

**MONITORING
REPORT**

EU Border Crossing Points

Bulgaria

The European Institute



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East East: Partnership Beyond Borders Program

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I. Introduction

Bulgaria is located in South-Eastern Europe bordering the Black Sea to the East, Romania to the North, Turkey and Greece to the South, Republic of Macedonia and Serbia to the West. Bulgaria has therefore land-borders, as well as blue borders. Since January 1st 2007 the sections of the border with Greece and to Romania have turned into internal EU borders /external Schengen/. The three other sections with Turkey, the Republic of Macedonia and Serbia will remain external borders for the time being.

Figure 1. Map of Bulgaria



The state border of the Republic of Bulgaria has an overall length of 2,245 km. The length of the Bulgarian borders in km per section is as follows:

- Romania 609 km (including the Danube river);
- Serbia 341 km;
- Macedonia 165 km;
- Greece 493 km;
- Turkey 259 km;
- Black Sea 378 km.

Bulgaria's accession to the EU on January 1 2007 assigned the country the responsibility to guard 1647 km of the Union's external borders. Bulgaria is expected to build an adequate capacity to perform its Treaty obligations of a reliable South-Eastern border of the Union. Key to the success in meeting such a goal is the **efficiency and effectiveness of the Bulgarian Border Police and Customs** in their efforts to guarantee security at the external borders

of the Union and, at the same time, to ensure the rights of free movement of citizens.

The European Institute's research within the framework of the Batory Foundation project, called "EU South Eastern Border Monitoring" is the first such study in Bulgaria after its accession to the EU. The Bulgaria-centred monitoring covers research and analysis of the three markedly different borders of that country with Turkey, Macedonia and Serbia, respectively. (The differences in the three border cases are conditioned by the differences in the institutional status of the three nations with regard to the EU and/or NATO).

The **monitoring teams** at the three border crossing points/BCPs/ were composed of five interviewers and two experts.

The **interviewers** were students or young people with basic knowledge of sociology and European policy in the field of migration, asylum and border control.

The **experts** had enough qualification and experience in the field of border management, migration and asylum policy in order to be able to evaluate the quality of services rendered at the BCPs concerned and identify the main problems there.

They have:

- surveyed the situation at the border crossing line;
- monitored the attitude of the border guards and custom officers towards travellers;
- created the description of the functionality of the BCP;
- evaluated the degree to which it can accommodate the intensity of cross-border traffic;
- evaluated whether it was appropriately equipped with signs and whether it ensured adequate access to information;
- gathered relevant information with respect to the evolving situation on the ground before, at and beyond the external borders;
- surveyed the adequate registration of the number of persons crossing the external land borders;
- monitored the categories of travellers, the number and nature of checks and surveillance measures at the chosen three BCPs based on the registration and other sources of data collection.
- assessed the effectiveness of the structural, strategic and operational coordination between all authorities operating at the BCPs

II. Method of the research

Methodological problems which occurred during the border crossing point survey and the way they could affect the quality of the gathered information.

The few methodological problems that occurred during the implementation of the survey have been connected with the interviewing process i.e.:

- In-depth interviews – difficult to be performed due to the length of the scenario;
- Questionnaires – too long with information overlapping in some of them;
- Uniform approach of the survey – not very appropriate for Bulgaria's external borders.

It is recommended that separate researches be done for Customs and Border Police authorities. This recommendation derives from the fact that Bulgaria has just started its preparation for Schengen accession and has not yet fully complied with all the Schengen requirements.

Some more concrete remarks on behalf of the analyzers appeared in the following parts of the scenarios and the questionnaires:

In the section **Services rendered to travellers at border crossing points** for each of the surveyed group of officers, respectively **border guard officers** – passport control, respect of human rights and law; **customs officers** – customs control, respect of human rights and law;

- Attitude of border officers towards EU citizens and citizens of other states; forms of address to travellers; respect of non-discrimination rules;

Provided a potential difference in the attitude towards EU citizens and citizens of third countries has been looked for; the following two questions do not provide an opportunity for valid conclusions, with the exception by means of a cross table containing the question about the permanent residence of the traveller, although even then a definite conclusion might not be obtained, since the permanent place of residence does not necessarily coincide with citizenship.

There are no questions addressing possible open or hidden acts of discrimination on ethnic, religious or other grounds by border and customs officers.

- Behaviour of border officers during passport checks (signs of corruption, overall atmosphere, levying of penalties, refusal of access to the country, verification of financial requirements with regard of the length of stay in an EU country.

Question 23. “Have you ever seen a Bulgarian border guard or customs officer receiving from traveller money or other gifts?”

The question mixes up the two groups, which need to be rated and does not provide the opportunity of localizing problems, specific solely to border guard officers or to customs officers. On the other hand, from interviews conducted it appears obviously that with regard of manifestations of corruption, travellers make a clear distinction between the two types of officers.

III. Basic characteristics of the studied border crossing points

1. The reasons for the selection of the studied border crossing points

Figure 2. Border crossing points – map of Bulgaria



We have chosen the three border crossing points/BCPs/: Kapitan Andreevo with Turkey, Gjuveshevo with Macedonia and Kalotina with Serbia, respectively, because:

- on one hand, the three neighbouring countries are not members of the EU, while at the same time they are at various stages of their institutional integration with the EU;
- On the other hand, each of the countries' border crossing point has its specific characteristics due to the different geopolitical or historical backgrounds.

Main monitoring focal points valid for all three BCPs:

1. The capacity of Border and Customs authorities to cope with the illegal trafficking of people, drugs and goods /the last two especially relevant for Kapitan Andreevo/.
2. Negative impact of corruption on the quality of border control
3. Mechanism to facilitate the smooth, time-saving, though carefully controlled flow of travellers (tourists, business people, students/academics, especially for Macedonia and Serbia) across the analyzed border.

Specific accents for Macedonia and Serbia:

The difficulties and tensions surrounding the final status of Kosovo, as well as the fragile ethnic peace within Macedonia, still pose the risk of potential influx of refugees towards Bulgaria in the event of a deterioration of the situation in Kosovo, Serbia proper, or Macedonia, respectively. These factors have given a slightly different focus on the monitoring at the 2 BCPs while assessing the preparedness of Macedonia and Serbia to tackle refugees.

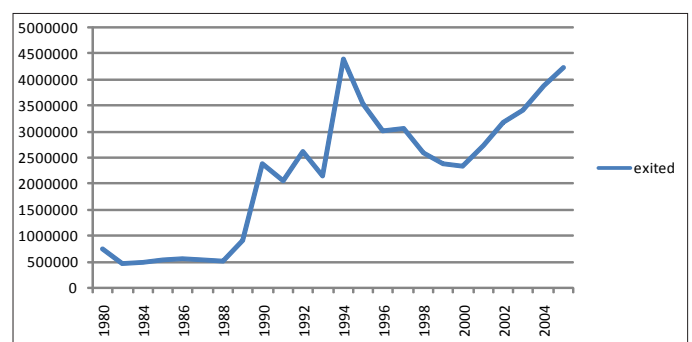
The number of the border crossings in 2006 and a percentage to the overall number of crossings:

Kapitan Andreevo BCP – 4,291,616 border crossings – 85% of all the crossings on the Bulgarian-Turkish border;
 Gjuveshevo BCP – 1 198 871 border crossings – 62.6% of all the crossings on Bulgarian-Macedonian border;
 Kalotina BCP – 4,720,463 border crossings – 47% of all the crossings on Bulgarian-Serbian border

2. The intensity and scale of the movement at the border crossing points

Analysis of the statistical data on border traffic with the focus on factors determining the increases and decreases of the movement.

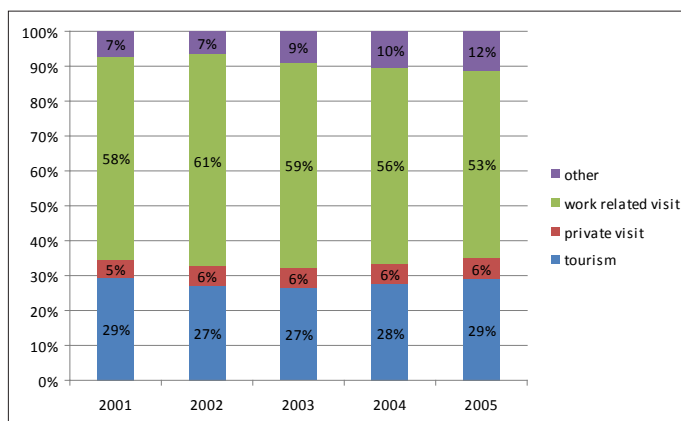
Figure 3. Statistical data on border traffic



In the past five years the travel of Bulgarian citizens abroad demonstrates a solid increase, reaching its maximum level in 2005 after an absolute peak in 1994 (4,234,866 versus 4,394,272). The average annual growth in the number of travellers crossing the borders to

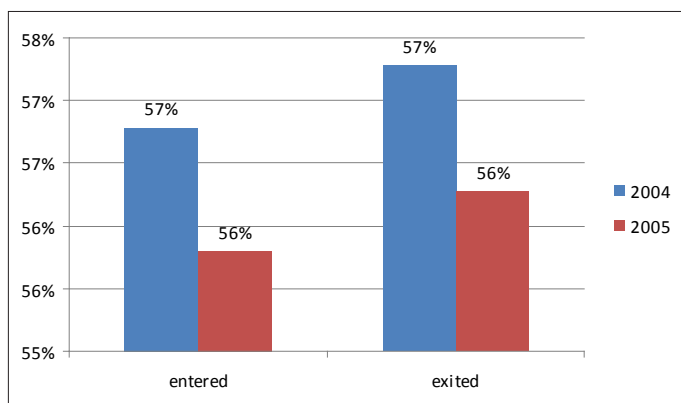
leave the country in the period 2001–2005 was 376,030 persons annually. On the other hand the proportional distribution of the purpose of travel of the Bulgarians crossing the borders has gradually stabilized in the last five years.

Figure 4. Purpose of travel of Bulgarian citizens abroad



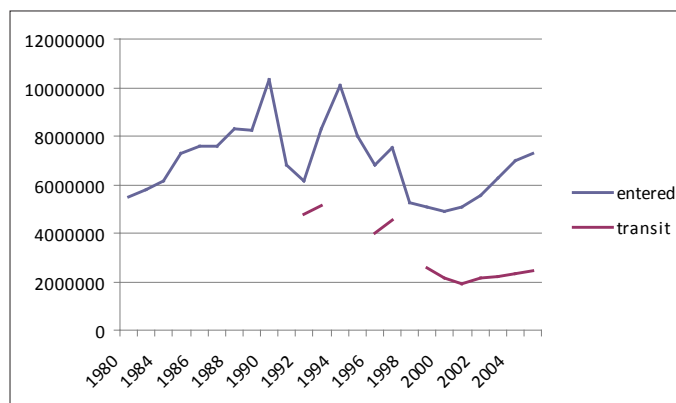
A good deal of the Bulgarian citizens' travel abroad goes through the three selected border crossing points.

Figure 5. Border crossing of foreign citizens



The dynamics of the travels of foreign citizens is presented in the following graph. In the past five years the statistics registers increase in the numbers of the foreigners entering the country by an average of 544,665 persons a year.

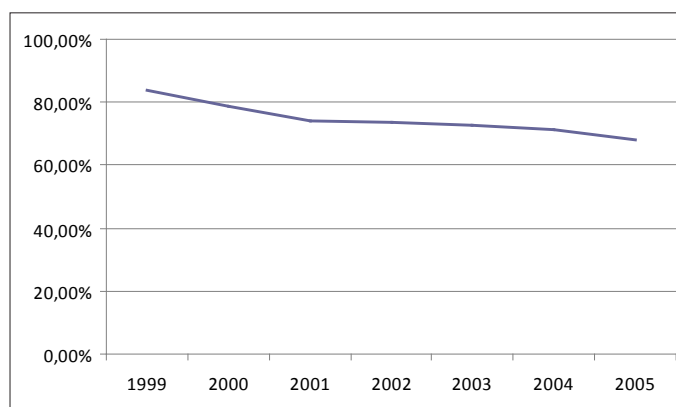
Figure 6. Foreigners visiting Bulgaria



Statistical data of the number of foreigners who have visited Bulgarian, including the transit passengers

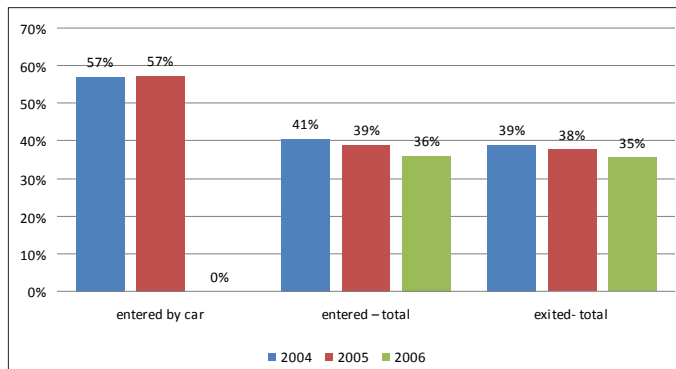
The majority of the travellers use road transport, but the trend is towards slow reduction in the usage patterns.

Figure 7. Use of road transport



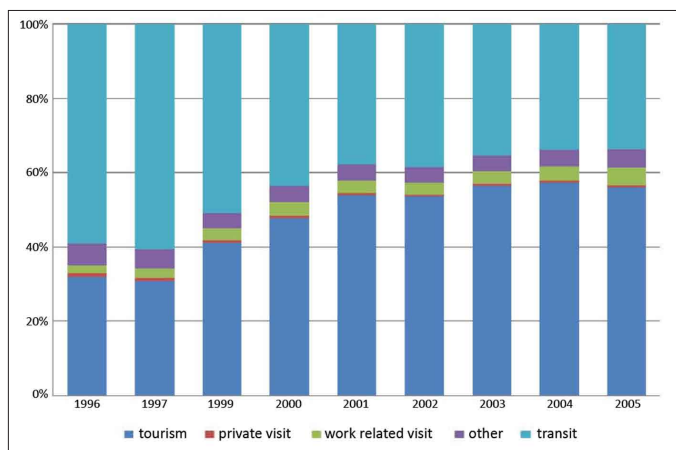
A serious proportion of the foreign citizens pass the state borders through the border crossing points selected for this survey.

Figure 8. Percentage of the stock passing through the studied BCP



Percentage of the population crossing the borders at the 3 selected crossing points versus the total number of foreign travellers

Figure 9. Proportional distribution of purpose of travel



On the other hand the proportional distribution of the purpose of travel among the foreign citizens has stabilized in the last five years.

*The time line statistics for registering the long-term trends has used the annual statistical books of the National Statistical Institute for the years 1989, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1998, 2000–2006.

In 2002 (according to the data from 2001) the data collection methodology for the travel abroad of Bulgarian citizens was altered to align it with the data collection methodology used for the foreign citizens. This explains the differences in the period of the graphs illustrating the purpose of travel for the Bulgarian and foreign citizens.

No data is available on the distribution of the travel of Bulgarian citizens by types of transport.

IV. Characteristics of the people crossing the border

(Demographic description, place of residence, behaviour at the border crossing point)

The break down of the surveyed sum total of travellers crossing the three border points (volume of the sample 1,142 questionnaires, out of which 1,140 – valid) is as follows:

- **EU states: 650**
Bulgaria – 487; Germany – 98; Western and Southern Europe – 50; Central and Eastern Europe – 15;
- **Other European and neighbour countries: 194**
Macedonia – 99; Turkey – 63; Serbia Proper – 30; Other – 2;
- **Other non European or neighbour countries: 8**

The data concerning the remoteness of the places of residence from the border of those interviewed are the following: 11.5% – less than 50 km; 13.4% – between 50 and 100 km; 75% – more than 100 km.

Figure 10. Q42. “Where is your permanent residence?”

