

# Abstract

This thesis set out to compare the discourse on possible future European Union enlargement to the Western Balkans in the national parliaments of Estonia, Slovenia, Austria, and Ireland. There is a lack of literature present on arguments for Western Balkan enlargement specifically and especially arguments on member state level. Thus, stenographic minutes were analyzed to fill this research gap. Arguments were divided into five categories: economic, security, containment of third actor influence, democracy promotion and moral. The results showed that the status quo strongly favors enlargement with only two out of the 92 statements analyzed opposing enlargement. Security arguments were most prevalent in all of the parliaments under study with the highest frequency of occurrence in the debates of Austrian and Slovenian parliaments. Interestingly, Irish discourse strongly favored moral arguments whilst Austrian discourse is focused on economic and security arguments. For Slovenia and Estonia, a surprisingly small number of statements were present. For Austria, Slovenia and Ireland, there was a significant increase in the salience of the Western Balkan enlargement topic from 2018 onwards.