

Poverty and Social Exclusion in Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia: Status and Policy Responses

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The paper discusses status and differences related to poverty, material deprivation and social exclusion based on statistical data from the Study on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) research in Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. The countries covered in the paper are chosen due to their similar legacy of the social protection system, but also because they have different status with regard to the European Union (EU): a member state (Croatia), a candidate country with ongoing negotiations (Serbia) and a candidate country without negotiations (Macedonia). Apart from comparing and analyzing similarities and differences in the poverty rate, material deprivation and vulnerable groups in the three countries, the paper also analyzes countries' policy approaches in tackling poverty and social exclusion. In doing so, the correlation with the EU 2020 goals and targets is particularly emphasized.

Comparative data from the SILC research shows that the scope of poverty and social exclusion is high in all three countries, however particular differences point to different dimensions of poverty which exist in these countries. While Croatia belongs to the EU countries in which income poverty is higher than the scope of material deprivation, Serbia and Macedonia have a reverse trend and belong to a smaller group of EU countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia and Hungary) in which material deprivation is more pronounced than income poverty. Although policies aimed at tackling poverty and social exclusion refer to the EU 2020 targets, some of the shortcomings are still seen in all three countries: lack of revision of targets, lack of integrated approach between targets, as well as lack of profiling of vulnerable groups that are aimed to be lifted out of poverty. The paper stresses some of the shortcomings of the EU SILC data for poverty analysis in the three countries, and provides further re-

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commendations for evidence based policy choices related to tackling poverty and social exclusion in Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia.

Key words: poverty, material deprivation, social exclusion, EU SILC, EU 2020, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia.

INTRODUCTION

Adoption of quantitative indicators and targets related to poverty and social exclusion on the European Union (EU) level may have not made such a big difference in more developed European welfare states, as it has in the newly acceded EU member states (Croatia) as well as in some of the EU candidate countries (Serbia and Macedonia). This is particularly evident in relation to creation and availability of transparent, comparative and quantitative data and targets related to poverty, material deprivation and social exclusion in the region. Experiences from the past in most of the Balkan countries were largely focused on generic, declarative and non-measurable social goals, which mainly suited the political elites in terms of lack of accountability and no measurable basis upon which social progress could be evaluated. With the (late) launching of the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions in Croatia (2010), Macedonia (test implementation in 2010) and Serbia (2013), as well as with the alignment of these countries strategic documents (i.e. National Economic Programme, National Strategy for tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion, etc.) with the Europe 2020 Agenda (and its goals and targets), the possibility for creation of evidence based policy is made much easier. Of course, there is no automatic translation of these data and targets into policy choices and let alone into social reality. As emphasized by Daly (2010), the risk with the social exclusion target is that “it might propel a move back

to a more uni-dimensional approach...and that the resulting actions will leave untouched those most mired in poverty and deprivation” (p. 156). Walker also indicates another important point i.e. “the difficulty to judge the level of commitment to targets among various stakeholders” (2010: 221), which further conditions the significance of the targets. Notwithstanding these risks, the aim of the paper will be to explore the status of poverty and social exclusion in the three countries (Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia) according to the harmonized EU-SILC methodology and to assess the differences, not only in trends and targets, but also in social policy choices which might have led to different poverty and social exclusion conditions in the analyzed countries.

MEASURING POVERTY: FROM DIFFERENT TRADITIONS TO HARMONIZED POVERTY DATA

Poverty measurement in the three analyzed countries (Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia) before the introduction of EU-SILC was based on different methodology, resulting from various influencing factors. In Serbia, poverty measurement until 2010 was predominantly based on absolute poverty lines, which may be attributed to the support Serbia received from the World Bank expertise in the development of poverty statistics (IMF, 2006; Grujic et al., 2013). In Macedonia, poverty was measured according to the relative poverty line, but with the application of a different poverty threshold (70% median), and estima-

tion of expenditure of households (rather than incomes). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the different poverty threshold in Macedonia was probably a political choice aiming to depict the reality of the country, while the expenditure based calculation was more convenient to the high prevalence of undeclared jobs in the country resulting in low reliability of reported incomes. In Croatia the poverty measurement before 2010 was based on relative poverty line, calculated as 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income. The European and particularly the EU influence were more evident in poverty measurement in Croatia, taking into consideration its previous history of measuring poverty according to the EU Laeken indicators. Also, due to the participation in the JIM process (which Macedonia did not complete fully, and Serbia was not participating due to the lack of candidate status at that time), Croatia was in better position to engage and construct "massive consultation process with several ministries, regional and local governments, social partners, welfare institutions, and civil society organizations and experts" (Matković, Šućur, and Zrinščak, 2007), which contributed toward more constructive and comprehensive platform for debating and tackling poverty and social exclusion.

These different traditions in poverty measurement among the three countries indicate that it was very difficult to assess and compare the poverty rates and categories of vulnerable population in the region. Hence, the contribution of the EU-SILC since

2010, among other, was indispensable in enabling poverty comparisons within the region, but also with the EU member states, based on harmonized statistical data.

The analysis of main indicators for poverty and social exclusion in Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia shows certain differences, but also some similarities. The main difference can be seen in the level of income poverty (i.e. poverty rate after social transfers, calculated as 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income). Although all three countries have a higher poverty rate than the EU average (16.9% in 2012), still Croatia is closest to the EU average, with a poverty rate of 20.5%. Croatia, along with Bulgaria (21.2%), Romania (21.2%) and Greece (23.1%) belongs to the group of countries with the highest poverty rate among the EU member states. Serbia and Macedonia have even higher poverty rates, with 24.6% and 27.1% respectively. While the reason behind these high poverty rates is not the prime interest of this paper, still it may be said that some contributing factors include: tradition of high poverty even before the 1990ties combined with low economic growth (Macedonia), economic and social collapse in the 1990ties, dramatic fall of GDP and influx of refugees and internally displaced persons (Serbia), as well as war accompanied by hyperinflation, limited employment opportunities and inadequacy of the social safety net (Croatia) (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2003; World Bank, 2001).

Table 1.
Indicators of poverty and social exclusion in Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia

% of population	Croatia (2012)	Macedonia (2011)	Serbia (2012)
At risk of poverty rate	20.5	27.1	24.6
Severely materially deprived persons ¹	15.4	40.7	27.0
People aged 18-59 living in households with very low work intensity ²	16.1	21.4	13.6
At-risk-of-poverty rate or social exclusion (AROPE) ³	32.3	50.9	44.3 (2013)

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2013), State Statistical Office Republic of Macedonia (2014), Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2013).

Other aspects of poverty and social exclusion indicate that Macedonia and Serbia belong to the group of European countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia and Hungary) in which material deprivation is higher than its income poverty. Possible reasons for such high material deprivation

may be associated with high inequalities in income distribution in these two countries. This is also confirmed in the work by Whelan and Maitre (2013) who argue that material deprivation is especially prevalent for countries which feature a high degree of social stratification.

Table 2.
Inequalities in income distribution in Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia

In percent	Croatia (2012)	Macedonia (2011)	Serbia (2012)
Gini coefficient	31.0	39.2	38.0
Inequality of income distribution – quintile share ratio (S80/S20)	5.4	12.0	8.8

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2013), State Statistical Office Republic of Macedonia (2014), Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2013).

Joblessness or low work intensity is least pronounced in Serbia and Macedonia in comparison to other two dimensions of poverty and social exclusion, while in Croatia this aspect is more problematic than the material deprivation. This characteristic of Croatia implies that prevalence of house-

hold joblessness has greater impact on income poverty than on material deprivation in this country. This particularity should be considered when defining the way policy is directed towards particular vulnerable or “at risk” groups.

¹ According to Eurostat definition: Severely materially deprived persons have living conditions severely constrained by a lack of resources, they experience at least 4 out of 9 following deprivations items: cannot afford i) to pay rent or utility bills, ii) keep home adequately warm, iii) face unexpected expenses, iv) eat meat, fish or a protein equivalent every second day, v) a week holiday away from home, vi) a car, vii) a washing machine, viii) a colour TV, or ix) a telephone.

