

Fragile sociality: Inequalities in access to adult education and social trust

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***4th International ESS Conference: Turbulent times in
Europe: Instability, insecurity and inequality
April 15-17, 2019, Mannheim, Germany***

OUTLINE

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- **Main theoretical assumptions and theses**
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INTRODUCTION

- In contemporary societies, the educational inequalities are as important as the inequalities in income and wealth.
- However, given the importance that participation in adult formal and non-formal education has at European policy agenda, the inequalities in adult formal and non-formal education matter as much as the inequalities in initial education.

Aim:

- *to explore how inequalities in access to adult education and training affect individual well-being by studying their influence on the construction of impersonal and institutional trust.*

Main theoretical assumptions and theses - I

Building upon the capability approach (Sen, 1992; 1999) we adhere the view that:

- the educational inequalities are as important for the well-being as the inequalities in income.

As Sen (1992: 28) puts it “[a]n important and frequently encountered problem arises from concentrating on inequality of incomes as the primary focus of attention in the analysis of inequality. The extent of real inequality of opportunities that people face cannot be readily deduced from the magnitude of inequality of incomes, since what we can or cannot do, can or cannot achieve, do not depend just on our incomes but also on the variety of physical and social characteristics that affect our lives and make us what we are.”

- unjust inequality is related more with freedom to achieve rather than with actual achievements.

“In dealing with responsible adults, it is more appropriate to see the claims of individuals on the society (or the demands of equity or justice) in terms of freedom to achieve rather than actual achievements. If the social arrangements are such that a responsible adult is given no less freedom (in terms of set comparisons) than others, but he still wastes the opportunities and ends up worse off than others, it is possible to argue that no unjust inequality may be involved. If that view is taken, then the direct relevance of capability (as opposed to achieved functionings) will be easy to assert.” (Sen 1992: 148)

Main theoretical assumptions and theses - II

Educational inequalities

- capture the losses in human capital/development and as such they influence not only on the objective (eg. economic), but also on subjective aspects of well-being.
- depend on the social background of people (e.g. Rubenson 1998);
- are cumulative (Di Prete & Eirich 2006; Walker 2012; Yaqub 2008).

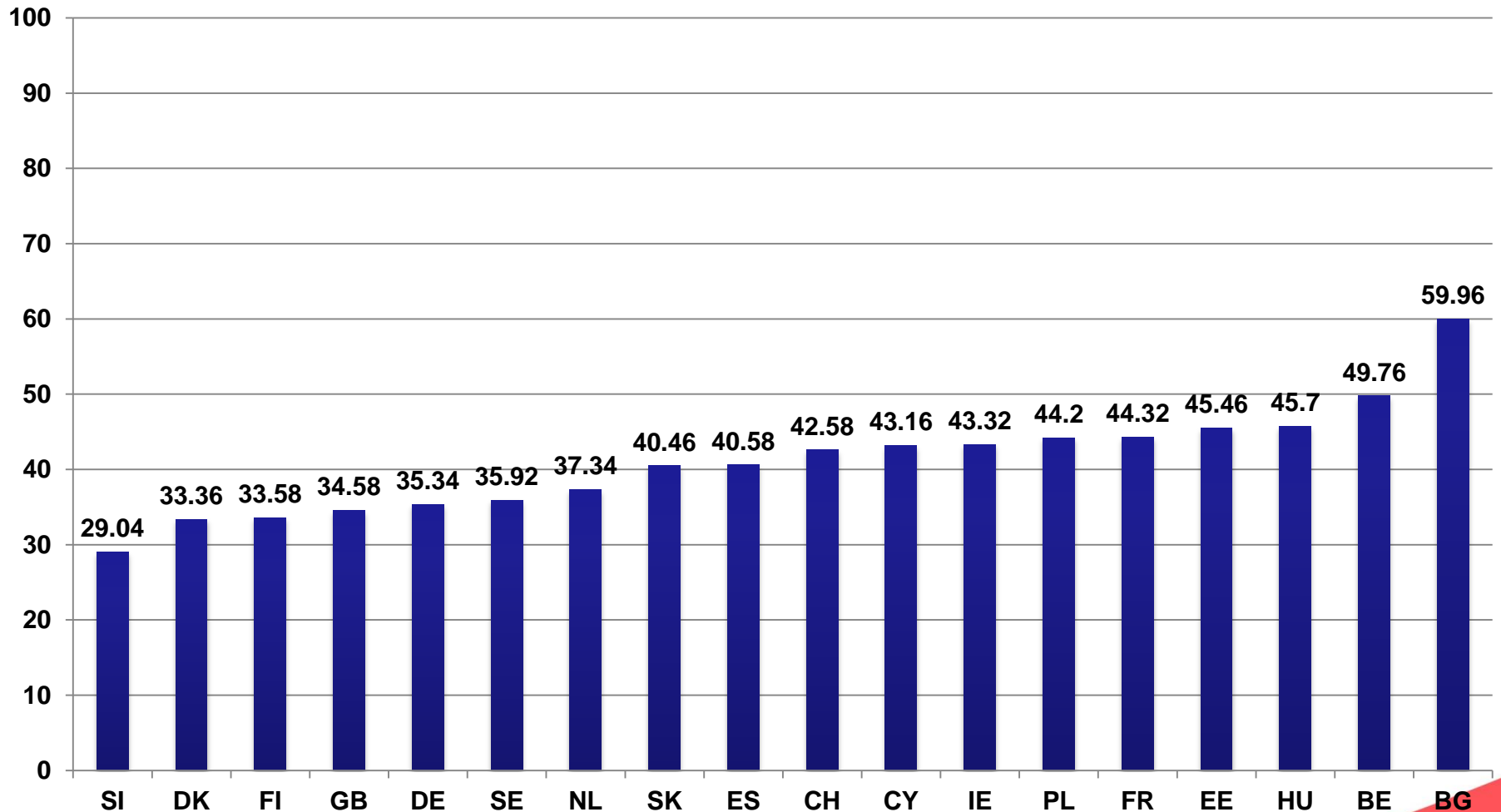
Given this,

- *legitimacy of educational inequalities cannot be taken for granted and their social consequences should be further explored.*

In contemporary societies education becomes life long and life wide:

- increase of the importance of adult education
- legitimacy of inequalities in adult education is questionable because of the strong dependence of participation in it on person's initial level of education.

Modified Inequality index for graduates born between 1976 and 1985 in 18 countries. Source: ESS, 2006-2010 (own calculations)



Main theoretical assumptions and theses - III

Trust as an indicator of well-being

We share the view that:

- well-being is a dynamic and complex phenomenon possessing both objective and subjective aspects.
- trust is one of the most important subjective aspects of people's well-being.
- it is the invisible axis of every society because without the general trust that people have in one another, society itself would disintegrate (Boyadjieva 2009; Simmel 1990).
- it is also seen as the key to making democracy work (Putnam, 1993) and crucial to overcoming the growing social vulnerability within societies, that is seen as resulting from social inequalities (Misztal, 2011).

Main theoretical assumptions and theses - IV

- We define trust as a personal strategy for dealing with insecurity, eventualities, and uncontrollability in social milieus. As a strategy, trust is based on positive expectations regarding the actions and attitudes of other people (e.g. Giddens, 1990). Thus, trust is the individual's expectation that another individual or group is likely, at worst, not to do you harm, knowingly or willingly, and at best, to act in your interest (e.g. Delhey & Newton, 2005).
- We focus on
 - ✓ **impersonal trust** - trust in generalized others, that is, on impersonal trust between random people,
 - ✓ **institutional trust** - captures trust in abstract social objects, such as the social institutions that are essential for the functioning of society and for establishing social order.

Main theoretical assumptions and theses - V

- There are 2 broad schools of thought relevant to trust (Delhey & Newton 2003)
 - 1) trust is a feature pertaining to individual persons and associated with individual characteristics, which are either core personality traits, or individual social and demographic features, such as class, education, income, age, and gender.
 - 2) social trust pertains not to individuals but to social systems. Proponents of this approach argue that education is closely related to, and a major cause of, success and well-being in life, the latter being more closely associated with trust.

- Survey data from different countries show that there is a strong association between trust and education, and indicate that high levels of education result in high levels of generalized trust (eg. Inglehart 1999; You 2012).

Main theoretical assumptions and theses - VI

Theses

We argue that it is not only the level of initial education that matters for the subjective well-being of individuals in contemporary societies but 1) also the participation in adult work-related education and training and 2) the inequalities in adult formal and non-formal education and training in the country where they live.

Hypotheses:

- 1) The participation in work-related education and training is positively associated with the level of trust.
- 2) The inequalities in adult formal and non-formal education and training in countries where people live are negatively associated with trust.
- 3) The influence of inequalities in access to adult formal and non-formal education and training on trust differs across European countries being stronger in countries with full democracy.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT - I

Data: European Social Survey (ESS): 2012

Methods: Descriptive statistics, Correlation & Multilevel Regression analyses

Measures:

Educational Inequalities

- We use the index of inequality in access to adult education developed by Cabus & Stefanik (2018). Using the properties of the Lorenz curve (e.g. Kakwani et al., 1997), they have computed a measure for unequal access to formal or non-formal adult E&T. The inequality indices represent concentration indices. Positive concentration indices indicate that adult E&T is clustered among the high-educated, while negative concentration indices indicate that adult E&T is clustered among the low-educated. The minimum and maximum values of a concentration is -1 and +1, respectively, which means perfect inequality.

Trust

- impersonal trust (generalized trust & generalized fairness)
- institutional trust (trust in the parliament & trust in the legal system)

DATA AND MEASUREMENT - II

Variables

Dependent (generalized trust, generalized fairness, trust in the parliament & trust in the legal system) (0/10)

