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Gateways to Europe

Checkpoints on the EU

External Land Border

MONITORING

R E P O R T



Stefan Batory Foundation

**Gateways to Europe
Checkpoints on the EU External Land Border
Monitoring Report**

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Executive summary

This report presents the results of the monitoring of border crossing points situated on the European Union external land borders. That study was performed from July till September 2007 by research teams from 7 countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. 19 border crossing points of those countries were chosen for the monitoring, on the borders with EU neighbors: Belarus, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.

The goal of this research was to provide politicians, policy makers and the general public with an overview of conditions prevailing at EU border crossing points. The subject of monitoring was the EU side of the border crossing points only. Collected data give positive examples of the way the EU border crossing points operate, however, the main focus of this report are particular aspects that need to be changed.

The majority of individuals crossing the monitored border crossing points on the external EU land-border are citizens of the two respective neighbouring countries, who cross the border to trade, work abroad or further other sorts of business activities. For some of the travellers, the aim of travel is shopping, tourism or family visit. The purposes for travelling and the high frequency with which individuals engage in border crossing suggest that strong regional links based on historical ties and economic interdependence exist between the neighbouring countries.

The key conclusion is that with regard to the external EU border, attention should be paid not only to security, but also to quality of services and conditions at border crossing points. Several problems that became evident during the monitoring should be dealt with in order to improve the standards of the border crossing points on the external EU land border.

The main problems are visible in the following areas:

- Infrastructure of border crossing points;
- Communication: access to information about border crossing procedures and communication between travellers and border staff;
- Cooperation between the border authorities, local municipalities and state authorities (also with the non-EU side)

The consequences of the problems in the areas mentioned above include:

- The formation of queues;
- Insufficient application of non-discrimination rules;
- Corruption practices.

Infrastructure

The layout and infrastructure, despite being among the most fundamental elements of efficient cross-border movement, were often found to be the weakest aspects of the monitored border crossing points. Infrastructural conditions are directly related to the operational quality of the institutions responsible for the border crossing points. Indeed, good infrastructure is a necessary precondition for border staff to be able to fulfil their duties effectively and to ensure appropriate treatment of the travellers. Insufficient infrastructure is also one of the reasons for the formation of queues.

Although according to border guards and customs officers, conditions today have improved compared to the past, they are still in pressing need of further rapid development. Some of the border crossing points were designed for local, small border traffic, but now render high border traffic without proper conditions such as a satisfying number of lanes. This problem

appears for example at the border crossing points in Sighetul Marmatiei (Romania-Ukraine), Tiszabecs (Hungary – Ukraine), Zosin (Poland – Ukraine).

An important problems that this research indicates is frequently underdeveloped infrastructure for travellers: insufficient restroom facilities, waiting rooms and waiting lines for travellers, as well as services for persons with disabilities and for parents travelling with small children.

In some cases, the lack of separate terminals for pedestrians in a situation when the border crossing point is open for pedestrians (for example on the Estonian – Russian border crossing point at Koidula, and Hungarian – Serbian at Tompa) and buses (Polish – Ukrainian border at Zosin) was an important problem. Also, areas for custom clearance and passport control require improvements.

More attention should be also paid to the areas leading up to the border crossing points. It is in these areas that a variety of essential services, which influence the conditions in which travellers cross the border, are often missing – such as gastronomic services, currency exchange points or restrooms. Long queues form in the areas before the actual border crossing points, and are not managed sufficiently by the border staff, local authorities or police. The lack of roads adjusted to the scale of the traffic is visible (for example on the Bulgarian – Turkish border crossing point Kapitan Andreevo or Bulgarian – Serbian Kalotina).

The problem of infrastructure concerns also the question of compatibility of both the EU and non-EU sides of the border crossing points. Higher standards of buildings and lines on the EU side of border crossing point do not solve the problem of low traffic capacity, when the third country does not have a sufficient number of terminals to carry out controls of travel documents and belongings.

Recommendations:

- The quality of infrastructure should be improved – buildings in which border guards and custom officers work, as well as places designed for travellers – especially restrooms, waiting areas and gastronomic points on the border crossing point.
- New facilities should be built and the existing ones improved for people with disabilities and parents with small children. Establishing medical posts with first aid and emergency medical equipment at all cross border points is needed.
- The infrastructure of entrance areas should be improved at the border crossing points, especially the quality of roads leading to the border crossing points and basic facilities before border crossing locations such as gastronomic services, currency exchange points and restroom amenities. This recommendation requires the cooperation of border authorities and local governments; larger support for local communities from state administration should be considered.
- More attention should be paid to the comparability of infrastructure of the EU and non-EU sides of the border crossing point

Communication

Problems with communication arose in the area of travellers' access to information about the legal rules and regulations of crossing the border, as well as in the somewhat unsatisfactory foreign language skills of border guards and customs officers.

The lack of clearly-presented information about customs and passport control is against the interest of customs officers, border guards officers and travellers alike. The information made available was, in some cases, difficult for travellers to acquaint themselves with and understand. Some of the border crossing points provided only short and sparse information, while others posted long legal excerpts incomprehensible to a layperson. As a result, travellers usually resorted to the more informal method of ask-

ing other, more experienced travellers for the information they required. Insufficient knowledge of current regulations often led to misunderstandings, sometimes creating in third country nationals the impression of being treated unjustly.

Moreover, according to the travellers, despite the fact that border staff claimed that communication was not a problem, insufficient foreign language competences were demonstrated in interactions with travellers. Research indicates that some border officers did not speak foreign languages. Sometimes shifts of border guards and custom officers were organized with regard to the ability of border officers to speak different languages.

Recommendations:

- Due to the frequent changes in customs and passport control regulations, there is a particularly pressing need to implement a well-functioning system of information on these issues – information should be clearly presented and adapted to the needs of travellers.
- All information should be translated into the languages of neighbouring countries, and one of the languages most frequently used in the EU, such as English.
- Information should be available on both the EU and non-EU sides of the border, in the entrance areas to the border crossing points, as well as in the wider areas of the border crossing point.
- It is necessary to improve the border guards and customs officers' knowledge of at least the language of the neighbouring country. Border staff should be encouraged to use languages of neighbouring countries when communicating with foreign travellers.

Cooperation

Cooperation between border guards and customs officers was positively evaluated by both border authorities, and likened to a kind of “peaceful coexistence”. Nevertheless, some misunderstandings appeared, resulting

from poor work conditions and differences in wages and/or benefits. In most countries, border guards received better earnings and benefits.

As emerges from the report, the management of infrastructure of the border crossing points and their entrance areas lacked sufficient cooperation with other institutions and organizations, such as state authorities and local governments, and the local community. Unsuitable budgets and the lack of legal instruments to establish frameworks of collaboration with these institutions were obstacles to good cooperation.

Cooperation between officers across EU borders seemed more problematic: in cases where the EU and non-EU country had concluded bilateral agreements, cooperation was more frequent and effective. Cooperation was seldom efficient if no binding regulatory framework had been provided – confusion and disorganisation were common results of that situations. For instance, at the Slovak border crossing point Vysne Nemecke, some technical documents were unacceptable by Slovakian standards, and changes in the border traffic which resulted from breaks or bank holidays were not coordinated. Together, these small impediments hindered the fluidity and efficiency of cross-border movement.

Recommendations:

- Special financial and legal instruments should be created as a basis for the development of good cooperation between border guards, custom officers from both sides of the border, as well as between local communities, state administration and other institutions or organizations important for the operation of border crossing points.
- It is recommended not to differentiate significantly the earnings and other benefits of border guards and customs officers.
- The quality of information given to non-EU border guards and customs as well as of that received by EU border staff about border crossing rules of the neighbouring country should be improved.

- Coordination of shift changes of EU and non-EU border guards should be improved, especially during the different holidays of the neighbouring countries.

Queues

Long waiting times seem to be the most glaring problem at most of the monitored border crossing points. This research indicates that the longest waiting times occurred at the EU border with Ukraine and Russia. Long queues are a problem which should be addressed by the appropriate authorities in the following countries: Finland (Valimaa)¹, Estonia (Narva-1, Koidula), Hungary (Tiszabecs) and Poland (Medyka and Bezledy). These lengthy waiting times affected not only the non-EU states citizens who were subjected to more extensive inspection procedures according to EU regulations, but also EU citizens. Uncomfortable and sometimes unsafe waiting conditions had a strong negative impact on travellers and, as a consequence, influenced their perceptions of the services provided by border staff as well as the overall operational quality of border crossing points. Border guards and customs officers suggested that the long queues at border crossing points were the outcome of a multitude of factors, including the increased volume of traffic during particular seasons or times of day and the lack of cooperation of EU and non-EU border authorities to better manage traffic flows. As has already been mentioned, insufficient infrastructure might also result in longer waiting times.

¹ The problem of queues at that border crossing point is visible in the case of cargo traffic, passengers cars are processed relatively quickly.

Recommendations:

- In order to decrease the waiting times to cross the border, improved coordination of work both the EU, non-EU border sides and local authorities is needed, as well as modernisation of infrastructure of border crossing points.
- It is advisable to construct new border crossing points, well equipped with infrastructure and adapted to the scale of traffic.

Compliance with non-discrimination rules

Border guards and customs officers are obliged to respect the non-discrimination rule contained in the European Convention on Human Rights. Discriminatory treatment of travellers was manifested in: long waiting times in non-EU queues, disrespectful means of address and detailed inspections of private property.

At some monitored border crossing points (for instance on the Polish-Ukrainian border in Medyka, on the Estonian-Russian border at Narva-1 and Koidula), the EU lane at the border crossing point was served faster and there were shorter queues, while the non-EU lane generally experienced a considerable waiting time. Longer waiting times on non-EU lanes were not associated with longer or more detailed procedure of checking documents, but slower work of border guards and custom officers. Third country nationals' impressions of being treated unjustly stem often from the insufficient information provided to travellers about the different rules applicable to EU and non-EU citizens when crossing the border.

According to some travellers, there were situations where both customs officers and border guards officers engaged in discriminatory practices. Some non-EU citizens, as well as individuals who crossed the border frequently for trade or for work purposes, reported receiving condescending or even insulting remarks from officers as they inspected documents and asked questions. At some cross border points between the EU and Ukraine, there was a clear difference in the way customs and border guards officers

addressed EU states citizens (formally) and non-EU states citizens (informally).

Move over travellers reported having their luggage or vehicle damaged by officers' indelicate handling, and in a few cases reported undergoing detailed personal inspections that bordered on harassment.

Recommendation:

- The professional attitude of border guards and custom officers towards travellers should be improved, with special focus on the respect of non-discrimination rules present in international law, as well as the protection of human dignity
- An information campaign should be prepared for travellers about their rights and ways of their protection. Equally important is the establishment of a more effective system of lodging complains about negative behaviours of border authorities, to give travellers opportunity to protect their rights as well as to inform about the problems existing at border crossing points.
- Mass media campaigns in the EU countries concerning travellers' rights could be carried out.

Corruption

It is worth to emphasising that, compared to past scenarios, according to the travellers, customs officers and border guards officers, the phenomenon of corruption has visibly decreased. One of the likely reasons for this decrease is the recent establishment of anti-corruption institutions and the installation of monitoring systems at most border crossing points.

Some travellers believed that "hidden" corrupt practices still persist along the borders, that is, outside the main area of the cross border points, which indicates changes in the mechanism of corruption. Because these practices went outside the area of border crossing points, they are harder to expose. As interviewed travellers claim, for the most part of corruption

situations, bribes were given by petty traders, smugglers, and, sometimes, entrepreneurs. The first two types of travellers expect that corruption of border duties would allow them to bring more of the limited goods across the border, while entrepreneurs pay to go faster through border crossing points.

Recommendations:

- Support for anticorruption initiatives needs to be continued.
- Responsible discussion in mass media about the prevention of corruption at the border crossing points should be carried out.
- Efficient instruments to prevent further development of “hidden” corruption at border crossing points should be developed.

* * *

From the point of view, of local communities almost all of the analysed border crossing points play a crucial economic role in the lives of people living in close proximity to the border. Border regions are often economically underdeveloped and more attention ought to be paid to their situation. With rising prosperity in those areas, the necessity of using the border as a “survival strategy” would decrease.

From the point of view of relations between the EU and third countries, external EU land borders have the same important economic role. It is essential to underline that the external EU borders are being used increasingly for land-transported international trade. Therefore, the quality and efficiency of operations at border crossing points are meaningful for international trade relations.

* * *

In the light of all the information presented in this report, the operational and infrastructural quality of border crossing points requires improvements. Discussion about the conditions at cross border points on the external borders of the EU should be more lively and, more importantly, real change in the quality of service offered to all the travellers who choose to enter the territory of the European Union is needed. Conditions at border crossing points ought to be systematically monitored to prevent some problems listed in this report.

Introduction

The Report is a result of cooperation between Stefan Batory Foundation and 7 institutions from EU Member States: Bulgaria (European Institute), Estonia (Euro College, Tartu University), Finland (Finnish Institute of International Affairs), Hungary (Contemporary Researches Foundation), Poland (Centre of Migration Research, Warsaw University) Romania (Desire Foundation), and Slovakia (Research Centre of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association). It presents the results of the monitoring of the border crossing points situated on the EU external land borders. During the study, which was carried out from July to September 2007, nineteen border crossing points on the borders with EU neighbours – Belarus, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine were monitored (*see the map of the monitored border crossing points*). Although not all the EU external borders were included in the study, the borders of the research partners' home countries currently constitute a significant part of the EU external land border. Research was focused on conditions in which passenger traffic took place on the border crossing points; the conditions of transport of goods were not the main point of interest. Only the EU side of the border crossing points was the subject of monitoring.

The experience of different team members in researching topics related to the movement of persons across borders, border crossing point infrastructure and community issues facilitated the development of a common

research methodology and assembling important, difficult-to-obtain data. The data contained here covers a wide range of issues, from border crossing point infrastructure and the accessibility of facilities to the overall organization of movement and the behaviour of border guards and customs officers as they carry out detailed inspections. The report is based on the opinions of travellers, border guards and customs, as well as on the observations made by research teams at border crossing points. This monitoring activity gave many positive examples of the functioning of border crossing points. However, the main focus in this report is on these particular aspects of border crossing points that need to be changed.

The objective of this report is to assess the quality of services rendered at border crossing points on the external land border of the European Union. The focus of the political debate addressing the question of external EU borders has been on security measures. Unfortunately, much less consideration has been given to travel conditions at border crossing points. In the current situation of border crossing points, everyday experiences of thousands of travellers moving across borders – whether as drivers, passengers or pedestrians – indicate serious problems. Regardless of whether they are EU or non-EU citizens, no matter what their reasons for travelling are, these travellers wait in long, often uncomfortable and sometimes hazardous queues; they and their belongings are subjected to exhaustive searches; they are quite frequently hard-pressed to obtain relevant, up-to-date information about border crossing regulations.

The attitude that border crossing points merely demarcate the separation between EU and non-EU countries, prevailing to date, requires revision. While it is essential to prevent unwanted persons from entering EU territory, it is equally necessary to allow for the movement of persons in a way that rests in accordance with fundamental European values, standards and principles. One of the main challenges is – while maintaining the distinction between EU and non-EU countries citizens – to treat the latter with the same respect during the border-crossing procedures as the former. For this reason, questions of security and protection must be broadly conceived:

not in terms of the separation between territories and persons, but in terms of the protection provided to all travellers: protection that upholds human rights and ensures fundamental freedoms to both EU and non-EU countries citizens.

The standards of travel across borders take on a good deal of significance when one considers the region's history of restricted international mobility and the stringent levels of militarization once prevailing at border crossing points. Certainly, the countries belonging to the former Communist bloc differed in their degrees of freedom of mobility. The external border of the Soviet Union was heavily militarized and strictly controlled, allowing for very little mobility between the USSR and the so-called satellite states. The Polish-Russian border was, for example, closed until the beginning of the 1990s because of the militarization of the Kaliningrad District. Similarly, other Cold War borders, such as those between Bulgaria and Turkey, were rather difficult to cross. Other borders were practically negligible in previous years: the border between Russia and Estonia, for instance, marked only an "administrative border" within the Soviet Union before 1991. The unprecedented levels of mobility enjoyed by citizens after the fall of Communism and the increased cross-border cooperation should be encouraged by enhancing the quality of operations at crossing points on EU borders.

