

PROMOTING INCLUSIVE SOCIETY IN THE NEW NORM: A LESSON FROM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

PROMOCIJA INKLUZIVNOG DRUŠTVA U NOVIM NORMAMA: LEKCIJE IZ BOSNE I HERCEGOVINE

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Abstract

There are several issues and problems that are inevitably produced by the phenomenon and the emergence of social exclusion. These are, first of all: unemployment, inadequate education, extremely poor housing and an environment characterized by high rates of corruption and crime, insufficient and inadequate care and nursing of the elderly, low level of general health, cases of family breakdown, addiction problems, and discrimination on various grounds. Therefore, the fight against poverty and social exclusion, through the promotion of integration and inclusion in the labor market and social integration, supports marginalized groups and helps their active inclusion in social flows. The inclusion in the labor market of socially excluded groups, accompanied by projects to create a supportive environment, is particularly important and represents the best approach in their social reaffirmation and fight against all forms of social exclusion. In this sense, the development and implementation of social inclusion programs that are regulated by positive legal regulations by the state are crucial. It is the state that should, on the basis of legal regulation and through financial support, encourage social inclusion since this is the only way and basis to ensure the prevention of all forms of discrimination against socially excluded groups of citizens. In this context, the development and implementation of disability education programs are key. Support for such projects increases opportunities for education and subsequent employment and reduces the risk of social exclusion and poverty of socially excluded categories. The presented case study shows that the development and implementation of targeted inclusive education programs will give excellent results in terms of strengthening this marginalized category by improving the conditions of their education without physical and mental barriers, as well as by creating conditions for improving their later employment and labor market integration.

Key words: society, social inclusion, social exclusion, marginalized categories, norms, disability

Sažetak

Niz je pitanja i problema koje neminovno producira fenomenen i pojava socijalne isključenosti. To su, prije svega: nezaposlenost, neadekvatno obrazovanje, iznimno

loši stambeni slovi i okruženje koje karakterizira visokoka stopa korupcije i kriminaliteta, nedostatna i neadekvatna briga i skrb osoba treće životne dobi, niska razina općeg zdravlja građana, slučajevi raspada porodica, problemi ovisnosti, diskriminacija po raznim osnovama. Zbog toga je borba protiv siromaštva i socijalne isključenosti, kroz promociju integracije i uključivanja na tržište rada i socijalne integracije marginaliziranim grupama potpora i pomoć njihovom aktivnom socijalnom uključivanju u društvene tokove. Uključivanje na tržište rada socijalno isključenih grupa, praćena projektima stvaranja poticajnog okruženja, posebno su značajni i predstavljaju najbolji pristup u njihovoj društvenoj reafirmaciji i borbi protiv svih oblika socijalne isključenosti. U tom smislu ključan je razvoj i provođenje programa socijalne inkluzije koji su normirani pozitivnim zakonskim propisima od strane države. Država je ta koja treba, temeljem pravnog normiranja i kroz financijsku potporu, poticati socijalnu inkluziju, budući da je to jedini način i osnov za obezbjeđenje preveniranje i sprječavanje svih oblika diskriminacije socijalno isključenih grupa građana. U tom su kontekstu ključni razvoj i provedba programa obrazovanja osoba s invaliditetom. Potpora takvim projektima povećava mogućnosti za obrazovanje i kasnije zapošljavanje, te umanjuje opasnost od socijalne isključenosti i siromaštva socijalno isključenih kategorija. Prezentirana studija slučaja pokazuje da će razvoj i provedba ciljanih programa inkluzivnog obrazovanja dati odlične rezultate u pogledu osnaživanja ove marginalizirane kategorije kroz poboljšanje uvjeta njihovog obrazovanja bez fizičkim i psihičkim barijera, kao i stvaranje pretpostavki za unapređenje njihovog kasnijeg zapošljavanja, te integraciju na tržište rada.

Ključne riječi: društvo, socijalne inkluzija, socijalna isključenost, marginalizirane kategorije, norme, invaliditet

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern social trends, characterized by permanent and rapid changes, are raising new issues and problems for countries and societies around the world. While a number of modern developed countries offer answers to these new questions and problems relatively successfully, there are a large number of countries whose approach to this is quite limited. Within these countries, which include Bosnia and Herzegovina, the emergence of various forms of social exclusion is inevitable. Due to the phenomenon of social exclusion, a large number of citizens and social groups are on the margins of society and are exposed to various forms of discrimination.

In underdeveloped countries and a large number of developing countries, there is an increasing occurrence of various forms of discrimination and social exclusion on various grounds: unemployment, inadequate education, high levels of corruption, problems with adequate housing, high levels of addiction to various psychoactive substances, social stratification caused by a high divorce rate, discrimination against the elderly, etc. Due to such a situation, it is imperative to affirm, advocate

and promote an inclusive society as a framework for reducing the level of social exclusion and discrimination of individuals and social groups. The guarantor of achieving such a goal is the state. The state government, through the adoption of new legal norms that regulate, advocate and promote the creation of an inclusive society, is a key actor in this process!

State interventionism through the adoption of new positive legal norms and the adoption of public policies is a guarantee of preventing discrimination and social exclusion and creating a society in which all members of the community are encouraged and supported. Achieving the goal of an inclusive society is a very complex and demanding job that requires the involvement of all relevant actors within the state (both governmental and non-governmental). Ultimately, there is no state development that does not keep pace with social development. An inclusive society is the basis of social development, which should certainly be worked on when it comes to Bosnian society and the state.

2. SOCIAL INCLUSION AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

The phrase inclusion refers to “a comprehensive social commitment to the completely equal position of all people in the community. It opposes segregation as an approach in which some people separate from the community and push towards its margins or exclusion as a state of isolation and breaking ties between the individual and society.... Inclusion is multidimensional in nature and refers to economic, sporting, and other spheres” (Efendić-Adžajlić 2020).

Integration processes are interconnected in all these aspects. In this context, inclusion requires that “the state and society ensure and ensure adequate policies, regulations, measures and works that will lead to [the] increased participation” of marginalized and discriminated individuals and groups in society (National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2019).

The phrase social inclusion comes from the Latin *inclusio*, “understanding” (Anić et al. 2002). This phrase means “a process that provides people at risk of poverty and social exclusion [with a chance] to achieve the opportunities and resources necessary for full participation in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy the standard of living and well-being that is the norm in the society in which they live.” This means that they have a greater share in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and access to fundamental rights (European Commission 2003).

Social inclusion is also defined as an affirmative activity that aims to change the conditions that lead to the emergence of social exclusion. The Center for Economic

and Social Inclusion defines social inclusion as “a process that seeks to ensure that everyone, regardless of their experience and circumstances, can reach their full potential in life. In order to achieve inclusion, income and employment are important, but they are not enough. A society that seeks to include all citizens is characterized by efforts to reduce inequality and a balance between individual rights and the duty of increased social cohesion” (Bejaković 2009).

Some authors emphasize that (social) inclusion is a normal developmental and social category that occurs throughout life. With it, “we are expanding our needs and relations, and without inclusion there is no process of socialization.” Inclusion is inclusion in an equal relationship, in a world of equal opportunities and a world of equal rights. It is not a decree and cannot be legally resolved. It is a philosophy of life, which requires empathy and trust and in which everyone is given equal chances (Bosankić-Čmajčanin et al. 2018).

Social inclusion enables individuals and social groups who are in a state of social exclusion and at risk of poverty and discrimination to gain the opportunity and necessary resources to participate – actively – in society and social relations. This means participation in the economic, social, legal, political and other life of the society (community) to which such persons belong, with the aim of raising the general standard of living and well-being. Social inclusion processes enable the greater participation activism of citizens in the processes and procedures of policy-making that have a direct or indirect impact on their lives. Their existence and social well-being depend on adequate public policies aimed at socially excluded people.

From the above observations, it is evident that this is a broad process of networking of various actors in social life, and the goal of achieving social inclusion is an imperative that allows one to say that a particular society is, in fact, an inclusive society. Creating an inclusive society implies a society in which all citizens are equally valuable and in which they have the opportunity to participate, regardless of their differences.

3. APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Research into and the elaboration of the phenomenon of inclusive society require a complex theoretical and methodological interdisciplinary approach. This is because when considering the phenomenon of inclusive society, different individuals and groups appear as the focus of interest. Inclusivity in society is therefore an interdisciplinary field. As the realization of an inclusive society is associated with various aspects of human life, it is very difficult to “meet the full range of possible needs of users with access to only one profession” (Štambuk 2017).

An inclusive society is a society that seeks to “meet the needs of marginalized, socially excluded people, get them out of this situation, overcome their problems, and help them in social activation and participation in many aspects of life and work. Multidisciplinary teams, composed of actors from different professions and fields, have a significant role in that, since social inclusion, as well as social exclusion, is a multidimensional phenomenon” (Džindo 2021). Teams composed of several different professions have a more efficient and better insight into the needs of users, and quality cooperation can achieve the harmonization and provision of their services.

