

External EU Border Monitoring Project 2006/2007: Better Efficiency at Border-crossing Points

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External EU Border Monitoring Project 2006/2007: Better Efficiency at Border crossing Points as a Precondition for Improved Cross border Cooperation. Pskov Case Report

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Â Introduction

In the course of research the following activities were held:

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7 semi-structured interviews with people experienced in border-crossing via the checkpoint studied;

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3 semi-structured interviews with 4 experts, possessing expertise in the sphere of checkpoint's impact upon the local community;

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content analysis of digital news agencies' postings having to do with the checkpoint studied;

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analysis of the legislation concerning Russian-Estonian border-crossing points.

Alongside with the activities mentioned, it was planned to hold a qualitative questionnaire survey among the people crossing the border at the checkpoint in question, as well as expert interviews with representatives of the border guard service and customs. Unfortunately, the Pskov Regional Federal Security Service Border Guard Administration refused to give permission to conduct these activities.

The research conducted resulted in obtaining a number of various points of view on the checkpoint studied, namely:

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what the checkpoint should be like from the point of view of the Russian legislation;

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how do the people crossing via the checkpoint perceive it;

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how does the local community hosting the checkpoint evaluate it;

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what messages do mass media post on the checkpoint, i.e. on the other hand, what can a person who has never been to the checkpoint potentially know about it, given that he/she follows the context of the regional events. Review of legislation in the sphere of customs regulation of the Russian Federation and Estonian state border crossing procedure
Fundamental enactments

A fundamental normative legal enactment in the sphere of regulation of the legal procedure defining the routine and forms of the Russian Federation State border crossing is the Law of the RF of 01.04.1993 no. 4730-1 (version of 26.06.2007) 'ON STATE BORDER OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'. According to the article 9 of the stated law 'the State border inland crossing shall be meant for persons and transport vehicles on international railway and highway communication lines or at other places defined by international agreements of the Russian Federation or decisions of the Government of the Russian Federation' at corresponding checkpoints which stand for the 'territory (water area) within a railway depot, a highway station or a railway station, sea (trade, fishery, special-purpose), river (lake) ports, an airport, military airfield open for international communication (international flights), as well as other dedicated area in close proximity to the State border, where according to the legislation of the Russian Federation persons, transport vehicles, cargoes, goods and animals cross the State border', under immediate control of border guard authorities. Norms of the stated law define grounds for border crossing which, in particular, are valid documents giving right to enter Russia. In particular, the State border shall not be crossed by foreign citizens and stateless persons who according to the RF legislation are not allowed to enter our country, as well as persons forbidden to exit the RF according to the ruling passed in compliance with the RF legislation (for example if a person became a subject of a criminal case).

The content, the means and methods of control, the routine of its execution at State border crossing points, as well as the routine to establish, open, functioning (operation), reconstruction and closure of State border crossing points, the general requirements to construction, reconstruction, equipment and technical features of the corresponding premises, buildings and structures, necessary to organize border-crossing, customs and other types of control implemented at State border crossing points, shall be set by the Government of the Russian Federation. In particular, the Ruling of the RF Government of 02.02.2005 No. 50 'ON PROCEDURE OF APPLICATION OF MEANS AND METHODS OF CONTROL DURING THE RF STATE BORDER CROSSING BY PERSONS, TRANSPORT VEHICLES, CARGOES, GOODS AND ANIMALS' defines means (particularly engineering structures and obstacles, service animals etc) and methods of control (particularly inspection of documents, observation, oral enquiry, body search, getting explanations etc) which are used by subdivisions of federal executive authorities when executing border-guard, immigration, quarantine and sanitary, veterinary, phyto-sanitary and transport control at the RF state border-crossing points, as well as their application procedure. Sanitary and epidemiological rules

According to the Ruling of the RF Chief state health inspector of 30.05.2003 N 108 'ON IMPLEMENTATION OF SANITATION AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL RULES SP 3.4.1328-03' (along with 'SANITATION AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL RULES 'SANITARY PROTECTION OF THE TERRITORY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION' SP 3.4.1328-03' adopted by the RF Chief state health inspector 25.05.2003) (registered in the RF Ministry of justice as of 19.06.2003 N 4754) (cl.4.1) The state border-crossing points provide for:

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appropriate sanitary state of the territory and objects within the territory;

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premises for temporary isolation of citizens with suspicion of disease, with access to a means of transport (marine or riverside wharfs, a landing field, a platform and an apron or a station) and a near-station area;

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allocation and equipment in marine and riverside wharfs, airports, railway and highway stations and stations open for international communication of ambulance wharfs, parking places, dead ends and sites for conducting sanitary-and-epidemiological (preventative) measures, including disinfection, disinsectization and rat destruction on transport means;

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protection of the transport organization territory and premises, structures and transport vehicles within the territory from penetration and contamination with rats, insects and conduction of measures aimed at fighting rodents, mosquitos and other decease-transmitting arthropods (hereinafter insects) according to normative documents;

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efficient system of disposal and decontamination of excrements, wastes, waste water, rejected food products and other

substances dangerous for health;

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organization and conduction of disinfection, disinsectization and rat destruction on transport means in case of epidemic indications;

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obtainment according to the prescribed procedure from the state transport sanitary and epidemiological inspection or territorial department of state sanitary and epidemiological inspection a rat destruction certificate or a rat destruction relief certificate - for outbound sea-, fishing- and river-crafts <International health regulations 1969 > etc.

