

CROSSING THE LINE OF CONTACT

MONITORING REPORT



August 2018

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides the results of the August 2018 round of the survey conducted by the Charitable Foundation «The Right to Protection» (R2P) at the five entry-exit checkpoints (EECPs) to the non-government-controlled area (NGCA) administered on a regular basis since June 2017. The EECPs are located in Donetsk (Maiorske, Marinka, Hnutove and Novotroitske) and Luhansk (Stanytsia Luhanska) Oblasts. The survey is a part of the monitoring of violations of the human rights 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 reasons 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 the survey results should not be directly extrapolated onto the entire population crossing the checkpoints, but it helps identify needs, gaps and trends, and provides an evidentiary basis for advocacy efforts. The data collection methodology was the same at all EECPs. R2P monitors surveyed civilians queuing on the government-controlled side of EECPs in the lines for pedestrians and for vehicles

both in the GCA and NGCA directions. 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 1-30 August 2018 during 45 visits to the five EECPs. This reporting period was characterized by the closure of Maiorske EECP 23-27 August due to shelling, closure of Novotroitske EECP 29-30 August due to wild fire detonating mines in its vicinity, and preparations for the school year. Reconstruction works at Marinka and Stanytsia Luhanska EECPs are still in progress.

OVERALL SUMMARY

- The gender and age proportion of respondents has remained relatively stable throughout all survey rounds. Women over 60 constitute the largest share of respondents.
- The vast majority of respondents (90.2%) were NGCA residents. The trend of GCA residents having far fewer reasons to travel across the line of contact than NGCA residents remains unchanged. The fluctuations in disaggregation of reasons for crossing were of a seasonal nature.
- Transport issues, as well as the temporary closure of Maiorske and Novotroitske EECPs, led to significant changes in the duration of crossing and the load at Marinka EECP. Thus, more than 50% of all respondents stated that they spend more than 4 hours to cross the line of contact.
- The majority of respondents spent 4-5 hours to pass all checkpoints. It took the most time to cross the line of contact at Marinka EECP. Waiting times at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP were the shortest. The crossing process took more time at NGCA checkpoints at all EECPs except Stanytsia Luhanska.
- Waiting conditions remained one of the highest concerns, especially at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP, where numerous cases of fainting due to the stuffiness under the shades continued to be reported during monitoring visits (up to 90 incidents per week).



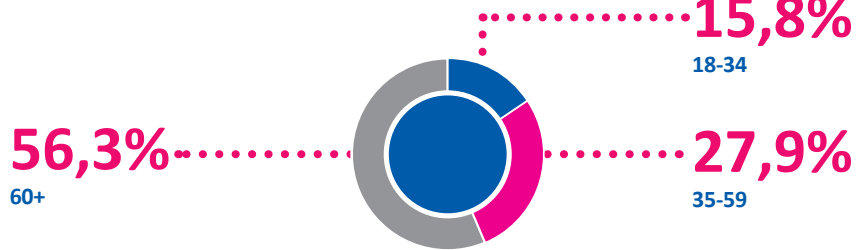
Maiorske EECP

1 DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

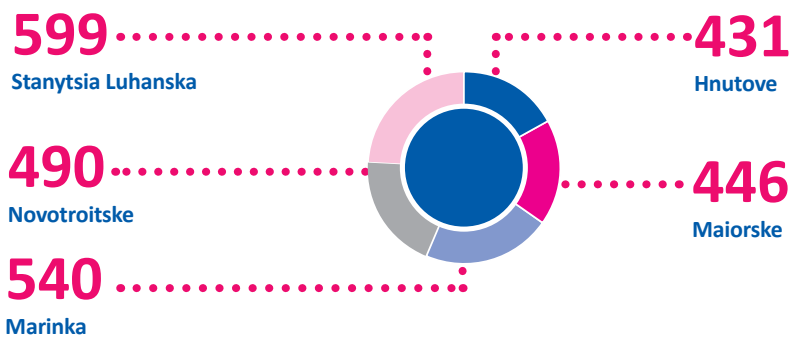
During the reporting period, R2P monitors surveyed a total of **2,506** persons crossing the line of contact. 53.8% of them were heading to the GCA and 46.2% to the NGCA.

35.7% of respondents were male and 64.3% were female. 10.2% of respondents were travelling with children. The elderly remain the largest age group (56.3% 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 similar throughout all survey rounds.

