Opportunities and Risks for Western Balkans

Bank of Albania Annual Conference

Tirana, November 2017

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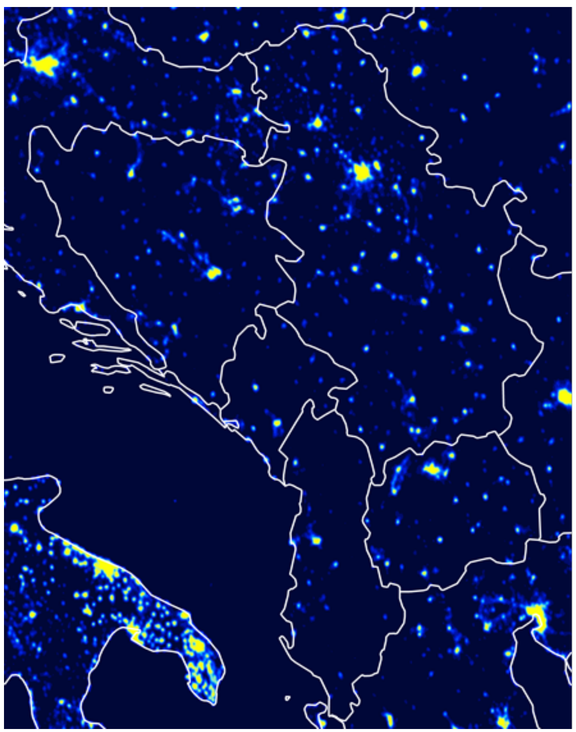
for Central and Eastern Europe

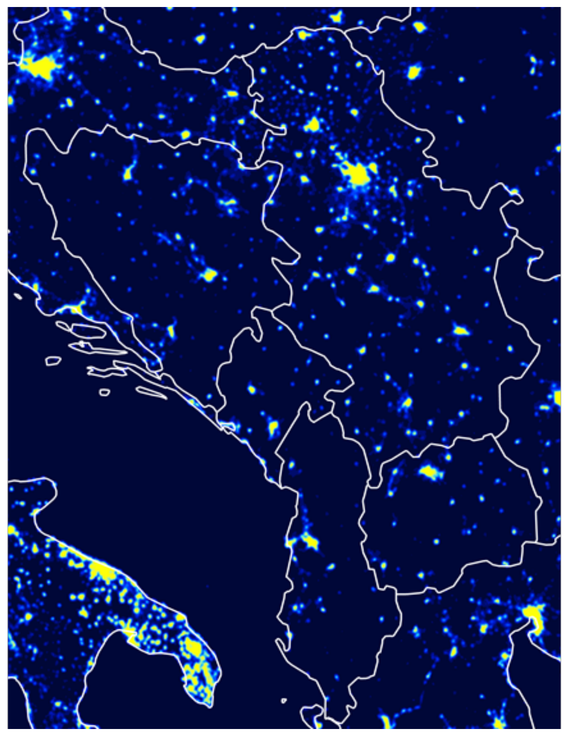
Life in Western Balkans has become brighter

