

# Europeanisation in Albania

*an exploration into gender meanings and norms*

A thesis in partial fulfilment for a degree of Masters of European Union Studies

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## Abstract

The European Union (EU) considers itself one of the most prominent normative powers in the world, promoting human rights and a rules-based order among other factors. Europeanisation is a form of the EU's normative power, particularly in the context of EU official candidate countries. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of Europeanisation has been subject to criticism, especially for the implementation of non-tangible norms such as democracy and gender equality.

Using the case study of gender equality and gender meanings in the official EU candidate country of Albania, this thesis will investigate the potential ability of the European Union, through Europeanisation, to sustainably implement non-tangible norms. This thesis has taken a bottom-up approach to examine how gender norms have changed in Albania since becoming an EU candidate country, if at all. This could give an indication as to whether the EU has been able to make sufficient and sustainable change in the area of gender norms. Supplementary analysis also provides insights into the EU's top-down approach to examine how the EU communicates its gender equality priorities in Albania. This thesis therefore aims to answer whether the process of Europeanisation contributes to the success or failure of gender equality in Albania

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## 1. Introduction and context

“... the EU [is] increasingly exercising normative power as it seeks to redefine international norms in its own image.” (Manners, 2002, p. 252)

### 1.1 Introduction

The values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights are integral to the identity of the European Union (EU), as enshrined in its treaties, actions, and rhetoric (Directorate-General for Communication, n.d). Without the traditional confines of the Westphalian notion of the nation-state, it has been argued that the European Union (EU) has developed and nurtured normative power and subsequently become one of the most formidable normative powers in the world (Bojinović Fenko & Urlić, 2015; Manners, 2002). The winner of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize for its work on peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights, its own power and influence within its Member States is well evidenced (Directorate-General for Communication, n.d). It is within the European Union’s edict to promote its values (or norms) with the wider world (Directorate-General for Communication, n.d). However, the European Union’s impact outside its Union is debatable with many scholars stating that the European Union is only able to elicit unsustainable, superficial, and short-lived change (Börzel & Risse, 2012a; Chaban et al., 2015; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2020). This is especially regarding less tangible norms, such as gender equality.

Using the case study of gender equality<sup>1</sup> and gender meanings in the official EU candidate country of Albania, this thesis will investigate the ability of the European Union, through Europeanisation, to sustainably implement non-tangible norms. The research question for this thesis is:

*Does Europeanisation contribute to the success or failure of gender equality in Albania?*

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<sup>1</sup> The reasons for investigating this thesis topic are numerous and varied and being interested in many topics has meant that I have been unable to adequately address all of them in the scope of this thesis. Due to my academic background and personal education, I understand that gender equality is far more nuanced than simply men and women being equal and felt that it was vital to include genders that have been effectively side-lined in many gender equality analyses. There is also a focus on gender-based violence in this thesis which has been influenced by my time as an active advocate against sexual violence.

To aid this thesis's attempt to answer this question, two sub-questions have been formed. They are:

1. *What are the historical, cultural, and political factors that contribute to the Albanian understandings of gender?*
2. *Has the process of Europeanisation changed these understandings of gender?*

### Important definitions and terminology

Integral to this thesis are the definitions of gender and norms. Understanding what terminology, such as official candidate country and conservatism, means is also important for this thesis. Therefore, before introducing the topic under consideration, some of the key terms discussed are out defined below.

Gender is complex and intertwined with experiences, culture, power, and social meanings. It is supported and upheld by those in power, shaped and distributed by those who are influential and supported by those who feel the need to conform to society's expectations. With that in mind, for the purpose of this thesis, gender will be defined as the socially constructed meanings, norms, roles, and behaviours associated with masculinity and femininity. This thesis follows the sociological understanding that gender is not innate or natural, and that all gender is learnt and conformed to in order to perform appropriate behaviours based on what society deems is feminine and masculine (Lindsey, 2011, p. 4). Additionally, it acknowledges and embraces that "...as a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time" (World Health Organization, 2021). This is to say that gender is not static, it is fluid, malleable and likely to change as it travels through the world and through time. Gender in this thesis is also decoupled from biological sex. Although gender is often assigned along the lines of biological sex, it does not determine gender; they can be related to each other, but they are not the same. In essence, it is difficult to untangle gender from other social phenomenon it intercepts and intertwines with, and it cannot be examined without considering the aspects that enable it to exist.

For this thesis, the sociological understanding of norms is accepted and used. Norms are defined as "nonrandom patterns of behaviour common in one and another social situation" (Dandaneau, 2015). These patterns of behaviour are reinforced and persuasive due to positive and negative reinforcement that is given by others. It is also important to note that norms are entirely fabricated by society- there is no rhyme or reason as to why certain norms exist and moreover there is no natural basis of norms. This is especially important to consider in regard to norms around gender which are often justified by biological differences.

“Official candidate country” or simply “candidate country” is the term given to nations that are in the process of joining the European Union and have had their formal application for membership accepted by the Council of the European Union (Directorate-General for Communication, n.d.). The acceptance of a nation’s application to the EU does not mean that they are a part of the EU, but rather that they can begin the process of accession negotiations (Directorate-General for Communication, n.d.).

“Conservatism” or “conservative” is used throughout this thesis. Conservatism as a political philosophy and practice “aspires to the preservation of what is thought to be the best in established society, and opposes radical change” (Allison, 2018). Conservatism is a term which has a long and myriad history, with the word “conservative” changing nuances and being used for a variety of politics more contemporarily. For example, Margaret Thatcher is often labelled a conservative, but more recently this label has also been applied by political commentators to former US president Donald Trump (Hopkins & Noel, 2021). In this thesis, “conservatism” is used in the context of being opposed to radical change and a desire to preserve systems that have worked. Consequently, “conservative” in this thesis describes someone who values traditional norms and power structures such as men being in power.

### Thesis structure

The rest of this introductory chapter will outline the structure of the forthcoming chapters, before introducing a key introductory focus: context. The context section of this chapter will provide important background information on the relationships between the European Union (EU) and gender equality and the EU and Albania. Lastly, it will give an overview of Albania. Specifically, it will indicate the current state of gender equality in Albania. The context is integral to understanding the thesis overall and it should provide the reader with enough background to understand the context.

The second chapter will consist of the literature review, examining existing literature on political, cultural, and historical gender meanings and norms in Albania, and on the processes of Europeanisation. It will also address and critique the gaps present in the existing literature. The literature review will add another layer of context to the thesis. While originally, it had been intended to use both Europeanisation theory and the related diffusion theory as the theoretical framing of this thesis, it was elected to only use the former. This is for both clarity and because Europeanisation theory is arguably more renowned.

The third chapter introduces both the theory employed in this thesis as well as the method employed. Europeanisation theory is included in the method chapter because it dictates the framing of which this research was done in and therefore is important to include within the method chapter. The first section delves into the academic theory that will provide the independent variable for this thesis which



is gender norm. It will build on what is outlined in the literature review to provide clarity about what Europeanisation is and how it works in regard to official candidate countries. The method section will explain the method used for the research as well as measures to address validity such as using reputable sources of data from the GESIS-Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences. Importance and novelty will then be addressed and explained why this thesis and research is important in a wider context. Generally, the approach this thesis is taking of using gender norms to measure progress towards gender equality is novel; most assessments of gender equality progress tend to focus on tangible changes such as new laws. However, such measures can be a fallacy because they can fail to account for the societal norms which underpin the effectiveness of such institutions. Delimitations and the scope of this research will then be discussed and the specific reason why the dependent variable of 'gender norms' has been selected will be further expanded on.

The analysis and key findings will then be discussed in the fourth chapter, followed by the discussion. These chapters will aim to ascertain if gender meanings and norms have changed since Europeanisation began compared to before the EU accession process began for Albania. To ascertain if any changes have occurred, quantitative analysis of the 2017 European Values survey from the GESIS-Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences will be used. Supplementary qualitative research on the 2011-2021 Albania Progress Reports by the EU on the topic of Albanian compliance to accession conditionality is also analysed in order to understand which norms and focuses the EU has in its accession communications with Albania. Based on the results of the analysis, it will be discussed whether Europeanisation is powerful enough to change something as non-tangible, yet enduringly intertwined as gender meanings and norms into Albanian society. The implications of these findings on, as well as the lack of data in relation to, other gender identities in both Albania and more broadly Europe will also be discussed. Section 4.7- the findings and discussion section- will also draw on other chapters that have discussed some of the content relating to the sub questions in order to provide a holistic approach and a "big picture" lens. Implications of the results will also be applied to Europeanisation and gender equality in general, as well as to the salience of the European Union's 'soft power'.

Finally, the conclusions will summarise the thesis and highlight the main takeaways and discussion points that the research in this thesis has found; Europeanisation has not made any noticeable changes to gender norms in Albania since 2009 when Albania made an official application for EU membership. However, it is also acknowledged that due to the short-term nature of Albania's official candidacy to the EU, that it may be too soon to see changes. It will also discuss the direction of future research, something that is particularly important for a number of reasons, including Albania's progress in the accession process, the European Union's commitment to gender equality, and the lack of research in the specific nexus and context that this thesis exists in.

## 1.2 Context

The following section provides a contextual background to the topic of the relationships between the EU, Albania, and gender equality. Understanding the relationship between the EU and Albania, between the EU and gender equality and giving an overview of the status of gender equality is vital to understanding the reality in which the research question exists. In other words, the significance and interpretation of the results garnered from the research question will be meaningless if the context is not first established.

### History of the EU

The EU is unique and sui generis institution arisen from the need to see peace on the European continent. As it stands, there is no other institution quite like the EU; the competencies, complexities and power of the EU far exceeds other supranational institutions like the United Nations. To understand how the EU interacts with potential new members and the world in general, a brief history of the EU is required. This thesis will only brush on important treaties in terms of European integration and what it means for joining the EU. A comprehensive history of the EU and what it is trying to achieve is a thesis in and of itself, so it will not be addressed here. Important treaties that will be discussed and explained here include the European Coal and Steel Community, the Treaties of Rome, the Single European Act, and the Maastricht Treaty. These treaties are important as they established or helped establish the EU's norms and values or gave the EU scope to employ them.

The origins of the European Union arose in the wake of two world wars which ravaged the European continent. On 9 May 1950, five years to the day that World War II ended, French foreign minister Robert Schuman proposed the integration of Western European coal and steel industries (Directorate-General for Communication, 2020). It was Schuman's intention that if the two vital components in weapon manufacture- coal and steel- were under common management, then war in Western Europe would be impossible. On 18 April 1951 Schuman's intention became realised when the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was established with Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy being members of said community (Directorate-General for Communication, 2020).

On the coattails of success in establishing the ECSC, the founding nations elected to further their cooperation with one another by creating the Treaties of Rome on 25 March 1957. The two treaties established the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) which was a step further along the continuum of European integration and was signed by the six original nations that were a part of the ECSC (Directorate-General for Communication, 2020).

EURATOM, in taking inspiration of the ECSC, dealt with ensuring nuclear materials were not used for war, as well as promoting safety standards in the nuclear industry and advocating for and supporting nuclear research (European Parliament, n.d). The creation of the EEC was the first step towards what is recognised as the EU today. The intention of the EEC was to further peace, integration and economic growth through trade and the creation of a common market which would allow the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people (EUR-Lex, 2017). The Treaty of Rome for the EEC was also the first time conditionalities and norms were explicitly addressed (EUR-Lex, 2017). Thus, it is the first time that the EU became akin to what this author likens to an exclusive club; there is criteria to join and rules to uphold if you want to keep your membership or if you want to avoid becoming a social pariah<sup>2</sup>.

The Single European Act was adopted on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1986 and broadened the scope the of European integration (EUR-Lex, 2018a). The aim of the Single European Act was to expand policy competencies of the EU by setting up a common foreign and security policy, complete the internal common market which would allow complete freedom of movement within the borders of the common market, as well as environmental policy (EUR-Lex, 2018a). The Single European Act also expanded the powers of various arms of the EU including the European Commission, the European council, and the European Parliament(EUR-Lex, 2018a). This treaty also introduced the concept of subsidiarity; the principle of “only taking measures at a European level where they are more effective than at the level of an individual country” (EUR-Lex, 2018a). The changes brought about by the Single European Act meant that the European Union was taking on more of its own competencies and was a step further towards the supranational institution it is known as today rather than merely a comprehensive economic bloc whose focus was trade and economics. According to the European Union, the changes brought about by the Single European Act “opened the way to further political integration and economic and monetary union that would be enshrined in the Treaty on European Union” (EUR-Lex, 2018a).

The Treaty on European Union, also known as the Maastricht Treaty, was perhaps the most integral to the creation of what the European Union is today. The Treaty on European Union (TEU) was signed on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 1992 and entered into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1992 (EUR-Lex, 2018b). It created the three pillars of the European Union: European communities; Common foreign and security policy; and Cooperation on justice and home affairs (EUR-Lex, 2018b). In essence, these three pillars gave a political dimension that had previously not existed; the EU now has competencies to create

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<sup>2</sup> Although the powers and actions of the EU are restricted by the laws they have set up themselves to deal with transgressions of EU law and norms, the court of public opinion can be strong and condemning enough on its own to do some considerable damage. For example, the common image of Poland and Hungary at the time of writing are not particularly favorable.

democracy, to protect its external borders, and to act in international political affairs as one unit (EUR-Lex, 2018b). These new pillars of the evolving European Union now meant that countries wishing to join had more conditionalities to meet to join. The TEU states that the EU has responsibilities to protect the EU's common values, interest and independence as well consolidating democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (EUR-Lex, 2018b). This effectively means that if a nation wanting to join the EU could not show sufficient evidence of doing that through law changes and other initiatives, it was unlikely that they could join the EU.

Today, the European Union is known for its efforts towards peace and European integration, earning a Nobel peace prize in 2012 (The Nobel Prize, 2012). The steps to become a member of the EU are set out and clear. Nations wishing to join the Union must make changes to become an official candidate for membership, this is the first step to being a part of the EU (European Commission, n.d-a). The second step is known as formal membership negotiations or accession negotiations. This is the stage that Albania is currently in. The accession negotiations are a "process that involves the adoption of established EU law, preparations to be in a position to properly apply and enforce it and implementations of judicial, administrative, economic and other reforms necessary for the country to meet the conditions for joining, known as accession criteria" (European Commission, n.d-a). These changes must be robust and bona fide and once these changes have been made to a satisfactory level for both the EU and the candidate country, then the nation joins the EU (European Commission, n.d-a).

## History of Albania

### *Prior to 1946*

Due to Albania's strategic position, it has been subject to invasions and assimilations for centuries prior to 1946 (Cara & Margjeka, 2015). Despite this, Albanians have been able to maintain the unique sense of being Albanian. This is largely thanks to the role of traditional canons<sup>3</sup> in Albania. Cara and Margjeka state that canons were often "an alternative or supplementary body of law..." to other laws in place (Cara & Margjeka, 2015, p. 178).

The most relevant canon to Albanian society is the Kanun of Leke Dukagjini (Mangalakova, 2004) which originated in the mountainous region of Northern Albania and parts of Kosovo (Cara & Margjeka, 2015). Due to the area's inaccessibility, foreign invaders were unable to effectively control the region, leaving the Kanun of Leke Dukagjini to be the de facto legal system for the tribes in the area (Cara & Margjeka, 2015).

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<sup>3</sup> laws; used interchangeably with Kanun

Consequently, the Kanun became a deeply entrenched part of life for the Albanians that lived there. Furthermore, Sadiku argues that the canon had such importance in the Northern regions that it was consistently placed above any other influence, including Islam, Catholicism, and even the Communist regime (2014). The Kanun consisted of twelve sections with family and marriage being the utmost important aspect overall (Cara & Margjeka, 2015). The Kanun is patriarchal and dictates that men must lead families with the eldest man acting as patriarch (Cara & Margjeka, 2015). Family units tended to be extended with sons and their families staying with the sons' parents, as well as any unmarried daughters (Cara & Margjeka, 2015). Extended families were then grouped together to form clans, where hereditary chiefs held supreme power, cementing the role of men as leaders in the Kanun. The patriarchal nature of the Kanun is such that "children... were raised with the understanding that father's word was law within the family" (Cara & Margjeka, 2015, p. 179).

Additionally, women were always considered outsiders due to the practice of wives being sought outside the clans (Cara & Margjeka, 2015). This meant that by default they were "other" as they were not a part of their husband's clan until marriage. Despite the Kanun of Leke Dukagjini being the main canon, several other canons existed that ruled different areas of Albania (Mangalakova, 2004).

One other notable canon is the Kanun of Laberia, which was in effect in Southern Albania. This canon is notable for its explicit control and violence over women. With Hoxha (2019) stating that article 291 of the canon addresses women's lack of social freedoms and political rights. It is also notable for normalising violence against women; "In the cases of disrespect of submission to the husband, violence was foreseen..." (Hoxha, 2019, p. 157). Despite the non-bona fide natures of these "laws", it can be understood that the canons played an integral part of the governing norms and laws in pre-communist times. Certainly, the canons impinged on the rights of women with men having control over the lives of women.

### *The communist era (1946-1990)*

The Albanian communist era was characterised by the introduction of new rights for women, particularly economic rights. Other rights that were introduced in the communist period include political rights and education rights. Economic rights, particularly the right to work for women, were prioritised under the communist regime. This follows a tenet of Marxism theorized by Engel that women's emancipation would fall into place once women had no restrictions on the being able to work (Vullnetari & King, 2016). As discussed in the Chapter 2, section 2.2 this has been characterised by scholars as an insincere attempt at gender equality due to insufficient measures to support the female workforce (Spehar, 2012).

