

**BASELINE STUDY ON CROSS-BORDER  
MOBILITY IN THE OSCE REGION**



# BASELINE STUDY ON CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY IN THE OSCE REGION



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# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<b>CIS states</b>	The Commonwealth of Independent States (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; associated member – Turkmenistan; unofficial member – Ukraine). <sup>1</sup>
<b>Common Travel Area</b>	A travel zone comprising the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom.
<b>Cross-border mobility</b>	Movement of persons across international borders.
<b>EU member states</b>	European Union member states (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom).
<b>EU member states not part of Schengen Area</b>	Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom.
<b>Intended immigrant</b>	For the purpose of this study an “intended immigrant” is a person who plans to immigrate into the territory of a foreign state contrary to the entry regulations of that state and the terms of the visa issued to such a person.
<b>Irregular immigration</b>	Entry into and stay on the territory of a state by a foreign national contrary to national legislation regulating foreigners’ entry and stay.
<b>Irregular migration</b>	Movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and/or receiving countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Ukraine has participated in the work of the CIS although it has never been made officially a member state.

<b>Local border traffic</b>	Cross-border traffic of the residents of the border area established on the basis of bilateral agreement aimed at the simplification of border crossing for these residents.
<b>Multiple-entry visa</b>	A short-term or long-term visa that allows the holder to enter and exit another country or travel area several times during a pre-defined period, not exceeding an overall duration of stay as defined by regulations on entry and stay.
<b>Multiple-entry visa rates</b>	The percentage of multiple-entry visas issued as a proportion of the total number of visas issued.
<b>Non-immigrant visa</b>	A visa that allows its holder to enter the territory of a state and to remain on that territory for a defined period of time, provided that the holder engages only in those activities permitted by the terms of such a visa. Within the context of this study the term “non-immigrant visa” refers to types of visa that allow a short-term stay for tourism/leisure visits, private visits or business visits, and which are abolished as part of visa-liberalization processes. Some other types of non-immigrant visas (such as student visas and visas issued to temporary workers) are not addressed in the study, as they are not abolished as part of any visa-liberalization process.
<b>ODIHR</b>	The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.
<b>OSCE</b>	The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.
<b>Reciprocal visa-free travel regime</b>	A decision by two states to allow their nationals to travel between the two states without a visa requirement.
<b>Reciprocal visa regime</b>	A visa regime between two states that is maintained on the basis of reciprocity.
<b>Schengen Agreement</b>	The agreement on the abolishment of internal passport immigration controls and customs checks at the common borders of Schengen Area states.
<b>Schengen Area</b>	The area of free cross-border travel between 26 OSCE participating States which have abolished passport and immigration controls and customs checks at their common borders.
<b>Schengen Area states</b>	Countries that implement the Schengen regulatory framework (Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland).

<b>Non-EU Schengen Area States</b>	Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.
<b>Unilaterally maintained visa-free regime</b>	A decision taken by a state to allow nationals of another state to enter its territory without a visa, even though the decision is not reciprocated by the other state.
<b>UNWTO</b>	The World Tourism Organization.
<b>Valid travel document</b>	Identity document issued by a state or international organization allowing the holder to cross international borders. The most common travel document is a passport, but others include Refugee Travel Documents, the UN Laissez-Passer for UN officials and travel documents for stateless persons or for persons to be readmitted to their homes countries.
<b>Visa</b>	An endorsement indicating that its holder is allowed to enter a country and stay there for a specified period of time. When the term “visa” is used in this glossary and study, it usually describes a short-stay visa, also known as an “entry visa”. Such a visa allows the holder to enter a country, stay there for a short period of time and return to the country of origin. Most states also issue longer-term visas, for example to students and temporary workers, or to bridge the time until a residence permit is issued. See also “multiple-entry visa”.
<b>Visa facilitation</b>	Procedural facilitation of the issuance of visas to nationals of particular countries (by means of, for example, a reduction in the visa fee, the issuance of multiple-entry visas for specific categories of applicants, shorter processing times) without altering the conditions for issuing visas (i.e., the visa applicant must still satisfy the entry conditions).
<b>Visa-free travel regime</b>	A decision taken by a state to allow nationals of another state entry into its territory without requiring that a visa be obtained in advance.
<b>Visa-free Travel Area One</b>	Term used in this study to describe an area within the OSCE region characterized by a reciprocal visa-free travel regime between certain OSCE participating States, namely: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, the Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.



<b>Visa-Free Travel Area Two</b>	Term used in this study to describe an area within the OSCE region characterized by reciprocal visa-free travel regime between certain OSCE participating States, namely: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.
<b>Visa liberalization</b>	The lifting of a visa regime for short stays in respect of citizens of a particular country.
<b>Visa-liberalization road map</b>	Criteria in several policy areas set by a state which another state must fulfil in order to qualify for visa-free travel.
<b>Visa refusal rate</b>	The percentage of refused visa applications as a proportion of the total number of visa applications received.
<b>Visa regime</b>	A decision by a state to allow nationals of another state to enter its territory only if they obtain an entry visa in advance.

# INTRODUCTION

Through the Helsinki process, OSCE participating States have encouraged one another to take mutually beneficial steps towards clarifying rules and simplifying procedures aimed at allowing persons to temporarily enter or leave countries within the OSCE region. The commitments on human contacts that OSCE participating States made in Helsinki in 1975, and which they subsequently reaffirmed in Madrid in 1983, Vienna in 1989 and Ljubljana in 2005, were intended to facilitate travel between participating States for the purpose of family reunions, marriage to a foreign national and travel for other personal and professional reasons. Since then, OSCE participating States have concluded multilateral and bilateral agreements and have made unilateral decisions towards liberalizing cross-border travel within the region. At the same time, where visa regimes between OSCE participating States remain, challenges continue to exist in the facilitation of visas for bona fide travellers.

This study aims to highlight the commitments on freedom of movement and human contacts made by OSCE participating States, as well as to provide baseline information to assist them in the implementation of these commitments. As such, this study presents the situation of cross-border mobility in the form of baseline data and is intended to raise awareness among OSCE participating States of the current situation in relation to freedom of movement and human contacts in the OSCE region. Data concerning the level of cross-border mobility in the OSCE region are presented to demonstrate how visa requirements maintained by OSCE participating States affect cross-border mobility in the OSCE region. In particular, the study focuses on visa-application mechanisms in those instances where visa regimes exist, as well as their characteristics and impact on cross-border mobility. It also focuses on best practices in operating visa regimes that successfully counter illegal immigration but, at the same time, facilitate cross-border travel for legitimate purposes.

With the objective of providing an analysis of the progress that OSCE participating States have achieved in promoting and facilitating cross-border contacts among their citizens in line with the relevant OSCE commitments, this study gives an overview of (i) the volume of cross-border travel in the OSCE region, (ii) patterns of cross-border travel undertaken by citizens of OSCE participating States and (iii) how visa regimes between participating States affect these travel patterns. This study also focuses on the visa-application requirements of the OSCE participating States and highlights best practices, as well as areas in which further progress could be achieved in the implementation of the OSCE commitments on freedom of movement and human contacts. To this end, this study specifically analyses: (i) the documentation required to

support visa applications; (ii) the costs of obtaining a visa; and (iii) how visa policies of OSCE participating States have translated into practice. In doing so, the study presents statistics on the number of visas issued, the percentage of visa applications that are refused and the percentage of multiple-entry visas that are issued.

This study does not single out any specific system of visa issuance as preferable to another, since the circumstances in which visa regimes are implemented by different participating States vary considerably. Information on visa application procedures is provided with the aim of highlighting different approaches among OSCE participating States when it comes to issuing visas. Although some specific recommendations are made as part of this study, they do not apply to any one state, but are intended to give a general indication as to how visa policies might be amended in order to further facilitate access to visas.

Finally, this study provides an overview of the on-going visa dialogues between OSCE participating States aimed at facilitating and liberalizing cross-border travel. It also highlights existing good practices in line with the relevant OSCE commitments regarding visa facilitation, and provides recommendations on visa facilitation and the liberalization of cross-border travel.

# OSCE COMMITMENTS IN THE FIELD OF FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND HUMAN CONTACTS

OSCE participating States use the term “freedom of movement” to describe a wide range of topics that concern both the right to leave a country and return to one’s own country and the right of nationals and foreigners to move about freely within the territory of a state. Although the right of non-citizens to enter the territory of a state is not guaranteed by international standards, within the OSCE the term “freedom of movement” is also used to describe policies and regulations of the participating States regarding entry to and exit from their territories by foreigners.

Emphasizing “[...] *the development of contacts to be an important element in the strengthening of friendly relations and trust among peoples [...]*”, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act introduced a range of commitments aimed at liberalizing cross-border movement. In that regard, participating States also made specific commitments aimed at simplifying exit procedures for their citizens and setting out procedures for the entry of citizens of other participating States on the basis of, *inter alia*, family contacts, family reunion, marriage with citizens of other participating States and business contacts. Participating States agreed, *inter alia*, “[...] *to facilitate wider travel by their citizens for personal or professional reasons [...]*” and to that end “[...] *gradually to simplify and to administer flexibly the procedures for exit and entry [...]*”, as well as “[...] *gradually to lower, where necessary, the fees for visas and official travel documents [...]*” and to consider “[...] *the conclusion of multilateral or bilateral consular conventions or other relevant agreements or understandings – for the improvement of arrangements to provide consular services, including legal and consular assistance*”.<sup>2</sup>

The issue of human contacts was also addressed during the Second Follow-up Meeting of the of the CSCE held in Madrid (1983) and the Third Follow-up Meeting of the CSCE held in Vienna (1989), in which participating States agreed to further expedite and facilitate the processing of requests for travel on the basis of commitments related to human contacts, including commitments to “[...] *further facilitate travel on an individual or collective basis for personal or professional reasons and for tourism, such as travel by delegations, groups and individuals and also[...] to reduce the time for the consideration of applications for such travel to a minimum*”.<sup>3</sup> Participating States specifically highlighted the need to address existing visa regimes and agreed to “[...] *give serious*

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2 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act, 1 August 1975, Helsinki, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/39501?download=true>>.

3 Concluding Document of the Third Follow-up Meeting of the CSCE, 19 January 1989, Vienna, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/16262>>.

*consideration to proposals for concluding agreements on the issuing of multiple entry visas and the reciprocal easing of visa processing formalities, and consider possibilities for the reciprocal abolition of entry visas on the basis of agreements between them*".<sup>4</sup>

By affirming that "...freer movement and contacts among their citizens are important in the context of the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms", in the 1990 Copenhagen Document OSCE States reaffirmed "[...] their determination not to recede from the commitments contained in CSCE documents [...]" and "[...]to implement fully and improve present commitments in the field of human contacts, including on a bilateral and multilateral basis". To that end, they expressed the intention "[...] to implement the procedures for entry into their territories, including the issuing of visas and passport and customs control, in good faith and without unjustified delay". Where visa regimes were in place, participating States agreed to "[...] shorten the waiting time for visa decisions, as well as simplify practices and reduce administrative requirements for visa applications" and "[...] endeavour, where necessary, to reduce fees charged in connection with visa applications to the lowest possible level".<sup>5</sup>

More recently, at the Ministerial Council held in Ljubljana (2005), OSCE States resolved "to promote free and secure movement of persons [...] across borders [...] through enhancing the security of travel documents and encouraging, as appropriate, circumstances that could allow the liberalization of visa regimes [...]"<sup>6</sup>

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4 Concluding Document of the Third Follow-up Meeting of the CSCE, 19 January 1989, Vienna, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/16262>>.

5 Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, 29 June 1990, Copenhagen, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/14304>>.

6 OSCE Ministerial Council, Journal No. 2, Agenda item 8, "Border Security and Management Concept: Framework for Co-operation by the OSCE Participating States" Ljubljana, 6 December 2005, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/18778>>.

# CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

## Volume of cross-border travel in the OSCE region

According to statistical data collated by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO),<sup>7</sup> OSCE participating States received approximately 578 million foreign visitors in 2011.<sup>8</sup> This represents 59 per cent of all foreign visitors recorded that year globally. The UNWTO data also reveal that, over the past 20 years, the total number of foreign visitors to the OSCE region doubled. Moreover, data suggest that the number of foreign visitors globally will grow over the next 20 years at an average rate of 3.3 per cent per year.<sup>9</sup> If this growth rate is applied to the OSCE participating States, the annual number of foreign visitors to the OSCE region from both within and outside of the region could rise to as high as 1.1 billion by 2030.

Steps taken by many OSCE participating States to liberalize entry regulations and waive visa requirements for citizens of other participating States have contributed to an increase in the volume of international travel and its continuing growth within the OSCE region. This visa liberalization has been achieved not only through multilateral and bilateral agreements between states, but also through the unilateral decisions of many OSCE participating States. For example, the decision to waive visa requirements is often taken by states unilaterally, in recognition of the benefits of increased cross-border travel for their economic development and for their citizens. The growing volume of cross-border travel has also been aided by the growth of the tourism industry in many OSCE participating States, as well as the increasing affordability of long-distance travel for the populations of those countries. Finally, increased cross-border movement is also a result of the creation of regional agreements allowing for the free movement of people, capital, goods and services. Regions established on these principles expand the potential for cross-border travel and largely shape patterns of cross-border travel within the OSCE region.

As a result of agreements and decisions made towards the liberalization of cross-border travel, as of March 2014, the OSCE region is characterized by two distinct areas within which OSCE participating States citizens can travel without a visa. One such visa-free travel area, hereafter referred to as “Visa-Free Travel Area One” (or “Area One”), comprises the territories of the United States and Canada, the 28 EU member states, the four states that are not in the EU bu-

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7 At the time the research was conducted, the most recent data made available by the UNWTO referred to the number of foreign visitors in 2011.

8 UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2012 Edition, <[http://www.docstoc.com/docs/149053690/unwtohighlights12enhr\\_1](http://www.docstoc.com/docs/149053690/unwtohighlights12enhr_1)>.

9 Estimates and statistical information are based on data published by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

ture in the Schengen Area, as well as the five states in the Western Balkans.<sup>10</sup> Another visa-free travel area, hereafter referred to as “Visa-Free Travel Area Two” (or “Area Two”), comprises the territories of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as well as Georgia and Ukraine.<sup>11</sup>

FIGURE 1.1: NUMBER OF FOREIGN VISITORS TO THE OSCE REGION IN 2011

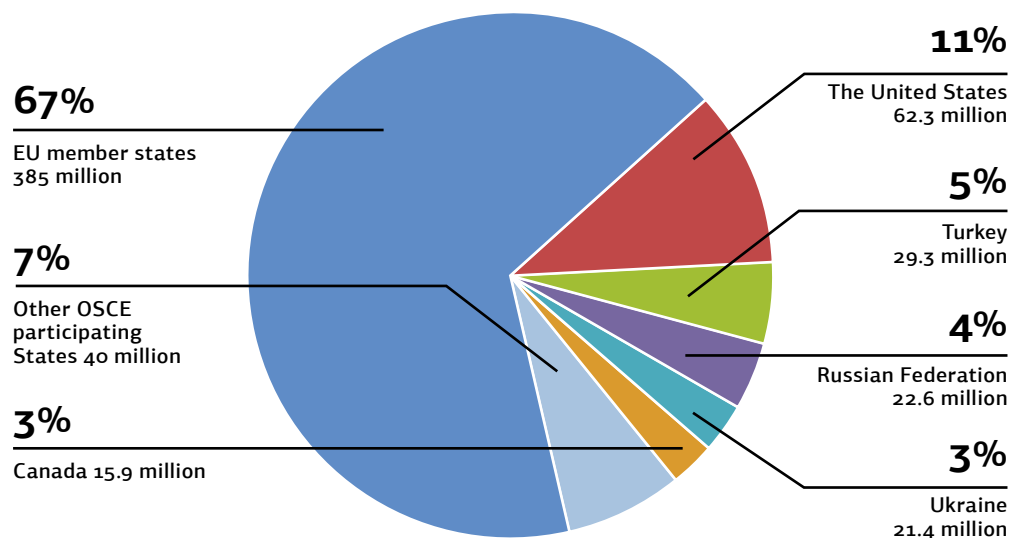
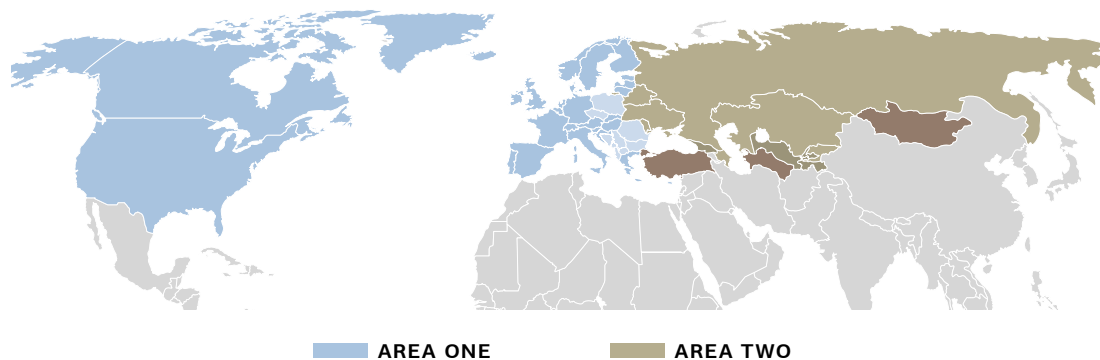


FIGURE 1.2: AREAS OF RECIPROCAL VISA-FREE TRAVEL IN THE OSCE REGION



<sup>10</sup> The five Western Balkans states that are part of a larger visa-free travel area are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The following exceptions apply: Canada maintains visa regimes towards Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia. The United Kingdom maintains visa regimes towards Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The United States maintains visa regimes towards Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania and Serbia.

<sup>11</sup> The following exceptions apply: Azerbaijan does not allow Armenian citizens to enter its territory; the Russian Federation maintains a visa regime towards Georgia; and Tajikistan and Uzbekistan maintain a reciprocal visa regime.

In general, travel between OSCE participating States belonging to different visa-free travel areas is regulated by a visa regime. These visa regimes are maintained either unilaterally or on the basis of reciprocity.

This study shows that:

- Citizens of OSCE participating States travel primarily within the parameters of the visa-free travel area to which their state belongs;
- Visa regimes between OSCE participating States belonging to different visa-free travel areas have an impact on the overall number of travellers between the two areas;
- How visa regimes affect travel between the two visa-free travel areas depends on the area from which the travellers originate.

Travellers originating from states that are part of Visa-Free Travel Area One predominantly visit states within this area. Besides constituting a visa-free travel space, this area also includes countries with the highest level of economic activity in the OSCE region, with OSCE participating States in North America, the EU member states and the non-EU Schengen Area states accounting for almost 90 per cent of the combined gross domestic product (GDP) of all OSCE participating States. Likewise, 70 per cent of the total population of the OSCE region lives in Visa-Free Travel Area One.

Most travellers originating from OSCE participating States within the Visa-Free Travel Area Two predominantly visit states within this area. This is a consequence of historical travelling patterns established during the Soviet era, during which travel within the Soviet Union was largely unrestricted, while travel to other OSCE participating States was restricted. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, travel from Visa-Free Travel Area Two countries to countries in Area One has been regulated by visa regimes.

The volume of travel from Area Two to Area One underwent significant and continuous growth between 2007 and 2011, in spite of the existence of visa regimes. Major reasons for the increased number of travellers from these states include the improving economic situation of the populations of Area Two countries, as well as the appeal of states in Area One as tourism destinations and the opportunities they provide in the fields of education, research, sports, science and culture, among others.

As illustrated in Chapter 1 of this study, the number of visitors from Area Two travelling to Area One steadily increased between 2007 and 2011. In particular, this period saw a 21.2 per cent increase in the number of visitors from Area Two to Canada, and a 71.9 per cent increase in the number of visitors to the United States. According to available baseline data on travel from Area Two to the Schengen Area states, the number of tourist visitors from the Russian Federation and Ukraine to the Schengen Area increased by 74.7 per cent in the case of the Russian Federation and by 61.7 per cent in the case of Ukraine between 2007 and 2011.

The continued growth in the number of travellers from Area Two to Area One suggests that the volume of travel has not reached its full potential, and that, comparatively, the number of visitors still remains low. For instance, in 2011 approximately two million tourists from Canada visited the Schengen Area (where a visa is not required), while at the same time only 0.7 million visitors



to the Schengen Area from neighbouring Ukraine (where travel to the Schengen Area is restricted by a visa regime). Similarly, the number of visitors from the United States to the Schengen Area in 2011 was twice that of the number of visitors from the Russian Federation, a state which borders the Schengen Area. The statistics on the number of visas issued also indicate that a small proportion of visa applications are rejected. An increase in the proportion of multiple-entry visas issued further indicates a growing number of bona fide travellers among visa applicants.

At the same time, the number of travellers from Area One to Area Two between 2007 and 2011 witnessed either a modest growth or, as in most cases, a steady decline.<sup>12</sup> In some cases, the number of travellers declined in spite of the full liberalization of the visa regime.

The Russian Federation and Ukraine witnessed the biggest decline in visitors from states in Area One, receiving 80 per cent of all visitors from the EU and other Schengen Area states travelling to Area Two in 2011. As compared to data from 2007, the proportion of visitors to the Russian Federation and Ukraine from the EU and other Schengen Area states dropped by 12.2 per cent and 41.9 per cent respectively in 2011.

The exception to this trend is Central Asia, where the number of visitors from Area One in this period increased. For example, between 2007 and 2011, the number of visas issued by Kazakhstan to citizens of Area One states increased by 34 per cent, while the number of visas issued by Uzbekistan to citizens of Area One states increased by 22 per cent. This increase in the number of travellers to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan may be explained by the decisions taken by these states to simplify visa procedures for certain states in Area One.

These trends suggest that visa regimes have not been the main factor in determining the volume of visitors travelling from Area One countries to Area Two countries, since the requirements for travel to Area Two countries did not change during the period under observation. In addition, while many OSCE participating States in Area Two liberalized their visa regime in order to boost business contacts, tourism and people to people contacts more generally, this has not dramatically increased the number of visitors from Area One.<sup>13</sup>

### Visa regimes and cross-border mobility

OSCE participating States have committed to “[...] promote free and secure movement of persons [...]” through “[...] encouraging, as appropriate, circumstances that could allow the liberalization of visa regimes”, while acknowledging the legitimacy of the visa mechanism to assess risks and threats associated with the movement of people across borders.

In exercising their sovereign authority over the admittance of foreign citizens into their territory, states can use the visa requirement as a legitimate instrument to ensure the protection of public order and/or national security, and to prevent irregular immigration and other threats associated with the entry of foreign nationals on their territory. The objective of visa requirements is not to prevent or deter the entry of foreign nationals, but rather to enable states to assess whether the entry of foreign citizens is associated with certain risks prior to their arrival at national borders.

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12 Data on the number of foreign visitors published by the UNWTO are provided on an annual basis for the period 2007-2011.

13 For example, although Ukraine lifted its visa requirement for most of OSCE participating States, the number of visitors from Area One declined.

The pre-assessment of foreign visitors through the visa mechanism gives states the opportunity to decide whether a foreign visitor meets its entry criteria in advance, so that this decision is not made at national borders. It therefore facilitates the work of border officials, who in the absence of a visa mechanism would be required to establish each foreign national's eligibility to enter the state's territory on arrival at the border.

While certain exceptions apply,<sup>14</sup> the visa-free travel regimes within Area One between the United States and Canada, the 28 EU member states, the four non-EU Schengen Area states and the five Western Balkans states have resulted in approximately 70 per cent of the population of the OSCE region enjoying a high level of cross-border mobility. A determining factor in the level of cross-border freedom of movement enjoyed by citizens of each OSCE participating State is the Common Visa Policy implemented by the 26 EU member states and four non-EU Schengen Area states – a total of 30 OSCE participating States, or more than half of all the countries in the OSCE region. As a result of the Common Visa Policy, the decision of states within the Schengen Area whether or not to maintain a visa regime with other OSCE participating States has a significant effect on the extent to which citizens of those states enjoy cross-border travel freedoms within the OSCE region. Similarly, as important destinations for travellers, visa regimes maintained by Canada, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States have equal importance in relation to their impact on cross-border travel.

This study shows that:

- Area One participating States facing high risks of irregular migration in general have higher rates of refused visa applications compared to Area Two participating States, which face lower risks of irregular migration;
- The relative complexity of visa issuance procedures of Area One participating States does not act as a deterrent to travel to this area regardless of the purpose of travel;
- In general, the number of visas issued by participating States from North America, the 28 EU member states and the four non-EU Schengen Area states is generally higher compared to the number of visas issued by participating States which maintain visa regimes on the basis of reciprocity;
- The number of visas issued by Area One participating States to Area Two participating States has increased despite the fact that visa procedures and their complexity have not changed substantively. It can therefore be assumed that the increase in travel is mainly due to increased interest of citizens from Area Two states in travelling to Area One states.

The prevention of irregular migration is one of the main reasons why a visa regime is implemented by the United States, Canada, the 28 EU member states and the four non-EU Schengen Area states.

As these countries are among the most developed economies in the world, they are traditional destination countries for legal and irregular immigrants. Accordingly, they face heightened risks of irregular immigration by nationals of other states.

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<sup>14</sup> The following exceptions apply: Canada maintains visa regimes towards Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia. The United Kingdom maintains visa regimes towards Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The United States maintain visa regimes towards Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania and Serbia.

Alleviating these risks has generally led to the development of complex visa application requirements, whereby a person applying for a visa has to provide sufficient guarantees that he or she will leave the destination state upon the expiration of his/her visa and will observe regulations governing the stay of non-immigrants on the territory of the state in question.

In OSCE participating States that maintain reciprocal visa regimes with the United States and Canada,<sup>15</sup> the 28 EU member states and the four non-EU Schengen Area states, the visa-application procedures are less complicated as these states are not at risk of irregular immigration.

Statistics presented in this study on the number of refused visa applications demonstrate the impact that the risks of irregular immigration have on the implementation of visa regimes.

Statistical analysis on the number of visas issued also demonstrates that the requirement to provide supporting documentary evidence and complex criteria for obtaining visas, such as those in place in North America, the 28 EU member states and the four non-EU Schengen Area states, have not deterred people from travelling to these states. In spite of the complex requirements for visas issued by these states, reflected in their higher visa refusal rates compared to other OSCE participating States, the number of visas issued by these states has steadily increased between 2010 and 2012. In the same period, the number of visas issued by participating States that maintain reciprocal visa regimes with the Area One states mentioned above either stagnated or declined. Only when these states waived some or all of the documentary evidence required as part of the visa application process did the number of visas issued increase.

An increase in the number of visas being issued does, of course, represent an achievement. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go before the liberalization of visa requirements will enable the full potential of cross-border travel between OSCE participating States to be realized.

### **Visa application requirements and the facilitation of cross-border mobility**

Continued growth in the volume of cross-border travel and the number of visas issued poses challenges to the facilitation of visa applications for legitimate travellers. Indeed, complex visa application requirements may discourage bona fide would-be travellers from travelling. In fact, it is more likely that they will choose to travel and request a visa *only* if they have strong personal or professional reasons for travelling. In particular, when deciding whether or not to travel, would-be travellers consider the time and money required to obtain a visa, which largely depends on the distance that they must travel in order to submit a visa application. Other determining factors include the number of trips to a consulate or visa application centre that the applicant must make, visa processing fees and the time required to collect the supporting documentation required for a visa application.

This study shows that:

- OSCE participating States can facilitate the visa application process for bona fide travellers by ensuring that applicants are not required to travel long distances to reach visa application collection points;

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<sup>15</sup> Namely Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

- In the OSCE region, the facilitation of visa applications (for example, by waiving the requirement for the submission of certain documentary evidence) results in an increase in the number of visa applications received, as well as in the number of visas issued, as compared to when the visa application procedure remains unchanged;
- Many OSCE participating States are issuing an increasing number of multiple-entry visas, which substantially facilitate cross-border travel for bona fide travellers;
- The need to establish the credibility of visa applicants in terms of their compliance with the terms of visa and entry regulations is the main obstacle to increasing the number of multiple-entry visas issued and extending their duration.

To facilitate visa applications, many participating States have opened additional consular representations in regions which receive a high number of visa applications. In those countries where they do not maintain consular representation, some OSCE participating States have delegated authority for the issuance of visas to other participating States that do have a consular representation in the country in question. This mechanism is particularly common among Schengen Area states, which use Schengen Representation Agreements as a mechanism for delegating authority for the issuance of visas.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, some participating States are increasingly relying on the contracted services of private companies, which (through their network of offices) serve as visa application collection points and points for the provision of information regarding visa applications.

OSCE participating States are also increasingly employing Internet-based visa application services. Many states allow applicants to use the Internet to submit visa applications, make appointments at consular offices and estimate the time taken to process visa applications. Even when online visa application processes are in place, however, supporting documentary evidence still needs to be submitted in the original hard copy and only rarely are scanned copies accepted. Some participating States require the submission of such documentation in person, while other participating States allow supporting documentation to be sent by post.

As noted above, the waiving of the requirement to submit certain documentary evidence has been found to result in a higher number of visas being issued as compared to other OSCE participating states where the submission of documentary evidence remains a requirement. This waiver most often occurs as part of visa facilitation agreements between OSCE participating States, but in some case OSCE participating States decide unilaterally to waive the requirement to submit supporting documents for citizens of certain states.

Multiple-entry visas facilitate cross-border travel by eliminating the need for frequent visa applications and allowing for greater freedom in making travel plans. The statistical data analysed in this study indicates that a growing proportion of the number of visas issued in the OSCE region are multiple-entry visas.

This study further highlights how participating States faced with heightened risks of irregular migration either employ or plan to introduce mechanisms to record the entry and exit of foreigners to and from their territories. These mechanisms permit them to better assess the credibility of visa applicants and the likelihood that they will comply with entry regulations,

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<sup>16</sup> Schengen Representation Agreements are bilateral agreements between Schengen Area states through which one Schengen Area state delegates authority over the issuance of visas for entrance into its territory to the consular representations of another Schengen Area state; such representations are based in countries in which the state delegating the authority does not have any consular representation.

and subsequently allow for the issuance of multiple-entry visas with a longer validity. In OSCE participating states which do not face high risks of irregular immigration from countries with which they have a visa regime, the issuance of multiple-entry visas is linked with an increased visa fee.

The collection of biometric information from visa applicants is already practiced by some OSCE participating States and is likely to become standard practice in many OSCE participating States. This requirement is being implemented regardless of whether a visa applicant holds a biometric passport or not. There are advantages and disadvantages to this approach: on the one hand, the biometric data collection process allows for the unambiguous determination of the identity of the person to whom a visa has been issued; on the other hand, this practice requires that visa applications be submitted only in person.

### **Visa-liberalization dialogues**

This study shows that:

- In order to liberalize visa requirements, it is important that OSCE participating States maintain continuous dialogue aimed at mitigating the risks associated with liberalizing visa requirements;
- Political dialogue between OSCE participating States aimed at the implementation of visa facilitation and/or liberalization has proven to be an effective mechanism to increase the cross-border mobility of the citizens of OSCE participating States and the promotion of contacts between their citizens.

With this in mind, this study focuses on the ongoing visa dialogues led by the EU and United States, as these have the most significant effect on cross-border mobility in the OSCE region as a whole. While these dialogues involve many other OSCE participating States, the criteria for qualifying for visa free travel are generally determined by the EU and United States. As part of the dialogue process, third countries usually decide to unilaterally waive their visa requirement for these states. The progress made in these dialogues to a large extent determines the progress that OSCE participating States make in creating conditions for freer and wider cross-border travel in the OSCE region.

In particular, the EU Schengen Area states, together with the four non-EU Schengen Area States, are making a conscious and determined effort to ease their visa requirements. In 2008, the EU created a policy on visa liberalization. As a result, the EU abolished the visa requirement for five Western Balkans countries in 2009 and 2010. In February 2014, the EU abolished visa requirements for citizens of Moldova. In addition, as of April 2014, the EU has begun visa-liberalization processes with Georgia, Turkey and Ukraine, and there is currently political commitment to offer this process to Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus. There is also an ongoing visa dialogue with the Russian Federation. Thus far, the EU has also concluded ten visa facilitation agreements with OSCE participating States, all of which have entered into force. At the time of writing, the visa facilitation agreement with Azerbaijan has been concluded but has not yet been entered into force. In April 2010, the EU Visa Code entered into force, which obliges EU member states to speed up and streamline visa application procedures and to put an emphasis on issuing long-term, multiple-entry visas, and which is gradually being put into practice. There are also efforts to harmonize documentation requirements in many of the third countries in which EU member states issue a large number of visas.

In the United States, the Visa Waiver Programme (VWP) is currently in operation for 30 OSCE participating States. Countries nominated for participation in the VWP undergo a detailed evaluation by the United States Department of Homeland Security. As of March 2014, there are no OSCE participating States undergoing the VWP assessment procedure. However, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland, Romania and Turkey have been afforded the status of “VWP Road Map Countries”. The United States has maintained a dialogue with these countries since 2005, with the aim of helping them meet VWP criteria so that they might qualify to be nominated for participation in the VWP in the future.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has drawn up the following recommendations intended for the authorities of OSCE participating States, with the aim of further supporting their efforts in developing and implementing regulations governing the movement of citizens in the OSCE region in line with OSCE commitments on freedom of movement and human contacts.

## **Visa dialogues and co-operation on visa issuance**

1. OSCE participating States should facilitate cross-border mobility in the OSCE region by intensifying dialogue aimed at liberalizing visa requirements for their citizens, while taking into account their legitimate interests with regard to national security, public order, public health and preventing irregular immigration.
2. To facilitate transparency (within the context of promoting cross-border human contacts), OSCE participating States should publish information pertaining to the content of visa facilitation/liberalization dialogues, as well as information on the number of visas issued annually, the rate of refused visa applications, the average duration of visas issued and the percentage of multiple-entry visas issued as a proportion of the total number of visas issued.
3. OSCE participating States should enhance co-operation between their consulates, and should consider concluding bilateral agreements on the outsourcing of consular tasks in those OSCE participating States where they do not maintain consular representation. Should one participating State not have diplomatic representation in a country where another participating State has a consulate, then the former should consider transferring to the latter tasks relating to visa applications and issuance. This would help to render consular services more accessible.

### Visa application requirements

4. OSCE participating States should provide visa applicants with up-to-date and comprehensive information on visa issuance policies and visa application procedures. To that end, consideration should be given to developing dedicated Internet websites that will carry and present to the public all information relevant to visa applications and provide necessary guidance on applying for a visa. Information should also be provided in the native languages of the applicants.
5. Where possible, participating States should consider the following: (i) shortening the period required to process a visa application; (ii) lowering visa application fees; (iii) minimizing the amount of supporting documentation required in order to reduce the time and cost to the applicant of obtaining a visa.
6. Consideration should be given to issuing long-term multiple-entry visas to persons who can demonstrably be trusted not to violate entry regulations, and in particular to persons who, it can be determined, have not violated the terms of previously issued visas.
7. For the purpose of determining compliance with the terms of previously issued visas, OSCE participating States with a high number of foreign visitors could consider, besides stamping passports, to implement mechanisms for the automatized recording of entry and exits by foreigners arriving on a visa.
8. To facilitate the issuance of visas, participating States should consider implementing mechanisms that would shorten the time required for an applicant to obtain invitation letters justifying the purpose of travel and guaranteeing the covering of travel costs. To that end, participating States could consider either (i) completely waiving the requirement for the official endorsement of invitation letters, or (ii) at a minimum, to establish a procedure whereby the authorities in the home country could inform the embassy/consulate at which a visa application has been submitted *ex-officio* that the required invitation letter has been endorsed.
9. OSCE participating States should use up-to-date communication technologies and explore opportunities for the electronic submission of visa applications and supporting documentation.
10. The fees for various types of state-provided services (including the issuance of visas) should be proportional to the administrative costs incurred and should not be viewed as a source of revenue.



# METHODOLOGY

Information presented in this study is the result of research and statistical analyses conducted between November 2012 and June 2013. In the course of the research, visa policy experts from the OSCE region were consulted and contributed their input. The research also benefited from discussions held and recommendations made by the participants in the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Movement and Human Contacts held in Vienna in April 2012.

## **Volume of cross-border travel**

In order to assess the volume of cross-border travel in the OSCE region, this study focuses on quantitative analyses of the number of foreign visitors to each OSCE participating State between 2007 and 2011, including the declared purposes of their visits.<sup>17</sup> The assessment was made with a view to determining the progress that OSCE participating States have made in implementing their commitment to “*facilitate wider travel by their citizens for personal or professional reasons*”<sup>18</sup> and to “[...] *further facilitate travel on an individual or collective basis for personal or professional reasons and for tourism, such as travel by delegations, groups and individuals*”.<sup>19</sup>

The assessment was based on official statistics published by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Baseline data published by the UNWTO for each country comprise information on the annual number of foreign visitors and/or the annual number of foreign tourist visitors, broken down according to travellers’ countries of origin. The statistical analysis of the number of foreign visitors to each OSCE participating State was based on the number of foreign visitors arriving at each state’s borders, as published by the UNWTO.

This methodology was applied to all OSCE participating States, with the exception of those located in the Schengen Area. As a consequence of the removal of land-border checks within the Schengen Area, many Schengen Area states do not record the arrival of foreigners at their

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<sup>17</sup> At the time the research was conducted, data for 2012 and 2013 had not been published.

<sup>18</sup> Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act, 1 August 1975, Helsinki, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/39501?download=true>>.

<sup>19</sup> Concluding Document of the Third Follow-up Meeting of the CSCE, 19 January 1989, Vienna, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/16262>>.

national borders; therefore, it is difficult to accurately estimate the volume of cross-border movement within and into the Schengen Area. Accordingly, the UNWTO baseline data for most of the Schengen Area states only provide information on the number of foreign visitors registered at all types of tourist facilities. Therefore, the number of foreign visitors presented in this study does not include all foreign visitors to the Schengen Area states; rather, it is limited to foreign tourist visitors. Where available (on the basis of the relevant UNWTO data statistics), information on the number of foreign visitors according to the declared purpose of their visit is also provided for each OSCE participating State.

In some cases, the UNWTO's statistical data on the numbers of foreign visitors arriving at national borders were not available, as national authorities in some OSCE participating States do not collect such information.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, this study does not provide any statistical information on those participating States.

The number of foreign visitors was assessed in order to determine the numbers of travellers from each of the two regions of free or visa-free cross-border travel established as a result of multilateral and bilateral agreements between OSCE participating states, i.e., (i) the free cross-border travel area comprising the 28 EU member states, the four non-EU Schengen Area states, Canada and the United States, and (ii) the free cross-border travel area between OSCE participating States that form part of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The order in which information on the number of foreign visitors to each OSCE participating State is presented reflects the geographical location of each state, as well as the region of free or visa-free cross-border travel in which they are located. This order begins with the most westerly OSCE participating States (in North America) and finishes with Mongolia (in North-east Asia).

### **Visa application requirements**

With a view to indicating the progress that the OSCE participating States have made in implementing their commitment “[...] to implement the procedures for entry into their territories, including the issuing of visas and passport and customs control, in good faith and without unjustified delay” and (where visa regimes are in place) to “[...] shorten the waiting time for visa decisions, as well as simplify practices and reduce administrative requirements for visa applications”, this study analyses the specific visa application requirements of OSCE participating States, as well as how such requirements impact the visa application process.

To that end, analyses of the visa application requirements of all OSCE participating States were conducted as part of this study. Information was gathered from official websites maintained by the relevant national visa authorities of participating States, including information published by the European Commission on behalf of the Schengen Area states. This was supplemented by information on the websites of consular representations of OSCE participating States operating abroad.

This study presents the results of an assessment of the implementation of visa policies in OSCE participating States. The assessment was made on the basis of a quantitative analysis of the number of visas issued, the visa refusal rate and the number of multiple-entry visas issued, as well as a qualitative analysis of the factors that influence certain statistical results. In terms of gathering and presenting information on visa statistics and visa application procedures,

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20 Namely Andorra, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Holy See, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, San Marino, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

this study focuses exclusively on non-immigrant visas, which generally allow visitors to enter states for the purposes of tourism or business or for other reasons, such as visiting friends and family, and which foresee that the visitor will return to her/his country of origin. These types of visas, however, do not grant the right to seek employment, provide commercial services or stay longer on the territory than legally permitted.

In addition to the above, information was obtained through a questionnaire developed for this study by ODIHR and distributed to the relevant authorities in all 57 OSCE participating States. The questionnaire comprised six questions including on the types of non-immigrant visas issued, the number of such visas issued to citizens of other OSCE participating States and the visa application process, as well as travel facilitation agreements and border area travel agreements concluded with other OSCE participating States (see Annex 1). As such, the questionnaire formed the basis for a comparative analysis of visa policies and the number of visas issued in instances where cross-border travel is regulated by a visa regime.

The questionnaire was distributed to the national authorities of all 57 OSCE participating States, of which 43 returned a completed questionnaire. In the event that an OSCE participating State did not return a completed questionnaire or where certain information on a participating State could not be obtained from public sources, then this information was left out of the study.

Information presented in this study on the total number of visas issued is further disaggregated to reflect the number of visas issued to nationals of each separate OSCE participating State.

One exception to this methodology is the information presented on the Schengen Area, which was provided by the European Commission on behalf of the 26 EU and the four non-EU Schengen Area states. This information is presented as the total number of visas issued at consular offices of Schengen Area states located in the OSCE participating States. This number is further broken down into the number of visas issued in each of those OSCE participating States that are subject to a visa regime with Schengen Area states. Under EU regulations, Schengen Area states are only obliged to inform the European Commission of the number of visas issued in those countries in which they operate visa offices. While some states included information on the questionnaire on the nationality of applicants to whom visas were issued, many were unable to provide this information. Therefore, information presented on the Schengen Area states is not fully in line with established methodology and there is a high probability that visas issued in a given state could have been issued to people who were not citizens of that state. Nevertheless, such numbers are incorporated in the total number of visas reported as having been issued in that state.

# CHAPTER 1

## OVERVIEW OF CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY IN THE OSCE REGION

In an increasingly globalized economy, liberalized cross-border human mobility yields significant economic benefits stemming largely from tourism and the establishment of business contacts. Many states, therefore, invest significantly in attracting foreign visitors in order to stimulate growth in their economies. According to feedback from foreign visitors regarding the purpose of their visits, 66 per cent of all foreign visits at the global level were carried out for the purpose of tourism or business. At the same time, as much as 30 per cent of all foreign visitors declared that personal motives (such as to visit friends or family or for health or religious reasons) were behind their visits.

The EU member states attract the largest number of foreign visitors within the OSCE region. According to the UNWTO, 66.6 per cent (385 million) of all foreign visitors recorded in the OSCE region in 2011 visited one of the (at that time) 27 member states of the European Union.<sup>21</sup> It is reasonable to aggregate the number of visitors travelling to the EU as a whole (rather than to each EU member state) given the fact that the EU itself is an area of free cross-border travel within which land border checkpoints between most of the EU member states no longer exist, and in which both citizens of these states and foreigners on the territory of these states can move about unrestrictedly. The number of foreign visitors to the EU in 2011 represents both the cumulative number of visitors travelling from one EU member state to another, as well as visitors arriving from other countries worldwide. It is noteworthy that the high number of foreign visitors to the EU recorded nevertheless constitutes a conservative estimate that is based largely on the number of registered tourist visitors. In the absence of land border checkpoints between EU member states that are part of the Schengen Area, many visitors travelling between these states remain unrecorded in statistics on foreign visitors and are not represented in the total number of visitors presented in this study.

Other countries that received large numbers of foreign visitors in 2011 were the United States, which received 10.7 per cent of all visitors to the OSCE region (62.3 million), Turkey (5 per cent, or 29.3 million), the Russian Federation (4 per cent, or 22.6 million), Ukraine (3.7 per cent, or 21.4 million) and Canada (2.7 per cent, or 15.9 million). Foreign visitors to the remaining OSCE participating States accounted for 7.3 per cent of foreign visitors to the OSCE region in 2011.

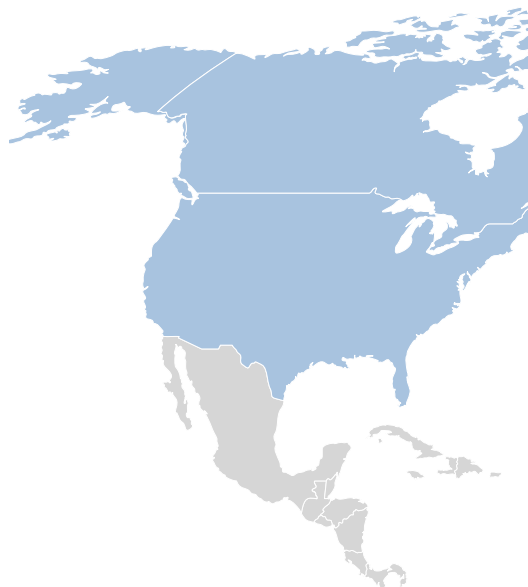
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21 Croatia joined the EU in 2013, becoming the 28th EU member state. However, data refer to the number of visitors in 2011, when the EU comprised 27 member states.

This section provides detailed information on the following: (i) the number of foreign visitors to OSCE participating States from the OSCE region between 2007 and 2011; and (ii) the declared purposes of their visits. Detailed statistics on the number of foreign visitors outside the specified timeframe were not available when the research was conducted. Information is presented on each OSCE participating State for which statistical information could be obtained during the research period. In the interest of clarity, the order in which the statistical data for each participating State is presented in this study reflects the state's geographical position within the OSCE region, starting from the participating States in the west (North America) and continuing eastwards through Europe and Central Asia, and ending with North-East Asia. Furthermore, in the case of many OSCE participating States, the information has been grouped according to membership in specific regions of free and visa-free cross-border travel, such as the Schengen Area and the region comprising the CIS states. In order to ensure clarity in terms of patterns of cross-border travel within the OSCE region, information on the number of foreign visitors to each OSCE participating State has been aggregated to reflect the number of foreign visitors arriving from either the Schengen Area or the CIS.<sup>22</sup>

## 1.1 NORTH AMERICA

Canada and the United States receive a large number of foreign visitors from the OSCE region. According to the 2011 UNWTO data, the number of foreign visitors to these two states amounted to 13.4 per cent of all foreign visitors to the OSCE region (including visitors between the two states). In fact, travel between the two neighbouring countries, which maintain mutually liberalized cross-border travel regimes, accounts for a large percentage of all foreign visitors from the OSCE region to these two states. According to data from 2011, visitors from Canada to the United States accounted for 63 per cent of all visitors to the United States originating from the OSCE region, while visitors from the United States to Canada accounted for 84 per cent of all visitors to Canada originating from the OSCE region.



