

Visa liberalisation processes in the EU: Earlier examples and conclusions for Ukraine

**Forecasting migration between the EU, V4 and Eastern Europe: Impact
of visa abolition**

Project's closing seminar

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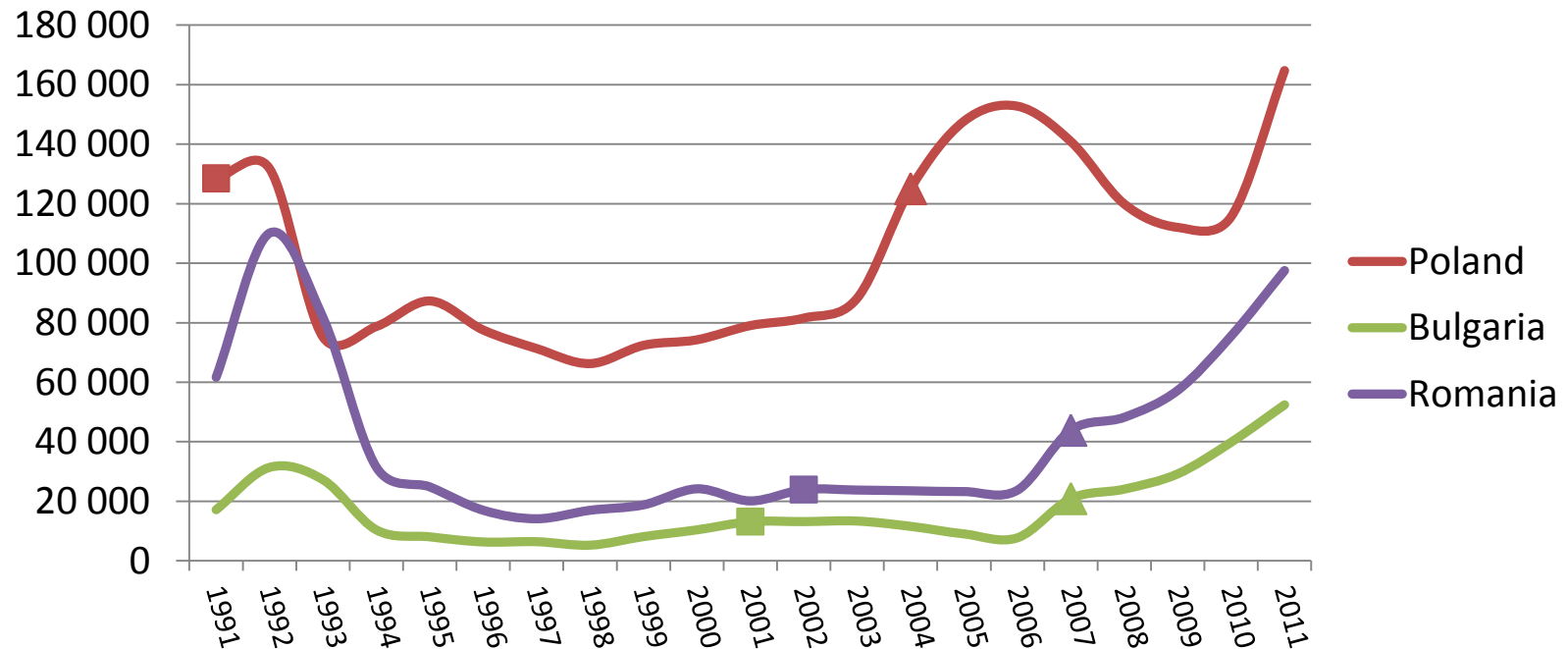
Introduction: The disputed impact of visa liberalisation on migration

- **Assumptions** and **evidence** on the nexus between visa policy and migration
 - Possible **indicators**: immigration flows (residence permits as a proxy), changes in population stocks, number of asylum seekers, number of detected irregular migrants before and after visa-free travel
 - Historical examples: Immigration to **Germany** from Poland, Bulgaria and Romania before and after visa-free travel
 - More recent examples: Immigration to the **EU** from Western Balkan countries before and after visa-free travel
 - What can we learn from these examples?
- What can we expect in terms of EU visa liberalisation towards Belarus, Moldova and **Ukraine**?

