

Analysis of the Citizen's Attitudes About the Economic Measures to Eliminate the Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Republic of Serbia

Dragomir Dimitrijević*, Milan Kostić, Marija Radulović

University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Economics, Kragujevac, Serbia
dimitrijevicd@kg.ac.rs, mkostic@kg.ac.rs, mradulovic@np.ac.rs

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Abstract

The pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus has led to negative economic consequences in all countries. The COVID-19 pandemic created problems in the functioning of the economy, and economic state measures were necessary to reduce the negative impact of the pandemic. Every country in the world has tried to find the best economic measures to help its citizens overcome the negative effects of the pandemic as easily as possible. After 5 years since the pandemic began, the real effects of these state measures, which were also implemented by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, can now be seen much more objectively, which is analysed in this paper. The primary objective of this paper is to evaluate citizens' opinions on the effectiveness of the state economic measures implemented by the Government of the Republic of Serbia to mitigate the impact of pandemics on both citizens' lives and companies' operations.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has completely changed the way of life, not only in terms of health problems (a large number of sick and deceased people around the world) but also in terms of how people and the economy work daily. It can be said that the negative impacts of this pandemic have significantly altered the global economy. Even the most developed countries, especially developing and underdeveloped countries, were not spared from these negative consequences. No one predicted that COVID-19 would have a major negative impact, and no country had prepared measures to react to this type of crisis. The goal of each state during the pandemic was to adopt certain economic measures that would mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic. Those economic measures varied from state to state, but their essence was based on providing financial aid or tax relief to citizens and businesses. Each country attempted, within its economic possibilities, to adopt suitable economic measures. For these reasons in particular,

*Corresponding author

this paper considers the economic measures the Serbian Government implemented to mitigate the negative effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. More precisely, it analyses citizens' views on the effects of these measures in terms of their speed of adoption, effectiveness, necessity and efficiency.

By the above, besides the Introduction and Concluding remarks, the paper also contains three sections. The first section outlines the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken by the Serbian Government in this regard. The paper's second section explains the research methodology, while the third section presents the research results.

Economic Consequences Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic and Measures to Mitigate Them

The immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy is reflected in a strong GDP decline that has covered all world regions. The estimated world GDP decline in 2020 was 4-4.5%, which is the largest annual decline in peacetime since the beginning of the 20th century. Another characteristic of the crisis is that it was widespread, meaning it occurred in all regions of the world. Compared to the previous ones, the third important feature of this crisis is that the pandemic initiated it as a non-economic factor, acting exogenously on the economy (Arsić, 2021, p. 58).

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was clear and inevitable that all countries would suffer economic consequences. In 2020, many countries decided to financially support the economy to overcome the negative effects of the pandemic, hoping that the pandemic would end quickly and that the economy would return to normal. Governments worldwide responded by providing large funds to businesses and individuals to help overcome the consequences of the crisis. Thus, to ensure liquidity, the US government approved more than four thousand billion dollars in various types of aid, while the G20 countries allocated

over eleven thousand billion dollars.

A large number of governments prepared and adopted significant packages of measures to alleviate urgent problems. An important way out was to increase the volume of primary money emissions and turn to fiscal policy, which meant deferral of various types of tax obligations and fiscal benefits in the form of grants to vital sectors and socially vulnerable people (Živković et al., 2021). One of the specifics of this crisis is the extremely uneven decline in economic activity. The crisis strongly affected activities exposed to epidemiological restrictions, such as hospitality, the hotel industry, transport, culture, sports, and entertainment (OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) 2021).

Most states approved transfers to citizens (helping the poor, the unemployed or even all citizens) to mitigate the decline in private consumption, the decrease in employment and the growth of poverty. States also approved transfers to the economy (payment of wages by the state, bank loan guarantee, direct transfers to particularly affected economic sectors, etc.) to improve the economy's liquidity, reduce layoffs and prevent mass corporate bankruptcy cases.

In general, all the measures taken by the states against the consequences of the pandemic-induced closure can be divided into those related to: *tax incentives* – deferral of the payment of taxes and social insurance contributions on employee salaries and wages in the private sector; *incentives aimed at employees* – direct government grants aimed at maintaining employment and *credit incentives* – more favorable credit arrangements intended for business entities to preserve the company liquidity.

