



Analysis

GRADUAL INTEGRATION PROCESS: TOWARDS RESTORING EFFECTIVENESS AND CREDIBILITY OF EU ENLARGEMENT

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Executive summary

Discussions about another change of the enlargement methodology can reinforce the image of EU membership as a moving target with constantly changing rules, especially when the current methodology still has not been applied fully. **The European Commission should create a new strategy in the framework of the current methodology which would in concrete terms specify its approach to the gradual integration of (potential) candidates into the EU and the conditions guiding the process.** The Strategy for the Western Balkans from 2018¹ laid out initiatives some of which are still valid today and can serve as a basis for the new enlargement strategy.²

While integration into different EU policies and institutions is the cornerstone of the gradual integration approach, **sectoral integration alone will not have the desired transformative effect**, especially in countries with leaders who have already shown hesitancy to advance on crucial and difficult reforms, especially related to the fundamentals cluster. However, it is in the interest of both the candidates and the EU member states to cooperate closely on areas of shared interest, such as foreign policy, energy, climate and environment, transport, research and education, or digital policies. **The European Council should commit to regularly inviting representatives of the candidate countries at least to parts of relevant Council meetings where topics of shared interest are discussed. The European Commission should provide a comprehensive overview of comitologies and agencies where participation of third countries**

¹ European Commission, Strategy for the Western Balkans: EU sets out new flagship initiatives and support for the reform-driven region, February 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_18_561.

² The Strategy mentions initiatives to strengthen the rule of law, reinforced cooperation on security and migration through joint investigating teams and the European Border and coast guard, expanding the EU Energy Union to the Western Balkans or lowering roaming charges and rolling out broadband in the region. The Strategy also underlines the need for the EU to be prepared to welcome new members once they have met the criteria.

is possible and should explore ways how to open this participation to the (potential) candidates for EU membership.

The only substantial incentive for reform efforts on the side of candidates seems to come through financial instruments and integration into the Single Market. Contrary to the approach of the European Commission which seems to put integration into the EU's internal market as the first step in EU accession, the conditions related to this area are very complex and difficult, depending largely also on the fundamentals. Furthermore, previous enlargement rounds as well as recent grain crisis showed the sensitivity of **access to Single Market** for EU member states and any accelerated integration in this area **has to be approached with high level of precaution and complex conditionality on the EU's side (not only in cluster 2 but also cluster 1 and 6).**

The financial incentives provided to the candidate countries need to be reformed and new instruments should be developed under and beyond the current Multiannual Financial Framework. The Growth Plan seems to be promising in providing the needed motivation for reforms, the **conditionality of the funding, however, has to be very strict especially in cluster 1 and 6 and combined with more rigorous monitoring** on the side of the European Commission.

Under the next MFF, a new instrument should be developed based on the experience with the Growth Plan, if integration of candidates into the EU budget would not be possible by then. In order to help bridge the development gap, the new instrument should **include macroeconomic assistance to avoid possible limited impact due to lack of absorption capacity, combined with strong “fundamentals” conditionality** and clear guidance from the Commission in setting the objectives and monitoring their fulfilment.

The EU should avoid steps leading to making the enlargement process more complicated – instead, **the process would benefit from streamlining and more**

clarity in terms of the end goal, short- and medium-term roadmaps, timelines and annual action plans provided by the European Commission in cooperation with the candidate countries and endorsed by the EU member states. Clear communication of the expected reform priorities each year is crucial for holding the leaders in the candidate countries accountable.

More frequent reporting on the priority reforms and rigorous monitoring proved to be beneficial in the previous enlargement rounds. However, stronger guidance from the European Commission will require more capacities, especially if the cross-sectoral gradual integration approach should be applied. **Separation of DG Enlargement from DG Neighbourhoods should be considered under the next European Commission mandate (2024–2029),** with coordination points in line DGs, equipping the DGs with sufficient capacities and showing that enlargement is again among the Commission's priorities. The Commissioner for Enlargement portfolio should be associated with the position of the Vice President of the Commission, which would clearly signal the commitment from the EU's side.

To restore credibility in the EU enlargement, **the discussion on the introduction of QMV in intermediary stages of the process should be advanced** in order to avoid its stalling due to different political reasons of individual EU member states. Furthermore, **a mechanism for the resolution of bilateral issues outside of the accession process needs to be established** to prevent bilateral issues from blocking the progress of candidates despite their reform efforts due to vetoes by individual EU member states.

Introduction

This year marked 20 years from the Thessaloniki summit where the perspective of EU membership was offered to the Western Balkan countries. However, since then only Croatia joined the EU in 2013 and the past decade was characterized mostly by stagnation and growing frustrations on both sides, the candidates and the EU. The progress of the aspirants for membership has been very slow, particularly in the areas of the “fundamentals”, related to the rule of law, democratic governance or fundamental rights, where some countries not only did not manage to progress but in some cases even showed backsliding. The lack of the ability of the process to stimulate a transformative effect in the candidates and their reform efforts led to a reevaluation of the enlargement methodology and an attempt to adjust the process in a way that it provides more incentives for reforms and opens up possibilities of deeper integration in some aspects already in the pre-accession phase. Russia’s aggression towards Ukraine further forced the EU leaders to reassess the current approach to their immediate neighbourhoods with European aspirations, so far, however, the changed geopolitical reality hasn’t resulted in a strong enough demonstration of the EU’s commitment to enlargement nor enhanced reform efforts among the Western Balkan countries.

Last but not least, one of the main frustrations with the different concepts of staged/accelerated/gradual/phased/progressive integration is the plethora of terms used to describe this approach and the different meanings assigned to each term by different actors.

The potential benefits of gradual integration, as introduced in the enhanced enlargement methodology from 2020,³ are numerous. Increased sectoral, institutional and financial integration of candidates with the EU throughout the EU accession process leading up to full EU membership could help to restore the EU's credibility as a sign that the Union counts with the candidates as future EU member states by giving them a seat at the table when important decisions are being discussed, helping the candidate countries prepare better for their future membership in line with developments in EU's own policies, it would boost the socialization effect and contribute to trust building between the candidates and current EU member states, and it would help the candidates build up their own capacities to handle better the eventual EU accession associated with EU funds, and boost their economies leading to enhanced socio-economic convergence which is now tragically lacking.

Several challenges are, however, tied to the application of gradual integration and there are pertaining questions that need to be answered. Can the EU develop one universal process which could be applied to all the candidates, or should the priority policy areas and associated funds and institutional integration differ among the countries? How can be the flexible nature of gradual integration connected with the formal EU accession process in terms of advancing through the clusters and chapters? Can the process be convincingly merit-based, rooted in detailed and objective reporting? How can the process be credible and avoid candidates stagnating at a certain level of integration, either due to a lack of

³ European Commission, DG NEAR, Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans, February 2020, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enhancing-accession-process-credible-eu-perspective-western-balkans_en.

political will among member states or due to lack of interest of the political leaders to continue the required reforms?⁴

Last but not least, one of the main frustrations with the different concepts of staged/accelerated/gradual/phased/progressive integration is the plethora of terms used to describe this approach and the different meanings assigned to each term by different actors. This paper uses the term *gradual integration* in the sense of sectoral, institutional and financial integration during the pre-accession process, without creating new stages. Gradual integration should thus frontload some of the benefits of EU membership to the candidates already before their EU accession, based on strict conditionality, and support the accession process leading towards full membership in the Union instead of creating new degrees of association or membership.

Connecting gradual integration to the EU accession process

There are two main approaches how the candidates can advance through the gradual integration process. First, hierarchically through individual clusters – when a certain level of alignment is achieved and simultaneously the candidate has achieved progress in clusters 1 and 6 (fundamentals and external relations), then it can advance its access in policy areas under the given cluster with the associated institutions where possible and associated funds. The second option is based on the staged accession model developed by the European Policy Centre (CEP) and Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) which relies on a more horizontal approach in the sense that in order to advance from one stage to another the candidates must show progress across all clusters. This approach can potentially

⁴ This paper attempts to answer these difficult questions by building on the existing analyses on gradual integration, phasing in, and staged accession and on conducted interviews with experts and civil servants from the candidate countries and the EU.

better secure a more balanced development in the candidates in terms of alignment with EU acquis but at the same time, it can be more difficult to make the benefits under each policy area accessible to them if they are not progressing well in other areas, causing potential further stalling.

Apart from the staged accession model, other proposals on phasing-in or gradual integration are not specific about how integration in different areas would be connected with the advancement through the formal accession process in terms of opening and closing of chapters and clusters. The challenge of how to combine the flexible nature of the gradual integration approach, reflecting different preparedness degrees and specific needs of each candidate, with the rigid structure of the accession process raises naturally the question of whether the enlargement methodology, adopted in 2020, needs to be revised again.

If gradual integration was applied universally on the basis of preparedness and progress under individual chapters, there is also a risk of advancing countries which are currently the ones with serious democratic backsliding and strongest ties with Russia ahead of other candidates who show more alignment with EU values.

