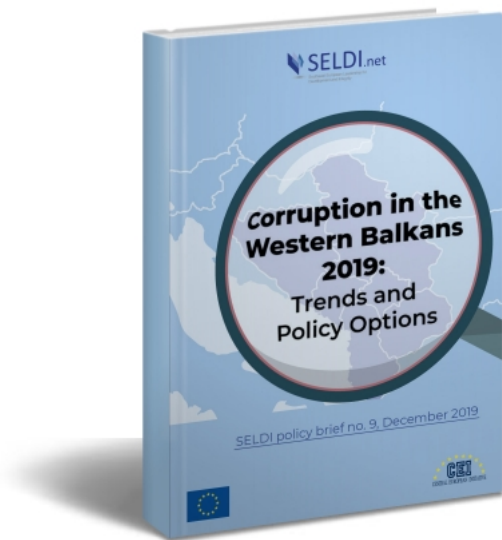


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SELDI data on corruption pressure in the Western Balkans since 2001 confirms that the EU enlargement has delivered in the past. Yet, the region remains far behind even the worst-performing EU member states. SELDI's Corruption Monitoring System (CMS) results for 2019 show that compared to 2016, corruption pressure has increased in four of all six monitored Western Balkans countries. Only Albania and North Macedonia have witnessed a marginal decrease in corruption pressure.

These results indicate that countries under more political pressure from the EU and a clear prize (short-term goal) on the horizon perform better. In that regard, the EU needs to continue monitoring progress in anti-corruption and to engage directly with civil society in the region. It needs to re-enforce the accession negotiations' technical aspects on anti-corruption with more political assertiveness from Brussels and its local delegations regarding progress in tackling higher-level corruption and state capture. It will also need to stand up to and develop mechanisms to neutralise the harmful effects of authoritarian influence in the region.