

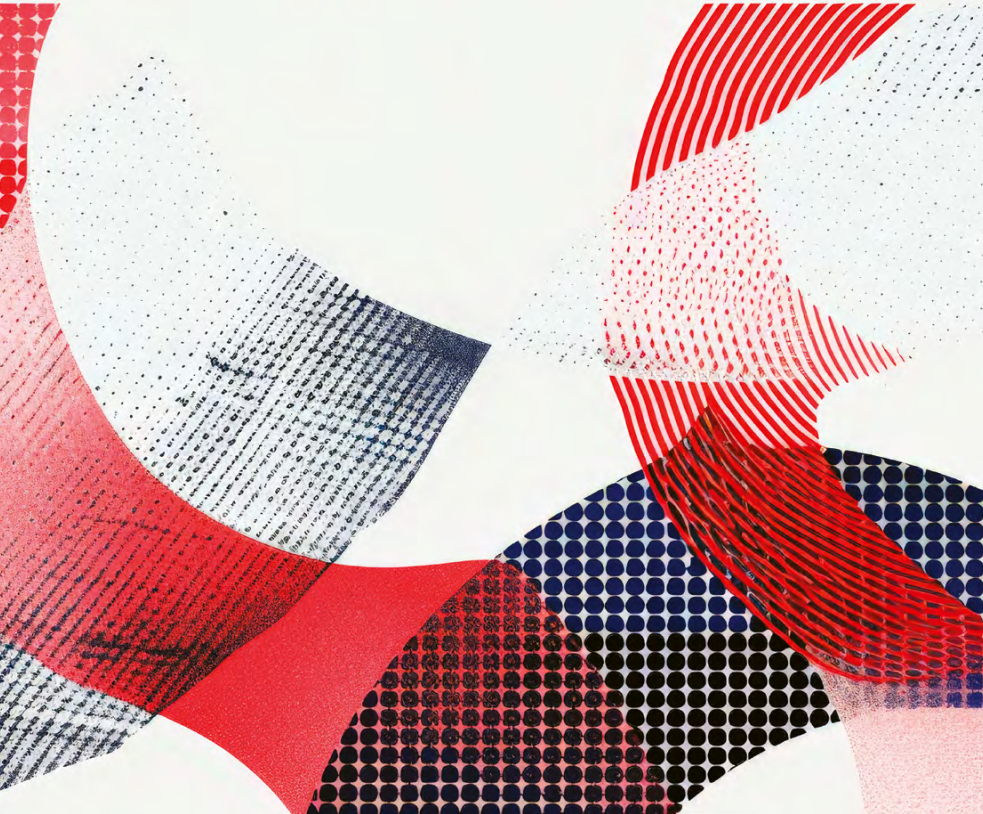
INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE POST-YUGOSLAV SPACE:

Challenges, Policies, and Perspectives

MAY 21–22, 2026

Great Hall of the Institute
of Social Sciences



GENDER EQUALITY IN THE POST-YUGOSLAV SPACE:
CHALLENGES, POLICIES AND PERSPECTIVES

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INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE POST-YUGOSLAV SPACE: CHALLENGES, POLICIES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Belgrade, 21–22 May 2026

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FOREWORD

With great pleasure and gratitude, we present the Book of Abstracts for the International Scientific Conference “**Gender Equality in the Post-Yugoslav Space: Challenges, Policies and Perspectives**”, to be held in Belgrade on May 21 and 22, 2026. In light of current trends and dominant narratives, a crisis of the idea of gender equality is evident, as are social conditions that cause slow progress, undermine achievements, and call into question gender equality as a social goal.

Recognizing that scientists are tasked with understanding social phenomena, explaining their causes, and interpreting them within defined social contexts, as well as identifying the ways and mechanisms for addressing specific social issues based on theoretical knowledge and established scientific methods, the Institute of Social Sciences, an institute of national importance, is organizing a conference to gather researchers from the area of the former Yugoslavia. In this way, we aim to contribute to better understanding of gender equality in the contextual conditions of our countries, and point out the directions for the necessary changes. The conference provides interdisciplinary insight into theoretical and conceptual issues, identifies practical challenges, and defines proposals for improving the situation in the field of gender equality.

Gender equality is a strategic development goal in the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda and in the European Union’s political agenda. In this context, it is a social value that guides efforts to improve social position and raise the quality of life. The conference is a forum for debating concepts and approaches, exchanging examples of both positive and negative practices, and considering ways to address specific issues and remove barriers that impede progress toward greater gender equality.

The different positions of the post-Yugoslav states in relation to the European Union result in uneven developments in this area. Therefore, the conference focuses on a critical examination of the existing policies and practices, the exchange of experiences, and reflection on concrete mechanisms for overcoming structural and other obstacles that still limit the achievement of gender equality.

The conference's comprehensive approach includes four equally important segments, within which the selected abstracts are classified. In the first section, concepts and cognitive frameworks are discussed; in the second, legal and institutional contexts of gender equality; in the third, economic aspects; and in the fourth, issues of gender equality in political life and in the creation of public policies.

Gender equality, as a complex and multidimensional social phenomenon, requires interdisciplinary understanding and analysis, as well as consideration of the specific social contexts in which it is realized or challenged. Progress toward its improvement implies a strong connection between interdisciplinary scientific knowledge and the intersectoral formation of policies capable of responding to contemporary challenges. In this sense, the abstracts presented in this book contribute to deepening insight into the complexity of contemporary processes that shape gender equality in the post-Yugoslav space. Their contribution is reflected in the identification of structural and contextual limitations, as well as in pointing out potential directions for improving policies and practices, which opens up space for further reflection and empirical research on this socially relevant issue.

Ankica Šobot
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**KEYNOTE
LECTURES**

Sonja Tomović Šundić*

ANTHROPOLOGY OF GENDER

The paper analyses gender theory from the perspective of cultural anthropology. The fundamental hypothesis is that gender can be interpreted in the context of culture as a space within which gender identity is constructed and the gender acquires meaning. In this sense, gender identity and equality depend on the interpretative strategies that comprise valid paradigms in certain cultural context. What is particularly emphasised is the anthropological dimension of culture, i.e. the system of belief, knowledge, terms and ideas that function as long-term patterns and determine our comprehension of gender roles. The paper also deals with the legacy of patriarchy which introduces the key presumption which appears to still be relevant and productive even today, that there is a division to public sphere that belongs to the dominant gender of men, and private sphere as a field envisaged for women, so that the stereotype of women's subjugation in society appear natural and normal. The paper also addresses subversive methods in deconstructing the myth of male dominance and male-centric European civilisation.

Keywords: Gender theory, male dominance, subversion, gender and identity, gender roles, private and public, stereotypes

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Nevena Petrušić*

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE POST-YUGOSLAV SPACE: POLICIES, PRACTICES AND RESISTANCE

Contemporary discourse on gender equality policies in the states that emerged from the dissolution of the SFR Yugoslavia is marked by tension between the formal adoption of international standards and ongoing social regression. This regression is reflected in the erosion of rights, the normalization of patriarchal norms, institutional inefficacy, and a shift toward conservative ideologies. The paper argues that post-Yugoslav societies are facing a legitimacy crisis concerning the concept of emancipation. Through the promotion of “traditional values,” gender equality is increasingly framed as a “foreign” imposition incompatible with the local culture. Such a tendency should not be understood as a temporary setback, but as a deliberate obstruction of progress, driven by political and social actors who actively devalue previously attained civilizational achievements.

