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Contents

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Monetary poverty in EU Acceding and Candidate Countries

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Common indicators for social inclusion

At the Laeken European Council in December 2001, European Union (EU) Heads of State and Government endorsed a first set of 18 common statistical indicators of social exclusion and poverty. Indicators are an essential element in the Open Method of Co-ordination to monitor progress of Member States in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. A selection of the 18 Laeken indicators have also been used as structural indicators by the European Commission in its Synthesis Report to the 2003 Spring European Council meeting.

To highlight the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon of social exclusion, the indicators cover four important areas: financial poverty, employment, health and education. The present report provides an overview of the indicators relating to monetary aspects of poverty, as calculated for Acceding and Candidate Countries on the basis of national statistical sources. An equivalent report, published in April 2003 gives the same overview for the Member States and more information on the political background.

Comparability of indicators between Candidate and Acceding Countries and with the EU

The methodology employed to calculate the indicators for Acceding and Candidate countries is, as far as possible, the same as the one used for Member States. In particular, every effort has been made to ensure that the definition of income used is as comparable as possible to the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) definition, which is the database used for Member States.

In spite of these harmonisation efforts, the indicators for Candidate and Acceding Countries cannot be considered to be fully comparable with those for EU countries, or even across the participant Candidate and Acceding Countries, due to the differences of underlying data sources. In particular, surveys can have different income reference periods (monthly, yearly, current or previous), which may have an impact on the value of the indicators. Furthermore, within a country, the income variable may not be fully comparable between subsamples if the survey is conducted at different periods of the year (i.e. in continuous surveys for which the income reference period is the current one). In this case, the income distribution (and the results in terms of poverty risk) can be biased by the variability of seasonal income components (such as income from agriculture). Another factor that can affect the comparability of the results is the fact that, although 1999 is the reference year for most of the countries, there are some exceptions (i.e., Cyprus (1997), Czech Republic (1996), Estonia (2000), Malta (2000) and Turkey (1994)). For a review of the underlying data sources and their income reference period, see methodological notes, page 7.

For all the indicators in the current publication, the "ACC" mean is a weighted average of national results (where each country receives a weight that equals its total population), computed for the eight Acceding Countries for which we have information, i.e. all except Hungary and Slovak Republic. For the latter two countries some questions remain about the consistency of the results and efforts are ongoing to identify and solve these issues in time to include indicators in a follow-up exercise. Results for the three Candidate Countries (Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey) are also presented. Due to the missing longitudinal dimension in the underlying data sources, persistent risk-of-poverty rates (50% and 60% threshold) could not be calculated for any country.

When comparing the results, it is important to keep in mind that participant countries have had different social, historical and economic experiences in recent years (contrast, for example, Eastern and Central European Countries with Mediterranean Islands, Turkey and Slovenia).

In spite of all the above methodological difficulties, the indicators presented provide a valuable (and previously unpublished) comparative information on poverty and in Candidate and Acceding Countries and the EU.

Population at-risk-of poverty

Figure 1 shows the proportion of the population who were at risk of poverty in each country in 1999, i.e. living in households with an "equivalised disposable income" (see methodological notes, page 7) below 60% of the national median equivalised income.

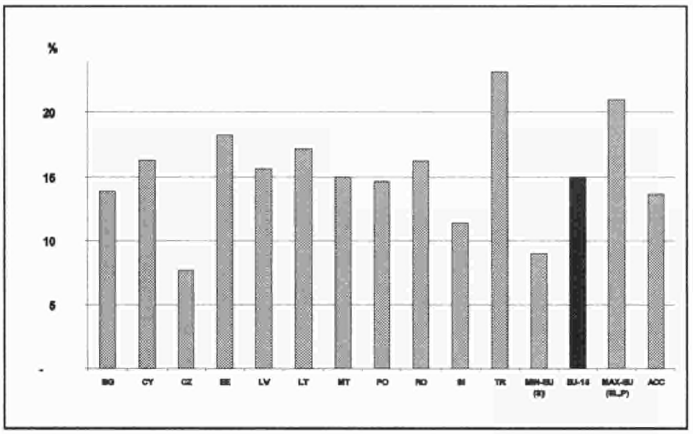

Figure 1: At-risk-of-poverty rate for 1999 except CY (1997), CZ (1996), EE (2000), MT (2000), TR (1994).