The Republic of Serbia took appropriate measures, the main goal of which was to preserve economic stability with a focus on supporting micro, small and medium enterprises in the private sector. It was a set of economic measures aimed primarily at mitigating the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. All types of these measures are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Program of economic measures to combat the negative consequences of the pandemic

Measure	Billions of dinars (RSD)	Millions of euros (EUR)	% of GDP
1. Tax policy measures	161	1.3	2.9
Deferral of the payment of taxes on wages and contributions for the private sector during the state of emergency, with later repayment of the resulting obligation in instalments starting from 2021 at the earliest;	140	1.18	2.5
Deferral of advance payment of profit tax in the second quarter;	21	0.12	0.4
Exemption of donors from the obligation to pay VAT.	-		
2. Direct aid to companies for employees	97.3	0.82	1.8
Direct aid to entrepreneurs taxed at a flat rate and those who pay real income tax, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the private sector – aid payment in the amount of the minimum wage (during the state of emergency – 3 minimum wages);	92.8	0.79	1.7
Direct aid to large companies in the private sector – aid payment in the amount of 50% of the net minimum wage (during the state of emergency) for employees with the decision on employment termination.	4.5	0.03	0.1
3. Measures for economic liquidity	246	2.04	3.7
Support to the economy through the Development Fund of the Republic of Serbia;	24	0.01	0.4
Guarantee scheme to support the economy through banks.	240	2.03	3.3
Including state guarantees (according to statements by officials)	60	0.05	1.1
4. Other measures	86	0.7	1.6
Moratorium on the payment of dividends until the end of the year, except for public companies;	16	0.11	0.3
Payment of 100 euros to all adult citizens.	70	0.59	1.3

Source: Fiskalni savet (2020)

In addition to these incentives, the National Bank of Serbia introduced a moratorium (stoppage) in loan and lease repayment without charging default interest for late loan payments. The idea was to help companies reduce their credit burden and increase liquidity. The Serbian Government allocated about 15.4% of GDP to remediate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Fiscal Monitor, IMF, 2021).

These initial measures, which estimate the views of businessmen and authors of various studies, have been carefully considered. However, they are currently being criticised for being unselective. Also, the professional community is critical of the delay in adopting these measures. The *Poslovi Infostud* (leading site for recruitment in Serbia) research on the impact of the pandemic on the labor market in the Republic of Serbia, conducted in the first week of April 2020, among 4,329 respondents and 580 business entities, shows that as many as 80 percent of companies have already started or are planning to cut costs soon, and about 12 percent

of respondents have already lost their jobs. At the same time, as many as 82 percent of Serbian companies that participated in this research point out that they agree with the measures adopted by the Serbian Government (Đaković, 2020). The measures adopted by the Serbian Government, although indiscriminate and with a certain delay, managed to some extent mitigate the large layoffs planned at the moment when the COVID-19 crisis began. The rest of the paper will investigate how the citizens of Serbia saw the measures taken and whether they saw them as effective.

Research Methodology and Sample Description

The research was conducted to assess citizens' views on the success of the economic measures taken by the Serbian Government to mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and citizens. Respondents over the age of 20 from the entire territory

of the Republic of Serbia were included in the research, and the questionnaire consisted of 25 questions. The research was conducted from December 2022 to February 2023. The questionnaire was constructed specifically for this study to reflect the unique socio-economic context of Serbia during the post-pandemic recovery period. Before the main data collection, the questionnaire underwent a pilot test with a small group of participants ($n = 15$) to ensure the clarity and relevance of the questions. Based on the feedback obtained during pilot testing, minor modifications were made to enhance the wording and structure of the questions. Data were collected electronically through Google questionnaires and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS, Version 21.0). The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare data between groups. Given that some groups of the independent variables had small sample sizes, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was more appropriate for the data analysis than the parametric one-way ANOVA (Nahm, 2016; Kruskal and Wallis, 1952; Dwied, Mallawaarachchi, and Alvarado, 2017). The research sample consisted of 179 respondents, including both sexes, and the structure of the respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Respondents' social and demographic characteristics

Variable	N	%
Sex		
Male	125	69.80
Female	54	30.20
Age		
20 - 30	79	44.10
30 - 40	45	25.10
40 - 50	31	17.30
50 - 60	9	5.10
Older than 60	15	8.40
Education		
Primary school	4	2.20
High school	17	9.50
College	10	5.60
University	148	82.70
Employment status		
Unemployed	11	6.20
Retired	14	7.80
Student	39	21.80
Employed	115	64.20

Source: Authors

Research results and Discussion

Based on the data from the survey, it can be concluded that, in the respondents' opinion, not a single country was

prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic (72.60%) (Table 3). More than 85% of respondents believe that the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the large gap between rich and poor countries and that poor countries depend on aid from rich countries. Additionally, more than 60% of respondents believe that the pandemic has demonstrated that richer countries cope better in such crises than poorer ones and that there is a need to connect underdeveloped and developing countries to overcome this type of crisis.