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22 Especially taking into account the fact that travel between the two regions is largely subject to visa regimes between participating States that are maintained on a reciprocal basis.

### 1.1.1 Canada

Foreign visitors from the OSCE region accounted for 87 per cent of all foreign visitors to Canada in 2011. By far the largest number of visitors in 2011 arrived from the neighbouring United States, representing 72.5 per cent of all foreign visitors and 84 per cent of all foreign visitors from the OSCE region. As illustrated in Table 1.1, after visitors from the United States, the largest number of visitors from the OSCE region in 2011 came from the EU member states and other Schengen Area states (16 per cent). In contrast, visitors from other OSCE participating States accounted for a mere 0.6 per cent of all visitors from the OSCE region in 2011. Detailed statistics reveal that, compared to data from 2007, the total number of visitors in 2011 decreased by 10.7 per cent. The drop, which coincides with the global economic crisis in 2008, is particularly noticeable among visitors from those OSCE participating States with which Canada maintains visa-free travel regimes, with the sharpest decline occurring in the number of visitors from the United States. However, when it comes to other OSCE participating States, the number of visitors in the same period continued to grow, unaffected by the economic downturn. While the nominal number of visitors from these states remains small compared to those from OSCE participating States with which Canada maintains visa-free regimes, the uninterrupted growth in their numbers between 2007 and 2011 further suggests that there is potential for the number of visitors from these states to continue growing.

TABLE 1.1: FOREIGN VISITORS TO CANADA BETWEEN 2007 AND 2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% change since 2007
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	17,934,881	17,142,102	15,737,150	16,097,369	16,014,405	<b>-10.7</b>
<b>Visitors from the United States of America</b>	13,375,201	12,503,880	11,667,233	11,748,814	11,595,363	<b>-13.3</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	2,314,720	2,366,434	2,145,201	2,244,480	2,222,781	<b>-4.0</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	35,028	40,941	35,618	42,404	42,468	<b>21.2</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	24,158	23,898	23,606	27,953	27,206	<b>12.6</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	2,185,774	2,206,949	1,865,492	2,033,718	2,126,587	<b>-2.7</b>

Figure 1.3 provides a breakdown of foreign visitors from the OSCE region to Canada in 2011, including their country of origin. It also illustrates a pattern that suggests that the largest number of foreign visitors came from either the United States or from European countries with which Canada maintains visa-free travel regimes.

FIGURE 1.3: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO CANADA IN 2011

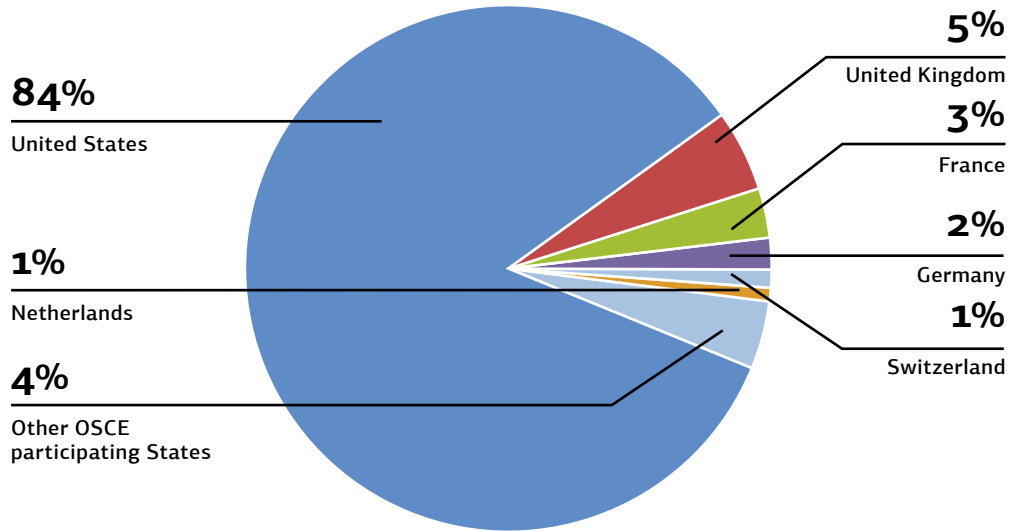
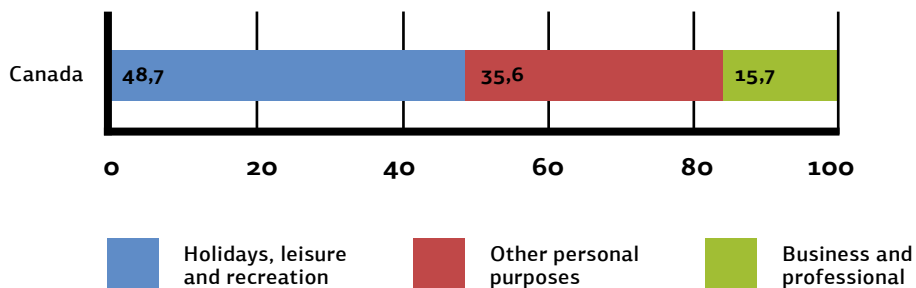


Figure 1.4 illustrates the fact that more than a third of all visitors to Canada came for reasons other than tourism and business. On the whole, most visitors travelling for personal purposes visited the country to meet with friends and family. Not surprisingly, given that Canada is one of the world’s largest tourist destinations, approximately 50 per cent of all visits were for tourism purposes.

FIGURE 1.4: PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS TO CANADA BY DECLARED PURPOSE OF VISIT IN 2011



### 1.1.2 The United States

In 2011, the United States received 62.5 million foreign visitors, of which 54 per cent came from the OSCE region. Compared to data from 2007, the total number of foreign visitors rose by 12 per cent, while the number of visitors from the OSCE region grew by 17 per cent (2.1 million) by 2011. In 2011, visitors from neighbouring Canada accounted for the highest number of visitors from the OSCE region (63 per cent). In 2011, the United States also received a large number of visitors from the EU member states and other Schengen Area states (36 per cent). This last figure can be explained by the high living standards among citizens of Schengen Area states, as well as the fact that, with a few exceptions, the United States does not require a visa for citizens of EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states. As a proportion of the total number of visitors to the United States from the OSCE region in 2011, the number of visitors from OSCE participating States with which the United States maintains visa regimes was very small, with only 1.5 per cent of all visitors to the United States originating from these states.

While the nominal number of visitors from OSCE participating States with which the United States maintains visa regimes (in particular from CIS states) remains small, the increase in the number of visitors from these states reveals a growing interest in travel from these states to the United States. Compared to data from 2007, the number of visitors to the United States from OSCE participating States with which the United States maintains visa regimes increased by 72 per cent by 2011. In contrast, the number of visitors from OSCE participating States with which the United States does not have visa regimes grew on average by 16.2 per cent between 2007 and 2011.

Table 1.2 provides a more detailed overview of foreign visitors to the United States between 2007 and 2011, including growth trends.

**TABLE 1.2: FOREIGN VISITORS TO THE UNITED STATES BETWEEN 2007 AND 2011**

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% change since 2007
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	55,978,277	57,942,451	54,962,184	59,795,616	62,711,157	<b>12.0</b>
<b>Visitors from Canada</b>	17,759,000	18,915,000	17,977,000	19,964,000	21,337,000	<b>20.1</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	11,213,247	12,550,314	11,328,339	11,723,220	12,344,361	<b>10.1</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	180,581	218,641	211,653	254,493	310,332	<b>71.9</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	132,169	148,606	130,189	152,018	157,958	<b>19.5</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	26,693,280	26,109,890	25,315,003	27,701,885	28,561,506	<b>7.0</b>

Figure 1.5 provides a breakdown of visitors from the OSCE region to the United States in 2011, including those participating States with the highest number of travellers. It also illustrates the fact that a total of 88 per cent of all visitors from the OSCE region to the United States came from Canada and the five largest EU member states (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom).



FIGURE 1.5: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO THE UNITED STATES IN 2011

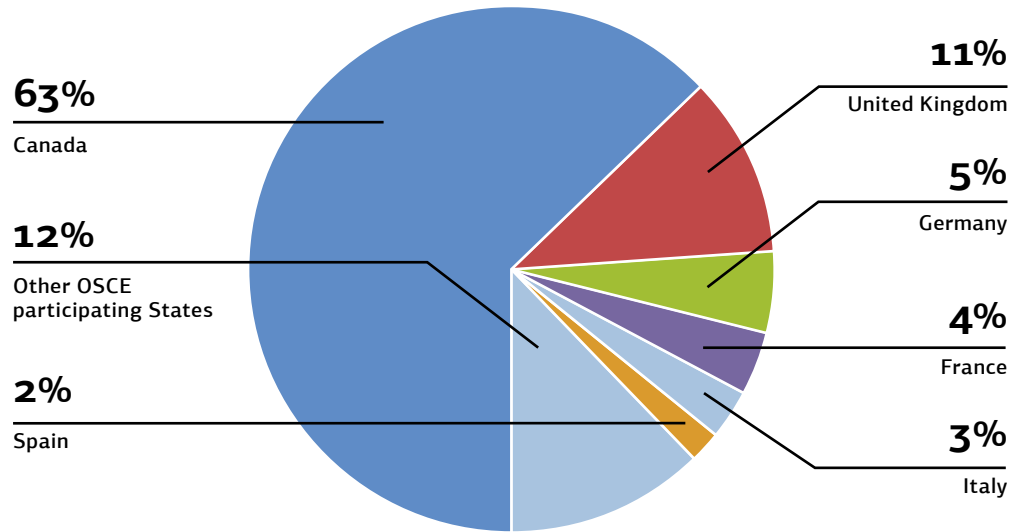
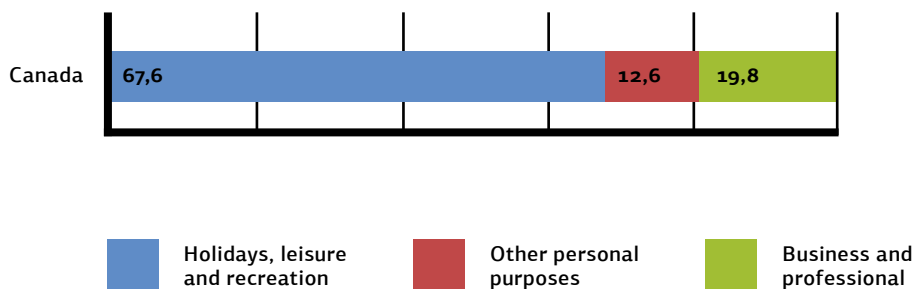


Figure 1.6 illustrates the fact that the majority of foreign visitors travel to the United States for leisure, while approximately 20 per cent visit for business purposes. The remaining 12.6 per cent of visitors travel for personal reasons that are not necessarily associated with leisure or business, such as visiting friends and family.

FIGURE 1.6: PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS TO THE UNITED STATES IN 2011 BY DECLARED PURPOSE OF VISIT IN 2011

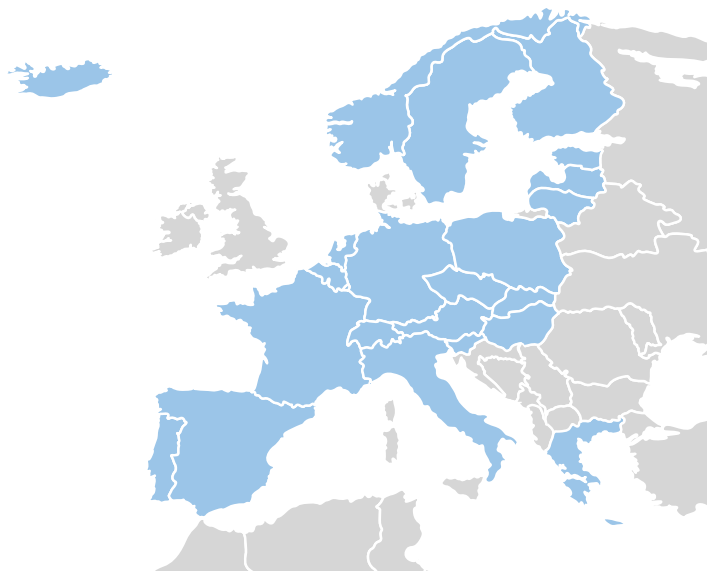


## 1.2 EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

The volume of cross-border travel between OSCE participating States in Europe and Central Asia is generally shaped by bilateral and multilateral agreements on the basis of which, *inter alia*, areas of free and visa-free cross-border travel between signatory states have been established. The 1957 Treaty on the European Economic Community established what is now known as the EU, and is an area of free movement of people, goods, capital and services. Later, the Schengen Agreement (1985) and the subsequent upgrade of its regulatory framework abolished

the land-border checkpoints between Schengen Area states (1995). Similarly, the Establishing Agreement of the Commonwealth of Independent States (1991) defined an area comprising the territories of member states as an area of visa-free cross-border travel.

In order to provide a better understanding of the volume of cross-border travel and to highlight patterns of cross-border travel between OSCE participating States in Europe and Central Asia, the information on the number of foreign visitors is aggregated and presented in a manner that reflects and contrasts the visa-free travel areas within this part of the OSCE region. In this regard, the data have been aggregated to reflect cross-border travel within the Schengen Area states and within the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as between these two regions. In addition, alongside information on the number of foreign visitors to the Schengen Area states, information is provided on other EU member states that do not implement the Schengen regulatory framework, but nevertheless are part of the free movement space within the EU.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the data have been aggregated to reflect the number of foreign visitors to the area of visa-free travel from CIS states. Information regarding other OSCE participating States that do not form part of these regions and for which statistical information was available is then presented separately.



### 1.2.1 Schengen Area

The establishment of the Schengen Area dates back to 14 June 1985, when five member states of what was at the time called the European Community (Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Luxemburg and the Netherlands) signed – outside the framework of the Community – an agreement on the Gradual Abolition of Checks at Their Common Borders (the “Schengen Agreement”). The main objective of the Agreement was to facilitate the gradual abolition of checks at the signatories’ common internal borders. In 1990, the Agreement was supplemented by the 1990 Convention,<sup>24</sup> which also included a provision on the creation of a Common Visa Policy. Both treaties and the rules adopted under them were then incorporated into European Union law by the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty.<sup>25</sup>

23 Namely Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom. This information also includes data from Croatia as an EU member state, although it should be noted that Croatia was not an EU member state in the period covered by the statistical data.

24 Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement of 14 June 1985 between the Governments of the States of the Benelux Economic Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic, on the Gradual Abolition of Checks at their Common Borders, 19 June 1990, Schengen, <[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:42000A0922\(o2\):en:HTML](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:42000A0922(o2):en:HTML)>.

25 Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty of the European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and certain related acts, 2 October 1997, Amsterdam, <[http://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/1\\_avrupa\\_birligi/1\\_3\\_antlasmalar/1\\_3\\_2\\_tadil\\_antlasmalari/1997\\_amsterdam\\_treaty\\_eng.pdf](http://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/1_avrupa_birligi/1_3_antlasmalar/1_3_2_tadil_antlasmalari/1997_amsterdam_treaty_eng.pdf)>.

The Schengen Area currently consists of 26 OSCE participating States, including 22 EU member states<sup>26</sup> and four non-EU countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland). It covers a population of some 420 million people. *De facto*, the Schengen Area also includes Monaco, San Marino and the Holy See, which maintain open or semi-open borders with Schengen Area states.<sup>27</sup> Ireland and the United Kingdom have opted out of the Schengen regulatory framework and co-operate only in certain areas concerning the control of the EU's external borders. Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania are scheduled to become part of the Schengen Area, although their future participation is subject to the approval of the EU Council of Ministers, following consultation with the European Parliament.

The removal of internal border checks within the Schengen Area has been one of the most tangible achievements in terms of co-operation between the Schengen Area states, and has resulted in the facilitation of cross-border mobility within a vast geographical area. Consequently, citizens of these states have the right to travel freely to and from any state within the Schengen Area. Moreover, this freedom of movement within the Schengen Area extends to foreign visitors from OSCE participating States with which the EU maintains visa-free regimes, as well as to holders of valid Schengen visas (in the case of citizens of OSCE participating States for whom entry into the Schengen Area requires a visa).

Following the removal of internal border checks, many Schengen Area states with no external Schengen Area borders do not record the entry of all foreigners onto their territory. It is therefore difficult to accurately estimate the volume of cross-border movement within the Schengen Area. As a result, for most Schengen Area states, the UNWTO statistical data only provide information on the number of foreign visitors registered in all types of tourist facilities. With this limitation in mind, the following information on the number of foreign visitors is limited to those who visit for tourism purposes and who register at tourist facilities.

According to the UNWTO data, the Schengen Area states received 276.5 million foreign tourist visitors in 2011. According to EU officials, however, an estimated 1.25 billion journeys across internal EU borders are made every year. On the one hand, this represents a significant difference in terms of the number of registered tourist visitors and the overall number of visitors. On the other hand, this reflects the limitations of the methodology used to aggregate information on the number of foreign visitors.<sup>28</sup> While the total number of tourist visitors does not paint an accurate picture, it does allow for travelling patterns to be identified. Nevertheless, it is still worth noting that, due to the different methodologies applied in aggregating the number of foreign visitors to Schengen Area states, these figures are not comparable with the data available for other OSCE participating States.

As illustrated in Table 1.3, the number of tourist visitors originating from within the Schengen Area states accounted for 61 per cent of all foreign tourist visits recorded in the Schengen Area in 2011. In addition, 13 per cent of foreign tourist visitors arrived from other EU member states that are not part of the Schengen Area (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the United

26 Namely Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

27 These OSCE participating States do not operate land border checkpoints with neighbouring states. For nationals of non-Schengen Area countries, entry into their territories is subject to the entry regulations of the state from which they cross the border. For instance, a person who enters San Marino or the Holy See by land must first comply with Italian entry regulations. While Monaco maintains open borders with France, French authorities check travellers arriving at the sea port in Monaco.

28 Keynote address to the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension on Freedom of Movement and Human Contacts by Marta Cygan, Director of Strategy and Delivery Steering Directorate in Directorate General Home Affairs of the European Commission to Meeting, 25 April 2013, Hofburg, Vienna, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/101084>>.

Kingdom).<sup>29</sup> As such, the number of tourist visitors originating from within the Schengen Area increased by 6.5 per cent (10.2 million visitors) between 2007 and 2011, while the number of tourist visitors originating from non-Schengen EU member states dropped by 13.3 per cent (5.3 million visitors). In contrast, tourist visitors from other OSCE participating States accounted for 10.6 per cent of all foreign tourist visitors in 2011. Therefore, the number of tourist visitors from other OSCE participating States increased in 2011 by 15.3 per cent (3.9 million visitors) between 2007 and 2011.

Due to the lack of precise baseline data, the citizenship of a certain number of foreign visitors from the OSCE region could not be determined, as visitors were sometimes grouped by region and not by country of origin. In Table 1.3, this number is included in the “unspecified OSCE participating States” category, which represents approximately 2 per cent of the total number of foreign tourist visitors to the Schengen Area for 2011.

TABLE 1.3: FOREIGN TOURIST VISITORS TO THE SCHENGEN AREA BETWEEN 2007 AND 2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% change since 2007
<b>Total number of foreign tourist visitors</b>	261,828,678	260,987,829	246,666,694	261,849,488	276,517,315	<b>5.6</b>
<b>Visitors from Schengen Area states</b>	159,754,599	161,699,691	156,784,302	163,723,328	170,075,274	<b>6.5</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states not part of the Schengen Area</b>	40,450,295	38,972,343	33,190,297	34,102,904	35,088,020	<b>-13.3</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	25,634,916	24,803,550	22,998,327	26,302,049	29,545,064	<b>15.3</b>
<b>Visitors from unspecified OSCE participating States</b>	5,879,041	6,124,410	5,871,211	5,723,526	5,702,795	<b>-3.0</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	30,109,827	29,387,835	27,822,557	31,997,681	36,106,162	<b>19.9</b>

In addition, limitations in the baseline data did not allow for a precise calculation to be made of the total number of foreign tourist visitors originating from the Commonwealth of Independent States. However, the available data did enable a comparison of the percentage and number of foreign tourist visitors coming from those OSCE participating States that are not members of the EU or part of the Schengen Area.

Figure 1.7 reveals that well over 50 per cent of tourist visitors to the Schengen Area from OSCE participating States that are not within the EU and/or the Schengen Area came from the United States. This can be attributed to the relatively high GDP per capita in the United States, as well as the visa-free travel regime that Schengen Area states maintain with the United States. The number of tourists travelling to the Schengen Area from OSCE participating States located east of the Schengen Area remains lower than it potentially could be mainly as a result of the cost of travel for citizens of the less economically-developed states in the region, with visa requirements posing an additional hurdle.

<sup>29</sup> The statistics do not include Croatia, which was not an EU member state when the data were collected.

FIGURE 1.7: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF TOURIST VISITORS TO THE SCHENGEN AREA IN 2011

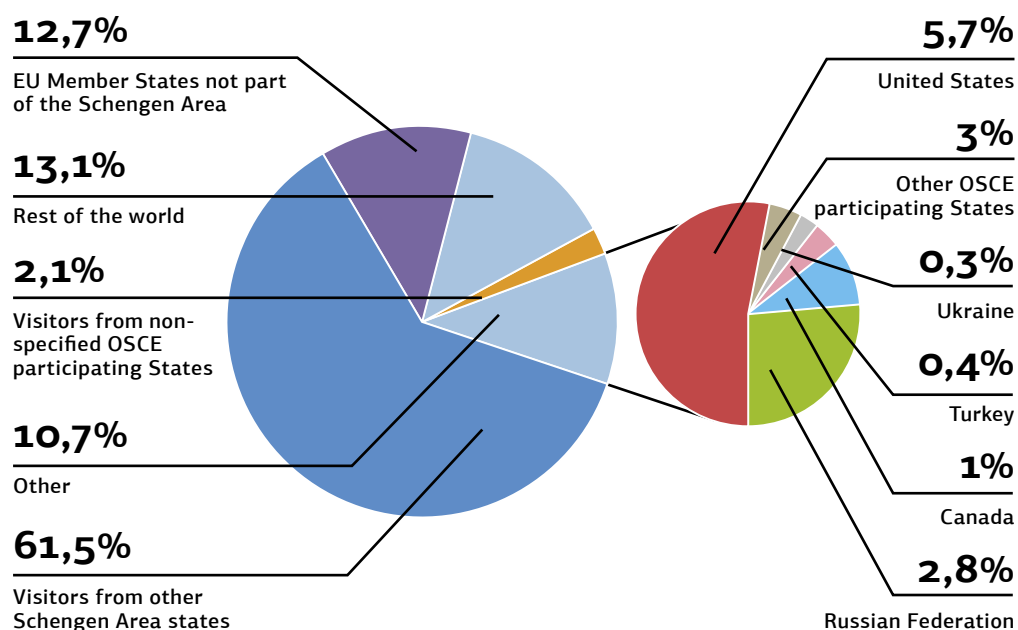


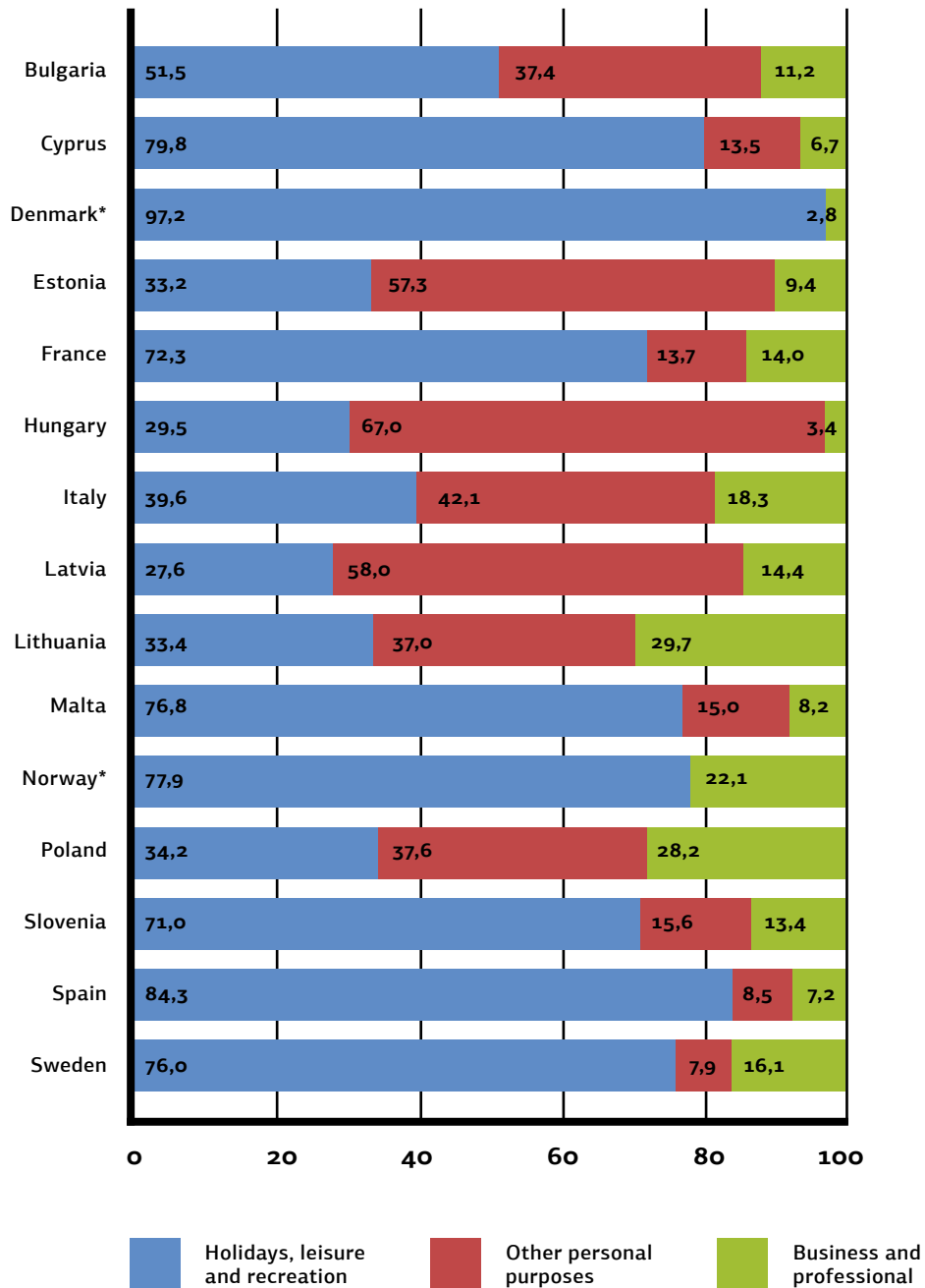
Table 1.4 illustrates the change in the number of tourist visitors from the five OSCE participating States located outside the EU and the Schengen Area with the highest number of tourist visitors to the Schengen Area.

TABLE 1.4: FOREIGN TOURIST VISITORS TO THE SCHENGEN AREA FROM NON-EU/SCHENGEN AREA STATES BETWEEN 2007 AND 2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% change since 2007
<b>Visitors from Canada</b>	2,274,747	2,318,314	2,150,664	2,501,211	2,736,365	<b>20.3</b>
<b>Visitors from the Russian Federation</b>	4,384,203	5,257,871	4,676,115	5,846,121	7,659,227	<b>74.7</b>
<b>Visitors from Turkey</b>	791,900	883,743	795,490	1,002,893	1,170,320	<b>47.8</b>
<b>Visitors from Ukraine</b>	500,666	501,373	473,362	643,167	809,688	<b>61.7</b>
<b>Visitors from the United States</b>	16,646,711	14,752,629	13,877,980	15,158,976	15,857,101	<b>-4.7</b>

The table shows that, compared to data from 2007, the number of visitors in 2011 from the Russian Federation increased by 3.2 million (74.5 per cent), from Turkey by 0.4 million (47.8 per cent) and from Ukraine by 0.3 million (61.7 per cent). It is important to stress that travel by citizens of these states to the EU is regulated by a visa regime.

FIGURE 1.8: PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS TO SCHENGEN AREA STATES BY DECLARED PURPOSE OF VISIT IN 2011 (WHERE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE)



\* no record of other personal purposes as declared purpose of visit

Conversely, the number of visitors from Canada and the United States, although already high, did not experience such high rates of growth. In fact, the total number of tourist visitors from the United States to the Schengen Area fell in 2008, coinciding with the start of the global economic crisis in 2008. Although the number of visitors from the United States picked up again after 2008, by 2011 it had not yet returned to pre-2008 levels, so that the number of visitors from the United States for 2011 is 4.7 per cent lower than the number for 2007. The data for the period 2007 to 2011 also reveal a growth of 6.5 per cent in the number of tourist visitors originating from the Schengen Area states, as well as a drop of 13.3 per cent in the number of tourist visitors from EU member states that are not part of the Schengen Area.<sup>30</sup> The high growth rate in the number of tourist visitors from OSCE participating States that are subject to visa regimes with the Schengen Area indicates that the number of tourists from these states is likely to rise, as is the workload of the visa-issuing authorities of Schengen Area states.

Figure 1.8 shows the percentage of visitors travelling to the Schengen Area according to the declared purpose of their visit. Only those Schengen Area states for which data were available are included. The high percentage of visitors travelling as tourists can be attributed to the strong tourism industries of the destination countries. The data also demonstrate how, in the case of many Schengen Area states along the eastern borders of the Schengen Area, a large number of foreign visitors travel in order to meet family and friends (among other personal reasons).

### **1.2.2 EU member states that do not implement or do not fully implement the Schengen regulatory framework**

The EU was founded on the principle of the free movement of people, goods, capital and services. Today, EU citizens have the right to travel freely within the territory of the EU and, under certain conditions, to establish residency in any EU member state. However, unlike those EU member states that fully implement the Schengen regulatory framework, EU member states that are not part of the Schengen Area operate land-border checkpoints, so that all travellers wishing to enter or leave the territory of these states need to present a valid travel document.<sup>31</sup>

When the Schengen regulatory framework was first drawn up, Ireland and the United Kingdom opted out of fully implementing the framework, including the EU's Common Visa Policy for non-EU nationals.<sup>32</sup> Instead, they have implemented their own national visa policies and operate a Common Travel Area consisting of Ireland, the islands of Guernsey and Jersey, the Isle of Man and the United Kingdom. In addition, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania are legally bound to become part of the Schengen Area once they have met certain criteria. However, their admittance into the Schengen Area is subject to the approval of the EU Council following consultation with the European Parliament. Taking into account the position of these states in relation to the principle of the free movement of people within the EU, the following paragraphs provide detailed information on the number of foreign visitors to these OSCE participating States.

As mentioned above, Ireland and the United Kingdom have created an area of free cross-border travel for their nationals known as the Common Travel Area. In general, the Common Travel Area's internal borders are subject to minimal or non-existent border controls and can usually

<sup>30</sup> Namely Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom. Data for Croatia are not included in the statistical analysis since Croatia was not an EU member state when data were collected for this study.

<sup>31</sup> Namely Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom.

<sup>32</sup> More specific information on the EU's Visa Code is provided in Chapter 3.

be crossed by British and Irish citizens with identity documents alone. Nationals of other OSCE participating States must carry a valid travel document and a valid Irish and/or United Kingdom visa, if applicable, when crossing the border between the United Kingdom and Ireland.

As already explained, the available baseline data were not detailed enough to allow for the aggregation of information on the number of foreign visitors arriving from specific visa-free areas within the OSCE region. Instead, it was only possible to determine the total number of visitors from the OSCE region and to present this information in relation to the total number of visitors recorded globally. However, it was possible to determine the country of origin within the OSCE region of the majority of foreign visitors.

TABLE 1.5: FOREIGN VISITORS TO IRELAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM BETWEEN 2007 AND 2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% change since 2007
<b>Ireland</b>						
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	8,333,000	8,026,000	7,189,000	7,134,000	7,630,000	<b>-8.4</b>
<b>Visitors from OSCE participating States</b>	8,017,000	7,683,000	6,883,000	6,823,000	7,278,000	<b>-9.2</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	316,000	343,000	306,000	311,000	352,000	<b>11.4</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>						
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	32,778,102	31,888,118	29,889,075	29,803,000	30,797,000	<b>-6.0</b>
<b>Visitors from OSCE participating States</b>	28,285,320	27,472,375	25,647,240	25,442,000	26,026,000	<b>-8.0</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	4,492,782	4,415,743	4,241,835	4,361,000	4,771,000	<b>6.20</b>

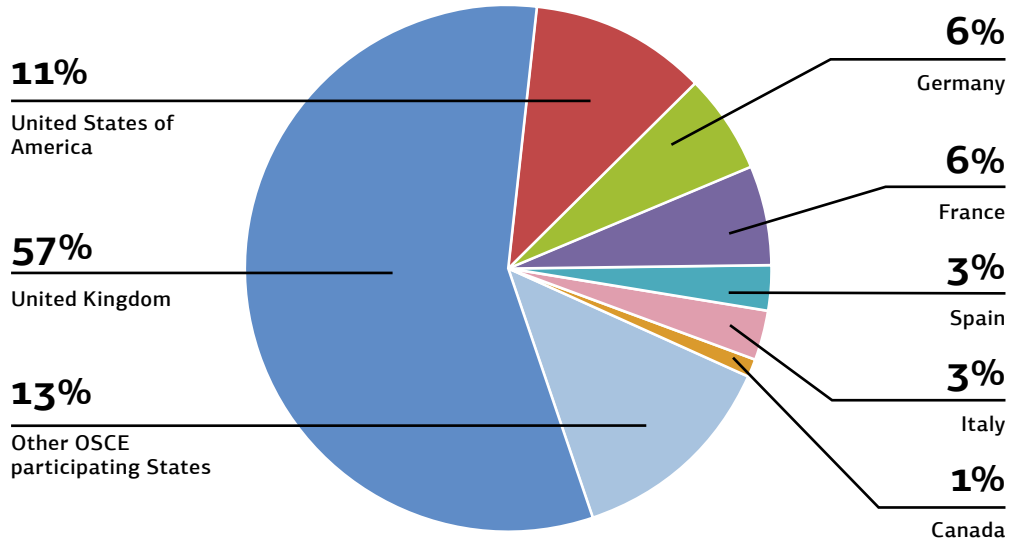
As Table 1.5 illustrates, 95.3 per cent of all visitors to Ireland in 2011 came from one of the OSCE participating States. However, with the onset of the global economic crisis in 2008, the number of visitors to Ireland fell between 2007 and 2008, in particular the number of visitors travelling from the OSCE region. Although there has been a slow recovery in the number of visitors to Ireland from the OSCE since 2008, in 2011 it was still 8.4 per cent lower compared to data from 2007.

Foreign visitors to the United Kingdom from the OSCE region accounted for 84.5 per cent of all foreign visitors in 2011. As in the case of Ireland, the number of visitors witnessed a fall between 2007 and 2010, and started to recover only in 2011. However, the number of visitors from the OSCE region in 2011 was still 8 per cent lower compared to data from 2007.

Figure 1.9 demonstrates that, when it comes to the number of visitors to Ireland from specific OSCE participating States, visitors from the neighbouring United Kingdom accounted for more than half of all visitors from the OSCE region in 2011. It can also be determined that most of the visitors from the OSCE region arrived from those states with which Ireland maintains visa-free travel regimes. As such, the majority of travellers came from the EU, of which Ireland is a member state. Finally, 11 per cent all visitors from the OSCE region came from the United States, a fact that can be attributed not only to the general interest of United States citizens in travelling to Ireland but also to the presence of a large Irish diaspora in the United States.

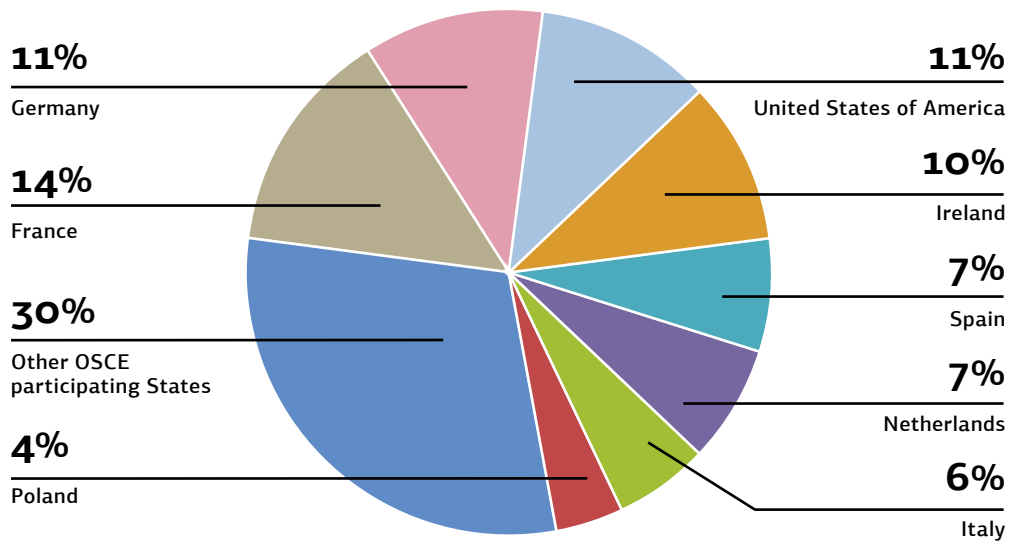


FIGURE 1.9: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO IRELAND IN 2011



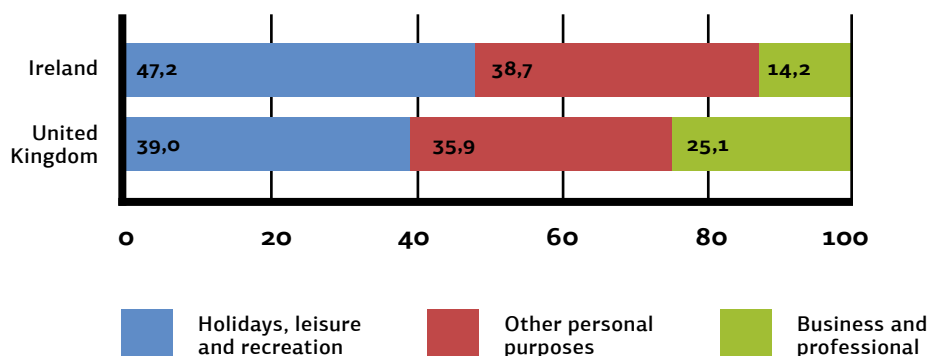
In 2011, most visitors to the United Kingdom from OSCE participating States came from other EU member states (Figure 1.10). The fact that Ireland received more visitors from the United Kingdom than vice versa is due to the difference in the size of their respective populations. However, when compared to the populations of other states that rank highly in terms of the number of visitors, the number of visitors from Ireland was disproportionately high. The information relating to other EU member states indicates that most such visitors came from EU member states with sizable populations.

FIGURE 1.10: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 2011



A breakdown of the statistics regarding visitors' declared purpose of travel to Ireland and the United Kingdom is provided in Figure 1.11, and reveals that a little over one third of all visitors travel to these countries for personal purposes, such as visiting friends and family. However, tourism and business remain the dominant purpose of most visits.

FIGURE 1.11: PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS TO IRELAND AND UNITED KINGDOM BY DECLARED PURPOSE OF VISIT IN 2011



The remaining four EU member states, namely Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania, have committed to eventually join the Schengen Area. However, before doing so, each state will be assessed for its preparedness in four areas: air borders, visas, police co-operation, and personal data protection. This assessment process involves a questionnaire (to be filled in by the relevant authorities in these states), as well as visits by EU experts to selected institutions in all four countries. In consultation with the European Parliament, the EC Council will decide on whether or not to accept the four states into the Schengen Area on the basis of whether they have fulfilled the criteria set out under the Schengen regulatory framework.

While the following paragraphs provide a breakdown of the number of foreign visitors to Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania, data were not available in the case of Croatia. This is partly due to a lack of baseline statistical data for Croatia, but also to the fact that Croatia was not an EU member state when the data were collected.

Unlike in the case of many other OSCE participating States, the number of foreign visitors to Bulgaria between 2007 and 2011 seems not to have been dramatically affected by the global economic crisis. Visitors from OSCE participating States accounted for 95.6 per cent of all visitors to Bulgaria in 2011, while visitors from EU member states and other Schengen Area states accounted for 64.5 per cent of all visitors to the country. As illustrated in Table 1.6, between 2007 and 2011, the number of visitors from other EU member states and the four non-EU Schengen Area states grew by 6.4 per cent, while at the same time the number of visitors from other OSCE participating States grew by almost a third (31.2 per cent).

More dramatic differences in the growth rate of foreign visitors can be observed in the case of Cyprus, where visitors from EU member states and other Schengen Area states accounted for 78.8 per cent of all foreign visitors in 2011. In contrast, visitors from the CIS states accounted for only 15.6 per cent of all visitors from the OSCE region in 2011, although their number more

than doubled in 2011 compared to the data from 2007, resulting in a growth rate of 120.1 per cent. Over the same period, however, the number of visitors from other EU member states and the four non-EU Schengen Area states fell by 10.3 per cent. Collectively, visitors from the OSCE region accounted for 95.1 per cent of all foreign visitors to Cyprus in 2011. The data demonstrate a certain degree of saturation in terms of the number of visitors from participating States with the right to visa-free travel to Cyprus, but at the same time indicates a high degree of potential interest in travel to Cyprus for the citizens of OSCE participating States for whom visas are required.

As further illustrated in Table 1.6, visitors from the OSCE region accounted for 96.5 per cent of all foreign visitors to Romania in 2011. Of these, 55.5 per cent of visitors came from one of the EU member states or other Schengen Area states, 28.5 per cent came from one of the CIS states, while the remaining 15.9 per cent of visitors arrived from other OSCE participating States. As regards changes in the number of visitors between 2007 and 2011, the number of visitors from the CIS states, which are subject to visa regimes with Romania, grew by 11.5 per cent, while the number of visitors from the EU member states and other Schengen Area states dropped by 8.4 per cent.

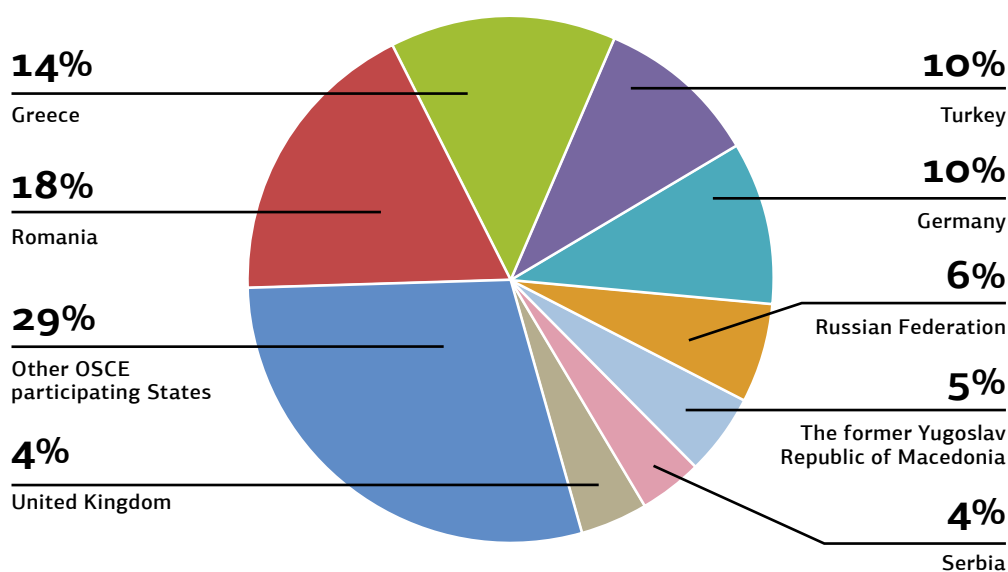
TABLE 1.6: FOREIGN VISITORS TO BULGARIA, CYPRUS AND ROMANIA BETWEEN 2007 AND 2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% change since 2007
<b>Bulgaria</b>						
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	7,725,747	8,532,972	7,872,805	8,374,034	8,712,821	<b>12.8</b>
<b>Visitors from other EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	5,268,351	5,809,262	5,528,032	5,493,177	5,603,637	<b>6.4</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	2,078,148	2,431,228	2,043,375	2,533,645	2,727,180	<b>31.2</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	379,248	292,482	301,398	347,212	382,004	<b>0.7</b>
<b>Cyprus</b>						
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	2,416,081	2,403,750	2,141,193	2,172,998	2,392,228	<b>-1.0</b>
<b>Visitors from other EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	2,104,052	2,067,652	1,843,071	1,770,975	1,886,396	<b>-10.3</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	161,474	194,240	160,456	241,156	355,369	<b>120.1</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	32,606	30,154	26,517	33,461	35,348	<b>8.4</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	117,949	111,704	111,149	127,406	115,115	<b>-2.4</b>
<b>Romania</b>						
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	7,721,741	8,862,119	7,575,298	7,498,307	7,611,124	<b>-1.4</b>
<b>Visitors from other EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	4,453,078	5,172,149	4,457,810	4,157,221	4,077,444	<b>-8.4</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	1,884,980	2,222,686	1,841,686	1,982,753	2,101,426	<b>11.5</b>

<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	1,127,941	1,193,049	1,059,248	1,113,800	1,169,361	<b>3.7</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	255,742	274,235	216,554	244,533	262,893	<b>2.8</b>

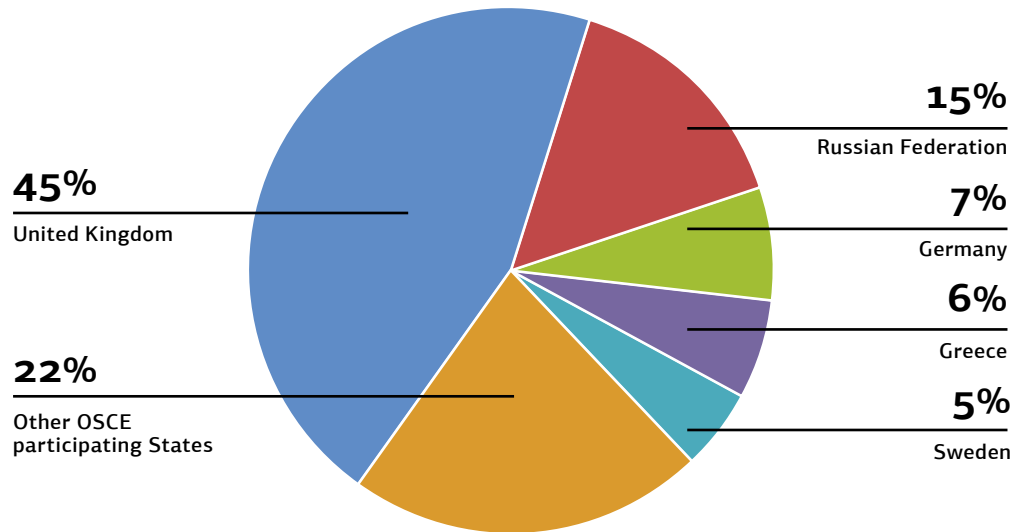
As Figure 1.12 illustrates, more than half of all visitors from the OSCE region arriving in Bulgaria in 2011 came from a neighbouring States. The impact of visa regimes in terms of the number of foreign visitors can be observed in the case of Turkey which, despite having a considerably larger population than Greece and Romania, ranked behind these two states in terms of the number of visitors to Bulgaria coming from Turkey.

