



# **BDZ PASSENGERS HEAD OFFICE**

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## **REPORT**

**on the quality of the provided railway transport services**

**on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria**

**for the period January - December 2020**

**BDZ – PASSENGERS EOOD**

**Sofia, 2021**

## **I. SCOPE**

This report has been prepared on the basis of Art. 28 of Regulation 1371/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the Rights and Obligations of Passengers Using Rail Transport. The report contains information on the implementation of the offered rail service on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria in compliance with the quality standards.

The report covers the period January-December 2020 and provides information on the areas of development according to Annex III of Regulation 1371 / 2007- Minimum Standards for Service Quality:

- Information and tickets;
- Punctuality of transport services and general principles for overcoming service disruptions;
- Cancellation of transport services;
- Cleanliness of rolling stock and railway facilities (air quality in coaches, toilet hygiene, etc.)
- Customer satisfaction survey;
- Complaint handling, refund and compensation for non-compliance with the service quality standards;
- Providing assistance to people with disabilities and people with reduced mobility.

## **II. INFORMATION AND TICKETS**

BDZ - Passengers EOOD uses the distribution channels for sales and for informing its customers and partners.

At the end of 2020, passenger service is provided at 92 stations and stops and 5 city offices, and there is an additional office for clients only for the summer period. The total number of non-serviced stations and stops is 590, and the service of passengers boarding from these points is provided by the train staff.

- The number of ticket sales points is to be increased by installing ticket machines at major stations.
- Launched in December 2017, the Integrated Automated Online Information, Reservation and Ticketing System is in use at 98 railway stations and offices and by the end of 2020 is fully operational for all trains and routes.
- A new module of the system has been created, allowing a place selection according to the scheme for fast trains when purchasing travel documents at railway stations and offices.
- A new functionality of the Online Ticketing and Reservation System has been launched, allowing the purchase of travel documents for all trains via the Internet. It is integrated on the BDZ website, allowing non-cash payment through two operators and is available for all trains in the country.
- In order to facilitate payments, POS terminals are gradually installed at the cash registers in major stations.

➤ Replacement of old information boards with plasma monitors has started at 25 stations. There are 9 stations where old boards have been replaced with monitors to visualize the movement of trains.

➤ The information service has been improved with a new vision of the BDZ website and integration of new functionalities for sales and passenger information

- Up-to-date information: in case of delay / stay of a train for more than 10 minutes, information about the reasons is published;
  - Live boards in all stations, visualizing information about the time of arrival and departure of trains, tracks and delays;
  - Integration and visualization of the railway network map in Google maps;
  - The visualization of the train schedule has been improved, with the possibility to purchase online tickets for a selected route;
  - A new digital application Radar has been introduced, through which the movement of all passenger trains in the country can be tracked in real time.
- Update of the information through the BDZ website regarding:
- Train schedule, general tariff conditions, prices, schedule changes, train routes;
  - Information on the application of Regulation (EC) 1371/2007 on the Rights and Obligations of Passengers Using Rail Transport;
  - Contacts of railway offices in the country, telephone numbers for information, complaints and signals, etc.

### **III. PUNCTUALITY OF TRANSPORT SERVICES AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR OVERCOMING SERVICE DISRUPTIONS**

In case of train delay at initial or way station passenger information is provided:

- At the stations - in a visible place, through electronic information boards;
- Through the PA system by employees of the information desk or by an authorized person from the station staff
- Information by phone on 02 931 11 11;
- In trains – by train staff;
- Online – the website of the company [www.bdz.bg](http://www.bdz.bg) provides up-to-date real-time information on the movement and delays of all trains, as well as on arriving and departing trains at all stations throughout the country.

BDZ - Passengers strive to minimize train delays due to the fault of the railway carrier.

According to approved instructions for reporting delays of passenger trains, a report on the occurred irregularities in their movement is prepared daily. The report shall indicate the reasons for the trains' delays, which may be:

- Due to the Railway Infrastructure Manager (track, signalling and telecommunications, energy distribution, traffic, etc.);
- Due to the railway carriers BDZ – Passengers EOOD, BDZ – Cargo EOOD, etc.;
- Other unforeseeable causes.

As a result of the measures taken, in 2020 an increase in the punctuality of the service is reported. The total number of trains delayed by more than 5 minutes at the final station is over 10% in 2019, and in 2020 it drops to 7%.