² According to Eurostat definition: People living in households with very low work intensity are people aged 0-59 living in households where the adults work less than 20% of their total work potential during the past year.

³ According to the Eurostat definition: This indicator corresponds to the sum of persons who are: at risk of poverty or severely materially deprived or living in households with very low work intensity. Persons are only counted once even if they are present in several sub-indicators.

A comparison in relation to specific material deprivation items shows that in all three countries the inability to afford one week annual holiday and the inability to face unexpected financial expenses are two most problematic items for the prevailing majority in these countries. However, the third most frequent item characteristic only for Macedonia and Serbia shows that there is a considerable degree of food poverty as well, as more than a half of the populati-

on in Macedonia and more than one third of the population in Serbia is affected with this issue. Yet, one should also interpret this indicator with caution, as some indicators of material deprivation may reflect the characteristics of individuals in a particular phase of their life rather than permanent conditions (Hagenaars, 1986) or may not be representative for certain religious/ethnic groups, and thus be less relevant for an overall assessment of deprivation.

Table 3.

Comparison of most frequent lacked material deprivation items in Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia

	Croatia (2012)	Macedonia (2011)	Serbia (2012)
Inability to afford paying for one week annual holiday away from home, %	71.1	72.2	67
Inability to face unexpected financial expenses, %	67.3	64.3	50.1
Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish or vegetarian equivalent every second day,%	/	56.9	30.6
Heavy financial burden of total housing cost, %	62.0	/	/

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2013), State Statistical Office Republic of Macedonia (2014), Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2013).

Finally, a comparative analysis of vulnerable groups at risk of poverty in the analyzed three countries show a common pattern in relation to the unemployed and women being most at risk of poverty, although in Croatia the difference in poverty rate between women and men is much more pronounced than the gender difference in Macedonia and Serbia. Age-related analysis shows that while in Macedonia and Serbia the most vulnerable group at risk of poverty are children (0-17), in Croatia older people (65+) are the ones with the

greatest risk of poverty. The type of households most at risk show a similar trend in Macedonia and Serbia, where most vulnerable households are those with three and more dependent children. In Croatia, on the other hand, most at risk are one person households headed by women. The profile of vulnerable categories at risk of poverty should be taken into serious consideration not only when constructing the poverty targets, but also because they might indicate gaps in the existing social protection system.

Table 4.
Vulnerable social groups at risk of poverty in Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia

Vulnerable categories at risk of poverty according to:	Croatia (2012)	Macedonia (2011)	Serbia (2012)
Age	Older people (65+) 30.4%	Children (0-17) 43.7%	Children (0-17) 30%
Gender	Women 21.6% (> 2.2 pp than man)	Women 27.5% (> 0.8 pp than man)	Women 24.3% (> 0.6 pp than man)
Households type	One-person household, women 42.7%	Households with two adults with three or more dependent children 57.0%	Households with two adults with three or more dependent children 44.4%
Labor market status	Unemployed 42.9%	Unemployed 48.7%	Unemployed 48.7%

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2013), State Statistical Office Republic of Macedonia (2014), Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2013).

The extent of the data enabled through the EU SILC research provides an important base for comparative poverty research among the countries in the region. However, as already indicated, for acquiring “a proper picture of the socio-economic profile of the country it is important to disaggregate and complement the new indicators with other data, which can give more details in relation to country specifics, such as: significant undeclared work, employment rates among different ethnic groups, poverty among less represented groups such as the homeless, and so on” (Gerovska and Stubbs, 2012: 70).

