AICEI PROCEEDINGS

Implications of EU2020 Targets and Indicators on Social Inclusion and Poverty in Macedonia

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Abstract

As a European Union (EU) candidate country, Macedonia is formally obliged to comply and adjust its social policies with the new Europe 2020 targets. In the social domain, this implies increase in employment and tertiary education rates, combined with the reduction of poverty and social exclusion. In addition to the targets, the Europe 2020 proposes new indicators according to which progress should be measured. Taking into consideration the negative structural conditions, such as high unemployment and poverty rates in Macedonia, it is expected that the new EU framework will have major implications on the national social policy agenda.

The aim of this paper is two fold. First, by providing comparative data on poverty and social exclusion in the EU member and candidate countries based on Europe 2020 indictors, it strives to show the differences in poverty rates measured according to a variety of indicators. Secondly, by applying the Europe 2020 estimations of poverty and social exclusion in Macedonia, it attempts to show the differences in poverty rate as well as categories at risk with those generated from the current official data in the country. Apart from these two general aims, this paper also assesses possible implications from the Europe 2020 in relation to strategic redefinitions of the national social policy. In addition to the literature review and comparative statistical analysis, the work in this paper is also based on quantitative research, involving a representative sample of 1602 households, whose responses formed a basis for calculating poverty and social exclusion in Macedonia, according to the Europe 2020 indicators.[i]

Keywords: EU2020, material deprivation, poverty, jobless households, social exclusion

Poverty and social exclusion have been two interconnected phenomena which have preoccupied social policy agendas on a global level. Their effective tackling has been to some extent hindered due to lack of coherent, comprehensive and comparatively acceptable ways of defining and measuring these social phenomena. The European Union, along with other international agents, has contributed in the past decade towards a clarification of indicators and targets which represents an important step forward in combating poverty and social exclusion. First, EU indicators for poverty and social exclusion were agreed upon at the European Council meeting in Laeken, in December 2001, and then amended in June 2006. The portfolio for measuring social protection and social inclusion process included 14 overarching indicators (+11 context indicators) in the three policy strands - social inclusion, pensions, health and long term care. The most recent EU approach in relation to social indicators has been adopted at the June 2010 European Council, through the Europe 2020 agenda, with its aim of achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

While such indicators provide a chance for a more progressive and inclusive social model both on a national and supranational level, we should be aware that they only "tell us about the aggregate sitaution of people, but little or nothing about the quality of their experiences"(Stubbs & Gerovska-Mitev, 2008, p.23). On the other hand, not having or utlizing these social indicators also hinders the possibility of effective social policies that can potentially improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable populations. Such social indicators are particularly important for Macedonia, as a country which on the one hand expriences higher rates of poverty and on the other lacks harmonized, comparative and disaggregated data on poverty and social exclusion.

Targets and Indicators on Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe 2020

Since June, 2010, the European Union (EU) has replaced its Lisbon Strategy with the Europe 2020 Strategy. The focus on poverty and social exclusion in this new Strategy may be seen through its headline targets, flagship initiatives as well as the integrated guidelines. Their achievement and operationalization is set through:

a) Five reinforcing EU-wide headline targets, one of which is primarily focused on poverty and social exclusion: "promoting social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty, by aiming to lift at least 20 million people out of poverty and exclusion. The anti-poverty target is based on a combination of three indicators: the number of people at risk of poverty (whose total income is below 60% of the median national equivalised household income), the number of people suffering severe material deprivation (the number of people living in households who can not afford at least four items out of a list of nine: 1. to face unexpected expenses; 2. one week annual holiday away from home; 3. to pay for arrears; 4. a meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day; 5. to keep home adequately warm; 6. to have a washing machine; 7. to have a colour TV; 8. to have a telephone; 9. to have a personal car), and the number of people aged 0-59 who live in jobless households;

b) Seven flagship initiatives, including one with the particular theme of poverty - "A European Platform against poverty"; and

c) Ten Integrated Guidelines, the last of which focuses on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty (European Commission, 2010).

