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SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES AND CONSEQUENCES INTEGRATION OF SERBIA IN THE EUROPEAN UNION²⁶

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Abstract

The subject of sociological and economic analysis is the most important social, economic, political and cultural preconditions of Serbia's integration into the EU. It appears on two levels: the first is normative and the other is empirical or real. On the one hand are the goals and achievements of EU integration, and on the other hand are the assumptions, actors, and achievements of Serbia in EU integration. Special attention is paid to the subjects, institutions, legislation and the consequences of Serbia's Eurointegration in the field of education, industrial relations, pension, health, and social protection reforms. It concludes that the ruling political elites play an important role in the slow European integration of the country, and the consequences of this affect the majority of the population of Serbia.

Keywords: EU, Serbia, development, education, industrial relations, political elites

INTRODUCTION

The strategic orientation of Serbia's political elites for integration into the European Union (EU) has its dynamics, goals, subjects and economic, political and social "price". This is influenced by external factors, primarily in the EU, and changes in Serbia. In the focus of the survey, the changes and consequences in the EU caused by the global economic crisis in 2008 and the processes of disintegration are spurred by mass intercontinental international migrations. This manifests itself as slow economic growth, the growth of unemployment, economic and social inequalities, poverty, political populism and the collapse of the "European" social model. All of this reflects on events in the countries in the region, with which Serbia compares. The internal factors that determine the way, goals, and achievements in Serbia's EU integration are multiple. In their importance, the symbiosis of the interests of the economic and political elite in power (those are fractions of the capitalist class), the underdeveloped market economy, the "lack of" democracy, high unemployment,

²⁶ Work is the result of research on the project: "Structural social and historical changes of Serbian society in the context of European integration and globalization" (179039). and on the project "Modeling the development and integration of Serbia into world trends in light, economic, social and political movements" (179038). Both projects are funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, 2011-2019.

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poverty and growth inequality, high conflicts of society and a marked gap between the legal norms adopted and their applications. The first part of the paper is dedicated to the problems facing the EU in the last ten years, and the second one concerns changes in the socio-economic, political and social development of Serbia and its efforts to integrate it in the EU.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN SOLVING THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND SECURITY CRISIS

- The Global Economic crisis and Slow Economic Growth in EU lasting several decades.

The crisis since 2008. is the biggest crisis since the Second World War. The EU is only at the beginning of the exit from it. This is indicated by data on GDP growth, unemployment, public debt, financial consolidation, fiscal and monetary GDP growth in the EU, the eurozone, and the most developed countries is different.²⁹ Policies and austerity measures have deepened inequalities between the most developed countries and the most. The unemployment rate is 8.7% and lower than in 2009. The level of unemployment is different in some countries, but it is several times higher than the EU average and the most developed EU countries, wherein in 2017 it fell to a level lower than in 2008 (7.4). In Spain, it was 16.7, and it was the highest in Greece (20.6)³⁰

According to the European Commission, the employment rate of population (from 20 to 64 years) was 72.2% in 2017. The highest in Sweden is 82%, and the smallest in Greece is 58%. A new phenomenon is that they are among the employed workers and are poor. The greater the intensity of the work activity of family members, the greater the poverty. Poverty is related to employment, sex, age, ethnicity, country of origin, type of household. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) announced that 5.5 million people in the EU were at risk of poverty. They spent 1.9 euros a day.

- EU and Migrants Crisis - which culminated in 2015. Its important causes are geopolitical, regional, local conflicts and climate change. Some EU members have directly participated in this. The EU reacted late to the migration crisis, not uniquely, ad hoc measures, making decisions by informal agreements of the strongest members and short-term and unsustainable solutions. In doing so, it jeopardized some of the most important values it stands for (freedom of movement, right to life, security ...). Germany is one of the most desirable destinations of migrants, and its Chancellor Angela Merkel played the most important role in resolving the crisis. German society is demographically old. The average age is 45.8 years, with 13.2% of children (0-14). An elderly dependent person comes to three workers, while in Ireland this ratio is five to one (Vukelic 2018, 76, 77).

²⁹ See more about that in Maksimovic Marijana, Nada Novakovic. „EU and challenges of integration: changes in the Western Balkans regio“. (International Scientific Conference: „Security, Political and Legal Challenges of Modern World“, Bitola, 19 - 21. October 2018.). In *Conference Proceedings, Volume II*, Editors Prof. Dr. Sc. Svetlana Nikoloska, Ass. Prof. Dr. Sc. Angelina Stanojoska, (Bitola: "St. Kliment Ohridski" University – Bitola with financial support by the Hanns Seidel Foundation, Republic of Macedonia. 2018.), especially 66-68.

