

## Social Cohesion and Development

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# Social Cohesion and Development

# Κοινωνική Συνοχή και Ανάπτυξη

37 Εξαμνιαία Επιστημονική Επιθεώρηση, Ανοιξη 2024, τόμος 19ος, τεύχος 1

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ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ ΔΙΟΝΙΚΟΣ



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# SOCIAL COHESION AND DEVELOPMENT

Biannual Scientific Review

**AIMS AND SCOPE.** Social Cohesion and Development (SCD) is a biannual interdisciplinary scientific journal for research and debate on social policy, social cohesion and social development issues. It aims to advance the understanding of social cohesion in the contemporary development and to promote social justice within and between the nations. Articles are covering policy analyses, developments and designs, evaluations of policy outcomes, comparative research, analyses of the role of international organizations, the voluntary, private and local agents in social development and policy. The journal provides comprehensive coverage of a wide range of social policy and development issues, such as labour market and employment policies, poverty and social exclusion, ageing, pensions and social security, health and social care, education and training, family, gender and child policies, migration, crime and corporate responsibility, as well as civil society and third sector activities. The Review welcomes scholarly articles, book reviews and short research reports, in Greek or English. It encourages a multidisciplinary, comparative and historical approach.

# ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ ΣΥΝΟΧΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΑΠΤΥΞΗ

Εξαμηνιαία Επιστημονική Επιθεώρηση

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## ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ

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Χριστόφορος Σκαμνάκης, Μαρίνα Αγγελάκη  
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Η σημερινή οικονομική κρίση επαναφέρει επιτακτικά προς συζήτηση τα ζητήματα της κοινωνικής πολιτικής και του κοινωνικού κράτους. Ο παρών τόμος, αν και σχεδιαστήκε πρωτίστως ως διδακτικό εγχειρίδιο, αποτελεί μια κριτική και συνολική εισαγωγή στα θέματα αυτά. Πολυεπίπεδες προσεγγίσεις εξετάζουν τις κύριες έννοιες, το περιεχόμενο και την εξέλιξη του σύγχρονου κοινωνικού κράτους. Παρουσιάζονται οι επιμέρους κοινωνικές και δημόσιες πολιτικές, όπως η απασχόληση και οι εργασιακές σχέσεις, η κοινωνική ασφάλιση, η υγεία, η κοινωνική πρόνοια και ο κοινωνικός αποκλεισμός, οι πολιτικές για τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες, η εκπαιδευτική πολιτική. Κοινωνικοί κίνδυνοι, κοινωνική προστασία, κοινωνική αλληλεγγύη, κοινωνικά προβλήματα, κοινωνική συνοχή είναι οι άξονες γύρω από τους οποίους δομούνται αυτές οι πολιτικές. Οι οριζόντιου χαρακτήρα κοινωνικές πολιτικές επικεντρώνονται στο φύλο, στην τοπική αυτοδιοίκηση, σε υπερεθνικό και ευρωπαϊκό πεδίο, στην κοινωνική οικονομία και στην επιχειρηματικότητα. Τέλος, αναλύεται ο ρόλος των βασικών πυλώνων και εργαλείων άσκησης και εφαρμογής κοινωνικών πολιτικών, όπως αυτός της κυβέρνησης, των συνδικάτων, της κοινωνίας πολιτών και των επιχειρήσεων. Τα κεφάλαια του τόμου, γραμμένα απλά και κατανοητά από έμπειρους πανεπιστημιακούς και ειδικευμένους στο αντικείμενο ερευνητές, προσφέρουν μια συνολική και περιεκτική εικόνα των αντιστοιχων πολιτικών, της εξέλιξης και της εφαρμογής τους.

# Implementing the Guaranteed Minimum Income in Greece: An evaluation from the perspective of social services professionals

Andreas Feronas, *University of Peloponnese*  
Manos Spyridakis, *National and Kapodistrian University of Athens*

## Η Εφαρμογή του Ελάχιστου Εγγυημένου Εισοδήματος στην Ελλάδα: Μια αξιολόγηση από τη σκοπιά των επαγγελματιών των κοινωνικών υπηρεσιών

Ανδρέας Φερώνας, *Πανεπιστήμιο Πελοποννήσου*  
Μάνος Σπυριδάκης, *Εθνικό και Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών*

### ABSTRACT

In contrast to the growing literature on the effectiveness of Minimum Income Schemes (MIS) in alleviating poverty and social exclusion, evaluation studies on the Greek case are scarce. This study explores the effectiveness of the Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) in Greece concerning three dimensions: a) adequacy, b) accessibility, and c) enabling. To this end it draws on the findings of 250 quantitative questionnaires completed by social services professionals responsible for its delivery at the local level throughout the country. The findings reveal a picture of ineffectiveness of the Greek GMI in addressing poverty and social exclusion. The informants present a rather pragmatic view, that GMI is a measure that is "better than nothing" in turbulent times. In terms of accessibility, they are quite skeptical regarding several issues, such as the reliability of applications' assessment, its fair distribution, the extent to which prospective beneficiaries can easily get it as well as the transparency of eligibility criteria. In addition, they express a more discouraging view regarding GMI's ability in reducing both undeclared work and unemployment and they think that it doesn't give incentives to work.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Σε αντίθεση με την αυξανόμενη βιβλιογραφία σχετικά με την αποτελεσματικότητα των σχημάτων ελάχιστου εισοδήματος ως προς την ανακούφιση από τη φτώχεια και τον κοινωνικό αποκλεισμό, οι μελέτες αξιολόγησης για την ελληνική περίπτωση είναι σπάνιες. Η παρούσα μελέτη διερευνά την αποτελεσματικότητα του Ελάχιστου Εγγυημένου Εισοδήματος (Ε.Ε.Ε) στην Ελλάδα σε τρεις διαστάσεις: α) επάρκεια, β) προσβασιμότητα και γ) ενεργοποίηση. Για το σκοπό αυτό βασίζεται στα ευρήματα 250 ποσοτικών ερωτηματολογίων που συμπληρώθηκαν από επαγγελματίες κοινωνικών υπηρεσιών που είναι υπεύθυνοι για τη διενέργεια του σε τοπικό επίπεδο σε όλη τη χώρα. Τα ευρήματα αποκαλύπτουν μια εικόνα αναποτελεσματικότητας της ελληνικής περίπτωσης στην αντιμετώπιση της φτώχειας και του κοινωνικού αποκλεισμού. Οι συμμετέχοντες στην έρευνα παρουσιάζουν μια μάλλον ρεαλιστική άποψη, ότι το Ε.Ε.Ε αποτελεί ένα μέτρο που είναι «καλύτερο από το τίποτα» σε δύσκολους καιρούς. Σε ό,τι αφορά την προσβασιμότητα, είναι αρκετά επιφυλακτικοί σχετικά με πολλά ζητήματα, όπως η αξιοπιστία της αξιολόγησης των αιτήσεων, η δύκαιη κατανομή του, ο βαθμός στον οποίο οι υπουργίες δικαιούχοι μπορούν να το αποκτήσουν εύκολα καθώς και ως προς τη διαφάνεια των κρι-

Future research should expand the study of the effectiveness of GMI to the actual (or potential) beneficiaries of the Program.

τηρίων επιλεξιμότητας. Επιπλέον, εκφράζουν μια πιο αποθαρρυντική άποψη σχετικά με την ικανότητα του Ε.Ε.Ε να μειώνει τόσο την αδήλωτη εργασία όσο και την ανεργία και πιστεύουν ότι δεν δίνει κίνητρα για εργασία. Η μελλοντική έρευνα θα πρέπει να επεκτείνει τη μελέτη της αποτελεσματικότητας του Ε.Ε.Ε στους πραγματικούς (ή δυνητικούς) δικαιούχους του Προγράμματος.

**KEY WORDS:** Guaranteed Minimum Income, poverty and social exclusion, social services, Greece.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Ελάχιστο Εγγυημένο Εισόδημα, φτώχεια και κοινωνικός αποκλεισμός, κοινωνικές υπηρεσίες, Ελλάδα.

## 1. Introduction

The aim of this exploratory paper is to shed light in the implementation of Guaranteed Minimum Income (hereafter GMI) in Greece in the context of turbulent times (Greve, 2023). Drawing on primary administrative data and on the findings of 250 quantitative questionnaires completed by key informants (social workers and professionals) responsible for the implementation of the GMI in the so called "Community Centers" (hereafter CCs) throughout the country, the article focuses on its social impact with respect to three dimensions: a) adequacy, b) accessibility, and c) enabling.

Greek GMI is an example of Minimum Income Schemes (hereafter MIS), often referred to as "last safety nets", which should be available and accessible for everybody in need of income support to avoid poverty and social exclusion and which are rule tax-financed and means-tested. Furthermore, it forms part of the so called "third generation" social assistance programs (Kazepov, 2011), which combine the provision of income support with supportive social services and work reintegration programs for the beneficiaries (Clegg, 2013).

In recent years, MIS have been at the center of political and academic interest for several interrelated reasons. Initially, interest in MIS stemmed from their importance as an indicator of the ultimate social rights guaranteed by national welfare states (Leibfried, 1992) and of the extent of public commitment to social justice and social cohesion (Bahl et al., 2011). At the same time, they have been identified, at the EU level, as a main component of the route towards a more social Europe (Cantillon, 2019).

More importantly, however, the resurgence of this interest is closely linked to the wider debate on the restructuring of welfare states in the context of the successive crises (financial, Covid 19, inflationary) of recent years, under the growing influence of neoliberalism (Farnsworth & Irving, 2018). The gradual strengthening of the latter has led to a continuous residualization of social policy (Cantillon and Lanker, 2012) with an emphasis on the establishment of new 'last resort' institutions for the management of extreme poverty (Kazepov and Sabatinelli, 2006). Under these circumstances, it's not striking that one of the main features characterizing the reforms that took place during the great recession in the countries of the Southern European model, which were disproportionately affected by the effects of the crisis, was the extension of income maintenance support, beyond the scope of traditional contributory social insurance programs (Perez & Matsaganis, 2019; Lalioti and Koutsampelas, 2021).

Against this backdrop, Greece was the late comer with respect to the introduction of a general and nationwide MIS (2017). Its introduction goes hand in hand with the restructuring of the wider welfare system towards a liberal/residual direction in the context of the implementation of the bail out programs (Papatheodorou, 2015; Dimoulas, 2017). Hence, supranational actors, such as the European Commission, the IMF, and the World Bank, played a significant role, pushing for the promotion of the required institutional reforms and offering technical assistance for its implementation (Matsaganis, 2018).

Having said that, this paper seeks to contribute to the fast-growing literature on the evaluation of MIS. It combines the descriptive use of primary and secondary sources with the collection and processing of primary quantitative data to explore the views of professionals involved in the implementation of the Greek GMI at the local level, regarding its impact in alleviating poverty and social exclusion, in terms of adequacy, accessibility, and its enabling character. Hence, it aims to add to the few evaluation studies on the effectiveness of the Greek GMI in fighting these phenomena (Sakellaropoulos et al., 2019).

Following this introduction, the next sections include a review of the relevant literature; the methods used and research results. Conclusions summarize the key findings, discuss the limitations and strengths of the study and end with future research directions in the area of social service provision.

## 2. Literature review

Over the past decades, literature on the effectiveness of MIS in alleviating poverty and social exclusion is fast growing and largely characterized by the dominance of quantitative approaches (Gabos and Tomka, 2022; Almeida et al., 2022; Eichhorst et al., 2023). Relevant studies mostly focus on three main issues: (a) adequacy (i.e. how generous the benefits are to guarantee a minimum standard of living), (b) accessibility, in terms of coverage and the issue of non-take up, and (c) the enabling character of MIS (i.e. the extent that they also include the delivery of inclusive labor market policies and access to high-quality social inclusion services) (see e.g. Almeida et al. 2022 and SPC and European Commission, 2022 for an overview of the performance of MIS and associated issues in EU countries).

A noticeable exception is a large-scale EU study that took place between 2012 and 2015 and adopted a mixed methodology to evaluate the impact of member states MIS on the live courses of deprived individuals (Frazer & Marlier, 2016).

In addition, there are a few single country studies, that employ qualitative research strategies to offer more 'in depth' interpretation of the impact of MIS, based on the perceptions of the beneficiaries (see for example for the Spanish case Estepa-Maestra and Roca, 2018). In some (rare) cases, single country studies try to assess MIS by analyzing the perceptions of key informants (social workers of regional and local administrations) (Estepa-Maestra and Roca, 2017).

The review of the relevant literature reveals mixed results. On the rather complex issue of adequacy<sup>1</sup> most studies show that, over the last years, it has declined in most MS with a few exceptions (Gabos and Tomka, 2022; SPC and European Commission, 2022). This downward trend is largely due to the difficulty of adequate financing, especially in countries with high public debt (Cantillon, et al., 2018; Noël, 2019).

In addition, they indicate a clear pattern across EU countries. In the Scandinavian and continental countries, MIS tend to be close to the AROP line (over 65%), Mediterranean and Baltic countries show an average adequacy (between 40% and 65%), while most eastern European

countries have a low adequacy level (below 40% of the AROP line). More specifically, a European Commission's study shows that in 2018 only Ireland and the Netherlands provided levels of minimum income above the 60% poverty line (European Commission,2020). Gabos and Tomka (2022), found - across all household types - that the MGI of out-of-work households does not reach the 60% national poverty threshold in almost any European country, while about half of them (almost exclusively Western European ones) reach the 40% threshold<sup>2</sup>. In the same vein, an SPC and European Commission (2022) study sawed that, for the income year 2019, adequacy was highest in the Netherlands, Ireland and Italy, where the level of benefits of single-adult households exceeded or was very close to 90 %-100 % of the 60% poverty line, while at the lower end, the minimum income in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary was below 20 % of the poverty threshold.

Finally, Almeida et al. (2022) found that more than half of the EU countries provide MI amounts that are not sufficient in relation to an extreme poverty criterion (e.g., Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary), while on the other hand, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland and Malta are the countries that provide the highest proficiency (over 120% for a single adult). As expected, the adequacy levels decrease for all countries when considering a standard poverty criterion (60% poverty line). According to this criterion, only four countries show adequacy levels close to 100% (Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark).

On the issue of accessibility of MIS, it mostly depends mainly on coverage and the issue of non-take up. As regards the former, it can be measured as the ratio between the population eligible for the MIS scheme and the population in poverty conditions (Figari et. al.,2013). Relevant literature also provides a mixed picture across countries. Figari et al. (2013) show that the coverage rate of the AROP population varies from around 20% in Austria, Denmark, and Germany to around 70% in Poland, while improving substantially when using an extreme poverty threshold (40% of the national equalized median income). Frazer and Marlier (2016) highlight that in 2015 16 EU countries out of 27 present MIS with eligibility conditions ensuring 'fairly comprehensive' coverage, with the rest 8 countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, and Romania), presenting a very limited coverage. According to the findings of the EMIN project, coverage was low in certain countries, due to income thresholds to qualify for MIS that are extremely low, often below 40% of median income which is the absolute poverty line (Makinen,2018:16).

In a similar vein, Almeida et al. (2022) found that the coverage of MI schemes is quite heterogeneous across countries, yet insufficient in most of them, with less than half of the population in extreme poverty covered by these schemes. Overall, most countries fail in covering most of the population in extreme poverty, with only eight countries depicting coverage rates above 50%. Moreover, certain population groups are excluded, or their benefits are lower than in the general population (e.g., a large part of the working-age population young people, immigrants, asylum seekers, the homeless and the Roma) (Makinen,2018).

Non-take-up is also seen as a serious problem that is not adequately addressed. It refers to an incomplete benefit receipt among those who are eligible to claim the same benefit (Raitano, et al.,2021). Relevant studies converge on the fact that it varies between 40% and 60%, depending on the schemes and countries studied, while also underlying that the risk of non-take-up is particularly high for certain social groups (women, couples, young people, people with a low educational level and migrants, etc. (Frazer and Marlier,2009; Dubois and Ludwiniek,2015). A recent comparative study in four MS (Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands, Finland) and the United Kingdom corroborates previous findings, by showing that the non-take-up of minimum income schemes typically ranges around 30 % to 50 % of the eligible population (Marc, et al.,2022). In

most cases, the non-take-up is found to be related to lack of information, administrative deficiencies (Daigneault and Macé,2019), social stigma (EAPN,2020), but also on the expected benefit amounts (Arrighi et al.,2015).

Finally, another important component of MIS concerns their enabling character, which is their ability to support beneficiaries to return to the labor market and to avoid social exclusion of those unable to work (2nd and 3rd pillar of MIS). As regards the former, activation requirements are generally combined with monetary incentives to ensure that work pays and active labor market policy provision (ALMPS) to ease the transition to the labor market (SPC and European Commission,2022). Moreover, all MIS in Europe combine activation measures with increased conditionality, which links benefits to participation in activation programs or to work acceptance (van Lanker and Farrel,2018:18, Coady et al.,2021). Natili (2020) shows that the strictness of the activation function may vary across countries, since some may focus on 'positive' incentives according to an 'enabling perspective' focusing on labor market integration, while others may stress the role of 'negative incentives' in a 'workfare perspective'. According to Immervoll and Knotz (2018) Malta, Switzerland, and Slovenia have the strictest conditions for jobseekers while Iceland, Bulgaria, and Greece have the most relaxed.

Concerning the effectiveness of their activation function, MIS show a rather limited success due to several factors such as the poor quality of services available, lack of tailoring of services to beneficiaries' profile, low coverage of activation measures, ineffective targeting, strict conditionality problems, lack of cooperation and coordination between employment services, social services and institutions that provide income support, etc. (Frazer,2018:19-20; SPC and European Commission,2022).

As regards the latter, all MIS combine the receipt of income support with the provision of a wide range of additional social services to support and empower beneficiaries for social participation and labor market inclusion. These include education/vocational training, free school meals childcare, in-kind benefits for education and participation, healthcare/health insurance social counselling and psychological services social services, social assistance services, energy tariffs, etc. (Frazer and Marlier,2016). Yet, such benefits tend to be difficult to assess, since they are sometimes granted on a discretionary basis, they are not well covered by available policy lever indicators, while the information provided by the Member States in MISSOC or to the OECD country fiches does not offer sufficient details on their design (SPC and European Commission,2022).

## **2.1 The Greek setting**

In contrast to the rapidly growing international literature, evaluation studies of the Greek GMI are scarce. In addition, they have been carried out during the first stages of GMI implementation and have not considered the effects of recent crises (Covid 19 and inflation) on the intensity of poverty and social exclusion (Raitano, et al.,2021) in the Greek population. Yet, they converge on the fact that the GMI cannot provide a decent standard of living to the beneficiaries, its enabling character is problematic (Sakellaropoulos et al.,2019), bureaucracy is a serious obstacle, while its impact on poverty reduction is extremely limited (Ziomas et al., 2017).

Moreover, it suffers from low coverage among its intended and potential beneficiaries, since almost 60 percent of said households do not apply for it (Hellenic Court of Audit, 2021). The eligibility criteria are so low that they end up favoring those who evade taxes or are employed in forms of undeclared work (Spyridakis, 2020).

If the above are combined with several administrative deficiencies, such as problems in the cross-checking and verification of the data of beneficiaries, lack of coordination procedures, the lack of interconnections within the program's information system, and the lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (Lalioti and Koutsampelas, 2021; Hellenic Court of Audit, 2021), then the GMI's overall social impact on individuals' lives is limited, as many beneficiaries continue to adopt the same coping strategies (Sakellaropoulos et al., 2019).

## 2.2. *The current study*

According to the literature presented above, this study is one of the few single country studies trying to assess the MIS by analyzing the perceptions of social services professionals at the local level (see for example Estepa-Maestra and Roca, 2017). To our knowledge, this is the first research effort in Greece to be based on a nationwide representative sample of professionals working on the implementation of GMI throughout the country. Moreover, it attempts to offer a more updated evaluation of the Greek GMI that covers the entire period of its nationwide operation (2017 to date) in a context of multiple crises.

The overarching research question of the study is: how effective is the Greek GMI in terms of adequacy, accessibility and its enabling character?

## 3. **Methodology**

The main research question concerns the social impact of GMI, in terms of adequacy, accessibility, and its enabling character. The chosen methodological approach combines the descriptive use of primary and secondary quantitative sources with the collection and processing of primary quantitative data. Regarding the former, apart from reviewing existing evaluation and administrative studies, data were drawn from EU SILC database, to show the incidence of poverty and social exclusion in Greece. Regarding the latter, a quantitative survey was conducted that was based on questionnaires sent and completed by social workers and other professionals all over the country. In order to respond to the research questions, the cross-sectional research design was used which is implemented when researchers' goal is to identify how beliefs, practices and knowledge about an issue are distributed in a sample and whether correlations can be brought to light. A random sample among the 335 CCs was used and the response amount was 250 questionnaires. Hence, we consider that the research complies with the criterion of generalization as the response rate is more than 50% (Bryman, 2016). The sample consists of young people, with a relatively high level of education, half of whom are single and the other half married, most of whom don't have children.

A questionnaire was constructed and structured around the main concepts of the research. In particular, the main aim was to operationalize the three main evaluation dimensions (a) adequacy (how sufficient the GMI was for the beneficiaries), (b) accessibility (how accessible the GMI was for the beneficiaries), and (c) enabling (how much it empowered them and mobilized them to find a job).

Participants' written accounts were analyzed by following the Thematic Network Analysis (TNA) as it is implemented by Jennifer Attride-Stirling (2001). Coding in TNA is composed of three analytic stages which correspond to three different levels of abstraction. First, Basic Themes code the most basic or lowest-order data fragments related to the research questions. Second, Basic Themes are grouped into Organizing Themes in which similar issues are clustered. Third, Global Themes are super-ordinate themes that encompass the principal metaphors in the data as a

whole. They are macro themes that summarize and make sense of clusters of lower-order themes abstracted from and supported by the data. In TNA analysis process is productive, but without completely canceling the flexibility of interacting with the data. This means that researchers can begin the process of analysis by constructing a book of codes (template) in which the axes of organization of the material are recorded.

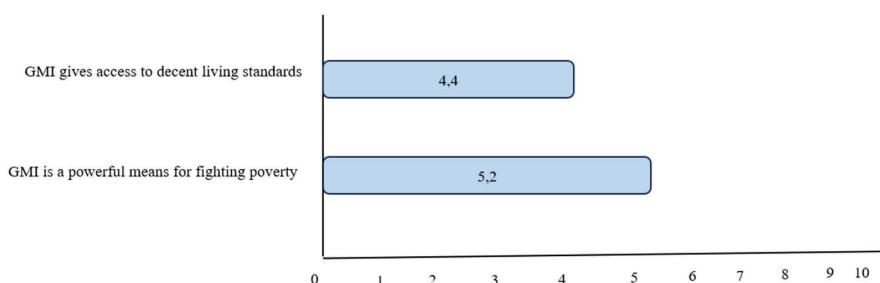
Finally, the main limitations of the study should be noted. First, it draws exclusively on the views and perceptions of social services professionals. Second, the results are based on the collection and processing of quantitative data mostly. Third, the current study would have benefited from including street-level bureaucrats and decision makers as well. Future research should replicate the study taking into account these dimensions. Despite these limitations, the findings of this quantitative study expand knowledge in this crucial area and have significant theoretical and policy implications.

