

SOME SOCIAL ASPECT OF THE ROAD TRANSPORT

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Abstract: *The article studies the social aspects which can occur in the sector of road transport. The road transport is a sector with a fast progression and flexibility; however it does not have quite set up social conditions for workers in this domain. In the Czech Republic there were in the last ten years the important changes of mobility in passenger and freight transport. The mentioned changes concerns all the relevant transport fields and first of all road and railway transport. The development of individual passenger transportation and the preference of road transport within goods transportation remain also nowadays. The enlargement of European Union influenced significantly the changes of modal split in transportation work and the Czech Republic became a member state. The alone integration of the Czech Republic into European structures we must evaluate definite positive, but in the field of transportation this step brings a lot of connected problems.*

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JEL Classification: *A14.*

1. Introduction

Each form of transport has its own particular strengths and weaknesses when used, for example the rail network has a lower polluting effect but it is less flexible than the road network. And social aspects exist in any kind of transport. There are many examples of strikes, including railmen, airline pilots, sailors, etc. Seriousness of this problem depends on many factors:

- financial situation in the sector,
- government social policy and help,
- severity of regulations,
- unemployment,
- structure in the sector (concentration of companies),
- competitive and work conditions.

It is hard to say if social aspects in road transport are worse than in other kinds of transport, nevertheless the number of workers connected with road transport calls appeal for analysis of this problem from the point of view of social policy.

2. The current transport

The transport as a sector of the national economy is still developing. If we take a look at the following table we can see that freight road transport is a dominant sector from the capacity indicators. It does not mean that it is more important than other kinds, but one has to solve thoroughly the social aspect of this human activity.

Tab. 1: Rail and road transport: Outputs in CR

	Years	Transport of goods		Passenger transport	
		Tonnage of goods carried (thous. t)	Goods transport outputs (mil ttkm)	Transport of passengers (mil. pass.)*	Passenger transport outputs (mil. passkm)*
Road transport	2005	461 144	43 447	383,3	8 607,3
	2006	444 574	50 369	387,7	9 501,2
	2007	453 537	48 141	375,0	9 518,8
	2008	431 855	50 877	376,9	9 369,1
	2009	370 115	44 955	367,9	9 463,6
Rail transport	2005	85 613	14 866	180,3	6 666,7
	2006	97 461	15 779	183,0	6 921,9
	2007	99 777	16 304	184,2	6 899,8
	2008	95 073	15 437	177,4	6 803,3
	2009	76 715	12 791	165,0	6 503,2

Source: (Statistical annual bulletin)

*without passenger car transport

The difference between performances in transport is clear from the following graphs. It concerns both goods and passenger transport. In the Czech Republic there were in the last ten years the important changes of mobility in passenger and freight transport. The mentioned changes concerns all the relevant transport fields and first of all road and railway transport. The development of individual passenger transportation and the preference of road transport within goods transportation remain also nowadays. The enlargement of European Union influenced significantly the changes of modal split in transportation work and the Czech Republic became a member state. The alone integration of the Czech Republic into European structures we must evaluate definite positive, but in the field of transportation this step brings a lot of connected problems.

