

# *Six nations united in their European dream*

*An analysis on how the European Union accession process shifts the trust that the Western Balkan citizens have in the European Union*



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# Abstract

The European Union (EU) is an economic and political union consisting of 27-member countries. Currently, there are four candidate member states in the Western Balkan. These are Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The two other Western Balkan countries, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo, have also expressed interest in joining the European Union. Since they do not (yet) meet the requirements for candidate membership, they are classified as potential candidates. Joining the European Union is a long and complicated process, which can take decades. The process is long and complicated because the candidate countries need to enact reforms in order to prepare for membership. These reforms are necessary due the extent of the EU's rules and regulations. Citizens of candidate countries are on the side-line as their country tries to enact the reforms.

This research investigates how the European Union accession process shifts the trust that the Western Balkan citizens have in the European Union. Two specific cases are chosen for this research. The chosen countries are North Macedonia and Montenegro. These states are chosen for two reasons. Firstly, these countries have the longest accession process. Secondly, their accession process differs from the other Western Balkan countries. The accession of North Macedonia is most troublesome, while the accession of Montenegro is described as the miracle of the Western Balkan. Both reasons ensure that there is enough data.

The aim of this paper is to analyse which factors cause a change of citizen trust in the EU. There are four factors that could potentially cause a decrease or increase in citizen trust in the EU. These factors are prolonged accession period, the size and speed of rewards, the credibility of the conditionality and the size of domestic adoption costs. The European Union measures citizen trust in the EU twice a year with the Eurobarometer questionnaire. The results are used as a cautionary for Euroscepticism or as a promotion of EU integration. However, the citizen trust in candidate states is not taken into account with this questionnaire. Whilst the reforms during the accession process are highly demanding on a country. High citizen trust in the EU is required if reforms need to be implemented. This paper will research which factors cause a change in citizen trust in the EU during the accession period in the Western Balkan.

**Keywords:** Prolonged accession, Western Balkan, Citizen trust in the EU, Europeanisation, Enlargement fatigue, External incentive model, EU conditionality

# Preface

*7 neighbours, 6 republics, 5 nations, 4 languages, 3 religions, 2 scripts, and 1 goal: to live in brotherhood and unity'*

Before I started this paper, I watched a documentary about the fall of Yugoslavia. In this documentary, the Dutch-Croatian trauma expert Iva Bicanic travels through Yugoslavia, which is the birth country of her parents. The first two countries she visits are Slovenia and Croatia. These countries have already joined the European Union. The citizens are excited and positive towards the future. Later, Bicanic travels further south. She visits Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Montenegro. These countries are run-down by civil war, leaving the countries in extreme poverty and widespread corruption. There is a sense of hopelessness among the population. Younger generations look at the EU as a solution for their country's problems, while older generations look to the past for solutions. When I saw this documentary, I knew I wanted this paper to focus on this region.

The phrase '*7 neighbours, 6 republics, 5 nations, 4 languages, 3 religions, 2 scripts, and 1 goal: to live in brotherhood and unity'*', is said to be a quote from Yugoslavia's former dictator Josip Tito. While writing this paper, I felt that this phrase fits the Western Balkan now more than ever. The 6 republics of Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Serbia are in a current state of limbo. The future is uncertain for these countries. The citizens still believe in brotherhood and unity, and many put their faith in the EU to achieve this. I believe this faith should not be unrecognised or betrayed. I have learned a lot from writing this research and hope others will learn from it as well.

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who made this research possible. Of course, my supervisor Asya Zhelyazkova for providing me with feedback to perform this research. I would also like to thank the students from my thesis circle for their feedback and other students with whom I spent countless days in the library.

On a personal note, I want to thank my parents, my sisters and my boyfriend for their continuous support through my studies and in writing this paper.

*Luuk Maathuis*

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# List of Abbreviations

EU	European Union
SAP	Stabilisation and Association Process
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreements
TEU	Treaties of the European Union
EP	European Parliament
IPA	Instrument Pre-accession Assistance
WIP	Willingness-to-pay
CEEC	Central and Eastern European Country
COV	Co-Variational Analysis
CPT	Causal-Process Tracing
CON	Congruence Analysis
EIB	European Investment Bank
IMF	International Monetary Fund
WB	World Bank
UN	United Nations
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
DPS	Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro
MP	Member of Parliament

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# 1 Introduction

*The first part of this chapter describes the background (1.1). Information is given about the Western Balkan, their accession process and their relationship with the EU. This background information is necessary to understand where the research question and the sub-questions originate from (1.2). The research approach explains how the research in this paper is performed (1.3). After this, the contribution of this paper to the academic and societal field is explained (1.4). Lastly, in the outline of this paper, the structure of the chapters is described (1.5).*

## 1.1 Background

This research is focussed on the Western Balkan. The Western Balkan holds most of the current candidate member states of the EU. Turkey is also a candidate member state of the EU, but not part of the Western Balkan. In literature, there are different definitions of the Western Balkan region. This paper adopts the definition given by the European Commission. This includes the following countries; Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia (Blockmans, 2007; European Commission, 2021).

Between 1991 and 1992 Yugoslavia fell apart. This resulted into new sovereign nations with liberal market economies. Until 1995, political relations between the EU and the Western Balkan were minimal. The EU only acted when there was a need for crisis management or humanitarian aid. This happened through projects such as ‘Phara’ and ‘Obnova’. Project Obnova provided over 400 million dollars of community assistance for reconstruction, development and stability (Mirel, 2018). Phara was a project directed to the entire Eastern European and Balkan area. For the Western Balkan, project Phara was limited to conflict management and humanitarian aid. In the Eastern Balkan and Eastern Europe, project Phare was used for institution building and for the implementation of the *acquis* (Blockmans, 2007). The Western Balkan fell behind in their process of EU accession compared to the Eastern Balkan and Eastern Europe.

Between 1995 and 1999, the EU started to see the Balkans as part of Europe. The *regional approach* was initiated. The regional approach consisted of initiatives to establish cooperation among the Balkan nations (Blockmans, 2007). However, there were many limitations. The approach was limited by a lack of financial resources, the initiatives were not comprehensive, and it offered post-conflict solutions instead of preventing conflict. This led to mixed reactions from the Western Balkan governments to the incentives provided by this EU regional initiative (Jano, 2009). There was a clear discrepancy between the goals of the Western Balkan and the EU. The EU aimed for stability and economic cooperation. In the contrary, Western Balkan nations prioritized integration into the EU.

After the Kosovo crises and NATO intervention in 1999, the EU became more involved. A new initiative was launched. According to Jano (2009) the goal was: “*To anchor the countries of the Western*



*Balkans firmly in the values of and institutional structures of the Europe-Atlantic Community*” (Jano, 2009, page 146). The member states confirmed their strategy for EU enlargement through the Western Balkan during the European Council meeting of 2003. The main incentives for policy adoption were offered with the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). This process prepared the region for sustainable reform and possible candidate status. The prospect of membership was offered in return for commitment by the Western Balkan countries to undertake a set of reforms (Andreev, 2009). The assistance in the Western Balkan was based on financial assistance, regional corporation, trade relations, political dialogue, and bilateral contractual relations. The contractual relations took form in the Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA). The agreements were based on rule of law, human rights and democratic principles (Gorden, 2009; Wessel, 2018).

The following Western Balkan countries have received candidate membership: North Macedonia (2005), Montenegro (2010), Serbia (2012), and Albania (2014). Kosovo and Bosnia & Herzegovina are included in some Association Agreements but are not yet members. Bosnia & Herzegovina did already apply, but was denied (Wessel, 2018). Information about each specific country from the Western Balkan can be found in appendix A. In this appendix, their path after the fall of Yugoslavia and their accession process is described.

## 1.2 Research Objective

The intention of the European Commission is that all the countries in the Western Balkan will eventually join the EU (Jano, 2009; Andreev, 2009). However, the path towards EU membership is difficult. Member states are reluctant in letting more countries join the EU. The result is that the candidate members do not have a clear future perspective for joining the EU. The relation between the EU and the Western Balkan is not based on equality. The EU has a leading role and dictates the rules (Jano, 2009). This is because the Western Balkan countries have much more to gain compared to the EU. Because of this, research and media focusses on whether the EU member states and their citizens want further enlargement. The opinion of the citizens of the Western Balkan countries are neglected (Türkes & Gökgöz, 2006). The effect on citizen trust of the Western Balkan in the EU due to a long accession process, is yet unknown.

This research paper will focus on the citizens of the Western Balkan and whether the accession process has a negative influence on their trust in the EU. This is done by measuring influential factors which can influence citizen trust of the Western Balkan in the EU during the accession process.

### 1.3 Research Question

*How does the European Union accession process shift the trust that the Western Balkan citizens have in the European Union?*

In order to answer this research question, a set of sub-questions are presented. The sub-questions help to get a better understanding which factors have an influence on citizen trust in the EU.

1. What is the relation between prolonged accession and citizen trust in the European Union?
2. What is the relation between the size and speed of rewards and citizen trust in the European Union?
3. What is the relation between the credibility of conditionality and citizen trust in the European Union?
4. What is the relation between the size of adoption costs and citizen trust in the European Union?

### 1.4 Research Approach

This paper presents a qualitative approach in the form of a case study. For the case study, the two Western Balkan states of Montenegro and North Macedonia will be considered for measuring which factors could influence citizen trust in the EU during the accession process. This is a small-N analysis. Case studies are ideal for investigation new, complex and abstract phenomena (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). Measuring EU citizen trust in the EU during the accession process has not been done yet in prior research. Therefore, the case study is the most suitable type of research design for this paper.

The research strategy used in this paper is an explanatory co-variational comparison. With co-variational design, the variables are chosen because they haven the highest chance to correlate. This paper has a cross-sectional comparison. This means that similar cases are selected in the same period of time.

In this paper the external incentive model is chosen to pick the independent variables. This model is the most prominent model for presenting the impact of the conditionality during the accession process. Due to its prominence in research about accession, this model is chosen.

### 1.5 Relevance

#### 1.5.1 Academic relevance

The academic relevance of this paper is a contribution to the already existing literature and theoretical discussion about the effects that the accession process of the European Union has on citizen trust in the EU. According to Corley and Gioia (2011) there are two important considerations when evaluating academic research. The first is the originality of the research. This relates to the extent that the research offers new fundamental theoretical linkages that have rich potential for the domain of the study. This means that there might be a possibility of discovering new relations or even causality. This study adds

originality by exploring the relation between citizen trust and accession to the EU. This is a relationship which has not been measured before.

The second consideration is the academic usefulness of the contribution in practise. This can either be by testing a new or already existing theory, generating data or by explaining a phenomenon (Stokes, 1997; Corley & Gioia, 2011). There is extensive data on European accession guided by conditionality, examined with the external incentive model (Schmelfenning & Sedelmeier, 2011, Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005, Richter & Wunsch, 2019, Džihic & Wieser, 2011, Böhmelt & Freyburg, 2012). However, the external incentive model has not been used to measure different concepts. By using this model to measure citizen trust in the EU, other researchers could be perused to expand on this. Next to that, the phenomena of Europeanisation and prolonged accession are gaining popularity. This paper further explores these concepts by contributing to these phenomena.

### 1.5.2 Societal Relevance

The purpose of this research is to determine what causes changes in the trust citizens of the Western Balkan have in the European Union during the accession process. This examination is considered to be societal relevant for two reasons. The first reason is that the paper concerns people. The accession process often focusses on the demands between nations, but the accession process has a big effect on the citizens in the countries going through the accession. This research helps humanize the accession process. The outcome of the examination can alter how policymakers perceive the accession process of countries in the Western Balkan.

The second reason why this research is societal relevant is that the outcome of this paper leads to practical suggestions, advice, and solution (Lehnert, Miller & Wonka, 2007). This paper could lead to advice and suggestions for policymakers about the importance of a credible accession process. This paper focusses on North Macedonia and Montenegro, but its findings could be applied to all countries which aspire EU membership.

## 1.6 Outline

The outline of this paper has a clear structure. Chapter 2 covers the literature review. In this chapter the most important concepts are explained and background on the topic is provided. Chapter 3 covers the theoretical framework where the concepts introduced in Chapter 2 are elaborated. In this chapter, the relation between the concepts are also explained. Chapter 4 is the research design, where the structure of the analysis in this research is described. This chapter also describes the data and the countries which are chosen for this research. The analysis of this research is performed in Chapter 5, where the hypotheses of this research will be answered. In chapter 6 the findings of the analysis are discussed. Chapter 7 contains all references and lastly chapter 8 contains the appendices.

## 2 Literature Review

*The aim of this chapter is to explore the existing literature on the concepts of European accession, conditionality and citizen trust. The chapter consists of 5 parts. The first is an introduction of the EU accession. This is done by exploring which countries are allowed to become an EU member (1.1.1), the process of how this is achieved (1.1.2) and how this process applies for the countries in the Western Balkan (1.1.3). An important aspect of EU accession is the conditionality used during pre-accession to prepare the country for membership. The conditionality, and how its connected with credibility is there for explored (1.2). The next important concept is citizen trust and the relation it has with the previous concepts (1.3).*

*Prolonged accession is caused by enlargement fatigue and absorption capacity. These concepts will be explained (1.4). The EU goal of the conditionality is to make countries ready for EU membership. Beside this goal, the conditionality also results in the Europeanisation of the countries. The last part of this chapter is about Europeanisation (1.5).*

### 2.1 Accession to the European Union

The European Union is an economic and political union between 27 countries. If a country wants to become a member of the European Union, it must meet the economic and political membership criteria. These criteria are set by the European Union to prepare the country for membership (Schimmelfenning, 2005). These conditions are described in the accession terms and will be discussed in the next paragraph.

#### 2.1.1 Terms of Accession to the European Union

Not every country is allowed to become a member state of the European Union. A country has to meet the membership criteria as described in the Treaties of the European Union (TEU) and the Copenhagen Criteria. The treaties of the European Union are agreements made between the member states. They describe the general principles of the EU's purpose, the rules the member states have to adhere to, the decision processes and the relationship between the central European institutions (such as the Council, Parliament and Commission) and its member states. The Copenhagen Criteria are based on the European Union treaties and gives a more in-dept description of the conditions for European membership (EUR-Lex, 2016).

