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## The system of cross-border tourism in the Polish-Russian borderland

Tomasz Studzieniecki<sup>a\*</sup>, Tadeusz Palmowski<sup>b</sup>, Valentin Korneevets<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Gdynia Maritime University, ul. Morska 81 – 87, 80 - 225, Gdynia, Poland

<sup>b</sup>University of Gdansk, ul. Bazynkiego 4, 80-309 Gdansk, Poland

<sup>c</sup>Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, 14 A, Nevskogo str. 236041 Kaliningrad, Russia

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### Abstract

The main aim of the paper is to analyse the system of cross-border tourism between Poland and Russia. In order to study the system, interviews and surveys were conducted; statistical data, legal documents and other sources were analysed and interpreted. A model of cross-border tourism was used in this article. The key stakeholders of tourism organisational system were specified and links among them were discussed. In relation to the development of cross-border tourism, five types of cross-border areas were distinguished (frontier zone, cross-border administrative area, Euroregions, eligible area of the European Neighbourhood Instrument, local border traffic). This article presents the functioning of the border, an analysis of border traffic in the years 2002-2014 was performed and the causes of fluctuations in such traffic were given. Also the relation between border formalities and the volume of border traffic was discussed. Cross-border cooperation and the introduction of "small border traffic" were proven to increase significantly the volume of cross-border tourism.

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### 1. Introduction

The development of tourism in the borderland of the two countries is significantly related to cross-border cooperation. The idea of cross-border cooperation was established in Western Europe in the 1950s, it stepped up

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\* Tomasz Studzieniecki. Tel.: + 48 604-99-66-36; fax: +48 58 69-01-210.

E-mail address: [tomaszstudzieniecki@wp.pl](mailto:tomaszstudzieniecki@wp.pl)

when INTERREG, a community initiative, was launched in 1990 (Wassenberg & Reitel, 2015), becoming a tool for developing "Europe without borders", with particular focus on the EU external border (Herrschel, 2011), (Bellini & Hilpert, 2013). Being in the process of integration, cross-border cooperation in Europe is a particular kind of international cooperation (Solarz, 2009) whose frames are specified in terms of territory, subject and object. The effects of cross-border cooperation depend on the efficiency of its organisational system.

## 2. The concept and semantic delimitation of cross-border cooperation

In territorial terms, cross-border cooperation is developed in a cross-border area, i.e. an area that is separated by political borders, and consists of geographic territory of several countries (Palmowski 2007). The substantive scope of cooperation mainly results from international and domestic regulations. The Madrid Convention (1980) lists 16 cooperation areas related to the most important spheres of social life (such as education, culture, tourism). The entities of cross-border cooperation are "subnational participants of international relations" (Szmigiel, 2009), i.e. mostly regional and local authorities.

Cross-border cooperation that does not end at the border of a country, but is "specifically aimed at getting things done and achieving goals together with the organizations on the other side of the border" (Molen & Ietswaart). Cross-border cooperation is an example of a zero-sum game that is beneficial for each of the participants (Korneevets, 2010). Mutual cooperation results in a better economic situation increasing the competitiveness of regions and reduces regional disparities negative towards other regions (Gajdova & Tuleja, 2015).

In relation to EU cohesion policy, cross-border cooperation has become, apart from transnational and interregional cooperation, one of the three pillars of territorial cooperation.

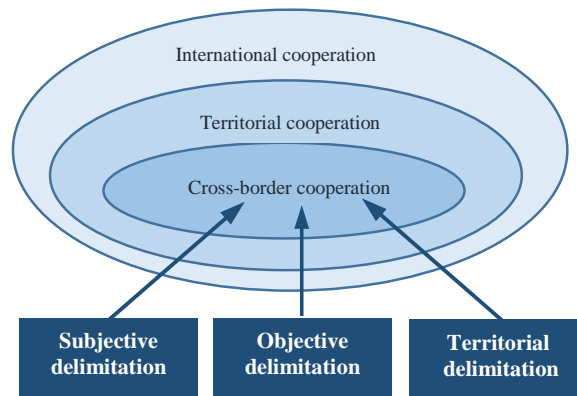


Fig. 1 Semantic delimitation of cross-border cooperation

In a systemic perspective, the cross-border cooperation of every borderland depends on two determinants: general and detailed (DoLzbLasz & Raczuk, 2015). In this context the general determinants cover all the aspects connected with the programming and implementation of cross-border cooperation programs: the support area, allocation of funds, priorities, institutional structures. Particular determinants, concern the other crucial factors: political, environmental, social or economic conditions.

