

**POPULIST NOTION OF DE FACTO IMPROVEMENT OF
LABOUR RIGHTS: ON ATTITUDES OF THE CITIZENS OF THE
FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA REGARDING
THE SUNDAY WORK BAN**

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***Abstract.** In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, through the Law on Internal Trade, it is planned to restrict work on Sundays for most sales facilities. This would apply to the territory of the entity concerned, i.e., 51% of Bosnia and Herzegovina's territory. Previously, unlike other countries that introduced the same or similar practices, there have been no significant social and political discussions or surveys of the views of workers, employers, and citizens. This paper aims to research the citizens' views of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina on non-working Sundays and thus offer a basis for a better discussion of this issue. A convenience sample of 406 respondents from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H) entity was used. Despite the expressed bias on the topic of banning trade on Sundays, the analysis of respondents' answers regarding the willingness to work on Sundays (with the condition of a second day off some other day and 50% higher wages for working on Sundays) showed that more than half of the respondents support working on Sundays under this condition. The survey results showed that citizens are less inclined to restrict the operation of smaller shops and that the ban on working on Sundays is mainly supported by those who do not work on Sundays.*

Key words: Sunday work ban, trade, citizens' attitudes.

JEL classification: F13, L81

1. Introduction. Do non-working Sundays contribute to enhancing labour rights? We have witnessed, on the one hand, the liberalisation of non-working Sunday regulations, such as in Germany, and, on the other hand, populist movements, such as Orban's movement in Hungary, introducing (for a short time) a non-working Sunday regulation to benefit from popular support. This paper presents citizens' attitudes towards the non-working Sunday regulation in the case

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of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H). Furthermore, it aims to debunk the popular belief that non-working Sunday regulations, by their very nature, enhance labour rights. In the global context, this study, however, can be a guide for academic researchers for future studies and for policymakers introducing regulations that aim either to liberalise Sunday work or to introduce non-working Sundays. The paper is structured in such a way as to present a literature review, after which the research methodology is explained, and the results are presented. Finally, there is a discussion of the results and conclusions. Non-working Sundays have become a topical issue in Southeast European countries in recent years. Thus, Montenegro banned Sunday work in 2019, while Croatia did so in 2023. In December 2023, the FB&H Government proposed the Draft Law on Internal Trade in parliamentary proceedings. Certain provisions of the Draft Law regulate the working hours of sales facilities, prohibiting work on Sundays and public holidays at these establishments. So far, there has been no significant public or academic debate on banning Sunday work in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This paper aims to investigate the views of FB&H citizens regarding this ban in order to contribute to a precise and more thorough understanding of this measure. In particular, there are numerous ambiguities in and misinterpretations of the regulations on working on Sundays and public holidays and on other related issues. Therefore, this paper offers new insights on these topics. In the last few years, Sunday work has been regulated by local or cantonal regulations. Some municipalities and cities have banned work on Sundays, with various exceptions. Larger cities that prohibit Sunday work are Mostar and Bijeljina. However, in 2023, the Ministry of Trade of the FB&H announced the intention to regulate Sunday work with the Draft Law on Internal Trade put forward by the FB&H Government in December 2023, as mentioned above. Regulating the opening hours of sales facilities, Article 17 of this law, *inter alia*, prohibits work on Sundays and public holidays with multiple exceptions enumerated as follows: Petrol stations, flower shops, bakeries, souvenir shops, antique and traditional shops, 24-hour convenience stores, as well as sales outlets that are part of hospitals, hotels, railway and bus stations, airports, areas of cultural and religious facilities, museums and nature parks, cemeteries and specialised stores associated with cemeteries. Exceptions also apply to trade in primary agricultural products, sales organised as part of fairs, events, and exhibitions, and sales via electronic stores, vending machines, etc. The adoption of these legal solutions implies that sales facilities in the field of trade on 51% of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be prohibited from operating on Sundays. In addition, from an international law perspective and based on agreements between Bosnia and Herzegovina and other (non-)state actors, three (international) documents address non-working Sundays: the European Social Charter, the Basic Agreement

between the Holy See and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the agreement with the Serbian Orthodox Church, which allows two additional non-working days (Sunday and Epiphany) (Išerić, 2016). Our study examines the attitudes of FB&H citizens regarding Sunday work and its regulation.

