

The cross-border crime and security of the movement of goods in the European Union – the role of the Border Guard of the Republic of Poland¹

Jowita Świerczyńska, *Krakow University of Economics*
(Cracow, Poland)

E-mail: swierczj@uek.krakow.pl

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6748-9635

Abstract

Issues related to broadly understood border security are discussed by the EU institutions and Member States, as well as attracting interest from various academic communities. The discussion has multiple dimensions. Regarding the cross-border movement of goods, the role of the security guardian is most frequently attributed to customs authorities, often without acknowledging the importance of another border service, i.e. the border guard. Therefore, the article's aim is to analyse the role of the Border Guard of the Republic of Poland in the process of ensuring the security of the cross-border movement of goods in the European Union and actions to combat cross-border economic crime in the context of movement of people. This article is divided in introduction, two parts presenting the research results, and conclusions. The first part describes the essence of security and threats in the cross-border movement of goods in the context of cross-border movement of people, the second one refers to the role of the Border Guard of the Republic of Poland as the guardian of the security of the European Union's external border. The conclusion presents recommendations for maintaining a high level of protection and border surveillance in the cross-border movement of goods. This article is theoretical, with elements of comparative analysis.

Keywords: security, cross-border movement of goods, border guard, external border, cross-border crime, European Union

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Przestępczość transgraniczna i bezpieczeństwo ruchu towarowego w Unii Europejskiej – rola Straży Granicznej RP

Streszczenie

Kwestie szeroko pojętego bezpieczeństwa granic są przedmiotem dyskusji na forum instytucji unijnych oraz państw członkowskich, są również obszarem zainteresowania różnych środowisk naukowych. Tematyka ta dyskutowana jest wielowymiarowo. Najczęściej w odniesieniu do transgranicznego ruchu towarów rolę strażnika bezpieczeństwa przypisuje się organom celnym, pomijając niejednokrotnie znaczenie działań innej służby, tj. straży granicznej. Stąd też celem artykułu jest analiza roli Straży Granicznej RP w procesie zapewniania bezpieczeństwa w transgranicznym przepływie towarów w Unii Europejskiej oraz w działaniu na rzecz walki z przestępczością gospodarczą, w kontekście transgranicznego przepływu osób. Struktura artykułu obejmuje wstęp, dwie części przedstawiające wyniki badania oraz podsumowanie. W pierwszej części omówiono istotę bezpieczeństwa i zagrożeń w transgranicznym przepływie towarów, druga odnosi się do roli Straży Granicznej RP jako strażnika bezpieczeństwa zewnętrznej granicy Unii Europejskiej. W konkluzjach przedstawiono rekomendacje dla zachowania wysokiego poziomu ochrony w transgranicznym przepływie towarów. Niniejszy artykuł ma charakter teoretyczny, częściowo analityczno-porównawczy.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo, transgraniczny ruch towarowy, straż graniczna, zewnętrzna granica, przestępczość transgraniczna, Unia Europejska

The term *external borders* of the European Union "means the Member States' land borders, including river and lake borders, sea borders, airports, river ports, sea ports and lake ports, provided that they are not internal borders", i.e. the common borders of the EU (Regulation (EU) 2016/1624: art. 2, point (1); Regulation (EU) 2016/399: art. 2, point 2). The rules governing the crossing of borders are laid down in the provisions of the Schengen *acquis*, constituting the integral part of the EU's *acquis*. The total length of the external border of the EU is 44,752 km, including the land border of 12,033 km. There are 1,863 authorised border crossing points (BCPs), broken down into: 451 BCPs at the external land border, 782 BCPs at the external sea border and 630 BCPs at the external air borders (Frontex 2019: p. 17). Since 1 May 2004, the Polish national border has been an important section of the EU's external border. As a result of Poland's accession to the European Union, the Polish southern and western borders became internal borders, and a major part of the eastern border turned into the external border of the EU (see, for example: Suduł 2018). At present, the EU's external border in Poland comprises the borders with the Russian Federation – 232.04 km, with the Republic of Belarus – 418.24 km, with Ukraine – 535.18 km, and the sea border – 500.94 km. Border traffic is very dynamic, regarding the movement of passengers and goods. Therefore, ensuring security in the cross-border movement of goods is a crucial task of border authorities, performed within the border surveillance function. The performance of the border surveillance function is particularly important fiscally (illicit trade in goods entails losses for national budgets and the EU budget due to unpaid customs duties and taxes), socially (the placing on the market of dangerous products gives rise to threats to health or, in many cases, poses a life-threatening risk to potential consumers) and economically (the protection of legally registered traders pursuing lawful economic activities against unfair competition).

