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**Subjective social status and perceived cost of living: their impact on attitudes  
towards economic (in)equality**

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## Abstract

There are many ways to explain (economic) inequality. The spectrum is wide: spanning from “naturalizing” inequality through geographical, cultural or even racial aspects, to acknowledging the flawed systemic preconditions that bring about the social and economic privilege for some. However, the socio-economic reality frequently does not correspond to the individual perceptions. These perceptions inform many of our decisions and stances, such as the one on economic (in)equality. By focusing on the case of Montenegro, a relatively small European country situated on the epistemic (and economic) semi-periphery, this thesis seeks to explore the link between the perception of one’s socio-economic status and their justification of economic inequality. The thesis aims to contribute to the literature on economic inequality, examining whether other factors, such as providing additional information about inequality to the respondents, may impact the discrepancy in their answers. The examination of the possible effects was done through the use of an online questionnaire. Although the findings of this thesis did not confirm its original hypotheses, the results indicate that the gender component has an impact on our judgement of economic (in)equality.

## Introduction

(In)equality is one of the most prominent concepts not only in contemporary economy and psychology, but in social sciences overall. For political ideologies, it is the key indicator of whether we speak of right-wing ideologies, justifying inequality as the “natural human condition”, or left-wing ideologies, which tend towards equality representing it as the perfect human situation (Bobbio, 1994). It is also one of the referential concepts, looked in conjunction with for example, poverty (Lang and Lingnau, 2015) or sexual orientation. Inequality and the way in which it is defined is particularly important in light of health considerations (Gakidou et al., 2022), as witnessed by the still ongoing pandemic and particularly vivid in the Global South (Okoi and Bwawa, 2022; Gibson et al., 2022). The “quest” for a perfect measurement of inequality has led to an establishment of certain indicators that were intended to encapsulate the multidimensional nature of the concept. Examples include the Gini index (Alison, 1978) which nevertheless can be interpreted and mathematically expressed in different ways (Ferris, 2010). Putting a “measurement stick” next to inequality has also been a pertinent feature of population ecology (Kokko et al., 1999).

This thesis seeks to unfold different perceptions of (in)equality. The central research question of this thesis – or the main aim, is to determine whether the perception of self (in its multifarious forms) on the socio-economic scale has an impact on our perception of economic (in)equality. The purpose of this overarching aim is to understand whether it is possible to determine certain regularities in

positioning vis-à-vis (in)equality, tapping into the ongoing research not only related to economic psychology scholarship but also the political psychology and political ideologies, as well as area studies by focusing on the Montenegrin case as a representative of what has been referred to as “semi-periphery” (Radice, 2009), the postsocialist realm of (South-)Eastern Europe.

To address this central research question exploring how the self-perception in the socio-economic scale impacts the perception of (in)equality, the thesis also raises two subquestions - which can be divided into distinctive objectives serving to reach the main aim. First, do people who place themselves higher (or lower) on the socio-economic scale prefer economic inequality (or equality)? This subquestion taps into the relationship between one’s self-reporting stance in a company and preferences for (in)equality. In other terms, are those who think they are better off in the socio-economic sense more likely to support or find justifications for greater inequality or not? The answer to this question may appear self-evident – but that does little to explain e.g., the working-class support for Republican presidents in the United States, such as Ronald Reagan or Donald Trump (see Morgan and Lee, 2018). Be that as it may, these findings will help me prompt a discussion with both the political science scholarship but also psychology scholarship.

Second, can an evaluation of the monthly expenses influence the respondents’ self-assessment of economic (in)equality? While the first subquestion taps into the perception of inequality “at face value”, the second subquestion aims to uncover this “first layer” by finding out if the additional information/evaluation will prompt respondents to change their initial position on economic (in)equality.

Although I will explore this in greater detail in Chapter 1, consistency is not the strongest feature of the perceptions of inequality. In other words, one would expect that, judging by the existing scholarly literature and findings, new information or probes would have an effect on the assessment of economic (in)equality.

To answer these two subquestions and ultimately the central research question, this thesis will be organized in the following way. First, it will present a literature review, offering a working definition of economic inequality, its measurements and the competing scholarly accounts on this concept. Second, it will unpack the meaning of “self” and “the others” with respect to socio-economic inequality. Third, it will outline the methodology for this thesis, the methods of data collection and the data analysis. The methodology section will also contain the information on the sampling, questionnaire and the limitations in the research design. Fourth, the presentation of the data collected followed by, fifth, the discussion of the findings and the relevant implications. Finally, the thesis will present the conclusions and the avenues for future research.

## 1. Economic (in)equality

As indicated in the Introduction, there are many definitions of inequality, depending on the domain of human activity. However, a working definition of inequality we will operationalize here relates to the “least common denominator”, that is, a definition that could be applied to a range of different fields and contexts. Thus, inequality is defined as an unequal distribution and outcome (Deverteuil and Geoffrey, 2009). The focus here is on economic inequality, because most of the world’s population lives in capitalist societies (Chase Dun and Nagy, 2022) where access to and quality of various elements of social well-being – including nutrition, shelter, health, education, employment opportunities, clean environments, leisure, security, social stability, and so forth – are increasingly determined by purchasing ability (Cammack, 2022). Economic inequality inevitably creates social inequality, as some groups are denied access to these basic elements of social well-being (Deverteuil, 2009).

While inequality is defined as an unequal distribution and outcome, the term “economic inequality” requires a wider and more applied explanation. It is mainly related to the position of individuals in the shared social context, based on their income, wage and wealth. The term “income” indicates all the money received and not only the wage amount, “wage” indicates the money received through employment only, while the term “wealth” indicates the total amount of assets. Keeping that in mind, we can easily conclude that the term economic inequality



indicates not only the economical but also social status differences, being social inequality one of its consequences.

One of the most effective and used ways of measuring economic inequality of a society is by calculating the estimated Gini index (on the scale of 0-1 or 0-100) of the society of interest. Developed by Corrado Gini in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gini, 2005) and derived from the “Lorenz curve framework (1905)”, the Gini Index can be defined as “the area between the perfect equality line and the Lorenz curve (A) divided by the total area under the perfect equality line (A + B).” (Sitthyot and Holasut, 2020, p.2). What this means in practice is that the more extreme the differences between lower and higher classes are, the higher the Gini index of that society will be (Swart, 2020). Thus, the societies with a lower Gini index are considered to be more equal in their economic distribution while the ones with a higher Gini index are considered to be more unequal in their economic distribution. In other words, a Gini index of 0 would imply that there is a perfect equality in the population concerning the income. The purpose of this measuring method is not only to calculate the level of economic (in)equality of one society but also between two societies, on regional or even global level, as it facilitates a relatively reliable comparison: since it is a measurement accepted by major international organizations, the Gini index is regularly updated and thus easily accessible.

