Democratization Department • Zoran Dokovic • zoran.dokovic@odihr.pl
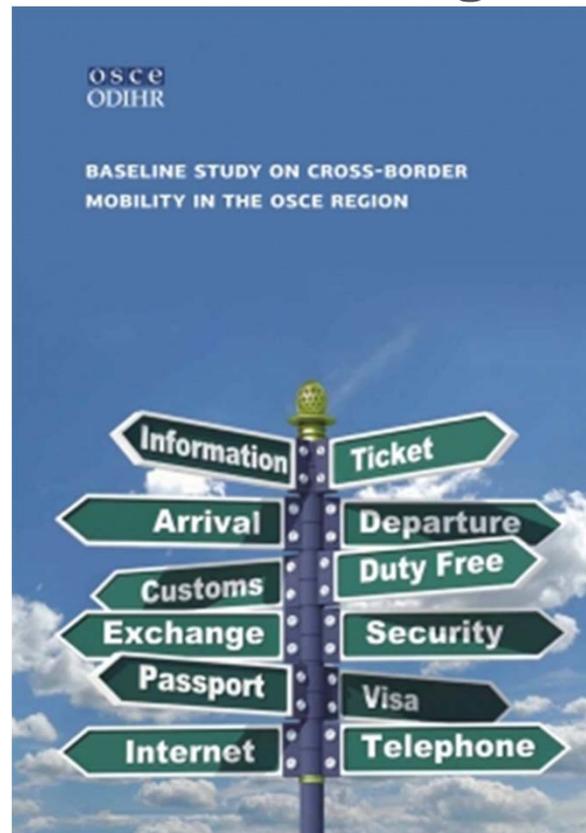
Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region

ODIHR Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region

Objectives:

- Provide an overview of cross-border travel freedoms in the OSCE region;
- Focus in particular on visa application mechanisms, their characteristics and their impact on cross border mobility;

Expected results:

- Increased data collection on existing visa polices;
- Increased awareness among state authorities of best practices related to implementing visa application procedures in the context of OSCE freedom of movement commitments;
- Increased awareness among civil society actors/think tanks on OSCE freedom of movement commitments;

ODIHR Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region

Content:

• Overview of volume of cross border travel in the OSCE region;

• Patterns of cross border travel by citizens of the OSCE participating States;

• Impact of visa regimes between participating States on these travel patterns;

• Visa application requirements of the OSCE participating States:

- visa application supporting documentation requirements;

- costs of obtaining a visa;

• How visa polices of OSCE participating States have been translated in practice: statistics on number of issued visas, percentage of refused visa applications, and the percentage of issued multiple entry visas;

• Overview of on-going visa dialogues between OSCE participating States;

• Best practices as well as way forward in the implementation of the OSCE commitments on freedom of movement and human contacts;

- Recommendations on visa facilitation and the liberalization of cross-border travel;

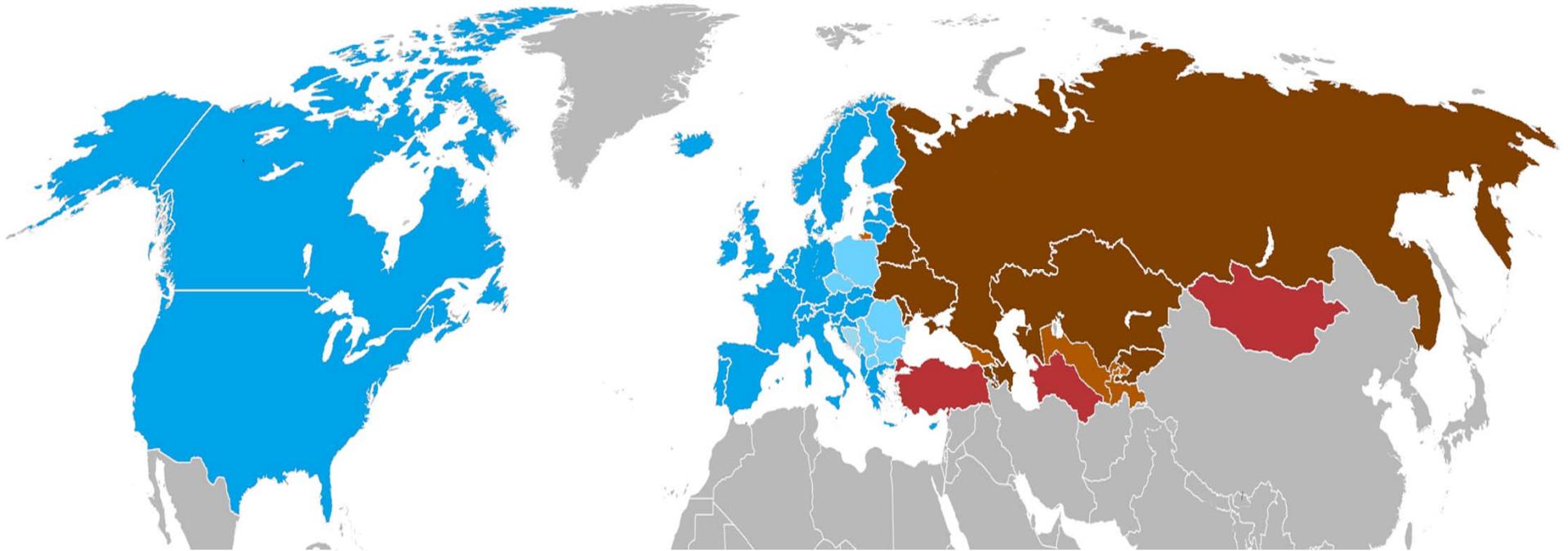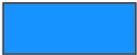## ODIHR Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region