Despite welcoming the "stronger legal base" (Daly, 2010), improvements in the "ideational and operational components" (Ferrera, 2010) and a "strengthened social dimension" (Zeitlin, 2010), the new Europe 2020 framework and particularly the potential of its poverty and social exclusion targets and indicators, have been widely criticized in the academic literature. Reflecting the French experience, Walker outlines challenges with all three measures (at risk of poverty, material deprivation and jobless households) emphasizing their unstableness, i.e. when incomes are clustered around the poverty threshold; their vulnerability to technological change, i.e. the phone as an element of deprivation; and the trade-off between competing targets, i.e. reducing the number of jobless households by low wage employment could increase income poverty (2010, p.214-215). Similarly, in the Synthesis report based on the reports of the EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion, Fraser and Marlier identify key issues, in relation to poverty and social exclusion targets, outlining that "there is a risk of focussing on just one aspect of poverty and social exclusion, and in effect of moving people from one aspect of poverty and social exclusion to another" (2011, p. 8).

Concerned with the other aspects in the economic and social protection system, Pochet has questioned the potential of attaining the poverty reduction target "without any changes in the distribution of income and the mechanisms for redistribution" (2010, p.143).

Notwithstanding these important challenges, Stubbs and Gerovska-Mitev have emphasized the importance of the new EU 2020 indicators and targets in the field of poverty and social exclusion for the EU candidate countries, particularly because they "provide an incentive for candidate countries to update and amend their previously adopted National Strategies as well as Action Plans in the field of poverty and social exclusion" but also "to move statistical assessments from consumption to income, from different national thresholds (i.e. on poverty) to more harmonized EU thresholds, as well as towards use of new statistical methods which can become a national standard" (2012, p.70).

Taking into consideration all the different arguments and shortcomings of the targets and indicators for poverty and social exclusion in the new Europe 2020 Strategy, it is still not possible to object to their significance, particularly in the period following the global economic crisis. Aware of the fact that their relevance varies upon each country's commitment to targets as well as factors such as economic growth and the tradition in governance of the social inclusion agenda, they may still be used as an additional tool to compare and assess performance against other existing national targets and indicators.

Comparative Trends on Poverty and Social Exclusion in the EU Member States and Candidate Countries

The social map of the European Union according to EU2020 indicators changes significantly, taking into consideration that poverty and social exclusion are measured by a combination of three indicators, including both monetary and non-monetary assessments. As argued by Nolan and Whelan the combination of a national income poverty line with an EU common deprivation threshold can be seen as seeking to capture "exclusion from customary EU living patterns due to lack of resources at the national level" (2011, p.7). Analysis of the rates of vulnerable population according to each of the three indicators suggests that newer member states (BG, LV, HU and ROM) are more affected with income poverty rather than with material

deprivation (in LT and SK the difference is negligibly in favour of income poverty). Accordingly, we can assume that countries experiencing higher material deprivation rates are countries in which the value of disposable income is lower compared with the costs of living in that respective countries, or that disposable income does not provide for a decent living standard. As also noted by Nolan and Whelan, "the addition of the deprivation criterion produces much sharper variation across countries than seen with relative income poverty alone, but this mainly involves a much sharper contrast between a sub-set of New Member States and the remaining countries" (2011, p.9). The EU member states in which there is a high material deprivation also are countries with relative income poverty higher than the EU average (BG, LV, LT and RO). The best performing EU member states in relation to poverty and social exclusion are found among the following: one of the new member states (CZ), the Scandinavian group of countries (SE, FI), as well as those who in the welfare state literature (Esping- Andersen, 1990) are defined as corporative-conservative countries (NL, AT).

Table 1: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion in EU member and candidate countries, 2010 (% of the total population)

	Severely materially deprived people	At risk of poverty (after social transfers)	People living in households with very low work intensity	People at risk of poverty and social exclusion
EU 27	8.1	16.4	10.0	23.5
Belgium (BE)	5.9	14.6	12.6	20.8
Bulgaria (BG)	35.0	20.7	7.9	41.6
Czech Republic (CZ)	6.2	9.0	6.4	14.4
Denmark (DK)	2.7	13.3	10.3	18.3
Germany (DE)	4.5	15.6	11.1	19.7
Estonia (EE)	9.0	15.8	8.9	21.7
Ireland (IE)	7.5	16.1	22.9	29.9
Greece (EL)	11.6	20.1	7.5	27.7
Spain (ES)	4.0	20.7	9.8	25.5
France (FR)	5.8	13.5	9.8	19.3
Italy (IT)	6.9	18.2	10.2	24.5
Cyprus (CY)	9.1	17.0	4.0	24.0
Latvia (LV)	27.4	21.3	12.2	38.1
Lithuania (LT)	19.5	20.2	9.2	33.4
Luxembourg (LU)	0.5	14.5	5.5	17.1