At the same time, according to cl. 4.2.7 the departure of transport vehicles on highway and railway stations, stops, and passages is allowed without quarantine and sanitary control if no other decision was adopted due to sanitary and epidemic indication. Border-crossing arrangement patterns

The sequence of the necessary types of state control - border-guard, sanitary and quarantine, customs, migrational, veterinary, and quarantine phytosanitary - in respect of persons, vehicles, cargoes, goods and animals crossing the RF State border on the international railways is regulated by the Decree of the RF Ministry of Communications no. 26 of 29.05.2002 (RF Ministry of Justice ref. of August 14, 2002 no. 3691) â€œOn establishment of typical RF State border-crossing arrangement patterns for persons, vehicles, cargoes, goods and animals on the international railways'. In particular, according to the Letter of the RF State Customs Committee of 26.04.2001 no. 01-06/16540 â€œOn the execution by the customs agencies of the decree by the Russian SCC of 15.12.2000 â€œOn export and import of alcohol and spirits-containing food products' (RF SCC letter version of 06.06.2001 no. 01-06/22193, amended by RF SCC letter of 03.07.2002 no. 01-06/26228) and in accordance with the Russian SCC Decree of 15.12.2000 no. 1170 â€œOn export and import of alcohol and spirits-containing food products' (RF Ministry of Justice ref. of 27.12.2000, no. 2511) the customs agencies permit import (export) to (from) the RF customs territory of alcohol and spirits-containing food products only to those organizations, which hold license to perform activities, stipulated in articles 18 and 21 of the Federal Law of 22.11.95 no. 171-FL â€œOn state regulation of production and sales of ethyl alcohol, and alcohol and spirits-containing products' (Federal Law Edition of 07.01.99 no. 18-FL). Customs agencies immediately inform the Russian SCC HAFTR on all cases of violations. In the event customs agencies of the region hosting RF customs border-crossing points discover facts of non-observance by organizations importing alcohol and spirits-containing food products of requirements of clause 1 of Russian SCC Decree of 15.12.2000 no. 1170, in particular importers lacking a correctly certified (notarially) license copy, such products shall become subject to either export beyond RF borders, or placement into a temporary storage warehouse, located within the region of the acting customs agency. Alongside with this, Russian SCC Decree of 27.11.2000 no. 1070 (RF Ministry of Justice ref. of 09.01.2001, no. 2522) established the list of border-crossing points, which are allowed to throughput alcohol production and individual brands of spirits-containing food products. Activity near or on the border

Agricultural, trade or other activity connected to the State border crossing or otherwise affecting interests of the RF or foreign states and carried out by Russian and foreign legal entities including joint activity directly on the State border or nearby in the RF territory (within the area of five kilometers) shall not:

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damage health of the population, harm environmental and other safety of the Russian Federation, adjacent and other foreign states or pose a threat to such damage;

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create obstacles to the State border maintenance and task fulfillment by border authorities; Border violators

Foreign citizens and stateless persons not residing in the RF territory who crossed the state border from a foreign state and showed in their activities elements of crime or administrative violation shall be subject to the liability under the RF legislation.

In events no criminal or administrative cases may be filed against the violators of the State border, and such violators do not exercise the right for political refuge, in accordance with the RF Constitution the border guards shall officially transfer them to the authorities of the state from whose territory they have crossed the State border. If such transfer of violators to the authorities of a foreign state is not provided for by a relevant agreement between the RF and the state in question, the border guard service convoys them beyond the RF borders to areas identified by the border guard service. Of such conveying of foreign citizens and stateless persons beyond the RF borders through border-crossing points notification shall be given to the authorities of the state, to (or via) whose territory such conveying is undertaken, in the event this is stipulated in the agreement between the RF and the state in question. Loss of documents

RF citizens arriving at State border-crossing points having lost documents permitting their entry into the RF during their stay abroad are retained at the border-crossing points for the time necessary to identify them, yet such time shall not exceed 30 days. Vehicle parking

Parking lots and periods at State border-crossing points for transboundary vehicles are identified by administrations of airports, airfields, sea and river (lake) ports, railway and motorway stations and stops, as well as other transportation enterprises, as agreed by the border guard and customs services.

Access of persons to and on board transboundary vehicles in duration of customs and other types of control is restricted or prohibited when necessary.

