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General socio-economic trends and relations with New Zealand

The region of South-Eastern Europe or the Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries comprises sixteen relatively small countries (excluding Ukraine) all of which - except for Greece – were until the early 1990s ruled by communist regimes and had effectively no political, economic or cultural relations with New Zealand during their communist past. Following the collapse of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and the opening of the European Union's Eastern Enlargement process, three post-communist states from the Balkans – Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia – joined the EU by 2013. All their remaining Balkan neighbours, labelled (together with Croatia) by the EU 'the Western Balkans', have also expressed a strong desire to follow the pathway of these three. Currently, North Macedonia (which was until recently known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Montenegro, Serbia and Albania hold the status of official EU candidates, while the remaining two – Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo – have a longer way to go and are still considered as only potential candidates for EU membership. Unlike their post-communist counterparts from Central Europe, the Baltics and the Western Balkans, the six countries from the Eastern Partnership are not offered a membership perspective to the European Union. The Eastern Partnership, which is an offshoot, and the Eastern dimension, of the European Neighbourhood Policy is the EU's policy initiative to forge closer ties with the six countries in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus (namely: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine). The partnership seeks to promote regional stability through trade agreements and democratic institution-building. The Programme offers partner countries tariff-free access to the EU's single market in exchange for their adoption of trade-related and political EU legislation.

Despite the much greater political and economic openness of all these countries during their post-communist history,

New Zealand's political, economic, cultural, trade and tourist relations with all the post-communist Balkan states and the Eastern Partnership countries have remained marginal at best. However, some positive recent trends, especially in relations with the new EU member states from the region of post-communist Europe, indicate that there is potential for significant improvement of all types of relations between New Zealand and both the Balkan states and the Eastern Partnership countries. In addition to academic relevance, the main objective of these policy briefs is to raise awareness among the NZ intellectual and wider public, particularly the political and business elites, of the main social-political and economic trends in these two groups of states as a pre-condition for identifying potential opportunities for the improvement of cooperation. The two policy briefs that this Jean Monnet Chair will issue annually for the period September 2017 – September 2020 will cover the following aspects of the contemporary developments of the Balkan States and the Eastern Partnership countries:

- General macroeconomic and social trends in the region and their impact on NZ trade, tourism and its socio-cultural and people-to-people links with the Balkan and the Eastern Partnership countries;
- Socio-political conditions and developments in the respective countries with regard to intra-regional cooperation and progress in democratisation and the European integration process. Particular attention will be paid to providing an overview of the current state of play as regards the Western Balkan states' attempts to meet the official political and socio-economic conditions for EU accession, EU relations with the Eastern Partnership countries, and the latter's progress in democratisation and in complying with the socio-political and economic requirements of the Eastern Partnership programme.

1. General macroeconomic and social trends

The economic development trend in the South-Eastern Europe (SEE) from July 2019 to June 2020 has undergone an abrupt shift from a growing mode to a downward trend. The arrival of the covid-19 pandemic worldwide poses a great risk to the regional economic development, its further social and economic reform as well as social and economic integration with the EU and the world. It has to a great extent decelerated regional economic growth and the growing momentum that was apparent in the past recent years. Although some countries in the region experienced a slight slowdown of economic growth in 2019, the scale is not comparable with the likely economic recession in 2020 as a result of the temporary nationwide lockdown and closure of borders in almost every country in the world. All of the countries in the SEE region entered into national lockdown in March 2020 when the first wave of the outbreak of the pandemic swept the European continent. However, until this July, the coronavirus is far from diminishing as the number of confirmed cases is still rising in different European countries.ⁱ Economic activities in most of the social sectors either came to a halt abruptly or were greatly decreased in each country because of social distancing and quarantine measures. Tourism and its affiliated industries were heavily devastated. In Bulgaria, the pandemic is likely to cause economic recession in 2020. The poverty rate may increase in 2020 to 6.8% as a result of the disruption to supply chains and domestic demand being impacted by quarantine measures.ⁱⁱ In Croatia, not only is the country facing a more severe economic downturn brought about by disruption to tourism and services, which accounts for over 20% of its GDP, the earthquake in March further exacerbated the already gloomy economic prospect.ⁱⁱⁱ In the Western Balkan

region, regional economic growth is expected to be negative in 2020, according to the World Bank.^{iv}

