

# Office of Rail Transport

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## A year full of challenges. What will we remember after 2023? Here's the summary

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At the beginning of the new year, let us look back for a moment. What was the past 12 months like for the Office of Rail Transport (UTK)? It was certainly a breakthrough year. It brought changes not only to the UTK itself, but also for the entire railway industry.

### CEMM

In 2023, the new system for examining candidates for train drivers became fully operational. The change - initiated and implemented by the President of UTK - materialized in the form of the [Centre for Examination and Monitoring of Train Drivers](#) (CEMM). The centre was one of the most important elements of the EU project that UTK had been running for the last few years. The basis of CEMM are the simulators of three railway vehicles. The centre itself is one of the most modern in Europe.

"Poland can be an inspiration for all European countries. I am convinced that others will follow us," says Mr. Ignacy Góra, PhD, the President of UTK.

The first serious test for this venture were the state exams for a train driver's license, which took place in the spring. [5 April 2023](#) is the date from which the revolution in the process of training railway staff has become a reality. Examinations for a train driver's license (from 2024 also for a train driver's certificate) have become impartial, equal for all candidates and fully professional.

CEMM collects data of all train drivers in Poland in a dedicated database - along with information on their qualifications and the employers who employ them. This makes it possible to monitor the qualifications of train drivers and railway vehicle drivers as well as guarantees transparency of the professional training of the cadre. You can read more about this change in the guide published by UTK "[How to become a train driver? A guide for candidates for the profession](#)".

The opportunity to visit the centre was presented during, among others, "[10th Open Days of](#)

[European Funds](#)". On that date CEMM opened its doors to many interested persons.

## ROGATEK IS A HERO

2023 meant not only a summary of the project "Improvement of railway safety through the construction of the Train Driver Examination and Monitoring System", for which UTK received almost PLN 41 million from the EU Funds of the Infrastructure and Environment Program. In the same year, two other strategic projects were completed. These are elements of the comprehensive action of the President of UTK to improve railway safety. Therefore, in the coming years, UTK will continue its activities educating both the entire society and the railway industry.

One of such activities is the second edition of the [Railway ABC Campaign](#) (over PLN 48 million in funding from the European funds). By the end of 2023, UTK's educators and Rogatek visited over 330 primary schools and kindergartens, where they used multimedia and interactive tools to teach children on safety rules near railway-road crossings, tracks, stations and railway stations.

Direct educational activities were accompanied by numerous media activities. There were created, among others: 5 animated spots aimed at children and 3 spots for adults (they were watched by approx. 38 million people on TV and in cinemas). UTK also produced 5 radio spots. They were heard by over 19.3 million people. The tollgate could also be found on the Internet. The spots on YouTube achieved over 11 million views, and on VOD portals - over 155 million.

## RAILWAY ACADEMY

Another EU project that was to be finalized in 2023 is the [Railway Safety Academy](#) (ABK) - with co-financing from the EU Funds in the amount of over PLN 3.4 million. The completed edition includes over 80 training courses - stationary, remote or e-learning. Approximately 8.5 thousand participants took part in them. At their disposal were a training platform and a mobile application. Thanks to ABK, it was possible to share UTK's expert knowledge and exchange experiences between railway market participants responsible for safety.

The Railway Safety Academy helped create the Inspector Development Program and the Inspector Starting Program. Participation in development centre sessions allowed us to examine the inspectors' predispositions. Thanks to this, each of them received a designated competence development path for the entire duration of the project. The created materials will support you even after its completion. They are made available to representatives of the railway market in the form of e-books.

## UTK'S ANNIVERSARY AND SAFETY CULTURE

Last year was special for UTK due to its round anniversary. "We are already a mature, 20-year-old institution that has clearly defined goals, awareness of its mission and vision, and a defined value system. We think about the railway seriously, fulfil the tasks entrusted to us by law, and we use our potential and creativity by implementing strategic projects," emphasizes the President of UTK. The office celebrated its [20th anniversary](#) at the TRAKO International Railway Fair.

The anniversary year was also important for the safety culture in rail transport. More entities have joined as [the signatories of the Safety Culture Declaration](#). There are already 285 of them. People who contributed to the creation of even safer and modern railways received awards and distinctions during [the 7th Safety Culture Conference](#), which was combined with the UTK jubilee gala.

