



Kosovo's Journey Towards European Integration: Progress, Challenges, and the Way Forward

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Abstract

Kosovo, a landlocked country in the Western Balkans, declared independence from Serbia in 2008. Since then, it has been actively pursuing its European integration process to become a fully-fledged member of the European Union. The European integration process is a strategic priority for Kosovo, as it seeks to align its legal, institutional, and administrative framework standard. The process promotes democratic governance, the rule of law, human rights, and economic development. Kosovo's European integration process is guided by the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) it signed with the European Union in 2015, which sets out the framework for Kosovo's engagement with the European Union and outlines the necessary reforms and commitments for its European integration. The SAA is accompanied by several other European Union instruments and initiatives, such as the European Reform Agenda, which provides a roadmap for reforms, and the European Investment Plan, which aims to boost economic growth and investment in Kosovo. The European integration process is crucial for Kosovo's political stability, economic prosperity, and social development. It is seen as a way to strengthen the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. And to enhance Kosovo's regional cooperation and reconciliation efforts. However, Kosovo faces various challenges in its European integration process, including corruption, organized crime, weak governance, and socio-economic disparities. In this context, discussion on the necessary steps for Kosovo to continue its path towards European integration, focusing on key areas such as reforms, democratic governance, alignment with the European Union acquis, economic development, human capital, regional cooperation, administrative capacities, citizen engagement, dialogue with the European Union, and progress monitoring. By taking these steps, Kosovo can progress in its European integration process and move closer to its goal of European Union membership.

Keywords: Kosovo, European Union, Integration, Stabilization and Association Process, rule, law, corruption, good governance, economy, regional cooperation, normalization of relations, reforms, progress, challenges, way forward

1. Introduction

1.1 Provide a brief background on Kosovo's history and its aspiration for European integration.

Kosovo, a territory located in the Western Balkans, has a complex history marked by ethnic tensions, conflicts, and political challenges. Kosovo was an autonomous province of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, which led to a series of conflicts in the region, including the Kosovo War in 1998-1999¹. The conflict resulted in the intervention of NATO forces and the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which administered Kosovo until it declared independence from Serbia in 2008. After gaining

1 European Union External Action Service. (2021). Kosovo. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/13777/Kosovo

independence, Kosovo has aspired to become a member of the European Union (EU) and has actively pursued its European integration process. The EU has recognized Kosovo's European perspective and has been engaged in supporting Kosovo's efforts towards European integration. Kosovo submitted its application for EU membership in 2016, and in 2018², the European Commission recommended the opening of accession negotiations with Kosovo, subject to the fulfillment of certain conditions³. Kosovo's aspiration for European integration is driven by the desire to align with the EU values, norms, and standards, as well as to benefit from the economic, political, and social advantages of EU membership. Kosovo sees the EU as a key partner in promoting stability, democracy, rule of law, human rights, and economic development, and views European integration as a means to enhance its prospects for a prosperous and peaceful future. However, Kosovo faces various challenges in its European integration process, including issues such as corruption, organized crime, weak governance, socio-economic disparities, and the normalization of relations with Serbia. Despite these challenges, Kosovo remains committed to its European integration process and continues to work towards meeting the requirements and criteria set by the EU for membership. In summary, Kosovo's history is marked by conflicts and political challenges, but its aspiration for European integration is driven by the desire to align with EU values and norms, promote stability and democracy, and achieve economic development. Kosovo faces challenges, but remains committed to its European integration process and strives to meet the requirements for EU membership. Since gaining independence in 2008, Kosovo has taken steps to implement reforms and align its legislation with EU standards and norms. These efforts have been supported by the EU through various programs and initiatives aimed at strengthening governance, the rule of law, and democratic institutions in Kosovo. One of the key milestones in Kosovo's European integration process was the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU in 2015, which represents the first contractual relationship between Kosovo and the EU. The SAA aims to promote political, economic, and social reforms in Kosovo and serves as a framework for further cooperation and integration with the EU. Kosovo has also made progress in implementing reforms in areas such as public administration, judiciary, the fight against corruption and organized crime, human rights, and economic development. Efforts were made to strengthen the rule of law, improve governance, and enhance the business environment⁴.

Kosovo has also made efforts to align its legislation with EU *acquis communautaire*, which are the rules and regulations of the EU. In addition, Kosovo has engaged in regional cooperation and has taken steps towards normalizing relations with Serbia, a key requirement set by the EU for its European integration process. This includes the signing of agreements on the normalization of relations facilitated by the EU, such as the Brussels Agreement in 2013, which aimed at resolving practical issues and improving relations between Kosovo and Serbia. 3. Challenges in the European Integration Process Despite the progress made, Kosovo faces significant challenges in its European integration process. One of the main challenges is the issue of corruption, which remains a persistent problem in Kosovo and threatens the rule of law, good governance, and economic development. There are also challenges in areas of public administration, judiciary, and human rights, which require further reforms and improvements to align with EU standards⁵. Another challenge is the socio-economic development of Kosovo, as the country faces high unemployment rates, low economic growth, and regional disparities. Building a sustainable and inclusive economy is crucial for Kosovo's European integration process, and efforts to improve the business environment, attract investments, and create jobs. Normalization of relations with Serbia remains a challenge, as there are unresolved issues related to border management, recognition, and integration of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo. Achieving a comprehensive and sustainable normalization of relations with Serbia is a key requirement set by the EU for Kosovo's progress toward European integration. Way Forward for Kosovo in its European Integration Process To continue its path towards European integration, Kosovo needs to address the challenges and implement necessary reforms. This includes strengthening the rule of law, tackling corruption, improving governance, and advancing human rights. Economic reforms and efforts to attract investments and create jobs are crucial for Kosovo's European integration process. Kosovo should also continue its efforts toward