Article 2 of the TEU describes the shared fundamental values of all the member states; *“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities”* (EUR-Lex, 2012). Article 2 describes that European Union membership is only possible for democratic European countries that adhere to the rule of law and protect human rights (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2019).

The Copenhagen Criteria were established in 1993 and describe the conditions a candidate country must meet. They are more comprehensive than article 2 of the European Union treaties. The Copenhagen Criteria consists of three criteria.

The first criterium refers to the political criteria. The political criteria states that a country must be a stable institution which guarantees democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. Thereby stating, that membership means more than just economic cooperation (Hillion, 2004).

The second criterium refers to the economic criteria. This states that a country must have a functioning market economy and has the capacity to cope with competition and market forces (Preston, 1995).

The third criterium refers to the administrative and institutional capacity a country must have, to effectively implement the *acquis*, and ability to take on the obligations of membership (European Council, 1993). The *acquis* are the accumulated rights and obligations which constitute the total body of the European Union law. Candidate countries have to accept the *acquis*, as part of their own national legislation before they are able to join the European Union (European Commission, n.d. -a).

When a candidate country adheres to the values referred to in Article 2 of the European Union treaties and sufficiently adhere to the to the Copenhagen Criteria, a county may apply to become a member of the Union. This accession process is explained in the next paragraph.

### 2.1.2 Accession Process to the European Union

The accession process is described in article 49 of the European Union Treaties. Article 49 states that a country can start applying for European Union membership if it meets the values as described in abovementioned article 2 of the European Union treaties. In article 49 is written that the European Parliament (EP) and national parliaments will be first notified of the application (EUR-Lex, 2016). The Commission gives advice about the readiness of the country to join. The Council, which consists of all heads of state of the EU, and the EP decide whether a country can start the accession process of the EU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2019).

There are four subsequent stages in the accession towards membership. Every subsequent stage in the process requires unanimous approval from the Council (EUR-Lex, 2016; Bevington, 2020).

The first step is the application stage. A potential EU country applies to become a member of the European Union. The Commission starts to investigate whether the country meets the criteria of article 2. Based on this assessment, the Commission gives their recommendations for the Council and the EP (European Commission, n.d. -b, Bevington, 2020). If the Council and EP vote in favour, the country becomes a European candidate member.

In step two the Commission carries out a further examination of the country. It determines how well the country is prepared for membership. It assesses how many of the 35 chapters, which are based on the Copenhagen Criteria are already fulfilled and which chapters will be most difficult to fulfil for

the country. Each chapter represents an area which needs to be fulfilled in accordance with the EU. The chapters help to harmonize the laws of the candidate country step by step with the laws of the EU. Examples of the chapters are chapter 27; environment regulation, chapter 17; economic and monetary policy or chapter 13; fisheries. Based on the observation, the Commission gives their recommendation to the Council. The Council and the EP decide on the next action. This could mean the country can directly proceed to the next step, or some requirements are set in place for the following step. These requirements are referred to as 'opening benchmarks'. These benchmarks mean that the commission will set a benchmark on how much a certain area needs to be improved and will monitor the progress of these improvements. The benchmark describes the minimum progress a country has to make. They also help to keep track of the progress of a country (European Commission, n.d. -b, Bevington, 2020). When a country meets the benchmarks, the country moves to step 3 in the accession process.

Step 3 is called '*the official accession negotiations*'. This involves the adoption of EU law and preparations to properly implement the judicial, administrative, economic and other reforms necessary for compliance. The Commission monitors a candidate country with chapters of the acquis. There are 35 chapters and they are based on the Copenhagen Criteria. The Commission monitors the progress of the chapters. A chapter opens when the Commission starts monitoring and closes when it is fulfilled. Each chapter needs be opened and closed before accession (European Commission, n.d. -b, Bevington, 2020).

The final stage of the accession process is the actual accession. The accession treaty contains the detailed terms, conditions and obligations of membership. Before the treaty becomes binding, it needs to be supported by the Commission, unanimously by the EU Council, and with a majority by the EP. It also needs to be signed by the representatives of all EU countries and the candidate country. And lastly, it needs to be ratified by the candidate country and each EU country, according to their constitutional rules. This can either by a parliamentary vote, a presidential signatory or a referendum (European Commission, n.d. -b, Bevington, 2020).

### 2.1.3 Accession to the European Union of the Western Balkan

At the moment there are five candidate countries. These are Turkey, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. With the exemption of Turkey, they are all located within the Western Balkan. In this region, the accession process is prepared through a pre-accession process whereby political and economic preparation is pursued through the conclusion of agreements. These are bundled together as the Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAA) (European Commission, n.d. -c). These agreements are accompanied by financial and technical support through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) (European Commission, n.d. -d). The Commission monitors the process. When progress is sufficient, the country is encouraged to submit its application (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2019).

The approach for the Western Balkan differs from previous admissions to the EU. After the enlargements of 2004, 2007 and 2013 there was a growing belief that there were significant challenges that needed to be resolved in some of the new and prospective members states. Primary in the areas of rule of law and combatting, organised crime and corruption (Mišćević & Mrak, 2017). There was a need for more rigorous conditionalities. Montenegro was the first country where the opening of negotiations was depending on certain benchmarks. Since then, benchmarks have become an integral part of every chapter of negotiations and have, de-facto, become an important instrument for a more structured approach to the negotiations.

In the Western Balkan, more emphasis is put on the 'fundamentals first' approach. This means that chapters 23 and 24 of the official negotiations, must be opened first and closed last. These are about judicial reform and fundamental rights (chapter 23) and justice, freedom and security (chapter 24). These are considered the most difficult chapters. The number of chapters increased after having learned from previous enlargements (Vlašić Feketija & Lazowski, 2014).

## 2.2 Conditionality Models and Credibility

With the introduction of the Copenhagen Criteria, the EU defined the framework for their political conditionality for becoming a member. According to Richter & Wunsch (2019) the political conditionality originally was perceived as rather vague, broad and open to interpretation. Over the years, the framework became clearer with specific criteria. For the Western Balkan, the framework consists of the 35 chapters (Richter & Wunsch, 2019).

Conditionality is an instrument that the EU uses to encourage reforms of the countries that apply for EU membership. EU conditionality and the implementation of the conditions is a process between the applicant country on one hand and the EU on the other. This interaction is limited to the elite administrators and politicians (Džihic & Wieser, 2011). This top-down process provides limited incentive to citizens of applicant countries to participate in the necessary reforms. EU conditionality follows either the strategy of reactive reinforcement or the reinforcement by reward strategy (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). These strategies mean that the EU rewards the target government if they agree and comply with the conditionalities and withholds reward if the target government fails to agree and comply. The EU does not intervene coercively nor by punishment (by inflicting extra costs) or supportively by support (by offering extra benefits). The EU believes that it is the government's own responsibility to adhere to the set conditions for reward. The countries that fail to meet the criteria are denied EU association, assistance or membership. There are three models which explain the impact EU conditionality has on a country (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2011).

The first model that describes the impact of EU conditionality is the social learning model. This model follows the theory of social constructivism to explain conditionality and Europeanisation. Meaning that governments are motivated by internalized identities, values and norms of the EU. The

model follows a logic called appropriateness. The process of rule transfer and rule adoption is characterized by complex learning, persuasion, the legitimacy of rules, and the appropriateness of behaviour. The general proposition of the social learning model is that a state will adopt EU rules if it is persuaded of the appropriateness of these EU rules (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2011).

The second model is the lesson-drawing model. This model assumes that adoption is induced by the candidate members. According to this model, policy-makers will review the EU policies and make an evaluation on their transferability and their problem-solving capabilities in the domestic context. The most general proposition of the lesson-drawing model is that a state adopts the EU rules, if the state expects these rules to solve their domestic policy problems effectively (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2011).

The last, and most prominent, theoretical framework for explaining the impact of EU conditionality, is the external incentive model. This is a bargaining model that assumes that governments seek to maximize their own power and welfare. The model argues that governments will comply with the EU conditionalities of law, if the calculated benefits of membership exceed the expected political costs of compliance that are associated with the accession criteria. This cost-benefit balance depends on the following four factors: the size and speed of rewards, the determinacy of conditions, the credibility of conditionality, and the size of adoption costs. The most general proposition of the external incentive model is that a state will adopt EU rules if the benefits of the EU rewards will exceed the domestic adoption costs (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2011). This model will be further elaborated in the theoretical framework of this paper.

The effectiveness of conditionality is linked to the credibility of the EU to be able to provide a reward or punishment. The credibility of the conditionality is decisive for effective candidate country compliance. A credible membership perspective is instrumental in overcoming domestic obstacles and is therefore decisive in enabling effective EU rule transfer (Böhmelt & Freyburg, 2012). As a summary, the success of the conditionality depends on whether the accession conditionality is credible in two ways. Firstly, target states need to be certain that they are rewarded with significant steps toward accession in a timely matter. Secondly, target states need to comply with the EU's political conditions and if they don't, they will be excluded from EU membership (Schimmelfennig, 2008).

### 2.3 Citizen Trust

Most research surrounding EU accession is focussed on compliance, the EU and the national governments that are involved. The focus is rarely on the citizens of the candidate member states. The interaction between the candidate member states and the EU can be described as a top-down framework. The government agrees to rule adoption and the administration-elite implement these rules (Džihic & Wieser, 2011). The role of citizens in the accession process is limited, but the impact of the rule transfer to the citizens can be substantial. There is a vertical relationship of trust between citizens and political



authorities and institutions (Golubović, Džunić & Golubović, 2015). Trust is subjective, meaning it can be unstable and fluctuating. Trust is closely related to credibility. Trust reflects a rational expectation, meaning a person will estimate the subjective probability that another person will perform a particular action (Catterberg & Moreno, 2005). When discussing citizen trust, the willingness of a citizen to pay for public projects is in line with the perceived benefits a citizen will receive from that project. When citizen trust is low, doubt arises on whether the government has the capabilities to use public funds properly (Oho & Hong, 2012; Dekker, 2004). Therefore, citizen trust in the government is a critical factor in the citizens willingness-to-pay for public projects (WIP).

Schafheitle et al. (2019) argues that there are three factors for citizen trust in political institutions such as the EU: value congruence, performance outcome, and attributability of performance outcome. Value congruence means that citizens appreciate policies and politicians more if they are in line with their own values. A mismatch in core-values leads to distrust. The second factor is performance outcome, which is the most uncontested and rational factor. Citizens trust institutions that show competence. This factor is especially impotent when it comes to economic aspects. The more successful the institution is in meeting people's needs, such as economic growth and the provision of public goods, the more trust citizens have in the institution (Hetherington, 1998). The last factor, Attributability of Performance Outcome, means the clear ability citizens have to attribute 'who is responsible for what'. Citizens need clear communication and transparency from the institution in order to distinguish between what is controlled by the institution and what is not (Schafheitle et al., 2019). Since the European sovereign debt crisis in 2009, citizen trust in governmental institutions is declining throughout Europe (Edelman, 2017).

There has been limited Research on citizen trust in the EU. In a democracy, legitimacy originates from the democratic process that states '*from the people, for the people*'. Legitimate governments include their citizens in the decision-making process. In the EU it is more difficult to refer to legitimacy since it is not very clear who constitutes 'the people' in the EU. Furthermore, the trust citizens have in the EU does not merely depend on what happens in the EU. Trust in the EU can also be influenced through actions of individual member states (Harteveld, Meer & Vries, 2013).

Trust in political institutions is particularly important in newly established democracies, such as the Western Balkan. Lower trust levels result in a decreasing willingness to comply with the decisions taken their governments. The western Balkan citizens are losing the trust in their institutions, especially in the political parties and the representatives of the political system (Golubović, Džunić & Golubović, 2015).

### 2.3. Enlargement Fatigue and Absorption Capacity

The EU started with only seven members. Through the decades, there have been seven moments were the Union was enlarged. This happened in in 1973, 1981, 1986, 1995, 2004 and 2007. The most recent

enlargement was the accession of Croatia in 2013. The next enlargement is not projected to happen any time soon (O'Brennan, 2014). This is due to enlargement fatigue. Szolucha (2010) defines the concept as: "*A reason for the unwillingness of some of the Union members to admit new countries*" (Szolucha, 2010, page 2). The concept is not restricted to a specific time period but has always been present to some extent in the EU. For example, the French president De Gaulle vetoed UK's entrance twice in 1963 and 1967. However, recent developments have brought support for enlargement at an all-time low. This has several explanations. Some of the older Union members are concerned that enlargement could spark waves of large incoming waves of immigrants due to the free movement of labour rule in the EU. (Forgue & Kehoskie, 2007). The impact of economic enlargement also plays a role. The countries joining the Union are less wealthy. Therefore, they will be net-receivers to the EU budget. This means they will receive more funds from the EU, than what they will pay to the EU. Lastly there is also the fear of absorption capacity. O'Brennan (2014) defines this as: "*the EU's ability to absorb new members whilst maintaining the momentum of the European integration process*" (O'Brennan, page 224, 2014). This means the fear that enlargement will make the Union more difficult to govern.

Developments in previous enlargements have also contributed to enlargement fatigue. According to O'Brennan (2014), it is largely accepted that retrospectively Bulgaria and Romania were not ready for accession to the EU. Their governance capacity was insufficient and their struggles with corruption and organized crime have not seen improvements (Forgue & Kehoskie, 2007). From the enlargement of 2004 also, troubles have arisen. Democratic backsliding in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland added a further layer of suspicion about the extent to which accession preparations helped 'lock in' EU standards in candidate states (O'Brennan, 2014). Because of this, currently much more focus is being put on the conditionality which is designed to 'democratise', 'Europeanise' and 'modernise' external states before their accessions. Now, more than ever before, countries need to align with the EU legislation, before they can become EU members (O'Brennan, 2013).

## 2.4. Europeanisation

A side-effect of the rule adoption of the candidate countries, is that it also leads to the Europeanisation of the countries. Featherstone & Radaelli (2003) state that Europeanisation is a contested and upcoming concept. Between 1981 and 1998 the term '*Europeanisation*' has only been referred to a total of three times in academic articles. Nowadays, the term is used more and more in research. In the year 2000 alone, the term has already been referred to 22 times (Featherstone & Radaelli, 2003). The term is used to describe a variety of phenomena and processes of change.

When the concept of Europeanisation first began to gain popularity, it was still strictly separated from the EU. Borneman and Fowler (1997) define it as: "*Europeanization is fundamentally reorganizing territoriality and peoplehood, the two principles of group identification that have shaped modern European order. It is the result of a new level and intensity of integration that has been a*

*reaction to the destruction of this century's first and second world wars and the collapse of the cold-war division of Europe into an East and West.*" (Borneman and Fowler, 1997, page 487). According to them (1997), Europeanisation occurs on the aspects of language, money, tourism, sex and sport on the European continent. These aspects have become less diverse between countries and more in line with the most dominant European view. In the past, when the EU contained fewer countries, the most dominant European continental view was not always in line with the view of the member states. However, currently a majority of the European continent is part of the EU, and the EU decides the most dominant view. With its organizational and administrative power the EU drives Europeanisation further.

Recently, it has become more difficult to separate the term Europeanisation from the EU. It overlaps with aspects of European regional integration and convergence. Mostly, Europeanisation is associated with the domestic adaptations coming directly or indirectly from EU membership. This results in cultural diffusion, insertional adaptation and adaptation of policies and policy processes (Featherstone & Radaelli, 2003).

According to Olsen (2002), the Europeanisation driven by the EU needs to be split into five different concepts, which together explain the phenomena of Europeanisation by the EU. The first concept is the geographical concept, which means the changing (enlarging) borders of the EU. Europeanisation continues to take place as the EU expands to include more and more European countries. The second concept is the developing institutions at the European level, building the EU action capacity, with a degree of co-ordination and coherence. It also refers to whether the EU is able to make and enforce binding decisions and to punish non-compliance. The third concept is the central penetration of national systems of governance. It involves the division of responsibilities and powers between different levels of governance. There must be a balance in the EU systems of governance to a political centre and European-wide norms. The fourth concept is the exporting forms of political organisations. This area is focussed on the interaction of the EU with non-member states and institutions, by exporting forms of typically European governance and political organisations. For candidate countries this concept, the adaptation of EU governance and laws, is most relevant. The fifth concept is the political unification project. This means whether there is a movement of the four concepts explained above, namely; the expanding of other European nations into the EU, centre-building, domestic adaptation and how European development impacts and is impacted by systems of governance and events outside the European continent (Olsen, 2002).

## 3 Theoretical Framework

*In this chapter the concepts which will be used in the analysis are further explored. Especially how they relate to each other. From these relations hypotheses are derived. This chapters begins by conceptualising prolonged accession (3.1). The model of external incentive is chosen to measure the impact of conditionality on the level of citizen trust in the EU. From this model the remaining hypotheses are derived (3.2).*

### 3.1 Conceptualising Prolonged EU Accession

The Western Balkan enlargement is different from previous enlargements. The countries of the Western Balkan have to comply with more conditions than other enlargement had to in their accession. The process has become much more comprehensive and costlier for the Western Balkan countries (Mišćević & Mrak, 2017; O'Brennan, 2014). Figure 1 gives an overview of some of the countries which joined or have tried to join the EU in the past. It includes all the countries which joined the EU in 2004, 2007 and 2013. Kosovo, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Albania, Serbia, North Macedonia and Montenegro are the Western Balkan countries which are trying to join the EU. The figure provides an overview on the time period a country has spent in each part of the accession process. An important distinction is that these countries of the Western Balkan are not member states yet, while the other countries in the figure are already member states. The end date of the accession process for these candidate member states is unclear.

It is also important to note that there are differences in the current accession process as compared to the past. Before Croatia became a member, the EU did not grant EU candidacy. A country applied to become a member, instead of applying to become a candidate country. Furthermore, in the past, the Commission would also research how the applicant country was performing in areas of importance to the EU. An application could also be denied if the country did not fulfil article 2 of the EU-treaties. If the country was not denied and the Commission reported their findings, the official negotiations started directly (European Council, n.d.-f). This makes it a bit more challenging to compare the accession process of the Western Balkan to the previous enlargements. However, in the figure it can be seen that most countries became a member of the EU within 10 years after they applied for membership. The negotiation phase mostly lasted around five to six years. Most Western Balkan countries have already surpassed the 10 years. The concept of prolonged accession is not established yet in literature. This paper defines the concept as; the accession process of the EU which has increased over time due to enlargement fatigue, abortion capacity and other external factors.

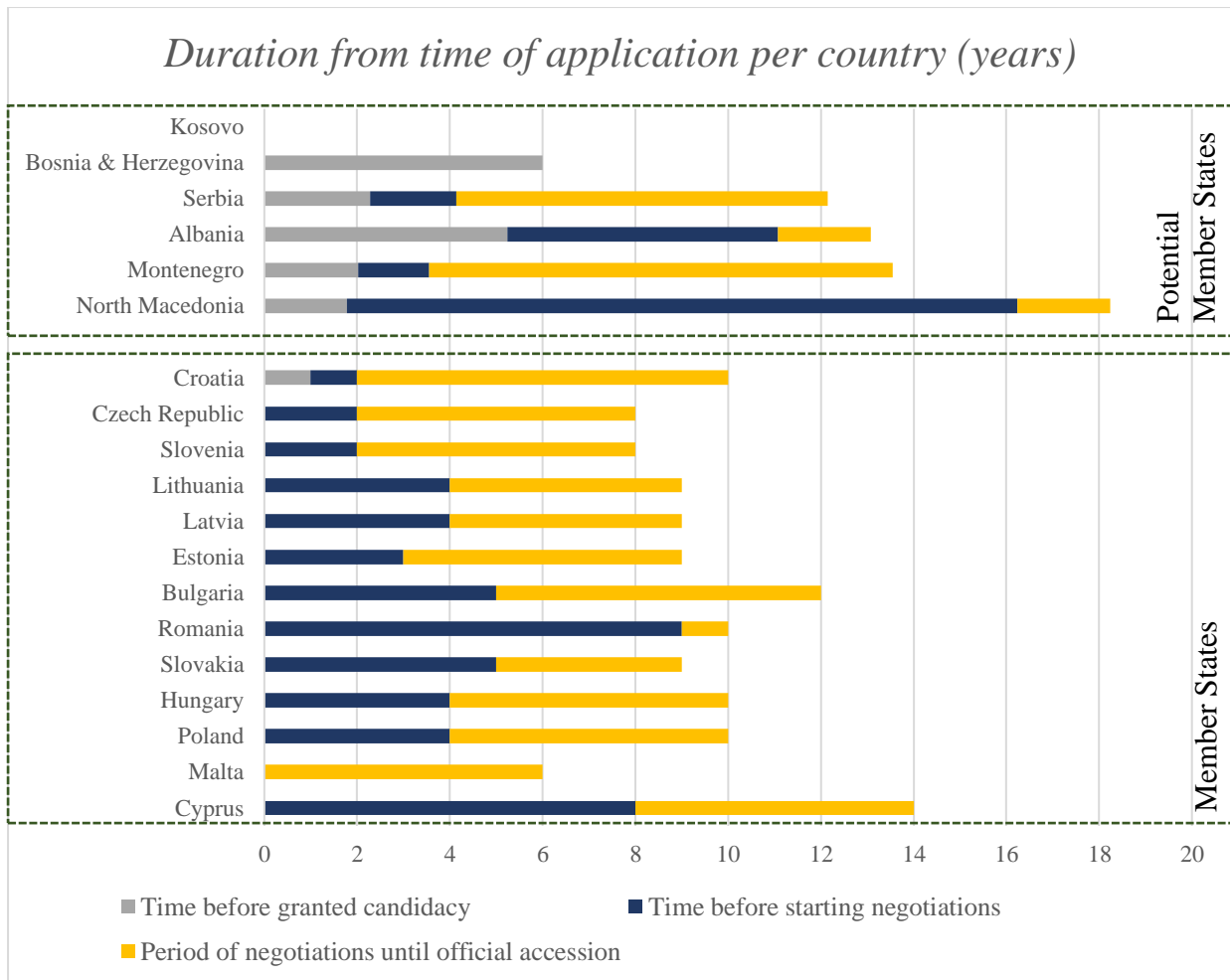


Figure 1 Accession processes from 2004 onwards, generated from; (European Council, n.d. -a-f)

There is no prior research on citizen trust in the EU during the accession process. Citizen trust in the EU during the accession process is important for multiple reasons. Trust is closely related to credibility. It reflects a rational expectation; estimating the subjective probability of an actor, the other actor will perform a particular action (Catterberg & Moreno, 2005). If a citizen does not believe a public project will benefit him or here, he or she will not make the sacrifices for it (Oho & Hong, 2012; Dekker, 2004). Lower trust levels also result in less willingness to comply with the decisions taken by a government or organisation (Golubović, Džunić & Golubović, 2015).

There is a strong possibility that the prolonged accession process is seen as unfair and incomprehensible by citizens of the Western Balkan. Their process is longer than that of previous enlargements. Due to the prolonged accession, citizen trust in the EU can decline. Therefore, the first hypothesis of this paper is:

*H1: prolonged accession leads to a decrease of citizen trust*

## 3.2 Theory of External Incentives Model

There is not a theoretic framework or model which links citizen trust in the EU to the accession process. However, as mentioned in the literature review, there are different models that explain the impact of conditionality and the reason behind why candidate member states adopt EU laws. This paper will use an already existing model which explains why non-member states accept the transfer of rules, to analyse the influence of accession to citizen trust in the EU. The most prominent theoretical framework in the field of accession is the external incentive model (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). This model has proven to best explain the impact behind rule adaption and Europeanisation through the accession conditionality of the Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC)(Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2019). This model relies on the EU-driven transformative power through the accession conditionality. It is a rationalist bargaining model. This means that actors are expected to maximize their power and welfare through well-informed decision making.

According to the model, the entire process depends on the relative bargaining power of the actors involved. The bargaining power results from the asymmetrical distribution of information, the benefits which arise from a specific agreement and alternative agreements offered from third parties. The actor with the most information or best alternative option can manipulate the other actor into reaching a more beneficial deal. This model was developed in 2005 and was successfully tested to the CEEC countries. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2019) found that the model continues to account for the conditions of Europeanisation to the new candidate members of the Western Balkan. According to the model, the EU sets the adoption of its rules as conditions that the candidate members have to fulfil. When the conditions are met, the candidates receive the rewards from the EU. The rewards the EU has to offer to non-member countries are assistance and institutional ties (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). The assistance in the Western Balkan starts with the Stabilization and Association Agreements (Gorden, 2009). The assistance is based on financial assistance, regional corporation, trade relations, political dialogue, and bilateral contractual relations, based on every country's unique needs. Institutional ties range from trade and cooperation agreements to full membership. The agreements provide progressively more market access to the EU and increasing participation in EU decision-making (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier's, 2005).

EU conditionality follows the strategy of reactive reinforcement or reinforcement by reward. This strategy means that the EU pays the reward if the target government complies with the conditions and withholds the reward if it fails to comply. Countries who fail to meet the criteria are denied association, assistance or membership. The EU does not intervene either coercively or by inflicting extra costs (punishment) or by offering extra benefits (support). The benefit of this strategy is that it puts the initiative with the non-member states, to proactively adapt to the EU rules. On the other hand, this strategy also implies that the strategy alone does not give much incentive to change rules and laws. Especially, when a government has made the conclusions that the domestic costs of rule adoption

outweigh the benefits of EU rewards. Therefore, the most general proposition of the external incentive model is: “A government will adopt EU rules if the benefits of EU rewards exceed the domestic adoption costs”. The cost-benefit balance depends on four factors; the size and speed of rewards, the determinacy of conditions, the credibility of conditionality, and the size of adoption costs (Schimmelfenning, 2005). Each of the factors will test their own hypothesis on how it influences trust.

The size and speed of reward implies that the rewards promised should be increasingly beneficial, as the country progresses through rule adaptation. The promise of EU candidate membership should be stronger compared to the promise of the SAA. And the promise of EU membership should be stronger compared to the promise of EU candidate membership. This way there is incentive to progress in the accession. Furthermore, the rewards by the EU must be more rewarding compared to alternative rewards offered by similar organisations. Also, the longer the temporal distance to the payment of rewards, the lower the incentive to comply. The closer the date on which the reward would be paid, the stronger the compliance pull. Lastly, conditionality is more likely to be effective if the rewards are tangible or material, such as state’s welfare (Schimmelfenning, 2005). When citizens are not able to experience the rewards of EU membership, it is expected that the trust of the citizens declines. Therefore, the second hypothesis is:

*H2: A decrease in the size and speed of rewards, leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the European Union*

The determinacy of conditions refers to both the clarity and the formality of a rule. The clearer the conditionalities are, the more committed a target country will be in achieving these conditionalities. In contrast, vagueness of conditionalities or timeframes makes target countries procrastinate, underachieve or take wrong measures. The EU can enhance determinacy by giving regular feedback and specifying the conditions with a clear timeframe (Schimmelfenning, 2005). This factor will not be measured in this paper due to multiple reasons. Firstly, even though the rules for accession have changed multiple times in the past, this does not apply for the majority of the candidate members of the Western Balkan. Most countries have only experienced the system which is currently in place. Therefore, the conditionalities have had the same amount of clarity in their accession process. Secondly, it is extremely difficult to measure ‘the clarity of conditions’. Clarity in this case is based on subjective perceptions on how clear the conditions are. Because of a lack of available objective data and the assumption that this factor would not yield results, this factor is not included further in this research.