The multidisciplinary nature of the phenomenon of inclusive society enables various social, economic, political, cultural and other problems to be connected by a modern concept based on networking, cooperation, cohesion and joint action. Thus, the concept of an inclusive society adapts to different contexts and different groups and individuals. The preference for a multidisciplinary approach to the problems of achieving an inclusive society can be presented using the example of the elderly. Thus, Quaseem et al. state that one of the factors that improves end-of-life care is the work of multidisciplinary teams involving nurses and social services, as well as continuity of care, harmonization of services, and facilitated communication. The same is achieved through quality communication between services and people who previously cared for the user, and for facilitated communication, the skills of advocacy, negotiation and mediation that a social worker has and can use for communication within the team and team communication with the user are extremely helpful. It has been shown that teamwork is more user-friendly (improves user satisfaction, discovers and meets more user and family needs) and that a multi-professional approach reduces the total cost of care, shortens the time users spend in acute hospitals and has a positive effect on pain and other symptoms (Štambuk 2017).

4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK, STRATEGY AND POLICIES OF AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

The importance of the legal-political framework (legal regulation) is to formulate and develop various programs and strategies in an adequate and socially necessary way, as well as public policies that support the creation and achievement of an inclusive society (Tahirović & Kuka 2021). This implies the strategic planning and implementation of all public policies formulated and conceptualized with the aim of increasing the level and scope of the social inclusion of all marginalized/socially excluded categories of the population.

Strategies and programs implemented within a society that can be said to be an inclusive society are, in fact, different public policies. The state (primarily the

state government) is a crucial factor in formulating, adopting and implementing a number of public policies as instruments and tools that influence the affirmation, promotion and implementation of social inclusion policies as a basis for creating an inclusive society. State interventionism affects the restructuring of poorly established and inefficient social protection systems, which are important for social inclusion and the activation of socially excluded persons and groups. In “social welfare restructuring processes, so-called activation policies or ‘active labor market policies’ are sometimes highlighted as by far the best measures. Sometimes it seems that the distinction between ideological and evidence-based motivation for such policies is lost, and their effects vary depending on the very nature of these policies, their perceptions of the labor market and the balance between incentives and sanctions that such policies promote” (Offline: social exclusion in Croatia 2006).

Certain programs and strategies can, if they are not adequately and sufficiently systematically set and their implementation not monitored, have the opposite effect. For example, in employment policy,

...extreme caution is needed when it comes to the relationship between measures to increase employment and measures to alleviate social exclusion. Measures to reduce social exclusion that rely solely on activation measures are unlikely to yield positive results; thus, exclusion could be exacerbated. Undoubtedly, much more resources should be devoted to active than passive measures, combining national best practice with programs tailored to local needs. However, care must also be taken not to further stigmatize particularly vulnerable groups. (UNDP 2006)

Joseph E. Stiglitz emphasizes that, according to the general opinion, “the social assistance system had to be restructured to help its beneficiaries to stop receiving it, i.e., to engage productively in the labor force” (Stiglitz 1999), which means social inclusion. Such an approach implies strong state economic incentives so that work becomes more profitable than receiving social assistance. Stiglitz believes that “it is (almost) certain that state aid programs have helped reduce poverty in the United States. Although by discouraging recipients from actively engaging in the workforce, they may in some cases have contributed to a vicious circle of poverty, they have broadly fought the growing wave of inequality that has hit not only the United States but many other countries” (Stiglitz 1999).

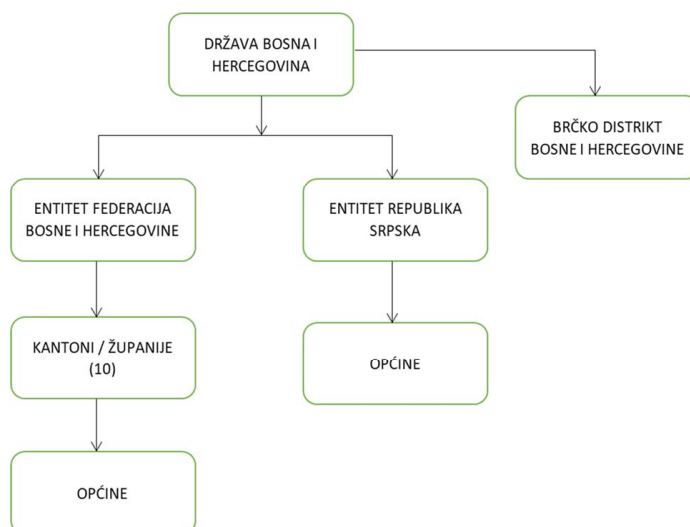
The long-term protection of socially excluded individuals and groups within a society known as an inclusive society should be based on the development of new forms, programs and social security measures as complementary and supportive