Passenger boarding on to vehicles when exiting the RF and alighting upon arrival to the RF, as well as loading (unloading) of luggage, mail and cargoes is performed on permission by border guard and customs services.
Peculiarities at the Russian-Estonian border

The procedure of direct crossing of Russian-Estonian border is additionally regulated by the Ruling of the RF Government of 14.02.2002 no. 107 "On signing of agreement between the RF Government and the Government of Estonian Republic on Russian-Estonian border-crossing points", which in particular stipulates:

The routine of financing, whereby the financing of complex construction (reconstruction), improvement, technical equipment of Russian-Estonian state border-crossing points, and creation of transport, engineering and social utility infrastructure is performed at the expense of the administrations of the Leningrad and Pskov Regions.

And the list of bilateral and multilateral border-crossing points.

By the Decree of the Federal Customs Service of 22.11.2006 no. 1208 (RF Ministry of Justice ref. of 20.12.2006 no. 8642) the "Routine of tacit declaration of goods by persons" was established, which stipulates peculiarities of declaration of goods subject to oral declaration, through performance of actions evident to the absence of goods subject to written declaration in the luggage and accompanied baggage of the person, as well as the absence of such goods in the unaccompanied baggage. The routine also establishes the peculiarities of improvement and signage at the special passage sites for persons who have chosen to tacitly declare the goods carried. In particular, for persons transferring goods across the RF customs border to utilize the tacit declaration principle, at the RF state border-crossing points human transit passageways are provided - the "red" and the "green" channels (two-channel system) - where the special signage allows a person crossing the RF customs border to independently choose the form of declaration and the relevant channel for customs clearing and control of the goods transferred by this person. The procedure of import and export of certain goods to and from Estonia is determined by the legislation of Estonia. Transfer of foreign currency

The routine of transfer of foreign currency and other currency values across the RF customs border is regulated by the legislation of the Russian Federation on foreign currency regulation and control, and by the Customs Code of the Russian Federation.

According to clause 3 article 15 FL of 10.12.2003 no. 173-FL "On foreign currency regulation and control", in the event of non-recurrent export from the RF by persons (residents and non-residents) of foreign currency cash in the amount equal or not exceeding the equivalent value of US \$3,000, the foreign currency cash exported shall not be subject to declaration to customs agency. In the event of non-recurrent export from the RF by persons (residents and non-residents) of foreign currency cash in the amount exceeding the equivalent value of US \$3,000, the foreign currency cash exported shall be subject to declaration to customs agency through filing in of a written declaration of the entire foreign currency cash sum exported.

Article 286 of the RFCC stipulates the routine to declare goods transferred by persons across the RF customs border, whereby the goods carried by a person younger than 16 years shall be declared by one of the parents, a foster parent, a custodian or a trustee accompanying such person, and upon an organized departure (arrival) and the return (departure) of a group of persons underage not accompanied by parents, foster parents, custodians or trustees - by the supervisor of such group.

In the event a person younger than 16 years is traveling not accompanied by persons specified, he or she shall have the right to transfer across the RF customs border goods and cash not subject to compulsory written declaration.

Thus, according to the Federal Law of 10.12.2003 no. 173-FL "On foreign currency regulation and control", and by the Customs Code of the Russian Federation, persons younger than 16 years crossing the RF customs border unaccompanied by adults shall have the right to export foreign currency cash in the amount not exceeding the equivalent value of US \$3,000, which is reflected in the Letter of the Federal Customs Service of 22.03.2005 no. 01-06/8497 "On transfer of foreign currency cash by persons under the age of 16". Personal search

The form of personal search of the human traffic crossing the RF state border is stipulated in article 373 of the RFCC and approved by the Decree of the RF State Customs Committee of 20.10.2003 no. 1165 (RF Ministry of Justice ref. of

13.11.2003 no. 5226). In particular, personal search as an exceptional form of customs control may be performed on decision of the head of the customs agency or his or her deputy, when there are grounds to assume that a person crossing the RF state border and transiting through the customs control zone or an open or international airport transit area is concealing and is not voluntarily disclosing goods prohibited for accordingly import into the RF customs territory or export from this area, or goods transferred with violation of the routine established by the current Code.

The decision as to conduct a personal search is made the head of the customs agency or his or her deputy in written form through a resolution to the report of the customs official, or is filled out as a separate enactment. Prior to the personal search the customs official is obliged to announce the decision as to conduct the personal search to the person, to familiarize the person with his or her rights and responsibilities during such search and to offer to voluntarily disclose the goods concealed. The fact of the person's familiarization with the decision as to conduct personal search is confirmed by the person to be searched via his or her written confirmation on the decision to conduct such search. In the event the person refuses to be subjected to such actions, this is marked on the decision to conduct personal search, certified by the signature of the customs official who announced the decision as to conduct personal search. Personal search is conducted by the customs official of the same sex with the person subject to search and in presence of two line-up witnesses of the same sex in an isolated venue corresponding to sanitary and hygienic requirements. Access of other people to the said venue, as well as opportunity for other people to watch the process of personal search must be excluded completely. Examination of the body of the searched must be performed solely by a medic, who shall not be entitled to refuse to perform according to the decision of the customs official or his or her deputy as to conduct personal search.