Role and function of visa policy

- Visa policy and visa practices are considered to be **key elements for the migration management** of nation states. In its visa policy, a state determines:
 - who requires a visa in addition to his/her passport to enter the country
 - which conditions the applicant has to meet to be eligible for a visa and
 - whether the visa will entitle the applicant only to a short stay in, or transit through, the territory or, alternatively, to a long stay such as for employment or family reunification
 - Visa policy is thus an element of **extra-territorial immigration control**
- **When analysing visa policy, a fundamental difference must be made between:**
 - **short-term visas** for stays up to three months in a six-months-period (entirely harmonized within the Schengen area) and
 - **visas for long-term stays or residence permits** (governed by non-harmonised, national legislation)

Immigration to Germany from Poland, Bulgaria and Romania before and after the introduction of visa-free travel



Source: Federal Statistical Office (migration flow data – immigration)

Rectangular reference points: years in which visa requirements were lifted

Triangular reference points: respective EU accession years

Asylum applications in Germany by nationals of Poland, Bulgaria and Romania before and after visa-free travel

	Poland	Romania	Bulgaria
1991	3 448	40 504	12 056
1992	4 212	103 787	31 540
1993	1 670	73 717	22 547
1994	326	9 581	3 367
1995	119	3 522	1 152
1996	137	1 395	940
1997	151	794	761
1998	49	341	172
1999	42	222	90
2000	141	174	72
2001	134	181	66
2002	50	118	814
2003	32	104	502
2004	21	61	480
2005	16	55	278
2006	3	60	142
2007	5	5	6

In the cases of Poland and Bulgaria, but not in the case of Romania, an increase in the number of asylum applications could be noted after visa requirements were lifted in 1991 and 2002, respectively

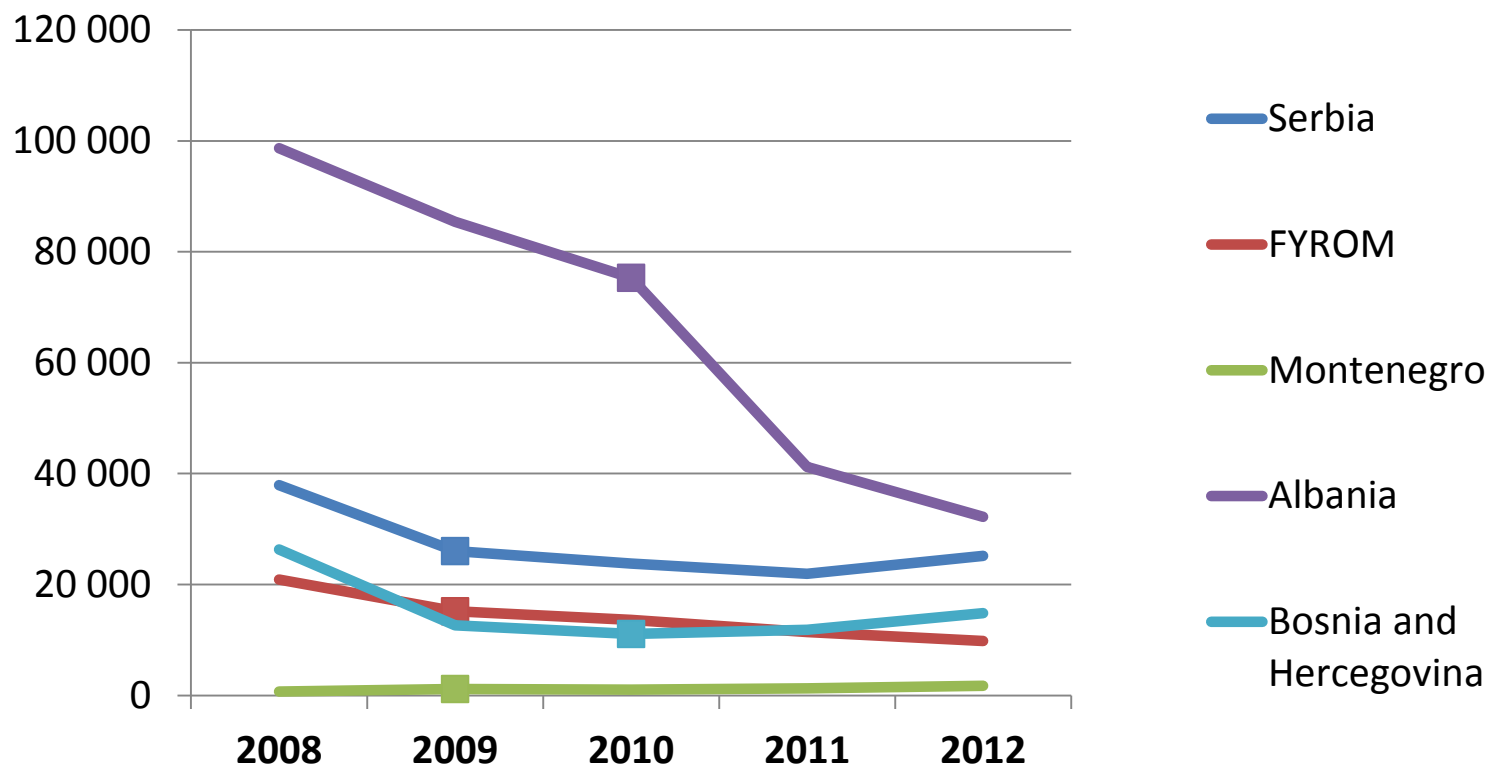
Highlighted yellow cells: years in which visa requirements were lifted

