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38 FLIRT trains in operation in Estonia: Number of passengers increased by 45%

Stadler Rail Group has successfully delivered the last FLIRT train out of the fleet of 38 units to Estonian railway operator Elron. The two companies signed the delivery and leasing contracts in 2010, and managed to close the project successfully with an early delivery of altogether 240 train-days¹. Stadler and Elron managed to close the project within the agreed deadlines. With this procurement Elron changed its whole passenger train fleet, and the improved service quality has already led to an average 45% increase in the number of passengers in Estonia.

Elron (at that time Elektriraudtee) issued the public procurement back in 2009 separately for the purchase of 18 electric (EMU) and 20 diesel (DMU) multiple units. The procurement ended successfully with the victory of Stadler, the contracts were signed in August 2010. Elron ordered altogether 12 three-car and 6 four-car EMUs, as well as 6 two-car, 8 three-car and 6 four-car DMUs from Stadler, which is the largest passenger train fleet acquired in the history of independent Estonia.

Operational experiences

Elron put the first electric unit in July 2013 and the first diesel train in January 2014 into operation. With this project the company changed its whole rolling stock, by which the average age of the fleet is close to zero. Since the launch of the service, the new trains have altogether run 1.200.000 kilometres on the Estonian railway network, and provided a service of approximately 5 million trips for passengers. The trains have proved to be reliable, as availability of the units is constantly around 99.5 percent. The outstanding service of Elron has been proven by the constantly growing number of passengers, which have increased by 60 percent on the electric lines, and 15 percent on the diesel lines, totalling to an average of 50 percent.

¹ * Cumulated number of days of early delivery projected for the whole fleet of 38 trains

The financial status of Elron improves not only due to the growing number of passengers, but also the decreasing operational costs. Due to the weight loss of the trains the charges for the railway network access decreased for Elron too. In case of the diesel units, the more efficient use of energy guarantees around 30% fuel savings, while the electric units bring also significant savings by feeding the braking energy back to the power grid. All these saving enabled Elron to raise the service frequency by 56%, and at the same time maintaining the previous cost levels.

About the FLIRT

The electric and diesel FLIRT trains designed for Elron with their 3500 mm wide carbodies are among the widest passenger trains in the European Union. Elron's DMUs are the first diesel FLIRTs produced in the history of Stadler, and are one of the first diesel trains in Europe where supercapacitors are used for the sake of increased acceleration and greater energy savings. The broad gauge (1520 mm) trains have been designed and manufactured to easily endure the harsh weather conditions typical in Estonia, which expertise Stadler gained through its earlier deliveries to Finland and Norway. Due to the lightweight aluminium structure and the modern energy saving system, the new trains also mean a great cost-saving for the operator.

The electric trains have a top speed of 160 km/h, coupled with an accelerating ability of 1.2 m/s which is a remarkable value in this train segment. The diesel trains also have outstanding accelerating abilities of 0.85m/s² with a top speed of 160 km/h as well. The high top speed and the admirable accelerating make the drivers capable to catch up even significant leeways between two stops. The driver's cabin received an ergonomic and modern design, which significantly improves the current working conditions of the drivers, and thanks to modern control system, the safe control of the trains is possible with a staff of only one person. The passengers also observe a great improvement in comfort, as all trains are equipped with state-of-the art information system, air-conditioners, free 4G WIFI, computer desks, power supplies for the charging of notebooks or cell phones, video surveillance and multipurpose areas appropriate for the transport of wheelchairs, baby trolleys or bicycles. Free and fast passenger flow is secured by the wide doors available on each side.

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