

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN FYR MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO AND SERBIA

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Nataša Golubović¹, Srđan Golubović²

¹University of Niš, Faculty of Economics, Serbia

²University of Niš, Faculty of Law, Serbia

Abstract. *Reconciling work and family life is one of the key elements of the quality of work and employment. The concept of work-life balance refers to the creation and maintenance of such work environment that allows employees to achieve a balance between work and personal commitments, which create the basis for increase of employee loyalty and productivity growth. Exploring the ways in which an individual functions in the spheres of work and private life, as well as mechanisms of achieving balance between these two spheres, provides a fresh perspective on the interaction between work and private life, as well as opportunities to achieve synergy between these two spheres. The aim of this study is to investigate the quality of the actual balance between work and private life in selected countries of the Western Balkans and on this basis to identify the key problems employees in these countries are confronted with in balancing work and private life.*

Key words: *balance, work, private life, working conditions.*

INTRODUCTION

Work plays very important role in the lives of people, firms and society in general. Individuals value work for income it provides, but also because it contributes to self-esteem and personal happiness. It is important from the standpoint of the welfare of the individual, but it also constitutes a cornerstone of economic and social development. Increasing employment is the backbone of many broader social goals such as poverty reduction, productivity growth and social cohesion. It is therefore not surprising that issues related to work and employment are at the top of the development agenda in almost all countries.

Certain jobs have a wider significance from the society's standpoint. Women's employment change the structure of household consumption and lead to the growth of investment in health and education of children. Jobs associated with global markets helps

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Corresponding author: Nataša Golubović

Faculty of Economics, University of Niš, Trg kralja Aleksandra 11, 18000 Niš, Serbia

E-mail: natasa.golubovic@eknfak.ni.ac.rs

diffusion of new technologies and managerial knowledge and skills. Employment of young people is an alternative to criminal and deviant behavior. It is obvious that employment, in addition to benefits that it brings to individuals, also provides significant benefits for society as a whole. European Union pays considerable attention to work and improvement of working conditions is among the key economic and political goals. EU Strategy 2020, which emphasizes the realization of smart, inclusive and cohesive growth, puts at the forefront work and working conditions, especially the impact of economic growth on the quality of work, employment and enterprise performance. Priorities formulated within the Europe 2020 strategy in the field of work and employment are also priorities of the Western Balkan countries.

Reconciling work and family life is one of the key elements of the quality of work and employment, contained in the Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission 2010a). Integrated guidelines for implementing the Europe 2020 strategy emphasize the importance of achieving work-life balance, as a determinant of increasing labor market participation (European Commission 2010b), especially of the younger population, women and the elderly. Unlike the EU, where implementation of the work-life balance programs has been perceived as a segment of corporate social responsibility, in the USA initiative is on the part of enterprises, trying to achieve comparative advantages through work-life balance programs. Results of the implementation of these programs have shown that the comparative advantage and social responsibility are not contradictory, but rather interdependent objectives: enterprises achieve competitive advantage on the basis of employment, productivity and service quality, thus contributing to the society in which they operate.

Balance between work and private life is determined by a range of factors. On the one hand, this balance depends on the individuals, their ability to juggle work and family life, as well as the situation within the family. On the other hand, relationship between these two spheres of life depends also upon working conditions, working time characteristics, infrastructure, social protection systems and the like. Policies aimed at achieving work-life balance and programs aimed at securing the flexibility of work are now synonymous with a set of initiatives oriented toward establishing individual needs.

The aim of this study is to investigate the quality of work-life balance in selected Western Balkan countries. In this study, we will use data from the Third Quality of life Survey in Europe (Eurofound 2012). This research is based on the perception of citizens regarding different aspects of the quality of life. Indicators that are relevant for our study are in the area of work-life. Since this research has not yet been conducted in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, we were able to incorporate only Serbia, FYR Macedonia and Montenegro into our analysis. On the basis of research results, we will try to identify the key problems employees in these countries are confronted with while balancing work and private life.

1. DETERMINANTS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Concept of work-life balance points out the efforts and needs of employees to share their time and energy between work and other important aspects of their life. It refers to the creation and maintenance of such working environment that allows employees to achieve a balance between work and personal commitments, providing increased loyalty of employees and productivity growth. The key point is that individuals have some control over when, where and how they work.

Reconciling work and family life is one of the key elements of the quality of life. The firm and the family are the two key institutions for individual (Mortimer, Lorence, & Kumka 1986). Having in mind that activities related to work and family often take place at different time and in different places, and that according to the established division of labor by gender men have primary responsibilities at work and women in the house, researchers and employers often consider work and family as separate, independent and opposing systems (Parsons & Bales 1955). By exploring the ways in which an individual functions in the sphere of work and private life, as well as mechanisms that help them to achieve a balance between these two spheres, provides a new angle on the interaction between work and private life, as well as the possibilities to achieve synergy between these two spheres (Zedeck 1992).

During the last two decades, however, a sharp increase in the number of individuals with significant responsibilities at work and in the family was registered. A growing number of one-parent families, working women, families with one employee, fathers engaged in child care (Brief & # 38; Nord, 1990; Fullerton, 1995) was registered. A significant number of individuals is taking care of elderly family members and those who are unable to care for themselves. For these individuals, achieving a balance between above mentioned two spheres is an imperative (Kemske 1998). In the conditions of the rising share of women in the labour force, working parents are struggling to achieve a balance between work and family commitments. Today's workers have a lot of responsibilities towards work, children, housework, parents, etc., which increase the pressure on individuals, their families and communities in which they live. The conflict between professional and personal spheres of life is a serious problem that affects workers, their employers and community. This problem becomes more pronounced with the increasing proportion of women in the labor force, rising number of one-parent families and families with both working parents, need to care for the elderly and rising unemployment.

Bearing in mind the need of employees to reconcile work and private life, employers have introduced a number of changes, such as flexible working time, flexible forms of work engagement, family-responsibility leave, paid maternity leave, childcare facilities for workers with small children, work at home, job-sharing and the like (Caudron 1997; Flynn, 1997). Many companies go even further by changing the organizational culture in a direction that supports family life (Galinsky and Stein 1990). Bailyn (1997) has identified three features of work culture that supports family life: flexible organization of work, flexible work process and recognition by the organizational leadership that family responsibilities are important. Such changes allow employees to devote attention to their families, without jeopardizing career and advancement in the organization (Regan 1994).

The manner in which work-life balance is accessed is not the same in all countries. In EU countries, programs oriented towards achievement of this balance are result of state legislation and are based on the social responsibilities of corporations, and the concept of corporate social responsibility refers to the company's obligations to take into account interests of customers, employees, shareholders, community and environmental aspects while performing their activities. In the United States above mentioned balance is primarily perceived as a contributing factor to the comparative advantage, in terms of hiring the quality labour force and increasing employees' loyalty towards the company where they work (Pocock 2005).

From the perspective of enterprise, the benefits of implementation of work-life balance programs are reflected in the field of human resources. Work-life balance programs

represent an effective marketing method to attract workers. These programs help to establish a symbiotic link between the employer and the employee, resulting in numerous benefits. Employees who better combine work and private life are satisfied, which in terms of the employer provides productivity growth, strengthens team spirit and loyalty to the employer, reducing the outflow of workers. Lower outflow of workers reduce the costs of hiring and training the new employees. It is logical to assume that aforementioned programs improve the efficiency of workers in the workplace. There are no studies, however, that definitively and unequivocally associate efficiency increase in the workplace as a result of the implementation of these programs and financial performance. Companies usually quantify the benefits of such programs through various performance indicators that are indirectly related to the financial results.

Work-life balance is determined by a range of factors - income, health, family situation (Eurofound 2004). Working time characteristics and its structure significantly affect achievement of this balance. Whether to work or not, how many hours will individual spend at work are often decided inside a family, depending on the circumstances (Eurofound 2012b). Requirements in terms of work-life balance vary depending on the life cycle of individual and the gender. Cultural factors (mothers who stay at home to care for children), infrastructure (childcare facilities for schoolchildren), availability of flexible working time, also affect how and to what extent men and women manage to reconcile work and private life. We should also mention the role of social protection system.

Employers can play an important role by allowing certain arrangements concerning working time (suitable to the workers' needs) or by requesting more flexibility from workers in accordance with the enterprise needs. This means that flexibility can have a positive, as well as negative aspects for both employers and employees. For instance, if some workers prefer flexible working time in order to fulfil some personal obligations, it may require additional organization by the employer or could simply be impossible. Some companies may offer temporary jobs, while workers need permanent employment. The same applies to work in shifts or overtime, which may or may not match employees and companies needs, depending on circumstances or preferences.

2. THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

In our analysis of the work-life balance in selected Western Balkans countries we shall use data from the Third European Quality of Life Survey (Eurofound 2012), conducted in all EU member states, as well as seven of the nine countries involved in the enlargement process (Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Iceland, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey). Research of the quality of life in Europe is a representative survey conducted by Eurofound, which serves as a rich source of information about living conditions, housing, local environment, health, public services, social cohesion and the quality of society, as well as subjective well-being. In all countries, testing was conducted using the same methodological approach: face-to-face interviews in people's homes, with selected random sample of the adult population (18 years and older), residing in the country for at least six months. Interviews were conducted in the national language/languages of the country. The sample size was 1000 respondents in all the examined countries that are not EU members, except in Turkey, where sample size was 2000.

Having in mind rising interest in the quality of life, this study is an important contribution to the monitoring and research of these topic. Quality of life research, carried out by the Eurofound, involves the following areas: subjective well-being, health and mental well-being, living standards, work-life balance, public services, trust and tension, participation and social exclusion. For each of these areas appropriate groups of indicators were selected. Results obtained on the basis of monitoring indicators in selected areas of the quality of life explain objective life conditions, as well as subjective well-being, both individual life circumstances and perception of the quality of society. They help to get an overview of the quality of life in one country. For our research relevant data are those related to the achievement of the balance between work and private life. In Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, this research has not been conducted yet, and we are able to include only Serbia, FYR Macedonia and Montenegro in our analysis. Quality of life research is carried out every four years, by the Eurofound. Data used in this analysis were obtained from the third wave of research of the quality of life, published in 2011. In FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro quality of life research was conducted in May-July 2012.

Since previous wave of research conducted in 2007 encompassed only FYR Macedonia, while data for Serbia and Montenegro are available only in the third wave of research, we were limited to the analysis of the current situation and were not able to analyze changes in the work-life balance through time.

3. EMPLOYMENT IN FYR MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO AND SERBIA

Employment is very important from the individual point of view as a source of income necessary for existence. Bearing in mind that labor market is a very important space in which social interactions take place, employment represents the cornerstone of economic and social development. Increasing employment is the backbone of many broader social goals such as poverty reduction, productivity growth and social cohesion and issues related to work and employment are at the top of the development agenda in almost all countries. Table 1 shows employment rates in FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in 2012.

Table 1 Employment rates, total and by gender

Country	Total	Men	Women
FYR Macedonia	39,0	47,1	30,8
Montenegro	40,1	45,9	34,6
Serbia	45,3	52,4	38,1
EU-27	68,5	74,6	62,4

Source: Anketa o radnoj snazi (2012), Republika Srbija; Anketa o radnoj snazi (2012), Crna Gora; Labour Force Survey (2012), Republic of Macedonia; European Commission Eurostat database, 2012
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_unemployment_ifs/data/main_tables

Table 2 shows employment rates by sex and age in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro. Data indicate that in the working age population (18-64 years), the employment rate is highest for the age group 25-49. Employment rates in all observed groups is greater for men than for women. If we compare employment rates for FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia with the EU-27 average, we can see that employment rates in these countries are significantly lagging behind the EU average.

Table 2 Employment rates, by gender and age

Country	gender	15-24	25-49	50-64
FYR Macedonia	male	18,1	64,9	54,7
	female	12,6	46,3	31,1
Montenegro	male	14,1	67,3	64,6
	female	12,9	55,4	37,1
Serbia	male	19,1	68,4	49,3
	female	9,4	56,4	42,4
EU-27	male	34,8	83,5	65,6
	female	30,8	71,4	51,9

Source: Anketa o radnoj snazi (2012), Republika Srbija; Anketa o radnoj snazi (2012), Crna Gora; Labour Force Survey (2012), Republic of Macedonia; European Commission Eurostat database, 2012 http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_unemployment_ifs/data/main_tables