³⁰Eurostat, „Unemployment statistics“, February 2019. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/1163.pdf> (accessed 11. March 2019.)

- Brexit and consequences for EU and Serbia - This is the first case that a member of the EU has exercised the right (Article 50) under the Lisbon Treaty to withdraw from the EU. The terms and conditions under which they will end will be uncertain and unknown. After Brexit (June 23, 2016), neither Great Britain nor the EU will be the same. According to Dusko Lopandic: "Britain's EU outbreak will be a real geopolitical earthquake and will significantly affect changing and potentially quantitative weakening of the EU" (Lopandic 2017, 63). Ognjen Pribicevic explored in detail the causes and consequences of Bregzita and concluded the following:

The victory of Bregzit was decisively influenced by a dramatic increase the number of migrants in the UK in the last decade, dividing in Conservative parties, a badly run campaign by those who advocated for the UK's stay in the EU and increasingly distrustful voters according to the political class and the ruling establishment. (Pribicevic 2018, 185)

The growth of *populism, nationalism* and the weakening of the EU's attractiveness by its citizens will further delay the integration of other countries. Nada Novakovic said:

The global economic crisis has exposed the crisis of neoliberal capitalism, but also the crisis in the EU. The ideology of market omnipotence, the sanctity of private property and capital is seriously undermined. In the "solution" of the crisis, the most powerful national states of the EU have the most important influence. Poor countries are condemned to lagging, destroying and subverting powerful centers of economic and military power. All this is accompanied by an increase in inequality in EU members and the rise of separatistic movements (Novakovic 2017, 281).

This will slow down the European integration and prosperity of the countries that are striving to enter the EU.

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHANGES IN SERBIA AND INTEGRATION PROCESSES IN THE EU

Labor legislation and the labor market in Serbia have been liberalized. In many of their elements, they are far below the standards and practices that exist in the most developed EU member states. This is most suited to entrepreneurs and the ruling elite with an attractive workforce attract investors. Flexible labor legislation reduces the level of economic, social and trade union rights of workers. It is against the interests of young people, older workers, women, disabled people, and vulnerable groups, which is contrary to the values that the EU stands for.

- *The inefficiency of human resources*- was a feature of these societies even before the transition. It was a consequence, to a large extent, of the nature of the social and political system, and only then of the impact of new technologies and markets. This is evidenced by the rates of labor productivity, employment and the level of education of the employed and the rest of the population. In Serbia, there is a low rate of activity in the working age population (15-64), 66.7%, and a high rate of inactivity (33.3%). The educational structure of employees is unfavorable and cannot be a factor in the growth of labor productivity. Most have (56.7%) secondary education, each fourth is employed with (25.4%) secondary and 17.6% has lower education. It is a limiting factor in the creation of a knowledge-based economy.

Certainly, we need to add specific cultural and political opportunities to individual societies, which contribute to this. A comparison of the achieved level of human resource utilization makes sense to see the level of achieved development of a society in relation to the region and the EU. According to economic data, labor productivity in the WB countries (especially in the industry) is far behind the EU average. In some of them (as in Serbia), this is below the level that existed before 1990 (Novakovic 2016, 748) This is not a coincidental fact, it is a consequence of de-industrialization. The conditions in which deindustrialization would be launched today are far more difficult and complex. For this, there are insufficient and quality material, human and political preconditions. In addition, the human resources of the employees in the economy in society are not sufficiently used due to insufficient investments and investment in training and training. Maksimovic Marijana said: "For Serbia, it is possible to increase the competitiveness of investments in talent and retain them and keep track of their work." (Maksimovic 2017a, 118; Maksimovic 2017). The entrepreneurial layer is not interested in this because of massive unemployment. Unemployment in Serbia is structural and long-term. Unemployment rate (14,1%), especially young people (31,9%), Nearly one million people are unemployed, and their educational structure is unfavorable. High, higher and secondary professional education has 43.7 percent, highly qualified and qualified 23.7 percent, unskilled 29.6 percent and semi-skilled and lower professional education 3.5. percent. (Labour Force Survey, 2017, 47) More than 70% of the unemployed have previous work experience. (Statistical Yearbook of Serbia 2018, 76, 82).