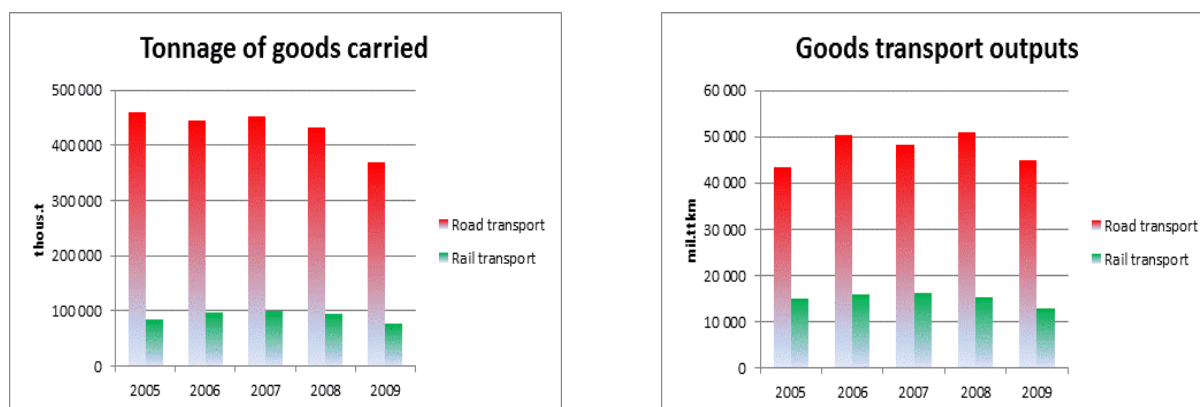


Fig. 1: Transport of goods

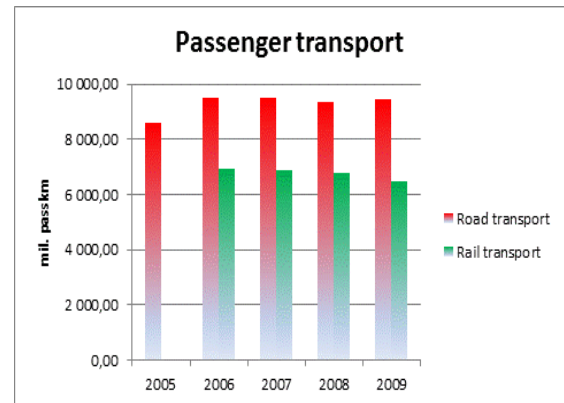
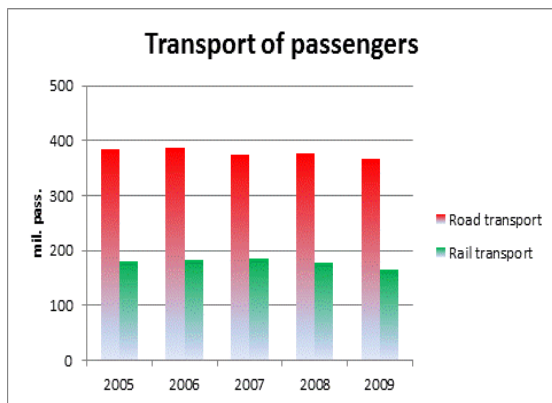


Fig. 2: Passenger transport

For every Czech subjects mean enlargement EU opportunities but many risks too. The problems that must be solved are quality of transport infrastructure, manage the growth of transport and transport policy realization. In all mentioned problem areas are eluded to charging in transport.

3. Social problems in road transport

The character of social problems in road transport depends indirectly on situation in this sector and its role in the economy, directly on specific characteristic features of organization and work conditions. After World War II the road transport became the booming sector for passenger and goods transport. It is difficult to imagine free market economy without the possibility to use roads in the productive and distributive operations. Small and medium companies cannot have its position in the economy if there is only the possibility to use rail or water ways. With respect to the possibilities of road transport (e.g. flexibility, low cost, etc.) the demand for road transport services is still high. This is the reason why there are new and new companies which go into this business which implies the splitting of the sector (for example specific kinds of transport) and cut-throat competition.

The specific organization of road transport can be seen from the point of existence of large numbers of small companies or also from the point of offered services, e.g. door-to-door. While a railman is responsible for some operation on the basis of rules defined by company management, a truck driver takes the responsibility for many different operations (driving, documentation, frontier formalities, etc.) and thus has a direct responsibility for result of these activities. However higher responsibility does not mean higher payment based on the market mechanism.

From the macroeconomic point of view the automated activity results in decreasing of job opportunity, rising of unemployment and social problems. There are many industrial branches where due to some technical discovery (automatization), it induces reduction of working station, on the other hand it implies reduction of cost. In the case

of tubular transport, which is highly automatic, the costs are minimal, while for road transport, at least one person is needed in order to deliver one article.

If we take into account a transportation output 1 mil. tkm in different kinds of transport, it was calculated in countries of EU in 1994, that output of road transport demands 2,63 employees, railway 4,58 employees and inland water transport 1,74 workers. Conclusion is surprising, as road transport is less dependent on technical resources it needs less people to forward a specific content. This is the contradiction with the previous formulation that an automatization implies lowering of needs for workers. Thus it turns out that road forwarders are obliged to respond to market pressure more than railway forwarders.

