

AIR TRANSPORTATION IN TRANSITION. POST-SOCIALIST COUNTRIES ON THE WAY TO HYPERMOBILITY?

Piotr Trzepacz

Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

piotr.trzepacz@uj.edu.pl

***Abstract.** Post-socialist countries in Central Europe have experienced a major political, social and economic transformation over the last twenty years. This transformation has affected virtually all facets of life including air transportation. The sector has experienced changes in passenger volume and the network of destinations. Several countries in the former Eastern Bloc have deregulated their air travel markets, which has prompted a number of low-cost carriers to enter their markets. The purpose of the research is to identify the factors responsible for the growth (dynamics and directions) of the air transportation sector in post-socialist countries in Central Europe.*

Чжепач П. Трансформація повітряного транспорту. Постсоціалістичні країни на шляху до гіпермобільності? Протягом останніх двадцяти років постсоціалістичні країни Центральної Європи зазнали значних політичних, соціальних та економічних трансформацій. Ці трансформації торкнулися практично всіх аспектів життєдіяльності населення, включаючи повітряний транспорт. У секторі відбулися зміни у обсягах пасажирських перевезень та маршрутної мережі. Кілька країн колишнього Східного блоку дерегулювали свої ринки повітряних перевезень, що дозволило вийти на них цілому ряду дешевих перевізників. Метою дослідження є виявлення факторів, що зумовлюють зростання (динаміку і напрямки) сектору авіаперевезень в постсоціалістичних країнах Центральної Європи.

Introduction. The 21st century has become the age of unprecedented mobility level. Both the frequency as well as the spatial range of travel led to the emergence of the term “hypermobility” (Adams 1995, 1999). The airplane as a mean of transportation for covering large distances became almost its symbol. Although hypermobility is seen mainly as a symptom of modernization, and inseparable to development, it is also hard to ignore the wide spectrum of negative aspects which come along with it. These issues include environmental consequences (Anderson, Bows 2008) or social polarization. The availability to high-frequency travel and its benefits is only restricted to people representing a narrow socioeconomic status. And any restrictions to mobility are treated as factors to social exclusion (Kenyon 2002).

In the time of hypermobility the issue of crossing borders is no longer treated as an obstacle by most travellers. Yet for residents of post-socialist countries such a possibility is still one of new prospects gained with freedom and democracy. These citizens have gained access to free travelling only after the transformation. Elimination of political or even ideological barriers was crucial to developing not only air travel but mobility in general. The pace and directions of air transportation in the region under examination is strongly diversified. The main aim of this paper is their identification and conditions within global trends of mobility.¹

Phases in development of air transportation in post-socialist countries. Since the beginning the analysed region had a special role for aviation. Especially the countries in Central Europe were destined for transportation development due to their transit location. This is mostly why in the interwar period, due to the range of aeroplanes from that era, the central part of Europe was used as a spot for intermediate landing for flights between Eastern and Western Europe.

World War II is considered a separate phase. This was the time for localizing airports due to military reasons along with the front moving east. After WWII ended some of these locations endured, becoming places for future nodes of civil aviation.

The next phase is the time of air travel in countries of Eastern and Central Europe under the influence of the new political system. Centrally planned economy is a system where consumer demand and supply do not matter, which led to local markets being completely dominated by national carriers. After the transition, air travel started to function in the open competition market. It started to prosper also due to a rising popularity of new business models – the low cost carriers (LCCs). This group opened a new phase in air travel for residents of post-socialist countries.

The transformation generated conditions for almost unhindered travelling, but it was the liberalization of transportation and the emergence of LCCs such as Ryanair or Wizz Air which give people means of mobility.

The determinants and scale of air mobility in European post-socialist countries. Aviation is a branch of transportation highly-dependant on infrastructure. This accessibility however, does not mean only the number of available airports. General organization of transport connecting it to other elements of settlement network may lead to a situation where a small number of airports will not be a factor obstructing air travel. This is one of the reasons why the idea to link airports with nearby cities or regions by railway lines is growing (Kołoś et al. 2012).

The network of airports in the discussed countries shows clear differentiation between the western and the eastern part of the region (Fig. 1.). The western part includes areas from Poland to Albania. Apart from central airports with an intercontinental range, there are some regional airports of differing significance, which have even up to 3 million passengers annually (case of Kraków). These types of airports are rare in the eastern part of the area in question. However, it also needs to be said that in such countries as Poland or Romania major existing airports have their accessibility on unsatisfactory levels. A dense network of regional airports,

¹ This dissertation analyzes several post-socialist European countries, and presents statistics on basic features of passenger air travel.

which offer transfers to major nodes, makes up for other shortcomings in the development of other types of infrastructure.