The communist era also ushered political representation for women in the form of minimum quotas for political parties. This enables women to gain a seat at the table so to speak and by 1988 33% of political party lists were women (Abrahams, 1996). Much akin to economic rights, political rights given under the communist regime have been criticised as superficial (Brunnbauer, 2000). This is explained in further detail in Chapter 2, section 2.2.

Education rights is arguably one of the most important changes undertaken by the communist regime. The Education Reform Law of 1946 required children to attend seven years of primary education and four years of secondary education (Kamibeppu, 1999). This was required of both boys and girls, allowing girls to gain at least a basic education. Mandating compulsory education had a huge effect on girls and women flipping the literacy rate from 90% of girls and women being **illiterate** before World War II to 90% of girls and women being **literate** in 1989 (Vullnetari & King, 2016). Furthermore, more girls and young women were receiving tertiary education with approximately half of university students in 1989 being women. However, this did not necessarily mean that women were free to pursue further education or any work prospects beyond that. Vullnetari and King (2016) note many girls and young women's decision to continue their education was often decided by the patriarchs of their families. This was especially so in rural areas where more traditional views on gender still had a strong hold (Vullnetari & King, 2016).

Abortion in communist era Albania also indicates gender equality being superficially implemented. Abortion was criminalised by Albanian communist leader Enver Hoxha (Abrahams, 1996). This has been attributed to Hoxha's ambitions of achieving a population of four million in Albania by the new millennium (Abrahams, 1996). Hoxha also encouraged women to have children and implemented maternity and child-care policies to support this (Abrahams, 1996). However, it has been stated by Abrahams (1996) that even with maternity and child-care policies in place, women were adversely affected by the pro-natalist policies due to an unequal obligation placed on women to hold jobs, produce and raise children, and be responsible for the household.

## The EU and Albania

It is clear that the European Union has always had a hand in the game since the collapse of communism in Albania, with the opening of dialogue between the two powers occurring only after the collapse (Goxha, 2016). Prior to this, the closed off nature of Albania in addition to cold war differences severely limited dialogue between the EU and Albania (Goxha, 2016). This section will give a brief overview of the development of relations between the European Union and Albania, highlighting the presence of the European Union during Albania's democratization efforts since 1992.

### *Prior to 1991*

Prior to 1991, dialogue between the European Union and Albania was almost non-existent due to ideological political differences with Albania having a strict communist regime (Goxha, 2016). It is unsurprising that there was a distinct lack of official diplomatic relations between the two. The European Union at its core is based on democracy, even before the value of democracy was enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty (Schimmelfennig, 2010). In comparison, Albania existed in a closed off and strict communist regime (Spahiu, 2015) run by dictator Enver Hoxha until his death in 1985, and then continued by his successor Ramiz Alia until 1990, when the latter chose to hold democratic elections (Biberaj & Prifti, 2021). The democratic elections signalled a new era for Albania, away from its communist past and towards a democratic future. It was also these decisions that allowed Albania to be considered for EU membership; as previously stated, democracy is at the core of the EU and subsequently, the EU will not tolerate non-democratic nations to become a part of the Union.

### *1991-1997*

The period of relations between 1991 and 1997 was characterised by the signing of economic agreements and diplomatic missions which signalled the EU's investment in Albania. Notably, the preamble of the agreement on trade, commercial and economic cooperation between Albania and the EU was aspirational for Albania's future as a stable and democratic nation (Goxha, 2016). Even as Albania was scrambling to find its democratic feet, Goxha (2016) argues that the desire to be a part of the European Union was palpable in all segments of society and has oft been used by political parties in Albania in order to win votes.

Due to the closed off nature of Albania prior to the collapse of communism, everyday Albanians had very little knowledge of Western style economies and institutions. It is often quoted that the start of Albania's transition to a market economy made it abundantly clear how backwards Albania had become in its isolation (Jarvis, 2000; Petrović, 2013). Petrović states that Albania remained "extremely backward... being the only Eastern European state that did not complete the process of economic industrialisation and the development of necessary urban infrastructures during communism..." (2013, p. 89). Jarvis (2000) stipulates that while the transition from central planning to a market economy was a formidably rapid transition, the financial sector was slow to reform, allowing predatory behaviour to flourish.

The slow financial sector reform meant that was not enough credit to satisfy demand by the Albanian public as credit was limited to banks which came under tight credit ceiling rules (Jarvis, 2000). Subsequently, an informal market grew. Largely, the informal market was based on family ties and was viewed as harmless and even viewed as having a positive effect on the economy (Jarvis, 2000).

However, at the same time there were “...deposit-taking companies that invested on their own account instead of making loans. These companies were the ones that turned into pyramid schemes” (Jarvis, 2000). Due to general problems with financial sector reform along with governance issues and regulatory gaps, it was uncertain which government body or position was responsible for the oversight of the informal market (Jarvis, 2000). This allowed the predatory pyramid schemes to go unchecked. Moreover, many government officials were in collusion with several of the companies running the schemes, often appearing at functions thrown by companies (Jarvis, 2000).

The Albanian public, not being aware that the places offering them credit and interest rates were illegitimate, invested heavily and widely. With increasing interest rates, as high as 30% (Jarvis, 2000), these companies were a very attractive investment avenue. It is estimated in 1996 that the top two pyramid scheme company had between them 2 million people invested out of a total population of 3.2 million and that many Albanians sold their homes, livestock and any assets they had to invest in these companies (Jarvis, 2000). Despite warnings early in 1996 about the nature of these companies by the likes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government did not warn Albanians until October. The news was received negatively, with many accusing the IMF of interfering with Albania’s most successful companies. Despite being recommended by external governments and organisations to set up a committee to investigate the companies involved in the pyramid schemes, the Albanian government ultimately did not act. In November of 1996, the first of the companies defaulted (Jarvis, 2000), sparking the collapse of the financial sector.

### 1997

Havoc broke loose in the wake of the collapse of all of the financial pyramid schemes in Albania. The effects of the collapse were devastating as almost two thirds of the Albanian population had invested heavily in these schemes. According to Jarvis (2000), at their peak the pyramid schemes were worth up to half of Albania’s GDP. Goxha characterises 1997 as an event that was responsible for “... financially destroying a large number of families, [and] making Albania financially depended to international organizations” (2016, p. 425). For many people, they saw their lives savings disappear almost overnight.

Social and economic problems had been brewing for some time when the collapse occurred (Dobbins et al., 2008) and consequently the tensions in the nation reached a fever pitch; there was widespread rioting that was especially concentrated in the Southern part of the nation (Goxha, 2016). The Southern part of Albania was a stronghold for the opposition party, the Socialist Party, and viewed Sali Berisha’s government as responsible for the economic collapse (Dobbins et al., 2008). By March 1997, the consequences of the collapse were at their peak: The government disintegrated, and Albania



descended into anarchy. The government had lost all control in the south without a sustainable army or police force to control the blossoming civil war as those in the forces abandoned their posts (Jarvis, 2000). Around one million weapons had been stolen from armories by gangs and insurgents, widespread looting was common and government buildings were set ablaze (Dobbins et al., 2008; Jarvis, 2000). Around 2,000 people were killed during this period and masses of people fled to neighbouring nations creating migrant crises (Dobbins et al., 2008; Jarvis, 2000).

During this period the European Union was uncharacteristically distant. Prior to the outbreak of war, the European Union was active in the stabilization and democratisation of Albania during its transition from communism to democracy, as previously outlined. However, when the collapse occurred and violence ensued, the EU was unwilling to act and send peacekeeping missions (Dobbins et al., 2008). This was not unique to the EU; associated security institutions such as NATO and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) were also unwilling to act (Dobbins et al., 2008). Within the EU there was no consensus among Member States with several viewing it as a domestic issue and were unwilling to send troops in due to failed interventions elsewhere (Dobbins et al., 2008). Similarly, NATO was still heavily involved in the Bosnian war at the time and was unwilling to become involved in another conflict on the Balkan Peninsula (Dobbins et al., 2008). However, with the effects of the war being most directly felt in their own nations, Italy and Greece sought to act and under the approval of the United Nations, Italy and Greece created a Military Flight Platoon to be deployed for peacekeeping and ensuring the safe delivery of humanitarian aid (Dobbins et al., 2008). A total of ten countries contributed troops to this mission, Operation Alba, which was led by Italy. The mandate of the mission was simple; troops were to provide security for the delivery of humanitarian aid, and security in general (Dobbins et al., 2008). Troops would not be fighting, unarming or generally becoming involved with the various factions that had arose (Dobbins et al., 2008). This mission was successful, and a sense of stability returned to Albania and allowed them to hold elections in June and begin to rebuild (Dobbins et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, the instability in Albania and the Balkans in general made them ill-suited to be considered for potential candidacy for the EU in the early 2000s as the civil unease and wars in the Balkans meant that they could not fulfil necessary criteria in the Stabilization and Association Agreement; this is logical as governments that do not have control over their own nations are certainly not able to make progress towards external agreements.

### *After 1997*

After the events of 1997 passed, the European Union continued to strengthen its relations with Albania. The creation of a bona fide legal framework and administrative capacity in 1999 between

Albania and the EU intensified their relationship. However, more notably and most importantly for this thesis, the European Union began to consider Albania and the rest of the Western Balkans as potential candidates for the EU. Initially, the preparations Albania undertook towards membership of the EU was through the Stabilization and Association Agreement.

### *Albania's Accession to the European Union*

Most importantly for this thesis, and arguably most importantly for the relationship between the European Union and Albania, is the development of potential accession to the European Union for Albania. Currently Albania is an official candidate country. This is the important end stage of joining the EU and means that once all of the accession chapters with the EU are closed, Albania will be a member of the European Union. However, the process of accession has been difficult with many scholars noting the ever-moving goal posts that nations must meet before being granted membership or even official candidate status. Notably scholars argue that the expansion of the Copenhagen criteria has made it more difficult for countries to join the European Union (Petrović & Smith, 2013). This has over time resulted in fatigue from both the members of the European Union and the potential candidates towards accession. While Albania has made significant progress towards joining the European Union it still has a long way to go until it will be a member of the European Union with the most recent development being the opening of accession negotiations in July 2020. With the rise of COVID there may be more challenges towards Albania's accession to the EU. Table 1.1 below details important dates and events in Albania's ongoing bid for accession to European Union.

**Table 1.1: Timeline of Albania's accession to the European Union (ongoing)  
(Eurydice, 2021)**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Body</i>	<i>Action</i>
June 2003	European Council	At the Thessaloniki Summit, potential candidates for EU membership are identified, including Albania
2009	Albania	Formal application for membership to the European Union is submitted
2010	European Commission	After reviewing Albania's application, the European commission's Opinion identified 12 key priorities for Albania to achieve
October 2012	European Commission	The Commission recommends that Albania be granted official candidate status dependent on if Albania is able to achieve key measures in revising

		parliamentary rules of procedure, and reforms in public administration and judicial administration
June 2014	Albania	Albania's application is granted, and Albania is now an official EU candidate country
April 2018	European Commission	The Commission unconditionally recommends that accession negotiations open
June 2018	Council of the European Union	If conditions are met, the Council's Conclusions plans to start accession in June 2019 with Albania
May 2019	European Commission	The Commission reiterates its recommendation made in April 2018
June 2019	Council of the European Union	The Council formally takes note of the Commission's recommendations
March 2020	European Council	The European Council endorses the General Affairs Council's decision to open accession negotiations with Albania
July 2020	Member States of the EU	Draft negotiating framework was presented to Member States.

### 1.3 The EU and gender equality

The European Union has a special relationship with gender equality, with this being a vision that the European Union has been and remains committed to. As one of its founding values, gender equality has been enshrined in all treaties (Schonard, 2021). Perhaps most importantly, the Treaty of Rome which established the beginnings of what is now the EU, upheld the principle of equal pay for equal work (Observatory for the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, n.d); something that remains a challenge today to uphold. Gender equality is also enshrined in subsequent treaties and conventions, including in European Convention on Human Rights where article 14 prohibits discrimination on any grounds, including on the basis of sex (European Court of Human Rights, n.d.). As both treaties and conventions are legally binding, working towards, maintaining, and/or upholding gender equality and practices is an obligation for member states and official candidate countries to meet.

One of the most important conventions in recent years is the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence; also known as the Istanbul Convention (Schonard, 2021). While this convention is not a part of the EU's actions, the EU is a signatory and therefore has requirements to fulfil as a signatory. It is also important to comply and uphold the convention as it shows their commitment to the norms of gender equality. The Istanbul Convention, the first of its kind, is a convention aiming at preventing and combatting violence against women and girls through introducing legal and policy measures that intend to prevent violence, punish perpetrators, and support victims (Schonard, 2021). It is obvious that the convention is ambitious towards achieving gender equality and ending violence against women. Article two implies the recognition that violence and domestic violence can happen to anyone and explicitly recognises that it disproportionately affects women (Council of Europe, 2011). The definitions of important terms, such as "domestic violence", "violence against women", "gender" and so forth take a holistic approach to these terms (Council of Europe, 2011), which means that the different aspects of violence are appropriately addressed and victims of lesser-known types of violence are not overlooked.

The Convention is between the European Union member states, EU candidate countries, other states which collaborated on the convention, and the European Union (Council of Europe, 2021). In total there are 46 signatories, in addition to Turkey who's denunciation of the convention was entered into force as of July 2021 and this is no longer a signatory of the convention<sup>4</sup> (Council of Europe, 2021). Notably, the European Union itself has signed the convention but has yet to ratify it (Council of Europe, 2021). However, no doubt due to their desire to become an official candidate country at the time, Albania has signed the convention on December 2011 and later ratified the convention on February 2013 (Council of Europe, 2021). Subsequently, it entered into force in five EU Member States<sup>5</sup> along with Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2014 (Council of Europe, 2021). In effect, this means that the Albanian government is obligated to put into place, both legislatively and otherwise, the measures dictated in the convention. Furthermore, the convention itself states that parties of the convention shall implement measure that are "based on a gendered understanding of violence against women and domestic violence and shall focus on the human rights and safety of the victim" (Council of Europe, 2011, p. 7). Therefore, the implementation

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<sup>4</sup> Despite the convention being named after its largest city. Ironic, isn't it.

<sup>5</sup> The five EU Member States in which the Istanbul Convention entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014 are: Austria; Denmark; Italy; Portugal; and Spain.

EU member states have had since had the Istanbul Convention entered into force include Sweden; Slovenia; Romania; Moldova; Poland; Netherlands; Malta; Luxembourg; Ireland; Greece; Germany; France; Finland; Estonia; Cyprus; Belgium; Croatia.

There are six EU Member States in which the Istanbul Convention has not entered into force they are: Bulgaria; Czech Republic; Hungary; Latvia; Lithuania; Slovakia.

of the changes required in the convention must meet the standard of practice set out by the Council of Europe and, indirectly, the European Union itself. While there is no explicit incentive for Albania to implement the policies arising from the Istanbul Convention, doing so send a powerful message of commitment to gender equality to the European Union, and also makes progress towards some of the changes Albania needs to make to join the EU.

The current European Commission President, the first woman to hold the role, Ursula von der Leyen, stipulated that “equality for all and equality in all its senses” was a paramount priority for her Commission (Observatory for the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, n.d). The 2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy, which von der Leyen’s Commission put forward, has six themes and aims to achieve “a gender equal Europe where gender-based violence, sex discrimination and structural inequality between women and men are a thing of the past. A Europe where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are equal” (Observatory for the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, n.d). Notably, this clause does not exclude gender diverse people, but it does not explicitly include them. It may be extrapolated from the inclusion of the wording “in all their diversity”, but it is not a confirmation of gender diverse people’s inclusion.

The six themes of the 2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy are as follows:

- “Being free from violence and stereotypes
- Thriving in a gender-equal economy
- Leading equally throughout society
- Gender mainstreaming and an intersectional perspective in EU policies
- Funding actions to make progress in gender equality in the EU
- Addressing gender equality and women’s empowerment across the world”

(Observatory for the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, n.d)

The 2016-2019 Gender Equality Strategy likewise had a focus on ending gender-based violence, economic equality, equal leadership and decision making, and promoting gender equality in external relations (Observatory for the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, n.d). The 2010-2015 Gender Equality Strategy had almost identical themes (European Commission, 2011). This means that for the last 12 years, the aims of the EU’s gender equality actions have been consistent. Therefore, any action or progress towards the gender equality goals the EU has set for Albania is building on previous efforts instead of starting anew with each new edition of the strategy.

In summary, it can be understood that gender equality is an important part of the European Union and has been a value and norm since its inception. Therefore, it can be expected that gender equality

is included in the European Union's influence of norms and values. Furthermore, the norm of gender equality can be understood as an important and paramount norm in its own right, especially under von der Leyen's Geopolitical Commission.

## 1.4 Overview of Albania and the status of gender equality

In order to understand the research undertaken in this thesis, one must first become familiar with Albania and the current status of gender equality in Albania. In other words, what it is currently like for women living in Albanian society? This section will cover the generic statistics of women and their quality of life before giving an overview of gender equality in seven areas: Legal Rights, Education; Economic life; Marriage; Health and reproduction; Violence; and Politics.

### Quality of life

The population of Albania is almost evenly split in 2021 with females accounting for 50.2% of the population (Instat, 2021). The life expectancy for females in 2020 was approximately 79.6 years (Instat, 2021), which is roughly 4.5 years more than the world average female life expectancy of 75.05 years (World Bank, 2019). Additionally, it is approximately 4.4 years more than the average life expectancy for Albanian males in 2020 (Instat, 2021). The median age for females in 2020 was 38.6 years whilst for males it was 36.3 years (Instat, 2021). Overall, it appears that females live longer than males<sup>6</sup> and the female population is slightly older than the male population of Albania. While on the surface, small differences in life expectancy and median age may not seem like it can affect gender norms and gender equality, it can. Research from sociologists suggest that gender and gender norms are primarily taught by mothers and other female relatives to children to make them conform to expectations of their assigned gender (Holmes, 2007). A longer life for women may mean that more conservative gender norms may be taught to children as mothers may be influenced or assisted by their own mothers who grew up with more conservative understandings of gender.

### Legal Rights

The legal rights of women in Albania have improved since the collapse of communism and the period of gender equality fatigue that followed in the early 1990s (Danaj, 2018). Economic, education, and political rights are guaranteed. Everyone has a right to basic education, and it is compulsory for children aged six-sixteen to attend school, ensuring that children have a minimum of ten years of education (Eurydice, 2021). In terms of political rights, Albanian law guarantees these rights which

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<sup>6</sup> Which follows global trends

cannot be rescinded on the basis of identity, including gender identity (Freedom House, 2020). Lastly, women are not able to be discriminated against for their gender in the workplace (*Employment & Labour Law 2019, 2019*). Maternity rights are guaranteed with new mothers required to take 98 days off around the birth of their child with the ability to take up to 365 days of maternity leave in total (*Employment & Labour Law 2019, 2019*). Mothers who give birth to multiples are able to extend their leave by 25 days. Throughout any maternity leave, mothers receive social security payments. Adoptive parents are additionally able to take parental leave especially if they have adopted a new-born (*Employment & Labour Law 2019, 2019*). Although the legal rights for women guarantee non-discrimination, this does not equate to everyday life, as evidenced in the following sections.

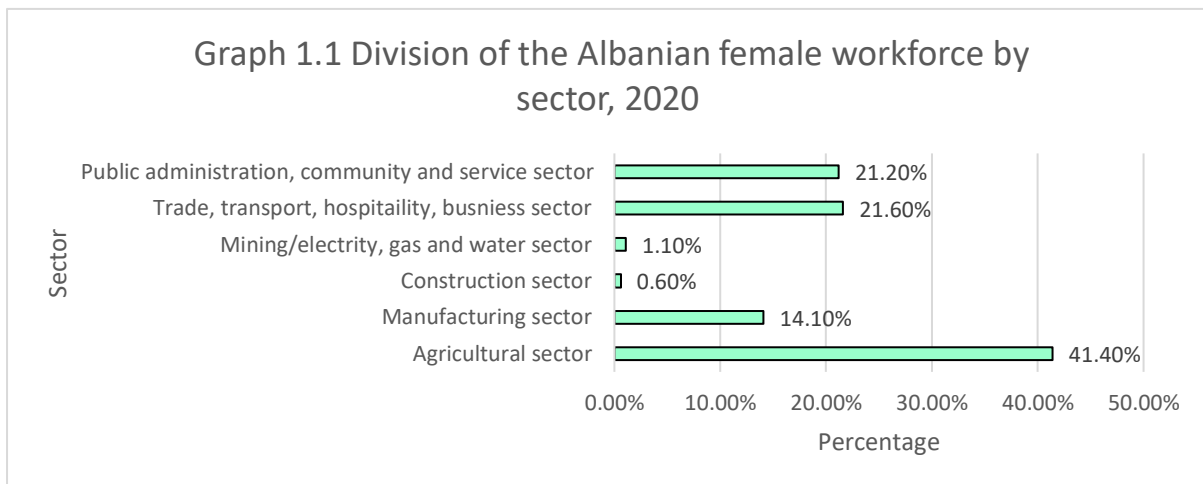
### Education

Although girls have the right to education, this does not mean that girls attend and attain education at the same rate as boys. According to the 2021 men and women in Albania report, only 94.20% of all girls are enrolled in primary + lower secondary education compared to 99.90% of boys enrolled in the same education levels in 2020 (Instat, 2021). This trend is similar in upper secondary education, with the enrolment rate of girls in 2020 being 90.10% whilst for boys the enrolment rate is 96.80%. Both of the discrepancies between the enrolment rates are concerning; the law requires that all children receive a basic education from ages six to sixteen, but according to these rates approximately 5.8% of primary and lower secondary age girls are not in education when they are legally required to be. In contrast boys of the same age are almost universally in education. Curiously, the rate of tertiary enrolments, however, is the opposite, with 71.9% of young women enrolled in tertiary education compared to 46.70% of young men in 2020. The unequal rates of enrolment in education by gender could be attributed to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic as parents may not be able to afford or be willing to put all their children into school. In this scenario, parents may elect only to have their sons educated. Another possible reason for the unequal rates of enrolments may be the requirement girls to be home to help their mothers look after children or sick relatives. Furthermore, due to economic downturn and uncertainties, older girls may be more likely to get married and become wives than continue education to reduce financial burdens in family households. The data from the report indicates that, with the exception of tertiary education, girls and women are enrolled at lesser rates than boys and men (Instat, 2021). However, this does not mean that women have an advantage over men in the workforce, as will be shown in the next section.

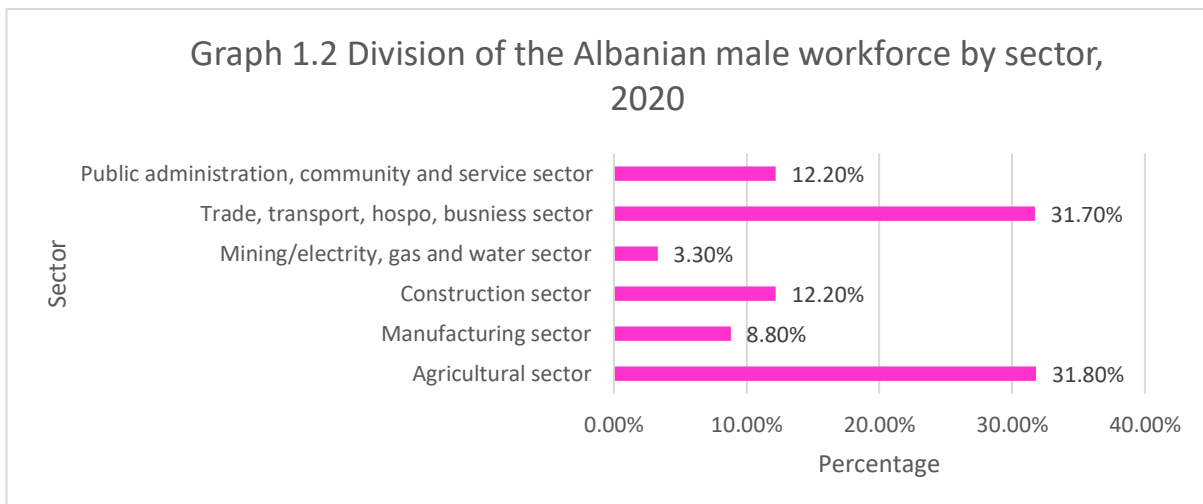
### Economic life

The rate of women in the labour force is approximately 61.20% compared to 77.10% of men (Instat, 2021). The work division in Albania is extraordinarily gendered. For example, out of those who are not

working, approximately 18.80% of women are classified as doing domestic household tasks<sup>7</sup> compared to only 0.60% of men (Instat, 2021). Another example is the construction industry. Construction, a masculine gendered job the world over, accounts for 12.20% of jobs that men undertake as shown in graph 1.2, compared to only accounting for 0.60% of jobs women undertake in Albania as shown in graph 1.1. Comparatively, the rate of women in the workforce in the EU is 67% compared to 78% for men (Eurostat, 2020). While the percentage difference between women and men’s rate of employment in the EU is smaller than in Albania, the rate of women in employment between the EU and Albania is 5.80%. Data on the distribution of gender in various industries across the EU appears to be missing.



(Instat, 2021)



(Instat, 2021)

It is not only the participation in traditionally gendered jobs or occupations which indicates that Albania’s workforce is still highly unequal in terms of gender equality, but also the gender pay gap

<sup>7</sup> In the past this would have been classified as a “housewife”



between men and women. As shown in table 1.2, in five of the total six industries listed in the 2021 Men and Women in Albania Report, women are paid less than their male counterparts (Instat, 2021). The biggest wage gap is 24.80% in production, which accounts for 8.80% of men’s jobs and 14.10% of women’s jobs (Instat, 2021). Additionally, in agriculture, which is the most common industry for both women and men to work in, there is a gender pay gap of 6.10% (Instat, 2021). Finally, the only industry in which women are paid more is construction, where women earn approximately 5.90% more than men (Instat, 2021). However, this is likely a fallacy of statistics caused by the unequal division of gender in the construction industry. It is likely that it appears that women are paid more because there are fewer women who hold higher paying positions- like engineer- compared to more men, a majority of whom may only be labourers. For example, the Albanian construction industry may only have 200 women who are all in highly skilled and highly paid jobs, such as engineers, compared to 20,000 men, a majority of which could be labourers. Overall, it is likely that women are still in traditionally gendered jobs, which they are paid less for.

Table 1.2 Gender Pay Gap (GPG) by sector in percentage (Instat, 2021)	
Sector	Percentage
GPG in the agricultural sector	6.10%
GPG in the production sector	24.80%
GPG in the construction sector	-5.90%
GPG in the mining, electricity, gas, and water sector	8.20%
GPG in the trade, transport, hospitality, and business sector	0.30%
GPG in public admin, social and services sector	11.70%

In terms of economic investment, men are more likely to own companies that produce goods or services than women. The total percentage of companies that produce goods that are owned by men is 74.50% compared to only 25.50% of women owned companies (Instat, 2021). A similar division exists in companies that provide services although women are more likely to own these companies compared to companies producing goods. Men own approximately 66.30% of companies that provide services compared to the 33.70% of women owned companies (Instat, 2021). A similar trend of men being more involved in the economic world also applies to loans, deposits and borrowers with the percentage of men involved in these activities around 56% compared to women who account for approximately 42% of borrowers and depositors (Instat, 2021).

## Marriage

Marriage is included in this contextual review because in countries where traditional gender norms have always had a stronghold, marriage is an important part of life. Furthermore, in countries where traditional gender norms persist, marriage also brings stipulations on what one can and cannot do. For example, in a country where traditional gender norms persist it may be expected that the couple has children within the first few years of marriage. Consequently, the ages in which people marry can be important in respect to pursuing further education, job promotions and so forth. In 2020, the average marrying age of women in Albania was approximately 27.7 years while the average marrying age of men was 31.1 years with a mean age difference between couples of 3.4 years (Instat, 2021). On average, 77% of brides who got married in 2020 were aged 29 and under, including 13% who were aged 19 and under (Instat, 2021). In comparison, approximately 52% of grooms married in 2020 were aged 29 and under, including approximately 1% who were aged 19 and under (Instat, 2021). It can therefore be understood that women on average married earlier than men. This is likely to impact the views of gender norms and expectations in Albania. As it can already be seen, it is common for girls and young women to be married before the age of 19. This may indicate an expectation of women to be primarily wives and mothers before anything else.

## Health and Reproduction

According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, health and reproduction are integral rights guaranteed by several articles within the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly article 25 (Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, 2021). Health and reproductive rights disproportionately affect woman due to their ability to carry and give birth to children. Therefore, it is important that women receive adequate care for both health and reproduction, including safe legal access to abortion. Faced with no option for safe and legal abortion, unsafe abortions are often performed and as a result make up to 45% of all abortions (World Health Organisation, 2021). According to the World Health Organisation unsafe abortion carried out by untrained people are one of the leading causes for maternal deaths and health complications including on mental health, which can have an ongoing financial burden (World Health Organisation, 2021). Albania in general, tells a story of lack of access, both for general health and for reproductive health. This is to the extent that statistics on maternal health in the last decade is not readily available on either Albania's national statistics website nor on the World Bank interactive database.

According to the United Nations in Albania's 2021 position paper, the biggest challenges facing equitable health outcomes is the (lack of) investment put into healthcare and rural and remote access to health facilities (United Nations in Albania, 2021). According to the United Nations, in Albania, approximately 3% of Albania's GDP is invested into healthcare and education (United Nations in

Albania, 2021). When compared the EU average of 9.9% of GDP spent on healthcare and education, it becomes clear that Albania could be investing more into healthcare to make it equitable and accessible. Further inhibiting access to health care is the lack of suitable or sufficient healthcare facilities in rural regions. Considering approximately 37% of the Albanian population are classified as living in rural or remote areas (World Bank, 2020), it becomes clear that they cannot access healthcare easily. The United Nations in Albania also raise concerns with access for minorities such as Roma, women and queer individuals (Instat, 2021).

While Albania has provisions for induced abortion<sup>8</sup>, access to induced abortion comes with obstacles that impede on women's bodily autonomy. In 2020, approximately 19% of abortions were induced abortions; the remaining 81% of abortions were classified as spontaneous abortions (Instat, 2021) The main reason in which an induced abortion can be performed is on grounds of endangerment to the health and life of the mother and cases of foetal impairment (United Nations, 2017). Induced abortion is also able to be performed in cases of rape and incest, for economic or social reasons, and on request of the mother (United Nations, 2017). The gestational age limit for induced abortion is 22 weeks with the exceptions of induced abortion on request, which is limited to 12 weeks gestational age, and cases of foetal impairment, for which there is no gestational limit (United Nations, 2017). The gestational age limits and limits on what grounds an induced abortion can be performed is not the only barrier to accessing abortion: Albanian law necessitates a compulsory seven day waiting period and counselling, as well as authorization by three doctors in specially licensed practices (United Nations, 2017). For those who are pregnant as a result of rape, the barriers for abortion are greater. To legally receive an induced abortion on the grounds of rape, victims must receive a consultation and examination to determine if the pregnancy is a result of rape. The authorization is then required from a doctor, social worker and jurist who are involved with the consultation and examination (United Nations, 2017). The barriers do not only delay the process, but also run the risk of re-traumatizing the victims. Furthermore, there are limits on public information of legal abortion services which is a further barrier to accessing safe, legal abortion services to begin with. In comparison, in Italy<sup>9</sup> induced abortion can be performed with no gestational limit for the purpose of saving life (United Nations, 2017). Other grounds for induced abortion are to preserve health, in cases of foetal impairment, for economic and social reasons, as well as allowing induced abortions on request (United Nations, 2017). While there is no information on gestational limits for induced abortions to preserve health, the latter three grounds for induced abortion have a gestational limit of 13 weeks (United Nations, 2017). In

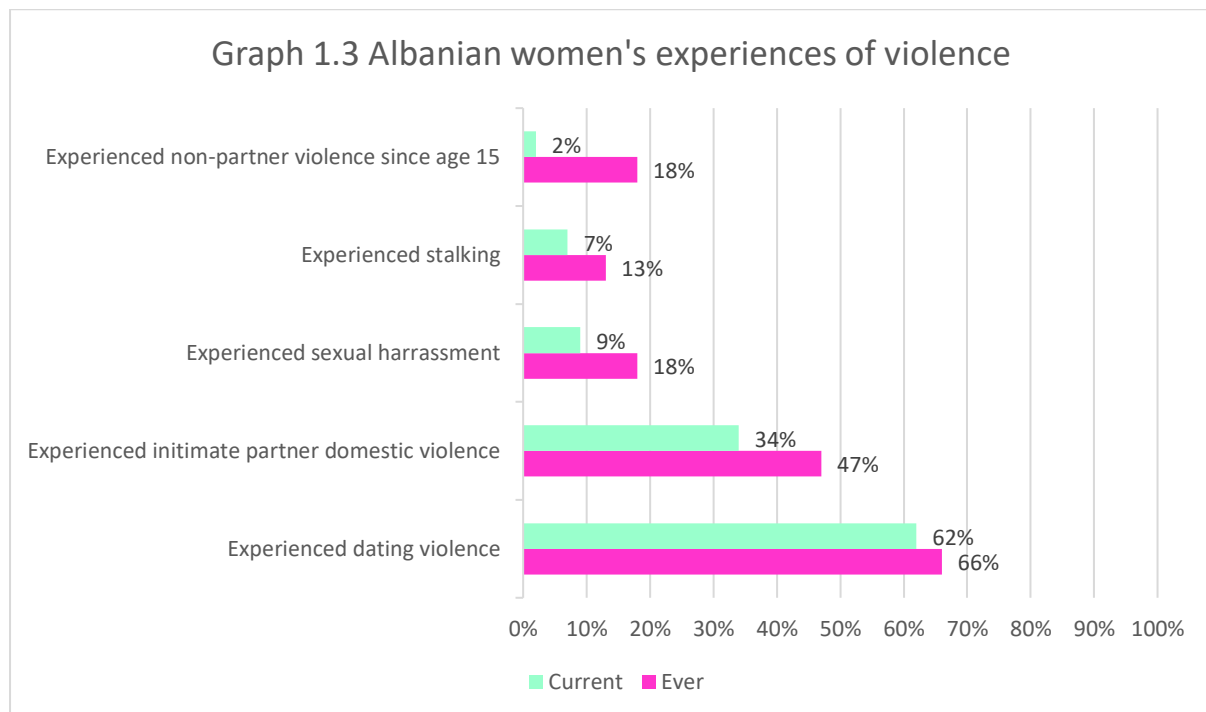
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<sup>8</sup> Induced abortions are constituted as abortions by choice and are not spontaneous abortions. Spontaneous abortions are more commonly known as miscarriages.

