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ARTICLE

Traffic control and the fight against cross-border crime

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Abstract

Cross-border crime, despite numerous actions taken by entities responsible for ensuring security, poses a serious challenge for law enforcement agencies. The aim of this article is to analyse cross-border crime from the perspective of an officer serving on the road and to indicate – based on a review of literature and statistical data – the importance of traffic control in combating this crime. The authors point out the impact of free movement within the Schengen area and the European Union on this type of crime.

Keywords

security, cross-border crime, control, traffic, Schengen area, European Union

Introduction

EU transport policy supports the building of a modern infrastructure network that provides both safer and faster travel. In doing so, it promotes the deployment of digital solutions, which on the one hand, streamline transport chains and make it easier to move around using different modes of transport, and on the other hand, enable crime.

Transport is an essential part of everyone's life. According to information published by the European Commission (EC), between 2011 and 2019, the share of passenger cars in passenger transport in the EU fell from 73.1% to 69.8%. In 2020, this share increased to 81.9%, and in 2021 it fell slightly to 79.7%. The share of aircraft in this transport increased from 10.9% in 2011 to 15% in 2019, but fell to 5.7% in 2020 and was 7.3% in 2021. Other transport modes showed similar patterns, with a sharp decline in 2020 followed by a partial recovery in 2021¹. The changes in 2020 followed the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which affected overall transport use and made people more likely to choose private cars over public transport. A similar relationship can be seen in relation to the war in Ukraine. People who fled the affected areas in large numbers mainly opted for road transport. It is the most popular mode of transport among both individuals and businesses. This is influenced by the extensive road network, easy access to motor vehicles and the ability to efficiently transport large amounts of cargo at one time. Vehicles have also been used for years for criminal activities, e.g. smuggling drugs, people, goods, works of art, exotic animals, etc., as well as for terrorist attacks, which has been particularly evident in recent years². Sporadic traffic controls are a factor that encourages criminal groups to use this particular mode of transport because of the low risk of exposing their activities.

Furthermore, transport plays an important role in the European economy. It accounts for more than 9% of gross value added in the European Union and nearly 11 million people are employed in transport services³. As societies become more mobile, EU policy has supported transport systems to address their main problems, including infrastructure, congestion, safety, pollution, among others. To address these, the EC has taken numerous measures, including the creation

¹ *Statistics Explained*, Eurostat, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?oldid=456757> [accessed: 10 XII 2024].

² For example, from 14 VII 2016 to 1 XI 2017, there were at least seven jihadist attacks using a vehicle (14 VII 2016 – Nice, 19 XII 2016 – Berlin, 22 III and 3 VI 2017 – London, 7 IV 2017 – Stockholm, 17 VIII 2017 – Barcelona, 31 X 2017 – New York).

³ *Safe, sustainable and connected transport*, European Union, https://european-union.europa.eu/priorities-and-actions/actions-topic/transport_en [accessed: 10 XII 2024].

of a Single European Transport Area over the last decade. The aim was to remove barriers between transport modes and national systems, improve integration or facilitate the emergence of international and multimodal operators⁴.

The number of service providers in the transport industry on a global scale continues to increase, with more and more interdependencies emerging between them. The system of the global economy is influenced by changes both in the economy itself and in other areas, which have resulted in a noticeable increase in the role of Asian countries, especially China and India, in the world economy, the integration of the economies of Central and Eastern Europe into the world economic circuit, a significant decrease in transport costs, multilateral liberalisation of trade, deregulation of telecommunications markets, rapid progress in the implementation of achievements in information and telecommunications technology⁵. Faced with a changing reality, security actors need to analyse their actions, improve existing procedures, skills and introduce new technologies to counter crime.

Traffic control is most often associated with actions taken by authorised authorities, e.g. the Police, to ensure safety and order on the roads. It includes, among other things, checking documents, the technical condition of vehicles, drivers' compliance with traffic regulations and testing their sobriety. However, according to the authors, the possibilities of using traffic control to ensure safety are much broader. When carrying out such checks, police officers can verify persons and items in the Police ICT systems, as well as cargo, luggage and their conformity with the documents held (where required).