There can be a case made for this revision if the countries were to advance through the process strictly on the basis of their level of alignment in different chapters and clusters. However, in reality, some of the most frequently mentioned and most mutually beneficial areas for deeper integration are those with a lower degree of preparedness of the candidates

or the preparedness differs significantly among them (e.g. Transport, Trans-European networks or Environment and climate change). Furthermore, tying the gradual integration approach to the formal accession negotiations would leave aside countries which are currently not negotiating nor have the perspective in the

near future (Georgia, Kosovo, potentially Bosnia and Herzegovina). If gradual integration was applied universally on the basis of preparedness and progress under individual chapters, there is also a risk of advancing countries which are currently the ones with serious democratic backsliding and strongest ties with Russia (Georgia and Serbia, as demonstrated in Table 1) ahead of other candidates who show more alignment with EU values.

Table 1: Quantified average level of preparedness of each (potential) candidate for EU membership per cluster based on data derived from the 2023 Enlargement Package.⁵ The quantification uses the same scale as the Staged accession template where 1 = early stage of preparations, 2 = some level of preparation, 3 = moderately prepared, 4 = good level of preparation and 5 = advanced level of preparation.

	ALB	BiH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SER	GE	MD	UA
Cluster 1	2,8	1,8	1,9	3,1	2,9	2,6	2	1,8	1,8
Cluster 2	2,6	1,9	2,4	3,1	2,9	3,2	2	1,9	2,1
Cluster 3	2,9	1,5	2,1	3,2	3,3	3,4	2,7	2,2	2,6
Cluster 4	2,4	1,6	1,5	3,3	3	3	1,8	1,9	2,5
Cluster 5	2,4	1,2	1,6	2,6	2,8	2,6	1,5	1,2	1,8
Cluster 6	4	2	1	4	3,5	3	3	2,3	4

Creating the same template of hierarchy among clusters can also prove to be difficult as the candidate and even negotiating countries (including Albania and North Macedonia) each have different levels of preparedness across chapters and

⁵ European Commission, DG NEAR, Strategy and Reports – 2023 Enlargement Package, November 2023, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/strategy-and-reports_en.



clusters (see Table 1 and Annex I) and the different structures of their economies can influence the impact of integration in different areas. What can be very beneficial and motivational for one country can thus not have the same effect on another candidate. Changing the enlargement methodology once again would also risk the creation of more frustrations among the already negotiating countries to whom EU accession seems like a moving target.

Fundamentals and External relations: Core of the gradual integration and accession process

The cluster 1 and cluster 6 should lie at the centre of the EU accession process as well as steps towards gradual integration. Only advanced alignment in these clusters can help to avoid the issues which are the most problematic even among EU member states – the issues with rule of law and liberal democracy in Hungary and until now Poland or the difficulty in finding consensus on CFSP due to some countries' close ties to Russia. Furthermore, strict conditionality in these areas is the only way how the EU can avoid creating a situation through the gradual integration when some candidate countries achieve only certain level of integration, in some policy areas which are beneficial for them, without the need to advance any further to full membership which is tied to difficult reforms under cluster 1 or without fully aligning with the EU's foreign policy and further catering to other global and regional players, as is the case of Serbia in particular.

As the sharing of values and respect for the same principles lies at the very core of the EU enlargement process, the prominence of the first cluster is only natural, as reflected by the practice of opening chapters 23 and 24 as first and closing them as last and the emphasis on fundamentals in the current enlargement methodology. The fundamentals are also cross-cutting in their nature, as only independently functioning institutions without political interference and high levels of corruption can reliably perform their responsibilities. Without upholding the rule of law, success in the fight against corruption, and without active civil society and independent media acting as watchdogs, the professionalism of agencies responsible for different internal market aspects cannot be guaranteed, influencing the quality of the products, and environment and climate policies can be corrupted, among a range of problems.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine created a new geopolitical environment in which the discussion about EU enlargement and gradual integration of the candidates is taking place. It created a new Cold-War-like division on the European continent, manifested in the establishment of the European Political Community with a clear geopolitical message, leaving out only Belarus and Russia. In this situation, it is crucial for the EU to tie its partners and neighbours as close

In the communication of the EU representatives, the prominence of cluster 6 rose basically to the level of fundamentals since the start of Russia's war in 2022. This should be reflected also in the actual strategies and alignment with EU's CFSP should officially be together with the progress on Fundamentals in cluster 1 a precondition for the candidates' integration in different areas as well as grounds for the application of the reversibility principle in case of backsliding.

as possible and not leave any space for their relations with other players, counter to the EU's interests. In the communication of the EU representatives, the prominence of cluster 6 rose basically to the level of fundamentals since the start of Russia's war in 2022. This should be reflected also in the actual strategies and alignment with EU's CFSP should officially be together with the progress on Fundamentals in cluster 1 a precondition for the candidates' integration in different areas as well as grounds for the application of the reversibility principle in case of backsliding.

Integration into the Single Market and its pitfalls

According to the announcements coming from the European Commission throughout this year and from the recently published Growth Plan for the Western Balkans,⁶ it is apparent that integration into the Single Market is viewed as a primary area where progress on gradual integration should be achieved. However, this is also an area where several problems need to be addressed if this integration should be carried out in a merit-based and sustainable manner which would bring benefits but also protect the candidates as well as the EU member states from the consequences.

First, it must be mentioned that the integration of the Associated Trio and Western Balkans into the Single Market is guided by documents of different nature. The Eastern (potential) candidates all have signed DCFTAs with the EU which already provide ambitious and detailed provisions on integration into the Single Market as they focus particularly on economic integration. The agreements state *"to achieve gradual economic integration into the EU Internal Market, in particular through*

⁶ European Commission, DG NEAR, 2023 Communication new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, November 2023, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/2023-communication-new-growth-plan-western-balkans_en.

*establishing a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area which will provide for far-reaching market access on the basis of sustained and comprehensive regulatory approximation in compliance with the rights and obligations arising from its WTO membership".*⁷ Furthermore, the DCFTAs provide a detailed list of EU legislation that the candidates need to align its legal framework with and include a timeframe within which the approximation with each of the legislative items should be achieved, since the signing of the Agreement.

On the other hand, the approximation and integration of Western Balkans to the EU is guided by the Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAAs) which encompass many more areas as they are designed not only for the creation of free trade area but also to stimulate the democratic transition and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. However, the agreements fall short of offering such detailed provisions for integration into the EU's internal market. Only one part of the agreement is dedicated to free movement of goods and one to movement of workers, establishment, supply of services and movement of capital. The timelines and deadlines for each area are then set by each country in the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA). In terms of approximation with EU legislation, the SAAs stipulate that the *"approximation will, at an early stage, focus on fundamental elements of the Internal Market acquis, Justice, Freedom and Security as well as on other trade-related areas. At a further stage, the country shall focus on the remaining parts of the acquis."*⁸ Compared to the detailed DCFTAs, it should be considered to conduct a review of the SAAs in view of creating a levelled playing field with the Associated Trio countries when it comes to integration into the Single Market.

⁷ European Commission, DG TRADE, Deep and comprehensive free trade agreements, <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/content/deep-and-comprehensive-free-trade-agreements>.

⁸ EUR-Lex, Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Serbia, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/stabilisation-and-association-agreement-with-serbia.html>.

The integration of Western Balkans is further specific by the regional aspect and the parallel process of establishing a regional economic area. In this regard, it is currently not very clear whether a functioning Common Regional Market (CRM) should be expected to be a precondition for the countries' integration into the Single Market. If this was the case, then it would be very problematic as the four CRM agreements signed under the Berlin Process are still awaiting ratification in some of the Western Balkan countries. As any regional initiative in the past showed, the agreements and their implementation are often a victim of bilateral disputes among the countries. If all Western Balkan countries' integration in the EU market would depend on their neighbours' political will to overcome their bilateral issues, then the potentially strong incentive of the Single Market integration could easily turn into a source of further stalling and frustrations in the

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region, resulting into another loss of the EU's credibility.

Another aspect related to the integration of candidates into the Single Market is the fact that alignment with EU acquis connected strictly to the internal market agenda and progress in negotiating cluster 2 without progress on the Fundamentals can bring potential risk. For example, if it

is not guaranteed that the institutions and agencies in charge of certification of various goods, agricultural products, etc. function independently and free from corruption and political influence, the quality and safety of products are not necessarily credible in the end. This is also why the SAAs explicitly tie together the

approximation on Internal Market acquis with the Justice, Freedom and Security, under Chapter 24. Also, the well-known European Stability Initiative proposal presumes that although the integration into the EU's internal market would be the first "stage" of the EU accession, prior to full

Opening of all four freedoms under the Single Market to the candidate countries would include also free movement of labour which was among the most sensitive areas for member states in case of the previous enlargement, introducing transitional periods of up to 7 years.

membership, the candidates would have to comply already with the EU standards under the Fundamentals cluster. This risk could be mitigated either by connecting progress on these particular questions with gradual integration into the Single Market or by friendly EU member states taking up the responsibility for control and seconding for example their experts to the relevant agencies in the candidate countries.

