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Poland: Human Development Progress Towards the MDGs at the Sub-National Level

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at the Sub-National Level***

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**Country Case Study on Human Development Progress
Towards the MDGs at the Sub-National Level
POLAND**

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INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this study is to present human development progress in Poland, with respect to the most critical groups of the population. They include: the poor, populations of rural areas and of the East of Poland. In addition, two 'excluded' groups – the Polish Roma and the former state farms laborers – are considered. Women also are treated as a separate group, deserving special attention. Such a selection reflects importance of the groups either in terms of their size or in terms of a challenge they pose.

The study intends to provide a variety of indices which may give a solid ground for the evaluation of human development progress. Generally, it uses target indicators recommended for Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but these indicators are somewhat adjusted to the Polish case. Poland is a relatively developed country as measured by such indices as GDP per capita or HDI. It is a member state of the OECD and a candidate member for the European Union. Also, social inequalities are not very acute comparing to many other countries in the world, and basic social services (in particular education and health care) are universally available. Thus, the study follows the approach of the 2002 MDGs report for Poland (UNDP 2002), which slightly modified goals and proposed country-specific targets and indicators. In some cases, however, original rather than adjusted indicators are used. For instance, MDG#2 "achieve universal primary education" has been interpreted in the Polish MDGs report as "achieve substantial progress at the tertiary level," and appropriate indicators have been suggested. In this study, Roma's enrollment at primary level is discussed as well, for it seems to be equally important.

The period under investigation covers mainly the last decade, i.e. years of the Polish transition. This makes it possible to examine the impact of the transition policies on human development. In some cases, however, data availability restricts the analysis to the selected years only. Regional data, for instance, based on the new administrative division introduced in 1999, are available for a shorter period only, i.e. usually up to three year long. Sometimes no indicators whatsoever may be found for sub-populations: examples include maternal health, or mortality and morbidity rates for some diseases. In these cases proxies have been used, e.g. perceived health conditions. Nevertheless, in some cases even proxy approach has proved to be useless.

The study is organized into five sections followed by conclusions and supplemented by two annexes, statistical and methodological. Each section describes the situation of one group, except of the last one which covers the two excluded populations. Sections are usually divided into sub-sections, which are intended to cover selected targets of MDGs (when applicable). Each section begins with general information concerning the discussed group, and ends with policy oriented comments. Statistical annex consists of over sixty tables and fourteen maps, while methodological annex gives comments on reliability and accuracy of some indices.

1. THE POOR

1.1. Identification of the poor

Poverty extent and poverty profile

In 2000, over 5.8 million people in Poland (or 15.1 percent of the total population) lived in poverty.¹ Their consumption level was lower than social assistance threshold, i.e. less than – approximately - \$ 5 PPPa day. Unemployment, low education, high number of dependent children, as well as living on agricultural income or in the rural area – all these have been recognized as the most important factors increasing the risk of being poor (table P1).

In 2000, for instance, headcount for individuals living in households with at least one unemployed was three times higher than for those who had no unemployed (11.3 and 32.9 percent, respectively). Education seems to be even more important. If the education of the household head was particularly low, i.e. primary or less, the headcount was close to 26 percent, but if the household head had a university degree, it was within the range of 1 per cent.

In the second half of the last decade, i.e. in 1994 – 2000, the poverty profile has remained almost unchanged. Certainly, there are groups which improved their relative positions slightly (residents of the largest cities), others have somewhat deteriorated (the unemployed), but the importance of various poverty factors looks stable.

Women and children in poverty

Given Millennium Development Goals, one should look more carefully at the situation of women and children. While there is very little evidence that the risk of being poor is higher for women than for men, child poverty is certainly an issue.

In general, families with children live more often in poverty than those without, and the more children in the family the higher are poverty headcounts. Headcounts for couples with one or two children are not very high, but for those with more children they are above the average (table P1, lower panel). But the most important, it seems, is the fact that poverty among the children is higher than for the adults. In 1996-2000, poverty rates reached 21 – 26 percent for children up to 5, and it was higher by 7 – 8 percentage points than headcounts for the adults (table P2). Moreover, usually the lower the age of the child the higher the headcount. In other words, the younger is a child, the higher her/his risk of living on poverty.

Statistical evidence of the ‘feminization’ of poverty is scarce. One can find higher poverty rates for women than for men but for selected subgroups only. Figures displayed in table P3 show that, on the average, the headcount for women is slightly lower than for men: 13 versus 14 percent, respectively. However, the feminization of poverty may be seen for educated adults: poverty rates for educated women are higher than for educated men. The opposite is true for those who received no more than elementary education. The above indicators also prove that gains from education are lower for women than for men (see also section 4.1).

On the other hand, sociological studies show that there is a feminization of poverty at the intra-family level. It is associated with the “division of labor, leisure time, as well as the fact that it is the women’s primarily responsibility to secure the basic needs of the family”. (Tarkowska 2002; see also Domański 2002a).

¹ Estimated number of the poor may differ depending on the poverty concept applied and the source of data. For the methodology adopted in this study – see methodological Annex. For other estimates, see for instance GUS 2001c, Dział [Part] 9, or earlier GUS publications of the same series.

Poverty increase

The overall picture of poverty changes is not encouraging, for two reasons at least. First, while in the middle of the nineties poverty was decreasing – from 19 percent in 1994 to 13 percent in 1998 – this tendency has changed at the end of the decade: poverty headcounts actually increased both in 1999 and in 2000 (table P1).

