Evaluation of border crossing point development projects on the Finnish-Russian border under the Karelia, Kolarctic and South-East Finland -Russia CBC programmes

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the programming period 2014-2020, three EU cross-border cooperation programmes (i.e., ENI CBC programmes) were implemented in the border regions of Finland and Russia. They are the Karelia, Kolarctic, and South-Eastern Finland-Russia (SEFR) ENI CBC programmes. Each of these programmes contributes to Thematic Objective 10: promotion of border management, border security, mobility and migration management.

This evaluation examines five different border crossing point development projects (Raja-Jooseppi, Vartius, Imatra, Vainikkala and Vaalimaa), funded from the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) Cross-Border Cooperation programmes. The five BCPs in question are located on the Finnish-Russian border. The evaluation examined the projects using the five standard evaluation criteria, namely: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. In addition, the evaluation assessed the added value of the projects to cross-border cooperation and border crossings and the added value to the respective programme and its area.

The data and information for the evaluation consisted of existing documents, interviews, and electronic surveys. The evaluation team conducted interviews between May and October of 2022. The interviews were directed to the project partners, lead partner and governing bodies, different stakeholder groups and to the final beneficiaries. In addition, two almost identical surveys (open link survey and Cint consumer panel) were conducted for users of BCPs and those who had heard about BCP investments.

The project needs centred around updating the facilities and the equipment at the border crossing point. In some of the projects, traffic arrangements, the CCTV system and x-ray equipment were also included in the project. In others, the task of improving infrastructure included building upgrades as well.

Most of the projects are in their final stages of implementation. Some delays were caused by the impact of COVID19 and the consequent labour shortages, or by delays in receiving some components. Some of the projects (Raja-Jooseppi and Vartius) had however already reached their targets, whereas the others (Imatra, Vainikkala, and Vaalimaa) have not realised their target indicators.

The overall results regarding the BCP development projects were positive. The project outcomes include improved working conditions for the officials working at the border stations and a more positive customer experience in terms of safety and ease in respect of crossing the border. The interviewees and the survey respondents who had used the border crossing points were positive about the results of the projects. In fact, the BCP development projects had, they suggested, raised the general safety of the border crossing point itself and the security of the EU's external border.

An unexpectedly positive result of the projects was that cooperation between the lead partner and the project partners was improved. Even though the development projects as such were implemented successfully, the target indicators focusing on throughput times and border crossing point capacity are currently not suitable for measuring the success of the development projects. Hence, there should be more focus on assessing the other aspects of the success that the projects have had, such as increased co-operation, improved working conditions and improved border management.

ABBREVIATIONS

BCP = Border crossing point
CBC = Cross-border cooperation
MA = Managing Authority
JMC = Joint Monitoring Committee
NCP = National Contact Point
SEFR = South-East Finland -Russia

1. Introduction

The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) is the funding instrument of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). During the programming period 2014-2020, three EU cross-border cooperation programmes (i.e., ENI CBC programmes) were implemented in the border regions of Finland and Russia. They were the Karelia, Kolarctic, and South-Eastern Finland-Russia (SEFR) ENI CBC programmes. The programmes are based on based on EU regulation No 232/2014 of the European Parliament and Council establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument, its implementing regulation No 897/2014, and the financial rules 966/2012.

Table 1: Basic information about the Karelia, Kolarctic and South-Eastern Finland -Russia (SEFR) ENI CBC programmes

ENI CBC	Karelia	Kolarctic	South-Eastern Finland - Russia
Core region	Finland: Kainuu, Oulu Region, North-Karelia Russia: Republic of Karelia	Finland: Lapland Sweden: Norrbotten Norway: Finnmark, Troms, Nordland Russia: Murmansk Region, Arkhangelsk Region, Nenets Autonomous District	Finland: South Karelia, South-Savo and Kymenlaakso in Russia: St. Petersburg and Leningrad region
Adjoining regions	Finland: Lapland, North-Savo, South-Savo, South-Karelia Russia: Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Leningrad regions	Finland: Oulu Region Sweden: Västerbotten Russia: Republic of Karelia, Republic of Komi	Finland: Uusimaa, Päijät-Häme, North-Savo, North Karelia and Republic of Karelia
Programme priorities	Growing cross-border business cooperation Attractive cultural environment Clean and comfortable region to live Functioning border crossing	Viability of arctic economy, nature and environment Fluid mobility of people, goods and knowledge	Lively, active and competitive economy Innovative, skilled and well-educated area Attractive, clean environment and region Well-connected region
EAFRD funding	21.5 million euros	24.7 million euros	36.2 million euros
Total funding	43.0 million euros	63.4 million euros	71.3 million euros
Funded projects	61	48	71

1.1 Background and objectives of the evaluation

Each of the ENI CBC programmes Finland participates in (Karelia, Kolarctic, and South-Eastern Finland - Russia) contributes to Thematic Objective 10: promotion of border management, border security, mobility and migration management. In the Karelia CBC programme[1], TO10 is included in one of the four main objectives of the programme 'Well-functioning border crossing'. In the Kolarctic CBC programme[2], TO10 is

[1] Karelia CBC programme https://www.kareliacbc.fi/
[2] Kolarctic CBC programme https://kolarctic.info/kolartic-2014-2020/

included in the priority axis 2 'Fluent mobility of people, goods and services'. In the SEFR CBC programme[3], one of the four programme priorities 'Well-connected region' includes TO10.

Table 2: Inclusion of TO10 in the Karelia, Kolarctic and South-Eastern Finland -Russia (SEFR) ENI CBC programmes

ENI CBC	Karelia	Kolarctic	South-Eastern Finland - Russia
TO10 inclusion	Priority 4: Well-functioning border crossing	Priority axis 2: Fluent mobility of people, goods and services	Priority 4: Well-connected region
Focus	Development of infrastructure, facilities and working procedures especially at international border crossing points and their immediate proximity on both sides of the border	Improvement of traffic lanes/roads to cross-border points • joint development activities in order to improve accessibility to and from the region (East-West connections) • elimination of bottlenecks in transport and border crossings Functionality of border-crossing points • Facilitation of veterinary and phytosanitary checks by providing equipment at the relevant border crossing points • Use of modern technology and innovations using ICT • Enhancement of cooperation and networking of the border authorities with professional international rescue teams/ authorities • reconstruction of relevant border-crossing points and lanes directing traffic to them	• Supporting the efficiency and safety of border crossings; • Improving border crossing infrastructure • Improvement of equipment at border crossing points; • Promoting the training and networking of border authorities; • Promotion of cooperation between customs and control authorities ensuring efficient and safe control and flexible border crossings; • Exchange of expertise and information; • Improving border management operations, customs and visa procedures • Measures to improve traffic safety.

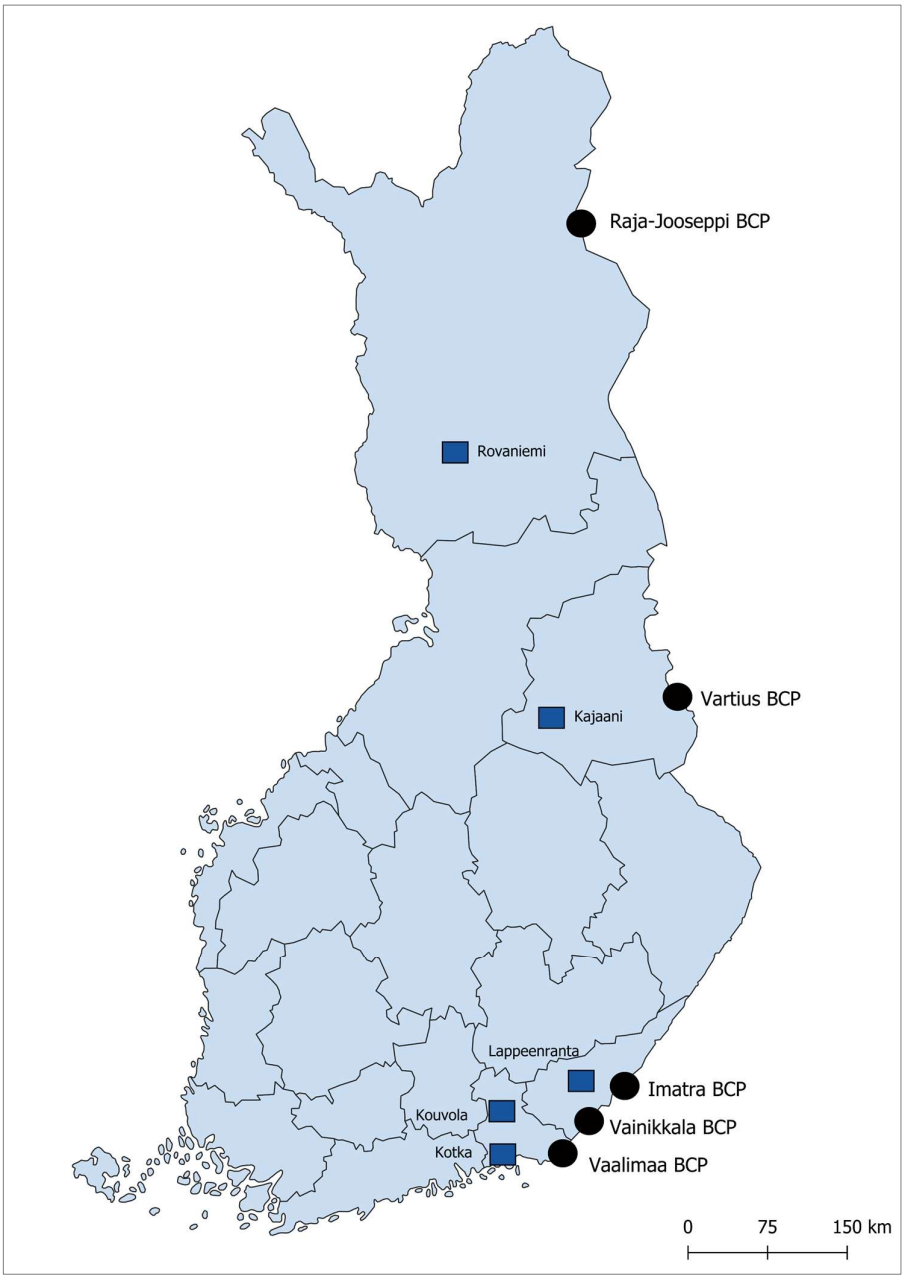
During the programming period 2014-2020, the Finnish Transport and Infrastructure Agency (Väylävirasto) implemented altogether six large infrastructure projects that improve the Finnish side of the border-crossing points[4]. The projects were funded from the three above-mentioned CBC programmes and they contribute to the same thematic objective: TO10 Promotion of border management and border security, mobility and migration management. The six projects are (Vartius, Raja-Jooseppi, Imatra, Vaalimaa, Vainikkala Railway Station and Parikkala). Of these projects, the Parikkala border crossing point improvement project is not included within the scope of this evaluation as its total funding is under 5 million euros. The projects that form the focus of this evaluation are listed in Table 3.

[3] SEFR CBC programme https://www.sefrcbc.fi/
[4] Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency, Development projects for border crossing points https://vayla.fi/en/development-projects-for-border-crossing-points

Table 3: Development projects for border crossing points

BCP project	Total Funding, €	Programme funding, €	Funding source	Project focus
Raja-Jooseppi	11 450 000	10 305 000	Kolarctic CBC	Renovating and improving road lanes, IT systems and X-ray equipment, new buildings and other equipment
Vartius	8 148 534	6 401 682	Karelia CBC	Improving track structures and lane arrangements and renovating buildings
Imatra	5 231 000	4 184 800	SEFR CBC	Improving border crossing infrastructure, esp. the track section
Vaalimaa	5 680 000	4 544 000	SEFR CBC	Renewing lane arrangements and control systems for road traffic
Vainikkala (railway st.)	6 392 000	5 113 600	SEFR CBC	Building a new border inspection station and improving control systems

Picture 1 shows the location of the evaluated BCPs and the biggest cities of the regions in which these BCPs are located. Raja-Jooseppi BCP is in Lapland, specifically in the municipality of Inari. Vartius BCP is in the municipality of Kuhmo, in Kainuu. The two BCPs located in the South Karelia region are Imatra BCP (near the city of Imatra) and Vainikkala BCP (near the city of Lappeenranta). Vaalimaa BCP, in turn, is in the municipality of Vironlahti which is in the Kymenlaakso region, in the South-East corner of Finland.



Picture 1. Location of the evaluated BCPs and the biggest cities of the regions in which they are located

1.2 Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The purpose of this assessment was to conduct an evaluation of five border crossing point development projects (Imatra, Vaalimaa, Vainikkala, Vartius, and Raja-Jooseppi) financed under the Karelia, Kolarctic and SEFR ENI CBC programmes. The overall goal of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness and impacts of the implementation of these projects.

The evaluation examined the projects using the five standard evaluation criteria, namely: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. In addition, the evaluation assessed the added value of

the projects in terms of cross-border cooperation and border crossings and the added value to the respective programme and its area. Furthermore, cross-cutting issues of environmental sustainability and gender equality were also considered.

The evaluation findings and results can be used to show the results and achievements of the projects. The evaluation results and findings are also a good basis for communication actions. The results of the evaluation can be used by the key programme stakeholders on both the national and regional levels to help with and better facilitate the implementation of future CBC programmes. Furthermore, the evaluation findings and recommendation can also be used as input to discussions about future cross-border cooperation.

1.3 Structure of the report

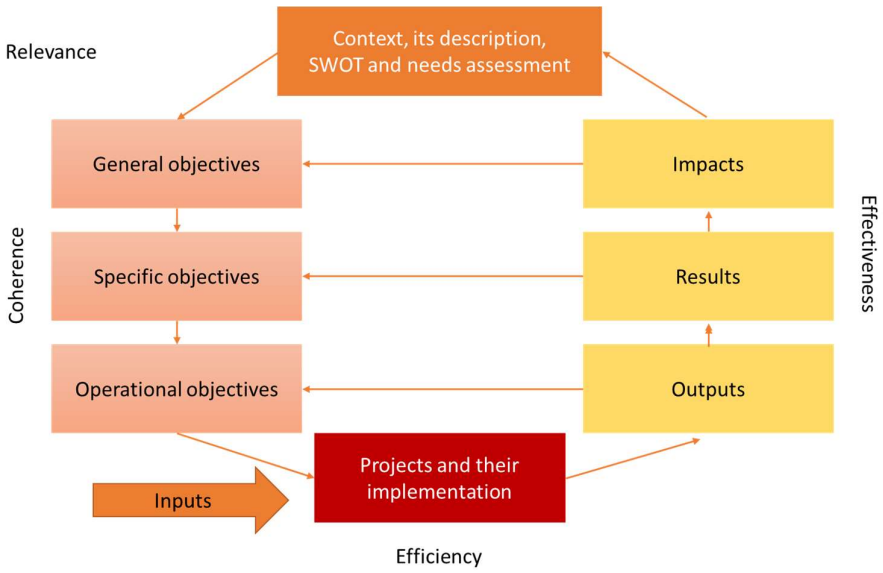
This report is divided into 10 chapters. In the introductory chapter 1 the background and objectives of the evaluation, as well as the purpose and scope are explained. Chapter 2 discusses the methodological approach to the evaluation, including the evaluation questions, methods and tools, data and information used and the factors affecting the validity of the evaluation findings. Chapters 3 to 7 contain the background descriptions of each funded project, the implementation of the projects and the assessment of and answers to the evaluation questions in respect of each project. Chapter 8 includes the overall assessment and answers to the evaluation questions. Finally, the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations are summarised in chapter 9. Chapter 10 includes the annexes.

1.4 The evaluation team

The evaluation was conducted by the regional development consultancy company, MDI Public Oy. Janne Antikainen (responsible evaluator), Sari Rannanpää (project manager), Benjamin Heikkinen, Janne Sinerma and Sebastian Hovi participated in the evaluation.

2. Methodological approach

The evaluation approach was qualitative in nature, given the minimal amount of quantitative data available. The evaluators based the evaluation on the logical framework which focuses on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, results and impacts of the activities. The logical framework is built on the hierarchy of objectives, inputs and indicators. The logical framework used in the evaluation is illustrated in picture 2.

