



*Youth mobility:  
Maximising opportunities for individuals,  
labour markets and regions in Europe*

# Dreaming of Sweden - Latvian and Romanian youth migration to Sweden

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- 2010: Labor Market Integration reform
- Policies too young to fully evaluate
- History of high unemployment for foreigners
- Welfare drives disincentives
- 2015: highest per capita inflow of asylum seekers ever to an OECD country

OCEC: Highest employment gap between  
Natives and Foreign-born

2011: 82% Swedish-born between 20-64 and  
57% foreign-born

Migrants < 5 years; 41% men and 25% women

Especially in initial years, Labor migrants are  
employed more than humanitarian

## Active policies:

- generous unemployment
- strong employment protection
  - high cost of hiring and firing
- social partners
  - Unions
  - employers' associations
- Minimum wages negotiated by 'collective'
  - little direct gov't involvement
- Focus: strengthening econ incentives
  - Migrants: improving skills
  - Employers: hiring incentives



- A. Employment Services
- B. Skills Recognition Services
- C. Language Training
- D. Vocational Training

Horizon 2020 project Ymobility: Intra-EU youth mobility

Main material: Statistical mobility data, panel survey and interviews

Sweden: Focus on Latvian and Romanian youth mobility to Sweden.

Some preliminary results

- How has the EU-expansion in 2004 and 2007 affected youth-mobility from Latvia and Romania to Sweden?
- How can we understand and explain the mobility and settlement patterns of young Latvians and Romanians?
- What makes Sweden attractive to Latvians and Romanians, and what makes them stay?

(Comparative perspective)

Sweden has experienced a **modest inflow** of migrants from the new EU-member states, despite geographical proximity and the decisions to give free access to the labour market in both the 2004 and 2007 EU-expansion (Gerdes and Wadensjö, 2013).

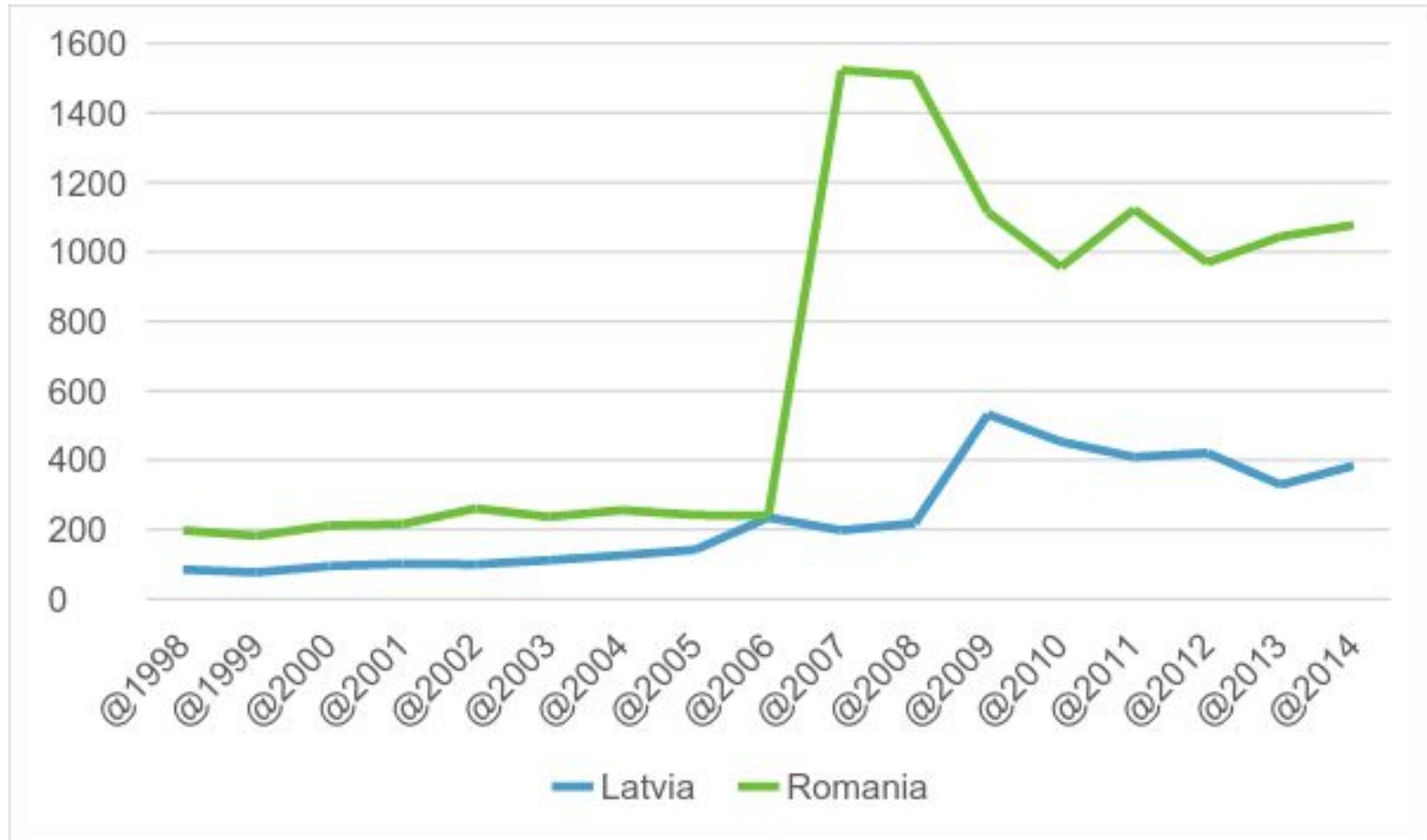
Even though the 2004 expansion was preceded by worries of exploitation of the welfare system, labelled "**social tourism**", and concerns about wage dumping, Sweden was actually the only country that **did not apply transitional restrictions** for any of the EU-expansions.

