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Between Inclusion and Fairness: Social Justice Perspective to Participation in Adult Education

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Abstract

The article claims that equity is an indispensable dimension of the widening of access to adult education. Building on the understanding of social justice in adult education as a complex phenomenon, two indicators are developed: an index of inclusion and an index of fairness in participation in adult education. The article analyses social justice separately in formal and non-formal education for two social groups – people with low and high education. Using data from the Adult Education Survey from 2007 and 2011 for 25 countries, it shows that in most of them fairness aspect of social justice has improved as a result of a decrease in the overrepresentation of people with high education and in the underrepresentation of people with low education. However, the progress towards inclusion of people with low education in adult education remains considerable lower in comparison to the progress achieved by people with high education.

Keywords

social justice, inclusion, fairness, formal and non-formal adult education, indexes, Adult Education Survey

Introduction

The social inequality perspective towards adult education[1] is becoming more important among researchers (Elman & O'Rand, 2004; Di Prete & Eirich, 2006; Hällsten, 2011; Bask & Bask, 2015). Patterns of participation in adult education, which have been identified and confirmed by several authors, clearly show that younger adults, those with higher educational attainment, those

with jobs or those employed in high-skilled occupations, participate more frequently than older, low-educated and unemployed people or those employed in low-skilled occupations (OECD, 2003; Roosmaa & Saar, 2012). It is acknowledged that these patterns of participation lead to growing inequalities, in terms of both education and labour market outcomes, over the life span (Kilpi-Jakonen, Vono de Vilhena, Kosyakova, Stenberg, & Blossfeld, 2012). Studies also reveal that there are two main mechanisms behind the identified patterns and inequalities they produce - cumulative advantage or disadvantage and the Matthew effect (Bask & Bask, 2015). Both mechanisms outline the tendency of a favorable relative position to become a resource that produces further relative gains, i.e. those individuals who are more advantaged, for example in terms of educational attainment, accumulate more (educational) resources and thus – more advantages (Di Prete & Eirich, 2006; Yaqub, 2008; Walker, 2012). Seen from this perspective, the individual's life history could be defined as "path-dependent and those initially endowed with strategic resources will see them grow at a faster absolute rate (although relative growth rates can be identical), and hence, will make initial differences grow over time" (Hällsten, 2011, p. 538). Thus, it is often concluded that lifelong learning primarily serves to maintain, rather than to narrow, inequalities attached to social origins (Bukodi, 2016).

The identified patterns of participation in adult education which are more likely to reinforce, rather than mitigate, existing inequalities, pose a serious challenge to the value of adult education and raise the question about equity and social justice in adult education. Gradually, the issue of social justice in adult education has gained prominence among both policy makers and researchers. According to United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development one of the key Sustainable Development Goals is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 declares that this goal is inspired by a humanistic vision of education and development based on

human rights and dignity, social justice and inclusion (UNESCO et al., 2015). Research on adult education within social justice perspective has focused mainly on groups marginalised through the interrelation between social class, gender, ethnicity, part-time status, age (e.g., Nesbit & Wilson, 2010; Wolf & Brady, 2010; Jackson, 2011; Devos, 2011; Callender, 2011). While acknowledging the growing amount of literature on social justice and adult education some authors point that "yet the depth and contours of the term [social justice] are not easily untangled" and that there is a continued uncertainty about the implications of social justice in the field of adult education (Johnson-Bailey, Baumgartner & Bowles, 2010, p. 346). In addition, by discussing a wide range of principles and practices of social justice Francois (2014) emphasises that the majority of the philosophies of adult education have neither specific perspective nor a reformist perspective about the notion of social justice which makes the question of the measurement of justice in adult education quite challenging. However, as Unterhalter (2014, p. 184) argues an "indicator on participation, lifelong learning, equity, and empowerment" is "necessary for more comprehensively addressing education in a post-2015 agenda".

Against this background, the present article claims that the social justice perspective is indispensable for both research and policy-making in the sphere of adult education. It aims to rethink the way social justice in adult education can be conceptualized and measured. The article proceeds as follows. First, we outline the theoretical background of the article and formulate our research questions. Then, we propose research methodology. After that, we present the results of the study. Finally, we make some concluding remarks and suggest directions for further research.

Theoretical background and research questions

Among different lines of reasoning about how justice may be achieved, two are very prominent – the institutions-centered approach of John Rawls and the human-centered approach of Amartya

Sen. The first one is based on the idea of establishing a hypothetical social contract, which aims at contributing towards the achievement of justice in society. In his theory of "justice as fairness" John Rawls (1971) develops an approach which is concentrated on identifying perfectly-just institutions and, in its essence, is arrangement-focused. It implies the identification of the right behaviour or right institutions. In a strong contrast to this line of reasoning, the human-centered perspective adheres to the idea that justice may be achieved on the basis of making comparisons between different ways in which people's lives may be led, and thus ascertaining which one is more or less just. This approach focuses on ranking alternative social arrangements, instead of concentrating exclusively on the identification of a fully-just society.

As a theoretical background of our attempts to rethink social justice in adult education, we propose to bridge these two approaches and their mutual enrichment, claiming that both provide value when trying to conceptualize social justice in adult education and how it can be achieved nowadays. In contrast to the Ralwsian understanding of justice as fairness, in Sen's view, justice is a "momentous concept" (Sen, 2009, p. 401) and the comparative questions are inescapable for any theory of justice that intends to give some kind of guidance to public policy or personal behaviour. Sen, who has expressed many times that although he criticizes Ralws, he is enormously intellectually indebted to him, has a more realistic vision of how justice can be enhanced. He acknowledges that there is a possibility, even having just institutions, of observing injustices at the individual level and in people's everyday lives. The informational basis of Sen's theory of justice is human capability, as the capability should be understood as a special kind of freedom, which refers to the alternative combinations that are feasible for a person to achieve. In this sense, capability is determined by the space of possibilities open to an individual – not in terms of some prior end such as utility or initial conditions such as equality of primary goods, resources or utilities. The capability is also constrained by the so-called conversion factors

(personal, institutional or environmental) which determine the capacity of people to convert the recourses they have into good living. These factors may vary a lot and can explain why people with the same resources available are not able to achieve the same outcomes. The important role of conversion factors is neglected in Rawlsian theory of justice. As Regmi (2016) has noted, Sen's approach and its application in the area of education can fall into the group of humanistic models of lifelong learning, whose main purpose is to create a better world by alleviating social inequality, reducing social injustices and ensuring human rights for all.

Simon Marginson (2011) argues that the above-described two understandings of justice resonate in the two perspectives in which social equity in higher education has been conceptualized: inclusion and fairness. The inclusion perspective refers "to the significance of improvement in participation of any particular group, irrespective of how other groups have fared" (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007, p.146). The fairness perspective "implies ensuring that personal and social circumstances – for example gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin – should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential" (Santiago, Tremblay, Basri, & Arnal, 2008, pp. 13-14). Thus, whereas the first approach "focuses on growth in the absolute number of people from hitherto under-represented socio-economic groups, as defined in terms of income measures or social or occupational status", the second one concentrates on the proportional distribution of student places (or graduations) between different social groups (Marginson, 2011, pp. 23-24). Marginson is in favour of the inclusion aspect of equity as it provides better basis for improvement, because instead of trying to achieve structural distribution of students, when inclusion is pursued as a goal each advance in the participation of persons from under-represented groups represents a move forward. However, we do think that both aspects are important and none of them should be neglected. Such understanding is in line with the idea of

bridging the Rawlsian and Sen's approaches, instead of looking at them as rival ways of reasoning for justice (Robeyns, 2008; Brighouse & Unterhalter, 2010; Maffettone, 2011).