The credibility of conditionality refers to the credibility of the EU’s threat to withhold the reward if conditions are not met, and the credibility of the EU’s promise to pay the reward once the conditions are met. The credibility increases if the partner is coherent and consistent. In the EU, it is important that the member states, the European Parliament and the European Commission agree on the conditions and the rewards. When in agreement, the EU can speak with one voice. This increases the

coherence and therefore the credibility. Credibility can alter through time. Distant rewards put the credibility of the EU in doubt. The EU can increase credibility by making investments and supporting the target states. Lastly, credibility can be undermined by other actors when they offer comparable rewards at lower costs (Schimmelfenning, 2005). When the EU does not act coherent and breaks promises, it is expected that citizens lose their trust. Therefore, the third hypothesis is:

*H3: A decrease in the credibility of conditionality, leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the European Union*

The size of adoption costs refers to the domestic adoption costs a country has to incur, to make the changes. The costs can come from various sources. For instance, the government is unwilling to make the changes because it will make them lose elections, coalition partners or governing power. In the target country the electorate, interest groups, opposition parties and state institutions can influence the costs of rule adaption. It is also possible for a target country to lack the expertise, financial or administrative capacity to implement rule adaption (Schimmelfenning, 2005).

It is expected that an increase in adoption costs lead to a decrease in citizen trust. The fourth and last hypothesis of this paper is:

*H4: An increase in the size of adoption costs, leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the European Union*



## 4 Research Design

*Chapter 4 explores the research design of this qualitative case study. First, the research design is discussed (4.1). Secondly, the design is operationalized. This examines how the concepts of the hypotheses can be made measurable (4.2). Furthermore, the selection of cases and theories, discuss the motivations behind choosing the cases (4.3). After that, the collection of the data is described (3.4). Next, a description on how the data was collected (4.4). Lastly, the validity and reliability of this research design will be discussed (4.5).*

### 4.1 Research Design

This study is designed as a qualitative case study approach. A case study is described as research with a small-N. This implies that sample data is selected for the research. In this research, Montenegro and North Macedonia are selected from the Western Balkan countries to examine. A sample study gives a researcher the opportunity to devote time to a specific research topic. Therefore, case studies are ideal for investigating new, complex, and abstract phenomena. The disadvantage of a case study is that the focus is on only one or two cases. Therefore, it can be difficult to scale up the findings (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; Heale & Twycross, 2017).

This study incorporates an explanatory design. This design is applied to research topics where literature is limited. According to Blatter & Haverland (2012), there are three explanatory approaches in case study research; the co-variational analysis (COV), causal-process tracing (CPT), and the congruence analysis (CON). COV analysis tests whether there is a relation between the variables. This is examined by comparing different cases and by systematically comparing the variation of independent variables on the dependent variable. CPT focuses on what is required to generate a specific outcome. It reveals the temporal interplay among conditions or mechanisms that lead to an outcome. CON analysis focuses on which explanator approach provides the most insights into a phenomenon by comparing multiple data. For this research, a co-variational analysis is incorporated in order to answer the research question. This analysis examines whether there is a causal relation between factors during the accession process and citizen trust in the EU.

There are different types of comparisons for the COV approach. This paper incorporates the cross-sectional comparison. A cross-sectional comparison examines different events at the same time. This type of research is useful when applied in studies with a focus on a specific geographical area (Blater & Haverland, 2012). A focus on the same area assures that shared historical, cultural and geographical characteristics are constant. Therefore, using the same geographical area in research, guarantees that the control variables are the same. This research focusses on the area of the Western Balkan. Next to that, the relation between prolonged accession and citizen trust in the EU takes place at the same time, Therefore, cross-sectional is the best fit for this research.

## 4.2 Operationalisation

This chapter explains how the concepts in the hypotheses are operationalised. Operationalisation refers to defining the concepts in a manner in which they can be objectively measured. This is necessary for hypothesis testing.

### 4.2.1 Hypothesis 1: *prolonged accession leads to a decrease of citizen trust.*

There is a relationship between citizen trust and the EU. Lower trust results in less willingness to comply with the decisions taken by the EU (Golubović, Džunić & Golubović, 2015). Citizen trust is measured twice a year through a survey, overseen by the European Parliament and European Commission. The survey is called the ‘The Standard Eurobarometer’. It is the official polling instrument used by EU institutions and agencies (European Parliament, n.d.). It was launched in 1974 and is used to measure public opinion on issues related to the EU’s political and social climate. It provides relevant data for the public, the media, researchers and experts (European Union, n.d.). The Standard Eurobarometer consists of 1000 citizens originating from every (candidate) member of the EU. The citizens are asked about their opinion regarding the EU, trust in EU institutions and national governments, economics and other political and social issues. The question in the Eurobarometer that is most relevant for this paper is: “*For each of the following institutions, do you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it?*”. In the survey, there is a list of institutions on which the citizen can express their opinion. The opinion of the citizen in the EU is used in this research.

Appendix B shows an example of the Eurobarometer question from the spring of 2021 (the European Commission with Directorate-General for Communication, 2021). The answers of these questions are gathered and documented throughout the years. This data is used for the operationalisation of citizen trust in the EU. The first hypothesis suggests that when the accession takes longer, there is a decrease in trust. This is operationalised by dividing the accession years of the candidate members into smaller pieces of 4 years. It is expected that every 4 years, the decrease in citizen trust will be steeper. This indicates that longer accession means lower trust levels for citizens.

### 4.2.2 Hypothesis 2: *a decrease in the size and speed of rewards, leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the European Union.*

The concept of ‘size and speed of rewards’ comes from the external incentive model. This means that through the process of rule adaptation, EU candidate membership must become increasingly rewarding. Every step through the accession should be more rewarding than the previous step. Lastly, the conditionality is more likely to be effective if the rewards are tangible or material (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier’s, 2005). Rewards from the EU hold multiple meanings. Rewards are given in monetary as well as non-monetary means. The EU supports candidate members monetarily with the Instrument for

Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The assistance is given in financial and technical support. From 2007 until 2013 the program was called IPA1. The program provided financial assistance for rural development, human resource development, regional development, cross-border cooperation, institution building, and transition assistance. The budget was 1.5 billion euro for all the candidate members (European Commission, n.d. -d). IPA2 was launched in 2014 for the period of 2014 until 2020. The budget for this program was 12.8 billion euro. Lastly, IPA3 was launched from 2021 until 2027 with a projected budget of 14.162 billion euro. The European Commission is transparent on how much budget is allocated to each country and how it is spent. When a country fails to comply with the conditionality, the provided budget is reduced. Beside funds, the EU also invests in candidate members if they are compliant. These investments are done through the European Investment Bank (EIB). The EIB is an extension of the EU and enacts monetary policy of the EU. The investments are transparent and published each year (European Investment Bank, n.d.). The funds and investments together make up the monetary rewards from the EU. Rewards can also be non-monetary. The ultimate goal of the accession process is to become a member of the EU. This process entails four subsequent steps; application, granted candidacy, the starting of official negotiations, and accession to the EU. The process of achieving steps is considered the non-monetary reward. The funds, investments and the achievement of steps towards accession are the operationalisation of the size and speed of rewards.

#### 4.2.3 Hypothesis 3: *a decrease in the credibility of conditionality, leads to a decrease in citizen trust.*

The credibility of the conditionality is linked to the credibility of the supplier. Credibility refers to the likeliness of the EU to withhold rewards and to pay the rewards if conditions are met. Before a country can join the EU, the application needs to be unanimously approved by the Council of the EU and have its application approved by a majority vote of the European Parliament (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2019; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier's, 2005). For this hypothesis, events in where there was conflict, disagreement, or broken promises of EU actors in regard to enlargement were used. Using key search points, these events are searched for in news report. These events are used as the operationalisation of credibility of the EU. Especially newspapers are prominent actors in reporting events of disagreement or broken promises. The key search points used in this research are: 'EU membership blocked', 'unbelievable accession', 'refused EU membership', 'Accession rules adjusted', 'European enlargement rejected', 'EU enlargement disagreement', followed by the selected country. The first 7 search results from google search engine are summed up in the analysis to see significant moments in time.

#### 4.2.4 Hypothesis 4: *an increase in the size of adoption costs, leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the European Union.*

The fourth hypothesis relates to changes within a candidate country. The hypothesis implies that an increase in the adoption costs to become an EU member, leads to a decrease in citizen trust. The size of domestic adoption cost determines whether a target government is willing to meet the EU's conditions. National governments will be opposed to comply with conditions if this leads to losing support from the citizens in elections (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier's, 2005). An increase in the Eurosceptic view in a country leads to an increase in the number of Eurosceptic political parties. When Euroscepticism becomes more popular, it becomes more politically advantageous to adopt Eurosceptic statements for main stream parties (Leconte, 2015; Trezn & de Wilde, 2009). The increase of political parties with Eurosceptic statements is used to operationalise this. This factor is measurable at the outcome of the national elections.

### 4.3 Selection of the Cases

A co-variational analysis (COV) approach case selection refers to the logic of causal inference. This method is based on two general rules. The first rule is that the cases should vary as much as possible on the factor that the research examines (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). Secondly, the cases should be similar with regard to the control variables. After accomplishing these two general rules, the causal relations can be examined by comparing the cases. If the independent variable (X) and dependent variable (Y) show covariance over time or space, the conclusion can be made that a change in X causes an effect on Y (Blatter & Haverland, 2012).

This research sample includes North Macedonia and Montenegro. Both countries have missing data points due to their long EU accession period. North Macedonia was the first country of the Western Balkan which signed the Association and Stabilisation agreements. It was also the first country to apply for EU candidacy, and the first country to be granted EU candidacy. Montenegro was the second country to be granted EU candidacy in this region. Even though they have a similar start in the accession, their process is completely different. North Macedonia was only allowed the start negotiations in 2020, while Montenegro started already in 2012. Montenegro is the country which is closest to be granted EU membership. It has opened and closed the most chapters in the accession process (*European Council, n.d. a-d*). These countries are selected because they vary the most in their process. By selecting these cases, it is most likely results will be found.

### 4.4 Data Collection

This research will be based on documentation as a source of data. Yin (1994) listed six sources of evidence for data collection in a case study. These sources are physical artifacts, participant observation, direct observation, interviews, archival records, and documentation. Documentation can

refer to primary or secondary documentation. Secondary documentation and sources are used in the literature review as well as the theoretical framework.

For the accession process primary data is used to conceptualise prolonged accession data. Primary data is used to measure citizen trust. Citizen trust is based on data collected from surveys conducted by the European Commission. The other hypotheses also make use of primary data. For the second hypothesis the data originates from the European Investment Bank and from the Instrument Pre-accession of the EU Commission. For the third hypothesis, newspaper articles are collected from the internet. These articles are international newspapers articles that report in English. The last hypothesis analyses election results from Montenegro and North Macedonia.

## 4.5 Reliability & Validity

### 4.5.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to whether something is measured consistently. When the research is repeated by others, the results should remain the same (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; Fitzner, 2007). The disadvantage of a sample research is that it makes the measurements less reliable in comparison to using the entire dataset. The process of analysing cases based on pre-defined indicators is a somewhat subjective process. Therefore, a case study is prone to error and a different researcher could come to different findings. However, this is not a disqualifying factor. Other researchers can further elaborate on case studies with different perspectives. In order for this to be possible, it is the responsibility of the researcher to be as transparent as possible. This is also the case for this paper. Next to that, argumentation is provided with choices and findings in this research.

### 4.5.2 Validity

This research also takes validity into account. Validity is the extent to which any measuring instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). There is internal validity and external validity (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; Fitzner, 2007). Internal validity refers to the possibility of a causal relationship. This research focusses on a few cases. A sample research increases the internal validity. Data triangulation is also applied when possible, to further improve internal validity. For instance, in hypothesis 2, rewards are referred to as funds as well as investments to measure the same concept. External validity means that the findings of the research can be generalized. However, in practice, it is difficult to generalise the findings of a case study. The findings can only be generalized when the population of the case resembles the population of the comparative cases. Therefore, the same control variables need to be displayed (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). The situation of each country in the accession process is unique. The findings of this research can therefore not be easily generalised. Researching how prolonged accession influences trust of the sample Western Balkan countries in the EU, can indicate how this happens in the other countries.

## 5 Analysis

*This chapter performs the analysis. The main research question is: How does the European Union accession process shift the trust that the Western Balkan citizens have in the European Union? Before this research question can be answered, the hypotheses first need to be answered. The first hypothesis states that prolonged accession has a relation with citizen trust in the EU. After that, the second hypothesis tests the relation between the size and speed of reward and citizen trust in the EU. The third hypothesis states that there is a relation between the credibility of the conditionality and citizen trust in the EU. Lastly, the fourth hypothesis states that there is a relation between the domestic costs on citizen trust in the EU. This research includes Montenegro and North Macedonia as Western Balkan countries. If necessary, the findings are further investigated through second-hand sources.*

### 5.1 Hypothesis 1

*Prolonged accession leads to a decrease of citizen trust in the European Union*

The hypotheses are tested by analysing North Macedonia and Montenegro. However, as the number of Western-Balkan countries awaiting EU membership is small, it is worth to look at the overall trend of the region. Therefore, Albania and Serbia also are included in the sample for testing the first hypothesis. Some countries started the process of EU accession earlier than other countries. Because of this, data availability varies among the countries. Figure 2 and 3 illustrate the results of the Eurobarometer questionnaires of candidate member from 2007 onwards. The questionnaires contain questions on whether the citizen trust the EU. This was repeatedly asked to 1000 citizens of each candidate country. The questionnaire is performed twice per year.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of people who answered the questionnaire with: 'Do not know'. This implicates that they do not know whether they have trust in the EU. From 2007 until 2014, the figure illustrates a general upward trend. After that, the general trend among the countries declines over time, with the exception of Serbia. There is a larger uncertainty towards the EU between 2014 and 2016 among all countries. This implies that less citizens were unsure on whether they trusted the EU.