- *The dominance of the private sector of ownership of the means of production* - was realized during the transition of society. In 1988, 38% of the GDP were created in private ownership, 32% in social and 27% in mixed goods. (Sukovic ed, 2002, 58). At the end of the transition of the society (ie 2017.), the private sector dominates, and the social one is marginal. Of all employees, 61% worked in the private property sector, 38% in the state, and only 1% in other forms of ownership (Statistical Year Book of Serbia 2018, 78). From the above data, it can be concluded that almost all social property has disappeared, and the big owner of the means of production has become a state. The privatization process was a key factor in the disappearance of earlier forms of ownership and the destruction of social structures. The largest single owner and employer became the state. New and old private individuals have gained wealth through various means, and by purchasing (and destroying) social enterprises, they have come to a capital. After 2000, quick privatization was carried out. It led to de-industrialization, de-urbanization, massive job losses and a fall in GDP below the level that existed before the start of a transition. Privatization has attracted both the labor productivity rate, the rate of investment in fixed assets and their efficiency (Novakovic 2016, 748, Stavljanin 2017). Global Competitiveness Index of the Serbian economy is at a low level. International comparisons of the Serbian economy with others in the world additionally confirm this. The value of this index was 60.9 in 2018, which ranks 65th out of 137 countries (Tanaskovic and Ristic, 2018).

- *The high level of gray economy in Serbia* - exists throughout the transition period. It is still far above the level in the developed capitalist economies. This was

influenced by systemic factors: the neo-liberal model of transition, privatization, the decay of the welfare state, the pronounced influence of foreign financial institutions, the low activity and employment of the working-age population, high unemployment, low productivity, labor legislation, the tax system, mass poverty public morality (bribery and corruption). (Novakovic, 2015, 259-279). Corruption is ubiquitous in society and a significant barrier to the emergence of healthy business and civic morale. Moreover, corruption is one of the strong obstacles to the adoption of European values and progress in the Eurointegration

- *Education and social inequality* - Reform of the education system at all levels is "unfinished" and below the achieved standards in other European countries. Students' protests against higher education reform indirectly point to all the difficulties encountered by those who impose the Bologna Declaration, as well as students and their parents. The results of this reform so far confirmed the thesis that the reform has a class character, and that education is far more accessible to children of higher classes and layers than those from the bottom of the social pyramid of wealth and power. Inequalities in the crushing positions of the children of rich and poor parents form in the youngest age. They are only deepening during schooling. Sociological research on the social background of students in Serbia unambiguously indicates this. In the research on young people in Serbia, the authors conclude that :

A young person whose parent has primary education has 4.2 times less chance of completing secondary education a school with a young person whose parents have secondary education and 7.9 times less chance of completing a college or faculty in relation to the child of highly educated parents. Young parents with secondary education are 3.5 times smaller a chance to complete a college or college, compared to young people whose parents have higher education. (Tomanovic, Stojanovic 2015, 27)

In short, the spatial mobility of students proclaimed by the Bologna reform is insufficient to eliminate classical inequalities of vertical mobility.

- *Poverty and inequalities in Serbia*-. During the transition, an increasing part of the society was growing. Serbia is one of the European countries where the distribution of income is fast growing, and education policy and social policy reproduce the class structure of society in general. Here we present data on inequalities in income

Growth of inequality in income among the population with the highest and lowest income (excluding income in kind) in the period 2006-2016. is higher than in the EU. Gini coefficient in Serbia in 2006 was 35.4 and in the EU 3.2. In 2010, it was 33.0 in Serbia and 30.5 in the EU. In both cases, Household Consumer Survey data were used. Subsequently, a comparison was made on the basis of the Survey on Income and Living Conditions. In the next five years (2010-2015), inequality of income in the EU rose to 31.0. In Serbia, there was faster layering. Gini coefficient in 2015 was 38.2 and in 2016 38.6 (Arandarenko et al. 2017, 12). This surpassed the values of the Gini coefficient of Macedonia (35.2), Croatia (30.6) and Slovenia (24.5). According to the findings of the same research, the ratio of the share of 20% of the population with the highest income and 20% of the population with the lowest income has increased. In 2013, this ratio was 8.6, and in 2016, 9.7. These inequalities are significantly higher than in the EU and developed OECD

countries.³¹Data on official statistics on the poverty of citizens have shown for a long time that the poverty level of 2006-2016 has not significantly decreased. The absolute poverty rate at the beginning of the observed period was 8.3 (703 976 citizens) and at the end 7.3 (or 492 306 persons). Meanwhile, the population of Serbia also decreased. Poverty has been affected to some extent by individual social groups, and "The risk of poverty in Serbia is twice as high as the European average" (*Danas*, 15. October 2017.), and amounted to 25.4%.

