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Towards Better Monitoring of Democracy in the Western Balkans

Improving Functioning of Democratic Institutions as a Key Instrument in EC's Reports

Introduction

Democracy and functioning democratic institutions are some of the key criteria and necessary prerequisites for a country to join the European Union (EU). First established at the Copenhagen European Council summit, as part of the so-called political criteria,² it was additionally strengthened in 2020 with the Revised Enlargement Methodology (REM) by placing the sub-area 'Functioning of democratic institutions' (FoDI) in the Fundamentals cluster (Cluster 1).³ In that sense, the role of the European Commission (EC) and its annual country report for candidates serve as the most relevant source of information for the state of play in this area on which important decisions within the accession process are made, by EC and other EU competent bodies. The importance of credible reporting in the FoDI area has been once again confirmed by the decision of the European Council (EUCO) to start accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, highlighting the necessity in their respective negotiating frameworks for preparing a roadmap for the functioning of democratic institutions.^{4,5} Finally, the newly adopted Growth Plan for the Western Balkans emphasises the Fundamentals as a condition for EU financial support.⁶

The FoDI is the sole area in the EC's reports that does not provide an assessment of the progress and preparation levels of candidate countries. Moreover, this is the only segment of the Fundamentals without a proper qualitative assessment – standing in contrast to areas on the Economic Criteria and

Public Administration Reform (PAR).⁷ The research focused on the Commission 2022 Enlargement Package for the Western Balkan countries and found inconsistencies in the EC's approach to reporting FoDI, especially for the Governance and Civilian oversight of the security and intelligence sector sections.⁸ The European Policy Centre (CEP) has, based on the findings of its three analyses on the Commission's reporting on FoDI, provided certain recommendations to this EU body on how to improve its reporting. Key recommendations suggest improving consistency, providing assessment, and deepening and expanding the scope and quantification of reports in this segment.⁹ In line with that, CEP developed a model for quantification of the FoDI area based on a mixed approach using publicly available renowned democracy indexes.¹⁰

However, preliminary estimations indicated that many of the last year's recommendations were not adopted, warranting another detailed overview of the subsequent annual reports. Thus, this paper aims to replicate last year's analysis using the methodology developed for scrutinising the 2023 Enlargement Package - EC's annual country reports for six Western Balkan countries.^{11,12} In order to see whether and to what extent the EC continued making the same mistakes and to track the developments over time, a replication study is warranted. In the first section, the paper will assess consistency of reporting in the FoDI area, providing a statistical calculation of how coherent and consistent the 2023 Enlargement Package among the WB countries was. The second section

1 Authors own thanks to Stefan Ristovski, researcher at the European Policy Institute (EPI), North Macedonia, for providing an extensive review of the previous drafts of the paper and substantially contributing to its development.

2 EUR-Lex, 'Accession Criteria (Copenhagen Criteria)', 1993, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/accession-criteria-copenhagen-criteria.html>.

3 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.

4 'GENERAL EU POSITION Ministerial Meeting Opening the Intergovernmental Conference on the Accession of Ukraine to the European Union' (European Council, 21 June 2024), 22, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/hzmfw-1ji/public-ad00009en24.pdf>.

5 'GENERAL EU POSITION Ministerial Meeting Opening the Intergovernmental Conference on the Accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union' (European Council, 21 June 2024), 22, AD 11/24, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45ilqaal/ad00011en24.pdf>.

6 European Commission, 'Reform Agendas Are the Corner Stone of the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans', 2024, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/9e28be19-e1ac-4123-a0b4-e399f-c65ec79_en?filename=Growth%20Plan%20-%20Reform%20Agendas.pdf.

7 Strahinja Subotić and Miloš Pavković, '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>.

8 Subotić and Pavković, 10.

9 Strahinja Subotić and Đorđe Dimitrov, 'Deepening and Expanding the Scope of the Commission's Reporting of Developments in the "Functioning of Democratic Institutions" in WB6', Policy Brief, 18 September 2023, <https://cep.org.rs/en/publications/deepening-and-expanding-the-scope-of-the-commission-s-reporting-of-developments-in-the-functioning-of-democratic-institutions-in-wb6/>.

10 Miloš Pavković, 'Quantifying the Functioning of Democratic Institutions: Developing a Reliable Model for the Western Balkans', Policy Brief, 16 November 2023, <https://cep.org.rs/en/publications/quantifying-the-functioning-of-democratic-institutions-developing-a-reliable-model-for-the-western-balkans/>.

11 Subotić and Pavković, 'Identifying Inconsistencies in the 2022 European Commission's Annual Reports for WB6 - Functioning of Democratic Institutions in the Spotlight'; Pavković, 'Quantifying the Functioning of Democratic Institutions: Developing a Reliable Model for the Western Balkans'.

12 This paper does not go into the debate of the status of so-called Kosovo. Without prejudice to the final solution of Kosovo's statehood, this analysis follows the EC's approach to reporting on Kosovo as a separate entity.

will discuss key findings regarding consistency and engage in the debate of standardised reporting against technical and national context-adjusted reporting. The third section will utilise the Mixed Approach Model¹³ to calculate and quantify the whole area of Functioning of democratic institutions for all six WB countries. That will allow for tracking reforms in this area over time and paint a clearer picture of the state of affairs of the whole Western Balkan region. Finally, this paper will offer a comparative analysis of the 2022 and 2023 Enlargement Packages in the FoDI area, both in terms of consistency of reporting and quantification of the state of play in six countries. Comparative analysis will provide a regional as well as in-country assessment on a year-by-year basis.

Tracing the inconsistencies from 2022 to 2023 Enlargement Package

The paper incorporates the methodology developed originally in 2023,¹⁴ which examines the elements covered by the European Commission and the extent of this coverage. It maps coverage differentiating four categories and classifies countries into five distinctive levels – from low to very advanced level (see Annex I). The elements are separated into elements explicitly assessed, elements implicitly assessed, justifiably missing and unjustifiably missing elements. Distinction on justifiably and unjustifiably missing elements is based on different national contexts, rather than on uniform criteria. Moreover, the paper aims to identify the country report with the lowest consistency rate to point out the one where most improvements are needed. This study analyses the most recent country reports for the WB6 (2023) and compares the findings with those of the aforementioned paper. The research has identified new elements that were not present in earlier reports and excluded one from consideration. Additionally, in line with the latest findings, some elements have been reclassified compared to the previous report, resulting in some elements previously labelled as unjustifiably missing now being considered justifiably missing, and vice versa (see Annex I for more details). The paper maintains the consistency evaluation scale from the 2023 methodology,¹⁵ applied to each sub-chapter of each country report as well as at the overall regional level (a table overview of the scale can be found in Annex I).

Sub-chapter 1: Elections

The regional consistency of the 2023 reports in the subarea of “Elections” is at the upper end of the moderate range when considering both explicitly and implicitly covered elements. When justifiably missing elements are excluded, the average consistency increases by three percentage points, raising the grade to a good level of consistency. Despite the overall good standing, analysing individual countries showcased a significant decrease in the consistency of Serbia’s report, which is missing half of the elements compared to the previous year. In terms of consistency percentage, the consistency has recorded a significant drop from 91 to 45 percentage points when only explicit elements are covered on year-to-year comparison. A similar decrease, from 82 to 45 percentage points, is

13 See more at: Pavković, ‘Quantifying the Functioning of Democratic Institutions: Developing a Reliable Model for the Western Balkans’, 2–3.

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

15 Subotić and Pavković, ‘Identifying Inconsistencies in the 2022 European Commission’s Annual Reports for WB6 - Functioning of Democratic Institutions in the Spotlight’, 1–2.

also noticeable in North Macedonia’s report. Despite Montenegro’s report covering more elements due to the elections held during the reporting period and the greater coverage of elements in the Albania report, the overall regional consistency has dropped by 16 percentage points compared to the 2022 reports.¹⁶ A deeper analysis of the text from six reports showed that this section has been missing the direct and precise Commission’s assessment of different policy elements regarding elections.

Delving deeper into the analysis of mapped policy elements, some changes can be seen compared to the year before, but in-country inconsistencies remained principal issue. Four out of eleven elements are present in all six reports: electoral reform and oversight of campaign financing, current constitutional or electoral legal framework, national electoral bodies, and administrative procedures. In contrast, the dominance of the ruling party is the least consistent element, appearing only in the Albania report. No new elements were added to the latest reporting. However, the national electoral bodies element has been expanded to include responses to electoral irregularities, a feature first reported in Montenegro. Additionally, the international influence element now includes foreign interference, as evidenced by the reported involvement of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro. The overall consistency drop indicates shortcomings in the EU’s reporting methodology as many elements are now omitted, which results in a less comprehensive assessment. As free and fair elections are the minimum standard for any democracy, this issue becomes more pronounced, especially considering the election process shortcomings across all WB6 countries.

Table 1 The level of consistency in the sub-chapter of Elections

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB	Regional average
Elements explicitly covered by the report per country	8/11 73%	9/11 82%	5/11 45%	5/11 45%	8/11 82%	5/11 45%	Moderate level of consistency (3) – upper threshold
60%							
Elements (explicitly & implicitly) covered by the report per country	8/11 73%	9/11 82%	5/11 45%	5/11 45%	8/11 82%	5/11 45%	Moderate level of consistency (3) – upper threshold
60%							
Elements explicitly & implicitly covered by the report per country without the elements that are justifiably missing	8/10 80%	9/11 82%	5/11 45%	5/10 50%	8/11 82%	5/10 50%	Good level of consistency (4) – lower threshold
63%							

Sub-chapter 2: Parliament

The sub-chapter on “Parliament” is the most comprehensive one in the FoDI in the 2023 Enlargement Package, encompassing a total of 19 elements. However, the observation is that the Commission does not fully assess the actual situation and meritum, instead focusing on covering a wide range of elements. The sub-chapter shows a good level of regional consistency, with 61% consistency for explicit elements. This rises to 70% when implicit elements are included and justifiably missing elements are excluded. However, compared to the 2022 reports, the overall regional consistency rate has declined slightly, partly due to the inclusion of new elements which are

16 Pavković, ‘Quantifying the Functioning of Democratic Institutions: Developing a Reliable Model for the Western Balkans’, 3–4.

only present in one report (see Table 2). Two new elements have been identified in the latest report package, both present solely in the Serbia report: *abuse of the speaker's power* and *unequal treatment of the opposition*. The former is justifiably missing from other reports as such issue was not identified in other countries, while the latter is justifiably missing only from the Montenegro report. Consistency aside, reporting for many policy elements comes down to mere description without clear assessment which indeed should be a substance.

When examining the reports for each country individually, consistency ranges from *moderate* to *advanced*. Four out of six reports show a slight decrease in the number of elements covered. Serbia has seen an improvement in consistency from 82% to 88% when both explicitly and implicitly covered elements are considered.¹⁷ The number of explicit elements covered in Albania has improved, while the other four reports have recorded a decline. On a year-to-year comparison, Kosovo recorded the biggest decline in all categories – between 15-17 percentage points. Moreover, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has the lowest consistency with 42% of explicit elements covered, three elements are not covered in the sub-chapter but rather in the FoDI introduction part, leading to a lower consistency rate in the sub-chapter, creating confusion and making the assessment more difficult. The Parliament sub-chapter, while comprehensive and regionally consistent, highlights the need for a more nuanced and situational assessment by the Commission to address specific country contexts effectively. Doing this would ensure that the situation and progress in each country are accurately reflected, leading to more effective reporting.

Table 2 The level of consistency in the sub-chapter of Parliament

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB	Regional average
Elements explicitly covered by the report per country	13/19 68%	8/19 42%	9/19 47%	14/19 74%	11/19 58%	14/19 74%	Good level of consistency (4) - lower threshold
61%							
Elements (explicitly & implicitly) covered by the report per country	13/19 68%	8/19 42%	9/19 47%	14/19 74%	12/19 63%	15/19 79%	Good level of consistency (4) - lower threshold
62%							
Elements explicitly & implicitly covered by the report per country without the elements that are justifiably missing	13/17 76%	8/18 44%	9/16 56%	14/17 82%	12/16 75%	15/17 88%	Good level of consistency (4)
70%							

Sub-chapter 3: Governance

“Governance” is the only FoDI sub-chapter that has recorded an increase in regional consistency compared to last year.¹⁸ Despite this increase, the consistency level remains *moderate* at 54% when considering only explicitly included elements. It rises to 63% when implicitly mentioned elements are included and justifiably missing ones are excluded, lifting the overall

17 For consistency ratings in the 2022 Enlargement Package, see: Pavković and Subotić.

18 For 2022 regional Governance consistency check: Subotić and Pavković, ‘Identifying Inconsistencies in the 2022 European Commission’s Annual Reports for WB6 - Functioning of Democratic Institutions in the Spotlight’, 7–8.

consistency grade to *good*. However, on the individual country level, consistency ranges from *some consistency* with 35% in Serbia, when explicitly and implicitly present elements are considered, to a *good level* in the case of Albania and North Macedonia reports. However, although consistency has increased by ten percentage points compared to 2022, the Serbia report stands out with by far the lowest consistency in this sub-chapter, missing 11 out of 17 elements. Moreover, despite the slight overall increase in consistency, reports on Albania and Montenegro have noted a slight decrease, yet they have maintained the same assessment grade as the previous year. The overall reporting approach of the Commission for Governance stays vague and lacks specificity, with a tendency to focus more on policy elements on a local level at the expense of providing a comprehensive analysis of other governance issues.

Disparity in the policy elements covered is also present. Only three elements out of 17 are present in all reports, which hinders comparison between the countries. On the other hand, a total of seven elements are present in one or two reports, like *transparency at the local level* or *access to IPA by local governments*, which are significant for the functioning of democracy and the EU accession process. In addition, although there has been an improvement in consistency compared to other sub-chapters, there are significant disparities in element coverage among individual country reports. By improving those gaps, the Commission has the ability to provide a comprehensive insight into decision-making and policy execution on all levels.

Table 3 The level of consistency in the sub-chapter of Governance

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB	Regional average
Elements explicitly covered by the report per country	12/17 70%	8/17 47%	8/17 47%	12/17 71%	9/17 53%	6/17 35%	Moderate level of consistency (3)
54%							
Elements (explicitly & implicitly) covered by the report per country	12/17 70%	9/17 53%	8/17 47%	12/17 71%	9/17 53%	6/17 35%	Moderate level of consistency (3)
55%							
Elements explicitly & implicitly covered by the report per country without the elements that are justifiably missing	12/15 80%	9/15 60%	8/15 53%	12/15 80%	9/15 50%	6/14 43%	Good level of consistency (4)
63%							

Sub-chapter 4: Civil society

The “Civil society” sub-chapter stands out with the highest consistency rate. Although there has been a slight decrease compared to the previous report package, the overall regional consistency grade for covering explicit elements remains good at 64%. When implicitly covered elements are considered, and justifiably missing elements are excluded, the score rises to 75%. This represents an 11 percentage points decrease from last year, leading to the overall grade dropping from *very advanced* to *good*. It should be noted that the decrease is partly due to the identification of two new elements. When analysing countries individually, consistency ranges from moderate to advanced. Disparities range from 90% in Serbia, which

recorded a 15 percentage points or 20% increase, to 60% in North Macedonia, which recorded a three-percentage point decrease (see Table 4). It should be noted that the North Macedonia report is the least consistent one in this sub-chapter at 55% when both explicit and implicit elements are taken into consideration. Therefore, although comparatively better developed than the rest of the FoDI sub-chapters, no matter the slight decline in overall consistency, this one also has space for improvement.

The high consistency level is reflected in the explicit presence of three elements - *the legal and regulatory framework for stimulating the CSO environment, institutionalised cooperation between CSOs and state institutions, and state financial support to CSOs* - in all reports. Moreover, consistency in reporting on *Taxation/VAT refund for CSOs* has improved from one country to four. In addition, two new elements on which the EC reports have been identified in comparison with the previous report package, but they did not lead to an increase in consistency level. The first is the *official response to attacks against CSOs*, and the second is *CSOs' involvement at the local level*. The former is included only in the Serbia report and is justifiably absent from all other reports as there were no attacks on civil society, except from Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the element is unjustifiably missing due to attacks on civil society in Republika Srpska. The latter is only present in the North Macedonia report, which is, at the same time, comparatively the least covered country in this sub-chapter in two consecutive reports. On the other hand, the element *Impact of pandemic restrictions* has been justifiably excluded from reports due to the irrelevance of the issue after the pandemic has officially ended. Despite a slight reduction in overall consistency compared to the previous report package, this sub-chapter can serve as an example of how to maximise consistency in other sub-chapters.

Table 4 The level of consistency in the sub-chapter of Civil Society

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB	Regional average
Elements explicitly covered by the report per country	8/11 82%	7/11 64%	6/11 55%	6/11 55%	8/11 82%	7/11 64%	Good level of consistency (4)
	64%						
Elements (explicitly & implicitly) covered by the report per country	8/11 82%	7/11 64%	8/11 73%	6/11 55%	8/11 82%	9/11 82%	Good level of consistency (4)
	70%						
Elements explicitly & implicitly covered by the report without the elements that are justifiably missing	8/10 80%	7/11 64%	8/10 80%	6/10 60%	8/10 80%	9/10 90%	Good level of consistency (4)
	75%						

Sub-chapter 5: Civilian oversight of the security and intelligence sector

Among all the FoDI sub-chapters, the “Civilian oversight of security and intelligence sector” stands out as the least consistent and most disoriented. It is included in only three of the six country reports, making it the only section not included in every report. Accordingly, the regional level of consistency is assessed as *some*, with a total of 33%. This consistency in-

creases to 40% when justifiably missing elements are not considered. Moreover, the sub-chapter’s title has changed from the previous report, where it was labelled ‘Civilian Oversight of Security Forces.’ However, the title varies in reports where it appears, leading to further inconsistencies. Although the title differences in the North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina reports are cosmetic, in the Serbia report, the sub-chapter is labelled “Civilian Oversight of Security Services”, making a significant divergence from the title of the other two. Moreover, it is positioned between the governance and civil society sub-chapters, further diverging from other reports. Given that the level of consistency remains unchanged from previous reports, it appears that the European Commission has not made efforts to improve this sub-area. Doing so is paramount, considering the impact the security forces and their abuse and lack of oversight can have on democracy.

Table 5 The level of consistency in the sub-chapter of Civilian oversight of security and intelligence sector

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB	Regional average
Elements explicitly covered by the report per country	0/4 0%	3/4 75%	0/4 0%	2/4 50%	0/4 0%	3/4 75%	Some level of consistency (2)
	33%						
Elements (explicitly & implicitly) covered by the report per country	0/4 0%	3/4 75%	0/4 0%	2/4 50%	0/4 0%	3/4 75%	Some level of consistency (2)
	33%						
Elements explicitly & implicitly covered by the report without the elements that are justifiably missing	0/3 0%	3/4 75%	0/4 0%	2/3 67%	0/3 0%	3/3 100%	Some level of consistency (2)
	40%						

Discussing (In)Consistency findings – Is there a need for standardised reporting?

The general state of play in FoDI when it comes to tracking consistency is not encouraging, leaving space for improvement. In the category of explicitly covered elements, there has been a drop in the assessment category from a *good* to a *moderate* level of consistency, with 4 percentage points decrease. In case implicitly covered elements are included, although it retains good level of consistency, there is nevertheless a decrease in score by 8 percentage points (see Table 6). The consistency issues are a result of too many technical policy elements and too wide of a scope that the Commission uses in its reports. Therefore, it would be essential for the EC to focus on a smaller number of key elements and provide a more direct and more comprehensive assessment of these elements for each country. This will also contribute to more consistent reporting, as it would ease the Commission’s job, setting the stage for wiser and better use of DG NEAR’s resources for writing annual country reports.

Although CEP recommended deepening and expanding EC’s scope when it comes to reporting FoDI back in 2023, reducing the number of reported elements in future reports is not necessarily contrary to this proposal. This recommendation remains valid; however, the EC should deepen and expand its

scope for elements *critical* for democratic development with the aim of providing a precise and unambiguous assessment of the state of play. The debate on standardising EC country reports versus giving priority to national contexts is not, and should not be, mutually exclusive. The optimal approach would be to standardise the reports in the sense that each report covers critical elements regarding functioning democracy while allowing flexibility to account for country-specific developments.¹⁹

Table 6: Consistency level per country

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB	WB Avg. 2023	WB Avg. 2022 ²⁰
Elements explicitly covered by the report	66%	56%	45%	63%	58%	56%	57%	61%
Elements (explicitly & implicitly) covered by the report	66%	56%	48%	63%	60%	61%	59%	64%
Elements explicitly & implicitly covered by the report without the elements that are justifiably missing	71%	59%	54%	71%	67%	62%	65%	73%

The analysis of the assessment of the FoDI reporting highlights significant qualitative shortcomings in the Commission's methodology. The reports appear to try to cover as many elements as possible without delving into the substance or providing some qualitative analysis, diminishing the reports' value. Moreover, for certain elements, the assessments are vague, missing the opportunity to provide a precise assessment. For instance, in the "Elections" sub-chapter, many points are reported by simply referencing the ODIHR report, with little additional explanation or analysis that could enhance the understanding of the situation. In the case of the "Parliament" section, despite overall good statistics when it comes to consistency levels, overlooking elements such as the *unequal treatment of opposition*, *internal party democracy*, or *usage of urgent procedures* in some countries blurs the real state of play. This leads to the conclusion that the Commission needs to create a standard for reporting when it comes to cornerstone elements and subsequently provide its own qualitative assessment using all available sources.

Alongside qualitative shortcomings, significant disparities among the country reports effectively prevent comparison. The "Governance" sub-chapter is a good example as it provides very limited information, omitting some critical elements closely related to democracy. *Division of power and jurisdiction within the executive and between different branches*, *polarisation between local and central authorities*, *citizens' trust in the government*, and *foreign interference in policy-making* are some crucial elements in this area that deserve their place in

19 When it comes to CEP methodology (Mixed Approach Model), in order to avoid lower consistency among the countries due to country-specific policy elements in their respective EC reports, researchers introduced the categorisation of justifiably and unjustifiably missing elements. The goal was to exclude country-specific elements from the final calculation of consistency ratings in order to provide a fair and unbiased assessment.

20 Source: Subotić and Pavković, 'Identifying Inconsistencies in the 2022 European Commission's Annual Reports for WB6 - Functioning of Democratic Institutions in the Spotlight', 10.

country reports.²¹ Furthermore, there are numerous instances where the Commission assesses whether measures were undertaken without evaluating the quality of those measures, thus omitting to highlight the actual problem. A notable example is the Commission's reporting in Serbia report on the adoption of media laws, which were criticised by civil society. Additionally, the observation that the European Commission has replicated sections from previous reports, particularly in the "Civil Society" sub-chapter, suggests a lack of effort in updating and improving the reports, thereby undermining their relevance. Overall, the EU's approach to the qualitative assessment of FoDI lacks the necessary precision needed for impactful analysis. Thus, the EU should also focus on enhancing the depth and quality of its qualitative assessments. By doing so, the Commission would elevate the overall quality of the reports and enable more meaningful comparisons between countries.

Quantifying FoDI in 2024

In the second part of the analysis, the paper aims to identify clear numerical ratings in the subarea covering the functioning of democratic institutions in WB6 - by quantifying elements mapped in the previous section. In order to manage this complex task, the paper employs the Mixed Approach Model, developed originally in 2023 for quantifying the Commission's 2022 Enlargement Package.²² The Model is based on the careful selection of various indicators from third-party indexes following the EC's approach in reporting and mapping policy elements in six country reports. While more details about the process of quantifying this sub-area can be found in Annex II, in this part the analysis will focus on the final results of quantification for six Western Balkan countries. By using the same model, it will be possible to compare the results in the FoDI of six countries across multiple years. Since several additional elements have been identified in the latest Enlargement Package, this paper also tried to quantify these elements as well. In that sense, there has been a very limited deviation from the original methodology of the Mixed Approach Model. However, this deviation serves only for more precise measurement and quantification of the FoDI.

The methodology follows the EC's approach of five sub-chapters: "Elections", "Parliament", "Governance", "Civil society", and "Civilian oversight of security forces". It uses third-party democracy indexes: Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* and *Nations in Transit*, as well as the *Democracy Report* of the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem). Drawing from their databases, it cross-references identified policy elements in Section 2 with indicators and sub-indicators of these indexes. Afterwards, these are rescaled on a 1-5 scale and used to calculate and quantify FoDI.²³ Out of five sub-chapters, "Elections" and "Civil society" are covered to the greatest extent (90% and 87% respectively), followed by "Parliament" (67%), while "Governance" is covered very low (with only 33% coverage at best).²⁴ Lastly, "Civilian oversight of security forces" is not possible to quantify due to the Commission's very high inconsistency in

21 Đorđe Dimitrov and Anesa Omeragić, 'The Commission's Assessment of the Functioning of Democratic Institutions: Adding the Missing Puzzle Pieces', 22 September 2023, <https://cep.org.rs/en/publications/the-commissions-assessment-of-the-functioning-of-democratic-institutions-adding-the-missing-puzzle-pieces/>.

22 Pavković, 'Quantifying the Functioning of Democratic Institutions: Developing a Reliable Model for the Western Balkans'.

23 Pavković, 2–3.

24 Pavković, 12–18.

reporting and the lack of international indexes dealing with control over security forces.

Sub-chapter 1: Elections

Securing free and fair elections in accordance with the highest European standards is imperative for a country aspiring to EU accession. Looking individually at countries, for the majority of them, all three observed indexes assess them more or less similarly. The biggest discrepancy can be observed in the case of Kosovo, where *Nations in Transit* rates its elections sections at 2.68, while both V-Dem and *Freedom in the World* rate it substantially higher – 3.89 and 4.14, respectively (see Table 6). The consistent ratings by all three indexes validate the assessment of the electoral standards in these Western Balkan countries, despite the notable outlier of Kosovo.

Table 1 Elections average rating

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
Freedom in the World	4.00	2.86	4.14	3.86	4.00	3.00
Nations in Transit	3.18	3.35	2.68	3.35	3.35	2.84
V-Dem	3.43	3.38	3.89	3.57	3.41	2.63
Average	3.54	3.20	3.57	3.59	3.59	2.82

Figure 1 Progress of WB countries in Elections sub-chapter from 2022 to 2023

Year	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
2023	3.54	3.20	3.57	3.59	3.59	2.82
2022 ²⁵	3.45	3.17	3.44	3.31	3.51	3.04

Quantification of the elections showed that almost all countries, with the exception of Serbia, recorded moderate ratings, between 3 and 4. This section paid particular attention to general democratic standards, minority representation, work of national electoral bodies, legal framework and implementation of reforms in the election area, disparities between political parties, and others.²⁶ When compared with quantified elections results in 2022, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia achieved better results in 2023. These five countries are in the right direction when it comes to further progress towards EU membership. On the other hand, Serbia was the only country to backslide, from a 3.04 rating in 2022²⁷ to 2.82 in 2023 (see Figure 1). Electoral irregularities in general and local elections of December 2023 have certainly affected Serbia's lower rating in this segment. However, the negative trend when it comes to the state of play in organising elections in Serbia has been recognised in a longer timespan.²⁸ In order to improve its rating, Serbia needs to implement all outstanding OSCE/ODIHR recommendations.²⁹ Current developments do not look encouraging as Serbia is far from the necessary standards established in Copenhagen criteria.

25 Pavković, 4.

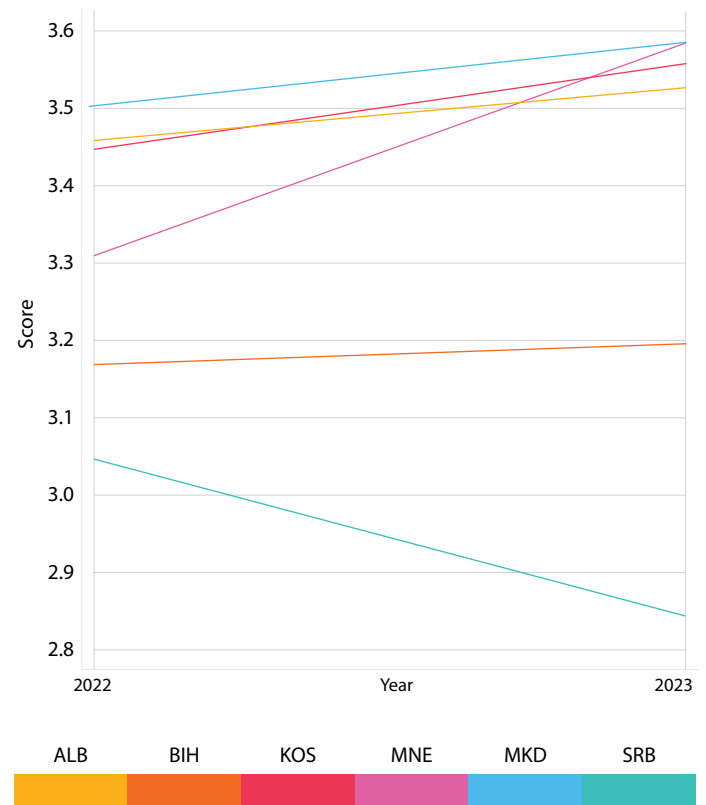
26 See Table 12 in Annex I for a detailed list of observed elements.

27 Pavković, 'Quantifying the Functioning of Democratic Institutions: Developing a Reliable Model for the Western Balkans', 4.

28 Mila Stankovic, 'Završni izveštaj Posmatračke misije Crte', CRTA (blog), 14 February 2024, <https://crtars/završni-izvestaj-posmatracke-misije-crte/>.

29 OSCE, 'Early Parliamentary Elections, 17 December 2023', accessed 19 July 2024, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/serbia/556500>.

Progress of countries' Election scores



Sub-chapter 2: Parliament

The "Parliament" section analyses key functions of the highest representative body in WB6, including parliament's control over the executive, its role in EU integration, transparency of work, electing officials, and other constitutional functions.³⁰ A new policy element was added this year – *Unequal treatment of opposition*. This element is covered only by the *Freedom in the World* report by Freedom House. On the other hand, the newly mapped element *Abuse of speaker's power* was not possible to match with any other indicators in three observed democracy indexes. The introduction of this element in the newest report and the inability to match it in any third-party report is one of the reasons why the Commission itself needs to develop its quantification methodology. When one compares ratings of this area among different indexes (*Freedom in the World*, *Nations in Transit* and *Democracy Report*), it can be seen that there are no big discrepancies per country. A notable difference can only be spotted in the case of Kosovo, where *Nations in Transit* deviate compared to V-Dem and *Freedom in the World* indexes (see Table 7).