| Hungary (HU)	21.6	12.3	11.8	29.9
Malta (MT)	5.7	15.5	8.4	20.6
Netherlands (NL)	2.2	10.3	8.2	15.1
Austria (AT)	4.3	12.1	7.7	16.6
Poland (PL)	14.2	17.6	7.3	27.8
Portugal (PT)	9.0	17.9	8.6	25.3
Romania (RO)	31.0	21.1	6.8	41.4
Slovenia (SI)	5.9	12.7	6.9	18.3
Slovakia (SK)	11.4	12.0	7.9	20.6
Finland (FI)	2.8	13.1	9.1	16.9
Sweden (SE)	1.3	12.9	5.9	15.0
United Kingdom (UK)	4.8	17.1	13.1	23.1
Iceland (IS)	1.8	9.8	5.6	13.7
Croatia (HR)	14.5	20.5	15.4	31.3

Source: Eurostat, 2012
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=t2020_50

Conditions of poverty and social exclusion among the EU candidate countries can be analyzed only for Iceland and Croatia, as comparative Eurostat data are available only for these countries. Accordingly, it may be seen that Iceland can be grouped in the best performing countries in relation to poverty and social exclusion, while Croatia experiences much higher rates of poverty and social exclusion. According to each of the indicators, material deprivation in Croatia is lower than in some EU member states (BG, LV, LT, HU and RO), while income poverty is much higher and close to poverty rates in the Southern EU member states and in some of the newer EU member states (BG, EL, ES, LV, LT and RO). Overall, Croatia's rate of poverty and social exclusion is quite high (31.3%), however lower than in some member states (BG, LT and RO).

People at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU 27 (experiencing one, two or all of the risks) represent 23.5% of all the population. The largest group is represented by people living at risk of poverty (16.4%), followed by those living in households with low work intensity (10.0%), while those living in material deprivation are fewest (8.1%). Those suffering severe cumulative disadvantage (experience all of the three risks) represent 6% of the total population in EU, or approximately 6.5 million people (Lelkes and Gasior, 2012, p.3).

Diagram 1: Overlap of those at risk of poverty, material deprivation and low work intensity in EU
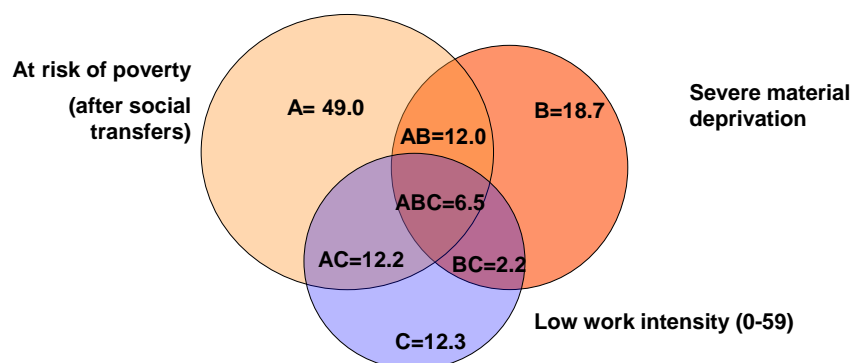
AC = at risk of poverty + low work intensity

AB = at risk of poverty + materially deprived

BC = materially deprived + low work intensity

ABC= low work intensity or at risk of poverty or materially deprived

Source: Lelkes and Gasior, 2012

Reading note: 49 million people in EU are faced with risk of poverty, while 6.5 million people are faced with risk of poverty and social exclusion.

It may be concluded that the new EU 2020 indicator for poverty and social exclusion produces much higher rates of a vulnerable population. However, for the purpose of reaching the EU 2020 target of lifting more than 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion, member states can choose target indicators on the basis of which this aim will be measured. According to an analysis by Lelie (2011) of the draft National Reform Programs produced by EU member states in November 2010, it may be seen that countries with higher material deprivation rates have opted only for "at risk of poverty rate" as a benchmark indicator (BG, EE, LV, RO). From the point of feasibility of achieving the national targets, choosing to avoid a non-monetary indicator may seem obvious, as political action can not intervene at

the level of material deprivation. However, if countries want to genuinely tackle poverty and social exclusion, then a combination of monetary and non-monetary indicators may provide greater chances for reaching those most at risk.

