



Restoration of social ties between TOT residents by improving access to the most requested services

Research findings

This monitoring was conducted by CF «Right to Protection» within the framework of the Multi-Sectoral Humanitarian Aid to Conflict-Affected Populations in Eastern Ukraine Project implemented by CF «Right to Protection» with the financial support of the European Commission under the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid within the ACCESS consortium and with the assistance of the Advocacy, Protection and Legal Assistance to IDPs Project, implemented by CF «Right to Protection» with the support of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

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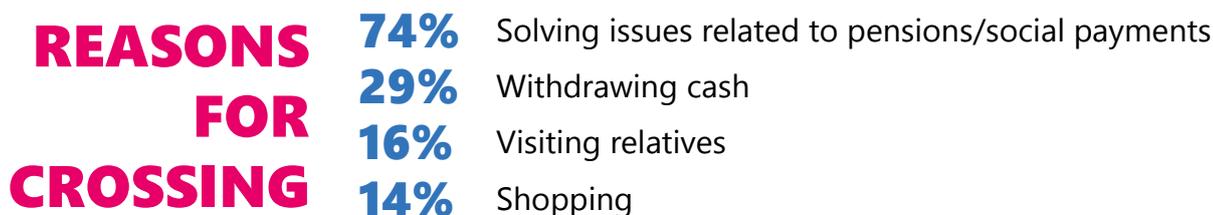
For more information please contact:
pr@r2p.org.ua

In July 2019, the SBGS recorded **1.297 million crossings¹ of the contact line** (hereinafter referred to as CL) through the entry-exit checkpoints (hereinafter referred to as EECPs) in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

EECP	Exit from TOT	Entry to TOT	Total
Hnutove	65,000	74,000	139,000
Maiorske	148,000	146,000	294,000
Marinka	136,000	139,000	275,000
Novotroitske	125,000	120,000	245,000
Stanytsia Luhanska	172,000	172,000	344,000
Total	646,000	651,000	1.297 million

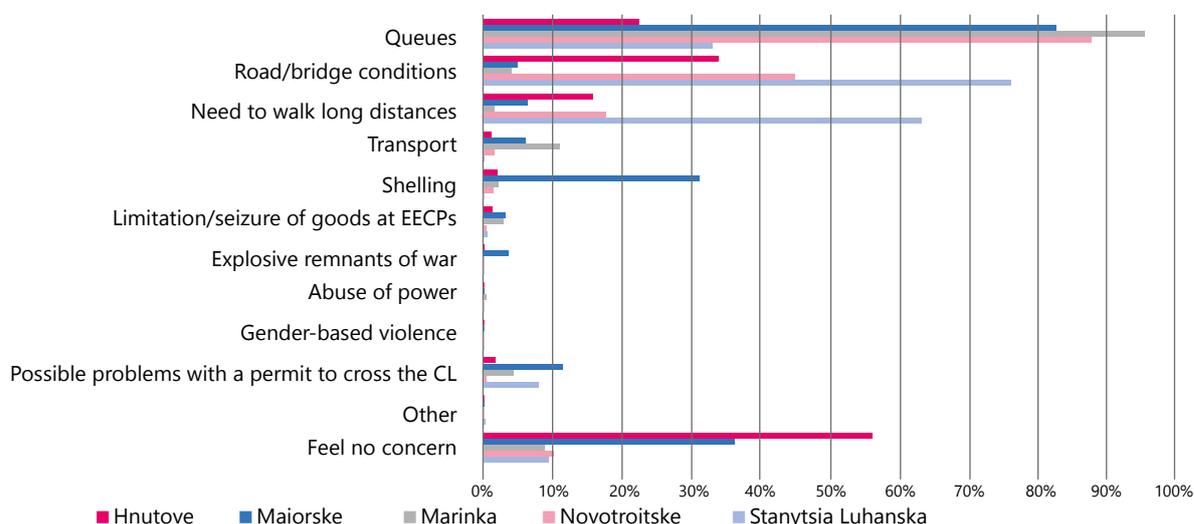
According to the surveys conducted regularly by CF «Right to Protection», from among the persons crossing CL through EECPs in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts², **93% of the respondents live permanently in the temporarily occupied territory of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts** (hereinafter referred to as TOT).

Respondents most often mention the resolution of the issues related to receiving or restoring the payment of pensions or social assistance (74%) and cash withdrawal (29%) as the purpose of their travel. About 16% of respondents travel to the government-controlled territory (hereinafter referred to as the GCA) to visit relatives, and 14% to go shopping.



Most spend **2 to 3 hours to cross** the CL and a few more hours to get to EECPs. Once there, they have to stand in queues without proper conditions, travel—sometimes even walking on bad roads—spend money on travel and often rent housing. This is what residents of TOT with no access to government, administrative, social and other services have to go through. Simple tasks such as renewing a passport, registering a birth of a child or death of a relative, passing physical identification to continue receiving a pension, withdrawing cash, buying presents are far more complex than they should be for hundreds of thousands of people in Ukraine.