2. Literature review. The discussion among economists and politicians on the pros and cons of banning Sunday work is still ongoing. It is a very complex issue on which there is no unified position. The general issue of trade is complex because trade in general, whether it is external or internal, is based on the division of labour and specialisation (Brkić & Popović-Petrović, 2017). In addition, trade is always under the influence of numerous trends in the world economy (Dužević et al., 2024). In the European Union, there is a trend towards liberalisation of Sunday work regulations (Boulin, 2013; Cabrita, 2016; Grzesiuk, 2021), and the number of workers who work on Sundays is continuously growing, according to the European Working Conditions Surveys (2016). At the same time, there is no consensus regarding Sunday work regulations. The European Court of Justice ruled that Sunday cannot be considered the most suitable day for ensuring the aforementioned labour rights regarding rest, health, and safety of workers as compared to other days (Bilić, 2017; Cabrita, 2016). The Catholic Church and organisations affiliated with it, as well as trade unions, mostly advocate for banning work on Sundays (Bekić, 2013; Šeba, 2019). The prohibition of working on Sundays is mainly investigated by assessing its economic, social, and other effects. This involves monitoring such indicators as the impact on employment, prices, sales (volume of sales, structure of sales, etc.), and market concentration/market structure (Grzesiuk, 2016). This paper will not deal with this topic. Instead, it investigates how FB&H citizens perceive the Sunday work ban. Furthermore, it provides the available research regarding the views of different respondents on the Sunday work ban. The main advocates for the Sunday ban work are the workers. Thus, numerous studies investigate workers' attitudes towards Sunday work. These studies show that weekend work is considered unpopular since workers view Sunday as a day off dedicated to family time and leisure (Demerouti et al., 2004). Studies in English-speaking countries reveal that retail workers are more opposed to working on Sundays than Saturdays (Deery & Mahony, 1994; Kirby, 1992). This applies, in particular, to workers who are parents (La Valle et al., 2002).

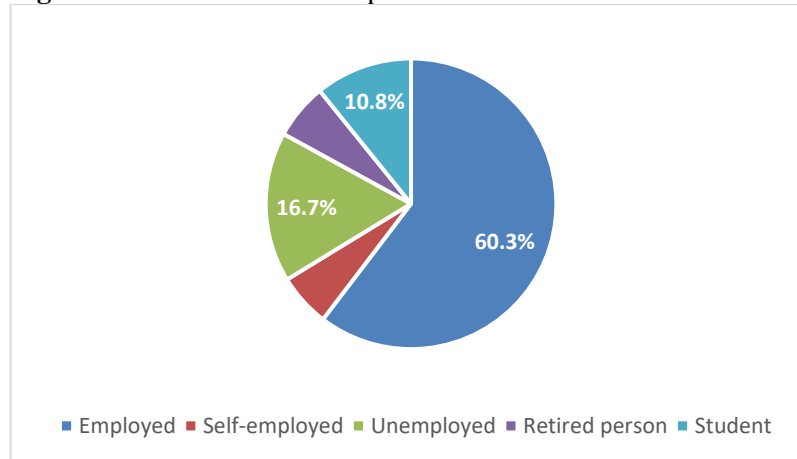
The study conducted by Deery and Mahony (1994) in Australia provides intriguing insights. The results indicate full-time employees (84%) are against working on Sundays, whereas fewer occasional employees (69%) and informal employees (51%) are against working on Sundays. Similarly, Price (2004) found

that 70% of informal employees are willing to work on Sundays, compared to 40% of permanent employees. These studies highlight different workers' attitudes toward Sunday work based on their employment status. Therefore, the empirical part of this paper will examine respondents' characteristics, such as gender, and whether the respondents work on Sundays. The main factor influencing workers' attitudes towards Sunday and overtime work is whether significant premiums or additional payments are included for such work (Martin et al., 2011). The additional factor that significantly influences workers' attitudes towards Sunday work is the work schedule. If the schedule is set solely by the employer, instead of by union bargaining or worker preference, then the willingness to work on Sundays is less (Fossum, 2005; Hinrichs et al., 1991; Root & Wooten, 2008). Therefore, Martin et al. (2011) suggest that if workers have notable bargaining power over their schedules, then workers' willingness to work on Sundays can be increased. In addition, significant financial compensation is required to improve workers' willingness to work on Sundays. Workers like to be in control of time organisation, and the reason for this is a quality balance of business and family obligations (Eby et al., 2005; Martin et al. 2011; Moen et al., 2008).