Poverty and Social Exclusion in Macedonia according to EU2020 Indicators

Since 2000, the debate on poverty and social exclusion in Macedonia has been on the rise. A body of research literature appeared related to the measurement of inequality (Eftimovski, 2002), poverty and fragmentation (Jakimovski, 2003) as well as analysis of problems related to defining the social exclusion (Donevska, 2003). The academic literature focusing on poverty measurement provided additional analysis and arguments confronting the official measurements based on expenditure and 70% median as threshold. In the following years, the literature and research concerning these topics continued to grow, analyzing different dimensions, such as: poverty assessment (World Bank, 2005), social inclusion of vulnerable groups (Donevska, M., Kirandjiska, S. & Lazarevska, S., 2005; Polio Plus, 2005; Novkovska, 2008; Bornarova, S. & Gerovska Mitev, M. , 2009), as well as policy governance and priorities in these domains (Gerovska Mitev, M., Gjorgjev, D. & Miovska-Spaseva, S., 2007; UNDP., 2008). Unfortunately, it may be said that these critical debates had no impact on political actions and policies aimed at poverty and social exclusion. National programs targeting socially excluded groups (2004) as well as the National Strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion (2010) were primarily developed on the basis of data from the State Statistical Office and other administrative sources (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Education, Agency for Employment, etc.). Notwithstanding the representativeness of these data, still they did not provide a complete picture of the problems of poverty and social exclusion.

Current official data on EU2020 indicators in Macedonia are partially available through the State Statistical Office. The only available official indicator focused on social exclusion is the number of people who are severely materially deprived, although its calculation is not based on the full list of 9 items. According to these data, the number of people who are severely materially deprived is slowly decreasing since 2005, from 55.9% to

41% in 2010. Other official data on poverty and jobless households (not based on the EU2020 calculation) indicate that 30.9% of the population is poor (State Statistical Office, 2010), while the rate of jobless households (by age group) is 21.4% (0-17) and 16.6% (18-59).

Table 2: Official data on poverty, material deprivation and joblessness in Macedonia

	2006	2010
At risk of poverty	29.8	30.9
Severe materially deprived	51.0	41.0
People living in jobless households	29.4 (0-17)	21.4 (0-17)
	24.7 (18-59)	16.6 (18-59)

Source: State Statistical Office from various releases – Poverty line (2006 and 2010), Republic of Macedonia 2020, Labour Force Survey (2010)

With the purpose of complementing the official data, but also to provide a more complete and comparable view with those at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the European Union, this paper will use the data gathered for the purposes of the Friedrich Ebert Study on material deprivation, poverty and social exclusion among households in Macedonia (forthcoming), based on the representative sample of 1600 households in the country.

According to these data, 30.8% of the households in Macedonia are faced with material deprivation, measured by the number of households lacking at least four out of list of nine basic items. This rate is lower by almost 10% than the currently available official data for Macedonia. The reasons for such a difference may arise due to the fact that the official data were not based on a complete list of nine items (only 8), but also a dissimilarity may arise due to time differences. Namely, the official data are based on assessments in 2010 (a year when the effects of the global economic crisis were severely experienced in Macedonia), while the study from which these data are taken was conducted at the end of 2011.

In comparative terms, the rate of materially deprived in the country (30.8%) indicates that Macedonia has similarly high rates of material deprivation as Bulgaria (35.0%) and Romania (31.1%), but almost three times higher than the EU average rate (8.1%).

Table 3: Poverty, material deprivation and joblessness in selected EU member states and EU candidate countries, 2010