In Poland, the key forces combating cross-border threats include the Tax and Customs Service (pl. *Stuzba Celno-Skarbowa*), a part of the National Revenue Administration (pl. *Krajowa Administracja Skarbowa*), and the Border Guard (pl. *Straż Graniczna*), under the authority of the Minister of the Interior and Administration. The attribution to customs authorities of the function of a guardian in the cross-border movement of goods is widespread and results from the fact that customs has a complete overview and control responsibility for all the goods passing through the customs borders. However, the role of the Polish Border Guard (PBG) tends to be undervalued, whereas this front-line service is responsible for the detection, law enforcement, investigation and prevention of border crimes and petty offences, including those related to the cross-border movement of goods.

The aim, hypothesis and research methods

The aim of the article is to analyse the role of the PBG in the process of ensuring the security of the cross-border movement of goods in the European Union and actions to combat cross-border economic crime in the context of movement of people. The research hypothesis has been formulated as follows: the Border Guard, having regard to the significance of the protective function for security, undertakes effective measures for the fighting cross-border economic crime, thus playing a significant role of the guardian of the economic and external border security of the EU. To achieve the article's aim, the author reviews various literature sources regarding security and acts of secondary legislation and analyses statistical data published by the Border Guard of the Republic of Poland. The approach adopted includes the application of the following research methods: analysis, synthesis, comparison, deductive reasoning.

The subject is an important problem from the perspective of the EU's development, due to the existing conditions, broadly understood border security of the EU has become more important than ever before. The state of research on the significance of the PBG activities for the process of ensuring the security of the cross-border movement of goods is not common knowledge, because the service tends to be perceived through the prism of border checks on persons, combating illegal immigration or international terrorism. It must be noted that the article is not aimed at preparing an exhaustive description or explaining all the research dimensions of the phenomenon under examination. The presented considerations should be treated as the starting point for further in-depth analysis of the indicated problem. The conclusions are primarily of scientific and cognitive quality.

The security and threats in the cross-border movement of goods, and border management

One of the main objectives pursued by all the EU Member States is the single European market (internal market) that, despite the lack of internal border controls, guarantees security. The term *security*, albeit widely used, has no uniform determination of its substance. It is a concept with a wide range of meanings, varying definitions and ways of understanding

it, considered from various perspectives. Etymologically, the word *security* tends to be derived from the Latin *sine cura* (*securitas*) (Zięba 2004: p. 27), or "without care", without sufficient protection, which means a worry-free state giving one the feeling of confidence (Zięba 1997: p. 33). Security is a state giving a person the feeling of confidence and guarantee of maintaining it as well as a chance for improvement (Bączek 2006: p. 11–14). Security is a multifaceted concept, one of the facets being the economic dimension. Such approach to security could concern a wide range of economic activities on micro- or macroeconomic scale. Undoubtedly, issues related to the international movement of goods, thus, to security at the EU's external borders, are of special importance here. The broadly understood border surveillance and protection includes areas such as economic protection, i.e. combating all phenomena hindering economic development. The EU treats security as its policy foundation, and economic security is one of its pillars. In 2004, the Council of the EU adopted the *Hague Programme*, with a major role of fighting crime in international trade in goods. Abuse, e.g. actual or intended avoidance of the payment of customs duties on imported goods, is extremely dangerous from the point of view of protecting the economic interests of individual Member States as well as of the EU as a whole (see: Council of the European Union 2005). *Cross-border security* is a state (process) resulting from all activities and measures aimed at ensuring security in the crossing of borders by persons, all goods and vehicles (including aircraft, vessels and land vehicles) between at least two state actors (Serdakowski 2015: p. 29). With reference to the above-mentioned definition, the cross-border security of the European Union should be understood as a process resulting from all measures taken by border authorities with a view to providing (physical, technical, social, health, economic, environmental) security in the crossing of the EU's external border. One effect of the security of the cross-border movement of goods is ensuring equal opportunities for all exporters or importers operating in accordance with the applicable law. It must be borne in mind that such entities include not only companies adapting their business methods and willing to pay the costs necessary to lawfully engage in import or export, but also traders deliberately neglecting applicable regulations in order to quickly make a profit or gain a competitive advantage (Świerczyńska 2016: p. 212).

