

# SEEJSD

SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Vol. 7 (3/2023)





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ISSN (print) 2545-4463 **Technical Editing/Layout:** Korab Ballanca

ISSN (online) 2545-4471 **Editorial Office:** South East European

is published three times per year. Journal of Sustainable Development

**Account No.** 160016267778815

723019 - 45 **Mother Teresa University in Skopje,**

**Tax No.** 4080016561272 **Republic of North Macedonia**

Mirce Acev 4, VII floor, Skopje, North  
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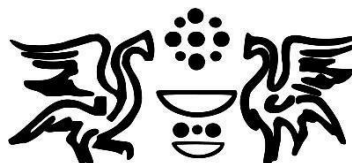
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The publication of the Journal is supported by:



Ministry of Culture of Republic of North Macedonia



# The professionalization of Social Work: Comparative study

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## Abstract

This article is based on detailed descriptions of the professional features of the social work in North Macedonia and Serbia. Social work in these countries is discussed in terms of three features: licensing, professional development and supervision, all aimed to improve the quality of the services. As a cross-national study, the goal of this study is to present comparative material that explores the range of the similarities and differences in these countries.

**Keywords:** professionalisation, licensing, professional development and supervision.

## Introduction

Professionalization implies that there is an institutionalized way of preparing individuals for the professional performance of tasks related to the profession itself. This process implies the establishment of standards and qualifications for the representatives of the profession itself, takes care of the creation and transfer of knowledge and skills for performing the profession itself, enables the certification of professionals for practicing the profession, as well as the regulation of relations between the members of the profession.

Licensing is the first step towards the professionalization of an activity. With the licensing, the professionals acquire an appropriate document, or work permit, which is a guarantee that certain initial criteria for the professional performance of the social activity have been met.

Licensing of professionals in social activity recognizes the existence of knowledge and skills that are necessary for daily practice, establishes a system of checking that knowledge or a competency exam, enforces mandatory compliance with professional standards, and that through a mandatory obligation for professional training of professionals, after obtaining higher education.

The license, as a document or certificate obtained during licensing, is issued by an official authority, authorized to issue licenses in accordance with the law. In most countries, it is a Chamber of Social Workers or Associations of Social Workers, but in some countries, it can be public institutions, which have a key role in the promotion of social activity.

There are differences in licensing in different countries, although ultimately licenses have the same

function and meaning.

The second step in the process of professionalization of the social activity, which is closely related to the licensing, is the continuous professional development or the need for constant improvement of the professional capacities of the persons who possess the appropriate license, but also of those who work in the social activity. This means that in order to maintain or renew the license that they hold, professionals must be actively involved in their own continuous professional development.

Although supervision is the third step in the professionalization of social activity, it is still a very significant link that connects the other parts. Starting from the meaning of the words of the term supervision (super – over; videre – to see), this process means control or supervision of the one who works, that is, supervision of the professionals involved in the social activity. In reality, this supervision of professionals during the performance of their work has a completely different background. Supervision represents support to professionals in the performance of work tasks by strengthening their professional capacities or a way of strengthening with knowledge and skills in daily practice.

## **Research methods**

The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze the process of professionalization of social work in North Macedonia and Serbia. For this purpose, a case study was used as a qualitative research method.

## **Findings**

### **Professionalization of social activity in the Republic of North Macedonia**

The aspiration to achieve a high degree of professionalization in the social activity has already existed in the Macedonian society for a long period. The orientation towards the professionalization of social activity is a path through which institutions and professionals face numerous challenges and problems, but also permanently invest themselves, their own capacities and available resources, in the direction of achieving the ultimate goal that will lead to a high level of quality in services and their standardization.

The need for the professionalization of social activity is especially linked to the efforts and preparations of the Macedonian society for membership in the European family, but also to the growth of the private sector in the provision of social services. The need to guarantee a minimum quality in the services of the social activity and to standardize them, led to the taking of intensive



measures and activities by the government and its institutions for the professionalization of the social activity.

Licensing of professionals employed in social protection institutions was introduced for the first time by Law of Social Protection from 2009 ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" number 79/09) and according to it, in accordance with certain amendments and additions, everything was carried out until entry into force of the new Law of Social Protection from 2019 ("Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" number 104/19). This innovation in the social protection system, at the time of its insertion in the Law of Social Protection from 2009, (Ibid), was an immature idea that simply felt the need to happen. Since the provisions in the law related to licensing were not ready in practice, the first licenses to work in social welfare institutions were issued in 2012.

Article 110 of the Law of Social Protection ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" number 79/09, 36/11, 51/11, 166/12, 15/13, 79/13, 164/13, 187/13, 38/14 , 44/14, 116/14, 180/14, 33/15, 72/15, 104/15, 150/15, 173/15, 192/15, 30/16, 163/17, 51/18), introduces the work license as a prerequisite for performing professional work in social protection institutions, for all professional workers with higher education. With that, the work license becomes a mandatory document, a public document for performing professional work for 11 professional profiles with higher education, employed in social welfare institutions: "Social worker, psychologist, andragogue, pedagogue, lawyer, economist, doctor, special education teacher, and speech therapist, special pedagogue for prevention and resocialization and sociologist".

Pursuant to Article 130 of the Law of Social Protection (Ibid), the Public Institution Institute for Social Activities is an institution that: "Gives, renews, extends and revokes licenses for the work of professionals in public and private institutions for social protection, keeps a register of issued, renewed, extended and revoked licenses, conducts continuous education of professionals and verification of the application of professional knowledge in the procedure for issuing licenses", and for the implementation of all these procedures, the Public Institution Institute for Social Activities forms a Commission for Licensing, after the prior consent of the Minister.

If a comparison is made with the systems of professionalization of social activity in the Republic of Serbia, it can be noted that in the institutions for social protection in the Republic of North Macedonia no difference is made in relation to the scientific degree of education, graduate and post-graduate studies, nor are higher powers assigned to professionals with a higher degree of academic education. From the legally defined procedure for acquiring and renewing a work license, in no part are



professionals with a master's or doctorate degree exempted. The only thing that was given with the Law of Social Protection from 2009, was an opportunity by the legal and by-laws, their degree of education to be entered in their license.

The license does not apply only to social workers, as holders of the activity of social work, but to all professional profiles that provide services in social protection institutions. Licensing is not carried out by the Chamber of Social Workers or the Chamber of Social Work, but the entire procedure is carried out by the Public Institution Institute for Social Activities, for which a Licensing Commission is established.

The Commission, in accordance with Article 131 of the Law of Social Protection ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" number 79/09, 36/11, 51/11, 166/12, 15/13, 79/13, 164/13, 187/13, 38/14, 44/14, 116/14, 180/14, 33/15, 72/15, 104/15, 150/15, 173/15, 192/15, 30/16, 163/17, 51/ 18), adopts a Program for checking the application of professional knowledge in the procedure for issuing and renewing a license for the work of a professional worker in social protection institutions, the Work Rules and the Code for professional workers in social protection institutions. In practice, the implementation of these legal provisions began with the establishment of the first Commission for Licensing Professionals employed in social protection institutions, on 27.09.2011, composed of 11 members, 5 of which are from the Institute for Social Activities, 3 from the Ministry of Labor and social policy and 3 from faculties and institutes for social humanities.

With the establishment of this Commission, professionals could obtain a license if they had completed 40 hours of education conducted in accordance with the Program for Continuing Education of Professionals in Social Protection Institutions of the Institute for Social Activities and if they passed the professional exam.

As an exception, all professionals, who were employed in social protection institutions on the day of the establishment of the Commission, obtained their first license without completing 40 hours of education. The method of conducting the professional exam was realized through a defense, that is, a practical oral presentation of a previously prepared professional paper, in accordance with the Program for checking the application of professional knowledge and the Commission's Rules of Procedure, before the members of the Licensing Commission. The professional work was prepared individually or in a group of maximum 5 professionals.

At the session, the Commission concluded that the candidate passed the professional exam and based on the Commission's Decision, the Institute for social activities issued a work license to the professional workers. Professional workers, after obtaining a work license, are entered in the Register

of issued, renewed, extended and revoked work licenses.

The license is valid for 5 years, and for the renewal of the work license it was necessary for the professional worker to have provided 20 hours of continuing education per year from the Institute for Social Activities and to submit a request for the renewal of the work license, no later than 3 months before the expiration of the validity of the license. The professional worker could renew his work license only after passing the professional exam.

The professional exam was taken for both obtaining and renewing a license, which is too strict a criterion for license renewal. Most often, in the experiences of other countries, renewal is connected with the fulfillment of the number of hours (points) for continuous professional development.

Pursuant to Article 131 of the Law of Social Protection ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" number 79/09, 36/11, 51/11, 166/12, 15/13, 79/13, 164/13, 187/13, 38/ 14, 44/14, 116/14, 180/14, 33/15, 72/15, 104/15, 150/15, 173/15, 192/15, 30/16, 163/17, 51/18), the Commission adopted a Code for professional workers in institutions for social protection, and in Article 130d, as one of the conditions for revocation of a license, was disrespect, or behavior of professional workers contrary to the Code. The practice does not have an established system where compliance with the Code is evaluated or checked, and it is also interesting that the practice does not yet record a single instance of revocation of the work license of the professionals employed in social protection institutions. The conditions for temporary and permanent revocation of a license are not regulated, but in cases of justified reasons such as illness, maternity leave, paid or unpaid leave, according to Article 130-c, the professional worker's work license could be extended, for six months after returning to work, a period during which the mandatory education and verification of the success of the application of professional knowledge should have been successfully completed.

The method of implementing the entire licensing procedure was carried out in accordance with the Rulebook on the method and procedure for issuing, extending, renewing and revoking a license for the work of professionals in social protection institutions, the amount of the cost of issuing a license, the form, content and form of the work license ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" number 04/12, 06/15).

According to the amendments in the Law of Social Protection in 2015 ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" number 33/15, 72/15, 104/15, 150/15, 173/15, 192/15), the procedure for passing the vocational exam was changed. Electronic passing of the professional exam is being introduced, which consists of two parts: first part (theoretical) and second part (practical).

The method of taking the professional exam, electronically, limited the possibility of presenting

professional knowledge and skills, which affects the innovation and motivation of professionals for continuous professional development. In addition, with the same legal amendments, in accordance with Article 130, professional workers are obliged within 6 months of employment to complete the mandatory education in accordance with the Program for Continuing Education of Institute for social activities. In accordance with Article 110, persons who are employed for the first time in a public institution for social protection as public service providers, they had to perform a trial work, lasting 6 months, under the mentorship of a public service provider. These provisions were introduced in order to transfer knowledge and skills for the development of general and special competencies of the employee through specific advice of the mentor.

The introduction of continuous professional development, in addition to its scientific significance in the development of the knowledge and skills of professionals, also meant the introduction of a control system in the delivery of training. Therefore, during that period of time, the Program for Continuous Professional Development of the Institute for Social Activities had its own special significance in raising the quality of services and their standardization. The program for continuous professional development was prepared in 2011, in cooperation with the University of Strathclyde from Glasgow and the non-governmental organization "Westwater International Partnersip" and financial support from UNICEF. The professionals in the PI Institute for Social Activities underwent training for trainers to deliver the Modules from the program itself. The program, which at the beginning counted 14 modules, constantly increased its number, trying to follow the needs of professionals for professional development. The program for continuous professional development introduced the existence of a clearly defined methodology for the preparation and delivery of education programs, through the application of adult education methods. The program had planned ideal concepts that bind the participant to the mandatory application of the acquired knowledge in practice, as it provided for a condition for obtaining a certificate for completed continuous education. Namely, the professionals, in order to secure the certificate for attended training, had to provide proof that they met the stipulated criteria and standards of each of the modules they visited, that is, that they apply what they learned at the trainings in practice. However, this system did not come to life in practice, and thus the use of knowledge and skills from the modules attended was left to the good will and motivation of the professionals themselves.

There was no system of accreditation of programs for education, but in reality there are already several experiences of recognition and approval of certain education programs, developed by non-governmental organizations, which respect the minimum standards for the delivery of trainings and

they are in accordance with the standards of work of the professionals.

The recognition of educations is only and exclusively obtained in accordance with the Program for the continuous education of professional workers of the PI Institute for Social Activities Skopje, That represents a kind of monopoly, or exclusivity in the education of professionals, which is why it is necessary to include other subjects in the continuous professional development, but the same must be based on respect for certain standards in the delivery of educations, for which the introduction of training accreditation seems to be the most appropriate way. On the other hand, continuing education was realized or calculated in hours, what means that there was no regulated scoring system for attendance at professional educations, seminars, conferences, etc.

The system of licensing and continuing education necessarily covered only professionals with higher education, while it did not foresee any system of education and preparation for work in the field of social services for personnel with a lower level of education. They are very important especially for services that include help and care, and on the other hand, due to low pay, they are in short supply. However, despite the fact that there was no legal obligation, the PI Institute for Social Activities Skopje came forward and held trainings for all staff in institutions for the social protection of the elderly, according to pre-defined topics from the modules. This is in the direction of supporting staff regardless of the level and degree of education, but also in the direction of improving the quality of services.

In the Law of Social Protection ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" number 79/09, 36/11, 51/11, 166/12, 15/13, 79/13, 164/13, 187/13, 38/14, 44 /14, 116/14, 180/14, 33/15, 72/15, 104/15, 150/15, 173/15, 192/15, 30/16, 163/17, 51/18), which was valid until 22.05.2019, there was no system of supervision as a significant segment in strengthening the capacities of professionals with knowledge and skills necessary for practice, but also as a system of support for professionals in the performance of work tasks.

The Social Protection Law, which entered into force on May 22, 2019. ("Official Gazette of the RNM" number 104/19, 146/19, 275/19) tries to solve or overcome some of the inconsistencies related to the licensing process.

Even though the Law of Social Protection (Ibid), from 2019, does not recognize certain advantages of persons with postgraduate studies, nevertheless in undergraduate studies, or professional staff with higher education, who can perform professional work in a social protection institution, depending on the type of work, there is an expansion of educational profiles. So according to article 194, paragraph 1, the following are recognized in this group: "Graduate social worker, lawyer, graduate in public

administration/public management, psychologist, pedagogue, special education teacher /special educator and rehabilitator, sociologist, economist, andragogue, speech therapist, doctor, special pedagogue for resocialization prevention, health worker, educator, expert in gender issues, family specialist". In paragraph 2, Article 194 it is added that: "Professional workers with higher education can perform professional work in a social protection institution, if they have a work license."

Probationary work, in accordance with Article 211 of the Law on Social Protection (Ibid), remains a requirement for all persons who are employed for the first time in a social protection institution, as providers of public services, in the direction of transferring knowledge and skills for the development of general and special competencies of the employee through specific advice of the mentor, reducing the duration of the trial work to four months.

In the licensing section, the expansion of the importance or necessity of possessing the license is noted, which changes from "license to work in a social protection institution" to: "license for professional work in the social protection activity". Thus, in Article 236 of the Law on Social Protection ("Official Gazette of RNM" number 104/19, 146/19, 275/19), it is stipulated that: "Professionals providing public services employed in public and private institutions for social protection and with other providers of social services, they should have a license to perform professional work in the field of social protection".

The license continues to be valid for 5 years, but two types of licenses are being introduced, general and special or specialized licenses, which depend of the type of knowledge and skills that professionals need to perform professional work in the field of social protection, that is, the degree of responsibility and the type of work tasks they perform.

General licenses, in accordance with Article 236, paragraph 2, of the Law of Social Protection (Ibid), are introduced as: "General license for performing social, legal, pedagogical and psychological professional work in the center for social work" and "general a license to perform professional work in an institution for non-family care, social services center, support center for foster families and other service providers for non-family care and services in the community". With such provisions, a distinction is made between the knowledge and skills necessary for professionals employed in social work centers and other institutions for social protection, but it also expands the range of professionals who should possess a work license.

Professional workers who are appointed as case managers, with the new law, it is considered that they should possess more specialized knowledge and skills related to case management and for those reasons in Article 236, paragraph 2, of the Law of Social Protection (Ibid), introduces: "special

license for a case manager in a social work center", and also introduces a specialized license necessary for supervisors in social work centers, a specialized license for providing care education and a license for counseling and counseling - therapy work. A condition for acquiring any specialized or special license is the possession of one of the types of general licenses for professional work in the field of social protection.

According to Article 238 of the Law of Social Protection ("Official Gazette of RNM" number 104/19, 146/19, 275/19), professionals should complete the initial education within six months of employment at the latest and according to Article 239 to submit a request to take an exam to the Licensing Commission, through the Institute for Social Activities - Skopje. The exam that the professional worker takes depends on the type of license to be acquired. The deadline for obtaining a first license from the day of the first employment of professional workers is 12 months, in accordance with Article 238, paragraph 2. The Program for taking the professional exam in accordance with Article 240, paragraph 5, is carried out by the Institute for Social Activities Skopje, on the proposal of the Commission for licensing.

A novelty that is being introduced, in terms of continuous professional development, in accordance with Article 241 of the Law of Social Protection (Ibid) is the scoring system and recognition of professional educations from other entities. Namely, for the renewal of a work license, the professional worker needs a minimum of 60 points, according to the Program for the continuous education of professional workers in social protection institutions and other social service providers, which should be acquired during the period of validity of the work license and are in the ratio of 40 points from mandatory trainings and 20 points from additional professional activities at the professional's choice. Professionals still have the obligation to take the professional exam in the license renewal procedure, despite the number of points earned from continuing education. In the license extension procedure, the professional workers' license is extended for the next six months after returning to work.

According to the provisions in Article 244, paragraph 3 of the Law of Social Protection (Ibid), the number of members of the Licensing Commission is reduced from 11 to 9, but therefore, in addition to these mandatory members, the possibility of including: "external members from the order of training providers"., in the process of preparing questions for a professional exam, is given. As an obligation of the Licensing Commission in accordance with Article 245, it is also introduced to keep records of participation in trainings and additional professional activities of professional workers providing social services.

A system of accreditation of training programs is introduced, through the establishment of the Commission for the Approval of Continuing Professional Education Programs, consisting of 5 members, whose task, in accordance with Article 248 of the Law of Social Protection ("Official Gazette of RNM" number 104/19, 146/19, 275/19) is implementation of procedure and approval of programs for continuous professional education. This Commission is obliged at least once a year to publish a public call for the approval of programs for continuous professional education in the activity of social protection, but also to state the conditions, criteria and deadline for submission and review of the programs.

A novelty in the direction of strengthening the respect of the Code of Ethics for professional workers is the introduction of an Ethics Board in the Institute for Social Activities in Skopje, which, according to Article 252 of the Law of Social Protection (Ibid), is composed of three representatives, who act according to complaints and knowledge about unethical behavior of a professional worker in working with users.

Within the framework of the works defined by the Law on Social Protection (Ibid), which are carried out by the PI Insitute for Social Activities - Skopje, as a public institution for the promotion of social activities in the entire territory of the Republic of North Macedonia, in Article 110, paragraph 1, it is also stated that the institution carries out: "Supervision of professional work in public institutions for social protection and of professionals in the Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia - employment centers, who work on case management and cooperate with professionals in social welfare centers work". With this, supervision is introduced for the first time in the social protection system of the Republic of North Macedonia. In addition to this form of external supervision, with the introduction of the position of supervisor in social work centers and the specialized license for supervision, the spirit of the new law is realized, which provides the introduction of internal supervision in social work centers.

### **Professionalization of social activity in the Republic of Serbia**

The Republic of Serbia led the process of licensing of professionals for the first time in 2011 in the Law on Social Protection ("Official Gazette RS", number 24/11), where, based on Article 189, paragraph 4, the Regulation on licensing of professional workers in social protectionhas, has been brought ("Official Gazette RS", number 42/13 and number 53/13).



A key role in the process of licensing professionals in the Republic of Serbia in accordance with the legal and sub-legal acts is played by the Chamber of Social Protection, which is an independent, non-profit and professional organization of employed professionals and professional associates in the social protection in the Republic of Serbia. The Chamber of Social Protection was established in January 2013, in accordance with the Law on Social Protection (Ibid), primarily for the needs of the licensing process of professional workers (social workers, pedagogues, lawyers, psychologists, andragogists, special education teachers and social pedagogues) and associates , more precisely, implements all procedures related to the licensing of professional workers.

The license of professional workers in the Republic of Serbia is necessary for independent performance of professional work. Therefore, in addition to the diploma for completing the first or second cycle of studies, professionals who want to obtain a license must also have a certificate of completed internship of one year, carried out according to an established program and supervised by a professional worker (mentor), such as and complete an accredited training program to acquire specific knowledge and skills for working with a specific user group. Pursuant to Article 3 of the Regulation on Licensing of Professional Workers in Social Protection (Ibid), in the Republic of Serbia, the existence of four types of licenses is foreseen, namely a license to perform:

**1. Basic professional work from social protection.** In order to issue a license for performing basic professional work in social protection, in accordance with Article 5, paragraph 1, 2 and 3 of the regulations, it is necessary for the professional worker to have completed the first or second cycle of studies in social work, psychology, pedagogy, andragogy, special education or special pedagogy and an appropriate accredited program for acquiring specific knowledge and skills for performing a specific job, i.e. for working with a specific user group, including victims of violence, people with disabilities, the elderly and others. Professionals who have completed a second cycle of studies within programs that acquire specific knowledge in a certain area are not required to complete the accredited training program.

The third condition for issuing this type of license is that the professional worker has at least one year of experience in social protection, or completed an internship and passed the license exam. In the event that the professional workers have acquired their work experience outside the social protection system, they should have completed training for newly employed and volunteer hired professional

workers and associates and passed the license exam.

**2. Specialized professional work from social protection.** The second type of license or license for performing specialized professional work in social protection, according to Article 6 of the regulations, is issued under similar conditions as the first type of license for performing basic professional work in social protection, with the difference that with this type of license persons who have completed the first and second cycle of legal sciences and who have completed an accredited program for specialized training in which they acquired special knowledge and skills for performing specific specialized work, or providing certain services.

**3. Supervisory work.** The third type of license, which is issued by the Chamber, is a license for performing supervisory work, which, according to Article 7 of the regulations, is issued for performing supervision of basic professional work from social protection and supervision for professional workers who work on specialized work from social protection. To acquire this type of license, professionals must have one of the first two licenses (a license to perform basic professional work in social protection or specialized professional work in social protection), at least five years of work experience in performing basic professional work or specialized works in the field of social protection and have completed an accredited supervision program.

**4. Legal affairs in social protection.** This license is obtained under the same conditions as the first two licenses, but is exclusively intended only for professionals who have completed the first or second cycle of studies in legal sciences and completed an appropriate accredited training program. At the same time, lawyers who have passed the state professional exam are exempt from taking the license exam.

For the issuance of each of these types of licenses, according to the Rulebook on Licensing of Professional Workers in Social Protection ("Official Gazette RS" number 42/13, 53/13), it is necessary to fulfill certain criteria. The professional exam for obtaining a license consists of a theoretical part with exactly prescribed literature and a practical part with a presentation of a case study in a predefined format.

The license is renewed every 6 years, if the professional workers have acquired the appropriate number of points, specified in the Points List from the Rulebook for Licensing of Professional

Workers in Social Protection (Ibid). The process of renewing a license in accordance with Article 10, paragraph 2 of this Rulebook, is based on the professional training of professionals, which includes:

1. continuous monitoring of the development of the theory and practice of social protection and
2. acquisition of knowledge and skills that advance the process of protection and support of users.

The points, which are proof of continuous professional development, can be acquired by professionals through active and passive participation, in accordance with Article 11 of the Regulation on Licensing of Professional Workers in Social Protection ("Official Gazette RS" number 42/13, 53/13 ). Active acquisition of points means if the professional worker independently or as a team participates in the process of continuous education through the acquisition of scientific, specialist and professional meetings, lectures at domestic and international congresses, authorship of training programs (education), with and without checks of knowledge, realization of training in the capacity of certified trainers, successfully completed knowledge verification of educations and trainings, participation in professional and scientific projects, organizing, leading and active participation in tribunes and round tables, publication of papers in indexed and non-indexed journals and monographs , as well as through editorship or membership in indexed and non-indexed journals and monographs.

In contrast to this, the passive achievement of points implies that professionals as listeners participate in domestic and international professional and scientific congresses, tribunes, round tables and educations that do not require a knowledge check. The functional standards that refer to the development of employees in social protection institutions, imply visiting at least 20 hours of accredited programs per year. At the same time, each professional worker is obliged to submit the obtained certificates to the Chamber by the end of the year, and in that way, the number of points won should be recorded.

Attached is Table number 1, which shows the Point list of conditions for acquiring points for license renewal, which is an extract from the Regulation on licensing of professionals in social protection ("Official Gazette RS", number 42/13, 53 /13).