<sup>9</sup> Italy has been chosen as a parallel due to being in a similar region, having a similar value placed on religion, as well as having had displayed a vested interest in Albania.

comparison to Albania, Italy has a compulsory waiting of seven days, but no legal requirement for counselling or authorizations (United Nations, 2017). Induced abortion is only performed by specialists doctors only including OB/GYN but these specialists are allowed to conscientious object to the abortion (United Nations, 2017). While there are still barriers to accessing induced abortion services in Italy, the legal situation of induced abortion is less restrictive than in Albania. Unfortunately, there are no detailed statistics readily available on abortion in Italy.

## Violence



(Haarr, 2019)

Violence against women and girls in Albania also occurs at alarming rates. According to the 2018 Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania report, more than 50% of their sample has experienced violence in some form (Haarr, 2019). As shown in graph 1.3, the most common form of violence is dating violence that approximately 66% of women surveyed have experienced at some point in their lives. A further 47% of women surveyed have experienced intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. The rate of current<sup>10</sup> violence experienced is also alarming with the report estimating that approximately 37% of women surveyed were experiencing some type of violence at the time (Haarr, 2019). Although the best efforts were given to ensure that the survey was an accurate picture of the rate of violence against women in Albania, including giving clear descriptions and examples for each type of violence, it is likely that this survey is an underestimation. Firstly, despite the authors best

<sup>10</sup> 'Current' is constituted as having occurred in the last 12 months.

efforts, the survey was not as well distributed in rural areas compared to urban areas (Haarr, 2019). Secondly, given that Albania is a traditional nation which has in the recent past considered domestic violence between couples to be a private matter (Dini, 2021), it is likely that some women who took part of the survey were hesitant to answer honestly. Additionally, the data is from 2018, and it is likely that due to the coronavirus pandemic and all that entails, that the rate of violence experienced by women and girls in Albania has increased.

Trafficking is additionally a prevalent issue that disproportionately affects Albanian women and girls. In 2020, approximately 50% of trafficking victims were adult women (Instat, 2021) Female minors, adult men and male minors accounted for 16.5% each of the remaining victims (Instat, 2021). This is a common problem in Albania and has been for a long time, with the practice of trafficking girl children for prostitution in Italy occurring since the opening of Albania after the collapse of communism (Bekteshi et al., 2012). Additionally, for the 2015-2016 period, Eurostat reported that for all trafficking victims identified in the European Union, Albania was the second most common non-EU nationality of trafficking victims (Balidemaj, 2019).

## Politics

Since 2008, Albanian law has dictated that 30% of parliamentarians must be the least represented gender (Instat, 2021). The 'least represented gender' is conceived within the gender binary and has traditionally been women (Instat, 2021). In 2020, approximately 29.50% of parliament was composed of elected women (Instat, 2021). However, representation in positions of leadership is still lacking. In 2020, the head of parliament as well as the heads of the various parties were all men (Instat, 2021). While the percentage of chairs of parliamentary committees and the spokespersons of parliament are divided equally between men and women, this is the exception, not the rule. Indeed, the composition of the various commission is mainly men, with the largest percentage of women being 44.4% in both the commission for education and public information and the commission for labour, social affairs, and health. The commission with the least amount of women is the commission for productivity, trade and environment for which women make up 10% of the commission (Instat, 2021). The representation of women in the justice system is also lacking with women accounting for approximately 29.66% of judges and heads of courts in all courts in Albania (Instat, 2021). When this is further broken down into the percentage of woman who are the head of court, the percentage reduces to 19.66% for all heads of court in all Albanian courts (Instat, 2021). Additionally, the composition of the supreme court is entirely male (Instat, 2021). This means that the supreme court has a lack of perspective that is inclusive of different genders. Consequently, while there is representation in political fields and in the justice system, this representation tends to be at a lower level.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

Gender equality has a special importance for the European Union (EU). It is both a founding value established in the Treaty of Rome and a priority of the 2019 elected European Parliament (Observatory for the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, n.d). Consequently, it is expected that alongside other accession conditionality, EU candidate countries will implement gender equality into its institutions and wider society. While gender equality has made some headway, progress continues to be slow in candidate countries. This is especially the case in Albania, which became a candidate country in June 2014 (European Commission, n.d-b). Despite the collapse of communism happening over 30 years ago, the lack of representation of women in politics, the prevalence of gender-based violence against women, and the social barriers to paid female employment persists. In 2020, for all cases of murder within the family, it was estimated that approximately 88.9% of victims were women (Instat, 2021). Similarly, in 2019 it was estimated that 52.9% of women living in Albania experienced violence within the family (Dini, 2021). Although approximately 30% of the Albanian parliament is made up of women, this does not necessarily equate to equal distribution of positions of power within the parliament (Instat, 2021). For example, the recent 2021 elections held in September resulted in the first female dominated cabinet which was successfully voted in by a narrow margin of 77 votes out of 140 votes (Bytyci, 2021). Given these concerning statistics, coupled with the EU's interest in both Albania and its promotion of gender equality, this thesis therefore asks whether the European Union's actions in the Western Balkans, generally, and Albania in particular has resulted in improved gender equality and gender norms that coincide with queer rights.

The focus of this thesis and literature review is gender equality in the EU candidate country of Albania. This focus is understood using the theory of Europeanisation and its affect (or lack of) on the ability of Albania to achieve gender equality. There is an important distinction to be made here; in lieu of looking at the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals as a goal, this thesis will be using gender equality goals of the European Union set out in the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. Using the European Union's own goal posts enables one to analyse the EU's effect instead of the United Nations.

This review will examine literature around meanings and understandings of gender in historical, cultural, and political contexts in Albania and the wider Western Balkans. It will then examine

literature on Europeanisation in order to understand how this process affects meanings and understandings around gender. Critiques and gaps will be discussed after each topic.

## 2.2 Albanian Meanings and Understandings of Gender

To understand how gender equality is likely to be in Albania, it is important to understand how gender is constituted in the former communist state. Perceptions around gender are important for gender equality because viewed gender perceptions shape views and consequently the implementation of gender equality. For the purposes of this thesis, gender is understood as the socially constructed behaviours, norms, expectations, roles and identities within a culture (World Health Organisation, 2002). Gender in this context is not constituted as biological differences (referred to as a person's sex). Gender is not something that should be examined in isolation; but is a complex phenomenon that is intertwined with historical, cultural, and political experiences. Although the literature on meanings and understandings of gender in the Albanian context is divided into three distinct sections, there is some overlap. This accurately reflects how intertwined the different aspects of these meanings and understandings are.

### Historical Meanings and Understandings of Gender in Albania and the Western Balkans

Literature on historical meanings and understandings of gender in the context of Albania is limited and intertwined with cultural meanings and understandings. That is to say that literature solely on the meaning of gender in Albania does not exist, but literature on important cultural institutions which include meanings and norms around gender or literature which meanings can be extrapolated from do exist. Largely, historical understandings of gender are constituted by enduring patriarchal systems. Hoxha (2019) states that all plans and policies regarding gender equality must recognise the role historical patriarchal systems in Albanian society. They state that "Albania serves us a patriarchal story, the women often displayed as the husband's shadow" (Hoxha, 2019, p. 156). Calloni (2002) provides more depth to this patriarchal system, by highlighting that the historical uniqueness of Albania has solidified a patriarchal cultural system. Due to Albania's geopolitical position, it was often a steppingstone or conquered by various regional geopolitical groups. Notable invading groups include the Romans, the Ottoman empire, and the Italian Fascist regime. Under the threat of constant cultural erasure, tribal and feudal systems in Albania created de facto canons that prioritised patriarchal values. This acted as a unifying factor and a strong hold of Albanian culture. Consequently, one can understand that historically gender has been constituted in a way that subverts women into a less powerful position (Hoxha, 2019). It is difficult to decouple traditional patriarchal values from

understandings of gender in contemporary Albania as the survival of Albanian culture was invariably linked to this patriarchal values system. This is not something to underestimate, as the literature examined below further shows that after the collapse of communism, patriarchal norms in Albania were reverted to in the wake of the end of Enver Hoxha's rule (Brunnbauer, 2000; Danaj, 2018). This means that the historical meanings of gender for women were often patriarchal and expected women to be mothers and wives who obeyed their fathers and husbands. Furthermore, given the history of invasion by others, the meanings around what it meant to be a women could not be decoupled from patriarchal view of gender in the canons which ensured the survival of the Albanian identity.

### Cultural Meanings and Understandings of Gender

Due to the overlap that exists between cultural and political meanings of gender, the way in which they are constituted in this thesis will be explained. Cultural meanings are understood as norms, ideas and practices set out by everyday people and/or groups. For example, churches are a cultural phenomenon that set out meanings around gender like having children is a part of womanhood. Political meanings of gender are understood as meanings around gender that are set by active and official governments which is secure by mandates, actions and/or laws. For example, granting women the right to work means that women are expected and allowed to work.

Spehar et al (2012) states that gender equality legislation will take time to be adopted "in social practice due to the cultural patterns which are rooted in [Western Balkan] society." Indeed, when cultural meanings and understandings of gender are combined with historical meanings, the literature starts to show how patriarchal meanings of gender have persisted in Albania and the wider Western Balkans. De facto canons, mentioned in the preceding historical section), were culturally significant for Albania and have had a far-reaching impact on how gender is constituted contemporarily. In particular, the Canon of Laberia was active in the Southern area (Hoxha, 2019) while in the Northern areas the Kanun of Lek Dukagjini regulated all aspects of life (Cara & Margjeka, 2015; Dini, 2021). Both canons were patriarchal and relegated all decision making and authority to the patriarch of the family or clan. In their research on sexual violence legislation, Dini (2021) links the Canons to contemporary gender roles and the perpetuation of domestic, sexual and other gender-based violence. They elaborate that entrenched patriarchal systems have "affected the role of women in the family and society for generations" (Dini, 2021). Additionally, despite gender equality being a founding value of communism, the patriarchal systems were not successfully erased (Dini, 2021). For example, the Public Perceptions and Attitudes toward Gender Equality in Albania survey shows that when asked if they agree or disagree with the statement "it is better for the whole family if the husband has a job



and the wife takes care of the family” approximately 69.04% agreed with the statement (Dauti & Zhllima, 2016, p. 31). Likewise, when asked if they agree or disagree with the statement “a good wife should obey to her husband, preserving family peace and well-being” approximately 75.11% of respondents agreed (Dauti & Zhllima, 2016, p. 31). This indicates that men and the decisions of men hold a higher place than their female counterparts- men are able to freely make decisions while women are expected to obey their husbands.

Brunnbauer (2000) argues that when women were allowed to return to work after the aftermath of the collapse of communism in Albania and the Balkans in general, cultural meanings and understandings of gender were still very much active as the jobs women usually had were feminine coded and reinforced patriarchal norms. For example, education, health care, and administration reinforce the traditional role of women as carers and the person responsible for organisation. Calloni (2002) also indicates the persistence of these meanings. Their work indicates that the reversion to deeply patriarchal norms resulted in men concurrently holding “macho” masculinities with extremely fragile masculinity. This need to conform to the cultural expectation of masculinity resulted in unhealthy coping mechanisms in men who experienced war, such as increased domestic violence and self-destructive habits like drinking (Calloni, 2002). Consequently, the cultural meaning of gender can be understood again as patriarchal; women were expected to be mothers and wives while men were expected to be tough, resilient leaders and earners. Furthermore, when women were allowed to work, the jobs were often feminine coded, reinforcing the gender understanding that women are carers, nurturers, and responsible for the organisation, but not decisions, of men’s lives.

### Political Meanings and Understandings of Gender

The literature on political meanings and understandings of gender is well represented. Gender meanings under the communist regime and the consequent switch to capitalism after its collapse has been subject to a lot of scholarship (Brunnbauer, 2000; Spehar, 2012). Generally, the communist regime prioritised the economic emancipation of women, but this emancipation did not extend to other areas of life. Spehar argues that this emancipation was “forced emancipation for women and generally insincere due to being motivated by economic interests rather than by gender equality concerns” (2012). Furthermore, gender roles did not change to accommodate the addition of female workers and consequently women were still expected to be responsible for reproductive work, household management and child rearing on top of a 40-hour working week. Brunnbauer (2000) estimates that during the communist regime women were working an estimated 60-70 hours a week when their unpaid work was taken into account. Furthermore, women seldom progressed beyond

mid-level positions in their workplace, meaning that there was almost no women in positions of power in the economic sphere (Brunnbauer, 2000). This pattern also extends to the political sphere. Despite party lists and parliament having a quota of 30% for the least represented gender (in this case women), these roles were tokenistic. Women in communist regimes did not have any authority or position of power and “very few women were found in the Central Committees and Politburos where real political power was wielded” (Brunnbauer, 2000). For women in politics, this only added to the increased burden phenomenon experienced during the communist regime. However, Mitrovic (2014) highlights that under the communist regime feminists and women were more tolerated compared to after communism.

After the collapse of communism, women were left in a more marginalized position (Brunnbauer, 2000). “Domestication”, the phenomenon discussed by Brunnbauer (2000), witnessed the retreat of women from the public life back into the domestic realm. Patriarchal norms that were never fully erased under communism were reverted to in the vacuum of power created and neo-traditional and neo-patriarchal orders were formed (Calloni, 2002). Gender equality was not prioritised in emerging political systems due to both the neo-patriarchal order and due to gender equality fatigue after communism’s pushing of (tokenistic) gender equality (Danaj, 2018). The neo-patriarchal orders formed, combined with domestication, saw the most important role of womanhood defined as “mothers of the nation” who were responsible for both the cultural and biological reproduction of Albania (Brunnbauer, 2000). Additionally, any financial agency and autonomy or the social institutions that aided this agency were not present after the collapse of communism (Calloni, 2002).

Consequently, in both communist and post-communist political systems in Albania, gender equality can be understood as performative at best. Under performative gender equality, the gender roles assigned to women are deeply patriarchal and relegates ‘domestic tasks’ to women on top of any jobs they may or may not have. Extra burden was unequivocally placed on women, which did not equate into any major benefits. Under post-communist systems, women’s autonomy is erased due to political, cultural, and societal pressure to be ‘mothers of the nation’ and a lack of financial agency.

In sum, much like the historical and cultural meanings of gender, the political meanings of gender are also patriarchal. While women were granted the right to work, it was not a choice but an order from the communist system. Furthermore, it was still expected that women were to manage the domestic sphere and so the perpetuation of the notion of women as carers and nurturers continued. Additionally, despite being given rights, women were still not be able to decide and define their own identities and meanings of their gender; it was at the whims of those in power.

## Critiques and gaps

Literature surrounding meanings on gender is not exempt from criticisms. Mitrovic (2014) argues that literature around gender meanings and understandings, especially in the historical context, tend to victimize women. Indeed, there is a distinct lack of literature on feminist movements and women with agency in the literature examined. Instead, literature generally paints women in Albania as overburdened victims to communism or victims of capitalism relegated to the domestic sphere. When feminist movements are excluded from the narrative presented by the literature, the realities and lived experiences of being a woman in Albania and the Western Balkans are negated because it does not paint the full picture and simplifies how gender was being constituted. Literature on the meanings of gender is also extraordinarily within the binary. Non-binaries identities are not mentioned in the literature, and transgender identities are only mentioned in passing. Although it could be argued that gender is exclusively understood within the binary in Albania, it does not justify this exclusion. Queer people exist everywhere, including in patriarchal societies.

## 2.3 Europeanisation

To understand how gender equality norms set by the EU are adopted by EU candidate countries, this thesis will incorporate literature on Europeanisation theory. Literature around Europeanisation is plentiful and there are numerous case studies on Europeanisation and the Western Balkans. Europeanisation can be defined as the process of third states adopting EU rules including “the transfer of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’, and shared beliefs and norms” (Godzisz, 2019). Generally, Europeanisation is seen within the EU candidate countries as EU accession conditionalities and criteria are considered Europeanisation. Furthermore, Börzel and Risse (2012b) argue that the process of Europeanisation is something that distinctly occurs in the region of Europe.

The most renowned scholars of Europeanisation theory are Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier. They originated the External Incentives Model (EIM) to explain why third nations ‘do’ Europeanisation. There are four components to the EIM that indicate if a nation is likely to adopt certain aspects of EU conditionality.

They are:

- Rewards: What do nations receive if they comply to the conditionalities imposed on them?
- Determinacy: What exactly is required, and will there be guidance if needed?

- Credibility: Is the EU able to withhold or dispense rewards?
- Costs: Will complying to EU conditionality help or hinder the political elites in maintaining their power?

The EIM model works by predicting when Europeanisation will occur through EU conditionality by calculating the above factors to see if it's a 'rewarding' move for the candidate country. The overall 'reward' for candidate countries is membership of the European Union which drives action towards achieving all EU conditionality. This thesis does not delve into the EIM model, but rather Europeanisation overall. The main reason for this is to ascertain the influence of Europeanisation when there is no great carrot to be had; the aim is to find out the power of the EU's words and actions alone.

### Critiques and gaps in Europeanisation

Europeanisation has come under a lot of criticism and most of the literature examined fell into the critical category. Most prominently, Europeanisation is criticized for its unsustainable nature (Bieber, 2019; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2020). After accession is successful, the EU can only induce negative sanctions onto non-complying members, which is often perceived as a non-credible threat (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2020). Indeed, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier's 2020 revisit of their External Incentives Model found that compliance was good for conditionalities such as single market *acquis Communautaire*, which arguably has tangible benefits. On the other hand, compliance for conditionalities that have non-tangible benefits, such as democracy, experienced backsliding in various post-communist nations (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2020). Currently there is no studies to indicate if gender equality has suffered backsliding in post-communist nations from an analytical lens of Europeanisation. There is however a United Nations discussion paper which discusses gender equality suffering in concert with democratic backsliding in Central Eastern European (CEE) states among other nations (Roggeband & Krizsán, 2020). Roggeband and Krizsán (2020) suggest that backsliding in gender equality is intertwined with democratic backsliding, albeit backsliding relating to gender equality is far more insidious than democratic backsliding.