RESPONDENTS AGE DISAGGREGATION



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY EEC



Novotroitske EEC

2 RESIDENCE, DISPLACEMENT AND RETURN

96.6% of respondents stated that they resided in the NGCA prior to the conflict. Among the 3.4% of respondents who resided in the GCA prior to the conflict, more than 70% were surveyed in Luhansk oblast. More interestingly, 3 of such individuals stated that they currently reside in the NGCA. All three were aged 18-34 and heading to the GCA to visit their relatives.

90.2% of all respondents cited the NGCA 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. 71.8% of all respondents stated that they never changed their place of residence due to the conflict. The majority of respondents who moved at least once (21.5% of all respondents) ultimately returned to their original place of residence¹. However, there is no information on when they returned.

DISPLACEMENT

Never moved

71,8%

Moved

28,2%

0,8% Moved several times but did not return

21,5% Moved but then returned

5,9% Moved once and are still residing there

REASONS FOR RETURN²

62,3%



Stabilized situation

33,2%



Unwillingness to abandon a household

50,5%



Wish to reside at home

1,7%

Care for a relative

6,3%

Unemployment

0,6%

Negative attitude from local community

63,5%



High rent

The most common reasons for return indicated by respondents who changed their place of residence but then returned were high rent (63.5%) and stabilized situation (62.3%). Desire to reside at home (50.5%) and unwillingness to abandon a household (33.2%) were also common reasons for returning. Though there was a significant

difference in disaggregation of reasons for return in comparison to the previous reporting period (for instance, 48.8% of the returnees surveyed in July explained their decision by the stabilized situation in the GCA while in August this option was mentioned by 13.5% 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. Moreover, in August no respondents mentioned permanent relocation as their reason for crossing. Only 15 of such cases were reported from the beginning of the year. Overall, there are no signs of active return of internally displaced persons.

¹ 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 EECs.

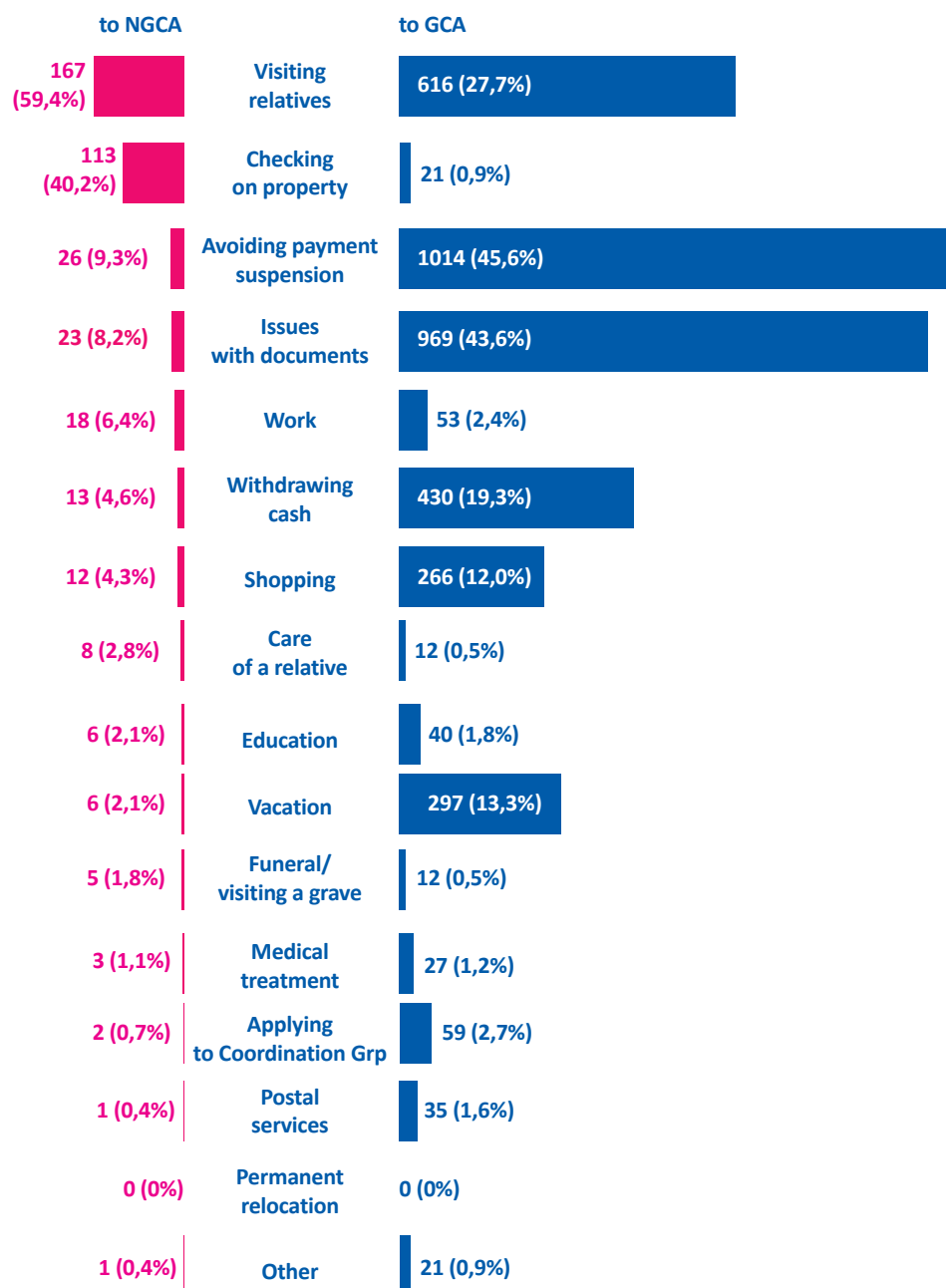
² Respondents could mention several reasons.