So far, only Polish citizens have moved to Sweden in large numbers but far from the numbers in the UK or Ireland. **There are also clear indications that the mobility patterns from the new EU-member states to Sweden and their situation in the labour market differs from other receiving countries** (Andersson and Hammarstedt, 2011; Gerdes and Wadensjö, 2013). At the same time, little research has been done about EU-mobility to Sweden, especially compared to the UK.

# Immigration from Latvia/Romania to SE



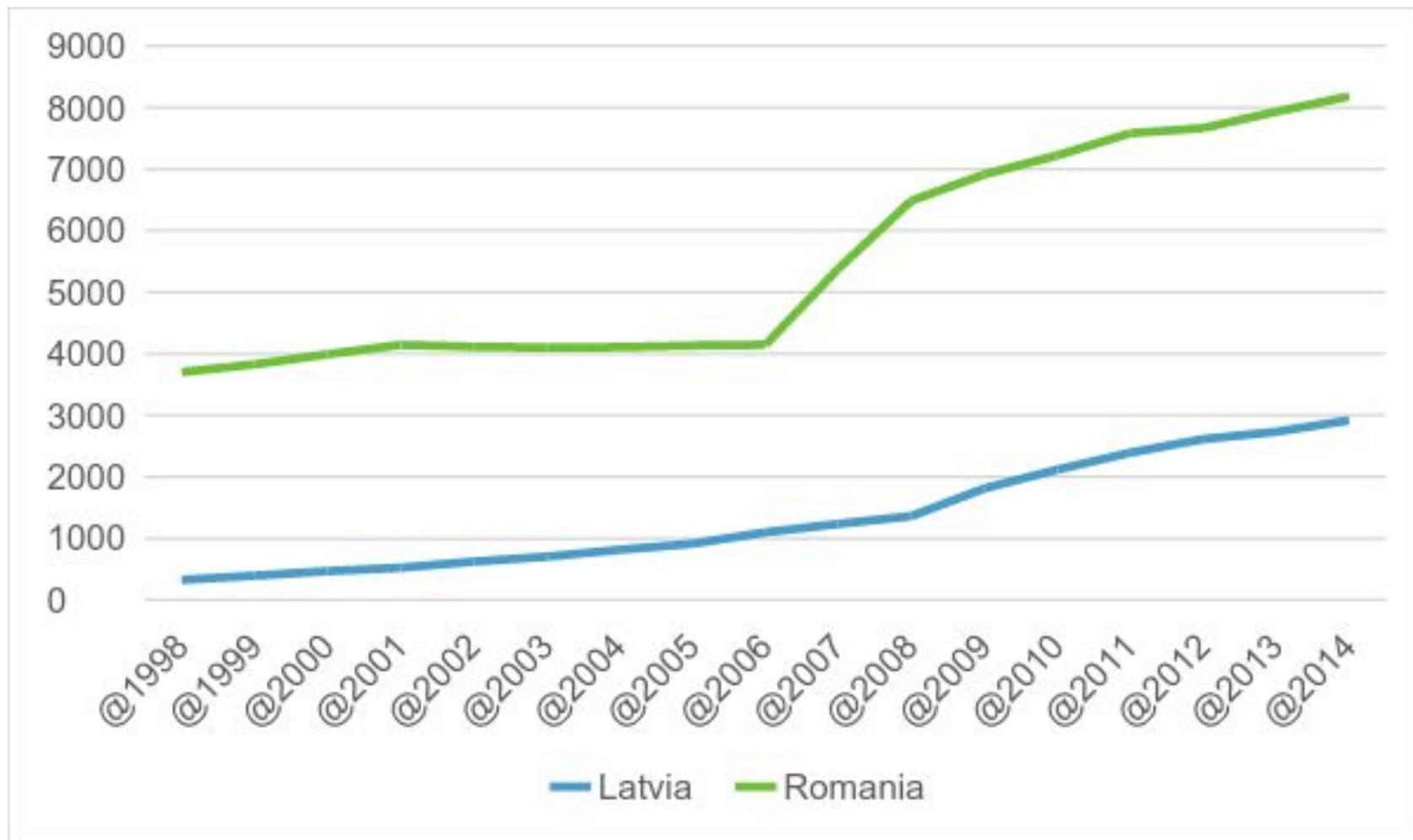
Figure. Immigration from Latvia and Romania to Sweden, 1998-2014, 15-34 years



# Persons born in Latvia/Romania, living in SE



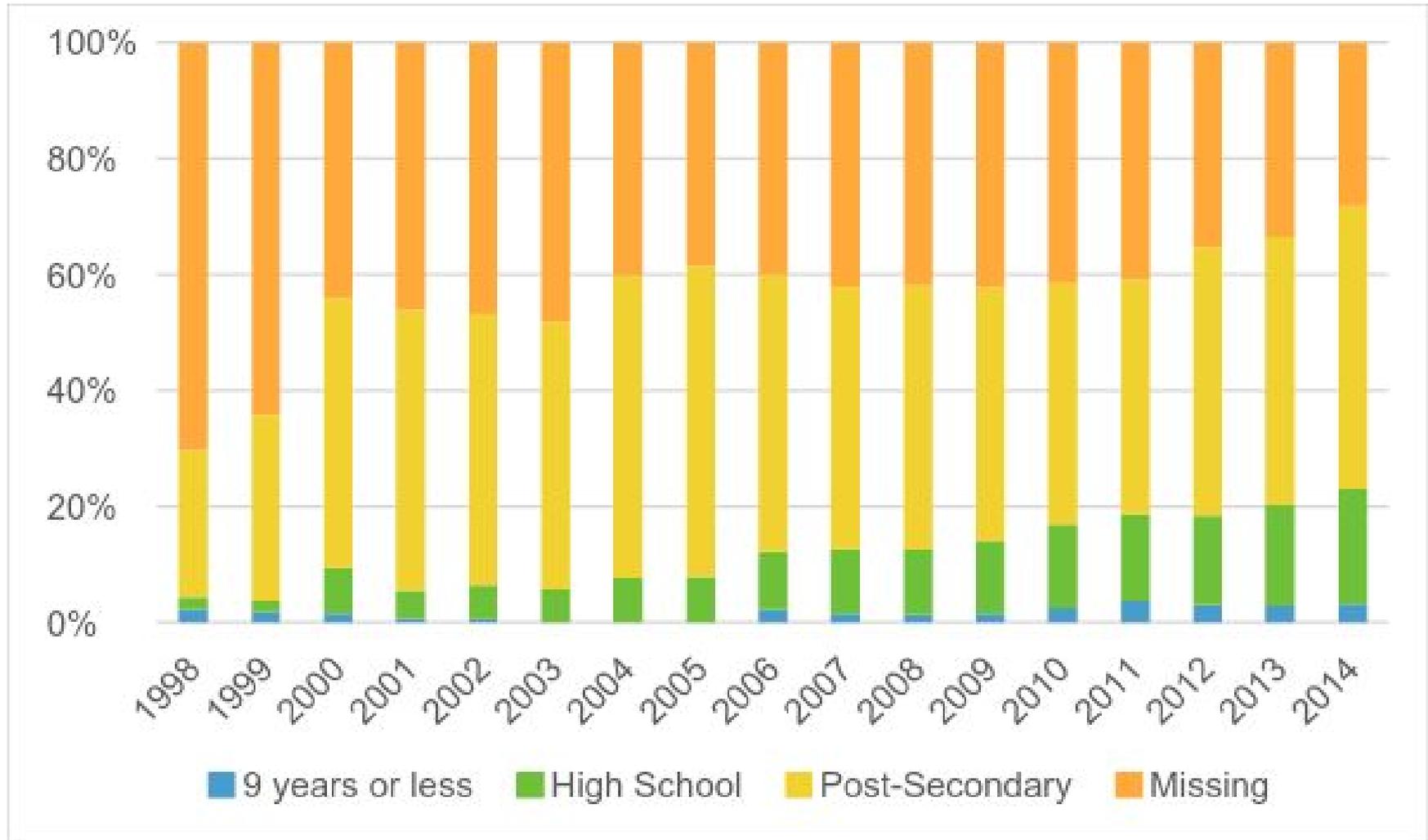
Figure. Persons born in Latvia and Romania, living in Sweden 1998-2014, 15-34 years