Acceding and Candidate countries and the existing EU Member States (on average) seem to have a very similar performance in terms of exposure to poverty risk. Apart from the extreme positions occupied by Czech Republic (8%) and Turkey (23%), the values range from 11% (Slovenia) to 18% (Estonia).

Poverty is measured as a relative concept

The "at-risk-of-poverty threshold" is fixed, for each country, at 60% of the national median equivalised income. The focus is therefore on the *relative* rather than absolute risk of poverty: this risk is defined in relation to the general level of prosperity in each country and is expressed with reference to a central value of the income distribution (a key advantage of the median is that it is not influenced by extreme values, i.e. extremely low or high incomes).

The main advantage of the relative poverty line is that it is based on the living standard of each country and does not require a universal definition of the minimum living standards below which one individual should be considered at risk of poverty. However, this method does not appear fully adapted for a comparative analysis of poverty and social exclusion in the context of the enlarged Union. The level of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold in Candidate and Acceding Countries is very low compared to the EU average, whereas their distribution of income is relatively narrow. This can almost certainly be explained by historical circumstances (income distribution policies in socialist economies and the different evolutions following liberalisation), by difficulties in capturing information about income from the hidden economy; and to the fact that extreme incomes (very poor or very rich people) are often misrepresented in the surveys. Be it as it is, this is an argument for complementing the relative poverty indicator with additional measures (absolute or non-monetary) in the future.

The comparative analysis of the national thresholds helps to illustrate the different level of economic well-being across countries (even again if it should be kept in mind that different reference years can influence the results). Figure 2 shows the annual monetary value of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold for a single-person household, in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS, see methodological notes) and for each country, as well as for the EU and ACC means.

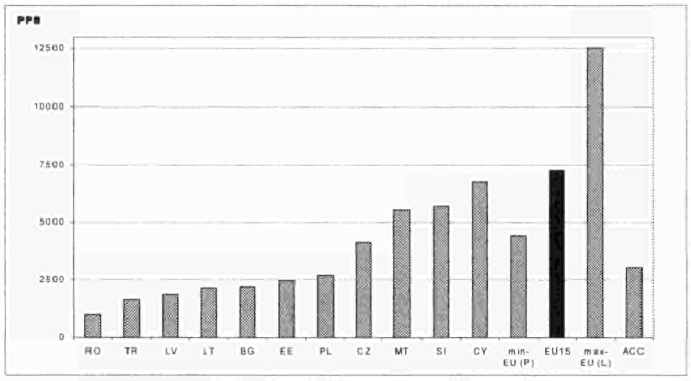

Figure 2: At-risk-of-poverty threshold for a single person household in 1999, except CY (1997), CZ (1996), EE (2000), MT (2000), TR (1994)

For all Candidate and Acceding Countries, the difference between the national threshold and EU one (weighted mean of the EU national values) is quite large, as national threshold values range from 16% of the EU-average in Romania to 98% in Cyprus. To illustrate further the magnitude of the threshold, we can mpare the Laeken relative threshold to the World Bank $AD cut-off line, which is an *absolute* level of income and is generally recognised as very low (see box, p. 5).

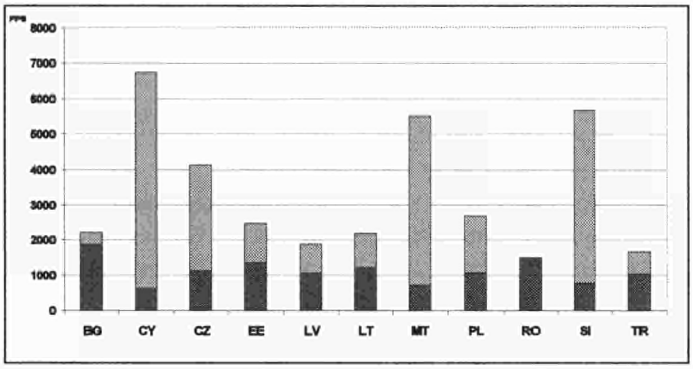

Figure 3: Comparison of 'Laeken' relative threshold and World Bank 'absolute' threshold in PPP terms, 1999 except CY(1997), CZ(1996), EE(2000), MT (2000), TR(1994)

The depth of poverty

The choice of 60% of national median equivalised income is conventional, although statistical considerations have guided this selection. To examine the sensitivity of the risk of poverty to the choice of alternative thresholds, three different thresholds have been considered: 40%, 50% and 70% of median equivalised income.