Effective protection of legal imports contributes to the level of security, e.g. in its economic dimension. The European Union has a system, named as *European integrated border management* (EU IBM). The European Commission defines the EU IBM as "national and international coordination and cooperation among all relevant authorities and agencies involved in border security and trade facilitation to establish effective, efficient and coordinated border management at the external EU borders, in order to reach the objective of open, but well controlled and secure borders" (European Commission WWW). The EU IBM consists of components such as: border control (border checks and border surveillance); the detection of cross-border crime and conducting investigations in cooperation with all authorities competent for maintaining law and order; cooperation between various services involved in border management (e.g. border guards, customs authorities, the police); international cooperation, the coordination and coherence of activities carried out by the Member States and the Union institutions and other bodies (Regulation (EU) 2016/1624: art. 4).

The European external border management is executed at the EU and national levels. At the EU level, border management and countering cross-border crime is the responsibility of the *European Border and Coast Guard Agency*, commonly known as *Frontex*. The Agency's mission is ensuring, together with the Member States, effective external border control and security (Frontex WWW). The main legal basis for the operations of its officers is the *Schengen Borders Code*, laying down detailed rules governing border controls and the requirements to be fulfilled by third-country nationals subject to border checks (Regulation (EU) 2016/399). At the level of individual Member States, border surveillance is the responsibility of the border guard or the border police. *Frontex* and the "national authorities of the Member States responsible for border management, including coast guards to the extent that they carry out border control tasks, and the national authorities responsible for return [...] constitute the European Border and Coast Guard" (Regulation (EU) 2016/1624: art. 3; Regulation (EU) 2019/1896: art. 4). The Guard ensures "national and international coordination and cooperation among all relevant authorities and agencies involved in border management" (European Commission WWW; Frontex 2019: p. 20). For the Member States, the functioning of *Frontex* guarantees support in the border surveillance tasks carried out by them: joint and well-coordinated actions, consisting in an appropriate division of roles based on the expertise and experience of relevant human resources and equipment, are always more likely to be successful (Tracz 2015: p. 255; see also: Szymańska 2018). The *European Border and Coast Guard Agency FRONTEX* and the Member States' border authorities can be collectively referred to as the EU border administration.

"The effective management of the EU's external borders is of strategic importance to the Union and, in particular, to the functioning of the Schengen area. Of key value to EU's internal and external policies, well-functioning external borders enable the EU to prosper through trade with the wider world while protecting our safe and secure European area of free movement from existing and emerging challenging situations at the external borders" (Frontex 2019: p. 16). The security of external borders is affected by geopolitics (e.g. "the Russian invasion in Ukraine, sovereignty disputes, conflicts over energy, scarce resources and spheres of influence"), migration, cross-border crime (e.g. the smuggling of drugs, tobacco, weapons, natural resources), terrorism and hybrid threats, fluid and multidimensional in nature, which requires a flexible approach to their understanding, analysis and management (Frontex 2022: p. 6). A security threat is a potential or existing phenomenon or event adversely affecting the value system and interests, jeopardising the living and health standards, private property, public assets and the environment (Jakubczak, Flis 2006: p. 98; see also: Jurczak, Kibysz 2021). Cross-border threats are determined nationally, internationally and globally, with various external and/or internal sources. They are strictly related to border traffic, socio-political and economic factors.

In the cross-border movement of goods, threats may stem from:

- price differentials between national markets in specific goods, encouraging illegal activities;

- inappropriate border management – insufficient or inappropriate control of the movement of goods by the border authorities responsible for such tasks;
- no control of the transport of goods;
- false, insufficient knowledge or the lack of knowledge of trading partners;
- possible marketing of goods representing unfair competition, goods infringing intellectual property rights, goods inconsistent with the EU standards, posing risks to life or health;
- the geographical location facilitating the commitment of cross-border crimes;
- increased smuggling risks due to migration processes;
- low sanctions for crimes related to the smuggling and distribution of illegally imported goods;
- the lack of social condemnation of illegal marketing of goods.