The comparability of Gini index allowed an exploration of the economic inequality worldwide. Some general observations point to the increase of Gini index and Gini coefficient (presented as percentage) over time – the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century have, arguably expectedly, led to the continuous increase of the coefficient. World

Bank estimates that the average global Gini index increases at about 1.5 points in the five years following the major pandemics (Midgley, 2021) – it is certainly interesting to see what effect the pandemic of COVID-19 will have on its measurement in the years to come. As per the more negative examples, South Africa has one of the highest ranks of income inequality worldwide, with its Gini index for 2014 being 63.0 (0.63) (see World Population Review, 2022). Namibia, Suriname, Zambia, and Sao Tome and Principe are following, with Gini coefficients ranging from approximately 59 to 53. On the other hand, the most positive and the lowest Gini coefficients, according to the World Bank Data (2022), can be found in European countries: Slovenia (24.6), Czech Republic and Slovakia (25), Belarus (25.3), and Moldova (25.7). The relatively good ranking of the Eastern European and post-socialist countries may lead to a conclusion that The Balkans (and thus, Montenegro) are among the countries with a relatively low-income inequality. Indeed, with Gini coefficient of 38.5, Montenegro is 39<sup>th</sup> in the world (World Population Review, 2022). In comparison to the region, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Macedonia have a coefficient of 33, Albania 33.2 whereas Serbia has 36.

Expectedly, the Gini Index is not the only measurement of economic inequality. Some of the criticisms levied at this index have to do with the technical aspects - the method of measurement, such as the inability to account for the “tails” or saying little about the very nature of inequality or being overly generalizing in representing the value of inequality in a vast geographical space (e.g., country) with a single number. In fact, it is being used to assert a difference between different societies, for example “Capitalist” and “Islamist” economies, containing

generalizations but also potentially useful ways of conceiving cross-contextual learning (Kato, 2022). Graham Sowter (2019) wittingly stated that “There are lies, damned lies and Gini index statistics.” With that in mind, there were several attempts to expand on the Gini index by introducing “the inequality” index, supplanting Gini index by adding two more measurements to ensure robustness: the income share of the top 10%, and the income share held by the bottom 10% of a country (Sitthyt and Holasut, 2020). The OECD library of income inequality (2022) proposed a P90:P10 ratio, which is another measurement that is based on the Gini index but could yield somewhat different results from the standard Gini index.

“The P90/P10 ratio is the ratio of the upper bound value of the ninth decile (i.e. the 10% of people with highest income) to that of the first. The P50/P10 ratio is the ratio of median income to the upper bound value of the first decile.” What this means in practice is that the richest 10 percent are compared to the poorest 10 percent, allowing for a more straightforward comparison of the differences.

In and of itself, these measurements are not particularly telling as they still do not help us determine the exact level of inequality in a given country. Against the background of attempts to make (economic) inequality more “objective”, its existence is ultimately dependent on the subjective recognition of the relevant actors (Engelhardt and Wagener, 2014). We will return to these points and measurements shortly, predominantly with an intention to show how perceived economic inequality may lead to distinctive “frames” (Goffman, 1974), singling out and prioritizing some aspects of reality over others and presenting them as more relevant. Through the role of particular linguistic devices such as metaphors (Lakoff, 2004) and priming

(Tversky and Kahneman, 1981), perceptions of inequality can be significantly changed irrespective of their “objective” stance represented through the Gini index. This is not to argue that we should do away with the Gini index and subsequent attempts to identify a measurable and comparable index of inequality – policymakers usually do not have the time nor the will to interpret societal complexities or the subtle yet influential role of framing in determining (in)equality. The allure of numbers is still a bit too strong and perhaps also necessary to succinctly capture the development over time. Yet, it is of equal importance to identify the vagaries that are still present in measuring equality on a different scale, especially in an attempt to persuasively “skew” the sense of (in)equality in a certain direction.

### 1.1. The perception of self on the socio-economic scale

It might not seem like that in the era of smartphones and endless staring in our phones but humans are social beings, and the perception of self depends much on the social context they find themselves in. We will never be able to talk about ourselves without thinking about our social relations and the perception other people have of us (Winnicott, 1973). This perception depends on the social roles we choose and the ones that were placed upon us without our saying. One can describe themselves as a good mother, husband, sister, coworker or just a “member of society” based on the infinite number of social roles they have. In this case and depending on how we render these social roles, both criteria can enter self-perception. It is therefore impossible to describe oneself without mentioning the social roles.

Socio-economic status is expectedly relational. Once our basic needs are being met and we can provide the food, water, roof over our head, clothing, and some basic products for everyday use, it becomes impossible to see ourselves as rich or poor without a comparison with the others. In the first case, in which a person can't afford to take care of their basic survival needs, we are talking about absolute poverty (Shaw, 1988). Once this criterion is excluded and a person doesn't have concerns for their livelihood based on their economic insufficiency, people may perceive their status based on that of others. Such a logic prompted the scholarship in political sciences to write at length about postmaterialist values which appear when basic needs are met – this would explain the nascent care for the natural environment since the 1970s (Inglehart, 1971). It does not make sense to compare the socio-economic status of two individuals solely based on their income. For that analysis, it is crucial to examine their social environment and the economic status of other members of their community. The socio-economic status as well as the ideas of “poverty” and “wealth” become relative and dependent on the society overall (Shaw, 1988). In other words, you can only be as rich as someone else is poor: having an extraordinarily high income in a poor neighborhood is certainly going to affect the (rich) individual's perception about both inequality and the life they are living. For this reason, this thesis takes into account the self-perception of an individual and not only the objective measurements of the economic (in)equality within the country (such as the Gini index).