**Table number 1. Point list of conditions for acquiring points for license renewal**

<b>Types of continuing education</b>			<b>Number of points</b>
Scientific, specialist and professional titles, which are relevant for social protection	Doctor of Sciences		60
	Master of Science		40
	Specialist academic studies		30
	Specialized professional studies		15
	Mentor		3 points for new employees, i.e. volunteers
Participation in conferences, congresses, scientific and professional gatherings relevant to social protection	International	Active participation	20
		Passive participation	10
	National	Active participation	15
		Passive participation	5
Educations with a knowledge check (Educations of the first degree)	Author		30
	Certified trainer		20
	Participant		15
Educations, without knowledge verification (Second level educations)	Lecturer		10
	Participant		5
Participation in tribunes and round tables relevant to social protection	Organizer		8
	Host		6
	Active participant		5

	Listener		3
Scientific and professional projects relevant to social protection 20	International	Head	20
		Participant	10
	National	Head	15
		Participant	5
Publication of papers relevant to social protection in journals and monographs	Paper in a journal with an impact factor/SCI list (Science Citation Index)		25
	Paper published in indexed journal		10
	Paper published in non-indexed journal		3
	Monograph Chapter of International Importance		25
	Chapter on a monograph of national importance		15
	Author of peer-reviewed books published by relevant scientific or professional institutions		20
Editorship	Editor of indexed journals 15		15 (annually)
	Editor of thematic issue of indexed journals		10
	Editor of a monograph/thematic collection with the participation of a large number of authors		8
	Editorial board member in indexed journals		8(annually)
	Editor of non-indexed journals		5 (annually)
	Member of the editorial board of a non-indexed journal		2 (annually)

Source: Rulebook for the licensing of professional workers in social protection ("Official Gazette RS", number

A key condition for acquiring or renewing any of the four types of professional licenses is attendance at accredited education programs. The idea of accrediting training programs in the Republic of Serbia begins with the project: "Establishment and application of the system for accreditation of training programs for social service providers in the Republic of Serbia", of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs works in Norway, in the period of 2007/2008, in order to gradually develop a sustainable state system for the continuous professional development of social protection professionals, i.e. a system for accreditation of training programs, through the definition of standards and competencies for professionals. The programs are accredited by the Accreditation Board, which functions within the framework of the Republic Institute for Social Protection - Belgrade, and all the trainings that take place are published on the website of the Chamber in a current calendar. In that way, professionals choose according to their needs, what trainings for professional improvement they will attend.

The accreditation of training programs is based on the legislative framework in the Law on Social Protection ("Official Gazette RS" number 24/11), which provides the normative framework for continuous professional development and the Rulebook on Standards and Procedures for the Accreditation of Professional Training Programs workers and associates in social protection ("Official Gazette RS" number 31/2014). The accreditation of programs aims to introduce a quality system in the area of professional development, which essentially implies a standardized way of checking the quality of training programs.

The Republic Institute for Social Protection - Belgrade, has obligations in keeping the records and documentation in the area of accreditation, namely keeping the prescribed register, to provide logistical support to the Accreditation Board and to perform quality control of the implemented accredited programs, as well as the evaluation of the process of accreditation and information. Control of the quality of the implemented trainings is carried out by the Republic Institute for Social Protection through regular and extraordinary control, through direct observation of the trainings themselves, interviewing and surveying the participants.

The basic standards for accreditation of programs define the lowest or minimum quality that programs should possess in order to be accredited, and there are two groups of programs, namely

basic and specialized or complementary.

The Republic Institute is the author of four programs:

1. Methodology for realization of trainings;
2. Basic training program for supervisors in social work centers;
3. Advancement of competencies for providing supervisory support and
4. Case management with user participation.

If we take into account the overall setup of the system for professional development or continuous professional development, a great advantage is the existence of the Program Accreditation Board, which on the one hand gives the opportunity to many subjects to get involved in continuous professional development, and on the other hand gives established system of control of what is delivered as competences (knowledge and skills) for professionals in the social protection system. Of course, there is also the third condition, which is that the education that is carried out is based on respect for certain norms and standards, which of course was established in the direction of ensuring higher quality.

Professional workers also have the opportunity to choose not only which educations from within the accredited programs they will attend, but also through the point scale, they are motivated for self-education, following European and world trends in social protection, creating their own papers and education programs, as well as developing their skills as trainers.

A particularly motivating role for accrediting programs in the Republic of Serbia is the financing of accredited programs for the professional development of employees in social protection institutions, by the competent ministry. The procedure takes place in such a way that the Republic Institute for Social Protection submits to the responsible ministry every year a proposal for programs for financing from the ministry's budget, with an explanation of them. Based on that rationale, the ministry values the quality of the accredited trainings and their contribution to the development of social protection, as well as the contribution to the achievement of the goals of the Social Protection Strategy and decides which programs it will finance.

## **Conclusions**

The professionalization of social activity is related to continuous learning and raising the profession to a higher level, because no graduating, no knowledge and no skill last forever. If the knowledge



and skills are not perfected and strengthened, the licence loses its value over the years, and the profession loses its meaning and role that it has as part of a certain science. Any profession that strives to strengthen its role in the social life of individuals should have high goals that are recognized in innovations that lead to the enrichment of the skills and knowledge of professionals, the development of programs for continuous modernized education, the application of methods and procedures of reflective learning from one's own experience, learning through problem solving and the like.

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## **VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AS A "*PRODUCT OF VIOLENT DOMESTIC CRIME*" POTENTIAL RISK FOR DISAPPEARANCE OF GENERAL SOCIAL WELFARE**

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**Abstrakt:** Child abuse within the family, as a result of violent domestic crime, is not a new social problem. However, it is unfortunate that it is considered an "accepted" part of our culture not only among Albanians but also in other communities in our country and beyond in some countries in the region. It may not be acknowledged that child abuse within the family is a widespread phenomenon, but even violence against children in our society today has not yet received the same level of attention as other types of crimes, namely violent domestic crime. Not surprisingly, this issue is essentially considered a private matter. This, together with the fact that the family has traditionally been considered a source of love and support, has led to an element of denial at both the community and individual levels. The family, as the most important institution within our society, is extremely complex. It is both a "social control agency" and a "social support agency", and its internal dynamics can have both positive and negative effects on relationships. Violent crime manifested within the family itself, results from the possible presentation of delinquent and criminal behavior by juveniles. The appearance of juvenile delinquency and other types of violent crime, its roots and sources, perhaps and are outside the focus of state-institutional intervention and regulation, seem to be in the family itself. Crime within the family circle and in the family within, and then "as its product" displayed in society, causes, among other things, numerous negative effects of far-reaching

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proportions, children and juveniles as perpetrators of delinquent and criminal acts.

**Keywords:** *child abuse, family, crime, delinquency and social.*

## **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

Within the family, the child may be the object and witness of violence, directly or indirectly. At the same time, he is exposed to psychological torture and experiences stress. Direct violence against children includes the use of physical force or threats, which cause mental or physical pain, suffering, fear, as well as some forms of sexual abuse, economic exploitation, or material and social neglect.

With violence, a child in the family not only gets used to the pain and suffering, but also learns about the violence. Constant stress on a child creates favorable conditions for him to become a person prone to the use of force and conflict. Thus, the habit of achieving the goal by force is acquired as a rational means to the weakest.

No matter how many calls of conscience and oppressive state reaction went to prevent this phenomenon, violence against children is still, even in civilized societies, subject to the stereotypical type of child-rearing model that "*Beating came out of paradise*". When one also has in mind the traditional meaning that parents "have the right" to do so, then violence gains legitimacy in family education.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

In accordance with the set hypothetical framework, the subject of the research and its purpose, the following research methods:

General methods:

- Analytical-synthetic method – as an initial and basic logical-methodological procedure with the aim of theoretical and practical separation or concentration of the research object and its constituent parts;
- Inductive-deductive method – as the most general approach in drawing conclusions;
- Comparative method - through which I will try to make comparisons with some of the applicable laws in some other countries.

## **SUBJECT CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CHILD VICTIM OF VIOLENT DOMESTIC CRIME**

Indirectly, children experience violence when they become victims in family confrontations (verbal or physical), especially in divorce cases where the parents take the children hostage. Seriously children obviously experience the harmful effects of domestic violence. There is a growing awareness of the emotional damage of domestic violence, evidenced in the UK in the offense of control or coercive conduct in intimate or family relationships, which has a maximum detention sentence of 5 years, a fine or both<sup>4</sup>.

Domestic violence is part of the child protection landscape. Government documentation on child protection entitled "Working together to protect children"<sup>5</sup> details the protection of the responsibilities of professionals and organizations and promotes a child-centered approach based on the needs and views of children<sup>6</sup>.

It is not uncommon for victims of domestic violence to stay living with perpetrators, even endangering their safety, instead of endangering themselves and their children by becoming homeless.

Teachers also play a key role in identifying and responding to domestic violence as they have more contact with children than any other service. Although school staff may not be able to stop domestic violence, they are able to make a significant difference in the lives of children<sup>7</sup>.

Exposure to domestic violence generates a host of responses and needs, and it is important that children and young people are not considered a homogeneous group or lack the capacity for post-traumatic growth and recovery. It is wrong to stereotype all children as inevitably and permanently damaged by domestic violence life.

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<sup>4</sup>Home Office (2015). Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship, Statutory Guidance Framework. London: Home Office, pg. 123.

<sup>5</sup>HM Government (2013). Working Together to Safeguard Children, A Guide to Inter-Agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children. London: HM Government, pg. 67.

<sup>6</sup>Etherington, N., and Baker, L. (2018). From 'Buzzword' to best practice: applying intersectionality to children exposed to intimate partner violence. Trauma Violence Abuse 19, pg. 70.

<sup>7</sup>Sterne, A., and Poole, L. (2010). *Domestic Violence and Children*, A Handbook for Schools and Early Years Setting. London: Routledge, pg. 17.

Although some children who experience domestic violence will exhibit difficulties in their school work, the education of others will not be adversely affected: some children living with domestic abuse do very well in school; throwing them into school life and work can provide an escape<sup>8</sup>. Similarly, while some students affected by domestic violence will experience educational settings as a source of continuity and security, others will experience them as challenging.

### **CHILD VIOLENCE AS RESULTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENT CRIME**

Therefore, early childhood exposure to domestic violence has been shown to have life-changing consequences for children in the form of academic failure, juvenile delinquency, and substance use disorders.

Official data from the police in Macedonia show that, in 2004, out of 2,434 complaints of domestic violence, 175 of them were children as well as other family members, in large families with members that include several generations<sup>9</sup>. Whereas, in 2017, out of 903 criminal offenses of domestic violence, 90 of them victims are children<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, children who witness abuse are prone to depression and even develop mental disorders and acquire a tendency to be physically violent themselves in later life<sup>11</sup>. Stark & Flitcraft argue that 90% of all male children in violent homes did not abuse their wives and that actual injuries were more than twice as likely as other men to have had a non-violent childhood<sup>12</sup>.

Children show different emotional reactions to a domestic abuser, especially anger directed at both the abuser and the victim, finding both guilty, feeling guilty about such a situation, fearing continued domestic violence, and shame on the environment. Moreover, such a child is characterized by fear of an individual family member, fear of a man in general, fear of physical contact of any nature, running away from home, insecurity, and even suicide attempts.

From numerous research studies on domestic violence and its impact on children, it turns out that some researchers suggest that there is a link between children's exposure to domestic violence and subsequent social behaviors, such as bullying, offending, drug abuse, self -low respect, escape,

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pg. 23.

<sup>9</sup>Tozija F, Gjorgjev D, Kochubovski M. (2012). "Violence and maltreatment of elderly - applied ecological model in risk assessment and policy intervention". J Environ Protect Ecol. 13: pg. 2173 - 2185.

<sup>10</sup> <https://mvr.gov.mk/vest/4980>.

<sup>11</sup> Pizzey, E. (1974). *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours will Hear*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, pg. 45

<sup>12</sup> Stark, E. and Flitcraft, A. (1996). *Women at Risk: domestic violence and women's health*, London: Sage, pg. 78.

with adolescents 6 to 9 times more likely to have attempted suicide or have suicidal ideation. Furthermore, Edelson proposed that exposing children to domestic violence among parents tends to seal their "inaudible pressures" on their "impressive minds", they are thought to express more anger, antisocial behavior, and fear, anxiety and depression<sup>13</sup>.

Similarly other studies have reported that children are more at risk of behavioral, emotional and psychological problems if they are exposed to domestic violence. In contrast, other researchers proposed that the impact of domestic violence on children may change with age and they may be less symptomatic of its impact with adulthood. In contrast Thornberry and others reported exposure to domestic violence in adolescence as more impactful than exposure to younger children, with previous exposure having had little or no impact without adolescent exposure<sup>14</sup>.

From a gender perspective, research suggests that there are gender differences in the problems of externalizing behavior as a result of domestic violence, boys are thought to have more externalization while girls less. However teenage boys are thought to express more sadness while girls express more anger. Other research studies are against these findings as they assume that exposure to domestic violence is not a "homogeneous one-dimensional phenomenon" and some research has been involved with many methodological implications<sup>15</sup>.

## **EFFECTS ON CHILD VICTIM FROM VIOLENT DOMESTIC CRIME**

Child abuse and neglect is specifically highlighted by the World Health Organization in Consultations on the Prevention of Child Abuse (Geneva 1999), which lists the following forms: Physical abuse - in the form of an actual or threatening attack on physical integrity; sexual abuse - involving a child in sexual activity that he or she does not understand or has not developed to engage in, inciting any sexual activity without consent, using it for pornographic purposes, and forcing prostitution; emotional abuse - the inability and lack of emotional and social skills of a child to develop properly to function in society, in accordance with his age; negligence - lack of necessary needs of the child in the field of education, emotional development, nutrition, accommodation, health, cultural and physical needs; exploitation - the use of a child in any field that is physically and

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<sup>13</sup> Edelson JL (1999). "Children's witnessing of adult domestic violence". J Interpers Violence 14: pg. 839-870.

<sup>14</sup> Thornberry T, Ireland T, Smith C. (2001). „The importance of timing: the varying impact of childhood and adolescent maltreatment on multiple problem outcomes". Dev Psychopathol 13: pg. 957-979.

<sup>15</sup> Holt S. (2003). "Child protection social work and men's abuse of women: an Irish study". Child Fam Soc Work 18: pg. 53-65.

mentally inappropriate, and that endangers his or her emotional, physical and social development.

Therefore, it can be said that child abuse and violent domestic crime are not new social problems, nor are they casual or deviant activities. Both are considered an accepted part of our culture here in Macedonia but also elsewhere in the region and beyond. However, while domestic violence is now politically recognized as one of the most entrenched and widespread forms of violence in our society today, child abuse issues have not yet received the same degree of attention<sup>16</sup>.

Not surprisingly, these issues are essentially considered a private matter. This, together with the fact that the family has traditionally been considered a source of love and support, has led to an element of denial at both the community and individual levels. However, the family, as the most important institution within our society, is extremely complex. It is both a social control agency and a social support agency, and that its internal dynamics can have both positive and negative effects on relationships.

A very negative aspect of family life is the effect of domestic violence on children, whether as witnesses or as victims of conflict. The growing awareness of this specific aspect of domestic violence owes much to the work of the women's housing movement. It was through reports from housing workers that people were initially made aware that children could be severely traumatized by seeing evidence of domestic violence and, indeed, that children could also be victims of this violence. Concern has also been expressed by health and welfare professionals, who have felt frustrated by not being able to legally intervene to protect child witnesses from extreme incidents of domestic violence, unless there was also evidence of child abuse<sup>17</sup>.

There is now limited literature on the effects of witnessing violence on the psychological development of children. Initially the literature was limited to clinical descriptions of children's behavioral and emotional problems caused primarily by the evaluation of children in women's shelters. These assessments used a standardized checklist which measures internalization problems (depression, somatic or physiological complaints, anxiety and withdrawal) and externalization problems (disobedience, destructiveness and aggression).

Recent studies have improved methodologically by including appropriate comparison sets and standardized additional measures, and by examining a wider range of dysfunctional and adaptive

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<sup>16</sup>Alexander, R. (1988). The Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987. Law Institute Journal. Mars, pg. 166-169.

<sup>17</sup> Ammerman, R.T. and Herson, M. (1990). *Treatment of Family Violence*, John Wiley and Sons, New York. pg.56.



behaviors in children. These studies represent the initial efforts to document the effects that domestic violence has on children's behavior, their cognitive and social problem-solving skills, and their coping and emotional functioning<sup>18</sup>.

A comprehensive summary of the effects on children of either witnessing and / or being victims of domestic violence is presented below. Babies are reactive to their environment; when they are desperate they cry, refuse to eat or withdraw and are particularly sensitive to emotional deprivation. They are extremely vulnerable. Young children, who have begun to develop basic efforts to link causes to emotional expressions, can often be seen to have behavioral problems such as frequent illness, severe shyness, low self-esteem, and problems in day care, as well as problems social as hitting, biting or being argumentative.

Gender differences may appear at this stage. In preschool, children believe that everything revolves around them and is caused by them. If they are witnesses of violence or abuse, they believe they caused it. Some studies have shown that preschool boys have the highest ratings for aggressive behavior and the most serious somatic difficulties of any age group.

Children of primary school age, especially in the final stage, begin to learn that violence is an appropriate way of resolving conflict in human relationships. They often have difficulty with school work and girls in this age group have been found to have higher clinical levels of both aggression and depression. Adolescents see violence as their parents problem and they often hold the victim accountable. Ongoing conflict between parents has a profound impact on adolescent development and adult behavior in the future, and may be the strongest predictor of violent delinquency<sup>19</sup>.

However, it should be noted that, although there is no doubt that children who either witness and / or are victims of domestic violence are all affected in terms of their behavioral, cognitive, and emotional adjustment, the study is still not conclusive enough for determined that there is a definite answer to gender, age, or stage of development. The sample sizes of some studies are also often not large enough to guarantee strong conclusions. The discrepancies suggest that there are still many more factors to consider, including: the extent and frequency of violence; the role of the child in the family; the number of repetitions and repeated movements as well as the economic and social

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<sup>18</sup> Bowker, L.H., Arbittel, M. and McFerron, J.R. (1988). On the relationship between wife beating and child abuse. *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*. Sage, California, pg. 78.

<sup>19</sup> Carlson, B.E. (1984). *Children's observations of inter-parental violence*, Springer, New York, pg. 123.

disadvantage.

Living with domestic violence can cause physical and emotional harm to children and young people in the following ways:

- Persistent anxiety and depression;
- Emotional distress;
- Eating and sleeping disorders;
- Physical symptoms, such as headaches and stomach aches;
- Have difficulty managing stress;
- Low self-esteem;
- Self-harm;
- Are aggressive towards friends and schoolmates, feel guilty or blame themselves for the violence;
- Have problems in creating positive relationships;
- Develop phobia and insomnia;
- Struggle with going to school and doing school work;
- Use bullying behavior or become a target of bullying;
- Difficulty concentrating;
- They find it difficult to solve problems;
- Have less empathy and care for others.

Children and young people need to grow up in a safe and nutritious environment. Where there is domestic violence, the home is not safe, children are afraid of what might happen to them and the people they love.

Children may be at risk of experiencing and witnessing violence within the family or from those known to them. The perpetrator is usually in a caring role or in a position of trust in relation to the child. Children can be direct targets of physical violence or they can get hurt when trying to protect

another family member, often the mother, or trying to stop their parents from fighting<sup>20</sup>.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that domestic violence results in a similar outcome for many children, regardless of whether they are direct victims or just witnesses of violence. A number of authors have highlighted a clear link between domestic violence and child abuse, with one being predictive of the other: it has been estimated that children living in situations of domestic violence are up to 15 times more likely to be abused or neglected than children from nonviolent homes<sup>21</sup>.

Behavioral and psychological consequences of childhood violence include poor performance at school, bedtime, aggression (especially in men), harsh anger, hostile behavior, self-blame, parental violence, peer isolation, self-harming behavior, seizures, psychosomatic symptoms, theft, overload, depression, sleep disturbances, and excessive anxiety symptoms. Violence from a person in a position of trust impairs a child's ability to trust others and increases the risk of victimization in later life.

Recent research has shown that there are significant and possibly persistent neurobiological effects of trauma experienced in early childhood. The work by Perry and others has demonstrated the importance of critical periods of exposure to safe parenting: exposure to repetitive traumatic experiences in early childhood puts a child at a much greater risk of long-term psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems<sup>22</sup>.

The type of violence is not the main factor determining the long-term outcome. The most important predictors are the duration of the violence, its severity and its frequency. The cumulative impact of exposure to multiple adverse experiences (e.g., violence, psychological or sexual abuse, substance abuse) in childhood is predictive of adverse health outcomes in adult life. In a large study in the US it was found that exposure to four or more categories of adverse childhood experiences was associated with a 4-12-fold increased risk of alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, and suicide attempt<sup>23</sup>.

Protective factors include a healthy relationship with a primary caregiver, good social support,

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<sup>20</sup>Anderson J, Martin J, Mullen P. (1993). "Prevalence of childhood sexual abuse experiences in a community sample of women". *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*; 32: pg. 911-919.

<sup>21</sup>McKay MM. (1994). "The link between domestic violence and child abuse: assessment and treatment considerations". *Child Welfare*; 73: pg. 29-39.

<sup>22</sup>Perry BD. (1994). *Neurobiological sequelae of childhood trauma: post-traumatic stress disorders in children*, Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, pg.199.

<sup>23</sup>Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg D, et al.(1998). „Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults". *Am J Prev Med* 14: pg. 245-258.

and positive subsequent life experiences.

Physical abuse of a child in the family is the darkest and most secret number of domestic violence. Assumptions that millions of children of all ages are exposed to this type of violence every day. It manifests in all forms of physical violence described previously, with some features, such as restriction of physical movement, restraint and confinement in the premises. The most severe types exist in the form of physical endangerment and physical liquidation, the so-called "Beaten Child Syndrome", which is justified in families with accidental cases and careless actions.

Emotional abuse has different forms of manifestation and causality. It constitutes special forms of parental behavior from rejection, threat, isolation, incitement to deviant behavior, verbal humiliation, conditioning of love and attention, insistence on identification, and many other activities of the parents to which the child takes a disgusting attitude.

An indirect form of abuse also takes the form of neglect or neglect of the child. It can be in the form of deprivation of attention and love, neglect of material needs and health needs, education, avoidance of the obligation to support, lack of educational influences, necessary supervision, etc ..

Sexual abuse is the most serious and brutal form of domestic violence. The most common perpetrators are father and stepfather, while the victims are girls, but often also boys of all ages. What makes this form of violence alarming, because it seems to be constant, as a rule it is in the form of incest or prostitution, represents the strictest family secret and consequently is the most traumatic form of all kinds of violence that occurs within the family. Many children are more likely to experience sexual violence from someone they know or witness violence within their family<sup>24</sup>.

Sometimes child abuse is systematic and a reflection of culture and customs in some parts of the world. This is especially the case with the traditional preference for male<sup>25</sup> children and the "circumcision" of females<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid, pg. 165-184

<sup>25</sup>The traditional preference for male children, as it is widespread among Albanians, it is especially widespread in China and in some other countries. Female infants, girls and women are deprived of food and medical care. With the advancement of technology, it is possible to determine the gender of the fetus in the mother's body very early. In the case of female fetuses, abortions are performed, or girls are killed or abandoned after birth. see about it "A Longitudinal Study of Son and Daughter Preference among Chinese Only-Children from Adolescence to Adulthood", The China Journal No. 71 (January 2014), pg. 1-24, The University of Chicago Press, published in <https://doi.org/10.1086/674551>, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/674551>, visited on 22.10.2022.

<sup>26</sup> The so-called "Female Genital Mutilation" is very widespread in multi-tribal Africa. In some Arab countries such as Egypt and Sudan, almost 100% of women have this "luck". In other countries, only members of certain tribes are circumcised, for example, in Nigeria, Mali, Senegal. For more see World Health Organization-Department of Women's



## **CONCLUSION**

The family may have also has a negative aspect in terms of family life, when the effects are caused by violent crime and inhumane treatment of children.

In the case of violent domestic crime where the woman suffers directly, who in the case of divorce loses the relationship and intimacy with her children who can be severely traumatized especially when they have seen evidence of violent domestic crime.

From domestic violent crime, it's possible that children are also collateral damage victims of this violence. Concerns about this situation have also been expressed by health and welfare professionals, who have felt frustrated by not being able to legally intervene to protect child witnesses from extreme incidents of domestic violence, unless there was also evidence of child abuse .

Domestic violence refers to violent acts committed by one family or a member of the household against another, and in this case the most painful case is the abuse of children or their mistreatment. The prevalence of violence against children is without a doubt one of the main concerns in every country of the world, as well as here at Republic of North Macedonia.

Understanding the definition violence and abuse against children helps to take the most effective measures against all types of manifestations of abuse. Children as victims may not be able to take action against their abusers, because they do not understand that the behavior they are experiencing is really violence against them, but the whole society should contribute towards clarifying their rights. , from families, schools, associations, organizations and especially those with a religious logo for these violations committed against children.

It is very sad any kind of abuse, but the emotional one, which often takes the form of constant criticism, calling the name, and more severely damaging the victim's relationship with her children, as well as interfering in the skills of the victim and the child in at the same time.