Nightlights intensity

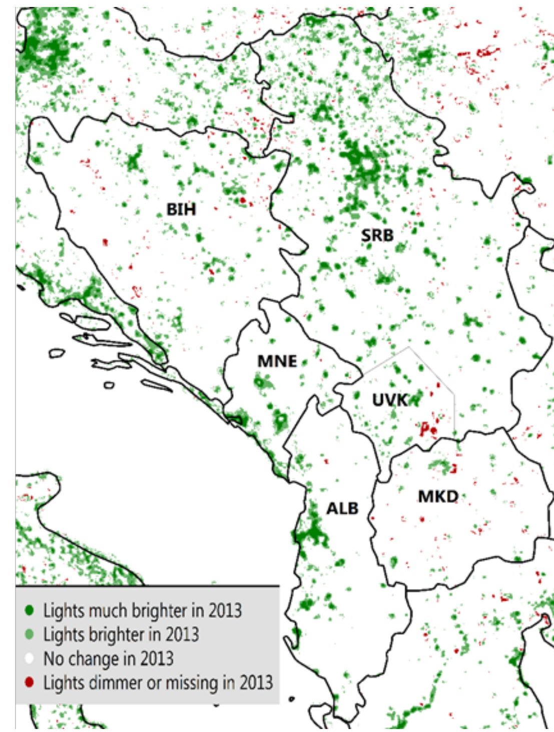
2002



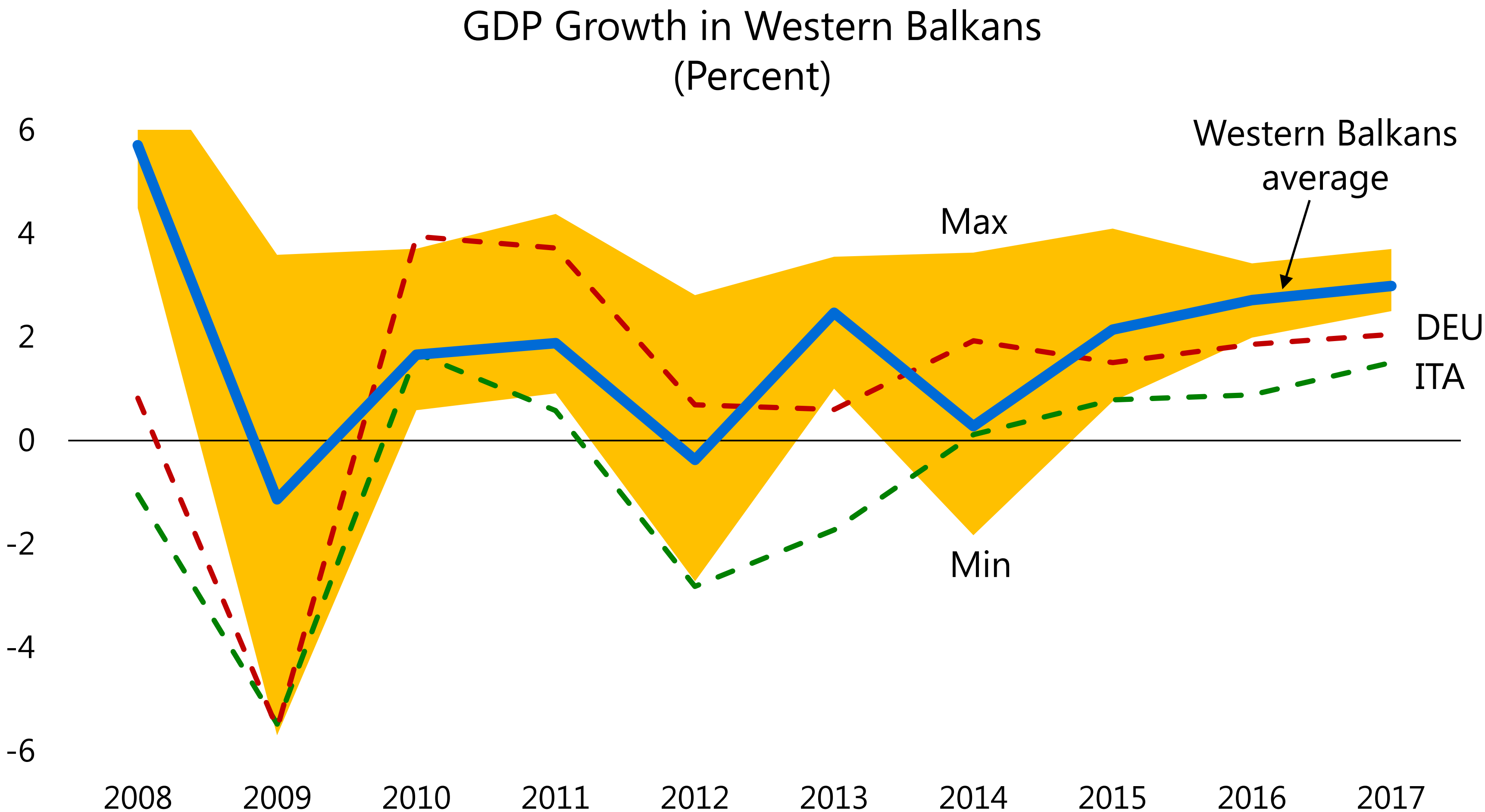
2013



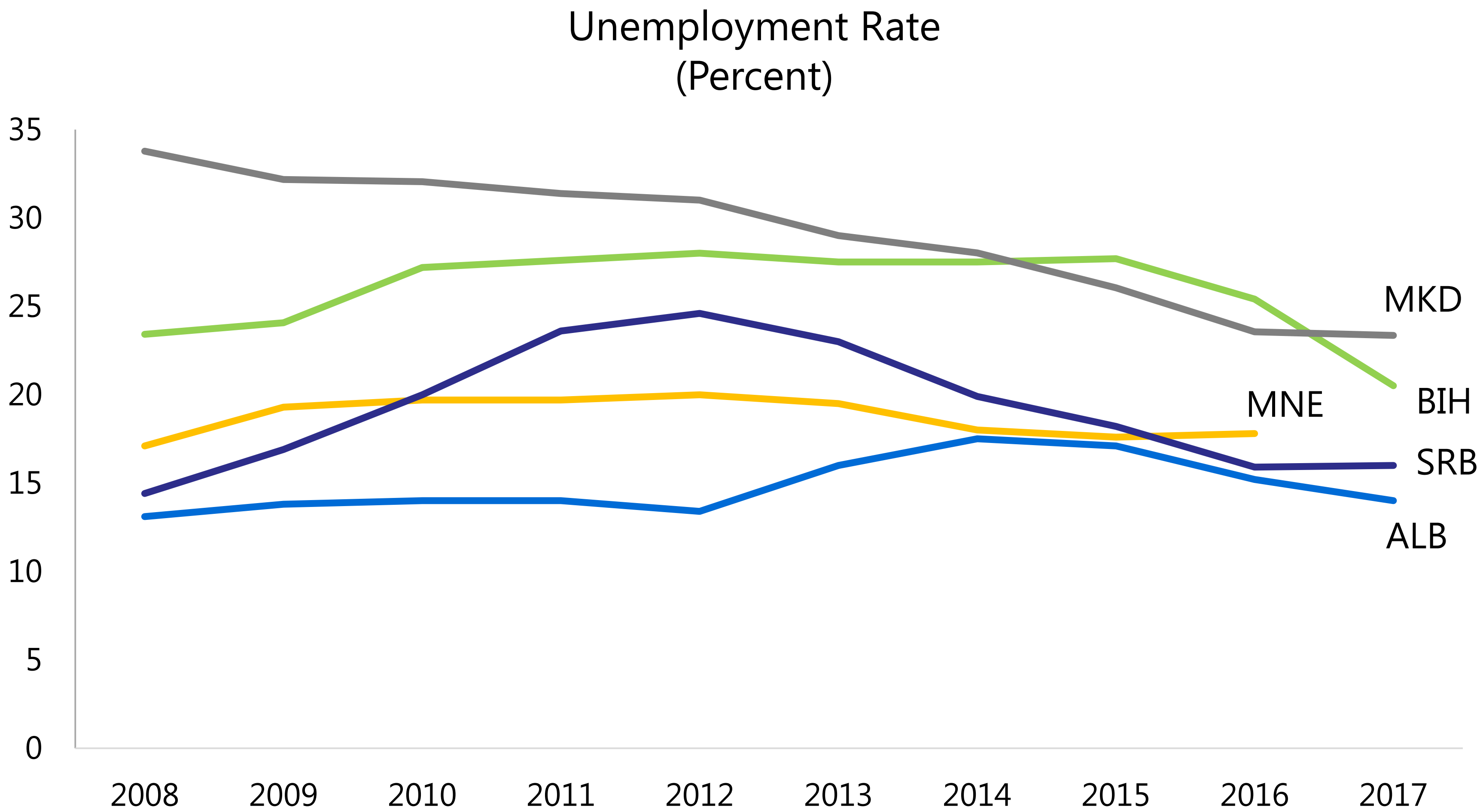
Change 2002-2013



After recessions in 2009 and 2012, the region is growing again, supported by activity in main trading partners

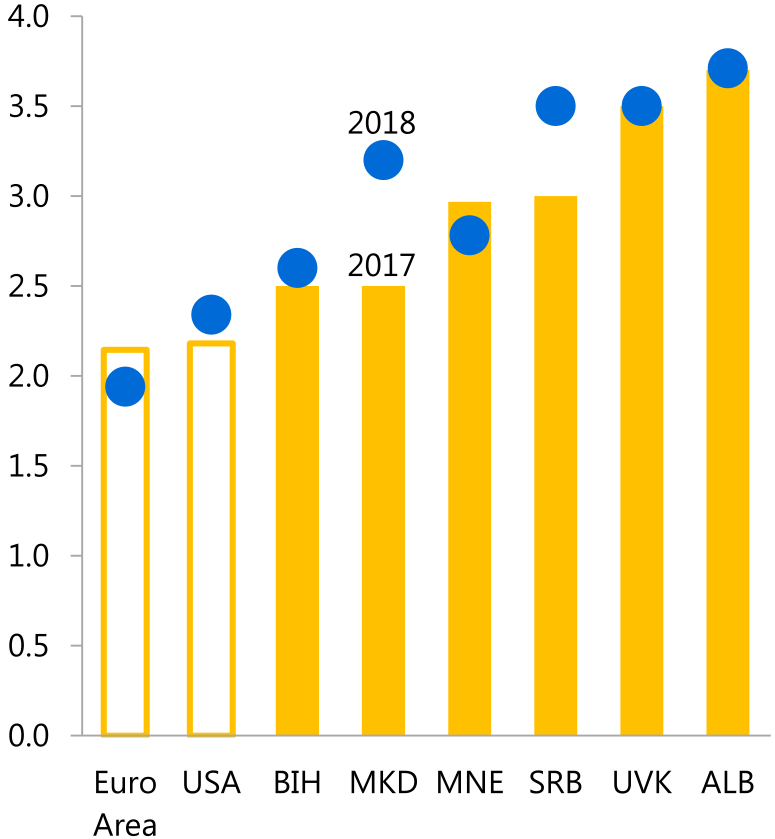


And unemployment is finally coming down—although it remains too high

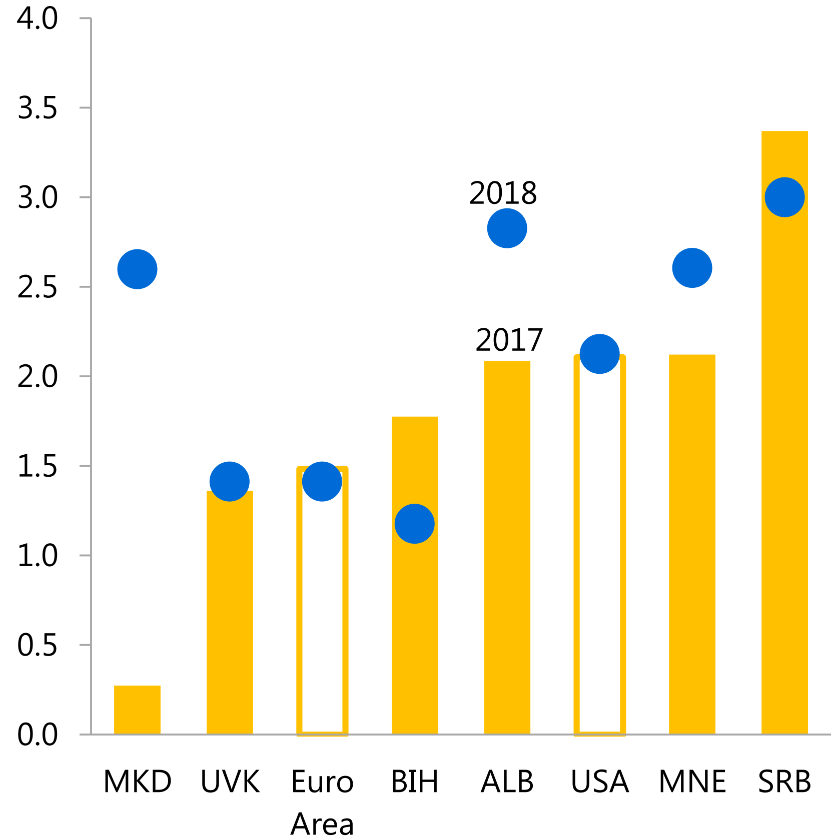


Immediate outlook is good

Real GDP growth
(Percent)



CPI Inflation
(Percent)



What are the remaining challenges and vulnerabilities?

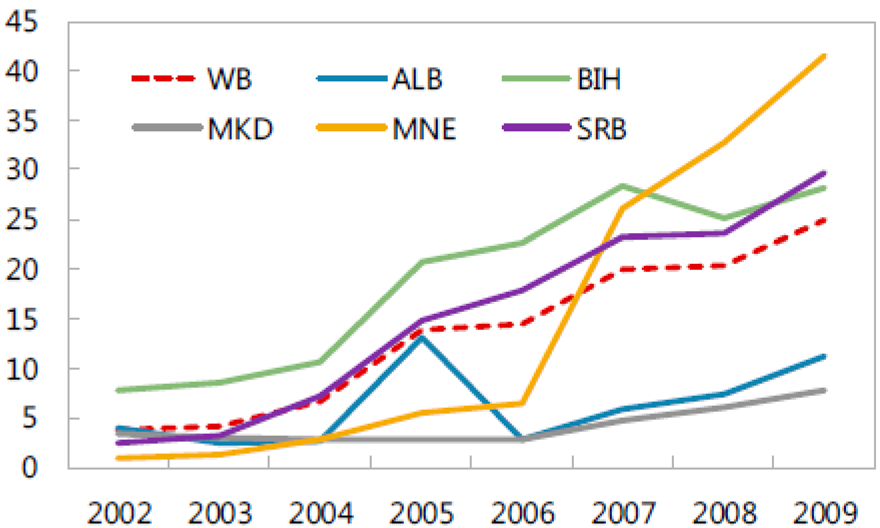
- Address overhang of the 2009-12 crisis, including in
  - The banking system
  - The public finances
- Complete transition
- Speed up convergence

The Banking System

(This is discussed in depth in upcoming REO)

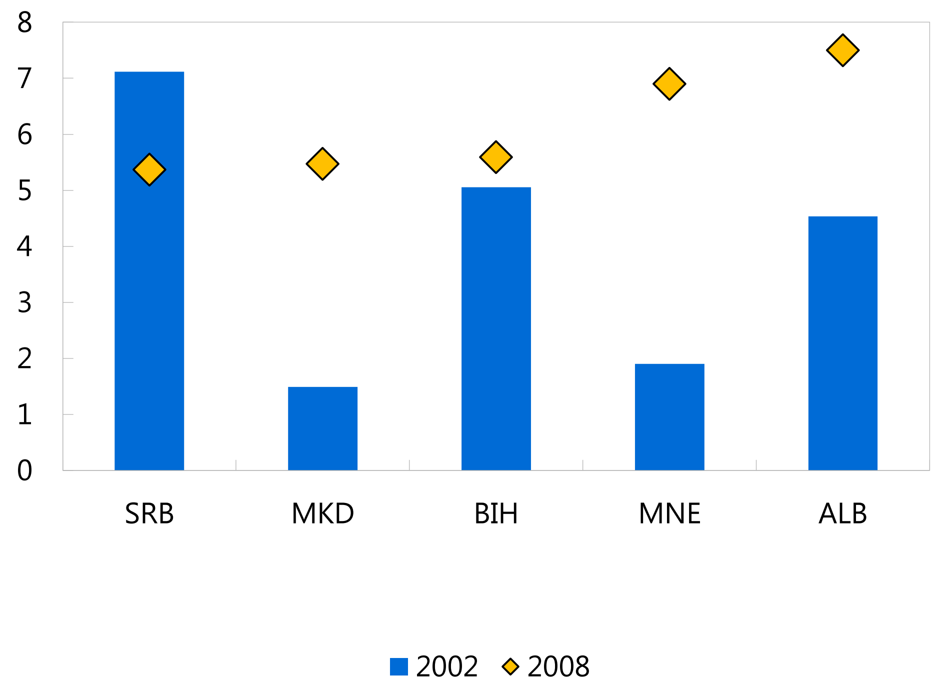
In run up to global financial crisis large inflows of foreign bank funding fueled and financed a credit boom.

