

Office of Rail Transport

<https://utk.gov.pl/en/new/17774,IRG-Rail-publishes-report-on-the-impact-of-COVID-19-on-the-European-rail-market-.html>
24.04.2024, 21:56

IRG-Rail publishes report on the impact of COVID-19 on the European rail market in 2020

01.09.2021

Rail sector in Europe has been hit by the coronavirus pandemic. IRG-Rail - an organization of European independent rail market regulators - prepared a report describing the impact of the epidemic on the European rail market. The number of travellers in different countries declined by 26% to 65% year on year. In rail freight the average decrease in transported weight was 7%, although there were countries where more goods were transported by rail than in 2019.

In 2020 the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were visible in all European countries. In 2Q 2020 most countries introduced strict internal traffic restrictions, which resulted in a significant reduction in mobility. This continued until the summer, when restrictions were eased in Poland and other countries. In 4Q 2020 restrictions were reintroduced in many countries due to the second wave of the COVID-19 epidemic. The situation in rail sector was monitored by the European rail market regulators, which allowed IRG-Rail to collect the most up-to-date data and prepare a detailed report on the impact of COVID-19 on rail market in Europe.

The IRG-Rail report is based on data from 26 countries which participated in the study.

- The trends described in the IRG-Rail report indicate that in 2020 all European countries were affected by declines in rail transport. From today's perspective we know that rebuilding the market to the state before 2020 will be a long-term process - comments Ignacy Góra, President of the Office of Rail Transport. - 2020 is over, but the epidemic is still going and rail sector must strive for the return of passengers and to ensure a smooth flow of goods - adds Ignacy Góra.

PASSENGER TRANSPORT

Some national travel restrictions varied on a regional basis or in domestic and international travel like, for example, in Italy, Great Britain and Germany.

Reduced passenger demand had a direct impact on transport performance. According to the

IRG-Rail report, the passenger transport market in each of the surveyed countries decreased as compared to 2020. The transport performance in the countries included in the report almost halved - from 419 bn pass-km in 2019 to 217 bn pass-km in 2020. In some countries drops ranged from -26% in Bulgaria to -65% in Ireland.

- The passenger transport market was severely affected by restrictions and limitations. Transport performance among these surveyed European countries decreased by circa 48%. However, 43% decrease in Poland places us among the countries where the situation was relatively better than the average. It was a similar situation when we take into account the operational performance - for our market we recorded 6% decrease, while the average was 11%. This proves that, despite the restrictions, the rail sector in Poland tried to ensure continuous operation and to maintain the passenger flow when it was necessary - assesses Ignacy Góra, President of the Office of Rail Transport.

RAIL FREIGHT

Rail freight, unlike rail passenger transport, was not restricted. Increases were recorded in some countries, for example Bulgaria, Croatia and Greece. Ensuring the continuity of trade during the pandemic in Europe was a priority for national governments. Rail transport ensured the continuity of services and distribution of food and essential products. It also supported the governments in fighting the pandemic by distribution of cleaning and personal care products, medicines and equipment. In 2020 in all countries which provided data for the IRG-Rail report total rail freight turnover was 386.6 bn net-tonne-km, which was 7% decrease when compared to 2019. The largest decreases were recorded in Latvia. It was due to the restriction on Russian transport through its territory as a result of sanctions imposed on Russia.

- Rail freight played an important role during the pandemic. Despite this difficult situation there were countries which had increases in the transport performance in 2020, even 32% level as in Portugal. In Poland a decrease in the transport performance was 7%, but it was close to the European average - notes Ignacy Góra, President of the Office of Rail Transport. - An interesting phenomenon was an increase in punctuality of freight trains which was recorded in almost all the surveyed countries, including Poland. Restrictions in mobility of people resulted in a lower number of passenger trains and in an increase in network capacity and higher punctuality of freight trains, which increased as compared to 2019 r. by 4% - he adds.

The IRG-Rail report on the impact of COVID-19 on the European rail market in 2020 is available on the [IRG-Rail website](#).