## 4. Data presentation

### 4.1 Adequacy

Adequacy of the Greek GMI is measured, by using the typical measure of comparing the maximum benefit amount to the poverty threshold (Raitano et al,2021, SPC and European Commission,2022). According to the latest EU SILC data (2022 based on 2021 incomes), the median equalized income for Greece was 793€ per month<sup>3</sup>. Hence, the standard poverty threshold (60% of the median) for this year was 476€ per month while the extreme poverty threshold (40%) was 317€ per month. Given that the GMI total amount for a single person to cover all its needs, including housing costs, food, utilities, or other essential needs is up to 200€, it proves ineffective in eliminating poverty, either according to a standard poverty criterion (42% of the standard poverty threshold), or even according to the extreme poverty criterion (63% of the extreme poverty threshold). In comparative terms, Greek GMI shows a moderate adequacy (between 40% and 65% of the standard AROP line), lying between the Scandinavian and continental countries on the one hand and the Eastern countries on the other (Frazer and Marlier, 2016, Natili, 2020). This picture is quite compatible with the results of primary quantitative research. On average, the participants of the sample are not very convinced that the GMI contributes effectively to the fight against poverty and access to a decent living, as can be seen in Figure 1 where it appears that their placement is in the middle of the scale, whose one pole is 1=not at all and the other 10=fully.

**Figure 1: Average opinions on GMI's effectiveness in eliminating poverty**



Also, the findings analysis based on participants' comments and suggestions to the open question of the questionnaire, showed that the governance of its implementation makes it deficient in view of specific social categories. For instance, due to the hostels' shortage, mainly in the regional peripheries of the country, the homeless are pushed to find costly shelters and in that case, they cannot pay the rent even if they get the housing benefit. In addition, there are many long-term unemployed (including the homeless) who as soon as they find a job, they should also try to keep it as the work ethic of GMI requires. This is a somehow strange precondition, if not very strict, for one, by getting a job he/she is not anymore entitled to GMI benefit. Yet, this does not mean that this job will last forever. It should be also noted that the Public Employment Service (hereafter D.Y.P.A) does not train unemployed people on how to keep and go on with their jobs as it just finds employment and its role ends at this point.

To this it must be added that as soon as somebody is dismissed from his job, he must wait up to six months to be able to receive the GMI as his/her incomes are shown as lacking for six months back. So, for six months he remains with zero income. Some change needs to be made so that this gap can be filled so that those who lose their job would be able to join the program from the first month. To overpass this bureaucratic obstacle social services professionals suggested a few amendments such as the increase of the significance of income criteria, the immersion into voluntary work as a condition for joining the GMI program, the more flexible inclusion and support criteria for single-parent families and the homeless as well as more strict ownership control based on combined cross-checking mentioned above.

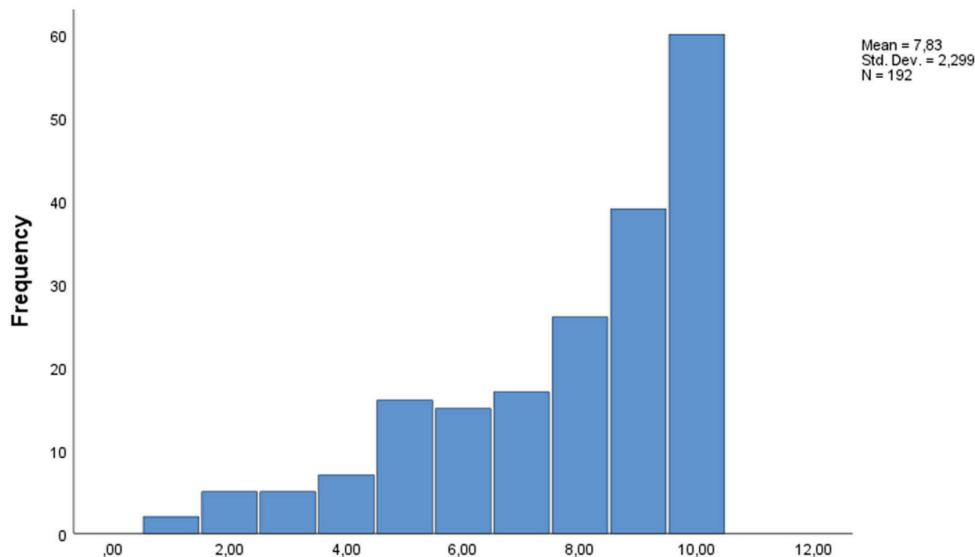
Being that as it may, social services professionals understand that potential beneficiaries try to do whatever they can to cheat the system either by not declaring that they work or by declaring as belonging to single parent families while living in different houses. And this is due to the GMI's financial inadequacy in meeting the real needs of real people. The composition of the household set apart there are people who while they have no income, have inherited a house where they live and exceed the real estate criteria set by the GMI rules. Certainly, none wishes to break the law but, in this case, the social services professionals emphasized that there exists an out of the need daily and repeated injustice which at the end may end up in illegality and delegitimization of the whole project. Yet, this is up to the State, that is, several public services should be coordinated and interfaced, so that possible law breakers may be spotted. On the other hand, should social benefits be better the tendency for law evading would have possibly been minimal or zeroed. For instance, for a single-family household to be viable 200€ per month is not enough to pay rent, electricity, and water and to be fed properly when food distribution all over the country is highly problematic especially with repeated delays.

Moreover, an effective governance of the program would include the following: GMI should only be provided by social scientists working in economic sections of welfare departments. They should be charged with a specific number of applicants or beneficiaries to develop a more holistic approach. The GMI should be approved by standard full-time social services professionals and not by non-standard ones who happen to rotate to other colleagues (and who cannot be held responsible for any possible fraudulent handling as well). At the same time, it cannot be given, although it should be, to certain vulnerable groups such the Roma, the homeless etc. (Makinen,2018). This is because it has been wrongly designed to apply to typical households whose members are not moving, and they seek permanent residence.

As for the Roma people especially, just the registration done by the social services professionals of the centers at the start is not enough. An official registration list should be made by the

Municipality along with a marking of shanty residents that will be enriched periodically. This is of utmost importance because there is not a single rule for all settlements and in that case, it happens that some are beneficiaries, and some are not at all. Monitoring should anyway take place for this purpose. What is being done so far is that the same people who make the applications, check, and support at the same time!! So, many people who really need it and do not work informally are thrown out of the benefit. Finally, not all who get pensions from other States or work abroad and appear only to apply are checked. This means that that they grab the place of somebody else's. Despite these drawbacks almost all respondents agreed that the GMI should be continued because it is a necessary and quite effective program. As Figure 2 shows, most of the participants' responses are above the value 7 in the scale.

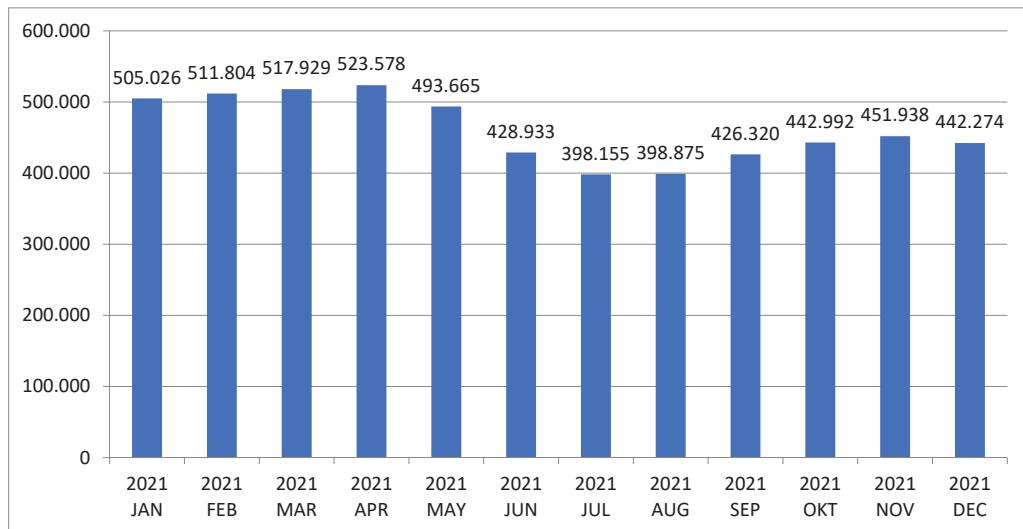
**Figure 2: Average responses to the question "Is GMI a necessary and effective program and should be continued?"**



## 4.2 Accessibility

For the purposes of this study, coverage of the Greek GMI is measured by calculating the ratio between the beneficiaries of the GMI scheme and the population in extreme poverty conditions (Almeida et al., 2022). According to the typically used extreme poverty measure in the EU (40% of median disposable income), extreme poverty in Greece was 6.7% in 2022 (based on 2021 incomes), the fifth highest rate after Romania, Spain, Latvia, and Italy. Considering that the Greek population, according to the last census (2021) was 10,482,487 million<sup>4</sup>, it follows that the extreme poor amounted to 670,000 people. As shown in Figure 3, the number of GMI beneficiaries in 2021 ranged between 398 and 523 thousand people, or an annual average of 428,611 thousand. Consequently, the coverage rate for this year reached 63.8%, which confirms the findings of previous studies (Hellenic Court of Audit, 2021; World Bank, 2019).

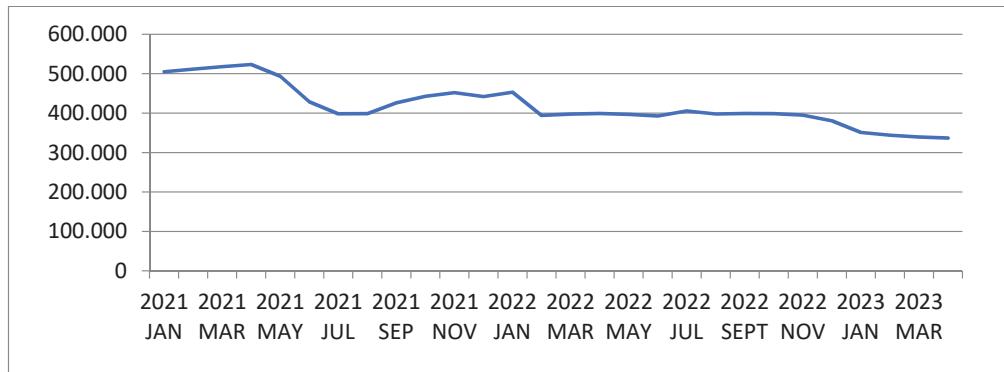
**Figure 3: Number of GMI beneficiaries, 2021 (per month)**



Source: OPEKA, May 2023. Own elaboration

Considering that poverty and social exclusion are expected to rise in the consequent years (2022 and 2023) due to the accumulative effect of successive crises (Covid 19, energy, inflationary, etc.) (Raitano, et al., 2021), it's quite surprising that, according to official administrative data, the number of GMI beneficiaries in the respective years is gradually decreasing, to reach at the lowest level (336.966 thousand) in April 2023 (Figure 4).

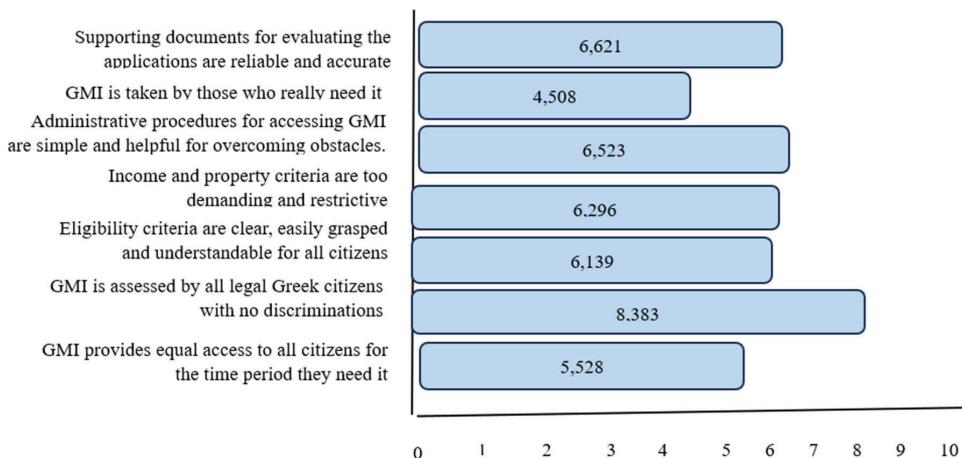
**Figure 4: The evolution of GMI beneficiaries, January 2021-April 2023**



Source: OPEKA, May 2023. Own elaboration.

Research findings, presented in figure 5, show that the social services professionals of CCs are quite skeptical regarding a number of dimensions concerning the accessibility of GMI including the reliability of applications' assessment, its fair distribution, the extent to which prospective beneficiaries can easily get it as well as the transparency of their eligibility (Dimoulas, 2018). Yet, they seem to be almost unanimously certain that the GMI is addressed to all legally settled residents of the country without discrimination, that is, they believe that such a thing happens, and this fact is an exception regarding its application.

**Figure 5: Accessibility dimensions of GMI by potential beneficiaries**



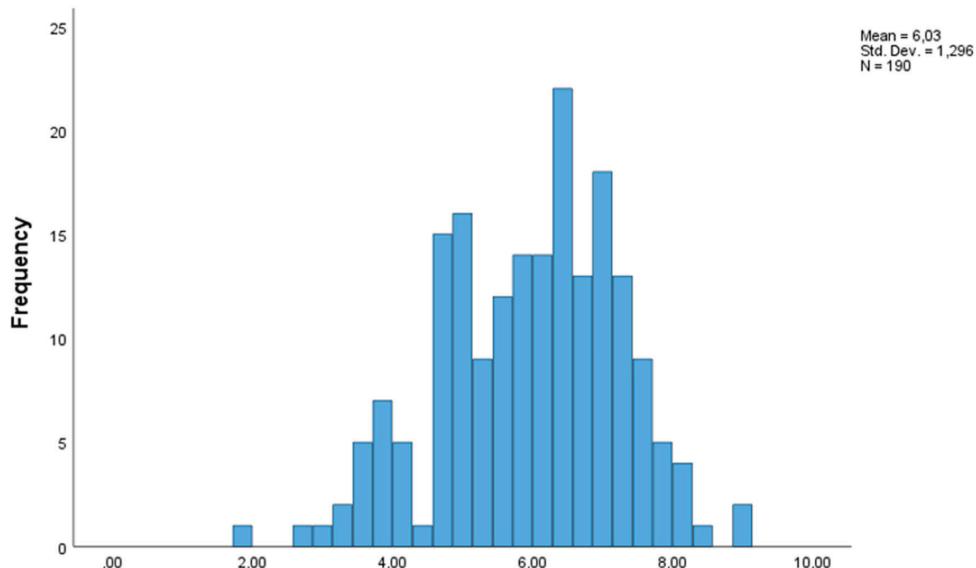
Being that as it may, social services professionals in CCs seem to depict a rather kaleidoscopic view on the issue. One of the problems noted focuses on the technical aspect of the platforms, a fact strangely to happen in so-called digitalization times. Due to repeated malfunctions the beneficiaries often cannot be properly served (whether with the interface with D.Y.P.A., or with Public Power Corporation (D.E.I), etc.) and as a result many lose their assistance.

At the same time, it is not unusual social services professionals to meet strong disagreements about the supporting documents and the conditionalities upon assistance getting since many beneficiaries-to-be take it for granted that they must receive it and by the time the income criteria are announced along with the necessary documents, they become frustrated due to repeated bureaucracy. On top of these, there are many freelancers and farmers whose income is very difficult to be checked because they do not declare it in the tax services and as soon as the social services professionals undertake the initiative to proceed with checking by themselves, although not being accountants, either they object to the supporting documents or provide other ones aiming at pausing the monitoring process.

However, they do assume this role time and again due to this administrative drawback. In this case social services professionals commented that it would be more appropriate and logical the thorough and intensive cross checking of personal belongings of the applicants as well as the establishment of networking between several public offices to locate as much as possible potential law breakers. In other words, participants show distrust towards accessibility. In Figure 6 a summative variable is created composed of the items which tap participants' beliefs on how

accessible the GMI by beneficiaries is. It is shown that participants' responses are not homogeneous since almost half of the responses are below the value 6 of the scale. This means that participants feel distrust towards the accessibility of the GMI.

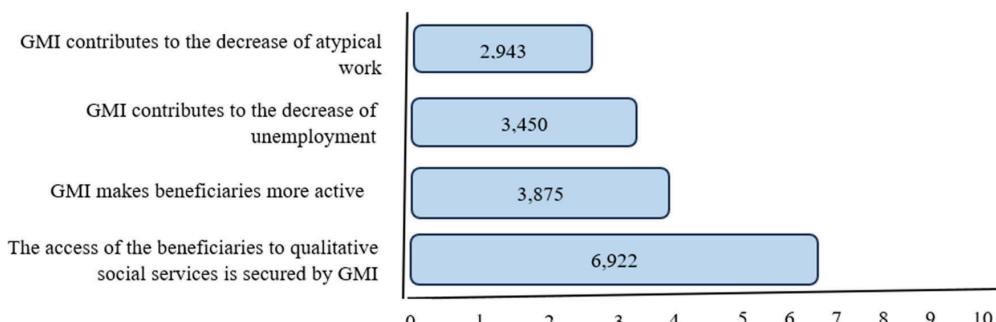
**Figure 6: Distrust related to the fair GMI accessibility**



### 4.3 Enabling

The answers to the question of whether the GMI enables beneficiaries and activates them in the labor market are somehow more discouraging as figure 7 shows. One can observe that according to the social services professionals the GMI does not help to reduce both undeclared work and unemployment. In addition, it does not give incentives to work while they seem to be ambivalent as to whether it ensures beneficiaries' access to qualitative social services.

**Figure 7: Enabling and activation rates of GMI towards the labor market**



Moreover, they hold the view that those who have been receiving the GMI for many years tend to develop a passive stance towards life. This is a condition that does not help beneficiaries either in their exit from unemployment or in their effective mobilization towards the labor market. Hence, effective immersion in the labor market presupposes several combined measures from the employment services in the first place. In this connection, the D.Y.P.A must modernize its employment programs for the inclusion of GMI beneficiaries in jobs according to their qualifications. Along with that there should be mandatory training seminars for GMI's to receive professional training that will effectively contribute to finding a job.

There were many answers converging to the same idea, that the same people have been taking GMI benefits for some years now and this is, if anything, at least a failure of the program to the extent that these beneficiaries do not work. For this reason, social services professionals suggested that there should be a limit to the period someone receives the GMI, a kind of conditionality enriched with simultaneous efforts for job finding, as is the case with the unemployment benefit. This is because the GMI operates at the risk of reproducing the "inactivity trap" phenomenon. In other words, people especially of productive age and able to work, are considered as relying on the benefits and do not even enter the job search process. Considering this, social services should design suitable motives for GMI's to be active in looking for job as well as to avoid informal employment.

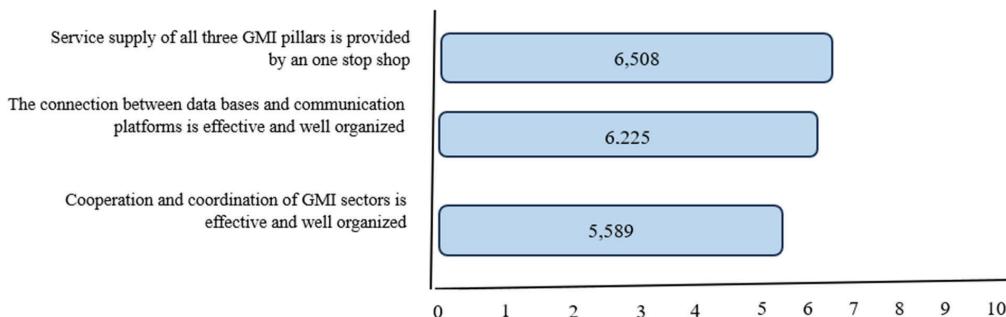
On the other hand, the relationship between GMI and undeclared work is a common secret and, in many aspects, a "conspiracy" of silence among those involved. It is mainly due to the political and bureaucratic inertia of State apparatus and to be bypassed as a problem social services professionals said that more intensive and additional cross-checks regarding residence details, guest card, residence permits (especially European citizens) and income sources are needed. In that way the GMI will and should be continued and expanded for those who really need it. Hence, there must be safeguards, like those mentioned, put in work to monitor those who are not entitled to it, fiscally in the first place. It is necessary the State to find ways to block from the GMI those who work with undeclared income or entrepreneurs who always declare a loss, since it is a common secret that they do not always need it. At this point it is necessary to point out that a great many beneficiaries are forced to work informally to continue to be subsidized by the GMI. In case they work and remain unemployed for a long period of time, which can often be up to six months, they are left without income since they may not be entitled to the GMI as mentioned. Therefore, they remain trapped in a regime of undeclared work. Here the State should intervene regulating the labor market in the first place as this is the biggest problem since the beneficiaries choose either to remain unemployed or to work illegally.

In addition, social services professionals were very sharp in saying that there must simultaneously be an improvement in the provision of the FEAD<sup>5</sup> services. The parts involved (companies, regional units, and municipalities) must ensure that the product they distribute to the beneficiaries arrives in excellent condition. In the opposite case, the beneficiary and its human dignity are belittled and devalued. The phenomenon of poor-quality products distribution due to their poor maintenance is not rare. In addition, better support, and interface with the D.Y.P.A. concerning the (re)integration of the unemployed into the labor market is urgently needed. It should be mentioned that not all municipalities have employment advisors, the older social services professionals either do not have the relevant know-how or they have not been trained through seminar schemes and/or do not want to deal with the GMI. Mismanagement of the FEAD has been often took place due to the irrelevance of the social services professionals of the D.Y.P.A resulting in the

pausing of income support without that being the fault of the beneficiary. Finally, an interface with EFKA<sup>6</sup> would be helpful to draw and monitoring immediately and in real time, salaries, etc.

Respondents rank in a similarly moderate and skeptical manner whether the GMI provides One Stop Shop services, whether IT databases are effective, and whether agency coordination is adequate, confirming the findings of previous evaluation studies (Lalioti and Koutsampelas, 2021; Hellenic Court of Audit, 202). As one can see in Figure 8, the average responses are 6.5, 6.2 and 5.5 for these three questions, that is, slightly above the middle of the scale.

**Figure 8: Average responses for GMI effective services**



For most of them, the basic function that must be regulated regarding the GMI concerns its core mission. The social services professionals of the sample made it clear in their comments that each case should be examined holistically and not being instead part of an impersonally structured bureaucratic mechanism. For instance, there are cases where applicants happen to have the highest percentage of belongings above the accepted levels which, however, cannot be sold because either it is mortgaged or in debt. Yet, the owners being either pensioners or salaried ones are deemed by the system as not beneficiaries when, as mentioned above, a great many people are tax evaders and work informally.

On the other hand, there is an issue with the time one starts to get the GMI that is the time he/she is considered as being in productive age. In this connection, there many cases where the GMI is given to people by the time they start their “productive years” so to speak and they become slowly passive recipients of a benefit which turns them into inactive labor figures. In sum the main axes of responses by the social services professionals of CCs can be clustered as follows in the Figure 9. It is clearly shown that GMI improvement may come from the income checking, the administrative service delivery improvements, an effective yielding income method and the essential link to the labour market.

**Figure 9: Social services professional's proposals for improving GMI implementation**



## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the social impact of GMI in Greece drawing on the findings of quantitative questionnaires completed by key participants (social workers and professionals) responsible for its implementation in the so-called "Community Centers" throughout the country. Research findings corroborate results of previous studies revealing a picture of ineffectiveness of the Greek GMI in addressing poverty and social exclusion in terms of adequacy, accessibility and enabling of beneficiaries.

Social service professionals consider that in terms of adequacy GMI is quite ineffective. Instead of taking into account the real condition of potential beneficiaries' life it relies on superficial, bureaucratic and unchecked criteria resulting in below the absolute poverty assistance reproducing thus both the poverty and the involuntary inactivity trap. Hence, although in general terms, the participants of the research are not negative towards GMI they consider that it is a 'better than worst' measure which needs immediate improvement.