In the cross-border movement of goods, the most significant threat to economic security is economic crime, i.e. smuggling. In legal terms, smuggling primarily includes various forms of customs and border wrongs (tax offences and petty offences). From the point of view of finance, due to budgetary revenue foregone, smuggling affects the level of economic security (Książopolski 2011: p. 42–43). Smuggling becomes economically profitable to those engaged in such activities as it generates much higher gains than lawfully earned profits (Ruszczyk 2016: p. 27). As regards the range of smuggled goods by type, smuggling concerns trafficking in spirits, tobacco products, motor vehicles, narcotic drugs and intoxicants, fuel, medicines and psychotropic substances, environmentally hazardous waste and chemicals, radioactive materials, weapons, ammunition and explosives, textiles and clothing, antiques and works of art, animals and endangered species of wildlife, counterfeit goods infringing intellectual property rights, jewellery, gold and articles of precious metal, means of payment and foreign exchange (Wysocki 2003: p. 100–101). From the point of view of the legality of marketing, smuggling is broken down into trafficking in illicit goods, regarding products legally banned from trade *in extenso* (e.g. drugs, counterfeit goods), and trafficking in licit goods, concerning products legally traded in international commercial transactions (e.g. cigarettes, alcohol, vehicles) (Oczkowski 2010: p. 117–118). In terms of method, there is large-scale smuggling, most frequently organised and incorporated into structures of organised crime, and unorganised (small-scale) smuggling, mainly "ant smuggling" (so-called "rucksack smuggling"), concerning individuals repeatedly carrying relatively small quantities, usually of a regional (local) nature (Bednarski 2011: p. 17–18). The main tool used for combating economic crime in the cross-border movement of goods is border control carried out by competent border authorities.

The Border Guard of the Republic of Poland as the guardian of the economic security of the EU's external border

The EU legislation defines *border guard* as "any public official assigned, in accordance with national law, to a border crossing point or along the border or the immediate

vicinity of that border who carries out [...] border control tasks" (Regulation (EU) 2016/399: art. 2, point 14). Pursuant to the *Polish Border Guard Act* (Ustawa 2022/1061: art. 1): it is a uniform, uniformed and armed force, responsible for national border surveillance, border traffic control, countering crime (the investigation, prevention and detection of crimes and petty offences and law enforcement towards perpetrators thereof, in areas such as goods and excise products, items specified in provisions concerning weapons and ammunition, explosives, the protection of cultural goods, combating drug abuse) and the prevention of and fight against illegal migration. After Poland's accession to the EU and commencement of full implementation of the *Schengen Agreement*, the role and the manner of performing tasks by the PBG in Poland fundamentally changed. Poland's eastern border – with Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation – also became the external border of the EU, which involved responsibility not only for the national security of Poland, but also for the security of the whole united Europe (Socha et al. 2012: p. 43). Upon accession, Poland became a vital element of the system protecting the EU economy and European societies. The integrality of particular sections of the national borders of the Republic of Poland with the EU's external borders implies the necessity of effective surveillance of national borders, as elements of key importance for ensuring broadly understood security, also in its economic dimension, of the whole territory of the EU. Effective control of the movement of goods at the external borders remains a vital measure for protecting the area without internal border control and significantly contributes to the economic security of the EU. National border surveillance, especially the surveillance of sections representing the external border of the EU as well, is a task whose performance requires the application of various forms, methods, organisational measures, as well as effective and coordinated cooperation with other services. The level of cross-border security is proportional to the quality of cooperation between the PBG and other services and the efficiency of fulfilling its responsibilities (Serdakowski 2015: p. 33). The PBG collaborates with the competent authorities and institutions of the European Union and with border surveillance authorities from other Member States (Zdyb et al. 2015: p. 135). The organisational structure of the PBG was adapted to the performance of the functions assigned. The relevant regional units and the territorial scope of surveillance responsibilities are listed in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Territorial scope of border surveillance by the Polish Border Guard

Regional unit	Territorial scope of border surveillance
Warmińsko-Mazurski Border Guard Regional Unit	surveillance of the section of the national border with the Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation, 198 km 769 m long (the external border of the EU). Officers present at 8 border crossing points.
Podlaski Border Guard Regional Unit	surveillance of the national border between Poland and Lithuania (the internal border of the EU) and of part of the section of the national border with the Republic of Belarus (the external border of the EU). Officers present at 9 border crossing points.