2 BBC News. (2018). Kosovo: What you need to know. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18250250>

3 European Commission. (2018). Kosovo 2018 Report. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/factsheet_kosovo_2018.pdf

4 Komisioni European. (2020). Raporti Kosova 2020. Marrë nga https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20201006-https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20201006-ommunication_from_the_commission_to_the_european_parliament_and_the_council_2020_enlargement_package_kosovo.pdf

5 Komisioni European. (2020). Raporti Kosova 2020. Marrë nga https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20201006-ommunication_from_the_commission_to_the_european_parliament_and_the_council_2020_enlargement_package_kosovo.pdf

normalizing relations with Serbia, including the implementation of existing agreements and finding solutions to unresolved issues. This includes maintaining dialogue with Serbia and other regional stakeholders and demonstrating a commitment to peaceful and constructive relations, and further reforms in areas such as public administration, judiciary, and economic development. International support, particularly from the EU, will continue to play a crucial role in Kosovo's European integration process. Kosovo should actively engage in EU-funded programs and initiatives, and leverage the assistance provided by the EU and other international partners to implement necessary reforms and achieve progress in its European integration journey. In conclusion, Kosovo has made progress toward European integration but faces challenges that require sustained efforts and reforms. The way forward for Kosovo in its European integration process 1. Provide a brief background on Kosovo's history and its aspiration for European integration. Kosovo, a territory located in the Western Balkans, has a complex history marked by ethnic tensions, conflicts, and political challenges. Kosovo was an autonomous province of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, which led to a series of conflicts in the region, including the Kosovo War in 1998-1999. The conflict resulted in the intervention of NATO forces and the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which administered Kosovo until it declared independence from Serbia in 2008. After gaining independence, Kosovo has aspired to become a member of the European Union (EU) and has actively pursued its European integration process. The EU has recognized Kosovo's European perspective and engaged in supporting Kosovo's efforts toward European integration. Kosovo submitted its application for EU membership in 2016, and in 2018, the European Commission recommended the opening of accession negotiations with Kosovo, subject to the fulfillment of certain conditions. Kosovo's aspiration for European integration is driven by the desire to align with EU values, norms, and standards, as well as to benefit from the economic, political, and social advantages of EU membership. Kosovo sees the EU as a key partner in promoting stability, democracy, rule of law, human rights, and economic development, and views European integration as a means to enhance its prospects for a prosperous and peaceful future. However, Kosovo faces various challenges in its European integration process, including the need to address issues such as corruption, organized crime, weak governance, socio-economic disparities, and the normalization of relations with Serbia. Despite these challenges, Kosovo remains committed to its European integration process and continues to work towards meeting the requirements and criteria set by the EU for membership⁶. The Stabilization and Association Agreement is a framework for the European Union and the administration of Kosovo to regularly discuss technical and political issues related to the European agenda. • Meetings of the SA Committee and Subcommittees are co-chaired by the European Commission and Kosovo. Each meeting results in jointly agreed upon follow-up actions to be taken by the authorities of Kosovo. The conclusions of the meetings are available on the website of the EU Office in Kosovo (https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo_en and www.mei-ks.net).⁷ There are seven fields covered by the sectoral meetings of the subcommittees, including Justice, Freedom, and Security; Innovation, Information Society, Social Policy, Education and Culture; Trade, Industry, Customs, and Taxation; Internal Market, Competition, Consumer Protection, and Health; Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Food Safety; Transport, Environment, Energy, Regional Development; Economic and Financial Issues, Statistics. Two Special Groups cover public administration reform and normalization of relations with Serbia. In summary, Kosovo's history has been marked by conflicts and political challenges, but its aspiration for European integration is driven by the desire to align with EU values and norms, promote stability and democracy, and achieve economic development. Kosovo faces challenges, but remains committed to its European integration process and strives to meet the requirements for EU membership.

2. Progress Towards European Integration Kosovo has Made Significant Progress in its Journey Towards European Integration

Since gaining independence in 2008, Kosovo has taken steps to implement reforms and align its legislation with EU standards and norms. These efforts have been supported by the EU through various programs and initiatives aimed at strengthening governance, the rule of law, and democratic institutions in Kosovo. One of the key milestones in Kosovo's European integration process was the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU in 2015, which represents the first contractual relationship between Kosovo and the EU. The SAA aims to promote political, economic, and social reforms in Kosovo and serves as a framework for further cooperation and integration with the EU. Kosovo has also made progress in implementing reforms in areas such as public administration, judiciary, the fight

⁶ Kosova dhe Bashkimi Evropian. https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/15890/kosovo-and-european-union_en
⁷ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo_en and www.mei-ks.net.