This general trend is best illustrated by Montenegro in figure 2. Firstly, the answer 'do not know' fluctuates a lot with an overall increase in the trend. In 2015, 23% of the people answered that they did not know whether they trusted the EU. After this peak, the trend declined over time. In 2021 only 7% of the citizens answered that they did not know whether they trusted the EU. This trend is seen in most countries. For instance, North Macedonia started with citizen trust of 11% and currently stands at 7%. The citizen trust of Albania shows a constant decrease, starting at 23% and currently at 2%. The data from the questionnaire in Serbia shows an upward trend from 2012 until 2014. After 2014, the trend decreases until 2020. This year illustrates a peak that has declined in 2021 again.

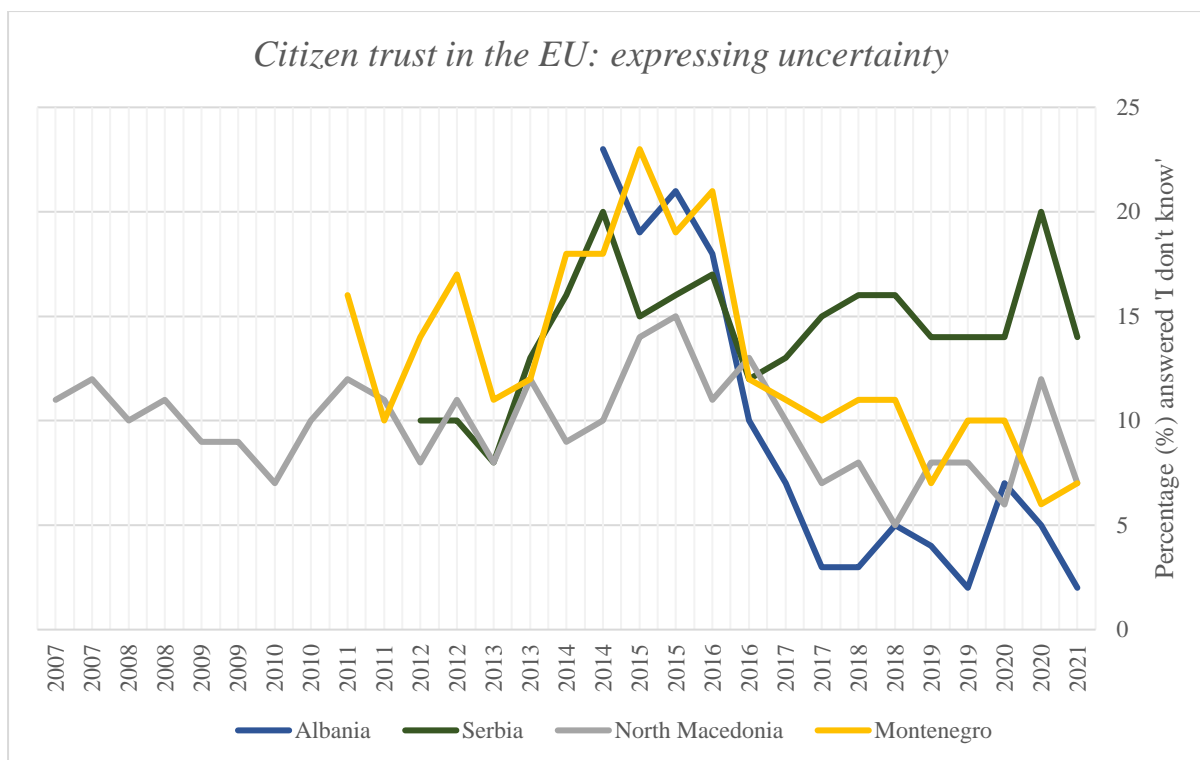


Figure 2 Trust in the EU; don't know, Western Balkan, generated from; (Eurobarometer, n.d.)

Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of citizens who answered the questionnaire with 'I trust the EU'. The trust of citizens in the EU differs a lot when they become a candidate member. The biggest difference in percentages are from the citizens of Serbia and North Macedonia. The citizens of Serbia answered with 37% in 2012 with 'I do trust the EU'. The percentage of citizens that answered that they trusted the EU in North Macedonia in 2007 was 66%. Next to that, the figure shows fluctuations with an increase and decrease of trust in the EU. The overall general trend of the trustworthiness of the EU is stable throughout the years.

All countries, with the exception of Albania, currently have a lower percentage of people answering that they trust the EU comparing to the first questionnaire. For North Macedonia the difference in citizen trust in the EU is -10%, for Serbia -5%, for Montenegro -21% and Albania +13%. However, it gives a biased view to only look at the starting and beginning point. This view is considered biased because of the fluctuations that the data displays. For instance, the year prior to the last Eurobarometer the citizen trust was 17% lower in Albania.

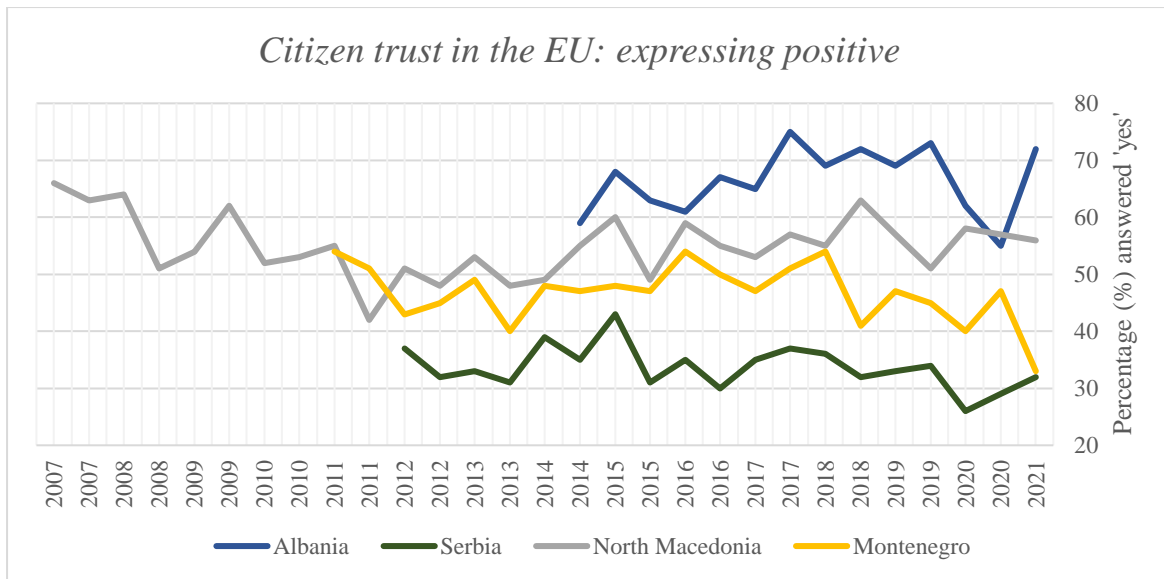


Figure 3. Trust in the EU; positive, Western Balkan, generated from; (Eurobarometer, n.d.)

The hypothesis states that prolonged accession leads to a decrease of citizen trust in the EU. In order to test this hypothesis, the factors trust of citizens and time to accession needs to be taken into account. It is expected that an increase in the accession period leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the EU. This would indicate that a longer accession period to become an EU member leads to lower citizen trust of the Western Balkan in the EU. Table 1 shows the influence of every 4 years of the accession process. In the first 4 years, the trust in the EU varies from -24% to 13%. In the second 4 years the citizen trust varies from -7% to -1%. Only North Macedonia has data about the citizen trust available in the third 4 years, which was 4%. In the last years of the prolonged accession the data varies from -12% to 6%. Most countries, except Albania, experienced a decline in citizen trust in the first 8 years. North Macedonia and Serbia experienced positive effects in citizen trust in the later period.

The data displayed in table 1 implies that the trust of citizens in the EU has a smaller range between the countries throughout the prolonged accession. This finding does not support the hypothesis, since the trust of the citizens does not decline in the prolonged accession.

**Citizen trust of prolonged accession**

	Start year	Citizen trust first 4 years	Citizen trust second 4 years	Citizen trust third 4 years	Remaining last years
Macedonia	2007	-24%	-7%	4%	6%
Montenegro	2011	-7%	-2%	*	-12%
Serbia	2012	-7%	-1%	*	3%
Albania	2014	13%	*	*	=

Table 1. Citizen trust of prolonged accession (Generated from data of figure 3)



### 5.1.1 Conclusion

Figure 2 illustrates that, besides the peak of 2015, citizens who answered 'Do not know' on the question whether they trust the European Union declines. A possible explanation for this might come from Kaeding, Pollak, Schmidt (2021). According to this research, the citizens of candidate countries going through the accession process become more aware of the EU. The EU becomes more dominant in rule transfer, politicians talk more about the EU or visiting EU countries becomes easier. The citizens form an extremer opinion about the EU, as they learn more about the EU. There was a high percentage of citizens who answered that they did not know if they could trust the EU in 2015. During this year the European migrant crisis peaked (Abdou, 2020). Many migrants tried to reach Western Europe by going through the Western Balkan. The EU was not able to resolve this crisis effectively. This might explain the increase of uncertainty whether they could trust the EU in 2015 from citizens in the Western Balkan.

Based on the hypothesis prolonged accession leads to a decline in citizen trust in the EU. Based on figure 3 and Table 1, the conclusion can be made that there is not a decline in citizen trust in the EU caused by the longitude of the accession process.

## 5.2 Hypothesis 2

*A decrease in the size and speed of rewards, leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the European Union*

The second hypothesis states that a decrease in the size and the speed of the rewards given to the accession countries, leads to a decrease in the trust of the citizens in the EU. The size and speed of the reward is split into two categories. The first is the monetary reward given to the Western Balkan countries throughout their accession period. Monetary assistance is provided through investments and funds. For the Western Balkan the largest investor from the EU is the European Investment Bank (EIB) (the European Investment Bank, n.d.). The EIB is an extension of the EU and enacts monetary policy of the Commission. The European Commission is transparent in how much budget is allocated to each country and where it is spent on. When a country fails to comply with the conditionality, its budget is reduced. How much funds candidate countries receive is decided by the European Commission and approved by the EP and the Council (European Commission, n.d.-d). For EU potential candidate countries financial and technical support is available through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). In 2007 they replaced a series of EU programmes and financial instruments, in order to simplify the process (European Commission, n.d.-d).

The second category is the non-monetary reward. The reward for the countries is the progress through the process accession. As mentioned in the literature review, there are four official steps in the accession; application, granted candidacy, the starting of official negotiations and accession to the EU. North Macedonia and Montenegro are at the third step of accession. The completion of each step represents a reward given to the country.

### 5.2.1 Montenegro

Figure 4 illustrates the amount of funds received from the IPA program and the investments of EIB to Montenegro. The funds are stable and show a slow upward trend. According to the external incentive model the rewards should become more rewarding as the country moves through the rule adaption. This does not apply for the funds, as in these cases the rewards only increase minimal. However, it is very stable, making it clear for Montenegro what to expect. It is expected that with the funds overall being stable, the effect on the decrease of the trust of the citizens is minimal.

Figure 4 also displays the number of investments given by the EIB. Between 2007 and 2009 there is an increase in investments provided by the EU. Between 2009 and 2016 the investments are low. From 2016 onwards, the investments increased.

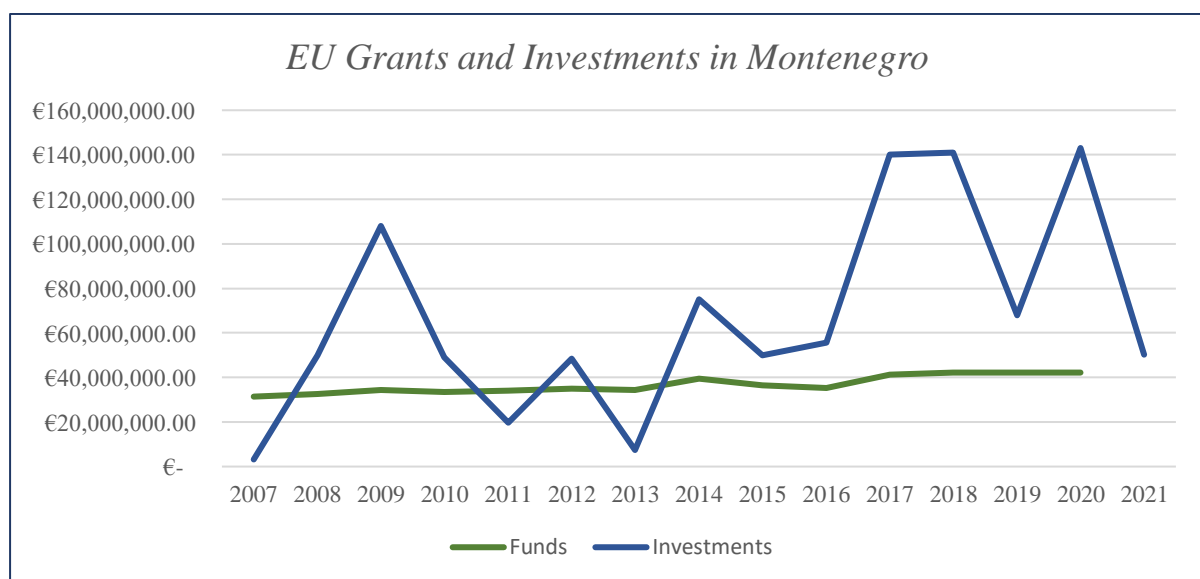


Figure 4. Monetary rewards from the EU to Montenegro, generated from; (European Commission, n.d. -d; the European Investment Bank, n.d.)

The non-monetary rewards are the steps of the accession process. Montenegro applied for EU candidacy in 2008 and was granted candidacy in 2010. The official start of the negotiations took place in 2012. The timeframe of granted candidacy to the start of negotiations was fast, compared to other countries. The timeframes of the other countries are shown in figure 1.

