

CROSSING THE LINE OF CONTACT

MONITORING REPORT



January - June
2018

INTRODUCTION

Semiannual Report covers the January to June 2018 period 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 survey is a part of the monitoring of violations of 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 objective of the survey is to explore 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 EECPs. The report covers several holiday periods in January and May. During the reporting period respondents faced seasonal weather changes that significantly affected crossing conditions, an extension of the operating schedule at all EECPs in March and June, temporary partial restrictions of movement through

Maiorske EECP from the GCA side due to a police operation in February, and intensified hostilities at the line of contact in May.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on a survey of civilians crossing the line of contact at the five operating EECPs located in Donetsk (Maiorske, Marinka, Hnutove and Novotroitske) and Luhansk (Stanytsia Luhanska) Oblasts. 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. This round of the survey was carried out from 3 January to 26 June 2018. The data was collected during regular visits to each of the five specified EECPs on a weekly basis (236 visits in six months). The data collection methodology was the same at all EECPs. R2P monitors surveyed civilians queuing

at the EECPs. The survey was conducted anonymously and on a voluntary basis. All persons interviewed for the survey were informed about its objective. The survey was conducted in the form of personal interviews with people aged 18 and above. The monitors approached every fourth person in line with a request to complete the survey. If a person refused to participate in the survey, monitors proceeded to survey the next fourth person in line. People travelling both to and from the GCA took part in the survey. At all EECPs R2P monitors had no access further than the line of people coming from the NGCA at the Ukrainian checkpoints. At no time did the monitors cross the zero checkpoints into the NGCA. To get a better understanding of trends

and tendencies regarding crossing the line of contact, the general statistics on crossings from the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (SBGS) was used¹. In February the survey questionnaire and the approach to data analysis was amended in order to collect more precise information. Consequently, some categories have changed in comparison to the previous round of the survey; some sections may partially lack data for January.

¹ General statistics on crossings are available at the UNHCR dashboard visualizing data from the State Border Guard Service – <https://goo.gl/TZbU8c>

«Today is my son's birthday, I am bringing him a present. I have not seen him for such a long time, but they say my permit expired and I should apply to the Coordination Group, but there are no representatives at this EECP. Does it mean they will not let me pass? Help me, please. I will give anything to see my son today.» – A 45-year-old man at Novotroitske EECP

Among those going to the GCA, issues with documents were one of the most common reasons (43%) for crossing. This is related to the requirements Ukrainian legislation places on NGCA residents for obtaining their pensions and social benefits. 66% of them explained that they were going to pass physical identification at Oschadbank. In accordance with Resolutions 505 and 689, people with NGCA residence registration can receive their social benefits only if they are registered as internally displaced persons and pass physical identification in «Oschadbank» on a regular basis. Also due to the legislative novelties (such as Cabinet of Ministers Resolution 225 which suspends pension arrears payments until a special procedure comes into place), the frequency of elderly persons crossing the line of contact increased in May: the share of people over the age of 60 who

cross the line of contact monthly instead of quarterly increased by 9%.

As the Ukrainian banking system does not operate in the NGCA, it is practically impossible to receive social benefits and pensions there. It is the same for employees trying to claim their salaries at entities re-registered in the GCA but physically operating in the NGCA. To solve the issue, NGCA residents have to cross the line of contact. Thus, a significant share of respondents indicated that they were heading to the GCA to withdraw cash (33.5%).

In order to avoid the suspension of social benefits, officially registered IDPs also must travel through the line of contact very often: in accordance with the Law of Ukraine «On ensuring rights and freedoms of internally displaced persons» payments will be suspended if a person is absent from their GCA place

of residence for more than 60 days. For instance, monitors observed people crossing a checkpoint just to check in the SBGS crossing database and then return to the NGCA.

Due to the restrictions on trading between the GCA and NGCA, prices in the NGCA tend to be higher. Consequently, shopping remains a rather common reason for crossing the line of contact (18% of respondents travelling to the GCA). 78.5% of them were buying food. Among other common purchases were medicine (36%) and clothes (21%). More rare items were household appliances, tools and hygiene items.

Only 12 individuals during the reporting period stated that they were crossing the line of contact for permanent relocation. Such share demonstrates that there are no signs for active return of internally displaced persons.