Last but not least, the recent "grain crisis" in Poland, Hungary and Slovakia also showed that despite the already advanced integration provided for by the DCFTAs, access to the EU's internal market still remains a sensitive area for the member states in case of unexpected events. Similar situations can occur also in the future and there should be a mechanism for their solution. Even more importantly, the EU should be able to foresee that this can happen and be prepared in order to protect the Single Market principles amidst the crisis and search for other solutions.

Opening of all four freedoms under the Single Market to the candidate countries would include also free movement of labour which was among the most sensitive areas for member states in case of the previous enlargement, introducing transitional periods of up to 7 years. For these reasons and in combination with

the harmful impact of the brain drain which is already happening in case of the candidates, complete internal market access seems to be rather unrealistic in the foreseeable future. Other possible scenarios include free movement of goods based on meeting of the criteria under the chapters related to internal market⁹ or a customs union as was the case with Turkey. However, authors of the CEPS study warn that this approach would be problematic especially in case of Serbia which has signed the free trade agreement with Eurasian Economic Union.

Other areas of gradual integration

The space for proposals on areas where gradual integration could be possible seems to be saturated with ideas as the majority of the expert papers as well as governmental non-papers are arriving to a very similar set of policies. The areas usually mentioned are the EU's Single Market, energy, green agenda, research, digital policies, foreign policy and defence and security.¹⁰ Some rather easily achievable areas which would be also visible to the public are the SEPA, e-commerce, telecommunications and roaming, or gradual integration into the Digital Market.

There are already existing areas where an advanced level of integration with the EU already exists or provides for, such as the Transport Community and extension of TEN-T Network to the Western Balkans and Moldova and Ukraine, the Energy Community, Common Aviation Area or the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans or the above-mentioned Common Regional Market in the Western Balkans. In the area of migration management, close coordination between the EU and the

⁹ According to the European Policy Centre and CEPS analysis, the EU's stance is not to divide the four freedoms thus this approach would have to be reconsidered. M. Emerson, S. Blockmans, Sectoral policy integration in advance of accession – an alternative or complement to the Staged Accession model? Centre for European Policy Studies, July 2023, <https://cdn.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Sectoral-policy-integration-in-advance-of-accession.pdf>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Western Balkans has also developed including Frontex deployment in the Western Balkans or in the agreement on lowering data roaming fees between the EU and the Western Balkans, Moldova and Ukraine.¹¹ These are all areas where further integration should be explored.

In regard to these other areas of possible deeper integration, many of the most

It is in the interest of EU member states to cooperate on the environmental and climate policies both to avoid pollution by their neighbours and to equip the candidates with the necessary expertise, knowledge and funds to align themselves with the ambitious EU's green transition goals.

often mentioned are included under cluster 4 (e.g. transport, energy, connectivity via Trans-European networks, green agenda). However, the level of preparedness of individual candidate countries across the chapters differs significantly. For example, while in Chapter 14 (Transport) Montenegro,

North Macedonia and Serbia range from moderate to good level of preparedness, as is the case with Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine in Chapter 15 (Energy), in Chapter 27 (Environment and climate change) the countries are only between early stage of preparations to some level of preparation. Despite this low level of alignment, it is in the interest of EU member states to cooperate on the environmental and climate policies both to avoid pollution by their neighbours and to equip the candidates with the necessary expertise, knowledge and funds to align themselves with the ambitious EU's green transition goals. However, strict approach allowing deeper integration in sectoral,

¹¹ J. Juzová, Reinforcing the EU Enlargement Policy: Phasing-in as a Way to Overcome the Enlargement Impasse, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, June 2023, <https://europeum.org/data/articles/jana-juzova-reinforcing-the-eu-enlargement-policy.pdf>.

institutional and financial regards only based on a certain level of preparedness according to the EC's reports would prevent this.

Institutional integration

Advanced institutional integration would be very beneficial for the candidate countries as it would create opportunities for them to follow the discussions and direction of EU legislation and thus better adapt to these developments and possibly voice their perspectives and concerns. There are several opportunities for institutional integration to be gradually implemented. The candidate countries have access to some EU agencies but the majority of them as well as different comitologies do not enable their participation, as analysed by authors from IDSCS.¹² **If the candidate countries are to be treated as future members, the European Commission should create an overview of bodies where the candidates could be invited to and under what conditions.** Some of the candidate countries' experts created their own overviews and analysed their country's participation but given the number of these bodies, it is very difficult to gain a complete picture without the Commission's guidance. Contributions and access to different EU databases by the candidates should be also explored and expanded.

¹² I. Damjanovski, D. Tilev and Z. Nechev, A Blueprint For Accelerated Integration and Phasing-In, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, September 2023, <https://www.kas.de/documents/281657/281706/A+Blueprint+For+Accelerated+Integration+and+Phasing-In+PDF/3b3f48eb-c66a-da53-3347-dde1920250af?version=1.0&t=1695281640552>.

Similarly, in the Council of the EU the good practice of inviting candidate countries' representatives to informal meetings or parts of Council meetings where their input could be relevant, for example in the area of foreign policy, energy, migration etc., should be continued and established as a normal practice. Some experts also suggest exploring less formal cooperation at the level of Council preparatory

Furthermore, these contacts developed through institutional integration would help the trust-building process between the EU member states and candidates, contributing to the shifting mindset from thinking about the candidates as third countries to considering them future members.

bodies such as sharing of detailed briefings of the agendas, draft policy papers, or draft decisions and legislative proposals with the candidates.¹³ Another discussed options for institutional integration is involving members of parliaments from the candidate countries as observers in the European Parliament. The seats available after Brexit could be potentially used for the observers.

Apart from the practical impact of increased information and opportunity for inputs to the preparation of EU legislation and other decisions, the inclusion of candidates' representatives in the work of EU institutions would enhance also the socialization of actors from different parts of candidates' administration. It would involve other ministries besides the ministry responsible for EU integration and the representatives thus could better develop their own network of contacts already before the EU accession, in a longer period than the usual time before ratification of the accession agreement. Furthermore, these contacts developed

¹³ D. Tilev, "The Phasing-in Approach for Accelerated Integration into the European Union, or Encapsulation into the Western Balkans", *Foreign Policy Review*, 2023, pp. 32-44, online at https://kki.hu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/mki_FPR_beliv_online_32-44_tilev.pdf.

through institutional integration would help the trust-building process between the EU member states and candidates, contributing to the shifting mindset from thinking about the candidates as third countries to considering them future members.

Financial implications of the next EU enlargement

The financial and economic implications are among the main concerns of the EU countries when discussing next EU enlargement and especially in connection to Ukraine's EU membership. Several studies providing these estimates have emerged over the last years in relation to the Western Balkans and few on Ukraine's EU accession impacts during this year. While these calculations are an important input into the discussions about the readiness of the EU for future enlargement, there are many variables that are still simply unknown or difficult to account for.

According to the Bertelsmann Stiftung study,¹⁴ the potential inclusion of the Western Balkan countries in the EU budget would increase the financial burden for individual EU Member States between 0.009 % to 0.04 % of their gross national income (GNI). Researchers from University of Ljubljana arrive to similar but narrower range of 0.014% to 0.026% of member states' GNI, or between €1.6 and €10.8 per capita per year €1.6 to €10.8 per capita per year.¹⁵

¹⁴ Pushing on a string? An evaluation of regional economic cooperation in the Western Balkans, Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.), August 2020, <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/publications/publication/did/pushing-on-a-string-en>, p. 79.

¹⁵ Vasja Rant, Mojmir Mrak and Matej Marinč, "The Western Balkans and the EU budget: the effects of enlargement," School of Economics and Business, University of Ljubljana, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 2020, Vol. 20, No. 3, 431–453, p. 442.

The recent study by CEP on financial and economic implications of application of their staged accession model¹⁶ builds upon these calculations and suggests three options for increasing participation of candidates in the EU budget according to different accession stages. The revised template for staged accession suggests the candidates would receive up to 40 % of funding usually available after full membership already in Stage 1, up to 60 % in Stage 2 and full funding upon becoming full members. Regarding contributions of the acceding countries, the first proposed option (variant A according to CEP) accounts traditionally for full contributions upon obtaining full membership. Second option (variant B) suggests a gradual increase in contributions also upon obtaining full membership. The third option (variant C) then assumes gradual contributions by the candidates already in the pre-accession phase. As the authors emphasise, even without the contributions by the candidates in the pre-accession phase, it cannot be expected that all candidate countries would enter the accession stages at the same time thus realistically the costs associated with gradual/staged integration of the Western Balkan countries into the EU would be significantly lower than the models by Bertelsmann Stiftung or Ljubljana University. The CEP study estimates that the accession of Western Balkans would increase the EU budget spending by €35 billion,¹⁷ if we don't assume any national contributions to the EU budget from the newcomers, which would certainly be the case at least in a gradually increasing manner. Media reporting about internal calculations of the Council of the EU show that inclusion of the six Western Balkan countries, Moldova and Georgia would mean a burden of €74 billion to the EU budget.¹⁸

¹⁶ S. Subotic, On financial and economic implications of the Staged accession model on the EU budget, and on acceding countries' budgets, European Policy Centre, June 2023, https://cep.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Budget_Paper.pdf.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ B. Moens, "Ukraine's accession would cost €186B, EU estimates," *POLITICO*, October 4, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-accession-cost-186-billion-eu-enlargement/>.

