

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of International Studies

PROTOCOL ON DIPLOMA THESIS ASSESSMENT
(Supervisor)

Name of the student: Ingriin Rääk

Title: Arguments used in parliamentary debates on Western Balkan European integration in EU member states

Supervisor: Tomáš Weiss

1. TOPIC AND OBJECTIVE (short information on the thesis, research objective):

Ingriin Rääk's thesis focuses on selected national parliamentary debates about accession of Western Balkan countries to the EU. It aims at contributing to the existing debate on EU enlargement by analysing how Western Balkan enlargement is framed. The objective is relatively descriptive. While the thesis then engages in some analytical work that has got the potential to contribute to the debate beyond mere description, it fails to do so in a structured manner.

2. CONTENT (complexity, original approach, argument, structure, theoretical and methodological backing, work with sources, appropriateness of annexes etc.):

The thesis builds on relevant academic debate, provides interesting and structured data collection, and has got the potential to make an interesting contribution. The problem is that as it stands, it is not structured in a helpful manner and the argument is not clear enough. The thesis could have aimed for more than just "add novel data to pre-existing literature" (p. 18), and in fact, it partially does more. However, the author fails to draw what could have been drawn from the comparison among the selected cases.

It is unclear why some part of the text are present. This is true particularly for the history of EU enlargement, which is written very well, but does not connect smoothly to the research objectives and aims – does the reader really need to read all the history to be interested and to understand the research question and the answer? I do not really think so.

Methodologically, there is no explanation of the hypotheses. Are they derived from any theory? Or from the existing literature? They are altogether quite plausible, but more explanation is needed for the reader to understand how they have been formulated. The work with sources is appropriate and the annex is very helpful to understand the author's approach.

3. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE (quality of language, citation style, graphics, formal aspects etc.):

The language of the thesis is appropriate, citation style is without major problems. The structure of the thesis is slightly confusing. The introduction is somewhat limited, and items that should have been introduced to the reader right at the beginning are scattered throughout the text, such as the choice of case studies on p. 17 and the structure of the whole thesis on p. 18. As a result, the reader keeps reading interesting facts but struggles to see the bigger picture.

4. STATEMENT ON THE ORIGINALITY OF THE THESIS

The thesis was checked by the Turnitin anti-plagiarism software and is an original piece of work with all quotes correctly cited.

5. SHORT COMMENTS BY THE REVIEWER (overall impression, strengths and weaknesses, originality of ideas, achievement of the research objective etc.):

The overall impression from the thesis is one of a missed opportunity. The topic is interesting and relevant, the author put the time into reading a lot of relevant literature, and she managed to collect interesting data. But she did not manage to translate all this work into a coherent thesis where all the constitutive elements, the puzzle, the theory, the method and the data, match with each other to make a persuasive point.

6. COOPERATION WITH THE SUPERVISOR (communication with the supervisor, ability to reflect comments, shift from the original intention, etc.)

Ingriin Rääk did consult her work, albeit with long periods of time between our meetings. For a long time, she struggled with choosing the right focus of the research, but managed to identify a good topic and relevant questions. However, she finished the text very late, and I couldn't comment on the draft. Had she managed to finish the first draft earlier, I could have commented on some of the most obvious and correctable problems.

7. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED DURING THE DEFENCE:

1. What are the main findings that can be drawn from the comparison of the four countries?
2. What would you identify as the key takeaways from your text that advance our theoretical understanding of the EU enlargement policy and the debate surrounding it beyond the individual cases?

8. (NON-)RECOMMENDATION AND SUGGESTED GRADE:

I recommend the thesis for defence and suggest the grade **D**.

Date: 18 January 2023

Signature: