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Prospects and Challenges for Female Leaders from the Balkans



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ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to show the position of female leaders in business and political spheres in Serbia and surrounding countries. Women fought for their equality in society in the early 21st century, but not so successfully in some countries of Eastern Europe. The Parliaments of several EU member states have almost equal number of men and women (Finland, Sweden, Iceland), while Bosnia and Herzegovina has about 17% of female MPs. This problem is present not just in the political but also in the business sphere. The paper specifies the reasons such as traditional attitude and mentality of the Balkan people as well as the lack of trust that women can coordinate a group of people and act as leaders in society. The literature review shows that other authors explain it by inadequate implementation of the Strategy on Gender Equality and Government's inability to solve the problem.

KEY WORDS: *women leadership, Balkan, labour market*

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Introduction

In business and politics, leaders' role is primary for achieving prosperity, because they are able and can motivate their associates, contribute to achieving the organization's goals (company's growth and increased profits) and thus affect the reduction of unemployment and the growth of economic indicators in the country. An individual or a leader can realize goals and achieve success if there is a certain group of people that trust him/her and are selflessly devoted and committed to work and organization. Given the above, it is obvious why the study on leadership has become popular among researchers since the beginning of the twentieth century (Jevtic, 2007).

In recent decades, women have successfully fought for their equality in society and proved they are capable of great achievements. Naturally, with the development of leadership, women's leadership gains in importance and becomes an interesting phenomenon for analysis. Over time, the research on leadership has shown that both sexes can equally contribute to the improvement of company's operations if they possess leadership skills, knowledge, experience, education, despite a small number of women in leading positions in companies and in public administration for years. Many global companies have recognized the contribution women can provide to the private sector and acted towards reducing the gap between men and women. Studies also showed that companies with a higher representation of women in their management or boards have better business performance (Djulich & Kuzman, 2013). Therefore, an initiative was launched to increase the number of women in leadership positions around the world.

National strategies, created and implemented in the Balkan countries at the beginning of the 21st century, had a great impact on increased participation of women in the labour market. The national strategy for improving the position of women and promoting gender equality in the Republic of Serbia emphasized the need for increasing the number of women in higher positions as well as for improving the economic position of women, achieving gender equality in education, improving the health of women and promoting gender equality in health policy, prevention and combating violence against women and improving the protection of victims and eliminating gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality in the media (The National Strategy For Improving The Position Of Women And Promoting Gender Equality, 2009).

Bearing in mind the current trends in world literature, the aim of this paper is to present the status of women in leadership positions, i.e. to provide a clearer picture of the participation of women in leadership positions in the public and private sector of the Republic of Serbia and selected countries in the region. Special attention has been paid to the processing of actual statistical data from publicly available providers like Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, World Bank and the International Labour Organization.

Literature Review

Significant interest for analyse of the leadership phenomenon is demonstrated by Hunt (1991), who, in his study in the 1990s, stated there are more than 10,000 of empirical studies on the topic of leadership, and that most of the studies are carried out in the period from 1978 to 1985 (Jevtic, 2007). There is no universal definition of leadership, although its essence is known to all. Some of the first studies on this subject show leadership as the interaction between people using different impact for achieving the goals of the organization (Yukl, 1989). Authors define leadership as the mobilization of labour resources, such as institutional, psychological, political ones, so as to satisfy the motives of followers (Burns, 2003), while others define it as a process of joint and voluntary effort invested to fulfil the objectives (Jacobs & Jacques, 1990). Attitudes have changed over time, depending on the climate, participants in the process, time, but the common element is that leadership requires the presence of a person who is ready to lead a group of people in order to realize common goals.

Based on the global research conducted by Bullough et. al. (2012), we can conclude that developed countries that invest in the business environment, social development, economy, technology and infrastructure, political freedom and culture are positively associated with the participation of women in political leadership. This indicates that developed countries will have a higher percentage of women in leadership positions and in political life. Despite the fact that leader is quite an affirmative concept around the world; this term in Serbia and the Balkan countries often has a negative collocation, while leaders themselves are faced with negative comments and their disputed role in business. Studies on the analysis of leadership in Serbia showed that successful entrepreneurs, at leading

positions in Serbia, gained their status thanks to factors such as timing of the commencement of operations, financial position of the family or marital status, while age is not identified as an important factor for leadership. The most important factor of leadership is timing, since the best climate in Serbia was in the early nineties, more precisely at the beginning of the transition, when social and political environment was favourable for starting business (Glomazic, 2011). Another study of leadership in Serbia analysed the other side of this phenomenon and showed that citizens do not have a high opinion of leaders (Ajdukovic, 2007). The research by Ajdukovic (2007) showed that about 60% of the respondents answered there are no leaders in Serbia.