**FIGURE 1.12: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO BULGARIA IN 2011**



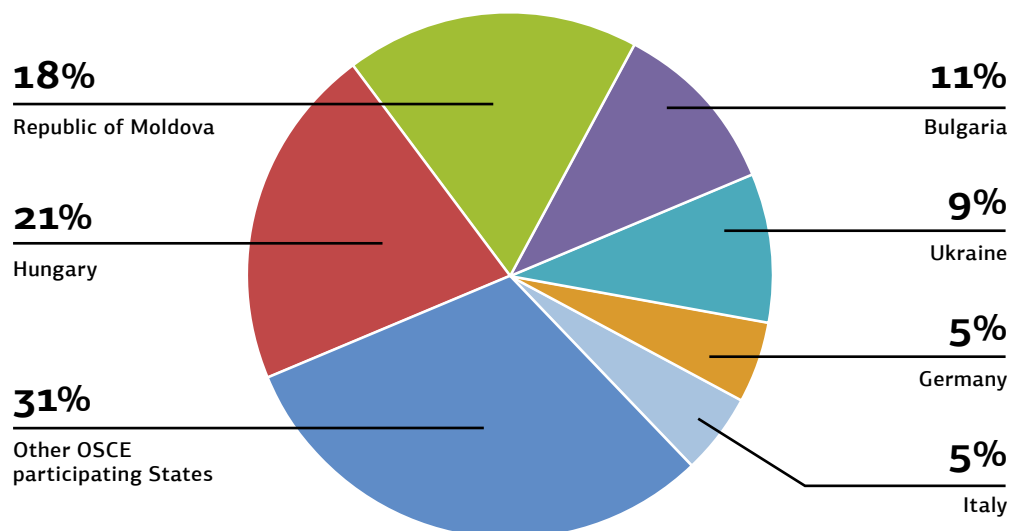
Almost half of all visitors from the OSCE region to Cyprus in 2011 arrived from the United Kingdom (Figure 1.13). Because Cyprus is a popular tourist destination, neighbouring countries do not contribute significantly to the overall number of visitors. Figure 1.13 also highlights the fact that, although it is subject to a visa regime with Cyprus, the Russian Federation has the second highest number of visitors to Cyprus among OSCE participating States. The high number of visitors from the Russian Federation may also be attributed to the fact that the authorities in Cyprus issue visas that are valid only for their territory (i.e., non-Schengen visas). It may be, therefore, that a more liberal approach is employed when assessing visa eligibility.

FIGURE 1.13: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO CYPRUS IN 2011



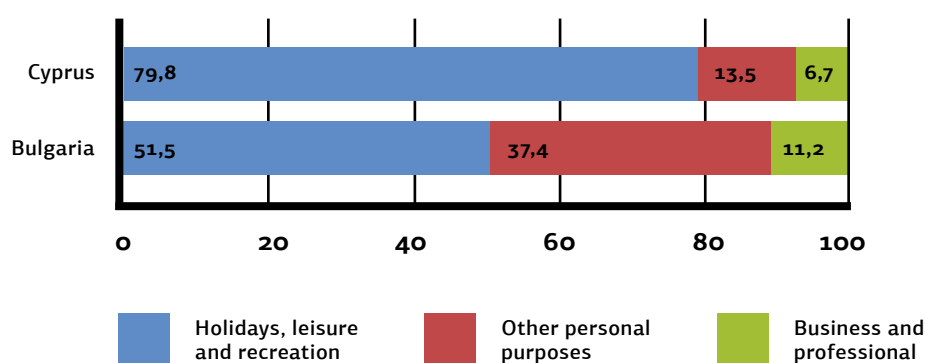
Most visitors to Romania from OSCE participating States in 2011 came from a neighbouring state (Figure 1.14). In spite of the visa regime maintained by Romania, owing to the strong historical ties between Romanian and Moldovan nationals, Moldova ranked second among OSCE participating States in terms of the number of visitors to Romania. This indicates that the Romanian authorities have succeeded in facilitating the entry of Moldovan citizens to Romania.

FIGURE 1.14: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO ROMANIA IN 2011



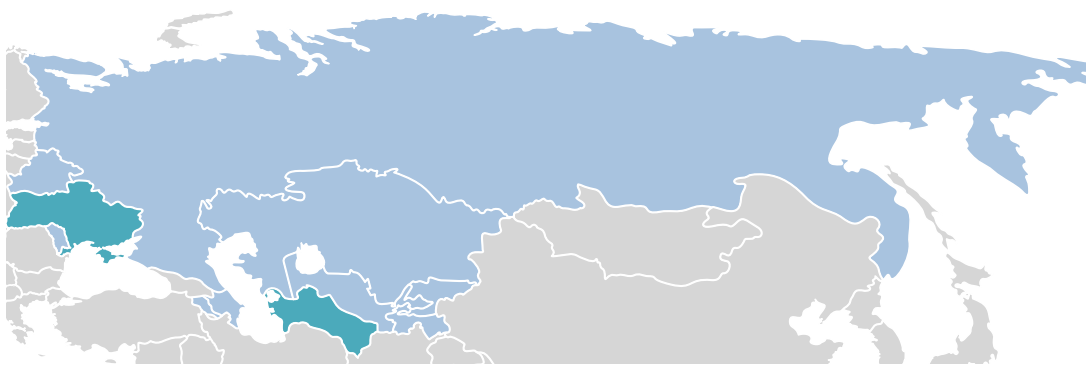
In terms of the breakdown of visitor statistics according to their declared purpose of visit, baseline data were only available for Bulgaria and Cyprus. As illustrated in Figure 1.15, most visitors to Cyprus travelled for tourism purposes, whereas in the case of Bulgaria more than a third of all visitors came for other personal purposes, such as to visit friends and family.

FIGURE 1.15: PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS TO CYPRUS AND BULGARIA BY DECLARED PURPOSE OF VISIT IN 2011



### 1.3 THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was established as a regional organization on 8 December 1991 by the Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine. The CIS was subsequently joined by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (from Central Asia), by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia (from the South Caucasus) and by Moldova (from Eastern Europe). The Agreement on the Creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (the Creation Agreement) remained the main constituent document of the CIS until January 1993, when the CIS Charter was adopted.<sup>33</sup> The Charter formalized the concept of membership, defining a member state as a country that has ratified the CIS Charter. To date, Turkmenistan and Ukraine have not ratified the Charter but participate in the work of the CIS. Georgia withdrew from the organization in 2009.



33 Charter Establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), <<http://www.dipublico.com.ar/english/charter-establishing-the-commonwealth-of-independent-states-cis/>>

Article 5 of the Creation Agreement provides for “open borders and freedom of movement of citizens” within the CIS, as well as for the continued unrestricted travel of people, as previously existed between the Soviet republics when they were part of the Soviet Union.

In order to implement the freedom of movement provision of the Creation Agreement, in 1992 the member states of the CIS signed the Bishkek Agreement on the Visa-Free Migration of CIS States Citizens on the Territory of its Members, which guaranteed the freedom to travel to any co-signatory’s territory for citizens of one of the parties to the Agreement. The CIS Charter of 1993 further enshrined the notion of freedom of movement among member states of the organization, in particular Article 2, which called for “*Member States’ assistance to the citizens of the CIS states with regard to free movement within the CIS*”. The development of legislation on freedom of movement within the framework of the CIS, however, had lost momentum by the end of the 1990s. As a result, the Bishkek Agreement is no longer in force, with several states – Turkmenistan (1999), the Russian Federation (2000), Kazakhstan (2001) and Uzbekistan (2001) – withdrawing from it altogether.

Withdrawal from the Bishkek Agreement did not mean the abandonment of the idea of free cross-border movement among member states of the CIS, however. Rather, visa-free movement was subsequently regulated through bilateral agreements or agreements made within the frameworks of other regional organizations, such as the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC). On 30 November 2000, the EurAsEC member states<sup>34</sup> signed an agreement under which the mutual visa-free travel of member state citizens was established.<sup>35</sup> Under Article 1 of the Agreement, a visa is not required for a citizen of one EurAsEC country to enter the territory of another EurAsEC member, except during periods of increased security concerns. Citizens of EurAsEC member states can cross borders between these states provided they possess one of the documents noted on a list of valid documents drawn up separately by each member state.

The area of visa-free travel agreed within the CIS framework exists to this date, even though legislation regulating visa-free cross-border movement between member states of the CIS is no longer part of the CIS framework. There are, however, exceptions to visa-free travel between CIS member states: the borders of Azerbaijan remain closed to Armenian citizens; Tajikistan and Turkmenistan maintain a visa regime operated on a reciprocal basis; and Turkmenistan maintains visa regimes with other CIS states.

The baseline data available were insufficient to conduct an assessment of the number of foreign visitors to all CIS states. Where this information was available, it is summarized for each state in Table 1.7.

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<sup>34</sup> Namely Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan.

<sup>35</sup> Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on Mutual Visa-Free Travel of Citizens, <<http://www.evrazes.com/docs/view/131>>.

TABLE 1.7: FOREIGN VISITORS TO THE CIS STATES BETWEEN 2007 AND 2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% change since 2007
<b>Armenia</b>						
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	510,622	558,443	575,284	683,979	757,935	<b>48.4</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	75,156	82,666	81,040	89,115	100,236	<b>33.3</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	182,587	202,650	208,328	228,810	239,978	<b>31.4</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	105,217	113,470	111,000	124,497	131,568	<b>25.4</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	147,662	159,657	174,916	241,557	286,153	<b>93.8</b>
<b>Azerbaijan</b>						
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	1,332,701	1,898,936	1,830,367	1,962,906	2,239,141	<b>68.0</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	26,656	37,522	42,259	44,878	47,794	<b>62.7</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	544,617	696,795	666,495	779,915	886,244	<b>59.5</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	539,474	816,426	752,475	750,960	860,393	<b>79.3</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	221,954	385,715	411,397	432,031	492,504	<b>121.9</b>
<b>Kazakhstan</b>						
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	4,706,742	5,310,582	4,721,456	4,329,848	4,712,657	<b>0.1</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	173,588	201,541	165,988	182,734	190,154	<b>9.5</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	4,194,897	4,645,186	4,166,552	3,750,322	4,152,613	<b>-1.0</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	144,006	197,385	137,457	139,015	137,859	<b>-4.3</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	194,251	266,470	251,459	257,777	232,031	<b>19.4</b>
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>						
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	1,655,833	2,435,386	2,146,740	1,316,207	3,114,372	<b>88.1</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	46,367	43,342	40,244	29,563	39,842	<b>-14.1</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	1,545,047	2,334,732	2,041,914	1,235,591	3,007,703	<b>94.7</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	18,021	14,067	17,501	14,654	15,986	<b>-11.3</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	46,398	43,245	47,081	36,399	50,841	<b>9.6</b>



<b>Russian Federation</b>						
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	22,486,043	22,908,625	23,676,140	21,338,650	22,281,217	<b>-0.9</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	5,872,518	5,460,469	5,678,081	5,468,824	5,156,380	<b>-12.2</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	13,530,977	14,506,898	15,061,619	12,960,167	14,009,690	<b>3.5</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	802,494	703,198	743,886	617,381	613,073	<b>-23.6</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	2,280,054	2,238,060	2,192,554	2,292,278	2,502,074	<b>9.7</b>
<b>Ukraine</b>						
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	23,122,157	25,449,078	20,798,342	21,203,327	21,415,296	<b>-7.4</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	8,139,799	9,161,509	5,733,996	5,346,928	4,725,839	<b>-41.9</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	14,477,045	15,761,719	14,596,093	15,363,824	16,139,068	<b>11.5</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	310,585	307,271	270,375	272,696	289,204	<b>-6.9</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	194,728	218,579	197,878	219,879	261,185	<b>34.1</b>

As Table 1.7 shows, citizens from OSCE participating States accounted for 62.2 per cent of all foreign visitors to Armenia in 2011. Of all visitors from the OSCE region in 2011, 50.8 per cent came from another CIS state. The annual number of visitors grew steadily between 2007 and 2011, increasing by 30.3 per cent by 2011. In 2013, Armenia liberalized entry for nationals of the EU and other Schengen Area states, although the effects of this decision remain to be seen.

Compared to 2007, the number of visitors from the OSCE region to Azerbaijan increased by 61.5 per cent by 2011. However, Table 1.7 also demonstrates the impact of the visa regimes that Azerbaijan maintains with EU member states and other Schengen Area states. While visitors from the OSCE region accounted for 80.1 per cent of all visitors in 2011, visitors from the EU member states and other Schengen Area states accounted for only 2.6 per cent of all visitors from the OSCE region in 2011. At the same time, visitors from other CIS states accounted for 39.5 per cent of visitors from the OSCE region.

This increase in the number of visitors observed in Armenia and Azerbaijan is not mirrored in Central Asia. In Kazakhstan, visitors from the OSCE region in 2011 accounted for 95 per cent of all visitors. Compared to data from 2007, the number of visitors travelling to Kazakhstan from the OSCE region had decreased by 0.1 per cent by 2011. In Kyrgyzstan, visitors from the OSCE region accounted for 98.3 per cent of all foreign visitors in 2011. Most of them (96.5 per cent) came from another CIS state. Compared to 2007, their number had increased by 94.7 per cent by 2011. Meanwhile, the number of visitors from other OSCE participating States that are not part of the CIS remained low (4.2 per cent) and witnessed a steady decline between 2007 and 2011. In 2012, Kyrgyzstan liberalized visa requirements for most OSCE participating States in order to address the ever-declining number of visitors to the country, in particular from non-CIS states. Subsequently, since 2013 Kyrgyzstan has only maintained visa requirements for citizens of Albania, Andorra, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, San Marino, Serbia and Turkmenistan. The effects of this decision have yet to be studied.

The Russian Federation receives a large number of visitors from the OSCE region. In 2011, visitors from the OSCE region accounted for 88.7 per cent of all visitors to the country, of which 70.8 per cent were from the CIS states and 26 per cent were from the EU and other Schengen Area states. Despite the fact that travel between the EU (as well as other Schengen Area states) and the Russian Federation is regulated by a visa regime maintained on a reciprocal basis, data on the number of visitors between these states reveal that a large proportion of Russian citizens (5.3 per cent) visited the Schengen Area in 2011. It is important to stress that this number only includes visitors who registered at tourist facilities; therefore, it can be assumed that the actual number is higher, given the fact that many visitors stay with friends or family or at their own property. In contrast, ten in every 1,000 of all citizens from the Schengen Area states travelled to the Russian Federation in 2011. Furthermore, compared to data from 2007, the number of visitors from the CIS states had grown by 3.5 per cent by 2011, while the number of visitors from the EU and other Schengen Area states had fallen by 12.2 per cent.

In Ukraine, visitors from the OSCE region accounted for 98.7 per cent of all foreign visitors in 2011. In accordance with similar trends in other CIS states, visitors from the CIS to Ukraine account for the largest number of foreign visitors from the OSCE region (76.2 per cent) in 2011. As in the case of the Russian Federation, by 2011 the number of visitors from CIS states had grown by 11.5 per cent compared to 2007, while the number of visitors from the EU and other Schengen Area states witnessed a significant decline of 41.9 per cent, despite Ukraine's decision in 2005 to abolish the visa regime for EU citizens.

Figures 1.16 to 1.21 provide a breakdown of foreign visitors to the CIS states according to their country of origin.

These figures illustrate that most foreign visitors to the CIS states come from neighbouring States and thus do not require visas (as is the case for most of the CIS states). In addition, as Figure 1.16 shows, a large number of visitors to Armenia originate from those OSCE participating States that host a large Armenian diaspora (e.g., the United States and France). Similarly, a large percentage of visitors to Kazakhstan come from Germany owing to the presence of ethnic Germans living in Kazakhstan (Figure 1.18). In addition, the Russian Federation receives proportionally large numbers of visitors, many of them ethnic Russians, from Latvia and Lithuania, in spite of the visa regimes in place. In the case of Ukraine (Figure 1.21), it can be observed that the numbers of visitors from neighbouring Hungary, Poland and Romania were disproportionately lower than the numbers of visitors arriving from other neighbouring CIS states. In fact, the numbers of visitors from Poland, Hungary and Romania have experienced a steady decline since 2005, despite the visa-free travel regimes in place. This continuing drop in the number of visitors could be attributed to the fact that the multilateral agreements allowing for the free movement of people, capital, services and goods have created numerous incentives to increase travel between states belonging to the areas where these agreements are effective, while reducing travel to countries that are not part of a particular agreement. Accordingly, most visitors to Ukraine come from states with which Ukraine has strong economic ties, while citizens of neighbouring EU Member states are increasingly opting to travel within the EU. As such, interest in travelling to Ukraine from the EU has declined in the face of barriers related to the flow of goods, capital and services.

FIGURE 1.16: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO ARMENIA IN 2011

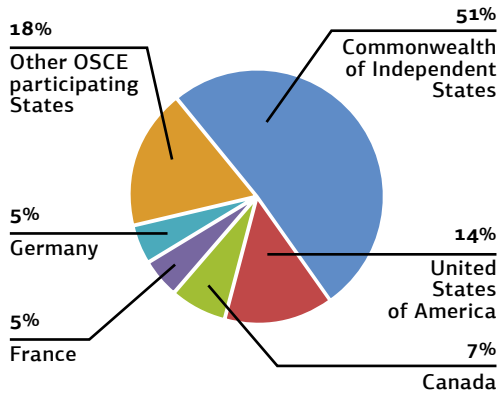


FIGURE 1.17: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO AZERBAIJAN IN 2011

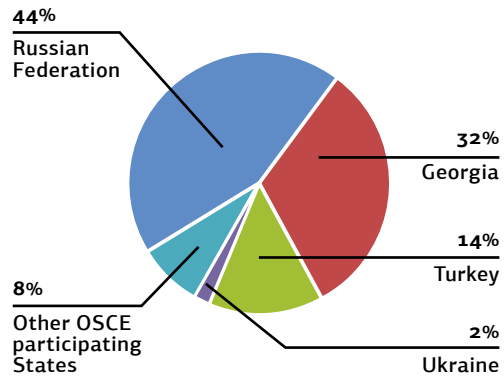


FIGURE 1.18: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO KAZAKHSTAN IN 2011

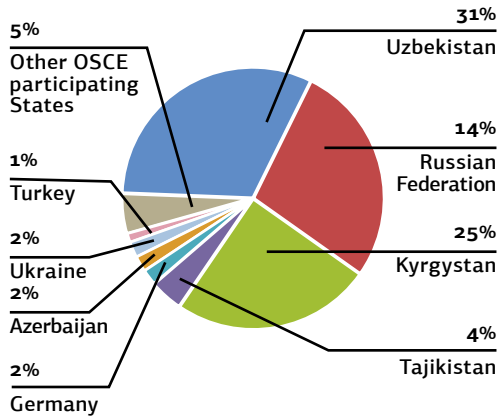


FIGURE 1.19: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO KYRGYZSTAN IN 2011

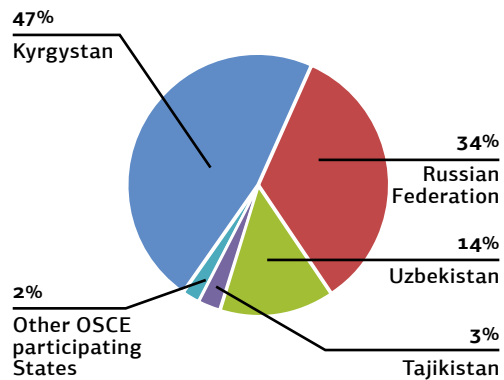


FIGURE 1.20: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN 2011 (THE CHART LACKS INFORMATION ON BELARUS, AS VISITORS BETWEEN BELARUS AND RUSSIAN FEDERATION ARE NOT RECORDED IN STATISTICS)

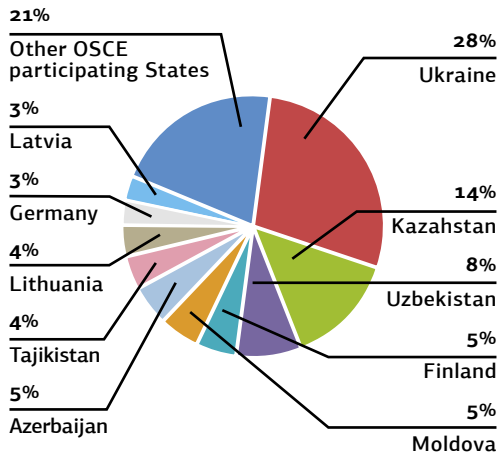


FIGURE 1.21: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO UKRAINE IN 2011

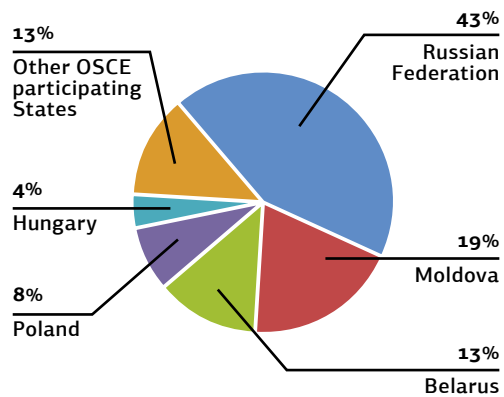
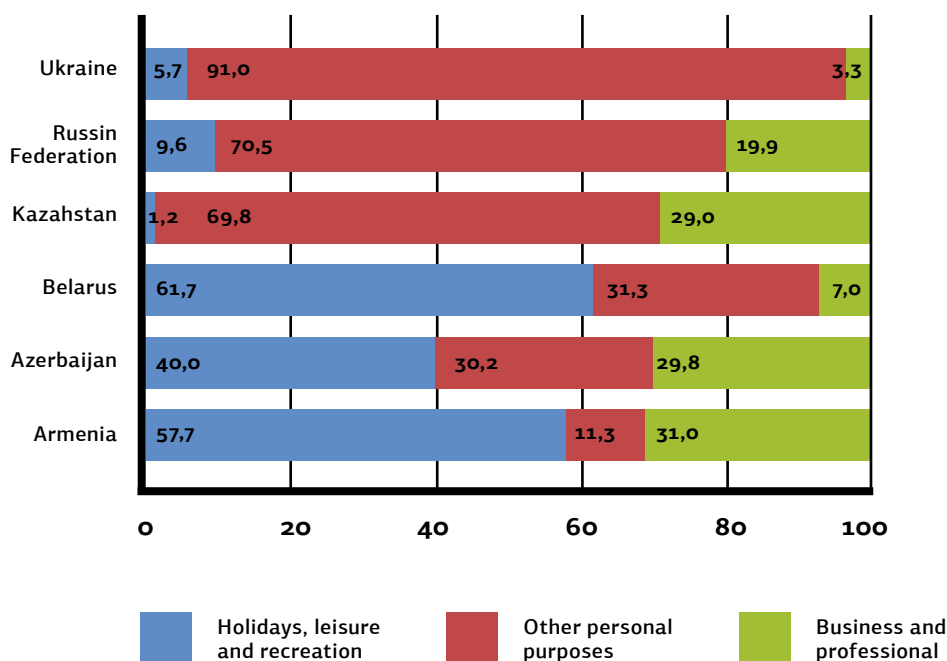


Figure 1.22 demonstrates variations within the CIS in the breakdown of visitors according to the declared purpose of their visit. Most visitors to Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Ukraine travel for private purposes (such as to visit friends and family) not related to business or tourism. However, this is not the case in Belarus, where, as in many other OSCE participating States, tourism is the main reason for travel, while travel for personal purposes accounts for almost a third of all visits. A similar trend can be observed in Armenia and Azerbaijan, which both receive a sizable number of tourist and business visitors.

FIGURE 1.22: PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS TO THE CIS STATES BY DECLARED PURPOSE OF VISIT IN 2011



#### 1.4 OTHER OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES

Baseline data on other OSCE participating States that fit the established methodology used in this study were available only for Albania, Georgia, Mongolia and Turkey.

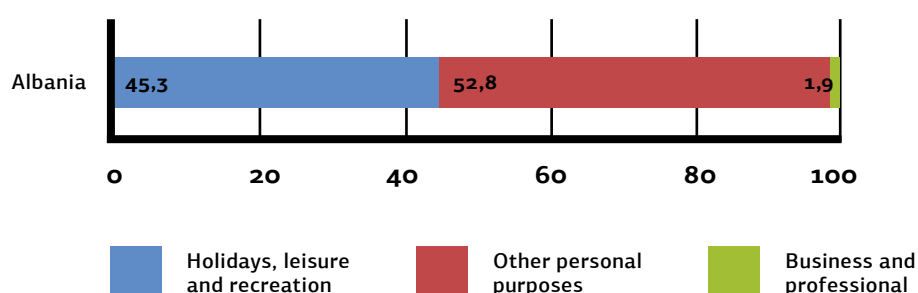
As illustrated in Table 1.8, 95 per cent of all foreign visitors to Albania in 2010 came from the OSCE region. At the same time, the majority of visitors from the OSCE region came from neighbouring states. The total number of visitors to Albania continued to grow for the period from 2006 to 2010, and was unaffected by the global economic crisis. In fact, the number of visitors from the EU member states and the four non-EU Schengen Area states almost doubled (84.2 per cent increase) between 2006 and 2010, while the number of visitors from other OSCE participating States almost tripled (190 per cent increase).

TABLE 1.8: FOREIGN VISITORS TO ALBANIA BETWEEN 2006 AND 2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	% change since 2006
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	937,038	1,126,514	1,419,191	1,855,638	2,417,337	<b>158.0</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	291,890	351,794	430,920	482,396	537,723	<b>84.2</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	2,567	8,889	9,363	5,994	7,430	<b>189.4</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	603,739	749,976	952,567	1,077,849	1,751,834	<b>190.2</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	38,842	15,855	26,341	289,399	120,350	<b>209.8</b>

Visitors from neighbouring states accounted for 83 per cent of all visitors to Albania from the OSCE region in 2010. The high number of visitors from certain neighbouring states can be largely attributed to the sizable ethnic Albanian population in those states.

FIGURE 1.23: PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS TO ALBANIA BY DECLARED PURPOSE OF VISIT IN 2011



Consequently, the breakdown of visitors according to the declared purpose of their visit reveals that more than half of all visitors travel to Albania to visit family and friends and not for tourism or business (Figure 1.23).

The data on the number of visitors to Georgia reveal a steady growth in the number of foreign visitors between 2007 and 2011 (Table 1.9). Visitors from the OSCE region accounted for 95.5 per cent of all foreign visitors to Georgia in 2011. In all, the number of foreign visitors to Georgia more than doubled (168.3 per cent increase) between 2007 and 2011. The lowest growth in the number of foreign visitors, although still high (60 per cent), can be observed among visitors from the EU member states and other Schengen Area states, while the number of visitors from the CIS states and other OSCE participating States grew on average by 181 per cent between 2007 and 2011.

FIGURE 1.24: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO GEORGIA IN 2011

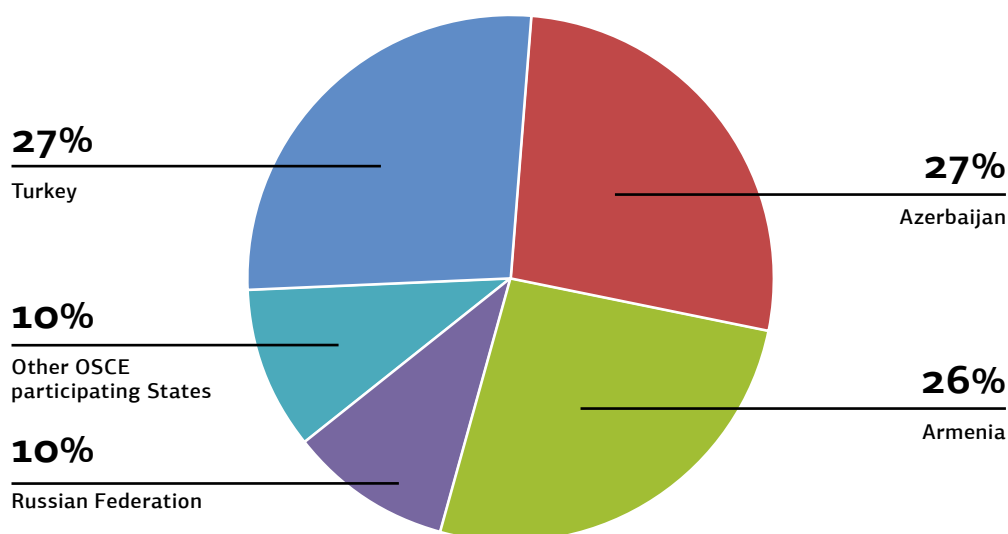


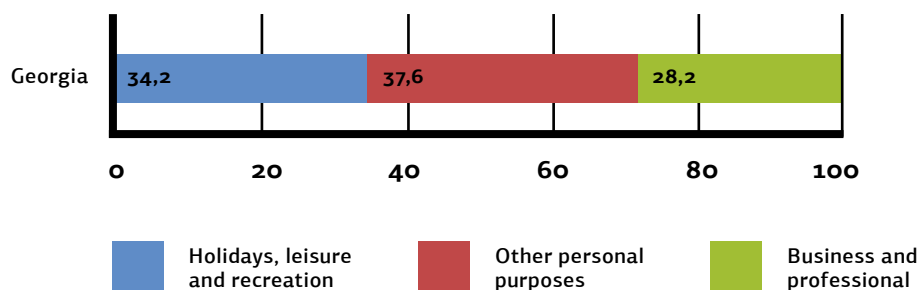
TABLE 1.9: FOREIGN VISITORS TO GEORGIA BETWEEN 2007 AND 2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% change since 2007
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	1,051,747	1,290,110	1,500,049	2,031,717	2,822,363	<b>168.3</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	88,102	89,236	93,980	113,330	141,042	<b>60.1</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	655,742	784,511	950,751	1,286,148	1,787,666	<b>172.6</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	265,148	369,175	404,855	559,753	767,685	<b>189.5</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	42,755	47,188	50,463	72,486	125,970	<b>194.6</b>

As shown in Figure 1.24, 90 per cent of all foreign visitors to Georgia in 2011 came from neighbouring states. While the figure reveals an almost equal distribution in the number of visitors originating from neighbouring Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey, the number of visitors from the neighbouring Russian Federation, while still accounting for 10 per cent of visitors, was nonetheless lower than in the case of other neighbouring states. This may largely have been due to the visa regime maintained by Georgia for citizens of the Russian Federation during this period.

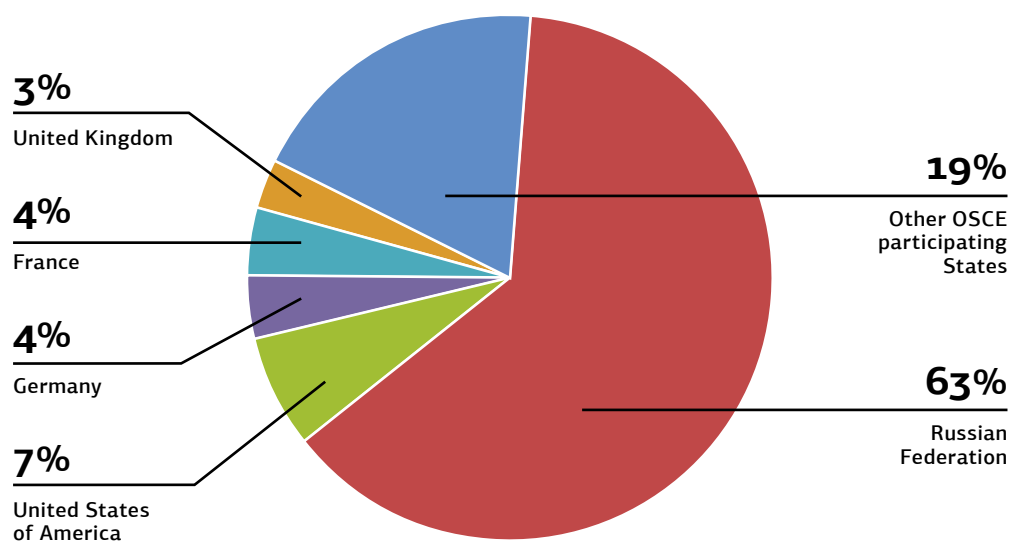
In terms of the breakdown of visitors according to the declared purpose of their visit, Figure 1.25 shows that most visitors travel to Georgia for business and tourism purposes, a consequence of Georgia's efforts to attract foreign investors and boost its tourism industry.

FIGURE 1.25: PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS TO GEORGIA BY DECLARED PURPOSE OF VISIT 2011



In terms of travel to Mongolia, visitors from the OSCE region accounted for 54.3 per cent of all visitors to the country in 2010.<sup>36</sup> Compared to data from 2006, the number of visitors from the OSCE region increased on average by 27.3 per cent by 2010. As shown in Table 1.10, the highest growth in the number of visitors between 2006 and 2011 can be observed among visitors from the CIS states.

FIGURE 1.26: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO MONGOLIA IN 2011



<sup>36</sup> Mongolia became an OSCE participating State in 2012. Data presented above relate to the period when Mongolia was not an OSCE participating State.

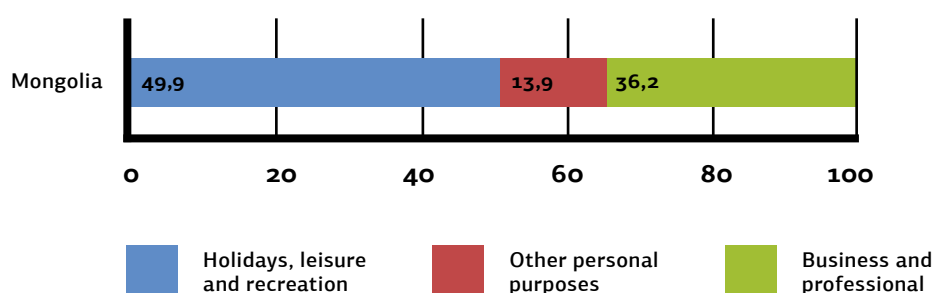
TABLE 1.10: FOREIGN VISITORS TO MONGOLIA BETWEEN 2006 AND 2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	% change since 2006
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	389,666	456,347	468,765	467,989	557,452	<b>43.1</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	37,045	41,667	40,845	36,633	42,047	<b>13.5</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	87,027	107,145	118,649	116,399	132,984	<b>52.8</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	14,980	15,508	16,236	14,519	17,335	<b>15.7</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	250,614	292,027	293,035	300,438	365,086	<b>45.7</b>

The Russian Federation is the only OSCE participating State with which Mongolia shares a land border; visitors from the Russian Federation accounted for 63 per cent of all visitors to Mongolia from the OSCE region in 2011 (Figure 1.26). Apart from United States citizens (who do not need a visa to enter Mongolia), citizens of other participating States contributing the largest number of visitors (as shown in Figure 1.26) required visas to enter Mongolia.

Figure 1.27 shows the breakdown of visitors according to the declared purpose of their visit. Over two thirds of visitors to Mongolia in 2011 travelled for business and tourism, while a small proportion of visitors entered the country for other purposes, such as visiting friends and family.

FIGURE 1.27: PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS TO MONGOLIA BY DECLARED PURPOSE OF VISIT IN 2011



Turkey is one of the single largest recipients of visitors in the OSCE region. This is in large part thanks to Turkey's developed tourism industry and liberal visa policy towards many countries worldwide. Even where citizens of OSCE participating States require a visa to enter Turkey, a visa can still be obtained by means of an expedited procedure upon arrival at the Turkish border. Visitors from the OSCE region accounted for 71.1 per cent of all visitors in 2011. The number of visitors grew steadily between 2007 and 2011 and, as illustrated in Table 1.11, this growth did not significantly differ in terms of the regions from which visitors originated.



FIGURE 1.28: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VISITORS TO TURKEY IN 2011

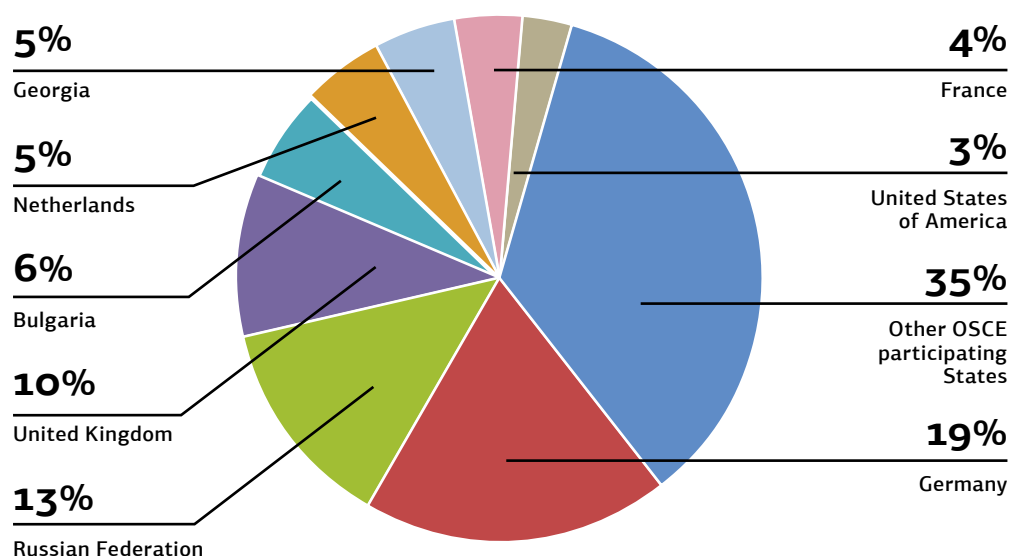


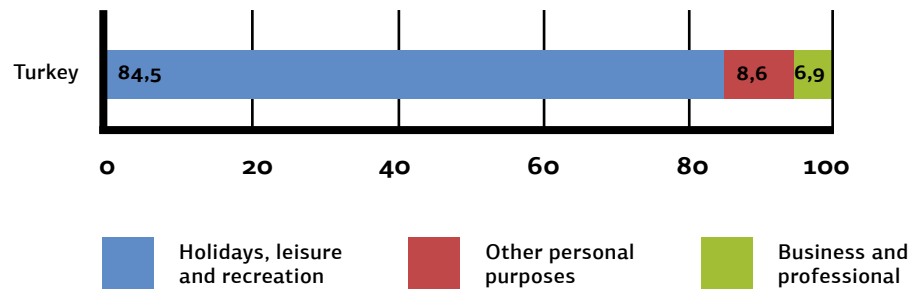
TABLE 1.11: FOREIGN VISITORS TO TURKEY BETWEEN 2007 AND 2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% change since 2007
<b>Total number of visitors</b>	27,214,988	30,979,979	32,006,149	33,027,943	36,151,328	<b>32.8</b>
<b>Visitors from EU member states and non-EU Schengen Area states</b>	13,896,981	15,591,850	16,289,417	16,205,492	17,704,579	<b>27.4</b>
<b>Visitors from the CIS states</b>	3,965,713	4,790,117	4,401,182	4,809,364	5,358,149	<b>35.1</b>
<b>Visitors from other OSCE participating States</b>	1,831,208	2,193,502	2,319,224	2,421,030	2,657,568	<b>45.1</b>
<b>Visitors from outside the OSCE region</b>	7,521,086	8,404,510	8,996,326	9,592,057	10,431,032	<b>38.7</b>

The OSCE participating States that contributed the highest numbers of visitors to Turkey in 2011 is largely shaped by the country's tourist industry (Figure 1.28). Both Germany and the Russian Federation (the countries sending the most visitors) are strong markets generating considerable revenue for the tourism industry in Turkey. The United Kingdom ranks third in terms of the number of visitors to Turkey, in spite of the fact that its citizens require a visa to enter Turkey, demonstrating the positive effect of expedited visa-issuance procedures.

The breakdown of visitors according to the declared purpose of their visit further points to Turkey's tourism industry as a major pull factor for travel to the country (Figure 1.29).

FIGURE 1.29: PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS TO TURKEY BY DECLARED PURPOSE OF VISIT IN 2011



## CHAPTER 2

# VISA REGIMES AND CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY IN THE OSCE REGION

The policies and legislation of OSCE participating States regarding the entry of third-country nationals are designed to take into account both national security concerns and risks associated with irregular migration. States formulate admission terms for visitors from each state separately, taking into account the varying risks posed by the entry into their territory of foreign nationals from different states.

Where the risks are deemed to be high, entry for citizens of those states is usually regulated by a visa regime. This allows receiving states to assess every national coming from a high-risk state individually in terms of the potential risks they pose to security and public order, including the risk of illegal immigration.

In many cases, the decision to maintain a visa regime with another country is not taken out of consideration for the risks to security or public order alone, but may be taken as a reciprocal response to the decision of another state to institute a visa regime.

Due to the wide range of bilateral and multilateral agreements between OSCE participating States, a visa is not required for travel between many of these states. At the same time, every OSCE participating State maintains a visa regime with at least one other OSCE participating State.

Table 2.1 illustrates how each OSCE participating State ranks in terms of the number of other OSCE participating States with which it maintains visa regimes.

TABLE 2.1: VISA REGIMES MAINTAINED BY OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES

Number of visa regimes maintained by OSCE participating States towards other participating States	
Ukraine	1
Georgia	2
Kyrgyzstan and Moldova	7
Montenegro and Serbia	10
Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	13
Andorra*, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, the Holy See*, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino*, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland	14
Armenia	17
Ireland and United Kingdom	19
Turkey	20
Canada and the United States	22
Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation	44
Belarus	45
Tajikistan	46
Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan	47
Mongolia	50
Turkmenistan	56

\* While these states do not maintain visa regimes with other OSCE participating States, visitors entering these states must be in possession of a valid Schengen Visa or a national visa issued by a bordering state.

The scope of cross-border travel freedoms that nationals of OSCE participating States enjoy is directly linked to the visa policy of foreign states towards a visitor's home state. Every democratic state whose society is built on the rule of law and respect for human rights tends to expand the scope of rights and freedoms that their citizens can enjoy, including freedom of movement and cross-border mobility. This is one of the reasons why states engage with other states in dialogue aimed at liberalizing cross-border travel for their citizens. A look at the existing visa regimes within the OSCE region reveals that citizens of different OSCE participating States enjoy different levels of cross-border mobility.

Table 2.2 provides a more detailed overview of the cross-border travel freedoms that citizens of each OSCE participating State enjoy, as it is based on the number of other OSCE participating States that the citizens of each participating State can visit visa-free.

TABLE 2.2: CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL FREEDOMS OF CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES

Number of OSCE participating States that citizens can visit without a visa	
Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland	48
Andorra, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, the Holy See, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and the United States	47
Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania, San Marino and the United Kingdom	46
Bulgaria	45
Serbia	44
Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	43
Montenegro	42
Albania	41
Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation	13
Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine	12
Georgia	11
Moldova, Tajikistan and Turkey	10
Armenia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan	9
Mongolia	6
Turkmenistan	1

A central factor in determining the level of cross-border freedom of movement that citizens of OSCE participating States enjoy is the Common Visa Policy implemented by the 26 EU member states and four non-EU Schengen Area states, equivalent to more than half of all OSCE participating States. As such, the Common Visa Policy has a significant effect on the extent to which citizens of other OSCE participating States enjoy cross-border travel freedoms within the OSCE region. Citizens from OSCE participating States that are permitted to enter the Schengen Area without a visa (according to the terms of the Common Visa Policy) enjoy dramatically increased cross-border travel freedoms. Equally, where citizens of OSCE participating States require a visa, their cross-border travel freedoms within the OSCE region are significantly curtailed. The cross-border travel freedoms of EU citizens and citizens of non-EU Schengen Area states are also affected by visa regimes maintained on a reciprocal basis by other OSCE participating States.

The Schengen Area's Common Visa Policy facilitates travel to Schengen Area states for foreign nationals from outside the Schengen Area. Holders of Schengen visas may travel to all 30 Schengen Area states, including Andorra, the Holy See, Monaco and San Marino, without having to apply separately for a visa for each Schengen Area state.

Multiple-entry Schengen visas also enable foreign nationals to enter Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia. The entry of visitors to these states with a Schengen visa is subject to the decision of each state. Additional rules for entry also apply, including the precondition that the visitor arrives from the Schengen Area or has used the same visa to travel to the Schengen Area at least once.

In terms of the cross-border travel freedoms of citizens of OSCE participating States, the OSCE region is characterized by two distinct areas that both enjoy reciprocal visa-free travel regimes, referred to as Area One and Area Two for the purposes of this study. With some exceptions, travel between participating States within each area is visa-free.

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, Area One is comprised of Canada, the United States, the EU member states, the non-EU Schengen Area states and the five states of the Western Balkans.<sup>37</sup> Area Two is comprised of the CIS states plus Georgia. Table 2.3 lists all the OSCE participating States that make up each of the reciprocal visa-free travel areas, as well as exceptions to visa-free travel within these areas.

