

# CROSSING THE LINE OF CONTACT

## MONITORING REPORT



September 2018

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## INTRODUCTION

This report provides the results of the September 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). 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 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 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 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 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 31 visits to the five EECPs in September 2018. This reporting period was characterized by the autumn reduction of operational times (from 6:00 – 20:00 to 7:00 – 18:30) at all EECPs, the beginning of the academic year, reconstruction activity at Marinka, Novotroitske and Luhanska EECPs, and the temporary closure of Stanytsia Luhanska EECP due to reconstruction (2-7 September).

## 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.
- The vast majority of respondents (89%) were NGCA residents. The trend of GCA residents having far fewer reasons to travel across the line of contact than NGCA residents remains unchanged. Although the broad categories of reasons for crossing the line of contact remain consistent, there were some fluctuations due to the change of season (for example, fewer individuals crossing for vacation).
- During the reporting period reconstruction at Marinka EECP was completed. The renovated EECP was officially launched on 17 September.

- On 28 September reconstruction started at Novotroitske EECP. At the end of September, reconstruction at Stanytsia Luhanska was still ongoing.
- As the number of control counters and the State Border Guard Service staff was increased as a part of reconstruction, lines at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP were significantly reduced. Conversely, the reconstruction at Marinka did not have any significant effects on the traffic capacity of the EECP.
  - The majority of respondents spent 2-5 hours to pass through the 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.



Stanytsia Luhanska EECP, Mobile branch of Oschadbank

# 1 DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

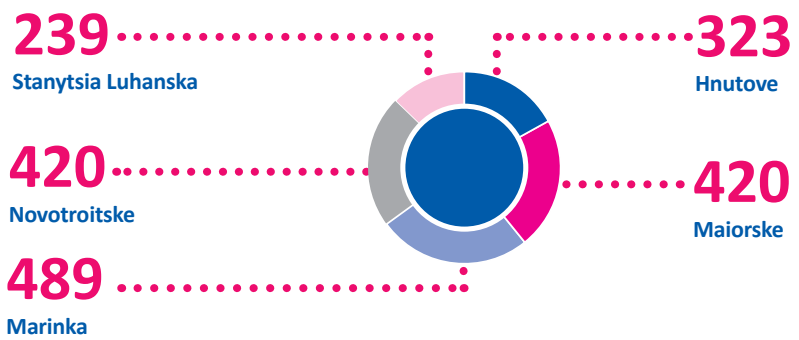
During the reporting period, R2P monitors surveyed a total of **1,891** persons crossing the line of contact. 49% of them were surveyed on the way to the GCA and 51% to the NGCA.

34% of respondents were male and 66% were female. 8% of respondents were travelling with children. The elderly remain the largest age group represented (56% 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.