Table 2 Parliament average rating

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
Freedom in the World	3.80	3.00	3.80	3.80	4.00	3.20
Nations in Transit	3.18	3.35	2.34	3.18	3.35	2.84
V-Dem	3.25	3.19	3.61	3.52	3.36	3.02
Average	3.41	3.18	3.22	3.50	3.57	3.02

When the 2023 average ratings for "Parliament" are compared with the same category in 2022, analysis shows that all countries except Kosovo have made progress. Kosovo recorded a

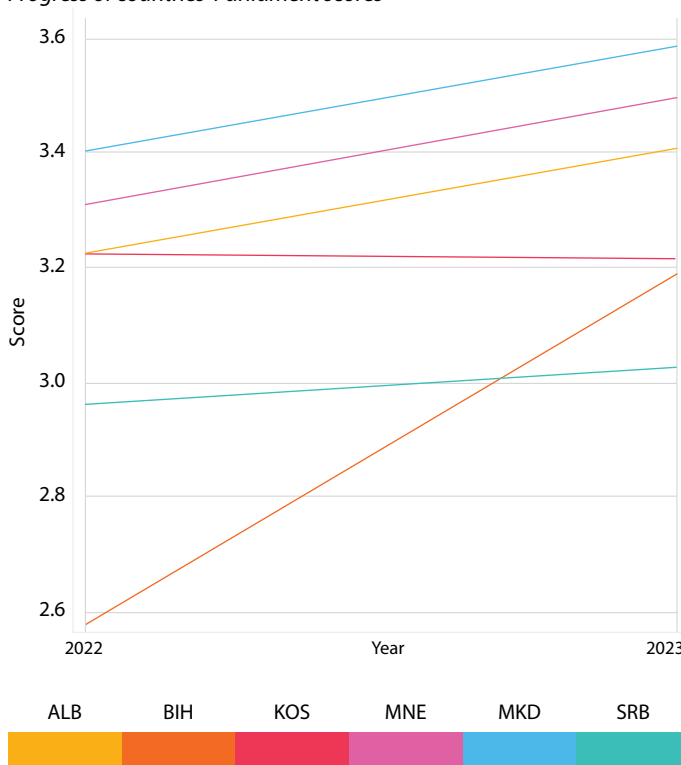
30 See Table 13 in Annex I for a detailed list of observed elements.

negligible decrease from 3.23 to 3.22.³¹ On the other hand, Bosnia and Herzegovina made the best progress, from 2.57 in 2022³² to 3.18 in 2023 (see Figure 2). All six countries recorded moderate ratings, between 3 and 4. This range indicates that while there have been improvements, there is still substantial room for strengthening the work and role of their respective parliaments on the European path. These findings highlight the ongoing need for reforms and capacity-building efforts to ensure that parliaments can more effectively fulfil their legislative, oversight, and representative functions as part of countries' progress toward European integration.

Figure 2 Progress of WB countries in Parliament sub-chapter from 2022 to 2023

Year	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
2023	3.41	3.18	3.22	3.50	3.57	3.02
2022	3.24	2.57	3.23	3.29	3.41	2.96

Progress of countries' Parliament scores



Sub-chapter 3: Governance

"Governance" is the most challenging area to quantify for several reasons. Firstly, the level of coverage is very limited, making it difficult to gather comprehensive and representative data across all relevant aspects of governance. This lack of extensive data hinders the ability to accurately assess and compare governance standards and practices across different regions. Secondly, policy elements from EC reports, even when cross-referenced with third-party indexes, are insufficient to provide a complete and nuanced understanding of the "Governance" sub-chapters in all countries. These policy elements and indexes often fail to capture the full spectrum of governance issues, including informal practices, local governance dynamics, and the influence of non-state actors. Consequently, all ratings calculated for "Governance" should be taken with

31 Pavković, 'Quantifying the Functioning of Democratic Institutions: Developing a Reliable Model for the Western Balkans', 5.

32 Pavković, 5.

caution. Although they provide insight, they may not fully reflect the complexities, variances, and subtleties of the governance issues present in each country. This fact is yet another argument in favour of encouraging the European Commission to quantify reports' findings in its own way.

Table 3 Governance average rating

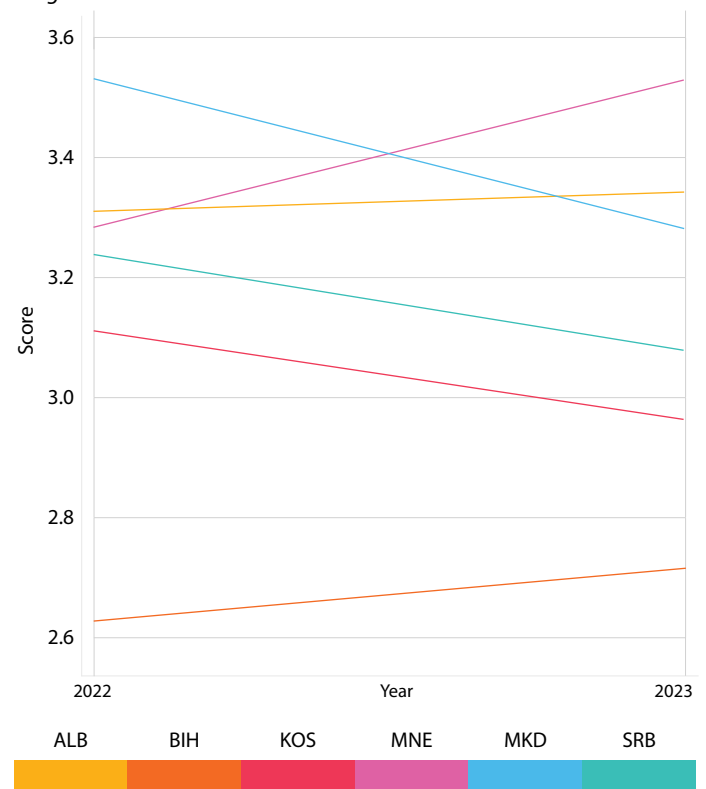
	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
Freedom in the World	3.67	2.67	3.67	3.67	3.67	3.00
Nations in Transit	3.35	2.51	2.34	3.01	3.18	2.84
V-Dem	3.05	2.95	2.90	3.76	3.11	3.42
Average	3.36	2.71	2.97	3.48	3.32	3.09

Taking a look at the 2024 Governance ratings, there have not been major discrepancies within country ratings among the three indexes. The most notable difference can be observed again in the case of Kosovo, where Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* and *Nations in Transit* put this country in two different categories (see Table 8). Bearing in mind methodological limitations and the fact that *Nations in Transit* cover only 33% of policy elements reported by the Commission in its annual country reports, fluctuations among ratings are not surprising. When compared to last year's quantification, "Governance" has slightly improved in Albania, BIH, and Montenegro, while a slight decline in rating is recorded in Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia. Overall, the 2023 "Governance" ratings indicate minor fluctuations, highlighting the nuanced nature of governance assessment across different indexes.

Figure 3 Progress of WB countries in Governance sub-chapter from 2022 to 2023

Year	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
2023	3.36	2.71	2.97	3.48	3.32	3.09
2022	3.32	2.64	3.11	3.30	3.44	3.27

Progress of countries' Governance scores



Sub-chapter 4: Civil society

“Civil society” segment of EC reports is, alongside “Parliament”, the most coherent and consistent part of FoDI. This fact makes quantification easier and more precise. What is important to note is that two new elements have been added for quantification: *Official response to attacks against CSOs* and *CSOs’ involvement on a local level*. These two elements are taken into account as part of the “Civil Society” indicator in the *Nations in Transit* report, while there is no equivalent indicator in the *Freedom in the World* report. Although the Commission reports on civil society coherently and consistently, there is a gap in matching all EC’s policy elements with third-party indexes. This gap underscores the necessity for continuous improvement in data collection and reporting methodologies to ensure comprehensive and accurate assessments in future analyses. It also speaks in favour of the Commission’s own approach in quantifying this area.