Foreign Banks' Funding to all Sectors, to Peak (Foreign bank funding per GDP)



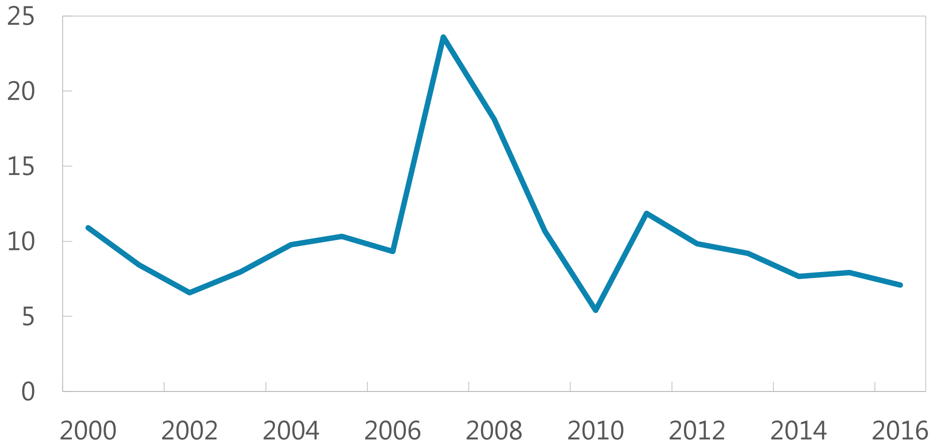
Sources: BIS, IFS, and IMF staff estimates.

GDP Growth
(Percent)



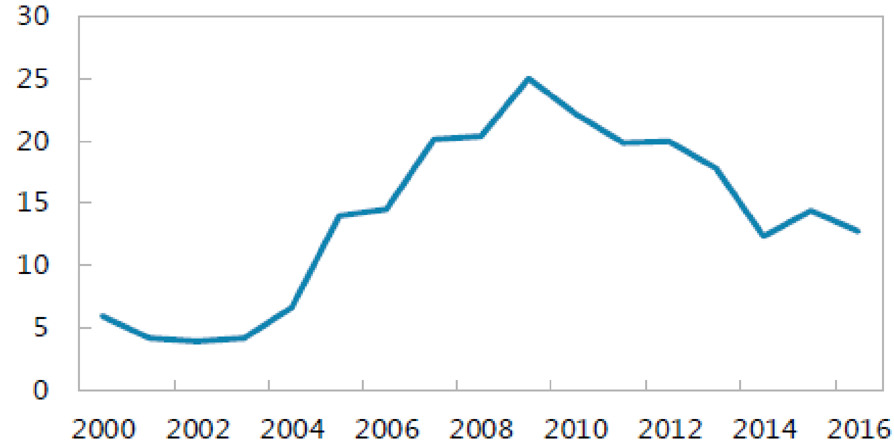
Bank funding dropped in the global crisis

Capital Inflows to Western Balkans 1/
(Percent of GDP)



1/ Does not include Kosovo; includes Serbia and Montenegro from 2007.

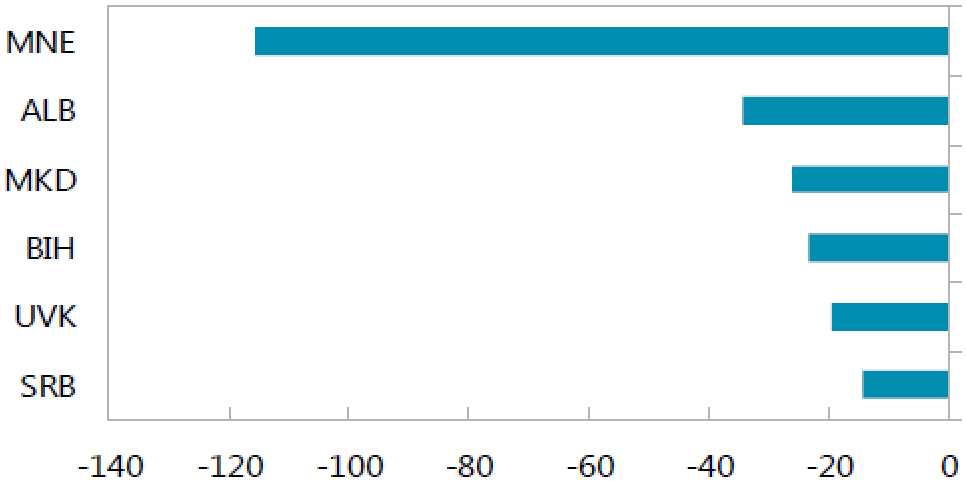
External Bank Claims on Western Balkans 1/ (Percent of GDP, all sectors)



1/ Does not include Kosovo. 2016 uses GDP projections.
Sources: BIS, IMF IFS, and IMF staff estimates.

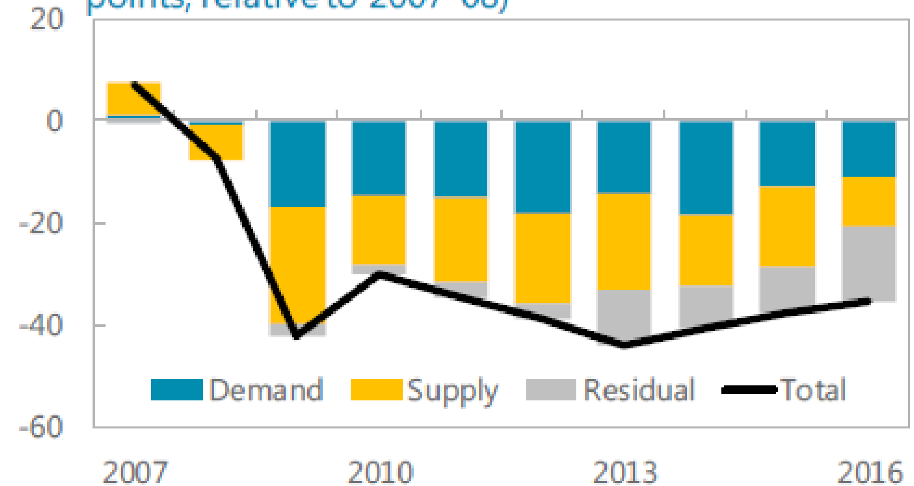
The result was a sharp drop in credit growth, in large part supply driven

Decline in Real Credit Growth to the Domestic Private Sector, 2007-08 to 2010-11 (pps, SA smoothed growth rate against average of previous 12 months[1])



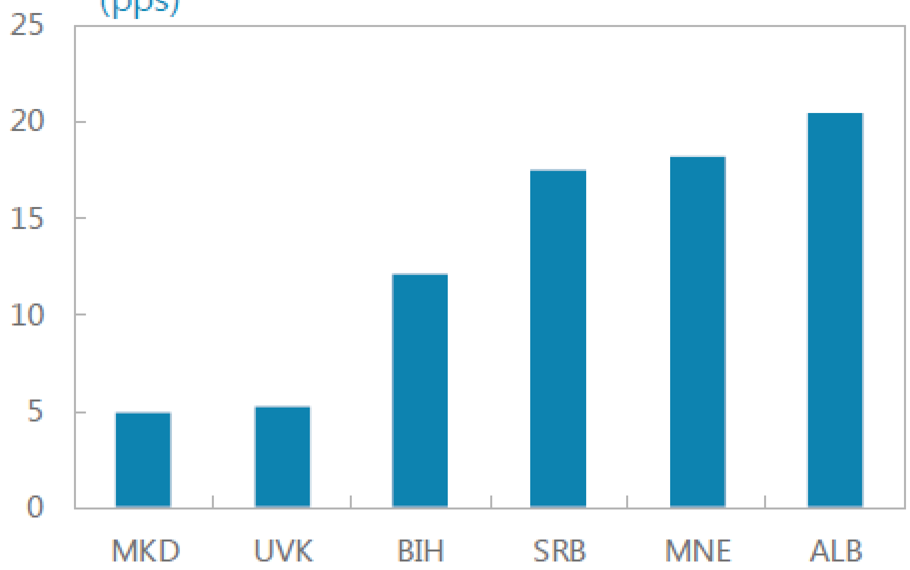
1/ Smoothed growth rates measure the growth against previous 12 months average.
Sources: HAVER, IMF IFS, and IMF staff calculations.

WB EU-Owned Banks: Demand vs. Supply Determinants of Credit Growth (Percentage points, relative to 2007-08)



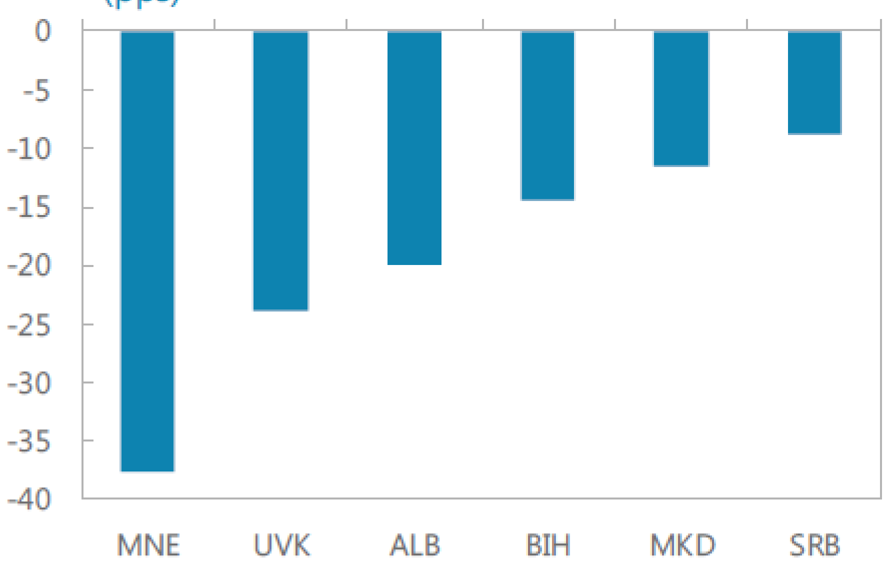
NPLs rose and profits plunged

NPLs: Trough-to-Peak Change
(pps)