## RESPONDENTS AGE DISAGGREGATION



## NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY EEC



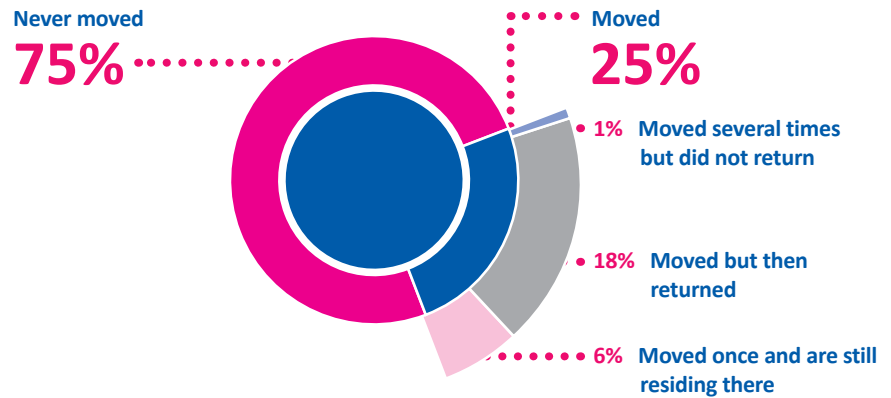
Hnutove EEC

## 2 RESIDENCE, DISPLACEMENT AND RETURN

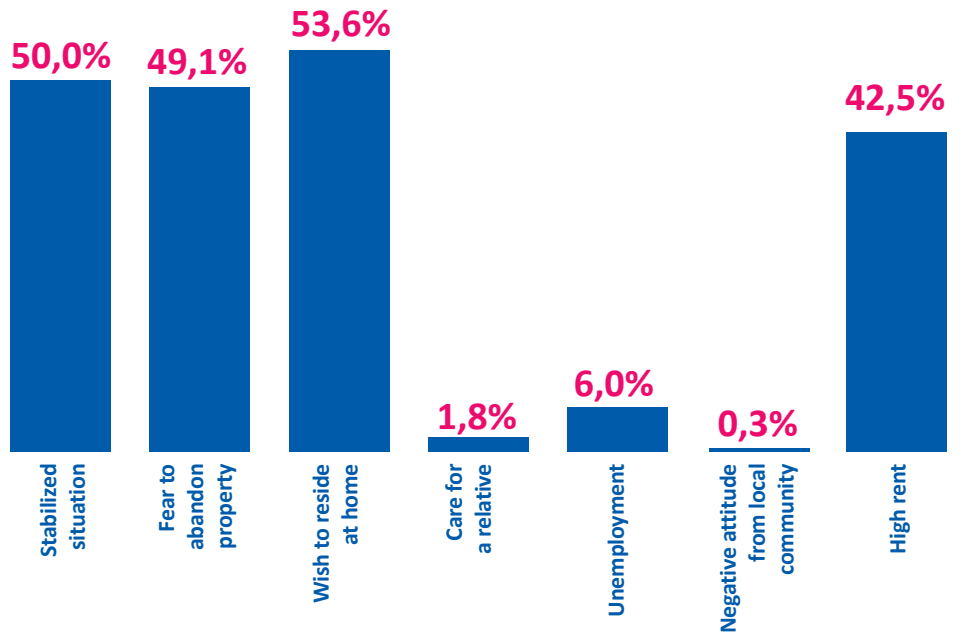
96% of all respondents stated that they resided in the NGCA prior to the conflict, 92% of them also cited the NGCA as their place of residence at the time of the survey. The trend of GCA residents having far fewer reasons to travel across the line of contact than NGCA residents remained unchanged. Of the 4% (80 individuals) of respondents who resided in the GCA prior to the conflict, 13 individuals stated that they currently reside in the NGCA. 9 of them were aged 18-34.

75% 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 (18% of all respondents) ultimately returned to their original place of residence. However, there is no information on when they returned.

### DISPLACEMENT



### REASONS FOR RETURN<sup>2</sup>



Respondents provided several reasons for why they decided to return to where they resided before the conflict. The most common reasons for return indicated by respondents who changed their place of residence but then returned were the desire to reside at home (53.6%) and the stabilized situation (50%). Fear to abandon property (49.1%) and high rent (42.5%) 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, 63.5% of the returnees surveyed in August explained their decision by stabilized situation while in September this option was mentioned by 21% less 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. In September, no respondents mentioned permanent relocation as their reason for crossing. Only 15 of such cases have been reported since the beginning of the year. Overall, there are no signs of active return of internally displaced persons.

