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# Trade and transport flows on the eastern border of the European Union: Russian-Baltic case

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## Abstract

After the collapse of the USSR and the enlargement of the European Union to the Baltic, the border became the border between Russia and EU. Such transformations have several consequences on trade flows but also on the regional transport system and traffic. Economic integration processes such as trade agreements and customs unions have greatly contributed to the growing fluidity of freight flows across borders, notably in Europe. During the Soviet period, the borders were closed. Nowadays, border effects have not disappeared and they continue to influence the structure of hinterlands and freight distribution processes. So, in the region borders still have their three most common effects. They act as barriers but also mark operational cost differences.

Furthermore, the Russian Baltic boundary, like any frontier, is both a cut and a seam which constrains transport networks and flows and create a specific gateway. The role of the maritime transport is essential in this structuration of flows. Traffic growth is one of the main characteristic of the development of maritime transportation in the Baltic Sea during the last 20 years. Indeed, transportation of containerized cargos has been intensively developing over the last decades. In such a situation in which the Baltic Sea region was facing a major economic restructuring, efforts to achieve more integrated and multimodal transport has appeared.

In addition, cross-border trade develops in the region, mainly due to economic or tax differentials. That kind of trade flows is abundant in the region and it is also structuring space: markets, mostly informal, were created along the borders between the CIS and the Baltic States.

Finally, the European economic integration participates in a new organization of the commercial activities in the European Union area, particularly in large retail area or cross-border cities.

Therefore, the paper will focus on a multiscalar approach of trade flows in the eastern Baltic Sea: main transport flows, cross-border trade and practices in the region but also their spatial implications along the border between EU and CIS.

**Keywords:** Baltic States, circulation, trade, cross, border, transportation.

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