

**MONITORING
REPORT**

EU Border Crossing Points

Romania

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1. Introduction

As Romania has become member of the European Union, some of its borders are now EU borders with non-EU states. This monitoring research aims at analyzing four border crossing points in terms of traffic, infrastructure and characteristic of travellers. It makes recommendations concerning the ways in which traffic can be improved and services at the border bettered.

The main assumption of this research is that border crossing points are embedded into the net of social relations in border regions. They are influenced by the main political and economic processes ongoing in Romania. Cross-border traffic varies in time due to different economic, politic and social factors. Also, border crossing points are part of a process of institutional readjustment due to EU enlargement and increasing security at the EU external border. These influence the traffic and the services rendered at border crossing points. Recommendations on making the border friendlier should take into account some of these factors. The second statement is that by comparing four border crossing points we will be able to better highlight the main factors influencing the traffic and services rendered at the border crossing points. The researched border crossing points are: **Stamora Moravița**, at the border with Serbia, **Sighetul Marmăției** at the border with Ukraine, **Sculeni**, at the border with the Republic of Moldova, and **Albița** at the same border.

The report has the following structure: Chapter 2 introduces the methodology of the research, the main research questions and the methods used to conduct this research. Chapter 3 presents the characteristics of the border crossing points and of the travellers at these border crossing points. It begins by introducing data concerning the evolution of the traffic through Romanian borders to the non-EU states: Serbia, Ukraine and Moldova, and continues with the description of the four border crossing points and with the characteristic features of travellers at these points. Chapter 4 analyzes the infrastructure of the border crossing points, as well as the services available to travel-

lers there, making specific recommendations on facilitating the crossing at these points. Chapter 5 presents aspects concerning the work of Border Guard and Customs officers. Chapter 6 concludes the research and makes general recommendations.

2. The Research Methodology

The research methodology aimed at analyzing the traffic, infrastructure facilities and the quality of services rendered by the border crossing points in Romania. The purpose was to identify ways in which traffic conditions may be improved so that better infrastructure and better services would be provided to travellers.

The applied methodology was that agreed with the other East-European partners. The Polish partners sent the final set of methods: monitoring sheet, the questionnaire and the interview's guidelines.

Monitoring was able to provide hard data on the number of crossings and the crossing time at each border crossing point. Thus, we were able compare the data gathered in the questionnaires with the data from the monitoring. The latter also provided data on citizenship, but the accurate numbers concerning travellers' citizenships are rather relative. The type of car did not provide relevant insights into the features of traffic. **Problems** occurred with monitoring in Sighetul Marmăției and especially in Moravița (as it will be further explained).

Questionnaires helped improving the situation. Their use lowered travellers' suspicion, since respondents understood that the research was done to facilitate traffic. The issue of corruption of border personnel lowered tensions among travellers, but border personnel became reluctant feeling that the research targeted them directly. As concerns questions 9, 10, 15, 16, 21 and 22, travellers usually rank the Romanian border personnel in comparison to the border personnel from the neighbouring non-EU countries. Thus, estimates are relative. Questions 14 and 20 did not show major problems existing at the border crossing points,

since most travellers were Romanian speakers. Questions 35 to 41 were very useful for identifying the characteristic of the travellers, they provided a good data set. We found irrelevant data on corruption. The questions concerning the infrastructure and services are also to be discussed and contextualized.

Interviews provided good qualitative information on the four sites of research but participant observation was needed for discussing the results. In all, we undertook **68 interviews**, 19 in Moravița, 14 in Sighet, 15 in Sculeni and 20 in Albița. There are 7 interviews with the local leaders, 30 with EU travellers (especially Romanian citizens), 15 with non-EU travellers, 7 with Border Guard officers, 3 with Customs officers, 6 with other types of subjects. In addition, there were a substantial number of casual discussions and informal talks. In Sighet and Moravița, we were not able to interview non-EU travellers. In Sighet there was much reluctance from the side of the Ukrainian citizens, whereas in Moravița the time of crossing the border was too short in order to conduct interviews at the border crossing point. Thus, the questionnaires and the interviews were applied differently to the four border crossing points.

We found **participant observation** a strong method. It provided correct data on the available information. It helped discussing the results from monitoring, questionnaires and interviews and contextualizing the information. Longer fieldwork diaries were very helpful.

Finally, the time of doing the research was too short. As for quantitative data, this was a sufficient time span, but for qualitative research more should have been done and some other aspects (local economies, social ties and so on) should have been researched.

3. Basic characteristics of the studied border crossing points

The analyzed border crossing points are Stamora-Moravița at the border with Serbia, Sighetul Marmăției at the border with Ukraine

and Sculeni and Albița at the border with Moldova. In the following, some basic characteristics of the Romanian borders are first introduced, helping to understand the cross-border traffic and the functioning of the border crossing points. Further on, these border crossing points will be analyzed, and factors influencing the traffic at the borders will be presented. Also, the characteristic of the persons crossing the borders will be introduced at each specific border crossing point. Some general features of the borders with Serbia, Ukraine and Moldova are first presented.

Romanian borders: some general features and data on cross-border traffic

After the collapse of the communist states in the Eastern Europe, Romania has passed through a series of radical changes in respect of its border regime. Initially, borders of the Romanian state were virtually closed for most Romanian citizens, who did not have their passports, stored by state authorities. International mobility was very limited. Some notable exceptions included international migrations of ethnic minorities (Germans, Jews, and Hungarians)¹, irregular migration, and small-scale petty trade to Yugoslavia. Foreigners' circulation was limited.

After 1989, a series of political and economic changes fully reshaped the border regime in two distinctive periods: the first from 1990 to 1999 and the second from 2000 to 2007. The first act influencing cross-border mobility was the law concerning the liberalization of passport regime, enabling any Romanian citizen to travel abroad². A series of border and neighbourhood treaties and agreements with the neighbouring countries followed, ensuring

¹ See Diminescu, D., Ohlinger R., Rey, V. (2003) "Les circulations migratoires roumaines : une intégration européenne par le bas?", *Cahiers de recherche de la MiRe*, n°15, pp. 61–69.

² Decretul Lege 10 din 8 ianuarie 1990: liberalizarea pașaportului, See in: Șerban, M. (2007) *Politici și instituții în migrația internațională: migrație pentru muncă din România. 1990–2006*. Fundația pentru o Societate Deschisă 2007, http://www.osf.ro/ro/program_articol.php?articol=37, downloaded on 16.12. 2007, 12:31.

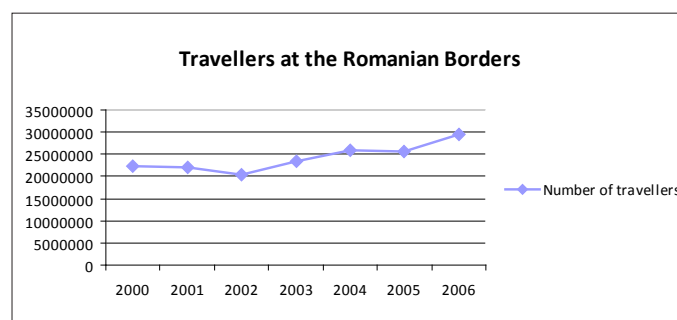
free access for citizens of neighbouring countries. Circulation to and from Romania was increasing and many forms of trans-border mobility developed: petty trade, regional labour migration, international migration and different forms of trafficking³. A quite laissez-faire attitude was prevalent in respect to modernizing the border crossing points and restructuring their personnel in order to increase the quality of services. Corruption was considered to be widespread at that time.

After 2000, Romania started the process of EU accession and a new series of changes have started, modifying the border regime, the infrastructure, and services of border crossing points. As a direct consequence of EU accession, Romania had to follow the *acquis communautaire*, restructuring its Border Guard and Customs, under direct influence of the EU. Moreover, the security of borders had to increase, as well as the capabilities of border crossing points in controlling and processing travellers. Especially the Border Guard received much attention in improving its capacity to control irregular migration and the illegal traffic of weapons, drugs, and human beings. Thus, an investment of 400 million euro was realized in the first instance. An integrated system for border security was implemented, involving quick data communication and surveillance capabilities. Moreover, by 30 June 2006, Romania had to implement *visa online*, and an integrated system for migration management, visa and asylum procedures⁴. It is estimated that 1 billion euro will thus be invested⁵, as Romania is going to manage 2050 km of the EU

external borders⁶. This investment programme was intended to provide security means for the whole length of Romania's borders, about 3150 km⁷. Programmes of structural readjustment of the Border Police and Customs, and specialization of the personnel backed these infrastructure changes.

Border crossing points also received attention in developing their infrastructure. Albița, for instance, which is located at the Romanian-Moldovan border, received the amount of about 1.2 million euro to be invested in its infrastructure, to be thus able to provide better services to the travellers. This border crossing point is currently considered to be *the Model* for the EU-non-EU border in Romania. It will further be analyzed. However, in comparison to the amounts of money invested into securing the borders, investments in the infrastructure of border crossing points are still tiny.

At the same time, traffic at the Romanian borders has changed. Thus, after the demise of the communist state, the number of travellers increased steadily: in 2000 there were already 22,384,377 travellers, and in 2006 there were 29,417,030.



The larger majority were the crossings on the Western Romanian border, to Hungary. These flows were targeting Western Europe and/or Hungary. The prevalence of crossings at this border remains still today, but in several years these crossing points will no longer exist, this border becoming internal EU border.

³ See, Lăzăroiu, S. (2000) "Trafic de femei – o perspectivă sociologică", *Sociologie Românească* No. 2/2000, pp. 55–79.

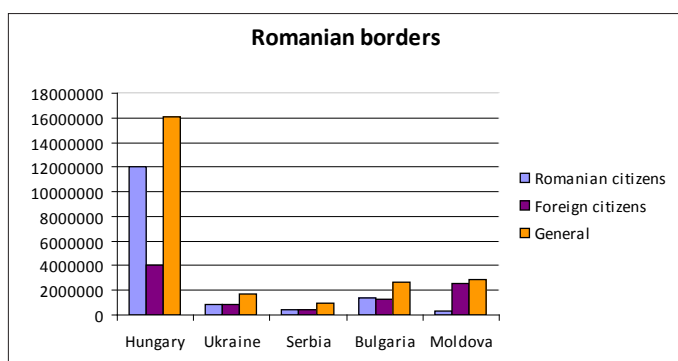
⁴ Lazaroiu, S. Alexandru, M. (2005) *Controlling exits to gain Accession. Romanian migration policy in the making*, <http://www.cespi.it/migration2/papers.htm>, downloaded on 15.12.2007, 12:21.

⁵ Integrated System for Border Security is a complex system "to fight down the transborder criminality". It involves actors and organizations that are engaged in the activities carried out to secure the borders. It is designed to provide high flexibility and capacity of securing the borders. It contains a system of communication, and a highly developed surveillance system. It also meant to acquire transport and surveillance means (quick boats for the rivers, jeep cars, and video surveillance equipment). Source: <http://www.politiadefron->

[tia.ro/](http://www.politiadefron-). This restructuring was undertaken through a series of adjustments between 2001 and 2005.

⁶ Source: *Gardianul*.