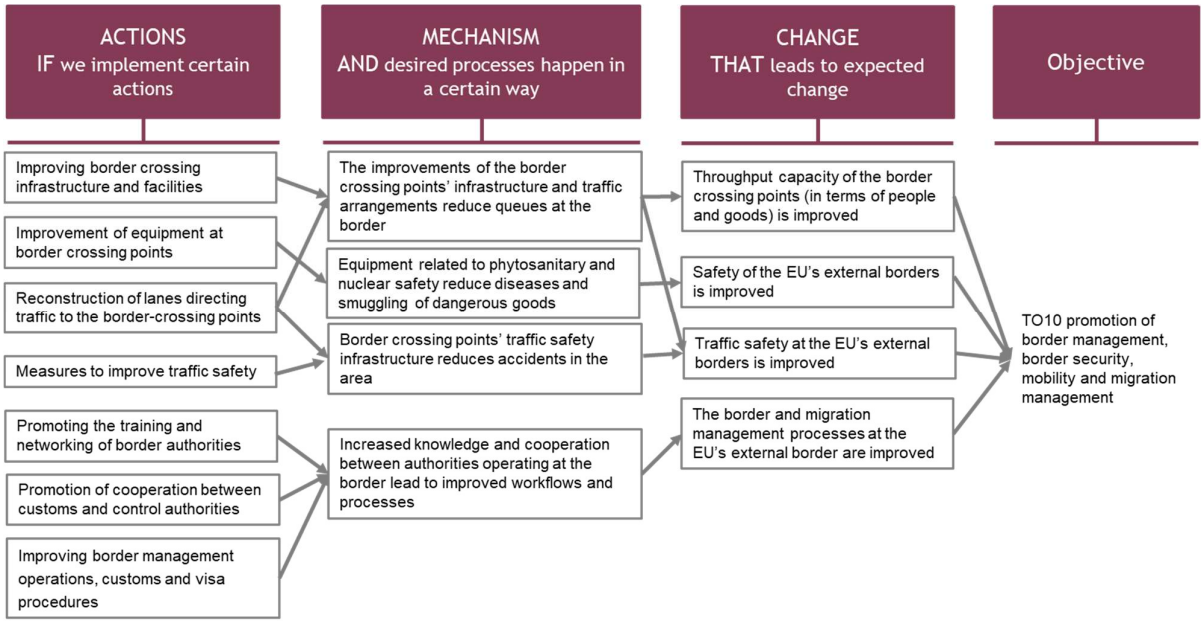


Picture 2. Intervention logic scheme

2.1 Methodology

As there are not enough available data or data points to conduct a counterfactual analysis, the evaluators used a **theory-based evaluation approach** in the assessment of the border-crossing point development projects. Here, theory relates to the assumptions, predictions and hypotheses underlying the operation of the projects.

For the evaluation of the border-crossing point development projects, the evaluators drafted a **Theory of Change**, based on the programme documents, to understand the causal chain that connects the observed outcomes with the project activities. The Theory of Change develops the intervention logic of the projects into a predictive and explanatory depiction of what should happen through the intervention. In practice, each step of the Theory of Change (strategy, delivery, and benefits) is examined to see whether the theoretically predicted changes occurred as expected and whether other external factors contributed to the changes. As the projects are very similar and they contribute to TO10 ‘promotion of border management, border security, mobility and migration management’, one Theory of Change will be developed to cover all of them. The Theory of Change is visualised in Picture 3 below.



Picture 3. Theory of Change for TO10

Qualitative analysis as well as descriptive statistics will be used to gain a deeper theory-based view of the factors behind successes and difficulties in respect of the projects. The evaluation also benefitted from developmental evaluation methods which emphasise a consultative approach and close interaction between the evaluators and the client during the process. Furthermore, developmental evaluation also stresses the hearing of the programme stakeholders, beneficiaries and actors during the conducting period of the evaluation.

Triangulation was used in the evaluation to ascertain the validity of the findings. In practice, triangulation was done by using data sources and interviewees to arrive at valid findings, conclusions and recommendations.

2.2 Evaluation questions

The evaluation was guided by the evaluation questions spelled out in the ToR. Various methods were used to obtain and analyse data for each evaluation question, as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Evaluation questions, data collection methods and information sources

Evaluation question	Documents	Interviews - project partners, lead partners, stakeholders	Interviews beneficiaries	Survey - beneficiaries
Relevance Effectiveness Efficiency: are the results produced in a cost-efficient way? Sustainability Impact Quality of the results: is the quality of results satisfactory?				
How has the project succeeded in developing new or improved elements of cross-border cooperation and capacity building?				
What is the impact of the project on the CBC programme and for the respective programme area?				
What is the added value of implementing an investment project of this size within CBC programmes?				

2.3 Data and information

The data and information for the evaluation consisted of existing documents, interviews and electronic surveys.

The evaluation began with desk research, meaning that information from the project applications, interim reports, project updates, steering group memos and financial information) was analysed. In addition, the programme documents for the three ENI CBC programmes and the available annual reports were also analysed at this stage. The latest available interim reports were dated as follows: Imatra BCP (31.5.2022), Raja-Jooseppi BCP (30.3.2022), Vaalimaa BCP (29.7.2022), Vainikkala BCP (31.5.2022) and Vartius BCP (30.3.2022).

The evaluation team conducted 42 interviews between May and October of 2022. Of those, 18 were with the project partners, lead partner and/or governing bodies. In addition, 19 interviews were held with various stakeholder groups such as municipalities, regional councils and Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment. Finally, 5 interviews were held with the final beneficiaries.

Two almost identical surveys (open link survey and Cint consumer panel) were conducted for users of the BCPs and those who had heard about BCP investments. The only difference between the two surveys was that in the Cint-survey all questions were mandatory while in the open survey only the background questions were mandatory. The answers to the surveys were combined in the analysis phase and were separated according to whether the respondent has (a) used a BCP or (b) heard about development investments in the BCPs. The total number of responses was 359. The open survey was open from mid-June to 7 October 2022.

The responding period was extended once. The Cint-survey was conducted during the period 21-22 September 2022.

The answer link for the open survey was distributed through various actors and forums in the regions and municipalities where the BCPs are located (e.g., municipalities, local action groups, associations, Facebook groups and regional councils) in the summer of 2022. In September-October 2022, the open survey was also advertised at the Raja-Joosepi and Vartius BCPs with posters with QR codes and an answer link. The open survey received 58 complete responses. The answers also include respondents who answered only part of the survey.

In September, 301 responses were purchased from the Cint Consumer Panel from respondents who said they had either used a border crossing point or had heard about BCP investments. Answers were collected from the provinces where the BCPs are located and additionally also from Uusimaa. The number of respondents in each province was pre-limited in the following way:

- South Karelia: 51
- South Savo: 46
- Kainuu: 21
- Kymenlaakso: 58
- Lapland: 21
- North Karelia: 45
- Uusimaa: 59

The number of responses was limited in this way because there were a limited number of respondents who met the criterion and who were available at a respondent pool. It was also important to limit the number of responses to ensure that responses were received from all provinces.

2.4 Factors affecting the validity of the evaluation findings

As in every evaluation, there are varying external factors affecting its process or results. Unfortunately, there were numerous external factors affecting this evaluation.

Namely, after the start of the BCP development projects, the geopolitical situation in Europe changed completely. The catalyst for the change and thus the first major factor affecting the evaluation project was the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014. After the annexation, the European Union among other authorities, decided to put in place a raft of sanctions against the Russian federation. This meant the imposition of significant restrictions on trade between Russia and the EU.

In 2020, the COVID19 pandemic resulted in the almost complete shutdown of cross-border traffic. This resulted in a dramatic drop in the number of crossings at every BCP. The COVID19 pandemic also affected the implementation of the BCP development projects. Due to the border closure, the projects struggled to hire staff and to import international workforce and experts. Additionally, the COVID19 pandemic accelerated the already ongoing shortage of building and other components. This resulted in significant delays to the schedules of the development projects.

In 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine generated several additional impacts on the BCP development projects. Firstly, the invasion of Ukraine saw comprehensive sanctions imposed upon the Russian federation by the EU, sanctions which were met with counter sanctions by the Russian federation. This meant, for example, heavy restrictions on the movement of people and goods. The invasion also caused the stricter regulation of visas. Due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU's cross-border cooperation with the Russian

federation has been put on hold and is not expected to be continued in the foreseeable future. The ongoing projects in the existing programmes will be completed within the Member States.

Additionally, the geostrategic factors listed above also generated a number of smaller issues during the evaluation project. For example, some interviewees were rather hesitant about participating in the interviews. Others were quite cautious when it came to answering anything connected to the Russian federation. The promotion of the open survey was also faced with challenges as Facebook forbad the promotion of the BCP development survey due to it being linked to border crossing and thus being potentially political in nature.

As one of the main indicators of the BCP development programmes was the increased throughput of people and goods, it is obvious that due to the border closures these targets will not be met. Moreover, it is simply not possible to set a baseline for 'normal' border traffic flow as there have been continuous disruptions since 2014.

3. Raja-Jooseppi

The Raja-Jooseppi border crossing point, established in 1967, is located in Inari, Eastern Lapland. The border crossing point lies on the northern side of the Urho Kekkonen national park. The operational area under the Raja-Jooseppi BCP monitoring duty includes 57 kilometres of national border.

By volume, Raja-Jooseppi is the smallest BCP included in this evaluation. In 2014, there were some 20 000 incoming and outgoing light transport border crossings each way. Despite its low throughput volumes, the Raja-Jooseppi BCP is significant for the Lapland region due to the relative proximity of the city of Murmansk on the other side of the border.

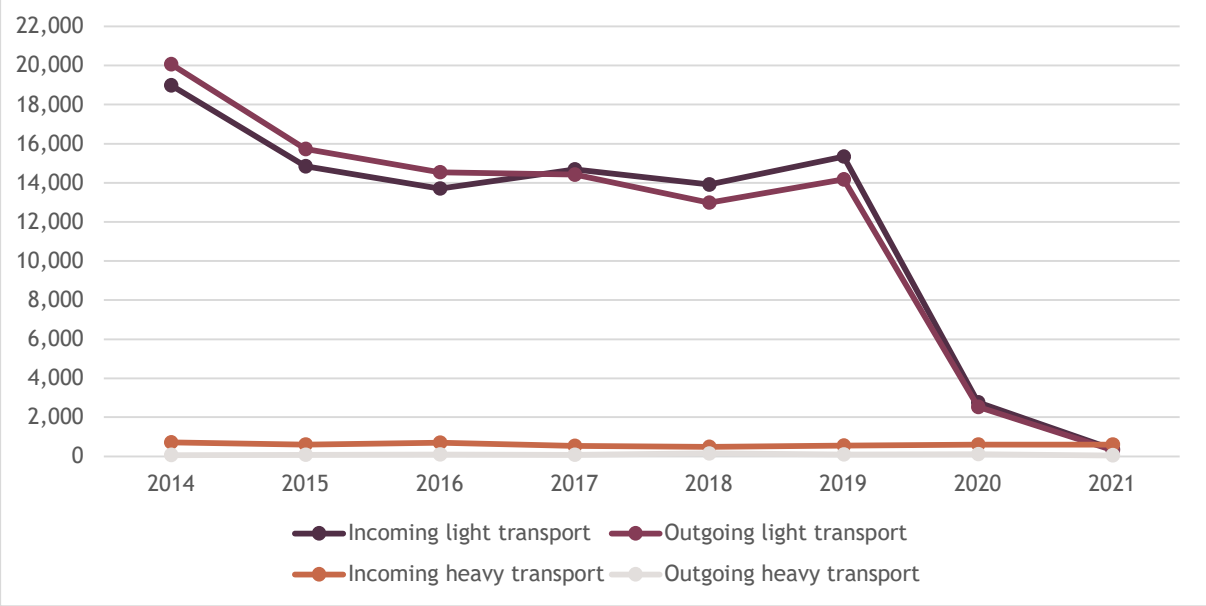


Figure 1. Light- and heavy transport between 2014 and 2021 across the Raja-Jooseppi BCP.

In 2014 the flow of light transport across the Raja-Jooseppi BCP was around 20 000 outgoing vehicles annually and around 19 000 incoming vehicles. As the figure above illustrates, the flow of outcoming and incoming light transport has plummeted within the observation period. There are a number of different factors affecting border traffic flows between Finland and the Russian federation. As stated in chapter 2.4, in 2014 the major cause of the declining numbers, in this respect, was the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and, consequently, the raft of additional sanctions imposed by the West. There was a slight increase in the flow of light transport from 2018 to 2019, but by 2019, COVID became the single most significant and comprehensive issue impacting the flow of border-crossing traffic at that time. As the figure above illustrates, the flow of border crossings reduced significantly and by 2021 light traffic volumes are basically non-existent. Notwithstanding this however, flows of incoming and outgoing heavy traffic have been steady across the observation period.

3.1 Background and description of the project

The Raja-Jooseppi development project was funded from the Kolarctic CBC Programme.

Basic information

Project ID: KO3002
Programme: Kolarctic CBC programme 2014-2020
Priority: Priority axis 2: Fluent mobility of people, goods and knowledge
Thematic objective: Promotion of border management and border security, mobility and migration management
Total budget: 11 450 000 €
Project name: Raja-Jooseppi BCP development and reconstruction; traffic arrangements, buildings and technology
Start date: 1.3.2019
End date: original end date 28.2.2022, project prolonged 3 times to 30.6.2021, 31.12.2021 and 30.6.2023
Lead partner: Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency
Other partners: Centre for Economic Development, Transport and Environment for Lapland, Senate Properties, Finnish Border Guard, Finnish Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority, Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation (replaced in 2020 by ANCO "Directorate for Development of the St. Petersburg and Leningrad Region Transport System"), (only informed and consulted during the project).
Project activities: new customs/border control building, new traffic management arrangements including lane check area with roof structure, lane check facilities (booths) and facilities for further

The need for the Raja-Jooseppi BCP development project was based on the border crossing infrastructure, (buildings and traffic areas) which did not meet the standards and requirements set by the Finnish Customs Agency and the Border Guards for safe and smooth customer services and controls. There were concerns over the mould damage of the former border crossing building which was deemed a non-healthy environment for the Border Guard and Customs officers and customers alike. Before the development project started, all of the border crossing procedures were conducted in the temporary barracks as the original building was out of use due to the health risks it posed to officials. In addition, development needs also emerged in relation to the non-functioning traffic areas which included both the traffic lanes and control as well as the lane check facilities. Furthermore, Raja-Jooseppi BCP did not have a fixed outdoor radiation portal monitor, used specifically to examinate heavy cargo and traffic containers for illegal trafficking.

3.2 Implementation

The lead partner for the Raja-Jooseppi BCP project was the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency. In addition, there were several other partners, contractors and sub-contractors in the project. The design and specifications period for the improvement of the Raja-Jooseppi BCP began in 2019. Organising the calls for tender and contracting started in the same year. The project implementation and equipment installation were scheduled to happen from 2020 to 2022.

The implementation of Raja-Jooseppi BCP's road construction work started in June 2020 and was continued during the summer of 2021. The original border crossing station building was demolished in the autumn of 2021. The landscaping work was completed in 2022. Additionally, some guarantee works were carried out in the first half of 2022.

Regarding the new border crossing station building, the foundation works and the civil construction works were completed in the autumn of 2020. Civil construction works were completed by the end of August 2021. At the same time, the temporary huts which were used at the border crossing point until then, were removed.

The new radiation detection and monitoring system equipment was installed in the inspection hall in 2020. Furthermore, other equipment such as furniture, fences and security equipment for the Finnish Border Guard were installed at the BCP in 2021. Also, during this period, the main equipment installations for Fintraffic Road were carried out.

Table 5. Raja-Jooseppi BCP cumulative costs of the project (31.12.2021 situation)

	Equipment and purchases	External services, sub-contracting	Infrastructure investments	Total eligible costs
Senate properties	-	259 000	4 846 965	5 105 965
Lead Partner Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency	-	541 760	3 689 240	4 231 000
Finnish Customs	143 899	930	99 200	244 029
Finnish Border Guard	173 272			173 272
Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority	123 090	2 287		125 378
TOTAL	**440 261**	**803 977**	**8 635 405**	**9 879 643**

The total budget for the Raja-Jooseppi BCP investment-project was 11 450 000 euros. By the end of 2021, the total cumulative costs for the project were 9 878 643 euros. Most of the total eligible costs were allocated to infrastructure investments (8 635 405 euros), which were implemented by the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency, Senate Properties and the Finnish Customs Agency. The second largest budget line was for External services, sub-contracting (803 977 euros). The rest of the costs were made up of equipment and purchases (440 261 euros).