Regarding the issue of accessibility, social service professionals are highly skeptical. Their particular concern relates to the reliability of applications' assessment, the fair distribution of GMI, the extent to which prospective beneficiaries can easily get it as well as the transparency of their eligibility. In addition, they seem to be ambivalent as to whether it ensures beneficiaries' access to qualitative social services.

Finally, as far as the issue of enabling is concerned they express a more discouraging view regarding GMI's ability to reduce both undeclared work and unemployment and they think that

it does not give incentives to work. On the contrary, GMI's structure pushes beneficiaries either in the realm of inactivity or in the trap of informal economy. This is because in a fully uncertain life context, the most certain material base becomes the GMI. Thus, instead of activating the actual or potential beneficiaries it turns them into micro-managers of State provisions.

In general terms, the participants of the research are not negative towards GMI. However, they consider that in order GMI be more effective it should be re-designed to become more task oriented by focusing on real poor through reframing and reorganizing its implementation structure. Hence the systematic monitoring and cross checking of the potential beneficiaries through networking with other public offices, the essential connectivity with labor market, the inclusion of more social categories, like the homeless, the improvement of the services delivery along with the facilitation of access, would make it more efficient and effective in terms of implementation.

This is necessary since the potential beneficiaries are neither a homogenous social group nor do they adopt a seemingly passive attitude towards their involuntary path to vulnerability. In other words, should the processes social services professionals very aptly described remain unchanged, a new revolving 'culture of poverty' will be created and reproduced with the unwitting assistance of the central administration.

## Notes

1. The adequacy of MIS is very difficult to measure. Yet, it is typically assessed by comparing the maximum benefit amount to a 'poverty' threshold (or better, an adequacy benchmark) for model families. For a discussion see Raitano, et. al., 2021; SPC and European Commission, 2022, p.9.
2. The ones below the 40% threshold are mostly Central, Eastern and Southern European countries.
3. Statistics | Eurostat (europa.eu)
4. Census2022\_GR.pdf (statistics.gr)
5. The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived
6. Unified Social Security Agency

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1974-2001

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Η μεταπολιτευτική Ελλάδα αποτελεί ένα από τα πιο συναρπαστικά κεφάλαια της σύγχρονης ελληνικής ιστορίας, γεμάτο μετασχηματισμούς και μεταβολές. Στο παρόν βιβλίο διερευνάται η εποχή της αναγέννησης της Δημοκρατίας, η είσοδος της Ελλάδας στην ενωμένη Ευρώπη και οι βαθιές κοινωνικοοικονομικές αλλαγές που διαμόρφωσαν τη σημερινή ελληνική πραγματικότητα. Μέσα από μια λεπτομερή ανάλυση των πολιτικών, οικονομικών και κοινωνικών εξελίξεων, αναδεικνύονται οι προκλήσεις και οι επιτυχίες που καθόρισαν τη σύγχρονη ελληνική ταυτότητα.

Η έρευνα βασίζεται σε ένα μεθοδολογικό πλαίσιο που περιλαμβάνει ανάλυση του δημοσίου λόγου της εποχής και ποσοτικά δεδομένα, προσφέροντας μια ολοκληρωμένη και αντικειμενική ματιά στην περίοδο της Μεταπολίτευσης. Αναλύοντας τη μετάβαση από τη δικτατορία στη Δημοκρατία, την ένταξη στην ενωμένη Ευρώπη και τις δημογραφικές ανακατατάξεις, το βιβλίο εξετάζει τις επιπτώσεις αυτών των αλλαγών στην ελληνική κοινωνία.

Το βιβλίο αυτό αποτελεί έναν απαραίτητο οδηγό για όσους επιθυμούν να κατανοήσουν τις ρίζες και τις εξελίξεις της σύγχρονης ελληνικής κοινωνίας. Μια συναρπαστική και τεκμηριωμένη αφήγηση, που φωτίζει τις προκλήσεις του παρελθόντος και προσφέρει πολύτιμες γνώσεις για το παρόν και το μέλλον της Ελλάδας.

# Violence Against Women in Rural Greece

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## Η Βία κατά των γυναικών στις αγροτικές περιοχές της Ελλάδας

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### ABSTRACT

Violence against women is a global human rights violation. Despite this, there is a lack of culturally sensitive country specific empirical research on violence against women. Much of the existing research focuses on the experiences of women living in urban and metropolitan areas. Little is known about the experiences of women living in rural areas. The current study uses feminist qualitative methodology to examine the unique experiences of intimate partner violence survivors in rural Greece who sought services from a regional Community Centre. Interviews with 12 rural Greek women were conducted, transcribed, and thematically coded to reveal commonalities in the participants' narratives. Our analysis revealed themes related to the impact of rurality on help-seeking behaviors, knowledge of and access to social services, and how rural patriarchal culture impacts victims' willingness to seek help. The results of this study shed light on the understudied experiences of rural Greek women who have experienced domestic abuse. Our findings can be used to further expand global rural criminological theory and develop procedures to remove the barriers that rural survivors face when seeking social services.

**KEY WORDS:** Rural criminology; violence against women; domestic violence; help-seeking behavior; patriarchal culture.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η βία κατά των γυναικών παγκοσμίως αποτελεί μια παραβίαση των ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων. Παρά το γεγονός αυτό, υπάρχει μια έλλειψη εμπειρικών δεδομένων των πολιτισμικών τους διαφορών ως προς την εκδήλωση του φαινομένου ανά χώρα. Η περισσότερη ερευνητική υπάρχουσα Βιβλιογραφία εστιάζεται στις εμπειρίες των γυναικών των αστικών και μητροπολιτικών περιοχών. Λίγα είναι γνωστά σχετικά με τις εμπειρίες των γυναικών που ζουν στις αγροτικές περιοχές. Η παρούσα μελέτη χρησιμοποιεί την φεμινιστική ποιοτική μεθοδολογία για να εξετάσει τις μοναδικές εμπειρίες συντροφικής βίας των γυναικών τέτοιων περιοχών της Ελλάδας, οι οποίες αναζήτησαν τις υπορεσίες ενός κοινοτικού κέντρου Βοήθειας. Διεξάχθηκαν δώδεκα συνεντεύξεις με γυναίκες αγροτικής περιοχής, και τα δεδομένα κωδικοποιήθηκαν και αναλύθηκαν με την θεματική μέθοδο ανάλυσης προκειμένου να αποκαλυφθούν οι κοινοί τόποι στις αφηγήσεις των συμμετεχουσών. Τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας μπορούν να χρησιμοποιηθούν στην επέκταση της ενημέρωσης της παγκόσμιας εγκληματολογικής θεωρίας σε αγροτικά περιβάλλοντα και στην ανάπτυξη διαδικασιών κατάργησης των εμποδίων που αντιμετωπίζουν οι γυναίκες της υπαίθρου στην προσπάθειά τους να αναζητήσουν βοήθεια από τις κοινωνικές υπηρεσίες.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Αγροτική εγκληματολογία, βία κατά των γυναικών, ενδοοικογενειακή βία, συμπειριφορά αναζήτησης βοήθειας, πατριαρχική κουλτούρα.

## 1. Introduction

**V**iolence against women is a global human rights violation which undermines the physical and mental health of victims, and their social and economic well-being (WHO, 2017). It is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, reinforced by masculine ideology of familial patriarchy and domination of women in domestic and social settings rendering them a polyvictimised population (DeKeseredy, 2019). Domestic violence (DV) against women by their spouse or partner is the most common form of gender-based violence and it is a well-known internationally recognized social problem. A World Health Organization report (2013) estimates that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or nonpartner sexual violence (UNCRI, 2014:7). The frequency of DV against women across the world has been well documented. The European Institute for Gender Equality (2015) estimates that 25% of women in Greece have experienced violence. The cost of intimate partner violence against women in Greece could amount to EUR 2.4 billion per year. Despite the pervasiveness of violence against women, the experiences of victims and the access they have to social services vary greatly by the region in which they live.

The experiences of DV victims living in urban areas differ from victims residing in rural communities. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the only international human rights treaty, recognizes that rural women in both developing and developed countries "grapple with poverty, economic and political exclusion, lack of access to services and social protection and the concomitant increases in domestic and care work, and rural development policies that overlook the priorities and rights of women" (The UN General Assembly Report, 2017:3). According to the UN General Assembly Report (2017), women in rural areas may be at increased risk of violence compared to urban women because of structural causes such as greater multidimensional poverty, legal and customary discrimination, lack of access to resources, and negative social norms of gender stereotypes (The UN General Assembly Report, 2017:9). Qualitative studies of DV in rural areas have revealed that both the structure and culture of rural environments may engender and conceal a particular type of violence against women (DeKeseredy, 2019).

The seriousness of domestic violence is often exacerbated in rural areas due to social isolation and reduced access to support and healthcare services for victims. As noted by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the unique conditions of living in rural areas result in less access to DV-related services. Rural women face barriers to accessing services because of geographic distance and isolation. In addition to facing barriers to accessing services, rural women are nearly twice as likely to be turned away from services because of the insufficient number of programs and inadequate staffing of communitybased health programs in their region (Peek-Asa et al., 2011, p.1743).

The experiences of DV victims living in urban and metropolitan areas around the world is well researched. However, less is known about the experience of DV victims residing in rural communities. Culturally sensitive country specific research on rural DV is needed to identify the unique experiences of victims living in rural areas. Findings from such studies can inform policy and programs to prevent DV and treat those who have been victimized. The purpose of this study is to document the experiences of rural women in Greece who have experienced DV. Specifically, we seek to explain the unique cultural and geographic challenges rural Greek women face when accessing DV support services in a region where inhabitants of sixteen independent communities seek the support of just one regional Community Centre.

## 2. DV in Rural Greece

Greece is a European country with a strict patriarchal structure based on sociocultural norms and gender inequality that define the expected behavior of women and men in both the family and larger society. The last national survey on gender-based violence in Greece found that Greek women experienced high rates of various forms of domestic violence. For example, 3.6% of survey participants experienced physical violence by their partners, 56% experienced psychological and/or verbal violence, and 3.5% experienced at least one event of sexual abuse in their lives (Artinopoulou, 2006). Data from the UN Global Database on Violence Against Women, show that 19% of Greek women experience physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence at some point in their lifetime, and 6% of women experienced this type of violence in the last 12 months.

Contemporary Greek life, especially in urban areas, reflects a society breaking patriarchal norms and making a slow shift towards egalitarianism like other modern European countries. However, in rural Greece, the patriarchal structures are still deeply entrenched, intense and obvious - men dominate and control women, and the masculine way of thinking and acting overvalues the feminine in all aspects of life. Accordingly, DV victims in small rural areas may face additional difficulties in seeking help and support, reporting the crime, overcoming the fear and shame they feel for what is happening to them, and in facing practical problems such as transportation to service providers. Results from the national survey on gender-based violence in Greece (Artinopoulou, 2006), show that 3% of women living in agricultural areas have been victims of physical violence by an intimate partner. Findings from this survey need to be considered with abundant caution given the age of the survey (conducted in 2003), and the changing economic, political and social dynamics. Nevertheless, these results show the problem of DV occurring beyond urban boundaries and in rural communities.

The social stigma of being a DV victim is a barrier for the official reporting of DV incidents, especially when it comes isolated rural communities. According to the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, only 11.6% of victims living in rural, mountainous or isolated areas of the country report incidents of violence and seek help after abuse (Glyniadaki, Kyriazi, & Mourtzaki, 2018, p. 26). These statistics show the effects of informal pressure that victims may receive from their social environment, through prevailing perceptions of violence, family, and gender roles within it. The reality for many rural women is that living in small rural communities limits their access to social supports and presents narrow life choices that further constrains their freedom and presents few safe pathways to gain support for themselves and their children.

## 3. Theoretical Framework of DV in Rural Areas

Much of the theoretical work that explains violence against women in rural areas draws heavily from various strands of feminism and prioritizes the gendered nature of DV in the context of the patriarchy (DeKeseredy, 2019, p. 315). This feminist perspective argues that the main reason violence against women has remained prevalent across the world, is the major imbalance of power and control that exists among men and women within societies that are strongly influenced by a patriarchal worldview (Grigaitė, Karalius & Jankauskaitė, 2019, p. 305). Though much debate exists around the definition of patriarchy, it can be conveniently defined as "a gender structure in which men dominate women, and what is considered masculine is more highly valued than what is considered feminine" (Renzetti, 2013, p. 8).

The feminist perspective argues that coercive control is established through acts of suppression and prohibition that makes women dependent on their male partners mentally, emotionally and/or physically, restraining them from full participation in society (Grigaitė, Karalius & Jankauskaitė, 2019). One of the most developed theoretical perspective on rural violence against women is DeKeseredy and colleagues' (2007) rural masculinity crisis/male peer support model of separation/divorce sexual assault. This multi-level theory explains separation/divorce sexual assault victimization through the lens of the rural patriarchy and male peer support (DeKeseredy, 1988; DeKeseredy et al., 2007). While multiple theoretical explanations exist, it is essential for theorists to view violence against women in rural areas through the lens of rural patriarchy.

## 4. Addressing DV in Greece

The legal framework on domestic violence in Greece addresses DV as a serious crime (Law 3500/2006) and protects the victims' rights during the criminal proceedings (Law 4478/2017) (for an in-depth review of progression of law and policy addressing DV in Greece see Petropoulos, Fotou, Ranjan, Chatzifotiou, & Dimadi, 2016; Ranjan 2020; Ranjan & Artinopoulou, 2021). Since 2010, the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSFPGE) has served as the principal entity for preventing and combating violence against women. The GSFPGE uses a network of structures to accomplish this goal, including: the national SOS 15900 24-hour helpline; and 42 Counselling Centers - 14 of which are located at the capitals of the regional units, while the remaining 27 operate under municipalities within regional units. The Counselling Centers offer a range of services to victims of gender-based violence such as: (i) updates and information on gender equality, combating violence, and multiple discriminations against women; (ii) social, psychological, legal, and employment support (using a gendered lens); (iii) referral or accompaniment services – when necessary – to shelters, police and prosecution authorities, courts, social services, hospitals, and health and mental health centers; and (iv) legal aid in cooperation with bar associations.

Despite international and country-wide efforts to prevent domestic violence, empirical data nationwide has not been collected in a systematic or regular manner. Original large-scale research is significantly underdeveloped (Ranjan & Artinopoulou, 2021). In Greece, data on domestic violence come from the police, the judiciary sector and the reports of the Observatory of General Secretary on Gender Equality and Family Planning (GSFPGE) (see Petropoulos, Fotou, Ranjan, Chatzifotiou, & Dimadi, 2016; Ranjan 2020). Since 2019, the GSFPGE has started maintaining and publishing records of disaggregated data. However, these numbers do not include the dark figure of domestic violence, which is notoriously under-reported.

Although research on rural criminology has been conducted internationally for decades, scholars and policymakers in Greece have not developed any project on the issue of rurality and domestic violence at the time of this study. The current study is the first empirical research on a rural setting in the northern part of Greece. This study aims to extend the theoretical discussion on violence against women in rural areas and develop understandings of how perpetrators can capitalize on the vulnerabilities that rurality imposes on women. Further, this study intends to shed light on the unique issues that pertain to domestic violence in rural areas and how these issues impact victims' ability to seek and receive social services. Specifically, we employ feminist qualitative methodology to explore the barriers to help seeking and help-seeking pathways of twelve domestic violence survivors who sought help from the Social Service Department at the Community Centre of a small rural area in northern Greece.

## 5. Methodology

**M**ost of the research on violence against rural women is informed mainly by feminist ways of knowing, and relies primarily on qualitative methods like rich, in-depth interviews which emphasize women's real and individual experience (Davis, Taylor & Furniss, 2001; DeKeseredy, 2019). Using this approach, the lack of interest in "objectivity" and an emphasis on intersubjectivity means that the researcher is embedded in a supportive, caring relationship with the participants (Davis, Taylor & Furniss, 2001, p. 337). This methodology provides a space for the voices of women who are victims of domestic violence to be heard (Lapiere, 2010). Additionally, recent research has shown that there has been a rapidly declining response rate to mail surveys, especially among rural populations (Stedman, Connelly, Heberlein, Decker, & Allred, 2019). This further justifies the use and importance of feminist qualitative methods in research on rural women's experiences.

Rurality in Greece reflects both the agricultural production and the population criteria. The administrative chart of Greece divides the country in regions and municipalities. Each municipality consists of villages and other smaller communities. There are 13 regions and 332 municipalities. Based on the last census results from 2011, 76.6% of the Greek population lives in urban and suburban regions of Greece and 24.3% live in rural areas. For the purposes of this study, rurality was defined according to the Greek Board of Agriculture 2017, as a community with up to 2,000 inhabitants ([www.odigostoupoliti.eu](http://www.odigostoupoliti.eu)).

The current study limited participation to women who have experienced domestic violence (physical, sexual and psychological) and have sought help from the Community Center. The Community Center offers services to victims of violence, such as legal counseling, psychological support and the creation of a strategic plan to leave the violent environment. A convenience sample was drawn from women clients seeking services from the Community Centre. A social worker employed by the Centre debriefed potential participants about the study and gave clients the researchers' contact information. Clients interested in participating in the current study then contacted researchers and arranged an interview. No incentives (material or preferential services) were offered for their participation in the research. This process resulted in 12 interviews with women who sought services from the Community Centre.

The twelve participants lived in rural area in northern Greece and had experienced domestic violence by their husband or intimate partner. The women's age ranged from 35 to 55 years old, with an average age of 45. All of the participants were local and identified their ethnicity as Greek. Additionally, all participants were married and had an average of two children. Of the 12 participants, 7 were engaged in agricultural work and animal husbandry and the remaining 5 were unemployed.

### Interview Procedure & Data Analysis

In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to collect data for this current study. Building on prior research on domestic violence and rurality (see Davis, Taylor, & Furniss, 2001; Ragusa, 2013), the interview protocol was constructed to capture the experiences of DV victims living in rural Greece. Interview questions focused on types of abuse experienced and the tactics used by the perpetrator, barriers to help and support, the type and amount of support received at the Community Centre, cultural and social factors contributing to abuse, and the effects of violence on motherhood. Two pilot interviews were conducted prior to interviewing study participants to help identify early weaknesses and areas in need of improvement in the thematic areas of the interview protocol. The pilot interviews did not reveal any areas in need of revision and the interview protocol was finalized.

Interviews with participants (n=12) were conducted from November 2020 to January 2021. Prior to completing interviews, participants signed an informed consent form that provided information about the study, their voluntary participation, and verification of confidentiality and anonymity. Interviews were conducted at a time convenient to the participant and the average duration was approximately one hour. Interviews were transcribed verbatim prior to data analysis. Following transcription, interviews were thematically analyzed to reveal several core themes throughout the interviews. Thematic analysis was used for analyzing the interview data. Thematic analysis allows for locating, analyzing and reporting various themes that arise through the data, as well as selecting the key points of interviews, understanding the text as they relate to the research questions by focusing on the key issues, and finding common ground among the participants' voices (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Researchers used the stated research questions as a guide in searching for relevant excerpts and cleaning and coding data. Initial codes were generated by repeatedly reading the data and assigning codes to identify characteristics of that data that pertained to the research questions and related to the most basic parts of the phenomena being studied. After coding the data, researchers sorted through the various codes to identify themes within the interview narratives. Themes are defined as more abstract conceptual constructions that result from the integration of the variety of codes and subcodes. Finally, researchers defined and named the core themes revealed through the data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## 6. Findings & Discussion

This section describes the common themes derived from a thematic analysis on how rurality impacted and interplayed with women's experiences of domestic violence and their pathways to help-seeking. Seven predominant themes emerged from our analysis and are presented below. Throughout our discussion, we included several participants' quotes that highlight each category and provide strong examples of the theme discussed.

### 1. Lack of transportation

Lack of public transportation is a unique risk factor for rural woman experiencing DV because rural areas are isolated (DeKeseredy, 2019; Youngson, 2020). Rural inhabitants without access to public transportation often must drive long distances to access daily goods and healthcare. Therefore, they may be constrained by limitations to access the family vehicle for social or medical services (Youngson, 2020). In this research, the lack of transportation across the rural area was a barrier identified by women seeking to access the Community Centre. For example, one participant stated, "One day my friend who had a car gave me a lift because there are not frequent bus routes and so it was difficult to go alone..." (Int.1). Several other participants identified transportation as a barrier to services and described how limited access to affordable public transportation presented challenges in reaching the Community Centre. As one participant described, "... public transit sucks in this area and you have to wait for the bus in order to go to the community center..." (Int.9). Another participant identified the costs of public transportation as a challenge by saying, "I did not have money to take the bus to go to the Community Centre ... it is far from the village... I had to tell someone to take me there..." (Int.7). Likewise, another participant (Int. 3) reported that her husband did not give her money to travel by bus and thus could not access the community center. As another woman described, "I could not go often, I do not have my own car, the car belongs to my husband and he does not give it to me...I had nowhere to leave the

children...the bus passes through the village only once a week..." (Int.5). These findings are consistent with past research, for example a study by Pit and colleagues (2019) found that women could not get money from their husbands so they could not use public transport.

## 2. Women's limited knowledge of available services in rural areas

Limited knowledge of available services in rural areas also creates barriers to accessing the Community Centre (Youngson, 2020). The majority of women in this study had limited contact and information regarding the Community Centre and the services they provide. As one woman described, "I did not know that there was a community center where I could go and talk about this problem..." (Int.12). Another participant echoed this sentiment and stated, "I did not contact for a long time because I did not know it existed in the area..." (Int.4). Other participants explained how they first became aware of the community center. In explaining how she was referred to the Centre, one woman stated, "I called the women's helpline at 15900, and they referred me to the Community Center I did not know it existed... then I went to the community center twice..." (Int.10). Another participant described how long she kept the abuse to herself before talking to a friend. As she described, "For 1 year I did not talk to anyone, when I discussed it with a friend of mine she told me about the community center, I did not know it existed..." (Int.11). The quotes presented in this section highlight the relationship between geographic isolation and a lack of awareness of DV support services in rural areas. This may reflect the gaps in referral systems for the victims of DV and the lack of institutional collaboration and networking in DV prevention policies at the community level. Our findings demonstrate a need for wider DV service awareness campaigns in the general population.

## 3. Community Center Services

Our findings suggest that obtaining services from the Community Centre had a positive impact on victims. Despite an initial lack of knowledge of the services available, all of the women in this study spoke positively about the services they eventually received from the Community Centre. Of particular importance was the support received from Community Centre professionals, such as a psychologist, lawyer and social worker. These professionals helped women with psychosocial and legal counseling. Specifically, some women reported that they developed a safety planning with the specialist. As one woman described, "... in the first place, psychological support was important because they helped me see things a little more cool and not so emotionally ..." (Int. 5). Other participants recalled the usefulness of legal support. One woman stated, "It is definitely and legally supportive, because I did not really know what my moves should be in order to be able to be (legally) protected in the future, and this advice was very legal" (Int. 12).

## 4. Reluctance to seek services based on fear, shame and lack of anonymity

Feelings of shame, fear and lack of anonymity can further limit the already small network of support in rural locations for women subjected to domestic violence, constricting their space for action and narrowing their help-seeking pathways. Several participants commented on the reasons why they stayed in an abusive relationship.

### *Lack of anonymity*

In a rural area anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality when disclosing violence or accessing support (from friends, support workers, police, court workers or medical professionals) is tenuous at best (Farhall, Harris & Woodlock, 2020; Ragusa, 2013). This, combined with cultural norms being incom-

patible with help-seeking, and even shaming of help-seeking behaviors, further increases the likelihood of a DV victim remaining silent. Several participants reported, As one participant described, "I did not want to get involved that the fact that private issues easily become public knowledge in the rural area prevented them from seeking help. in this process, I was supposedly trying to understand him...I was afraid of what people would say.... our friends, our relatives, here in the village you know nothing stays a secret and that makes it difficult for me to ask for help ..." (Int.9)

### *Shame and blame*

Shame is often a consequence of the lack of privacy in rural areas (Bosch & Bergen, 2006; Ragusa, 2013; Farhall, Harris, & Woodlock, 2020). In this study, participants encountered challenges and complications when seeking help for the abuse because of shame and blame, which was further exacerbated by living in a small community. This is illustrated by one participant's statement, "I feel ashamed for being identified as a battered woman. Everyone will think I have done something wrong to annoy my husband they would blame me...this prevented me from seeking help..." (Int.7). Another participant expressed, "Everybody talks here, and if he finds out they are talking about us he will blame me, because you don't talk about things that make him look bad" (Int.9).