As shown with metaphors and priming, past research has shown that human beings are very susceptible to shifts in their perceptions. For example, the research

on economic (in)equality shows that the way the message is presented will change the course of their thoughts leading them to different decision making (Dietze and Craige, 2021). What is particularly interesting is that people are susceptible to these persuasive messages: not only if they are told a story that they are familiar with (Baumann et al., 2020), but their opinion in the field changes in base of the numbers provided irrespective of whether they are familiar with the geographical context – higher when the actual salary is known or lower when the pay gap between the minimum and maximum is presented (Pedersen et al, 2019). This effect may be explained through the anchoring bias (Easterbrook, 2021). Anchoring bias or anchoring effect is a process where people are influenced by an information given prior to making a judgement (Furnham and Boo, 2019). The people will then make a judgement about a given matter starting from the anchor value and adjusting it towards what would have been their idea of it until they have reached a satisfactory answer (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974).

Nevertheless, Strack and Mussweiler (1997) explained how the anchoring effect changes its impact based on the previous knowledge on the theme in question. The more information an individual has gathered in their life experience on the theme in question, the less effect will the anchor have on their answers. The more unknown the context seems to the participants, the greater impact the anchoring effect will have on their reasoning when answering the question. Thus, if a person is well informed on a particular subject, they tend to respond less if in any way to the anchoring effect.

A more recent study from Schmalor and Haine (2021), takes upon itself to explore the objective and subjective component of economic (in)equality. In their opinion, the socio-economic (in)equality of a society does not apply to the socio-economic self-perception of an individual as the differences of the two are inevitable. Within their cross-cultural study, they found that the larger correlation between the Gini index (objective [in]equality) and subjective inequality across non-USA countries, can be presumably linked to the greater variability of economic (in)equality. The results of this study were mixed and dependent of the cultural changes within their sample.

Building on these works and the overall role of anchoring in the perception of the self on the socio-economic scale, this thesis takes upon itself to explore what happens if personal experience becomes the anchor, as will be described in the empirical section. This analysis occurs in the context of Montenegro, which is particularly interesting as a small country that has been through interesting political and cultural changes – all of which will be explained in the following section.

## 2. The economic situation of Montenegro

Heavily dependent on the societal dynamics, namely the tribal history which centered brotherhoods/clans at the very core of economic activity, Montenegro has long been one of the most underdeveloped areas in the Balkan region. As the kinship groups were giving the sense of shared identity, the economy until circa 1950s was mostly reliant on subsistence farming (Marovic, 2006). Montenegro was frequently integrated in different state arrangements: changing eight from 1906 to 2006. After the industrialization in the 1950s pointed to new societal fissures as migration from villages to towns was very frequent, the shortcomings of the central planning economy started being more evident as the political problems were also emerging (Bacovic et al., 2022). In the socialist era, economic differences were rather evident, including the internal differences within the classes, such as the ones present in the communist party nomenklatura (Lazic, 1987). Overall, the socialist Yugoslavia was a relatively economically unequal society, a finding that may seem paradoxical if one does not consider the nature of class hierarchy that ultimately conditioned these hierarchies (Petrovic, 2020).

The breakup of Yugoslavia in 1990s contributed to a major economic crisis, resulting in plummeting of investments and job opportunities (Andrijasevic and Bacovic, 2022). Such a situation signaled a major restructuring in the economy, from state socialism to capitalism. The socialist smokestacks resembling the apotheosis of progress (for a similar socialist experience, see Hicks, 1996) were dismantled or left to decay as the factories were massively closed and workers sent home as a



part of transitioning to this “wild capitalism” (Harper, 2006). In Montenegro, releasing workers from debt-ridden factories amid the increasing political and economic crisis (such as the UN embargo during the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s) meant that only a few privileged were able to accumulate capital, mostly through illegal activities (see Bieber, 2003). This “redistribution” of capital also meant that if it is to survive the “neither war nor piece” situation during the 1990s (Teokarevic, 2014), Montenegro found a new base for the economic activity - tourism (Bigovic, 2012). The discursive centering around tourism as this new backbone of Montenegrin’s future, an almost messianic idea that is supposed to be driving the nation’s post-productivist economy went hand in hand with the economic “profile” of a freshly independent country. Tourism also had a fair share in exacerbating the inequalities present in the country. The GDP growth in turn resulted in more arrivals of tourists, which was also evident in other countries, such as Slovenia (Gričar et al., 2021).

So, what happened with economic inequality during that time? The general historical account of post-socialist transitions providing space for new opportunities while simultaneously increasing inequality has been proven in several countries, mostly through reference to income inequality (Bandulj and Mahtuga, 2010). Montenegro was not exempt from these trends. True, the period of post-socialist transformation increased the status of all social groups, even though the differences between the higher and lower classes remained evident across time (and across different political and economic settings, see Petrovic, 2018). In 1990, the top 10 percent (pre-tax) income share was 27.9 and the lowest was 22.4 – however, in 2015, the gap increased from 35.8 to 15.8. The exacerbation of income inequality

was also evident in the way in which the distribution of these differences occurred across different societal groups and classes: in particular, the farmers and the manual workers remained well below the median line. Most of these idiosyncrasies paint a relatively incongruent picture concerning the trajectory of economic inequality in Montenegro, which may well be read as a call for more research in this subject (Petrovic, 2018).

This is not to argue that Montenegro of today (2022) does not suffer from (rampant) inequality. In 2020, Eurostat revealed somewhat striking data: that the average income of the top one fifth is about 7 times higher than the income of the bottom fifth in the country. This ratio is five times the EU average, compared only to some other Eastern European countries, such as Bulgaria, Lithuania and neighboring Serbia (UNICEF 2022). The average national income in Montenegro barely topped the 1990s level in the wake of the pandemic (17,991 EUR in 2020 to 17,213 EUR in 1990). The pandemic has expectedly affected Montenegrin economy but it was also a year in which the long-ruling Democratic Party of Socialists was ousted and replaced by a rather eclectic coalition. What is interesting about this coalition, though, is that it proposed an ambitious economic plan, “Europe Now”, which raised the minimum wage from 250 EUR to 450 EUR, changing also the average salary from about 480 EUR to circa 880 EUR in less than a year and the employment rate remains at about 19 percent (Trading Economics, 2022). Whether this has had any effect on the perception of average income, it remains to be seen. Like virtually any other country, Montenegro is also susceptible to local and regional differences. The central part (including Podgorica, the country’s capital) and

especially the southern, coastal area has a higher average income than the virtually desolated North of the country (Bacovic et al., 2022). While it is difficult to find reliable data in terms of exact numbers, these differences must be taken into account into any future research on income inequality in Montenegro. The next section will describe how the research design and the method were crafted to account for these contextual circumstances and the historical trajectory of (in)equality in the country.