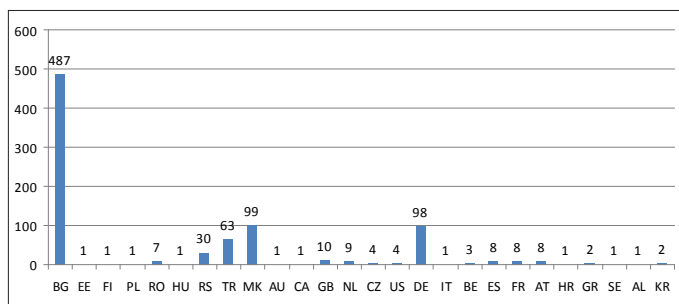


Figure 11. Q43. “How far from this border do you live?”

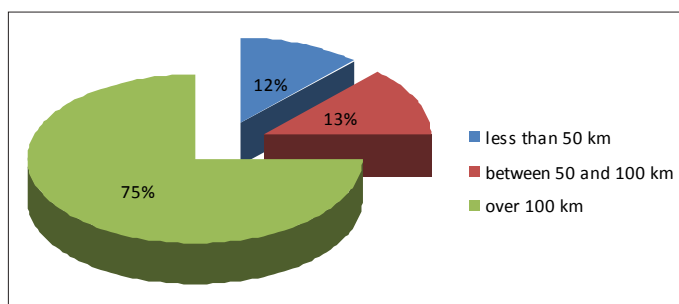
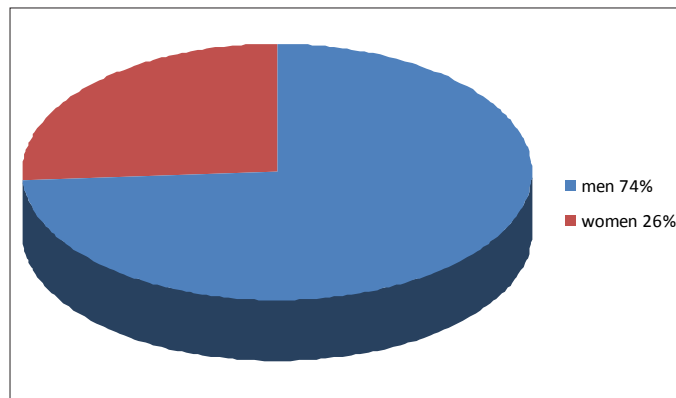
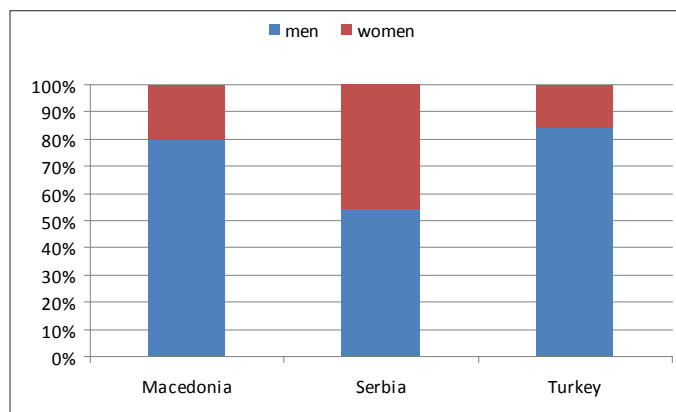


Figure 12. Q37. Sex

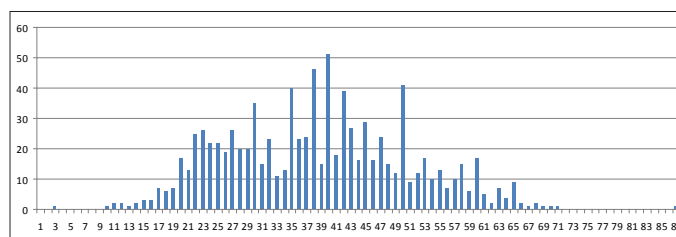


Correlation by sex: men – 73.7%, women – 26.3%.



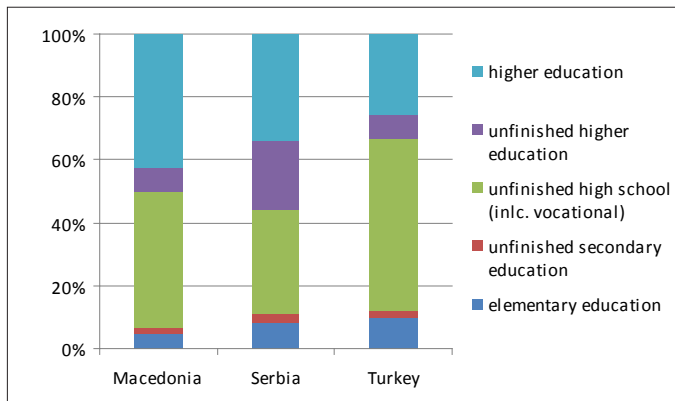
Distribution by age: the minimum age of a traveller is 3 years, the maximum – 87 years. The average age of travellers is 38 years (i.e. 50% of travellers are no older than 38).

Figure 13. Q38. Age



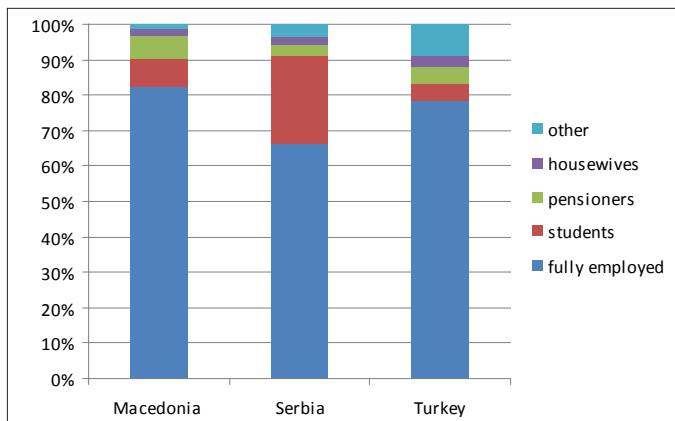
Distribution by education: 7.8% of respondents have elementary education, 2.2% have not finished their secondary education (including vocational), 44.4% are high schools graduates, 12.3% have not finished their higher education and 33.3% are university graduates.

Figure 14. Q39. Education



Distribution by employment: 75.9% fully employed, 11.9% students, 4.9% pensioners, 2.2% housewives, 5.1% have other occupations.

Figure 15. Q40. "What is your occupation?"



Distribution by frequency of crossing the border: 31.6% – very frequently (22% once a week or more often and 9.5% – once in two weeks); 19.4% – rather often (8.9% – once a month, 10.5% less than once monthly); 39.1% – seldom; 9.8% – for the first time. Out of the sum-total surveyed on the three crossing borders, the following differences in the frequency of crossing have been observed:

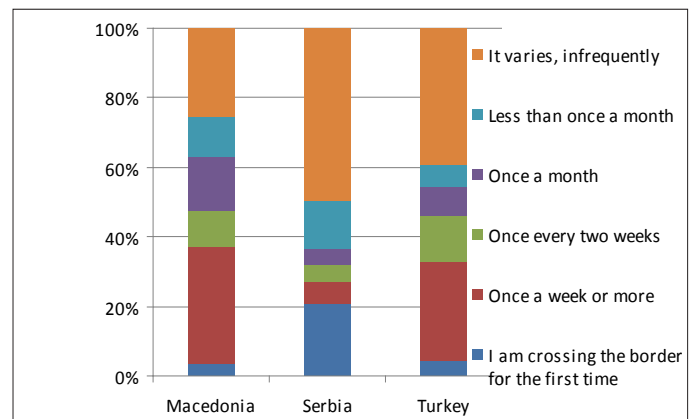
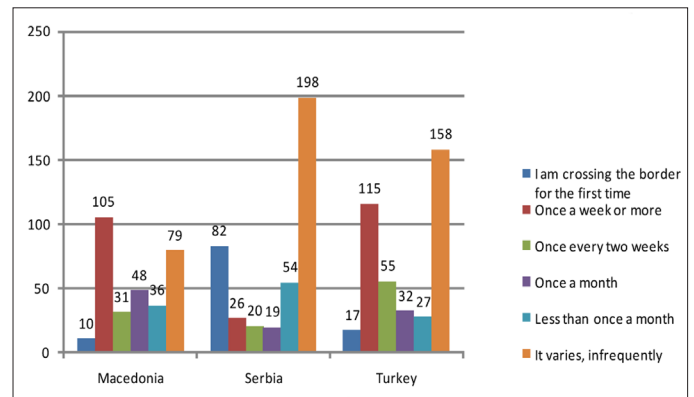
Gjueshevo: 44% – very frequently, (34% once weekly or more often and 10% – once in two weeks); 27.2% – rather often (15.5% once a month, 11.7% less than once monthly); 25.6% – seldom; 3.2% – for the first time...

Kalotina: 11.5% – very frequently (6.5% once weekly or more often and 5% – once in two weeks); 18.3% – rather often (4.8% once a month, 13.5% less than once monthly); 49.6% – seldom; 20.6% for the first time.

Kapitan Andreevo: 42.1% – very frequently (28.5% once weekly or more often and 13.6% –

once in two weeks); 14.6% – rather often (7.9% once a month, 6.7% less than once monthly); 39.1% – seldom; 4.2% – for the first time.

Figure 16. Q1. "How often have you crossed the Bulgarian-Macedonian/Serbian/Turkish border through this border point (BCP) for the last three years?"



The following are data concerning other crossing points on the same border:

Gjueshevo: 19.3% of inquiries conducted on the Bulgarian-Macedonian border indicate one or more alternative BCPs.

First choice: Zlatarevo – 34
Second choice: Stanke lissichkovo – 25
 Stanke lissichkovo – 26

Kalotina: 2.1% of inquiries conducted on the Bulgarian-Serbian border indicate one or more alternative BCPs.

First choice: Oltomantsi – 3
 Vrashka chuka – 4
 Bregovo – 1
Second choice: Stratsimirovtsi – 3
 Bregovo – 1
Third choice: Vrashka chuka – 3
Fourth choice: Bregovo – 3

Kapitan Andreevo: 18.8% of inquiries conducted on the Bulgarian-Turkish border indicate one or more alternative BCPs.

First choice: Malko Tarnovo – 29
Lessovo – 48

Second choice: Lessovo – 19

Figure 17. Q3. “Where are you coming from?”

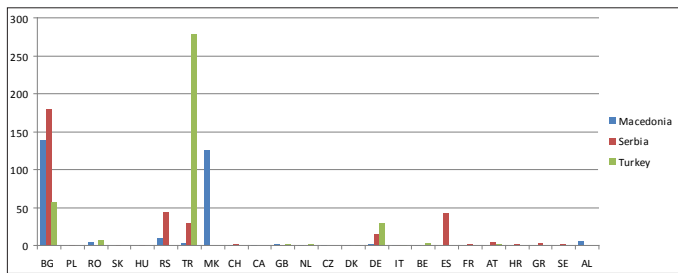


Figure 18. Q4. “Where are you heading?”

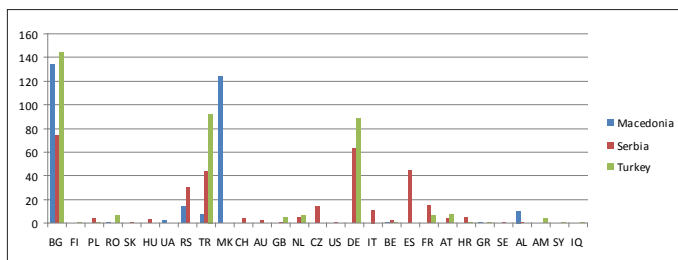


Figure 19. Q5. Major purpose of the trip

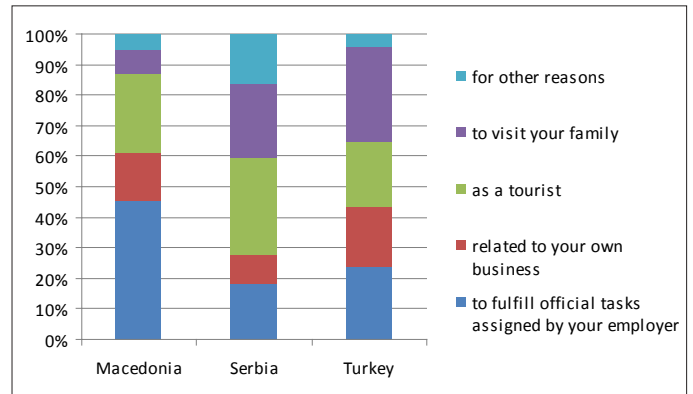
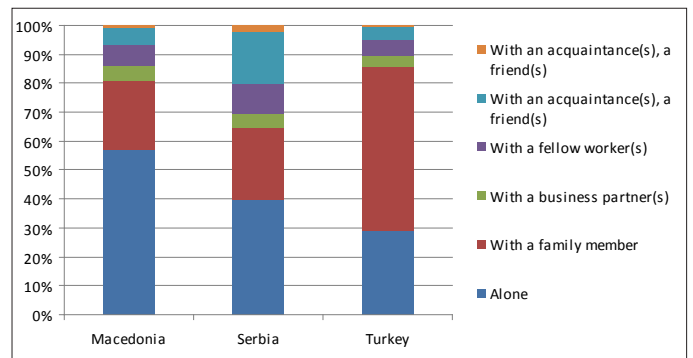


Figure 20. Q6. “Who are you travelling with?”



V. Quality of work at the external EU borders

1. Technical conditions at the Border Crossing Points (map)

Pursuant to the law, border crossing points (BCP) represent detached territories under a special regime of admission and protection, which are set up at international highways; as well as on the territory of international railway stations, airports and ports for public transport, where crossing the state border is solely permitted, unless provided otherwise by an international agreement. The BCP zones cover the territory, on which are located the buildings, the premises, the working places, the underground and the surface facilities, the technical means and the places for passing, waiting and check of persons, vehicles and goods passing through the zones for border control¹.

With regard of ownership in BCP zones, the status of a public state property has been applied. This property pursuant to the Law on the State Property is placed at the disposal of institutions to implement functions and tasks, provided for by law. The maintenance, reconstruction and management of buildings and the grounds – public state property, whose upkeep and management have not been assigned to the offices of obligatory customs control, as well as the infrastructure, are performed by the respective district governor of the point's location. District governors also take care for the symbols of the Republic of Bulgaria in the zone of the BCP. Their responsibility is the good condition of the state coat of arms and the national tricolour flag, as well as the proper exterior of the point. Signs indicating the manner of movement in the point's area are also placed and maintained by the district administration.

The funds for reconstruction and repair are being planned and provided via the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works

¹ Ordinance on border crossing points (promulgated by Decree of the CoM 104/2002 published in the State Gazette, issue 54/31 May 2002, amended SG issue 24/2004, amended and supplemented SG issue 86/2004, amended SG issue 90/2005, SG issue 85/2005.

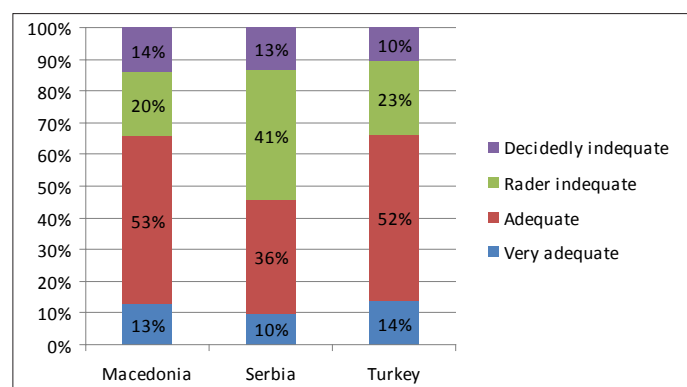
(MRDPW); as construction and reconstruction works of buildings are performed after coordination with border control services through the Interagency Council on Border Control, in compliance with the Law on Regional Development and other normative acts in this field. A provision for the financing of the future development of BCP infrastructure on the borders with the Republic of Turkey, Macedonia and Serbia has been also made under the Phare Crossborder Cooperation Programme. Complete information on programming, designing and implementation stages is kept and coordinated by the MRDPW.

1.1. Access to information with regard of the legal framework

The access to information about legal regulations concerning travellers crossing the borders is not a subject of the Ordinance on Border-crossing Checkpoints.

952 questionnaires (83.3%) contain a reply to the question about the access to information by travellers on a scale of 5. Almost half of the respondents – 48% replied definitely positively [(quite) sufficient], the reply of 32% is negative [definitely/rather insufficient than not], while the remaining 20% have a difficulty to answer. Different borders have different specific features, thus on the Turkish border the assessment is **more positive** by about 7% (Kapitan Andreevo border crossing point) and by about 2% at the border with Macedonia (Gjueshevo BCP), while the opinion is **more negative** by about 8% about the Serbian border (Kalotina BCP).

Figure 21. Q30. “How would you rate the accessibility of information on the customs legislation on the Bulgarian side of this border crossing point?”



Data are rated within **100%** after eliminating the reply “**difficult to say**”, which has been respectively given by **72/55/62** respondents at the Bulgarian-Macedonian/Serbian/Turkish borders.

It has to be taken into consideration that in the quantitative survey, the question about the access to information is estimative and accounts for the general perception of respondents. The controversy with the data obtained by the qualitative survey out of in-depth interviews and observations is due to the assisted understanding of characteristics and the type of the information concerned, as well as the means of its presentation.

Out of the interviews conducted with travellers on the border crossing points, it transpires that the latter possess merely general knowledge about regulations applying. People who go through the border rely mainly on preliminary information, and information provided by friends and relatives, who have the relevant experience. The only source mentioned at all BCPs are the information boards placed at the very border. Only one individual, crossing the border each month because of his business, indicates the web sites of the Ministry of the Interior as a source of information. It might be summarized that among travellers is prevailing the opinion that there is not enough information related to the legal framework and the rules for crossing the border.

The interviewed experts perceive the information placed at the disposal of travellers as sufficient. The sources they enumerate include the internet, brochures placed at the border crossing points and on all entry and exit lanes to and out of the country. The allegations that the information is in several languages (German, French, English and Turkish) have not been confirmed in the observations of interviewers.

According to the data of officers interviewed, the travellers have the possibility to drop appeals into special boxes set for this purpose, as the instructions about this bear a valid address/telephone number and are visible. However, none of travellers interviewed men-

tions this option, thus it cannot be perceived as sufficiently publicized.

The qualitative part of the survey throws some light on the differing opinions of the border officers and the passengers as the two parties in the border crossing activity as regards the provision and sufficiency of the information. On the one hand very few passengers, even in the group of people with higher education, search actively for information about the rules and regulations, unless crossing the border is part of their occupational routine. Rather, they expect to get it on the spot at the actual points of crossing. On the other hand, the border guards and customs officer do not recognize informing the border crossers of their obligations and of the formalities as their essential function. As a result, in most of the cases the officers would answer passenger questions and make clarifications when needed, but their perception is that the information panels are a sufficient source, while the true function they have to perform is the controlling one.

Information is available; we distribute leaflets ...there are information panels put up at accessible places (border guard)

There huge information panels in several languages. In addition we disseminate brochures in German, English and Turkish (customs officer)

There are information panels places in several sections of the border point and mail boxes where the citizens can find the number of the complaints line (customs officer)

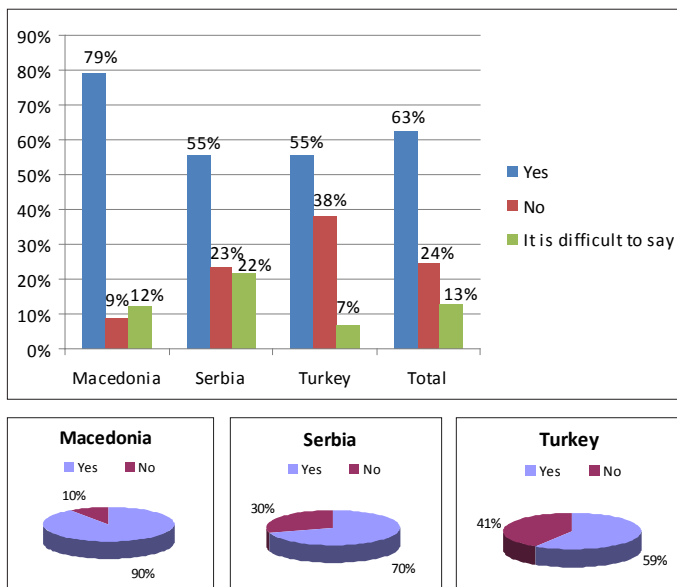
You can get information only if you ask for it. The border guards would usually answer you, but most of the time they are pretty laconic (passenger).

1.2. Characteristics of the venues of customs clearance and passport control

To the question concerning the number of passport control border guard officers in the quantitative part of the survey, an answer on a scale of 3 is given in 960 questionnaires (84%). 62.6% of the respondents are of the opinion

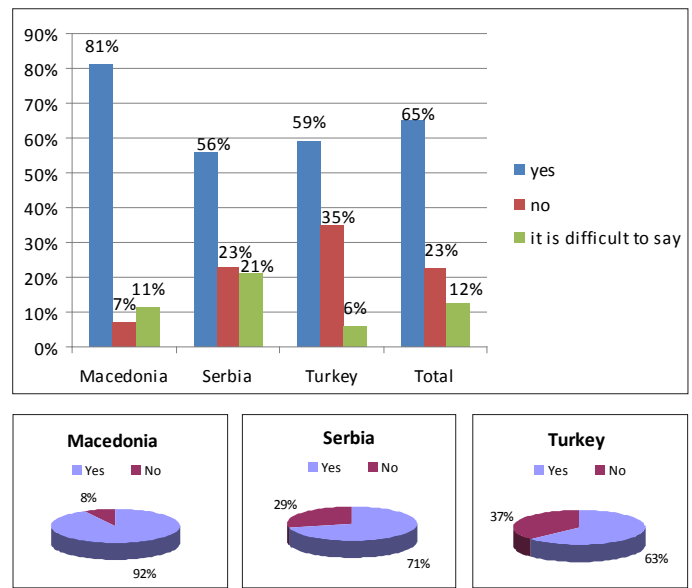
that it is sufficient [yes], 24.5% consider it insufficient [no], while the remaining 12.9% elected to answer “it is difficult to judge”. The specific features of different borders indicate some 15% shifting towards a **more positive** assessment at the Macedonian border, and a shift to an equally **more negative** estimate at the Serbian and Turkish borders by about 7%. The opinions in the qualitative part of the survey with regard of the number of border guard officers both of travellers and observers are definitely in the positive side of the scale – sufficient/fully sufficient, and confirm the results obtained by the survey.

Figure 22. Q21. “In your opinion, are there a sufficient number of border guard officers working at this border crossing point?”



As far as the number of customs officers is concerned, a reply to the question is provided in 943 questionnaires (82.6%) on a scale of 3. 65% of respondents supplied a positive opinion about the sufficient number of officers [yes], 22.7% had a negative opinion, while the remaining 12.3% were unable to judge. The specific features of different borders indicate some 16% towards a **more positive** assessment at the Macedonian border, and a shift to a **more negative** estimate by 9% at the Serbian and by about 6% at the Turkish border. The prevailing opinion that the number of customs officers is sufficient for the carrying of legally assigned checks was as well reconfirmed by in-depth interviews and the observations of the researchers on the spot.

Figure 23. Q22. “In your opinion, are there a sufficient number of customs officers working at this border crossing point?”



Under national law, regulatory guidelines with regard of the construction, maintenance and reconstruction of buildings, equipment and grounds on BCP territories, in view of compliance with the technological order, the national border protection, national security and public order are issued by the Office for Border Passport and Visa Control at the Ministry of the Interior. The office is also in charge of the upkeep of special engineering communication outfits located in BCP area.

The maintenance of inscriptions designating the state border, the infrastructure and hygiene in BCP zones is ensured by district governors.

With regard of the condition and characteristics of places for passport and customs control, as well as the implementation of applicable requirements under the law by respective authorities; significant divergence in the opinions of transiting travellers has been established. The services and infrastructure at Kalotina border crossing point, the border with the Republic of Serbia; is perceived to be on the highest level.

According to the observations of researchers the approach to BCP Kalotina is via a two-lane two-way asphalt road. Immediately before the BCP there is a post of the Customs Police after which the road splits in two – one lane for au-

tomobiles and the other – for lorries and buses. Both lanes lead to the customs checkpoint.

Customs have an administrative building, lanes for customs control and a hall for a more thorough examination of vehicles. After the customs checkpoint the road is significantly widening and leads to the post of the Border Police, where there is also an administrative building. The passport control lanes are split in two - half for automobiles and the other half for lorries and buses. There are booths, barriers and all equipment needed, as well as surveillance cameras.

The points of entry and exit to the Republic of Bulgaria are split up by a tall screening mesh-work. The point of entry to Bulgaria is constructed identically to the exit one, the only difference being that the lane for freight vehicles is on a higher level because of the region's relief. Vignettes are sold at the exit point.

A post office, a currency exchange office, a restaurant and some other similar facilities, as well as several duty free shops are situated in the area of the BCP. Both travellers and officers are of the opinion that the infrastructure layout of the point is “relatively good”; it does not create obstacles to the traffic, on the opposite – it has a positive effect.

The allegations of people working at the border are that facilities have been built and functioning in compliance with the requirements of the law. The prevailing opinion of travellers is that as a whole the situation of this border has significantly improved for the last few years and in particular after the accession of Bulgaria to the EU. Almost all are satisfied with the quality of services. On their part employees do not see the need of serious changes in the manner and conditions of work, since in their words *people crossing the border do not stay long in the border zones*. Very indicative of their general attitude is the affirmation that *there is no need for special facilities for people with disabilities, since the area where the customs office is located is flat and accessible*.

In contrast to these opinions, the observations of the survey team are that although function-

ing “decently”, the infrastructure of Kalotina looks quite obsolete. This impression has been confirmed by travellers having crossed this point for the last few months, whose opinions fall in the extremely negative spectrum. In various internet forums and sites where opinions are expressed; citizens make comments on the rudeness of passport and customs control officers, the critical state of the administration, the appearance and the order at the point, the violation of rights and the humiliation of travellers crossing.

An explanation of controversies established might be the fact that interviews carried within the survey were with Bulgarian permanent residents; while internet opinions belong to citizens living in European Union states.

In fact the factor that generates the most serious criticism of the users is not the availability but the condition of relevant facilities and infrastructure. In other words, what bring about dissatisfaction and resentment falls within the responsibilities of the regional governors. The present survey does not provide sufficient grounds for this type of explanation, but perhaps further research would disclose that not enough financing is allocated to this activity.

The hygiene is a disaster....Just look around, it is so dirty... Dust and dirt everywhere... Street dogs wandering around... So far as I am informed, the regional governor should take care of this, but ... (Kalotina)

It is very dirty. The entire area is muddy, dusty and full of garbage. The toilets are gruesome and there is nowhere you can rest for a while. The place is miserable, all the facilities are outdated, not maintained, inaccessible and in wretched condition (Kapitan Andreevo)

One other point deserves special attention: specialized facilities for passengers with special needs like the disabled and children. Apparently, neither the officers nor the public are sufficiently aware of or sensitive to this issue because it was not mentioned spontaneously by any of the respondents in the conducted interviews.

Alternatively the prompted response disclosed another interesting fact: the citizens, when reminded, consider this an important aspect, especially in view of Bulgaria's membership in the European Union. The general perception is that the country will not become a real European state until it starts taking care of persons with special needs.

At Gjueshevo BCP, the border with the Republic of Macedonia, it is expected that next year a project for infrastructure improvement will be launched. It covers a renovation of underground infrastructure, the electric and water supply. At present most of the travellers complain with the slow pace of work of officers. The availability of separate premises for customs control is pointed out as an advantage.

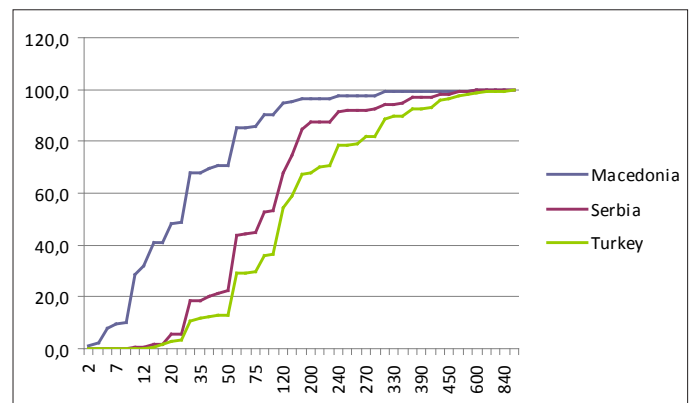
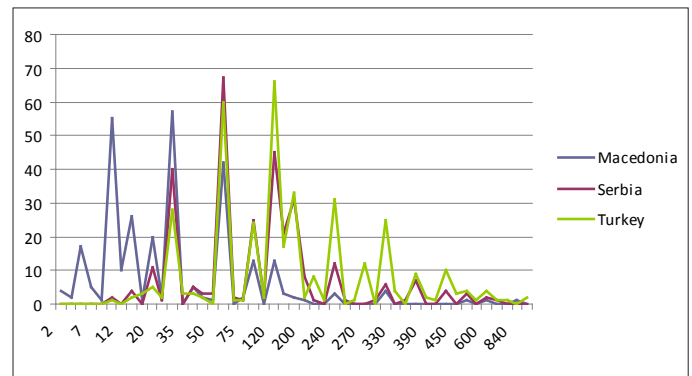
The general opinion of all participants in the survey about Kapitan Andreevo BCP, the border with the Republic of Turkey, is that it does not have the facilities needed to respect human rights. For the last two years the number of automated working stations has been increased and they are enough, although the equipment is rather obsolete. Border guard officers inform about the necessity of transport facilities to split the traffic at the approach to the point from the Bulgarian side.

1.3. Lines organization and waiting time

The opinion that customs clearance requires far more time than the passport control is in general prevailing for all three border crossing points. Both observers and travellers have the impression that lorry drivers wait the longest time.

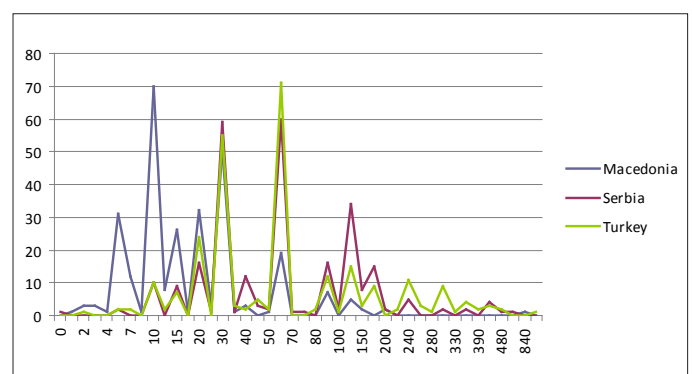
The time needed to cross the border (on both sides for all types of travellers) has been indicated in 86% or 979 questionnaires. The median is 60 minutes (i.e. 50% of travellers have been serviced in less than one hour); the handling of 70% took not more than 2 hours, 80% have been handled in less than 3 hours, 90% have been processed in not more than 4:40 hours, the handling of 90% took less than 6 hours.