In a similar vein, Godzisz (2019) in their study of anti-LGBT hate crime legislation in Croatia found that often these nations often changed legislation as a box ticking exercise rather than due to a genuine desire to prevent hate crimes. "In this sense, [Western Balkan] countries are simply fulfilling the EU external conditionality superficially, without attempting to internalize the norms seriously" (Godzisz, 2019, p. 301). This casts a doubtful shadow upon the effectiveness of Europeanisation to impart any sustainable changes; is the EU and Europeanisation powerful enough to change norms when norm changes are not a required conditionality of EU accession negotiations?

Additionally, the European Union has come under fire in the literature for its ever-changing goal posts of accession. Compared to their CEE counterparts, the Western Balkan candidate countries face increasing conditionalities which are ambitious targets and not particularly suited for the realities of societies that are still stabilising (Petrović, 2019). This is especially so for Albania who suffered one of the most severe communist regimes and have had a poor track record of stability and democracy since the collapse (Spahiu, 2015).

Another critique of Europeanisation is that the process 'others' candidate countries by default. The process stipulates that in order to join the European Union, they must conform to 'European' norms, institutions, and expectations. This arguably negates the historical and cultural experiences and identities of Europeanness within the Western Balkans. Mitrović's case-study of feminist organisations in the Western Balkans during the communist era found that feminists self-identified their feminism and identities as distinctly European as opposed to Anglo-Saxon or American (Mitrović, 2014). This is significant because it indicates another aspect in which the Western Balkans conceptualise themselves as European when offered other avenues. Petrović (2019), in recognising this mismatch, argues that the process of Europeanisation during the accession process is EU-centric and consequently should be called EU-ropeanisation. Or perhaps in recognising that Europeanisation is a process with a longer history than what is currently being discussed in academic circles, it would be more accurate to call it 'Western Europeanisation' in recognition of the cultural, political and religious dissemination carried out by Western Europe through the last few centuries (Bieber, 2019).

## 2.4 Summary

To summarise, this literature review sought to provide an insight into relevant literature on Albanian gender meanings and understandings, and Europeanisation. This was undertaken to understand how these factors and theories contribute to understanding if Europeanisation affects Albania's ability to move towards gender equality. Gender meanings and understandings in historical, cultural, and political contexts have been subject to research by several authors and indicates various factors that contribute to these meanings, but unfortunately the literature is only conceived within the gender binary and negates non-binary and genderqueer experiences. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, among others, discuss the key concepts of Europeanisation, but this process has its faults, including its unsustainability, its ever-shifting goal posts, and the 'othering' it inherently produces.

While Europeanisation has been done to the Western Balkans and Albania, including in the area of gender equality, there is inadequate academic research into whether this has changed the social

attitudes, and meanings and understandings of gender in everyday life to something more equal and progressive. This author believes this is the best measurement of understanding if gender equality is sustainable and embedded into the fabric of society, and therefore is the focus of this thesis.

## 3. Theory and Method

### 3.1 Theory

#### Europeanisation

As stated in Chapter 2, Europeanisation theory is the theoretical lens through which this thesis examines gender meanings and the potential impact on gender meanings through the EU accession process. This chapter therefore explains Europeanisation theory in more detail. The second part of the chapter then explains how the theory is then utilised and mapped for the purposes of analysis. Europeanisation is posited as a “process in which states adopt EU rules that cover a broad range of formal and informal issues and structures” (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005: 7, as cited in Spahiu, 2015, p. 347). Europeanisation works due to “concrete benefits [that are] present and credible... but only when international rewards outweigh domestic implementation costs” (Markinkovic, 2011: 15; Schimmelfennig, 2007: 126-128 as cited in Finn, 2021, p. 207). The EU tends to use the enticement of membership to the EU as the incentive to conform with EU norms and values, especially for nations within the geographical bounds of Europe. In this understanding, the process of adopting EU norms, values and rules commonly occurs through the accession process to join the EU.

Within the accession process, EU candidate countries must meet EU conditionality through negotiating and successfully closing 36 chapters of an accession agreement (European Union, 2021). The 36 chapters consist of various values and requirements upheld by the European Union and the chapters are broken into six thematic groups: Fundamentals, internal market, competitiveness and inclusive growth, green agenda and sustainable connectivity, resources and agriculture and cohesion, and external relations. The accession process begins and ends with the fundamentals grouping of chapters which open the entirety of the accession negotiations. In the words of the EU, “...progress under the fundamentals’ cluster will determine the overall pace of negotiations” (European Union, 2021). In some cases, the process is simple, and minimal negotiation is needed. For example, Austria, Finland, and Sweden are so far the quickest to successfully negotiate and join the EU, doing so in approximately two years (Bevington, 2020). In other cases of accession, the process is much more arduous and lengthier. This is especially the case for Albania which had to start from a less developed place than its Balkan counterparts due to the economic and general backwardness, as mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis (Petrović, 2013, 2019).

The accession process can be tedious and drawn out for candidate countries. This is especially true when the accession criteria continue to grow and the chance of successfully joining the EU seems like a distant prospect (Petrović, 2019; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2020). The grand 'reward' of joining the EU and all the benefits that entails are sometimes not enough to entice candidate countries to continue reforms, especially if the domestic costs to implement these changes are substantially high. Consequently, the EU uses intermittent rewards to incentivise candidate countries along the way towards required reforms to join the EU, such as visa liberalisation (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2020). Incentives are given along the path of EU accession when EU candidate countries reach certain goal posts, and therefore encourage EU candidate countries to continue with reforms to the next goal post. It is particularly crucial that these incentives are in place, especially considering the ever expanding conditionality placed on EU candidate countries or potential candidates by the EU as noted by Petrović (2019) in chapter 2. Understanding the carrot and stick nature of Europeanisation, and of accession to the European Union in general, leads to the reason why this thesis is being written; does Europeanisation occur for norms that have a perceived high domestic cost and no tangible reward? In other words, without intermittent rewards to incentivise Albania, does Europeanisation have any effect in influencing a change in Albanian gender norms to be more gender equal?

### 3.2 Method

The research's novelty is two-fold. Firstly, the thesis employs a quantitative analysis of the European Values Survey (EVS) data to understand perceptions around gender and gender quality in Albania. Secondly, the research also offers qualitative analysis of EU-Albania's Progress Reports from 2011-2021 in order to understand what norms the EU is trying to insert into Albanian society through the accession process. The qualitative research is presented as supplementary to the quantitative research. Combined, this research should offer an insight into the effectiveness of Europeanisation processes and its sustainability which can be applied more widely to other candidate countries, or it can inform the EU's approach with third nations.

The data used for this thesis is from the European Values survey from 2018 (Evs/Wvs, 2021) and compares results from Italy and Albania. There are two other surveys – the Gender Equality in Albania 2016 survey (Dauti & Zhllima, 2016) and the 2018 national population survey on Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania survey (Haarr, 2019), – will support the findings from the European Values Survey in the discussion. The latter two surveys are not appropriate for quantitative research, as they are laid out as reports and do not include any raw data to statistically analyse. It was hoped that by



using the EVS source and supporting it with the findings of the other two surveys that the thesis would paint a clear and valid picture of gender norms in Albania. The European Values Survey was carried out by the GESIS-Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences, whilst the other two surveys were both carried out by a team including the United Nations Development Programme, with support from the government of Sweden. For the 2018 survey on Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania, the official statistics department of Albania was also involved.

Europeanisation is taken as one of the framings of this thesis. While considering how to measure the influence of the EU on third nations, Europeanisation appeared to be the most appropriate model. Arguably, other models that could have been used, such as economic indicators, would not have been effective at capturing this phenomenon.

The method of the quantitative data analysis, being the most important to this research, is explained in the next section. This is followed by the supporting qualitative data analysis method section, the delimitations section, and the novelty and importance section. This chapter is concluded with the validity section which outlines the measures in place to ensure the research is as accurate as possible.

### Quantitative data method

Quantitative analysis of data is the main method of analysis used for this thesis. The European Values Survey (EVS) from the GESIS-Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences is a quantitative data survey. As the EVS asks questions around perceptions on a variety of things including gender perceptions, it can be used to show patterns of perceptions. Further, due to the quantitative nature, the results can be tested for validity through the use of the independent T-test, which measures if there is a statistically significant difference between means or not (Nishishiba et al., 2014). The reasons outlined above make quantitative analysis a logical choice for this thesis. The other source of data that was identified earlier in the research – the Public Perceptions and Attitudes toward Gender Equality in Albania Survey and the Violence Against Girls and Women Survey are published reports with no primary data provided by a database. Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain the validity of any patterns presented in the reports. Thus, the Perceptions and Attitudes toward Gender Equality in Albania Survey and the Violence Against Girls and Women survey will be used only as a means to support the results of the EVS data analysis.

The variables selected from the EVS for analysis are in Table 3.1 in the following pages. These variables were selected to understand the views and understandings around gender by the study. The data was taken from the joint EVS/WVS 2017-2021 dataset and in the analyses two countries are examined:

Albania and Italy. While Albania is the focus of this thesis, Italy was chosen as a comparative nation. Italy was chosen over other Balkan nations for a variety of reasons. Firstly, as previously mentioned in this thesis, Albania has historically been distinct from the rest of the Balkans due to the extent that the Albanian language is an isolate in the Indo-European language family. More recently, Albania has also been separated from the rest of the Western Balkans, which were a part of Yugoslavia while Albania was not<sup>11</sup>. Secondly, the relationship between Italy and Albania is one that has both historical and contemporary relevance with Italy being a part of Albanian history and having collaboration between the two nations more recently. For example, as mentioned in the historical context section of Chapter 1, Italy was a driver and organiser for Operation Alba in response to the 1997 Albanian financial collapse and resulting civil conflict (Dobbins et al., 2008). Historically, links between Italy and Albania have existed, with Albanian communities living in Italy as a result of the Ottoman invasion of the Balkans as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Musabelliu, 2021). During WWII, the Italian fascist regime invaded Albania in 1939 and subsequently made Albania part of the Italian empire until 1943 (Musabelliu, 2021). Therefore, it can be understood that Italy and Albania have had significant bilateral relations both historically and more recently. Thirdly, Albania and Italy share similar values, holding a high value in religion and family (Evs/Wvs, 2021). Lastly, Italy was a founding member of the European Union and therefore was a part of creating the gender norms of the European Union. It would therefore follow logic that Italy would be more likely to hold the values enshrined in EU gender norms within their society.

Included in the list of variables investigated are variables F119 and F132 which surrounding the justifiability of prostitution and casual sex respectively. This has been included as a link between negative attitudes around prostitution and casual sex and controlling women's sexuality (Ralston, 2021). There is also a link between sexual violence and negative attitudes towards prostitution and casual sex (Ralston, 2021). As sexual violence is an issue in Albania, it is logical to examine perspectives around prostitution and casual sex. Views on homosexuality are also included, as homosexuality subverts gender expectations by not conforming to heteronormative gender models which are often part of patriarchal systems (Kimmel, 2017). In other words, patriarchal systems often rely on biological essentialism which posits heterosexuality as a natural and biological hallmark of masculinity and consequently invalidates homosexual men's masculinity due to their sexuality (Kimmel, 2017). While it has previously been mentioned that there is no direct and unbiased data on views on non-binary and genderqueer identities in Albania, views on homosexuality may give an insight into how Albanians view people who do not conform strictly with their heteronormative and cisnormative society.

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<sup>11</sup> Despite many of this author's friends being convinced that Albania was part of Yugoslavia.

The dataset provided from the EVS surveys have varying scales. This is important to note for the interpretation of the data. Some variables have been reverse coded so that the results are consistent. With the data reverse coded, 1 always means “strongly disagree” and the largest number always means “strongly agree”. However, the data was not simplified or changed beyond this in order to keep its accuracy and integrity. This means that the results are still on scales of 4, 5, and 10. This will be noted in the results table to ensure clarity.

To gauge perceptions and attitudes of gender norms and gender equality, it was decided that the means of the Albanian data and the Italian data would be compared. The data sets were separated into appropriate demographics for analysis; all Albanian and Italian women were in one set for comparison and all Albanian and Italian men were in one set. This was to combat the unequal spread of men and women in the Albanian sample. There are approximately 905 female participants out of 1435 Albanian participants and 530 male participants out of 1435 Albanian participants; Albanian women account for approximately 63.07% of their population while Albanian men account for approximately 36.93% (Evs/Wvs, 2021). In comparison, the Italian population is much more evenly spread with Italian women accounting for 1134 participants out of 2277 total Italian participants which equates to approximately 49.80%. Italian men make up 1143 of Italian participants out of total of 2277 which equates to approximately 50.20% (Evs/Wvs, 2021). Using IBM’s SPSS software version 28.0.1.0 (142), the two datasets- females and males- were put through an independent T-test which measures if there is a statistically significant difference between two means. The countries – Albania and Italy – were set as the grouping variable, and all other variables were set as the test variables. A simple bootstrap was performed on the Independent T-test to ensure the results’ integrity. A 95% Bias Corrected accelerated (BCa) bootstrap was employed. The SPSS programme then gave the means, standard deviations, T values, degrees of freedom, p values and 95% confidence intervals of all the variables tested. This has then enabled the researcher to compare the statistical significance of means for numerous variables surrounding gender equality and norms and enables conclusions to be drawn.

<b>Table 3.1 EVS (2018) variables by code and description</b> <i>(Evs/Wvs, 2021)</i>	
Code	Description
D059	Men make better political leaders than women do
D060	University is more important for a boy than for a girl
D061	Pre-school child suffers with a working mother

D078	Men make better business executives than women do
C001_01	When job scarcity exists: Men should have more right to a job than women
D081	Homosexual couples are as good parents as other couples
D026_03	Duty towards society to have children
E233	Women having the same rights as men is essential to democracy
F118	Justifiable: Homosexuality
F119	Justifiable: Prostitution
F120	Justifiable: Abortion
F121	Justifiable: Divorce
F132	Justifiable: Casual Sex

The above table is simplified for clarity. The questions that precede the table are important to know so the context of what the participants were asked can be understood. For variables F118 to F132 the question asked “Please tell me for each of the following whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card” (Evs/Wvs, 2021). For variables C001\_01, D059, D060, D061 and D078, the question was “for each of the following statements I read out, can you tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with each. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?” (Evs/Wvs, 2021). D026\_01 and D081 the question asked “How would you feel about the following statements? Do you agree or disagree with them?” (Evs/Wvs, 2021). Lastly, for variable E233, the question asked: “many things are desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. Please tell me for each of the following things how essential you think it is as a characteristic of democracy. Use this scale where 1 means “not at all an essential characteristics of democracy” and 10 means it definitely is” (Evs/Wvs, 2021).

### Qualitative data method

This thesis also aims to analyse how the European Union is trying to influence Albania. To achieve this, EU-Albanian Progress Reports from 2011-2021(Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021) have been analysed with the exception of the 2017 document which either does not exist or is not available on the EU accession document portal. The EU-Albania Progress Reports were chosen as all documents report on accession areas to comply with EU standards. The documents analysed include the 2011, 2012, and 2013 documents which were different from the rest of the documents as they were before Albania formally gained official EU candidate country status. The 2011-2013 documents were included

to show a larger pattern of how Albania was meeting the expectations and conditionality of the EU accession process.

Word frequency analysis were used to ascertain which words were most common in paragraphs relating to gender and queer rights. Due to the document's size and variety of topics, paragraphs and sections relating to gender and queer rights were coded into their own codes which then could be analysed. This was a logical choice as full analysis of the documents would not garner the results desired and instead returns results for the most commonly used words in the document which are often not related to gender specifically.

A word frequency query was performed on both the gender-related text code and the queer-related text code. Due to the small size of the sections in each document, it was decided that the 50 most frequent words would be an appropriate measure. It was also decided to use the setting on Nvivo that classifies stemmed words as one group. This prevents words like protect, protecting and protection from being counted separately when they mean the same thing. The stop word function was used which enabled common words that bear no relevance to the information to be excluded. The term "gender", "LGBT" and its derivatives were also included as they were the topic of each analysis. "Gay", "lesbian", "bisexual", "transgender" and "intersex" were also included as they almost exclusively used to define what LGBT meant. For the complete list of stop words please see appendix 1.

### Delimitations

The delimitations of this thesis form an important set of limits, boundaries and understandings that can be gained from the research. It consequently determines the usefulness of the research and conclusions.

Being a novel area of study, the literature available to use to support the thesis is severely limited. The context of a Europeanisation in the Balkans is able to be examined, and likewise so is gender equality and the EU. However, the specific focus of the thesis is not well represented in literature. While this gives the thesis novelty, it also serves as a delimitation of the research.

The availability of data is another delimitation. Data from reputable institutions has been selected as opposed to the researcher collecting data. While this serves to overcome the challenges of collecting data in Albania in 2022- namely COVID-19 restrictions and language barriers- it also limits what the research can investigate. Subsequently, the areas researched for this thesis are limited to the questions that the institutions carrying out the surveys felt was suitable and appropriate to ask for their research.

