Kosovo in the Process of EU Enlargement: Implementation of Political Criteria as one of “Copenhagen criteria”

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) as a unique economic and political union was founded in the 1950s to cultivate European values, peace, and prosperity. Since then, the EU has grown from 6 countries to 28, becoming a home of more than 500 million people. It continues to be very attractive to the countries over Europe continent and it is open for all democratic European countries that want to join. Since the early 2000s the EU has opened the doors of membership to the countries of the Western Balkans. A part of Balkan is also Kosovo. This paperwork includes the case of Kosovo on its EU integration path. Hereeto, I did a short description about the Union and its relations with Balkans.

Joining EU is a choice and all of the countries have the opportunity to move forward on their way to it, they can all be members once they fulfill the criteria set by the Union. The focus of the paperwork is on Kosovo’s process of the enlargement and the implementation of the political criteria, also known as one of the three “Copenhagen Criteria”. This paperwork gives a clear understanding on what is achieved on the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.

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I. Introduction

The European Union is represented by 28 countries, as such it covers a considerable part of the continent. Back to the beginning, when European countries started to cooperate economically in 1951, only Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands participated. European Union was not this big as it is today, but since the early 70s, more and more countries decided to join. In June 1993, the European Council meeting in Copenhagen took a firm commitment to enlarge the European Union (EU) to the central and eastern European countries (CEECs).

First enlargement happened in 1973, when Denmark, Ireland and Great Britain became Member States. Greece joined in 1981, than Spain and Portugal in 1986. Followed by, Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995. In 2004 was the largest EU enlargement, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia became Member States. Three years later, in 2007 Bulgaria and Romania joined the union. And Croatia joined the EU in 2013, increasing the total number of Member States at 28. And it will be bigger in the upcoming years.

European Union is open to any European country that is ready to sign up to the Treaties and accept the body of EU law. According to the Lisbon Treaty (Article 49), any European state may apply to become a member of the European Union provided it respects the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. The Union have put 3 criteria also, known as “Copenhagen criteria”.

The EU’s enlargement policy is an investment in peace, security, prosperity and therefore stability in Europe. The European Council that took place in Madrid in December 1995 “shifted EU policy firmly towards enlargement”. Process of EU enlargement is still going on. Seven countries, six from Western-Balkan are at different stages of preparation for possible future membership. The Western Balkans countries actually are part of Europe, geographically they are surrounded by EU Member States. The peoples of the EU and the region have a common heritage and history and a future defined by shared opportunities and challenges. We can clearly see that the future of the Balkans countries is within the European Union.

The EU is strongly engaged in the region and it is supporting Western Balkan countries on their integration paths. All of the six countries will be able to join the European Union when the

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1 European Union. About the EU. Available at https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries_en
2 Alan Mayhew EU Enlargement: A Legal Approach (OXFORD AND PORTLAND OREGON, 2004)
5 Ulrich Sedelmeier, 2005. Eastern Enlargement: Towards a European EU?

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criteria of Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, including Copenhagen criteria, are fulfilled as requested by the Union.

But in order for the countries to meet all membership conditions and strengthen their democracies, comprehensive and convincing reforms are still required in crucial areas, notably on the rule of law, competitiveness, and regional cooperation and reconciliation.\(^7\)

Kosovo is part of Balkan and the EU is open for its membership too. European Union is present in Kosovo through its mechanisms as the Special Representative (EUSR), the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission in the rule of law area (EULEX) and the European Union Office in Kosovo. Currently, Kosovo is implementing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and it has to fulfill the other criteria set by the Union. This paper work includes the relations and support of EU in Balkan countries, and in focus it has the implementation of the political criteria in Kosovo.

**II. European Union Relations with Western Balkan Countries**

The term "Western Balkans" was for the first time officially used by the European Union in 1998, under the leadership of Austria. Western Balkan are the third group of countries that are joining EU. Countries of the first group were mainly of Western European, while their membership process was known as the "accession process". On the second group were mainly the countries of Central Europe, the process of which was otherwise known as "the process of association". And for the Western Balkan countries, as the third group, the membership process is known as the "Stabilisation and Association Agreement".