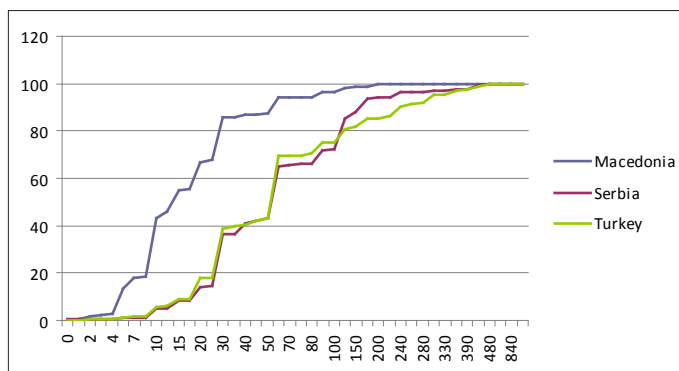
Figure 24. Q7. “How much time in total does it take you on average to cross the border between Bulgaria and Macedonia/Serbia/Turkey?”



The time needed to go through passport and customs control from the Bulgarian side has been indicated in 72% or 821 questionnaires. The median in replies is 30 minutes (i.e. 50% of travellers have been serviced in half-an-hour at the most), 70% were processed in 1 hour at the most, the processing of 80% took 1:30 hours at the most, 90% were handled in 3 hours at the most, and 95% were processed in 4 hours at the most.

Figure 25. Q8. “How much time in total does it take you on average to go through the Immigration and the Customs on the Bulgarian side of this border crossing point?”





Data indicate that going through border and customs control on both sides of the border takes the same amount of time.

In the qualitative part of the survey, the prevailing opinion of travellers is that the procedure is “normal”; officers are strictly performing their duties, and they are strictly and relatively quickly carrying the checks. The interviewed affirm that everybody without any exception is checked. The waiting time is within normal limits – from 5 to 30 minutes at the most, depending on traffic. The general impression is that waiting in the opposite direction (entry to Bulgaria) is longer. Besides the intensity of traffic (to certain extent seasonal) and the work of officers (50% of opinions) as a factor affecting the time of waiting, failures of the computer system are mentioned: “resulting in long lines and traffic jams”. No differences have been established in this aspect on all three border crossing points.

A second level of analysis discloses the following reason for the perceived “normality” of the waiting time and line organization at the border crossing checkpoints: the travellers realize that after the accession on 1 January 2007 Bulgaria has become an external border of the European Union to third countries. This charges the competent bodies and institutions with new responsibilities related to the security and entrance control of the entire Community. Therefore the passengers tend to express understanding to eventual prolonged procedures and delays and are generally more critical in their attitude to the officers at the other side of the border.

1.4. Access to and standard of toilets, bars/restaurants, foreign exchange offices

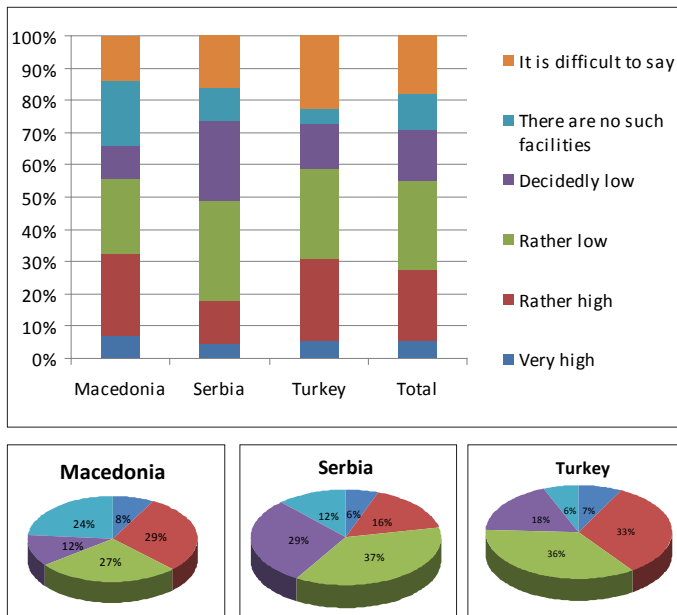
An assessment of the standard of sanitary facilities at the Bulgarian side is presented in 953 questionnaires (83.3% of the total number). At the Bulgarian-Macedonian border (Gjueshevo BCP) and the Bulgarian-Turkish border (Kapitan Andreevo BCP) the percentage of respondents is slightly over 90, while on the Bulgarian-Serbian border (Kalotina BCP) their percentage is 71. The replies are on a scale of six, as the last degree is indeterminate: very high, rather high, rather low, definitely low, there are no such facilities, it is difficult to judge. Data processing produced the following results at border crossing points:

Gjueshevo: Out of the respondents 32.3% have made a positive assessment (high/rather high standard), 53.7% made a negative assessment (20.3% of them have given the extremely negative assessment “there are no such facilities”), while the remaining 14% replied by “it is difficult to judge”.

Kapitan Andreevo: Out of the respondents 31, 3% have made a positive assessment (high/rather high standard), 46, and 3% made a negative assessment (4.7% of them have given the extremely negative assessment “there are no such facilities”), while the remaining 22.4% replied by “it is difficult to judge”.

Kalotina: Out of the respondents 18.2% have made a positive assessment (high/rather high standard), 65 and 6% made a negative assessment (10.1% of them have given the extremely negative assessment “there are no such facilities”), while the remaining 16.2% replied by “it is difficult to judge”.

Figure 26. Q25. “How would you rate standards of the sanitary facilities on the Bulgarian side of this border crossing point (in terms of equipment, cleanliness)?”



The specific features of different borders indicate some 5% shifting towards a more positive assessment at the Macedonian and the Turkish borders, and a shift to a more negative estimate at the Serbian border by about 10%. According to the summarized data of the three border crossing points, 27.5% of respondents provide a positive assessment (very high/rather high standard), the greatest percentage – 54.6% made a negative assessment (out of which 11.1% of them have given the extremely negative assessment “there are no such facilities”), while the remaining 17.9% did not express any definite opinion.

The comparison with quantitative data indicates that the state of accessory infrastructure for rest and refreshment of travellers is the aspect on which the degree of unanimity of all types of respondents in the survey was the highest. The greatest criticism has been addressed to the state of sanitary facilities. The general opinion is that they are in a critical

state and do not meet any sanitary requirements. Both travellers and observers share the impression of dirtiness and neglect.

The picture on the other side of border crossing points surveyed, respectively the Macedonian, the Turkish and the Serbian is similar. On the Bulgarian-Macedonian and the Bulgarian-Turkish borders the percentage of respondents is slightly over 90, while at the Bulgarian-Serbian it is about 66. The replies are on an identical scale of six. Data processing produced the following results on border crossing points:

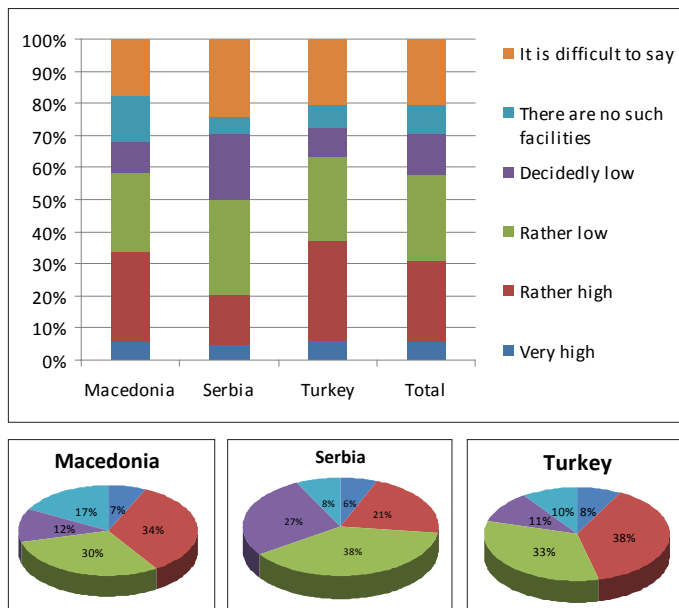
The picture on the other side of border crossing points surveyed, respectively the Macedonia, the Turkish and the Serbian is similar. On the Bulgarian-Macedonian and the Bulgarian-Turkish borders the percentage of respondents is slightly over 90, while at the Bulgarian-Serbian it is about 66. The replies are on an identical scale of six. Data processing produced the following results on border crossing points:

Gjueshevo: Out of the respondents 33.6% made a positive assessment (high/rather high standard), and 48.7% made a negative assessment (14.1% of them have given the extremely negative assessment “there are no such facilities”), while the remaining 17.7% replied by “it is difficult to judge”.

Kapitan Andreevo: Out of the respondents 36.8% made a positive assessment (high/rather high standard), and 43% made a negative assessment (7.8% of them have given the extremely negative assessment “there are no such facilities”), while the remaining 20.2% replied by “it is difficult to judge”.

Kalotina: Out of the respondents 20.5% made a positive assessment (high/rather high standard), 55.5% made a negative assessment (5.7% of them have given the extremely negative assessment “there are no such facilities”), while the remaining 24% replied by “it is difficult to judge”.

Figure 27. Q36. “How would you rate standards of the sanitary facilities on the Macedonian/Serbian/Turkish side of this border crossing point (in terms of equipment, cleanliness)?”



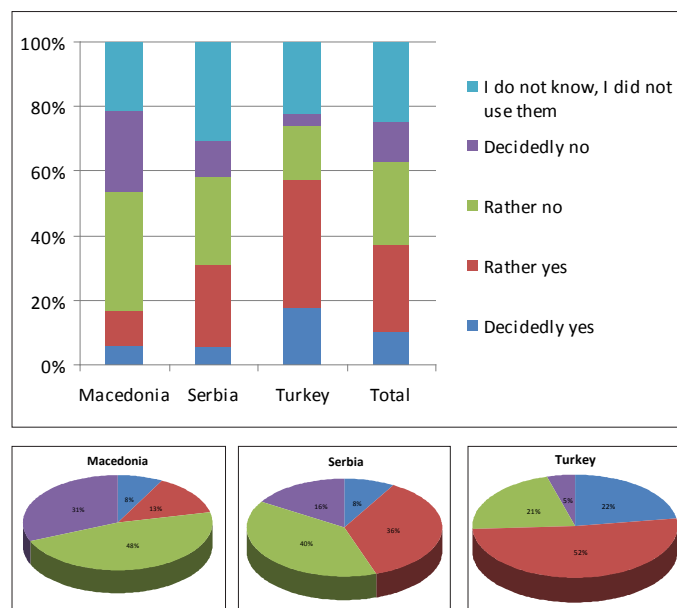
Although the accessibility and condition of restaurants, cafés and currency exchange offices at Kalotina border crossing point are estimated as better by qualitative methods, data do not outline substantial differences among the three BCPs surveyed. According to travellers, at Gjueshevo border crossing point the number of places for recreation and eating, toilets and parking spaces is insufficient. Buildings are old and badly maintained; there are no foreign currency exchange offices. This information has also been confirmed by the staff interviewed.

The state of catering facilities and toilets at Kapitan Andreevo border crossing point is also assessed as unsatisfactory. The conclusion of both travellers and observers everywhere is that the existing infrastructure does not meet the needs of people with disabilities and people travelling with kids. Going through a disinfecting solution without indication of epizooty in neighbouring countries, generates general amazement and indignation. Sporadic opinions have been registered that compared with the infrastructure at the other side of the border; the Bulgarian one is a bit better (above all at Kalotina), though without outlining substantial differences.

Qualitative indices on the availability and condition of foreign currency exchange offices, catering facilities and commercial outlets are the following:

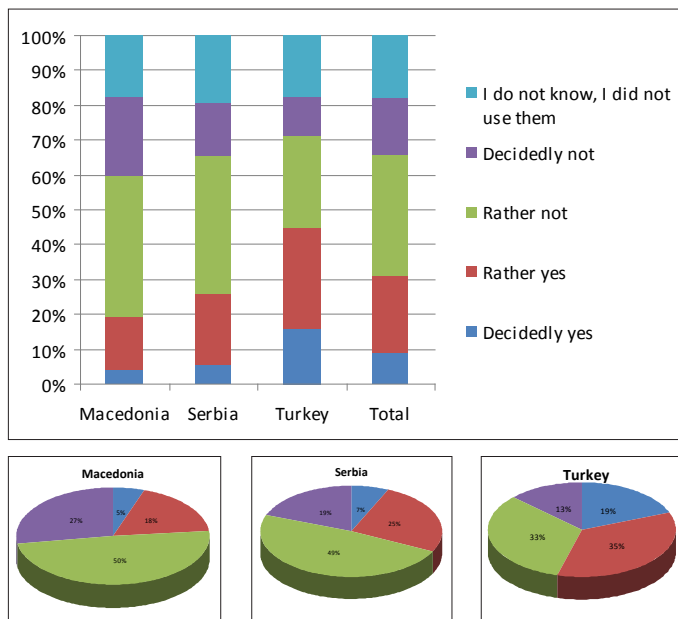
A reply to the question concerning the availability of foreign currency exchange offices is given by 83.7% or 956 questionnaires. 36.9% have made a positive assessment (definitely/rather yes than no), 38.6% – negative assessment (definitely/rather no than yes), while the remaining 24.6% replied “I don’t know, I have not used them”. The specific features of different borders indicate some 22% shifting towards a more positive assessment at the Turkish border, and a shift to a **more negative** estimate by about 5% at the Serbian and by about 20% at the Macedonian border.

Figure 28. Q26. “In your opinion are there sufficient numbers of foreign exchange facilities on the Bulgarian side of this border crossing point?”



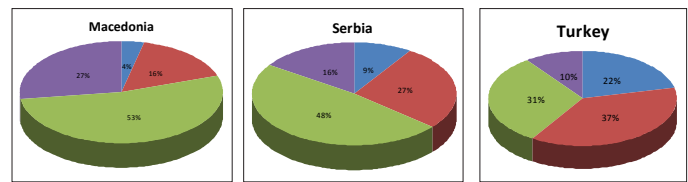
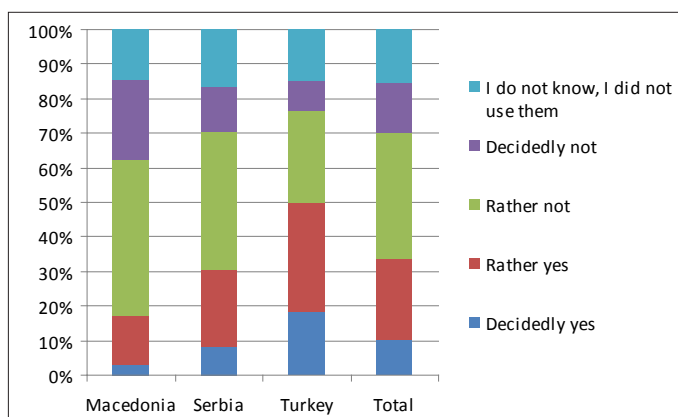
With regard of catering facilities valid replies have been registered in 84.2% of questionnaires (962). The assessment is on a scale of 5. 31% of the respondents have made a positive assessment (definitely/rather yes than no), 51% gave a negative estimate (definitely/rather no than yes), while the remaining 18% replied “I don’t know, I have not used them”. The specific features of different borders indicate some 14% shifting towards a **more positive** assessment at the Turkish border, and a shift to a **more negative** estimate by about 5% at the Serbian and by about 12% at the Macedonian border.

Figure 29. Q27. “In your opinion, are there sufficient numbers of bars, restaurants, and other food/drink serving facilities on the Bulgarian side of this border crossing point?”



Data with regard of commercial sites are the following: replies have been registered in 84.7% of questionnaires (968). The assessment is on a scale of 5. 33.9% of the respondents have made a positive assessment (definitely/rather yes than no), 50.9% gave a negative assessment (definitely/rather no than yes), while the remaining 15.8% replied “I don’t know, I have not used them”. The specific features of different borders indicate some 16% shifting towards a **more positive** assessment at the Turkish border, and a shift to a **more negative** estimate by about 4% at the Serbian and by about 16% at the Macedonian borders.