The analysis identifies the asymmetrical nature of European integration as a key factor behind the fragmented gender policies in the region. Divergent trajectories and tempos of EU accession have produced structural discontinuities that hinder the development of consistent responses to systemic inequalities across the region. Although the degree of implementation of gender equality policies varies across the countries in the region, they remain to a greater or lesser extent disconnected from everyday practice in all of them, often resulting in a “normative façade.”

In contrast, the paper highlights the enduring relevance of the shared feminist heritage rooted in the socialist period of the SFRY. The Antifascist Women’s Front (AFŽ) played a key role in the inclusion of women in labour, education, and political life, highlighting that the roots of women’s struggle in the region precede contemporary liberal frameworks. The continuity of feminist solidarity, maintained even during the conflicts of the 1990s, indicates that

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gender equality represents an indigenous achievement and an important basis for regional cooperation.

Finally, the paper emphasizes that meaningful progress requires addressing the economic dimensions of inequality, particularly economic dependency and unpaid reproductive labour. It concludes that resistance to contemporary challenges requires a synergy between scientific research and political action, with knowledge serving as the only reliable resource in resisting the processes of retraditionalization and the marginalization of women's rights.

Keywords: Gender equality, post-Yugoslav space, retraditionalization, shared feminist heritage, economic inequality

Nada Maćig Sekulić*

GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES IN SERBIA IN THE CONTEXT OF INCREASING SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

Gender equality policies in Serbia have a long-standing tradition that began to develop as part of the state-led development program with the establishment of socialism. Throughout this period, the social position of women—measured through indicators such as increased literacy, educational attainment, employment, social care for families, marital rights, reproductive rights, as well as the promotion of gender equality—improved significantly. During this time, gender equality policies were closely intertwined with social policy and the strengthening of the public sector as a key driver of the improvements in women's social status.

The disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia brought about a radical transformation of this policy framework. The state-led gender equality policies, as well as family care policies, were replaced by nationalist population policies and ceased to function as an integral component of official public policy.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, following the fall of the regime of Slobodan Milošević and the complete dissolution of the socialist system, gender equality policies have, up to the present day, been primarily oriented toward legalistic reforms and increasing women's participation in representative political bodies and political parties.

This paper highlights the paradox of Serbia's post-socialist transformation, in which the issue of advancing gender equality has become increasingly detached from the broader goal of improving women's social position and reducing social inequalities. Instead, it has increasingly become a matter of concern for political elites, accompanied by the decline and suppression of grassroots women's organizations that could serve as a counterbalance to these tendencies.

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The paper critically examines the ambivalent aspects of neoliberal gender equality policies and argues for the necessity of strengthening the public sector and adopting an integrated approach to improving women's social position as the only sustainable path toward achieving substantive gender equality.

Keywords: Gender equality policies, social inequalities, public sector, post-socialist neoliberal transformation

Milica Antić Gaber*

GENDER EQUALITY IN POLITICS BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS, PROSPECTS AND ACTUAL POSSIBILITIES OF REALIZATION IN POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES

This paper examines Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo, highlighting the interplay between institutional reforms, gender quotas, party dynamics, and socio-cultural norms. Research demonstrate that, despite decades of institutional reforms and formal commitments to gender equality, women in politics remain underrepresented in positions of real influence across the region.

The departing question therefore is: **Why there is a persistent gap between normative prospects, established institutional mechanisms for gender equality in politics, and its actual realization in Post-Yugoslav Societies.**

Legislative mechanisms, including candidate quotas (of 30 – 50 percent) have increased descriptive representation, particularly in Serbia, Slovenia, and North Macedonia, where women now hold around 35–40 percent of parliamentary seats. Kosovo has a strong legal framework, yet a gap between formal equality and actual political participation persists. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Croatia illustrate that legal provisions alone do not ensure meaningful influence.

Party gatekeeping remains the central barrier to equal gender representation: parties control candidate selection, leadership appointments, and access to decision-making networks, thus limiting the impact of quotas. Key positions remain male-dominated, producing symbolic rather than transformative inclusion. Persistent socio-cultural norms, media bias, and post-socialist trajectories further constrain women's effective participation.

A multi-level analysis situates these patterns at the intersection of institutionalism, representation theory, and post-socialist transition studies. Region as such illustrates the distinction between

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descriptive and substantive representation, showing that formal compliance with gender quotas does not automatically produce redistribution of political power.

Our analysis underscores that gender equality is not just a legal issue – it is a structural, political and cultural one. Advancing women’s political empowerment depends not only on the quotas and party reform, it also includes the impact of specific historical and societal factors that will be discussed.

By reflecting on the diverse experiences of post-Yugoslav states and comparing experiences across the region, the paper highlights both the progress achieved and the enduring challenges in advancing women’s political empowerment.

Keywords: Gender equality, quotas, political representation, post-socialist societies, party gatekeeping, cultural norms, media, substantive vs. descriptive representation.

**GENDER EQUALITY:
INTERPRETATIONS
AND KNOWLEDGE
FRAMEWORK**

Ana Maskalan*

FROM SUPRANATION TO FRAGMENTATION: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE POST-YUGOSLAV SPACE

This presentation examines gender equality in the post-Yugoslav space with the primary focus on the Croatian case, analysing the interaction of supranational and national gender regimes that have developed after the dissolution of Socialist Yugoslavia. Starting from the premise that women's rights played an important role in supranation-building in both Socialist Yugoslavia and the European Union, the presentation explores how the disappearance of the Yugoslav supranational framework produced a fragmented field of gender policies, shaped by three overlapping influences: the legacy of socialist emancipation, European Union gender equality norms, and post-socialist nationalist retraditionalization.

In Socialist Yugoslavia, gender equality was institutionalised within the broader processes of modernization and state-building, primarily through women's participation in paid labour, expansion of education, formal legal equality, and the socialisation of care work. Although such measures were largely introduced from above, and only partially addressed structural inequalities, they established expectations regarding women's social and economic participation. Following the breakup of Yugoslavia, Croatia inherited this emancipatory legacy, while simultaneously undergoing the processes of state-building, economic restructuring, and political transformation that frequently contributed to the strengthening of traditional gender roles. At the same time, European integration introduced new institutional and legal frameworks grounded in gender mainstreaming, anti-discrimination legislation, human rights standards, and equality-oriented policy mechanisms. In the Croatian case, these frameworks often coexist with the national policy orientations that emphasise motherhood, demographic renewal, and traditional family values. The result is a hybrid and internally contradictory configuration characterised by the expansion

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of formal equality measures alongside persistent socio-economic inequalities and limited structural change.

