (UBZD) – Naushki (RZD) has been agreed upon.

The RZD OJSC, UBZD and KZD agreed that if demand for tourist trips grows up, the train service on the route Irkutsk – Zamyn-Uud/ Erlian will be restored according to the developed new timetable.

In the China-Mongolia traffic, the timetable provides for the running of trains Nos. 23/24 on the route Ulan-Bator – Beijing formed on a parity basis by KZD and UBZD, as well as trains Nos. 22/21 on the route Ulan-Bator – Erlian (KZD), formed by UBZD. The operation

of direct coaches on the route Ulan-Bator – Hohhot (KZD) through the border crossing Zamyn-Uud (UBZD) – Erlian (KZD) has been also maintained.

In international passenger traffic between China and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the timetable provides for the running of groups of direct coaches belonging to KZD and ZC on parity terms on the routes Beijing (KZD) – Pyongyang (ZC) and Dandong (KZD) – Pyongyang (ZC) through the border crossing point of Dandong (KZD) – Xinzhu (ZC).

In the traffic between the Russian Federation and the DPRK, the running of direct coaches of the FPC JSC formation on the routes Moscow – Tumangan and direct coaches of ZC formation on the routes Pyongyang – Moscow, Pyongyang – Khabarovsk through the Khasan (RZD) – Tumangan (ZC) border crossing point has been preserved.

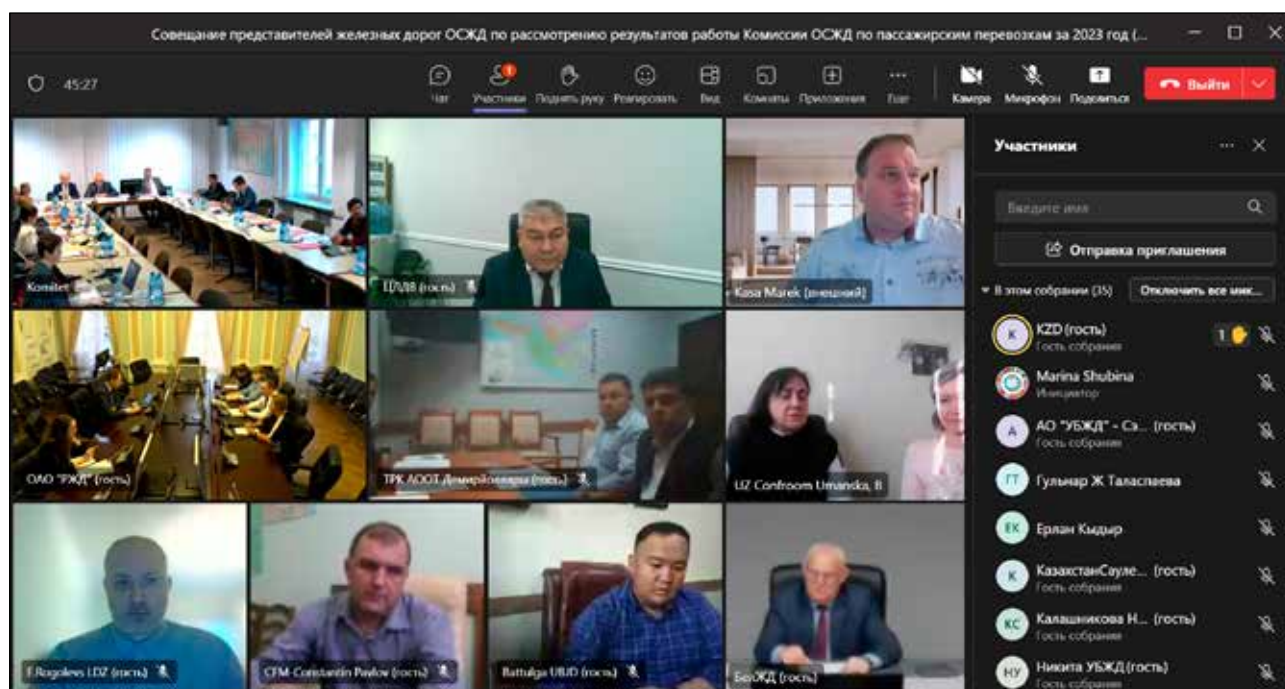
In the China-Vietnam traffic, the train timetable has been agreed upon, which provides for the running of direct coaches belonging to the Chinese Railways along the route Beijingxi (KZD) – Hanoi (Gia Lâm station, VZD) through the border crossing point of Pingxiang (KZD) – Dong Dang (VZD).