Based on the hypothesis and figure 4 it is expected that the trust of citizens in the EU would decline after 2009 and increase after 2016. This is because the monetary rewards declined after 2009 and increased after 2016. The data of figure 3 does not support this expectation. The first available dataset point on citizen trust in the EU of Montenegro is in 2011. Whether trust declines in 2009 is therefore not possible to observe. From 2016 to 2017 trust declines with 7%. Even though, after 2017 the funds and investments are high, there is a continuous decline of citizen trust in the EU.

Based on the hypothesis, it is expected that the trust of citizens in the EU would be the highest in the years of 2008 until 2012. This is because the non-monetary rewards of candidate membership and official negotiations were granted in these years. The data does not support this expectation. The first datapoint of Montenegro is in 2011. Therefore, it is not possible to determine how high the trust was from 2009 until 2011. But in 2011 and 2012 there is a decrease in trust of 11%.

### 5.2.2 North Macedonia

Figure 5 illustrates the amount of funds received from the IPA program and the investments of EIB. The funds granted to North Macedonia fluctuates. From 2007 through 2013 the funds increased steadily. In 2014 programme IPA2 started. This severely decreased the funds to North Macedonia. The amount of funds remained low until 2016. In 2017 the funds increased again and kept increasing until now. The figure also shows the investments given by the EIB. Similar to the funds, there is an increase between 2007 and 2013. Between 2014 and 2017 the investments are at its lowest. The trend of the investments is similar to the trend that occurs with the funds.

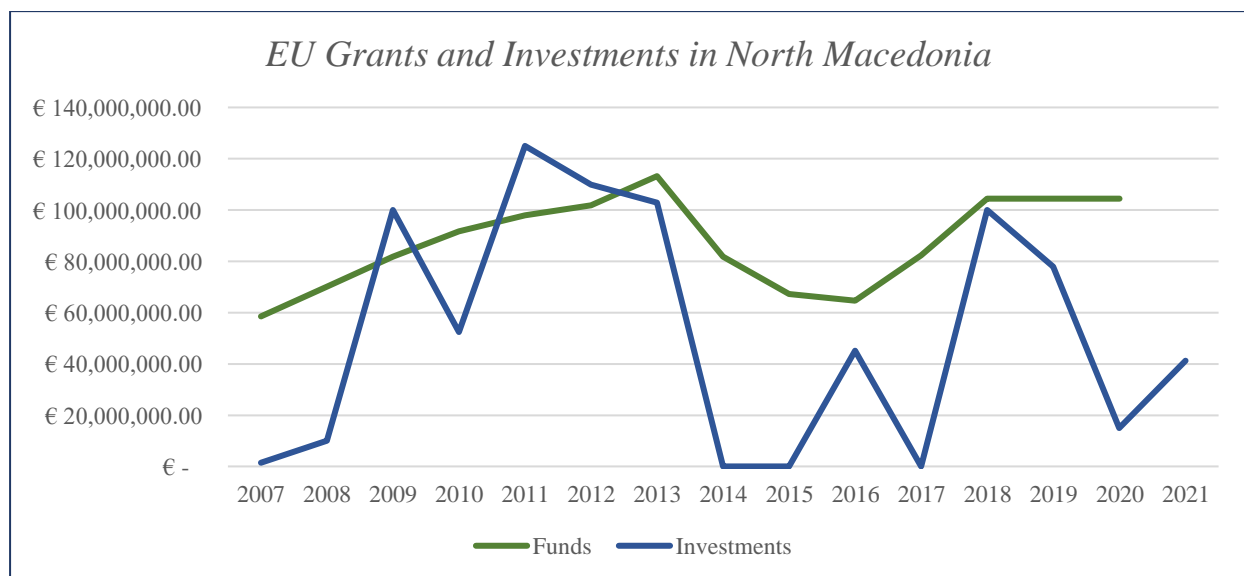


Figure 5. Monetary rewards from the EU to North Macedonia, generated from; (European Commission, n.d -d.; the European Investment Bank, n.d.)

For the non-monetary rewards, this paper looks at the accession process. North Macedonia applied for the EU in 2004 and was granted candidacy in 2005. The official starting of the negotiations happened in 2020. At the time of this paper, North Macedonia is in the third step of accession.

For the monetary rewards it is expected for citizen trust in the EU to decline after 2013, as this is the date at which funds and investments decreased. In the years after, citizen trust remained high. After 2017 it is expected that citizen trust increases again. However, the opposite occurs for citizen trust

in the EU. In 2014 citizen trust increased from 48% to 55%. Also, in the years after, citizen trust remained high. this period stands out for the high amount of citizen trust in the EU.

For the non-monetary rewards, it is expected that there is a high citizen trust in the EU in 2004 and in 2020. The Eurobarometer only started in North Macedonia from 2007 onwards. Therefore, there is no data available on the trust of the citizens in the EU in 2004 or 2005. However, the trust of the citizen in the EU peaked in 2007. Whether this peak resulted from the granted EU candidacy cannot be determined in this research, because of the missing data. The data on the trust of the citizens in the EU shows a decrease in 2020 of 2%.

### 5.2.3 Conclusion

Based on this hypothesis, the received rewards of the countries should correlate with the trust that the citizens have in the EU. After the analysis the conclusion is that the rewards do not correlate with the citizen trust in the EU.

For the monetary rewards the opposite appears to happen. There is an increase in citizen trust in the EU in both Montenegro and North Macedonia in the periods where the funds and investments are lower. This is partly in line with previous research. Mendez and Bachtler (2018) found that EU-funded projects from the Cohesion Fund did not trigger a positive view towards the EU. Citizens were unaware which projects were funded by their government or the EU. Chalmers and Dellmuth (2017) also found that EU funding did not have a direct effect on public support for the EU. There is no research to suggest that funds would cause a decrease of citizen trust in the EU.

Also, the non-monetary rewards do not correlate with an increase in citizen trust in the EU. There is not a large decrease of citizen trust in the EU when a next accession period is received.

## 5.3 Hypothesis 3

*A decrease in the credibility of conditionality, leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the European Union*

The third hypothesis implies that a decrease in the credibility of the conditionality leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the EU. The credibility of the conditionality is linked to the credibility of the supplier that conditionality. For EU accession this is the Council, EP and the Commission. The Council consist of all the member states of the EU. A country needs to apply to become a member of the EU. The application, and each step of accession, needs to be unanimously approved by the Council of the EU and by a majority vote of the European Parliament. The Commission gives recommendations. These are the actors who demand the conditionality on the candidate member states. Trust in the EU is in this paper linked to the supplier of the EU conditionality. It is tested if the citizen trust in the EU correlates with the unbelievable actions by the EU and other actors who decide on the accession process.

Key search points are taken into account in order to examine the credibility of the conditionality. These key search points will point out specific events when the EU and other actors have been not trustworthy. Especially newspapers are prominent actors in reporting these events. The key search points are: ‘EU membership blocked’, ‘unbelievable accession’, ‘refused EU membership’, ‘Accession rules adjusted’, ‘European enlargement rejected’, ‘EU enlargement disagreement’, followed by the case-country selected. In the next paragraph it is examined whether the key search points have an influence on the citizen trust.

### 5.3.1 Montenegro

The key search points are examined and compared to the trust of the Montenegro citizens. The key search points for Montenegro are summarized in table 2. The table displays the source, who the author is and which news outlet it originates from. In the column ‘event’ a small summary of the event is described. The next column shows which actor was unbelievable in the event. The last cell states which year the source originates from.

#### Results from key search points of Montenegro

Source	Event	Unbelievable actor	Year
<u>Author:</u> Dettmer, J. <u>News outlet:</u> Voice of America.	Member states are unable to agree on timetable for membership the Balkan countries.	Members states and the EU	2021
<u>Author:</u> Petrequino, D. <u>News outlet:</u> AP NEWS	EU leaders fail to give Balkan nations a membership timeline.	Member states and the EU	2021
<u>Author:</u> Marusic, S. J. <u>News outlet:</u> BalkanInsight	Council positive regarding the accession process of Montenegro.	-	2021
<u>Author:</u> Koseva, D. <u>News outlet:</u> BNE-Intellinews	European Parliament backs 2025 as Montenegro’s possible accession date.	-	2018
<u>Author:</u> Crowcroft, O. <u>News outlet:</u> Euronews	After elections the new prime-minister of Montenegro reaffirms the goal of joining the EU.	-	2021
<u>Author:</u> Barnes, J. <u>News outlet:</u> The Telegraph	EU leaders refuse to commit to accession of Montenegro before 2030	Member states and The EU	2021
<u>Author:</u> European Council	Fourteenth meeting of the Accession Conference with Montenegro at Ministerial level.	-	2021

*Table 2 results from key search points of Montenegro*

Table 2 displays the 7 key search points that appear highest. Even though the key search points are focused on untrustworthy events, not many were found. The search results give an uncertain perspective given by the actors towards accession of Montenegro in 2021. This is when the EU was unable to give a clear timeframe for becoming an EU member.

Citizen trust in the EU in 2020 of Montegonians was 47%. This trust declined with 14 points to 33% in 2021. Therefore, it seems that an unclear EU accession perspective correlates with citizen trust in the EU. It is unclear whether the effect is long-term, as this 2021 survey was the most recent questionnaire.

### 5.3.2 North Macedonia

The key search points are also examined and compared to the trust of the North Macedonia citizens. Table 3 summarizes, similar as table 2, the sources, what happened, who was unbelievable and the year they originate from.

#### Results from key search points of North Macedonia

Source	Event	Unbelievable actor	Year
<u>Author:</u> Emmott, R. <u>News outlet:</u> Reuters	The EU can no longer agree to give a guarantee of future membership to North Macedonia	Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Bulgaria	2021
<u>Author:</u> - <u>News outlet:</u> BBC	EU (members states led by France) blocks Albania and North Macedonia membership bids.	France, Denmark and the Netherlands	2019
<u>Author:</u> Barigazzi, J. <u>News outlet:</u> Politico	Bulgaria blocks EU membership talks for North Macedonia over language and culture disputes.	Bulgaria	2020
<u>Author:</u> Marusic, S.J. <u>News outlet:</u> EUobserver	Bulgaria and Greece Block Macedonia's EU Talks over North Macedonia's name.	Bulgaria and Greece	2012
<u>Author:</u> Gotev, G. <u>News outlet:</u> BalkanInsight	EU delays Macedonia and Albania talks as countries refuse to give the green light	France, Denmark and the Netherlands	2018
<u>Author:</u> Radev, G. <u>News outlet:</u> VoxEurop	Bulgaria opposes a date for opening of official accession negotiations	Bulgaria	2012
<u>Author:</u> Zalan, E. <u>News outlet:</u> EURACTIV	Bulgaria vetoes Macedonia's EU accession talks	Bulgaria and Greece	2012

Table 3. Results from key search points of North Macedonia

Table 3 summarises the events at which actors were perceived untrustworthy according to North Macedonia. The news reports that came up first in the search engine originated from the years 2012, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Some observations can be made. First, by summarising the magazines it can be seen that the individual member states blocked accession, rather than the Commission or Council. The Commission gave yearly recommendations to let the negotiations start. However, news reports stated that the EU blocked the accession. Secondly, the news reports published in year 2018, 2019 and 2020 refer to the same event. Therefore, there are two events at which the actors were unbelievable. These events took place 2012 and in the period of 2018 until 2020.

In 2012 Bulgaria and Greece blocked the starting of the official negotiations with North Macedonia due to language and cultural disputes (EURACTIV, 2012; VoxEurop, 2012, EUobserver,

2012). In 2011 citizen trust of North Macedonia in the EU was 42%. In 2012 It increases to 51% and further on it declines to 48%. Comparing this data to the postponing of the official negotiations, it can be implied that this event did not have a large effect on citizen trust

In the time period of 2018 until 2020 a large clash between the EU and North Macedonia took place. First, the Prespa agreement was signed in 2018. In this agreement promises were expressed that official negotiations would start. However, France, the Netherlands and Denmark delayed the accession negotiations with a year to 2019. In 2019 these countries blocked the start of official negotiations. Eventually, in 2020 the official negotiation started. (BalkanInsight, 2018; Politici, 2020; BBC, 2019; Reuters, 2021). In 2018 the citizen trust in the EU was 54%. After the Prespa agreement was signed the trust increases to 63%. This was the highest since the start of the accession process. In 2019 the citizen trust in the EU declines to 51%. In 2020, when the negotiations have started, the trust of the citizens in the EU increases again to 58%. This event appears to correlate with the citizen trust in the EU.

### 5.3.3 Conclusion

Based on the hypothesis a decrease in the credibility of conditionality, leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the EU. In Montenegro there was a large decrease in citizen trust in the EU when actors appeared untrustworthy in 2020. In North Macedonia there was no decline in trust in 2012. In 2018 until 2020 the event created a decrease of trust when actors were perceived as untrustworthy. Based on this the credibility of the conditionality and the decrease in citizen trust correlates most of the time. Montenegro's accession has progressed better than that of North Macedonia. For Montenegro only one event appeared where they were perceived as an untrustworthy EU actor. For North Macedonia, the events of 2012 and 2018 until 2020 were untrustworthy moments to the citizens.

## 5.4 Hypothesis 4:

*An increase in the size of adoption costs, leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the European Union*

This hypothesis examines whether an increase in the size of the adoption costs leads to a decrease in the citizen trust in the EU. The adoption costs are required to meet the conditionality of the EU that are determined in the agreements. These costs examine whether a target government is willing and able to meet the EU conditionality. National governments can be hesitant to meet the conditions. The reasoning for this hesitation is that compliance could lead to losing popular support or elections. An increase of Eurosceptic parties in a country represents a Eurosceptic view in the country. When Euroscepticism increases within the population, it becomes more politically advantageous to adopt the Eurosceptic discourse for political parties (Leconte, 2015; Trenz & de Wilde, 2009).

