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Short Scientific Article

## MODERN SOCIETY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF EIDERLY PEOPLE IN THE R. OF MACEDONIA<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract:* Aspects of social exclusion occur as a multifaceted problem of contemporary society and at the same time are subject of treatment of many economic, political and scientific experiences and discussions. However, this problem has not yet become a priority issue for many societies, including Macedonia. Poverty and social exclusion represents a threat for over one third of European citizens. It is assumed that about 10 percent of this number is the elderly. A large number of Macedonian citizens are in unsatisfactory social circumstances: they do not have access to public goods and services. Most of pensioners and the elderly have low pensions, not enough to meet their needs. In the Republic of Macedonia is not yet known exactly how many elders who enjoy no pension at all, although it is assumed that their number relatively high. Social exclusion is closely related to unemployment, poverty and social isolation which influence each other. This paper aims to examine the situations and activities to lessen the social exclusion in this country from the perspective of modern life, the transformation of the family in contemporary societies. The paper begins with theoretical and methodological framework with regard to the problem of social inclusiveness, and continues with social circumstances and in the end with conclusions and suggestions how to improve the current situation.

*Keywords:* poverty, social exclusion, elders and modernity

*We all talk about the poor, but nobody talks to them, Mother Teresa*

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## Introduction

In contemporary sociology, special attention is paid to the social component, as a complex process with the help of which is fulfilled the character of social system. Today's sociology researches are oriented towards understanding, publication and interpretation of the correlation between social structures and social actors' actions. Without defining this correlation, it is not possible to determine their development, movement and orientation. A sense of inclusion or exclusion depends on the situations in all social systems. Being integrated socially, means to be equal with others in all social spheres. Being socially integrated means to receive benefits or other forms of social services offered from the state. Interpersonal integration means establishing and maintaining family ties, ties with friends or neighbors, which are important in the case of moral assistance or companionship. All these systems are important and complementary between them. Social exclusion becomes a serious problem when an individual is excluded from most of the systems, especially if that exception is longer or permanent. Despite this, such a definition of social exclusion is not entirely accurate, it enables us to determine the dimensions of social exclusion which between them are dependent and intertwined. (Suçur 2004 Socioloska Luca / IV2 2010). The analysis of definitions of social exclusion originates as a general characteristic of a multidimensional concept, meaning a multiple exemption: poverty, unemployment, access to income, lack of property, education, social prestige, etc. Because of the complexity of this theoretical concept, there are still no standards and instruments neither indicators nor dimensions of social exclusion research. Some authors, during their research emphasize different number of categories, dimensions and indicators of social exclusion. Regardless of diverse approaches and definitions, exclusion is often understood as a virtuous circle which can become a reality by three elements: unemployment, poverty and social isolation. Various constituent elements of social exclusion, especially in contemporary conditions affect each other, which ends with the interruption of connections and relations in society. It usually starts with job loss, which worsens the standard of living and leading to the dimension of living in poverty. The European Commission defines social exclusion as a multidimensional concept which connects tangible and intangible aspects of living standard, a process that pushes certain individuals on the margins of society and prevents them to fully participate in society, due to individual poverty, lack of basic competencies, the chances of lifelong learning or because of discrimination. On the other hand, social inclusion usually defined as an affirmative activity for changing conditions which leads to social exclusion, but their more concrete definition varies a lot at the definition of different organizations. To accomplish the inclusion, income and employment are very important, but not enough. A society that strives to include all citizens is characterized by efforts to reduce inequality and the tendency to establish a fair balance between individual rights and obligations to increase social cohesion. (<http://www.cesi.org.uk>) (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion). In this search we have used data from different statistical sources, replenished with

personal interviews, talks and elders files glance, through which a methodological procedure for a successful analysis of attitudes, expectations and needs among groups and certain individuals is provided, all this for easier understanding of the process of social exclusion of the elderly. With the application of scientific methods, the data collected in the field provide initial and basic assumption for shaping and defining the conditions for social exclusion of elders in Macedonia.

