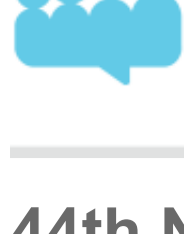


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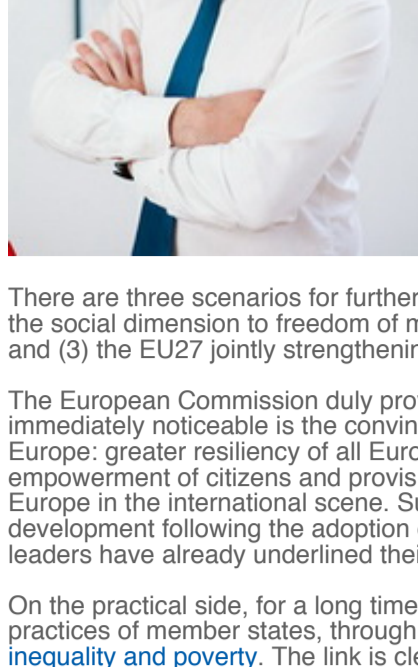


44th NEWSLETTER

ON SOCIAL INCLUSION AND POVERTY REDUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Reflections on the Social Dimension of Europe: Less, Same or More?



Written by: **Ivan Sekulović, Manager, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia**

As far back as 2011 the renowned Harvard professor Michael Porter stated that "capitalism is under siege", reflecting the urgency of aligning the economic interests of capital with the broader interests of the community, due to the increasingly dramatic effects of the global economic crisis.

A series of populist developments on the global scene, caused by a crisis of capitalism due to the financial crash of Wall Street, is currently leading to an ever more visible reversal regarding the future development of the European continent. The list of options is becoming ever smaller, and thus ever more focused. The debate on the future rights, benefits and roles of citizens; the main actors in the above crises, is particularly interesting in this regard. The latest contribution to this issue was provided by the long expected document entitled "Reflection Paper on the Social Dimension of Europe", published on 26 April in Brussels. Make note: this paper does not speak of the European Union, but *Europe*.

There are three scenarios for further development envisaged by the European Commission: (1) limiting the social dimension to freedom of movement, (2) those who wish to work more on social issues doing so, and (3) the EU27 jointly strengthening the social dimension of Europe.

The European Commission duly provides reasons for and against each of the scenarios. However, immediately noticeable is the convincing nature of reasons for strengthening the social dimension of Europe: greater resiliency of all European economies to shocks, a visible contribution to the empowerment of citizens and provisions of the greatest amount of power and highest reputation for Europe in the international scene. Such a convincingly formulated option is no surprise, it is a logical development following the adoption of the **Roma Declaration** in March of this year, whereby the European leaders have already underlined their commitment to a stronger social Europe.

On the practical side, for a long time the EC has been mapping the situation in the field, along with good practices of member states, through its Joint Employment Report, with the latest issue dedicated to **inequality and poverty**. The link is clear: a high level of inequality can reduce the performance of the economy and potential for sustainable growth, it reflects a high degree of poverty and social exclusion and leads to the underutilization of human potential.

Regarding Serbia, the EC has been telling us all of the above through the progress reports, screening reports and numerous analyses. The statistics are clear: Serbia is among the European countries with the highest at-risk-of-poverty rates and the highest Gini coefficients, used to measure income inequality, as shown by the recently published data by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. Additional cause for concern is given by the trend indicating that the gap between the rich and poor population is increasingly pronounced: 20% of the richest population in the Republic of Serbia has over 9 times higher equivalent income compared to the 20% of the poorest. Inequality is the issue under focus of the European and global public and one of the focus issues of the United Nations 2030 Agenda. More information on this issue can be found on the [website of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit](#), as well as in the recently initiated [Monitor of the Social Situation in Serbia](#) dedicated to the issue of inequality.

Due to all of the above, the Government of the Republic of Serbia intensified its efforts in the field of employment and social policy through the adoption and implementation of the **Employment and Social Policy Reform Programme (ESRP)**, the calculation of the **EU Gender Equality Index** (as the first country outside the EU to do so) and introducing a **methodology for assessing the impact of reform on society under the Economic Reform Programme (ERP)**. Particularly encouraging is the fact that the above methodology, based on the model of Serbia, recently became an integral part of the process of drafting and applying ERPs for all countries participating therein, thus showing that Serbia can and should be a leader in inclusive development in the Balkans and beyond.

Finally, aiming to empower citizens to monitor and actively participate in the above reform, the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia is preparing a programme of support for civil society organizations to build a platform for monitoring the application of ERP and ESRP. We believe this will additionally motivate citizens, as well as all competent institutions, to provide their contribution to building a common vision of inclusive economic development in Serbia.