By conceptualising gender equality in Croatia within the broader post-Yugoslav context as shaped by the competing gender regimes, the presentation contributes to the discussions on conceptualising gender equality, institutional and policy frameworks, and socio-economic factors in the region. It highlights the tensions between supranational norms, national political priorities, and inherited socialist legacies, and offers a perspective on contemporary challenges and possible future trajectories of gender equality in Croatia, as well as the wider post-Yugoslav space.

Keywords: Gender equality; competing gender regimes; Croatia; post-Yugoslav societies; European integration; retraditionalization

Stefan Vasev*

SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND DYNAMICS OF THE MACEDONIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: FROM THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT TO CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

This paper analyses the socio-cultural aspects of the Macedonian women's movement, with a focus on its development from the period of independence to the present day. The research aims to examine the historical transformations, ideological narratives, and institutional frameworks that shape feminist activism within the Macedonian social and cultural context.

The theoretical approach is based on the integration of sociological and cultural studies perspectives, while the empirical part relies on a qualitative methodology, through the implementation of semi-structured in-depth interviews with activists, representatives of the civil sector, and the academic community. This approach enables a multi-layered analysis of the experiences, strategies, and challenges faced by the women's movement.

The results show that the Macedonian women's movement is conditioned by a complex interaction between historical heritage, cultural values, and contemporary global processes, such as digitalization and transnational feminist influences. Additionally, processes of institutionalization of gender policies are identified, including the introduction of quotas, strategies for gender equality, and the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

The paper contributes to deeper understanding of the specificities of Macedonian feminism, highlighting its position between local cultural matrices and global ideological trends, as well as its role in democratization and the development of civil society.

Keywords: Women's movement, feminism, gender, socio-cultural processes, activism, institutions, Macedonia

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Adriana Zaharijević*

GENDER IN THE (POST-)YUGOSLAV SPACE: THE EXAMPLE OF SERBIA

The concept of gender has Yugoslav roots. It first appeared in the early 1980s, in a translation of Kate Millett's text by a translator identified only by the initials, "D. Lj." We owe the word *rod* to this precious translator, as well as to the theorists who adopted it and introduced it into the local context. Unlike in various Eastern (and some Western) European countries, where gender was retained in its original form or awkwardly transliterated, *rod* became a part of the feminist tradition of our region, which, even during the socialist era, sought to reconsider the social dimensions of sex, daring to advocate the introduction of women's studies. In my presentation, I will attempt to trace the local trajectory of the concept of gender: its theoretical life, activist appropriations, its transfer to the European-values framework of public policies and laws, and its eventual co-optation and erasure in the language of "*rodna/džender ideologija* (gender ideology)". I will seek to capture its various paths over several decades, during which *rod* moved from feminist theory into non-feminist domains, sometimes following feminist aims, sometimes diverging from them. Finally, I will call for the defence of the concept of *rod/gender* in the circumstances where we have been deprived of the Law on Gender Equality, suspended indefinitely in June 2024, precisely because of the supposedly suspicious nature of that foreign word – *rod*.

Keywords: Rod, women's studies, gender studies, džender, anti-gender mobilizations

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Ankica Šobot*

EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF DEMOGRAPHY: GENDER EQUALITY AS A FOUNDATION FOR UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY POPULATION PHENOMENA AND ITS POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In population studies, considering gender differences alone is not enough. Demographic processes and trends must be understood within the context of the gender regime, the broader social framework in which they occur. This approach allows exploration of the complex links between gender roles and population phenomena, as well as accurate interpretation of their effects. Epistemological grounding offers a strong foundation for contemporary demography as a science that cannot ignore the influence of gender roles on population issues, or overlook gender equality as a vital social principle. Gender equality is not the cause of unfavourable demographic trends. Structural barriers, cultural norms and stereotypes slow the shift from traditional to more egalitarian gender regimes, leading to adverse demographic effects. This view is especially relevant for the post-Yugoslav space, where, despite the changes, the traditional patriarchal gender regimes still dominate. A clear example of misunderstanding the causal link between gender equality and demographic trends is low birth rates. In such a context, pronatalist policies often ignore or undervalue gender equality as a social value. Also, responses to the key population challenges such as aging, employment, health, migration, and mortality, underscore the need to systematically link them to gender regimes from a gender equality perspective. Accordingly, the European Union's policies focus on gender equality in areas such as childcare and eldercare, work-family balance, reproductive health, and migration management. Demographic thinking in Serbia, with its social and interdisciplinary character, provides a foundation for this approach. However, it needs a stronger implementation of gender equality as a key analytical framework for understanding population phenomena within patriarchal gender regimes. This approach offers

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a basis for more effective population policies. Implementing gender equality involves addressing issues related to social certainty, economic stability, and quality of life, which are essential for understanding the demographic realities of contemporary societies.

Keywords: Gender equality, demography, population, public policies, Serbia

Lara Končar*

UNPAID HOUSEWORK: BETWEEN THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK IN CONTEMPORARY SERBIA

Unpaid housework in contemporary Serbia has emerged as a “new” topic – particularly within the context of institutional policies and legislation – despite having been extensively theorized, problematized, researched, and analyzed for decades within feminist theory and critique. This form of labor constitutes a significant element in understanding contemporary socio-economic systems in the context of gender (in)equality. Nevertheless, its interpretation has remained unidimensional, which is especially evident in the statistical measurements conducted by state institutions and in predominantly quantitative approaches to this phenomenon. Defining unpaid housework in opposition to “paid” work, measuring it through time-use surveys within household, and situating it within heteronormative relations represent dominant perspectives that often overlook a range of social, political, economic, and cultural conditions, relations, and interdependencies that shape it.

Drawing on findings from recent research and scholarly work produced in the local context, this presentation examines unpaid housework on two levels: a brief overview of its theoretical conceptualizations, on the one hand, and the institutional framework through which it is recognized domestically, on the other. By juxtaposing these perspectives, the aim is to identify “gaps” between feminist theoretical conceptualizations – particularly within the social reproduction theory – and the institutional documents that regulate this form of labor. In doing so, it highlights several key issues: the social, economic, and cultural conditions and relations often omitted from analyses of unpaid housework; those aspects that remain invisible in public discourses and policies; and the question of quantitative and qualitative approaches to this phenomenon. Finally, particular attention is devoted to reflecting on political strategies aimed at advancing gender equality and fostering

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a more comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic and cultural complexity of unpaid housework.

