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**Abstract**

This paper aims at studying the dynamics of inequalities in access to higher education (HE) both in a historical and a comparative perspective. It uses Bulgaria as a case study and places it among five other countries such as Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. The adopted approach differentiates between equity in HE and inequalities in access to HE, and stresses the qualitative side of inequalities. The analysis is based on data from the European Social Survey (2006?2010), complemented by data from EUROSTUDENT III (2007). It is argued that, despite the expansion of HE before and especially after 1989, Bulgaria is among the countries where inequality in access to HE caused by socio-economic disadvantages is most salient. In general, our findings lend support to the effectively maintained inequalities hypothesis. The capability approach is applied in the analysis of these changes inasmuch as it provides a social justice framework for conceptualizing and evaluating inequalities, including taking into account their qualitative side. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)