As expected, individuals who identify themselves as religious and who regularly worship are more inclined to be against a Sunday workday than atheists and respondents who do not worship (Brstilo Lovrić & Škomrlj, 2020). Cohen-Zada & Sander's (2011) study reveals that Sunday work deregulation led to a decrease in the participation of religious respondents, mainly among women, and consequently to a decline in their sense of happiness. In addition, it was confirmed that religious respondents demonstrate a strong preference for a non-working Sundays in the context of the need for worship, mainly because Mass on Sundays is an important part of religious life that is impossible or difficult to attend if a religious individual works on Sundays (Batinić et al., 2014). A survey of Croatian students based on a sample of 1,094 participants (Brstilo Lovrić & Škomrlj, 2020) indicates that respondents whose parents have higher incomes and are well-educated are more willing to accept work on Sundays than respondents whose parents have lower incomes and are less educated. This could be in line with a study conducted in Serbia in which the results show that higher work intensity of household members reduces the poverty risk of employed persons (Krstić, 2017). Furthermore, hedonistic consumers are more willing to endure Sunday work than those who do not follow consumption trends, do not relax while shopping, and do not go shopping when they have a bad day. Qualitative research conducted by Batinić et al. (2014) indicates that Sunday work is perceived as solidly linked to the violation of labour and human rights.

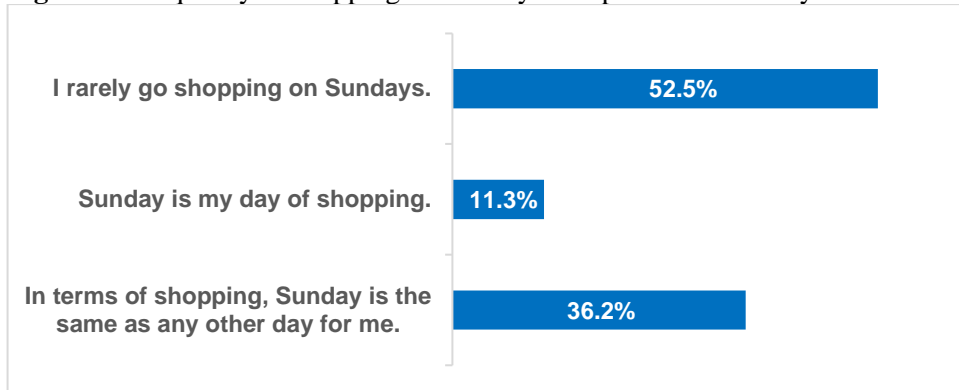
3. Methodology. This study surveyed the attitudes of the citizens of the FB&H regarding the Sunday work ban for shopping facilities. More precisely, this paper surveyed citizens' attitudes regarding the potential benefits and consequences of this work ban. This research is based on data collected by interview to determine the attitudes of FB&H citizens concerning working on Sundays. The survey used a convenience sample (406 respondents) with the application of the CAWI (computer-assisted web interview) and MAWI (mobile-assisted web interview) data collection methods and was conducted in January 2024. A survey questionnaire was developed to use as an instrument for data collection. The first part of the questionnaire contained questions relating to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, and work status). The second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions pertaining to the shopping and other habits of the respondents (on Sundays). The third part of the questionnaire comprised questions concerning the views of the respondents regarding the Sunday work ban for shopping facilities and the impact of this ban on employees. A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on the data obtained, whereas the Chi-square test was used to determine potential statistical differences between the groups of respondents. Figure 1 shows the structure of the sample in relation to the work status of the respondents.