Other participants developed a sense of shame, and as a result lead them to hide both her physical and psychological traumas and become socially excluded and withdrawn emotionally. As one participant explained, "I was ashamed, I wanted to hide everything I was going through, I did not want to leave the house so that they would not see the bruises I had...I was trying not to show my feelings, I was trying to look happy while I felt bad and isolated... only my parents knew it and the children who saw them every day...I felt guilty because my parents blamed me..." (Int. 6). Another woman explained the shame associated with the victimization she experienced and her concern surrounding her friends and family's response. As she explained, "I had to suffer, hurt and endure for the sake of marital duties, I had to endure it, I had lost my dignity, what would my parents and friends say... here everything becomes known..." (Int.11). Another participant described how the shame she felt inhibited her from seeking help. She described, "I have been thinking about it for a long time to seek help...because I feel ashamed and I was judged negatively in the village... that I was to blame" (Int.5).

## **5. Cultural-social factors facilitating abuse in a rural area**

Many participants in this study stressed how cultural values driven by their parental families made them maintain marital relationships by all costs, even if the perpetrator was abusive, or else they risk being shunned from their community. As one participant described, "My parents did not want me to get divorced and they told me to stay with my husband for the children's sake ... my parents and my husband told me that I should be at home with my children and be a good mother and good housewife." (Int.2). Many rural women stay in abusive situations for years or a lifetime because they have come to accept the abuse as normal, are witnesses and victims of intergenerational violence, and/or have been convinced by their abuser that the abuse was their fault (Forsdick-Martz & Sarauer, 2000). This adherence to patriarchal norms and expectations is well illustrated by the following participant quote: "I did not want to talk about what I was going through, I thought it was something normal... that was how I grew up here in the village ... the woman must be patient and not react when she does not agree with the husband..." (Int.1). Another participant described a similar understanding to the strict gender roles she was expected to adhere to and how these expectations impacted her willingness to seek help. She explained, "My husband thought that he should only provide food and shelter to the children and that I

should be responsible for the children's upbringing... I believed him and I did not understand the seriousness...that's why I did not seek help for so long..." (Int.9).

Rural culture often carries the expectation of not disclosing "private matters" in public settings outside of the family or community (Valandra et al., 2016). This was another common influence that participants believed limited abuse disclosure and influenced some survivors to stay in abusive relationships. As one participant explained, "People think it is a private matter and nobody wants to interfere. Some of the elderly men of the village say that husband and wife should sort their personal problems out by themselves." (Int.7). Another described, "My parents and friends tell me to be patient so as not to ruin my marriage and this is normal that men sometimes raise their hand and shout... they tell me the couple should stay together for the children's sake and they don't help me..." (Int.3)

Consistent with prior research (e.g., Youngson 2020), women in this study did not receive help from their families to leave the abusive relationship and were discouraged from being assertive allowing for long term abuse. As one participant explained, "I begged my parents to help me, they always judged me negatively, they put the blame at me and told me that if I divorce him I should think about the consequences and that I cannot rely on them... in the village the people have this mentality..." (Int.4). Another participant reported, "The family affairs should remain within the four walls of the house...the woman keeps the family together", the man has to work...(Int.11). Many participants referred their family environment impacting the amount of abuse they could tolerate. For example, one participant explained how her abusive upbringing impacted her perceived expectations as a mother and wife, "I have had a difficult childhood, I grew up in a violent family environment, with a father deciding everything and a mother who was always afraid, so I thought I had to endure for the children's sake, for the family to be united ... I did not think I could ask for help at some point..." (Int.6).

## 6. Effects of domestic violence on motherhood

Domestic violence affects many women's experience of motherhood. DV can have profound and far-reaching effects on women, their feelings and behavior towards their children, as well as their sense of identity as mothers and as women (Lapiere, 2010). One participant described how the abuse she experienced impacted her ability to care for her children. She explained, "I was not in the mood to do chores at home, to cook, to take care of the children...I felt like a failure as a mother that I could not protect my children" (Int.5).

Additionally, abused women can feel overwhelmed and focus on just surviving while enduring these difficult conditions (Jaffe & Croocks, 2005). One participant described this survivor mentality and how it impacted her role as a mother when she stated, "I could not play my mothering role, I had other priorities, I was trying to survive, I was locked in a room when he started attacking me..." (Int.1). Another woman described how the abuse left her psychologically unable to care for her children. She explained, "I had nerves when he spoke badly to me and I broke out on the kids...I did not give the children the care they needed because I did not have the courage..." (Int.12).

Research suggests that some mothers have the power to care for and try to protect their children from their partner's violence (Sullivan, et al., 2000; Jaffe & Croocks, 2005) demonstrating resilience and determination (Lapiere, 2010). This resilience is best demonstrated through the following participant quote: "I was strong for my children, I was trying to protect them..." (Int.8). Many participants in this study described positive aspects of their relationship with their children. As one woman explained, "I had no problems with my children, I always tried to be

there for them, I always took care of them, I always talked to them..." (Int.10). Another participant explained the strength she gained through her children. As she described, "I was engaging with children constructively. I had the strength, we did things together, we went along to supermarkets, for walks..." (Int.1).

Women in rural areas often fear being painted as "bad mothers" or being judged as unfit mothers by their community if they sought help or left their abusers (Farshall, Harris & Woodlock, 2020). As one participant explained, "I did not want to be described as a bad mother from the village ... I was trying to take care of the children, I couldn't leave my family..." (Int. 11). Another woman also described this fear and expressed concern about being isolated from her community, when she stated, "I was afraid that my relatives and friends here in the village would accuse me of not being a good mother and they would isolate me if they had learned that I sought help..." (Int.12). Another participated explained, "I felt bad, that I do not deserve, that I am not a good mother, a good housewife if they learned in the village that I sought help...I was afraid to leave them".

## 7. Isolation, control of movement and surveillance

Abusive partners often reinforce their coercive control through physical and geographical isolation, such as deliberately moving to a remote area to live, and through social isolation, such as separating the woman from her friends and family, therefore isolating her from the wider community (Farshall, Harris & Woodlock, 2020, p.187). Abusive isolation and control of movement was described in many participants' accounts. As one woman explained, "My husband chose to stay in the village in his paternal home, we are far from the city and so I cannot meet my friends... he tells me we came here in the village to raise the children not to go out, while he is missing all day...I have no help from anyone in this isolated place..." (Int.12). Another participant explained, "We live in a secluded place and I cannot go out, our neighbors are elderly, he does not give me money, I am cramped and alone at home with the children" (Int.8). Physical isolation can be the perpetrator's most effective tactic, as it can result in the victim-survivor being "literally captive" (National Rural Crime Network, 2019, p. 8). Isolation and control over women's movements by the perpetrator leave women feeling that there is no option for long-term solutions (e.g., support from the Community Center) as it seems inaccessible. Rather, many women feel that they must endure their abuse and focus on simply surviving the day. As one woman described, "I was trying to survive, I was locked in a room when he started attacking me...I kept crying, I thought of calling the police but I was scared..." (Int.1).

Closely linked to the tactic of isolation, perpetrators' monitoring and control of victimsurvivors' use of technology was presented as a form of surveillance of victim-survivors' actions and movements. Multiple studies detail how perpetrators focus on limiting and controlling women's use of technology (Bosch & Bergen, 2006; National Rural Crime Network, 2019). Further, recent research shows that women have less access to digital technologies, especially those who live in rural areas (OECD, 2018). Women in this study mentioned perpetrators putting bed bugs in their sleeping sheets, recording calls with family and friends, and keeping track of their phone bills. As one participant explained, "[he was] constantly checking and keeping track of their phone bills and he keeps telling me I will control you and watch you whatever you do" (Int.5). Another participant described, "He was watching me and I understood, he admitted it in his anger, he had ordered the calls to be recorded...the phone was in his name so he had the right to do so" (Int. 3). The findings from this study show that addressing the gender digital divide is crucial to ensuring women's livelihood, improving women's access to support services, and to changing attitudes (OECD, 2018).

## 6. Conclusion

**A**s demonstrated by the results of this study, qualitative research with survivors from rural areas is required to provide an in-depth understanding of the barriers to and complexities of speaking out against abuse, and to give voice to the experiences and perspectives of women living in rural communities. Our analyses identified several unique barriers rural women experience when seeking and receiving services. Based on these findings, we provide recommendations (summarized in Table 1) to help reduce these barriers such as offering a hotline service to connect victims to transportation, establishing mobile services and providing offices at rural markets, and educating school children about healthy relationships.

Professionals working in rural communities can use consciousness raising in work with women who have experienced intimate partner violence (Pitt et al., 2019). When women understand their experience is not a result of their individual failing, but part of a wider system of patriarchy they are freed from the shame and blame so often associated with abuse. Social workers working in rural communities need to be aware of the way in which traditional ideas of masculinity and male privilege are used in intimate partner violence. In this sense, they need to work towards the elimination of the societal pressures on men and boys to perform masculinity. Rural social workers also have a responsibility to challenge traditional gender norms which contribute to, and support, intimate partner violence (Pitt et al., 2019). As recommended in Table 1, service providers should consider strategies such as educating rural leaders on the regional services available and their power to make community change.

In addition to implementing some of these recommendations, there is a clear need for more small-scale studies of domestic violence in under-researched countries and communities (such as rural Greece). As described by DeKeseredy (2019), large-scale, international surveys, such as the WHO multi-country study, generally estimate prevalence rates lower than those found in smaller studies. This suggests a need for more culturally sensitive research that addresses factors such as language barriers, fear, distrust of authorities, patriarchy, and norms around secrecy, that may contribute to underreporting abuse in rural communities.

A more critical and theoretically led approach to the study of rural domestic violence needs to be located within a detailed understanding of the social and cultural construction of rurality. It has been suggested that more conservative ideas about gender and about the importance of maintaining a strong sense of community, in particular, have shaped the experience of domestic violence and, critically, its invisibility within rural families and households (Little, 2017). It is crucial that "traditional" culture on gender stereotypes and the powerful patriarchal relations within some rural communities and their knowledge of domestic violence is understood both by the recipients of services and the social welfare professionals in professional settings. Consequently, welfare service provision and implementation need to consider the configurations of society at the local level and to fully comprehend the specific needs of survivors and the appropriate responses in those rural spaces.

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# Social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic at local level. A quantitative study

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## Κοινωνικός και οικονομικός αντίκτυπος της πανδημίας COVID-19 σε τοπικό επίπεδο. Μια ποσοτική μελέτη

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the residents of a municipality in the Region of Central Macedonia in Greece. Conducted during 2021-2022, the field research focused on how the citizens perceive, approach, and evaluate their socio-economic situation (quality of life), access to health and social services, facilities for persons with disabilities, environmental challenges, and other factors, in light of the effects of the recent financial and health crises. To achieve this, a customised questionnaire was developed, a telephone-based opinion survey was conducted, and responses from a sample of about 3000 residents were collected and analysed.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η παρούσα μελέτη εξετάζει τον κοινωνικοοικονομικό αντίκτυπο της πανδημίας COVID-19 στους κατοίκους ενός δήμου στην Περιφέρεια της Κεντρικής Μακεδονίας στην Ελλάδα. Η έρευνα πεδίου πραγματοποιήθηκε την χρονική περίοδο 2021-2022 και επικεντρώθηκε στον τρόπο με τον οποίο οι πολίτες αντιλαμβάνονται, προσεγγίζουν και αξιολογούν την κοινωνικοοικονομική τους κατάσταση (ποιότητα ζωής), την πρόσβασή σε υπηρεσίες υγείας και κοινωνικές υπηρεσίες, τις υποδομές για τα άτομα με αναπορία, τις περιβαλλοντικές προκλήσεις και άλλους παράγοντες, δεδομένου των επιπτώσεων της πρόσφατης οικονομικής και υγειονομικής κρίσης. Για τους σκοπούς αυτούς, εκπονήθηκε ειδικό ερωτηματολόγιο, διεξήχθη τηλεφωνική έρευνα κοινής γνώμης και συγκεντρώθηκαν και αναλύθηκαν απαντήσεις από ένα δείγμα περίπου 3000 κατοίκων.

**KEY WORDS:** COVID-19 Impact, Social Inclusion, Economic Resilience, Social Cohesion, Persons with Disabilities, Local Development, Opinion Research.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Επιπτώσεις της COVID-19, Κοινωνική Ένταξη, Οικονομική Ανθεκτικότητα, Κοινωνική Συνοχή, Τοπική Ανάπτυξη, Έρευνα Κοινής Γνώμης.

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had profound and far-reaching effects on both social and economic life across the globe. Its impact touched nearly every aspect of society, from daily routines to global economies. Nicola et al. (2020) observed diminished workforce across all economic sectors, stagnation in development, scarcity in commodities and manufactured goods but also higher demand in the food industry and medical supplies. They summarised COVID-19's socioeconomic consequences on specific sectors of the international economy (primary sectors, secondary sectors, tertiary sectors, quaternary sector), cited the response measures of the EU, US and UK authorities, and concluded in the necessity of relief measures and resilient governmental leadership. Delardas et al. (2022) reaching similar conclusions in their research, noted reduced productivity and material shortages, supply disruptions but also their findings pointed to intensive innovative activity and novel ways of working in order to boost financial resilience. In their model, Martin et al. (2020) state the importance of governmental financial aids on restraining poverty rate increases and maintaining the standards of social welfare. This was also supported by Almeida et al. (2021) in their assessment of the fiscal policy measures on household's disposable income in the EU, mentioning that policy interventions can help mitigate the pandemics' impact on inequality and poverty. Moreover, Baptista et al. (2021) supported that stimulus interventions proved to be crucial in order to effectively manage social implications such as tackling poverty in the EU, supporting social inclusion of vulnerable social groups and reducing inequalities. Another dimension worth mentioning is the findings of Flor et al. (2022) that observed gender disparities in health, social, and economic aspects. The issued travelling restrictions and general lockdowns in the pandemic period, although deemed necessary for the public health by the experts, caused severe disruptions in many economic sectors. This was especially true in Greece, where tourism represents one of the country's most important economic sectors, the imposed restrictions created fears for much greater economic recession compared to the earlier economic crises (Vouloutidou et al., 2021). Vouloutidou et al. (2021) also noted the importance of financial relief measures coming from government financial aid to ease the economic repercussions to the median household income.

On a different note, Agrawal et al. (2020) have highlighted the effects of COVID-19 on the professional skills and requirements of employees. Specifically, it is described the necessity to build up critical workforce capabilities in different levels of employment (managers, associates, workers, etc.) to ensure the resilience of organisations. Similar findings from Li (2022), show that providing all individuals with opportunity to obtain new skills is prerequisite in order to create and maintain stronger, more equitable and inclusive economies and communities. The importance of upskilling and continuous training, as means of social cohesion and prosperity within the community, is also supported in the work of Skarnakis & Kostas (2020) drawing attention to the urgency of formulating techniques of life-long education as the central focus for further development and life-long employee development is presented as a new approach to social policy.

The social and economic impacts of the pandemic can be briefly summarised, based on the above cited works, as follows (Agrawal et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2020; Nicola et al., 2020; Almeida et al., 2021; Baptista et al., 2021; Vouloutidou et al., 2021; Delardas et al., 2022; Flor et al., 2022): a) Changes in Social Interactions: social distancing, quarantines and lockdowns, virtual connections; b) Mental Health Effects: anxiety and stress, loneliness, grief; c) Educational Disruption: school closures, educational inequality, impact on young people; d) Changes in Work Culture: remote work, workplace health and safety, job insecurity; e) Global Economic Downturn: supply chain disruptions, unemployment, recession; f) Changes in Consumer Behaviour: impact

on small businesses, changes in spending, shift to e-commerce; g) Government Responses and Economic Stimulus: monetary policy, fiscal stimulus; h) Long-Term Economic Shifts: digital transformation, reshaping global trade, inequality and poverty, financial market volatility.

Survey researchers have debated the fundamental idea of public opinion and its connection to mass survey data since the beginning of the scientific study of public opinion (e.g., Bryce, 1888; Park, 1972; Habermas, 1989). Opinion research is the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting sample data about people's opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and preferences on various topics. A sample that is carefully constructed could provide a realistic representation of the total population (Gallup, 1948). The selection of polling and opinion survey techniques have to be conducted appropriately and in a strong correlation with the current trends of society in order to provide reliable data for decision making (Osborne & Rose, 2003). Traditional survey research may become less important in the new era of public opinion research. The socio-political environment in which public opinion researchers work is evolving due to the widespread use of new technologies like social media and mobile devices (Murphy et al., 2014).

In the current study, the opinion research survey was carried out using a quantitative research method, which took into account all the required conditions to ensure a smooth conduct and safeguard the processing of its results. According to Lampiri-Dimaki & Papachristou (1995); Lazos (1998); Kiriazi (2001); Paraskevopoulou-Kollia (2008); Wolf et al. (2016); Babbie (2018); Sakellaropoulos (2019), quantitative research methods (particularly in social sciences), analyse the number and quantity of occurrence of the object (phenomenon) under consideration, include precise measurements and strict control of variables aiming to collect data through recording to mainly extract data statistics. Quantitative research is a highly effective method for describing and examining objective characteristics of the population under study, as well as gathering accurate and valid data that leads to findings and conclusions. Furthermore, quantitative research operates within a predetermined and strict framework, with limited flexibility for alterations once the research has commenced. This quantitative research was conducted using a standardised questionnaire, enabling the researchers to reach a substantial portion of the population, ensuring the effectiveness of the study. The structured questionnaire was carefully designed, ensuring that it was concise with small, closed-ended questions, that the correlation between the questions and the overall context of the research was clear, that the flow and sequence were maintained smoothly, that the questions were phrased simply and clearly for full understanding, that double-barreled and leading questions, which could result in incorrect answers, were avoided, and that no questions requiring high specialised knowledge were included, nor any questions that could put the respondents in an uncomfortable position. The closed-ended questions were paired with predetermined answer options, allowing the respondent to select the one that best reflected their situation and opinion.

The pilot research, conducted to identify and rectify potential errors, played a vital role in its ultimate success. During this step, ambiguities, confusing terms, difficulties picking answers, a lack of expertise about the research topics, difficulty understanding the questions, and other concerns were discovered. Consequently, the use of this unique quantitative research approach, combined with the thoughtfully designed questionnaire, ensured maximum impartiality, validity, and reliability of responses, contributing significantly to the success of this study.

The Field research (opinion research survey) was conducted during 2021-2022 to examine the opinions and views of the residents of a municipality in the Region of Central Macedonia, Greece, on how they perceive, approach, and evaluate their socio-economic situation in light of the effects of the recent financial and health crises (quality of life, access to social and health

services, environmental issues, criminality, culture, civilisation, volunteering, etc.). Beyond the basic indicators, citizens' perspectives are particularly important, as significant changes occurred in society, the national economy, and local economies over the twelve-year period from 2010 to 2021. The findings can serve as a valuable tool for authorities to support decision-making and improve their related policies.

The study included analysis and correlation to the living space in the examined area of responses regarding quality of life, access to social and health services, facilities for Persons with Disabilities (PwD), environmental issues, criminality, culture, volunteering, etc. Data analysis and research findings highlighted significant factors and parameters affecting the community, alongside insights into the perspectives of residents across diverse social and economic backgrounds. These results could serve as a guide for the development of targeted policies by local and regional authorities.

The study area was a municipality in the Region of Central Macedonia in Greece, and the data collection period lasted in the years 2021-2022. The sample was 2998 inhabitants (91,9% living in urban areas and the remainder in suburban areas/villages), which included 65,9% females and 34,1% males. The inhabitants in poverty risk were 1884 (62,8%), the disabled inhabitants were 383 inhabitants (12,8%), the migrants/refugees were 34 inhabitants (1,1%) and the drug users (current, ex) were 28 inhabitants (0,9%).

According to the EUROSTAT glossary with the term AROPE - "at risk of poverty or social exclusion" (European Union, n.d.), we are referring to the aggregate of individuals who are either at risk of poverty, highly materially and socially disadvantaged, or residing in a home with extremely low labour intensity. In Greece, the financial criteria, on an annual basis, in order for someone to be considered "at risk of poverty" must not exceed the amount of €4.917 (for individuals) and €10.326 (for a household of two adults and two dependents). Based on the statistics provided from the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), the percentage of those meeting the financial criteria corresponds to 17,9% of the Greek population (in the ELSTAT data, the income includes allowances and other social benefits, which were probably not taken into account by the participants in their answers). The aforementioned data reveal a significant discrepancy, which may be explained by the participants' reluctance to answer some more personal questions (being even worried about potential telephone fraud), the fact that a high percentage of respondents were not employed and answered from home (non-work), and the age of the distribution of the sample, predominantly between 65 and 79 years of age. The interpretation is further supported by the corresponding correlation between high unemployment rates and elevated poverty rates.

## 2. Research Methodology

### 2.1 Basic elements of methodology - variables

The sample of 3.000 respondents is sufficiently high for a population between 25.000 and 80.000 people, as the minimum acceptable sample size for confidence level of 95% and error margin of 5%, is 394 and 398 respectively, with regards to applying the method of Yamane (1967) as referred by Israel (2013), and Osahon & Kingsley (2016). Similarly, for the improved margin of error being set at 3%, the minimum acceptable sample size is between 1.064 and 1.096 respondents respectively.

The initial collection design involved fieldwork with questionnaire-based personal interviews. Owing to the restrictive measures imposed to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person data collection was not permitted in 2021, and it was decided to conduct the

research by phone and online. The collected data were entered to a database, were assessed and analysed for a range of parameters using a spreadsheet (EXCEL) and statistical analysis software (PSPP), and high-risk conclusion assessment controls were identified.

The variables measured included: 1. the sex; 2. the age; 3. the marital status (single/living with parents, single/living alone, married/living with family, divorced, other); 4. the children (minors, adults and minors, adults, adult dependents, none); 5. the educational level (illiterate, elementary school, secondary school, technical school, institutes of vocational training, university, MSc, Ph.D.); 6. the residence (rent, property, hosting); 7. the area of residence and city/village and municipal unit; 8. Citizenship; 9. the employment (unemployed, self-employed, employed in the public/wider public sector, employed in the private sector, loss of previously held capacity, inactive/unable to work); 10. the form of employment [unemployed, informal (non-legal)], precarious, flexible (part-time, temporary, seasonal), inactive [(unable to work), formal (legal)]; 11. the employment sector (unemployed, primary, secondary, tertiary, other).

Moreover, other measurement variables were: 12. the income (individual, family) and annual amount of income (i. have no income, ii. up to €4.917, iii. €4.918 - €6.000, iv. €6.001 - €10.326, v. €10.327 - €20.000, vi. €20.001 - €40.000); 13. the disability (yes, no); 14. the existence of addiction (yes, no) and the type of addiction (none, smoking, alcohol, gambling, drugs, other); 15. the access to social / medical services (medical, social, both, none); 16. the participation in a volunteer club / group (yes, no), with what object (amateur sports, blood donation, culture, help to the needy, support for the disabled, help for immigrants, etc.); 17. the impact of COVID-19 on personal and family financial situation (negative, positive, not at all, very negative, very positive); 18. The impact of COVID-19 on personal and family social status (negative, positive, not at all, very negative, very positive); 19. the impact of COVID-19 in general on the economic situation in the society of the municipality (negative, positive, not at all, very negative, very positive); 20. the impact of COVID-19 in general on the social, cultural situation in the society of the municipality (negative, positive, not at all, very negative, very positive).