The purpose of this article is to discuss cross-border crime from the perspective of an officer on duty on the road and to indicate, on the basis of a literature review and statistical data, the importance of traffic control in combating this crime.

The concept of cross-border crime

Pursuant to *Directive 2014/42/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 on the freezing and confiscation of instrumentalities and proceeds of crime in the European Union*:

⁴ Ł. Foryś, R. Gwardyński, M. Žuber, *Wybrane aspekty bezpieczeństwa dotyczące mobilności człowieka* (Eng. Selected safety aspects of human mobility), Szcztyno 2024, p. 61.

⁵ Ibid., p. 62.

(1) The main motive for cross-border organised crime, including mafia-type criminal organisation, is financial gain. As a consequence, competent authorities should be given the means to trace, freeze, manage and confiscate the proceeds of crime. However, the effective prevention of and fight against organised crime should be achieved by neutralising the proceeds of crime and should be extended, in certain cases, to any property deriving from activities of a criminal nature.

(2) Organised criminal groups operate without borders and increasingly acquire assets in Member States other than those in which they are based and in third countries. There is an increasing need for effective international cooperation on asset recovery and mutual legal assistance.

(3) Among the most effective means of combating organised crime is providing for severe legal consequences for committing such crime, as well as effective detection and the freezing and confiscation of the instrumentalities and proceeds of crime.

(4) Although existing statistics are limited, the amounts recovered from proceeds of crime in the Union seem insufficient compared to the estimated proceeds. Studies have shown that, although regulated by Union and national law, confiscation procedures remain underused⁶.

According to Piotr Kozłowski, Andrzej Wawrzusiszyn's definition of cross-border crime indicates that:

(...) cross-border crime is one of the forms of organised crime. It is a dynamic phenomenon, which undergoes constant changes and modifications depending on the area and methods of operation as well as the category of smuggled goods. Cross-border crime is capable of adapting rapidly to local needs and of filling the demand for services and goods in short supply, generating profit margins for the organisers of the crime. Existing border traffic and the international exchange of goods try to exploit cross-border crime for their purposes⁷.

Cross-border crime is defined as criminal activities that are carried out within or breach the borders of different countries. It is often associated with transnational

⁶ Directive 2014/42/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 on the freezing and confiscation of instrumentalities and proceeds of crime in the European Union.

⁷ P. Kozłowski, *Przestępczość transgraniczna w latach 2015–2017 zagrożeniem dla bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego państwa w świetle danych statystycznych Bieszczadzkiego Oddziału Straży Granicznej w Przemyślu* (Eng. Cross-border crime in 2015-2017 as a threat to the state's internal security in the light of statistical data from the Bieszczady Border Guard Unit in Przemyśl), "Współczesne Problemy Zarządzania" 2020, vol. 8, no. 1(16), p. 86. <https://doi.org/10.52934/wpz.86>.

organised crime, which adopts a network structure. This type of crime poses a serious threat to the state security system due to: (...) *the long-term effects of cross-border organised crime activity, the origins of which are to be found in the so-called secondary effects of criminal groups. Given that organised crime groups gain certain material benefits as a result of their illegal activities, it must also be assumed that the resources they gain can and are used to influence the situation of individual countries, their economies and consequently their security*⁸. Cross-border crime includes, inter alia, smuggling of goods, drugs, weapons, waste, works of art, nuclear and radioactive materials, as well as terrorism. The manner, forms and extent of cross-border organised crime activity varies greatly between countries and depends on a number of factors, e.g. socio-economic conditions, government policy and stability, the legal system and law enforcement. It is very difficult to assess the scale of the phenomenon and its impact on the security of states and the international system. As Paweł Lubiewski notes:

Contemporary socio-political conditions generate a number of problems, which the state administration has to cope with and to learn to handle unknown ones as soon as possible. Undoubtedly, the state border is this field of state administration activity. (...) In relation to the problem of protecting the borders of a modern state, the dual character of border protection is clearly discernible, manifested on the one hand in the need to protect the integrity of the border, and on the other hand in the need to protect against a number of serious threats penetrating it into the state⁹.