Table 6. Raja-Jooseppi BCP target indicators and realised values (30.03.2022)

Indicator	Target value	Realised value
Thematic indicators *(SOI = programme-specific output indicators; COI = common output indicators)*		
SOI 5. Number of participating institutions/organisations cooperating across borders towards **fluent** mobility of people, goods and knowledge	7	9
SOI 5.1 Number of males	35	35
SOI 5.1 Number of females	25	27
SOI 6. Population covered by developed transport and communication networks as a direct consequence of the programme support	500 000	500 000
SOI 7. Number of participants in cross-border activities implemented by projects improving border management and border security, mobility and migration management	20	20
COI 27. Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads	1	1
COI 29. Number of additional ICT based tools developed supporting cross-border cooperation.	5	5
COI 35. Number of border crossing points with increased throughput capacity	1	1

COI 36. Increased throughput capacity of private cars on land border crossing points	300	300
COI 38. Increased throughput capacity of persons on land border crossing points	700	700
Project specific indicators		
Number of detailed designs of infrastructure and building works and specifications of the BC equipment	5	5
Number of tender procedures and following them contracts of designs, construction management, infrastructure and building works and specs of the BC equipment	12	12
Number of objects received to develop BC procedures (areas, lanes, buildings and other constructions, BC equipment sets),	4	6

The project has proceeded successfully in terms of indicators. The target indicators (e.g., SOI 5) have been realised fully. Some targets have even been exceeded.

3.3 Assessment and answers to the evaluation questions

Overall, the Raja-Jooseppi BCP improvement project has been successfully implemented. Some delays were encountered due to problems in respect of the delivery and installation of Customs equipment. Notwithstanding this however, the project has already fulfilled or even exceeded its target indicator values.

The interviewees emphasised the importance of the Raja-Jooseppi border crossing point. More importantly, they pointed to the fact that the BCP is crucial for the businesses and people of the Lapland region. The relative proximity of the city of Murmansk is considered significant for the cross-border tourism in the region.

The interviews gave a positive picture of the benefits of the Raja-Jooseppi BCP improvement project. The interviewees underlined the importance of the project for both the border crossing traffic between Finland and the Russian federation, as well as the overall well-being of the officials serving at the BCP. This meant that the investments improved the working conditions for the officials at the station. In addition, the interviewees perceived the potential of the Raja-Jooseppi BCP to serve a higher volume of customers per day as a long-term benefit of the project.

The results of the survey give a similarly positive picture of the benefits of the project. The respondents who had used the Raja-Jooseppi BCP (N=12) viewed the improvements in security and traffic arrangements as the most significant benefits.

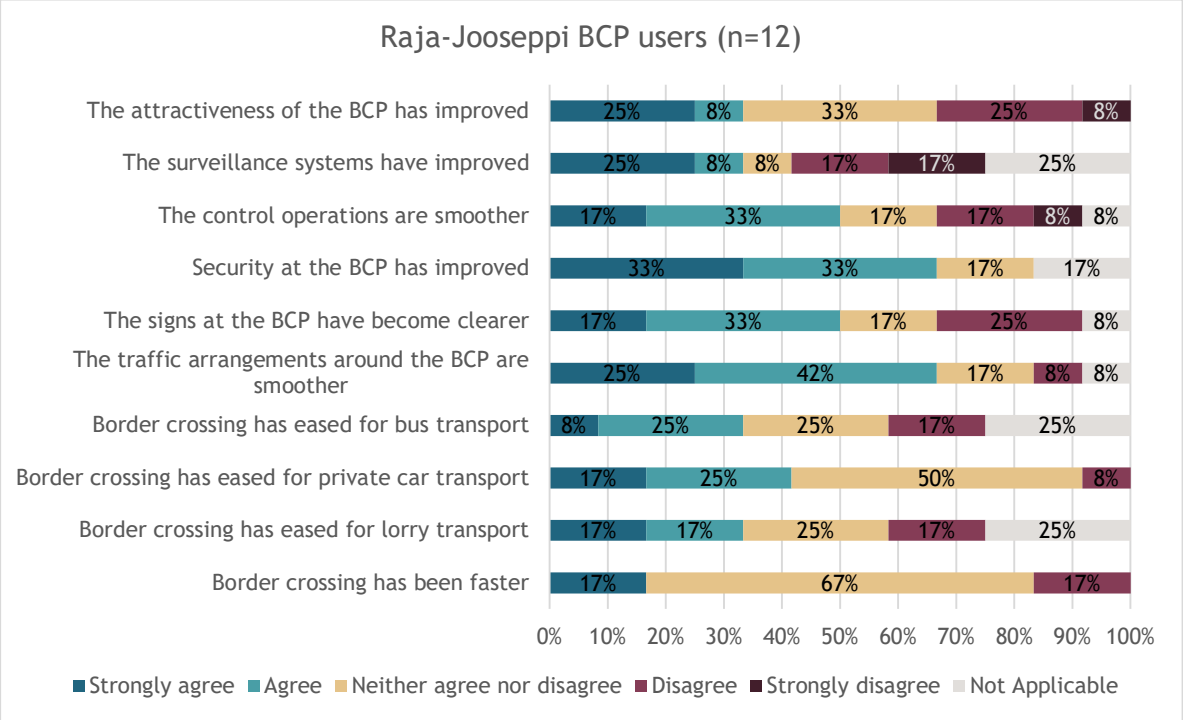


Figure 2. Survey responses from Raja-Jooseppi BCP users

The respondents who have used Raja-Jooseppi BCP specifically noted that security at the BCP has improved (66% strongly agree or agree) and the traffic arrangements around the BCP are smoother (67% strongly agree or agree). Only 17% of respondents agreed with the statement "Border crossing has been faster" while most respondents (67%) neither agreed nor disagreed. In addition, the statement "The attractiveness of the BCP has improved" divided opinion significantly. Only one third of respondents believed (strongly agree or agree) that the surveillance systems had improved and that border crossing had eased for bus transport.

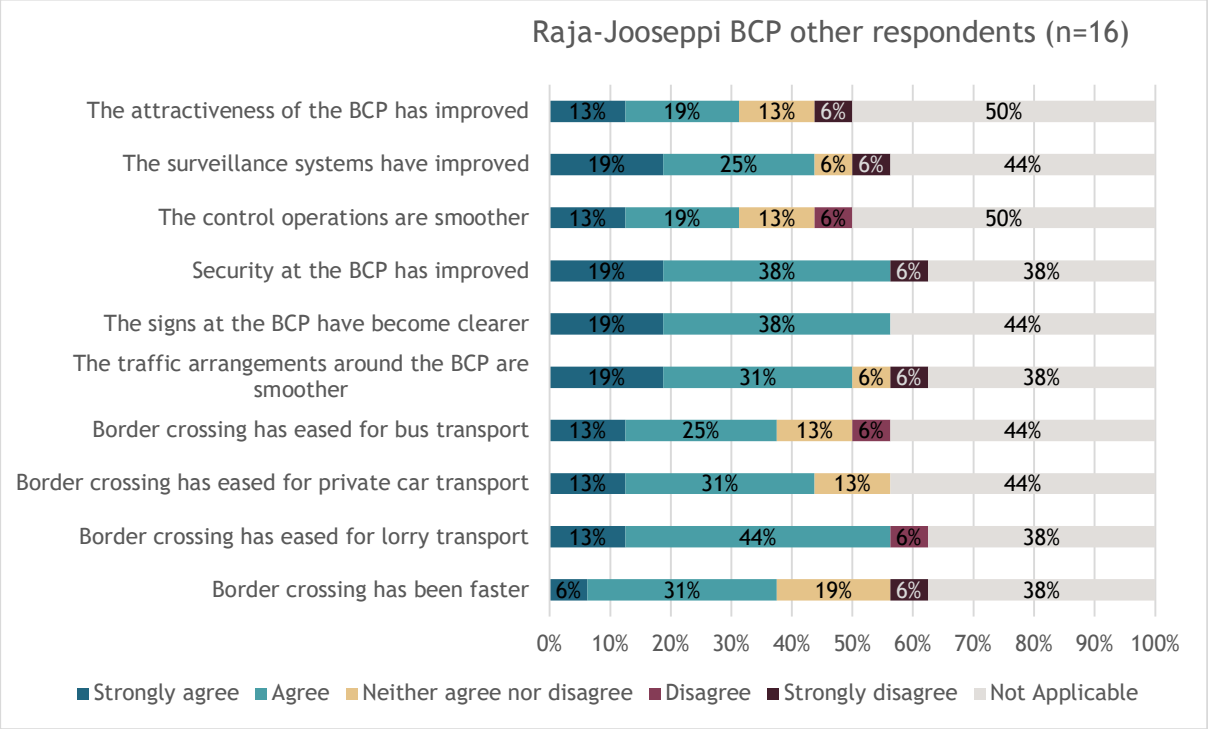


Figure 3. Survey responses by people who had heard about the improvements at the Raja-Jooseppi BCP

Those respondents who had heard about the improvements at the Raja-Jooseppi BCP had typically heard only about some of the improvements. This showed in the amount of "Not Applicable" answers which was very high (38%-50%). Respondents had generally heard that security at the BCP had improved (57% strongly agree or agree), border crossing has eased for lorry transport (57% strongly agree or agree) and that the signs at the BCP had become clearer (57% strongly agree or agree) while only about one third of the respondents had heard that the attractiveness of the BCP has improved or that the control operations are smoother.

In terms of relevance, improvements at the Raja-Jooseppi BCP focused primarily on the identified problems (old and unusable border control buildings, insufficient traffic safety arrangements at the BCP). Even with some of the final installations missing, the Raja-Jooseppi BCP improvement project can be judged as having been efficiently carried out. Namely, all of its indicator targets have been achieved. Furthermore, the new border crossing station building not only improved the intended border and migration management processes but also contributed to improving the working conditions of the border officials, thus indirectly improving border safety more generally. The investments made in respect of the traffic safety arrangements and equipment, as well as the border security equipment have directly improved traffic safety at, and safety of, the border. The throughput capacity of the BCP has also been improved, although the external circumstances (COVID19, the sanctions, and the stricter visa requirements) have caused a significant reduction in the number of border crossings. The cooperation required for the project has also increased and intensified the cooperation between the different Finnish authorities operating at the border. As the project focused on building infrastructure, the results will be sustainable in the medium-long term.

On the basis of the interviews and the survey, the results of the Raja-Jooseppi BCB improvement projects have been satisfactory. The investments have improved the border crossing facilities, supported a healthy working environment for the authorities working at the border, as well as improving the throughput times

for the traffic. However, given the current situation at the border, the full potential of the investment has not been realised in terms of traffic volumes. Nevertheless, if the border traffic eventually normalises, the Raja-Jooseppi BCP will be ready for a higher volume of cars and cargo vehicles.

Even though the project is financed from the Kolarctic ENI CBC, the investments have remained within the Finnish side of the border. As such, there were few new or improved elements in respect of cross-border cooperation realised on the Russian side of the border, though the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation and/or Directorate was kept informed of developments throughout the project. Thus, when considering the levels of cross-border added value typically found in transnational projects (solutions to common problems, learning opportunities, generating critical mass and building structures for further co-operation and territorial cohesion[5]), this project focused on building structure for further cooperation and territorial cohesion.

4. Vartius

Vartius is located in the region of Kainuu, more specifically in the municipality of Kuhmo. The Vartius border crossing point was established in 1992, after the collapse of Soviet Union. The border crossing point lies around 140 km to the east of Kajaani which is the main city of the region. The Vartius BCP is used for both road and railway traffic between Finland and the Russian federation. The operational area under the Vartius BCP monitoring duty includes 22 kilometres of national border.

Vartius BCP is highly important for Kainuu from both an economic and a cultural point of view. The city of Kostomuksha lies in relative proximity, across the border, to Vartius BCP. Historically, there is a high volume of traffic from the factories of Kostomuksha to Finland through the Vartius BCP.

[5] Lisa Hörnström, Lise Smed Olsen and Lisa Van Well, Added Value of Cross-Border and Transnational Cooperation in Nordic Regions. Nordregio working Paper 2012:14, http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:700328/FULLTEXT01.pdf

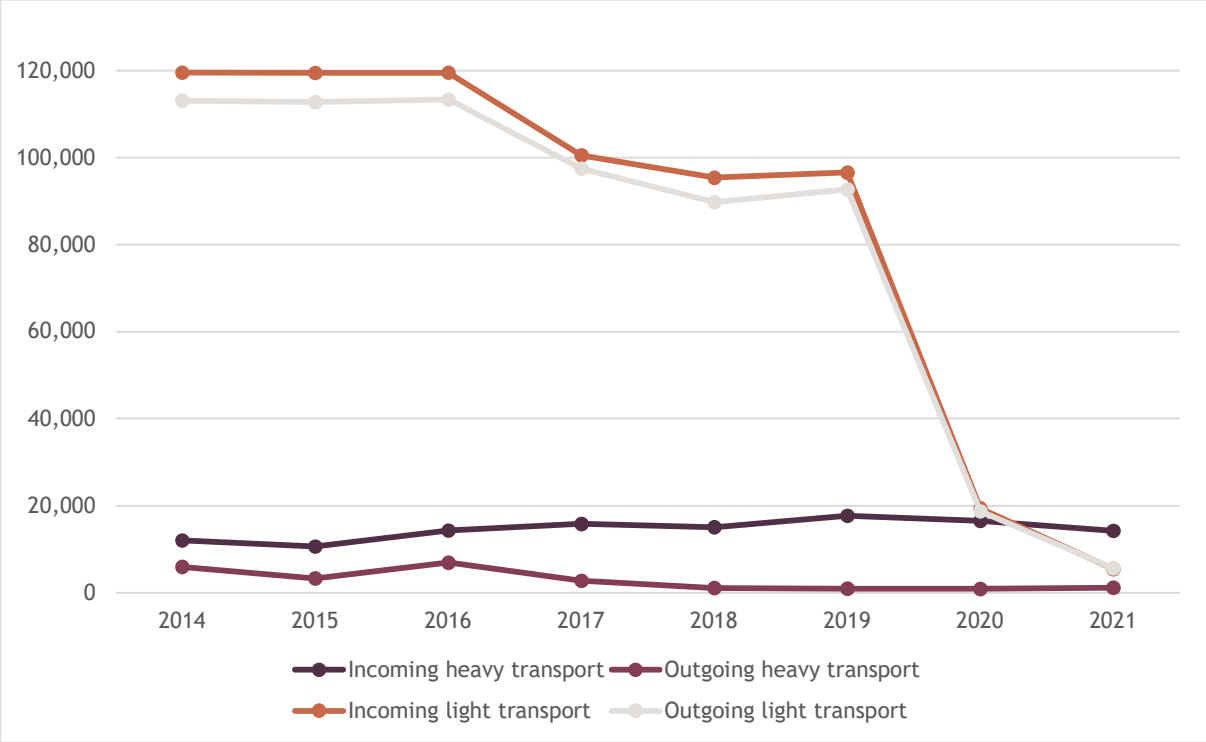


Figure 4. Incoming and outgoing light and heavy transport using the Vartius BCP between 2014 and 2021

The outgoing light traffic was approximately 120 000 while the incoming light traffic was around 113 000 in Vartius BCP in 2014. Interestingly, the traffic flow across the Vartius BCP did not start to decline immediately after the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, the trend which can clearly be seen in relation to the other border crossing points included in this evaluation. In 2016 however traffic numbers did start to dwindle, except for incoming heavy transport which actually increased slightly. As figure 4 above shows, the numbers in respect of incoming and outgoing light transport declined markedly after the COVID19 outbreak. This meant that the tourism traffic across the border basically stopped. By 2021, incoming and outgoing light transport volumes were around 5 000 vehicles annually.

4.1 Background and description of the project

Basic information

Project name: Vartius border crossing point development
Project ID: KA6004
Program: Karelia CBC programme
Priority axis: 4 Well-functioning border crossings
Thematic objective: Promotion of border management and border security
Total budget: 8 148 534 €
Start date: 1.1.2019
End date: 30.6.2022, prolonged to 30.6.2023
Lead partner: Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency
Other partners: Senate Properties, Finnish Radiation and Nuclear Safety Agency, Finnish Border Guard, North Ostrobothnia Centre for Economic Development, Transport and Environment, Finnish Customs Agency, Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation (only informed and consulted during the project)
Project activities: new customs/border control building, new traffic lanes, expanded railway marshalling yards, and border control technology for border checks, border surveillance and customs control.

