

Liberalization

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Słowa kluczowe: mały ruch graniczny, współpraca transgraniczna, handel transgraniczny

Introduction

Contemporary Europe is a territory which has undergone significant changes in a relatively short time. For millions of people living on the continent, it is the place of a lively cooperation. The borders no longer divide, they now connect nations. International cooperation constitutes an important element of the development of the regions divided by borders. It becomes a stimulus to enter into a social and economic cooperation. It ensures a flow of experiences between the regions pertaining to different countries. It stimulates the development of cultural and educational contacts. It influences the development of tourism and trade. It becomes an element of promoting the border region and, as a consequence, it can be a competitiveness-raising factor.¹

One of the elements which significantly influence the development of cross-border cooperation is border traffic. It consists of tourism, shopping trips, visiting, business trips, and transit.

The aim of the following article is to examine the influence of border traffic as an important factor shaping the cross-border cooperation. The article presents selected

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¹ A. Malkowski, *Regiony przygraniczne jako terytoria peryferyjne na przykładzie wschodniego i zachodniego pogranicza*, Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 2011, p. 364.

results of the research conducted in the borderland area between Poland and Germany. The study is based on a descriptive method and the analysis of the available literature. The data were obtained from the Institute of Tourism, the border guards, the customs office, and the Polish Central Statistical Office, as well as from the author's own research.

Borders as research subject

The border is an ambiguous concept, commonly used in everyday speech, political discourse, and scholarly papers. It is most often interpreted as a line separating the territories of different countries, and often identified with concepts such as borderland or border area. In academic discourse, we employ the notions of an artificial border and a natural border (see Figure 1), political and economic, historical and cultural borders. Border is not clearly defined in literature. The Polish word *granica* is of Slavic origin (Polish – *granica*, Czech – *hranica*) and it has several semantic meanings related to concepts such as edge, end, and limit.

The border is defined in the act on the protection of the national border, passed on October 12, 1990.² The act states that the state border is a vertical area passing through the boundary line, separating the territory of Poland from the territories of other countries and from the open sea. M. Baczworow and A. Suliborski define it similarly, as an “imaginary curtain running at a 90 degree angle to the surface of the earth, separating countries and areas without a defined affiliation.”³

The ambiguity of division between natural and artificial borders was prompted by Hartshorn, who proposed a different distinction, genetic in nature, into antecedent and subsequent borders. The former are understood as borders existing prior to the settlement of the area (before the development of cultural landscape features), and remain unaltered despite human activity. The latter are formed after the settlement among the formerly established communities (linguistic, territorial, etc.).⁴

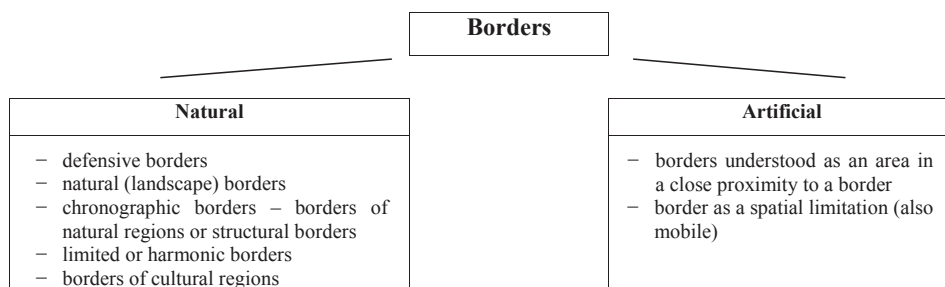
In the available research on the functioning of borders, terms such as *frontier zone* or *border region* appear. The frontier zone is defined as the entire area of municipalities adjacent to the national border, and, where it borders a sea, to the coastline. If the width of the so understood frontier zone is less than 15 km, the municipalities directly neighboring those adjacent to the national border or the coastline are also included.

² Polish Journal of Laws, no. 78.

