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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES ^a

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Abstract

The paper explores the role of education in preventing social exclusion in the Western Balkan countries. Given that education is considered as one of the factors of social exclusion, the paper tests the hypothesis that access to education and training determines the process of inclusion of individuals in social activities. In this regard, we investigate the importance of the level of education for individuals' perceptions of social exclusion, their participation in the activities of community organizations, and the intensity of their civic and political engagement. Statistical analysis of empirical data (analysis of variance, post hoc analysis) from the Third European Quality of Life Survey confirms that there is a statistically significant impact of education level on the processes of social inclusion. In particular, for all forms of social activities there are statistically significant differences in mean indicator values between individuals with primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

Key words: education, social exclusion, social participation, Western Balkans

ОБРАЗОВАЊЕ И ДРУШТВЕНА ИСКЉУЧЕНОСТ У ЗЕМЉАМА ЗАПАДНОГ БАЛКАНА

Апстракт

Предмет истраживања овог рада је улога образовања у превенцији друштвене искључености у земљама Западног Балкана. С обзиром на то да се образовање сматра једним од фактора друштвене искључености, у раду се проверава претпоставка да приступ образовању и усавршавању одређује процес укључивања појединаца у друштвене активности. У том смислу, испитује се значај нивоа образовања за перцепције појединаца о друштвеној искључености, њихово учешће у активностима друштвених организација и интезитет њиховог грађанског и

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политичког ангажовања. Статистичка анализа емпиријских података (анализа варијансе, *post hoc* анализа) Трећег Испитивања квалитета живота у Европи потврђује да постоји статистички значајан утицај нивоа образовања на процесе друштвеног укључивања. Конкретно, код свих облика друштвених активности постоје статистички значајне разлике у просечним показатељима активности између појединаца са основним, средњим и високим образовањем.

Кључне речи: образовање, друштвена искљученост, друштвена партиципација, Западни Балкан

INTRODUCTION

Social exclusion is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that occurs as a result of interrelated and mutually conditioned processes of deprivation in the key segments of life of individuals and social groups, which prevent them from full participation in basic political economic and social activities (Bellani & D'Ambrosio, 2011). We can identify social exclusion as a kind of a vicious circle, where the lack of resources, inability to use appropriate rights, scarcity of goods and services, and inability to participate in normal social relationships and activities available to the majority in a society aggravate economic situation and quality of life of individuals, leaving them with few opportunities to improve their position. People who live in poor material conditions, attend inferior schools, or are unable to finance their own education, face a higher risk of unemployment or employment on precarious and hence poorly paid jobs. Such individuals have negligible political power and few social contacts.

Social exclusion is determined by numerous factors, whose effects are often intertwined, so it is difficult to determine which factor has the primary role. It is believed that education plays a key role in preventing social exclusion.

Combating poverty and social exclusion is an integral part of the European Union social agenda and a very important component of social policies of member states. The EU has clearly expressed its attitude towards education in the new Europe 2020 strategy, where education is emphasized as an engine of sustainable growth and one of the most effective ways of fighting inequality and poverty (European Commission, 2010). Special emphasis is given to the prevention of early departure from the education system, as a way of preventing exclusion from the labor market and social exclusion. Fighting against social exclusion and poverty is of particular importance for Western Balkans countries, since alleviation of poverty and social exclusion is one of the key challenges these countries deal with in the process of joining the EU. The challenge is even greater considering that Western Balkan countries have gone through significant socio-economic changes during the last two decades: the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, transition, institution building, wars and destruction, ethnic wars, refugees,

economic decline, and impoverishment of the population (Matković, 2006). Absolute poverty is still a major problem in almost all Western Balkan countries. Vulnerable groups that are excluded from economic and social life are unemployed, dependents, and are less educated. Thus, the priority in these countries is to provide a balanced and sustainable economic development, while improving the position of vulnerable groups. Almost all Western Balkan countries have stressed in their national plans and programs that employment growth and job creation are important steps on the way out of the vicious circle of poverty. Another priority is higher education coverage and improvement of the quality of education. In addition, mitigating social exclusion and poverty also means securing adequate housing and a health care system, improving social safety nets, securing participation of vulnerable groups in decision-making, and respecting human rights.