# Educational level, 30-34 year olds, from Latvia



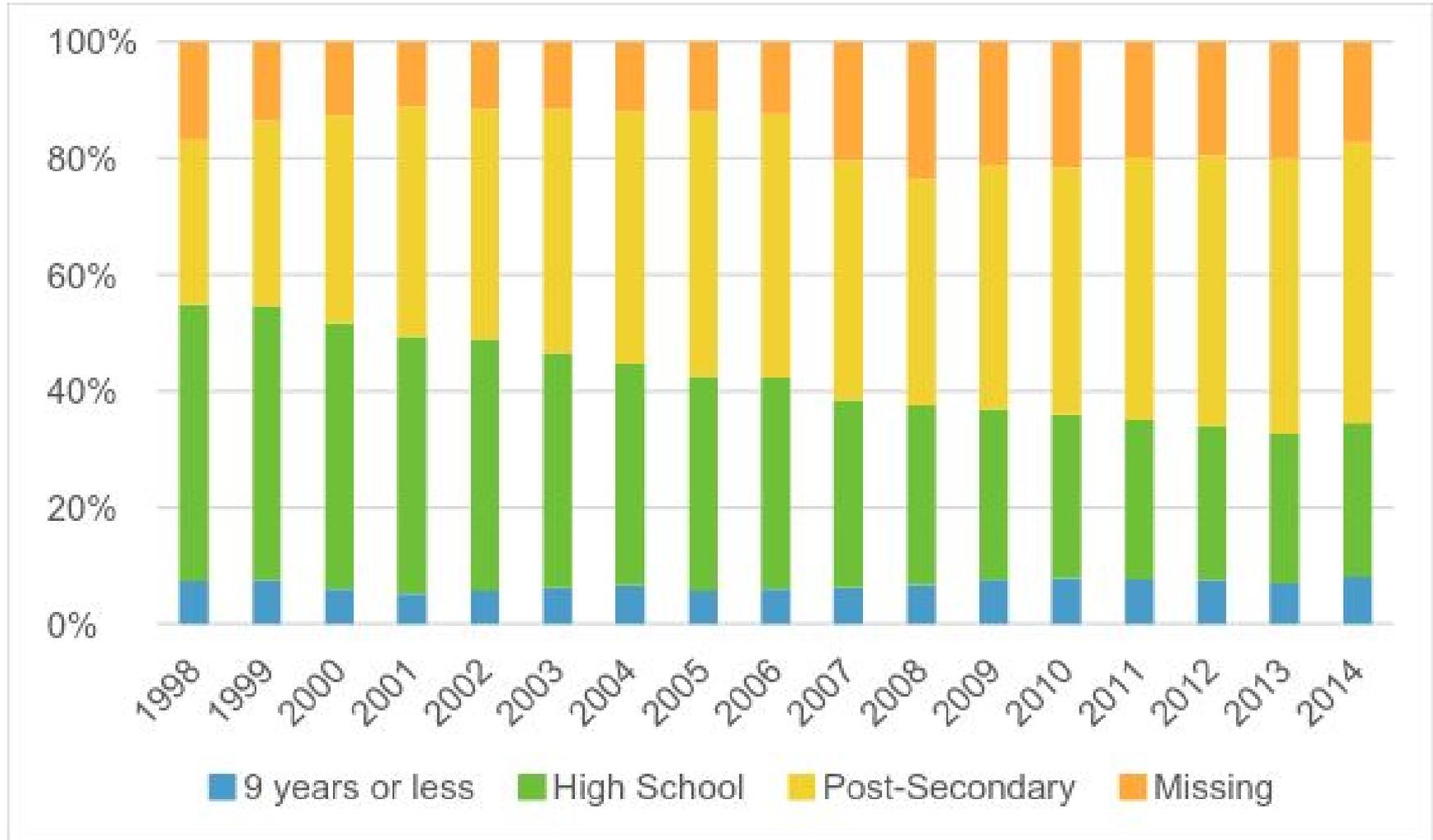
Figure 7. Educational level, 30-34 year olds, from Latvia.