Building on the discussion of the two approaches to justice and Marginson's (2011) differentiation between fairness and inclusion aspects of equity in higher education, we argue that in order to explore the development of adult education in a given country, we need to ask at least three questions: *What growth?, Access for whom?,* and *Access to what?* The answer to the first question provides a general view of the increase in proportions of people from different social groups involved in adult education, and thus captures the inclusion aspect of participation in adult education. The second question refers to the relative chance of representatives of different social groups of entering different types and programs of adult education and thus reveals the fairness aspect of participation in adult education. The third question takes into account the differences in the offered programs of adult education: the three main ones being formal adult education, non-formal and informal. There are also qualitative differences within each of these forms, but within this article we will not pay attention to them. Thus, we conceptualise social justice in adult education by differentiating two aspects of participation in it: inclusion and fairness and argue that they need to be analyzed separately for different types of adult education.

So far, many studies have focused on revealing the main micro and macro-level factors which determine participation in adult education. With the unfolding of the process of globalization, two important macro developments – demographic aging and accelerated economic change – have emerged as common factors influencing participation in adult education all over the world (Kilpi-Jakonen, Buchholz, Dämmrich, McMullin, & Blossfeld, 2014; Buchholz, Jensen, & Unfried, 2014). Both developments are important drivers for active national polices in the sphere of adult education, and thus positively influence participation rates in it. However, data show that, despite the influence of these common factors, there are considerable country

differences in participation in education and training (last 4 weeks) of people aged 25-64. For example, in 2014, the participation rate ranged from below 2.5% in Bulgaria and Romania to more than 25% in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Switzerland (Eurostat, code: trng_lfs_01. Data extracted on 06.11.2016). Relying on cross-national survey data, a study has shown that "adult education and training systems are deeply embedded in national social and institutional structures, in how state, market, and family structures deliver social rights, and in patterns of social stratification" (Boeren & Holford, 2016, p. 137).

Based on our understanding of social justice, and taking into account these studies, we aim to answer the following research question (RQ):

RQ1: Do countries differ with respect to the development of their adult education as inclusive and fair?

There has been a clear tendency among researchers to acknowledge the specificity of different types of lifelong learning. Analyses show that there are not only differences between countries and social groups in participation rates in formal and non-formal adult education but also that the level of social inequalities is different depending on the type of adult education (Blossfeld et al., 2014; Kilpi-Jakonen,Vono de Vilhena, & Blossfeld, 2015; Boeren & Holford, 2016).

An important feature of modern societies is rapid economic change, which in recent years has been associated with the development of knowledge economies and knowledge societies. In order to catch up with these developments, people need to constantly advance their knowledge and skills. This refers especially to low-educated people. Data show a pattern of progressive decline in the number of low-educated people in all age groups, although the trend is slow and is more pronounced among the younger generations (European Commission, 2013). Based on this, we will ask:

RQ2: Are there any positive trends in inclusion and fairness aspects of social justice in adult education over time?

RQ3: Does the inclusion in participation in adult education is associated with fairness in adult education at country level?

RQ4: Do the inclusion and fairness aspects of adult education differ for different types of adult education (formal and non-formal)?

Research methodology

Having outlined the theoretical background and the main research questions of the present study, we proceed with a presentation of the data and the indexes which will be used to answer these questions.

Data

The empirical basis of our study is the Adult Education Survey (AES). This survey, conducted via random sampling procedure, targets people aged 25-64 who live in private households. The AES is part of the European Union (EU) statistics on lifelong learning and collects primary data on participation in education and training (formal, non-formal and informal learning) and a wide range of socioeconomic characteristics, such as age, gender, highest educational level and country of residence. The survey takes place every five years. So far, this survey has been conducted two times: in 2007 and in 2011. The data from the AES 2016 are still not available. The survey allows us to adopt a wide comparative perspective, as it was conducted in many European countries. The number of countries who participated in AES 2007 was 29, whereas in 2011 – 30. However, in the files with micro data for the survey obtained by Eurostat, for AES

2007, data are available only for 26 countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Norway). In 2011, four countries joined the survey: Ireland, Malta, Switzerland and the Republic of Serbia. However, in the dataset from this year, there is no information for Croatia. This is why, the following analysis is based on data for 25 countries – the countries which participated in both years. The analytical sample size for 2007 includes197,806 cases, whereas for 2011 - 167,454 cases.

In terms of the overall quality of the data, it is worth-mentioning that in the Synthesis Quality Report of the AES (2007), it has been evaluated as a good one[2]. The EU Quality Report for AES (2011) notes that it is possible to compare the results of the two waves for the main indictors on participation in lifelong learning. This does not apply to informal learning and that is because it is not included in our analyses. Classifications related to education follow the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) revision 1997 for both years.

Indexes

We introduce two indexes in order to capture social justice in participation in adult education of different social groups at a country level: *an index of inclusion in participation in adult education* (IincluAE) and *an index of fairness in participation in adult education* (IfairAE).

Social groups could be defined based on different characteristics, such as: completed level of education, occupation status, place of residence, gender and age. We focus only on social groups with respect to completed level of initial education because previous studies have shown that the educational attainment is a key factor influencing participation in adult education (for

instance, Blossfeld et al., 2014). More specifically, we calculated the IincluAE and the IfairAE for those with a low level of education, ISCED 1997 0-2, and those with a high level of education, ISCED 1997 5-6. For the levels of education of the population of a given country we used data from Eurostat that correspond to these two groups.

For the calculation of IincluAE, we estimated binomial logistic regression models for formal and non-formal adult education separately for all 25 countries using a variable distinguishing between whether people participated in a given type of education and training (1=participated) or not (0 = not participated) as a dependent variable.The main independent variable is educational attainment, measured by three categories: low (ISCED 0-2), medium (ISCED 3-4) and high education (ISCED 5-6). We include in the models gender and age as control variables. We use one of the measures derived from the multivariate models: predicted probabilities for the people with low and high education. The IincluAE is calculated as the ratio between predicted probabilities of a given social group in two temporal points, in our case – 2011 and 2007. An index above 1 indicates the increase of inclusion of the given social group within one and the same country within the above-described period of time, whereas an index below 1 shows a tendency towards exclusion of this group over time. An index value of 1 indicates that no advancement of inclusion was made by this group.

The IfairAE measures how the representation[4] of a given social group in adult education in a given country has changed over time. The IfairAE is calculated as the ratio between the representation of a given social group in two temporal points, in our case – 2011 and 2007. An IfairAE index above 1 for people with low education indicates a decrease in the underrepresentation of this group in adult education and thus more fairness in participation in adult education of this social group, whereas an index below 1 shows an increase in the underrepresentation of this group in adult education and thus a tendency towards deterioration of

the fairness of participation of this group over time. In case of the group of people with high education an IfairAE below 1 would mean that the overrepresentation of this group has decreased and thus the fairness of participation of this group has increased. An index of 1 indicates that no change of fairness was made by this group, whereas an index above 1 would mean an increase in overrepresentation, i.e. a decrease in fairness of participation of this group in adult education.