Maiorske EECP

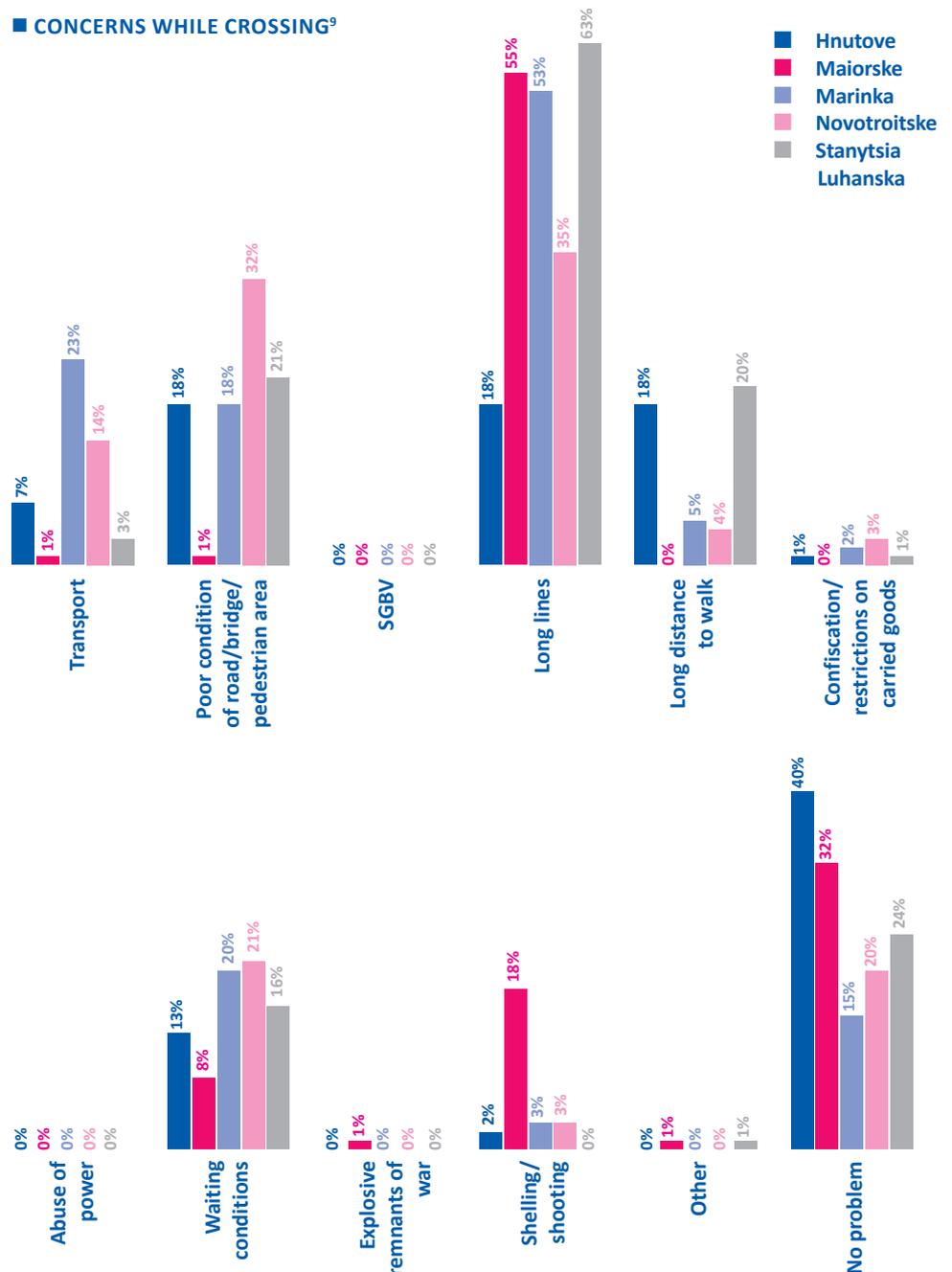
4 CONCERNS WHILE CROSSING THE LINE OF CONTACT

«They confiscated my new perforator and threw it in a garbage bin because it was not listed in Order No.39. I just wanted to start reconstruction of my house after it was damaged. I spent all my money on it» – Elderly man at Maiorske EECF.

Long lines remain the major concern at all EECFs. Although the share of respondents who were concerned about the long lines at Hnutove EECF is not large compared to the other EECFs, it is still one of the major issues there.

As people often have to spend hours in lines, there is a critical need for proper infrastructure at EECFs. The lack of sunshades and stuffiness in the summer can be hazardous to life and health, especially for the elderly. Numerous cases of losing consciousness continued to be reported during monitoring visits to EECFs.

■ CONCERNS WHILE CROSSING⁹



⁹ Respondents could mention several concerns.

The disaggregation on concerns while crossing depends on the age of respondents. In general, older respondents expressed significantly more concerns than younger ones. The only concern mentioned by respondents in the age of 18-34 more often than by other age categories was shelling or shooting.