## 3. Organisational model of tourism in the cross-border area

The organisational model of cross-border tourism envisages a direct cooperation between NTA (national tourism administration) and NTO units (national tourism organisation). It covers three levels: national, regional, and local (fig. 1). A particular role is given to the local government administration at regional and local level. The organisational system of tourism in Poland covers the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, the Polish Tourist

Organisation, 16 regional tourist organisations and 127 local tourist organisations. On the other hand, in Russia the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation together with the Federal Agency for Tourism (Rostourism) are responsible for tourism.

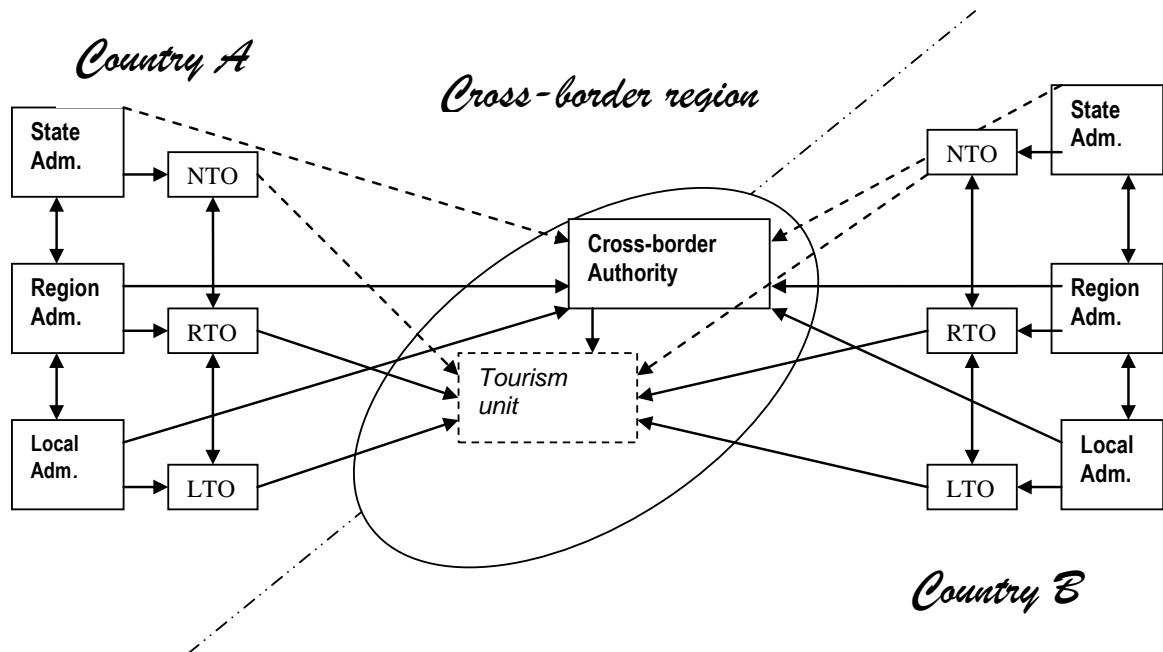


Fig. 2 Organisational model of cross-border tourism

Cross-border authorities, i.e. Euroregional structures that cooperate with organisational units within their statutory tasks, dealing with tourism, play an important role. The cooperating regions differ with regard to their administrative status. Kaliningrad Region is a self-governmental unit with a federal influence and special incentives for enterprises to be actively engaged in foreign trade and tourism. Polish voivodships are of self-government nature with directly elected regional assemblies and regional boards headed by elected marshals. Within Marshal Offices there are relevant tourism departments. They manage tourism together with regional tourism organisations. Local tourism organisations (LTO) operate at municipal and district level. The Ministry of Tourism of Kaliningrad Region is responsible for managing tourism in Kaliningrad Region.