The most significant factors that influence (under)development of leadership in women are environment, tradition and mentality of the Balkan people. Here, women have fought for their place at important, top-level positions for years, whether these positions are in public state bodies or in private companies. Data from the labour markets of developed countries show that highest percentage of women in leadership positions is in Scandinavian countries. According to the latest statistics from January 2015, women on average participate in parliamentary life with about 40% in Scandinavian countries. For instance, out of the total number of members of the Parliament (MPs) in Sweden 43% are women, 41.5% in Finland, while this percentage is significantly lower in the other countries of the EU. In the USA, this participation amounts to around 26.7%, Asia 19%, Europe about 25%, Pacific 15.7% (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015). In the nineties, women in the Nordic countries were almost equal in the parliament, unlike in the US Senate that had a small number of women until 1995. Looking at the global picture, the presence of women in politics has doubled since 1995 (Centre for American Women and Politics, 2015).

Despite the progress women have made in the public and private sectors in recent decades, they remain under-represented in management positions and their position is unfavourable compared to male population (Adler, 2001; Davidson and Burke, 2000). According to the research from Catalyst Inc. Knowledge Centre, the results indicate that in just four countries women represent over 20 per cent of board members (Finland, Sweden, Norway and United Kingdom); in 13 countries between 10 and 20 per cent; in 14 countries between five and 10 per cent and in 13 countries less than 5 per cent (Quick Take: Women on Boards, ILO, 2015). Besides holding a small number of leadership positions, women earn less than men,

as shown by the research conducted by a group of authors considering the period from 1983 to 2000. The results show that women on average earn about 44% less than men (Krishnan and Park, 2005; Carter, Simkins and Simpson, 2003). In Central and Eastern Europe, the gender pay gap is about 21%. For instance, in Turkey, women can expect to earn just 25 per cent of men's income over their lifetime (Progress of the world's women, UN, 2015).

In the period 1993 to 2000, the countries in Central and Eastern Europe were going through the process of transition from socialist to market economy, which caused high unemployment rate and low participation of women in the labour market. Women were not able to combine work and family life. However, after the transition, some countries have managed to decrease Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR). For example, in the Republic of Moldova women's LFPR decreased from 61.1% to 37.6% in period between 1990 to 2013 (Progress of the world's women, UN, 2015).

Methodological Notes

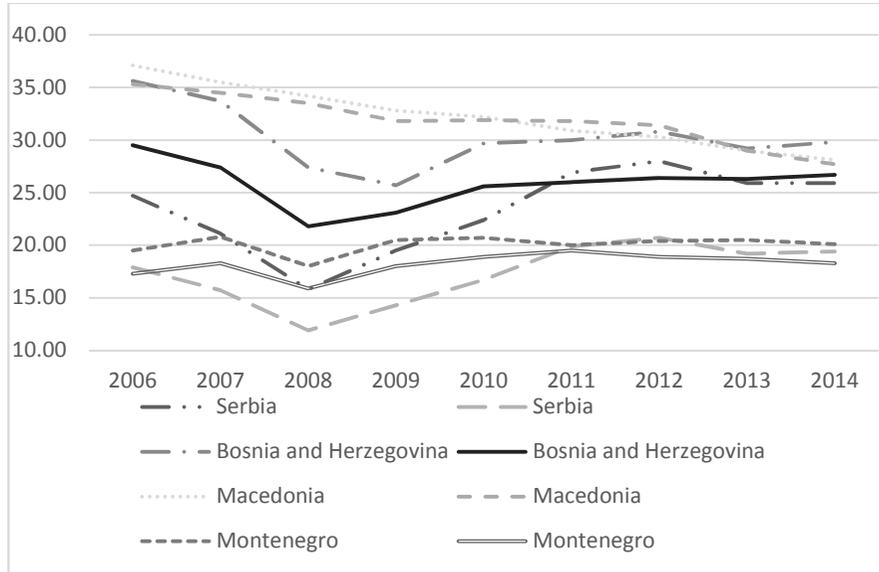
The paper pays special attention to the countries of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, with special emphasis on countries that have not accessed to the EU. Analysis of the labour market in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia demonstrates significantly different patterns of active participation of women in the private and public sector. All four analysed countries were created after the dissolution of SFR Yugoslavia. Some of the countries separated peacefully, while others went through wars. These characteristics with specific market factors defined their economic systems that are essentially inherited, noting that they entered the process of transition in different periods. Although in various stages of transition, the problems they face are generally similar and relate to the difficulty of establishing (sustainable) economic growth, attracting investments, solving the problem of high unemployment, achieving gender equality and servicing public and private debts. The issue of gender equality is the most sensitive when observing and analysing labour market. Unemployment is one of the most acute social problems in all countries. Even in developed European countries, the solution of this problem is of great importance. In order to solve the aforementioned problem the European Union Member States implemented the public policies on the labour market, with the primary aim of reducing the period of unemployment and inactivity of the working-age population.