In addition, the availability of data regarding gender queer identities is practically non-existent. There are additional concerns that any data that is available will either have a high degree of bias or may not be accurate due to gender queer people being unwilling to participate. In the limited number of reports that do exist, it is evident that 'coming out' or being queer is something that has high social stakes and many are at risk of isolation, discrimination and being rejected by their families (COWI: The Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2011). However, there is some research on views on homosexuality in the European Values Survey. While this is not the same as researching genderqueer identities and views on those, this research will give an insight of how those who do not conform to traditional gender norms are viewed. It will form an important part of the discussion.

### Novelty and importance

From the literature research undertaken for this thesis, it has become apparent that there is no existing literature that is the same as the specifics of this research. There is little literature about Europeanisation's effects on gender norms and subsequently gender equality in Albania. The literature that does exist within the realms of Europeanisation and gender equality in Albania is produced from one academic Elona Dini<sup>12</sup> whose focus is largely from a legal perspective. The literature that has been examined on gender equality in Albania is overwhelmingly focused on comparing gender equality during and after the collapse of communism in Albania or the wider Balkans. The literature on Europeanisation tends to focus on either democracy or tangible aspects of gender equality like law changes. Finally, all literature is conceived exclusively within the gender binary. This consequently means that this thesis will be the first to discuss gender equality and gender norms beyond the gender binary and consider the effects on all genders.

The novelty of the research means that it is important. It will be one of the only pieces of research specifically on the effects of Europeanisation on gender equality and gender meaning in Albania. Subsequently it will contribute to several fields of existing research on Europeanisation, gender equality, gender norms, and Albania, or any research that combines these fields. It may also inform the EU of the effectiveness of their soft power and inform future approaches of implementing gender equality. The research is also important due to its intent to discuss all genders despite the limitations of data. This is not something that is widely recognized or implemented in research or any of the reporting done by the European Union, the United Nations and so forth.

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<sup>12</sup> Also recorded as Elona Hoxha. I have looked up this academic after discovering there were two Elona's in the literature review who examined similar things. Upon investigation it is clear that they are the same person, Elona has merely changed her last name between publishing the two articles.

## Validity

The data being collected by reputable sources such as the GESIS-Leibniz Institute the United Nations and adds to the validity of the research as they have accountability mechanisms. Additionally, they do not have “skin in the game” so to speak compared to if data was collected from an advocacy group.

The data from the European Values Survey is older, dating from 2018. Additionally, the supporting surveys are from 2016 and 2018. This will be considered in the discussion and conclusions. Although the data is from as many as five years ago, it does not erode the relevance of the data or the pattern it shows in any way; norms and understandings of gender, although intangible, are often resolute and embedded in the fabric of a given society and thus it is difficult to change quickly.

For the qualitative research, the official EU-Albania Progress Reports will be used which are available on the EU’s document repository. As these documents are being collected from the source of the report itself, it should be valid and accurate for its purposes.

## 4. Results and Findings

### 4.1 Format of results

There are two total results tables that investigate the comparison of two different demographics to ensure the accuracy of conclusions. The first two results tables are: Albanian women compared to Italian women; and Albanian men compared to Italian men. It was advised that the analysis was done this way to avoid any potential data fallacies that may be a result of the bigger percentage of females in the Albanian sample, which is approximately 63% compared to Italian women who account for approximately 50% of the Italian sample. For simplicity of the results, there are three thematic groupings which will be used for discussing the results. These groups are as detailed in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1, EVS (2018) research variables, their descriptions, scales, and grouping (Evs/Wvs, 2021)			
Variable	Variable description	Scale	Grouping
D060	University is more important for a boy than a girl	1-4	Parenting
D061	Preschool child suffers with working mother	1-4	Parenting
D081	Homosexual couples are as good parents as other couples	1-5	Parenting
D026_03	Duty towards society to have children	1-5	Parenting
F118	Justifiable; Homosexuality	1-10	Sexuality <sup>13</sup> and bodily autonomy
F119	Justifiable: Prostitution	1-10	Sexuality and bodily autonomy
F120	Justifiable: Abortion	1-10	Sexuality and bodily autonomy
F132	Justifiable; casual sex	1-10	Sexuality and bodily autonomy
D059	Men make better political leaders than women do	1-4	Power, work, and rights
D078	Men make better business executives than women do	1-4	Power, work, and rights
C001_01	Men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce	1-5	Power, work, and rights
E233	Women having the same rights as men is essential for democracy	1-10	Power, work, and rights
F121	Justifiable; Divorce	1-10	Power, work, and rights

<sup>13</sup> Sexuality here is understood as a holistic understanding of how and when people have sex and who with rather than simply who they have sex with.



The results are formatted as a table with means, standard deviation, t values, degrees of freedom, the p value, and the bootstrapped 95% Confidence Interval. The tables also have superscripted numbers next the variable numbers. For superscripted numbers 1-3, this notes which scale the variable is on, and for superscripted number 4, this notes the scale of the 95% Confidence Interval. A key is also provided below each table.

## 4.2 Albanian women compared to Italian women

Table 4.2 Albanian women’s mean responses compared to Italian women’s mean responses EVS (2018) responses of Albanian and Italian women<sup>14</sup>

Variable	Albania		Italy		t	df	p	95% CI <sup>4</sup>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				Lower	Upper
X003	44	16.32	50	17.75	-6.55	1584	<.001	-7.20	-4.25
D059 <sup>1</sup>	1.75	0.85	1.71	0.74	0.86	1309	.389	-0.44	0.12
D060 <sup>1</sup>	1.25	0.53	1.59	0.71	-10.74	1583	<.001	-0.39	-0.27
D061 <sup>1</sup>	2.74	0.79	2.56	0.81	4.32	1584	<.001	0.10	0.26
D078 <sup>1</sup>	1.86	0.89	1.63	0.68	5.58	1192	<.001	0.15	0.31
CO01_01 <sup>2</sup>	2.52	1.29	2.41	1.16	1.76	1347	.078	-0.12	0.23
D081 <sup>2</sup>	1.90	1.16	2.97	1.17	-18.11	1584	<.001	-1.19	-0.96
D026_03 <sup>2</sup>	3.05	1.31	2.87	1.06	2.97	1247	.003	0.06	0.31
E233 <sup>3</sup>	9.64	1.28	9.18	1.85	5.83	1580	<.001	0.30	0.62
F118 <sup>3</sup>	2.19	2.55	6.54	2.99	-31.16	1544	<.001	-4.60	-4.1
F119 <sup>3</sup>	1.56	1.82	2.84	2.34	-12.33	1577	<.001	-1.48	-1.09
F120 <sup>3</sup>	3.01	2.31	5.28	3.00	-17.01	1579	<.001	-2.52	-2.02
F121 <sup>3</sup>	4.24	2.74	6.64	2.72	-17.34	1584	<.001	-2.66	-2.14
F132 <sup>3</sup>	1.32	1.34	3.41	2.74	-20.03	1412	<.001	-2.28	-1.91

(Evs/Wvs, 2021)

<sup>1</sup> Reverse coded: 4= strongly agree; <sup>2</sup> Reverse coded: 5= strongly agree; <sup>3</sup> Reverse coded: 10= strongly agree; <sup>4</sup>BCA 1000 samples

<sup>14</sup> Please note some helpful explanations for the interpretation of results.

A p value that is smaller than .05 indicates that the results are significant and that the difference between the means is real rather than due to chance.

A t value is indicative of the size of the effect. Therefore, the bigger the number (either positive or negative) for the t value, the bigger the difference is between the means.

The df value, or degrees of freedom value indicates the size of the sample for each variable.

The confidence intervals support the reliability of the p values.

## Parenting

Parenting has been chosen as a grouping of variables due to the strong link between mothers being the primary perpetuator of gender norms for their children (Holmes, 2007) as stated in Chapter 1, section 1.4. Another reason for this grouping is that it has been identified that historically Albanian women have been expected to be mothers as their primary social roles as stated in Chapter 2 under the Historical Meanings and Understandings of Gender in Albania and the Western Balkans section. Therefore, analysing parenting as a whole can show if there is still an expectation of motherhood and the attitudes towards gender equality by parents. Additionally, the parenting grouping of variables contributes to answering the two sub questions of this thesis; “what are the historical, cultural, and political factors that contribute to the Albanian understandings of gender?” and “has the process of Europeanisation changed these understandings of gender?” respectively.

As demonstrated in table 4.2, variable D60- “university is more important for a boy than a girl”- shows there is a significant difference between Albanian (M=1.25, SD=0.53) and Italian (M=1.59, SD=0.75) women’s agreement;  $t(1583)=-10.74$ ,  $p<.001$ . A p value of  $<.001$  effectively means that the results have less than a 1% probability of being the results of the analysis being by chance (Glen, n.d.). Consequently, the difference between the samples can be considered significant (real). Likewise, for variable D061- “pre-school children suffer with a working mother- there is a significant difference between Albanian women (M=2.74, SD=0.79) and Italian women (M=2.56, SD=0.81);  $t(1584) =4.32$ ,  $p<.001$ . For variable D081 – “homosexual couples are as good parents as other couples”- the most significant difference in all the parenting coded variables exists with Albanian women (M=1.90, SD=1.16) disagreeing more with the statement than Italian women (M=2.97, SD=1.17);  $t(1584) =-18.11$ ,  $p<.001$ . D081 is also one of the variables with the most substantial differences as demonstrated by the t value, -18.11. This indicates that this variable is where Albanians and Italians’ opinions diverge the most. Lastly for variable D026\_03 – “Duty towards society to have children- there is a significant difference between Albanian women (M=3.05, SD=1.31) compared to Italian women (M=2.87, SD=1.06) although the difference between samples for this variable was the smallest out of all the parenting coded variables;  $t(1247) =2.97$ ,  $p=.003$ .

While both groups of women disagree with the sentiment that university is more important for boys than girls, Albanian women feel more strongly about this. This is a pattern throughout all the parenting-coded variables, with Albanian women believing that preschool children suffer by having a working mother, that homosexual couples are not as good parents as other couples are, and that it is their duty towards society to have children. Their Italian counterparts also agree that preschool children suffer with a working mother and that they have some duty towards society to become parents, although this is a less salient sentiment among Italian women. The main difference here is

that Italian women are less conservative about homosexual couples' ability to successfully raise children compared to Albanian women; whereas Albanian women believe homosexual couples are not as good parents as other couples, Italian women are neutral about it.

### Sexuality and bodily autonomy

Sexuality and bodily autonomy have been chosen as a grouping of variables because, as established in Chapter 2 under sections 2.2 Albanian Meanings and Understandings of Gender, Albanian gender norms have often been patriarchal and have normalised the role of women as being wives and mothers. This may mean that Albanian women have historically had reduced autonomy over their bodies and sexuality. Additionally, as stated in Chapter 1, under the Health and Reproduction section, access to abortion in Albania still has barriers which reduces women's rights to bodily autonomy and reproductive freedom. Subsequently, analysing sexuality and bodily autonomy as a whole may show the attitudes towards subjects such as abortion and ascertain if the norms and perspectives around bodily autonomy and sexuality have changed. The sexuality and grouping of variables contribute to answering the two sub questions of this thesis; "what are the historical, cultural, and political factors that contribute to the Albanian understandings of gender?" and "has the process of Europeanisation changed these understandings of gender?" respectively.

As shown in Table 4.2, for variable F118 – "justifiable: homosexuality"- there is a significant difference between Albanian (M=2.19, SD= 2.55) and Italian (M=6.54, SD=2.99) women's agreement;  $t(1544)=-31.16$ ,  $p<.001$ . This means that Albanian women find homosexuality less justifiable than Italian women do. Variable F118 has the most significant difference in both the sexuality and bodily autonomy grouping, and out of all variables between Albanian and Italian women. This is supported by the t value of -31.16 which indicates that opinions on homosexuality from Albanian and Italian women diverge the most. Likewise for variable F119 – "justifiable: prostitution"- there is a significant difference between Albanian women (M=1.56, SD=1.82) and Italian women (M=2.84, SD=2.34);  $t(1577)=-12.33$ ,  $p<.001$ . While both Italian and Albanian women find prostitution unjustifiable, Albanian women disagree to a greater extent. For variable F120 – "justifiable: abortion"- there is a significant difference between Albanian women (M=3.01, SD=2.31) who disagree more with the statement than Italian women (M=5.28, SD=3.00);  $t(1579)=-17.01$ ,  $p<.001$ . Albanian women find abortion to be unjustifiable whereas Italian women hold a position of neutrality. Lastly for variable F132 – "justifiable: casual sex" - there is a significant difference between Albanian women (M=1.32, SD=1.34) compared to Italian women (M=3.41, SD=2.74);  $t(1412)=-20.03$ ,  $p<.001$ . This is another

variable where Albanian and Italian women disagree with most with the t value being -20.03. There are significant differences between each sample for each variable in this group, as the p value is <.001 (Glen, n.d.).

The sexuality and bodily autonomy grouping of variables has the most divergent means. Generally, Albanian women disagree with something whereas Italian women hold a position of neutrality or disagreement to a lesser extent. For example, Albanian women view homosexuality and abortion as unjustifiable whereas Italian women are neutral towards both. While Italian and Albania women view both prostitution and casual sex as unjustifiable, Albanian women disagreed to a greater extent. It is possible that this implies that Albanian women still comply to patriarchal understandings of gender norms which are heteronormative and essentialist (Kimmel, 2017), as previously stated in Chapter 3, section 3.2. These results could also be interpreted as Italy being more aligned with European Union ideals on gender equality compared to Albania.

### Power, work, and rights

Power, work, and rights have been chosen as a grouping of variables because these variables surround attitudes towards tangible gender equality measures that can be implemented. For example, variable D059 – “men make better political leaders than women do” - measures the perceptions of women in politics and their perceived capability. Political representation for women is able to be enforced by law and Albania currently has in place a 30% quota of the least represented gender on party lists which is required of all political parties. Consequently, analysing perceptions around tangible actions such as political representation and work life can give an insight into if tangible actions such as law changes are having an effect on changing attitudes around gender equality and gender norms. This group of variables helps to answer the main question as well as the two sub questions of this thesis; “what are the historical, cultural, and political factors that contribute to the Albanian understandings of gender?” and “has the process of Europeanisation changed these understandings of gender?” respectively.

For variable D059 “men make better political leaders than women do” there is no significant difference between Albanian (M=1.75, SD= 0.85) and Italian (M=1.71, SD=0.74) women’s agreement;  $t(1309) = 0.86, p = .389$ . This means that the means between Albanian and Italian are too close to be statistically different. Furthermore, the p value of .389 indicates that the results of comparing the two means are less accurate compared to other results thus far. Likewise, for variable C001\_01 – “Men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce” - there is not a significant difference between Albanian women (M=2.52, SD=1.29) and Italian women (M=2.41, SD=1.16);  $t(1347) = 1.76, p = .078$ . For

variable D078 – “Men make better business executive than women do”- there is a significant difference between Albanian women (M=1.86, SD=0.89) compared to Italian women (M=1.63, SD=0.68);  $t(1192)=5.58, p<.001$ . Variable E233 – “women having the same rights as men is essential for democracy”- a significant difference exists with Albanian women agreeing (M=9.64, SD=1.28) and Italian women also agreeing (M=9.18, SD=1.85) although to a lesser extent;  $t(1580)=5.83, p=.003$ . Lastly, for variable F121 – “justifiable: divorce”- there is a significant difference between Albanian women (M=4.24, SD=2.74) who disagree more with the statement than Italian women (M=6.64, SD=2.72);  $t(1584)=-17.34, p<.001$ . Variable F121 has the most significant difference in the power, work, and rights grouping, and out of all variables between Albanian and Italian women.

The statistics presented above suggest that Albanian women paint a complex picture for the power, work, and rights grouping. Albanian women believe that women having the same rights as men is essential for democracy more than Italian women, but they also generally disagree with divorce compared to Italian women’s neutrality. This could mean that Italian women feel more empowered to seek divorce or be divorced because divorce is treated with neutrality in Italy. Comparatively, Albanian women may not be willing to get divorced due to the disapproval and stigma surrounding divorce. Thus, Albanian women may elect to stay in marriages where abuse occurs instead of getting divorced. Additionally, both Albanian and Italian disagree with the notion that men make better business executives than women do, although Italian women disagree to a larger extent.

