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Public logistics – development and determinants

Abstract. The article deals with the issue of the development of public logistics, understood not in terms of infrastructure, but in terms of implementation of public tasks. An attempt is made to identify the determinants of public logistics development and to conceptualise it. It is pointed out that the development of public logistics results both from the increase in the number of public tasks performed by self-government bodies and from the increased involvement of the private sector in the public sphere.

Key words: logistics, public logistics, public tasks

1. Introduction

For several years now, the notion of ‘public logistics’ has been present in the literature of the subject. Until today, however, it has not been clearly defined. It has been difficult to define, for instance, due to the fact that the sphere of logistics uses public property, such as road infrastructure. This makes it, at least to a certain extent, public. The point, however, is not to examine public logistics in the infrastructural context, but to discuss the activities related to the implementation of public tasks. Without entering into a discussion on whether the use of the term ‘public logistics’¹ is justified or not, the article seeks to outline the basic determinants of its development and to conceptualise the notion.

¹ S. Kauf, “Logistyka a realizacja zadań publicznych”, *Logistyka* 2010, No. 6.



2. Legitimacy and necessity of developing logistics in the area of public tasks

The legitimacy of developing public logistics results from the increasingly frequent commissioning of public tasks from enterprises. Such tendencies started to appear when the democratic state came into existence. Its emergence caused an essential change in the perception of the purpose, role and function of the state. Introducing such concepts as ‘decentralisation’ or ‘subsidiarity’ led to a redefinition of the notion of ‘public tasks/services’.

Decentralisation assumes hierarchical exercise of power, i.e. the higher-level authority must not interfere with the competences of a lower-level one, which is “an independent body, with its own sources of income and power to decide independently on how this income is to be spent”². The subsidiarity principle implies that the state should implement only the tasks which it must implement. Other tasks should be commissioned from those who will perform them in a better and more effective manner³. This in turn means that public tasks need to be implemented with the help of third-party institutions. The tasks of self-government bodies include not only the selection of a contractor, control and supervision of task performance⁴, but most of all assuring availability of public services. Taking care to ensure that products are available⁵ is, in fact, one of the basic tasks of logistics.

Motorway construction can be put forward as an example of the implementation of public tasks by external entities or under a public-private partnership. It used to be one of the state’s tasks. Currently, it is being taken over for instance by consortiums, like in the case of the A2 motorway, whose section between Stryków and Konotopa is being built by a consortium of the companies Boegl&Krysl and Dolnośląskie Surowce Skalne. The northern section of the A1 (Gdańsk – Toruń), on the other hand, is being built under a public-private partnership between the government and GTC S.A. acting as the private partner.

Simultaneously with the changes in the functioning of the public sector, we have been witnessing a constant growth of the TSL (transport, shipping and logistics) sector, offering packages of increasingly comprehensive solutions for logistics-related problems. In 2010, the revenues derived from basic sales by TSL companies in Poland amounted to 18.87 billion PLN⁶, while in Germany they

² E. Ura, E. Ura, *Prawo administracyjne*, Wyd. Prawnicze LexisNexis, Warszawa 2008, p. 42.

³ J. Regulski, *Samorządna Polska*, Rosner i Wspólnicy, Warszawa 2005, p. 22.

⁴ K. Bandarzewski, “Prywatyzacja zadań publicznych”, in: *Koncepcja systemu prawa administracyjnego*, ed. J. Zimmermann, Wolters Kluwer Polska, Warszawa 2007, p. 334.

⁵ We understand a product as any item exchanged on the market.

⁶ ekonom.ug.edu.pl/pp/download.php?OpenFile=7331 [28.12.2012].

amounted to 14.6 billion EUR⁷. The sector carries out a series of tasks for other entities, most often on the basis of subcontracting or contract logistics.

The notion of ‘contract logistics’ describes a model of collaboration between the ordering party and the logistics service provider based on long-term cooperation, with the service provider offering integrated and customised logistics service chains⁸. Logistics service providers develop integrated solutions and also assume responsibility for the entire logistic process, including control and management. Due to the comprehensive nature of the services provided, contract logistics⁹ requires suitable management of the relationships between the partners.