Given the evolving situation with the Corona virus pandemic, the more precise estimation of the size of economic decline in the SEE region during 2020 is still hard to predict. The severe economic slump is going to affect the labour market differently in each country. Contrary to recent years' decline in the unemployment rate, the pandemic is likely to result in more workers laid off in the region. As is shown in Table1, the unemployment rate will likely rise sharply in most of the countries in the SEE region in 2020, in particular in Romania which has (so far) the highest number of confirmed cases of Covid-19.^v For the other countries in the region, the unemployment rates in 2020 will likely increase at a rate ranging from 2% to 4%, apart from Albania whose unemployment rate is predicted to decrease slightly (0.2%) compared to 2019. On the other hand, the GDP growth rate of all of the countries in the region is expected to be negative in 2020. For those more advanced economies in the Western Balkans, they may suffer the most due to the worldwide disruption of economic interactions, such as Serbia and North Macedonia.^{vi} According to the IMF, the real GDP growth rate in Croatia and Montenegro will be hit the hardest in 2020 in the SEE region, which will probably fall to -9%. The real GDP growth rate in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Kosovo and Romania may deteriorate to around -5% in 2020. In Serbia, the real GDP growth rate in 2020 may decrease to around -3%. Protests arose in Serbia, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina along with the rising number of cases in 2020.^{vii}

Table 1. Basic social and macroeconomic indicators

	Population (millions)			GDP per capita (PPP in international thousand\$)			Unemployment rate (Percent of total labour force)		
	2014	2019	2020*E	2014	2019*E	2020*E	2014	2019	2020*E
South-Eastern Europe									
Albania	2.89	2.87	2.97	10.91	13.99	13.65	17.5	12	11.8
Bulgaria	7.2	6.96	6.91	18.37	24.6	23.74	11.5	4.2	8
Bosnia-Herzegovina	3.57	3.5	3.28	11.02	14.22	14.89	27.5	15.7	18
Croatia	4.24	4.06	4.05	21.24	27.73	27.68	19.3	7.8	11.5
Montenegro	0.62	0.62	0.62	15.42	20.08	19.93	N/A	N/A	N/A
North Macedonia	2.07	2.08	2.08	13.47	16.49	16.61	28	17.3	20.4
Kosovo	1.81	1.8	N/A	9.28	12.32	N/A	35.3	25.7	N/A
Romania	19.95	19.52	19.4	20.04	28	30.14	6.8	3.9	10.1
Serbia	7.13	6.97	6.94	13.5	18.56	18.84	19.9	10.9	13.4
East-Central Europe									
Czechia	10.51	10.64	10.69	30.53	38.83	40.29	6.1	2	7.5
Hungary	9.88	9.76	9.75	25.63	34.05	32.43	7.8	3.4	5.4
Poland	38.02	37.97	37.96	25.41	33.89	33.74	9	3.3	9.9
Slovenia	2.06	2.07	2.07	29.97	38.46	38.51	9.7	4.6	9
Slovakia	5.42	5.45	5.46	28.73	36.64	32.18	13.2	5.8	8
Some Western EU									
Belgium	11.18	11.46	11.49	43.45	49.53	50.11	8.5	5.4	7.3
France	64.03	64.82	64.99	40.99	47.22	45.45	10.3	8.5	10.4
Germany	80.98	82.97	83.15	46.89	53.57	53.57	5	3.2	3.9
Italy	60.78	60.36	60.29	35.42	40.47	40.07	12.6	10	12.7
Netherlands	16.86	17.23	17.28	49.12	58.34	57.1	7.4	3.4	6.5
Eastern Partnership									
Georgia	3.72	3.71	3.7	9.27	12.23	15.14	14.6	11.6	N/A
Moldova	3.56	3.54	2.63	6.04	7.7	13.25	3.9	3	3
Ukraine	42.76	41.87	41.54	8.76	9.77	12.71	9.3	8.5	10.1
Armenia	2.99	2.97	2.97	8.2	11.08	13.74	17.6	17.7	19
Azerbaijan	9.48	10.06	10.1	17.92	18.62	14.5	4.9	5	5
Belarus	9.47	9.48	9.41	18.95	20.64	19.76	0.5	0.3	2.3
Europe	735.1	743.27	742.59	33.21	39.04	38.21	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Zealand	4.56	5.04	5	35.65	40.94	41.07	5.4	4.1	9.2

Source: International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook; *(E) Estimated