### 4.3 Albanian men compared to Italian men

Table 4.3 Albanian men’s mean responses compared to Italian men’s mean responses

Variable	Albania		Italy		t	df	P	95% CI <sup>4</sup>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				Lower	Upper
X003	50	16.70	51	18.11	-0.386	1321	0.699	-2.47	1.58
D059 <sup>1</sup>	1.90	0.92	1.98	0.79	-1.55	774	0.121	-0.18	0.02
D060 <sup>1</sup>	1.30	0.58	1.77	0.74	-12.81	1085	<.001	-0.55	-0.39
D061 <sup>1</sup>	2.74	0.81	2.55	0.81	4.09	1321	<.001	0.11	0.29
D078 <sup>1</sup>	2.08	0.96	1.92	0.75	2.93	712	0.004	0.04	0.26
C001_01 <sup>2</sup>	2.62	1.35	2.67	1.19	-0.706	788	0.481	-0.2	0.10
D081 <sup>2</sup>	1.53	0.99	2.77	1.18	-19.99	1028	<.001	-1.35	-1.11
D026_03 <sup>2</sup>	3.29	1.32	2.94	1.11	4.73	757	<.001	0.19	0.50
E233 <sup>3</sup>	9.68	1.19	8.85	2.08	9.13	1295	<.001	0.63	1.01
F118 <sup>3</sup>	1.78	2.03	6.05	3.14	-29.70	1235	<.001	-4.5	-3.98
F119 <sup>3</sup>	1.73	2.04	3.63	2.65	-14.38	1100	<.001	-2.15	-1.6
F120 <sup>3</sup>	2.77	2.20	5.36	3.04	-17.71	1154	<.001	-2.85	-2.33
F121 <sup>3</sup>	3.96	2.76	6.69	2.81	-16.75	1321	<.001	-3.07	-2.43
F132 <sup>3</sup>	1.90	2.25	4.35	2.88	-16.93	1090	<.001	-2.74	-2.16

Table 4-1: Albanian men's mean responses compared to Italian men's mean responses (Evs/Wvs, 2021)

<sup>1</sup> Reverse coded: 4= strongly agree; <sup>2</sup> Reverse coded: 5= strongly agree; <sup>3</sup> Reverse coded: 10= strongly agree; <sup>4</sup>BCA 1000 samples

### Parenting

As previously stated in section 4.2 “Albanian women compared to Italian women”, mothers are generally the perpetrators of gender norms in their children (Holmes, 2007) as stated in Chapter 1, section 1.4. However, men still have a role to play in raising and subsequently gendering their children. Additionally, fathers set an example of gender norms within their own family units and accordingly their perspectives on gender norms and gender equality will impact the children’s understanding about how gender is done. For example, if a father has a hands-off approach to the day-to-day care of his children and leaves it to their mother, the children could code caring and nurturing as a natural feminine characteristic as opposed to something that can be done by anyone. Therefore, it is important to understand the perspectives of men on parenting to understand how parenting may be taught to children. Another reason for this grouping is because as has been shown previously in Chapter 1, in the History of Albania section, it has been identified that historically Albanian men have

been the decision makers in family units. Cara and Margjeka (2015) have stated that children understand that their father's word is law. Consequently, the perspectives of fathers may have considerable influence within their own family. Overall, analysing parenting as a whole can show the attitudes of fathers towards gender and parenting. The parenting grouping of variables contributes to answering the two sub questions of this thesis; "what are the historical, cultural, and political factors that contribute to the Albanian understandings of gender?" and "has the process of Europeanisation changed these understandings of gender?" respectively.

As shown in graph 4.3, variable D060 – "university is more important for boys than girls"- there is a significant difference between Albanian (M=1.30, SD=0.58) and Italian (M=1.77, SD=0.74) men's agreement;  $t(1085)=-12.81$ ,  $p<.001$ . Although both disagree with the sentiment that university is more important for boys, Albanian men disagree more strongly than Italian men. Likewise, for variable D061 – "pre-school children suffer with a working mother"- there is a significant difference between Albanian men (M=2.74, SD=0.81) and Italian men (M=2.55, SD=0.81);  $t(1321)=4.09$ ,  $p<.001$ . However, this is the weakest degree of significance out of all the parenting coded variables for the men comparison. Table 4.3 also shows that variable D081 – "homosexual couples are as good parents as other couples"- has the most significant difference in all the parenting coded variables, with Albanian men (M=1.53, SD=0.99) disagreeing more with the statement than Italian men (M=2.77, SD=1.18);  $t(1028)=-19.99$ ,  $p<.001$ . This is supported by the t value of -18.11 which indicates a significant difference of opinions between Albanian and Italian men. Lastly for variable D026\_03 – "duty towards society to have children" - there is a significant difference between Albanian men (M=3.29, SD=1.32) compared Italian men (M=2.94, SD=1.11);  $t(757)=4.73$ ,  $p<.001$ .

Albanian men have stronger disagreement with the variables D061 and D026\_03, believing that pre-school children do suffer with working mothers and that it is their duty towards society to have children respectively. Italian men also hold similar attitudes, but often to a lesser extent. For variable D081, Albanian men once again strongly disagree with the sentiment, believing that homosexual couples are not as good parents as other couples. Italian men again disagree with the statement, but once again to a lesser extent than Albanian men. Lastly, both Albanian men and Italian men disagree with the notion that university is more important for boys than girls, although notably Albanian men disagree with the notion more. Thus, Albanian men believe in both girls and boys having equal access to university education more so than their Italian counterparts. The trend overall is that Italian men are less conservative than their Albanian counterparts except for the education clause- D060- which will be elaborated upon in the discussion.

## Sexuality and bodily autonomy

As stated in section 4.2, sexuality and bodily autonomy have been chosen as a grouping of variables because, as established in Chapter 2 under sections 2.2 Albanian Meanings and Understandings of Gender, Albanian gender norms have often been patriarchal and have normalised the role of women as being wives and mothers. It is important to understand Albanian men's' perspectives on sexuality and bodily autonomy of women as in the 1990s after the collapse of communism there was a return to a form of patriarchal norms (Calloni, 2002). This included women's roles being conceived as "mothers of the nations" who were responsible for having children and passing on cultural knowledge as stated in section 2.2 in Chapter 2 (Brunnbauer, 2000). The sexuality and grouping of variables contribute to answering the two sub questions of this thesis; "what are the historical, cultural, and political factors that contribute to the Albanian understandings of gender?" and "has the process of Europeanisation changed these understandings of gender?" respectively.

There is a significant difference between Albanian (M=1.78, SD= 2.03) and Italian (M=6.04, SD=3.14) men's agreement with variable F118 – "justifiable: homosexuality"- as shown in graph 4.3;  $t(1235)=-29.70$ ,  $p<.001$ . Variable F118 has the most significant difference in both the sexuality and bodily autonomy grouping with a difference of 4.26. This is supported by the t value of -29.70 which indicates a big divergence of opinions between the two groups; It is the largest difference out of all variables between Albanian and Italian men. Likewise, for variable F119 – "justifiable: prostitution"- there is a significant difference between Albanian men (M=1.73, SD=2.04) and Italian men (M=3.63, SD=2.65);  $t(1100)=-14.38$ ,  $p<.001$ . For variable F120 – "justifiable: abortion" - there is a significant difference between Albanian men (M=2.77, SD=2.20) who disagree more with the statement than Italian men (M=5.36, SD=3.04);  $t(1154)=-17.11$ ,  $p<.001$ . This is another variable where opinions of Albanian and Italian men diverge greatly with the t value being -17.71. Lastly for variable 132 – "justifiable; casual sex"- there is a significant difference between Albanian men (M=1.90, SD=2.25) compared to Italian men (M=4.35, SD=2.88);  $t(1090)=-16.93$ ,  $p<.001$ . All p values for this grouping are  $<.001$  which indicates that the independent t test results are accurate and not due to chance.

The sexuality and bodily autonomy grouping of variables has the most divergent means. Generally, Albanian men disagree with something whereas Italian men hold a position of neutrality or disagreement, but to a lesser extent than Albanian men. For example, Albanian men view homosexuality and abortion as unjustifiable whereas Italian men are neutral towards both. While Italian men view both prostitution and casual sex as unjustifiable, Albanian men disagreed to a greater



extent. This could be an indication of patriarchal gender norms around sexuality and bodily autonomy still being present in Albanian society. As stated in section 3.2 in Chapter 3, the negative attitudes around sexuality and bodily autonomy can have sexual violence implications (Ralston, 2021).

### Power, work, and rights

As stated previously in section 4.2, power, work, and rights have been chosen as a grouping of variables because these variables surround attitudes towards tangible gender equality measures that can be implemented. Consequently, analysing perceptions around tangible actions such as political representation and work life can give an insight into if tangible actions such as law changes are having an effect on changing attitudes around gender equality and gender norms. It is particularly important to understand the perspectives of men as a majority of those in power in Albania are men and these men make decisions that affect women such as funding, education, and laws. This group of variables helps to answer the main question as well as the two sub questions of this thesis; “what are the historical, cultural, and political factors that contribute to the Albanian understandings of gender?” and “has the process of Europeanisation changed these understandings of gender?” respectively.

As displayed in graph 4.3, there is not a significant difference between Albanian (M=1.90, SD= 0.92) and Italian (M=1.98, SD=0.79) men’s agreement with variable D059 – “men make better political leaders than women do”-;  $t(774)=-1.55$ ,  $p=.121$ . Likewise, for variable C001\_01 – “Men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce” - there is not a significant difference between Albanian men (M=2.62, SD=1.35) and Italian men (M=2.67, SD=1.19) for variable C001\_01;  $t(788)=0.71$ ,  $p=.481$ . For variables D059 and C001\_01, the results suggest that the means are too similar to be statistically significant. The p value for both variables also suggests that the probability of the results being by chance are high and consequently the results are not accurate. For variable D078 – “men make better business executives than women do”- there is a significant difference between Albanian men (M=2.08, SD=0.96) compared to Italian men (M=1.92, SD=0.75);  $t(712)=2.93$ ,  $p=.004$ . Variable E233 – “women having the same rights as men is essential for democracy”- is significant with Albanian men agreeing (M=9.68, SD=1.19) and Italian men also agreeing (M=8.85, SD=2.08) although to a lesser extent;  $t(1295)=9.13$ ,  $p<.001$ . Lastly, for variable F121 – “justifiable: divorce”- there is a significant difference between Albanian men (M=3.96, SD=2.76) who disagree more with the statement than Italian men who hold a position of neutrality (M=6.69 SD=2.81);  $t(1321)=-16.72$ ,  $p<.001$ . Variable F121 has the most significant difference in the power, work, and rights grouping, and out of all variables between Albanian and Italian men with a difference of 2.73.

In the same vein as their female counterparts, Albanian men’s values also seem to be in contradiction; Albanian men believe that women having the same rights as men is essential for democracy more so than Italian men. However, divorce is viewed as something that is unjustifiable especially when compared to Italian men’s neutrality. Additionally, both Albanian and Italian men disagree with the notion that men make better business executives than women do, although Italian men disagree to a larger extent. These results could appear to contradict the pattern of the men’s results overall, but as will be discussed in the 4.6 findings and discussion section, there are historical, cultural, and political reasons why Albanian men’s opinions deviate away from their pattern for some variables, but not others.

#### 4.4 Discussion on general trends of the quantitative research

It is obvious that Italians are less conservative towards most of the variables compared to the Albanians. The only exceptions to this are variable D060 and E233 which are “university is more important for boys than girls” and “women having the same rights as men is essential to democracy” respectively. This will be elaborated on further on in the “exceptions in variables” section.

#### 4.5 EU Accession document analysis

##### Gender in the EU-Albania Progress Reports

Figure 4.5.a : Word cloud of the 50 most frequent words in gender related text of the EU-Albanian Progress Reports



*(Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)*

As stated in section “qualitative research method” in the Chapter 3, a word frequency search was conducted using Nvivo software. The documents were the 2011-2021 Albania Progress Reports produced by the European Commission (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). These documents were chosen for analysis since the progress reports is produced by the EU and details how Albania is conforming to the EU’s conditionality for joining. The results of the 2011-2021 EU-Albanian progress reports analysis shows that out of the 5 most frequent words “violence” (mentioned 92 times), “protection” (35 times), “local” (27 times), “mechanisms” (27 times) and “efforts” (25 times), three of them are often used in the context of violence. The results demonstrate an apparent focus by the European Union on combatting gender-based violence in Albania. This conclusion is found by the most frequent word in the analysis being “violence” which is mentioned in the gender-related texts 92 times. This far outstrips the second most frequent word “protection” which is mentioned 35 times. This is unsurprising considering the gender-violence statistics discussed in Chapter 1 with as many 50% of the women and girls surveyed responding that they had experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime (Haarr, 2019). It is also expected since the first priority of the European Union’s 2020-2025 Gender Equality strategy is “being free from violence and stereotypes” (Observatory for the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, n.d). This echoing of the Gender Equality Strategy in this analysis of the EU-Albania Progress Reports is not a sole occurrence as other words in the top 50 most frequent words echo the main themes of the Strategy. For example, the theme of “gender mainstreaming and an intersectional perspective in EU policies” (Observatory for the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, n.d) can be seen by inclusion of “mainstreaming”, “ministries”, “institutional” and “government”. Likewise, the theme of “funding actions to make progress in gender equality in the EU” can be seen by the inclusion of “funding”, and “budgeting”. This is a common theme in the Progress Reports with funding being mentioned in the 2012, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 documents often in relation to the funding gap and reliance on external funding rather than government funding for things like gender equality initiatives and domestic violence shelters.

It could also indicate how the EU envisions implementing gender equality; words like “strategy”, “mechanisms”, “reporting”, “institutional” and “operational” indicate the presence of top-down approaches implemented by national and local governments. Despite one of the EU’s overarching themes having an emphasis on being free from gender stereotypes (Observatory for the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, n.d), there is nothing to suggest that this is a

particular priority of the EU in Albania’s accession negotiations. If it was a priority of the EU in their accession negotiations with Albania it could be expected that words like “discrimination” and “awareness” would be present in the gender code analysis.

### Queer rights in the EU Progress Reports

Figure 4.5.b: Word cloud of the 50 most frequent words in queer rights related text of the EU-Albanian Progress Reports



(Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)

From the word frequency search for queer-rights related text from the 2011-2021 EU Albania Progress Reports, several themes emerge. In contrast to the gender related text, the most common word in the queer-rights related text is “discrimination” which along with “discriminatory”<sup>15</sup> is mentioned 33 times. It is also apparently evident that the EU places a focus on specific rights in this field. “Plan”, “rights”, “action” and “legislation” were all mentioned 15, 13, 13 and 11 times respectively. This could indicate a desire by the EU to see more legislative changes to ensure queer rights by the Albanian government and to increase the Albanian government’s awareness efforts. This speaks to where

<sup>15</sup> It is unclear why “discrimination” and “discriminatory” are classified as separate words by the Nvivo system as they should be counted as one under the ‘stemmed words’ setting.

Albania stands on queer rights as well, with it often being mentioned that discriminatory legislation is still in place.

On a civilian front, the EU appears concerned with hate speech with words “media”, “speech” and “hate” also being fairly common with 10, 9 and 7 mentions respectively. These words are often used together, highlighting the hate speech and homophobia that can be particularly poignant in the media as well as by politicians and other key figures. Additionally, “awareness” is mentioned 9 times and is often framed in either awareness of queer rights or as awareness and acceptance of queer identities. Lastly, it should be mentioned that discrimination and attacks against transgender and intersex people is mentioned at least three times over the course of the reports. Consequently, it appears that the EU’s main priorities in Albania’s accession negotiations is that non-discriminatory legislation is adopted, and that the EU value of tolerance be imported via awareness and acceptance of queer identities.

#### 4.6 Quantitative and Qualitative analysis and it’s link to Europeanisation

The results from the quantitative and qualitative research may seem unrelated at first glance. However, from the qualitative research it can be understood that the European Union is first and foremost concerned about gender-based violence in Albania. This comes as no surprise as it has been a goal of the last three EU Commissions and is a paramount goal of Ursula Von der Leyen’s current EU Commission (Observatory for the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, n.d). It additionally is not surprising considering the rate of gender-based violence that happens in Albania (Haarr, 2019). Likewise, the EU-Albania Progress Reports suggest that the EU is similarly concerned about discrimination against queer people in Albania and wishes to impart the value of tolerance into Albanian society. It can be understood that eliminating gender-based violence and discrimination against queer people are some of the EU’s priorities is part of Europeanisation as both the adoption of specific policies and shared beliefs and norms (Godzisz, 2019).

According to Dini’s (2021) research on legislative changes around gender-based violence, Albania has made progress towards adopting some of the EU policies and rules. However, on the shared values and norms front, the quantitative research makes it clear that the EU has thus far been unsuccessful in the Europeanisation process. This is especially so for reducing the amount of gender-based violence or reduce the amount of discrimination against queer people as reported in both the Albania Progress Reports (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021), in the Violence Against Women in Albania report (Haarr,

2019), and in the Study on Homophobia, Transphobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (COWI: The Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2011) on Albania.

This brings Godzisz's (2019) criticism of Europeanisation to the fore. They argued that often the EU is unsuccessful in being sustainable; "[ the Western Balkan] countries are simply fulfilling the EU external conditionality superficially, without attempting to internalize the norms seriously" (Godzisz, 2019, p. 301). Without changing the norms surrounding the policy changes, it is possible that policy and legislative changes are not used as they should be. For example, a queer person may not feel comfortable reporting discrimination due to a perceived stigma surrounding queerness.

#### 4.7 Findings and Discussion

The results of the research suggest that Europeanisation has not yet had a tangible effect on Albanian gender norms and subsequently does not aid Albania in achieving sustainable gender equality. Despite placing similar importance on religion and family, the comparative research on Italy shows more progressive views in Italy on a number of fronts relating to gender equality. This is particularly shown by the means of Italians in the "justifiable" section of variables which asks if something is moral and/or justifiable or not. These variables essentially ask the respondent if they think it is morally okay to do or not and therefore is an important to understand the norms and values that the public operate with. Italians tend to have a mean of at least 5 for most of the justifiable statements which indicates that while some Italians will find things like abortion and casual sex as unjustifiable to do, most Italians will have either a neutral view towards it or believe that it is justifiable for people to do. Albanians tend to condemn a lot of the variables, such as casual sex, prostitution and homosexuality as well as believing things like mothers should not work during a child's pre-school years (variable D061). Italians tend to be neutral or disapprove of most of the variables, but to a much lesser extent than Albanians.

#### Gender-based Violence in Albania

It appears that gender-based violence has not reduced in Albanian society and is still a norm. Europeanisation in Albania in the context of EU accession thus far been relatively short term with Albania only becoming an official EU candidate country in June 2014, therefore changes in norms may have not taken effect yet. The link between the variables investigated, such as variables F119 and F132 and gender-based violence may not be an obvious indicator of violence, but the views of variable F132 on casual sex and variable F119 on prostitution indicates that double-standards of sexuality exist in Albanian society. Therefore, it is most likely that a patriarchal understanding of sexuality and

masculinity exists. While it cannot be concluded for sure what gender is being thought of when Albanians were asked if casual sex was justifiable or not, the results do replicate patriarchal understandings of sexuality (Kimmel, 2017).

