

POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

Research background: Social exclusion and poverty constitute pressing issues in contemporary societies and significant obstacles to achieving sustainable social development. In contemporary Europe, they are recognised as one of the most severe social problems. Consequently, the pursuit of research in this domain appears entirely justified.

Purpose: This paper aims to examine the disparities in levels of poverty and social exclusion among European Union countries, employing an analysis of the indicators delineated in Agenda 2030.

Research methodology: The linear ordering and determination of the typological groups of objects was conducted using a method based on the median Weber vector. To ascertain potential changes in the phenomenon under investigation, the survey was conducted in two years: 2015 and 2022.

Results: The linear ordering of objects, as presented in the paper, revealed that Romania, Bulgaria and Latvia consistently exhibited the highest levels of poverty and social exclusion, regardless of the year studied. In 2015, Greece was also included in this Group. Conversely, nations situated in the northern regions of Europe, including Scandinavian countries, consistently demonstrated the lowest levels of the studied phenomenon. The empirical research results thus underscore substantial disparities between developed and developing countries.

Novelty: The paper makes a valuable contribution to the current European and global academic discourse on poverty and social exclusion, both recognised as formidable social challenges worldwide.

Keywords: poverty, social exclusion, EU countries, taxonomic measure of development, Weber median

JEL classification: C38, I24, I32, Q01

Introduction

The fight against poverty and social exclusion stands as a pivotal policy objective of the European Union and its Member States. Effectively addressing these phenomena necessitates comprehensive collaboration among all social economy actors, state institutions, and the broader community (Woldegiorgis, 2022). Over a span of more than two decades, the European Union has endeavoured to foster concerted action among Member States to enhance the adaptability of social security systems in response to socio-economic challenges and to mitigate social inequalities, poverty and social exclusion (Panek, Zwierzchowski, 2016; Nolan, Marx, 2009; Sanchez, Perez-Corral, 2018; Bąk, Perzyńska, 2021; Bak and Kurtz, 2022). Different groups in society are at risk of poverty or social exclusion for a number of reasons, such as unemployment, single parenthood, old-age poverty, being young, educational level, disability, gender, ethnicity or a combination of these factors (Duffy, 2020). The concept of sustainable development, a focal point in the Treaty on the European Union, provides a coherent foundation for the analysis and practical resolution of social, economic, and environmental challenges. The UN Agenda for Sustainable Development delineates 17 goals and 169 targets addressing the 3 dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. The Sustainable Development Goals relating to the social dimension include (Agenda 2030):

- Goal 1: Eradicate poverty in all its forms worldwide,
- Goal 2: Eradicate hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture,
- Goal 3: Ensure a healthy life for all at all ages and promote prosperity,
- Goal 4: Provide quality education for all and promote lifelong learning,
- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower women and girls,
- Goal 8: Promote stable, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all people,
- Goal 16: Promote a peaceful society, ensure access to justice for all, and build inclusive, effective and accountable institutions at all levels.

According to Eurostat (2023), the European Union's overarching sustainable development goal is to eliminate poverty in all its forms and reduce it in all dimensions by 2030. This goal implies shared prosperity, basic living standards and social protection benefits for the impoverished and vulnerable segments of society.

This study aims to examine the variations in poverty and social exclusion levels across the European Union countries, analysing the indicators included in Agenda 2030. The methodology

involved the linear ordering and categorisation of objects into typological groups, utilising a method based on the median Weber vector. The study aims to discern any changes in the phenomenon under examination, focusing on two specific years: 2015 and 2022.

The layout of this paper includes an introduction, which presents the primary purpose of the paper and explains the authors' underlying motivations for researching poverty and social exclusion. Subsequently, the paper reviews the literature on the measurement of poverty and social exclusion. It is followed by a presentation of the statistical data used in the study and a description of the research procedure used in the paper. The paper concludes by presenting the research findings, discussion and conclusions drawn from the study.

1. Measuring poverty and social exclusion

In the literature, the term poverty is often combined with social exclusion, as both concepts denote a condition of living below a generally accepted standard. According to Sobczak (2016), the term social exclusion identifies all kinds of inequalities that can lead to various types of discrimination. It entails a form of isolation from the social life of people who do not conform to the prevailing norms.