This is one of the main reasons why, nowadays, a single institution is not sufficient to protect the borders. In the Polish reality, this responsibility is entrusted, to varying degrees, to several institutions performing tasks in different areas of state activity.

Security efforts must be comprehensive and interdisciplinary. According to Andrzej Czop, the determinants that cause a particular threat to the state border are: (...) *terrorism, especially Islamic terrorism, uncontrolled migration flows, organised crime, sanitary and epidemiological contamination. The need to protect the border against organised smuggling, especially of: narcotics and psychotropic drugs, radioactive*

⁸ P. Kuzior, *Transgraniczna przestępczość zorganizowana – asymetryczne zagrożenie* (Eng. Cross-border organised crime – an asymmetric threat), "Prawo Europejskie w Praktyce" 2008, no. 12(54), pp. 29–30.

⁹ P. Lubiewski, *Granice Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej jako wyzwanie dla bezpieczeństwa państwa* (Eng. Borders of the Republic of Poland as a challenge to state security), "Przegląd Policyjny" 2019, special issue, p. 66. <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0013.6700>.

*materials, hazardous waste, weapons, ammunition and other means of warfare, stolen cars, alcohol, cigarettes and works of art, was also pointed out*¹⁰.

The Schengen area – a European area without internal borders

Rules in force in the Schengen area since 1995¹¹:

(...) abolish internal border controls, while harmonising and reinforcing protection of the area's external borders. Once inside the Schengen area, people can travel from one country to another without being subjected to border checks. However, national authorities may check people at or close to internal borders if police information and experience warrant stepping up surveillance temporarily. Schengen also includes a common visa policy for short stays by non-EU citizens and helps participating countries to join forces in the fight against crime with the aid of police and judicial cooperation¹².

The Schengen Information System is being improved with a view to providing Europeans with greater security. The Schengen area is one of the pillars of European integration. Free movement gives EU residents the right to live, study, work and receive benefits (medical, pensions) throughout the community. All associated countries in the Union belong to the Schengen area, except Ireland, which maintains its opt-out clause, and Cyprus, which plans to join the Schengen area. EU countries have agreed to abolish border controls at air and sea borders for people travelling to and from Bulgaria and Romania from 31 March 2024¹³. In addition, four non-EU countries are part of the Schengen area: Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein (Figure 1).

According to statistics, the EU's external borders were crossed illegally 1.83 million times in 2015. It was possible to reduce this number to 355 300 times

¹⁰ A. Czop, *Śłużby specjalne w systemie ochrony granic Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (Eng. Special services in the border protection system of the Republic of Poland), "Przegląd Policyjny" 2019, special issue, p. 129. <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0013.6698>.

¹¹ *Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders.*

¹² *Schengen: a guide to the European border-free zone*, European Parliament, 17 VI 2019, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20190612STO54307/schengen-a-guide-to-the-european-border-free-zone> [accessed: 13 VI 2025].

¹³ *Schengen: what issues affect the border-free zone?*, European Parliament, 29 V 2018, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20180525STO04311/schengen-what-issues-affect-the-border-free-zone> [accessed: 11 XII 2024].

in 2023¹⁴. Still, managing migration and external border security is a challenge for Europe.