With the main aim to determine whether the perception of self on the socio-economic scale has an impact on our perception of the economic (in)equality, an online survey was conducted to test the hypotheses reported below. In order to answer this main research question, the independent and dependent variables were identified. The first independent variable was set as the self and by that to answer to the two subquestions (hypothesis 1 and 2 reported below), the participants were randomly assigned to experimental or control group.

H1: The higher people report their standing in company to be the greater the economic inequality (defined as a greater difference between ideal maximum and minimum wages) they will desire (H1a) and the lower their endorsement of a law that would define minimum and maximum wages (H1b)".

H2: The participants who were presented with an evaluation of the monthly expenses will indicate higher ideal minimum and lower ideal maximum wage (H2a) and will provide a stronger endorsement of the law on minimum and maximum wages than the participants who were not reminded of these expenses (H2b).

To test these hypotheses, I will introduce the data and method in the following section.

### 3. Method

In line with the existing scholarship exploring the questions of (in)equality (see for example, Thorbecke and Charumilind 2002) but also the research questions presented in the introduction and the above presented hypotheses, this thesis is predominantly based on quantitative methods which I used to elaborate on the results derived from the questionnaire produced and distributed to the target population in Montenegro.

The testing of the first hypothesis determines whether the judgement of economic (in)equality is in correlation with one's socio-economic status. Being the ones who would benefit from a more equal society, I expect the people who perceive their standing in company to be lower to (a) have a more negative judgement of economic inequality (prefer a more equal society) and (b) to be more open to the law inducing a minimal wages and a cap on maximum wages.

The second hypothesis testing provides an insight into the importance of the deeper evaluation of monthly expenses prior to the judgement of economic (in)equality. I expect to see the participants in the experimental condition (who will be presented with this additional manipulation) to have a more negative judgement of economic inequality than the participants in the control group (whose answers will not be influenced by this manipulation).

#### 3.1. Sample

In accordance with the aims and objectives of this thesis, an online questionnaire was produced and distributed among the target population. The data

collection took place in period between 11 October 2021 and 19 October 2021. The sample included 295 participants of age currently working in an company of at least 3 employees in Montenegro. The total number of responses collected through the survey was 466, of which 171 respondents were excluded from analysis for a range of reasons: because they did not complete the questionnaire ( $n = 76$ ); because they did not provide post-experimental consent to use their data ( $n = 1$ ); because they were currently, unemployed ( $n = 52$ ) or because they worked in an environment of less than 3 people ( $n = 42$ ). The criterion referring to the working environment (of at least 3 people) was introduced so that the chosen sample would consist of people who actually have a perception of how their colleagues are placed on a socio-economic scale. For that reason, I did not reach out to entrepreneurs working in companies and family businesses comprised of 1 or two workers. The participants were mainly female ( $n=200$ ), followed by male ( $n=91$ ) and non-binary ( $n=4$ ) with the median age of 38 and higher education level (median value of education years=16).

### 3.2. Questionnaire and procedure

The questionnaire consisted of 38 questions, divided into three parts. It was distributed in an online form using a snowball sampling method, providing easy access to the participants, especially useful during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, even for this snowball sampling, I did focus on several “entry points” which could then, through the snowball sampling, provide me with more respondents. The entry points were based on their geographical distribution, the size of the company but also demographics (female and male respondents). Since business and entrepreneurship in Montenegro is predominantly a male endeavor, I tried to

diversify my entry points to incorporate female employees and female leaders too (Despotovic et al. 2018).

The first part of the online survey was the same for both conditions (experimental and control group) and was meant to firstly eliminate the subjects whose workplace does not have a minimum of 3 employees or who are unemployed and secondly examine the socio-economic perception of the participants within their working place. The participants were asked to provide us with their perception of what the salary of the highest and the lowest paid employee is in their company. They were asked to report the salaries (in EUR) of the highest and lowest paid person in their company within an open box question. These questions were followed by a 100-point slider question on which participants indicated their own standing in the company. The slider question reported their previously indicated highest and lowest wage within the company as extreme values, so the idea was to position themselves within their company (from “their estimation of the lowest payee in the company” to “their estimation of the highest payee in the company”). Their answer to this question (providing us insight on their self-reported standing in the company) will be used to reflect their self-reported socio-economic status.

The second part constituted the experimental manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to two conditions (experimental and control group). In the experimental condition, participants were asked to estimate the cost of living. They were asked to reflect on the monthly expenses a person faces in their community by taking in consideration the monthly rent, bills, groceries, hygiene items (“Taking into account the monthly expenses of renting accommodation, bills and food for one

person, how much do you think the monthly expenses in your city amount to?”) and to respond in an open box question indicating their estimation in EUR currency. In the experimental condition, this task was followed by the dependent variables. Participants in the control group performed the same tasks in reverse order, responding first to the dependent variables and then reflecting on the cost of living in their community. In this way, the structure of the questionnaire remained symmetrical, and every participant had the same number of questions while the manipulation would be able to affect the dependent variables only in the experimental condition.

The primary dependent variables were their preferences of economic (in)equality and their endorsement of the law on minimum and maximum wage. First, participants' economic (in)equality preferences were assessed by asking them to indicate their ideal minimum and maximum salary in the country. The difference between the two (maximum minus minimum) was considered as their ideal pay gap and served as an indicator of their economic (in)equality preferences. The higher (or lower) they set the ideal pay gap to be, the more unequal (or equal) their ideal society is. Second, in order to determine how strongly our participants felt about their economic (in)equality preference, they were asked to express their preferences on the ideal minimum and maximum salaries should be defined by law. The participants were here asked to report on how strongly they agreed with the law proposing statements (“The minimum monthly income should be regulated by law in my country” and “The maximum monthly income should be regulated by law in my country”) on a 5-point Likert scale.



The third part of the questionnaire contained two scales: the PEIEL (Perception of Economic Inequality in Everyday Life) scale and the SEIS (Support for Economic Inequality Scale) scale. The PEIEL scale, which was developed by García-Castro et al in 2019, consists in twelve judgements and presents an evaluation of one's perception of the other (item example: "I know both: people who undergo many problems to pay for their home expenses (rents, mortgages) and others who do not."). For purposes of this survey the scale was adjusted to simplify the survey flow and decrease the expected time for its completion. As a result, the participants were asked to provide only nine judgements expressed on a 5-point Likert scale (from complete disagreement to complete agreement with the statement). Its purpose is to reflect one's perception of others' social status and by that the perception of the social status of their shared society in general.