3 REASONS, FREQUENCY AND DURATION

Only 11.2% of all respondents indicated the NGCA as the trip destination. The reasons for crossing differ substantially depending on the travel direction. The respondents traveling to the GCA were mostly avoiding payment suspension triggered by being away from the GCA for over 60 days, solving issues with documents, visiting relatives, withdrawing cash and going on vacation. The highest number of respondents going on vacation was observed at Hnutove EECP (41.8% of all respondents going on vacation), which is located close to the seaside. The most common reasons to travel to the NGCA were visiting relatives and checking on property³.

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 structures, documents or banking services, while respondents aged 18-34 were mostly visiting relatives and going on vacation.

REASONS FOR CROSSING BY DIRECTION



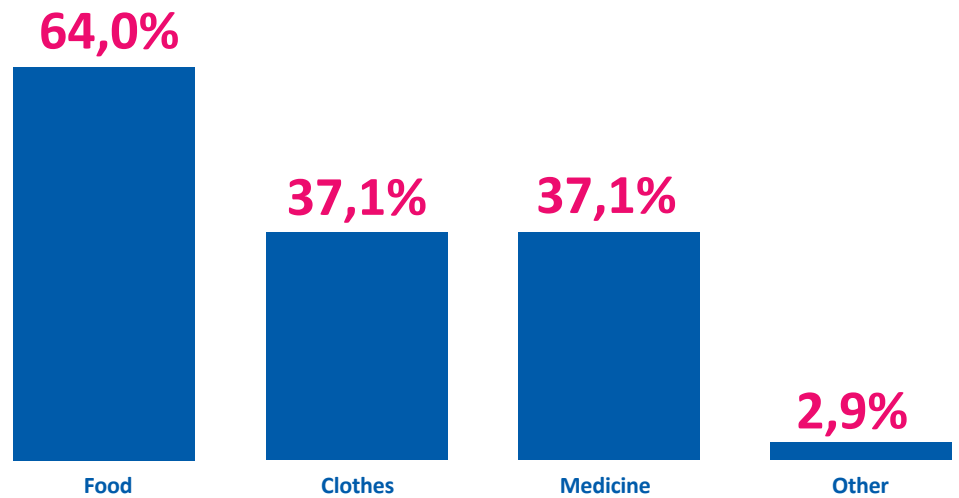
³ The percentage was calculated based on the total number of people who indicated either the GCA or the NGCA as their destination.

11.1% of all respondents indicated shopping as their reason for crossing the line of contact. 95.7% of such respondents were travelling to the GCA. The number of respondents who were travelling to buy food has decreased since June, while the number of those buying clothes increased by 6% since the previous reporting period. However, food remains the most commonly purchased item. Among other goods respondents mentioned purchasing were mainly household appliances, hygiene products and items for school.