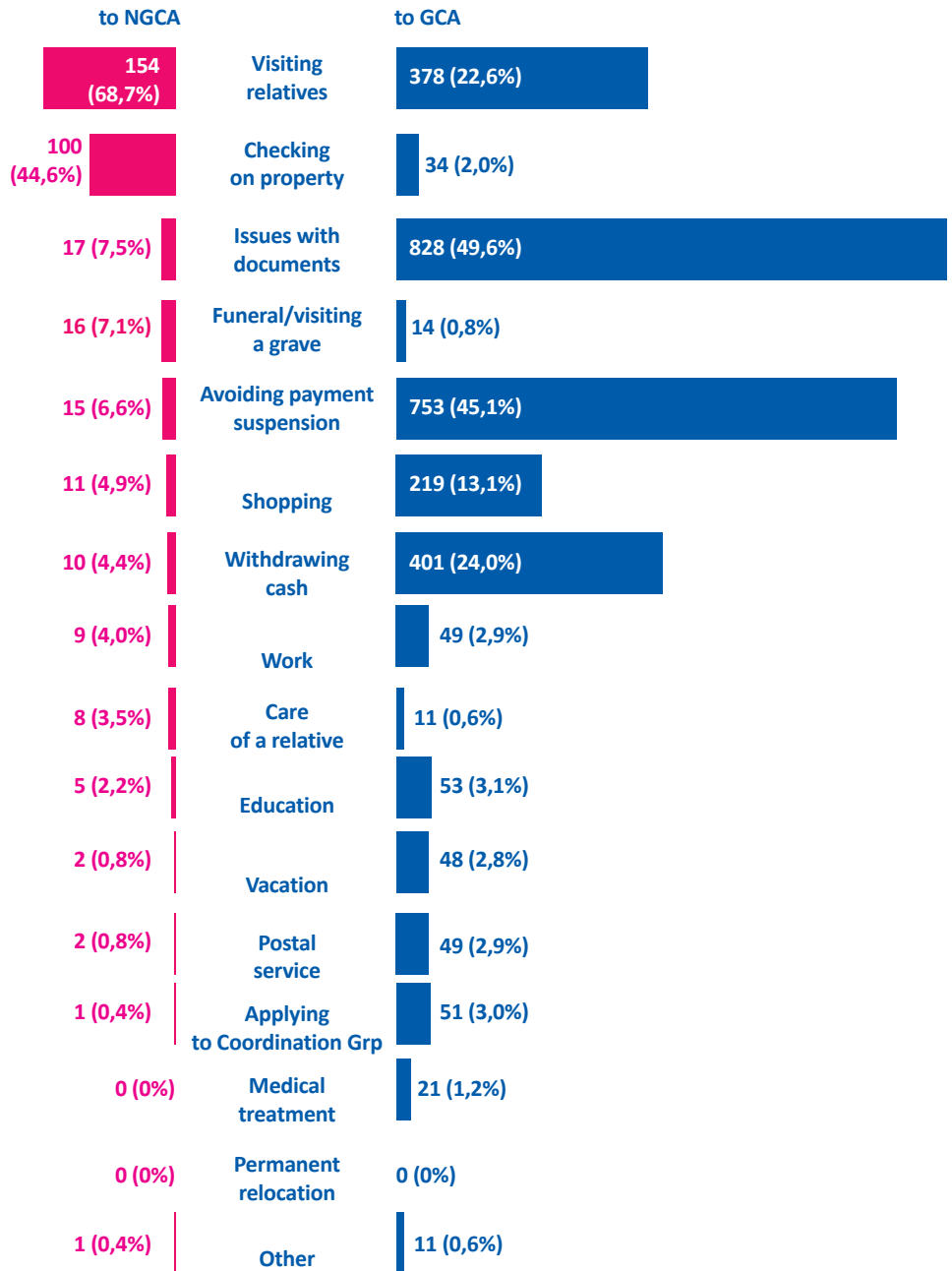
<sup>1</sup> It is important to mention that the demographics of respondents and their answers should not be extrapolated to the whole population as the survey does not cover internally displaced persons or NGCA residents who do not travel through the EECs.

<sup>2</sup> Respondents could indicate more than one reason for their travel.

### 3 REASONS, FREQUENCY AND DURATION

Only 12% 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 solving issues with documents, avoiding suspension of payments triggered by being away from the GCA for over 60 days, visiting relatives, and withdrawing cash. As the summer season is over, the number of respondents going on vacation was significantly reduced (by 10%). The most common reasons for travel to the NGCA were visiting relatives and checking on property. 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 traveling for educational purposes.