Nadbużański Border Guard Regional Unit	surveillance of the national border with the Republic of Belarus, 171 km 310 m long, and with Ukraine, 296 km 260 m long (the external border of the EU). Officers present at 12 border crossing points.
Bieszczadzki Border Guard Regional Unit	surveillance of the national border with Ukraine, 239 km long (the external border of the EU), and with Slovakia, 134 km long (the internal border of the EU). Officers present at 9 border crossing points.
Karpacki Border Guard Regional Unit	surveillance of the section of the national border between Poland and Slovakia (the internal border of the EU). Only the Border Guard Unit operating at Kraków Airport (John Paul II International Airport, Kraków-Balice) performs tasks at the external border of the EU. Officers present at 2 border crossing points.
Śląski Border Guard Regional Unit	surveillance of the border with the Czech Republic (the internal border of the EU). The Border Guard Unit operating at Katowice Airport (Katowice Wojciech Korfanty Airport, Katowice-Pyrzowice) is the only unit performing tasks at the external border of the EU. Officers present at 1 border crossing point.
Nadwiślański Border Guard Regional Unit	surveillance of air border crossing points: Warszawa – Okęcie, Warszawa – Modlin, Radom-Sadków; Łódź, Bydgoszcz-Szwederowo. Officers present at 5 border crossing points.
Nadodrzański Border Guard Regional Unit	surveillance of the national border with the Federal Republic of Germany, 278 km long, and with the Czech Republic, 438 km long (the internal border of the EU). Officers present at 3 border crossing points.
Sea Border Guard Regional Unit	Surveillance of the national border section 701.07 km long: the sea border – 456.51 km, the section of the sea border between the respective territorial waters: with Germany – 22.22 km, with Russia – 22.21 km; the section of the internal sea border on the Vistula Lagoon – 10.21 km, the section of the internal sea border on Lake Nowowarpieńskie (the Neuwarper See) and on the Szczecin Lagoon – 20.16 km, the section of the land border with Russia – 0.85 km, the section of the land border with Germany – 168.91 km. Officers present at 20 border crossing points.

Source: prepared by the author on the basis of thy website: Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej (W/WW).

The PBG has three types of border crossing points at the external border of the Union: land, sea and air border crossing points. At the external land border of the EU, 1,163.25 km long, Polish border guards serve at 18 border crossing points for road traffic, 8 of which are only intended for passenger traffic (4 – the national border with the Russian Federation, 6 – with the Republic of Belarus, 8 – with Ukraine), 14 border crossing points for rail traffic (3 – the border with the Russian Federation, 5 – with the Republic of Belarus, 6 – with Ukraine), one border crossing point for river traffic (the border with the Republic of Belarus). At the sea border, Polish border guards serve at 18 sea border crossing points (6 of which are only intended for passenger traffic). There are 12 permanent airport border crossing points and 8 other airport border crossing points (5 of which only intended for passenger traffic) (Obwieszczenie 2015/636). As the internal borders can be crossed at any point, it is necessary to provide effective control of the external border of the EU, to ensure the maximum possible level of surveillance and security. The border section

under the surveillance of the PBG is characterised by heavy traffic (see: *Tables 2, 3*). Therefore, it is extremely important to combine fluid traffic flow with a high level of control effectiveness. It is the only way of minimising threats and ensuring a high level of security, especially that Poland's geopolitical location is a factor conducive to cross-border crime.

Table 2: Passenger traffic at border crossing points in 2018-2021

Border section	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	total traffic	% of total traffic	total traffic	% of total traffic	total traffic	% of total traffic	total traffic	% of total traffic
Russia	3,534,899	6.8	3,466,814	6.4	743,525	4.2	234,287	1.2
Belarus	8,955,437	17.1	8,814,753	16.2	3,024,134	16.8	2,180,133	11.2
Ukraine	21,586,753	41.3	21,737,666	40.0	7,819,324	43.4	8,730,051	44.9
sea border	209,628	0.4	168,684	0.3	114,898	0.6	117,549	0.6
air border	18,004,411	34.4	20,204,025	37.1	6,298,666	35.0	8,179,533	42.1
At the external border of the EU	52,291,128		54,391,942		18,000,547		19,441,553	

Source: authors own elaboration based on the Border Guard Headquarters data (see: Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022a: p. 1).