Keywords: Unpaid housework, institutional framework, social reproduction theory, qualitative and quantitative approaches

Ivana Jakšić*

GENDER RELATIONS IN POST-YUGOSLAV COUNTRIES: SHARED BELIEFS, DIVERGENT EXPERIENCES

The 2023 rotating module on gender beliefs in the European Social Survey offers a unique opportunity for cross-national comparison across a comprehensive set of gender-related constructs, including gender roles and identity, perceptions and experiences of gender-based discrimination, evaluations of gender equality, multiple forms of sexism (hostile, modern, and benevolent), and support for gender equality policies. This study focuses on the post-Yugoslav countries participating in the survey (Croatia, N = 1,563; Slovenia, N = 1,248; Serbia, N = 1,563), with the aim of examining whether this regional space can be meaningfully mapped in terms of gender beliefs as well as gendered experiences and practices. To address this question, a hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted at the country level, using aggregated item sets measuring these constructs, with Ward's method and Euclidean distance. The findings indicate that these countries display relatively similar attitudes toward gender equality and sexism, as well as relatively high levels of support for gender equality policies, suggesting a degree of shared cultural framing or common historical legacy. In terms of evaluations of gender equality, post-Yugoslav countries are positioned between Scandinavian and Iberian countries, which exhibit the most positive attitudes, and Central European countries, which tend to have lower scores. At the same time, these countries rank relatively high in both hostile and benevolent sexism compared to Scandinavian countries, although overall cross-national differences remain moderate. Notably, post-Yugoslav countries also rank among the European leaders when it comes to their support for gender equality policies. However, this convergence at the level of beliefs does not translate into uniform outcomes. Substantial cross-national differences emerge in the reported perceptions and experiences of gender discrimination across social domains. These differences are likely rooted in the institutional, structural,

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and socio-political contexts that condition how gender norms are translated into practice.

Keywords: Gender relations, gender equality, gender beliefs, European Social Survey (ESS), Post-Yugoslav Countries

**LEGAL AND
INSTITUTIONAL
CONTEXTS FOR
GENDER EQUALITY**

Antonija Petričušić*, Olja Družić Ljubotina**

ANALYSIS OF CROATIAN GENDER EQUALITY POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: BETWEEN STRONG NORMS AND WEAK INSTITUTIONS

This paper analyses the implementation of gender equality policy in the Republic of Croatia through normative, institutional, and operational dimensions. It argues that Croatia has developed a comprehensive and multilayered policy framework aligned with international women's rights standards, yet it continuously faces challenges in translating formal women's rights commitments into substantive gender equality.

The normative framework for gender equality in Croatia is grounded in the 2003 Gender Equality Act. It defines discrimination, establishes institutional competences, and mandates coordination, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms. This framework is further shaped by international obligations, including CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, the Beijing Platform for Action, the UN 2030 Agenda, as well as EU and Council of Europe gender equality strategies.

At the institutional level, the Government Office for Gender Equality plays a central coordinating role. It is supported by decentralized mechanisms such as county-level gender equality committees and focal points for gender equality within ministries. Limited administrative capacity of the Government Office for Gender Equality, illustrated by a small number of staff, represents a structural constraint affecting policy effectiveness. As a result, the gender equality policy domain is inherently horizontal, requiring coordination across ministries, independent bodies, and civil society actors.

At the operational level, the paper examines how public policy has been implemented through the goals and measures of the National Gender Equality Plan and its Action Plans. Particular attention is paid to core measures, including monitoring and evaluation, public awareness campaigns, gender mainstreaming, compliance with international obligations, and capacity-building efforts.

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Despite the existence of domestic norms aligned with international standards, findings point to a persistent gap between commitments and outcomes. Structural inequalities, entrenched stereotypes, weak enforcement, and limited resources constrain implementation. Future progress depends on stronger institutional capacities, consistent enforcement, and deeper integration of gender perspectives.

Keywords: Women's rights; gender equality; gender equality policy implementation; gender mainstreaming; implementation gap; structural inequalities

Zlatiborka Popov-Momčinović*, Danijela Lakić**

FROM LEGAL REFORM TO POLITICAL PRACTICE: GENDER DYNAMICS IN REPUBLIKA SRPSKA'S PARLIAMENT

This paper applies feminist institutionalism to examine gender equality as both an aspirational goal and a marker of democratisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). While formal measures such as gender quotas have improved women's descriptive representation, they rarely transform underlying institutional norms. Parliaments, as central representative bodies, remain gendered spaces that constrain women's substantive participation.

In post-war BiH, international involvement, EU integration, and women's activism drove legal reforms, including quotas and electoral changes. Yet translating these reforms into genuine equality has proven difficult, largely due to ethnic dominance in representation and weak enforcement of gender laws. This study focuses on the underexplored Republika Srpska entity, where ethnic homogenisation and jurisdiction over key policy areas make gender dynamics particularly striking.

Drawing on electoral patterns, parliamentary procedures, committee compositions, and minutes from the 2018–2022 and 2022–2026 sessions, the analysis finds modest gains in women's representation but little progress in gender-sensitive norms. Women remain concentrated in stereotypically gendered committees and seldom hold leadership roles outside traditionally "feminine" domains. Parliamentary minutes reveal that men dominate interventions, while women—though active across topics—contribute more to debates on education, child protection, youth, and domestic violence, and less to adversarial exchanges such as rebuttals.

These findings highlight the persistence of gendered institutional culture and underscore the need for a deeper inquiry into how parliamentary norms and practices shape women's political participation in BiH.

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Keywords: Feminist institutionalism, gender equality legislation, gendered parliamentary practices, Bosnia and Herzegovina politics, Republika Srpska

Anđelija Stevanović*

GENDER EQUALITY IN ARMED CONFLICT: THE LEGACY OF THE CONFLICTS IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL LAW

The armed conflicts that accompanied the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s exposed the systematic and widespread use of sexual violence against women as a method of warfare. These events significantly influenced the development of international legal response to gender-based violence in armed conflict and contributed to a broader recognition of its implications for gender equality.

This research examines the role of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in shaping the legal understanding and prosecution of sexual violence in armed conflict. Through its jurisprudence, the Tribunal established important precedents by recognizing rape and other forms of sexual violence as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and, in certain circumstances, acts of torture. Landmark judgments such as *Prosecutor v. Kunarac et al.* and *Prosecutor v. Furundžija* played a crucial role in clarifying the legal elements of these crimes and in affirming the gravity of gender-based violence under international law.

Building on these developments, it is argued that the legacy of the Tribunal extends beyond the sphere of criminal accountability. Its jurisprudence contributed to a deeper conceptualization of gender-based violence as a structural phenomenon, as well as to the incorporation of gender perspectives within contemporary international criminal law. In this sense, the experience of the former Yugoslavia represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of legal frameworks addressing violence against women in armed conflict.

Finally, the paper reflects on the relevance of these legal developments for post-Yugoslav societies, where the recognition of victims, the pursuit of justice, and the acknowledgment of past violations remain closely connected to broader processes of transitional

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justice and ongoing efforts aimed at achieving substantive gender equality.