Concerns in crossing the contact line through the EECPs



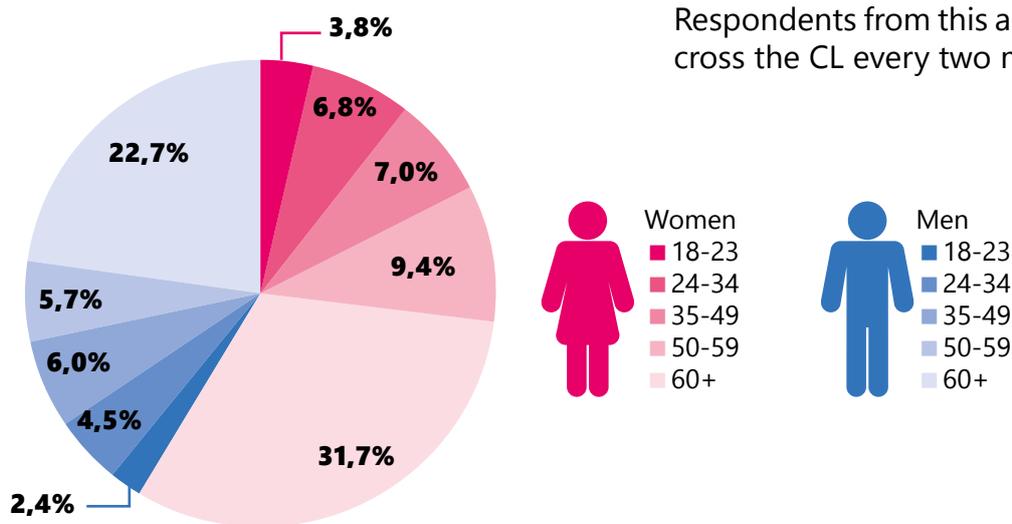
1 EECP Monthly Figures: <http://bit.ly/2H8H4eG>

2 Within the framework of the Advocacy, Protection and Legal Assistance to IDPs Project, implemented by CF «Right to Protection» with the support of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) <http://r2p.org.ua/category/zviti-ta-infografiki/>

This survey aims to find out how, given the current restrictions on freedom of movement in Donbas, **it is possible to alleviate the condition of people affected by an armed conflict and to grant them access to the most requested services.** For this purpose, in July 2019, we conducted a survey among TOT residents crossing the CL through EECPs in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts to find out which services were requested the most and also to present their vision of the best way to receive these services. We analyzed the situation in the context of the existing infrastructure, regulations, and security, and developed recommendations, which, in our opinion, can positively influence the degree of protection of the conflict-affected population and improve TOT residents' access to the necessary services.

In July 2019, the monitors of CF «Right to Protection» interviewed 1,059 adult TOT residents crossing the CL through 5 EECPs in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. The survey covered the services they would use at or near the EECP, under what conditions they would do it, and what services, in their opinion, should be required to be available at the EECP.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS



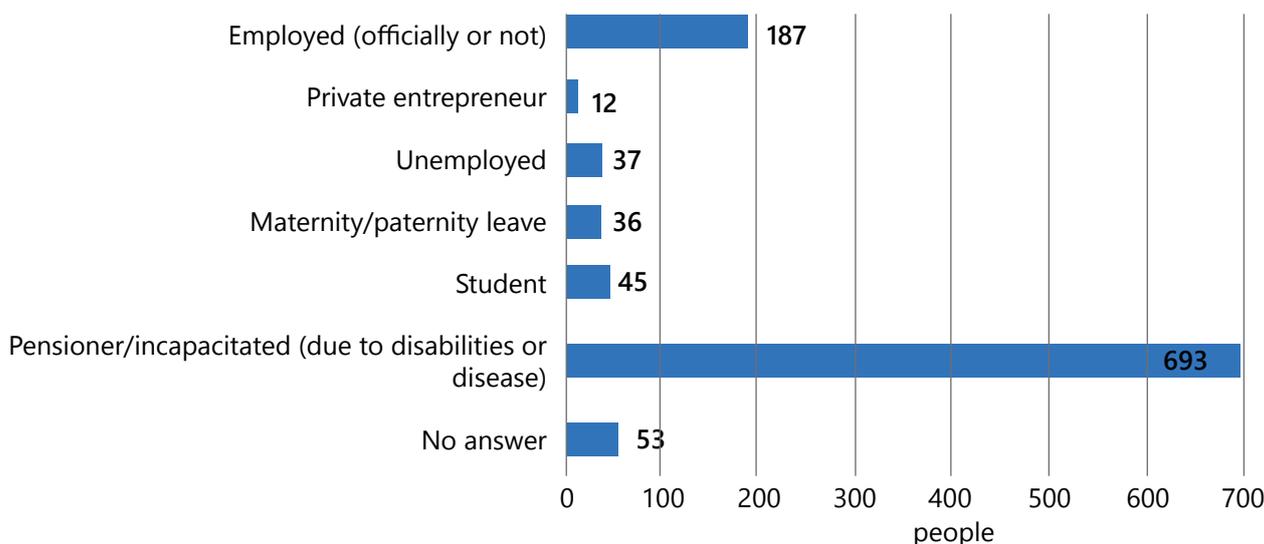
Most of respondents were women (58.7% against 41.3% of men)