Some fluctuations in severity of the protection risks faced by persons of concern were observed during the reporting period due to seasonal weather changes.

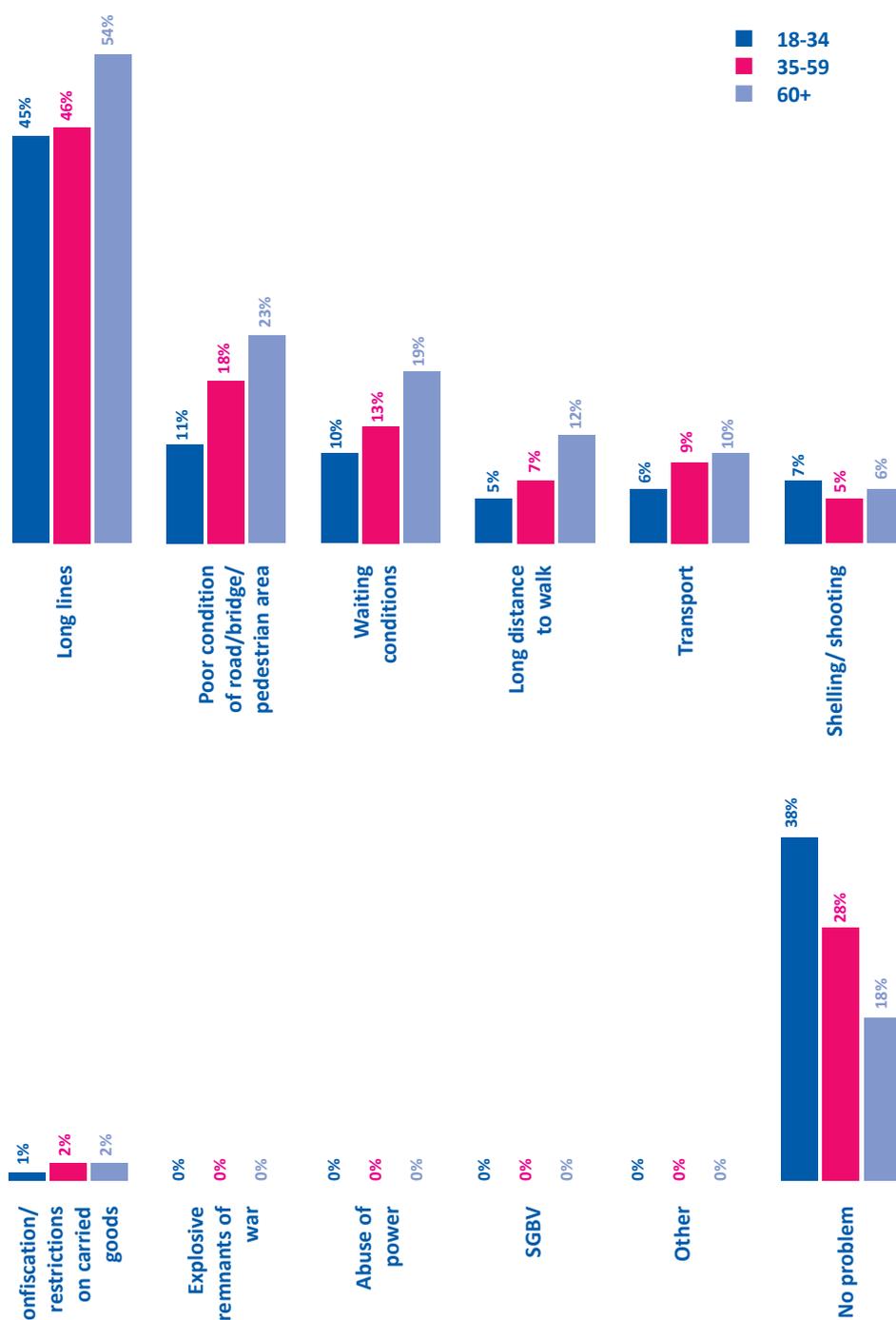
In March the number of respondents at Stanytsia Luhanska EECF who did not mention any concern dropped almost twofold in comparison to February (from 35% to 18%).

The condition of the road and pedestrian area was especially unsatisfactory due to melting snow, mud, slippery surfaces, and insufficient maintenance at EECFs. Thus, a considerable increase of such complaints was observed at Marinka EECF: 49% in March comparing to 24% in February.

Due to the warm weather in April, the share of respondents who did not mention any concerns at Hnutove EECF increased by 21%, and the percentage of respondents who complained about the poor condition of the roads at that EECF decreased by 37%.

