

CROSSING THE LINE OF CONTACT

MONITORING REPORT



October 2018

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides the results of the October 2018 round of the survey conducted by Charitable Foundation «The Right to Protection» (R2P) at the five entry-exit checkpoints (EECPs) to the non-government controlled area (NGCA). The survey has been administered on a regular basis since June 2017. The EECPs are located in Donetsk (Maiorske, Marinka, Hnutove and Novotroitske) and Luhansk (Stanytsia Luhanska) Oblasts. This survey is a part of the monitoring of human rights violations of the conflict-affected population within the framework of the project «Advocacy, Protection and Legal Assistance to the Internally Displaced Population of Ukraine» implemented

by R2P with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The purpose of the survey is to explore the motivations and concerns of those travelling between the NGCA and the government-controlled area (GCA), as well as the conditions and risks associated with crossing the line of contact through the EECPs. It should be noted that survey results should not be directly extrapolated onto the entire population crossing the checkpoints in eastern Ukraine, but they help identify needs, gaps and trends, and provide evidenced-based facts for advocacy efforts. The data collection methodology was the same at all EECPs. R2P monitors surveyed civilians

in the pedestrian and vehicle lines in the direction of both the GCA and NGCA on the government-controlled side of EECPs. The survey was conducted anonymously and on a voluntary basis. All persons interviewed for the survey were informed about its purpose. This report is based on data collected during 44 visits to the five EECPs in October 2018. More statistical data can be found on the Eastern Ukraine Checkpoint Monitoring Online Dashboard available at <https://goo.gl/fZxXD1>. This reporting period was also influenced by reconstruction activity at Novotroitske and Stanytsia Luhanska EECPs.

OVERALL SUMMARY

- The gender and age proportion of respondents have remained relatively consistent throughout all survey rounds. Women over 60 constitute the largest share of respondents (35% this month).
- The vast majority of respondents (87%) were NGCA residents. The trend of GCA residents having far fewer reasons to travel across the line of contact than NGCA residents remains unchanged.
- During the reporting period, reconstruction at Novotroitske and Stanytsia Luhanska EECP was in progress. Road reconstruction was conducted at Hnutove EECP.
- As the number of control counters and State Border Guard Service staff

were increased in September as a part of reconstruction, lines at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP were significantly reduced. The number of counters was increased from 10 to 20 in each direction on the GCA side of the EECP.

- The majority of respondents (58%) spent 4-5 hours to pass through the checkpoints. It took the most time to cross the line of contact at Marinka EECP. Duration of crossing at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP was the shortest. The crossing process took more time at NGCA side of checkpoints at all EECPs except Stanytsia Luhanska due to more thorough control procedures on the GCA side of this EECP.

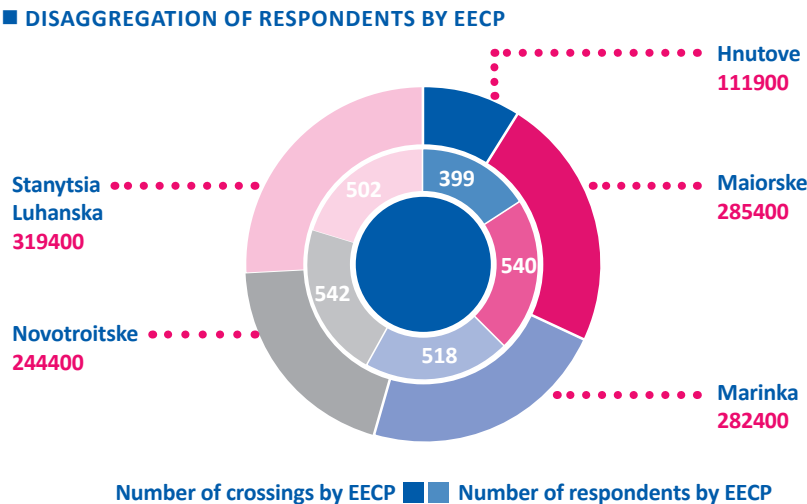
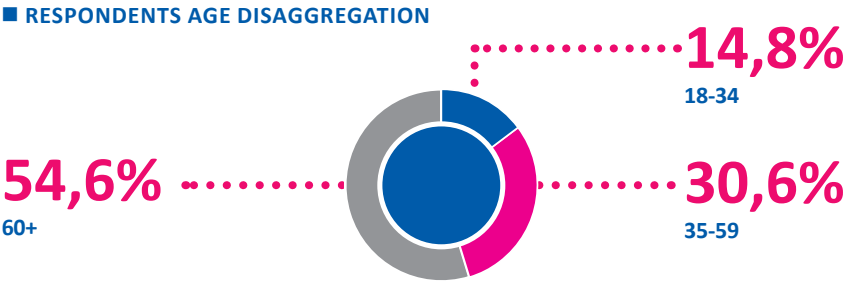