One of the main causes of social exclusion is poverty, frequently conceptualised as a deficiency in economic resources. However, social exclusion extends beyond economic dimensions and manifests in various forms (Commins, 2014; MacInnes et al., 2014; Gallie et al., 2003; Madanipour et al., 2015; Halleröd, Larsson, 2008). It is noteworthy that individuals experiencing poverty may not invariably face social exclusion, and conversely, socially excluded individuals may not necessarily be economically disadvantaged. Consequently, social exclusion entails a multidimensional array of challenges. Discussions on exclusion (Szarfenberg, 2006; Bukowski, Magda, 2013; Tendera-Właszczuk, 2015) interconnect 3 common elements: social participation, access to resources and institutions, and the realisation of social rights, occasionally incorporating the issue of poverty and material deprivation. Therefore, in order to achieve social inclusion, both poverty and social exclusion need to be addressed in a balanced way.

In practical terms, the endeavour to combat social exclusion should be grounded in social policies, particularly those addressing education, social assistance, health, housing and family policies. It is vital to create opportunities for people at risk of social exclusion to participate fully in economic, cultural and social life through the implementation of social policy measures. Furthermore, the concept of bridging social exclusion holds significance as

a political imperative. Achieving social inclusion is a political objective for governments as well as international organisations. Governments are aware that economic growth alone is insufficient as a policy goal and that social disintegration poses a perilous threat. Conversely, emphasising the economic dimension of social exclusion at the expense of other facets proves problematic in addressing broader social issues.

Studies of social exclusion and poverty commonly rely on comparative analyses of a designated set of countries, necessitating pertinent statistical data. The literature points to a number of indicators to analyse the phenomenon of social exclusion and poverty. Marlier and Atkinson (2010) suggest that advancements in constructing and utilising diverse indicators can be facilitated through a participatory approach to developing social indicators. Involving key actors in this process contributes to the establishment of ownership and trust in the indicators' validity and reliability.

The 2001 EU Summit held in Leaken, Belgium, adopted the so-called Leaken indicators for the measurement of poverty and social exclusion. These indicators have undergone subsequent revisions and refinements in subsequent years. The set of Leaken indicators includes (Taracha, 2021):

- at risk of poverty rate by economic activity, type of housing ownership, gender and age,
- persistent at risk of poverty rate,
- relative poverty depth index,
- dispersion around the poverty line,
- at-risk-of-poverty rate before social cash transfers,
- at-risk-of-poverty rate by real poverty line,
- income quintile ratio
- regional cohesion,
- long-term unemployment rate,
- long-term unemployed share,
- population living in jobless households,
- early school leavers not in education or training,
- the share of people with a low level of education among the population aged 15–64,
- self-defined health status by income level,
- life expectancy,
- Gini coefficient.

Subsequently, these indicators underwent adjustment and aggregation to form synthetic measures addressing poverty and social exclusion. This process facilitated the development of a 9-element synthetic material deprivation indicator and the At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion AROPE indicator. The EU AROPE indicator represents the percentage of the total population facing the risk of poverty or social exclusion. Its computation relies on three key elements: monetary poverty, severe material and social deprivation and very low work intensity. Functioning as the primary metric for monitoring poverty and social exclusion within the European Union by 2030, the AROPE indicator played a pivotal role as the leading metric in overseeing the EU 2020 poverty target (Eurostat, 2023).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as outlined in its Human Development Reports, provides a way of constructing an indicator of deprivation that includes:

- the probability of not living to the age of 60 at birth,
- the percentage of the population lacking functional literacy,
- the percentage of long-term unemployed,
- the percentage of the population below the poverty line (50% of median income).