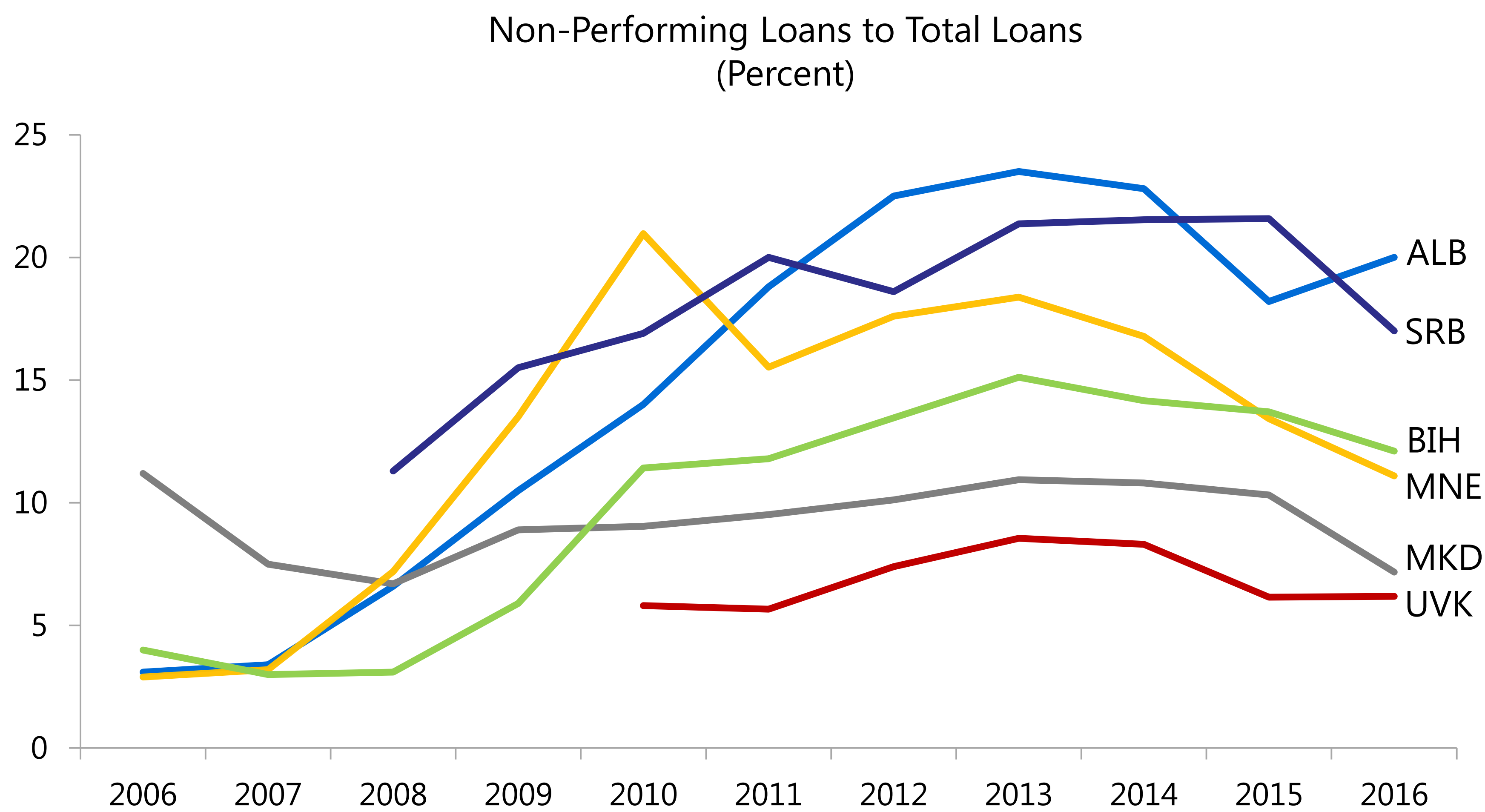
Sources: Country Authorities, IMF FSI, and IMF staff estimates.

ROE: 2007-to-Trough Change
(pps)



Sources: Country Authorities and IMF staff estimates.

NPLs have come down, but remain high

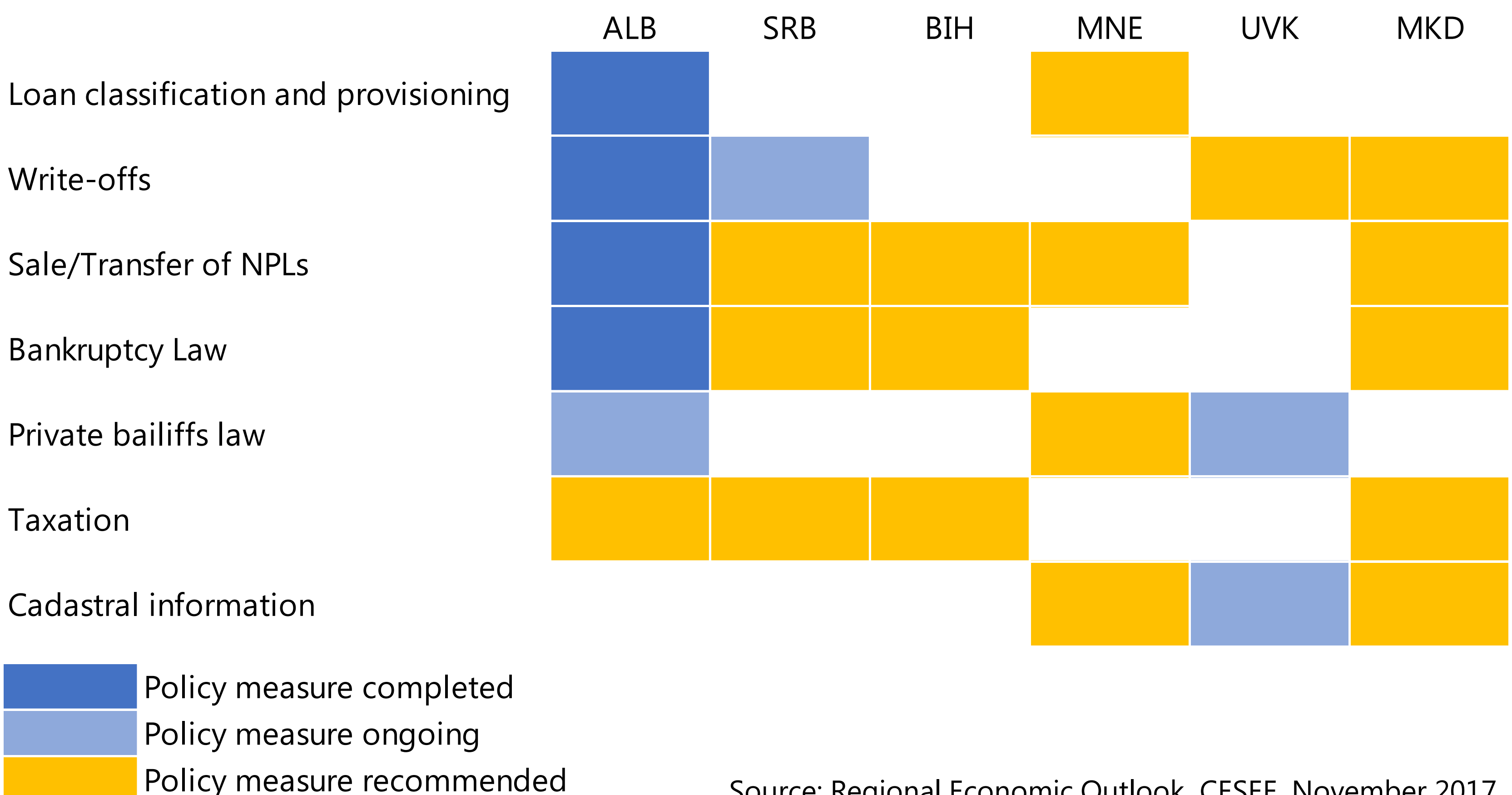


Banking sector challenges

- Banks need to address NPLs
- Banks need to manage deleveraging and expand funding sources
- Address non-bank obstacles to credit

Dealing with NPLs require multipronged approach

Summary of Key Policy Actions and Recommendations Fostering Bank Balance Sheet Repair



Source: Regional Economic Outlook, CESEE, November 2017

Banks need to manage deleveraging and expand funding sources

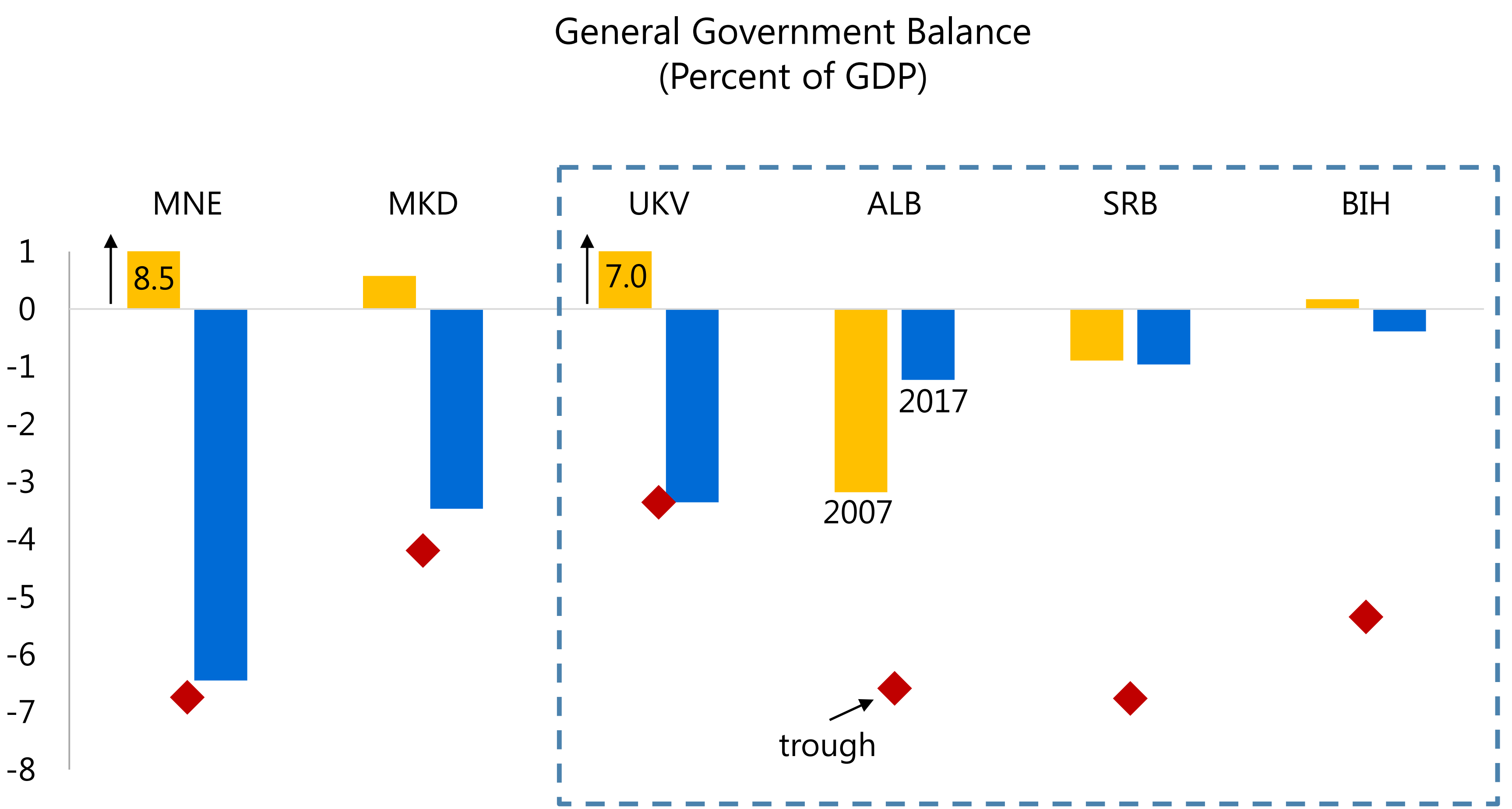
- Deleveraging:
  - Monitor banks; ensure that bank maintain contingency plans
  - Remain in close communication with parent banks and home supervisors
- New funding:
  - Tackling overbanking to attracting fresh foreign capital
  - Develop local capital markets