#### REASONS FOR CROSSING BY DIRECTION



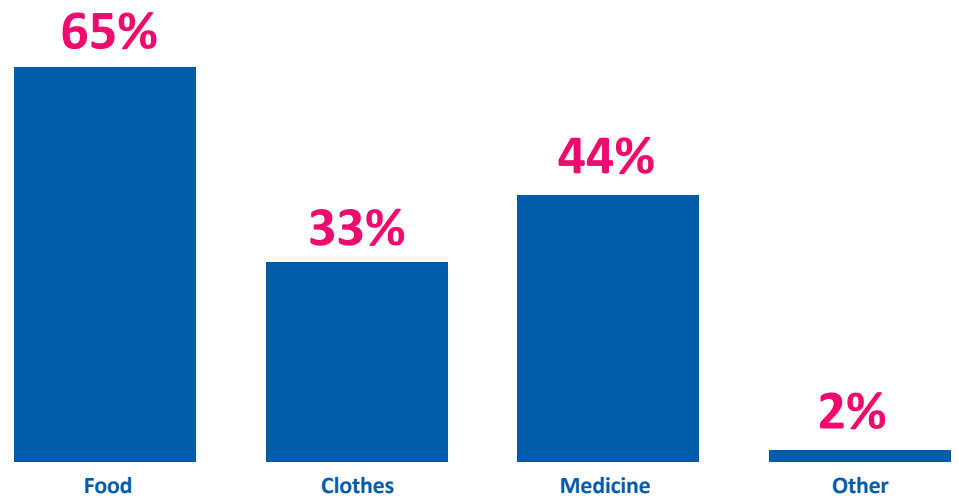
<sup>3</sup> The percentage was calculated based on the total number of people who indicated either the GCA or the NGCA as their destination.

12% of all respondents indicated shopping as their reason for crossing the line of contact. 95% of such respondents were travelling to the GCA. Food remains the most commonly purchased item. The number of respondents who were travelling to buy medicines has increased by 7% since August. The most frequent other goods respondents mentioned purchasing were household appliances and spare car parts.

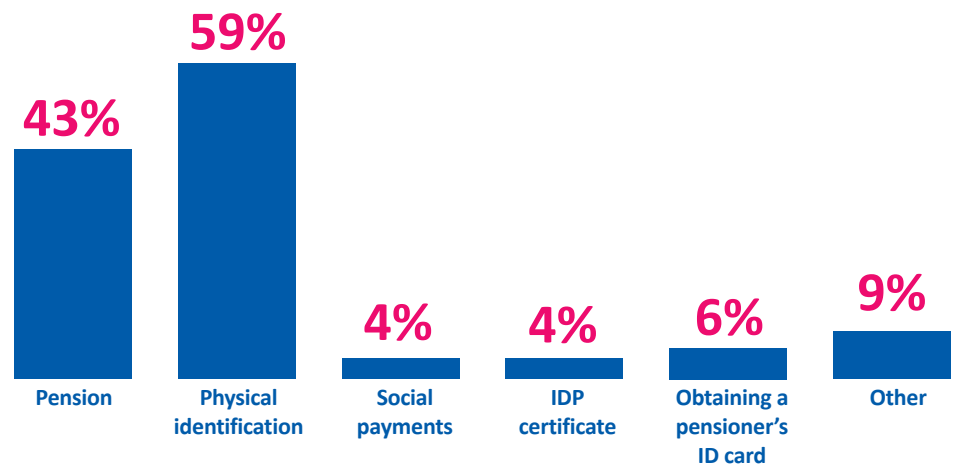
The need to pass physical identification at Oschadbank (59% of respondents who travelled to solve issues with documents) and payment of pensions (43%) remain the most common documentation issues. Among other issues, respondents mostly mentioned submitting documents for internal or international passports.