A perspective for these countries is set in two successive summits, such as the Zagreb Summit held in 2000, and the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003. EU countries agreed to have the Stabilisation and Association process (SAP) as the framework for the European course of the Western Balkan countries. Given what had preceded the Thessaloniki Summit of 2003 - the wars that tore Yugoslavia apart in the 1990s, the breakdown of state authority in Albania in 1997, a barely averted civil war in North Macedonia in 2001, and the experience of nationalism, autocracy and impoverishment in Serbia and Croatia - this basic social contract between the Balkan states and the EU appeared well suited to the consolidation of democracy in the post-Yugoslav space plus Albania.\(^8\) In the case of Kosovo, 2 years later on 21 and 22 February the Commission adopted the Communication: “A European Future for Kosovo”, when the EU reiterated the prospect of a new state in the region for integration.

Since the early 2000’s Balkans have opened a new democratic chapter by going through a security transition, from a conflict zone to a security community. Western- Balkan countries like Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia all have

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\(^7\) Ibid.  
\(^8\) Heinrich böll stiftung, Out of Focus: the EU’s Relations with the Western Balkans. Available at https://eu.boell.org/en/2018/10/09/out-focus-eus-relations-western-balkans
democratic institutions and share a strong political will on joining the EU. For the Union Balkans stability is the main issue since a long time. To prevent destabilization in the region, it deployed civilian and military missions like CSDP “the Common Security and Defence Policy, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and North Macedonia. For more than a decade, the European Union has opened the doors for membership to the countries of the Western Balkans. The process of preparing to join the EU would empower progressive forces in these countries and create space for domestically driven reform movements to transform the way politics, economies and societies work. The enlargement process is built on established criteria and fair and rigorous conditionality. Each beneficiary is assessed on the basis of its own merits.

### III. European Union engagement with the Western Balkans

In February 2018, the European Commission reaffirmed the firm, merit-based prospect of EU membership for the Western Balkans in its Communication *A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans*. This is an encouragement for the whole Western Balkan countries, they must continue on their commitment to work towards European integration.

The EU is helping the Western Balkan countries at all levels on fulfilling the requested criteria. In his 2017 State of the Union address, President of the European Commission JeanClaude Juncker re-affirmed the European future of the Western Balkans countries: "If we want more stability in our neighbourhood, then we must also maintain a credible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkans. It is clear that there will be no further enlargement during the mandate of this Commission and this Parliament. No candidate is ready. But thereafter the European Union will be greater than 28 in number. Accession candidates must give the rule of law, justice and fundamental rights utmost priority in the negotiations."

The Commission foresees an Action Plan in Support of the Transformation of the Western Balkans, Action Plan with six concrete flagship initiatives targeting specific areas of common interest: rule of law, security and migration, socio-economic development, transport and energy connectivity, digital agenda, reconciliation and good neighborly relations. Also, the Commission is helping Western Balkans with technical assistance on the alignment process with EU legislation and on the effective implementation in practice. Urgent progress is needed in the

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9 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
EU-facilitated Dialogue towards the full normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, which should result in concluding and implementing a comprehensive, legally binding normalisation agreement.14

To deliver on the Western Balkans Strategy and support a seamless transition to membership, adequate funding is indispensable. The European Commission proposes to gradually increase funding under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.15 IPA it is the means by which the EU supports reforms in the enlargement region with financial and technical help. The EU is known as one of the biggest donor in the countries of Western Balkan. Also it is the main trading partner for Western Balkans partners and it is supporting the Western Balkans initiative to establish a Regional Economic Area to make the region more attractive to investors, this is seen as an opportunity on creating new jobs within the region. It has also create opportunities for youth, they can directly participate in EU programmes such as Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, Creative Europe, and COSME.

The EU supports stability and security in the region. Currently in the region there are Two Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions (EUFOR Althea and EULEX Kosovo), at the same time the partners in the Western Balkans are making steps towards becoming security providers, with 10 contingents operating in EU CSDP missions throughout the world.16 EU is cooperating with Europol, Eurojust, the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), and the Western Balkans Counterterrorism Initiative (WBCTi) in the field of terrorism. With IPA financial support, under the over-arching framework of the Western Balkans Integrative Internal Security Governance, the EU is providing more than €31 million for counterterrorism and projects countering violent extremism in the region, in addition to funding related security and rule of law.17

Also on migration EU gives special focus it “has strongly supported and continues to support Western Balkan partners with more than €100 million through dedicated financial support and humanitarian aid, as well as delivery of expertise on the ground, ensuring smooth handling of migration flows and minimizing space for threats to human rights”18