Personal search of a person underage or a disabled person can be participated by his or her legal representatives (parents, foster parents, custodians or trustees) or persons accompanying the searched. Personal search must be performed in a correct form barring humiliation of dignity or inflicting lawless harm to health and property of the searched within the limits necessary to disclose the goods concealed by the person.

The person searched (his legal representative) in the course of personal search shall perform as legally required by the customs official running the search, and be entitled to:

- demand announcement of the decision of the head customs official or his/her deputy as to conduct personal search;
 - familiarize with his/her rights and responsibilities;
 - explain and petition;
 - familiarize with the deed of personal search on completion of its compilation and make claims to be integrated into the deed;
 - use native tongue, as well as utilize an interpreter's services;
 - appeal against actions of customs officials upon completion of the personal search, if the said person considers his rights and lawful interests to be impaired in the course of the personal search. The personal search is summarized in the deed, which is signed by the customs official who performed the search, the person subject to the search (or his/her liable representative), line-up witnesses, and in the event of examination of the body of the search - by the medic. The second copy of the deed is to be transferred to the person searched (or his liable representative). General conclusions
- Resulting from the legislation monitoring performed in the sphere of RF state border-crossing regulation it should be noted that the border guard and customs control in Russia is executed in strict accordance with the international norms of human and civic rights' observance within the context of the existent bilateral Agreement between Russia and Estonia following the principle of parity of the national legislations.
- To identify the 'vicious circles' in the sphere of regulating this issue, as well as to inform of the issues and problems in the course of direct procedure of border-crossing, and consequently to introduce proposals to improve the current mechanism of this legal procedure is not viewed as possible due to the absence of instances of negative legal precedents within this scope.

Â Local community Four residents of the town of Pechory were interviewed as experts: Deputy Head of Pechory district administration, Deputy Head of Pechory district administration for social issues, Head of the Pechory Culture Club and a guide from this club. The expert interviews produced a number of viewpoints on the impact of the Kunichina Gora

Quality of work of the external EU border crossing points Technical conditions on the border crossing Access to the information on the law regulations Information on customs issues is available in Russian and English at the site of the Russian Federal Customs Service (www.customs.ru). No information on border-crossing regulations was located at the site of the Russian Border Guard Service (<http://fps.fsb.ru/>). Instead, the border-crossing point transit process is