According to Kozar (2021), insufficient emphasis is placed on non-monetary indicators of social exclusion and poverty in the examination of these phenomena. Consequently, there is an endeavour to formulate a synthetic measure in this domain that facilitates the ranking and comparison of countries that acceded to the EU in 2004. By considering well-being, quality of life, and social cohesion as analogues of poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion, the indicators describing these aspects become pertinent for evaluating the adverse phenomena under analysis. Measures relating to qualitative aspects of living standards include (Kubiczek, 2014; The Economist, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2011; Miciuła, 2015):

- Green GDP and GNP,
- Measures of Economic Well-being (MEW),
- Measures of Net National Well-being (NNW),
- Index of Economic Aspects of Well-being (EAW),
- Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI),
- Human Development Index (HDI)
- Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI),
- Quality of Life Index (Where-to-be-born),
- Purchasing Power Parity Index (Big Mac index),
- Democracy Index,

- European Green City Index,
- Better Life Index.

As can be seen from the above, poverty and social exclusion are multidimensional concepts referring to processes that limit the ability of individuals or groups to participate fully in society. Given the diversity of national issues and variations in developmental levels, the design of an international portfolio of indicators for poverty and social exclusion must be flexible. Marlier and Atkinson (2010) propose a three-tiered indicator structure encompassing the following levels:

- Level 1 would consist of a limited number of leading indicators, unanimously agreed upon by all countries, covering pertinent areas such as income poverty, material deprivation, lack of education, poor health, and inadequate housing.
- Level 2 would include jointly agreed supporting indicators offering greater detail and elucidating additional dimensions of social exclusion not incorporated in the Level 1 list.
- Level 3 would consist of indicators and contextual information individually selected by national governments to underscore specific areas and facilitate the interpretation of Level 1 and Level 2 indicators.

The proponents of this conceptual framework emphasise that, in the context of the European Union (EU), the three-tier structure offers numerous advantages. Foremost among them is the realisation of the principle of balance between various dimensions without constraining the potential for the advancement of individual areas.

2. Materials and methods

The empirical research presented in this paper relies on a database constructed from data provided by Eurostat. The variables that have been adopted for the study are indicators that relate directly not only to the categories of poverty and material deprivation but also to the issues concerning employment, education, and health across various age groups. The inclusion of employment, education and health quality in the study of poverty and social exclusion is justified because of the direct impact of these categories on the phenomenon analysed. The list of indicators adopted for the study includes stimulants, indicating a positive effect on the phenomenon, and destimulants, whose values are preferable to be minimised. The majority of indicators employed in the study function as destimulants, with only five of them serving

as stimulants (X_{9S} , X_{18S} , X_{19S} , X_{21S} , X_{22S}). The following indicators (diagnostic characteristics) were included in the study.

- X_{1D} – At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion (%);
- X_{2D} – At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers (%);
- X_{3D} – Poverty risk threshold for a single household (60% of the national median equivalised disposable income);
- X_{4D} – Rate of severe material and social deprivation (% of the population);
- X_{5D} – Persistent at-risk-of-poverty rate (the proportion of people with equivalent disposable income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold in the current year and at least two of the previous three years);
- X_{6D} – Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap (the difference between the median total equivalent net income of those below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold and the at-risk-of-poverty threshold itself, expressed as a percentage of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold);
- X_{7D} – Income distribution inequality (the ratio of the total income received by the 20% of the population with the highest incomes (top quintile) to the income received by the 20% of the population with the lowest incomes);
- X_{8D} – Children aged 0–17 at risk of poverty or social exclusion (% of the population in this age group);
- X_{9S} – Impact of social transfers (excluding pensions) on the reduction of the poverty risk percentage due to social transfers (%);
- X_{10D} – Household at-risk-of-poverty rate (the percentage of the total population under 60 living in households with very low work intensity, i.e. where adults aged (18–59) worked less than 20% of their total work potential in the past year);
- X_{11D} – At-risk-of-poverty rate for working people aged 18–64 (% of the population in this age group);
- X_{12D} – Long-term unemployment rate (% of economically active population);
- X_{13D} – Percentage of 18–24-year-olds leaving education and training prematurely (% of the population in this age group);
- X_{14D} – Youth unemployment rate (15–24 years) in the total population of this age group (%);
- X_{15D} – Indicator for young people (15–24 years) not in education, employment or training (% of the population in this age group);