FIGURE 2.1: AREAS OF RECIPROCAL VISA-FREE TRAVEL IN THE OSCE REGION

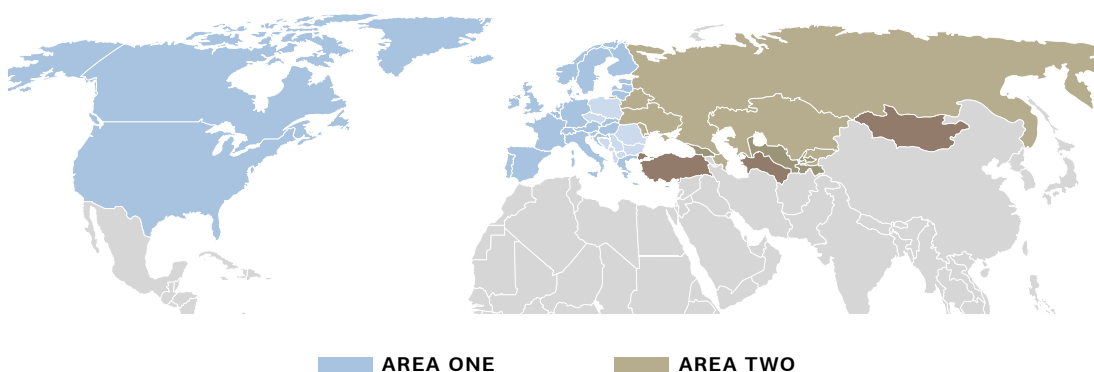


TABLE 2.3: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES INCLUDED IN A RECIPROCAL VISA-FREE TRAVEL AREA, TOGETHER WITH EXCEPTIONS

<b>Reciprocal Visa-Free Travel Area One (Area One)</b>	Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, the Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.
<b>Exceptions to visa regime reciprocity within Reciprocal Visa-Free Travel Area One</b>	<p>Canada maintains visa regimes with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Romania.</p> <p>The United Kingdom maintains visa regimes with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.</p> <p>The United States maintain visa regimes with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania and Serbia.</p>

37 The non-EU Schengen states are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. The Western Balkans states are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

<b>Reciprocal Visa-Free Travel Area Two (Area Two)</b>	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
<b>Exceptions in terms of visa regime reciprocity within Reciprocal Visa-Free Travel Area Two</b>	Azerbaijan does not allow Armenian citizens to enter its territory.  The Russian Federation maintains a visa regime with Georgia.  Tajikistan and Uzbekistan maintain a reciprocal visa regime.
<b>Other OSCE participating States</b>	Mongolia maintains a reciprocal visa-free regime with Ukraine and unilaterally maintains visa-free regimes with Belarus, Georgia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the United States.  Turkey maintains reciprocal visa-free regimes with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Ukraine, as well as unilateral visa-free regimes with Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.  Turkmenistan maintains visa regimes with all OSCE participating States.

## 2.1 RECIPROCAL VISA-FREE TRAVEL IN AREA ONE

The United States, Canada, the 28 EU member states, the four non-EU Schengen Area states and the five countries of the Western Balkans form a large territory of reciprocal visa-free travel (Area One). They constitute 41 of the 57 OSCE participating states, cover approximately 50 per cent of the territory of the OSCE region and account for 70 per cent of its population.

Besides constituting an area of visa-free movement, the EU is also unique in that its visa policy is agreed upon by its member states at the supranational level. As parties to the Schengen regulatory framework, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland have aligned their visa policies towards third country nationals with the common visa policy of the EU. Ireland and the United Kingdom are the only two EU member states that do not participate in the common EU visa policy and maintain their own national visa policies. Nevertheless, they maintain visa-free regimes with other Schengen Area states.

In 2009 and 2010, the EU introduced visa-free travel for five OSCE participating States in South-Eastern Europe, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Citizens of these countries are, nevertheless, subject to a visa regime when travelling to the United Kingdom and Ireland. Prior to the EU's decision to liberalize visa requirements for their citizens, the five Western Balkans states had already established reciprocal visa-free travel regimes among themselves.

Historically, Canada and the United States have maintained a reciprocal visa-free travel regime. However, their national visa policies differ slightly in terms of the regulation of visa-free entry for citizens of other OSCE participating States. Both Canada and the United States maintain reciprocal visa-free regimes with most EU and other Schengen Area states. At the same time, all EU member states, other Schengen Area states and the non-EU OSCE participating States in South-Eastern Europe allow visa-free entry to citizens of Canada and the United States. Of the EU member states, Canada maintains visa regimes with Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Romania, while the United States maintains visa regimes with Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland and Romania. In addition, nationals of the five Western Balkans states with which the EU maintains visa-free travel are subject to a visa regime with Canada and the United States.

## 2.2 RECIPROCAL VISA-FREE TRAVEL IN AREA TWO

The second area of reciprocal visa-free cross-border travel in the OSCE region (Area Two) comprises states that have been or are part of the Commonwealth of Independent States, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. These 11 OSCE participating States cover approximately 45 per cent of the territory of the OSCE region and account for 23 per cent of its population.

The Bishkek Agreement on the “Visa-free Movement of Citizens of the CIS Countries on the Territory of the Member States”<sup>38</sup> (1992) made cross-border mobility within the CIS subject only to the possession of valid personal or citizenship identification documents. Initially, the agreement was ratified by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, with Georgia joining in 1995. Subsequently, however, several members decided to withdraw from the Bishkek Agreement, namely Turkmenistan in 1999, the Russian Federation in 2000, Kazakhstan in 2001 and Uzbekistan in 2001.

Although when it was formed the CIS area provided for visa-free travel, since then travel has been regulated through a number of bilateral agreements that reflect relations between individual CIS member states. Some of these bilateral agreements mean that citizens of a signatory state seeking to cross the borders into another signatory state need only to present their identification documents.

There are, however, exceptions to the principle of visa-free travel within the CIS area. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan maintain a reciprocal visa regime, while Azerbaijan does not allow Armenian citizens to enter its territory. The Russian Federation also maintains a visa regime for Georgian citizens.

## 2.3 VISA REGIME RECIPROCITY

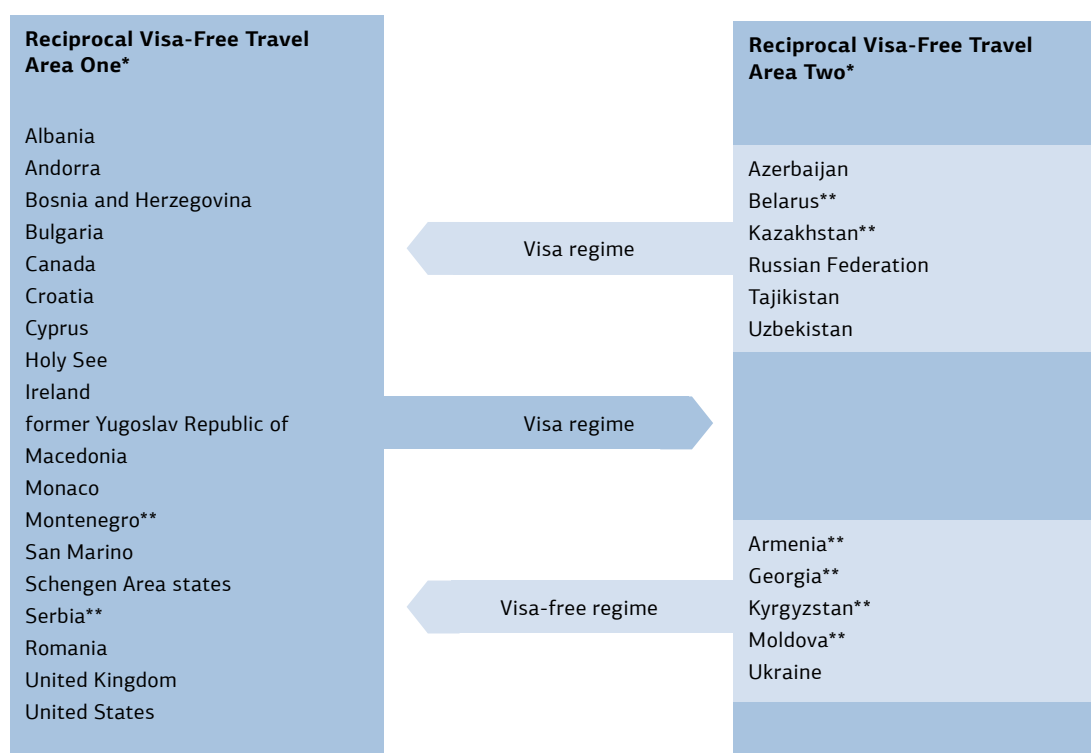
Travel between Area One and Area Two is generally regulated by visa regimes. As illustrated in Figure 2.2, in response to visa regimes maintained by the Area One states, many states of Area Two maintain visa regimes on the basis of reciprocity. At the same time, some states in Area Two have decided to unilaterally waive visa requirements for certain Area One countries, based on their assessment that the benefits to them of liberalizing entry into their territories outweigh the benefits of maintaining reciprocal visa regimes.

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38 Agreement on the Visa-free Movement of Citizens of the CIS Countries on the Territory of the Member States, informational bulletin of the Council of Heads of States and the Council of Heads of Governments of CIS, 1992, № 7, <[http://www.carim-east.eu/media/legal\\_module/1\\_CIS\\_RU.pdf](http://www.carim-east.eu/media/legal_module/1_CIS_RU.pdf)>.



FIGURE 2.2: VISA REGIME RECIPROCITY BETWEEN AREA ONE AND AREA TWO



\*– Exceptions apply as per Table 2.3

\*\*– Other exceptions:

**Armenia** maintains visa regimes with Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, the Holy See, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Monaco, Montenegro, San Marino, Serbia, Turkey and the United States;

**Georgia** maintains a visa regime with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;

**Kyrgyzstan** maintains visa regimes with Albania, Andorra, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, San Marino and Serbia;

**Moldova** maintains visa regimes with Albania, Montenegro and Serbia;

**Serbia** maintains reciprocal visa-free travel regimes with Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Ukraine;

**Montenegro** maintains a reciprocal visa-free regime with the Russian Federation.

## 2.4 THE EFFECT OF VISA REGIMES ON TRAVELLING PATTERNS IN THE OSCE REGION

It can be assumed that the decision to travel to a foreign country is weighed against the difficulty of obtaining a visa. In particular, a would-be traveller will consider the estimated time it takes to obtain a visa as well as the cost of doing so. While an assessment of the extent to which demanding visa requirements dissuade would-be travellers in the OSCE region goes beyond the scope of this study, it is possible to study the impact of visa regimes and visa facilitation on the volume of cross-border movement.

Data on the number of visitors and the number of visas issued suggest that, in some cases, visa regimes do not present an obstacle to travel and that the number of visitors continues to grow. Nevertheless, the removal or simplification of visa requirements can be expected to lead to an increase in the number of visitors to a state.

As illustrated in Chapter 1, the number of visitors from Area Two to Area One increased steadily between 2007 and 2011. In particular, during this period the number of visitors from Area Two to Canada and the United States increased by 21.2 per cent and 71.9 per cent, respectively. As regards the number of visitors from Area Two to the Schengen Area states, baseline data available only included the number of tourist visitors coming from the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Between 2007 and 2011, the number of visitors from these two OSCE participating States to the Schengen Area increased by 74.7 per cent in the case of the Russian Federation and by 61.7 per cent in the case of Ukraine.

Furthermore, in spite of the relatively demanding visa requirements in place for visitors travelling from Area Two to Area One, the number of visa applications made by citizens from Area Two states to travel to Area One states experienced significant growth. For example, the number of visas issued by Schengen Area states to citizens of Area Two states increased by 42 per cent between 2010 and 2012, while the number of visas issued by the United States to citizens of Area Two states increased by 20 per cent. Moreover, the number of visas issued by the United Kingdom to citizens of Area Two states increased in the same period by 20 per cent, while those issued by Ireland increased by 17 per cent.

In contrast, there was a decline in the number of visitors from some Area One states to Area Two states between 2007 and 2011. This decline occurred mainly in the cases of the Russian Federation and Ukraine, which received 80 per cent of all visitors from the EU and other Schengen Area states travelling to Area Two. Between 2007 and 2011, the number of visitors to the Russian Federation and Ukraine from the EU and other Schengen Area states decreased by 12.2 per cent and 41.9 per cent, respectively. As such, the largest decline occurred in the number of visitors from the EU to Ukraine, despite the fact that Ukraine maintains a unilateral visa-free regime for states in Area One.

This pattern is also reflected in the number of visas issued by Area Two states to travellers from Area One. For example, the number of visas issued by the Russian Federation to citizens of Area One states in 2012 grew by just 2.4 per cent compared to 2010, while in the case of Belarus, the number of visas issued fell by 3.9 per cent.

In the same period (2007 to 2011), the number of visitors from both Area One and Area Two to OSCE participating States in the South Caucasus steadily increased. Between 2007 and 2011, the number of visitors to Armenia and Azerbaijan from the EU and non-EU Schengen Area states increased by 33.3 per cent and 62.7 per cent, respectively.

A similar trend can be observed in Central Asia. For example, during the same period, the number of visas issued by Kazakhstan to citizens of Area One states increased by 34 per cent, while the number of visas issued by Uzbekistan to citizens of Area One states increased by 22 per cent. This increase in the number of travellers to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan may have come about as a result of their decision to simplify visa procedures for certain states in Area One.

Table 2.4 provides a detailed breakdown of the number of visas issued for visitors travelling between OSCE participating States that maintain reciprocal visa regimes. The table only contains information on those participating States for which data are available and that issued the highest number of visas. The number of visas issued by other OSCE participating States for which data were available and that maintain visa regimes on a reciprocal basis represents only a small proportion of all visas issued.

**TABLE 2.4: NUMBER OF VISAS ISSUED BETWEEN OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES THAT MAINTAIN RECIPROCAL VISA REGIMES**

Number of visas issued (data from 2012)	Schengen Area states	United Kingdom (data from 2011)	United States of America
<b>Belarus</b>	318,137	5,537	6,259
	693,425	9,986	8,607
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	92,381	11,364	12,142
	137,358	16,481	11,211
<b>Russian Federation</b>	1,404,046	91,596	123,763
	5,939,644	185,748	182,074
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	46,558	3,482	5,452
	19,108	2,863	5,685

The share of refused visa applications varies among OSCE participating States, and also depends on the citizenship of the visa applicant. Judging by available information from OSCE participating States in Area Two, visa refusal rates among these countries are very low, at around less than 1 per cent. The percentage of visa applications refused by participating States in Area One, however, is higher, ranging from 1.1 per cent to 15.1 per cent among Schengen Area states. Refusal rates are highest in the United States, where they range from 1.9 per cent to 40.5 per cent.

Table 2.4 presents the overall numbers of visas issued, and may be used to determine reciprocity in terms of the number of visas issued. For a breakdown of the difference in the number of visas issued in each OSCE participating State that maintains a reciprocal visa regime, the data must be assessed against the size of the respective populations that these visa regimes affect. The results of this assessment are presented in Tables 2.5 and 2.6.

**TABLE 2.5: NUMBER OF VISAS ISSUED BETWEEN STATES FROM AREA ONE AND AREA TWO, ADJUSTED FOR THE SIZE OF THE POPULATIONS OF THE AREA TWO STATES**

Issuing States	Number of visas issued per 10,000 citizens of the issuing state in 2012	Number of visas issued to:	Number of visas received from:	Number of visas issued to:	Number of visas received from:	Number of visas issued to:	Number of visas received from:
		Schengen Area states	United Kingdom	United States			
	<b>Belarus</b>	336	732	6	11	7	9
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	56	83	7	10	7	7	
<b>Russian Federation</b>	98	415	6	13	9	13	
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	16	7	1	1	2	2	

Table 2.5 presents the number of visas issued in 2012 by Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan to citizens of the Schengen Area states, the United Kingdom and the United States, assessed against the size of the respective populations of Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan. More precisely, the numbers presented in the table

correspond to the number of visas issued and the number of visas received per 10,000 citizens of the given state.

For instance, the table shows that in 2012, for every 10,000 of its citizens Belarus issued 336 visas to visa applicants from Schengen Area states, while Schengen Area states issued 732 visas for every 10,000 citizens of Belarus. Another way to look at the data is to say that for every 10,000 of its citizens, Belarus hosted seven visa-holding citizens of the United States, while nine out of every 10,000 citizens of Belarus received visas to travel to the United States.

The table shows that, in 2012, Belarus and the Schengen Area states exchanged the highest number of visa-holding travellers per capita, followed by the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. Moreover, the greater the distance between two states, the fewer the number of visas that are issued to the citizens of either state. In addition, where countries are further apart, the numbers of visas being issued by both countries tends to be more even.

The rates at which visas are issued between two states also depend on the respective population size of the states. For instance, while the Schengen Area states issued nine times the number of visas to Kazakhstan as they issued to Uzbekistan, when the relative population sizes of these two states are taken into account, the number of visas issued to citizens of Kazakhstan is actually 11.5 times higher than the number of visas issued to citizens of Uzbekistan. Similarly, while Schengen Area states in 2012 issued 8.5 times more visas to citizens of the Russian Federation than to the citizens of Belarus, after taking into account the relative sizes of their populations, the number of visas issued per capita in Belarus is 1.7 times higher than in the Russian Federation.

Table 2.6 also provides information on the number of visas issued, this time taking into account the size of the respective populations of the Schengen Area states, the United Kingdom and the United States.

**TABLE 2.6: NUMBER OF VISAS ISSUED BETWEEN STATES FROM AREA ONE AND AREA TWO, ADJUSTED FOR THE POPULATION SIZES OF AREA ONE STATES**

Number of visas issued per 10,000 citizens of the issuing state in 2012	Number of visas issued to:		Number of visas received from:		Number of visas issued to:		Number of visas received from:		
	Belarus	Kazakhstan	Russian Federation	Uzbekistan	Belarus	Kazakhstan	Russian Federation	Uzbekistan	
Issuing States	Schengen Area states	17	8	3	2	142	33	0.5	0.5
	United Kingdom	2	0.9	3	2	30	15	0.5	0.6
	United States	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.4	6	4	0.2	0.2

# CHAPTER 3

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VISA REGIMES

The final decision on whether a foreigner is granted entry to a state lies with the border guards at border crossing points; they may refuse entry if they establish that a person poses a risk in terms of public order, security or irregular immigration.

If entry by foreigners is regulated by a visa regime, then visitors are usually required to undergo an assessment performed by the visa-issuing authority of the destination state before commencing travel, to determine whether they meet the criteria for obtaining visas. The criteria are defined by the visa policy of each OSCE participating State, and may differ according to the citizenship of the person requesting a visa.

This chapter sets out the main characteristics of the visa application requirements of the OSCE participating States, including how these requirements are used to ensure that the risks associated with the arrival of foreign nationals are mitigated. At the same time, the criteria for obtaining a visa are analysed in terms of their complexity from the point of view of the visa applicant. To that end this Chapter focuses on the following:

- Documentary evidence required to support a visa application;
- The costs of obtaining a visa; and
- Procedures for the submission of a visa application and the necessary supporting documentation.

Finally, in order to explain how OSCE participating States'<sup>39</sup> visa policies are implemented in practice, this chapter presents a statistical analysis of the following:

- The number of visas issued to citizens of other OSCE participating States;
- The percentage of visa applications refused; and
- The proportion of multiple-entry visas issued to the total number of visas issued.

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39 The analysis only applies to those OSCE participating States for which information could be obtained.

### 3.1 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION FOR VISA APPLICATIONS

All OSCE participating States require visa applicants to fill out a visa application form and to submit it either in person at the designated visa office or to send it by post to the consular representative responsible for the processing of visa applications. Where necessary, and in circumstances defined by visa policy regulations, visa applications can also be submitted by persons other than the applicant. In addition to the visa application, states require that a visa fee be paid according to the amount defined by the visa policy. Applicants are also required to declare the purpose of their planned visit and to submit documentary evidence to prove the intended purpose of their visit. Many OSCE participating States also require documentary evidence demonstrating the visa applicant's ties to their country of origin and establishing that the applicant is not likely to remain on the territory of the destination state as an irregular immigrant (see page # for more information).

Visa authorities seek to determine whether or not visa applicants pose a risk to the security and public order of the destination state, whether they have the necessary financial means to support themselves in the destination state and whether they pose a risk in terms of irregular immigration. As such, the burden of proof that they do not constitute any such risk lies with the applicants.

Once an applicant has submitted the required documents, visa authorities use the information provided to assess the applicant's visa eligibility. The personal information provided in visa applications is used to conduct checks in the relevant national databases and registers in order to establish whether a visa applicant could pose a threat to national security and public order. In addition, documentary evidence provided to demonstrate the applicant's declared purpose of visit is used to determine whether the applicant qualifies for the requested visa type, as well as which type of visa the applicant will be issued.

The documentary evidence required to support visa applications varies between countries, and depends on the visa application policy of the OSCE participating State in question or the practice of its consular representations abroad. While the general requirements, as outlined above, are the same for all OSCE participating States, there are substantial differences in terms of the supporting documentary evidence required by OSCE participating States to prove the following:

- That an applicant is not likely to abuse a visa for the purposes of irregular immigration; and
- The declared purpose of the visit.

*Documentary evidence proving that a person is not travelling for reasons of immigration*

In general, OSCE participating States with strong economies and developed social support schemes are highly attractive to irregular immigrants. To alleviate the risks of irregular immigration from countries with which they maintain visa regimes, these states require that visa applicants prove that they do not intend to immigrate to the visa-issuing state. This approach is characteristic of the visa policies of OSCE participating States in North America, the EU and other Schengen Area states, as well as of other OSCE participating States in South-Eastern Europe. This approach generally renders a visa application a complex process that requires that the applicant provide a range of supporting documents to help assess whether the applicant is a bona fide visitor. In such instances, applicants are required to provide documentation which proves that they:

- are in possession of sufficient financial means to cover the expenses of travelling to and staying in the destination state; and
- have strong ties with their state of residence and intend to return to their state of residence upon the expiry of any visa issued.

Requirements concerning proof of sufficient funds vary depending on whether the trip is sponsored privately by the traveller or by a private person or a legal entity within the destination state. Self-sponsored travellers are generally required to provide documentary evidence of their financial status, as well as proof of their travel arrangements (e.g., airplane tickets and hotel reservations).<sup>40</sup>

To prove sufficient ties with their state of residence, applicants may be required to submit the following, non-exhaustive, list of documents:

- Bank statements or bank books showing transactions within a defined period of time;
- A current or savings bank account balance certificate;
- Recent salary payslips;
- Tax returns (business or personal);
- Proof of real estate property ownership;
- A letter from an employer on company-headed paper, detailing the salary and the length of employment, confirming the time taken off work and indicating whether leave is paid or unpaid;
- Details of previous employment and salary history (if the visa applicant recently entered new employment); or
- Business registration documents confirming the business owner's name and the date on which the business became operational.

Other OSCE participating States, such as the CIS states, Georgia, Mongolia and Turkey, generally do not require that visa applicants submit such a wide range of supporting documents. This is partly because the authorities in these states have concluded that a visa is not likely to be abused for the purpose of irregular immigration. Moreover, historically, irregular immigration to these states from other OSCE participating States with which a visa regime is maintained has not been an issue. However, many states in the CIS also require foreign visitors to register their place of stay with the relevant national authority, and checks are made on the length of their stay at the given location. Foreigners who do not fulfil the registration requirement risk facing a lengthy administrative process before they are granted the right to leave the country.<sup>41</sup> This requirement is not conducive to freedom of movement.

#### *Documentary evidence proving the declared purpose of a visit*

Visa applicants are generally required to present evidence justifying the purpose of their trip. In the case of travel for tourism, visa applicants are required to furnish proof that they have booked accommodation at a tourist facility at their destination; for private visits, a free-form

<sup>40</sup> With the introduction of electronic airplane tickets, it is generally no longer possible to book tickets without simultaneously purchasing them. This often forces applicants to procure expensive refundable tickets that can be cancelled with the full price reimbursed in the event that a visa application is refused, further adding to the cost to the applicant of the visa application process.

<sup>41</sup> That foreign visitors register their place of stay is also a requirement of many Schengen Area states and OSCE participating States in South-Eastern Europe. However, this requirement is often not enforced when it comes to short-term foreign visitors. Moreover, OSCE participating States that do not require residency registration do not require foreign nationals to register their place of stay.

invitation letter from a friend or a family member is required; for business-related travel, an invitation letter from a business entity at the destination (and, sometimes, examples of past business correspondence) is required; and in the case of travel for medical purposes, an invitation from a medical facility at the destination and documents explaining the medical condition of the visa applicant are required.

There are also significant differences between OSCE participating States in terms of the requested format of the documentation justifying the purpose of the visit. Most OSCE participating States require that visa applicants submit either the original or a copy of an invitation letter from a legal entity or a person from the destination state. The letter does not generally have to conform to a prescribed format. However, some OSCE participating States require that original invitation letters be certified by the relevant national authority before they can be considered.<sup>42</sup> In cases where the inviting party is sponsoring the costs of travel and the stay of the visa applicant, some OSCE participating States require that an original invitation letter written on a designated form and certified by a national authority be provided.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.2 VISA APPLICATION PROCESSING FEES

Consular representations of OSCE participating States abroad require trained officials and adequate technical capacities in order to process visa applications. The related costs are paid for by visa fees charged to applicants; this ensures that the processing of visa application requests is not paid for out of the national budget. Table 3.1 provides an overview of some of the applicable visa fees in the OSCE region.<sup>44</sup>

42 Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan require visa applicants travelling for private reasons to provide invitation letters from the inviting person, and that such letters be certified by the relevant national authority. An invitation on an official form certified by the relevant national authority should be provided regardless of whether the inviting person will or will not sponsor the applicant's stay in the destination country. A similar invitation letter should be obtained if the inviting party is a legal person. The types of invitations required by each country are as follows: Belarus – an original invitation issued by the Citizenship and Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus; The Russian Federation – a visa entitlement invitation (“Izvesheniya”) obtained from the local Office for Visa and registration; Turkmenistan – a letter of invitation obtained from the sponsor (either a host company or an individual) in Turkmenistan and certified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ashgabat; Uzbekistan – the inviting natural or legal person in Uzbekistan must apply in advance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The visa is processed when confirmation has been received by the embassy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan; Mongolia – for a stay of longer than 30 days in Mongolia, an invitation approved by the Office of Immigration, Naturalization and Foreign Citizens or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia is required.

43 A few examples of such forms are as follows: Austria – the “Elektronische Verpflichtungserklärung; DEL-No.”; Estonia – the “Viisakutse Füüsilisest Isikust Kutsujale”; France – the “Attestation d'accueil”; Germany – the “Verpflichtungserklärung”; Hungary – the “Meghívólevél”; Italy – the “Fidejussione Bancaria”; Latvia – the “Ielūgums visas pieprasīšanai”; The Netherlands – the “garantverklaring”; Norway – the “Garantiskjema for besøk/Guarantee Form for Visits”; Spain – the “Carta de invitación”; Sweden – the “Appendix E” and an extract of the Swedish Population Register (Personbevis) from the sponsor, together with a copy of the sponsor's passport/ID card or residence permit and proof of employment (with salary slips for the previous three months and the previous three months' bank statements); Switzerland – the “Verpflichtungserklärung/Déclaration de prise en charge/Dichiarazione di garanzia”.

44 Information on visa fees for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mongolia and Montenegro could not be obtained.



TABLE 3.1: VISA FEES CHARGED BY OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES

OSCE participating State	Cost of visa processing	Number of OSCE participating States that are subject to a visa regime
Schengen Area states, Bulgaria and Romania	EUR 60 – short-term visa (reduced to EUR 35 for countries that are signatories to visa facilitation agreements)	14
Armenia	EUR 6 – single-entry visa valid for up to 21 days EUR 37 – single-entry visa valid for up to 120 days EUR 50 – multiple-entry visa valid for up to 60 days within a six-month period EUR 99 – multiple-entry visa valid for up to 120 days within a one-year period	9
Albania	<b>For citizens of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan:</b> EUR 40 – all types of short-term visas  <b>For citizens of Georgia:</b> EUR 30 – all types of short-term visas  <b>For citizens of Belarus and Moldova:</b> EUR 50 – single-entry visa EUR 70 – double-entry visa <b>For citizens of – multiple-entry visa</b>  <b>For citizens of Russian Federation:</b> EUR 30 – single-entry visa EUR 50 – double – or multiple-entry visa  <b>For citizens of Turkmenistan:</b> EUR 30 – single-entry visa EUR 50 – double-entry visa EUR 60 – multiple-entry visa  <b>For citizens of Uzbekistan:</b> EUR 30 – single-entry visa EUR 50 – double-entry visa EUR 100 – multiple-entry visa	13
Azerbaijan	<b>For citizens of Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Slovenia:</b> EUR 35 – single-entry visa USD 80 – double-entry visa  <b>For citizens of Slovakia:</b> EUR 35 – single-entry visa USD 80 – double-entry visa  <b>For citizens of Albania:</b> EUR 40 – single-entry visa USD 80 – multiple-entry visa  <b>For citizens of Austria:</b> EUR 60 – single-entry visa EUR 80 – double-entry visa  <b>For citizens of Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania and Sweden:</b> EUR 60 – single – or double-entry visa  <b>For citizens of Spain:</b> EUR 60 – single-entry visa USD 80 – double-entry visa	47

	<p><b>For citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkmenistan:</b>  <b>USD 40</b> – single-entry visa  <b>USD 80</b> – double-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of Lithuania:</b>  <b>USD 45</b> – single-entry visa  <b>USD 80</b> – double-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of Poland:</b>  <b>USD 46</b> – single-entry visa  <b>EUR 60</b> – double-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of Canada:</b>  <b>USD 63</b> – single-entry visa  <b>USD 80</b> – double-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of United Kingdom:</b>  <b>USD 101</b> – single – or double-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of United States:</b>  <b>USD 131</b> – single – or double-entry visa  <b>USD 250</b> – multiple-entry visa for citizens of all states  <b>EUR 200</b> – multiple-entry visa for citizens of Bulgaria</p>	
<b>Belarus</b>	<p><b>For citizens of Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta and Slovenia:</b>  <b>EUR 60</b> – single – or multiple-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland:</b>  <b>EUR 25</b> – single-entry visa  <b>EUR 60</b> – multiple-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of United Kingdom:</b>  <b>USD 114</b> – single – or multiple-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of United States:</b>  <b>USD 160</b> – single-entry visa  <b>USD 190</b> – multiple-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of other OSCE participating States:</b>  <b>EUR 60</b> – single-entry visa  <b>EUR 120</b> – multiple-entry visa</p>	<b>46</b>
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	<b>EUR 60</b> – single – or multiple-entry visa	<b>13</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>CAD 100</b> – single – or multiple-entry visa	
<b>Croatia</b>	<b>EUR 60</b> – single – or multiple-entry visa	<b>14</b>
<b>Cyprus</b>	<b>EUR 20</b> – single-entry visa <b>EUR 60</b> – multiple-entry visa	
<b>Georgia</b>	<b>USD 50</b> – single – or multiple-entry visa	<b>2</b>
<b>Ireland</b>	<b>EUR 60</b> – single-entry visa <b>EUR 100</b> – multiple-entry visa	<b>19</b>
	<p><b>For citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia:</b>  <b>Free of Charge</b> – single – or multiple-entry visa</p>	
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<b>USD 40</b> – tourist visa single-entry visa <b>USD 60</b> – tourist visa double-entry visa <b>USD 60</b> – business or invited guest single-entry visa <b>USD 90</b> – business or invited guest double-entry visa <b>USD 105</b> – business or invited guest triple-entry visa <b>USD 200</b> – business or invited guest multiple-entry visa	<b>44</b>

<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	<p><b>USD 70</b> – business single-entry visa valid for up to one month</p> <p><b>USD 100</b> – business double-entry visa valid for up to one month</p> <p><b>USD 50</b> – tourist single-entry visa valid for up to 15 days</p> <p><b>USD 60</b> – tourist single-entry visa valid for up to one month</p> <p><b>USD 70</b> – tourist double-entry visa valid for up to one month</p>	<b>7</b>
<b>Moldova</b>	<b>EUR 60</b> – short-term visitor visa	<b>7</b>
<b>Mongolia</b>	<p><b>GBP 40</b> – single-entry visa</p> <p><b>GBP 55</b> – double-entry visa</p> <p><b>GBP 70</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to one year</p>	
<b>Russian Federation</b>	<p><b>For citizens of EU member states (except the United Kingdom), Iceland, Norway and Switzerland:</b></p> <p><b>EUR 35</b> – single – or multiple-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of Canada:</b></p> <p><b>CAD 75</b> – single – entry visa</p> <p><b>CAD 130</b> – multiple-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of Albania, Croatia, Georgia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:</b></p> <p><b>GBP 30</b> – single-entry visa</p> <p><b>GBP 48</b> – double-entry visa</p> <p><b>GBP 180</b> – multiple-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina:</b></p> <p><b>GBP 42</b> – single-entry visa</p> <p><b>GBP 60</b> – double-entry visa</p> <p><b>GBP 102</b> – multiple-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of Mongolia:</b></p> <p><b>GBP 39</b> – single-entry visa</p> <p><b>GBP 66</b> – double-entry visa</p> <p><b>GBP 162</b> – multiple-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of the United Kingdom:</b></p> <p><b>GBP 50</b> – tourist/business single-entry visa</p> <p><b>GBP 65</b> – tourist/business double-entry visa</p> <p><b>GBP 200</b> – business multiple-entry visa</p> <p><b>For citizens of the United States:</b></p> <p><b>USD 140</b> – single – or double-entry visa</p> <p><b>USD 150</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to one year</p> <p><b>USD 160</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to three years</p>	<b>43</b>
<b>Serbia</b>	<b>EUR 60</b> – single – or multiple-entry visa	<b>11</b>
<b>Tajikistan</b>	<p><b>USD 15</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to three days</p> <p><b>USD 30</b> – single-entry visa for up to seven days</p> <p><b>USD 40</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to 14 days</p> <p><b>USD 50</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to one month</p> <p><b>USD 90</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to one month</p> <p><b>USD 60</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to 45 days</p> <p><b>USD 100</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to 45 days</p> <p><b>USD 65</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to two months</p> <p><b>USD 105</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to two months</p> <p><b>USD 70</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to three months</p> <p><b>USD 110</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to three months</p> <p><b>USD 80</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to four months</p> <p><b>USD 120</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to four months</p> <p><b>USD 90</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to five months</p> <p><b>USD 130</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to five months</p> <p><b>USD 100</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to six months</p> <p><b>USD 140</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to six months</p> <p><b>USD 120</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to seven months</p> <p><b>USD 160</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to seven months</p> <p><b>USD 140</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to eight months</p>	<b>46</b>

	<p><b>USD 180</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to eight months</p> <p><b>USD 160</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to nine months</p> <p><b>USD 200</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to nine months</p> <p><b>USD 180</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to ten months</p> <p><b>USD 220</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to ten months</p> <p><b>USD 200</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to 11 months</p> <p><b>USD 240</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to 11 months</p> <p><b>USD 220</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to one year</p> <p><b>USD 260</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to one year</p> <p><b>USD 350</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to two years</p> <p><b>USD 390</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to two years</p> <p><b>USD 450</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to three years</p> <p><b>USD 490</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to three years</p>	
<b>Turkey</b>	<p><b>For citizens of Canada:</b> <b>EUR 50</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to 90 days</p> <p><b>For citizens of Moldova:</b> <b>EUR 20</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to 90 days</p> <p><b>For citizens of other OSCE participating States:</b> <b>EUR 25</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to 90 days</p>	<b>20</b>
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	<p><b>USD 35</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to 10 days</p> <p><b>USD 45</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to 20 days</p> <p><b>USD 75</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to 20 days</p> <p><b>USD 55</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to one month, and <b>USD 30</b> for each requested additional month up to a total of one year (one year = <b>USD 385</b>)</p> <p><b>USD 75</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to one month, and <b>USD 40</b> for each requested additional month up to a total of one year (one year = <b>USD 515</b>)</p>	<b>56</b>
<b>Ukraine</b>	<p><b>USD 85</b> – single-entry visa</p> <p><b>USD 130</b> – double-entry visa</p> <p><b>USD 200</b> – multiple-entry visa</p>	<b>1</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<p><b>GBP 80</b> – single – or multiple-entry visa valid for up to six months within a one-year period</p> <p><b>GBP 278</b> – single – or multiple-entry visa valid for up to two years (maximum length of stay for each visit: six months)</p> <p><b>GBP 511</b> – single or multiple-entry visa valid for up to five years (maximum length of stay for each visit: six months)</p> <p><b>GBP 737</b> – single – or multiple-entry visa valid for up to 10 years (maximum length of stay for each visit: six months)</p>	<b>19</b>
<b>United States</b>	<p><b>USD 160</b> – all visa categories</p> <p><b>For citizens of Belarus:</b> <b>USD 100</b> – additional reciprocity fee for business and tourist visas</p> <p><b>For citizens of Kyrgyzstan:</b> <b>USD 45</b> – additional reciprocity fee for business and tourist visas</p> <p><b>For citizens of Turkmenistan:</b> <b>USD 335</b> – additional reciprocity fee for business and tourist visas</p>	<b>21</b>
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	<p><b>USD 40</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to seven days</p> <p><b>USD 50</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to 15 days</p> <p><b>USD 60</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to 30 days</p> <p><b>USD 80</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to three months</p> <p><b>USD 120</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to six months</p> <p><b>USD 160</b> – single-entry visa valid for up to one year</p> <p><b>USD 150</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to six months</p> <p><b>USD 250</b> – multiple-entry visa valid for up to one year</p>	<b>47</b>

It is also noteworthy that, while some OSCE participating States charge a unified rate for all visas, many OSCE participating States charge different rates depending on the length of stay or whether the visa is single or multiple-entry, despite the fact that the actual processing costs are the same regardless of the duration of the visa and the type of entry that it permits.

In addition, OSCE participating States often contract private companies (service providers) to collect visa applications on their behalf and to provide assistance to visa applicants. These companies also charge fees for their services, which must be paid for by the applicant on top of the visa fee. Therefore, while such services facilitate access to visas for applicants who would otherwise have to travel long distances to reach a consulate or embassy, they also contribute to the overall cost of visa processing. In general, visa applicants can choose whether to use the services of private companies or to apply for a visa at the designated consular office or embassy. In practice, however, their choice essentially consists of either paying the costs of travel to the consulate or embassy in the capital city or paying an additional fee to the more conveniently located service provider.

It is also important to bear in mind that the visa fee constitutes only a part of all the overall costs that a visa applicant needs to pay to obtain a visa. The total cost of the visa application process, as well as the time taken to collect the necessary documents, is determined by the volume of supporting documentation required. Where official translations of documents have to be obtained, this incurs additional cost and prolongs the process. In particular, the process of obtaining documents may take longer and be more costly for those applicants who are required to submit documentation to establish their financial status and/or ties to the state in which they reside. The process may also take significantly longer if an applicant is required to obtain an original invitation letter issued by a private or legal person in the destination state, and which must be endorsed by the relevant national authority of that state.

Another factor that can significantly increase the cost of obtaining a visa and the time taken to do so is the distance that an applicant must travel to the consular office or visa centre, as well as the number of visits required. In general, citizens of OSCE participating States may obtain visas by submitting a visa application at an embassy or consular representation located in the country in which they reside. However, the consular representations of some OSCE participating States can only be reached by travelling abroad. In some instances, in order to obtain a visa for the destination state the applicant must first obtain a visa for the state in which the relevant consulate or embassy is located.

When deciding to travel to a visa-issuing country, visa applicants generally assess the costs of obtaining the visa against the overall cost of the intended trip. People planning to travel great distances will have already factored in high transportation costs, in which case the cost of the visa may be proportionally small compared to the overall cost of travel.

Conversely, if the visa applicant requires a visa to travel to a neighbouring country and the cost of travelling to that country is not high, then the cost of the visa (as well as the additional costs associated with obtaining the visa) may be proportionally high compared to the cost of travel. In this case, the cost of obtaining a visa may serve as a significant deterrent to some people, who may consequently decide to travel elsewhere or not to travel at all.

### 3.3 VISA APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND VISA STATISTICS

This section provides detailed statistical information on the number of visas issued by the OSCE participating States between 2010 and 2012.<sup>45</sup> It further explains visa issuance procedures and characterizes the visa policies of OSCE participating States in terms of the various types of non-immigrant visas issued by each state, the supporting documentary evidence required for the visa application process and the availability of visa application collection points for citizens of OSCE participating States who require a visa. How these visa policies translate into practice is illustrated by statistics provided on the number of visas issued, the percentage of visa applications refused and the percentage of multiple-entry visas issued.

In addition, information on the number and accessibility of visa application collection points provides for a better understanding of the distances that citizens need to travel to apply for or collect visas, given that the costs of travel to these collection points may affect their decision to apply for visas.

Similarly, special consideration is given to the kind and volume of supporting documents required for visa applications, since this determines how much time and money must be spent on obtaining such documents. As such, the kind and number of documents required may also factor into applicants' decisions on whether or not to apply for a visa.

Information on the number of visa applications highlights the level of interest in travelling to a visa-issuing state, while visa refusal rates indicate to what extent the visa application mechanism is used to prevent entry of those applicants not found to be sufficiently credible. Finally, information on the number of multiple-entry visas issued as a proportion of the total number of visas issued is presented in order to highlight the extent to which applicants are deemed sufficiently trustworthy to receive visas allowing entry for longer periods (as opposed to single visits).

This study does not single out any specific system of visa issuance as preferable to another, since the circumstances in which visa regimes are implemented by different participating States vary considerably. As such, information on visa application procedures is provided with the aim of highlighting different approaches among OSCE participating States when it comes to issuing visas.

Information is presented for each OSCE participating State that provided visa statistics as part of the ODIHR questionnaire distributed to all participating States. For those OSCE participating States that did not provide a response to the questionnaire, the information (where available) was obtained from the official visa statistics published by the participating States in question. Where information could not be obtained from either the questionnaire or from public sources, the information for that OSCE participating State is not presented.

For the sake of clarity, statistical data from each participating State are presented according to the geographical location of the state within the OSCE region, starting with the westernmost participating States (i.e., those in North America) and continuing eastwards to participating States in Europe, Central Asia and North-East Asia. Information concerning certain OSCE participating States was grouped to reflect their membership in regional organizations established with the aim of, *inter alia*, promoting cross-border travel (for example the EU, the Schengen Area and the CIS).

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45 Except in the case of Canada, for which the information provided covers the period from 2009 to 2011.

### 3.3.1 North America

#### Canada

Citizens of OSCE participating States with which Canada maintains visa regimes may enter the territory of Canada upon obtaining a “temporary residence” visa. In order to acquire a visa, they are required to provide information about the intended purpose of their visit, as well as evidence of strong ties with their country of residence, as this is expected to reduce the likelihood of them overstaying their visa. In order to demonstrate that they possess sufficient means for travel, applicants are requested to provide proof of payment of travel costs, the source of their income in their country of residence, and evidence of sufficient means to support themselves and their accompanying family members while in Canada, as well as details of their previous travel history.

Visa applications may be submitted online or in person at a designated Canadian embassy or consulate. An assessment of each case can be made solely on the basis of the documentation provided in conjunction with the visa application. However, the consular authorities may request that the applicant attend a personal interview before a decision on visa issuance is made.

Canada does not have consular representations in all OSCE participating States that are subject to a visa regime. As a result, only residents of Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine can apply for a visa at the Canadian visa office in their country of residence. Where Canadian consular representations are not present, citizens must submit their visa applications to a Canadian embassy or consulate located abroad, and must appear in person at the consulate or embassy if so requested (Table 3.2).

**TABLE 3.2: DESIGNATED CANADIAN VISA OFFICES FOR NATIONALS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES THAT ARE SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**

OSCE participating State	Canadian Visa Office
Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	Moscow (the Russian Federation)
Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkmenistan	Ankara (Turkey)
Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Montenegro and Serbia	Vienna (Austria)
Bulgaria and Moldova	Bucharest (Romania)
Belarus*	Warsaw (Poland)
Mongolia*	Beijing (China)
Albania	Rome (Italy)

\*visa required for travel to the country where the visa office is located

However, the need to travel to the designated visa office has been mitigated by the introduction of an interface for visa application processing. This interface allows for supporting documents, including scanned versions of original documents, to be submitted electronically. In addition, the interface provides information on the average time taken to process a visa application at a particular consular office. Provided that the application has been assessed positively, the applicant may mail their passport to the consular office and have it returned by mail together with the issued visa.

*Number of visas issued*

Table 3.3 shows statistics published by the Canadian authorities on the number of visas issued by each Canadian visa office, as well as the visa refusal rates.<sup>46</sup>

**TABLE 3.3: CANADA – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED, AS WELL AS VISA REFUSAL RATES, BY CANADIAN VISA OFFICES**

Location of visa office	2009		2010		2011	
	Number of visas issued	Refusal rate (%)	Number of visas issued	Refusal rate (%)	Number of visas issued	Refusal rate (%)
<b>Ankara</b>	7,069	15.9	8,987	14.5	8,405	15.8
<b>Belgrade*</b>	4,312	8.0	4,871	9.5	4,691	10.9
<b>Bucharest</b>	14,644	7.5	14,532	10.6	13,229	12.9
<b>Kyiv</b>	6,905	20.7	7,376	20.5	7,934	16.9
<b>Moscow</b>	16,247	22.0	21,293	17.5	20,233	12.8
<b>Prague*</b>	37	0.0	6,353	1.7	7,298	1.5
<b>Rome</b>	2,464	42.3	2,149	50.3	1,543	61.6
<b>Vienna</b>	6,900	8.0	3,389	15.8	1,336	35.2
<b>Warsaw</b>	4,083	6.0	3,387	8.8	2,627	13.6

\*visa office is currently closed

Based on the number of visas issued by each Canadian embassy in the OSCE region and the citizenship of the visa applicants applying to each visa office, the number of visas issued to citizens of Russian Federation and participating States in Central Asia grew between 2009 and 2011.<sup>47</sup> For example, the number of visas issued by the Canadian Embassy in Moscow in 2011 was 25 per cent greater than the number of visas issued in 2009. Equally, the number of visas issued in Ukraine in 2011 saw a 15 per cent increase compared to data from 2009. Finally, the number of visas issued to Turkish citizens rose by 19 per cent between 2009 and 2011. A similar trend was not evident in other parts of the OSCE region for this period: between 2009 and 2011, the number of visas issued by the Canadian embassy in Bucharest declined by 10 per cent, in Vienna by 81 per cent, in Rome by 37 per cent and in Warsaw by 36 per cent. The only exception was the embassy in Prague, which, following the reintroduction of the visa regime for citizens of the Czech Republic, witnessed a sharp increase in the number of visas issued between 2009 and 2011.