POLICY RESPONSES AND CHALLENGES RELATED TO POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The quantitative data on poverty and social exclusion in Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia imply a serious need for undertaking comprehensive review of policies and measures that will improve countries' current high poverty levels. Despite some of the risks and potential shortcomings associated with the analyzed indicators,

they can still serve as a starting point in constructing desegregated policy measures towards particular vulnerable groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Current research, analysis and available data on policies aimed at tackling poverty and social exclusion in the analyzed countries show that some of the factors behind their unfavourable social profile may be seen in current legislative and institutional capacities, as well as in lack of voice and participation of social service users in social protection reforms, lack of accountability, etc. In Croatia, after the adoption of the Joint Inclusion Memorandum in 2007, which set some of the policy trends targeted towards poor and most vulnerable categories, the newest strategic document is the Strategy for Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2014-2020 (2014). What is evident is that this newest policy document does refer to the EU 2020 poverty target set in the country Economic Programme, and elaborates further the vulnerable groups that will be lifted out of poverty, including: long-term unemployed, young people, the disabled and Roma. Yet, taking into consideration previous experi-

ences in Croatia, researches have warned (Stubbs and Zrinščak, 2013) that “there has been too little clear prioritizing, almost no costing of priorities, and too little meaningful monitoring” (p. 7). Some have also warned (Šućur, 2012) that the stagnation of poverty rate in Croatia during the periods of economic growth speaks about the need to take into consideration not only the income poverty indicator, but also subjective measurements of poverty and material deprivation (p. 625). Finally, despite changes introduced in the Social Welfare Act (2011), the challenge of more effective social protection system was not fully tackled as “the social assistance level and the coverage rate of the poor in Croatia are still low” (Babić and Franković, 2011).

Policy responses to poverty and social exclusion in Macedonia can be seen in recent adoption and revision of soft strategic documents, such as the National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion. Despite its creation in 2010 and its revised version in 2013, in practice there is no evidence of realization of this Strategy. Taking into consideration the public measures directed towards those most at risk of poverty, it may safely be argued that the prevailing policy response to poverty and social exclusion in Macedonia is through the economic doctrine, encompassing: (i) foreign direct investment seen as “*erga-omnes*” solution for the high unemployment and poverty rates, (ii) active employment measures, targeted towards limited number of unemployed people, as well as (iii) passive social welfare transfers, targeted toward unemployed and those affected with in-work poverty, but with extremely low level of benefits. This approach obviously does not prove successful in targeting poverty, among other reasons because it does not cover all poor persons (i.e. those involved in undeclared

but subsistence jobs), and it is not adequately funded (0.11% of GDP for active labor market measures, as well as a limited amount of social assistance). In addition, poverty indicators are not sufficiently used to support policy reforms. For example, poverty indicators clearly show that the most vulnerable households in Macedonia are those with 3 and more children, and yet the current social assistance amount does not increase for households with more than 3 children.

The data and research on Serbia show that despite some progress in reduction of poverty until 2009, the increase in the number of the poor grew again in 2009 which may be associated with: the global economic crisis, problems with revitalization of agriculture and macro economy, low levels of employment, reduction of level of wages, etc. (Lakicevic, 2011: 115). Social transfers (social assistance particularly) aimed at poor people were quite restrictive, which according to some (Arandarenko and Golicin, 2007) was a result of the World Bank influence, which also supported the creation of the first Antipoverty Strategy. Other research also indicates that programs whose beneficiaries are poor and marginalized people have lower social and political support, as coalitions which can be formed out of this programs are usually small and politically uninfluential (Vukovic, 2013: 40). However, some of the new legislative changes in the Law on Social Protection (2011) seem to have taken into consideration the poverty statistics, as among the most important changes in this Law is that within the households with five and more members, the sixth member is being valorised (Matkovic, 2011). Also, the unique Serbian experience with the Social Innovation Fund (2008-2012) might have also contributed towards innovation and effectiveness of the local social inclusion

programs, and additionally improved the condition of most vulnerable groups at risk.

Effectiveness of the social protection systems in the analyzed countries in tackling poverty seen/calculated as poverty rate before and after social transfers shows a different potential. Overall effectiveness of Croatian social protection system in tackling poverty is the highest compared to other two countries, with 55.14% of reduction in poverty rate after all social transfers. However, Croatian pension system seems to have the lowest effect on

poverty (30.4%), compared to other two countries. Serbian social protection system seems to be most effective with its pension system, which has a greater impact on poverty (37.2%) than other social transfers (21.65%). Macedonian social protection system in terms of social transfers has the lowest effect on poverty (42.6%) compared to other countries, and is similar to the Serbian system due to its greater impact of pensions on poverty alleviation (33.4%), than other social transfers (13.41).