No significant changes in frequency of crossing the line of contact were observed in comparison to August. The majority of all respondents (65%) 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.

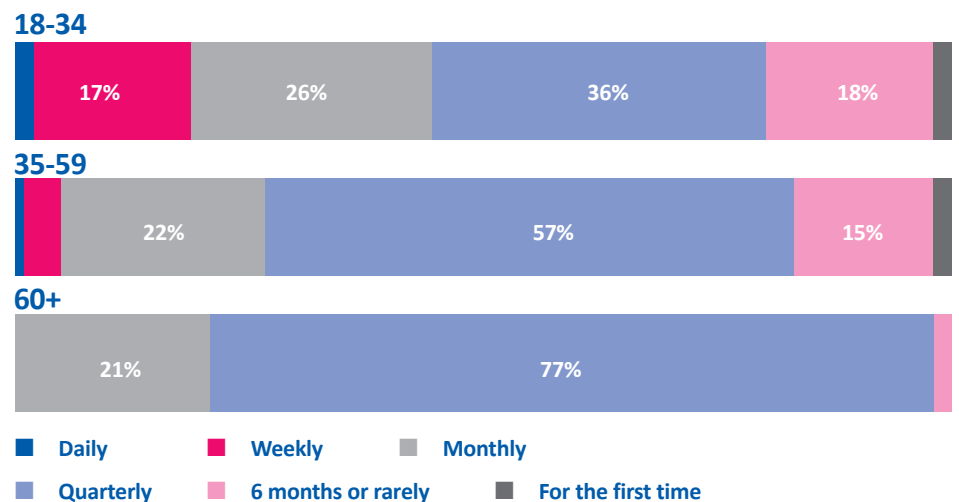
■ TYPE OF GOODS PURCHASED



■ TYPE OF DOCUMENT ISSUE



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



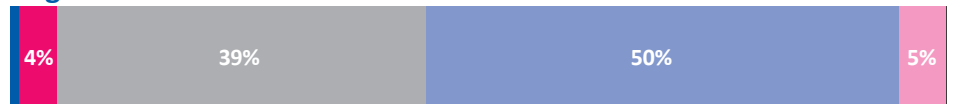
14% of those surveyed stated that they have previously crossed the line of contact during the reporting period. The graphs in this section contain information on duration of crossing in September. The majority (48%) of such respondents spent 4 to 5 hours to pass the EECPs on both the GCA and NGCA sides. The crossing process was slightly more expedited in comparison to August: the number of respondents who spent 2-3 hours increased by 6%, while 5+ hours was cited 4% less frequently. 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 the large number of people coming from the NGCA.

**DURATION OF CROSSING**

**September**



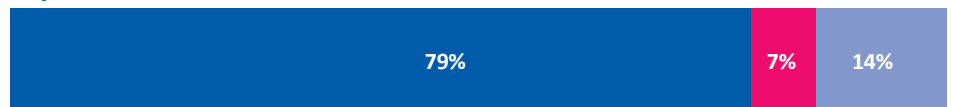
**August**



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

**WHICH CHECKPOINT SIDE TOOK LONGER TO CROSS**

**September**



**August**



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

Across all five EECPs, in September and August it took the most time to cross the line of contact at Marinka EECP. Over 60% of those respondents who crossed the line of contact at Marinka EECP in September had to spend 4 hours or more to do so. According to the observations of monitoring visits, the completion of reconstruction activity had no significant effect on the traffic capacity or operational pace at Marinka EECP. However, as reconstruction was only completed on 17 September, there was insufficient time to validate the information with statistical data.

The largest share of respondents who spent less than 2 hours crossing the line of contact was at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP, where a considerable reduction of queues was observed due to reconstruction. This tendency was caused by the increased number of State Border Guard Service staff and control counters. 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 (69%) stated that it took more time to pass the NGCA

checkpoints, which is similar to previous rounds of the survey. Such a tendency correlates with information obtained during monitoring visits: people crossing the line of contact regularly complained about slow servicing on the NGCA side. Stanytsia Luhanska EECP remained the only one where the majority (93%) of respondents stated that they spent more time crossing the GCA checkpoints. Though the procedure has sped up, information received during monitoring visits shows that the control procedure in the GCA is still more thorough.