The pandemic also devastated the economies of the six Eastern Partnership Countries of the EU. Ukraine and Belarus (as of writing) have

the highest numbers of confirmed cases among the group of six. The (already) high unemployment rate is very likely to rise in

Ukraine and Armenia in 2020 by around 2% in comparison with that in 2019. The six Eastern Partnership countries had solid economic growth in 2019, in particular Georgia and Armenia, whose real GDP growth rate reached 5.1% and 7.6% respectively. However, the positive trend is plunging in 2020. Ukraine and Belarus are expected to be affected most severely. Their real GDP growth rates in 2020

may reach -7.7% and -6% respectively (see Table 2). For other countries in the group of six, their GDP growth rates are predicted to decline to around -3% in 2020. The economy may recover fast in Georgia as soon as the health crisis is contained worldwide. The country (so far) had the least number of cases among the six and lifted its lockdown ban in late April.^{viii}

Table 2. Real GDP annual growth and inflation rates

	Real GDP growth 2017-2020 (annual percent change)				Inflation rates, average consumer prices 2017-2020 (annual percent change)			
	2017	2018	2019*E	2020*E	2017	2018	2019	2020*E
South-Eastern Europe								
Albania	3.8	4.1	2.2	-5	2	2	1.4	2.4
Bulgaria	3.8	3.1	3.4	-4	1.2	2.6	2.5	1
Bosnia-Herzegovina	3	3.6	2.7	-5	1.2	1.4	0.7	-0.6
Croatia	2.8	2.6	2.9	-9	1.1	1.5	0.8	1.3
Montenegro	4.3	4.9	3.6	-9	2.4	2.6	0.4	0.7
North Macedonia	0.2	2.7	3.6	-4	1.4	1.5	0.8	-0.9
Kosovo	3.7	3.8	4	-5	1.5	1.1	2.7	1.3
Romania	7	4.1	4.1	-5	1.3	4.6	3.8	2.2
Serbia	1.9	4.3	4.2	-3	3.1	2	1.9	1.4
East-Central Europe								
Czechia	4.3	3	2.6	-6.5	2.4	2.2	2.9	2.1
Hungary	4	4.9	4.9	-3.1	2.4	2.8	3.4	3.3
Poland	4.6	5.1	4.1	-4.6	2	1.6	2.3	3.2
Slovakia	3.4	4.1	2.3	-6.2	1.3	2.5	2.8	1.1
Slovenia	5	4.1	2.4	-8	1.4	1.7	1.6	0.4
Some WE Countries								
Belgium	1.7	1.4	1.4	-6.9	1.8	2.3	1.2	0.3
France	2.3	1.7	1.3	-7.2	0.3	2.1	1.3	0.3
Germany	2.5	1.5	0.6	-7	0.4	1.9	1.3	0.3
Italy	1.5	0.9	0.3	-9.1	-0.1	1.2	0.6	0.2
Netherlands	2.9	2.6	1.8	-7.5	0.1	1.6	2.7	0.5
Eastern Partnership Countries								
Georgia	4.8	4.7	5.1	-4	2.1	2.6	4.9	4.6
Moldova	4.7	4	3.6	-3	6.4	3.1	4.8	2.8
Ukraine	2.5	3.3	3.2	-7.7	13.9	10.9	7.9	4.5
Armenia	7.5	5.2	7.6	-1.5	-1.4	2.5	1.4	0.8
Azerbaijan	0.1	1	2.3	-2.2	12.4	2.3	2.6	3.3
Belarus	2.5	3	1.2	-6	11.8	4.9	5.6	5.6
Europe	2.5	2.2	1.6	-6.7	1.5	2.2	2	1.1
New Zealand	3	2.8	2.2	-7.2	0.6	1.6	1.6	1.2

Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook; *(E) Estimated

In 2020, the economic prospects in East-Central European countries and Western European countries are also expected to enter recession. The unemployment rate is escalating in the countries in the two regions, particularly in Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia. In Poland, the unemployment rate may soar to nearly 10%. Both Slovenia and Slovakia had a high unemployment rate in 2019. The situation will further deteriorate in 2020 in both countries, whose unemployment rate may rise to around 9%. (see Table 1).

