



# What happened in Sweden when visa-free travel started for the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries?

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# Visa liberalisation – The Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries



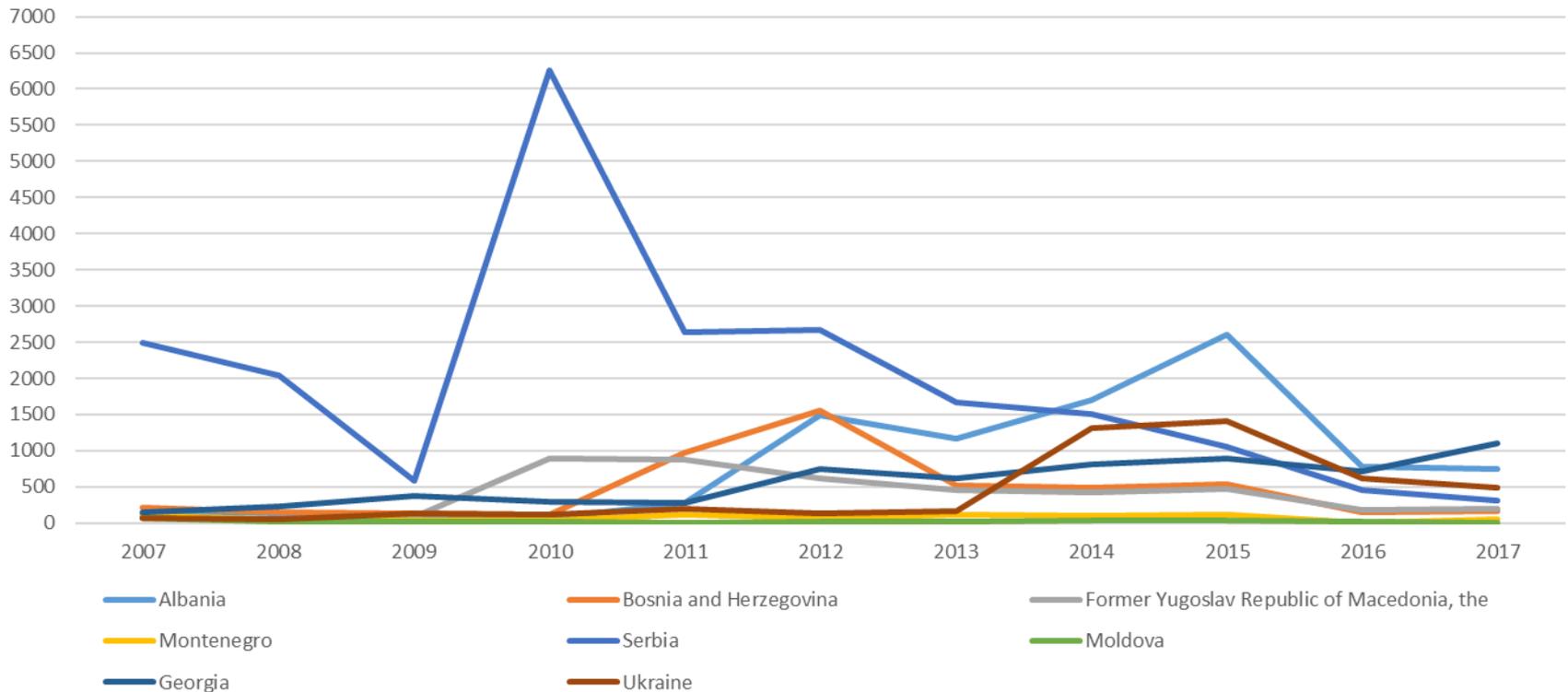
# Starting points



- Study looks primarily at **impact** on the country of destination
- **Premise** = visa liberalisation has **effects** on cross-border mobility / pull factor
- **Previous links** between Sweden and...
- **Western Balkan countries:**
  - Labour immigration in 1960s from **the former Yugoslavia**, refugees during civil war in 1990s, particularly from Bosnia and Herzegovina - **large diaspora**
  - **Albania** – immigration to Sweden **recent phenomenon**
- **Eastern Partnership countries:**
  - **Moldova** – immigration to Sweden **recent phenomenon**
  - **Georgia** – immigration to Sweden **recent phenomenon**
  - **Ukraine** – **limited** previous immigration to Sweden, but seasonal workers common