NEWS

Economic Development and Employment

- ▶ Short Film on the Programme of Employment of Persons with Disabilities
- ▶ Series of Free Seminars Regarding Social Entrepreneurship
- ▶ "How to Respond to the Employment Needs of Youth at Risk" Conference Held
- ▶ "PRAKSAM – Programme of Quality Internships" Conference Held

Social Welfare and Healthcare

- ▶ "Coordination and Cooperation of LSU and Public Administration Bodies in Implementing Social Welfare Policy" Workshop Held
- ▶ "Intersectoral Cooperation in Drafting the Protocol on the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect" Roundtable Held
- ▶ Social Welfare Service Fair Held in Niš
- ▶ The SCTM Network for Roma Issues Presented the Role of Healthcare Mediators
- ▶ Preliminary Results of the Survey on Satisfaction with Public Services in Primary Healthcare Presented

Education

- ▶ Public Call for Participation in the Public Review of the draft Law on Higher Education
- ▶ "Inclusion of Children from Vulnerable Groups in the Preschool System" Conference Held
- ▶ UNICEF: Professional Manuals on Inclusive Education
- ▶ Update of Preliminary PISA Testing Completed
- ▶ Education National Minorities and New Legislative Framework
- ▶ Digital Competence Framework Published – Teacher for a Digital Age
- ▶ Free-of-Charge Trainings for Computer Science Teachers
- ▶ A Teacher from Niš, the Most Innovative Educator in the World

Vulnerable Groups and Human Rights

- ▶ ATSZJ has translated the Law on the Use of Sign Language to Serbian Sign Language
- ▶ "We are here together – European support for Roma inclusion" – One of the most successful projects in the last decade
- ▶ The Methodology for Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women 2016-2025 Results Presented
- ▶ Education and Employment for Better Social Inclusion of the Roma Community
- ▶ The Education is the Key to the Improvement of the Status of Roma Women
- ▶ "Protection of Children from Violence" Panel Held in Niš

EU Integration

- ▶ "Towards a Smart Staff Retention Policy for the Sustainable EU Integration of Serbia" Survey Presented
- ▶ The Organisations for Children Network Prepared the Guide for Chapter 19
- ▶ "Youth and the European Union – a Look into the Future" Debate Held
- ▶ European Commission Initiative for Youth Mobility now Available for Students from Serbia

EU News

- ▶ Europe Month in Serbia
- ▶ Delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights – Commission adopts first concrete initiatives
- ▶ Ever Closer Union – The legacy of the Treaties of Rome for Today's Europe
- ▶ Disappointing Results of the EU Programme for Youth Employment
- ▶ "Economic Benefits of Gender Equality in the EU" Survey Published
- ▶ Greek Start-ups in the Service of Recycling

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIAL INCLUSION UNIT

Open Call for "Support to Innovative Approaches for Increasing Youth Employment and Employability" (Deadline: 31/5/2017)

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia is publishing an Open Call for grants under the public call "Support to Innovative Approaches for Increasing Youth Employment and Employability". This Call for proposal is published under the programme "From Education to Employment" (E2E) programme, whose implementation is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The purpose of this call is strengthening of the inter-sectoral cooperation – especially between the civil and private sector – with regard to youth employment and employability. The objective of this call is to support, with available capacities and resources, the inter-sectoral dialogue through the development, testing and scaling of social innovation, that are feasible given the specific context, in order to solve the issue of youth employment and employability at the local and/or regional level in the Republic of Serbia.

The deadline for submitting Concept Notes is 31 May 2017. [Click here for more information.](#)

Awards for Contributions to the Development of all Forms of Accessibility Given to Kragujevac, Pirot and Niš

At a ceremony held on 21 April, in Belgrade, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Serbia awarded the cities of Kragujevac, Pirot and Niš for their contributions to the development of all forms of accessibility on their territory in 2016. The City of Kragujevac was awarded for the overall development of accessibility and social inclusion of persons with disabilities, Pirot for the inclusion of final beneficiaries in the process of making decisions about the appropriate solutions to the problem of accessibility, while Niš received an award for the strategic thinking and proactivity in the development of accessibility.

Užice, Novi Pazar, Kruševac, as well as municipalities Bujanovac and Svlajnac received recognition for their efforts within the development of all forms of accessibility on their territory in 2016. Leskovac, Loznica, Pančevo and Vranje, as well as municipalities Bojnik, Boljevac, Pantelej, Zvezdara, Negotin, Paraćin, Sremski Karlovi, Stara Pazova, Vrnjačka Banja and Žagubica, received commendations for their work developing all forms of accessibility in 2016.

A Selection Committee consisting of representatives of the Office of the Ombudsman, Standing Conference of Town and Municipalities (SKGO), Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Republic of Serbia, and several civil society organisations made the decision which cities will receive the award.