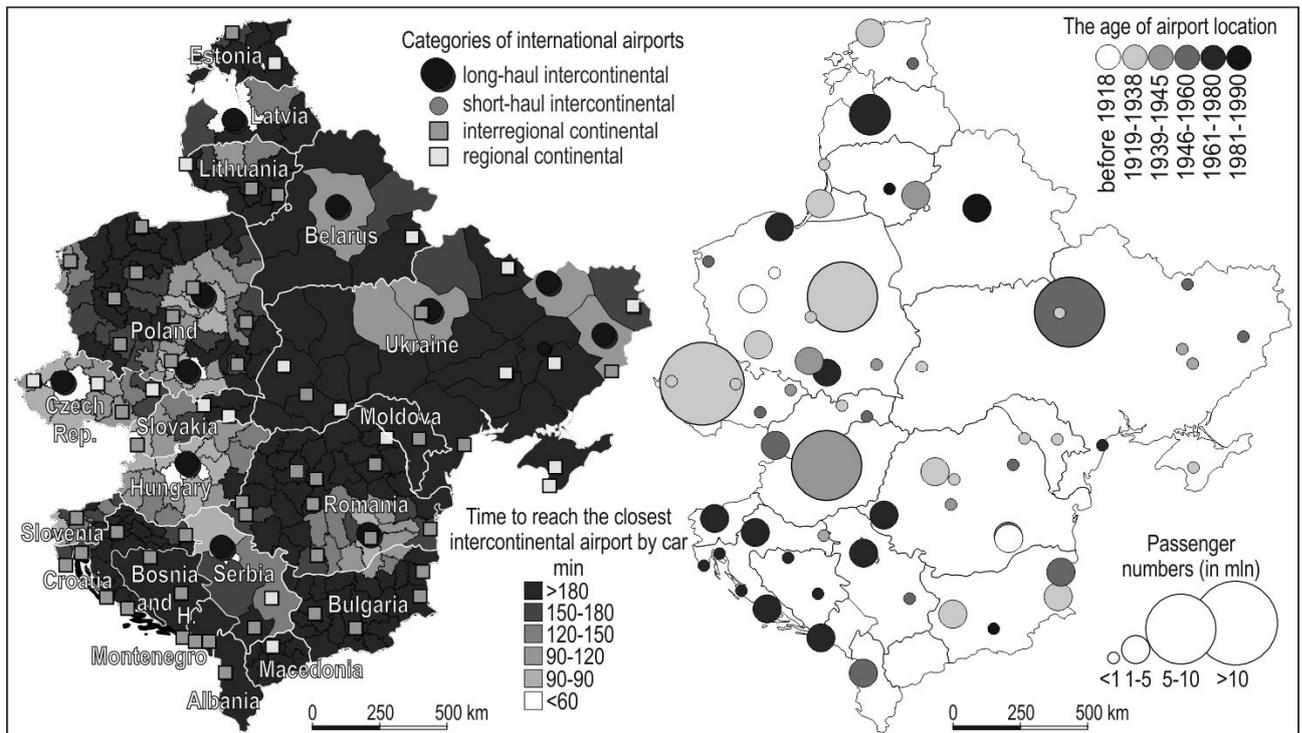


Figure 1 – Airports in selected European post-socialist states
(Source: author's elaboration based on data published by airports; airport access measured based on www.viamichelin.com)

It needs also to be pointed out that spacing of airports in the studied countries clearly corresponds to the spatial features of the settlement network. In places where the settlement network is more monocentric (the capital city is dominating as the biggest city), like in Hungary or Slovenia, the airport network follows this pattern.

In the southern regions of Europe regional airports which are responsible for serving tourist centres by the Adriatic and Black Sea are comparable in size to airports of capital cities. This is a completely different situation than in Central Europe and former Soviet republics, where the central airports are clearly superior, although it changes due to expansion of the LCCs in regional airports and economic issues of national carriers, which treat the capital airport as the main hub.

It is also worth mentioning that since the start of transition no new location for international airport was established in the studied parts of Europe. This brings more questions, e.g. whether the above-mentioned fact should be considered as a sign of delay in decreasing deficiencies in infrastructure, which are one of the fundamental barriers of regional and national development? Or should it be treated as a testimony to saturation of air travel infrastructure and proper localization of its nodes? It needs to be stressed that the main problem for servicing an almost record-breaking volume of passengers was not the number of airports but their throughput capacity and accessibility. It is safe to say that further growth in air travel in these countries will depend on the pace of implementing investment plans which will allow more passengers according to their needs and the expectations of the carriers.