The character of the majority of the borders is influenced by the existence of economic gaps between the neighbouring regions. Significant wage differentials constitute important stimuli for labour mobility across borders. High levels of unemployment in many of the regions along the border also impel the inhabitants to use the crossing of borders as a strategy to cope with financial insecurity. Cross-border trade continues to be profitable in almost all of the countries researched here, though different states respond differently to this phenomenon.

Frequently, the areas where border crossing points are located are inhabited by heterogeneous populations, consisting of ethnic groups that were separated by newly drawn state borders. Socio-political transformations such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and the war in former

Yugoslavia also influenced the substance and character of the different states' borders.

Similarities between border sections can be found mainly in legal regulations introduced during the EU accession process. The countries researched in this study began the accession process at different moments. Finland joined the European Union in 1995 and thus, of all the countries considered here, has the longest history of maintaining an external EU border. The Finnish experience with controlling an external EU land border substantially influenced the “blueprint” of border control in the European Union. Estonia, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic joined the EU in 2004. These countries differed with regard to the introduction of policy changes at the border: Hungary and Poland, for example, were last to introduce the visa requirement for entry. Bulgaria and Romania, whose accession processes began in 2000, joined the EU in 2007. During the research period of this study, only Finland was part of the Schengen area, while the other countries were preparing to join in the near future¹. Minor differences between the countries also arose with respect to the time at which EU legislation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs was adopted. In general, however, EU legal requirements represent a common feature of this otherwise highly diversified – historically, politically and geographically – set of external borders.

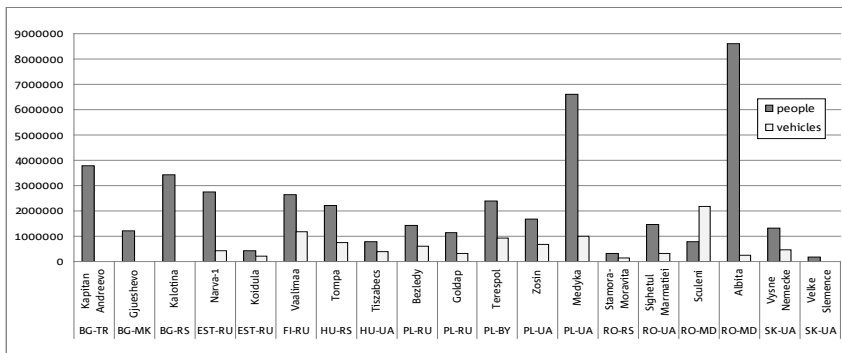
¹ Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia entered the Schengen area in December 2007.

Border crossing points

Border crossing points undergo dynamic change, especially within the context of the EU enlargement and Schengen area extension. Although one of the main differences between border crossing points is the volume of traffic (see Graph 1), this factor in itself does not necessarily provide a sufficient basis for comparison. That is, the volume of traffic/flow of travellers at some of the border points has undergone considerable changes due to the opening of new border crossing points in the proximity.

Some of the border points can be categorised on the basis of their international or regional character. Officially, all of the analysed border crossing points are open to international traffic, yet border crossing points like Zosin between Poland and Ukraine, Goldap between Poland and Russia or Velke Slemence between Slovakia and Ukraine have a primarily regional character, serving mainly the people who reside in the border regions. Others, such as Kapitan Andreevo between Bulgaria and Turkey, Stamora-Moravita linking Romania to Serbia or Valimaa between Finland and Russia, are of a more international character.

Graph 1. Scale of movement of people and vehicles at selected border crossing points (in 2006)¹



Source: Border Guards Statistics (see Annex 3, Table 1).

¹ In the case of Bulgarian border-crossing points, there is no scale of movement of vehicles due to the lack of this kind of data.

Kapitan Andreevo, between Bulgaria and Turkey, is a border crossing point of a clearly international character. In 2006, there were more than 4 million border crossings, which constitute 85% of all the crossings on the Bulgarian-Turkish border. Over 50% of respondents of the conducted survey crossed the border frequently (42% once or more in two weeks) or rather frequently (15% once a month or less than once a month). Approximately 39% crossed Kapitan Andreevo seldom and fewer than 1% used it for the first time. 75% of people crossing the border declared living farther than 100 km away from the border. The majority of respondents were employed. The main reasons for travel, apart from family visit, were related to work, business interests and tourism. This border crossing point is also an important transit route between Turkey and Germany.

On the other hand, **Velke Slemence**, the border crossing point between Slovakia and Ukraine, has a distinctly regional character. It was established for pedestrians in 2005, its opening was prompted by a local referendum. The border crossing point reunites villages that were divided by the establishment of the border in 1946. Velke Slemence on the Slovakian side of the border has approximately 600 inhabitants, Mali Selmenci on the Ukrainian side just 150. The exclusive destination of pedestrians is Mali Selmenci. Most of the travellers park their cars in Velke Slemence, while a small portion arrive by bus from the town Velke Kapusany or other nearby villages. In 2006, 185,787 persons crossed this border point. More than one half of travellers surveyed at this border crossing point (54%) crossed the border at least once a week. Almost everyone crossing the border had a Slovak passport. Many travellers were Roma or else of ethnic Hungarian origin, hailing from the neighbouring Hungarian-speaking villages and towns. Almost all of the respondents lived less than 50 km from the border crossing point. A high number of pensioners and housewives crossed Velke Slemence. The main purpose for crossing the border – apart from a small number of people visiting family or going shopping – was cross-border trade. Since 2005, family-owned shops have been flourishing along the main village road in Mali Selmenci. According to the survey an average travel to Mali Selmenci takes roughly two to three hours, though travellers spend two to three additional hours waiting in the queue to the border crossing point.

Well before they are allowed to accede to the EU, countries are responsible for improving security measures at their borders, which entails subjecting all non-EU travellers, their documents and their luggage to detailed, thorough inspections. An integrated system for border security has been implemented throughout the EU, involving fast data communication and surveillance capabilities. In addition, programs on structural readjustment and the specialisation of border authorities were introduced.

Official authorities at border crossing points

The main two types of state representatives present at border crossing points are border guards officers and customs officers¹. The border guards at the external EU border are responsible for controlling all incoming and outgoing traffic. When entering the country, EU nationals are inspected according to minimum requirements. In practice, it means that a person is supposed to only present a valid passport. Non-EU citizens are obliged to undergo a more thorough inspection, which, apart from an inspection of travel documents, consists of a series of screening questions about the individual's purpose of travel and his or her possession of sufficient financial resources for the entire length of the stay in the EU. It is verified whether the third-country national concerned, his or her means of transport and the objects he or she is transporting are not likely to endanger any of the EU Member States. Additionally Council Regulation² defines the list of third countries whose citizens need to have visas when crossing an EU border, and of countries whose citizens are exempt from this obligation. Exit controls carried out by border guards allow them to determine whether a person leaving the area is in possession of a travel document appropriate for crossing the border, whether his or her stay has been unlawfully extended beyond the permitted period, and whether any alerts have been issued about certain persons in the Schengen Information System. The controls have also recently become a part of the framework for combating trans-border criminality, irregular immigration and trafficking. Border guards cooperate with local police and customs. The Border Guards Authority has the power to maintain public order in its own facilities and in their immediate vicinity. The Schengen Borders Code is the main legal basis for the professional services provided by border guards. It deals in detail with

¹ The terms "border guards officer" and "customs officer" are used in this report generally with regard to every institutional form of activities of border guards and customs. In individual countries, there are differences in names and institutional positions of these institutions. For instance, in Bulgaria Border Police is responsible for guarding state borders and controlling compliance with the border regime, in Hungary border guards and police are one institution (the merger of the Police and the Border Guards was completed in 2007, the integration has become operative from January 1, 2008).

² Council Regulation No 539/2001/EC.

border controls and the prerequisites for entry of third-country nationals. The Schengen Borders Code is complemented by regulations concerning visa requirements and transit laws.

The Customs Authority is a state institution for controlling and managing the internal and external trade of the European Union. Its tasks include the collection of taxes, inspections, the provision of services and the implementation of EU customs policy. It is the duty of the Customs Authority to control the international flow of goods in order to promote legal foreign trade and prevent the smuggling of illegal goods and substances. Customs functions as a subsidiary organisation within the Ministry of Finance. The legal basis for the operation of customs is drawn from the Community Customs Code³ and national legislation is adopted by every EU Member State. The Customs Code contains general provisions on rights and obligations with regard to customs legislation, the introduction of goods into the EU's territory, non-Community goods in transit, the handling of goods and others.

Users of border crossing points

According to the data collected, individuals passing through the selected border points are mainly inhabitants of bordering countries. The majority of travellers who participated in this study can be divided with regard to the aim of travel into the following groups: cross-border traders, labour migrants, entrepreneurs, shoppers, family visitors, tourists and students (see Annex 3, Table 2).

Cross-border traders make up a sizeable part of the travelling population at almost all of the monitored border crossing points. Although they often officially declare their purpose for travelling as “tourism”, their real objectives are usually to engage in some form of economic activity for profit. One of the main reasons for the presence of traders are differences in prices of goods – especially alcohol, cigarettes and gasoline – between EU countries and their neighbours. Cross-border traders were present at

³ Council Regulation No 2913/92.

border crossing points on the borders of Belarus, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine. The border crossing points on Serbia's borders have a long-standing history of informal cross-border trade.

Labour migrants and entrepreneurs are two other important types of travellers present at the monitored border crossing points. According to research results, travellers between the EU and Russia mainly declared purposes of travel connected with the execution of professional duties as ordered by an employer or in order to further their own business interests. In the case of the Estonian border crossing point at Narva-1, the majority of people crossing it on a daily basis were local inhabitants who commuted across the border to work. At the EU border with Serbia, labour migrants from Romania and Serbia also constituted an important group. At the EU-Moldova border crossing points, nearly 45% of travellers declared having occupational or business interests as reasons for crossing the border. At the border crossing point between the EU and Macedonia, over 60% of the respondents declared that their main purposes of travel were duties related to work or business. Labour migration was also a prevalent phenomenon at the border between the EU and Ukraine.

Travellers also crossed the border in order to go shopping in the neighbouring countries. This was, among others, the aim of many travellers at border crossing points between the EU and Russia. Initially, EU citizens were also interested in buying cheaper alcohol or cigarettes in Russia. What with the rising prices of goods in Russia, however, it is now mainly Russians who shop in the EU and not vice versa. At the EU-Serbian border, Serbians often crossed the border crossing point in Tompa in order to buy Hungarian goods.

Family visit was indicated as the main purpose of travel by a number of persons crossing the border between the EU and Serbia, Moldova and Turkey. This was likely to be a result of the presence of ethnic minorities.

The remaining two groups of travellers were tourists and students. Tourism was frequently offered as a reason for crossing the border between the EU and Turkey and the EU and Russia. Students were very often present at the border between the EU and Moldova.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure of border crossing points is one of the most important elements contributing to their overall quality of operation. The conditions and functionality of the building and facilities at the border crossing points are directly related to human rights protection, securing against unfair discrimination, protection of personal dignity and respect for personal property, as well the behaviour of border guards and customs officers and working conditions at border-crossing points. Solutions to infrastructural problems will directly target related problems with capacity, safety and security at border crossing points

In most cases, the monitored border crossing points on the external EU land border were constructed many years ago (after the Second World War or after the collapse of the Soviet Union), and so are of modest size and provisional character and intended for very low-volume traffic. With the onset of the 21st century, in spite of the introduction of the visa regime, there was an increase in the size of traffic of travellers and vehicles across the external EU border. Many of these “old border crossing points” were, as a consequence, extended in order to accommodate higher cross-border movement. There was a notable surge in the efforts to modernize border crossing points, for instance, before Poland’s and Hungary’s accession into the EU and before the extension of the Schengen Area to include Finland.

A variety of financial and developmental support came from the EU, especially via the Phare Programme and Structural Funds, as aid in the process.

The border-crossing point at **Tompa** on the Hungarian-Serbian border was renovated and enlarged in 2003 with EU funding; **Tiszabecs** (Hungary-Ukraine) was also renovated and enlarged in 1997-98 such that it was in compliance with the regulations and expectations of the EU.

At the **Albita** checkpoint on the Romanian-Moldovan border, teams of foreign experts (Spanish and English) supervised and counselled the implementation of new customs regulation. The process of modernization involved the introduction of a new type of practices at the border, directly aimed at improving the ways in which customs workers and border police officers treated passengers (i.e., the passport/document control process could not take more than 15 min.).

At the Polish-Russian border at **Goldap** two stages of infrastructural development were planned before the border-crossing point was established. There are ongoing preparations to further enlarge it.

Yet modernization efforts today are not proceeding everywhere at an equal pace: there are significant differences between the present-day infrastructural conditions of border crossing points. Wherever border crossing points were under joint control¹, the most intensive modernization works are being conducted.

¹ “Joint control” means that two neighbouring countries share the responsibility for duties carried out by border staff within one space, which excludes the need to two separate technical infrastructures one on each side of the border. This solution was a particularly cost-effective way for two countries to control their mutual border (e.g.: at Zosin, the Polish-Ukrainian checkpoint, and at Terespol on the Polish-Belarusian border).

Areas for customs clearance and passport control

Customs clearance and passport control of the border crossing points is dependent on the means of locomotion in which a given traveller is crossing the border. Research results indicate that there are legal rules that different travellers have their own specially-designated terminals, but no common practice exists. Specially designated spaces, areas or buildings for the control of different types of vehicles and travellers are also lacking

Areas specially designated for customs clearance purposes were not readily available at every border crossing point studied. For example, at a few border crossing points in Poland, Slovakia and Romania – due to the lack of facilities for detailed control, customs officers inspected passengers and their belongings in inappropriate areas. Whenever a more detailed further control was deemed necessary, individuals were brought either to an office or to other rooms set aside for this purpose.

Sometimes, as in the case of the Polish-Russian border crossing point at Bezledy, border guards inspected travellers' cars out in the open and in the close proximity of other travellers, which meant the proceedings were visible to everyone standing nearby. The repeatability of this practice is an indication that border crossing points on the EU external border are not adequately equipped to guarantee discreet controls while still ensuring that border guards and customs officers can effectively carry out their duties.

In only a few monitored border crossing points were all passengers allowed to remain in their cars for the duration of the inspection. This procedure took place at the Estonian (Narva-1 and Koidula) and Hungarian border crossing points (Tompá and Tiszabecs).

Additionally, poor condition of booths in which border guards and customs officers worked were noted. In some cases booths were not equipped with central heating and the windows were old and not airtight. Floors happened to be practically nonexistent: there were simply large sheets of plastic material covering the ground. The areas were also overcrowded, with two or three officers working in a space intended for no more than

one person. Likewise, in many monitored border crossing points there was a lack of washrooms or small kitchens in which to prepare meals or hot drinks during the day. Although it seemed that border guards and customs officers cooperated and somehow managed to share the facilities available, those they had at their disposal were clearly insufficient to enable them to carry out their duties effectively and in relatively comfortable conditions.

Limited passageways and terminals for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles

Out of the 19 border crossing points, 6 were for pedestrians however 2 of them, Koidula (Estonia-Russia) and Tompa (Hungary-Russia), had no terminals especially designated for pedestrians. This meant that travellers crossing the border on foot were forced to wait in lanes designated for cars. Travellers waiting in the same lane as vehicles not only had to breathe in exhaust fumes, but were also in danger of being involved in an accident. Border guards were thus forced to pay special attention to managing queues of people intermixed with cars in order to maintain safety standards.

At the Goldap (Poland – Russia) border-crossing point there was a similar situation, in which no separate line was available for bicycles, motorbikes or scooters. Individuals travelling on foot, by bicycle, motorbike or scooter who did not have separate terminals – and thus queued up with cars – had their passports controlled at the same booths as cars.

At Zosin (Poland-Ukraine), in turn, the border crossing point lacked a specially-designated terminal for buses. Passengers were either asked to leave the bus to go through passport control or customs clearance, to remain inside the bus for passport control and exit for customs, or else to remain inside the bus for both procedures. In this situation, travellers referred to buses as “inhibitors” of cross-border movement.

The facilities available were definitely not equipped to provide specialized services for large groups of people with (potentially) heavy or bulky luggage: especially in the case of elderly individuals, disabled people or children, exiting a bus with luggage was a difficult, dangerous and time-consuming situation to cope with.

At one monitored border-crossing point at Bezledy, bus customs clearance took place in a hangar/cargo shed: buses were to enter the complex, passengers were told to alight, and their documents and personal belongings were checked outside the bus. Inside the hangar there was no place to sit, there were no toilets or special rooms for detailed inspections, there was no heating or adequate lighting – only birds living under the roof and an sordid-looking interior.