Figure 30. Q28. “In your opinion, are there sufficient numbers of shops on the Bulgarian side of this border crossing point?”



1.5. Marking of buildings and lines

The only reference of marking is at Kapitan Andreevo border crossing point, where the availability of “signs, boards and a price list at paying points” is mentioned, although they exist at all the border crossing points.

The absence of opinions on this feature is not less informative. Apparently the accumulation of positive practices in the course of time has led to the point when the existence of standard marking of the buildings and lines has become “the norm”.

1.6. The situation on the road to the border crossing point

This illustrates the utter flippancy of the already European authorities in Bulgaria, which do not find incentives and means to repair the strip of road from Sofia to Kalotina European – some fifty kilometres strewn with potholes, ditches and bumps, without any marking, no lighting, dangerous, disheartening, contrastingly non European. Electronic newspaper of Bulgarians in Great Britain, August 2007.

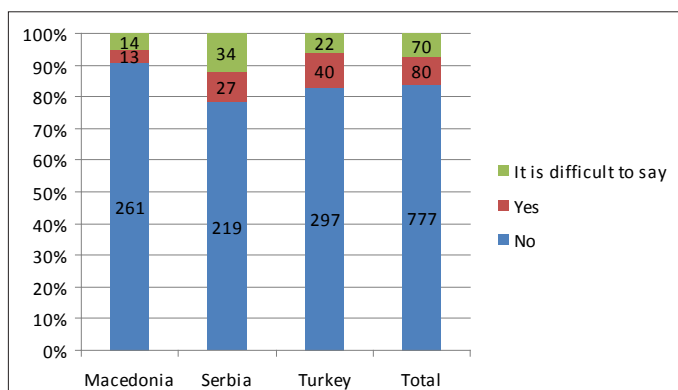
The findings of the team implementing the qualitative part of the survey are fully in synchrony with quota above: low sanitation level, in particular the heaps of waste discarded by travellers in the area of 3–4 km along the road before Kalotina border crossing point

In the description of observers, the area immediately around the Kapitan Andreevo BCP looks unwelcoming, dirty and inspiring the feeling of insecurity. *The general impression is that one is somewhere deep in the Orient, rather than in an EU country.* The opinion that around the border crossing points an illicit trade is being practiced is widespread, which leaves a bad impression in passers-by. Although the estimated number is not big, respondents consider it as an impediment to the work of staff.

It has to be pointed out here that the condition of the road to the border crossing point as a problem is not so much related to the border but to the overall country road infrastructure. In other words this problem is not specific for the border areas but is part of the more general national concern about the condition of the roads in Bulgaria. Its solution should consequently be addressed on a different scale.

In the quantitative part of the survey to the question “Have you encountered any difficulties on the road to the border crossing point?” 81.2% of the people interviewed replied that they have had **no** problems, 8.6% have experienced problems and 7.6% were unable judge. The proportion is maintained also on individual borders, though with slight differences. **No** problems have been encountered on the road to the border of Bulgaria with: Macedonia – 90.6%; Serbia – 78.2% and Turkey – 82.7%. Obviously respondents do not perceive significant pollution on the road to the border as a problem.

Figure 31. Q24. “Did you have any problems with getting to this border crossing point (e.g. additional charges)?”



1.7. The Impact of the technical infrastructure over traffic efficiency

The staff of Kalotina border crossing point reports that all technical equipment for the performance of checks is in place – premises, scanners, X-ray, detectors, etc. They affirm that a hall for a thorough check of big size vehicles like international freight lorries is available too. The information about Gjueshevo is that each work station is equipped with a computer, linked to the database of the Ministry of the

Interior (although such information has not been provided about the other border crossing points, it applies both to Kapitan Andreevo and Kalotina). The officers affirm to have all equipment needed for primary control. Only from Kapitan Andreevo border crossing point complaints by the staff that the equipment they use is obsolete, have been recorded.

Both officers and travellers are of the opinion that the pace of work and data processing at all three BCPs is normal. According to quantitative data 29.4% of people interviewed at Gjueshevo BCP consider it as the best border crossing point for travellers to Macedonia, 8.5% perceive it as the worst, while 34.6% are of the opinion that they are all the same. 27.5% of respondents are not familiar with any other border crossing point.

According to the data provided by Kalotina BCP, 18.8% consider it the best border crossing point with Serbia; 9.1% perceives it as the worst, while 42.4% are of the opinion that they are all the same. 33% of respondents are not familiar with any other border crossing point. Almost half of the interviewed – 45.8%, would like to see changes at the Bulgarian side of the border.

The introduction of modern technology in the work of the border guards has substantially improved the traffic efficiency, but also their performance. Among them the communication systems occupy a special place, in particular the modern telecommunication system TETRA. To that we should add technologies for primary and secondary documents control; detection of hidden persons and radioactive substances etc.

A new system for transferring data to the regional border sections has been built and electronic exchange and references have been introduced in the automated information funds of the Interior ministry. The automated work stations at the border crossing points allow for real-time checks, registration and control of all the crossing passengers and vehicles. The system also enables the registration of Bulgarian and foreign citizens announced for national and international quest and registration of illegally expropriated vehicles.

The border crossing points are equipped with the automated dactyl scope information system AFIS, which gives the guards the opportunity to take “live” finger prints and identify persons. This is a precondition of sharp decrease in the repetition of administrative violations and crimes committed in the BCP zones because they facilitate the detection of false or forged documents.

2. Services provided to travellers at the border crossing point

Pursuant to the Ordinance on Border Crossing Checkpoints, the Ministry of the Interior performs the following tasks:

- Implements border passport-visa control over persons and means of transportation crossing the border of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Investigates, detects and prevents crimes and violations threatening the security of the state border and the passport-visa regime on the territory of border crossing points;
- Issues visas at the border under the provisions of Article 9e from the Law on the Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria/ Art. 9e. (new – SG 29/07) As an exception, where this is required by the state interest or by extraordinary circumstances, the bodies of border control of the border-crossing checkpoints, coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, may issue single 16-hour transit visas and 15-day short-stay visas.
- Detects and counteracts organized channels for the illegal transition of the state border, smuggling and traffic in humans;
- Detects and detains trespassers of the state borders, people wanted by police and means of transportation on the territory of the BCP;
- Performs checks for explosives, firearms and other generally dangerous means carried by people and means of transportation when crossing the state border;
- Implements forceful administrative measures when provided for by law;
- Performs other activities assigned by law or by virtue of international agreements.

Figure 32. Q31. “How would you rate in general this border crossing point as compared to other ones on the Bulgarian-Macedonian border – Greek-Turkish border?”

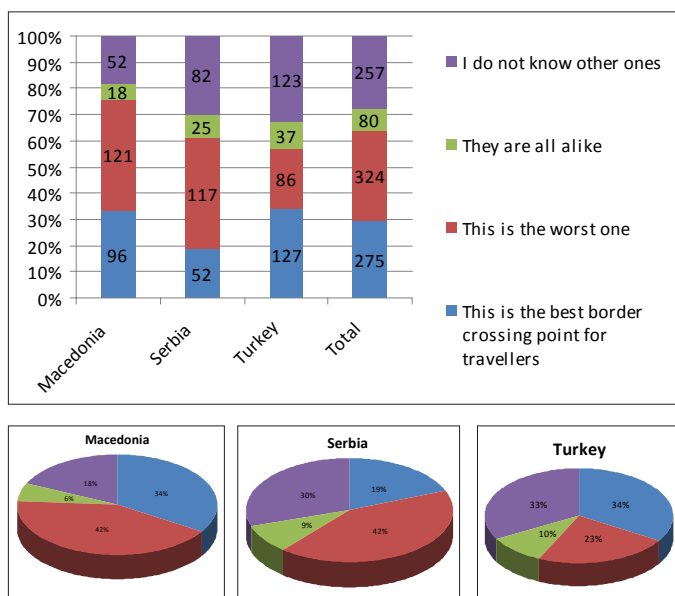
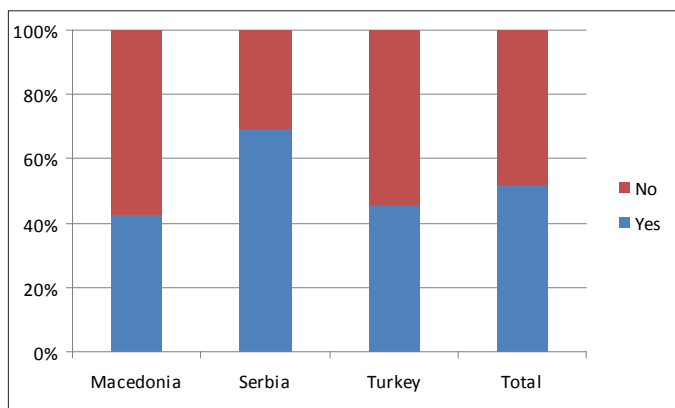


Figure 33. Q33. “In your opinion, is there anything that needs to be changed on the Bulgarian side of this border crossing point?”



2.1 Services provided by border guard officers – respect of basic human rights and compliance with the law

2.1.1. Attitude of border guard officers towards EU and third countries' citizens, respect of non-discrimination regulations

The prevailing opinion of travellers is that the attitude of border guard officers to people crossing the border is “kind, amiable, and polite”. Their attitude is described with the words “they do not embarrass unnecessarily people” and with “I have no complaints”. As a whole their attitude is described as “satisfactory”, “good”, “and normal”. There is no reference to differentiated attitude – according to the interviewed, officers treat everybody equally. Some assumptions are made about a different opinion to the so-called “suitcase merchants”, who impede the work and probably violate legal regulations.

The general impression is that there is no difference in the attitude towards travellers of different nationality, or the different reasons for crossing the border. The complicated procedure applied to Macedonian citizens as a consequence of the visa regime implemented, and a ruder/more unceremonious attitude towards some of them has been reported. The assessment of border police attitude towards travellers on a scale of 5 (very kind, rather kind, rather unkind, definitely unkind, and difficult to judge) produced the following results: 68% of the respondents make a positive assessment overall (very kind, rather kind), the assessment of 15% is negative (rather unkind/definitely unkind), while 17% deem it difficult to judge. The distribution by border crossing points indicates that the most polite appear to be the officers at Gjueshevo BCP:

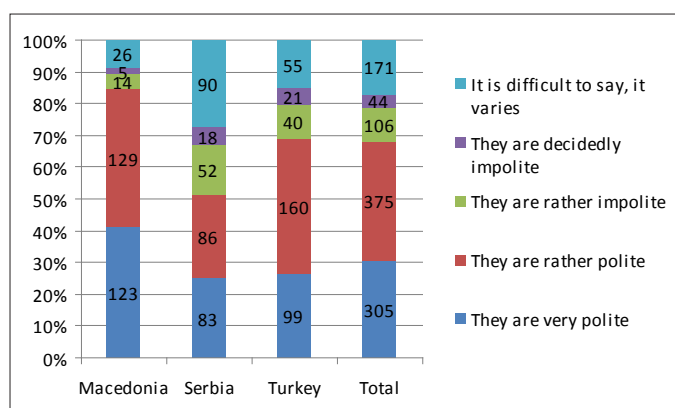
Gjueshevo: 84.8% of respondents make a positive assessment (very kind/rather kind), the assessment of 6.4% is negative (rather unkind/

definitely unkind), while 8.8% deem it difficult to judge.

Kalotina: 51.3% of respondents make a positive assessment (very kind/rather kind), the assessment of 21.3% is negative (rather unkind/definitely unkind), while 27.4% deem it difficult to judge.

Kapitan Andreevo: 69.1% of respondents make a positive assessment (very kind/rather kind), the assessment of 16.3% is negative (rather unkind/definitely unkind), while 14.6% deem it difficult to judge.

Figure 34. Q10. “How would you rate them in terms of their politeness towards travellers?”



This impression is confirmed by the question concerning the form of address of officers to travellers: about 85% of those interviewed on the border with Macedonia and about 63% of those interviewed on the borders with Serbia and Turkey (or on the average 70.1% for the three borders), state that officers address them as “Sir/Madam”, and barely 6.1% informed that the address is on first name. What concerns differences in the attitude towards citizens of other states, almost half (49.2%) of those interviewed are unable to answer this question; while the distribution of those expressing an opinion is respectively in a proportion corresponding to the answers **yes:no** – Gjueshevo 17.8:82.3; Kalotina 40.1:59.9; Kapitan Andreevo 28.7:71.3. In other words the opinion that officers do not treat differently the citizens of various states prevails.

Figure 35. Q11. “How do they usually address you?”

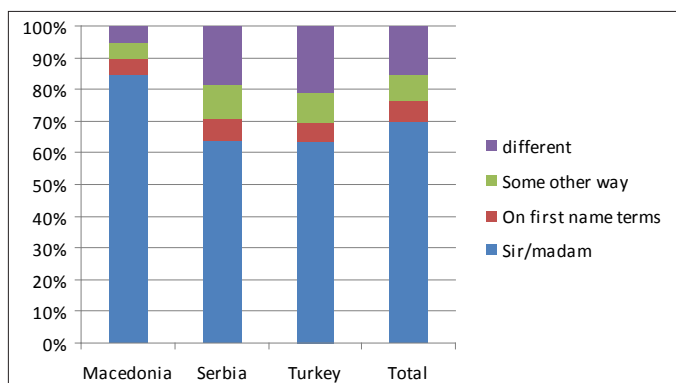


Figure 36. Q12. “Do they address travellers from countries other than your own differently than your countrymen?”

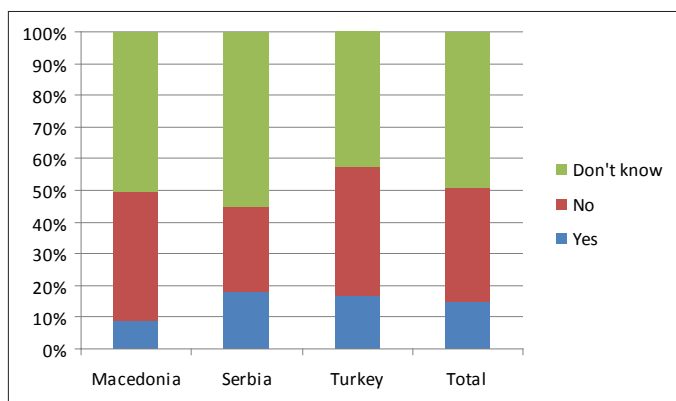
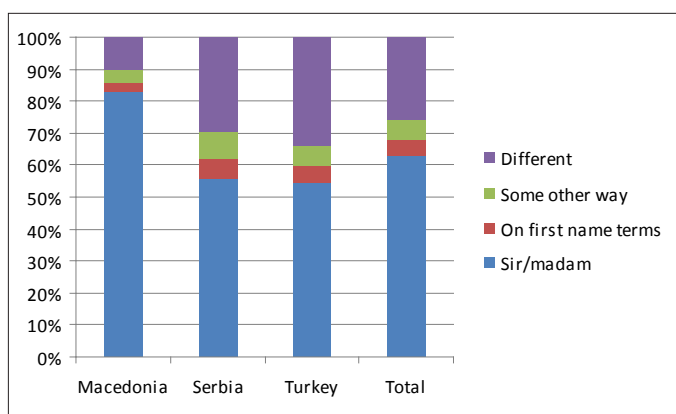


Figure 37. Q13. “How do they usually address travellers from countries other than your own?”



However, in the opinion of observers, the citizens of EU member countries, the USA and Canada enjoy better and more amiable services; they are not asked too many questions, and the passport check is quicker. It has been noted that the attitude towards citizens of the Republic of Macedonia is rather patronizing

and more unceremonious. Another group of travellers, in which researchers register certain differences in attitude, are Turkish guest workers.

The in-depth analysis of the qualitative dataset arrived at the following categorization of the passengers from the point of view of the attitude of the border guards and customs officers, which goes along two lines – nationality and purpose of travel. The first line distinguishes between two categories: EU nationals and third country nationals. Apparently, the attitude to the former is more professional and polite, while to the latter it tends to be more negligent and informal.