OPEN CALLS

- ▶ Support to Young Farmers Open Call Published (Deadline: 8/6/2017)
- ▶ Competition for the Best Idea in the Field of Entrepreneurship Promotion – EEPA (Deadline: 10/6/2017)
- ▶ Call Issued for Film Festival "Grab This Day with Me/Grab a Film" (Deadline: 15/6/2017)
- ▶ Volunteering Challenge: Open Call for Volunteer Activities (Deadline: 15/10/2017)

You may follow the news on open calls regularly at: socijalnouljucivanje.gov.rs/en/tenders

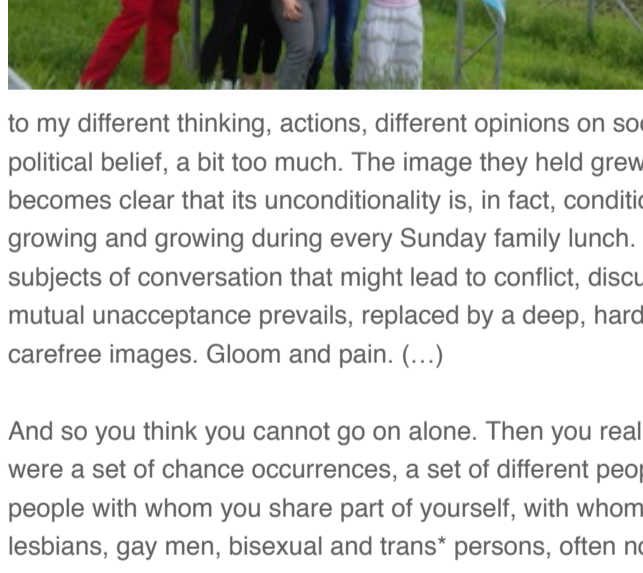
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- ▶ Data on Poverty and Inequality and Data on Available Resources and Individual Consumption of Households for 2016 Published
- ▶ "Family Housing as Support to Biological Family" Conference Held
- ▶ National Conference on Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities Held
- ▶ Open Call of the Resource Centre for Training on Community Organising
- ▶ The "Raising EU and International Funds for Youth" Document Published
- ▶ The First Secretary General of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans Selected
- ▶ ILO says social dialogue key to shaping the future of work we want
- ▶ The Monitoring of Social Situation in Serbia – MONS Platform Presented
- ▶ Health and Safety at Work Day Marked

You may follow the news on social inclusion and poverty reduction regularly at: socijalnouljucivanje.gov.rs/en/

SOCIAL INCLUSION BLOG

ANDELA ČEHI: What (the LGBTI) Community Means, or How We Choose Our Family



(...) I was always hard-headed, mulish, obstinate, they told me. My wonderful, normative, perfectly imperfect, demanding family, full of love. They found it cute, as long as I still, somehow, fit into the norm. And then I fell in love. Once, then again, and again... I discovered something within myself and about myself. Something wonderful and as enormous as the entire planet. Clearer and greater than that, even, greater than myself. The ability to love. A woman. (...)

This turned out to be, it would seem, in addition to my different thinking, actions, different opinions on society and the world, the generation gap and political belief, a bit too much. The image they held grew blotted and dissolved. The love remains, but it becomes clear that its unconditionality is, in fact, conditional, and that a huge elephant in the room kept growing and growing during every Sunday family lunch. When there is skilful evasion of all touchy subjects of conversation that might lead to conflict, discussion, wailing and tears, and when the fear of mutual unacceptance prevails, replaced by a deep, hard silence. Separation. Erasure or blurring of happy, carefree images. Gloom and pain. (...)

And so you think you cannot go on alone. Then you realize that along the way, almost by accident, as if it were a set of chance occurrences, a set of different people start to nestle into your life and your heart, people with whom you share part of yourself, with whom you feel free in your open vulnerability. (...) We, lesbians, gay men, bisexual and trans* persons, often not understood, not accepted, side-lined, rejected, and always "other", regardless of the economic (instability), social circles, level of education and all other aspects of life, we are rather wont to spending a lot of time and energy building communities. Yes, we recognize one another and connect based on our identity, or at least part of our identity, something that may seem limited, irresponsible and politically rash, but we still do it, due to a very strong need for acceptance and belonging.

No, we are not a homogenous community by any means, we so have our differences! We come from various backgrounds, life experiences, levels of education, we support varied political options, believe in different things, reason differently, and make different steps. We get angry at one another, shout, frown, complain, scream, rage, there is discord among us. But we always understand one another and always give a chance and hold out our hand to one another. Based on what is important for us, this being primarily closeness and a yearning for acceptance and freedom. And we know we are investing in the right stuff, in one another, we support each other, cheer our successes, mourn together, work together and fight together. (...)