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# **Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Organizational Behavior and Mental Health of Employees in Higher Education Institutions**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The motive for writing this article is to connect the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic, the organizational behavior and mental health of employees in higher education institutions. Such as, the impact that this pandemic has on every segment of the functioning of one higher education institution.

In January 2020, the world saw the spread of a new virus known as Covid-19. The impact of this virus has produced a pandemic that has spared no country<sup>27</sup>. In course of COVID-19 pandemic, learning and teaching environments soon started to change on a dramatic scale for all stakeholders, like students, teachers, educational leaders, educationalists, due to the restriction strategies adopted and imposed by national governments in many parts of the world<sup>28</sup>.

Organizational behavior in higher education often has a standard structure, such as Rector, Vice-Rector for teaching, Dean, Vice Dean, Full Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Teaching assistant and others administrative figures. All these individuals are responsible for setting the tone in the institution, especially in times of changes, such as pandemic of COVID-19. Lack of leadership or ethics can come from the very top, which can create fractures in the institution.

From the beginning of online teaching in March 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic, all staff was under a high degree of stress. They were faced with the enormous challenge of adapting to the new

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<sup>27</sup>B Khaoula and A Jalal (2021). The Impact of Covid-19 on Higher Education: A Review on the Moroccan Case. International Journal of Innovation and Economic Development, Inovatus Services Ltd, 7(5)

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way of realizing teaching. Teaching work is stressful, which means experiencing negative emotions like anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, depression. Changes in teaching methods and the lack of guidance for new teaching challenges have created great uncertainty in this sector.

## **KEY WORDS**

**COVID-19, organizational behavior, mental health, higher education, institutions, changes**

### **1. Introduction**

Organizational behavior is a term that can be derived from several different definitions, although the classic is the study of individuals in an organizational context. All organizations have some type of corporate behavior it exists everywhere, even as organizational behavior in education. Here, the term defines the structure of the higher education institution, the process by which it measures performance, and how the educational institution responds to change. Every higher education institution is different, and the organizational behavior depends on its size, type, importance of the structure and other factors. Individuals are the common driving force behind organizational behavior. The higher education institution is the same as any other organization, full of people who lead the activities in the group.

The pandemic taught us a lesson. The most important thing about doing professional training is not to do it face-to-face or online, but rather that its forms of learning and content adapt to what the labor market really needs. And since this also changed during the same pandemic, it forced educational centers to adapt quickly.

The literature suggests that increased workload, poor work-life balance, lack of management support, and other factors result in anxiety and stress at work that affect their mental well-being. Since the beginning of online teaching in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the teaching staff has been under a high degree of stress, because they were faced with the huge challenge of adapting to the new way of teaching. Changes in teaching, methods and lack of guidance for new teaching challenges have created great uncertainty in this sector.

This paper will show how the COVID-19 pandemic influences on the changes of organizational behavior and mental health of employees in higher education institution, and which are the consequences that the pandemic caused in the higher education.

## 2. Organizational behavior in higher education institutions during COVID-19 pandemic

The covid-19 pandemic situation compelled all the teaching professionals to work from home and find different ways to inculcate knowledge among students. It has changed the people lifestyle, working style, gives mankind the wildest imagination, teaching and learning and like so<sup>29</sup>. As Suganya and Sankareshwaristate, many educational institutions change its teaching and working style in the track of imparting education among students<sup>30</sup>.

During the pandemic, the already weak relationships of the higher education institutions necessitated an extensive work of coordination to avoid possible organizational anarchy. According to Paletta, headmasters who have been able to develop, in their schools, the middle management could count on the precious contribution of collaborators, department coordinators, persons in charge of the digital development plan, safety managers and many other staff committed to weave the fabric of a professional community<sup>31</sup>.

Before the pandemic, changes were visualized and planned over time. In this health and social crisis, change has been experienced rapidly. Undoubtedly, Senge's visionary approach is becoming relevant currently, where people and organizations have had to unlearn and relearn rapidly.

The disrupted outcomes of the pandemic may last longer for the education sector and negatively influence the interest and performance of educators<sup>32</sup>.

Although the transformation of traditional educational institutions into virtual organizations facilitates teaching and learning practices, at the same time, it poses challenges for leaders, organizations, and employees<sup>33</sup>.

According to Shaya et al<sup>34</sup>, if organizations are not sufficiently prepared to mitigate impacts and effectively respond to crises, neither will the communal- or supra-systems to which they belong. Shaya et al, also state that most of those establishments showing preparedness to mitigate the impact

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<sup>29</sup>S SuganyaB Sankareshwari(2020). Job Satisfaction Level on Online Teaching among Higher Secondary School Teachers during Covid-19 Pandemic. Shanlax International Journal of Education, 9(1)

<sup>30</sup> ibid

<sup>31</sup>A Paletta(2020). Covid-19 and organizational change: the case of educational institutions.BBS Initiative for sustainable society and business.

<sup>32</sup>E.M Onyema,CNwafor, F Obafemi,S Sen, FG Atonye,ASharmaand AO Alsayed(2020). Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic on Education. Journal of Education and Practice, 11(13).

<sup>33</sup>MShoaib, A Nawal, RKorsakieneand RZamecnik (2022). Performance of Academic Staff during COVID-19 Pandemic-Induced Work Transformations: An IPO Model for Stress Management. Economies, 10(51).

<sup>34</sup>N Shaya, RA Khait,RMadaniand MN Khattak (2022). Organizational Resilience of Higher Education Institutions: An Empirical Study during Covid-19 Pandemic. Higher Education Policy.

of COVID-19 have adopted and deployed an organizational resilience framework<sup>35</sup>.

Higher education institutions and staff at every level should find time now to look at rebuilding strategies that could be applied in the post-crisis period<sup>36</sup>. In this pandemic of Covid-19, organizations know that engaged employees are the key to success in this tough time<sup>37</sup>.

### **3. Mental health of employees in higher education during COVID-19 pandemic**

The existence of the COVID-19 pandemic poses challenges and pressures for employees in higher education institutions in their work, and organizational support is required<sup>38</sup>.

45.07% of staff from the Arts and Humanities department of a Spanish university showed moderate to severe subjective distress during the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in May 2020<sup>39</sup>.

Kita et al. state that, as mental health issues among higher education institutions can impact the quality of instruction, which may in turn affect students' learning and psychological well-being, more research on higher education institution mental health during the COVID-19 induced emergency online education is necessary<sup>40</sup>.

Anxiety and worry on a personal and institutional level are evident<sup>41</sup>. As they state, increases in depression and anxiety amongst staff members in higher education are expected globally.

University employees experienced the pandemic in three phases: phase 1: uncertainty and instability, demanding an adjustment to the work context; phase 2: fatigue, characterised by new realities and new fears; and phase 3: re-opening, generating new feelings of uncertainty amongst staff members<sup>42</sup>.

Academic staff, have also been influenced by factors other than the COVID-19 pandemic, including leadership styles, economic instability, security, working conditions and stress level<sup>43</sup>. According to

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<sup>35</sup>N Shaya, RA Khait, RMadani and MN Khattak (2022). Organizational Resilience of Higher Education Institutions: An Empirical Study during Covid-19 Pandemic. Higher Education Policy.

<sup>36</sup>M Nandy, S Lodhand A Tang (2021). Lessons from Covid-19 and a resilience model for higher education. Industry and Higher Education, 35(1).

<sup>37</sup>N Chanana (2021). The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employee's organizational commitment and job satisfaction in reference to gender differences. Journal of public affairs, 21 (4).

<sup>38</sup>N SudibjoManihuruk AM (2022). How do happiness at work and perceived organizational support affect teacher's mental health through job satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic? Psychology Research and Behavior Management.

<sup>39</sup>Y Kita, SYasuda, and C Gherghel (2022). Online education and the mental health of faculty during the COVID-19 pandemic in Japan. Scientific Reports.

<sup>40</sup>ibid

<sup>41</sup>R L van Niekerk and MMvan Gent (2021). Mental health and well-being of university staff during the coronavirus disease 2019 levels 4 and 5 lock down in an Eastern Cape university, South Africa. S Afr J Psychiatr.

<sup>42</sup>R L van Niekerk and MMvan Gent (2021). Mental health and well-being of university staff during the coronavirus disease 2019 levels 4 and 5 lock down in an Eastern Cape university, South Africa. S Afr J Psychiatr.

<sup>43</sup>M Shoaib, Nawal A, RKorsakiene and RZamecnik (2022). Performance of Academic Staff during COVID-19

Chanana, an increased level of fear of Covid-19 was associated with decreased job satisfaction, increased psychological distress, and increased organizational and professional turnover intentions<sup>44</sup>. The focus to deal with work stress must move from individual vulnerabilities to work organization problems, where the intervention response considers three levels (individuals, teams, and organization).<sup>45</sup>

Organizational culture, job satisfaction, and technology provide motivation and have a significant positive effect on employee performance during the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>46</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

Organizational behavior affects almost all aspects of an organization's business. The effectiveness of the control system in the organization largely depends on its compatibility with organizational culture. Behavior is an important factor in the choice organizational structures. It determines the predominant profile of motivation, as well as style leadership in the organization. Culture affects both the sources and the structure of power in an organization. It decisively influences the choice and efficiency of methods of carrying out organizational changes, as well as on the performance of the organization. Higher education administrators and senior staff should be in a position to cope with these changes without sacrificing the quality of education provided to students at higher education institutions, especially in times of COVID-19 pandemic.

The mental health and well-being of university staff members was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to an increased risk of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety

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Pandemic-Induced Work Transformations: An IPO Model for Stress Management. *Economies*, 10(51).

<sup>44</sup>N Chanana (2021). The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employees' organizational commitment and job satisfaction in reference to gender differences. *Journal of public affairs*, 21 (4).

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<sup>46</sup>N Chanana (2021). The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employees' organizational commitment and job satisfaction in reference to gender differences. *Journal of public affairs*, 21 (4).

and stress<sup>47</sup>.

It is of crucial importance to prepare higher education institutions employees for maintaining their organizational behavior and mental health and find creative solutions to crisis situations at both individual and institutional level<sup>48</sup>.

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# INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AS A PREVENTIVE PREMISE

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## Abstract

The history of humanity does not move chaotically and aimlessly, but it has purpose and can define things regardless of what attitude we have, it can be positive or negative. In this matter, religion gives us opportunities for a more realistic approach with a contemporary method of dealing with problems related to culture and civilizations. Precisely, the issue of culture and civilization is presented to us as a very sensitive and relevant topic not only at local but also global levels.

Modern man is faced with cultural challenges that constantly accompany him. Concretely, September 11, 2001 was the beginning of a new chapter of the clash of cultural concepts and showed threatening tones for the peace and security of the world. The inter-religious and inter-civilizational dialogue presents the intention and tendencies to overcome the clashing and conflicting paradigms for the establishment of peace in the world. People should communicate with each other and respect each other regardless of their religion. Religion is one of the most powerful, deeply felt and influential forces in human society. It gives life to interpersonal relationships, having an impact in various fields, whether in the family, society, politics and economy.

**Key words:** history, religion, culture, dialogue, security, civilization, peace.

## Introduction

Nowadays we are offered information from different sources and at the same time we also have multiple interpretations about the situations that appear, and give meaning to the certain events. It is a fact that modern society is very different from the societies that lived in the past therefore in general today society is faced with new challenges, with numerous commitments and dynamism in life, but above all we have to face the concept and understanding of religion which has been declining in recent times.

Everything that has come to the surface, even a symbolic development, is meritorious, perhaps even an incentive for other innovations. So, we understand that different peoples, depending on their way of life, the

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way they work the land, or the way they irrigate it, have created methods - each in their own style, with the same goal, the perfection of the human being and the best conditions for good living.

Jacqueline de Romilly's assessment is of this nature when she defines culture as a resource and a system of reference points that allows everyone, as well as any group, to think, act and express themselves - to find the words to say what is on their mind, then all we have to do is underline the multiplicity of its aspects, the diversity of its components.<sup>51</sup>

Every society has its own culture. Religious beliefs, drama, poetry, dances, folklore, popular wisdom, mythology, moral and aesthetic codes of society, elements of political and legal life that affirm the value and freedom of the personality, tolerance, philosophy, theater, galleries, museums, libraries represent the beginning of human culture.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, today, the need for dialogue has become more pronounced after the developments of the beginning of the XXI century. And if we refer to the declarations related to human rights, we see that a person has the right to express his thoughts, his religious beliefs individually and collectively, to pray at home but also in public, and even to change his beliefs. when you wanted and you performed the rites that you think are most suitable for him.<sup>53</sup>

## **Intercultural dialogue as a preventive premise**

We witness great movements processes and developments different scenarios, manifestations and colors appearing everywhere in the world. In this view, there are two coast that in most cases cross each other. The two coasts that appear are characterized by two principles, one historical, while the other represents the present time. Unfortunately as if the bridge that should connect these shores is missing. It is a fact that the bridge itself represents the safest and strongest connection where walking is not without obstacles and every step taken towards the future is very hard.

The future remains as a hostage to the past, and a more modest look at history and events that prevent the sowing of good, to take a step forward, remains to be given. But the issue and the dilemmas that arise are related to the question of how to reach the desired, tolerance and dialogue? It is safe, then when the two coasts sit down and create relations, then when they extend their hand and in the name of tolerance start dialogue although, of course, this also has its own challenges, there are difficulties that can be encountered and the

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<sup>51</sup>Francis Balle, *Përplasja e Fanatikëve*, përkth. Kleopatra Koleka, Papirus, Tiranë, 2016, p.11.

<sup>52</sup>AlijaIzetbegoviq, *Islamindërmjetlindjesdheperëndimit*, përkth. EkremKryeziu, Logos, Shkup, 1993, p. 62.

<sup>53</sup>Kardinal Sergio Pignedoli, Kisha katolikedhebesimet e tjera: trialogifeveabrahamike,nëIsmail Faruki, *Dialog i feve abrahamike, përmbledhje esesh*, përkth. Rezart Beka, , Qendra studimore fetare Erasmus, pa datë, p. 16 - 29.



narrowing that can appear at certain times.

The word "tolerance" was borrowed only in the 16th century from Latin and French, that is, in the context of religious schism. In this developmental context, it initially took on the narrow meaning of tolerance in the face of other religious beliefs. In the continuation of the 16th and 17th centuries, religious tolerance becomes a notion of right. Governments issue acts of tolerance, which charge the subordinates and the religious population with a tolerant attitude towards religious minorities - Lutherans, Huguenots, Papists. From the legal act of state tolerance of other faiths and their practice, the claim of tolerant behavior towards the members of a religious community, until then oppressed and persecuted, results. In English, "tolerance" as a disposition of behavior or virtue is clearly distinguished from "toleration", that is, a legal act.

## What is the concept of "tolerance"

In German, the expression "toleranz" refers to both: the tolerance of the guaranteed legal order and the political virtue of the tolerant approach.<sup>54</sup>

However at least in Italian ambiguity is likely: tolerance is a positive term that indicates mutual respect for all public beliefs; tolerant indicates an attitude of superior gentleness and pleasing; to tolerate means an offensive or even arrogant tolerance of behavior and opinions that are different from your own.<sup>55</sup>

Tolerance is a tendency to resist or tolerate the beliefs and practices of other people with whom one may disagree because he or she considers these beliefs or practices to be false or wrong. As one author puts it, "tolerance involves an attitude that is intermediate between wholehearted acceptance and unbridled opposition."<sup>56</sup>

Tolerance as a term we occasionally use instead of the words respect, mercy, generosity, or self-control, is the most essential element in moral systems, the most important source of spiritual discipline, and a divine virtue for perfect men. Hence the definition related to a man who can be tolerant, it has to do with his views, the ideas he cracks, but he does not cause any trouble with others even though he does not agree with their ideas.

For example, we know that there is diversity, and this diversity also represents the beauty of this world, the religious issue appears to us as a paradigm. Everyone thinks that their own is better, just as every religious person thinks that his faith is more complete and that it responds to people's needs, but at the same time it does not show aggressiveness, contempt and an attitude of ignorance towards others, towards a other

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<sup>54</sup>Jürgen Habermas, *Midis natyralizmitdhereligionit, përkth. ArbërÇeliku, Asdreni, Shkup, 2008*, p, 261.

<sup>55</sup>Claudio Magris, *Panairi i tolerancës, ese për çmimin Erasmus 2001*, Tiranë, pa datë, p, 12.

<sup>56</sup>Thomas Michael Scanlon, *The diversity of objections to inequality*, the Lindley Lecture the University of Kansas, 1996. p, 226.

culture and civilization, so he tolerates disagreements and any other debate. Under the magnifying glass of tolerance, the qualities of believers reach new heights and stretch to infinity, mistakes and faults become insignificant and distant, while they are so insignificant that they can fit on a finger.<sup>57</sup> Though this does not understand that the matter is so simple, that many thoughts appear in front of us that have to do with exceptions, disinterest, prejudices, non-intervention but also not paying attention, and these in themselves contain something positive or negativity in the space where act.

## **Synonymous and prejudices of tolerance**

In none of these we mentioned, we can say that they are synonymous with tolerance, a person cannot have prejudices and immediately identify him with tolerance and on the contrary if he shows prejudices we treat him as an intolerant person. The same has to do with disinterest or non-interference in an issue on which there may be hot conversations. This picture can be presented with different pictures but we take the moment from the angle when it seems that the individual is tolerant because he has no interest in a phenomenon that appears, or about a debate. These definitions do not cover what is actually hidden by the term tolerance. We can have principles, and for the sake of these principles perhaps also silence. If controversies arise about an issue, about a religious phenomenon or any other social problem, this problem or this phenomenon should be handled in the most gentle way possible, where a genuine debate occurs with a respectful listening to the other side even if there is opposition or disagreements. This does not mean that we should depart from our principles, only that we present them gently.

And dialogue means a meeting of two or more people to discuss specific issues and thus create a connection between them. In this context, we can say that the dialogue has human beings in its axis.<sup>58</sup>

## **The necessity for establishing dialogue**

The need for dialogue has become more pronounced after the developments of the beginning of the XXI century. And if we refer to the declarations related to human rights, we see that a person has the right to express his thoughts, his religious beliefs individually and collectively, to pray at home but also in public, and even to change his beliefs. when you wanted and you performed the rites that you think are most suitable for him.

For the much-talked about "Clash of Civilizations", inter-religious dialogue becomes an alternative, because in most cases the debate that has to do with religions itself provokes reactions from the most diverse

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<sup>57</sup>Fethullah Gylen, *Drejt qytetërimin botëror me dashuri dhe tolerancë*, përkth. Mithat Hoxha, Prizmi, Tiranë, 2005, p. 65.

<sup>58</sup>Fethullah Gylen, *Drejt qytetërimin botëror me dashuri dhe tolerancë*, përkth. Mithat Hoxha, Prizmi, Tiranë, 2005, p.84.

and in other aspects both negative and belittling and not to mention and in some cases derogatory. That is why greater importance is given to this type of debate because it is more sensitive, especially in those societies dominated by multiculturalism, where society is filled with different cultures and each of the cultures tries to appear to be dominant over the others. Interreligious dialogue is a form of communication between members of different religions, which rejects the method of forcing the other party to accept the beliefs and ideas of one religious group, which starts from the similarities and not from the differences of different religions.

A way of communication that is carried out in an atmosphere of equality, tolerance, sincerity, love, respect, peace and transparency, that gives the members of different religions the opportunity to learn about the different points and those, that enables them to know, listen, conversation, understanding, cooperation, coexistence and rapprochement through experience... interfaith dialogue aims against the evil path the world has taken, against war, atheism, nihilism, relativism.<sup>59</sup>

Clashes have existed since before, let's mention the ancient times where there were within ancient Greece in the city-states, as well as in ancient Rome, in Persia, i.e. within a society there were different divisions and oppositions.

The gladiator fight in ancient Rome constitutes one of these dividers that it can be said that freedom itself had a high price. A man who did not live like the others, had different treatment, he was not even spoken to because they were people of violent shows. And others, who were not like them, enjoyed their blood. Another phenomenon, despotism, has to do with these shows that we mentioned. John Stuart Mill demonstrates the handling of this situation when he says that: despotism is a legitimate form of government when we are dealing with barbarians, as long as the ultimate goal is to improve their condition and the means used are compatible with the achievement of this goal. Freedom as a principle is not applicable in any situation until humanity reaches the point where it can be improved through free and equal debate. Until then there is no other way for them but to submit implicitly to an Akbar or Charlemagne, if they are lucky enough to find one...<sup>60</sup> Likewise, in recent times we have many shows that present a danger to coexistence in a society, and the need for dialogue was inalienable, something not only desirable but obligatory and as a necessary process.

## **Diversity leads to dialogue and understanding**

Dialogue between civilizations has become today a crossword puzzle in the global discourse related to issues such as cultural globalization and the resolution of international conflicts. Therefore yet the

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<sup>59</sup>Ali Pajaziti, *Fjalor i sociologjisë*, Logos – A, Shkup – Prishtinë - Tiranë, 2009, p. 126.

<sup>60</sup>Ibrahim Kalin, *Barbarë, Modernë, të Qytetëruar*, shënimbembiqytetërimin, përkth, Rubin Hoxha, Logos A, Shkup, Prishtinë, Tiranë, 2020, p. 104.

disappearance of traditional stereotypes that existed along with the ideological lines of the Cold War paved the way for a new scheme of confrontation, which became even more visible according to the idea of the clash of civilizations. This new form of ideological friction may well turn into a real and serious conflict, especially in those cases where acts of violence are given a religious dimension, potentially setting in motion a sequence of events that can obscure and undermine political reason..<sup>61</sup> Dialogue between people with profoundly different perspectives is what interests us. Such dialogue is vital in today's world in which globalization, mass media and technology have taken individuals and groups of individuals on paths previously untrodden throughout human history and this of course contains a challenge for all societies dominated by such opposing viewpoints and viewpoints.<sup>62</sup>

It is known that there are people with different cultures and beliefs, but in most cases, people are obsessed with finding a way to understand others. This does not mean that he has lost his culture and that his faith has melted, and the other's culture will have an impact on his life. So, tolerance does not mean being influenced or related to others, but accepting others as they are and knowing how to move forward with them. No one has the right to say anything about this aspect of tolerance, everyone in this country has their own point of view, people with different opinions and attitudes will either look for ways to move forward with the goal of harmony, or they will constantly fight with each other. There have always been people who think differently from each other and it will always be like that.<sup>63</sup> We must be convinced that ignorance and misunderstanding, two things that encourage enmity, must be removed, eradicated to give room for tolerance and dialogue to make it their own, to sow peace in the world.

We don't have to lie to ourselves that it will be an easy task and that obstacles will arise only from conservative narrow-mindedness or stupid racism. The hope of overcoming objective difficulties exists only if these difficulties are not underestimated. Almost all differences - customs, dockets, traditions, values - can and should be overcome, against all angry and narrow-minded stupidity, in a brotherly dialogue.<sup>64</sup> The need for understanding and information about the views of the Abrahamic religions is imperative. Examples of this nature abound, in the early Middle Ages, the court of the caliphate of Damascus, Baghdad, and Cordoba witnessed countless encounters between Jews, Christians, and Muslims... the prevailing culture so highly revered all three religions, institutions, and principles theirs, so much so that interreligious dialogue was the subject of discussions in royal salons and public conversations.<sup>65</sup> In that context we should not stop here, because it is understood that this way is also the way of living in a community, and precisely the experience

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<sup>61</sup>Ramin Jahanbegloo, *Përplasja e intolerancave*, Tiranë, pa datë, p. 7 – 8.

<sup>62</sup>B.Jill Carroll, *Dialogu i qytetërimeve, idealet Islame dhe pikëpamjet humaniste të Gylenit*, përkth. Dritan Hoxha, Prizmi, Tiranë, 2008, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup>Fethullah Gylen, *Drejt qytetërimin botëror me dashuri dhe tolerancë*, përkth. Mithat Hoxha, Prizmi, Tiranë, 2005, fq, 75.

<sup>64</sup>Claudio Magris, *Panairi i tolerancës, ese për çmimin Erasmus 2001*, Tiranë, pa datë, fq, 16.

<sup>65</sup>Ismail Faruki, *Dialogu i feve abrahamike, përmbledhje esesh*, përkth. Rezart Beka, Qendra studimore fetare Erasmus, pa datë, fq, 5.

of coexistence in Andalusia of Jews, Christians and Muslims, is one of the outstanding examples of Islamic cultural pluralism.<sup>66</sup>

It is true what C.S. Lewis asserts, according to which the geography of the spiritual world is different from that of the physical world; in the physical world, contact between states occurs at their borders, while in the spiritual world, contact occurs at the center. This means that religious beliefs meet right at the heart of the common faith. The holy books urge us to expose ourselves decisively to the open road of encounter. They speak to all of us who see the religion of Abraham in one God as the fundamental pillar of our religious encounter... The dialogues and encounters of our three Abrahamic religions, as well as of other religions, must first of all be a union of hearts before to be a union of minds.<sup>67</sup> In this way, Islam recognizes all Jews and Christians as God's creatures, whom God has blessed with the gift of reason and understanding, sufficient to recognize Him in His transcendence and unity... moreover, Islam recognizes that all Christians and Jews have received from God prophetic messages of the same nature as those of Islam... The historical heritage can be rejected or abandoned and another identity can be acquired. Being part of a certain heritage is a personal choice.