- X_{16D} – Employment rate of older workers (55 to 64 years) (% of the population in this age group);
- X_{17D} – At-risk-of-poverty-or-exclusion rate for older people (65+) (% of the population in this age group);
- X_{18S} – Median relative income of older people (ratio of median equivalent disposable income of people 65+ to median equivalent disposable income of people up to 64);
- X_{19S} – Aggregate replacement ratio (the ratio of median gross individual pensions in the 65–74 age group to median gross individual earnings in the 50–59 age group, excluding other social benefits);
- X_{20D} – Share of unmet medical care needs (% of the population);
- X_{21S} – Years of healthy life for men aged 65;
- X_{22S} – Years of healthy life for women aged 65;
- X_{23D} – Housing expenditure overload rate (% of population);
- X_{24D} – Current expenditure on health care from household income or savings (percentage of total current expenditure on health care).

For collectivities characterised by a diverse set of attributes, multivariate comparative analysis methods, particularly taxonomic methods, are commonly employed. Taxonomic measures of development are synthetic variables that replace the description of the objects of study using a set of diagnostic characteristics with a description using a single aggregate quantity. Two prevalent approaches in taxonomic methods include benchmark and model-free measures. In model-free methods, the synthetic variable is a function of the normalised values of the input variables. Conversely, benchmark methods utilise the concept of a model object, representing an ideal object with optimal values for the input variables. The construction of a synthetic measure involves assessing the distance between the observed object and the model object (Panek, 2009).

In the study, the benchmark method was used to construct a taxonomic measure of development in a positional approach using Weber's median. The Weber median is a multi-dimensional generalization of the classical notion of the median. It is about a vector that minimizes the sum of Euclidean distance (Euclidean distance) of the data points representing the considered objects and therefore is somehow “in the middle” of them. Still, it is also immune to outliers (Weber, 1971). The positional variant of linear object ordering incorporates a distinct standardisation formula in comparison to the classical approach. It is grounded on the

quotient of the deviation of the trait value from the corresponding Weber median coordinate and the weighted median absolute deviation using the Weber median (Młodak, 2006):

$$z_{ij} = \frac{x_{ij} - \theta_{0j}}{1,4826 \cdot \tilde{mad}(X_j)} \quad (1)$$

where: $\theta_0 = (\theta_{01}, \theta_{02}, \dots, \theta_{0m})$ is the Weber median, $\tilde{mad}(X_j)$ the median absolute deviation in which the distance of the characteristics is examined in relation to the corresponding coordinates of the Weber vector, i.e.: $\tilde{mad}(X_j) = \text{med}_{i=1,2,\dots,n} |x_{ij} - \theta_{0j}|$ ($j = 1, 2, \dots, m$). The aggregate measure is determined according to the formula:

$$\mu_i = 1 - \frac{d_i}{d_-} \quad (2)$$

where $d_- = \text{med}(d) + 2,5 \text{ mad}(d)$, whereas $d = (d_1, d_2, \dots, d_n)$ is the distance vector determined by the formula: $d_i = \text{med}_{j=1,2,\dots,m} |z_{ij} - \varphi_j|$, $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$, $\varphi_j = \max_{i=1,2,\dots,n} z_{ij}$ or $\varphi_j = \min_{i=1,2,\dots,n} z_{ij}$ – the coordinated of the development pattern vector, which is constituted of the maximum values for stimulants and minimum for destimulants.

The ordering of objects using the positional measure is the basis for grouping objects into four classes (Kukuła, 2014). In order to do this, it is necessary to determine the spread of the variable μ_i :

$$R(\mu_i) = \max_i \mu_i - \min_i \mu_i, \quad (i = 1, \dots, 16) \quad (3)$$

The value of the splitting parameter k is then determined:

$$k = \frac{R(\mu_i)}{4} \quad (4)$$

The parameter k is used to divide the entire set of objects into the following groups:

group I: $\mu_i \in (\max_i \mu_i - k, \max_i \mu_i]$,

group II: $\mu_i \in (\max_i \mu_i - 2k, \max_i \mu_i - k]$,

group III: $\mu_i \in (\max_i \mu_i - 3k, \max_i \mu_i - 2k]$,

group IV: $\mu_i \in [\max_i \mu_i - 4k, \max_i \mu_i - 3k]$.