The EU is present and active in Kosovo through its Special Representative (EUSR), and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission in the rule of law area (EULEX). There is also the European Union Office in Kosovo, which has an important role in implementing the EU agenda in the territory, ensures permanent political and technical dialogue between Kosovo

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15 European commission, Strategy for the Western Balkans. Available at
16 Factsheet, EU Engagement in the Western Balkans. Available at
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
and the EU institutions. The EUSR offers advice and support to the Government of Kosovo, coordinates the EU presence, and promotes human rights and fundamental freedoms.¹⁹

**IV. Situation within Western Balkan Countries**

Joining European Union is a choice and all of the Western Balkans countries have the opportunity to move forward on their way to European Union if they want to. The Commission considers all the countries in a fair and objective way. Currently, all of the six countries are on different stages, sharing the strong will on joining the Union and they are moving forward on fulfilling the criteria.

Representing the EU at the Western Balkans Summit in London 2018, High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini said: “In these years we have been all working together to draw the region closer and closer to the European Union, politically, economically and security-wise. And we have seen remarkable results, solutions to the most difficult bilateral issues. The Western Balkans are steadily moving forward. And today we reconfirm that we are together with the region on that path, sharing the commitment towards our common future.” ²⁰

Stabilisation and Association Agreements as the European policy framework for relations between the EU and the Western Balkan countries, all the way to their eventual accession to the Union have entered into force for all six Western Balkan countries. Albania and the North Macedonia are candidate are making significant progress on their European path and the Commission is ready to prepare recommendations to open accession negotiations. The Commission will start preparing an Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s membership application following receipt of comprehensive and complete answers to its Questionnaire. Montenegro and Serbia are the only two countries with which accession talks are already under way. Kosovo even though has a clear prospect on joining the Union it has still the status as a potential candidate. Unfortunately, Kosovo’s accession process is complicated by the European Union’s foreign policy. Consequently, the country is still not recognized by five EU member states (Spain, Romania, Greece, Slovakia and Cyprus) while the European Union continues to address Kosovo with an asterisk (*) without prejudicing the various positions regarding the political status of Kosovo and in accordance with UN Resolution 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.²¹ Kosovo is the only Balkan country that does not have the freedom of movement in Europe, even though a road map to the visa liberalization has

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²¹ THE COPENHAGEN POLITICAL CRITERIA FOR JOINING THE EU: THE CASE OF KOSOVO Afrim HOTI, Dren GËRGURI, 2017. Available at [https://www.fdv.uni-lj.si/docs/default-source/tip/k%C3%B6benhavenska-politi%C4%8Dna-merila-za-pridru%C5%BEitev-eu-primer-kosova.pdf?sfvrsn=0](https://www.fdv.uni-lj.si/docs/default-source/tip/k%C3%B6benhavenska-politi%C4%8Dna-merila-za-pridru%C5%BEitev-eu-primer-kosova.pdf?sfvrsn=0)
been submitted since 2012. The citizens of Kosovo remain the only citizens from the Western Balkans that have to apply for and obtain a visa to travel to the Schengen Area.\textsuperscript{22}

\section*{V. Historical review of Kosovo’s relations and EU}

Kosovo is the newest independent country in Europe. After the end of war in Kosovo, based on the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 on 10 June 1999. Kosovo was placed under the transitional administration of the United Nations. Kosovo declared its independence in February 17, 2008. Based on this fact, relations between European Union and Kosovo we can split into 2 periods. First period is the administration period by United Nations, and in relations with Europe Kosovo was mainly represented by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Second period is after the declaration of the independence, when Kosovo in relations with EU is represented by the Kosovo’s institutions.

Kosovo’s interest to be part of the Union was shown since the early 2000’s. Prior to independence and statehood, Kosovo’s objective was to integrate with the EU\textsuperscript{23}. In the summit of Zagreb in 2000, Kosovo was not part of it because it was not seen as a state at that period, but the Head of UNMIK( United Nations Mission in Kosovo) Bernard Kouchner, attended this summit only as an observer. Thessaloniki Summit in 2003 was the first EU event for Kosovo’s political leaders to attend. Present at this summit was the former Head of UNMIK, Michael Steiner, Kosovo’s President, Ibrahim Rugova, and the Prime Minister, Bajram Rexhepi. But their names were not listed in the Final Declaration of the Summit. Even though, Kosovo was not treated as a state, the Thessaloniki Summit, on its Declaration was noticed ”…support the full implementation of Resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council on Kosovo and the 'standards before status' policy of UNMIK."\textsuperscript{24}