The aim of this paper is to determine to what extent education levels determine social exclusion. For this purpose, we will examine the relationship between education levels on the one hand and indicators of social exclusion – perceptions of individuals about the extent of their social exclusion, participation in activities of social organizations, and intensity of civic and political engagement – on the other hand.

EDUCATION AS A DETERMINANT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION – LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship between initial conditions, education, and social exclusion was the subject of many theoretical and empirical studies in recent decades. Those studies progressed in two directions. One segment of the research efforts was focused on the investigation of influence of living conditions during childhood on the quality of life in adulthood, with special emphasis on educational achievements. Studies have shown that children that grow up in poverty experience worse health and emotional problems, and exhibit problematic behavior and poor educational achievements in adulthood (Bolger, Patterson, Thompson & Kupersmidt, 1995; Haveman & Wolfe, 1995). It is believed that education is the most important transmission mechanism that enables accumulation of deprivation through generations. Children who grow up in poor conditions have poorer results in school and a lower level of education compared to children living in better conditions, which increases the risk of social exclusion. Using data from the UK National Child Development Study (NCDS) from 1958, one group of authors (Gregg & Machin, 1997; Feinstein, 1998) identified poor results in the field of education as a key mechanism of turning deprivation from the childhood into poor social and economic achievements in the later period. Results of their study proved that education upgrade can help mitigate the transmission of social exclusion throughout the lifecycle.

Another line of research refers to the short-term and long-term effects of education on social exclusion. Research of the European Commission indicated the existence of a strong relationship between academic education and social exclusion (European Commission, 2010). Poor educational outcomes increase the risk of unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, as well as lower earnings, thus contributing to social exclusion (OECD, 2010; Walker & Walker, 1997). Unemployment increases the risk of social exclusion, but the impact of unemployment goes well beyond the framework of financial deprivation. Although unemployment, especially long-term, can result in social exclusion, employment does not automatically lead to social inclusion (Atkinson & Hills, 1998). This means that there are other important determinants of social exclusion that may or may not be associated with the labor market.

In the research of the link between education and social exclusion emphasis has been placed on compulsory education for a relatively long period. Considering the growing importance of lifelong learning and the fact that social exclusion can occur at different stages of the lifecycle, the role of education as a determinant of social exclusion goes beyond the framework of compulsory education. When we refer to education in the context of social exclusion, we think not only of formal education but also of further training in the context of the labor market, as well as informal learning.

The role of education in social exclusion is still insufficiently explored. The dominant approach in the analysis of education as a determinant of social exclusion is based on the concept of human capital. From this perspective, education or training increase the productivity of individuals through the acquisition of various knowledge and skills. As higher levels of productivity lead to higher wages and participation in the labor market, education creates a basis for increased social mobility, especially for the poor. People become poor because they lack education, training, skills, and the like (Jennings, 1999). People with lower levels of education, limited work experience, and unstable relationships in the labor market are more likely to be socially excluded and poor. That is why education and human capital development create the basis for reducing social exclusion.

Burchardt, Le Grand, & Piachaud (1998) identified the following key dimensions of social participation: production, consumption, wealth, political activity, and social life. The majority of papers that examine the relationship between education and social exclusion are focused on the relationship between education and participation in the production sphere. From this perspective, better educational achievements provide faster and easier employment, continuation of learning, and upgrade of skills, creating the basis for the increase of consumption and wealth. Focus on the link between education and production is justified on the grounds that poverty

is the central component of social exclusion, which is associated with limited opportunities of finding a job. Long-term exclusion from the labor market is an important indicator of potential social exclusion of young people.