³ M. Baczworow, A. Suliborski, *Kompendium wiedzy o geografii politycznej i geopolityce*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa–Łódź 2002, p. 72.

⁴ J. Bański, *Granica w badaniach geograficznych – definicja i próby klasyfikacji*, “Przegląd Geograficzny” 2010, 82, no. 4, p. 489–508.

Figure 1. Types of borders



Source: own compilation on the basis of Nowińska, E. *Strategia rozwoju gmin przygranicznych*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej, Poznań 1997, p. 9–10.

A distinction should be made between a border region and a cross-border region, with the latter pertaining to two or more countries, and including both sides of the actual border. The cross-border region is an area which transgresses at least one national border and constitutes at least a sum of two socio-economic spaces.⁵

Mazurkiewicz proposes an interesting definition of a cross-border region.⁶ According to him, this type of a region is different from those which had been previously considered in the theory of economic regions. A cross-border region is not a part of just one socio-economic space, but rather a sum of several (at least two) such spaces. Each of these spaces constitutes a separate system and is connected with the territory of one of the neighboring countries. Such a perception of the cross-border region perfectly captures its main feature, the peculiar ‘split’ between the two decisive centers of the neighboring states, as well as the specific cohesion of the region as a whole. Sanguin distinguishes three types of cross-border regions:⁷

- border gaps (empty spaces) – areas which have not been developed,
- border nebulas – groups of small and big villages spread on both sides of the border, with insignificant functional connections,
- border regions – areas with strong and multilateral functional connections across the border.

The conditions of the development of the border region are inextricably linked to the concept of border permeability. Full border permeability allows to compensate

⁵ A. Skrzydło, *Euroregiony z udziałem podmiotów polskich jako forma współpracy transgranicznej*, “Sprawy Międzynarodowe” 1994, no. 3, p. 46.

⁶ L. Mazurkiewicz, *Region transgraniczny – nowe pojęcie teorii regionu geograficznego*, “Podstawy Rozwoju Zachodnich i Wschodnich Obszarów Przygranicznych Polski”, IGiPZ PAN, Warszawa 1993, no. 2, p. 227–240.

⁷ Z. Rykiel, *Rozwój regionów stykowych w teorii i badaniach empirycznych*, PAN IGiPZ, Wrocław 1991, p. 40.

for the adverse effect it has on the relationship between the communities inhabiting both sides of the border, and thus further consolidates the region as a whole. It becomes an important factor in the development of the cross-border region. An impermeable border intensifies the unfavorable differentiation in the socio-economic development, the conditions of the economic activity on both sides of the border, as well as the functions related to the formalization of the border. This leads to the peripheralization of the cross-border regions. The works of Miszczuk⁸ and Ciok⁹ are important contributions to this aspect of the question. According to the aforementioned authors, cross-border cooperation, including the change of the borders' function, leads to the socio-economic development of the cross-border region.

There are numerous examples of cross-border cooperation in Europe. The premises for such collaboration have usually been of historical, political, or economic nature. Cooperation was the chance for overcoming the isolation of the cross-border communities. The economic reasons called for the development of common cross-border economic ventures and a commercial exchange between partners.

In the case of the cooperation in the Polish-German border region, it seems that the most salient factors are political and economic. These factors shaped and continue to shape the actions undertaken by the communities divided by the borders. The research concerning the influence of the border on the socio-economic development of the border region, conducted by the author in 2003, and then repeated cyclically, showed that the general consensus among the local authorities was that the border substantially influences this development. The research also showed that this influence is strongest in the municipalities and the districts located in the immediate vicinity of the border.¹⁰

Border traffic as a factor in the development of the border regions

The political and economic transformations which took place after 1989 reduced the isolating function of the border. Liberalization of trade between the integrating economies facilitated an accelerated development of the border regions. It was possible due to the international exchange being made possible, the removal of the barriers in the flow of people, capital, and services – the liberties so characteristic of the process of shaping a common market. Among the factors influencing the development of the border regions,

⁸ A. Miszczuk, *Uwarunkowania peryferyjności regionu przygranicznego*, Norberitum, Lublin 2013.

