CROSSING THE CONTACT LINE: October 2021 Snapshot

During October, crossing the contact line remained possible only through two of the seven EECPs: Novotroitske in Donetsk Oblast and Stanytsia Luhanska in Luhanska Oblast. The numbers of people crossing the EECPs are still being affected by COVID-19. The restrictions on the other five EECPs are imposed by de facto authorities as a measure to limit the spread of COVID-19. The number of crossings in October fell by half that of the previous month. According to State Border Guard Service (SBGS) statistics, 28,205 people crossed the contact line in October, compared with 70,000 in September.

On 9 October, de facto authorities in Luhansk NGCA temporarily imposed further restrictions on people crossing Stanytsia Luhanska EECP in response to a rise in COVID-19 cases. For one month, they only allowed people to cross the contact line who were registered as permanent residents in their place of destination (GCA residents could return to the GCA and NGCA residents to the NGCA). All others needed permission from the de facto authorities for one or more of the following reasons:

- medical treatment and rehabilitation;
- education;
- caring for a relative;
- burial of a relative.

These restrictions, which led to a significant reduction in the number of people crossing, were lifted on 11 November.

In October, 4,375 vulnerable elderly persons were transported across the Stanytsia Luhanska EECP by an electric vehicle run by the NGO Proliska in cooperation with UNHCR.

The findings of the monitoring should not be directly extrapolated to the entire population.

On October 9, de facto authorities in Luhansk NGCA introduced restrictions for crossing Stanytsia Luhanska EECP. The restrictions were lifted on Nov 11.

The number of crossings decreased by half compared to the previous month.

R2P facilitated 278 requests for crossing through the fast-track procedure and assisted about 1,100 persons with installing Vdoma app.

28,205 CROSSINGS


Individuals surveyed by R2P in October%

- MEN 34%
- WOMEN 66%

49% OF RESPONDENTS ARE 60+

52% Visiting relatives
50% Withdrawing cash
36% Issues with pensions/social payments
16% Medical treatment
4% Checking on property
10% Take care of a relative
3% Burial of a relative
5% Appeal to coordination group

52% GCA residents
50% NGCA residents
4% All respondents

54% Novotroitske
72% Stanytsia Luhanska

Respondents who stated they had no concerns

29% Possible issues with a permit
4% Long lines
19% Confiscation of carried goods
19% Others needed
11% Zero checkpoint
5% With installing Vdoma app

NGCA residents
GCA residents
All respondents

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*NGCA – (non-)government-controlled areas
EECP – entry-exit checkpoint
NGO – non-government organization
PCR – Polymerase chain reaction
SBGS – State Border Guard Service
According to the data obtained from the laboratories located at the EECPs, **1,115 persons**, 78 per cent of those who entered GCA via Novotroitske EECP, took antigen tests for COVID-19 during October, as did **2,226 persons**, 22 per cent of those who entered GCA via Stanytsia Luhanska EECP. Meanwhile, in Donetsk Oblast, **24 people** were referred to the observation facility because they had no compatible smartphone to install the Vdoma app. There were still no state-run observation facilities in Luhanska Oblast.

Visiting relatives remains NGCA residents’ top reason given for crossing the EECPs since October 2020. Seeking access to banking facilities and administrative/social services (including pension funds) are the other most commonly cited reasons for crossing from the NGCA to GCA areas, as before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The requirement to download the Vdoma app continues to be a problem for half those who were asked, especially people aged 60+ (18 per cent of all respondents).

Crossings in October, fell to one third of the August figure and under half of those in September. In Donetsk Oblast, **1,459** people crossed to the GCA and **2,209** went to the NGCA. In Luhanska Oblast, **9,921** people entered the GCA and **14,616** crossed to the NGCA.

Crossings through the international border crossing point (IBCP) at Milove in Luhanska Oblast have risen by about 4,000 per month since August. R2P monitors in October noticed more cars with Luhansk number plates, which may indicate that some NGCA residents were there to get round the temporary restrictions at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP after 9 October. R2P monitors also observe very few NGCA residents being fined. NB: Numbers of those crossing the IBCP include all Ukrainians, including those unconnected to the NGCA.

Reconstruction work (new asphalt and street lights) continued at Milove IBCP. In addition, UNHCR installed shelters and prefabricated modules.

Lack of shelters, severe weather conditions and infrequent bus services at Hoptivka IBCP make the trip for pedestrians there arduous. Yet, Hoptivka has more crossings than Milove because it is near to Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second largest city.

278 people were sent to the observation facility in October at Milove, compared with 98 people in September.