Furthermore, extra measurement variables were: 21. the level of criminality and safety in the municipality in general (very low, low, high, very high); 22. the level of criminality and safety in the municipality (Do you feel safe living in the Municipality? - very low, low, high, and very high); 23. the question: What affects crime? (Unemployment, unemployment due to COVID-19, unemployment-foreigners, lack of policing, etc.); 24. the question: What is your opinion about the environmental problems in the municipality? (very few, few, many, too many); 25. the question for list, if possible, the three most important environmental problems, ranking them from the most significant to the least significant; 26. the question: Are you experiencing any local issues where you live or work? (yes, no) and specialization in "Yes"; 27. the open question about the evaluation of the accessibility in urban infrastructure for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) in the municipality in general.

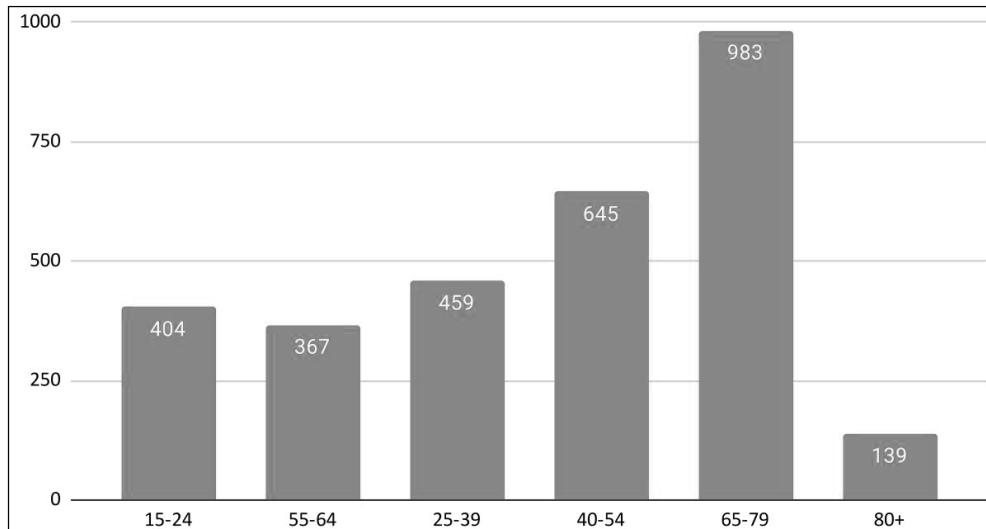
The final measurement variables included the following open-ended questions: 28. general issues of dependency on the municipality; 29. descriptive information about volunteering in the municipality; 30. descriptive data on quality of life, culture, and sports in the municipality; 31. general descriptive information about the immigration of third-country nationals to the municipality (categorised as A. Europe: e.g., AL, RUS, SRB, etc.; and B. non-European countries); 32. general descriptive information about social issues or problems in the municipality; 33. descriptive data on crime and citizens' sense of security in the municipality; 34. ideas for addressing the societal consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the municipality; 35. suggestions for addressing other potential societal issues in the municipality (beyond those related to COVID-19).

## 2.2 Research sample - demographics

For the purpose of this article, we present 15 selected parameters (1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20) of the 35 measurable variables listed above, in the following graphs and tables.

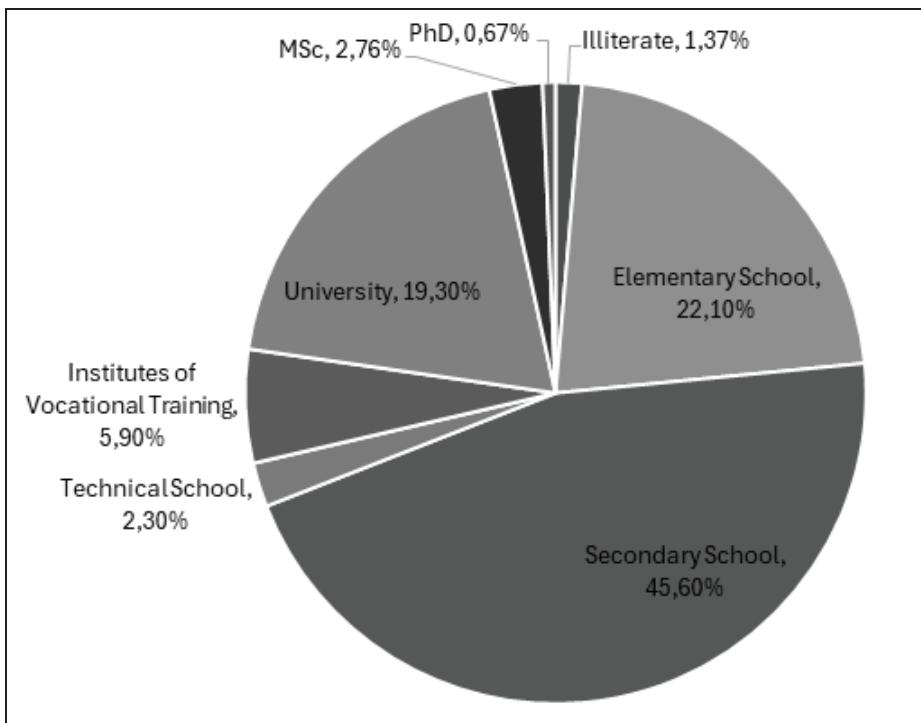
These parameters range from demographic data to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the personal and family financial or social situations.

**Graph 1. Demographic data of participants (Age)**



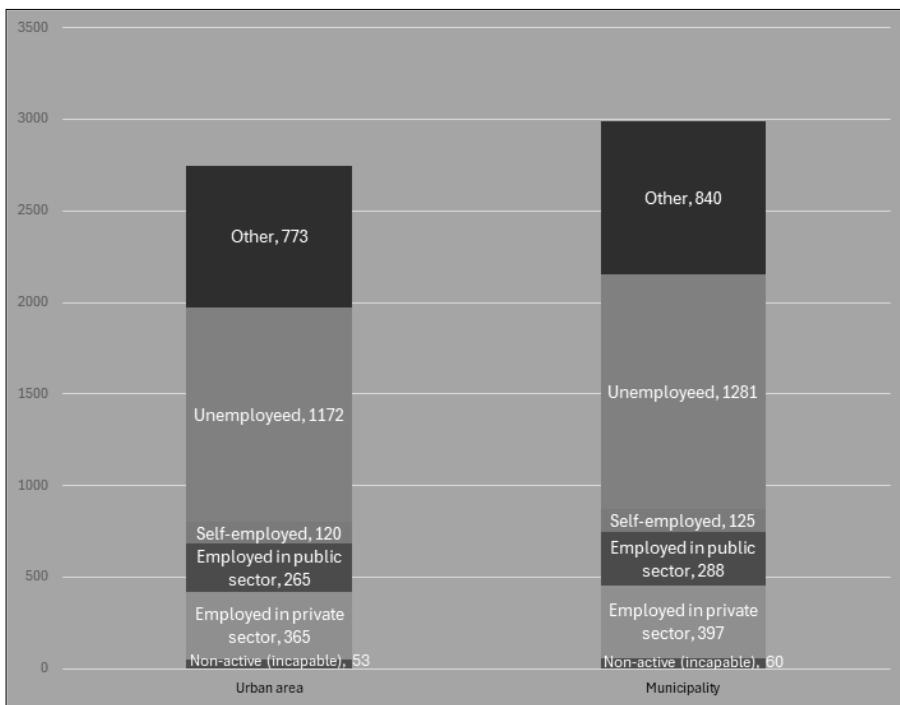
Graph 1 illustrates the measurement variable 2, which represents the age distribution of the survey participants. The largest age group that was involved in our survey falls within the 65-79 age range, accounting for 32,8% of respondents. Moreover, participants aged over 40 comprise more than 70,0% of the total sample. This outcome is likely related to the fact that the survey was conducted primarily in the mornings through phone calls to households, which led to a higher response rate from older individuals. These respondents also demonstrated greater willingness to participate in the survey compared to other age groups, who exhibited higher refusal rates due to various factors, such as lack of time or unwillingness to engage.

Graph 2. Demographic data of participants (Education Level)



Graph 2 depicts measurement variable 5, which pertains to the educational level of the participants. In the sample, only 22.73% of respondents had attained higher educational degrees, including university qualifications and advanced degrees such as MBAs, MScs, and PhDs. Meanwhile, 67.70% had completed only compulsory education in Greece (primary and secondary school). Ninety-five percent of the respondents answered this question. The proportion of individuals with higher education levels in the sample is slightly lower than the OECD (2023) data, which reports that 34.56% of the population aged 24-65 hold a university degree or higher. This discrepancy can be attributed to the relatively high proportion of respondents over 65 years old, as enrolment rates in higher education were lower in previous decades compared to more recent ones. However, the correlation remains consistent. Additionally, the percentage of holders of higher education degrees was higher in the urban areas. Meanwhile, the percentage of individuals with secondary education aligns closely with the OECD (2023) findings at the national level (45%).

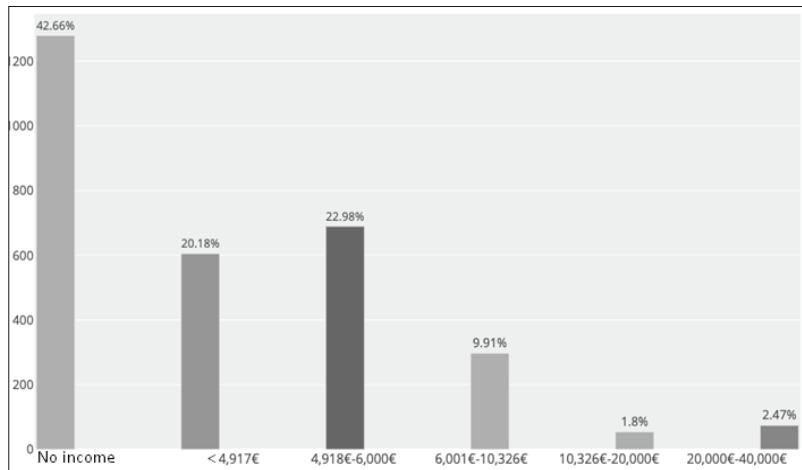
**Graph 3. Demographic data of participants (Employability Status)**



Graph 3 categorises respondents based on the area of residence (urban, municipality) and employment status. Among those residing in the municipality, 42,8% were categorised as "unemployed". The private sector shows 13,2%, the public sector 9,6%, and 28,0% is linked to "other".

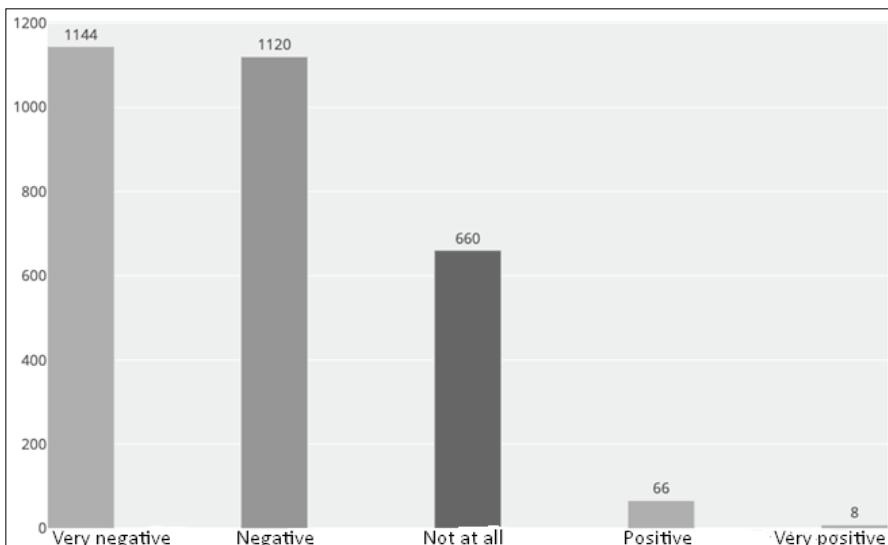
The figure is higher than the average in Greece; however, it is explained due to the fact that many respondents were in temporary suspension or lost their job due to the crisis, while others were reluctant to answer the survey honestly, and the distribution of the sample also affected the outcome as employed individuals were at work during the morning survey calls.

The unemployment rate among individuals aged 40-54 was 19,47% higher than that of the 15-24 age group and 4,12% higher than the 55-64 age group. This discrepancy can be attributed to younger individuals more easily securing non-permanent jobs that typically do not require significant credentials, such as waiters, while those over 55 benefit from special employment programs offered by the Greek Public Employment Service. Furthermore, women experienced an unemployment rate 27,8% higher than that of men.

**Graph 4. Income of the participants**

According to the income data presented in Graph 4, 42.66% of participants reported "no income" at all. When combined with the percentage of those who reported "income below €4.917", then we have 62.84% of participants living at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

This outcome is closely linked to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in job losses and reduced opportunities for seasonal employment due to limited business turnover. Additionally, some respondents may have chosen not to provide accurate answers - an issue commonly observed with personal questions during phone surveys, compared to those conducted in person or in public settings, where respondents may feel more secure providing detailed information.

**Graph 5. Effects of COVID-19 on the financial status of the citizens**

As shown in Graph 5, respondents were asked to describe the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the society of the municipality they reside in. An overwhelming majority, 75,52%, reported a negative impact, with 38,2% answering “very negative”, and 37,3% “negative”. In contrast, only 2,5% of respondents described the impact as “positive” or “very positive”.

The described approach can be attributed to the fact that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a public health emergency with severe socio-economic repercussions. Beyond its significant impact on vulnerable sectors of the economy, the pandemic also dealt a heavy blow to individual families. Many residents reported pre-existing survival challenges due to the economic crisis and the transition to the digital age, which were exacerbated by the new coronavirus. The necessary measures implemented to curb the spread of COVID-19, such as mandatory home confinement, led to a rapid decline in income for numerous families.

### 3. Research Findings

#### 3.1 Findings - selected parameters

The tables below continue the presentation of selected measured variables and parameters. It is important to note that percentages are calculated based on the total of each category, and only main categories are presented; therefore, they do not sum to 100%. The total number of participants includes 2615 non-PwD (People without Disabilities/general population) and 383 PwD (Persons with Disabilities), accounting for 12,78% of the sample, which is fairly close to the national average of disabled people in Greece, where 10,2% report feeling significantly restricted in performing daily tasks due to health problems, and 14,0% report experiencing moderate restrictions in carrying out such tasks (European Commission, 2022). Specifically, among the general population, there are 872 males and 1.743 females, while in the PwD group there are 150 males and 233 females. Among the PwD respondents, only 233 out of 383 (60,8%) reported having access to social benefits. This finding may reflect the general perception that such benefits are directly associated with expectations of financial support. Additionally, 28 participants, representing 0,9% of the total sample, reported being currently or formerly addicted to substances.

**Table 1. Educational status of PwD compared to general population**

Male+Female	Illiterate	Tertiary	MSc/MBA	phD
General Population	30 (1,1%)	482 (18,4%)	70 (2,7%)	17 (0,7%)
PwD	10 (2,6%)	63 (16,4%)	8 (2,1%)	2 (0,5%)

Table 1 presents the educational status of Persons with Disabilities (PwD) in comparison to the general population according to answers given by the respondents. Among PwD, 16,4% have completed some form of tertiary education (universities, colleges, technical training institutes, or vocational schools). Conversely, only 2,6% of PwD pursued advanced degrees (MScs, PhDs, etc.). These rates are comparable to those observed in the general population, indicating that educational attainment among PwD aligns closely with broader societal trends, despite potential barriers.

Among illiterate individuals, the rate of PwD is 136% higher than that of the general population. This significant disparity likely reflects the challenges faced by PwD with more severe health conditions, highlighting the critical need for targeted interventions to address educational barriers and promote literacy within this group.

**Table 2. Existence of addiction/s in PwD compared to general population**

Males+Females	Have some addiction/s
General Population	870 (33,3%)
PwD	131 (34,2%)

Another finding presented in Table 2 is the prevalence of addiction/s among PwD compared to the general population. The data show that 34,2% of PwD have noted some form of addiction (smoking, alcohol, gambling, drugs, etc.), a rate similar to that observed in the general population. This finding suggests that addiction is a pervasive issue, affecting individuals regardless of disability status. However, it is important to note that this was a sensitive topic for many respondents. Despite assurances regarding the protection of personal data, some participants may have been hesitant to provide detailed or accurate answers, likely due to stigma or discomfort associated with discussing personal issues such as addiction. This reluctance may have resulted in underreporting, suggesting that the actual prevalence of addiction could be higher than reported.

**Table 3. Income status of PwD in comparison to general population**

Males+Females	No Income	< 4.917€	4.918€ - 10.326€	10.327€ - 20.000€	20.001€ - 40.000€
General Population	1.116 (42,7%)	532 (20,3%)	858 (32,8%)	44 (1,7%)	65 (2,5%)
PwD	163 (42,6%)	73 (19,1%)	128 (33,4%)	10 (2,6%)	9 (2,3%)

The income indicators presented in Table 3 represent a critical parameter of the sample, revealing that 61,7% of PwD are living at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Comparable findings are observed in the general population, with 63,0% of the respondents reporting financial vulnerability.

These results highlight the pervasive economic challenges faced by both PwD and the general population. For PwD, limited access to stable employment and additional costs related to health-care or accessibility needs likely contribute to their financial insecurity. Similarly, the elevated risk of poverty among the general population reflects broader socio-economic challenges, potentially exacerbated by the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, including job losses, reduced income opportunities, and economic instability. These findings underscore the need for targeted policy interventions to address systemic financial inequities and promote social inclusion. Recognising that disability does not equate to incapability for work, such an approach could significantly contribute to local development. By increasing the workforce available to the market, it would likely add value to local enterprises and organisations, both through direct labour contributions and enhanced social corporate responsibility policies. This, in turn, could lead to a higher local GDP (Gross Domestic Product) driven by increased consumption. Moreover, family members of PwD, who belong to the general population, would benefit from more opportunities for work and other activities due to the increased availability of personal time.

**Table 4. Marital and living status of PwD in comparison to general population**

Males+Females	Divorced	Single / Living alone	Single / Living with parents	Married
General Population	462 (17,7%)	429 (16,4%)	76 (2,9%)	1.529 (58,5%)
PwD	80 (20,9%)	55 (14,4%)	13 (3,4%)	215 (56,1%)

Table 4 presents the marital status of PwD in comparison to the general population, including whether they live alone or with their parents. In the sample, 56,1% of PwD were reported to be married, and 38,7% were either divorced or single. Tables 5 and 6 provide a more detailed breakdown of this parameter, offering a gender-based comparison.

The relatively high percentage of married individuals (56,1%) among PwD indicates a level of social integration, suggesting that disability does not necessarily preclude marital relationships. The combined percentage of divorced or single individuals (38,7%) may reflect challenges PwD face in maintaining long-term relationships, potentially linked to the additional demands and stresses associated with disability. The findings, when compared to the general population, reveal minor differences. For instance, a slightly proportion higher of PwD are divorced or live with their parents compared to the general population. Conversely, fewer PwD live alone or are married, although these differences are also minimal.

While living alone may not be difficult for the general population, it has complications for PwD, thus, the 14,4% of them (living alone) is an important part and should be taken into consideration when designing related policies (i.e., provide benefits for independent living).

**Table 5. Marital and living status of male PwD in comparison to the males of the general population**

Males	Divorced	Single / Living alone or with parents	Married
General Population	140 (16,1%)	198 (22,7%)	498 (57,1%)
PwD	33 (22,0%)	27 (18,0%)	85 (56,7%)

**Table 6. Marital and living status of female PwD in comparison to the females of the general population**

Females	Divorced	Single / Living alone or with parents	Married
General Population	322 (18,5%)	307 (17,6%)	1031 (59,2%)
PwD	47 (20,2%)	41 (17,6%)	130 (55,8%)

Tables 5 and 6 reveal minor but noteworthy findings. In the general population, divorced women outnumber divorced men, whereas in the PwD group, divorced men are more prevalent than divorced women. Additionally, in the general population, the proportion of men who are single or living alone or with their parents is significantly higher than that of women. In contrast, within the PwD group, these rates are nearly equal across genders. Lastly, in both the general population and the PwD group, married men slightly outnumber married women.

The higher prevalence of divorced women in the general population aligns with broader societal trends, where women may initiate divorce more often. Conversely, the reverse trend observed in the PwD group, with more divorced men, may reflect the added pressures of caregiving responsibilities or challenges of maintaining partnerships when one partner has a disability.

The nearly equal rates of single or cohabiting men and women in the PwD group differ from the general population, where men are more likely to live alone or with parents. This could indicate a shift in traditional gender roles among PwD, perhaps due to shared reliance on family or external support systems.

Finally, the slightly higher proportion of married men in both groups may reflect traditional gender roles, where men are more likely to receive familial or societal support to sustain a marital relationship, even in the presence of disabilities. Women, by contrast, may demonstrate greater independence when required.

**Table 7. Employment status and employment category of male PwD in comparison to the males of the general population**

Males	Unemployed	Self-employed	Public Sector	Private Sector	Non active
General Population	312 (35,8%)	71 (8,1%)	97 (11,1%)	120 (13,8%)	40 (4,6%)
PwD	57 (38,0%)	13 (8,7%)	10 (6,7%)	9 (6,0%)	9 (6,0%)

**Table 8. Employment status and employment category of female PwD in comparison to the females of the general population**

Females	Unemployed	Self-employed	Public Sector	Private Sector	Non active
General Population	800 (45,9%)	34 (2,0%)	163 (9,4%)	238 (13,7%)	9 (0,5%)
PwD	112 (48,1%)	7 (3,0%)	18 (7,7%)	30 (12,9%)	2 (0,9%)

Tables 7 and 8 provide insights into employment status and employment categories by gender for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) and the general population. Among the male PwD population in the sample, 21,4% reported being employed, whether in the private or public sector or as self-employed. In contrast, 44,0% identified as either unemployed or non active in the workforce.

For the female population of PwD, 49,0% have been recorded as either unemployed or non-active, while 23,6% reported some form of employment, including private sector, public sector, or self-employment.

Unemployment rates are notably higher among women compared to men, irrespective of population category. Additionally, self-employment is almost three times more common among men in the PwD group than among women. However, women in the PwD group are more likely than men to be employed in the private or public sector.

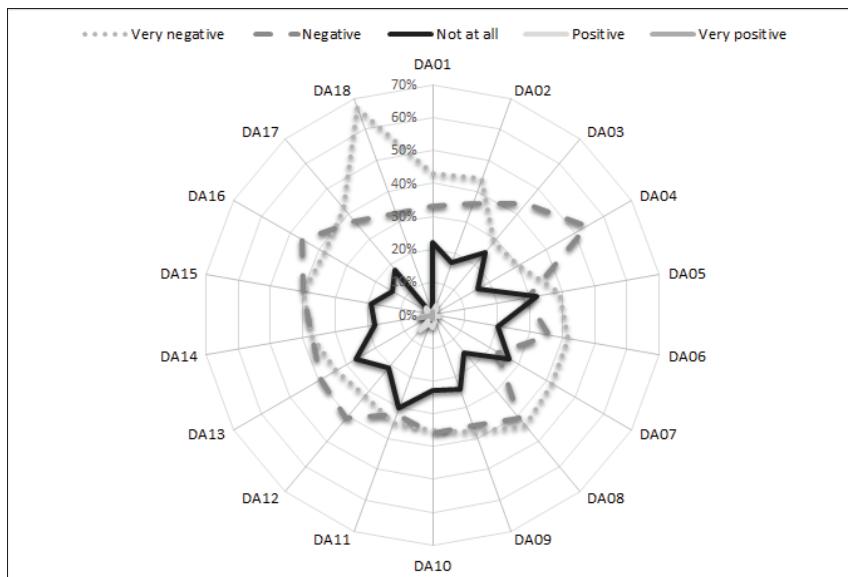
The higher unemployment rates among women with disabilities mirror general labour market trends, where women often face greater challenges in accessing employment, including caregiving responsibilities, social biases, or lack of opportunities. Similarly, the notable gap in self-employment rates suggests that men with disabilities may have greater access to resources, networks, or confidence to start and sustain their own businesses. The higher proportion of women working in the private or public sectors could indicate that women with disabilities are more likely to seek structured employment environments, possibly due to the stability and benefits these roles often provide.

