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Quantifying the Functioning of Democratic Institutions: Developing a Reliable Model for the Western Balkans

Introduction

Functioning of democratic institutions (FoDI) is an inseparable part of country reports produced by the European Commission (EC, Commission) each year. At the same time, this is the sole part of the report that does not have an assessment of the level of preparedness and progress. Since 33 negotiating chapters and two sub-areas within the Fundamentals cluster, namely Economic Criteria and the Public Administration Reform (PAR), are regularly assessed by the Commission for all (potential) candidate countries, FoDI deserved the same treatment. Moreover having in mind the revised enlargement methodology¹ with enhanced focus on the Fundamentals, the necessity for providing a clear assessment of the state of play in this area appears as a logical step forward if the aim is to elevate the overall impact of the mentioned reports on the reform processes in the Western Balkan region. Hence, this paper offers thorough guidance for the EC to apply quantification to the FoDI area, using a reliable approach (referred to as 'mixed approach' throughout the paper).

Bearing in mind Articles 2 and 49 of the Treaty on European Union² (TEU) as well as the Copenhagen criteria for EU accession,³ it is rightfully considered that democracy and the functioning of democratic institutions are at the core of the EU's enlargement policy. Stemming from that comes the necessity to not only monitor the (potential) candidates' state of play in this area, but also provide credible assessments as a basis for future accession process related decisions. Building upon the EC's 'fundamentals first' approach, benchmarking has become an important mechanism to ensure the consistency and credibility of the EU conditionality policy.⁴ Moreover, civil society organisations have continuously highlighted the importance of introducing quantification of Western Balkans' preparedness levels in the Commission's annual reports.⁵ This concept should be applicable to the FoDI area in the same vein. Consequently, this analysis shows that it is both possible and necessary to quantify the country reports in the 'Functioning of democratic institutions' section. It, therefore, employs relevant international democracy indexes as a tool for quantifying FoDI.

The paper is organised in five distinct chapters. In the first part, it argues why quantification is important and necessary for the EU accession process. In the second chapter, a methodology for quantifying FoDI is developed with detailed step-by-step explanations. Afterwards, in the third section, the quantification methodology is applied to six Western Balkan countries and ratings for four categories ('Elections', 'Parliament', 'Governance', and 'Civil society') are calculated and presented. The Mixed approach model for quantifying FoDI is developed in the same chapter by calculating an overall score for FoDI across six countries. The same chapter also presents and discusses the final FoDI results based on the applied methodology. Lastly, quantification is observed in the context of the Model of staged accession as part of its merit-based approach towards enlargement.

1 European Commission, 'Enhancing the Accession Process - A Credible EU Perspective for the Western Balkans' (European Commission, 5 May 2020), https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-02/enlargement-methodology_en.pdf.

2 TEU, 'Treaty of the European Union' (Official Journal of the European Union, 2007), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2b-f140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF.

3 EUR-Lex, 'Accession Criteria (Copenhagen Criteria)'; accessed 25 August 2023, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/accession-criteria-copenhagen-criteria.html>.

4 Simonida Kacarska and Ardita Abazi Imeri, 'Effective Benchmarking for Concrete Rule of Law Reforms in the Western Balkans' (Think for Europe Network - TEN, October 2019), <https://cep.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Effective-benchmarking-for-concrete-rule-of-law-reforms-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>.

5 Milena Lazarević and Strahinja Subotić, 'Monitoring Reforms in the EU Accession Process: A Western Balkan Civil Society Contribution' (Think for Europe Network - TEN, May 2023), https://cep.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Monitoring-Reforms-in-the-EU_-A-WB-civil-society-contribution.pdf.

Why quantification is important?

Quantifying the Commission's annual country reports in the area of the functioning of democratic institutions is important for several reasons. It can enhance objectivity, accountability, transparency, and the effectiveness of efforts to promote and protect democracy within the Western Balkans. Moreover, it provides a valuable tool for both policymakers and the public to monitor and address democratic challenges in the region. It enables monitoring progress and preparedness of a country towards the EU membership. Consequently, the objective of this analysis is to establish a structured and systematic approach for the quantification of FoDI.

In the ever-evolving landscape of European democracy, this analysis shines a quantitative lens on the annual country reports produced by the European Commission. This approach brings forth an indispensable and long-awaited quantified assessment of EC country reports within the FoDI section. By quantifying these reports, an objective and standardised assessment emerges, shedding light on the strengths and weaknesses of democratic institutions among (potential) EU candidate countries. Such quantification fosters accountability, enabling countries to be held to the same criteria and ensuring that none of them can escape scrutiny. Finally, it provides a tangible means for cross-country comparisons, allowing policymakers, researchers, and citizens to discern trends, identify areas of concern, and measure progress with precision.

Beyond these analytical benefits, quantification serves as an essential early warning system, helping to avert democratic crises. When specific metrics signal a decline in a country's democratic institutions, it prompts timely interventions and safeguards against potential turmoil such as institutionalism authoritarianism and illiberal practices. The quantification requires precise and standardised methodology applicable to all countries as a basis. Transparency and public awareness are bolstered as quantification demystifies the assessment process, inviting informed public debate and civic engagement, as well as decisions within the enlargement policy. Furthermore, quantified data guides policymakers in allocating resources more efficiently, ensuring that support is channelled where it is most needed. Ultimately, this approach advances the cause of democracy within the acceding states, fostering accountability, transparency, and, most importantly, the preservation and strengthening of democratic values across the continent.

Developing the Methodology for Quantification of the FoDI

As the Commission does not provide a qualitative assessment for the FoDI, it has so far been challenging to quantify the ratings solely based on the reports. Consequently, hitherto it was not possible to compare the state of play in the area of democracy between the countries nor to follow progress or regression over the years. In order to overcome this hurdle, this paper explores the utilisation of relevant international democracy indexes as a complementary tool. This, however, excludes taking the total quantitative ratings for democracy per country, as it would not accurately reflect the divergent scopes of these indexes and the Commission's reporting. Consequently, a more refined approach was required, necessitating the selection of specific indicators from the comprehensive lists within these indexes that align with the Commission's FoDI reporting. To achieve this, the paper builds upon the groundwork laid by CEP, which has previously mapped out the key elements of the Commission's FoDI reporting framework.⁶

Step 1. Selection of indexes

In the selection of relevant indexes, the following were included: 1. Freedom House's *Freedom in the World*, 2. Freedom House's *Nations in Transit*, and 3. Varieties of Democracy's *Democracy Report*. There are several reasons for selecting these three sources besides the well-known methodological rigour, longitudinal data, accessibility, transparency, and independent and comprehensive assessment. First, all of them have the newest reports published in 2023. Second, they contain data for all WB countries. Third, these three indexes are the closest to the EC's scope and cover the same time period. Having obtained data via in-depth comparative analysis, the matching process was conducted for each sub-area of the FoDI separately ('Elections', 'Parliament', 'Governance', 'Civil society', and 'Civilian oversight of security forces'). The precise details of this matching process can be found in the Annex, including how each democracy index aligns with the EC's elements in percentage points. The cross-examination and mapping of key policy elements in the Commission's reports, as a basis for quantification, was already facilitated by a separate yet interlinked paper.⁷

6 Strahinja Subotić and Milos Pavkovic, 'Identifying Inconsistencies in the 2022 European Commission's Annual Reports for WB6 - Functioning of Democratic Institutions in the Spotlight' (European Policy Centre - CEP, Belgrade, 2023), <https://cep.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Identifying-Inconsistencies-in-the-2022-European-Commissions-Country-Reports-for-WB6.pdf>.

