

# THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TOWARDS THE WESTERN BALKANS AND THE RULE OF LAW AS A TOOL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

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The enlargement of the European Union (EU) towards the Western Balkans contains challenges. Although the EU's goal is its enlargement, some EU countries present skepticism. The Western Balkans have not yet reached the appropriate stage of economic development. The rule of law has been among the main barriers that have hindered their EU integration advancement. This paper is based on the work of Osmani et al. (2022a), Leka et al. (2022), and Qorraj and Jusufi (2018). The aim and objective of this paper are to analyze the enlargement policy of the EU towards the countries of the Western Balkans, focusing on Kosovo. Historical research methods were used to collect facts and chronological data. The main finding of this paper is that the rule of law is the main factor that positively affects the integration of the countries of the Western Balkans into the EU, as well as the increase in the level of economic development. Therefore, as a conclusion, it can be affirmed that integration in the EU is essential for the existence of this region. The relevance of this paper lies in the fact that it deals with an important topic from the field of European integration for small countries like Kosovo.

**Keywords:** European Union, Enlargement, Law, Western Balkans, Economic, Kosovo

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The enlargement of the European Union (EU) towards the countries of the Western Balkans has been a geopolitical interest of this union (Qorraj, 2016; Grievson et al., 2021; Jusufi et al., 2024). According to Ker-Lindsay et al. (2017), Džogović et al. (2021), Qorraj and Jusufi (2019a), and Osmani and Jusufi (2022a) the countries of this region are at very different stages of their EU membership

processes as a result of the progress they have made since 1999. Therefore, the Western Balkans cannot be seen as a single entity in the process of its membership in the EU. Also, the member countries of the EU do not have the same opinions regarding new memberships in this union. Some countries do not have positive attitudes towards this region, which according to them continues to remain problematic in terms of economic development, rule of law, and political stability.

It can be affirmed that the Western Balkans, as a region with many opportunities and challenges, is a valuable region to assess the readiness of the EU to accept new states into the union (Hashani et al., 2018). National EU enlargement policies are driven by very different and specific national concerns. The rule of law, the level of corruption, and the legacy of ethnic wars are some of the concerns of EU bureaucrats regarding the countries of the Western Balkans. The opinions of the EU countries are not immutable, therefore the support of the countries by the EU institutions may change over time (Ajdarpašić & Qorraj, 2019; Jusufi & Ramaj, 2020; Osmani, Sejdiu, et al., 2022).

For candidate countries like Kosovo and other Western Balkan, it is essential that the countries intending to join the EU must show readiness to take on the obligations of EU membership, simply to keep pace with the EU's demands. The main requirements are defined in the Copenhagen criteria, which are conditions defined in June 1993 at the European Council in Copenhagen, Denmark. First, countries must have developed stable institutions that guarantee the rule of law, social and economic development, democracy, human rights, and the protection of national minorities in those countries. The countries of the Western Balkans have potential and economic capacity, but this potential is not used due to weaknesses and deficiencies in the field of the rule of law. The institutions of the countries of the Western Balkans function poorly because the state, by interfering in the economy, prevents comprehensive economic development. Western Balkan legislation should be compatible with existing EU legislation (European Court of Auditors, 2021; Kadriaj & Ramaj, 2023).

The in-depth research and study of the development of Kosovo requires a start from the political and historical dimensions, up to the economic, cultural, educational, and institutional dimensions. It also includes a set of events and processes which, from the research and scholar point of view, are certainly very important and interesting, even from the multidimensional creative, educational, and scientific focus (Kastrati, 2018; Bellaqa & Jusufi, 2020; Rudaku & Daku, 2023). In its perspective, the Republic of Kosovo is in an important stage of development and prosperity, as a country and as a post-war society. The development of Kosovo has therefore not been easy and comfortable at all. The period after 1999 includes the stages of recovery and construction, periods of democratization, modern education, and state-building. Until the declaration of independence on February 17, 2008, Kosovo was under the international administration of the United Nations (UN).

