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## **Promoting Political Change and Economic Revitalization in the Western Balkans: The Role of the European Union**

### **Abstract**

Moving toward joining the European Union (EU) is almost universally recognized by Western governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations as the only viable strategy for bringing stability, democracy and economic revitalization to the Western Balkans. This article has three parts. First, it explores the politics of enlargement in the EU today, following the failure of the EU constitution and the widespread feeling of 'enlargement fatigue.' Second, it explains why the dynamics of qualifying for EU membership make EU leverage so powerful in comparison to the influence of other international actors. Third, it argues that the EU needs to adjust its leverage in four distinct ways in order to make it work in the much more difficult domestic conditions of most Western Balkan states.