### **Social exclusion of elders**

The average age of the world population is growing, so in Macedonia, which for the first time passed the old population coefficient with 12% of residents who are over the age of sixty. Poverty and social exclusion represents a threat for almost a quarter of European citizens. It is assumed that 10% of that number is elderly people. A large number of Macedonian citizens are under bad social circumstances: they do not have satisfactory access to public benefits and services. Most of retired and elderly receive low pensions, insufficient to please their basic needs. Two-thirds of pensioners receive pensions lower than the average of Macedonia. In the Republic of Macedonia is still not known precisely how many old people do not enjoy their pension rights, even though it is estimated that it is a very large number. Citizens of this country live four years less than the inhabitants of the European Union countries. UN projections are that in 2015 the Republic of Macedonia around 33% of the population will be over 60 years old. Population with higher age is in Pellagonia region and the population with younger age is in Pollog region. Social exclusion means exclusion from family, friendly and neighborly ties as well as numerous professional networks. Researches on socially excluded individuals show that causes of social isolation are the complex combinations of social, family and individual reasons. In this paper are reviewed the situations and activities for mitigation of social exclusion as well as suggestions from the perspective of EU policies. The paper begins with a theoretical and methodological framework of social exclusion, continuing with the description and comparisons with EU member countries.

After presenting the situation in Macedonia, especially the priorities and disadvantages of countries of the region, the paper ends with a conclusion and suggestions for improving the current situation. In some researches by authors as (Galli, D., Paugam, S., Sporer, Ž., Štulhofer, A., Andersen, G., etc.), there is a strong link of social exclusion with senility, income, living conditions, and the environment also. Social exclusion is often linked to major events in life, such as the death of the partner, divorce, unemployment or disability. Such events are usually accompanied by the loss of social connections. Elders are often, more exposed to such situations than the youngsters. In addition, health problems, disability, chronic illnesses, and even violence against them<sup>1</sup>, increase the risk of social exclusion. All researches on the position of the elders in Macedonia

confirm the principles of regional examples on the causes and consequences of social exclusion of this social group. The elders, respondents to different needs and researches, complain that their relationship with family and relatives has changed, that the contact and connections are reduced to some sort of help, care and so on. In Macedonia, a more often exposed group from social exclusion are the elderly (parents of emigrants, elders who remain in so-called migrating villages), then pensioners, the unemployed, individuals with low education, single parent families, etc. (Nacionalna strategija za borba protiv siromashtijata i socijalnata isklucenost vo Republika Makedonija 2010-2015).

Statistical data on the number of the elderly, their socioeconomic and geographic position have identified several groups of elderly who are more often subject to the risk or completely excluded from social networks. In the first group as the most vulnerable elders fall those persons who have no close relatives and they have no family support or other social solidarity. In the second group belong elders who live in families with their relatives. They have the support of their closest relatives and here is kept the emotional bond with the family. The third and the largest group, is consisting of elderly, whose families are employed overseas.

Their children, grandchildren, nieces and cousins, who live away from their parents or other elderly people in a family relation, do not have enough time or the opportunity to provide adequate care to the elders, thus increasing their feeling of forgetfulness. In the fourth group of seniors belong elders who live in remote and forgotten villages of the country. This category of the elderly in addition to the sense of amnesia (most often by their children) are burdened with lack of necessary social and health protection which hinders the fulfillment of basic living needs such as food, clothing, heating and electricity. According to ethnicity, the elders of Albanian ethnicity, because of the still traditional way of living (family with two and more brothers in a community, still presents a tendency to care for the elderly, but this condition from year to year is worsened as a result of migration and overseas employment. Registered elderly persons (pensioners and beneficiaries of any social assistance), for example, from the region of Tetovo and Gostivar, who live alone, represents a drastic increase of this category, and the difference of 10-15 years, should worry us (Sinani 2014: 5).

1 According to the UN Programme, the strengthening of national capacities for prevention of family violence “any individual over 65 or 32 percent of the country's elders have tried this kind of violence. Elders are often more exposed to psychological, financial and physical violence. Abuses occurred more often at home”.