Table 5.

Effectiveness of the social protection system to reduce poverty through social transfers

In percent	Croatia (2012)	Macedonia (2011)	Serbia (2012)
At risk of poverty before social transfers ⁴	45.7	47.1	50.1
At risk of poverty before social transfers (pensions included in social transfers)	30.4	31.3	31.4
At risk of poverty after social transfers	20.5	27.1	24.6

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2013), State Statistical Office Republic of Macedonia (2014), Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2013).

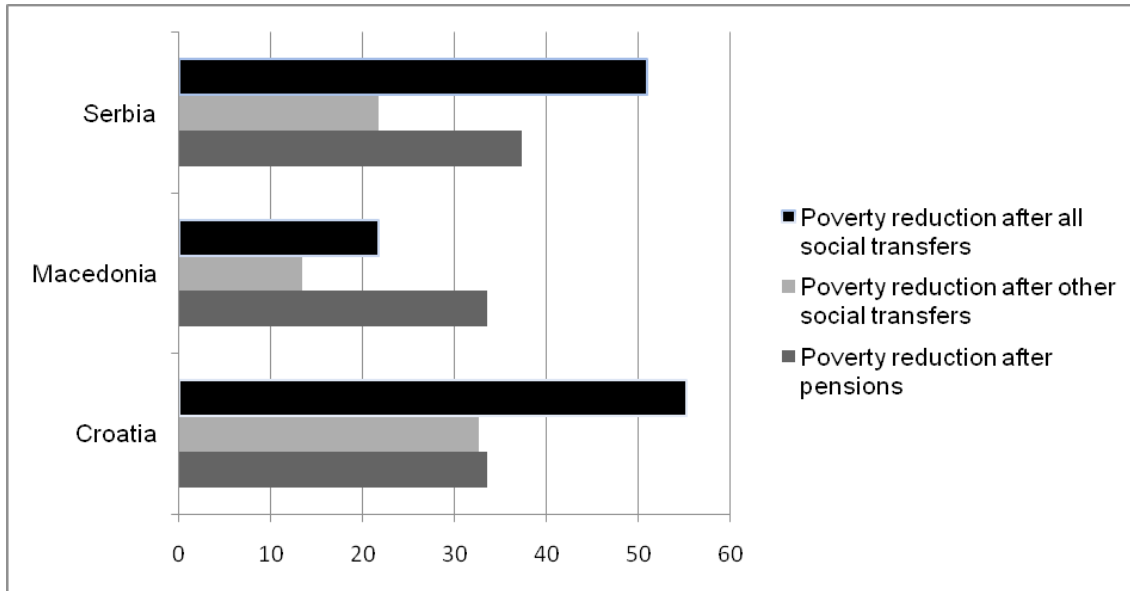
Effectiveness of social transfers in all three social protection systems is below the EU average, whose average antipoverty effect is 61.46%. In the case of Croatia, some of the factors contributing towards lower effectiveness include: a low level of means-tested social benefits (the World Bank, 2012), as well as little systematic monitoring of social assistance and benefits at national and local level (European Commission, 2013). Lower effect of the social protection system compared to the EU average, as indicated in other studies (Camina-da and Goudswaard, 2009; Hermann et al., 2008) may also be seen as a result of the

country's lower social spending. According to the ESSPROS⁵ statistics (available only for Croatia and Serbia), social spending in Croatia in 2012 amounted to 20.6% of the country Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while Serbian social spending in 2010 (latest available data) amounted to 24.6% of its GDP (Eurostat, 2013). In this respect, efficiency of the Croatian social protection system in relation to reduction of poverty is higher than the Serbian one, because with less spending it achieves higher reduction of its poverty rate.

