



## Human security - Collection of students' papers

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# FOREWORD

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“The idea of human security, though simple, is likely to revolutionize society in the 21st century.”<sup>1</sup>

This bold claim, formulated nearly a quarter of a century ago, at the time of the emergence of this completely new, revolutionary different concept of security, has not proved to be completely true. Ever since 1994, the concept of human security has been subjected to numerous reviews and criticisms, primarily because of its boundlessness, insufficient precision and (too) wide application that has significantly reduced its heuristic value.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it was introduced in the 21st century due to its unique approach - focusing on the security of individuals in their communities and its universal orientation - commitment to creating conditions in which each individual will have the opportunity to choose his or her own path and realise his or her own potential. The century we live in has brought many new forms of risk, but the key questions arising from the concept of human security (*Will I be able to sustain my family? Will I lose my job? Will I become a victim of violence?*) remain equally relevant.

Our colleague Svetlana Đurđević Lukić, co-founder of the Public Policy Research Centre and its director for many years, after whom the Centre’s competition was named, was a real expert on the concept of human security and was able to take the best of it. She nurtured a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach and had a talent of pioneering the introduction of numerous topics (primarily those related to the security of vulnerable groups) into security discourse in Serbia. She managed to inspire other researchers and policy makers to think about these topics and act on the basis of carefully collected findings and analyses. Svetlana died in tragic circumstances two years ago. She was hit by a public transport bus while crossing the street as a pedestrian and when the traffic light was green.

Since then, for two years in a row, in tribute to Svetlana’s work, the Centre organises the eponymous competition to encourage young people of very different educational backgrounds to explore security threats to individuals in the community. Both

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1 UNDP (1994): Human Development Report, p. 22

2 Lipovac, M., & Glušac, L. (2011). Perspektive koncepta ljudske bezbednosti. (Perspectives of the Human Security Concept). *Kultura polisa*, 16, 57-76.

this and last year, we invited undergraduate, master's and doctoral students from all faculties in Serbia to reflect on the following topics: post-conflict societies and small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation, security of vulnerable groups, information security (cybersecurity), natural disasters and community security, and new health security challenges.

Bearing in mind that today, two years later, there is still no final court decision establishing the guilt for Svetlana's death and that Svetlana's case is only one in a series of cases that remain without completed court proceedings and punishment or with insufficiently severe punishment, we have decided to add another topic – *road traffic safety*.

In this way, we wanted to draw attention to the security threat that every year takes hundreds of lives in Serbia, and which policy makers remain silent about, despite huge individual and social losses.

This publication presents the four best papers of undergraduate, master's and doctoral students who participated in the Centre's competition. All papers were evaluated in two rounds, before and after the mentoring process carried out with the help of Centre's researchers.

The paper of Ljubomir Mitrović, an undergraduate student of the Faculty of Security, very systematically presents the influence of SALW proliferation on the recovery of post-conflict communities. In addition to determining the correlation between the presence of weapons and the socio-economic development of a society, the author examines and proposes the ways to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. One of the possible models of action mentioned by Ljubomir is a process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) as one of the key mechanisms of post-conflict rehabilitation. Finally, in lieu of conclusion, the author looks at the efficiency of strategies for reducing the quantity of firearms. He points out that new strategies must follow contemporary trends, that is, they must focus on the specific culture of communities and the reasons that drive demand for weapons.

The paper of Katarina Pantelić, an undergraduate student of the Faculty of Political Sciences and Ljubica Vladušić, a doctoral student of the Faculty of Geography, deals with the dating application Tinder. The authors question the security aspect of meeting new people online, recognising security risks for individuals. In order to examine the users' awareness and views on security measures and data protection, the authors carried out an online survey and interviews. The conducted survey has shown that although the security of surveyed application users has not been threatened so far, they apply certain precautions. For example, they inform persons close



to them about their movements or agree to meet in public places. The authors also point out to the necessity of working continuously on the normative improvement of information security.

Nikola Perišić, an undergraduate student of the Faculty of Political Sciences, focused on casualties among pedestrians, the most vulnerable category of traffic participants, in the Republic of Serbia in 2016 and 2017. The author provides a statistical overview of casualties among pedestrians compared to the total number of casualties in traffic accidents and points to the most vulnerable traffic participants, the most critical locations and the shortcomings in the penal policy. Nikola's research shows that road traffic casualties among pedestrians undoubtedly lead to the consequences of unimaginable proportions and have an impact on health, social and economic security, and on family integrity. In the end, the author offers recommendations for improving and tightening the penal policy and punishment of misdemeanour offenders and perpetrators of criminal offences in the field of road traffic safety and suggests ways to raise awareness among all traffic participants.

Doroteja Peković, a master's student of the Faculty of Political Sciences, chose a topic in the field of health care and highlighted the issues of the safety of children in alternative care. Protection of children from neglect, abuse and exploitation has been recognised as an important area of human security. The author mentions numerous threats to children's safety - emotional and educational neglect, physical violence, sexual exploitation, or labour exploitation. She provides a critical view of the current social protection system in Serbia and examines the institutional mechanisms of care. Removing a child from the biological family is a complex process and potentially traumatic experience for the child, even when it is in his or her best interest security wise. The author finds the lack of qualified staff and the lack of efficient education, especially in case of mentally ill children, to be the biggest flaws in the functioning of alternative care of children. Doroteja stresses the need for additional education for work with children who have behavioural problems. The most important author's recommendation is to intensify work on improving the care of children in social protection institutions, that is, on strengthening the sense of their safety during institutionalisation.

We would like to thank the Democratization Department of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, which this year again recognised the importance of the competition *Svetlana Đurđević Lukić* aimed at encouraging young students to think about the key threats to human security. We would also like to thank the expert jury consisting of Vladimir Bilandžić, PhD; Vanja Rokvić, PhD, Srđan Korać, PhD and Marina Tadić.

The Centre's researchers Milica Skočajić and Filip Stojanović provided professional support to the students in the mentoring process and thus contributed to the quality of papers in this year's publication.

In Belgrade, December 2018

Svetlana Đurđević Lukić Foundation Secretary

Filip Stojanović

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# POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES AND PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

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**Abstract:** *The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a common phenomenon in post-conflict countries and a significant factor contributing to escalation and re-emergence of violence, while the state system disintegrated by war does not have functional mechanisms for combating proliferation. Small arms and light weapons pose a particular threat due to low procurement costs, general availability, easy handling and portability, and high mortality rates they can cause. According to the Small Arms Survey's estimates from 2017, over one billion small arms and light weapons are circulating worldwide.*

*The purpose of this paper is to examine the negative effects of SALW proliferation on the recovery of post-conflict communities. This paper focuses on examining direct and indirect consequences of small arms and light weapons for the socio-economic development of society and for human security, that is, on examining the reasons why they often end up in the wrong hands after the conflict. Moreover, special attention is paid to the mechanisms for combating and solving the issue of weapons proliferation.*

**Key words:** *post-conflict societies, SALW, proliferation of firearms, human security*

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# INTRODUCTION

The term Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)<sup>1</sup> means “weapons of daily destruction” given that the number of deaths and injuries they cause on a daily basis worldwide is higher than caused by any other type of weapons. Nine out of ten of these deaths occur in non-conflict settings, while over 50% of the weapons used are in the hands of non-state actors beyond the control of public authorities (Wilson, 2014; Hazdra, 2007). The situation is more difficult in post-conflict communities since the proliferation of weapons is less controlled and may account for as much as 93 percent of casualties annually (Mack, 2014). The causes of such outcomes can be found in the experiences of post-conflict countries, which reveal that weapons transfers continue even after the conflict, mainly in the form of illicit trade (Upreti et al., 2010; Marsh, 2002).<sup>2</sup> The danger of SALW trade was recognised by the UN in the mid-1990s by adopting the global Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. One of the key aspects of the Programme of Action is stockpile management, since inappropriate management converts stockpiles into significant sources of illegal weapons and increases the risk of proliferation (Amoa, 2014).<sup>3</sup>

Both short-term and long-term consequences of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in post-conflict countries are numerous. The first effects of proliferation that will be presented are commonplace and based on examples of many post-conflict countries such as Sudan, while the situation in the Western Balkan countries is used as an example of long-term effects and problems generated by small arms proliferation nearly two decades after ending the conflict in this region. An unavoidable aspect of regulating the SALW policy refers to disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes, which, although described at the end of this paper, are its core element. The last part of this paper analyses the methods of regulating SALW proliferation at the national level through the adoption of weapons control strategies, and international initiatives such as the Western Balkans Roadmap.

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- 1 The definition of *Small Arms and Light Weapons* used in this paper is based on the guidelines provided in the Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (UNGA, 1997).
  - 2 See more details about illicit trade in small arms and light weapons at the Small Arms Survey website, Illicit trafficking.
  - 3 In post-conflict societies, inappropriately managed state stockpiles of small arms and light weapons become a source of proliferation in the region (Marsh, Gugu, 2014).

# EFFECTS OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS PROLIFERATION ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES

The socio-economic consequences of illegal trade in small arms are enormous, with the main cause of proliferation being the human factor (Acheson, 2014). The UN Security Council has pointed out that illegal trafficking in small arms causes armed violence and has a wide range of negative consequences for socio-economic development, human rights and security, including violence against women and girls during and after the war (Cîrlig, 2015). According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, SALW proliferation contributes to the continuation of conflicts, violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, while cultural violence continues after the conflict (Cîrlig, 2015).