#### 4. Polish-Russian border

The Polish-Russian border is 232.04 km long. The section demarcating Poland's and Russian's territorial sea is 22.21 km long. The Polish-Russian border is the shortest external border of the EU protected by Poland's border guard. The Warmia-Mazuria Border Guard Unit was entrusted with the task of protecting the onshore section of the state border with Kaliningrad Region, which is 198.77 km long. The Marine Unit of Border Guard protects a section of border demarcating the territorial sea with Russia, a section of internal waters on the 10.1 km long Vistula Lagoon and a section of the onshore border with Russia on the Vistula Spit that is 0.835 km long. This is the only part of the border zone situated in the Pomeranian Province. In Russia the border is protected by the Border Service of the Federal Security Service. Five out of eight border crossing points are for passenger border traffic. None of the points is adapted to pedestrian traffic. Trips between Poland and Kaliningrad Region are provided by yearlong bus connections and seasonal connections around the Vistula Lagoon.

## 5. Border traffic between Poland and Russia

Border traffic between Poland and Russia fluctuated. The lowest volume was in 2009, when border formalities were toughened because Poland joined the Schengen area. An upward trend has been observed since 2010.

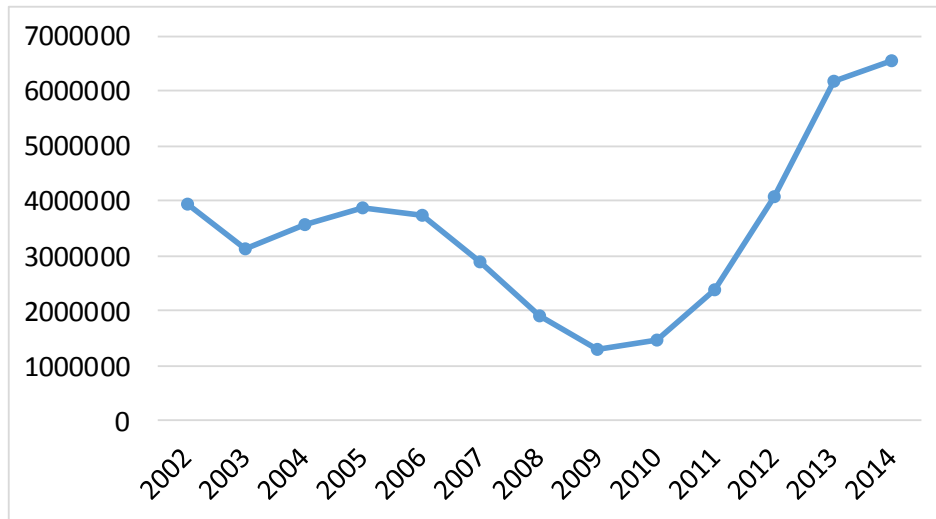


Fig. 3 Border traffic between Poland and Russia in the years 2002-2014

Legal aspects and, as a result, formalities and documents needed to cross the border were a significant factor affecting the dynamic of border traffic. Four phases of border traffic development in Poland and Russia can be distinguished (tab. 1).

Table 1 Phases of border traffic between Poland and Russia

Years	Name	Description	Documents required to cross the border for Polish citizens	Documents required to cross the border for Russian citizens
1991-2003	Border traffic after the USSR collapse	Small border barriers, free or cheap and easy to obtain documents needed to cross the border for Polish citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity card and "semi-passport"</li> <li>• Passport and AB stamp</li> <li>• Passport and visa</li> <li>• Passport and voucher</li> </ul>	Passport and voucher
2003-2007	Border traffic in the context of Poland joining the EU	The toughening of border formalities, both the states introduced visa regime for passengers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passport and visa</li> </ul>	Passport and visa
2007-2012	Border traffic after Poland joined the Schengen area	Further toughening of border formalities, in particular for Russian citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passport and visa</li> </ul>	Passport and Schengen visa
After 2012	Border traffic after MRG was implemented	Liberalisation of border formalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passport and visa</li> <li>• Passport and permit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passport and Schengen visa</li> <li>• Passport and permit</li> </ul>

The small border traffic enabled the residents of the border area to cross the common border regularly for social, cultural or family purposes as well as for reasonable economic purposes. The requirement to possess a visa was lifted and a document called a permit was introduced. Institutions for completing formalities related to obtaining such a permit or a visa were established.