Hnutove EECP

1 DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

During the reporting period, R2P monitors surveyed a total of **2,501** persons crossing the line of contact. 53% of them were surveyed in the line to the NGCA and 47% to the GCA.

64% of respondents were female and 36% were male. 7% of respondents were travelling with children. The elderly remain the largest age group represented (54.6% of all respondents), which is related to the administrative burdens people registered in the NGCA must undergo to receive their pensions. The overall demographics of respondents have remained quite consistent throughout all survey rounds.



Maiorske EECP

2 RESIDENCE, DISPLACEMENT AND RETURN

Only 13% of all respondents indicated the GCA as their place of residence at the time of the survey. The trend of GCA residents having far fewer reasons to travel across the line of contact than NGCA residents remained unchanged. 4% of all respondents resided in the GCA prior to the conflict. Nearly all of them (103 of 104 individuals) indicated the GCA as their place of residence at the time of the survey. 87% of such respondents were in the age of 18-59. The majority of them (68%) were surveyed at EECP Stanytsia Luhanska.

69% of all respondents stated that they never changed their place of residence due to the conflict. The majority of respondents who were displaced at least once ultimately returned to their original place of residence. 95% of such respondents currently reside in the NGCA. However, there is no information on when they returned.

■ DISPLACEMENT

Never displaced

69,3%

Displaced

30,7%

1,3% Displaced several times but did not return

22% Displaced but then returned

7,4% Displaced once and are still residing there

■ REASONS FOR RETURN³

70,2%

Stabilized situation

47,5%

Fear to abandon a household

70,0%

Wish to reside at home

1,1%

Care for a relative

2,9%

Unemployment

0,7%

Difficult relations with local community

3,0%

High rent

Respondents provided several reasons for why they decided to return to where they resided before the conflict. The most common reasons for return were the desire to reside at home and the stabilized situation (70% for both). The fear to abandon a household (47%) and high rent (30%) were also common

reasons for returning. Though there was a significant difference in the distribution of reasons for return in comparison to the previous reporting period (for example, 50% of the returnees surveyed in September explained their decision by stabilized situation while in October this option was mentioned by 20% more

respondents), it is not appropriate to compare survey data from different rounds as the survey does not collect information about time of displacement or return. Overall, there are no signs of massive return of internally displaced persons.

² It is important to mention that the demographics of respondents and their answers should not be extrapolated to the whole population as the survey does not cover internally displaced persons or NGCA residents who do not travel through the EECPs.

³ Respondents could indicate more than one reason for their travel.

3 REASONS, FREQUENCY AND DURATION

The reasons for crossing differ substantially depending on the place of residence. Respondents who reside in the NGCA were mostly traveling to solve issues with documents, avoid suspension of payments triggered by being away from the GCA for over 60 days, visit relatives, and withdraw cash. GCA residents were mostly visiting relatives and checking on property.

It is noteworthy, that 18% of the GCA residents who resided in the GCA prior to the conflict were traveling for work. Most of them crossed the line of contact at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP. Such share is partially attributable to the employment environment in Luhansk oblast that compelled people to seek opportunities in major cities that are mostly in the NGCA now.

No significant difference in the reasons for crossing were observed in comparison to September except for a slight decrease in the number of the GCA residents traveling to visit their relatives. Such decrease is of a seasonal nature and matches the observations of the year 2017.

■ REASONS FOR CROSSING⁴

GCA residents		NGCA residents
229 (68,4%)	Visiting relatives	428 (19,8%)
179 (53,4%)	Checking on property	7 (0,3%)
20 (6,0%)	Work	54 (2,5%)
17 (5,1%)	Avoiding payment suspension	1120 (51,7%)
15 (4,5%)	Funeral/visiting a grave	14 (0,6%)
10 (3,0%)	Shopping	325 (15,0%)
10 (3,0%)	Care of a relative	16 (0,7%)
9 (2,7%)	Withdrawing cash	564 (26,0%)
6 (1,8%)	Issues with documents	1208 (55,8%)
6 (1,8%)	Medical treatment	28 (1,3%)
5 (1,5%)	Education	48 (2,2%)
1 (0,3%)	Vacation	17 (0,8%)
1 (0,3%)	Applying to Coordination Grp	77 (3,6%)
0 (0%)	Postal service	88 (4,1%)
0 (0%)	Permanent relocation	1 (0%)
0 (0%)	Other	10 (0,5%)

⁴ Respondents could indicate more than one reason for their travel. The percentage was calculated based on the total number of people who indicated either the GCA or the NGCA as their current place of residence.

The reasons for crossing also varied depending on the age of respondents. Those over the age of 60 mostly traveled in order to solve issues with governmental agencies, documents or banking services, while respondents aged 18-34 were mostly visiting relatives. Overall, younger respondents had fewer reasons to travel through the line of contact. Respondents aged 18-34 were traveling slightly more often to work. The share of such respondents increased from 8% in September to 14% in October. 62% of them (31 individuals) were NGCA residents.

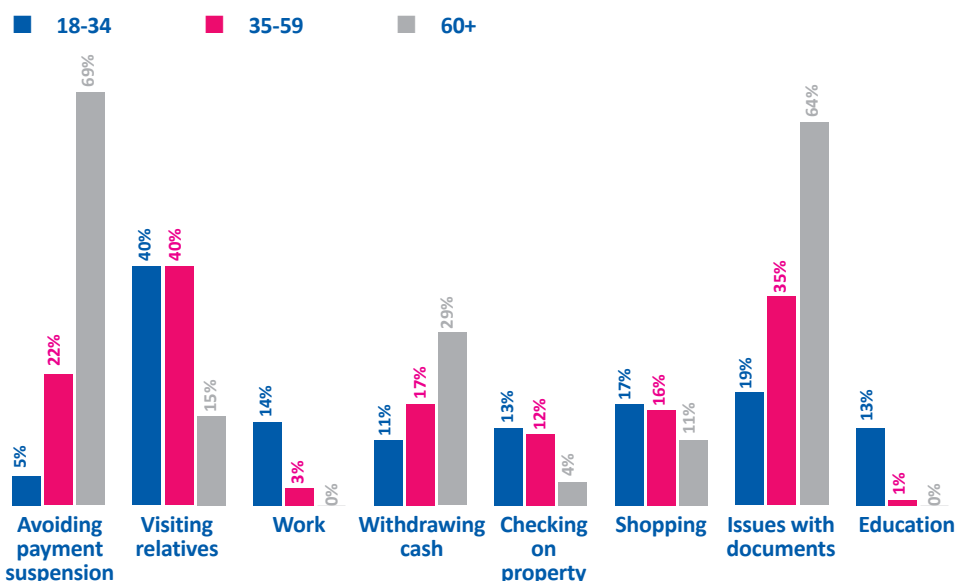
The need to pass physical identification at Oschadbank (cited by 68% of respondents who travelled to solve issues with documents) and reinstatement of pensions (34%) remain the most common documentation issues. Among other issues, respondents mostly mentioned submitting documents for internal or international passports.

13% of all respondents indicated shopping as their reason for crossing the line of contact. 97% of such respondents were NGCA residents.