In the case of Sighetu Marmatiei (Romania-Ukraine) and Tiszabecs (Hungary-Ukraine) crossings, although there is a separate terminal for vehicles, problems arise concerning the fluidity of vehicle traffic. Both border crossing points are situated at a river, meaning the road between the neighbouring countries goes along a bridge. In Sighetul Marmatiei, the bridge has sidewalks for pedestrians and only a single lane for vehicle traffic: this means that traffic exiting Romania or Ukraine must do so on a rotational basis, not simultaneously. This has a significant impact on the frequent formation of queues waiting for access to the crossing point on both sides of the bridge.

Inefficient organization and marking of lanes

Perhaps one of the most important components of border crossing points emphasized in the Schengen Borders Code pertains to lanes and the information displayed on signs. Indeed, the lanes leading up to border crossing points, their orderliness and organization are key elements in facilitating safe and speedy movement across the border.

Lack of separate lanes for EU and non-EU citizens

At the majority of researched border crossing points, no problems were observed with regard to having separate lanes for EU countries and non-EU countries citizens, nor were there any significant difficulties noted with the information signs displayed as recommended by the Schengen Borders Code. The only exception was the border crossing point at the Hungarian-Ukrainian border, Tiszabecs, where there were no separate lanes for the two groups of travellers. Officially, there was a “one-line control” procedure in place, which meant that travellers’ cars were stopped at one point to allow for customs control and for the verification of primary documents².

Good practice visible at some border crossing points in cases of temporary imbalance in traffic flows is that third country citizens are sometimes checked on the EU lanes and vice versa is. However this kind of flexibility is not the rule everywhere.

Inadequate facilities on lines and waiting areas

A particularly glaring problem in the infrastructure of numerous border crossing points was the lack of places to sit while waiting in the queue. This is especially important for pedestrians crossing the border and for individuals travelling by buses.

² When the need for a second, more detailed inspection arose, cars were sent to another area set aside for a more detailed control and so as not to hold up traffic. The first was passport control which took place next to the booths of border guards; next control was conducted by custom officers.

Ambiguous meaning of the “nothing to declare” lane

Although signs clearly indicated the purpose of the separate (customs clearance) lane, travellers were confused about when to use a particular lane³. Observations confirmed that customs clearance in the “nothing to declare” lane often failed to proceed as quickly or efficiently as it should. While many travellers expected that the “nothing to declare” lane would provide the most expeditious way of crossing the border, whether they were crossing the border for professional reasons such as business trips or in order to fulfil duties ordered by an employer, were subjected to the same “suspicious” treatment as were informal traders.

Poor quality and availability of facilities for travellers at border crossing points

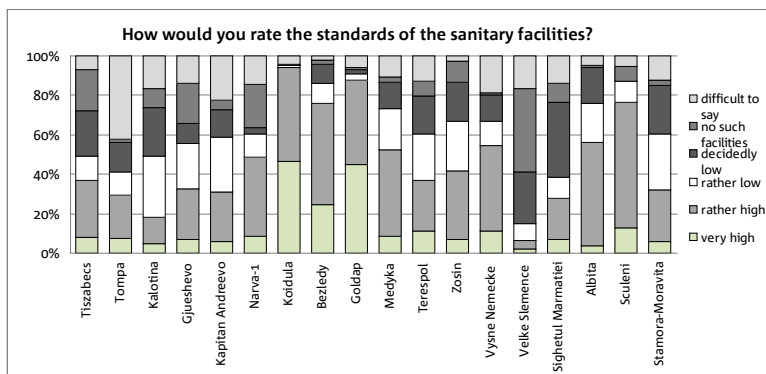
Given the long waiting time for passport control and customs clearance, the availability, accessibility and overall quality of facilities for travellers at border crossing points were monitored. Adequate facilities of various kinds for all travellers, including those with special needs (disabled, children) are supposed to be guaranteed by local governments and border staff... Travellers’ overwhelmingly negative opinions about the access to and quality of restroom facilities and gastronomic services were based on opinions about facilities available in the areas leading up to the border crossing points.

Insufficient number of and access to restroom facilities, gastronomic and currency exchange services at border crossing points

A significant portion of respondents had negative views on the availability of gastronomic services and access to restrooms, which is illustrated by the graph above.

³ At border-crossing points at the Polish-Russian, Polish-Ukrainian and Slovak-Ukrainian borders, travellers had problems understanding when they were allowed to use the “green” (nothing to declare) lane. Some travellers crossing the border for business or employment purposes who used the “nothing to declare” lane were stopped and directed to the lane designated for more detailed inspections.

Graph 2. Assessment of restroom facilities quality at monitored border crossing points.



Sources: Own data (see Annex 3, Table 3).

An interesting result of this survey is the information that at some border crossing points, for instance at Velke Slemence (42% travellers), Narva-1 (22%) and Tizabecs (21%), travellers claimed that there were no such facilities as restrooms, even though in fact they were there. This indicates the problem with marking the buildings located in the area of border crossing points.

According to the survey, citizens of third countries generally had more positive opinions about the facilities at EU border crossing points than EU countries citizens did. However qualitative data indicate that travellers were, in general, dissatisfied with the facilities and services at border crossing points.

Whereas in some cases negative opinions were the result of the utter lack of restroom facilities available, in others travellers were simply unaware of the existence of these facilities because they were located in obscure areas with difficult access or else were poorly designated. Travellers also

An insufficient number of restrooms was noted at the Slovakian border crossing point **Vysne Nemecke**; the Polish border crossing points **Bezledy** and **Zosin**; the Hungarian border crossing point **Tiszabecs**; and the Romanian border crossing point **Sighetul-Marmatiei**. At the last two border crossing points (Tiszabecs and Sighetul Marmatiei), as was noticed above, the access road where travellers waited to cross the border between the two countries was a bridge with a sidewalk and a lane for cars, meaning restrooms or washrooms with running water were unavailable.

encountered difficulties accessing restrooms – either they were locked or travellers were required to ask a border guard for a key (Tiszabecs, Bezledy, Vysne Nemecke). At other border crossing points, travellers paid to use toilets (Terespol); in some cases, where only men’s restrooms were available, this meant that women and men used the same facilities (Medyka).

Unsanitary conditions in restroom facilities

Suffice to say that in some cases restrooms, though available, were simply unusable due to their inadequate sanitary conditions. An especially difficult situation was at border crossing points for pedestrians used primarily by petty traders (e.g., Medyka, Vysne Nemecke), the restrooms had an unpleasant smell and dirty interiors (full of empty boxes and tangled sellotape used to smuggle cigarettes). Many of the restrooms had old, damaged interiors, without such sanitary basics as soap, hand dryers, or even locks on the doors.

Lack of facilities for handicapped or disabled individuals and parents with small children; lack of first aid supplies and medical emergency equipment

At most of the researched border crossing points there was a total lack of proper facilities for individuals with disabilities (notably at entrances to restrooms), there were no elevators or suitable pavements, as well as no changing or care facilities for young children. Out of 19 researched border

crossing points, only 4 had such facilities. It is essential for border crossing points to provide these sorts of services or facilities given the large number of individuals with disabilities, people with children and elderly travellers crossing the border, occasionally or on a daily basis. Alarming, there is a relatively large number of reported cases of fainting, and other health difficulties among people waiting in the queues.

Such was the case of: the **Vysne Nemecke** (Slovakia – Ukraine) border crossing point, where restrooms were considered unacceptably dirty by travellers; the **Zosin** (Poland – Ukraine) border crossing point, where travellers gave low marks to the availability and accessibility of shops, bars and restroom facilities; the **Terespol** (Poland – Belarus) border crossing point, where travellers deemed the access to restroom facilities as very poor; the **Koidula** (Estonia – Russia) border crossing point, where travellers indicated there was an insufficient number of shops and bars; and the **Tiszabecs** (Hungary – Ukraine) border crossing point, where travellers were dissatisfied with the inaccessibility of restrooms.

Entrance areas to border crossing points

The quality of facilities in the entrance areas of border crossing points depends largely on how close or how far away a given border crossing point is located from a sizable city or town. In cases where studied border crossing points were located in the proximity of a city or town, facilities were generally of higher quality than when border crossing points were distant from somewhat more urbanized areas. The facilities available to people waiting in queues leading up to border crossing points that were located far away from more urbanized areas (or if the city/town was of only modest size/development) were, as a rule, far inferior to those of border crossing points in close proximity to large settlements.

Many travellers crossing the border were dissatisfied with the appearance and quality of the entrance areas to border crossing points. They complained about the low quality or total lack of refreshment areas like bars or gastronomic points. In addition, restrooms at border crossing points' entrance areas were often either locked or absent. Very bad hygienic conditions and lack of restroom facilities were noted at the Vysne Nemecke (Slovakia – Ukraine) border crossing point (there is no terminal for trucks at the border and the only opportunity when drivers queuing up before the border crossing point can use rest facilities is in the regional capital Kosice, app. 100 km away from the border). In some cases, such as the Vysne Nemecke and Medyka border crossing points mentioned above, the entrance area was in very bad condition

The entrance areas leading up to some border crossing points were characterized by several common elements. There were usually currency exchange points and legal shops and bars. There were also dilapidated buildings, piles of rubbish and crooked benches and tables used by petty traders and middlemen to buy back goods from people coming from the non-EU side of the border. In the evening the areas tended to be dark and dangerous because of the lack of working street lamps. The space that was often dirty and chaotic and the nerve-wracking behaviour of petty traders gave the border crossing points and its surrounding areas an appearance of lawlessness and disorganization.

Points of view of border guards and customs

In general, the border guards and customs officers provided positive assessment of the infrastructure of the border crossing points. In interviews they emphasised that in the last ten years infrastructure had been notably developed and improved.

Border guards and customs officers did indicate, however, that there was a need to further renovate the existing facilities or construct new buildings in order to facilitate officers to fulfil their duties: monitoring results showed a problem with the low quality of buildings available to customs officers,

border guards officers and their equipment. During interviews, officers mentioned that they made use of very modern, high-quality equipment – computers, devices to check documents, cars and instruments designed to detect smuggled goods and people – yet worked often within obsolete buildings with no space to safely store this equipment and/or goods confiscated during customs clearance. Moreover, the buildings themselves were in very poor condition.

Slovak officers in particular stressed that there were serious problems with the infrastructure of the entrance areas to border crossing points. By cooperating more closely with police, they believed, traffic in the vicinity of border crossing points could be better organized and movements across the border could be expedited. According to them the organization and safety at the border crossing points themselves could be significantly improved by introducing rest facilities for trucks.

Communication

Research results revealed a series of grave problems in the relations and interactions between travellers, border guards and customs. Significant problems arose from the lack or inaccuracy of information available to travellers about customs, passport and traffic regulations. The inability of border guards or customs officers to communicate with travellers in a language both parties could understand was also an important problem.

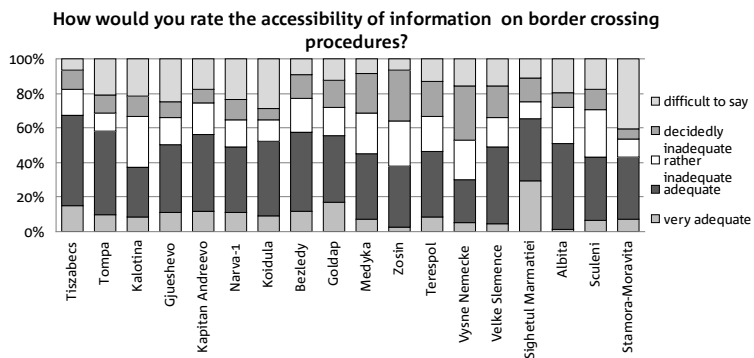
Public awareness of regulations

Access to information about border crossing procedures is not explicitly outlined in the Schengen Border Code or the Community Customs Code. However, that kind of information should be available as a consequence of the established rights to which citizens of given countries are entitled.

Border guards and customs uniformly stressed, however, that border crossing points were not suitable places to receive information pertaining to legal border crossing procedures. They maintained that travellers were obligated to obtain such information *prior* to their arrival, since officers may not always have an optimal command of legal rules and regulations.

While this sort of argumentation sounds convincing, the frequency with which legal rules evolve and change and their potential opaqueness to individuals without any legal training means that it is extremely important

Graph 3. Travellers' evaluation of accessibility of border crossing and custom regulations.



Source: Own data (see Annex 3, Table 4).

– in addition to being in the general interest of both travellers and border staff – that clearly-presented information about the legal aspects of border crossing be readily available at border crossing points. This would no doubt optimize the fluidity and efficiency of movement across borders.

The main sources of information about border crossing regulations between EU and non-EU countries included other more experienced in border crossing travellers or the media, while information from border guards and customs officers and/or information directly available at the border crossing point were cited as rarest. This shows that today's prevailing information sources, including, *inter alia*, information boards, posters, information provided on the Internet, abstracts from legal acts, etc., do not effectively meet their objectives of informing travellers of pertinent rules and regulations in place at border crossing points. The results of the questionnaire confirm that at monitored border crossing points there are problems with access to border crossings and custom legal rules, as is illustrated on the graph below.

Indeed, it seems that the current means of supplying information about procedures at border crossing points are impractical for and unfamiliar to most travellers. This, in turn, reflects poorly on the image of border crossing points on EU borders.

Lack of clearly-presented, relevant information about customs and passport control regulations at border crossing points

Most travellers indicated that there was a severe lack of information about customs and passport control regulations and/or that they were not aware of where to look for such information when crossing the border. This was especially prevalent at the Velke Slemence and Vysne Nemecke (SK-UA), Terespol (PL-BY), Medyka and Zosin (PL-UA), Stamora-Moravita (RO-RS) border crossing points. As a result, travellers usually resorted to the more informal method of asking other, more experienced travellers for the information they required. In some cases, border guards and customs officers took unfair advantage of travellers' lack of knowledge or experience¹.

The area in which information was displayed was also a notable problem at a number of border crossing points. In most cases, information boards were visible alongside queues, on the outside and inside of administration (customs and border guards) buildings, on walls or in windows at the end of waiting lines. These were very impractical conditions under which to obtain information about the rules of border crossing. Reading information displayed in this way, in these kinds of places, would necessitate stopping a vehicle in line to the border crossing point as travellers are required to move quickly past the border crossing point. Managing under these conditions is complicated by the infrastructure of border crossing points or else by the rules governing movement across the border.

¹ A respondent at the Terespol (PL-BY) border-crossing point described the negative effects of inadequate access to information as follows: *Belarusians are scared (...) they don't know what they are allowed to do, and so people – including customs officers and border guards officers – take unfair advantage of them by taking bribes: not just monetary ones, but also in the form of "physical goods"; this is a normal occurrence.*

A clear manifestation of this sort of problem was noted at the **Zosin** border crossing point, where most travellers claimed that no information was available. In fact, information was detailed and abundant, but was so poorly lit and located (just before the passport control booths and in areas where stopping was prohibited) that it was quite possible for travellers to have passed right by it. One other such example was noted at the **Stamora-Moravita** border crossing point, where a significant amount of legal information was posted or made otherwise available on-site, but located so poorly or inconveniently (inside the main building on barely discernable panels) as to render it useless: the majority of travellers crossed the border in vehicles – and therefore had no need to enter the administrative building.

The information made available was, in some cases, difficult for travellers to acquaint themselves with and understand. Some of the border crossing points supplied only short and sparse information, while some of them posted long legal excerpts incomprehensible to a layperson.

Many individuals claimed they preferred consulting unambiguous pictograms and short information rather than dense legal texts, but even when there were pictograms available, travellers complained that they could not easily be seen.

The only informational sources travellers at the Romanian side of the **Sculeni** had were small, randomly-placed and badly presented posters, leaving it up to customs officers and border police to provide – or refuse – legal assistance. At the Hungarian-Serbian checkpoint **Tompa**, no up-to-date regulations (as required by law) were displayed; only small and outdated posters hung in obscure areas. At the **Goldap** and **Bezledy** border-crossing points, there were only long excerpts from legal documents displayed on the walls of the administration building or in the windows at the end of the lane.

Lack of basic information about customs, passport control regulations and visa requirements in place in both neighbouring states.

Many travellers encountered problems with obtaining information about the customs rules and passport control regulations in place in third countries. The reasons for this difficulty included the overall lack of information available at border crossing points as well as the lack of adequate translations of the information that was available. This seemed to generate a number of problems, such as refusal of entrance to third countries, a longer inspection of the traveller or else the confiscation of their belongings (including stopping the vehicle in which the individual was travelling). It is also worth noting that many travellers were in need of access to better information about visa regulations. Although consulates are generally charged with supplying this sort of information, it seems to be in the keen interest of travellers to have this often complex set of regulations readily available at border crossing points as well.