Table 3

Respondents' views on the consequences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic

Variable	N	%
The world economies were prepared for the consequences caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.		
Yes, only developed countries	43	24.00
Yes, only developing countries	1	0.60
Yes, all countries	5	2.80
No, not a single country category was prepared for the pandemic	130	72.60
The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the large gap between rich and poor countries.		
Yes	155	86.60
No	24	13.40
The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that rich countries cope better with such crises than poor ones.		
Yes	108	60.30
No	71	39.70
The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that poor countries depend on the aid of rich countries.		
Yes	152	85.40
No	26	14.60
The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to connect underdeveloped and developing countries.		
Yes	110	61.50
No	8	4.50
Probably	61	34.00

Source: Authors

Table 4 shows the respondents' views on the readiness of the Republic of Serbia to face the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most respondents (46.20%) believe that the Republic of Serbia was no less prepared than other countries to face the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, 26.90% of respondents believe it was still less prepared to face such a crisis than the European Union countries. Additionally, 20.30% of respondents believe that Serbia was less prepared to face

the crisis compared to the rest of Europe, while the smallest percentage of respondents (6.60%) think that Serbia was less prepared for the crisis than other Balkan countries. It follows that the respondents believe that the Republic of Serbia was equally or less prepared for this kind of crisis compared to other countries globally. However, it was still better when compared to other Balkan countries.

Table 4

Respondents' views on the readiness of the Republic of Serbia for the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

Variable	N	%
The Republic of Serbia was less prepared for the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to other European countries.		
Yes, compared to all European countries	37	20.30
Yes, only compared to the Balkan countries	12	6.60
Yes, only compared to European Union countries	49	26.90
No	84	46.20
The Republic of Serbia was less prepared for the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to the Balkan countries.		
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8	10.10
Montenegro	11	13.90
North Macedonia	5	6.30
Albania	9	11.40
Croatia	21	26.60
Bulgaria	11	13.90
Romania	14	17.70

Source: Authors

On a scale from 1 (not affected) to 5 (very affected), the respondents rated how certain economic sectors in Serbia were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents believe that the tourism and hospitality sector was the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the production and transport sectors, while, in their opinion, the energy and public sectors were the least affected. This was the real situation with the external COVID-19 crisis. Additionally, respondents believe that the trade sector was the most successful in responding to the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the finance and banking sectors, while the tourism and hospitality sectors were the least successful in responding to these problems (Table 5).

Table 5

Affected sectors of the Serbian economy and the success of the response to the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic

Variable	N	M	SD
Affected sectors of the Serbian economy by the COVID-19 pandemic (from 1 – not affected to 5 – very affected)			
Tourism and hospitality	178	4.63	0.80
Production	179	3.73	1.02
Transport	179	3.49	1.23
Finance and banking	179	3.27	1.12
Trade	178	3.22	1.38
Agriculture	179	3.06	1.19
Public sector	179	2.72	1.22
Energy	178	2.70	1.18
Success of the economic sector in its response to the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (from 1 – not successful to 5 – very successful)			
Trade	179	3.34	1.11
Finance and banking	179	3.31	1.07
Agriculture	178	3.16	1.09
Energy	178	3.15	1.02
Production	179	3.08	0.96
Transport	178	2.96	1.05
Public sector	179	2.94	1.11
Tourism and hospitality	179	2.33	1.14

Note: N – number of respondents; M – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation

Source: Authors

Table 6

Negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on work

Variable	N	M	SD
My working conditions have worsened	179	2.40	1.39
I am thinking of changing jobs	179	2.25	1.52
My salary was reduced	179	2.09	1.36
I had to change jobs	179	1.72	1.27

Note: N – number of respondents; M – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation

Source: Authors

On a scale from 1 (I absolutely disagree) to 5 (I fully agree), respondents evaluated the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their business performance. The majority of respondents (88.80%) did not lose their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the negative consequences of the pandemic on companies. However, on average, the respondents say that their working conditions have worsened, they are thinking of changing

jobs, their salary has decreased, and they had to change jobs, with the more pronounced view being that the working conditions have worsened as a negative consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Table 6).