Figure 1: Structure of the sample in relation to the work status of the respondents



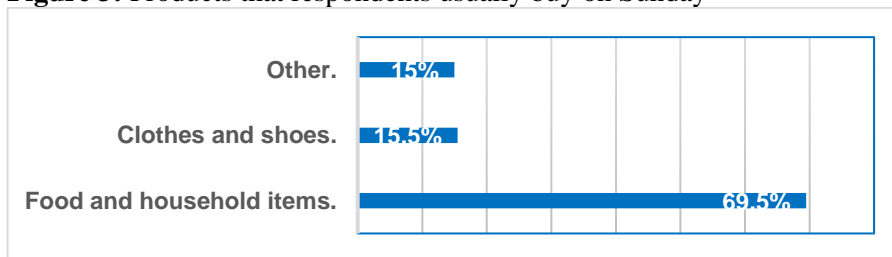
4. Results. In the second part of the survey, respondents answered questions relating to their shopping and lifestyle habits on Sundays. Figure 2 shows the respondents' answers regarding their habits, or in other words, their frequency of shopping on Sundays.

Figure 2: Frequency of shopping on Sundays compared to other days



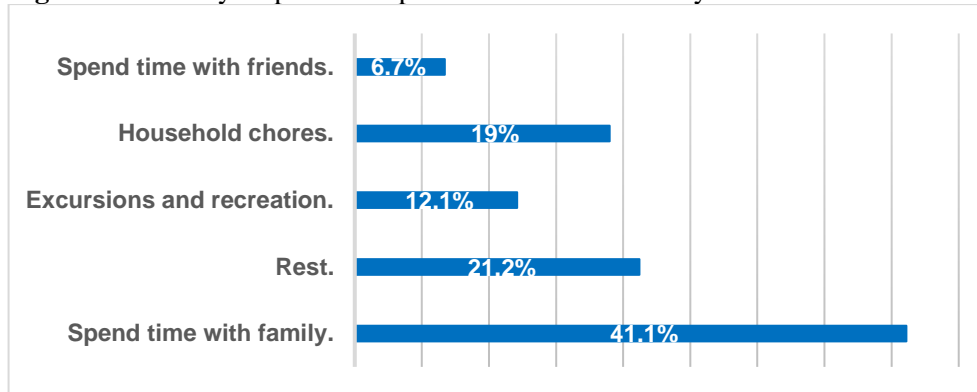
It is evident from the responses that for slightly less than half of the respondents, Sunday is of the same importance as, or even more important than, other days of the week in terms of shopping. On the other hand, 52.5% of respondents stated that they rarely shop on Sundays. It should be emphasised that shopping malls nowadays do not encourage shopping on Sundays, as 78.1% of respondents stated that they did not notice any special promotions or discounts that are offered on Sundays. In terms of the proposed Sunday work ban, it is a significant fact that 69.5% of the respondents indicated that they usually buy food and household items on Sundays, while for 15.5% of them, Sunday is the day when they usually buy clothes and shoes (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Products that respondents usually buy on Sunday



Most of the respondents (41.1%) spend their time on Sundays with the family. A small percentage of respondents (12.1%) use Sundays for excursions and recreation, whereas 19% of the respondents spend Sundays on household chores (Figure 4).

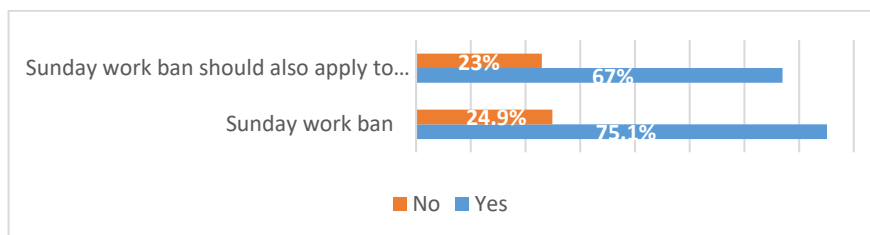
Figure 4: The way respondents spend their time on Sundays



With respect to gender, the results of the Chi-square test indicate that there are statistically significant differences between genders concerning how time is used on Sundays ($\chi^2 = 16.702$; $p = 0.002$). Among the female respondents, 21.2% spend Sundays on household chores, which is a significant difference in comparison to 6.5% of the male respondents who do so. In addition, significantly more male respondents (21%) than female respondents (10.5%) use Sundays for excursions and recreation .