The economic recovery of the SEE countries and the Eastern Partnership countries of the EU is largely dependent on the speed of recovery in the EU due to their close economic connections. The EU has reached a consensus regarding allocation of a massive EU recovery fund (€750 billion).^{ix} The funding will be distributed to the member states in the form of grants, loans or investments. For EU member states in the SEE region, their economic recovery is associated with

2. Relations with New Zealand

The economic relations between the SEE countries and New Zealand have been growing in recent years. New Zealand's trade engagement with every country in the region has been more extensive, although it still lags far behind New Zealand's trade exchange with the EU member states from East Central Europe (see Table 3). The two-way trade exchange value between New Zealand and some SEE countries, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Romania has increased slightly in last three years. The most traded goods between New Zealand and the above-mentioned countries were cereals, optical, photo, technical apparatus, essential oils, raw hides and skins, and fish.^{xii} The total trade value between New Zealand and Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia and North Macedonia has decreased in the same period. The majority of traded goods were in copper, articles of apparel, pharmaceutical

allocation of the EU recovery fund, the EU market's recovery, the government's supportive measures for economic revival, as well as the government's capability in containing the virus. For those prospective candidates of the EU in the SEE region, the EU has set up a financial package (€3.3billion) for the Western Balkans at the EU-Western Balkan Summit held via video conference on 6 June ^x. The package is aimed to support social and economic recovery and management of the health crisis. For the Eastern Partnership countries, the EU has also initiated a financial package worth over €1billion in total to support the countries' social and economic revival. ^{xi} However, the further economic recovery and development in the EU and a wider European region remain to be seen as the pandemic is still a very unpredictable factor that significantly affects free movement of goods and people in Europe.

products, fish, crustaceans, molluscs, aquatics invertebrates, etc.^{xiii} Among the SEE countries, New Zealand imported most from Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia. New Zealand increased its imports from Albania, Serbia and Romania in 2019. The value of New Zealand imports from Albania increased slightly from NZ\$0.658 million in 2018 to NZ\$0.769 million in 2019 mostly due to increased imports of footwear and gaiters. ^{xiv} However, the value of NZ imports from Romania increased significantly, by around NZ\$26 million from 2018 to 2019. The most imported goods from Romania were cereals.^{xv} New Zealand's imports from Serbia increased by around NZ\$2 million from 2018 to 2019, of which the majority comprised edible fruits, nuts and melons.^{xvi} Until June 2020, New Zealand exports to the region remain problematic. The only noticeable export destination for New Zealand goods in the region is Bulgaria. The total value of New

Zealand exports to this country increased by nearly NZ\$8 million from 2019 to 2020 (Table 3). It mainly comprised wool, animal hair, horsehair yarn and fabric.^{xvii} Although the amount of imports from Romania, New Zealand's biggest origin of imports in the region, has reduced by some NZ\$20 million till June 2020, it is still around NZ\$7million higher than that in 2018. Despite some gradual improvement of trade relations between New

Zealand and the SEE countries in recent years, they still remain marginal in comparison with the more developed trade relations between New Zealand and EU member states from East-Central Europe, especially Poland and Czechia. The overall value of trade between New Zealand and either of these two countries is still significantly higher than the amount of total trade value between New Zealand and all SEE countries combined.

Table 3. New Zealand merchandise trade (NZ\$ mil, Annual-Jun)

	2018		2019		2020	
	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports
South-Eastern Europe						
Albania	0.145	0.658	0.028	0.769	0.259	0.523
Bulgaria	13.894	33.697	12.785	24.915	20.488	18.265
Bosnia-Herzegovina	0.055	3.393	0.295	2.012	0.055	4.146
Croatia	2.904	5.345	1.443	5.090	1.651	6.161
North Macedonia	0.194	1.060	0.088	0.916	0.055	0.887
Montenegro	0.081	0.043	0.184	0.040	0.422	0.422
Kosovo	0	0	0	0	0	0
Serbia	2.114	3.933	2.403	4.979	3.149	7.440
Romania	6.906	50.060	8.720	76.532	12.054	57.243
East Central Europe						
Czechia	20.887	191.923	45.784	239.301	36.518	224.003
Hungary	5.536	87.021	8.897	151.107	4.881	142.249
Poland	63.574	195.264	74.723	200.007	71.250	258.731
Slovakia	7.987	61.145	9.234	97.405	6.517	108.879
Slovenia	4.180	30.830	1.853	37.403	4.136	32.851
Eastern Partnership						
Georgia	5.491	0.797	53.510	0.851	58.544	0.510
Moldova	0.171	0.422	0.246	0.543	0.335	0.684
Ukraine	11.200	10.448	16.105	22.200	17.241	28.771
Armenia	13.214	0.171	0.386	0.308	0.214	0.248
Azerbaijan	52.360	0.155	18.208	0.211	25.493	0.116
Belarus	0.456	1.574	1.481	28.118	3.423	51.618
Europe	5,784.954	11,842.444	6,010.160	12,886.878	5,824.956	12,270.936
EU	5,454.114	11,086.675	5,554.336	11,680.386	5,268.529	11,159.505
World	55,490.193	59,696.459	59,378.413	64,365.620	60,232.678	61,361.501