As the bridge on the river of Siversky Donets is damaged, Stanytsia Luhanska EECF still has no line for vehicles. Since it takes about one hour of walking under the hot sun to cross the line of contact at Stanytsia Luhanska EECF, the share of respondents who complained about the long distance soared from 13% in May to 36.5% in June due to the heat.

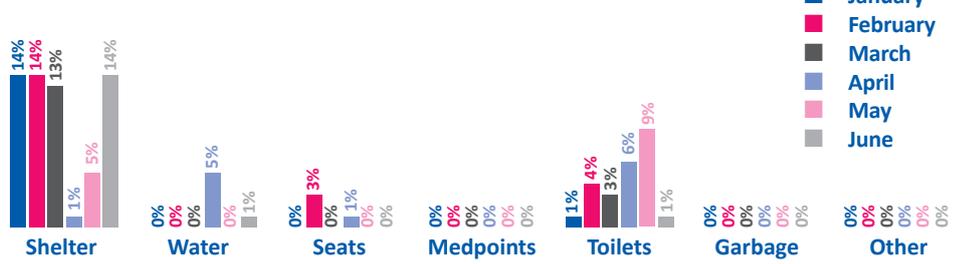
■ CONCERNS BY AGE¹⁰



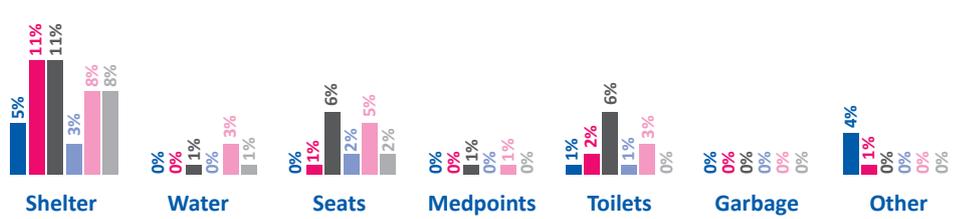
¹⁰ As age categories were changed in February, the disaggregation only consists data collected from February to June. Respondents could mention several concerns.

Among the waiting conditions, one of the most concerning issues for respondents was the lack of sun/rain shades at all EECPs. The number of complaints regarding waiting conditions increased drastically in June due to summer heat.

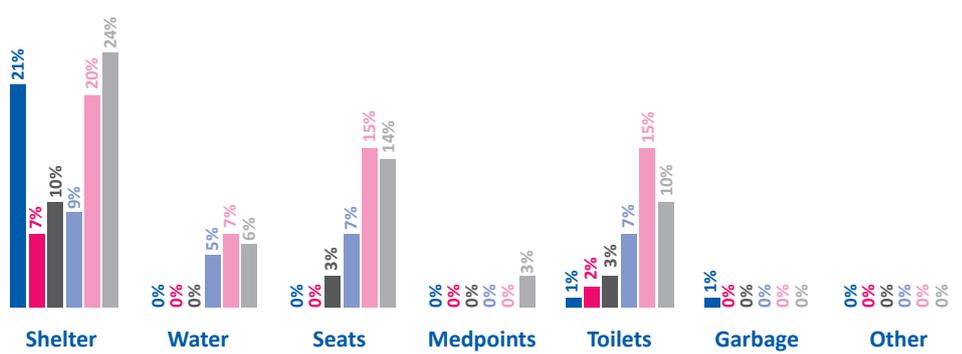
■ WAITING CONDITIONS (HNUTOVE EECP)



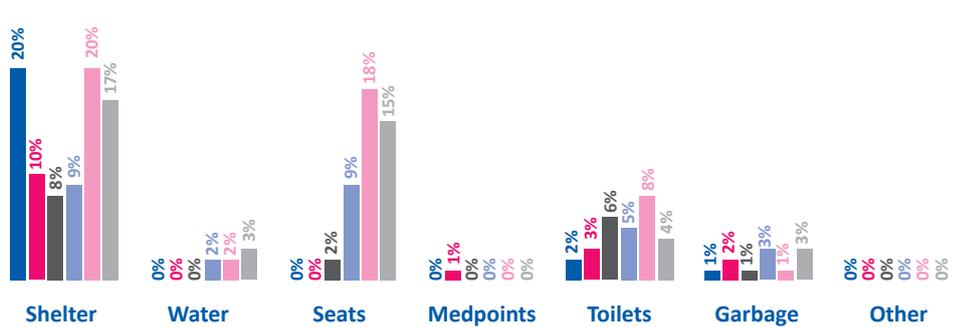
■ WAITING CONDITIONS (MAIORSKE EECP)