A creation of working place in road transport, and not only there, is based on a simple rule: "A production is a function of manpower". This rule is less strictly applied in the railway transport, where strong labour unions stay against the reorganization and thus do not take into account bad financial situation. It is unthinkable that the road transport has so many administrative employees as has the railway. One can find examples in road transport sector of a company with a proprietor who is also driver. European statistics show that 2/3 of companies having business in road transport have less than 5 people.

4. Social provisions

For Europe there are not unified social rules. The European Union expected that working condition would change in part as a result of the common market and also by harmonisation of the national economic policy. National systems of social insurance are different in individual countries of EU. Member countries of EU have an extensive autonomy with respect to their social policy. The Union social policy is based on wide extent of directions and rules. They are supplied by recommendations and action programmes, especially if connected with elimination of poverty and integration of disable persons.

For the road transport the European social rules concern only driving time and rest periods. The regulation 3820/85/EEC defines daily and weekly driving time and obligatory rest periods. This text mentions also minimal age of driver depending on a total weight of a vehicle and kind of transport (persons, goods).

5. Source and type of conflicts

The illusion that the output of road services will offer economic freedom and so also working comfort is one on the main reason of the dissatisfaction in this field. Despite of high demands and a large number of consumers the road transport is not the most lucrative activity. Marginal profit in countries of EU is on an average between 0 and 5 % from takings and a one third of companies has a passive balance of payment. In such a situation employers do not profit and the employees are not well paid. Both sides are not satisfied, at the beginning employees impute the owner, later government, competition and also the European community. However, in reality the reasons for unsatisfactory social situation in road transport are more interconnected. There are

many differences between economic and social interests of owners and workers, and also between big and small companies, owners of companies and government, government and employees, etc.

Companies are exposed to keen competition at the market of road transport which implies that owners must offer their services at low prices. The employees thus victimize technical and economic progress in the road sector. Road carriers with a small perspective for profit are further limited by authority with many regulations that are not present in other sectors. Farmers, tradesmen and other professions are less strictly governed by regulations than road companies: there are limitations for recruitments, driving and other times are inspected and some other conditions are demanded (e.g. special driving licence), etc.

Drivers of goods carrier have a small chance to obtain good social condition in discussions with owners or authority. The arguments that their salary should be increased with inflation or comparable with other sectors are very weak. And strike inside a company leads to a shutdown which cannot change the situation in the market. In order to achieve their aim the drivers should take steps outside of a company, which can impact the whole society (blockade of roads, channels of supplies, etc.). However, public cannot resolve the problem of drivers; this can do only owners and authorities, in many cases at the international level.

6. Social issues for transport policy

Subjects of road transport have the social problematic in their statute. Though the economic, technical and organization problems are effectively solved, a lot of things should be done is social field. The social problems are complicated and some specific solutions are needed.

The rules of free market economy are not compatible with the idea of justice. Those who work hard and contribute to development in this sector are powerless to get some benefit from their work. Competition in road transport is not equivalent with any other kind of forwarding. On one hand the lack of competition (railway) is not correct; on other hand the excessive competition does no good. The sector must be reorganized in order to offer low-cost services and at the same time good social conditions.

Last but not least, the controversial question of road transport policy: regulation of working conditions, which is not enough to regulate driving time and rest period. The time period assigned to all operations in road transport companies must be harmonized and united with the standards of other sectors. A transport vehicle and the design of a cabin must fulfil social demands and not economic efficiency.

New challenge in a social area is the exclusion of negative effects from the full liberal accession to transport market in Europe (including cabotage). The demands on transport safety and environment face with sector social dimension. The combined transport seems to be the best way how to solve these contradictory demands. This kind of transport enables drivers to spare time otherwise lost on crowded roads which can be used for repose (e.g. in a sleeping part). The support of combined transport is one way how to help solving the social problems in road transport branch.

7. Conclusion

The main source of social disorder is in salary problematic. Though inflation and salary trends in other sectors call for salary adaptation mechanism, in road transport such mechanisms do not exist. The source of conflict can be in the differences of salaries between road transport and other forwarders, including differences between international and regional level.

The improvement of transport safety which is connected with the lower accident frequency caused by drivers would be accompanied with some improvement in the driver working conditions. Without chance for higher salary it is difficult to get relaxing climate in the sector, however, at least there is evidence of long daily and weekly repose.

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