- *Society "lacks" democracy* - the term is the one that most closely characterizes the reach in the development of the political system (Stojiljković, 2017, 21)³²Multilateral parliamentarian has been established, but the behavior of the parties, their funding and the functioning of the parliament are far beyond the established ideal-stable parliamentarianism. Frequent election cycles, invisible sources of party funding, an unclear interest of political parties, economic and other elites are present in the WB countries. Political instability is associated with the circulation of elites in power that have weak modernization and democratic potentials. The consequence is the absence of a political will to launch radical economic and social reforms. This is often associated with massive disregard of procedures in passing laws, numerous affair and corruption in making major economic and other decisions. These are the conditions from which capital flows, and attract "hot" domestic and foreign capital. All this contributes to the weakness of the judicial system and the underdeveloped legal system.

- *High conflict of the society of Serbia and region* - are unable to develop more rapidly and join the EU. Numerous sources of conflict are long-lasting, historically inherited, and new ones arise during transition and integration in EU. This is a place where the interests of different ethnic, religious, military, political, cultural groups and communities are in conflict. It has always been a place where powerful world powers have collided, but today it is a factor that hampers the successful development of these societies. Therefore, it is difficult to achieve good inter-neighborhood, since conflicts are present in each of these societies. The belief that economic progress will alleviate and suppress it has not yet been achieved in practice. Still, state-building and national interests are more important than the reforms of the economic, social and political system. The ruling political elites in the region thus continue the same tactics of governance, ie, conflict instead of peace and development.

- *Resistance to social change and Eurointegration.*-Resistance to faster entry into the EU comes both from the ruling class and from lower classes and layers. The political elite is inclined to declare a decisive commitment to EU integration, and it is really slow to give up its monopoly of decision-making in various areas. Any commitment to an independent judiciary and the rule of law, for example, impedes

³¹„Eurostat: Differences in income of rich and poor in Serbia are higher than in EU, Macedonia, and Turkey“. *New Serbian political thought*, 19. March 2017. <http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/eurostat-razlike-u-prihodima-rich-and-poor-in-serbia-greater-than-in-eu-macedonia-and-turkey.html> (accessed 10. August 2018.)

³²Zoran Stojiljkovic says that Serbia is a weak state with "a lack of democracy" In *Collapse or collapse of democracy? (Decline or Eclipse of Democracy in Europe's New Democracies?)*, Ilija Vujacic and Bojan Vranic (eds.). (Belgrade: Association for Political Sciences of Serbia; Universities of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Sciences, 2016.), 9-30.

the implementation of many members of the political elite in power. In negotiations with EU representatives, she is ready to adopt laws and rules imposed by EU institutions and often does not implement them in practice. Accelerating economic and political reforms corresponds to only one part of the economic elite, while the richest citizens are close to the authorities. In the processes of globalization and regional integration, middle strata lose security, and savings measures bring them job losses and lower wages. These are some of the reasons for the growth of Euroscepticism in Serbia are multiple. One is the result of the long process of waiting, negotiating and meeting a growing number of conditions. Other are domestic origins, from falling living standards, political instability, the growth of nationalism to the spread of inequality and mass poverty of citizens (Todorovic-Lazic 2018, 81, 86, 91, 93, 98).

CONCLUSION

The European Union has been in big changes for the last decade. They are political, institutional, environmental, social, cultural and security. Most often, the EU is in crisis. In doing so, an emphasis is placed on one of the mentioned problems, and it is often unilaterally concluded that the EU as a "peace project" has failed. The participation of its largest and most developed members in numerous "humanitarian" interventions in the world raises this issue at work. There are also questions of the "imperfection" of the joint superiors and the possibilities of preserving national identity and the state. For the "Brussels" bureaucracy, many citizens of individual EU member states are inclined to say that they are alienated, and in this respect, they express doubt about the need to preserve the EU. All this additionally brought into question the migrant crisis, which peaked in 2015.

Serbia has delayed its integration into the EU. Numerous causes are. In the first place, this is the nature of the realized concept of transition (neoliberal) and privatization. In the first decade, the changes were relatively slow, complicated by war events in these areas, UN sanctions, and bombing from NATO in 1999. During that time, it was changing economically. The political and social structure of society. A new capitalist class was created, which was also helped by the war and privatization for the rise of the ruling positions. Sociologists from Serbia and the region wrote about its educational, social structure and limited modernization potentials.

The big event happened in Serbia on 5. October 2000. The new ruling political elite was replaced by a new one, which accelerated and ultimately led to the privatization of social ownership and the transition of the society to the creation of a capitalist semi-periphery society. Here are briefly listed some of the most important indicators of the achieved level of economic development of the society, the results of labor market reforms, education, pension system, and social protection. They worked together on the emergence and growth of mass unemployment and the growth of income, political, educational, regional and other inequalities. The objective and subjective poverty of the employed and the rest of the population of Serbia is extremely high. It is an important obstacle to the progress of society and integration into wider European or other communities.

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