The SEIS scale was also a shortened version of the scale developed in 2019 by Wiwad et al. While the original scale consists in eighteen statements, the adjusted scale consisted in five statements with 7-point Likert scale. The scale assesses the awareness of and concern for economic inequality worldwide (item example: "I am very disturbed by the amount of economic inequality in the world today"). Finally, the demographic data was also collected, including sex, age, residence, years of education after elementary school, profession and the type of contract respondents have with their employer. At the end, participants were fully debriefed about the aims and hypotheses of the research and thanked for their participation.

## 4. Results

### **Correlation between self-reported standing in company and dependent variables**

The first hypothesis predicted that “the higher people report their standing in company to be, the greater the economic inequality (defined as a greater difference between ideal maximum and minimum wages) they will desire (H1a) and the lower their endorsement of a law that would define minimum and maximum wages (H1b)”. Following the exclusion of outlier values ( $n = 27$ ), correlations were run for both dependent variables. Self-reported standing in company was not significantly correlated with the difference between the ideal values of maximum and minimum wages,  $r(267) = .033$ ,  $p = .60$ , the endorsement of a law regulating minimal wage,  $r(267) = -.076$ ,  $p = .219$ , or the endorsement of a law regulating maximum wage,  $r(267) = -.049$ ,  $p = .422$ .

The analysis did not show a significant correlation between the self-reported standing in company and their judgement of the ideal pay gap in the country (difference ideal maximum minus ideal minimum wage) being  $r(267) = .033$ ,  $p = .597$ . However, it showed the negative correlation between the ideal pay gap and law that puts a cap on the max stipends,  $r(267) = -.39$ ,  $p < .001$ . The higher people's ideal pay gap, the lower their endorsement of a law on maximum wages. Also, the self-reported standing in company seems to correlate with the estimate of the perceived maximum wage in the company,  $r(267) = -.27$ ,  $p < .001$ , suggestion that those with a higher self-reported standing in company – reflected by their self-

reported standing in their company tend to underestimate the perceived maximum wage in the company. Since these were the only statistically significant findings, the hypothesis H1 was not supported.

### **Effect of experimental condition on the dependent variables**

To test the H2, according to which “the participants who were presented with an evaluation of the monthly expenses will indicate higher ideal minimum and lower ideal maximum wage (H2a) and will provide a stronger endorsement of the law on minimum and maximum wages than the participants who were not reminded of these expenses (H2b).”, a t-test was conducted. The same test was done also for the remaining dependent variables. The t-tests showed no significant differences between conditions for any of the measures taken in consideration.

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Experimental Condition</b>	<b>Control Condition</b>	<b>t-test</b>	<b>p</b>
Ideal minimum wage	M = 633.46 SD = 177.92	M = 652.69 SD = 253.99	.716	.475
Ideal maximum wage	M = 2759.77 SD = 2337.06	M = 3049.63 SD = 2454.48	.988	.324
Ideal pay gap	M = 2126.32 SD = 2290.78	M = 2396.94 SD = 2414.51	.939	.348
Perceived living cost	M = 658.71 SD = 248.29	M = 707.16 SD = 264.97	1.54	.124
Paiel scale	M = 4.27 SD = .50	M = 4.28 SD = .47	.078	.938

Table 1: Experimental condition effects

## **Potential gender effect exploration**

An exploration of potential gender effect was conducted to see if it had an impact on the judgement of economic (in)equality. As reported in figures (Figure 4, Figure 5) below, the correlations and T-test analyses were conducted separately for male and female participants.

generemne = female

		Correlations <sup>a</sup>								
		SSES. Company	stipminideale cmn	stpmassideale ecmn	leggemincmn e_1	leggemassc mne_1	PEIEL_Mean	stipminmne	stipmassmne	spesacmne_ 1
SSES.Company	Pearson Correlation	--								
	N	179								
stipminidealecmn	Pearson Correlation	.100	--							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.185								
	N	179	179							
stpmassidealecmn	Pearson Correlation	.016	.217**	--						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.828	.004							
	N	179	179	179						
leggemincmn_e_1	Pearson Correlation	-.110	-.071	.066	--					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.142	.343	.380						
	N	179	179	179	179					
leggemasscmne_1	Pearson Correlation	-.012	.053	-.412**	.330**	--				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.878	.481	.000	.000					
	N	179	179	179	179	179				
PEIEL_Mean	Pearson Correlation	-.095	.002	.185*	.271**	.021	--			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.204	.978	.013	.000	.776				
	N	179	179	179	179	179	179			
stipminmne	Pearson Correlation	-.142	.182*	.193**	-.037	-.170*	.030	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.058	.015	.010	.620	.023	.686			
	N	179	179	179	179	179	179	179		
stipmassmne	Pearson Correlation	-.185*	.056	.352**	.003	-.166*	.045	.358**	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.456	.000	.968	.027	.552	.000		
	N	179	179	179	179	179	179	179	179	
spesacmne_1	Pearson Correlation	.048	.269**	.106	-.008	.130	-.011	.076	.120	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.522	.000	.157	.911	.082	.883	.314	.111	
	N	179	179	179	179	179	179	179	179	179

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).  
 \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
 a. generemne = female

Table 2: Gender effects correlation, female

generemne = male

		Correlations <sup>a</sup>								
		SSES, Company	stipminideale cmn	stpmassideale ecmn	leggemincmn e_1	leggemassc mne_1	PEIEL_Mean	stipminmne	stipmassmne	spesacmne_ 1
SSES.Company	Pearson Correlation	--								
	N	83								
stipminidealecmn	Pearson Correlation	-.083	--							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.456								
	N	83	83							
stpmassidealecmn	Pearson Correlation	.070	.304**	--						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.531	.005							
	N	83	83	83						
leggemincmne_1	Pearson Correlation	-.015	-.134	-.191	--					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.894	.229	.084						
	N	83	83	83	83					
leggemasscmne_1	Pearson Correlation	-.094	.121	-.383**	.251*	--				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.399	.277	.000	.022					
	N	83	83	83	83	83				
PEIEL_Mean	Pearson Correlation	-.122	.011	.019	.274*	.103	--			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.272	.923	.867	.012	.355				
	N	83	83	83	83	83	83			
stipminmne	Pearson Correlation	-.008	.167	-.113	.105	.171	-.055	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.942	.132	.309	.346	.123	.619			
	N	83	83	83	83	83	83	83		
stipmassmne	Pearson Correlation	-.373**	.152	.102	-.131	-.036	.117	.276*	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.171	.357	.237	.744	.291	.012		
	N	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	
spesacmne_1	Pearson Correlation	.011	.309**	-.011	.259*	.169	-.026	.313**	.126	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.924	.004	.919	.018	.126	.814	.004	.257	
	N	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