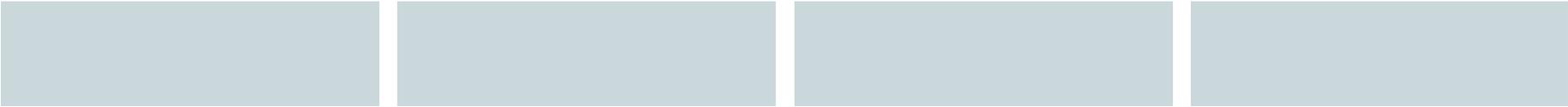**Volume of cross-border travel in the OSCE region (2011):**

- 578 million foreign visitors, 59% of all globally recorded foreign visitors in 2011

- 28 Member States of the European Union hosted 66 % (385 million) of all foreign visitors in the OSCE region

- United States - 10% (62,3 million),

- Turkey - 5% (29,3 million visitors),

- Russian Federation - 3.9% (22,6 million visitors),

- Ukraine - 3.7% (21,4 million visitors)

- Canada - 2.7% (15,9 million visitors)

- Other OSCE participating states - 7% (40.4 million visitors)

osce
ODIHR

ODIHR Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region

Impact of visa regimes on cross border travel in the OSCE region

Area One of reciprocal visa-free travel
Area Two of reciprocal visa-free travel

ODIHR Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region

Impact of visa regimes on cross-border travel in the OSCE region

- Citizens of OSCE participating States citizens travel primarily within the parameters of the visa-free travel area of which their state is a part;

- 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.

ODIHR Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region

* - Rate of visitors per 1000 citizens is calculated with reference to the size of population at the states of origin

14 million visitors

28 visitors out of 1000 citizens

7% increase in number of visitors (2007 – 2011)

23 million visitors

66 visitors out of 1000 citizens

-5.3% increase in number of visitors (2007 – 2011)

10 million visitors

20 visitors per every 1000 citizens

-28% Increase in number of visitors between 2007 - 2011

13 million visitors

45 visitors per every 1000 citizens

63% Increase in number of visitors between 2007 - 2011

0.3 million visitors

1 visitors out of 1000 citizens

63% increase in number of visitors (2007 – 2011)

0.6 million visitors

2 visitors out of 1000 citizens

-10% increase in number of visitors (2007 – 2011)

osce
ODIHR

ODIHR Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region

Visa application requirements and cross-border mobility

- 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;

- 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.

ODIHR Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region

Visa application requirements and the facilitation of cross-border mobility

- 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.

- Success in visa liberalization dialogues is linked with mitigating the risks associated with liberalizing visa requirements;

- 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;

- In the OSCE region, the facilitation of visa applications (for example, by waiving the requirement for the submission of certain documentary evidence) has resulted 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 and its complexity remain unchanged;

- Many OSCE participating States are issuing an increasing number of multiple entry visas, which substantially facilitates cross-border travel for bona fide travellers;

ODIHR Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region

Best practices in facilitating visa where visa regimes exist

- The provision of information to applicants on visa issuance policies and visa application procedures;

- Electronic visa applications

- Facilitating submission of supporting documentation for visa applications

- Outsourcing the collection of visa applications to external service providers

- E-visas

- The issuance of multiple entry long-term visas

osce
ODIHR

ODIHR Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region

Recommendations

- 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;

- To facilitate transparency, OSCE participating States should publish information pertaining to the content of visa facilitation/liberalization dialogues

- 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.

- 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

- 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.

osce
ODIHR

ODIHR Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE Region

Recommendations

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- OSCE participating States should use up-to-date communication technologies and explore opportunities for the electronic submission of visa applications and supporting documentation.

- 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.

Thank you for your attention!

Questions?

Zoran.Dokovic@odihr.pl