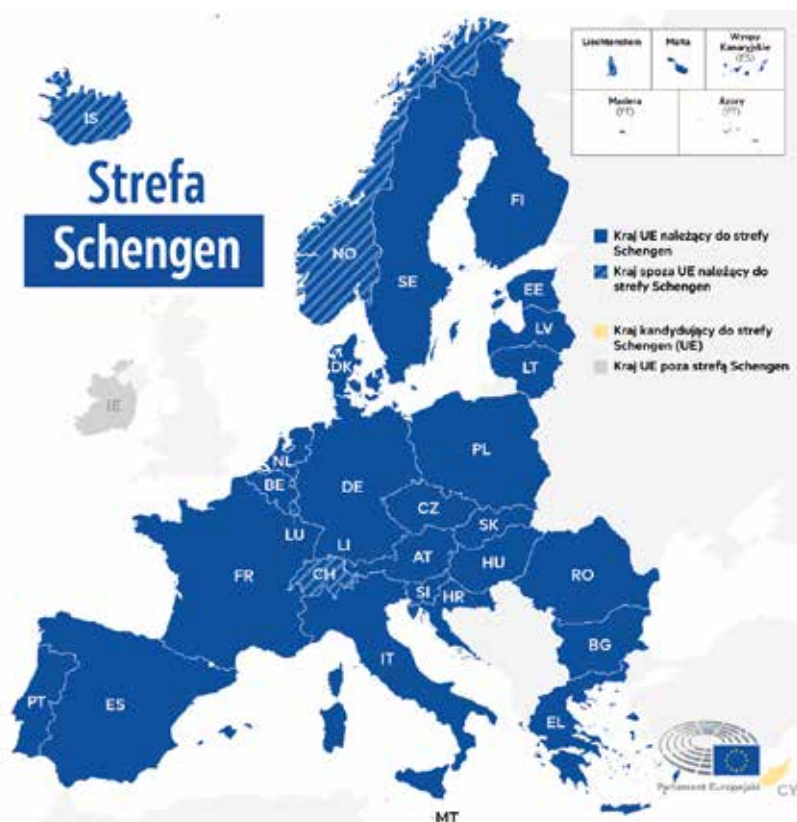


Figure 1. Schengen States

Source: *Schengen: a guide to the European border-free zone*, European Parliament, 17 VI 2019, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20190612STO54307/schengen-a-guide-to-the-european-border-free-zone> [accessed: 13 VI 2025].

The action taken by the EP contributes to strengthening the common asylum policy, develops legal migration in line with the needs of Member States, promotes the integration of third-country nationals and stops illegal migration. The Internal Security Fund aims to combat cross-border threats such as terrorism, organised crime and cybercrime. These challenges have triggered significant developments

¹⁴ *Irregular border crossings into EU so far this year highest since 2016*, Frontex, 11 XII 2023, <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/irregular-border-crossings-into-eu-so-far-this-year-highest-since-2016-hZ9xWZ> [accessed: 11 XII 2024].

in the creation of tools and agencies such as the Schengen Information System, the Visa Information System, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the Entry Exit System (EES)¹⁵ at the external borders of the Schengen area. Their role is to detect criminals, terrorists or other persons posing a threat. Travellers not requiring a visa will in future be screened before arrival in the EU using the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)¹⁶, which will become operational in the last quarter of 2026¹⁷.

In the Schengen area, road transport, especially car transport, is the most common mode of transport. This is due to the ease of movement without border controls, which is particularly beneficial for freight and passenger transport.

Schengen area - border control

According to the information provided on EP websites: *The increased influx of third-country nationals into the Schengen area, which is expected to increase even further in the future (by 2025, around 300 million third-country nationals will have legally crossed into the Schengen area for a short-term visit), and concerns about the security of the EU's external borders have led to the need for new rules on the management of the Schengen area's external borders*¹⁸. According to the EC data:

(...) more than 1.25 billion journeys are made within the Schengen area every year. Internal border controls have been abolished within the Schengen Area, but states have retained the right to reinstate temporary controls in case of serious threats to public policy or internal security. Since 2015, in the wake of the migration crisis, as well as the increase of cross-border terrorist threats, a number of Schengen states reintroduced such controls (...). The Covid-19 pandemic also pushed many EU countries to reintroduce border controls in an attempt to contain the spread of the virus. In December 2021, the European Commission proposed an update of the rules governing the Schengen area, aiming to ensure that reintroducing internal border controls remains a measure of last resort and promote the use of alternative measures instead such as targeted police checks and enhanced police cooperation. MEPs have

¹⁵ The EES system will start operating on 12 X 2025. See: *Entry/Exit System (EES)*, <https://travel-europe.europa.eu/en/ees> [accessed: 11 XII 2024].