The effects of education on participation in other spheres of life, primarily participation in political and social life of the community, are far less examined (Sparkes, 1999). One such study, conducted by Parsons and Bynner (2002), showed that people with lower educational achievements and skills are characterized by lower level of citizen participation. In addition to reduced interest for politics and lower voter turnout in the elections, this population segment has a lower rate of participation in social organizations and associations. Employment is very important for individuals, not only because it provides income, but also because labor market is an important area where social interactions take place. Therefore, exclusion from the labor market can easily encourage other forms of social exclusion – poverty and exclusion from political and social life. Parsons and Bynner established a strong link between poor results in compulsory education and exclusion of people from the labor market at an early working age, a higher risk of unemployment, and lower wages. Modest educational achievements are associated with other features of social exclusion – poorer general health, depression, and lower voter turnout.

Available studies show that many factors affect results that individuals achieve in the field of formal qualifications and generic skills, such as family, community, labor market, and economic policy. Therefore, when considering social exclusion we must be aware of the interaction between individuals and their responsibilities, on the one hand, and the role of social factors in determining the living conditions of individuals, on the other hand. We emphasize this because individualistic explanations of social exclusion, in their extreme variants, raise the question of personal responsibility, as social exclusion may result from individuals' decision. They can decide to leave school, quit their jobs, and become economically inactive. In this case, the concept of social exclusion is used as a smokescreen to disguise extreme poverty and to label the poor and socially excluded as being solely responsible for their situation.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

Assuming that education is one of the causes of social exclusion, this paper tests the hypothesis that access to education and training determines the process of inclusion of individuals in social activities. As members of various social groups have unequal access to quality education, this significantly influences the development of their careers and forms of inclusion in social life. Although quality education is not the only condition for social success, it can be assumed that the combination of low levels of education and limited access to opportunities for further

education contribute to social exclusion and result in various forms of deprivation and poverty.

In order to study the relationship between education and different forms of social exclusion in the Western Balkans, we shall use empirical data from the *Third European Quality of Life Survey*.¹ The survey was conducted by means of a multi-staged stratified random sample. Each country in the survey was divided into sections, and in each section homogeneous units of households was formed. A random sample of households from each unit was drawn and in each household one person aged 18 or more was selected for the interview.

We analyze indicators of perceived social exclusion, social participation, and political engagement in the Western Balkans in order to assess the impact of the level of education on the level and intensity of the aforementioned forms of social activities. The analysis is based on the responses from 39,525 interviewees, of which 4,471 completed primary, 25,554 secondary, and 9,247 completed tertiary education. Assessment of the impact of education on the level of social exclusion includes:

- a) An overview of data on the level of perceived social exclusion, social participation, and different forms of political engagement in selected countries of the Western Balkans (including comparisons with the average values of these indicators in the European Union);
- b) An analysis of these data by education level of respondents;
- c) Testing of the significance of differences between the indicators of social exclusion and participation between groups with different levels of education, using the statistical method Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The starting point for determining the level of social exclusion is to analyze the individuals' perceptions of their social connectedness and acceptance in society. An index constructed on the basis of individuals' subjective evaluations of their social status, feeling of social cohesion,

¹ *European Quality of Life Survey* is a representative survey conducted by the *European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions* (hereinafter *Eurofound*), and it represents a rich source of information on living conditions, housing, local environment, health, public services, social cohesion, and quality of life, as well as subjective well-being. This survey has been conducted in all EU member states, as well as seven of the nine countries involved in the enlargement process (Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Iceland, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey).

and recognition by the community is used as an indicator of perceived social exclusion (Table 1).

Table 1. Index of perceived social exclusion

Country	I feel left out of society	Life has become so complicated	Value of what I do is not recognized by others	People look down on me because of my job	Index of perceived social exclusion
Croatia	1.97	2.64	2.48	2.37	2.36
Montenegro	1.97	2.72	2.40	2.16	2.31
FYR Macedonia	2.19	2.67	2.66	2.17	2.42
Serbia	2.33	2.78	2.58	2.33	2.50
<i>EU27</i>	<i>1.95</i>	<i>2.43</i>	<i>2.41</i>	<i>2.11</i>	<i>2.22</i>

