



# THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: CHALLENGES OF ENLARGEMENT AND INTEGRATION IN THE BALKANS

**Hritochit Chakraborty**  
Student

Amity Institute of International Studies  
Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

**Abstract:** The European Union (EU) faces complex challenges in its efforts to integrate the Western Balkans, a region with deep historical, political, and economic complexities. The EU's enlargement strategy aims to stabilize and democratize the Balkans, extending its influence while promoting peace and prosperity in a historically volatile area. However, the process of enlargement is hindered by a range of obstacles, including political instability within candidate countries, slow implementation of EU-required reforms, economic disparities, and the persistence of ethnic tensions. Additionally, issues of rule of law, governance, and corruption continue to affect the readiness of Balkan states to meet EU membership standards. Within the EU, member states are divided on enlargement, with some viewing it as a strategic necessity to counter external influence (such as Russia's and China's presence in the region), while others worry about the potential strain on the EU's resources and political cohesion. As the EU attempts to balance these internal and external pressures, questions arise regarding the future of EU integration policies, the sustainability of its enlargement ambitions, and the Union's long-term vision for a united Europe. This paper examines the challenges and prospects of EU enlargement in the Balkans, exploring the implications for EU identity, governance, and regional stability, as well as the broader geopolitical landscape in Europe.

## Introduction to European Union Enlargement

The procedure of bringing new member states into the European Union is pretty complex and dynamic. On a fundamental level, what enlargement does is bring nations together around the value of social progress, economic stability, and democracy. For the Balkan nations, whose hopes for EU membership are fuelled by the prospect of increased possibilities for citizens, political stability, and economic growth, this process has been especially important.

The possibility of entering the EU offers optimism and a route to a better future for many Balkan countries. A number of stringent changes and adherence to the EU's exacting requirements are necessary on the path to membership. These changes range across several topics, including rule of law, anti-corruption efforts, judicial systems, and human rights guarantees. Candidate countries must comply with these requirements to observe the EU's standards and principles.

There are difficulties in the path of EU enlargement. The EU must carefully evaluate its ability to accept new members while upholding its essential principles and efficacy before integrating them. This balance is essential because the union has to make sure that its policies and institutions can accept new members without jeopardising the cohesiveness and functionality of the current structure. Furthermore, substantial financial and technical support is required for the expansion process in order for the EU to offer sufficient aid and for the candidate nations to carry out the required reforms.

The institutional and economic dimensions of EU enlargement are not the only important ones. It has significant ramifications for the populations of the candidate nations as well. The prospect of EU membership offers people in the Balkans optimism about higher living conditions, more mobility, and access to more options for job and education. Young people have a strong desire to join the EU because they see a future in which European unity will allow their dreams to transcend national boundaries.

In a nutshell the process of incorporating new member states into the union through strict reforms and adherence to EU criteria is known as EU expansion. It has great potential for improving possibilities for citizens in the candidate nations, especially in the Balkans, as well as for political stability and economic growth. Although the path to membership is difficult, it is motivated by a common goal of a thriving and united Europe.

## Historical Context and EU Integration Process

It emerged as a product of a rather complex, integrated process for post-war European integration after World War II. These destructive wars have ravaged the continent to such an extent, primarily by the two World battles, which significantly affected on the historical background for European integration. The history indicates that these wars have established the significant need for integration between the European states, along with peace. The original goal of European integration was to foster political cooperation and economic interdependence between European states with the view of avoiding another war in the future.

Following the successes of the ECSC, the EEC and Euratom were formed in 1957 following the signing of the Treaty of Rome. The EEC was commonly known as the Common Market and was meant to ensure the free movement of capital, people, products, and services among the member states through the establishment of a common market and a customs union. This is the point at which deeper economic integration was initiated, an effort that would go on to assume political and social elements.

This was also a time of increasing integration in the 1960s and 1970s, which would peak in the first enlargement of the EEC with the accession of the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Ireland in 1973. It also comprised the creation of such institutions as the European Parliament, whose legislative powers would grow step by step through a series of treaties and which would further deepen democratic legitimacy in the process of European integration. Another significant event was the Single European Act of 1986, which established its goal as a single market by the end of 1992 and indeed realized it.