More than half of respondents (54%) were older than 60 years of age

Accordingly, pensioners formed the largest social group

Respondents from this age group most often cross the CL every two months

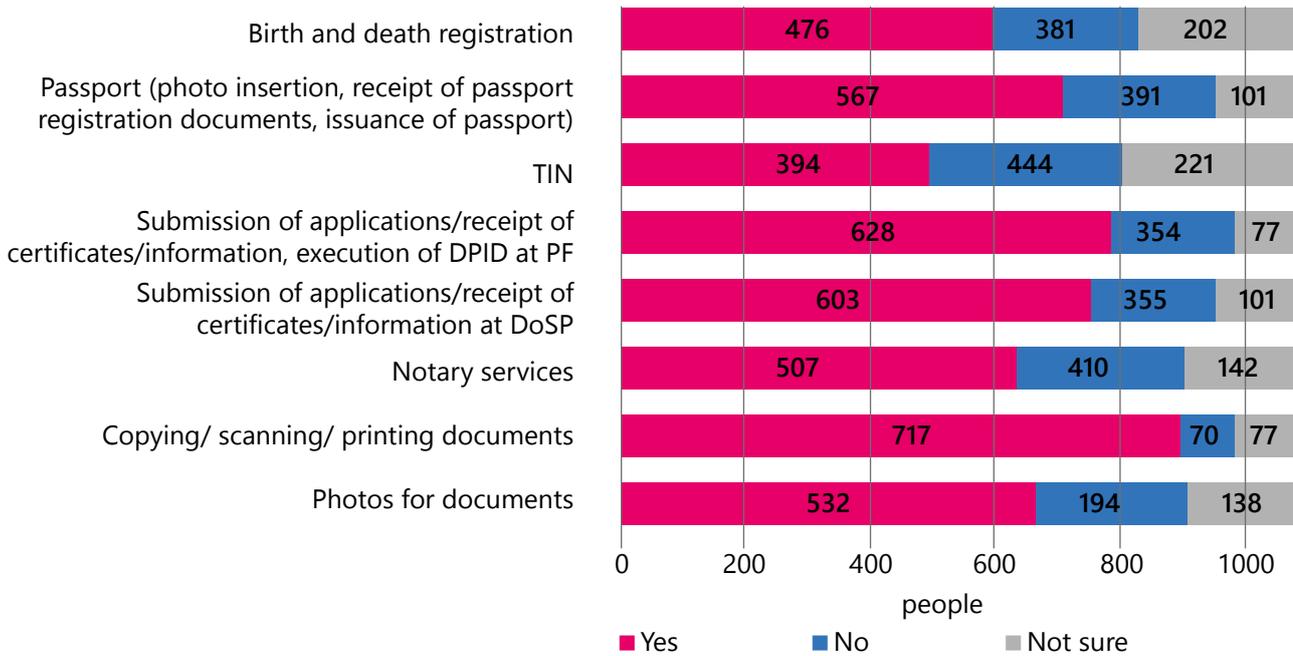
Social status



Taking into account the most popular reasons for crossing the CL, R2P asked travelers to choose which services they would like to receive directly at the EECF.

Demand for administrative services among TOT residents is extremely high. 82% of respondents would like to be able to receive them as close to the point of crossing as possible. Most respondents are interested in the services provided by the Ministry of Social Protection and the Pension Fund of Ukraine.

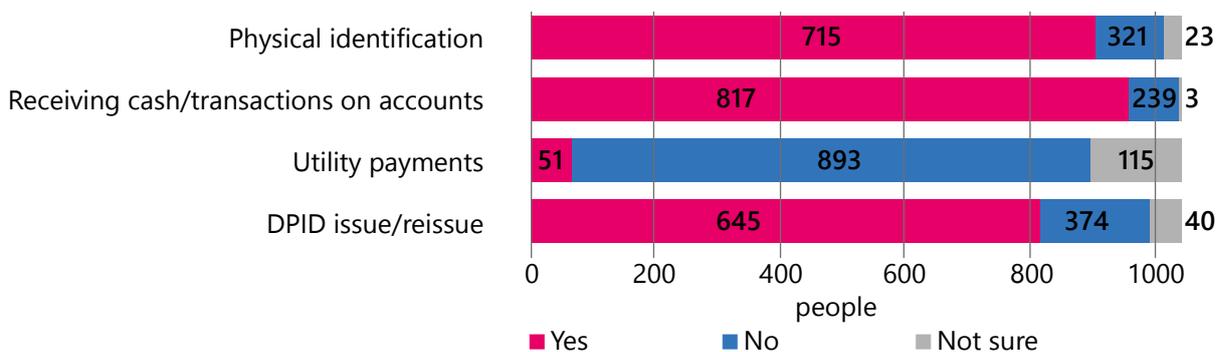
Administrative services



Additional services such as printing, copying, scanning documents, photos for documents, and postal services are also highly demanded.