Source: Third Quality of Life Survey

The index of perceived social exclusion is used for the purpose of comparing the perceptions of social exclusion among different social groups or countries, and it is calculated as the arithmetic mean of the values of respondents' attitudes (1-5) towards the statements presented in Table 1 (a value of 1 indicates the highest level of integration in society, expressed by the response "Strongly disagree", while the value of 5 is assigned to the response "Strongly agree", reflecting the highest level of exclusion). The Cronbach's Alpha is 0.75, which implies an acceptable level of index reliability.²

Compared to the EU average, Serbia and countries in the region exhibit higher values of the index of perceived exclusion. The study reveals that within the EU residents of Denmark (1.6), Germany (1.8), and Austria (1.9) consider themselves the least excluded, while the highest perceived exclusion was measured in Cyprus (3.0), Bulgaria (2.7), and Greece (2.5).

The index of perceived social exclusion varies considerably if it is observed at the level of different social groups. The data in Table 2 indicate that the highly educated individuals feel the least excluded from social activities. The value of the index of perceived social exclusion decreases with the increasing levels of education in all of the countries. It should be stressed that there is a large gap between the absolute values of the index for the groups with the lowest level of education in the Western Balkans and the value of the index for the corresponding group in the EU. For example, the value of the index of perceived exclusion for respondents with primary education in Serbia and Macedonia is 3.0, while in the EU the value of the index for the same group is 2.3. The level of perceived

² The Index values are taken from the *Third European Quality of Life Survey* and are not the result of authors' calculations.

social exclusion of groups of respondents with secondary and tertiary education is uniform within the region, but definitely higher than in the corresponding groups in the EU countries.

Table 2. Index of perceived social exclusion by the level of education

		Croatia	Montenegro	FYR Macedonia	Serbia	EU27
<i>Index of perceived social exclusion</i>		2.36	2.31	2.42	2.50	2.22
Education level	Primary	2.6	2.6	3.0	3.0	2.3
	Secondary	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.2
	Tertiary	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.3	2.0

Source: Third Quality of Life Survey

A detailed overview of individual indicators that are included in the index of perceived social exclusion confirms the importance of education for social exclusion (Table 3). The index of perceived social exclusion decreases with the increase of the education level in all observed cases. Individuals with higher education have fewer problems with regard to their social status, recognition by the community, and the attitudes of other people about their work, and they rarely feel excluded from society.

Table 3 Education and decomposed index of perceived social exclusion

		Croatia	Montenegro	FYR Macedonia	Serbia	EU27
	<i>Education</i>	2.36	2.31	2.42	2.50	2.22
I feel left out of society	Primary	2.27	2.28	2.76	2.98	2.15
	Secondary	1.94	2.00	2.16	2.36	1.99
	Tertiary	1.77	1.85	2.16	2.13	1.73
Life has become so complicated	Primary	2.94	2.92	3.48	3.27	2.72
	Secondary	2.65	2.80	2.66	2.86	2.49
	Tertiary	2.26	2.48	2.57	2.38	2.11
Not recognized by others	Primary	2.71	2.50	3.00	3.16	2.60
	Secondary	2.47	2.44	2.66	2.60	2.44
	Tertiary	2.29	2.29	2.59	2.40	2.24
People look down on me	Primary	2.44	2.56	2.93	2.49	2.14
	Secondary	2.37	2.21	2.14	2.36	2.15
	Tertiary	2.27	2.00	2.13	2.21	1.96

Source: Third Quality of Life Survey

In order to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in the mean values of the index of perceived social exclusion between groups with different levels of education, a One-way ANOVA method is applied. The results indicate that the level of education affects

the mean value of the Index of perceived exclusion (realized significance is 0.009).

In order to further explore the differences between the mean values of the index, we applied a post hoc analysis, where the significance of mean differences of the index is tested by the least significant difference (LSD test). Results of multiple comparisons are presented in Table 4, indicating that there is a statistically significant difference in mean values of the index of perceived social exclusion between groups with primary and secondary education, as well as between groups with primary and tertiary education. The differences in the perceived social exclusion between respondents with secondary and tertiary education are not statistically significant.