But the fact that Jews and Christians have decided to be part of this heritage and have recognized it as their own is undeniable.<sup>68</sup>

Indeed, no religion has ever been based on conflict, turmoil, betrayal and oppression. In the history of faiths, from Moses, Jesus as well as from Muhammad, but also from their worthy followers, in no way have they emphasized that for the benefit of any human heart, violence or war should be shown. It has always been considered how best to understand the messages issued by world religions, because they do not in principle have chaos as an objective and causing panic in the group they represent as well as in those who are not part of them. The objective has been to create conditions for knowing and understanding each other and to create space for interaction in many dimensions because the systems that have been dominant in the world, in certain periods, after all, have not been their primary goal, but in most in some cases, an effort has been made for the person within the society he lived in to understand the true dimensions of life. The goal of dialogue between world religions is not simply to destroy scientific materialism and the destructive materialistic worldview, but because the true nature of religion requires this dialogue. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, even Hinduism and other world religions claim the same source for themselves, and including Buddhism, have the same purpose.<sup>69</sup> Religions have a purpose, the purpose has to do with morality, moral perfection. And where can we

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<sup>66</sup>Ibrahim Kalin, *Barbarë, Modernë, të Qytetëruar*, shëmbimbëmbiqytetërimin, përkth. Rubin Hoxha, Logos A, Shkup, Prishtinë, Tiranë, 2020, fq. 260.

<sup>67</sup>Kardinal Sergio Pignedoli, Kisha katolikedhebesimet e tjera: dialogifëveabrahamike, në Ismail Faruki, *Trialog i feve abrahamike, përmbledhje esesh*, përkth. Rezart Beka, , Qendra studimore fetare Erasmus, pa datë, fq. 16 - 29.

<sup>68</sup>Muhammed Abdurrauf, JudaizmidheKrishteriminëperspektivën e Islamit, në Ismail Faruki, *Trialog i feve abrahamike, përmbledhje esesh*, përkth. Rezart Beka, Qendra studimore fetare Erasmus, No date, p., 52 – 54.

<sup>69</sup>Fethullah Gylen, *Ese, prespektiva, opinione*, përkth. Mithat Hoxha, Prizmi, Tiranë, 2005, p., 36.

find morality except in the divine books. So dialogue and tolerance have their source there, we as members of any religious faith need to adhere to the orders, the world needs peace.

## Conclusions

This paper examines a very sensitive topic based on the possibility of putting dialogue and communication, of course without forgetting previous developments and making comparisons with today's developments in the direction of relations between civilizations, cultures and religions. Nowadays everywhere we see the tendency for interpretations of cultures, where the impression is created that cultures and civilizations are at war with each other. This rhetoric was preceded by the theories that emerged and they try to convince the society that the wars of the future are of a cultural character.

At this time, there is a growing trend that a culture should be avoided or removed describing civilization as "obsolete". The big shocks seem to be doing it indispensable a rearrangement of the world that will serve peace and security. Some peoples experienced terror but it does not mean that they live in terror, although they do not forget the past. The developments in Macedonia were also of this nature. The armed conflict had to lead to changes in the state, society, had to change the concept of building the state, of building relations, bringing balance, inclusion of all of institutional instances and also in a world stage a more cohesive society. For example, after the conflict Macedonia has made an effort to give priority to inter-ethnic relations, noting communication between communities and the way of dialogue for the restoration of bridges bringing people closer, for the reconceptualization of culture in every dimension.

we suggest that:

- to practice the organization of intercultural dialogue conferences.
- inclusion of all without distinction.
- The state should not create a gap between cultures by favoring one culture, but to express that cultures are equal.
- Religious Clerics must testify with concrete actions that coexistence and communication between cultures is essential.
- The media must be careful in conveying the journalistic message which it has relevance and immediate social reflection, whether positive or negative.

**Controlling the public financing of non-EU countries to companies with EU nexus –  
The Proposal on EU Regulation of foreign subsidies**

by Dr. Marta Vejseli

*Abstract*

*Free and undistorted competition are objectives of the EU internal market. EU rules on competition, public*

*procurement and trade defense instruments play an important role in ensuring fair conditions for companies who are doing business in the EU. However, none of these rules and instruments apply to third-country subsidies which provide their recipients when acquiring companies active in the EU), participating in public procurements in the EU or engaging in other commercial activities in the EU.*

*This regulatory gap is now to be closed by a new EU regulation<sup>70</sup> which enters into force at the end of 2022 and apply from mid-2023. It contains specific rules (i) where foreign subsidies take the form of financial flows facilitating acquisitions of EU undertakings, or undertakings operating in the EU, (ii) where foreign subsidies distort public procurement procedures or, (iii) where foreign subsidies provide a benefit when it comes to access to EU financial support.*

*In addition, the Commission will have the right to investigate suspicious cases of subsidies from third countries on its own initiative (ex-officio).*

## *I. Introduction*

The European Union is closely intertwined with the global economy. With trade in goods and services amounting to EUR 5 984 billion in 2019, the EU is the world's largest trading block ahead of the United States of America (EUR 4 985 billion) and China (EUR 4 749 billion). As such, the EU accounts for 16.4% of overall global trade.<sup>71</sup> It is undisputable that investments coming from third-countries enhance the integration of the EU to the global economy, however, this integration requires a fair competitive environment (a so-called “level playing field”).

Currently, the EU member states are subject to strict regulatory rules in shaping their economic policy. The

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<sup>70</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market, 5.5.2021 COM(2021) 223 final 2021/0114 (COD).

<sup>71</sup> Commission staff working document impact assessment, Accompanying the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market, Brussels, 5.5.2021 SWD (2021) 99 final, page 4.



EU State aid rules for instance, are prohibiting member states from granting to companies any kind of advantage, even a potential competitive advantage. Article 107 (1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states:

*"Save as otherwise provided in the Treaties, any aid granted by a Member State or through State resources in any form whatsoever which distorts or threatens to distort competition by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods shall, in so far as it affects trade between Member States, be incompatible with the internal market."*<sup>72</sup>

But EU State aid rules apply only to member states. Third - countries were so far not subject to these regulatory restrictions. Third-countries were able to provide their companies with equity capital, grants, interest-free loans or tax breaks for operations in the EU internal market without restrictions, thus giving them a competitive advantage towards EU companies which the latter ones cannot gain any financial help from any member state without a prior notification with the European Commission. Different international levels of protection of competition lead to individual companies from third countries holding monopoly positions in their home markets and were able to use the rents accruing there to expand their market power in foreign markets (e.g., in the EU). This is the case for example, with a subsidized company purchase: if a buyer received money from a third country to make a company purchase in the EU, it had an advantage over other buyers, and had undercut them. A similar problem rose in the area of public procurement when a company that received subsidies from a third country participated in a public tender. Because of the third-country subsidy, the company had offered a lower price than it would have had without the subsidy. A third-country subsidy to a company already operating in the internal market could also distort the internal market.<sup>73</sup> In a mirror image, this created a competitive disadvantage for European companies: They neither received support to reduce their prices in order to stimulate demand nor could they rely on support for investments in the EU.

A number of legal instruments of the European Union legislation already address these challenges but did not solve the problem of the distortive third country subsidies. Articles 107 et seq. TFEU contain a system that protects the internal market from anti-competitive subsidies. However, these regulations bind only the EU member states.

The EU Public Procurement Directives<sup>74</sup> do not contain specific rules for the participation of companies in

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<sup>73</sup> Simone Ritzek-Seidl in „Fairen Wettbewerb in der Europäischen Union sichern“, edited by Alexander Heger, Sascha Gourdet, Verordnungsvorschlag der Kommission über den Binnenmarkt verzerrende drittstaatliche Subventionen, page 30.

<sup>74</sup> Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC; Directive 2014/25/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors and repealing Directive 2004/17/EC; Directive 2009/81/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 13 July 2009 on the

procurement procedures that have received third-country subsidies.

There was also a lack of an effective regulatory framework at the international level:

The Regulation (EU) 2019/452 establishing a framework for the screening of foreign direct investments into the European Union<sup>75</sup> addresses the impact of such investment on security and public order of the EU. It does not intervene in the case of distortions caused by third-country subsidies.

The anti-dumping regulation<sup>76</sup> as a trade policy protection instrument, applies only to imports of goods from third countries. The trade in services, participation in public procurement and business combinations are not covered by the anti -dumping regulation.

The Merger Regulation<sup>77</sup>, which applies to mergers, does not focus on the existence or effects of third-country subsidies, but only examines the question of whether the merger creates or strengthens a dominant position in the EU.

WTO law addresses only trade in goods together with the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures<sup>78</sup>. Rules concerning the subsidization of services have been negotiated for decades, but so far without result. Government procurement is governed by an agreement that is not binding all WTO members (China, for example, is not a party to the agreement). WTO subsidy rules and EU trade defense instruments allow the EU to act when subsidized goods are imported into Europe – but not when subsidies take the form of subsidized investments, acquisitions or bids in procurement procedures or when services and financial flows are concerned. Under the WTO Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, the EU has the possibility to initiate State-to-State dispute settlement against certain foreign subsidies granted by WTO members and is limited to goods.

The EU has therefore recently been increasing its efforts to include subsidy provisions in free trade agreements that are similar to the EU's state aid rules. This regulatory gap is now closed with the new Regulation on distortive third - country subventions<sup>79</sup> (hereinafter: “Anti-Subsidy Regulation”).

## II. *The main content of the Anti-Subsidy Regulation*

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coordination of procedures for the award of certain works contracts, supply contracts and service contracts by contracting authorities or entities in the fields of defense; Directive 2014/23/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on the award of concession contracts.

<sup>75</sup>[Regulation \(EU\) 2019/452 establishing a framework for the screening of foreign direct investments into the European Union.](#)

<sup>76</sup>[Regulation \(EU\) 2016/1036 on protection against dumped imports from non-EU countries.](#)

<sup>77</sup>Council Regulation (EC) No 139/2004 of 20 January 2004 on the control of concentrations between undertakings (the EC Merger Regulation).

<sup>78</sup>WTO Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures Apr. 15, 1994, Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization, Annex 1A, 1869 U.N.T.S. 14. [Not reproduced in I.L.M.].

<sup>79</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market, 5.5.2021 COM(2021) 223 final 2021/0114 (COD).

The Anti-Subsidy Regulation distinguishes between three related concepts: “financial contributions,” “foreign subsidies” and “distortions on the internal market.” The Commission can only impose redressive measures or require commitments as a condition of approval where it finds that a “financial contribution” qualifies as a “foreign subsidy”<sup>80</sup> that is likely to distort the EU internal market.<sup>81</sup>

The subsidy must be in the form of a financial contribution granted by a third country. According to Art. 2 lit.a of the Anti-Subsidy Regulation, the following financial contributions are deemed to stipulate a financial contribution, i.e., subsidy:

- a) the transfer of funds or liabilities, such as capital injections, grants, loans, loan guarantees, fiscal incentives, setting off of operating losses, compensation for financial burdens imposed by public authorities, debt forgiveness, debt to equity swaps or rescheduling;
- b) the foregoing of revenue that is otherwise due; or
- c) the provision of goods or services or the purchase of goods and services.

But the above-mentioned subsidies are not *per se* prohibited. Moreover, they must be uncompetitive, i.e., distortive, in order to be qualified as prohibited or subject to remedies imposed by the Commission within the meaning of the Anti-Subsidies Regulation.

A distortion on the internal market shall be deemed to exist where a foreign subsidy is liable to improve the competitive position of the undertaking concerned in the internal market and where, in doing so, it actually or potentially negatively affects competition on the internal market (Art. 3 (1)). The list of the additional and detailed criteria for qualifying a subsidy as anticompetitive/distortive, are listed in Art. 3, 4 and 5 of the Anti-Subsidy Regulation: The categories of third country subsidies which most likely distort the internal market are explained (Art. 4). A balancing test is also specified, according to which the negative effects of the distorting subsidies must be weighed against their positive effects (Art. 5). The assessment of whether a third-party subsidy has a positive impact on the "development of the economic activity concerned" is similar to the approach of EU state aid control, in which the Commission also examines the positive effects of a state aid. An example for a “positive effect” within the meaning of EU state aid are for instance the state aids for a project supporting environmental protection. The Commission takes the outcome of the balancing test into account when deciding on the appropriate remedies or commitments offered by the beneficiaries.<sup>82</sup>

A foreign subsidy is unlikely to distort the internal market if its total amount is below EUR 5 million over any

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<sup>80</sup>In this article, the term “third – country subsidy” shall be read as “foreign subsidy”.

<sup>81</sup>Kluwer Law Blog, The EU Anti-Subsidy Regulation – Implications for M&A, *Jay Modrall* (Norton Rose Fulbright, Belgium)/November 16, 2021.

<sup>82</sup>*Simone Ritzek-Seidl* in „Fairen Wettbewerb in der Europäischen Union sichern“, edited by Alexander Heger, Sascha Gourdet, Verordnungsvorschlag der Kommission über den Binnenmarkt verzerrenden drittstaatliche Subventionen, page 35.

consecutive period of three fiscal years (Art. 5 (2)). Finally, the general part of the regulation explains the obligations and remedies (Art. 6)<sup>83</sup>.

It shall be noted, that a foreign subsidy would be covered under this regulation if it provides a benefit to an undertaking established in the EU. However, according to the White Paper<sup>84</sup> consideration should be given to not only to the undertakings established in the EU, but also, to certain undertakings that benefit from foreign subsidies and are otherwise active in the EU, such as when an undertaking established outside the EU seeks to acquire an EU target. According to Art. 22, “*the aggregate financial contribution to an undertaking concerned shall be calculated by adding together the respective financial contributions received from third countries by all undertakings referred to in Article 21(4), points (a) to (e)*”. In this Article 22 are captured “financial contributions” which are received by members of the relevant groups from non-EU governments and entities “attributable” to non-EU governments. This Article 22 applies also to public bids.

Hence, an established company in the EU can be deemed as beneficiary within the meaning of the Anti-Subsidy Regulation even though another group company with its seat outside of the EU was the factual beneficiary of a third – country subsidy. The benefit can be established by law or in fact (see above in II.). The threshold subject to Art. 22 is calculated on an aggregate group-wide basis.

### *III. The impact assessment of the Commission*

#### *a) Ex- officio investigation*

In order the EU Commission to assess the compatibility of the third-country subsidies with the internal market, the Anti – Subsidies Regulation foresees three instruments on behalf the EU Commission is entitled to undertake its market investigation.

The first central regulatory area, the general market investigation instrument, governs the examination of third-country subsidies in all market situations (Chapter 2 of the Anti-Subsidy Regulation, Art. 7 et seq.). This examination is to be carried out by the EU Commission *ex officio* and may request *ad-hoc* notification. This instrument can be applied by the EU Commission in **all** market situations (here are captured also transactions not reaching the thresholds according to Art. 18 of the Anti- Subsidy Regulation and public procurement procedures, in which a company carries out its economic activity in the EU). In contrast to the White Paper, the Commission's competence is designed as an exclusive competence. By this, the Anti-Subsidy

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<sup>83</sup>The fifth chapter (Art. 33 et seq.) of the Anti-Subsidy Regulation also contains the common procedural rules, whereas the sixth chapter regulates the relationship of the regulation to other EU legal instruments (Art. 40).

<sup>84</sup>White Paper on levelling the playing field as regards foreign subsidies, Brussels, 17.6.2020 COM(2020) 253 final, page 15.

Regulation avoids the different application, i.e., implementation of the regulation by all member states and reduces the coordination effort of the authorities as well as the administrative burden for companies.<sup>85</sup> The procedure under the general market investigation instrument initially consists of a preliminary examination by the EU Commission (Art. 8) and - if the indications of a distorting subsidy from third countries become stronger - an in-depth investigation (Art. 9(1)). The Commission, however, is able to terminate the preliminary examination at short notice, without conducting in-depth investigations, if there are no indications of a subsidy by a third country or no internal market distorting effect caused by such a subsidy, or if such effects do not appear to be of great significance which would make their termination necessary.

In case the EU Commission opens the in-depth investigation, the EU Commission may decide on remedial measures (Art. 9 par. 2, 3). To prevent irreparable harm to competition, it may also take interim measures (Art. 10). In this respect, the instrument is similar to the instrument of abuse of dominant position under Art. 102 TFEU and repressive supervision of existing aid (Art. 108 I, II TFEU).<sup>86</sup>

Obtaining an information (and a correct information) at both in the pre - eliminary and in the in - depth investigation, are from great importance for the EU Commission. The EU Commission may request information from companies and from third countries in both stages. Member States may also provide information to the EU Commission which could be helpful for the Commission's investigations. The EU Commission also has the possibility to arrange for inspections at the company premises (Art. 12). If companies fail to cooperate, the EU Commission can impose fines and periodic penalty payments (Art. 15). It also has the possibility to issue a decision based on the available information if a company or a third country does not cooperate in the investigations. Where the company concerned, including a public company which is directly or indirectly controlled by the third-country, fails to provide the necessary information to determine whether a financial contribution confers a benefit to it (or not), that company may be deemed to have received such benefit (Art. 14 (3)).

#### b) Concentrations

The second instrument (Chapter 3 of the Regulation, Art. 17 et seq.) deals with mergers. This term can be defined as a lasting change of control (Art. 18). This change may occur through a merger, but also through an acquisition of shares or assets followed by direct or indirect control over the whole or parts of one or more other undertakings (Art. 18 (1) lit. a and b.). Similarly, the creation of a joint venture that performs on a lasting basis all the functions of an autonomous economic entity shall constitute a concentration within the meaning of the Anti - Subsidy Regulation. Furthermore, the concept of control is similarly defined as in the EU Merger

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<sup>85</sup> *Herrmann/Miller*, Global Mergers & Transactions, TLE-023-2021.

<sup>86</sup> *Herrmann/Miller*, Global Mergers & Transactions, TLE-023-2021.

Regulation, namely as the possibility of exercising a determining influence on the activities of an undertaking. Such control may be established by rights, contracts or other means.

A concentration is to be notified with the EU Commission if in the case of an acquisition or merger, the target (in the case of an acquisition) or at least one of the merging parties (in the case of a merger) is established in the EU and generates EU turnover of at least €500 million and the parties concerned received aggregate financial contributions from third-countries in the three prior years of over €50 million (Art. 18 and 19).

Upon notification of the concentration, the EU Commission follows the same procedure as that in the case of an examination initiated *ex officio*. If the thresholds are reached, a merger may not take place before notification (*standstill obligation*). The EU Commission has then to conduct the examination in short terms. For the preliminary examination it has 25 working days starting from the date of formal notification. If an in-depth investigation is initiated, it must be completed within 90 working days. Should the EU Commission find that the non-EU financial contributions received by the parties constitute third – country subsidies and that such subsidies distort the internal market, it could either accept commitments by the notifying party that effectively remedy the distortion or prohibit the acquisition after its in-depth review (contrary to the EU Merger Regulation, remedy offers in the preliminary review period are not allowed).<sup>87</sup>

Commitments offered by the party or redressive measures may include: offering access under fair and non-discriminatory conditions to an infrastructure that was acquired or supported by the distortive foreign subsidies (a remedy which is similar to be found in the Broadband Guidelines); reducing capacity or market presence; refraining from certain investments; licensing on fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory terms of assets acquired or developed with the help of third -country subsidies; publication of results of research and development; divestment of certain assets; requiring the undertakings concerned to dissolve the concentration; repayment of the third - country subsidy, including an appropriate interest rate. Interestingly, if the EU Commission finds that the negative effects outweigh the positive effects it may not prohibit the merger, but allows the transaction by mere offering of the above-mentioned commitments. This would not be possible under the EU Merger Regulation.

The EU Commission, however, may also prohibit the merger (Art. 24 para. 3).

Where the concentration has already been implemented, notably in cases where no prior notification was required because the notification thresholds were not reached, it may occur the case that the distortion can be so substantial that it cannot be remedied by behavioural or structural measures or by the repayment of the subsidy. In such cases, the EU Commission could decide to remedy the distortion by ordering the undertakings

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<sup>87</sup>Kluwer Law Blog, The EU Anti-Subsidy Regulation – Implications for M&A, *Jay Modrall* (Norton Rose Fulbright, Belgium)/November 16, 2021

concerned to dissolve the concentration.<sup>88</sup>

### c) *Public Procurement Procedures*

The third instrument (Chapter 4 of the Anti – Subsidy Regulation, Art. 26 et seq.) deals with distortions in the internal market caused by third-country subsidies concerning the public procurement procedures for an estimated contract work of at least EUR 250 million (Art 27).

This Chapter covers cases with high economic impact and harmonizes at the same time the public procurement procedures when the participants received third – country subsidies. If this threshold is reached, the EU Commission assesses whether there is a distortion on the internal market pursuant to Article 3 and whether a tender is unduly advantageous in relation to the works, supplies or services concerned which are subject to the respective tender (Art. 26). The companies participating in the procurement procedure must notify to the contracting authority all third-country financial contributions they have received in the past three years. This is their notification obligation. This notification obligation also applies to the main subcontractors and suppliers of the company participating in the tender.

The Commission shall conduct a preliminary review no later than 60 days after receipt of the notification. An in-depth review is generally completed 200 days after receipt of a notification. Also, in case of the public procurement procedures, the *ex officio* rules apply in the notification procedure. In case the awarding contract is below the threshold, the EU Commission may also require a prior notification of the received third – country subsidies (of the company, its suppliers and subcontractors) and will conduct the *ex officio* procedure same as for the concentrations or other market situation as described in II. a.

The result of the procedure can be a decision addressed to the company by the EU Commission in the case of distortive subsidies, otherwise a decision prohibiting the award of the contract to the company (Art. 30).

## IV. Conclusion

The Anti – Subsidy Regulation is a reaction to the regulatory gap in EU law that puts European companies at a competitive disadvantage when some established EU companies who have other group companies worldwide, receive (through their group wide companies) third – country subsidies, whereas the subsidies granted by the EU member states are subject to the strict EU state aid rules. M&A practice in particular could benefit significantly, despite the more administrative work to be feared, by minimizing subsidy-related distortions from third countries in mergers and acquisitions. On the other hand, it can be envisaged that there

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<sup>88</sup>Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market, 5.5.2021 COM(2021) 223 final 2021/0114 (COD), para (20).

will be much more notifications with the EU Commission, since even when parent companies with seat in the EU would merge or acquire, they will have each time to fill a notification with the EU Commission, if their (non – EU) subsidiary or controlled entity received third -country subsidy.

The public procurement procedures facilitate and harmonize the rules and the administrative burdens of the member state authorities. In practice, however, will remained to be seen how the assessment of the market distortion will be carried out by the EU Commission, when also suppliers and/or subcontractors will be involved in the tender procedure, since the company concerned may not have comprehensive knowledge of all subcontractors and suppliers at the time of the bid submission. An obligation to list the subcontractors and suppliers is not foreseen in the Public Procurement Directive(Art. 71 Directive 2014/24/EU).

The new regulation is expected to officially enter into force at the end of 2022 and apply from mid-2023. Under the Anti – Subsidy Regulation, the EU Commission will have the power to control financial contributions made by third-country authorities, governments or third country state - owned companies to companies operating in the EU.

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## **ILLEGAL MIGRATION AS A SECURITY THREAT AND CHALLENGE**

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### ***Abstract***

The aim of this work paper is to explore illegal migration as a security threat and challenge for contemporary societies and states. Migration, in particular, illegal migration is a major problem in today's world. Nowadays, migration stands on top of the European Union policy agenda. All in all, massive and 'unwanted' migrants are deemed to threaten the stability of national states. Dealing with migration is an impossible mission for a national state. That is why it is necessary to cooperate and coordinate all the countries that are affected by this issue. As security challenges overcome national borders, they become a challenge that needs to be addressed by more actors, requiring therefore broader patterns of cooperation. Defined as a strategic priority impinging on overall stability and security, the management of migration and especially of illegal migration is considered as a security matter needing coordination and cooperation processes at more levels and with more state and non-state actors. Dealing with security threats means envisioning the strategies, techniques, tactics and the actors more suited to preserve the stability of the state, in the narrowest sense. Both elements are today more difficult to identify because of the transnational character of the risks and threats. The migration is primarily a product of economic and political crises that push people to leave their states, most often involuntarily. Most migrants come from the middle ranks of the social hierarchy of the sending society. The people at the top of the social hierarchy have little motivation to move and those at the bottom lack the wherewithal to consider migration. The numbers of refugees are large, both historically and at present, often numbering in the millions. Any public policy that engages migration must include the flight of refugees as a central issue.

