

Qualitative Analysis of the Poverty in the Republic of Macedonia

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1. Introduction

In conditions of fast decrease in the level of the population living standard, the process of impoverishment has become obvious and recognizable.

The existing statistical research at the time used to indicate only the changes of the living standard level, yet they did not provide for an identification of the socio-economic reasons to the changes that were occurring. The first quantitative research of poverty for the period 1994-1997 confirmed the fact that a huge percent of the population lies under the poverty line and that this phenomenon was even more evident with certain population groups. Data obtained from this research provided answers to the questions: which households are poor and how deep their poverty is; yet, this at the same time implied the lack of information to comprehend the real conditions. A part of the necessary information was provided by the qualitative analysis of poverty.

2. The Aims of the Qualitative Analysis

Poverty measurement opened many new questions and has located numerous areas to cover; such answers and information can, nonetheless, be obtained only from persons already identified as poor. The poverty qualitative analysis seeks to answer the following questions: How do poor people see and define poverty? How does the poorest part of the population manage to survive?

3. Methodological Bases

The qualitative analysis that was carried out at the end of 1997 covered a part of the identified poor households and enabled the comparison of living standard circumstances identified by a different research manner. This analysis is based upon a semi-structured interview of the households selected directed towards getting information on living conditions, health and education features with impoverished persons, the share in the labour market, the basic mechanisms to overcome the status, the impact of social transfers over the deepness of poverty. Interviewers conducted qualitative, semi-structured interviews with members of the households selected and developed detailed reports on each household they had covered according to specified guidelines.

4. The Contents of the Analysis

The qualitative analysis contained questions formulated on the basis of poverty profiles obtained by poverty measurement through the application of other methods.

Poverty profiles:

Who is to be considered poor? changes within the recent five years, characteristics of the most vulnerable population parts, defining, seeing and assessing one's own poverty. *Social consequences of poverty?* Poverty material and cultural dimensions, poverty impact over relations among household members, over household's relations with its neighbours, friends, colleagues. *Characteristics of the socio-economic stratification?* poverty gender dimensions, the share of poor persons in the labour market figures, impact of social benefits on the living standard level.

5. The Results of the Qualitative Analysis

The results obtained from this analysis confirmed some of the indicators obtained by poverty measurement in the relevant period; moreover, they provided additional information on the poorest households. This analysis identified the basic features of the poverty risk profiles: persons with primary or secondary education completed, excluded from the formal labour market, labour-active, socially isolated, seeing their own poverty as a sad, shameful and undeserved condition, basic means of survival/ subsistence: participation in the informal labour market through seasonal, irregular and poorly paid work, and making attempts to emigrate from the country, using social benefits improves the living standard of the poor, yet, due to social (self)isolation and the lack of timely and accurate information, a part of the vulnerable groups of families is not beneficiaries of social assistance; population vulnerable groups have been identified throughout the country, with no significant dependence upon the ethnic affiliation and gender.

6. Directions for Further Action

The poverty in the Republic of Macedonia maintains the trend of getting deeper, mostly due to the increasing of inequality in income distribution, the high unemployment rate and the cessation of operation with numerous enterprises.

Recent analyses of the living standard have revealed the need of: more detailed data on the living conditions, population health and education features, the need to measure poverty in a more frequent manner to establish the basic indicators according to more features, qualitative analysis of the living standard of the population above the poverty level.

REFERENCES

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RESUME

L'objet des premiers mesurages et analyses de la pauvreté en République de Macédoine pour la période 1994-1997 ont confirmé qu'un important pourcentage de la population était en dessous de la ligne de la pauvreté et que pour certains groupes de la population la pauvreté s'approfondissait. Les créateurs de la politique sociale étaient ainsi privés des informations plus détaillées concernant les conditions de vie, les caractéristiques sanitaires et éducatives des personnes en situation précaire, la participation au marché de travail, les conséquences sociales de la pauvreté, les instruments de base nécessaires pour surmonter cet état de choses. L'analyse qualitative faite en 1997 par le biais d'un interview semi-structuré sur l'échantillon des ménages pauvres a confirmé une partie des résultats des mesurages de la pauvreté obtenus par la méthode relative et a identifié les profils de base de la pauvreté: personnes qui ont une éducation primaire ou secondaire, indépendamment de leur âge, exclues du marché formel du travail, socialement (auto)isolées, moyens de survivre de la partie la plus pauvre de la population: participation au marché informel du travail et tentation d'émigrer du pays. Les catégories vulnérables de la population ont été identifiées sur l'ensemble du territoire du pays; elles ne sont pas sérieusement dépendantes de l'appartenance ethnique ou du sexe. L'analyse qualitative procure des informations utiles, détaillées et nécessaires aux créateurs de la politique portant sur le développement du pays, et notamment aux responsables du domaine de la politique sociale.