⁴ According to Eurostat: The at-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers is calculated as the share of people having an equivalised disposable income before social transfers that is below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold calculated after social transfers. Pensions, such as old-age and survivors' (widows' and widowers') benefits, are counted as income (before social transfers) and not as social transfers. This indicator examines the hypothetical non-existence of social transfers.

⁵ The European system of integrated social protection statistics

Graph 1.
Decrease of poverty (in %) as a result of social transfers



Source: Own calculation based on SILC Surveys Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2013), State Statistical Office Republic of Macedonia (2014), Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2013).

The EU 2020 Agenda has had its impact on policy creation in all three countries, which may be seen through incorporation and translation of EU 2020 goals into national targets within countries' strategic documents (Economic Programme of Croatia, 2013; Serbia 2020 – Concept of Development in Serbia up to 2020, 2010; and National Strategy for tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion, 2012). Stipulation of national poverty targets reveals to a certain extent the political will, as well as the governmental dedication towards tackling poverty and social exclusion up to 2020. The stipulated national target for Croatia indicates 11% decline of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion for the next six years. Compared to the country's other targets (employment rate, early school leavers, tertiary education), the Croatian anti-poverty

target is of secondary priority in comparison to the improvement of its tertiary education rate (perceived increase of 47.67% up to 2020). In Serbia and Macedonia, the national target is not related to the overall AROPE⁶ indicator, i.e. the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, but only to the reduction of people experiencing income poverty. In this respect, Serbia stipulates a reduction of at risk of poverty rate of 43%, while Macedonia specifies a reduction rate of 20.6% up to 2020. The comparison of the anti-poverty targets and other targets signals that Serbia is most ambitious when it comes to poverty reduction, while Macedonia puts greater emphasis on improving tertiary education rate (-38.234%) and employment rate (+24.48%) rather than on the reduction of its poverty rate up to 2020.

⁶ At risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Table 6.
Comparison of national status and national targets related to EU 2020 goals

	Croatia		Macedonia		Serbia		EU 2020
	Status in 2012	Croatia 2020	Status in 2012	Macedonia 2020	Status in 2011	Serbia 2020	EU 2020 targets
Employment rate (20-64)	55.4%	59%	48.2%	60%	64.1% (2011)	65%	75%
Early school-leavers	4.2%	4%	11.2%	12%	8.5% (2011)	less than 15%	10%
Share of 30-34 with completed tertiary or equivalent education	23.7%	35%	21.7%	30%	21% (2010)	30%	40%
People at risk of poverty and social exclusion	1 370 000 (32%)	1 220 000 (lifting 150.000 out of poverty and social exclusion) (24.3%)	27.1 % (2011) People at risk of poverty after social transfers	21.5% People at risk of poverty after social transfers	24.6% (2012) People at risk of poverty after social transfers	14% People at risk of poverty after social transfers	Lifting 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion

Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (2013), *National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia (Revised 2010-2020)*; Working Group for creation and follow up implementation of the Strategy for fight against poverty and social exclusion (2014), *Draft Strategy for Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Republic of Croatia 2014-2020*; Government of the Republic of Serbia (2010) *Serbia 2020 – Concept of Development in Serbia up to 2020 (2010)*.

Some of the observed shortcomings in the stipulated national (social) targets in all three countries may be seen in the following aspects: (1) lack of revision of targets since their creation. Namely, in all three countries the stipulated national school drop-out target is already achieved (or almost achieved), and yet new strategic documents do not provide upgraded targets; (2) lack of integrated approach between targets, which, for example, may be seen in the lack of clear interconnection between the increase in employment rates and reduction of poverty rates; and (3) lack of profiling of anti-poverty target, i.e. no specification which vulnerable groups will be lifted out of poverty.

The above aspects suggest that a practical translation of targets into policy me-

asures is problematic in all three countries, and that despite legislative alignment of policies and initiatives with the EU priorities, more vigorous tackling of poverty and social exclusion in the three analyzed countries is not clearly evident.