In post-war societies, proliferation additionally contributes to the re-emergence of violence. The consequences of SALW proliferation for the socio-economic development of society manifest in the form of stagnation due to increased social consumption and poverty, with the system being incapable of satisfying the needs due to the escalation of armed violence.<sup>4</sup> Mack adds that armed violence has strong psychological consequences for survivors, that it is used as a tool of intimidation and is linked to violence against women and girls and domestic violence (Mack, 2014).<sup>5</sup>

While not being the ultimate cause for armed violence and conflict, atrocities and human rights violations are often ‘assisted’ by SALW (Heinrich, 2006). When access to weapons is poorly controlled, and the sense of insecurity is reinforced, retribution can lead to criminal and anti-social violence. Conflicts, social violence and armed crime are major causes of economic underdevelopment and human rights violations, and very often lead to increased demand for weapons. The increased inflow of weapons may lead to the militarisation of society, which, accompanied by a continuous sense of insecurity and the reduction of social and economic investment, fuels the perpetuation of armed violence and adversely affects socio-economic development (Heinrich, 2006). World Bank studies confirm that the risk of armed violence correlates

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4 Socio-economic development implies the improvement of living conditions and abilities to meet basic needs (such as health care, education, food), the reduction of inequality and poverty and the increased capacity of human beings to realise their potentials (AU, 2006).

5 The international community recognised the connection of weapons with violence against women and children by adopting the Arms Trade Treaty. Article 7 of this Treaty explicitly prohibits exporting weapons to the places where they are used for killing women and children (Law on the Ratification of Arms Trade Treaty, 2013).

with poverty and economic underdevelopment, inequality and failed political institutions (World Bank, 2011). Collier states that a civil war-affected economy declines by around 2.2% per annum relative to its underlying growth path, which means that after a decade of war a society will have an income 20% lower than before the conflict (Collier, 1999). In order to end the situation of crisis, countries, supported by the international community, start post-conflict recovery by launching the programmes of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former rebels. However, due to scarce resources and very few employment opportunities, DDR programmes are rather ineffective (Heinrich, 2006). Without sustainable employment opportunities, former rebels have difficulty integrating into civilian life and can easily be recruited for various forms of armed violence (Mueller, 2013).

It is indisputable that DDR programmes are an important instrument of post-conflict rehabilitation, but the low rate of their effectiveness is worrying. Attempts to reduce the quantity weapons and demobilise ex-combatants without effective socio-legal and economic measures are destined to failure, while prospects for the prevalence of crime and re-emergence of conflict are increased.

## **EFFECTS OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS PROLIFERATION ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN SECURITY IN POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES**

The proliferation of weapons is considered one of the main obstacles to achieving sustainable human development (Cîrlig, 2015).<sup>6</sup> The proliferation and abuse of weapons inevitably affect human security, both individual and societal. The impacts of weapons proliferation on human development are both direct - deaths and injuries, and indirect - higher levels of criminality and migration, declines in economic activity, etc. (Muggah, Batchelor, 2002). Without effective mechanisms for eliminating the negative impacts of proliferation, personal protection becomes a key consideration. A sense of insecurity generates a need for possessing weapons that causes an accelerated and massive demand for weapons. However, studies show that an increase in the number of weapons in the hands of civilians does not necessarily create an increased sense of security, but it can certainly fuel the re-emergence or stimulation of violence (Muggah, 2005). Since the increase in armed violence fuels the demand for weapons

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6 The human security framework implies the preservation of the safety of individuals, families, communities, and governmental and national life in the economic, political and social dimension (AU, 2006).

among civilians for their own protection, it consequently encourages a culture of violence that creates conditions for thoughtless and frequent use of weapons.

The uncontrolled proliferation and easy availability of SALW generates numerous negative effects both on individuals and communities. Due to these negative effects, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is one of the serious threats to human security. SALW proliferation undermines human security more than any other conventional weapon. Post-conflict communities are susceptible to certain risk factors such as marginalisation and exclusion of certain ethnic and political groups from social processes, unemployment, social inequality, etc. The absence of legitimate political authorities and effective security sector, along with the easy availability of weapons and the aforementioned factors, encourages a widespread culture of violence (Muggah, Batchelor, 2002).

It can be concluded that an increased presence of firearms is one of the important factors that contribute to a direct increase in armed attacks resulting in endangered human security and development. However, a particular problem in these situations is the inclination of individuals exposed to danger to resolve disputes by using lethal force rather than more traditional and peaceful means.

## **EFFECTS OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS PROLIFERATION ON NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES**

In addition to increasing the number of victims and endangering the safety of people in war-affected areas, the proliferation of weapons also affects the surrounding countries. The scope of the impact of proliferation depends on a particular regional context. In the East Africa region, one of the effects of proliferation is an increase in the number of rebel groups (Sudan, Uganda) and pirates (Somalia, Kenya). The proliferation of light weapons and small arms has increased the efficiency and mortality of their attacks (Gikonyo, 2015). In the period 2012-2013, some Middle East countries have nearly doubled their imports of weapons.<sup>7</sup> I find that the reason for the increased imports of weapons lies in the “hidden wars” led by these countries in the territory of other countries in the region. Besides, one should not wonder whether the civil war in Yemen has just escalated or was prompted by the regional problems of West Africa and the northern part of the Middle East. Yemen’s cholera epidemic in 2017 was a result of

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7 See more detailed information at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/06/arab-states-almost-double-small-arms-imports-report>.

non-functional public health sector and poor economic situation. Health care facilities were overburdened by providing care to the victims of small arms and had scarce resources. Due to the limited access to health care and social services for civilians, cholera epidemic had the potential to spread beyond the boundaries of Yemen. This type of health security threat would affect not only the people in Yemen, but also other people in the region. In order to help the readers understand the real scale of impact of SALW proliferation, I will briefly present the case of Ukraine. After the escalation of the conflict in 2014, large quantities of SALW were brought to Ukraine. However, this event did not shake up the countries of the region, and most of these weapons ended up in Iraq, Syria and Libya.<sup>8</sup> This substantiates the fact that the consequences of SALW proliferation for the neighbouring countries do depend on the regional context.

### Small arms and light weapons in the Western Balkan region

One of the long-term problems faced by post-conflict communities are surplus weapons that can be significant sources of proliferation if they are not properly managed, as is the case in the countries of former Yugoslavia.<sup>9</sup> There are several causes for the existence of these surpluses. During the regional wars of the 1990s, the countries of SFR Yugoslavia largely increased their stockpiles.<sup>10</sup> As tensions and perception of threats have changed after the conflict, the countries have decrease their military production and the number of staff employed in the security sector.<sup>11</sup> In addition, several republics of former SFRY have undergone a process of interoperability through NATO membership, that is, adaptation of weapons and military equipment standards. The countries of the region (Albania, BiH, Bulgaria, Croatia and Serbia) reformed their own armed and security forces, which required numerous adjustments in the process of their armament. It is also necessary to point to the widespread culture of weapon possession in the region originating from the tradition of liberation movements and being considered a valuable family heritage and an element of pride (Đurđević-Lukić, 2014).

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8 See more details at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-arms-insight/ukraine-after-war-becomes-a-trove-for-black-market-arms-trade-idUSKCN1050ZE>.

9 The countries of the region (Bulgaria, Romania and Albania) also face the problem of surplus weapons today.

10 The number of SALW in Yugoslavia in 1989 was estimated at about six million, of which about 800,000 were illegally held (Davis, 2002). According to current estimates, between 3.6 and 6.2 million weapons are circulating in the Western Balkans (Čarapić, 2014).

11 The SFRY was one of the leading small arms producers with the annual export worth \$ 3 billion. It had a defence system with about 2.2 million members (Đurđević-Lukić, 2014).



It is disconcerting that selling off is a desirable method of disposing of surplus firearms, which the Southeast European governments advocate for rather than for its destruction. Studies show that the countries in the region are attempting to sell off surplus firearms if they are functional, in good condition and can be safely transported (Lazarević, 2010: 6). The process of destroying SALW and ammunition is mainly carried out if surpluses cannot be sold.

Currently, the biggest problem with the surplus of small arms and light weapons in the Western Balkans is faced by Serbia and Montenegro, which are the leaders in this field. According to estimates, the ratio of inhabitants to light weapons in these two countries is approximately 100-40 (Stojanović, Đorđević, 2018). Of the total number of SALW in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo, estimated to be around 6 million according to the Small Arms Survey 2018, only in Serbia there are more than 2.6 million weapons, of which over 1.5 million are illegal. It is also worrying that between 500,000 and 1.6 million households in the Western Balkans possess firearms (Čarapić, 2014). As regards the types of weapons circulating in the region, the Small Arms Survey 2012 shows that of the 157,000 registered firearms in Macedonia, the majority were handguns, revolvers and other long-barrel firearms (SAS, 2012a). A survey undertaken in Serbia shows that there were nearly 1.2 million registered firearms, 90 percent of which were the same types of weapons as in Macedonia (SAS, 2012b). The same survey found that there were about 100,000 registered firearms of the same type in Montenegro, while the number of unregistered firearms was estimated at between 40,000 and 80,000.

Large quantities of small arms and light weapons in the hands of civilians in Southeast Europe result in the misuse of weapons, which is particularly pronounced in gender-based violence. According to surveys, men in Southeast Europe make a large majority of those who possess and misuse weapons, while on the other hand, women rarely possess weapons and are more often victims than perpetrators of violence (Božanić, 2016).<sup>12</sup> The number of murders committed with firearms in the Western Balkans accounts for about 44% of the total number of murders, which is significantly higher percentage than 30.5% and 35.1% in North Europe and West Europe, respectively (Čarapić, 2014). According to the World Health Organization, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia are on the top of the list of firearms suicides (Del Frate, Mugellini, 2012).

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12 Ninety-four (94) percent of 874,000 registered users of firearms in Serbia are men. The situation is similar in Montenegro where most of 80,000 licensed weapons users are men (SAS, 2012).

# FIGHT AGAINST THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN THE POST-CONFLICT ENVIRONMENT

There is a general consensus in the international community that the best way to tackle the proliferation problem is through disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes (Mueller, 2013). However, the success of the implementation of DDR programme depends on the degree of disintegration of the state/region.<sup>13</sup> There are several reasons for this. More specifically, the economic reintegration of ex-combatants into post-conflict communities is significantly hindered due to scarce resources, limited infrastructure and employment opportunities. One of the problems, especially in third world countries, are children soldiers. Many of them were too young when they became combatants and therefore have not acquired formal education or basic skills needed in the labour market. In addition to economic constraints, there is a strong psychosocial element that prevents the process of demobilisation of former rebels because many of them suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, mainly men. In order to facilitate the process of demobilisation, it is necessary to have appropriate community-based psychological support and legal frameworks that would prevent the war veterans affected by PTSD from accessing firearms.