At the ACC average level, the likelihood of being at risk of poverty varied in 1999 from 4% to 21% for thresholds set at 40% and 70% of the median respectively; it is 8% if a 50% cut-off is employed (see statistical appendix).

Figure 4 shows national rates of poverty-risk at these four different thresholds in proportion of the rate at the 60% threshold. The results displayed in this Figure reflect the shape of the income distribution around the 60% threshold. If a lot of people are located just below (above) the 60% threshold, the 50% (70%) rate will be much lower (higher) than the 60% rate. So, the longer a bar for a given country, the higher the concentration of individuals around the 60% threshold. For example, in the Czech Republic, the low 60% rate is relativised by the fact that far more people than in other countries are located between the 60% and the 70% threshold. At the same time, only around 40% of those who are at risk of poverty at the 60% threshold are also at risk of poverty at the 50% threshold. By contrast, in Turkey, a higher proportion of the poor (69%) are lying below the 50% threshold, and 40% of those who were at risk-of-poverty had actually an equivalised income below the 40% threshold.

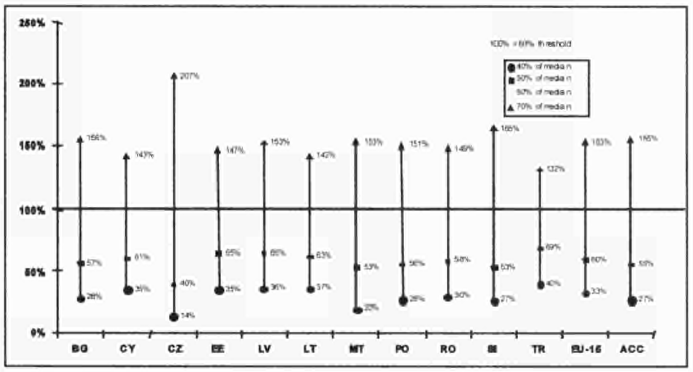

Figure 4: Dispersion around the at-risk-of-poverty threshold 40% (bottom) 50% (middle) 70% (top) as proportion of 60% rate for 1999, except CY (1997), CZ (1996), EE (2000), MT (2000), TR (1994).

This indicator provides a first insight into the depth of poverty risk. One Laeken indicator that explicitly measures how far below the threshold the income of people at risk of poverty is, i.e. "how poor the poor are", is the at-risk-of-poverty gap.

In 1999 the median gap (i.e. the difference between the 60% threshold and the median equivalised income of the poor), expressed as a percentage of this threshold, was 19% at ACC level. In other words, half of those at-risk-of-poverty had an equivalised income below 81% of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (or below 81%*60%=48.6% of median equivalised income). The gap was higher in Turkey, the Baltic States and Cyprus. Among Candidate Countries, Romania and Bulgaria have a gap below the EU mean, whereas Turkey displays the highest gap among the Candidate and Acceding Countries (Figure 5).

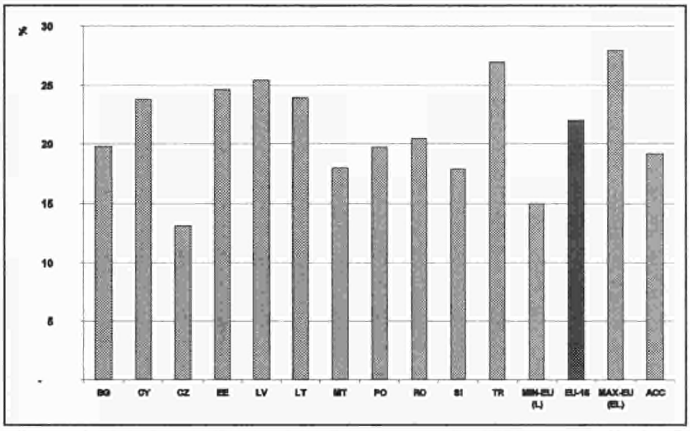

Figure 5: Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap for 1999, except CY (1997), CZ (1996), EE (2000), MT (2000), TR (1994).