7 Subotić and Pavković, 2023.

However, some limits of the selected indexes need to be taken into account. The exercise of quantifying EC's reports requires a detailed analysis of the three mentioned reports in terms of their methodologies for providing quantified assessments. For instance, the *Nations in Transit* report is based on expert interviews while having only 7 very wide indicators.⁸ These indicators often encompass several policy elements, thus meaning that more policy elements receive the same score, deeming it less precise compared to other democracy indexes. On the other hand, *Freedom in the World* and V-Dem's *Democracy Report* are much more nuanced and precise due to the fact that they possess a wide variety of indicators and sub-indicators covering more democracy elements individually. Therefore, the paper aims to overcome the limits of third-party indexes by opting for a mixed approach – calculating the average score and approximating EC's scope based on the Freedom House and Varieties of Democracy indicators.

Step 2. Converting the ratings

Once the appropriate indicators were selected, the subsequent steps proceeded in a straightforward manner. After matching the EC's policy elements with various indicators, it was necessary to rescale all the indicators' ratings on a 1-5 scale using the following basic formula: $X_5 = (X_7 - 1) \cdot (4/6) + 1$.⁹ This standardisation was essential because Freedom House indicators use a 1-7 scale (*Nations in Transit*), and 0-4 (*Freedom in the World*), while V-Dem offers a plethora of indicators ranging from 0-1, to 0-2, but also 0-60 and 0-100. The rescaling process aimed to enhance usability and comparability across these different sources. Then, to make sure the quantification mirrors the Commission's assessment scale, normally employed for the evaluation of 33 chapters and two Fundamental areas, a part of analysis was to convert the indicators' values on a five-point scale using a separate convergence formula for each of them. After the conversion, values are presented by the following five-point grading system: 'early stage of preparation' [1], 'some level of preparation' [2], 'moderately prepared' [3], 'good level of preparation' [4], and 'very advanced stage of preparation' [5].

Step 3. Presenting the scores per index

Upon completing the rescaling process, the outcomes for each sub-area, as well as the overall FoDI assessment, are showcased with reference per specific democracy index that was chosen for analysis. The average score is also presented. In other words, these outcomes illustrate how the Commission's ratings would appear if this EU institution selectively adopted the quantified ratings from either of the democracy indexes. Undertaking this step will demonstrate that it is possible to assess the functioning of democratic institutions – something that has been missing in EC's country reports for years. While there may be some discrepancies between the results for the FoDI across the different democracy indexes, they nonetheless provide the reader with valuable insights into the candidate country's status in the realm of FoDI.

Step 4. Mixed approach as a model for quantification

In an attempt to minimise the aforementioned discrepancies and provide a more objective and balanced scoring, the paper provides a justification for opting for a mixed approach. Rather than relying solely on the scores obtained from one index, the methodology also provides a score which incorporates a blend of indicators from Freedom House (FH) and Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem). The mixed approach entails the selection of the indicators' results, following the EC's scope, from all three observed democracy indexes when calculating the final score for the FoDI per analysed country. The mixture was a necessity, as neither FH nor V-Dem aligned perfectly with the EC's reporting on the FoDI. In short, by applying this proposed methodology, further research on the preparedness levels of the Western Balkan countries will be able to account for the ongoing developments in the essential area covering the functionality of democratic institutions.

One limitation, however, needs to be stressed out. The quantification of the functioning of democratic institutions serves only as an approximation to the Commission's scope of analysis, and there might be varying degrees of precision per sub-area. For example, based on the comparative analysis, the aspect centred on elections aligns most closely with the Commission's original scope. In contrast, the methodology was unable to provide quantification of the assessment of 'Civilian oversight of security forces' as the Commission's assessment of this sub-area is rather vague and inconsistent. Furthermore, the section on Governance recorded the lowest coverage by all three indexes due to the EC's unusual choice of policy elements (see table 17 on Governance in Annex), thus severely limiting the final assessment. The existence of this limitation is another call for the Commission to improve its overall approach to reporting, while taking into consideration existing democracy indexes.

⁸ Freedom House, 'Nations in Transit Methodology', 2023, <https://freedomhouse.org/reports/nations-transit/nations-transit-methodology>.

⁹ The formula for rescaling values from a 1-7 to a 1-5 scale is presented as an example. See the Annex for the detailed list of all conversion formulas for each individual indicator.

Quantifying the FoDI in Practice

Looking back at the Commission’s approach so far, it has been relatively consistent in providing qualitative assessments of the state of preparedness for 33 chapters in its annual reports for the Western Balkan countries. While assessments in three key areas: public administration reform, economic criteria, and functioning of the democratic institutions have been assessed individually as part of Cluster 1 (Fundamentals) the only one the Commission has not provided a qualitative assessment for - normally ranging from ‘early stage’ up to ‘very advanced’ level of preparedness - is the functioning of democratic institutions (FoDI). Consequently, this made it difficult to quantify the level of preparedness in this area. Considering that the Western Balkans have suffered from “elements of state capture”, as the Commission rightfully noted in its 2018 enlargement strategy,¹⁰ it becomes of paramount importance to start providing clearer assessments of how democratic institutions are functioning in the region.

Elections

Elections represent the first sub-area of the functioning of democratic institutions part of the EC country reports. By comparing reports of all Western Balkan states, it was possible to identify ten main elements within this category that are present and analysed across all six countries.¹¹ Key policy elements within the elections sub-chapter mapped in the Commission’s reports are:

- 1) Electoral reform and implementation of recommendations of relevant international organisations;
- 2) Oversight of civil society;
- 3) Dominance of the ruling party or coalition;
- 4) Current constitutional and electoral legal framework;
- 5) Gender balance;
- 6) Minority/ethnic representation/discrimination and access to political power;
- 7) Campaign and/or political party financing disparities;
- 8) General democratic standards (fair, competitive, free, regular, inclusive elections);
- 9) Work of national electoral bodies;
- 10) Administering elections.