Both aspects of social justice could also be assessed from a cross-national perspective; this means comparing the indexes of inclusion and fairness in adult education of different countries. However, due to AES data use rules, which refer to the cell size thresholds, it was not allowed to present results that refer to less than 20 observations[3]. Therefore, it was not possible to calculate the indexes for the groups with low and high education for both forms of adult education for all 25 countries.

It should be emphasised that adult education is characterized by its internal diversity, and its programs vary according to the type of education offered. Therefore, in order to capture the two main forms of adult education, we calculated the indexes separately for formal and non-formal education. We measure formal education as the proportion of adults who participated in formal education during the last 12 months, whereas non-formal education as the proportion of adults who participated in at least one non-formal education and training activity (such as courses, workshops and seminars, guided on-the-job training, private lessons) during the last 12 months.

Results

In this section we present our results separately for formal and non-formal education.

Formal education

Participation and representation of people with low and high education in formal adult education. Figure 1 shows the participation rates in formal education by the level of education people have attained in 2007. It indicates two main trends: the proportion of adults who participated in formal education activities is not very high and adults with higher education are more likely to participate in formal education compared with their low-educated peers. The figure demonstrates that countries differ considerably in the participation rates in formal adult education. Thus, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Sweden have the highest proportion of adults with higher education who pursue formal education, while Greece, Hungary and Bulgaria having the lowest rates.

- Figure 1. Participation rate in formal adult education by educational attainment level and by country in 2007. about here –

Figure 2 presents the values of representation of the groups of people with low and high education in formal adult education, as of 2007. The results show that the group of people with low level of education is underrepresented in all countries for which data were available, whereas the group of highly-educated people is overrepresented in all countries. This suggests that adult formal education reproduces already-existing educational hierarchies in all countries. Despite this, there are country differences in the extent to which these two groups are represented. The data show that in some countries, like Denmark and Norway, the underrepresentation of people with low education is at the lowest levels, whereas in Poland and Italy, the underrepresentation of these people is very pronounced.

- Figure 2. Representation in formal adult education by educational level and country in 2007. about here

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As regards people with high education, the countries in which their proportion in adult education is closest to their proportion in the general population are Denmark, Germany and Finland. At the other extreme are Latvia, Romania and Poland, where the representation of the group with high education is more than three times higher than its proportion in the general population.

Inclusion and fairness in participation in formal adult education of people with low and high education. The analysis of the IincluAE for adults aged 25-64 reveals that countries differ in terms of the inclusiveness of formal education for adults with different levels of education (RQ1) (see Figure 3). Thus, formal education has become more inclusive in regard to higher education in the period between 2007 and 2011 in ten of the countries, with Hungary, Austria, and the Netherlands being among the ones who made the largest advancement with regard to inclusion for this period. The figure also shows that the majority of the countries' formal education has not achieved more inclusion of the highly-educated adults in the studied period. This is very pronounced in Italy, Lithuania and Romania. The index for people with low education shows that advancement of inclusion of this group occurred in 15 out of all countries, being highest in Bulgaria, Latvia, Austria, Hungary, Estonia and Portugal (RQ2).

- Figure 3. Index of inclusion in participation in adult formal education for people with low and high education for the period 2007-2011 by country. about here-

Figure 4 shows how the fairness in participation in adult formal education has changed between 2007 and 2011 for people with low and high levels of education. Formal education has become considerably fairer in regard to low educated in this period in Portugal, Sweden, and Poland and to a lesser extent in Spain, Finland and Belgium. The figure also shows that the majority of the countries' formal education has improved the fairness in the representation of the highly-educated adults in the studied period. The formal adult education has become less fair with regard to the representation of people with high education only in Slovakia, Romania, France, Germany, Denmark, the Czech Republic and Austria (RQ2).

– **Figure 4.** Index of fairness in participation in formal education for people with low and high education for the period 2007-2011 by country. about here –

Given the observed trends, a relevant question becomes whether the changes in inclusion in formal adult education are associated with changes in fairness in participation in this form of adult education (RQ3). Despite the low number of countries included in the analysis due to the data use restrictions (only nine), we found a positive correlation between the inclusion achieved by people with low education in formal education between 2007 and 2011 and in the advancement of fairness of this group (Pearson's $r = 0.482$). However, it is not significant at ($p < 0.05$). As regards people with high education, we did not find any significant association between the inclusion of this group in formal education and to the advancement of fairness (Pearson's $r = 0.121$, not significant at $p < 0.05$).

Non-formal education

Participation and representation of people with low and high education in non-formal adult education.

Figure 5 shows that in Hungary, Romania and Greece, a very low proportion of adults with low and high education participated in non-formal education in 2007, whereas in Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark and the United Kingdom a very high proportion of adults did so.

- Figure 5. Participation rate in non-formal education by educational attainment level by country in 2007. about here –

Figure 6 presents the values of representation of the groups of people with low and high education as of 2007 in non-formal adult education. The results show that, similarly to formal education, in all countries the group of people with low levels of education is underrepresented in non-formal education, whereas the group with high education is overrepresented. Despite this, there are country differences in the extent to which these two groups are represented in this type of adult education. In some countries, like Finland and Norway, the underrepresentation of adults with low education is relatively low, whereas in the Czech Republic, Greece, Lithuania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom it is very high.

- Figure 6. Representation in non-formal adult education by educational level and country in 2007. about here –

As regards adults with high education, the countries in which their representation in non-formal adult education is closest to their proportion in the general population are Finland, Norway and Sweden. At the other extreme are Poland, Portugal and Romania.

Inclusion and fairness in participation in non-formal adult education of people with low and high education. The analysis of the IincluAE in non-formal education for adults aged 25-64 reveals that countries differ in terms of the advancement of inclusion of groups with different levels of education (RQ1) (see Figure 7). Thus, we observed that the non-formal education has become more inclusive with regard to people with high education in the period between 2007 and 2011 in more than half of the countries studied (RQ2). The figure also shows that non-formal education has achieved better inclusion with regard to low-educated people than with regard to high-educated ones in 13 of the countries. This is very pronounced in Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Italy and Portugal.

- Figure 7. Index of inclusion in adult non-formal education for people with low and high education for the period 2007-2011 by country. about here -

The analysis of IfairAE reveals some positive trends with regard to the fairness in the participation of the group of highly educated in non-formal education (RQ2). Thus, Figure 8 shows that there is a decrease in the overrepresentation of this group and the representation of people with high education has become closer to the fair one in most of the countries, except Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden. More specifically, there was a considerable increase of fairness in Hungary, Poland, Portugal and Romania. As regards to the fairness with regard to the representation of people with low education, the analysis shows that it increased in eleven of the countries, as highest increase was achieved in Italy, Slovenia and the United Kingdom and lowest in Austria, Bulgaria, Poland and Spain.

- Figure 8. Index of fairness in participation in non-formal education people with low and high education for the period 2007-2011 by country. about here –

In order to more systematically describe the relationship between inclusion and fairness, similarly to formal education we also conducted a correlation test for non-formal one. The analysis reveals that there is a weak positive correlation between the advancement of inclusion among people with low education in non-formal education and the advancement of fairness achieved by this group (Pearson's $r = 0.351$). However, the correlation coefficient is not statistically significant (at $p < 0.05$). As regards to people with high education, we found a weak negative association between the advancement in inclusion among this group in non-formal education and to the change in the representation of people with high level of education (Pearson's $r = -0.397$), but it was not significant (at $p < 0.05$). These results show that more inclusion in participation in non-formal education of people with low and high education is not associated with achieving a better representation of these groups within this type of education (RQ3).

The above results and analyses show that the inclusion and fairness aspect of equity in adult education differ for formal and non-formal education (RQ4).

Discussion and conclusion

The article demonstrates that equity is an indispensable dimension of the widening of access to adult educationfor both research and policy-making in the sphere of adult education.
It contributes to the literature on social justice in adult education in a number of ways.

First and foremost, we suggest a way of how social justice in adult education can be conceptualized and measured. It is stated that "like 'equality of opportunity' or 'choice', 'social

justice' is one of those politically malleable and essentially contested phrases which can mean all things to all people" and that it tends to suffer from "vagueness and oversimplification" (Thrupp & Tomlinson, 2005, p. 549). In defining social justice in adult education, the article bridges two of the main contemporary lines of reasoning about justice: the institutions-centered one and the human-centered one and considers their application to higher education by Marginson (2011). We argue that social justice in adult education is a complex phenomenon, which is context and time-specific. The article differentiates between inclusion and fairness aspects of social equity in adult education and claims that both aspects of equity should be studied separately for different social groups.

Second, the analysis goes beyond the narrow information provided by the participation rates in adult education and explores how participation in adult education in different European countries looks like through a social justice perspective. Recently, the issue of indicators for adult education has attracted researchers' attention. Studies have questioned the use of the EU's lifelong learning participation index for policy purposes, particularly at the national level, as limiting the analyses of changes over time (e.g., Boeren & Holford, 2016). As Boeren and Holford (2016, p. 137) put it, "lifelong learning participation index is no more than a descriptive tool; it allows no multivariate exploration of other variables related to participation". Building on the understanding of social justice in adult education as a complex phenomenon, the article develops and applies two indicators – IincluAE and IfairAE – for measuring how the inclusion and fairness aspects of social justice in adult education change over time and tries to show that for explorative and explanatory purposes, both perspectives should be simultaneously taken into account. By developing these two quantitative indexes, the article also methodologically enriches the study of equity in adult education which has been analyzed mainly through qualitative

research methods (see, for example, the special issue *Lifelong learning and social justice* of the International Journal of Lifelong Education (2011)).

The IicluAE and IfairAE reveal specific features of participation in adult education, which are not captured through the already-existing measures and indicators. This is clearly evident from the fact that some countries, which do not have high participation rates (e.g., France), has achieved better advancement with regard to the inclusion and fairness in the studied period (2007-2011) in comparison to countries with very high participation rates.

In terms of how our indexes refer to already developed ones, it is worth-mentioning that Eve-Liis Roosmaa and Ellu Saar (2012) develop an inequality index which captures the labour market status of adults with regard to non-formal education. The index consists of the ratio of the participation of high-skilled white-collar workers against the participation of low-skilled blue-collar workers. In contrast to theirs, we focus on the groups with low and high education, adopt a dynamic perspective with respect to the advancement of inclusion and fairness in their participation in adult education over time and try to cover not only non-formal, but also formal education.

By relying on data from OECD Survey of Adult Skills database, 2013 and by using a wide range of control variables, such as age, gender, parents' education, functional literacy, and immigration status, Richard Desjardins (2015) shows that while inequality in participation in adult education activities is present in all 22 countries who participated in the survey, a number of countries are much more successful at extending adult learning opportunities to those who initially had low levels of educational attainment. The higher probability of more educated adults of participating in adult education than the low educated remains in all countries even after adjusting for the above-mentioned control variables. However, his index misses to capture whether some advancement has been achieved with regard to the inclusion or fairness in the

participation of these two social groups. Furthermore, it focuses on adult education as a whole, although it acknowledges that it has an internal diversity.

The Social Justice Index (see Schraad-Tischler, 2015) includes equitable education as one of its core dimensions and offers a dynamic measure of social justice at national level for 28 countries. However, it neglects access to and participation in adult education as one of the key aspects of equitable education. Similarly, the Social Progress Index (see Porter, Stern, & Green, 2016) calculated for 133 countries recognizes access to basic knowledge as a foundational for human well-being, but focuses only on adult literacy rate and does not acknowledge the participation in adult education. In general, the latter two indexes adopt a much wider view of what matters for social justice or social progress. Although the present article focuses only on social justice in adult education in two of its aspects, we do agree that "the different dimensions of social justice are strongly interrelated" and that "weak educational opportunities translate into weaker opportunities on the labor market and – as a consequence – into weaker opportunities to achieve higher incomes" (Schraad-Tischler, 2015, p. 15). Given this, we think that the identification of spaces of injustice in adult education in both of its forms and the timely policy interventions with regard to them are necessary because of their influence on the overall level of justice and progress achieved at a country level.

Third, in contrast with most previous studies, the article focuses not on adult education as a homogenous good, but considers its internal diversity and makes separate analyses for two of the most common forms of adult education: formal and non-formal education for two different social groups– people with low and with high education. The results obtained show that the inclusion aspect of social justice in adult education differs for the two types of education. Thus, our approach and results are consistent with other studies, which have shown that the isolation of different types of lifelong learning is a fruitful endeavour since it unfolds patterns that may be

hidden and because they may indicate different conclusions about the inequality (or different mechanisms) of the distribution of lifelong learning (Hällsten, 2011; Kilpi-Jakonen et al., 2014).

Fourth, the analysis makes cross-national comparisons and uses both macro- and micro-level data. In answering our research questions we reveal both differences and similarities between counties in terms of the advancement of inclusion and fairness of adult education for people with different levels of education. For example, in the majority of the countries, there is a tendency for improvement of the fairness in the representation of the highly-educated adults in formal education over time. The index of inclusion in formal education for low-educated people shows that half of the countries studied have become more inclusive for this group. With regard to non-formal education, we observe that low-educated people have increased their inclusion in a greater extent than the high-educated ones in 13 of the countries.

Almost all of the studies of adult education confirm that "at first sight, adult education lacks capacity to contribute significantly to social transformation for social justice" (Tuckett, 2015, p. 245) and that people with high levels of initial education are able to pursue opportunities for lifelong learning far more readily than those with low or inadequate formal education (Waller, Holford, Jarvis, Milana, & Webb, 2015; Kilpi-Jakonen et al., 2015; Roosmaa & Saar, 2012). Our results are in line with those authors who have challenged this main strand of research, by revealing that adult education has a potential – although a limited one – to mitigate the power of the exiting educational hierarchies (Kilpi-Jakonen et al., 2012; Hällsten, 2011). Although adult education reproduces existing educational hierarchies in almost all countries studied, the fact that countries differ considerably with regard to underrepresentation of people with low education and overrepresentation of people with high education and in the tendencies over time, points out that adult education has some power to influence educational inequalities. Although "lifelong learning involves atypical educational transitions off the main track and cannot be the main driving force

behind educational or other inequality on a larger scale", under certain social conditions it "may provide a possibility to 'catch up' for the unemployed, for individuals in marginalized positions in the labour market and for individuals with initial educational failures" (Hällsten, 2011, p. 538) and thus help build a fairer society.