Table 4 Civil society average rating

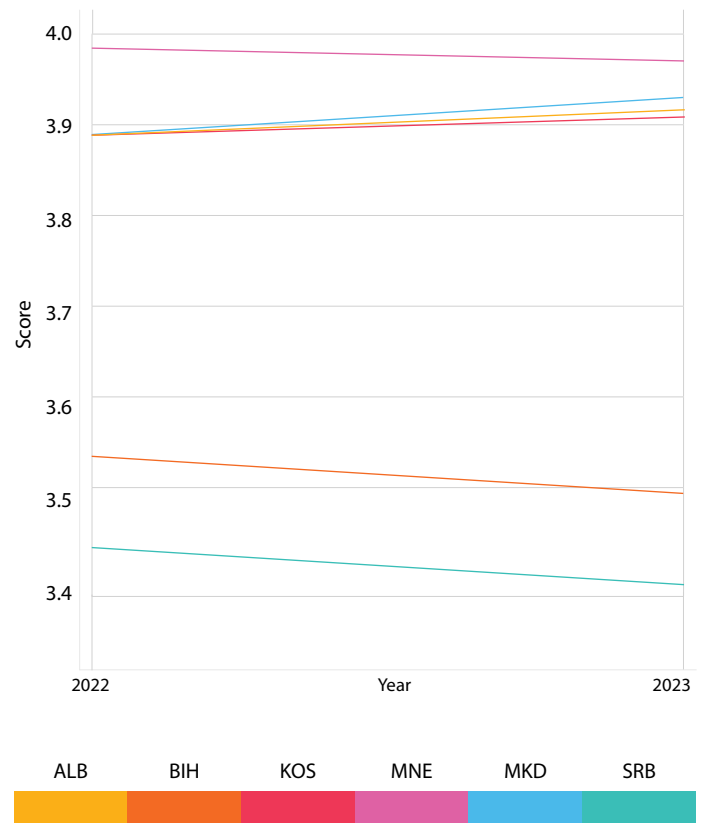
	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
Freedom in the World	4.00	3.50	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00
Nations in Transit	3.51	3.17	3.51	3.85	3.51	3.85
V-Dem	3.96	3.79	3.92	4.01	4.01	3.35
Average	3.82	3.49	3.81	3.95	3.84	3.40

The Western Balkans as a region recorded a moderate rating in the “Civil society” sub-chapter. All six countries scored between 3.40 and 3.95 (see Table 9). Albania, North Macedonia, and Kosovo improved their civil society ratings in 2023 compared to 2022, while BIH, Montenegro and Serbia experienced a slight decrease (see Figure 4). Score changes, be they increase or decrease, are very limited. However, civil society is the best-ranked sub-chapter for every single country. Reaching higher scores in civil society is a low-hanging fruit for candidate countries compared to other sub-chapters, which require much more work by individual countries in order to reach better scores. This helps countries to increase their overall FoDI scores, while elections, parliament, and governance should weigh more in the final count, given their relevance for the functioning of democratic institutions. This means that in a potential future quantification of FoDI, the EC might consider the approach of weighing some sub-chapters more than others in the final assessment.

Figure 4 Progress of WB countries in Civil society sub-chapter from 2022 to 2023

Year	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
2023	3.82	3.49	3.81	3.95	3.84	3.40
2022	3.78	3.54	3.79	3.96	3.79	3.44

Progress of countries’ Civil society sub-chapters from 2022 to 2023



Comparing FoDI state of play in 2022 and 2023

In the previous section, necessary data for quantifying FoDI were collected, and four sub-chapters following the EC’s approach (“Elections”, “Parliament”, “Governance”, and “Civil society”) have been quantified on a 1-5 scale. By doing it, the requirement for quantifying the whole FoDI chapter has been fulfilled. Table 10 shows the final ratings for WB6 calculated based on average values for the sub-chapters. “Civilian oversight of security forces” has been excluded from the calculation as it was not possible to quantify it for the reasons explained above.

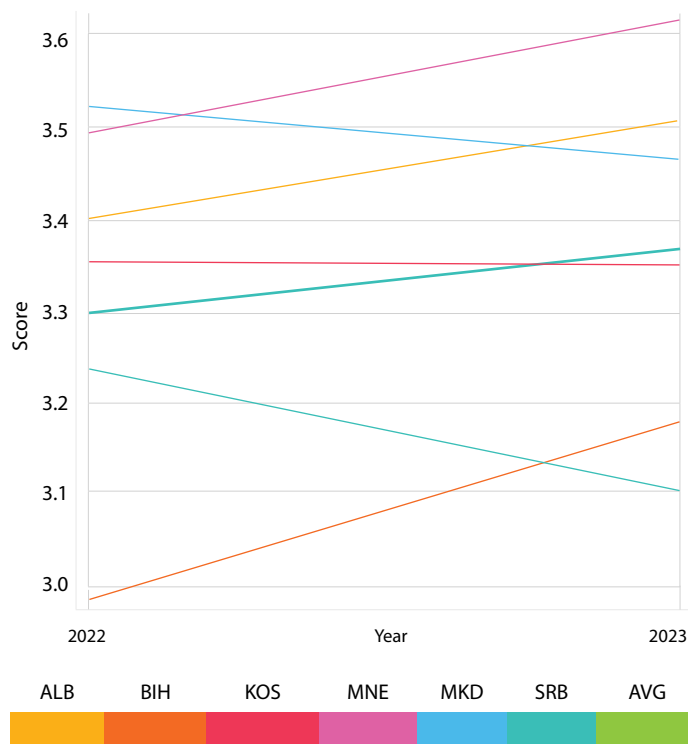
Table 5 Final quantified ratings for WB6 (2023 & 2024)

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB	Regional avg.
Elections	3.54	3.20	3.57	3.59	3.59	2.82	3.39
Parliament	3.41	3.18	3.22	3.50	3.57	3.02	3.32
Governance	3.36	2.71	2.97	3.48	3.32	3.09	3.16
Civil Society	3.82	3.49	3.81	3.95	3.84	3.40	3.72
FoDI Avg. 2023	3.53	3.15	3.39	3.63	3.58	3.08	3.40
FoDI Avg. 2022 ³³	3.45	2.98	3.39	3.50	3.54	3.18	3.34
Avg. change in p.p.	0.08	0.17	0.00	0.13	0.04	-0.10	0.06
Avg. change in %	2.32	5.70	0.00	3.71	1.13	-3.14	1.80

33 Pavković, ‘Quantifying the Functioning of Democratic Institutions: Developing a Reliable Model for the Western Balkans’.

Taking a look at the final results, one can conclude that all countries achieved moderate ratings (between 3 and 4). In order to fulfil Copenhagen criteria, countries aspiring for EU membership should aim to achieve higher ratings, over 4 and as close as possible to 5 – the best on a 1-5 scale. When these ratings are compared with the results from the 2023 quantification, three main conclusions may be drawn. First, there have not been major changes within countries. Second, four countries recorded limited progress compared to 2023, while Kosovo saw a stagnating trend (see Table 10). More serious overall backsliding in FoDI can be observed in Serbia, which is caused by a substantial rating decline in the “Elections” sub-chapter. Third, Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only country that managed to level up to a higher category (moderate rating – over 3) and catch up with the rest of the region. It seems like the decision to grant this country candidate status in 2023 and to open negotiations with the EU in 2024 had a positive impact on accelerating reforms in the FoDI area. The region as a whole recorded a slight rating increase; however, this is not enough for these countries to be able to access the EU. Persisting issues in securing a level playing field for elections, dominance of ruling parties, weak parliaments and inability to exercise full control over the executive are some of the primary obstacles in almost all Western Balkans countries. There will be no shortcuts for any country if these systemic problems are not addressed prior to the conclusion of accession negotiations.