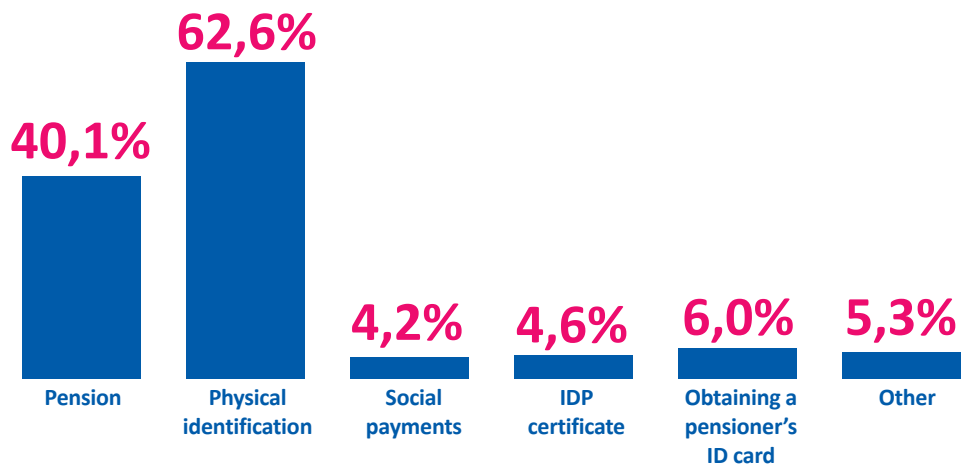
The need to pass physical identification (62.6% of respondents who travelled to solve issues with documents) and pensions (40.1%) remain the most common documentation issues. Among other issues, respondents mostly mentioned submitting documents for internal or international passports, obtaining death or birth certificates and inheritance issues.

No significant changes in frequency of crossing were observed in comparison to July. The majority of all respondents (63.6%) stated that they cross the line of contact quarterly. Considering the age disaggregation, such share 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. Fluctuations in the frequency of crossing might be also caused by the vacation season.

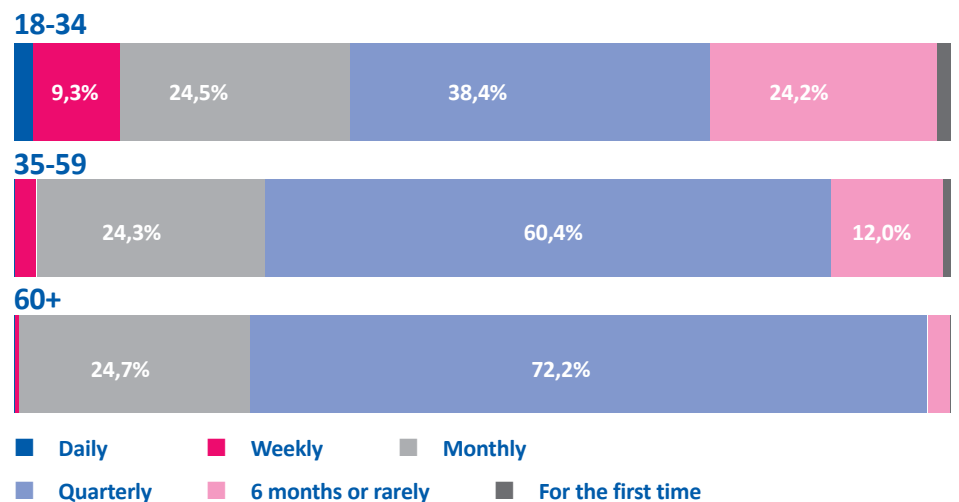
■ TYPE OF GOODS PURCHASED



■ TYPE OF DOCUMENT ISSUE



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



15.8% of those surveyed stated that they have previously crossed the line of contact during the reporting period. Graphs in this section contain information on duration of crossing in August. The majority (50.3%) of such respondents spent 4 to 5 hours to pass the EECPs on both the GCA and NGCA sides. The crossing process has significantly slowed down in comparison to August: the number of respondents who spent 4-5 hours increased by 24.5%, while the number of those who spent less time crossing decreased. Throughout the whole month, transportation issues were observed, especially at Marinka EECP. The number of buses running in the buffer zone (between the GCA and NGCA EECPs) was insufficient for large numbers of people coming from the NGCA. The situation at Marinka EECP worsened even more due to the temporary closure of Maiorske and Novotroitske in late August.