The two development tendencies complement each other: demand with regard to outsourcing of the public sector’s tasks meets the extended offering of private service providers. In Germany, the private sector carries out public tasks worth EUR 300 billion annually¹⁰ and demonstrates a growth tendency. In Poland, the potential for collaboration between the public and the private sector is also powerful. This is confirmed by the fact that the former’s spending reaches nearly 49% of GDP. These figures seem to prove that it is legitimate to use external entities in the implementation of public tasks. Apart from that, due to the growing inefficiency, caused by the complexity of logistic processes and the striving to improve performance, public bodies look for external organisations which will relieve them of the burden of carrying out and coordinating the tasks commissioned from them¹¹. Logistic operators seem to be the external entities best suited to implement such tasks. Logistics, in fact, with its coordinating function, creates the biggest potential for the optimum shaping of the interfaces between the public and the economic sphere.

Logistics operators may take over various tasks whose scope is virtually unlimited. Such tasks may include elements of conventional services (transport, warehousing and order picking) as well as consulting, financial or HR services. They may be related both to public tasks (e.g. waste disposal) and to logistics services provided to the public sector (e.g. supplying hospitals). The basic service areas may include, for instance:

⁷ Ch. Kille, M. Schwemmer, *Top 100 der Logistik 2012/2013*, Fraunhofer Institut, Berlin 2012.

⁸ J. Weber et al., *Einführung in das Management der Kontraktlogistik*, Wiesbaden 2007, p. 38.

⁹ Contract logistics is also referred to as logistics outsourcing.

¹⁰ Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie, *Öffentliches Beschaffungswesen. Gutachten des Wissenschaftlichen Beirats bei Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie*, Berlin 2007, p. 15.

¹¹ J. Teska, G. Krasnodebski, “Logistyka publicznych usług transportowych”, *Logistyka* 2011, No. 3, p. 2820.

- transport – planning, optimisation and steering of transport networks customised to meet the needs of an ordering party from the public sector (managing flows of people and goods, organising transport),
- warehousing – offering storage and handling centre networks that may be used by public sector organisations (organising tasks consisting in the storage of goods for public administration bodies, for instance local logistics centres),
- IT – offering IT systems, including ICT, whose purpose is to optimise access to logistics hubs or linear infrastructure¹².

The involvement of logistic enterprises in the implementation of public tasks should bring advantages to the public sector, such as for instance cost reduction, increased flexibility in responding to changing market demands, or increased satisfaction of beneficiaries¹³.

Since public tasks are usually of long-term nature, cooperation between the logistics operator and the public ordering party should be formalised by way of agreements (contract logistics). The operator's responsibility and the scope of the agreement are usually limited¹⁴, and the duration usually increases with the scope and quality of the services provided¹⁵. Long-term relationships between the two sectors require time and a precise determination of the benefits, so that divergent interests can be reconciled¹⁶.

The above arguments justify the development of a new research area, i.e. public logistics.

¹² M. Szymczak, *Logistyka miejska*, Wyd. UE w Poznaniu, Poznań 2008, p. 177 ff.

¹³ M. Eßig, S. Dorobek, A. Glas, S. Leuger, "Überprüfung privatwirtschaftlicher Beschaffungsstrategien auf ihre Anwendbarkeit im Rahmen öffentlicher Beschaffungsprozesse", in: *Handbuch Kommunales management, Rahmenbedingungen, Aufgabenfelder, Chancen und Herausforderungen*, ed. D. Brodel, LexisNexis, Vienna 2008, p. 81 ff.

¹⁴ Optimisation or privatisation of logistic tasks is simple in the case of Facility Management, for instance, which includes management of public real property. This only requires the conditions to be determined related to maintenance and systematic improvement of service quality (Service Level Agreements). In this case, the contracts and agreements are not specific in their nature, but only include the general assumptions and goals of cooperation. If comprehensive public tasks are performed under a public-private partnership, the rights and obligations of both parties need to be determined more precisely. Contracts may be short-term and functional, as well as long-term, and in the latter case, strategic alliances are created; "Westernising the keiretsu model: the outsourcing paradigm shift", *Journal of Management Development* 2000, Vol. 19, No. 8, p. 2 ff.

¹⁵ D. Badäus, "Publik Private Partnership – Kooperationsbedarfe, Grundkategorien und Entwicklungsperspektiven", in: *Kooperationsformen zwischen Stadt und Markt*, ed. D. Badäus, Baden-Baden 2005, p. 11 ff.

¹⁶ Discussed more extensively in: S. Kauf, *Orientacja marketingowa i logistyczna w zarządzaniu regionem*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, Opole 2009, p. 166 ff.

3. Public logistics – an attempt to identify the concept

Although the public nature of logistic tasks requires public services to be specified more precisely, it is worthwhile emphasising at this point the implications of the sole notion of ‘public logistics’. Semantically speaking, this is composed of two elements: ‘logistics’ and ‘public’, each with a specific semantic context. Without elaborating on the nature of either of them individually, an attempt can be made to define the notion of ‘public logistics’.

According to the narrow definition, it means a temporal and spatial transformation related to the implementation of public tasks, as well as the coordination of interfaces between the bodies involved. Compared to the classic approach, the last element listed gained an additional dimension, related to the connections between the public and the private sector.

Many organisations, both public and private, are involved in the implementation of public tasks, which makes it legitimate to examine public logistics in the context of the supply chain. It should therefore be defined as flow-oriented management of public value creation networks/chains¹⁷. The public supply chain is composed of a network of central government and self-government agencies and organisations, as well as private institutions and enterprises. The goal pursued by all the participants of that chain is the best possible implementation of public tasks, bringing added value for the public sector and for the beneficiaries.

The two approaches to public logistics mentioned above complement each other, making it possible to define the concept more broadly. In this respect, public logistics will comprise all actions related to the spatial-temporal transformation of property, regardless of the latter’s form of ownership and the nature of the organisation performing such activities. It also comprises the provision and maintenance of tools and machinery necessary to implement public tasks¹⁸. The task of public logistics is also to manage networks composed of public and private organisations.

Public logistics should guarantee the supply of public goods and services to territorial self-government bodies in accordance with the social needs, in the sense of supply chain management, and the taking over of implementation of public logistic tasks by the private sector (within the framework of contract logistics) should become a new public task.

¹⁷ M. Eßig, “Zur Anwendbarkeit der logistischen Führungskonzeption auf den öffentlichen Sektor”, in: *Logistikmanagement: Innovative Logistikkonzepte*, eds. R. Lasch, C.G. Janker, Gabler, Wiesbaden 2005, p. 93 ff.

¹⁸ M. Eßig, M. Witt, M. Scheckenhöfer, “Öffentliche Logistik. Logistik zur Erfüllung öffentliche Aufgaben”, in: *Öffentliche Logistik*, eds. M. Eßig, M. Witt, Gabler, Wiesbaden 2009, p. 8.

4. Public logistics – development and determinants

It needs to be pointed out that the first impulse for the emergence of the new research area was deregulation and privatisation of the public sector. Until recently, public institutions used to perform most tasks on their own, which resulted from the fact that the ordering party and the contractor being a single entity. Most public tasks in the field of logistics, related for instance to municipal management or transport policy¹⁹ used to be the state's domain. Said tasks used to be implemented by state-owned enterprises or were subject to rigorous concession granting processes. Only in the second half of the 20th century did first deregulation take place in the area of public tasks, consisting in the gradual withdrawal of the public sector from implementation of a part of them. The first privatisation processes related to public administration tasks took place in the 1960s in the USA, when first attempts were made to overcome the difficulties and financial hardships cities were facing. In the 1980s, the concept was developed further in the UK. Its development was stimulated by the harsh financial crisis affecting territorial self-government bodies. In Poland, the process of deregulation and privatisation of public tasks²⁰ took place in the 1990s, which was related to the emergence of modern territorial self-government bodies. Public sector privatisation was based on the ustawa z dnia 13 lipca 1990 r. o prywatyzacji przedsiębiorstw państwowych [Act of 13th July 1990 on privatisation of state-owned enterprises]²¹. For instance, in 1990 the coach company PKS was divided and specialised transport was decentralised. Privatisation processes in the area of municipal management, on the other hand, were accelerated by the ustawa z dnia 20 grudnia 1996 r. o gospodarce komunalnej [Act of 20th December 1996 on municipal management], imposing the obligation on municipalities to adopt resolutions converting municipal companies into budget establishments or commercial law companies²².

Apart from the public sector deregulation and privatisation processes already mentioned, substantial changes took place in the functioning of the global market, manifested mainly in the development of the logistics sector (TSL). The

¹⁹ Until 1989, the ustawa z dnia 27 listopada 1961 r. o transporcie drogowym i spedycji krajowej, Dz.U. nr 53, poz. 298 [Act of 1961 on road transport and domestic forwarding] was in force, since 1989 – the ustawa z dnia 23 grudnia 1988 r. o działalności gospodarczej, Dz.U. nr 41, poz. 324 [Act on economic activity], and since 1991 – the ustawa z dnia 27 lipca 1991 r. o zmianie ustawy Prawo o ruchu drogowym, Dz.U. z 1991 r. nr 73, poz. 321 [Act governing international transport by road].

²⁰ Examples of literature dealing with the privatisation of public tasks: S. Biernat, *Prywatyzacja zadań publicznych. Problematyka prawna*, PWN, Warszawa – Kraków 1994; L. Zacharko, “Prywatyzacja zadań publicznych jako nowe pojęcie w zakresie gospodarki komunalnej”, in: *Prawo administracyjne w okresie transformacji ustrojowej*, eds. E. Knosala, A. Matan, G. Łaszczyca, Kantor Wydawniczy Zakamycze, Kraków 1999.

²¹ Journal of Laws, Dz.U. nr 51, poz. 298.

²² Journal of Laws, Dz.U. z 1997 r. nr 9, poz. 43.

said development was a consequence, for instance, of process thinking becoming more widespread, of the fact that enterprises focused on core activity (key competences), and also of the concentration and differentiation of structures within the sector²³. It also seems legitimate to conclude that the increased demand for logistic services is a consequence of globalisation of the economy, of going towards a post-industrial society and of the increased importance of environmental aspects of business activity.

Public sector deregulation contributed to increased competitiveness of the logistic sector, in particular in the area of transport, warehouse and postal services, linear infrastructure maintenance services and tasks related to municipal management. This, in turn, led to the already mentioned changes in demand structure and in service offering differentiation. Such tendencies opened up broad possibilities for manufacturing and trading enterprises as well as for self-government bodies in relation to the use of logistics operators in order to optimise their value creation chains. This, on its part, contributed to a boom in contract logistics. Today, however, it is still difficult to determine the extent to which the public sector in Poland has been making use of this potential. Apart from several practical examples, such as for instance the taking over of tasks related to municipal waste management or transport (urban transport²⁴) by private enterprises, few public tasks can be enumerated which were carried out within the framework of contract logistics. One should therefore be all the more pleased with the initiative of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, formalised by way of the Decision on the Minister of National Defence, concerning the implementation of service contracting outside the armed forces²⁵. According to that decision, in order to relieve the army from burdens not resulting from military functions, some priority services will have been contracted by the year 2018, including for instance²⁶:

– repair, maintenance and other services related to weapons and military equipment,

²³ P. Klaus, “Logistik – flow management, brevier und glossar”, *Nürnberger Logistik-Arbeitspapier* 2003, No. 8, p. 8 ff.

²⁴ The following may be put forward as examples here: 1) Private transport company Warbus with its registered office in Warsaw, operating municipal bus routes in Murowana Goślina, Lesznowola near Warsaw, and earlier in the municipality of Elk, and hypermarket shuttle buses in in Warsaw, 2) Przedsiębiorstwo Komunikacji Samochodowej sp. z o.o., performing scheduled passenger transport services and urban transport services, operating in the area of Gdańsk, Sopot, Gdynia and adjacent municipalities.

²⁵ Decyzja nr 318/MON Ministra Obrony Narodowej z dnia 3 lipca 2008 r. w sprawie wdrożenia systemu kontraktowania usług poza Siłami Zbrojnymi Rzeczypospolite, Dz.Urz. MON nr 14, poz. 175 z późn. zm. [Decision No. 318/MON of the Minister of National Defence of 3 July 2008 on the implementation of service contracting outside the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, Official Journal of the Ministry of National Defence of 24 July 2008, as amended].

²⁶ J. Teska, G. Krasnodębski, op. cit., p. 2809.

- disposal of combat assets,
- transport,
- gathering and maintenance of inventories,
- maintenance of real estate belonging to the army,
- providing security to Polish army contingents.

In Poland, logistics outsourcing may take place on the basis of the Public Procurement Law. In accordance with Article 3 of that Act, self-government bodies become ordering parties, and the private enterprise – a contractor conducting public services. The big potential of the public sector can be proven by the value of public procurement in 2011, ranging at PLN 144 billion²⁷. The public sector, aiming at streamlining its expenses, should therefore use logistics outsourcing more often, since it offers a large potential for cost reduction and improvement of the quality of public services.