against corruption and organized crime, human rights, and economic development. Efforts have been made to strengthen the rule of law, improve governance, and enhance the business environment. Kosovo has also made efforts to align its legislation with EU *acquis communautaire*, which are the rules and regulations of the EU. In addition, Kosovo has engaged in regional cooperation and has taken steps towards normalizing relations with Serbia, a key requirement set by the EU for its European integration process. This includes the signing of agreements on the normalization of relations facilitated by the EU, such as the Brussels Agreement in 2013, which aimed at resolving practical issues and improving relations between Kosovo and Serbia.⁸ 3. Challenges in the European Integration Process Despite the progress made, Kosovo faces significant challenges in its European integration process. One of the main challenges is the issue of corruption, which remains a persistent problem in Kosovo and poses a threat to the rule of law, good governance, and economic development. There are also challenges in the areas of public administration, judiciary, and human rights, which require further reforms and improvements to align with EU standards. Another challenge is the socio-economic development of Kosovo, as the country faces high unemployment rates, low economic growth, and regional disparities. Building a sustainable and inclusive economy is crucial for Kosovo's European integration process, and efforts need to be made to improve the business environment, attract investments, and create jobs. Normalization of relations with Serbia remains a challenge, as there are unresolved issues related to border management, recognition, and integration of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo. Achieving a comprehensive and sustainable normalization of relations with Serbia is a key requirement set by the EU for Kosovo's progress toward European integration. 4. Way Forward for Kosovo in its European Integration Process To continue its path towards European integration, Kosovo needs to address the challenges it faces and implement necessary reforms.⁹ This includes strengthening the rule of law, tackling corruption, improving governance, and advancing human rights. Economic reforms and efforts to attract investments and create jobs are also crucial for Kosovo's European integration process. Kosovo should also continue its efforts toward normalizing relations with Serbia, including the implementation of existing agreements and finding solutions to unresolved issues.

This includes maintaining dialogue with Serbia and other regional stakeholders and demonstrating a commitment to peaceful and constructive relations. Furthermore, Kosovo needs to continue aligning its legislation and practices with EU standards and norms, and fully implementing the obligations arising from the SAA. This includes further reforms in areas such as public administration, judiciary, and economic development. International support, particularly from the EU, will continue to play a crucial role in Kosovo's European integration process. Kosovo should actively engage in EU-funded programs and initiatives, and leverage the assistance provided by the EU and other international partners to implement necessary reforms and achieve progress in its European integration journey. • Highlight the significance of European integration for Kosovo in terms of political stability, economic development, and regional cooperation. European integration holds significant importance for Kosovo in various aspects, including political stability, economic development, and regional cooperation. Here's how: 1. Political Stability: Kosovo's aspiration for European integration is closely linked to its efforts to establish political stability and consolidate democratic governance.¹⁰ Through the integration process, Kosovo aims to adopt and implement European norms, standards, and values in areas such as the rule of law, human rights, and democratic governance. This can contribute to the strengthening of political institutions, enhancing the functioning of the judiciary, improving public administration,¹¹ and promoting transparency and accountability in governance. European integration can also help address issues related to minority rights, inter-ethnic relations, and reconciliation, which are critical for long-term political stability in Kosovo and the wider region.

3. Economic Development: European Integration can Offer Significant Opportunities for Economic Development in Kosovo

Access to the EU market, which is one of the largest markets in the world, can provide favorable conditions for trade,

8 European Union External Action. (2013). *Agreement on the Normalisation of Relations between Serbia and Kosovo*. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/22768/agreement-normalisation-relations-between-serbia-and-kosovo-0_en

9 European Union External Action Service. (2021). *Kosovo*. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/13777/Kosovo

10 European Commission. (2019). *Kosovo 2019 Report*. Retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/20190529-kosovo-report.pdf>

11 Ministria e Integritimit Evropian dhe Republikës së Kosovës. (2020). *Procesi i Integritimit Evropian*. Departamenti Amerikan i Shtetit. (2020). *Raporti i të Drejtave të Njeriut në Kosovë 2020*. Marrë nga <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/kosovo/>