⁷ Source: <http://www.politiadefron->



Due to the increasing flows of travellers, a number of changes happened in the 1990s and continued afterwards. The most significant was the set up of new border crossing points, which were able to receive higher shares of these flows. Thus, at the border Romania-Hungary, there were 12 border crossing points in 2000, and their number increased to 18 in 2006. The flow of crossings to the other borders, Moldova, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Yugoslavia, is significantly smaller in comparison to the flows towards Hungary (as seen in the previous chart). However, in these cases also, we may assist an increase of travellers in the next years, together with the development of new mobility patterns. Due to the steady increase of prices on the Romanian market, petty trade (with different sorts of goods, but especially with cigarettes) is extremely profitable and many people from the border regions make their living out of that. Also, in Romania there is a steady scarcity of labour and people from Moldova and from Ukraine already started to work seasonally in Romania. This is not new for Moldovan citizens who started the petty trade and work in Romania even in 1990s, but it is relatively new for Ukrainians⁸. This is a small-scale, but growing phenomenon in the eastern regions of Romania, where migration towards Western Europe is particularly strong⁹.

⁸ Thus, in the region of south Bucovina, strong migration towards Italy created in some communities labour scarcity. Some Ukrainians have started to come for the agricultural work.

⁹ See, Sandu, D, ed. (2006) *Locuirea temporară în străinătate. Migrația economică a românilor: 1990–2006*, Fundația pentru o Societate Deschisă, www.soros.ro, downloaded atdownloaded on 18.12.2007, 08:52.

As far as changes in traffic are concerned, in the case of Moldova there is a backdrop in cross-border mobility in 2007 because visas have been introduced for Moldovan citizens. However, this may recover soon. In the case of the Serbian border, the traffic decreased after 2004, but it has been increasing again. Currently, there are 56 border-crossing points with Hungary (18), Bulgaria (13), Ukraine (11), Serbia (8) and Moldova (6).

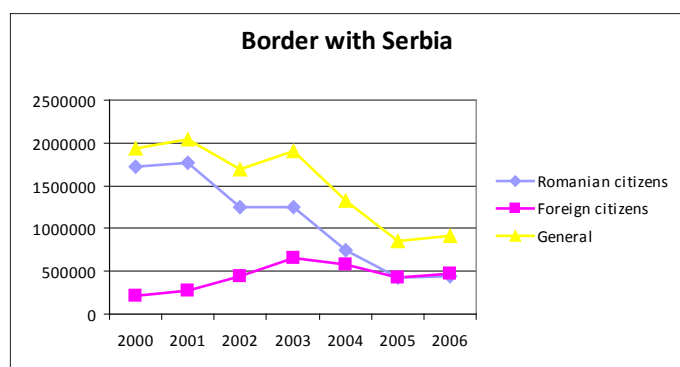
To sum up, in post-communism we have witnessed two distinctive periods: the first marked by weak control and administration and low quality of services at border crossing points, and the second characterised by increasing control and bettering border crossing points' services. In the first period, the changes were undertaken solely by the Romanian state, whereas in the second period, they were carried out under a strong pressure and according to institutional design of the EU.

In this last year, some unclear processes occurred, making us reflect on possible consequences for the traffic on the crossing points with the non-EU countries. On the one hand, Romania is a member of the EU and has to follow Community rules governing the external EU border. On the other hand, internal structural demands make the Romanian state to act on its own. For example, the steady needs for workers on the labour market lead the Romanian officials to undertake unorganized policies with possible strong effects. In Moldova, the granting of citizenship to a very large amount of persons may strongly change the situation at the border crossing points. Moreover, due to price differences between Romania and the neighbouring countries, petty trade may further develop. In addition, irregular migration is likely to emerge, pushed by the Romanian labour market demands. These may have further effects on the functioning of border crossing points. Further on, we will introduce the characteristics of each border crossing point, with a short introduction concerning the border regime at the specific border crossing point.

Characteristics of the Stamora-Moravița border crossing point

Reasons for the selection of the border crossing point

The border with Serbia has 8 border crossing points and the length of 546 km¹⁰. The traffic on the border crossing points in Stamora Moravița and Porțile de Fier represents the majority of the traffic on this border, namely about 74%¹¹. The first act stipulating the possibility of the Romanian citizens to travel to Yugoslavia was the bilateral agreement signed in 1967 by the governments of the two countries to allow their citizens living in the localities close to the border to travel to the other country. Petty trade emerged at that time. After 1990s, Romanians started to look for jobs in Yugoslavia and until 2001 Romanians were day labourers there. Between 1990 and 2004, border control was minimal¹². **A treaty of neighbourhood was signed in 1996¹³. Due to Romania's EU accession, in July 2004 the Romanian authorities imposed visas. Then, the traffic between Romania and Yugoslavia decreased drastically, affecting a large number of petty traders and labour migrants from Romania going to Serbia and Montenegro. This trend can be observed in the following chart, presenting the decreasing number of travellers at this border.**



¹⁰ Source: INS, National Institute of Statistics

¹¹ Thus, in 2006 at those two points there were 330,942 travellers, whereas on the whole borders, 447,089 travellers.

¹² (Radu 2004) Cosmin Radu, Migration towards Yugoslavia, in *Romanian Migration Abroad: Stocks and Flows after 1989*, <http://www.migrationonline.cz/e-library/?x=1963634>, downloaded on 17.12.2007, 11:07.

¹³ Tratatul de prietenie, bună vecinătate și cooperare dintre România și RFI a fost semnat la 16 mai 1996 și a intrat în vigoare la 16 mai 1997.

We have chosen the border crossing point at Stamora-Moravița for several reasons: it is one of the two main border crossing points to Serbia, and it has a long tradition of informal activities. There were also irregular crossings of the border during communism, and petty trade occurred.

Stamora-Moravița border crossing point

The border crossing point of Stamora-Moravița between Romania and Serbia has been functioning since 1920. After the decline of the communist regime in both countries, the access for all Romanian and Serbian citizens was free and circulation developed. In July 2004, visas were introduced for citizens of both Romania and Serbia (at that time, Serbia and Montenegro). Romania joined the European Union in January 2007 and consequently Serbia abolished visas for Romanian citizens in July 2007. Serbian citizens still need a visa in order to enter the Romanian territory. The border crossing point of Stamora-Moravița is a road transport crossing, excluding, at least in theory, the access of pedestrians. In reality, pedestrians cross the border daily. Restricting pedestrian access would mean restricting the right free movement guaranteed for all EU citizens.

The closest border crossing points to Stamora-Moravița are Jimbolia, located 112 km from Stamora-Moravița, and Moldova Nouă, 82 km. Stamora-Moravița border crossing point is located on the European E70 route that links the Romanian city of Timișoara with the Serbian small town of Vršac and, further on, with the Serbian capital Belgrade. The region of Banat, where the border point is located, is currently parted between three states, Romania, Serbia and Hungary, with a tradition as a multicultural area. Currently, the Romanian part is inhabited by 13,273 Serbs, whose ties to Serbia may have implications for the circulation across the border¹⁴. The Serbian region of Voivodina has

¹⁴ From a total population of 667,926 inhabitants of the Romanian county Timiș. In this research, due to the limited time spent in the field, and specific research design, we did not look at the ethnic cross border circulation.

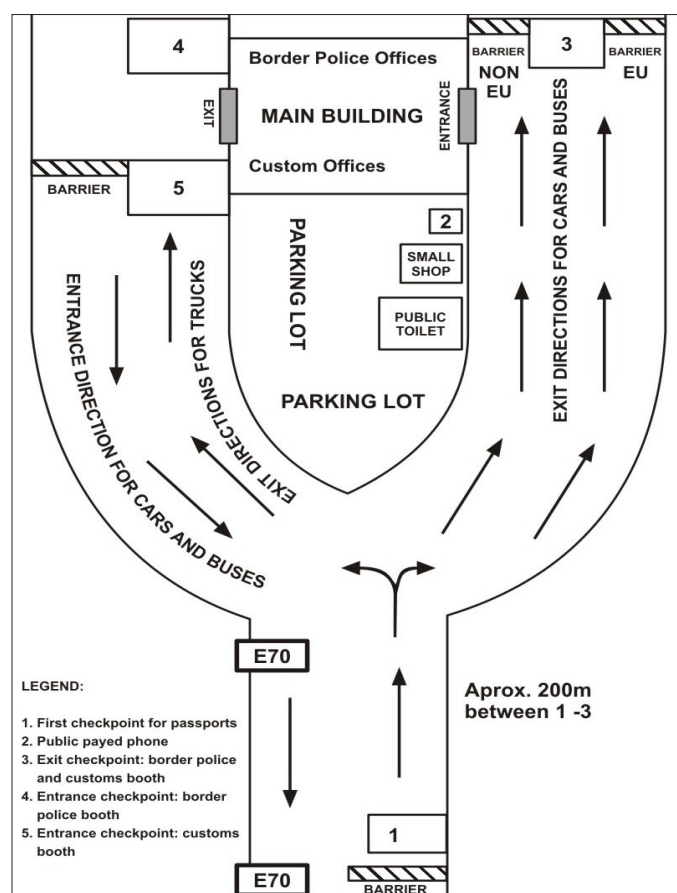
o population of 30,520 Romanians¹⁵. Vršac, the closest town to the border on Serbian side, located 17 km from it, has a population of 36,600 inhabitants, out of which 10.87% are Romanians.

Moravița is the closest locality on the Romanian side of the border, placed at a distance of approximately 2 km. Moravița has a population of about 1,000 inhabitants, with only 2 Serbian families. The present economic situation of Moravița is a very precarious one. Out of a total population of about 1,000 inhabitants, 130 benefit from the grant-in-aid social support, which makes Moravița very poor in the context of the county Timiș. This pushes the local people into petty trade and finding new solutions for sustaining their households. The objects of trade are products obtained from duty-free shops located in-between the Romanian and Serbian border checkpoints. The European legislation does not recommend EU states having duty free shops at their borders¹⁶, but they are allowed on the EU to non-EU borders. Currently there is a government legislative measure to prohibit all duty free shops on the borders of Romania¹⁷, but it needs to be voted by the Romanian Parliament.

Finally, it is also to be mentioned that during the war in former Yugoslavia, there was much informal trade with gasoline, and, as a consequence, there is a strong local practice of using the borders as a resource for sustaining livelihood in the area.

Access to the border area is intermediated by a check point, situated at about 1.5 km away from Moravița, run by a police officer and a traffic agent, in order to ensure that nobody without a passport would enter the perimeter. The distance between this first checkpoint and the Romanian border limit is merely 300 m. After the checkpoint, the road forks. The left side is designated for the entrance direction of

cars and buses, simultaneously with an exit direction for trucks. The right side of the forked road is designated for the exit direction of cars and buses. Following the side designated for exit direction, there is a parking lot on the left, which encloses a public toilet, followed by a small shop and the main building. This main building counters both the offices of Border Police and those of Customs. The border checkpoint lies ahead, consisting of a booth shared by Border Police and Customs officers. The left crossing point is designated for non-EU passengers, while the right crossing point is designated for EU passengers. This division is seldom respected in practice.



Map: Border crossing point at Moravița.

Following the left side of the forked road, designated for entrance direction of cars and buses and exit direction for trucks, there is a booth on the right side for Customs officers followed, at 50 m, by another booth for Border Police officers only. The main building has exits and communicates with both the exit and the entrance direction sides. The space between Romanian and Serbian checkpoints contained 8 duty-free shops at the time of our research, while the 9th was just being built. The duty-free

¹⁵ Out of a total population of 2,031,992 inhabitants

¹⁶ Source: <http://www.newschannel.ro/stiri/27/7075/Comisia-Europeana-recomanda-Romaniei-sa.html>.

¹⁷ Thus, in 2006 a procedure was issued to close down all duty free shops at the borders, Ordonanța de Urgență 48/2006. However, this was not voted by the Parliament, therefore the result is still unclear.