# Educational level, 30-34 year old Romanians



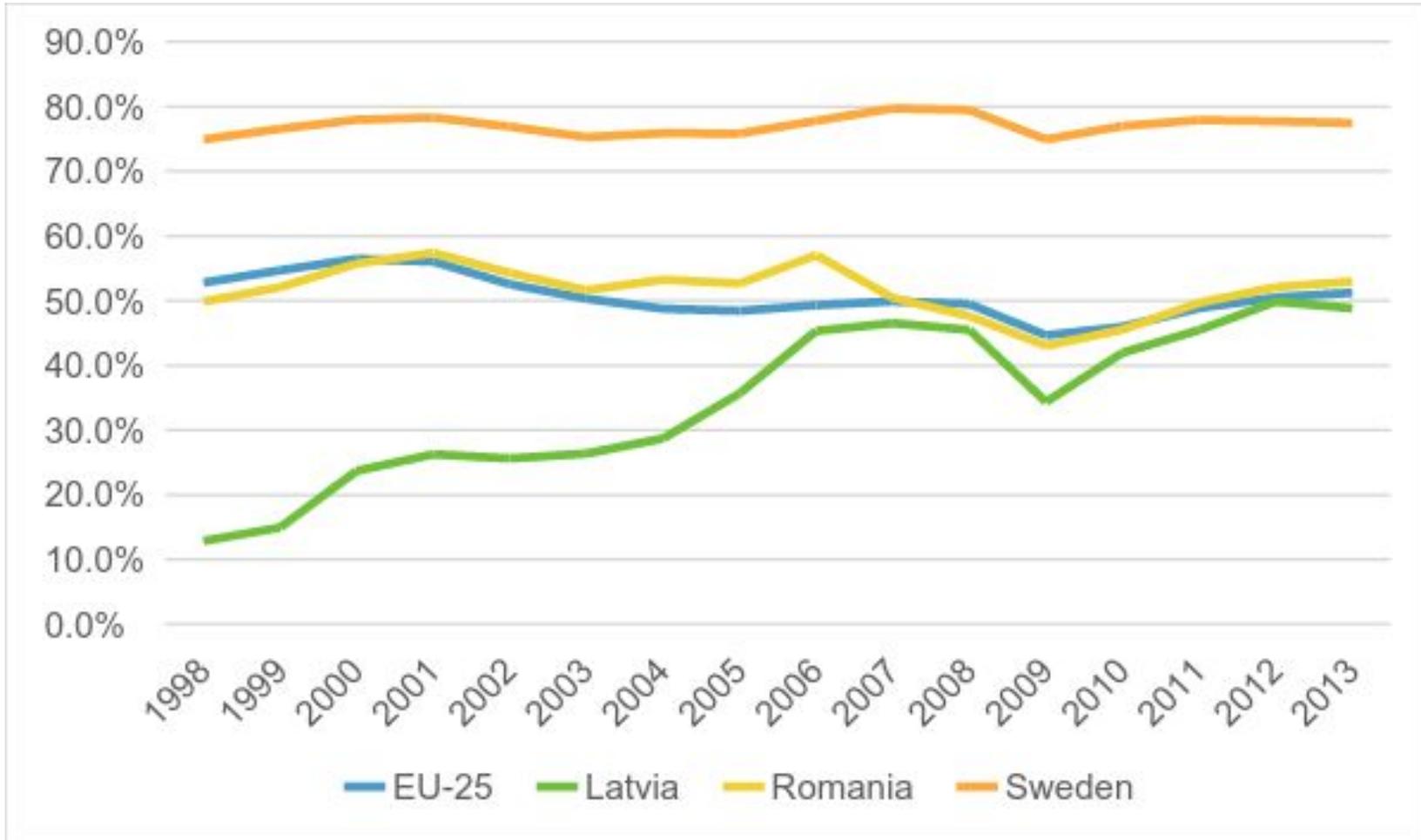
Figure 8. Educational level, 30-34 year olds, from Romania.