thoroughly described at tourist-oriented websites (e.g. www.travel.ru/news/2006/06/19/90803.html). According to travelers, at the actual border-crossing point you people can access information at the special stands. The information on them is available in English, Estonian and Russian. As to the Estonian version, one respondent mentioned: "I saw this plaque on the exit, with the regulations in Estonian and Russian. And that Estonian version had really lots of mistakes, which for me as a teacher of Estonian is weird". Besides the stands, the traveler may contact the shift supervisor. "There phone numbers of the shift supervisor, the bosses, where one can call in emergencies and all, since if you got into trouble, you're fully able to call and clarify all the nuances with the administration". The simplest prompt method to obtain information on the regulations, according to travelers, is to address border guard or customs officers directly. From the traveler's point of view, the pressing issues are the rules for transit of goods cross the border, the list of documents necessary for border-crossing, and also the possible delay intervals at the border. Waiting time and lines organization In the course of all interviews, various opinions were expressed as to the efficiency level of the Kunichina Gora border-crossing point. On the whole, the quality of the border-crossing point's work is assessed by the travelers as satisfactory. The main travelers' complain is that the process is too long. This problem is not pressing for pedestrians, but it does show for those who cross the border by bus, and becomes most acute for those who cross by car. I.e. the main factor, upon which the border-crossing transit times depend, is the transport mode. The quickest way is that of pedestrians. In such instance no more than 20 minutes is required. Crossing by a passenger bus takes at around one hour. While if the traveler goes by car, the procedure may take several hours. And truck drivers can queue for days. A motor vehicle requires greater deal of attention during the inspection, which shows in inspection time costs: "The problem arises with transport, but that is again connected with the inspection process " you need to open it up, look in, climb all around it " this is why the transport passes through so slowly, and the regular citizens crossing on foot don't have any problems". The procedure of passing through the border-crossing point is as follows. Upon entrance, the traveler receives an individual pass ticket. If it is a passenger bus, its driver receives a set of such tickets for the number of passengers. The traveler passes through the customs. After this the passport control follows, which includes visual verification of the photo in the passport with its owner's face, answering questions that may arise by the border guards as to previous border-crossing, as well as to the level of acceptability of the documents the traveler holds. On top of that come the standard questions like "Are you transferring any illegal goods?". The last link is the exit checkpoint of the border guards, where the person crossing the border submits the ticket with validation marks from the previous control stages. The facility employees do conduct some activities aimed at speeding this process up. For instance, respondents note that sometimes during the passport control procedure queues occur. When such things happen, border guard officers form more temporary checkpoints: "There were fairly many passengers on the bus, and there were two windows open, so there was a queue. And so a third representative came out and started to check the passports of the people at the end of the line, stamping and all". Yet, such efforts are obviously insufficient. The conclusion is apparent: the checking procedure does not meet high efficiency requirements. One of the obstacles is the use of the ticket, which accumulates all the validation marks. There is no such procedure on the Estonian side. "It [checkpoint passing procedure] could be optimized only if the marks would be canceled. This is often done in the European Union". "If it weren't for that customs stamp, it would be just a passport check". Unfortunately, we did not manage to meet the representatives of the Kunichina Gora facility to discuss, among other things, the need in this ticket. On the other hand, the entire pool of the opinions on passport control collected also contained some critical remarks. Some respondents thought the passport control procedure was way too long and complicated, and that it could be reduced. To boost the efficiency of the procedure several steps may be taken. One of the interviewees mentioned that there was insufficient information on behavioral patterns at the border-crossing point: "The information stands are too few, because I had this situation myself: at the Kunichina Gora point one shouldn't use cell phones; so you get a phone call or you call some place, and they get some disturbance, and so the staff of the checkpoint are extremely irritated with it, and people " they make calls and get told off "... But there is no warning, just the reprimands post factum". Such remarks of the travelers are again evident to the fact that the work to improve efficiency is insufficient. The checkpoint's personnel suppose that the greater part of their "clients" are experienced border-crossers. Otherwise it is hard to explain, why the personnel do not try to adjust the border-crossing process to such extent, when a "new comer" " an inexperienced border-crosser " also would not have doubt the obvious truisms like a cell phone call. Having applied no effort to provide the information support for the border-crossing process, the personnel have to waste their time to familiarize the "inexperienced" travelers with the everyday norms. So, on the whole, the more experience a traveler has, the more advantageous is his position. Another such element is the inputting of passport data in the computer system. The border guard officer inputs passport data into the database every time the traveler crosses the border at the checkpoint. It is obvious that the information from the passport is already stored in the database from the time of the first crossing via the checkpoint. So, why not use the database search function, e.g. by passport number? Apparently, this requires upgrading the software, and that should be something the border guard service may not accommodate at the moment. The third such element is the paper ticket given to the traveler upon entrance, which is then used to accumulate the validation marks on clearance of all types of control, and is turned in at the exit. At the present time, the necessity of such auxiliary control effort may well be doubted, specifically so, when all working stations of the checkpoints " both those of the border guards and customs officers " can be connected into a local area network. As soon as the traveler passes through the first checkpoint, all of the workstations built into the chain of border guard and customs control receive a relevant entry with the information on the person crossing. All the marks in such instance are made digitally instead of on paper. This, on one hand, will speed up the control procedure; on the other hand it will reduce in the complexity of the registration procedures run by the staff. Naturally, organizing this kind of procedure requires extra expenditures for additional hardware and software, as well as for staff training. But in the long run, this will positively affect the time cost for the people crossing the border, as well as reduce the human factor in control procedures. One of our respondents characterized the status of the computer pool at