Data from the national labor force surveys for FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro indicate that majority of workers are employees (73.2% in FYR Macedonia, 81.9% in Montenegro and 69.6% in Serbia). The share of self-employment in total employment ranges from 16.1% in Montenegro, 18.4% in FYR Macedonia, to 22.8% in Serbia. Self-employed without employees represents 13.6% of the total employment in FYR Macedonia and 18.9% in Serbia. The share of self-employed varies depending on gender and age. Males have larger share in the category of self-employed in relation to females, whereby this share increases going from the lower (18-24) to higher age groups (50-64 and over). In contrast, the share of females is higher in the category of employees.

Most workers are employed in the private sector and private sector employment share is highest in FYR Macedonia, with 75% of the total number of employees in the private sector. In Montenegro, this ratio is 57.3% and in Serbia 51.8%. When it comes to employment in the public sector, public sector employment share in total employment is higher for females than for males. Thus, for example, in FYR Macedonia 24.4% of employed males are working in the public sector, compared to 25.9% of employed females. In Serbia this ratio is 40.7% versus 49.6%, while in Montenegro 41.2% and 43.9%. The share of public sector employment in total employment is higher for older age groups. These employment characteristics are very important in terms of the ability of workers to achieve a healthy balance between work and private life.

There is a relatively high level of job insecurity. In the survey conducted by the Eurofound, respondents were asked to what extent, in their opinion, it was likely that they could lose their job in the following 6 months. The percentage of those who responded to this possibility „very likely“ or „quite likely“ amounts to 16.6% in Serbia, 24.1% in Macedonia and 12.8% in Montenegro. Only in Montenegro this percentage is slightly lower than the average for EU-27, which is 13.3%. In all three countries, perception of the possibility of losing the job is greater for females than males. Thus high level of job insecurity perception certainly puts additional pressure on the employees and affects the work-life balance.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORKING WEEK

When it comes to the balance between work and private life, the relevant characteristics of individuals and families are gender, age, as well as whether the family is with or without children. In addition, the time spent at work is of significant importance (Duxbury et al., 1994; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985 Gutek et al. 1991). We can assume that no one wants a career and job that would not leave him with enough time for a personal life, family and friends. Other factors are: job security, support from the supervisors, support from associates, overwork and demanding job, job dissatisfaction, as well as the widespread use of communication technology that blurs the boundaries between work and private life.

Table 3 Average number of hours per week spent on the main job

Country	Average number of working hours per week		
	All	Men	Women
FYR Macedonia	42	43	41
Montenegro	46	49	43
Serbia	45	48	43
EU-27	40	43	36

Source: Eurofound 2012a, calculations by the authors

Length of the working week, or the number of working hours per week, is a very important determinant of the balance between work and private life. A large number of hours spent at work and stressful job do not affect only the ability of workers to reconcile work and private life, but are also associated with numerous health risks related to physical and mental health of individuals. The average number of working hours per week at the main job ranges from 42 in FYR Macedonia (43 for man, 41 for women), 45 in Serbia (48 men, 43 women), to 46 in Montenegro (49 men, 43 women). The average number of working hours per week for the EU-27 is 40, meaning that the average number of working hours in FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia is higher than the EU average (Table 3). When it comes to gender, the average number of working hours per week at main job is lower for females than for males. The average number of working hours per week is lower in countries with the bigger share of part-time employed workers in total employment. The share of workers with part-time employment in total employment in Serbia is 8.1%, FYR Macedonia 6.4%, and Montenegro 4.5%. Part-time work is associated with lower income, which is reflected in the fact that the average working week is shorter for individuals who belong to the lowest income quartiles and increases as we go to higher income quartiles.

A significant number of employees have a second job - in Serbia 9.7%, Montenegro 8%, FYR Macedonia 11.5%, which is higher than in the EU-27 average, where 5% of employees have a second job. Number of hours per week they usually spend on the job is also significant – on average 19 hours per week in Serbia, 16 in the FYR Macedonia and 14 hours in Montenegro, which is much higher than the EU-27 average and that is 13 hours per week.