The present article raises some serious questions, which deserve further research. It is very important to continue the theoretical reflection on the understanding of social justice in adult education and how it relates to other issues in adult education, for example quality and effectiveness. The social justice in adult education needs to be studied with regard to all different social groups, i.e. to groups differentiated, not only on the basis of completed initial education, but on characteristics such as occupational status, place of residence, and age. A fruitful direction for future study refers to factors at both macro and micro level, which could explain differences between countries with regard to inclusion and fairness aspects of social justice in adult education. At macro level, for example, it is worth investigating how different types of welfare regimes, social cohesion regimes and specificity of educational systems influence social justice in adult education. Previous research has demonstrated that the person's capability to participate in adult education can be bounded by the nature of welfare regimes of the states they live in (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009). It is worth studying which of the existing typologies (e.g., Green, Janmaat and Cheng's 'transition' regimes of social cohesion' (2011) and the Saar, Ure and Desjardins's institutional contexts (2013)) are more relevant for the analysis of both inclusion and fairness aspects of equity in adult education in different countries.

Having in mind the conclusion of Kilpi-Jakonen et al. (2012, p. 65) that "adult education does not fully fit with general social inequality patterns", it is also interesting to examine the relationship between countries' GINI inequality index and social justice index (see Schraad-Tischler, 2015) and indexes for inclusion and fairness in adult education. We have analyzed

social justice in adult education without differentiating between job-related and non-job-related adult education. A recent study (Knipprath, 2015) shows that participation in lifelong learning is marked by a Matthew effect only in the case of job-related learning activities. This is in line with our theoretical argument that social justice in adult education needs to be analyzed separately for different types and different programmes of adult education.

The analyses presented in the article could be of interest from a policy point of view as well. The report *Adult and continuing education in Europe: Using public policy to secure a growth in skills?* published by the European Commission (2013) defines "[g]uaranteeing adequate equity in growth opportunities" as the second function of adult and continuing education policy (ibid. p. 14). Other authors, (Thrupp & Tomlinson, 2005; Waller et al., 2015), also argue for the need to support a notion of social justice against policies which will maintain or intensify injustices. Applying a social justice approach to adult education is a way to counter the purely-economic view on lifelong learning (Heckman & Masterov, 2007). A prerequisite for the transformation of the social justice perspective of national and European policies to adult education from an inspiring slogan into reality and for the development of adequate policy measures is the deepening of the theoretical understanding of social justice in adult education and the improvement of data and indicators for its assessment.

Notes

1. Lifelong learning and adult education/learning have been highly-discussed topics in both academic and policy spheres. Authors use different terminology and suggest different understandings of the concepts (Jarvis, 2010; Holford, Milana, & Špolar, 2014, Blossfeld, Kilpi-Jakonen, Vono de Vilhena, & Buchholz, 2014). We differentiate between adult education and adult learning and view them as important forms of lifelong learning. Adult

education refers to institutionally-organized forms of education of adults, more concretely – to formal and non-formal adult education and training. Adult learning is a broader concept and includes all learning activities of adults, both institutionalized and informal. In this article we focus on adult education.

2. Response rate in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Hungary and Lithuania exceeds 80% for both households and individuals. The highest rate (95%) is reported in Spain (for households) and Hungary (for individuals). The countries with the lowest response rates are Belgium and the United Kingdom (close to 30% and 40% respectively).
3. See 1.3 Calculation of AES indicators and reliability thresholds: https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/d3bbb686-e9fe-4448-a74a-a35aeec43703/LLL_Metadata_Section1_AES.htm
4. The representation is calculated by dividing the proportion of participants in adult education, aged 25-64, with a given initial level of education, by the proportion of people with the same educational level in the entire national population aged 25-64. Avalue of representation above 1 indicates overrepresentation of the given social group among the participants in adult education whereas a value below 1 shows that this group is underrepresented. A value of 1 means that a given social group is perfectly represented within a given form of adult education in the respective country.

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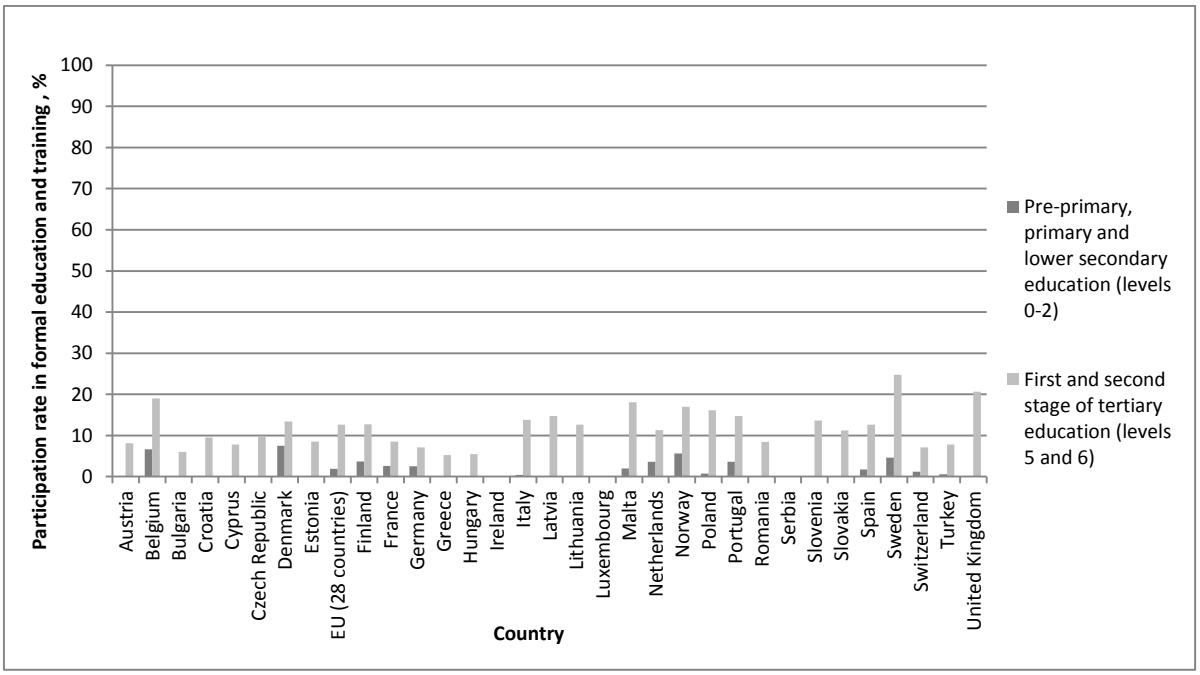

Figure 1. Participation rate in formal education by educational attainment level and by country in 2007.

Source: Eurostat. Data code: trng_aes_102. Extracted on 11.10.2016.