DURATION OF CROSSING

August



July



June



- Less than 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 4-5 hours
- 5+ hours
- Not specified

WHICH CHECKPOINT SIDE TOOK LONGER TO CROSS

August



July



June



- NGCA side
- GCA side
- Approximately the same
- Not specified

Among all five EECPs, in August it took the most time to cross the line of contact at Marinka EECP. 70% of those respondents who crossed the line of contact at Marinka EECP in August had to spend 4 hours or more. Such deterioration was due to the lack of transport and the temporary closure of Maiorske and Novotroitske EECPs. To cross the line of contact at that time, respondents who usually travel through these EECPs mostly went to Marinka, causing longer lines there. The largest share of respondents who spent less

than 2 hours crossing the line of contact was at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP. It is important to note that the bridge at Stanytsia Luhanska is damaged and there is no roadway for vehicles. Thus, it takes about an hour to walk between the GCA and NGCA checkpoints there. The majority of respondents (68.8%) stated that it took more time to pass the NGCA checkpoints, which is similar to the July survey. Such tendency correlates to information obtained during monitoring visits: people crossing the line of contact complained about slow servicing on

the NGCA side. Stanytsia Luhanska EECP remained the only one where the majority (82.6%) of respondents stated that they spent more time crossing the GCA checkpoints. According to information received during monitoring visits, the control procedure in the GCA is more thorough. At the same time, GCA checkpoints at Stanytsia Luhanska lack the staff and equipment for speedy processing due to heavy traffic at the EECP.

4 CONCERNS WHILE CROSSING THE LINE OF CONTACT

An increase in the level of concern in comparison to the previous reporting period was observed at all EECPs except Hnutove. Such a decrease at Hnutove EECP is related to the improvement of the situation with lines which significantly increased in July. As the vacation period is coming to an end, the number of people travelling through the EECP has returned to the average level.

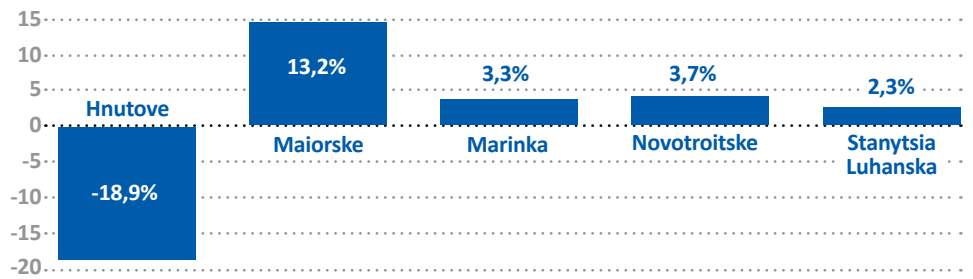
Respondents at Maiorske EECP were more concerned about long lines and intensified shelling in the area.

Long lines remain one of the main concerns at EECPs, especially taking into account the summer heat. The number of complaints about the lines at Hnutove EECP, which drastically increased in July, decreased to their regular level in August. At the same time, the number of respondents who complained about the lines increased at every other EECP.