Kosovar society, in general, after Kosovo's independence in 2008, entered a new phase of construction and consolidation. Therefore, the country had a great need to strengthen itself politically and economically (Qorraj & Jusufi, 2019b; Ajdarpašić & Qorraj, 2020). It also needed to continue and strengthen the various reforms to prosper democracy. After its independence, Kosovo started to apply for membership in international organizations and mechanisms and specially to prepare itself for the long and difficult process of accession to the EU. Kosovo offers many

opportunities for economic development because it is a country with a developed democracy and a young population. Therefore, these are the advantages of Kosovo compared to other regional countries. On this occasion, this paper aims to study the issues of the process and development related to the preparations of Kosovo to join the EU.

The literature gap in this paper lies in the fact that there is little theoretical and even less empirical evidence regarding the European integration of the Western Balkans, the influence of the rule of law, and the economic development of these countries, always based on the integration process of this region. The theoretical/conceptual framework applied in this paper is based on the literature sources of various eminent authors who have dealt with the problem of EU expansion towards the Western Balkans and the rule of law in the countries of this region as a basic condition for EU integration and development economic. The significance of this paper lies in the treatment of the topic of EU expansion towards the Western Balkans, as well as the impact that the rule of law can have on the economic development of this region and also on the faster integration of this region into the EU. Historical research methods were used to collect facts, chronological data, and other data related to the topic.

The main findings and contributions of this paper are that the rule of law is the main factor that positively affects the integration of the countries of the Western Balkans into the EU, as well as the increase in the level of economic development of these countries. Despite the still unresolved ethnic problems in some countries, the rule of law is the number one factor that accelerates the European integration of these countries, thus enabling the expansion of the EU towards the former socialist bloc.

The research aims of this paper are as follows:

- Theoretical analysis of EU enlargement towards the countries of the Western Balkans;
- Analysis of the impact of the rule of law in these countries and the progress made in this area, in their integration processes;
- Analysis of EU expansion in the countries of the Western Balkans and economic development as a stabilizing factor, with special emphasis on Kosovo.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 1 is the introduction. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 analyzes the methodology that has been used. Section 4 presents the results. Section 5 presents a discussion of the paper. Section 6 presents the conclusion.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since 1999, the EU has offered Kosovo great financial and personnel assistance, political support, and technical expertise. So it has contributed to the progress of the Kosovar society towards democratization and European values. However, Kosovo has a difficult path compared to other countries towards EU membership, because the five EU member countries such as Romania, Spain, Cyprus, Greece, and Slovakia have not yet recognized Kosovo's independence and as a result

prevent the participation of Kosovo in many EU initiatives. Regarding Kosovo's integration into the EU, a lot of work is being done by Kosovo institutions and international ones (Tepshi & Qafa, 2015; Mexhuani, 2023).

Jusufi and Ukaj (2021) emphasize that different mechanisms from Kosovo's officials are dealing with this issue, to be a member of the EU. Although some important steps have been taken in this respect, there is still a lot of work to be done and many important issues to be resolved before joining the EU. The issue of preparation and entry into the EU is undoubtedly an institutional priority in Kosovo (Bunjaku et al., 2023). Therefore, the political and governing leadership in Kosovo has been continuously committed to aligning the country as much as possible with EU policies (Rrustemi & Jusufi, 2021).

After Kosovo's independence, the European mission EULEX-Kosovo was launched in 2008 and its mandate has been prolonged until June 14, 2020. The headquarters are located in Prishtina. The legal basis for the mission was provided by the EU Joint Action of February 2008, whereas the Council Decisions of June 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 apply this basis within the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 1244/99. EULEX is supported by 27 member states, as well as Canada, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States.

This mission aims to advise, monitor, and guide Kosovar institutions for the creation of a justice system and a multi-ethnic police system by eliminating political interference and ensuring the establishment and promotion of the rule of law and public safety. This mission is included in the constitutional and civil justice of Kosovo, as well as in the trial of numerous criminal cases. It can be affirmed that the main objective of this civil mission is the involvement in the process of ethnic reconciliation in the Western Balkans, as well as the involvement of minority groups in the law enforcement sector, which is of specific importance for the work of this mission. Commitment to the rule of law, the fight against organized crime, the strengthening of border control, and the creation of a police force following EU standards are the main goals of this EU mission with a major role in the legal and political system of Kosovo.