Table 4. Post hoc test: multiple comparisons of the mean values of the index between groups with different levels of education

Levels of education	Mean difference	Standard error	Significance
1-2	.32*		.029
1-3	.48*	.12858	.003
2-3	.16		.237

*Theoretical level of significance is 0.05.
(Numbers 1, 2, and 3 stand for the groups with primary, secondary, and tertiary education, respectively.)

The second group of data that can be used to evaluate the impact of education on the involvement of individuals in society relates to the individuals' participation in social activities of clubs and associations, i.e. the inclusion of individuals in social networks. Table 5 presents data on the frequency of participation of the citizens of the Western Balkans in various community organizations. The intensity of social participation in these countries can be characterized as low, given that, on average, only 14.5% of respondents participate in social activities at least once a month. In comparison with EU countries, where on average every fourth citizen (25.1%) participates in some form of social activity at least once a month, the low level of social participation in the Western Balkan countries is obvious. The most intensive participation in social activity was measured in Croatia, where the average values of the indicators are not significantly different from the European average (22.7%). The relative share of respondents who never participate in social activities is the highest in Serbia and Macedonia (72.1% and 73.2%).

Table 5. Participation in social activities in Western Balkan countries (in %)

Country	Every day or almost every day	At least once a week	One to three times a month	Less often	Never
Croatia	4.1	9.7	6.9	14.2	65.1
Montenegro	1.9	4.8	4.3	22.1	66.9
FYR Macedonia	1.4	4.4	6.9	14.1	73.2
Serbia	3.0	5.7	6.0	14.1	71.2
EU 27	2.5	12.4	10.3	15.0	59.8

Source: Third Quality of Life Survey

In order to determine whether frequency counts concerning participation in social activities are equally distributed across different countries, a Chi-square test of homogeneity is applied. Results of the test indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the analyzed countries in all the observed cases. The calculated values of Chi-square statistics and their statistical significance are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Test of homogeneity of participation percentages between countries

	Every day or almost every day	At least once a week	One to three times a month	Less often	Never
Chi-square	17.47	134.73	71.25	34.51	58.30
Significance	0.0016	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001

To demonstrate the impact of the respondents' education level on the intensity of social participation, Table 7 presents the percentages of participation of respondents with different levels of education. The percentages of highly educated respondents who participate in the activities of community organizations are higher compared to groups of respondents with primary and tertiary education. Likewise, highly educated individuals are underrepresented among the respondents who say they never participate in the activities of community organizations. It should be noted that the observed levels of participation not only reflect individual attitudes towards social participation, but may also be an indicator of poor infrastructure, limited access to social networks or associations, as well as the lack of material resources or time to participate in community organizations.

Bearing in mind the unbalanced frequencies of the respondents across the categories of participation (very low frequencies for categories: "Every day or almost every day", "At least once a week" and "One to three times a month"), the frequencies of these three modalities have been grouped into one category, named "Once a month or more". Further analysis will include the following three categories of participation in social activities: "Once a month or more", "Less often", and "Never". Testing of the significance of differences in the participation of citizens in community

organizations shows that there are statistically significant differences between groups with different levels of education for all frequencies (Table 8). According to the results of a post hoc test (Table 9), the differences in the average percentages of participation are statistically significant between all educational groups, for all frequencies.

Table 7. Participation in social activities, by level of education (in %)

		Croatia	Montenegro	FYR Macedonia	Serbia	EU27
Every day or almost every day	Primary	0.6	3.8	0	0	2.0
	Secondary	4.5	1.3	0.6	2.4	2.3
	Tertiary	6.2	3.3	3.5	5.4	3.6
At least once a week	Primary	2.9	0	0	2.1	6.4
	Secondary	9.2	4.0	3.1	4.7	11.3
	Tertiary	19.4	7.3	8.1	9.6	18.4
One to three times a month	Primary	5.8	0	0	0	4.6
	Secondary	7.8	4.0	4.6	5.4	9.6
	Tertiary	4.4	5.5	13.1	9.2	15.1
Less often	Primary	6.4	3.8	4.0	6.4	7.7
	Secondary	14.0	21.8	11.2	12.8	14.7
	Tertiary	23.1	24.8	22.6	19.2	19.8
Never	Primary	84.4	92.3	96.0	91.5	79.4
	Secondary	64.4	68.9	80.4	74.8	62.1
	Tertiary	46.9	59.1	52.7	56.5	43.0