Since societal security is threatened in critical and changing circumstances, communities seek to preserve essential values despite possible or actual threats. Although all of these measures are included in the standard pattern of behaviour and action in the post-conflict situation, the success of their implementation may be doubted to a certain extent, bearing in mind that a disintegrated system is not capable of providing this type of support to ex-combatants. The Sudan experience supports this thesis. After the six-year implementation period, the DDR programme proved unsuccessful in terms of weapons reduction or demobilisation of combatants because a very small percentage of the targeted individuals even entered the programme (Mueller, 2013). The main obstacles to the successful implementation of the DDR programme in Sudan are limited employment opportunities and non-acceptance of ex-combatants by local communities. On the other hand, the Sudan People's Liberation Army encouraged rebels to loyalty by allocating a significant part of the budget for their needs, thus deterring them from participating in the DDR programme (Muggah, 2005), while developing a sense of belonging to the structure among rebels. Community

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13 North and South Sudan faced the unique situations that prevented the successful implementation of DDR programme. The programme was completed in 2011 without any significant success.

support is crucial in the DDR process in order for ex-combatants to feel socially accepted and useful. The challenges related to the DDR programme are completely different in Somalia. The key obstacles to its implementation are the lack of transparency in deciding on the recommendations given under the programme and numerous death sentences of rebels (Felbab-Brown, 2015). In such cases, it is necessary to establish provisional institutions with the mediation of international actors. Since death sentence is the most severe type of punishment, the DDR process can be hindered. Therefore, although completely opposite, the amnesty of combatants may be a more flexible measure, as it would secure the consent of other rebels for demobilisation.<sup>14</sup>

While humanitarian organisations advocate the inclusion of women and children in the DDR process, others are against it because they believe that it would make the programmes less effective (Hanson, 2007). The reason is that under the given circumstances, DDR programmes require significant adjustments due to an increase in the number of rebels to be demobilised, but also require treating women and children differently than adult combatants, which is why it is necessary to be particularly careful in involving them in the process. Participation in the DDR process together with other rebels may subject women and children to discrimination and psychological violence by adult combatants, especially if those rebels are their former commanders they rebelled against. Special attention should be paid to the inclusion of women in DDR programmes in conservative cultures.

## IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION

Small arms and light weapons control in post-conflict communities requires an integrated approach and effective strategies for firearms reduction. DDR programmes are the first step in creating a more secure weapon-free environment. Real challenges appear years, even decades later, as in the case of the countries of former Yugoslavia. New strategies must follow new trends. They should not focus only on the control of weapons proliferation, but also on the culture and reasons that fuel demand for weapons. Proliferation control strategies can reduce the quantity of SALW to a certain extent, but it continues to be a problem. This is shown by numerous experiences of the countries of Africa and South-East Europe. The proliferation danger is recognised by many European and African countries whose response manifests through the adoption of national and regional proliferation control strategies. The prolifera-

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14 Strict criteria have to be defined in the process of amnesty, taking into consideration that it is contrary to the interest of the victimised populations and can lead to retaliation.

tion of SALW on the African continent is regulated by a number of regional initiatives, such as the Nairobi Protocol.<sup>15</sup> Some African countries, such as South Sudan, control the proliferation of weapons also at the national level through the activities of the Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control. Rwanda and Burundi have adopted several laws that determine the level of charges for weapons and mediation in arms trade.

In Europe, the Western Balkan countries have been trying for years to put weapon proliferation under control through national and regional strategies, but without any significant success. By adopting the Strategy on Small Arms and Light Weapons Control for the period 2010 - 2015, the Republic of Serbia attempted to improve the control of SALW, but without visible results.<sup>16</sup> In the period 2003 - 2012, Serbia destroyed around 110,000 SALW (UNDP, 2012). During 2017, around 18,000 weapons were destroyed in Serbia.<sup>17</sup> One of the interesting mechanisms, launched in 2012 by the Centre for Control of SALW in South East Europe, is the web platform “Targeted Weapons”, which provides the possibility of easier identification of firearms in Serbia. Thanks to this platform, we can learn more about the culture of weapons from the perspective of an average citizen of the Republic of Serbia. However, I propose caution in analysing data collected from the “Targeted Weapons” platform, because we cannot be sure of their credibility.

What is promising with respect to small arms and light weapons proliferation control in the Western Balkans is a new regional initiative - the Western Balkans Roadmap, according to which this region should become a safer place by 2024. The Roadmap makers saw the problem of proliferation from different perspectives. I would like to highlight the option for citizens to surrender their weapons without an obligation to prove their origin and without liability if illegally obtained. This is a really promising move.

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15 The States Parties to the Nairobi Protocol are: Burundi, DR Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

16 In the period 2005 - 2009, 6.284 firearms in illegal possession were seized from citizens (Strategy on Small Arms and Light Weapons Control in the Republic of Serbia, 2010).

17 See more details at: [https://ceas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/30595/eu-helps-destroy-18000-small-arms-serbia\\_en](https://ceas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/30595/eu-helps-destroy-18000-small-arms-serbia_en).

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# METHOD OF COMMUNICATION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE BY USING DATING APPLICATIONS (TINDER)

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**Abstract:** *The Internet has become the easiest way to meet new people with no pressure to make a good impression as when talking face-to-face. Security issues in this domain are still insufficiently explored. Establishing face-to-face contacts with people met online can lead to personal security threats. Of all dating applications, young people use mainly Tinder. Their experiences are expressed in a survey showing that Tinder users (over 80% of them) were not afraid for their safety while dating and that their dating partners presented themselves truthfully in over 90% of cases. Nevertheless, it is necessary to improve the legal protection of users of these applications in the Republic of Serbia, because the existing laws regulate this field only partially.*

**Key words:** *communication, Tinder, security, dating applications, cybersecurity*

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# INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the Internet is the leading form of communication. Sending photos, video clips, using various applications require the user's personal data, which exposes them to security risks. This is a subject matter of Internet law<sup>1</sup>, one of the newest branches of law. Among other things, it deals with Internet security. Today, the biggest Internet problem is the protection of Internet users' data. Providers collect personal data about the users of social media and applications (with their consent) and use these data to generate profits. The Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia includes a section on criminal offences on the Internet entitled *Criminal Offences against the Security of Computer Programmes in the Republic of Serbia*.<sup>2</sup> Internet frauds and data abuse are punishable with up to 3 years of imprisonment, depending on the degree of fraud. On the other hand, the rights of individuals, that is, the protection of their data on the Internet, are not properly regulated. Everywhere in the world there are time limits for storing personal data; we cannot claim that these time limits are respected, but every legal system has a different data protection framework.<sup>3</sup> This type of data is regulated in the European Union by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). With two legal documents, Serbia made a step towards establishing IT security. These are the Strategy for the Development of Information Security in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2017-2020 and the Law on Information Security, which recognise cyberspace as a possible means of threatening the security of citizens. The security of entire cyberspace has come to the focus of governmental action, due to the flow and control of digital data, resource management (internet domain) and the development of standards that will define the functioning of society in the future.

People are social beings and cannot exist without communication. The primary medium is human speech. Without it, it is impossible to communicate through verbal and non-verbal speech. Since humans are social beings, they cannot function without interaction with other people. Speech and language do not only serve for expressing thoughts, but also for their development (Rot, 2004). Communicology is the study of processes through which messages and their reflections are transmitted (Fiks, 1982). In order to better understand and develop communication, we need to distinguish between the terms *information* and *communication*. *Communication* is a term that refers to connection between two entities, while *information* is the content and pur-

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1 Source: <http://www.milic.rs>

2 Source: <http://www.milic.rs>

3 Source: <http://www.milic.rs>

pose of that connection. Communicology deals with verbal communication, but also with non-verbal communication through signs, symbols and colours. (Mirkov, 2012). Communication is one of the most dynamic activities in human society. From the aspect of communicology, a man is an “animal symbolicum”, a man has built the world of information that is equal to the world of people and the world of things (Tjurou, 2012). Communication is one of the most important needs of human beings, and the Internet, including dating applications, is one of the means for meeting that need.

Dating applications are becoming more and more used year after year. In the USA, in 2015 the number of users of these applications tripled compared to 2013. In addition, 80% of Americans think that online dating is a good way to choose a partner, while on the other hand, 45% of them think that this way of dating is not safe. More women (53%) than men believe that meeting people online is not safe, while 38% of male online daters agree with this statement (Smith, 2016). In 73.3% of cases, conversations through the application are initiated by men (Masden and Edwards, 2015). Dating applications also have some negative aspects, such as the fact that the majority of marriages among people who met on such applications end in the first year (Drell, 2018). Tinder is an Android and iPhone application designed in 2012 primarily for meeting new people.<sup>4</sup> Tinder is used more by men, but according to research, the number of female users has been increasing. Women prefer Tinder for security reasons because Tinder uses Facebook data to link people up with mutual friends based on their common interests. Today, Tinder has 1.5 billion users (Greenfield, 2013). It is used mostly by students 23 years old on average and the largest number of Tinder users said that they wanted to find a partner for a serious relationship (Sumter S., Vandenbosch and Ligtenberg, 2016). Tinder is the most visited dating application in the world (Drell, 2018). Between 10,000 and 20,000 people install this application daily (Bosker, 2013). The main threat or security risk is catphishing. Presentation on dating sites is also the main concern of those who have profiles. That is why most people present themselves as very attractive persons of average weight and height (Caspi, 2007).

Due to the growing number of Internet users, cybersecurity is an increasingly frequent topic and a focus of interest in modern society. Therefore, real-world security cannot be viewed separately from cyberspace security (Tomić, Pažun and Ilić, 2015). When communicating in cyberspace, users exchange information that can be misused or false. Attention should be focused on the very way of communication and hidden content of messages.