Bearing in mind the development tendencies mentioned above in the practice of self-government bodies, three phases of public logistics development can be distinguished²⁸:

1. Phase one is related to the privatisation of state-owned logistics enterprises and the deregulation of transport markets and of tasks related to municipal management.

2. Phase two appeared with the advent of competition between self-government bodies, the differentiation of logistic services in economic practice, as well as the development of contract logistics.

3. Phase three is characterised by the striving of territorial self-government bodies to improve operating performance, economic thinking and the consequent tendency to outsource at least some public tasks. At this phase, the self-government bodies do not act solely as lawmakers, but become ordering parties commissioning public tasks. It needs to be pointed out here that the public tasks are implemented most often on the basis of civil law contracts.

It also has to be mentioned that the comprehensive nature of the logistic tasks which are outsourced requires all their elements to be defined earlier. In that case, the process of outsourcing logistic tasks takes place in three stages²⁹:

1. Preparation – at this stage, the public administration body continues to be an independent contractor performing the public tasks, while the logistics operator becomes acquainted with the structures, processes and current organisational determinants.

²⁷ *Report of the Chairman of the Public Procurement Office on the functioning of the public procurement system in 2011*, Warszawa 2012, p. 85.

²⁸ M. Eßig, M. Witt, M. Scheckenhofer, op. cit., p. 14.

²⁹ M. Witt, “Strategische Logistikkonzepte für den öffentlichen Sektor”, in: *Öffentliche Logistik*, op. cit., p. 147 ff.

2. Handing over – at this stage, the public organisations hand over a part of the public tasks to be implemented by logistics operators. They determine the strategic and operational goals, as well as hand over the necessary infrastructure, IT and competent human resources to the private partners.

3. Implementation – at this stage, the contractor controls all operational activities performed by the logistics operator. The task of the public administration body is only to decide whether to continue that partnership or to terminate it (exit strategy).

In order to optimise the implementation of public tasks, the external partner needs to be constantly controlled and supervised by the self-government bodies, i.e. continuous analysis is required of performance as well as of the economic benefits obtained by the public sector compared to independent task implementation.

Although outsourcing of public tasks seems to be an appropriate approach to the solving of logistics problems both in large urbanised areas and in small municipalities, it is not a particularly widespread phenomenon for the time being. Nevertheless, experiences of highly developed countries seem to confirm the legitimacy of outsourcing public tasks by self-government entities³⁰. In order to benefit from such experiences, resolute action is needed and the economic policy assumptions of territorial self-government bodies need to be reconstructed. A scientific analysis of the prospects of logistics outsourcing and of public-private partnership is also necessary. It should address not only the related hazards and benefits, but also their specific macro-regional nature.

5. Conclusion

The discussion presented in this study proves the legitimacy of developing public logistics. Its increased importance is a consequence, on the one hand, of the extension of the scope of public tasks performed by self-government bodies, and on the other hand – of the increased involvement of the private sector in the public sphere. Although the potential of public logistics, in particular of the tasks carried out within the scope of logistics outsourcing, is vast, it seems that it has not yet been sufficiently appreciated and implemented. This concerns both the practical use of the logistics potential and scientific discourse. Actually, no study has yet addressed the issues related to public institutions acting as parties

³⁰ One of such positive examples is the British army in which tasks related to logistics security are outsourced, performed under public-private partnership, initiatives consisting in the private financing of public undertakings and privatisation of earlier military logistics operators. T. Jałowiec, “Firmy w brytyjskich siłach zbrojnych”, *Przegląd Logistyczny* 2010, No. 1, p. 64.

commissioning logistics services. One should therefore hope that this text will contribute to a future in-depth discussion of the issue.

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Logistyka publiczna – rozwój i uwarunkowania

Streszczenie. W artykule zaprezentowano problematykę rozwoju logistyki publicznej rozumianej nie w sensie infrastrukturalnym, a realizacji zadań publicznych. Podjęto tutaj próbę identyfikacji uwarunkowań rozwoju logistyki publicznej oraz jej conceptualizacji. Wskazano na fakt, że rozwój logistyki publicznej wynika zarówno ze wzrostu liczby zadań publicznych realizowanych przez organa samorządowe, jak i ze wzrostu zaangażowania sektora prywatnego w sferę publiczną.

Słowa kluczowe: logistyka, logistyka publiczna, zadania publiczne