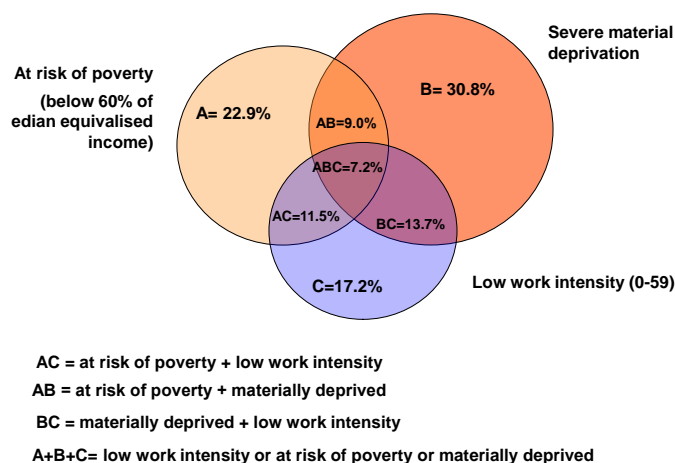|	At risk of poverty (after social transfers)	Severe materially deprived	People living in jobless households	People at risk of poverty and social exclusion
EU 27	16.4	8.1	10.0	23.5
Slovenia	12.7	5.9	6.9	18.3
Bulgaria	20.7	35.0	7.9	41.6
Romania	21.1	31.0	6.8	41.4
Croatia	20.5	14.5	15.4	31.3
Macedonia	22.9	30.8	17.2	44.5

Source: Eurostat, 2012 and own calculation based on the data from the FES study (forthcoming)

Analysis of households at risk of poverty, measured according to the EU approach (below 60% of the median equalised income) indicates that 22.9% of the households in Macedonia are faced with poverty. This rate implies that when a method of incomes and lower threshold is applied (60% of the median income rather than 70%), the result is a lower poverty rate. However, due to the specific socio-economic characteristic of Macedonia, such as a high level of undeclared work as well as lack of disclosure of the actual amount of incomes, measuring poverty according to the expenditure approach will remain relevant. Having said that, one also must be aware that the relative income measure also has its limitations, and as argued by Bradshaw and Mayhew any median threshold is arbitrary and not related to an understanding of need, but merely a line drawn on income distribution (2010, p.173).

Jobless households or people living in households with very low work intensity, according to the Europe 2020, are people aged 0-59 living in households where the adults work less than 20% of their total work potential during the past year. Data from the FES study suggest that 17% of the households (where the household head is 0-59) were jobless in 2011. When compared with other EU member and candidate countries, Macedonia's rate of joblessness is highest (with the exception of Ireland - 22.9%). This is not surprising, taking into consideration the high official rate of unemployment in Macedonia (31.2% in the third trimester of 2011). In addition, the problem of precise estimation of joblessness in Macedonia is accumulated due to the high level of the grey economy and undeclared work.

As definitions and measurements of social exclusion are scarce both at the national and international level, the Europe 2020 provides significant contributions towards this end. Namely, the cumulative sum of all three indicators - at risk of poverty rate, material deprivation and low work intensity provide assessment of those at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This may be measured in two ways, i.e. either as a cumulative sum of all three indicators, where persons are counted only once even if they appear in more than one category, or as a total number of people who are represented in all three categories. The latter category provides data about those experiencing multiple social exclusion. Analysis of the households at risk of social exclusion in Macedonia (belonging to at least one of the three categories) signals that 44.5% of all households in the country are affected with this problem. If assessment is based on households affected by all three indicators than we see that 7.2% of the households are those mostly disadvantaged, or those experiencing multiple social exclusion. Both rates are comparatively higher than rates of poverty risk and social exclusion in all EU member and candidate countries.

Diagram 2: Households at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Macedonia

AC = at risk of poverty + low work intensity

AB = at risk of poverty + materially deprived

BC = materially deprived + low work intensity

A+B+C= low work intensity or at risk of poverty or materially deprived

Source: FES study on material deprivation, poverty and social exclusionamong households in Macedonia (forthcoming)

Policy Implications for Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion in Macedonia

Available data on poverty and social exclusion estimated according to the Europe 2020 indicators provide important information for adapting national social policy agenda. In addition, they enable more targeted and quantified insight into trends of poverty and social exclusion according to which national targets and actions should be framed.

Currently, national targets in relation to the Europe 2020 indicators can be seen from the Employment Strategy – 2015. While the new National Strategy can be praised in terms of aligning new targets in the domains comparable to those with Europe 2020, still the stipulated national targets particularly in the domain of poverty give little hope for improvement. The national target for population living at risk of poverty until 2015 is set for 29%, which represents a decrease of only 1.9 percentage points for a period of four years. In addition, setting national targets in relation to EU 2020 goals seems to have been realized without any prior analysis and research, as well without an integrated 3 pillar approach.