Table 4 Preferences of employees in terms of working hours

		FYROM	Montenegro	Serbia	EU-27
work less	all	61	53	53	44
	men	57	56	62	45
	women	67	50	41	42
work the same ¹	all	32	39	39	43
	men	34	34	32	42
	women	28	44	49	43
work more	all	8	8	8	14
	men	9	9	6	12
	women	5	6	9	15

Source: Eurofound 2012a, calculations by the authors

There is a clear link between the number of hours that employees are spending on the job and the number of hours they would like to spend (table 4). Employees were asked how many hours per week would they prefer to work, taking into account funds needed for a normal life. Over half of the employees in all three countries indicated that they would like to work less per week, while the number of those who would like to work more is less than 10%. Among employees that belong to the lower income quartiles there are relatively more employees willing to work more hours per week. In Serbia, even 28.2% of employees belonging to the lowest income quartile would like to work more hours per week, compared to only 5.4% of those in the highest income-quartile. In FYR Macedonia this ratio is 14.9% versus 4.8%, while in Montenegro 10.6% and 4.8%.

5. UNPAID WORK: TAKING CARE OF FAMILY MEMBERS AND HOUSEWORK

Some of the key social roles and responsibilities are realized through unpaid work, during leisure time. Housekeeping, taking care of children and sick family members are primarily performed by family members. Although these are non-paid jobs, they certainly affect the way individual performs tasks at the workplace. Working at home, taking care of those who can not take care of themselves (children, grandchildren, parents or disabled family members), attending various courses and training, participation in voluntary organizations or engagement in political activities require significant amount of time, but can be usefull for individuals, their families and society as a whole.

Since most of the unpaid work is performed by women, it has important implications in terms of gender equality, particularly regarding the possibility of securing the paid work. Men and women have different responsibilities in terms of unpaid work. In general, women take the most of the burden of unpaid work (whether they work full-time or not), while men spend more time on paid work. Children play an important role, especially for single parents (men and women) and mothers (who are married). Single parents and couples with children have more hours of unpaid work compared to single parents or couples without children. Married women with children and single mothers report more hours of unpaid work than men of the same status. Table 5 presents the frequency of the unpaid work by gender. Indicators in the table were obtained on the basis of answers to the following

¹ "Work the same" is defined as the existing average ± 2 hours.

Table 5 Hours per week spent doing unpaid work by those in employment, by country (%)

		FYROM	Montenegro	Serbia	EU-27
Taking care for children	all	48	35	43	34
	men	42	25	40	29
	women	54	45	45	39
Cooking and/or housework	all	56	50	64	76
	men	29	21	38	60
	women	82	79	88	91
Taking care for elderly or disabled relatives	all	7	8	10	9
	men	4	8	9	7
	women	10	8	10	11

Source: Eurofound 2012a, calculations by the authors

question: In general, how often are you involved in any of the following activities outside of paid work: 1) taking care of children, grandchildren; 2) cooking and/or housework; 3) taking care of elderly or disabled relatives. Only answers of the respondents who carry out mentioned forms of unpaid work every day or several days a week were taken into account. Based on indicators in the table, we can conclude that differences between men and women in related to the unpaid work significant, especially when it comes to housework. Slightly smaller differences emerge in the taking care of children, and smallest differences are present in the care for elderly or disabled relatives (Table 5). Compared to the EU-27 average, in FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia relatively more employees spend every day or at least several days a week taking care of children or grandchildren. On the other hand, percentage of those who perform cooking and/or housework every day or at least several days a week is higher in EU-27 than in FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The differences between these countries and the EU-27 are negligible when it comes to care for the elderly.

In addition to frequency of performing unpaid work, number of hours employees spend doing this work is also important. Table 6 show the number of hours per week that employees in FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are spending in unpaid work.