Source: Statistics New Zealand

The trade relations between the Eastern Partnership countries of the EU and New Zealand have entered a more promising stage

in the first half of 2020 than in previous years. The major New Zealand exports destinations in the six countries were Azerbaijan, Armenia and

Ukraine in 2018. In 2019, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine have become the major New Zealand exports destinations among the group of six. New Zealand mainly exported fish, crustaceans, molluscs, aquatics invertebrates to Ukraine in 2019. The major New Zealand exports to Georgia and Azerbaijan in 2019 concentrated on dairy products, eggs, honey, and some other edible products.^{xviii} In terms of

New Zealand imports from the Eastern Partnership countries in 2019, they mainly came from Ukraine and Belarus. In 2019, New Zealand mainly imported fertilisers from Belarus. New Zealand's most imported goods from Ukraine were animal, vegetable fats and oils, cleavage products, electrical and electronic equipment^{xix}.

Table 4. Total number of New Zealand visitors to SEE, ECE and EP countries (Annual-Jun)

	2018	2019	2020
South-Eastern Europe (total)	6,857	7,880	7,006
Albania	60	90	122
Bulgaria	502	613	415
Bosnia-Herzegovina	180	92	102
Croatia	3,969	4,729	4,571
FYROM (North Macedonia)	500	334	218
Montenegro	120	184	62
Serbia	522	721	616
Kosovo	142	150	80
Romania	862	967	820
East Central European Countries (total)	5,497	5,812	5,097
Czechia	1,758	1,983	1,888
Hungary	1,442	1,275	1,115
Poland	1,414	1,859	1,462
Slovakia	543	312	348
Slovenia	340	383	284
Eastern Partnership Countries	1,081	1,280	943
Georgia	160	146	151
Moldova	20	119	44
Ukraine	500	625	481
Armenia	100	91	80
Azerbaijan	221	90	68
Belarus	80	209	119
Europe	250,108	272,101	220,458
World	2,914,303	3,072,334	2,323,853

Source: Statistics New Zealand

The value of New Zealand imports from the two countries has been on an upward trend in recent years. In 2019, the value of New Zealand imports from Ukraine has surged from some NZ\$10 million in 2018 to NZ\$22 million in 2019. The amount of New Zealand imports from

Belarus increased significantly from 2018 to 2019 (from some NZ\$1.5 million to nearly around NZ\$28 million). The trade value between New Zealand and the Eastern Partnership countries continues to grow strongly throughout 2019 and the first half of

2020, despite the negative impact of the corona virus pandemic after March 2020. As is shown in Table 3, from June 2019 to June 2020, the trade value between New Zealand and each country in the group of six have increased significantly, in particular with Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Belarus. The value of New Zealand imports from Belarus rose by nearly NZ\$23 million from June 2019 to June 2020, which is over NZ\$40 million higher than that of previous year. The value of New Zealand

exports to Georgia has also been increasing in 2020 and amounted to over NZ\$5 million more than in 2019. Overall, the pandemic has not significantly hindered a strengthening trade relation between New Zealand and the Eastern Partnership countries. Nevertheless, their economic connections still remain marginal in comparison with the bilateral economic engagement between New Zealand and the EU member states.