Governments need to address non-bank obstacles to credit

- Improve land and property titling
- Accelerate slow court procedures
- Upgrade insolvency frameworks:
  - Personal bankruptcy
  - Limit power of minority holdouts in corporate restructuring

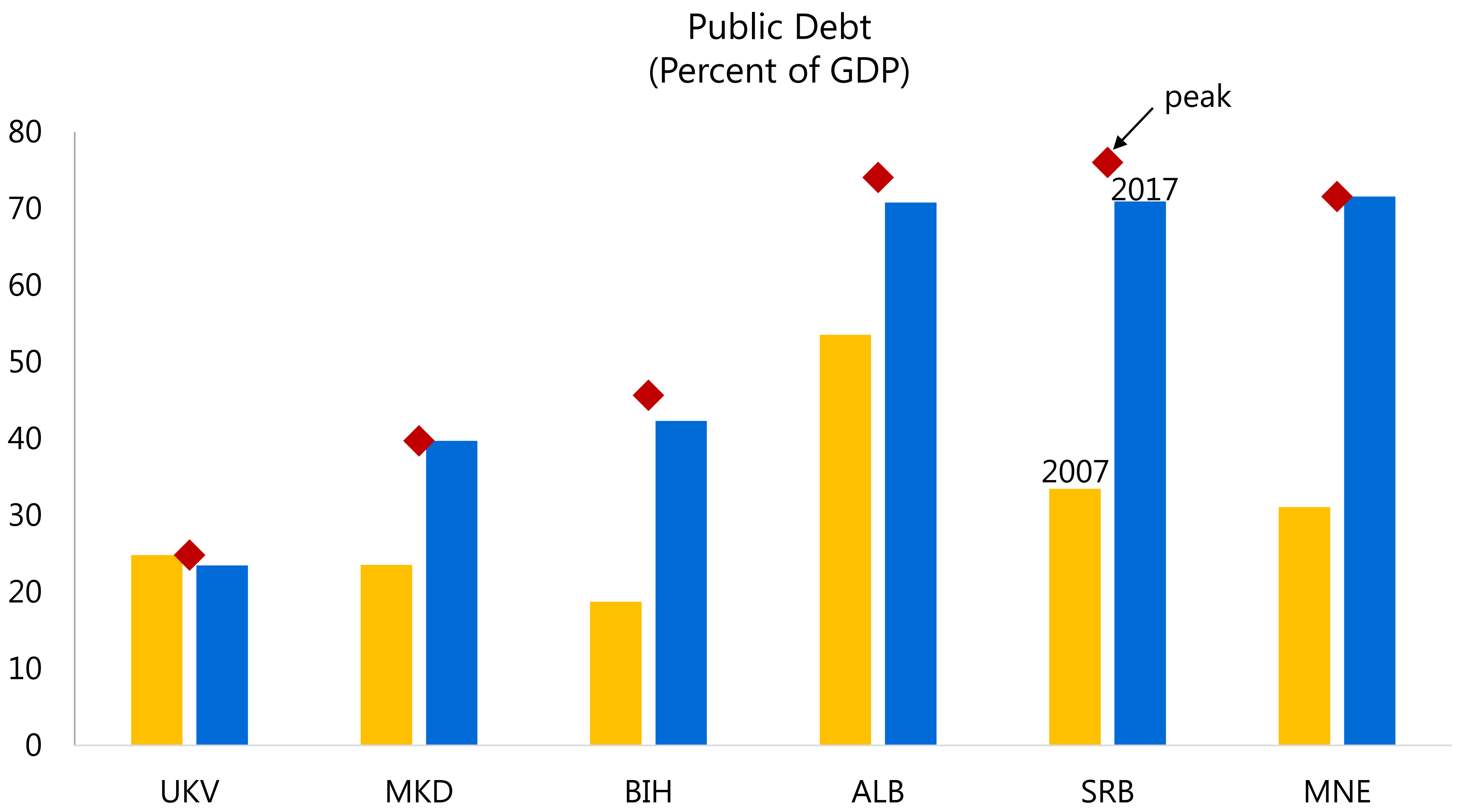
Public finances

Fiscal deficits have come down, particularly in countries with IMF Programs

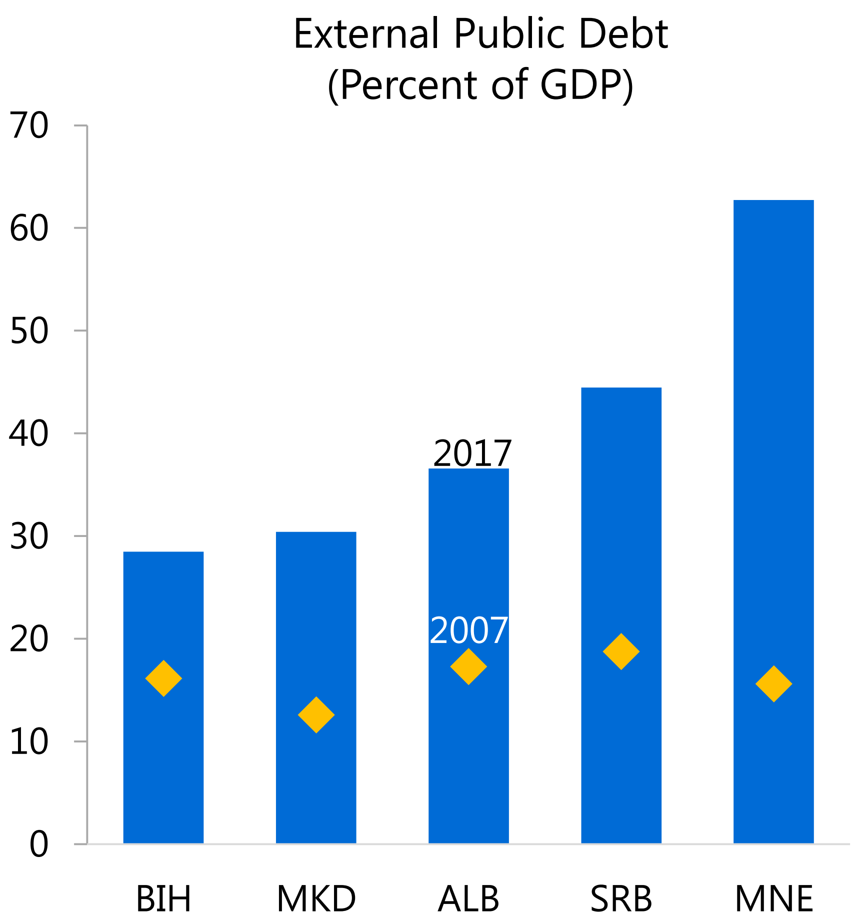


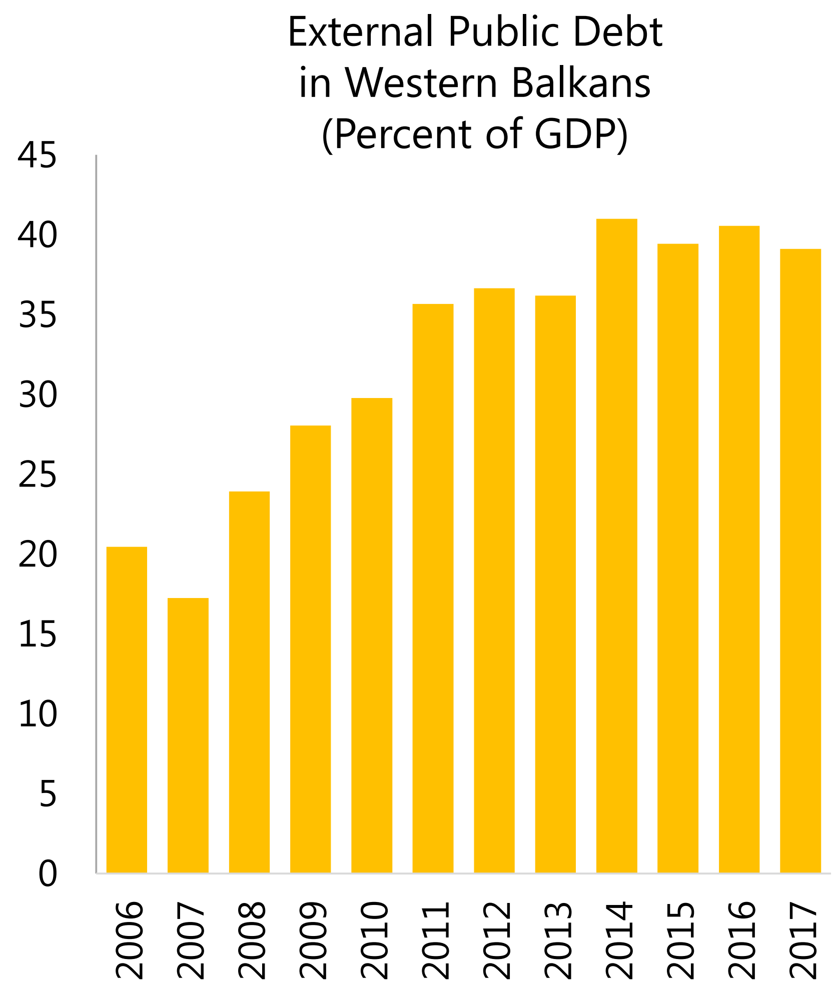
Countries with ongoing or recently completed IMF programs

