

MOBILE BORDER IN BETWEEN KEY POINTS AND POLICY IDEAS

The border between Ukraine and Poland is the **busiest** one for both countries. *Every nine out of ten travellers are Ukrainian citizens. And more than half of them live right next to it.* They have their own needs to cater for. They consume it differently than other Ukrainian citizens and have different expectations.

We focus here on border posts placed in **Lviv region** since it hosts six out of eight road crossing points. **Local residents** hop the border here mainly for work, shopping, or small-scale trade. They are far from being rich. And consider border as an **income source**.

People from distant regions spurn this lifestyle. Yes, border has become the way of living for locals. So, Ukraine limited the number of crossings and the value of goods they can bring back from Poland since 2018.

Many locals are ready to change this lifestyle and they know how. Firstly, **infrastructure projects** like repairing roads barely ridden on by non-local people can *open isolated villages and town* to the rest of the country relieving their plight. More shops, filling stations, parking would not only make journeys more pleasant for travellers but would bring more *revenues to local budgets*.

The borderland has an immense **tourism** potential. After **Lviv-Staryi Sambir road** has been repaired, more tour buses cross at Smilnytsia-Krościenko border post avoiding overcrowded Shehyni.

The projects of kayak trails, tours through ancient buildings, natural beauties, and sacred places could attract more Polish tourists. *They are the main foreign visitors and about third part of them head for the borderland.*

We have only one border post where you can cross on foot or with bike. It is in Shehyni-Medyka. Meanwhile, more **pedestrian crossings** could lure more Polish visitors. *Biking tours are a new vogue in Poland.*

Pedestrian crossings are even more important for local residents since *they live in short distances from the border posts*. But they should not become localised small-scale trade points, a development largely perceived as negative.

At the moment, Polish loan will finance building pedestrian crossing at Rava-Rus'ka-Hrebenne border post. Uhryniv crossing point has a big potential too. People could walk through the border by 2019. Pedestrian crossing was closed because Ukraine had not built crucial infrastructure. People were virtually walking across roadway without street lights that was dangerous. The border post is in Sokal' district but its geography is much wider. People from neighbouring Ivanychi district of Volyn' region visited it far more often than Sokal district's residents. The risk of turning into trading point is downgraded by the fact that the closest shop on the Polish side is 4 km away.

Living close to our six border posts *locals usually head for the closest one to enter Poland*. As a result, they wend their way to the three **small crossing points** in Uhryniv-Dołhobyczów, Hrushiv-Budomierz, and Smilnytsia-Krościenko *more often than travellers from more distant*

parts of Ukraine. Better access to these small entry-exit points could **offload the burden** from the three big and overcrowded places in Shehyni-Medyka, Krakivets-Korczowa, and Rava-Rus'ka-Hrebenne. **Pothole-free roads** is key for drivers to make it to these small crossing points. It is important that you can reach the border post itself. But also it should be easy to drive from a crammed crossing point in case you are stuck there to a neighbouring one that may happen to be free. *Many people opt for **Hrushiv** in lieu of Krakivets even now despite the roads*. Though such a journey is all but a pleasure.

It is at the three small crossing points where the **joint control** is applied. It makes the checks faster since Ukrainian and Polish officials do them in one place and only once.

At the same time, the potential of big border posts is not fully used. Foreigners - largely Polish citizens - who tear along the highway to **Krakivets-Korczowa** crossing point entering Ukraine reluctantly come back via this border post. **More lanes are needed for cars and buses on the Ukrainian side**.

Rava-Rus'ka-Hrebenne crossing point, in turn, suffers from **understaffing**. The officers grapple with the flows but they cannot handle them. A **good road** to this border post **from Chervonohrad** would make trip easier for about 20 percent of local residents from Sokal district often heading for Rzeszów or Kraków.

Shehyni-Medyka is the oldest border post and the busiest out of all six ones. So it is thirst for a full reconstruction.

There are ideas of new border posts like Nyzhankovychi-Malhowice, Lopushanka-Michniowiec, and Boberka-Smolnik. They are discussed in media and supported by Lviv regional authorities. The new crossing points could take some flows of people on themselves. **Nyzhanjovychi-Malhowice** could cater for needs of people who now cross at Shehyni crossing point, the busiest one, for instance.

Meanwhile, **Lopushanka-Michniowiec and Boberka-Smolnik** in Turkiv district would serve less than one percent of people living in borderland. A tiny border post might be enough here, if any at all.

Some of these bottlenecks could be resolved with the **Polish loan**. It should help to modernise three big border posts and repair roads to some smaller ones. But it is repeatedly delayed.