■ WAITING CONDITIONS (MARINKA EECP)



■ WAITING CONDITIONS (NOVOTROITSKE EECP)



■ WAITING CONDITIONS (STANYTSIA LUHANSKA EECP)



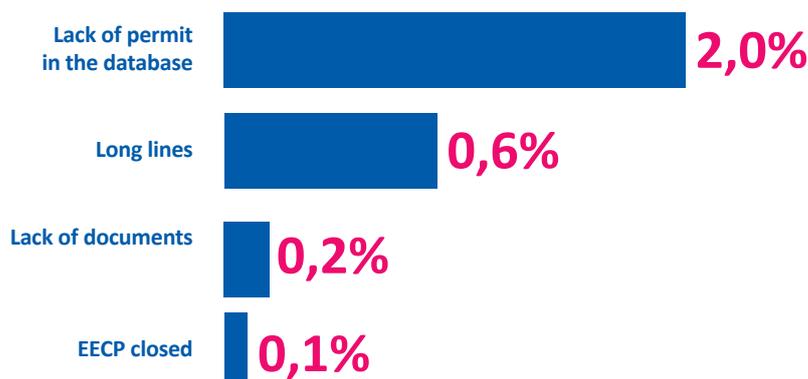
5 INABILITY TO CROSS

«If you do not give me a permit now and I die here as I have no money to return to Bakhmut and no place to stay there, will you feel better? How long will this torture continue?» – A 82-year-old woman, Maiorske EECP

Only 2.9% of all respondents (357 surveyed individuals) mentioned incidents of not being able to cross the line of contact in the past six months, mostly due to lack of permits in the SBGS database,¹¹ and long lines.

The database-related issues can be solved by the Coordination Group¹² representatives at the EECPs. However, Coordination Groups are not represented at Novotroitske, Hnutove and Stanytsia Luhanska EECPs, rendering it impossible to apply for a permit to cross the line of contact at these EECPs.

REASONS FOR INABILITY TO CROSS



OBSERVATIONS

In addition to the survey, R2P monitors conducted protection monitoring by observation at all five EECPs. The information below describes the situation as of late June.

Monitors at all EECPs highlighted the inappropriate infrastructure conditions: the lack of sun and rain shades, pedestrian areas are often negatively affected by the weather (puddles, mud or slippery surfaces). At all EECPs except Maiorske, monitors noted inappropriate maintenance of latrines. Such issue is related to the lack of personnel at EECPs given the intensive flow of people

through the territory – approximately four to ten thousand people cross the line of contact daily.

Most State Emergency Service (SES) paramedics were withdrawn from EECPs in Donetsk Oblast (except Hnutove). Premiere Urgence Internationale (PUI) continues to provide medical aid.

Intensified hostilities were observed during the reporting period at all EECPs except Stanytsia Luhanska. For instance, Hnutove EECP was exposed to shelling on the 5th of May during working hours. All civilians were evacuated from the EECP; two cars were damaged by shelling.

¹¹ The SBGS database is an inter-institutional system that is used to monitor individuals and vehicles crossing the line of contact.

¹² National Police of Ukraine unit established to organise the issuance of permits and to check individuals crossing the line of contact.

■ HNUTOVE

	Amount	Condition	Location
Sun/rain shade	⚠	⚠	⚠
Seats	⚠	⚠	⚠
Beds/bed linen (in SES tents)	✓	✓	✓
Information stands	⚠	✓	✓
Potable water	✓	✓	⚠
Sanitary water	✓	✓	✓
Garbage bins	⚠	⚠	⚠
Latrines	⚠	⚠	✓

✓ – sufficient amount/proper condition/convenient location

⚠ – insufficient amount/poor condition or inappropriate maintenance/inconvenient location

Hnutove remains to be the least busy among all five EECPs. Such contrast is related to its location as it is mostly convenient for those who travel between Donetsk and Mariupol and the poor condition of the road in the NGCA. The overall situation at Hnutove compares favourably with other EECPs. However, the waiting conditions still need to be improved.

During monitoring R2P representatives observed a lack of information about crossing procedures and bus

schedules. In addition, the absence of directional signs complicates the crossing process. The potable water tank at the exit from the EECP is inconveniently located so the majority of people crossing the line of contact are not aware of its location.

The lack of medical staff at Hnutove EECP remains a problem. SES paramedics are currently the only provider of medical aid at the EECP, but s/he will be withdrawn in early July without an immediate substitution by PUI.

R2P monitors indicated hindered access to basic needs due to inappropriate maintenance of latrines.