## **6. Polish-Russian cooperation in relation to tourism development**

The Polish-Russian cooperation was formally initiated in 1991 by Russian Federation's and Poland's central entities of the implementing body. Local bodies of government administration were gradually involved into cooperation. The territorial reform of Poland, including the establishment of a three-level administration system, increased the role of governmental provinces that became partners of Kaliningrad Region. The evolution of cooperation meant a gradual involvement of cities and municipalities, and districts to a lesser extent, into cooperation. At the same time the development of economic and social entities was increasingly being intensified. Using the subject criterion, four levels of cooperation can be distinguished.

### *6.1. Governmental cooperation*

Bilateral cooperation is implemented by the Polish-Russian International Committee for Interregional Cooperation and the Polish-Russian Council for Regional Cooperation between Poland and Russia's Kaliningrad Region. The Council's tasks include developing sport and tourism as well as all modes of transport and its infrastructure. The scope of issues of the Tourism Committee attached to the Council, among other things, included cooperation in tourism industry and organising package tours.

### *6.2. Cooperation of regional authorities*

In their official documents, the authorities of the Pomeranian and Warmia-Mazuria Province regarded cooperation with Kaliningrad Region as one of the priorities of foreign cooperation. The cooperation agreement concluded between the Warmia-Mazuria Province and the Administration of Kaliningrad Region of 2001 stipulated that both Parties are to support economic and tourism development through intensification of contacts between economic organisations, organising seminars and conferences, mutual promotion of fairs and tourism events and initiating direct contacts between companies.

### *6.3. Euroregional cooperation*

The establishment of Euroregions contributed to an increase in international cooperation between Poland's and Russian's districts and municipalities in a significant way. Cross-border cooperation was implemented through the following Euroregions: Baltic, Niemen, Lyna-Lawa. The statutes of all Euroregions included provisions related to supporting the development of tourism. In Poland Euroregional structures operated as associations of the local government.

### *6.4. Cooperation of economic entities*

The cooperation of Polish and Russian economic entities was fostered by the Polish-Russian Industrial Chamber of Commerce, which associated partners, promoted fair displays and provided business tourism services. Furthermore, a Polish-Russian Tourism Forum is held regularly. Tourism entities from Russia take part in fair events in Poland such as Gdansk Tourism Fairs. Poland's tourist industry was invited to "Yantour" International Tourism Fairs in Kaliningrad.

In the context of developing cross-border tourism, five types of cross-border areas can be distinguished (frontier zone, cross-border administrative region, Euroregions, eligible area of the European Neighbourhood Instrument, local border traffic area). The local border traffic area is crucial part of the cross-border administrative region (fig. 4).



Fig 4. Delimitation of the Polish-Russian borderland and local border traffic area

Every cross-border area affects the development of tourism in a different way (tab. 2). The cross-border zone is an area of toughened regime and control, which has a restrictive effect on tourism development

The administrative region covering Kaliningrad Region and two Polish provinces is an area of formal cooperation whose frames are determined by signed agreements. The area of the Small Border Traffic covers parts of two provinces and the whole of Kaliningrad Region. In this area cross-border tourism develops more intensively due to lifting the visa obligation. The eligible area of the European Neighbourhood Instrument covers parts of two provinces and the whole of Kaliningrad Region. It determines the territory where EU-funded projects can be implemented.

Three Euroregions operate in the Polish-Russian borderland. Each of them recognised tourism as their statutory objective and has carried out activities to develop it. Tourism projects are implemented in two Euroregions. Half of the Polish Euroregions drew up a development strategy; however, none of the Polish-Russian Euroregions belong to this group. Apart from the border areas listed below, the cooperation of cities and municipalities within partnership agreements fostered the development of tourism. Intensification of this cooperation occurs when joint cross-border projects are implemented.