However, public debt is far above pre-crisis levels



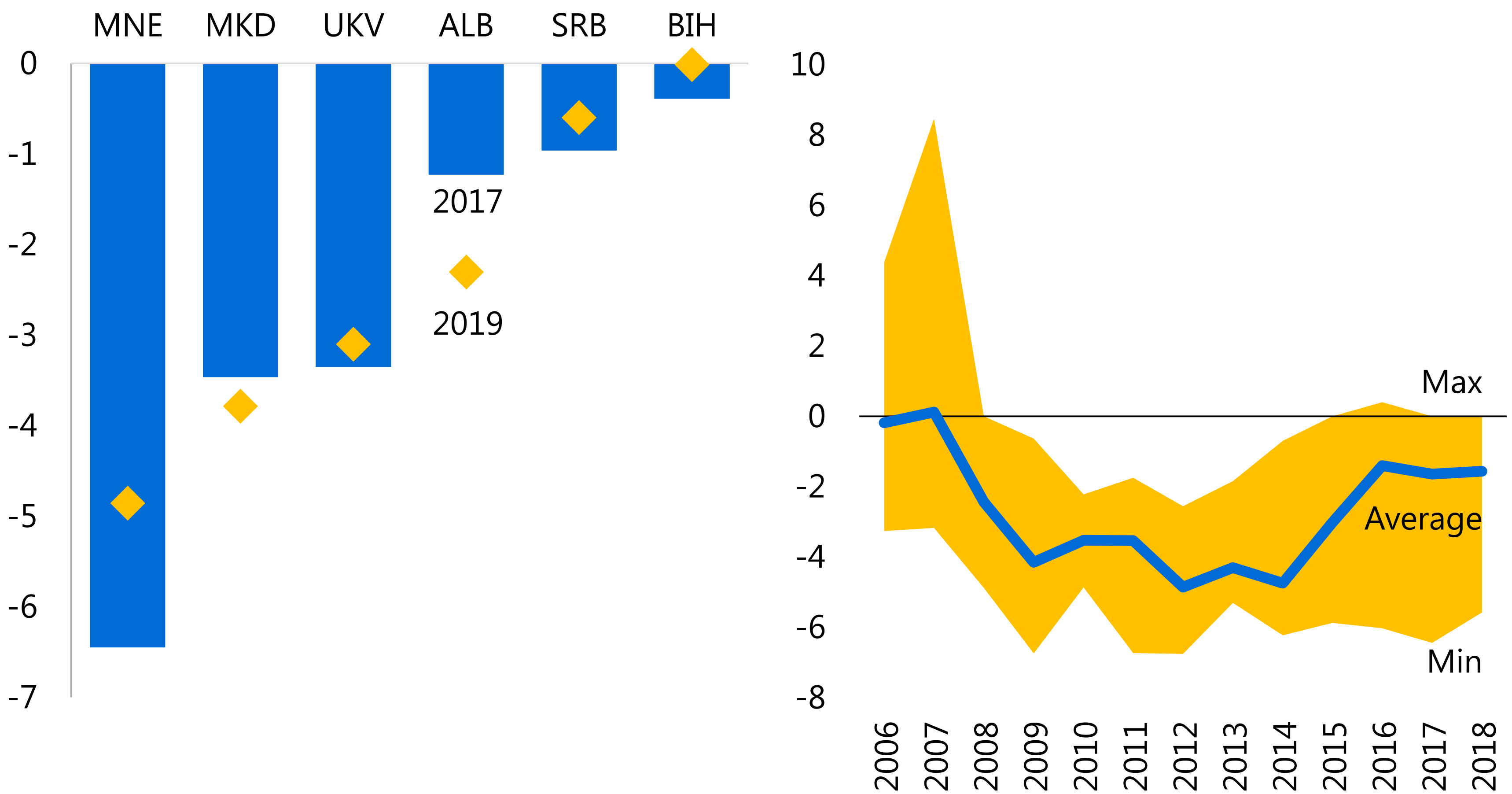
Much of which is financed externally





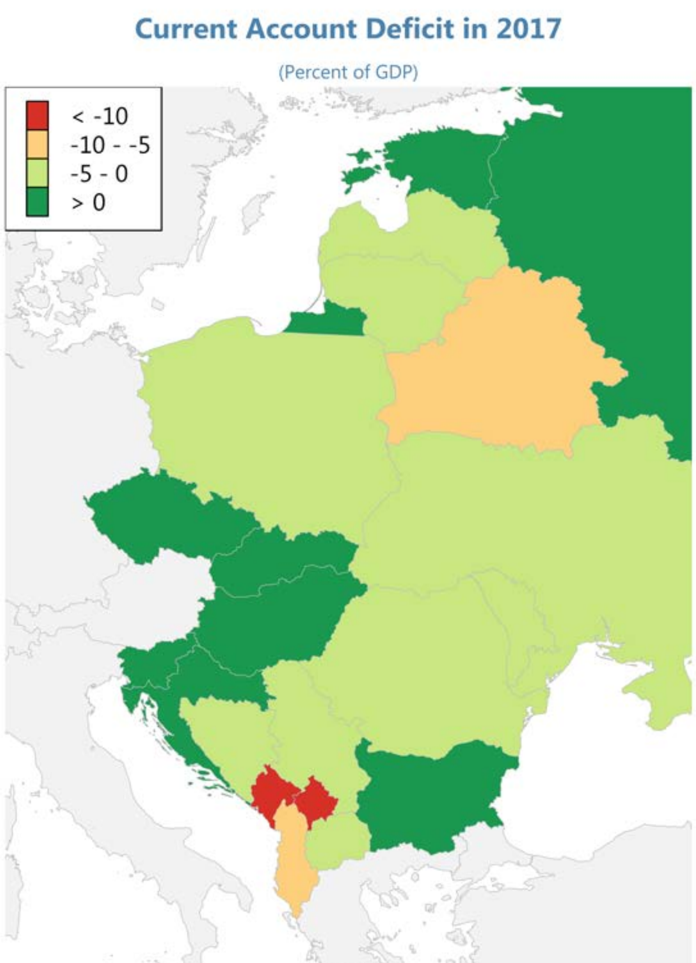
Unfortunately, little further consolidation is planned

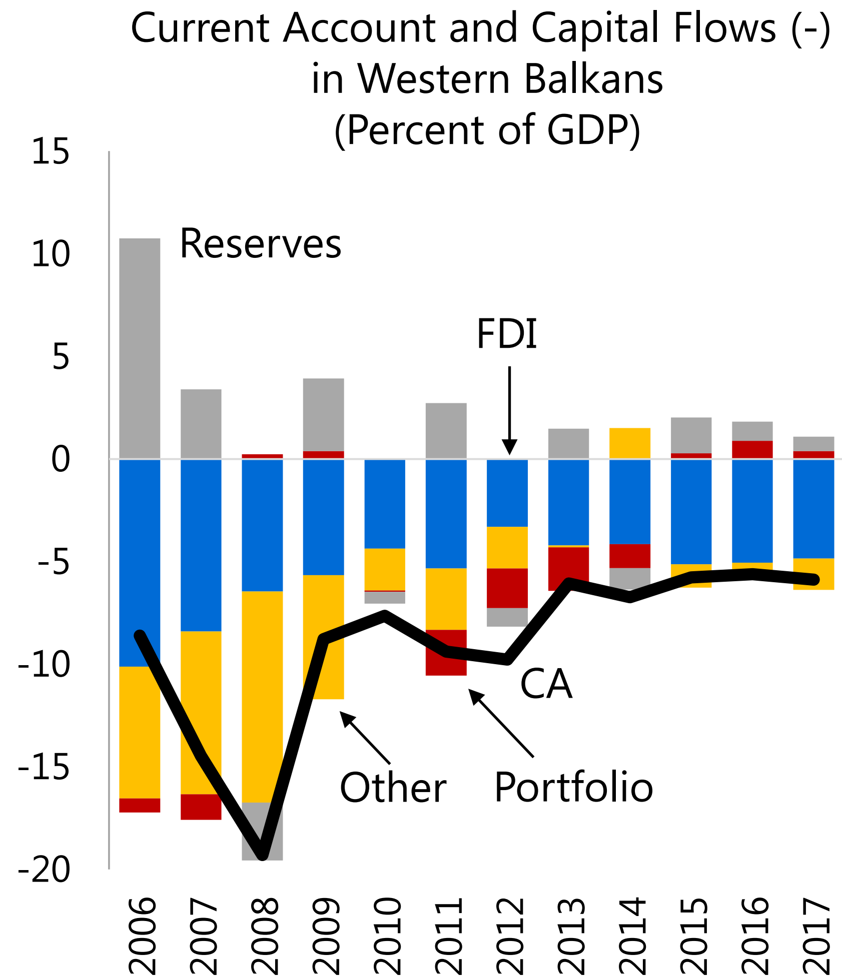
GG Balance in Western Balkans
(Percent of GDP)