Average FoDI scores for WB6 from 2022 to 2023



Conclusion

This paper gains significance amidst ongoing difficulties in the region to firmly establish democratic standards and wider geopolitical turmoil, recognising the urgency of the matter. By enhancing the EC’s reporting mechanisms, the aim is to fortify democracy development within the Western Balkans, contributing to the European integration of the region. The pursuit of this objective is justified for several key reasons. Firstly, the region struggles with managing democratic institutions, jeopardising its stability, governance legitimacy, and

EU enlargement prospects. Secondly, the Commission’s current methods are inadequate for accurately assessing critical areas such as “Elections”, “Parliament”, “Governance”, “Civil society”, and “Civilian oversight of security forces and the intelligence sector”. Without thorough evaluations, the EU risks missing essential aspects of democratic progress or backsliding in candidate countries. Lastly, the European Council’s support for gradual integration highlights the necessity for robust assessment mechanisms to ensure the credibility and reliability of annual reports, which are crucial for determining access to increased benefits throughout the accession process. The same was called for as part of the Model for Staged Accession to the EU, simultaneously calling improving the merit-based process founded in EC’s reports. Considering the importance of the FoDI for future EU member states, we are past the time when Commission reports can use diplomatic and vague language in its annual country reports.

Analysis of the 2023 EC’s Enlargement Package for the Western Balkans showcased that the Commission is still dealing with similar problems identified in the 2022 report package. Primary issues with the FoDI reporting remain the following: lack of assessment on progress and preparedness, varying degrees of consistency in reporting among the countries with a multitude of policy elements mentioned in the reports, among which some do not have substantial relevance for democracy, and consequently, lack of comparability among reports. Another persisting issue is the fact that half of the countries are still missing the sub-chapter “Civilian oversight of the security and intelligence sector”, all the while the reporting in this segment requires an overhaul of EC’s approach. Moreover, the overall consistency of reporting across all sub-chapters dropped compared to the previous Enlargement Package. With that in mind, the Commission should reconsider its reporting approach in order to focus more on explicit reporting on policy elements of direct effect and higher importance on democratic functioning. In other words, the EC needs to re-prioritise reporting on substantial elements and unburden the report from unnecessary technical details. It is of utmost importance for the Commission to balance out the standardisation of reports, which means careful selection of pertinent elements reported across all countries, and technical and country-specific details in the upcoming Enlargement Package.

Finally, it needs to be emphasised that the quantification of annual assessments remains the most intuitive, clear, and transparent method for communicating how far a candidate has gone on its path to EU membership. Quantification may lead to continuous improvements in data collection and reporting methodologies. The paper’s Mixed Approach Model for quantification is an effective tool for gauging the overall state of play and the trajectory of reforms over time in the area of FoDI. By successfully approximating reality, it serves as a compelling example of how quantification can be achieved. However, its key limitation lies in the fact that certain policy elements are not covered by the third-party indexes used in the Model. Therefore, the Commission should consider this Model as a pilot example and work towards developing its own comprehensive quantification mechanism for levels of preparedness and progress of the FoDI area. By adopting such a mechanism, the Commission would ensure a more objective and comparable assessment across candidates, ultimately leading to a fairer and more effective EU enlargement process.

Annex I – Mapping policy elements in EC annual country reports

Legend:

- ✓ - element present and explicitly assessed in a country report
- ⊖ - element partially present or implicitly assessed in a country report
- - element justifiably missing from a country report
- ✗ - element unjustifiably missing from a country report

Table 6 Scale for rating the level of consistency

Rating	%	Description
Rating 1	0-20	Low level
Rating 2	21-40	Some level
Rating 3	41-60	Moderate level
Rating 4	61-80	Good level
Rating 5	81-100	Very advanced level

Table 7 Elections - Identifying elements in 6 EC reports

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB
Electoral reform and oversight of campaign financing (e.g. addressing recommendations of OSCE/ ODIHR, EU election observation mission, Venice Commission, GRECO)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Involvement of local civil society or citizens– effectiveness of oversight	○	○	○	○	✓	✓
The dominance of the ruling party/coalition (access to media, pressure on the public sector)	✓	○	○	○	○	○
Current constitutional or electoral legal framework	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gender balance in the latest elections (regular or by-elections)	✓	✓	○	○	○	○
Minority/ethnic representations/discrimination and access to political power	○	✓	✓	○	○	○
Campaign (political party) financing and disparities	✓	✓	○	○	✓	○
General democratic standards of latest elections (fair, competitive, free, regular, inclusive ...)	✓	✓	○	✓	✓	○
National electoral bodies (involvement, effectiveness or need to reform, response to appeals on irregularities)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
International influence/foreign interference	✗	✓	○	✗	✓	✗
Administrative procedures (processes related to elections, procedural shortcomings, technical limits...)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 8 Parliament - identifying elements in 6 EC reports

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB
Summary of the latest parliamentary election	✗	○ ³⁴	✗	✗	✓	✗
Share of women among MPs / gender equality	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Political parties - changes in the distribution of political power compared to the previous period	✓	○ ³⁵	✗	✓	✗	✗
Oversight function over executive (interpellations, annual reports...)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parliament's role in the EU integration and Committee for the Stabilisation and Association process/ EU Integration Committee	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transparency (live streaming, publication of parliamentary documentation, statistics)	✓	○	○	○	✓	✓
Parliament's consultation with civil society	✓	○	○	✓	✓	✓
Electing/ appointing officials	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inquiry committees	✓	✓	○	✓	✓	✓
Exercising constitutional function (legislative output initiative)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

34 Element present in FoDI introduction

35 Element present in FoDI introduction

Ethical standards / Code of Ethics/ Inflammatory / inappropriate language / physical altercation	✓	○	✓	○	✓	✓
Registration and political parties funding	○	○	○	✓	✓	○
Employing urgent/shortened procedures	○	✓	○	✓	○	✓
Parliamentary representation of national minorities	✓	○	✓	✓	○	✓
Political polarisation (e.g. Interparty dialogue, effects on the functioning of Parliament)	✓	○	✓	✓	✓	✓
Unequal treatment of opposition	○	○	○	○	✗	✓
Abuse of speaker's power	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Rules of procedure / technical innovations/administration processes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internal party democracy	✓	○ ³⁶	○	✓	○	○

Table 9 Governance - identifying elements in 6 EC reports

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB
Local self-government and decentralisation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
National EU integration structures , i.e. Administration coordination, expertise and capacities on EU integration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Overall focus on EU-related reforms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Executive output (legislative initiative, legislative output)	○	✓	✓	✓	✓	○ ³⁷
Opportunities for local participation and consultation	✓	○	○	✓	○	○
Women's representation in local governments	✓	○	✓	○	✓	○
Women's representation in national government	○	✓	✓	✓	○	✓
Inter-ethnic relations	○	✓	○	✓	○	○
Coordination between central and local levels of governance	✓	○	✓	✓	✓	○
Transparency at the local level and communication to the public	✓	○	○	○	○	○
Appointments made by the executive bodies (interview)	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
Local governments/administrative units, i.e. financial resources, administrative capacities, quality of services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Government effectiveness and coalition stability	✓	✓	○ ³⁸	✓	✓	○
Access to IPA by local governments	✓	○	○	○	○	✓
Local governments' involvement in EU integration	✓	○	○	✓	○	○
Territorial planning	✓	○	○	○	○	○
Overview of Government's programme	○	○	○	✓	○	○