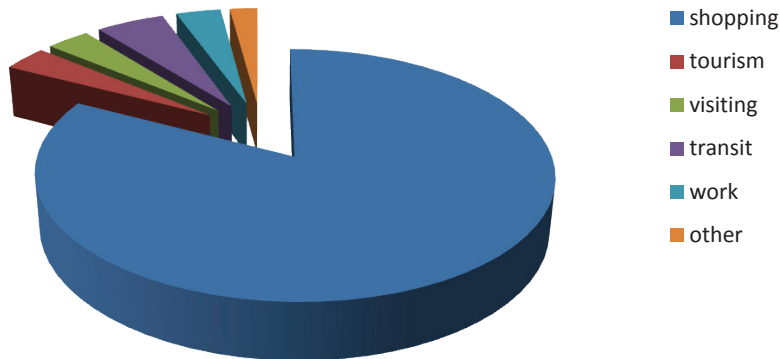
⁹ S. Ciok, *Uwarunkowania rozwoju przestrzennego Polski wynikające z sąsiedztwa z Republiką Federalną Niemiec*, in: *Ekspertyzy do Koncepcji Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania Kraju 2008–2033*, eds. K. Saganowski, M. Zagrzejska-Fiedorowicz, P. Żuber, Ministerstwo Rozwoju Regionalnego, Warszawa 2008.

¹⁰ A. Malkowski, *Rola granicy w rozwoju lokalnym*, "Folia Universitatis Agriculturae Stetinensis. Oeconomica" no. 43, Szczecin 2004, p. 129–134.

the role of tourism, including social tourism¹¹ as well as cross-border economic cooperation were now being noticed.¹² The observed instances of the increased traffic due to shopping tourism demonstrate that this is also an important aspect in the functioning of the border regions.¹³

Poland’s accession to the EU further solidified the position of the border regions. According to the data from the National Border Guard Headquarters, in 2013 at the border crossing points localized on the EU’s external land border, 31.8 million people checked in while leaving or arriving in Poland. 80% of that number were foreigners. Compared with 2012, on the EU’s external border on the territory of Poland, there were 13.8% more check-ins.

Figure 2. The purpose of the visit of the foreigners crossing the Polish Eastern border



Source: own work on the basis of data obtained from the Polish Central Statistical Office.

On the Polish-Russian, border the number of foreigners increased by 62.5%, and of Poles by 41.6%. This increase is related to the ratification of the local border traffic agreement with Russia, which entered into force on July 27, 2012. The Polish-Belarusian border was crossed by 1.2% less foreigners than in the previous year, and by 11.6% more Poles. On the Polish-Ukrainian border, 16.1% percent more foreigners and 10.7% less Poles checked in. According to the Polish Central Statistical Office, both foreign-

¹¹ A. Malkowska, *Wzmacnianie kapitału społecznego regionu przygranicznego na przykładzie województwa zachodniopomorskiego*, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego no. 840, Ekonomiczne Problemy Usług no. 114, Szczecin 2014, p. 158.

¹² A. Malkowski, *Rola granicy...*, p. 129–133.

¹³ K. Dudzińska, A. Dyner, *Mały ruch graniczny między obwodem kaliningradzkim a Polską – wyzwania, szanse i zagrożenia*, Policy Paper no. 29 (77), Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, Warszawa 2013; A. Malkowski, *Mały ruch graniczny jako element kształtowania współpracy transgranicznej*, Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu, Polityka Ekonomiczna no. 348, Wrocław 2014, p. 90–199.

ers and Poles crossed the Polish section of the EU's external border mostly for shopping purposes. In 2013, this was the main purpose declared by 82.6% of the foreigners and by 87.6% of the Poles crossing this particular border.¹⁴

In 2013, the border traffic in West Pomeranian Voivodeship was over 233,000 people, with over 28,000 foreigners coming to Poland. These data apply to the foreigners crossing the maritime border of our country as well as to the passengers using the Goleniów Airport. The human traffic at the land border crossings is not monitored as a consequence of the Poland's participation in the Schengen Area and the abolishment of the internal border control.

The size of the border traffic on certain sections of the borders is influenced by many factors. Among them, there are undoubtedly the more or less rigorous border regulations, which is especially visible on the Western border. The relaxation of the border regulations resulted many times in the increased border traffic between Poland and GDR, and later Germany. Shopping trips to the malls located near the border became commonplace for both Germans and Poles.

The character of the border traffic, however, did change. Before 2004, it was concentrated around the border marketplaces located on the Polish side. An important factor in the development of the border traffic at that time was the possibility of shopping in duty-free zones, which actually resulted in a dynamic development of the border traffic in the small ports of the Szczecin Lagoon or directly by the Baltic Sea. The ferries sailing in the Szczecin Lagoon or the Baltic Sea were the places to shop for cheap alcohol and cigarettes, which were then sold on the local marketplaces. Poland's admission into the EU put a stop to these practices.

Currently, the border traffic at the Western border is entirely different in character. The border marketplaces lost a significant number of customers to the shopping malls developing along the border. Nonetheless, they survived the difficult period, and they continue to be a place where German tourists shop. It is especially visible in West Pomeranian Voivodeship. 94% of the surveyed merchants from Osinów Dolny, Krajnik, and Lubieszyn declare that the number of customers is lower than in the 1990s. In the respondents' opinion, it decreased by over 90%, which is also directly related to the strong competition from the shopping malls in Szczecin and Schwedt. At the same time, the respondents state that the number of customers at the border marketplaces has been stable for a few years now. German pensioners who look for lower prices and at the same time appreciate the quality of Polish products constitute the vast majority of the clientele.

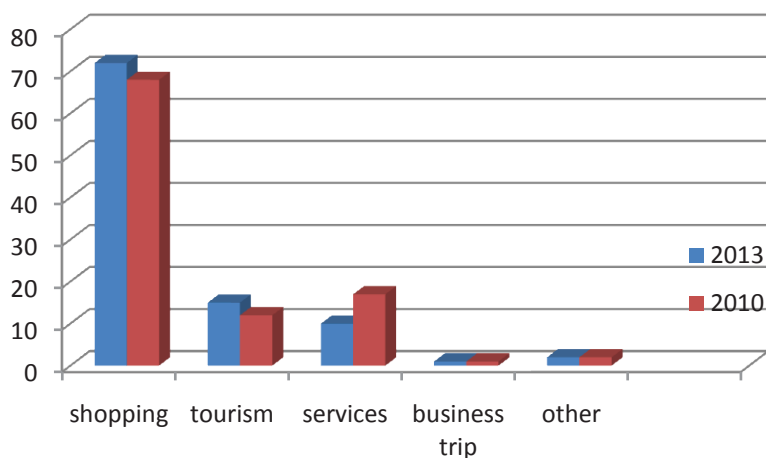
The Polish merchants from the border marketplaces state that the goods popular among German customers are, invariably, Polish food, cigarettes, alcohol, and handicraft.

German respondents declare that they come to Poland because of the lower prices

¹⁴ *Ruch graniczny oraz przepływ towarów i usług na zewnętrznej granicy Unii Europejskiej, na terenie Polski w 2013*, Warszawa–Rzeszów 2014, p. 36–38.

(80% in 2010, 76% in 2013). As their main purpose for coming to Poland, they list shopping (68% in 2010, 72% in 2013).

Figure 3. German tourists' purpose of their visit to Poland in 2010 and 2013



Source: own work.

According to the declarations of German tourists, they spend up to EUR 100 per trip (64% in 2010, 60% in 2013) and they come to Poland once or twice a month (80% of the responses). Only 10% of the respondents declared they spent more than EUR 200 in Poland. According to the merchants selling at the border marketplaces, there is a clear increase in the traffic on every first and fifteenth day of a month, and before holidays.

Another reason to visit West Pomeranian Voivodeship is the availability of numerous services. As the respondents declare, the most popular services are hairdressers, dentists, and car repairs. In the border towns, those kinds of services are available at every street.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the so called medical tourism. In Szczecin alone, there are over 800 registered medical practices. German citizens often opt for West Pomerania to take care of their health. The already mentioned dental services or rehabilitation holidays at the Polish seaside are gradually becoming the tourism product of the region. The development of the medical tourism is connected with a high overall assessment of the quality of the available services. Over 86% of the respondents described the quality of services offered in Poland as very good and good.

According to the Medical Tourism Chamber of Commerce, an average of 300,000 foreigners visit Poland, and the number might increase annually by 10–15%. In a short time, Poland could become a leader in medical tourism. According to estimates,

the value of the medical tourism segment in Poland in 2011 was close to PLN 800 million and the number of foreign patients – over 320,000.¹⁵ On average, medical tourists in Poland spend EUR 1,460 on medical services.

Essential in the development of medical tourism in West Pomeranian Voivodeship is the West Pomeranian Medical Cluster. Its objective is to design and implement innovative technological and organizational solutions thanks to the integration of business and science, in order to achieve high quality thanks to the competitive advantage of the West Pomeranian medical sector. According to the members of the cluster, in order to promote medical tourism, Poland should build on the following strengths:

- competitive prices – treatments cheaper by 50% or even 80%,
- modern clinics offering high quality services,
- highly qualified medical and nursing staff,
- excellent infrastructure and accommodation base,
- implementation of modern methods and providing medical offices with advanced equipment,
- short waiting time for treatments and procedures.

More and more frequently, the inhabitants of West Pomeranian Voivodeship go to German clinics. This was made possible thanks to the directive of the European Parliament dated March 9, 2011 on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare. It was created as an element of the EU's common market, and its objective is to improve the movement of services. The directive was introduced in Poland on November 15, 2014 and it allows the access to medical facilities on the other side of the Oder. Previously, the most frequented facility was the maternity clinic in Schwedt. Right now, German clinics offer a wide range of treatments reimbursed by the Polish National Health Fund. Among other options, patients from West Pomerania can undergo ophthalmic procedures in a private clinic in Pasewalk. According to the facility's representative, cataract surgeries are very popular among the patients. Waiting time is no longer than three weeks, which is very important since in Poland the patient has to wait two or three years for a refundable procedure. The cataract surgery costs about PLN 2,500 and it is reimbursed by the National Health Fund. The patient is transported from Poland to Germany and back.

The development of medical tourism is a new phenomenon on the Polish-German border. This area is especially attractive for this type of activity. Attractive landscape, numerous health resorts, specialized medical staff, all contribute to creating perfect conditions for the development of the healthcare industry. The road infrastructure, along with airline and ferry services, allows an easy access not only for the inhabitants of Mecklenburg, but also for Scandinavians, and even visitors from other continents. It is pro-

¹⁵ Rutkowska M., *Rozwój i potencjał rynku turystyki medycznej w Polsce i na świecie*, www.trendywturystyce.pl, 2014.

jected that not only Europeans will migrate for medical purposes. According to estimates, in 2013 as many as 750,000 Americans may have travelled abroad for treatments, which is caused by high prices of specialized medical services in the USA. For example, the average cost of a cataract surgery in Poland is USD 1,200, in the UK – USD 5,000, and in the USA – USD 6,500. The cost of dental implants in a Polish clinic is USD 780, in the UK – USD 4,200, in the USA – USD 4,000.¹⁶ According to a report by TechSciResearch, the short waiting time and the high quality of service are the most significant factors in the development of the Polish medical tourism market.¹⁷

