

Rail freight by commodity groups in 2Q 2020

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The impact of the coronavirus outbreak on rail transport was still visible in 2Q 2020. Rail operators transported nearly 51 m tonnes. When compared to 2019 results, it means a decrease by 7.3 m tonnes (12.5%). However, the changes looked different in different commodity groups. Declines were noted in groups such as coal or metal ores, but intermodal transport was on rise.

If we compare 2Q 2020 to 2Q 2019, a drop in weight and transport performance is visible in five key commodity groups carried by freight operators:

- Coal, lignite, crude oil and natural gas - the decrease amounted to 14% in total weight carried and 20.4% in freight performance. The total weight carried in this commodity group was less than 18 m tonnes, of which nearly 98% was coal. The share of coal in 2Q 2020 was thus slightly more than 1/3 of the entire freight transport (35.4%). It was mainly a result of a decrease in energy consumption in 2Q 2020. The freight performance for this commodity group was 2.7 bn tonne-km.
- Metal ores, other mining and quarrying products: The decrease amounted to 18.4% in total weight carried and 22.8% in freight performance. In 2Q 2020 nearly 13.9 m tonnes were transported and the freight performance reached 3.3 bn tonne-km.
- Coke, briquettes, refined petroleum products: The total weight carried in this commodity group was 5.7 m tonnes and the freight performance was 2.1 bn tonne-km, so the drops were 17, 7% and 16% respectively.
- Chemicals, chemical products: The drops in total weight and freight performance were 7.3% and 8.1% respectively. In 2Q 2020 2.4 m tonnes were transported in this commodity group. The freight performance reached 0.8 bn tonne-km.
- Metals, finished metal products: The total weight carried in this commodity group was 2.1 m tonnes and the freight performance was 0.5 bn tonne-km. The drops as compared to 2Q 2019 were 12.1% and 11% respectively.

- The impact of the pandemic, though to a lesser extent than in passenger transport, was also visible in freight statistics. The drops were acute, especially when we look at quarterly results in the total weight carried. Despite various actions undertaken to minimize the impact of the pandemic, decreases in weight parameters and transport performance were noted even for such important commodity groups as fuels, metals or chemicals. Rail services for automotive sector also dropped. At the same time, we see a steady growth of goods transported in containers. This trend is confirmed in excellent performance of intermodal transport in 2Q 2020 - comments Ignacy Góra, the President of the Office of Rail Transport.

The first half of 2020 was characterized by changes in market share between commodity groups. The share of the commodity group which includes coal, lignite, crude oil and natural gas for the first half of the year was lower by nearly 3% as compared to their share at the end of 2019. In case of aggregates the situation was similar. However, some commodity groups were on the rise, for instance non-metallic raw materials, especially cement, lime and gypsum (increase by 22.1% as compared to the first half of 2019).

- The pandemic changes the way we see the transport of goods by rail. One of possible scenarios is that the demand for rail transport services for certain commodity groups will decrease. For that reason it becomes necessary to create favourable conditions for rail carriers to expand to new markets and shift as much goods as we can from road to rail. - notes Ignacy Góra, the President of the Office of Rail Transport.

Detailed data on transport by commodity groups for 1Q and 2Q 2020 can be found in the [Freight statistics](#) section.