Similar financial impact can be expected in the case of Moldova and Georgia, but a different picture naturally emerges with Ukraine in question. It is already clear that the size and level of development of Ukraine's economy will be a challenge for the EU's absorption capacity and that the current mechanisms for distribution of structural and cohesion funds as well as the Common Agricultural Policy will have to change.

funds as well as the Common Agricultural Policy will have to change. The recently emerged studies on the actual economic impacts, however, differ significantly in their conclusions. On one hand, the Council of the EU note shows that according to current rules, Ukraine's EU membership could lead to some €186 billion EU budget allocation to the country over the seven-year period. These calculations also stipulate an increase to the EU budget of 21 % in case of accession of all nine membership aspirants (without Turkey), many of the current net recipients from the EU budget becoming net contributors and Ukraine's inclusion in CAP leading to a cut around 20 % for the current EU member states.¹⁹ On the other hand, a recent study published by ICDS shows more optimistic estimates – while Ukraine would be eligible to €18 to 19 billion per year (€126 - €133 bn over seven years) as a net beneficiary leading to an increase in contributions by current EU member states by 10 %, the authors argue it wouldn't cause any of the current net beneficiaries becoming net contributors. Furthermore, according to the study the impact of Ukraine's EU membership would be softened by the introduction of a

¹⁹ H. Foy, "EU estimates Ukraine entitled to €186bn after accession," *Financial Times*, October 4, 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/a8834254-b8f9-4385-b043-04c2a7cd54c8>.

transitional period for direct payments of agricultural subsidies (as was the case in 2004 enlargement for a ten-year period), the capping mechanisms negotiated and revised for each MFF, and potentially the question of other international funding for Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery as well as potential use of frozen Russian assets.²⁰

However, it is important to keep in mind that all studies build on the existing budget rules and policies which will have to change substantially for the EU to be ready to accept Ukraine as a member state. An alternative option would be to develop different financial instruments for Ukraine, at least for a transitional period, as is the case also with the IPA III funds where Ukraine cannot be now realistically included and the funding is provided through the Ukraine Facility.

In the same time, the financial incentives provided by the gradual integration and by other instruments such as the recently introduced Growth Plan for the Western Balkans are most likely the only means with potential to enhance the reform process in the candidate countries. While deeper integration into EU policies and institutions is desirable and beneficial for the candidates, the costs associated for the leaders with the difficult reforms, especially in the Fundamentals cluster, are still too high. Tangible and significant financial incentives can prove to be more interesting, especially if they are properly communicated to the public and accompanied by strict conditionality. The release of funds as well as integration into the Single Market should be conditioned by substantial progress on the fundamental chapters in cluster 1 and given the geopolitical situation also possibly cluster 6.

²⁰ M. Emerson, The Potential Impact of Ukrainian Accession on the EU's Budget – and the Importance of Control Valves, International Centre for Defence and Security, September 2023, <https://cdn.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ICDS-Policy-Paper-Impact-of-Ukrainian-Accession-on-the-EU-Budget.pdf>.

As regards the financial instruments, CEP proposes three options – integration into

The Growth Plan with its time span until 2027 falls into the third category and its size could be promising in terms of motivating reforms. However, for the instrument to have a chance to bring the desired results, the conditionality attached to the release of funding will have to be very strict, combined with more rigorous monitoring on the side of the EC.

the EU budget in the pre-accession phase, change of the IPA III funding or introduction of a new instrument parallel to the IPA III.²¹ The Growth Plan with its time span until 2027 falls into the third category and its size could be promising in terms of motivating reforms. However, for the instrument

to have a chance to bring the desired results, the conditionality attached to the release of funding will have to be very strict, combined with more rigorous monitoring on the side of the EC. The Plan could be a good start, but a new instrument should be developed beyond its scope, if integration into the EU budget would not be possible by then. In order to have the desired impact and to indeed help narrow the development gap, the new instrument should ideally include principle of macroeconomic assistance, to avoid possible limited impact due to lack of absorption capacity, combined with strong “fundamentals” conditionality and clear guidance from the EC in setting the objectives and monitoring their fulfilment. For any financial instrument to work in enhancing the reform process in the candidate countries, it is necessary for the EU to be actually willing to apply the conditionality and potentially the reversibility principle. While

²¹ M. Mihajlovic, Reforming the EU’s pre-accession funding instrument: Effective membership preparation through the Staged Accession Model, European Policy Centre, September 2023, <https://cep.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Reforming-the-EUs-pre-accession-funding-instrument.pdf>.

positive financial incentives may not necessarily have the desired effect due to small absorption capacity, negative incentives will be felt in any case.

Conclusion: Towards flexible gradual integration for all

As reasoned above, a universal template for gradual integration would be difficult and possibly inappropriate to apply, although proposed by the staged accession model in order to develop and progress across the clusters in a balanced manner. Each of the candidate countries has slightly different needs and is in a different stage in individual chapters and clusters. Applying the same approach to the gradual integration of all candidates could enable some to integrate in areas which might not be as beneficial for them as for some of their neighbours and stall integration in areas where the benefits would be most significant.

As such, the staged accession model does not provide a solution to the

Tying the gradual integration to the formal accession process would keep the benefits from some (potential) candidates who are not in the position to start the accession negotiations anytime soon.

developmental gap between the EU and the candidates in the foreseeable future as no country is currently ready for the Stage 1 of the model, associated with the potential allocation of funds.

Furthermore, tying the gradual integration to the formal accession process would keep the benefits from some (potential) candidates who are not in the position to start the accession negotiations anytime soon. In the case of Kosovo this situation is also not entirely in the country's own hands and blocking the benefits of deeper cooperation on issues such as connectivity, green agenda, or foreign policy on this basis would risk creating a black hole in the middle of Western Balkans. Where universality needs to be applied is the cluster 1 and cluster 6 and integration of

each country into the Single Market or access to additional funds need to be conditioned with specific and targeted priority reforms and alignment areas identified by the European Commission.

In terms of sectoral integration, apart from the Single Market integration in most of the proposed areas is very much in the interest of the EU member states as well as the candidates (energy, green agenda, research, digital policies, foreign policy, defence and security), especially in the context of the polarized geopolitical situation and high level of interconnectedness between the candidates (especially from Western Balkans) and EU members. While gradual integration into these policy areas might not have such a strong motivational effect on the candidates, it is an important symbolic as well as pragmatic step benefiting both, the candidates and the EU countries. For these pragmatic reasons, integration in these areas tackling shared challenges could be less conditioned. At the symbolic level, advancing the integration in these areas together with institutional integration would show the candidate countries and their citizens that the EU counts with them as close partners. Integration in these practical areas would have also other less visible effects – increased socialization of different actors and gradual increase of capacities and expertise already before accession.

The most voiced concern of the gradual integration approach is the risk of further stalling of the EU enlargement process. On one hand, there is the risk of EU member states stalling the process in order to maintain integration in areas which are beneficial for them without progressing towards full-fledged accession of the candidates. On the other, the leaders of the candidate countries who show hesitancy to advance on the difficult reforms, particularly in the area of fundamentals, can be satisfied with a certain level of integration in some areas instead of working continuously towards full membership.

The staged accession model addresses this risk through the horizontal tying of all chapters together with joint minimal requirements on alignment in order for the candidate to progress from one stage to another and by offering increasing financial incentives in each stage. From the gradual integration perspective, the risk of candidates diverting from the path towards membership can be mitigated only through a strict application of conditionality in clusters 1 and 6 (fundamentals and external relations) and of the reversibility principle where even stagnation, not only regression, of the reforms process provides the basis for denying of some of the benefits and financial incentives. The financial incentives offered have to be robust enough to create enough motivation for the leaders and should be combined with gradual integration into the EU's Single Market. As emphasised in the above analysis, integration into different EU policies alone, associated agencies and bodies, will not have the desired transformation effect, unless accompanied with significant funds. The issue of member states stalling the process and blocking it at different stages cannot be easily overcome – the solution would be tied to a larger change of voting in the Council of the EU and removal of the unanimity requirement in the intermediary stages of the accession process.