These elements are cross-referenced with indicators of FH’s *Freedom in the World* and *Nations in Transit* reports, and V-Dem’s *Democracy Report* in an attempt to quantify this sub-area of the country reports. After cross-referencing, the matching indicators from the observed international indices are rescaled to a 1-5 scale, and the average value for the whole sub-area is calculated. The results after rescaling and calculation across countries are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Quantifying Elections based on Freedom House and V-Dem on a 1-5 scale;

Sources: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2023 Report* (https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/FIW_World_2023_DigitalPDF.pdf), Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2023 Report* (https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/NIT_2023_Digital.pdf), *Varieties of Democracy, Democracy Report 2023* (https://v-dem.net/documents/29/V-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf)

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	NMK	SRB
Freedom in the World	4.0	3.0	4.1	3.7	4.0	3.1
Nations in Transit	3.17	3.33	2.67	3.17	3.33	3.17
V-Dem	3.19	3.19	3.55	3.05	3.21	2.84
Average	3.45	3.17	3.44	3.31	3.51	3.04

It is important to have in mind that not all indexes cover all mapped policy elements of country reports. The table provided in the Annex shows that in the case of the ‘Elections’ sub-area, there is a strong match between what Commission’s reports and what Freedom House offers in its two relevant reports (*Freedom in the World* and *Nations in Transit*). Freedom House displayed a 90% match in the Elections sub-area with the EC reports (see Table 1 in Annex). When it comes to V-Dem, it covers 60% of EC’s policy elements, which renders its assessment in the context of the Commission’s reports more limited compared to the two Freedom House reports.

10 European Commission, ‘A Credible Enlargement Perspective for and Enhanced EU Engagement with the Western Balkans’ (European Commission, 2 June 2018), https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf.

11 See more at: Pavković and Subotić, ‘Identifying Inconsistencies in the 2022 European Commission’s Annual Reports for WB6 - Functioning of Democratic Institutions in the Spotlight’, p. 4.

When analysing the ratings of six Western Balkan countries, it is evident that, in some instances, all three indexes (*Freedom in the World*, *Nations in Transit*, and *Democracy Report*) yield closely aligned assessments with only minor score variations, as seen in the cases of BIH and Montenegro. Conversely, in Serbia, two Freedom House reports provide comparable evaluations of elections, while V-Dem assigns them a significantly lower rating. North Macedonia, on the other hand, sees *Nations in Transit* and V-Dem evaluating elections almost identically, with *Freedom in the World* offering a slightly higher score. Notably, there are substantial deviations among the three international indexes when it comes to Albania and Kosovo.¹²

Nevertheless, the results in Table 1 underscore that all Western Balkan countries fall within the range of *some* level to a *moderate* level of preparedness, in line with the European Commission's assessment approach. The Serbian case underscores that the 2020 electoral boycott, an uneven playing field in the 2022 elections, and various electoral process deficiencies have significantly impacted the low average grade. Additionally, BIH's inability to implement the European Court of Human Rights' judgments¹³ regarding citizen equality in electoral processes, combined with the complexities of its power-sharing model, has contributed to lower values in all democracy indexes. Overall, with an average rating of around 3, all Western Balkan countries indicate substantial room for improvement and the potential to attain the high democracy standards prevalent in the European Union.

Parliament

Parliament is the second of five sub-areas under 'Functioning of democratic institutions'. The role of the parliament in democratic system is particularly important as the parliament is the supreme representative body where elected representatives adopt laws, and ensure accountability of the government. By mapping elements¹⁴ provided in the EC's reports on six WB countries, 15 key policy elements have been identified:

- 1) Share of women among MPs/gender equality;
- 2) Oversight function over the executive;
- 3) Parliament's role in the EU integration and Committee for the Stabilisation and Association process/ EU Integration Committee;
- 4) Transparency;
- 5) Parliament's consultations with civil society;
- 6) Electing/appointing officials;
- 7) Inquiry committees;
- 8) Exercising constitutional function;
- 9) Ethical standards/Code of Ethics/Inflammatory/inappropriate language/physical altercation;
- 10) Registration and political parties' funding;
- 11) Employing urgent/shortened procedures;
- 12) Parliamentary representation of national minorities;
- 13) Political polarisation;
- 14) Rules of procedure/technical innovations/administration processes;
- 15) Internal party democracy.

Table 2 Quantifying Parliament based on Freedom House and V-Dem on a 1-5 scale

Sources: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2023 Report* (https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/FIW_World_2023_DigitalPDF.pdf), Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2023 Report* (https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/NIT_2023_Digital.pdf), *Varieties of Democracy, Democracy Report 2023* (https://v-dem.net/documents/29/V-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf)

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	NMK	SRB
Freedom in the World	3.8	3.0	3.8	3.8	4.2	3.4
Nations in Transit	2.5	1.5	2.33	2.5	2.67	2.5
V-Dem	3.42	3.2	3.55	3.56	3.35	2.99
Average	3.24	2.57	3.23	3.29	3.41	2.96

12 This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

13 Sejdić and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 27996/06 and 34836/06 (European Court of Human Rights 22 December 2009); Kovačević v. Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 43651/22 (European Court of Human Rights 29 August 2023).

14 Pavković and Subotić, 'Identifying Inconsistencies in the 2022 European Commission's Annual Reports for WB6 - Functioning of Democratic Institutions in the Spotlight', p. 5.

When cross-referencing these elements with the three international democracy indexes, all three showed similar levels of coverage for observed policy elements. *Freedom in the World* covers 60%, while V-Dem and *Nations in Transit* cover 67% and 53%, respectively, out of 15 policy elements within the 'Parliament' sub-chapter (see Table 4 in Annex). In the case of the 'Parliament' sub-area, V-Dem's indicators cover the largest portion of policy elements, rendering it the best to consult when it comes to this sub-area. However, having in mind that *Freedom in the World* and *Nations in Transit* cover some of the elements missing in the V-Dem, taking the average score for all three indexes offers the widest possible coverage of this sub-area.

The quantification of elements found in the Commission's country reports for the Western Balkan countries (WB6) is displayed in Table 2, revealing considerable variations, notably within the 'Parliament' section, among the three indexes. This disparity is most evident in BIH, where *Nations in Transit* rates as low as 1.5 on a 1-5 scale, while V-Dem assigns a higher 3.2 on the same scale. In general, *Freedom in the World* and V-Dem scores align closely in this section, except for North Macedonia, where *Nations in Transit* stands out as somewhat of an outlier. The final rankings position North Macedonia as the top-performing country, followed by Montenegro and Albania, with Kosovo, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina receiving lower scores (see Table 2). In this specific sub-area, the countries are assessed within a range from some to a moderate level of preparedness. North Macedonia's high ranking is well-deserved, reflecting the transparency of its parliament (Sobranje), effective parliamentary oversight in recent years, adequate representation of minorities, and limited polarization in the legislative body. Conversely, BIH and Serbia exhibit high polarisation, insufficient utilization of control and oversight functions, and, notably in Serbia, frequent breaches of procedural rules. Internal party democracy remains a shared concern across all countries in the region, underscoring the need for concerted efforts to strengthen party democracy in the future. Looking at the region as a whole, there is an unmistakable imperative for democratising and reinforcing the role of parliaments in the foreseeable future.