Moreover, at most of the researched border crossing points, information about crossing the border was not translated – despite information obtained from border guards and customs officers to the contrary². In view of the fact that these border crossing points are the first points of encounter of individuals from non-EU nations with the European Community, there is a pressing need to make information available not only in the languages spoken in border countries, but also in ones widely spoken in EU (i.e., English).

² Such situations were noted at the border-crossing points in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

Difficulties for foreigners to gain access to the documents necessary for lodging a complaint or filing a motion

Although information about the *possibility* of lodging a complaint or filing a motion for a hearing was widely available, significant difficulties surfaced in the majority of border crossing points when it came to exercising this sort of right. Travellers from non-EU countries were for example often slightly disoriented and, since they could not communicate in a common language, were unable to defend their own rights.

At the **Bulgarian** border-crossing points, travellers were able to drop appeals or complaints into special boxes set aside for this purpose. But although instructions for doing so, the telephone number and address were all visibly displayed, almost none of the travellers questioned mentioned this option – a likely indication that it was still under-publicized as a possibility.

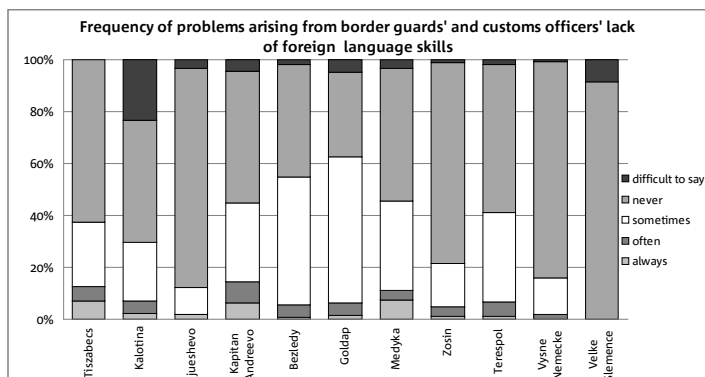
At the **Slovakian-Ukrainian** border, travellers from both sides also encountered difficulties: Slovak border guards officers usually instructed travellers to call the capital Bratislava but, as one respondent indicated, nobody ever picked up the phone.

At the Polish-Russian border-crossing point in **Goldap**, complaints could only be submitted in Polish. In addition, in several cases the available contact information (phone numbers, e-mail or postal addresses) were inaccurate or inoperative, such that travellers received no response to their filed complaints or motions. At the Polish-Ukrainian border crossing point in **Medyka**, lodging a complaint over the phone against an aspect of customs clearance was impossible (invalid phone number).

Language skills

Pursuant to national legal rules, customs officers and border guards are obliged to speak several languages, especially those used in the bordering countries. Such is the object of the preparatory courses they are expected to

Graph 4. Frequency of problems arising from border guards and customs officers' lack of language and/or communication skills as reported by travellers from non-EU countries.



Source: Own data (see Annex 3, Table 5).

complete in the first years of their training. The ability to communicate with travellers is an essential component of the professional service expected at cross border points. Yet some customs and border guards officers were not at all fluent in foreign languages, which prevented them from communicating with travellers effectively and impeded them from carrying out their own duties.

Inadequate knowledge and/or use of foreign languages during pass-port/customs control

As the graph above indicates, in most cases the problems with officers' lack of foreign language skills did not "always" or even "often" arise.

Problems with officers' (lack of) knowledge of foreign languages were mostly evident on the Polish border with Ukraine and Russia, the Bulgarian border with Turkey and the Hungarian border with Ukraine. In some of the monitored border crossing points, the problem of officers lacking foreign language skills did not arise because members of the border communities spoke the neighbouring EU country's language. This situation was observed

at the Slovak and Polish borders with Ukraine (Vysne Nemecke, Velke Slemence, Zosin) and the Hungarian border with Serbia (border crossing point Tompa)³. The language barrier in Bulgaria at the Macedonian (Gjueshevo) and Serbian (Kalotina) borders barely exists because of the similarity between the two languages.

Lack of those kinds of problems is also a consequence of the composition of the travellers passing through these border-crossing points, mostly travellers with a command of the language spoken in the country which they are heading to

Although statistically the frequency with which communication problems arise is not vast, it is necessary to stress that it goes contrary to accepted protocol for customs and border guards officers that forbids being, at any point, unable or unwilling to communicate effectively with travellers. Polls conducted among non-EU citizens show that this sort of problems negatively influences their opinions of border control staff.

Three main problems surfaced with regard to officers' communication skills: an inadequate command of foreign languages, refusal to speak foreign languages, or speaking in a language that was undesirable for political or historical reasons.

The first problem was simply an inadequate command of foreign languages. In many cases, border guards or customs officers either resorted to an incomprehensible mixture of two languages that was extremely difficult for travellers to understand or else avoided speaking in travellers' native languages altogether. For example, at the Stamura-Moravita border crossing point (Romania – Serbia), respondents indicated that officers... *do not speak proper English and speak no Serbian at all.*

The second problem was that, although border guards and customs officers were quite able to speak in foreign languages, they refused to do so⁴. Instead, officers presumed that travellers understood the language

³ The majority of travellers are Hungarian (ethnic Hungarian) or speak Hungarian.

⁴ This situation was noted for example at the Goldap (Poland – Russia) border crossing point.

spoken in their destination country and so used only that language. This bred much misunderstanding and confusion among travellers who may or may not have had a solid command of their destination country's predominant language.

The third problem was that border guards and customs officers spoke with travellers in a language that certain travellers preferred not to speak for historical or political reasons. That phenomenon was observed at the Medyka (Poland – Ukraine) border crossing point, where some Ukrainians who were unwilling to speak Russian were forced to do so by border guards and customs.

Points of view of border guards and customs

During interviews, border guards and customs officers confirmed that information about the legal and organizational regulations governing movement across borders was usually available on bulletin boards and posters, in leaflets or at the officers' booths. They were of the opinion, however, that supplying such materials was unnecessary as travellers either exchanged information amongst themselves or else had adequate access to such information via the Internet or other media. Moreover, they tended to assume that travellers were responsible for gaining all the appropriate information prior to crossing the border.

Customs officers also stressed that some travellers attempted to feign lack of knowledge of the law in order to be able to transport certain (amounts of) goods through customs clearance. They cited these sorts of incidents as being among the most challenging they encountered in their everyday work. *It is particularly difficult to explain to an individual that he or she has broken the law. Most travellers insist on their 'citizen's rights', claim that they are in a hurry or completely refuse to communicate with officers at the border. It takes a lot of energy to make people understand that, for example, they have exceeded the allowable limit on some goods which they have neglected to declare.*

Most border guards and customs officers claimed they had no problems with using foreign languages. Even when a problem did arise, they said, they generally had an officer or translator available during shifts to aid in communication with foreigners.

In most of the countries researched, preparatory courses are available which include language lessons that officers must participate in prior to being hired. Sometimes these courses (and the languages they teach) are perceived as irrelevant since novice border guards or customs officers do not yet know at which border crossing point or on which border they will be posted. Hungarian border guards and customs officers stated candidly that they had inadequate language skills because they did not know when or where (to which border crossing point) they would be assigned.

Often officers had opportunities to improve their language skills during work, but in some cases (i.e., Poland), they lacked time to participate in language courses because certain shifts were understaffed. Sometimes (i.e., in Slovakia), border guards and customs officers simply had no need to improve their foreign language skills because the persons crossing the border were predominantly from local communities.

Border guards and customs officers emphasized that their interactions with travellers were influenced heavily by travellers' experiences leading up to their arrival at the border crossing point – especially when they were coming from a non-EU country. Stress and emotions could run high when travellers had waited in queues for long periods of time.

Cooperation

Cooperation is a particularly sensitive and challenging aspect of operations at EU border crossing points. Cooperation is defined as the entirety of means and methods of communication between border guards, customs, local communities/municipalities and officials from both EU States and third countries. Thus defined, in this analysis the concept of cooperation is divided into “national” and “international” subcategories.

Cooperation between border guards and customs

Border guards and customs officers evaluated cooperation and cooperation policies as “good” and “very good”. Interactions occurred mostly in everyday meetings between superiors that oversaw particular shifts, as well as at informal situations. For travellers, cooperation between border guards and customs could be perceived via the fluidity and efficiency with which movements across the border proceeded. The overlap between the activities of customs and border guards officers was most pronounced in the organization of movement at border crossing points, in detailed inspections, and in sharing on-site administrative facilities. It was not infrequent for customs and border guards officers to, share and exchange professional equipment, in cases where border crossing points were under-supplied.

Cooperation was well perceived however some exceptions, described below were noted as well.

The first of the difficulties has its roots in the infrastructure of the border crossing points. For instance, at the Tiszabecs (Hungary – Ukraine) border crossing point, both border guards and customs officers have to work in the same building. Complications have arisen from the fact that there is but a limited number of rooms at their disposal, and also that one authority might be described as an “owner” while the other was more like a “tenant”. The equipment they share is often in short supply and often damaged. Because of the lack of space in which to carry out detailed inspections, customs officers often take to inspecting passengers and their luggage in the queues. This, in turn, is inconvenient for the border guards officers responsible for maintaining orderliness and organization in the queues.

Border guards and customs officers also have different wage and retirement plans, which causes tensions between them. For example, the customs officers in Hungary receive wages partly on the basis of their performance. The state determines how much income they could expect from the Hungarian Customs and Finance Guard (at the national level), and they also receive a quarterly bonus if they manage to meet a certain expected performance quota. This system is not applicable to the border guards officers, where a novice guard receives much higher wages than a similarly inexperienced customs officer. In Poland, the border guards officers earn higher wages than customs officers who work in the same – and sometimes even inferior – conditions. Additionally, the position of border guards as a part of the military entitles them to various benefits: they could retire at a younger age, for instance, which seems unjust to customs officers. These differences in wages and added benefits can contribute to tense conditions in the workplace and make co-ordination and cooperation between the two authorities difficult. For example the border guards may at their discretion to instruct customs to carry out detailed inspections of an individual or his/her car. Some border guards officers have apparently abused this ability

– thus introducing another negative sentiment into the workplace full of frustration of the travellers.

Still, these frictions, which arise mostly from the differences between the two organizations, do not have a particularly significant impact on the agencies' everyday work. As one Hungarian customs officer put it: *Each [of them] have to do their duty so that others may do theirs. They could perhaps do without each other, but the travellers could not do without their mutual cooperation.*

Cooperation between border guards, customs, national administration and other institutions

The basic entities with which border guards and customs officers cooperate include specific national ministries¹, regional administrative units in neighbouring municipalities and local communities, local police forces, professional translators, veterinarians and ambulatories. For the most part, cooperation was deemed quite satisfactory. At Tompa (Hungary – Serbia) and Tiszabecs (Hungary – Ukraine) border crossing points, there was a contractual relationship between border staff and the local municipal police force: the two cooperated during “targeted actions”. The Hungarian border staff has also concluded cooperative agreements with three vigilante organizations that specialised in re-building and/or repairing damaged buildings after natural disasters. At the Medyka (Poland – Ukraine) border crossing point, customs officers cooperated with the local community in a specific way: they arranged charitable activities with local organisations and donated confiscated clothing to the needy. One exceptional case was Bulgaria, where cooperation between border guards and local authorities and governors has not been satisfactory. The governors have been in charge

¹ For example, in Estonia, the Ministry of Internal Affairs; in Poland the Ministry of the Interior and Administration; in Hungary the Ministry of Finance (Hungarian Customs and Finance Guard) is responsible for operations and maintenance and the Ministry of Justice and Law Enforcement is responsible for law enforcement; in Bulgaria the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Finance.

of the infrastructural projects for the last couple of years and have rarely co-ordinated their design and execution with the border control authorities.

Problems with cooperation at other border crossing points arose not because of the lack of willingness of units to work together but because of the lack of personnel and financial and legal means. That is, in order for the border guards and local municipalities to brainstorm about, invest in and cooperate on the development of border crossing point infrastructure, a suitable budget is necessary for the two to allocate accordingly. For example, in the entrance areas to the border crossing points at Medyka and Zosin (Poland – Ukraine), Vysne Nemecke and Velke Slemence (Slovakia – Ukraine), the apparent lack of proper cooperation between border guards, customs and local police forces has a visible impact on the (poor) condition and organisation of these places (*more detailed information can be found in the chapter on infrastructure*).

Above all, in order for the cooperation to flourish, the appropriate legal instruments are necessary. Yet the lack of this basic foundation was apparent in the faltering administrative techniques noticed at many border crossing points: both border guards and customs officers complained that local administrations were slow to react to their even most pressing needs. It took very long, they said, to improve technical malfunctions in buildings, to rebuild or otherwise improve certain aspects of border crossing points' infrastructure, or to repair professional equipment. Administrations, for their part, indicated that the difficulties had their roots in the fact that there are many legislative obstacles to choosing a particular contractor or provider of services and supplies².

In summary, the elements elaborated above indicate that a significant amount of co-operation is necessary to maintain and/or improve the operational quality of border crossing points; no less important, however, is the collective will of different units to work together to improve conditions at border crossing points.

² This type of problems was particularly evident in Poland's case.

Cooperation with bordering non-EU countries

Cooperation between border officials and non-EU countries is regulated via bilateral agreements that are signed with each bordering state. These agreements stipulate the areas subject to joint efforts, list the appropriate means and methods of communication and describe specific procedures for handling problems and/or emergencies that may arise. Cooperation with third countries falls usually within border guards' realms of responsibility, and focus mainly on maintaining a fluid and efficient standard of movement across the border.

In general, co-operation between border guards in EU and non-EU countries comprises of interactions during everyday meetings at the gates between bordering countries, at *ad hoc* meetings in urgent cases, at monthly meetings called to discuss any problems, and at "task force" meetings that aim to enumerate joint responsibilities for officials on both sides of the border. After each meeting, summary reports are compiled and issued to border guards on both sides. Additionally, border guards of neighbouring countries regularly exchange information about any changes in legal regulations by post or by fax.

When interviewed, border guards on the EU side of the border evaluated their co-operation with officers in non-EU countries relatively positively. Still, it seemed that only some border crossing points used their bilateral agreements in a satisfactory manner.

In Hungary's case, for instance, the relationship of border guards with officials in third countries was satisfactory, but slight differences emerged in the cases of Serbia and Ukraine. While there was close, well-institutionalized co-operation between officials at the Serbian Kelebija and the Hungarian Tompa border crossing points, the relationship between officials at the Hungarian Tiszabecs and the Ukrainian Vilok border crossing points was not as successful. An example of fruitful co-operation between the Hungarians and the Serbs was, for instance, a draft proposal

for renovating and modernizing border crossing points. Officials from both sides of the border also cooperated in everyday tasks pertaining to the overall operation of the border crossing point: a Hungarian lieutenant informed his Serbian counterpart on a monthly basis about traffic flows and any incidents and events worthy of note. Both sides compared their collected data and held general meetings every month. Because Hungarian officers had access to specialised equipment for night patrols, they informed their Serbian colleagues of any suspicious persons and/or situations. By contrast, the co-operation between Hungary and Ukraine was only based on several loose agreements pertaining to joint work efforts. Cooperation between the two took place only when it was absolutely necessary: no extra, independent initiatives (such as monthly meetings or joint committees as described above) were in place.

During the research problematic issues become evident when infrastructural considerations and methods of information exchange between EU and non-EU officials are considered. Border guards at EU border crossing points underlined the infrastructural obstacles they encountered during co-operation with officials in third countries. At some border crossing points, bottlenecks in traffic severely impede the fluidity and efficiency of movement across EU borders³. According to them, in order to remedy such situations, it would likely be helpful for both sides to discuss or conclude joint agreements to further develop border crossing point infrastructures. The creation of financial instruments to help support development in third countries would also be necessary.

³ It is worth noting, however, that sometimes infrastructural problems can pave the way to closer cooperation. At the Romanian-Ukrainian border-crossing point Sighetul Marmatiei, for example, the cooperation between Romanian and Ukrainian border guards is described as “satisfactory”: it appears that the difficult traffic conditions (due to the vast amount of passengers and vehicles crossing just a single-lane bridge every day) force the Romanian and Ukrainian officials to co-operate very closely with one another in order to ensure the best logistical outcomes. They meet on the bridge twice a day, aided by an interpreter.