Source: Third Quality of Life Survey

Table 8. ANOVA results for the mean differences of participation percentages between groups with different levels of education

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
<i>Once a month or more</i>					
Between groups	798.047	2	399.023	18.81	.0002
Within groups	254.510	12	21.209		
Total	1052.557	14			
<i>Less often</i>					
Between groups	663.525	2	331.763	39.783	.000
Within groups	100.072	12	8.339		
Total	763.597	14			
<i>Never</i>					
Between groups	3437.328	2	1718.664	35.395	.000
Within groups	582.688	12	48.557		
Total	4020.016	14			

Table 9. Post hoc test: multiple comparisons of participation percentages between groups with different levels of education

Levels of education	Mean difference	Standard error	Significance
<i>Once a month or more</i>			
1-2	-9.10*	3.760	.039
1-3	-19.95*		.000
2-3	-10.85*		.018
<i>Less often</i>			
1-2	-9.24*	1.8264	.000
1-3	-16.24*		.000
2-3	-7.00*		.002
<i>Never</i>			
1-2	18.60*	4.4071	.001
1-3	37.08*		.000
2-3	18.48*		.001

*Theoretical level of significance is 0.05.
(Numbers 1, 2, and 3 stand for the groups with primary, secondary, and tertiary education, respectively.)

Based on the analysis of the data on the participation of the respondents from the Western Balkans, it can be argued that the level of education affects the intensity of participation in community organizations. We particularly emphasize that respondents with tertiary education, as a rule, are characterized by higher levels of participation compared to the less educated ones.

A specific form of social participation relates to the engagement of individuals in civic and political activities, such as attending protests or demonstrations, attending the meetings of trade unions, political parties, or groups for political action, signing petitions, or contacting politicians or public officials. Overview of the data on the intensity of civic and political engagement of citizens in the Western Balkans (Table 10) indicates that the most represented forms of political activities are signing petitions and participation in the activities of political parties and trade unions. It reveals that engagement in political parties and trade unions in the countries of the Western Balkans is more intensive compared to the average engagement of EU citizens in this form of political activities. Analysis of the data on civic and political participation from the aspect of the education levels of respondents indicates that highly educated individuals are several times more active in participating in the meetings of trade unions and political parties and in signing petitions compared to those with primary education.

Further examination of the impact of education level on participation in civic and political activities involves the testing of the significance of differences in mean percentages of participation between groups with different levels of education. Analysis of variance (Table 11) confirms the

presence of statistically significant differences in participation in political activities between respondents with primary, secondary, and higher education.

Table 10. Forms of civic and political engagement in the previous 12 months (in %)

		Croatia	Montenegro	FYR Macedonia	Serbia	EU27
Attended a protest or demonstration	Primary	2.3	4.0	2.0	2.3	1.9
	Secondary	5.1	8.8	6.6	2.7	4.2
	Tertiary	5.6	5.3	11.5	5.1	8.1
Contacted a politician or public official	Primary	0	0	0	4.5	2.6
	Secondary	5.4	2.6	6.8	2.3	5.6
	Tertiary	11.8	3.4	14.9	2.5	13.4
Attended a meeting of a trade union/pol. party	Primary	2.3	0	0	4.5	2.2
	Secondary	8.4	4.7	10.7	9.1	6.7
	Tertiary	16.2	10.6	15.8	18.3	13.3
Signed a petition	Primary	8.7	4.0	0	6.8	3.3
	Secondary	24.6	8.5	4.2	10.8	11.6
	Tertiary	36.9	13.7	14.2	18.4	26.8

Source: Third Quality of Life Survey

Table 11. ANOVA results for the mean differences of political participation percentages between groups with different levels of education