Table 3: Vehicle traffic at border crossing points in 2018-2021

Border section	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	total traffic	% of total traffic	total traffic	% of total traffic	total traffic	% of total traffic	total traffic	% of total traffic
Russia	2,030,561	16.3	1,921,795	17.2	417,383	8.8	135,062	2.6
Belarus	4,256,828	34.3	4,080,523	36.4	1,811,151	38.1	1,574,371	30.9
Ukraine	6,005,765	48.3	5,059,375	45.1	2,463,647	51.2	3,309,101	64.9
sea border	18,078	0.1	14,025	0.1	10,853	0.2	10,151	0.2
air border	124,113	1.0	136,453	1.2	54,815	1.2	72,499	1.4
At the external border of the EU	12,435,345		11,212,171		4,757,849		5,101,184	

Source: author's own elaboration based on the Border Guard Headquarters data (see: Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022a: p. 4).

There was a downward trend in border traffic in 2020-2021, which should not come as a surprise taking into account the travel restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first half of 2022, the Polish section of the external border of the EU was crossed by 16,353,648 persons (up by 156% in comparison with the corresponding period of 2021). The heaviest passenger traffic was noted at border crossing points at the border with Ukraine – 8,370,465 persons (an increase by 136%) (see: Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej 2022b: p. 1). The upward trend was primarily due to the situation in Ukraine and the mass influx of refugees. With regard to vehicle traffic, in the first half of 2022 it grew by 14% (2,605,637 vehicles). In the case of lorries, the number of crossings dropped by 32%, with the most significant decreases noted at the borders with Belarus and Russia, by 47% and 39% respectively (see: Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej 2022b: p. 4). As demonstrated by the data analysis, the land border crossing points account for the dominant share of border traffic, constituting the pivotal element of the system of border crossing points at the section of the external border of the European Union. Combating economic crime in freight traffic across borders primarily involves controls of persons, vehicles, goods. Owing to control and investigation operations, Polish Border Guard manages to intercept significant quantities of illicit and illegal goods. The intensity and scope of such activities are adjusted to updated threat assessments. Border guards have the right to carry out checks on persons, luggage, freight – for the purpose of precluding any possibility of the commitment of crimes or petty offences (MSWiA W/W). Successful surveillance of the external border of the EU depends on the involvement of every border guard. Tables 4 and 5 present the value of goods intercepted and revealed by the PBG.

Table 4: Value of goods intercepted and revealed by the Polish Border Guard (and in cooperation with other services) at the EU's external border section by type of item in 2018–2021 (estimated data, PLN)

Specification	2018	2019	change 2019/2018	2020	2021	change 2021/2020
vehicles	18,884,550	20,106,347	(+) 6%	10,667,340	14,598,547	(+) 37%
alcohol	271,662	49,319	(-) 82%	192,289	54,503	(-) 72%
cigarettes	21,224,622	16,501,559	(-) 22%	33,849,835	41,458,590	(+) 22%
tobacco	607,836	539,442	(-) 11%	1,081,542	1,104,962	(+) 2%
other goods	34,217,801	37,952,544	(+) 11%	6,335,528	18,533,004	(+) 193%
TOTAL	75,206,471	75,149,210	(-) 0.1%	52,126,534	75,749,607	(+) 45%

Source: author's own elaboration based on the Border Guard Headquarters data (see: Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022a: p. 33).

Table 5: Value of goods intercepted and revealed by the Polish Border Guard by place of interception in 2018–2021 (estimated data, PLN)

Border section	2018	2019	change 2019/2018	2020	2021	change 2021/2020
Russia	2,677,596	3,189,219	(+) 19%	1,521,670	1,652,090	(+) 9%
Belarus	35,282,688	32,477,601	(-) 8%	30,872,418	54,054,530	(+) 75%
Ukraine	32,980,736	34,437,707	(+) 4%	19,339,082	18,050,525	(-) 7%
sea border	1,331,811	2,494,403	(+) 87%	230,435	1,092,575	(+) 374%
air border	2,933,640	2,550,279	(-) 13%	162,930	899,887	(+) 452%

Source: author’s own elaboration based on the Border Guard Headquarters data (see: Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022a: p. 33).