***Keywords:*** migration, illegal immigration, illegal emigration, security threat, modern world.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Differences in socioeconomic development and the level of living standards between individual countries, as well as political instability in individual regions of the world remain the main determinants of the rise of international migration movements.

In the last few years, illegal migration, smuggling of migrants and asylum, as well as trafficking in human beings have increased. Regardless of their growth, the Republic of Macedonia remained a transit point for illegal migration.

**Illegal immigration** by definition refers to the migration of people into a country whose citizens are not in ways that breaks and violates the immigration laws of that country, or the remaining of those people in a country where they don't have the legal right to remain.

Illegal immigration, as well as immigration in general, is overwhelmingly financially upward, from a poorer to a richer country. (Taylor 2007: 775–776).

Living in another country illegally includes a variety of restrictions, as well as the risk of being detained and deported or of facing other sanctions. (Briggs 2009: 177–193).

**Illegal emigration** by definition refers to people who are moving across national borders in a way that breaks and violates emigration laws of that country. These people may legally go abroad and refuse to return when that is demanded by the country of origin. Special cases are when one flees a country as a refugee escaping persecution or, after committing a crime, trying to escape criminal prosecution. However, a person who enters another country as an illegal immigrant may be sent back, and if he or she is a criminal, a person may face extradition or prosecution in the other country.

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country." (Article 13).

International institutions that work on migration issues typically distinguish between **two broad categories of migrants**, based on each group's perceived reasons for migrating from one country to another(s). The first category is the so-called "**voluntary**" or "**economic**" **migration** which usually refers to population movements spurred by economic reasons, when people "choose" to migrate in search of better livelihoods. The second category is so-called "**forced**" **migration** which, on the other hand, refers instead to population movements stemming from violent conflict, persecution, or other situations that oblige people to seek refuge elsewhere. So-called "forced" migration usually results from violent conflicts such as civil wars, and often leads to loss of national protection that warrants refugee status determination in another country.

According to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and the Protocol

Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967), a "refugee" is a forced migrant "who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion."

**Internally-displaced persons** (IDPs) constitute a third important category, referring to people who have not crossed international borders but were nonetheless forced to leave their place of origin due to conflict, extreme poverty, environmental degradation, etc.

## 1. HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF MIGRATION

Labor migration originates in societies that are undergoing change. For example, mass migration from Europe to the United States began in England, Scotland, and Ireland in the 18th and early 19th century as peasants and urban workers lost their farms and jobs through land enclosure, the commercialization of agriculture, and the decline of handicraft manufacture through competition from trade. During this period, there was little motivation for emigration from the much poorer countries in southern and eastern Europe. (Hirschman 2004: 10).

In the late 19th and early 20th century, mass labor migration began from eastern and southern Europe to the United States (and other destinations) as the economies of these countries began to stir. Although the labor needs of the American economy provided the "pull," there were parallel economic and social changes that provided the "push." The development of industry, commercial agriculture, and a capitalist economy led to the erosion of traditional social institutions that provide a subsistence floor. In addition to migration to distant shores, many displaced peasants and workers migrated to regional cities and adapted by looking for new jobs, and changed their demographic behavior. (Ibid.).

The securitization of migrants and migration is nothing new: German citizens resident in the UK were interned there during World War II on the grounds that they may have been 'fifth columnists,' while Kurdish and Algerian diasporas were associated with terrorist attacks in Western Europe during the 1970s and 1980s. But the perception of migration as a threat to national security has certainly heightened in recent years, in part as the security agenda has become more prevalent across many aspects of policy, and in part in response to the rapid rise in the number of international migrants (214 million in 2010 according to the International Organization for Migration) and especially of 'irregular' or 'illegal' migrants (estimates vary from 30-50 million worldwide). ([Koser](#), 2011).

In the late 20th century, migration pressures are greatest in Latin American, Asian, and

African countries with rapidly growing populations, eroding traditional sectors, and insufficient opportunities in the modern sector. Mexico and the Philippines are examples of countries that are modernizing, but not fast enough to absorb all the youthful workers seeking employment. (Hirschman 2004: 10).

The 2015 migrant crisis caught Europe off guard, with little funding, limited manpower and no contingency plans in place. The number of migrants trying to reach Europe has declined significantly since then but migration is back on the EU's radar, against the backdrop of continuing instability in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The perception of immigration as a threat to security has developed alongside the rapid increase in the number of immigrants worldwide: while there were approximately 191 million persons living outside their countries of origin in 2005, by 2010 this number had increased to an estimated 214 million. (IOM 2010).

In the most general sense of the term, security refers to the absence of threats. The traditional approach to international security has focused primarily on military concerns. From this perspective, the state is the referent object needing protection from threatening forces, particularly that of war. (Krause and Williams 1996:230).

However, security studies in the post-Cold War era has moved away from the state-centric approach, broadening the definition of security to include a number of potential threats (Ibid.).

Due to the expansion of the concept of security, a multitude of issues such as those relating to the environment, poverty, and international migration have been labeled as security risks or threats. (Krause and Williams 1996:230).

Instead of the state as the referent object being threatened, non-state objects such as humanity, cultural identity, and the individual self are considered to be in danger (Huysmans 2006:20).

## **2. THE IMPACT OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION ON THE SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

In the basic strategic document for the security of the Republic of Macedonia, adopted in 2003, the National Concept for Security and Defense states that Macedonia with its central location represents a natural and geographical crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa, and with the very fact that our country is one of the crossroads of the main avenues of terrorism, illegal migration, illegal drug trafficking, weapons and people from Asia and Africa to Western Europe.

Positioned centrally in the Balkans, the Republic of Macedonia is vulnerable to illegal migration. Developments in the Middle East, but also in North Africa in recent years have significantly affected and still affect the ongoing migration processes in the world, but appear to be most pronounced on the Balkan Peninsula, as migrants (especially those from the Middle East) choose our country as part of its route of entry to the countries of Western Europe.

However, illegal migration is not a problem for only one country. All the countries that are on the "Balkan Route" are facing the challenge of facing this burning problem. But this also does not excuse the countries of Western Europe from responsibility, because migrants as the ultimate deer are choosing exactly them.

According to FRONTEX (Agency of the European Union for Security of the External Borders), Macedonia is part of the so-called: The "Balkan Route", which has the following flow: migrants cross the Turkish-Greek border, where they have three options to leave the country: the first is by air; the second is by waterway and the third option is by land route (for which they most often decide).

One of the factors facilitating illegal migration is Turkey's liberal visa policy towards the countries of North Africa and the Middle East, including a visa-free regime with Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, etc. In addition, "Turkish Airlines" has established direct flights with all Western Balkan countries, as well as with many African countries, making those more easily connected and more attractive to those migrants who use forged documents (forged passports or identity cards, but also false work permits or student visas). The strategic position of the Western Balkans, which links "east" and "west", serves as a factor attracting migrants (pull factor). Macedonia with its central position is no exception. Lembovska, M. (2013).

Once the migrants cross the Greek-Macedonian border, some immediately continue their way towards the Republic of Serbia, but many of them decide to spend some time in villages near the Serbian border. However, as I pointed out above, the countries of the Balkan Peninsula are not the final destination of migrants. But security services from these countries must be extremely careful when it comes to monitoring migrants, as it is not excluded the possibility of moving members of certain terrorist organizations together with them.

The legal framework that exists in the Republic of Macedonia for dealing with illegal migration is in line with the EU legislation and with the relevant international standards. However, problems arise in the implementation of applicable legal regulations, because there are, for example, difficulties in determining the identity of migrants, there is further problematic implementation of

readmission agreements due to various objective and/or subjective factors, etc.

Illegal migration is a complex phenomenon and a regional approach is needed. Macedonia is involved in all regional initiatives that deal with this issue, but many more things need to be done. The Western Balkan countries need support from the international community, especially the European Union, in order to strengthen their capacities for prevention, detection and dealing with illegal migration. Bearing in mind that the Western Balkans is not their ultimate goal, but a transit zone, competent institutions may not have the same level of motivation to detect illegal migrants because it costs a lot, and sometimes they prefer to "look through their fingers". It is in the best interest of EU member states to provide support to the Western Balkan countries and to prevent migrants' attempts to reach richer EU member states. (Lembovska 2013: 28).

Regarding the migration movements, it is important to point out potential migration - a phenomenon that has reached a worrying dimension in the past five years in the Republic of Macedonia. The number of young people, high school students and students is continuously increasing, as well as highly educated personnel (especially from technical and natural sciences) who are thinking or planning to leave abroad. (Resolution on the Migration Policy of the Republic of Macedonia 2015 – 2020: 1).

### **3. THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON SECURITY**

It is immigration in general, whether voluntary or involuntary, legal or illegal, that constitutes this threat, as long as the immigrants pose a challenge to the identity of the receiving state through their different language, culture, or religion.

The supposed danger of immigration to the societal security of a state is not an objective and universal threat, but rather a subjective threat, dependent on the ways in which the receiving state defines itself (Weiner 1992-1993:110). For instance, while some states may view multiculturalism as undesirable, other states may pride themselves on their cultural diversity. As explained by Heisler and Layton-Henry (1993), in the post-war era, most European states have undergone a transformation from fairly homogeneous states, whose members have been generally bound by a common sense of cultural and ethnic identity, to heterogeneous states made up of several national groups. In these cases, immigration may be seen as a societal security threat as it challenges a state's traditional national identity and core values. Furthermore, the inability of immigrants to integrate or assimilate is argued to have a negative effect on the society and government's stability. (Heisler and Layton-

Henry 1993:162).

On the other hand, a traditional immigrant-receiving state such as Canada may hold a different notion of national identity and thus may be more tolerant and accepting of different languages, cultures, and religions, supporting its policy of multiculturalism. In a study of immigration and national identity in Germany and Canada, Esses et al. write that while Canada has embraced immigration as essential to its development, Germany's growing immigrant population is an unintended consequence of its history of guest worker immigration as well as a large inflow of asylum seekers and refugees. Each state's unique history affects their immigration policies as well as whether or not immigration is perceived to be a threat to society. For instance, while Canada has supported a multiculturalism policy since 1971, aimed at preserving the identities of its multi-national groups, in Germany there has been a trend to support the assimilation of its immigrant population. (Esses et al. 2006:655).

Another way in which immigration has been argued to pose a threat to a state's national interest is through its impact on the state's economy. Immigration has, and will continue to have, a significant economic impact on both the receiving country and the country of origin. While immigration has economic advantages and disadvantages, the expansion of the definition of security to encompass the economic sector has brought increased attention to the economic challenges caused by immigration, and immigration has, as a result, been labeled as a security issue. It is economic migrants as well as refugees and asylum seekers that are perceived to threaten the economic security of a state.

Labour migration can be argued to pose a threat to the economic security of both the sending and the receiving state. According to this argument, the emigration of highly skilled and qualified workers from developing countries in the global South to developed states in the global North results in a "brain drain" in the sending country, as well as undesirable economic consequences in the receiving country. (Guild 2009:134; Weiner 1992-1993:95).

However, as argued by Carr et al. (2005), emphasizing the notion of "brain drain" on its own ignores the notion of "brain gain". While developing countries may lose highly skilled workers through emigration, they often gain large numbers of people with greater skills back through the process of reverse migration. (Carr et al. 2005:387-388).

Immigration can be argued to pose a threat to a receiving country's economic security through its impact on the labour market. Guild addresses this concern by highlighting some key issues: do migrant workers decrease wages in strong economies? And, in a strong economy, do immigrants take



away jobs from native-born workers (Guild 2009:135)? Public opinion often supports the notion that immigrants depress wages and take away jobs, contributing to economic problems. (Somerville and Sumption 2009:3). This argument is often used to justify restrictive and exclusionary immigration policies. However, this perception is based on perception rather than empirical facts. According to Chomsky, the theory that the number of people determines the number of jobs is a fallacy. Rather, population growth facilitated by immigration creates jobs while simultaneously providing people to take these jobs. (Chomsky 2007:8).

While the economic impact of immigration differs in every state and depends on the economic conditions of the time, it can be seen that immigration often has a positive impact on the employment levels of the host state. (Islam 2007:53). For instance, a study on the relationship between immigration and unemployment in Canada by Islam concludes that migration does not result in higher unemployment levels. While it may, in some cases, contribute to temporary unemployment, this effect dissipates over time, as the state's economy begins to adjust to the increase in labour supply. (Islam 2007:63; Somerville and Sumption 2009:9). Islam finds that: "in the long run, demand side effect takes place, wages adjust, labour demand is restored and thereby Canadian born workers are benefited". Complementary to this study, a paper by Somerville and Sumption demonstrates that although the effects of immigration vary from state to state, immigration has a minimal impact on wages; in the United Kingdom, most workers remain unaffected or even gain from immigration (13-14). Evidently, economic immigration does not pose a threat to the host state's economic security. Other factors, such as education and demographic change, have a much greater impact on labour market opportunities in immigrant receiving countries (Somerville and Sumption 2009:3).

It has also been argued that immigrants, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, are threats to the receiving state's social security and welfare system. From this perspective, immigration is seen as a problem rather than an opportunity. Refugees and asylum seekers are presented as profiteers and free-loaders who illegitimately exploit the host state's welfare system, and the welfare system is presented as unable to sustain an influx of immigrants. (Huysmans 2006:78-79). Immigrants are portrayed to be so numerous and poor that they pose a strong economic threat to the state, creating housing shortages and straining education, transportation, sanitation and communication services (Weiner 1992-1993:95, 114; Stivachtis 2008:17). As explained by Weiner (1992-1993), the provision of welfare state services to migrant workers and refugees often spawns resentment from within the local community (114). There is a widespread belief that immigrants not only take jobs away from native citizens, but that they also take away social benefits (Huysmans 2006:78).

Societal and economic security are closely connected, as the view of immigrants as an economic burden is often caused by the perception of immigrants as "others" due to their visible differences.

Evidently, the argument that immigrants are a threat to a state's economic security is heavily influenced by misconceptions prominent in discourse as well as widely held stereotypes about the foreigner. While an increased flow of immigrants, specifically refugees and asylum seekers, inevitably poses a fiscal challenge which the host state must manage, the effects of migration on social spending vary between states and can change over time. Moreover, the long-term economic benefits of refugee flows should not be overshadowed by the possible short-term costs (Stevenson 2005). For instance, studies on the impact of refugees in Australia show that the initial costs of accommodating refugees through social security benefits are compensated in ten years (Stevenson 2005).

Securitizing immigration and presenting immigrants as a danger to the survival of the welfare system consequently leads to the exclusion of immigrants by deeming them undeserving of social services.

In addition to societal and economic security, internal security has also emerged as an aspect of security which is threatened by immigration. The notion of immigration as a threat to internal security has been present since the 1980s. (Huysmans 2000:756). As highlighted by Huysmans, the Schengen Agreement and Convention of Dublin connected immigration to terrorism, international crime, and border control. (Huysmans 2000:756; Huysmans 1995:53). Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, immigration has featured prominently on the counter-terrorism agenda; governments have tightened immigration policies, linking immigration with terrorist activities (Spencer 2008:1).

Similar to how immigration has been connected with terrorism, immigration has also been related to increased criminality, resulting in the perception that immigration is a threat to public security. The issue of whether or not immigration actually results in increased crime rates is, again, an issue of perception versus reality. While the public has become increasingly concerned about high crime rates intensified by immigration and the threat that immigrants pose to public order, these concerns are empirically unsound. (Wang 2012:743).

## **CONCLUSION**

The aim of this work paper is to explore illegal migration as a security threat and challenge

for contemporary societies and states. The relevance of the theoretical part presented in this work has been to help understand the multiple levels of cooperation needed to face new, many-sided and transnational threats to security, such as illegal migration.

Except for national states, migration is considered as a strategic matter for Europe, meaning that it can have an impact on security and stability.

The designation of any issue as a security threat on national or international security has significant implications in terms of the laws, norms, policies, and procedures that become justified in response of state power. In the illegal migration context, for example, the designation has been used to justify greater surveillance, detention, deportation and more restrictive policies taken by the state and its authorities. Such measures and activities taken by the state and its authorities in turn can impact the migrants involved, for example, by denying asylum seekers access to safe countries, driving more migrants into the arms of criminal groups of smugglers and human traffickers. This would increase the rate of criminality in the country concerned.

On the other hand, in terms of economic security, labeling immigration as a security threat overlooks the advantages that immigration may have on the development of the sending country. At the same time, immigration can increase employment opportunities and immigrants can have a significantly positive impact on the host state's economy. While immigration in Europe has been increasingly connected to terrorism, immigration and border control in most countries in the world have been wrongly placed in the same category, and the idea of immigration as a threat to the state's internal security has been greatly exaggerated. On the other hand, contrary to the widespread public opinion that immigration is a threat to public security, there is little to no significant correlation between immigration and criminality. The designation of immigration as a security threat does more to harm society than it does to protect it. It often results in xenophobic and racist attitudes in the wider population, the exclusion of immigrant groups, and the perception of the immigrant as the enemy.

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## **Economic Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the global economy**

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### **Abstract**

The World Health Organization first declared Covid-19 a global health emergency on January 2020, and on March announced that the viral outbreak was officially a pandemic, the highest level of public health emergency. Since then the emergency has evolved into a global public health and global economy crisis. The virus infection spread among and over all countries and affected almost every

community, showing the high attachment of the global economy. Since the pandemic began, the global economy has struggled to recover. As infectious cases began to rise sharply, the governments of each country undertook a plan of measures to limit social activities in order to prevent the spread of the pandemic, thus creating a global economic recession. Individually, each of these measures posed a challenge to the global economy, which weakened and reduced the policy flexibility of many nations, especially among leading developed economies. Uncertainty about the duration and depth of the Covid-19 crisis and the economic effects associated with economic policies intended to prevent the spread of the virus have increased volatility in all economies. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to evaluate how much this crisis affected the most important economic indicators using a Global Vector Autoregression (GVAR) model.

**Keywords:** Covid-19 crisis, economic effects, global economy, GVAR

## **Introduction**

The corona virus pandemic is a global health crisis, a socio economic crisis and the biggest challenge faced by the countries of the whole world after the Second World War. Since its appearance in Asia about two years ago, the virus has spread among and over all countries and affected almost every community, showing the high attachment of the global economy. This crisis has affected all aspects of life, education, politics, public security and economic activity has also been seriously affected.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) first declare Covid-19 a global health emergency in January 2020, and on March 11 announced that the viral outbreak was officially a pandemic, the highest level of health emergency<sup>89</sup>. Since then the emergency has evolved into a global public health and global economy. The focus of infections shifted from China to Europe, particularly Italy, by early March 2020, but by April 2020, the focus shifted to the United States. By April 2021, India, Brazil, parts of Africa and Asia had emerged as virus hotspots with the number of infections and deaths

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<sup>89</sup>Bill Chappell, "COVID-19: COVID-19 Is Now Officially a Pandemic, WHO Says," National Public Radio, March 11, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/03/11/814474930/>

reaching record levels daily. By mid-September 2021, the Delta variant, the more virulent variant of Covid-19, had reportedly become the most dominant global strain of the virus, prompting various national leaders to announce additional health measures including the reemploying of travel restrictions. According to the World Health Organization, by November 1, 2021, over 246.6 million people globally were infected with the Covid-9 virus, with over 5 million deaths.<sup>90</sup> Many countries around the world have closed their borders to arrivals from countries at risk (countries with a higher number of infections), ordered businesses to close, ordered their populations to quarantine and closed schools for about 1.5 billion children<sup>91</sup>.

Since the pandemic began, the global economy has struggled to recover. As infectious cases began to rise sharply, the governments of each country undertook a plan of measures to limit social activities in order to prevent the spread of the pandemic, thus creating a global economic recession. Individually, each of these measures posed a challenge to the global economy. Overall, these challenges have weakened the global economy and reduced the policy flexibility of many national leaders especially among leading developed economies. The combination of policy measures also had an impact on the way businesses organized their workforces and on global supply chains<sup>92</sup>. As a result of the rapid spread of the virus and its complex effects on global and national economic growth rates, predicting the impact of the virus has been particularly challenging.

In the early stages of the global economic recession, economic forecasts were complex. Although in the first half of 2021, economic forecasts were positive based on the expected return to pre-pandemic growth rates, the global economic situation remained uncertain. Uncertainty about the duration and depth of the Covid-19 crisis and the economic effects associated with the health crisis continued to influence perceptions of risk and volatility in financial markets and corporate decision-making. In addition, uncertainty about the effects of economic policies intended to contain the spread of the virus has increased volatility in all economies. Delayed investment decisions have resulted in large numbers of workers being laid off. Advances in vaccine production and administration in the first half of 2021 have seen social distancing rules eased or lifted, signaling that economic activity

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<sup>90</sup>World Health Organization. <https://covid19.who.int/>.

<sup>91</sup>“The Day the World Stopped: How Governments Are Still Struggling to Get Ahead of the COVID-19,” *The Economist*, March 17, 2020. <https://www.economist.com/international/2020/03/17/governments-are-still-struggling-to-get-ahead-of-the-COVID-19>

<sup>92</sup>Rowland, Christopher and Peter Whoriskey, “U.S. Health System is Showing Why It’s Not Ready for a COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Washington Post*, March 4, 2020. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/the-us-healthsystem-is-showing-why-its-not-ready-for-a-COVID-19-pandemic/2020/03/04/7c307bb4-5d61-11ea-b29b9db42f7803a7\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/the-us-healthsystem-is-showing-why-its-not-ready-for-a-COVID-19-pandemic/2020/03/04/7c307bb4-5d61-11ea-b29b9db42f7803a7_story.html).

will improve.

### **The effects of Covid-19 pandemic on macroeconomic global indicators**

When assessing the macroeconomic impact of Covid-19, some basic supply and demand analysis can be useful. A good starting point is Deloitte's research that Covid-19 can affect the global economy in the three main ways: through direct impact on production (supply), through supply chain and market disruption (supply) and through impact on firms and markets (mainly demand)<sup>93</sup>. The initial primary impact of Covid-19 is on the supply side. Factory closings in China and elsewhere led to a reduction in the macroeconomic supply of goods and services, shifting the global economy from point „a,, to point „b,, -lower production, higher prices, or what is known as stagflation. The demand-side contraction's response (central banks cut interest rates) to an increase in demands leads to worsening inflation, with only a small impact on output and employment. As a result of supply-side reductions, factory and job closures, consumers have reduced their spending, reducing GDP, increasing unemployment and dampening price growth. Reduced business activity and due to reduced consumer demand, which also created a demand shock, led to a lower rate of economic growth in most countries.

In 2021, as countries begun to reopen and vaccines become available, the global economy was estimated to be growing, although still below pre-pandemic projections, and the recovery is uneven across countries and regions<sup>94</sup>. In 2020, the Gross Domestic Product decreased by 6.7% as a result of the corona virus pandemic. In Latin America the total loss is 8.5%. In the graph below we can see the reduction of the Gross Domestic Product for different groups of countries, in 2020, as a result of Covid-19 pandemic, that is, for low income countries, developing economies, developed economies, Latin America and in general for the World economy. In 2020, there is a decrease in Gross Domestic Product of 4.8% in low-income countries, a decrease of 6.5% in developed economies, a decrease of 7% in developing countries, a decrease of 8.5% in Latin America and a 6.7% decrease in GDP in the World economy<sup>95</sup>.