**Results?** Positive? Negative? Short-term? Long-term?

# Asylum seekers from the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries 2007-2017



Source: Eurostat

# What about legal migration 2007-2017?

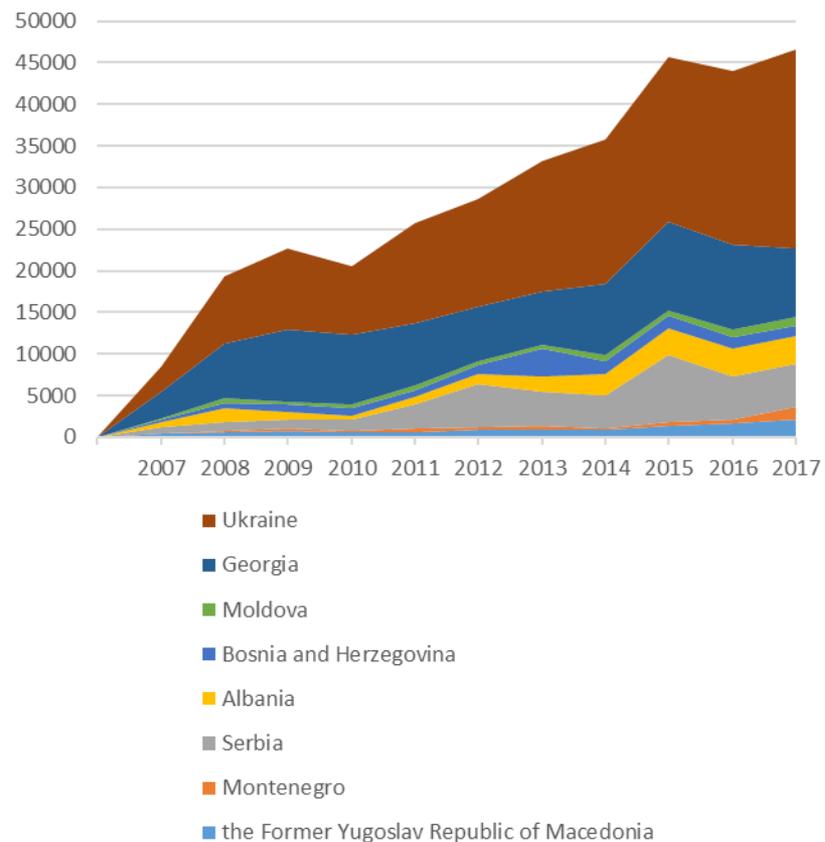
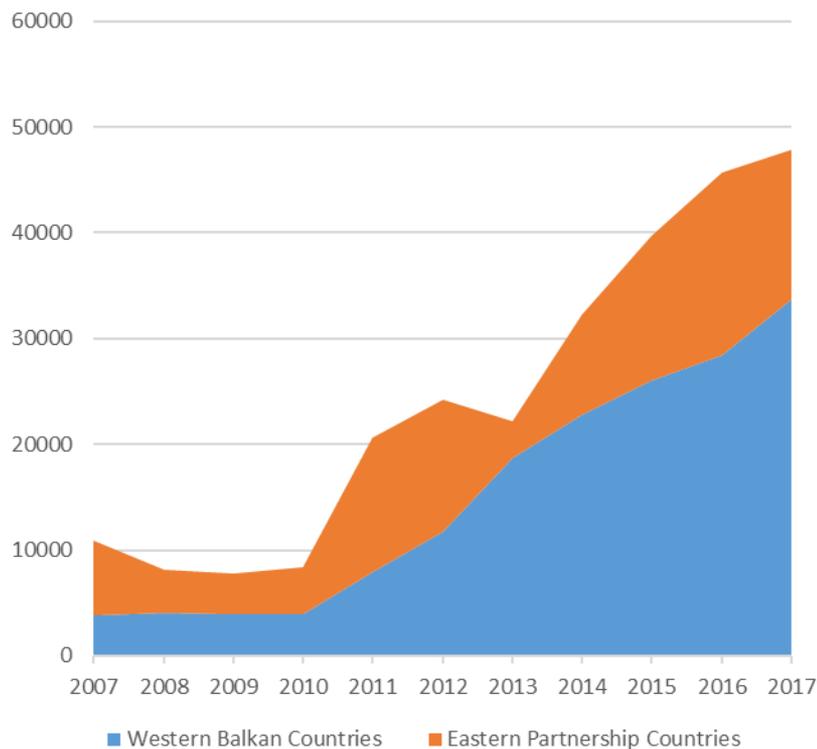


- Visa liberalisation potentially **facilitates** for migrants in this category, but difficult to see causal links and effects **appear limited** so far
- Total migration from the Western Balkan and European Partnership countries for **remunerated activities** peaked in 2009 (New labour immigration law in 2008), but **Western Balkan countries increase slowly** - 286 permits issued in 2007, 738 permits issued in 2017
- Total migration from these countries of **self-employed** persons low throughout the period, but peaked in 2017 at 15 issued permits
- Total migration from these countries for **education reasons** peaked in 2010 (Tuition fees introduced in 2011), Western Balkan countries back at pre 2011 levels in 2017

Sources: Swedish Migration Agency, Eurostat



# External border-crossings (l) and guest nights at hotels etc. (r) 2007-2017



Sources: Swedish Migration Agency, Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth

# Foreign trade 2007 vs. 2017

- Overall trade limited with these countries, often **difficult to see trends** in data or causal link to visa liberalisation
- Sweden's **imports** from 7/8 countries higher in 2017 (-Moldova)
- Sweden's **exports** to 6/8 countries higher in 2017 (-BiH, Moldova)
- Visa liberalisation **facilitates** business contact/development (but...)
- Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (**DCFTA**) probably more important for trade development

Source: Statistics Sweden



# Challenges and downsides

- High initial increase in number of **asylum seekers**
- Did (risk of) **human trafficking** increase?
  - Overall small number of final court rulings, majority of victims EU nationals, 3 victims from the Western Balkan and European Partnership countries 2007-2017
- Did **smuggling** and other **crimes** increase?
  - Lacking statistics, but indications of increase in crime perpetrated by Georgian asylum seekers in 2017-2018
- Increase of total number of nationals from the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries **refused entry at external borders** (580 out of 880 cases in 2017)
- Increase of total number of nationals from these countries detected with **identity document fraud** (78 of 215 instances in 2017)



Source: Swedish Police



# Conclusions and Summary

- Sometimes **difficult** to see causal links, but visa liberalisation certainly appears to play a role
- **Short term** and **long term** perspective necessary
- Consider **push factors** / **heterogeneous** group of countries
- High initial increase of asylum seekers, but data shows emerging trend of "bona fide" travellers
- **Increase** in cross-border **mobility** (external border-crossings ↑ and guest nights ↑), legal migration appears less affected for the time being
- **National report** available for download from the EU EMN website or Sweden's EMN website

**Thank you!**

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