These findings highlight the need (i) for targeted interventions to reduce unemployment among PWD, especially women, by providing access to training programs, flexible working conditions, and support for entrepreneurship, and (ii) encouraging self-employment opportunities for women with disabilities could help address the stark gender gap in this area. Further analysis could explore the barriers preventing women with disabilities from pursuing self-employment and the factors enabling men with disabilities to succeed in this area.

**Table 9. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the personal & family financial situation**

Sub-area	Very negative	Negative	Not at all	Positive	Very positive	N/A	Sum
DA01	43%	33%	22%	1%	1%	0%	100%
DA02	44%	36%	17%	3%	0%	0%	100%
DA03	29%	44%	25%	2%	0%	0%	100%
DA04	30%	54%	16%	0%	0%	0%	100%
DA05	39%	29%	32%	0%	0%	0%	100%
DA06	42%	36%	20%	2%	0%	0%	100%
DA07	42%	23%	27%	0%	0%	8%	100%
DA08	44%	41%	15%	0%	0%	0%	100%
DA09	38%	36%	24%	2%	0%	0%	100%
DA10	35%	36%	23%	4%	1%	1%	100%
DA11	35%	32%	30%	3%	0%	0%	100%
DA12	32%	41%	21%	6%	0%	0%	100%
DA13	34%	39%	27%	0%	0%	0%	100%
DA14	37%	37%	18%	4%	4%	0%	100%
DA15	40%	40%	19%	1%	0%	0%	100%
DA16	38%	46%	14%	2%	0%	0%	100%
DA17	42%	37%	18%	3%	0%	0%	100%
DA18	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

**Graph 6. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the personal & family financial situation**



**Graph 7. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the personal & family financial situation (negative - very negative jointly; positive - very positive jointly)**

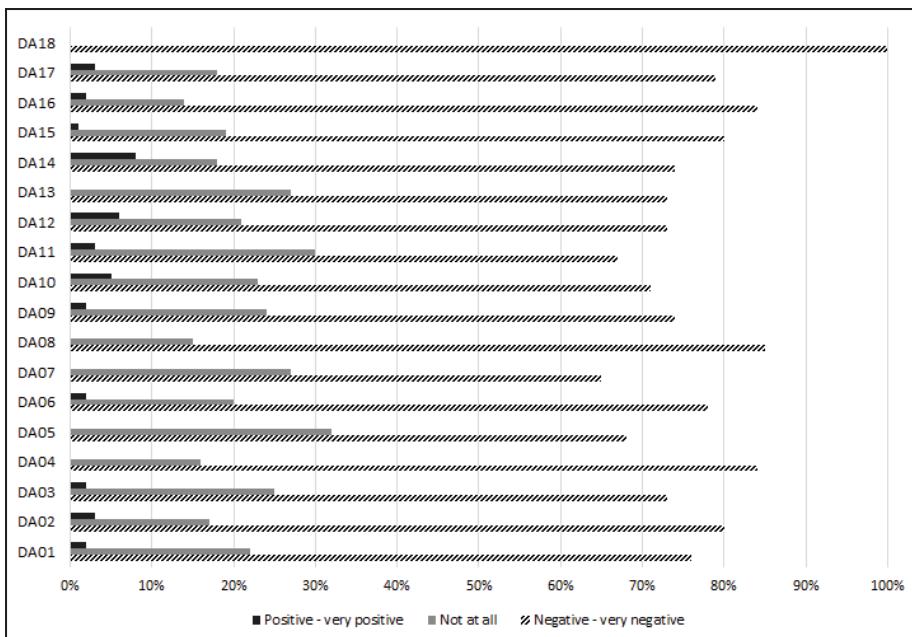


Table 9, along with Graphs 6 and 7, illustrate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on personal and family financial situations across different district areas (DA) within the municipality. Significant variations are evident between the areas, with notable disparities linked to the social and economic status of each district. Poorer families living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods reported feeling the negative financial impact of the pandemic more acutely compared to wealthier families residing in affluent areas.

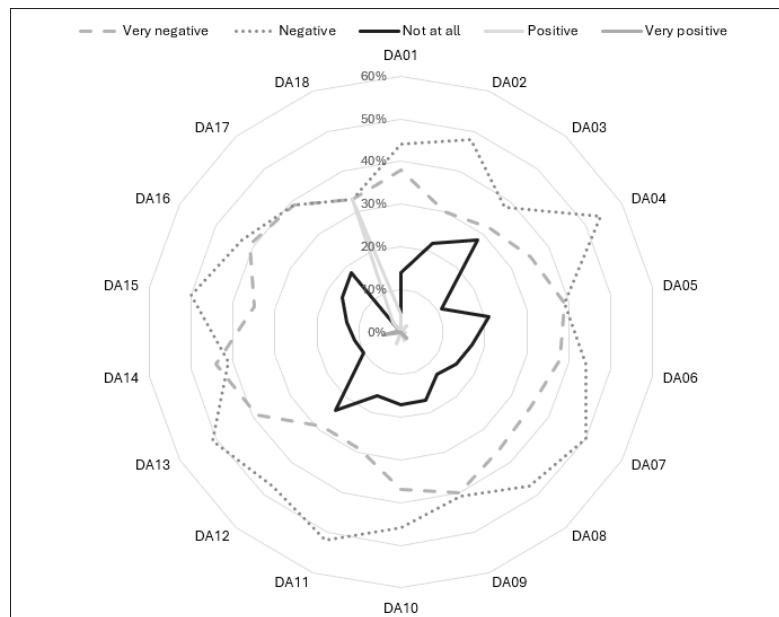
These findings highlight the uneven financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the municipality, with poorer families in disadvantaged neighbourhoods experiencing more severe effects than wealthier families. This disparity can be attributed to pre-existing socio-economic inequalities, where low-income households often lack financial buffers, stable employment, or access to support systems that could mitigate the pandemic's economic challenges. Conversely, wealthier families typically have greater resources to withstand such disruptions, including savings, diversified income sources, and better access to remote work opportunities.

This trend underscores the critical role of social and economic structures in shaping community resilience during crises. It also emphasises the need for targeted policy measures to support vulnerable populations in disadvantaged areas.

**Table 10. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the personal & family social situation**

Sub-area	Very negative	Negative	Not at all	Positive	Very positive	N/A	Sum
DA01	38%	44%	14%	4%	0%	0%	100%
DA02	30%	48%	22%	0%	0%	0%	100%
DA03	32%	38%	28%	2%	0%	0%	100%
DA04	35%	54%	11%	0%	0%	0%	100%
DA05	39%	39%	21%	0%	0%	1%	100%
DA06	38%	44%	17%	1%	0%	0%	100%
DA07	35%	50%	15%	0%	0%	0%	100%
DA08	36%	47%	13%	2%	2%	0%	100%
DA09	40%	41%	17%	2%	0%	0%	100%
DA10	37%	46%	17%	0%	0%	0%	100%
DA11	29%	52%	16%	3%	0%	0%	100%
DA12	29%	47%	24%	0%	0%	0%	100%
DA13	39%	51%	10%	0%	0%	0%	100%
DA14	44%	41%	11%	0%	4%	0%	100%
DA15	35%	50%	13%	0%	1%	1%	100%
DA16	41%	43%	16%	0%	0%	0%	100%
DA17	39%	39%	18%	3%	0%	1%	100%
DA18	33%	33%	0%	33%	0%	1%	100%

**Graph 8. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the personal & family social situation**



**Graph 9. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the personal & family social situation (negative - very negative jointly; positive - very positive jointly)**

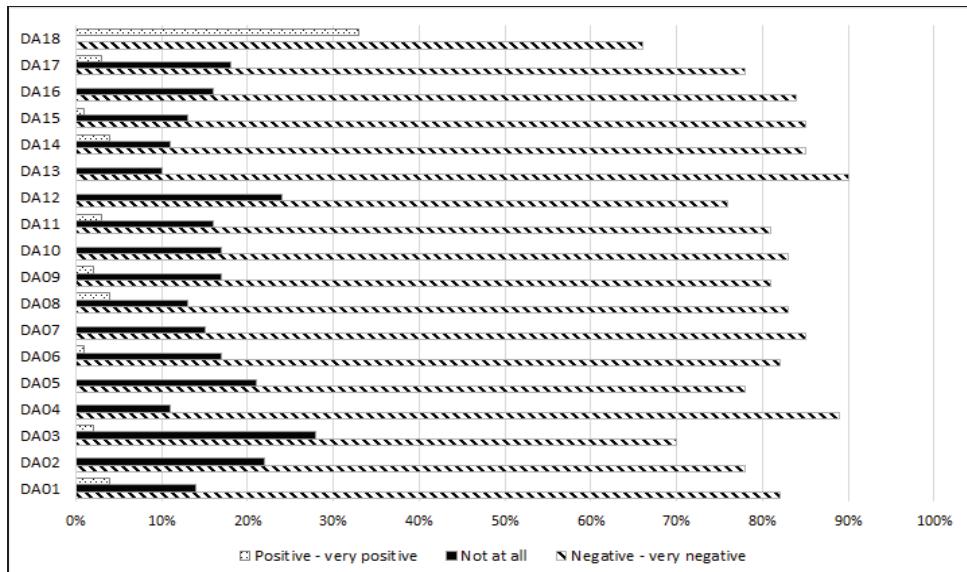


Table 10, along with Graphs 8 and 9, depicts the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the personal and family social conditions across various district areas (DAs) within the municipality. The data reveal significant differences between areas, with notable variations linked to the socio-economic status of each district. Families in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods reported experiencing the negative social effects of the pandemic more intensely than those in affluent areas.

These findings underscore the unequal social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the municipality, with families in poorer neighbourhoods bearing a greater burden compared to those in wealthier areas. This disparity can be traced to existing socio-economic inequalities, as low-income households often lack sufficient resources, stable jobs, or access to support systems to cushion the pandemic's social and economic effects. In contrast, wealthier families are typically better equipped to handle such disruptions due to their access to savings, diversified income streams, and remote work opportunities.

This pattern highlights the vital influence of social and economic frameworks in determining community resilience during times of crisis and underscores the need for targeted policies to assist vulnerable groups in underserved areas.

### **3.2 Research limitations**

The restrictions implemented to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus necessitated changes to the data collection method, shifting from in-person collection to telephone communications. This adjustment introduced challenges with certain queries, resulting in incomplete responses to some questions.

Completing the questionnaires posed structural difficulties in accurately and efficiently recording responses. Questions related to sensitive topics such as income or living arrangements (e.g., income, living alone or with family, etc.) created a sense of insecurity among respondents during the Q/A process. This discomfort led to some questions going unanswered or responses deviating partially from reality.

The data and findings thus reflect the perception and approaches of the respondents, constrained by the limitations and weaknesses of the modified collection method. Additionally, certain responses may reflect the current situation or mindset of the respondents more than an objective reality.

Consequently, while the findings may not fully represent the recorded reality for all questions, they offer valuable insights. These insights can serve as a useful tool for local and regional authorities, as well as other services, to enhance their policies and address community needs more effectively.

## **4. Conclusion - Discussion**

**P**ublic perceptions of social indicators frequently differ from officially recorded data, influenced by factors such as media and social networks. For instance, perceptions of crime rates or service quality may be negatively skewed and deviate significantly from official evaluations, such as recorded police offences. Addressing this gap requires effective communication strategies to align public perceptions more closely with reality.

Developing and implementing a dynamic and modern information plan could enhance the dissemination of accurate data related to these indicators. This would ensure that the public's understanding of social indicators better reflects objective realities, fostering informed opinions and reducing misinformation.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing socio-economic inequalities across different district areas within the municipality. Families in disadvantaged neighbourhoods faced more severe financial and social impacts compared to their counterparts in affluent areas. This underscores the urgent need for policies aimed at reducing systemic inequalities and fostering economic resilience.

Persons with Disabilities (PWD) faced heightened challenges during the pandemic, with a significant proportion (61,7%) living at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Despite comparable educational attainment rates between PWD and the general population, disparities in employment opportunities and access to social benefits highlight critical areas requiring targeted interventions to promote inclusion and reduce barriers.

The findings indicate that women, particularly those with disabilities, experience notably higher unemployment rates compared to men. Moreover, the stark gender disparity in self-employment among PWD suggests the need for tailored programs to encourage and support entrepreneurial activities, particularly for women.

The data analysis and field research findings underscore significant shifts in socio-economic factors and parameters for the community as well as residents' perspectives on particular issues from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. The results offer a data-driven basis for targeted policy-making aimed at enhancing social inclusion, economic recovery, and community resilience, underscoring the pandemic's profound effects on local socio-economic structures. Thus, the results of this study can be a tool to support decision-making by the respective authorities and to improve their related policies, addressing employment, social benefits, and accessibility for PWD, coupled with targeted economic recovery programs, which could enhance social cohesion and mitigate long-term impacts.

Engaging residents in open discussions about local challenges -such as environmental issues, public infrastructure, and volunteering-, can yield innovative solutions. These collaborative efforts can be transformed into comprehensive strategies that enhance the quality of life and foster local development.

Beyond crime and violence, other agencies, such as Social Welfare Services, can similarly benefit from aligning public perception with official data, using hybrid models to integrate diverse data sources for effective decision-making.

Engaging the community in the collection and development of proposals for special topics (e.g., sport facilities, neighbourhood parks/pocket parks, synergies and collaboration between the Municipality and organisations of civil society, and innovative actions to support the local economy, etc.), can yield invaluable ideas. Open discussions can enrich these proposals, transforming them into comprehensive interventions to enhance the quality of life in the neighbourhoods.

Interventions, or surveys targeting specific population groups (e.g., Roma, immigrants, etc.), are practically impossible to be carried out (or with the minimum satisfaction and credible response) without the cooperation of a corresponding cultural mediator, who understands their mentality (and the language, if the case), their special traditions, and their general philosophy. Such mediators are essential for collecting credible responses and ensuring the successful implementation of research initiatives within these communities.

Finally, surveys involving personal data should ideally be conducted in person, in order to ensure their maximum possible validity. While telephone surveys (as in the case of the present surveys) were the only viable option due to pandemic-related restrictions, a combination of methods, including on-site surveys, is recommended for achieving better balance in age and employment status distribution.

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# Roe vs Wade and the public discourse regarding reproductive rights

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## Roe vs Wade και ο δημόσιος διάλογος γύρω από τα αναπαραγωγικά δικαιώματα

Παύλος Καραγρηγόρης, Πάντειο Πανεπιστήμιο

### ABSTRACT

The following text aims to provide a socio-political analysis regarding the right to an abortion on the United States. Via the legal arguments of the scholars supporting the Originalist interpretation of the U.S constitution, it aims to understand the overturning of Roe v. Wade, which guarantees abortion as a right. However, this position isn't supportive of the limitation of women's reproductive rights but aims to transfer the decision-making process from the judicial to the legislative branch (especially on the state level). This case will be assisted through the utilization of modern arguments in favor of women's rights, the necessity of democratic dialogue and involvement with issues that pertain to human rights in liberal democracies and by the reasoning provided in Jurgen Habermas' essay «The future of human nature», which will strengthen the sentiment that in a democracy the citizens via their representatives should be the ones that decide about crucial life and death matters.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το παρακάτω κείμενο επιχειρεί να αναλύσει σε πολιτικό/κοινωνικό επίπεδο το δικαίωμα στην έκτρωση στις Ηνωμένες Πολιτείες. Μέσα από την νομική επιχειρηματολογία των υποστηρικτών της «Originalist» ερμηνείας του Αμερικανικού συντάγματος, σκοπεύει να κατανοήσει την ακύρωση της απόφασης Roe v. Wade που κατοχυρώνει συνταγματικά την έκτρωση ως αναφαίρετο δικαίωμα. Ωστόσο αυτό δεν αποτελεί υπεράσπιση του περιορισμού των αναπαραγωγικών δικαιωμάτων των γυναικών, αλλά μετατόπιση της προστασίας του δικαιώματος, από την δικαστική εξουσία στην νομοθετική εξουσία και δι σε πολιτειακό επίπεδο. Αυτή η θέση θα υποστηρίχει δια της παράθεσης σύγχρονων απόψεων για το δικαίωμα της αυτοδιάθεσης των γυναικών, της αναγκαιότητας περί δημοκρατικής συμμετοχής και διαβούλευσης σε ζητήματα που αφορούν τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα (με βάση την λειτουργία των σύγχρονων αστικών δημοκρατιών) και με την παράθεση της επιχειρηματολογίας του Jurgen Habermas στο δοκίμιο «Το μέλλον της ανθρώπινης φύσης», η οποία θα ενισχύσει την θέση πως σε μία δημοκρατία, οι πολίτες δια των αντιπροσώπων τους πρέπει να αποφασίζουν για τα λεπτά θέματα ζωής και θανάτου.

**KEY WORDS:** Abortion, Reproductive rights, US Supreme Court, Originalism, Living Constitution, Due Process, US Constitution, Roe v. Wade, Dobbs v. Jackson, Consensus, Discourse.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Αμβλώσεις, Αναπαραγωγικά δικαιώματα, Ανώτατο Δικαστήριο ΗΠΑ, Οριτζιναλισμός, Ζωντανό σύνταγμα, Due Process, Σύνταγμα Ηνωμένων Πολιτειών Roe v. Wade, Dobbs v. Jackson, Consensus, Discourse.

## 1. Introduction

**H**uman Rights don't exist in a vacuum. They are conceptualized, compartmentalized, fought for and founded, and reformed by challenging social processes ranging from the field of ideological debates to class and political warfare. Rights also can't be absolute, the way that they are understood and preserved is constantly changing due to the fact that they are abstract products that exist only within the social sphere. A social sphere which in turn is affected and transformed constantly by the powers of societal change. Of course, if one goes further than purely philosophical analyses, they would find it almost inhuman to deny certain basic principles and rights which should be enjoyed by all members of a society. Even by those that refuse to be integrated into one or who even actively fight against the laws and institution that guarantee those rights.

The right to an abortion is valid in its own right, however, it is closely related and part of broader rights such as women's rights, the right to self-determination and bodily autonomy, and medical rights. On the other hand, there exist certain parts of society (which despite being homogenous to a high degree, meaning that for most of the opponents of abortion, their opinions are shaped by religious beliefs, without this necessarily being always the case), that considers the right to an abortion as contradictory to the right to life that the fetus possesses. This text does not aim to particularly support one of the above opinions in any capacity, but instead, it aims to interpret and explain the approaches that both sides seem to have adopted, within the context of a grossly unproductive public dialogue. Following basic academic and objective principles, while hoping to provide conciliatory interpretation that bridges the gap between large parts of society.

## 2. The legal status of abortion in the United States

**T**he issue of the legal status of abortion has attracted a lot of interest lately due to the leaks of the draft opinion of most of the US Supreme Court justices regarding the overturning of Roe v. Wade (Politico, 03/05/2022). The right to abortion in the United States is not guaranteed through the federal legislature nor through its explicit guarantee in the United States Constitution; instead, its guarantee is the result of a judicial decision by the U.S. Supreme Court (Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 1973).

The above decision was based on the principle of the "Living Constitution" according to which the constitution is the foundation of the state, but its explicit text is not the ultimate be-all end-all in terms of rights and laws (Strauss, 2010). Judicial and legislative decisions must be made in the spirit of the constitution and not to the letter, as it could not fully anticipate all the developments that would take place in the United States over the next 200 years. Therefore, its interpretation should not be absolute but should be based on the basic principles it establishes and the social conditions in the current state of affairs.

More specifically, under the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; (a provision also included in the 5th Amendment to the Constitution)" (Magoulas, 1997). In 1973 the court ruled that the right to abortion is protected by the Constitution as one of the civil rights/liberties that are protected by the constitution. The result of this decision was that the right to an abortion was guaranteed through the judicial (and subject to overturning through the judicial) without giving the states or the federal government the power to rule on them, except on particular points such as weeks of gestation and medical supervision.

This verdict has been strongly criticized even by supporters of reproductive rights as an example of "judicial activism" (Dershowitz, 2004. Cassidy, 2016; Gerard, 1989) and as a counterproductive ruling for women's rights as the right to an abortion was enshrined in a way that reinforced the militancy of more conservative and religious political groups (Segall, 2017). While progressive and liberal groups within the US ignored the public debate and legal arguments surrounding the abortion issue and the Roe v. Wade for decades (Karrer, 2011), overlooking that all that was needed to put the issue back to square one was a change in the court's structure that would allow the decision to be overturned. A reversal that would enable those states that do not have an explicit reference to abortion rights in their constitutions and a conservative majority in their legislatures to make abortion illegal from day one.

The constitutional protection of abortion has not been strongly contested for several decades. The current of the living constitution and of judicial progressivism that led to Roe v. Wade was confronted by the constitutional theory of Originalism, which holds that the Constitution must be strictly construed in terms of the provision explicitly stated in it and with the intentions of its framers in mind. Originalism is complemented by Textualism, which argues that a constitution should be interpreted on the basis of how it would have been interpreted at the time it was drafted (Posner, 1995, Scalia, 2011).

With regard to Roe v. Wade, the opposition of the Originalists on the one hand concerns the fact that there is no explicit reference to the issue of abortion in the articles and amendments of the US Constitution and that there was no such original intent by its authors, because if they wanted abortion to be constitutionally protected then they would have included it among the universal and inalienable rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Additionally, one cannot be certain that the original text meant any protection of the right to abortion as such a concept was not taken for granted at the time of the constitution's drafting and implementation. Nor did the right to abortion have mass social acceptance in order for it to be taken for granted or considered necessary at that time period. (Tang, 2021).

Thus Roe v. Wade is a clear case of judicial overreach, as the right to an abortion is neither explicitly enshrined in the constitution, nor is it certain that it is meant either through the context, the intentions of its drafters, or its interpretation at the time of its application. And it is indeed arbitrary (always based on Originalist Interpretation) as the court is essentially legislating on an issue that it does not itself have jurisdiction over as abortion is not a constitutional issue but a legislative issue. With the states and the Federal government being the ones who must by democratic means through their legislatures decide the legality or otherwise of abortion. Indeed, it is certain that the framers of the United States Constitution intended to protect through their constitutional guarantee all those rights which they believed should be fundamental and universal for the survival of the state, precisely because they knew that societies and their perceptions change. So that even if the will of the people and governments is in favor of the infringement of a fundamental right, this is not possible. For those rights not contained in the constitution, it is the responsibility of future generations of US citizens to decide by democratic and institutional means (laws and amendments to the constitution) whether they should be protected or not, whether they should be universal or prohibited, and (to decide) the exact individual provisions of any legislative action on the above issues. So, the lack of reference to the right to an abortion means that such decisions should not be made by the US Supreme Court but through the legislative process (Scalia, 1989).