To examine the role and prospects of female leaders in the Balkan countries, it was necessary to examine their position on the labour market, taking into account the global economic crisis that is still a significant factor. It is important to emphasize that the implementation of the strategy since 2010 has significantly increased the number of female leaders and reduced unemployment among women. All this is in accordance with the adopted Europe 2020 strategy, which was implemented in 2010 by the European Commission, in order to increase employment. At the same time, the Strategy for equality between men and women from 2010 to 2015 states that it is impossible to realize the objectives of the Europe 2020 without utilization of potentials and talents of the female gender. Analysis and monitoring of the employment rate for women enables determination of the movement of female leaders in developing countries. In addition, it was necessary to analyse labour force participation rate in relation to gender, which is defined by International Labour Organization as the proportion of the population ages 15 and older that is economically active: all people who supply labour for the production of goods and services during a specified period. Raw data for this research were obtained from the International Labour Organization, while the systematization and analysis were conducted by the authors of this paper. We analysed all available surveys in the selected countries, to better examine the role, position and potential of women as leaders. Unfortunately, hardly any country conducts this kind of research, and we were limited to data obtained from Serbia and Montenegro.

Analysis of Employment with Respect to Gender in Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia

Chart 2 shows trends in the number of unemployed in relation to gender in the analysed countries in 2006-2008. Although female unemployment is increased in all analysed countries, the trend of unemployment rate coincides with both sexes. The highest unemployment rate is registered in Macedonia, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and finally Montenegro.

Chart 1: Unemployment female and male (% of female and male labour force) in chosen countries



Source: International Labour Organization

The labour market of Bosnia and Herzegovina has felt significant effects after the breakout of the global economic crisis, more precisely since 2008. The unemployment rate fluctuated from 23.9%, to 24.1%, 27.2%, 27.6%, 28.1%, 27.4%, 27.9% from 2008 to 2014. Within the working-age population, women make up 51.1% of the total population and 51.8% of the working-age population. According to the data of the International Labour Organization, the unemployment rate for women in the period from 2008 to 2014, on average is around 28.4%, while for men this percentage is lower by 4%. Within the working-age population, 8% of women and 9.7% of men have a university degree, masters or doctoral degree. Out of the total employed population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 31.3% are self-employed or entrepreneurs, where women make up 24.9%, which is comparable to regional averages. At the same time, women represent 71% of unpaid workers in family (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2012).

The labour market of FYR Macedonia recorded a slight decline in the unemployment rate in the period from 2008 to 2014, but the country is still struggling with the highest number of the unemployed population in the Balkans. The unemployment rate was extremely high in 2008, amounting to

33.8%, but it fell after six years to 27.9% (ILO, 2015). Unemployment rates among women and men were not dramatically different and in the period from 2008 to 2014 amounted on average to about 31%. The highest rate of unemployment among women was 34.2% and 33.5% for men in 2008. Inactive female population reached 63.7% at the end of 2012, while male inactive population for the same period reached a rate of 36.3%. The difference becomes even more dramatic when observing data on education of men and women, which makes it clear that significantly more women have a university degree (26% versus 14.7%). Furthermore, only 8.9% of men with a university degree were unemployed, compared with 25.7% of women (Statistical Office of FYR Macedonia, 2013).