Within the European partnership with Balkans, Kosovo was not treated as a particular country. “After the report of the troika sent to the UN Secretary General, the Council of Europe in December 2007 emphasis the need to move forward towards the agreement for Kosovo, underlining that Kosovo’s status settlement is a sui generis case and that does not constitute a precedent”\textsuperscript{25}

Even after the declaration of independence, all member countries of the EU, except 5 countries (Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain), have recognized Kosovo as an independent state, and Kosovo continues to be supported by EU. In July 2008, in Brussels, the European Commission has organized a donor conference for Kosovo.

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On July 22, 2010, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) gave the opinion that Kosovo’s declaration of independence did not violate the general norms of international law, or Security Council Resolution 1244/99. In October 2012, the European Commission approved a feasibility study for Kosovo, through which the EU membership process officially begins. After the publication of the feasibility study report, preparations for negotiating SAA have started. The European Commission, after giving a positive opinion and assessing the political and economic situation, as well as the legal aspects regarding the assumption of obligations, started the negotiation process for the SAA with Kosovo. The negotiation process was held from October 2013 to May 2014. On 27 October 2015, the SAA between the EU and Kosovo was signed in Strasbourg. And after its ratification in the Kosovo Assembly on 2 November 2015, it was approved in the European Parliament on 21 January 2016.

Kosovo has also adopted the European Reform Agenda (ERA) in 2016, the Agenda outlines priority actions in the fields of good governance and the rule of law, competitiveness and investment climate, and employment and education. Even after this period, Kosovo continues to fulfill the requested criteria from the European Union.

**VI. Kosovo in implementation of Copenhagen criteria**

“The Copenhagen Criteria are the conditions candidate countries must meet before they can become members of the European Union”. They were defined by the European Council in 1993, after the requests of the former communist countries to join the Union. The Council set up three criteria that each country should fulfill. The EU decides if a country has fulfilled Copenhagen Criteria. By the time they join, new members must have:
- stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities (political criteria)
- a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union
- the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including support for the aims of the Union — they must have a public administration capable of applying and managing EU laws in practice.

European Union every year has published annual report for Kosovo before even the Kosovo’s process of membership. The report contains 3 Copenhagen criteria. Looking at the Progress Report of 2018, Kosovo has made good progress and is at an early stage of developing a functioning market economy, as regards the economic criteria. What has been improved is the

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26 Paulina Rezler, 2011 The Copenhagen Criteria: Are They Helping or Hurting the European Union?  
business environment, road infrastructure and it is at an early stage in terms of capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU. It has stable economic growth. The informal economy remains widespread. Unfortunately structural changes in the economy are slow, the unemployment rate increased further, a high trade deficit reflects a weak production base and no progress was made on improving the quality of education and addressing skills gaps in the labour market. Kosovo is having good and constructive bilateral relations with almost all other enlargement countries and it is represented in most regional organisations. Regarding the normalisation of relations with Serbia, Kosovo has remained engaged in the dialogue. However, Kosovo needs to make further substantial efforts on the implementation of existing agreements and contribute to the establishment of circumstances conducive to the full normalisation of relations with Serbia, to be defined in a legally binding agreement.29

VII. Implementation of Political Criteria

Political criteria is one of the EU criteria that Kosovo has to fulfill. The Copenhagen Political Criteria means having stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. The evaluation of democracy and the rule of law includes certain factors: elections, functioning of the legislature, operation of the executive, civil society, public administration reform, functioning of the judiciary, the fight against corruption and the fight against organised crime.30 In the Freedom in the World 2018 report, Freedom House classifies Kosovo as a “partly free state”. Among the Western Balkan countries, Kosovo’s rating for political rights is on the 2nd place, better than for Bosnia, North Macedonia and Albania but worse than for Serbia. In its rating for civil liberties, Kosovo is listed as the last one compared to the other Balkan countries.

The requested political criteria is mainly affirmed in the Declaration of Independence when it is said that ” We declare Kosovo to be a democratic, secular and multi-ethnic republic, guided by the principles of non-discrimination and equal protection under the law. We shall protect and promote the rights of all communities in Kosovo and create the conditions necessary for their effective participation in political and decision-making processes.”31 Below briefly will do an analyze of the elements of the political criteria.