In China-Kazakhstan traffic the running of fast international trains on the routes Urumqi –

Almaty-2 of the KZH formation through the border crossing point Khorgos (KZD) – Altynkol (KZH) is planned. In Kazakhstan-China direction the running of the fast train Almaty-2/Nur-Sultan – Nurly Zhol – Urumqi of the KZH formation has been confirmed through the border crossing point of Dostyk (KZH) – Alashankou (KZD).

The Byelorussian Railway informed that to date the service of the trains Budapest – Terespol – Brest, Kraków – Grodno, Warsaw – Brest and trains running in the Brest – Terespol border traffic has not been resumed. As part of the final meeting, the BC initiated the issue of resuming the operation of international passenger trains on the route Budapest – Terespol – Brest, Kraków – Grodno, agreed trains Warsaw – Brest – Minsk and trains in the border traffic between Brest and Terespol.

The Ukrainian Railways JSC informed that it is carrying out relevant works in a bilateral format with the carriers from Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova and Austria to ensure the running of passenger trains and the transportation of passengers in the traffic between Ukraine and EU countries, Ukraine and Moldova for the 2023-2024 traffic schedule. All schedules and coach sequence indicators of passenger trains will be agreed upon and announced in accordance with the established



Consideration of the agenda items of the final meeting of the OSJD Commission on Passenger Traffic (24-26.10.2023, OSJD Committee, in a hybrid mode)

procedure to ensure the sale of travel documents.

The “Post of Russia” JSC presented to the meeting participants a presentation on the subject “Organisation of transportation of postal items by rail”, where it was noted that the timetable of passenger trains in international traffic for 2023-2024 provided for an agreed luggage wagon as part of train No. 306/305 in the Irkutsk – Ulan-Bator service. The “Post of Russia” JSC was proposed to continue this work in the future to include luggage wagons in passenger trains operating in international traffic and to conduct test dispatches of these wagons.

The meeting has noticed the importance of holding meetings for coordination of train timetables on the OSJD platform, using the format of bilateral and multilateral negotiations as an auxiliary format.

Within the framework of the subject “**Systems of seat reservation, reference and information services for passengers, provision of general services and generation of financial statements**”, two expert meetings were held at the OSJD Committee in 2023 – from 28 February till 1 March and from 26 till 27 September, 2023, at which the OSJD railways presented their information on the development of systems and services in this area.

According to the Byelorussian Railway, the railway administration currently provides the ability for ticket cashiers to issue travel documents (tickets) for trains of interregional lines and regional business class lines (with numbered seats) using stationary ticket printing machines. Since September 2023, the upgraded software for portable ticket printing machines has also been put into trial operation in terms of issuing travel documents (tickets) to passengers by the train master. In this case, the travel documents are printed on thermal tape without



Opening of the meeting of group 2 of OSJD railways for the development and coordination of passenger train timetables, coach sequence indicators for the formation of trains and the provision of coaches in them in international traffic for 2023-2024 (11-15.09.2023, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation)

using the blank sheets with a certain degree of protection.

The legitimacy control of electronic tickets is ensured through the use of the following systems: “Automated Passenger Boarding Control System” (ACKIII/APBCS) and “Legitimacy Control” software.

The system for selling travel documents via the Internet, the mobile application “BC. My Train” and the unified section “Services for Passengers” of the official website of the Byelorussian Railway have also been improved in order to implement the functionality of the third mode of using electronic registration (removing restrictions on the return of ETD on Web resources before the train departs) in the Express automated control system when issuing travel documents (tickets) in international traffic.

Within the framework of the subprogramme “Accessible living environment for disabled and physically weakened persons” of the State programme “Social Protection” for 2021-2025 until 2025, it is planned to carry out measures to ensure accessibility for physically impaired persons at six railway stations of Luninets, Polotsk, Kozenki, Lida, Molodechno, Slutsk.