the crossing point this way: “There are these computers that halt at times. I don’t know if it’s any better now, but the computers there used to be of pretty poor quality, halting all the time”. The shifting procedure is also underdeveloped: by the time one group of staff have done their duty, the next shift have not yet started to perform their duties. Thus, shifting becomes a standby period for the travelers. There are examples indicating the insufficient quality of the checkpoint’s amenities, which results in conflicts between the travelers and the staff. One of the respondents described a situation, when the pedestrian restriction line ran right across a huge puddle. The respondent attempted to walk around the puddle, naturally violating the restriction lines of the lane, which resulted in loud warnings and even shouting on the part of the staff. Access to and standard of - toilets, bar/restaurant, foreign exchange office Among the opinions voiced on the issue of access to toilets there were no negative views. “Concerning the toilets, they are there and they work. No customs officer or border guard would want the consequences of nonoperational toilets”. The only reprimand went to the absence of noticeable toilet signage: “If you are walking “ especially for the first time “ you just don’t know where the toilet is in order to find a water closet, one needs to address the staff of the point. Respondents also note the lack of toilets for the physically challenged at the checkpoint. At the Kunichina Gora checkpoint there is a foreign currency exchange, but none of the interviewees has ever experienced its service. The question whether the checkpoint is complete with a bar, or a café had one of the interviewees say there was no such necessity: “Say, if a person is crossing by car, he has to queue. And you can queue a long time. But the border-crossing itself takes an hour, if no violations are found, and if he doesn’t get transferred to detailed inspection “ and then, there’s a café before the border, the one at the gas station there’s a café after. <...> So, it’s senseless to make a café at the border”. “The border doesn’t take up so much space, it really need some super comfort”. A contrasting opinion also resulted: the presence of a cafeteria on the Estonian side was valued positively, whereas its absence on the Russian side was viewed as negative. Some drawbacks in the work of the Estonian cafeteria were also mentioned: it opens 9 o’clock local time. For Russian travelers it is already 10 o’clock and by this time they manage to cross the border, idle at the bus stop awhile, and finally leave hungry with a bus. A respondent, who is crossing the border through the checkpoint regularly by car, suggested organizing in the area where the cars queue to pass the checkpoint a Wi-Fi Internet access point. A person may spend several hours by the checkpoint queuing. For many people using the Internet could become an opportunity to do some of their work remotely, or a good way to pass the time. Such an opportunity could be offered for a fee, and the arrangement of the service could be outsourced in a commercial company with the compulsory condition of part of the revenues from the service to go to the account of the Border Guard Administration. That would bring about a budget relief for the state and yield additional funds to maintain and develop checkpoints. Personal qualification of Border Guards One traveler stressed that the Kunichina Gora checkpoint has existed already 15 years servicing travelers of completely different categories and citizenships: “It’s an international point, they go through it to the port of Tallinn, or to get on the plane in Tallinn airport, and all sorts of people go through there: cargo trucks, Poles, Swedes, Finns and Danes and!”. Thus, in the opinion of the respondent, as of today, the personnel of the checkpoint have accumulated vast experience of doing their duty, including complex problem-solving and emergency response. This is why on the whole the quality of work with the travelers is satisfactory in the least. Travelers note that not all body guards speak English. Yet, in a situation requiring communication in a different language, an interpreter may be called for. Notably, at the Kunichina Gora checkpoint it is not only translation to English “ a factual international language, or Estonian “one of the two service languages “ may be conducted, but also into other European languages, for instance, the Dutch. Behaviour of Border Guards during passport control Among the interviewed travelers the opinion that the Kunichina Gora checkpoint border guards treat the people crossing the border properly and politely was expressed several times. In words of one of the interviewees, this is due to the fact that the Kunichina Gora checkpoint is frequently used by Europeans, so the personnel simply have to sustain the level of service adequate to the other border-crossing points along the state border. Border guards address travelers only using the polite form of the second person pronoun, refraining from use of indicative pronouns. Respondents accentuate that no cavils are put across to travelers on the part of border guards. “It’s because if a border guard cavils about something creating trouble for himself, it’s he who will have to write it off. And, if he is a sensible person, he will not add on extra work for himself, unless he has grounds or confidence in the results. Since that is a very long process: agreeing, writing off and other nuances “ and why the hell would he want that for?”. One of the respondents drives in an example of how the personnel agreed to soften the requirements to persons crossing in order to help. “Among the members of our delegation there was a student, and by the moment of crossing the border she was not 18 yet, she still had 2.5 months before she’d turn 18. In such cases, according to the Russian legislation, it is required that the group leader or the actual person crossing present a power of attorney from the parents, stating that the latter allow this person to cross the border independently. In the situation with that student that had not been done “ she hadn’t taken the trouble, neither had her parent, nor indeed we, so the border guards refused to let her through, but in about 10-15 minutes of my arguing and my persuasions that we bear full responsibility and so on, they agreed to accommodate us.” According to one of the respondents, one and a half years ago the preliminary border control started as you approached the town of Pechory. It is considered to be a border town, i.e. it requires major state security efforts. “I got on the train and was in my seat, and there was a young man next to me “ he went to have a smoke a couple of times, and then he came up to me individually, flashed his emigration service ID and asked me to show him mine.” This case illustrates the selective control of the people arriving to Pechory. The mentioning by the interviewee of the fact that it was the only case of such individual check for him, and that, in his view, this was no longer the practice, speaks for the increase in body guard agencies’ trust in regular citizens. Services rendered by the Customs Officers In the course of interviewing the themes concerning the Kunichina Gora checkpoint customs personnel were considered in comparison to the border guard personnel. There were no particular differences identified in the attitude to pedestrians on the part of border guards and customs staff. The practice is the proper and correct treatment by customs personnel of the pedestrians crossing the border: “If you carry a bag, he asked you a question, you opened it, there is nothing in it, and you may go”. In the event the checkpoint is passed