The issue of member states stalling the process and blocking it at different stages cannot be easily overcome – the solution would be tied to a larger change of voting in the Council of the EU and removal of the unanimity requirement in the intermediary stages of the accession process.

Another risk of the gradual integration approach to enlargement is the lack of predictability of the process which the staged accession model tries to address. In order to maintain flexibility in the gradual integration approach with the ability to react to the individual situation and needs of each candidate and development in

their alignment under different chapters, stronger steer by the European Commission endorsed by the member states could help to mitigate this risk. Ideally, the Commission together with the governments of the candidate countries would identify areas where deeper integration would be most beneficial for the candidates and where integration into EU policies and institutions would be possible.

On this basis, the Commission together with the candidates should develop clear roadmaps for example for the next three, five and seven years outlining what exactly is expected from each candidate in terms of alignment with the acquis in each of these timeframes and what the EU is ready to offer in return in terms of gradual integration and EU accession. These roadmaps should be endorsed by the member states in order to show their commitment to progress on the enlargement process towards the candidates' full-fledged EU membership. As part of the Commission's annual Enlargement Package and country reports, annual Action Plans for each candidate should be published and publicly communicated, containing clearly defined reform priorities for the upcoming year together with specified progress in gradual

integration and allocation of available funds in case of fulfilling these priorities. The Action Plans could be confirmed in the format of the Stabilization and Association Council, in the case of Western Balkans, and their inclusion in the Enlargement Package would ensure the involvement of the EU member states in

The Commission together with the candidates should develop clear roadmaps for example for the next three, five and seven years outlining what exactly is expected from each candidate in terms of alignment with the acquis in each of these timeframes and what the EU is ready to offer in return in terms of gradual integration and EU accession.

the process Similarly, renewal or country accession partnership action plans in case of North Macedonia and their extension to other candidates could be another option.²²

However, the fundamental issue of the concepts of gradual integration, phasing in or staged accession approaches is that they are often viewed as substitutes for the enlargement process. This perception is rather a reflection of the deteriorated credibility of the EU enlargement as such, allowing for any new initiative to be seen as a diversion from the process instead of something that could enhance it. The same concerns followed the establishment of the Berlin Process for the Western Balkans in 2014, when EU enlargement was officially put on hold, or the introduction of the European Political Community. The credibility of the enlargement perspective is potentially further weakened in the context of a wider

However, the fundamental issue of the concepts of gradual integration, phasing in or staged accession approaches is that they are often viewed as substitutes for the enlargement process. This perception is rather a reflection of the deteriorated credibility of the EU enlargement as such, allowing for any new initiative to be seen as a diversion from the process instead of something that could enhance it

discussion about reform of the EU and its design and functioning in the future with differentiated integration resulting in a multi-speed Europe on the table. With a more and more blurred picture of where the accession process is actually heading, with various actors interpreting it in different ways, EU's mixed messages are a natural consequence leading to only half-hearted

²² D. Tilev, "The Phasing-in Approach for Accelerated Integration into the European Union, or Encapsulation into the Western Balkans", https://kki.hu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/mki_FPR_beliv_online_32-44_tilev.pdf.

reforms on the side of the candidates. Without setting a clear direction with a roadmap and timeline on how to get there, the EU risks further deterioration of credibility of the process and eventual erosion of enlargement as a transformative instrument.

Recommendations

- The European Commission should create a new strategy in the framework of the current methodology which would in concrete terms specify its approach to the gradual integration of (potential) candidates into the EU and the conditions guiding the process. The Strategy for the Western Balkans from 2018 should serve as a basis for the new strategy.
- Before the election to the European Parliament in 2024, the EU should advance gradual integration of candidates in areas of shared interest, such as foreign policy, energy, climate and environment, transport, research and education, or digital policies.
- The European Council should commit to regularly inviting representatives of the candidate countries at least to parts of relevant Council meetings where topics of shared interest are discussed.
- The European Commission should provide a comprehensive overview of comitologies and agencies where participation of third countries is possible and should explore ways how to open this participation to the (potential) candidates for EU membership.
- While integration of candidate countries into the EU's Single Market can have a strong motivational effect, it has to be approached with high level of precaution and complex conditionality on the EU's side (not only in cluster 2 but also cluster 1 and 6).

- The financial incentives provided to the candidate countries need to be reformed and new instruments should be developed. The release of funds from the Growth Plan for Western Balkans has to be tied with a strict conditionality (especially in cluster 1 and 6) and combined with more rigorous monitoring on the side of the European Commission.
- Under the next MFF, a new instrument should be developed based on the experience with the Growth Plan, if integration of candidates into the EU budget would not be possible by then. The new instrument should include macroeconomic assistance to avoid possible limited impact due to lack of absorption capacity, combined with strong “fundamentals” conditionality and clear guidance from the Commission in setting the objectives and monitoring their fulfilment.
- The EU should avoid steps leading to making the enlargement process more complicated – instead, the process would benefit from streamlining and more clarity in terms of the end goal, short- and medium-term roadmaps, timelines and annual action plans provided by the European Commission in cooperation with the candidate countries and endorsed by the EU member states. Clear communication of the expected reform priorities each year is crucial for holding the leaders in the candidate countries accountable.
- Separation of DG Enlargement from DG Neighbourhoods should be considered under the next European Commission mandate, with coordination points in line DGs, equipping the DGs with sufficient capacities and showing that enlargement is again among the Commission’s priorities. The Commissioner for Enlargement portfolio should be associated with the position of the Vice President of the Commission, which would clearly signal the commitment from the EU’s side.
- To restore credibility in the EU enlargement, the discussion on the introduction of QMV in intermediary stages of the process should be advanced in order to

avoid its stalling due to different political reasons of individual EU member states.

- A mechanism for the resolution of bilateral issues outside of the accession process needs to be established to prevent bilateral issues from blocking the progress of candidates despite their reform efforts due to vetoes by individual EU member states.

Annex I

Quantified level of preparedness of individual (potential) candidates for EU membership

ALBANIA

Public administration reform	moderately prepared	3
Judicial system	moderately prepared	3
Fight against corruption	some level of preparation	2
Fight against organized crime	some level of preparation	2
Freedom of expression	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5
Economic criteria: market economy	moderate/good level of preparedness	3,5
Economic criteria: competitiveness	some level of preparation	2

CLUSTER 1 - FUNDAMENTALS						average
Chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights	some level of preparation/moderately prepared	2,5				2,8

Chapter 24 - Justice, freedom and security	some level of preparation/moderately prepared	2,5	
Chapter 5 - Public procurement	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 18 - Statistics	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 32 - Financial control	moderately prepared	3	
CLUSTER 2 - INTERNAL MARKET			average
Chapter 1 - Free movement of goods	some level of preparation/moderately prepared	2,5	2,6
Chapter 2 - Freedom of movement for workers	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 3 - Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 4 - Free movement of capital	moderately prepared	3	

Chapter 6	-	moderately prepared	3	
Company law				
Chapter 7	-	moderately prepared	3	
Intellectual property law				
Chapter 8	-	some level of preparation/moderately prepared	2,5	
Competition policy				
Chapter 9	-	moderate/good level of preparation	3,5	
Financial services				
Chapter 28	-	early stage of preparations	1	
Consumer and health protection				
CLUSTER 3 – COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH				average
Chapter 10 – Digital transformation and media		moderately prepared	3	2,9
Chapter 16	-	moderately prepared	3	
Taxation				
Chapter 17	-	moderate/good level of preparation	3,5	
Economic and monetary policy				
Chapter 19 – Social policy and employment		moderately prepared	3	

Chapter 20 - Enterprise and industrial policy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 25 - Science and research	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 26 - Education and culture	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 29 - Customs union	moderately prepared	3	
CLUSTER 4 - GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY			average
Chapter 14 - Transport	some level of preparation	2	2,4
Chapter 15 - Energy	moderate/good level of preparation	3,5	
Chapter 21 - Trans-European networks	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 27 - Environment and climate change	some level of preparation	2	
CLUSTER 5 - RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND COHESION			

Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development	some level of preparation	2	2,4
Chapter 12 - Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 13 - Fisheries and aquaculture	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions	some level of preparation	2	
CLUSTER 6 - EXTERNAL RELATIONS			average
Chapter 30 - External relations	good level of preparation	4	4
Chapter 31 - Foreign, security and defence policy	good level of preparation	4	

* third pillar according to Staged accession model 2.0 – early (1) to advanced (5) level of preparedness

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Public administration reform	early stage of preparation	1
Judicial system	early stage/some level of preparation	1,5
Fight against corruption	early stage/some level of preparation	1,5
Fight against organized crime	early stage/some level of preparation	1,5
Freedom of expression	some level of preparation	2
Economic criteria: market economy	early stage of preparation	1
Economic criteria: competitiveness	early stage/some level of preparation	1,5

CLUSTER 1 - FUNDAMENTALS				average
Chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights	some level of preparation	2		1,8