Second, poverty has somehow deepened during the discussed period, and at the same time the distance between the poor and the non-poor became larger. The following indicators support this conclusion. Poverty gap has slightly increased over the last seven years, from below to above 20 percent; poor to non-poor consumption has declined by 4 percentage points, from 36 percent down to 32 percent, and poor to non-poor income has declined even more, by 4.6 percentage points. At the same time Gini coefficients for *per capita* consumption have increased each year, altogether from 0.32 up to 0.34 (table P4).

These figures indicate that relative poverty has risen, and extreme poverty might have actually grown as well. It is clear that no success whatsoever has been achieved as far as MDG #1 is concerned. As direct evidence, headcounts for ‘hard core’ poverty may be reported.

Extreme poverty and hunger

Central Statistical Office identifies extreme poverty using so called subsistence minimum² as a poverty threshold. According to the CSO figures, this poverty has grown in the second half of the nineties from 4.3 percent in 1996 up to 8.1 percent in 2000 (GUS 2001c, Table 97).

Another evidence of the increase of extreme poverty may be found as well. This time it concerns hunger. Although starvation is almost unknown in Poland, under-nutrition happens, and it looks increasing over the last years. According to the survey of 2000, 5.4 percent of respondents were hungry in the evening, before going to the bed, while twelve years later only 2.9 percent of them were hungry (Domański 2002b: 75).

1.2. Education³

Primary and pre-school levels

Given MDG #2, the access to education should be investigated. In Poland, primary education – starting at the age of 7 - is obligatory and universal, and no major difference of the enrollments is found between the poor and the non-poor (over 98 percent in each case) (Barryman 2002). Certainly, quality of education available for poor and non-poor may differ, but there is no direct evidence supporting this hypothesis.

The investigation of enrollment rates at the preschool level may be more important, for preschool education influences heavily the whole educational attainment of a child. Unfortunately, there are no reliable data disclosing the poor versus the non-poor enrollments. Indirect estimates based on HBS data show a higher rate for the poor children 6-year old, but this result may be questioned.⁴

² Evaluated by Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych (Institute of Labor and Social Affairs) quarterly, based on a basket approach.

³ Notice that the figures and comments that follow reflect the ‘old’ educational system. In 1999, a major reform of primary and secondary education was introduced. However, it has not impact on the statistics of 1998 and 2000 that are discussed below.

⁴ HBS estimates are as follows: in 2000, enrollment rate for children at the age of 6 (not attending school) was equal to 36.5 percent in the first quintile and 22.4 percent in the fifth quintile. But this result is based on the information on expenditures on kindergartens; and this may be misleading.

Secondary and tertiary levels

Given that the enrollment at the primary level is almost universal in Poland, secondary and tertiary levels are crucial.

First, it should be noticed that there is a significant difference in the enrollment rates between the poor and the non-poor for individuals at the age 15 -18, and then 19 – 24 (table P5). In 2000, 86 percent of the poor teenagers of the age group 15 – 18 attended schools, but for the non-poor this rate reached 95 percent. At the age of 19 – 24, only 24 percent of the poor, but almost one half of the non-poor was enrolled. A similar pattern may be found two years earlier. Moreover, the poor – non-poor difference of the enrollments increased in 1998 – 2000.

It is worth to study the secondary level in more detail (table P6). There is a striking and very important difference between the poor and the non-poor with respect to the type of a secondary school attended; two/three-year basic vocational, or four-year general. The poor attend basic vocational schools (enrollment close to 40 percent, versus approx. 20 percent for the non-poor), while the non-poor - general secondary schools (enrollment around 35 percent, versus less than 15 percent for the poor). This gives an evidence of a certain discrimination of the Polish educational system against the poor: a diploma of a basic vocational school does not entitle to enter university or – in other words – it does not allow for continuing education at the tertiary level. In fact, graduates of basic vocational schools are trapped at the under-secondary level. Moreover, basic vocational schools reveal many other shortcomings, widely discussed among specialists: low quality of services, out-dated methods and programs etc. The opposite seems to be true for general secondary schools. But the most important is that these schools prepare students for the next education level, or - in other words – they open the way for the tertiary (university) education.

At the tertiary level, the difference between the poor and the non-poor is even more pronounced (table P7). While only slightly above 6 percent of the poor at the age 19 – 24 are enrolled at the tertiary level, as much as 25 – 30 percent of the non-poor are. Besides, the gap between the poor and the non-poor increased in the three-year period of 1998 – 2000.

All this indicates that MDG #2, interpreted as ensuring equal educational treatment of the whole population, is not fulfilled as far as poor versus non poor population is concerned. Moreover, the recent changes in enrollments show growing discrepancy between the poor and the non-poor.

1.3. Health and mortality

Given statistics available, very little can be said about maternal health, child mortality and such diseases as HIV or tuberculosis among the poor versus non-poor populations – as stated by MDGs 4, 5 and 6. In general, the poor face more difficulties in caring for their health (table P8). It does not necessarily mean that their health is worse than those of the wealthy. Indices displayed in table P9 show that the lower the household income, the better (!) self-estimated health of the household members – at least with respect to the chronic conditions. So in fact, given the available proxy indicators concerning health, there is a certain ambiguity in the evaluation of MDGs for the poor versus non-poor.

1.4. Access to basic household amenities

Access to basic amenities - such as running water, lavatory (WC), bathrooms, grid gas or central heating - does not only indicate what is the material status of a household, but also it may be treated as an indicator of living in a healthy environment. This refers especially to such amenities as running water, lavatory and central heating.