Governance

Judging by the number of policy elements mapped in the previous analysis, 'Governance' represents a very lengthy and, at the same time, very important part of Commission reports. With 15 policy elements, it observes a wide variety of issues. Among them, the following elements have been identified and mapped¹⁵ as necessary for quantification within the Governance sub-area:

- 1) Local self-government and decentralisation;
- 2) National EU integration structures;
- 3) Overall focus on EU-related reforms;
- 4) Executive output;
- 5) Opportunities for local participation and consultation;
- 6) Women's representation in local governments;
- 7) Women's representation in national government;
- 8) Inter-ethnic relations;
- 9) Coordination between central and local levels of governance;
- 10) Transparency at the local level and communication to the public;
- 11) Appointments made by executive bodies;
- 12) Capacities of local governments;
- 13) Government effectiveness and coalition stability;
- 14) Access to IPA by local governments;
- 15) Local governments' involvement in EU integration;

From this list, it is evident that many policy elements are exclusively EU related and it is impossible to find a similar indicator from relevant international democracy indexes. This is the case with the following policy elements: *national EU integration structures; overall focus on EU-related reforms; access to IPA by local governments; local governments' involvement in EU integration*. These four elements have henceforth been omitted from quantification, which limits the final results for this sub-chapter.

¹⁵ Pavković and Subotić, p. 7.

Table 3 Quantifying Governance based on Freedom House and V-Dem on a 1-5 scale

Sources: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2023 Report* (https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/FIW_World_2023_DigitalPDF.pdf), Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2023 Report* (https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/NIT_2023_Digital.pdf), *Varieties of Democracy, Democracy Report 2023* (https://v-dem.net/documents/29/v-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf)

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	NMK	SRB
Freedom in the World	3.67	2.67	3.67	3.67	4.00	3.33
Nations in Transit	3.33	2.5	2.67	3.17	3.17	3.0
V-Dem	2.95	2.76	2.98	3.05	3.14	3.47
Average	3.32	2.64	3.11	3.30	3.44	3.27

When it comes to coverage of these 15 policy elements, *Nations in Transit* report is the best, however with only one third of all policy elements covered (5 out of 15). *Freedom in the World* and V-Dem cover only 27% and 20% of policy elements respectively, rendering their assessment very limited (see Table 16 in the Annex). The low coverage is a result of EC's approach to focus more on local governance and already mentioned EU-related policy elements. This means that for the majority of policy elements that do not have alternatives in international indexes, the EC would need to develop its own assessment and quantification based on already existing benchmarking models. Additionally, in the case that in future coverage of policy elements within the 'Governance' section remains low, any quantification should take it into account and ponder or weight scores within this section to prevent distortion of final scores.

Despite limited coverage of policy elements among three indexes, the final results do not show major inconsistencies in country ratings among the reports. The larger differences can be seen in cases of Albania (from 2.95 to 3.67), Kosovo (from 2.98 to 3.67), and North Macedonia (from 3.14 to 4.00). The whole WB region has approximately similar ratings and shows moderate governance levels. Montenegro and North Macedonia achieved the best scores in this section, followed by Albania, Serbia, and Kosovo. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only country lagging behind the region with the lowest average rating of only 2.64. While too extensive decentralisation and conflicts regarding competencies between the central government and lower administrative units severely impacted the average rating of BIH, all other countries have moderate ratings (between 3 and 4). As per observed indexes, Albania enjoys the best local democratic governance rating which counts on local participation and consultation with citizens, the democratic legitimacy of local authorities, and their transparency. On the other hand, the best-assessed indicators of Serbia were effective government and legislative output in terms of legislative initiative, thus improving the overall score. The fact that almost all countries scored over 3 sends a positive signal, bearing in mind the importance of national and local governance for carrying out necessary reforms. However, this result should be taken with caution, as the sample of policy elements is very limited and needs to be complemented with ratings for the missing policy elements.

Civil society

Role of the civil society in building strong, resilient, and independent institutions is undisputed. The country reports a number of policy elements in regard to civil society and its function in a democratic political system. Key elements mapped¹⁶ in reports for six Western Balkan countries are the following:

- 1) Legal and regulatory framework for stimulating CSO environment;
- 2) Institutionalised cooperation between CSOs and state institutions;
- 3) Institutional bodies voicing priorities of CSOs;
- 4) State's financial support of CSOs;
- 5) Right to freedom of assembly and association;
- 6) Attacks against CSOs;
- 7) Consultations/Involvement of CSOs in the EU integration process.

Out of these seven mapped policy elements, four have corresponding indicators in the dataset of FH's *Freedom in the World* (57%) and five in V-Dem's *Democracy Report* (71%), while the *Nations in Transit* covers six policy elements or 86% (see Table 19 in the Annex). Institutional bodies voicing priorities of CSOs, state's financial support to CSOs and consultation of CSOs in the EU integration process have no corresponding indicators in one or more observed international indexes (*Freedom in the World*, *Democracy Report*, *Nations in Transit*). Overall, the *Nations in Transit* report of Freedom House has shown as the most useful when it comes to the Civil Society category, while the *Freedom in the World* and V-Dem are more limited in regard to indicators covering civil society.

¹⁶ Pavković and Subotić, p. 8.

Table 4 Quantifying Civil Society based on Freedom House and V-Dem on a 1-5 scale

Sources: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2023 Report* (https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/FIW_World_2023_DigitalPDF.pdf), Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2023 Report* (https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/NIT_2023_Digital.pdf), Varieties of Democracy, *Democracy Report 2023* (https://v-dem.net/documents/29/V-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf)

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	NMK	SRB
Freedom in the World	4	3.5	4	4	4	3
Nations in Transit	3.5	3.17	3.5	3.83	3.5	3.83
V-Dem	3.84	3.95	3.86	4.05	3.87	3.49
Average	3.78	3.54	3.79	3.96	3.79	3.44

Overall, Western Balkans has the best rating in this area on average compared to all other FoDI sub-areas. Quantified assessment for the 'Civil society' shows that there are no major discrepancies between the three indexes used for quantification of elements within the Civil Society sub-area. After quantifying all policy elements based on three international indexes, the average rating based on these indexes has shown that all six countries are on similar *moderate* levels. The best rated country is Montenegro, just a little below the value of 4, followed by North Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Consultative role of civil society is the best utilised in Kosovo. With plethora of CSOs and regular and institutionalised cooperation between government and civil sector, Kosovo stands out. Montenegro and North Macedonia have also secured good environment for the functioning of civil society. While occasional attacks on CSOs are present in all countries, in Serbia these attacks are more frequent compared to others. In general, the region as a whole is moderately prepared in this sub-area, but with a little bit more effort in improving the environment for the functioning of civil society, a good level of preparedness can be reached.