Keywords: Gender equality, armed conflict, International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, sexual violence, international crimes

Sofija Nikolić Popadić*

GENDER EQUALITY AND WORK–LIFE BALANCE FOR PARENTS IN SERBIA: LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

This research explores gender equality and work–life balance for parents in Serbia through an analysis of their institutional and legal frameworks, with particular attention to existing disparities and future policy directions. Over the past two decades, Serbia has adopted a comprehensive set of laws and strategies aimed at promoting gender equality, including anti-discrimination legislation, labour regulations, and parental leave policies. Despite this normative progress, significant gaps remain between formal rights, their implementation and practical needs of parents. Women continue to face disproportionate challenges in the labour market and career interruptions linked to caregiving responsibilities. Although legal provisions enable fathers to take parental leave, the uptake remains limited due to persistent gender norms and workplace expectations. In addition, the availability and accessibility of childcare services and institutional support remains limited, which is one of the critical factors influencing work–family reconciliation and affecting the achievement of gender equality, given that in practice, the lack of institutional childcare support affects more women than men. The research identifies specific legal gaps and inconsistencies between regulations across different sectors that create practical difficulties for parents. One of the notable examples is the mismatch between labour law provisions and childcare enrolment policies: parental leave typically ends before the child reaches the age of one according to law, while access to public childcare is often unavailable until the age of one and is subject to restrictive enrolment conditions and limited institutional capacity. This regulatory misalignment and lack of capacities leave many parents without adequate care solutions which affects their return to work. Within the research, we gave recommendations for legal and policy reforms aimed at improving coherence between regulations, strengthening institutional support, and promoting gender equality. Such changes are essential not only for facilitating

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work–life balance, but also for supporting broader demographic and family policy objectives.

Keywords: Work–Life Balance, parenthood, legal challenges, institutional support

Sanja Zlatanović*

GENDER EQUALITY IN LABOUR LAW: MENSTRUAL LEAVE AND THE CHALLENGE OF SYMMETRICAL PROTECTION

Gender equality is a cornerstone of contemporary labour law and international human rights law. Within the European legal framework, the principle of equal treatment of women and men is firmly established by Directive 2006/54/EC, which prohibits direct and indirect discrimination in employment and occupation. However, formal equality alone is increasingly recognized as insufficient to address structural inequalities, social stereotypes, and biological differences affecting workers' positions in employment and labour. Substantive equality requires differentiated measures to achieve genuinely equal opportunities.

A prominent recent development is the introduction of menstrual leave as a labour law mechanism to accommodate menstrual health conditions that may affect women's working capacity. In 2023, Spain became the first EU country that introduced the statutory right to menstrual leave, allowing medically certified leave financed through the social security system. Similar provisions exist in Asian jurisdictions, including Japan and South Korea, reflecting a broader trend toward recognizing reproductive health needs and promoting inclusive working conditions.

The paper examines whether menstrual leave constitutes a legitimate positive measure to achieve substantive gender equality in employment, using legal-theoretical, normative, and comparative methods. The analysis situates menstrual leave within European equality law and the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union, including *Dekker v Stichting Vormingscentrum voor Jong Volwassenen* (C-177/88) and *Webb v EMO Air Cargo* (C-32/93), which confirm the compatibility of pregnancy-related protections with equal treatment.

The paper also addresses concerns that gender-specific measures may reinforce stereotypes, or create indirect inequalities.

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It explores functional symmetry through gender-neutral or men-inclusive measures, such as reproductive health leave, fertility-treatment leave, or preventive well-being leave schemes. The central argument is that genuine gender equality in labour law requires a balance between targeted supportive measures for women and broader mechanisms ensuring equal dignity, protection, and well-being for all workers, both men and women.

Keywords: Labor law, Gender equality, Menstrual leave, Substantive equality, EU equality law

Zorica Mršević*

MEMORY AS AN EMANCIPATORY ALTERNATIVE TRADITION

Keeping and cherishing the memory of events and actors significant for women's history is never neutral, because it provides arguments on who has the right to be a hero, who is included in textbooks, whose name is given to the streets, who symbolizes a desirable future. Remembrance of them reminds us that women's rights (education, labour rights, right to vote, reproductive rights, right to safety) are not gifts by the state, but were won by women who carried weapons in the Second World War, and after the War led a political, legal and social struggle for a better society and women's rights in it. They believed in a society without the privileged, that work has dignity, and that education and health are public goods.

To remember prominent women from the partisan past is important today, because they prove that women have a historical basis for political and social strength, that fascism is a crime. By preserving that memory, we preserve the possibility of a different, fairer, more open future. This is especially important at the current times of the growing influence of the global right and renewed insistence on attempts to erase the differences between the categories of sex and gender. They continue to represent a model of irreconcilability and an incentive for all those who fight against (gender) stereotypes, prejudices, anthropological reductionism and the denial of women's rights.

In Yugoslavia, during the Second World War, more than 100,000 women participated in the partisan movement — as fighters, couriers, medics, organizers of uprisings, political leaders and revolutionaries, often becoming victims of the terror of the occupiers and their domestic collaborators. Many are remembered as key figures of the anti-fascist resistance.

Keywords: Actors in women's history, partisans, preservation of memory, emancipatory alternative tradition, heroines

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Gordana Jauković Nenezić*

WOMEN IN BANKING – BEGINNINGS, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE: CASE STUDY OF THE NATIONAL BANK OF THE KINGDOM OF SHS/YUGOSLAVIA

In existing historiographical and economic literature, the role of women within banking institutions has remained on the margins of research. This paper seeks to elucidate the process of integrating women into the banking service, using the National Bank as a primary case study. The emergence of female clerical staff within this institution was not a direct development. Rather, it unfolded through a specific process of personnel succession from the former Austro-Hungarian Bank. While women lacked access to such positions during the preceding period of the National Bank of the Kingdom of Serbia's operation, the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia) introduced new socio-political circumstances that transformed employment practices. The study analyses how volatile political conditions, frequent changes in government, and the pronounced influence of the monarch were reflected in the economic sphere and the dynamics of women's professional emancipation within the Bank. This research is based on extensive archival material from the Archives of the National Bank of Serbia, complemented by a comparative analysis of the digital archive press, digital periodicals from the National Library and relevant historiographical literature. By reconstructing the history of female clerical work, this paper aims to provide deeper insight into broader social and economic phenomena of the first half of the 20th century, and to map the trajectory through which women secured their place in the financial sectors of Serbia and Yugoslavia. The primary data source for this research consists of previously unpublished archival records from the Archives of the National Bank of Serbia. Through a qualitative and quantitative analysis of 550 *matriculae* (personnel files), the professional and life paths of female employees were reconstructed for the period between 1937 and 1946.

Keywords: Women's employment, National Bank, financial sector, mid-20th century, banknotes and coins, banking elite, income–salary

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ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF GENDER EQUALITY

Vladimir Mentus*

GENDER GAP IN EXPERIENCED WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION: NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE EVIDENCE FROM SERBIA

In this paper, we examine gender discrimination in the labour market in Serbia, with a particular focus on the gender gap in self-reported experiences of unfair treatment in hiring, pay, and promotion. Systematic evidence on gender discrimination in the Serbian labour market based on nationally representative data remains unexplored. We use the data from the eleventh round of the European Social Survey, from 2022/23 for the Serbian subsample of employed respondents (N = 1,096). We employ hierarchical binary logistic regression across three models. The first model introduces gender as the sole predictor. The second adds socioeconomic factors — subjective household financial situation, settlement type, and frequency of serious household conflict during childhood. The third adds workplace characteristics — employment sector, establishment size, job autonomy, contract type, and trade union membership. We found that the gender gap in self-reported experiences of unfair treatment in hiring, pay, and promotion is substantial: women are approximately 4.2 times more likely to experience discrimination than men. Additionally, three socioeconomic factors are significantly associated with the experienced discrimination: worse subjective household financial situation increases the likelihood of experiencing discrimination, rural residence decreases it, while a higher frequency of serious household conflicts during childhood also decreases it. By contrast, none of the workplace characteristics included in the third model significantly predicted the experienced discrimination – the gender gap is equally present in large and small establishments, in the public and private sector, among those with higher and lower job autonomy, and were unrelated to the contract type and duration. The only exception is trade union membership which is positively associated with self-reported experiences of discrimination. These findings suggest that gender

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discrimination in the Serbian labour market is not concentrated in particular types of work environments, but is instead diffuse — pointing to a cultural and institutional embeddedness of gender inequalities that extends beyond organizational boundaries.