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4 Source: <https://tinder.com/>

## Tinder as a dating place of new era - safe or not?

Surfing the Internet has specific security challenges. Internet users leave digital traces. These traces can be used for analysing the characteristics of the users who left them behind. Different TCP/IP protocols have been created to enable computers to communicate with each other. They serve to identify the network to which the user is connected and to identify the computer. This is one of the reasons why anonymity on the Internet is questionable (Milosavljević, Veinović i Grubor, 2009).

The application Tinder can be installed free of charge in the Play Store. When installing the application, users are provided with privacy guidelines and terms of use. They can choose to read them or not and to accept them or not. Upon acceptance, users are asked to sign up either through Facebook or by providing their mobile phone number. When signing up with the mobile phone number, users enter their number, after which they receive a text message with an identification code. After that, they are asked to enter their email address and a password that should contain one letter, one number and at least a total of eight characters. Users enter their Tinder username, date of birth and sex. There is also an option to upload a profile photo from the user's device, if the user wants it. Users are also asked to give permission for accessing files on their device. They are then asked whether they want to enable access to their location. If users want to delete their Tinder profile, they are asked why they want to do so (as obligatory feedback, which means that they must choose one of the reasons listed or specify other reason). First impressions about users are based on their profile photos. If users are interested in seeing more details (to get to know more about someone), they can enter the user's profile that contains photos, description of the user and mutual friends on Facebook and Facebook likes. Users swipe left to reject and right to accept a potential match. If the right swipe is mutual, it is a match and they immediately begin to chat (Ward, 2016).

When choosing anonymous communication, there are various motives that can be useful or harmful. The right to anonymity is considered to be defence against oppression, harassment, revenge, censorship or discrimination and therefore a vital component of the freedom of speech or the freedom of expression (Virkof, 2010). Given the sensitivity of information, it is important to protect yourself against its abuse. The Law on Information Security envisages measures for protection against security risks in information and communication systems. According to the Law on Information Security<sup>5</sup>, individuals must be aware of the risk they are exposed to because

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5 Source: [https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_informacionoj\\_bezbednosti.html](https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_informacionoj_bezbednosti.html)

information sharing can affect their information security. The aim of this survey is to examine the behaviour of Tinder users focused on protecting their security as well as their attitudes towards these issues.

## Method

In this survey, we applied a qualitative method (interview) to get a better insight into this phenomenon and a quantitative method (questionnaire-based survey) to examine the behaviour of Tinder application users.

## Instruments

For the purpose of this survey, we interviewed one male and one female person. In this way, we have obtained the information about what the respondents expected from Tinder and whether they felt safe using this application. Both persons answered the same questions. These data allowed for a valuable insight into the aspects considered important by Internet users, and therefore provided the basis for the creation of questionnaire.

The second step was the creation of questionnaire, which served to identify the motives for using the application and the users' expectations. The questionnaire-based survey<sup>6</sup> involved 174 respondents, including 58.6% of women and 41.4% of men. Of the total number of respondents, 100 went on dates. The average age is 22, which indicates that this network, as it was supposed, is used more by young population. The respondents were asked fifteen questions. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: one part was filled by users who used the application and did not go on dates, and the other part was filled by users who went on dates. The respondents were given the opportunity to specify reasons why they did not go on dates.

## Exploration

By applying the interview method, we obtained the following findings. Our male interviewee has been using this application already for two years.<sup>7</sup> During this period,

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<sup>6</sup> The survey was conducted in August 2018.

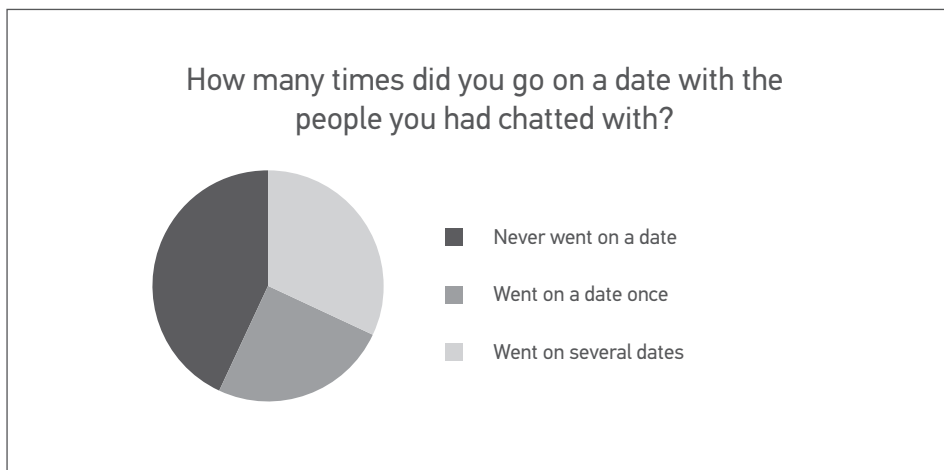
<sup>7</sup> Data obtained from respondents, August 2018.

he went on dates with about 25 people that he had met through Tinder. The female interviewee has also been using the application for two years.<sup>8</sup> However, she has less experience since she went on a total of 5 dates.

Based on these interviews, the following conclusions can be made. The male interviewee, unlike the female one, did not inform anyone about going on a date. Both interviewees went on dates where they were repelled by their dating partner's gestures or physical appearance; in addition, they both felt some sort of discomfort when meeting people. Both of them also stated that the information received through the application and face-to-face was not different. Both interviewees had bad experiences in meeting people. The female interviewee got emotionally attached to a person before meeting face-to-face several times, unlike the male interviewee. Based on the above, it can be concluded that the answers of both interviewees largely coincide and that essentially this application functions similarly for both sexes. It can also be concluded that they both have some form of anxiety that manifests at the time of meeting people, which points to their introvert nature, due to which they do not give the opportunity to everyone. This reduces the possibility of negative situations occurring when meeting people through this application.

## Results

Based on the conducted survey, the following results were obtained:



Graph no. 1 - Number of dates with the people contacted through the application

<sup>8</sup> Data obtained from respondents, July 2018.

The reasons for giving up dates were the following: believing that such relationships were not achievable (22.5%), not feeling safe (18.3%) and being afraid of not meeting the expectations of the person they were supposed to meet (4.2%). By comparing these answers with the answers of interviewees, we can conclude that some of their key elements are the fear of uncertainty, anxiety and safety, as mentioned by the female interviewee. As regards safety, 77% of respondents answered affirmatively to the question: Did you inform a friend/relative/acquaintance before going on a date? This suggests that people are not careless about meeting people online, but take care of their safety. Forty-seven (47) percent of respondents felt some fear when going on a date, while 18.3% of them did not feel safe.



Graph no. 2 - Feelings about dates with the people contacted through the application

We can conclude that 83.8% of them did not have negative experiences during this type of meeting. In addition, 99% of respondents answered “no” to the question “Were you frightened by some gesture or physical appearance of your dating partner?”, which sheds light upon some important aspects of these experiences. This means that on the basis of gestures, verbal and non-verbal communication on dates, they realised that they would not get into an unpleasant situation with their dating partner. Moreover, 92% of respondents indicated that their dating partners presented themselves truthfully on Tinder application, while 4% of respondents denied it. This difference of 7% can be interpreted as disappointment (the dating partners looked different from the photos, they were not so interesting face-to-face, etc.), but they were not afraid for their safety.

13.1% of respondents had bad experience with dates and specified (some) situations as reasons: fake profile (different person showed up), too high expectations and large differences in character, dating partner's pushy behaviour, disappointment in the dating partner (uninteresting, insecure). The positive aspects of this application are reflected in the answer of 37.8% of respondents who established a relationship (including 16.3% of those who are still in that relationship).

## Discussion/Conclusions

Nowadays, there is a growing use of dating applications. Traditional ways of meeting people face-to-face are used less and less among the youth. Internet and social media have become a field of action where virtual dating begins. Sometimes it turns into "live" and sometimes it does not. It depends on the character of persons on the other side of the screen, their sincerity in chatting and the degree of fear of meeting face-to-face. As regards the safety of such types of contacts with the people met online, the fact is that people must be very careful. Meeting in public places and informing the persons close to us about the dating place are necessary precautions. Clearly, online communication can give us an idea of the type of person we are dealing with. During face-to-face contact, interpreting non-verbal signs, in addition to verbal communication, will help us form an opinion about a person sitting across the table. It is therefore necessary to pay attention to every detail of communication and take the necessary aforementioned precautions before going on a date.

In the era where the Internet is widely accessible and has a growing number of users, this way of communication is becoming increasingly common. This is because it is easier for people to get in touch with others when they are "hidden" behind their social media profiles, while face-to-face interaction requires boldness and "disclosing yourself" to another person. It is therefore necessary for users to be aware of the risk they are exposing themselves to and avoid compromising their safety.

As regards the issue of security, more concerns are raised about face-to-face contacts than about using the application itself. In Serbia, the Law on Information Security was adopted as late as in 2016, and the paragraphs in other laws dealing with information security were also recently adopted, so that this type of protection remains relatively unknown to citizens including young people who are the users of various kinds of dating applications such as Tinder. It is advisable to focus on education in this sector, especially of young people (most Internet users worldwide are in the age group 15-24, 71% of the total population, while the average age of Tinder users is 22 according to the survey) who are the largest group of users both of dating applications and the Internet in general.

Online dating carries certain risks. Based on the interviews and the questionnaire-based survey, we can conclude that people take some precautions when going on dates (they inform persons close to them, they meet in public places). However, the interviews of Tinder users reveal that although they take some precautions, they are not sufficiently informed about the ways of protecting their data on the Internet. The lack of appropriate legal protection contributes to it. The disadvantages of using Tinder are the experiences consisting of disappointment in the dating partner (not as interesting as they thought), and some kind of vulnerability (when the dating partner was pushy or when a different person showed up). There were no cases where security was threatened. Some of the positive aspects using Tinder are the following: 92% of respondents stated that the dating partners had presented themselves truthfully, while 83.8% of respondents did not have any negative experience in face-to-face meetings.



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## Appendix

The respondents entered their age and sex in the designated fields.

### *Questions used in the questionnaire-based survey:*

When did you start using Tinder application?

How many persons who use this application do you know?

How many times did go on a date with the people you had chatted with?