Table 5. Total number of visitor arrivals to New Zealand by country of residence (Annual-Jun)

	2017	2018	2019	2020
South-Eastern Europe (total)	3,536	3,392	3,582	3,577
Albania	48	16	35	30
Bulgaria	784	688	730	851
Bosnia-Herzegovina	32	48	30	39
Croatia	752	784	783	702
North Macedonia	96	96	87	86
Montenegro	48	48	29	30
Kosovo	32	16	43	31
Serbia	256	288	226	275
Romania	1,488	1,408	1,619	1,533
East-Central Europe	15,264	14,768	16,075	12,821
Czechia	5,040	4,992	5,759	4,687
Hungary	1,872	1,936	1,849	1,461
Poland	6,192	5,568	6,256	4,971
Slovakia	1,280	1,280	1,304	952
Slovenia	880	992	907	750
Eastern Partnership Countries	2,048	1,632	1,585	1,089
Georgia	80	32	15	30
Moldova	96	16	52	52
Ukraine	1,600	1,296	1,241	789
Armenia	32	32	45	36
Azerbaijan	96	96	71	41
Belarus	144	160	161	141
Europe (total)	568,576	563,296	561,152	465,812
World (total)	3,635,744	3,780,128	3,887,430	2,919,122

Source: Statistics New Zealand

The pandemic has to a certain degree negatively influenced the growing cultural exchange of activities and tourism connections between New Zealand and the two group of

European countries investigated in this Brief. As is shown in Table 4, the total number of New Zealand visitors to the SEE region increased by over 1000 from 2018 to 2019. Nevertheless,

that trend is declining in 2020. From July 2019 to June 2020, the number of New Zealanders visiting the SEE region declined significantly - nearly 900 fewer than the previous year. Over 60% of New Zealand visitors to the SEE region visited Croatia in 2020, a renowned tourist destination in Europe. From July 2019 to June 2020, the total number of New Zealand visitors to Croatia is only about 500 fewer than the total number of New Zealand visitors to East-Central European countries combined in 2020. In the region, the other major travel destinations that are popular among New Zealanders are Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria.

In the last three years, the number of New Zealand visitors travelling to the SEE region outnumbered that to the East Central European countries. On the contrary, it is vice versa in terms of the number of visitors from the two regions to New Zealand. The number of visitors originally from East-Central European states to New Zealand is around three times higher than the number of visitors from the SEE countries. In the SEE region, more Bulgarians and Romanians visited New Zealand in 2020 than previous years.

The tourism exchange and cultural communications between New Zealand and the Eastern Partnership countries still remain very limited. As shown in Tables 4 and 5, there has been a reduction in the number of New Zealand visitors to the Eastern Partnership

countries up until June 2020 compared with 2019 and so is there a reduction in the number of travellers from the Eastern Partnership countries to New Zealand for the same period. From July 2019 to June 2020, 1089 visitors from Eastern Partnership countries travelled to New Zealand, which is about 500 fewer than in the previous year. Among the visitors from the Eastern Partnership countries, over 75% are from Ukraine. The number of visitors from Belarus to New Zealand has been rising in 2020.

To date, New Zealand has not opened consulates in any of the Eastern Partnership countries. A visa centre for people travelling to New Zealand was opened in Kyiv, Ukraine last year. It surely will promote bilateral cultural exchanges and tourism in the future so long as the Covid-19 pandemic has been contained and border restrictions are lifted worldwide. The future development of cultural and tourist relations between New Zealand and the South-Eastern Europe as well as the Eastern Partnership countries remain to be seen. It largely depends on when the corona virus can be contained worldwide, when countries' border restrictions for travelling, studying or business purposes are lifted and when the economy and people's living standards in the two regions will be able to recover from the pandemic.

ⁱ Worrying Infection Trends in Balkans and South Europe, WHO official <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/06/30/live-blog-central-southeast-europe-responds-to-uptick-in-covid-19-pandemic/>

ⁱⁱ The World Bank in Bulgaria, Overview. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bulgaria/overview>

ⁱⁱⁱ The World Bank in Croatia, Overview <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/croatia/overview>

^{iv} Recession Looms for Western Balkans as Countries Respond to Covid-19. The World Bank.

2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/29/recession-looms-for-western-balkans-as-countries-respond-to-covid-19>

^v Johns Hopkins University, Coronavirus Resource Centre. <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

^{vi} The covid-19 crisis in the western Balkans: Economic impact, policy responses, and short-term sustainable solutions. OECD. <http://www.oecd.org/south-east-europe/COVID-19-Crisis-Response-Western-Balkans.pdf>

^{vii} Public anger rises across Balkans as coronavirus toll grows, Financial Times.

<https://www.ft.com/content/103377cd-9cfb-41e3-8030-65aac20762dc>

^{viii} COVID-19: Georgia Announces National Lockdown, Partial Curfew. Civil Georgia. 30 March. 2020. <https://civil.ge/archives/344761>

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