investment, and economic growth. The adoption of EU standards and regulations can improve the quality and competitiveness of Kosovo's products and services, enhance the business environment, and attract foreign investment. Moreover, European integration can promote economic reforms, including fiscal consolidation, structural adjustments, and alignment with EU economic policies, which can contribute to sustainable economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction in Kosovo. 3. Regional Cooperation: European integration can also play a crucial role in promoting regional cooperation and stability in the Western Balkans. Kosovo's integration into the EU can foster regional dialogue, cooperation, and reconciliation, which are vital for building trust, resolving disputes, and ensuring peaceful relations among countries in the region. Through participation in regional initiatives and cooperation mechanisms facilitated by the EU, Kosovo can engage in regional projects, joint policies, and initiatives that promote regional stability, security, and prosperity. This can contribute to building confidence among countries in the Western Balkans and contribute to the overall stability and development of the region.¹² In conclusion, European integration holds significant importance for Kosovo in terms of political stability, economic development, and regional cooperation. It can provide a framework for reforms, promote European values and standards, and offer opportunities for Kosovo's progress and prosperity. However, it also poses challenges that need to be addressed, including issues related to the rule of law, governance, economic reforms, and regional cooperation. Nonetheless, Kosovo's commitment to the European integration process and the support of the international community can pave the way for a successful journey toward integration into the EU. The role of the diaspora of Albania and Kosovo people in Integration Eu ¹³The role of the Albanian and Kosovo diaspora in the European integration process is an important and multifaceted aspect that can have significant impacts on both the home country and the host country within the EU. The diaspora, which refers to the communities of Albanians and Kosovars living abroad, can play a crucial role in fostering economic, social, cultural, and political connections between their home country and the EU. One of the key roles of the Albanian and Kosovo diaspora in the European integration process is economic. Diaspora members often send remittances, invest in businesses, and engage in trade and investment activities in their home countries, contributing to economic development and growth. They can also establish networks and partnerships with businesses and organizations within the EU, facilitating trade and investment between their home country and the EU market. The diaspora can also have a social and cultural impact by promoting Albanian and Kosovo culture, language, and traditions in the host countries. They can organize cultural events, festivals, and activities that raise awareness and promote the rich cultural heritage of Albania and Kosovo. This can help preserve and promote the Provide a brief background on Kosovo's history and its aspiration for European integration. Kosovo, a territory located in the Western Balkans, has a complex history marked by ethnic tensions, conflicts, and political challenges. Kosovo was an autonomous province of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, which led to a series of conflicts in the region, including the Kosovo War in 1998-1999. 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Kosovo sees the EU as a key partner in promoting stability, democracy, rule of law, human rights, and economic development, and views European integration as a means to enhance its prospects for a prosperous and peaceful future. However, Kosovo faces various challenges in its European integration process, including the need to address issues such as corruption, organized crime, weak governance, socio-economic disparities, and the normalization of relations with Serbia. Despite these challenges, Kosovo remains committed to its European integration process and continues to work towards meeting the requirements and criteria set by the EU for membership. In summary, Kosovo's history has been marked by conflicts and political challenges, but its aspiration for European integration is driven by the desire to align with EU values and norms, promote stability and democracy, and achieve economic development. Kosovo faces challenges, but remains

¹² Government of Kosovo. (2021). *Kosovo's European Integration*. Retrieved from <https://kryeministri-ks.net/en/eu-integration/>

¹³ Izairi, N., & Durmishi, A. (2018). *Integrimi evropian dhe sfidat për Kosovën*. *International Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, 5(2), 1-10.

¹⁴ Roli i Diasporës Shqiptare në Procesin e Integrimit Evropian të Shqipërisë" nga Muhamed Veliu dhe Aferdita Berisha-Shaqiri, *Revista Shkencore "International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research"*, Viti 2018, Nr. 1.

committed to its European integration process and strives to meet the requirements for EU membership. 2. Progress towards European Integration Kosovo has made significant progress in its journey towards European integration. Since gaining independence in 2008, Kosovo has taken steps to implement reforms and align its legislation with EU standards and norms. These efforts have been supported by the EU through various programs and initiatives aimed at strengthening governance, the rule of law, and democratic institutions in Kosovo. One of the key milestones in Kosovo's European integration process was the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU in 2015, which represents the first contractual relationship between Kosovo and the EU. The SAA aims to promote political, economic, and social reforms in Kosovo and serves as a framework for further cooperation and integration with the EU. Kosovo has also made progress in implementing reforms in areas such as public administration, judiciary, the fight against corruption and organized crime, human rights, and economic development. Efforts have been made to strengthen the rule of law, improve governance, and enhance the business environment. Kosovo has also made efforts to align its legislation with EU *acquis communautaire*, which are the rules and regulations of the EU. In addition, Kosovo has engaged in regional cooperation and has taken steps towards normalizing relations with Serbia, a key requirement set by the EU for its European integration process. This includes the signing of agreements on the normalization of relations facilitated by the EU, such as the Brussels Agreement in 2013, which aimed at resolving practical issues and improving relations between Kosovo and Serbia.¹⁵ 3. Challenges in the European Integration Process Despite the progress made, Kosovo faces significant challenges in its European integration process. One of the main challenges is the issue of corruption, which remains a persistent problem in Kosovo and poses a threat to the rule of law, good governance, and economic development. There are also challenges in the areas of public administration, judiciary, and human rights, which require further reforms and improvements to align with EU standards. Another challenge is the socio-economic development of Kosovo, as the country faces high unemployment rates, low economic growth, and regional disparities.¹⁶ Building a sustainable and inclusive economy is crucial for Kosovo's European integration process, and efforts need to be made to improve the business environment, attract investments, and create jobs.

Normalization of relations with Serbia remains a challenge, as there are unresolved issues related to border management, recognition, and integration of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo.¹⁷ Achieving a comprehensive and sustainable normalization of relations with Serbia is a key requirement set by the EU for Kosovo's progress toward European integration. 4. Way Forward for Kosovo in its European Integration Process To continue its path towards European integration, Kosovo needs to address the challenges it faces and implement necessary reforms. This includes strengthening the rule of law, tackling corruption, improving governance, and advancing human rights. Economic reforms and efforts to attract investments and create jobs are also crucial for Kosovo's European integration process. Kosovo should also continue its efforts toward normalizing relations with Serbia, including the implementation of existing agreements and finding solutions to unresolved issues. This includes maintaining dialogue with Serbia and other regional stakeholders and demonstrating a commitment to peaceful and constructive relations. Furthermore, Kosovo needs to continue aligning its legislation and practices with EU standards and norms, and fully implementing the obligations arising from the SAA. This includes further reforms in areas such as public administration, judiciary, and economic development. International support, particularly from the EU, will continue to play a crucial role in Kosovo's European integration process. Kosovo should actively engage in EU-funded programs and initiatives, and leverage the assistance provided by the EU and other international partners to implement necessary reforms and achieve progress in its European integration journey¹⁸. • Highlight the significance of European integration for Kosovo in terms of political stability, economic development, and regional cooperation.¹⁹ European integration holds significant importance for Kosovo in various aspects, including political stability, economic development, and regional cooperation.