## Social exclusion and modern society

Causes of social exclusion, in most cases are related to social changes and can be divided into several basic groups: the processes of social changes, can act on the exclusion of individuals from the social processes and social spheres, for example, with the change of common property, a large number of employees were left jobless and without means for living, or with the change of social system: from the monist system to parliamentary system: the politics may increase or reduce the social exclusion of certain social groups or geographic regions (example the region of Skopje at the expense of other regions of the country) and the neglect of villages. Institutions, due to discriminatory policies may exclude from social and networking links many individuals and groups, primarily based on a selective approach, poor quality of services, or ineffective laws or their ineffective application, for example, inefficient management of pension pillar, or insufficient access to insurance companies up to inadequate policies and health insurance service to elders. Sometimes values and ethical norms, which are not that transparent and latent, while operating in daily practice in almost all spheres of life (Colin 2008), may contribute to increased social exclusion of elders. In this regard, sociologists point out that social exclusion of the elderly is more as a result of profound moral changes and norms, and less as an individual choice. Thus, for example, an adult and a family man can decide to move from village to town or in another country for the purposes of employment and a better life, not of his own desire but of the need for a higher living standard, because social components system, such as social protection, employment, health care, etc., they are obliged to provide protection just because of these risks. The example of Ireland in 2001 when it was concluded that 11% of individuals who were affected by an illness in the family became poor (Eurohome impact, 2002). Even for these individual factors can be claimed that there is an important link of social factors. Conscience for increased care for the family and the elderly, as well as the need for better relations, mutual solidarity between generations, although present, are not found positive examples or improvement of the situation of social exclusion of elders. One such report best reflects the citation of Mother Teresa: *We all talk about the poor, but nobody talks to them*. Some states even have special ministries for social exclusion and solidarity between generations, whose duty is to take care of social, legal and health protection of the elderly. Policies of these countries want to verify the designation for special care for the elderly and stress the intention for mutual relation between young and old generations, which is well-defined in all European documents (Copenhagen criteria for EU accession). With these activities is given more care and concern to the new generations for the consciousness about aging and the elderly, in the family, neighborhood, local community, in terms of the involvement of youth and elders in joint activities and programs for mutual cooperation. The understanding and good deeds, UN's determination for establishing a society for *all ages*. Analysis of the total number of forms and services and help offered to the elderly shows that for the largest number of elders, their family represents the main public support in their lives.

However, family solidarity and care for older family members, which is characteristic of the traditional way of life, is less and less present. Transformation of the family in Macedonia, the changing role of women in the family, new professions and business hours, migration of youth from country to city and overseas, are just some of the reasons for the increasing number of households only with elderly people, while fewer family members care for the elderly who live alone in their homes, due to their inherent dignity and the right to choice, it is an imperative to guarantee them access to services and rights for improving of their quality of life and to facilitate the accomplishment of daily tasks and duties. This is possible to be achieved in our society too, the development of non-institutional care, primarily, at the local level by activating the coordination of various factors oriented toward satisfying the needs of socially excluded elders. The examples of the European countries regarding the concept of non-institutional care for the elderly people, with fewer resources, can be achieved long-term effects and results, and in this way are being encouraged for activation the users and their families. With such a policy, the state strengthens the consciousness of the local population on the responsibility of the entire population and the necessity of inclusion of all state institutions. These measures provide conditions for a more qualitative life, dignifying and active life, adapted to the needs and abilities of each elderly person. The realization of such an activity requires changes in current state policy for the care of excluded elderly people, but also prevention of exclusion from institutional forms towards non-institutional forms of care, as a decentralized care and putting of a model of care and services with access for a greater number of elderly people in their homes, including all possible resources, especially from the local community. It is estimated that various forms of care for the elderly in the Republic of Macedonia through state institutions is around 1%, which is the lowest level of institutional care for the elderly in Europe.

### **Conclusions and suggestions**

The economic growth represents an important indicator for the reduction or protection from poverty and social exclusion. However, economic empowerment (although creates new jobs) is not always an indicator for the achievement of certain positive results. With the economic and social policy, the society should strengthen social packages for the poor and other vulnerable categories of society. Strengthening represents a right relationship to socially vulnerable categories, i.e. the poor, in order to motivate them to gain their status. Society should help them to gain new skills for the needs of the economy, motivate them to exit from poverty and isolation. No one benefits more than the poor by leaving the virtuous circle of social exclusion, even the state, because people who work and earn money, engage more easily in social activities (Gallie 1999). The overall economic crisis with the growth of the number of unemployed and the need for additional finances for social funds puts under pressure most of

the state economies. Not always states are prepared for such an action, and Macedonia as a country with weak economy is a striking example.