The utilisation of a method based on the Weber median serves to mitigate the distorting influence of outlier observations. This approach enables the determination of the contribution of individual deviations to the respective aggregate value while simultaneously treating the

set of diagnostic characteristics as an integrated entity throughout virtually every stage of the research process.

3. Results

On the basis of the reported values of the 24 indicators described in the statistical material and method section, taxonomic measures of the development of the 27 EU countries in terms of poverty and social exclusion in 2015 and 2022 were determined. The summarised results are presented in Table 1, where a higher ranking corresponds to a lower level of poverty and exclusion in a country. The ranking facilitated the categorisation of countries into four typological groups (I–IV), with Group I comprising countries with the highest levels of poverty and Group IV consisting of those with the lowest levels.

Table 1. Ranking of EU countries and typological groups by level of poverty and social exclusion in 2015 and 2022

Country	2015			2022		
	μ_i	position	group	μ_i	position	group
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Belgium	0,3022	18	III	0,2261	20	IV
Bulgaria	0,6267	4	I	0,5418	2	I
Czechia	0,1702	25	IV	0,1251	27	IV
Denmark	0,1654	26	IV	0,1840	25	IV
Germany	0,3121	16	III	0,2736	12	III
Estonia	0,4571	9	II	0,4122	7	II
Ireland	0,3096	17	III	0,2263	19	IV
Greece	0,6646	2	I	0,4221	6	II
Spain	0,5293	6	II	0,4440	5	II
France	0,2598	19	IV	0,2689	14	III
Croatia	0,4059	10	III	0,2684	15	III
Italy	0,5239	7	II	0,3830	8	II
Cyprus	0,3876	11	III	0,2708	13	III
Latvia	0,6269	3	I	0,4716	3	II
Lithuania	0,5586	5	II	0,4483	4	II
Luxembourg	0,1711	24	IV	0,1852	24	IV
Hungary	0,3620	13	III	0,2397	18	IV
Malta	0,3524	14	III	0,2980	10	III
Netherlands	0,1347	27	IV	0,1971	23	IV

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Austria	0,2336	22	IV	0,2257	21	IV
Poland	0,3679	12	III	0,2243	22	IV
Portugal	0,4890	8	II	0,3145	9	III
Romania	0,7386	1	I	0,5873	1	I
Slovenia	0,2471	20	IV	0,1441	26	IV
Slovakia	0,3189	15	III	0,2453	16	III
Finland	0,2381	21	IV	0,2747	11	III
Sweden	0,1820	23	IV	0,2450	17	III
min	0,1347			0,1251		
max	0,7386			0,5873		
average	0,3754			0,3017		
Vs	44,4467			39,0957		
A	0,5172			0,8458		

Source: own elaboration.

Analysing the information presented in Table 1 regarding the synthetic measures, it is observed that their average values did not exhibit significant differences between the two years under investigation but displayed a notable coefficient of variation, hovering around 40%. The elevated positive asymmetry further attests to the substantial variation. It implies that, for the majority of EU countries, the measure was below the average value, which is favourable from the perspective of the studied phenomenon.

In 2015, Romania registered the highest level of poverty and social exclusion, primarily influenced by elevated values across six indicators compared to other EU countries: the risk of poverty or social exclusion (X_{1D}), risk of poverty after social transfers (X_{2D}), relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap (X_{6D}), income distribution inequality (X_{7D}), children aged 0–17 at risk of poverty or social exclusion (X_{8D}), impact of social transfers (excluding pensions) on the reduction of the percentage at risk of poverty due to social transfers (X_{9S}), at-risk-of-poverty of working people aged 18–64 (X_{11D}). Bulgaria, Greece and Latvia were also in Class I, reflecting the highest levels of poverty and social exclusion.