At the end of the nineties, the access of Polish poor households to basic utilities was worse than of the non-poor (table P10). The largest difference is found for the grid gas and the central heating, the lowest – for running water. Both in 1998 and in 2000, less than 20 percent of the poor households but over 58 percent of the non-poor had an access to grid gas. In case of the central heating, equipment rates were equal to over 40 and over 70 percent, respectively. Running water was widespread in both populations, but only about 85 percent of the poor used this amenity, while the access of the non-poor exceeded 96 percent.

However, during the three-year period of 1998-2000, the access of the poor to basic amenities improved considerably, while that of the non-poor did not change much – even in case of amenities which were far from the saturation level (gas, central heating). As a result, the gap between the poor and the non-poor diminished. This decrease was more significant for water mains, lavatory and bath than for grid gas and central heating.

1.5. Policies toward the poor

Polish social protection system is well developed. It offers both contributory benefits for the insured (such as pensions, sick pay, maternity benefits) and non-contributory benefits intended to support the poor and vulnerable. The latter are listed in the table P11. This list includes, among others, social assistance benefits, family and nursing allowances, and housing benefits.⁵ All of them are income tested,⁶ and may be treated as core benefits targeted to the poor. They are paid in cash or in kind, but cash benefits prevail.

The share of total public expenditures on benefits intended to support the poor in GDP is low. In 1996 – 1999, it amounted to 1.09 percent of GDP, and remained almost unchanged over the following years.

There are also other ways of state support for the poor. Two examples may be given. First, the government supports NGOs which care for selected groups of the poor (homeless, minorities etc). Second, it occasionally sets up special programs to intervene in specific areas. In the past, a program of financing medicaments was in force (terminated at the end of the nineties). Also, almost every year the government introduces a program of financing textbooks for the poorest students of primary and secondary schools. Quite recently, in 2002, it developed a program of financing meals for the poorest children attending schools at the gmina⁷ level (MENiS 2001). The number of students to be covered by this program is estimated at 716 thousand, and the amount spent is PLN 160 million (approx. USD 40 million).

2. RURAL POPULATION

2.1. General information

Identification of the rural population

In this study, identification of the rural population follows the criterion adopted in the Polish official statistics. In principle, it reflects administrative divisions of the country. It gives the

⁵ The list of all social protection benefits -directly or indirectly targeted to the poor - is longer and altogether they make much larger share of GDP than displayed in the table P11, but their investigation remains beyond the scope of this study.

⁶ Exception – nursing allowance paid for the elderly and, in specific cases, for the disable.

⁷ Gmina is the smallest administrative unit in Poland. Among others, gminas are responsible for financing and administration of primary and lower-secondary schools.

number of rural population equal to over 14.7 million, or 38.1 percent of the total population.⁸ This share has been stable over the last decade (table R1).

According to the agricultural census of 1996, only two third (66 percent) of the rural population was somehow linked to the agriculture – farming, working on farms, as well as living on agricultural income or on farmer pensions. Actually, only one half (51 percent) of the rural population lived on farms,⁹ while the rest was rural, but non-farming population (GUS 1999f). It is to be notice, however, that the 2002 census may correct the above stated numbers.

HDI and related indicators

In general, rural areas are less developed than urban, as shown by most measures of the standard of living. In 1997, rural Human Development Index was equal to 0.794 and it was lower by almost 5 percent than the urban HDI (table R2). Per capita GDPs and educational indicators – both significantly worse for rural areas - seem to be the main source of this difference. The differences in life expectancy are less pronounced (tables R2 and R16).

Income, consumption and inequality

Mean per capita income and mean per capita expenditure are considerably lower for rural than for urban households. Moreover, the rural-urban gap has increased over the last years (table R3). For instance, in the middle of the nineties the ratio rural to urban of mean per capita expenditure was around 75 percent (73 – 77, depending on the year). At the end of the decade it declined to 70 percent or less. Figures for the ratios of mean incomes are very similar (table R3).

Income inequalities are much higher in rural than in urban areas. In 2000, Gini coefficient for the rural population was equal to 0.362, while for the urban it reached only 0.317.¹⁰ While urban / rural Ginis for other years are not available, coefficients for worker and for farmer households might be used as proxies. They show that the worker-farmer gap of Ginis is even larger than the urban-rural gap (table R4). In 2000, for instance, Gini for farmer households was equal to 0.456, for workers it was equal to 0.323. It should be noticed that there has been no increase of this gap in recent years.

Consumption inequalities, on the contrary, seem to be lower in rural than in urban areas. In the case of consumption, Gini coefficient for the rural population was equal to 0.317, while for the urban it reached as much as 0.334 (in 2000).¹¹ A similar pattern may be found when comparing farmer with worker Gini coefficients for consumption, especially at the end of the last decade (table R4).

2.2. Poverty

In 2000, over 23 percent of the Polish rural population (or 3.4 million people) lived in poverty. At the same time, a poverty headcount for the urban population was much lower, and it was equal to 10 percent (table R5). Given the poverty line used,¹² one may refer these figures to ‘medium’ poverty. The extent of ‘extreme’ poverty was considerably lower, both in rural and in

⁸ It may be noticed that OECD criterion (benchmark = 150 persons per 1 sq. km) set the rural population share at the level of 35 percent, while the EU criterion (benchmark = 100 persons per 1 sq. km) lowers this share down to 32.3 percent (see MRiRW 1999, and UNDP 2000:3).

⁹ In Poland, a farm is registered by official statistics if its land area is over 1 hectare.

¹⁰ Ginis are for per capita disposable incomes, expressed in current prices. Source: the author’s computations based on HBS (unweighted data).

¹¹ Ginis are for per capita expenditure, including expenditure in kind (expressed in current prices). Source: the author’s computations based on HBS using Pyatt formula (unweighted data).

¹² Main concepts - see methodological Annex.

urban areas. CSO estimates of the headcounts for those who lived below subsistence minimum in 2000 are as follows: 12.6 percent rural population, 5.2 percent urban population (GUS 2001c, Table 101).

In 1994 – 1998, poverty declined in both areas, and in 1999 it increased. In 2000, this increase continued in urban, but not in rural areas (table R5). However, all these changes resulted in a higher rural-urban difference of the poverty headcounts at the end of the decade than a few years earlier. In 1999 and 2000, headcounts were approx. two and a half times higher for rural than for urban population, while in the middle of the nineties rural headcounts were two times higher.

2.3. Education

There is no indication of any difference of enrollments at the primary level between rural and urban populations. On the other hand, enrollments at preschool, secondary and tertiary levels differ considerably. This is very important as far as MDG#2 is concerned.

Pre-school level

In 2000, only 35 percent of rural children (3-6 year old) attended kindergartens or – in the case of 6 year old – pre-school classes. The respective share of enrolled urban children was equal to 63 percent (table R6). In other words, rural enrolment at the pre-school level was by 45 percent lower than urban. Moreover, this discrepancy has increased over the last decade: at the beginning of the nineties rural enrollment was lower than urban by ‘only’ 35 percent (tables R6 and R7).

Pre-school enrollment rate for children which are 6 year old is higher than for the younger ones, both in rural and in urban areas. At the same time, the difference between rural and urban enrollments is small for the 6-year old, and it is very large for younger children (3-5). In 1999, for instance, only 16 percent of 3-5 year olds attended kindergartens in rural areas, but as much as 50 percent did in urban (table R7). Moreover, while enrollment rates for those at the age of 6, as well as those at the age 3-5 declined in rural areas over the last decade, they increased in urban areas.

Secondary and tertiary levels

At the end of the nineties, 95 percent of urban teenagers (15-18) but only 90 percent of rural teenagers attended schools (table R8). At the same time, one half of urban young adults (19-24) but less than one third of rural young adults were enrolled. This difference of the enrollment rates has not resulted – what might have been expected - from the material status. In other words, it should be attributed (at least in part) to the type of residence itself. Such a conclusion may be drawn upon the comparison of the enrollment rates of poor and non-poor residents. Both for the poor and the non-poor teenagers and young adults enrollments rates are higher in urban than in rural areas (table R8).

At the secondary level, rural teenagers more often than urban attend basic vocational schools (28 percent and 18 percent in 2000, respectively) – see table R9. On the other hand, they are underrepresented in secondary general schools (20 percent versus 40 percent in 2000). This put rural teenagers in a disadvantageous position, for basic vocational school is a ‘dead end’ of the educational career.¹³

One should also add that quality of training at the secondary level is lower in rural areas. This may be seen when discussing the results of the 2002 comprehensive exam in ‘gymnasiums’ (i.e.

¹³ These numbers are based on HBS. But very similar indices may be found in other studies (see for instance Kaleta Andrzej, Grzegorz Zabłocki 2001).

in lower-secondary schools introduced by the reform of 1999):¹⁴ average grades of students in rural gminas were lower than in urban ones (CKE 2002, p. 8 and 11). This is certainly a good proxy of education quality in rural versus urban secondary schools.

The difference of the enrollment rates at the tertiary level is even more pronounced (table R10 and R11). In 2000, enrollment was more than two times higher for urban than for rural population (34 percent and 15 percent, respectively). Looking more closely at the rural population, enrollment rates by socio-economic groups may be investigated. According to the HBS figures, the lowest rate at the tertiary levels is for farmer population (less than 14 percent in 2000 – table R11).¹⁵

All this gives evidence that rural population lies far behind the urban as far as the fulfillment of MDG#2 is concerned.

2.4. Child mortality and maternal health

Child mortality

In the past decades, Poland succeeded reducing under-5 child mortality rate (MDG#4). In the long run, this mortality declined from over 3000 per 100,000 of population in 1950, down to less than 200 in 1999 (UNDP 2002, p. 45 and 46). This decline has been enjoyed both in urban and in rural areas. Moreover, the rural population seems to benefit more from the overall success.

In 1990, under-5 mortality rate in rural areas was still equal to 377 per 100,000 of population and it was higher than in urban areas (318 - table R12). Its decline in 1990 – 1995 did not change this relation: in 1995, rural rate was still higher than the urban one. Since 1995, rural under-5 mortality is lower than urban, although this difference is rather small (172 urban versus 168 rural in 2000). It seems that this is mostly due to the pattern of child mortality by age: infant versus 1-4.

In the second half of the nineties, infant mortality has always been lower by a few percent in rural than in urban areas (exception 2001, equal). On the contrary, child mortality (1-4) was higher in rural areas, although the distance between rural and urban populations diminished (table R12). This may indicate that, in general, more attention has been paid to the reduction of infant mortality rate, and relatively more has been achieved with this respect in rural areas.

Maternal health

Maternal health (MDG#5) is described with the use of two proxy indicators: maternal mortality and teenager's fertility.¹⁶

In 1990 – 2000, maternal mortality rate slightly declined, both in urban and in rural areas, although a certain increase may be found in some years (table R15). Over this period, the rural rate was lower than the urban (exception: 1998), but this difference was rather small.