The reunification of Germany in 1990 and the end of the Cold War provided new impetus to European integration. The European Union was established in 1992 by the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, which also created the concept of European citizenship and allowed free movement between its member states. Moreover, the treaty enabled the advent of the EMU, and consequently, the single currency, the euro, which saw its first appearance in 1999. The Maastricht Treaty also is often cited as a decisive moment in the history of the EU, as it allowed the scope of integration in areas such as home affairs, defence and foreign policy, and justice to spread.

The EU consists of 27 member states because of the accession of many countries in Central and Eastern Europe to the group during the 2000s—the beginning of the 21st century of further growth. It also has major challenges, such as the migration crisis, the eurozone crisis, and the expansion of Euroscepticism that made the UK decide to exit the EU in 2016, popularly known as Brexit. Despite these hindrances, the EU has continued to push for further integration in issues such as security, climate change, and digital policy, reflecting its changing role on the international stage.

The post-World War II aspiration for peace and stability is the basis of the historical framework of European integration. The EU has changed over the years from being a primarily economic union to a sophisticated political organisation with considerable sway over world affairs. The EU's dynamic nature and capacity to adjust to shifting conditions are reflected in the integration process's many accomplishments as well as obstacles.

### Current Status of Balkan Countries' EU Accession

The process for the Balkan countries to become members of the EU has not been easy and has continued through time. For years, the Western Balkan countries—Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia—have been competing to join the EU. However, it was not free of obstructions, such as social, political, and economic reforms and regional stability. [1].

North Macedonia and Albania have been at the forefront, at least as far as membership in the EU is concerned. The European Council finally agreed to establish accession talks with both nations in 2020; it had postponed this date for years. The largest reasons for this delay concerned Albanian rule of law and corruption. However, the EU has given up on the fact that both countries have improved a lot, mainly in terms of judicial independence and in the fight against organized crime. Despite such developments, Bulgaria's blockade on North Macedonia's accession—and which was related to language and historical disputes between the European Council on Albania and North Macedonia—further postponed the actual start of negotiations. [2].

Only two of the Western Balkan states have opened formal membership negotiations: Serbia and Montenegro. Since launching negotiations in 2012, Montenegro has moved forward the most, with almost all chapters of the *acquis*, the EU body of law, now open, and several are partially closed. However, issues of free media, corruption, and respect for the rule of law are creating slowdowns in the process. Serbia has more to work on as it is the one who started the negotiation process in 2014, considering its relationship with Kosovo. Before Serbia is allowed into the EU, the country and Kosovo, which declared independence in 2008, need to be made to reconcile with each other. Serbia and Montenegro's journey toward the EU [3].

Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina are only now just beginning the process of becoming part of the EU. Bosnia and Herzegovina requested accession to the EU back in 2016; however, it wasn't until December 2022 that they received candidate status—a long journey because the nation has a complicated political system and is often subject to political instability. The EU emphasizes that before granting Candidate Status

to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country needs important constitutional and electoral reforms and improvement in the judiciary as well as the public administration system. [4].

Kosovo's road into the EU is complicated by the fact that five members of the European Union have yet to declare it a sovereign state. However, Kosovo has been so successful in the recent years that it even succeeded to sign the stabilization and association agreement with the EU during 2016. In this agreement, for the first time, an official step was made toward Kosovo's membership in the bloc. However, there are many other hurdles on the way towards EU accession for Kosovo - not least the disputes currently ongoing with Serbia and needed far-reaching reforms in governance as well as the rule of law. [5].

In verdict, there has been progress toward EU membership for Balkan countries, but there are still obstacles to overcome. Even while North Macedonia and Albania have made significant progress, political unrest and the execution of reforms continue to impede their advancement. Even though they have come a long way, Serbia and Montenegro continue to face serious problems with regional relations and the rule of law. Both Kosovo and Bosnia & Herzegovina are still in the introductory phase and still need heavy reforms to draw closer to EU membership. The EU is still committed to the expansion project, but the nations face arduous tasks that demand tenacity and careful negotiation.