mechanisms to existing state social policies aimed at affirming the social inclusion of marginalized individuals and groups. That is why government programs are often considered “safety net programs.” For example, there is a view that civilized society cannot allow individuals to starve or die due to inadequate health care. Knowing that there is a safety net contributes to a sense of an individual’s economic security and thus to their general well-being (Stiglitz 1999).

5. NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The constitutional structure of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina was established on the basis of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1995, which ended the war and established peace (United Nations 1995). Based on the Agreement, a complex and heterogeneous constitutional system of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been established. It is a kind of semi-federal system, since it was determined that Bosnia and Herzegovina would consist of two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. In 1999, the Brčko District was formed as a separate administrative-territorial unit within the state. Furthermore, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is composed of ten cantons. The regulation of the local level of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina was largely based upon the earlier socialist system. Municipalities and cities are positioned as units of local self-government.

Figure 1. Constitutional structure of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina



Source: Autors

Article 2 of the Constitution specifies that Bosnia and Herzegovina and its two entities (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska) must ensure the highest level of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms and that the rights and freedoms set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms) and in its protocols have direct application and precedence over any other legislation. The same Article further proclaims that all persons in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina are guaranteed the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination on any grounds. Annex 6 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina refers to the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees all persons in the territory of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina the highest level of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Furthermore, in the Law on Principles of Local Self-Government in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Article 8 deals with the competencies of local self-government, among which in the first place is ensuring and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Constitution. Article 30 of the Law on Local Self-Government of the Republika Srpska also clearly states that the local community, within its competencies, ensures the exercise, protection and promotion of human rights.

Important elements of Bosnian legislation and accompanying operational documents focus on special marginalized/socially excluded categories of the population. For example, when it comes to the disabled as a marginalized/socially excluded category, special documents should be singled out that carry obligations for local communities. These documents include: Strategy for Improving the Rights and Position of Persons with Disabilities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2016–2021; Strategy for Improving the Social Position of Persons with Disabilities in the Republika Srpska 2017–2026; Law on the Professional Rehabilitation, Training and Employment of Persons with Disabilities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Law on Professional Rehabilitation, Training and Employment of Disabled Persons of the Republika Srpska; Law on the Use of Sign Language in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and other relevant laws and acts implemented at the level of the state, entities, Brčko District, and the ten cantons in the entity of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In addition to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which obliges the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina to develop inclusive local communities, and the Constitution and laws prescribing the obligation of local communities to actively deal with the protection of human rights and the development of

inclusive communities, special attention is paid to the UN Sustainable Development Goals expressed in Resolution A/70/L.1 (United Nations 2015). Within the Council of Europe, of which Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a member since 2002, particular attention is paid to the Strategy for Persons with Disabilities, in which accessibility is defined as a special and extremely important area (Council of Europe 2017).

6. ACTORS IN CREATING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is extremely important to map the key actors that will participate and are participating in the process that seeks to make Bosnian society an inclusive society. This is due to “capacity building to improve the open coordination process as well as the capacity to enable the use of the European Social Fund (ESF) in the field of employment and social inclusion. The process of development of the Social Inclusion Strategy as well as its implementation should be based on a broader partnership including all levels of government, social partners and non-governmental organizations” (Vijeće ministara 2010). For this process,

80 government institutions at the state and entity / BD level and cantonal level in FBiH were mapped, namely the ministries in the field of health, labor and social protection, veterans’ and disabled persons’ protection, displaced persons and refugees, entrepreneurship and development, EU integration, families, youth and sports, transport and communications, education, human rights, civil affairs and finance and statistical institutions and other public agencies, institutes, extra-budgetary funds (MIO entities, entity health insurance bureaus, agencies and employment bureaus and employment) and good governance bodies (Roma Council, PWD Council, Coordination Committee for Youth Issues, etc.) as well as participants in the process within the civil sector (representatives of the NGO network, social partners, social work centers, association of municipalities and entity cities). (Vijeće ministara 2010)

It is, therefore, about all those actors that exist and operate in developed democracies. In relation to such countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina differs in its possibilities and achievements and, in fact, the limitations of its actors in social inclusion, which range from the legal and political organization of the state to the coordination and joint and coordinated action of actors at all levels.