Independent

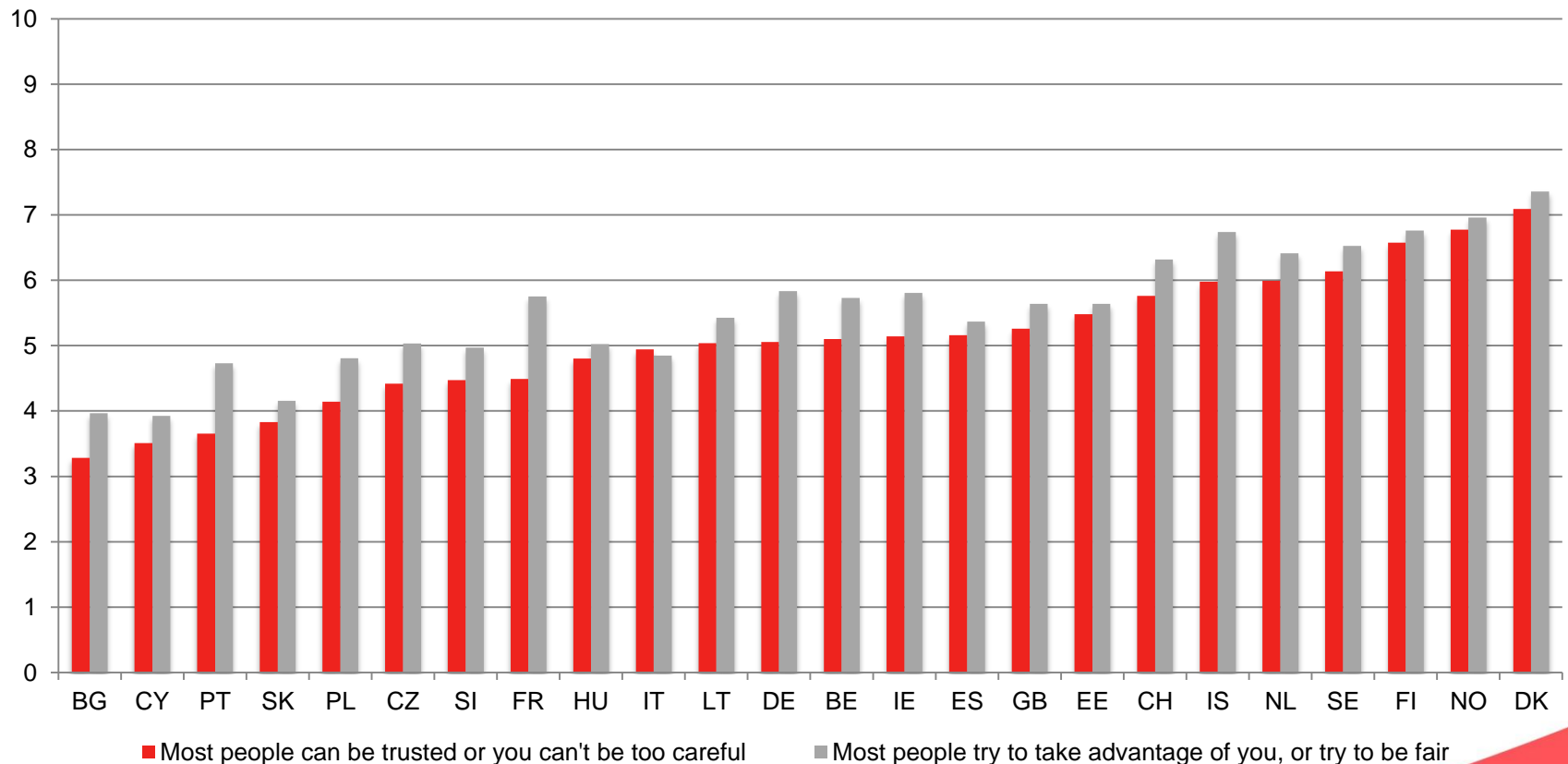
- Participation in adult work-related education and training (ref. period 12 months) (0 no /1 yes)
- Index of inequality in access to adult formal and non-formal education and training (Cabus & Stefanik 2018) (standardized)
- Democracy regime (The Economist 2012) (0 flawed: SI, PL, HU, EE, PT, FR, IT, LT, BG, SK, CY/1 full)

Control variables

- Gender (0 male/1 female)
- Educational level (ISCED 2011) 8 categories.
- Social background (0 none of the parents with HE /1 at least one of the parents with HE)
- LM status – 4 categories (in paid work, in education, unemployed, inactive)

