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# Western Balkans in Comparative Perspectives

## European Social Survey



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# Gender–equality Paradox and Benevolence: a Multilevel Analysis across European Countries

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In this paper, we test the gender–equality–values paradox, in the case of benevolence as a value orientation. Gender–equality paradox, which states that more gender–equal societies are also more gender differentiated in terms of values, traits, interests, and preferences, is a growing research field. In terms of values, for example, some studies indicate that, first, men consistently attribute more importance to power, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, and self–direction values than women do, while the reverse is true for benevolence and universalism, and also that these differences are largest in gender–egalitarian societies (Schwartz and Rubel, 2005; Schwartz and Rubel–Lifschitz, 2009). It is argued that these societies should display the largest psychological gender differences because such conditions allow men and women to more freely express their intrinsic dispositions (Connolly et al., 2019).

However, prior studies mainly used inappropriate measures of gender equality (which were not time–matching other data). Also, these studies have not controlled for variables such as income, which was found to be relevant in this sense (Meer and Priday, 2020; Smeets et al., 2015). Finally, previous research didn't differentiate between various country types.

We use the data from the ninth round of the European Social Survey, from 2018, including 27 countries and comprising 47,086 individuals (45,3% of women,  $M_{age} = 47.92$ ,  $SD_{age} = 18.86$ ). The importance of benevolence is measured using the question: "How much each person is or is not like you?" and items: "It's very important to him to help the people around him. He wants to care for their well-being", and "It is important to him to be loyal to his friends. He wants to devote himself to people close to him". The answers are given on a six–point scale ranging from 1 ("very much like me") to 6 ("not like me at all"), and the value score is the mean response to the two items. Internal consistency of the scale in our sample is  $\alpha = .645$ . On the other side, we used the UNDP Gender Inequality Index from 2018 as a measure of aggregate gender equality. We run several linear multilevel models ( $ICC = .12$ ) to assess country differences in regard to gender–benevolence association. We also looked at the differences between mean benevolence levels in three country groups: the Western Balkans, other postsocialist countries, and traditionally capitalist countries.

Controlling for age and education, our results confirm the gender–equality–values paradox, but adding income into the model gives contradicting results: interaction effect of gender and Gender Inequality Index on benevolence loses its significance. Consequently, our results show that gender differences in regard to benevolence do not depend on aggregate gender equality. Second, our data indicate a clear grouping of countries in terms of benevolence mean levels: the Western Balkan and the traditionally capitalist countries have distinctly higher levels compared to other transition countries.

Keywords  $\Delta$  CGENDER–EQUALITY PARADOX  $\square$  BENEVOLENCE  
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