These statistics point to a growing interest in travelling to Canada among citizens of the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine, which is in line with the overall trend of an increasing rise in the number of travellers from Area Two to Area One states.

<sup>46</sup> Information presented in the chart is based on the official Canadian statistics on the number of issued non-immigrant visas, as published by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), <<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/menu-fact.asp>>. The chart does not include statistics for the Canadian Visa Office in Beijing (which is also designated as the visa application point for Mongolian citizens – the only nationals of an OSCE participating State who have to travel outside the OSCE region in order to obtain a visa to enter Canada), as it can be presumed that most of the visas issued there are given to Chinese citizens.

<sup>47</sup> On the basis of the available baseline information it was not possible to determine the number of visas issued aggregated according to the nationality of recipients.



### *Visa refusal rates*

The number of refused visa applications (visa refusal rates) among Canadian visa offices is high compared to most OSCE participating States, and is similar to the refusal rates among consular representations of the United States. Such high refusal rates result from the high costs of repatriating visitors who overstay their visas, as well as other social and welfare-protection costs incurred by foreign visitors that state authorities may need to cover. An increase in the number of visas issued between 2009 and 2011 to citizens of the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine was accompanied by a decline in the number of refused visa applications. As such, between 2009 and 2011, the number of visa refusals issued by the Canadian visa office in the Russian Federation declined by 50 per cent, in Ukraine by 19 per cent and in Turkey by 0.1 per cent. Meanwhile, the decline in the number of visas issued by visa offices in other OSCE participating States was matched by an increase in the number of refused visa applications. This was particularly evident in the case of Albanian citizens applying for visas at the Canadian Embassy in Rome, where the already high visa refusal rate of 42.3 per cent in 2009 rose to 61.6 per cent in 2011. A similar trend can be observed in the case of Belarus citizens obtaining their visas at the Canadian Embassy in Warsaw, where the number of refused visa applications rose from 6 per cent in 2009 to 13 per cent in 2011.

### **United States**

Foreign visitors wishing to enter the United States for a short period of time may apply for a non-immigrant visa. The United States issues 32 types of non-immigrant visas, with each visa type relating to the specific purpose of the visit or to the status of the visitor to the United States.<sup>48</sup> The most common types of non-immigrant visas issued by the United States are visas for business (B1) and visas for tourism, vacation and pleasure (B2).

The visa application and issuance process in the United States centres on the assessment of the credibility of the applicant's declared purpose of travel, which is determined by a consular official by means of a personal interview. As part of the application process, applicants are generally required to provide sufficient proof of the purpose of their trip, their intention to leave the United States within the specified time period and their ability to cover all costs of travel.

Applicants are generally advised to bring with them to the interview all documents that could be used as proof that the applicant is not an intended immigrant. The decision to grant a visa is not made solely on the basis of supporting documents, but also on an assessment by the visa official of the credibility of an applicant at an interview; as such, supporting documents only contribute to this assessment.

Further to the visa mechanism, the United States also records the dates of entry and departure of all third-country nationals who require a visa. This information is collected through the "I 94 W" form, which is composed of two parts – one that is completed at the time of entry into the United States and one that is submitted at the border crossing upon departure.<sup>49</sup> The United States uses this mechanism, among others, to determine if persons who have been issued long-

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48 A complete list of the types of non-immigrant visa issued by the United States can be found at: <[http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types\\_1286.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1286.html)>.

49 Form I-94 is a form denoting the arrival-departure record of particular foreigners, and is used by the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) also use Form I-94 to track the arrival and departure of foreign nationals. Form I-94 must be completed at the time of entry to the United States by foreign citizens that are being admitted into the United States on a non-immigrant visa basis.

term multiple-entry visas comply with the entry regulations applicable under a particular visa type. This additional layer of oversight allows the United States authorities to provide long-term visas to trustworthy applicants.

*Number of visas issued*

Table 3.4 provides an overview of the number of non-immigrant visas issued to citizens of those OSCE participating States with which the United States maintains visa regimes.<sup>50</sup>

**TABLE 3.4: UNITED STATES – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO NATIONALS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**

OSCE participating States	Number of non-immigrant visas issued			% change since 2010
	2010	2011	2012	
<b>Albania</b>	5,537	4,867	5,310	-4.1
<b>Armenia</b>	3,412	2,783	4,057	18.9
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	2,662	3,345	3,865	45.2
<b>Belarus</b>	5,991	7,322	8,607	43.7
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	4,974	5,673	4,698	-5.5
<b>Bulgaria</b>	11,492	13,575	12,041	4.8
<b>Croatia</b>	10,414	10,727	10,740	3.1
<b>Cyprus</b>	4,690	4,731	4,319	-7.9
<b>Georgia</b>	2,658	2,757	3,306	24.4
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	7,535	9,411	11,211	48.8
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	1,533	1,884	1,862	21.5
<b>former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</b>	3,212	3,612	3,941	22.7
<b>Moldova</b>	3,176	3,691	3,921	23.5
<b>Mongolia</b>	3,806	4,589	4,906	28.9
<b>Montenegro</b>	1,834	1,800	1,880	2.5
<b>Poland</b>	64,382	62,242	60,815	-5.5
<b>Romania</b>	21,337	20,850	21,516	0.8
<b>Russian Federation</b>	120,700	158,949	182,074	50.8
<b>Serbia</b>	10,296	11,819	11,818	14.8
<b>Tajikistan</b>	648	852	962	48.5
<b>Turkey</b>	51,297	63,676	66,521	29.7

<sup>50</sup> Information presented in the chart is based on official United States statistics on the number of non-immigrant visas issued, as published by the United States Department of State at: <[http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/statistics/nivstats/nivstats\\_4582.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/statistics/nivstats/nivstats_4582.html)>. The information sets out only the total number of visas issued for business visits and visits made for the purpose of tourism, holiday and leisure.

<b>Turkmenistan</b>	511	566	740	44.8
<b>Ukraine</b>	21,297	26,511	30,538	43.4
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	4,309	4,156	5,685	31.9
<b>Total</b>	367,703	430,388	465,333	26.5

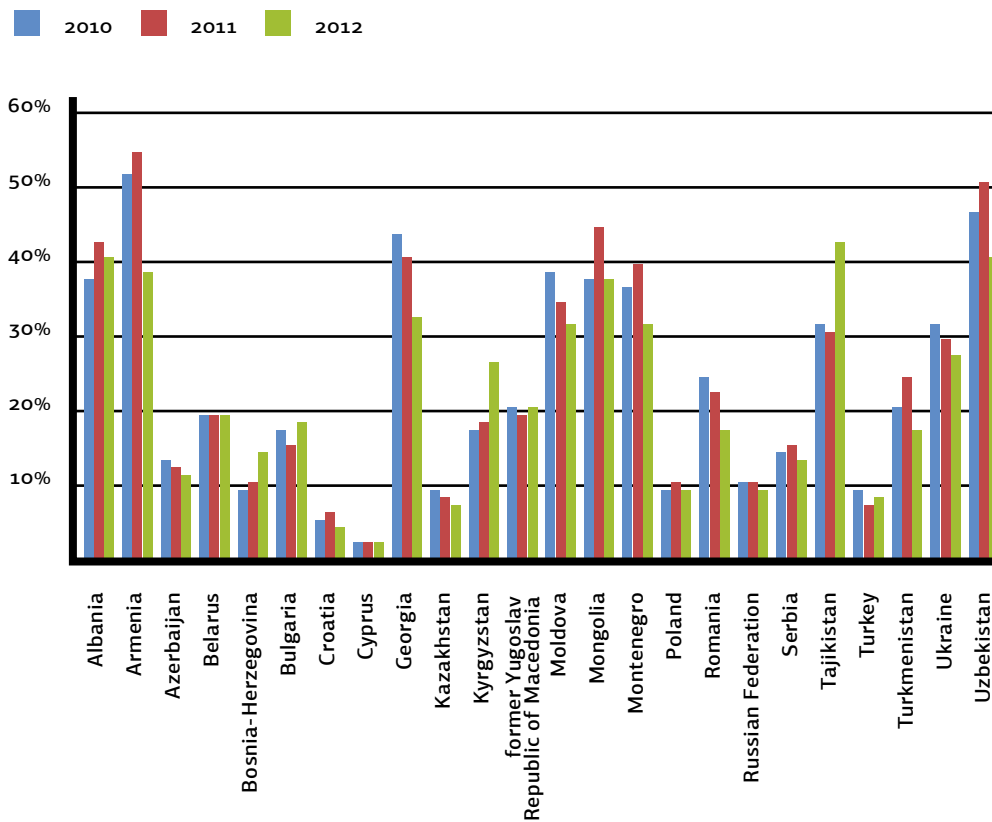
As presented in Table 3.4, the number of business or tourist visas issued to citizens of OSCE participating States that are subject to a visa regime increased by 26.5 per cent between 2010 and 2011. The table also demonstrates how, between 2010 and 2012, the number of visas issued to citizens of CIS states increased, depending on the applicant's state of origin, by between 18.9 per cent (Armenia) and 50.8 per cent (the Russian Federation). A similar trend can be observed in the cases of Georgia, Mongolia and Turkey, where the number of visas issued increased by 24.4 per cent, 28.9 per cent and 29.7 per cent, respectively, between 2010 and 2012. This trend is not apparent in the cases of those OSCE participating States from South-Eastern Europe and the European Union, which maintain visa regimes with the United States. For these OSCE participating States, the growth in the number of visas issued between 2010 and 2012 was relatively modest, ranging from 0.8 per cent (Romania) to 14.8 per cent (Serbia). In the cases of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus and Poland, the number of visas issued declined between 2010 and 2012, ranging from a drop of 4.1 per cent (Albania) to 7.9 per cent (Cyprus).

Generally speaking, first-time applicants for United States visas who are deemed to be trustworthy receive a visa for the requested duration of their trip. If the applicant complies with the entry regulations and departs the United States before the visa expires, then the applicant is granted long-term multiple-entry visas for all subsequent visa applications. The maximum duration of a long-term visa is determined separately for each third country and also depends on the type of visa issued. The maximum duration for visas for business and leisure purposes is generally 10 years for most OSCE participating States. Under United States visa policy, the maximum duration of long-term multiple-entry visas for citizens of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is one year. For citizens of Montenegro and the Russian Federation, the maximum duration of long-term multiple-entry visas is three years, while for citizens of Ukraine, the maximum duration is five years. The final decision on the admission of foreign citizens into the United States lies with the Customs and Border Protection officials, who have the authority to permit or deny admission to the United States. These officials also decide how long holders of a valid entry visa may remain on United States territory.

#### *Visa refusal rates*

Visa refusal rates for the United States (Figure 3.1) are generally higher (21.6 per cent) than the refusal rates of the Schengen Area states (4.9 per cent) for the same third countries. There are a number of possible reasons for this. As one of the world's largest economies, the United States is highly attractive to potential irregular labour migrants. Where persons are found to be in breach of entry regulations, the costs of processing the repatriation of such persons to their country of residence can be very high. Therefore, United States consular officials need to be sure that the applicants are not inclined to violate the terms of their visa. Finally, the application of strict criteria to assess the credibility of each applicant reduces the likelihood of a violation of the United States entry regulations from occurring, and also allows consular authorities to subsequently issue long-term visas to applicants who did not violate the terms of the first visas that they were issued.

FIGURE 3.1: UNITED STATES – THE PERCENTAGE OF VISA APPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS AND LEISURE PURPOSES THAT WERE REFUSED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME



### 3.3.2 Europe and Central Asia

#### *Schengen Area*

To ensure that their citizens and foreign citizens benefit from free cross-border movement within the Schengen Area, Schengen Area states co-operate in protecting their external borders and implementing a common EU visa policy. This includes the issuance of uniform visas for short stays (of up to 90 days), as well as constant efforts towards harmonizing visa issuance procedures and standards.

As of 2013, 22 EU member states had fully implemented the Schengen regulatory framework, namely Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. Four EU member states – Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania – are not yet part of the Schengen Area, but are legally obliged to join upon fulfilling certain conditions relating to the full implementation of the Schengen Regulatory Framework. As such, they maintain border controls and also have their own visa policies. The remaining two EU member states – the United Kingdom and Ireland – decided to opt out of implementing the Schengen regulatory framework. Four other OSCE participating States – Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland – are not members of the EU, but are part of the Schengen Area and have fully implemented the Schengen regulatory framework.

The EU member states have delegated visa issuance procedures and regulations to a supra-national organization. As “Schengen-associated countries”, Norway, Switzerland, Ireland and Lichtenstein have incorporated the Schengen regulatory framework into their national legislation, and also comply with the norms of European Commission Regulation No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009, establishing a Community Code on Visas (known as the “Visa Code”). They also comply with the norms of European Council Regulation No 539/2001 of 15 March 2001, which lists the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from this requirement (EC Regulation 539/2001).<sup>51</sup>

Although Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania do not yet issue Schengen visas, they already apply the set of common rules set out in the Visa Code, EC Regulation 539/2001 and, to a certain extent, the Schengen regulatory framework. Two EU member states – Ireland and the United Kingdom – have opted out of participating in the uniform visa policy of the EU and, instead, implement their own independent visa policies.<sup>52</sup>

Short visits (either a single visit lasting for up to 90 days or multiple visits amounting to up to 90 days in total) made within a specified six-month timeframe are regulated by the Common Visa Policy, and a Schengen visa issued by one Schengen Area state entitles the holder of the visa to free movement across the Schengen Area.

The EU Common Visa Policy comprises several elements:

- **Common technical standards and specifications**, as well as shared security criteria for all visas issued by the Schengen member states.<sup>53</sup> The uniform format of the visa sticker was introduced in 1995;
- A **uniform list of third countries whose nationals require a visa** to cross the external borders of the Schengen Area. EC Regulation No 539/2001 of March 2001 contains two annexes, which list countries whose nationals require visas in order to travel to the EU (Annex I, the so-called “black list”) and a list of countries whose nationals are exempted from this requirement (Annex II, the so-called “white list”). These Annexes are updated whenever a decision on liberalizing the EU visa regime with a third country is made. In 2009 and 2010, the five Western Balkans states moved from the “black list” to the “white list”;
- **The continuous harmonization of procedures and conditions for issuing visas.** The Visa Code has become the cornerstone of the current Common Visa Policy; it sets out the conditions and procedures for issuing visas for transit through and short stays in (for max-

51 Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code): <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:243:0001:0058:en:PDF>>. European Council Regulation No 539/2001 of 15 March 2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2001:081:0001:0007:EN:PDF>>.

52 Ireland and the United Kingdom can participate in some or all of the Schengen arrangements if a unanimous decision is reached by the Schengen member states and the government representative of the country in question (under the Treaty of Amsterdam, the United Kingdom and Ireland co-operate on some aspects of the Schengen Area, including police and judicial co-operation, the fight against drugs and the Schengen Information System). More information can be found at the European Commission’s website: <[http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/justice\\_freedom\\_security/free\\_movement\\_of\\_persons\\_asylum\\_immigration/l33020\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_immigration/l33020_en.htm)>.

53 Council Regulation (EC) No. 1683/95 of 29 May 1995 laying down a uniform format for visas, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:1995R1683:20070101:EN:PDF>>.

imum of 90 days within any six-month period) Schengen Area states. The Visa Code has been supplemented by a set of operational guidelines.<sup>54</sup>

- **A common visa fee**,<sup>55</sup> set to ensure equal treatment of all third-country nationals. Currently the visa fee is fixed at EUR 60. Reduced visa fees of 35 EUR have been negotiated with some OSCE participating States as part of their visa facilitation agreements. The visa fees may also be waived or reduced in individual cases to promote cultural and sporting interests, as well as interests in the fields of foreign policy, development policy and other areas of public interest, or for humanitarian reasons;
- **Intensified information exchange**, which constitutes an important feature of co-operation in the implementation of the Common Visa Policy. This exchange takes place through the Schengen Information System<sup>56</sup> (SIS), now in its second upgraded version, and the Visa Information System (VIS). The SIS was established on the basis of the Convention of 19 June 1990 Applying the Schengen Agreement of 14 June 1985 between the Governments of the States Of The Benelux Economic Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic, on the Gradual Abolition of Checks at their Common Borders (the Schengen Convention) and is an electronic database storing information (including biometric data) on certain categories of persons, such as those who have been involved in serious crime, do not have the right to enter or stay in the EU, or who are missing (particularly children). The SIS also holds data on certain types of lost and stolen property, such as firearms, vehicles, bank notes and personal documents. The database has search tools that can be accessed by border guards as well as by police, customs, visa and judicial authorities throughout the Schengen Area, as well as by The European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit (Eurojust) and European Police Office (Europol). The recently launched common Visa Information System (VIS) contains data on visa decisions taken by consulates of Schengen area states and is aimed at eliminating fraudulent practices.<sup>57</sup> The VIS includes biometric data, including photographs and fingerprints of all third-country nationals (nationals of countries located outside the EU) applying for short-term visas, as well as information on previous applications and rejections within a five-year period, thus preventing so-called "visa-shopping" and rendering a rejection at one consulate decisive and final; and
- **Local Schengen co-operation** by Schengen Area states. Within this framework, consular services in a given country co-operate with the aim of ensuring a harmonized application of the common visa policy and information exchange. The former includes harmonizing document requirements, circumstances in which the visa fee may be waived and the fees charged by external service providers.

Visitors to the Schengen Area states who require visas must apply for a short-stay visa, which either allows for a single entry or multiple entries within defined periods of time. Multiple-entry visas are issued with a validity of up to five years and permit stays of a maximum of

54 Commission Decision of 19.3.2010 establishing the Handbook for the processing of visa applications and the modification of issued visas, <[http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/borders/docs/c\\_2010\\_1620\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/borders/docs/c_2010_1620_en.pdf)>; Commission Decision of 11.6.2010 establishing the Handbook for the organisation of visa sections and local Schengen cooperation, <[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/pdf/policies/borders/docs/c\\_2010\\_3667\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/pdf/policies/borders/docs/c_2010_3667_en.pdf)>.

55 Regulation No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code), Article 16, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:243:0001:0058:en:PDF>>

56 More information can be found at the official website of the European Union: <[http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/justice\\_freedom\\_security/free\\_movement\\_of\\_persons\\_asylum\\_immigration/l33020\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_immigration/l33020_en.htm)>.

57 More information can be found at the European Commission's website: <[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-information-system/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-information-system/index_en.htm)>.

90 days within a six-month period. This is the only type of visa issued by the Schengen Area states for short-stay purposes. However, within the visa issuance process, different rules apply concerning the required supporting documentary evidence depending on the declared purpose of the visit.

Schengen Area states have made efforts to increase the number of consular offices in order to make the process of applying for a visa more accessible to citizens of OSCE participating States. By means of Schengen Representation Agreements, they have also made it possible to delegate authority over visa issuance to the consular services of other Schengen Area states. In some participating States, such as Moldova, they also maintain common (shared) application centres.

Citizens of Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Uzbekistan can apply for a visa to all Schengen member states at the designated consular office in their own country. Citizens of a number of OSCE participating States, however, have to travel abroad to obtain a visa for some Schengen Area states, as illustrated in Table 3.5.

**TABLE 3.5: SCHENGEN AREA STATES WHICH DO NOT HAVE CONSULAR REPRESENTATION IN OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO VISA REGIMES**

Schengen Area states for which a visa can only be obtained abroad	
<b>Armenia</b>	Czech Republic, Liechtenstein, Malta and Switzerland
<b>Belarus</b>	Denmark and Liechtenstein
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	Denmark and Iceland
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Switzerland
<b>Moldova</b>	Iceland, Liechtenstein, Malta, Norway and Portugal,
<b>Mongolia</b>	Denmark, Estonia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Norway, Poland and Switzerland
<b>Tajikistan</b>	Czech Republic, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and Switzerland
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden, Iceland and Switzerland
<b>Ukraine</b>	Liechtenstein and Malta

Some Schengen Area states operate more than one consular office in different regions of a particular country, allowing for the submission of visa applications in more than one location. In addition, some Schengen Area states operate so-called common visa application centres, which provide visa-issuing services on behalf of several Schengen Area states. Finally, many Schengen Area states contract external service providers to collect visa applications, including Spain in Kazakhstan and Italy in Georgia and Moldova. Due to the country's size, this practice is the most widespread in the Russian Federation (Table 3.6).<sup>58</sup>

<sup>58</sup> The number of consular offices does not correspond only to the number of consular offices by the listed state but also includes consular offices of other Schengen Area states, which, under the Schengen Representation Agreement, issue visas on behalf of the listed state.

TABLE 3.6: NUMBER OF LOCATIONS WITHIN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION WHERE VISA APPLICATIONS CAN BE SUBMITTED (PER ISSUING STATE)

Number of cities where visa applications for Schengen Area states can be submitted	Consular Offices <sup>58</sup>		Service providers		Consular Offices		Service providers	
	Austria	3	14	Liechtenstein	2	n/a		
	Belgium	2	2	Lithuania	5	n/a		
	Czech Republic	3		Luxemburg	2	n/a		
	Denmark	3	7	Malta	1	9		
	Estonia	5	78	Netherlands	6	5		
	Finland	5	2	Norway	4	1		
	France	5	2	Poland	5	2		
	Germany	4	n/a	Portugal	1	n/a		
	Greece	3	11	Slovakia	3	n/a		
	Hungary	4	n/a	Slovenia	5	n/a		
	Iceland	1	n/a	Spain	2	2		
	Italy	2	2	Sweden	2	18		
	Latvia	5	30	Switzerland	2	14		

#### *Number of visas issued*

As illustrated in Table 3.7, between 2010 and 2012, the number of visas issued by Schengen Area states in OSCE participating States that are subject to a visa regime increased by 41 per cent. The reason for such an increase may be the growth in the number of visa application centres and visa application collection points, as well as the simplification of visa issuance procedures, as a result of visa facilitation agreements. It may also partly be due to more affordable transportation costs and an increase in the demand for travel to the Schengen Area on the part of a growing middle class in non-Schengen countries.

A steep increase in the number of visas issued is particularly apparent among OSCE participating States in Eastern Europe that border the Schengen Area. The number of visas issued by the Schengen Area states to citizens of the Russian Federation grew by 44.1 per cent between 2010 and 2012. At the same time, similar growth patterns have been recorded for Belarus (61.8 per cent) and Ukraine (37.9 per cent). Similarly upsurges in the number of visas issued can be observed in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Mongolia, with increases of 39.8 per cent, 42.9 per cent and 83.5 per cent, respectively. The reason for such increases in the number of visas issued to citizens of some of these states could be linked to the relatively low impact of the 2008 economic downturn on their economies.

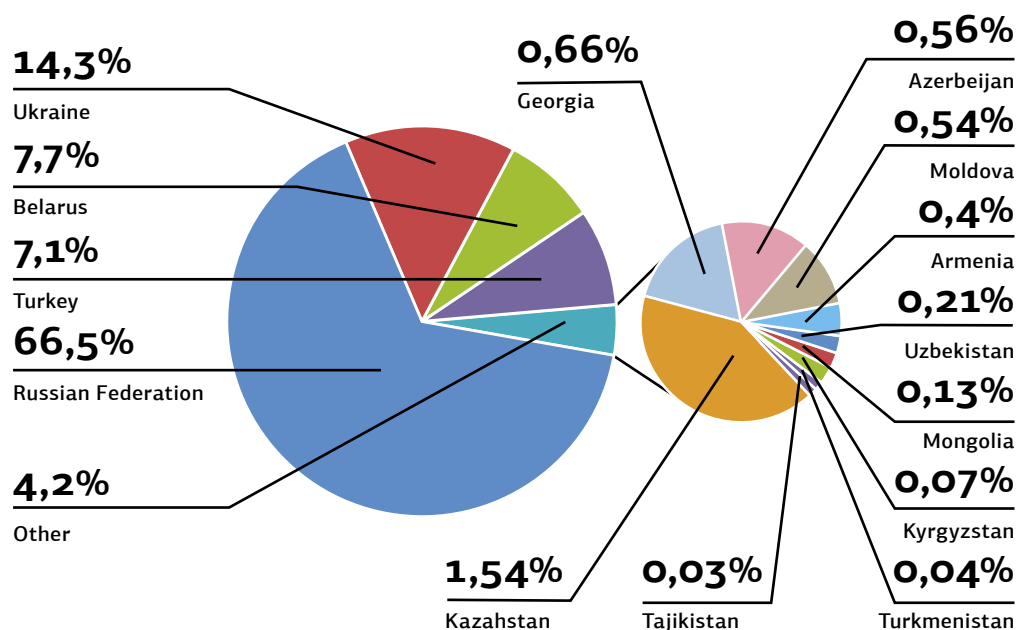


TABLE 3.7: SCHENGEN AREA STATES – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED IN OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME

OSCE Participating States	Number of non-immigrant visas issued			% change since 2010
	2010	2011	2012	
Armenia	29,307	33,527	35,780	22.1
Azerbaijan	35,672	43,009	49,867	39.8
Belarus	428,491	579,924	693,425	61.8
Georgia	50,290	59,602	59,363	18.0
Kazakhstan	96,123	117,756	137,358	42.9
Kyrgyzstan	5,070	6,003	6,600	30.2
Moldova	45,434	50,300	48,615	7.0
Mongolia	6,347	9,309	11,644	83.5
Russian Federation	4,120,704	5,152,518	5,939,644	44.1
Tajikistan	2,331	2,405	2,685	15.2
Turkey	522,230	591,950	637,276	22.0
Turkmenistan	2,734	2,937	3,619	32.4
Ukraine	930,407	1,103,328	1,283,014	37.9
Uzbekistan	16,704	17,848	19,108	14.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,291,844</b>	<b>7,770,416</b>	<b>8,927,998</b>	<b>41.9</b>

Figure 3.2 shows that 66.5 per cent of all visas issued by Schengen Area states in the OSCE region were issued in the Russian Federation, while 14.4 per cent of visas were issued in Ukraine and 7.8 per cent in Belarus. As such, the percentage of visas issued in OSCE participating States that border the Schengen Area amounted to 88.7 per cent of the total number visas issued by Schengen Area states to OSCE participating States citizens. The sharp growth in the number of visas issued in these states suggests a growing interest in travel to the Schengen

FIGURE 3.2: PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED BY SCHENGEN AREA STATES TO OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME IN 2012

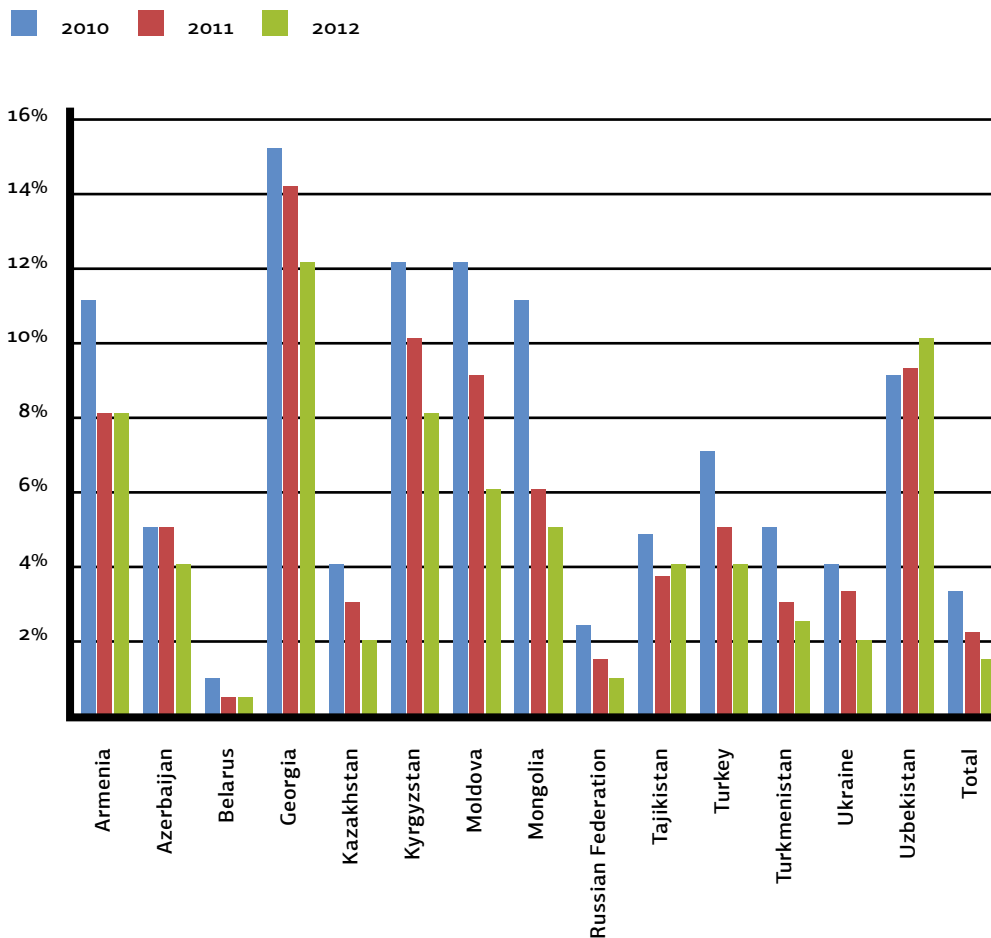


Area. Moreover, the fact that the economic situation of many travellers from these states is improving makes it easier to assess their credibility in terms of compliance with the entry regulations of the Schengen Area. With no evidence of imminent changes in the financial standing of many visitors from these states, it can be anticipated that the number of visas issued to citizens of states bordering the Schengen Area is likely to increase in years to come. This will place strains on the capacities of consular offices of Schengen Area states, which will need to increase their visa application processing capacities.

#### *Visa refusal rates*

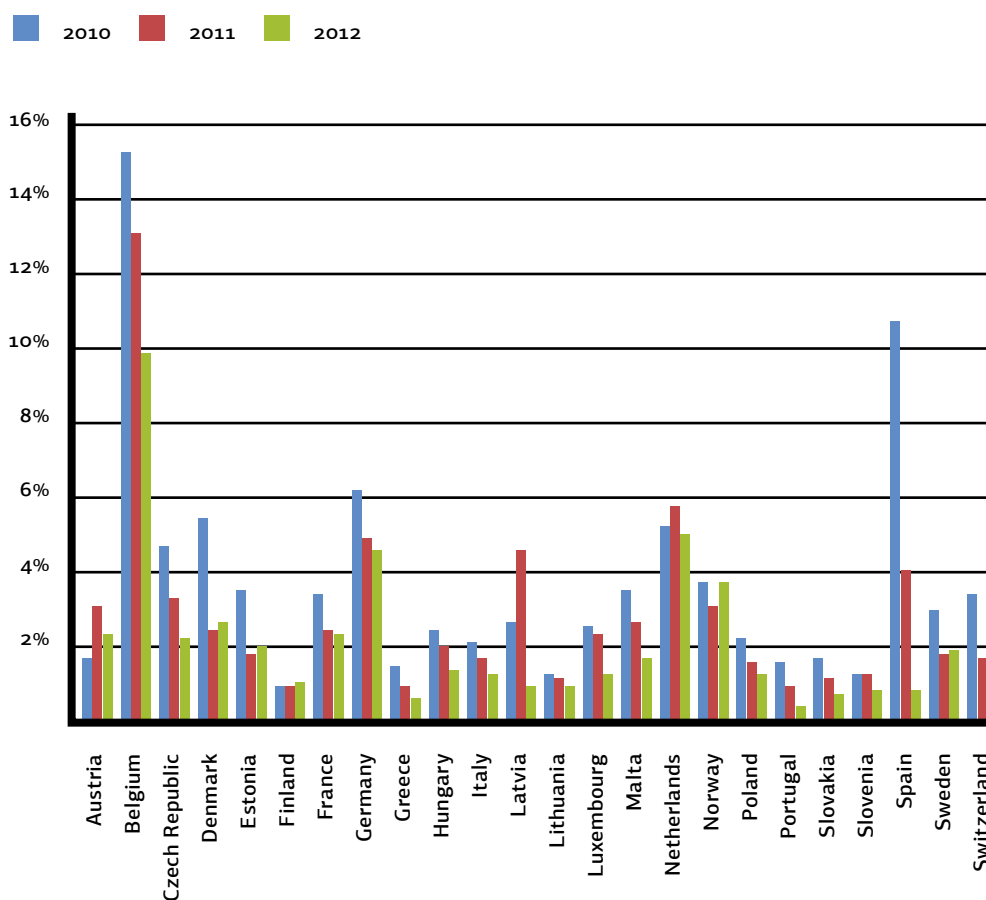
As illustrated in Figure 3.3, the percentage of visa applications refused by Schengen Area states is different for each OSCE participating State that is subject to a visa regime. The highest rates of visa application refusals were recorded in Georgia (12.7 per cent in 2012), in spite of the visa facilitation agreement that the country signed with the EU. Visa refusal rates were also high in Kyrgyzstan (8.2 per cent in 2012) and Uzbekistan (10 per cent in 2012). This high rate of refusal can be explained by the increased risks of irregular immigration associated with these countries.

**FIGURE 3.3: SCHENGEN AREA STATES – THE PERCENTAGE OF VISA APPLICATIONS FOR NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS THAT WERE REFUSED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**



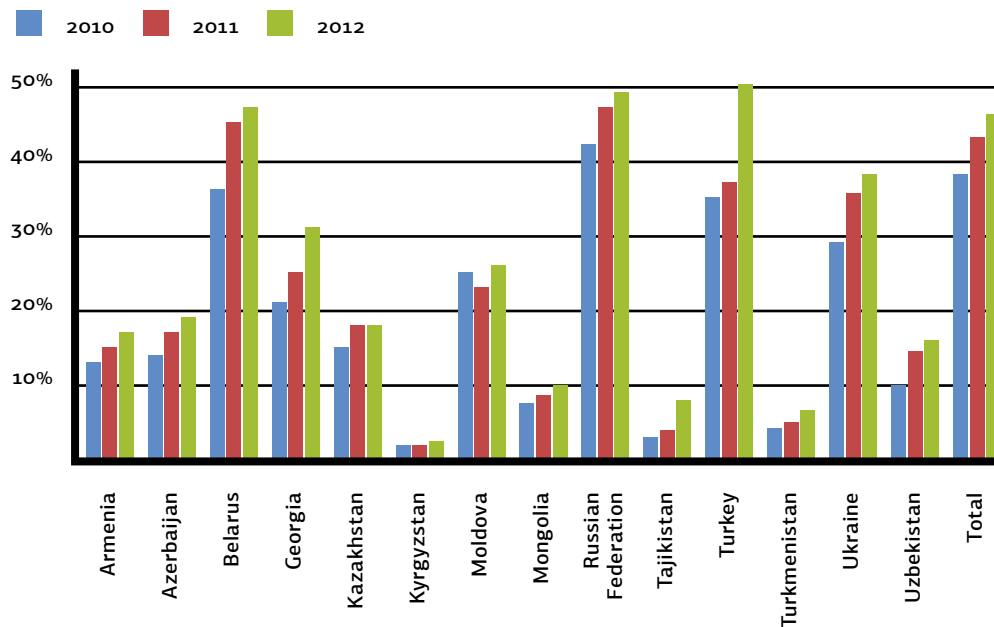
The figures also indicate that the lowest proportions of refused visa applications were recorded in the OSCE participating States where Schengen Area states issue the highest numbers of visas. Such is the case for Belarus, where the visa refusal rate in 2012 was 0.5 per cent, the Russian Federation (0.9 per cent) and Ukraine (2 per cent). As illustrated in Figure 3.3, there is a general decline in the number of visa applications refusals. This may indicate that the visa mechanism serves as an increasingly effective means of deterring visitors who are not willing

**FIGURE 3.4: SCHENGEN AREA STATES – THE PERCENTAGE OF VISA APPLICATIONS FOR NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS THAT WERE REFUSED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**



to comply with entry regulations, and that persons wishing to travel to Schengen Area states generally comply with the entry regulations of those states.

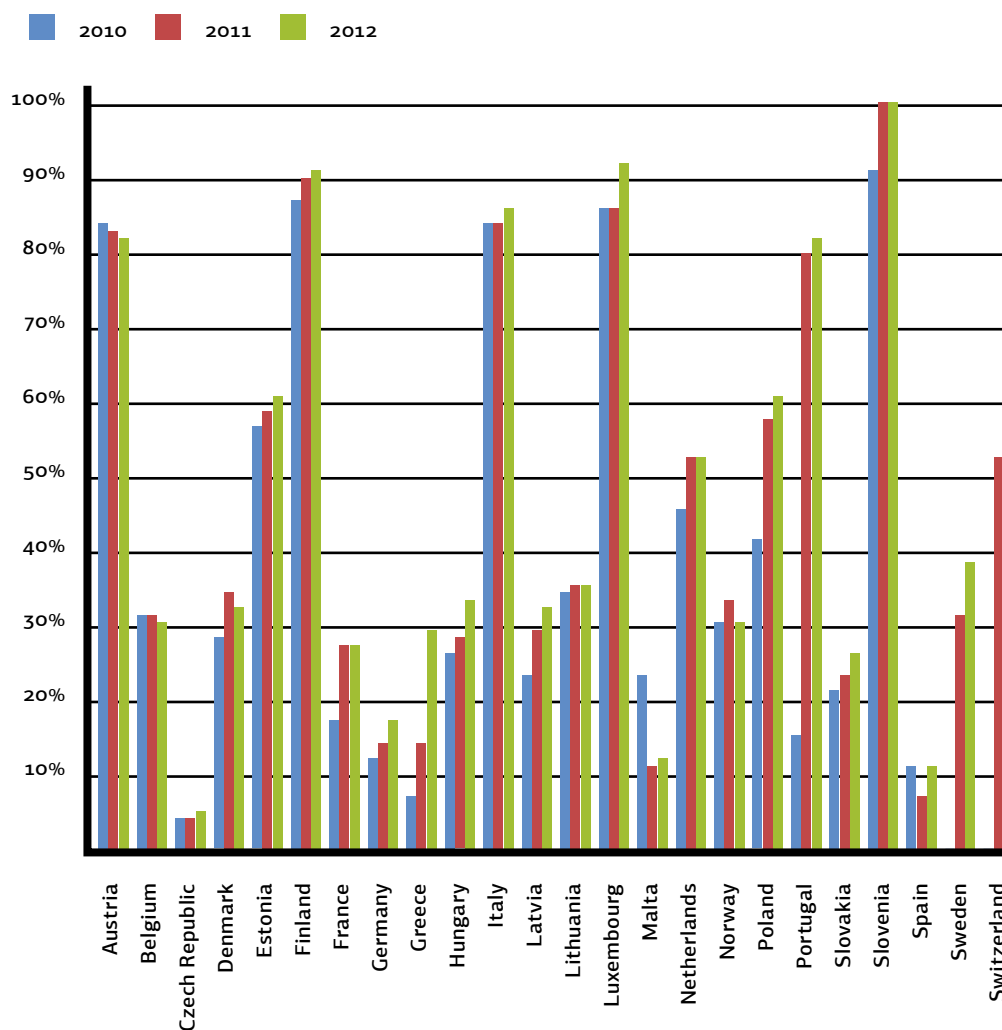
As illustrated in Figure 3.4, the percentages of visa application refusals differ depending on the state in the Schengen Area that is processing the visa application. These variations stem from the different motivations for travel to certain states within the Schengen Area. For instance, visitors to Schengen Area states with a strong tourism industry are likely to travel for tourism purposes, and by so doing contribute to the growth of the economy of these states. Accordingly, these states generally turn down relatively few visa applications. At the same time, many Schengen Area states attract irregular immigrants seeking to work illegally. These states face the challenge of identifying bona fide travellers among visa applicants and, due to the increased risks of irregular immigration, refuse a higher number of visa applications in the process.

*Proportion of multiple-entry visas issued***FIGURE 3.5: SCHENGEN AREA STATES – THE PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE-ENTRY NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**

The percentage of multiple-entry visas issued is an important statistical figure that indicates the extent to which foreign visitors are deemed not likely to violate the terms of entry, and are therefore granted the right to multiple visits on a single visa. Figure 3.5 illustrates the general trend towards increasing the number of multiple-entry visas issued by Schengen Area states between 2010 and 2012. There is, however, variance in the number of multiple-entry visas issued as a proportion of the total number of visas issued. In particular, OSCE participating States that border the Schengen Area received the highest percentage of multiple-entry visas. In 2012, 48.9 per cent of all visas issued in the Russian Federation were multiple-entry visas, while in Belarus and Ukraine those figures were 47.1 per cent and 38.6 per cent, respectively. Such a high rate of issuance of multiple-entry visas is linked to the probability that citizens from neighbouring states are more likely to travel frequently to the Schengen Area for a shorter period of time. Figure 3.5 shows how, as the distance of states from the Schengen Area states increases, the number of multiple-entry visas issued in those states decreases.

As in the case of refused visa applications, the proportion of multiple-entry visas issued to OSCE participating States citizens varied among different Schengen Area states. As illustrated in Figure 3.6, some Schengen Area states issue mostly multiple-entry visas. The figure shows the number of multiple-entry visas issued as a percentage of all visas issued to citizens of OSCE participating States. Given that 88.7 per cent of all visas issued by the Schengen Area states are issued in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, the percentages presented in Figure 3.6 largely reflect the issuance of multiple-entry visas to citizens of these three states. The figure also reflects different approaches among different Schengen Area states in determining whether a person qualifies for a multiple-entry visa. Some Schengen Area states issue multiple-entry visas regularly and not as an exception; for example, 90 per cent of all short-term stay visas issued by Slovenia and Finland are multiple-entry. By contrast, Germany, Greece and Spain issue the lowest percentage of multiple-entry visas.

FIGURE 3.6: SCHENGEN AREA STATES – THE PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE-ENTRY NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES THAT ARE SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME



### *EU member states that do not fully implement the Schengen regulatory framework*

When assessing visa applications, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania follow the common EU visa policy and apply its criteria. However, as they are not yet parties to the Schengen regulatory framework, they can only issue visas that are valid solely for entry into their own territory.

#### **Bulgaria**

Bulgaria has been applying the EU Common Visa Policy since 1 January 2007. Like all other Schengen Area states, it issues short-stay visas to citizens of OSCE participating States that are subject to a visa regime under EU Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 of 15 March 2001, which lists countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing external borders, as well as those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement. At the same time, Bulgaria unilaterally grants visa-free entry to holders of valid Schengen visas; specifically, it

allows them to enter and reside in Bulgaria for a period of no more than three months in any six-month period from the date of first entry without needing to hold a Bulgarian short-stay visa.

Visa application forms must be accompanied by supporting documentation (in line with the EU Visa Code) and presented in person at the designated consular representation or through an authorized agent. Except in the cases of Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, citizens of all other OSCE participating States with which Bulgaria maintains visa regimes may apply for visas in their own countries. In addition, citizens of the Russian Federation may submit visa applications in one of 17 cities in the Russian Federation by using the contracted services of an external provider. In Ukraine, this service is provided in eight cities, while in Turkey it is available in seven cities, and in Kazakhstan – in two cities.

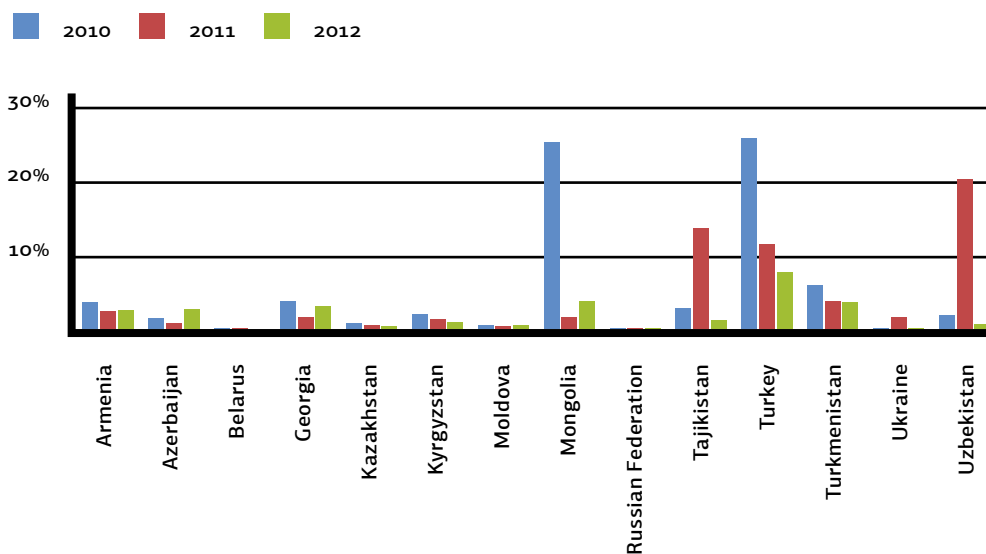
In 2012, the Bulgarian authorities issued 771,917 non-immigrant visas to citizens of OSCE participating States, an increase of 70.4 per cent compared to figures from 2010. A total of 98.1 per cent of visas issued in 2012 were granted to citizens of the following countries: the Russian Federation (52.6 per cent); Ukraine (26.7 per cent); Moldova (7.1 per cent); Belarus (7.9 per cent); and Turkey (3.8 per cent). Between 2010 and 2012, the number of visas issued increased by 70.7 per cent, while the number of visas issued to citizens of the Russian Federation and Ukraine almost doubled in the same period, increasing by 87.9 per cent and 98.8 per cent, respectively. The only drop in the number of visas issued was witnessed in the case of Turkish citizens, who were granted 33.5 per cent fewer visas in 2012 compared to the number of visas issued in 2010 (Table 3.8).