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
<i>Attended a protest or demonstration</i>					
Between groups	54.857	2	27.429	6.031	.015
Within groups	54.576	12	4.548		
Total	109.433	14			
<i>Contacted a politician or public official</i>					
Between groups	153.297	2	76.649	5.472	.020
Within groups	168.100	12	14.008		
Total	321.397	14			
<i>Attended a meeting of a trade union/pol. party</i>					
Between groups	425.637	2	212.819	36.235	.000
Within groups	70.480	12	5.873		
Total	496.117	14			
<i>Signed a petition</i>					
Between groups	766.369	2	383.185	6.904	.010
Within groups	666.024	12	55.502		
Total	1432.393	14			

The second step in exploring the differences in political engagement on the basis of different levels of education is testing of the significance of mean differences using the LSD test. Results of multiple comparisons presented in Table 12 show that in the cases of protest or demonstration attendance there are statistically significant differences between groups with primary and secondary education, as well as between groups with primary and tertiary education. For this form of political engagement, the differences between respondents with secondary and tertiary education do not affect the intensity of political activity. Likewise, in the case of contacting a politician/public official and signing a petition, multiple comparisons imply that the mean percentages of engagement statistically significantly differ only between groups with the primary and tertiary education. Finally, differences in education levels cause statistically significant differences in all observed cases for participation in the activities of political parties or trade unions.

Table 12. Post hoc test: multiple comparisons of political participation percentages between groups with different levels of education

Levels of education	Mean difference	Standard error	Significance
<i>Attended a protest or demonstration</i>			
1-2	-2.98*		.047
1-3	-4.62*	1.3488	.005
2-3	-1.64		.247
<i>Contacted a politician or public official</i>			
1-2	-3.12		.212
1-3	-7.78*	2.3671	.006
2-3	-4.66		.073
<i>Attended a meeting of a trade union/pol. party</i>			
1-2	-6.12*		.002
1-3	-13.04*	1.5327	.000
2-3	-6.92*		.001
<i>Signed a petition</i>			
1-2	-7.38		.143
1-3	-17.44*	4.7117	.003
2-3	-10.06		.054

*Theoretical level of significance of mean differences is 0.05.

(Numbers 1, 2, and 3 stand for the groups with primary, secondary, and tertiary education, respectively.)

Results of data analysis on the intensity of civic and political engagement in the countries of the Western Balkans show that education levels of individuals have a statistically significant influence on participation in these activities; this especially applies to the highly educated individuals, who engage in the most intensive participation in all analyzed types of activities.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Among many factors that determine social exclusion, our aim was to study the influence of education on the perceptions of individuals about social exclusion, their participation in the activities of community organizations, and the intensity of their civic and political engagement. The study of the relationship between education and social exclusion, as well as mechanisms through which education could determine the position of individuals in society, has received significant academic attention in the last few decades. Most often, the inadequate conditions of growing up are linked to poor education achievements of children from materially deprived families, which in most cases increase the risk of unemployment, a key factor of social exclusion. Consequently, almost every strategy for fighting against unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion highlights the importance of education as the basic lever for alleviating the aforementioned socio-economic problems. It should be borne in mind that, besides education, there are numerous different factors of social exclusion with interfering influences, whose individual impacts are not easy to delineate. There is also a line of research that indicates that the influence of education on social exclusion is limited and that it is manifested only as the basis for estimation of individual abilities of people by employers on the labor market.

With the assumption that both formal and informal education and its upgrade over a lifetime can alleviate the extent of exclusion of individuals from social interactions, from the labor market, as well as from other areas of participation (political engagement, participation in community organizations), this paper explored to what extent the education level of individuals affects the process of their inclusion in social activities. Specifically, the paper explored the relation between education level and the perceptions of individuals about social exclusion, their participation in the activities of community organizations, and the intensity of their civic and political engagement.