Functioning of democratic institutions and Public Administration Reform

Democracy: Functioning of democratic institutions depends from the organisation of free and fair elections. This means the building of stable institutions too. Kosovo is one election zone, where the candidate list must contain at least 30% of female gender. In 2017 in Kosovo were

29 Ibid.
30 HE COPENHAGEN POLITICAL CRITERIA FOR JOINING THE EU: THE CASE OF KOSOVO Afrim HOTI, Dren GËRGURI, 2017. Available at https://www.fdv.uni-lj.si/docs/default-source/tip/k%C3%86benhavenska-politi%C4%8Dna-merila-za-prihod%20%E1tev-eu-primer-kosova.pdf?sfvrsn=0
31 Kosovo Declaration of Independence https://www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/Dek_Pav_e.pdf
held early parliamentary elections and regular municipal and mayoral elections.” Parliamentary and municipal elections, held in 2017, were generally competitive and well-administered in most places in Kosovo. However, patterns of intimidation within many Kosovo Serb communities, targeting particularly candidates not belonging to the Sprska Lista party, raised concerns.”32 The report has addressed many of election process weakness. A number of long-standing weaknesses, in particular political party financing, women participation, electoral dispute mechanisms, inaccurate voter lists and a largely defective voting system for Kosovo citizens resident abroad remain to be addressed.33 Freedom house results shown that Kosovo’s Democracy Score improved from 4.96 (in 2017) to 4.93 (in 2018).

The assembly: It has 120 deputies, 20 seats are guaranteed for minorities that live in Kosovo (10 for Serbian community and 10 for other non-Serbian community). Within the parliament, function permanent and functional commissions. As an achievement of the work of the parliament in the report is noticed the ratification of the demarcation agreement with Montenegro. Crossparty work on long overdue reforms is urgently needed. Both the ruling coalition and the opposition should intensify their parliamentary work and seek consensus on EU-related reform priorities.34 It is seen as necessary the oversight of the executive from the parliament. Some progress was made in improving the transparency in and public access to the work of the Assembly.35

Governance: The government and the European Commission launched the European Reform Agenda (ERA) in 2016, it is a tool to priorities the implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) but unfortunately it has lagged behind. Political crashes between the parties has been an obstacle for the effective work of the Government too.

Civil society: They play a crucial role in the democracy. The regulation of the legal infrastructure of the NGOs is important for their functioning. The entry into force of two regulations setting standards for public consultation and laying down criteria and procedures for the public funding of NGOs has paved the way for improved governance and a more transparent use of public funds.36 It is made some progress in the improvement of the relations between civil society and government.

Regarding the reform of public administration, it was included as a priority area in the government programme for 2015-2018. As Report concludes it has achieved some progress in the preparation of reform of its public administration and also some progress has been made with the review of agencies and (semi) independent bodies, as recommended by the Commission in

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
2016. The legal basis and institutional structures for a coherent and coordinated policy-making system, including for EU related reforms, are largely in place. But politicisation of the public administration is still a concern, and so, it affects the efficiency and professional independence of the public administration.

**Rule of Law and fundamental rights**

**Judiciary and fundamental rights**: Rule of law in Kosovo continues to be criticized. Kosovo’s judicial system is at an early stage. Some progress has been made in 2017 by implementation of the 2015 justice package laws. Also in the same year a big achievement was made with the integration of Kosovo Serb judges and prosecutors and their support staff across Kosovo into the Kosovo judicial system. The judiciary is still vulnerable to undue political influence and rule of law institutions need sustained efforts to build up their capacities. The administration of justice remains slow and inefficient.38

**Fighting corruption**: Transparency International global corruption barometer has listed Kosovo 93rd as opposed to a year ago when it ranked 85th. Kosovo has some level of preparation in the fight against corruption. It has made some progress on a track record for the investigation and prosecution of high-level cases, including final convictions and on the preliminary confiscation of assets although final confiscations remain low. Corruption is widespread and remains an issue of concern.39 There are anti-corruption institutions, and the main one remains Anti-Corruption Agency. Unfortunately, the anti-corruption institutions are not well integrated, their division of tasks needs to be clarified. “Some of the challenges that Kosovo faces in its fight against corruption include insufficient transparency, weak institutions and inadequate space for citizens’ engagement.”40

**Fundamental rights**: Kosovo has an advanced legal system and has special institutions that guarantee human and fundamental rights in accordance with European standards. Constitution is consisted by two chapters for human rights, chapter 2 that includes the guaranteed rights for all the citizens of Kosovo and chapter 3 has extra rights for the communities living in Kosovo.41 Kosovo is also drafting strategies for the human rights, and the last drafted one is “Strategy of human rights in Kosovo 2016-2022: A path that should be followed”.42 Implementation of 21 human rights strategies and legislation is often undermined by inadequate financial and other resources, particularly at local level, limited political prioritisation and lack of coordination.43 Even though, Kosovo guarantees rights of the high standards when it comes to the practice,

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Council of Europe, Anti-corruption digest Kosovo*. Available at https://www.coe.int/en/web/corruption/anti-corruption-digest/kosovo
41 Kosovo’s Independence Declaration. Available at https://www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/Dek_Pav_e.pdf
implementation is still weak. More needs to be done to effectively guarantee the rights of persons belonging to minorities, including Roma and Ashkali (there is a strategy for their involvement in the Kosovar society) and displaced persons, persons with disabilities, to ensure gender equality in practice, to counter intolerance towards LGBTI persons, to set up an integrated child protection system, and to advance the protection of cultural heritage.

**Freedom of expression:** Media freedom is an important challenge for any country that aspires to join the EU, not only because freedom of the press is a fundamental right and one of the values of the European Union, but also because freedom of the media is considered an indicator of a country’s democracy. Kosovo has some level of preparation in the area of freedom of expression. As it is said in the report Kosovo benefits from a pluralistic and lively media environment. As a progress made in this area is also the fact that the media started publishing the publisher data. In 2018 it was a worried situation for the funding of the public broadcaster. There were no legislative developments on the regulation of media ownership and transparency.

**Justice, freedom and security**

As it was mentioned above, Kosovo is a new independent country and so the achievement on these areas are not in the desirable level. Other obstacles are also not acceptance in some international organisations as Interpol. This makes more difficult the fight against terrorism. Despite those difficulties Kosovo is at some level of preparation in this area. Some progress has been made in the fight against terrorism, including measures to tackle violent extremism and radicalisation and in preventing terrorist fighters from joining conflicts abroad. It is also at an early stage in fight against organised crime.

**Conclusions**

With this paper work, the purpose was to do a review of EU relations with Balkan and the special focus was in the fulfillment of the Copenhagen Criteria, the political criteria in Kosovo. Political criteria is not the only criteria that should be fulfilled to join the Union, but as we can see it is a very important criteria that involves important areas. Regarding the political criteria, the continuing political fragmentation and polarisation have adversely affected the role of the Assembly and have impacted the effectiveness of the government. Parliamentary and municipal elections held in 2017, were competitive and well-administered in most places in Kosovo. Patterns of intimidation within many Kosovo Serb communities, targeting particularly candidates not belonging to the Srpska Lista party, raised concerns.

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44 THE COPENHAGEN POLITICAL CRITERIA FOR JOINING THE EU: THE CASE OF KOSOVO Afrim HOTI, Dren GËRGURI, 2017. Available at [https://www.fdv.uni-lj.si/docs/default-source/tip/k%C3%B6benhavenska-politi%C4%8Dnemerila-za-pridru%C5%9du%EBeitve-eu-primer-kosova.pdf?sfvrsn=0](https://www.fdv.uni-lj.si/docs/default-source/tip/k%C3%B6benhavenska-politi%C4%8Dnemerila-za-pridru%C5%9du%EBeitve-eu-primer-kosova.pdf?sfvrsn=0)

Some progress has been made public administration reform, especially with the review of agencies and (semi)independent bodies. Regarding to the fight against organised crime, there are still few final convictions, financial investigations and final confiscations of assets. Progress was made in the fight against terrorism, including measures counter violent extremism and radicalization. Kosovo guarantees human rights of the high standards but unfortunately when it comes to the practice, implementation continues to be weak.

With all the difficulties, Kosovo has achieved a progress in the fulfillment of the political criteria and the others criteria. Besides that, it is also implementing SAA, since it entered into force in 2016. Non-recognition by the five EU member states, still remains challenge on Kosovo’s integration in the European Union.

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