Table 6 Hours per week spent in performing unpaid work by those in employment, by country

		FYROM	Montenegro	Serbia	EU-27
Taking care for children, grandchildren	all	17	32	40	18
	men	13	21	33	28
	women	20	38	46	23
Cooking and/or housework	all	14	16	16	9
	men	10	10	10	14
	women	16	17	18	11
Taking care for elderly or disabled relatives	all	11	16	26	8
	men	8	14	20	9
	women	13	16	28	8

Source: Eurofound 2012a, calculations by the authors

Number of hours per week that employees in the FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are spending doing above mentioned unpaid activities are given in Table 6. Although in FYR Macedonia even 48% of employees spend each day or at least several days a week taking care of children or grandchildren, number of hours per week devoted to children care is below the average for EU-27. On the other hand, although a smaller percentage of employees in Montenegro and Serbia spend time in taking care of children, they are spending twice more time for child care than employees in FYR Macedonia, and more than the average for EU-27. The average number of hours that employees in Serbia spend in taking care for the elderly or disabled relatives was significantly higher than in FYR Macedonia and Montenegro, as well as in relation to EU-27 average. For all of the mentioned categories women on average spend more hours doing unpaid work compared to men, which certainly reflects on the balance between work and private life.

6. ORGANIZATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORKING WEEK

The number of working hours is certainly very important for the quality of life both at work and outside work. However, organization of a working time can also play an important role in balancing work and private life. Flexibility in working time arrangements can contribute to a better balance between these two spheres. Workers who work full time or overtime are less likely to achieve a satisfactory balance between work and private life. Working part-time can have a positive influence on the work-life balance. According to available data, less than 10% of employees working 34 or less hours per week have problems with achieving a work-life balance, compared to over 20% of those working full-time (Eurofound 2012b, p. 90).

Table 7 Compatibility of working time with family and social commitments of employees

		FYROM	Montenegro	Serbia	EU-27
Very well	all	17	12	20	26
	men	19	9	20	24
	women	14	14	20	27
Fairly well	all	58	65	40	53
	men	54	67	38	52
	women	64	63	42	53
Not very well	all	21	19	31	16
	men	23	19	32	17
	women	19	18	30	16
Not at all well	all	4	4	9	5
	men	4	4	9	6
	women	3	4	8	5

Source: Eurofound 2012a, calculations by the authors

Research provided by the Eurofond gives us opportunity to explore the extent to which working time arrangements fit with the family and social commitments of employees. Respondents were offered four variants of answer: very well, fairly well, not very well and not at all well. Results are presented in Table 7. In Serbia, 40% of employees answered that their existing working time arrangements do not fit very well or not at all well with their

family and social obligations. In FYR Macedonia and Montenegro, these shares are much smaller: 25% and 23%. The percentage of those who believe that existing working time arrangements fit very well or fairly well with their family and social obligations is lowest in Serbia - 60%. In FYR Macedonia and Montenegro these percentages are significantly higher and amounted to 75% and 77% (Table 7). When it comes to relation between genders, women generally report compatibility of the existing working time arrangements with family and social obligations to a lesser degree compared to men.

Working time schedule, variability and predictability of working hours affect the compatibility of working time arrangements and private life of workers, but the same solutions do not fit to all workers. In some cases workers would like to know exact time they have to come to work and when they go home from work (for example, when they have to take children from kindergarten or school). In other cases, certain flexibility will help workers to cope with the contingencies or adapt to developments in private life. Those who are faced with a traffic jam on the way to work benefit from flexible working arrangements. Some workers will highly appreciate if they can take a few hours off to visit doctor and the like.

Table 8 shows availability of various forms of flexible working time arrangements to employees. Compared to EU-27 average, a significantly smaller percentage of employees in FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia have the opportunity to use examined forms of flexible working time arrangements. As in the EU, in Montenegro and Serbia flexible working time arrangements are more accessible to men than to women. When it comes to possibility to accumulate hours for time off or take a day off at short notice, the exception is FYR Macedonia where these forms of flexibility are more accessible to women than men.

Table 8 Availability of flexible working time arrangements (%)

		FYROM	Montenegro	Serbia	EU-27
I can vary my start and finish times	all	26	23	25	43
	men	26	24	31	46
	women	25	22	18	40
I can accumulate hours for time off	all	35	27	25	41
	men	34	30	28	44
	women	36	22	21	39
I can take a day off at short notice when I need to	all	63	39	40	64
	men	62	42	42	67
	women	65	35	37	59

Source: Eurofound 2012a, calculations by the authors

As for the importance of different forms of flexible working time arrangements, employees in all three countries mostly valued the possibility of taking the day off when necessary. Employees were asked to value benefits of specific working time arrangements. Results are presented in Table 9.