Albanian women disapproved of casual sex more strongly than Albanian men perhaps because femininity is often defined by the lack of active sexuality. Kimmel explains “women are raised to believe that to be sexually active or “promiscuous” is to transgress the rules of femininity” (Kimmel, 2017, p. 411). This can also explain why Albanian women disapprove of prostitution the most out of all groups examined. By contrast, masculinity is often defined by active sexuality (Kimmel, 2017). What cannot be explained, however, is why it appears that Albanian women appear to be more lenient towards prostitution than casual sex. It is possible that within the Albanian sample of women that links to prostitution exists.

In contrast, Albanian men had higher means for both casual sex and prostitution than Albanian women. This can relate to patriarchal understandings of masculinity in which men are posited as sexual beings. Lindsey explains that “macho men” or the pinnacle of masculinity are “primarily sexual beings living and have ongoing heightened interests in sexuality in all its forms” (Lindsey, 2011, p. 250). Consequently, it may be understood that men are therefore allowed to be sexual in all its definitions whereas women are not. However, it should be noted that casual sex is still largely disapproved of by Albanian men. This could be for a variety of reasons including religious beliefs. However, this disapproval of casual sex could be another reproduction of gendered understandings of sexuality; there is no way to ascertain *who* Albanian men are thinking of when they answered if casual sex was justifiable. It is possible than a majority of the male respondents were thinking of women when they answered. Albanian men’s disapproval of prostitution may be for similar reasons.

The opinions on casual sex and prostitution from Albanians paired with the understanding of how these replicate gendered understandings of sex, leads to the discussion of sexuality and violence. With masculinity being associated with sexual prowess and often defined by the ability to succeed in sexual encounters, and being in a society where patriarchal systems exists and men being ‘dominant’ is the norm, it is theorized that “power and patriarchy combine to spur rape and increasing sexual violence” (Lindsey, 2011, p. 256). While the results of this research alone are not enough alone to determine if a culture of violence or rape culture exists in Albania, it looks more likely when combined with previous research on gender norms around violence in Albania.

The 2018 Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania survey indicates a culture of dismissing and tolerating violence exists in Albania with approximately 52.2% of people agreed with the notion that the community believes “violence between a husband and wife is a private matter and others should

not intervene” and a further 46.5% of people agreeing that the community believes that women “should tolerate some violence to keep her family together” (Haarr, 2019, p. 65). This survey also reveals a culture of victim blaming with 27.6% of those surveyed believing that the community holds the belief that a woman is partly to blame or at fault when she is beat by her husband (Haarr, 2019, p. 65). Perhaps more alarmingly, approximately 21.2% or 1 in 5 people believe that the community believes that “if a woman is raped, she has probably done something careless to put herself in that situation” (Haarr, 2019, p. 66). There is also a trend of shame around sexual violence with 27.6% or roughly 1 in 4 people believing that the community believes “a woman should be ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anyone outside of her family about abuse or violence in her marriage” (Haarr, 2019, p. 65). Furthermore, approximately 26.1% or 1 in 4 people believing that a “woman should be ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anyone if she is raped” (Haarr, 2019, p. 66).

Consequently, as well the fact that casual sex and prostitution are condemned by the majority in Albanian society, it can also be understood that some Albanian narratives around gender-based violence dictate that women are to blame for their experiences of gender-based violence and that they should not speak up about it beyond their family (Haarr, 2019). A norm of non-intervention also exists, with Albanians believing that violence between a couple is a private matter. This is problematic for the European Union’s current attempts to combat gender-based violence in Albania; there is a large focus on changing laws to enable perpetrators of violence to be charged as well as a large focus on victim support including shelters (Dini, 2021). Yet, with the gender norms and narratives that currently exist, it is unlikely that women would feel comfortable reporting violence or getting support.

This brings about an important conversation around the EU’s processes and their suitability for where it is being used. Europeanisation has long been criticized for its unsustainability and this thesis suggests that Albania and gender-based violence is a paramount example; while the approaches the EU are taking are important and necessary, without associated gender norm changes, their efforts may never be utilised fully nor sustainable in the long term. However, the short-term nature of Albanian accession should be considered. Although it appears changes to norms have not happened yet, it does not mean that it will not happen as the accession and Europeanisation processes continue.

### Non-binary and genderqueer identities in Albania

As mentioned above, another concern of the European Union in their accession negotiations with Albania is discrimination against queer people. The EU does not condone discrimination against queer people and instead extol the value of tolerance. Although the EU constitutes gender equality as the equality between men and women instead of between all and every gender and the European Values Survey does not have variables relating to genders beyond the binary, genderqueer identities are an



important part of the conversation and will be discussed here. While there is not any research relating to the perception of non-binary and genderqueer identities in Albania, arguably there is insight to be gained from the perceptions of Albanians around homosexuality, since homosexuality can subvert essentialist understandings of gender (Kimmel, 2017).

Homosexuality is particularly condemned in Albanian society, compared to Italy. Despite both countries holding religion and family in high regard in terms of importance in life, Italy is far more tolerant of homosexuality. This brings to the fore concerning implications for those in Albania that identify as genderqueer or non-binary. While there is a clear disapproval of homosexuality, it is still understood in a binary way. That is to say, generally homosexual men and women conform to the norms of masculinity and femininity respectively (Kimmel, 2017). Thus, it can be understood that when Albanians disapprove of homosexuality, they are still disapproving of a sexuality that conforms to the gender binary; gay men may not have sex with women, but this does not mean they forfeit masculinity and gender norms all together. There may be an understanding of this in Albanian society too, with Albanians disagreeing with the notion that homosexual couples are as good parents as other couples. While this may be due to fears of ‘converting’ children away from heterosexuality or because Albanians believe that children should have a mum and dad, it is also possible for that some they believe two men<sup>16</sup> are incapable of being the primary caregiver of children as it is a ‘feminine’ thing.

Given the historical understandings of gender in Albania, which was established in Chapter 2, section 2.2, binary gender has been the prominent gender norm that Albanian society has revolved around. Therefore, where this leaves those who do not fit into the binary is an important consideration. It is very likely that those who hold identities beyond the gender binary are even more discriminated against compared to homosexual people. This is something that is noted briefly in the EU-Albania Progress Reports with three explicit mentions of physical violence against transgender and intersex people (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2011, 2020, 2021).

### Woman in Albanian society

The historical, political, and cultural role of women in Albania has conformed to patriarchal or traditional ideas surrounding gender meaning. Generally, this has meant that women have been mothers, responsible for the household, and have had limited input in decision making in both family units and in political sphere (Brunnbauer, 2000; Spehar, 2012). It is hence imperative to understand

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<sup>16</sup> This is once again assuming that Albanians associate ‘homosexual’ with two gay men.

what roles women take contemporarily to answer sub-question 2; “Has the process of Europeanisation changed these understandings of gender?”

The data clearly shows that women in Albania are expected to prioritise being mothers over most other things, with both Albanian women and men agreeing that preschool children suffer with a working mother and that it is their duty towards society to have children. This means that Albanians expect Albanian women to prioritise motherhood over other aspirations. It is also clear that an element of Albanian femininity and womanhood is defined by their ability to be mothers and caregivers. This is a trend throughout all of Albanian history examined in this thesis, with pre-communist canons emphasising women’s roles as mothers and wife, communist era policy expecting women to continue their roles as mothers and wives despite their new roles as workers, and the return to “domestication” post communism (Brunnbauer, 2000).

It could be argued that the overarching tenets of womanhood in Albania is being a good mother and wife above all else. The UNDP’s survey reinforces this theory. For example, 44.99% agree and a further 24.05% strongly agree with the statement “it is better for the whole family if the husband has a job and the wife takes care of the family” (Dauti & Zhllima, 2016, p. 31). Another 56.67% of Albanians agree and 30.67% strong agree with the notion “it is good if the woman works but, above all, she should think about her family and children” (Dauti & Zhllima, 2016, p. 36). Lastly, 40.44% of Albanians agree and 34.67% strongly agree with the notion that “a good wife should obey to her husband, preserving family peace and well-being” (Dauti & Zhllima, 2016, p. 31)

### Exceptions in variables

In order to understand how Europeanisation has affected gender norms in Albania, it is important to discuss the exceptions in the variables. This is to understand why these variables are exceptions and to ensure they are not wrongfully attributed to Europeanisation if there are other reasons why these variables may exist.

The only variables that indicate positive attitudes towards gender equality for Albanians are variables D060 and E223 which relate to education and women’s rights respectively; Albanians believe more than their Italian counterparts that university is not more important for a boy than a girl and that women having the same rights as men is essential for democracy. However, contributing these differences to the positive influence of Europeanisation would be a fallacy. It is far more likely that both of these results can be attributed to Albania’s communist past rather than any actions by the European Union. As noted in the literature review, communism in Albania was different than other

communist systems at the time. However, like other communist systems it did instil gender equality as essential to society even if this gender equality was superficial. In other words, Albanians views on gender equality being essential to democracy may be a long-lasting consequence of Albanian communism which held gender equality in high regard, even if in reality the implementation was trivial. The importance of university education for both boys and girls is something that may also be attributed to Albania's communist past with the Communist regime mandating mandatory basic education for all children and consequently changing the who was educated (Kamibeppu, 1999); prior to communism in Albania 90% of women were illiterate, whereas by 1989 90% of women were literate (Vullnetari & King, 2016). Moreover, despite many Albanians believing that children should have equal opportunity to attend university, this does not necessarily mean the freedom of choice and gender equality one would assume it does.

## 5. Conclusions and future research

### 5.1 Conclusion

This thesis has sought to understand the impact of Europeanisation on gender equality in Albania through investigating and comparing gender norms in Albania and Italy and with the Albania Progress Reports from the EU. While it can be generally said that Europeanisation may not contribute to the success of gender equality in Albania, answering the research questions as outlined in Chapter 1 will enable more detail and nuances to be understood.

*What are the historical, cultural, and political factors that contribute to the Albanian understandings of gender?*

It is evident from prior research that historical, cultural, and political factors continue to contribute to and affect the understandings and meanings of gender in Albania. Primarily the canons and the legacy of the communist era appears to continue to shape what it means to be a woman, or what it means to be a man, in Albanian society. This finding is reflected in the research in this thesis which demonstrates that women are expected to be mothers and that sexuality is viewed through a traditionally conservative lens in Albania. Although it is not explicitly stated or examined, the expectation that men should be the breadwinners and decision makers in a family can be seen in a number of variables, as discussed in the Chapter 4, as well as a distinctive lack of variables or conversations around men's roles. In other words, the variables examined from the European Values Survey dataset never uses men as a subject; men are always either the reference point, not mentioned or the variable does not specify gender. For example, variable D078 asks participants if they agree that "men make better business executives than women do". In this instance, men are the standard against which women are measured. If there were variables around men's roles, a statement may be: "men should have an equal role in housework".

*Has the process of Europeanisation changed these understandings of gender?*

It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which Europeanisation may have changed the understandings of gender in Albania. While it appears that Albania is less conservative compared to Italy towards women and girls' roles in some contexts, such as access to education, it cannot be confirmed for certain that this is not a legacy of the communist era. It can also be argued that it is too soon to see the impacts of Europeanisation; Albania's application for membership was only submitted in 2009 and its official candidate status was granted in June 2014. The European Commission only opened

accession negotiations with Albania in March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began to substantially affect countries worldwide and became a priority. At a maximum, it has only been 13 years that Europeanisation, through Albania's bid for membership, has been an intensive process in Albania. 13 years is arguably a very short time for a country that was in active conflict as recently as the late 1990s and notably had one of the harshest communist regimes to form a stable and well-functioning democracy that is in line with European Union ideals. Additionally, the world has seen a lot of challenges that it, and Albania, has had to respond to in those 13 years such as the Eurozone crisis, the European refugee crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic. This would have potentially affected Albania's ability to meet accession criteria as it took a backseat to more pertinent issues it was facing.

### Does Europeanisation contribute to the success or failure of gender equality in Albania?

The penultimate question of this thesis asks whether Europeanisation makes a difference to gender equality in Albania? The answer is not easy to ascertain. Certainly, work around law reforms is making a difference; more women are seeking support for gender-based violence in the face of a culture that believes experiences of gender-based violence should not be discussed outside the family. However, the gender norms that would make gender equality actions and important law reforms sustainable in the long term do not seem to be affected yet. A majority of Albanians still believe that women should prioritise motherhood which acts as a barrier- either from their family or from themselves- to pursue other aspirations they have. The research undertaken in this thesis suggests that Albanians are comparatively more conservative in terms of gender equality and queer rights than Italians, despite cultural similarities in the two nations. However, looking into Italy's attitudes and perceptions of gender and gender equality shows that gender equality can be implemented in a culture that prioritises religion and family. Italy appears to have enshrined gender equality norms and tolerance into their society and these values are widely shared. Europeanisation in the future may be able to enshrine gender equality norms and tolerance into Albanian society but this thesis suggests it has not yet. Certainly, it brings into question if Europeanisation is a worthwhile or sustainable strategy for the EU to employ in third nations to change non-tangible norms.

### Wider implications for the EU

While this thesis is a short-term study, there are already some important implications for the European Union. Primarily, the European Union should consider how gender norms affects gender equality outcomes and how the EU can support Albania in changing the narratives painted by gender norms. In other words, how can the EU support Albania to normalise different ways of doing gender. For example, how could the EU help Albania normalise working mothers. However, this needs to be done

in a culturally appropriate manner; since patriarchal norms are intertwined with the survival of Albanian culture, there is a risk of either the EU's work being ineffective or certain parts of cultural identity being erased if the EU attempts to uplift the existing norms and replacing them with the EU's own; if the process is attempted too quickly it may not work. Furthermore, the European Union should be working in partnership with Albanian institutions to ensure this work is appropriate and reciprocal and has wide support from the Albanian public, so it has a better chance of being sustainably implemented. This would enable the European Union to be better equipped to aid genuine gender equality actions in other nations that are different from them without it being able to be criticised as overtly neo-colonial.

## 5.2 Future research

Given the novelty of this research, there is ample scope for future research in the area of gender norms and gender equality and its relation to Europeanisation.

Firstly, there should be more research on the sustainability of Europeanisation regarding non-tangible norms such as gender equality. This research would be more far reaching than it sounds; how does gender equality efforts from global actors remain sustainable? Other actors, including NGOs and other governments could use this research to inform their approaches to delivery and aiding gender equality actions. Currently there is very little research in this area when non-tangible norms would be a more appropriate indicator of success.

Secondly, research on how increasingly diverse understandings of gender should be appropriately incorporated into gender equality actions and strategies is needed. As it stands, while considering itself to be a gender equality leader, the European Union only constitutes gender equality in binary terms.

Lastly, more detailed research should be carried out in Albania to understand how cultural and historical legacies inform perspectives on gender norms and gender equality. It is hard to understand how to move forward and in a sustainable manner when there is no benchmark or guide to tell one where they are beginning from or what considerations they may have to make.

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## Appendix 1

Stop word list from the Nvivo word frequency analyses'				
2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
a	about	above	adopted	adoption
after	again	against	Albania	all
am	an	and	any	are
aren't	aren't	as	at	based
be	because	been	before	being
below	between	bisexual	both	but
by	can	can't	cannot	can't
case	cases	chapter	chapters	community
continue	continued	continues	could	couldn't
couldn't	countries	countries'	countries'	country
court	courts	courts'	courts'	did
didn't	didn't	do	does	doesn't
doesn't	doing	domestic	don't	don't
down	during	each	ensure	ensuring
equality	especially	European	few	for
from	further	gay	gender	group
groups	had	hadn't	hadn't	has
hasn't	hasn't	have	haven't	haven't
having	he	he'd	he'll	he's
he'd	held	he'll	her	here
here's	here's	hers	herself	he's
him	himself	his	how	how's
however	how's	I	I'd	I'll
I'm	I've	I'd	if	I'll
I'm	improve	improved	improvements	in
increase	increased	increasing	inter	into
is	isn't	isn't	it	it's
its	it's	itself	I've	lesbian
let's	let's	level	lgbt	lgbti
lgbtiq	line	made	make	making
may	me	member	members	more
most	mustn't	mustn't	my	myself
national	need	needed	needs	new
no	nor	not	number	of
off	on	once	only	or
other	ought	our	ours	ourselves
out	over	own	particularly	persons
provide	regarding	regards	remain	remained
remaining	remains	said	same	say
says	sexual	shall	shan't	shan't
she	she'd	she'll	she's	she'd
she'll	she's	should	shouldn't	shouldn't
so	some	still	such	than
that	that's	that's	the	their

theirs	them	themselves	then	there
there's	there's	these	they	they'd
they'll	they're	they've	they'd	they'll
they're	they've	this	those	through
Tirana	to	too	under	until
up	upon	us	very	victim
victims	was	wasn't	wasn't	we
we'd	we'll	we're	we've	we'd
we'll	were	we're	weren't	weren't
we've	what	what's	what's	when
when's	when's	where	where's	where's
which	while	who	who's	whom
who's	whose	why	why's	why's
will	with	women	won't	won't
would	wouldn't	wouldn't	you	you'd
you'll	you're	you've	you'd	you'll
your	you're	yours	yourself	yourselves
you've	transgender	intersex	orientation	identity