Chapter 24 - Justice, freedom and security	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 5 - Public procurement	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 18 - Statistics	early stage of preparations	1	
Chapter 32 - Financial control	some level of preparation	2	
CLUSTER 2 - INTERNAL MARKET			average
Chapter 1 - Free movement of goods	early stage of preparations	1	1,9
Chapter 2 - Freedom of movement for workers	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 3 - Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	early stage of preparation	1	
Chapter 4 - Free movement of capital	moderately prepared	3	

Chapter 6	-	some level of preparation	2	
Company law				
Chapter 7	-	moderately prepared	3	
Intellectual property law				
Chapter 8	-	some level of preparation	2	
Competition policy				
Chapter 9	-	some level of preparation/moderately prepared	2,5	
Chapter 28	-	early stage of preparations	1	
Consumer and health protection				
CLUSTER 3 – COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH				average
Chapter 10 – Digital transformation and media		early stage of preparations	1	1,5
Chapter 16	-	some level of preparation	2	
Taxation				
Chapter 17	-	early stage of preparations	1	
Economic and monetary policy				
Chapter 19 – Social policy and employment		some level of preparation	2	

Chapter 20 - Enterprise and industrial policy	early stage of preparations	1	
Chapter 25 - Science and research	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 26 - Education and culture	early stage of preparations	1	
Chapter 29 - Customs union	some level of preparation	2	
CLUSTER 4 - GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY			average
Chapter 14 - Transport	some level of preparation	2	1,6
Chapter 15 - Energy	early stage of preparations	1	
Chapter 21 - Trans-European networks	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 27 - Environment and climate change	early stage/some level of preparation	1,5	
CLUSTER 5 - RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND COHESION			average

Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development	early stage of preparations	1	1,2
Chapter 12 - Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 13 - Fisheries	early stage of preparations	1	
Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	early stage of preparations	1	
Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions	early stage of preparations	1	
CLUSTER 6 - EXTERNAL RELATIONS			average
Chapter 30 - External relations	some level of preparation	2	2
Chapter 31 - Foreign, security and defence policy	some level of preparation	2	

KOSOVO

Public administration reform	some level of preparation	2
Judicial system	early stage of preparations	1
Fight against corruption	early stage/some level of preparation	1,5
Fight against organized crime	early stage of preparations	1
Freedom of expression	some level of preparation	2
Economic criteria: market economy	early stage/some level of preparation	1,5
Economic criteria: competitiveness	early stage of preparations	1

CLUSTER 1 - FUNDAMENTALS				average
Chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights	early stage/some level of preparation	1,5		1,9
Chapter 24 - Justice, freedom and security	early stage/some level of preparation	1,5		

Chapter 5 - Public procurement	some level of preparation/moderately prepared	2,5	
Chapter 18 - Statistics	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 32 - Financial control	some level of preparation	2	
CLUSTER 2 - INTERNAL MARKET			average
Chapter 1 - Free movement of goods	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5	2,4
Chapter 2 - Freedom of movement for workers	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 3 - Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 4 - Free movement of capital	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 6 - Company law	some level of preparation	2	

Chapter 7	-	moderately prepared	3	
Intellectual property law				
Chapter 8	-	some level of preparation	2	
Competition policy				
Chapter 9	-	moderately prepared	3	
Financial services				
Chapter 28	-	early stage of preparations	1	
Consumer and health protection				
CLUSTER 3 – COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH				average
Chapter 10 – Digital transformation and media		some level of preparation	2	2,1
Chapter 16	-	some level of preparation	2	
Taxation				
Chapter 17	-	moderately prepared	3	
Economic and monetary policy				
Chapter 19 – Social policy and employment		early stage of preparations	1	
Chapter 20	-	moderately prepared	3	
Entreprise and industrial policy				

Chapter 25 - Science and research	early stage of preparations	1	
Chapter 26 - Education and culture	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 29 - Customs union	moderately prepared	3	
CLUSTER 4 - GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY			average
Chapter 14 - Transport	early stage of preparations	1	1,5
Chapter 15 - Energy	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 21 - Trans-European networks	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 27 - Environment and climate change	early stage of preparations	1	
CLUSTER 5 - RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND COHESION			average
Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development	some level of preparation	2	1,6

Chapter 12 - Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5	
Chapter 13 - Fisheries and aquaculture	early stage of preparations	1	
Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	early stage of preparations	1	
CLUSTER 6 - EXTERNAL RELATIONS			average
Chapter 30 - External relations	early stage of preparations	1	1

MONTENEGRO

Public administration reform	moderately prepared	3
Judicial system	moderately prepared	3
Fight against corruption	some level of preparation	2
Fight against organized crime	some level of preparation	2

Freedom of expression	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5
Economic criteria: market economy	moderately prepared	3
Economic criteria: competitiveness	moderately prepared	3

CLUSTER 1 - FUNDAMENTALS			average
Chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights	moderately prepared	3	3,1
Chapter 24 - Justice, freedom and security	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 5 - Public procurement	moderately prepared/good level of preparation	3,5	
Chapter 18 - Statistics	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 32 - Financial control	moderately prepared	3	
CLUSTER 2 - INTERNAL MARKET			average
Chapter 1 - Free movement of goods	moderately prepared	3	3,1

Chapter 2 - Freedom of movement for workers	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 3 - Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 4 - Free movement of capital	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 6 - Company law	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 7 - Intellectual property law	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 8 - Competition policy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 9 - Financial services	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 28 - Consumer and health protection	moderately prepared	3	
CLUSTER 3 - COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH		average	

Chapter 10 - Digital transformation and media	moderately prepared	3	3,2
Chapter 16 - Taxation	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 17 - Economic and monetary policy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 19 - Social policy and employment	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 20 - Enterprise and industrial policy	moderately prepared/good level of preparation	3,5	
Chapter 25 - Science and research	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 26 - Education and culture	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 29 - Customs union	moderately prepared	3	
CLUSTER 4 - GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY			

Chapter 14 - Transport	moderately prepared/good level of preparation	3,5	3,3
Chapter 15 - Energy	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 21 - Trans-European networks	moderately prepared/good level of preparation	3,5	
Chapter 27 - Environment and climate change	some level of preparation	2	
CLUSTER 5 - RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND COHESION			average
Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development	moderately prepared	3	2,6
Chapter 12 - Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 13 - Fisheries	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of	moderately prepared	3	

structural instruments				
Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions	some level of preparation	2		
CLUSTER 6 - EXTERNAL RELATIONS				average
Chapter 30 - External relations	good level of preparation	4		4
Chapter 31 - Foreign, security and defence policy	good level of preparation	4		

State of play of the accession negotiations:

Clusters	Chapters / areas	Date chapter opened / closed with interim or closing benchmarks
Fundamentals <i>All chapters open</i>	23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights	December 2013
	24 - Justice, freedom and security	December 2013
	5 - Public procurement	December 2014
	18 - Statistics	June 2014
	32 - Financial control	

	<p>...Economic criteria</p> <p>...Functioning of democratic institutions</p> <p>...Public administration reform</p>	
<p>Internal Market</p> <p><i>All chapters open</i></p>	<p>1 – Free movement of goods</p> <p>2 – Freedom of movement for workers</p> <p>3 – Right of establishment and freedom to establish services</p> <p>4 – Free movement of capital</p> <p>6 – Company law</p> <p>7 – Intellectual property rights</p> <p>8 – Competition</p> <p>9 – Financial services</p> <p>28 – Consumer and health protection</p>	<p>June 2017</p> <p>December 2017</p> <p>December 2017</p> <p>June 2014</p> <p>December 2013</p> <p>March 2014</p> <p>June 2020</p> <p>June 2015</p> <p>December 2014</p>
<p>Competitiveness and inclusive growth</p> <p><i>All chapters open ch.25 and 26 provisionally closed</i></p>	<p>10 – Digital transformation and media</p> <p>16 – Taxation</p> <p>17 – Economic and monetary policy</p> <p>19 – Social policy and employment</p>	<p>March 2014</p> <p>March 2015</p> <p>June 2018</p> <p>December 2016</p> <p>December 2013</p>

	<p>20 – Enterprise and industrial policy</p> <p>25 – <i>Science and research</i></p> <p>26 – <i>Education and culture</i></p> <p>29 – Customs union</p>	<p>December 2012 (opened and closed – no closing benchmarks);</p> <p>April 2013 (opened and closed – no closing benchmarks)</p> <p>December 2014</p>
<p>Green Agenda and Sustainable connectivity</p> <p><i>All chapters open</i></p>	<p>14 – Transport policy</p> <p>15 – Energy</p> <p>21 – Trans-European networks</p> <p>27 – Environment and climate change</p>	<p>December 2015</p> <p>December 2015</p> <p>June 2015</p> <p>December 2018</p>
<p>Resources, Agriculture and cohesion</p> <p><i>All chapters open</i></p>	<p>11 – Agriculture and rural development</p> <p>12 – Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy</p> <p>13 – Fisheries</p> <p>22 – Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments</p>	<p>December 2016</p> <p>June 2016</p> <p>June 2016</p> <p>June 2017</p> <p>December 2014</p>

	33 - Financial and budgetary provisions	
External Relations	30 - External relations	March 2015 - June 2017 provisionally closed
<i>Both chapters open, ch.30 provisionally closed</i>	31 - Foreign, security and defence policy	June 2014

Not part of a cluster: chapters 34 Institutions, and 35 Other issues are currently not applicable for Montenegro.