Yet another obstacle to effective co-operation between EU and non-EU border guards is an insufficient amount of communication. Border guards emphasised that only inefficient means existed to inform partners across the border (or vice versa) about any changes in legislation. Posted letters arrived with a significant delay or in a language incomprehensible for one side. Both border guards and customs officers suggested that joint training sessions – especially for novice officers – might be an effective means of opening channels of communication and acquainting both sides with the proper protocol. According to border guards and custom officers, a significant obstacle to effective co-operation was an insufficient number of staff on both sides of the border.

Queues

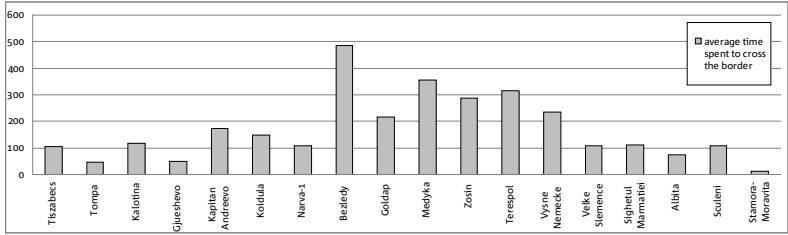
Queues on the border crossing points are related with the following areas :

- Waiting times;
- Order in queues;
- Efficiency of border guards and customs officers;
- Infrastructure at border crossing points;
- Type and number of travellers crossing the border;
- Number of border crossing points at the external EU border;
- Border crossing rules;
- Traffic coordination between the EU and non-EU border authorities.

Length of waiting time

The major source of discomfort during travel, reported at almost all of the border crossing points, was the length of time spent waiting in a queue to cross the border. In the majority of cases, the longest queues formed at the entrance to EU countries, though there were a few notable exceptions, such as in Finland, where the queues formed mainly when trying to exit Finland. Many of the travellers were convinced that the border guards intentionally and arbitrarily prolonged the procedures for non-EU citizens. They were not aware, however, of any different procedures applying to EU

Graph 5. Average length of time spent according to the travellers to cross the border (in minutes).



Sources: Own data (see Annex 3, Table 6)

and non-EU citizens crossing the border¹. Importantly, it is not the length of time needed for inspections (which last from a few minutes to less than one hour), but the overall average time needed for passing through the border crossing point (see graph below and Annex 3, Table 6). The waiting time is a function of infrastructural conditions, the number of officers working and the extensiveness of procedures carried out by neighbouring border guards and customs.

According to the survey conducted among travellers, the waiting times between Ukraine and the EU are the longest of all the other border crossing points. The average waiting time at Poland’s border crossing points ranges from almost 6 hours in Medyka to almost 5 hours in Zosin. At Vysne Nemecke between Slovakia and Ukraine, the average waiting time is more than 4 hours. Travellers claimed that the length of waiting time depended on the particular border guards and customs shift in charge. Of all of the border crossing points researched in Romania, the longest average waiting time was 110 minutes, at Sighetul Marmatiei.

¹ There were some exceptions, however, as at the border-crossing points in Bulgaria, where travellers were aware of the changed rules and tended to express understanding about prolonged procedures and delays.

Zosin is one of Poland's newest border crossing points with Ukraine, which opened after a series of systemic changes. 20% of respondents claimed that the average time needed to cross the border was up to two hours. This applied only to Polish citizens, however, because the average time for all of the travellers who resided in Ukraine was longer than two hours. Over 80% of respondents living in Poland claimed that the inspection of travel documents and customs clearance did not last longer than one hour, while only half of the Ukrainian respondents were of the same opinion. The respondents declared that the waiting time was too long and the formation of long queues was the fault of inefficient border authorities or else the result of breakdowns in the computer system. There were, however, examples given of some shifts that worked well. Although there are two lanes – for EU citizens and for citizens of third countries – all cars have to wait in one queue.

Tiszabecs is Hungary's border crossing point with Ukraine, which was re-opened to the general public after 1989 and could initially handle only local border traffic. In 1993, it was opened to international traffic. Initially, the traffic was heavy: up to two million people crossed the border each year. Shopping and tourism dominated at this time. Since Hungary's accession to the EU, local border traffic has been stopped, but there has been significant use of the border crossing point by people living in the border region. The average length of waiting time according to the respondents is 106 minutes, that is less than two hours. Entrance and customs inspection takes, in general, approximately 25 minutes. Before reaching the Hungarian border crossing point, travellers entering Hungary have to wait on average 80 minutes on the Ukrainian side of the border. This long waiting time is connected with the tightened inspection procedure aiming at decreasing cross-border trade and introduced by the Ukrainian authorities. EU citizens are inspected just as closely along this border section as are non-EU citizens. At times it seems that EU-citizens must wait even longer. Those who travel to work or carry out business

activities wait the shortest (approximately 20 minutes), while tourists or those who declare themselves to be tourists, wait 1.5 times longer.

The border crossing point **Sighetul Marmatiei** between Romania and Ukraine was just recently constructed, opened to traffic on January 15, 2007. The long waiting times are the result of the limitation of traffic by the one-lane bridge, where cars can only circulate in one direction. The difficulty of this situation is increased by the enormous amount of daily traffic: about 6,000 persons in 24 hours. Long waiting-for-access queues form frequently on both sides of the bridge. The long waiting time spent in unfavourable conditions creates tensions between the travellers and the customs officials. On the Ukrainian side, the procedure is quicker.

Waiting times were rather short at the border crossing points between Serbia and the EU and at the border between Moldova and the EU.

In general, average waiting times at border crossing points between Russia and the EU were rather long. The number of traffic lanes and customer service points was seen as an issue of secondary importance. At Estonia's border crossing points with Russia, the average waiting times were not very long, although long waiting times were experienced by truck drivers. Long waiting times were also a problem in Finland at the Valimaa border crossing point and in Bezledy (PL-RU).

Very long queues formed in **Valimaa** at the Finish-Russian border. As the volume of traffic grew, the waiting time at the border increased. In 2006, more than 2.6 million people crossed the border at Vaalimaa: this was 39% of all crossings at the Finnish-Russian border that year. The queues of trucks waiting to cross the border and to undergo customs control have repeatedly stretched to intolerable lengths, at times close to 60 kilometers from the border. These queues involve serious safety

risks for the remaining traffic, negatively affect people living along the route, cause logistical complications and, overall, have a negative influence on EU-Russian trade. Temporary solutions have been introduced in an effort to ease the situation, i.e., the construction of truck parks and lanes where the trucks can wait for their turn instead of waiting by the road. These parking areas are, however, insufficient and do little to eliminate the actual problem. Although – according to the Finnish report – queues are the result of time-consuming bureaucratic procedures administered by Russian customs officers, the processing of documents for freight transport and cars on the Finnish side is all done in the same line, thereby causing delays and creating longer queues.

Long waiting time negatively affects travellers' opinions of the functioning of the border crossing points, of the efficiency of the border guards and of the adequacy of infrastructure.

Order in queues

Travellers at several of the border crossing points complained about disorder in the queues. This was in part a reaction to the conditions of the areas leading up to the actual border crossing point which are not monitored by the border guards or by the local police.

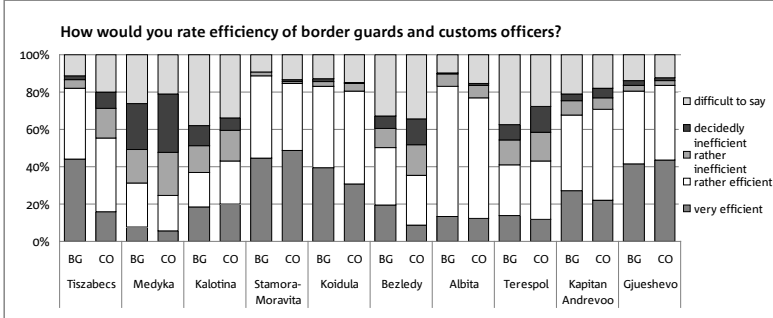
Disorder in the queues is prominent at border crossing points between Ukraine and the EU. Among the reasons for the disorder, travellers claimed, was that at some of the border crossing points there were no separate lanes for travellers crossing on foot or by car. Another reason given was that the traffic increased during weekends or holidays. An important factor influencing the situation in the queues was the adoption of informal strategies by travellers, who opted for any possible solutions to shorten their waiting time.

At the Slovak-Ukrainian border in **Vysne Nemecke**, several cars without diplomatic stickers (CD) were allowed to pass through the line on the Ukrainian side. According to respondents, there was a hierarchy of travellers' importance for entering the Ukrainian border zone: supposedly the function of a small bribe or else of preferential treatment of those who have informal ties with the customs and border guards officers. Some travellers mentioned that nepotism was also common among the Slovak border guards. Yet another major problem was the mismanagement of the spaces in between two border crossing points, where passengers' cars waited to proceed through to the other countries' border crossing procedures.

Some disorder in the queues is also visible at the border crossing points between the EU and Russia. This is, in the majority of cases, due to unsatisfactory infrastructure. The queues at other border crossing points are also caused by an insufficient number of lines for different types of vehicles.

At the Estonian section of the border with Russia at **Narva-1** and **Koidula**, long pedestrian queues were formed outside of the indoor inspection area, with the lack of adequate facilities for travellers. Another problem has to do with the queues created by buses and trucks: although there was a small parking place for transit transport, it was of inadequate size and thus queues formed at the roadsides outside the town. At the Koidula border crossing point, trucks lined up on the roadside to the length of 5 to 8 km from the border crossing point. There was no extra parking space for trucks, and so the long queues of trucks parking on the roadside created a potentially dangerous situation for cars passing by in both directions. Certain informal practices also allegedly take place. Based on the observations of the Estonian research team of the border crossing point, informal ties played a role in shortening waiting times at Narva-1: people working for the transit company or their acquaintances

Graph 6. Evaluation of work efficiency of border guards and customs officers in selected countries in the opinion of travellers.



Sources: Own data (see annex 3, table 7–8).

who presented the company's coupons at the border crossing point were let into the border control zone without having to wait in the queue. According to the comments of drivers inside the Narva-1 border-control zone, coupons for the queue that had originally been provided for free were sold at the nearby gas station for circa 35 EUR.

Efficiency of border guards and customs officers

The perception of the effectiveness and efficiency of border guards and customs officers is strongly related to the existence of queues at border crossing points. The waiting time at the border is one of the most important factors influencing travellers' opinions about a given border crossing point, and, in addition to infrastructural quality, bears significantly on travellers' evaluations of border authorities' performance.

In general, the efficiency of border guards' performance was evaluated more positively than that of customs. This was partly linked to the respond-

ents' inability to differentiate between the two roles and the protocols and procedures they entailed. The officers of border guards and customs were also compared by respondents to their non-EU colleagues, which resulted in the quality of their work being perceived much more positively. There were significant differences between evaluations of border guards and customs officers by EU and non-EU travellers, with the latter often being more critical in their responses. The high frequency of the "it is difficult to tell" answers was likely attributable to the challenging circumstances in which research was carried out, where travellers were asked to answer the questionnaires at the border crossing points, i.e., in close proximity to border guards and customs officers.

The efficiency of border guards and customs officers' performance at some of the sections of the EU-Ukrainian border crossing points was evaluated rather negatively. Specifically, this occurred at the Polish section of the EU external land-border, where most of the negative evaluations came from travellers who crossed the border as pedestrians. The negative evaluations provided by Ukrainian citizens were, in part, reactions to the detailed inspections that they were obliged to undergo. Meanwhile, at the Hungarian section of the EU border with Ukraine, the efficiency of border guards and customs officers was seen more positively than at the Polish border crossing point. Similarly, at the Slovak section of the border with Ukraine, more than half of travellers claimed that the Slovak officers were either "very" or "rather" polite and that their work was efficient and professional. Only one-fifth said that officers were "incompetent" and their work "inefficient".

At **Medyka** on the Polish-Ukrainian border, the percentage of positive evaluations of border guards officers' efficiency among Polish travellers was only slightly higher than the percentage of negative evaluations (42% and 36%, respectively). Almost half of the Ukrainian travellers evaluated the proficiency of border guards officers negatively (49%) and only 20% positively. As for the efficiency of customs officers, 63% of Poles and 48% of Ukrainians provided negative evaluations.

At the border between the EU and Russia, significant differences could be seen between the evaluations of border guards and customs officers by EU and non-EU citizens. Similarly, as at the border with Belarus in Terespol, there were striking differences between the evaluations of the border guards and customs officers' work efficiency by Polish and Belarusian travellers. The Belarusian citizens were almost certainly influenced by the long queues and, for this reason, gave more negative evaluations of the efficiency of the border guards officers. Overall, the detailed inspections that non-EU citizens were subjected to made them more inclined to provide negative evaluations of the efficiency of the work of border guards.

At **Bezledy**, between Poland and Russia, the work of border guards officers were evaluated as “very good” and “rather good” by 61% of travellers living in Poland and 40% of travellers living in Russia. The gap of over 20% between the positive evaluation of border guards by Polish and Russian travellers is important to note. The negative evaluations were similar among the two groups – over 15% of both Poles and Russians evaluated the border guards officers' efficiency as “poor” and “very poor”. Despite the fact that, during on-site observations carried out at the border crossing point, the inspections were conducted by the border guards competently, travellers claimed that this was often not the case. 24% of travellers from Russia and almost 40% of travellers living in Poland evaluated the efficiency of customs officers negatively (only 34% of both groups gave appraisals of “good” and “very good”). A high number of Russian travellers had difficulties evaluating the quality of the work carried out by border guards and customs officers at the Polish border crossing points. These “difficulties” were likely related to the setting in which the research was carried out: that is, the proximity of the border guards and customs officers to the respondents. According to some of the travellers, the customs officers sometimes drew out or delayed inspections more than was necessary.

At the border between Serbia and the EU, and between Moldova and the EU, travellers gave rather positive evaluations of the efficiency of the officers of border guards and customs.

At the Bulgarian border crossing point with Serbia in **Kalotina**, 37% of travellers provided positive evaluations of the border guards officers' efficiency and 25% negative ones. Almost 38% claimed that it was difficult to evaluate. With regard to customs officers, 43% of respondents gave a positive assessment ("very efficient"/"rather efficient"), 23% a negative one ("rather inefficient"/"definitely inefficient"), while 34% deemed it "difficult to say".

The border crossing point at the Bulgarian border with Macedonia, **Gjueshevo**, was in general very positively evaluated in terms of efficiency. When evaluating border guards, 81% of respondents gave a positive assessment ("very efficient"/"rather efficient"), 5% evaluated it negatively ("rather inefficient"/"definitely inefficient"), while 14% deemed it difficult to judge. The customs officers were evaluated positively by 84% of respondents ("very efficient"/"rather efficient"), 4% responded negatively ("rather inefficient"/"definitely inefficient").

Points of view of border guards and customs

Officers of border guards and customs claimed that queues resulted from many interconnected factors. Among them were the types of the travellers crossing the border and the location of the border crossing point. Queues could be longer at those border crossing points where non-EU citizens, who require more thorough inspection, dominated. Longer queues were also, in the opinion of border authorities, brought about by the existence of cross-border trade, which, they indicate, will endure as long as there are price differences between goods in the EU and non-EU neighbouring countries.

The more experienced officials suggested that simplification of Schengen rules might make entry into the EU more efficacious.

In the opinion of the border guards and customs officers, the waiting time was largely dependent on the number of passengers crossing the border. There were increased flows of traffic during vacation seasons and at the weekends, as well as during local religious holidays. Reasons for prolonged waiting times were also related to the travelling patterns of the passengers: the majority preferred to travel during the light hours of the day. The peaks for cargo traffic, by contrast, occurred at night or in the early morning hours. The officers' general conclusion was that the current facilities were insufficient, especially for the period between mid-June and mid-September.

Another important factor behind the formation of queues was, in the opinion of border guards and customs, the number of existing border crossing points at the external EU border. For example, at the Polish border with Russia, Belarus and Ukraine (which has a combined length of 1183.7 km) there are 31 border crossing points. This, compared to the previous external border with Germany – spanning 467 km and containing 32 border crossing points – reveals how many border crossing points might be necessary to ensure efficient performance. In the opinion of the border guards and customs officers, the number of border crossing points ought to be increased.