On a scale from 1 (measures were very bad) to 5 (measures were excellent), respondents evaluated the measures taken by the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on companies and the economy, the employed and the unemployed. Respondents believe that the measures taken by the Serbian Government in all the mentioned categories were on the border between weak and average, being more significantly aimed at the economy and the employed than at the unemployed (Table 7). On average, respondents agree that the Serbian Government's measures to mitigate the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic were political and resulted in the collection of political points, while they partially agree that the measures were inadequately planned and implemented, as well as late and untimely.

Table 7

Characteristics of measures taken by the Serbian Government during and after the COVID-19 pandemic

Variable	N	M	SD
Estimating measures taken by the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the following categories (from 1 - measures were very bad to 5 - measures were excellent):			
Companies and the economy	179	2.62	1.12
Employed population	179	2.61	1.13
Unemployed population	179	2.52	1.24
Measures taken by the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic were (from 1 - I absolutely disagree to 5 - I fully agree):			
Of a political character and resulted in the collection of political points	179	3.93	1.30
Inadequately planned and implemented	179	3.39	1.19
Late and untimely	179	3.16	1.21

Note: N – number of respondents; M – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation

Source: Authors

Table 8 shows that the respondents, on average level, have neutral opinions about the financial aid of the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and its positive

effect on the citizens of the Republic of Serbia, while they disagree that the financial aid helped them solve some of their financial problems. Ivanović et al. (2020) found that 17% of respondents believe that Serbia has enough money to overcome the pandemic COVID-19 crisis.

Table 8

Respondents' opinions regarding financial aid from the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences during the COVID-19 pandemic

Variable	N	M	SD
Financial aid from the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences during the COVID-19 pandemic had a positive effect on the citizens of the Republic of Serbia (from 1 - I absolutely disagree to 5 - I fully agree).	178	3.07	1.33
Financial aid from the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences during the COVID-19 pandemic helped me solve some of my financial problems (from 1 - I absolutely disagree to 5 - I fully agree).	179	2.28	1.43

Note: N – number of respondents; M – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation

Source: Authors

According to the research results, respondents agree, on average, that they did not feel confident about adopting and implementing measures by the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences of the pandemic. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means that the respondent absolutely disagrees, and 5 means that they fully agree with the statement that they did not feel confident, the average score is 3.60. The respondents have a slightly better attitude but are still negative regarding confidence in institutions (Government of the Republic of Serbia, President, Parliament, Public Institutions, Healthcare, Education, Police, etc.). The average score is 3.40 on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents absolute disagreement, and 5 represents full agreement with the statement that the respondent has lost trust in the institutions (Table 9). According to Bjeloš & Hercegonja (2022), approximately 40% of respondents believe the Government of Serbia handled the crisis effectively. On the other hand, Turjačanin et al. (2020) found that respondents generally do not trust institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding COVID-19 measures and their implementation.

Table 9

Respondents' opinions regarding confidence in the adoption and implementation of measures by the Serbian Government and institutions

Variable	N	M	SD
During the pandemic, I did not feel confident about the adoption and implementation of measures by the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences of the pandemic (from 1 – I absolutely disagree to 5 – I fully agree).	179	3.68	1.23
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I lost trust in institutions (Government of the Republic of Serbia, President, Parliament, Public Institutions, Healthcare, Education, Police, etc) (from 1 – I absolutely disagree to 5 – I fully agree).	179	3.40	1.32

Note: N – number of respondents; M – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation

Source: Authors

Table 10

Respondents' attitudes regarding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on health and lifestyle

Variable	N	M	SD
The COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed the way people live (remote work, travel, distance education, healthcare) (from 1 – I absolutely disagree to 5 – I fully agree).	178	4.09	1.05
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I am more afraid for my health and that of my family (from 1 – I absolutely disagree to 5 – I fully agree).	178	3.54	1.29
The COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on my mental state (nervousness, fear, panic, etc) (from 1 – I absolutely disagree to 5 – I fully agree).	179	3.02	1.39
I believe that after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, I will not be able to continue with a normal life (from 1 – I absolutely disagree to 5 – I fully agree).	178	2.27	1.29

Note: N – number of respondents; M – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation

Source: Authors

Table 10 shows respondents' attitudes regarding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on health and lifestyle. On average, respondents agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way people live (remote work, travel, distance education, health care) and say that they fear more for their health and the health of their families because of the COVID-19 pandemic. On average, respondents express neutral attitudes regarding the negative impact on their mental state (nervousness, fear, panic, etc.), while they disagree with the view that after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, they will not be able to continue with a normal life.