The Vietnamese Railway State Company provided information that since November 2014, an electronic ticket sales system has been successfully operating on the website <https://dsvn.vn>, which is constantly being improved to meet

the needs of passengers. Innovations include:

- electronic payments: passengers can pay for tickets through banking systems and payment gateways; electronic invoices and tickets are also available;
- mobile applications: applications for smartphones have been developed, including pricing modules and various ticketing scenarios for different trains and time periods;
- integration of services: integration of multifunctional transport services has been introduced, as well as a car rental service;
- e-commerce partner applications: tickets can be purchased through applications of major partners in Vietnam, such as VinGroup, Ngan Luong, Momo, Viettel, Zalo and others;
- share of online sales: it currently amounts to 50-55 % of all tickets sold by the Vietnamese Railway are sold through the website and mobile applications;
- increasing the timing of ticket sales: at different times of the year, you can sell tickets several months in advance. During the upcoming Lunar New Year holiday, tickets can be sold 4 months before the holiday.

According to the “Kazakhstan Temir Zholy National Company” JSC, the main task in the field of passenger transportation is to meet the growing needs of passengers and expand the range of services that ensure a comfortable trip, starting from the stage of planning and purchasing tickets.

For this purpose, the largest travel document sales network has been deployed in Kazakhstan, including:

- traditional ticket offices at train stations;
- own website and mobile application, as well as many alternative websites and mobile applications for selling electronic tickets;
- the ability to purchase tickets in one’s personal account of banking applications (kaspi, halyk bank);
- a wide network of ticket

agencies;

- 20 thousand payment terminals providing ticket sales services;
- the ability to purchase tickets at all branches of Kazpost JSC.

In 2023, works were completed to integrate the electronic ticket sales system with the systems of government agencies to ensure the possibility of online ticketing for preferential categories of passengers using IIN. In the process of issuing a ticket, an appeal is made to the database of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan to confirm the right to the benefit. In case of positive verification, the passenger is given a 50 % discount when buying a train ticket.

The “KTZ NC” JSC has introduced the practice of issuing discount cards. The Sayakhatschy card is issued free of charge for regular customers and provides a discount, the amount of which depends on the amount spent by the passenger on trips over the last 12 months.

Due to numerous requests from passengers on the official website bilet.railways.kz, as well as in the mobile application, the ability to obtain a boarding pass for completed trips has been implemented. If it is necessary to confirm the fact of travel (in terms of business trips, reimbursement of expenses, legal proceedings, etc.), holders of electronic tickets, having registered boarding by the train conductor, can receive



Meeting of the OSJD railway experts on the subject “Systems for reservation of seats, reference and information services for passengers, provision of services and generation of financial reporting” (28.02-01.03.2023, OSJD Committee)

a boarding pass for their electronic ticket in their personal account within 30 days after the trip.

The Korea Railroad Corporation (KORAIL) provided information on the background and current state of the seat reservation system, integration with external platforms and its effects, as well as the introduction of a single train-and-plane ticket.

Starting with printed tickets in the 1980s, the seat reservation system in the Republic of Korea reached a turning point with the launch of the country's first high-speed train, the KTX, in 2004. Currently, a real-time online service is provided through the KORAIL's own reservation system. As a result, the share of online ticket orders exceeded 80 %. It was the introduction of the KorailTalk mobile application that has become a trigger for the growth in online ticket sales. Purchasing tickets through the KorailTalk mobile application occurs in the following steps:

- on the home page of the application, the departure and destination station, date and time, number and type of passengers are selected;
- on the next page, train schedules on the specified route are compared, the train number, coach class (deluxe or regular) and passenger seat (forward/reverse) are selected;
- on the last page one can make a purchase using a registered card or transfer from a bank account and receive an electronic ticket in their personal account in the application.

But for non-regular customers, among whom the share of users of the KorailTalk mobile application is low, the company launched sales and ticketing services on external platforms such as NAVER and KAKAO, the majority of whose users are constantly online. This uses API technology, an application program interface that provides access to the data platform for



Meeting of the OSJD railway experts on the subject "Systems for reservation of seats, reference and information services for passengers, provision of services and generation of financial reporting" (26-27.09.2023, OSJD Committee)

the development of new services. Purchasing and issuing tickets through external platforms is carried out in the same way as through the KorailTalk mobile application.

In addition, starting from June 2023, single train-and-plane tickets officially began to be sold through the interaction of the seat reservation system with the GDS (Global Distribution System), which is used by more than 125 thousand airline ticket sellers around the world. These services are available on the websites of travel agencies or through mobile applications of airlines with which KORAIL has entered into a contract for the sale of a single train-and-plane ticket.

Procedure for checking tickets on the train: the seat reservation system is synchronised with the conductors' mobile terminals, freeing passengers from having to print tickets, carry them with and prove their identity during each trip. Thanks to this, in 2009, turnstiles were dismantled at all stations in the country.