Results of statistical analysis of empirical data of the *Third European Quality of Life Survey* on the perceived social exclusion, participation in community organizations, and political engagement in the Western Balkans confirmed a statistically significant influence of education level on social inclusion. The perceptions of social exclusion are the strongest in the lowest educated segment of the population. The study of the effects of education on the intensity of social participation showed that highly educated people, as a rule, express higher levels of participation compared to lower educated groups. Finally, the study of the effect of education level on participation in civic and political activities confirmed the presence of significant differences between the respondents with different levels of education. As regards these forms of social activities,

highly educated individuals are prevalently involved in participation in comparison to others.

Since social inclusion is not possible without adequate education of individuals in the form of appropriate knowledge and skills, reducing the risk of social exclusion involves harmonization of the education policy with the needs of the society and the labor market demand. Since individuals who do not possess adequate qualifications and competence have less job opportunities and are at higher risk of social exclusion, equal attention should be paid to the early stages of education, where social inequalities actually begin, and to lifelong learning, the encouragement of which is a precondition for employability and sustainability in the labor market.

This study, conducted on the sample of Western Balkans countries, showed that very important dimensions of social exclusion are determined by educational achievement. The question is how strong this influence is in relation to gender and age of the individuals, household characteristics, or place of living. Furthermore, bearing in mind that education is one of the factors that contribute to the transmission of social exclusion, it is necessary to examine the extent to which individuals can increase their wages and employment prospects, and how they can reduce the risk of social exclusion through upgrading their education. These are possible directions for further research of the link between education and social exclusion.

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ОБРАЗОВАЊЕ И ДРУШТВЕНА ИСКЉУЧЕНОСТ У ЗЕМЉАМА ЗАПАДНОГ БАЛКАНА

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Резиме

Друштвена искљученост је вишедимензионални феномен који настаје као последица међусобно повезаних и условљених процеса депривације у кључним сегментима живота појединаца и друштвених група, што их онемогућава да партиципирају у основним политичким, економским и друштвеним активностима. На друштвену искљученост утичу бројни фактори, чије је дејство често испреплетано и није лако установити који од тих фактора има примарну улогу. Сматра се да образовање игра једну од кључних улога у превенцији друштвене искључености. Борба против друштвене искључености и сиромаштва од посебне је важности за земље Западног Балкана, јер ублажавање сиромаштва и друштвене искључености представља један од кључних изазова са којима се ове земље сусрећу у процесу придруживања ЕУ.

Са једне стране, образовање се сматра најважнијим трансмисионим механизмом путем којег се депривација акумулира кроз генерације. Деца која одрастају у лошим условима, бележе слабије резултате у школи и имају нижи ниво образовања у односу на децу која живе у бољим условима, што повећава ризик друштвене искључености. Други правац истраживања односи се на краткорочне и дугорочне ефекте образовања на друштвену искљученост. Лоши образовни резултати повећавају ризик од незапослености, посебно дугорочне незапослености, као и мањих зарада, што доприноси друштвеној искључености. Чињеница је да незапосленост повећава ризик од друштвене искључености, при

чему утицај незапослености превазилази оквире финансијске депривације. Образовање се овде дефинише у ширем смислу, тако да обухвата не само формално образовање, него и даљу обуку у контексту тржишта рада и неформално учење.

Полазећи од претпоставке да образовање и надоградња образовања током живота, формалног и неформалног, може да ублажи степен искључености појединаца из друштвених интеракција, како на тржишту рада, тако и у другим областима партиципације (политичко ангажовање, учешће у друштвеним организацијама), у раду се истражује у којој мери степен образовања појединаца може да утиче на процес њиховог укључивања у друштвене активности. Конкретно, у раду се испитује веза између нивоа образовања и перцепција појединаца о степену њихове друштвене искључености, учешћа у активностима друштвених организација и интезитета њиховог грађанског и политичког ангажовања.

Резултати статистичке анализе емпиријских података Трећег Испитивања квалитета живота у Европи о перципираној друштвеној искључености, ангажовању у друштвеним организацијама и политичком ангажовању у земљама Западног Балкана потврђују статистички значајан утицај нивоа образовања на процес друштвеног укључивања. Код свих облика друштвених активности постоје статистички значајне разлике у просечним показатељима активности између појединаца са основним, средњим и високим образовањем.