The idea of safe transport is a close one to many institutions in Poland. The proof is the [letter of intent](#) that the President of UTK signed in 2023 with the President of the Civil Aviation Office. This is a declaration of cooperation in order to establish a joint opinion-giving and advisory team on the culture of just treatment (Just Culture).

The President of UTK also develops relations with the national security authorities (NSA) of the neighbouring countries. In 2023, he signed an [agreement with the director of the Czech transport safety authority](#) - Drážní úřad. The document defines the principles of cooperation and coordination in the field of supervision of railway undertakings and infrastructure managers conducting cross-border activities on railway lines connecting Poland and the Czech Republic, as well as the requirements to be met in the event of an application for a single safety certificate.

On the occasion of the office's birthday, a unique guide was also published - "Through Poland by rail - 20 routes for the 20th anniversary of UTK". It includes suggestions for 20 routes around regions that can be visited by train. The selection of railway connections and places in the guide takes into account the most interesting railway monuments, remains of old railway lines and narrow-gauge railways.

## REGIONAL OFFICES

UTK is a modern governmental body that, in order to fulfil its role even better, must develop. At the beginning of 2023, a new local branch of UTK began its operations. [The Szczecin branch](#) is the eighth in the row. The area covered by it includes two voivodeships: West Pomeranian and Lubuskie. Thus, a new territorial division of all UTK's Regional Offices came into force.

Last year, UTK inspectors from all local branches carried out 943 inspections and audits. During them they found approximately 4,300 irregularities.

## END OF THE EPIDEMIC

The [revoked state of the epidemic threat](#), announced at the beginning of July, was a moment long awaited by the railway industry and at the same time brought a period of intense work at UTK. The automatic extension of the validity of safety certificates, safety authorizations and certificates of compliance for entities responsible for maintenance and safety certificates under the COVID-19 Act has ended. Therefore, the President of UTK had to issue almost 700 safety certificates from 1 July to 27 December 2023, so that railway companies could operate in accordance with the regulations. The remaining documents extended by the COVID-19 Act were also issued on time.

## MANY IMPORTANT DECISIONS

The effective implementation of applications for permits for railway investments allowed us to avoid the risk of repayment of PLN 3.5 billion while at the same time enforcing safety standards by UTK in the field of creating safety evidence and risk management based on Regulation 402/2013. The settlement of EU funds intended for co-financing of infrastructure investments depends on the issuance of a permit for operation by the President of UTK. Many investments by the national infrastructure manager PKP PLK were completed in the last year in which it was possible to settle the 2014-2020 financial perspective, i.e. in 2023.

In 2023, the President of UTK received a record number of applications for granting a railway operator's license - 31 of them. This is more than three times when compared to the previous three years, when an average of 10 applications were received per year. UTK also conducted other proceedings in the field of railway market regulation. They ended with the issuance of administrative decisions that are important for the functioning of the railway market in Poland, including: a decision regarding fees for access to infrastructure or a decision ordering changes to the regulations on access to passenger stations. In 2023, POLREGIO and PKP PLK conducted negotiations under the supervision of the President of UTK on reducing fees for access to railway infrastructure on one of the railway lines. The negotiations ended successfully.

Last year, the President of UTK issued 17 decisions granting open access. UTK also considered approximately 1,700 individual passenger cases.

In 2023, UTK completed almost 6,500 cases related to spatial development. Among them were: extensive draft spatial development plans for cities such as Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław and Łódź. The most important rules regarding the reconciliation of planning documents with the President of UTK are described in a [special guide for public administration bodies](#).

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In 2023, UTK employees engaged in socially responsible activities. The Railway Drop of Blood campaign was developed, many initiatives related to the idea of work-life balance were organized, and narrow-gauge railways were promoted. A Mobility Plan for UTK was also introduced and workshops were organized for railway market participants on sustainable mobility. All activities will be described in the CSR Report - just like in 2022. The study for 2023 is under preparation.

Many studies prepared by UTK last year and detailed data on the railway system can be found on the [dedicated website](#).

"The activities of UTK are aimed at constantly increasing the safety of the railway system. The accident rate has been proof of the high level of safety for years. Over the years, it has decreased from 4 to approximately 2. Preliminary data shows that in 2023 this indicator amounted to 2.09. So last year there were about 2 accidents per million train-kilometres. However, there is a visible increase in, for example, the number of accidents at category D rail-road crossings. This is an important argument to implement a monitoring system at these crossings as soon as possible," summarizes President Góra.