It was Easter, and we gathered around a very honest family feast. My wonderful, non-normative, perfectly imperfect family, full of love. Each of us, in fact, choosing to be there. The day was preceded by a long week, and we didn't much feel like talking. We ate, toasted, ate some more. Listened to music, played a cartoon. Silence, but not uncomfortable. A silence full of unspoken words of recognition and acceptance, warming its way into the furniture, walls, skin and hearts. Feeding your soul and giving you strength. Like when the Serbian Pride Parade ended in June last year, when we were overflowing with happiness, success and pride. Like when we learned that the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality adopted the historical opinion confirming that the Ministry of Defence discriminated against the first retired trans* major of the Serbian Army. Like when, together and in harmony, we initiated that process. Like when they told us that finally we have received premises from the City of Belgrade to establish a drop-in centre for trans* and LGBTI persons, where we can share togetherness with all those in need. Just like every time we shared all that we cheer for, hope for, dream for, what we fear and what we mourn. Trust, love and support. Something greater than each of us individually, yet precisely what makes us, together, so strong. And the entire cosmos is sitting with you in that room. And you know you are home. (...)

The text in its entirety can be found on the [Social Inclusion Blog](#).

Other texts by our bloggers can be found at: www.socijalnouljucivanje.gov.rs/blog/

SUCCESS STORY

Meet Mina Rakićević – DRAGON LADY



The "Flower of Success for a Dragon Lady" prize is an award issued by the Association of Businesswomen of Serbia every year to the most successful female entrepreneurs, going on ten years in a row. (...) This year's special prize for family entrepreneurship for a Dragon Lady was quite deservedly given to the Director of the family company "Delikos", the phenomenal Mina Rakićević, running a business with 29 employees, the majority of them women.

For Mina, this award means a great honour, but not because it represents the idea that Mina Rakićević is the best among female family business entrepreneurs in 2016, but because this award helped quell her doubt that she *is not doing well enough*. When she heard the words of praise this success brought her, Mina felt to be a powerful woman in Serbia, which is, unfortunately, rare, and regained her courage that she can do a great job in leading a company in the meat processing industry. In this regard, this award for Mina is a moment of recognition and valuation of the dedicated work and confirmation of the *importance of not giving up*. (...)

Mina Rakićević completed two faculties – molecular biology, followed by the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. Having completed her studies, in 2000 she returned to Serbia with the idea that things would improve. She started working in entrepreneurship at a very difficult time for her personally. Namely, in 2013 Mina took over the company after her father's death. Her decision was inspired by the thought: "I wanted to be something I am not – the boss's daughter, when in fact I was a fighter. I did not prepare to be a manager, to know taxes and laws, it was simply the issue of the survival of the factory and brand on the market, with a lot of investment riding on the line." (...)

Mina believes entrepreneurship is necessary for this country. She believes it is important for our country to develop the entrepreneurial spirit, and that it is the responsibility of the competent authorities to stimulate the creation of such an environment, to provide a boost for entrepreneurship, not just with adults, but also in the culture of education for youth. Mina's message for improving entrepreneurship is towards utilizing the potential of domestic small and medium enterprises and providing incentives. She says that the market game must be fair, and in this, the domestic producers would be significantly helped if the numerous para-fiscal charges were decreased, currently hampering operations and stimulating the grey economy and illegal operation. Mina believes it is a significant problem, particularly since employers and entrepreneurs see no benefits in paying these charges. Likewise, Mina notes that it is necessary to work on expanding the market, since customs services are very high. (...)

Mina's message to all those wishing to try their hand at entrepreneurship is the following: "Always ask yourself first: what is the worst thing that could happen? Unless you try something, the worst that can happen is that you remain where you are. Unless you try and take on the risk, you will be no smarter or more successful, and if you fail – you certainly become smarter due to the experience you tried, and it will open some new doors. If you fail – get up and try again. No work is without mistakes. We learn from them and they make us stronger, and more resilient to greater challenges that may occur. My personal example shows this. I teach my closest associates to take responsibility and learn from their experience."

The message Mina wishes to send to women across Serbia is: "Have a clear idea and goal in life and believe you will succeed. Be brave, believe in yourself, be courageous and know that success does not come overnight. Do not take shortcuts, because the merits will come, while all that comes quickly also disappears quickly." (...)

Women in the labour market should be stimulated and viewed as proactive entrepreneurs and employers actively contributing to the economic development of our country. As active members, female entrepreneurs contribute to increasing the social responsibility and collective awareness in the field of economic empowerment of women. This is of key importance for development, as well as for improving the image of women in society.

More success stories can be found at socijalnouljucivanje.gov.rs

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