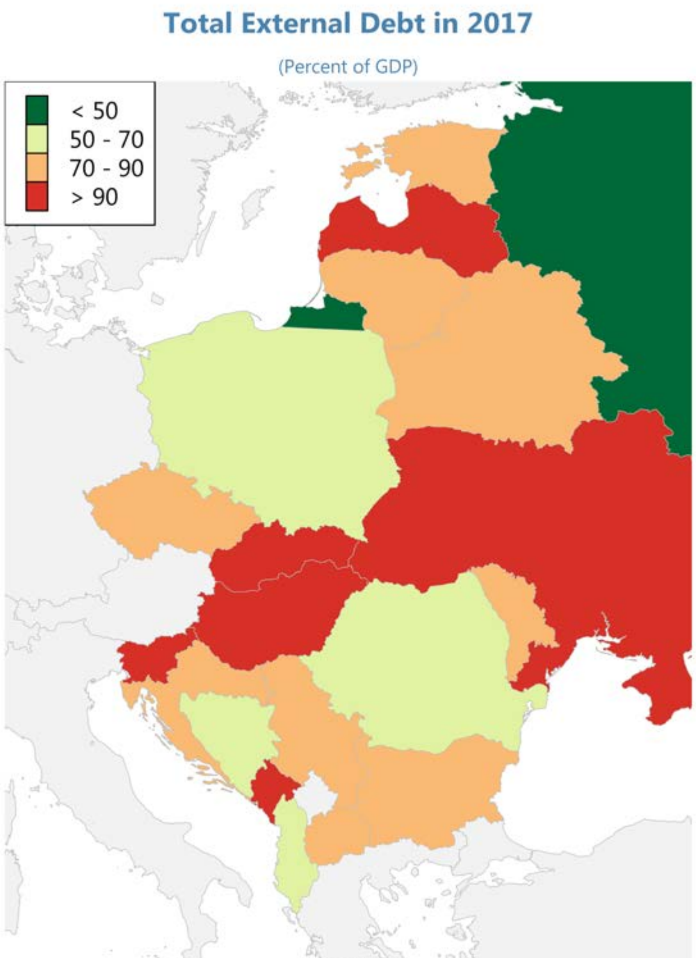
External vulnerabilities

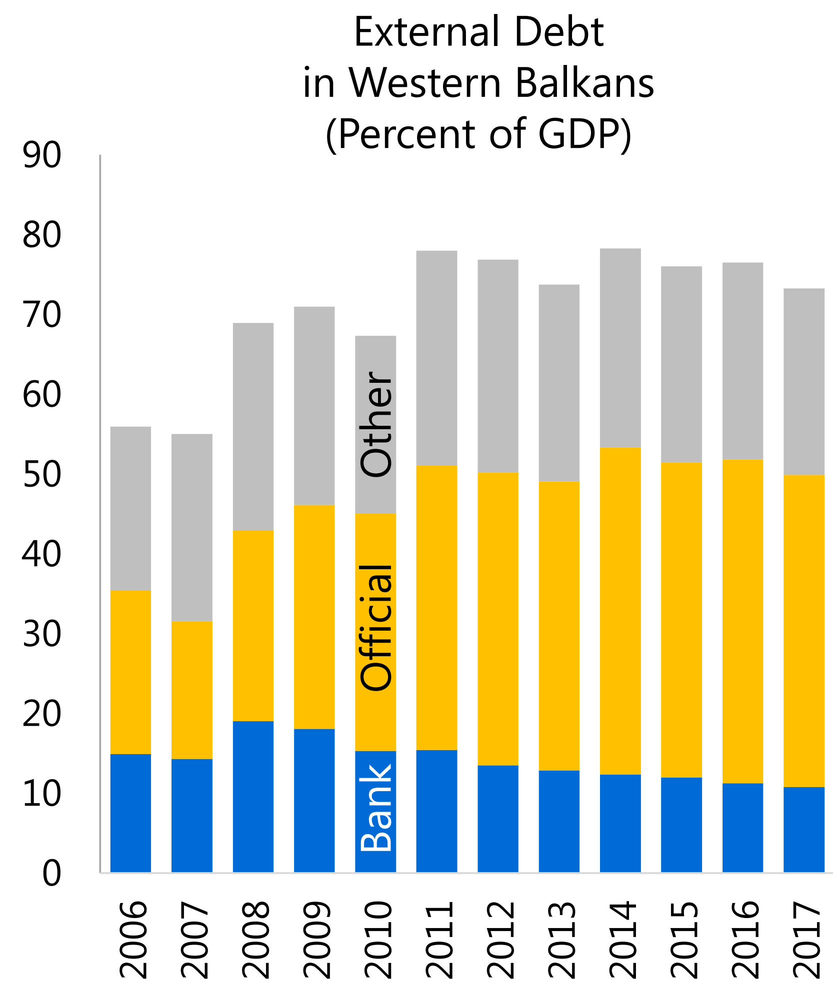
Current account deficits have come down and are now almost fully financed by FDI





External debt remains relatively high as lower bank funding has been offset by higher public debt

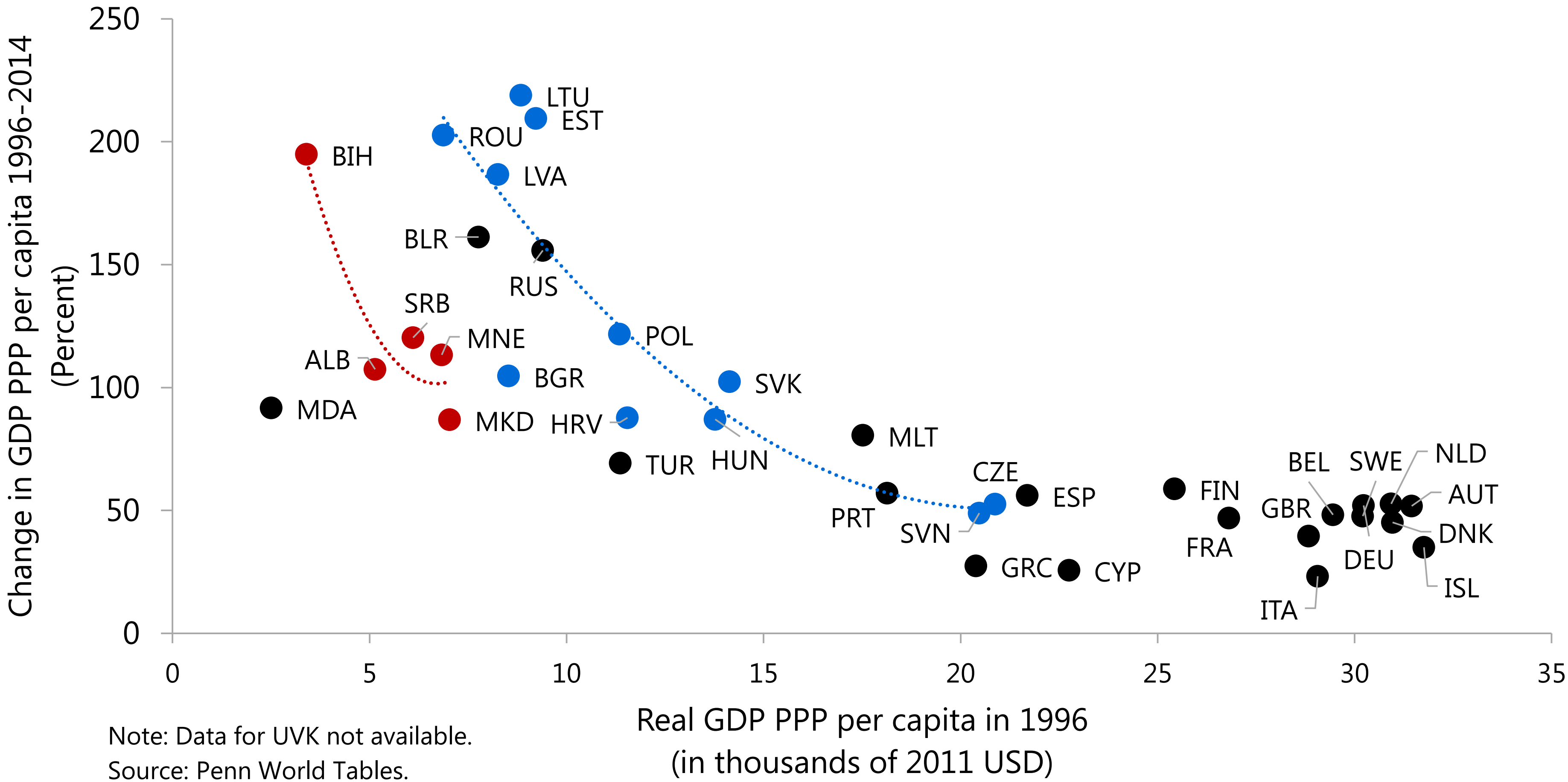




Completing transition

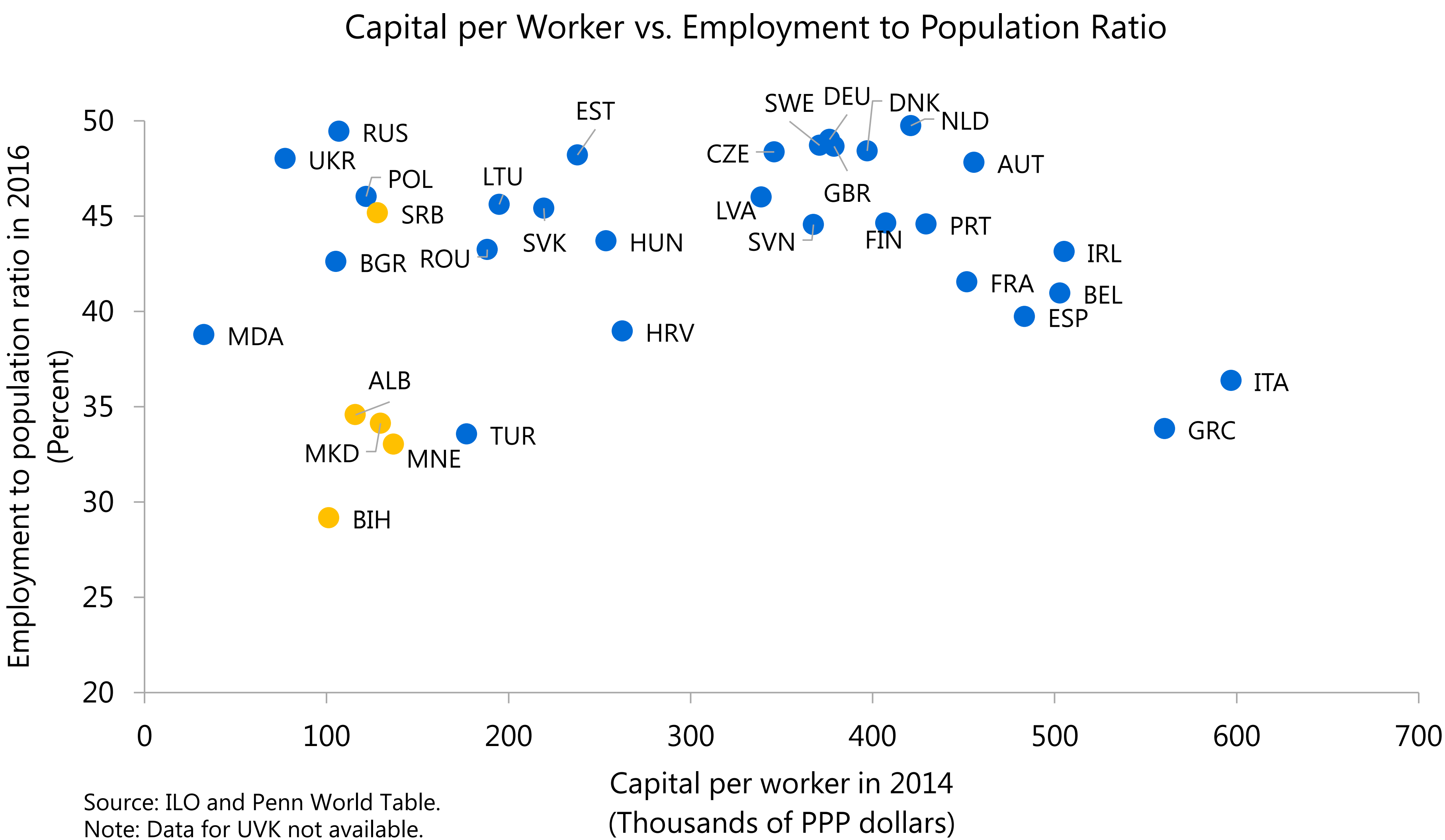
In past two decades Western Balkans have not done as well as the NMS: at similar income levels they have grown less