Political Stability: Kosovo's aspiration for European integration is closely linked to its efforts to establish political

15 Roli i Diasporës Shqiptare në Procesin e Integrimit Evropian të Shqipërisë" nga Muhamed Veliu dhe Aferdita Berisha-Shaqiri, *Revista Shkencore "International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research"*, Viti 2018, Nr. 1.

16 *The Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo*, European External Action Service, accessed on April 26, 2023, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/713/stabilisation-and-association-agreement-between-european-union-and-kosovo_en

17 *The Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo*, European External Action Service, accessed on April 26, 2023, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/713/stabilisation-and-association-agreement-between-european-union-and-kosovo_en

18 *Stabilization and Association Agreement*"), European Union External Action Service, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/3045/Stabilisation%20and%20Association%20Agreement%20\(SAA\)%20Kosovo](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/3045/Stabilisation%20and%20Association%20Agreement%20(SAA)%20Kosovo)

19 *Kosovo's European Integration: The Next Steps*, European Western Balkans, 27 maj 2019, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2019/05/27/kosovos-european-integration-the-next-steps/>

stability and consolidate democratic governance. Through the integration process, Kosovo aims to adopt and implement European norms, standards, and values in areas such as the rule of law, human rights, and democratic governance. This can contribute to the strengthening of political institutions, enhancing the functioning of the judiciary, improving public administration, and promoting transparency and accountability in governance. European integration can also help address issues related to minority rights, inter-ethnic relations, and reconciliation, which are critical for long-term political stability in Kosovo and the wider region.²⁰

2. Economic Development: European integration can offer significant opportunities for economic development in Kosovo. Access to the EU market, which is one of the largest markets in the world, can provide favorable conditions for trade, investment, and economic growth. The adoption of EU standards and regulations can improve the quality and competitiveness of Kosovo's products and services, enhance the business environment, and attract foreign investment. Moreover, European integration can promote economic reforms, including fiscal consolidation, structural adjustments, and alignment with EU economic policies, which can contribute to sustainable economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction in Kosovo.

3. Regional Cooperation: European integration can also play a crucial role in promoting regional cooperation and stability in the Western Balkans. Kosovo's integration into the EU can foster regional dialogue, cooperation, and reconciliation, which are vital for building trust, resolving disputes, and ensuring peaceful relations among countries in the region. Through participation in regional initiatives and cooperation mechanisms facilitated by the EU, Kosovo can engage in regional projects, joint policies, and initiatives that promote regional stability, security, and prosperity. This can contribute to building confidence among countries in the Western Balkans and contribute to the overall stability and development of the region. In conclusion, European integration holds significant importance for Kosovo in terms of political stability, economic development, and regional cooperation. It can provide a framework for reforms, promote European values and standards, and offer opportunities for Kosovo's progress and prosperity. However, it also poses challenges that need to be addressed, including issues related to the rule of law, governance, economic reforms, and regional cooperation. Nonetheless, Kosovo's commitment to the European integration process and the support of the international community can pave the way for a successful journey toward integration into the EU.²¹

4. The Role of the Diaspora of Albanian and Kosovo People in European Integration

The role of the Albanian and Kosovo diaspora in the European integration process is an important and multifaceted aspect that can have significant impacts on both the home country and the host country within the EU. The diaspora, which refers to the communities of Albanians and Kosovars living abroad, can play a crucial role in fostering economic, social, cultural, and political connections between their home country and the EU. One of the key roles of the Albanian and Kosovo diaspora in the European integration process is economic. Diaspora members often send remittances, invest in businesses, and engage in trade and investment activities in their home countries, contributing to economic development and growth. They can also establish networks and partnerships with businesses and organizations within the EU, facilitating trade and investment between their home country and the EU market. The diaspora can also have a social and cultural impact by promoting Albanian and Kosovo culture, language, and traditions in the host countries.²² They can organize cultural events, festivals, and activities that raise awareness and promote the rich cultural heritage of Albania and Kosovo. This can help preserve and promote the cultural identity of the diaspora communities and foster greater understanding and appreciation of the Albanian and Kosovo cultures within the EU. Furthermore, the diaspora can also play a political role in the European integration process. Diaspora members can engage in political activism, advocacy, and lobbying efforts in the host countries and within EU institutions to promote the interests and aspirations of their home country. They can raise awareness about the political situation and challenges in Albania and Kosovo, advocate for policies, reforms, and initiatives that support the European integration process, and address issues such as governance, the rule of law, human rights, and democracy. However, it's important to note that the role of the diaspora in

²⁰ Kosovo's European Integration: The Next Steps*, *European Western Balkans*, 27 maj 2019, <https://europeanwesterbalkans.com/2019/05/27/kosovos-european-integration-the-next-steps/>