**TABLE 3.8: BULGARIA – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**

OSCE participating State	Number of visas issued			% change between 2010 and 2012
	2010	2011	2012	
Armenia	2,575	3,192	3,678	42.8
Azerbaijan	854	909	968	13.3
Belarus	38,131	33,133	60,899	59.7
Georgia	1,868	2,303	2,437	30.5
Kazakhstan	3,274	3,979	4,896	49.5
Kyrgyzstan	212	234	242	14.2
Moldova	39,949	51,047	54,770	37.1
Mongolia	76	135	138	81.6
Russian Federation	216,156	390,837	406,192	87.9
Tajikistan	74	59	86	16.2
Turkmenistan	47	62	79	68.1
Turkey	43,731	45,097	29,094	-33.5
Ukraine	103,584	153,962	205,913	98.8
Uzbekistan	395	383	513	29.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>450,926</b>	<b>685,332</b>	<b>769,905</b>	<b>70.7</b>

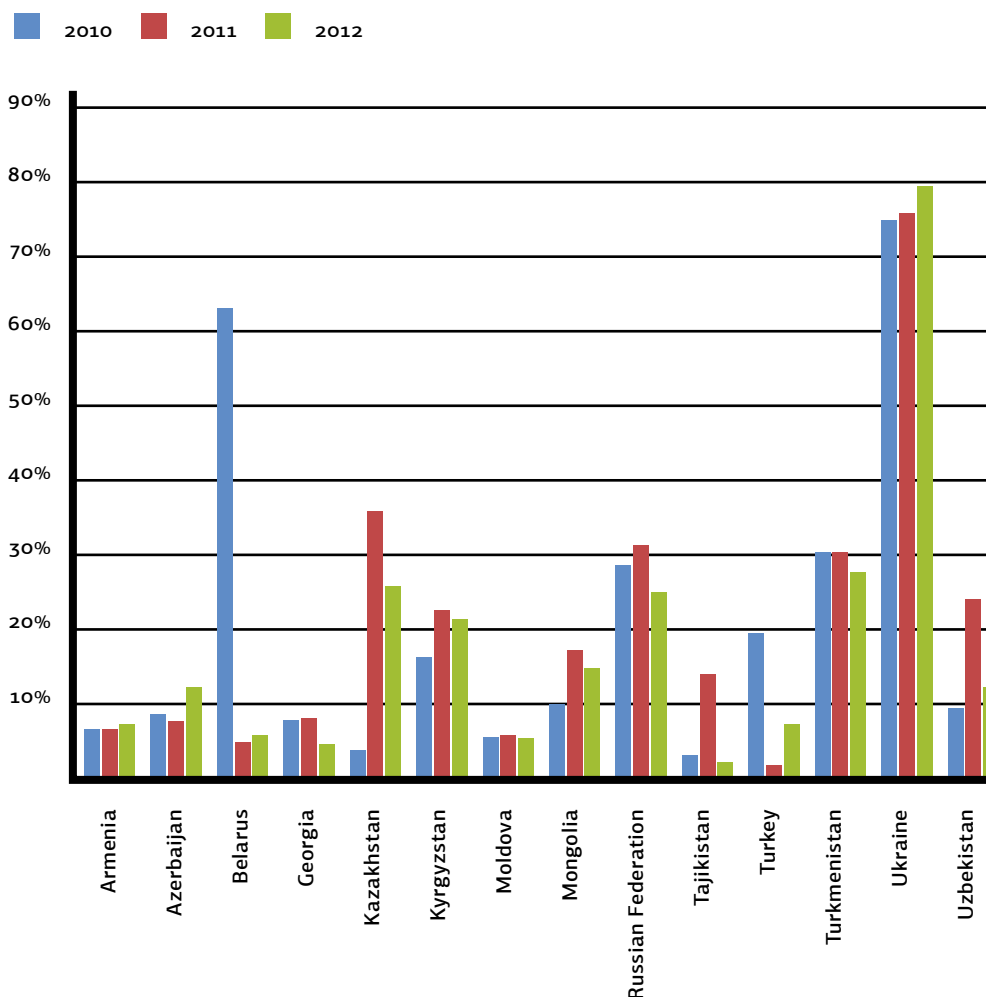
As illustrated in Figure 3.7, in 2012 the percentage of visa application refusals for citizens of most OSCE participating States was below 3 per cent, except in the cases of Mongolia (3.6 per cent), Turkmenistan (7.1 per cent) and Turkey (3.6 per cent). The figure also reveals that, even though the number of visas issued increased between 2010 and 2012, the rate of visa application refusals dropped from 1.1 per cent in 2010 to 0.5 per cent in 2012.

**FIGURE 3.7: BULGARIA – THE PERCENTAGE OF VISA APPLICATIONS FOR NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS THAT WERE REFUSED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**



As Figure 3.8 indicates, at 87.6 per cent, Ukrainian citizens receive the largest percentage of multiple-entry visas as a proportion of visas issued them by Bulgaria. For citizens of other OSCE participating States, the number of multiple-entry visas issued was generally lower than 50 per cent of all visas issued in 2012.

FIGURE 3.8: BULGARIA – THE PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE-ENTRY NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME



### Croatia

OSCE participating States citizens who require visas to enter Croatia can do so by obtaining a short-term visa at a designated Croatian consular representation abroad. Apart from transit visas, short-term visas are the only type of non-immigrant visa issued to foreign nationals. Short-term visas allow for single or multiple entries and stays of up to 90 days in total within a specified timeframe of six months. As a general rule, visa applications should be submitted in person and should be supported by documentary evidence that proves the following: the purpose of the applicant's stay in Croatia; booking confirmations for accommodation; sufficient funds to cover subsistence while in Croatia, as well as funds to return to the country of origin or onward travel to a third country; means of transport; and the intention to return to the country of origin or plans for onward travel to a third country.

As of 1 April 2013 (that is, prior to its accession to the EU on 1 July 2013), Croatia's visa policy had been fully harmonized with that of the EU. This means that, from that date onwards, Croatia's visa regime applied to OSCE participating States citizens who need a visa to enter the Schengen Area. As a result, with Croatia's accession to the EU, citizens of the Russian



Federation, Turkey and Ukraine need to obtain visas to travel to or visit Croatia. For citizens of the Russian Federation and Ukrainian, Croatia allows visa applications to be submitted online.<sup>59</sup> However, a visa application in hard copy (together with the relevant supporting documentation) still needs to be submitted to a Croatian consular representation or to one of the agencies contracted to collect visa applications for Croatia. Under a decision taken by the Croatian Government, from 1 January 2014, all foreign nationals who hold a valid Schengen visa do not require a Croatian visa for entry into and short-term stay in Croatia.

As a result of its largely liberal visa policy before it joined the EU, the total number of visas issued by Croatia between 2010 and 2012 was low. In 2012, Croatian consular authorities issued 2,141 non-immigrant visas to citizens of those OSCE participating States which at that time were subject to visa regimes with Croatia. This marked a decrease by 49.6 per cent in the total number of non-immigrant visas in 2010. In 2012, 80 per cent of all visas issued went to citizens of the following countries: Belarus (27.6 per cent), Ukraine (25.3 per cent), Moldova (11.8 per cent), the Russian Federation (7.9 per cent) and Georgia (9.1 per cent). In 2012, a total of 28 visa applications were refused.

### **The United Kingdom and Ireland**

The United Kingdom and Ireland are the only two EU member states to have opted out of implementing the common EU Visa Code and EC Regulation 539/200. Instead, they retain their own independent national visa policies. At the same time, the two countries maintain a reciprocal free travel regime for their own citizens, known as the Common Travel Area. As a result, the border between Ireland and the United Kingdom can be crossed by Irish and United Kingdom citizens in possession of a valid identification document. However, the benefits of free movement between the two OSCE participating States do not extend to third country nationals.

In addition to a general visitor visa and a business visitor visa, the United Kingdom issues 11 other categories of non-immigrant visas, including family visit visas, sporting visitor visas and visas for visitors undertaking permitted paid engagements.

Applicants are required to present supporting documentary evidence, which is specific to each visa category depending on the intended purpose of travel. Residents of most OSCE participating States can apply for a British visa in their country of residence. In the Russian Federation and Turkey, the United Kingdom operates five visa application centres, which are located in large cities. Residents of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, however, must submit their applications for United Kingdom visas at the visa centre in Kazakhstan. Similarly, residents of Montenegro are required to apply at the visa centre in Serbia.

The general rule is that visa applications may be submitted either in person or electronically through a web interface. The interface ensures that the designated visa application centre receives all relevant personal and trip-related information and provides relevant information on available time slots for appointments at the visa office, as well as the expected processing time.

All applicants are required to visit a designated visa application centre in order for their biometrical data (fingerprints and a facial image) to be collected. Visa applications must be supported by relevant documentary evidence, such as personal information, information about the financial standing and current employment status of the applicant, details of accommodation at the destination, as well as travel details. Usually, a decision on visa issuance is reached on

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59 Citizens of the Russian federation and Ukraine may apply for visas to travel to Croatia at: <<https://crovisa.mvep.hr>>.

the basis of the documentary evidence submitted. However, an applicant may also be required to attend an interview with a visa officer within 15 days of an assessment of the visa application being made. If the visa application is refused, the applicant has the right to appeal against the decision or request an administrative review.

Short-term visas are issued for a maximum period of six months, while long-term visas can be issued for periods of one, two, five or ten years. Long-term multiple-entry visas are issued if the applicant can prove a frequent and sustained need to visit the United Kingdom (such as family links or an established business connection). Applicants further need to prove that their personal circumstances in the home country are not likely to significantly change while the visa is valid. Finally, applicants also need to prove that they are in possession of sufficient means to support themselves without recourse to public funds, and also that they have a clean previous travel history with no visa overstays on their record.

#### *Number of visas issued by the United Kingdom*

While information on the number of non-immigrant visas for 2012 was not available at the time when research was being conducted, data from 2009 to 2010 reveal that the number of visas issued to citizens of OSCE participating States during this period increased by 25.5 per cent. Of the total number of all visas issued, 73.3 per cent were given to citizens of the following countries: the Russian Federation (45.6 per cent), Turkey (24.2 per cent), Ukraine (10.4 per cent) and Kazakhstan (4 per cent). A more detailed breakdown is provided in Table 3.9.

**TABLE 3.9: UNITED KINGDOM – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**

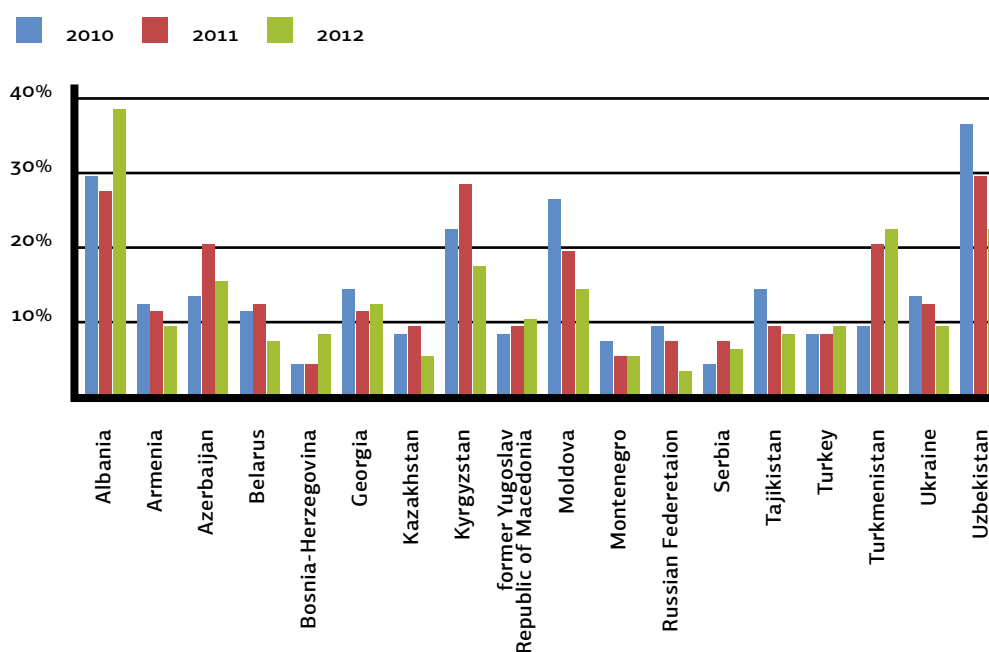
OSCE participating State	Number of issued non-immigrant visas			% change since 2009
	2009	2010	2011	
Albania	7,829	7,830	7,455	-4.8
Armenia	2,095	2,402	2,623	25.2
Azerbaijan	5,659	6,557	6,931	22.5
Belarus	9,471	9,295	9,986	5.4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3,643	3,639	3,717	2.0
Georgia	5,360	5,097	5,374	0.3
Kazakhstan	14,011	15,314	16,481	17.6
Kyrgyzstan	1,248	1,036	994	-20.4
former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	3,564	3,581	3,852	8.1
Moldova	2,176	1,939	1,989	-8.6
Montenegro	1,206	1,996	1,900	57.5
Russian Federation	133,794	154,820	185,748	38.8
Serbia	9,200	14,260	14,872	61.7
Tajikistan	358	425	375	4.7
Turkey	86,364	97,874	98,382	13.9

<b>Turkmenistan</b>	1,636	1,532	1,467	-10.3
<b>Ukraine</b>	33,657	36,728	42,269	25.6
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	3,261	2,717	2,863	-12.2
<b>Total</b>	324,532	367,042	407,278	25.5

Historically, the United Kingdom has been an immigration destination country and continues to attract a large number of immigrants. Citizens of states with which the United Kingdom has historically strong ties often consider the United Kingdom to be their ideal destination for resettlement. Immigration to the United Kingdom is further intensified by the presence of an already large diaspora. The United Kingdom's attractiveness to labour migrants has resulted in increased levels of attentiveness on the part of United Kingdom visa officials concerning the credibility of each visa applicant and their intention to leave the United Kingdom once their visa expires. Indeed, the United Kingdom's unique circumstances as regards the risks of irregular immigration are what prompted its decision to opt out of fully implementing the Schengen regulatory framework, as well as its subsequent decision not to implement the EU Common Visa Policy. Due to the increased risks of irregular immigration, the percentage of visa applications refused by the United Kingdom is generally higher (12 per cent) than the percentage of visa applications refused by Schengen Area States which implement the Common Visa Policy (4.9 per cent).

A detailed overview of the percentages of refused visa applications for each OSCE participating State with which the United Kingdom maintains a visa regime is presented in Figure 3.9. The statistical data suggest that there is a correlation between the number of refused visa applications and the overall number of visas issued. For countries where the total number of visas issued is high, the number of refused visa applications is generally low. Conversely, where the total number of visas issued is low, the number of refused visa applications tends to be high.

**FIGURE 3.9: UNITED KINGDOM – THE PERCENTAGE OF VISA APPLICATIONS FOR NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS THAT WERE REFUSED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**



*Ireland – number of visas issued and visa refusal rates*

Visitors from those OSCE participating States with which Ireland maintains visa regimes may visit Ireland by obtaining a short-stay visa. Short-stay visas allow visits to Ireland for the purposes of meeting friends and family, tourism, study, research, short-term employment, training, business, attending a conference or performance, receiving medical treatment and practicing religion.

A visa application can be made only via the Internet using a dedicated website. The website also contains other information to guide the applicant through the questions in the online application form, which is available only in English. Applicants are aided in the process by comprehensive guides that are translated in several languages spoken in OSCE participating States, which explain how to complete the application. The website also provides detailed information on the supporting documentation that should be attached to a visa application. A printed hard copy of the visa application (accompanied by the requested supporting documentation) should be submitted to the Irish consular office. The application can be submitted in person or by mail, and is assessed by consular staff. Consular offices may decide to refer an application for processing to its home office. Applicants are, therefore, generally advised to submit their applications eight weeks prior to the planned trip. The fact that visa applications do not have to be submitted in person and that interviews are not a requirement compensates for the fact that citizens of most OSCE participating States that are subject to a visa regime with Ireland must submit their visa applications abroad (Table 3.10).

**TABLE 3.10: IRELAND – LOCATIONS OF IRELAND’S DESIGNATED CONSULAR OFFICES FOR PROCESSING OF VISA APPLICATIONS**

<b>OSCE participating State</b>	<b>Country where visa application should be submitted</b>
<b>Albania</b>	Greece
<b>Armenia</b>	Bulgaria
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	Turkey
<b>Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan</b>	Russian Federation
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	Slovenia
<b>Georgia</b>	Bulgaria
<b>former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</b>	Romania
<b>Moldova</b>	Romania
<b>Mongolia</b>	China
<b>Montenegro</b>	Hungary
<b>Serbia</b>	Greece
<b>Turkey</b>	Turkey
<b>Ukraine</b>	Ukraine

In 2012, Irish consular authorities issued 19,848 non-immigrant visas to citizens of OSCE participating States. Compared to the number of visas issued in 2010, the total number of non-immigrant visas issued increased by 21 per cent in 2012. In total, 86.9 per cent of all visas issued in 2012 were issued to the citizens of the following countries: the Russian Federation

(54 per cent), Turkey (15.5 per cent), Belarus (8.9 per cent) and Ukraine (8.5 per cent). As in the case of the United Kingdom, for the citizens of those OSCE participating States to whom Ireland issued a high number of visas in 2012, the percentage of refused visa applications was also low. As such, the refusal rates for citizens of the Russian Federation was 1.3 per cent; for Belarus – 1 per cent; for Turkey – 1.3 per cent; and for Ukraine – 7.4 per cent. Conversely, in those OSCE participating States where the total number of visas issued was low, the percentage of visa applications refusals was high, with 26.6 per cent refusals for citizens of Albania; 30.2 per cent for citizens of Mongolia; 18.2 per cent for citizens of Moldova; and 18.8 per cent for citizens of Uzbekistan.

### ***Participating States in South-Eastern Europe***

#### **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

A short-term single or multiple-entry visa issued by Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only type of non-immigrant visa available besides a transit visa. According to the terms of this visa, visitors can stay for up to a total of 90 days within a specified time period of six months from the day of first entry. A short-term visa may also be issued for a period of one year or more. This type of visa is issued for trips related to business, educational training, tourism, private affairs, politics, science, sport, religion or other purposes.

**When applying for a visa, applicants need to provide information on the purpose of their visit,** evidence of accommodation arrangements at the destination, as well as proof that they possess sufficient funds to cover the costs of their stay and travel expenses.

Only citizens of the Russian Federation may apply in their own country for a visa to travel to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Moscow is also the designated consular office for visa applications by citizens of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Citizens of Azerbaijan and Georgia may apply for visas at the Consulate of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Turkey (Istanbul), while the designated consular office for citizens of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan is in Iran (Tehran). Citizens of Moldova must travel to Romania (Bucharest) to apply for a visa to Bosnia and Herzegovina, while citizens of Mongolia must travel to China (Beijing) to do so.

Citizens of OSCE participating States for whom a visa would ordinarily be required may enter Bosnia and Herzegovina without a visa for a stay of up to seven days, provided that they hold a valid multiple-entry Schengen or EU state visa or, alternatively, a residency permit for a Schengen or EU state, and provided that they arrive in Bosnia and Herzegovina from a Schengen or an EU member state.

In 2012, the consular authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina issued 818 non-immigrant visas to citizens of OSCE participating States with which it currently maintains visa regimes. Compared to the number of visas issued in 2010, the total number of non-immigrant visas fell by 19 per cent in 2012. Before Bosnia and Herzegovina lifted the visa requirement for citizens of Ukraine in 2012, the number of visas issued to Ukrainian citizens accounted for approximately 60 per cent of all visas issued. In 2012, 80 per cent of all visas issued were issued to citizens of the following countries: Belarus (18.2 per cent), Moldova (16.6 per cent), Azerbaijan (16.1 per cent), the Russian Federation (15.7 per cent) and Georgia (12.7 per cent). In 2012, only five visa applications were refused.

## **Albania**

Citizens of OSCE participating States who require a visa to visit Albania may obtain a short-term visa, which affords the holder the right to stay for up to 90 days within a specified six-month period. Visas are issued for tourism, business and medical purposes and for employment. A visa application should be submitted in person and should be supported with documentary evidence proving the purpose of the stay in Albania and demonstrating that accommodation has been arranged.

In terms of access to consular representations, citizens of many OSCE participation States must travel abroad to submit visa applications for Albania. Citizens of Belarus may obtain a visa either in Poland or the Russian Federation. Citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan may opt to apply for a visa at the Albanian consular representations in either Turkey or the Russian Federation. Citizens of Mongolia may apply for a visa either in the Russian Federation or in China. Citizens of Moldova may submit their visa applications to one of the Albanian consulates located in Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. Citizens of Georgia should apply for a visa at the consular representation in Turkey. Finally, citizens of the Russian Federation may apply for a visa in their own country.

All foreigners in possession of a valid multi-entry Schengen visa or a valid residence permit for one of the Schengen member states can enter and transit through Albania for up to 90 days within a specified six-month period without a visa, in accordance with the validity of their Schengen visa or residence permit. Between 25 May and 25 September 2013, citizens of the Russian Federation were allowed to enter Albania visa-free. The aim of creating this one-off visa-free entry period was to promote tourism, and is seen as a step towards full visa liberalization in the future.

In 2012, Albanian consular authorities issued 523 non-immigrant visas to citizens of OSCE participating States. Compared to the number of visas issued in 2010, the total number of non-immigrant visas increased by 40 per cent in 2012. That year, the majority of visas were issued to citizens of the Russian Federation (58.5 per cent), Georgia (13 per cent) and Moldova (9.3 per cent). The visa refusal rate is generally low at below 1 per cent.

## ***Commonwealth of Independent States***

### **Belarus**

Citizens of OSCE participating States with which Belarus maintains visa regimes may apply for short-term visas, which can be issued as single, double or multiple-entry visas. These entitle the holder to single, double or multiple entries within the timeframe specified in the visa and for a specified number of days of stay (up to 90 days in total).

Supporting documentation that must be submitted together with the visa application differs depending on the declared purpose of the applicant's visit. For business visitors and visitors participating in sports and/or cultural activities, the application must be submitted in the original by a legal entity. It must feature the letterhead and full name of the entity, spelling out the commitment of the legal entity to ensure that the foreigner in question will comply with the rules of stay in Belarus, and certified by the legal entity.

Tourists are required to submit an original or copy of a letter of invitation from a Belarusian travel agency. Applications for long-term multiple-entry visas must be accompanied by an original invitation letter. Should the visitor request a visa to visit friends or family members, their friends or relatives are required to complete an invitation letter and have it certified by

the local Citizenship and Migration Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Once it has been certified, the invitation is then submitted together with the visa application. In the event of an emergency (unexpected illness, death of a relative, etc.), visas can be issued based on a certified communication from a doctor or a clinic in Belarus.

To obtain a visitor's visa for a private visit, citizens of the United States, Canada and the European Union applying for a visa that is valid for up to 30 days or less do not need to provide any letters of invitation.

Citizens of most OSCE participating States that are subject to a visa regime with Belarus may obtain visas in their own country. Citizens of OSCE participating States with no diplomatic representation or consular offices in Belarus may obtain all types of entry visas at the Foreign Admissions Division of the Consular Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Minsk National Airport upon their arrival, provided that they can present the required supporting documentation. Citizens of countries with diplomatic representations or consular offices in Belarus have the right to obtain visas at Minsk National Airport only when travelling to Belarus as part of official delegations invited by the state authorities of Belarus, or in the event of the serious illness or death of a close relative or family member upon submission of official documents confirming such circumstances.

Despite the simplification of visa-issuing procedures for citizens of the United States, Canada and the European Union (who no longer need to submit an original invitation letter to obtain a visa), the number of visas issued by Belarus gradually declined between 2010 and 2012. As illustrated in Table 3.11, the total number of visas issued in 2012 dropped by 3.5 per cent compared to the number of visas issued in 2010. This decline in the number of visas issued was apparent among most OSCE participating States that are subject to a visa regime. It was somewhat offset by an increase in the number of visas issued to citizens of Bulgaria, Turkey and Turkmenistan. Statistics on the number of visas issued to citizens of Schengen Area states, as illustrated in Table 3.12, reveal a decline in the number of visas issued in 2012 compared to 2010, except in the cases of Hungary, Portugal, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and Switzerland, where the number of visas issued increased between 2010 and 2012.

**TABLE 3.11: BELARUS – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO NATIONALS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**

OSCE participating States	Total number of visas issued			% change since 2010
	2010	2011	2012	
<b>Albania</b>	81	34	32	-60.5
<b>Andorra</b>	2	1	-	-100.0
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	123	216	190	54.5
<b>Bulgaria</b>	2,481	3,014	3,001	21.0
<b>Canada</b>	1,495	1,247	1,393	-6.8
<b>Croatia</b>	736	745	660	-10.3
<b>Cyprus</b>	599	490	420	-29.9
<b>Holy See</b>	7	8	4	-42.9
<b>Ireland</b>	1,148	975	915	-20.3
<b>Monaco</b>	-	-	3	300.0

Romania	1,173	866	833	-29.0
San Marino	23	23	13	-43.5
Schengen Area states	332,247	322,621	318,137	-4.2
Turkey	7,126	7,807	8,230	15.5
Turkmenistan	5,199	4,920	7,016	34.9
United Kingdom	5,929	5,671	5,537	-6.6
United States of America	7,114	6,690	6,259	-12.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>365,483</b>	<b>355,328</b>	<b>352,643</b>	<b>-3.5</b>

TABLE 3.12: BELARUS – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO NATIONALS OF SCHENGEN AREA STATES

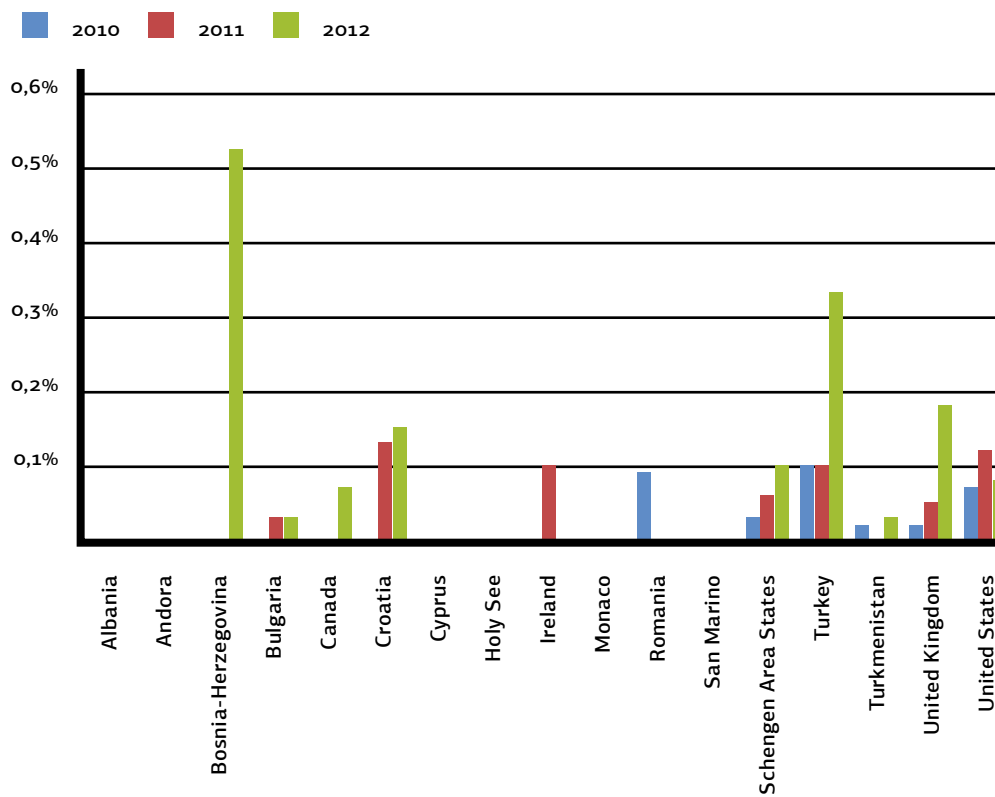
OSCE Participating States	Total Number of visas issued			% change since 2010
	2010	2011	2012	
Austria	2,719	2,530	2,527	-7.1
Belgium	1,921	1,780	1,689	-12.1
Czech Republic	5,409	5,099	5,542	2.5
Denmark	1,215	1,190	1,021	-16.0
Estonia	9,511	8,785	8,938	-6.0
Finland	1,635	1,315	1,483	-9.3
France	5,203	4,736	4,916	-5.5
Germany	34,635	31,615	32,893	-5.0
Greece	852	829	783	-8.1
Hungary	1,728	1,815	1,925	11.4
Iceland	67	45	30	-55.2
Italy	12,337	11,967	11,640	-5.6
Latvia	39,334	38,900	38,306	-2.6
Liechtenstein	23	8	8	-65.2
Lithuania	137,628	131,809	123,636	-10.2
Luxembourg	103	86	75	-27.2
Malta	88	35	33	-62.5
Netherlands	4,432	3,691	3,848	-13.2
Norway	909	868	837	-7.9
Poland	63,062	66,454	68,576	8.7
Portugal	247	223	333	34.8
Slovakia	2,449	2,536	2,887	17.9
Slovenia	617	633	536	-13.1
Spain	1,597	1,647	1,735	8.6



<b>Sweden</b>	2,742	2,279	1,968	-28.2
<b>Switzerland</b>	1,784	1,746	1,972	10.5
<b>Total</b>	332,247	322,621	318,137	-4.2

As illustrated in Figure 3.10, the number of visa-application refusals is generally below 0.1 per cent, which suggests that almost all visitors from OSCE participating States that are subject to a visa regime are granted entry into Belarus, provided that they collect the requested supporting documents.

**FIGURE 3.10: BELARUS – THE PERCENTAGE OF VISA APPLICATIONS FOR NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS THAT WERE REFUSED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**



As illustrated in Figures 3.11 and 3.12, the percentage of multiple-entry visas issued as a proportion of the total number of visas issued is generally high (above 50 per cent) among neighbouring states and Schengen Area states. Such a high proportion of multiple-entry visas can be attributed to the liberal approach to issuing this type of visa, which is generally issued for as long as the applicant requests, provided that s/he is prepared to pay the visa fee.

FIGURE 3.11: BELARUS – THE PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE-ENTRY VISAS ISSUED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME

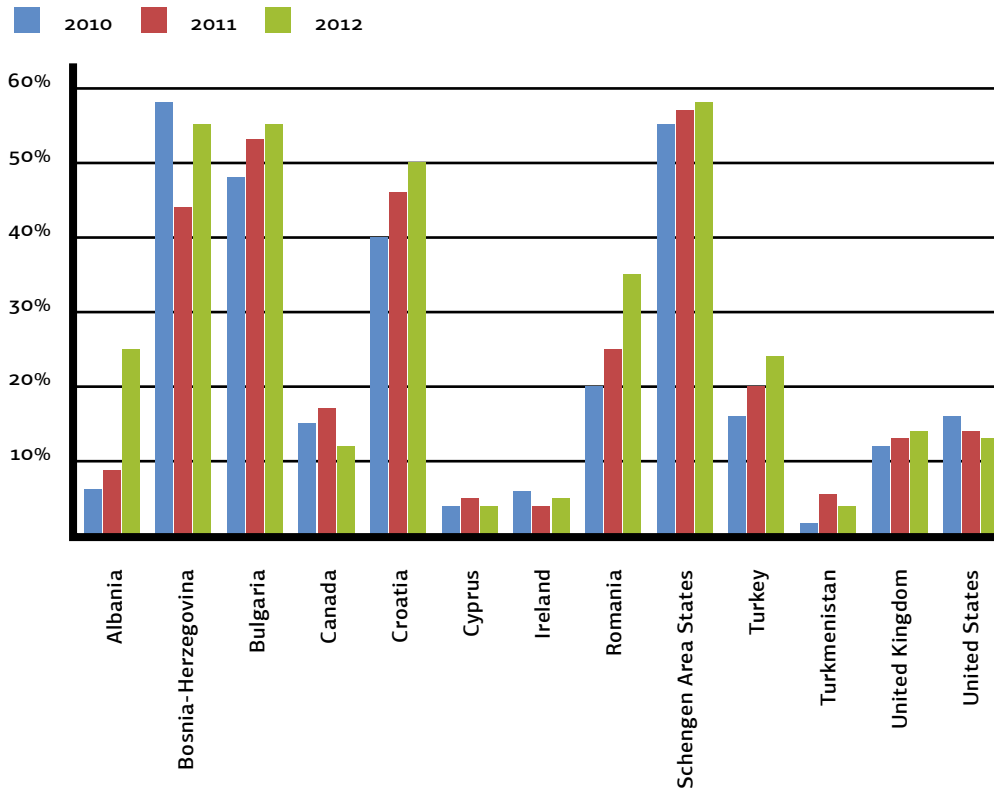
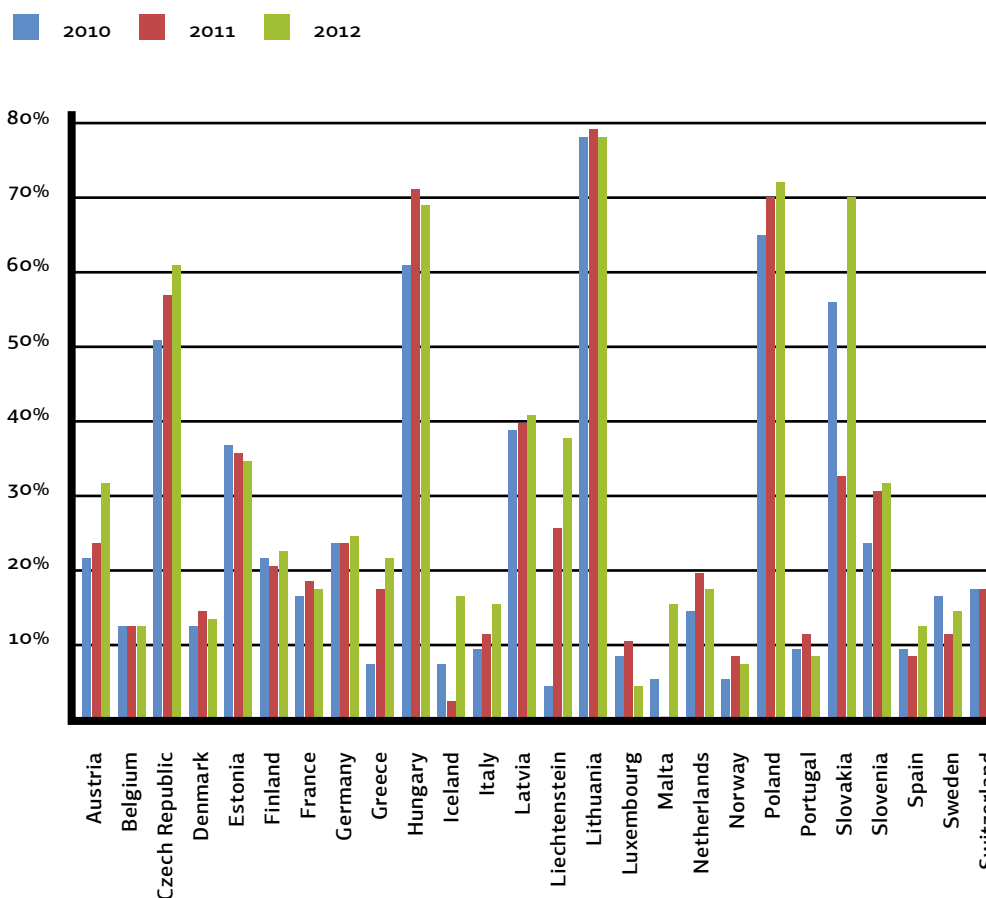


FIGURE 3.12: BELARUS – THE PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE-ENTRY VISAS ISSUED TO CITIZENS OF SCHENGEN AREA STATES



## Kazakhstan

Visitors from OSCE participating States with which Kazakhstan maintains visa regimes may apply for tourist or business visas. A tourist visa may take the form of a single, double or triple entry visa, with each stay lasting for no more than 30 days within a 90 day period. In general, business visitors may obtain single-entry business visas valid for up to 90 days and multiple-entry visas valid for up to three years, which allow for stays of up to 90 days within a six month period. Both tourist and business visas are divided further into different categories, depending on the declared purpose of the visit. As part of the visa application process, visitors requesting tourist visas must submit a copy of an invitation letter from a tourist company in Kazakhstan licensed for visa support purposes, and must provide confirmation of accommodation arrangements, including hotel reservations. Together with their visa application, business visitors are required to include a copy of an invitation letter from a host company in Kazakhstan, the original of which must have been submitted to the Department of Consular Services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan and certified by the Ministry. Visitors who require visas to travel to Kazakhstan and who intend to visit friends and family must secure original invitations for a temporary visit, which their relatives or friends in Kazakhstan can obtain from the local authorities (the Ministry of Internal Affairs), and which are valid for one year from the date of issuance.

Citizens of the following OSCE participating States are not required to submit invitation letters certified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Interior when applying for single-entry, business, home stay (visiting friends or family), or tourist visas for up to 30 days, or double entry tourist visas for up to 60 days: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Equally, former citizens of Kazakhstan, their spouses and children and persons who used to live permanently in Kazakhstan do not need an invitation in order to obtain a single-entry visa for visiting friends or family for up to 90 days.

Citizens of OSCE participating States may apply for visas to travel to Kazakhstan at Kazakhstan's consular representation located in their own country, except in the cases of citizens of Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, the Holy See, Iceland, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia and Sweden. Individual Kazakh consular representations decide whether visa applications must be submitted in person or whether they may be submitted by mail. For instance, in the United States, the Kazakh embassy requires that visa applications be submitted in person at the embassy or via authorized visa agencies, while many other embassies allow submission via registered mail.

As shown in Table 3.13, the total number of visas issued by Kazakhstan grew by 32.6 per cent between 2010 and 2012. Citizens of the EU and other Schengen Area states received 77 per cent of all visas for Kazakhstan issued in 2012. The decision to waive the requirement for an invitation letter certified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has resulted in a significant increase in the number of visas issued, both in terms of percentage growth and nominally. Table 3.14, which presents a detailed overview of the number of visas issued by Kazakhstan to citizens of each of the Schengen Area states, reveals that 51 per cent of all visas issued in 2012 were issued to German citizens; this represents an increase of 42 per cent in the number of visas issued to German citizens compared to data from 2010. The huge number of visas issued to German citizens is linked not only to intensified business contacts but also to the desire to maintain ties to ethnic Germans residing in Kazakhstan.<sup>60</sup>

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60 There are some 800,000 ethnic Germans from Kazakhstan living in Germany; in Kazakhstan itself, approximately 180,000 ethnic Germans live (or 1.4 per cent of the total population), who are largely integrated into society. <[http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/01-Nodes/Kasachstan\\_node.html](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/01-Nodes/Kasachstan_node.html)>.

TABLE 3.13: KAZAKHSTAN – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO NATIONALS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME

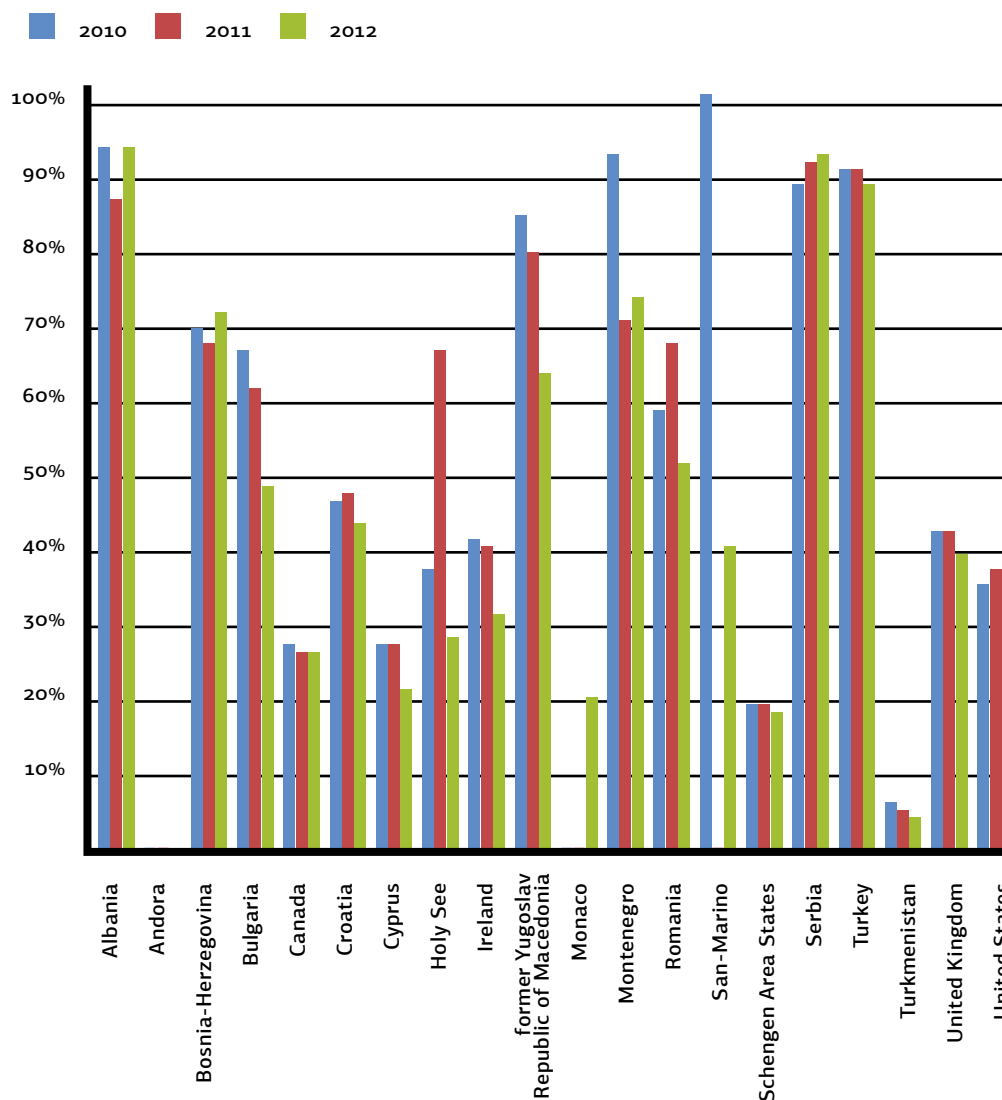
OSCE participating State	Number of non-immigrant visas issued			% change since 2010
	2010	2011	2012	
Albania	110	145	161	46.4
Andorra	-	-	4	n/a
Bosnia and Herzegovina	62	91	168	171.0
Bulgaria	1,075	1,444	1,594	48.3
Canada	2,400	2,544	2,717	13.2
Croatia	399	455	628	57.4
Cyprus	22	33	52	136.4
Holy See	8	3	7	-12.5
Ireland	558	598	839	50.4
former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	66	84	165	150.0
Monaco	-	-	10	n/a
Montenegro	13	34	23	76.9
Romania	740	1,228	1,077	45.5
San Marino	2	2	10	400.0
Schengen Area states	64,346	71,816	92,381	43.6
Turkey	5,508	7,706	5,497	-0.2
Turkmenistan	6,416	7,671	8,000	24.7
United Kingdom	10,459	10,704	11,364	8.7
United States	10,772	11,219	12,142	12.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>102,956</b>	<b>115,777</b>	<b>136,893</b>	<b>32.9</b>

TABLE 3.14: KAZAKHSTAN – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO NATIONALS OF SCHENGEN AREA STATES

OSCE participating State	Number of non-immigrant visas issued			% change since 2010
	2010	2011	2012	
Austria	1,401	1,610	1,932	37.9
Belgium	940	1,086	1,300	38.3
Czech Republic	1,700	1,782	2,011	18.3
Denmark	210	305	512	143.8
Estonia	473	554	583	23.3
Finland	311	479	904	190.7
France	3,972	4,205	5,449	37.2
Germany	33,295	37,007	47,405	42.4
Greece	1,072	1,093	1,117	4.2
Hungary	1,433	1,693	1,811	26.4
Iceland	10	22	29	190.0
Italy	5,653	6,061	8,083	43.0
Latvia	1,348	1,492	1,821	35.1
Lichtenstein	2	28	5	150.0
Lithuania	2,719	3,061	3,727	37.1
Luxembourg	27	55	50	85.2
Malta	18	25	42	133.3
Netherlands	2,419	2,613	2,885	19.3
Norway	419	594	935	123.2
Poland	2,784	3,200	3,792	36.2
Portugal	149	180	296	98.7
Slovakia	522	642	751	43.9
Slovenia	306	393	373	21.9
Spain	1,308	1,593	1,694	29.5
Sweden	608	669	1,197	96.9
Switzerland	1,247	1,374	3,677	194.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>64,346</b>	<b>71,816</b>	<b>92,381</b>	<b>43.6</b>

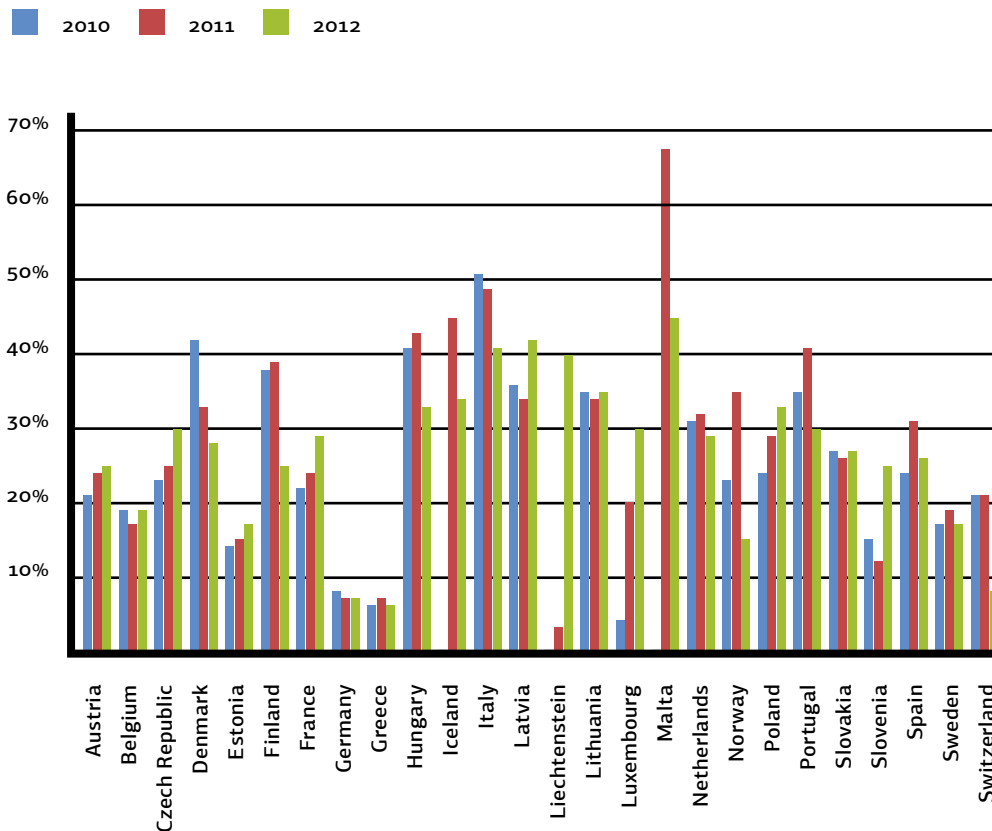
As illustrated in Figure 3.13, for many OSCE participating States the percentage of multiple-entry visas issued as a proportion of the total number of visas issued is greater than 50 per cent. This can be attributed to the liberal approach in issuing this type of visa, which is generally issued for as long as the applicant requests, provided that s/he is prepared to pay the visa fee.