RZD OJSC informed that:

- the share of electronic ticket sales is more than 76 %, and the annual increase in electronic ticket sales is achieved through the implementation of new tasks aimed at simplifying the purchase of services and developing a product offer for various categories of passengers;
- the use of non-cash payment method through

the “Fast Payment System” (FPS) is developing among the population: from 2023, through FPS one can pay for tickets not only at the ticket offices and on the website, but also in the mobile application “RZD for Passengers”; to increase the number of customers using such payment method, the RZD OJSC organised a lottery, following the results of which the passengers who paid for tickets using FPS were awarded 4000 RZD Bonus points;

- issuing of a discount ticket basing on a virtual transport requirement (VTR) for railway personnel has become available not only for long-distance trains through the company’s website and mobile application, but also for trains of a number of suburban passenger companies;
- a section has been developed on the company’s website that contains all the information on regional children’s railways with a description of how to get there, work and training schedules;
- artificial intelligence was introduced to operate the contact center on the company’s website, in the mobile application and in the email ticket@rzd.ru, in popular instant messengers, as well as when calling the hotline;
- new options have been implemented in the “RZD for Passengers” mobile application;
- in August 2023, the sale of electronic tickets

was opened through the Web resource of the RZD OJSC from the norm of return departure points for a Russian carrier train running from Ulan-Bator to Irkutsk: to implement this task, a modernised automated boarding control system was installed on the train, which made it possible to sell train tickets without time restrictions before it arrives at the destination station;

- in April 2023, passengers were offered on the RZD OJSC’s website the service of remote receipt of a certificate of the cost of travel and luggage allowance on a FPC JSC train with a qualified electronic signature by email with payment for the service via a certain link;
- the software of the ACS “Express” system was finalised;
- passengers are offered various promotions as part of the RZD Bonus programme, which makes it possible to accumulate points for the trips and spend them on new trips;
- there has been a 10-fold increase in the passenger volume of tourist trains over four years: from 1 July 2023, a new programme to reward travellers on tourist trains, the “Travellers Club”, was introduced to accumulate points for the future trips. A possibility has been made available to purchase an excursion tourist package (tour) when purchasing a ticket for a tourist train as an additional

ORGANISATION OF TRANSPORTATION OF POSTAL ITEMS BY RAIL

ПОЧТА РОССИИ

TECHNOLOGIES FOR MAIL DELIVERY BY RAIL



Postal and luggage technology

1. Postal and parcels train No. 990/989
 - Route Moscow – Vladivostok – Moscow
 - Daily service
 - 9 days en-route
 - Train capacity 1480-3000 m³
 - 30 stops along the route
2. Mail coaches as part of passenger trains



Container technology

1. Postal container train “Russia”
 - Route Moscow – Vladivostok – Moscow
 - Frequency of service – 3 times a week
 - 11 days en-route
 - Train capacity 4700-5900 m³
 - 8 stops along the route
2. Individual containers as part of freight trains

service at the ticket office and on the RZD OJSC's website.

According to the information of the Ukrainian Railways JSC, works are underway to improve and develop online services for passengers, so that all ticketing processes are more convenient and services are more accessible.

In 2023, about 80 % of tickets for long-distance trains were sold online, including through the official website, the mobile application of the Ukrainian Railways JSC, chatbots and partner sales channels. The share of sales of railway travel documents through the official mobile application exceeded sales volumes at ticket offices and has amounted to 22.8 % of the total number of issued travel documents.

The Ukrainian Railways JSC is actively introducing the practice of issuing electronic travel documents in international traffic. In the conditions of increased demand for international railway services, the issuance of electronic travel documents in international traffic is especially important. Agreements have been concluded on organising the sale of electronic travel documents with payment via the Internet with the PKP Intercity JSC, Railway of Moldova State Enterprise, Railway Company of Slovakia JSC, "Railway Passenger Transportation – MÁV-START" Co.

According to the agreement with the PKP Intercity JSC, electronic travel documents (ETD) are issued for all trains on the Ukraine-Poland route through the Web services of the Ukrainian Railways JSC.

The agreement with ZSSK provides for the issuance of ETD through the Web systems of the Ukrainian Railways JSC and of Slovakia for trains formed by ZSSK.

According to the agreement between the Ukrainian Railways JSC and MÁV-START Co., electronic travel documents are issued on the Website of the MÁV-START Co. and through the mobile application MÁV app for the trains formed by the MÁV-START Co. running internationally between Hungary and Ukraine.