²¹ *European Commission*. (2021). *Kosovo*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/kosovo_en

²² *European Stability Initiative*. (2020). *Why Kosovo should be part of the EU's new enlargement methodology*. Retrieved from https://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document_ID=236

the European integration process is not without challenges. Diaspora members may face integration challenges in the host countries, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and legal and administrative hurdles. There may also be varying opinions and interests among the diaspora, and not all members may be actively engaged in supporting the European integration process. In conclusion, the role of the Albanian and Kosovo diaspora in the European integration process can be significant and diverse, encompassing economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions. The diaspora can contribute to the development and progress of their home country, foster cultural exchange, and advocate for the European integration process.²³

5. The History of the Contribution of the Diaspora in the Integration of Kosovo

The history of the diaspora's contribution to the integration of Kosovo is significant and noteworthy. Following Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, the Kosovo diaspora has played an important role in supporting the new state in various fields. The diaspora has made contributions in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres, helping to strengthen Kosovo's institutions and promote its development. Politically, members of the diaspora have actively engaged in advocating for Kosovo's recognition and sovereignty on the international stage. Through lobbying efforts, diplomatic initiatives, and public advocacy, they have raised awareness about Kosovo's situation and worked towards gaining recognition and support from other countries. Economically, the diaspora has invested in Kosovo and contributed to its economic growth. Remittances from the diaspora have been a crucial source of income for many families in Kosovo, supporting livelihoods and driving local consumption. Additionally, diaspora entrepreneurs have established businesses, creating job opportunities and stimulating economic development. Socially, the diaspora has played a role in transferring knowledge, skills, and experiences to Kosovo. Many diaspora members have returned to Kosovo to contribute their expertise in various sectors, such as education, healthcare, technology, and governance. Their contributions have helped enhance the quality of services and foster innovation in these fields. Culturally, the diaspora has actively preserved and promoted Kosovar identity, heritage, and traditions. Through cultural events, art exhibitions, music festivals, and other initiatives, the diaspora has showcased Kosovo's rich cultural heritage to the world, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among the diaspora and the local population. Overall, the diaspora's contribution to the integration of Kosovo has been multifaceted and essential.

It has helped strengthen Kosovo's position as an independent state, supported its socio-economic development, and fostered connections between the diaspora and the homeland. The diaspora continues to play an active role in shaping Kosovo's future and maintaining strong ties with the country. The active role of the diaspora in shaping Kosovo's future and maintaining strong ties with the country is widely acknowledged. The diaspora has been instrumental in supporting Kosovo's development through various means, including financial contributions, investment projects, knowledge transfer, cultural exchange, and advocacy efforts. Members of the diaspora often maintain strong emotional and cultural connections to their homeland, which motivates their active engagement in Kosovo's affairs. They contribute to the country's economic growth by investing in businesses, initiating entrepreneurial ventures, and supporting local development projects. Remittances from the diaspora also serve as an important source of income for many families in Kosovo. Moreover, the diaspora plays a vital role in promoting Kosovo's image and interests on the international stage. Diaspora organizations and individuals engage in advocacy campaigns, lobbying efforts, and cultural exchanges to raise awareness about Kosovo's political situation, advocate for its recognition and inclusion in international institutions, and foster partnerships between Kosovo and other countries.²⁴ The active involvement of the diaspora in Kosovo's affairs has helped strengthen ties between the diaspora communities and the homeland.²⁵ Initiatives such as exchange programs, educational scholarships, and cultural events foster a sense of belonging and bridge the gap between the diaspora and Kosovo. This connection is crucial for the long-term development and integration of Kosovo as it benefits from the expertise, resources, and networks of its diaspora. While specific references can vary depending on the aspect of diaspora involvement you are interested in, you can explore academic literature, reports from international organizations, news articles, and official government publications to gather more comprehensive information on the topic.

23 *Diaspora në rrugën e integritit evropian të Ballkanit Perëndimor*, një raport nga Fondacioni Konrad Adenauer dhe European Policy Centre (2019)

25 King, R., & Vullnetari, J. (Eds.). (2018). *Albanian Diaspora in the EU and the US: A Comparative Perspective*. Springer

6. Analyze the Impact of These Challenges on Kosovo's Progress Toward European Integration

One major challenge is the issue of unresolved political conflicts and tensions in the region. Kosovo's status as an independent state is not recognized by all countries, including some EU member states. This political challenge can hinder Kosovo's progress towards EU integration, as it may affect the normalization of relations with neighboring countries and limit Kosovo's ability to engage in regional cooperation initiatives. Another challenge is the weak economy and high levels of unemployment in Kosovo.²⁶ Limited economic development, low GDP per capita, and high poverty rates can hinder the country's ability to meet EU standards and requirements for accession. Economic reforms, including improving the business environment, addressing corruption, and enhancing competitiveness, are crucial for Kosovo's progress toward European integration. Social challenges, such as issues related to the rule of law, human rights, and minority rights, also play a significant role in Kosovo's European integration process. Ensuring the independence and efficiency of the judiciary, addressing corruption, strengthening democratic institutions, and promoting inter-ethnic reconciliation and cooperation are critical for Kosovo's progress toward EU integration²⁷. Institutional challenges, including building functional and efficient state institutions, implementing EU-related reforms, and aligning with EU standards and *acquis communautaire*, are also crucial for Kosovo's progress towards European integration. Strengthening public administration, enhancing administrative capacity, and improving governance are essential for Kosovo's ability to meet the requirements for EU accession. Furthermore, Kosovo's progress towards European integration can also be impacted by external factors such as changes in the EU's accession process and priorities, as well as geopolitical dynamics in the region. In conclusion, the impact of these challenges on Kosovo's progress toward European integration is significant and multi-faceted. Addressing these challenges requires sustained efforts by Kosovo's institutions, political leaders, civil society, and other stakeholders, as well as support from the European Union and the international community. Overcoming these challenges and making progress in areas such as political normalization, economic development, social reforms, and institutional strengthening is essential for Kosovo's successful integration into the European Union.