	International trains	Long-distance fast trains	Regional and suburban trains
<b>Delayed trains over 5 minutes at the endstation</b>			
- % of delayed trains from the total number	11%	14%	6%
<b>Train delays of 6 to 60 minutes at the endstation</b>			
- % of delayed trains from the total number	10%	12%	5%
<b>Train delays of 61 to 120 minutes at the endstation</b>			
- % of delayed trains from the total number	0,7%	1,1%	0,3%
<b>Delayed trains over 120 minutes at the endstation</b>			
- % of delayed trains from the total number	0,2%	0,3%	0,1%

In the event of an emergency situation, an action plan is prepared immediately after the occurrence of the specific event. Depending on the nature of the situation and the possibility of action, the movement of trains on an alternative route is organized or passengers are transported by bus.

In order to improve the efficiency of the railway network, the disturbances reduction system consists of the following components – minutes of delay and causes.

Depending on the reason for the delay, the minutes of the delay are applicable to the Railway Infrastructure Manager, to the Carrier, BDZ – Passengers EOOD, or to a third party. Any delay of more than 5 minutes at the endstation shall be considered as a passenger train delay.

To establish the amount of delays on passenger trains and their causes, after the end of the current month and on the basis of daily reports bilateral protocol is prepared and signed by the Railway Infrastructure Manager and the Carrier.

#### **IV. CANCELLATION OF TRANSPORT SERVICES**

##### **➤ Backup transport**

BDZ - Passengers EOOD organizes backup transport in the following cases:

- After notification by the Railway Infrastructure Manager NRIC about forthcoming planned repairs of the railway and facilities;
- Other events known in advance that make the provision of a public service impossible

##### **➤ Emergency transport**

Emergency transport is organized in case of:

- Interruption of railway traffic due to natural disasters;
- Interruption of railway traffic as a result of railway accidents and incidents;
- Damage to rolling stock and/or rail infrastructure;
- Other circumstances.

In 2020, the total train kilometres realized by backup and emergency bus transport are 659,694 km.

Month	Train / km
January	45,854.27
February	52,901.51
March	48,867.18
April	27,850.62
May	45,562.00
June	51,318.68
July	56,532.36
August	62,317.16
September	65,742.40
October	76,479.80
November	79,559.20
December	46,709.27
<b>Total</b>	<b>659, 694.00</b>

## V. CLEANLINESS OF ROLLING STOCK AND STATION FACILITIES (AIR QUALITY IN COACHES, HYGIENE OF TOILETS/WC AND BATHROOMS, ETC.)

The cleanliness of the rolling stock is one of the main key indicators for reporting the quality of the service.

During its activity BDZ-Passengers performs the following types of cleaning:

- **Complete thorough cleaning** is performed once every 4 weeks according to a pre-arranged 28-day schedule, in compliance with the approved process time;
- **External cleaning** of the rolling stock is performed once every 7 days according to a pre-arranged 28-day schedule, in compliance with the approved process time for the respective type of external cleaning (external machine cleaning and external manual cleaning);
- **Daily cleaning** is performed once every 24 hours according to a pre-arranged 28-day schedule, in accordance with the Train Traffic Schedule, train connections and train stay, as well as the approved technologies, process times and cleaning staff available at the respective point;
- **Cleaning at the station** is performed before the departure of the train from the starting station, according to a pre-arranged 28-day schedule, in accordance with the Train Traffic Schedule, trains connections and train stay, as well as the approved technologies, process times and cleaning staff available at the respective point;
- **Couchettes and sleeping cars** are subject to mandatory complete thorough cleaning at the main point and daily cleaning at the turnover point;
- **Graffiti cleaning of the rolling stock** is done upon request at least 24 hours before the delivery of the train to the sanitary site or track. Graffiti cleaning is carried out in the period April 1 - October 31. Outside this period, the cleaning of graffiti is carried out on request 48 hours in advance and in the event of a forecast of favourable weather conditions (no *wind, rain or snow, temperatures above 3 ° C*).

The cleaning and equipping of the rolling stock operates as a unified system of 34 points in the country. The complete thorough cleaning is done in 9 points, the daily cleaning in 19 points and the cleaning at the station in 17 points.

There are automated washing stations for external washing in Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna.

Draining of vacuum toilet systems is done in 7 points, refilling with water in 14 points and washing of seats in 4 points.

Daily cleaning and thorough cleaning are performed on 12 separate sanitary tracks and technical stations.

In connection with the state of emergency declared in mid-March 2020, BDZ - Passengers EOOD undertook with its own resources disinfection of all coaches, DMUs and EMUs. Disinfection is performed at all cleaning points, as well as at all start and end stations.