Works are also underway to modernize the Website for issuing electronic travel documents and creating software for interaction with inter-system platforms of the European countries for issuing travel documents in international traffic.

At the expert meeting it was decided to use OSJD leaflets: O 171 "Instructions for compiling reservation lists", O 172 "Combined forms of travel documents issued electronically using the Express ACS and the UZ PP ASU", R 914 "Electronic reservation of seats and ticket sales in international traffic (General provisions)" in the current version, and the issue of their updating in the future will be considered in cooperation with other international organisations.

The meeting noted the importance of further exchange of experience on the prospects for the development of electronic reservation systems, the interaction of information systems related to reservation and ticket sales, and continued cooperation with other international organisations in this area.

Within the framework of the subject "Improving the Agreement on the International Railway Passenger Tariff (MPT Agreement) and the MPT Tariff", a meeting of the representatives of OSJD railways – Parties to the MPT Agreement was held in the OSJD Committee from 23 till 25 May 2023, in which representatives of BC, VZD, KZH, KRG, UBZD, RZD OJSC, TDZ, TRK, UTI and EVR took part.

The OSJD Committee informed the Parties to the MPT Agreement about the entry into force of amendments and additions to the MPT Agreement and to the MPT Tariff from 1 September 2023, and about the entry into force of amendments and additions to Article 4 of the MPT Agreement from 11 February 2023.

The working staff of the Commission prepared and sent to the Parties to the Agreement the updated text of the MPT Agreement in electronic form valid as of 1 September 2023, taking into account the announced updates and amendments, which is also posted on the OSJD Website (<https://osjd.org/>). The OSJD Committee, as the depositary of the MPT Agreement, will publish and send to the Parties to the Agreement certified copies of the updated text of the MPT Agreement as of 1 January 2024.

The final meeting has agreed to continue in 2024 the works on the subject "Improving the Agreement on the International Railway Passenger Tariff (MPT Agreement) and the MPT Tariff."

History of the company's creation

- 2020 - Start of regular bus services
- 2020 - Start of periodic passenger railway transport services
- 2021 - Rental of railway vehicles to large carriers
- 2022 - Joining OSJD and FTE
- 2023 - Regular railway services to Vienna Airport from the Czech Republic



Background of Gepard Express (an OSJD affiliated enterprise)

Within the framework of the subject “*Improving the Agreement on the ‘Rules for the use of passenger coaches in international traffic’* (PPW Agreement) and the PPW Rules”, a meeting was held in the OSJD Committee from 31 May through 2 June 2023 of the representatives of the OSJD railways – Parties to the PPW Agreement attended by the representatives from BC, KZH, KZD, KRG, LDZ, CFM, UBZD, RZD OJSC, TDZ, UTI and EVR.

Based on the results of the meeting, the OSJD Committee informed about the entry into force of the agreed amendments and additions to the PPW from 1 January 2024, as well as, being the depositary of the PPW Agreement, about the publication and sending to the parties to the Agreement of certified copies of the updated text of the PPW Agreement as of 1 January 2024.

The meeting participants reviewed the proposals of the Parties to the Agreement on the issue of improving the PPW Agreement and the PPW Rules and agreed on further revision of the PPW Agreement and the establishment of an expert group for this purpose consisting of the representatives from BC, KZH, RZD OJSC and the working staff of the Commission.

The meeting agreed to continue in 2024 the works on the subject “Improving the Agreement on the “Rules for the use of passenger coaches

in international traffic (PPW Agreement) and the PPW Rules”.

Gepard Express SE (OSJD affiliated enterprise) presented to the meeting participants a presentation of the Project for organising direct passenger service on the route Prague – Bratislava – Budapest – Bucharest – Sofia – Istanbul – Tbilisi – Baku – Ashgabat – Tashkent – Astana. Based on the results of the exchange of views, the meeting invited concerned OSJD railways to continue work on the implementation of the above Project on a bilateral basis.

The meeting reviewed and agreed on the following draft documents: report “The working results of the OSJD Commission on Passenger Traffic for 2023”, the Work Plan for 2024, the OSJD Work Programme for 2025 and subsequent years in part of passenger traffic, the decision of CGD meeting XXXVIII regarding the working results of the OSJD Commission on Passenger Traffic for 2023.

The meeting decided to include a new subject – “Management of train stations and passenger railway stations” in the Commission’s draft Work Plan for 2024 and to hold a workshop on this subject in August 2024. ■