#### **Graph 1. Percentage of GDP lost as a result of Covid-19, 2020-2021**

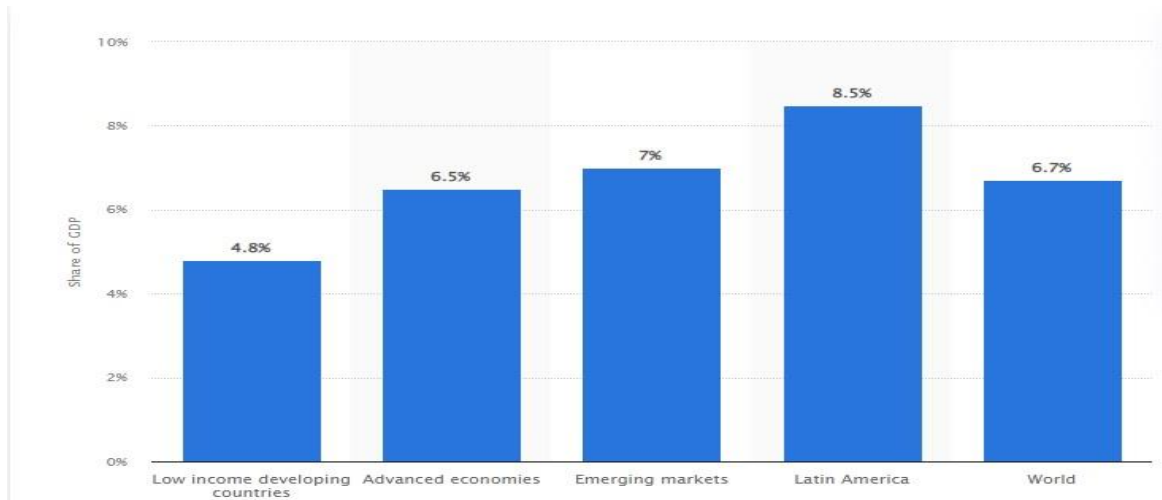
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<sup>93</sup>Deloitte. "The economic impact of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)". March 2020 (source)

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<sup>95</sup>Statistika 2022



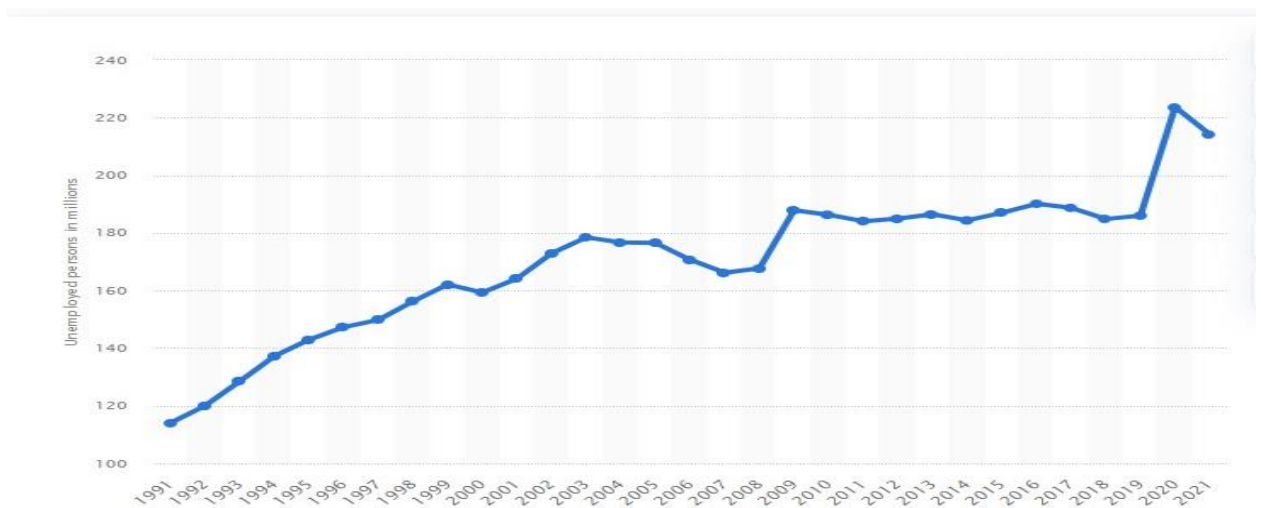


Source: [statista.com/statistics/1240594/gdp-loss-covid-19-economy/](https://statista.com/statistics/1240594/gdp-loss-covid-19-economy/)

### Global labor market and Covid-19 pandemic

Regarding the impact of Covid-19 crisis on unemployment, referring to the chart below, which shows the movement of the number of unemployed people in the world in the time period between 1991-2021, it can be seen that between 2019 and 2020, the number of unemployed worldwide increased from 185.95 million to 223.67 million, the largest annual increase in unemployment. In 2021, the number of unemployed increased slightly to almost 214.21 million. Rising unemployment will affect consumption, creating a cycle of low production-low consumption.

**Graph 2. The number of unemployed people, 1991-2021**



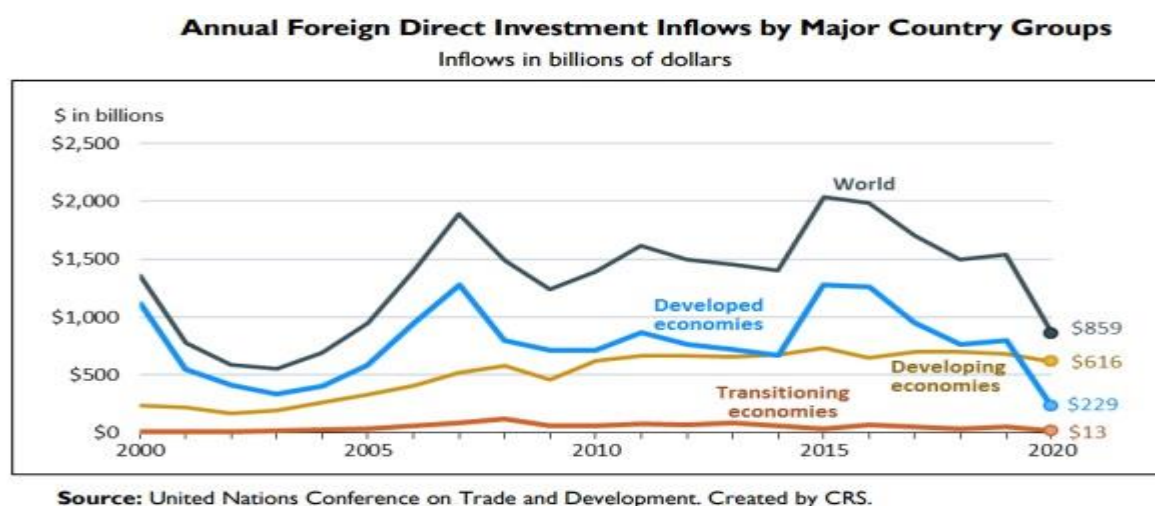
Source: [statista.com/statistics/266414/unemployed-persons-worldwide/](https://statista.com/statistics/266414/unemployed-persons-worldwide/)

### Foreign Direct Investment and Covid-19 pandemic

Similar to the negative impact on other indicators, the measures that were taken to control the

spread of the virus, also negatively affected the global flows of the global foreign investments. As we can see in the chart below, all countries except Asia saw a decline in Foreign Direct Investments in 2020 compared to 2019. This decline in Foreign Direct Investment was visible in the three main types of direct investment: cross-border investment, greenfield investment, international investment financing. Across the three types of investment, global activity fell by 10%, 35% and 2% respectively in 2020 compared to 2019.

**Graph 3. Annual Foreign Direct Investment Inflows by Major Country Groups**



### World trade and Covid-19 pandemic

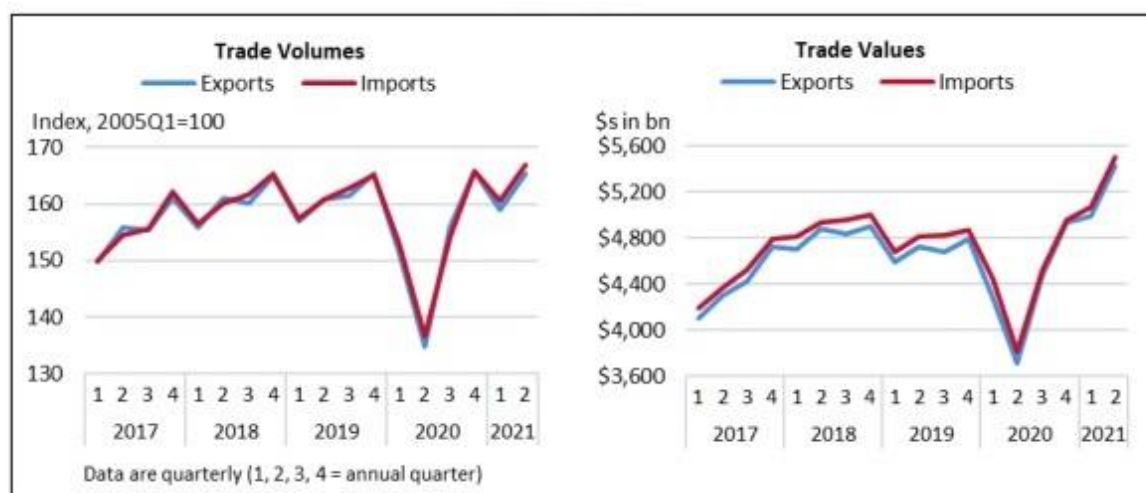
As a result of Covid-19 virus pandemic, world trade showed negative growth trends. In the first quarter of 2020, global imports and exports fell by 7.8% and 6.8% respectively, reflecting the global economic impact of Covid-19 pandemic. In the second quarter of 2020, global imports and exports fell by 11.6% and 11.1% respectively, while in the third and fourth quarters of 2020, these values recorded an improvement. According to World Trade Organization, some trade sectors were more affected than others, notably trade in fuels and mineral products fell by 38% while trade in agricultural products fell by 5%. Although the World Trade Organization does not have comprehensive data on trade in services, it concludes that the trend most likely matches that of trade in goods.

In the period from October 2019 to May 2020, the G-20 countries achieved, significant,, progress in facilitating imports, including products related to Covid-19. According to the report,

<sup>96</sup>WTO Report on G20 Shows Moves to Facilitate Imports Even as Trade Restrictions Remain Widespread, World Trade Organization, June 29, 2020. [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news20\\_e/trdev\\_29jun20\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news20_e/trdev_29jun20_e.htm).

the governments of various countries responded to the pandemic by introducing new trade restrictive measures, 90% of which were bans on export products. Since then the World Trade Organization has indicated that G-20 economies have lifted 36% of restrictions and barriers to imports of many products linked to the pandemic. In the chart below, we can see that global trade saw a large decrease in imports and exports in 2020 while global trade recovered in 2021, as predicted by the World Trade Organization.

**Graph4. World Trade Organization Estimates of Quarterly Global Imports and Exports, Volumes and Values**



Source: World Trade Organization, October, 2021. Created by CRS

### Global Financial Markets and Covid-19 Pandemic

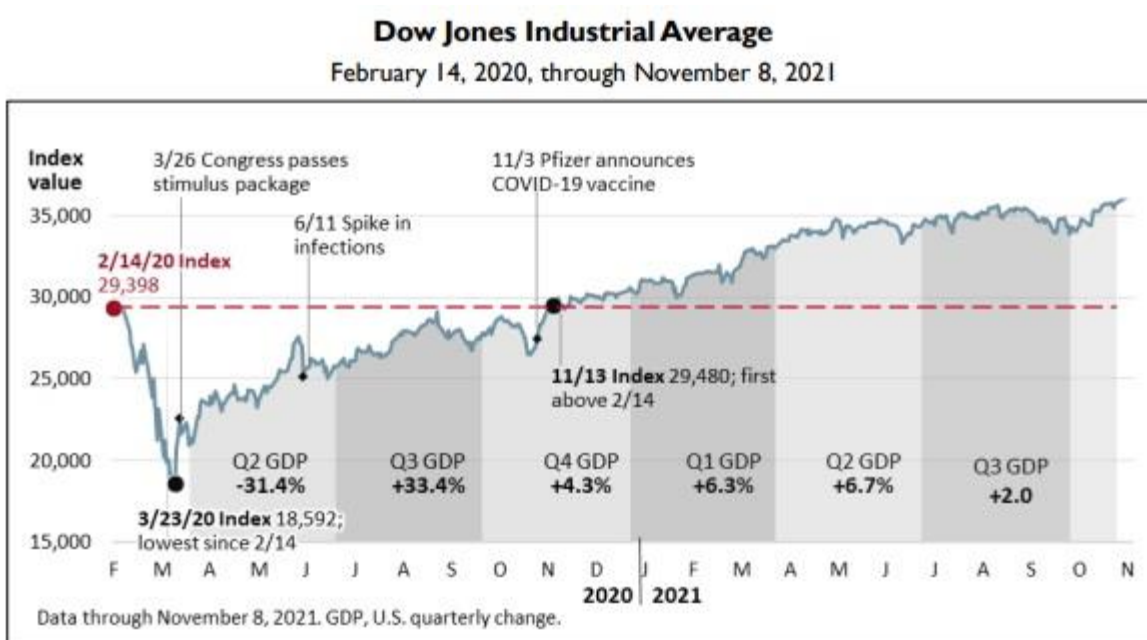
Between the end of February 2020 and the beginning of 2021, financial markets from the United States to Asia and Europe were strained as investors were burdened between pessimism and concern about the duration of Covid-19 crisis. Specifically on February 24, 2020, the indices of the financial markets of Asia, the United States and Europe fell to a great extent. In response, the Federal Reserve cut the key interest rates on March 3, 2020 to boost economic activity, while the Bank of Japan engaged in asset purchases to provide short-term liquidity to Japanese banks. The bank of Canada also cut interest rates. The International Monetary Fund has announced \$50 billion in emergency financing for low-income and developing countries<sup>97</sup>. As risk assessments by financial

<sup>97</sup>Georgieva, Kristalina, "Potential Impact of the COVID-19 Epidemic: What We Know and What We Can Do," International Monetary Fund, March 4, 2020. <https://blogs.imf.org/2020/03/04/potential-impact-of-the-COVID-19-epidemic-what-we-know-and-what-we-can-do/>.

markets participants eased, pressure on the dollar and government securities also eased.

Reflecting investor uncertainty, the DIJA lost about a third of its value between February 14, 2020 and March 23, 2020 (chart below). By October 2020, the DIJA has regained much of what it had lost in February and March. In the last week of October, the DIJA lost more than 1800 pints, the biggest weekly loss since March 2020, as Germany, France and other European countries imposed lockdowns in response to a resurgence of Covid-19 cases. The announcement of vaccines, as a signal of the revival of economic activity, allowed the DIJA to increase by almost 14%. During the first six months of 2021, the DIJA increased by 15%.

**Graph 5. Dow Jones Industrial Average, February 14, 2020–November 8, 2021**



**Source:** Financial Times. Created by CRS.

Similar to 2008-2009 Global Financial Crisis, central banks implemented monetary measures to provide liquidity to their economies, despite the fact that these two crises were different in origin. During the Global Financial Crisis, central banks intervened to help banks that were engaged in risky assets. In 2020, central banks sought to address financial markets volatility and prevent major corporate insolvencies that were a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In terms of fiscal and monetary measures to reduce the economic impact of the Global Financial Crisis, the G-20 countries, the IMF recommended to undertake a combination of coordinated monetary policies characterized by low interest rates and central bank programs to facilitate the availability of credits, extending fiscal support to individuals and firms, and engaging

in a synchronized program of infrastructure investment to promote growth. According to the IMF's analysis, when the other factors remain constant, an increase in infrastructure spending by G-20 countries by 0.5% of GDP in 2021 and by 1% in 2022 to 2022 would contribute to an increase in global GDP by 2% compared to growth below 1.2% for non-synchronized access<sup>98</sup>. Policymakers need to take coordinated steps to realize investments in digital technology, infrastructure and the environment.

## Methodology

The purpose of this study is to empirically evaluate how much the CoVID-19 crisis affected the most important economic indicators using a Global Vector Autoregression (GVAR) model. The GVAR model firstly developed by Paseran et al. (2004) is an effective model in quantifying country-specific effects by taking into the consideration the “spillover” influences that arise from the global economy.

In general, the Global Vector Autoregression (GVAR) model in its structural form can be written as in **Eq. (1)**:

$$Y_{i,t} = \beta_{i,0} + \beta_{i,1}t + \sum_{j=1}^{q^i} \beta_{i,j} Y_{i,t-j} + \sum_{j=1}^{q^{i^*}} \delta_{i,j} Y^*_{i,t-j} + \sum_{j=1}^{q^i} \theta_{i,j} e_{t-j} + u_{i,t} \quad \text{Eq.(1)}$$

- $Y_{i,t}$  is a vector country specific endogenous variables;
- $t$  is a linear time trend;
- $Y_{i,t-j}$  are lags of endogenous variables;
- $Y^*_{i,t-j}$  is a vector of country specific foreign variables ;
- $e_{t-j}$  is a vector of global exogenous variables;
- $u_{i,t}$  is the error term

The Global Vector Autoregression (GVAR) model is a complex multi-dimensional estimation of the global economy that can be simplified in the following stages of estimation. Firstly, we specify the country specific Vector Autoregression (VAR) models. According to the theoretic predictions we determine the variables that will enter in the country specific VAR model. Afterwards, in order to

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

account for the unobserved factors that might influence the economy of a specific country we augment the country specific Vector Autoregression (VAR) models with country specific foreign variables, which are in essence weighted averages of domestic variables. The second step is to estimate the weights which then will be used to compute country specific foreign variables. Trade, FDI and remittance weights are calculated following Hoxha (2018). After specifying the country specific Vector Autoregression (VAR) models we proceed by specifying the Vector Error Correction model (VECM) for each country. The final stage is solving the GVAR model and presenting the results in the form of Impulse Response Functions (IRFs). For the empirical estimation of the model we have used the GVAR Toolbox 2.0 developed by Smith and Galesi(2014). The variables entering the model are as follows:

- **Endogenous variables:**
  - GDP (**gdp**)
  - Exports (**exp**)
  - FDI flow (**fdi**)
  - Remittances (**rem**)
  - Foreign credit flows (**fc**)
- **Foreign country specific variables (weakly exogenous):**
  - gdp\*
  - exp\*
  - fdi\*
  - rem\*
  - fc\*
- **Global exogenous variables :**
  - Price of fuel (**oil**)
  - Global uncertainty (**uncertain**)

Standard stationarity and cointegration tests are conducted and variables are transformed in logs before estimation. In this model we use quarterly data for 33 countries, for the period Q1-2004 to Q4 -2021. Countries grouped into regions: China; EU-15; CEE; SEE (region of interest). Data sources are as follows: (**gdp**) – from EUROSTAT; (**expand FDI**)- from OECD ; (**oil** and **rem**)- from World Bank ; (**fc**)- from Bank for International Settlement (BIS); and (**uncertain**) – from Chudik et al. (2021).

## Results

The aim of this study is to empirically estimate the spillover effects of the Covid-19 crisis into transition economies. We analyze ‘spillover’ effects on SEE countries of an adverse shock in EU-15 countries. The adverse shock is presented in terms of one standard deviation=0.4 %. We are interested to quantify how much a reduction of GDP in EU-15 countries will affect the South East European economies (SEE) as a region. The results from the IRFs, although borderline significant at 10%, suggest the following effects:

- if GDP in EU-15 is reduced by one standard deviation, the SEE **GDP** is reduced by 0.7% on impact and 0.85% after 4 quarters.
- if GDP in EU-15 is reduced by one standard deviation, the SEE **export** is reduced by 1% on impact and 1.6% after 5 quarters.
- if GDP in EU-15 is reduced by one standard deviation, the SEE **inward FDI** is reduced by 0.15% on impact and 0.3% after 8 quarters.
- if GDP in EU-15 is reduced by one standard deviation, the SEE **remittances** are reduced by 1.4% on impact and 3.8% after 5 quarters.
- if GDP in EU-15 is reduced by one standard deviation, the SEE **foreign credit flow** is reduced by 0.4% on impact and 0.9% after 8 quarters.

The results presented above are in line with theoretical predictions and suggest that the **trade linkage** is indeed **the most significant channel of transmission of shocks** from EU-15 to SEE region. The results of this empirical investigation also suggest that the financial linkage is a less significant channel of transmission of shocks from EU-15 to SEE, probably due to underdeveloped financial markets in the SEE countries. Looking specifically into the global

economic indicators, the results suggest that in SEE countries, **exports** and **remittances** are most severely hit by the COVID-19 crisis.

## Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to empirically investigate the adverse economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis into the global economy. Specifically we are interested on the adverse effects of COVID-19 crisis into transition countries and the SEE region in particular. We start by providing a detailed overview of the development of this unprecedented public health and global economy crisis. We proceed our analysis by providing a detailed overview of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy and specifically on macroeconomic global indicators: GDP, global labour market, Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), World Trade and Global Financial Markets. We employ a Global Vector Autoregression (GVAR) model in order to empirically quantify country-specific effects by also taking into the consideration the adverse “spillover” influences of COVID-19 crisis that arise from the global economy. The results confirm the adverse effects of the descriptive analysis suggesting that the least developed countries, are more severely hit by the COVID-19 crisis and their economies are struggling to recover to pre-pandemic levels. The results confirm the strong trade linkages of the SEE region with the European Union suggesting that the **trade linkage** is indeed **the most significant channel of transmission of shocks** from EU-15 to SEE countries. Specifically, the results highlight that the SEE countries are strongly dependant on trade relations and on remittances from the European Union i.e. exports and remittances are two indicators more adversely hit by the COVID-19 crisis in SEE region.

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# THE LINK BETWEEN INDUSTRIAL DESIGN AND ADMINISTRATIVE FACILITIES

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## ABSTRACT

Industrial design serves to satisfy the need for beauty and utility. In its substance and form, in which it is presented to the public, it is halfway between invention and pure artistry. Industrial design is a design process applied to products to be produced through mass production techniques. Its key characteristic is that the design is separated from the production. The design for office buildings, just like their interior arrangement, changes over time through various influential trends in society. It depends on the social occasions, culture, but also on the willingness and talent of the architects to find the most efficient office layout in accordance with the current trend regarding the interior style and the organizational culture that prevails in a certain company.

The functional nature of the industrially produced objects, that is, the industrial design, is the key link between the space and the users of the administrative facilities. Industrial design has a functional and aesthetic impact, thus in the administrative facilities a whole is achieved that

affects the psychology and efficiency of use.

## **KEYWORDS:**

Man, space and industrial design

The design of administrative buildings has been receiving a professional approach since the middle of the twentieth century, measures are applied to improve the functionality, color, comfort and attractiveness of the form of the furniture. Elements of the formation of an administrative space is connected with a certain methodology of satisfying the functional, spatial and aesthetic elements, so that the work process can be realized. It is necessary to apply all previous experiences in the development of the administrative space in order to achieve optimal conditions for residence and appropriate treatment in the use of the internal space. The functional organization of the administrative space needs to contain the grouping of certain working rooms, which form one spatial unit, so called the office space. The largest part of the surface of the buildings covers the office space, grouped according to the needs and adjusted to a certain model of the existing system and concept for organizing the space. As a result of the centuries-old development of the administrative space, several basic systems of organization of the working space, a traditional or classic system and several systems of a modern system of organization, were formed. These basic models were adapted based on the existing technical and spatial possibilities in the given historical period of the development of administrative facilities. The modern approach in the organization creates opportunities for a combination of open and closed administrative spaces, their combination and constant renewal of new models that are associated with certain manufacturers in the global market of specialized furniture production.

Office buildings

When shaping the office space, the person is more and more in the center of attention. The establishment of break and rest departments and the individual shaping of the workplace increase productivity. The greater the flexibility of the premises in a public facility, the easier public facilities adapt to changing requirements.

The detailed plan of the work and organizational structure, and thus the specific functions and relationships of the work process, lead to the search for a specific solution for the business space itself. In the case of administrative buildings, special attention should be paid to the flexible spatial organization, which allows different sizes of office units.

Office space. The forms of the offices, and thus the spatial plan of the administrative building, arise from the activities and the current organization. The method of use can be performed with an appropriate influence on the structure of the object and its spatial design. Efficiency can be achieved by reducing the area per workplace. Emotional components, such as the concepts of colors and materials in the interior, affect motivation and productivity in the building.

## Forms of office organization

1. Large offices – they are suitable for large groups of employees. A large room has the character of coercion, which causes repulsion among employees. The enclosed forms of offices are suitable for independent and concentrated work, as individual rooms, or as rooms for small groups that need to exchange information.
2. Reversible office – is an attempt to improve working conditions in a large room. With the possibility, as needed, to divide the room into enclosed devices that are better suited for concentrated work and flexibility, the technical conditions for adaptability have also increased.
3. Group rooms - or it is also called a small, big room, are suitable for groups of collaborators who constantly exchange information. With them, an attempt is made, through the size of the work field, to create spatial conditions for increased individuality of the work environment and thus to improve the work environment, which in the large room no longer met the growing demands for office work (light, air, individuality).

The design also affects the productivity of the employees' work, to feel comfortable in a functional environment, equipped with furniture that is adapted to the level and character of the company's work. At the same time, the basic characteristic of the administrative space is to determine the zones of the working space and communicative spaces, which should be in a common relationship with each other, so that the work process is not hindered.

Modern way of organizing the administrative space Based on the experience in the past development of the furnishing of the administrative space, the term modern, modern way, it is necessary to satisfy certain criteria based on the experience. In doing so, it is necessary to respect the provision of the individuality of each employee, regardless of the concept of grouping in the space itself. It is necessary to provide easy communication to all employees, even in the case of different professions or different groups that are related to different work processes.



**Figure 34. 21st Century Contemporary Design, Tendency to Get Rid of Box Office**



**Figure 35. Modern partitions, 21st century design**

At the same time, certain pieces of furniture are placed that determine the dynamics of filling the space, work desks, various armchairs, shelves and closed spaces with closets. Depending on the need, the space can be organized, while it is not necessary to observe a certain system that was practiced in the past.

Through solutions that make it difficult to access other workplaces, more time is needed for the exchange of documents between employees, that is, it takes time, which creates inefficiency in the work process.

According to the placement of the work groups in the administrative facility, the designer should assess the definition of the space according to the complex structure of the workplaces. At the same time, the execution of the work activity within the established structure, consisting of different profiles, activities and hierarchical arrangement of the work unit, must not be disturbed.