However, the focus of this study relates to the analysis of the respondents' attitudes regarding the Sunday work ban for shopping facilities. The results indicate that 75.1% of the respondents are in favour of the Sunday work ban. Slightly fewer respondents (67%) agree that the Sunday work ban should also apply to small stores (grocers, boutiques, etc.) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Respondents' attitudes regarding the Sunday work ban

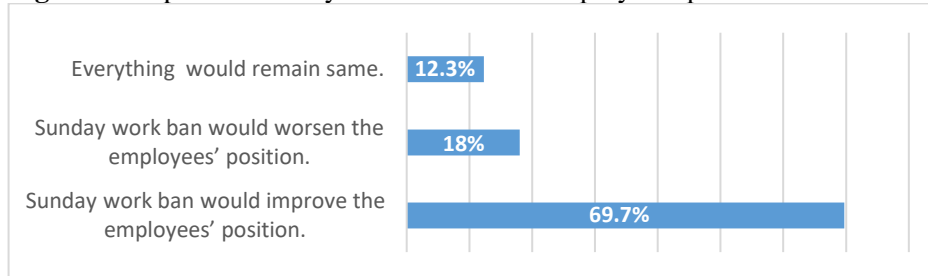


It is especially interesting that a Sunday ban on work is mostly accepted by unemployed individuals (79.4%) and pensioners (76%). At the same time, self-employed individuals are less supportive of introducing the Sunday work ban (66.7%), and this category is significantly less likely to accept the Sunday work ban for small stores (50%). However, in the comparison of the respondents who work on Sundays (at least two Sundays per month) with respondents who do not work on Sundays, the results of the Chi-square test indicate no significant differences between these two groups of respondents regarding the Sunday work ban for shops in general ($\chi^2 = 0.018$; $p = 0.894$) and the Sunday work ban for small stores ($\chi^2 = 0.146$; $p = 0.703$). Concerning respondents' age, the age groups did not indicate significant differences in their answers, with the observation that respondents of age 50 years and over indicated the most significant support for the Sunday work ban for shops. It is also worth highlighting that male and female respondents are significantly different regarding the Sunday work ban. Namely, female respondents are more supportive of the Sunday work ban than male respondents ($\chi^2 = 17.662$; $p = 0.0005$). This difference is particularly clear in relation to the Sunday work ban for small stores (only 43.5% of male respondents support this ban).

The responses to the following question are also of particular interest: Would you be willing to work on Sundays if you had another day off and if the wages for working on Sundays were 50% higher for that day? More than half of the respondents (54.4%) stated that they would be willing to work on Sundays if the wages for work were 50% higher for that day. At the same time, 64.9% of the respondents who already work at least two Sundays per month would continue to work on Sundays if they received higher wages for that day. In addition, there is no significant difference between male and female respondents' attitudes concerning willingness to work on Sundays provided they receive higher wages.

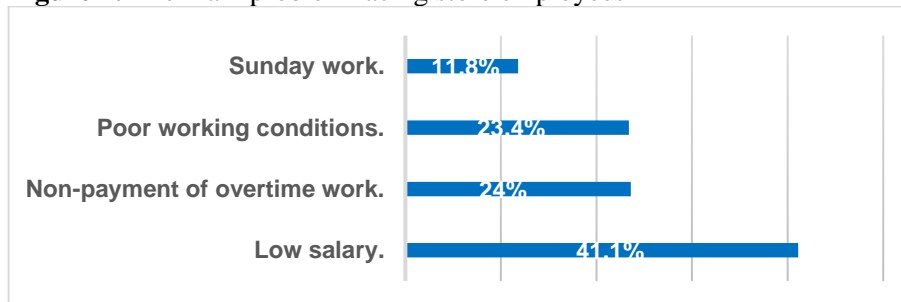
The results of the study concerning the respondents' perception of the impact of the Sunday work ban on the position of employees indicate that 69.7% of the respondents believe this measure would improve the employees' position. On the other hand, 18% of the respondents believe that this measure would worsen the employees' position (Figure 6). However, there were no significant differences in the responses between the respondents who work on Sundays (at least twice per month) and those who do not. What is noteworthy is that 64% of the respondents who work on Sundays less think that their position would improve with this measure in comparison with 71.9% of the respondents who do not work on Sundays.