In contrast, the lowest levels of poverty and social exclusion were observed in the Netherlands (exhibiting the lowest values among EU countries for the share of young people (15–24 years) not in education, employment, or training in this age group and for those at risk of poverty or social exclusion among the elderly aged 65+), Denmark (displaying the lowest values among EU countries for the at-risk-of-poverty rate and long-term unemployment rate),

and the Czech Republic (registering the lowest values among EU countries for the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate and income distribution inequality).

In 2015, the vast majority of EU countries were in groups III and IV, each comprising nine countries. For countries in these groups, most indicators exhibited values below the EU average for destimulants and above the EU average for stimulants, reflecting a favourable condition concerning the studied phenomenon.

In 2022, the Group of countries with the highest levels of poverty and social exclusion once again included Romania, Bulgaria and Latvia. Romania, in particular, exhibited unfavourable values for ten indicators. In comparison to 2015, the following indicators experienced further deterioration: the proportion of 18–24-year-olds leaving education and training prematurely as a percentage of the population in this age group (X_{13D}), the proportion of young people (15–24) not in education, employment or training as a percentage of the population in this age group (X_{15D}), the reduction in healthy life years for men aged 65 and women of the same age (X_{22S}).

Taking into account that a higher ranking means a lower level of poverty and exclusion in a country, the best situation in terms of the level of the phenomenon under study was in the Czech Republic (up two positions), Denmark (up 1 position) and Slovenia (up 6 positions). However, the Netherlands dropped 4 positions in the ranking, experiencing, among other things, a two-fold increase in indicator X_{17D} – the risk of poverty or social exclusion of older people (65+).

Upon further analysis of the information in Table 1, it is evident that in 2022, the majority of member states altered their positions, except for Latvia and Romania. Notable improvements were recorded in Poland (up 10 positions), in the already mentioned Slovenia (up 6 positions), Croatia (up 5 positions) and Hungary (up 5 positions). In contrast, Finland (down 10 positions), Sweden (down 6 positions) and France (down 5 positions) experienced significant deterioration.

Similar to 2015, the majority of countries in 2022 (18) fell into typological groups III and IV, displaying favourable values for indicators related to poverty and social exclusion levels.

Maps (Figures 1–2) offer a visual representation of the taxonomic analysis of the surveyed EU countries, illustrating the division of member countries into groups characterised by similarity in terms of poverty and social exclusion levels. Notably, countries situated in the northern part of Europe, including the Scandinavian countries and Slovenia, exhibited better performance in 2015. In contrast, in 2022, Poland and Hungary were part of the fourth typological Group, characterised by the lowest levels of poverty and social exclusion.

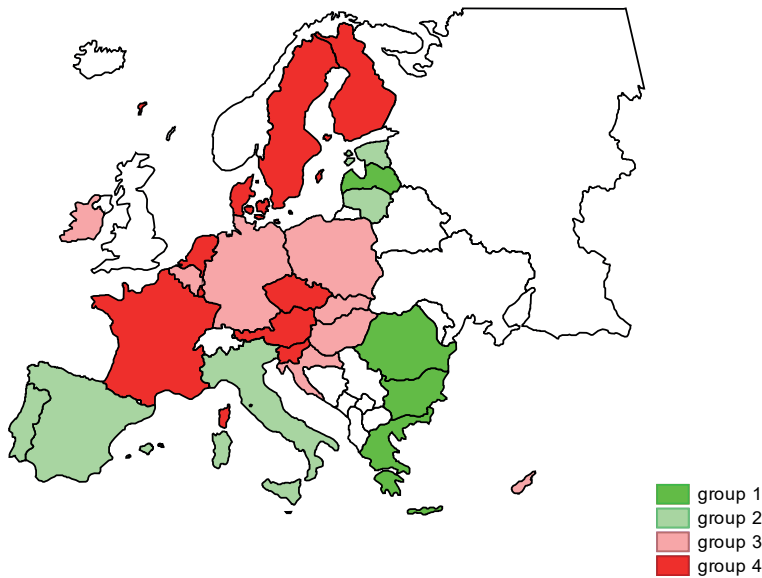


Figure 1. The division of EU countries into similar groups according to the level of poverty and social exclusion in 2015

Source: own elaboration.

