

Long-Term Modal Changes in International Traffic - Example of the Polish Eastern Border

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Abstract : The possibilities of cross-border traffic depend on the degree of permeability of a given border as well as the state of the existing transport infrastructure. The aim of this paper is to identify the impact of economic transformation, EU accession, and infrastructure development on modal shifts in border traffic through the Polish eastern boundary. In the 1980s railway was still the main mode of cross-border transport in Poland. At the beginning of the 1990s, the role of the road and rail transborder passenger traffic was similar, but since 1993, the role of rail was decreasing. The general decline in rail infrastructure in Poland continued uninterruptedly until accession to the European Union. The slow opposite trend can be observed later as a result of the inflow of European funds. In the countries neighbouring Poland from the east, these processes took place with some delay, and the loss of railway position was not so drastic. Therefore, cross-border railway connections have been maintained for quite a long time since the break-up of the USSR. However, finally, cross-border rail transport proved to be completely inflexible in relation to both economic, geopolitical, and transport transformations. It has been shown that the current modal split of the passenger border traffic was shaped by the following factors: a) closure of many transborder railway lines, especially local ones; b) the signing of an agreement on minor border traffic with Ukraine; c) rapidly growing number of citizens of Ukraine working in Poland (unofficial transportation of workers by car directly to their workplaces in Poland); d) the emergence of low-cost air connections between Ukraine and Poland and the growing role of air transport in the Russia-Poland relationship. The summary points to the possibility of a renewed increase in the importance of rail transport on the eastern border of the European Union.

Keywords : modal change, border, rail transport, Poland

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