Equality of the distribution of income

The focus of all the indicators presented so far is on the bottom part of the income distribution. It can also be interesting to look at the overall income distribution. This can be illustrated by the S80/S20 ratio. For each country, this ratio compares the total equivalised income received by the top income quintile (20% of the population with the highest equivalised income) to that received by the bottom income quintile (20% with lowest equivalised income).

While the S80/S20 ratio is only responsive to changes in top and bottom quintiles, the Gini coefficient allows taking into account the full distribution of income. If there was perfect equality (i.e. each person receives the same income), the Gini coefficient would be 0%; it would be 100% if the entire national income were in the hands of only one person.

The rankings of national Gini coefficients and S80/S20 ratios are quite similar, as can be seen in Figure 6.

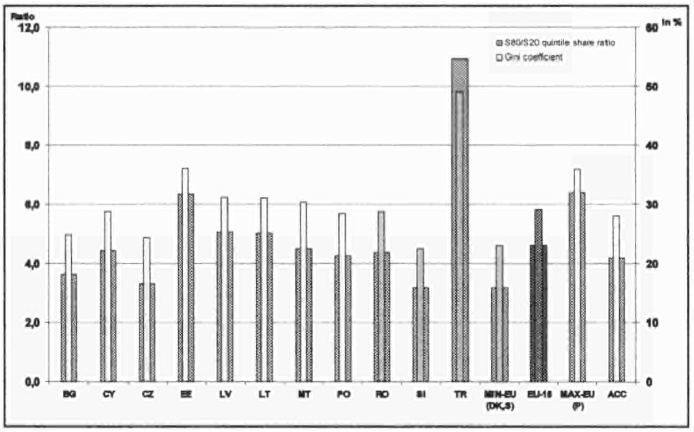

Figure 6: Income quintile share ratio (left) and Gini coefficient (right) for 1999, except CY (1997), CZ (1996), EE (2000), MT (2000), TR (1994).

Due to the relative narrowness of the income distribution, most Candidate and Acceding Countries have a S80/S20 ratio or a Gini coefficient that is close to the EU-15 mean, or even lower. In 1999, the mean S80/S20 ratio for the eight Acceding Countries for which data are available was 4.2, which means that the wealthiest quintile had 4.2 times more income than the poorest. The values ranged from 3.2 in Slovenia to 6.3 in Estonia. The mean Gini coefficient for the ACC was 28%. National Gini coefficients varied between 22% (Slovenia) and 36% (Estonia). Among the Candidate Countries, Turkey has the less equal distribution of income, as the S80/S20 attained 10.9 and its Gini coefficient 49%.

Re-distributive effect of social transfers

After having examined the phenomenon of poverty risk and the underlying income distribution, it is important to start assessing the role of policy in lifting people out of the poverty risk. A comparison between the standard at-risk-of-poverty rate and the hypothetical situation where social transfers are absent *ceteris paribus* shows that such transfers have an important re-distributive effect. Figure 7 compares the different at-risk-of-poverty rates after and before social transfers for all the countries in 1999. These rates are calculated with exactly the same threshold, namely the 60% threshold calculated on the basis of total household income, i.e. including all social transfers.

An analysis of social transfers goes beyond the scope of this note, but Figure 7 shows that in the absence of all social transfers, the mean poverty risk for Accession Countries would be considerably higher than it is in reality (mean rate of 43% instead of 14%). For the EU as a whole, the indicator would rise from 15% to 40%.