The Vartius BCP improvement project was motivated by the fact that the entire BCP was viewed as dysfunctional and out of date by the organisations working at the BCP, as well as by the other stakeholders such as passengers and the freight consignors. In addition, the traffic arrangements and controls were considered, at best, ambiguous causing long waiting lines at the border crossing point. Furthermore, the border safety equipment was not modern which had a negative impact on both passenger and national safety.

4.2 Implementation

The design and specification of the Vartius BCP improvement project began in January 2019. The goal of this phase was to produce detailed designs and specifications in respect of the envisaged improvements and construction works at the BCP. This included designs and plans for the new railway yard, road designs and designs for the new border station building. In addition, new radiation detection monitoring system equipment was purchased in 2019 while a technical surveillance system for the Finnish Customs Agency and Border Guard was also put in place.

The construction works at the Vartius BCP railway yard were completed in October 2021. Some additional minor details, such as the installation of railway switches, were due to be completed by June 2022. Improvements in respect of the road construction were carried out between summer 2020 and August-September 2021. Construction works regarding the border crossing point buildings were completed in January 2021, excluding the installation of new equipment. The final installations and minor refurbishing of the outer premises of the border crossing building was completed by June 2021.

Furthermore, new radiation detection and monitoring system equipment was bought, installed and tested by the end of 2019 and since then it has been in operative use. Other equipment for the use of Finnish Border Guard included the construction of small support premises in 2019 and the construction of a fence and gate in 2021. The new safety equipment for use by the Border Guard was purchased and installed by the end of the project. In addition, the Finnish Customs Agency and Border Guard moved the customs

surveillance camera equipment to Border Guard post. The installation of road- and railroad traffic management equipment was also completed within the project schedule.

Table 7. Vartius BCP cumulative costs of project (31.12.2021 situation)

Partner	External expertise and services	Investments	Cumulated costs EUR
Finnish Border Guard	2 542	515 299	517 841
Finnish Customs	930	133 684	134 614
Fintraffic Raide Oy		80 900	80 900
Fintraffic Tie Oy		80 000	80 000
Lead Partner (Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency)	857 602	4 919 221	5 776 823
Senate Properties	49 719	968 488	1 018 207
Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority	2 261	120 473	122 734
TOTAL	**913 054**	**6 818 065**	**7 731 119**

The total budget for the Vartius BCP investment-project was 8 148 534 euros. The cumulative costs in the 3rd financial report were 7 731 119 euros. Most of the total was allocated to investments which were implemented by Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency and Senate Properties. The rest of the accumulated costs were allocated to external expertise and services which were also mainly implemented by the lead partner. However, the railway budget exceeded the planned amount. The difference was paid by the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency from additional financing inside the agency.

The infrastructure works (road and railway) and the civil building construction were completed as planned. However, the delivery and installation of customs equipment was delayed due to delivery problems, causing the project timetable to be extended until June 2022.

Table 8. Vartius BCP target indicators and realised values (30.03.2022)

Indicator (Project specific indicators)	Target value	Realised value
Decreased throughput time of cars	2	2
Decreased throughput time of trucks	5	5
Decreased throughput time of trains	10	15
The estimated theoretical maximum 24 h capacity of private cars increases (now 300)	500	500
The estimated theoretical maximum 24 h capacity of trucks increases (now 150)	300	300
The estimated theoretical maximum 24 h capacity of trains increases (now 50)	75	75

The target indicators have largely been fulfilled, except for the indicator on decreased throughput time for trains. The target for the throughput time for cars and trucks has been realised as planned. Other indicators measure the estimated theoretical maximum 24 h capacities of private cars, trucks and trains. These different capacities have grown in the following way: Private cars 66%, trucks 100% and trains 50%.

4.3 Assessment and answers to the evaluation questions

Overall, the Vartius BCP improvement project has been successfully implemented. Some delays have however been experienced in terms of the delivery and installation of Customs equipment. The project has already fulfilled and even exceeded its target indicator values for most indicators.

The interviewees considered the Vartius border crossing point to be extremely important for industrial traffic (wood and pellet transportation) from Kostomuksha. Before the BCP improvements, freight and container traffic bottlenecks were regularly experienced due to the inadequate infrastructure at the Vartius BCP. According to the interviewees, the overall impact of the Vartius BCP improvement project has been positive with the improvements in terms of the railway and yard particularly noticeable. Furthermore, these investments in the BCP have made it much more functional and efficient both for officials and customers.

The results of the survey give a similarly positive picture in terms of the benefits of the project. The respondents who had used the Vartius BCP (N=31) considered the improvements in the surveillance systems and the security of the BCP, as well as the easing of the border crossing for private car transport, to be the main benefits of the project.

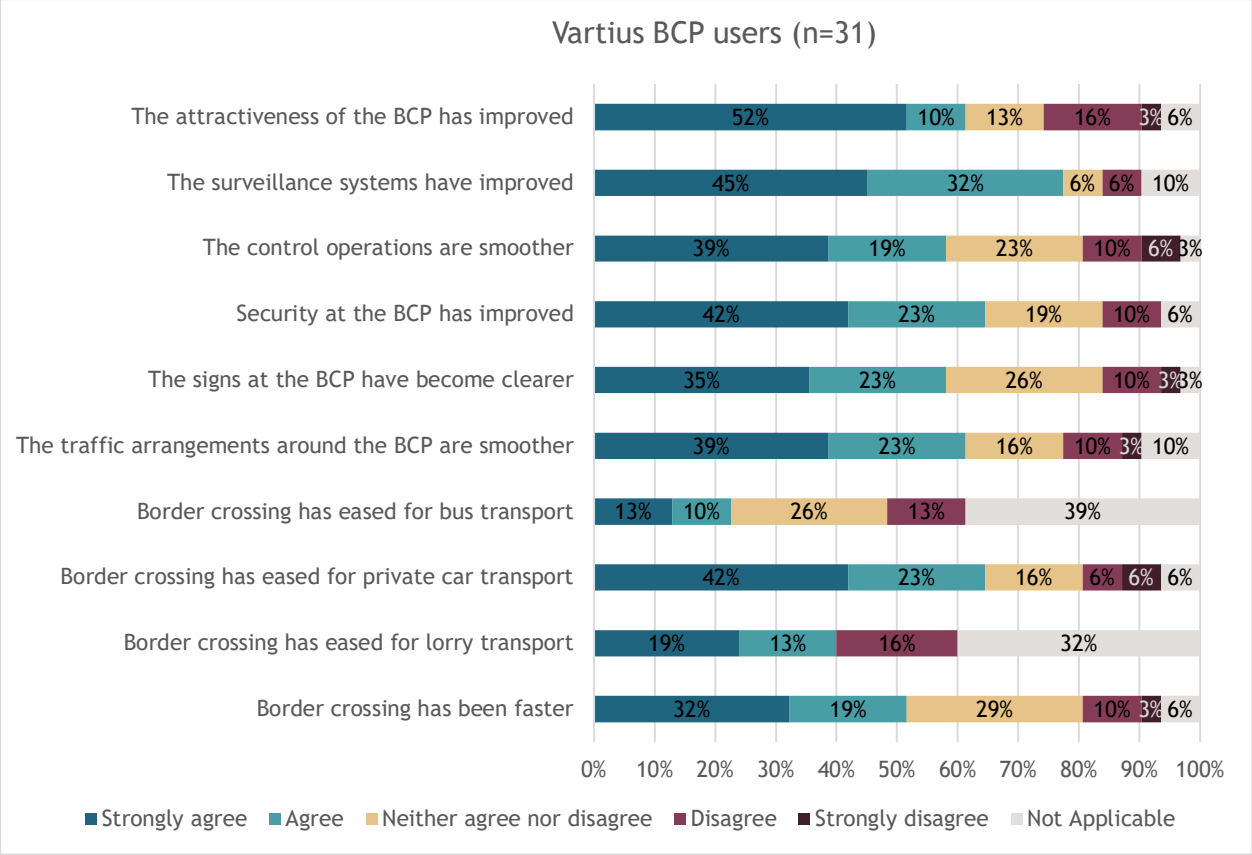


Figure 5. Survey responses from Vartius BCP users

The respondents who have used the Vartius BCP saw the various improvements made at the BCP in strongly positive way. The amount of "strongly agree" answers is very high in many propositions. Respondents saw in particular that the surveillance systems have improved (77% strongly agree or agree) and that security at the BCP has improved (65% strongly agree or agree). In addition, the attractiveness of the BCP has improved (62% strongly agree or agree), the control operations are smoother (58% strongly agree or agree), the signs

at the BCP have been made clearer (58% strongly agree or agree) and the traffic arrangements around the BCP are smoother (62% strongly agree or agree). Border crossing has also eased for private car transport (65% strongly agree or agree) and border crossing has been faster (51% strongly agree or agree). Border crossing has not however been eased for bus transport or for lorry transport as significantly. For these two propositions however, we should take into account the fact that there were many respondents who chose the "Not Applicable" opinion here.

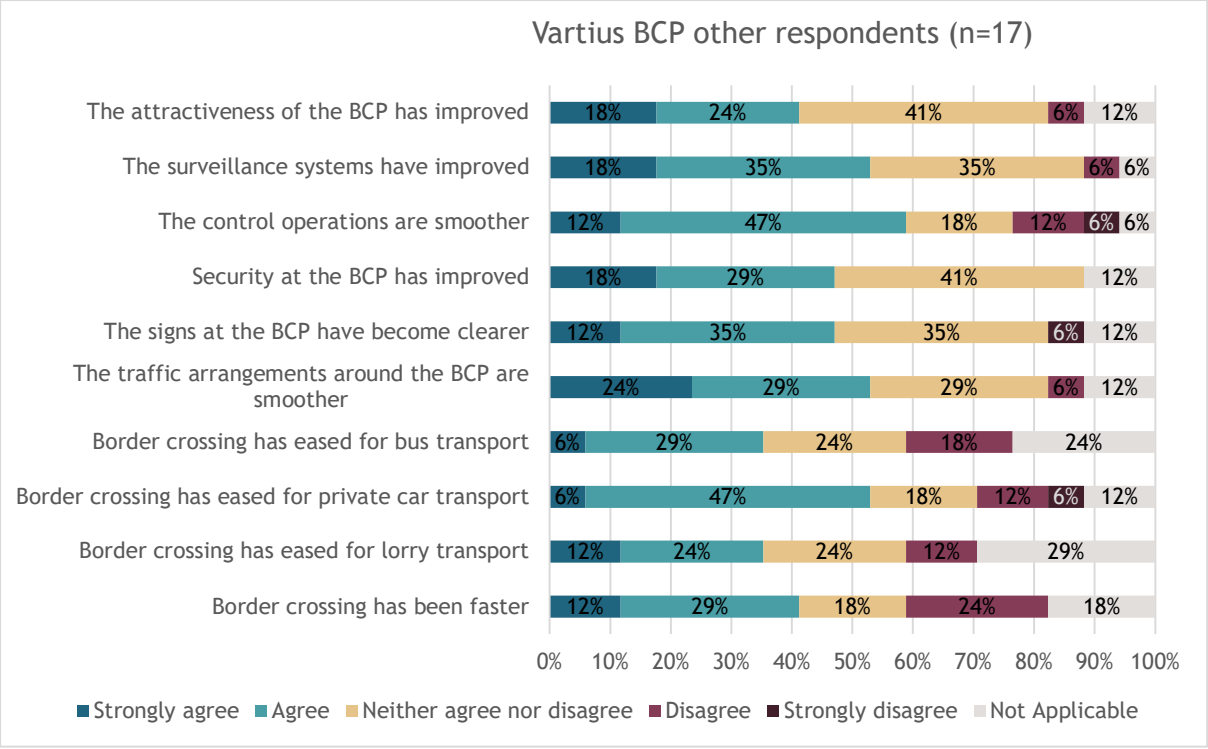


Figure 6. Survey responses by people who had heard about the improvement at the Vartius BCP

Those respondents who had heard about improvements at the Vartius BCP had typically heard only about some aspects of the improvement project. This could be seen in the amount of "Not Applicable" answers which was 6-29%. Many respondents also chose the neutral "neither agree nor disagree" opinion. Respondents had however heard, specifically, that the control operations were smoother (59% strongly agree or agree), the surveillance system had improved (53% strongly agree or agree), the traffic arrangements around the BCP were smoother (53% strongly agree or agree) and that the border crossing has eased for private car transport (53% strongly agree or agree). the same respondents appear not however to have heard as much about whether border crossing has eased for bus transport (35% strongly agree or agree), that border crossing has eased for lorry transport (36% strongly agree or agree), or that border crossing has been faster (41% strongly agree or agree). These statements also had the most diverse opinions with high proportions of 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' opinions.

The Vartius improvements focused on already widely recognised issues at the BCP, such as the dysfunctional border-crossing for officials working at the border station, for the customers and for the consignors of freight traffic. On top of that, the improvement process tackled the problem of inadequate traffic arrangements. In terms of indicators, the development project can however be perceived as successful. Namely, all of the target indicators were met or even exceeded. In addition, the improvements at the Vartius BCP tackled not only the challenges regarding the traffic arrangements, but also contributed to the general safety of the

officials working at the BCP and those crossing the border. Furthermore, the installation of the radiation detective system, the implementation of fences and gates, as well as the installation of the new CCTV surveillance system has improved the security of the border crossing point and the security of Finland. The throughput capacity has increased and the queues at the BCP have shortened. However, due to COVID19, sanctions and stricter visa regulations the overall number of border crossings have reduced markedly.

The interviewees and the survey respondents consider the results of the development project at the Vartius BCP as sufficient. The attractiveness of the BCP have improved, the surveillance system is much better than before, the control operations are smoother and the general safety of the BCP has increased. In addition, cooperation between the authorities who participated in the development project has deepened during the project. In the future, if border crossing operations and traffic should normalise, the Vartius BCP is in a much better state to serve a potentially higher volume of traffic than was previously the case.

5. Imatra

The Imatra border crossing point is located in the region of South Karelia, in close proximity to the city of Imatra. The Imatra BCP was opened in 1972 when the construction of the Svetogorsk pulp- and papermill began in Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the border crossing point was opened up to regular tourist traffic. The Imatra BCP became an international border crossing point in 2002 and in the years before COVID19, the BCP has been among the busiest border crossing points between Finland and the Russian federation. In 2014, approximately one million vehicles and 2.34 million passengers passed through the Imatra BCP[6]. The border crossing point serves both road and railway traffic for the movement of people and goods alike.

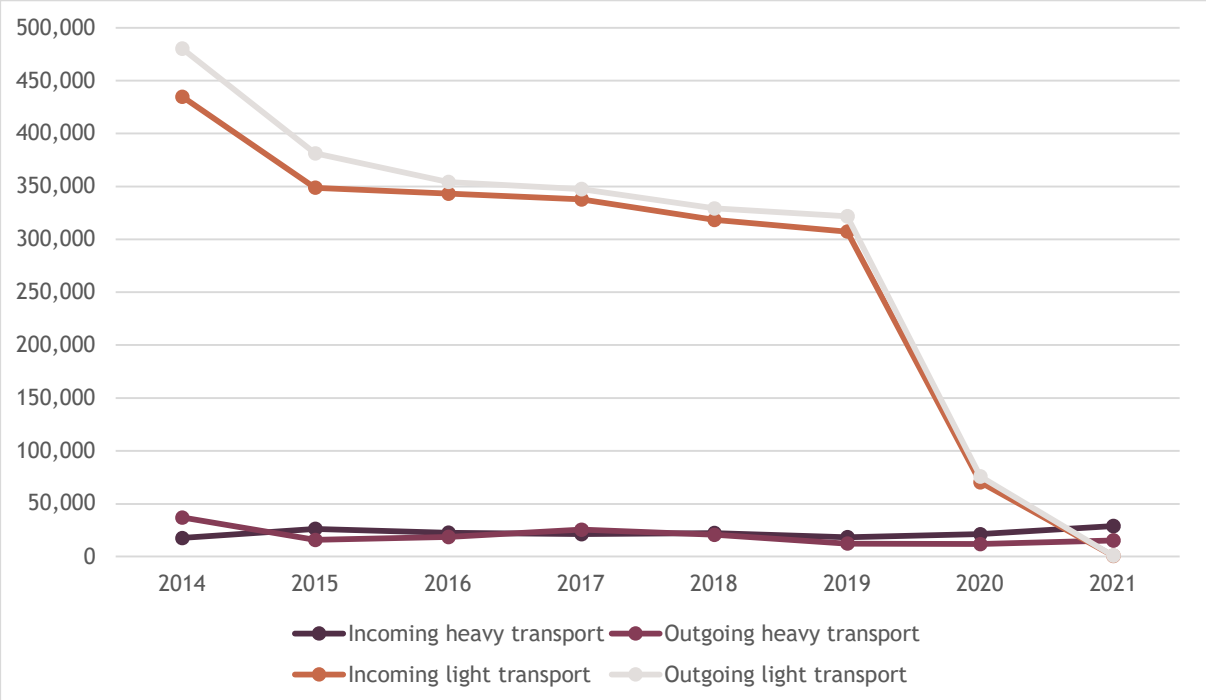


Figure 7. Incoming and outgoing light and heavy transport at the Imatra BCP between 2014 and 2021

[6] Rajaliikenne at https://www.rajaliikenne.fi/info/fi/rajanylityspaikat/imatra/

The Imatra BCP has witnessed a drastic change both in terms of incoming and outgoing light transport traffic volumes in recent years. In 2014, incoming light traffic was approximately 430 000 while outgoing traffic was even higher at 480 000 individual crossings. After the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation, the volume of light transport started to rapidly decline though the numbers began to stabilise between 2016 and 2019. As with the other BCP's, the overall volume of border crossings reduced markedly after the COVID19 outbreak. In 2021, the volume of outgoing light transport crossings amounted to 833 while the volume of incoming light transport was a mere 606.