¹⁶ *Zarządzanie granicami zewnętrznymi* (Eng. Management of external borders), Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji, <https://www.gov.pl/web/mswia/zarzadzanie-granicami-zewnetrznymi#:~:text=SIS%20%E2%80%93%20System%20Informacyjny> [accessed: 11 XII 2024].

¹⁷ *ETIAS*, <https://travel-europe.europa.eu/en/etias> [accessed: 11 IV 2025].

¹⁸ *EU entry/exit system: a modern solution for secure borders*, European Parliament, 25 X 2017, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20171023STO86604/eu-entry-exit-system-a-modern-solution-for-secure-borders> [accessed: 11 XII 2024].

on several occasions argued against the frequent reintroduction of controls, which hampers the free movement of people across the EU¹⁹.

In April 2024, the European Parliament approved an update of the Schengen rules. Time limits for internal border controls were established. The EU Council approved the update in May 2024. The Schengen Borders Code gives Member States the possibility to temporarily reintroduce border control at internal borders in the event of a serious threat to public order or internal security. They may exercise this right as a last resort, in exceptional situations, and this must respect the principle of proportionality²⁰.

In February 2024, Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs approved an agreement reached with national governments modifying the rules on the control of persons at the EU's external borders²¹. *The rules apply when travellers who do not fulfil the entry conditions of an EU country are apprehended crossing a border point irregularly, are rescued at sea, or who apply for international protection at an external border crossing point*²². Checks may be carried out on persons found within the EU who have evaded border control and do not have the appropriate authorisation. Checks are to include: (...) *identification, fingerprinting, security checks, and preliminary health and vulnerability assessment*²³. According to the regulations, this procedure should take up to seven days. A system for monitoring activities in this regard is in place: (...) *in each EU country to protect fundamental rights of people undergoing screening*²⁴. In turn: (...) *as an alternative to internal border controls, the new rules for a more resilient Schengen area promote police cooperation in border regions to address unauthorised movements within the Schengen area. Apprehended non-EU citizens with irregular status often arrive from another EU country so if the two countries hold joint patrols, the irregular*

¹⁹ *Schengen: enlargement of Europe's border-free area*, European Parliament, 23 II 2018, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20180216STO98008/schengen-enlargement-of-europe-s-border-free-area> [accessed: 11 XII 2024].

²⁰ *Countering irregular migration: better EU border management*, European Parliament, 30 VI 2017, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20170627STO78419/countering-irregular-migration-better-eu-border-management> [accessed: 13 XII 2024].

²¹ *Asylum and migration: Civil Liberties committee endorses a new legal framework*, European Parliament, 14 II 2024, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240212IPR17628/asylum-and-migration-civil-liberties-committee-endorses-the-agreements> [accessed: 13 XII 2024].

²² *Countering irregular migration: better EU border management...*

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

*migrants may be transferred back to the first EU country*²⁵. The European Parliament wants to exclude several categories of people, including minors.

The state of security in Poland in 2019–2020

According to the data published by the Police for 2020²⁶, 786 302 crimes were committed in Poland, i.e. 36 475 less than in 2019, and their detection rate increased and amounted to 73.9%²⁷. In 2020, 9121 cars were stolen, i.e. 3% more compared to 2019 (8856 cars), and the detection rate for this type of crime increased by 1.9%. In 2020, there were 656 homicides in Poland, up to 125 more than in 2019. In addition, 199 020 economic crimes were recorded – 9427 more than in 2019. In the same year, police officers secured criminals' property worth a total of PLN 867 049 023, and in 2020, property worth PLN 930 118 572. Officers of the Central Bureau of Police Investigation (CBŚP), whose main tasks are to identify and neutralise criminal groups, often in cooperation with Polish and foreign institutions, collected trial material and presented charges against more than 3200 people (in 2019 – almost 3800). In 2019, 1836 suspects were charged with leading or participating in an organised criminal group (in 2020 – over 2000). It has also been possible to dismantle the financial background of criminal groups and secure the assets of suspects for future penalties. In 2020, property in the amount of over PLN 700 million was secured and over 10 t of drugs were prevented from reaching the black market, of which over 4 t were seized outside Poland. Narcotic and psychotropic drugs were also secured, as well as large quantities of precursors, which stopped the production of further drugs. In addition, 31 synthetic drug laboratories and 75 cannabis plantations were closed down.