- Provide a brief background on Kosovo's history and its aspiration for European integration. Kosovo is a landlocked country in the Western Balkans region of Europe. It has a complex history marked by political, social, and ethnic tensions. Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in 2008, which was recognized by the majority of European Union (EU) member states, though not by all. Kosovo has aspired to join the European Union as a full member state, seeing it as an opportunity for political stability, economic development, and integration into the European community. European Union integration has been a key priority for Kosovo's government and a significant part of its foreign policy agenda. Kosovo's aspiration for European Union integration is based on the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA)²⁸, which was signed with the European Union in 2015, and is considered a first step towards full EU membership. Kosovo has made progress in various areas, including democratic governance, rule of law, and economic reforms, to align with EU standards and requirements. It has implemented several reforms in areas such as public administration, judiciary, and fundamental rights. Kosovo has also participated in regional initiatives and cooperated with European Union institutions and member states in the process of European integration.

7. Kosovo Faces Numerous Challenges on its Path Toward EU Integration.

These challenges include political and institutional stability, the rule of law, the fight against corruption, economic development, minority rights, and the normalization of relations with Serbia. The process of EU integration requires comprehensive reforms and capacity-building in various sectors, and Kosovo has encountered difficulties in fully meeting the criteria and conditions set by the EU. Here are some key steps that Kosovo can take to continue its path towards European integration:

1. **Strengthening the Rule of Law:** Kosovo needs to continue its efforts in reforming its judiciary, improving the functioning of its legal system, and enhancing its law enforcement capabilities.

This includes addressing issues such as corruption, organized crime, and human rights violations.

2. **Economic Reforms:** Kosovo should focus on implementing economic reforms, promoting private sector development, improving the business environment, and enhancing competitiveness. This includes strengthening the financial sector, attracting foreign investment, and creating favorable conditions for economic growth and job creation.

3. **Alignment with EU *Acquis*:** Kosovo needs to continue aligning its legal, institutional, and administrative framework with the EU *acquis*, which are the laws and regulations of the EU. This includes adopting and implementing

27 "The Role of Diaspora Investment in the Economic Development of Kosovo" Author: Gentiana Begolli Pustina

28 Title: "Diaspora Engagement in Promoting State Interests: The Case of Kosovo" Author: Jaka Primorac

EU standards in areas such as justice, security, human rights, environment, and consumer protection.

4. **Strengthening Democratic Governance:** Kosovo should continue to strengthen its democratic governance, including promoting political pluralism, enhancing public administration and civil society, and improving transparency and accountability in government institutions. This includes resolving outstanding issues with neighboring countries, fostering good neighborly relations, and engaging in regional cooperation mechanisms.

5. **Investing in Education and Human Capital:** Kosovo should prioritize education and human capital development, including investing in quality education, vocational training, and skills development. This will help to build a skilled workforce that can contribute to Kosovo's economic growth and integration with the European Union.

6. **Building Public Support:** Kosovo needs to continue building public support for European Union integration by promoting awareness, understanding, and engagement among its citizens. This includes building institutional capacity, improving coordination among government agencies, and enhancing public administration efficiency and effectiveness.

7. **Engaging in Dialogue with the European Union:** Kosovo should actively engage in dialogue with the EU, including participating in EU-led negotiations and meetings, responding to European Union recommendations and requirements, and demonstrating its commitment to European values and principles.

8. **Monitoring and Reporting Progress:** Kosovo needs to establish robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track its progress in the European integration process, including regular reporting on the implementation of reforms, achievements, and challenges. By taking these steps, Kosovo can continue its journey towards European integration, overcome challenges, and make progress towards becoming a fully-fledged member of the European Union. Discuss the necessary steps for Kosovo to continue its path towards European integration. Here are some necessary steps that Kosovo can take to continue its journey towards

European integration:

1. **Continue with Reforms:** Kosovo needs to continue implementing comprehensive reforms in various areas, including the rule of law, judiciary, public administration, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. This includes addressing issues such as corruption, and organized crime, and ensuring the independence and efficiency of its judiciary.

2. **Strengthen Democratic Governance:** Kosovo should further strengthen its democratic governance, including promoting political pluralism, enhancing transparency and accountability in government institutions, and promoting civil society engagement. This includes strengthening democratic institutions, promoting inclusive governance, and safeguarding democratic principles and practices.

3. **Align with European Union Acquis:** Kosovo should continue aligning its legal, institutional, and administrative framework with the European Union acquis. This includes adopting and implementing European Union standards, regulations, and policies in various areas, such as the environment, consumer protection, agriculture, and transport.