NORTH MACEDONIA

Public administration reform	moderately prepared	3
Judicial system	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5
Fight against corruption	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5
Fight against organized crime	some level of preparation	2
Freedom of expression	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5
Economic criteria: market economy	good level of preparation	4

Economic competitiveness	criteria:	moderately prepared	3
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CLUSTER 1 - FUNDAMENTALS				average
Chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights	some level of preparation/moderately prepared	2,5		2,9
Chapter 24 - Justice, freedom and security	moderately prepared	3		
Chapter 5 - Public procurement	moderately prepared	3		
Chapter 18 - Statistics	moderately prepared	3		
Chapter 32 - Financial control	moderately prepared	3		
CLUSTER 2 - INTERNAL MARKET				
Chapter 1 - Free movement of goods	moderately prepared	3		2,9
Chapter 2 - Freedom of movement for workers	early stage of preparations	1		

Chapter 3 - Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 4 - Free movement of capital	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 6 - Company law	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 7 - Intellectual property law	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 8 - Competition policy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 9 - Financial services	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 28 - Consumer and health protection	moderately prepared	3	
CLUSTER 3 - COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH			
Chapter 10 - Digital transformation and media	moderately prepared	3	3,3
Chapter 16 - Taxation	moderately prepared	3	

Chapter 17 - Economic and monetary policy	moderate/good level of preparation	3,5	
Chapter 19 - Social policy and employment	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 20 - Enterprise and industrial policy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 25 - Science and research	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 26 - Education and culture	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 29 - Customs union	good level of preparation	4	
CLUSTER 4 - GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY			average
Chapter 14 - Transport	moderately prepared	3	3
Chapter 15 - Energy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 21 - Trans-European networks	good level of preparation	4	

Chapter 27 - Environment and climate change	some level of preparation	2	
CLUSTER 5 - RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND COHESION			average
Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development	moderately prepared	3	2,8
Chapter 12 - Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 13 - Fisheries	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions	early stage of preparations	1	
CLUSTER 6 - EXTERNAL RELATIONS			
Chapter 30 - External relations	moderately prepared	3	3,5

Chapter 31 - Foreign, security and defence policy	good level of preparation	4	
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SERBIA

Public administration reform	moderately prepared	3
Judicial system	some level of preparation	2
Fight against corruption	some level of preparation	2
Fight against organized crime	some level of preparation	2
Freedom of expression	some level of preparation	2
Economic criteria: market economy	good level of preparedness	4
Economic criteria: competitiveness	moderately prepared	3

CLUSTER 1 - FUNDAMENTALS	average
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Chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights	some level of preparation	2	2,6
Chapter 24 - Justice, freedom and security	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 5 - Public procurement	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 18 - Statistics	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 32 - Financial control	moderately prepared	3	
CLUSTER 2 - INTERNAL MARKET			average
Chapter 1 - Free movement of goods	moderately prepared	3	3,2
Chapter 2 - Freedom of movement for workers	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 3 - Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	moderately prepared	3	

Chapter 4 - Free movement of capital	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 6 - Company law	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 7 - Intellectual property law	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 8 - Competition policy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 9 - Financial services	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 28 - Consumer and health protection	moderately prepared	3	
CLUSTER 3 - COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH			
Chapter 10 - Digital transformation and media	moderately prepared	3	3,4
Chapter 16 - Taxation	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 17 - Economic and monetary policy	moderate/good level of preparation	3,5	

Chapter 19 - Social policy and employment	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 20 - Enterprise and industrial policy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 25 - Science and research	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 26 - Education and culture	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 29 - Customs union	good level of preparation	4	
CLUSTER 4 - GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY			average
Chapter 14 - Transport	good level of preparation	4	3
Chapter 15 - Energy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 21 - Trans-European networks	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 27 - Environment and climate change	some level of preparation	2	
CLUSTER 5 - RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND COHESION			

Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development	some level of preparation	2	2,6
Chapter 12 - Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 13 - Fisheries	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions	some level of preparation	2	
CLUSTER 6 - EXTERNAL RELATIONS			average
Chapter 30 - External relations	moderately prepared	3	3
Chapter 31 - Foreign, security and defence policy	moderately prepared	3	

State of play of the accession negotiations:

Clusters	Chapters / areas	State of play
Fundamentals <i>All chapters open</i>	23 – Judiciary and fundamental rights 24 – Justice, freedom and security 5 – Public procurement 18 – Statistics 32 – Financial control ...Economic criteria ...Functioning of democratic institutions ...Public administration reform	Opened July 2016 Opened July 2016 Opened December 2016 Opened December 2018 Opened December 2015
Internal Market <i>4 chapters open</i>	1 – Free movement of goods 2 – Freedom of movement for workers 3 – Right of establishment and freedom to establish services 4 – Free movement of capital	Serbia working on fulfilment of opening benchmarks Draft EU Common Position in Council Draft EU Common Position in Council Opened December 2019 Opened December 2017

	<p>6 – Company law</p> <p>7 – Intellectual property rights</p> <p>8 – Competition</p> <p>9 – Financial services</p> <p>28 – Consumer and health protection</p>	<p>Opened June 2017</p> <p>Serbia working on fulfilment of opening benchmarks</p> <p>Opened June 2019</p> <p>Draft EU Common Position in Council</p>
<p>Competitiveness and inclusive growth</p> <p><i>5 chapters open</i></p>	<p>10 – Digital transformation and media</p> <p>16 – Taxation</p> <p>17 – Economic and monetary policy</p> <p>19 – Social policy and employment</p> <p>20 – Enterprise and industrial policy</p> <p>25 – Science and research</p> <p>26 – Education and culture</p>	<p>Draft EU Common Position in Council</p> <p>Opening Benchmarks Assessment Report in Council</p> <p>Opened December 2018</p> <p>Opening Benchmarks Assessment Report in Council</p> <p>Opened February 2017</p> <p>Opened December 2016 and provisionally closed</p> <p>Opened February 2017 and provisionally closed</p> <p>Opened June 2017</p>

	29 – Customs union	
Green Agenda and Sustainable connectivity <i>All chapters open</i>	14 – Transport policy 15 – Energy 21 – Trans-European networks 27 – Environment and climate change	Opened December 2021 Opened December 2021 Opened December 2021 Opened December 2021
Resources, Agriculture and cohesion <i>2 chapters open</i>	11 – Agriculture and rural development 12 – Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy 13 – Fisheries 22 – Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments 33 – Financial and budgetary provisions	Opening Benchmarks Assessment Report in Council Serbia working on fulfilment of opening benchmarks Opened June 2018 Opening Benchmarks Assessment Report in Council Opened June 2018
External Relations <i>1 chapter opened</i>	30 – External relations 31 – Foreign, security and defence policy	Opened December 2017 Screening Report in Council

Not part of a cluster:

Chapter 34 – Institutions is currently not applicable for Serbia



Chapter 35 – Other Issues / Normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo opened in December 2015

UKRAINE

Public administration reform	some level of preparation	2
Judicial system	some level of preparation	2
Fight against corruption	some level of preparation	2
Fight against organized crime	some level of preparation	2
Freedom of expression	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5
Economic criteria: market economy	early stage/some level of preparation	1,5
Economic criteria: competitiveness	early stage of preparation	1

CLUSTER 1 - FUNDAMENTALS			average
Chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights	some level of preparation	2	1,8

Chapter 24 - Justice, freedom and security	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 5 - Public procurement	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 18 - Statistics	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 32 - Financial control	early stage of preparations	1	
CLUSTER 2 - INTERNAL MARKET			average
Chapter 1 - Free movement of goods	moderately prepared	3	2,1
Chapter 2 - Freedom of movement for workers	early stage of preparation	1	
Chapter 3 - Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 4 - Free movement of capital	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5	

Chapter 6	-	some level of preparation	2	
Company law				
Chapter 7	-	some level of preparation	2	
Intellectual property law				
Chapter 8	-	some level of preparation	2	
Competition policy				
Chapter 9	-	some level of preparation	2	
Financial services				
Chapter 28	-	some level of preparation	2	
Consumer and health protection				
CLUSTER 3 – COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH				average
Chapter 10 – Digital transformation and media		moderate/good level of preparation	3,5	2,6
Chapter 16	-	some level of preparation	2	
Taxation				
Chapter 17	-	moderately prepared	3	
Economic and monetary policy				
Chapter 19 – Social policy and employment		early stage of preparations	1	