Note. Data for the participation rate in formal adult education, aged 25-64 for Denmark, Germany, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Finland and Norway from AES 2007 for ISCED 1997 levels 0-2 and for Croatia and Malta from AES 2007 for ISCED 1997 levels 5-6 are with low reliability according to Eurostat reliability thresholds.

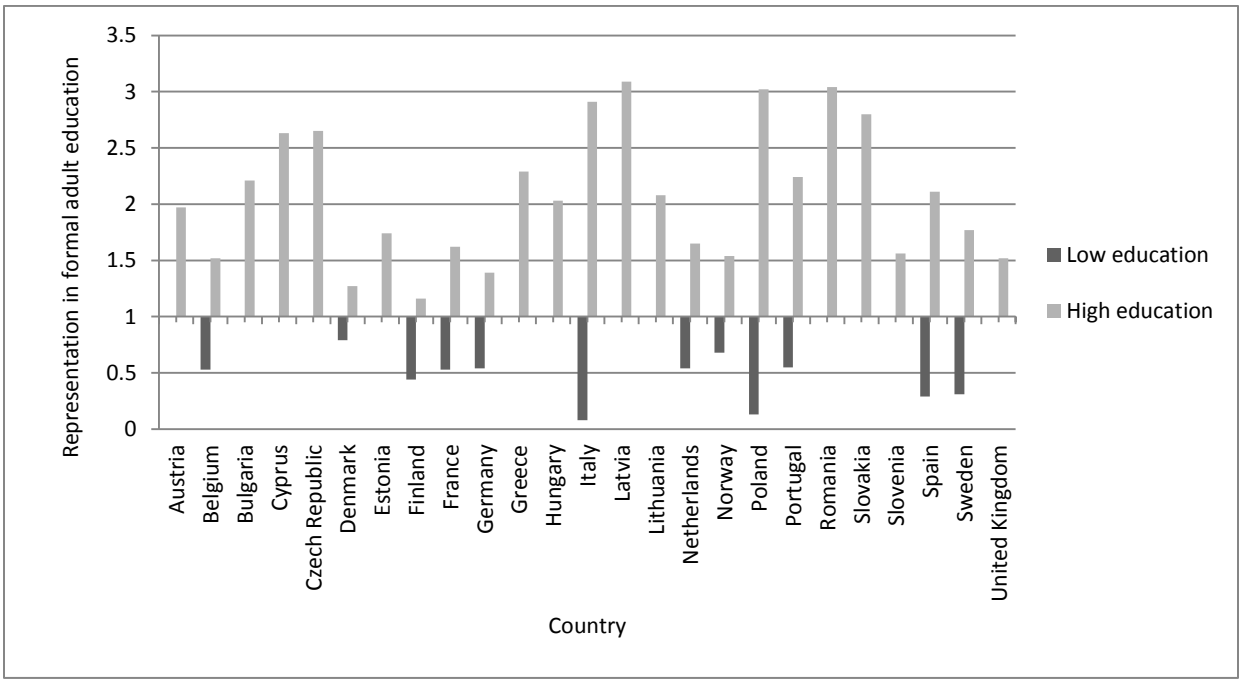

Figure 2. Representation in formal adult education by educational level and country in 2007.

Source: AES 2007 (own calculations, weighted data – coefindw for 2007) & Eurostat, data for 2007 extracted on 06.11.2016, code: edat_lfs_9903.

Note. Data for the participation rate in formal adult education, aged 25-64 for Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Finland and Norway from AES 2007 for low education are with low reliability according to Eurostat reliability thresholds.

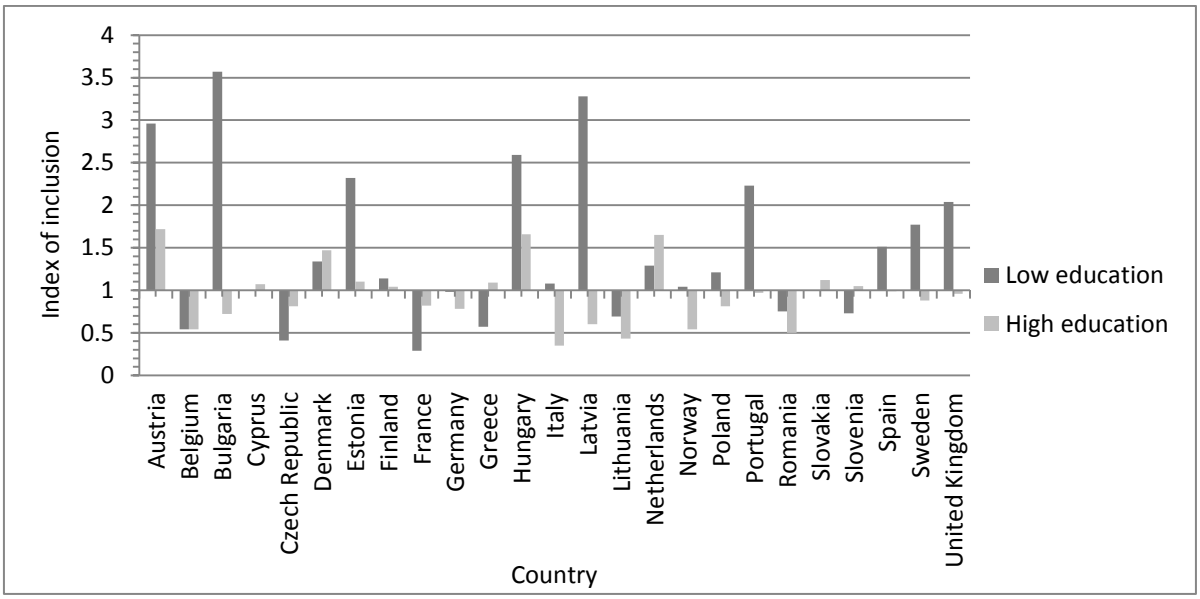

Figure 3. Index of inclusion in participation in adult formal education for people with low and high education for the period 2007-2011 by country.

Source: AES 2007; 2011 (own calculations).