In the first half of 2022, at the EU’s external border section, the PBG intercepted goods worth PLN 10,997,161, which meant a fall by 75% as compared to the first half of 2021 (at the border with Russia – by 68%, with Belarus – by 93%, with Ukraine – by 18%, at the sea border – by 40%; in contrast – at the air border there was a rise by 190%). The analysis of interceptions by type of item demonstrates that there was an increase in the case of vehicles and alcohol – by 11% and 46% respectively (at the same time, the value of intercepted cigarettes plunged by 94%) (see: Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej 2022b: p. 35). The situation in Ukraine and tightened surveillance of the border with Belarus (e.g. the construction of a wall) have considerably suppressed smuggling activities from the East, but it is hardly possible to assume that such trend should persist in the future.

Conclusions

Every unit involved in the process of ensuring security performs specific functions. The Border Guard is primarily responsible for prevention, coordination and control, providing information and support. Guarding Poland’s national border, partly constituting the EU’s external border as well, the PBG actively participates in the non-military system of ensuring security not only to the Republic of Poland but also to the whole Union. If the Polish border should be inappropriately protected, such insufficient surveillance would adversely affect the functioning of the single European market and, consequently, entail losses to the EU budget as well as to Poland, whose revenue comes from customs, taxes and from the EU budgetary revenues, as various forms of support for particular sectors of the economy. The uncertain situation at the EU’s eastern borders with Ukraine and Belarus will continue to be challenging to the PBG and

will involve rising pressure towards effective actions of the force with regard to both national and Union security – the PBG should not only combat but also predict and anticipate criminal activities posing security threats to the EU market. The aim of the article (i.e. analysis of the role of the PBG in the process of ensuring the security of the cross-border movement of goods in the European Union and actions to combat cross-border economic crime in the context of movement of people) has been achieved, and the adopted hypothesis – confirmed.

Cross-border crime will not disappear, it will continue to evolve and influence the EU as an attractive market for illicit and illegal goods. Criminals will take all opportunities, whether domestically or beyond national borders, using modern technologies and new *modi operandi* to pursue their goals and avoid detection. The diversity of cross-border criminal activities is based on a low-risk and high-profit business model. "Criminals on both sides of the border work together to increase their activities in the EU criminal market by exploiting opportunities in third countries as well as in EU Member States and on external borders" (Frontex 2022: p. 23).

Cross-border crimes can be committed anywhere and at any time, in various forms and circumstances. Therefore, the border must always be under surveillance, regardless of the conditions, time of day or season. Defining recommendations for effective border management is not easy, but in the author's opinion, with a view to maintaining the high level of surveillance in the cross-border movement of goods, the PBG should orientate its activities towards:

- increasing the throughput capacity of the existing border crossing points and continuously improving border infrastructure in order to ensure effective control of the movement of goods;
- further digitisation of border control and the development of systems for the acquisition, analysis and distribution of information on suspicious phenomena;
- risk profiling in border control, supported by ongoing investigative and intelligence activities;
- striving to eliminate the overlapping of control activities with those carried out by other services;
- pursuing real-time access to information based on a single search query to all (operating, analytical and ancillary) databases;
- intensifying cooperation with other national control services and border authorities of the neighbouring countries in order to effectively protect the created system of the resilience of the external border;
- optimal number and quality of officers in service, for the pace of carrying out border checks to be adequate to traffic intensity – it is advisable to monitor the utilisation of human resources at border crossing points;
- introducing uniform procedures and quality standards for handling traffic at all border crossing points, as well as ensuring comprehensible and easily accessible information on the applicable rules to be followed at a border crossing point by persons who cross the border.

Jowita Świerczyńska – PhD in economic sciences, Assistant Professor at the Krakow University of Economics, Department of International Economics, College of Economics, Finance and Law, Institute of Economics. Research interests: economic security of international trade, customs system of the EU, international supply chains, changes in international business primarily caused by globalisation and regionalisation.

Jowita Świerczyńska – doktor nauk ekonomicznych, adiunkt na Uniwersytecie Ekonomicznym w Krakowie, Katedra Międzynarodowych Stosunków Gospodarczych, Kolegium Ekonomii, Finansów i Prawa, Instytut Ekonomii. Zainteresowania badawcze: bezpieczeństwo ekonomiczne obrotu międzynarodowego, system celny UE, międzynarodowe łańcuchy dostaw, zmiany zachodzące w sferze biznesu międzynarodowego, powodowane zjawiskami globalizacji i regionalizacji.

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