Civilian oversight of security forces

Having in mind the specificity of the civilian oversight of security forces and the fact that even country reports published by the Commission are not coherent and complete, gathering quantifiable data on this matter was challenging. In fact, Freedom Houses' *Nation in Transit* does not have a mention of security forces for neither of the Western Balkan countries. Similarly, V-Dem's *Democracy Report* has only one indicator - *Criteria for appointment decisions in the armed forces* – which does not correspond to the Commission's scope, rendering it unusable. Lastly, the *Freedom in the World* report of Freedom House from 2023 partially covers the legal framework and executive oversight over security forces only for North Macedonia. This report can produce some, although very limited, quantifiable data as opposed to the previous two. However, this is not enough to produce a model for the Commission on how to quantify this sub-area of country reports.

Towards the model for quantification

Previous analysis has shown that the functioning of democratic institutions is possible to assess and quantify – something that has been missing in EC's country reports for years. Multiple international democracy indexes already exist and cover to a great degree the same processes and policy elements that the Commission observes in its country reports under the FoDI, which provides possibilities for quantification. Of course, none of the international democracy indexes fully matches the Commission's approach. Rather, there are various degrees of matching depending on the sub-area. For instance, in the 'Governance' sub-area, *Nations in the Transit* covers more policy elements compared to *Freedom in the World* and V-Dem' *Democracy Report*. However, *Nations in Transit* has a wide category of *National Democratic Governance* that covers a multitude of policy elements. Conversely, *Freedom in the World* and V-Dem have more indicators that narrowly match the exact policy elements mapped in the EC reports. This means that *Nations in Transit*, despite being more inclusive, provides one grade that takes into account multiple policy elements. On the other hand, *Freedom in the World* and V-Dem, although covering fewer policy elements, offer more precise assessments of observed policy elements.

Table 5 Overview of scores for Elections, Parliament, Governance, and Civil society using FH & V-Dem indicators on a 1-5 scale

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
FH <i>Freedom in the World</i>	3.87	3.04	3.89	3.79	4.05	3.21
FH <i>Nations in Transit</i>	3.13	2.63	2.79	3.17	3.17	3.13
V-Dem <i>Democracy Report</i>	3.35	3.28	3.49	3.43	3.39	3.20

One may ask what is the best model for calculating FoDI? To follow the model of *Nations in Transit* with a broader scope and less precise grading, or the model of *Freedom in the World* and V-Dem with a narrow scope and more precise grading? FoDI scores per different indexes are displayed in Table 5. Based on the findings of this research, it was concluded that the middle way named the Mixed approach is the best option to bridge the gap between the two models. By taking into account all three democracy indexes (*Freedom in the World*, *Democracy Report*, and *Nations in Transit*) and calculating the average of their scores, the authoritative model for quantification showcased in this paper has been developed (see Table 6). It confirmed that the quantification of something elusive and complex as democracy, is indeed possible and nonetheless necessary. The Mixed approach model for quantification of FoDI was developed in order to encompass sub-areas of 'Elections', 'Parliament', 'Governance', and 'Civil society' using third-party indicators. Providing ratings for all six Western Balkan countries across four main sub-areas of FoDI laid the ground for the quantification of future country reports. The logical next step would be to compare ratings of all countries across these four sub-areas and calculate the average for the whole region in order to determine their level of preparedness for membership in the EU in the FoDI area.

Table 6 Mixed approach model – Final FoDI rating for WB6

Sources: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2023 Report* (https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/FIW_World_2023_DigitalPDF.pdf), Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2023 Report* (https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/NIT_2023_Digital.pdf), *Varieties of Democracy, Democracy Report 2023* (https://v-dem.net/documents/29/V-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf)

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
Elections	3.45	3.17	3.44	3.31	3.51	3.04
Parliament	3.24	2.57	3.23	3.29	3.41	2.96
Governance	3.32	2.64	3.11	3.45	3.44	3.27
Civil Society	3.78	3.54	3.79	3.96	3.79	3.44
FoDI Average	3.45	2.98	3.39	3.50	3.54	3.18

North Macedonia and Montenegro emerge as the most democratic states in the region. The approximation of all data gathered in this research shows that elections are free and fair, parliament performs its competences in satisfactory manner, governance is on a moderate level, and work of civil society is very productive, supported and appreciated by the government. Albania and Kosovo are following, with some challenges in the 'Parliament' sub-area. It is worth mentioning that Kosovo achieved the second-highest rating for the 'Civil society' sub-area among all WB countries. Lastly, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are with the lowest ratings. Serbia has notable problems with organising elections, more concretely in enabling an even playing field for all participants in elections, which justifies the lowest score of all countries in this sub-area. Additionally, the dysfunctionality of the National Assembly and misuse of parliament by the ruling majority affected the low rating in the 'Parliament' sub-area for Serbia as well. Lastly, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country with many difficulties, mostly due to the complex and cumbersome political system with the disintegrative tendencies of Republika Srpska. As a consequence, BIH achieved the lowest rating in two sub-areas: 'Parliament' and 'Governance'.

The final results of the quantification of FoDI show that neither of the WB countries is a consolidated democracy. Rather, all of them have a variety of issues. Some of them are common for some or all countries, while many are individual. Taking into account the importance of FoDI, Copenhagen Criteria and democracy as the intrinsic value of the EU, six WB countries will need to step up and make a crucial leap forward in raising FoDI on a new level with the aim of meeting the standard. If they desire to make it by 2030 following the Bled Pledge¹⁷, there is no time to waste.

¹⁷ Dušan Stojanović, 'EU Official Proposes 2030 as Enlargement Deadline for States That Have Long Been Waiting in Line', Associated Press, 28 August 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/balkans-european-union-enlargement-russia-ukraine-michel-51be2bc9c53092c16d4011bc8542c156>.