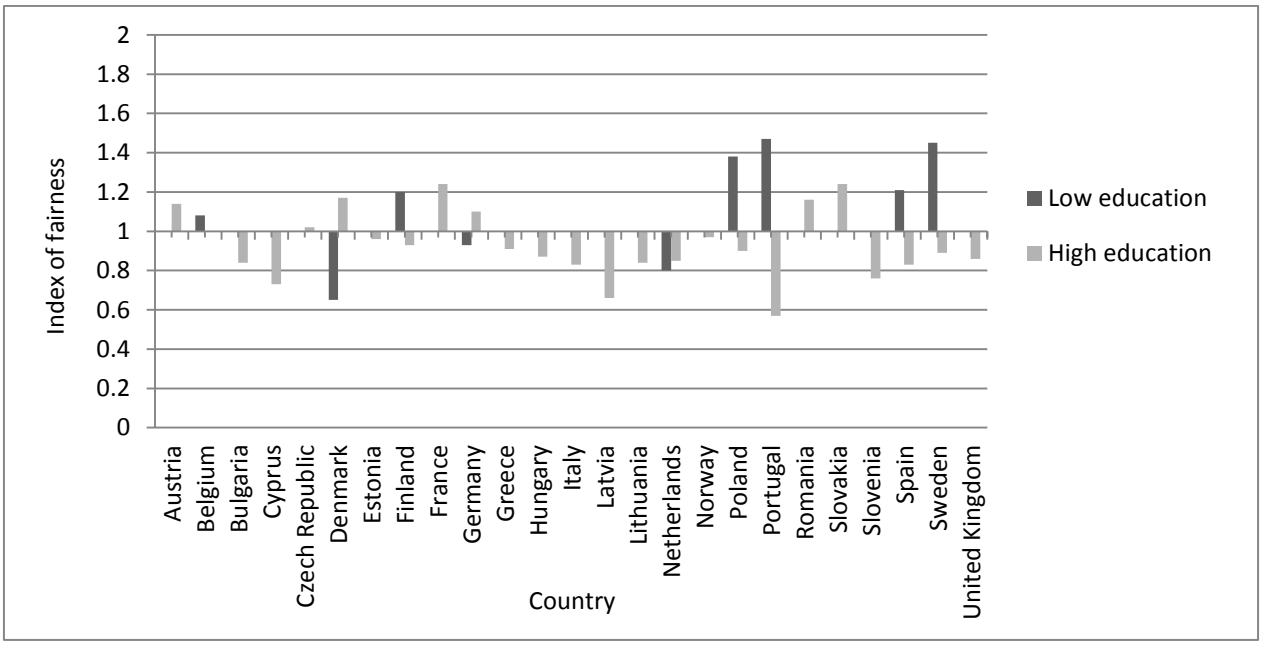

Figure 4. Index of fairness in participation in formal education for people with low and high education for the period 2007-2011 by country.

Source: AES 2007; 2011 (own calculations, weighted data – coefindw for 2007 and respweight for 2011) & Eurostat, data for 2007 and 2011 extracted on 06.11.2016, code: edat_lfs_9903.

Note. Data for the participation rate in formal adult education, aged 25-64 for Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Finland and Norway from AES 2007 for low education and for Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Finland; the United Kingdom from AES 2011 for low education and Bulgaria for high education from AES 2011 are with low reliability according to Eurostat reliability thresholds.

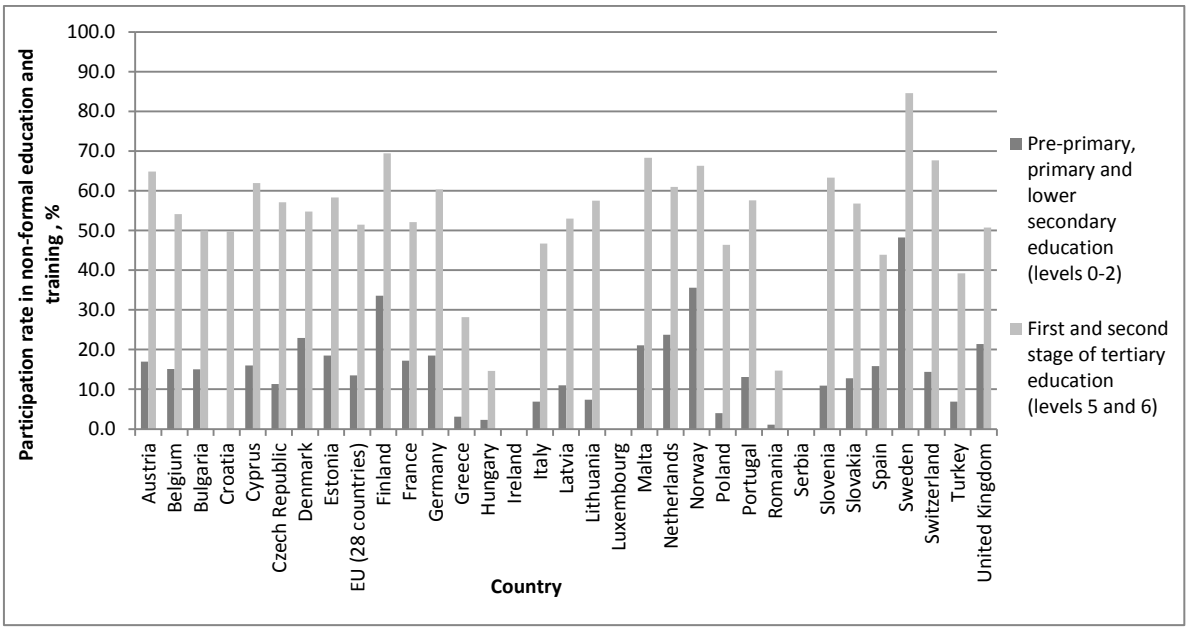

Figure 5. Participation rate in non-formal education by educational attainment level by country in 2007.

Source: Eurostat. Data code: trng_aes_102. Extracted on 11.10.2016.

Note. Data for the participation rate in non-formal adult education, aged 25-64 for Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia from AES 2007 for ISCED 1997 levels 0-2 and for Greece and Romania from AES 2011 for ISCED 1997 levels 0-2 are with low reliability according to Eurostat reliability thresholds.

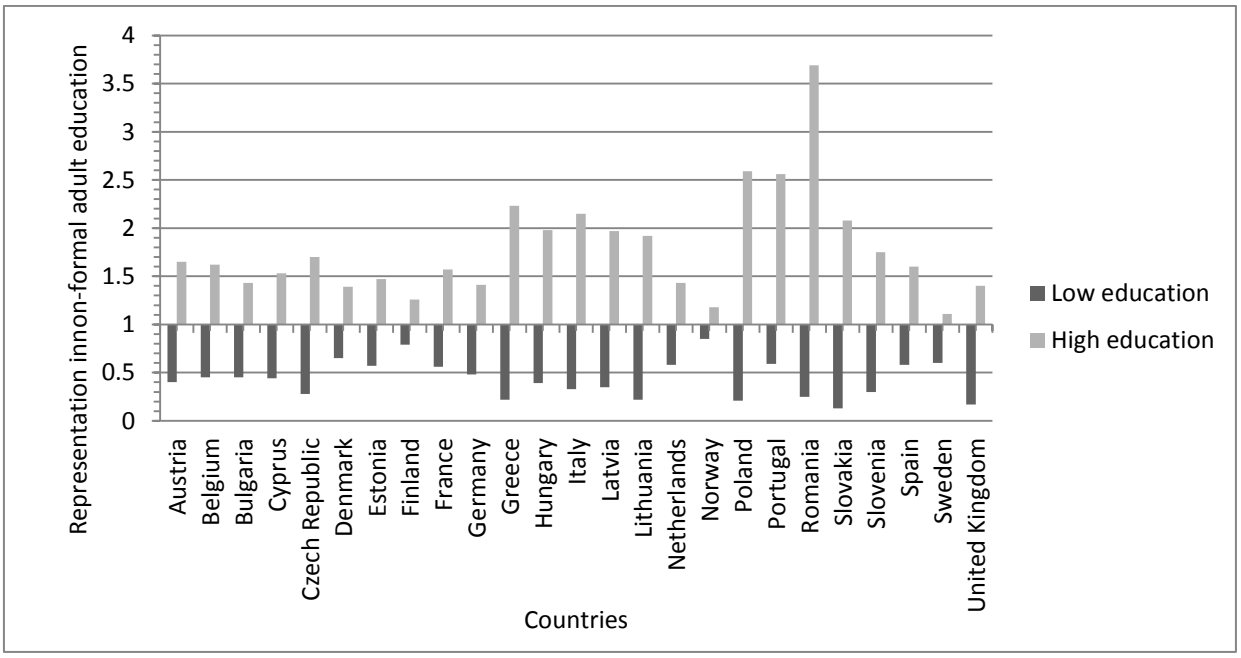

Figure 6. Representation in non-formal adult education by educational level and country.