There are obvious differences in the appraisals of the respondents in all three countries. However, most of them consider the ability to take a day off at short notice when needed the most important in balancing work and private life. Bearing in mind that women are more involved in unpaid work than men, it is not surprising that noticeable difference occurs in the access to support services. Higher evaluation of better access to services such as child care centers and facilities for the elderly is particularly pronounced in countries where this infrastructure is relatively underdeveloped.

Table 9 The role of flexible working time arrangements in balancing work and private life (%)

		FYROM	Montenegro	Serbia	EU-27
Having more control over start and finish times of my work	all	39	39	34	35
	men	39	43	33	34
	women	38	36	36	36
Changing the number of my weekly working hours	all	34	38	25	29
	men	35	40	24	27
	women	34	36	26	30
Being able to take a day off at short notice when I need to	all	49	50	41	46
	men	50	51	37	45
	women	47	49	46	47
Having better access to support services (for example, childcare, elderly or long-term care)	all	36	40	29	33
	men	34	38	26	31
	women	38	42	32	35

Source: Eurofound 2012a, calculations by the authors

7. DIFFICULTIES IN BALANCING WORK AND PRIVATE LIFE

Reconciling work and private life represents a long-term goal of employment and social policy in the EU. It is an integral part of the Europe 2020 strategy, not only for the purpose to enable more people to reach the paid work, but also to increase gender equality. Table 10 presents the incidence of problems at work due to family responsibilities as well as the impact of work on family life. We took into account only respondents who answered that they face these problems several times a week or several times a month.

Table 10 Difficulties in balancing work and private life, by country (%)

		FYROM	Montenegro	Serbia	EU-27
I have come home from work too tired to do some of the household jobs which need to be done	all	72	72	79	53
	men	63	67	76	50
	women	77	78	83	56
It has been difficult for me to fulfil my family responsibilities because of the amount of time I spend on the job	all	48	52	50	30
	men	44	46	49	29
	women	54	61	52	31
I have found it difficult to concentrate at work because of my family responsibilities	all	24	31	26	14
	men	22	30	24	13
	women	26	31	29	16

Source: Eurofound 2012a, calculations by the authors

Generally, employees in all three countries believe that work affects their family life more than responsibilities towards the family affect their job performance. In EU-27 there is no significant difference between men and women when it comes to dealing with difficulties in balancing work and private life. In FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, women have more difficulties in balancing work and private life in relation to men. There is an obvious link between the problems in achieving a balance between work and private life

and the number of working hours per week. Also, for the same number of working hours per week women have a higher percentage of reported problems in achieving a balance between work and private life.

Eurofond research allow us to understand difficulties that employees face in an attempt to establish balance between work and private life. In Table 11 employees are divided into three groups, according to difficulties in establishing work-life balance: first, where employees are facing difficulties both at work and at home (at least several times a month); second, where they are faced with difficulties either at work or at home; third includes employees who are faced with little or no difficulties. Montenegro has the largest share of employees who are faced with difficulties both at work and at home in an attempt to balance work-private life and it is twice as high compared to the EU-27 average. Serbia has the highest percentage of employees who are faced with problems in establishing the balance either at work or at home. At the same time, the percentage of employees who are faced with little or no difficulties is significantly lower in Serbia than in the FYR Macedonia and Montenegro and twice as lower as the average for EU-27.

Table 11 Strain-based conflict, by country (%)

		FYROM	Montenegro	Serbia	EU-27
both at work and at home conflict	all	23	30	25	13
	men	21	29	23	12
	women	26	30	29	15
work or home conflict	all	49	44	55	43
	men	46	40	55	42
	women	52	48	56	45
no or weak conflict	all	28	26	19	43
	men	33	30	23	46
	women	22	21	15	40

Source: Eurofound 2012a, calculations by the authors

In Serbia, FYR Macedonia and Montenegro there is a relatively high percentage of women and men who experience strain-based conflict between work and private life. Serbia has the largest percentage of the population that is experiencing conflict between commitments to work and private life (85% of women and 77% of men). It is possible that it has something to do with the organization of work and inflexible working hours. Private life, to a certain extent, is shaped by daily household tasks and their distribution among family members. Housework may be a significant additional burden on the behalf of women if they perform all of housework, particularly if they are employed. Difference in the contribution of men and women to housework in Serbia (50%) is above the EU-27 average (Table 12).