The research below examines the differences in attitudes among various respondent categories using the Kruskal-Wallis test. This test was used to examine the differences between the attitudes of respondents of different age groups regarding the Government's measures and the long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The tests showed the following statistically significant results:

- 1) Judging by age groups, regarding the attitude that the measures of the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic were of a political nature and resulted in the accumulation of political points, ($\chi^2_{(4)} = 20.69$, $p < 0.001$), respondents aged from 30 to 40 are the most likely to believe that the measures were of a political nature and resulted in the collection of political points, followed by respondents aged 20 to 30, while respondents over 60 years of age least agree with this statement.
- 2) With regard to the opinion that financial aid from the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences during the COVID-19 pandemic had a positive effect on the citizens of the Republic of Serbia, ($\chi^2_{(4)} = 20.47$, $p < 0.001$), respondents over 60 years of age agree the most with this statement, followed by respondents aged 20 to 30, while respondents aged 30 to 40 agree the least with this statement.
- 3) Regarding the opinion that financial aid from the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic helped them solve some of their financial problems, ($\chi^2_{(4)} = 40.89$, $p < 0.001$), respondents over 60 agree the most, while respondents aged 30 to 40 agree the least with the above statement.

- 4) Regarding the attitude that during the pandemic, they did not feel confident about the adoption and implementation of the measures taken by the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences of the pandemic ($\chi^2_{(4)} = 12.01$, $p = 0.017$), respondents aged 30 to 40 most agree with the above statement, followed by respondents aged 50 to 60 and older than 60, while respondents aged 40 to 50 least agree with this statement. Kallemose et al. (2023) found that respondents from Denmark and Sweden, 65 years or younger, expressed less trust in government measures than those older than 65.
- 5) Regarding trust in institutions (Government of the Republic of Serbia, President, Parliament, Public Institutions, Healthcare, Education, Police, etc.), respondents aged 30 to 40 lost the most trust, and respondents older than 60 the least ($\chi^2_{(4)} = 32.68$, $p < 0.001$).
- 6) Among the age groups, regarding the attitude that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they are more afraid for their own and their family's health, ($\chi^2_{(4)} = 13.65$, $p = 0.009$), respondents over 60 agree with this statement the most, while respondents aged 30 to 40 agree the least. Pajvančić-Cizelj, Čikić, and Ristić (2020) also found that older respondents (aged 56-64 and 65 years and older) in Serbia agree that they are afraid for themselves and their families.
- 7) Regarding the inability to continue a normal life after the pandemic, respondents over 60 most agree that they will not be able to continue a normal life after the COVID-19 pandemic, while respondents between the ages of 50 and 60 agree the least with this statement, ($\chi^2_{(4)} = 27.97$, $p < 0.001$). The results are similar to those of Pajvančić-Cizelj, Čikić and Ristić (2020), who found that respondents older than 65 years strongly agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed their lives.

The Kruskal-Wallis test was also used to examine differences in attitudes toward the Government's measures and the long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic among respondents of different employment statuses. The results show statistically significant differences regarding the following statements:

- 1) Unemployed respondents mostly agree with the statement that the measures taken by the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative

consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic were of a political nature and resulted in the collection of political points. On the other hand, pensioners are least likely to agree with this statement ($\chi^2_{(3)} = 16.03$, $p = 0.001$).