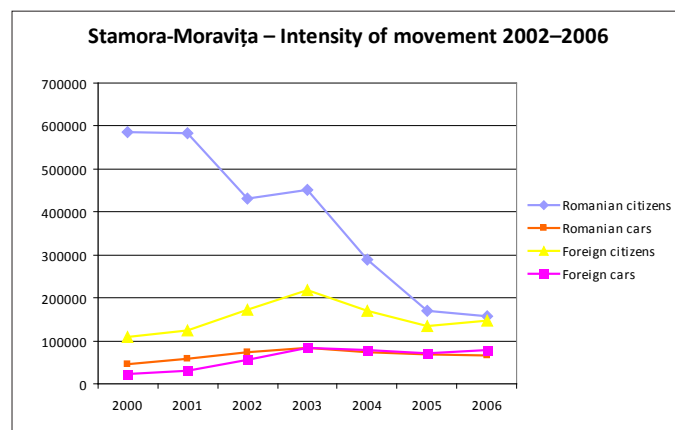
shops had just reopened, after being closed between January and May 2007. The merchandise offered in these duty-free shops consists mainly of cigarettes, some coffee and suits. These are significantly cheaper than those sold at the shops in Romania.

The circulation at the Stamora – Moravița border crossing point is of about 500 vehicles per day. Suspending the visa system for the Romanian citizens was believed to enhance the amount of trade and tourism through the border, because driving through Serbia reduces the distance from Romania to Greece and Italy by 100–200 km. At the time of our field-work, this expectation of the local Romanian authorities was not confirmed¹⁸. The number of Border Police and Customs officers proves to be satisfactory, ensuring a constant rhythm of processing the passengers through the checkpoints. The issues related to infrastructure affect other aspects, such as: there is one public toilet for both the entrance and exit points, but due to the lack of maintenance and cleanliness it is practically unusable. There is only a very small shop, with a limited supply of products, which serves the whole custom area and also represents the only source for food within the distance of 2 km on the Romanian side. The public paid phone is always out of order. There is no money exchange office within the distance of 16 km on the Romanian side, until the closest town of Deta. It could also prove profitable to invest more in the type of infrastructure that influences the ability of the staff to work at full capacity, such as more and better computers.

Characteristics of the persons crossing the border

As shown in the following chart, the circulation at the Stamora-Moravița border crossing point has sharply decreased between 2003 and 2004, especially in terms of Romanian citizens. The number of foreigners has decreased, too,

but with a lower pace in comparison to the changes in the traffic of Romanians. In 2006 there were 305,208 crossings here.



From the total of respondents to our questionnaire (Moravița represents roughly 25% of the total of subjects questioned in all of the 4 investigated border crossing points), in Moravița there is a fairly unequal distribution regarding the **gender** of the persons using this border crossing point. We can ascertain the prevalence of the masculine gender, as men represent **74%** of those who cross this border checkpoint, while women represent only **26%**.

The declared purposes of respondents' visits are: in **13%** of the cases work interest, in **3%** cases personal matters or business interests, in **18%** cases visiting the family. The percentage of those who declare that their purpose for crossing the border is tourism is the most significant one, namely **44%**. Similar to the cases of the other border crossing points, the percentage that regards the aspect of visiting a family member is a pretty constant one and we do not expect it to vary significantly from other variables, such as the case of the tourism.

As concerns respondents' **education**, about **35%** of them have graduated high school; the same percentage (**34%**) represents those who declare they have graduated college. Thus, we can ascertain that more than half of those who answered our questionnaires have secondary education.

Approx. **70%** of our respondents declare that they **work**, that they have a settled job, an aspect that can suffer some insights compared to our qualitative data. **79%** of the total num-

¹⁸ The situation can be partially explained by the car insurance system. There is no mutual agreement between Romania and Serbia regarding RCA (auto insurance policy), which makes some of the insurances signed in Romania to be invalid on the Serbian side.

ber of respondents live at maximum 100 km away from the border crossing point, while 36% live even closer, 50 km away from the border; these percentages sustain the existence of petty trade and local informal economy. The percentage of pensioners is of about 11%, higher in the case of this border crossing point than it is, for example, in the case of Albița or Sculeni border crossing points. Most travellers here are Romanian citizens.

The qualitative field data offer some new approach to the quantitative data. 70% of our respondents declare they work, which, compared to the fact that our ethnographic material outlines a very poor economic level of the region and a high number of unemployed persons in Moravița, raises the question of the real application of this percentage in the field. The high percentage of declared employees and of those with secondary and higher education can be partially explained by two aspects: the fact that the field research took place in August, the period for holidays, which increased the number of educated, employed tourists exiting Romania; and the fact that the passengers engaged in informal activities and petty trade were particularly reluctant in responding the questionnaires, which forced the field team to concentrate on the tourists. But this does not also explain the high percentage of the respondents who declared that their purpose for crossing the border was tourism. As a matter of fact, the qualitative data outlines the fact that “tourist/tourism” is a local euphemism for petty trading. The percentage of those who live near the border, less than 100 km away, confirms the existence of petty trade. The vast majority of petty traders are locals, from Moravița, as well as Deta and Denta, closest small towns. If 74% of the total numbers of travellers who cross this border checkpoint are males, based on the qualitative field data it is hard to approximate the percentage of males and females with petty traders, but is it fairly clear that in this particular case the females represent more than 26%. Individual unemployed petty traders who commute daily in order to ensure, by this activity, their basic income, are mostly women. Individual petty traders who commute occasionally in order to obtain small

supplementary income are both men and women. There are also a significant numbers of scooters, used as vehicles of transport for cigarettes, for both types of individual petty traders. The vast majority of those who practice petty trade are Romanian citizens.

Characteristics of the Sighetul Marmației border crossing point

Reasons for the selection of the border crossing point

Romania has a border with Ukraine of 649 km¹⁹ in two sections: the longer in the northern part of Romania, crossing the Carpathian Mountains, and the shorter in the eastern part of Romania, at the Danube Delta. There are 12 border crossing points, out of which that in Sighetul Marmației opened this year. The most important points are those in Halmeu, Siret (Suceava County) and Sighetul Marmației that highly concentrate the cross-border traffic between Romania and Ukraine. In 2006, the border crossing points at Halmeu and Siret had 1,552,335 travellers from the total number of 1,684,000 travellers. The border crossing point in Sighetul Marmației has been opened this year, thus data is not available. From our own research, we observed a very intense circulation here as well.

On 1 January 1992²⁰, diplomatic relationships were established between the two countries. In 1996, a convention was signed concerning simplified access of citizens living close to the border²¹. There was also a treaty for co-operation and good neighbourhood²², and a convention in 2000 concerning common co-operation in the field of customs²³. The bor-

¹⁹ Source: INS, National Institute of Statistics.

²⁰ <http://www.mae.ro/index.php?unde=doc&id=5750>.

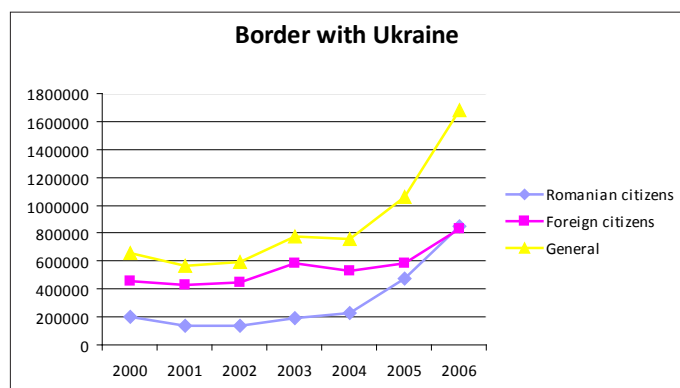
²¹ Convenția între Guvernul României și Guvernul Ucrainei privind trecerea simplificată a frontierei de stat comune de către cetățenii care domiciliază în județele și raioanele de frontieră (Ismail, 29 martie 1996).

²² Tratat cu privire la relațiile de bună vecinătate și cooperare între România și Ucraina (Constanța, 2 iunie 1997).

²³ Acord între Guvernul României și Cabinetul de Miniștri al Ucrainei privind asistența reciprocă în domeniul vamal (București, 19 iunie 2000), www.mae.ro.

der treaty was signed on 17 June 2003²⁴. Later on, there were other two treaties, in 2003 and 2006, the first regulating travels of Romanian and Ukrainian citizens²⁵, the second regulating border crossing points²⁶. This last treaty agreed on the opening of new border crossing points²⁷, as it is the one that brought to life Sighetul Marmăției. Moreover, with this treaty the parties agreed that pedestrian access is possible for crossing points having appropriate infrastructure facilities (paved roads for pedestrians). The treaty does not mention recommendations or collaborations between the border crossing points aimed at facilitation of traffic across the border.

If during 1990s the access was fairly free, nowadays access regulations between the two ex-communist countries are established on the basis of a mutual visa system, established on 16 July 2004 by the Ukrainian side and in the same year by the Romanian side. It is expected that Ukraine would eventually abolish the visa system for Romanian citizens in 2008. Visas for Ukrainian citizens are to be obtained in Kiev, Chernivtsi, and Odessa, and they are free of charge. Romanian citizens can obtain Ukrainian visas from Suceava or Bucharest.



²⁴ Tratat, între România și Ucraina privind regimul frontierei de stat româno-ucrainene, colaborarea și asistența mutuală în problemele de frontieră.

²⁵ Acord între Guvernul României și Cabinetul de Miniștri al Ucrainei cu privire la condițiile călătoriilor reciproce ale cetățenilor (Kiev, 19 decembrie 2003).

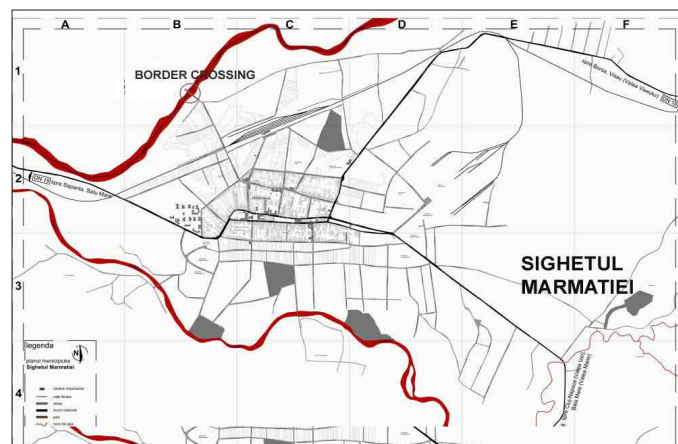
²⁶ Acord între Guvernul României și Cabinetul de Miniștri al Ucrainei cu privire la punctele de trecere a frontierei de stat româno-ucrainene (Kiev, 2 februarie 2006). In Romania this has enforced by the HOTĂRÂRE nr.675 din 24 mai 2006. http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.act_text?id=73188, downloaded on 16.12.2007, 15:17.

²⁷ At that time, the decision concerning the Sighet-Solotvino crossing point was made.

We selected this border crossing point for several reasons. First, it was opened in 2007 and we intended to have a new border crossing point in our sample. Second, from prior information we found out that the crossing border traffic was intense. Third, it is located at the outskirts of the small town of Sighetul Marmăției. Thus, we hypothesized that the analysis may reveal interesting aspects on the relations between the border crossing point and the town.