To examine whether the size of adoption costs leads to a change in citizen trust in the EU, Eurosceptic parties are taken into account. However, the most common databases which track Eurosceptic voting, such as ParlGov, do not include the Western Balkan in their research. Therefore,

this paper has gathered its own data by analysing the results from the previous national elections. This data is gathered from Europe Elects, which keeps track of all EU elections (*Europe Elects, n.d.-a, Europe Elects, n.d. -b*). Europe Elects gathers the data on how the party self-identifies as. In this manner the number of votes for Eurosceptic parties is observed. This data is analysed and processed in table 3 and 4. The number of parliamentary seats that each political party won is indicated in the tables. Next to that, this also indicates whether the party is far right, far left, Eurosceptic or in pro-EU.

#### 5.4.1 Montenegro

In 2007 Montenegro adopted its constitution after the dissolution of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro. According to the constitution the country has a republican form of government. The Parliament is unicameral and consists of 81 seats. Unicameral means that there is only one legislative chamber. The executive power belongs to the government headed by the Prime Minister. The President is elected every 5 years but holds mostly symbolic power. The country favours a dominant party structure. This means that many small parties form broad coalitions prior to elections, often consisting of over 10 parties. Citizens still vote for the individual party, but with the knowledge which coalition will govern after the elections. If these coalitions are not chosen to govern the country they tend to fall apart after elections. (KU Leuven, 2022). This makes the political landscape dynamic and complicated. The Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS) has been in power for 30 years, from 1990 until the 2020 parliamentary elections.



### Montenegro parliamentary election results 2012-2020

Original name	English name	Abb.	Far-right	Far-left	Eurosceptic	Pro-EU	2020	2016	2012
Demokratska partija socijalista Crne Gore	Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro	DPS	0	0	0	1	29	36	39
Socijaldemokratska partija	Social Democratic Party	SDP	0	0	0	1	2	4	0
Socijaldemokrate Crne Gore	Social Democrats	SD	0	0	0	1	3	2	0
Koalicija Ključ	Key Coalition	*	0	0	0	1	0	9	0
DEMOS	Demos	*	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Ujedinjena reformnska akcija	United Reform Action	URA	0	0	0	1	4	0	0
Socialistička narodna partija Crne Gore	Socialist People's Party	SNP	0	0	0	1	5	0	9
Pozitivna Crna Gora	Positive Montenegro	*	0	0	0	1	0	0	7
Hrvatska građanska inicijativa	Croatian Civic Initiative	HGI	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Albanci odlučno / hqiptarët të vendosur	Albanians Decisively	AO	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Albanska koalicija / Koalicioni Shqiptar	Albanian Coalition	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Albanska alternativa	Albanian Alternative	AA	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
Demokratska stranka jedinstva	For Unity	DSJ	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Demokratska Partija / Partia Demokratike	Democratic Party	*	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Narodni pokret Crne Gore	Popular Movement	NP	1	0	0	1	3	0	0
Liberalna partija Crne Gore	Liberal Party	LP	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Demokratska Crna Gora	Democratic Montenegro	DCG	0	0	0	1	9	8	0
Bošnjačka stranka	Bosniak Party	BS	0	0	0	1	3	2	3
Demokratski front	Democratic Front	DF-ECR	1	1	1	0	19	18	20
							81	81	81

Table 4. Montenegro parliamentary election results 2012-2020, generated from; (Europe Elects, n.d.-a)

Table 4 shows the parliamentary election results between 2012 and 2020. The first column presents the original name of the party in Montenegro, the second column presents the English name of the party, and the third row displays the abbreviation of the name. There are four categories of political views for political parties; far right, far left, Eurosceptic and Pro-Europe. A party can fall under more than one category or in no category. Table 4 contains 1's and 0's. If a party falls under a category it is marked

with a 1, if not with a 0. The columns that mention a year indicate how much parliamentary seats each political party won in that election year.

There are two Eurosceptic parties who won parliamentary seats in the scope of the elections in table 4. The smallest Eurosceptic party who won the Montenegro elections is 'For Unity'. This party represents a political alliance of Albanian parties. The political party won one seat in the election in 2012. The alliance ended after the election of 2016. The other Eurosceptic party is the 'Democratic Front'. This is also a coalition of multiple smaller parties. Some parties of this coalition are the New Serb Movement, the Workers' Party, Yugoslav Communist Party, the Serbian Radical Party, and more parties who have joined and left throughout the years. The coalition consist political parties that have right political views, as well as parties that have left views. There are various parties in the coalition, which makes it difficult to determine their uniform standpoint. The Serbian Parties seek reunification with Serbia, while other parties seek closer ties with Russia. Other political parties desire complete Souverainism. What unites them is a platform of anti-corruption, populism and Euroscepticism (Tomović, 2012). In 2012 the coalition won 20 of the 81 possible seats. In 2016 they won 18 seats and in 2020 they won 19 seats. The Eurosceptic support peaked in 2012. The two Eurosceptic parties won 21 seats. In the two elections that followed a small decline in the number of seats for the Eurosceptic parties appeared.

The number of parliamentary seats for Eurosceptic parties remains the same for most of its accession process. It is expected that with the parliamentary seats being stable, the chance that it caused a decrease of citizen trust in the EU minimal.

#### 5.4.2 North Macedonia

North Macedonia is a parliamentary representative democratic republic with a unicameral legislature comprised of between 120 to 123 seats depending on turnout. The Members of Parliament (MP) are elected for four years. The president is elected every five years with a maximum of two terms. The power of the president is limited, with mostly only holding symbolic power. The executive power remains with the government headed by the Prime Minister (KU Leuven, 2020). Macedonia's political party system is dominated by two major parties on the centre-left and centre-right; SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE.

### North Macedonian parliamentary election results 2011-2020

Original name	English name	Abb.	Far-right	Far-left	Euro-sceptic	Pro-EU	2020	2016	2014	2011
Levica	Levica - LEFT	*	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0
Socijaldemokratski Sojuz na Makedonija	Social Democratic Union Coalition	SDSM	0	0	0	1	46	49	34	42
Demokratska unija za integracija	Democratic Union of Integration	DUI	0	0	0	1	15	10	19	15
Gradanska opcija za Makedonija-GROM	Citizen Option for Macedonia	GROM	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Alijansa za Albancite	Alliance for Albanians	AA	0	0	0	1	12	3	0	0
Nacionalna Demokratska Prerodba / Rilindja Demokratike Kombëtare	National Democratic Revival		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Demokratska Partija na Albancite	Democratic Party of Albanians	DPA	1	0	0	1	1	2	7	8
Vnatrešna makedonska revolucionerna organizacija – Demokratska partija za makedonsko nacionalno edinstvo	VMRO-DPMNE Coalition	VMRO-DPMNE	0	0	0	1	44	51	61	56
Lëvizja Besa	Besa Movement	BESA	0	0	0	1	0	5	0	0
							120	120	123	123

Table 5. North Macedonian parliamentary election results 2011-2020, generated from; (*Europe Elects, n.d.-b*)

Table 5 shows the parliamentary election results between 2011 and 2020. The first column presents the original name of the party in Macedonian, the second column presents the English name of the party and the third row displays the abbreviation of the name. There are four categories of political views for political parties; far right, far left, Eurosceptic and Pro-Europe. A party can fall under more than one category or in no category. Table 5 contains 1's and 0's. If a party falls under a category it is marked with a 1, if not with a 0. The columns that mention a year indicate how much parliamentary seats each political party won in that election year.

Throughout the four elections, all the political parties publicly supported becoming an EU member. Therefore, there are zero Eurosceptic parliamentary seats. Based on this observation, this could not have caused a decrease of citizen trust in the EU.

### 5.4.3 Conclusion

Based on the hypothesis an increase in the size of adoption costs, leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the EU. In Montenegro the size of the Eurosceptic parties remained stable through the accession period. In North Macedonia there were no parties which were openly stating they were against EU accession. Based on these observations the domestic adoption costs and the citizen trust in the EU do not have a correlation.

That there is no rise of seats of Eurosceptics parties in Montenegro might be explained by Keading, Pollak and Schmidt (2021). According to them there is a strong consensus between the citizens and politicians that European membership is the future for Montenegro. The citizens consider themselves as Europeans and believe that EU membership will increase the living standards. Also, most political parties are from the communist past. These parties strongly oppose right wing ideology, including Euroscepticism (Keading, Pollak and Schmidt, 2021).

There are no political parties openly stating that they are Eurosceptic in North Macedonia. Possible explanations are given by Trkanjec, (2021) & Jovanovski (2021). According to them the VMRO-DPME presents itself as pro-EU, but actually is Eurosceptic. there political actions imply a party that supports neo-Macedonian, conservatism, nationalism and anti-Western. It balances a line of resisting EU conditionality and claiming to be pro-EU (Trkanjec, 2021; Jovanovski 2021). The VMRO-DPME is one of the largest parties of North Macedonia. The presence of this party could explain why no other Eurosceptic parties have been able to gain seats.

## 6 Conclusion

*In this final chapter the findings of the analysis, the research questions and the hypothesis are discussed (6.1). Also, the limitations of this research are discussed (6.2). Lastly, the recommendations for further research are described (6.3).*

### 6.1 Discussion of Findings

This paper analyses the relation between accession and citizen trust in the European Union, focused on the candidate countries in the Western Balkan. The research question of this paper is: *How does the European Union accession process shift the trust that the Western Balkan citizens have in the European Union?* A set of sub-questions were developed in order to answer the main research question. Each of the sub-questions will be answered separately.

#### 1. What is the relation of prolonged accession and citizen trust in the European Union?

To answer the research question in this paper the relation between prolonged accession and citizen trust in the EU is measured. Prolonged accession was operationalised by dividing the accession process into blocks of four years. In contrary to the other hypotheses, this was tested on all Western Balkan candidate members. The citizen trust of Albania, Montenegro North Macedonia and Serbia in the EU was collected from the Eurobarometer questionnaire. The citizen trust in the first year of the block was compared with the citizen trust of the last year in the block. According to the hypothesis it was expected that each subsequent block would have a larger decrease in trust than its previous block. It was expected that a longer period of accession would decrease trust.

The results of the analysis do not show a relation between prolonged accession and citizen trust in the EU. The largest decreases of trust in the EU appeared in the first four years of accession. Later years of the accession show a small recovery of citizen trust in the EU.

#### 2. What is the relation between the size and speed of rewards and citizen trust in the European Union?

This research tested the relation between rewards and citizen trust in the EU. The rewards were operationalised in monetary rewards and non-monetary rewards. The monetary rewards are the investments by the European Investment Bank and the funds given by the EU. The non-monetary reward is referred to as progress into the next step of the EU accession. Based on the hypothesis, citizen trust in the EU should decrease when the funds and investments decline. It was also expected that citizen trust in the EU would increase when progress into the next step of accession was granted.

### Monetary rewards:

For Montenegro, the funds from the EU were the same throughout the accession period. The investments decreased after 2009 but increased in 2016. After 2016 the investments remained high. There is no data on 2009 to measure the fluctuation of citizen trust in 2009. In 2016 citizen trust in the EU declined with 7%. Even though the investments remained high, there was a continuous decline of Montenegrin citizen trust in the EU. In North Macedonia, the funds and investments decreased from 2014 until 2017. In 2014, North Macedonian citizen trust had increased from 48% to 55%. In the following years citizen trust remained high.

Based on the analysis, citizen trust in the EU and the monetary rewards do not correlate. For Montenegro and North Macedonia, in periods with low funds and investments, there was an increase in citizen trust in the EU. This is the opposite of what was expected based on the hypothesis. According to previous research this is not unusual (Mendez & Bachtler, 2018; Chalmers & Dellmuth, 2016). Citizens are often unaware of how much and what is funded by the EU.

### Non-monetary rewards:

Montenegro applied for EU membership in 2008 and was granted EU candidacy in 2010. The negotiations started in 2012. The first data point available for Montenegro is 2011. Therefore, it is not possible to determine how high the trust was from 2009 until 2011. However, in 2011 and 2012 there is a decrease in citizen trust of 11%. North Macedonia applied for the EU in 2004 and was granted candidacy in 2005. The negotiations started in 2020. There is no data available on the trust of the citizens in the EU in 2004 or 2005. In 2020 there is a decrease of trust of 2%. Based on the analysis, citizen trust in the EU and the non-monetary rewards do not correlate.

### 3. What is the relation between the credibility of conditionality and citizen trust in the European Union?

This question tested whether a decrease in the credibility of the conditionality, leads to a decrease in citizen trust in the EU. The credibility of the conditionality is linked to the credibility of the actor. For EU accession these are the Council, EP, Commission and the member states. These are the actors who demand conditionality of the candidate member country. Trust in the EU, in this paper, is linked to the actor of the EU conditionality. To examine the credibility of the conditionality, key search points were taken into account. These key search points would point out specific events when the EU actors have been untrustworthy.

For Montenegro one event appeared in 2021. At this event the EU was unable to give a clear timeframe for EU membership. In Montenegro Citizen trust in the EU in 2020 was 47%. This trust declined with 14 points to 33% in 2021.

For North Macedonia two events appeared. The first event took place in 2012. Bulgaria and Greece blocked the starting of the official negotiations with North Macedonia due to language and cultural disputes. In 2011, citizen trust in the EU was 42%. At the end of 2012 this increased to 48%.

The second event was in 2018-2020. In 2018 the Prespa agreement was signed. In this agreement promises were made to North Macedonia that official negotiations would start. France, the Netherlands and Denmark delayed the accession negotiations with a year to 2019. In 2019 these countries blocked the start of the official negotiations. In 2020, partly due to outrage of the Commission, the negotiations started. In 2018 the citizen trust in the EU was 54%. After the Prespa agreement was signed, the trust increased to 63%. In 2019 the citizen trust in the EU declined to 51%. After the negotiations had started in 2020, trust partly recovered to 58%.

Based on the analysis, there is a correlation between the credibility of conditionality and citizen trust in the EU. In two out of the three events, the variables correlated with each other.

