



Increasing security at the eastern Schengen border between Poland and Belarus

MODERNISATION OF BORDER CROSSINGS IN THE PODLASKIE VOIVODESHIP



BORDER CROSSINGS OF SIEMIANÓWKA AND POŁOWCE

In the strategically important border railway station of Siemianówka, the buildings, loading ramps and access roads are outdated and in need of renovation. Facilities for food and border veterinary inspections are lacking entirely. The same is the case in the customs office in Połowce, which is currently only open to Polish and Belarusian nationals and does not handle customs clearance for international goods. A well-functioning customs clearance and border control in Połowce reduces the burden on other border crossings in the region. Because of long waiting times, more and more transport companies are accepting long detours to other border crossings, leading to undesirable additional traffic through villages.

An efficient, functional eastern Schengen border is not only important for Poland and the EU, but also for Switzerland's security. That is why, as part of the enlargement contribution, Switzerland is investing in modern infrastructure that facilitates well-functioning customs clearance at strategically important border crossings on the Polish-Belarusian border. Poland has one of the longest Schengen external borders of the EU, measuring nearly 1200 kilometres.

The two Polish border crossings of Siemianówka and Połowce are being renovated and upgraded with Swiss support to ensure that they reach Schengen standards. At the same time, Switzerland wants to step up its exchange of expertise and experience with Polish customs authorities.

Today, the two borders crossings meet neither EU standards nor Polish legal requirements. The infrastructure is outdated and in need of renovation: modern installations are lacking and equipment doesn't meet current needs. Personnel are negatively affected by these conditions and struggle to carry out their tasks given the growing cross-border traffic.

SECURING THE SCHENGEN EXTERNAL BORDER AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Another goal of efficient and well-functioning border control and customs clearance in Siemianówka and Połowce is to combat the smuggling of people and goods. Poland hopes that the upgrading of the two border crossings will revitalise the regional economy, create new jobs in this structurally underdeveloped region, and increase local border traffic for cultural exchanges with Belarus.





CONCRETE INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND SWISS EXPERTISE FOR PODLASKIE

In Połowce, the Swiss contribution is enabling the construction of terminal facilities for trucks, and for border controls for persons, as well as the construction of a roof for the border post, and the provision of modern infrastructure for administrative and operational buildings. In addition to administrative and operational buildings, a storage room for confiscated goods, facilities for food and border veterinary inspections, external fencing and an electronic monitoring system are being built in the border railway station of Siemianówka.

Besides the investment in infrastructure, Switzerland is also supporting border control and customs clearance activities in Podlaskie Voivodeship. The focus is on the transfer of knowledge and exchange of experience.



THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

THEME

Securing the eastern Schengen border

COUNTRY

Poland

STARTING POINT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Poland has the longest Schengen external border, measuring nearly 1200 kilometres. The two strategically important Polish border crossings of Siemianówka and Połowce at the Belarusian border do not meet Schengen requirements for border controls and customs clearance at the Schengen external border. Buildings and facilities are outdated or in need of renovation, and there is no modern infrastructure.

PURPOSE

A well-functioning and efficient customs clearance and border control of goods and people will contribute to greater security at the eastern Schengen border. The goal is to provide personnel on the ground with state-of-the-art facilities and equipment to carry out their mission, boost the regional economy, and promote cultural exchange.

ACTIVITIES

New administrative and operational buildings, a modern infrastructure for efficient customs clearance and the border controls for people and goods are being put in place. At the same time, Switzerland wants to support Poland with knowledge transfer and the exchange of experience.

TARGET GROUPS

Customs officers, border guards, the private sector, local communities

COSTS

Siemianówka:

Total project budget: CHF 5'873'692

Level of Swiss contribution: CHF 4'992'638

Połowce:

Total project budget: CHF 18'690'360

Level of Swiss contribution: CHF 15'886'806

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Podlaskie Voivodeship

DURATION

Siemianówka: 2011–2015

Połowce: 2012–2014