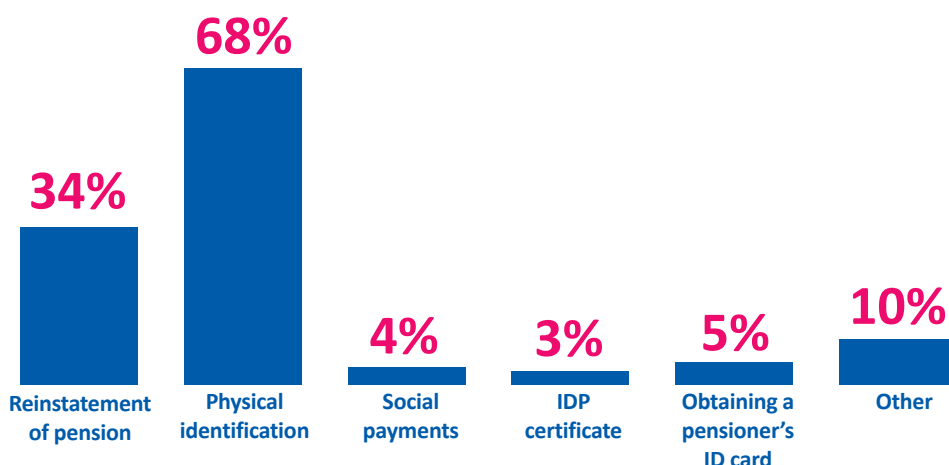
Food remains the most commonly purchased item, followed by medicine and then clothes. Outside of these items, the most common item mentioned in the «Other» category is household appliances.

No significant changes were observed in comparison to the previous month.

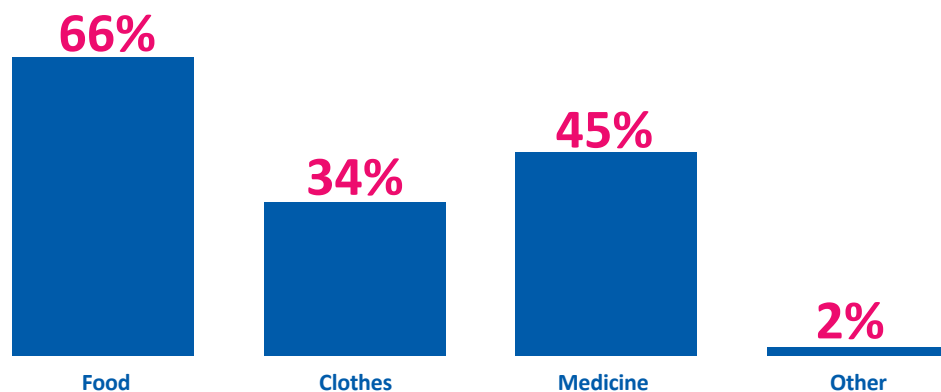
■ MOST FREQUENT REASONS FOR CROSSING BY AGE⁵



■ TYPE OF DOCUMENT ISSUE



■ TYPE OF GOODS PURCHASED



⁵ Respondents could indicate more than one reason for their travel. The percentage was calculated based on the total number in the particular age group.

No significant changes in frequency of crossing the line of contact were observed in comparison to September. The majority of all respondents (67%) stated that they cross the line of contact quarterly. Considering the age disaggregation, such a percentage of respondents travelling quarterly and monthly is often related to the requirements imposed on people with NGCA residence registration by Ukrainian legislation for obtaining pensions and social benefits, such as verification of the actual place of residence and physical identification at Oschadbank.

15% of those surveyed stated that they have previously crossed the line of contact during the reporting period. The graphs in this section contain information on the duration of crossing in October. The majority (58%) of such respondents spent 4 to 5 hours to pass the EECPs on both the GCA and NGCA sides. The crossing process slowed down in comparison to September: the number of respondents who spent 4-5 hours increased by 10%. A major increase in duration of crossing was observed at Maiorske EECF due to the lack of SFS staff and more thorough inspections of personal belongings in the GCA.

The majority of respondents (61%) stated that it took more time to pass the NGCA checkpoints. However, the number of such respondents significantly decreased compared to the previous month. Stanytsia Luhanska EECF remained the only one where the majority of respondents stated that they spent more time crossing the checkpoints on the GCA side due to more thorough control procedures than in the NGCA, however the number of respondents stating that duration was approximately the same on both sides increased from zero to 32% since September.