Efforts to combat tobacco crime were also carried out in 2020. Twenty cigarette factories were dismantled (the same number as in 2019). More than 190 million cigarettes (approx. 212 million cigarettes in 2019) and more than 306 t of tobacco (more than 324 t in 2019) were secured. In addition, the services of EU countries, thanks to information provided by CBŚP officers, identified the activities of criminal groups on their territory. Four operating cigarette factories were dismantled and approximately 48 million cigarettes and over 123 t of tobacco cut

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The last safety information published by the Police is from early 2021.

²⁷ All data in *The state of security in Poland in 2019–2020* section of the article is taken from: *Podsumowujemy 2020 rok w Policji* (Eng. We recap 2020 in the Police), <https://statystyka.policja.pl/st/raporty/roczne-raporty-statyst/226911.Podsumowujemy-2020-rok-w-Policji.html> [accessed: 10 XII 2024].

were secured. Significantly: (...) *the results achieved by the CBŚP and the operations carried out were also possible thanks to cooperation with the Public Prosecutor's Office, police officers of Provincial Police Headquarters, Border Guard, Central Anticorruption Bureau, Internal Security Agency, National Revenue Administration, Chief Sanitary Inspectorate, General Inspector of Financial Information and other Polish institutions*²⁸. In addition, CBŚP officers, often with the support of Europol and Eurojust, cooperated with the services and institutions of many countries. The criminal activities analysed are also related to organised crime, often taking the form of cross-border crime. Criminal groups use means of transport (especially road transport), which allow for efficient movement of persons and goods.

Traffic control and safety

Traffic control is the action taken by law enforcement agencies to ensure road safety. It involves monitoring and enforcing traffic laws, including speed limits, parking bans, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and other laws designed to protect road users. Controls may be routine or result from specific incidents, such as road accidents. In Poland, road traffic controls are performed by: Police²⁹, Border Guard (SG), Road Transport Inspection and Municipal Police. The officers, on the basis of the regulations in force, have specific powers with respect to road traffic control. The performance of tasks by the aforementioned entities is most often associated with ensuring road traffic safety. Due to the changing geopolitical situation in the world and the geographical location of Poland, it is necessary to change the approach to road traffic control, inter alia in relation to the developing cross-border crime.

An increasing number of unaccompanied migrant minors are reported. There are six guarded centres for foreigners (SOCs) in Poland, with a total of 962 places. In 2023, 1903 foreigners were admitted to them, including 32 unaccompanied minors. Due to the large number of unaccompanied minors who have arrived in Poland since the beginning of April 2024, the care facilities are overcrowded. The minors remain in SOC and SG facilities because there is nowhere to direct them³⁰.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ł. Foryś, *Zapewnienie bezpieczeństwa w związku z kontrolą ruchu drogowego* (Eng. Ensuring safety in connection with traffic control), in: *Bezpieczeństwo w perspektywie transdyscyplinarnej*, A.W. Filippek (ed.), Siedlce 2022, pp. 88–102.

³⁰ A. Rodowicz, *Nieletni migranci. Gdy nie uda się ich wypchnąć za druty, trafiają w tryby niewydolnego systemu* (Eng. Juvenile migrants. When they fail to be pushed back behind the wire, they end up in the cogs of an inefficient system), OKO.press, 3 VIII 2024, <https://oko.press/maloletni-migranci-pol-ska-granica-ani-prawa-ani-opieki> [accessed: 18 XII 2024].