5.1 Background and description of the project

Basic information

Project name: Imatra road and rail border crossing point
Project ID: KS1402
Program: South-East Finland – Russia CBC Programme (SEFR 2014 – 2020
Priority axis: 4 Well-connected region
Thematic objective: Promotion of border management and border security, mobility and migration management
Total budget: 5 231 000 €
Start date: 1.3.2019
End date: 31.8.2022 (prolonged)
Lead partner: Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency
Other partners: Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency, Finnish Customs, South-East Finland ELY Centre, Finnish Border Guard, Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation (informed during the project.)
Project activities: building of a new 'tax free' refund office, creating of a new layout for the passenger terminal premises, x-ray scanner for rail traffic, supportive structures for train inspections", perimeter fencing of the railroad BCP, installation of security equipment at the BCP

The Imatra BCP improvement project was motivated by the inadequate nature of the BCP's facilities before improvement. Namely, the Imatra BCP serves both road and railroad traffic and when the project was being planned in 2016-2017, it was estimated that the volume of passengers through the BCP would rise significantly in the coming years. The overall functionality of the BCP was fundamentally reconsidered as, for instance, the tax refund point was previously located in an unsuitable place, creating a bottleneck for passengers and raising concerns in respect of passenger safety. Furthermore, in 2016 an additional lane for dangerous goods was constructed on the Russian side but the lane could not be continued on the Finnish side as the tax-free refund point was blocking the way. In addition to the issues related to the tax refund point, there was no x-ray scanner for railway freight traffic at the railway border crossing point. Finally, the passenger terminal was deemed to be out of date and in need of modernisation.

5.2 Implementation

The design phase for improvements in the Imatra BCP started in early 2019 with the process for the relocation of the tax-free refund station also beginning in 2019. By 2020 however no offers had been received from building contractors. This clearly impacted negatively the timetable for the relocation process. A similar problem was faced in relation to the tendering process for the building of a new road

connection to the relocated tax-free refund station. The construction work in this respect has however now been successfully completed.

The Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency, the Finnish Customs Agency and the Border Guard agreed to carry out the construction of the x-ray device, fencing, camera surveillance systems and train inspection structures in Imatra as a shared-cost project. This meant that the CCTV monitoring system at the BCP was shared between the border crossing point authorities. During the project, the Finnish Customs Agency requested that the funding for updating and expanding the CCTV system at the BCP was transferred to the Border Guard. In 2020, a small baggage- and parcel x-ray system, as well as a brake dynamometer were delivered and installed at the Imatra BCP for the use of the Finnish Customs Agency. The delivery, installation and testing phase of the train x-ray control system - used for the inspection of cargo trains - was finalised during 2021 though some final testing operations were still missing. The aim was to carry out all missing testing by the end of April 2022. For the Border Guard, the aforementioned updating and expansion of the CCTV system was finalised during the project. The Border Guard was also responsible for expanding the CCTV system for railroad BCP and for executing perimeter fencing around the railroad BCP as well as for additional supportive structures for train inspection. At the time of writing of the interim 3 report, regarding the CCTV system, some minor electricity work and installation issues remained to be carried out. The work was supposed to be completed by the end of June 2022.

Table 9. Imatra BCP cumulative costs of project (28.11.2022)

Partner	External expertise and services	Investments	Cumulated costs EUR
Finnish Border Guard	1 672	249 609	251 281,34
Finnish Customs	2 635	1 394 069	1 396 704
Lead Partner (Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency)	7 745	2 144 600	2 152 345
TOTAL	**12 052**	**3 788 278**	**3 800 330**

The total budget for the Imatra BCP investment project was 5 231 000 euros. The cumulative costs, as of 28.11.2022, were 3 800 330 euros. Most of the total eligible costs were allocated to investments (3 788 278 euros) which were implemented by the Finnish Transport Infrastructure, Finnish customs and the Finnish Border Guard. The rest of the costs were made up of external expertise and services.

Table 10. Imatra BCP target indicators and realised values (31.05.2022)

Indicator	Target value	Realised value
Thematic indicators		
Number of improved border crossing points	2	0
Total length of reconstructed or updated roads in the vicinity of the border crossing points	1	0
Project-specific indicators		
ENI/CBC 35. Number of border crossing points with increased throughput capacity. Unit: Border crossing points. Baseline value; 1	1	0
ENI/CBC 36 Increased throughput capacity of private cars on land border crossing points. (Measurement unit: Private cars/24 hours. Baseline value; 2060)	2 200	0

ENI/CBC 37 Increased throughput capacity of trucks on land border crossing points (Measurement unit: trucks/24 hours. Baseline value year 2017: 190)	220	0
ENI/CBC 38 Increased throughput capacity of persons on land border crossing points. (Measurement unit: persons/24 hours. Baseline value year 2017: 4205)	4 600	0
Reduced waiting time at border crossing points. Baseline value; 6.4 min (2016 average). Target value: max	10	0
Number of accidents at the border crossing point. Baseline value:1. Target value: 0	0	0
The specific cross border value-added character of these investments is significant because activities are related to exciting developments (new lane) or it (the x-ray scanner) creates possibilities for future intensive growth of international rail freight traffic.	0	0

At the time of the evaluation, none of the target indicators have realised values. However, the expected results of the project comprise reconstructed and improved roads, increased throughput capacity for private cars, trucks and people, as well as reduced waiting times at the border crossing point. The project specific indicators also measure increased security by counting the number of accidents.

5.3 Assessment and answers to the evaluation questions

Overall, the Imatra BCP improvement project has been successfully implemented to a large extent though delays were experienced in terms of the building works due to some tenders not receiving any offers. The project has not yet fulfilled any of its target indicator values, however some of the indicators are such that they will show positive values only after all the implementation work has been completed.

The interviewees considered the Imatra border-crossing point as essential, especially for the region of South Karelia and its tourism and retail businesses. The interviewees were of the opinion that the investment project in the Imatra BCP improved significantly the working conditions of the officials stationed there. Additionally, the investments increased the capacity of the BCP and made the border-crossing point safer and the traffic flow much smoother than before. The interviewees also highlighted the importance of Imatra BCP's railroad connection.

The results of the survey give a similarly positive picture of the benefits of the project. The respondents who had used the Imatra BCP (N=57) noted that clearer signs at the BCP, improved security at the BCP, smoother control operations and improved surveillance systems were the most significant benefits.

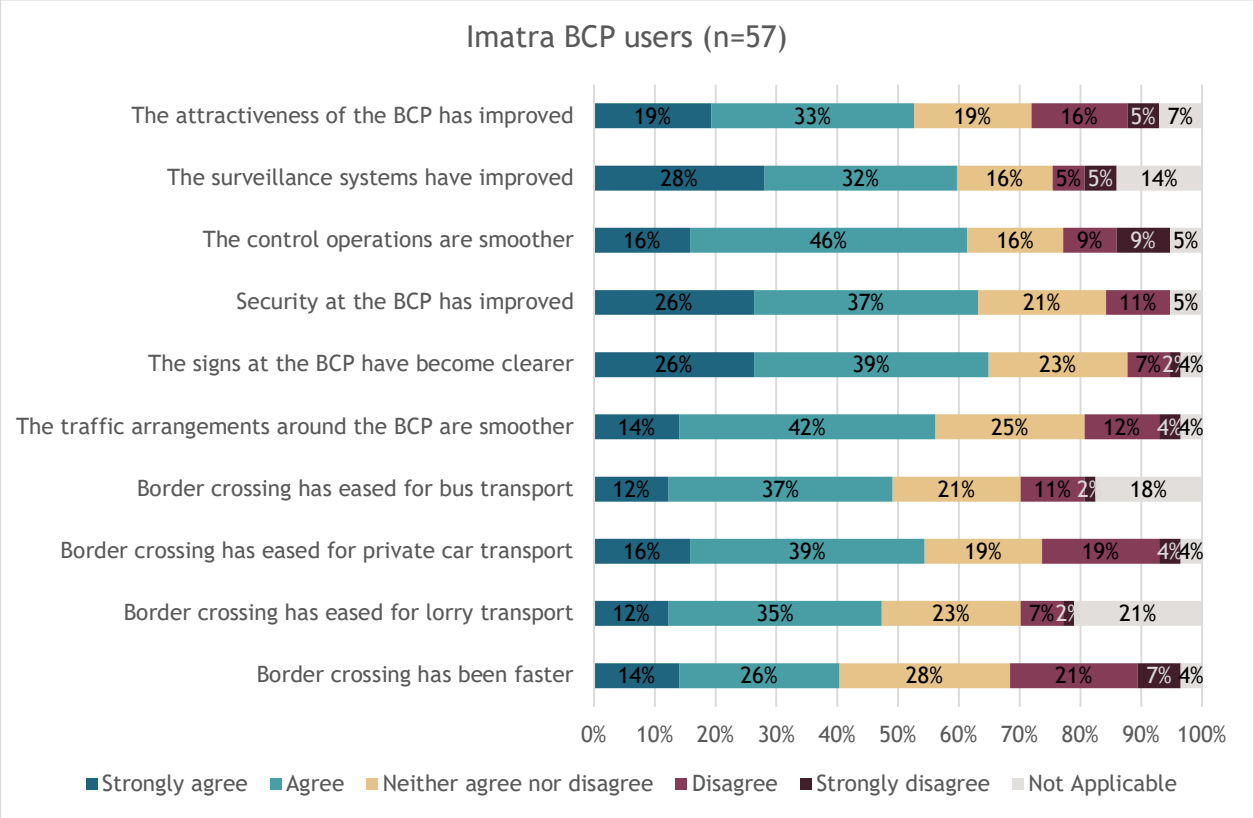


Figure 8. Survey responses from Imatra BCP users

Those respondents who have used the Imatra BCP viewed the improvements made in a rather positive light. They were particularly of the opinion that the signs at the BCP have become clearer (65% strongly agree or agree) and security has improved (63% strongly agree or agree). Respondents also stated that the control operations are smoother (62% strongly agree or agree), and that the surveillance systems have improved (60% strongly agree or agree). They were however rather more critical towards statements such as the border crossing being faster (40% strongly agree or agree but 28% disagree or strongly disagree), border crossing has eased for lorry transport (47% strongly agree or agree), and that border crossing has eased for bus transport (49% strongly agree or agree). However, even for these statements, the number of positive responses is high. The statement on the improvement of the attractiveness of the BCP divided opinions (52% strongly agree or agree and 21% disagree or strongly disagree).

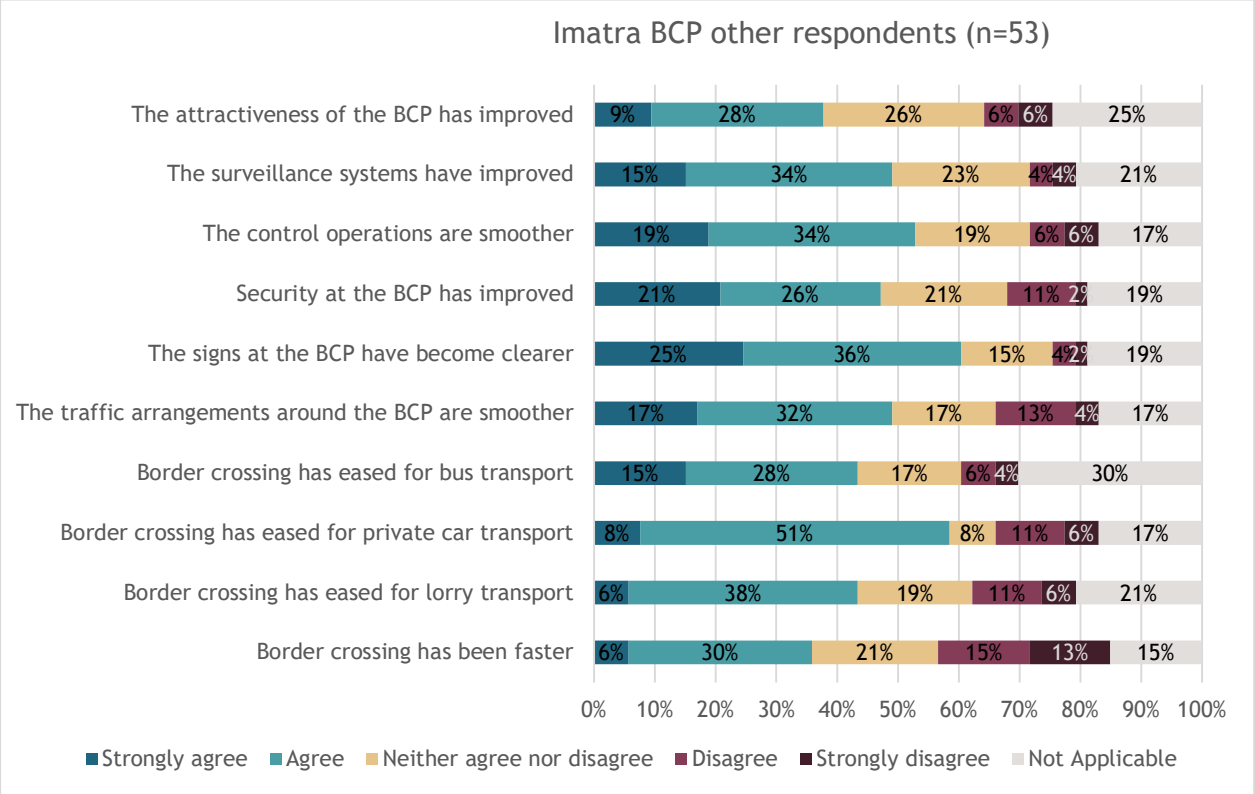


Figure 9. Survey responses from those who had heard about the improvements at the Imatra BCP

The respondents who had heard about the improvements at the Imatra BCP had typically heard only about some of them. This was visible in the amount of "Not Applicable" answers which was 15-30%. Respondents had, in particular, heard that the signs at the BCP have become clearer (61% strongly agree or agree), border crossing has eased for private car transport (59% strongly agree or agree), the control operations are smoother (53% strongly agree or agree) and the traffic arrangements around the BCP are smoother (49% strongly agree or agree). Respondents had not however heard to any great extent that the border crossing has been faster or that border crossing has eased for bus transport.

The re-development of the Imatra BCP was clearly necessary. The improvements were directed to specifically address the identified problems. For example, the placement of the former tax-free refund point caused significant issues for traffic control and general customer safety. In addition, the improper placement of the tax-free refund point caused a bottleneck at the BCP. With the improved traffic lanes and the railway yard, the operation of the BCP is now much smoother. Furthermore, the installation of the new x-ray system raised the overall level of security at the BCP and increased border security more generally. With the improvements made at the Imatra BCP, the throughput capacity has increased while, on the other hand, queue times have reduced. Given, however, the current situation in respect of COVID19, sanctions and the new stricter visa regulation regime, the number of border crossings are very low. As such, estimates in respect of increased capacity and reduced queue times should be viewed theoretically. The target indicators for the project have, as such, not yet been fulfilled.

The interviewees and the survey respondents were, overall, however satisfied with the results of the development project at the Imatra BCP. The interview and survey responses pointed out that the surveillance systems at the BCP have improved, the signs used at the BCP are clearer and that the traffic arrangements are much smoother than was previously the case.