The respondents who answered the previous question by saying that they had never go on a date were asked:

Why did you never go on a date with the people you had chatted with?

The respondents who answered the same question affirmatively (saying that they went on several dates) were asked:

Did you inform a friend/relative/acquaintance before going on a date?

Did you happen to fall in love before meeting/seeing the person you had chatted with?

When you were going on a date with the person you had chatted with did you feel some fear?

How did you feel while on a date?

Did your dating partner notice that you were nervous or feel uncomfortable?

Were you frightened by some gesture or physical appearance of your dating partner?

Did your dating partner present him/herself on a date the same way as he/she did through the Tinder application?

What were your expectations from a date?

Did you have any bad experience on one or more dates?

If you had some bad experience, can you describe such a situation briefly?

What was the outcome of your date?

***Questions asked in the interviews:***

When did you start using Tinder application?

How many persons who use this application do you know?

Do you know how many times you went on dates with the people you had chatted with?

Did you inform anyone about going on dates?

Did you happen to fall in love before meeting face-to-face with the person you had chatted with?

When you were going on dates, did you feel some fear?

How did you feel while on a date? Did you feel uncomfortable, surprised, relaxed?

Did your dating partner notice that you were feeling uncomfortable or nervous?

Were you repelled by your dating partner's gesture or physical appearance?

Did your dating partner present him/herself on a date the same way as he/she did through the Tinder application? What did you talk about on a date? Did your dating partner give you different information while chatting and in the face-to-face meeting?

What did you expect from a date?

Did you have any bad experience on a date? Can you describe such a situation?

What were the outcomes of your dates?

Do you believe, based on your experience, that this method of meeting people is reliable/safe?

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# PEDESTRIAN ROAD SAFETY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA AND IMPACT ON HUMAN SECURITY

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**Abstract:** *This paper examines primarily the characteristics of casualties among pedestrians, as the most vulnerable group of traffic participants in the Republic of Serbia in 2016 and 2017, and provides a statistical overview of casualties among pedestrians in the total number of victims in traffic accidents. The published data show that the pedestrian road safety has not reached a satisfactory level and that it is therefore necessary to step up preventive measures and impose stricter punishments on careless traffic participants.*

*The introductory part explains why road traffic safety is an important aspect of human security and presents the basic characteristics of road traffic, along with the data on the number of deaths, which is extremely high and comparable to the number of lives lost in severe epidemics of infectious diseases. A brief overview of all factors that affect the safety of road traffic is given for a better and clearer insight into the situation of casualties among pedestrians.*

*A combined quantitative and qualitative method was applied in this research. The quantitative part of research includes the analysis of secondary data about the number of road traffic fatalities and injuries and the age and gender structure of victims in 2016 and 2017 from the database of the Road Traffic Safety Agency of the Republic of Serbia. The qualitative part of research is based on a review of the most relevant literature in the field of human security and road traffic safety, where these issues are addressed from different points of view.*

*Based on this, an analysis on casualties among pedestrians was carried out. All the studies described in the literature used clearly indicate the fact that pedestrians are*

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*at the highest risk in populated areas. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank reports show that human and material losses in traffic accidents are huge, which is why it is necessary to enhance both preventive and repressive actions. The aim of this paper is to point out the most vulnerable traffic participants, highest-risk places and shortcomings in the penal policy, but also to identify possible ways of improving the situation in this field.*

**Key words:** *road traffic safety, traffic accidents, casualties among pedestrians, traffic participants, Road Traffic Safety Strategy*

# INTRODUCTION

Road traffic safety is an important aspect of human security, because not only the lives of direct victims are at risk in traffic but the lives of their families and friends are also affected, resulting in substantial irreversible physical, psychological and material losses. Bearing in mind that the concept of human security comprises different dimensions, it is clear that road traffic safety directly affects many categories, such as personal, health, economic and community security.

The rise of the concept of human security is often interpreted in the context of the rise of discourse on individual human rights, which relates to privatisation and legal regulation of social relations in the second half of the 20th century (Saupe, 2010). According to the modern theory of automobile and road traffic safety, there has been a shift in discourse on road traffic safety, in which driving was perceived only as satisfaction and personal mobility, towards a pragmatic discourse on security and risk relations under social and technological control (*Ibid*).

Traffic has an enormous impact on humans in both physical and financial terms. Road traffic accident is becoming one of the pressing human security threats. It is claiming the lives of millions of people, and causes destruction of property leading to social and economic crisis of households. (Gebru M.K, 2017).

In April 2018, the new Law on Road Traffic Safety came into force in the Republic of Serbia. Among other things, it envisages significantly stricter penalties for careless drivers and other traffic participants. In addition to being harmonised with the standards of the European Union, this Law primarily aims at contributing to the improvement of situation in the field of road traffic safety and raising the level of awareness among all traffic participants.

Traffic is an inevitable precondition for the life of modern human beings. It enables a safe and efficient exchange of goods, the supply of raw materials, business and recreational trips, cultural events and many other activities that make up a diverse tapestry of the modern world. No human activity has improved so much the standard of living, but at the same time no human activity has taken as many human lives in peacetime as traffic. Traffic accidents are not really “accidents”, i.e. traffic casualties are not accidental, but the result of systemic errors (Strategy, 2015-2020). Unless more effective measures are taken, the consequences of traffic accidents will become the fifth leading cause of death in the world and will result in approximately 2.4 million deaths annually (*Ibid*).

Road traffic injuries are estimated to be the eighth leading cause of death globally, with an effect similar to the effect of an epidemic of infectious disease, such as malaria (Murray, et al, 2012). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, Global status report on road safety 2015), the number of road traffic deaths globally is 1.25 million a year, which means that one person every 25 seconds is killed in a road crash.

## Road traffic safety factors and prevention

Road traffic safety depends on the organisation of road traffic safety system, the structure and diversity of road traffic safety measures, attitudes and behaviours of traffic participants and many other elements (Bačkalić, 2014).

All factors that have an impact on road traffic safety can be classified in two categories: *objective* (social: level of economic and cultural development, various historical conditions, organisation of society, society's approach to transport infrastructure, influence of contemporary scientific achievements, education, customs, ethics, tradition, etc. and natural factors: climatic and geographical) and *subjective*, which implies endogenous etiology that includes personality traits of a person and his or her entire structure, psychological and biological basis, mental state and other properties that influence his or her traffic behaviour (Tojagić M, 2015).

Of all factors that affect road traffic safety, the human impact is most dominant. According to statistical data, the human factor affects traffic safety in 95% of cases (Logistic Magazin, 2015).

In all traffic situations, a person projects his or her own personality, knowledge, perceptions and attitudes, i.e. his or her general and traffic culture, whereas traffic culture is directly correlated with the psycho-social personality profile (Tojagić M, 2015). Therefore, endangering traffic safety is defined by the law as a criminal offence, which can be qualified as an intent or negligence. For example, if a person is driving a vehicle under the influence of alcohol, he or she should be aware of compromising the safety of traffic participants. In general, when a driver causes a traffic accident by violating regulations, it will surely be assumed that he or she was aware of the risk taken.

For the purpose of prevention, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Road Traffic Safety Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2015 - 2020<sup>1</sup>,

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1 On 9 February 2015, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Road Traffic Safety Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2015 – 2020.



which includes a detailed overview of the activities and tasks to be undertaken at various levels in order to improve the safety of all traffic participants. The task of the Government of the Republic of Serbia is to improve the conditions for the safety of all citizens on the roads of Serbia; the National Assembly adopts and harmonises legislation; the Road Traffic Safety Agency monitors the situation in this field from the professional and operational aspect and takes action to eliminate the deficiencies in the system; the police oversee and exercise coercion against traffic participants, etc. This complex system includes: the judiciary, territorial autonomy and local self-government units, road operators, health care institutions, educational institutions and higher education institutions, scientific educational institutions, businesses, insurance companies, associations, the media, etc. At-risk groups of traffic participants that require special attention are primarily drivers and passengers in passenger vehicles in the age group 17-35, followed by pedestrians, traffic participants older than 65 years, children in passenger vehicles, cyclists, tractor drivers and passengers, drivers whose driving licence was seized due to careless driving, drivers of commercial vehicles and moped and motorcycle drivers and passengers.

It can be seen that pedestrians take second place among the listed at-risk groups of traffic participants, which is certainly not by chance, since the share of killed pedestrians in the total number of road traffic deaths in the Republic of Serbia is around 26%, which is twice as much as in the developed countries of the world (WHO, 2013).

## Casualties among pedestrians in the Republic of Serbia

All studies and statistics both in our country and abroad show that one of the most vulnerable groups of traffic participants are pedestrians.<sup>2</sup> Traffic accidents with casualties among pedestrians result in great social losses, which is why researchers in the field of road traffic safety continuously examine the factors that have impact on the probability of traffic accidents, with the aim of taking preventive measures that would contribute to reducing their number.

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2 Information about the vulnerability of pedestrians can be found in the specified bibliography, but also on the following websites: <https://ekonferencije.com/bs/rad/istra-ivanje-bezbednosti-pe-ak/4374> (e-Conferences); [bslz.org/bslzdownload/c1c4cf1bcdd70b4cb6eb76e098a0c00c](https://bslz.org/bslzdownload/c1c4cf1bcdd70b4cb6eb76e098a0c00c) (Tenth International Conference of Road Traffic Safety in Local Community, Kragujevac, 2015); <https://www.vozac.rs/t/saobracajne-nezgodе-sа-pesacima/80> (vozac.rs); <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/pedestrian-safety> (Pedestrian Safety, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration - NHTSA); <https://www.trafficsafetystore.com/blog/safe-pedestrians-u-s/> (Securing Pedestrian Safety).

It is important to point out that traffic accidents involving pedestrians are specific also for a total disproportion between the danger they are exposed to and the danger they provoke, given that at the moment of accident a vehicle collides with a pedestrian, and vehicles are incomparably heavier and travel much faster than pedestrians. Still, the impression is that neither pedestrians nor drivers are sufficiently aware of this relationship.