The second line also divides the travellers into two major categories: passengers travelling for tourism and business, and the group of persons crossing the border as a part of their job (petty merchants and truck drivers). The attitude to the first category of passengers, no matter whether Bulgarian or foreign citizens, is much more respectful and civilized, and led by respective code of conduct. The second category, however, does not seem to enjoy such benefits.

2.1.2. Personal qualification of border guard officers

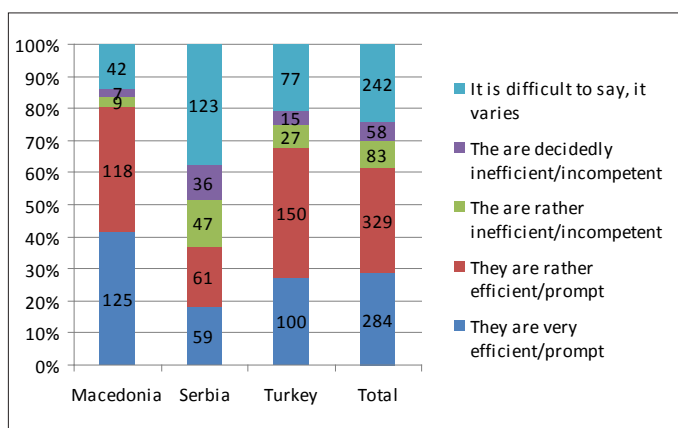
An assessment of the efficiency and speed border guard officers work with was made in a quantitative survey on a scale of 5: very efficient, rather efficient, rather inefficient, definitely inefficient, and difficult to judge. According to the summarized data a predominant portion of interviewed (61.5%) appraise the work of border authorities positively, about ¼ are unable to assess and barely 14.2% are critical. Data distributed by border crossing points is the following:

Gjueshevo: 80.7% of respondents make a positive assessment (very efficient/rather efficient), the assessment of 5.3% is negative (rather inefficient/ definitely inefficient), while 14% deem it difficult to judge.

Kalotina: 36.8% of respondents make a positive assessment (very efficient/rather efficient), the assessment of 25.5% is negative (rather inefficient/definitely inefficient), while 37.7% deem it difficult to judge.

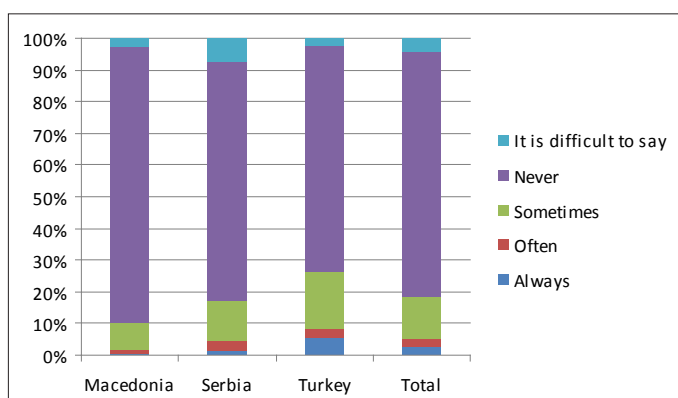
Kapitan Andreevo: 67.8% of respondents make a positive assessment (very efficient/rather efficient), the assessment of 11.4% is negative (rather inefficient/definitely inefficient), while 20.8% deem it difficult to judge.

Figure 38. Q9. “How would you rate Bulgarian customs officers in terms of their efficiency/promptness?”



With regard to communication and language skills it might be said that Bulgarian border guard officers get the highest rating by travellers crossing the border. According to the inquiry a total of 77.3% of people interviewed (respectively 87% – 75% – 71% on the borders with Macedonia – Serbia – Turkey) state they have never experienced communication problems: 13.2% (respectively 8% – 13% – 18% on the borders with Macedonia – Serbia – Turkey) affirm that communication problems have been encountered seldom and a mere 5.3% (the highest being the percentage at the Turkish border – 8.5%) inform about frequent language problems when crossing the border.

Figure 39. Q14. “Do you ever have any language problems in communicating with Bulgarian border guard officers?”



The data obtained by qualitative research methods are similar. Among the interviewed the opinion that in most cases the communication with the border police is unobstructed, is predominating. It was mentioned that not all officers speak the language of the neighbouring country or English, and sometimes there is a need to call another officer to communicate in the respective language; but this are rather exceptions to the rule. The main critical remarks are mostly concerning the level of language mastery: freedom of expression, pronunciation.

As far as the manner of work in passport control execution is concerned, observers are of the opinion that officers perform their duties proficiently, relatively calmly and with the professionalism required. No visible violations of the procedure have been reported. The general impression is that they do their work conscientiously. When compared to customs officers, the opinion of travellers and observers alike is that the level of border guard officers is higher, that they are efficient and polite.

It was mentioned that they provide information about rules and regulations; sometimes they are quite laconic and by no means thorough; however this is not a need recognized by travellers, but rather a response to a direct question. Almost 100% of people crossing the border state that they are not familiar with the responsibilities of border guard officers and have no information about the consequences of violations, being inclined to blame for this deficiency the very officers.

2.1.3. Attitude of border guard officers during checks

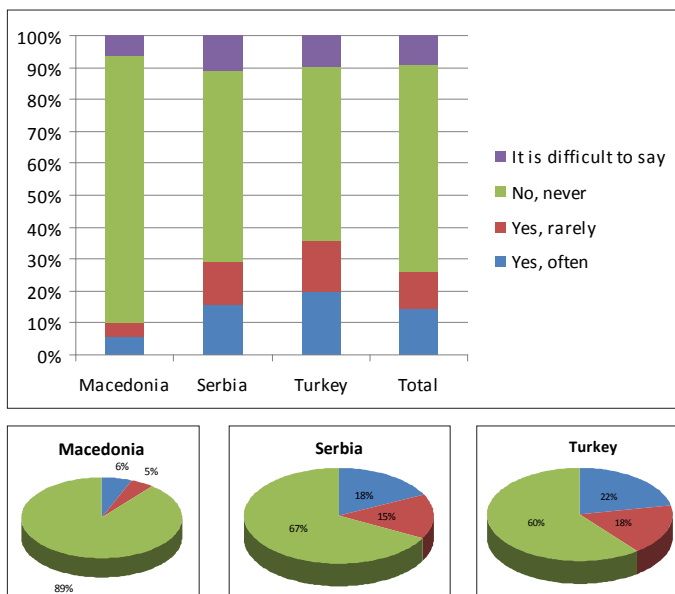
The attitude and work of border guard officers during the check of travellers’ documents is estimated as good by the interviewed. Their attitude towards travellers is described as professional, predominantly kind and polite, with rare cases of nervousness. The manner of addressing travellers complies with the standards of professional ethics. One of deficiencies noticed is that border guard officers seldom identify themselves in the checks.

The opinion of travellers is that the number of border guard officers is sufficient, which im-

plies efficiency in the execution of their duties. This conclusion is proven when a direct question about the efficiency of the work is asked (100% reply “yes”). The general opinion is that the procedure takes about 10 minutes. The requirements of uniforms and distinctive signs are complied with.

In the quantitative part of the research, the question about the existing corruption practices has been answered by 84.2% of people interviewed: 9% find it difficult to judge; among the other respondents 65% affirm they have never witnessed the acceptance of money or gifts by the officers, while 25.8% claim that they have seen such things happen. However, it is important to point out that the question ties up border **and** customs officers, while in-depth interviews and observations clearly differentiate border police and customs officers in this respect. Because of specific characteristics of each border, the positive answers concerning the Macedonian border are 18% **less**; positive answers at the two other borders are **more**: respectively 4% more at the Serbian border and about 10% more at the Turkish border.

Figure 40. Q23. “Have you ever seen a border guard or customs officer receiving from traveller money or other gifts?”



Among the interviewed, as well as among the observers there is unanimity with regard of compliance with law by the two types of border authorities: it is firmly affirmed that there are no cases of corruption among border guard

officers, while concerning customs offices examples of receiving money or gifts are pointed out. *Our observations of the work of border guard officers indicate that they are performing their duties correctly, professionally and efficiently. They act quickly and carefully, though if something seems suspicious, they might detain the traveller for hours.*

According to observers automobiles go through with the greatest ease – their check is performed at the respective counter, without passengers getting off, unless established that there is some problem. Towards lorry drivers, officers, and in particular customs officers permit themselves a freer behaviour, which at times might be described as arrogant, on the verge of being rude. Observers define the attitude towards bus passengers as neutral. There are almost no people crossing the border on foot, except a few people a day, who by unconfirmed official opinions are believed to be engaged in petty smuggling, mainly of cigarettes.

An opinion was expressed that officers need supplementary qualification (for instance some psychological preparation).

Comparative assessment of officers at the two sides of the border has been made by slightly over 90% at Gjueshevo and Kapitan Andreevo BCPs, and by about 66% at Kalotina border crossing point. The rating is on a scale of five: better professional level, equally good professional level, equally bad professional level, worse professional level, exceptionally low professional level. Results obtained are as follows:

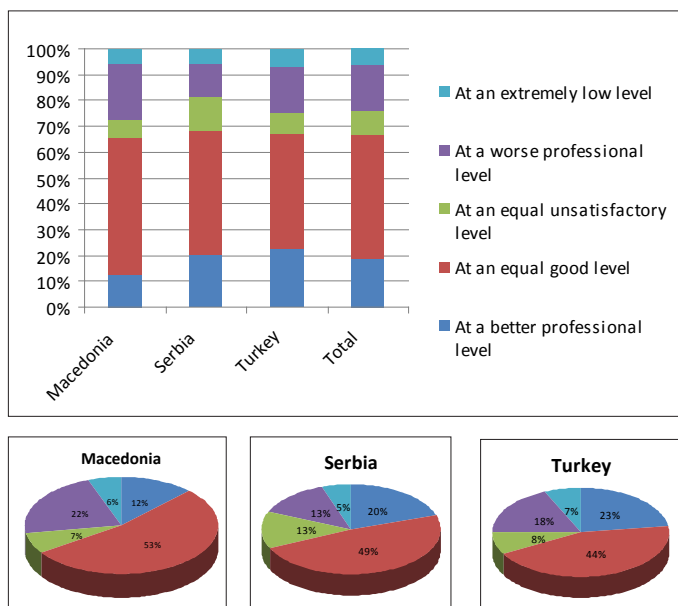
Gjueshevo: 12.2% of the respondents consider foreign officers to be on a better professional level, 53.5% deem them to be on an equally good professional level, 6.9% consider them to be on an equally bad professional level, 21.9% deem them on a worse professional level, while 5.6% consider their professional level as exceptionally low.

Kapitan Andreevo: 22.7% of the respondents consider foreign officers to be on a better professional level, 44.3% deem them to be on an equally good professional level, 7.8% consider them to be on an equally bad professional level, 18.4% deem them on a worse professional

level, while 6.8% consider their professional level as exceptionally low.

Kalotina: 20.1% of the respondents consider foreign officers to be on a better professional level, 48% deem them to be on an equally good professional level, 13.3% consider them to be on an equally bad professional level, 13.3% deem them on a worse professional level, while 5.4% consider their professional level as exceptionally low.

Figure 41. Q35. “How would you rate the work and professionalism of the Macedonian/Serbian/Turkish border guard and customs officers compared to the work of their Bulgarian colleagues?”



We draw attention to the fact that the question again ties up the two types of authority – border and customs. The data gives the reason to affirm that the predominant opinion of interviewed in the quantitative survey, is that the professional level of border and customs officers at the two sides of Bulgaria’s borders with Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey is on the same or on a similar level.

2.2. Services rendered to travellers at the customs – respect of basic human rights and compliance with law

By virtue of the Ordinance on Border Crossing Checkpoints, the organs for border customs control at the Ministry of Finance perform the following tasks:

- Implement customs monitoring and control over goods, means of transportation and persons in the zones of the BCPs;
- Calculate, collect or require a guarantee of customs dues and other public state receipts in the responsibility of customs organs;
- Implement tariff measures and the measures of the trade policy of the Republic of Bulgaria within their competence;
- Organize and perform activities for the prevention and detection of customs and foreign currency violations and crimes under the provisions of the Penal Procedure Code;
- Organize and perform activities for the prevention and detection of the illegal traffic of narcotic substances and precursors;
- Implement measures for the protection of intellectual property rights;
- Perform also other activities assigned by law.

2.2.1. Attitude of customs officers towards EU and third countries citizens, compliance with the regulations for non-discrimination

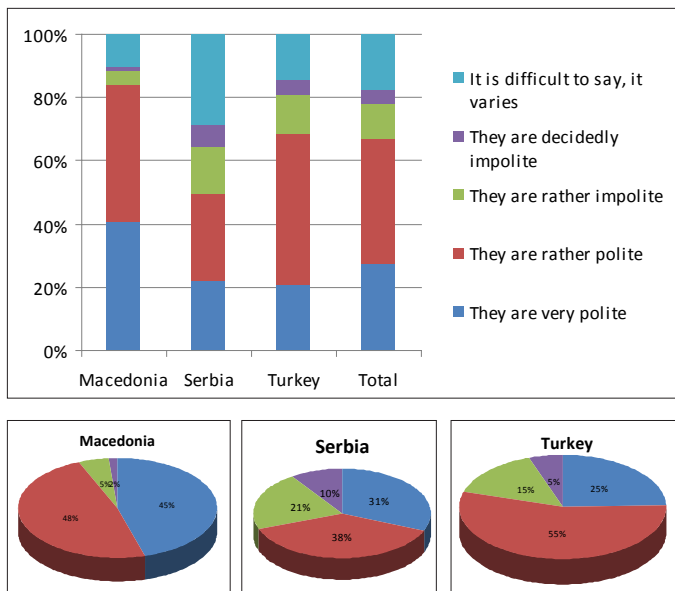
The assessment of travellers with regard of the politeness of customs officers in the quantitative research, to a great extent overlaps with the one attributed to border guard officers: 67.2% of the respondents rate it positively (very/rather polite), 15.2% are negative in their assessment (rather/definitely impolite), while 17.6% find it difficult to judge. In detail, depending on the border crossing point:

Gjueshevo: 84.8% of the respondents rate it positively (very/rather polite), 6.4% are negative in their assessment (rather/definitely impolite), while 8.8% find it difficult to judge.

Kalotina: of the respondents rate it positively (very/rather polite), 21.3% are negative in their assessment (rather/definitely impolite), while 27.4% find it difficult to judge.

Kapitan Andreevo: 69.1% of the respondents rate it positively (very/rather polite), 16.3% are negative in their assessment (rather/definitely impolite), while 14.6% find it difficult to judge.

Figure 42. Q16. “How would you rate them in terms of their politeness towards travellers?”



In other words quantitative data depict the attitude of customs officers at the border crossing points as polite, corresponding to their functions and the regulations for non-discrimination.

Only 6% of the respondents affirm that customs officers address them on a first name. Asked whether the latter have a different behaviour towards travellers from other countries, 43.5% of the sample is not able to formulate a definite opinion. The answers **yes:no** distributed proportionally by border crossing points, look like that: border with Macedonia 17.8:82.3; border with Serbia 40.1:59.9; border with Turkey 28.7:71.3. If we compare this question with how customs officers address travellers from other countries, where 63.1% answer “Sir/Madam” and about 5% “first name”, we will establish that the opinion of the prevailing portion of respondents is being confirmed.

Figure 43. Q17. “How do they usually address you?”