6. Vainikkala

The Vainikkala border crossing point is also located in South Karelia, in the city of Lappeenranta. The Vainikkala BCP is the only border crossing point in this evaluation which serves only railway traffic between Finland and the Russian federation. It is also the busiest railway crossing point between the two countries. The only passenger train connection between Helsinki and St. Petersburg passes through Vainikkala. The border crossing point is also one of the oldest crossing points as it was established in 1898.

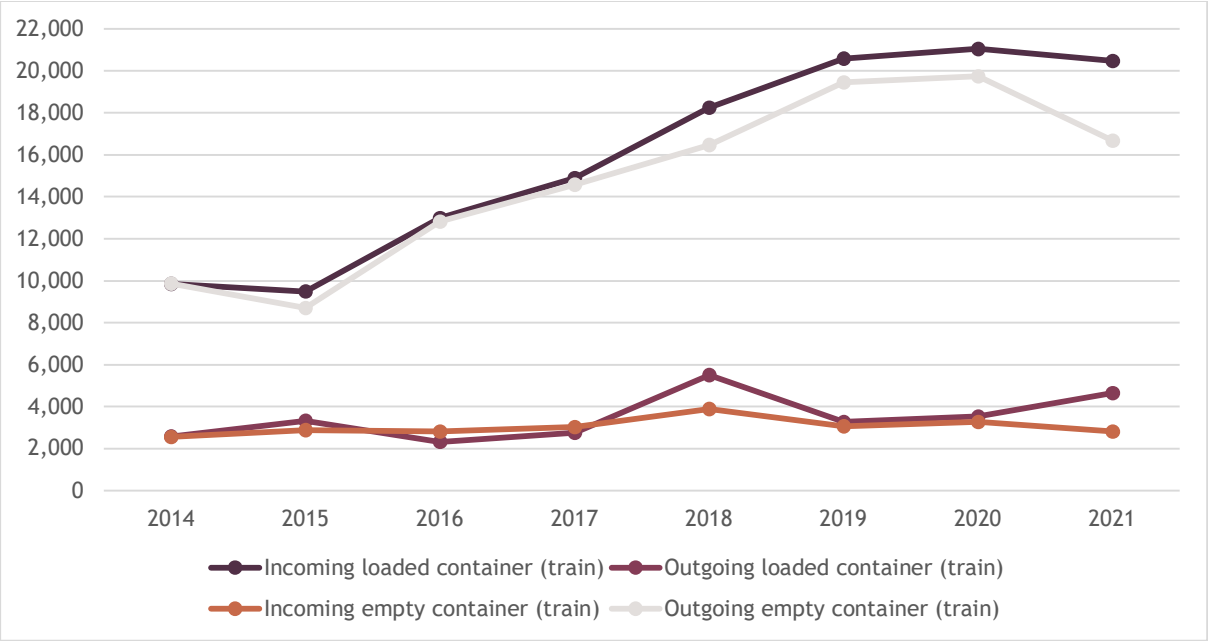


Figure 10. Outgoing and incoming loaded and empty containers (train) across the Vainikkala BCP between 2014 and 2021.

In Vainikkala, the measuring system in respect of traffic flows differs from the other BCP's surveyed in this evaluation. Whereas in the other BCP's the measurement unit has been light- and heavy transport. In Vainikkala the measurement unit is empty and loaded containers. This is due to the fact that Vainikkala BCP serves only railroad traffic. Contrary to that of the other BCP's, the overall volume of incoming and especially outgoing container traffic has increased during the observation period. As the figure above illustrates, only a slight dip occurred in terms of incoming loaded containers and outgoing empty container volumes after 2014. Indeed, after 2014 volumes increased significantly up to 2020. The volume of incoming empty containers and outgoing loaded containers moreover remained quite steady during the observation period.

6.1 Background and description of the project

Basic information

Project name: Vainikkala railway station (border crossing point)
Project ID: KS1405
Program: South-East Finland – Russia CBC Programme (SEFR) 2014 – 2020
Priority axis: 4 Well-connected region
Thematic objective: Promotion of border management and border security, mobility and migration management
Total budget: 6 392 000 €
Start date: 1.3.2019
End date: 31.8.2022 (prolonged)
Lead partner: Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency
Other partners: Finnish Customs, Senate Properties, Finnish Border Guard, Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation (informed during the project)
Project activities: new border check station, CCTV system, train x-ray scanner, border checks devices

The Vainikkala border crossing point is the busiest railway border crossing point between Finland and Russia. In the 2000s, the volume of people and goods through the BCP increased annually. The main concern, in respect of the Vainikkala BCP, was that the border crossing point in general and its equipment in particular were out of date. The previous x-ray machine at the border crossing point was installed in 2009. As the life cycle of an x-ray scanner is around 10 years, it was clear that the old one was at the end of its life cycle.

Another question concerned the safety of the BCP, specifically, the overall surveillance system at the border crossing point. The surveillance system was old, dysfunctional and analogue-based. Moreover, the surveillance system was not shared by the authorities working at the BCP while the system itself only covered a small portion of the entire border crossing point area. Thus, in order to improve the flow of people and goods, the whole border crossing check point was moved and re-constructed closer to the already existing railway station.

6.2 Implementation

The project to improve the Vainikkala border crossing point began in March 2019. Senate Properties was the authority responsible for the properties at the border. This meant, that they implemented the detailed design and construction of the new border check station, which is now located in close proximity to the existing Vainikkala railway station. The construction work for the new border check station was completed in March 2022.

The Finnish Customs Agency worked with the Border Guard to design the CCTV camera surveillance system at the Vainikkala border crossing point. Additional funds were transferred to the Border Guard, since they were the authority responsible for the acquisition and implementation of the surveillance system.

The Finnish Customs Agency were responsible for updating the train x-ray scanner at the BCP. The installation of the new x-ray system began in June 2021. The COVID19 pandemic caused severe labour shortages, so implementation of the new x-ray system lagged behind the original schedule by a couple of months. With the completion of the new border check station, the Finnish Border Guard was responsible for

installing the new CCTV surveillance system and furniture. Furthermore, the Border Guard also implemented a new lighting system.

Table 11. Vainikkala BCP cumulative costs of the project (28.11.2022 situation)

Partner	External expertise and services	Investments	Cumulated costs EUR
Finnish Border Guard	2 641	394 854	397 495
Finnish Customs	1 550	567 718	569 268
Senate Properties	4 500	3 00 005	3 004 50
TOTAL	**8 691**	**3 962 578**	**3 971 269**

The total budget of the Vainikkala BCP investment project was 6 392 000 euros. The cumulative costs as of 28.11.2022 were 3 971 269 euros. Most of the total eligible costs were allocated to investments (3 962 578 euros) which were implemented by Senate Properties, the Finnish customs Agency and the Finnish Border Guard. The rest of the costs are made up of external expertise and services.

Table 12. Vainikkala BCP target indicators and realised values (31.05.2022)

Indicator	Target value	Realised value
Thematic indicator		
Total length of reconstructed or updated roads in the vicinity of border crossing points	0	0
Number of improved border-crossing points	1	0
Project specific indicators		
Increased throughput capacity of persons on land border crossing points. Baseline value 2017:1507	1800	0
Reduced waiting time on border crossing points. Baseline value; 6.4 min (2016). Target value: max.	10	0
Number of accidents at the BCP	0	0
Cross border value. The new location of the border guard facilities optimally side by side with the railway station and border control point.	1	0

The target indicators had however not been realised at the time of the evaluation. With the exception of the concern for reconstructed and updated roads, increased throughput capacity for private cars, trucks and people, reduced waiting time on BCP, increased security and cross border value had all been realised. Yet, due to the restrictions on the cross-border movement of people and goods, the throughput capacity and reduced waiting time indicators are not really relevant here in terms of judging the success of the project.

6.3 Assessment and answers to the evaluation questions

Vainikkala BCP is regarded as the most important railroad crossing point between Finland and the Russian federation. The interviewees emphasised that Vainikkala BCP has been crucial for tourism and cultural exchange, as well as for families and the dual citizens of Finland and the Russian federation. Vainikkala is important as all Allegro- and Tolstoi trains which travel between Helsinki and St. Petersburg and between Helsinki and Moscow, pass through the BCP.

The interviewees highlighted that the Vainikkala BCP had urgent improvement needs and thus the improvement project was necessary. The improvement of the railway crossing point and railyard, as well as the relocation and refurbishment of the border crossing facilities have made the Vainikkala BCP significantly safer and much more customer-friendly. With the implementation the new x-ray- and surveillance systems, the overall security of the BCP and thus, the security of the border, has increased.

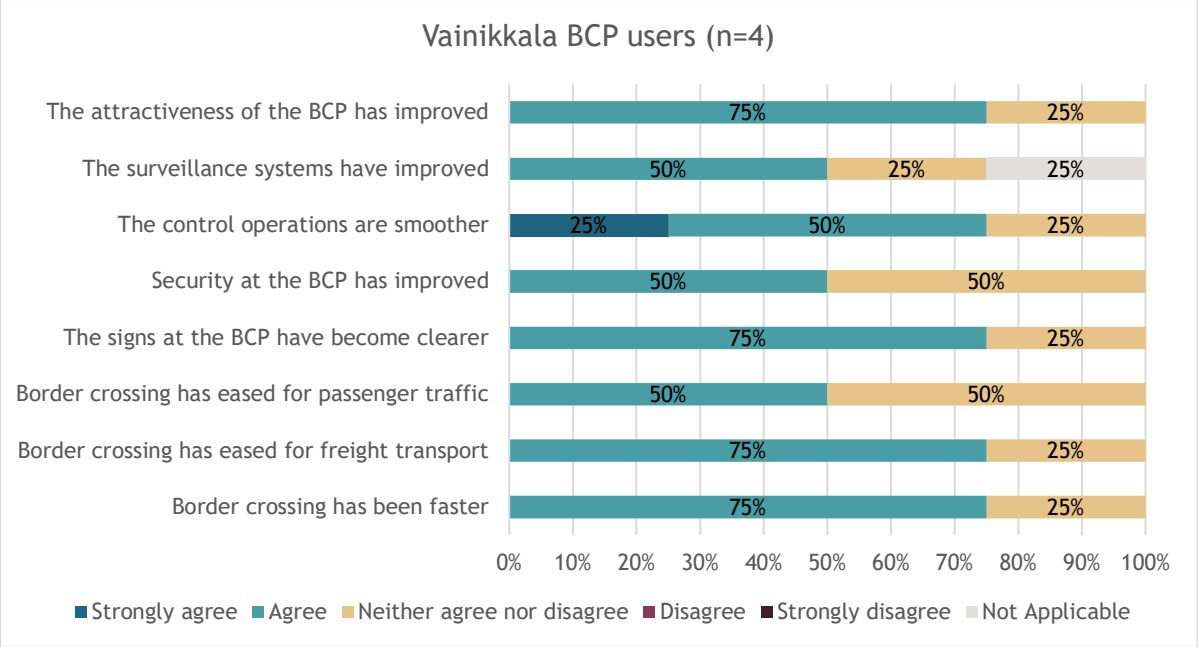


Figure 11. Survey responses from Vainikkala BCP users

The results of the survey provide a similarly positive picture of the benefits of the project.
There were only four respondents who had used Vainikkala BCP. The respondents saw in particular that the control operations were smoother. At least 2 of the 4 respondents agreed with all propositions.

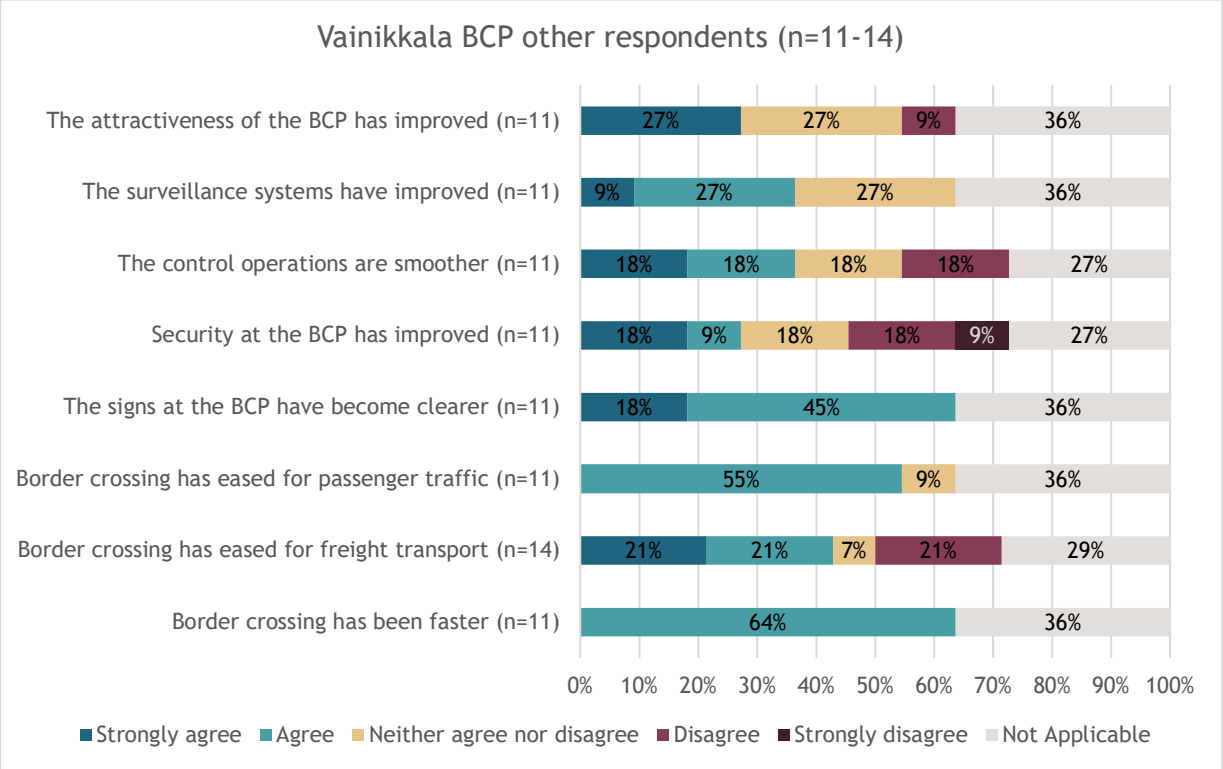


Figure 12. Survey responses from people who had heard about the improvements at the Vainikkala BCP

Those respondents who had heard about the improvements at the Vainikkala BCP had typically only heard about some of the improvements. This could be seen in terms of the number of "Not Applicable" answers which was 27-36%. The respondents had, in particular, heard that the signs at the BCP have become clearer (63% strongly agree or agree) and border crossing has been faster (64% agree). Many respondents had also heard that border crossing has eased for freight transport (42% strongly agree or agree) and that the border crossing has also eased for passenger traffic (55% agree). A smaller number of respondents had learned that the surveillance system has improved (36% strongly agree or agree), security at the BCP has improved (27% strongly agree or agree), control operations are smoother (36% strongly agree or agree) and that the attractiveness of the BCP has improved (27% strongly agree).

In terms of relevance, the developments undertaken at the Vainikkala BCP were aimed at the identified challenges which emerged at the border crossing point. The old, analogue-based equipment was modernised to meet current standards while improvements in the surveillance system increased safety at the border crossing point. Furthermore, modernisation of the x-ray system increased safety and made the day-to-day work of officials much more manageable, as previously, some inspections of heavy cargo were done manually. With the modernisation of the x-ray- and surveillance systems then the overall level of safety of the BCP and of Finland itself has improved. In addition, the railway and rail yard were in need of renovation and with the development project were improved. With the new location of the border check station, the Vainikkala BCP is generally safer for customers and officials to use. Furthermore, the new location of the border check station is more convenient in the sense that it is now much closer to Vainikkala railway station. In conclusion though, while the project has not fulfilled any of its target indicator values, some of the indicators are such that they will show positive values only after all of the renovation work has been completed.

The interviewees and the survey respondents judged the results of the Vainikkala BCP improvement work as satisfactory. The survey respondents agree with most of the statements regarding the Vainikkala BCP. For example, the respondents agreed that the border crossings are much faster and the improvements have eased delays in passenger traffic. It should however be noted that the overall number of respondents here was quite small, so the margin for error is substantial.