a. generemne = male

Table 3: Gender effects correlation, male

The gender effect exploration for both male and female participants (see Table 5) resulted in a significant correlation between the ideal maximum and ideal minimum wage values. The question regarding the maximum wage law correlated negatively with the ideal maximum wage in case of male participants and positively in case of female participants. For male subjects, the greater the indication of the ideal maximum wage, the lower the acceptance of the maximum wage law – which indicates a preference of economic inequality. In case of female subjects, the greater the indication of the ideal maximum wage, the greater the acceptance of the maximum wage law. The results also showed that female participants who expressed a greater acceptance of the minimum wage law also expressed a greater acceptance of the maximum wage law, which was not the case for male participants.

For both female and male participants, the higher perceived maximum, the lower the value of the self-reported standing in the company was reported. Female participants also expressed a stronger preference of the law on maximum wages, the higher they perceived the maximum wage to be. This was not the case for male participants. Both male and female participants reported the higher perceived maximum wage values, the higher their perception of the minimum wage was. The perception of the maximum wage also influenced their judgement on the ideal maximum wage in case of female participants (the higher they perceived the maximum wage to be, the higher ideal maximum wage they indicated). As per the living cost, it correlated positively with perceived minimum, ideal minimum and law on minimum wage for male participants and with perceived minimum for female participants.

For a clearer insight in the medium values as well as the t-test results of male and female participants, see table 4 (below).

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	Male	Female	t-test	P
Ideal minimum wage	M = 634 SD = 218.19	M = 651 SD = 221.40	-.564	.884
Ideal maximum wage	M = 3524.10 SD = 2777.54	M = 2646.44 SD = 2169.85	2.779	.001
Ideal pay gap	M = 2889.16 SD = 2719.21	M = 1997.99 SD = 2132.76	2.876	.001
Perceived living cost	M = 641.69 SD = 204.93	M = 705.80 SD = 278.18	-1.876	.155

Table 4: T-test, gender effects exploration

## **PEIEL and SEIS scales report**

Since the third and final part of the questionnaire contained an additional exploration first of the sense of community of our participants, measured by an adjusted PEIEL scale (9 judgements on a 5 point Likert scale, 1 – “strongly disagree”, 5 – “strongly agree”) and second their perception of the economic inequality’s consequences measured by an adjusted SEIS scale (5 judgements 7-



point Likert scale, 1 – “Strongly disagree”, 7 – “Strongly agree”), the results of these scales are reported in this section (see table 6 and table 7).

PEIEL scale Items	Mean	SD
1. I know people with very different levels of income.	4.32	3.84
2. Among the people I surround myself with, there are some people who can afford access to a better health service than others.	4.28	3.80
3. Among the people I surround myself with, there are those who can go on vacation at least one week per year and those who cannot afford it.	4.29	3.83
4. Among the people I know, some have bigger and more luxurious homes than others.	4.39	3.90
5. Among the people I surround myself with, there are some people who can afford access to a better education than others.	4.26	3.79
6. I know both: people who undergo many problems to pay for their home expenses (rents, mortgages) and others who do not.	4.24	3.78
7. I know people who can afford to save money and others who struggle to reach the end of the month.	4.36	3.88
8. Among the people I know, some cannot afford unforeseen expenses and others cope with them without any difficulty.	4.21	3.74
9. Among the people I surround myself with, some people can afford to buy a lot more and better things than others.	4.24	3.76

Table 6: PEIEL scale results

SEIS scale Items	Mean	SD
1. The negative consequences of economic inequality have been largely exaggerated.	4.32	3.84
2. Economic inequality is causing many of the world’s problems.	3.41	1.50
3. I am very disturbed by the amount of economic inequality in the world today.	1.38	3.38
4. Economic inequality is not a problem	3.86	3.65
5. We need to do everything possible to reduce economic inequality in the world today	2.14	2.40

Table 7: SEIS scale results

The purpose of the PEIEL scale was to determine whether the participants’ judgment on socio-economic (in)equality may be additionally influenced by their acquaintances of people of different socio-economic status. As we can see from the

results, the majority of participants reported to have acquaintances with people of different socio-economic status which could have interfered with our manipulation. As the results of the SEIS scale report, the participants did not show particular concerns about economic inequality in general/worldwide.

## 5. Discussion

The outcome of this research provided insights into the bases of human judgement calls. The main aim of this thesis was to determine whether the perception of self on the socio-economic scale (measured by their self-reported standing in company) has an impact on our perception of the economic (in)equality, to which end this thesis set two main hypotheses.

As reported in the results section, the examination of the first hypothesis: “The higher they report their standing in company to be, the greater the economic inequality (defined as a greater difference between ideal maximum and minimum wages) they will desire (H1a) and the lower their endorsement of a law that would define minimum and maximum wages (H1b)”. This hypothesis was not supported. However, the lower the participants judge the highest income in their company to be, the higher they will subsequently report their standing in company. It is only natural that the people who perceive themselves high on the socio-economic scale of their working environment do so by actually doing the highest paid jobs in their company and will be well aware of their “objective” socio-economic status.

The second hypothesis: “The participants who were presented with an evaluation of the monthly expenses will indicate higher ideal minimum and lower ideal maximum wage (H2a) and will provide a stronger endorsement of the law on minimum and maximum wages than the participants who were not reminded of these expenses (H2b)” was also not confirmed. However, it has been noted from the SEIS

scale examination that the participants are all in all well aware and concerned about economic inequality and its consequences for the society in general.