CONCLUSION

The provided analysis of poverty data based on EU-SILC research in Macedonia, Croatia and Serbia enables some comparative conclusions, as well as identification of national specifics related to policy responses and future policy reformulations in the analyzed countries. The extent of poverty rate in all three countries is well above the EU average rate, which speaks about pro-

blems of lower employment rates, lower incomes, low amounts and lower efficiency of social transfers, as well as generally lower social spending as part of the GDP. In addition to the high poverty rates, high degree of material deprivation which is particularly emphasized in Macedonia and Serbia also speaks about issues of high stratification between different income groups in these countries. While the extent to which these statistical data are incorporated into the countries' strategic documents is satisfactory, a worrying issue remains the degree of commitment and translation of the stipulated targets into effective and coordinated actions toward poor and excluded people.

Some particular national specifics, which may be drawn from the analyzed statistical data and incorporated into the countries' policy responses to poverty include: the need to target more effectively one person households headed by women, as well as older people in Croatia, improve the effectiveness of other social transfers (other than pensions) in Serbia, as well as clearer profiling of vulnerable groups to be tackled within the identified national poverty target in Macedonia. All three countries should also consider lifting the social assistance level to enable more decent and adequate minimum income for the most vulnerable population.

Despite the importance of the analyzed statistical data and their contribution towards evidence based policy choices, it is even more important that previous statistical measurements continue to be officially measured and provided, to enable calculation and analysis of poverty trends. Hence, the EU SILC measurement should be complemented with the national specific indicators, so certain vulnerable groups would not be hidden or forgotten within the countries strategic documents and initiatives.

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Sažetak

SIROMAŠTVO I SOCIJALNA ISKLJUČENOST U MAKEDONIJI, SRBIJI I HRVATSKOJ: STANJE I MJERE

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Odsjek za socijalni rad i socijalnu politiku
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U radu se raspravlja o situaciji i razlikama povezanim sa siromaštvom, materijalnom deprivacijom i socijalnom isključenošću na temelju statističkih podataka iz istraživanja o dohotku i životnim uvjetima (Study on Income and Living Conditions – SILC) u Makedoniji, Srbiji i Hrvatskoj. Države analizirane u radu odabrane su zbog sličnog nasljeđa sustava socijalne zaštite, ali i zato što imaju različit status u odnosu na Europsku uniju: jedna je država članica (Hrvatska), jedna država kandidat u tijeku pregovora (Srbija), a jedna država kandidat bez pregovora (Makedonija). Osim što se u radu uspoređuju i analiziraju sličnosti i razlike u pogledu stope siromaštva, materijalne deprivacije i ranjivih skupina u tri države, isto se tako analiziraju mjere država u borbi protiv siromaštva i socijalne isključenosti. Pritom se posebno naglašava korelacija s ciljevima EU2020.

Komparativni podatci iz SILC istraživanja pokazuju da je opseg siromaštva i socijalne isključenosti vrlo visok u sve tri države, no određene razlike ukazuju na različite dimenzije siromaštva koje postoji u tim državama. Dok Hrvatska spada u države članice EU-a u kojima je dohodovno siromaštvo više od opsega materijalne deprivacije, Srbija i Makedonija imaju obratni trend i spadaju u manju skupinu država EU-a (Bugarska, Rumunjska, Latvija i Mađarska) u kojima je materijalna deprivacija naglašenija od dohodovnog siromaštva. Iako se mjere usmjerene na borbu protiv siromaštva i socijalne isključenost podudaraju s EU2020 ciljevima, neki su nedostaci još uvijek zamjetni u sve tri države: nedostatak revizije ciljeva, nedostatak integriranog pristupa među ciljevima, kao i nedostatak profiliranja ranjivih skupina koje se namjerava izdići iz siromaštva. U radu se naglašavaju neki nedostaci EU SILC podataka za analizu siromaštva u tri države, te se daju preporuke za mjere za borbu protiv siromaštva i socijalne isključenosti u Makedoniji, Srbiji i Hrvatskoj utemeljene na dokazima.

Ključne riječi: siromaštvo, materijalna deprivacija, socijalna isključenost, EU SILC, EU 2020, Makedonija, Srbija, Hrvatska.