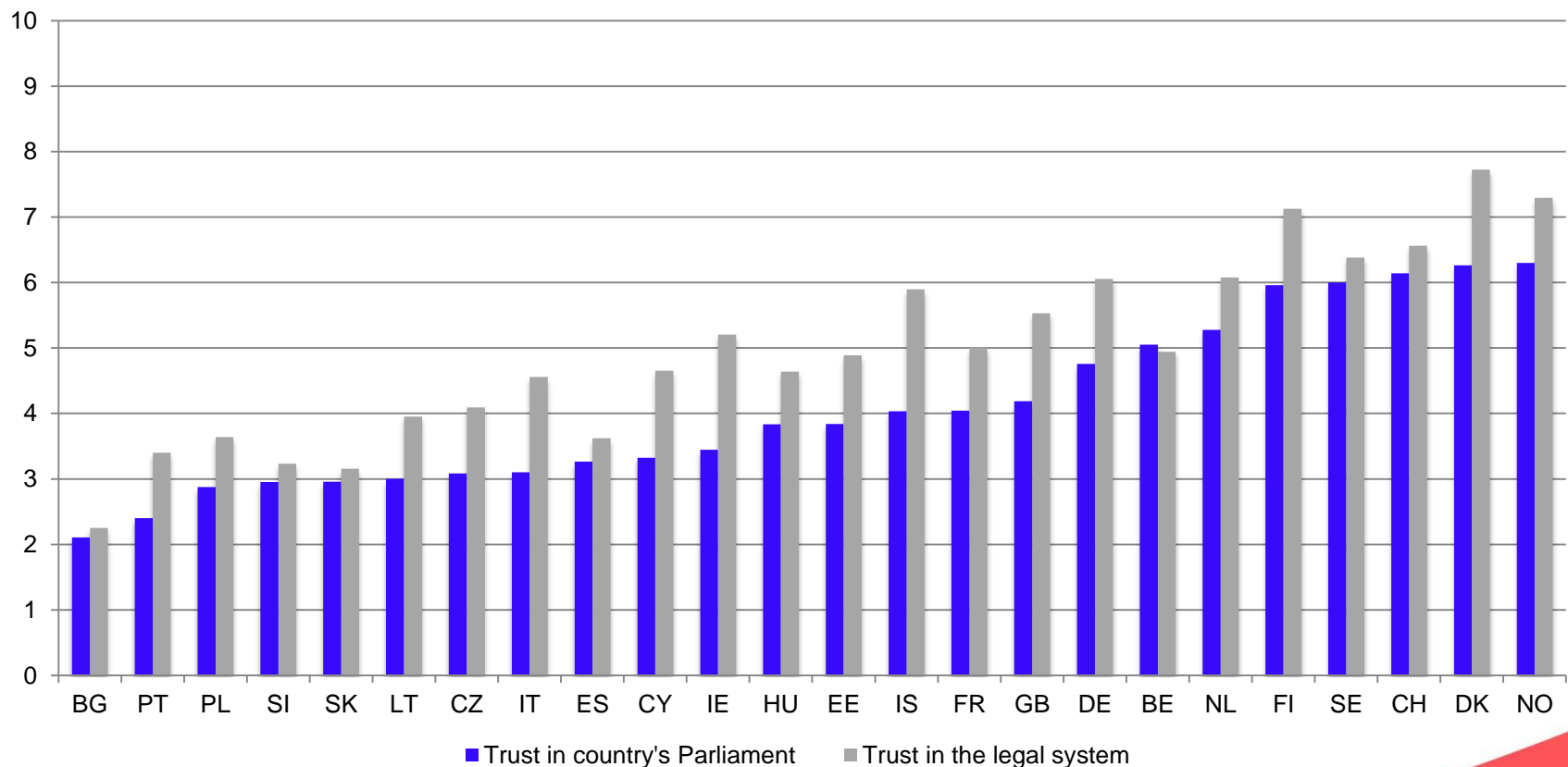
Generalized Trust and Generalized Fairness in 24 Countries (Mean Values), All People Aged 25-64, weighted data (dweight)

Scales: from 0 you can't be too careful to 10 most people can be trusted;
from 0 most people try to take advantage of me to 10 most people try to be fair.



Trust in Country's Parliament and Trust in the Legal System in 24 Countries (Mean Values), People Aged 25-64, weighted data (dweight).