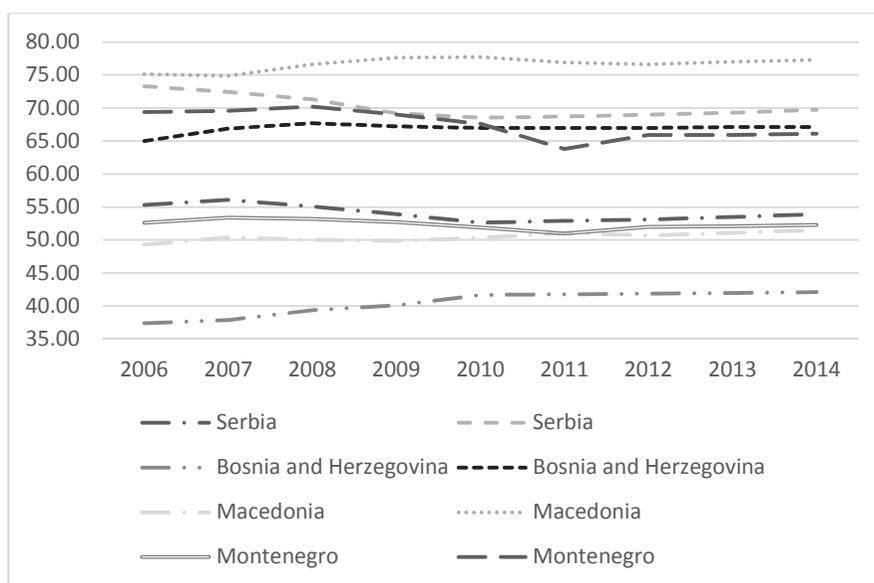
Following the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality, since 2007, the unemployment rate among women in Montenegro has not changed drastically in last few years. Since 2008, the unemployment rate among women was 18%, and after the onset of the financial crisis, from 2009 to 2014, mild changes were observed from 20.5%, 20.7%, 20%, 20.4%, 20.5%, 20.1% (ILO, 2015).

The position of women changed significantly in the Republic of Serbia, after the establishment of the Council for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, after formed special internal organizational units of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Office of Gender Equality and the Committee for Gender Equality of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia in 2000. In this way, the priorities of action and measures for improving the position of women and promotion of gender equality were established. Changes made at the beginning of the 21st century significantly affected the decline in the unemployment rate for women in the period from 2005 to 2008, when the unemployment rate in women ranged on average around 22.25 (ILO, 2015). However, since 2008, the labour market of the Republic of Serbia felt the consequences of the economic crisis. In five years, the unemployment rate for women increased from 19.5% to 22.4% in 2010, but reached the highest unemployment rate in 2012 among women in the Republic of Serbia amounting to 28% (ILO, 2015).

Analysis of the Activity of Women in the Labour Market in Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia

Graph 2 shows Labour force participation rate in selected countries in relation to gender. At first glance, several significant facts can be identified. First, women are significantly less active in the labour market in all the countries. A significant difference is obvious in the activities of women and men, as women's participation in any country does not exceed 60%, whereas the activity of men in any country is not less than 60%. These inequalities are presented in the graph by a great gap that separates these two segments in two halves. Second, the number of the least active women is in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while women are the most active in Serbia. The chart also shows that in the period 2006-2014 there were no significant changes to the intensity of the activities of women and men in the labour market.

Chart 2: Labour force participation in chosen countries



Source: International Labour Organization

Country analysis shows that women in Bosnia and Herzegovina are present in the private and public sector at a very modest extent. Furthermore, in this country they face discrimination in the labour market and receive lower wages, although they often support their families (Djulić

& Kuzman, 2013). In order to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices and to ensure gender equality in the society, Bosnia and Herzegovina embarked on key legislative reforms in 2003. The Gender Equality Law was adopted in 2003 and then amended in 2009 (Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2009). The labour market participation of women has increased in the last 6 years, and according to data from 2014, 42.1% of women are present in the lab or market, while this percentage dropped to 39.4% in 2008 (International Labour Organization, 2015).