7. Vaalimaa

The Vaalimaa border crossing point is located in the municipality of Vironlahti which is situated in the Kymenlaakso region in the South-Eastern corner of Finland. The Vaalimaa BCP was opened to traffic in 1958. At the time, it was the first road traffic border crossing point between Finland and the Soviet Union. Throughout the 2000s, Vaalimaa was the busiest passenger traffic border crossing point between Finland and the Russian federation. One of the reasons for this is that the E18 road that runs through Vaalimaa is in better condition than those at the other border crossing points. Furthermore, the BCP is used a lot for freight traffic originating from Finland's ports[7].

Figure 13. Incoming and outgoing light and heavy transport through the Vaalimaa BCP between 2014 and 2021

In 2014, the overall number of incoming light transport vehicles at Vaalimaa was around 588 000 while outgoing light transport numbered approximately 535 000. After 2014, the overall volume of transport has seen a steady decline, although the numbers for heavy transportation saw a slight increase during the

[7] Vadim Kononenko and Jussi Laine (2008), Assessment of the Finnish-Russian border: the case of Vaalimaa border crossing point. FIIA working papers 57 https://www.fiia.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/upi_working_papers_57_2008.pdf.pdf

observation period. As with every other BCP, at Vaalimaa the volume of light transport plummeted as a consequence of the COVID19 pandemic. In 2021 the overall numbers were 49 000 and 56 000 respectively.

7.1 Background and description of the project

Basic information

Project name: Vaalimaa border crossing point
Project ID: KS1405
Program: South-East Finland – Russia CBC Programme (SEFR)
Priority axis: 4 Well-connected region
Thematic objective: Promotion of border management and border security, mobility and migration management
Total budget: 5 680 000 €
Start date: 1.5.2019
End date: 30.10.2022 (prolonged)
Lead partner: Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency
Other partners: Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency, Finnish Customs Agency, Senate Properties, South-East Finland ELY Centre, Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation (informed during the project)
Project activities: passenger terminal reconstruction, x-ray scanner facility, CCTV surveillance, new road connections to the BCP, improvement of the traffic control and information systems, improvement of the street lighting.

The Vaalimaa development project was funded from South-East Finland – Russia CBC Programme (SEFR). The lead partner for Vaalimaa border crossing point development project was the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency. Other project partners were Finnish Customs, Senate Properties, South-East Finland ELY Centre and the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation. The Russian ministry was only informed of the progress of the project.

The Vaalimaa border crossing point is, by passenger volume, among the busiest BCP's between Finland and the Russian federation with the passenger capacity for road traffic more than 6 million per year. Yet, the border crossing point and its customer service facilities were considered to be out of date and in need of modernisation. The objective of the BCP improvement project was to improve the traffic flow, make clearer traffic arrangements and to improve the overall safety of the BCP.

Furthermore, the technology (surveillance system and x-ray scanner) used at the BCP was coming to the end of its life cycle. The previous lighting system was also deemed to be insufficient for the current volume of passengers and cargo traffic.

7.2 Implementation

The project for the overall improvement of the Vaalimaa border crossing point commenced in 2019. In the first phase the aim was to design new road connections to the BCP. The next step was the construction of the new road connection which was completed during 2021. Subsequent to that the installation of the traffic control and information systems, as well as the new street lights, were completed in 2021.

Senate Properties were the responsible authority tasked with reconstructing and refurbishing the passenger terminal and the customer service facilities. The reconstruction of the passenger terminal was completed in autumn 2021. Part of the reconstruction of the x-ray building and x-ray equipment was also to modernise the CCTV surveillance system at the BCP. The installation of the new CCTV surveillance system was scheduled for the spring of 2022. The process for updating the x-ray scanner facility started in 2021 with the dismantling of the old equipment. The installation of the new x-ray equipment started after that. The updating process also consisted of the reconstruction of the control building. The construction work was completed in 2021. Delays occurred here because of the late delivery of components related to the x-ray scanner facility, while problems were also encountered in terms of sourcing sufficient skilled labour.

Table 13. Vaalimaa BCP cumulative costs of the project (28.11.2022 situation)

Partner	External expertise and services	Investments	Cumulated costs EUR
Finnish Customs	2 914	2 263 602	2 266 515
Intelligent traffic Management Finland Ltd.		82 000	82 000
Lead Partner (Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency)	8 807	1 141 925	1 150 733
Senate Properties	2 000	273 716	275 716
TOTAL	**13 721**	**3 761 243**	**3 774 964**

The total budget for the Vaalimaa BCP investment project was 5 680 000 euros. The cumulative costs as of 28.11.2022 were 3 774 964 euros. Most of the total eligible costs were allocated to investments (3 761 243 euros) which were implemented by the Finnish customs Agency, the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency and Intelligent traffic Management Finland Ltd. The rest of the costs are made up of external expertise and services.

Table 14. Vaalimaa BCP target indicators and realised values (29.07.2022)

Indicator	Target value	Realised value
Thematic indicator		
Total length of reconstructed and updated roads in the vicinity of border crossing points)	1	1
Number of improved border crossing points	1	1
Project specific indicators		
A new road connection to BCP and improvement of street lighting and traffic control. Number of units.	1	1
X-ray scanner's installation, testing, and deployment. Number of units	1	0
Customer service terminal. Alteration works. Number of units	1	1
Update of the CCTV system. Number of units	1	0

The target indicators have thus far only been partly realised. The total length of the reconstructed and updated roads has been completed as planned. In addition, the new road connection to the BCP and improvements in terms of street lighting, traffic control and the customer service terminal have been realised as planned. The X-ray scanner's installation and the updating of the CCTV system have not however been completely finished and reported at the current time of writing.

7.3 Assessment and answers to the evaluation questions

The Vaalimaa border-crossing point is the busiest BCP between Finland and Russia. The interviewees pointed out that Vaalimaa has not only regional but also national significance. Given the outdated facilities at the BCP, the investment project was necessary. Overall, the interviewees had a positive view of the Vaalimaa BCP improvement project. The increased capacity of the BCP with its benefits for tourism and cargo transport were also mentioned as positive aspects of the project.

The results of the survey give a similarly positive picture of the project's benefits. The respondents who had used the Vaalimaa BCP (N=44-45) noted that clearer signs at the BCP, improved surveillance systems and easier border crossing for private car transport were the most significant benefits.

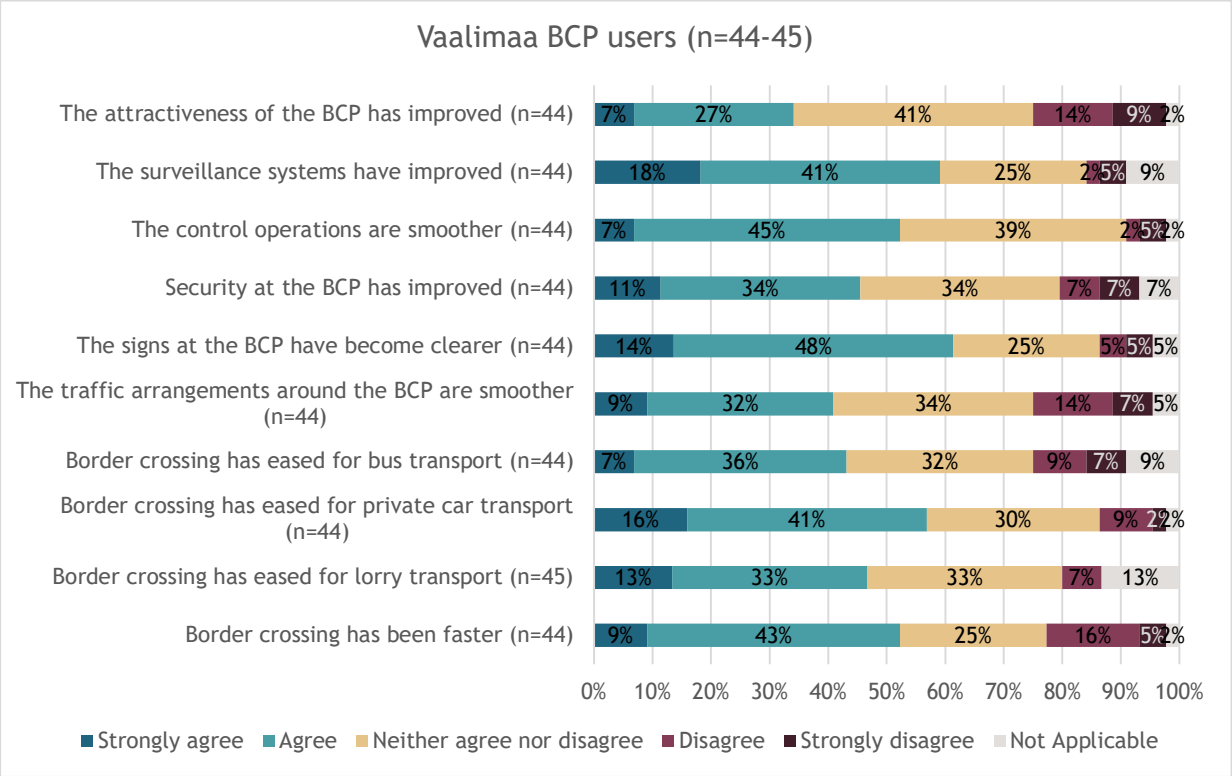


Figure 14. Survey responses from Vaalimaa BCP users

Those respondents who have used the Vaalimaa BCP saw in particularly that the signs at the BCP have become clearer (62% strongly agree or agree), the surveillance system has improved (59% strongly agree or agree) and that border crossing has been made easier for private car transport (57% strongly agree or agree). In addition, many respondents considered that the control operations are smoother (52% strongly agree or agree) and that border crossing has been faster (52% strongly agree or agree). On the other hand, the statement "The attractiveness of the BCP has improved" divided opinions. Only about one third of respondents strongly agreed or agreed, 41% neither agreed nor disagreed while 23% strongly disagreed or disagreed. Similarly, the statement "The traffic arrangements around the BCP are smoother" also divided opinions.

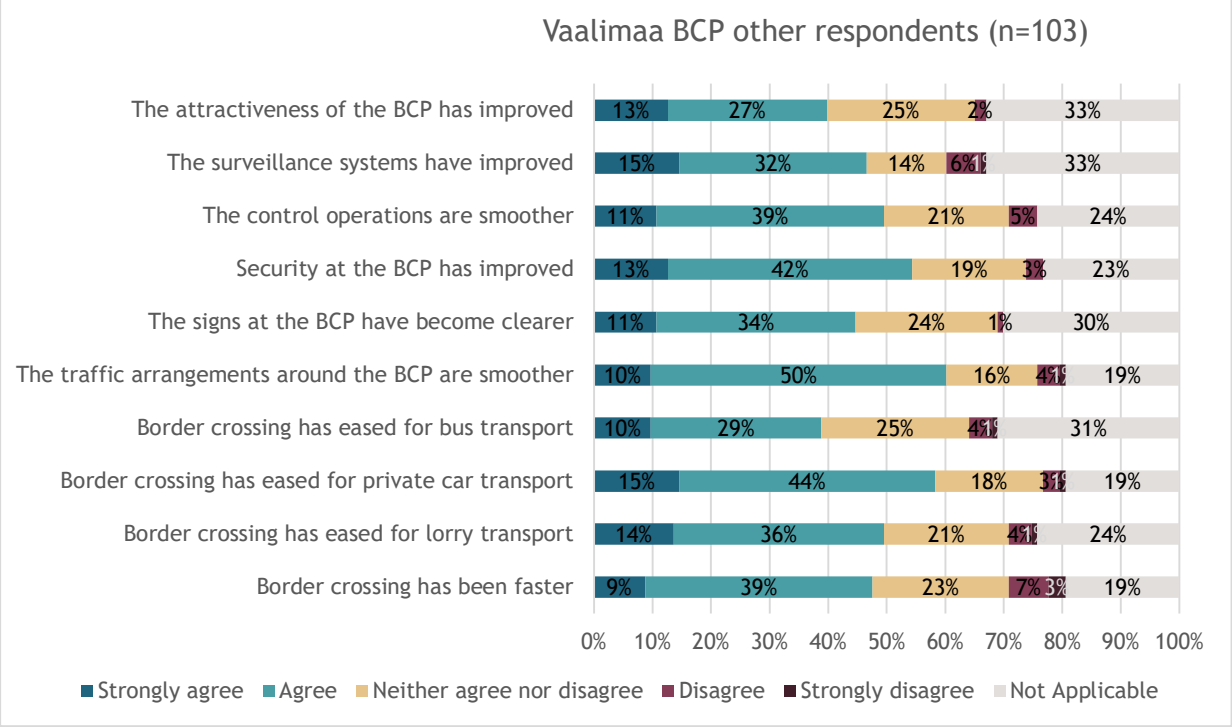


Figure 15. Survey responses by people who had heard about the improvements at the Vaalimaa BCP

The respondents who have heard about the improvement of the Vaalimaa BCP had typically heard only about some parts of the improvements. This could be seen in the share of the "Not Applicable" answers which was 19-33%. The respondents had mainly heard that the traffic arrangements are smoother (60-% strongly agree or agree), the border crossing has eased for private car transport (59-% strongly agree or agree) and that security at the BCP has improved (55% strongly agree or agree). The respondents had not however heard so much about the fact that the border crossing had eased for bus transport or that the attractiveness of the BCP had improved.

The improvements at the Vaalimaa BCP aimed to directly address previously recognised problems. For example, the surveillance measures provided by the x-ray systems were considered to be out of date. The improved surveillance system and x-ray facilities not only raised the overall security of the BCP and the border itself, but also made the everyday work of the officials much easier. With the improved street lighting and information systems, the Vaalimaa BCP has become safer and easier to use. In addition, the customer experience has improved during the development project, since the reconstruction of the passenger terminal has increased the customer service capacity. However, at the current time of writing only part of the target indicators had been fulfilled.

On the basis of the interviews and the survey, the results of the development project have been satisfactory. The surveillance systems have improved, the signs are much clearer and the crossing has eased, especially for private car transport. However, as stated previously, given the current situation at the border, the full potential of the investment has not been realised in terms of traffic volumes. That said, should the border traffic return to pre-2014 levels, the Vaalimaa BCP is now much better prepared to serve even higher volume of passengers and cargo than previously.

8. Overall assessment and answers to the general evaluation questions

Are the quality of the results satisfactory?
The evaluation aimed at assessing the projects using the five standard evaluation criteria, namely: ***relevance***, ***effectiveness***, ***efficiency***, ***sustainability*** *and* ***impact***.

The overall impression regarding the BCP development projects is positive. The redevelopment projects have clearly been needed with the improvements focusing on the identified needs at each BCP. In addition, the interviewees underlined the importance of the projects as the border crossing points were in need of drastic modernisation as regards facilities and equipment. In terms of outcomes, the development projects, the partners, stakeholders and final beneficiaries all noted that the theoretical capacities of the BCP's have increased in terms of throughput time and capacity. Furthermore, with the investments into the new border crossing infrastructure (buildings) in some of the projects and the working conditions of the officials working at the border stations have been improved significantly. In addition, the customer experience is more positive than previously.

There was a general consensus among the interviewees that the improvements at the border crossing points have also raised the general level of national security. In addition, the border crossing points are now much safer for officials and customers alike. The improved traffic arrangements and infrastructure improvements have made the BCP's much safer for the officials to operate and for customers to use. In addition, the installation of new security equipment (e.g., x-ray machines and surveillance systems) has raised the general level of safety at the border crossing point itself, as well as the security of the EU's external border.

An unintended consequence of the large infrastructure projects was that the cooperation between the lead partner and the project partners intensified and improved. Many interviewees noted that this improved cooperation was both the catalyst for success as well as the best outcome of the project.

The survey responses confirm the positive picture of the BCP investment projects process already visible in the interviews. Based on the surveys, the investments are considered to be successful. The respondents were of the opinion that the investments have both improved the general appearance and security of BCPs while also improving the customer experience. The ease of border crossing has also improved with the improvements in traffic arrangements, the improvement of signs and smoother control operations. In addition, the respondents stated that safety was also improved, for instance, in the form of surveillance systems and new security equipment.

Each border crossing point development project was highly relevant in terms of the activities focusing on the identified needs. The border crossing points needed modernisation in terms of infrastructure and equipment. Each border crossing point project application contained a clear identification of project needs, and the activities were directly related to fulfilling those needs. Also, during the project planning period, a well-functioning border traffic regime was considered vital for the functioning of international traffic to and from Finland.[8] The development of the border crossing points was considered important in terms of removing bottlenecks and improving the traffic nodes that were viewed as important for cargo transport chains and passenger traffic.