Scales: from 0 no trust at all to 10 complete trust



Bivariate associations at national level (24 countries)

	Generalized trust	Trust in the legal system	Index of inequality in adult education	Full democracy	GDP (below EU 28 average)
Generalized trust	1				
Trust in the legal system	0.89***	1			
Index of inequality in adult education	-0.72***	-0.67***	1		
Full democracy	0.69***	0.69***	-0.61**	1	
GDP (below EU 28 average)	-0.68***	-0.80***	0.61**	-0.66***	1

Results of Multilevel Analysis of Generalized Trust in 24 countries

	M0	M1	M2	M3
	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.
<i>Gender, Ref. Male</i>				
Female		-.064*	-.063*	-.063*
<i>Educational level, Ref. ISCED 0-1</i>				
ISCED 2		.161*	.160*	.160*
ISCED 3 general		.607***	.608***	.609***
ISCED 3 vocational		.531***	.529***	.53***
ISCED 4		.757***	.755***	.757***
ISCED 5 short		.767***	.763***	.763***
ISCED 5 medium		1.06***	1.05***	1.05***
ISCED 5 long & ISCED 6 doctor		1.20***	1.20***	1.20***
<i>Socioeconomic background, Ref. None of the parents with a HE degree</i>				
At least one of the parents with a HE degree		.089*	.086*	.086*
<i>Participation in work-related training: No</i>				
Yes		.200***	.196***	.195***
<i>Main activity: Ref. Paid work</i>				
Education		.127	.124	.124
Unemployed		-.349***	-.347***	-.347***
Inactive		-.089*	-.089*	-.089*
<i>Index of inequalities in access to adult education</i>			-.390**	-.0003
<i>Democracy, Ref. Flawed</i>				
Full			.759**	.832**
<i>Index of inequalities in access to adult education*full</i>				-.715**
Constant	5.14***	4.46***	4.05***	3.79***
Intraclass correlation (rho)	0.178	0.065	0.056	0.050
No. of observations	25369	25369	25369	25369

Results of Multilevel Analysis of Generalized fairness in 24 countries

	M0	M1	M2	M3
	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.
<i>Gender, Ref. Male</i>				
Female		.124***	.125***	.125***
<i>Educational level, Ref. ISCED 0-1</i>				
ISCED 2		.162*	.160*	.160*
ISCED 3 general		.547***	.547***	.549***
ISCED 3 vocational		.505***	.502***	.503***
ISCED 4		.671***	.667***	.669***
ISCED 5 short		.680***	.674***	.674***
ISCED 5 medium		.962***	.958***	.959***
ISCED 5 long & ISCED 6 doctor		.994***	.993***	.995***
<i>Socioeconomic background, Ref. None of the parents with a HE degree</i>				
At least one of the parents with a HE degree		.099**	.095**	.095**
<i>Participation in job-related training: No</i>				
Yes		.161***	.155***	.154***
<i>Main activity: Ref. Paid work</i>				
Education		-.074	-.078	-.079
Unemployed		-.389***	-.387***	-.386***
Inactive		-.055	-.056	-.055
<i>Index of inequalities in access to adult education</i>				
			-.380***	-.105
<i>Democracy, Ref. Flawed</i>				
Full			.756***	.809***
<i>Index of inequalities in access to adult education*full</i>				
				-.505*
Constant	5.61***	4.92***	4.51***	4.32***
Intraclass correlation (rho)	0.172	0.048	0.033	0.036
No of observations	25293	25293	25293	25293
No of countries	24	24	24	24

Results of Multilevel Analysis of Trust in Country's Parliament in 24 countries

	M0 Coef.	M1 Coef.	M2 Coef.	M3 Coef.
<i>Gender, Ref. Male</i>				
Female		-.144***	-.143***	-.143***
<i>Educational level, Ref. ISCED 0-1</i>				
ISCED 2		.021	.019	.019
ISCED 3 general		.511***	.512***	.513***
ISCED 3 vocational		.245***	.243***	.245***
ISCED 4		.454***	.452***	.453***
ISCED 5 short		.621***	.617***	.618***
ISCED 5 medium		.937***	.935***	.936***
ISCED 5 long & ISCED 6 doctor		1.15***	1.15***	1.15***
<i>Socioeconomic background, Ref. None of the parents with a HE degree</i>				
At least one of the parents with a HE degree		.139***	.136***	.136***
<i>Participation in job-related training: No</i>				
Yes		.119***	.114***	.114***
<i>Main activity: Ref. Paid work</i>				
Education		.114	.111	.111
Unemployed		-.377***	-.375***	-.375***
Inactive		-.067	-.067	-.067
<i>Index of inequalities in access to adult education</i>				
Democracy, Ref. Flawed			-.477*	.024
Full			1.03**	1.13**
<i>Index of inequalities in access to adult education*full</i>				
				-.919**
Constant	4.14***	3.68***	3.12***	2.78***
Intraclass correlation (rho)	0.248	0.094	0.104	0.080
No of observations	25017	25017	25017	25017