78% of those surveyed would like to receive banking services at EECFs. In particular, respondents would like the option to withdraw cash and conduct transactions on their accounts, pass physical identification (a mandatory procedure for pensioners from TOT), (re) issue a digitalized pensioner’s ID card in the form of a bank card.³

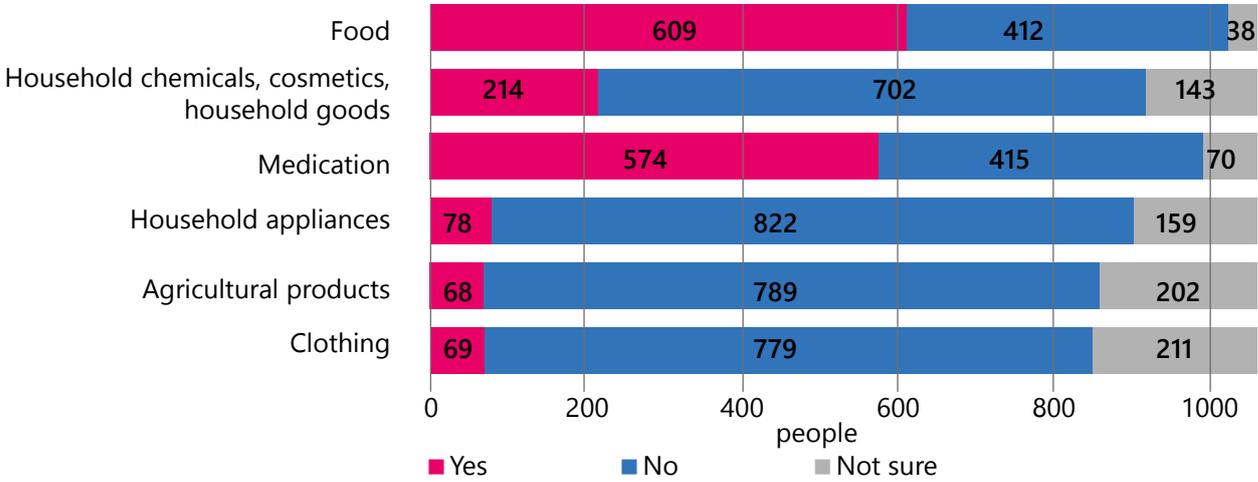
Banking services



³ It should be mentioned that in the context of Oschadbank’s effective monopoly on servicing pensioners and people receiving social payments in the TOT, this question is mostly about the services of this particular bank.

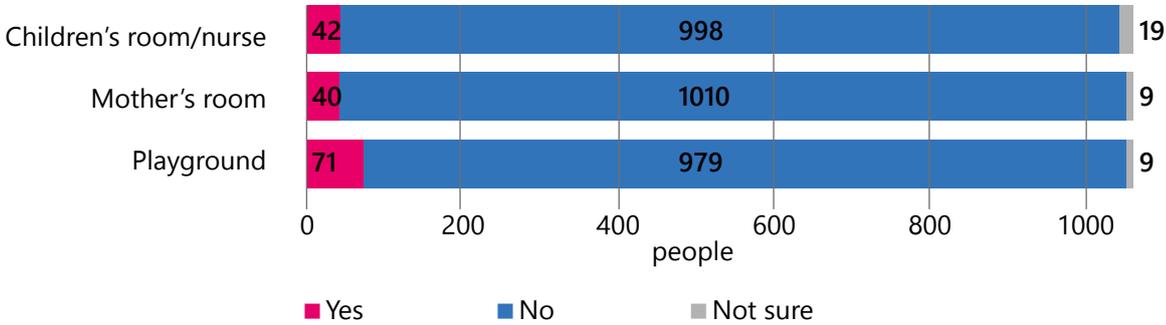
Goods that can be purchased in GCA are also highly demanded among TOT residents – **67% of those surveyed would like to be able to buy goods at or near the EECp.** However, this only applies to food and medications. Our respondents would be less willing to buy clothing, agricultural products and household appliances at EECps.