Table 10 Civil society - identifying elements in 6 EC reports

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB
Legal and regulatory framework for stimulating CSO environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Institutionalised cooperation between CSOs and state institutions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Institutional bodies voicing priorities of CSOs	✓	○	✓	✓	✓	✓
State's financial support to CSOs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Right to freedom of assembly and association	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Attacks against CSOs	○	✓	○	○	○	✓
Official response to attacks against CSOs	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✓
Consultations/Involvement of CSOs in EU integration process	✓	○	✓	○	✓	✓
CSOs involvement on local level	○	○	○	✓	○	○
Volunteering	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Taxation/VAT refund for CSOs	✓	✓	✓	○	✓	○

36 Element present in FoDI introduction

37 Element present in FoDI introduction

38 Element present in FoDI introduction

Table 11 Civilian oversight of security forces - identifying elements in 6 EC reports

	ALB ³⁹	BIH	KOS ⁴⁰	MKD	MNE ⁴¹	SRB ⁴²
Parliamentary oversight	○	✓	○	✓	○	✓
Executive and other institutional bodies oversight	○	○	○	✓	○	✓
Legal framework	○	✓	○	○	○	✓
Human rights and freedoms of defence personnel ⁴³	○	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗

Table 12 Newly added elements

Parliament	Abuse of the Speaker's power
	Unequal treatment of opposition
Civil Society	Official response to attacks against civil society
	CSOs involvement on local level

Justification for change of classification between justifiably and unjustifiably missing elements

In the Bosnia and Herzegovina report, element *Political parties – changes in the distribution of power compared to the previous period* is unjustifiably missing as such changes took place following the elections. Regarding newly added elements in the Parliament sub-chapter, *Abuse of Speaker's power* is justifiably missing as no such cases were reported in other WB6 except for Serbia. Moreover, *Unequal treatment of opposition* is justifiably missing only in the Montenegro report, as there were no instances of such conduct. Due to the intensification of *inter-ethnic relations*, the element is now classified as unjustifiably missing from Albania, Montenegro and Serbia reports. Lastly, *Attacks against CSOs* element has been changed from justifiably to unjustifiably missing due to the attacks on the civil society in the reporting period.

Annex II – Quantifying FoDI

Elections

Table 13 Selected elements from the FH's Freedom in the World 2024 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
A1	4	3	4	4	4	3
A2	4	3	4	4	4	3
A3	4	2	4	3	4	2
B1	4	4	4	4	5	4
B2	4	3	5	5	4	2
B3	4	2	4	3	3	3
B4	4	3	4	4	4	4
Elections average rating	4.00	2.86	4.14	3.86	4.00	3.00

Table 14 Selected elements from the V-Dem's 2024 Democracy Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
v2elintim	3.87	3.92	4.44	4.20	4.06	2.91
v2x_polyarchy	3.04	3.04	3.68	3.32	3.24	2.44
v2pepwsoc	4.07	3.13	4.00	3.63	3.18	3.24
v2elembaut	3.3	3.79	3.99	3.48	3.40	2.61
v2elembcap	3.70	4.12	4.00	3.59	3.57	3.29
v2elirreg	2.62	2.30	3.22	3.21	3.02	1.30
Elections average rating	3.43	3.38	3.89	3.57	3.41	2.63

39 The sub-chapter not present in the country report.

40 The sub-chapter not present in the country report.

41 The sub-chapter not present in the country report.

42 The sub-chapter was placed as 4th sub-chapter, instead of 5th as is the case with other reports and is labeled as 'Civilian oversight of security service'

43 Although human right and freedoms are an essential part of democracy, this element in the context of defence personal is not a necessary indicator of the state of democracy.

Table 15 Selected elements from the FH's Nations in Transit 2024 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
Electoral Process	3.18	3.35	2.68	3.18	3.35	2.84
Elections average rating	3.18	3.35	2.68	3.18	3.35	2.84

Parliament

Table 16 Selected elements from the FH's Freedom in the World 2024 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	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	3	2
Parliament average rating	3.80	3.00	3.80	3.80	4.00	3.20

Table 17 Selected elements from the V-Dem 2024 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
v2lgfemleg	2.90	2.02	2.78	2.12	3.27	3.07
v2xlg_legcon	3.84	2.88	3.68	3.80	3.40	2.52
v2cscnsult	2.64	2.44	3.58	3.04	3.00	2.26
v2lginvstp	3.40	2.21	3.03	3.42	3.16	2.00
v2lgcomslo	3.40	4.02	4.35	4.40	3.79	3.71
v2lglegplo	3.88	4.96	4.96	4.84	4.90	4.32
v2x_horacc	4.08	3.12	4.12	4.20	3.52	2.84
v2dlcountr	2.18	2.70	2.54	2.91	2.53	2.29
v2psbars	4.73	4.69	4.80	4.82	4.19	4.23
v2eldonate	3.12	3.10	3.25	3.22	3.24	3.15
v2lgdsadlo	3.65	2.85	4.25	3.25	2.99	3.25
Political Polarization	2.74	4.26	3.69	4.17	4.08	4.11
v2pscnslnl	1.70	2.21	1.92	1.63	1.64	1.49
Parliament average rating	3.25	3.19	3.61	3.52	3.36	3.02

Table 18 Selected elements from the FH's Nations in Transit 2024 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
Electoral Process	3.18	3.35	2.34	3.18	3.35	2.84
Elections average rating	3.18	3.35	2.34	3.18	3.35	2.84

Governance

Table 19 Selected elements from the FH's Freedom in the World 2024 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
B4	4	3	4	4	4	4
C1	4	3	4	4	4	3
C3	3	2	3	3	3	2
Governance average rating	3.67	2.67	3.67	3.67	3.67	3.00

Table 20 Selected elements from the Varieties of Democracy 2024 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
v2ellocpwr	4.06	3.93	4.08	4.44	4.60	4.10
v2exdfpphg	2.06	2.44	1.72	3.84	1.76	3.12
v2exfemhog ⁴⁴	/	/	/	/	/	/
e_wbgi_gee ⁴⁵	3.04	2.47	/	2.99	2.96	3.04
Governance average rating	3.05	2.95	2.90	3.76	3.11	3.42

Table 21 Selected elements from the FH's Nations in Transit 2024 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
Local Democratic Governance	3.35	2.51	2.34	3.01	3.18	2.84
Governance average rating	3.35	2.51	2.34	3.01	3.18	2.84

Civil society

Table 22 Selected elements from the FH's Freedom in the World 2024 Report for Western Balkan countries

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
E1	4	4	4	4	4	3
E2	4	3	4	4	4	3
Civil society average rating	4.00	3.50	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00

Table 23 Selected elements from the V-Dem 2024 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
v2xcs_ccsi	4.40	4.32	4.28	4.44	4.36	3.68
v2cscnsult	2.64	2.44	3.58	3.04	3.00	2.26
v2csptrcpt	4.33	3.76	3.19	3.65	3.76	3.32
v2x_cspart	3.80	3.68	3.60	3.64	3.68	3.08
Freedom of peaceful assembly	4.12	4.40	4.50	4.77	4.58	4.05
v2csreprss	4.47	4.12	4.35	4.52	4.64	3.69
Civil society average rating	3.96	3.79	3.92	4.01	4.01	3.35

Table 24 Selected elements from the FH's Nations in Transit 2024 Report for Western Balkan countries after rescaling

	ALB	BIH	KOS	MNE	MKD	SRB
Civil society	3.51	3.17	3.51	3.85	3.51	3.85
Civil society average rating	3.51	3.17	3.51	3.85	3.51	3.85

⁴⁴ No data.

⁴⁵ This indicator is available only for 2022, nonetheless it is taken into consideration in order to provide wider scope of the assessment. There is no available data for Kosovo.

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