FIGURE 3.13: KAZAKHSTAN – THE PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE-ENTRY VISAS ISSUED TO NATIONALS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME



In particular, a high proportion of the visas issued to citizens of Schengen Area states are multiple-entry (Figure 3.14), except in the case of citizens of Germany, for whom the number of multiple-entry visas issued is among the lowest (7.4 per cent in 2012). At the same time, visitors from Germany represent more than 50 per cent of all visitors from the Schengen Area. This could be explained by the fact that most of these visitors from Germany are former Kazakh citizens of German origin who visit friends and family on single-entry visas according to the simplified procedure described above.

FIGURE 3.14: KAZAKHSTAN – THE PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE-ENTRY VISAS ISSUED TO CITIZENS OF SCHENGEN AREA STATES



### Russian Federation

Visas issued by the Russian Federation to citizens of OSCE participating States that are subject to a visa regime can be issued as single, double and multiple-entry visas. Depending on the purpose of the visit, the Russian Federation may issue the following: a single or double entry tourist visa, valid for a up to 30 days in total; a single or double entry private visa, valid for up to 90 days in total; a single, double or multiple-entry business visa, valid for between one and three years provided that the holder stays for no more than 90 days within a 180-day period. The Russian Federation also issues student visas, refugee visas, visas for humanitarian purposes and visas for religious purposes.

Depending on the intended purpose of travel, visa applicants are required to present documentary evidence specific to each visa category. As in other OSCE participating States, emphasis is placed on whether the supporting documentary evidence provided justifies the stated purpose of the applicant's visit. When applying for a tourist visa, the applicant must present an invitation letter from a Russian tourist company that is registered with the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Similarly, business travellers must obtain an invitation letter issued by a Russian business entity that is authorized to invite foreign nationals. For private visits, the inviting party must obtain a visa entitlement certificate from the local Office of Visas and Registration in the Russian Federation and send it to the applicant.



Citizens of most OSCE participating States who require a visa to travel to the Russian Federation can apply for a visa in their own country. Citizens of Georgia may apply for visas at the Embassy of Switzerland in Tbilisi, while citizens of San Marino and the Holy See may apply in Rome (Italy). Citizens of Andorra may apply for visas at the Russian Embassy in Madrid (Spain). In order to improve access to its consular services, in many cases a visa application may be submitted either at the consulate of the Russian Federation or at a privately operated visa application centre that has been authorized by Russian Federation (Table 3.15).

**TABLE 3.15: OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES WITH MORE THAN ONE LOCATION FOR THE SUBMISSION OF VISA APPLICATIONS FOR THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

OSCE participating states	Number of locations for the submission of visa applications
Austria, Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom	2
Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Latvia, Mongolia, Norway	3
Finland, Italy, Poland	4
United States	5
Germany	6

As illustrated in Tables 3.16 and 3.17, citizens of EU member states receive the largest number of visas issued. This is particularly the case with citizens of Germany, which received 18 per cent of all visas issued to citizens of OSCE participating States in 2012. Other EU member states whose citizens also received a high proportion of the visas issued by the Russian Federation in 2012 are Finland (7.5 per cent), France (7.2 per cent) and Italy (7.2 per cent).

The total number of visas issued to citizens of countries in the OSCE region fell by 0.3 per cent between 2010 and 2012. This decline can be explained by the significant drop in the number of visas issued to citizens of Turkey, which fell by 51.3 per cent between 2010 and 2012. This decrease came about following the decision in 2011 to waive the visa requirement for Turkish tourist visitors to the Russian Federation.

**TABLE 3.16: RUSSIAN FEDERATION – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO NATIONALS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**

OSCE participating State	Number of non-immigrant visas issued			% change since 2010
	2010	2011	2012	
Albania	729	630	715	-1.9
Andorra	78	174	116	48.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2,039	2,352	3,560	74.6
Bulgaria	14,869	16,073	16,848	13.3
Canada	19,213	20,443	21,163	10.1
Croatia	2,641	2,361	2,479	-6.1
Cyprus	4,577	5,516	3,788	-17.2

<b>Georgia</b>	16,729	20,179	18,472	10.4
<b>Holy See</b>	3	12	14	366.7
<b>Ireland</b>	5,672	6,477	6,280	10.7
<b>Mongolia</b>	24,928	25,722	29,628	18.9
<b>Montenegro</b>	288	371	533	85.1
<b>Romania</b>	8,532	9,434	9,356	9.7
<b>San Marino</b>	117	95	116	-0.9
<b>Schengen Area states</b>	1,390,676	1,399,742	1,404,046	1.0
<b>Turkey</b>	108,363	63,743	52,723	-51.3
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	25,858	29,021	31,018	20.0
<b>United Kingdom</b>	83,773	86,716	91,596	9.3
<b>United States</b>	111,864	124,282	123,763	10.6
<b>Total</b>	1,820,949	1,813,343	1,816,214	-0.3

TABLE 3.17: RUSSIAN FEDERATION – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO NATIONALS OF SCHENGEN AREA STATES

OSCE participating State	Total Number of visas issued			% change since 2010
	2010	2011	2012	
<b>Austria</b>	36,115	36,243	35,926	-0.5
<b>Belgium</b>	22,188	23,348	23,177	4.5
<b>Czech Republic</b>	23,314	26,535	28,392	21.8
<b>Denmark</b>	19,380	19,409	18,696	-3.5
<b>Estonia</b>	70,402	71,492	71,759	1.9
<b>Finland</b>	156,695	147,395	137,762	-12.1
<b>France</b>	123,416	126,009	130,889	6.1
<b>Germany</b>	343,580	333,641	335,290	-2.4
<b>Greece</b>	22,158	21,136	18,689	-15.7
<b>Hungary</b>	12,325	13,111	12,771	3.6
<b>Iceland</b>	941	1,380	1,457	54.8
<b>Italy</b>	125,539	130,662	131,845	5.0
<b>Latvia</b>	72,992	77,165	78,021	6.9
<b>Liechtenstein</b>	172	177	157	-8.7
<b>Lithuania</b>	69,613	72,712	70,090	0.7
<b>Luxembourg</b>	1,086	1,048	1,236	13.8
<b>Malta</b>	780	875	1,041	33.5
<b>Netherlands</b>	45,985	47,655	44,640	-2.9
<b>Norway</b>	25,108	26,664	25,378	1.1
<b>Poland</b>	78,063	79,442	94,554	21.1

Portugal	8,450	7,666	8,911	5.5
Slovakia	9,295	10,225	11,132	19.8
Slovenia	5,645	5,679	5,675	0.5
Spain	56,075	61,037	56,789	1.3
Sweden	32,078	31,287	30,819	-3.9
Switzerland	29,281	27,749	28,950	-1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,390,676</b>	<b>1,399,742</b>	<b>1,404,046</b>	<b>1.0</b>

Figures 3.15 and 3.16 provide a detailed overview of the percentage of multiple-entry visas issued in proportion to the total number of visas issued to citizens of each participating State. Russian multiple-entry visas are valid for up to three years and permit stays of up to 90 days per visit within a six-month period. The period of validity and number of entries for a multiple-entry visa are generally granted according to the dates and number of entries specified on the invitation letter. The main condition for obtaining a multiple-entry visa is the payment of the visa fee, and there is no further assessment in terms of the applicant's eligibility for a multiple-entry visa.

**FIGURE 3.15: RUSSIAN FEDERATION – THE PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE-ENTRY VISAS ISSUED TO CITIZENS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**

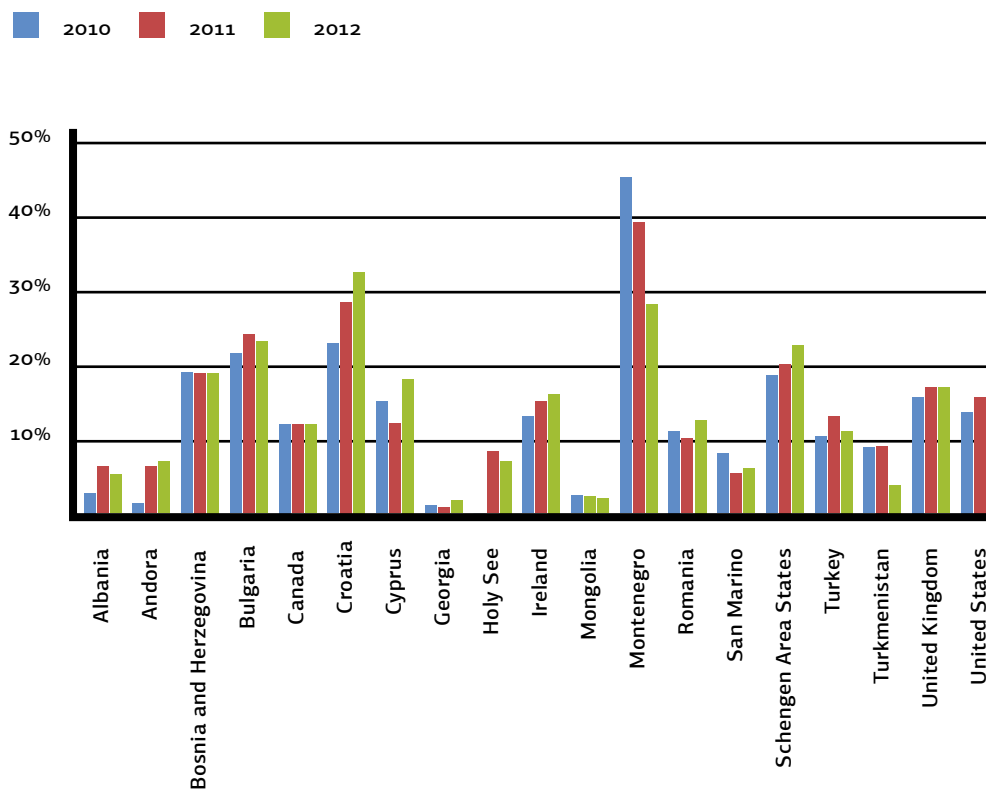
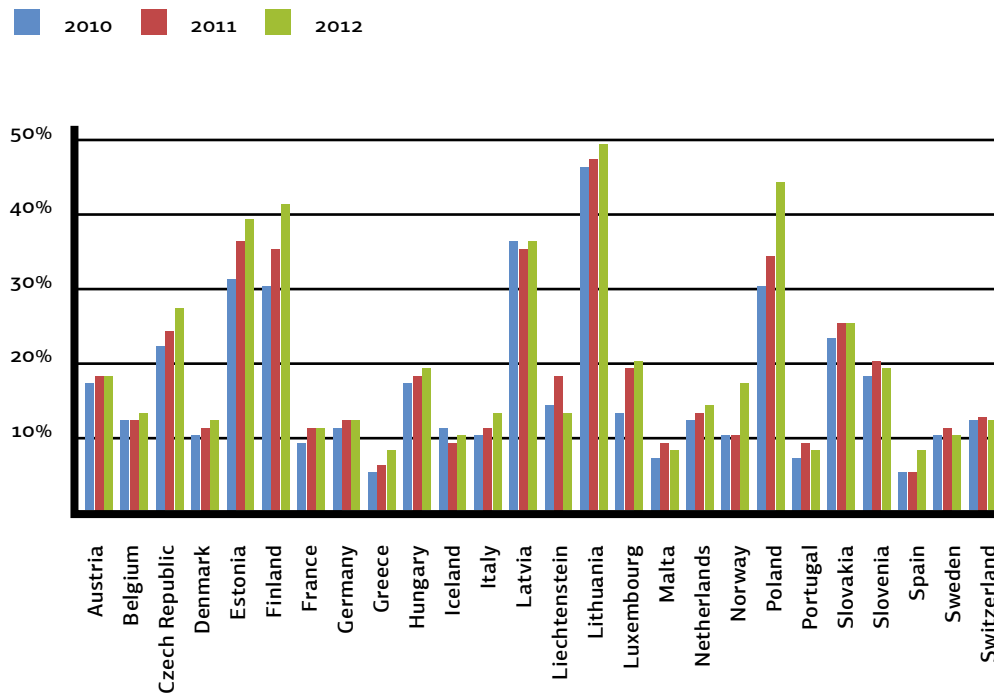


FIGURE 3.16: RUSSIAN FEDERATION – THE PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE-ENTRY VISAS ISSUED TO CITIZENS OF SCHENGEN AREA STATES



## Tajikistan

Depending on the purpose of their travel, citizens of OSCE participating States subject to visa regimes with Tajikistan may request one of the following: an official business visa (valid for up to one year); an investment visa (valid for up to two years); a work visa (valid for up to three months); a tourism visa (valid for up to 45 days); an educational visa (valid for up to nine months); a free economic zone visa (valid for up to three months); a private visa (valid for up to three months); a driver's visa or a visa for aircraft crew (valid for up to three months); a public press visa (valid for up to three months); a visa for the purpose of engaging in sporting, cultural or religious activities (valid for up to four months); a humanitarian visa (only for the purpose of delivering humanitarian aid); or a visa for commercial activities (valid for up to three months).

Foreign visitors travelling to Tajikistan for tourist purposes may apply for visas at registered tourist agencies. Individual tourists can also request visas from the Tajik consulate in their home country by producing a completed visa application form and their declared travel itineraries.

Applications can be submitted at any of the consular representations or embassies of Tajikistan. Only citizens of Austria, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States may apply for visas in their own countries. Within the OSCE region, Tajikistan also has embassies or consular representations in the following countries: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Citizens of almost all OSCE participating States subject to a visa regime may apply for visas upon arrival at Tashkent airport, except citizens of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Uzbekistan, who must apply for visas at a consulate of Tajikistan.

In 2012, the Tajik consular authorities issued 3,659 non-immigrant visas to citizens of OSCE participating States. This represents a 50 per cent decline in the total number of non-immigrant visas as compared to the number of visas issued in 2010. Ninety per cent of all visas issued in 2012 were issued to citizens of the following countries: Turkey (35 per cent), Schengen Area states (20 per cent), Turkmenistan (11 per cent) and Uzbekistan (11.1 per cent). Visa applications were refused only in rare cases. Among OSCE participating States, citizens of Turkmenistan were issued the largest share of multiple-entry visas as a proportion of the total number of visas issued to Turkmenistan at 91.3 per cent, followed by Uzbekistan (73.9 per cent) and the United States (71 per cent). At the same time, the percentage of multiple-entry visas issued to citizens of Turkey and Schengen Area states as a proportion of the visas issues to these countries was 8.8 per cent and 7.5 per cent, respectively.

### **Uzbekistan**

Citizens of OSCE participating States with which Uzbekistan maintains visa regimes may apply for visas at the diplomatic representations and consular missions of Uzbekistan by obtaining a visa support letter. The letter is issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan on the basis of an application submitted by the inviting natural or legal persons, who must be permanently or temporarily based in Uzbekistan. Visitors travelling to Uzbekistan to visit friends and family need to obtain invitation letters issued upon the request of the inviting persons by the Immigration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan to the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan. Tourist visitors are required to obtain invitation letters certified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and submitted by tourist agencies registered in Uzbekistan. Finally, business visitors need to ensure that their inviting partners in the Republic of Uzbekistan submit visa support letters to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. However, this requirement has been waived for the citizens of Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Uzbekistan issues single and multiple-entry visas for a maximum period of one year. Visa fees differ depending on the number of entries and the requested duration of the visa. Citizens of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the United Kingdom and the United States may apply for visas in their own country. Citizens of other OSCE participating States who require visas to travel to Uzbekistan may apply at one of the Uzbek diplomatic or consular representations located abroad.

Visa applicants are required to fill out an electronic visa application form on the appropriate online visa portal. The relevant data are then forwarded to the relevant consular representation for processing.<sup>61</sup> Following this, applicants are required to print out the visa application and submit it to the designated consular representation of Uzbekistan, together with the necessary supporting documentation. Whether supporting documents for visa applications must be submitted in person or can be sent by registered mail depends on the policy of each consular representation.

As Table 3.18 reveals, in 2012 almost every second visa issued by Uzbekistan was given to a citizen of Tajikistan, who received 48 per cent of all visas issued to OSCE participating States citizens. Thirty per cent of visas issued in 2012 were given to citizens of one of the Schengen Area states, while 9 per cent of visas issued went to citizens of Turkey. Compared to data from 2010, the overall number of visas issued in 2012 increased by 24.7 per cent. This increase occurred mainly as a result of a significant increase in the number of visas issued to Tajikistani

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61 Persons applying for a visa to travel to Uzbekistan must submit an electronic visa application at: <[http://evisa.mfa.uz/evisa\\_en/](http://evisa.mfa.uz/evisa_en/)>

citizens (48.1 per cent) and to citizens of the EU and other Schengen Area states (19.6 per cent) between 2010 and 2012.

**TABLE 3.18: UZBEKISTAN – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO NATIONALS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME**

OSCE participating State	Number of non-immigrant visas issued			% change since 2010
	2010	2011	2012	
Albania	13	6	3	-76.9
Andorra	7	5	2	-71.4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	20	20	11	-45.0
Bulgaria	988	1,515	1,268	28.3
Canada	687	676	759	10.5
Croatia	64	83	71	10.9
Cyprus	39	23	28	-28.2
Holy See	7	1	6	-14.3
Ireland	170	170	149	-12.4
former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	22	13	25	13.6
Monaco	2	4	-	-100.0
Mongolia	115	95	57	-50.4
Montenegro	7	27	12	71.4
Romania	99	128	175	76.8
San Marino	2	3	6	200.0
Schengen Area states	38,923	41,682	46,551	19.6
Serbia	171	176	119	-30.4
Tajikistan	50,240	67,847	74,389	48.1
Turkey	13,677	14,383	14,061	2.8
Turkmenistan	8,438	7,783	6,571	-22.1
United Kingdom	3,592	3,507	3,482	-3.1
United States	5,592	4,840	5,452	-2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>122,875</b>	<b>142,987</b>	<b>153,197</b>	<b>24.7</b>

Visitors from Germany are the single largest recipients of visas to Uzbekistan among Schengen Area states. As Table 3.19 shows, in 2012, German citizens received 34 per cent of all visas issued by Uzbekistan to citizens of Schengen Area states. When it comes to other Schengen Area states, the largest percentages of visas were issued to citizens of France (19 per cent), Italy (10 per cent), Spain (8 per cent) and Switzerland (5 per cent). Altogether, these five states account for 76 per cent of all visas issued to citizens of Schengen Area states in 2012. It is also worth noting that citizens of these states benefit from a facilitated visa application procedure that does not require them to obtain visa support letters certified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

TABLE 3.19: UZBEKISTAN – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO NATIONALS OF SCHENGEN AREA STATES

OSCE participating State	Total number of visas issued			% change since 2010
	2010	2011	2012	
Austria	1,191	1,157	1,482	24.4
Belgium	1,139	1,158	1,396	22.6
Czech Republic	568	596	733	29.0
Denmark	445	389	350	-21.3
Estonia	132	173	128	-3.0
Finland	227	261	232	2.2
France	8,413	8,676	8,963	6.5
Germany	13,645	13,428	15,862	16.2
Greece	415	320	401	-3.4
Hungary	235	297	249	6.0
Iceland	17	21	5	-70.6
Italy	4,130	5,160	4,873	18.0
Latvia	607	669	779	28.3
Liechtenstein	7	3	9	28.6
Lithuania	366	445	483	32.0
Luxembourg	48	44	58	20.8
Malta	10	5	13	30.0
Netherlands	864	997	1,270	47.0
Norway	281	202	314	11.7
Poland	950	1,354	1,800	89.5
Portugal	136	171	143	5.1
Slovakia	139	157	236	69.8
Slovenia	128	185	188	46.9
Spain	2,580	3,616	3,817	47.9
Sweden	359	465	503	40.1
Switzerland	1,891	1,733	2,264	19.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,923</b>	<b>41,682</b>	<b>46,551</b>	<b>19.6</b>

The requirements for obtaining multiple-entry visas are the same as for single-entry visas, and no additional criteria must be met. Visa applicants who meet the criteria may obtain multiple-entry visas valid for up to one year. Visa fees will vary according to the length of stay and number of entries requested. Figure 3.15 provides an overview of the percentage of multiple-entry visas issued as a proportion of the total number of visas issued to citizens of OSCE participating States that are subject to a visa regime in 2012. Figure 3.16 provides the same information but for Schengen Area states. Both figures highlight the high proportion of multiple-entry visas issued as compared to the total number of visas issued in 2012. This is particularly evident in the cases of neighbouring Tajikistan (71 per cent) and Turkmenistan (68.5 per cent).

FIGURE 3.13: KAZAKHSTAN – THE PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE-ENTRY VISAS ISSUED TO NATIONALS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES SUBJECT TO A VISA REGIME

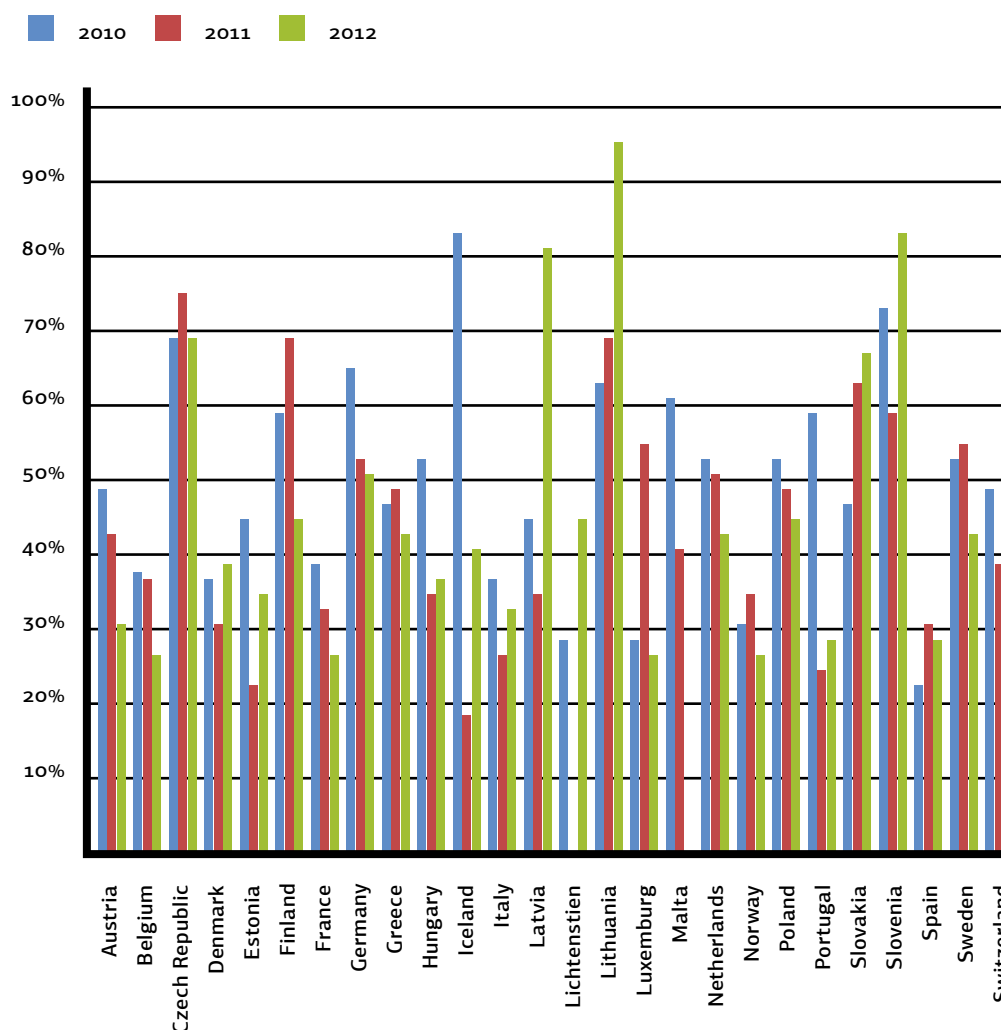
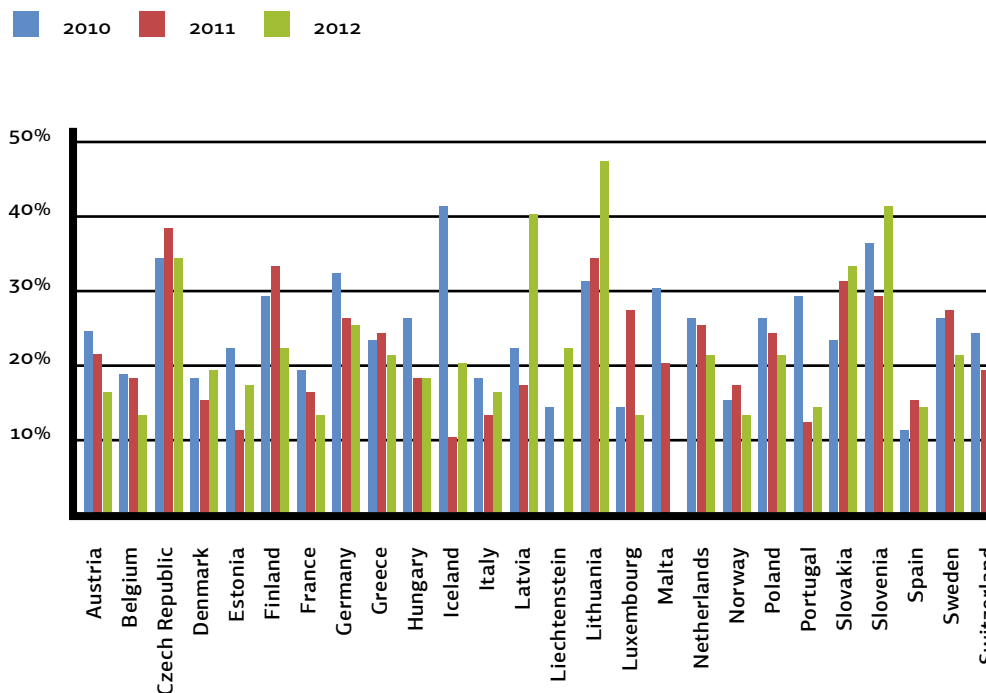




FIGURE 3.18: UZBEKISTAN – THE PERCENTAGE OF MULTIPLE-ENTRY VISAS ISSUED TO CITIZENS OF SCHENGEN AREA STATES



## Mongolia

Visitors to Mongolia travelling for purposes other than immigration can apply for tourist or business visas. Tourist visas allow visitors to stay in Mongolia for a maximum of 30 days. Business visas, on the other hand, are valid for either six or 12 months and can, if requested, allow for multiple entries. Applicants for tourist visas must submit a copy of a letter indicating the dates of the visit from the tourist company responsible for organizing the trip. Applicants for business visas must submit a copy of their travel itinerary and a letter of invitation from the person or company with whom the applicant will be working in Mongolia. When requesting multiple-entry business visas, applicants must submit either a support letter issued by the Office for Immigration, Naturalisation and Foreign Citizens (OINFC) or the reference number of a letter issued by the OINFC.

A visa application may be submitted to a limited number of Mongolian diplomatic and consular representations abroad. Citizens of the following OSCE participating States may submit visa applications in their own country: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Poland, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. Citizens of other OSCE participating States must submit visa applications to the designated Mongolian consular representation abroad. Mongolia accepts visa applications via registered mail; this facilitates the visa application process for those applicants who would otherwise need to travel large distances to submit a visa application at the designated consular representation.

As illustrated in Table 3.20, 88 per cent of all visas issued in 2012 by Mongolia to OSCE participating States citizens with which it maintains visa regimes were issued to citizens of the Russian Federation (62 per cent) and the Schengen Area states (26 per cent). The number of visas issued to Russian Federation citizens dropped by 31 per cent between 2010 and 2012.

Given the Russian Federation's large share in the total number of visas issued, this resulted in an overall decline of 20.1 per cent in the number of visas issued between 2010 and 2012. As of 1 September 2013, Mongolia liberalized entry for German nationals, who can stay in Mongolia visa-free for up to 30 days. German nationals previously accounted for 25 per cent of all visas issued to citizens of Schengen Area states.

TABLE 3.20: MONGOLIA – STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES CITIZENS

OSCE participating State	Total number of visas issued			% change since 2010
	2010	2011	2012	
Azerbaijan	78	118	104	33.3
Bulgaria	124	88	122	-1.6
Canada	2,887	3,711	3,714	28.6
Ireland	492	547	576	17.1
Other OSCE participating States	338	345	349	3.3
Romania	110	-	155	40.9
Russian Federation	125,543	104,989	86,584	-31.0
Schengen Area states	35,103	36,122	36,364	3.6
Serbia	61	100	122	100.0
Turkey	1,194	974	1,880	57.5
United Kingdom	6,228	7,436	7,369	18.3
Uzbekistan	178	202	223	25.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>172,336</b>	<b>154,632</b>	<b>137,562</b>	<b>-20.1</b>

The proportion of multiple-entry visas issued by Mongolia is the lowest in the OSCE region. For many OSCE participating States, the percentage of multiple-entry visas issued is well below 0.1 per cent. This is a consequence of the policy whereby multiple-entry visas are issued mainly to business visitors. Another factor that complicates the issuing of multiple-entry visas is the requirement that applicants obtain support letters from the OINFC.

# CHAPTER 4

## VISA DIALOGUES BETWEEN OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES

While Chapters 2 and 3 of this study presented information on the volume of cross-border mobility, travelling patterns and the impact of visa regimes on cross-border travel in the OSCE region, this chapter, together with Chapter 5, describes ongoing efforts by the OSCE participating States to increase cross-border mobility and human contacts. As such, this Chapter focuses on the political dialogue between OSCE participating States that aims to facilitate the issuing of visas and/or create conditions that would allow for increased visa liberalization.

One of the main conclusions of these chapters is that successfully conducted visa dialogues and subsequent decisions to facilitate the issuance of visas and/or liberalize visa regimes has proven to be one of the most effective ways of increasing cross-border mobility and promoting contacts among citizens of OSCE participating States. Therefore, it is highly recommended that these dialogues continue. Such dialogue also demonstrates the continued engagement of OSCE participating States in implementing OSCE commitments on cross-border mobility and human contacts. To that end, detailed information is provided on the content of visa dialogues pursued by the United States and the EU aimed at facilitating and liberalizing the visa requirements for citizens of other OSCE participating States whose travel to the United States and the EU is regulated by a visa regime.

As noted in Chapter 2, the EU and the United States combined receive 78 per cent of all foreign visitors in the OSCE region. Moreover, as highlighted in Chapter 3, their visa policies have a wider impact on the cross-border mobility of citizens of other OSCE participating States. Therefore, the commitment of these states to move forward with visa facilitation and liberalization dialogues is key to increasing cross-border mobility in the OSCE region.

It is also worth highlighting that visa facilitation and liberalization decisions are often taken unilaterally by OSCE participating States and do not always result from dialogue between states. In this case, the decision to simplify visa application procedures or to lift a visa requirement is taken on the basis of a state's assessment that the economic and political benefits of visa facilitation or liberalization will outweigh the risks, in light of which the visa regime was established in the first place.

## 4.1 THE UNITED STATES VISA WAIVER PROGRAM

The United States' Visa Waiver Program (VWP) is a programme that allows citizens of particular countries to travel to the United States for the purpose of tourism or business for up to 90 days without having to obtain a visa. The OSCE participating States that currently benefit from this programme are: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Under United States national legislation, citizens of Canada may also enter the United States visa-free for business and leisure purposes.

To qualify for the VWP, a country must undertake the following:

- offer reciprocal privileges to United States citizens;
- have had a refusal rate for non-immigrant visas of less than 3 per cent for the previous year, or an average of no higher than 2 per cent for the past two fiscal years, with neither year exceeding a 2.5 per cent refusal rate;
- issue its nationals with machine-readable passports that incorporate biometric identifiers;
- certify that it is developing a programme to issue tamper-resistant, machine-readable visa documents that incorporate biometric identifiers that are verifiable at the country's places of entry; and
- not compromise the law enforcement or security interests of the United States by its inclusion in the programme. Countries can be excluded from the VWP if an emergency occurs that threatens the United States' security interests.<sup>62</sup>

Citizens of OSCE participating States that are party to the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) are allowed to travel to the United States for tourism or business purposes (B1 and B2 type of visas) and stay for up to 90 days without visas.<sup>63</sup>

In order to travel visa-free to the United States, citizens of OSCE participating States who are eligible for the VWP must be in possession of a travel documents that meet the requirements set by the United States authorities, such as a machine-readable and biometric passports. If their travel documents do not meet this requirement, then citizens of OSCE participating States who are eligible for the VWP must apply for visas. Visa-free travel as part of the VWP does not include travel for purposes other than business or leisure.

In addition, citizens of OSCE participating States who travel to the United States for business and leisure purposes under the VWP are required to inform the United States authorities of their intention to travel to the United States through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). ESTA is a web-based interface used to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the VWP and whether such travel poses a law enforcement or security risk. The system became available for applications for travel authorization on 1 August 2008. As of 16 March 2010, 17,447,000 travel authorization applications had been

62 Immigration and Nationality Act, <<http://www.uscis.gov/ilink/docView/SLB/HTML/SLB/0-0-0-1/0-0-0-29/0-0-0-4391.html>>.

63 OSCE participating States that participate in the United States Visa Waiver Program are: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Portugal, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

processed, of which only approximately 0.5 per cent were refused.<sup>64</sup> In January 2009, the ESTA requirement became mandatory for all eligible visitors arriving in the United States by boat or plane, meaning that all VWP travellers must now have obtained a valid travel authorization through the ESTA system prior to boarding a carrier or vessel bound for the United States.

Countries that are nominated for participation in the VWP undergo a detailed evaluation by the United States Department of Homeland Security. As of March 2014, no OSCE participating State is undergoing such an assessment. Meanwhile, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Poland, Romania and Turkey are considered to be “VWP Road Map Countries”. The United States has maintained a dialogue with the VWP Road Map Countries since 2005, with the aim of helping these countries meet VWP criteria so that they might qualify to be nominated for participation in the VWP.

Although all EU member states except the United Kingdom and Ireland maintain the EU Common Visa Policy, not all of them qualify for the VWP, since the United States assesses the eligibility of each state on its own merits. Although EC Regulation 539/2001 stipulates the principle of “solidarity”, which calls for a reciprocal response by all EU member states in the event that a third country imposes a visa requirement on one of them, this measure has not been activated with respect to the United States.

Following a year of bilateral negotiations, on 9 September 2012, the United States and the Russian Federation concluded a new visa agreement on the simplification of visa formalities for nationals of the Russian Federation and the United States.<sup>65</sup> Under the agreement, three-year, multiple-entry visas have become the standard “default” visa issued to United States citizens visiting Russia and to Russian citizens visiting the United States. No formal invitation is required to apply for this type of business or tourism visa, although those applying for Russian tourist visas must continue to hold advance lodging reservations and arrangements with a tour operator.

Under the new agreement, the United States reduced the reciprocal visa fee for business and tourist visitors from Russia from USD 100 to USD 20, although the standard visa application fee of USD 160, which is paid on top of the reciprocal visa fee, has not changed. From 1 January 2013, processing fees for three-year multiple-entry Russian visas in the business, private, humanitarian and tourist categories were reduced from USD 180 to USD 160.

The agreement also eases restrictions in terms of the duration of stay of United States citizens in the Russian Federation. Previously, United States citizens could stay in the Russian Federation for a maximum of 90 days within any specified 180-day period. Now, reciprocal conditions have been introduced whereby United States citizens can stay in Russia for up to six months, mirroring the benefits already previously enjoyed by Russian visitors to the United States. In addition, “exit visas” will no longer be required for those United States citizens who lose their passports in Russia.

Another significant benefit this agreement provides to United States citizens is that the requirement to present a formal invitation from a Russian entity has been waived for business and tourist visa applications. Previously, all applicants were requested to possess an invitation from a Russian host, which had to be approved by the local office of the Federal Migration

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64 “Policy study on an EU Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)”, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, February 2011, <[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/docs/pdf/esta\\_main\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/docs/pdf/esta_main_en.pdf)>.

65 More information is available at the website of the United States embassy in Moscow: <<http://moscow.usembassy.gov/new-visa-agreement.html>>.

Service of the Russian Federation. As stipulated in the agreement, the new three-year, multiple-entry business visa does not require that the supporting visa application documents be certified by a notary. Instead, the letter of invitation should contain specific information about the organization issuing the invitation, as well as information about the person invited. Invitations issued on behalf of natural persons need to be certified by a notary.

The agreement has facilitated travel and established stronger ties between the Russian Federation and the United States, as it benefits the largest segment of travellers in both countries, namely business and tourist visitors. However, while those applying for three-year, multiple-entry visas now benefit from a simplified application procedure, the agreement did not introduce any changes to the issuance of one-year, single, double and multiple-entry visas.

## **4.2 VISA FACILITATION AGREEMENTS**

Visa Facilitation Agreements (VFAs) between the European Union and certain third countries have eased the visa application procedures for third country nationals. Measures included in the visa facilitation process include reducing visa fees, allowing for the issuance of multiple-entry visas for specific categories of applicants and shortening processing times. These facilitation measures do not affect conditions in place for issuing visas, and the visa applicant must still satisfy entry conditions. Ten VFAs are currently in force. The first VFA was signed with the Russian Federation and entered into force in June 2007. A further seven VFAs were agreed, with Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine, and entered into force in January 2008. The ninth VFA – with Georgia – entered into force in March 2011. In January 2014, the tenth and latest VFA, with Armenia, entered into force. A VFA was reached with Azerbaijan in November 2013, but as of March 2014 it had not entered into force.

VFAs are linked to readmission agreements, which establish the procedures for the return to the EU or to the EU partner country of persons (including own and third country nationals or stateless persons) residing irregularly on the territory of the EU or the EU partner country in question.

The five Western Balkans states – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia – have negotiated visa-liberalization road maps with the EU, resulting in the lifting of visa requirements for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in 2009 and for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2010. However, only citizens travelling with a biometric passport can benefit from the visa requirement waiver. As of March 2014, the VFAs which remained in force were those with Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and the Russian Federation, as well as for citizens of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia travelling with non-biometric passports (see Table 4.1).

**TABLE 4.1: VISA FACILITATION AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE EU AND NON-EU STATES CONCLUDED AS OF LATE 2012**

Country	Visa facilitation agreement	Entry into Force
<b>Albania</b>	Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Albania on the facilitation of the issuance of visas	01 January 2008
<b>Armenia</b>	Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Armenia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas	01 January 2014
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	Agreement between the European Community and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the facilitation of the issuance of visas	01 January 2008
<b>Georgia</b>	Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas	01 March 2011
<b>former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</b>	Agreement between the European Community and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas	01 January 2008
<b>Moldova</b>	Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Moldova on the facilitation of the issuance of visas	01 January 2008
<b>Montenegro</b>	Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Montenegro on the facilitation of the issuance of visas	01 January 2008
<b>Russian Federation</b>	Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas	01 June 2007
<b>Serbia</b>	Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Serbia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas	01 January 2008
<b>Ukraine</b>	Agreement between the European Community and Ukraine on the facilitation of the issuance of visas	01 January 2008

All visa facilitation agreements apart from the one concluded with the Russian Federation concern the travel of citizens of non-EU and non-Schengen states to the EU (except to the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark). By the time their respective VFAs with the EU entered into force (see Table 4.1), all states except the Russian Federation had waived their visa requirements for nationals of the EU and Schengen Area states. The visa facilitation agreement between the Russian Federation and the EU applies both to citizens of the Russian Federation travelling to the EU, as well as to EU citizens travelling to the Russian Federation. It is worth mentioning that on the EU side, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark opted out of the implementation of these agreements.

Although the specific provisions of the visa facilitation agreements differ from state to state, the VFAs feature broadly similar details, including: the reduction of visa fees from EUR 60 to EUR 35; a reduction in the number of supporting documents required for those applying for visas in certain professional and social categories; a waiver of the visa fee for those applying for visas in certain professional and social categories; the requirement that visa application procedures take no more than 10 days;<sup>66</sup> and the issuance of long-term multiple-entry visas to those applying for visas in certain professional and social categories.

In general, a visa fee waiver is granted to those applicants who need to travel to the EU frequently, including business visitors, as well as to vulnerable groups (as detailed in Table 4.2).

<sup>66</sup> If a further review of a visa application is needed, the agreements allow for an extension of the processing time to a maximum of 30 days. They also provide for the processing of applications in urgent cases within two working days.

**TABLE 4.2: CATEGORIES OF VISA APPLICANTS FOR WHOM THE VISA FEE IS WAIVED ON THE BASIS OF THE EU VISA FACILITATION AGREEMENTS**

Categories of applicants from OSCE participating States with VFAs for whom the visa fee is waived:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of national and regional governments and of constitutional and supreme courts, in the event that they were not already exempted from the visa requirement;</li> <li>• Disabled persons and the persons accompanying them, if necessary; close relatives – spouse, children (including adopted), parents (or custodians), grandparents or grandchildren – who are visiting citizens of a state that signed the VFA with the EU legally residing in the territory of the member states;</li> <li>• Members of official delegations who, following an official invitation addressed to the state that signed the VFA with the EU, are to participate in meetings, consultations, or negotiations or exchange programmes, as well as in events held on the territory of the member states by intergovernmental organizations;</li> <li>• Students, postgraduate students and accompanying teachers who undertake trips for the purposes of study or educational training, including exchange programmes and other school-related activities;</li> <li>• Participants in international sporting events and persons accompanying them in a professional capacity;</li> <li>• Persons participating in scientific, cultural or artistic activities, including university and other exchange programmes; and</li> <li>• Persons who have presented documents proving the necessity of their travel (and that of an accompanying person) on humanitarian grounds (including the necessity of receiving urgent medical treatment), or to attend the funeral of a close relative or to visit a seriously ill close relative.</li> </ul>
Visa applicants from Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia for whom the visa fee is waived:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children below the age of 12 (Georgia, Armenia);</li> <li>• Pensioners; and</li> <li>• Journalists and accredited persons accompanying them in a professional capacity.</li> </ul>
Visa applicants from Moldova, Ukraine and Russian Federation for whom the visa fee is waived:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants in official exchange programmes organized by twinned towns.</li> </ul>
Visa applicants from Moldova and Ukraine for whom the visa fee is waived:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children under the age of 18 and dependents under the age of 21;</li> <li>• Drivers transporting international cargo and conducting passenger transportation services to the territories of the member states in vehicles registered in Ukraine or in Moldova; and</li> <li>• Members of train, refrigerator and locomotive crews in international trains travelling to the territories of member states.</li> </ul>
Visa applicants from Moldova for whom the visa fee is waived:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionals participating in international exhibitions, conferences, symposia, seminars or other similar events held on the territory of member states; and</li> <li>• Representatives of civil society organizations when undertaking trips for the purposes of educational training, seminars, conferences (including within the framework of exchange programmes).</li> </ul>
Visa applicants from Armenia for whom the visa fee is waived:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representatives of civil society organizations and persons invited by Armenian non-profit community organizations registered in the member states when undertaking trips for the purposes of educational training, seminars or conferences (including within the framework of exchange programmes or Pan-Armenian and community support programmes).</li> </ul>

In addition to the above and in accordance with the EU visa facilitation agreements, long-term visas are granted to categories of visa applicants who need to travel to the EU regularly for professional or family reasons.<sup>67</sup> While there are slight variations in terms of the visa facilita-

67 Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:052:0034:0044:EN:PDF>>; Agreement between the European Community and Ukraine on the facilitation of the issuance of visas, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:22007A1218%2802%29:EN:HTML>>; Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Moldova on the facilitation of the issuance of visas, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:334:0169:0179:EN:PDF>>; Agreement between the European Community and the



tion agreements made with each respective state, in general, the following categories of people enjoy facilitated access to visas, as they are eligible for multiple-entry visas:

- Spouses, children (including adopted children) who are under the age of 21 or are dependent, or parents visiting citizens of a state signatory to a visa facilitation agreement or someone who is legally residing in the territory of a state party to such an agreement;
- Members of national and regional governments and of constitutional and supreme courts (if they are not already exempted from the visa requirement by a visa facilitation agreement) travelling in the exercise of their duties;
- Permanent and non-permanent members of official delegations who, following an official invitation addressed to the signatory state to a visa facilitation agreement, are to participate regularly in meetings, consultations, negotiations or exchange programmes, or in events held on the territory of the member states by intergovernmental organizations;
- Representatives of civil society organizations travelling regularly to member states for the purposes of educational training, seminars or conferences (including within the framework of exchange programmes);
- Professionals participating in international exhibitions, conferences, symposia, seminars or other similar events who regularly travel to member states;
- Persons participating in scientific, cultural or artistic activities, including university and other exchange programmes, who regularly travel to member states;
- Students and postgraduate students who regularly travel for the purposes of study or educational training (including within the framework of exchange programmes);
- Participants in official exchange programmes organized by twinned towns or municipal authorities;
- Persons needing to visit regularly for medical reasons (and necessary accompanying persons);
- Businesspeople and representatives of business organizations who regularly travel to member states;
- Journalists and accredited persons accompanying them in a professional capacity;
- Participants in international sporting events and persons accompanying them in a professional capacity;
- Drivers conducting international cargo and passenger transportation services to the territories of the member states in registered vehicles; and
- Members of train, refrigerator and locomotive crews travelling on international trains.

In general, citizens belonging to the first three groups listed above are issued multiple-entry long-term visas for up to five years. Other categories of persons are initially issued multiple-entry visas for one year, with every subsequent visa being issued for two to five years, provided that the terms of the previous visa have not been violated. As a rule, visa applications should be processed within 10 days. An extension to the maximum of 30 days for processing a visa application is allowed only in exceptional cases.

Following the entry into force of the EU's Visa Code in April 2010, the development of a new generation of visa facilitation agreements with Ukraine and the Russian Federation has been under way. Given that the EU's Visa Code has already introduced improvements concerning visa application procedures, the new generation of VFAs is expected to expand the scope of categories of persons that will enjoy simplified access to visas.