Tab. 2 Territorial delimitation of different types of the Polish-Russian borderlands

Borderland	Poland	Russia
<b>Frontier zone</b>	15 km in Poland (13 municipalities directly border Russia) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pomerania - 32 municipalities (1 of them borders Russia)</li> <li>• Warmia Mazury – 18 municipalities (12 of them border Russia)</li> </ul>	In Russia a zone 5 -7 km long with the cities of Mamonowo and Bagriatonowski
<b>Administrative region</b>	2 provinces – 39 districts – 239 municipalities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pomerania (20 districts – 123 municipalities)</li> <li>• Warmia Mazury (19 districts, 116 municipalities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kaliningrad Region (9 cities and 13 municipal regions)</li> </ul>
<b>Local border traffic area</b>	20 districts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 in the Pomeranian Province: Puck District, city of Gdynia, city of Sopot, city of Gdansk, Gdansk District, Nowy Dwor Gdanski District, Malbork District;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kaliningrad Region (9 cities and 13 municipal regions)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13 in the Warmia-Mazuria Province: city of Elbląg, Elbląg District, Braniewo District, Lidzbark District, Bartoszyce District, city of Olsztyn, Olsztyn District, Ketrzyn District, Mrągowo District, Wegorzewo District, Gizycko District, GoLdap District, Olecko District</li> </ul>	
<b>European Neighbourhood Instrument eligible area</b>	6 subregions: (5 without the Podlasie Province) – 29 districts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pomerania Province 2 subregions – 8 districts: Tri-City (3 districts), Gdansk (5 districts)</li> <li>WM Province 3 subregions – 21 districts: Elbląg (7 districts), Olsztyn (8 districts), ELk (6 districts)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kaliningrad Region (9 cities and 13 municipal regions)</li> </ul>
<b>Operational territory of Euroregions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Euroregion Niemen - territory of local governments covered by the "Euroregion Niemen" Association - 42 members, including 8 from the WM Province:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 districts - ELk and Olecko</li> <li>6 municipalities – ELk, GoLdap, Olecko, Orzysz, Wegorzewo, Kowale Oleckie</li> </ul> </li> <li>Euroregion Baltic             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 provinces and 46 municipalities</li> </ul> </li> <li>Euroregion Lyna – Lawa             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9 districts (Bartoszyce, Elbląg, Gizycko, GoLdap, Ketrzyn, Lidzbark, Olecko, Olsztyn, Wegorzewo)</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Euroregion Niemen             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 regions (Czarniachowski, Gusiew, Krasnoznamienski, Niestierow and Ozierski)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Euroregion Baltic             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kaliningrad Region</li> </ul> </li> <li>Euroregion Lyna – Lawa             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 regions (Bagiatobowski, Gusiew, Pradwinski, Ozierski) and the city of Mamonowo</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

## 7. Conclusions

The example of the Polish-Russian borderland proves that cross-border tourism may be intensively developed in an area separated with the external EU border. Five modernised border crossing points provide efficient border traffic services. The correctly operating system of cross-border tourism favours tourism development. It is based on the cooperation of the administrative units of central and local government as well as, to a limited extent, tourist organisations from the two countries at regional and local level.

The delimitation of five borderland types allows to understand the specificity of cooperation in each of these areas. Actions taken by government administration cover the whole cross-border administration region and focus on lifting border traffic barriers, with a particular attention to the barriers resulting from Poland's accession to the European Union. An increase in border traffic has been observed since 2010, to a great extent due to the local border traffic. Funds for the Polish-Russian borderland foster financing tourism initiatives. The eligible area of the European Neighbourhood Instrument ensures the implementation of tourism projects. A new Poland-Russia Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 is an opportunity for further tourism development. Previously, this programme covered Poland, Russia and Lithuania. In the new financing period it covers only Poland and Russia. This will allow to step up the bilateral cooperation. Small limits in the development of tourism occur in the border areas of both countries. This results from the strategic functions of these areas for the countries.

The Polish-Russian borderland covered by the small border traffic zone has increased tourist traffic, mostly from Russia to Poland. Demand for trade, overnight stay, gastronomic and even medical services have increased in this area. The small border traffic zone does not include the maritime border. The Vistula Lagoon is a cross-border tourist destination; however, tourism cooperation is still limited there.

The most advanced tourism cooperation occurs in three Euroregions. The Euroregional structures are used for channelling EU funds for regional development and cross-border cooperation from various budgetary lines. However, they lack legal personality. Economic entities are not allowed to join them. A new European legal instrument can be used in the further development of cross-border tourism – an EGTC. Currently, it operates only on the internal EU borders. However, EU provisions state that it can be also used outside the European Union.

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