A total of 72% of the coaches in the BDZ - Passengers fleet are equipped with air conditioning system or air duct heating. The air conditioned coaches are 25% of the total wagon fleet. This implies a constant passage of the air entering the coaches during heating and cooling through a filter element. Passenger cars with air duct heating are 47% of the fleet. In this type of coaches, the passage of the air entering the coaches is through a filter element only during heating.

BDZ - Passengers EOOD operates in the suburban areas of major passenger centres - Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna with electric and diesel multiple units, equipped with air conditioning system and filter elements of the intake air. Air conditioned sleeping cars operate at all night routes.

## **VI. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

➤ Data for 2020 show a 25% decline in rail travel by citizens who have previously used this mode of transport. Half of them cite the risk of coronavirus infection as the cause and have found alternative transport by car, the rest avoid traveling frequently by train or do not travel at all. Most often, this group includes retirees and elderly people over 60 years.

➤ 5% are new customers who, during the corona crisis, chose rail over other modes of transport for safer travel to work. These passengers are workers, traveling short distances who have previously used bus or company transport.

➤ At short distances of up to 60 km, trains are used as a means of transportation by the majority of people over the age of 60, retired persons, persons with primary and lower education, villagers. The trend is particularly pronounced in sparsely populated regions, villages and towns with a population of less than 10,000 inhabitants, in order to reach the large district and municipal centres offering more services: institutions, shops, pharmacies, hospitals, banks, etc.

➤ When asked "Why do you prefer to travel by train?", the reason for more than half is the lower price. Second, they cite discounts and offers as a reason. 15% say they have no other alternative transport. The same percentage of passengers choose the train because they consider it safer than other modes of transport. Least of all, or 5%, have chosen the train as a more convenient vehicle.

➤ When asked "What needs to change when traveling by train?", 60% want changes in the timetable, incl. departure and arrival times, reduction of travel and stay time. Half want extra stops for fast trains at smaller stations and stops and more trains on certain routes. 35% are not satisfied with the cleanliness and service on the train. Almost 50% state that the timetable must be adhered to, which requires new rolling stock. 10% of passengers consider some of the prices of railway services to be high, and 5% do not want any changes.

➤ According to the sample, regarding the last reason for traveling by train, half indicate a visit to relatives or friends. There are approximately equal numbers of train trips to school or university and to the workplace. 10% prefer to travel by train to their holiday destination.

➤ Results of the assessment of the indicators on a ten-point scale in terms of quality of service when traveling by train and expectations for comfort:

- Kind and polite staff - 4;
- Availability of free seats - 7;

- Use of discounts - 8;
- Prices - 9;
- Offers - 6;
- Security during the trip - 10;
- Regularity of trains - 4;
- Availability of information - 6;
- Friendly atmosphere - 4;
- Travel speed - 4;
- Cleanliness and comfort - 4;
- Condition of trains - 4;
- Accessibility for people with disabilities and PRM - 3;
- Additional services - 2.

➤ The recommendations addressed to BDZ-Passengers EOOD regarding the additional services are ranked as follows, as a large part of the interviewees indicate more than one priority:

- Wi-Fi Internet - 40%;
- Offering food and beverages - 30%;
- Offering restaurant services - 25%;
- Air-conditioned trains, electrical outlets in the coaches and comfort - 55%;
- Sleeping cars - 35%.

## **VII. COMPLAINT HANDLING, REFUND AND COMPENSATION FOR NON-COMPLIANCE WITH SERVICE QUALITY STANDARDS**

In order to meet the needs of the population for passenger transport services, prior to the entry into force of the new train timetable, the Railway Infrastructure Manager together with the National Railway Passenger Carrier BDZ - Passengers EOOD organizes meetings with representatives of customer organizations and regional and municipal administrations. At these meetings the developed transport schemes are presented and coordinated. The suggested routes, schedules, periods of operation, train stops and others are discussed. In 2020, due to the danger of the spread of COVID 19, live meetings were not organized. The discussions took place after the publication of the draft for the forthcoming train schedule on the carrier's website [www.bdz.bg](http://www.bdz.bg)

The counting of passengers in all categories of trains is an element of the marketing research of passenger transport. Studies are held three times a year within 7 (seven) calendar days - from Monday to Sunday inclusive. In 2020, the regular counting in the trains took place in March, July and October. On this basis, the number and type of wagons in the train composition of the different train categories are determined.

Any passenger who is not satisfied with the quality of the service offered may lodge a complaint or signal with the railway undertaking. Contact details (telephone, fax, e-mail and address) can be found in all stations, railway offices, on the Internet, etc. It is possible to file a complaint through an online form on the carrier's website.