Keywords: Gender, workplace discrimination, Serbia, European Social Survey

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THE ROLE OF RURAL TOURISM IN THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Rural tourism is a form of tourism that takes place in rural areas. It is characterized by sustainability, direct contact between tourists and hosts, a smaller scale, local identity, the authenticity of the experience of getting to know the local community, as well as a contribution to the local economy and the diversification of rural household income. The essence of rural tourism is reflected in connecting visitors with everyday activities in the village (staying in rural households, participating in agricultural activities). Encompassing various sub-types (rural, agro, eco, ethno or gastronomic tourism), in addition to its economic role, rural tourism also has an important social dimension in the form of incentives to remain in the countryside, especially for women, through their increasing participation in the development of local entrepreneurship and decision-making. In this context, rural tourism represents an important instrument of sustainable local development and social inclusion, as well as a mechanism for the economic empowerment of women in rural areas. In the context of gender inequalities, particularly pronounced in rural areas, women are faced with limited access to resources, the labour market and the decision-making process. This paper explores how rural tourism can contribute to overcoming structural barriers by improving the position of women in rural areas, valorising the visibility of their work in the form of economic empowerment through the development of local entrepreneurship. Since the economic empowerment of women in rural areas does not exclusively involve increasing their income, but also expanding their influence in decision-making processes, the paper seeks to offer insight, through an interdisciplinary approach, into the potential of rural tourism as a lever for achieving gender equality, as well as to highlight the challenges arising from the traditional roles, insufficient institutional support and limitations that accompany this process.

Keywords: Rural tourism, economy, empowerment, women

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SURVIVAL AND MARGINALIZATION: THE IMPACT OF UNREGISTERED WORK IN THE CONDITIONS OF APPARENT TEMPORALITY ON MIGRANT WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES AFTER THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA***

This study explores the complex dynamics of women's migration in and within the post-Yugoslav space, with a particular focus on temporary labour migrants and forced migrants, especially those working in private households (e.g., care and cleaning) and the unregistered work that accompanies this phenomenon. In the context of violent conflicts of the 1990s, as well as enormous political and economic challenges, many women became forced migrants or emigrated as a survival strategy in the conditions of high unemployment and low wages.

In the cases of two countries – Slovenia and Serbia – the research analyses how these women have used agency and navigated different socio-economic and legal contexts, marked by limited access to social and economic rights and/or precarious employment. By analysing the data from empirical interviews with earlier forced migrants from ex-Yugoslav countries in Slovenia and Serbia, as well as reviewing the policy, significant challenges, such as legal invisibility, deskilling, exploitation, and the overlapping of gender and migration policies have been identified. Findings show that the temporary and often unregistered nature of work significantly increases vulnerability, limits access to social protection, and perpetuates gender inequality. Conversely, when it comes to men, who traditionally work in sectors where unregistered work is more visible (e.g., construction), the loss of the ability to economically

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provide for their families can also lead to significant distress and increased vulnerability.

The research additionally examines the impact of these conditions on personal, family, and professional aspects of life. It also indicates that the attitude of migrant women towards irregular work migration as a “chosen” temporary form of vulnerability has influenced the prolongation of the cycle of dependence and marginalization. The paper also proposes recommendations for improving their rights and social integration. The results highlight the need for policies that address the specific needs of these women and promote a more inclusive approach to gender equality in post-Yugoslav societies.

Keywords: Women, migration, undeclared work, temporariness, Slovenia, Serbia

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FATHERHOOD: PERCEIVED SUPPORT FOR CHILDCARE FROM THE FATHER'S WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

Contemporary public policies recognize the importance of fathers' involvement in childcare. However, their implementation often differs. Fathers' perceptions of workplace support for their parental role were examined in a sample of 348 employed fathers of children with a mean age of 5 years (range: 0-300 months). Twenty-two percent of fathers reported being unfamiliar with their right to parental leave, while 11% believed that their workplace would not support its use. Another 27% were uncertain about their organization's stance. These findings point to deficiencies in information channels, as well as barriers rooted in traditional work patterns and professional role expectations. The most commonly reported form of support was reduced working hours or taking days off during early childhood (28%). Furthermore, 16% of the fathers stated that they did not recognize any forms of support from their professional environment for their role as fathers and caregivers, and 63% could not even imagine useful and feasible forms of support within this context. Those who perceived potential organizational support proposed solutions that move beyond the "traditional father-worker" model. These included subsidies and financial support for childcare (e.g., kindergarten), increased free time, flexible working arrangements (e.g., remote work, leave when the child is ill), the establishment of workplace childcare facilities, as well as opportunities for information-sharing, development of parenting-related knowledge and skills, and organization of events that bring families together and strengthen informal support networks. These

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findings raise important questions about the need to transform the culture of communication around fatherhood within professional environments. Such a shift would enable support for fatherhood to become not an exception, but an integral part of human resources strategies – moving policies from passive entitlements to active organizational encouragement.

Keywords: Fatherhood, workplace support, work-family balance, organizational culture, paternal involvement

Njegoš Vujadinović*, Nevena Novaković**

PRECARITY AS A GENERATOR OF RETRADITIONALIZATION: THE ECONOMIC CONDITIONING OF GENDER STEREOTYPES AND THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND GLOBAL INTERNET TRENDS IN SHAPING THE DIVISION OF GENDER ROLES AND CONCEPTIONS OF MASCULINITY IN SERBIA

Institutional frameworks for gender equality in Serbia, as well as globally, show formal progress, while sociological research points to parallel strengthening of conservative value orientations among youth, particularly regarding gender roles. This paper assumes that the growing youth conservatism does not represent mere cultural regression, but a structurally conditioned response to labour precarity and the erosion of social security within a dependent market economy.

Drawing on critical social theory, the paper analyses mechanisms through which economic insecurity and inability to achieve material preconditions of adulthood (stable employment, housing independence) generate need for firm identity anchors, security, and answers. Under such conditions, a strict gender role division and patriarchal family function as compensatory mechanisms for establishing subjective sense of order within the destabilized social space. Moreover, conservative social organization and gender role division represents the “familiar” in a world of the “unknown” and dangerous.

The paper examines the dual mediating role of religious institutions, primarily the Serbian Orthodox Church, that channel class dissatisfaction through the discourse of the “natural” gender order and family protection, offering a theologically legitimized framework for retraditionalization; and digital subcultures of the global “manosphere” (red pill philosophy, alpha masculinity), whose

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narratives localize in the Serbian context through intertwining with the Orthodox aesthetics and national symbols. Methodologically, the paper combines secondary analysis of the existing data on youth value orientations in Serbia (EVS, FES/KOMS studies) with a critical discourse analysis of Serbian Orthodox Church institutional texts and digital content.