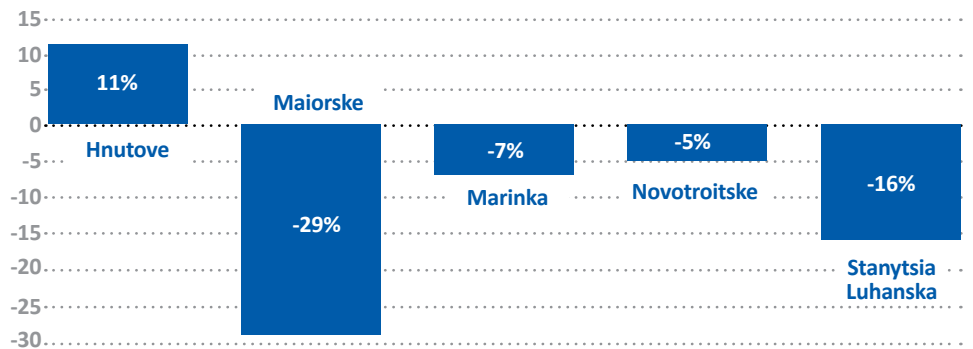
# 4 CONCERNS WHILE CROSSING THE LINE OF CONTACT

The level of concern considerably decreased at all EECPs except Hnutove. Such a decrease at Maiorske and Stanytsia Luhanska EECPs is mostly related to the reduction of queues. By contrast, the number of complaints about long queues, along with the poor road conditions, slightly increased at Hnutove EECP, leading to a raise in the level of concern. According to information obtained during monitoring visits, the lines were mostly occurring on the NGCA EECP. The worsening of the road was caused by the beginning of the rainy season and an inappropriate road surface for the weather.