Source: AES 2007 (own calculations, weighted data – coefindw for 2007) & Eurostat, data for 2007 extracted on 06.11.2016, code: edat_lfs_9903.

Note. Data for the participation rate in non-formal adult education, aged 25-64 for Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia from AES 2007 for low education are with low reliability according to Eurostat reliability thresholds.

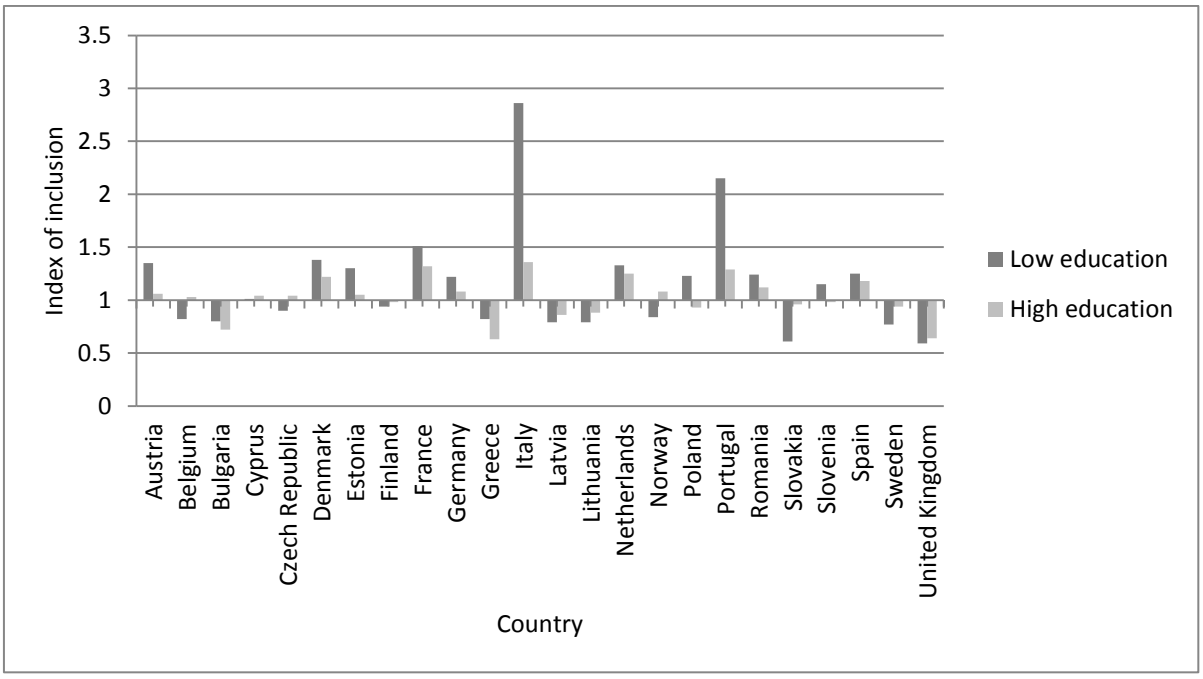

Figure 7. Index of inclusion in adult non-formal education for people with low and high education for the period 2007-2011 by country.

Source: AES 2007; 2011 (own calculations).

Note. We excluded Hungary from the figure as an outlier. The index for low education was 8.26, whereas for high education it was 2.49.

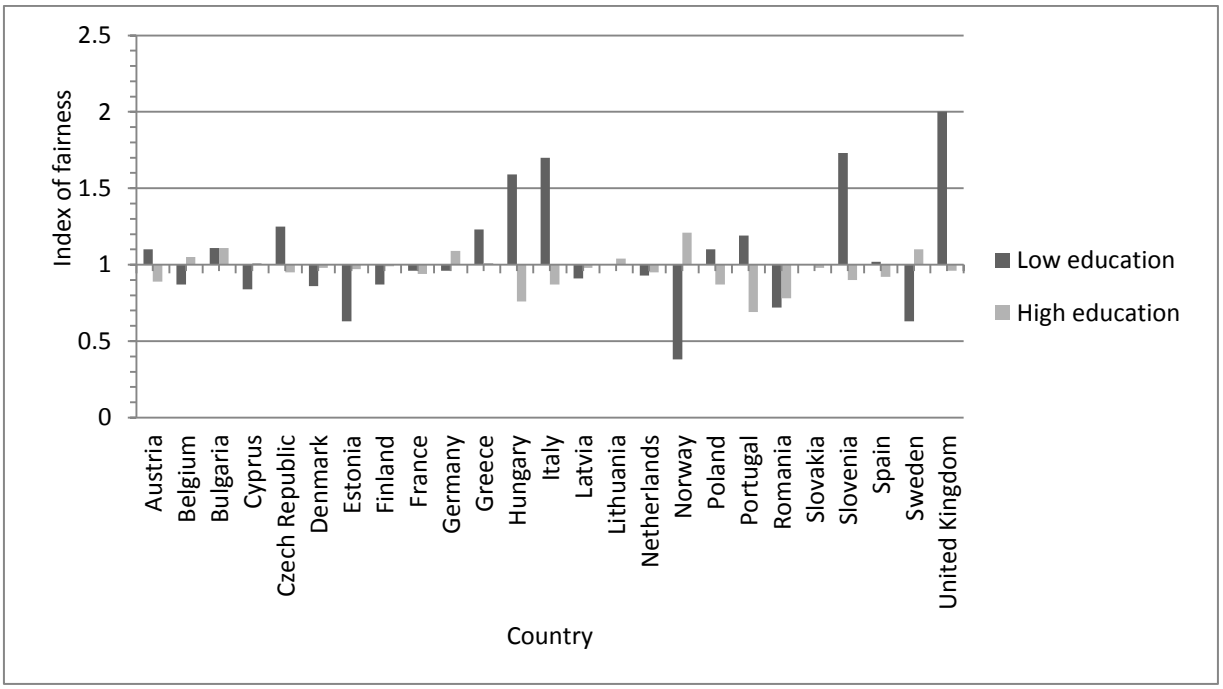

Figure 8. Index of fairness in participation in non-formal education people with low and high education for the period 2007-2011 by country.

Source: AES 2007; 2011 (own calculations, weighted data – coefindw for 2007 and respweight for 2011) & Eurostat, data for 2007 and 2011 extracted on 06.11.2016, code: edat_lfs_9903.

Note. Data for the participation rate in non-formal adult education, aged 25-64 for Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia from AES 2007 for low education and for Greece and Romania from AES 2011 for low education are with low reliability according to Eurostat reliability thresholds.