Sighetul Marmăției border crossing point

The border crossing point Sighetul Marmăției – Solotvino between Romania and Ukraine is a very new one, opened to traffic on 15 January 2007. The reasons for opening this border checkpoint are primarily of cultural and social nature. The border crossing point is intended to facilitate the access of parted families from both sides of the Tisa River and to remake cultural and identity links between Romanians and Ukrainians living on both sides of the border. In the Transcarpathia region²⁸ of Ukraine, there are 2.3% Romanians, mostly concentrated in Solotvino and the neighbouring villages. Their great majority live near the border. There are 6.7% Ukrainians in the Maramureș county of Romania, out of a total population of 500,000 inhabitants. The intermarriages between Romanian and Ukrainian citizens started at the beginning of the 1990s, when the access of Romanians and Ukrainians was visa free. Yet it is considered that there are many families separated by this border.



Map: Border crossing point Sighetul Marmăției, on the outskirts of the town²⁹

²⁸ Out of a total population of 1.2 million inhabitants.

²⁹ Source: www.sighet.ro/harta.htm.

The Sighetul Marmăției – Solotvino border crossing point consists of a bridge of 262 m that links the two small towns, Sighetul Marmăției on the Romanian side and Solotvino on the Ukrainian side. Sighetul Marmăției has a total population of about 40,000 inhabitants, out of which 3% are Ukrainians. Solotvino has a total population estimated at about 10,000 inhabitants, with a majority of ethnic Romanians.

The border bridge has a historical value due to the fact that it was built in the 18th century. Its wooden structure was reinforced with concrete between 2001 and 2007. Its rehabilitation was initially designed for pedestrian use mainly, but the amplitude of both pedestrian and road transport needs of this region greatly exceeded the initial expectations. The traffic capacity of the bridge is outrun³⁰. The necessity of Sighetul Marmăției – Solotvino border crossing point is outlined by the fact that the closest pedestrian and road transport border crossing point is Halmeu, in the county of Satu-Mare, about 80 km away. The other closest access point to Ukraine is Valea Vișeuului at 60 km from Sighetul Marmăției, with an exclusive railway specific only. Thus, this is the single pedestrian and car border crossing point between the Romanian region of Maramureș and the Ukrainian Transcarpathia.

The Romanian border checkpoint is placed in the town of Sighetul Marmăției, at its outskirts. A long lane with an array of houses on each side goes to the border crossing point. The distance between the custom area and the closest restaurant is about 150 m. The second restaurant is about 200 m away. The close proximity of the town offers unproblematic access to shops and restaurants. The proximity of the border checkpoint is signalled by the presence of a booth with customs information, placed on the left side of the small road that exits the town. On the right side of the same road there is a parking lot, followed by the main building that counters for both Customs and Border Police offices. There are two booths, one for

the entry and the other one for exit. The exit and entry are in shifts.

Issues of infrastructure are varied. The bridge has sidewalks for pedestrians but has a single lane-circulating track, which makes the exits from Romania and the exits from Ukraine to take place not simultaneously, but by rotation. This means that while the cleared group of cars, scooters, pedestrians or bikers are allowed to exit Romania and to enter Ukraine, similar groups waiting to exit Ukraine and enter Romania are put on hold. The difficulty of this situation is increased by the significant amount of daily traffic, about 6,000 persons in 24 hours. Long queues waiting for access form frequently on both sides of the bridge. The number of Customs and Border Police officers is clearly unsatisfactory, exceeded by the demand. People are often irritated and they do not have any places to rest. Due to the fact that many are pedestrians tensioned moments by the longer waiting times occur. The bridge has a limited capacity, with a weight limitation for cars (maximum 3.5 tonnes). The necessity of creating two lanes for cars up to 3.5 tonnes is also apparent, in order to ensure simultaneous entrance and exit traffic. However, due to the intensity of traffic, the structure of the bridge worsened and it was closed temporarily on 21st August 2007 for further structural rehabilitation. It will be reopened in the future. Another issue concerns toilet access for people waiting to exit Romanian territory. There is a toilet inside the official main building designated as public, but in practice the access for passengers is restricted. There is an exchange office in the customs area, but it does not function. Information concerning the laws and regulations are put on a booth, but the writing is small and travellers do not read it.

The opening of this border checkpoint had a great impact upon a local feeble economy in Sighet. The opportunity of petty trade as a supplementary source of income, as well as of organized informal trade, is motivated by the fact that all product of personal interest (food, clothing, cigarettes) are significantly cheaper in Ukraine. All these categories of goods are bought in Ukraine and commercialized in Romania, with a special emphasis on cigarettes.

³⁰ The weight limitations on cars (maximum 3.5 tonnes) did not seem to help much on this situation. As a consequence, the border bridge was closed temporarily on 21 August 2007 for further structural rehabilitation and it will be reopened in the future.

Characteristics of the persons crossing the border

At Sighetul Marmației border crossing point we can differentiate between three situations: there is an organized informal trade in cigarettes, there is individual local petty trade, and there is also the new-created situation of petty traders who commute frequently to Sighet from neighbouring rural villages. The latter category often abandons their agricultural labour, paying if needed day labourers from the profits gained with cigarettes petty trading. In the town of Sighetul Marmației, commercial agents that supply from Romania lose profit in favour of informally commercialized but cheaper products introduced from Ukraine. Ukrainian citizens also cross the border, for petty trade and sometimes for work interests, owing to better wages on the Romanian side.

Similar to the case of all the other border crossing points, the ratio of men versus women is unequal at Sighetul Marmației – Solotvino border crossing point, with **73%** men and only **27%** women. As far as education level is concerned, **47%** of the total number of respondents have secondary education, while **22%** have higher education.

26% of the passengers declare to cross the border with work or business purposes, or for shopping, and **15%** have tourist interests. About **25%** of respondents cross the border in order to visit their families, a percentage that is similar to all the other border-crossing points investigated in Romania.

The percentage of active population (respondents with a permanent job) is **43%**, while **10%** attend some form of education. The percentage of pensioners is higher in this case compared to the other border crossing points, namely **20%** of the total number of respondents. There are **6%** housekeepers, also a high percentage compared to the other 3 investigated border crossing points. Concerning the distance between the border and the place of origin, **92%** declare to live closer than **50 km** away from the Sighetul Marmației border crossing point, while only **2%** live closer than **100 km** away

and **5%** of the total number of respondents live further than **100 km** away from the border checkpoint.

The high percentage of passengers who live very close to the border, less than 50 km away, strongly suggests the presence of petty trade interests, which do not exclude the presence of familial visiting as purpose for crossing the border. The qualitative field data confirms the existence of parted families between the two sides of Tisa River, one of the main reasons for opening the bridge as a border crossing point. But the same qualitative material portrays a significant amount of flourishing informal border trade, centred on cigarettes dealing and motivated by the cheaper products of Ukraine. This informal trade is an opportunity as new as the opening of the Sighetul Marmației – Solotvino border crossing point, thus with a history no longer than that of 7 months (15 January – 21 August 2007, the date of closing the border point for general repairs to the bridge). The newness of this local trade opportunity can partially explain the relative openness of the local authorities to discuss this subject. The vast majority of the people engaged in petty trade or organized informal trade are Romanians, and Ukrainians are less numerous. There are individual petty traders from Sighetul Marmației, but not as many as there are individual petty traders from other villages in the proximity of the border. Their majority are men, aspect sustained also by the quantitative data. There are also organized informal networks of cigarettes dealers, who transport the objects of their trade by cars or by using the so-called “little bees” (*albinuțe*), pedestrian youngsters who cross the border several times per day and transport cigarettes cartons from Ukraine to Romania. There is also a significant amount of scooters and bicycles, not only pedestrians and vehicles, which cross the border on a daily basis. The intense petty trade affected the local traders. Shops in Sighet and the oil station have lost many of their clients and dissatisfaction bursts out. Moreover, petty trade networks press the Border Guard officers in allowing them to undertake these activities and to cross the borders several times a day. The great percentage of active population, as well as that of pensioners crossing the border, suggests that petty trade is, in the case

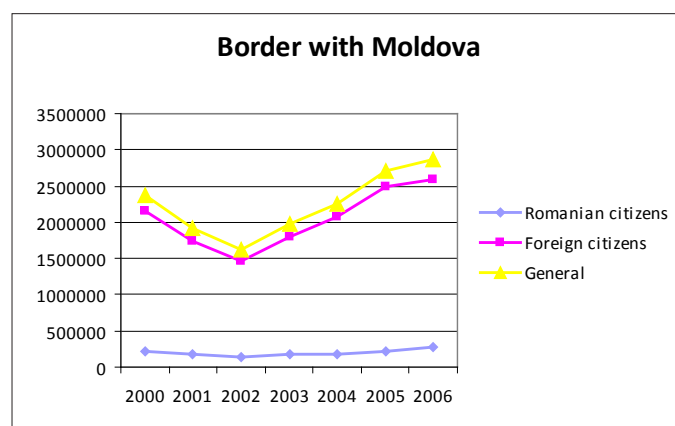
of Sighetul Marmăției – Solotvino border crossing point, a source for supplementary income for individual traders, and less the main source of income. Networks get more income. The issues of corruption and demands for bribery aim at Ukrainian personnel of the border cross point can be found in both the officials' as well as in the passengers' discourse. The passage on the Ukrainian side of the border is generally short.

Characteristics of the Sculeni border crossing point

Reasons for the selection of the border crossing point

The border with Moldova is 681 km³¹ long and has 6 border crossing points, out of which those in Albița, Sculeni and Galați concentrated 80% of the traffic in 2006³². The regime of borders was not regulated for several years and there is still no border treaty signed between the two countries³³. The first treaty governing the borders was signed in 2000³⁴. The access of Romanian citizens to the neighbouring country is granted based on the passport or the ID card, without the need for a visa or a residence card, while Moldovan citizens need to obtain a visa or a residence card in order to enter Romania. After 1992, Moldovan citizens were able to come to Romania based on an agreement between the two governments. Thus, initially they were able to cross the borders just on the basis of their ID. Afterwards, the requirement of owning the passport was introduced. Finally, in October 2006, Romania introduced visas for Moldovan citizens³⁵, but

obtaining these visas is free for Moldovan citizens. The majority of Moldovan citizens are Romanian speakers³⁶. After 2007, there has been an increasing number of requests for Romanian citizenship by Moldovan citizens, estimates ranking up to 800,000 individuals being in this situation³⁷. This may lead towards unclear developments on the border traffic over the next years.



Due to the concentration of traffic on the aforementioned border crossing points, we have chosen Sculeni and Albița as the crossing points to be analyzed. Also, Albița represents a model for the borders with non-EU countries. Thus, comparison to other border crossing points can be made and policy recommendations can be formulated accordingly. Sculeni is near a big city, Iași. We hypothesized that the comparison to the other border crossing points, generally located near small towns (such as Sighet), may bring out different results to reflect on. Initially, Moldovans were coming to Romania for various reasons, including those wishing to obtain visas for western European states. Now, they are obliged first to obtain a visa for Romania. Because of the high number of visa requests, Romanian authorities are facing serious administrative difficulties and queues for visas are very long in the front of the Romanian consulate department in Chișinău, the capital

³¹ Source: INS, National Statistical Institute.

³² These 3 points were crossed in 2006 by 636,060 travellers, whereas the whole border by 786,797 travellers.

³³ In this sense, discussions are still in a halt. The problematic issue is that of language. The Moldovan side sustains that the Moldovan language is not the same with the Romanian language while the Romanian side argues that it is.

³⁴ Acord între Guvernul României și Republicii Moldova privind cooperarea vamală și asistența administrativă reciprocă pentru prevenirea, investigarea și combaterea infracțiunilor în domeniul vamal, (București, 24 aprilie 2000). www.mae.ro.