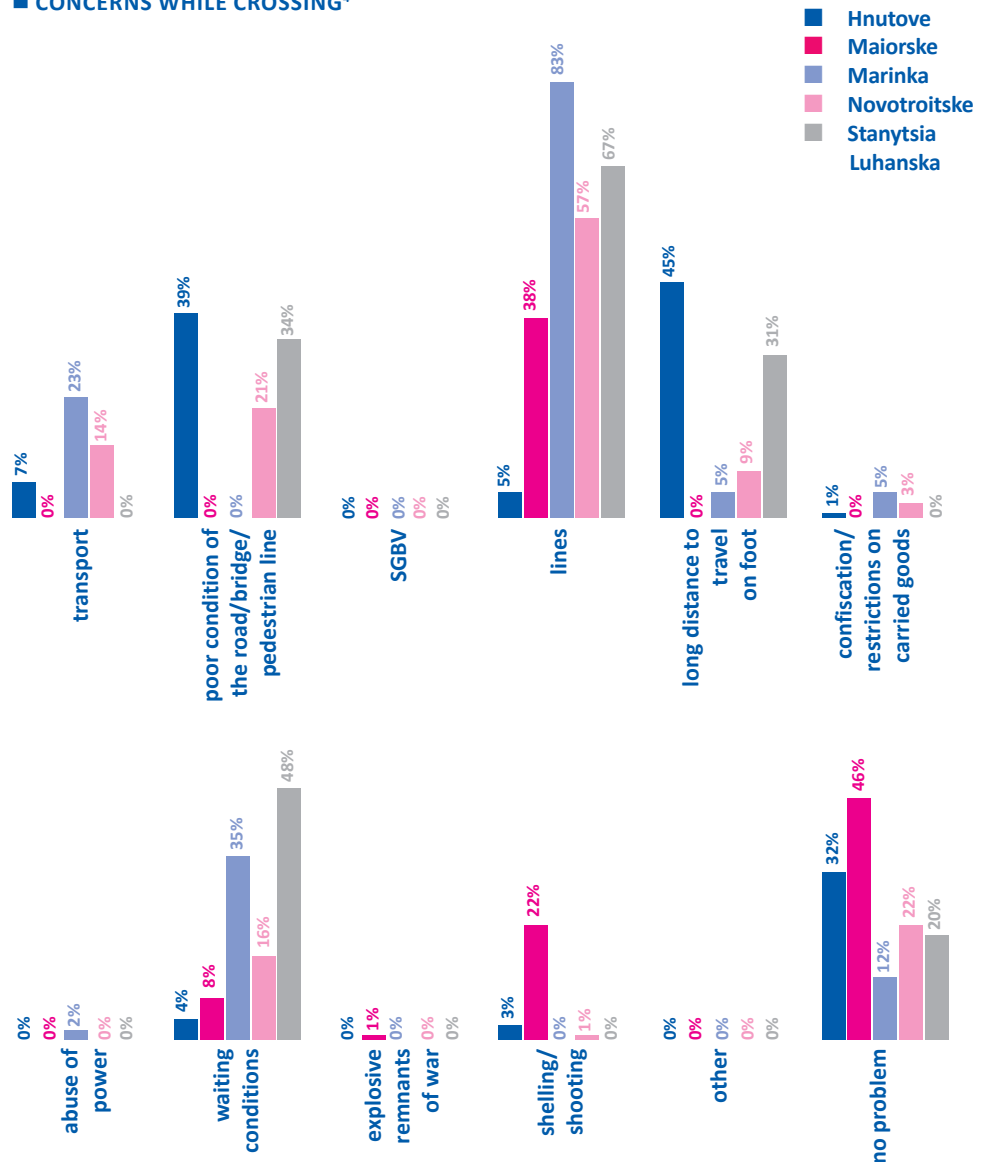
Long lines at EECPs remain one of the main concerns of respondents. However, the number of such complaints sharply decreased at Maiorske and Stanytsia Luhanska EECPs by 37.5% and 21% respectively. The decrease at Stanytsia Luhanska was certainly caused by the renovation, as the number of staff and control counters was substantially increased. According to the information obtained during monitoring visits, there were more control counters operating at Maiorske EECP due to the end of the vacation season.

Though reconstruction at Marinka EECP was completed, it had no significant effect on the concerns reported by respondents. The number of staff and control counters did not increase, so the traffic capacity at the EECP remains unchanged. According to monitoring observations, the lack of State Fiscal Service staff often causes long lines at Marinka EECP. Respondents also complained about the high cost of transportation, the insufficient number of buses, and the unavailability of a bus schedule.

■ DYNAMICS IN GENERAL LEVEL OF CONCERN



■ CONCERNS WHILE CROSSING<sup>4</sup>



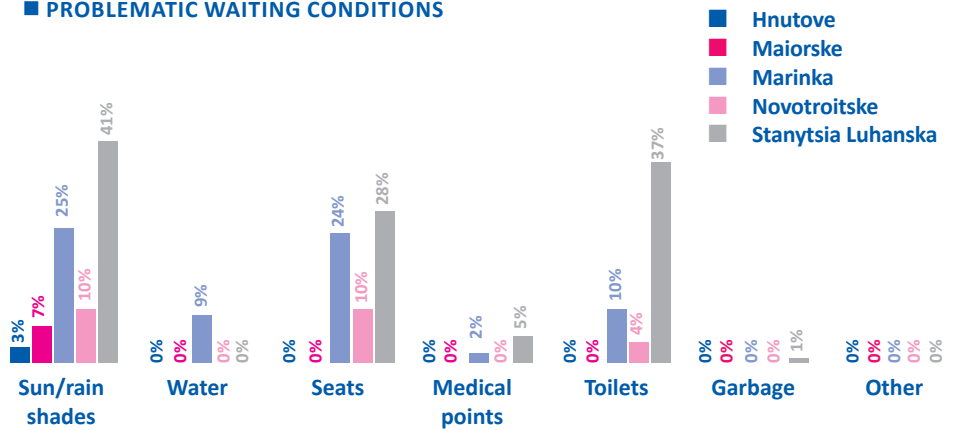
<sup>4</sup> Respondents could mention several concerns.

