

Serbia is the European record holder in the percentage of employees who are at a minimum wage

The average salary in Serbia in July was 550 euros, but it does not say much about how much most citizens earn because half have incomes of up to 450 euros, and even a third of up to 300 euros.

Center for Democracy Foundation researcher Sarita Bradas explains for the Nova newspaper that the best average salaries are in public companies, while many employees of private entrepreneurs do not have enough income for a dignified life.

She reminds that the Republic Bureau of Statistics has not provided data on the last four years on how many people in Serbia receive the minimum wage, which is why everyone is looking for outdated data on 350,000 people. However, according to the analysis of the Fiscal Council, 20 percent of employees in Serbia receive the minimum wage - more than 400,000 people, which makes Serbia a European record holder in the percentage of employees at the minimum.

The state leadership often mentions the average salary as a benchmark for economic progress and a better life for citizens. Two months ago, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic boasted that the average salary in March was 555 euros, marking it as proof that Serbia had become a "winning country", while he recently announced that it would reach 610 euros by the end of the year.

According to the latest data from the Republic Statistical Office of Serbia (SORS), the average net salary in June was 550 euros, while the median was 130 lower, which means that as many as half of the Serbian population received a salary of up to 420.

"SBS data show that the average salary in Serbia is received by one third of employees, and two thirds less than that. You get the average salary when you add up all the low salaries, which the majority has, with a small number of high salaries and draw an arithmetic mean that does not tell you the right situation," says Bradas and explains that media earnings are a better benchmark.

He adds that the SBS survey conducted in September last year speaks volumes about the distribution of salaries in Serbia, which shows that at that time almost every third employee in Serbia had salaries of less than 300 euros.

"That means that even in that half of the employees, whose salary does not exceed 450 euros, the largest number of those who earn significantly less than that," notes Bradas.

The highest salaries in public companies

Data from the Republic Bureau of Statistics show that the distribution of salaries in the public and private sectors is also uneven - the average net salary in the public sector, where about 30 percent are employed, amounted to 630 euros in June, 80 euros more than in the private sector.

Bradas notes that, when we talk about the public sector, it is important to separate public companies in which salaries are significantly higher than in the local administration.

"In public state-owned companies in June, the average salary was 700 euros, in public local

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companies around 520 euros, in the state-level administration 680 euros, and in the administration in the local self-government a little less than 500 euros," he explains.

The largest number of employees, however, work in the private sector, where the average salary in June was around 520 euros, which is 30 euros less than the average.

"Those who work for entrepreneurs have the lowest salaries in the private sector, there is actually the largest number of those who are registered for the minimum and that drags the average down," says Bradas.

The minimum consumer basket in Serbia in June amounted to 330 euros.

"One third of the population of Serbia does not have a minimum consumer basket, and the amount of the minimum consumer basket, in which, for example, only one euro a month is allocated for education, is not enough for a dignified life," Bradas concludes, 021 reports.