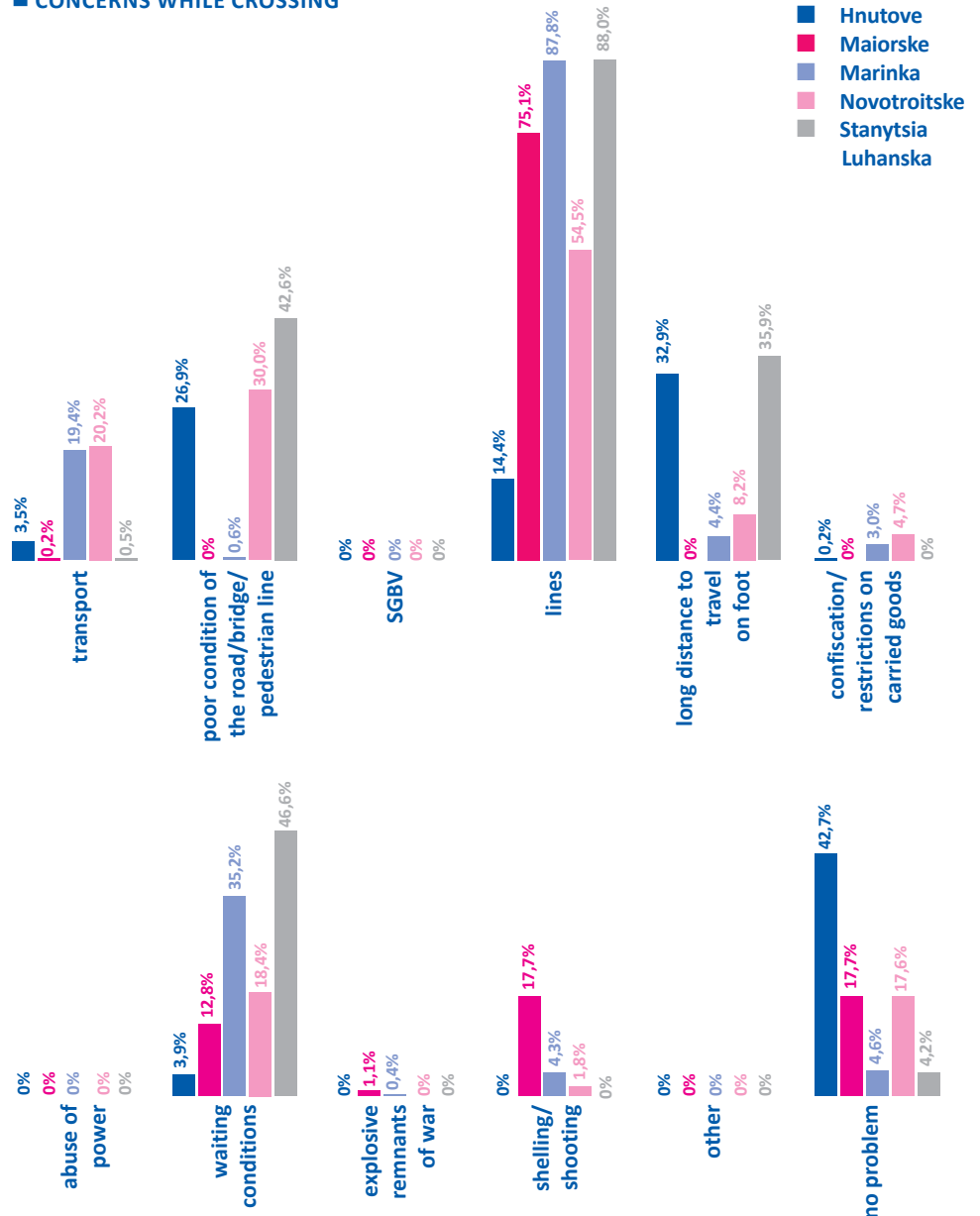
In August, respondents more often indicated concerns about shelling at Maiorske and Marinka, which is related to intensified hostilities in the vicinity.

The intensified hostilities adversely affected the work at Maiorske and partially at Marinka EECPs. On 8 August at 15:00, there was an explosion at Marinka EECP which caused numerous injuries to a State Border Guard Service (SBGS) staff member. All civilians were evacuated. Crossing at the EECP resumed at approximately 15:40. On 9 August, crossing at Maiorske EECP was suspended for about 2 hours due to shelling. On 23 August, shooting at Maiorske EECP damaged one of the SBGS modules. During the hostilities no civilians were

■ DYNAMICS IN GENERAL LEVEL OF CONCERN



■ CONCERNS WHILE CROSSING⁴



⁴ Respondents could mention several concerns.