■ FREQUENCY OF CROSSING THE LINE OF CONTACT (BY AGE)

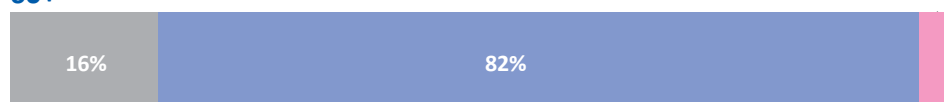
18-34



35-59



60+

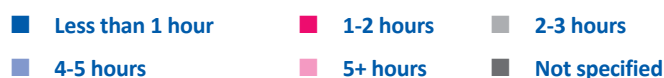


■ DURATION OF CROSSING

October



September



■ SIDE OF CHECKPOINT WITH LONGER DURATION OF CROSSING

October



September



Considerable deceleration was observed at Maiorske EECF. The number of respondents who stated that they spent more time at the GCA checkpoint increased from 7% in September to 22% in October. During October, monitors often noted the efficient work of the EECF staff, however, queues occurred periodically. For example, on October 11 there was only one control counter

operating at each side of the GCA EECF due to a temporary issue with electricity. People also queued at the SFS⁶ desks for inspection of personal belongings. The number of staff that conducts the inspection is often insufficient, considering the intense flow through the EECF. Also, monitors noted that after the SFS staff rotation inspections became more thorough.

⁶ State Fiscal Service of Ukraine

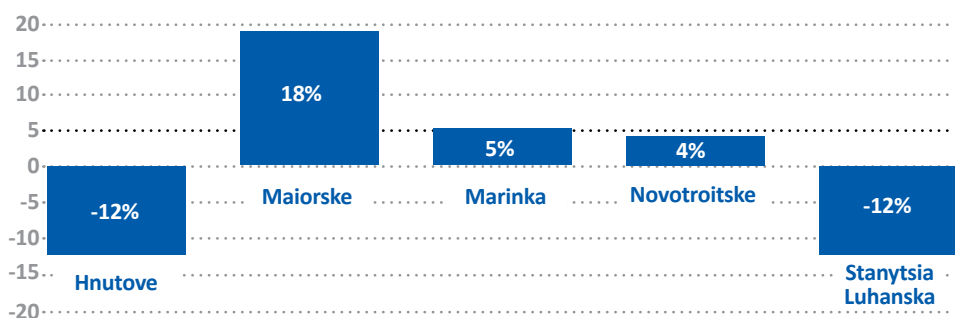
4 CONCERNS WHILE CROSSING THE LINE OF CONTACT

The general level of concern considerably increased at Maiorske EECF but decreased at Hnutove and Stanytsia Luhanska EECF. Such a decrease at Hnutove and Stanytsia Luhanska is mostly related to reconstruction at these EECFs.