An interesting, but considering the patriarchal society not that unexpected, outcome of the analysis conducted within this research seems to be the effect the gender has had on the judgement of economic (in)equality. It is now well established that gender differences heavily inform economic inequality (Paterna et al. 2006; Neff et al. 2007; Moreno-Bella et al. 2020; Michener and Brower 2020), with the adjusted wage gap being 16.1 percent in Montenegro, the second in the Western Balkans region (after Northern Macedonia, see Vladislavljevic et al. 2013), as well as a visible gap in the rates of employment between women and men (42,5 percent vs. 56,8 percent respectively). For this reason, it is not surprising that gender has been emerged as one of the relevant predictors of the perception of (in)equality, in line with the traditional gender roles and the cultural history of discrimination based on gender in Montenegro. Namely, female participants indicated the lower perceived minimum and maximum wages than male participants. Not only that, but in the second part of the survey, female participants reported a higher living cost than male participants. Finally, male participants tended to indicate higher ideal pay gaps than females, suggesting that female participants were more prone to preferring economic equality. This discrepancy between the male and female participants could not be attributed to their perceived socio-economic status since both female and male participants were equally distributed within the socio-economic scale. Although the extreme values of these scales were defined exactly by their previous responses, which we see that differed on the basis of their sex. What these findings

tell us is that women see the society as less wealthy and judge the living cost higher respect to the men in Montenegro.

### 5.1. Limitations

What should have been the added value of this research – the fact that it does not use any artificial framing (e.g., experimental research which would serve the previously prepared narratives to the respondents, evaluating how these narratives impact the respondents' views) but only activates what people may already be thinking, ended up being its biggest limitation. The preparation phase, research design and structure did not (and, in the way in which they were posed, could not) account for the unaccounted independent variables that may have an effect on the participants although I did not aim for their activation. Who is to say that the participants assigned to the control group responded to our questionnaire without thinking of the living cost for example?

Also, another important factor was neglected in the preparation of the survey and research design in general. The participants, being a part of a community, would hardly be able to ignore outside factors in their decision making. Their estimate of perceived wages could also be influenced by the finances of other people in their lives. As we read from the results reported in Figure 8, the participants were well aware of the socio-economic inequality of their society and this probably had a way of influencing their answers.

Another important factor is the uneven geographical distribution of the survey – in part conditioned by the lack of respondents in the North of the country. It would be interesting to see how the self-perception on the socio-economic scale but also

the estimation of living cost and judgement of the economic (in)equality changes in different parts of the country. Montenegro is not a federal state, meaning that it does not have “formal” economic regions – however, the country has long been (informally) divided into three separate socio-cultural (and also economic) parts: the North (Plav, Gusinje, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Andrijevica, Kolašin, Šavnik, Plužine, Žabljak), the Central part (Podgorica – the capital, Cetinje, Nikšić) and the South (the coast: Budva, Bar, Kotor, Herceg-Novi, Tivat, Ulcinj). As already stated in the previous chapters of this thesis, Montenegro has a very uneven distribution of wealth in the country, the central part (where most of our respondents were from) and the south part being the wealthiest, leaving the north of the country the poorest (Rajovic et al., 2012). It is not that I did not try to reach the other parts as well, but the chosen sampling method (the snowball) is unpredictable and the north of Montenegro itself has a lower population count. Another reason those participants were not reached is their unemployment rate and the prevalence of people of certain age mainly being already in pension (Rajovic et al., 2013) and therefore not part of the target population since they do not respect the criteria of employment in an environment of at least 3 people. Moreover, the data were collected during the pandemic and the lockdowns and other limitations in traveling between places (see Method), meaning that it was impossible to arrive to the North in person and ensure a higher completion of the online surveys.

## Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis was to determine whether the perception of self, in its many forms, on the socio-economic scale, has an impact on one's perception of the economic (in)equality. As stated in the introduction, this thesis raised two subquestions, in order to explore the effects of the socio-economic scale on our perception of economic inequality: first, do people with higher self-reported standing in company prefer higher economic inequality, and second, can an evaluation of the monthly expenses influence their judgement of economic (in)equality?

In order to address these two questions, this thesis first presented a literature review of the existing scholar contributions in the economic (in)equality field with special accent on the self-perception component exploration among them. This literature review showed that the conceptions of economic (in)equality are contested and that the Gini index, while being useful for comparison, is not reliable for drawing conclusions related to self-perception. Secondly, this thesis dedicated a chapter to the exploration of the current socio-economic situation of the target population and by that also the past socio-economic situation of the country, given that the past changes lead to the current society. It has shown how the transition of Montenegro from socialism to capitalism exacerbated inequalities and social injustices but also how basing economic activity around tourism has impacted the discrepancies between those with the highest and the lowest income. Thirdly, this thesis presented the methodology, sample and the questionnaire used to test the two hypotheses. Lastly, this thesis presented the results of the research and will, within the present

chapter, identify the problems of the presented research and propose a new approach for the studies to come.

Even though the hypotheses formulated on the grounds of the research questions were not confirmed, thus not showing statistically significant evidence in support (or in rejection) of our claims, there are still important takeaway messages for future research.

The somewhat unexpected finding concerning the role of gender on the self-perception is important to keep in mind for the future. Since Montenegro is even regionally recognized as a patriarchal and masculine society, not recognizing discrimination and “normalizing” women as unworthy of participating in the public sphere (simultaneously metaphorically venerated as “the neck of the family” or even worse, “the stranger’s supper”, see Milic 1995), the gender difference can be important in understanding preferences for economic (in)equality and naturalizing economic differences between individuals. Adding the issue of unpaid labor, which this research has only tangentially touched upon, we come to realize a long way needed at leveling the self-perception with the “facts of worklife” in Montenegro or any other context. The finding that women also perceive differently the living cost in a country can be linked to the gendered nature of labor, and the issue of unpaid labor that has to be accounted for in prospective analyses of economic self-perception. The findings marshalled in this thesis are congruent with findings in other countries and contexts (Robeyns 2003), urging both the scholarship and policy to fundamentally rethink the very nature of labor and perception of inequality in a



country that has barely completed a transition to economic capitalism, such as Montenegro.

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## Annex - Questionnaire

### **CONSENT FORM**

#### RESEARCH GOALS AND DESCRIPTION:

Dear participant,

In this document we request that you confirm your consent to participate in the research “Economic perception” coordinated by Anne Maass. The goal of this research is primarily to find out how the economic situation in a country is observed, but also the possible stances on the subject.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Throughout this research you are expected to fill out a survey about the perception of the economic state in your country. Furthermore, you will be asked to answer questions on social-demographic as well.

#### RESEARCH LOCATION AND DURATION:

The research will be published online and will require 5-10 minutes to complete.