We should not ignore the fact that the risk of injuries when walking is four times higher than when driving a motor vehicle (Elvik, 2009). This is why the speed of vehicle movement is one of the key risk factors in all traffic accidents including the aforementioned ones. In the Military Technical Courier (*Vojnotehnički glasnik*), Bulajić states that the risk of death of a pedestrian collided with a vehicle moving at a speed of 30 km/h is about 5%, while at a speed of 60 km/h, this risk increases to as much as 80%. Precisely this information explains why the law prescribes lower speeds for driving in populated areas (50km/h) and school zones (30 km/h).

Traffic accidents involving pedestrians most often occur in urban areas where pedestrian traffic and traffic volume are increased. Therefore, one of the priority tasks in the process of improving the safety of pedestrians is the identification of locations or places where accidents occur, and then determining the specificity of the causes of accidents and the factors of casualties among pedestrians. Crossroads are critical locations where conflict situations between pedestrians and other traffic participants occur. However, 65% of traffic accidents involving pedestrians do not occur at crossroads (Bulajić, 2016).

Another specific characteristic of pedestrians is that any person, regardless of their age, health status, knowledge of traffic regulations, etc. can be a traffic participant. There is neither any selection nor possibility to correct or limit traffic participation, as is the case with drivers. Such a situation leads to an increased risk of accidents, as indicated by the statistical data according to which pedestrian errors account for 75% of the causes of traffic accidents involving pedestrians (Wall, 2000).

Another important factor is the fact that behaviour on carriageway is thoroughly regulated, while this is not the case with respect to pedestrian surfaces - pedestrians have the freedom to choose how to behave. For this reason, a sudden movement from one surface to another (the moment of stepping on the carriageway from the pedestrian surface) requires a rapid adaptation to changed conditions.

By analysing the findings and opinions of traffic engineering expert witnesses, reliable data are obtained indicating that traffic accidents involving pedestrians are the most frequent form of accidents for which courts request an opinion from traffic en-

gineering expert witnesses, because the number of casualties in accidents involving pedestrians is higher than in all other accidents (Bulajić, 2012).

According to the data of the Road Traffic Safety Agency, pedestrians in the Republic of Serbia are most likely to get injured on the sections of state roads that pass through populated areas and the sections of other high-frequency roads in high-attraction areas. It is alarming that more than half of the injured pedestrians at crossroads get injured at crossroads with traffic signs.

**Table 1 – Age distribution of injured/killed pedestrians in 2017<sup>3</sup>**

Age	FAT	SBI	LBI
0-14	5	100	407
15-24	4	86	421
25-35	8	60	210
35-44	11	67	198
45-54	15	95	194
55-64	15	141	248
65+	83	308	416
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>2094</b>

Legend: FAT - fatalities, SBI - serious bodily injury, LBI – light bodily injury

3 Data retrieved from the Road Traffic Safety Agency of the Republic of Serbia

**Table 2 - Age distribution of injured/killed pedestrians in 2016<sup>4</sup>**

Age	FAT	SBI	LBI
0-14	4	98	428
15-24	7	83	373
25-35	11	50	244
35-44	18	52	207
45-54	16	82	218
55-64	27	138	260
65+	57	304	389
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>2119</b>

Legend: FAT - fatalities, SBI - serious bodily injury, LBI – light bodily injury

Based on the statistical data on casualties among pedestrians in the Republic of Serbia in 2017 and 2016 (Tables 1 and 2), it can be concluded that the situation in 2017 was worse because the number of fatalities (141:140) and seriously injured pedestrians (857:807) was higher than in the previous year. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the total number of people killed in traffic in 2017 is smaller by 4.6% (579) than in 2016 (607), which gives hope that the overall situation regarding road traffic safety has been improving.

The data presented indicate that in 2017 pedestrians accounted for 44% of the total number of fatalities in traffic accidents, while in 2016 this percentage was somewhat higher - 48%. As in previous years, the majority of people killed in traffic accidents were motorcyclists, followed by pedestrians.

Of the total number of fatalities among pedestrians in 2017 in the Republic of Serbia,

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4 See Footnote 2

40 pedestrians lost their lives in traffic accidents that occurred in Belgrade, which accounts for about 29%. The situation in 2016 was similar: 42 pedestrians were killed in Belgrade, which is 30% of the total number of killed pedestrians. This means that almost one third of all fatalities among pedestrians in the Republic of Serbia occur in Belgrade, which confirms the aforementioned data that urban areas are much more dangerous regarding traffic accidents involving pedestrians. Judging by the number of fatalities among pedestrians, the most at-risk Belgrade municipalities over the past two years were Novi Beograd, with seven fatalities in 2017 and three in 2016, followed by Zemun, with five fatalities in each year and Čukarica with five fatalities in 2017 and three in 2016.

On the other hand, the total number of children killed in traffic accidents in 2017 in the Republic of Serbia (17) is higher than in the previous year (12); the same applies to the number of children who lost their lives as pedestrians. Five child pedestrians were killed in 2017 and four in 2016. In both years, one child pedestrian was killed in Belgrade. Bearing in mind the objective of having zero children killed on the roads by 2020, as defined in the Road Traffic Safety Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2015 - 2020 that by 2020, this trend of increasing fatalities among children in 2017 is even more alarming.

**Table 3 – Gender distribution of pedestrian fatalities in 2016 and 2017 in the Republic of Serbia<sup>5</sup>**

Year	2016	2017
Total number of pedestrian fatalities	140	141
Male	101	86
Female	39	55

As regards the gender distribution of pedestrians who lost their lives (Table 3) in the Republic of Serbia, more men were killed in both years. In 2016, 101 male pedestrians were killed, which accounts for 72% of the total number of fatalities, while this number in 2017 was 86, which accounts for 61%.

The age distribution of pedestrian fatalities (Tables 1 and 2) shows that the most vul-

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5 See Footnote 2

nerable persons are in the age group 65+, as indicated by all studies in Serbia and worldwide. These pedestrians show declines in health, vision and hearing, which explains why the statistical data have been as they are for many years. It should also be noted that older pedestrians usually walk, which is why they are also more exposed to the risk of road traffic accidents (Zegeer, et al, 1993). In 2017, 83 pedestrians in the age group 65+ were killed in the Republic of Serbia, which accounts for nearly 60% of the total number of fatalities among pedestrians, while in 2016 the number was 57 or about 40%. These data show that in 2016 and 2017 in the Republic of Serbia on average one pedestrian was killed every 62.3 hours, and one pedestrian was injured in a traffic accident every 179 minutes.

In addition to causing enormous and irreparable societal damage resulting from human casualties, traffic accidents cause huge material damages, as confirmed by the World Bank reports, according to which traffic accidents in the Republic of Serbia create costs of about 2.7% of gross domestic product annually (World Bank Report, 2008). According to expert estimates, the direct and indirect costs of traffic accidents in the Republic of Serbia reach an amount of at least USD 470.000 per road traffic death (*Ibid*).

We should certainly bear in mind the fact that the penalties for a criminal offence of endangering traffic safety imposed by courts have both repressive and preventive effects on road traffic safety. The penal policy for the most serious criminal offences of endangering traffic safety was best presented by Appellate Court Judge Sretko Janković, who, by analysing 50 final court decisions for this criminal offence in the period from 2013 to 2015, selected by random sampling, came to a conclusion that the factor of alcohol was one of the most common causes of traffic accidents. The analysis of the penal policy of courts has shown that relatively mild penalties are imposed for serious offences of endangering traffic safety and that there is a lack of uniformity in sentences for similar offences, even within the same court. Based on the analysed offences, Janković further concludes that the current situation regarding the penal policy is unacceptable and does not contribute to the elimination of criminal offences of endangering traffic safety under the influence of alcohol. It is therefore necessary to prepare official statistics on the penalties imposed, which would be presented to judges and on the basis of which it would be possible to achieve uniform penal practice. On the other hand, there is an initiative of the Road Traffic Safety Committee proposing that drivers under the influence of alcohol who kill someone in road traffic get the same punishment as for murder, which is 5 to 15 years of imprisonment.

If the courts imposed the prescribed penalties in proportion to the degree of offender's guilt, that is, the severity of injury and the degree of intoxication, there would

be no need for more severe penalties, and the preventive action with respect to other drivers would be far more efficient (Janković, 2016). As regards fines for traffic misdemeanours, the law provides that 30% of collected fines will be paid to the local self-government budget in the territory where the misdemeanour is committed; however, if that money is not spent by the end of the current year, it no longer has to be used for improving traffic safety and local self-governments can spend it on something else (Petrović, 2017).

The presented data are alarming and indicate the need for more intensive and purposeful preventive and repressive action with respect to all traffic participants. The priority tasks in terms of prevention related to pedestrian safety are the following:

- Improvement of pedestrian infrastructure;
- Improving the knowledge of drivers and pedestrians about traffic risks;
- Modern approach to speed management on roads along pedestrian corridors;
- Creating conditions for walking that are acceptable also for persons with disabilities and reduced mobility and
- Construction of pedestrian paths along high-frequency and state roads in settlements.

Nevertheless, bearing in mind the aforementioned statistics and the fact that the number of people killed, seriously and lightly injured in road traffic has not been reduced in recent years, it is obvious that apart from organising education and building infrastructure, it is necessary to tighten and uniformly apply the penal policy, both for traffic misdemeanours and for criminal offences of endangering traffic safety.

A uniform and strict penal policy would surely lead to raising drivers' awareness of the need to comply with traffic regulations, which would have a direct impact on the reduction of traffic accidents, and would thus reduce human casualties. Everyone "should know that traffic victims are not chosen either by education or by wealth, which means that anyone can be a victim." (Vujanić, 2017).<sup>6</sup>

The issue addressed in this paper is pressing nowadays both in Serbia and worldwide. The presented data show that the number of killed and injured pedestrians, but also

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6 Statement given at the press conference (Mondo.rs).

other traffic participants, is not decreasing, which makes this topic even more serious. Analysing the texts from the mentioned literature, it becomes evident that the safety of pedestrians, in particular in populated areas, is not at the satisfactory level, which indicates the urgency of using all available measures and actions to improve the situation. According to statistics, the number of road traffic fatalities among children in the Republic of Serbia is not decreasing either, which additionally aggravates the situation of road traffic safety. From the aspect of human security, this analysis reveals the problems of incomprehensible proportions, which consist of undermining personal security and creating problems in the field of health and social protection, economic security, family integrity and finally, economic problems that usually accompany all forms of human security threats. This points to the need to regulate, first and foremost, the penal policy applicable to misdemeanour offenders and criminal offence perpetrators in the field of traffic safety, and then to undertake all necessary activities of awareness raising among all traffic participants, which would significantly improve the situation in the field of personal security and thus have a favourable impact on the development of society in general.