The tasks and goals of actors creating an inclusive society in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be focused on improving the position of marginalized categories of the

population and improving mutual cooperation, especially cooperation with actors at local levels within the public and private sectors.

7. THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities makes it clear, *inter alia*, that States Parties, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, are obliged to provide inclusive education for all members of society and that persons with disabilities are not to be excluded from the general education system based on disability. It also specifies that children with disabilities must not be excluded from free and compulsory primary and secondary education based on disability. To assist in the exercise of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including those with disabilities, who know sign language and/or Braille and shall train professionals and staff working at all levels of education. Such training should include disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative means, means and forms of communication, educational techniques, and materials to support persons with disabilities.

At the entity level, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a Decree on Spatial Standards, Urban-Technical Conditions and Norms for Preventing the Creation of Architectural and Urban Barriers for Persons with Disabilities that aims to counter the hindering or prevention of the movement, residence and work of persons with disabilities in meeting their basic living, working and other needs (Official Gazette of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 48/09).

Although, in theory, the laws are applied and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is respected, in practice the case is different. For example, most primary schools in Sarajevo Canton do not have adapted access for people with disabilities, nor do they have access to communication between classrooms. That is why parents mostly opt for special schools, which are much further away from their local community.

In 2018, the implementation of a project was launched with the aim that all primary and secondary schools in Sarajevo Canton must provide access entrances and elevators for the needs of students with disabilities. This is a sub-project within the general project called Action Plan for Improving the Rights and Position of Persons with Disabilities in Sarajevo Canton (2018-2021) (Ministarstvo za rad, socijalnu politiku, raseljena lica i izbjeglice 2018).

Without the implementation of the said project, persons, *i.e.* children with disabilities, will lose the opportunity to be included in regular primary education. However, if a parent does not decide to enroll their child in a special school, there is also

the option of a personal teaching assistant. Although mandatory in some places, teaching assistants are generally not funded by the Ministry of Education or local governments.

Many parents of children with disabilities (individually and through parent associations) have expressed concerns about the usefulness and effectiveness of private/personal teaching assistants, in line with a number of international studies dedicated to this issue. Parents expressed concern about three issues: 1) that their children will be assigned to work with a private/personal teaching assistant who may or may not have the pedagogical knowledge needed to teach; 2) that the presence of a private/personal teaching assistant who works only with their children in the classroom will further stigmatize the children as ‘different’ or ‘demanding’ and classify them in the category of ‘others’; and 3) that the assignment of private/personal teaching assistants to work with their children will relieve children of the responsibilities of capable and participatory students, in accordance with a 2017 UNICEF survey.

Furthermore, many schools do not have FM devices for children with hearing impairments or literature adapted for the blind and visually impaired. Also, there are schools that refuse to accept children with disabilities. It is precisely because of these situations that parents are forced to decide to enroll their children in special schools. In this area, discrimination is mostly hidden, so formally there are no obstacles to enrollment or attendance, but in practice there are problems, from inadequate plans and programs for children with disabilities to unadapted school environments and content for students.

The Strategy for the Improvement of the Rights and Position of Persons with Disabilities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2016-2021) aims to help improve the inclusive education of persons with disabilities. This strategy states that the Federal Ministry of Education and Science has participated in the development of documents that, among other things, aim to improve access to and participation in education for people with disabilities, namely: “Draft action plan based on the recommendations of inclusive education policies,” “Strategic directions for the development of higher education in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2012 to 2022,” “Strategic directions for the development of career orientation in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2015-2020,” and the “Proposal of the action plan for the implementation of the strategic directions for the development of career orientation in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2015-2020.”

At the entity level, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina provides funds to support projects aimed at improving the inclusion and conditions of education in preschool institutions and public primary schools for children with disabilities

through the program “Support for projects to improve the inclusion of preschool and primary education,” as well as the programs “Support for the professional development and lifelong learning of educators in preschool, primary and secondary education” and “Support for students with disabilities, citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, studying at public higher education institutions in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

For many years, there has been a need for education reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This has been shown by two recent international surveys (PISA 2018; TIMSS 2019). According to the general findings of this research, education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not good, and it is urgent to reform all segments and highlight education as a top value. Several reforms that have been initiated in education that directly or indirectly affected persons with disabilities, i.e. children with disabilities, in the educational process have not significantly changed or improved inclusive education. In implementing these reforms, it placed particular emphasis on inclusiveness in education and introduced it unsystematically in schools, without thorough comprehensive teacher education and without changing everyday teaching practices to make inclusive education fully alive.