According to the Border Guard Headquarters spokesperson, in the first half of 2024, the Border Guard detained 243 minors (56 girls and 187 boys) who had illegally crossed the Polish border³¹. After apprehending a minor who has illegally crossed the border and is unaccompanied, the Border Guard must apply to the court for placement of the minor in a care facility or a SOC³². Agnieszka Matejczuk, a lawyer from the Association for Legal Intervention, points out that: (...) *when a detained minor is under 15 years of age, he must be taken to an intervention facility. If they are over 15 years of age but make a request for protection, they should also be referred to such a facility. Those between 15 and 18 years of age can be placed in a SOC for the duration of the so-called return procedure, i.e. aiming at deportation*³³.

Undoubtedly, the issue of underage irregular migrants requires separate regulations, providing them with adequate care and protection, while at the same time complying with current border control standards.

The introduction of internal border controls will be possible in accordance with the Schengen Borders Code – in justified cases involving, for example, an identified and imminent threat of terrorism, initially for a period of up to 6 months, extendable to 18 months, and in exceptional cases even longer with the consent of the EU Council. If the threat persists, a decision of the EU Council will be able to authorise further border controls, especially when this involves a serious threat to several countries at the same time³⁴. It is also worth mentioning that in Poland there has been for many years close cooperation between national border, police and judicial services and their counterparts in the Member States, which helps to maintain public safety and order.

Road traffic controls are important in the fight against cross-border crime for several reasons. They can help detect the illegal transport of goods such as drugs, weapons or excisable goods. Police officers on duty on the road can cooperate with police officers from other countries and with the Border Guard or the Customs and Tax Service to combat smuggling more effectively. If, during a roadside check, officers come across persons who have crossed the border illegally, then cooperation with border control authorities is crucial. Very often cross-border crime is of an organised nature. Roadside checks can help identify and apprehend criminal groups that use transport networks to carry out their activities.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Act of 12 December 2013 on foreigners.

³³ A. Rodowicz, *Nieletni migranci...*

³⁴ *Countering irregular migration: better EU border management...*

Summary

Both traffic control and the fight against cross-border crime are complex processes undertaken by numerous actors, including international cooperation. The geopolitical changes taking place in the modern world pose a major challenge for entities responsible for ensuring safety. The traffic control measures taken focus primarily on improving safety by reducing the number of people injured and killed in road accidents.

Armed conflicts or humanitarian crises can lead to increased migratory movements. This can cause an increase in the number of vehicles on the roads and require more effective traffic control and management. In response to new threats, countries may introduce changes to traffic legislation, which may affect international cooperation and procedures in place.

In the Schengen area, internal border controls have been abolished, requiring more efficient management of external borders. This implies advanced tools, information systems and better coordination between countries. New technologies, such as traffic monitoring systems, number plate recognition systems or drones can contribute to better traffic management on roads and border monitoring, more efficient detection of offenders, more effective search for people and countering threats such as terrorist attacks. However, their implementation requires investment and training of personnel, as well as appropriate regulations and procedures.

Traffic controls at borders and strategic points can effectively hinder the smuggling of persons and illegal goods, which is one of the main elements of cross-border crime. Joint operations and the exchange of information between countries can increase the effectiveness of road checks and thus the fight against crime, as they hit organised crime groups. Another important element is the noticeable presence of control services on the roads, which can act as a deterrent to potential criminals and reduce the undertaking of illegal activities such as smuggling.

Geopolitical changes pose many challenges to states, including the need to introduce innovative solutions to improve road safety, both in road traffic and in other areas. At the same time, it should be remembered that cross-border crime is a complex phenomenon that requires cooperation, including international cooperation, and effective tools to combat it. Road traffic control can be considered one of them. A broader view of the activities undertaken by officers with respect to road traffic participants, provides an opportunity to create more effective tools to improve road safety, ensure public safety and order, and thus prevent and combat crime, including cross-border crime. The authors identified factors determining the road traffic control procedure and the cross-border crime facilitated by free movement in the Schengen area. Attention should be drawn to the systemic nature

of the issue in question, which requires coordinated action by various institutions. The considerations made in the article provide a starting point for deeper insight and indicate the need for an interdisciplinary approach to research related to this issues.

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