The sun and rain shades location are inconvenient as they are far from the lines and control areas, and they provide insufficient space to shelter from snow, rain, sun, or heat. As the snow melted, people had to walk through puddles and mud. This was dangerous, especially for the elderly and the disabled.



Hnutove EECP

■ MAIORSKE

	Amount	Condition	Location
Sun/rain shade	✓	✓	✓
Seats	✓	✓	✓
Beds/bed linen (in SES tents)	✓	✓	✓
Information stands	⚠	⚠	⚠
Potable water	✓	✓	⚠
Sanitary water	⚠	✓	✓
Garbage bins	✓	✓	✓
Latrines	✓	✓	✓

✓ – sufficient amount/proper condition/convenient location

⚠ – insufficient amount/poor condition or inappropriate maintenance/inconvenient location

Conditions at Maiorske EECF were significantly improved during the reporting period and preparatory works for EECF relocation are ongoing as of the end of June. The purpose of relocation is to move the EECF further from high-voltage transmission lines. According to the information from monitoring visits, fast control procedure at GCA checkpoints prevents lengthy queues. However, when some queues occur (mostly due to transportation delays), the number of shades becomes insufficient. However, the shades were refurbished and no longer leak.

Potable water tanks are unsuitably located, which limits the access to water for people waiting in places of mass gathering at the EECF.

People crossing the line of contact at Maiorske EECF also complained about

lack of information about crossing procedures and humanitarian actors operating in the vicinity. Even though there are informational stands at the EECF, they are rarely updated, and materials quickly lose visibility when exposed to wind and rain.

There were no directional signs pointing to the SES tents, Oschadbank mobile office or latrines. However all of these objects except Oschadbank are clearly visible from the EECF. R2P monitors also reported that Oschadbank often does not work at the scheduled hours.

Even though conditions at Maiorske EECF, in addition to providing a speedy crossing process, compare favorably with other EECFs, some improvements are needed. For instance, the changing weather and insufficient maintenance of the pedestrian area affected the waiting

conditions at the EECF during winter and summer. Without the proper coverage of the pedestrian area people often had to stand in puddles and mud during passport control. In winter months with less daylight, people had to wait for passport control in darkness as there was no lighting under the shades.

Representatives of the State Fiscal Service highlighted the issues related to Order 39, which determines the list of goods allowed through the line of contact. It is recommended to replace it with a list of forbidden items in order to facilitate the inspection process. EECF employees that conduct inspections of personal belongings complain about a lack of sanitary water nearby and insufficient supply of gloves.

■ MARINKA

	Amount	Condition	Location
Sun/rain shade	⚠	⚠	⚠
Seats	⚠	⚠	⚠
Beds/bed linen (in SES tents)	✓	✓	✓
Information stands	⚠	⚠	⚠
Potable water	⚠	✓	⚠
Sanitary water	⚠	✓	✓
Garbage bins	⚠	⚠	⚠
Latrines	⚠	⚠	⚠

✓ – sufficient amount/proper condition/convenient location

⚠ – insufficient amount/poor condition or inappropriate maintenance/inconvenient location

Overall conditions at Marinka EECP are inappropriate. However, as of the end of June, reconstruction works at Marinka EECP were in progress.

Almost all shades and seats were dismantled due to reconstruction and people spent most of their time standing under the sun. Potable water is located at the entrance to the EECP from both sides, but it remains unnoticed as people are in a rush to get in line, whereas there is no potable water in the operational area of the EECP.

Monitors also noted the lack of garbage bins at the EECP and the inconvenient location of latrines that were installed approximately 50 meters from the EECP. This is inconvenient for persons with disabilities. There is only one latrine at the «zero» checkpoint and it is in a poor condition.

There are no directional signs pointing to the goods inspection site and latrines. Monitors highlighted that there are also no directional signs to the bomb shelter and stated that people lack information while crossing the line of contact.

The SES tent is located approximately 700 meters from the EECP, so many people who cross the line of contact are unaware of it.

EECP staff complained about inappropriate working conditions due to the heat and a lack of rest. They also indicated transportation issues: the lack of buses leads to numerous conflicts among people in queues. Another problem reported by EECP staff was the poor Internet connection at Marinka EECP, hindering data processing.



Marinka EECP

■ NOVOTROITSKE

	Amount	Condition	Location
Sun/rain shade	⚠	⚠	✓
Seats	⚠	⚠	⚠
Beds/bed linen (in SES tents)	✓	✓	✓
Information stands	⚠	✓	⚠
Potable water	✓	✓	✓
Sanitary water	⚠	✓	✓
Garbage bins	⚠	✓	⚠
Latrines	⚠	⚠	✓

✓ – sufficient amount/proper condition/convenient location

⚠ – insufficient amount/poor condition or inappropriate maintenance/inconvenient location

Some improvements are needed near the Oschadbank mobile office at Novotroitske EECP. For instance, there are no shades and only one bench has been installed. Printed information about humanitarian assistance and the crossing procedure is available, but the amounts are insufficient due to the high number of crossings. There were no directional signs to the Oschadbank mobile office or latrines.