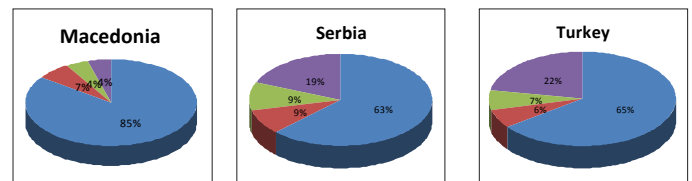
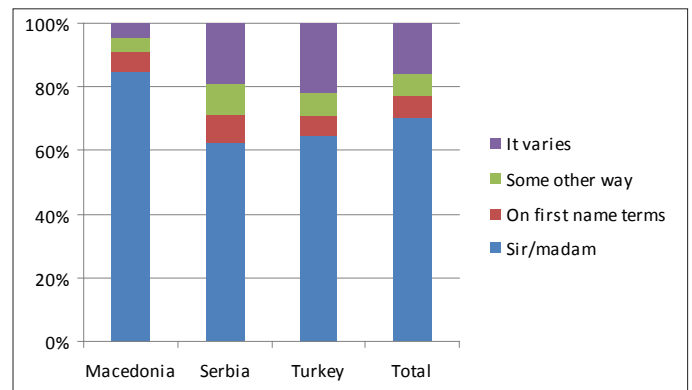


Figure 44. Q18. “Do they address travellers from countries other than your own differently that your countrymen?”

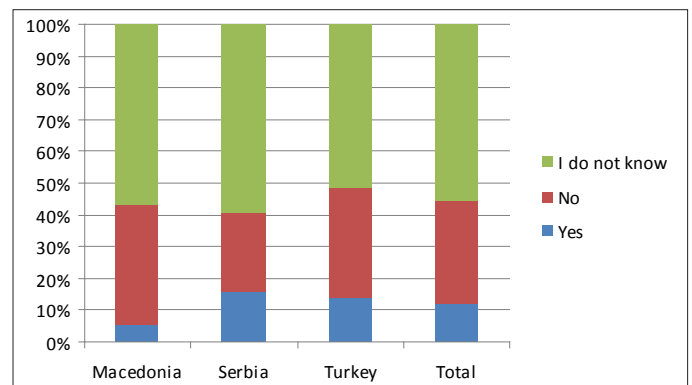
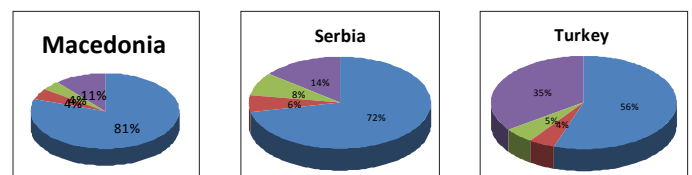
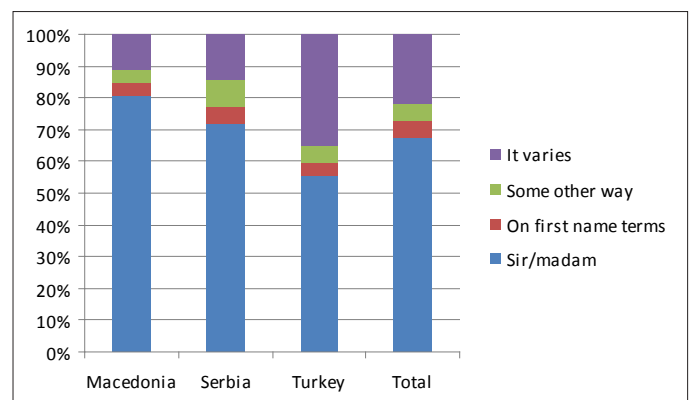


Figure 45. Q19. “How do they usually address travellers from countries other than your own?”



The definitions of the attitude and behaviour of customs officers used in in-depth interviews are “professional”, “proper to state employees” and “inspiring respect”. Customs control is described as efficient and uniformly applied to everyone. It is obvious that etiquette in addressing travellers is being observed. The interviewed also confirm that there is no different attitude towards travellers from various countries.

However, along with this the attitude of customs officers is also described as satisfactory, but changing, depending on the state of the officer at the moment. Customs officers do not identify themselves, and when they have to call someone they do it with a gesture or an oral invitation.

The impressions of observers introduce certain controversy to the data. In their opinion very often customs officers, after looking at the personal papers of travellers, address them on a first name and in a somewhat rude tone. An indirect indication is their attitude and behaviour to researchers: the officers are uncooperative and try to get rid of them. Observers are of the opinion that citizens fear customs officers.

Observers note that there is a difference in attitude, although it is always connected to the type of travellers crossing. Lorry drivers wait for hours at the point, but this is linked to the more complicated checking procedure, as well as to the huge lines of international freight lorries at certain times. *During my stay at Gjueshevo BCP I noticed that the difference in attitude usually occurs when the individual checked behaves arrogantly or impatiently. This frequently is a reason for the officers to delay the check deliberately and to spend needlessly long time.*

2.2.2. Personal qualification of customs officers

In the quantitative part of the survey, 86% of questionnaires contain an assessment of efficiency and speed of the work of customs officers. The answers are on a scale of five, the last degree being undetermined: very efficient, rather efficient, rather inefficient, defi-

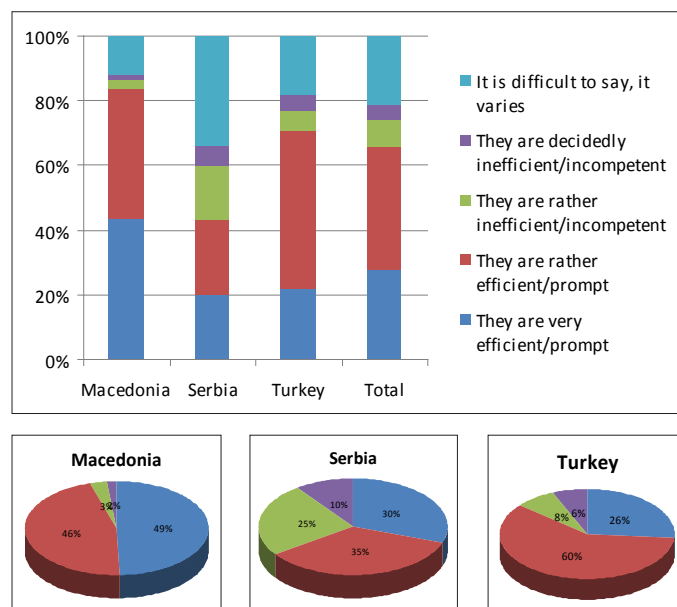
nitely inefficient, and difficult to judge. 65.7% of respondents make a positive assessment (very efficient/rather efficient), 13% evaluate it negatively (rather inefficient/ definitely inefficient), while 21.3% deem it difficult to judge. Assessment by border crossing points is the following:

Gjueshevo: 83.7% of respondents make a positive assessment (very efficient/rather efficient), the assessment of 4.1% is negative (rather inefficient/definitely inefficient), while 12.2% deem it difficult to judge.

Kalotina: 43.2% of respondents make a positive assessment (very efficient/rather efficient), the assessment of 22.9% is negative (rather inefficient/definitely inefficient), while 33.9% deem it difficult to judge.

Kapitan Andreevo: 70.6% of respondents make a positive assessment (very efficient/rather efficient), the assessment of 11.5% is negative (rather inefficient/definitely inefficient), while 17.9% deem it difficult to judge.

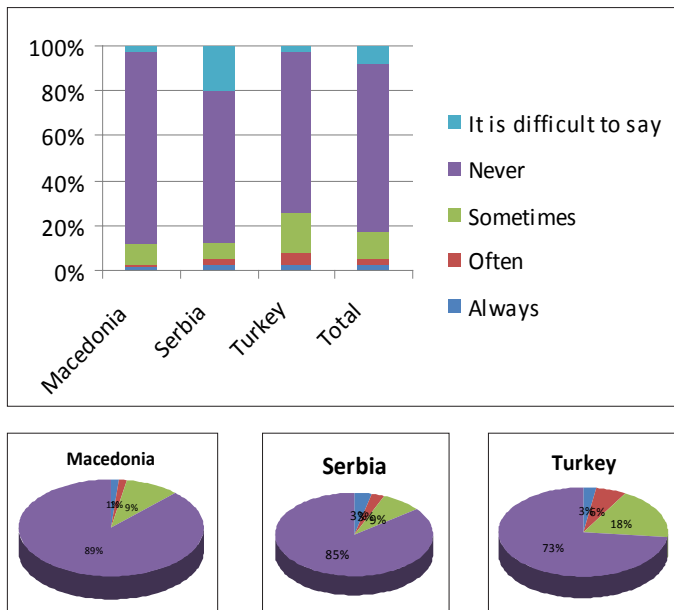
Figure 46. Q15. “How would you rate customs officers in terms of their efficiency/promptness?”



The question concerning language problems in communication with Bulgarian customs officers got the following results:

75.1% of respondents state “never” (respectively 86% – 68% – 72% for Macedonia – Serbia – Turkey), 5.5% – “often” or “always” (the highest is the percentage at the border with Turkey – 8,1%).

Figure 47. Q20. “Do you ever have any language problems in communicating with a Bulgarian customs officer?”



According to the interviewed the checks of automobiles and luggage are performed thoroughly and properly. A respondent made the assumption that customs have a system for visual appraisal of risk and work in accordance with its rules. There was information about the use of dogs and scanners. The interviewed define customs officers as diligent in the checks, though to a greater degree of automobiles than passengers.

It is mainly relied on the information boards displayed to ensure that travellers are aware about the law and the regulations. The officers provide information when asked, but do not take the imitative. In the opinion of the interviewed, the officers speak various languages, not all of them speak English, though. The fact that not all customs officers speak foreign languages, and sometimes there is a need to call someone to communicate with travellers has been mentioned as a problem. The prevailing opinion is that they are properly trained to perform their duties. The requirements of uniforms and distinctive signs are complied with. The general impression is that the number of officers is fully sufficient for the efficient performance of the procedure.

In the observations of researchers the attitude of officers to people coming from Turkey is friendlier, while to those from European coun-

tries, it is more official. The checks of traders living in Bulgaria and Turkey, who cross regularly the border, are more thorough compared to those of tourists. *I insist to point out that the level of foreign language knowledge is not high and quite often there are problems in communication. We have identified 5 or 6 cars regularly (every day) crossing, which were checked as a matter of form.*

Lorry drivers disapprove the work of customs officers; they consider them slow and corrupt. However, they are rather indifferent to the work of border guard officers, because they cause no problems. As a whole this is the most dissatisfied group.

2.2.3. Conduct of customs officers during checks

The question aimed at detecting the existence of corruption practices in the work of customs offices produced the following results: 25.8% of respondents have witnessed travellers giving money or presents; 65% have not witnessed such practices, while 9.1% find it difficult to reply.

The specific characteristics of the different borders reflect in 18% less positive answers at the Macedonian border and in more positive answers at the other two borders: respectively 4% more at the Serbian and about 10% more at the Turkish border. Among travellers interviewed, only one reports of having witnessed a bribe being given to a customs officer.

In the in-depth interviews with travellers in the quantitative part of the survey; to a direct question what the behaviour of customs officers' depends on, most of the interviewed have the impression that it depends on their mood.

Only one of the interviewed reported a violation by a traveller to customs regulations exceeding the permitted limits. In general, respondents have no information about these regulations, to what extent going over quantities permitted is possible and what the consequences of such violation are.

According to observers, some of the people crossing the border come anticipating to be requested a bribe, because they had such ex-

perience earlier; while others are patiently waiting for the respective checks. *As far as customs officers are concerned, they often get various presents, most frequently from the goods transported (fruit, etc.). The presence of our team bothered them to some extent, but I have seen them taking money too.* A case when a small bag with unclear contents was handed over is reported. Observers have witnessed also cantankerous behaviour related to goods transported, questions about the origins of cars, as well as a more patronizing behaviour towards certain travellers. Drivers themselves (the predominant portion of travellers) stated they witnessed how gifts were given explicitly to customs officers.

It turned out that the most delayed at the border were drivers of freight lorries, which were expected to give a bribe. Relatively easier is the transition of automobiles.

However, fleeting observations of customs offices did not leave particularly good impressions with me. The times we passed by their posts we got the feeling of indiscipline, neglect, disregard. In my opinion it is inadmissible officers on duty to smoke, nibble seeds or keep demonstratively 2–3 bottles of Coke on the desk in front of the control station. Usually, they keep in groups of 3 or 4 and chat, if a car arrives; it is taken aside and checked, although cars with Haskovo registration plates were let go without too much control. I noticed that many cars with local registration transport big blue drums, cover sheets, onions, potatoes, etc., which in my opinion go through without any problems.

In my opinion border policemen are approached with respect and esteem, while however, the attitude towards customs officers is even hostile. A widespread reply of the interviewed is that they ask for a bribe, they behave badly, they are inimical and rude. We have not witnessed such acts, but these are the allegations of a big number of travellers and lorry drivers.

2.3. Cooperation and relations of Border Guards and Customs Officers

The correlation coefficient in the assessment of the work of border and customs offices in

the survey is very close to one, meaning that synchronization between the two offices is good.

Concerning the collaboration between border and customs authorities, the opinions of travellers interviewed are contradictory. A portion of respondents consider the collaboration as very good, a continuous contact is maintained, and there is coordination and interaction. *In my opinion the two offices were well coordinated, proven by the prompt reaction of both entities when lines of vehicles would accumulate in one of the lanes.* (Observer's opinion)

However, there is an opposite opinion that everyone is minding one's business, collaboration is weak and there isn't much interaction. *The coordination among individual units of the customs is exceptionally low.*

The customs officers themselves report that the level of collaboration with their colleagues at the other side of the border is very good, as well as with border authorities in the in-depth interviews. In their opinion, on Kalotina BCP the coordination incorporates information regarding the flow of travellers, personal contacts in firsthand encounters and via a direct phone line, the exchange of the so-called customs information sheets containing data about the goods transported. In contrast to this, there was also an opinion that the two authorities act completely independently of one another.

At Gjueshevo border crossing point officers consider their collaboration as good. *When necessary both parties look for support from each other. In some instances we require a thorough check of a certain vehicle or individual, before they reach our point.* Interviewed officers inform about regular monthly joint meetings, exchange of experience and information, coordination of the work and even the carrying of joint trainings.

There are talks with officers at Kapitan Andreevo border crossing point in the interviews about daily arising problems along with long-term projects and plans.

Speaking of the cooperation between the border guards and the customs officers we have to make the point that what was stated in the interviews reflects “superficial” impressions. Whatever interaction there is between the two services, it is not readily visible to the users, especially having in mind that they are spatially separated. The fact that the organization is smooth without any serious disruptions goes show though, that the necessary coordination is in place.

2.3.1. Cooperation between the customs control service and the Ministry of Interior services

The interaction between the services of the Ministry of Interior and the Customs Agency is regulated by special laws stipulating the principles, the activities, the rights and obligations of their employees, as well as the forms and conditions for such interaction. (*Law on the Ministry of the Interior. Customs Law*)

On this basis customs organs are involved in the implementation of operative-investigation activities **jointly with the organs** of the Ministry of the Interior in compliance with the provisions and conditions of the Law on Ministry of the Interior. The organs of the Mol detain the perpetrators of contraband, illegally exported cargoes and means of transportation having gone outside the established for this purpose points. They perform checks jointly with **customs authorities** (article 85 of the Law on Ministry of the Interior).

This is the way of forming up the legislative basis of collaboration between the structures of these administrations nationally and regionally.

A particular importance is attached to interaction on the territories of border crossing points; hence it is the subject of additional regulation by a secondary legislative act – the Ordinance on Border Control Checkpoints.

The Ordinance on Border Control Checkpoints regulates the organization, the activities and the management of border crossing points, as well as the interaction between the offices

for border control in the Republic of Bulgaria. With regard the border control of goods; their activities are coordinated with those of customs control organs in compliance with the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of goods.

The conditions and the order of interaction between customs organs and the organs of the Ministry of the Interior in the prevention and investigation of customs and currency violations are settled by a joint instruction of the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Interior.