The current reform in Sarajevo Canton is a differentiation of the teaching process itself, in which all students in the class do not learn everything at the same time and in the same way but adapt to the different needs of the child. In such classes, children with disabilities also have much more room for improvement.

Primary schools, although they can accept a child with a disability, are not adapted to work adequately with that child. From uneducated educators, insufficiently adapted material and literature, all the way to architectural barriers, there are issues of silent discrimination against persons/students with disabilities. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a comprehensive reform of the education system, which would include, above all, the adjustment of curricula and the training of teachers. Only then could it be said that inclusive education for children with disabilities is sustainable. The system operates sporadically and inefficiently, which causes problems in the education of children with a disability in regular primary and secondary schools, and by enrolling in special schools, they are additionally socially excluded and stigmatized. As a result, children with disabilities in Bosnian society continue to feel excluded and neglected by society.

It is clear that education reform must take place. That education must be reformed is also indicated by another phenomenon, and that is the emergence of two schools under one roof. This phenomenon has plagued Bosnian society for 30 years, and it can be freely said that this segregation and classic discriminatory practice against mono-ethnic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a continuation of war activities (aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina by its immediate neighbors)

by educational methods. In these schools, students are divided according to national and religious keys, and each ethnic group performs the teaching process according to its own curriculum. The reason for this is the explicit ban on mixing children of different religions and nations. International bodies have been calling attention to this phenomenon for decades and asking for its elimination, but it still exists. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is a symptom and not a problem.

In the educational practices present in Bosnia and Herzegovina today and in considerations about their transformation, the following concepts stand out: “assimilation, separation (segregation), multiculturalism, interculturalism and integration and inclusion” (Trkulja 2017). Finally, we must remember how far Bosnia and Herzegovina is from essential inclusion by its very definition, as

Inclusion means that schools enable equality in exercising the right to education for all children, which according to UNESCO means children with disabilities and gifted children, street children and working children, children from remote areas and nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or religious minorities and children from other disadvantaged areas or groups who are disadvantaged or marginalized. (UNESCO 1994)

8. CONCLUSION

Inclusion implies a process that enables marginal/socially excluded categories of the population (people with mental and physical disabilities, the elderly, former and active addicts to psychoactive substances, alcohol and other drug addictions, juvenile delinquents, victims of domestic violence, etc.) who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion not only to get the opportunity and resources necessary for full participation in economic, legal, political, social and cultural life but also to achieve a level of living standards and well-being that is considered acceptable in the society in which they live. An inclusive society should be one of the priorities of a large number of actors, both governmental (from the state to the local level) and non-governmental, in order to ensure adequate protection, promotion and care for socially marginalized categories of the population. It ensures greater participation of citizens in decision-making, which affects their lives, and the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms, which ensures their existence and social well-being.

For this reason, it is necessary to adopt new legal regulations and norms that are in line with internationally accepted standards and the catalog of basic human rights and freedoms. It is necessary to clearly and comprehensively determine the manner, mechanisms and resources for achieving and realizing the principles of an inclusive society. Reforms in this segment are required as an imperative.

One of the steps toward reform should certainly be the advocacy and promotion of inclusive education in Bosnia and Herzegovina as an important mechanism for solving the dominant problems of students with disabilities. The essence is to enable the inclusion of this category of the population in the educational process, in which there should be no obstacles or restrictions to their education, progress and further educational development. The lack of a functional system for including members of the target group in the educational process contributes to the non-involvement of these groups in the local community and reduces their opportunities to gain access to available resources.

A positive step in this direction has been made by Sarajevo Canton, which since 2018 has been conducting concrete activities in this area. The project is currently being implemented and provides access and elevators to all primary and secondary schools in Sarajevo Canton in order to enable unhindered schooling without physical barriers for students with disabilities. Such a practice needs to be extended throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. Projects such as this have the following as their main goal: to enable a selected marginalized category of the population to obtain stronger and more significant participation in the educational process and later in the labor market. The project will ultimately yield excellent results in terms of strengthening this marginalized category of the population and will be a valuable contribution to the aspirations of achieving an inclusive Bosnian and Herzegovinian society.

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