Quantification of FoDI in the context of the Staged accession model

Quantification of assessments is something that the Commission has always shied away from in its Western Balkan annual country reports. That is why CEP and CEPS have taken it upon themselves in the past, both independently and separately, to translate the Commission’s qualitative ratings into quantitative ones. Once they teamed up, and introduced the Staged accession model¹⁸¹⁹ in 2021, they have jointly argued that quantification, on a simple but effective numerical scale, would permit both aggregation and averaging of the assessments. As part of a more structured, gradual integration of the acceding countries into the EU, quantification would provide a clear basis for regulating the conditions to progress through the stages. It would work the other way around as well – if average ratings fall significantly below the established norm, the acquired benefits would be subject to reversal. By insisting on quantification, the idea was to make the process more transparent and credible, but also to render the Commission’s reports more trustworthy and coherent – something that has been put in doubt in recent times both by EU Member States and civil society organisations from the region.

As a part of a provisional solution to quantify FoDI for the needs of the National Issue Paper series,²⁰ the European Policy Centre (CEP) used four indicators of the Freedom House’s *Nations in Transit* report. More precisely assessments of *National Democratic Governance*, *Electoral Process*, *Civil Society* and *Local Democratic Governance* were rescaled on a 1-5 scale and used to calculate the whole FoDI section. This calculation, although limited, was used as a starting point for quantifying FoDI. This analysis expanded it to include two new indexes (*Freedom in the World* by FH and *Democracy Report* by V-Dem) and provide for a more nuanced assessment and quantification of FoDI. Table 6 comparatively shows the difference between the two assessments. It reveals that there are no major disparities, except maybe in the case of Kosovo, but that the model developed in this analysis is more precise and wider in scope. It confirms the findings of the National Issue Papers (NIP) on assessment in the area of FoDI, and sends a message that quantifying FoDI should not be a bogeyman.

Table 7 Comparative display of FoDI quantification in National Issue Paper series on staged accession and full quantification conducted in this analysis NIP Sources: Albania: <https://cep.org.rs/en/publications/dealing-with-enlargement-fatigue-to-avoid-patience-fatigue/>; Bosnia and Herzegovina: <https://cep.org.rs/en/publications/staged-accession-model-a-way-to-end-the-stagnation/>; Kosovo: <https://cep.org.rs/en/publications/potential-application-of-the-eus-staged-accession-model-in-kosovo/>; Montenegro: <https://cep.org.rs/en/publications/potential-application-of-the-staged-accession-model/>; North Macedonia: <https://cep.org.rs/en/publications/the-staged-accession-model-in-practice-addressing-the-challenges-ahead-for-north-macedonia/>; Serbia: <https://cep.org.rs/en/publications/the-staged-accession-model-in-practice/>

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	NMK	SRB
NIP Provisional Quantification	3.13	3.0	2.75	3.2	3.1	3.1
FoDI Final Quantification	3.45	2.98	3.39	3.5	3.54	3.18

Lastly, bearing in mind the Staged accession model and the importance of the Fundamentals cluster, FoDI also contributes towards the development of the staged accession and merit-based approach to integration of new countries into the EU. Taking a look at the final results of the quantification of FoDI, it can be concluded that all WB countries, except BIH which is very close, score higher than the rating of 3 required for a country to enter stage 1.²¹ This means that the benefits of stage 1 such as increased pre-accession funding, horizontal policy integration, and gradual access to EU institutions are within reach when accounting for FoDI assessment, but conditioned on improving remaining chapters and sub-areas within the Fundamentals cluster without stagnating or backsliding in FoDI. Finally, these ratings should not be misconstrued as indicating a satisfactory state of play, as all WB countries have demonstrated serious deficiencies in some of the most essential FoDI elements, necessitating strong political commitment to further improvements in the field.

18 Michael Emerson et al., ‘A Template for Staged Accession to the EU’ (European Policy Centre Belgrade, 10 January 2021), <https://cep.org.rs/en/publications/a-template-for-staged-accession-to-the-eu/>.

19 See also: Milena Mihajlović et al., ‘Template 2.0 for Staged Accession to the EU’ (European Policy Centre - CEP, Belgrade, 28 August 2023), <https://cep.org.rs/en/publications/template-2-0-for-staged-accession-to-the-eu/>.

20 A series of six papers dealing with challenges and opportunities of implementing the Staged accession model in six Western Balkan countries.

21 Mihajlović et al., ‘Template 2.0 for Staged Accession to the EU’.

Conclusion

The main idea behind this paper was to demonstrate how the quantification of functioning of democratic institutions is possible and how the Commission can apply its own preparedness assessment from 'early stage' to 'very advanced' in this area. The presented results reflect an approximation of the rating for WB6 based on a set of indicators borrowed and adjusted from three most notable democracy reports. Therefore, it can serve as an inspiration for the European Commission's future endeavours to apply a robust methodology, based on credible third-party indicators, for its assessments of the FoDI sub-area – currently the only segment of its annual reports without the final preparedness appraisal. Bearing in mind that the functioning of democratic institutions of acceding countries needs to be on a high level before the moment of accession, creating a reliable tool for assessing this area should be of high priority for the European Commission. These assessments serve to underpin important decisions in the candidates' accession process; thus a credible and reliable model is indeed indispensable.

This analysis showcased to what degree third-party indicators cover EC's approach of reporting and exposed critical issues in democratic governance of the Western Balkans. Sub-areas of 'Elections' and 'Parliament' showed very high coverage levels by third party indicators which enabled very precise and reliable quantification for all six WB countries. The policy elements mapped in EC country reports were easily matched with third-party indicators. However, the EU-related policy element within the 'Parliament' sub-area *Parliament's role in EU integration* remained unquantified since there is no matching indicator from none of the democracy indexes. Some key takeaways from these two sub-areas are that the work of parliaments' inquiry committees and inter-party democracy are on a worryingly low level across all countries, while indicators and overall preparedness within 'Elections' sub-area range from some to moderate, with a particular cause for concern in the context of Serbia.

Although quantification is possible as demonstrated in this analysis, there are several questions that necessitate further attention. One of them concerns the high number of elements not covered by third-party indicators in the 'Governance' sub-area, which as a consequence has very low overall coverage by third party indicators. This further complicates and limits the final results of quantified FoDI, as a large portion of 'Governance' remains unassessed by democracy report. In that sense, to fill in the gaps, the Commission might consider identifying and using specific indicators or sub-indicators from other credible third-party sources (e.g. those related to local governance in the reform).²² Unlike with the 'Governance', the 'Civil society' sub-area showed very good coverage and reliable assessment by third-party indicators. However, the sub-area 'Civilian oversight of security forces' needs additional standardisation and consistent reporting across countries, which is currently missing. This is the most problematic sub-area which rendered its quantification impossible. Lastly, the EU-specific policy elements which mostly feature in the 'Governance' sub-area but are also present in the 'Parliament' and 'Civil society' ones, lack matching third-party indicators. Therefore, these elements might require the Commission's own engagement in developing suitable assessment approaches.