Table 4: Comparison of national targets 2015 and EU 2020 targets

	Status in 2010	National targets 2015	EU 2020 targets
Employment rate (20-64)	48,1%	55%	75%
Employment rate of young people (15-29)	26,5%	29%	/
Employment rate of young people (15-24)	15,4%	17%	/
Employment rate among women	34%	42%	/
Employment rate of older workers (55-64)	34,2%	41%	/
Early school-leavers	16,2%	14%	10%

Share of 30-34 with completed tertiary or equivalent education	14,2%	19%	40%
People below poverty line	30,9%	29%	Lifting 20 million people out poverty and social exclusion

Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, National Strategy for Employment-2015

In this respect, data provided in this paper enable a disaggregated view of those living at risk of poverty and social exclusion. A comparison between categories of people faced with the risks of material deprivation, poverty and joblessness suggest that in Macedonia the problem of material deprivation is much higher than that of income poverty and joblessness. In this respect, a possible redefinition of national targets and strategies, which currently tackles only those at risk of poverty, should also take into consideration people faced with material deprivation and those with low work intensity. In addition, these data provide a chance for policy measures which can be focused at the larger population faced with poverty and social exclusion (44.5%), but also a more targeted approach towards those experiencing multiple social exclusion (7.2%).

Use of the different statistical indicators which are comparable to that in the European Union can also serve as an important tool for comparison and extrapolation of different categories of risk. The applied EU estimation of at risk of poverty according to 60% of median income does not only provide a different rate of poverty, but can also serve as a method to analyze differences between the profile of people faced with income poverty and those faced with poverty according to the expenditure method.

As already noted by Gerovska-Mitev and Stubbs (2012), Europe 2020 indicators and targets contribute towards a number of challenges, which for the candidate countries may mainly be seen in the need to: "widen official indicators for measuring poverty and social exclusion, widen the focus of social policies and measures towards larger target groups and integrate social

policies targets with that of other public policies, such as employment, education, housing, and so on, to overcome the current lack of horizontal coordination of policies for social inclusion″ (p. 70).

However, these challenges also provide an opportunity for a more coordinated and focused social inclusion policy, which reflects its multidimensional character. By combining policy measures targeted towards different vulnerable populations instead of only at those currently defined in Macedonia as poor, the chances for reducing poverty and social exclusion in the country are much greater.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has provided quantitative and qualitative analysis of data related to poverty and social exclusion according to Europe 2020 Strategy. It enabled an identification of the scale of the population affected with risks of poverty, material deprivation and low work intensity, as well as the population faced with all three risks, defined as people at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The analysis in the paper indicates that the country is not only faced with poverty based on average expenditure (according to official data), but also with a high scale of material deprivation (30.8%). In addition, the paper identifies 44.5% of people living at risk of poverty and social exclusion, which is a worrying signal not only for the policy makers, but also for the future socio-economic development of the country. In this respect, it is of immanent importance that social policy measures and particularly social inclusion policy focus on multiple categories associated with any of the mentioned risk, in order to prevent further escalation of the problem.

When stipulating national targets regarding reduction of poverty and social exclusion, the country should avoid opting for only one of the three indicators according to which it will assess and reform its policy programs. In doing so, it will undermine the complexity and multidimensionality of the problem and will not contribute towards effective tackling of poverty and social exclusion in the long run. Hence, a comprehensive approach towards future redefinitions of policies and strategies in the field of poverty and social exclusion should incorporate the following important aspects:

- Assessment of poverty and social exclusion on the basis of national and international statistical indicators. This should ideally be based on

both income and non-income measures of poverty and social exclusion.

- Targeting policy measures and providing access to social protection to all categories of vulnerable population, namely: those at risk of poverty, materially deprived and jobless. This would imply that beside those "traditionally vulnerable categories", such as unemployed, long-term unemployed, others such as people experiencing in-work poverty should also be part of the governmental measures and programs.

- Differentiation of measures between those experiencing poverty and social exclusion and those experiencing multiple social exclusion. The latter should be targeted with a long-term strategy which should include all aspects of public support: social welfare, education, housing etc.

- Use of all three EU 2020 indicators when stipulating national targets in the field of poverty and social exclusion.

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[i] The quantitative research is part of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's study on "Material deprivation, poverty and social exclusion among households in Macedonia", forthcoming, and the author of this paper is also the author of the forthcoming study.