There is a relatively high percentage of women of a working age (49% in Serbia, 58% in Montenegro and 49% in FYR Macedonia) that are not part of the labour force. However, more than half of them - 57% in Serbia, 62% in Montenegro and 65% in FYR Macedonia would like to have a paid job. These data indicate that the country has the potential to increase participation rates in the labor market by developing a more balanced work organization. It would also create conditions for higher gender equality in relation to work and family commitments.

Table 12 Work-life balance

	FYROM	Montenegro	Serbia	Range for 34 surveyed countries		EU-27
				Min	Max	
Conflict between work and private life (in any aspect, % women)	78	79	85	Italy 47	Cyprus 86	59
Conflict between work and private life (in any aspect, % men)	67	69	77	Italy 39	Serbia 77	57
Performing housework at least several days a week, difference between men and women (percentage points)	53	58	50	Finland 11	Turkey 72	30
Women, economically inactive, who wants to work (%)	65	62	57	Luxemb. 46	Island 91	70

Source: Eurofound 2012c.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we examined possibilities of employees in FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia to harmonize responsibilities at work with private life and family commitments. We conclude that a relatively large percentage of employees in these three countries are faced with difficulties in reconciling work and private life. Number of working hours during the week is one of the key factors that determine work-life balance and employees in these countries show preferences toward shorter working time because more than half of the respondents in all three countries indicated that they would like to work less per week. Within the same working time arrangements, women expressed more difficulties in reconciling work and private life as a result of their greater engagement in unpaid work compared to men. Women spend more hours compared to men performing unpaid work (for all forms of unpaid work), which certainly affects the possibility of achieving satisfactory balance between work and private life. Differences between men and women are considerable, especially when it comes to housework and, to a lesser extent, babysitting. It is not just the frequency of performing these tasks, but also the number of hours spent doing these jobs.

When it comes to the availability of flexible working time arrangements, considerably smaller percentage of employees in the FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia have the opportunity to use various forms of flexible working time arrangements compared to the EU-27 average. As in the EU-27, in Montenegro and Serbia, different forms of flexible working time arrangements are more available to men than to women.

Employees in the FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia believe that work affects their family life more than commitment towards the family affect their job performance. At the same time, women have more difficulties in balancing work and private life in relation to men. Montenegro has the largest share of employees who are faced with

difficulties both at work and at home in an attempt to balance work and family life, while Serbia has the highest percentage of employees who are faced with problems either at work or at home. Serbia has the largest percentage of the employees that experience conflict between work and family life (85% of women and 77% men), which is explained by the organization of work and inflexible working time.

Our research show that the introduction of various forms of flexible working time arrangements are important for overcoming the difficulties in balancing work and private life. In addition, development of infrastructure and better access to support services (eg, child care, adult care, transport) also plays a significant role.

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KOMPARATIVNA ANALIZA RAVNOTEŽE POSAO-PRIVATNI ŽIVOT U BJR MAKEDONIJI, CRNOJ GORI I SRBIJI

Usklađivanje posla i privatnog života jedan je od ključnih elemenata kvaliteta rada i zaposlenosti. Koncept ravnoteže posao-privatni život odnosi se na stvaranje i održavanje takvog radnog okruženja koje omogućuje zaposlenima da ostvare ravnotežu između posla i ličnih obaveza, što obezbeđuje povećanje lojalnosti zaposlenih i rast produktivnost. Istraživanje načina na koji pojedinac funkcionira u sferi posla i privatnog života, kao i mehanizama postizanja ravnoteže između ove dve sfere, pruža novi ugao gledanja na interakciju između posla i privatnog života, kao i mogućnosti ostvarivanja sinergije između ove dve sfere. Cilj ovog rada je da istraži kvalitet ostvarene ravnoteže između posla i privatnog života u odabranim zemljama Zapadnog Balkana i da na osnovu toga identifikuje ključne probleme sa kojima se zaposleni u ovim zemljama suočavaju u balansiranju posla i privatnog života.

Ključne reči: *ravnoteža, posao, privatni život, uslovi rada*