European Union's Enlargement Policy towards Western Balkans
Albania a specific case study; implications and challenges

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in the thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis highlights the European Union's policy of conditionality and the positive role of the EU incentives for transition to democracy and market economy; a concrete example of this is the Visa Free Regime. However, it is questionable if the EU's instrument of conditionality will work the same with countries of Western Balkan as they come from different political, economic, social and cultural background. This thesis highlights the case of Albania and how the EU policy of conditionality works with less developed countries.

In order to analyze the incentive structure provided by the EU to Albania, a critical look will be taken at the main instrument of conditionality: the access to negotiations. Furthermore I have taken a critical look at Albania's statehood and accordingly the Albanian government's achievements resulting from fulfilling the preconditions defined by the EU in order to access the candidacy status. Following that I analyze Albania's potential to achieve EU membership in the near future.

This thesis highlights how the EU is aiming to stabilize the region through regional cooperation as well as trying to ensure that the pace of the reforms is kept up in the countries of Western Balkans. Challenges are numerous for the EU as these countries come from different cultural and historical background.
## CONTENTS

DECLARATION .......................................................................................................................... ii  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ iii  
ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................ v  
CONTENTS ....................................................................................................................................... vi  
GLOSSARY ......................................................................................................................................... ix  

### CHAPTER 1  RESEARCH INTEREST AND DESIGN ................................................. 1  
1.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1  
  1.1.1 Evolution of the European Union .................................................................................. 2  
  1.1.2 Institutions of the European Union ............................................................................. 5  
  1.1.3 EU and Western Balkans ............................................................................................ 6  
  1.1.4 EU and Albania ........................................................................................................... 8  
1.2 Problem statement .............................................................................................................. 9  
1.3 Research objectives ........................................................................................................... 11  
1.4 Assumptions ....................................................................................................................... 13  
1.5 Theoretical Framework ..................................................................................................... 15  
1.6 Scope of Study ................................................................................................................... 19  
1.7 Literature Review ............................................................................................................. 20  
1.8 Research Methodology ..................................................................................................... 25  
1.9 Division of Chapters ......................................................................................................... 27  

### CHAPTER 2  PROFILE OF ALBANIA'S STATEHOOD ......................... 31  
2.1 Albania's historical background: the problem of statehood ....... 31  
  2.1.1 National Albanian Rebirth (Rilindja Kombetare Shqiptare) ...... 32  
  2.1.2 Creation and failure of the first Albanian State, 1912/13 .......... 33  
  2.1.3 The Communist Regime in Albania 1944-1991 ................... 36  
  2.1.4 Albania after 1991 ..................................................................................................... 38  
2.2 Conclusions ....................................................................................................................... 40
CHAPTER 3 EU'S WESTERN BALKAN ENLARGEMENT POLICY ...... 42
3.1 EU -Western Balkan Relations................................................. 42
3.1.1 The EU -Western Balkan Relations 1990-1999...................... 43
3.1.2 The EU-Western Balkan Relations after 1999....................... 44
3.2 Enlargement and the nature of the EU..................................... 48
3.3 Challenges that affect the EU enlargement process............... 50
3.3.1 Economic Crisis ................................................................. 51
3.3.2 Rule of Law........................................................................... 53
   3.3.2.1 Corruption........................................................................ 53
   3.3.2.2 Organized Crime............................................................ 54
   3.3.2.3 Freedom of Expression................................................. 54
3.3.3 Bilateral Questions............................................................... 55
3.3.4 Regional Cooperation ......................................................... 55
3.4 Pre-Accession Instruments applies by the EU ....................... 57
   3.4.1 Achieving visa-free travel............................................... 57
   3.4.2 Ensuring the quality of pre-accession preparations............... 58
   3.4.3 Bringing citizens and administration closer to the EU ........... 58
   3.4.4 Support of enlargement countries by financial assistance..... 59
   3.4.5 Communicating enlargement............................................ 61
3.5 The EU Spanish Presidency's impact on Enlargement Policy..... 61
   3.5.1.1 The well-functioning of institutions based on Lisbon Treaty.. 62
   3.5.1.2 Overcoming the financial crisis....................................... 62
   3.5.2 The Western Balkans in the Spanish Presidency Agenda ...... 63
      3.5.2.1 Croatia......................................................................... 63
      3.5.2.2 Macedonia................................................................. 64
      3.5.2.3 Albania.................................................................... 64
      3.5.2.4 Bosnia and Herzegovina.......................................... 65
      3.5.2.5 Kosovo.................................................................... 66
3.5.3 Future perspective of the European Union............................ 67
3.6 Conclusions.............................................................................. 67