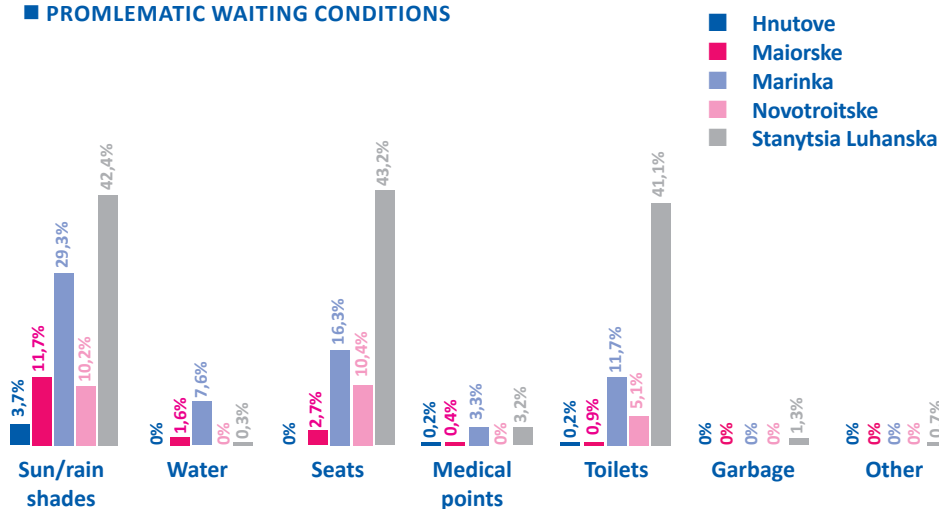
harm. However, the high risk “red” regime was established and the EECP resumed operating only on 28 August. Such complications have led to longer lines at Marinka EECP.

Similar complications occurred at Novotroitske EECP for different reason. On 29 August, mines and unexploded ordnance began detonating in the immediate proximity to the checkpoint due to wild fire. Crossing at Novotroitske EECP was only restored on 31 August after the situation was stabilized. No civilians were harmed in the accident.

Waiting conditions remain a cause of significant concern, especially at Stanytsia Luhanska and Marinka EECPs. The majority of complaints concerned the lack or poor condition of sun and rain shades, lack of seats or their inconvenient location and the insufficient maintenance of latrines. Overall, the severity of protection risks did not face significant changes compared to July.

As crossing the line of contact at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP requires over an hour of walking, the level of concern about the waiting conditions has been high since May, although it slightly decreased in August. As the shade side covers, which

■ PROMBLEMATIC WAITING CONDITIONS



were temporarily installed for the cold weather period, were not removed during the hot season, civilians continue to suffer from stuffiness under the shades, which can be hazardous to life and health, especially for the elderly. During monitoring visits, numerous cases of fainting continued to be reported (up to 90 incidents per week). The condition of latrines at Stanytsia Luhanska was the most appalling among all five EECPs. Throughout the reporting period, monitors recorded numerous complaints about latrines which are in dire need of maintenance. The level of concern

regarding the waiting conditions at Marinka EECP were most likely related to the reconstruction works that are still in progress. New sun shades were installed on the GCA side of the EECP, while people waiting in lines to cross to the NGCA were exposed to direct sunlight. The number of sun shades is still insufficient considering the long lines at the EECP. Monitors also reported about the lack of safety measures near the construction works. Thus, in late August, a plastic beam fell on a woman, causing minor injuries.



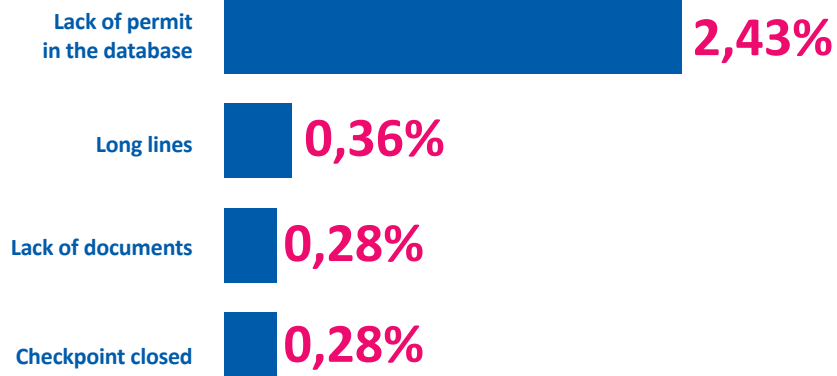
Stanytsia Luhanska EECP

5 INABILITY TO CROSS

Only 3.2% of all respondents mentioned incidents of not being able to cross the line of contact in the past six months. The crossing permit not being in the database was the most common reason for such incidents.

The lack of Coordination Group representatives at Hnutove, Novotroitske and Stanytsia Luhanska hinders the opportunity for obtaining a permit at the EECP.

REASONS FOR INABILITY TO CROSS⁵



Marinka EECP

⁵ Respondents could mention several reasons.

