

Introduction

It is my pleasure and honor to write this first introduction for the first issue of the newly established *Western Balkans Policy Review*, a scholarly journal dedicated to enriching and disseminating academic work related to the many issues that the region of Western Balkans in general and its countries in particular face.

As chair of this year's international conference on *Western Balkans: An Opportunity or a Challenge for the Future of the EU*, organized by the Kosovo Public Policy Center (KPPC) in cooperation with the American University in Kosovo Research Center and Victory University College, I have been impressed with the level of interest and the quality of papers presented. As guest editor of this volume, I have been privileged to work with so many scholars from many countries during the peer-review and editing process. I must say that I have enjoyed this experience thoroughly and that I have learned a lot from it. And, I am quite confident that the readers of this journal will also learn a lot from its contents.

The current volume (which includes two issues of the WBP Review) consists primarily of articles that were presented at this year's Western Balkans and EU conference that was held in Prishtina, Kosovo in June 2010. The volume includes articles that look at the role of the EU in shaping the future of the Western Balkans, case studies of particular Western Balkans country experiences with EU accession programs, the benefits, advantages and disadvantages of joining the EU, etc. Articles draw from a variety of perspectives in their respective analyses – political, economic, demographic, and social.

Finally, I would like to thank all of our contributors, special contributors, as well as our donors (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung – Prishtina, Kosovo Foundation for Open Society) and sponsors (ProCredit Bank, Hotel Victory) that helped our conference and the publication of the first volume of this journal. I would like to also thank our editorial board as well as student assistants of Victory University College and American University in Kosovo who helped with logistics during the conference. Special thanks go to the staff and fellows of the Kosovo Public Policy Center for their tireless work in making both the conference and this journal a reality.

Faton (Tony) Bislimi
PhD Candidate in Political Science
Doctoral Fellow, Centre for Foreign Policy Studies and EU Centre of Excellence
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
October 2010