The EULEX mission attempts to promote sustainable development, but it faces a number of problems that hinder Kosovo's integration with Europe, such as strained inter-ethnic relations, organized crime, and widespread corruption in political circles and public administration (Jagieł-Szostak, 2019). It can be affirmed that this mission has had success in the sphere of the rule of law in Kosovo and the improvement of inter-ethnic relations. According to Jackson (2020), despite the presence of the EU Rule of Mission (EULEX) since 2008, it has failed to convict prominent officials, perceptions of corruption are high, and perceptions of EULEX performance are low.

A political system began in ancient antiquity and since then, remains an essential part of thought, movement, and unhindered social and state development (Jusufi & Lubeniqi, 2019). The advantage of democracy is that it allows the freedom of development, being an essential part of humans,

which does not allow to be ruled by the totalitarian prism, dictatorship, and other forms of exploitation. Democracy helps and develops human well-being, and serves the recognition and cultivation of human rights, and respect for the law (Qorraj & Jusufi, 2019a; Jusufi & Ajdarpašić, 2020).

Starting from the historical aspect, Kosovo has gone through difficult stages. The Albanian people of Kosovo had to enter the liberation war and, with the help of the international factor, were liberated from Serbia in 1999. Kosovo has embraced a democratic parliamentary system. Therefore, the importance of the separation of powers lies in the creation of a controlled and balanced system. Through this political and parliamentary system, independent powers are placed in three branches in relation to governance, thus creating a system through which each exercises the power of control over the other (Osmani & Jusufi, 2022b). The executive generally has the power to review legislation, suggest changes to legislation, and veto it if it deems it inappropriate. The organ of the executive power of the Republic of Kosovo is the Government, which implements the laws approved by the Assembly and is accountable to the Assembly for its work.

The integration of Kosovo into the EU, is one of the issues with special priority for many reasons, including the entry of Kosovo into the community of peoples and states integrated into the European continent, the partnership of cooperation and economic interest, and the sphere of security (Jusufi & Ukaj, 2020; Qorraj & Jusufi, 2021). Kosovo's integration into the EU is seen as important also regarding the freedom of movement of people and goods. Although the people of Kosovo and the institutions of Kosovo have always had positive trends regarding the integration into the EU, the policy of the EU has not been unique against the state of Kosovo. The recent case of the terrorist attack by Serbia in the north of Kosovo, where the EU was not unanimous in condemning this terrorist attack, best shows how much support the Kosovar citizens have from the EU institutions.

In addition, since 2008, the five EU countries still do not recognize the state of Kosovo, thus making the integration of Kosovo into the EU difficult. A positive development that can be mentioned is the liberalization of visas for Kosovar citizens, which will enter into force on January 1, 2024. Kosovo has created the cooperation-partnership framework with the EU. Being involved in the Forward Mechanism of Stabilization and Association, it necessarily has a plan for fulfilling the criteria required by the EU, which criteria have as objectives the various political, economic, and institutional reforms. With this act, the most important and witnessing step of Kosovo was undoubtedly marked on its path of no return, towards European integration.

The integration of Kosovo into the EU is considered to be, in advance, dynamic and the main driver for the continuation of the democratization of the country, the rule of law, the continuous approach of legal reforms, the construction and multiple economic and social transformations, and significantly in the rise of economic and industrial development capacities (Rrustemi, Mladenović, et al., 2021; Hajdari et al., 2023).

The more the alignment with EU policies and standards happens, this approach, or this dimension of the construction of the rule of law, is a social and state imperative. Therefore, the need to adopt relevant, stable, and standard policies that will intensify the process of accelerating the path of Kosovo's integration into the EU, becomes not only a priority but a necessity for the country (Jusufović et al., 2020; Shkodra et al., 2021).

The EU is not only an extraordinary opportunity for prosperity, one more opportunity for work, for a more dignified life, for freedom of movement and security, but also a space where harmonious development reigns and a high level of well-being and perspective. Membership in the EU is the goal of both Albanians and Kosovars because membership in this organization creates good opportunities for development and perspective. The European space, apart from political and economic development, is a space where the rule of law has reached a high level of development, where the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary are a fact, and the law is equal for all (Rrustemi, Hasani, et al., 2021).