- 2) Pensioners most agree with the statement that financial aid from the Serbian Government to mitigate the negative consequences during the COVID-19 pandemic had a positive effect on the citizens of the Republic of Serbia, while employed respondents least agree with this statement ($\chi^2_{(3)} = 23.19$, $p < 0.001$). Jovanović, Đukić and Ajvazović (2021) also found that financial support from the Serbian Government was particularly important to pensioners.
- 3) Additionally, pensioners most agree with the statement that financial aid from the Serbian Government helped mitigate the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, alleviating some of their financial problems, while employed respondents least agree with this statement ($\chi^2_{(3)} = 39.61$, $p < 0.001$).
- 4) Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployed respondents lost the most trust in institutions (Serbian Government, President, Parliament, Public Institutions, Healthcare, Education, Police, etc.). On the other hand, pensioners lost the least trust in institutions ($\chi^2_{(3)} = 12.29$, $p = 0.006$).
- 5) Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, pensioners are the most afraid for their own and their family's health, while unemployed respondents are the least afraid for their own and their family's health ($\chi^2_{(3)} = 11.68$, $p = 0.009$).
- 6) As in the previous situation, pensioners most agree with the statement that after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, they will not be able to continue with a normal life, while employed respondents least agree with this statement ($\chi^2_{(3)} = 31.72$, $p < 0.001$).

Concluding Remarks

Based on the above, it can be said that no country in the world was ready to respond adequately to the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most countries have adopted economic measures to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic and to help citizens and the economy. Those measures had different impacts, and many factors influenced the effectiveness of those measures (economic development of the country, political situation, citizens' trust, etc.). This paper analyses the citizens' attitudes related to the

effectiveness of economic measures implemented by the Serbian Government during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Analysis of research results points to the following conclusions. First of all, the majority of respondents believe that the Republic of Serbia was not ready to adequately deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, similar to other countries. The economic sectors most affected by the pandemic were, in the opinion of Serbian citizens, the tourism and hospitality sectors, followed by the production and transport sectors. Most respondents did not lose their jobs due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but their working conditions worsened. Respondents mostly believe that the Government's measures had an impact on the economy, but that they were primarily political and were used to score political points. Also, respondents believe that the Government's measures did not solve the financial problems that arose during the pandemic. Citizens have shown that they have little trust in government measures and institutions themselves, and in how they deal with crises. The respondents were quite neutral regarding their psychological state after the pandemic and the possibility of continuing a normal life. Care should be taken here because the attitudes by age categories differ, so older respondents are more concerned about the health consequences of the pandemic.

What should be emphasised is that, if observing the respondents' age structure, as the age of the respondents

increases, the trust towards the Government's measures also increases. The fear of long-term consequences of the pandemic is more pronounced among the elderly population. The unemployed are the most dissatisfied with the measures taken by the Serbian Government regarding the elimination of the pandemic's consequences.

The conclusion that emerges is that the measures could have been more selective and aimed at the middle-aged population and the unemployed, which is also a recommendation for future crises. The greater targeting of measures towards the population that makes up the working class stems from the fact that their position is much more uncertain in crisis conditions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which is why they require larger aid.

The survey includes 179 respondents, so generalising the results is not recommended. Furthermore, most questions and answers are based on rating certain statements on a scale from 1 to 5. Therefore, the respondents' answers are based on their subjective assessment. Given that the answers were obtained via an online tool and the survey was anonymous, the influence of subjectivity is reduced. However, there is a social desirability bias. Future research should include a larger sample of respondents and a qualitative analysis of citizens' views on economic measures to mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Republic of Serbia.

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Analiza stališć državljanov do ekonomskih ukrepa za odpravo posledic pandemije covid-19 v Republici Srbiji

Izveček

Pandemija, ki jo je povzročil virus covid-19, je povzročila negativne ekonomske posledice v vseh državah. Pandemija covid-19 je ustvarila težave pri delovanju gospodarstva, zato so bili potrebni ukrepi ekonomske politike za zmanjšanje negativnega vpliva pandemije. Vsaka država na svetu je skušala najti najboljše ekonomske ukrepe, s katerimi bi svojim državljanom čim bolj olajšala premagovanje negativnih učinkov pandemije. Po petih letih od začetka pandemije je mogoče veliko bolj objektivno oceniti dejanske učinke teh državnih ukrepov, ki jih je izvajala tudi Vlada Republike Srbije, kar je predmet analize v tem prispevku. Primarni cilj tega prispevka je oceniti mnenja državljanov o učinkovitosti ekonomskih ukrepov države, ki jih je izvajala Vlada Republike Srbije za ublažitev vpliva pandemije na življenja državljanov in delovanje podjetij.

Ključne besede: ukrepi ekonomske politike, pandemija covid-19, anketa, anketiranci