The border guards and customs officers take into consideration the speed and volume of traffic because they are responsible for reporting approximate waiting times, but they must also take into consideration several other factors, including, but not limited to: EU regulations, national regulations, other laws, bilateral agreements and, above all, ensuring the safety and security of all travellers. They complained about the lack of common management of border crossing procedures. There are no joint training sessions organized for the EU and non-EU officers, especially at the lower level. This has been identified as a problem, especially at the Vysne Nemecke border crossing point. Officers would appreciate closer cooperation with the local road police on improving the infrastructure leading up

to the border crossing point. They acknowledged that assistance with the coordination of traffic in the close vicinity of border crossing points would help make the crossing procedure more efficient.

In general, border guards officers attributed responsibility for the length of queues to the inefficient performance of border guards in neighbouring countries. The officers reported cases in which their colleagues across the border had refused to carry out their services as well as cases in which problems with the computerized system had caused delays and hampered the processing of documentation. This was confirmed in several cases by travellers.

In some cases, officers suggested a complete separation of passenger and freight traffic, opening extra lines for passenger traffic, and hiring more staff members. A perhaps more workable plan to put an end to lengthy queues was one in which the use of an electronic customs declaration would be the norm.

Dignity

Respondents evaluated the attitude and behaviour of border guards and customs officers during inspections of travel documents and goods. Almost all of the travellers compared the treatment provided by EU-border staff to that of the non-EU border guards and customs officers. In the opinion of travellers, border authorities of non-EU countries treated them disrespectfully more frequently than border staff of EU Member States. However, research showed some examples of bad practices also among EU border authorities. In this chapter, examples of such practices are given.

Research results indicate that the EU border staff treat various travellers differently. In the opinion of all travellers, the attitude toward EU nationals is professional and polite, while officers' attitudes toward non-EU citizens are often described as disrespectful and patronising. Attitudes toward tourists and businessmen are more respectful than they are toward traders and truck drivers. Thus, the type of treatment travellers receive can be determined by their nationality/ethnicity and/or their purpose of travel. Above all, travellers from non-EU countries might feel to be discriminated against because of different legal rules of custom and passport control.

The discriminatory treatment perceived by travellers included:

- Long waiting times for third country citizens;
- Disrespectful means of address;
- Excessively detailed inspections of private property

Unequal treatment

At the section of the EU border with Ukraine in Slovakia, the improper attitude of Slovaks toward Ukrainians and Roma was observed. Among the Slovaks, almost one third of the travellers claimed border staff behaved differently toward travellers from different countries – in this case, especially Ukrainians. A significant number of Ukrainians felt they were treated as though they were “inferior” compared to EU travellers. Ukrainian citizens claimed that personal inspections were too detailed and that they also experienced haughtier and more impolite behaviour from Slovak officers more frequently than other travellers did. Some of the travellers claimed *we are all treated like smugglers* and like *citizens from third-world countries*. Unequal treatment of non-EU citizens by the Slovak border officers was acknowledged by a number of travellers, regardless of their nationality. Discriminatory treatment of Slovak Roma at the border is rooted in the overall economic and social exclusion of Roma in Slovak society. Detailed inspections were, however, also related to the large number of petty traders crossing the border.

At another section of the EU-Ukrainian border, in Poland’s Medyka, many respondents complained about the discriminatory treatment of Ukrainian citizens. The EU lane at the border crossing point was served faster and there were shorter queues, while in the non-EU lane there was generally a considerable waiting time. Although the border guards could be flexible and allow Ukrainian citizens to use the EU lane, they did not do so. Some travellers indicated that the preferential treatment of Polish travellers by Polish border guards was a symbolic “payback” because Ukrainian border guards allegedly treated Ukrainians better on their side. At the Zosin border crossing point, both Polish and Ukrainian travellers claimed to have observed discriminatory treatment of persons from third countries. All in all, too detailed control with regard to assumed aims of inspection did

convey an impression of disrespect for an individual's personal dignity. In Hungary, at Tiszabecs, travellers were also checked thoroughly as a result of the Bereg action¹.

At the EU-Russian border, the condescending attitude of border guards and customs was particularly noticeable when they dealt with petty traders. The longer queues for non-EU citizens also gave the impression of them being treated in an inferior manner. In Estonia, for instance, negative evaluations of border guards' and customs' work were given by respondents who felt that their own and other countries' citizens were being treated differently. For example, according to one respondent, *there is long waiting in the general queue while EU citizens often cross the Estonian side of the border more quickly using a separate window. That creates situations in which citizens of the third countries are obliged to stay in a queue for a longer time while the border guard officer at the EU booth is free.*

¹ The so-called Bereg action was carried out in October 2005 and was aimed at decreasing cross-border trade. More information is available in the Hungarian national report.

At the **Goldap** border crossing point between Poland and Russia, there are significant differences between the percentage of positive and negative evaluations of the customs' attitudes by EU and non-EU citizens. There is a 30% difference between the positive and negative evaluation of the behaviour of customs depending on nationality. It was evaluated as "good" and "very good" by 57% of travellers living in Poland and by 67% of travellers living in Russia. In the case of this border crossing point, the percentage of negative evaluations given by Polish travellers was very high, while there were almost no negative opinions on the side of Russian travellers. The lack of negative evaluations from Russian travellers may be attributable to comparisons they drew between the behaviour of Polish officers and the behaviour of Russian customs, as well as to the fact that most of the petty traders were Poles, not Russians.

At the EU-Belarus border in Terespol, large numbers of Belarusians had problems with evaluating EU border guards and custom officers' attitudes. However, Belarusian citizens, coming from an undemocratic state, may have experienced more trepidation in voicing critiques of any state-related institution. Good behaviour among Polish border guards seemed not to be a common standard, but rather due to the exceptional qualities of individual border guards.

At the border crossing point between the EU and Serbia in Hungary, some of the interviewees felt that Hungarian citizens and other EU-citizens were treated more politely. At Tompa, cars that had a Serbian registration number were often checked more thoroughly, which, might stem at least partly from Schengen regulations. There were also differences in the evaluation by EU and non-EU citizens of border authorities' attitudes during inspections. The uncertainty of travellers with regard to how to evaluate the behaviour of border guards might be the result of prior treatment they received from non-EU border guards. Differences in treatment were also noted at the Bulgarian section of the border with Serbia.

At the Hungarian border crossing points, the responses given to the questionnaire show that over a half of EU citizens claimed that the behaviour of the border guards was "very good", while half of non-EU citizens were of the opinion that it was only "fairly polite". One reason for this difference may be attributable to the fact that the documents of third country citizens must be checked more thoroughly than those of EU states citizens. Because of this, their interactions with the border guards take longer. Interviews indicate, however, that some people viewed this as discrimination, while others thought that it was part of the system; the opinion depended on people's attitudes. In the case of Hungary, irrespective of the border crossing point or the individual's citizenship, travellers seemed to agree on the fact that the Hungarian border guards were much more polite than their Ukrainian and Serbian colleagues: *[...] on the Serbian side they don't even talk in sentences, they only growl at you. This is the way they address you right from the beginning.*

At the border between the EU and Moldova, Moldovan citizens claimed that there was a marked difference in the treatment that foreign travellers received. One of the explanations for these differences is the fact that Moldovan citizens have to undergo a detailed inspection of travel documents, which often causes delays even on the Romanian side of the border.

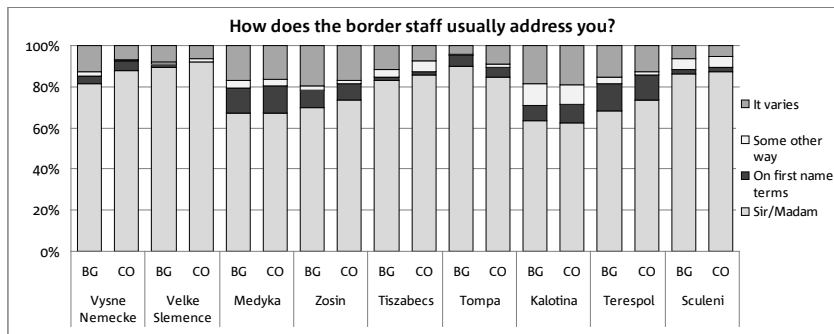
In general, EU citizens and citizens of other developed countries enjoyed better treatment due to “fast-track” border crossing procedures. This was also visible at the EU-Macedonian border, where citizens of the EU, the USA and Canada enjoyed better and more amiable services: they were asked fewer questions and moved through passport inspections more smoothly. Meanwhile, the attitude towards citizens of the Republic of Macedonia was rather patronising and somewhat brusque. This was at least partly related to the complicated visa procedure applied to Macedonian citizens.

Addressing the travellers

The border guards and custom officers, in general, addressed travellers in a formal and polite manner. However, travellers claimed that border staff addressed them in an informal way in several cases. By informal addressing they understand culturally (in some countries e.g. Slovakia, Poland) unaccepted directness associated with lack of respect. This way of addressing was more visible at border-crossing points of a regional character, where many individuals crossing the border were involved in petty-trade.

The style in which border officers addressed travellers was also, of course, influenced by the behaviour of the travellers themselves. For instance, the behaviour of some of the inhabitants of Slovakia or Poland, who use various “strategies” to conceal and protect their smuggled goods during inspections, could trigger more severe reactions from officers. On the other hand, some border guards and customs officers addressed travellers harshly without provocation. The manner in which border staff address

Graph 7. Addressing the travellers at selected border crossing points.



Source: Own data (see Annex 3, Table 9).

and treat travellers should be equal for all of them: that this is not the case indicates a lack of uniform standards.

The main problems with addressing travellers politely – especially non-EU citizens – were observed at border crossing points with Ukraine. At the Zosin border crossing point, 75% of Polish travellers claimed that they had been addressed politely, while only 58% of Ukrainian travellers said so. Over 30% of travellers from Ukraine claimed that means of address depended on the context. In Hungary, although the majority of people believed that other countries’ citizens were not addressed differently, there was a difference between the border crossing points: more people at Tiszabecs (bordering with Ukraine) than at Tompa (bordering with Serbia) believed that border guards addressed people differently (13% vs. 2%). At the Polish border crossing points with Ukraine, more positive opinions were found among travellers in private cars than among pedestrians crossing the border. The latter claimed that their dignity was trampled upon by the custom officers’ attitudes and general disposition: during inspections, they claimed, they were asked derisive questions

which went beyond their duty. The travellers underlined the fact that border guards officers took long breaks, thereby increasing travellers' waiting times. When the travellers attempted to intervene, the behaviour of border guards deteriorated further, sometimes even leading to drastic conflicts.

At the EU border with Belarus in Terespol, border guards addressed different travellers differently. 75% of Polish travellers and 61% of Belarusian travellers were addressed in a formal way. According to 16% of Poles and 11% of Belarusians, border guards officers addressed travellers informally. Among the non-EU travellers, 24% claimed that border guards' behaviour varied depending on the context. Border guards claimed that their so-called derogatory attitudes towards Belarusians were a result of the travellers' unseemly behaviour. According to border guards, Belarusian citizens were ignorant of the regulations even though they crossed the border every day and were, in general, impolite.

Of the travellers crossing the border between the EU and Serbia in Kalotina, more than a half were addressed politely.

The border crossing point at **Sculeni**, connecting Romania to the Republic of Moldova, has been in operation since August 1991. Opened at first for local border traffic, it began to function as an international border crossing point following the legal decision of the government in March 1996. Officers of customs and border guards address travellers in a polite way since most of them are young and specialized in this field. In interviews, however, respondents complained of preferential treatment towards EU citizens (especially Western Europeans). This might be partially explained by the fact that Romanian and Moldovan citizens need many documents in order to cross the border and therefore undergo a lengthier inspection procedure. 76% considered border guards to be polite. Both customs and border guards officers used *madam/sir* when addressing travellers; 86% of the respondents mentioned that this type of address was used by Romanian officials towards all travellers, including foreigners. 74% of respondents considered customs workers "polite", with 26% considering them "very polite".

Excessively detailed inspection of private property

In principle, customs clearance procedures consist of travellers preparing their car or baggage for inspection and declaring what they intend to bring into or out of EU territory. Whenever a customs officer has doubts and wants to examine all the contents of a traveller's baggage or car, he or she must ask the traveller to prepare and reveal all the goods necessitating inspection.

A number of respondents, especially those who were engaged in petty trade, frequently complained about the very detailed inspections to which vehicles were subjected. In some cases, customs officers used inappropriate instruments to carry out their duties, and as a consequence damaged some travellers' vehicles. Individuals who were randomly selected for detailed inspections were surprised by the rough nature of this procedure and often expressed concern about the condition of their vehicles.

In addition, some respondents had negative experiences with detailed inspections of their personal luggage: in order to ascertain what is being brought into an EU country, customs officers typically asked travellers to open their luggage and the goods they were carrying, and frequently some goods or articles (if they were opened, tried, etc.) were damaged in the process. Unsurprisingly, whenever any goods that travellers intended to bring in as gifts needed to be opened or tested in front of customs officers, respondents had particularly negative opinions of the process. There is no doubt that, in order to ensure legal and safe cross-border movement, travellers and their goods should be subject to detailed inspections. However, attention should be drawn to the fact that possibly inappropriate, inefficient or otherwise costly practices are involved in customs officers' efforts to "expose" travellers. Respondents claimed that these excessively detailed, occasionally damaging controls were carried out purely as "warnings" to dissuade cross-border traders from engaging in such activities.

Corruption

Complexity of the phenomenon

Due to its elusiveness and exclusivity, providing a complete description and in-depth analysis of corruption proves particularly difficult. As it is characterized by some degree of immoral and criminal behaviour, corruption proliferates only in hidden situations. For this reason – and also because it is potentially damaging information for both parties involved – it is difficult to effectively research and unmask. Yet individuals who have never or were only formerly involved in corrupt practices testify to the pervasiveness and seriousness of this problem among border guards and customs officers, as well as other travellers. Travellers possessing such knowledge about the presence and promulgation of corrupt behaviours, however, avoid commenting on the topic for fear of damaging their professional and personal well-being.

Despite these inherent difficulties, there is no doubt that the perceived operational quality of cross border points is closely linked to the presence – or absence – of corrupt behaviour. All the information contained in this section is based on personal, in-depth interviews, observations of travellers and results of questionnaire, as well as on information provided by officers of customs and border guards themselves. Accordingly, all the information

offered below is a summary of the perceptions of corrupt behaviour as seen and/or experienced by travellers and border guards and customs officers.

Travellers' perceptions of the problem of corruption

The majority of travellers (from 55% of travellers in Bulgaria to 95% in Estonia) were of the opinion that there was no problem with corruption at EU border crossing points. Some travellers, however (from 5% in Estonia to approx. 25% in Bulgaria), claimed that there was, in fact, a problem with corruption at EU border crossing points. Corruption in these cases was more frequently associated with customs officers than with border guards officers. This is perhaps unsurprising, as fewer problems generally arise because of invalid documents or vehicles than because individuals travel with quantities of goods that exceed the legal limits,. In the opinion of most of those interviewed, bribes were given by petty traders, smugglers, and, sometimes, entrepreneurs. Opinions of travellers referenced below will provide further insight into the corruption problem.

Changes in the mechanisms of corruption

Most travellers emphasized that the problem of corruption had noticeably diminished over the past ten years on the EU external borders. They spoke of corruption as a phenomenon of the past that had long since come to an end. The interviewed travellers indicated that corruption might only *seem* less pervasive because of changes in common corrupt mechanisms or practices. These changes had simply caused corrupt practices to move outside the main area of the cross border points.

Those travellers who believed that corruption was no longer a problem at border crossing points highlighted the fact that anticorruption instruments and institutions recently put in place had had a very positive impact on eradicating corrupt practices.

For instance, one method very frequently used in the battle with corruption at border crossing points was the installation of monitoring systems,

and interior verifications among custom officers. This last method is based on the building of so-called mobile custom officer teams, which are checking the ways and methods of work of custom officers working constantly on particular border crossing points.

Travellers were of the opinion that the presence of cameras and other surveillance methods prevented or impeded those who would otherwise engage in corrupt behaviours from doing so.