11 individuals complained about abuses of power at Marinka EECP in the form of verbal assaults. Monitors reported that people often feel intimidated about articulating such complaints, so the level of such concern is likely understated.

Waiting conditions remain a cause of significant concern. The majority of complaints concerned the lack or poor condition of sun and rain shades, lack of or inconvenient location of seats, and the insufficient maintenance of latrines. Overall, the severity of protection risks did not undergo significant changes compared to August.

According to information obtained during monitoring visits, despite the completion of reconstruction at Marinka EECP, waiting conditions at the «zero» checkpoint remained unsatisfactory. The lack of latrines, seats, sun/rain shades at the «zero» checkpoint is crucial, considering the mass gathering of people waiting for a bus. Monitors also reported that potable water tanks are still located outside the territory of Marinka EECP. The EECP staff does not allow people to leave the territory without losing their place in the queue, so access to water remains limited. During the first days after the

**PROBLEMATIC WAITING CONDITIONS**



public launch of the renovated Marinka EECP, latrines were closed which caused a significant number of complaints. Monitors at Marinka EECP also noted that despite the overall positive feedback about the reconstruction, many people were concerned that strengthening of infrastructure on EECP might be an indication of further protraction of the conflict and a rejection of the people who reside in the NGCA. Though reconstruction at Stanytsia Luhanska is still ongoing, there are already signs of modest improvement

in most indicators. In September new latrines were installed at the «zero» checkpoint, including latrines for people with disabilities. A new waiting hall, leisure units with maternal and child facilities, as well as State Fiscal Service, State Border Guard Service and medical aid modules were also installed at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP. The reconstruction of the waiting area along with the milder weather resulted in a reduction of cases of losing consciousness at the EECP.



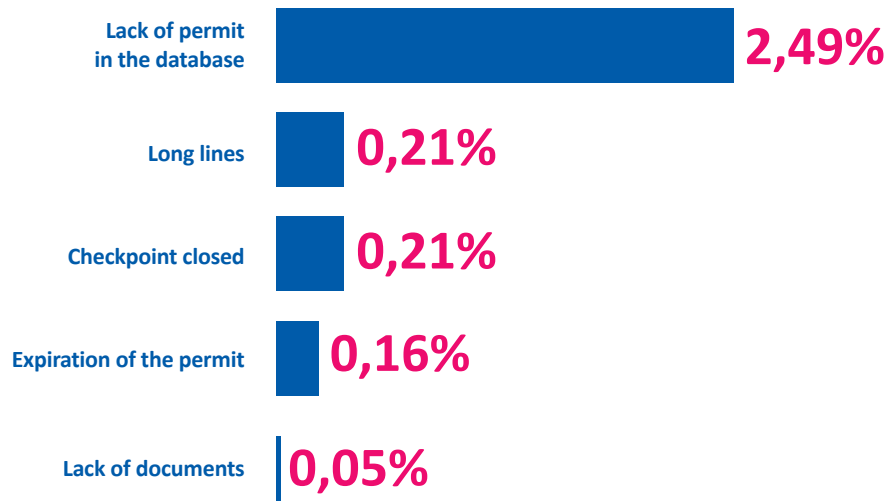
Marinka EECP

## 5 INABILITY TO CROSS

During the reporting period, only 3.1% 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 lack of Coordination Group representatives at Hnutove, Novotroitske and Stanytsia Luhanska EECPs hinders the opportunity for obtaining a permit at the EECP.

### REASONS FOR INABILITY TO CROSS<sup>5</sup>



Stanytsia Luhanska EECP, Asphalt road reconstruction

<sup>5</sup> Respondents could mention several reasons.