#### CONTACTS:

Responsible for the research:

Anne Maass; 0498276579; [anne.maass@unipd.it](mailto:anne.maass@unipd.it); Department of Developmental and Social Psychology – University of Padua; Via Venezia 8, Padua

Carmen Cervone; [carmen.cervone@phd.unipd.it](mailto:carmen.cervone@phd.unipd.it); Department of Developmental and Social Psychology – University of Padua; Via Venezia 8, Padua

Responsible for data collection:

Sofija Bojic: sofija.bojic@studenti.unipd.it; Department of Developmental and Social Psychology – University of Padua; Via Venezia 8, Padua

## CONSENT TO RESEARCH PARTICIPATION AND TREATMENT OF DATA

The undersigned voluntarily accepts to participate in the “Economic perception” research.

The undersigned declares that:

1. They are of age
2. They were informed that this research is in accordance with the valid Legal provision 2003/196 and EU Regulation 2016/679 about data protection and approves their treatment and usage, within limitations, strictly for the purposes and time period defined by applicable laws. The person responsible for the research undertakes to comply with the rules stipulated by the applicable laws when collecting, using and storing sensitive data. The protection of your personal data is guaranteed by the Decree of the General Director 4451, December 19, 2017, which appointed the person responsible for Data Protection (privacy@unipd.it).
3. They were informed about the possibility of withdrawing from the research at any moment, with no need for elaboration or any kind of sanction, and with the possibility of withdrawing the collected data.
4. They were informed that the data will be collected in an anonymous form.
5. They were informed that the data will be used strictly for scientific and statistical

purposes, while respecting confidentiality guidelines.

6. They were informed that, if they are interested, they may request a copy of this module from the researcher.

After reading this form, the undersigned gives their consent for participation in the research, as well as the usage and adequate collection of personal data.

☐ I consent

☐ I do not consent

### Questionnaire – first part

1. Are you currently employed?

☐ No

☐ Yes

2. Do you work in a staff of more than 3 employees (e.g. firm, company, public or private institution) or do you work independently (e.g. private business, freelancing etc.)?

☐ I work independently (my collective doesn't exceed 3 employees)

☐ I work in a collective of more than 3 employees

In this segment of the research you are requested to answer a couple questions about your income in the company you work at.

3. Please fill the blank field with what you think the minimum monthly income at your company is (e.g. of a lowest paid employee).

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4. Please fill the blank field with what you think the maximum monthly income at your company is (e.g. of the highest paid employee).

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5. Please indicate your positioning on the available scale based on your monthly income at your company.

Your monthly income is:

Lowest paid employee income

Highest paid employee income



## **Questionnaire – second part**

### **Control group**

In this segment of the research, you are requested to share your opinion on the economic situation in the country.

1. How much do you think the minimum monthly income should ideally be in your country?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Please express how strongly you agree with the following statement.

The minimum monthly income should be regulated by law in my country

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

3. How much do you think the maximum monthly income should ideally be in your country?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Please express how strongly you agree with the following statement.

The maximum monthly income should be regulated by law in my country.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

5. Do the previously entered monthly incomes represent the net or gross income?

☐ Net

☐ Gross

6. Now please think about the monthly expenses in your city. These expenses include the monthly cost of renting accommodation, bills and food expenses for one person on a monthly basis.

Taking into account the monthly expenses of renting accommodation, bills and food for one person, how much do you think the monthly expenses in your city amount to?

Approximately \_\_\_\_\_



### **Experimental group**

1. Now please think about the monthly expenses in your city. These expenses include the monthly cost of renting accommodation, bills and food expenses for one person on a monthly basis.

Taking into account the monthly expenses of renting accommodation, bills and food for one person, how much do you think the monthly expenses in your city amount to?

Approximately \_\_\_\_\_

2. How much do you think the minimum monthly income should ideally be in your country?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Please express how strongly you agree with the following statement.

The minimum monthly income should be regulated by law in my country

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

4. How much do you think the maximum monthly income should ideally be in your country?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Please express how strongly you agree with the following statement.

The maximum monthly income should be regulated by law in my country

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

6. Do the previously entered monthly incomes represent the net or gross income?

☐ Net

☐ Gross

## **Questionnaire – third part**

### **PEIEL scale**

Please express how strongly you agree with the following statements. Please answer spontaneously and remember that there are no correct or incorrect answers.

I know people with very different levels of income.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

Among the people I surround myself with, there are some people who can afford access to a better health service than others.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

Among the people I surround myself with, there are those who can go on vacation at least one week per year and those who cannot afford it.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

Among the people I know, some have bigger and more luxurious homes than others.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

Among the people I surround myself with, there are some people who can afford access to a better education than others.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

I know both: people who undergo many problems to pay for their home expenses (rents, mortgages) and others who do not.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

I know people who can afford to save money and others who struggle to reach the end of the month.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

Among the people I know, some cannot afford unforeseen expenses and others cope with them without any difficulty.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

Among the people I surround myself with, some people can afford to buy a lot more and better things than others.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree or disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

## SEIS SCALE

Please express how strongly you agree with the following statements on a scale from 1 to 7. Please answer spontaneously and remember that there are no correct or incorrect answers.

The negative consequences of economic inequality have been largely exaggerated

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly agree

Economic inequality is causing many of the world's problems

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly agree

I am very disturbed by the amount of economic inequality in the world today

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly agree

Economic inequality is not a problem

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly agree

We need to do everything possible to reduce economic inequality in the world today

Strongly disagree ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly agree

### **Questionnaire – forth part**

To follow is the last segment of the research in which you will be requested to answer questions about your demographic data. Please submit your answer at the end.

1. Sex:

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Municipality of residence:

Choose your residence



4. Years of education (since elementary school): \_\_\_\_\_

5. Please select the type of contract you have with your employer:

☐ Full time

☐ Part time

☐ Honorary

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. Please write down your profession in the blank space

\_\_\_\_\_

**SUBMIT**

#### FINAL MESSAGE:

Dear participant, the present survey is conducted for scientific purposes with the aim of collecting information on the perception of the economic situation in the country. The research is conducted on the territory of Montenegro in an online form and the criteria for participation are the age of majority and employment in the collective. Participants were divided into two groups to determine whether the review of living expenses makes a difference in assessing the ideal minimum and maximum wage in the country as well as expressing approval to define them by a law on maximum and minimum wage. Also, the research aims to determine whether and how much



the socio-economic position of the individual himself and the people to whom he is surrounded affects their attitudes.

Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions from this survey.

Your response has been successfully recorded.