#### 4. What is the relation between the size of adoption costs and citizen trust in the EU?

In the last hypothesis the correlation between adoption costs and citizen trust in the EU were examined. Adoption costs are measured by the presence of Eurosceptic parties. Data was collected by using the results from parliamentary elections in Montenegro and North Macedonia from a database. This database identifies political parties as Eurosceptic, when the political party self-identifies as Eurosceptic. This means that identification is not based on the actions of the political party.

In Montenegro there were two Eurosceptic [coalitions in the database](#) which had won parliamentary seats. The coalitions were named 'For Unity' and 'Democratic Front'. For Unity was a small coalition which represented Albanian minority parties. Democratic Front represented a sizeable coalition of parties who shared a platform of anti-corruption, populism and Euroscepticism. The two coalitions together won 20 seats in 2012, 18 seats in 2016 and 19 seats in 2020. The number of parliamentary seats for Eurosceptic parties remained stable during its accession process.

In North Macedonia, no political party stated to be against EU accession in the elections of 2011 through 2020. In Montenegro the size of the Eurosceptic parties remained stable through the accession period. In North Macedonia there were no parties that openly stated they were against EU accession. Based on these observations, there is no correlation between the domestic adoption costs and the citizen trust in the EU.

A possible explanation behind the absence of Eurosceptic parties in North Macedonia is provided by Trkanjec, (2021) & Jovanovski (2021). According to them VMRO-DPME presents itself as pro-EU, but actually is Eurosceptic. The VMRO-DPME is one of the largest parties of North Macedonia. Its presence could explain why no other Eurosceptic parties have been able to gain seats. In Montenegro Keading, Pollak and Schmidt (2021) argue that there is a strong consensus between the citizens and politicians that European membership is the future for Montenegro. This could explain that a decrease of citizen trust in the EU does not correlate with an increase of Eurosceptic parties.

## *How does the European Union accession process shift the trust that the Western Balkan citizens have in the European Union?*

The main research question is how the European Union accession process shifts the trust that the Western Balkan citizens have in the European Union. In this paper prolonged accession, the size and speed of rewards, the credibility of the conditionality and the size of the adoption costs were tested in relation to citizen trust of the Western Balkan in the EU. Based on the analysis there is only one factor which correlates with citizen trust in the EU. The other hypotheses were not observed. This means that the longitude of the accession, the rewards and the presence of Eurosceptic parties are less relevant for the citizen trust in the EU. Most important is the credibility of the conditionality.

### 6.2 Limitations

This research contains a set of limitations which need to be considered. At the time this research was written, there were only five EU candidate countries. These were Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. Ukraine and Moldova gained EU candidate status in the last week of writing this paper. A limitation is that these countries are not included in this research.

A second limitation is the data which was available for the fourth hypothesis. The most known databases, such as ParlGov, do not keep track of election results in the Western Balkan. This makes it more difficult to find data on the election results. Europe Elects is not linked to a university or established institution. It is a small non-partisan platform with a wide reach in European countries. Europe Elects is the most reliable database which keeps track of the political situation in the Western Balkan. Therefore, this research deems this database as sufficiently credible.

Thirdly, there is no prior research linking citizen trust in the EU during the accession process with potential factors. Therefore, the selected factors to test correlations are based on different qualifications. Prolonged accession is chosen due to its rising popularity in the research field. The other factors originate from the external incentive model. This model is the most prominent model for explaining the impact of EU conditionality. There are a lot of similarities between the external model and the premises of this research. Therefore, it was expected this model would be best able to explain changes of citizen trust in the EU. Based on the results of the analysis, this might not have been the case.

### 6.3 Recommendations

This paper presents opportunities for future academic research. The only factor that correlates with citizen trust in the EU, is the credibility of the conditionality. In this hypothesis, there were events at which member states declined process of the accession. Namely Bulgaria, Greece, France, the Netherlands and Denmark. The Commission gave positive recommendations for the process of



accession for both North Macedonia and Montenegro. Citizen trust in the EU declined in the events. This means that the EU was held accountable for actions of its member states. Future research can focus on how the EU is perceived externally. For example, when an action of a country is perceived as an action of the EU, rather than an action of itself.

Secondly, Euroscepticism is difficult to determine in the Western Balkan. Most political parties openly claim to be in favor of EU accession. However, not all of the political parties are. Future research can be focused on determining whether parties are Eurosceptic based on their action, rather on what they claim to be.

Lastly, this paper finds that one factor correlates with citizen trust in the EU. Research can be done to determine which other factors influence trust in the EU. This can be examined by choosing a different conditionality model, such as the social learning model. Another option would be to choose a model that relies more on psychology to understand citizen trust.

This paper presents implications for government policies. Citizen trust in the EU correlates with the credibility of the conditionality. The other hypotheses were not supported in this research. This implies that for citizen trust in the EU, the longitude, the rewards, and Eurosceptic parties are less relevant. The most important factor is that citizens should observe credible conditions, set by credible actors. For policy this implies that citizen trust in the EU is not affected by a longer accession time period or domestic difficulty in achieving the policies. The most important factor is a credible accession process with a clear perspective.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A Background about the Western Balkan countries accession process

### A.1. Albania

In contrast to the other Western Balkan countries, Albania was not part of Yugoslavia. Both Albania and Yugoslavia had authoritarian communist governments until the early 1990s. The communist regime of Albania collapsed in 1990. At this moment in time Albania was the poorest country in Europe, caused by the isolationistic policies of the former country's dictator (Panagitou, 2011). In 1998 a new constitution was approved, ending a period of turmoil. Albania became a country with a democratic system of government with separation of powers and protection of fundamental human rights (Peshkopia, 2014). Unlike other countries in the region, Albania is almost entirely ethnically homogenous. This together with a strong history of of secularism, unburdens the country of potential religious or ethnic conflicts (Panagitou, 2011).

During the Thessaloniki European Council summit in June of 2003 Albania, together with the former Yugoslavian countries, was identified as a potential candidate for EU membership (Meurs, 2003). In 2006 it signed into the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). In 2009 it joined NATO and submitted its formal application for membership of the EU. The Commission gave recommendations for 12 key priorities where Albania needed more compliance with in accordance with the membership criteria. In 2012 the Commission recommended that Albania be granted EU candidate status. In June of 2014 the council agreed, and EU candidacy was granted. In April 2018 the Commission gave its recommendation to open official accession negotiations. In 2020 the members of the European Council opened accession negotiations with Albania. No chapters have opened so far (European Council, n.d.-a).

### A.2. Bosnia and Herzegovina

In 1992 there was a referendum in Bosnia and Herzegovina for independence, following the declarations of referendums in Slovenia and Croatia which occurred in 1991. The country is ethnically diverse. This was represented in the outcome of the referendum. The Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats voted in favour of independence, whereas the Bosnian Serbs voted against. The United States and the European Community recognised Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign state in 1992. In the same year a civil war erupted along the three ethnic groups of the country. The internal conflict lasted for three years and it is estimated that it caused 100,000 casualties. A NATO intervention led to peace negotiations. These resulted in the Dayton peace agreement in 1995. This agreement-imposed peace caused a unique political order. The Parliamentary Assembly holds equal representation for each ethnic group. Furthermore, the Presidency consists of one member from each ethnic group which holds veto power over any legislation (Szewczyk, 2010). The system guarantees representation but lacks functionality. Nowadays there is a broad agreement that the Dayton

agreement is insufficient. It causes deadlocks and halts progress. However, there is no agreement on how to improve the political and governmental situation without reigniting ethnic tensions (Perry, 2015).

Bosnia and Herzegovina was recognized as a potential candidate for EU membership during the Thessaloniki European Council summit. It actively participates in a number of agreements, including the SAA since June 2015. Bosnia and Herzegovina applied for EU membership in February of 2016. The Commission denied this application. In 2019 the Commission gave 14 key priorities for the country to fulfil before it could become an EU candidate member. It currently remains the status of potential candidate (European Council, n.d. -b).

### **A.3. Kosovo**

Yugoslavia was a federation comprised of six equal republics, of which Kosovo was not one of them. Kosovo was an autonomous province of Serbia. When Yugoslavia fell apart, Serbia greatly reduced the special autonomy that Kosovo had guaranteed while being a part of Yugoslavia. Serbia also began the process of Serbianising Kosovo (Bellamy, 2002). This led to revolts in the country and in 1998 open-combatting between the Kosovo Liberation Army and the Serbian army started. The Serbian army launched a wave of ethnic cleaning which triggered NATO to launch airstrikes in 1999, amidst fear of upcoming humanitarian disasters. Kosovo was placed under transitional UN administration. In 2008 Kosovo declared independency from Serbia. It has joined a number of organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), but has not been able to join the United Nations (UN) due to vetoes from Russia and Serbia (Judah, 2008).

In 2008 the EU declared its willingness to assist the economic and political development of Kosovo through a clear European perspective. Kosovo is participating in the Stabilisation and Association Agreements since April of 2016. Since then, the EU and Kosovo have worked together on a number of topics such as visa and trade liberalisation. Kosovo currently remains the status of potential candidate (European Commission. (n.d.-f)

### **A.4. Montenegro**

Montenegro and Serbia attempted to prevent the collapse of Yugoslavia. They created a successor state. At first, the political leadership of Montenegro was in favour of this a two-member federation with Serbia, formalised by a referendum in 1992. The federation was named the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In Montenegro the pro-independence camp was in the minority. However, the authoritarian rule of Serbia and the potential international costs of being associated with this paved the way for a renewed pro-independence movement (Darmanovic, 2007). This led to a 2006 independence referendum. The referendum occurred without a crisis or the presence of violence. The pro-independence camp won, and Montenegro became independent from Serbia. The result of the referendum was recognized by all local and international entities; including Russia, the USA, China

and the EU. It has no border issues and has friendly relations with all of its neighbours (Fawn, 2008). Due to this smooth transition Montenegro is referred to by politicians as “the miracle in the Balkans” (Darmanovic, 2007).

In December of 2008 the country applied for EU membership. In 2010 the Commission identified 7 key priorities that would need to be addressed before negotiations could begin, but also issued a favourable opinion on Montenegro’s application. The Council agreed and granted Montenegro candidate status the same year. In June of 2012 official accession negotiations opened. There have been continuously meetings to access progress made by Montenegro. At the time of writing this paper there have been 14 meetings, with the last meeting taking place on December of 2021. So far, 33 5 chapters have opened, and 3 are successfully closed (European Council, n.d.-c).

#### **A.5. North Macedonia**

North Macedonia declared its indecency from Yugoslavia in 1991. The country largely avoided the conflict which devastated other parts of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. It was however destabilised for a period by the Kosovo war when large numbers of refugees entered Macedonia. The country has a majority ethnic Macedonian population (65% of the population), with a large ethnic Albanian minority (25%) (Peshkopia, 2014). Ethnic violence erupted between these groups in 2001. The ethnic Albanians saw the government as systemic discriminative. NATO deployed peacekeeping missions to North Macedonia between 2001 and 2003 at the government’s request. The EU and U.S. helped broker the Ohrid Framework Agreement. This led to partial devolution of power to municipalities, equal minority representation and greater rights to the use of the Albanian language. Interethnic relations have largely stabilized since 2001, but political crises periodically create strain (Garding, 2019).

During the Thessaloniki European Council, North Macedonia was also identified as a potential candidate for EU membership. It was the first country to sign the SAA in 2004. North Macedonia applied for EU membership in March of 2004 and the Council granted candidate status in 2005. Since 2009 the Commission has recommended to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia. In 2015 conditions were added to open accession negotiations. These were met in 2018, and the Commission again recommended to open accession negotiations. A name dispute with Greece and a language dispute with Bulgaria stalled the accession process. However, in March of 2020 negotiations officially began. No chapters have opened so far (European Council, n.d.-d).

#### **A.6. Serbia**

In 1989 Slobodan Milošević rose to power in Serbia. His authoritarian style of governance, together with his policy of policy of ethno-nationalism, ignited tensions between the other republic within Yugoslavia. This, together with a rise of ethnic nationalism in the republics, led to the collapse of Yugoslavia (Milošević, Touquet, 2018). During this collapse Serbia became involved in four wars;

with Slovenia in 1991, with Croatia from 1991 until 1995, with Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 until 1995 and with Kosovo in 1998 until 1999. Crimes of humanity were committed by all sides involved in the conflict. The UN formed the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) that dealt with war crimes that took place. External intervention put the conflicts to a halt. The Milošević regime was peacefully overthrown in 2000 and Milošević was extradited to the ICTY. In Serbia the topic of the war is sensitive, balancing between the role of oppressor and victim (Golčevski, Engelhardt & Boomgaarden, 2013).

Serbia was identified as a potential candidate for EU membership during the Thessaloniki European Council of 2003. In 2008 priorities were set out for the country's membership application, and the country applied in 2009. In March of 2012 Serbia was granted EU candidate status. In September 2013 the SAA Serbia entered into force between the EU and Serbia. On January 2014, the first intergovernmental conference took place signalling the formal start of Serbia's accession negotiations. So far, Serbia has opened eighteen chapters and provisionally closed two chapters (European Council, n.d.-e).












## Appendix B. The Eurobarometer questionnaire with the question regarding trust in the EU.

Spring 2021

Tables of results

**QA6a.11** How much trust do you have in certain institutions? For each of the following institutions, do you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it?

**The European Union (%)**

		Tend to trust		Tend not to trust		Don't know
		Sp.2021	Diff. Sp.2021 - Win.20/21	Sp.2021	Diff. Sp.2021 - Win.20/21	
EU27		49	0	42	-1	9
EURO AREA		48	0	44	0	8
NON-EURO AREA		54	0	37	-1	9
AL		72	17	26	-14	2
MK		56	-1	37	6	7
ME		33	-14	60	13	7
RS		32	3	54	3	14
TR		31	-1	60	4	9
BA		46	1	47	-3	7
CH		40	-6	59	5	1
IS		63	1	35	-2	2
NO		58	5	42	-4	0
UK		36	-9	64	9	0
XK		65	13	22	-12	13

(European Commission Directorate-General for Communication, 2021)