In 2006 the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Finance signed an Instruction on the Interaction between the Organs of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Finance. It settles the order of interaction between the two entities. The interaction is aimed at improving the activities on the prevention and investigation of customs, currency and excise legislation and on border regime. At the same time the two administrations endeavour to optimize their work through the implementation of integration components into their daily activities.

The tasks of this interaction incorporate activities related to the prevention and investigation of smuggling and trafficking in humans; counteractions to illegal migration; the prevention and investigation of violations and crimes of the customs, currency and excise legislation; control and surveillance of people, goods and cargoes crossing the BCPs, the border areas and the territory of the country; the prevention and investigation of illegal transactions and illegal international traffic in cultural monuments, valuable historical finds and works of art; counteractions to the illegal traffic in explosives, firearms, biological or nuclear arms or ammunition, nuclear equipment of other sources of ionization radiation; of toxic and chemical substances and their precursors; of biological agents and toxins; as well as of goods and technologies with a possible dual-use; counteraction to the trade and traffic in counterfeit banknotes, payment instruments and official certifying documents; the prevention and investigation of the illegal traffic in narcotic substances, their analogues and precursors; the implementation of other actions

for the control and prevention of criminality; the prevention and investigation of violations of intellectual property rights; the implementation of joint checks of international cooperation as provided by international agreements under which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party.

This set of measures is implemented on the basis of joint risk analyses and planning of joint checks. Results are regularly accounted for, thus creating prerequisites for activities' improvement. In cases when joint teams are set up, priority is attributed to the organs of administration having initiated the joint operation. There exist options for modification of preliminarily planned actions and regions, thus introducing the element of surprise and enhancing the effect of operations.

A new element in the activities of the two administrations is the continued regulation of the order and conditions of the joint use of specialized equipment to counteract violations of the border regime and of smuggling activities. A result of the joint use of equipment is the enhanced intensity of checks in common and the improved efficiency of joint operations.

In the administrative and organization aspect the interaction on national level is implemented via the Interministerial Council on the issues of border crossing checkpoints, as well as on the basis of annual bilateral or multilateral agreements signed by the heads of the entities and approved by the respective ministers.

It is of importance to mention the role of the Interministerial Council on the issues of border control in the settlement of infrastructure and organization problems of the BCPs. As an organ of the Council of Ministers it is responsible for the coordination of activities implemented by the offices for obligatory border control. The Council is comprised of the deputy ministers of the entities in charge of obligatory border control, thus the interests and positions of each represented institution are reflected in the decisions made. One of the main tasks of the Council is to coordinate nationally the interaction between the offices implementing obligatory border con-

trol. Decisions aimed at the improvement of the infrastructure and the conditions of work at the BCPs are made within the Council. Contemporary technical solutions for border control are proposed and approved, aimed at decreasing the time of processing and reducing the subjective factor to a minimum. Thus, at Lesovo BCP (at the border with Turkey) a one-stop shop has been introduced, where payments are effected electronically. The intention is to introduce this model of work in other BCPs at the external frontiers (Kapitan Andreevo and Kalotina BCPs).

2.3.2. International cooperation

This form of cooperation is carried in accordance with bilateral agreements between the competent bodies.

Thus, at the present time the Border Police have signed Agreements of Cooperation on Border Issues with all neighbouring countries. These agreements might be grouped in several directions. One of the lines of actions is the maintenance and marking of the state border and the settlement of border incidents in the sphere of border-police cooperation.

The forms of cooperation are implemented via the exchange of information on counteracting criminality and cross-border violations. The emphasis is placed on the traffic and smuggling in humans, the illegal transfer of drugs, information about individuals on the list of internationally wanted persons, etc.

As a matter of fact, the heads of border points have the opportunity of meeting every day their partners from a neighbouring country and exchanging information on issues of mutual interest. Issues related to forthcoming renovations or difficulties occurring on the respective point are also solved at such meetings.

It is foreseen to set up a contact office at the Macedonian border, where officers of the Bulgarian and Macedonian border police will work together, following the model of the contact office in Giurgevo, Romania. This will enable police officers to exchange police information in real time. This model of work is being established in all EU member-states and

in general its level of efficiency is very high. However, in fact these initiatives are very slowly implemented due to the multitude of preparatory and organizational aspects, accompanying this measure. It has to be pointed out that the proposal of the Bulgarian side for the implementation of such a measure has met the full support of the Macedonian side and concrete steps related to the preparation of the agreement are anticipated.

In 2006 an Agreement between Bulgaria and Macedonia on the mutual travel of citizens, by virtue of which a facilitated regime for Macedonian citizens in the application and issuance of entry visas for the Republic of Bulgaria, was signed as an exception, when required by the state interest or in extraordinary circumstances; the organs of border control at the border crossing points, in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, might issue single transit visas of 36 hours' validity and a short-term stay of up to 15 days.

An Agreement for the Mutual Travel of Citizens has also been signed with Serbia.

On the border with Serbia, by virtue of a bilateral Agreement between the government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Council of Ministers of Serbia, with regard of border control and procedures in the railway traffic, a model of control of train travellers starting on the territory of Serbia and ending on Bulgarian territory was implemented. For this purpose the teams of the border police travel every day to the railway station in Serbia, where together with their Serbian colleagues they perform a passport-visa control of travellers in movement. It has been reported that this model of control significantly decreases the time of stay of international trains on the railway stations of both countries.

On 12 November 2007 Ministers of Interior of Bulgaria and Serbia signed an Agreement on Border Police Cooperation.

The Republic of Bulgaria has signed re-admission agreements with Macedonia and Serbia, and no problems have appeared so far in their implementation. At the same time the range of initiatives of the Bulgarian side to finalize the negotiations with the Republic of Turkey on the Agreement of Re-admission has not succeeded.

VI. Work of the external eu border crossing points in opinion of the border guard and the custom officers – identification of the main problems and their reasons; good practices

1. Factors determining the waiting time on the border crossing point

In the opinion of the border guards and customs officers the waiting time is heavily dependent on the number of the passengers crossing the border. The majority voiced the impression that the Bulgarians travelling through their border points have substantially increased in numbers since the beginning of the year, that is to say with the country's EU membership. In addition, there are the flows of vacation makers and therefore queues are formed at the border crossing points mostly during the summer season and at weekends.

None of the interviewed assumed the occasions of formation of long lines might be the result of ineffective functioning of the personnel. Reasons were sought in the travelling patterns of the passengers, namely that the majority prefer to travel during the light hours of the day. *It happens sometimes to have a concentration of large numbers of people around 10–11 hours in the morning. Fast processing becomes difficult in such situations, especially at the time when the summer vacations have ended and the people are returning home.* The peaks for the cargo traffic are during the night or in the early morning hours.

The officers report cases of refusals of their colleagues across the border to deliver services and cases of problems with the computerized checks system, which cause delays and hamper the processing of the documentation. The internal normative arrangements were quoted as a positive factor that allows the controlling authorities to handle the traffic more effectively.

Whatever the traffic burden, their assertion is that no groups are privileged and all wait in line on an equal basis. *Naturally, the EU citizens pass the border faster.* The officers' general conclusion is that the facilities are insufficient; in particular this is the period mid-June to mid-September.

2. Adjustment of the infrastructure on the border crossing point to the passenger traffic

The most serious criticism as regards the condition of the infrastructure on the border crossing points is related to the cleanliness and hygiene in the border area. The condition of the infrastructure was generally defined by the respondents as unsatisfactory. The ineffective infrastructure leads to complications in the work performance, especially in the customs control activities. Broadening of the crossing points was repeatedly recommended, because bottlenecks are formed in the two ends of the crossing area, which cause heavy traffic jams.

The customs office on some of the points has a separate room for checks, while the border control does not have such a facility. The absence of proper facilities for searching passengers that guarantee respect for personal privacy and human dignity produce deficiencies in the work performance that are beyond the control of the border officers. If medical intervention is needed, doctors are summoned from the nearest town, at an average distance of 20 km. As pointed out in earlier sections of the report, the infrastructure is not adapted to families with the children and persons with disabilities.

Although connected to the database of the ministry of interior according to the standards, the electronic equipment is outdated. On a positive note, all the appliances needed for primary control are in place. However, transport installations distributing the traffic when approaching the border area from the Bulgarian side are badly needed.

The following quote from a respondent is a good summary illustration of the situation on the crossing point: *The facilities are so old*

that they are very difficult to maintain, so even the serious efforts invested in them are not sufficient to improve their appearance. Total reconstruction and modernization is necessary, in particular when having in mind that those are external EU borders. An improved infrastructure will significantly increase the quality work.

3. Plans for the border crossings developments and reconstructions (if there exist)

Plans for developments and reconstructions were mentioned on only one of the border crossing points – Gyueshevo, the border with the Republic of Macedonia. An infrastructure improvement project is expected to start next year. In the opinion of the responsible officers there is plenty of room for development. The subterranean infrastructure, the electrical and water systems must be entirely replaced.

4. Sufficiency of the number of officers working on the border crossing point and their qualifications

There is general agreement that the number of staff is currently sufficient. The statement on one of the border crossing points was that the border police have some 100 officers. Suggestions for more people were only made for the point of disinfection of the vehicles, which is in itself an extremely controversial requirement, and at the vignettes selling service. The border guards and the customs officers recommended organization of foreign language courses to help them improve their professional competences.

5. Cooperation of the Border Guard and the Custom Officers and in respect with the officers of the neighbouring country

The cooperation of border guards and customs officers on the one hand, and with the respective officers of the neighbouring country on the other was predominantly assessed

at being on a good level. When necessary, the two controlling institutions ask each other for assistance. *Sometimes we demand in-depth checks of a vehicle or a person before they reach our crossing point.*

Among the various forms of cooperation mentioned by the border guards and customs officers were coordination of the work, exchange of experience and information, monthly working meetings, continuous daily communication on emerging issues, joint training courses. Assistance is readily provided in crisis situations.

As regards their colleagues on the other side of the border, the Bulgarian officers expressed satisfaction with the cooperativeness demonstrated by them. As reported, the early warning systems for increasing traffic have been synchronized. Also mentioned were preventive actions and coordination in the control, which produce improved results.

6. Travellers behaviour and attitude towards Border Guards and Custom Officers

For the border guards and customs officers travellers' behaviour becomes an issue when it creates some difficulties or problems in the execution of their duties. Usually such practices are illegal trade, smuggling of goods, various violations of the legal arrangements.

In the opinion of the border crossing points staff the illegal trade in the border area has significantly reduced, but it still creates difficulties, in particular when it comes to the so-called "suitcase merchants". The officers' impression is that the traffickers are mostly of Roma origin, petty traders or smugglers. Their behaviour is problematic insofar as they cheat or try to avoid the controlling bodies. It seems they are organized and report to seniors.

Reference was also made to the flows of Serbian citizens that regularly travel to Sofia on shopping tours. In the opinions of the customs control officers there are individuals among them whose purpose is to smuggle cigarettes and

alcohol. Therefore this group of travellers necessitates the acuter attention of the customs service and takes more time to control.

7. Identification of corruption practices and the way they are dealt with

Cases of officers fired for corruption were referred to on each one of the studied border crossing points. The question about the corruption practices causes serious embarrassment among the officers and some of them preferred to remain silent on this matter. The data from the qualitative part of the survey clearly show that a distinction is made between border guards and customs officers when corruption is discussed.

There is almost universal agreement that the border guards function well and are very diligent. Doubts of their integrity were expressed extremely rarely. Those that happen to misuse their position are an exception. Their attitude to the regular passengers is very good. No serious complaints were registered in the course of research.

The situation with the customs officers appears to be different. Popular talk about serious corruption among them, as well as office abuse, seems to have become the norm. *I have heard stories of bribes. Very often the passengers talk about the corrupt Turkish customs officers. Some two years ago serious measures were taken and many got sacked, but I believe the effect was temporary. In most of the cases those who give the bribes are in some violation of the law, which makes them vulnerable.*

8. Most often offences against the law and the way they are dealt with

In the opinion of the border guards offences against the law on their border crossing points are not the usual practice. Isolated cases of

persons with a persona-non-grata status attempting to cross the border were mentioned, but more as an example of rare exceptions. Most often the problems are irregular documentation, expired visas, missing work permits. In any case all the interviewed insisted that offences are not a frequent practice in their work.

On a more general level the interviewed officers explained that the border areas were attractive to the criminal business, that they are a cross point of interests related to economic activities, that are banned by the law. That is, from their point of view, very difficult to handle and beyond the individual efforts of the border control services. *It requires the efforts of the local authorities, the public order institutions, the judicial system and the citizens.*

9. Most common problems concerning legal issues and organizational aspects of work on the border crossing points

Not many problems were mentioned concerning legal issues and the organizational aspects of the work on the border crossing points. Among those that seem to bother the officers in the execution of their duties are the Roma beggars, which in their opinion embarrass the passengers and create certain complication in the work process. *We sometimes have to call the border police because of that.*

Some of the officers believe that the problems with illegal traffic will disappear, if the duty free shops are closed down. Another serious difficulty seems to be the contradictory and numerous normative acts (instructions, ordinances, telegrams, methodological guidance etc). A number of persons in charge of the border control complained that they had to interpret all those in the course of their work, while this should be done at a higher level.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

It is important to underline that border control is not only in the interest of the Member-States at whose external borders it is exercised, but is also of interest to those Member States which have eliminated the control along its internal borders. This enhances the importance and the role of border authorities and of the border passport control and customs control authorities, in particular. This, in practice, creates a real prerequisite for a better preparedness by the Republic of Bulgaria for the full implementation of the criteria for control over the external borders, as well as for the country's better preparedness for accession to the Schengen zone.

Border control should help **to combat illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings and to prevent any threat to internal security, public policy, public health and international relations.** However, border checks should be carried out in such a way as to **fully respect human dignity.** Border control should be exercised in a professional and respectful manner. Therefore, all forms of preliminary information and guidelines given to the border-crossers would be beneficial to the persons concerned. Here one should include the various information signs and boards as well as **brochures which direct and help border-crossers.**

In conclusion, in the course of its preparation for entry into the Schengen zone, Bulgaria's competent authorities should take better account of the fact that border control does not include only the check on persons at or between the border crossing points but also an analysis of the inland security risks, as well as analysis of the threats which may emerge from the security problems at the external borders. Therefore the prerequisites, the criteria and the capacity for control over the border check points should be established.

Despite the fact that the current study established a high-level of interaction and cooperation between the passport border control and customs control authorities, forms of joint checks should be discussed and envisaged with the aim of elevating the quality of the controls

and shortening the duration of the checks. This is especially valid for those border crossing points where the existing infrastructure would enable such checks without additional investment. In this case, one should bear in mind that the practice of the other EU member-countries shows a substantial decrease in the number of corruption cases and a rise in the confidence enjoyed by the border control bodies. Last but not least, this approach would enhance the respect on the part of the border-crossers for the checking procedures and would act as another tool of prevention.

As to the infrastructure, the current study demonstrates the need **for substantial investment in the border check points along the external borders,** namely – Kapitan Andreevo BCP, Gjueshevo BCP and Kalotina BCP. The new infrastructure should guarantee a considerable reduction in the duration of the checks and an easing of the various controls.

In this context, we would also recommend **a revision of the current system using disinfectant solutions** for combating the various types of epizootics, as well as **a revision of the charge collection for the passage of transport vehicle over disinfection ditches.** It is important to make clear the reason why persons and vehicles must pass through here said ditches and pay a disinfection charge. **In our opinion, such a step would enhance transparency and a better understating of the measure by border crossers.**

Pursuant to the Schengen Borders Code *Member States should designate the national service or services responsible for border-control tasks in accordance with their national law. Where more than one service is responsible in the same Member State, there should be close and constant cooperation between them.*

Based on the research, study and observations within the framework of the project, the project experts recommend in Bulgaria's case the designation of a single service responsible for border-control tasks. The research has showed that the authority, which exercises the most efficient, competent Schengen-oriented border control at the moment is Bulgarian Border Police Service.