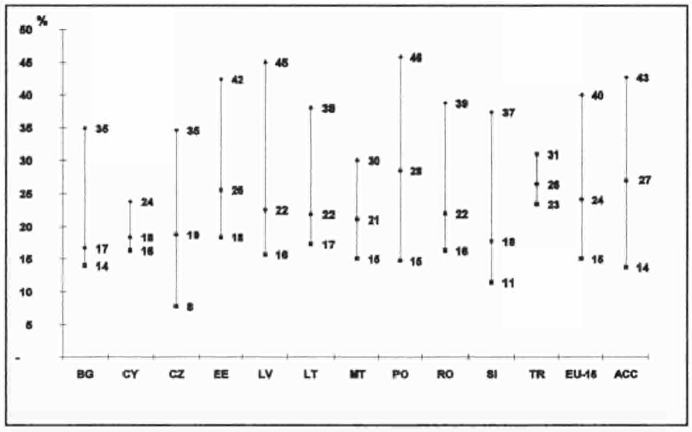

Figure 7: At-risk-of-poverty rate before any social transfers (top), after pensions (middle) and after all social transfers (bottom) for 1999, except CY (1997), CZ (196), EE (2000), MT (2000), TR (1994).

It can be argued that the prime role of old age (and survivors') pensions is not to re-distribute income across individuals but rather over the life-cycle of individuals. If, therefore, pensions are considered as primary income rather than social transfers, the at-risk-of-poverty rate without all other social transfers is 27% for ACC (24% for the EU). The at-risk-of-poverty rate before all social transfers is very low in Cyprus. For a rate after transfers comparable to the EU (16% vs 15%), the rate before all transfers is far lower in Cyprus (24%) than in the EU (40%). The same pattern is also true for Turkey, even if the risk of poverty rate is quite higher. For all other Candidate and Acceding Countries, the effect of social transfers is important and decreases substantially the level of poverty.

More about the *Laeken indicators*...

The present publication focused on the Laeken indicators of monetary poverty (see definitions in table below) in Candidate and Acceding Countries. Indicators in this report were only provided at the level of the total population and for 1999, when possible. The full series of data with the breakdowns agreed in Laeken (by age and gender, activity status, household type and tenure status) can be found on the Eurostat New Cronos website, theme 3, domain ILC.

'Income' must be understood as equivalised disposable income. It is defined as the household's total disposable income divided by its "equivalent size", to take account of the size and composition of the household, and is attributed to each household member.	
Primary Indicators	**Definition**
At-risk-of-poverty rate after transfers	The share of persons with an income below 60% national median income. Breakdowns by age and gender, by most frequent activity status, by household type, by tenure status + At-risk-of-poverty threshold (illustrative values)
Inequality of income distribution	S80/S20 income quintile share ratio: Ratio of total income received by the 20% of the country's population with the highest income (top quintile) to that received by the 20% of the country's population with the lowest income (lowest quintile).
Persistent risk-of-poverty rate (60% median)	The share of persons with an income below the risk-of-poverty threshold in the current year and in at least two of the preceding three years. Gender breakdown + total *Missing due to missing longitudinal dimension in the underlying data sources.*
Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap	Difference between the median income of persons below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold and the at-risk-of-poverty threshold expressed as a percentage of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. Gender breakdown + total
Secondary Indicators	
Dispersion around the risk-of-poverty threshold	The share of persons with an income below 40%, 50% and 70% national median income.
At-risk-of-poverty rate anchored at a moment in time	For a given year (in this publication: 1999), the "at-risk-of-poverty rate anchored at a moment in time (here: 1996)" is the share of the population whose income in that given year is below a risk-of-poverty threshold calculated in the standard way (here for 1996) and then up-rated for inflation (here, the period concerned is 1996-1999, but the inflation rate to be applied is that for the period 1995-1998 because the income reference year in the ECHP is the year prior to the survey)
At-risk-of-poverty rate before transfers	At-risk-of-poverty rate where income is calculated as follows: 1. Primary income, i.e. income excluding all social transfers 2. Primary income plus old-age and survivors' pensions 3. Total income, i.e. including all social transfers Gender breakdown + total
Gini coefficient	The relationship of cumulative shares of the population arranged according to the level of income, to the cumulative share of the total income received by them.
Persistent risk-of-poverty rate (50% median)	The share of persons with an income below the 50% risk-of-poverty threshold in the current year and in at least two of the preceding three years. Gender breakdown + total *Missing due to missing longitudinal dimension in the underlying data sources.*