Office cubicles organized with modules

With the development of the form and concept of the working space, standards related to the way of practicing the openness of the space were practiced. The development of the spatial conception of the interior during the twentieth century was transformed in relation to the needs and possibilities of furniture manufacturers for furnishing the administrative space.

In the beginning of the twentieth century Eng. Fredrick Taylor creates a spatial solution, respecting the principle of satisfying the efficiency of the work process, that is, satisfying the basic elements for shaping the administrative space. He placed the work desks in an open space, while he connected the realization of the offices for the managers with closed office rooms. In that way, a different system was precisely applied to the type of office space for a different category of clients according to their needs.

Later in the second half of the twentieth century (1960), an open model or landscape office was practiced. In doing so, a space was formed, characteristic of offices in Germany, where the workplaces were grouped according to their function, while the management positions were placed in the same space. Designer Herman Miller created a modular design with flexible workspace. This design was adapted to the needs of companies in Europe that followed a certain philosophy when organizing the workspace.

In the eighties of the twentieth century (1980), the model of office boxes, which enabled precise division of the workspace and with an emphasis on saving space, was most often current. In that way, the economy of the cost of the administrative space was put in the foreground, as well as the design of the furniture. Based on the experience of the mentioned systems in the modern design of the administrative space. Certain elements of the existing systems are used which, with the experience of their application, retained certain positive aspects of their application. The networking of the elements of the working units became a priority from where modern design began. The system of movable panels, which allows a certain degree of privacy, has been retained. Where large work areas are divided into individual work areas, but their mobility in space enables communication between employees.

Today, in the modern design of the administrative space, elements of furniture and a modular concept, based on previous experiences, can be applied. In this way, a design is formed where the primary concept is the satisfaction of the needs of each employee. In the dynamic pace of execution of the activities of the work process, it is necessary to satisfy the specific characteristics of the large number of different jobs. The directions for shaping a modern space move towards the creation of more functional spaces, which can occasionally transform their shape and concept of the space according to needs, which in a certain period change and adapt to the transformation of the structure of the companies, as a whole.

Certain experiences have led to sophisticated solutions of office cabins, which meet the standards for efficient performance of work duties. In doing so, fixed partition panels or sliding doors are used, which allow the spatial system to be changed from time to time, according to needs.





Figure 37. Office cabins

Industrial design is the part that is inextricably linked with the administrative space, that is, the so-called industrial design for modern needs in administrative spaces, where if the part of industrial design of products and semi-products did not exist, the space would have no function. The basic elements of industrial design of products that are used in administrative facilities are: work chair, worktable and manual furniture.

**Application of furniture** the process of application of furniture in the administrative space represents a multivalent problem where it is necessary to take into account the functional, aesthetic, psychological and economic elements. Knowing the needs of users in the administration through several decades of experience has led to the formation of standardization of sizing and the type of specialized furniture for this purpose. The knowledge of the needs and the psychological component of the users, together with the functional needs, were expressed through the definition of the aesthetic component in the design process.

According to the defined work process, the layout of the furniture is formed, while the visual aesthetic element should be added to the basic functional conception of the spatial solution. With the new modern way of treating the functioning of the space, there was a need for new functional elements of furniture, which satisfy the new needs of the users.

According to modern standards, due to the change in the modern design of the space with furniture, and the reduction of the working area, there is no limit to the dimensioning of the working space. Furnishing with furniture imposes functionality on the space, where care is taken for satisfied communication areas, in addition to working areas with furniture. In doing so, several separate needs are formed, apart from the workplace area, document storage area (shelves), necessary functional area for the furniture (doors), free area for movement around the workplace, as well as provision of communication areas, which often overlap with another function. At the same time, according to the nature of the work tasks, the space is modeled according to the needs, in order to increase the efficiency from all aspects of the execution of the work tasks.

Although it is about modernly conceived furniture, intended for a specific purpose, with the increase in the scope and variety of the work, the need for additional pieces of furniture for a different purpose increase. It requires storage of a larger number of documents, a larger area for a workspace, where the comfort and functionality of the workspace at each workplace should be optimally used. Modern needs can only be met with a professional approach of companies that produce office furniture.

**Desk.** In the design of the administrative space, the desk or surface represents a basic cell, surface or shape from which the design of the space begins. The design of the table always represents an accented element to which the additional elements of the furniture are adjusted or complemented. Most of the working time is spent at the workplace, i.e., using the desk, so special attention should be paid to its design. During the evolution of the desk according to the various needs, which were in large numbers, it was necessary to dimension a certain size, with standardized dimensions, which would fit and satisfy the needs of the largest number of users. Depending on the shape of the work surface, the worktables can be provided as independent, in conjunction with certain modular systems or free modular multi-functional systems.

**Work chair.** According to the large selection of desks, suitable design and creative solutions of

administrative desks are provided. In this area, appropriate technology is applied in the production of models that must meet high modern standards, in terms of the application of modern materials, colors, dimensions according to the latest scientific and technological findings in the production of furniture in this area.

First, it is necessary that the work chairs meet the ergonomic standards for the correct position of the body in the working position, in which employees spend most of their working time, that is, they must be adapted for long hours of sitting. For harmonious functioning and satisfaction of all parts of the modern design chair, it is necessary to constantly monitor modern technological solutions, through which higher standards are achieved in the design and production of this complex element of a work chair.

**Specialized office furniture.** In the classic, traditional way of shaping the administrative space, the world's major furniture manufacturers adhere to certain standards and typology adapted to the administrative work process. In particular, this applies to shelves, closed closets, shelves with drawers, open shelves, archive shelves, movable types of shelves, vertical types of cabins, etc. In all types, the principle of matching the form of the administrative stationery is respected, which also has certain standards and develops throughout the twentieth century.

**Hand-made furniture.** This category includes pieces of furniture that can fit into the administrative interior and are designer products that are used to shape other types of interiors (living space). This applies to different types of upholstery, stylish designer pieces on armchairs, side tables, lighting, floor coverings, etc.

## CONCLUSION

The administrative facilities contain various rooms aimed at satisfying the work process, holding meetings, other auxiliary rooms for rest, etc. The organization of all the different rooms requires knowledge of certain characteristics related to the typology of the work process, the choice of furniture, colors, materials and the connection with all other rooms in one spatial-functional whole.

Industrial design is the part that is inextricably linked with the administrative space, that is, the so-called industrial design for modern needs in administrative spaces, where if the part of industrial design of products and semi-products did not exist, the space would have no function.

The application of a dynamic lifestyle also reflects on the needs and design of the modern workspace. Designers are faced with satisfying multiple requirements regarding the attractiveness, individuality and performance of a contemporary administrative space. The quality of industrially produced objects affects the image, compactness and the image that is created in the space. For these reasons, it is significant to determine guidelines for adapting to modern models of industrial products in the administrative space.

The interior design of the administrative space should primarily satisfy the functional and practical aspect of arranging the space and choosing furniture.

Modern interior design needs to constantly produce new models of space design, while combining different functional units, different activities, where the innovation of the idea makes the space attractive, acceptable and interesting, both for employees and customers.

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# EVALUATION OF NORTH MACEDONIA'S HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

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**Abstract:** This paper is a result of a project that aims to raise the awareness and enrich the knowledge of high school students regarding sustainable development. In order to build an appropriate program structure it was necessary to assess the current level of awareness and knowledge about sustainable development. Therefore the main intent of this research is to establish a clear picture of the degree of information students have about sustainable development, including its definition and goals, as well as their knowledge of the different types of renewable energy sources, the basic principles of their functioning, their benefits and shortcomings, how much they are present in our country. The research was also focused on analyzing whether there is a connection between areas of living and gender with the comprehension of sustainable development.

**Keywords—** *sustainable development; awareness; high school students*

## Introduction

The current data about climate change suggests that the amount of time we have left for a point without any return is getting considerably short, as some studies predict this point might be as close as the year 2035. Therefore it is important to focus on the awareness and knowledge of the youth about all matters related to sustainable development in order to give them the necessary means for a proactive approach needed to expedite and implement the changes towards a more sustainable lifestyle in a local and global level. This study aims to establish the base level of knowledge that students have acquired about different elements of sustainable development so that we have an empirical element about how important it is to change curriculum, especially in primary and high schools, of the subjects through which different components of sustainable development are taught.

## Purpose of Study

The main purpose of this study is to assess the degree of information and understanding of high schools students of public schools in the municipality of Chair, Skopje about sustainable development. This assessment aims to construct the basis for the necessary changes in the educational programs that will increase the awareness and knowledge of the students.

## Research Methods

The research method used was a questionnaire about the definition of sustainable development, its goals in addition to the types of renewable energy sources they have encountered and how they function, the amount in which they are present in our country and a scale of how urgent and serious the matter of climate change is according to them.

In order to have comprehensible results we established a basis for correct answers regarding the questions that require a definition of a term and labeling goals or advantages/disadvantages of an energy source.

The definition of sustainable development that we chose while considering two criterias such as:

- simple enough to be remembered by students
- contains enough elements to define it completely and correctly

is the one from the Bruntland Commission Report in which sustainable development is considered as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

- The goals of sustainable development that we focused are the ones that UN members agreed upon in 2015 as part of the 2030 agenda:
- Eliminate Poverty
- Erase Hunger
- Establish Good Health and Well-Being
- Provide Quality Education
- Enforce Gender Equality
- Improve Clean Water and Sanitation

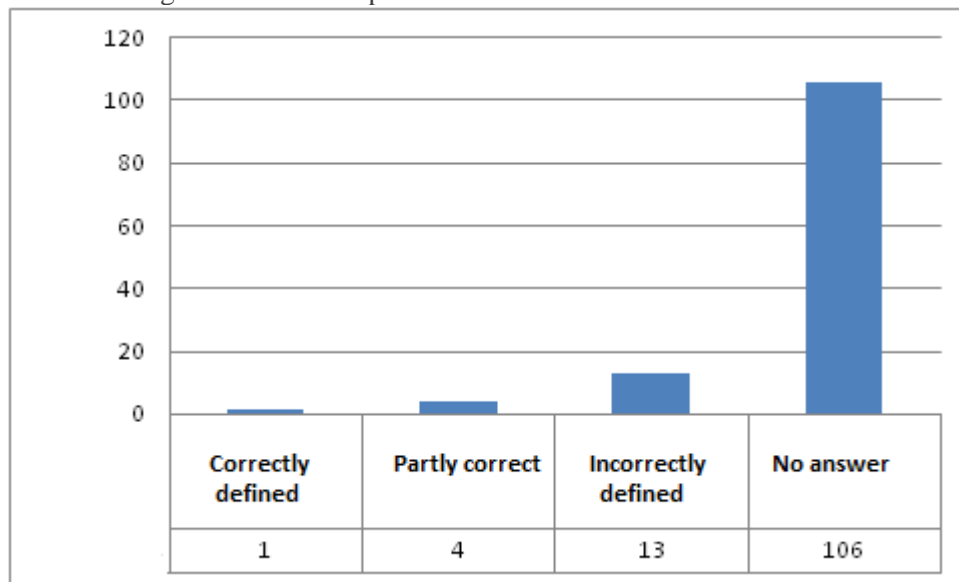
- Grow Affordable and Clean Energy
- Create Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Increase Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
- Reduce Inequality
- Mobilize Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Influence Responsible Consumption and Production
- Organize Climate Action
- Develop Life Below Water
- Advance Life On Land
- Guarantee Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
- Build Partnerships for the Goals

As part of the research we developed hypothesis about the correlation between gender and level of knowledge about sustainable development, as well as area of living and level of knowledge about sustainable development which were tested using a Chi square test. The Chi square test was selected as our sample size was bigger than 50 which is the recommended area of implementing this method as well as the fact that we were testing a correlation between two categorical variables.

### Findings and Results

The number of complete questionnaires that were collected was 124. Out the surveyed students 57 % were female and 43% male, of which 68.5 % lived in rural areas and 31.5% in urban areas.

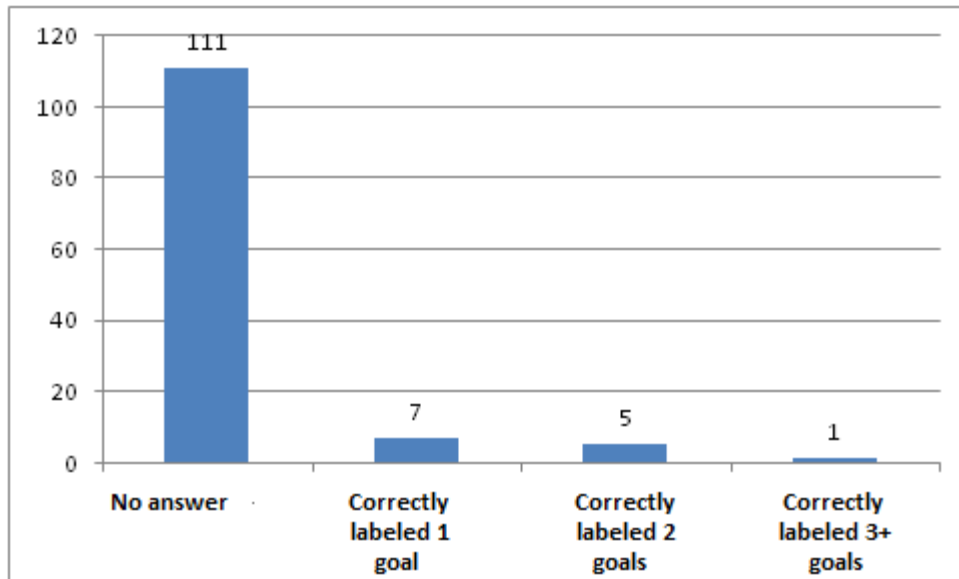
In order to define a general level of knowledge the initial question about sustainable development was whether they have ever heard about the term sustainable development, on which a great majority, 85%, of the students replied with no, and only 15% or only 19 of the 124 students surveyed answered with yes. The following question about how they would define sustainable development gave a clearer picture of their actual knowledge of the issue as presented in table 1.



**Table 1**

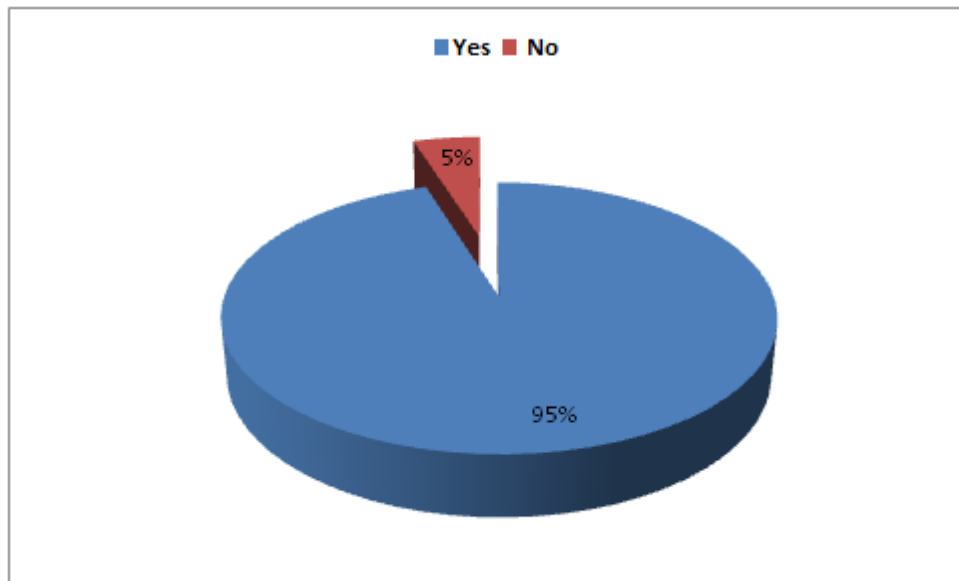
The situation is similar with Table 2 that expresses the number of students that have correctly labeled the goals of sustainable development.



**Table 2**

The knowledge of renewable energy sources was mainly about solar and wind energy, with a limited knowledge of their basic principles, along with almost no knowledge of other types of renewable energy sources. In general all the answers regarding the level of information students have about the energy component of sustainable development show the same low level of knowledge which concurs with our initial hypothesis.

On the other hand, even though they don't possess a lot of information about different aspects of sustainable development their answers presented in table 3, about whether they believe that climate change is an urgent matter or not, portray that the level of alertness among students about the urgency of a necessary change was higher than our initial hypothesis suggested.

**Table 3**

The data was used to test two hypotheses:

1.  $H_0$ : There is no correlation between gender and the level of knowledge about sustainable development
2.  $H_0$ : There is no correlation between area of living and the level of knowledge about sustainable development

The results from the chi square test about the first hypothesis confirmed our initial hypothesis within this sample size, while the results about our second hypothesis showed that there is a correlation between area of living and the level of knowledge about sustainable development.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The research suggest that high school students are aware and alerted about the urgency of the matter yet lack the necessary knowledge and education about sustainable development which means they lack the appropriate tools to contribute and use their potential for

innovation and personal changes that would help accelerate the process of achieving the goals of sustainable development. Consequently the importance of developing an appropriate theoretical and practical knowledge through formal and informal education is more than necessary.

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## The role of IT in the pandemic-education

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### Abstract

What if the coronavirus pandemic happened only 30 years earlier? In the early nineties of the last century in these areas, Internet communication was almost unknown, and creating infrastructure conditions for its fast development required extremely expensive investments. The high level of IT development at the time of the outbreak of the corona pandemic contributed to greatly mitigate its consequences, not only in industry, but also in areas such as education, healthcare, software companies and others. If there was no high level of IT development, during the corona-pandemic there would be almost no conditions for the work of schools and colleges, as well as the work of companies, where workers can carry out their work duties using IT and an electronic device, connected on the Internet. In this article, we will give a special review to the benefits of IT in the corona pandemic for the educational process, and we will also consider the disadvantages, which we have seen during that period.

### CCSCONCEPTS

• Education • Mathematics

### KEYWORDS

Distance education, Online classes, Online exams, University subjects, Corona crisis, BigBlueButton (BBB), Moodle, Disadvantages, Advantages.

## 1 Introduction

Hypothetically, a worldwide pandemic could have happened thirty years earlier, i.e. around 1990. But then the level of development of information technologies (IT) was in its infancy and it would have been practically impossible to use the power and opportunities that they offered in 2020. If the corona pandemic had appeared thirty or fifty years ago, the world would probably have been much more affected by its impact. In this study, the emphasis is on education during the coronavirus crisis, so, in such a hypothetical situation, we would be interested in the teaching process. Probably the education of the students would have taken place through the televisions, but even here several key questions would have been asked: whether every home had a television, how many children could follow such instruction on their own, how the achieved knowledge of the students would be checked, etc.

The main goal of this paper is to discuss the role and some of the implications of IT in the corona crisis, especially in higher education based on a review and comparison of various aspects of teaching from several courses at the Faculty of Informatics and Computer Engineering (FINKI), at the University of "St. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje in the corona crisis. Also we will discuss the technologies used during this period.

After announcement of the pandemic crisis by The World Health Organization, the teaching process had to be adapted for the new situation. The teaching process emerged from classical teaching to online teaching process. All that was made possible by the rapid development of IT and its presence in every aspect of life.

Teaching activities on most of the subjects of FINKI consist of lectures, classroom and laboratory exercises, and a variety of other activities

that are done by the lecturers and the students themselves. The lectures and classroom exercises before corona crisis took place in the classroom, using a blackboard and a video projector. At our faculty, the previous implementation of IT in teaching process and before the pandemic was a great advantage, although the new situation brought great challenges.

## 2 Distance learning via Moodle e-platform

Most of the subjects at FCSE involve classes, which consist of lectures, auditory and laboratory exercises. The classical way of conducting the lectures and exercises, before the corona crisis, was in the classroom, using a blackboard and a video beam. However, as explained previously, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the process had to be adjusted to the newly emerged circumstances.

During the corona crisis, for the courses such as: Business Statistics, Calculus 1 and Calculus 2, Calculus, Discrete Mathematics, and others, as for all the other courses at the faculty, distance education realized through lectures, auditory and laboratory exercises, as well as colloquia and exams, took place through the BigBlueButton (BBB) video conferencing system, implemented in the Courses and Exams student services, i.e. the official FCSE websites on the Moodle e-learning platform.

In the following we briefly describe the classical teaching approaches for the theoretical lectures, auditory and laboratory exercises, and then elaborate on the adjusted online approaches that were implemented with the outbreak of the pandemic.

Moodle e-platform which was used before the corona crisis, as we mentioned previously, with many information technologies included during the classical teaching process, and fast integration of BigBlueButton (BBB) video conferencing system, made distance teaching possible.

Our experiences from teaching classes, exercises and exams with the Moodle e-platform indicate that online teaching in higher education has many advantages, but unfortunately we also encountered several disadvantages. Here we will list the most important of them.

## 3 Positive aspects of distance learning

Advantages of distance learning are noted in several of the most important areas.

- We used Moodle e-platform as an e-platform during the corona crisis. In this virtual environment, teaching resources of different characteristics can be included, such as links to web pages, chats, forums, messages, and other specific documents like notes, tutorials and question relationships elaborated by the teacher.

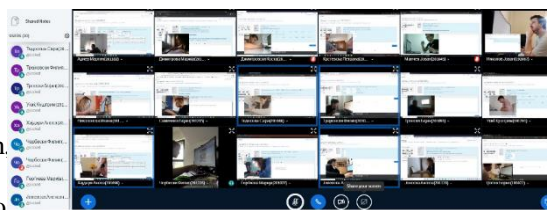
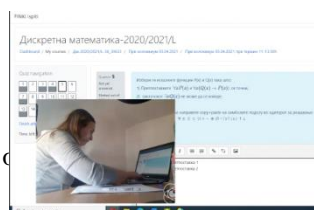
- As a part of the onlineteaching, we used YouTube for publicly posting and sharing the video material from the classroom exercises. This is a good example of using global online video sharing and social media platforms as an additional tool in online learning process. Through this platform it was possible to save high quality videos without additional data storage space at our faculty. We also chose YouTube because of the reliability it offers as well as the ease of sharing them. This video-materials together with the video-materials made on BBB were very useful for the students during the corona crisis and are useful for the students after the corona crisis in the classical teaching at our university.

- During an exam session, recorded materials are especially effective, as one can review the recorded materials again in order to review the material. When the student is preparing for the exam, he needs to look at the lesson, or the solution to the task, several times, according to his needs and perceptions. After the end of the corona crisis and returning to the classical teaching, many students use the video lectures made during the corona crisis.

- Flexibility in acquiring the material: the student can choose any time, when it suits him best, to see the solutions or to listen to the recorded lesson.

- One student can take the exam from anywhere on the planet, not only from the classrooms of the faculty.

On the Figure 1 left is shown a student and on the Figure 1 right is shown all the group during the online exam in a BBB session.



- The costs of transportation are completely avoided in distance education.

- Saving travel time. The student does not need to travel from home to the city where the faculty is located and travel from the place of temporary residence (Figure 1: students during the online exam)

- Moodle Quiz activity allows creating various question types such as: multiple choice, short answer, essay questions etc., with a teacher's feedback that can be viewed by the students in any time after the end of the exams. This tool can meet most of the teachers needs for the examination process. Also, the technical team of FINKI integrated Equation Editor, a LaTeX based editor for mathematical notation, as a part of Moodle Quiz Activity. This created the same conditions for creating questions as during the classic exam, especially for the mathematical courses. The Moodle e-platforms allow you to create a question banks. This feature is very useful in creating exams. The modification and reuse of the questions made creation of the exams faster than the classical way. In the following we will mention some of the features of Moodle Quiz activity:

- IT through Moodle e-platform enables a rapid increase in the speed of reviewing exams and publishing results, due to the use of questions with automated answers. This type of questions, implemented through the Moodle e-platform, were mostly by choosing one of several offered answers, or by writing only one numerical result.

This is especially important for study groups and faculties that have a large number of students, with several hundred students each group, and for which in the classical performance of exams, it sometimes took several weeks for the results to be published.

By using platforms like Moodle, the results of the exams were done in a few days after the online exams, although there were also a few

essay questions in the online exams, where the answers were written during the exam, and were not automated, but in this case the professors' time for review of answers was significantly reduced due to the smaller number of essay questions.

- IT, in our case realized through the Moodle e-platform, allows the professors to use a password to reveal the questions of the exam, which was told by the professor only for the students present in the session with students taking the exam. In this way, through IT, another protection is available so that the exam questions cannot be seen by students who have not registered and are not registered with the professor as taking the exam, and who would possibly take it in an illegal way, without authorization, or they would help some students who are taking the exam with authorization.

- IT through the Moodle e-platform allows the professors to define the duration of the exam in advance, but also to modify that length of time during the exam.

- IT through the Moodle e-platform and through the use of appropriate software allows the professors to set the prohibition of the use of any website, except certain websites, through which the exam is taken.

- IT through the Moodle e-platform allows the professors to stop the exam of a student immediately, if he does not respond to the check by the professor/assistant, or the video signal from his camera shows a frozen image.