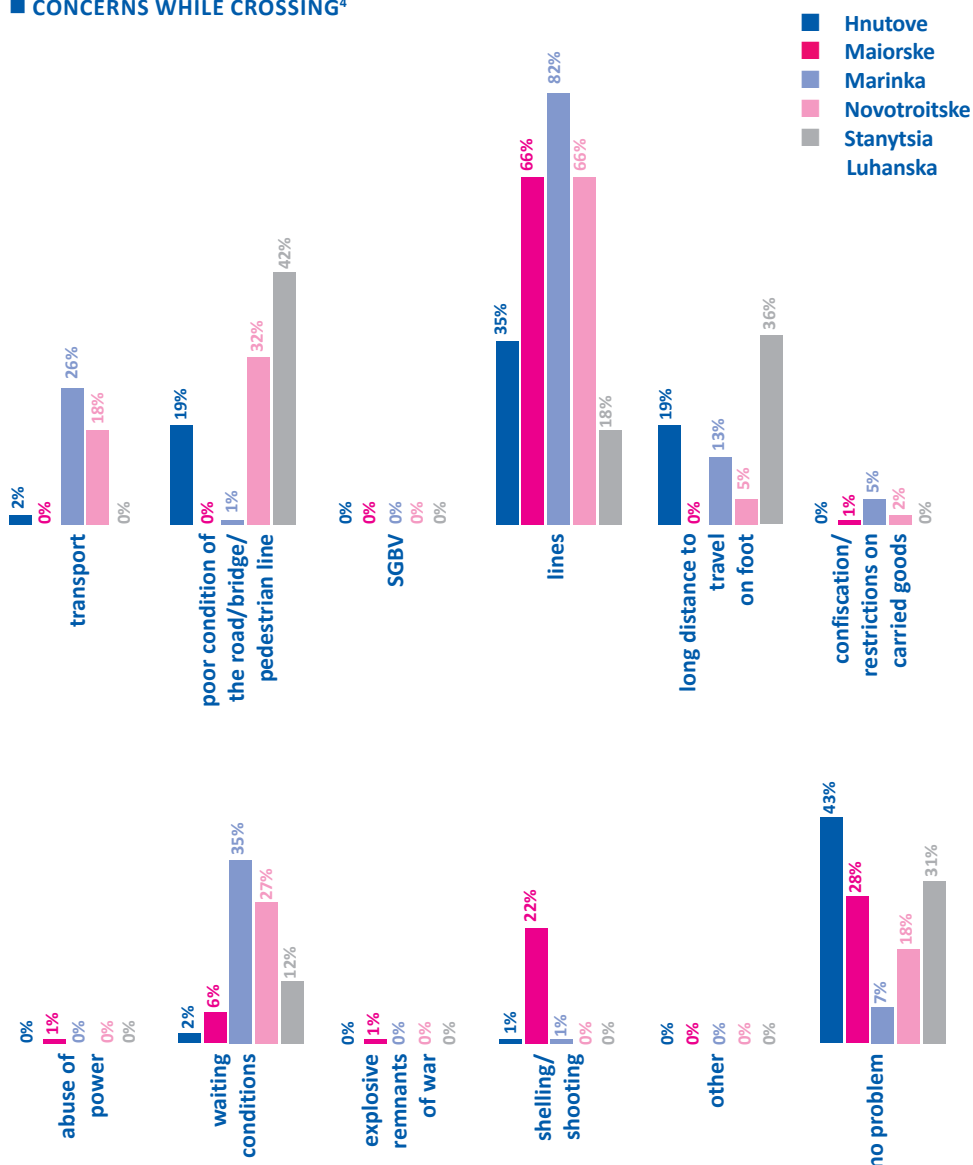
During the reporting period the most considerable changes were observed at Stanytsia Luhanska EECF. The share of respondents who complained about the long lines decreased by almost 50% (from 67% to 18%), and complaints about waiting conditions by 36% (from 48% to 12%). The decrease at Stanytsia Luhanska was certainly caused by the renovation, including the increased number of staff and control counters that sped up crossing procedures. However, monitors noted the lack of sun/rain sheds and seats as new sheds that were installed at the EECF are shorter than the previous ones and do not cover all people in a queue. Monitors also reported about the lack of wheelchairs for transporting people with impaired mobility across the bridge. During the reporting period both wheelchairs were broken. New chairs were provided by UNHCR on October 31.

However, long lines at EECFs remain one of the main concerns of respondents. The number of such complaints sharply increased at Hnutove and Maiorske (by 30% and 28% respectively). According to information from the monitoring visits, the inspection of personal belongings at Hnutove NGCA EECF is more thorough and on the GCA there is often only one control counter operating at a time, which causes lines in both directions. However, Hnutove is still significantly less busy than other EECFs.