Each complaint is considered, an investigation is carried out and a response is prepared within 30 days, which must contain a comprehensive and substantiated explanation of the problem, in accordance with all regulations and the specific situation. In case of non-fulfilment of the official duty by an employee of the company and proven guilt, the strictest responsibility is sought and a disciplinary sanction is imposed according to the current legislation.

The signals received from railway customers in 2020 are a total of 1604, with the largest share occupied by service suggestions (14%), complaints about poor behaviour and service by trains crews (13%) and train delays (10%).

Compared to the previous 2019, there is a decrease in the number of complaints received by over 8%, with the clearest improvement observed in the following areas: servicing by employees of ticket offices and information desks, as well as suggestions regarding the railway service. Complaints from customers related to the provision of incorrect preliminary travel information and the company's tariff policy have increased.

Signals about	2019 Number	2019 Share in %	2020 Number	2020 Share in %
Service suggestions	349	20%	217	14%
Train crews - rude behaviour and failure to perform their official duties	205	12%	213	13%
Train delay	187	11%	157	10%
Preliminary travel information	61	3%	138	9%
Tariff policy	81	5%	137	9%
Ticket cashiers - poor service by employees at ticket offices and information desks	254	15%	100	6%
Cooling / heating system of railcars and coaches	112	6%	94	6%
Competence of NRIC	55	3%	86	5%
Hygiene in trains	70	4%	86	5%
Out of the competence of BDZ-Passengers	17	1%	86	5%
Cancelled train due to lack of rolling stock	39	2%	53	3%
No seat / berth is provided	72	4%	45	3%
Forgotten luggage during the trip	30	2%	44	3%
Appreciation	26	1%	39	2%
Incorrect / non-working timetable on the site	60	3%	36	2%
Inconvenient timetable	61	3%	33	2%
Failed (missing) connection at transfer station	25	1%	28	2%
Non-working electronic boards in the station and lack of information about BDZ delays	43	2%	12	1%
<b>Total number of signals</b>	<b>1,747</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1 604</b>	<b>100%</b>

Inspections continue regarding the regularity of the travel documents of passengers together with the employees of the General Directorate "Gendarmerie" at the Ministry of Interior. For all trains for which there is information about an existing threat to passenger safety, the information is submitted immediately to the Ministry of Interior for taking preventive measures such as: redirection of the patrol unit, inspection of passengers at an intermediate station and others.

In case of organized trips of groups of children, students, as well as during attraction trips, employees of the Gendarmerie must be present, after notification by BDZ - Passengers EOOD.

The measures to limit the COVID-19 pandemic imposed the cancellation of all international trains from mid-March 2020, with only two pairs of trains between Bulgaria and Romania being restored by the end of the year. Due to the suspension of international trains in 2020, there are no claims for



refunds of passengers with international travel documents due to train delays, according to *Regulation 1371/2007* on the Rights and Obligations of Passengers Using Rail Transport.

## **VII. PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND PERSONS WITH REDUCED MOBILITY**

The service of PRM is carried out in accordance with the tripartite agreement concluded between the Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC), Bulgarian State Railways EAD and the National Railway Infrastructure Company

To ensure equal rights of access to rail transport, the National Railway Infrastructure Company has equipped thirteen railway stations in the country - Sofia, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Varna, Burgas, Gorna Oryahovitsa, Pleven, Shumen, Pazardzhik, Sliven, Yambol, Vidin, Vratsa, Ruse and Petrich. Each of these railway stations has a lifting device - a mobile lift, and the stations Sofia and Gorna Oryahovitsa are equipped with two mobile lifts. Persons with reduced mobility or their representatives must request the service in advance, indicating the date, time and train of the trip in order to provide a mobile lift.

The company has five specialized wagons with separate seats and toilets, meeting international standards, to be included in the trains at the request of PRM. Five of the sleeping cars in the composition of the night fast trains have two special cabins each for the transport of persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility.

The company provides specialized transport services with 11 diesel multiple units (DMUs) and 18 electric multiple units (EMUs), operating on various suburban routes in the country. Each multiple unit is equipped with removable folding ramp. No prior request is required when traveling with these trains. The service during boarding and disembarking is performed by the train staff.

Information about the organization of the transport of persons with reduced mobility by rail, the Rules of access and the annexes to them, as well as contacts of our associates and the stations where this service is available can be found on the website of BDZ-Passengers EOOD.

**Quality Management System** of BDZ - Passengers EOOD under ISO 9001  
BDZ - Passengers EOOD is certified according to BDS EN ISO 9001 with the scope "Transport of passengers by rail in international and domestic traffic" from 13.12.2018.