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# SECURITY AND ALTERNATIVE CARE OF CHILDREN IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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**Abstract:** *There are children all over the world, including the Republic of Serbia, who live without parental care or are at risk of losing parental care. After removal from the family, children are placed to alternative care in social welfare institutions. The aim is to reduce the number of children in residential care and work timely on the provision of continuous support to families at risk of child removal. This does not apply to families with child abuse and neglect patterns. Social welfare centres are obliged to protect children's safety in all cases where children are removed from the family by conducting an assessment and creating a plan of services and measures and a permanence plan. Children are particularly vulnerable, due to a large number of abuse, neglect and abandonment cases adversely affecting their overall growth and development. Children are service beneficiaries and rights holders in the social protection system in the circumstances where their safety, health and development are endangered, when it is determined that they are not able to achieve optimum development without the support of the system. The aim of social protection is to prevent and reduce dependence on social services, and hence to preserve and promote children's safety.*

*This paper presents the forms of alternative care of children as well as their development. In addition, it presents the proposals for the protection of children's safety in accordance with the Protocol on the Protection of Children against Neglect, Abuse and Exploitation. Finally, the paper shows how institutionalisation affects the growth and development of children.*

**Key words:** *alternative care, child abuse and neglect, social protection system, children's safety*

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# INTRODUCTION

The Law on Family of the Republic of Serbia defines children without parental care as follows:

*“Children without parental care, within the meaning of this Law, shall refer to: children whose parents are unknown or whose whereabouts are unknown, children whose parents are completely deprived of parental rights or legal capacity, children whose parents have not yet acquired legal capacity, children whose parents are deprived of the right to take care of, raise and educate a child, and children whose parents do not take care of them or take care of them inappropriately (Law on Family of the Republic of Serbia, 2005).*

According to the UN Guidelines<sup>1</sup>, raising, taking care of and educating a child can be formal and informal. Informal care implies that the child is looked after in a family environment, on an ongoing or indefinite basis, by relatives or other persons (e.g. friends), without this arrangement having been ordered by an administrative or judicial authority. Formal care implies all care provided in a family or residential environment.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to support efforts to keep children in, or return them to, the care of their family or, failing this, to find an alternative care solution in the best interests of the child, while taking care of their safety; while in alternative care, provide the best possible care for the child’s optimum growth and development; encourage decision making and implementation and enhance activities in the field of policy, public and private sector related to the social protection of children (UN, Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children, 2010).

Forms of alternative care of children are:

- 1. Kinship care** – The child is in care of a relative or close friend of the family, which is not a formal care arrangement.
- 2. Placement for adoption** – This type of care is not sufficiently developed in the Republic of Serbia. It is implemented in the form of six-month child placement in the family of future adoptive parents.
- 3. Foster care** - Placing the child in the family that is trained or licensed for childcare. Children are referred to foster care by the guardianship authority.

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1 Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children, published on 24 February 2010

4. **Replacement family** - The family where a child is placed for a determined period.
5. **Family upbringing group** – The family that takes care of children coming from specialised institutions, with the assistance of staff from these institutions.
6. **Residential care** – Placement of children in the institutions specialised for this type of care. The institutions such as: *small residential communities* – arranged in such a way to look like a house or apartment for 6 -15 children; *children's villages* – placement of children in houses (8-15), under the supervision of educator or SOS educator; *intuitions or homes for children* – residential care that does not look like a family environment and where a strict routine is followed (Žegarac, 2004).

A special form of representing children in the domestic family law is **guardianship**. The guardianship is primarily related to the legal representation of children. Social welfare centres perform the duties of guardianship authority and may decide not to appoint a guardian, but that the guardianship duty is performed by one of their employees.

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

One of the most common reasons for placing children in care is a direct threat to their safety in the primary family. The following security risk factors are mentioned: abuse, neglect, abandonment, parents' inability to take care of the child due to physical impairments, illness, substance abuse, serving a prison sentence, death, etc.

Children's safety is endangered in various ways, ranging from various forms of neglect (emotional, educational, etc.) to severe forms of child injuries that may have fatal consequences (physical violence), but also the forms of child abuse and exploitation (sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, etc.). The forms of child ill-treatment are described by using the terms *abuse*, *exploitation* and *neglect* (Žegarac, 2004).

Definitions:

- **Child abuse or maltreatment** refers to all forms of physical, mental, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation, resulting in the harm to the child's health, development or dignity.

- a) **Physical abuse** is that which results in actual or potential physical harm of the child by a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power over the child. The examples of physical abuse are: blowing, hitting, kicking, strangling, burning, etc.
  - b) **Sexual abuse** is the involvement of a child in sexual activities that are not allowed, that he/she does not fully comprehend, has not given an informed consent to. It also includes the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any sexual activity, the exploitative use of a child in sexual practices (pornography, prostitution).
  - c) **Emotional abuse** is the failure to provide a supportive environment where the child can develop emotional and social competencies. It includes any act of belittling, insulting, discriminating, exposing to traumatic situations, etc.
- **Child neglect** is the caregiver's failure to provide for the development of the child in the spheres of health, education, nutrition, emotional support, thus acting contrary to the child's best interest.
  - **Exploitation** refers to the use of the child in the activities for the benefit of others. This includes child labour, beggary, prostitution and other activities that are detrimental to the child's personality.
  - **Baby dumping** refers to the cases where the child is left by a known or anonymous parent. The child can be abandoned in the maternity hospital or social welfare institution, left to the care of individuals or institutions.
  - **Child abandonment** refers to the cases where the child is left without any care and the parent does not show any intention to return to the child. The child is left in inappropriate conditions (General Protocol on Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect, 2005).

## Obligation of reporting child abuse and neglect

The Law on Marriage and Family Relations stipulates as follows: “*Judicial bodies, interest and local communities, bodies of social-political community, educational organisations and every citizen are obliged to inform the guardianship authorities as soon as they learn that a parent is unable to exercise his or her parental rights or that a child needs protection for other reasons*”. (Law on Marriage and Family Relations, Article 133, paragraph 2, 2005).

The legislation of the Republic of Serbia prescribes the obligation of reporting child abuse. However, the sanctions for non-compliance with this obligation are not precisely defined. This can lead to a series of consequences, as evidenced by numerous examples of child abuse and endangered children's safety in our country. The Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia releases of liability anyone who justifiably reports a case of child abuse and neglect provided that the allegations are proven to be true, which falls under the category of legal immunity. Legal immunity is granted with the assumption that the abuse has been reported in the performance of professional or civic duty, in order to protect the best interests of the child, and that it is possible to prove the truthfulness of allegations and the justifiability of suspicion (Obretković, 2002).

## Fields of responsibility

*The role of social welfare centre*, as basic service of social protection and the guardianship authority is to provide assistance and support to children exposed to security risks. This responsibility is fulfilled through various measures and services. Social welfare centres, particularly those in local communities, are obliged to work on the continuous provision of information and education of citizens, education of professionals from institutions, establishing cooperation with social protection institutions and community-based services (Berg, 2000).

*The role of the police* is timely detection of child abuse cases and the identification of perpetrators. For this purpose, there are special teams and departments whose task is to detect cases of abuse and neglect. The care for children's safety is not solely the responsibility of these departments, but also of every law enforcement officer (Berg, 2000).

*The Protocol of the Centre for Protection of Children and Infants* envisages an internal team, whose members are appointed by the Centre's Director. The task of this internal team is to be available, cooperate with social welfare centres, police and prosecutor's offices, collect all information relevant for the case, and if necessary, to organise emergency care of the child, that is, the child's removal from a life-threatening situation (Protocol of the Centre for Protection of Children and Infants, 2006).

# SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The activation of social welfare services was often motivated by the consequences of wars. After the Serbian-Turkish wars in the 19th century, a large number of children remained without parental care. This launched an initiative to introduce state care of such children. After the World Wars I and II, a large number of children were also left without parental care, which led to the activation of social services. The 20th century saw the introduction of professional social work and community-based services. In the period of their establishment, from 1957 to 1968, social welfare centres were professional services. They provided services and protection to their beneficiaries through pedagogical, psychological and social work. Social welfare centres began to perform legal and administrative tasks in the field of social protection as of the adoption of the Law on Guardianship Authority (1968). The reforms of the social protection system began in the 2000s.

## Social protection system reform

In 2000, the Republic of Serbia initiated the reforms of the social protection system. One part of the reform efforts focused on the institutional care of infants, children and youth, and in particular on the deinstitutionalisation and transformation of residential care institutions. The reforms included the establishment of working groups that consisted of domestic and foreign experts, university professors, representatives of civil society organisations and public authorities. Intensive efforts were invested in deinstitutionalisation in the period 2001 - 2013 with the aim of reducing the pressure on the capacities of social care institutions, i.e. reducing the number of beneficiaries in the social protection system. In order to transform the residential care institutions, the focus was on improving the quality of accommodation and care of the beneficiaries who did not have any option other than institutional care. The main purpose of these attempts was to protect children's safety and ensure their stable growth and development, as much as possible, to protect their personality and to protect them from other forms of abuse and neglect. The effort was made not to separate siblings, unless there was a specific reason for that (for example, abuse). The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy (presently the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs) adopted in 2006 a document entitled *Measures for Elimination of Irregularities in Performing the Tasks of Placing Children and Youth in Social Protection Institutions*. This document provided that institutions for residential care of



children and social welfare centres had an obligation to request an opinion from the competent ministry in case of institutionalising children under 18 years of age. Deadlines for obtaining the Ministry's opinion were also specified. The centre has to consider all the possibilities of child care before placing the child in a social protection institution (Žegarac, 2014).