A constant presence of SES medical staff at the EECP is not envisaged, so medical aid is provided by Premiere Urgence Internationale. Monitors received numerous complaints the lack of Coordination Group representatives at the EECP, making impossible to apply for a permit to cross. Waiting conditions at the EECP were described as satisfactory. Monitors noted that new shades were installed, and control procedures became faster

at the GCA checkpoints. Another issue highlighted by monitors was the condition of the pedestrian area. During the winter months the area was covered in ice which turned into mud in spring. Such inappropriate maintenance could be hazardous, especially for the elderly and persons with disabilities. In early June ICRC announced reconstruction at Novotroitske EECP. As at 5th of June a bus stop at Novotroitske EECP was installed.



Novotroitske EECP

■ STANYTSIA LUHANSKA

	Amount	Condition	Location
Sun/rain shade	⚠	⚠	✓
Seats	⚠	✓	⚠
Beds/bed linen (in SES tents)	⚠	⚠	✓
Information stands	✓	⚠	✓
Potable water	⚠	✓	✓
Sanitary water	⚠	⚠	✓
Garbage bins	⚠	⚠	✓
Latrines	⚠	⚠	⚠

✓ – sufficient amount/proper condition/convenient location

⚠ – insufficient amount/poor condition or inappropriate maintenance/inconvenient location

Stanytsia Luhanska is the only EECP with no line for vehicles due to the extensively damaged bridge across the Siversky Donets river. The reconstruction of the bridge has been a controversial issue for the parties of the conflict throughout the entire period of the EECP's operation. It still remains an urgent need as there are no other EECPs operating in Luhansk Oblast. Opening of Zolote EECP in Luhansk Oblast would alleviate the situation, however the parties did not reach a compromise regarding this issue.

Currently there are two shades at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP with covered sides, causing stuffiness under the shades. Seats at the EECP are inconveniently located and the number is insufficient. There are informational stands at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP that provide information about bus schedules, crossing procedures and local humanitarian actors and projects. However, the list of transportable goods can only be found on the GCA side. There are directional signs to inspection

locations, the Oschadbank mobile office, and mine danger signs. However, monitors stated that additional directional signs to the Oschadbank mobile office should be placed on the exit from the EECP.

Monitors observed constant long queues from the NGCA. People in queues often expressed their concerns regarding a lack of seats and stuffiness under the shades. EECP staff stated that delays in data processing are caused by the lack of technical equipment.



Stanytsia Luhanska EECP

RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into account the results of the survey and observations, R2P considers the following actions necessary:

1. To improve the infrastructure at all EECPs:

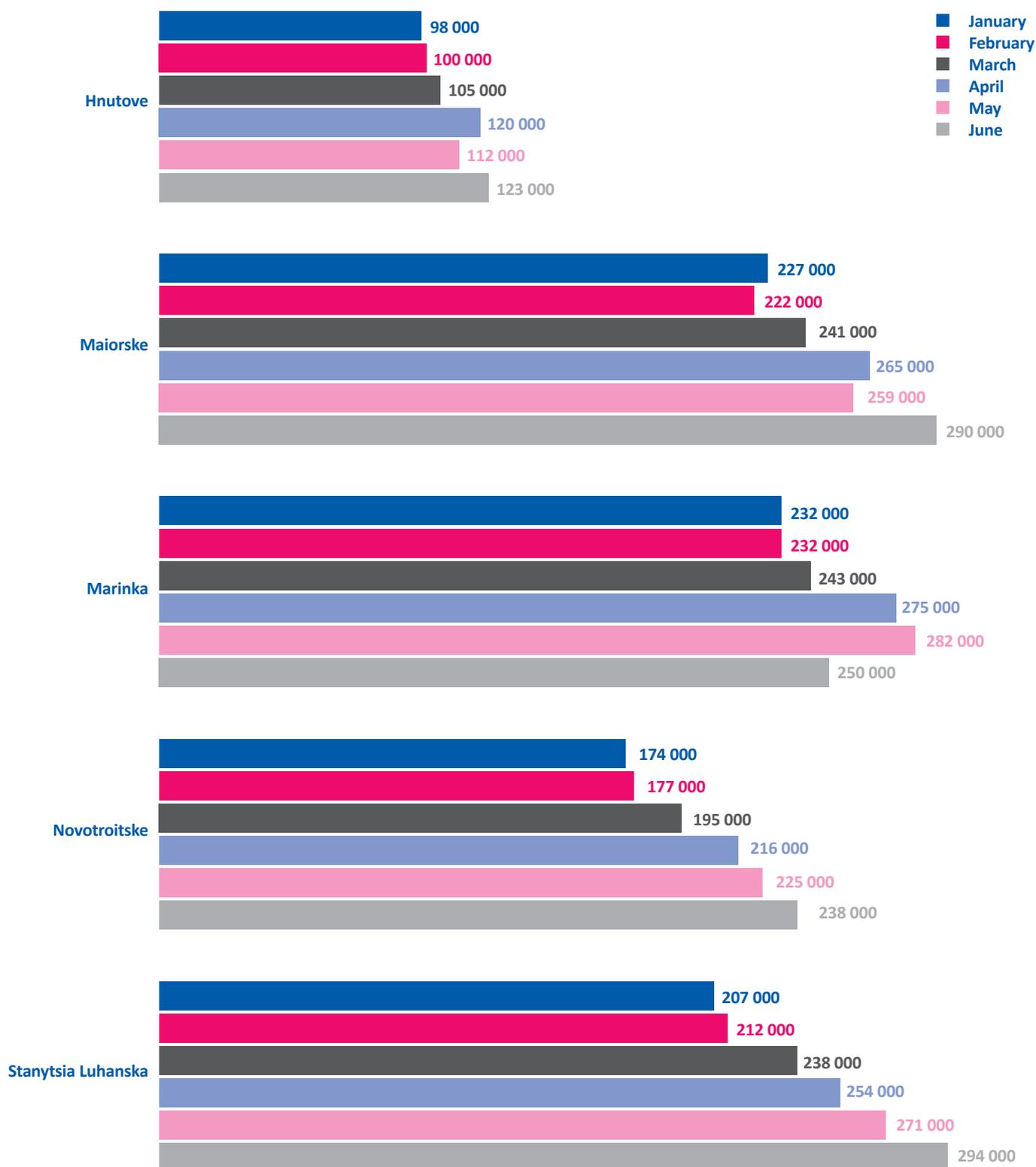
- To install a drain system or improve the road surface in the pedestrian area at all EECPs in order to reduce the risk of injury in unfavorable weather conditions.
- To relocate the water tanks at Hnutove, Maiorske and Marinka EECPs closer to passport control in order to provide better water supply for people crossing the line of contact.
- To install additional sun/rain shades in gathering places (near the inspection point at Hnutove and Oschadbank mobile office at Novotroitske EECP). As most shades at Marinka EECP were temporary dismantled due to reconstruction works, new shades should be placed according to the needs of people crossing the line of contact. The number of shades at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP must be increased as well due to the intense traffic. It is also necessary to remove the siding that causes heat rise and stuffiness under the shades.
- To provide the comprehensive schedule of Oschadbank mobile office working hours at Maiorske EECP.

- To recruit additional EECP staff to provide sufficient maintenance of latrines at Hnutove, Marinka, Novotroitske and Stanytsia Luhanska EECPs.
- To provide more sufficient maintenance and increase the number of garbage bins at Hnutove, Novotroitske and Stanytsia Luhanska EECPs.
- Additional seats should be installed at Oschadbank mobile office at Novotroitske EECP. Gathering places should be provided with seats at Marinka and Stanytsia Luhanska EECPs.
- To enhance the safety of civilians and facilitate crossing process, directional signs towards important infrastructure objects (Oschadbank mobile offices, SES tents, bomb shelters, etc.) must be installed at all EECPs in gathering places.
- To install information stands at Marinka EECP. Additional stands with leaflets about the crossing procedure, bus schedules, categories of people entitled for expedited crossing and contacts of the relevant humanitarian and state organizations should be placed at Hnutove, Maiorske and Novotroitske EECPs. The stands should be updated regularly and located in pedestrian traffic areas where it would be convenient to stop and read the information and updated on a regular basis.

2. To ensure presence of medical staff and access to medical assistance during working hours at all EECPs;
3. To ensure the presence of Coordination Group representatives at each EECP.
4. To arrange major reconstruction of the bridge at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP.

ANNEX. EECF CROSSINGS DURING JANUARY-JUNE 2018

■ NUMBER OF CROSSINGS BY EECF¹³



¹³ General statistics on crossings are available at the UNHCR dashboard visualizing data from the State Border Guard Service – <https://goo.gl/TZbU8c>