³⁵ Acordul între Guvernul României și Guvernul Republicii Moldova privind regimul călătoriilor cetățenilor; semnat la București, 20 octombrie 2006.

³⁶ Roughly, 70% of the population declare themselves Moldovan, and about 2% – Romanian. Source: Wikipedia. Officials of the Republic of Moldova insist on the distinctiveness between Romanian and Moldovan, but practically Moldovan citizens speak the same language as Romanians. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moldova>.

³⁷ Source: Cotidianul.

city of Moldova. The imposition of visas highly affected the cross border traffic between the two countries.

Sculeni border crossing point

The border crossing point of Sculeni connecting Romania to the Republic of Moldova, has been functioning as such since August 1991. Opened at first as a small-traffic regional crossing, it began to function as an international border crossing point following the legal governmental decision in March 1996³⁸. As a rule, the same as in the case of Stamora-Moravița border crossing point, Sculeni is a road transport crossing point and access for pedestrians is limited. This border crossing point is located on the European E385 route, km mark 218, the road that links the Romanian city of Iași, placed 20 km away from the border, with Chișinău, the capital of the Republic of Moldova. Iași is the administrative capital of the Iași county and one of the biggest and most flourishing cities of Romania. It has over 340,000 inhabitants, with a great Romanian majority of 98%.

The quality of Iași-Sculeni road is very good, the distance between the two takes 20 minutes by car. The border checkpoint is located in the area of Sculeni village that belongs to Victoria commune, on the bank of the river Prut. The Victoria commune has been a part of the Iași County since 2004. It encloses 7 villages, has a population of 4,500 inhabitants out of whom only 1,300 are active on the labour market, 80% working in agriculture.

To the border crossing point Sculeni on the Romanian side corresponds with the border crossing point Sculeni on the Moldovan side, which makes the village of Sculeni the closest locality on both sides of the river Prut. About 30 km away from the border on the Moldovan side, there is another village, Hijdieni, while the capital Chișinău is located about 110 km away from the border crossing point.

The access to the border area is marked by the existence at the entry of a booth for verifying passports, after which there is another 300 m

of road until the border final check point. In this point there are: one booth destined to check the entrance direction, and another booth for checking the exit direction. Each one of the entrance and exit directions has 6 lanes for vehicles, distributed as follows: 1 for diplomatic staff, 1 for EU cars, 2 for non-EU cars, 1 for buses and 1 for trucks. In practice, there are frequent confusions especially between the EU vehicles and non-EU vehicles designated lanes. Each one of these border final check points has 3 offices for Customs officers and 3 offices for Border Police officers, destined for passport control. Respondents have complained of the lack of facilities for persons with disabilities and for those who travel with children, as well as of cleaner toilets. The Sculeni border crossing point has an exchange office, a bar inside the Custom's Bureau and a point for releasing vignettes. The general impression created by this facility is that of a pretty clean and neat space, compared to other border crossing points. When interviewed, the passengers declare it to be on the middle position in their preferences, while Albița – another border crossing point to the Republic of Moldova – occupies the first place in their preferences. As for the sanitary service of the border crossing point, this belongs to the administration of Victoria commune. Respondents declare to be fairly satisfied with this service. Concerning the access to legal information, there are posters with legal information available, the only problem being with the size of those posters – A4 – which makes them pretty hard to notice by the passengers.

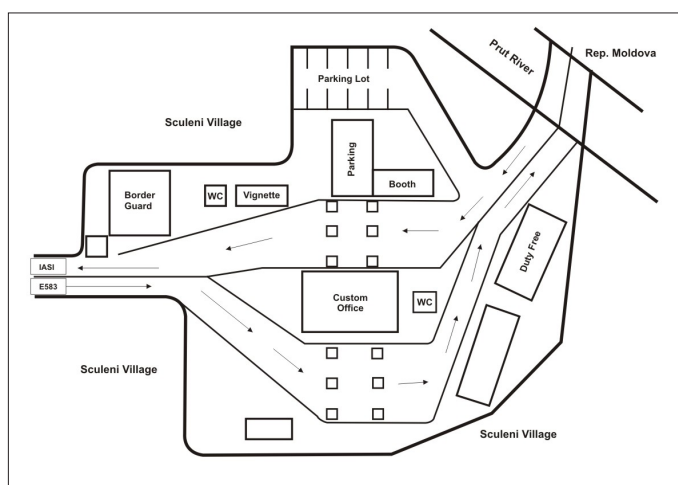
Generally, the medium necessary processing time observed in the field for crossing this border point is of approximate 20 min for small cars and 30–40 min for buses. This time assessment modifies significantly during the weekend, between rush hours 12:00–5:00 p.m.

The manner of Customs and Border Police officers addressing and relating towards the passengers is a formal one, due to the fact that most of them are young and specialized in this field. In the interviews, respondents accuse them nevertheless of preferential treatment towards the EU citizens (especially West Europeans). But the impression of a preferen-

³⁸ H.G. no. 205 / 27.03.1996.

tial treatment can be partially explained by the fact that Romanian and especially Moldovan citizens need many documents in order to cross the border and the examination procedure lasts longer.

Concerning the issue of corruption, respondents often declare that “it exists, as it does all over Romania, but it seems like things have improved a little after the integration with the EU”; at the same time, they point out to the existence of corruption on the Moldovan side of the border, and accuse Moldovan officials of it.



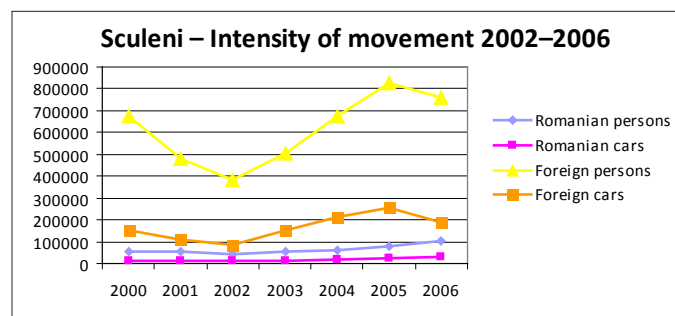
Map of the Sculeni border crossing point

Characteristics of the persons crossing the border

Before 2007, when Moldovan citizens were obliged to obtain visas in order to come to Romania, the ratio between foreign travellers to Romanian travellers was about 7:1. The border was crossed mainly by Moldovan citizens, coming with trade tourism and local petty trade to Romania. Also, different sources indicate that Romania has started to become not just a source, but also a destination country of migration and Moldovan citizens are well represented among them. In 2006, there were 981,000 crossings at this border.

Travellers here generally use Sculeni (61%) as the border crossing point, and not other locations. 68% come from Iași, Romania. In the case of this border crossing point, the gender distribution coincides with Moravița's; more precisely, 75% of those who use this border cross-

ing point are men, while 25% of them are women. 42% of the total of our respondents have just secondary education, 32% attend a form of higher education. Accordingly to our database, 59% of those who cross this border point have a form of higher education. Roughly 44% of the passengers declare to have work or business interests for crossing the border, while only 18% declare to have a tourist purpose. Similarly as is in the case of Albița, a high number of passengers travel in order to visit their families (26%).



Out of the total number of those who answered to our questionnaires, 62% are active population, while 21.5% are presently undertaking a form of education. The poorest represented category is that of the pensioners, of roughly 4%.

Concerning the distance between the passengers' place of origin and Sculeni border crossing point, 16% of those who answered our questionnaire declared to live more than 100 km away from the border check point, while 83% of them live less than 100 km away. 62% of respondents live less than 50 km away from the border.

The vast majority of those who use this border crossing point *do not* come from localities placed near the border. Nevertheless, Sculeni border checking point confirms a general tendency ascertained in all the 4 border points investigated: the predominance of male gender of those who cross the border. There is also a vast majority of Moldavian citizens who use this border checking point, compared to Moravița and Sighet where the majority is represented by Romanian citizens, which could also explain on one hand the high number of passengers who travel with business and work interests, and the small amount of tourists on the other hand. If we analyze the high per-

centage of respondents who declare their purpose to be business interests or visiting family, we can ascertain that the high number of Moldovan citizens who use this border check point is motivated by the fact that, together with Romania joining the EU, the number of passengers diminished significantly. The majority of travellers who continue to cross the border are being motivated by work or familial interests, not by border informal activities as in the case of Sighet and Moravița border check points. Based on the field observations, we can ascertain the existence of a certain amount of border informal activities, but on a rather small scale. This theory is sustained by the high percentage of those who live more than 100 km away from the border.

Unlike in Sighet and Moravița, but similar to Albița, the interviewed passengers often mention the fact that those who cross the border are not locals; they came from towns placed more than 100 km away from the border, aspect which amplified after January 2007 and after the changes in legislation concerning the access to Romanian territory. Thus, Sculeni and Albița represent border crossing points used mainly by Moldovan citizens, more than by any other category.

The characteristics of Albița border crossing point

The border crossing point of Albița, which links Romania to the Republic of Moldova, has been functioning since 1964. Its first modernization was carried out during 1977 and 1978. It was finalized only in 1980, due to the carrying over the border of the Olympic flame, in its journey to Moscow, the host of Olympic Games that year. Albița has been functioning as an autonomous entity since 1973 and it is subordinated to Iași Customs. On the Moldavian side, Leușeni Customs corresponds to the Albița border crossing point. Chișinău, the capital of the Republic of Moldavia, is located about 80 km away from the border. Albița border crossing point is in the region of Drânceni commune, near the village of Rășești. The closest town on the Romanian side of the border is Huși, Vaslui district, located 20 km away from the border crossing point. Vaslui district is one of the poorest regions

of Romania and migration towards Western Europe is largely developed. This district is placed in the eastern part of the country, similar to the Iași district to which the border crossing point Sculeni belongs. The town of Huși has a population of about 30,000 inhabitants.

Albița is part of a pilot programme concerning the modernization of all the border-crossing points. In the summer of 2004, there was a significant modernization and extension of the customs area, with a space of 35 ha conceded to the border crossing point. In addition, an investment of over 1,200,000 euro took place in 2006, allocated to three modules: the first one destined for pets and large animals, the second realized for food (human) consumption and the third for raw materials of animal origin. This is a step on the way to make Albița border crossing the most important one in Romania³⁹, which will ensure the import of animal products and live animals for Romania as well as for all the Eastern region of EU. Besides, an integrated IT system for controlling the identity of the travellers has been launched.

Of a considerable spatial extent after the 1994–1999 improvements, Albița border crossing point has the following endowments: 2 entries for cars, 1 entry for trucks, translation office, over 50 personnel offices, protocol auditorium, buildings destined for cars control, central heating, 6 flats for personnel, auto workshop, depository rooms, parking lots for 200 trucks, water supply network, evacuation network, buildings for Customs services and over 10 km of concrete lane circulating tracks. Out of the total 35 ha, 16 are occupied with green areas and ornamental plants and trees. The cleaning is here maintained by a company from Husi, not by the administration of the border crossing point and involves 50 persons' work in the maintenance of green spaces and general cleanness. Close to the border crossing point, there is an oil station, including a small supermarket, and toilets. There is an additional 1 km of highway with 4 lane circulating tracks to this complex, linking the custom border area to the centre of Rășești village.

³⁹ In a couple of years Romania will join the Schengen area and then the Western borders towards Hungary, and those towards Bulgaria, will no longer be active.

