

Impact of Covid-19 epidemic on railway market in Poland and Europe

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In 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic had a visible impact on Polish economy, railways including. The Office of Rail Transport published a study which shows how the global crisis influenced passenger and freight transport in Poland. The report also introduces data from selected European countries for the first half of 2020.

After the record-breaking 2019, in which rail operators carried 335 m passengers, in 2020 we saw a decline for an unprecedented scale. In 2020 only 209.2 m passengers were transported. The transport performance fell by over 42%.

In March 2020 enormous changes in the world economy begun, which also affected Poland. Travel restrictions caused by the pandemic changed the transport offer. Rail operators and public transport authorities monitored the situation on the market and reacted to the changes in demand and in sanitary regime to ensure the continuity of operations and safety of travel – comments Ignacy Góra, the President of the Office of Rail Transport.

Despite the pandemic the situation in rail freight was much better than in passenger transport. After initial cuts in the number of connections and difficulties in cross-border transport, international transport increased. Nevertheless, in 2020 a 5.6% decrease in total weight transported was recorded. However, a positive upward trend in intermodal transport was also noticeable. Due to its geographical location, Poland has the potential to further develop the market for this type of transport. Two European transport corridors run through Poland: East – West (North Sea – Baltic Rail Freight Corridor) and North – South (Baltic – Adriatic Rail Freight Corridor). In transport from China to the Western Europe, especially during the pandemic, deliveries systematically rose as well as the role of Poland as a transit country.

The cuts in connections introduced by passenger rail operators in 2020 had impact on capacity of railway network. The increased capacity of the network allowed for shorter travel times and better train punctuality, mostly for rail freight. It was an unforeseen but positive effect of the pandemic. Punctuality of freight trains is one of the key parameters of quality of rail services and has a significant impact on its competitiveness to road transport.

- *Despite the difficult situation caused by the pandemic in 2020, rail transport was a very reliable mode of transport, especially for goods. Freight trains were definitely more punctual than in 2019. Intermodal transport is gradually increasing, which proves the potential of this market segment* – sums up Ignacy Góra, the President of the Office of Rail Transport.

New study published by the Office of Rail Transport shows the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on rail market in 2020. In addition to basic data on passenger transport and freight, the study also includes data on trains launched and cuts in train stops, changes and cuts in connections introduced by rail carriers, train punctuality, as well as changes in international connections. The study also has a summary on intermodal transport market in 1Q - 3Q 2020. The data on transport during the pandemic in several other European countries cover only the first half of 2020. For example, the largest decrease in passenger transport was recorded in Ireland and the United Kingdom, where the number of passengers dropped 1Q and 2Q. In the Netherlands there was virtually no decline in passenger traffic.

The study *The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on rail market in 2020* is available [here](#).