The adoption of the Strategy on Gender Equality in FYR Macedonia 2013-2020 enabled a major step for women's participation in the labour market. This strategy makes gender equality a social and political priority of the country, but it remains to be seen whether it will give more impressive results compared to previous initiatives (Djulić & Kuzman, 2013). Participation of women in the labour market over the past 6 years on average was about 50.66%, while the rate of participation of men in the labour force was on average 77.1% (ILO, 2015).

Although the unemployment rate, according to official data, is the lowest in Montenegro, there is a significant number of studies on gender inequality in the labour market. The research conducted by the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development of Montenegro, shows that more than half of the surveyed women believe that men find employment easier than women. The reasons stated is that they primarily have a greater choice and the existing prejudices that are not in favour of women. In addition, over 60% of female respondents believe that there is a division of "male" and "female" jobs in Montenegro. The majority of women interviewed in this study agrees that they find a satisfying, well-paid job with more difficulties than men. They reveal the most common cause is the family responsibility as a women's priority, while men have a better inter-relationships and mainly play the roles of decision-makers. Over 40% of female respondents said that gender of an employee is an important factor for an employer (Centre for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development of Montenegro, 2015). Data obtained in this research suggest that employers assign tasks relating to decision-making preferably to men. Out of the total number of respondents who believe that women find a satisfactory job with more difficulty than men, the majority of women as possible reasons for the fact that women occupy "second-class" positions mentions "the employer is a man" or "male connections and acquaintances". In order to eliminate the extremely pronounced gender inequality, Montenegro adopted the Law on

Gender Equality in 2007. The report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was prepared, and the Office of gender equality, various associations and organizations has been successfully working since 2003, which are involved in issues of gender equality and improving the status of women in Montenegro (Law on Gender Equality in Montenegro, 2003).

Interesting research results on the topic of women's leadership in Montenegro could be found at Masnic (2011). On the basis of the surveyed, the results showed that 44.4% of respondents fully supports the statement that a woman leader is a threat to the birth rate, 66.1% fully agrees with the view that a woman's place is at home, and 58.6% stands behind the statement that if women were in leadership positions, the country would be in a mess.

Analysis of the Position of Women and Their Prospects on Leadership Positions in Serbia and Neighbouring Countries

Position of women in the broader region varies drastically, and ranges from one extreme where a woman is the head of a country, to another where a large population of girls does not even finish elementary school. Although Croatia has the lowest percentage of female leaders in the market, women have traditionally had great influence in politics. It is the fact, that this is the only country in the region with a female president. Unlike Croatia, the Report on the Millennium Development Goals in 2004 points out to the great inequality of women and men in Albania. This report proposes specific measures to increase the representation of women in decision-making bodies, with the aim of empowering women to participate in economic development and reducing the dropout rates among girls, especially in rural areas. Civil society organizations have actively participated in the formulation of local objectives and development priorities.

A growing trend in the number of educated women was noticed in Serbia and Montenegro, which has a significant impact on increasing the participation of women in public life and in leadership positions. According to the latest United Nations Women Progress Report 2015, Bosnia and Herzegovina is faced with the largest percentage of uneducated women (5%) and a small percentage of highly educated women 36%, while this rate in Montenegro is 54%, and 52% in Serbia. However, there is a paradox, since Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia have the highest percentage of

women as top managers in private companies, 24% and 26% respectively, while this percentage is only 19% in Montenegro, according to World Bank data from 2013 (World Bank, 2015).

Table 1: Educational of men and women by country, 2015 (in percentage)

	Women			Men		
	No education	Only primary education	Secondary or higher education	No education	Only primary education	Secondary or higher education
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5.0	59.0	36.0	2.0	42.0	56.0
Montenegro	4.0	42.0	54.0	1.0	30.0	69.0
Serbia	4.0	44.0	52.0	2.0	37.0	60.0

Source: UNW Progress Report, United Nations, 2015

Note: Data on Macedonia are not available

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina drastically changed after the conclusion of the Dayton Agreement. Although women were active participants in the peace process, they were barely represented in the new political structures. The Law on Gender Equality was adopted in 2003 and was amended in 2009 with the aim to protect and promote gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina in all spheres of society. However, statistics show that in 2008 women accounted for 13.33% of the representatives of the House of Peoples and only for 11.90% of the representatives in the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Institute of Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2009). According to the data from December 2015, women in the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina accounted for 21.4% of the representatives, i.e. out of 42 seats in the parliament 9 seats were occupied by women. In Serbia, there are 43% of female MPs, i.e. out of 250 seats in parliament 85 are held by women, with the similar situation in Macedonia where women's representation is 33.3%. The lowest percentage of women in parliament is noted in Montenegro (17.3%), where women have 14 out of 81 seats in the parliament.