through by car, a certain difference between the border guard and the customs approaches does show. This is so primarily because for the border guards the person crossing the border is the actual object of scrutiny, whereas for the customs staff it is what this person is bringing along as baggage. When the traveler crosses the border by car, the object of scrutiny for the customs becomes much larger. This, naturally, leads to the increase in time costs of traveler-customs officer communication. Speaking of cars, which may be carrying contraband, they do scrutinize cars more thoroughly, hence the longer times for cars crossing. It was noted that there is a category of persons crossing the border who are not inspected by the customs at all. This category's representatives just present their IDs, and no inspection takes place. Obviously, the persons in question are diplomats. The customs control procedure comprises a number of questions, and in the event suspicions arise inspection of belongings and body. And yet the procedures for pedestrians and bus passengers differ. In case with a bus trip, several scenarios may take course. The most tiresome method from the point of view of the traveler is when all passengers have to produce their things from the bus for inspection. In such case, a customs officer gets on the bus and suggests that all passengers exit with their baggage. Then all the baggage is scanned. As some respondents noted, this procedure can get long: after the belongings are x-rayed, the passengers may yet have to wait another 15-20 minutes, while the staff checks the bus. Another option of the customs check of a bus is selective. An officer gets on the bus and visually assesses the passengers. Alongside, the assessment criteria are only known to the customs personnel and are not disclosed. If any of the passengers possesses certain attributes, the officer suggests that this passenger demonstrates the contents of his/her bags. The traveler passing through the checkpoint on foot, according to the respondents, is usually subjected to an accelerated procedure: the traveler does not need to come inside, the customs officer asks whether there are any things the passenger should declare, and sometimes asks the traveler to open the bag. If a person crosses the border by car, his motor vehicle may be thoroughly scrutinized. This may comprise inspection of the floor-pan with a special mirror, of the passenger compartment and of baggage. Questions to any traveler concern currency carried and its sum, as well as willingness of the traveler to declare money or goods. None of the interviewees had experience of body search at the Kunichina Gora checkpoint. Only one of the respondents had such experience at all, when crossing the Russian-Finnish border by train in Vyborg. In his words, the reason for the search was the large sum of money he had not declared. Among other, at the customs checkpoint cases of violation of elementary labor discipline take place: You're standing next to this booth, and they can put that stamp on. Once I missed the bus, because I was waiting for a customs employee for 20 minutes. What she was up to all that time I have no idea. If she's the only one here, she needs to be back quickly, otherwise there should be a substitute. Attitude of Customs Officers towards EU and non EU citizens Several times the opinion was voiced that there is no difference in attitudes of customs officers to various citizens. At least, such differences are not apparent. On the other hand, there were other opinions too. The brightest experience on the issue was that of the respondent who regularly passes through the Kunichina Gora checkpoint by car. This respondent is an Estonian citizen, but he runs his business in Russia. His frequent trips allow introducing substantial reprimands as regards the RF border guard service. The respondent himself took part in bribing an officer. The monetary gift turned out to be inevitable when transporting a large item for the respondent's business routine. The customs officer stated that items of that size might not be brought across the state border. After that the respondent followed the customs officer inside, where the bribe was given to the officer. Upon this, the respondent was allowed to proceed with the item. Personal qualification of Customs Officers The travelers who took part in the interview evaluate customs officers' qualification as equal to that of the border guards. They are fairly confident in performing their duties, but are not much hasty. One of the respondents mentioned that foreign language command of customs officers is better than of border guards: [languages] are more required with the customs staff, since part of the documents on cargo and on motor vehicles they view is in national languages also. And, say, a discrepancy of a phrase in the national and the English languages, which is compulsory as a dubbing, is a reason for inspection too, like to check accordance. So they have to master them better than those border guys. Behaviour of Customs Officers during customs clearance Some respondents mentioned that customs officers' attitude to a person crossing the border in most cases depends on that person. I think, 90% of cases they are guided by the person. If the person is nervous, or inadequate, or dressed strangely for the season: say, it's hot, and he's in some woolen long-sleeves. I guess, 90% of all cases depend on human factors. And that's global practice, because you can lock the whole perimeter with smart equipment and all, but the human factor will still be determining. One of the respondents also voiced an opinion that very often behavior of the people crossing violates all accepted norms, and the checkpoint's employees, from the point of view of ethics, could take corresponding measures, but they don't do that simply because it is not allowed by the rules. There are always people who talk to female border guards or customs officers as to girls. I saw it many times, when these officers, swallowing their fury, replied politely letting them know, like, hey man, this exaggerated attention is unpleasant. <...> If I were that border guard, I'd ask my colleagues to delay the young man for a half hour and give him a talk. Cooperation and relations of the Border Guard and the Customs Officers Unfortunately, we did not manage to have interviews with the personnel of the border guard and customs services of the Kunichina Gora border-crossing point. Therefore, the interaction of these services may be assessed only externally, through the words of the travelers. The border guards and the customs officers have different spheres of responsibility, but they work at the same site. The regime at the checkpoint and activities within the regime, e.g. inspection, is the competence of the border guards. Besides, according to one expert, only the border guards have the right to use weapons. Thus, under certain circumstances should they arise the customs officers may not act without the support of the border guards. Mass media coverage One of the parts of this research is the digital mass media content analysis conducted by the Sociological Laboratory of Pskov Volny Institute. In the course of this analysis we searched for, selected and actually analyzed news pieces on the Kunichina Gora checkpoint. The news search tool we chose to use was the Yandex News Service (<http://news.yandex.ru>). As a search query to look for news postings, we chose to use the phrase 'Kunichina Gora'.

at the border. It is important as such delays paralyze freight traffic from Estonia to Russia and back. It results in losses for trade companies, and people have to queue for many hours at the border. If we remember the interviews with the travelers, we will see that it is this topic that is the most urgent for people crossing the border. However, judging by the mentioning frequency, it hardly is the most topical for digital mass media.