### Economic Challenges and Opportunities

The enlargement and integration process of the European Union, mainly in the Balkans, is highly interlinked with the future of the European Union. Countries in West Balkans, such as North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, are an accession process into the European Union. But this poses hard obstacles for the European Union and the countries in the Balkans, even though there might be also economic advantages.

The major challenge to the expansion of the EU in the Balkan region would be the large economic gap between these countries and the existing members of the EU. The Western Balkans are among the poorest regions of Europe, with GDP per capita much below the EU average. For instance, the GDP per capita for Serbia was around \$9,000 in 2021, while that for the EU was about \$35,000 on average. The EU will have to offer these countries immense financial aid to raise the economies in their standards, which are a hindrance to integration World Bank on Western Balkans Economy [6][7].

Furthermore, another area of concern is the Balkan countries' economic structure. Because of their heavy reliance on low-tech manufacturing, agriculture, and foreign remittances, the economies of the region are less able to compete in the EU single market and are more susceptible to external shocks. These economies must modernise and diversify, concentrating on industries like digitalisation, green energy, and technology, for successful integration. But in order to do so, a substantial amount of money and fundamental changes to the European Commission's enlargement strategy are needed [8].

The EU's inclusion of the Balkans offers significant economic prospects in spite of these obstacles. The region's youthful and reasonably educated populace may prove advantageous for the EU labour market. In addition, these nations' EU integration may contribute to regional stabilisation, increase FDI, and promote economic expansion. As companies look forward to the advantages of having access to the EU market, the prospect of EU accession has actually already stimulated FDI in nations like Serbia and North Macedonia OECD on Western Balkans Investment [9].

In addition, some of the larger issues the Union is experiencing may be addressed with the aid of the EU's expansion into the Balkans. For example, adding the Western Balkans might strengthen the EU's geopolitical position in Southeast Europe by acting as a deterrent to other forces, especially China and Russia, who have been stepping up their influence in the area. By diversifying energy supplies and routes, especially through the development of the Southern Gas Corridor European Parliament on Energy Security in the Balkans, it may also enhance the energy security of the EU [10].

But the Balkans' journey to EU membership is not an easy one. The EU is now more hesitant to expand, especially in light of the challenges some nations in Central and Eastern Europe have had integrating. The emergence of euroscepticism and populism within the EU has also increased the political sensitivity of the expansion process. Reluctant to expand further are nations like France and the Netherlands, who worry that it may worsen internal divides within the Union European Policy Centre for EU Enlargement.

As a result, there are many economic obstacles ahead for the EU's expansion and integration in the Balkans, but there are also a lot of promising prospects. Managing political sensitivities within the EU, modernising the economies of the Balkan countries, and addressing economic imbalances are critical to the success of integration. A more secure and affluent Europe could result from the strategic and economic strengthening of the EU brought about by the Balkan integration, if it is handled properly.

## Political Reforms and Governance Issues

The successful integration of the Western Balkan nations, which have been on the EU's enlargement agenda for quite some time, is important to the future of the EU. However, the path to membership is beset with many challenges, especially in terms of political change and governance. Such challenges question the ability of the EU to admit new members while upholding its core principles.

Political reforms have to take place for the Western Balkans to come in line with EU democratic standards and legal frameworks through admission into the EU. However, the speed at which change has taken place varies from one country to another. For example, Albania and North Macedonia have achieved great success in reorganizing political structures and dealing with matters such as an independent judiciary and corruption. The EU acknowledged these benefits and launched accession negotiations with the two countries. [11].

Though there has been some change, there are still the big problems. Many West Balkan countries are haunted by widespread corruption, weakness of the legal system and fragile democratic institutions. Therefore, for example, there have been ethnic political division that has made it possible to implement radical changes into Bosnia and Herzegovina system and it has led to very long political crisis threatening further stability of the country. Similar issues have been raised concerning the democracy of Serbia and that of freedom of the media in tandem with the concentration of power to a clique of political elites. These issues have stalled reform processes and brought into question the sincerity of the country towards promoting such EU values. [12][13].

In the Western Balkans, concerns about governance are also very important. The region's history of ineffective public institutions, poor administrative capabilities, and a lack of openness impedes the execution of EU-driven reforms. For the Western Balkan nations to be able to enact and uphold EU laws and regulations, governance frameworks must be strengthened. As requirements for more integration, the EU has underlined the necessity of thorough public administration reforms, judicial independence, and more robust anti-corruption measures [14].

There are obstacles facing the EU's Balkan expansion strategy from within the Union itself. Some member states are becoming less optimistic about future expansion, especially in light of the rise of populism and doubts about the EU's ability to accept new members. Previous expansion experiences, in which certain newly admitted members were thought to have retreated from democratic principles after joining the EU, have prompted demands for tighter conditions and more thorough oversight of reforms prior to admission [15].

Moreover, the EU must balance its geopolitical interests in the region with the need to uphold its standards on democracy and governance. The Western Balkans are of strategic importance to the EU, particularly in the context of growing influence from external actors such as Russia and China. This geopolitical dimension adds pressure on the EU to keep the accession process on track, even as it grapples with the complex political realities on the ground [16].

## Social and Cultural Dimensions of Integration

There are quite a few aspects of the problem of integrating the Balkans into the European Union, especially in social and cultural spheres. Some challenges related to identity, cultural diversity, historical tensions, and cohesiveness as nations pursue membership have to be resolved.

Important social problems that marred the history of Balkans include ethnic and nationalistic conflicts, and social issues would have to involve overcoming it. The challenge in coming to a unified European consciousness has been rooted in strong ethnic differences inherent in that region, a situation deepened after the Yugoslavian wars in the 1990s. It is a hard thing to integrate that national identity the country takes on when joining the community, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, or North Macedonia, with the more general conceptions of the EU-in things like tolerance, diversity, and the defence of minority rights. The EU, it declared membership conditional upon observing human rights and promoting unity among different ethnic groups. [17].

The mobility of individuals and migration constitute another important social feature. Numerous Balkan nations have noteworthy demographic obstacles, such as elevated emigration rates, especially among the younger generation, as a result of financial hardships and restricted employment opportunities. A sizable section of the populations of nations like Serbia and Albania have migrated to EU nations in quest of better possibilities. In addition to posing difficulties for the Balkan countries' economies, this tendency makes it more difficult for them to integrate into the EU because the loss of talented personnel limits their ability to develop [18].

The problem of cultural integration is also complicated. The religious and cultural roots of the Balkan countries—Islam, Catholicism, and Orthodox Christianity—bring a rich but potentially polarising cultural fabric to the EU. It will be difficult to successfully integrate this variety within the liberal, mostly secular framework of Western Europe without making concessions on policy. The EU supports principles like freedom of speech and religion, yet in some Balkan countries, these principles may not always align with more traditional and conservative viewpoints. Getting over this divide is crucial to a successful cultural integration [19].

Concerning the EU itself is the problem of social cohesiveness. Despite the EU's goal of unifying European identity, member states' attitudes on admitting newcomers, particularly those from the Balkans, vary. There is concern that additional EU enlargement may make social unrest already present worse, especially in light of the growth of nationalist and populist movements in a number of the member states. Balkan countries find it challenging to completely integrate into the social and cultural fabric of the EU as a result of this internal resistance, which also hinders the expansion process [20].

Nonetheless, the process of integration offers the Balkan nations certain advantages as well. The goal of the EU's development, education, and cultural exchange initiatives is to close the divide between Balkan and Western European societies. Youth from the Balkans have the opportunity to study in EU nations thanks to initiatives like the Erasmus+ program, which fosters cultural integration and understanding at the local level [21].