The authors argue that public policies aimed at gender equality remain ineffective if they neglect the economic roots of retraditionalization and the role of religious institutions as mediators translating structural deprivation into restorative gender ideology, and global internet trends that offer quick fixes and definitive answers while generating the same outcomes.

Keywords: Precarity, retraditionalization, gender roles, manosphere, Serbian Orthodox Church

Vasko Kelic*

THE MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER EQUALITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CASE OF SERBIA

A number of representative studies conducted so far have shown that a strong empirical interconnection can be identified between the degree of gender equality and the level of economic development in a given country. Studies examining the impact of gender equality on economic growth have shown that a higher level of women's inclusion in economic activity, primarily in the labour market, has a transformative positive effect on the economy. In some cases, this effect has proven to be so strong that its absence may lead to a level of economic development that is twice as low. On the other hand, economic development itself has also proven important for the achievement of gender equality, including in dimensions beyond the economic sphere. In this regard, the paper will examine in greater detail what specific mutual effects between gender equality and economic development in Serbia are indicated by the representative studies conducted thus far. The representativeness of these studies will primarily be determined by their explicit treatment of the interdependent relationship through the application of methodologies extensively dealing with the problem of endogeneity. As will be shown, Serbia's current level of gender equality already contributes substantially to its standard of living; without it, living standards would be dramatically lower, while higher gender equality could make the country significantly more developed. It will also be shown how an increase in the standard of living can lead to a higher level of gender equality.

Keywords: Gender equality, economic development, economic growth, endogeneity problem

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GENDER EQUALITY AND POLICIES

Dijana Vukomanović*

RE-CONCEPTUALIZING GENDER EQUALITY AS A CORE DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE PROCESS

Gender equality in the post-Yugoslav area has been perceived as a linear trajectory of harmonization with the EU acquis, which included the adoption of EU gender related guidelines and directives, CEDAW obligations and the adoption of national laws, strategies and action plans. Emerging hybrid gender-oriented policies in the post-Yugoslav societies have been fragile and fragmented, framed by inherited political cultures, ideological resistance and scarce resources. Clustering of academic research around recurring themes of representation quotas, anti-discrimination laws and institutional gender mainstreaming has resulted in perceiving women as a homogeneous category. On the contrary, the gender equality should be understood as a heterogeneous, dynamic, both progressive and reversible, politically and socially contested process which is shaped by historical legacies, backlash, ruptures and crises within post-Yugoslav states. The contemporary literature identifies anti-gender movements that rely on religious, nationalist, and global conservative networks, using backlash strategies against “gender ideology”, the Istanbul Convention, women and feminist organizations and activists. That is why it is necessary to link and research gender equality within the broader context of democratic resilience against illiberal, populist and authoritarian trends. This reframes gender equality from being a social policy issue to becoming a core democratic process, linked to human rights and civil liberties, secularism, media freedom and the rule of law. Furthermore, the contemporary approach should be oriented towards the more economically and socially sensitive context of the structural intersectional inequality indicators of class, income, education, ethnicity, sexuality, age and disability, refugee, migration or marital status and spatial position – urban/rural, centre/periphery. This intersectional approach should be integrated into the gender equality assessment, audit and monitoring schemes with the aim to re-frame standard indicators and rankings.

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Keywords: Gender equality, gender policy, anti-gender backlash, democratic resilience, intersectional inequality.

Džana Hodžić*

FROM DIGITAL RISK TO RESISTANCE? ICTS, AI, AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN SERBIA

This work-in-progress PhD project examines the dual role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in shaping women's political participation in Serbia. While digital technologies have lowered barriers to political engagement by enabling new forms of communication, mobilization, and visibility, they have simultaneously reproduced and intensified existing patriarchal power structures. In particular, online gender-based violence (OGBV) has emerged as a significant deterrent to women's participation in political discourse, contributing to exclusion, self-censorship, and withdrawal from public spaces.

Focusing on women born between 1995 and 2007, this research investigates how ICTs and AI systems both constrain and enable political participation in a context marked by democratic backsliding, rising nationalism, and persistent gender inequality. Grounded in feminist political theory, digital democracy, and intersectionality, the study explores the conditions under which technologies function either as tools of empowerment and resistance or as mechanisms of control and marginalization.

Methodologically, the project adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining a literature review, semi-structured expert interviews, and a survey conducted among women in Belgrade. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of both structural conditions and lived experiences, as well as of the relationship between exposure to OGBV and levels of political engagement.

By situating women's experiences within broader political, legal, and technological frameworks, this research contributes to ongoing debates on digital democracy, gendered power relations, and political participation in transitional contexts. It also provides policy-relevant insights into how safer and more inclusive digital

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spaces can be fostered, particularly in light of Serbia's EU accession process and commitments to gender equality.

Keywords: Gender equality, digital democracy, political participation, Serbia, artificial intelligence, information and communication technologies

Charles O. Warner III*

SECOND PLACE IN CROATIA OR INVISIBLE IN THE U.S.? WOMEN VETERANS AND THE TALK OF TWO POST-SERVICE NARRATIVES

This presentation, structured as a report of ongoing anthropological research with military veterans living today in post-Yugoslav societies, as well as veterans who served in Southeast Europe in different capacities (e.g., peacekeeping missions), focuses on one particular research dynamic: the post-service narratives of women veterans. During the course of ethnographic fieldwork alongside veterans of the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s, several dominant narratives emerged that informed both methodological reflexivity vis-à-vis veteran ethnographies as well as new comparative frames of veteran social positionality. With regard to the latter, these frames allow for a re-engagement and a re-imagining of women veteran socio-political issues, gender equality amongst veterans, and gendered veteran policies following military service. This research report – developed from long-term ethnographic fieldwork, qualitative data development, and analyses of women veteran narratives in Croatia and the United States – suggests fresh contributions to discussions regarding gender, voice, and visibility in post-service policies and representations. By placing select women veteran narratives into comparative conversation, focus and agency are retained by the women veterans, while old stereotypes and new tropes are (critically) encountered. Furthermore, in looking to disrupt the established hegemony, this effort includes an accounting of how veteran narratives are continuously aligned or baselined by veterans in the United States or in the United Kingdom, leading to enforcement of marginalities and marginalized voices in research with veterans after military service.

Keywords: Women veterans, gender & post-conflict studies, Southeast Europe, veteran ethnographies

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Milena Karapetrović*

GENDER EQUALITY, PUBLIC POLICIES, AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – BETWEEN FORMAL REFORMS AND SOCIAL RESISTANCE

Two decades after the establishment of the legislative and institutional framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina, numerous obstacles remain on the path to achieving gender equality. There is a long list of formal indicators in institutional reports **that demonstrate progress in the realization of gender equality**. At the same time, analyses and studies initiated by civil society and the academic community **point to fundamental challenges** that remain unresolved.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the normative framework serves as a basis for gender-aware policies. This means that, in addition to the Law on Gender Equality, many by-laws have been adopted, bodies formed, strategies developed, and action plans created **at both the state and entity levels**. Despite these, the results of changes in society itself **remain limited**. Women participate in public and political life, occupying the highest positions, but research shows that vertical segregation **persists**. The topic of femicide **gains political attention only in the aftermath of individual cases**, remains in public focus only briefly, and is not accompanied by systematic preventive policy measures.