Trade



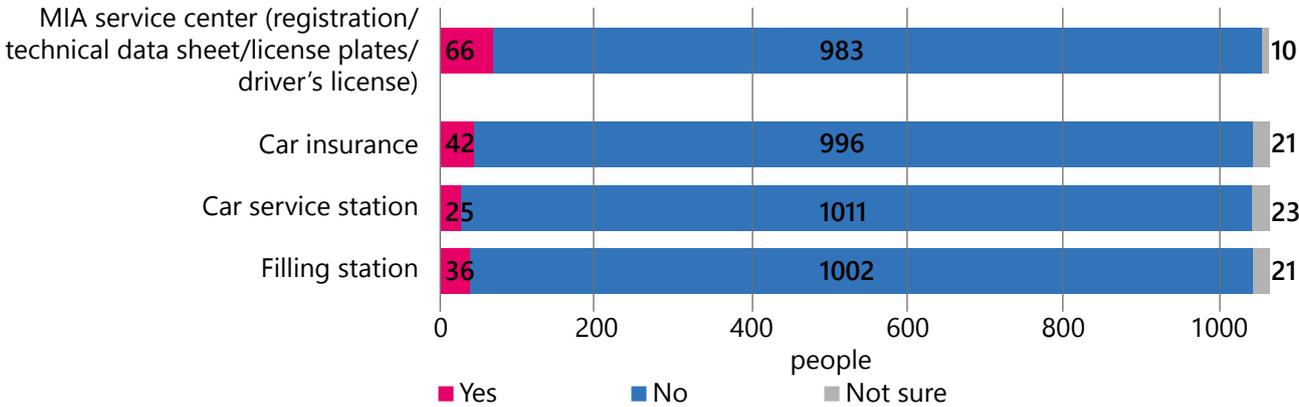
90% of travelers are not interested in services for families with children. First of all, this is due to the demographic peculiarities of the respondents, among whom the largest age groups are pensioners and people of pre-retirement age.

Services for families with children



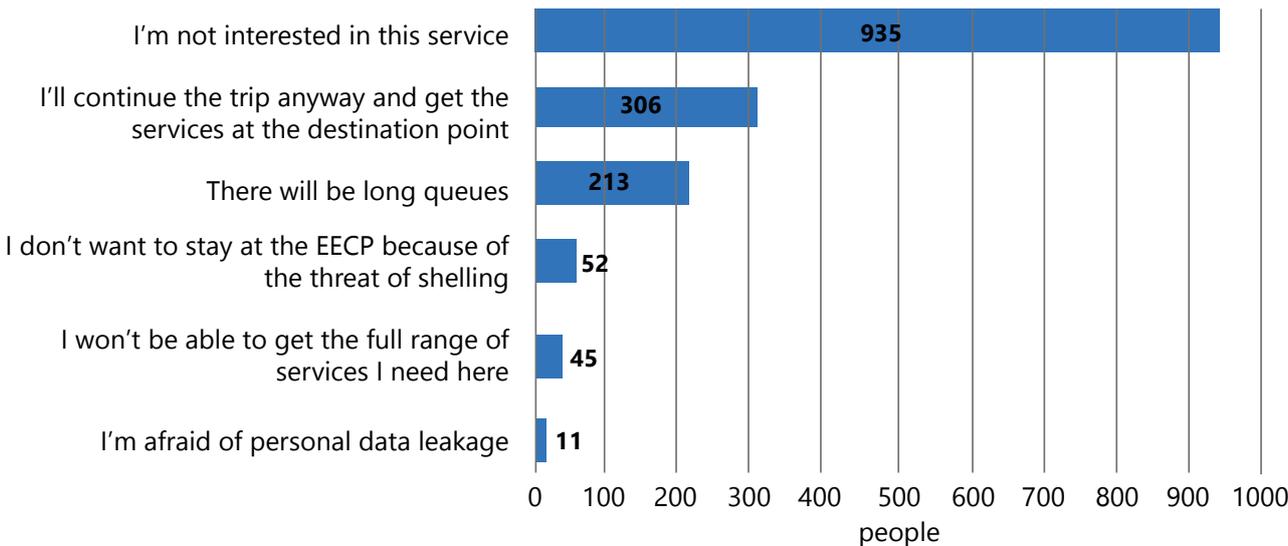
Due to the fact that majority of the respondents crossed the EECF through a pedestrian corridor, and only a small percentage cross by car, **services for car owners** were not too in demand. Such services were only interesting **for 9% of those surveyed**. The most demanded services were MIA service centers (registration of vehicles, issuance of technical data sheets, driver's licenses, license plates, etc.), as well as insurance, while the repair and refueling of cars were less interesting to the interviewed.

Services for car owners



If the respondents did not want to receive a particular service at or near the EECF, we asked them why not. Usually, queues bother respondents much more than shelling. In addition to the situations where those surveyed are not interested in a particular service at all, the respondents most often stated that they did not want to use the services at EECF because they would still continue their trip, since they had other interests at their final destination.

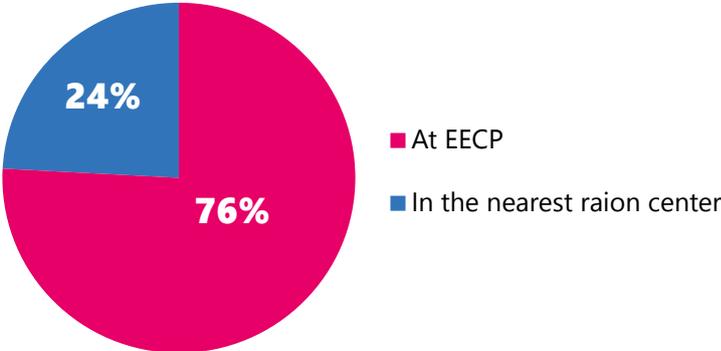
Reasons for reluctance to receive services at/near EECF