GDP PPP per capita in 1996 vs. its change in 1996-14



Note: Data for UVK not available.
Source: Penn World Tables.

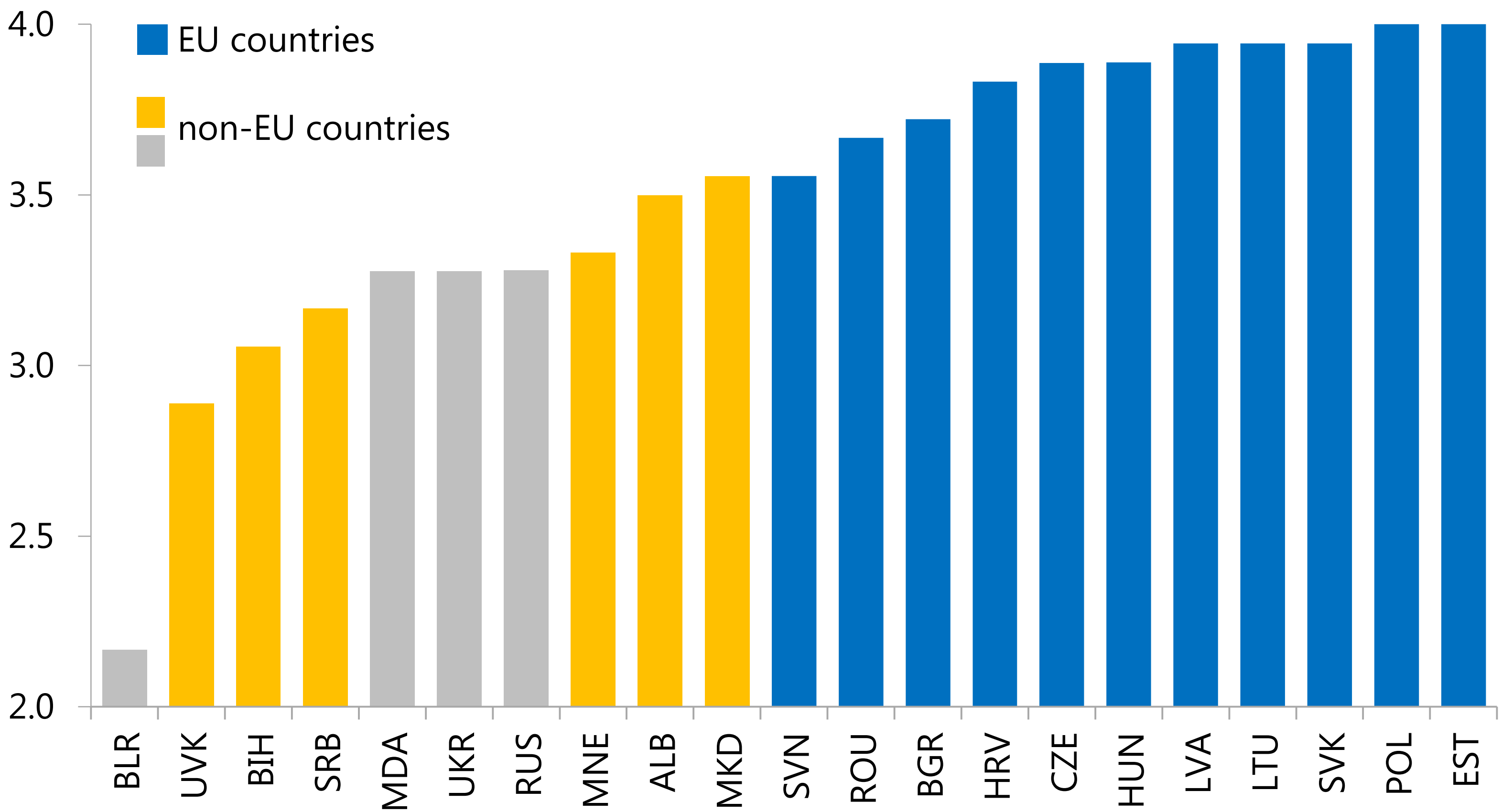
Western Balkans are poor because relatively few people work and capital stock per worker is low (TFP is low as well)



Source: ILO and Penn World Table.
Note: Data for UVK not available.

EU accession process should lead to improved institutions / completion of transition

Average of Six EBRD Transition Indicators in 2014



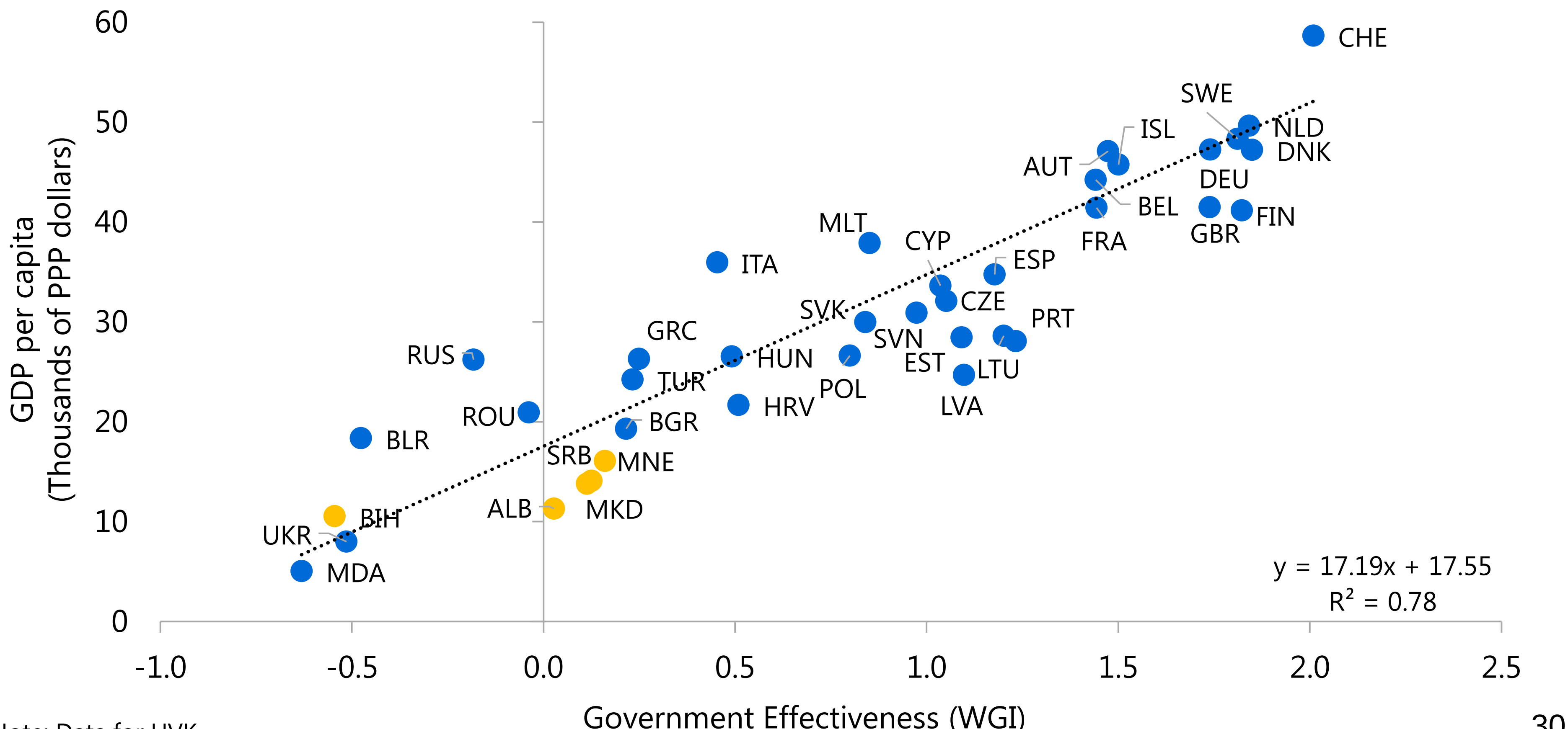
Note: 2007 for Czech Republic.

Better policies would help, whether or not WB become EU members

- What can be done to boost investment and create jobs so people stay?
- Improve investment climate
  - Better protection of property rights
  - Improve legal systems and other government services
  - Address infrastructural gaps
- Address efficiency gaps in public investments and tax collection

Boosting government effectiveness would also help

Government Effectiveness vs. GDP per capita in PPP dollars, 2015



Note: Data for UVK not available.

Thank you