Since the area of higher education constitutes a key site for knowledge production and the formation of social values, it is particularly important to **examine how approaches to gender equality are developed within these institutional frameworks**. Recent analyses show that institutional activity **has significantly increased only in the past five years**, and this is primarily linked to participation in the European Research Area. The first extensive analyses carried out in that period show that universities **largely reflect broader societal conditions**, and this is visible through the **lack of content addressing gender equality and gender perspectives**, both in teaching and in scientific papers.

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Although formal changes **have been recorded** in the last twenty years, it is still evident that patriarchal patterns have not completely disappeared, and in the context of contemporary global political shifts, anti-gender narratives are additionally strengthening in these areas, reinforcing and reproducing traditional gender norms and resistance to change.

Keywords: Gender equality, public policies, Bosnia and Herzegovina, higher education, anti-gender narratives

Sabira Gadžo-Šašić*

EQUALITY OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS

Throughout the entire history of human existence, persons with disabilities have been disenfranchised. As society evolved, the attitude toward this group became more humane in almost all environments, including Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Due to this marginalization, specialized documents were adopted as a reminder that persons with disabilities have the same rights as other members of the community. The latest such document is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

Despite these efforts, women and children with disabilities have remained partially disenfranchised. Consequently, the UN Convention (Preamble para. Q, Art. 3, Art. 6) specifically highlights them as groups requiring special attention.

To create equal opportunities, Bosnia and Herzegovina ratified the UN Convention in 2010 and adopted the Law on Gender Equality at the state level in 2009 (*Official Gazette of BiH, No. 102/09*). Nevertheless, there is an evident disparity in the realization of certain rights for women and children with disabilities.

Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that the participants in the study "*Mapping Priorities and Programs of Political Partners Aimed at Labor Market (Re)integration and Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities*", supported by the European Training Foundation (ETF), spoke with reservation regarding the (in)equality of women with disabilities in BiH. The research utilized in-depth interviews based on questions developed by EU experts, involving 13 stakeholders who directly or indirectly shape policies relevant to persons with disabilities in BiH.

The aim of this presentation is to highlight the unfavourable position of women with disabilities in BiH and emphasize the importance of creating more measures to improve their status.

Keywords: Equality, women, disability

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Ivana Magdalenić *

GENDER EQUALITY IN SERBIA'S POPULATION POLICY – CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The current public discourse on demographic issues in Serbia highlights the need to redefine the institutional responses to population challenges through an integrated and cross-sectoral approach.

These tendencies have motivated the aim of this study, namely, to examine the position of gender equality in the state's only strategic response to low fertility, and identify directions for its integration into Serbia's family policy.

Analysis of the Strategy for Promoting Childbearing indicates that gender equality is not defined as a separate objective, but is embedded within goals such as reconciling work and parenthood and reducing the psychological costs of parenting. At the same time, objectives related to preserving and improving reproductive health, addressing infertility, and promoting healthy motherhood, offer potential for mitigating gender inequalities.

The paper proceeds from the assumption that, to some extent, gender inequalities in both the private and public spheres influence parental aspirations. Accordingly, the study proposes that implementing a gender-sensitive approach in family policy has the potential to reduce the gap between the desired and actual number of children.

Within this analytical framework, we identify several avenues for enhancing family policy, including integrating gender equality as a distinct strategic goal, formulation and implementation of measures that enable the simultaneous participation of both parents in early childcare, development of gender-sensitive policies for early childhood, and improvement of indicators that monitor gender aspects of family policy.

We consider that the goal of family policy should be to improve the quality of life and promote gender equality, recognizing that this

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approach has the potential for the fulfilment of both professional and parental aspirations.

Keywords: Gender equality, Serbia, family policy, gender-sensitive approach, quality of life

Ksenija Marković*

FROM COMMITMENT TO POLICY: GENDER EQUALITY IN POLITICAL PARTY PROGRAMS IN SERBIA

This paper examines how political parties in Serbia conceptualize gender equality in their party programs and policy documents, focusing on the gap between the normative commitments and operationalization of policies. Despite its widespread inclusion in party programs, gender equality remains largely confined to normative articulation, lacking systematic integration into policy design and implementation.

The paper applies the distinction between normative and functional inclusion. Normative inclusion refers to the declarative acceptance of gender equality, while functional inclusion captures its translation into concrete measures, institutional mechanisms, and policy frameworks.

The empirical analysis is based on a qualitative content analysis of party programs, including Demokratska stranka (DS), Stranka slobode i pravde (SSP), Zeleno-levi front (ZLF), Srpska napredna stranka (SNS), and Srpska stranka Zavetnici (ZAVETNICI). The findings suggest that most parties demonstrate strong normative commitment, while policy responses remain limited, fragmented, or predominantly protective. Structural dimensions of gender inequality, such as economic disparities and power distribution, are largely underdeveloped.

The paper proposes a typology of party approaches, contributing to a better understanding of the extent to which gender equality is treated as a substantive political issue in Serbia.

Keywords: Gender equality, political parties, Serbia, normative vs functional inclusion, gender policies

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Svetlana Janković*

GENDER, DISINFORMATION, AND SECURITY: NEW CHALLENGES FOR GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES IN THE POST-YUGOSLAV SPACE

The contemporary security environment is increasingly shaped by hybrid threats, in which disinformation and information manipulation serve as instruments in political struggle. This paper examines gender-targeted disinformation as a tool for delegitimisation and social control. Through the lens of securitisation theory and strategic communications, it explores how gender roles are instrumentalised to mobilise the public and reproduce power structures.

The research investigates how these discourses shape securitisation in the post-Yugoslav context and their impact on public trust and gender equality policies. The empirical analysis is based on qualitative case studies from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2018–2024), focusing on media reporting and online communication.

Findings indicate that women in politics and activists are frequent targets of coordinated online attacks combining misogyny, conspiracy theories, and “foreign mercenary” narratives. This form of symbolic violence (*sensu* Pierre Bourdieu) challenges their political legitimacy based on identity rather than policy. While the international framework, notably UNSC Resolution 1325, acknowledges gender in security, it insufficiently addresses the digital dimensions of modern threats. In the region’s post-conflict settings, the stigmatisation of feminism and LGBTIQ individuals is utilised to provoke polarisation and undermine social cohesion.

The paper concludes that gender-targeted disinformation is a significant security challenge affecting democratisation and institutional trust. It highlights the need for a systemic integration of gender perspectives into counter-hybrid threat strategies. Furthermore, it advocates for developing institutional resilience through media literacy, regulatory frameworks, and robust support for women in public and political life.

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Keywords: Ender-targeted disinformation, securitisation, strategic communications, gender equality, hybrid threats, post-Yugoslav space



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