This analysis provided several key lessons learned. First, it proved that a precise and quantifiable assessment of FoDI is possible. In that sense, the Mixed approach model can serve as a starting point. Second, although there is no perfect approach, it is possible to find proxies and secure the best possible coverage of Commissions score by third-party indicators. Third, current rating of Western Balkan countries in this area is mostly moderate (with only BIH below rating of 3), but it exposed serious issues among these countries that require attention in the EU accession process.

²² A joint initiative by the OECD and the EU developed under SIGMA developed Principles of Public Administration (PPA) and a methodology for monitoring and assessing implementation of PPA across different countries. PPA covers six dimensions of public administration reforms: (1) strategic framework for public administration reform, (2) policy development and coordination, (3) public service and human resource management, (4) accountability, (5) service delivery, and (6) public financial management (PFM).

Annex

Elections

Table 1 Comparing the elements from EC reports with indicators of international indexes

	Freedom House Freedom in the World 2023	Varieties of Democracy	Freedom House Nations in Transit
Electoral reform and recommendations of relevant international organisations	A3		Electoral process
Oversight by civil society			Electoral process
Dominance of the ruling party or coalition	B2	Election government intimidation (v2elintim)	Electoral process
Current constitutional and electoral legal framework	A3	Electoral democracy index (v2x_polyarchy)	Electoral process
Gender balance	B4		Electoral process
Minority/ethnic representation/discrimination and access to political power	B4	Power distributed by social group (v2pep-wrsoc)	
Campaign and/or political party financing disparities	B1		Electoral process
General democratic standards (fair, competitive, free, regular, inclusive)	A1; A2; A3; B1; B2; B3; B4	Electoral Democracy Index (v2x_polyarchy)	Electoral process
Work of national electoral bodies	A3	EMB autonomy (v2lembaut) EMB capacity (v2lembcap)	Electoral process
Administering elections	A3	Election Other Voting Irregularities (v2elir-reg)	Electoral process
Total coverage in %	90%	60%	90%

Table 2 Conversion table from Freedom House's scores to CEP's 1-5 quantification methodology

Freedom House	CEP
0	1
1	2
2	3
3	4
4	5

Calculating formula: **X+1**

Formula used for conversion from *Nations in Transit* 1-7 scale to 1-5 scale: $X5=(X7-1)(4/6)+1$

Table 3 Selected elements from the FH's *Freedom in the World 2023 Report* for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	NMK	SRB
A1	4	3	4	4	4	3
A2	4	3	4	4	4	3
A3	4	2	4	3	4	3
B1	4	4	4	4	5	4
B2	4	3	5	4	4	2
B3	4	3	4	3	3	3
B4	4	3	4	4	4	4
Elections average rating	4.0	3.0	4.1	3.7	4.0	3.1

Table 4 Selected elements from the V-Dem's 2023 *Democracy Report* for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	NMK	SRB
v2elintim	3.80	4.00	4.23	3.49	4.04	3.24
v2x_polyarchy	1.96	2.06	2.24	2.0	2.10	1.72
v2pepwsoc	4.03	3.13	3.87	3.65	3.17	3.29
v2elembaut	3.18	3.87	3.86	3.16	3.37	2.96
v2elembcap	3.51	3.82	3.92	3.55	3.54	3.46
v2elirreg	2.66	2.28	3.15	2.45	3.01	2.38
Elections average rating	3.19	3.19	3.55	3.05	3.21	2.84

Parliament

Table 5 Comparing the elements from EC reports with indicators of international indexes

	Freedom House Freedom in the World 2023	Varieties of Democracy	Freedom House Nations in Transit
Share of women among MPs / gender equality	B4	Lower chamber female legislators (v2lg-femleg)	
Oversight function over executive (interpellations, annual reports...)	C3	Legislative constraints On The Executive Index (v2xlg_legcon)	National Democratic Governance
Parliament's role in the EU integration and Committee for the Stabilisation and Association process/ EU Integration Committee			
Transparency (pandemic response, live streaming, publication of parliamentary documentation, statistics)	C3		
Parliament's consultation with civil society		CSO consultation (v2cscnsult)	
Electing/appointing officials			National Democratic Governance
Inquiry committees		Legislature investigates in practice (v2lginvstp); Lower chamber committees (v2lgcomslo)	National Democratic Governance

Exercising constitutional function (legislative output initiative)	C1	Lower chamber legislates in practice (v2lglegplo); Horizontal Accountability Index (v2x_horacc);	National Democratic Governance
Ethical standards/Code of Ethics/Inflammatory/inappropriate language/physical altercation		Respect counterarguments (C) (v2dlcountr)	National Democratic Governance
Registration and political parties funding	B1	Barriers to parties (v2psbars); Disclosure of campaign donations (v2eldonate)	
Employing urgent/shortened procedures	C1		
Parliamentary representation of national minorities	A2; B4	Representation of disadvantaged social groups (C) (v2lgdsadlo)	
Political polarisation (e.g. Interparty dialogue, effects on the functioning of Parliament)	A2	Political polarization (C) (None)	National Democratic Governance
Rules of procedure/technical innovations/administration processes	C1		National Democratic Governance
Internal party democracy		Candidate selection-national/local (C) (v2pscnslnl)	National Democratic Governance
Total coverage in %	60%	67%	53%

Table 6 Selected elements from the FH's Freedom in the World 2023 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	NMK	SRB
A2	4	3	4	4	4	3
B1	4	4	4	4	5	4
B4	4	3	4	4	4	4
C1	4	3	4	4	4	3
C3	3	2	3	3	4	3
Parliament average rating	3.8	3.0	3.8	3.8	4.2	3.4

Table 7 Selected elements from the V-Dem 2023 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	NMK	SRB
v2lgfemleg	2.79	2.31	2.75	2.36	3.09	2.94
v2xlg_legcon	4.28	3.04	3.64	3.68	3.60	2.92
v2cscnsult	2.66	2.44	3.58	3.32	3.30	2.28
v2lginvstp	3.72	2.36	2.92	3.45	3.15	2.07
v2lgcomslo	3.30	3.40	4.14	4.08	3.16	3.36
v2lglegplo	4.36	4.96	4.96	4.84	4.88	4.28
v2x_horacc	4.32	3.28	3.88	4.16	3.72	2.92
v2dlcountr	2.15	2.64	2.53	2.90	2.41	2.27
v2psbars	4.86	4.77	4.76	4.83	4.19	4.22
v2eldonate	3.27	3.14	3.30	3.23	3.25	3.18
v2lgdsadlo	3.63	2.99	4.12	3.28	3.00	3.11

Political Polarization	3.23	4.10	3.67	4.56	4.16	3.72
v2pscnslnl	1.89	2.15	1.88	1.63	1.63	1.49
Parliament average rating	3.42	3.20	3.55	3.56	3.35	2.99