4. **Enhance Economic Reforms:** Kosovo needs to focus on implementing economic reforms that promote sustainable economic growth, private sector development, and job creation. This includes improving the business environment, enhancing the competitiveness of the economy, and promoting investment and trade.

5. **Build Human Capital:** Kosovo should invest in education and human capital development, including improving the quality of education, vocational training, and skills development. This includes promoting lifelong learning, addressing youth unemployment, and building a skilled workforce that can contribute to Kosovo's economic development and integration with the EU. This includes conducting outreach campaigns, promoting dialogue, and addressing concerns and misconceptions about the EU integration process among the general public.

6. **Dialogue and Cooperation with the EU:** Kosovo should continue engaging in dialogue and cooperation with the EU, responding to EU recommendations and requirements, and demonstrating its commitment to European values and principles. This includes participating in EU-led negotiations and meetings, aligning with EU policies, meeting the accession criteria and benchmarks, regularly reporting on the implementation of reforms, achievements, and challenges, and addressing the identified gaps and shortcomings. • Highlight the significance of European integration for Kosovo in terms of political stability, economic development, and regional cooperation. European integration holds significant importance for Kosovo in various aspects, including political stability, economic development, and regional cooperation. Here's how: 1. **Political Stability:** Kosovo's aspiration for European integration is closely linked to its efforts to establish political stability and consolidate democratic governance. Through the integration process, Kosovo aims to adopt and implement European norms, standards, and values in areas such as the rule of law, human rights, and democratic governance. This can contribute to strengthening political institutions, enhancing the functioning of the judiciary, improving public administration, and promoting transparency and accountability in governance.

European integration can also help address issues related to minority rights, inter-ethnic relations, and reconciliation, which are critical for long-term political stability in Kosovo and the wider region.

1. Economic Development: European integration can offer significant opportunities for economic development in Kosovo. Access to the European Union market, which is the largest market in the world, can provide favorable conditions for trade, investment, and economic growth. Adoption of European Union standards and regulations can improve the quality and competitiveness of Kosovo's products and services, enhance the business environment, and attract foreign investment. Moreover, European integration can promote economic reforms, including fiscal consolidation, structural adjustments, and alignment with European Union economic policies, which can contribute to sustainable economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction in Kosovo.

2.. Regional Cooperation: European integration can also play a crucial role in promoting regional cooperation and stability in the Western Balkans. Kosovo's integration into the European Union can foster regional dialogue, cooperation, and reconciliation, which are vital for building trust, resolving disputes, and ensuring peaceful relations among countries in the region. Through participation in regional initiatives and cooperation mechanisms facilitated by the European Union, Kosovo can engage in regional projects, joint policies, and initiatives that promote regional stability, security, and prosperity.

This can contribute to building confidence among countries in the Western Balkans and contribute to the overall stability and development of the region. In conclusion, European integration holds significant importance for Kosovo in terms of political stability, economic development, and regional cooperation. It can provide a framework for reforms, promote European values and standards, and offer opportunities for Kosovo's progress and prosperity. However, it also poses challenges that need to be addressed, including issues related to the rule of law, governance, economic reforms, and regional cooperation. Nonetheless, Kosovo's commitment to the European integration process and the support of the international community can pave the way for a successful journey toward integration into the EU.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, Kosovo's path toward European integration requires a comprehensive and sustained effort toward meeting the criteria and requirements set by the European Union. This includes implementing reforms in various areas such as the rule of law, governance, human rights, economy, and public administration, as well as fostering good relations with neighboring countries and promoting regional cooperation. Additionally, Kosovo needs to demonstrate its commitment to EU values, norms, and standards, as well as align its legislation with the European Union *acquis communautaire*. Continuous engagement with EU institutions, effective implementation of reforms, and progress in addressing key challenges will be essential for Kosovo to advance on its path toward European integration. It is important to refer to official and reputable sources for the most up-to-date and accurate information on Kosovo's European integration process. Continued efforts in strengthening the rule of law, addressing corruption, promoting economic development, and improving the overall governance and administrative capacity will be crucial for Kosovo to make progress toward European integration. Additionally, fostering good relations with neighboring countries and actively participating in regional initiatives will contribute to Kosovo's integration into the European community. Furthermore, engaging in dialogue and normalization of relations with Serbia, as well as implementing agreements reached through the EU-facilitated dialogue, will be important for Kosovo's European integration process. Resolving outstanding bilateral issues, such as border disputes and minority rights, will also demonstrate Kosovo's commitment to regional stability and cooperation. In addition to domestic reforms, Kosovo needs to continue aligning its legislation and standards with the European Union *acquis communautaire*. This includes adopting and implementing EU-related laws and regulations, strengthening institutions, and building a robust framework for monitoring and reporting progress. Kosovo's path toward European integration will require sustained political will, determination, and cooperation among all stakeholders, including the government, civil society, and the public. Regular monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on progress, as well as effective communication and coordination with EU institutions, will be essential in navigating the complex process of European integration. It is important to note that the European integration process is subject to change, and specific requirements and steps may evolve. Therefore, refer to official and reputable sources for the most up-to-date and accurate information on Kosovo's European integration journey.

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