

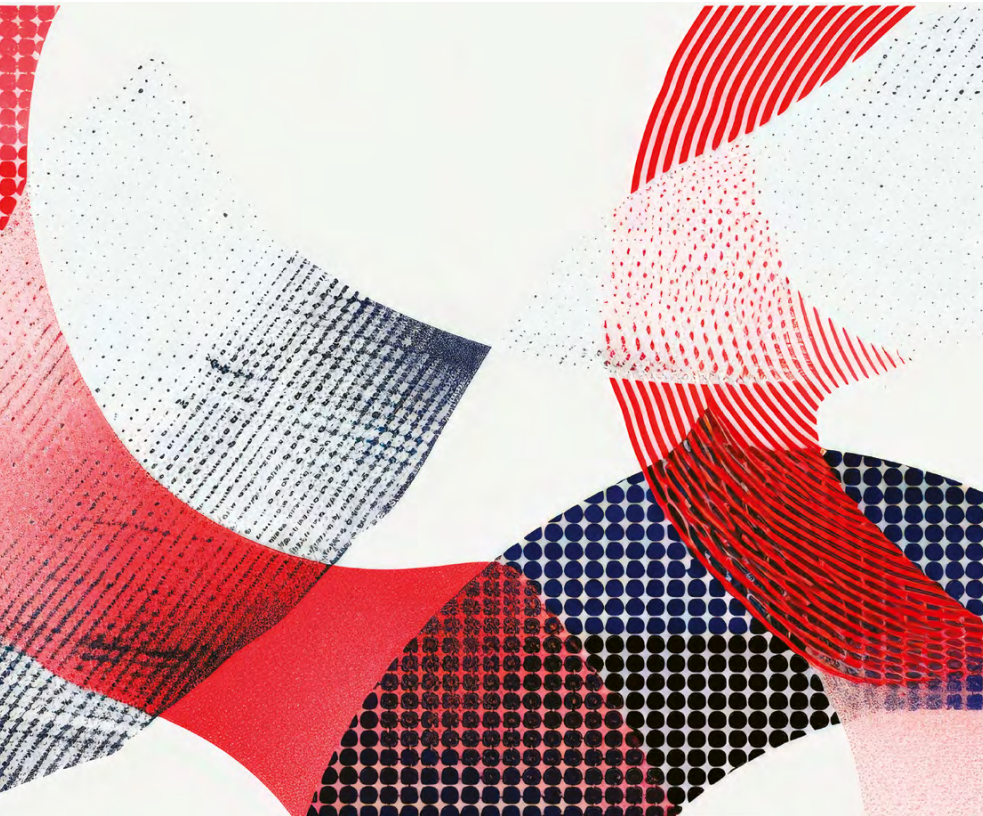
INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE POST-YUGOSLAV SPACE:

Challenges, Policies, and Perspectives

MAY 21–22, 2026

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IN THE POST-YUGOSLAV SPACE

Sofija Nikolić Popadić*

GENDER EQUALITY AND WORK–LIFE BALANCE FOR PARENTS IN SERBIA: LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

This research explores gender equality and work–life balance for parents in Serbia through an analysis of their institutional and legal frameworks, with particular attention to existing disparities and future policy directions. Over the past two decades, Serbia has adopted a comprehensive set of laws and strategies aimed at promoting gender equality, including anti-discrimination legislation, labour regulations, and parental leave policies. Despite this normative progress, significant gaps remain between formal rights, their implementation and practical needs of parents. Women continue to face disproportionate challenges in the labour market and career interruptions linked to caregiving responsibilities. Although legal provisions enable fathers to take parental leave, the uptake remains limited due to persistent gender norms and workplace expectations. In addition, the availability and accessibility of childcare services and institutional support remains limited, which is one of the critical factors influencing work–family reconciliation and affecting the achievement of gender equality, given that in practice, the lack of institutional childcare support affects more women than men. The research identifies specific legal gaps and inconsistencies between regulations across different sectors that create practical difficulties for parents. One of the notable examples is the mismatch between labour law provisions and childcare enrolment policies: parental leave typically ends before the child reaches the age of one according to law, while access to public childcare is often unavailable until the age of one and is subject to restrictive enrolment conditions and limited institutional capacity. This regulatory misalignment and lack of capacities leave many parents without adequate care solutions which affects their return to work. Within the research, we gave recommendations for legal and policy reforms aimed at improving coherence between regulations, strengthening institutional support, and promoting gender equality. Such changes are essential not only for facilitating

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work–life balance, but also for supporting broader demographic and family policy objectives.

Keywords: Work–Life Balance, parenthood, legal challenges, institutional support