In all researched countries, different initiatives aimed at fighting corruption at border crossing points were introduced. For example in Hungary, customs officers are relocated to different cross border points after three or four years of service¹. In addition, leaders of the Hungarian Border Guard units inspect officers' booths every month in search of money or other valuables – and usually find nothing. Such inspections take place not only within the institution itself: an external law enforcement agency also investigates the organization of Hungary's armed forces, including those of customs and border guards. In Poland, a relatively strict law was introduced, to the effect that the mere suspicion that an officer has engaged in corrupt behaviour was enough to merit his or her suspension. If, after a year, the suspicion was not dropped, the officer was dismissed, whether or not he or she was ever found guilty². Other important initiatives taken against corruption include those of local governors cooperating with border guards and customs

Some travellers indicated that although corruption had mostly diminished at border crossing points themselves, it was likely to still be pervasive outside the border crossing points. Travellers described various situations and provided examples of individuals who – despite being notorious smugglers of cigarettes or petrol – were not stopped or even closely inspected as they crossed the border. This seemed to indicate that corrupt associations and practices might develop via private contacts outside of the border crossing points. That is, since customs officers and border guards usually reside in

¹ Relocating some of the personnel to different checkpoints has proven to bring about decreases in the apparent levels of corruption.

² This controversial from the beginning regulation, had been changed in March 2008.

towns near the cross border points, they are easily approached while off-duty with bribes or other corrupt propositions. Customs officers, border guards and petty traders could be old schoolmates or neighbours. In such cases, it may prove difficult to refuse to enter into a bribery partnership.

Many travellers (especially those from non-EU countries) who emphasized the lack of corruption likely based their observations on a direct comparison with the situations present at the non-EU country's side of the border. Many interviewed travellers had experiences with corrupt behaviours of border guards and customs officers in third countries. It is this stark comparison, perhaps, that led many of them to observe that corruption was not prevalent or even nonexistent at EU cross border points, even if the phenomenon did indeed endure elsewhere outside the border.

Examples of corruption at monitored border crossing points

Certain travellers were able to provide specific examples of corrupt behaviours at border crossing points, which adds to the probability that it still occurs. At the Tompa border crossing point (HU-RS), some travellers mentioned that bus drivers were known to give small “gifts” to border guards or customs officers in order to move more quickly through the cross border point – though none had witnessed the situation personally. At the Goldap and Bezledy border crossing points (PL-RU), several travellers indicated that corrupt practices were pervasive between Polish border guards and customs officers and non-EU travellers engaged in petty trading (with whom it was less risky to establish a “partnership” than it might be with Polish citizens). Observations and interviews with travellers at the Bulgarian-Macedonian cross border point indicated that some individuals, drawing from past experiences, anticipated being asked for a bribe – and prepared accordingly. Customs officers may receive bribes in various forms, as explained by one traveller: *as far as customs officers are concerned, they often get a variety of presents, most frequently from goods being transported*

– like fruit or vegetables – ... but they take money, too, as well as small bags with unknown contents. It was also noted that some business travellers from Transcarpathian Ukraine and Eastern Slovakia paid bribes in order to be allowed quicker passage through the cross border points.

Points of view of border guards and customs

Border guards and – especially – customs officers mostly avoided the topic of corruption during interviews. While they did state that they knew from travellers' accounts that giving bribes was practically a precondition for passing through the non-EU side of a border crossing point, they believed that corrupt practices never or only seldom occurred on the EU sides of border crossing points.

Officers indicated that in the past, any attention drawn to the fact that an officer was arrested or suspended on account of corruption had severely damaged the prestige of their profession. While corruption in the workplace was widely discussed, it had taken on a “mythological” or “folklore-like” status. Customs officers also emphasized that corruption was that which was proven to be corruption. *As corruption involves two [or more] people, the one who bribes and the one who is bribed, it is extremely difficult to establish the veracity of such accusations. [...] People talk about many more cases than can actually be proven to have taken place.* In general, the media very quickly assume border guards or customs officers were guilty of corruption as soon as an accusation was made. Border guards and customs officers who were arrested on charges of corruption and then later acquitted had found that it was the negative, suspicious side of the event that had remained in the public memory.

For many, officers of border guards and customs, the “push factor” for corrupt practices seemed to be related to the low salaries they receive in the public sector. In Poland, for instance, a novice customs officer earned

about 430 EUR (about 1,500 PLN) monthly in 2007³, which is insufficient for the current cost of living. Additionally, the salaries of Polish border guards are higher than those of customs officers performing similarly arduous duties. In Estonia⁴ and Hungary⁵, the situation is the same: border guards enjoy higher salaries than customs officers. An exceptional case is Bulgaria, where there is no substantial difference between the salaries of customs officers and border police⁶.

Border guards and customs officers also emphasized the legal complications they might encounter with accusations or allegations of corruption – they may be dismissed from duty even before a court finding is issued (such was the case in Poland). The defamation and slander associated with accusations of corruption can sometimes lead to dismissal, and often to suspension of pay.

³ After massive strikes of custom officers in Poland at the beginning of 2008, the Polish government decided to increase earnings of this professional group by 500 PLN (about 150 EUR).

⁴ In 2007, the average salary for a border guard officer (from directors to field officers) was ca 680 EUR; whereas the customs claimed their salaries were respectively 15% smaller, ca 620 EUR per month.

⁵ In Hungary, border guards officers earn more pemonth than customs officers, though customs officers do receive a quarterly bonus.

⁶ Border guards and customs officers earn about 400 EUR with some additional bonuses. These earnings might be insufficient, but are markedly higher in comparison to other civil servants in Bulgaria.

Annex 1

Method of the research

In light of the substantial differences between the border crossing points considered in this study, a series of comparative case studies was carried out. This method was chosen in order to most effectively elicit good and bad practice of border crossing points located on the external EU land border. Given the sheer complexity of the institutions involved, quality control analyses of the practices applied at border crossing points necessitated the use of lengthy and intricate research techniques. The data contained in this report are the result of field work completed at selected border crossing points from the beginning of July 2007 to the end of September 2007. A variety of research techniques was implemented, including secondary data analysis, field work and a survey.

Sampling

Extensive qualitative and quantitative research was carried out in 7 EU Member States (Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) all of which share borders with non-EU third countries (Belarus, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine). In cases where the number of border crossing points was small, the selections were made using the “object-oriented” method. The selection key comprised the following elements: the scale of cross-border movement (*high/medium/small*), the

type of movement (*personal/private, trade, tourism, or “minor” cross-border movements*), the type of terminal (*roadways for pedestrians and/or private or commercial vehicles; railway; airport; river port or seaport*), and, in the case of Slovakia, the availability of border crossing points¹. Due to the large number of and substantial differences between border crossing points, one of the research teams (Polish) made use of a more random sampling method, i.e., cluster analysis².

Research techniques

The research required the application of qualitative and quantitative methods as well as secondary data analysis. In practice, this allowed for the application of the “triangulation procedure”, which involves the use of more than one method of data-collection to test the same hypothesis.

Secondary data analysis

In the first stage of research secondary research were conducted that drew from two main data sources: (a) statistical data (obtained from border guards), and (b) legal and customs regulations effective in areas of cross-border movement. Data pertaining to cross-border movements – with a special focus on the nationalities of travellers and the scale/volume of traffic at border crossing points – was collected by border guards on EU borders from 2000 to 2006 and made up the bulk of preliminary analyses. The results of these analyses were used for on-site research at selected sample border crossing points, as well as in order to prepare detailed descriptions of selected cross border points. Assessments and analyses of legal regulations most frequently employed by border guards and custom officers at selected border crossing points were carried out simultaneously.

¹ During fieldwork only two surveyed border-crossing checkpoints were open.

² For more information about cluster analyses please see the Polish report.

Field work

Field work was conducted from July to the end of October 2007 at 19 border crossing points. All field work was carried out by researchers with prior training. Once again, a variety of research techniques was employed: so-called “open” and “clandestine” observation, in-depth interviews, informal interviews, and survey administration.

The only exception was the cross border point in Vaalimaa at the Finnish-Russian border, where current and up-to-date research materials existed. For this reason, it was unnecessary for the Finnish team to carry out any additional extensive quantitative research, and the study was focused on the qualitative data and secondary data analysis

Both kinds of observations mentioned above were based on a semi-structured observation questionnaire. The following elements were under particular scrutiny: the intensity/volume of border movement, the behavioural characteristics of border guards and customs officers and the overall appearance of the border crossing points’ respective infrastructure. Clandestine observations allowed research teams to observe and obtain information about the practical aspects of customs clearance and passport control, to gain access to information about the legal and organizational regulations employed by border guards and customs officers, and to assess the general quality of infrastructure. This data was prepared in the form of field notes.

The totality of these techniques afforded the collection of travellers’ opinions about the overall quality of border crossing points’ operation. Data obtained via open and clandestine observation techniques was complemented by informal (i.e., unrecorded) interviews with travellers encountered on site.

In-depth interviews were conducted with three main groups of respondents: travellers crossing selected cross border points, local experts with knowledge of the day-to-day operations at border crossing points, and specialized staff members employed at cross border points, i.e., border

guards and customs officers. These interviews were based on interview scenario guidelines adapted to different types of respondents. Interview candidates were selected randomly using the object-oriented method. To select interviewees, we drew from information gained via observations, from informal interviews and from prior consultations with border guards and customs officers. The number of interviews conducted varied at times because of difficulties encountered while seeking out particular types of respondents.

In sum, 366 recorded, in-depth interviews were completed at 19 different border crossing points with randomly selected travellers (131 with EU states citizens, 82 with third country nationals), 89 with local authorities and 64 with officers of border guards and customs.

Questionnaire

Survey questionnaires were randomly administered on both sides of border crossing points to individuals departing from EU countries and to those entering EU countries. The “direction” of travel was irrelevant for our research purposes as the vast majority of travellers crossed the border at selected border crossing points with great regularity, and had thereby gained ample knowledge of and experience with the operation of border crossing points on both sides of the border.

The sampling required by this kind of research is rendered a more difficult task because of the limited possibility to randomly select individuals. Surveying travellers at border crossing points inherently means surveying people in movement, where the presence or absence of particular individuals at border crossing points is a reality with a necessarily random character, and the population of travellers is neither an exclusive nor a particularly well-tracked set of data³. In an effort to overcome these limitations we endeavoured to take samples as randomly as possible. Thus, the first steps taken

³ Border guards of the EU countries are obligated to collect statistical data about third country citizens, not about EU citizens. For this reason, data collected on movement of EU citizens are mostly approximated.

in the field were devoted to surveillance of border crossing points. Based both on observations and on interviews with border guards and customs officers, all the research teams agreed on a fixed time of day to administer questionnaires – that is, when cross-border movements were observed to be at their highest volumes. We presupposed that, during periods of high volume, we would administer 300 questionnaires at most border crossing points (150 among EU citizens and 150 among non-EU citizens), and, in the case of smaller border crossing points, 200 questionnaires (100 for each group of travellers).

The survey questionnaire was administered from 2 to 5 hours per day at border crossing points. Pollsters distributed the questionnaires to travellers to complete on their own, instructing them to bring back the completed form after approximately 20 minutes. The questionnaire was given to only one person per vehicle (*either to the driver or to the passenger*). The questionnaires themselves were prepared in the appropriate language of a given partner country in English for other EU citizens and in the appropriate language of neighbouring non-EU countries. In total, we administered and received responses to 4,019 questionnaires from 19 border crossing points.

By applying the triangulation⁴ procedure to these various research techniques, it was possible to minimize some of the difficulties of conducting field work at selected border crossing points. Despite encountering a few more endemic problems in the field, the proposed method seemed to be optimal for this kind of research.

⁴ Triangulation is a procedure employing a number of different methods to investigate one area of research. Denzin N. (1978) identified four main types of triangulation: (1) triangulation of data, (2) triangulation of researchers, (3) theoretical triangulation, (4) methodological triangulation.

Annex 2

Monitored border crossing points

Country	Cross border point	Border with non-EU country	Year of establishing the cross border point	Located on route	Type of mobility	Number of lanes		Area of cross border point (sq km)	Scale of cross border movement (average, per day, in 2006)		Scale of cross border movement (in 2006)	
						departure	entrance		people	vehicles	people	vehicles
Bulgaria	Kapitan Andrevo	Turkey	1948	International road E-80	road and railway border crossing; passenger and goods transport	10 (15 cabins)	11	0.17	–	–	3 800 000	–
	Gjive-shevo	Macedonia	1952-53 – first established 1974 – the present one	International road	road border crossing; passenger and goods transport	5 (after ongoing reconstruction)	5 (after ongoing reconstruction)	0.064	–	–	1 199 000	–
Estonia	Kalotina	Republic of Serbia	1919 – first established 1948 – the present one	International road E-80	road and railway border crossing; passenger and goods transport	10 (23 cabins)	12	0.28	4 000/5 000 – 25 000	–	3 434 000	–
	Narva-1	Russian Federation	1990	Tallinn – St. Petersburg	pedestrians, small and heavy lorries	3	2	0.02	7 400	1 100	2 753 538	424 547
	Koidula	Russian Federation	1990	Tartu, Voru – Petseri, P-Skov	pedestrians, small and heavy lorries	5	7	0.04	1 100	600	415 999	221 817
Finland	Vaali-maa	Russian Federation	1958, from 1993 24 hours traffic	International route E-18, Helsinki – St. Petersburg	cars, small and heavy lorries	5	7	–	7 200	3 100	2 652 372	1 162 599

Gateways to Europe. Checkpoints on the EU External Land Border

Country	Cross border point	Border with non-EU country	Year of establishing the cross border point	Located on route	Type of mobility	Number of lanes		Area of cross border point (sq km)	Scale of cross border movement (average, per day, in 2006)		Scale of cross border movement (in 2006)	
						departure	entrance		people	vehicles	people	vehicles
Hungary	Tompa	Republic of Serbia	1978	local road 53 between Kiskunhalas (HU) – Subotica (RS)	cars, small and heavy lorries	4+1 (bus)+ truck terminal	4+1 (bus)+ truck terminal	0.04	6 000 (weekly fluctuation)	2 000 (weekly fluctuation)	2 202 792	763 274
	Tisza-becs	Ukraine	1989	local road nr 491 – A264 between Fehergyarmat (HU) – Vinohravyiv (UA)	pedestrians, cars, small lorries	3	3	0.003	2 100 (weekly fluctuation)	1 000 (weekly fluctuation)	796 928	400 335
Poland	Bezdedy	Russian Federation	1993	Local road no 51	cars, busses and heavy lorries (7.5 tonnes)	4	5	–	3 900	1 700	1 443 057	616 501
	Goldap	Russian Federation	1995	Local road no 65	cars, busses and light lorries (7.5 tonnes)	4	5	–	3 000	800	1 125 539	319 043
	Terespól	Belarus	1974	International road E-30 (Lisbon-Paris, Berlin-Moscow) International railway (Paris-Moscow)	cars, busses and light lorries (7.5 tonnes) railway	4	5	–	6 500	2 500	2 389 576	930 147
	Zosin	Ukraine	1995	Local road no 74	cars and light lorries (3.5 tonnes)	2	2	–	4 500	1 800	1 668 795	678 070
	Medyka	Ukraine	1980	International road E-40 (France - Calais – Kazakhstan - Ridder)	cars, busses, heavy and light lorries (7.5 tonnes)	4	5	–	18 000	2 700	6 601 669	995 876

Country	Cross border point	Border with non-EU country	Year of establishing the cross border point	Located on route	Type of mobility	Number of lanes		Scale of cross border movement (average, per day, in 2006)		Scale of cross border movement (in 2006)	
						departure	entrance	people	vehicles	people	vehicles
Romania	Stamora-Moravita	Republic of Serbia	1920	International route E-70 Timisoara Vrsac	cars and lorries	2	2	1.100	500	305 208	144 377
	Sighetul Marma-tiei	Ukraine	2007	Satu Mare - Soltvino	cars and pedestrians	1	1	4.000	900	1 460 000	328 500
	Sculeni	Republic of Moldova	1991	International route E-385 Iasi-Chisinau	cars and lorries	6	6	2.000	700	773 138	2 181 163
Slovakia	Albita	Republic of Moldova	1964	International route E-581 Bucharest - Chisinau	cars and lorries	6	6	2.500	800	8 598 463	232 512
	Vysne Nemecke	Ukraine	1960	International route E-50 Kosice-Michalovce (SK) and Uzhgorod-Stryj (UA)	pedestrians ¹ cars	5 + 1 for trucks	5 + 1 for truck	3.500	1 200	1 307 414	471 482
	Velke Slemence	Ukraine	2005	Only for pedestrians, no route	pedestrians (only for EU, EES and Ukrainians)	1	1	500	no vehicles	185 787	no vehicles

¹ Temporarily closed for pedestrians because of reconstruction and building of truck terminal.

Annex 3 Tables

Table 1. Scale of movement of people and vehicles at selected border crossing points (in 2006)¹.