■ DYNAMICS IN GENERAL LEVEL OF CONCERN

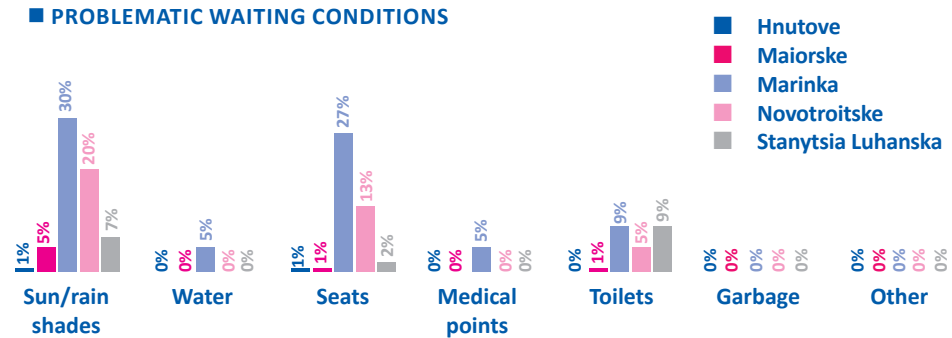


■ CONCERNS WHILE CROSSING⁴



The level of concern about shelling at Maiorske EECF remains high, while at other EECFs respondents rarely mentioned it. The number of shelling or shooting incidents in the vicinity of Maiorske EECF reported by monitors is significantly higher than at other EECFs. Despite reconstruction, the level of concern about waiting conditions at Marinka EECF remains high (35%). Such complaints mainly relate to the condition of the «zero» checkpoint where people often have to spend hours waiting for a bus.

4 individuals were concerned about abuse of power. 3 of them were surveyed at Maiorske and one at Marinka EECF. Two of them (a man aged 18-34 at Marinka and a woman aged 35-59 at Maiorske) explained that they feel emotional pressure and are afraid of being abused though they did not experience it before. Two other women at Maiorske EECF mentioned actual cases – numerous verbal assaults at the NGCA EECF and a conflict with the SFS employee at the GCA EECF that was caused by miscommunication. Monitors reported that people often feel intimidated about



articulating such complaints, so the level of such concern is likely understated. Waiting conditions only remain a cause of significant concern at Marinka and Novotroitske EECFs. However, reconstruction at Novotroitske EECF is already in progress, whereas at Marinka EECF the majority of complaints concerned waiting conditions at the «zero» checkpoint, which are not suitable for the hundreds of people queueing there for hours. Although renovation at Stanytsia Luhanska is still in progress, monitors received a lot

fewer complaints regarding the sun or rain sheds (from 41% in September to 7% in October), latrines (by 28%) and lack of seats (by 26%). Respondents at Novotroitske and Marinka EECFs complained slightly more often about the lack of sun/rain sheds (by 10% and 5% respectively). The increase at Novotroitske EECF is most likely a temporary inconvenience related to reconstruction. Complaints at Marinka EECF mostly concerned the «zero» checkpoint and the area of passport control counters.



Marinka EECF

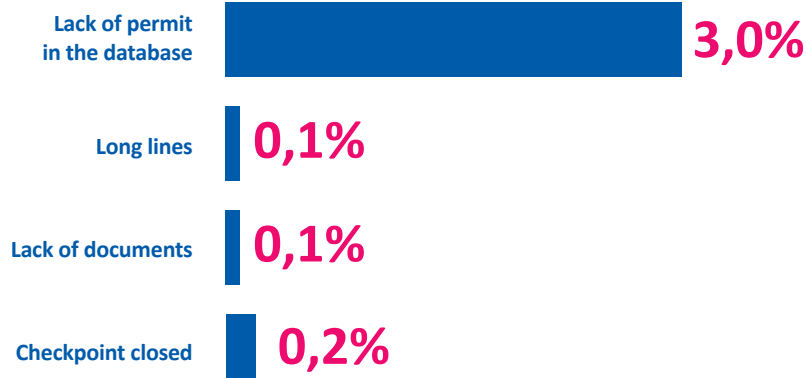
⁷ Respondents could indicate more than one concern

5 INABILITY TO CROSS

During the reporting period, only 3.2% of all respondents mentioned incidents of not being able to cross the line of contact in the past six months. The absence of the crossing permit from the database was the most common reason for such incidents. The share of such respondents and the main reason remains relatively stable through the whole period of conducting the survey.

The lack of Coordination Group representatives at Hnutove, Novotroitske and Stanytsia Luhanska EECs hinders the opportunity for obtaining a permit at the EEC. The State Border Guard Service at these EECs can assist in obtaining a crossing permit for emergency cases by expedited procedure, but in all other cases people have to travel to Coordination Centers in the GCA.

REASONS FOR INABILITY TO CROSS⁸



Stanytsia Luhanska EEC

⁸ Respondents could indicate more than one concern

For more information please contact: pr@r2p.org.ua

More statistical data can be found on the Eastern Ukraine Checkpoint
Monitoring Online Dashboard available at <https://goo.gl/fZxXD1>.