Many inhabitants of West Pomeranian Voivodeship shop in Germany. In 2010, 12% of the respondents in the survey declared that they visited Germany to shop at least once a year. 10% stated that they went shopping in Germany at least three times a year. In 2013, the percentage of the shoppers visiting Germany once a year slightly decreased to 10%. It can be explained by the unfavorable exchange rate of PLN to EUR. The respondents invariably declared they went to Germany to buy household chemicals, selected food products (coffee, sweets), and textiles. The shopping malls in Berlin and Schwedt are very popular with Polish customers. Polish tourists also use the beaches and the bathing areas on the German side of the Szczecin Lagoon, which is made easier owing to a well-developed road network in Germany. More and more often, German entrepreneurs prepare their commercial offers in Polish language. In the Ozeaneum in Stralsund, or the Ueckerermünde Zoo, the staff speaks Polish, which encourages mutual contacts.

Conclusions

The development of cross-border cooperation is a necessity in the integrated Europe. The new generations, not burdened with the memories of the cold war and the unconcealed mistrust between the nations, do not want to live in the past. The future of the European integration is the consolidation of markets and the creation of new social and political connections between the nations. The border regions play a crucial role in the creation of the new European order. As contact areas, they become the territories of the diffusion of new international cooperation concepts. They become a place where a competitive European economy can be created, and where cooperation is not just a slogan, but it becomes everyday reality.

The socio-economic development of the Western borderland is certainly based on the coexistence with our German partner, made easier through both the well-organized cross-border contacts within the efficiently functioning Pomerania Euroregion, as well as the informal ones.

¹⁶ www.tourmedica.pl/turystyka-medyczna (21.02.201).

¹⁷ *Poland Medical Tourism Market 2013*, www.techsciresearch.com/779 (13.03.2015).

The size of the border traffic in West Pomeranian Voivodeship is difficult to estimate, as there is no institution which would analyze it. According to the author's observations, Polish citizens visiting Germany, and German citizens visiting Poland are now everyday phenomena. The parking lots by the border shopping malls are full of the cars with German license plates.

The Germans appreciate the low prices in Poland and they use the services of Polish enterprises. The Poles look for high quality, well-known brand products in the shops of Schwedt or Berlin.

Berlin and Szczecin are becoming the leading metropolises in this part of the German-Polish borderland. The development of innovative services in this region could potentially intensify the border traffic and result in higher revenues. This concerns especially tourism, including medical tourism. The West Pomeranian Medical Cluster is an exemplary initiative leading to a steady growth of the cross-border connections in the region. Medical tourism might become a very important factor in the development of the cross-border region. The first experiences are very promising. Both German and Polish citizens are benefitting from the new opportunities stemming from the cross-border directive.

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Abstract

International cross-border and interregional cooperation is an important factor in the development of the regions divided by a border. It is the element which changes the perception of the border. It becomes the stimulus to enter into a social and economic cooperation. The cross-border cooperation is one of the crucial elements of the regional policy. An important part of the cross-border contacts is the increase in border traffic and the development of the border trade. The aim of this article is to present selected issues connected with the development of the border traffic as an important factor shaping the cross-border cooperation and the development of the cross-border region. The article presents selected results of the research conducted in the borderland area between Poland and Germany.

Ruch graniczny jako czynnik rozwoju regionu przygranicznego na przykładzie województwa zachodniopomorskiego

Międzynarodowa współpraca transgraniczna i międzyregionalna stanowi istotny czynnik rozwoju obszarów podzielonych granicą. Jest elementem zmieniającym postrzeganie granicy. Staje się bodźcem do nawiązywania współpracy społecznej i gospodarczej. Współpraca transgraniczna jest jednym z istotnych elementów polityki regionalnej. Ważnym elementem kontaktów transgranicznych jest wzrost ruchu granicznego i rozwój handlu przygranicznego. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie wybranych zagadnień związanych z rozwojem ruchu granicznego, jako ważnego czynnika kształtującego współpracę transgraniczną i rozwój regionu transgranicznego. Artykuł przedstawia wybrane wyniki badań, prowadzonych na pograniczu polsko-niemieckim.