As far as teenager's fertility rate is concerned, rural population seems to be in a worse position than urban. In the last decade, teenager's fertility declined in both populations (table R13), but it was always higher in rural than in urban areas, by over 20 percent. For instance, in 2001 it was equal to 17.9 per 1000 women 15-19 in rural areas, and 14.4 in urban areas. However, after

¹⁴ 'Gimnazjum' is a lower-secondary level school, implemented by the reform of 1999.

¹⁵ For the cross-checking of these numbers– see for instance (MENiS undated). However, data discussed there depict the composition of students by residence rather than enrolment rates by residence.

¹⁶ For justification of such a choice, see UNDP 2002, esp. MDG #5 targets and indicators; see also data and comments in UNICEF 2001.

investigating fertility by age of the teenage mothers, one should slightly correct the general conclusion. In urban areas, more births are given by very young mothers (table R14). In rural areas, over one half of all teenage births were given by women at the age of 19.

2.5. Selected diseases

Specific diseases considered in this study include AIDS, salmonella and tuberculosis (MDG#6). The examination of appropriate mortality and morbidity statistics is preceded by a short review of the overall health indicators for the rural and urban populations.

Life expectancy

Over the last years, female life expectancy was always higher in rural than in urban areas (table R16). It increased in both sub-populations, but the urban-rural gap has remained almost unchanged. As far as male life expectancy is concerned, the situation looks slightly worse from the rural perspective. In the past (1980, 1990), life expectancy was higher for rural than for urban males, but since the beginning of the last decade, it is slightly higher for urban males (table R16). One may conclude that in general, the position of rural population as far as life expectancy is concerned slightly worsened.

Health perception and chronic conditions

According to the survey of 1996, residents of rural areas perceive their health conditions as 'bad' or 'very bad' more often than urban residents (table R17). This refers both to men and women, irrespectively of the age group. On the average, over 30 percent of rural but less than 20 percent of urban adults perceived their health conditions as bad / very bad. The share of unsatisfied respondents increased with the age group, but rural – urban difference persisted.

On the other hand, figures based on the same survey indicate that chronic conditions were more frequent among urban adults (both males and females), with the exception of the middle-age groups (tables R18). The survey of 1999 seems to confirm this finding, reporting higher incidence of chronic conditions for urban than for rural population (table R19). Quite surprisingly, however, it also reports higher incidence of chronic conditions for members of farmer households than for members of worker households.

Unfortunately, a conclusion with regard to the general health conditions for urban versus rural population based on the proxies used is ambiguous: it is hard to indicate the population which really is in a worse position.

Diseases

AIDS mortality, as registered by the official statistics, is low in Poland: altogether 34 cases in 2001, 37 in 2000, and 58 in 1999. Virtually all cases are registered for urban residents (table R20). Given the way of HIV/AIDS dissemination and populations concerned, it may be expected that this pattern will persist in the future.

Salmonella infections seem to be important as an indicator of poor sanitary conditions and inadequate prevention methods. In 1998 – 2000, salmonella incidence per 100,000 population varied between 50 and 60, declining over time, but it was always higher in rural than in urban areas (table R21).

Tuberculosis is a more frequent cause of deaths in rural than in urban areas. In 1990, TB mortality rate was close to 3 (per 100,000 inhabitants) in urban areas, while it amounted to 4.5 in rural areas (table R22). In 1990 – 1998 (?), TB mortality declined both among the urban and the rural population. At the same time, the rural-urban gap declined as well.

2.6. Access to basic household amenities

Housing access to basic utilities, such as running water, lavatory (WC), bathrooms, grid gas and central heating, is worse in rural than in urban areas (table R23). The difference between rural and urban equipment is the largest for gas, the smallest – for running water. Over the last decade, access to these amenities improved considerably, both in urban and in rural areas, but the rural increase was greater. As a result, the rural-urban gap diminished for each of these amenities. Nevertheless, in 2000 the rate of equipment in the most important amenities (which might secure good sanitary conditions) was still much lower in rural than in urban areas: by 15 percent in the case of running water, and 30 percent – in the case of lavatory (WC).

2.7. Policies toward rural areas

Since years, the improvement of the rural sector has been one of the top issues of the government sectoral policies in Poland. Over the last decade, subsequent governments attempted to modernize agriculture and to improve living conditions of the rural population either by implementing economic instruments (price control, quotas, credit subsidies, etc.) or by launching ‘rural-oriented’ programs. Usually, these programs have included also separate components related to the issues which are discussed under MDGs: education and health care, social policies towards rural populations, environment protection of rural areas etc.

The most recent government proposal, the program called *Spójna polityka strukturalna obszarów wiejskich i rolnictwa* [‘Coherent Structural Policy for Rural Areas and Agricultural Development’] of July 1999, indicates as one of its major goals (chapter 3.1) ‘Creation of adequate working and living conditions in rural areas...’ through ‘[i] development of physical infrastructure, [ii] improvement of social infrastructure in rural areas, and [iii] foundation of better conditions for economic activities and job creation outside agriculture’. (MRWiR 1999)

In the spheres of education and health, the program invokes the expected outcomes of reforms implemented in 1999 (see also section 3.7). However, it also recommends measures aimed specifically at improving the situation in rural areas. As far as education is concerned, following arrangements are proposed: financial incentives (such as pay supplements and credits) for teachers working in rural areas, support for upgrading equipment of rural schools, implementation of transport facilities for commuting students, and stipends for rural youth who learn or study outside their place of residence. Within the health care, several priorities are listed: large scale health education; prevention of diseases, in particular occupational diseases of farmers; better access to medical services; improved legislative and information activities about occupational safety and hygiene standards in agriculture; providing health centers and doctors' surgeries in villages and small towns with diagnostic and therapeutic equipment; and intensified activities to improve the state of the environment and of drinking water especially from harmful pesticides and their residues., 3.1.2).