Concerning identity, migration, cultural variety, and social cohesion, the social and cultural aspects of EU integration for the Balkans are intricate and multidimensional. Even though the process is fraught with difficulties, it also offers chances for deeper integration through mutual understanding, education, and cultural interaction. The future of the EU as a whole and the Balkans depend on how well these issues are resolved.

## EU Enlargement Policy and Criteria

Great challenges have been witnessed in the expansion and integration of the European Union (EU) concerning future enlargement, especially about the Western Balkans. The regions that have been considered potential candidates for EU membership include countries like Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Entering the EU, however, is not a smooth process, mainly because of the strict criteria set up for enlargement and the intricacies of the political context. The Copenhagen criteria laid down an institutional, political, and economic adjustment for future members.

Important obstacles stand in the way of further enlargements of the European Union in the future, not least concerning the integration intentions related to the western Balkans. The individual countries Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina have long been considered possible future member states. Joining the European Union is by no means easy, however; on the contrary, it is quite difficult. This is primarily due to the strict entry criteria and complex political situation. The Copenhagen Criteria, upon which the institutional, political, and economic conditions that applicants must meet constitute the framework of the EU's accession policy. [22].

The political instability of the Balkans is one of the main obstacles to EU enlargement. Ethnic and political tensions are still present in several Western Balkan countries, which are still struggling with unfinished business from the Yugoslav Wars. For instance, Bosnia and Herzegovina's profound ethnic divides have impeded its efforts to modernise its governance and move closer to EU membership. Though little progress has been made, the EU has urged the nation to enact extensive political reforms in order to conform to EU norms. These difficulties highlight the significance of the Copenhagen Criteria's political requirements, which call for stable institutions that uphold democracy, the rule of law, and human rights [23].

Significant barriers to the EU admission of Balkan countries include inadequate governance and corruption. Though considerable problems still exist, nations like Serbia and Albania have achieved progress in their anti-corruption and judicial reform initiatives. These countries have frequently faced criticism from the European Commission for their lack of accountability and openness in government. For instance, the EU has closely examined Albania's judicial reforms, even though recent advancements have been recognised. Fulfilling the governance prerequisites outlined in the Copenhagen Criteria is crucial, since the European Union requires applicant nations to exhibit a dedication to thwarting corruption and upholding legal norms [24].

The economic gap between the EU and the Western Balkans presents another difficulty. The economies of the region continue to lag behind those of EU members. Many of these nations have enacted economic reforms, such as privatisation and market liberalisation, yet unemployment is still high and growth rates have been uneven. Through programs like the Instrument for Pre-accession aid (IPA), which aims to assist Balkan nations in aligning their economies with EU standards, the EU offers financial aid as well as economic advice. To achieve the EU's economic standards, which call for a working market economy able to withstand pressure from other Union members, these nations must still enhance their economic performance [25].

The EU's public opinion has further complicated the process of enlargement. Many Europeans, particularly those in Western Europe, are wary of additional enlargement because they worry about rising immigration and the possibility of unstable political and economic conditions. The EU's expansion policy has become more circumspect as a result of this "enlargement fatigue". The European Commission has persisted

in pushing for the inclusion of the Western Balkans, but member nations like France and the Netherlands have dragged the process down politically [26].