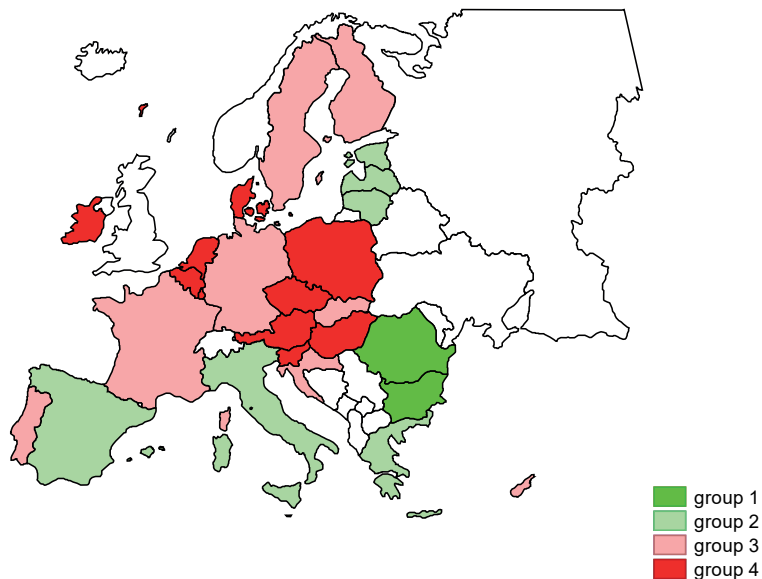


Figure 2. The division of EU countries into similar groups according to the level of poverty and social exclusion in 2022

Source: own elaboration.

Discussion and conclusions

The issues of poverty and social exclusion impact all countries in the European Union, albeit to varying extents. Combating poverty, its eradication, and the reduction of inequalities stand out as the most significant global challenge, serving as a crucial prerequisite for achieving sustainable development, particularly for developing nations. EU leaders have agreed to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 15 million by 2030, including at least five million children (Copeland, 2023). Eurostat (2018) estimates that in 2017, social transfers (excluding pensions) were instrumental in reducing the number of individuals classified as poor by nearly a third. The effectiveness of social transfers in alleviating the risk of poverty varies among EU Member States. In 2017, two Member States experienced reductions of more than 50%, namely Finland (57% reduction) and Denmark (51%). In contrast, nine Member States witnessed reductions of less than 25%, with the smallest reductions observed in Greece (16%) and Romania (17%).

The linear ordering of objects conducted in the article revealed that Romania, Bulgaria, and Latvia consistently exhibited the highest levels of poverty and social exclusion, regardless of the year studied. In 2015, Greece was also included in this Group. In contrast, countries in the northern part of Europe, along with the Scandinavian countries, demonstrated the lowest levels of the phenomenon under study. The empirical results, therefore, indicate significant disparities between the developed and developing countries in the EU, in aligning with the findings of other researchers (Birau et al., 2019; Carlsen, Bruggemann, 2021; Kalinowski, Rosa, 2021).

The multidimensional analysis of poverty and social exclusion in 2015 and 2022 carried out in this study allows a detailed assessment of the level of the phenomenon under study in individual EU countries. It makes it possible to identify countries where the situation has improved or deteriorated in terms of the variables examined. The reasons for this can then be sought. In practice, this means that the Union will take action to coordinate cooperation between Member States in the field of social policy, employment and social protection.

In the realm of social policy, European Union countries confront numerous challenges associated with the attainment of sustainable development goals. The prevention and alleviation of issues related to poverty and social exclusion hinge significantly on the actions and reforms implemented by Member States. The role of the EU lies in supporting and complementing national policies pertaining to social inclusion and social protection through the provision of policy recommendations and financial support for reforms.

The results obtained in this study raise the need for in-depth research to identify the causes of poverty and social exclusion in individual EU countries. Consequently, the next phase of the analysis will involve considering detailed data on this phenomenon in conjunction with other sustainable development goals.

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