The post-socialist countries are all still characterized by low levels of aviation mobility (Table 1), in spite of the fact that the number of passengers in these countries have increased from 45.5 million in 2004 to 99.8 million in 2011. Unfortunately, when one juxtaposes these numbers with the demographic potential of this group of countries, the result falls behind in comparison to the rest of Europe. Aviation mobility indicator, defined as the number of passengers in relation to the number of residents, is extremely low for all post-socialist countries. In 2011 the EU average was estimated at 1.6 passengers per 1 resident.² Only Latvia and Montenegro had a higher value, and these are countries with relatively low population number. Although all surveyed countries made progress, EU members who liberalized their markets had more significant results. The gap in the level of aviation mobility in Europe is best illustrated by Poland and the Ukraine which together have a population of 80 million people (similar to Germany).

Table 1 – Air transport in selected European post-socialist states

Country	Passenger number (in mln)		Dynamics (2004 – 100)	Index of (air)mobility		LCC share		Share of central airport	
	2004	2011		2004	2011	2004	2011	2004	2011
Postsocialist countries – European Union member states									
Bulgaria	4,3	6,7	156	0,56	0,88	0	27,6	37,1	49,7
Czech Rep.	10,1	12,8	127	0,96	1,22	18,2	25,1	95,3	93,5
Estonia	1,0	1,9	190	0,77	1,46	3,8	27,1	96,5	96,9
Lithuania	1,1	2,7	245	0,33	0,82	0	51,4	90,1	63,5
Latvia	1,1	5,1	464	0,50	2,27	4,3	22,2	99,8	99,9
Poland	6,1	20,7	339	0,15	0,54	16,4	50	67,9	42,6
Romania	3,4	9,8	288	0,16	0,46	0,6	43	78,4	68,7
Slovakia	1,1	1,8	163	0,20	0,33	40,5	73,8	78,4	84,5
Slovenia	1,1	1,4	127	0,55	0,70	5,2	8	97,9	100,0
Hungary	6,4	8,9	139	0,64	0,89	16,8	23,6	99,9	100,0
Average			224	0,48	0,96	13,2	35,2	84,1	79,9
Other postsocialist countries									
Albania	0,6	1,8	300	0,19	0,19	·	·	100,0	100,0
Belarus	0,5	1,0	200	0,05	0,10	·	·	100,0	100,0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0,4	0,6	150	0,10	0,16	·	·	91,3	98,6
Croatia	3,4	5,7	167	0,77	1,29	·	·	41,5	38,4
Macedonia	0,5	0,8	160	0,25	0,40	·	·	93,9	91,1
Moldova	0,4	1,0	250	0,11	0,28	·	·	100,0	100,0
Montenegro	0,7	1,3	186	1,13	2,13	·	·	49,5	48,6
Serbia	2,1	3,1	148	0,29	0,42	·	·	99,1	99,2
Ukraine	5,5	12,7	232	0,12	0,28	·	·	65,3	68,2
Average			199	0,33	0,68	·	·	82,3	82,7

Source: author's elaboration based on data published by airports and Eurostat database and www.oagaviation.com

²The greatest developments in this field are done by the small island countries in Southern Europe: Cyprus 8.6; Malta 8.4, and on the continent to Ireland (5.1) and Denmark (4.6). It is also needs to be emphasized that the Northern European countries are in the international forefront of aviation mobility (Island – 7.7, Norway – 6.6, Switzerland – 5.3).

But the number of passengers in German airports is estimated annually at nearly 190 million, while Polish and Ukrainian airports have only ca. 33.4 million passengers together. This situation is highly complex as the above-mentioned countries play a different role not only on the European level but also globally. It is hard to compare the rank of such a city as Frankfurt am Main with any cities located in the post-socialist countries.

However, one has to bear in mind that in the perspective of globalization the activation of post-soviet countries in the area of air travel should let them avoid being peripheralized. The other thing which needs to be pointed out is that development in aviation mobility depends more and more on regional centres.

The discussed group of countries is strongly diversified in terms of air travel development dynamics (Fig. 2.). There is a clear dichotomy here. Eastern European EU non-member states were particularly hurt by the financial crisis from the late 1990s which mainly hit Russia, and decreased air traffic. The countries in this region which after 2004 joined the European Union have rapidly gained large numbers of passengers through liberalizing air transportation and welcoming low-cost carriers. All post-socialist countries indicated a clear drop in passengers due to the financial crisis, which was especially visible in 2009 results. In most cases this was the first time such a decreased occurred since the early 1990s.