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Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas to the citizens of the European Union and the Russian Federation, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:129:0027:0034:EN:PDF>>; Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Armenia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas, <[http://www.mfa.am/u\\_files/file/EU\\_AM\\_VFA%20eng.pdf](http://www.mfa.am/u_files/file/EU_AM_VFA%20eng.pdf)>.

Visa facilitation agreements are not drawn up separately but are concluded as part of a package together with EU readmission agreements, which set out procedures for the return of irregular migrants (nationals, third-country nationals or stateless persons) from the EU to their country of residence.

Apart from the visa facilitation agreements signed between the EU and the Russian Federation, Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia, separate visa facilitation agreements have been concluded by other Schengen Area states. In particular, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland have concluded visa facilitation agreements with the Russian Federation.<sup>68</sup> In addition, Norway and Switzerland have concluded visa facilitation agreements with Moldova,<sup>69</sup> while Norway has concluded such an agreement with Ukraine.<sup>70</sup> The provisions of these agreements are similar to those already contained in the visa facilitation agreements signed by the EU. Finally, in 1994, the Russian Federation also concluded an agreement with Mongolia aiming to facilitate access to visas for citizens of both countries.<sup>71</sup>

### 4.3 VISA-LIBERALIZATION PROCESSES

Since 2008, the EU and the four non-EU Schengen Area states have implemented a joint policy on visa liberalization with third countries. In line with this policy, the EU has conducted visa-liberalization dialogues with several OSCE participating States. These dialogues are aimed at creating conditions that would allow the EU to lift the short-stay visa requirement for citizens of these countries. Visa liberalization entails both a technical and a political process. In order to qualify for visa-free travel to the EU, each third country must meet a number of criteria set by the EU in several policy areas. Progress towards meeting these criteria is evaluated by the EU to assess whether all relevant conditions for visa-free travel to the EU have been met.

As a result of these visa-liberalization dialogues, the EU abolished visa requirements for the five Western Balkans states in 2009 and 2010. It is also currently engaged in visa-liberalization dialogues with Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Turkey, while there is also a political commitment to enter into dialogues with Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus.

In addition, there is an ongoing visa dialogue with the Russian Federation. The format of this dialogue is different from the dialogues undertaken with other states in that both parties set their own criteria for applicants to fulfil in order to qualify for visa-free travel.

The first five countries that were offered a visa-liberalization dialogue were the OSCE participating States in the Western Balkans region, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. After all conditions had been met,

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68 The agreement between Norway and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas was concluded on 6 June 2007; the agreement between the Russian Federation and Switzerland on the facilitation of the issuance of visas was concluded on 21 September 2009; the agreement between Iceland and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of the issuance of visas to citizens was concluded on 29 September 2008.

69 The agreement between Moldova and Switzerland on the facilitation of the issuance of visas was concluded on 1 February 2011; the agreement between Moldova and Norway on the facilitation of the issuance of visas was concluded on 14 September 2011.

70 The agreement between Norway and Ukraine on the facilitation of the issuance of visas was concluded on 13 February 2008.

71 The agreement between the Government of Mongolia and the Government of the Russian Federation on border crossing points and facilitated traffic across the Mongolian-Russian border was concluded on 10 August 1994.

the visa requirements for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia were lifted in December 2009 and for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2010.

While the visa-liberalization process for the Western Balkans states was still ongoing, the EU introduced the Eastern Partnership,<sup>72</sup> a framework for more intensive co-operation between the EU and six of its Eastern neighbours, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Among other things, the Eastern Partnership aimed to promote the mobility of citizens, first by concluding visa facilitation and readmission agreements and then through visa liberalization. As of March 2014, the EU has entered into visa-liberalization dialogues with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

As a result of visa-liberalization dialogues, in November 2010, the EU offered Ukraine an Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation, which sets out the conditions for visa-free travel.<sup>73</sup> Moldova was offered a similar action plan in January 2011<sup>74</sup> and Georgia in June 2013.<sup>75</sup> The visa-liberalization dialogue with Georgia was officially launched in April 2012 and an EU action plan on visa liberalization was presented to the Georgian authorities in February 2013.<sup>76</sup> Among those countries engaged in a visa-liberalization dialogue with the EU, Moldova is considered to have made the most progress in meeting the criteria of the visa-liberalization roadmap. The European Commission formally proposed to lift visa requirements with Moldova in December 2013 and received approval from the European Parliament in February 2014. In February 2014, the European Council decided to lift the visa requirement for Moldova effective from May 2014.

The EU has also prepared a roadmap for Turkey on visa liberalization, which was accepted by Turkey in December 2013.<sup>77</sup> By accepting the roadmap and signing the readmission agreement, the EU and Turkey signalled that a formal visa-liberalization dialogue had been launched.

Before adopting EU action plans on visa liberalization, the EU conducted exploratory missions in each OSCE participating State where a visa-liberalization process was under consideration. While all action plans contain similar criteria the countries concerned must meet for visa liberalization to be realized, each national action plan is tailored to reflect the current state of a country's legislation in each policy area. The action plans on visa liberalization<sup>78</sup> focus on four policy blocks:

- 1) Documents security (including biometrics);
- 2) Migration management (including readmission);
- 3) Public order and security; and
- 4) External relations and fundamental rights.

72 Communication for the Commission to the European parliament and the Council, Eastern Partnership (COM92008) 823 final), Brussels, 3 December 2008, available at <[http://www.eeas.europa.eu/eastern/docs/como8\\_823\\_en.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/eastern/docs/como8_823_en.pdf)>. The Eastern Partnership was endorsed by EU leaders at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Prague in May 2009. Council of the European Union, Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, Prague, 7 May 2009, available at <[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/107589.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/107589.pdf)>.

73 <<http://novisa.org.ua/upload/file/EU-Ukraine-Action-Plan.pdf>>.

74 EU – Republic of Moldova Visa Dialogue Action Plan on Visa Liberalization <<http://www.gov.md/doc.php?l=en&idc=447&id=3397>>.

75 EU – Georgia Visa Dialogue Action Plan on Visa Liberalization <[http://www.mfa.gov.ge/files/459\\_16273\\_945386\\_ActionPlanonVisaLiberalisation.pdf](http://www.mfa.gov.ge/files/459_16273_945386_ActionPlanonVisaLiberalisation.pdf)>.

76 “Commissioner Malmström presents Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation with Georgia”, European Commission website, 25 February 2013, <[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-156\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-156_en.htm)>.

77 Roadmap towards a visa-free regime with Turkey, <[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/docs/20131216-roadmap\\_towards\\_the\\_visa-free\\_regime\\_with\\_turkey\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/docs/20131216-roadmap_towards_the_visa-free_regime_with_turkey_en.pdf)>

78 More information is available at <<http://visa-free-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/EU-Ukraine-Action-Plan.pdf>>, and <<http://visa-free-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/EU-Moldova-Action-Plan.pdf>>.

The contents of each policy block in the action plans are very similar to the road maps for visa liberalization previously concluded and successfully implemented with OSCE participating States in the Western Balkans. Unlike the road maps, the action plans are divided into two stages: the legislative framework stage and the implementation stage. The European Commission makes a recommendation to move a country from the first stage to the second, and the European Council has to formally endorse it.

### **Main features of road maps/action plans for visa liberalization with the EU**

**Block 1: Documents security (including biometrics)** – focuses on ensuring that personal documents, especially travel documents, are reliable, hard to forge and easily checked against international databases. The criteria of the first phase of the roadmap/action plan include the introduction of the legislative framework for the issuance of biometric passports (including an action plan for the roll-out of biometric passports), as well as anti-corruption training and ethical codes for officials dealing with passports. In the second phase, progress in the implementation of the roll-out of biometric passports, together with international co-operation on document security with the EU and on lost and stolen passport with Interpol, is assessed.

**Block 2: Migration management (including readmission)** – focuses on ensuring an adequate level of border and migration management, as well as asylum policy, in accordance with the relevant international standards. The criteria of the first stage cover the introduction and/or consolidation of a legislative and institutional framework that regulates border, migration and asylum issues (including accession to relevant international treaties), as well as the adoption and implementation of strategies and action plans aimed at the proper implementation of this legislation. With regard to migration management, the introduction of a mechanism for monitoring numbers and flows of migrants, the development of regularly updated migration profiles and the effective implementation of the readmission agreement with the EU, as well as the conclusion of readmission agreements, are also required. Benchmarks of the implementation stage include the following: the proper implementation of adopted legislation; an adequate level of inter-agency and international co-operation; adequate infrastructure and facilities; and a methodology for the detection and combating of irregular migration.

**Block 3: Public order and security** – comprises three policy areas: the prevention of and fight against organized crime, terrorism and corruption; international judicial and law enforcement co-operation; and ensuring a high level of data protection.

The first policy area covers the adoption and consolidation of the legislative and institutional framework, including the ratification of international instruments relating to the fight against and prevention of organized crime, money laundering, human trafficking, drug abuse and corruption. This also includes the establishment of independent institutions dedicated to the fight against corruption. Implementation criteria comprise the proper implementation of existing legislation, co-operation with the relevant international institutions and the implementation of their recommendations, the introduction of ethical codes and anti-corruption training for relevant officials.

The second and third policy areas focus on international co-operation on judicial and law enforcement issues, and include the adoption and implementation of legislation on mutual legal assistance, co-operation with Eurojust and Europol and a high level of inter-agency co-operation. The second and third policy areas also mandate the introduction and implementation of data protection legislation that is in line with relevant international standards, including the ratification of international conventions, the establishment of an independent

data protection supervisory authority and the conclusion of agreements with Eurojust and Europol concerning data protection.

**Block 4: External relations and fundamental rights** – focuses on anti-discrimination and human rights policy. One of the policy areas concerns freedom of movement within the state and ensuring that there are no unjustified barriers to the free choice of one's place of residence. Also, non-discriminatory access to identity documents should be guaranteed. The introduction and implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination policy (in line with international standards) is necessary in order to meet the criteria of Block 4. This includes the implementation of commitments agreed upon in international fora, such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe, as well as the ratification of relevant conventions and resolutions.

The EU is also discussing visa liberalization with the Russian Federation, but according to a different format. Initiatives regarding dialogue on the facilitation of cross-border travel between the EU and the Russian Federation started in 2002 on the eve of the EU's eastern enlargement, which complicated travel between the Russian Federation's Kaliningrad enclave and the Russian Federation mainland. Negotiations on the facilitation of travel by Russian citizens between these two areas across Lithuanian territory resulted in the introduction of the Facilitated Transit Document and the Facilitated Rail Transit Document.<sup>79</sup> In addition, the gradual lifting of the visa requirement for their citizens was included in the EU-Russian Federation dialogue, as well as in the Road Map on the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice.<sup>80</sup> The Road Map called for the two parties to "intensify the visa dialogue at expert and political level" and to "examine the conditions for a mutual visa-free travel regime as a long-term perspective" without specifying exact dates. As a first step, the Russian Federation and the EU concluded visa facilitation and readmission agreements, which entered into force in June 2007.

In 2011, the EU and the Russian Federation concluded a bilateral agreement on Common Steps towards Visa-Free Short-Term Travel for Russian and EU Citizens.<sup>81</sup> The document is less detailed than the action plans developed for Eastern Partnership countries and, unlike the action plans, is not divided into two phases. It lists specific tasks the parties agree to implement, in the areas of:

- document security (including biometrics);
- illegal migration (including readmission), focusing on migration, asylum and border management issues; and
- public order, including: security and judicial co-operation, focusing on the fight against transnational organized crime, terrorism and corruption; law enforcement co-operation; and the protection of personal data.

79 Council Regulation (EC) No 693/2003 of 14 April 2003 establishing a specific Facilitated Transit Document (FTD), a Facilitated Rail Transit Document (FRTD) and amending the Common Consular Instructions and the Common Manual, <[http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/justice\\_freedom\\_security/free\\_movement\\_of\\_persons\\_asylum\\_immigration/l14557\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_immigration/l14557_en.htm)>.

80 Road Map on the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice, <[http://www.russianmission.eu/userfiles/file/road\\_map\\_on\\_the\\_common\\_space\\_of\\_freedom,\\_security\\_and\\_justice\\_2005\\_english.pdf](http://www.russianmission.eu/userfiles/file/road_map_on_the_common_space_of_freedom,_security_and_justice_2005_english.pdf)>.

81 The full text is available at the website of the European Commission, <[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/russia/docs/common\\_steps\\_towards\\_visa\\_free\\_short\\_term\\_travel\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/russia/docs/common_steps_towards_visa_free_short_term_travel_en.pdf)>.

As part of the agreement, the EU and the Russian Federation also agreed to discuss and cooperate with one another on relevant recommendations made by UN bodies, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and international human rights organizations in the areas of freedom of movement and the facilitation of people-to-people contacts, as well as on anti-discrimination policies, the protection of persons belonging to minorities and combating hate crimes. The first meeting on the implementation of the list of common steps took place in March 2012.<sup>82</sup>

#### 4.4 LOCAL BORDER TRAFFIC REGIMES

Where a visa is required for travel between neighbouring states, dialogue on visa facilitation can assist states in promoting people-to-people contacts. In practice, many OSCE participating States are working to facilitate cross-border travel and contacts for citizens residing in border areas. This section focuses on local cross-border travel agreements in force as of March 2014, which have been reached between non-EU OSCE participating States and the EU member states that they share borders with.<sup>83</sup> Similar agreements reached between other non-EU OSCE participating States are also mentioned.<sup>84</sup> The high number of visitors who benefit from facilitated local cross-border travel has not only resulted in increased mobility, but has also contributed to the development of mutual trust between neighbouring communities located in border regions.

On the basis of Regulation (EC) No 1931/2006 of the European Parliament and of the EU Council of 20 December 2006 **laying down rules on local border traffic at the external land borders of the Member States and amending the provisions of the Schengen Convention**, the EU member states are authorized to conclude agreements on local border traffic with neighbouring third countries. “Local border traffic” refers to regular and frequent crossings of the EU’s external borders for legitimate reasons by nationals of neighbouring third countries who reside in areas bordering the EU.

Under the provisions of local border traffic agreements, residents of border areas may cross the external land border of an EU member state without a visa, provided that they are in possession of special permits, which are valid for one to five years (and passports, if the member state in question so requires), and that they are not deemed to be threats to public order. These persons are authorized to stay in the border area at the destination for the maximum duration stipulated in the bilateral agreement between the EU member state and the neighbouring third country. However, the stay must not exceed three months. The fee for the permit is equivalent to that payable for a short-term multiple-entry visa. However, EU member states may decide to reduce or even waive these fees.

On 14 December 2011, the Russian Federation and Poland signed a bilateral agreement on local border traffic, which entered into force on 27 July 2012.<sup>85</sup> The Agreement allows residents of the border regions to cross the border with special permission (Local Border Traffic Permission), which costs EUR 20 and is issued by the Russian consulates in Warsaw and Gdansk and the

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82 More information is available at the website of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union, <<http://www.russianmission.eu/en/news/russian-and-eu-experts-start-implementation-steps-visa-waiver>>.

83 Namely between Poland and the Russian Federation, between Poland and Ukraine, between Hungary and Ukraine, between Moldova and Romania and between Belarus and Latvia.

84 Including Norway and the Russian Federation.

85 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Russian Federation on the Rules of Local Border Traffic, <<http://www.ms.gov.pl/resource/630c9ccb-acd7-45e5-89bf-8f9e529a3b05>>.

Polish consulate in Kaliningrad. The document is valid for two years, and can be extended up to a total of five years; it can be used for building family, social, economic, cultural and other contacts, but not for employment and business activities. The new cross-border regime covers the entire Kaliningrad *oblast* and the Polish *województwa* (provinces) of Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Pomorskie. The expansion of the local border traffic regime to include the entire Kaliningrad *oblast* required the respective Schengen rules be revised; accordingly, amendments were made to Regulation (EC) No 1931/2006 of the European Parliament and of the EU Council of 20 December 2006.<sup>86</sup> Given that the situation of Kaliningrad is unique, the EU accommodated the request by Poland and the Russian Federation to increase the width of the local border traffic zone by 60 to 100 kilometres on either side of the Polish-Russian border. In doing so, the EU deviated from the common rule, which allows local border traffic to cover an area stretching a maximum 30 kilometres (50 kilometres in exceptional cases) from the border.

A similar agreement on local border traffic was signed between Norway and the Russian Federation in November 2010.<sup>87</sup> In addition, Lithuania and the Russian Federation have entered negotiations on a similar local border traffic regime, but at the time of writing the dialogue had not resulted in an agreement.

On 1 July 2009, a local border traffic agreement between Ukraine and Poland entered into force.<sup>88</sup> Under the agreement, the Ukrainian zone covers an area of 24,000 square kilometres, with over 1.2 million inhabitants. The agreement allows Ukrainian nationals living in the designated border area to cross the external border of the EU with permits obtained from the Polish consular authorities according to a simplified procedure. These permits are issued for a limited period of time to applicants who have been deemed eligible. The permits have a geographical limitation allowing travellers from Ukraine to stay in the immediate border areas of Poland (up to 30 kilometres from the border).

Since the launch of the local border traffic agreement between Poland and Ukraine, there has been a significant increase in the number of border crossings at the Polish-Ukrainian border. According to European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX) data,<sup>89</sup> around 3 million entries on the border with Ukraine were recorded by Polish authorities in 2009. This number rose by 40 per cent, to more than 4.2 million in 2010, and was expected to reach around 5 million in 2011 (a rise of 27 per cent). According to a FRONTEX report from 2012, since the establishment of the local border traffic agreement in 2009, visitors from Ukraine arriving in the border area of Poland via one of the border crossings accounted for 50 per cent (2.1 million) of all visitors arriving in Poland from Ukraine since 2010.<sup>90</sup>

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86 Regulation (EC) No 1931/2006 of the European Parliament and of the EU Council of 20 December 2006 laying down rules on local border traffic at the external land borders of the Member States and amending the provisions of the Schengen Convention, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:405:0001:0022:EN:PDF>>.

87 Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway on Facilitation of Mutual Travel for Border Residents of the Russian Federation and the Kingdom Of Norway, <[http://www.carim-east.eu/media/legal%20module/biag/ru/15.2.%20Norway\\_en.pdf](http://www.carim-east.eu/media/legal%20module/biag/ru/15.2.%20Norway_en.pdf)>.

88 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on the Rules of Local Border Traffic, <[https://granica.gov.pl/umowy/UA\\_maly\\_ruch\\_graniczny.pdf](https://granica.gov.pl/umowy/UA_maly_ruch_graniczny.pdf)>.

89 "Eastern Borders Annual Overview 2012", FRONTEX, 13 July 2012, <[http://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk\\_Analysis/EB\\_AO.pdf](http://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/EB_AO.pdf)>.

90 FRONTEX Eastern Borders Annual Overview 2012, <[http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk\\_Analysis/EB\\_AO.pdf](http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/EB_AO.pdf)>.

Romania and Moldova concluded a local border traffic agreement in November 2009.<sup>91</sup> Under this agreement, Moldovan citizens with permanent residence in Moldova's 50-kilometre border zone have the right to visa-free entrance to Romania's 50-kilometre border zone, so long as they are in possession of special permits. The permits are issued free of charge by Romanian consular offices and are valid for two to five years. The border zone covers 651 villages and 369 municipalities, with a total population of 1.2 million (approximately one third of the total population of Moldova).

In November 2007, an agreement was signed between Hungary and Ukraine on the rules of local border traffic that covers a border area of 50 kilometres, including 244 Hungarian and 384 Ukrainian settlements.<sup>92</sup> The local border area permit issued to Ukrainian citizens costs EUR 20 and is valid for a period of one to five years. It allows Ukrainian citizens to enter and stay in the Hungarian border area for a total of 90 days within a six-month period (calculated from the first date of entry). A similar agreement was signed between Slovakia and Ukraine in May 2008 that covers 299 Slovak and 280 Ukrainian settlements situated within 50 kilometres of the common border.<sup>93</sup>

In December 2011, a local border traffic agreement between Belarus and Latvia entered into force.<sup>94</sup> Following this agreement, consular representations of both states in the border areas developed lists of residents in those areas who are eligible for permits. On the basis of these lists, entry permits are granted to eligible persons for a period of one to 5 years. The agreement delineates the administrative and territorial units within each state located no further than 30 kilometres from the Belarussian-Latvian border. If the size of a unit stretches further than the 30-kilometre zone on either side of the border but is within 50 kilometres of the border, then the unit is also considered to be a part of the border area.

Further to those local border traffic agreements that are already operational, OSCE participating States are negotiating, or have already concluded, several other local border traffic agreements, some of which have not yet entered into force (including those between the following states: Lithuania and the Russian Federation; Latvia and the Russian Federation; Poland and Belarus; Romania and Ukraine). Before the liberalization of cross-border travel between OSCE participating States in the Western Balkans, local border traffic agreements were concluded between Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. At the time of writing, these agreements had not yet entered into force.

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91 Agreement between the Government of Romania and the Government of the Republic of Moldova on Local Border Traffic.

92 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on the Rules of Local Border Traffic.

93 Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Ukraine on Local Border Traffic.

94 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Republic of Latvia on Local Border Traffic.



# CHAPTER 5

## BEST PRACTICES AND INNOVATIVE MECHANISMS IN INCREASING CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY

While OSCE participating States struggle to meet the increasing demand for travel from countries with which they maintain visa regimes, negotiations on the facilitation and eventual liberalization of cross-border mobility remain the sovereign prerogative of each participating State. Where visa regimes exist, the facilitation of cross-border travel and the simplification of visa procedures represent significant challenges, especially in the face of an increasing demand for visas, as demonstrated between 2010 and 2012. The facilitation and liberalization process requires states to establish and maintain genuine partnerships, while working continuously to simplify visa application procedures and introduce innovative mechanisms in the visa application process.

In an effort to simplify administrative procedures in the visa application process, many OSCE participating States have reduced the required frequency and duration of an applicant's visits to the relevant visa issuing office, as well as the time taken to process visa applications. Likewise, efforts have been made to increase the issuance of multiple-entry visas and to increase their period of validity for bona fide travellers.

In some OSCE participating States, the simplification of visa application procedures is undertaken in parallel with the introduction of national registration systems to track the entry and exit of third country nationals to ensure that they comply with the terms of the visa. These mechanisms are useful in assessing the credibility of frequent visitors and allow the visa-issuing state to increase the number of long-term multiple-entry visas being issued to frequent visitors.

## 5.1 THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO APPLICANTS ON VISA ISSUANCE POLICIES AND VISA APPLICATION PROCEDURES

The provision of detailed and comprehensive information on visa application procedures to visa applicants is an important first step in rendering cross-border travel more accessible. This information should include not only the types of visas available and the supporting documents required for each category of visa, but also the rights and responsibilities that come with the issuance of a visa, the criteria for qualifying for a long-term visa and/or a visa fee waiver, as well as the possibility to appeal against a consular decision deemed unsatisfactory by the applicant.

To date, the Internet has proven to be the most effective means of disseminating consular information to the general public, through the websites of embassies and consulates. However, the detail and quantity of information provided often varies between individual participating States, as well as between individual embassies and consulates of the same country.

Information on visa application procedures provided by many OSCE participating States often comprises only basic facts, which do not extend beyond what is already contained in the national regulations on visa issuance (such as the types of visas issued, the duration and cost of visas and the supporting documentation required). Frequently, a visa application form is also made available on the website, allowing applicants to complete the form before visiting the relevant visa application centre. In some instances, however, consular information is not provided in the local language of the country where the consulate is located; moreover, applicants may struggle to locate the relevant sections of the websites of national authorities.

As a result, some OSCE participating States have begun to aggregate all the necessary information on visa regulations and application procedures and make it available on a dedicated website, particularly in cases where the electronic submission of visa applications is either made possible or a requirement. Such websites not only contain detailed information on visa application procedures, but may also provide a range of additional services, including: a guide to the process of submitting a visa application; online advice regarding the necessary supporting documentation; application processing times at individual embassies and consulates; a mechanism allowing applicants to check the progress of their visa application; and responses to frequently asked questions.<sup>95</sup>

Where OSCE participating States have outsourced the collection of visa applications, the external service providers employed to do so generally provide detailed and comprehensive information on application procedures. Moreover, information provided via the Internet is often user-friendly in terms of format, and is usually presented in the local language(s).

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95 For further details, please refer to: the website of the United States Department of State, <<http://travel.state.gov/visa>>; the website of the United Kingdom Border Agency, <<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk>>; the website of the Government of Canada, <<http://www.cic.gc.ca>>; the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, <<http://www.inis.gov.ie>>; and the Danish Government's official web portal for foreigners and integration, <<http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-US>>.

## 5.2 ELECTRONIC VISA APPLICATIONS

The visa application process can be streamlined considerably by switching to online application systems, including permitting documents to be submitted electronically and allowing applicants to book their consular visits online. This practice also helps to reduce the time that applicants spend in consulates and visa offices.

In general, under the electronic visa application system, information that would otherwise need to be completed on paper in the form of a visa application is completed and transferred electronically to the relevant consular office. This enables the consular authorities to both process basic information submitted by the applicant and complete the necessary background checks prior to the applicant's visit to the consular office. Most of the OSCE participating States that use this system require applicants to arrive in person at the designated consular office and to submit the necessary supporting documents in hard copy, which are then used to assess their credibility in terms of their stated reasons for travel. If the background security checks have not flagged any risks and the consular official is satisfied with the application and the supporting documents, the visa can be issued on the same day. This considerably streamlines the application process and limits the number of visits made by the applicant to the consulate to just one. In particular, introducing an electronic visa application system facilitates the process for those applicants who must travel great distances to reach the consular office.

Electronic visa applications are mandatory for travel to Ireland, the Russian Federation and the United States.<sup>96</sup> For travel to Azerbaijan, Canada, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan, online applications are encouraged, while paper visa applications can also be submitted in person at the designated visa office.<sup>97</sup> In the EU, Germany<sup>98</sup> and Poland<sup>99</sup> have also introduced a system whereby visa applications are registered electronically and appointments for interviews or to submit supporting documents at the consulate are arranged online.

Although the use of electronic visa applications provides certain benefits, it also requires a degree of aptitude in information technology on the part of applicants. To render the process more user-friendly, some OSCE participating States have developed detailed manuals that guide applicants through the process. In many instances these manuals are available in the local languages. However, the actual application interface is generally available only in one language – that of the visa issuing OSCE participating State. Moreover, information cannot usually be entered in the online form in the local language.

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96 United States Department of State Consular Electronic Application Center, <<https://ceac.state.gov/genniv>>; Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, <<https://www.visas.inis.gov.ie/avats/OnlineHome.aspx>>; Consular Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, <<https://visa.kdmid.ru/PetitionChoice.aspx>>.

97 Website of the Government of Canada, <[http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/my\\_application/apply\\_online.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/my_application/apply_online.asp)>; United Kingdom Border Agency, <<http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk/applynow.aspx>>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijan Republic, <<http://evisa.mfa.gov.az>>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, <[http://evisa.mfa.uz/evisa\\_en](http://evisa.mfa.uz/evisa_en)>.

98 See, for example, the official website of the German consulate in Yerevan, Armenia, <[http://www.eriwan.diplo.de/Vertretung/eriwan/de/09\\_Visa/terminvergabe\\_\\_S.html](http://www.eriwan.diplo.de/Vertretung/eriwan/de/09_Visa/terminvergabe__S.html)>.

99 Official website of the electronic consulate system of the Republic of Poland, <<https://secure.e-konsulat.gov.pl>>.

### 5.3 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION FOR VISA APPLICATIONS

While some OSCE participating States may accept scanned supporting documents and copies of originals, the submission of originals is still required by many consular offices. Many of the required supporting documents can be obtained locally (e.g., proof of employment or bank statements). Some, however, can only be obtained from the destination country, such as original invitation letters from a private or legal entity to prove the declared purpose of the visit. This letter often has to be certified and approved by the relevant national authority. This requirement makes collecting required supporting documents more time – and labour-consuming. Shortening the time taken to obtain required documentation from an inviting party would, to a large extent, facilitate the processing of visa applications. In this regard, consideration should be given to accepting scanned copies of invitation letters or establishing *ex officio* communication between the national certifying authorities and their consulates abroad.

Good practices developed by some OSCE participating States demonstrate that progress in this area is possible. Canadian visa application procedures already allow for all supporting documents to be submitted in electronic format. To this end, the online visa application interface provides detailed instructions on the technical requirements for scanning and submitting supporting documentation electronically. Equally, some OSCE participating States arrange for the *ex officio* and electronic transmission of invitation letters to their consulates.<sup>100</sup>

Countries that facilitate the procurement of invitation letters include Azerbaijan and Norway, which accept good quality copies of certified invitation letters. The faxing of an invitation that has been approved by the relevant certifying authority could also constitute a sufficient means to prove that the document is genuine. Although Schengen member states implement a Common Visa Policy, they specify their own requirements in terms of supporting documents. As a result, the same Schengen visa might be easier to obtain in the consular offices of some Schengen member states than in others.

Except where an interview with the visa official is mandatory, consideration should be given to allowing a visa application (together with supporting documents) to be mailed to the relevant consular office or visa facilitation centre. Many OSCE participating States (including Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) allow for the mailing of visa applications together with the applicant's passport. However, Schengen member states generally require that the application be submitted in person or, under certain circumstances, by a proxy at the designated embassy, consular office, visa application centre or other authorized legal entity (for example, tourist agencies).

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100 The Austrian authorities, for example, issue an *Elektronische Verpflichtungserklärung* (Electronic declaration of Responsibility).

## **5.4 OUTSOURCING THE COLLECTION OF VISA APPLICATIONS TO EXTERNAL SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Consulates in some OSCE participating States increasingly rely on contracted external service providers to collect visa applications. Such services are of value both to consular services (as they reduce the number of people applying directly to the consulate), and for applicants, as it may mean that they have shorter distances to travel in order to submit a visa application. If an in-person interview with a visa official is not required, a visit to an external service provider would be the only travel required in order to obtain a visa. Offices operated by external service providers are used to collect visa applications and forward them to the designated embassy or consular office for onward processing. The assistance and information provided by these offices is generally of better quality than that provided by consular offices and embassies. Additional services, such as scheduling an appointment for visa submission and the online tracking of the visa application process, are also available.

The cost of the services of external providers, however, has to be covered by applicants. This contributes to the overall cost of obtaining a visa. Therefore, the applicants should be given a choice of whether to use the services of external providers or to apply for a visa directly at the consulate.

## **5.5 FACILITIES AT CONSULATES AND APPLICATION CENTRES**

There are considerable differences between consulates in the OSCE region in terms of their facilities for collecting visa applications. Where online registration for the submission of visa applications is unavailable and where applicants must submit their documents at the consulate in person, necessary provisions should be made to ensure that applicants are able to queue and wait in appropriate conditions. For example, heating, air conditioning and seating space should be available where applicants are required to wait inside the consulate, and shelter and benches should be available where applicants are required to wait outside the consulate building. Depending on the projected number of visa applicants, many consulates also provide desks and chairs for filling out applications and install fresh water dispensers. Some consulates also provide applicants with copy machine facilities, a photo booth, stationary and computers to allow applicants to make last minute changes to their applications. Where applicants are willing to pay extra for the service, some visa application centres offer a VIP-style personalized service in handling the receipt of visa applications. For example, the United States Homeland Security hired engineers from Disney Worldwide Services, Inc., to evaluate certain consular sections and to suggest improvements for queue management, as well as other ways to improve applicants' experiences.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> For more information, see the official website of the White House, <[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/eo\\_13597\\_18o\\_day\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/eo_13597_18o_day_report_final.pdf)>.

## 5.6 E-VISAS

In many instances, OSCE participating States have waived the requirement for assessing visa applicants against potential risks, including the risk of irregular migration or a financial burden being placed on the host state, based on the nationality of the applicant. Where this requirement is waived, applicants are generally only required to provide information on the purpose of the visit and to cover visa costs. If an extensive assessment of a visa application is not necessary, states could consider issuing an electronic permit similar to those issued as part of existing electronic systems for travel authorization (ESTA), which would replace a visa sticker in the passport. Turkey already operates such a system, enabling applicants to receive e-visas by applying online.<sup>102</sup> Similar to an electronic flight ticket, holders of e-visas are checked on arrival against a database of e-visas issued, in order to ensure that the e-visas are genuine. Armenia operates a similar system.<sup>103</sup>

## 5.7 BIOMETRIC AND MACHINE-READABLE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Travel documents and visa stickers with various features designed to prevent their being forged no longer provide sufficient means to prevent the counterfeiting of passports and visas or the use of stolen documents. In the absence of an efficient mechanism to match the identity of persons to whom the visa or passport is issued with the identity of the holder of the document at the border, travel and visa documents may be forged.

The collection and use of biometric data such as fingerprints and facial images allow for the safe verification of the identity of a person. A biometric passport (also known as an ePassport) is a combined paper and electronic passport that contains biometric information, and can be used to authenticate the identity of the holder of the biometric passport. The value of biometric data has led biometric passports to become increasingly common. Consequently, the availability of such passports is one of the main requirements for visa liberalization.<sup>104</sup>

Machine-readable and biometric passports allow for the movement of foreign nationals across state borders to be efficiently recorded. Equally, where ePassport gates are installed, information is automatically recorded in the system when a biometric passport holder crosses the border. Currently, there are ePassport gates at all major airports in the United Kingdom, while many other OSCE participating States have started to equip airports with such gates. ePassport gates are automated – a scanner and camera (rather than a border officer) are used to check whether the biometric data of the traveller match the information stored in their biometric passport; if all is in order, entry is granted. In the United Kingdom, this service is currently only available to United Kingdom and EU holders of biometric passports; however, the system has the potential to be used by nationals of other OSCE participating States which issue biometric passports.

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<sup>102</sup> For further details, visit the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, <<https://www.evisa.gov.tr/en>>.

<sup>103</sup> For more information, visit the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, <<http://www.mfa.am/eVisa/index.htm>>.

<sup>104</sup> The EU has liberalized cross-border travel only for holders of biometric passports from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; the introduction of biometric passports is one of the conditions for visa liberalization between the EU and other OSCE participating States. The United States requires states wishing to become a part of the Visa Waiver Program to issue biometric passports.

## 5.8 THE ISSUANCE OF MULTIPLE-ENTRY LONG-TERM VISAS

Multiple-entry long-term visas considerably facilitate the cross-border mobility of bona fide travellers and do not necessarily pose a risk to the security of the destination state. In this regard, it is important to remember that a person who intends to overstay a visa can do so with a short-term single-entry visa. Therefore, it would appear worthwhile to place a stronger emphasis on assessing the intentions of first-time applicants in order to ensure that they do not pose a risk in terms of security or irregular immigration. The issuance of multiple-entry visas valid for longer periods could also reduce the workload of consulates, as fewer visa applications would need to be processed.

The United States increasingly uses long-term multiple-entry visas by focusing on a thorough assessment of visa applicants through personal interviews. In general, the visa refusal rate for the United States is higher than that of other OSCE participating States, but the procedure allows those applicants who did not violate the terms of a previously issued visa to subsequently receive long-term multiple-entry visas. In 2011, more than 62 million foreign nationals visited the United States. Around 60 to 65 per cent entered lawfully without a visa (including Canadians and citizens of Visa Waiver Program countries), while the majority of the remaining visitors entered with multiple-entry non-immigrant visas issued before 2011. Approximately 12 per cent of visitors travelled on newly-obtained non-immigrant visas (35 per cent of all visitors entering with a visa).<sup>105</sup>

The proportion of multiple-entry long-term visas issued varies significantly among OSCE participating States, as well as among Schengen member states that implement the Common Visa Policy.

Shifting visa policies towards issuing more multiple-entry long-term visas requires changes to the assessment of individual applications. Where emphasis is placed on confirming a person's legitimate need to travel to the destination country, a single-entry visa covering the time period of the visit is likely to be issued. Where the applicant is assessed according to the likelihood that s/he will respect the terms of entry (and where the need for the visit is deemed to be of secondary importance), consular offices usually issue long-term multiple-entry visas, provided that the applicant has complied with entry regulations during previous visits.

The task of determining whether a person has complied with the terms of visas issued previously is aided in some OSCE participating States by a national system which registers the arrivals and departures of foreign nationals by means of, for example, immigration cards. The United States operates such a system and shares information on the entry and exit of foreigners with its consular offices, which use this information to determine whether persons re-applying for a visa complied with entry regulations during their previous visits.

Use of the United States Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) demonstrates the importance of registering arrivals in facilitating the entry of foreign nationals while at the same time upholding national security. Making ESTA operational has allowed many OSCE participating States to participate in the United States' Visa Waiver Program while preserving the prerogative of the United States authorities to continue to screen all nationals from VWP countries for potential security threats.

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<sup>105</sup> Written Statement before a hearing of the United States Senate Appropriations Committee, Senate Subcommittee on Homeland Security, by David T. Donahue, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Visa Services, Department Of State, 21 March, 2012, Washington, <<http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=704977>>.

The United States authorities also plan to expand the existing mechanism for registering arrivals and departures by establishing an “air exit system”. This system will allow visitors’ biometric data to be read upon their departure from the United States and will, thus, ensure that all departures have been accurately recorded. The implementation of the system will allow new countries to participate in the VWP, as it will enable the waiving of the non-immigrant refusal rate requirement for admission to the VWP.<sup>106</sup>

Some OSCE participating States (including the Russian Federation and the United States) also employ a system of recording entries and departures to and from their respective territories by means of immigration forms, which need to be filled out upon entry into the state territory in question. It is unclear, however, whether and to what extent this information is used in the processing of visa applications.

The Schengen Border Code does not contain provisions for maintaining a database of visitors’ cross-border movements upon entry into and departure from the Schengen Area. Currently, the stamping of travel documents is the sole method used to register the dates of entry and exit; such stamps can be used by border guards and immigration authorities to calculate the duration of the stay of a third-country national in the Schengen Area (which must amount to no more than 90 days in a six-month period). Other measures and tools available at border crossing points, including the Schengen Information System and the Visa Information System databases (the consultation of which is compulsory at entry, but not at exit), are not intended for the purpose of recording border crossings and do not possess the capacity to do so.

As such, there are currently no electronic means of checking whether, where and when a third-country national has entered or left the Schengen Area. Difficulties in monitoring the stays of third-country nationals are also caused by the improper use of and poor quality of stamps, the lengthy process involved in calculating a foreigner’s stay on the basis of previous entry stamps in passports and by incidents of forgery and counterfeiting of stamps. For these reasons, a consistent EU-wide record of the entry and exit of visitors to and from the Schengen Area and more efficient means by which the EU member states may determine if a third-country national has exceeded her/his right to stay do not exist.

To address this issue, in February 2013, the European Commission submitted proposals for two regulations to the European Parliament and the Council.<sup>107</sup> The aim of these proposals is to introduce two major innovations to the European Union’s border control system. The first is the establishment of an Entry/Exit System (EES) to create a centralized, digital method for the registration of entry and exit data of third-country nationals crossing the external borders of the EU member states for a short stay within the EU. The second proposal aims to establish

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<sup>106</sup> Section 711 of the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-53)18 allows the Secretary of the Department for Homeland Security (DHS), in consultation with the Secretary of the Department of State, to waive the non-immigrant refusal rate requirement for admission to the VWP after the Secretary of DHS certifies to Congress that: an air exit system is in place that can verify the departure of no less than 97 per cent of foreign nationals that exit through United States airports; and the electronic travel authorization system is operational. The “non-immigrant refusal rate requirement” refers to the fact that the annual total percentage of refused visa applications for non-immigration purposes made by nationals of a state must be below the required threshold (3 per cent) for nationals of that state to qualify for the VWP.

<sup>107</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Entry/Exit System (EES) to register entry and exit data of third country nationals crossing the external borders of the Member States of the European Union, <[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/doc\\_centre/borders/docs/1\\_en\\_act\\_part1\\_v12.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/doc_centre/borders/docs/1_en_act_part1_v12.pdf)>; Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Registered Traveller Programme, <[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/doc\\_centre/borders/docs/1\\_en\\_act\\_part1\\_v14.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/doc_centre/borders/docs/1_en_act_part1_v14.pdf)>.



a Registered Traveller Programme to facilitate border crossings by frequent travellers from third countries.

When combined, these systems would allow for an evidence-based approach to visa issuance, as the EES would provide reliable information on whether any violations of the entry regulations have been recorded with respect to a particular visa applicant. These systems could play a significant role when deciding whether to impose or lift, as the case may be, the visa obligation of a third country. Relying on the kind of information that EES provides on entries and exits would also foster increased confidence in granting more multiple-entry long-term visas.

Currently, the EU does not plan to introduce a system along the lines of the United States' ESTA. This is partly due to the fact that the roll-out of such a system would slow down the processing of foreign travellers arriving at EU land borders. It may, however, facilitate the travel of nationals from OSCE participating States that are subject to visa regimes with the EU. An ESTA-type system, when implemented as an electronic visa application system, could bring a number of tangible benefits for consular authorities and travellers alike. However, it would have to be restricted to persons who had already submitted their biometric identifiers as part of an earlier visa application (thus requiring a fully operational Visa Information System (VIS)), and would require that applicants' data be checked against their visa and entry and exit history (thus requiring not only a fully operational VIS, but also an operational entry-exit system).

## **5.9 TRANSPARENCY OF VISA DIALOGUE AND BORDER CO-OPERATION**

While innovative mechanisms for handling visa applications and visa processing may render cross-border travel more accessible, it is the visa dialogues and co-operation between OSCE participating States in the field of migration and border security that are indispensable in making progress in the facilitation of cross-border mobility. Where there is a sufficient level of co-ordination and co-operation between OSCE participating States in tackling irregular immigration and security threats, the role of national borders in ensuring the protection of national security and welfare becomes less important. The Schengen Area demonstrates how close co-operation among OSCE participating States can lead to the abolition of land border checkpoints.

An important aspect of co-operation between OSCE participating States in enabling wider cross-border travel is that of reciprocal information sharing. Transparency in the implementation of national visa policies can help to build trust in the facilitation and liberalization of cross-border travel. In this regard, many, but not all, OSCE participating States publish their statistical data on the number of visas issued (including visa type and number of entries permitted), the refusal rate and other relevant statistical information. Civil society is also playing an increasingly active role in monitoring visa facilitation and liberalization dialogues to help ensure that national governments actively promote cross-border travel freedoms for their citizens. Therefore, civil society initiatives in this area would benefit from increased transparency regarding information on the number of visas issued. It would also benefit from greater transparency regarding the content of political dialogues and agreements reached over the liberalization of cross-border travel.

# ANNEX 1



## **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

### **Survey questionnaire**

#### **BASELINE STUDY ON CROSS BORDER MOBILITY IN THE OSCE REGION**

##### **Information note**

This questionnaire was prepared by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) as part of an on-going project related to the development of a “Baseline Study on Cross-border Mobility in the OSCE Region”. The objective of this project is to support OSCE participating States in implementing OSCE commitments on freedom of movement, with a focus on facilitated cross border movement. The study will provide an overview of cross-border travel freedoms in the OSCE region and will focus in particular on visa application mechanisms in the instances where visa regimes exist, their characteristics and their impact on cross border mobility.

**Your support and information is critical to the success of this project, and we thank you in advance for your co-operation!**

##### **Target Audience**

We recommend that the questionnaire be completed by the national authority responsible for issuing visas.

### ***Objective***

This questionnaire is designed with the aim to obtain information on: characteristics of visa application procedures, the number of visas issued to citizens of other OSCE participating States and the agreements that your country has concluded with other OSCE participating States.

The questionnaire is designed to obtain information only on non-immigrant visa types issued by states. These include visas issued for the purpose of allowing temporary stay on the territory of the state but which do not provide the right to establish any type of permanent residence on the state's territory. Please also note that for the purpose of this questionnaire transit visas should not be considered.

The survey will form the basis for a comparative analysis of visa policies and the number of issued visas in the instances where cross-border travel is regulated by a visa regime.

### ***Requests for clarification***

**Please send your completed questionnaires in electronic (Microsoft Word) format BY 12 April 2013 directly to Mr. Juris Gromovs, OSCE ODIHR Migration and Freedom of Movement Adviser** (Juris.Gromovs@odihr.pl). In the event that respondents have difficulty in the completion of this questionnaire, require additional details or have questions, they should be directed to Juris Gromovs at OSCE ODIHR (Juris.Gromovs@odihr.pl), tel.: +48 22 52 00 696.

**OSCE participating States:** Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States and Uzbekistan

**Information on the respondent**

<b>Country</b>	
<b>Completed by</b>	<b>Name:</b>
	<b>Position:</b>
<b>Contact e-mail</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

- 1) **For each OSCE participating State with which your country maintains a visa regime, please list embassies and consulates of your country, which are authorized to process applications for non-immigrant visas**  
(Please add additional rows as appropriate)

<b>OSCE participating State</b>	<b>Country and city/cities where visa application should be submitted</b>	<b>Service providers or visa application centres which are authorized with visa application collection in that state</b>

2) Please provide the total number of non-immigrant visas your country has issued to citizens of other OSCE participating States with which your country maintains a visa regime in 2010, 2011 and 2012:

(Please add additional rows as appropriate)

OSCE Participating State	Number of non-immigrant visas applied by citizens of that state			Number of single-entry visas issued to citizens of that state			Number of multiple-entry visas issued to the citizens of that state			Refusal rate		
	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012

3) Please list the documents and information – common for all types of non-immigrant visas – that an applicant should submit when applying for a non-immigrant visa

Visa application form

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A photograph

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Visa fee payment receipt

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Travel medical insurance

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Documents indicating purpose of travel

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Proof of sufficient means of subsistence

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Proof of accommodation at the destination

**4) Please list the types of non-immigrant visas that your country issues to citizens of other OSCE participating States:**

(Please add additional rows as appropriate)

Visa type	Cost of visa processing (in EUR or USD)	Visa Duration (days or months)	Average processing time (days or months)	Other visa application supporting documents not listed under question 3

**5) If applicable, please list bilateral or multilateral agreements with other OSCE participating States and/or international organizations on the facilitation of/simplified issuance of visas for your citizens**

(Please add additional rows as appropriate)

OSCE participating State and/or international organization(s), with which an agreement was concluded	Title of bilateral/multilateral agreement, dates of its conclusion and entry into force

**6) If applicable, please list bilateral agreements with neighbouring OSCE participating States, which establish a special local border traffic regime and simplify travel of citizens residing within an area close to the national border**

(Please add additional rows as appropriate)

OSCE participating State with which a local border traffic regime agreement was concluded	Title of the local border traffic agreement, dates of its conclusion and entry into force

**Thank you for your time and responses!**