Methodological note: the World Bank poverty threshold

The World Bank poverty $AD (Dollar-A-Day) threshold (ie. annual value $365.25) was established in 1985 and updated in 1993. It was calculated as an average of the thresholds for the lowest income countries in the world in PPP terms at that point in time. As the available data does not permit the updating of the PPP-based threshold in a fully theoretically correct way, for the purposes of the current publication the $AD value has instead been taken as a nominal amount in 1985. To maintain purchasing power of this nominal amount over time, the value was updated using US consumer price indices from 1985 to the year when each candidate country conducted its' survey, then converted into local currency using exchange rates for that year.

Statistical appendix

			BG	CY	CZ	EE	LV	LT	MT
			1999	1997	1996	2000	1999	1999	2000
S80/S20 quintile share ratio			3.6	4.4	3.3	6.3	5.1	5.0	4.5
Gini coefficient			25	29	24	36	31	31	30
Risk-of-poverty threshold (illustrative values)	*1 person household*	*NAT*	1231	3095	52943	17880	589	4091	2036
		EUR	630	5313	1537	1143	942	960	5038
		PPS	2199	6733	4127	2464	1879	2182	5511
	2 adults 2 dep. children	*NAT*	2586	6500	111180	37548	1236	8591	4276
		EUR	1323	11157	3227	2400	1976	2015	10581
		PPS	4618	14140	8665	5175	3942	4582	11573
	Dollar-a-day	*NAT*	1038	280	14453	9902	332	2263	256
		EUR	531	480	419	633	531	531	633
		PPS	1853	609	1126	1365	1059	1207	692
Dispersion around the risk-of-poverty threshold	*40% of median*		4	6	1	6	6	6	3
	50% of median		8	10	3	12	10	11	8
	60% of median		14	16	8	18	16	17	15
	70% of median		22	23	16	27	24	24	23
Risk-of-poverty rate	*Before all transfers*		35	24	35	42	45	38	30
	Including pensions		17	18	19	26	22	22	21
	Including all transfers		14	16	8	18	16	17	15
Relative risk-of-poverty gap			20	24	13	25	25	24	18

			PL	RO	SI	TR	EU-15	ACC
			1999	1999	1999	1994	1999	1999
S80/S20 quintile share ratio			4.2	4.4	3.2	10.9	4.6	4.2
Gini coefficient			28	29	22	49	29	28
Risk-of-poverty threshold (illustrative values)	*1 person household*	*NAT*	5654	5654208	762391	24321369	:	:
		EUR	1338	346	3921	685	7334	1488
		PPS	2683	985	5677	1665	7263	3032
	2 adults 2 dep. children	*NAT*	11873	11873837	1601022	51074875	:	:
		EUR	2809	727	8233	1438	15401	3124
		PPS	5633	2068	11922	3496	15252	6367
	Dollar-a-day	*NAT*	2243	8673125	103192	15028457	:	:
		EUR	531	531	531	423	531	514
		PPS	1064	1510	768	1028	531	1072
Dispersion around the risk-of-poverty threshold	*40% of median*		4	5	3	9	5	4
	50% of median		8	9	6	16	9	8
	60% of median		15	16	11	23	15	14
	70% of median		22	24	19	31	23	21
Risk-of-poverty rate	*Before all transfers*		46	39	37	31	40	43
	Including pensions		28	22	18	26	24	27
	Including all transfers		15	16	11	23	15	14
Relative risk-of-poverty gap			20	21	18	27	22	19

: No data available
Source: see Methodological notes.
Notes: The ACC and EU-15 means are population weighted averages for countries for which the indicator is available.
PPP estimates at the level of final consumption at households from the European Comparison Programme are used (except CZ, TR : PPP at level of total GDP)

➢ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Data used

Figures presented in this publication come from National Surveys for Candidate and Acceding Countries and, for the EU mean, from the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) users' database, version of December 2002 wave 6 conducted in 1999). The table presents the different sources and their income reference period.

