

SUMMARY

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CONDITIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE ROAD TRANSPORT SECTOR

The factors of SME development in the road transport sector are still not fully understood. Due to the fact that this sector in Poland has been developing intensively since 2004, no comprehensive studies dealing with the indicated issues have been created so far. The source literature provides only a lot of detailed studies regarding the SME sector as a whole. On the other hand, the development of international road hauliers has so far been addressed in the general field or by discussing individual issues. Due to the fact that different companies may have different factors shaping their development, the translation of observations concerning all enterprises in Poland does not fully cover the research topic. In the context of the above considerations, an attempt was made to identify key factors for the development of SMEs in the road freight sector.

The subject of this study was the developmental conditions of small and medium-sized enterprises on the example of the road transport sector in the years 2008-2014. The author will attempt to analyse external and internal determinants that influenced the development of this type of entities in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship. The length of the adopted research period resulted from the fact that continuous development is difficult to achieve in practice. More often, we are dealing with a step increase and sometimes even with the situation of a periodic decrease of some values. It is therefore difficult to capture the right moment to diagnose changes in an enterprise.

The main objective of this dissertation is to identify factors determining the development of small and medium enterprises in the road freight transport sector in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship in 2008-2014 and an attempt to answer the question which factors determined the activity of the indicated entities to the greatest extent.

Realization of research tasks, which the author decided to face, takes place through the verification of four research hypotheses. The main hypothesis states: Development of small and medium enterprises in the road freight transport sector is determined by the socio-economic potential, this applies especially to the labour market, the dynamics of investment and the industrial production. Additional research hypotheses were also assumed:

1. The abolition of haulage restrictions performed by Polish carriers within the domestic markets of other countries of the European Union (cabotage) influenced the development of businesses in the road freight transport sector in border areas.
2. The main barrier to the development of small and medium-sized enterprises of the road freight transport sector is the complex system of laws and regulations.
3. The rates of tolls and taxes on means of transport may affect the growth of investment in new rolling stock.

As part of the secondary data analysis to analyse the development conditions of small and medium-sized enterprises in the road transport sector in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, the analysis of financial and quantitative data was used. The selection of the surveyed enterprises was of specific nature and was carried out in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship on the basis of a database of companies having an international cargo transport license made available by the Office for International Transport.

As a result of the analysis of the data, a research group including 705 companies was obtained. These enterprises constituted 37.6% of all entities licensed in 2014. The data obtained were supplemented with information on address data, e-mail addresses and telephone data using the commercial database of Bisnode Polska and InfoVeriti Sp. z o.o. During the selection of the research group, the availability of financial statements in the National Court Register was also taken into account (this concerned entities that were subject to the reporting obligation), which was made on the basis of the analysis of the InfoVeriti Sp. z o.o., which enabled access to the indicated data. The study covered entities that met the requirement to qualify to the SME sector based on the number of persons employed, which was verified on the basis of the data from Bisnode Polska database. The study involved 184 enterprises from 705 entities constituting a research group, for which both qualitative and quantitative data were obtained.

The conducted own research allowed to confirm the assumed hypothesis that the development of small and medium enterprises in the road transport sector is determined by the socio-economic potential, which applies in particular to the labor market, investment dynamics and industrial production. Apart from the period 2008-2009, when a significant role in the development of the surveyed enterprises was played by allowing Polish companies to carry out cabotage operations in other European Union countries, subsequent years were characterized by changes in the financial and property situation depending on changes in the economic situation in the European Union and in countries that are direct recipients of services in its area.

The study did not show a significant relationship between the local economic development of the districts in which the units had their registered office and other socio-

economic factors. The production of transport services was generally detached from the employer's registered office. The presence of large cities influenced the concentration of entities in specific regions. This is the result of the general trend of locating enterprises in the region of voivodeship centres.

It was also noted that the opening of the cabotage transport market in 2008 contributed to the development of all transport enterprises. At the same time, in the opinion of the surveyed enterprises the proximity of the border was an important advantage. Deregulation and the abolition of barriers to economic activity that was introduced by the implementation of Regulation (EC) No. 1072/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 should be considered as an important factor in the development of the road transport sector. The future activities, aimed at greater economic integration, and thus at eliminating other barriers, will probably improve the situation of road carriers.

The hypothesis assumed in the study that the abolition of restrictions on transport performed by Polish carriers on the internal markets of other EU countries (cabotage) affected the development of enterprises of the road transport sector in the border areas should be considered as partially confirmed. Since 2009, rapid development of the surveyed entities, characterized in particular by an increase in revenues and volume of rolling stock has been observed. However, no significant relationship was found between the distance from the border and the economic situation of the units.

Moreover, the collected results allowed for partial confirmation of the next hypothesis stating that the main barrier to the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the road transport sector is a complex system of legal provisions. Certainly, the complex system of legal regulations was a serious development barrier indicated by the surveyed companies of the road transport sector. However, the results obtained indicate that this is not the main stimulant. There are several more significant barriers, namely the difficult situation on the labour market, manifested by the lack of qualified employees (mainly drivers), as well as significant indebtedness of the surveyed entities, which is related to the small resources of own funds used for investments.

The last analysed aspect was the impact of toll rates and vehicle tax on the increase in investment in new rolling stock. The conducted study clearly indicates that in the years 2008-2014, which coincided with the introduction in Poland of the electronic system of charging Viatoll (2011) and the introduction in Germany of the toll collection system for lower category roads (2012), investments in newer rolling stock have clearly increased. From 2011, the number of used rolling stock complying with the EURO 5 emission standard and higher started, has

begun to increase. An analogous situation related to the replacement of rolling stock was observed in the indicated period also in enterprises from other regions of Poland, where most international road hauliers changed their stock in the years 2010-2014. In the conducted study, however, no relation was found between the number of vehicles used in a given commune by the surveyed transport companies and the rate of tax on means of transport.

The author managed to achieve the purpose of the work which was to identify determinants and analysing their impact on the development of the surveyed enterprises in 2008-2014. The obtained results indicate that the development of transport enterprises operating on international markets is determined by typically local factors only to a small extent. The activity of the surveyed enterprises as well as of all entities in Poland was to a large extent determined by the macroeconomic situation in the European Union, including in particular in the largest economies of the euro zone. An interesting observation is that the road transport sector has used, in particular, the global economic crisis as its chance to increase the market share. Although, despite a detailed analysis, this situation has not been fully explained within the framework of the study, it can be concluded that it resulted from a combination of several important factors. Undoubtedly, the most important was the opening of the cabotage market for Polish transport companies in 2009, thanks to which they were able to take over orders from the internal market of individual countries. In addition, the success was due to the low level of wages in Poland, as well as the lower costs of liquid fuels. The surveyed enterprises, however, did manage to seize the opportunity and quickly adapt to the conditions of the economic slowdown. Thanks to more favourable transport rates resulting from lower operating costs, the carriers could offer more favourable transport rates, which in a slowdown was a rational choice for companies from Western Europe.

Keywords: road transport, enterprise development, small and medium enterprises