Figure 6: Impact of Sunday work ban on the employees' position



One of the questions was as follows: What do you think is the main problem facing store employees? The most significant finding, in the context of this paper, is the fact that working on Sundays is cited as the smallest problem for 11.8% of the shop employees, whereas low salaries and non-payment of overtime work are listed as the main problems facing 41.1% and 24% of the shop employees, respectively (Figure 7). Interestingly, 9.6% of the respondents who fall into the category of those who work at least two Sundays per month believe that the Sunday working day is the main problem for employees in shops in comparison to 12.7% of the respondents who do not work on Sundays.

Figure 7: The main problem facing store employees



The difference between the responses is even more significant depending on employment status. Only 4.2% of self-employed believe that working on Sundays is the main problem for employees in the trade, whereas 20% of pensioners indicated the Sunday workday as the main problem. In the context of gender, there were no significant differences between the answers of the respondents.

5. Discussion and conclusions. Introducing a Sunday work ban in the FB&H is intended to create a positive political image for the FB&H Government,

although no significant research has been conducted on the possible benefits and drawbacks of such a measure. In contrast to the intention of the FB&H Government and some neighbourhood countries' governments, which are also keen to introduce this kind of measure, the European Union has been following the opposite trend of deregulating the Sunday work ban for the last 20 years.

Although for most FB&H citizens, the Sunday work ban for shops is an acceptable measure (the lack of information is one of the reasons for this), respondents' answers regarding the willingness to work on Sundays (with another day off and higher wages [50%] for working on Sundays) indicate that Sunday work is acceptable for more than half of the respondents under the conditions mentioned above. Although female respondents were clearly more supportive of the Sunday work ban than male respondents, no significant differences were found between the two groups. Unexpectedly, the percentage of those respondents not working on Sundays who disapprove of Sunday work is almost the same as the percentage of those respondents working on Sundays who are in favour of Sunday work. Only half of the self-employed respondents are supportive of the Sunday work ban for small stores. This indicates that owners of small stores or members of their families are the most affected category in the case of the introduction of the Sunday work ban.

Regarding consumers' habits in the FB&H, there is no significant evidence that the proposed Sunday work ban will not affect purchasing habits. Therefore, the proposed ban restricts the work of sales facilities (such as groceries) that mainly offer products that are most often purchased on Sundays. This paper argues that consumer habits will not change in the short term, which will lead to absurd situations where food and household goods will be purchased in facilities that do not sell these products as their main line of business, but which are exempted from the proposed ban (such as petrol stations). This would lead to increases in the cost of living of the population (due to the higher prices of these products in the facilities mentioned) and potentially endanger health, as the exempted facilities do not have adequate capacity for selling food products.

The key argument of Sunday work ban advocates is that Sunday should be a day for the family, excursions, and recreation. The results of this study indicate that 41.1% of the respondents spend time on Sundays with their families. Furthermore, the findings of this paper indicate that female and male respondents spend their time on Sundays in very different ways. For example, female respondents spend more time on housekeeping and significantly less time on active rest (excursions and recreation) on Sundays than male respondents. Given

that the proposed Sunday work ban was an attempt to advance a narrative of support for the female labour force, the results do not confirm that women will be able to use the non-working Sunday for themselves.

The paper's findings also confirm the existence of a tendency among the respondents in terms of whether they support the Sunday work ban. Namely, only 11.8% of the respondents stated that working on Sundays is the most important problem for store employees (out of the four answers offered, this received the least support). An even lower percentage of respondents who work at least two Sundays during the month, compared to the entire sample, regard Sunday work as the biggest problem for store employees. This attitude is even more pronounced among respondents who belong to the self-employed category. Only 4.2% of them believe that working on Sundays is a major problem for employees.

This paper aims to contribute to opening the academic discussion on the economic and social consequences of introducing a Sunday work ban. The study emphasises the general attitudes of employees and consumers towards the Sunday work ban. The constitutionality of such a measure has not been addressed in this paper, which leaves scope for further contributions on this aspect of the Sunday work ban.

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Примљен (Received): 18.7.2024.

Ревидиран (Revised): 14.9.2024.

Прихваћен (Accepted): 25.9.2024.