The political and geographical compactness of the EU includes a multitude of European countries with a consumer market of over 500 million inhabitants. Kosovo and its integration into the EU have a difficult road ahead of it, but this time too it will succeed when we compare the difficult roads it has gone through. According to the basic construction of the operation, the EU seeks to ensure that all human rights — whether civil, political, economic, social, or cultural — are respected everywhere, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reaffirmed by the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights.

The approximation and advancement of relations between the EU and the countries of the Western Balkans, including Kosovo, is very important, based on the final goal of these countries for EU integration. The European enlargement agenda provides support for institutional reforms, financial support, economic reform, and market liberalization, but also support for the consolidation of democracy and legislation following European standards. Some of the main aspects or mechanisms of cooperation and connection with Kosovo are already factual: The 2002 Association Stabilization Mechanism — as an instrument that involves Kosovo in the European path even before the definition of its final status; The 2003 Thessaloniki Summit — where the EU's commitment to the Western Balkans was reaffirmed, promising this region a European perspective; The European Partnership is also an important instrument of the EU, in the implementation of the duties and requirements arising from the EU towards Kosovo (Hasani & Beqaj, 2021).

It is considered that the reforms, in accordance with the standards of the EU, are one of the effective measures for speeding up and successfully passing the transition process and at the same time advancing the European integration process. These objectives are consistent with the action plan of

the European Partnership but also with the Copenhagen criteria for EU integration (Paszkiwicz, 2012).

The Ukraine crisis has raised many questions in terms of EU expansion towards the Western Balkans and Eastern countries. Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia are likely to gain EU candidate country status. But what will happen to the countries of the Western Balkans, which for 20 years have been trying to join the EU? It can be affirmed that the current crisis in Ukraine will affect the EU's expansion plans in the countries of the former socialist bloc and the countries of the Western Balkans. For years the EU has been repeating the mantra of its enlargement policy representing "a strategic investment in peace, stability and economic growth on our European continent". The EU and its institutions have failed to fulfill their promises to the Western Balkans region because there have been numerous blockages and delays. These have to do with the internal implications of the EU member states rather than with the objective criteria set for membership by the EU.

Now with the unfolding tragedy in Ukraine, the world has changed and the international order that has kept war at bay on the European continent for decades has been thrown into question. Ukraine's application to join the EU as Russian bombs were literally falling on Kyiv has cast an urgent spotlight on the EU's enlargement policy (Fouère, 2022).

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on a systematic review of theoretical studies on the enlargement of the EU towards the Western Balkans. Geddes and Carney (2002) and Berisha Qehaja et al. (2017) assert that systematic reviews are the synthesis of theoretical studies that use and describe explicit and reproducible methodological strategies to identify, collect, critically evaluate, and synthesize all relevant issues for a specific topic such as in the case of this paper the enlargement of the EU towards the Western Balkans. The main methods used for synthesizing and comparing such studies are textual narrative synthesis.

The paper is not empirical, so no econometric model has been applied. Historical research methods were used to collect facts, chronological data, and other data related to the topic. Usually, papers with a theoretical character are based on the historical method, or only in the literature review, so as an alternative method in this work, the multiple linear regression method or the logistic regression method can be used. For the implementation of these econometric models, empirical data would have to be provided, and it requires a long time and additional expenses for the realization of the research. Initially, tabular data related to the chronology of inter-ethnic conflicts in this region, which have restrained the enlargement of the EU towards these countries, have been provided.

**Table 1.** Main characteristics of the inter-ethnic conflicts in Balkan countries

Country	Duration of the conflict	Nature of the conflict	Involved parties	Conflict resolution	International involvement
Croatia	1991-1995	Intrastate and interstate	Croats, Croatian Serbs, Serbia	Military victory and Erdut Agreement	UN military mission; foreign aid
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1992-1995	Intrastate and interstate	BiH: Croats, Serbs and Bosnians; Croatia, Serbia	Dayton Agreement	OHR, UN, NATO, EU, OSCE missions; institution building
Kosovo	1998-1999	Intrastate	Serbs, Albanians	Military victory and Ahtisaari Plan	UN, NATO, EU, OSCE missions; state building
North Macedonia	2001	Intrastate	Macedonians, Albanians	Ohrid Framework Agreement	NATO and EU missions; foreign aid