The overturning of Roe v. Wade was the result of decades of a multi-dimensional effort by various largely conservative groups. This effort occurred on the electoral level in local, state, and federal elections, on the judicial level with the appointment of more and more originalist judges to municipal, state, and federal courts (Gramlich, 2021). On the legislative level with the backing of candidates who either directly or indirectly restricted access to abortion in conservative states or promoted of measures challenging Roe v. Wade and even at the academic level by establishing and funding originalist societies and groups at all major US law schools to raise the next generation of originalist lawyers (Duncan, 2016; Hoover Institute 2009; Hoover Institute 2009. Hoover Institute, 2012). Of course, in addition to the efforts of these groups, the stroke of luck (for the supporters of the overturn) played a decisive role in the reversal, as during the Trump presidency 33% of the seats on the Supreme Court were vacant at a time when both the presidency and the US Senate were controlled by people who wanted to promote originalist judges to the Supreme Court. Ergo the appointment of Justices Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Barrett who were in favor of overturning the constitutional protection of the right to an abortion and shifted the balance of the supreme court to the conservative side.

In Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, the now conservative court held that the U.S. Constitution does not guarantee the right to abortion. In addition, the above-mentioned court decision overturned Planned Parenthood v. Casey, which prohibited states from enacting measures that would impose "Undue Burdens" on their citizens with respect to the exercise of fundamental rights (which, according to Roe v. Wade, includes the right to an abortion). The overturning of the above two decisions allowed those state legislatures that wished to do so, to impose restrictions or ban abortion altogether, and also opened the way for those state legislatures to prevent access to abortion in almost any way through individual regulations and restrictions (e.g., viewing mandatory anti-abortion content prior to the final decision to terminate a pregnancy or mandatory parental consent) (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2020).

The arguments of the 6 judges who voted in favor of the decision were based on the following pillars.

a) Established legal scholars, experts on constitutional law (Ely, 1973), and even the Supreme Court itself (Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pa. v. Casey, 505 U.S. 833, 1992) have come out against Roe v. Wade even though they support the right to abortion.

b) The Constitution contains no mention of abortion, nor is it protected by any constitutional provision. Even if the Due Process clause guarantees rights not explicitly mentioned in the constitution, it only applies to rights that are deeply rooted in the nation's history and tradition as well as those rights that are fundamental to the preservation of ordered liberty (Blake, 2022).

c) Prior to the adoption of the 14th amendment about 3/4 of the states had legislatively banned abortion and prior to the 1973 decision more and more states were removing this restriction. Roe v. Wade not only prevented the natural and democratic progress of the right to an abortion but instead succeeded in sowing discord in an entire nation (De Vogue, 2022).

d) Abortion is differentiated from other similar rights of self-determination as the right to abortion is contrasted with the right to life possessed by the fetus (which is potential human life or unborn human life) (De Vogue, 2022).

e) The variance in beliefs around the issue of abortion shows that there is the freedom to form and express opinions about its morality and legality, the so-called ordered liberty. It is not for the court itself to try to shape a balance between reproductive rights and the right of the embryo to potential human life. The States and their citizens are the ones who will be asked to set the balance by democratic means, which will surely lead to different results from state to state, in accordance with the principles of ordered liberty (Dobbs v. Jackson, Alito draft, 2022).

### 3. Social Reaction and Public Discourse

The polling data shows, both overall and especially among younger age groups, that most citizens in the US and almost every Western country is in favor of abortion rights. And of course, every decision of a constitutional court has, apart from its validity, important consequences for the entirety of social life and in this case for women's reproductive rights.

An overwhelming majority of American citizens reacted negatively to the court's decision to renege the constitutional protection for abortion, with 57% opposing the decision. Even in the conservative states that have banned abortion altogether/imposed strict restrictions thanks to the ruling, 52% of respondents opposed the decision. The groups most strongly opposed to the decision are the 18-34 age group, women, minorities, and Democratic Party voters (all the previous groups overwhelmingly vote for Democratic candidates) (Pew Research Center, July 2022).

Of course, the reaction to the court's decision was manifested not only on paper but also on a social level. Massive demonstrations and protest marches took place throughout the US, especially in major urban centers and around the rest of the world (ERT, 25/06/2022). Moreover, as a consequence of the decision, there was a significant increase in donations both to organizations that support women's reproductive rights and to politicians and political parties whose actions promote these rights (USA Today, 2022).

In fact, even at the level of legal arguments, there was a section of jurists who were against Roe v. Wade, not because they considered the constitutional guarantee of the right to abortion wrong, but because they believed that the guarantee of the right to abortion as a Civil right is not sufficient but should instead be guaranteed as a human right with fully unrestricted and free access for those women who wish to terminate their pregnancy (Rebouche, 2022).

At the electoral level, Dobbs has also shifted the balance in an important period ahead of the November 2022 mid-term elections. Before the decision, polling data showed a comfortable Republican victory in the House of Representatives and a tight race for the Senate. At the state level, Republican candidates enjoyed a wide lead in many key races in the so-called swing states (because of the US electoral system, special weight is given to states where the two major parties have similar support). This is because the public debate was dominated by economic insecurity, inflation, housing market volatility, the war in Ukraine and its consequences, and the fact that President Biden's approval ratings showed a lack of broad support and a high dissatisfaction with him. After the overturning of Roe, the Democratic Party has succeeded in rallying its base and bringing to the fore an issue on which its positions are identical to those of most of the American society. Although the individual negative issues mentioned above remain, the decision has led to a far from negligible decline in the Republican momentum, with the new data showing that the Republicans' victory in the House will not be so easy and that the Democrats now have the upper hand in the Senate. At the state level, many substantive races in states such as Pennsylvania and North Carolina now show trends that strengthen the Democratic party (especially in terms of recently registered voters with Democratic turnout being particularly elevated after the decision).

The above claims are demonstrated by an analysis of the quantitative data available in the Polling Aggregate FiveThirtyEight database. Prior to the Dobbs v. Jackson decision in the Pennsylvania gubernatorial elections, the polling data showed a slim lead of 3% for the Democratic candidate. In the weeks immediately following and to date the lead for the Democratic candidate has widened to the 6.9-10.5% range). At the federal level in the generic ballot polls before Roe's overturn, Republican candidates enjoyed a 2-3% lead, a situation that has now been reversed with Democratic candidates in the post-Dobbs polls holding a solid 1-point lead. The exact same trend is evident in the North Carolina Senate election.

The red state of Kansas was the first one to put the issue of abortion rights to a referendum held on August 2, 2022. The issue of the referendum was whether the protection of the right to abortion should be removed from the state constitution and whether there should be an implementation of further restrictions on abortions. The final results showed about 60% of voters voting in favor of women's reproductive rights. Based on the above, it can be concluded that the majority of Americans are against abortion restrictions and that this group is more politically active after recent developments (State of Kansas Official Primary Election § 22, 2022, State of Kansas Official Primary Election, HCR 5003, 2022, Associated Press, 2022).

Most conservative states had already prepared bills that partially or fully restrict access to abortion in case Roe v. Wade was overturned. In states such as Texas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Louisiana abortion is now illegal in almost every case and carries penalties under both criminal and civil law. In Idaho and West Virginia, an outright ban on abortion is currently not in place but both legislative and executive actions already allow for this possibility. In most Mid-west and Mid-South states, there are varying restrictions on abortion ranging from 15 weeks to almost total bans with only medical exceptions or in cases where the fetus was conceived through non-consensual sexual intercourse. Finally, in several other states which are mostly located in the southern part of the Atlantic coastline of the United States, the issue of the legality and protection of abortion is subject to litigation (Jimenez, 2022; Center for Reproductive Rights, 2022-20xx). In any case, the November 2022 elections will be decisive for the immediate developments, where the new political/social/electoral trends that will shape the new dynamics between the two sides at the state and federal levels will be plain for all to see.

#### **4. Theories of consensus. The necessity of compromise and productive public dialogue**

**H**uman ingenuity is the tool that societies have always used when they wish to solve the problems that plague them or to improve the standard of living of the people existing in them. Abortion is not a new phenomenon, the desire of women and entire families to terminate a pregnancy has occurred in many different societies and at many different time periods. Of course, a discussion of the nature of abortion in pre-modern societies, although interesting, cannot be of much help, except to understand the scope of the issue. That is, abortions occur precisely because not wanting a person to give birth is something normal and not reprehensible.

Many women are unable/not in a position to give birth either for material/financial reasons, medical reasons, or even for personal/social reasons. Even if there is no specific justification, women's bodily autonomy must be respected by all.

At the same time, there is also the embryo itself. An entity that is destined to be born and to enjoy all the rights and protections that the members of society receive or should receive. It makes perfect sense that the members of that society would want to protect all potential forms of human life from premature termination. Such a desire can be observed especially in newer and modern European societies.

as well as in many Islamic societies (amongst others). Based on the above logic, groups that believe that a fetus is a life form with rights that must be protected (otherwise it is a case of murder) have imposed laws that restrict, prohibit, or even criminalize abortion (International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2007; Hessini, 2007).

Both sides have strong arguments based on some of man's noblest urges, such as birth and nurture of life, protection of the weak, freedom of choice, and individual liberty.

In modern democracies, citizens are often called upon to balance their individual interests and find compromise solutions. The issue of abortion is one of these cases. In every developed Western democracy, access to abortion is legal or even free, but with strict criteria regarding the weeks of gestation which are intended to protect a fetus that is already sufficiently developed. The critical period is the first trimester of pregnancy, during which women are free to terminate their pregnancy. Abortion is also permitted later, even after the second trimester, when the fetus develops serious health issues or the woman's own life is at risk. (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2020).

However, even if the legal framework of abortion in most western democracies is in general correct, this does not mean that there are no dysfunctions, from the medical and legislative to the social and constitutional. The United States is the pre-eminent example of a liberal democracy that has not managed to resolve the abortion issue, but instead, the social and political controversies surrounding the issue have led public discourse to an almost complete standstill.

But there are tools that, if used correctly, will allow American society to deal with such a difficult and sensitive issue in a much better way. And because it is understood that it is not always possible to find solutions to all of society's problems, then it is at least necessary to find conventions that admonish the side effects that these problems cause.

First of all, in every principled democracy, certain basic axioms must be respected. Directly related to the protection of the right to abortion in the USA is the protection of the minority from the unbridled and uncritical imposition of the views of the majority (Majoritarianism). The above principle is the reason why the framers of the US Constitution decided to constitutionally protect certain fundamental rights. Rights which would be safe even if a tyrannical majority prevails in the US (institutionally safe, because if there are no strong institutions then there can be no protection of the constitution and the rights it guarantees) (Ratner, 1978).

Therefore, the minority should be protected from the decisions of the majority when they violate their fundamental rights, as defined by the constitution and the laws in the context of a just state. However, is the right to an abortion something so fundamental and inalienable, but moreover institutionally and constitutionally guaranteed (without any question of interpretation which is not resolved in a decisive manner and where there is no significant quantitative and qualitative difference between the arguments of the two sides), that if the majority votes in favor of its removal it would constitute a violation of a fundamental right on the basis of extremist majoritarianism?

As there is no consensus on the moral and constitutional status of abortion and there are strong arguments on both sides, it cannot be inferred that abortion should be included in the vague constitutional rights enshrined in the constitution. This is not because abortion under the Originalist approach was not a matter of concern to the framers of the U.S. Constitution and its amendments, but because even today there is no agreement on the status of abortion on either the simplistic political level or the philosophical or legal realms. So the predominance of one side over the other does not mean that an extreme majority prevails, but that within the framework of a democracy decisions are taken on important issues that dissatisfy and even anger significant sections of society.

On the same basis as before, therefore, there can be raised a potential question of whether it would be arbitrary for the majority to amend the Constitution to explicitly guarantee the right to abortion or to codify Roe v. Wade. Again, the answer is that it is not majoritarian tyranny but a normal and healthy democratic process.

But a subsequent question can be asked based on "are the basic rights of a fetus equal to or greater than those of a woman who wishes to terminate her pregnancy?" The truth is that the concept of a fetus as a living being is somewhat abstract in contrast to the concept of a citizen which, although it varies from state to state, has solid foundations, rights, and obligations.

The rights of the embryo in contrast to those of the pregnant woman/parents have been analyzed in Habermas' work "The Future of Human Nature", in which he approaches the issue of the genetic modification of embryos. The above dilemma in his work takes the name of "Human dignity versus dignity of human life" and leads to the conclusion that there is an important difference between modifying the embryo and terminating its existence. This is that in the first case the parents do not unexpectedly happen upon a dilemma in which a particular outcome deprives the embryo of its right to self-determination and free life. Whereas in the case of abortion the parents take the decision to deprive a (for a significant part of society) rightful right to live, in many cases without having another choice and in almost all cases without planning for the pregnancy to occur. Therefore, the violation of any rights of the fetus is not their goal, but only a necessity that leads to a conflicting interpretation of rights.

In the case of fetal genetic modification, Habermas concludes that it should not be allowed and that in any case, it is much less morally acceptable than abortion. However, he does not side explicitly with the pro-life camp and against the right of the embryo to life but understands that this is a question where "In the context of this dispute every attempt has failed to achieve a theoretically neutral worldview and therefore a non-prejudicial description of the moral status of early human life that would be acceptable to all citizens of a secular society... But now the ontological fundamental assumptions of quasi-scientific naturalism, from which birth emerges as the important intersection in the status of life, are not in any case more valid or scientific than the religious or metaphysical dogmata that life begins at conception. Both sides plead that, to draw a morally significant boundary between fertilization or union of reproductive cells, on the one hand, birth on the other, there is something arbitrary inherent, since from organic beginnings life develops in unbroken continuity, which is initially capable of feeling emotions and then of acquiring a personal character. However, if I see it correctly, the continuity thesis rather argues against both attempts to set up by ontological judgments an "absolute" principle, which is binding also from a normative point of view... For, as was already evident in the abortion debate, it is impossible to make a universally binding definition of when the embryo is included in the community of rights-bearing subjects and thus from what point onwards respect for its dignity is due, insofar as such judgments depend on moral evaluations" (Habermas, 2001).

So surely the above reasoning strengthens the argument that there should not be a predominance of one side or the other on the basis of compelling arguments, as neither the lack of rights of the fetus nor that the rights of the fetus exceed those of the woman can be proven so that abortion is de facto equated with murder or even illegality.

If we combine the lack of unquestionably valid arguments in support of the constitutional protection of abortion in the US, with the lack of solid arguments demonstrating the timeframe in which a fetus is a bearer of full rights and the lack of a commonly accepted decision on the right to abortion, we come to the conclusion that the right to abortion should be decided democratically by societies like all other issues. As there are different camps and groups that support antithetical positions and policies.

In the US the issue of abortion was placed outside the forefront of the public sphere for decades, as access to abortion was protected by a controversial decision, which has been heavily criticized even by liberal and centrist constitutional scholars such as Alan Dershowitz (Dershowitz, 2004). And now with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, many conservative states have moved to a radical and complete suppression of a right that the majority of citizens support. Without it being a voting criterion for a large proportion of voters in regional elections because of its prior constitutional guarantee.

Moreover, even if there is no objectively valid view on the issue of abortion, a complete ban is a retrograde decision that would not only set back women's rights by decades (it is much easier to argue for the right to autonomy of a citizen's body than for the very broad right to life of a newly conceived fetus, without even an agreement on when and if it acquires rights). The most important consequence of the abortion ban is the social and economic inequalities it will create as, the poorest social strata of the US, who are disproportionately non-Asian minorities, will not be able to travel out of state to terminate an unwanted pregnancy, with this entailing dire consequences (huge medical debts, further criminal penalties to targeted minorities, raising new family members without the necessary capital and state support, and coercion to use non-medically supervised procedures to terminate a pregnancy) (Riley, Enquobahrie et Katz, 2022).

Habermas' theory of consensus explains how in modern democracies there is an unprecedented diversity of opinions and differences among socio-political subjects. Indeed, on important issues, the differences between them lead to acrimonious disputes, intense conflict, and a complete disregard for the rights of opponents and the values that just societies are based upon. The solution according to Habermas is found in the concept of consensus, which arises through understanding the other's positions and the values that lead to them (Ingram, 2019). Through understanding and consensus, individuals can reach a discourse through which the common goal of all sides will be to seek a common truth (rather than an imposition of views or positions behind which shadowy motives are hidden) that all sides can accept (Deflem, 1998). A truth ideologically uncommitted and based on logical axioms. Legislatures in turn should weigh up the individual arguments and interests and legislate with the intention of balancing interests and reaching compromise solutions that do not violate the core values of the members of a society and do not lead to a situation of worldview imposition (after all, the composition of parliaments is largely representative and therefore there is a 'fair' representation of many ideologies and views). For the above, the technocratic/scientific sector will also play an important role, which as an advisory body will provide assistance to legislators to optimize their decisions and measures (Warnke, 1996).

Ultimately, although in such complex political issues it is not possible to say with certainty what should be done and how it should be done, it is possible to implement measures that are based on sound principles. Nevertheless, some difficulties remain in the US case, such as the broader political polarization, the antiquated electoral system leading to a counterproductive two-party system, and the US constitution, which although extremely durable and infused with the principles of enlightenment and humanism, is extremely difficult to amend and a product of very different era (The rigidity of the constitution and the lack of references within it to critical issues, is seen as a great advantage by groups such as modern federalists and originalists) (Duncan, 2016).

These difficulties do not condemn the US to a bleak future for women's reproductive rights, but instead, place the burden on citizens and social and political groups to fight for them with all available legal means. And of course, the success or failure of this effort, beyond the strategies they pursue, will depend on the will of the American people through their votes in every

election. With regard to the current situation, however, it is important for the conservative wing of the American society to understand that adherence to maximalist positions for a complete abortion ban is damaging the social cohesion of the United States in various ways, and through this understanding to follow the policy drawn up by the European conservative parties, which are trying by preventive means to stop unwanted pregnancies and accept abortions in the first weeks of pregnancy or in case of a medical or other emergencies (Wiliarty, 2010), not so much because they have changed their fundamental beliefs on the issue, but because they have understood that adherence to these beliefs is damaging and counterproductive both for their own sake and for the entire social fabric.

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**ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ Α. ΠΑΝΤΑΖΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ**  
**ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΟΣ ΜΕΤΑΣΧΗΜΑΤΙΣΜΟΣ**  
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ΔΙΑΣΤΑΣΗ 14 x 21

Ποια είναι η θέση της κοινωνικής πολιτικής σε διάφορα γεωγραφικά, διοικητικά και οικονομικά πλαίσια; Τί πρέπει να γίνει για τον εκσυγχρονισμό της κοινωνικής πολιτικής στο σύγχρονο και παγκοσμιοποιημένο οικονομικό και κοινωνικό περιβάλλον; Αυτά τα ερωτήματα, όπως και άλλα, ερευνώνται και απαντώνται μέσα από μια ενδελεχή μελέτη των τοπικών, εθνικών, υπερεθνικών και διεθνών διαστάσεων της κοινωνικής πολιτικής, αποκαλύπτοντας τις πολύπλοκες σχέσεις και τις προκλήσεις στον σημερινό κόσμο.

Το βιβλίο παρέχει μια συνολική και διεξοδική ανάλυση των πολυεπίπεδων προκλήσεων και μετασχηματισμών της κοινωνικής πολιτικής σε ένα εξελισσόμενο πλαίσιο. Μέσα από την έρευνα, το βιβλίο αναδεικνύει πώς η παγκοσμιοποίηση, οι διεθνείς οργανισμοί, οι υπερεθνικές ενώσεις, οι εθνικές πολιτικές και οι τοπικές πρωτοβουλίες επηρεάζουν την κατεύθυνση, τις στρατηγικές αλλά και την ύπαρξη του κοινωνικού κράτους.

Παρουσιάζει τις διαδικασίες μετασχηματισμού της κοινωνικής προστασίας, αναλύοντας τις αλληλεπιδράσεις μεταξύ διαφόρων κυβερνητικών επιπέδων, αποκεντρωμένων διοικήσεων και διεθνών φορέων. Τονίζει επίσης τη σημασία της κοινωνικής δικαιοσύνης και της πολιτικής αλληλεγγύης, καθώς και την ανάγκη για πιο συνεκτικές και δίκαιες πολιτικές κοινωνικής προστασίας. Τέλος, επισημαίνει τις προκλήσεις και τις ευκαιρίες που ανακύπτουν από την αλληλεπίδραση της τοπικής αυτοδιοίκησης με τα εθνικά και υπερεθνικά επίπεδα διακυβέρνησης.



**George Stamelos,**

*La démocratisation de l'enseignement supérieur en Europe. Le cas hellénique (Η δημοκρατικοποίηση της ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης στην Ευρώπη. Η ελληνική περίπτωση)*

Paris: Εκδόσεις L'Harmattan-- Collection: Educations et Sociétés, 2024

**T**ο ο ενδιαφέρον βιβλίο του Γιώργου Σταμέλου, καθηγητή στο Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρών, με τίτλο 'Η δημοκρατικοποίηση της ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης στην Ευρώπη. Η ελληνική περίπτωση' εκδόθηκε το 2024 από τις εκδόσεις L'Harmattan και την σειρά Educations et Sociétés που διευθύνει ο καθηγητής Louis Marmoz. Στόχος του βιβλίου είναι να αναδείξει τις ιδιαιτερότητες της ελληνικής περίπτωσης, να αναλύσει την επίδραση της ευρωπαϊκής εκπαιδευτικής πολιτικής, να αναδείξει τα σύγχρονα διακυβεύματα και τα βασικά προβλήματα που είναι η δυσαρέσκεια, η απογοήτευση από τον θεσμό του Πανεπιστημίου, η έλλειψη εμπιστοσύνης στην κοινωνική και εκπαιδευτική πολιτική.

Στο πρώτο μέρος του βιβλίου διερευνάται ο όρος 'δημοκρατικοποίηση' και επιχειρείται η παρουσίαση της ελληνικής περίπτωσης συγκριτικά με άλλες ευρωπαϊκές χώρες και η ανάδειξη ομοιοτήτων, διαφορών και ιδιαιτεροτήτων. Η δημοκρατικοποίηση της εκπαίδευσης αναλύεται σε συνάρτηση με την ισότητα των ευκαιριών, τη θεωρία της αναπαραγωγής των Bourdieu-Passeron και το μοντέλο της ορθολογικής απόφασης του Boudon. Διακρίνεται η διχοτομία μεταξύ μαζικοποίησης και δημοκρατικοποίησης της εκπαίδευσης και χρησιμοποιείται ως βάση η ανάλυση της ποσοτικής και ποιοτικής διάστασης της δημοκρατικοποίησης από τον Antoine Prost.

Η έννοια της δημοκρατικοποίησης, όπως υπογραμμίζει ο Γιώργος Σταμέλος, εκφράζει την πολιτική βούληση για διεύρυνσην του εκπαιδευτικού συστήματος αλλά και περιορισμό των ανισοτήτων, ενώ η ανάλυσή της πρέπει να συσχετίστε με κοινωνικές, οικονομικές, πολιτικές και γεωγραφικές παραμέτρους. Σε χώρες που αντιμετώπισαν ιδιαίτερα πολιτικά προβλήματα μετά τον Β'ΠΠ-κυρίως στον νότο της Ευρώπης- το αίτημα για δημοκρατικοποίηση της ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης ήταν ιδιαίτερα φορτισμένο ιδεολογικά και επιδίωκε να θεραπεύσει πληγές του παρελθόντος, ή/και να ικανοποιήσει αιτήματα για κοινωνική δικαιοσύνη.