Table 2: the percentage of women in national parliaments 2015

The percentage of women in national parliaments			
Country	Seats	Women	% Women
Bosnia and Herzegovina	42	9	21,4%
Montenegro	81	14	17,3%
Serbia	250	85	34%
Macedonia, FYR	123	14	33,3%

Source: Inter-parliamentary Union Statistics 2015

According to the latest data of the International Labour Organisation, the participation of women in leadership positions in Serbia is 31% out of the total number of top positions in the business world. Unlike Serbia, the largest percentage of women in leadership positions in the region is found in Bulgaria, amounting to 36.7% in 2014 and 36.5% in 2013. The situation in the EU Member States is quite similar for 2014, and the percentage in Croatia, Macedonia and Romania was 23.2%, 29% and 31.7% respectively.

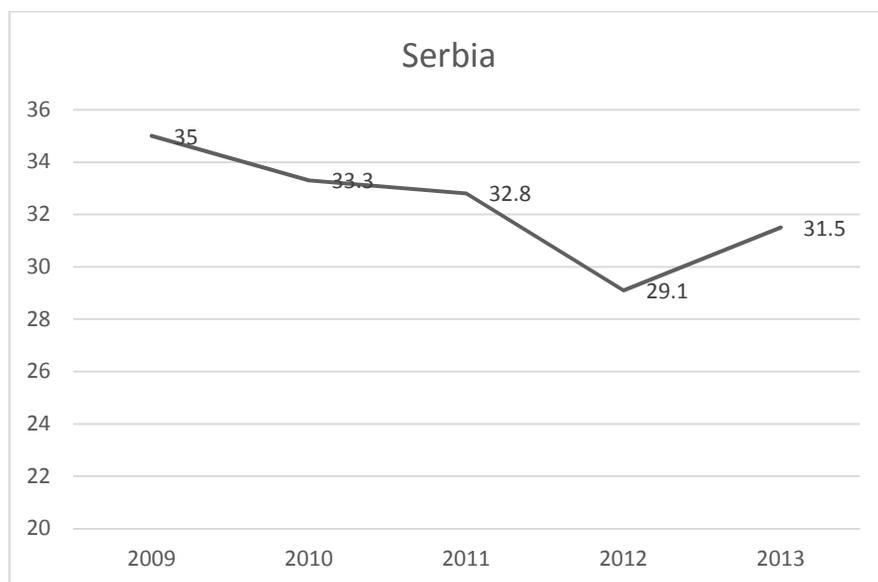
Table 3: Percentage of Female leaders in chosen countries

Country	2013	2014
Bulgaria	36.5	36.7
Croatia	24.4	23.2
Macedonia	27.3	29
Romania	31.2	31.7
Serbia	31.5	

Source: ILO, 2015

According to the research conducted in April 2014, only 18 women are heads of state, 22.9% participate in parliaments around the world. Although the number of women in managerial positions is significantly increased in recent decades, it is expected to grow in the future.

However, in Serbia there is a trend of decline in the number of women in leadership positions. The results indicate a drop by 5.1% in recent years, namely from 2009 to 2012, while the participation of women in leadership positions increased by 1.6% from 2012 to 2013.