During the review and comparative analysis (mainly with EU countries and countries of the region) in order to mitigate the social exclusion of old people in Macedonia, the following conclusions and suggestions have been highlighted:

- ◇ Multidimensional coordination and cooperation in social care with other factors (health, education, courts, employment agencies, on one hand, and cooperation with non-governmental and non-institutional organizations, with the aim of building of policies for a more efficient implementation of the inclusion of the elderly in society, on the other hand;
- ◇ Commitment for structural changes with the help of which the unemployed individuals will be enabled to realize their rights in the services for the unemployed, who with a suitable salary may provide additional means for living. This commitment will be aimed at facilitating the realization of the needs and daily tasks.
- ◇ Modernization of information centers, additional education in computer literacy of employees in these centers, avoiding of corruption and bribery;
- ◇ Permanent jobs in social work centers with users of social assistance (volunteering activities, work in the community / municipality, etc.), attending courses and training for new activities, such as keeping of hygiene and environmental protection, sports activities, etc. This is done for active aging and financial benefit;
- ◇ Enabling new social skills especially elderly in today's society (urban environments where reduced role of traditional neighborhood), computer work, social networks, increasing circle of new friends, bond with family, all this in order to integration of the elderly in society;
- ◇ Training with new social skills of the elderly, especially in today's society (urban environments where the role of traditional neighborhood is reduced), work with computer, social networks, increasing circle of new friends, relationship with family, all this for the integration of elderly people in society;
- ◇ Education for prevention of violence against the elderly in the family and community, in order to recognize the rights and duties of the elderly, arising from the legal system and social norms and values;
- ◇ Construction of new homes for the elderly as well as the so-called reconstruction of homes for the elderly, especially in some parts of Macedonia, where these shelters are not functioning for years;
- ◇ Increasing the awareness of the public for solidarity with the poor and socially excluded persons, in order to increase the

awareness for the need for the importance of collecting and distributing the necessary assistance to elders and their shelters.

The research results should take us to the new information, to the scientific knowledge on basic dimensions on the link between unemployment, poverty and social isolation, the care of institutions and affirmation of the concept of solidarity and moral sense for this important category of our society.



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## МОДЕРНОТО ОПШТЕСТВО И ОПШТЕСТВЕНОТО ИСКЛУЧУВАЊЕ НА ПОСТАРИТЕ ЛИЦА ВО Р. МАКЕДОНИЈА

**Абдилнасир СИНАНИ**  
**Ибиш КАДРИУ**

*Анстракт:* Аспектите на општествено исклучување се појавуваат како повеќестран проблем во современото општество, а истовремено се и предмет на анализа на многубројни економски, политички и научни искуства и дискусии. Но, овој проблем сè уште не е приоритетно прашање за многу општества, вклучувајќи ја и Македонија. Сиромаштијата и општественото исклучување претставува закана за повеќе од една третина од европските граѓани. Се смета дека околу 10 проценти од овој број се постарите лица. Голем број македонски граѓани се во незадоволителни социјални услови: немаат пристап до јавни добра и услуги. Повеќето пензионери и постари лица имаат ниски пензии, недоволни за задоволување на основните потреби. Во Република Македонија сè уште не се знае точно колку има постари лица кои не примаат пензија, иако се смета дека нивниот број е релативно висок. Општествената исклученост е цврсто поврзана со невработеноста, сиромаштијата и општествената изолација кои влијаат едни врз други. Целта на овој труд е да ги истражи ситуациите и активностите што се преземаат за да се намали општествената исклученост во оваа земја од перспектива на модерниот живот, трансформација на семејството во современите општества. Трудот почнува со теоретска и методолошка рамка во поглед на проблемот на општествена инклузивност, а продолжува со општествените услови, додека на крајот се даваат заклучоци и сугестии како да се подобри сегашната ситуација.

*Клучни зборови:* сиромаштија, општествена исклученост, постари, современост