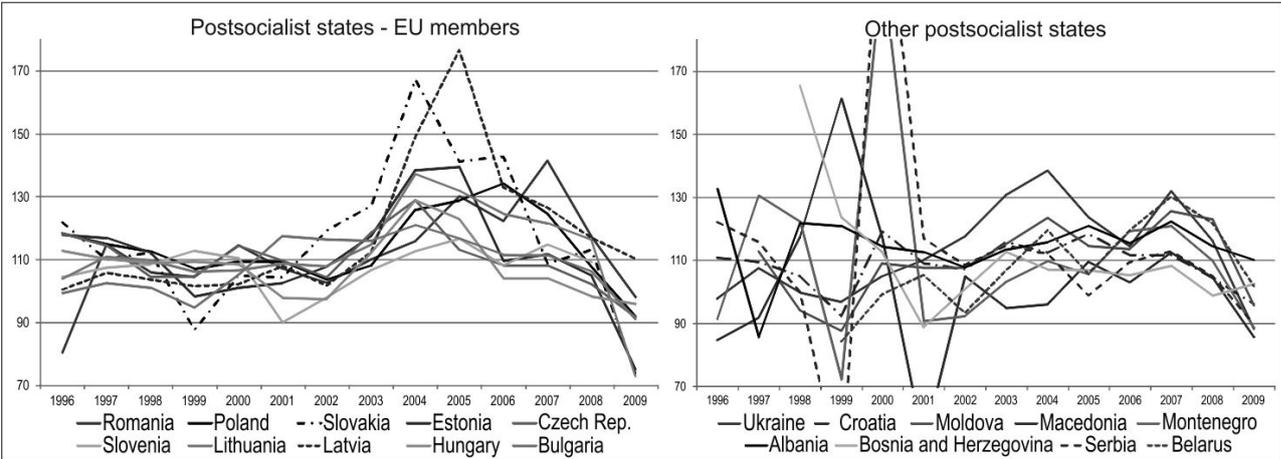


Figure 2 – Dynamics of passenger air transportation development in selected European post-socialist states (1996–2009) (Source: author’s elaboration based on data published by airports and Eurostat database)

Summary – directions and the essence of the air transportation changes in post-socialist countries of Europe. All researched countries troubled by their socialist past noted a rapid increase in the number of passengers after the transformation. One of the most important factor allowing them to get record-breaking results was their EU access, and the integration of the air travel services that came with it. However, in terms of aviation mobility these countries are still on the peripheries of Europe. This stems not only from the amount of air traffic which can be easily explained e.g. by demography. The records in air transportation development mainly depend on the policy of low-cost carriers who mainly control the regional airports.

In case of post-soviet countries it is hard to speak of hypermobility, as the rapid development in air transportation does not correlate with success in terms of socioeconomic development. It is more a result of a demand rooted in no alternatives for economic migration to more developed countries in Western and Northern Europe. If the financial crisis stays, it may turn out that the growth of air travel in post-socialist countries and the increase in mobility will be very short-termed. Another aspect worth considering is the psychological barrier which accompanies still many residents from these parts of Europe when planning a trip by plane.

REFERENCES

1. Adams J., 2005, Hypermobility: a challenge to governance, [in:] C. Lyall, J. Tait (eds.), *New modes of governance: developing an integrated policy approach to science, technology, risk, and the environment*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 123–138.
2. Adams J., 1999, The social implications of hypermobility, OECD Env. Directorate, Unclassified ENV/EPOC/PPC/T (99) 3/FINAL/REV1.
- Anderson K, Bows A., 2008, Reframing the climate change challenge in light of post-2000 emission trends, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences*, 366:1882, 3863–3882.
3. Kenyon S., Lyons G., Rafferty J., 2002, Transport and social exclusion: investigating the possibility of promoting inclusion through virtual mobility, *Journal of Transport Geography*, 10, 207–219.
4. Kołoś A., Taczanowski J., Trzepacz P., 2012, Connecting airports with cities. Perspectives of air-rail links development in Central Europe, *Prace geograficzne*, 130, 107–129.

THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT IN UKRAINE AND EU COUNTRIES

Valentyna Smal

Mykola Gogol Nizhyn State University, Nizhyn, Ukraine
vivosmal@mail.ru

***Abstract.** In recent decades, the world economy held radical changes that suggest the formation of a knowledge-based economy. Strengthening of knowledge capacity of economy is an important sign of postindustrial development. The paper consists of results of research of the level of knowledge capacity of economy, defined for the countries and regions in the European Union, as well as Ukraine. Correlation between the level of development of countries and regions and the degree of knowledge capacity of their economy is revealed.*

***Смаль В.В.** Рівень знаннєємності економіки країн і регіонів Євросоюзу та України. Упродовж останніх десятиліть у світовому господарстві відбулись радикальні зміни, що дозволяють говорити про формування економіки знань. Посилення знаннєємності економіки – важлива ознака постіндустріальності розвитку. У статті представлені результати дослідження рівня знаннєємності економіки, визначеного для країн та регіонів Євросоюзу, а також для України. Виявлена залежність між рівнем розвитку країн і регіонів та ступенем знаннєємності їх економіки.*

© V. Smal, 2013