* respondents could choose more than one response

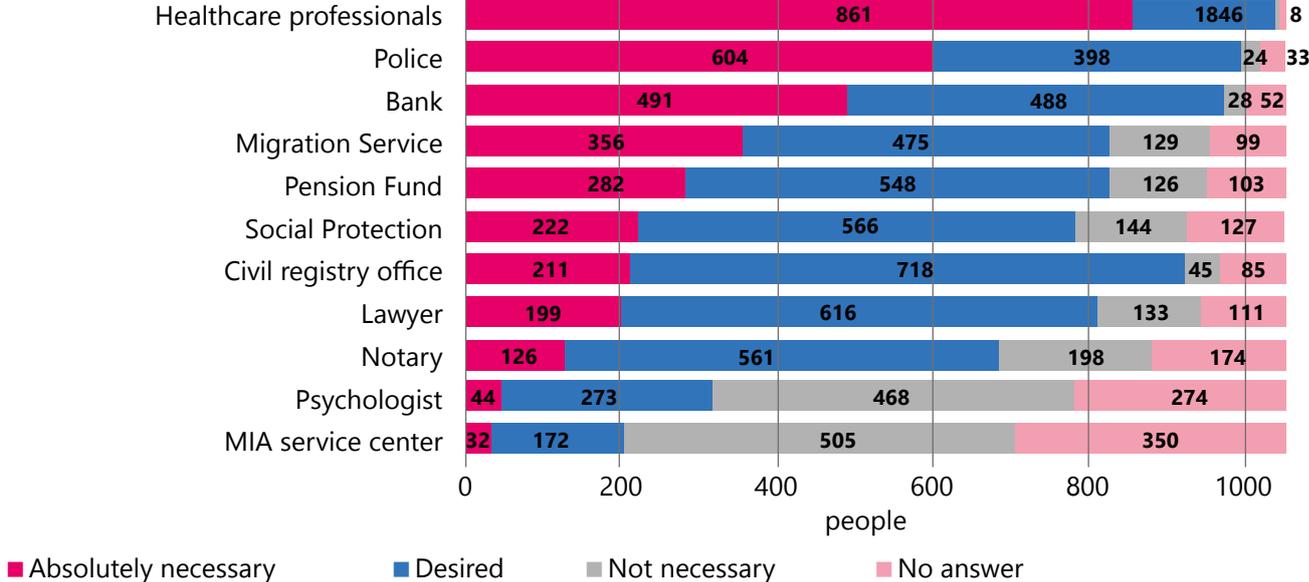
Travelers were asked to choose where they thought it would be best to receive the services listed – at/near the EECP, or in the nearest settlement where they were already available, subject to the creation of appropriate infrastructure (road reconstruction and repair, transport options, temporary dwelling). Most respondents wanted to save time and money during the trip – **76% preferred the availability of services directly at the EECP.**

Where do you think it would be better to receive these services?



Travelers were also asked about desired and required services at EECP. The overwhelming majority of respondents consider the presence of healthcare professionals absolutely necessary. Banking services were demanded more than law enforcement. The next most significant are state institutions (PF, DoSP, SMS, civil registry office) and legal services (notary, lawyer). Psychological assistance and other administrative services (MIA SC) at the EECP are most likely not needed, according to the travelers.

What are the services required at the EECP?



In addition, TOT residents also noted they would like to receive the following at EECPs:



Mail



Internet (Wi-Fi)



Currency exchange



Railway ticket offices

In summary, TOT residents mostly travel to GCA to receive state and administrative services that they do not have access to at their place of residence, as well as postal or banking services and to purchase goods. The findings of this survey allow making a rating of the most requested services and suggesting ways to improve access of the affected population to these services:



SECURITY

EECPs are on the contact line between the parties to a current armed conflict. Considering the multiple violations of international humanitarian law and attacks on residential areas and social infrastructure recorded by OSCE⁴, the UN⁵ and numerous national and international observers, it is impossible to guarantee the security of personnel and clients of these services in close proximity to CL.

The development of existing social infrastructure does not require agreements with security agencies. The risks to the safety of clients, personnel and property are much lower than in the territory around EECPs.

LAND PLOTS

The land around EECPs is mostly agricultural and residential. Therefore, the establishment of such service centers may require a time-consuming and complex resolution of land-related issues up to the change of the purpose of land plots.

In most raion centers, various premises are available for rent when needed to expand the areas of public authorities and institutions, and land plots are available for construction as needed.

INFRASTRUCTURE: REAL ESTATE

Unlike Stanytsia Luhanska EECP, the EECPs in Donetsk Oblast are located outside of settlements or border rural areas. Therefore, there is no permanent facility that could potentially be used to create jobs in the relevant institutions, while rather stringent requirements apply to buildings and premises of public authorities, banks, notaries, etc. Major construction in the immediate vicinity of the CL is dangerous and temporary facilities may not be the solution for a number of institutions.