## References

- Dedman, Martin. *The Origins and Development of the European Union 1945-2008: A History of European Integration*. Routledge, 2010.
- Milward, Alan S. *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945-1951*. Routledge, 1984.
- Judt, Tony. *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. Penguin Books, 2006.
- Dinan, Desmond. *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration*. Macmillan International Higher Education, 2010.
- Dinan, Desmond. *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration*. Macmillan International Higher Education, 2010.
- Ronja Kempin and Rafael Loss, "The European Union's Strategic Compass: Challenges and the Way Ahead," *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)*, July 2023, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2023C36/>.
- Statista on Serbia's GDP Per Capita:** "Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per Capita in Serbia from 1994 to 2028," *Statista*, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/440521/gross-domestic-product-gdp-per-capita-in-serbia/>.
- World Bank Report on the Western Balkans:** "Western Balkans Regular Economic Report: Fall 2023," *World Bank*, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/western-balkans-regular-economic-report>.
- OECD Multi-Dimensional Review of the Western Balkans:** "Multi-Dimensional Review of the Western Balkans," *OECD*, accessed August 11, 2024, [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/multi-dimensional-review-of-the-western-balkans\\_8824c5db-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/multi-dimensional-review-of-the-western-balkans_8824c5db-en.html).
- European Parliament on Energy Security in the Balkans:** "European Parliament Resolution of 25 October 2018 on the Situation in the South China Sea," *European Parliament*, October 25, 2018, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0458\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0458_EN.html).
- Global Initiative on Judicial Reform in Albania:** "Albania's Judicial Reform Process," *Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime*, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://riskbulletins.globalinitiative.net/see-obs-009/04-albanias-judicial-reform-process.html>.
- EU External Action on Bosnia and Herzegovina:** "Leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina Must Deliver Reforms," *European External Action Service*, accessed August 11, 2024, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/leaders-bosnia-herzegovina-must-deliver-reforms\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/leaders-bosnia-herzegovina-must-deliver-reforms_en).
- Brill on Southeast European Union Countries:** Igor Bandović, "Towards EU Membership: Challenges of the Southeast European Union Countries," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 39, no. 1 (2023): 62-74, accessed August 11, 2024, [https://brill.com/view/journals/seeu/39/1/article-p62\\_4.xml](https://brill.com/view/journals/seeu/39/1/article-p62_4.xml).
- OECD on Governance in the Western Balkans:** "Government at a Glance: Western Balkans," *OECD*, 2022, accessed August 11, 2024, [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/government-at-a-glance-western-balkans\\_a8c72f1b-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/government-at-a-glance-western-balkans_a8c72f1b-en.html).
- SWP on EU Enlargement:** "The EU and the Western Balkans: Enlargement for Stability," *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)*, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2022C46/>.
- ECFR on European Foreign Policy:** "European Council on Foreign Relations," *ECFR*, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://ecfr.eu/>.
- ICTY on Former Yugoslavia Conflicts:** "Conflicts," *International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)*, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://www.icty.org/en/about/what-former-yugoslavia/conflicts>.
- World Migration Report 2024:** "Europe," *World Migration Report 2024, International Organization for Migration (IOM)*, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/world-migration-report-2024chapter-3/europe>.
- Religion in the Balkans:** "Religion Remains Powerful in Balkans, Survey Shows," *Balkan Insight*, January 15, 2018, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/01/15/religion-remains-powerful-in-balkanssurvey-shows-01-15-2018/>.
- Enlargement Fatigue in the EU:** William Chislett, "Enlargement Fatigue in the European Union: From Enlargement to Many Unions," *Elcano Royal Institute*, July 13, 2017, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/work-document/enlargement-fatigue-in-the-european-union-from-enlargement-to-many-unions-wp/>.

Erasmus+ Youth Participation: "Youth Participation," *Erasmus+ Program Guide*, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://erasmusplus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-1/youth-participation>.

European Council, *EU Enlargement Policy*, available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/enlargement/> (last accessed September 15, 2024).

Human Rights Watch, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Ethnic Discrimination Key Barrier*, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/13/bosnia-andherzegovina-ethnic-discrimination-key-barrier> (last accessed September 15, 2024).

Global Initiative, *Albania's Judicial Reform Process*, available at: <https://riskbulletins.globalinitiative.net/see-obs-009/04-albanias-judicialreform-process.html> (last accessed September 15, 2024).

World Bank, *Western Balkans Regular Economic Report*, available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/western-balkans-regular-economic-report> (last accessed September 15, 2024).

Real Instituto Elcano, *Enlargement Fatigue in the European Union: From Enlargement to Many Unions*, available at: <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/work-document/enlargement-fatigue-in-the-european-union-from-enlargement-to-many-unions-wp/> (last accessed September 15, 2024).