As far as education is concerned, other government programs may be mentioned as well, namely *Interkl@sa* and *Pracownia internetowa w każdym gimnazjum* [Internet in all gymnasiums] - both aimed at the dissemination of the internet at schools. Special sections of these two programs relate to the issue of the internet development in rural schools. (See on these programs: UNDP 2001, ch.7; Kotowski, Kotowicki, Woodward 2001; and MENiS undated).

It should also be noticed that in most cases, recently submitted programs for improvement of rural areas, such as ‘Coherent Structural Policy...’, envisages prospects of the EU accession and their implementation depends to the large extent upon EU projects (such as SAPARD) and the future use of various EU funds (EAGFF, ERDF, CF). The impact of EU financing is even

more important in a new ‘Rural Development Programme for Poland 2004-2006’, prepared in October 2002.

3. THE POPULATION OF UNDERDEVELOPED REGIONS

3.1. Eastern voivodships and their performance

Traditionally, Poland has been divided into administrative units called ‘voivodships’. Their number has changed many times in the past. A last major reform of 1999 established 16 voivodships (see map 1).¹⁷ They replaced 49 voivodships introduced in 1975, which in turn substituted former 17 units. Obviously, all these reforms involved changes of size, status, as well as political and administrative power of a voivodship. But as far as economic development is concerned, relative positions of various voivodships has remained quite stable.

In general, voivodships of Eastern Poland, close to the borders with Russia, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine (formerly – with USSR) have been always less developed than the others. At present, this Eastern region – called often the ‘Eastern Wall’¹⁸ – consists of four voivodships (map 2): *warmińsko-mazurskie*¹⁹ on the East-North, *podlaskie* more on the South, *lubelskie* and *podkarpackie* on the South-East. These four voivodships are the main concern here. All of them are predominantly agricultural, with quite large shares of minorities (section 5), and with poorly developed infrastructure. Although there are differences among them as well (say, *warmińsko-mazurskie* and *podkarpackie* are tourist regions, while others are not), they can reasonably be distinguished from the rest of the country, at least with respect to major economic indicators.

It may be useful to compare these four Eastern voivodships with the most developed ones: *mazowieckie* voivodship in a central Poland, which comprises the capital city, Warsaw, and *śląskie* voivodship (Silesia) in a South-central part – see map 2. The latter voivodship is in a specific position. Silesia (German, in part, before the Second World War), abundant in coal mines and steel mills, flourished in the past, and experienced a privileged treatment under communism. At present, it struggles with economic difficulties resulting not only from the economic transformation, but from a decline of their major industries (mines and heavy industry). Therefore, it deserves special attention.

Certainly, the choice of voivodships to be investigated in more detail may be questioned. For instance, there is yet another voivodship with very poor social and economic indicators, namely *świętokrzyskie*, located in the Center-South of Poland (Czyżewski et al. 2001, Niemczyk 2001). However, in this study geographical location has been also considered: selected four voivodships form clearly an eastern part of Poland, and this seems to be important as well.

Besides, there are also some enclaves of poverty which may be found in the North and North-West of Poland, in *zachodniopomorskie* for instance, where many former PGRs were located (Dzun 2002, Zabłocki et al. 1999). However, such areas are certainly not ‘regions’ in a narrow sense of the word, and their investigation is postponed to the section 5.2 of this study.

Notice also a methodological constraint which this section faces. The analysis follows new administrative division of Poland, effective since 1999. This allows for collecting the most recent official statistics but, on the other hand, makes it impossible to use findings received for ‘old’ voivodships (Gorzelać 1998, Gorzelać 1999, UNDP 1998).

¹⁷ Administrative reform of 1999 implemented also smaller units, *powiats* (counties) and *gminas* (communes) which are not discussed in this section. At present, there are altogether 308 *powiats*, 65 cities with *powiat* status, and 2489 *gminas*.

¹⁸ In Polish – *Ściana Wschodnia*.

¹⁹ Names of voivodships are used in adjective form in Polish and therefore they are written with a small letter.

Major economic and human development indicators

Four Eastern voivodships make altogether over 18 percent of the Polish population, or in other words more than 7 million people live there. Density of population is relatively low in this region. In contrast, Silesia alone, which is one of the smallest voivodship, makes two third of that number. Mazowieckie, with a capital city (Warsaw, over 2 million inhabitants) carries 13 percent of the country population (table V3).

The rate of urbanization is worth noticing for – as seen in the previous sections – it might be correlated with the poverty rate, educational pattern or household equipment in basic amenities. Urbanization rates in two Eastern voivodships, namely in podkarpackie and lubelskie, are among the lowest in Poland (especially in podkarpackie). Urbanization of warmińsko-mazurskie and podlaskie is medium, somehow lower than that of mazowieckie voivodship. Silesia, on the contrary, has the highest urbanization in Poland (table V4).