Border crossing point		people	vehicles
Tiszabecs	HU-UA	796 928	400 335
Tompa	HU-RS	2 202 792	763 274
Kalotina	BG-RS	3 434 000	–
Gjueshevo	BG-MK	1 199 000	–
Kapitan Andreevo	BG-TR	3 800 000	–
Narva-1	EST-RU	2 753 538	424 547
Koidula	EST-RU	415 999	221 817
Bezledy	PL-RU	1 443 057	616 501
Goldap	PL-RU	1 125 539	319 043
Medyka	PL-UA	6 601 669	995 876
Terespol	PL-BY	2 389 576	930 147
Zosin	PL-UA	1 668 795	678 070
Vysne Nemecke	SK-UA	1 307 414	471 482
Velke Slemence	SK-UA	185 787	–
Sighetul Marmatiei	RO-UA	1460 000	328 500
Albita	RO-MD	8 598 463	232 512
Sculeni	RO-MD	773 138	2 181 163
Stamora-Moravita	RO-RS	305 208	144 377
Vaalimaa	FI-RU	2 652 372	1 162 599

Source: Border Guards Statistics.

¹ In the case of Bulgarian border-crossing points, there is no scale of movement of vehicles due to the lack of this kind of data.

TABLE 2. Purpose of travel of people crossing the border crossing points (in percent).

Border crossing point/ Aim of travel	To fulfil duties as- signed by em- ployer	To fur- ther business inter- ests	Tourism	To visit your family	For other reasons	Total
Tiszabecs	0.5	15.8	8.1	32.6	42.8	100.0
Tompa	6.5	12.5	4.0	25.5	51.5	100.0
Kalotina	18.8	10.0	31.2	24.1	15.9	100.0
Gjueshevo	45.39	16.04	25.6	7.85	5.12	100.0
Kapitan Andreevo	23.8	20.1	21.1	31.0	4.0	100.0
Narva-1	20.2	2.0	12.1	27.8	37.9	100.0
Koidula	14.5	13.0	9.2	38.2	25.1	100.0
Bezledy	18.3	22.2	41.5	4.0	13.9	100.0
Goldap	3.5	10.6	60.0	6.0	19.8	100.0
Medyka	7.9	14.8	30.6	12.7	34.1	100.0
Terespol	10.1	19.7	33.0	5.3	31.9	100.0
Zosin	2.7	31.7	41.9	5.4	18.2	100.0
Vysne Nemecke	24.6	34.7	11.6	19.3	9.8	100.0
Velke Slemence	1.6	65.6	13.3	12.5	7.0	100.0
Sighetul Marmatiei	8.9	23.3	16.7	28.9	22.2	100.0
Albita	10.5	34.4	7.6	39.0	8.6	100.0
Sculeni	13.2	31.9	18.7	26.4	9.9	100.0
Stamora-Moravita	13.0	0.0	44.0	18.0	25.0	100.0

Source: own data.

TABLE. 3. Assessment of restroom facilities quality at monitored border crossing points (in percent).

Border crossing point/ assessment of restroom facilities	Very high	Rather high	Rather low	Decidedly low	No such facilities	It is difficult to say	Total
Tiszabecs	8.2	28.5	12.7	22.8	20.9	7.0	100.0
Tompa	7.6	21.7	12.1	14.6	1.5	42.4	100.0
Kalotina	5.0	13.4	30.8	24.4	10.0	16.4	100.0
Gjueshevo	6.9	25.5	23.4	10.0	20.3	13.8	100.0
Kapitan Andreevo	5.8	25.3	27.7	14.0	4.7	22.5	100.0
Narva-1	8.5	40.2	11.6	3.5	21.6	14.6	100.0
Koidula	46.4	47.8	1.0	0.5	0.0	4.3	100.0
Bezledy	24.7	51.2	10.0	9.6	2.1	2.4	100.0
Goldap	44.7	42.9	3.2	2.5	0.7	6.0	100.0
Medyka	8.3	43.9	21.0	13.2	3.1	10.5	100.0
Terespol	11.0	25.8	23.7	19.0	7.9	12.6	100.0
Zosin	6.8	35.1	25.0	19.6	10.8	2.7	100.0
Vysne Nemecke	11.4	43.1	12.5	13.5	1.1	18.5	100.0
Velke Slemence	2.3	4.0	8.6	26.6	42.2	16.4	100.0
Sighetul Marmatiei	6.93	20.79	10.89	37.62	9.90	13.86	100.0
Albita	3.81	52.38	20.00	18.10	0.95	4.76	100.0
Sculeni	12.9	63.44	10.75	0.0	7.53	5.38	100.0
Stamora-Moravita	6.06	26.26	28.28	24.24	3.03	12.12	100.0

Source: own data.

TABLE 4. Travellers' evaluation of accessibility of border crossing and custom regulations (in percent).

Border crossing point/ accessibility of border crossing and custom regulation	Very adequate	Rather adequate	Rather inadequate	Decidedly inadequate	Difficult to say	Total
Tiszabecs	15.2	51.8	15.2	10.9	6.8	100.0
Tompa	9.9	48.0	10.9	10.4	20.8	100.0
Kalotina	8.7	28.6	29.4	12.0	21.3	100.0
Gjueshevo	10.8	39.5	16.1	9.0	24.6	100.0
Kapitan Andreevo	12.0	44.4	18.1	7.9	17.7	100.0
Narva-1	11.0	37.9	15.6	12.0	23.3	100.0
Koidula	9.4	42.7	12.3	7.0	28.5	100.0
Bezledy	11.7	45.6	20.1	13.2	9.4	100.0
Goldap	17.1	39.8	16.1	16.1	12.6	100.0
Medyka	7.3	38.0	23.4	22.5	8.8	100.0
Terespol	2.4	35.1	26.6	29.3	6.5	100.0
Zosin	8.4	38.1	20.0	20.5	12.9	100.0
Vysne Nemecke	5.4	24.5	22.9	31.3	15.8	100.0
Velke Slemence	4.8	44.4	16.9	18.1	15.8	100.0
Sighetul Marmatiei	29.4	35.8	9.8	14.2	10.8	100.0
Albita	1.4	49.5	21.1	8.2	19.7	100.0
Sculeni	6.5	36.7	27.6	11.3	17.9	100.0
Stamora-Moravita	7.4	35.6	10.6	5.8	40.4	100.0

Source: own data.

TABLE 5. Frequency of problems arising from border guards and customs officers' lack of language and/or communication skills as reported by travellers from non-EU countries (in percent).

Border crossing point/ foreign language skills	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	Difficult to say	Total
Tiszabecs	7.1	5.4	25.0	62.5	0.0	100.0
Kalotina	2.1	4.9	22.6	47.0	23.4	100.0
Gjueshevo	1.9	0.0	10.4	84.5	3.2	100.0
Kapitan Andreevo	6.2	8.1	30.7	50.6	4.5	100.0
Bezledy	0.9	4.6	49.4	43.2	1.9	100.0
Goldap	1.4	4.8	56.6	32.4	4.8	100.0
Medyka	7.3	3.9	34.5	50.9	3.4	100.0
Terespol	0.9	5.7	34.4	57.1	1.9	100.0
Zosin	1.0	3.9	16.7	77.4	1.0	100.0
Vysne Nemecke	0.0	2.0	14.1	83.1	0.8	100.0
Velke Slemence	0.0	0.0	0.0	91.7	8.3	100.0

Source: own data.

TABLE 6. Average length of time spent according to the travellers to cross the border (in minutes).

Border crossing point	Average time of crossing the border (approx. in min.)
Tiszabecs	106
Tompa	47
Kalotina	118
Gjueshevo	48
Kapitan Andreevo	174
Narva-1	107
Koidula	150
Bezledy	487
Goldap	217
Medyka	356
Terespol	315
Zosin	287
Vysne Nemecke	234
Velke Slemence	108
Sighetul Marmatiei	110
Albita	75
Sculeni	108
Stamora-Moravita	13

Source: own data

TABLE 7. Evaluation of work efficiency of border guards (in percent).

Border crossing point/ efficiency	Very efficient/ prompt	Rather efficient/ prompt	Rather inefficient/ incompetent	Decidedly inefficient/ incompetent	It is difficult to say, it varies	Total
Tiszabecs	43.9	37.9	5.1	2.0	11.1	100.0
Tompa	24.9	49.8	13.9	9.0	2.5	100.0
Kalotina	18.3	18.6	14.2	11.0	37.9	100.0
Gjueshevo	41.7	39.0	3.0	2.3	14.0	100.0
Kapitan Andreevo	27.3	40.5	7.3	4.1	20.8	100.0
Narva-1	28.4	49.2	1.0	3.0	18.3	100.0
Koidula	39.6	43.5	2.4	1.4	13.0	100.0
Bezledy	19.5	31.0	9.9	6.6	33.0	100.0
Goldap	19.2	24.5	10.1	11.9	34.3	100.0
Medyka	7.6	23.4	18.3	24.2	26.4	100.0
Terespol	13.7	27.4	13.1	8.4	37.3	100.0
Zosin	15.0	33.3	14.3	20.4	17.0	100.0
Vysne Nemecke	14.2	46.3	15.6	6.0	17.8	100.0
Velke Slemence	16.0	58.4	12.8	1.6	11.2	100.0
Sighetul Marmatiei	45.0	41.1	12.7	0.0	1.0	100.0
Albita	13.3	69.5	6.7	1.0	9.5	100.0
Sculeni	13.0	53.8	11.8	3.2	18.3	100.0
Stamora-Moravita	44.4	44.4	2.0	0.0	9.0	100.0

Source: own data.

TABLE 8. Evaluation of work efficiency of customs officers (in percent).

Border crossing point/ efficiency	Very efficient	Rather efficient	Rather inefficient	Decidedly inefficient	It is difficult to say, it varies	Total
Tiszabecs	15.7	39.6	15.7	9.1	19.8	100.0
Tompa	21.6	39.2	22.1	10.6	6.5	100.0
Kalotina	20.2	23.0	16.4	6.6	33.8	100.0
Gjueshevo	43.4	40.3	2.7	1.4	12.2	100.0
Kapitan Andreevo	21.8	48.9	6.2	5.2	17.9	100.0
Narva-1	24.9	53.8	3.0	1.0	17.3	100.0
Koidula	30.7	49.8	3.9	1.0	14.6	100.0
Bezledy	8.7	26.5	16.8	13.7	34.2	100.0
Goldap	4.6	15.5	17.2	27.8	34.8	100.0
Medyka	5.7	18.8	23.2	31.1	21.0	100.0
Terespol	11.6	31.6	15.3	13.7	27.9	100.0
Zosin	13.7	45.9	17.1	9.6	13.7	100.0
Vysne Nemecke	13.4	45	13.4	6.9	21.0	100.0
Velke Slemence	15.4	59.2	10.0	3.0	12.3	100.0
Sighetul Marmatiei	34.3	43.1	15.7	2.9	3.9	100.0
Albita	12.5	64.0	6.7	1.0	15.4	100.0
Sculeni	12.2	50.0	15.5	8.9	13.3	100.0
Stamora-Moravita	48.5	36.4	1.0	1.0	13.1	100.0

Source: own data.

TABLE 9. Addressing the travellers at selected border-crossing points (in percent).

Border crossing point	Sir/madam		On first name terms		Other way		It varies		Total
	BG	CO	BG	CO	BG	CO	BG	CO	
Tiszabecs	83.2	85.9	1.5	1.5	3.6	5.0	11.7	7.5	100.0
Tompa	90.0	84.4	5.0	5.0	1.0	1.5	4.0	9.0	100.0
Kalotina	63.2	62.5	7.4	9.2	10.7	9.6	18.7	18.8	100.0
Gjueshevo	85.2	84.9	5.0	6.5	5.0	4.1	4.7	4.5	100.0
Kapitan Andreevo	63.4	64.8	5.8	6.3	9.7	7.1	21.1	21.9	100.0
Narva-1	17.2	17.3	2.5	7.1	61.6	60.9	18.7	14.7	100.0
Koidula	13.1	12.1	6.8	4.9	61.2	68.4	18.9	14.6	100.0
Bezledy	87.4	83.6	4.0	4.7	0.3	0.3	8.3	11.4	100.0
Goldap	80.4	71.5	6.7	8.5	1.4	2.8	11.6	17.1	100.0
Medyka	67.4	67.4	12.0	13.0	3.4	3.0	17.2	16.5	100.0
Terespol	68.4	73.3	13.2	12.6	3.2	1.6	15.3	12.6	100.0
Zosin	69.6	73.5	8.8	8.2	2.0	1.4	19.6	17.0	100.0
Vysne Nemecke	81.7	87.8	3.6	4.7	2.2	0.7	12.6	6.8	100.0
Velke Slemence	89.2	92.2	1.5	0.0	1.5	1.6	7.7	6.2	100.0
Sighetul Marmatiei	95.0	96.1	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	4.0	2.9	100.0
Albita	91.4	92.4	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	6.7	5.7	100.0
Sculeni	86.0	87.1	2.2	2.2	5.4	5.4	6.5	5.4	100.0
Stamora-Moravita	88.9	86.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	5.0	8.1	9.0	100.0

Source: own data.

Project partners

Stefan Batory Foundation, Warsaw

The aim of the Stefan Batory Foundation is to support the development of a democratic, open society both in Poland and in other countries of the region. The Foundation's priorities include the reinforcement of the role and a proactive approach to civil society, the propagation of civil liberties and the rule of law as well as the development of international collaboration and solidarity. The Foundation acts as a coordinator of the Friendly EU Border Project.

www.batory.org.pl

Center of Migration Research, Warsaw University

The Centre of Migration Research (CMR) is a research unit of the Warsaw University. It was established in 1993 as an interdisciplinary research team whose aim was to undertake in-depth and comprehensive studies on migration in present-day Poland. Over the last 15 years CMR was involved in a number of large-scale migration projects, coorganised a number of international seminars and major conferences on migration issues in Central and Eastern Europe, participated in various international collaborative initiatives.

www.migracje.uw.edu.pl

Contemporary Researches Foundation, Budapest

The Contemporary Researches Foundation was founded in 1989, after the change of the political system in Hungary. The main goal of the foundation is to observe, note down and analyze the historical, sociological and political contemporary events. Our mission is to extend the social publicity and transparency, and to reduce the democratic deficit. The Foundation managed the Hungarian research group in the Friendly EU Border Project.
www.jelal.hu

EuroCollege, University of Tartu

EuroCollege is an institution integrating academic studies and research with the aim of organizing European Union related academic education, training and research. EuroCollege is located within the University of Tartu. The mission of the University is to act as the guardian and advocate of a highly educated Estonia through internationally acclaimed research and the provision of research based higher education.
www.ec.ut.ee/ecu

The European Institute, Sofia

The original mission of the European Institute, an independent policy centre, was to support the efforts of governmental and non-governmental agencies to successfully prepare Bulgaria for EU membership through research, technical assistance, public awareness projects and training. To date, the Institute has extensive and unique knowledge about both EU enlargement and accession, matched by practical EU negotiation's experience. Through its four main activity areas mentioned above, the European Institute has been exchanging training experience and consultancy work with EU candidate and potential candidate countries from SEE on EU integration matters.

www.europeaninstitute.bg

Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki

The Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) is an independent research institute that functions in association with the Parliament of Finland. The mission of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs is to conduct and publish research on international political and economic affairs, as well as on issues relating to the European Union.

www.upi-fii.fi

Research Centre of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava

The Research Centre of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (RC SFPA), founded in 1995, is a non-profit organization that prepares independent expert analyses of the key questions in a field of international relations and the Slovak foreign policy; publishes periodical and non-periodical publications, the role of which is to intensify knowledge in the area of international relations and the Slovak foreign policy and they are at the same time a source of credible academic information in the field of international affairs and the Slovak foreign policy suitable for specialists as well as for a lay public; organizes professional events and participates in the international expert debate concerning international relations and security research.

www.sfpa.sk

The Desire Foundation, Cluj

The Desire Foundation was founded in 1996 and has functioned since then in Cluj, Romania as a non-profit organization aiming to develop a network that links governmental and non-governmental institutions, in particular universities and non-academic organizations. Committed to the promotion of a democratic civic culture and viable social communication that empowers citizens of different ethnicity, gender and class, and increase their opportunities to participate actively in public life. The foundation promotes and effectively conducts interdisciplinary research on the social, economic, political and cultural life of Romania, it offers educational programs for students on domains hardly developed and institutionalized at the state universities, organizes seminars, summer schools, conferences at national and international level.

www.desire.salve.ro