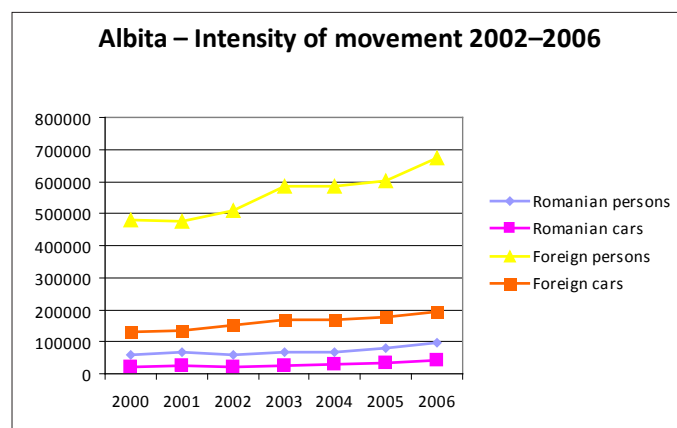
Modernizing this border space involved teamwork with foreign experts (Spanish and English), who supervised and counselled the implementation of new custom regulation. The process of modernization involved a new type of behaviour at the border, directly aiming at improving the ways in which Customs and Border Police officers treat passengers. The head of Albița Customs declared that, based on the new EU regulations, the process of papers control cannot take more than 15 min. During our fieldwork, we observed that these regulations are generally put in practice.

Albița Customs and Border Police have 200 employees of different specializations, functions, degrees and prerogatives. About 100 of them have secondary and faculty education, working as economists, police officers, gendarmes, border guards, Customs officers (around 80 persons), doctors, chemical investigator, appraisers (17 persons with work contract). Most of this personnel live in the closest town, Huși, from which they commute daily. Respondents observe the existence of certain changes as compared to the previous situation of Albița border crossing point, and consider it the most modern and the best maintained border crossing point. However, they still declare to be unsatisfied with some of the maintenance issues, especially with the condition of the toilets.

Until 1 July 2001, when EU ordered Romania to secure especially its eastern borders (especially in the Eastern region), the ties between Romanians and Moldavians had been very close for 11 years. There was continuous visiting, many Moldovan pupils were learning in Romanian high schools, hundreds of inhabitants from around Leușeni Customs area (Leușeni, Călmățui, Feteasca, Obileni, Cotu Morii, Cioara) came to work in agriculture or to sell their products on the Huși and Vaslui markets. This was no longer possible as before 2001, when the ID was enough to get entrance into Romania, and even less after 1 January 2007. Irregular crossing here is very difficult to be undertaken, due to the fact that this border crossing point represents the biggest and the most important border crossing point of the entire Eastern EU border, benefiting of an increased attention and security measures due to that fact.

Characteristics of the persons crossing the border

Until 2006, the number of foreign persons (mainly Moldovan citizens) exceeded by far the number of Romanians (ratio: 7:1, see the chart). After 2007, when the visa regime was introduced, this number of foreign travellers, made mainly by Moldovan citizens, dropped dramatically⁴⁰ and the trend reversed. In 2006 there were 679,817 crossings at this location, fewer than in Sculeni (981,000).



The gender distribution of those who cross the Albița border checking point is close to Moravița's, 80% men and 20% women. As for education, 27% of respondents have secondary school education and 62% have higher education. The place of origin is situated more than 100 km away from the border for 70.5% of those who answered our questionnaire, different from the other border crossing points.

The percentage of active population is high, 86% of them declaring to be employed. Only 3% are attending a form of education. Roughly 2% of our respondents are pensioners.

8% declare tourism interests, while 45% have of work or business interests. A significantly high percentage of those who cross this border point (39%) have the purpose of visiting their families, living on the other side of the border. We can assert this percentage to be

⁴⁰ Also, a limit of the research is that the fieldwork was realized just in the middle of August. Strong traffic is seen just at the beginning of August and at the beginning of September, when migrants from Moldova are coming from and returning to Western Europe.

rather constant in all 4 border crossing points, due to the fact that our field research was undertaken during the summer, a holiday period and thus a favourable context for familial visits. The same assertion stands also for the percentage of tourism interests in most of the researched border crossing points, due to the same seasonal conditions.

Compared to Sculeni, the other investigated border crossing point between Romania and the Republic of Moldova, Albița is the largest and most important border point of the whole Eastern part of EU border. It is also crossed mainly by Moldovan citizens and less by Romanian citizens. Until one year ago, before Romania joined the EU, the vast majority of the crossing population was composed of Moldovan citizens who came to work in agriculture; those engaged in petty trade, those who came to study in Romania and had legal arrangements for crossing this border point. Starting with 1 January 2007, the majority of the passengers who use this border check point consists mainly of: Moldovan citizens, men, with business or education interests in Romania, or those who transit Romania as they come back to Moldova from work in Spain or Italy. The more and more restrictive formalities applied to Moldovan citizens after the mentioned date determined a certain decrease of the border petty trade. Also, the restructuring of border crossing categories almost eliminated the segment of population who used to practice informal border petty trade. All the legislation concerning better securing of the eastern border of EU had a practical effect of diminishing the amount of informal activities at the border and of the number of persons practicing it. The field observations, along with interviews with the officials, confirm the fact that the structure of the population using this border checkpoint has modified significantly after applying the EU legislation, from petty traders to a majority of people with business, work or familial interests in crossing the border. This aspect can also be a consequence of the fact that EU and Romanian officials, due to its importance as strategic EU Eastern border point, closely monitor Albița border crossing point.

4. Quality of work of the external EU border crossing point

a. Technical conditions on the border crossing

Access to the information on legal regulations

Overall, about 50% of travellers evaluate as adequate the information concerning the rules of entering the country and the information on customs. Data on specific border crossing points show differentiated results. Thus, 62%, respective 67% of the travellers in Sighet, consider the information concerning the custom legislation and the rules to entry the country to be adequately posted. The Romanian Customs and Border Police officers often inform the passengers about legal matters. In exchange, the issue of improper access to legal information is addressed in what concerns the Ukrainian side of the border. Although many travellers consider the information being available, some others express contrary opinions: “here we have just some A4 sheets of paper, posted on some booths... and if you ask them about the regulations, officers are not well informed, they don’t know the law [properly]”.

Opinions in Sculeni on availability of information are of about 41–45% for both types of information. In Albița, 48% and 53% of travellers consider the information adequately posted. There are travellers who complain about an unsatisfactory access to legal information on the Romanian side of the border. Small information posters, placed at random, from which the passengers cannot obtain any quick and clear information, leave it up to the Customs and Border Police officers to offer or not this type of legal information. “The custom officers said [to read on] the internet... However, not everybody has internet at home.... In addition, information in Russian could be placed. There should also be a guide: for crossing the border to Chișinău you should have green card, and this, and that... I haven’t been on the other side, I wouldn’t know”.

In Moravița the situation is the worst as seen by travellers. Access to information concerning legislation is considered adequate by 35% of respondents, 46% find it hard to say and 13% consider it to be inadequate. The field observations certify the existence of legal information posted at sight, and the existence of folders destined for the passengers, the problem being with the placement of informative posters: inside the main building, on panels difficult to notice.

Also, access to information should be provided by institutions such as the Romanian consulate, for instance when travellers should be informed in advance about the requirements for crossing the border. Below, two examples are provided about the ways in which weak access to information influences travellers' plans.

Example 1

In some cases procedures require that travel to Bucharest should be accompanied by hotel reservations in Romania or other formal housing arrangements. In such cases, the procedure requires the hotel is checked and the reservation confirmed from the border. "One young man was once turned back because nobody answered the phone at the hotel where he had the reservation. His papers were OK, his invitation for the embassy in Bucharest was OK, but he could go no further".

Example 2

"I was with my daughter, I am divorced. The Police, which gave me the passports, said I needed nothing. Later on, at the border I was asked for the divorce act. I didn't have it and I couldn't go further. I remained with my daughter at the border crossing point, and nobody said anything about what I was to do and where I had to go".

In such cases, information should be clearly provided by the Romanian authorities through the consulates, when visas are issued. Flyers and clear posters should be available to travellers. Moreover, from our observations, information in different languages is inadequately posted. Thus, basic information should be sim-

ple and clear; presenting only the copies of the Romanian laws often rather complicates the issue than helps informing travellers. Information should be clear and simple, in the languages spoken in the neighbouring countries, and in some international languages. It should be visible at the outside of the buildings.

In conclusion, many interviewees consider information on custom clearance rules not to be adequately posted, and that the changes in regulations not announced in due time. For example, on the Sculeni border crossing point, one of the interviewees observed that "in different spots of the border crossing zone one can find information on customs legislation, which is helpful, but posters are pretty small and most travellers do not read them because they lack time to do so". Moreover, the high ratio of positive answers in Sighet may be due to the fact that travellers are actually local people, crossing the border daily. For them, to get to the information is not just a matter of formal information at the border crossing point, but also of information arriving informally. At the same time, it is difficult to rank properly travellers' appreciations obtained in the questionnaires. In the interviews we obtained in general rather positive evaluations for Albița and Sculeni, but as shown before, there are many malfunctions.

Characteristics of the place of the custom clearance and passport control, lines organization and waiting time

(See also above the description of each border crossing point). Albița is the best-equipped border crossing point. Travellers to Moldova consider it the best on the Romanian-Moldovan border. Comparison is often made between Albița and other border crossing points (here Sculeni). Albița is considered the best border crossing point by about half (46.7%) of the travellers in Albița. Sculeni also has a good infrastructure. In Moravița and Sighet, travellers consider that all border crossing points are the same. In these cases, there is no clear reference between a "good" and a "bad" border crossing point, and this could also be the result of the big distance to other important border crossing points. However, infrastructure is lacking in both places and travellers complain about that.

Based on monitoring, the waiting times are as follows: Moravița 3 minutes, Sighet 99 minutes, Sculeni 35 minutes, Albița 22 minutes. Altogether, time to cross to Serbia was the best, with an estimated 12.5 minutes (in the questionnaires). This actually hides the real dynamics at stake, where most travellers are disguised tourists: 70% of the travellers (based on monitoring) are Romanians, i.e., petty traders and they do not cross to Serbia but come back to Romania. However, this is the quickest crossing time. The data reveal also that Albița is better in comparison to Sculeni, information that is consistent with that from interviews. In Sculeni, travellers declared that they need 108 minutes to get into Moldova.

Thus, in comparison to Albița where travellers generally do not complain on the crossing times, in Sculeni there is more criticism: “sometimes it takes long with the crossing, because of the ‘speed’ of the proceedings... they should open more counters”. From our fieldwork observations, crossing on the Moldovan side was long. Even if on the Romanian side the crossing time was reasonable, it did not actually help too much in the overall crossing time to Moldova. For this case, we suggest that much should be done: collaboration with the Moldovan authorities should be realized in order to increase efficiency on the Moldovan side.

The worst times are in Sighet: the waiting time is long and the infrastructure should be improved. Due to the size of the bridge, cars can circulate in just one direction. Due to the amount of time of waiting in inadequate conditions (long waiting lines, standing up position for pedestrians, crowd, agitation, lack of toilets etc.), reports are expected of incidents between travellers or between travellers and Customs officers, none of which exceeding the line of verbal aggression though. “Romanian Border Guard and Customs officers don’t manage the situation. There is no organization here. We have to wait here 2–3 hours... in rain, or sun... It is as if we were some stupid people, and the whole border point is blocked. The border crossing goes well just sometimes, and this is just when some of them have a bit more mood to work... Did you see? A few moments ago that old man has fainted”. On the Ukrainian

side, the crossing is quicker in comparison to the Romanian side, but travellers declare that it is based on bribery. “Every time you go there, you have to give 3 lei⁴¹”. Looking at this case, we strongly suggest that opening up new border crossing points should be accompanied by appropriate means to facilitate the traffic.