Source: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Bundesministerium des Innern (2011): Migrationsbericht 2010, pp. 307-310

Can we learn from earlier examples? (1)

- Statistical data from Germany suggests that the introduction of visa-free travel for citizens of Poland (1991), Bulgaria (2001) and Romania (2002) has not prompted higher levels of **immigration**
- It may have triggered higher numbers of **asylum seekers** in the case of Bulgaria, but not in the cases of Poland and Romania
- Longer-term immigration and settlement trends may be more dependent on factors such as economic development (in countries of origin and destination) and the legal provisions for immigration for economic purposes, as well as for international protection and asylum

Immigration from Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina before and after visa-free travel



Source: Eurostat database. First residence permits issued by EU Member States.

Reference points: years in which visa requirements were lifted (December 2009 and December 2010, respectively)

Asylum applicants in the EU from Western Balkan countries before and after visa-free travel

Table: New asylum applications by citizens of Western Balkan countries in 27 EU MS

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Serbia	5 360	3 205	14 765	10 650	13 635
Montenegro	105	190	340	540	1 105
FYROM	315	615	6 135	4 535	6 705
Albania	620	1 305	1 095	2 860	6 875
Bosnia-Herzegovina	435	1 040	1 910	2 400	5 235
Total	6 835	6 355	24 245	20 985	33 555

Source: Eurostat database. Asylum applicants.

Can we learn from earlier examples? (2)

- For the EU as a whole, Eurostat data on residence permits issued do not indicate a higher level of immigration from the Western Balkan countries following visa liberalisation
- Immigration flow data (calculated on the basis of population registries) do not give a clear picture. Immigration from Western Balkan countries reached higher levels in few countries (e.g. Germany), but in most countries, it did not (e.g. Italy, Slovenia)
- Statistics on asylum and indicators of irregular immigration do point towards certain short-term effects of visa liberalisation in the case of Western Balkan countries, although not all EU Member States were affected
- In sum, visa-free travel does not seem to interfere much with longer-term immigration trends, but may have short-term (temporary) effects

Conclusions regarding Ukraine (1)

If we expect the same development in the event of the introduction of visa-free travel from Ukraine to the EU as in the case of the Western Balkan countries, the following pattern would appear:

- The number of **residence permits** issued to nationals of Ukraine and immigration flows towards the EU would **decrease**
- The number of Ukrainian nationals living in the EU (resident population stock) would increase (but more slowly than before)
- The number of asylum seekers and irregular migrants (e.g. “overstay”) would rise

Any such predictions are however highly uncertain. Underlying circumstances and socio-economic conditions in Ukraine are very different: Much bigger population as compared to Western Balkan states, but lower levels of asylum applicants

Conclusions regarding Ukraine (2)

Table: Residence permits granted by 27 EU Member States to nationals of Ukraine, 2008-2012

	2008	2009	2010	2012
Ukraine	115 770	87 740	166 945	163 083

Source: Eurostat (incomplete data for 2011)

- The number of permits granted to nationals of Ukraine has increased, but the picture is different in different EU Member States:
 - In **Poland**, more than ten times as many Ukrainians were granted a residence permit (in most cases for temporary stay) in 2012 than in 2008
 - In **Italy**, the number of permits granted to Ukrainian nationals decreased strongly (as a result of the economic crisis). Decreases were also observed in **Czech Republic**, **Hungary** and **Spain**
 - In **Germany**, a gradually increase could be seen, and in the **United Kingdom**, the number of permits granted to Ukrainians has remained stable

Conclusions regarding Ukraine (3)

- Despite the current crisis, the number of Ukrainian nationals applying for asylum in the EU has remained modest. Thus, it would be wrong to automatically assume that the same pattern as for the Western Balkan countries (with many more asylum seekers) would appear after the introduction of visa-free travel
- The extent to which Ukrainian citizens will immigrate to the EU, or seek asylum there, is more likely to depend on EU immigration provisions, economic developments in Ukraine and the EU, and the political situation
- The question as to whether or not visa requirements are in place will affect the possibilities of people to **travel**, not so much their ability to **migrate** and settle
- Visa-free travel will widen the options of potential migrants since it saves money and administrative difficulties
- Whether EU Member States open up for labour immigration and temporary stay or circular migration, or differences between wages/salaries, will most likely have a far greater impact than visa policy

Thank you for your attention!



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