To create service centers or strengthen the existing institutions through staff expansion and logistics, no major construction is needed or such construction is related to lower costs.

4 <https://www.osce.org/uk/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/423191>
 5 <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2019/05/1355511>

INFRASTRUCTURE: UTILITIES AND COMMUNICATIONS

In rural areas, where most EECs are located, there are no or poorly developed networks of electricity, water, sewerage, heating, mobile communication networks and Internet; there are no utility enterprises, personnel and resources required to service these networks.

There is no need to build utility networks from scratch. The utility networks of cities and towns, where TOT residents travel in most cases, are often outdated and in need of development, which is, however, far more expedient than creating new facilities. In addition, investment in housing services will have a positive impact on the lives of local communities.

INFRASTRUCTURE: TRANSPORT

In the case of building service centers near EECs, the demand for the services of passenger transportation to the nearest settlements with good transport options with the rest of GCA is likely to decrease significantly. Carriers, who are not interested in servicing an EEC, may reduce the amount of transportation, which will adversely affect a large proportion of TOT residents who would like to maintain social ties in GCA.

In order to improve the access of TOT residents to administrative and social services, it is necessary to develop the transport network of relevant areas: road widening and pavement repair; creation of conditions for fair competition of carriers, quality control of passenger transportation services.⁶

INFRASTRUCTURE: TEMPORARY DWELLING

Addressing a number of issues (such as document issuance, (re)registration of an electronic permit to cross the CL) may take some time for a person to stay in GCA. The only possible way of accommodation for overnight stay near EECs is at the SES points of assistance, which are designed only for overnight stays in exceptional cases.

Settlements, where the majority of TOT residents travel today, often already have the opportunities for temporary accommodation (hotels, hostels, dormitories, private property for rent). TOT residents often rent private accommodation at very high prices (the rental fee for a 1-room apartment is at least UAH 250-350 per day on average). Therefore, investments are needed to create additional affordable options of temporary accommodation (social hotels/hostels).

INFRASTRUCTURE: INSTITUTIONS

The process of creating new territorial subdivisions of governmental authorities, which should be entered in the administrative map of the relevant districts, will be long and difficult.

There is no need to create additional territorial subdivisions of public authorities and institutions.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In the conditions of a current armed conflict, any long-term demand for administrative and social services cannot be predicted.

Strengthening the infrastructure of relevant raion centers will have a positive impact on their further development by creating new jobs and attracting additional resources.

INTEGRATION

Establishment of service centers at EECs may cut off many TOT residents from the rest of the country's territory and isolate them from social and cultural ties with host communities.

Improving access to the necessary services within the existing infrastructure at GCA will help maintain the social and cultural ties of Ukrainians on both sides of the CL, will provide TOT residents with access to the impartial and complete socio-political information, educational, medical and humanitarian services.

Thus, the first of the proposed options seems to be the most desirable for TOT residents, since it would significantly reduce time and financial costs. However, its implementation does not appear to be very realistic and will entail unjustified financial costs, taking into account a number of factors. Such an approach may be relevant only for the Stanytsia Luhanska EECP, which is located in a settlement. However, there is still a rather tense security situation there, as well as a great need to develop both the resources of the settlement itself and its connection with the rest of GCA.