Finally, the different border crossing procedures can also explain the longer times at the borders to Moldova and Ukraine in comparison with the very short ones at the border to Serbia. According to the law, travellers coming from countries with migration potential are thoroughly checked at the entrance⁴². “I don’t know the exact procedures, but I’ve seen that Moldovan citizens are asked for many things, they should provide many papers, receipts and so on...”. Thus, if Ukraine and Moldova are in the first category, with Serbia the situation differs. Moreover, the number of Serbian travellers here is relatively low. Thus, the very large differences of crossing times between the analyzed border crossing points are due to the differences in procedures, infrastructure and traffic at the specific border points. Accordingly, a more developed infrastructure should be available in order to speed up the crossings. Especially at the borders to Moldova and Ukraine, we strongly recommend improving the speed of the proceeding by acquiring computer facilities and by using more counters when long queues are formed. As mentioned before, cooperation with the Moldovan side may also better the efficiency.

Access to and standard of toilets, bar/restaurant, foreign exchange office

The sanitary facilities exist in Albița but some travellers consider that they are not always in a good condition. 56% of travellers in Albița consider the quality of the sanitary facilities there to be high and very high. However, some travellers consider that “there should be more hygiene here, soap, drying machine and so on”. The situation in Sculeni is worse than in Albița. In Sculeni, 18% of travellers consider the quality of

⁴¹ About one euro.

⁴² Hotărâre nr. 445 din 9 mai 2002, pentru aprobarea normelor metodologice de aplicare a ordonanței de urgență a guvernului nr. 105/2001 privind frontiera de stat a României, Art. 18/1.

the sanitary facilities low or rather low, whereas 76% assess it rather high. The difference in perceptions could come from the different type of persons crossing Albița. In comparison to Sculeni, in Albița there are many travellers coming from Western Europe or Bucharest. In Sighet there is a toilet, but travellers are not allowed to use it. Here, 47% of travellers express dissatisfaction with the sanitary facilities. However, the situation is not critical, since the border crossing point is at the outskirts of the town. But it is problematic for people waiting at the entrance queues: “people have no toilet to use here staying in the queue, sometimes 3–4 hours”. In Moravița the sanitary facilities are not usable. Accordingly, solely Albița attains a certain level of quality in this respect and travellers mention that situation here has improved significantly over the last years: “a few years ago there was a lot of garbage here, no civilization, there were no toilets”. For the other border crossing points, more efforts should be engaged in improving the situation. All border crossing points lack facilities for handicapped persons.

During the fieldwork, we observed that only a small number of travellers use exchange offices located near border crossing zones. Interviews recorded only a small number of references to these facilities. 28% of the travellers think that there is an insufficient number of exchange offices, only 24% being satisfied with it. In Albița, 20% of the travellers declare that they do not know/do not use the exchange offices. 19% consider that there are not sufficient exchange offices. 39% of travellers in Sculeni declared that there is a sufficient number of exchange offices. In Sighet, 48% do not use exchange offices, and another 24% believe that there are enough. Travellers exchange money either in Sighet, with informal traders, or in Ukraine, at a bank office. In Moravița there are many non-answers on this issue; the closest exchange office is 16 km away.

With regard to restaurants, bars and shops, opinions are less clear than in the case of the sanitary facilities and exchange offices. In Albița and Moravița travellers tend to consider that there are not enough restaurants, bars and shops, with 32% and 55%, respectively. In Sighet and Sculeni, the situation is a bit better.

One of the reasons for these answers is that these two border crossing points are located in, and respectively close to larger towns, so that travellers can benefit better from the services offered by these towns. Looking at the qualitative data at Moravița, where there is no restaurant, travellers consider that “it would be good to have a restaurant here, especially for tourists coming from afar”. In the other cases, situation is not critical.

In conclusion, the sanitary facilities should be improved at all border crossing points, but to different extents: the need the most improvement particularly in Sighet and Moravița. Facilities for handicapped persons and for children should be provided. Restaurants and bars might be improved. Especially in Moravița, a small restaurant would be needed, serving both travellers and the personnel of the border crossing point, which suffers from the lack of catering/food facilities. Moreover, especially at this border crossing point, the building should be modernized and a larger car park could be realized. Lighting could be improved. Finally, with respect to changes at the border crossing points, about 61% of the travellers want some changes. This indicates somehow a feeling of dissatisfaction with the present-day situation.

b. Services rendered to the travellers on the border crossing by Border Guard and Customs officers

The general opinions regarding Customs and Border Police officers in all 4 border crossing points in respect of the services they render are positive. In the following, these qualifications will be addressed first for Border Guard officers and then for Customs officers, in all four border crossing points. The qualitative information on these issues is more scarce than the information on infrastructure, thus the analysis will rely more on the quantitative data. Addressing these issues, generally, travellers do not differentiate between Border Police officers and Customs officers. They consider the officers polite: over the last years the situation has been improving steadily and “they are very polite now”.

Attitudes of Border Guard officers towards travellers

As far as Border Police officers are concerned, in Moravița, **88%** of the total number of respondents assess them to be “prompt” or “very prompt”. As for politeness, **88%** declare that Romanian Border Guard officers are “very” and “quite” polite, normally addressing people with *madam/sir* (**88%**). **61%** of respondents are not familiar with the Border Guard officers’ manner of addressing travellers from other countries, while **37%** consider that they do not address them differently. In Sighet, Border Police officers’ attitude towards passengers is also positively evaluated, with **85%** of the total respondents considering them “very” or “fairly” prompt. **85%** consider the Border Police officers to be polite towards the travellers and **93%** report their manner of addressing to be *madam/sir*. The majority of those who answered our questionnaire do not think that Border Police officers address travellers from other countries differently (**52%**), while **33%** do not know it. In Sculeni, **66%** appreciate the Border Guard officers to be “prompt” or “very prompt”. **76%** consider that the Border Police officers are “polite”. The addressing formula mostly used by both Customs and Border Police officers is that of *madam/sir*, **86%** of respondents mentioning this type of addressing which is applied by Romanian officials indiscriminately towards all the travellers, including foreigners. In Albița **83%** of respondents consider the Border Police officers to be generally prompt. The Border Police officers have also been favourably evaluated by most of the travellers, considered “polite” or “very polite” by **85%**, the addressing formula used being the standard one – *madam/sir* – in **91%**. **70%** of travellers do not know if there is a differentiated treatment towards travellers from other countries. **15%** declare there is a preferential addressing towards foreigners from a part of Border Police officers, while **15%** consider that this treatment is not preferential.

Attitudes of Customs officers towards travellers

84% of respondents in Moravița consider Customs officers to be “prompt” or “very prompt”, and **87%** say they are “very” or “fairly” polite towards the travellers. Their manner of

addressing is declared to be *madam/sir* by **86%** of respondents. **38%** consider that Customs officers do not address passengers from other countries differently, while **57%** do not know.

In Sighet, there is a generally satisfactory impression concerning Customs officers’ promptness, which is appreciated as being satisfactory by **77%** of the total number of respondents, while their politeness is appreciated by **84%** of respondents. Their general manner of addressing travellers is *madam/sir*, reported by **95%** of those who answered our questionnaire. A vast majority of passengers do not consider that Customs officers address travellers from other countries differently (**50%**), while **31%** do not know and **17%** consider that they do address them differently. However, the qualitative data provide a different view. Thus, the situation seems to be tenser here. Due to the long queues and crowdedness, the atmosphere is often difficult. People are of the opinion that “border officials should be more polite, they should talk more politely to travellers”. They complain about being “pushed” into queues. As mentioned before, this is also the place where officers’ promptness is considered to be the worst. In Sculeni, **60%** of travellers declare that Customs officers are generally prompt with rendering their services. Regarding the issue of their politeness, **74%** of respondents consider Customs officers to be polite, with **26%** considering them to be very polite. In Albița, more than one half of travellers, **76%**, consider Customs officers to be prompt with their services. As for politeness, **77%** of the population segment questioned considers the Customs officers to be fairly polite, using the addressing formula of *madam/sir* – **92%**. **19%** say that there is different addressing towards foreigners, while **15%** assert the opposite regarding the Customs officers’ behaviour.

Personal qualifications and the number of Border Guard and Customs officers

In Moravița there is a majority of **84%** of respondents who say they never had any problem of communication or language with Romanian border officials. A high percentage reports never to have had difficulties of communicating or language with Customs officers (**84%**). As for estimating the Romanian officials’

number, **62%** consider it to be sufficient and **31%** find it hard to estimate, while **61%** consider the Border Police officers to be in sufficient number and **29%** do not know. The field observations find the Romanian officials' number appropriate at Stamora Moravița border crossing point. Qualitative information is contradictory in evaluating the knowledge of foreign languages among border officials here. Some consider that officers "do not speak English properly and not at all Serbian". Some others consider that the level of knowledge is appropriate: "in front of us there were some Germans and one of the officers spoke with them in English. I noticed that he was speaking very well".

94% of the total number of respondents report they never had problems of communicating or problems regarding the language with the Romanian custom workers from Sighetul Marmației – Solotvino border crossing point. **95%** of our respondents declare never to have experienced problems of communication or language with the Romanian Border Police officers. Their number is considered sufficient by **62%** of respondents, while **27%** disagree, claiming that an increased number of Border Police officers would improve the situation at this border point. Opinions regarding the number of Customs officers are divided between **50%** who consider their number to be sufficient and **43%** who consider that their number should be increased. These opinions coincide with the qualitative data, where most of the interviewed passengers consider the number of Border Police officers to be quite satisfactory. Some of the passengers believe that "more Customs officers, about 6–7 at the entry booth, would improve the situation". Moreover, the qualitative data in Sighet points out that Romanian Customs and Border Police officers speak some Ukrainian, and most of the younger Customs and Border Police officers speak also more languages. However, the level of knowledge is unclear.

In Sculeni, as for the language and communication, **90%** of travellers declare never to have experienced any problems with Customs officers, while **91%** have the same perspective regarding Border Police officers. However, the

knowledge of foreign languages is unclear. For example, a passenger observed "I've seen once some Russians, the translation to Romanian was done by some other travellers, at the border crossing point nobody was speaking Russian". The general number of Customs and Border Police officers is found sufficient by **58%** and **68%**, respectively, of the interviewed population. About **12** to **15%** of the travellers find it hard to pronounce an opinion on this issue. In Albița there are no communication problems for over **97%** of the travellers who declare never to have experienced such a problem with the Customs or Border Police officers. A majority – **68%** – of travellers consider the number of Customs officers to be sufficient, and **64%** in the case of Border Police officers. In both border crossing points, travellers consider that Russian should be spoken.

Behaviour of Border Police and Customs officers during control

In Moravița, **82%** of respondents to our questionnaire declare that they have never encountered bribery or corruption at Stamora Moravița border crossing point, while **11%** find it hard to say. The research of different Romanian journals reports strong accusations of corruption⁴³. At the same time, one can notice different treatment of passengers, especially the pedestrian petty traders. The majority of problematic situations stem from the lack of legal basis to restrict or limit pedestrians' access through this road-transport border crossing point. Moreover, it is difficult to limit petty trade in the context of the general poor economic situation of the region, where informal trade remains a viable option. Regarding the issue of corruption, Romanian officials suggest the existence of this phenomenon only at the Serbian side of the border point.