- IT, implemented through the Moodle e-platform, allows the professors to set the number of attempts with which a student can take the exam, in all our exams that number was initially one. Only in a few exceptional situations, for justified reasons (power outage, etc.), that number of attempts was increased to 2 for a specific student, so that he could continue to take the exam.

- As a favorable possibility, we mention the possibility to professors of mixing the questions, as well as mixing the offered answers, so that they do not appear in the same order for each student, but appear in a random order.

- Another positive possibility of the IT is the possibility of negative points for the answers to the automated questions, if the teacher considers that the question is fundamental and should not be answered randomly.

## 4 Negative aspects of distance learning

On the negative side, here are the highlights:

- Lack of direct face-to-face contact. Unlike the classic way of teaching in a classroom or laboratory, where the teacher or assistant has direct live contact with the students through distance education, the lack of that direct form of communication is felt to a significant extent when the teacher conveys the material live and follows the attention and student reactions.

- Not only the contact between the teaching staff and the students, but there was no face-to-face contact between the students of the same generation, who hardly know each other, except for those who knew each other before enrolling in college.

- In the subjects where recordings of the material were left out of the online teaching, the online attendance of the classes was high, but later the attendance decreased, because the student could listen and watch the recordings by himself, without the need for the online presence of the teacher or the assistant.

- Another interesting disadvantage is the use of illegal means by the students during online exams. But even that was minimized by using IT. The availability of high-quality cameras and high-speed Internet communication that is accessible to everyone allowed for good supervision during exams.

- Negative effect on health due to prolonged sitting in front of a monitor and in the same position. Professionals from health facilities point to more and more recorded cases of requested medical help, due to pain, deviations, difficult movement, etc., with one of the leading reasons being the long time spent in front of a monitor. Mainly, the following several health problems are mentioned: strain on the eyes, curvature of the spine, especially the neck and shoulder girdle, weight gain and accompanying effects on the increase of fats in the bloodstream e.t.c.

## 5 Comparison of the exams' results

In this section we will make a comparative analysis of the results on the first partial exams and the exams in first exam session in the year 2019/20 when the exams were held in classical way versus the year 2020/2021, when the exams were held online. We will discuss the results of some of the mathematical courses at FINKI: Calculus, Calculus 1, Calculus 2 and Business Statistics.

In Figure 2 there are percentage of students that pass the exam on partial exams on some mathematical courses from two different years. In 2019/2020 the exams were held on classical way and in 2020/21 were held online. In Figure 3, there these percentages for the first exam session. It is obvious that there is no big difference in percentages in the year when the exams were held in classical way, versus the year when the exams were held online. From the Figure 2 and Figure 3 we can say that the passing percentage of Calculus 2 in 2019/20 is significantly bigger than this percentage in the 2020/21. The reason for this may be the new program that was accredited in 2019/20. All the students enrolled in that course in 2019/20 were students that are enrolled in Calculus 2 for the first time. There were no students that were enrolled in this course which previously were enrolled in this course.

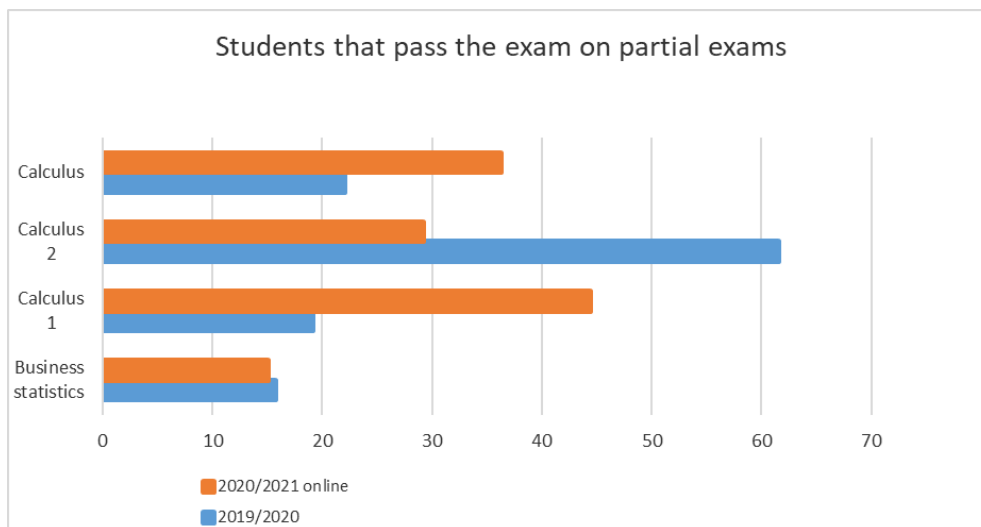


Figure 2: Percentage of students that pass the partial exams for different courses

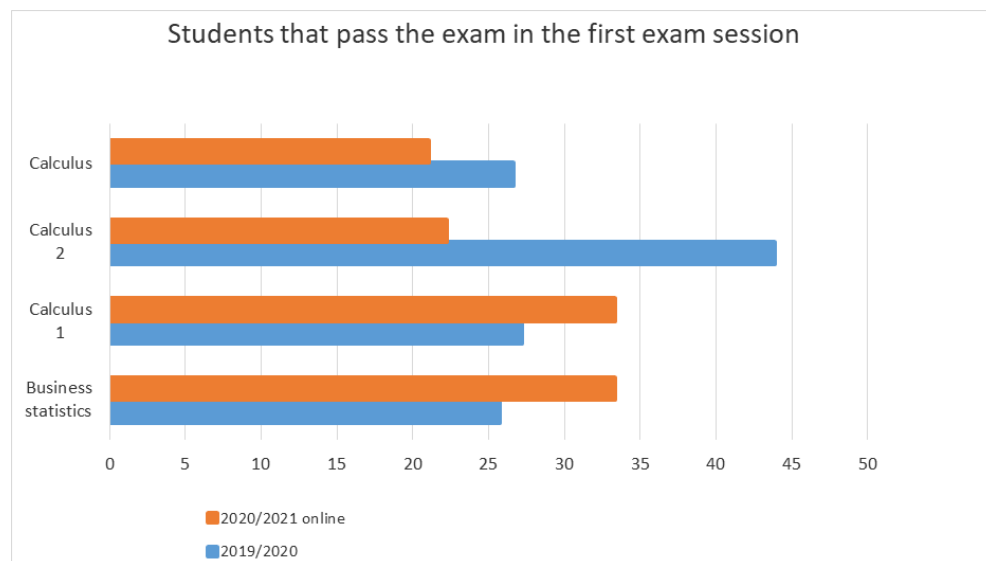


Figure 3: Percentage of students that pass the exam in the first exam session

In Table 1 are given average passing percentages, on the above mentioned mathematical courses, of the students enrolled in the courses in 2019/20 and 2020/21 on partial exams. In Table 2 are given average passing percentage of students in the first session in the same years. We can say that there is insignificant increasing of the number of students that pass the exams on partial exams 2020/21 when the examination process was held online.



Table 1: Average passing percentage on the partial exams

	2019/2020	2020/2021 online
Business statistics	15.73	15.04
Calculus 1	19.15	44.44
Calculus 2	61.6	29.24
Calculus	22	36.31
<b>Average</b>	<b>29.62</b>	<b>31.2575</b>

Table 2: Average passing percentage on the exam in first exam session

	2019/2020	2020/2021 online
Business statistics	25.71	33.33
Calculus 1	27.19	33.33
Calculus 2	43.86	22.22
Calculus	26.62	21.09
<b>Average</b>	<b>30.845</b>	<b>27.4925</b>

## 6 Conclusion

The role of IT on the corona crisis in the field of education contributed to a large extent to mitigate the damage of the crisis and to maintain the continuity of the educational process. Despite a number of positive benefits, we are also witnessing more negative effects of using IT. In this article, we have made an overview of the most important advantages and disadvantages that IT had on the education process for several higher education courses during the corona pandemic.

We have shown a comparative analysis of the results on the first partial exams and the exams in first exam session in the year 2019/20 - exams in classical way versus the year 2020/2021, when the exams were held online. We can conclude that there is insignificant increasing of the number of students that pass the exams on partial exams 2020/21 when the examination process was held online.

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# The existential condition as a significant challenge in the care of the older people

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## ABSTRACT

Entering old age roughly corresponds to the time of going to an age-based retirement. Entering retirement for many older people represents a period that surprises them, confuses them and often they enter this life sequence unprepared to organize and fill their everyday life with meaningful activities. Since the older people enter this period unprepared, they are not able to face the new challenges, such as the lack of resources, the new roles in the family, existential difficulties, and the need for greater and more organized care for their own health, the desire for an active old age and the large quantity of free time. Social care for this age group is largely at an unenviable level. The older people, in this challenging period are facing many significant needs and problems, which require immediate action. Hence, a reduced approach to care for this population is often observed. The social community, in contrast to the size of this population, often puts it on the margins of the social health care system. The factual care is reduced to a bunch of declarative but dysfunctional instruments and incomplete regulations, often accompanied by political declarations that in the near future the care for the older people will get priority and higher commitment.

The research part of this scientific paper includes presentation of our original research based on a multi-dimensional stratified sample of the older people. We have developed a survey sheet for the data gathering and the analysis of the obtained data is presented in tables and graphs with appropriate statistical processing.



This paper is a modest but important contribution to the advancement of knowledge on the conditions and challenges of the contemporary living of the older people and an incentive for appropriate reaction by the appropriate services in the Republic of North Macedonia.

## KEYWORDS

Older people, existential condition, challenges, social care.

## 1. Introduction

The older people represents a large, but also in many respects special category in the general population. For many people, the period of old age begins with retirement. Retirement is a condition, but also a challenge accompanied by a number of changes. It represents a significant turning point in the life of the older people.

Retirement for a large number of people is not only a new situation, but also a challenge filled with a large number of novelties and uncertainties. The fact that the working life is over introduces the older people to a completely new and unknown situation, a challenge resulting in leaving the professional live behind and renouncing a huge part of one's professional routines (Berglund and Ericsson, 2003).

Often the challenges in the life of an older person have a negative connotation, accompanied by a feeling of confusion, depression, inferiority, reduced self-esteem and over-sensitivity in relationships with people (Bowling et al., 2003). Also, retirement situations are followed by the appearance of new problems that need to be overcome. These problems have origins in different reasons, primarily from the challenge of psychological adaptation to the new role in the family and society, the need for greater commitment to health problems, the need to know the appropriate legal regulations that regulate the rights of pensioners, the need to get to know the system of social and social protection of the elderly, etc. (Bowling et al., 2007).

All these needs and difficulties faced by the older people represent a significant challenge for the social community as well. The society at large is responsible for the process of adaptation and care at all levels of social life, with appropriate forms of institutional and non-institutional social protection, in programs

and strategies, i.e., in the overall older care policy.

Longer life expectancy produces more social, economic, and political consequences. In modern society, which promotes the cult of youth and physical attractiveness, older people have become a marginalized group with less and less influence and power, which was not the case in previous stages of the development of human communities when old age was considered to bring wisdom, so the reputation and people's power grew with age. Emphasizing the importance of youth has led to the emergence of discrimination based on prejudices about older people as useless and therefore less valuable members of the community. The consequences of the extended life span are increased financial pressure on the social and pension insurance system and the demand for increasing portion of government's social policy and accompanying programs to be directed to solving the problems of the older people (Bowling and Gabriel, 2004). The economic effects of the aging population trend especially affect transition and less developed countries, such as the Republic of North Macedonia, which have poor resources to meet the needs of older citizens (Борнарова, 2004).

The multi-year decline in the rate of natural growth is one of the pieces of evidence that indicates that the society in the Republic of North Macedonia is getting older. That is why there is a need to determine the real situation with regards to the position of the older people in our society and find possible directions for improvement through the implementation of adequate social policy measures.

The purpose of this study is to find out whether older people manage to meet their subsistence needs based on their pension, and for those who find it difficult to do so, the authors try to find out what tactics the older people use to achieve this goal. The findings aim to enrich the scarcely available data on the socio-economic status of the older people and to provide credible information to be used by the state or other relevant entities in order to strengthen their efforts to achieve improvement of the socio-economic status of the older people.

## **2. Methodology and hypothesis**

The research method consists of a stratified questionnaire (Lacey and Luff, 2001) distributed to 600 respondents over the age of 60, who come lives in four cities in North Macedonia: Skopje; Kumanovo; Kichevo; and Strumica. Respondents were interviewed in family clinics, clubs and day care centers for the older people, retirement homes and old people's homes, both public and private. A framework analysis was used to analyze the collected data.

The sample, with which we studied the existential conditions of the older people as a significant challenge, included 600 respondents over the age of 60 with a stratified sample and with an appropriate ratio of age and gender, with place of residence in Skopje, Kumanovo, Kichevo and Strumica. The sample is designed to be balanced in relation to the institutions where the research was carried out: in the premises of the primary care clinics, we've included 280 respondents, (i.e. 47%), clubs and day care centers 155 respondents, (i.e. 26%), retirement homes 60 respondents, (i.e. 10% of the sample) and nursing homes, state and private 105 respondents, (i.e. 18%).

The sample is stratified i.e. the survey was carried out in four institutions that we assume are the most accessible to the older people, namely family doctors 280, older people in Skopje Kichevo and Strumica, day care centers and clubs 155 respondents in Skopje Kichevo and Strumica, retirement homes 60 respondents in Skopje Kichevo and Strumica and old people's homes (public and private) 105 respondents in Skopje and Kumanovo.

The highest percentage of respondents i.e., 430 or 73% were surveyed from the population living in families or in independent dwellings. We consider this ratio to be relevant to the actual situation regarding the organization of the living of the older people, according to which the highest percentage live in the above-mentioned conditions and forms. The structure of the sample in terms of age categories (60-69, 70-79 and over 80) and sex affiliation is presented in Table 1, below.

Table 1 Display of the structure of the research sample according to age and sex

Number of older people by age and sex								
Age	60 -69		70 -79		80+		Total	
Sex	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f
Number	111	116	128	108	60	77	299	301
Percentage	18,5%	19,33%	21,34%	18%	10%	12.83%	49.84%	50,16%
Total	227		236		137 22.83%		600	
	37,83%		39,34%		22,83%		100%	

In terms of age categories, the highest percentage of older people belong to the second category of 70-79 years old, because we believe that from the entire old population, this age category most relevantly shows the conditions and challenges of the older people. However, a suitable ratio of the sample exists in both the first and third age categories.

The stratification of the sample was achieved not only by dividing the older people by age categories (60-69, 70-79, and over 80), but also, each category was divided by gender into two subcategories.

The socioeconomic conditions of the older people represent significant indicators in this research. From the multitude of indicators that characterize the socioeconomic conditions of the older people, we decided to study the following indicators: where and whether the older person is living alone or with other members, how is the payment of utility bills in the household arranged, and the manner of distribution of the total monthly income of an older person. One of the basic items that influence the socioeconomic conditions of the older people is the payment of the recurring monthly utility costs, because they basically engage a significant part of the monthly income of the older people, and the older people are generally perceived as regular and disciplined payers of all the utility costs and other financial obligations levied by the state or by the public utility providing companies.

The main hypothesis centers around the assumption that older people do not generate enough income to meet their subsistence needs. Hence, the research question will reside in the realm of finding out which

priority areas income should be spent on and what are the tactics/approaches older people employ in trying to meet their subsistence needs.

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1 Payment of utility bills and structure of households**

The data on the payment of utility bills in our research were studied from the aspect of the structure of the households with regards to the people comprising the household and their family statutes. In addition to the basic indicators for paying bills for electricity, heating, water, television and telephone, they were also studied in terms of who the older person live with, including the following categories: alone, with spouse, with spouse and children and with other family members. We considered these data relevant in order to ascertain whether community living reduces the responsibility of the older person in paying overhead costs. Assuming that overheads are paid by the older persons from their pensions, regardless of whether they live alone or in a community, it has been shown that with high reliability and within these categories overheads are paid regularly. The older persons who live alone in their own households and in retirement homes are the most regular payers of utility bills, primarily for electricity, water and telephone, while a very small proportion are unable to provide funds for the purchase of firewood and radio-television bills. Inability to purchase enough firewood is due to the high cost, while the failure to pay radio-diffusion tax is due to dissatisfaction with the content of the television and radio programs.

Likewise, spouses who live alone regularly pay their electricity, water, and telephone bills. The situation changes when the older person, either as individuals or with their spouse, live in a family, where certain discontinuity appears in the regularity of paying the utility bills. although in the categories: electricity, television, water and telephone they are paid regularly.

Table 2 Display of the frequency of payment of utility costs according to the type of household the older person live in

With whom do the older person live?								
Payment of overhead costs			Alone	Husban+ wife	Alone+ children	Husbant+ children	Other members	Total
			F	F	F	F	F	F
			%	%	%	%	%	%
	Electricity	Regularly	104	136	121	106	28	495
			25,85%	26,26%	23,23%	20,20%	4,44%	100%
		Irregularly	/	/	/	/	/	/
			/	/	/	/	/	/
	Heating	Regularly	70	97	64	96	18	345
			14,14%	19,39%	11,91%	13,18%	6,06%	69,69%
		Irregularly	34	39	57	10	10	150
			17,17%	4,44%	10,70%	2,02%	1,41%	30,30%
	Water	Regularly	128	130	115	100	28	495
			25,85%	26,26%	23,23%	20,20%	5,65%	100%
		Irregularly	/	/	/	/	/	
			/	/	/	/	/	
	TV	Regularly	94	116	115	103	28	452
			22,82%	21,21%	21,41%	23,23%	3,43%	91,31%
		Irregularly	10	20	6	3	/	43
			2,62%	4,04%	1,21%	/	/	7,87%
	Telephone	Regularly	88	128	117	103	23	459
			1,77%	25,85%	23,63%	20,80%	4,64%	92,72%
		Irregularly	24	12	/	/	/	36
			4,84%	2,42%	/	/	/	7,27%

Despite the comparative review of the payment of overheads shown in the table, it can be clearly seen that the most serious amount in the spending of joint family funds is related to overheads. This situation, on the one hand, reflects the responsibility of the older people towards paying the bills, but on the other hand, shows state's strict attitude towards non-payers, punishing them with expensive money fines and blocking the personal accounts of the debtors as long as they pay the debt and the related procedural costs.

From the statements of the older people, we know that they are not satisfied with the services or with the costs of overhead expenses, but because of their old age, they do not know where to send their complaints, they do not know whom to address, which leads to the creation of big problems in their budget. Also, the older people, despite the high heating bills, are mostly not willing to implement other alternatives for heating. We are aware that these high costs force the older people who are alone or only with their spouse to organize shared residences with two or more people regardless of kinship. The fact that they are at similar age and know each other from before results in consent of few friends/acquaintances to live together and share rent and overhead costs. There are also cases where due to apartment shearing the previous apartment of one or more of the members of the newly formed household remain void, and in these cases the owners opt for renting the void apartments and use the funds from the rent for paying utility costs in the newly formed household.

These problems are surmountable in the older people, in whom the physical and mental ability (awareness and reasoning) is relatively preserved. Among older persons who are endangered from this aspect, the possibility of finding alternative solutions for independent living is drastically reduced and often, if organized help is not provided, this category of persons end their life in the greatest danger. That's why in this paper, we come to a conclusion that older people with physical and mental disabilities, regardless of their age, find themselves in need of assistance that should undoubtedly be provided and facilitated by the state and the society.

### **3.2 Reduction and distribution of total income**

In the course of managing the total incomes available to the older people, they very often find themselves in a situation of having to prioritize their spendings in order to make it throughout the month, while usually investing a lot of effort in the distribution of the total incomes. With their average relatively modest pensions, they are constantly struggling with the increase in living costs and almost all of them are able to meticulously manage the distribution of their monthly income, but often at expense of failing to meet some basic needs. That's why we considered it significant to present a table displaying the areas where the older people most frequently manage to accumulate some savings. It is also important to emphasize that the older people who live in families (and are happy to live in a family), usually pay a large part of the overhead costs from their pension, and the remaining money are managed by their children i.e., in these cases the older members of the household are deprived from the right of free disposition of their income. Hence, we have paid some attention on locating and displaying the areas where the older people most frequently manage to accumulate some savings. We would like to once again emphasize that by reducing the distribution of total income, we do not mean non-payment of overhead costs and other expenses, but above all a focus on savings, that is, the allocation of minimal funds to satisfy basic life needs. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Display of the categories where the older people try to save by constraining their needs

Older persons by age and sex										
What items the older people save most on		60-69		70-79		80+		Total		Total
		m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	
		F		F		F		F		F
		%		%		%		%		%
	Overhead costs	44	73	42	4	54	20	140	97	237
		8,88%	14,74%	8,48%	0,80%	10,90%	4,04%	28,28%	19,59%	47,87%
Nutrition	40	60	52	40	30	40	122	140	262	
	8,08%	12,12%	10,50%	8,08%	6,06%	8,08%	24,64%	28,28%	52,92%	



		30	20	20	15	11	80	60	53	113
	Medicines	6,06%	4,04%	4,04%	3,03%	2,22%	16,16%	12,12%	10,70%	22,82%
	Clothing and household	80	92	100	80	43	64	223	236	459
		16,16%	18,58%	20,20%	16,16%	8,68%	12,92%	45,05%	47,96%	92,72%
	Culture and communication	95	48	80	60	95	52	270	160	430
		19,19%	9,69%	16,16%	12,12%	19,19%	10,50%	54,54%	32,32%	86,86%

In the table, the responses of the older people are divided into three age categories, because we considered that age greatly affects the ability of the older people in managing their own total income. We also considered it significant to perceive and study some substantial categories frequently used by the elderly with regards to their spendings and came up with the following: overhead costs, food, medicine, clothing and household goods, culture and communication.

A significant percentage of older people, 47.87%, stated that they save as much as possible on overhead costs, for example, they prepare meals two to three times a week, use electricity at night, take care of water consumption, and alike.

In terms of nutrition, a very high percentage of older people (52.92%) stated that they save on food, use cheap products, some of which have expired, and even buy right before the markets close, expecting to get reduced prices. The older people also save on medicines, although almost all of them have a threatening health condition, i.e. suffer from chronic diseases that require medication. Despite the conscientious health policy that provides relatively cheap and accessible medicines for the most common diseases of the elderly, still 22.82% stated that they cut back on the purchase of medicines because they are not able to buy them.

From the data it can be clearly seen that the highest percentage of cut in total income of pensioners

refers to the inability to buy clothes and household goods 92.72%, also on cultural manifestations and communication where this percentage is 86.86%. On the one hand, this indicator is relatively high due to the inability of the third category of adults to participate, but the indicators from the second age category are also significant.

The second highest percentage of savings is carried out by cutting the expenses under the category transportation, even though when it comes to using the city bus services the pensioners are exempt from charges on certain weekdays. The research showed that a large percentage of the older people cut back on transportation on the days when it is charged. In that direction, looking at the total data in the table, we can conclude that the older people are largely exposed to a reduction in the total income based on their pensions, and with that, a reduction in very important and necessary funds with which the life of the elderly can be safer and filled with greater satisfaction and security.

#### **4. Conclusion and recommendations**

From the standpoint of the ability of the older people on satisfying their basic existential needs the research showed that the life of the elderly is characterized by living in very modest conditions in every aspect. A significant percentage of older people cut down on overhead costs, prepare cooked meals two to three times a week, use cheap electricity (available between 10pm and 6am the next morning), take care not to spend too much water, and try to save wherever and whenever possible. The older also cut back on buying medicines, considering that this cost takes up a large part of the family budget. With regards to the payment of the overhead costs we have found out that the fear of the elderly from eventual fines resulting from irregular payment of overhead costs is huge and this is additional driving factor for the older people to do whatever possible in order to give highest priority on paying these costs. Even though the elderly often are finding themselves in a situation where they have to borrow money or sell part of their real estate in order to be able to pay the overhead costs. Hence there is an initiative, which we dearly support, for the older people with the lowest pensions to be fully or partially exempt from paying the utility bills.

The disadvantageous position of the older people in the Republic of North Macedonia can be changed only by designing and implementing a reasonable policy of national care. As a conclusion, it can be pointed out that income based on pension is not enough to ensure a dignified life for the older people, especially in terms of enabling them to service their basic (essential) needs. Increasing pensions for the elderly would have been a logical proposition, but not a viable one. Therefore, our recommendation would be more in the direction of creating opportunities for part-time work for the older people. Many of them are still willing to work and if we consider negative demographic trends and labor shortages, it seems that the economy can benefit from both the experience and skills of many older members of our society.

Of course, we are aware that the model we propose has its limitations, especially if we consider that the increase in age is proportional to the decrease in the ability to work, but still the establishment of a viable model for engaging the older people with part-time professional work and staying active beyond retirement will definitely contribute to easing the financial constraints of a significant percentage of this population. And on the other hand, the state could investigate the possibilities of introducing additional small financial subsidies for those citizens who do not have the ability to work beyond the retirement age, but they need a small financial support to help them generate enough income to service their basic subsistence needs.

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ISSN (print) 2545-4463

ISSN (online) 2545-4471