Source: *Osmani, Leka, et al. (2022).*

Historically, these conflicts have hindered the membership of these countries in the EU, they have hindered the rule of law, economic development, and with this the reduction of the standard of general well-being. In addition, it should be emphasized that the dictatorial system in Albania has greatly burdened the general well-being, and has isolated Albania from the integration processes, leaving this Balkan country behind. The deep study through the historical method of reports, conflicts, and wars of ethnic character developed in the region of the Western Balkans, enables a better understanding of the relations of the EU with the countries of this region, because without long-term inter-ethnic reconciliation, without ensuring inter-ethnic tolerance, and without breaking away from the Russian influence of countries like Serbia, one cannot expect the expansion of the EU towards this region. Serbia's non-recognition of Kosovo is the source of the political, ethnic, and economic instability of this region. Only when this country is separated from the influence of Russia, and the independence of Kosovo from this country is recognized, then we can

talk about long-term peace in this region, and the expansion of the EU in the direction of this region, thus ensuring the rule of the law and with it economic development.

#### 4. RESULTS

As emphasized above, Kosovo aims to join the EU, just like other countries in South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Most of the European countries have already become part of the EU. There are several countries in South-Eastern Europe, which have been named by the EU as Western Balkan countries — Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia — which are making efforts to join the EU as soon as possible (Qorraj, 2018; Jusufi & Bellaqa, 2019; Qehaja et al., 2022; Zylfiu & Leka, 2023; Bajraliu & Qorraj, 2023). The theoretical review suggests that their fragile past, the Balkan mentality, and various economic problems hinder their integration into the EU, thus preventing the faster expansion of the EU towards the Western Balkans.

**Table 2.** Comparison of the accession progress of Western Balkan countries

Country	Albania	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo
Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) entered into force	April 2009	April 2004	May 2010	September 2013	June 2015	April 2016
Current status	Candidate country since June 2014	Candidate country since December 2005	Candidate country since December 2010	Candidate country since March 2012	Potential candidate	Potential candidate
Membership negotiations	-	-	June 2012	January 2014	-	-
Negotiations status: chapters opened	-	-	28	8	-	-
Negotiations status: chapters provisionally closed	-	-	3	2	-	-
Ranking	4	3	1	2	5	6

Source: *Osmani, Leka, et al. (2022).*

Table 2 provides information regarding the current situation of these countries in the Euro-Atlantic integration processes. Despite the progress so far, the rule of law and economic development oriented towards increasing the level of exports remain a big challenge (Djurovic & Lajh, 2020; Leka & Jusufi, 2024). However, the road of these countries, including Kosovo, is not filled with challenges (Rrustemi et al., 2020). The achievement of the status of the candidate country for the EU membership constitutes the biggest challenge of Kosovo. There is no doubt that Kosovo's integration

in the EU derives from the imperative demands of its citizens which are the most pro-EU in the Western Balkans. Kosovo, therefore, is trying to carry out its duties in this regard (Jusufi et al., 2022; Ramaj et al., 2022).

Thus, all the steps taken so far come as a result but also as a fact that Kosovo not only geographically belongs to Europe, but it is the whole of Europe from the ethno-cultural, historical, and political point of view. The EU represents in Kosovo the ideals of a developed, peaceful, and united Europe (Jusufi & Gashi-Sadiku, 2020). European

societies and nations, despite the former deep historical and political divisions and the cultural-ethnic heterogeneity are today a model of coexistence and prosperity, despite the many challenges of further expansion (Nezirovic et al., 2022; Qorraj & Bajraliu, 2023).

## 5. DISCUSSION

The countries of the Western Balkans almost have the same population both in terms of number and ethnic origin (except Albanians). Also based on the data of the sections above, these countries have had an almost identical past, because most of them have suffered from riots and ethnic conflicts.

It can be affirmed that it is in the interest of the EU to expand towards this region because both economically and politically the EU is strengthened if it accepts these countries into its bosom. The main criterion for the membership of these countries in the EU is the rule of law, but unfortunately, these countries have not yet reached the maximum in this aspect. Corruption and economic crime are still high, political structures are thought to be involved in smuggling and corruption, and very few high officials have been arrested for crime and corruption. Therefore, it can be affirmed that the EU should not accept these countries only because of its geostrategic and geopolitical interests, but also by evaluating their progress in the field of rule of law and economic progress.