Chapter 20 - Entreprise and industrial policy	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 25 - Science and research	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 26 - Education and culture	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 29 - Customs union	good level of preparation	4	
CLUSTER 4 - GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY			average
Chapter 14 - Transport	some level of preparation	2	2,5
Chapter 15 - Energy	good level of preparation	4	
Chapter 21 - Trans- European networks	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 27 - Environment and climate change	some level of preparation	2	
CLUSTER 5 - RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND COHESION			

Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development	early stage of preparations	1	1,8
Chapter 12 - Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 13 - Fisheries	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions	early stage of preparations	1	
CLUSTER 6 - EXTERNAL RELATIONS			average
Chapter 30 - External relations	good level of preparation	4	4
Chapter 31 - Foreign, security and defence policy	good level of preparation	4	

MOLDOVA

Public administration reform	some level of preparation	2
Judicial system	some level of preparation	2
Fight against corruption	some level of preparation	2
Fight against organized crime	some level of preparation	2
Freedom of expression	some level of preparation	2
Economic criteria: market economy	early stage/some level of preparation	1,5
Economic criteria: competitiveness	early stage/some level of preparation	1,5

CLUSTER 1 - FUNDAMENTALS			average
Chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights	some level of preparation	2	1,8
Chapter 24 - Justice, freedom and security	some level of preparation	2	

Chapter 5 - Public procurement	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 18 - Statistics	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 32 - Financial control	early stage of preparations	1	
CLUSTER 2 - INTERNAL MARKET			average
Chapter 1 - Free movement of goods	some level of preparation	2	1,9
Chapter 2 - Freedom of movement for workers	early stage of preparation	1	
Chapter 3 - Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 4 - Free movement of capital	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5	
Chapter 6 - Company law	early/some level of preparation	1,5	

Chapter 7	-	some level of preparation	2	
Intellectual property law				
Chapter 8	-	some level of preparation	2	
Competition policy				
Chapter 9	-	some level of preparation	2	
Financial services				
Chapter 28	-	some level of preparation	2	
Consumer and health protection				
CLUSTER 3 – COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH				average
Chapter 10 – Digital transformation and media		some level of preparation	2	2,2
Chapter 16	-	some level of preparation	2	
Taxation				
Chapter 17	-	some level of preparation	2	
Economic and monetary policy				
Chapter 19 – Social policy and employment		some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 20	-	some level of preparation	2	
Entreprise and industrial policy				

Chapter 25 - Science and research	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 26 - Education and culture	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 29 - Customs union	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5	
CLUSTER 4 - GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY			average
Chapter 14 - Transport	some level of preparation	2	1,9
Chapter 15 - Energy	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5	
Chapter 21 - Trans-European networks	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 27 - Environment and climate change	early stage of preparation	1	
CLUSTER 5 - RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND COHESION			average
Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development	early stage of preparations	1	1,2

Chapter 12 - Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 13 - Fisheries	early stage of preparations	1	
Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	early stage of preparations	1	
Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions	early stage of preparations	1	
CLUSTER 6 - EXTERNAL RELATIONS			average
Chapter 30 - External relations	moderately prepared	2	2,3
Chapter 31 - Foreign, security and defence policy	moderate/good level of preparation	2,5	

GEORGIA

Public administration reform	moderately prepared	3
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Judicial system	some level of preparation	2
Fight against corruption	some level of preparation	2
Fight against organized crime	some level of preparation	2
Freedom of expression	some level of preparation	2
Economic criteria: market economy	moderately prepared	3
Economic criteria: competitiveness	some level of preparation	2

CLUSTER 1 - FUNDAMENTALS				average
Chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights	some level of preparation	2		2
Chapter 24 - Justice, freedom and security	some level of preparation	2		
Chapter 5 - Public procurement	some level of preparation	2		
Chapter 18 - Statistics	some level of preparation	2		

Chapter 32 - Financial control	some level of preparation	2	
CLUSTER 2 - INTERNAL MARKET			average
Chapter 1 - Free movement of goods	some level of preparation	2	2
Chapter 2 - Freedom of movement for workers	early stage of preparation	1	
Chapter 3 - Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 4 - Free movement of capital	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 6 - Company law	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 7 - Intellectual property law	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 8 - Competition policy	early stage of preparation	1	

Chapter 9 - Financial services	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 28 - Consumer and health protection	some level of preparation	2	
CLUSTER 3 - COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH			average
Chapter 10 - Digital transformation and media	some level of preparation	2	2,7
Chapter 16 - Taxation	some/moderate level of preparation	2,5	
Chapter 17 - Economic and monetary policy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 19 - Social policy and employment	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 20 - Enterprise and industrial policy	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 25 - Science and research	moderately prepared	3	

Chapter 26 - Education and culture	moderately prepared	3	
Chapter 29 - Customs union	moderately prepared	3	
CLUSTER 4 - GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY			average
Chapter 14 - Transport	some level of preparation	2	1,8
Chapter 15 - Energy	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 21 - Trans-European networks	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 27 - Environment and climate change	early stage of preparation	1	
CLUSTER 5 - RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND COHESION			
Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development	early stage of preparations	1	1,5
Chapter 12 - Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	some level of preparation	2	

Chapter 13 - Fisheries and aquaculture	some level of preparation	2	
Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	early/some level of preparation	1,5	
Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions	early stage of preparations	1	
CLUSTER 6 - EXTERNAL RELATIONS			
Chapter 30 - External relations	moderately prepared	3	3
Chapter 31 - Foreign, security and defence policy	moderately prepared	3	

COMPARISON OF PREPAREDNESS OF CANDIDATE COUNTRIES PER CLUSTER

Cluster 1	ALB	BiH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SER	GE	MD	UA
Chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights	2,5	2	1,5	3	2,5	2	2	2	2
Chapter 24 - Justice, freedom and security	2,5	2	1,5	3	3	2	2	2	2
Chapter 5 - Public procurement	3	2	2,5	3,5	3	3	2	2	2
Chapter 18 - Statistics	3	1	2	3	3	3	2	2	2
Chapter 32 - Financial control	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	1	1

Cluster 2	ALB	BiH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SER	GE	MD	UA
Chapter 1 - Free	2,5	1	2,5	3	3	3	2	2	3

movement of goods										
Chapter 2 - Freedom of movement for workers	2	2	2	2	1	3	1	1	1	
Chapter 3 - Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	
Chapter 4 - Free movement of capital	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2,5	2,5	
Chapter 6 - Company law	3	2	2	4	4	4	2	1,5	2	
Chapter 7 - Intellectual property law	3	3	3	4	3	4	2	2	2	
Chapter 8 - Competition policy	2,5	2	2	3	3	3	1	2	2	

Chapter 9	-	3,5	2,5	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Financial services										
Chapter 28	-	1	1	1	3	3	3	2	2	2
Consumer and health protection										

Cluster 3		ALB	BiH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SER	GE	MD	UA
Chapter 10	-	3	1	2	3	3	3	2	2	3,5
Digital transformation and media										
Chapter 16	-	3	2	2	3	3	3	2,5	2	2
Taxation										
Chapter 17	-	3,5	1	3	3	3,5	3,5	3	2	3
Economic and monetary policy										
Chapter 19	-	3	2	1	2	3	3	2	2	1
Social policy and employment										
Chapter 20	-	3	1	3	3,5	3	3	3	2	2
Entreprise and										

industrial policy										
Chapter 25 -	2	2	1	4	4	4	3	3	3	
Science and research										
Chapter 26 -	3	1	2	4	3	4	3	2	2	
Education and culture										
Chapter 29 -	3	2	3	3	4	4	3	2,5	4	
Customs union										

Cluster 4	ALB	BiH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SER	GE	MD	UA	
Chapter 14 -	2	2	1	3,5	3	4	2	2	2	
Transport										
Chapter 15 -	3,5	1	2	4	3	3	2	2,5	4	
Energy										
Chapter 21 -	2	2	2	3,5	4	3	2	2	2	
Trans-European networks										
Chapter 27 -	2	1,5	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	
Environment and climate change										

Cluster 5	ALB	BiH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SER	GE	MD	UA
Chapter 11 - Agriculture and rural development	2	1	2	3	3	2	1	1	1
Chapter 12 - Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	2	2	2,5	3	4	3	2	2	3
Chapter 13 - Fisheries and aquaculture	3	1	1	2	3	3	2	1	2
Chapter 22 - Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	3	1	1	3	3	3	1,5	1	2
Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions	2	1	-	2	1	2	1	1	1

Cluster 6	ALB	BiH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SER	GE	MD	UA
Chapter 30	4	2	1	4	3	3	3	2	4
External relations	-								
Chapter 31	4	2	-	4	4	3	3	2,5	4
Foreign, security and defence policy	-								