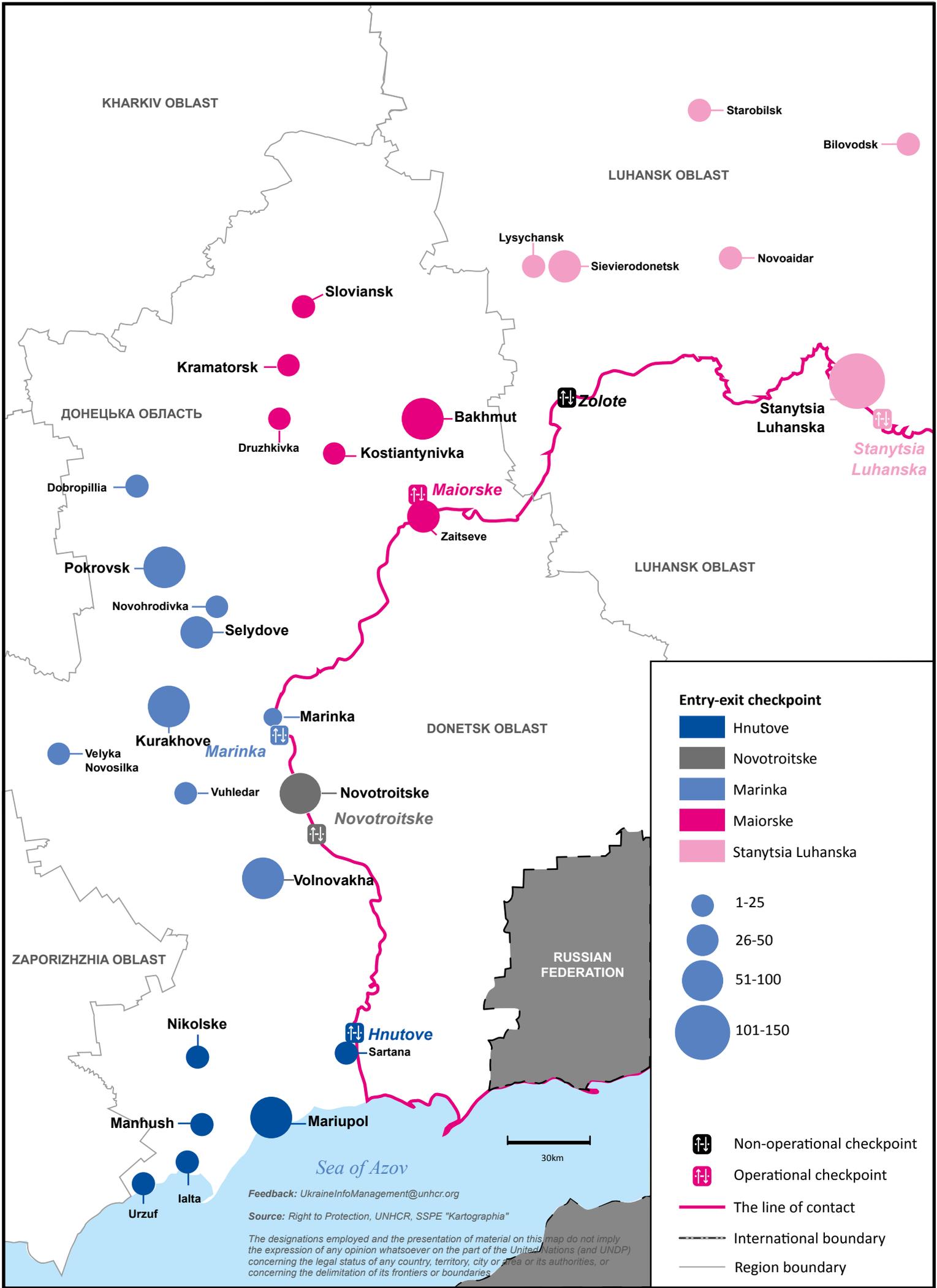
According to the survey findings, 95% of respondents did not plan to go further than Donetsk (74%) or Luhansk oblasts (21%). Stanytsia Luhanska, Kurakhove, Mariupol, Pokrovsk, Volnovakha and Bakhmut feel the largest burden. Similar results are shown by the survey conducted by REACH in September-November 2018.⁷

In each of these settlements, the most requested services are provided at least at a basic level. Public authorities expanded staff, introduced electronic queues and increased capacity in some of them, given the increased demand for their services. But the overall level of access to services remains rather low due to the lack of a systemic approach to service provision.

Taking into account the geography of crossing the CL, the second option is more promising, i.e. the development of the existing infrastructure of the administrative centers (raion, oblast, cities of oblast subordination) closest to EECPs, which would entail the implementation of the following steps:

- Road repairs, including widening of roads connecting EECPs with settlements in GCA.
- Development of transport options between EECPs and these settlements: free public transport for privileged categories of citizens and accessible to all others, that runs on a convenient schedule, and has equipped bus stations/stops.
- Opening of administrative service centers where such centers have not yet been established.
- Strengthening the capacity of state institutions (staff expansion, logistics and electronic services).
- Temporary affordable housing for TOT residents, who come for the short term to solve document-related issues, obtain/reissue a permit to cross the CL (social hotels, hostels).
- Development of urban infrastructure (public transport, public toilets, reference information, no barriers and accessibility) by strengthening communities, for example, by providing them with subsidies from the state or oblast budget, based on demand/usage rather than population.

⁷ http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_ukr_flowchart_eastukraine_cclmovement_20feb2019.pdf



KHARKIV OBLAST

LUHANSK OBLAST

Starobilsk

Bilovodsk

Lysychansk

Sievierodonetsk

Novoaidar

Sloviansk

Kramatorsk

Bakhmut

Zolote

Stanytsia
Luhanska

Stanytsia
Luhanska

ДОНЕЦЬКА ОБЛАСТЬ

Druzhkivka

Kostiantynivka

Dobropillia

Maiorske

Zaitseve

LUHANSK OBLAST

Pokrovsk

Novohrodivka

Selydove

DONETSK OBLAST

Marinka

Entry-exit checkpoint

Hnutove

Novotroitske

Marinka

Maiorske

Stanytsia Luhanska

1-25

26-50

51-100

101-150

Non-operational checkpoint

Operational checkpoint

The line of contact

International boundary

Region boundary

ZAPORIZHZHIA OBLAST

RUSSIAN
FEDERATION

Nikolske

Novotroitske
Novotroitske

Volnovakha

Hnutove
Sartana

Manhush

Mariupol

Sea of Azov

30km

Feedback: UkraineInfoManagement@unhcr.org

Source: Right to Protection, UNHCR, SSPE "Kartographia"

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