Table 8 Conversion table from V-Dem scores to CEP's 1-5 quantification methodology 0-100

V-Dem	CEP
0-20%	1
21-40%	2
41-60%	3
61-80%	4
81-100%	5

Calculating formula: $x/100*4+1$

Table 9 Conversion table from V-Dem scores to CEP's 1-5 quantification methodology 0-2

V-Dem	CEP
0-0.39	1
0.4-0.79	2
0.8-1.19	3
1.2-1.59	4
1.6-2	5

Calculating formula: $x/2*4+1$

Table 10 Conversion table from V-Dem scores to CEP's 1-5 quantification methodology 0-4

V-Dem	CEP
0	1
1	2
2	3
3	4
4	5

Calculating formula: $x+1$

Table 11 Conversion table from V-Dem scores to CEP's 1-5 quantification methodology 0-5

V-Dem	CEP
0-0.2	1
0.2-0.4	2
0.4-0.6	3
0.6-0.8	4
0.8-1	5

Calculating formula: $X*5+1$

Table 12 Conversion table from V-Dem scores to CEP's 1-5 quantification methodology 0-6

V-Dem	CEP
0-1.2	1
1.2-2.4	2
2.4-3.6	3
3.6-4.8	4
4.8-6	5

Calculating formula: $x/6*4+1$

Table 13 Conversion table from V-Dem scores to CEP's 1-5 quantification methodology 0-1

V-Dem	CEP
0-0.2	1
0.2-0.4	2
0.4-0.6	3
0.6-0.8	4
0.8-1	5

Calculating formula: $x*4+1$

Table 14 Conversion table from V-Dem scores to CEP's 1-5 quantification methodology 1-3

V-Dem	CEP
1-1.4	1
1.4-1.8	2
1.8-2.2	3
2.2-2.6	4
2.6-3	5

Calculating formula: $(x-1)/2*4+1$

Table 15 Conversion table from V-Dem scores to CEP's 1-5 quantification methodology 0-80

V-Dem	CEP
0-15%	1
15-30%	2
30-45%	3
45-60%	4
60-80%	5

Calculating formula: $x/80*4+1$

Table 16 Conversion table from V-Dem scores to CEP's 1-5 quantification methodology 0-3

V-Dem	CEP
0-0.6	1
0.6-1.2	2
1.2-1.8	3
1.8-2.4	4
2.4-3	5

Calculating formula: $x/3*4+1$

Governance

Table 17 Comparing the elements from EC reports with indicators of international indexes

	Freedom House Freedom in the World 2023	Varieties of Democracy	Freedom House Nations in Transit
Local self-government and decentralisation		Local offices relative power (v2ellocpwr)	Local Democratic Governance
National EU integration structures, i.e. Administration coordination, expertise and capacities on EU integra- tion			

Overall focus on EU-related reforms			
Executive output (legislative initiative, legislative output)	C1	HOG proposes legislation in practice (C) (v2exdfpphg)	
Opportunities for local participation and consultation		HOG female (A) (v2exfemhog) ²³	Local Democratic Governance
Women's representation in local governments			
Women's representation in national government	B4		
Inter-ethnic relations			
Coordination between central and local levels of governance			Local Democratic Governance
Transparency at the local level and communication to the public	C3		Local Democratic Governance
Appointments made by the executive bodies			
Local governments/administrative units, i.e. financial resources, administrative capacities, quality of services			Local Democratic Governance
Government effectiveness and coalition stability		Government effectiveness (E) (e_wbgi_gee) ²⁴	
Access to IPA by local governments			
Local governments' involvement in EU integration			
Total coverage in %	20%	27%	33%

Table 18 Selected elements from the Varieties of Democracy 2023 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BiH	KOS	MNE	NMK	SRB
v2ellocpwr	3.99	3.99	3.86	3.59	4.67	4.13
v2exdfpphg	1.86	1.80	2.10	3.92	1.80	3.24
v2exfemhog	/	/	/	/	/	/
e_wbgi_gee	3.00	2.48	/	3.01	2.96	3.03
Governance average rating	2.95	2.76	2.98 ²⁵	3.51	3.14	3.47

Calculating formula for Government effectiveness (e_wbgi_gee): $(x+4)/8*4+1$

Civil Society

Table 19 Comparing the elements from EC reports with indicators of international indexes

	Freedom House Freedom in the World 2023	Varieties of Democracy	Freedom House Nations in Transit
Legal and regulatory framework for stimulating CSO environment	E2	CSO Participatory Environment (C) (v2cspcpt); Core civil society index (D) (v2xcs_ccsi)	Civil Society

²³ No data.

²⁴ This indicator is available only for 2021, nonetheless it is taken into consideration in order to provide wider scope of the assessment. There is no available data for Kosovo.

²⁵ Average grade excludes for Government effectiveness, due to lack of data in V-Dem database.

Institutionalised cooperation between CSOs and state institutions		CSO consultation (C) (v2cscnsult)	Civil Society
Institutional bodies voicing priorities of CSOs		Civil society participation index (D) (v2x_cspart)	Civil Society
State's financial support of CSOs	E2		
Right to freedom of assembly and association	E1	Freedom of peaceful assembly (C) (None)	Civil Society
Attacks against CSOs	E2	CSO repression (C) (v2csreprss)	Civil Society
Consultations/Involvement of CSOs in EU integration process			Civil Society
Total coverage in %	57%	71%	86%

Table 20 Selected elements from the FH's Freedom in the World 2023 Report for Western Balkan countries

	ALB	BiH	KOS	MNE	NMK	SRB
E1	4	4	4	4	4	3
E2	4	3	4	4	4	3
Civil society average rating	4	3.5	4	4	4	3

Table 21 Selected elements from the V-Dem 2023 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BiH	KOS	MNE	NMK	SRB
v2xcs_ccsi	4.36	4.64	4.28	4.36	4.16	3.76
v2cscnsult	2.66	2.44	3.32	3.32	3.18	2.28
v2csprtcpt	4.03	3.8	3.23	3.64	3.61	3.75
v2x_cspart	3.68	3.72	3.56	3.8	3.6	3.32
Freedom of peaceful assembly	3.9	4.44	4.5	4.87	4.24	4.19
v2csreprss	4.43	4.64	4.28	4.32	4.45	3.66
Civil society average rating	3.84	3.95	3.86	4.05	3.87	3.49

Civilian Oversight of Security Forces

Table 22 Comparing the elements from EC reports with indicators of international indexes

	Freedom House Freedom in the World 2023	Varieties of Democracy	Freedom House Nations in Transit
Parliamentary oversight	/	/	/
Executive and other institutional bodies oversight	D4 (NMK only)	/	/
Legal framework	D4 (NMK)	Criteria for appointment decisions in the armed forces (C) (None)	/

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