[8] The National Transport System Plan for 2021–2032, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/163389/VN_2021_75.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Each of the BCP improvement projects is, at the current time of writing, in the final stages of implementation. Even though the projects have largely been implemented as planned, there were, nevertheless, some delays which caused their prolongation in some cases. The main reasons for the delays include labour shortages caused by the COVID19 pandemic, as well as the scarcity of components. In terms of effectiveness, some of the projects (Raja-Jooseppi and Vartius) had already attained their targets, whereas the others (Imatra, Vainikkala, and Vaalimaa) have not yet attained their target indicators. Given the fact that some of the target indicators (e.g., throughput time) are based on the assumption that border traffic flows will be maintained at least at the levels of 2014, it is clear that these indicators are no longer really suitable for assessing the success of the border crossing point development projects.

The infrastructure and security equipment works were tendered out in different lots. The evaluators did not receive detailed data by cost type on the projects. As such, it was not possible to assess the cost efficiency of the projects. Most of the projects had remained within their budgets, except for one in which the railway development was more costly than initially anticipated. However, the difference was paid by the Lead Partner from a different funding source.

The border crossing point development projects are sustainable in the sense that they will remain in use for a significant length of time. In addition, the projects have helped to improve sustainability in terms of improved border management and working conditions for the authorities working at the border station.

It is not currently possible to assess the impact of the projects. Firstly, impacts, referring to a change in the programme area, typically arise only in the medium to long term. Secondly, as the border is not currently operating normally, it is not possible to assess the improvement in real terms. The BCP development projects have improved the theoretical capacity of the border crossing points, but at present there is simply not a large enough volume of traffic to discern reliable information on their real capacity.

How have the projects succeeded in developing new or improved elements of cross-border cooperation and capacity building?
What is the impact of the project to the CBC programme and to the respective programme area?
What is the added value of implementing an investment project of this size within CBC programmes?

In terms of size, the LIPs related to the border crossing point improvements have been significant for each of the programmes (Karelia, Kolarctic, and SEFR). The Vartius BCP development project was the only project implemented under priority 4 of the Karelia ENI CBC programme. Similarly, the Raja-Jooseppi BCP development was the only one to further TO10 under priority axis 2 in the Kolarctic ENI CBC programme. The Imatra, Vainikkala and Vaalimaa BCP improvements were the largest three to support priority 4, but there was also the Parikkala BCP improvement project, as well as a project related to preventing accidents and managing risks at border crossings funded by the SEFR ENI CBC programme.

Table 15: BCP projects in the Karelia, Kolarctic and South-Eastern Finland -Russia (SEFR) ENI CBC programmes

ENI CBC	Karelia	Kolarctic	South-Eastern Finland - Russia
TO10 inclusion	Priority 4: Well-functioning border crossing	Priority axis 2: Fluent mobility of people, goods and services	Priority 4: Well-connected region
BCP projects furthering TO10	1 project - Vartius border crossing point development -	1 project - Raja-Jooseppi BCP development and reconstruction	5 projects - Imatra road and rail border crossing point (Imatra) - Vainikkala railway station border crossing point (Vainikkala) - Vaalimaa border crossing point (Vaalimaa) - Parikkala border crossing point (Parikkala) - Cross-Border Safety; accident prevention and risk management

Thematic objective 10 (Promotion of border management and border security, mobility and migration management) focuses on supporting border efficiency and security, improving the border crossing infrastructure and equipment and the border crossing points and improving the border management operations, customs and visa procedures. The five BCP improvement projects assessed in this evaluation (Raja-Jooseppi, Vartius, Imatra, Vainikkala, and Vaalimaa) have all contributed significantly to thematic objective 10.

Even though the BCP improvement projects have been financed from the Karelia, Kolarctic and SEFR ENI CBC programmes, all of the improvements and investments have been undertaken on the Finnish side of the border. As such, there was not much in the way of new or improved elements of cross-border cooperation to report on although the Lead partner has cooperated with the Russian authorities and kept the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation informed during the projects. In practice, cooperation was in any case minimal before February 2022, after which all cooperation was terminated. Thus, when considering the levels of cross-border added value typically found in transnational projects (solutions to common problems, learning opportunities, generating critical mass and building structures for further cooperation and territorial cohesion[9]), these projects focused on building structures for further cooperation and territorial cohesion within Finland only.

[9] Lisa Hörnström, Lise Smed Olsen and Lisa Van Well, Added Value of Cross-Border and Transnational Cooperation in Nordic Regions. Nordregio working Paper 2012:14, http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:700328/FULLTEXT01.pdf

9. Evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations

The projects were developed to respond to various identified needs which included establishing or updating the infrastructure (roads, traffic arrangements, buildings and security equipment). The projects had clear links to Finland's transport strategy and at the time that the project plans were drawn up, their impact on easing the border traffic for cargo and passengers was expected to be significant.

The overall results in respect of the BCP development projects were clearly positive. The BCP development projects were significant for each of the programmes and have furthered TO10 - Promotion of border management and border security, mobility and migration management.

The outcomes of the various projects included improved working conditions for the officials working at the border station and a more positive customer experience in terms of safety and the ease of crossing the border. In addition, the installation of new security equipment (e.g., x-ray machines and surveillance systems) at the border crossing point has raised the general level of safety at the border crossing point itself, we well as the security of the EU's external border.

An unintended positive result of the projects was that cooperation between the lead partner and the project partners intensified and improved. Many interviewees noted that this improved cooperation was both the catalyst for success as well as the best outcome of the project.

Even though the development projects as such were implemented successfully, albeit with some delays, the target indicators focusing on throughput times and border crossing point capacity are currently not suitable for measuring the success of the development projects as the border traffic is not currently operating normally given the current geopolitical situation in Europe. The COVID19 pandemic, as well as the repercussions of the Russian invasion of Ukraine have caused significant reductions in the volume of border crossings, making it impossible to estimate the results of the BCP improvement projects in terms of the indicators initially set.

Recommendation: There should be more focus on assessing the other aspects of the success that the projects have had, such as increased cooperation, improved working conditions and improved border management.

The assessment contained five BCP projects from three different ENI CBC programmes. It was not always possible to obtain comparable information on the projects and programmes as the monitoring and reporting requirements were different. In addition, the three programmes varied in terms of the ease of finding information about the programme and the funded projects from the programme websites.

Recommendation: It is useful for the programmes to exchange information and best practices related to monitoring, reporting and providing information about the projects. This is especially important when the programmes have similar objectives or projects.

10. Annexes

10.1 Annex 1: Background questions of the questionnaire to the final beneficiaries

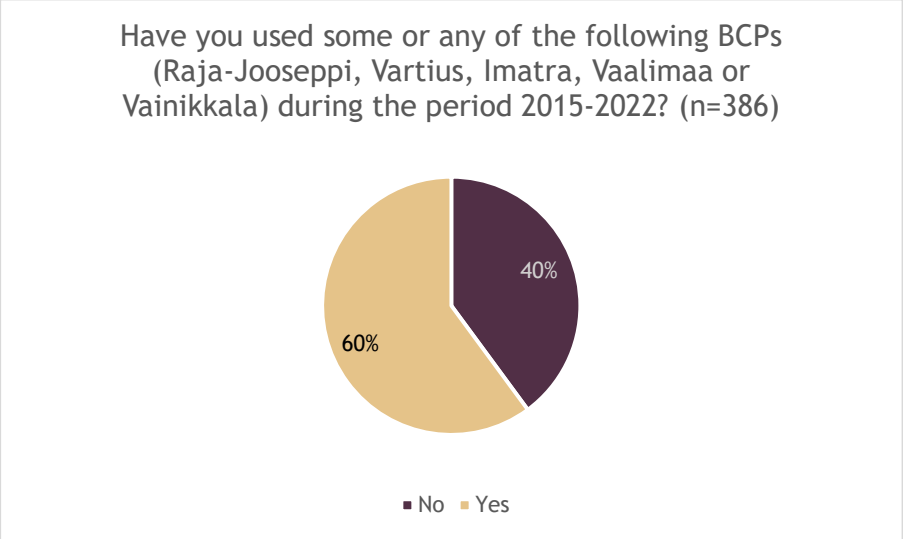


Figure 16. Respondent's answers regarding the usage of BCPs

60% of respondents said that they had used some of these BCPs during the period 2015-2022.

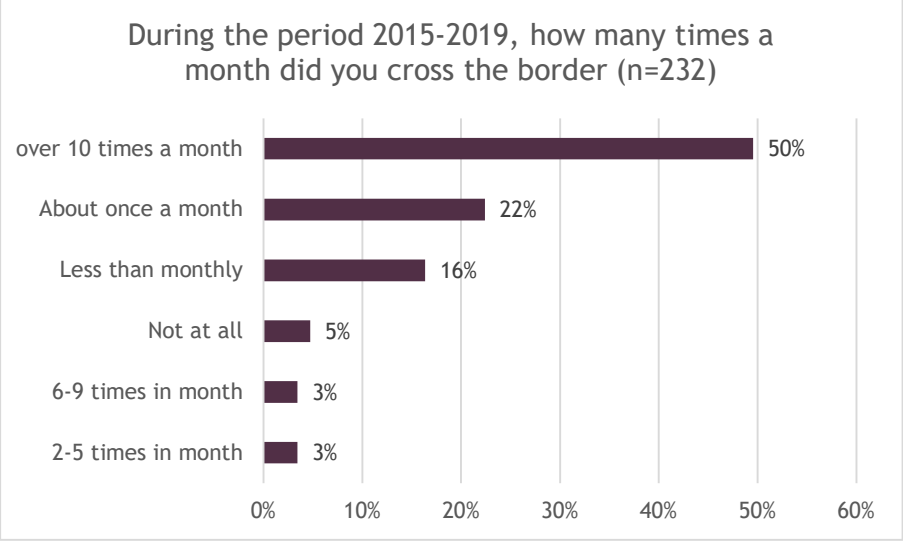


Figure 17. BCP user answers regarding the usage frequency of BCPs

50% of the respondents who had used the BCPs during the period 2015-2019 said that they used them over 10 times a month. 22% of respondents had used them about once a month and 16% less than once a month. The rest of respondents used the BCPs 2-5 times in a month 3%, 6-9 times in month (3%) or not at all (5%)

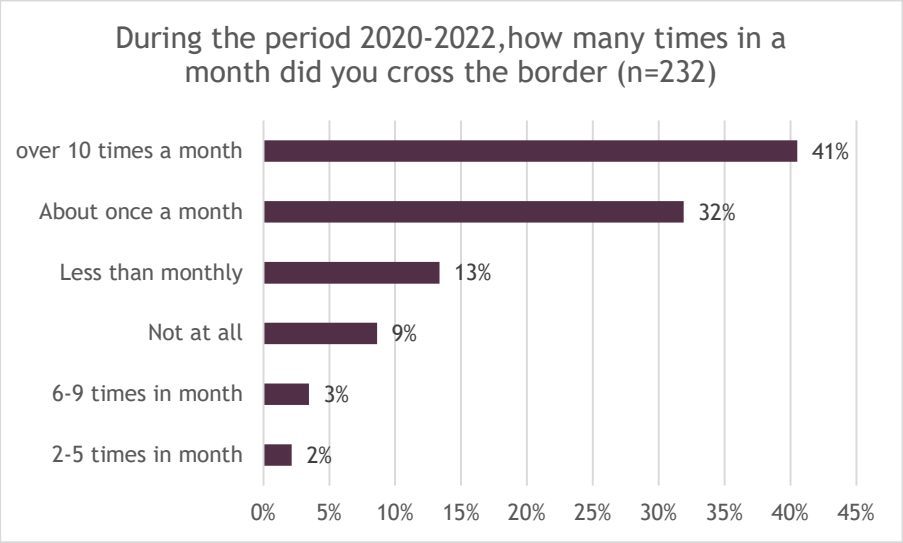


Figure 18. BCP user answers regarding the usage frequency of BCPs

41% of respondents who had used the BCPs during the period 2020-2022 said that they crossed the border over 10 times a month. 32% crossed the border about once a month and 13% less than once a month. The rest of the respondents crossed the border 2-5 times a month 2%, 6-9 times a month (3%) or not at all (9%). Respondents who had not used the BCPs or heard about the improvements of were excluded from the survey results.

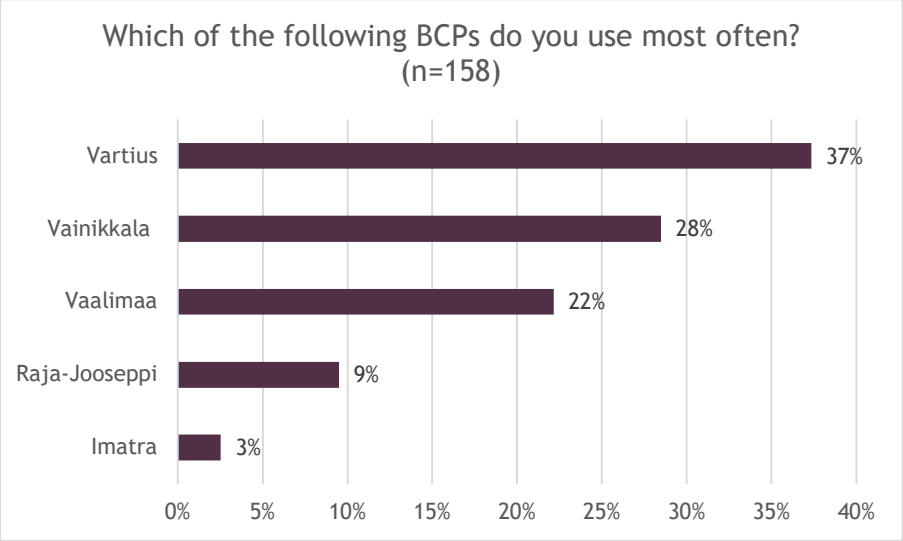


Figure 19. BCP user answers regarding the usage of BCPs

The largest number of respondents had used Vartius BCP (37%) followed by Vainikkala BCP (28%) and Vaalimaa BCP (22%). 9% had used Raja-Jooseppi BCP and 3% Imatra BCP.

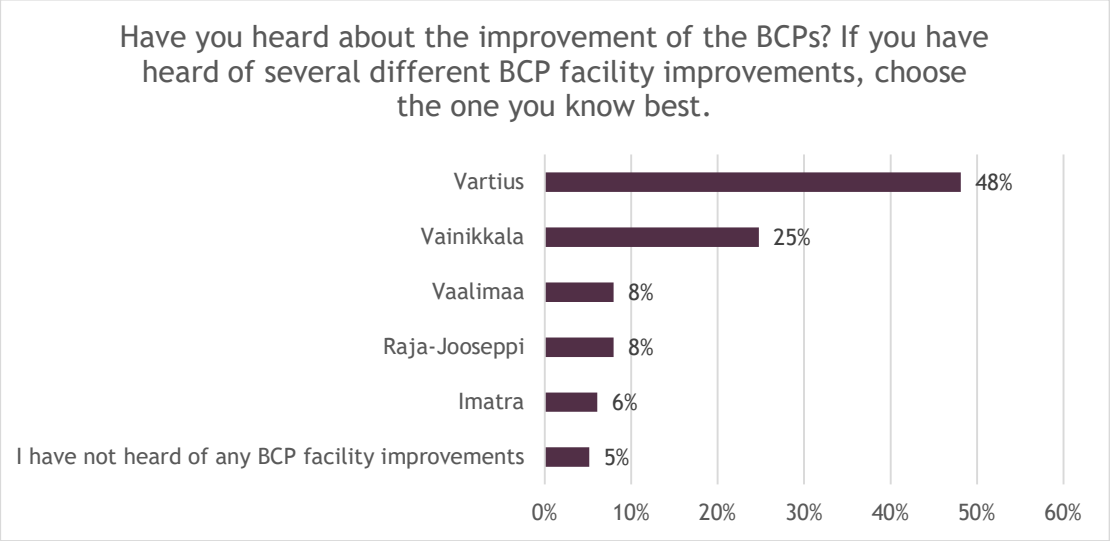


Figure 10. Answers of the respondents who had heard about the BCP improvements

Most of the respondents had heard about the Vartius BCP improvements (48%) while 25% had heard about the Vainikkala BCP improvements. Smaller numbers of respondents had heard about the other BCPs improvements or had not hear of any BCP facility improvements. Those respondents who had not heard about any BCP improvements were excluded from the survey results.