Chart 3: Participation of women in leadership positions in Serbia

Source: ILO, 2015

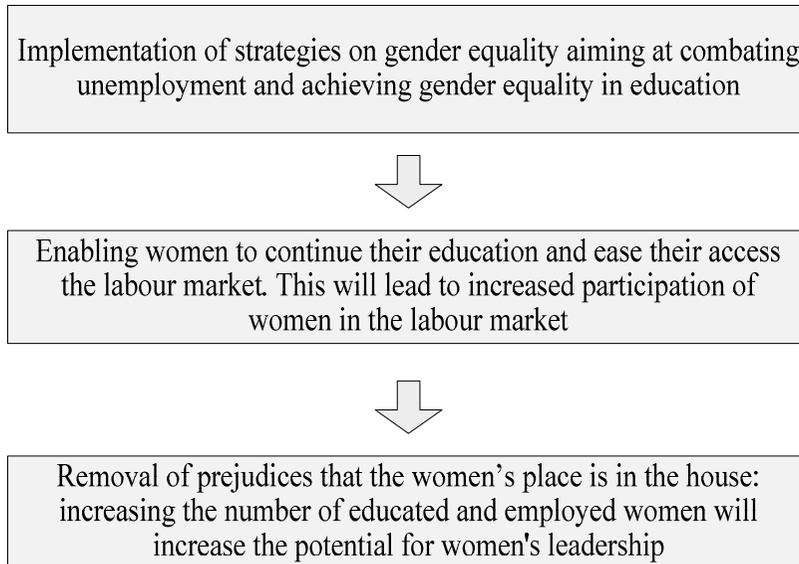
Interpretation of Results

Women leaders in the territory of the Balkan Peninsula are struggling with the negative impact of a patriarchal environment. Mistrust is still present as well as the opinion that a woman cannot represent a group of people and therefore the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliament is represented by a small number of women, while the participation of women in parliamentary life in Serbia and Macedonia is at the EU average. Women successfully fought for gender equality, which was supported by the Strategies implemented at the beginning of the 21st century. Although the Strategies aim to reduce unemployment and to reform the education system in developing countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina is still struggling with a small number of highly educated women, which is one of the preconditions for increasing the number of women leaders in the public arena.

The main problems causing an unsatisfactory number of women in leadership positions include: insufficient number of educated women; a small percentage of women in the labour market resulting in high unemployment; the mentality and tradition of the Balkan people; mistrust and prejudice. Having analysed the data of this study, it was observed that a

prerequisite for the development of women's leadership is an adequately established gender equality strategy that would provide women with the prospects for education and easy access to the labour market and the consequent impact on reducing unemployment.

Chart 4: The process of increasing women's leadership



Conclusion

Nowadays, being a good leader is a challenge for both men and women. The role of a leader is attached to the delegation and achievement of objectives, and also the stimulation of certain groups of people towards their realization. A good leader possesses responsibility, dominance, confidence, integrity, intelligence, determination, perseverance, and more, but everything that a woman can have too.

Numerous studies, which are analysed in this paper, show a strong link between the level of development of society and involvement of women in public and private, or political and economic life of a country. Practically, this can be proved by the analysis of data on women's participation in parliament in the countries covered by this study. Countries with the highest proportion of women in parliament are Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway which has 40% of participation of women, Egypt with 3%, Kuwait 1%,

while the presence of women in Saudi Arabiaparliament is unthinkable. On the other hand, we can conclude that the participation of women in the USA which is one of the economically developed countries is at a high level because many factors affect the growth of women's participation. Women that are at leading positions motivate and encourage other women and they are role models for other women to run for leading positions.

We can believe that the struggle for gender equality will be completed in the future, and that women will have the same rank as men in the political and business leadership positions. In countries with a very strong traditionalist belief about the role of women in society these changes and having women in leadership positions will be hard to accept in the near future. It is necessary to work on improving the business environment and to provide women with significantly more opportunities to participate in political leadership, because it is an important aspect for the implementation of social changes.

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Izgledi i izazovi žena lidera sa Balkana

A P S T R A K T

Cilj rada je da prikaže položaj žena lidera u poslovnoj i političkoj sferi u Srbiji i zemljama u okruženju. Žene su uspele početkom 21. veka da se izbore za ravnopravnost u društvu ali u nekim zemljama Istočne Evrope nedovoljno. Pojedine zemlje članice EU u narodnom parlamentu imaju skoro izjednačen broj muškaraca i žena (Finska, Švedska, Island) dok je u Bosni i Hercegovini ovaj podatak oko 17% žena u parlamentu. Problem je prisutan i u poslovnoj sferi, a ne samo u političkoj. U radu se kao razlozi navode tradicionalni stav i mentalitet balkanskog naroda kao i nedovoljno poverenje da žena može da rukovodi grupom ljudi i preuzme ulogu lidera u društvu. Dok pregledom literature, drugi autori navode kao razlog neadekvatna implementacija Strategije o ravnopravnosti polova i neumeće Vlade da reši problem.

KLJUČNE REČI: *žensko liderstvo, Balkan, tržište rada*

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