In Sighet, the solution of increasing the number of Romanian Customs officers operating at Sighetul Marmației – Solotvino border crossing point comes always in second place to the solution of improving the traffic infrastructure, mainly to adding the second lane on the bridge, so that exits from and entries to

⁴³ See for instance <http://www.evz.ro/articleprint.php?artid=267331>.

Romania would take place simultaneously. In what concerns the passengers' opinions about the formal behaviour of Romanian officials from Sighetul Marmăției – Solotvino border crossing point, as it is outlined by the qualitative data, there are passengers' complaints of mistreatments during the waiting time. There are similar complaints from Romanian officials concerning passengers' behaviour. One can safely assume that many of these situations are influenced by the general context of long waiting time, crowdedness and inadequate infrastructure conditions. As to corruption, **92%** of our respondents declare that they have not witnessed any case of bribery with Romanian Customs or Border Police officers, while most of the interviewed passengers say that bribery is the rule with Ukrainian guards. They also complain about Ukrainian guards' general manner of addressing and treating the passengers.

In Sculeni, **21%** of the passengers declare that they encountered corruption, while **63%** claim they had never met such a problem; there are **15%** who avoid having an opinion on this issue. **94%** of the total of respondents say they have never experienced any problem in crossing Sculeni border point, while only **4%** state the contrary. In Albița, **23%** of those questioned declare to have witnessed corruption, either as observers or as participants – while **64%** declare they have never seen such an event and **13%** of them appreciate it to be „hard to say”. On the other hand, a vast majority, **91%**, declare never to have encountered any type of problems while crossing this border point.

Considering the field observations, the informal and formal discussions, we can ascertain that these data reflect the reality at the Albița border crossing point, with some supplementary aspects. For example, respondents make a big difference regarding Customs and Border Police officers' behaviour before and after 1 January 2007. Thus, statements as “it has exceptionally improved during the last year” are present both in the interviews as well as

in discussions with travellers. In addition, in comparison to the previous years, travellers are currently able to make complains against officers. The qualitative information show that in all border crossing points small-scale bribery is present (mostly gifts and small amounts of money) in cases of petty traders, but “this is between officers and travellers they know”.

Also, there are opinions stating that there is a differentiated treatment towards foreign travellers, and in this context Moldovan citizens are specially mentioned – the second in number, after Romanian citizens, who use this border crossing point. “I think there is [a difference]. With Romanian citizens they are more honest, while with the Moldovan ones they are more wicked, excuse my language”. As we have remarked before, these differentiations at the border point can be explained by the fact that Moldovan citizens need a more detailed control of documents, which often causes delays even on the Romanian side of the border point. Generally speaking though, the rules and regulations are respected and the services rendered are mainly of a good quality, such as one of the passengers observed in one of the interviews: “Honestly, the conditions improved significantly, now if you have all the needed papers you cross very easily”.

In conclusion, we observed that more should be improved in terms of infrastructure. There should be better sanitary facilities, information should be better provided to the travellers and more resources should be invested in infrastructure facilities. Services have improved over the recent years at the border crossing points in comparison to the situation several years ago. Politeness has increased. At least English and the languages of the neighbouring countries should be spoken at the border crossing points. Corruption seems to be at low levels and generally limited to petty traders. Finally, to limited extents cooperation may be enhanced between the Romanian and Moldovan side, to improve the traffic.

5. Cooperation between Border Guard and Customs officers. Work of the external EU border crossing points in opinion of Border Guard and Customs officers

Border Guard is an autonomous institution within the Ministry of Interior and Administration. It has a general directorate⁴⁴ and 6 regional units⁴⁵ (each incorporating several counties). Each regional unit incorporates two or more county units⁴⁶. These are divided into sectors and into border points (these roughly located in the border crossing points). Border Guard has its own schools designed to train the personnel. Officers are hired on a contractual basis and currently they are all hired, from specialized schools. The Border Guard, its structure and the legal basis of its functioning were restructured to meet EU admission criteria set up for Romania after 2000. The laws regulating it are all issued after 2000. The new statutory law of the border officer was adopted in 2002⁴⁷. As stressed before, Border Guard and Customs have passed through a series of changes to fulfil EU criteria of professionalism. The check at the border crossing points is carried out by Border Guard officers and they cooperate with all other state authorities involved in securing and controlling the border.

Customs has a central administration, regional directorates and local units. The custom control at the border follows that of the Border Guard. Customs officers receive benefits for confiscated products. Due to the reorganization of Customs after the accession to the European Union, parts of the personnel from the western part of Romania (from the border with Hungary) were transferred to eastern borders. Similar to Border Guard officers, Customs officers have gone through specializations over the last years. A complete clear legal framework and clear procedures do not

set up the relationships between Customs and Border Guard officers. The techniques of their relationship are made up in institutional agreements and local arrangements. Relations with local administrations are scant and distant, even though border officials would like to change this situation. More support from the local administrations would be needed.

Cooperation between Romanian and the neighbouring border crossing points' officials is arranged locally. The technicalities of these arrangements are set up in the law, but the items of these discussions and solutions to different problems are set up locally. For instance, in Moravița cooperation between Customs and Border Police is declared to be satisfactory. There is also a protocol of cooperation between Romanian and Serbian officials, so that they meet whenever it is felt necessary on mutual visits. Older Romanian Customs and Border Police officers speak Serbian, while younger know different other languages.

In Sighet, cooperation between the officers of Romanian Customs and Border Police is described as adequate, and the same seems to be the case between Romanian Customs and Border Police officers and Ukrainian Border Guard officers. Difficult traffic conditions, the vast amount of passengers and vehicles crossing every day, the existence of one single lane on the bridge makes Romanian and Ukrainians officials to cooperate very closely, in order to ensure the best synchronization conditions. They meet on the bridge twice a day, assisted by a translator.

In undertaking their duties, Customs and Border Police have over the last years gone through a series of structural changes and the quality of the services provided by both institutions has improved. Accordingly, evaluating the quality of their services today, travellers compare the present day situation with the situation several years ago. The general situation has been improving steadily. In this sense, most travellers in our sample observe that activities at the border are more efficient, and that these officials are more correct and polite with travellers since 1 January 2007. ("Int.: – The custom officer is ... he has been 'baptized' or what because he is

⁴⁴ Inspectoratul general al poliției de frontieră.

⁴⁵ Direcții teritoriale ale poliției de frontieră.

⁴⁶ Inspectoratele județene ale poliției de frontieră.

⁴⁷ Through the law 'Legea nr. 360 din 6 iunie 2002'.

very nice! Op.: – Yes? Lately? Int.: – Yes, for a half a year, since we joined the EU he has been baptized”). Moreover, travellers usually compare the work on Romanian border to conditions encountered on the border crossing points in the neighbouring countries: Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine. The quality of services, procedures and attitudes of officials is seen as much better in comparison to that in Moldova, and Ukraine. An exception is the waiting time which is better in Ukraine than it is in Sighet.

At the same time, officials complain about the set of problems they face in carrying out their job. Although heads of the border crossing institutions are in general satisfied with the quality and professionalism of the personnel, the management of work is considered to have deficiencies. Night shifts and accumulated fatigue, transportation of personnel to work and from the work to home are problems that need solutions. Officials believe that the income of workers is too low compared to the importance of the job, responsibility, danger and efforts required for the satisfactory fulfilment of duties.

In Moravița and Sighet, officials complain about the access of pedestrians. They can walk or use bicycles and scooters in order to get on the other side. This pedestrians’ movement is actually enabling petty trade and the officers cannot change the border regime at these border-crossing points. Finally, many times travellers lack information and often they do not understand regulations, thus making the activities on the border crossing points more difficult. “We can also find uncivilized travellers, some making problems. They try to cross with fake papers, or without all the documents they need, or with too many cigarettes. And then, they are not allowed to pass, and so on”.

Finally, border crossing points’ officials face a negative public image, associated with corruption. The work of border officials is charged with public display of cases of corruption or other types of irregular activities. Local and national newspapers present border institutions as mainly corrupt and there are strong public suspicions regarding the moral integrity of officials. Especially custom officers face this

public image. However, these stereotypes are strongly rejected by the border officers and they complain about the inequity of this image and its falsity.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

As stressed in the first part, there is a significant imbalance between the efforts and finances invested in securing the borders versus those providing better services for the travellers. Political awareness should be raised that borders should not be seen solely in terms of security and control. More investments in infrastructure are needed and facilities should be provided for travellers, at least in the border crossing points concentrating the larger flows of travellers. Investment should be done properly for (a) facilitating the traffic, (b) improving the services at the borders crossing points, (c) offering proper working conditions to the personnel and renovating the buildings. Information for travellers should be easily available as, actually, in none of the border crossing points were travellers happy with it. Moreover, at consulates clear information on the rules and conditions of travel should be provided to travellers. Also, it should be available in foreign languages. Changes in regulations should be announced in due time.

Services at crossings points should be better as well. Even in the case of Albița, there are many travellers unhappy with all the services provided and criticism is present. Thus, the progress that has been accomplished so far with the modernization of the border crossing points does not suffice for having proper conditions there. The recommendations made in the previous chapter may be considered. The time of crossing the borders should be quicker, for instance in Albița the crossing time is shorter as it is in Sculeni. Sighet has the longest waiting time. Moreover, collaboration with Moldovan authorities may be bettered, and hence the overall waiting time shortened. Computers should be provided to improve the traffic, and the maximum number of counters to be used, especially at the borders with Ukraine and Moldova.

Data gathered from monitoring shows that there were 1002 crossings at Sculeni, 1068 at Sighet, 939 at Moravița, and 1585 at Albița. Considering that in Sighet the monitoring underrepresented the number of travellers, we can suppose that this was the most trafficked border crossing point. It has the weakest infrastructure. Albița, with the strongest developed infrastructure, follows. Thus, there is no relationship between the intensity of crossing borders and the infrastructure facilities. Another conclusion might be that opening new border crossing points may lead to unexpected strong traffic. Infrastructure should be better in most border crossing points. Sanitary facilities and exchange offices should exist and be open to travellers. Moreover, benches should exist, especially in points like Sighet, where the infrastructure does not face the string cross-border traffic. Because of the lack of infrastructure facilities there, tensions often burst out. Small restaurants can help both travellers and officers, who could have better working conditions. Travellers are pleased with the attitudes of officers in all border crossing points. However, in terms of communication, the knowledge of languages should be improved (Russian and Ukrainian mostly). So far the fact that travellers are pleased with it is also because they are predominantly Romanian speakers. In the future however, the number of travellers not speaking Romanian is likely to increase especially at the border with Ukraine. Officers should also

have the knowledge of English (at least). The quality of the services rendered by officers improved over the last years. Working conditions of the officers should be also improved.

Both border crossing points, Sighet and in Moravița, witness strong informal activities (petty trade). Moravița is the border crossing point with the quickest crossing time. Thus, informality itself does not impede on travellers' circulation. Other aspects, such as infrastructure, and the checking procedures, are more relevant for the fluidity of crossings. Moreover, informal or irregular activities should not be seen as "illegal" and should not be criminalized as such. Informal activities at borders may have benefiting effects for the border regions and create new economic opportunities. Illegality should be banned; informality may be tolerated to certain extents. Travellers consider that corruption exists, but it is not very developed and it does not impede on the crossing. In towns closed to border, as in Sighet, the effects of informal activities are likely to be strong. In such places, social networks of informal trade may develop quickly even though there is no tradition of using the border as a resource. The effects of informal petty traders may be stronger in small towns (as it is Sighet) as they are in large cities (as Iași). In such cases, if networks are too strong, local tensions may emerge, undermining the idea of friendly borders.