

The aim of the thesis is to elaborate a theoretically well grounded concept and to use it for a comparative analysis of the development of inequalities in access to tertiary education in European countries. To achieve the aim, it has been necessary not only to acquire a thorough knowledge of how the theme is dealt with in other countries but, in particular, to find relevant data needed for comparative analyses. The author - who has concerned himself with the problem for more than twenty years - has solved it in an original way by combining three stages of the European Social Survey (ESS) conducted in 2002-2007, and by supplementing it with a special Czech survey conducted in 2007/2008.