Στην περίπτωση της Ελλάδας το αίτημα για δημοκρατικοποίηση προσέκρουσε συχνά στις οικονομικές δυσκολίες του εγχειρήματος λόγω των ευρύτερων οικονομικών και κοινωνικοπολιτικών προβλημάτων της χώρας κατά την μεταπολεμική περίοδο. Την ίδια περίοδο ενισχύθηκε η ζήτηση για ανώτατη εκπαίδευση, η οποία συνδέθηκε με την εύρεση θέσης σε δημόσια υπηρεσία διασφαλίζοντας καλές συνθήκες εργασίες και μισθολογική ασφάλεια. Η εθνική εκπαιδευτική πολιτική στο ελληνικό πλαίσιο προσπάθησε, ωστόσο, να υπηρετήσει χωρίς σωστές βάσεις και κοινωνικά ερείσματα τα αιτήματα για δημοκρατικοποίηση επιδιώκοντας κυρίως να θεραπεύσει πληγές του παρελθόντος, να εφαρμόσει αρχές της ευρωπαϊκής πολιτικής και αξίες της οικονομίας της γνώσης. Η συζήτηση για τη δημοκρατικοποίηση της ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης συνδέθηκε περισσότερο με την 'αντικειμενικότητα' και τη μη διαβλητότητα του διαγνωνισμού εισόδου στα Πανεπιστήμια, με τις εξετάσεις εισαγωγής και τον αριθμό των μαθημάτων που εξετάζονταν. Το θέμα, ωστόσο, της προετοιμασίας για την είσοδο στην τριτοβάθμια προσέκρουσε αρκετά συχνά στον ρόλο της παραπαιδείας (των φροντιστηρίων και των ιδιαιτέρων μαθημάτων) και κατά συνέπεια στη διαφοροποιημένη και ταξικά προσδιορισμένη προετοιμασία για ένταξη στην ανώτατη εκπαίδευση με βάση τις οικονομικές δυνατότητες της ελληνικής οικογένειας.

Τομή στην ιστορική ανάλυση για τον ρόλο της τριτοβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης και τα σχετικά αιτήματα αποτελεί για τον συγγραφέα το 2009, όταν αναπτύσσονται έντονες οικονομικές, πολιτικές και κοινωνικές αναταράξεις που οδηγούν στην αναδιατύπωση του αιτήματος της δημοκρατικοίσης. Παρά την αυξανόμενη ανεργία των πτυχιούχων η κοινωνική αναπαράσταση για τον ρόλο του Πανεπιστημίου και των πανεπιστημιακών σπουδών παραμένει υψηλή, καθώς η ελληνική οικογένεια μεταφράζει το πανεπιστημιακό δίπλωμα ως όχημα επαγγελματικής αποκατάστασης και ως εργαλείο κοινωνικής κινητικότητας και ανέλιξης. Παράλληλα η αύξηση των διαθέσιμων θέσεων στην τριτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση και η διεύρυνση των πανεπιστημιακών τυμπάτων και ιδρυμάτων αλλάζουν την αντίληψη για τη σημασία της πρόσβασης. Ενδιαφέρον έχει μάλιστα να υπογραμμιστεί ότι, ενώ μέχρι τη δεκαετία του '70 στόχος ήταν να καταφέρει κάποιος/α να μπει στην ανώτατη εκπαίδευση, στη συνέχεια το αίτημα συνδέεται πρωτίστως με τη φοίτηση σε συγκεκριμένο εκπαιδευτικό ίδρυμα και σε ορισμένο επιστημονικό αντικείμενο. Αυτό φαίνεται μάλιστα να αποτελεί εκ νέου τον κρίκο που συνδέει την πρόσβαση στην ανώτατη εκπαίδευση με την ανισότητα. Σε αυτό το σημείο εντοπίζουμε μια διαφορετική ανάλυση της πρόσβασης στην τριτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση και ιεράρχηση των επιλογών που συνδέεται με τις οικογενειακές επιλογές, τις δυνατότητες οικονομικής στήριξης των σπουδών μακριά από τον τόπο κατοικίας, την παραποτεία και την κατάλληλη επιλογή φροντιστηρίου και λιγότερο με τις μαθησακές επιδόσεις και τα διαφορετικά είδη Λυκείου. Κατά συνέπεια η ανισότητα δεν εξαλείφεται αλλά μεταφέρεται εκτός των τειχών του σχολείου, εντοπίζεται στην εξωσχολική προετοιμασία, στις βαθμίδες ελευθερίας και επιλογής με βάση τις οικονομικές δυνατότητες. Κατά συνέπεια το παράδοξο που εντοπίζεται στο βιβλίο με εύγλωττο τρόπο συμπυκνώνεται στο εξής: η εξωσχολική προετοιμασία ενισχύεται όταν διευρύνεται το σύστημα και καθίσταται περισσότερο δημοκρατικό. Ενώ λοιπόν παρατηρούμε διεύρυνση και δημοκρατικοποίηση της ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης με την εξασφάλιση μεγαλύτερης πρόσβασης, ένα μικρό συγκριτικά ποσοστό αισθάνεται ικανοποιημένο από το πρόγραμμα σπουδών στο οποίο εισήχθη. Τα 'όρια της δημοκρατικοίσης' λειτουργούν ως 'εργαλείο ανάλυσης' (σύμφωνα με τον όρο του Ville-1978) των σχέσεων μεταξύ κοινωνικών-πολιτικών θεσμών και πρωταγωνιστών.

Στην περίπτωση της Ελλάδας το σχέδιο δημοκρατικοίσης της ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης δεν περιορίστηκε στη διεύρυνση και την ενίσχυση της πρόσβασης, αλλά μεταφέρθηκε σε άλλα σημεία: στα κριτήρια εισόδου στην ανώτατη εκπαίδευση -με έμφαση στη βάση εισαγωγής που θα απασχολήσει αρκετά τα επόμενα χρόνια- στη δυνατότητα πρόσβασης και όσων ολοκληρώνουν την επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση και στην ισοτιμία ΑΕΙ και ΤΕΙ. Επιπλέον εντοπίζεται μια ακόμη παραδοξότητα στο θέμα αυτό: αναπτύχθηκε με ευρωπαϊκούς πόρους μια 'πολιτική θεσμών εγγύτητας' (ιδρύματα που βρίσκονται όσο γίνεται πιο κοντά στην πόλη κατοικίας) και μια πολιτική δημιουργίας 'εκπαιδευτικών πόλων προσέλκυσης φοιτητικού πληθυσμού' ως εκφάνσεις εκδημοκρατισμού. Αυτές όμως οι πολιτικές δεν έλαβαν υπόψη τους την γεωγραφική κατανομή του ελληνικού πληθυσμού που συγκεντρώνεται στις δύο μεγάλες πόλεις, Αθήνα και Θεσσαλονίκη, γεγονός που καθιστά δυσβάσταχτη για την οικογένεια την εγκατάσταση σε άλλες πόλεις και ακυρώνει στην πράξη την προσπάθεια εκδημοκρατισμού.

Το δεύτερο μέρος του βιβλίου ασχολείται με τη σχέση του εκπαιδευτικού συστήματος με τα υποκείμενα, τους μαθητές και τις μαθήτριες. Εστιάζει στο πώς αντιλαμβάνονται τις πανεπιστημιακές σπουδές, την πρόσβαση στην ανώτατη εκπαίδευση, τα κίνητρα και τις επαγγελματικές προοπτικές. Η ανάλυση στο μέρος αυτό βασίζεται σε τρεις έννοιες: στην κοινωνική αναπαράσταση του Πανεπιστημίου, στο κίνητρο και στην αυτοεικόνα. Ο συνδυασμός του φόβου, της αβεβαιότητας για το μέλλον με την αξία ενός πανεπιστημιακού διπλώματος που διασφαλίζει ένα πιο σύγουρο μέλλον φαίνεται ότι είναι τα στοιχεία που συνθέτουν την αναπαράσταση για το Πανεπιστήμιο και καθορί-

ζουν τις αντίστοιχες επιλογές, τα προσωπικά κίνητρα των υποκειμένων και τις στάσεις τους (επιμονή, αντίληψη δεξιοτήτων, γνωστική εμπλοκή και διασύνδεση). Σε άμεση σύνδεση με τα παραπάνω θρίσκεται και η αυτοεικόνα των εφήβων σε συνδυασμό με την αυτοαντίληψη και την αυτοεκτίμηση στην κρίσιμη περίοδο της ζωής τους.

Ειδικότερα γίνεται αναφορά σε έρευνα που διεξήχθη το 2017-2018 με στόχο να αναλυθούν οι αντιλήψεις των μαθητών/τριών της τελευταίας τάξης του Λυκείου στο τέλος των σπουδών τους στην δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση και μερικές μέρες πριν από τις πανελλαδικές εξετάσεις. Με την έρευνα (σε δείγμα της Δ. Ελλάδας) επιβεβαιώνεται η κοινωνική αναπαράσταση για τον ρόλο του Πανεπιστημίου στην κοινωνική και οικονομική εξασφάλιση των μαθητών/τριών και η ανέλιξη τους συχνά μέσα από κοινότυπες και απλουστευτικές θέσεις. Ενδιαφέρον έχει, επίσης, ότι οι προσδοκίες και τα κίνητρά τους καθορίζονται από μια αρκετά ωραιοποιημένη και εξιδανικευμένη εικόνα του εαυτού τους, που έχουν διαμορφώσει κατά τη διάρκεια της σχολικής τους φοίτησης με βάση τους βαθμούς και την εν γένει πορεία τους. Αυτό επιβεβαιώνει το γεγονός ότι οι μαθητές και οι μαθήτριες στο ελληνικό εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα σπάνια γνωρίζουν την έννοια της 'σχολικής αποτυχίας' και τις περισσότερες φορές έχουν μια βεβαιότητα για τις δυνατότητες επιτυχίας που τους φέρνει στο Πανεπιστήμιο ως φυσικό επακόλουθο της σχολικής τους πορείας και όχι ως αποτέλεσμα μιας συνειδοτοποιημένης προσωπικής επιλογής. Υιοθετούν κατά συνέπεια περισσότερο μια συλλογική κοινωνική αναπαράσταση για τον ρόλο του Πανεπιστημίου και την αξία των σπουδών και λιγότερο εκτιμήσεις για τις δικές τους ικανότητες και προοπτικές, γεγονός το οποίο εκφράζει μια ρευστότητα στις επιλογές τους και μια 'επιφανειακή στρατηγική'.

Ενδιαφέρον έχει να τονιστούν και κάποιες επιμέρους διαστάσεις στην έρευνα: η διάσταση του φύλου δεδομένου ότι τα κορίτσια φαίνεται ότι έχουν μια πιο ισχυρή εικόνα για το Πανεπιστήμιο. Επιπλέον το προφίλ της οικογένειας και ειδικότερα η σταθερότητα των εισοδημάτων, το επαγγελμα της μπτέρας και του πατέρα έχουν στατιστικά σημαντική βαρύτητα στη διαμόρφωση της προσωπικής εικόνας και αντίληψης για τον ρόλο του Πανεπιστημίου. Εξίσου μεγάλη σημασία έχουν το πολιτισμικό και μορφωτικό κεφάλαιο της οικογένειας, ο τόπος κατοικίας, η προσωπική δέσμευση και αποφασιστικότητα αλλά και οι απόψεις των φίλων αναφορικά με τον ρόλο και τη σημασία του Πανεπιστημίου. Σταθμό στην πορεία ωρίμανσης και συνειδοτοποίησης αποτελεί η φάση επιλογής σχολής μέσα από τη συμπλήρωση του μηχανογραφικού δελτίου που μπορεί να συσχετιστεί με τις οικογενειακές στρατηγικές, τα στερεότυπα και τις προσδοκίες από την επαγγελματική αποκατάσταση.

Στο τελευταίο μέρος του βιβλίου παρουσιάζονται τα αποτελέσματα έρευνας που διεξήχθη το 2019-2020 για τις απόψεις πρωτοετών φοιτητών και φοιτητριών του Πανεπιστημίου Πατρών για τις συνθήκες και τα προβλήματα της φοιτητικής τους ζωής. Στόχος είναι να συσχετιστούν τα κίνητρα για τις σπουδές και η κοινωνική αναπαράσταση για τον ρόλο του Πανεπιστημίου με το βαθμό ικανοποίησης στο πρώτο έτος. Τα παραπάνω συσχετίζονται με τρεις κατηγορίες φοιτητών/τριών όσον αφορά τις προσδοκίες και τις αναμονές από το Πανεπιστήμιο: οι διανοούμενοι/οι έχοντες και οι έχουσες όραμα, οι πραγματιστές και οι 'χαμένοι' ή αλλιώς όσοι/ες έχουν χάσει τον προσανατολισμό τους. Οι φοιτητές/τριες της έρευνας φαίνεται ότι έχουν μια ωφελιμιστική αντίληψη για τις πανεπιστημιακές σπουδές -όχι τόσο ρεαλιστική- που συνδέεται περισσότερο με την επαγγελματική ζωή, τη σταθερή δουλειά, τον ικανοποιητικό μισθό που εναρμονίζεται περισσότερο με τα αιτήματα της μεσαίας τάξης στην ελληνική κοινωνία.

Μέσα από την ανάλυση των εκπαιδευτικών πολιτικών και των ερευνητικών δεδομένων που επικειρεί ο συγγραφέας συνάγεται ότι η μαζικοποίηση της ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης οδήγησε σε έναν εκδημοκρατισμό με ποσοτικά χαρακτηριστικά. Το δίκτυο της ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης επεκτείνεται ικανοποιώντας περισσότερο ευρωπαϊκές εκπαιδευτικές πολιτικές και λιγότερο κοινωνικές ανάγκες,

ενώ η ανισότητα διατηρείται και μεταφέρεται στο εσωτερικό της ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης μέσω της ιεράρχησης των ιδρυμάτων και των προγραμμάτων σπουδών. Επίσης οι πολιτικές εκδημοκρατίσμού της ανώτατης εκπαίδευσης δεν μεταφράζονται σε ικανοποίηση και ευχαρίστηση των φοιτητών/τριών αλλά σε απογοητεύσεις και συγκρούσεις που αλλοιώνουν το νόημα της ίδιας της δημοκρατίας και των σχετικών αξιών.

Δέσποινα Καρακατσάνη  
Πανεπιστήμιο Πελοποννήσου

**Σταύρος Α. Πανταζόπουλος,**  
**Κοινωνικός μετασχηματισμός στην Ελλάδα της Μεταπολίτευσης 1974-2001: Η νεοελληνική κοινωνία σε ιστορική προοπτική**  
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**Τ**ο βιβλίο με τίτλο "Κοινωνικός μετασχηματισμός στην Ελλάδα της Μεταπολίτευσης 1974-2001: Η νεοελληνική κοινωνία σε ιστορική προοπτική" του Σταύρου Α. Πανταζόπουλου αποτελεί μια εκτενή και λεπτομερή ανάλυση των κοινωνικών, οικονομικών, πολιτικών και δημογραφικών αλλαγών που συντελέστηκαν στην Ελλάδα κατά τη διάρκεια αυτής της κρίσιμης περιόδου. Ο συγγραφέας, με ακαδημαϊκή αιστηρότητα και επιστημονική μεθοδικότητα, εξετάζει την εξέλιξη της σύγχρονης ελληνικής κοινωνίας, αποτυπώνοντας τις δυναμικές που διαμόρφωσαν την μεταπολιτευτική Ελλάδα.

Το έργο χωρίζεται σε τέσσερα κύρια κεφάλαια, καθένα από τα οποία εστιάζει σε διαφορετικές πτυχές του κοινωνικού μετασχηματισμού. Στο πρώτο κεφάλαιο, αναλύονται οι θεσμικοί και πολιτικοί μετασχηματισμοί που οδήγησαν στην αναγέννηση της δημοκρατίας στην Ελλάδα, ενώ παράλληλα εξετάζονται οι επιπτώσεις των πολιτικών κομμάτων και οι εκλογικές διαδικασίες που διαμόρφωσαν το πολιτικό τοπίο της χώρας. Το δεύτερο κεφάλαιο εστιάζει στην οικονομική διάσταση της περιόδου, παρουσιάζοντας την ανασυγκρότηση της ελληνικής οικονομίας μετά την πτώση της δικτατορίας και την ένταξη στην Ευρωπαϊκή Οικονομική Κοινότητα.

Ο Πανταζόπουλος, στο τρίτο κεφάλαιο, εμβαθύνει στις δημογραφικές αλλαγές που συντελέστηκαν κατά τη διάρκεια της μεταπολιτευτικής περιόδου, αναδεικνύοντας τις μεταβολές στον πληθυσμό, την αστικοποίηση και τις μεταναστευτικές ροές. Το τέταρτο κεφάλαιο αποτελεί μια σύνοψη των προηγουμένων κεφαλαίων, παρέχοντας μια ολοκληρωμένη αποτίμηση της περιόδου, με έμφαση στις κοινωνικές και πολιτικές προκλήσεις που αντιμετώπισε η Ελλάδα κατά τη διάρκεια της μεταπολίτευσης.

Το βιβλίο "Κοινωνικός μετασχηματισμός στην Ελλάδα της Μεταπολίτευσης 1974-2001" διακρίνεται για τη μεθοδική του προσέγγιση και την εκτενή χρήση πρωτογενούς και δευτερογενούς υλικού, συμπεριλαμβανομένων εκλογικών δεδομένων, δημοψηφισμάτων, δημογραφικών στατιστικών και κυρίως, εφημερίδων της εποχής, τις οποίες συνδυάζει με τα προαναφερθέντα δεδομένα. Ο συγγραφέας αξιοποιεί μια πολυδιάστατη μεθοδολογία, συνδυάζοντας την ποιοτική ανάλυση με την ποσοτική εξέταση των διαθέσιμων δεδομένων, προσφέροντας έτσι μια ολοκληρωμένη και τεκμηριωμένη επιστημονική έρευνα.

Η συμβολή του βιβλίου στην κατανόηση της σύγχρονης ελληνικής ιστορίας είναι αναμφισβήτητη. Ο Πανταζόπουλος καταφέρνει να συνδέσει τις θεσμικές, πολιτικές, οικονομικές και κοινωνικές εξελίξεις με έναν συνεκτικό τρόπο, αναδεικνύοντας τις αλληλεπιδράσεις μεταξύ των διαφορετικών παραγόντων που διαμόρφωσαν την Ελλάδα της μεταπολίτευσης. Η ανάλυση των αλλαγών που συντελέστηκαν στην πολιτική σκηνή, στην οικονομία και στην κοινωνία της Ελλάδας παρέχει στους αναγνώστες ένα βαθύ και πολυδιάστατο πλαίσιο κατανόησης της περιόδου.

Επιπλέον, ο έμφαση του συγγραφέα στην ιστορική συνέχεια και στην ανάλυση των παραγόντων που οδήγησαν στην οικονομική κρίση του 2008, καθιστά το βιβλίο ιδιαίτερα επίκαιρο και χρήσιμο για την κατανόηση των σημερινών προκλήσεων που αντιμετωπίζει η Ελλάδα. Η σύνδεση των ιστορικών γεγονότων με τις σημερινές εξελίξεις προσφέρει στους αναγνώστες ένα εργαλείο για την ερμηνεία του παρόντος μέσω της γνώσης του παρελθόντος.

Συνολικά, το βιβλίο του Σταύρου Α. Πανταζόπουλου αποτελεί ένα σημαντικό επιστημονικό έργο, το οποίο συμβάλλει καθοριστικά στην κατανόηση των πολυδιάστατων μεταβολών που επηρέασαν την Ελλάδα κατά την περίοδο της μεταπολίτευσης. Η σχολαστική έρευνα, η ακαδημαϊκή αυστηρότητα και η ευρεία θεματολογία καθιστούν το βιβλίο αυτό απαραίτητο ανάγνωσμα για τους μελετητές της σύγχρονης ελληνικής ιστορίας και κοινωνίας, καθώς και για όλους εκείνους που επιδιώκουν να κατανοήσουν τις βαθιές αλλαγές που διαμόρφωσαν την Ελλάδα της μεταπολίτευσης και τις επιπτώσεις τους στη σημερινή εποχή.

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## ΟΔΗΓΙΕΣ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΣΥΓΓΡΑΦΕΙΣ

Τα κείμενα υποβάλλονται στα ελληνικά ή στα αγγλικά. Οι συγγραφείς δεσμεύονται ότι δεν έχουν δημοσιεύσει ή υποβάλει προς κρίση τα άρθρα τους σε άλλο έντυπο. Σε περίπτωση δημοσίευσης παρόμοιου άρθρου, αυτό δηλώνεται από τον συγγραφέα. Υποβάλλονται τέσσερα ταυτόσημα κείμενα και ένα σε πλεκτρονική μορφή στην επόμενη διεύθυνση του εκδότη.

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Τα άρθρα αξιολογούνται από δύο τουλάχιστον ανώνυμους κριτές. Το όνομα και τα άλλα στοιχεία του συγγραφέα, καθώς και ο τίτλος του άρθρου πρέπει να υποβάλλονται σε ξεχωριστή σελίδα από το κυρίως σώμα (τίτλος, κείμενο, βιβλιογραφικές αναφορές). Τα υποβαλλόμενα άρθρα πρέπει να συνοδεύονται από δύο περιλήψεις, όχι μεγαλύτερες των 100 λέξεων, και πέντε λέξεις-κλειδιά στα ελληνικά και τα αγγλικά. Η έκταση των άρθρων πρέπει να κυμαίνεται μεταξύ 6-8.000 λέξεων, συμπεριλαμβανομένων των περιλήψεων και αναφορών. Τα χειρόγραφα των άρθρων που απορρίπτονται δεν επιστρέφονται.

Για τις αναφορές χρησιμοποιείται το σύστημα Harvard. Οι αναφορές στο κείμενο περιλαμβάνουν το επώνυμο του συγγραφέα και το έτος έκδοσης της δημοσίευσης, π.χ. (Esping-Andersen, 1990, Kleinman and Piachaud, 1993). Οι άμεσες αναφορές πρέπει να δίνουν και τον αριθμό της σελίδας ή των σελίδων, π.χ. Ferrera et al., 2002: 230. Σε περίπτωση περισσότερων αναφορών του ίδιου συγγραφέα για το ίδιο έτος, πρέπει να χρησιμοποιείται η διάκριση με α, β, γ κ.λπ. για το έτος. Οι βιβλιογραφικές αναφορές (όχι βιβλιογραφία) καταχωρούνται αλφαριθμητικά στο τέλος του κειμένου. Παρακαλούνται οι συγγραφείς να επιμελούνται την ακριβή αντιστοίχηση των αναφορών του κειμένου με τον αλφαριθμητικό κατάλογο των βιβλιογραφικών αναφορών στο τέλος του κειμένου και το αντίστροφο. Η αναφορά σε βιβλία πρέπει να δίνει το όνομα του συγγραφέα, το έτος έκδοσης, τον τίτλο του βιβλίου, τον τόπο έκδοσης και την επωνυμία του εκδοτικού οίκου. Π.χ. Scharpf F., (1999), *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Η αναφορά άρθρων σε περιοδικά πρέπει να δίνει τόμο, τεύχος, σελίδες, καθώς και τον τίτλο του άρθρου σε απλά εισαγωγικά. Για παράδειγμα: Atkinson A.B., Marlier E. and Nolan B., (2004), "Indicators and Targets for Social Inclusion in the European Union", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 42: 47-75. Αναφορές σε κεφάλαια συλλογικών τόμων καταχωρούνται με τον τίτλο του κεφαλαίου σε απλά εισαγωγικά, ακολουθούμενο από τον συγγραφέα και τον τίτλο του συλλογικού τόμου. Π.χ. Leibfried, S. and Pierson, P. (1995) "Semisovereign Welfare States: Social Policy in a multiterritorial Europe", in: Leibfried S. and Pierson P., (eds), *European Social Policy: Between Fragmentation and Integration*, p.p. 43-77, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution. Οι τίτλοι των βιβλίων και περιοδικών γράφονται με πλάγια γράμματα. Συνιστάται οι επεξηγηματικές σημειώσεις να είναι οι ελάχιστες δυνατές. Εάν κρίνονται απαραίτητες, τότε πρέπει να αριθμούνται στο κείμενο και να παρατίθενται στο τέλος του άρθρου. Επίσης, στο τέλος παρατίθενται και οι τυχόν ευχαριστίες. Άρθρα που δεν συμβιβάζονται με τις παραπάνω οδηγίες επιστρέφονται στον συγγραφέα για την ανάλογη προσαρμογή.

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