As countries with an almost identical past, it is worth discussing the fact that why some state leaders of these countries are still not aware of a better future respecting tolerance and inter-ethnic coexistence, and instead of greater commitment to European integrations, they waste energy on destabilizing region. Therefore, an undeniable fact cannot be discussed that the enlargement of the EU is more for the benefit of the well-being, and political and inter-ethnic stability of the peoples of the Western Balkans than of the EU itself. The only key to success for these countries is their integration into the EU as soon as possible. An undeniable fact whose theoretical or even empirical accuracy cannot be disputed.

Albania and North Macedonia are closer to joining the EU, while Montenegro is also not bad, as long as Russian influence does not increase in this small coastal state. So, the rapprochement of this country with Russia may negatively affect its membership in the EU. As for Bosnia and Herzegovina, in addition to barriers to economic development and high levels of corruption, this country also faces barriers of a political and ethnic nature. Republika Srpska and the influence of Serbia through the representatives of this republic in the political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina cause many problems in its functioning as a normal state and in its advancement in the EU integration process. Therefore, the ethnic and political problems of this country are unfortunately almost insurmountable.

As for Serbia, the EU has offered many benefits and facilities to this country more than any country in the Western Balkans. The goal was to detach Serbia from the orbit of Russian influence and to detach the Serbian people from their nationalist past. Despite this, nationalistic spirit and inter-

ethnic hatred still prevail in this country. It can be affirmed that confronting the past and recognizing the reality of Kosovo can greatly accelerate Serbia's path towards EU membership. Unfortunately, the Serbian society still does not have the readiness to realize these expectations of the EU and the international factor.

Kosovo has almost fulfilled all the requirements of the EU, so it can be affirmed that it has been constructive in many requirements related to its state-building and the EU membership process. However, Kosovo lags compared to other countries because it is not recognized as an independent entity by the EU, but only by the majority of EU member states. Kosovo has signed the SAA, has visa liberalization with the EU, and is now in the process of becoming a member of the European Council. As long as there is no final agreement with Serbia, Kosovo's road to the EU will be long.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Economic cooperation between the countries of the Western Balkan region is an important condition for accelerating their integration into the EU. The assessment of the EU integration of these countries will be based on the deepening of regional economic and political cooperation. The individual achievements of these countries will be a measuring barometer in the process of their integration into the EU. The specific problems of each country inhibit their rapid integration. Therefore, without solving the neighboring disputes between these countries, we cannot expect their rapid membership in the EU.

The stability and neighboring relations of the region depend a lot on the unresolved disputes between these countries which have a historical character. The increase of political and economic cooperation between these countries of this troubled region depends on the support of the EU through various programs. The movement of people without barriers, the increase of competition in the European market, and the attraction of foreign direct investments entirely depend on the deepening of regional cooperation between the countries of the Western Balkans. As long as these countries are hostile, the road to their integration into the EU will be longer.

The integration of Kosovo in the EU is one of the issues with special priority for many reasons, including the entry of these countries into the community of peoples and states integrated in the European continent, the partnership of cooperation and economic interest, and the sphere of security. The issue of the preparation and entry of the countries of the Western Balkans into the EU is a special institutional and governmental priority.

Therefore, this study concludes that the political and governing leadership in these countries has continuously been committed to aligning these countries as much as possible with EU policies, as well as adapting to the EU's development standards for a safe future of road construction in the region to join this institution, obviously, very interesting. Therefore, the need to adapt relevant, sustainable, and standard policies which will intensify the process of accelerating the path of the region's integration into the EU, becomes not only a priority but a necessity for the region. This

paper has some limitations, such as the lack of statistical research that would enable this topic to be understood from an empirical point of view, then the literature is not very sufficient to elaborate on such a topic from the field of European integrations, a field which is quite new in the Western Balkans. So, few authors have dealt with such a topic.

The implications of this paper are many because it deals with a topic that is a combination of

legal, economic, and political sciences. It therefore has implications in all these scientific fields. As for future research, research on this topic should be done including statistical data, because empirical results are obtained and would be more attractive and interesting for the reader. Therefore, future research should be directed to these aspects.

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