# Employment rate, 25-29 year olds



Figure 6. Employment rate, 25-29 year olds, from EU-25, Latvia, Romania and Sweden.



# Why Sweden?



- Free education (university, adult education, Swedish language)
- Romantic relationships
- Cosmopolitan life-style
- English language
- Idealization of Sweden
- Work-life balance

“As for Sweden, I think that I like Sweden generally so I was here before sometimes for a travel and I thought that this is a nice country. **Of course, with the high level of life and of education.** Plus I wanted to have the experience and education from a foreign country. So I was considering a couple of other countries, for example Germany as well, **but then I decided that Sweden is more suitable for me.** And then I looked what kind of programmes the universities in Sweden offered and I liked the programme I’m currently in. It’s a Service Management in Logistics and since it’s connected to what I’ve been doing in my previous job, I thought that this could be a new direction for me to take, from Technical University into kind of business oriented, so I wanted to do a little bit different things.

*Ok, so why do you say that Sweden was more suitable than Germany for example for you?*

I think that I liked Sweden generally, plus that the education system is better and I thought that... **yeah, education is for free.**” (SE\_LV\_F\_S\_33: Latvian, female, studying a Master in Service Management, 26 years old)

“In 2008 it happened that none of us had a boyfriend or a girlfriend, so things changed a little bit. And then we were talking about where we were going with this romance and I decided to come to Sweden in 2008 and then in December I actually did it. I applied for jobs and I knew in **Romania it wasn't a problem getting a job** and usually I was the one jumping from one to another after a year because I wanted something else, like let's have that instead. So if you look at my CV it's a bit like whoa, you know, trying different things. But I must admit, I was quite an optimist when I was moving here. Christoffer was like **“Oh, it will take a year to get a job”** and I said **“Oh, come on!”**. I mean, in Romania I had to beg for a one week vacation from one job to another. So I said maximum 3 months. But anyway, just in case, I thought **“Well, it's a back-up or maybe just doing something fun”**, I said “Let's study something there”. (SE\_RO\_F\_H\_21: Romanian, female, moving to Swedish boyfriend, 34 years old (26 when coming to Sweden))

A large majority socialise and build friendships in an English speaking social environment. Both workplaces where EU-migrants work and the universities are highly international English-speaking environments. There, they quite easily find friends who are in similar life-situations from a broad range of countries. In this way, social life becomes very exciting and giving for a large majority of the respondents.