COUNTRY	Source	Income reference period	Continuous survey
Bulgaria	Household Budget Survey (1999)	Year of the survey	No
Cyprus	Family expenditure survey (1997)	Last twelve months	No
Czech Republic	Microcensus (1996)	Last twelve months	No
Estonia	Household Budget Survey (2000)	Month of the survey	Yes
Latvia	Household Budget Survey (1999)	Month of the survey	Yes
Lithuania	Household Budget Survey (1999)	Month of the survey	Yes
Malta	Household Budget Survey (2000)	Year before the survey	No
Poland	Household Budget Survey (1999)	Month of the survey	Yes
Romania	Household Integrated Survey (1999)	Month of the survey	Yes
Slovenia	Household Budget Survey (1999)	Last twelve months	Yes
Turkey	Household Income Distribution Survey (1994)	Calendar Year	No

Disposable income

For the EU Countries, as measured in the ECHP, household total disposable income is taken to be all net monetary income received by the household and its members at the time of the survey interview – namely all income from work (employee wages and self-employment earnings), private income from investment and property, plus all social transfers received directly including old-age pensions, net of any taxes and social contributions paid. However, no account is taken of indirect social transfers, loans interest payment, transfers paid to other households, and imputed rent for owner-occupied accommodation.

For Candidate and Acceding Countries, in order to approximate as closely as possible to the ECHP income definition, components such as the following were excluded: lottery winnings, insurance claim receipts, non-regular gifts (although regular transfers received from other households were included), all transfers paid to other households, sales of property (for example houses or cars). The impact of these adjustments on reported values can be significant by comparison with the income definitions used in these countries and based on the Household budget surveys.

Furthermore, for Candidate and Acceding Countries, income-in-kind was included in the total income definition, as it is considered to be a more substantial subcomponent of the disposable income for these countries than is the case for EU Member States, and its exclusion would significantly underestimate the actual situation. 'Income in kind' involves goods produced directly by the household through either a private or a professional activity (e.g. own production of food from a farming household, or a household whose leisure activity is connected with agriculture; products from hunting or fishing; withdrawals from stocks by tradespeople etc.). These services obtained free of charge as part of a professional activity are also classified as 'benefits in kind' (e.g. provision of housing, company vehicle, crèche facilities, free meals at work, etc.). However, collecting information regarding 'income-in-kind' can involve a number of difficulties, due to the different methods of estimating 'income-in-kind', and due to the different relative importance of this income in the different countries, as well as within countries. At the moment, these components are not included in the ECHP and only the value of a company car for private use is planned to be included as a mandatory requirement from the beginning of the EU-SILC (other elements will become mandatory from 2007).

Please also note that self-employment income is acknowledged to be difficult to collect whatever the survey. The way that the surveys take self-employment income into account differs greatly.

Once total household income is collected, the figures are given per "equivalent adult", in order to reflect differences in household size and composition. In other words, the total household income is divided by its equivalent size using the so-called "modified OECD" equivalence scale. This scale gives a weight of 1.0 to the first adult, 0.5 to any other household member aged 14 and over and 0.3 to each child. The resulting figure is attributed to each member of the household, whether adult or children. The equivalent size of a household that consists of 2 adults and 2 children below the age of 14 is therefore: 1.0+0.5+(2*0.3) = 2.1.

Purchasing Power Parities (PPP) and Purchasing Power Standards (PPS)

PPP are a fictitious currency exchange rate, which eliminate the impact of price level differences across countries. Thus 1 PPS will buy a comparable basket of goods and services in each country. For ease of understanding they are scaled at EU level. **The detailed methodology of the monetary Laeken indicators presented in this publication is available on the Eurostat CIRCA website or from the authors on request.**

Further information:

➢ **Reference publications**

Title Income, Poverty & Social Exclusion: 2nd report
Catalogue No KS-BP-02-008-EN-C Price EUR 28

➢ **Databases**

NewCronos, Theme 3, Domain ILC

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