Category 2 follows with 9 news pieces. These news pieces spotlight the information useful to tourists going to the Pskov Region, and to the people going to Estonia. This category includes such news as opening of new bus lines between Estonia and Russia, simplification of visa regime etc.

Category 7 follows with 7 news pieces. These news pieces contain information on cooperation between the border guards of Russia and Estonia. Possibly, the attention paid to these issues by digital mass media is sufficient, since from the point of view of a regular citizen, interested in border-crossing practicalities, this topic is hardly of any interest.

7 news pieces relate to category 1. It speaks of political relations between Estonia and Russia. These made it into the sample, as Russian-Estonian relations directly impact the work of the border guard and customs services (visa regime, border trade etc.), and, consequently, the quality of the service the travelers get at the Kunichina Gora checkpoint.

Category 3 news relate to violations of the border regime, i.e. attempts at illegal crossing of the state borders. The press coverage of such events is fairly torpid: one news piece in 2007, one in 2006 and one in 2005.

Let us look into news dynamics time-wise. Most news pieces come in 2007 - 17, then followed by 2005 - 15 pieces, then 2006 - 12, and then 2003 and 2002 - 8 pieces a year, in 2004 - 5 pieces, and finally 2001 with 1 news piece. Possibly, such dynamics maybe conditioned by several reasons; but the main reason, apparently, is the development of the Internet. Every year more and more digital media open up on the Internet, and subsequently, every new event taking place in the world is covered by the growing number of media.

Let us look at the picture on the Kunichina Gora checkpoint that is formed with a person who has never been there, but is monitoring the news on the Internet. This person would hardly estimate the overall work of the checkpoint as positive, as - judging by the postings - problems and difficulties there arise continuously, and remain unsolved for long periods of time. If we consider a tourist going to cross the border and reading the news to familiarize with the situation at the checkpoint, his/her opinion must be bent positively, as there is the positive dynamics in problem-solving.

The person monitoring the news on the Internet most probably will be well aware as regards the news on the work of the customs at the Russian-Estonian border, as these events are covered best in the press.

Judging by the event coverage dynamics in 2001 - 2007, the perception of the border zone by the reader changed for the better, meaning that the person monitoring the news for a number of years would be receiving broader information on the Kunichina Gora checkpoint, hence broader awareness of the border zone status, which facilitates a better perception of the regional image.

A person for the first time crossing the border via the Kunichina Gora checkpoint would hardly rest assured of smooth and unproblematic border-crossing, as having read the news on the Pskov border one gets the information implying that emergencies and complications are fairly often here.

We conducted news content analysis of the coverage of emergencies at the Kunichina Gora checkpoint. The analysis resulted in statistics of emergency-based news occurrence in 2001 - 2007.

In future, content analysis could be used to thoroughly research events and emergencies concerning tourism in the border region.

This research opened several directions which are scientifically interesting. First, during the preparation of the material we should not have deleted similar texts taken from different sources. This could enable us to draw the dynamics of one event coverage in mass media. Second, postings concerning other border-crossing points can be traced, and the message array structures for various points compared.

Conclusion

This report focused on the situation around Kunichina Gora border-crossing checkpoint, located in Pechory district of Pskov oblast. The analyze touched upon a number of topics: Russian legislation as applied to the checkpoint, the perception of Kunichina Gora by the travelers, the influence of the checkpoint on the local community and the perception of Kunichina Gora via mass-media.

Resulting from the legislation monitoring it should be noted that the border guard and customs control is executed in accordance with the international norms of human and civic rights' observance within the context of the existent bilateral Agreement between Russia and Estonia following the principle of parity of the national legislations. There weren't instances of negative legal precedents within the issues and problems in the course of direct procedure of border-crossing. On the other hand, interviews with travelers had displayed the facts of corruption at the Kunichina Gora checkpoint, especially towards car holders. Evidently travelers are agreed with possibility of the "unofficial" way of problems solutions.

Interviewed travelers showed quite positive perception of Kunichina Gora point particularly in comparison with other checkpoints in Pskov region. Kunichina Gora offers the sufficient level of services for travelers. Problems can show up with physically handicapped peoples. Also the number of hardships increases for car holders.

Local experts evaluate the influence of the checkpoint on the community positively. Kunichina Gora checkpoint creates employment, increases the welfare level of Pechory inhabitants, makes an positive impact on the condition of the town infrastructure.

Concerning the mass-media there are a big amount of news messages about Kunichina Gora checkpoint. The reader

who is interested in news about Kunichina Gora can get a wide picture of the situation takes place there. But this picture differs from opinions of interviewed travelers. In mass-media news the main topic is about custom: problems, plans, etc. But the main problem the travelers worry about is a question of time, what they spend during custom and border guard control.

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