The international environment is highly appreciated, and most have a quite rich social life. On the other hand, living in those international environments can hinder persons from a broader social inclusion since the incentives to learn Swedish language is limited and there is no immediate need to learn Swedish, neither for working or studying, or for social reasons.

“It’s international. My closest friends for now are more or less Asian I would say. I have a friend from Pakistan, I have a friend from China, Thailand and I have also a friend from US. It’s very hard to find people from Latvia. I’ve never seen no one from Latvia, I just heard that there were people from Latvia. I found some people from Russia, but I wasn’t trying to socialize with them. I wasn’t searching for a specific nationality. I was searching specifically for my type of people and I found them, so for me it wasn’t that important as for nationality.” (SE\_LV\_F\_S\_33)

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, cos if I’m now to say how my social life looks like, it doesn’t have so many Swedish people involved in it. It’s not that they don’t want to, but it’s a matter of mindset. I have Swedish friends, but they are not the friends that I can call at night and tell them that I am sick. So most of my friends come from Mexico, from Greece, from the US, my best friend is from Texas and yeah, mostly Spanish speaking. Eastern-European perhaps, but not so much.” (SE\_RO\_F\_S\_01)

The fact that most Swedes can and want to speak English also adds to the lack of need to learn the Swedish language. The respondents compare to previous visits in, for example, Spain and France where there is a greater need to learn the local language. SE\_LV\_M\_S\_26 came to Sweden to study a Master course in Physics and he reflects on this issue.

“The thing is that Swedes are very good at knowing English and they’re quite happy, like for example, in France there’s just no way I could just exist with English, but people here are a lot more open to that and that’s a very good thing. But also, that makes me... If English is sufficient, I have no motivation of actually learning Swedish, except for feeling disrespectful to the people living here.”

“Ahm, when I was 14, **I fell in love with a Swedish band called Roxette**, maybe you know it [smiles]. Yes. And, this is why I got in this Swedish thing. I started, because I knew that the band members used to be solo artists in Sweden and I got to read more them and get my hands on their solo albums in Swedish, **so this is how I actually started to learn Swedish and get to know more about Sweden**. And at some point when I grew up and I, well, I still didn’t get rid of that Roxette thing [laughs], I must say, but I kind of noticed that the **Swedish kind of mentality really appeals to me** and I kind of, I can identify with it more than what we have in Romania. **So, in a way I feel more Swedish than Romanian, but, yeah, that’s another story.**“

(SE\_RO\_F\_S\_03: Romanian, female, 33 years, ended up studying a Master in International Migration)

“As I told you in the beginning, we saw this as temporary, me being in maternity leave and having a vacation in Sweden instead of being in Bucharest with the baby, but afterwards when the baby came, our first reason for staying here was that we couldn’t manage with the baby back in Romania. It’s coming from day-care system, social system, mentality... I mean in Romania we work like crap, 12-14 hours a day. And that was fine, we were young, we loved our jobs, we really were not bothered by that, but having a child, it changed a lot. I remember my colleagues back there complaining that they see their children during the weekends and so on. So after I gave birth I thought that I don’t want to be a weekend mommy, so how do we do it? We have to stay here. And that was the major reason we stayed and we tried to make It work.” (SE\_RO\_F\_H\_17)

The 2004 EU-expansion did not lead to a large influx of migrants to Sweden. The inflow was mostly from Poland, but on a much smaller scale compared to the UK. For Latvians, the immigration did not pick up until the 2008 financial crisis. After the 2007 EU-expansion, we found a completely different pattern for Romanians who increased their youth mobility to Sweden with over 500 percent from 2007 to 2008.

Youth migration to Sweden differs a lot from what we have experienced in other countries. Many are highly skilled. Short-term economic motives are not the main reasons for migration. Employment rates are quite low. However, those employed have similar incomes as natives. Also, EU-migrants do not occupy specific segments of the labour market but competes with natives.

## STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSION AND STAYING –

Some young Latvians and Romanians work in English speaking high skilled jobs. For the rest, who have an ambition to stay in the country, they need to invest in country specific human capital to enter the labour market.

A large majority of our informants like to stay in the country despite precarious economic situations. They study at universities, adult education and language training



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**Thank you!**

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