Results of Multilevel Analysis of Trust in Country's Legal System in 24 countries

	M0	M1	M2	M3
	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.
<i>Gender, Ref. Male</i>				
Female		-.123***	-.122***	-.122***
<i>Educational level, Ref. ISCED 0-1</i>				
ISCED 2		-.060	-.061	-.061
ISCED 3 general		.311***	.312***	.313***
ISCED 3 vocational		.133	.132	.133
ISCED 4		.277**	.276**	.278**
ISCED 5 short		.476***	.473***	.475***
ISCED 5 medium		.721***	.720***	.721***
ISCED 5 long & ISCED 6 doctor		.929***	.929***	.930***
<i>Socioeconomic background, Ref. None of the parents with a HE degree</i>				
At least one of the parents with a HE degree		.094*	.092*	.092*
<i>Participation in job-related training: No</i>				
Yes		.166***	.162***	.162***
<i>Main activity: Ref. Paid work</i>				
Education		.236*	.233*	.233*
Unemployed		-.239***	-.237***	-.237***
Inactive		-.107**	-.107**	-.107**
<i>Index of inequalities in access to adult education</i>				
			-.505*	.245
<i>Democracy, Ref. Flawed</i>				
Full			1.19*	1.33***
<i>Index of inequalities in access to adult education*full</i>				
				-1.38***
Constant	5.036***	4.699***	4.05***	3.54***
Intraclass correlation (rho)	0.280	0.121	0.137	0.090
No of observations	25070	25070	25070	25070

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS - I

- Consistent with previous research (eg. Borgonovi 2012), our results suggest that better educated are generally more trusting than the poorly educated.
- Participation in adult work-related education and training is positively associated with the level of trust.
- High social background is positively associated with the level of trust.
- People living in full democracies show significantly higher levels of impersonal and institutional trust than people in countries characterized by flawed democracy.
- Similarly to income inequalities, our results indicate that **as the inequalities in access to adult formal and non-formal education rise, the levels of both impersonal and institutional trust drop.**
- The strength of the association between inequalities in adult education and training and levels of trust depends on the democracy regime of the country people live. More specifically, in countries with full democracy the inequalities in access to adult education are associated with decreasing the level of impersonal and institutional trust.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS - II

- The study results raise again the question whether social trust is a property of individuals or of social systems. Analyzing seven countries Delhey and Newton (2003: 113) find that “we cannot draw the conclusion that societal theories are more or less powerful than individual ones. Each seems to play a part.”

- Our study contributes to this discussion by demonstrating that:
 - ✓ participation in adult work-related education and training is also positively associated with the level of trust.
 - ✓ construction of social trust is also dependent on the level of inequalities in access to adult education in the country people live and this dependence is different in societies with different democratic regime.

CONCLUSION

- Inequalities in adult education are important determinant of the subjective aspects of well-being.
- That is why reducing inequalities in access to adult education is a way to improve individuals' well-being.
- Adult education is a complex phenomenon and refers to different kinds of education – formal, non-formal, job-related, non-job related. Further studies are needed in order to better understand the influence of inequalities in different types of adult education on well-being.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The paper is a result of the work of the authors in the scientific project European Social Survey (ESS) of the National route map for scientific infrastructure, funded by the Ministry of Education and Science, Bulgaria.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION!**

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