Unemployment is yet another strong correlate of poverty and – in turn – of the enrollment rate and other indicators of human development. In the last decade, two-digit unemployment was registered in Poland every year. Moreover, it was increasing in the second half of the decade, up to 17.4 percent at the end of 2001 (table V5). During this period, registered unemployment was the highest in warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship: at the end of 2001, it amounted to almost 29 percent, and the lowest in mazowieckie. In lubelskie (notice: not urbanized) and podlaskie voivodships, unemployment was below the average all over the four-year period 1998 – 2001. In podkarpackie, it remained above the mean in 1998 - 2000. Very high unemployment in warmińsko-mazurskie is certainly connected with the fact that many state farms (Państwowe Gospodarstw Rolne, PGRs) were located there in the past. At the beginning of 1990s, PGRs were abolished, and former PGRs workers became unemployed (see section 5.2 for discussion).

In 2000, per capita GDP in Eastern voivodships varied from PLN 12,146 (USD ca. 2,800) in lubelskie to PLN 13,210 (USD 3,050) in warmińsko-mazurskie (table V1, map 3b). These are the lowest figures in Poland. At the same time, mazowieckie voivodship made 2.2 times more than warmińsko-mazurskie, and śląskie 1.6 times more. On the eve of the administrative reform, the distance between these voivodships was much smaller.²⁰ The ranking, however, was the same, over the whole period 1995 – 2000 (table V1, maps 3a and 3b).

HDI for new voivodships are not available, but other indicators which combine human and economic development may be found (Czyżewski et al. 2001, Niemczyk 2001, and table V2), namely Human Capital Index for 1994-1997, and Aggregated Social Development Index for 1999. HCI and ASDI rankings are very similar to the GDP ranking. They both show the lowest rank for świętokrzyskie voivodship (the one not discussed here, off Eastern Poland) in 1994-1997, as well as in 1999. Lubelskie and podlaskie carried the next lowest ranks in 1994-1997, while warmińsko-mazurskie was in the middle. Podkarpackie and warmińsko-mazurskie was at the lower bottom in 1999, and lubelskie was very low as well. Looking for a voivodship with the highest rank, one would always find mazowieckie and śląskie, as for GDP.

3.2. Poverty

In 1998 and 2000, all four underdeveloped voivodships under discussion were far above the country average as far as poverty is concerned, or in other words, the share of the poor was higher in Eastern than in other regions of Poland (table V6, maps 4ab). In 1998, a poverty rate was higher by 50 percent than the average in podkarpackie, by 40 percent in warmińsko-

²⁰ Notice that, for the years before 1999, main voivodship figures (GDP, population etc) have been estimated or reconstructed by CSO.

mazurskie, by over 30 percent in lubelskie, and by 20 percent in podlaskie.²¹ Three years later, in 2000, not that much has changed. The relative position of podkarpackie and warmińsko-mazurskie slightly improved, while that of lubelskie and podlaskie – slightly worsened. In all cases they were still among the poorest voivodships in Poland. At the same time, poverty in mazowieckie and śląskie was the lowest. Over the discussed period, the gap between these two well-performing and the Eastern voivodships has slightly decreased. Other studies (GUS 2001c, table 101) provide a similar ranking of voivodships according to the poverty rates. Given economic indicators, such a result might have been expected.

3.3. Education

Pre-school level

There is a noticeable difference in the pre-school enrollment rates between the Eastern and more developed regions. All Eastern voivodships (together with świętokrzyskie, located in the South-Center of Poland) are amongst the least advanced as far as pre-school education is concerned (maps 5ab, table V7). All of them are below the average indicator for Poland, and far below the most developed. In 2000, only 44 percent of children 3-6 year old attended kindergartens (or pre-school classes in the case of 6 year olds) in warmińsko-mazurskie and it was the lowest rate in Poland (average: 50 percent). In podkarpackie, lubelskie and podlaskie enrollment rate was only slightly higher, up to 46 percent in podkarpackie. In contrast, in the capital region (mazowieckie) over 52 percent of children attended kindergartens or pre-school classes in 2000, and in śląskie voivodship this coefficient amounted to 57 percent. This last indicator is somewhat unexpected. Śląskie is usually perceived as a traditional region, where families tend to bring up their (small) children at home rather than at kindergartens. All this shows that the pre-school enrollment is related to general development rather (GDP, urbanization) than tradition alone.

The change over time cannot be studied in detailed, for the appropriate statistics are available for two years only, i.e. 1999-2000. In general, average pre-school enrollment rate in Poland increased slightly during the period considered. It has also increased in the East of Poland, but only in two voivodships: in podkarpackie and lubelskie, in warmińsko-mazurskie this rate has actually declined. At the same time, the most pronounced increase may be found in mazowieckie. As a result, the gap between the Eastern Poland and the most developed regions has somehow increased, indicating problems with the fulfillment of MDG#2 at the regional level.

Secondary education

The pattern of secondary education in Eastern voivodships does not follow – as might have been expected - the one which has been found for the poor and for rural population, namely: higher enrollment rates in basic vocational schools, lower in general secondary schools. Such a pattern indicates that more students receive low quality, under-secondary education disfavoring them in many ways. First, they cannot continue their educational career at the tertiary level, and second they are also less competitive than graduates of general secondary schools at the modern labor market.²²

Table V8 shows that the pattern of secondary education in lubelskie and podlaskie voivodships is close to that of mazowieckie. They all have relatively high enrollment rates in general secondary schools, and low enrollment rates in basic vocational schools. Indicators for secondary general level look as follows: mazowieckie 40 percent enrolled in 2000 (rank 1 in the

²¹ Notice also a very low position of świętokrzyskie.