## Gate Keeping

The social protection system should target the problems that children are facing. The task of this mechanism is to provide care to the children who need it, to limit access to care and allow leaving care in the right moment. This mechanism must be functional in all phases of service delivery, starting from referral to leaving the social protection system. In order to establish the gatekeeping mechanism, it is necessary to provide a quality assessment of strengths and risks, plan reviews, qualified staff for assessment, monitoring and review of decisions (UN Children's Fund and World Bank, 2003).

**Table 1** – *Some of the residential care institutions for infants, children and youth in the Republic of Serbia*

Residential care institution and its location	Capacity	Year of foundation	Age
Angelina-Gina Kojić - Zrenjanin	60+8	1960	7 - 18+
Vera Radivojević - Bela Crkva	107	1960	7 - 18+
Duško Radović - Niš	96+10	1984	7 - 18+
Jefimija - Kruševac	72	1955	7 - 18+
Miroslav Mika Antić - Sombor	80	1981	14 - 18+
Petar Radovanović - Užice	96	1982	7 – 18
Spomenak - Pančevo	93	1961	14 - 18+
Dragutin Filipović Jusa – Belgrade	30+10	1963	Under 7
Drinka Pavlović - Belgrade	96	1955	7 – 18

Jovan Jovanović Zmaj – Belgrade	72	1989	7 - 18
Moša Pijade – Belgrade	96	1957	7 – 18
Dom za srednjoškolsku i studentsku omladinu (Home for Secondary School Pupils and University Students) - Belgrade	50	1999	14 - 18+

The Republic Institute for Social Protection publishes annual reports entitled *Report on the work of institutions for residential care of children and youth*. According to the latest report, released in July 2017, there are about 3,000 children in residential care. The number of employed professionals equalled 1,424, which is fewer than in the previous years (Report on the work of institutions for residential care of children and youth, 2017).

## REMOVAL OF CHILDREN FROM THEIR BIOLOGICAL FAMILIES

Although children are removed from their biological family in situations where their safety is endangered, they can experience that process traumatically. The removal requires prior preparation in the form of careful planning and assessment so that all parties in the process have the necessary information. If a child is placed in residential care, information about the child and his or her biological family is necessary, while on the other hand, the parents need to be informed about the institution where the child will be placed. All information in this process must remain confidential. It is necessary to prepare the child before the removal to allow his or her acceptance of the situation, to the extent possible. This can be done through an advisory conversation with the child, his or her parents, a visit to the institution in which the child will be placed, providing all possible information about the process of removal. These preparations are necessary to avoid possible trauma due to separation. The entire process must be guided primarily by the best interests of the child (Brandon, 2008).

### The best interests of the child

All activities relevant to the child must reflect his or her best security interest. In order to meet the child's needs and respect the child's rights, all available interventions

must be considered. It is extremely important to allow the child to express his or her opinion, to hear his or her voice, to take into consideration his or her needs, in accordance with his or her developmental capacities. In removing a child from the family and considering alternative care, it is essential to take into account the whole situation. This refers to the child's circumstances, his or her development, environment, culture, needs. "Everyone shall be guided by the best interests of the child in all activities concerning the child" (Law on Family of the Republic of Serbia, 2005). According to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in the Republic of Serbia the principle of best interests of the child is not sufficiently implemented in practice, partly due to lack of understanding of its meaning and partly due to being misunderstood (Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Republic of Serbia, 2008). Since 2008, social welfare centres have been applying the permanence planning procedure. Permanence has three aspects: physical, legal and relational. Permanence means that the child has a safe environment, legal and social status, and that his or her needs are recognised. The permanence plan determines the period for achieving individual goals in accordance with the best interests of the child. The permanence plan begins with the first contact of the responsible professional with the child and lasts as long as the case is handled (Child Rights Centre, 2013).

## **Procedure of risk assessment for a child**

Social welfare centre professionals are obliged to make an assessment in every case concerning children. The assessment procedure is initiated *ex officio*. The assessment is performed in particular in cases where the following is endangered: the child's safety, health, meeting of basic existential needs, developmental needs, etc. The assessment procedure ends with the creation of a plan of services and permanence measures that includes measures for assistance and support to parents, provided that this is in the best interest of the child and does not compromise his or her safety (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, 2007).

## **IMPLICATIONS CONCERNING THE QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL CARE**

Institutional care can vary over time in different institutions and countries, and even within one country. The reason for this can be found in social organisation, cultural habits and ethnic principles. Information on the type and quality of institutional care

is usually obtained from various reports, surveys, protocols, etc., which means that it may be incomplete or give an incomplete picture of the functioning of residential care institutions. However, these reports, surveys and protocols have pointed to some common characteristics of child care institutions, which can still vary. Thus, one of these characteristics is the fact that the publications dealing with the work of these institutions (published either by professionals, policy makers or experts dealing with this topic) focus more on the care of infants and small children, in terms of their functioning in the institution, than on older children who are also in care. Another characteristic is that in a large number of institutions one professional worker is responsible for more children than he or she should be. Therefore, the question arises as to whether all children are provided with care in the same way, whether each of them is given enough attention and whether they are completely safe. On the other hand, children are exposed to the circulation of a large number of people in the institution, including different educators, social workers, psychologists, volunteers, interns, donors. This multitude of contacts can have a negative impact on children because they are overwhelmed by different types of people. Problems arise when children get attached to them and feel abandoned again when these contacts cease to exist. This vicious circle may result in changes such as emotional oscillations, withdrawal, asocial types of behaviour, attention deficit and similar mental health problems in children (Corby, 2000).

Another characteristic of life in an institution, in case of open-type institutions, is lack of control of the movement of children, which can affect their safety and well-being. As regards closed-type institutions, the problem is that children do not have sufficiently developed skills to function in the “real world” (Groark, 2015).

## **IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONALISATION ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

Institutionalised children are among the most vulnerable groups, in terms of security, in every society. Institutionalisation affects the overall development of the child in different ways. Numerous factors influence the development of children in institutional care. While some children may demonstrate different types of atypical behaviour or may be more exposed to adverse effects including abuse, other children can show immense resistance (Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2015).

Children who are raised in different types of alternative care are at greater risk of slower development. The educational setting in many institutions is characterised by

structural neglect due to routine care, multiple shifts of professional workers and a large number of children. Nevertheless, it seems that even in institutions some children can avoid the negative consequences of early deprivation and succeed in developing safe, even stable relationships (Nelson, 2007).

Institutional care does not always provide security and protection to children. They can still be subjected to violence, abuse and neglect. Institutionalised children are often “damaged” or “broken” by traumatic experiences. Although they were removed from the primary family for their protection and safety, it does not mean that such experiences cannot continue in the institution. A high risk of violence and abuse can partly be explained by structural neglect, the lower degree or even the lack of emotional involvement of professional workers, and peer violence. Children can be moved from one institution to another or even be institutionalised all the time, which contributes to their inability to establish stable and continuous relationships. The problem is also the so-called “burnout syndrome”<sup>2</sup> among the professional workers who, due to stress, overload and exhaustion, can completely ignore the needs and well-being of children or express their frustration through violent treatment of children (Alink, 2014).

Security and stability of children in institutions are compromised by systemic constraints. This is also due to the fact that some employees of these institutions do not have the necessary qualifications for providing care to children with complex needs (children with behavioural problems, mental disorders, children who abuse substances, etc.). The consequences are that the needs of these children are either unfulfilled or inappropriately dealt with. Children can then demonstrate behaviour that varies from one extreme to another, such as explicitly sexual behaviour, attacks on the institution staff, destruction of property, physically and verbally aggressive behaviour, withdrawal, development or deterioration of the various types of pathological conditions (Doyle, 2014).

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Today, a large number of children are exposed to some form of abuse and neglect. A high percentage of these children are in the social protection system. Children may be at risk also in their primary families through various forms of abuse, maltreatment and neglect (physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect, child exploitation, etc.).

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2 **Burnout syndrome** is a consequence of chronic or accumulated stress and psychophysical exhaustion. It can also occur as a result of excessive work, conflicts at workplace where a person experiences chronic stress, which can lead to a number of psychosomatic complaints.

The social protection system serves to protect the safety of children and make decisions about their removal/placement. The steps taken are assessments of strengths and risks, making decisions on child removal, support to parents, provided that this does not compromise the child's safety. The forms of alternative care are various and include kinship care, adoption, foster care, replacement family, family upbringing group, residential care. These forms of alternative care are not ideal solutions, because they also involve specific challenges (recurrence of abuse and neglect, exploitation, asocial behaviour, aggressive outbursts, explicit sexual behaviour, etc.).

Although the alternative care of children has many advantages in terms of safety and optimum development opportunities, it is noticeable that there are some shortcomings as well as priorities that should be considered when dealing with these forms of child care. It is necessary to increase the number of professional workers, ensure their education, particularly for working with mentally ill children, and ensure education for practical work with children who have behavioural problems. Among other things, it is necessary to relocate some residential care institutions, for example to the suburbs. The reason for this is the existence of several open-type institutions whose capacity for controlling the movement and functioning of children is reduced. It is extremely important to improve deinstitutionalisation. Practice has shown that children are not fully prepared for leaving the system of care. Support is lacking both in the institution and outside of it. It is extremely important to involve children in the decision-making process concerning their lives, in order to identify their strengths but also forms of resistance, and to allow their voice to be heard.

The negative aspects of alternative care institutions are being either overcrowded or underused. Moreover, they provide care to different categories of children and children who need different levels of support. On the other hand, there is a problem of the lack of institutions for certain categories of children. It is noticeable that social welfare centres are sluggish in providing support and assistance to functional parents, who have the capacity for care and need to be empowered, to whom children could return after leaving the system. What should be done to improve the quality of life of institutionalised children is to address their traumatic experiences, encourage the completion of education, help them adopt basic hygiene habits, and invest greater efforts in making them feel safe in institutions.

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