²² As it has been already mentioned, educational system (secondary and primary levels) has been transformed in 1999. The reform has cancelled – but not immediately – basic vocational schools of the old type.

country), lubelskie 40 percent enrolled (rank 2), podlaskie 37 percent (rank 3). And at the same time, enrollment rates in basic vocational schools are much lower for all three voivodships: mazowieckie 17.4 percent in 2000 (rank 14 out of 16 in the country), lubelskie 17.7 percent (rank 13), and podlaskie 15.8 percent (rank 16). In warmińsko-mazurskie, on the contrary, general secondary education is somehow ‘underdeveloped’ (enrollment rate 30 percent, rank 13 out of 16), while basic vocational is above the country average (21 percent, and a middle rank equal to 6).

The position of podkarpackie may be established on the basis of the enrollment rate combined, which sums up general secondary and vocational. This rate is very low in podkarpackie voivodship, only ca. 47 percent in 2000, which puts this voivodship at the very bottom in the country. Quite surprisingly, as far as this combined indicator is concerned, Silesia is the second worse in Poland.

Another indicator of secondary education which may be investigated regards its quality. This indicator reflects the results of 2002 comprehensive exam in ‘gymnasium’ (newly established type of school at under-secondary level). It shows that grades of gymnasium students in warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship are – on average – the worst in the country. On the other hand, three other Eastern voivodships are located in the middle range of grades (table V9).

So in general, as far as secondary education is concerned, warmińsko-mazurskie lies far behind the others with respect to all indicators considered, podkarpackie’s indicators are also unsatisfactory, while the performance of lubelskie and podlaskie is rather good.

3.4. Child mortality and maternal health

Child mortality

Both infant mortality and under-5 mortality is relatively low in Eastern voivodships discussed. Moreover, a recent position of two of them, namely podkarpackie and podlaskie is one of the best in the country, and warmińsko-mazurskie is no so far behind.

In 2000, infant mortality (number of deaths per 1000 live births) was equal to 7.2 – 7.3 in podkarpackie and podlaskie, putting these voivodships at the second best place in the country, together with mazowieckie. Warmińsko-mazurskie made 7.5, and lubelskie 8.0, both still below the country average (8.1, table V10, map 6b). Besides, the decline of infant mortality in 1990 – 2000 was also significant in podlaskie and podkarpackie: mortality rate declined by 60 – 65 percent there, more than in the country as a whole. Lubelskie and warmińsko-mazurskie did slightly worse.

In 2000, under-5 mortality (number of deaths per 100,000 inhabitants) was equal to 154 in podkarpackie, and it was the lowest rate in the country (average 181 – table V11). The second low rate may be found in warmińsko-mazurskie (158). In both these voivodships the mortality rate was by ca. 15 percent lower than the country average, and it was similar to the rate of mazowieckie. At the same time, podlaskie was still below the country average, while lubelskie slightly above. Also, the recent progress of Eastern voivodships in reducing under-5 mortality was among the most pronounced in the country. This refers first of all to warmińsko-mazurskie (decline by over 40 percent in 1995-2000). In lubelskie the decrease was smaller, but still more pronounced than the country average.

It should be noticed that Silesia has been always in the worse position in the country as far as child mortality is concerned. The difference between ślaskie and the rest of the country is enormous: in 2000, Silesian indicators were by over 20 percent higher (worse) than the country average for both infant and under-5 mortality rates. Also, the progress in ślaskie voivodships is the smallest in the country.

All these findings suggest that child mortality may be correlated with the urbanization rate and the type of industry / pollution rather than with the level of economic development as measured by GDP. Śląskie is urbanized, industrialized with heavy industry, and polluted, and this may be the reason of high mortality rates there. Podkarpackie, on the contrary, is predominantly rural and – given its location and climate – often perceived as a ‘healthy’ region, and this may explain low mortality in this voivodship. Similar reasoning may be given for two other Eastern voivodships, warmińsko-mazurskie and podlaskie. However, it is hard to give reasons for the poor performance of lubelskie as far as child mortality is concerned.

Maternal health

Maternal mortality is low in Poland. In 2000, 30 cases were registered altogether (GUS 2002b, table 101; and table R15, section 2 of this study), and it would be hard to analyze regional distribution of this mortality. Therefore, the investigation of MDGs #4&5 in this study is based on yet another indicator, more appropriate in the case of developed countries, namely on teenager’s fertility (see also section 2).

In 1998-2000, in podlaskie and podkarpackie fertility rates per 1000 women of the age group 15-19 were the lowest in Poland. In 2000, for instance, they were equal to 12.8 and 13.9, respectively, or by 24 percent and 18 percent lower than the country average (table V12). These two voivodships, the best performers as far as child mortality is concerned, are once again the best in the country. In lubelskie, teenager’s fertility rate has been relatively low as well, all the time below the country average. However, the situation is quite different in warmińsko-mazurskie. In this voivodship, on the contrary, teenager’s fertility is among the highest. In 2000, it was equal to 21.8 per 1000 women aged 15-19, or by almost 30 percent higher than the average for Poland.

The overall decline of the teenager’s fertility may be also found in four Eastern voivodships discussed. However, this decline has been less pronounced in podkarpackie and lubelskie than in the others ones.

3.5. Selected diseases

Before proceeding with the analysis of selected diseases (MDG#6), it may be useful to say a few words about the most general health and human development indicator, i.e. life expectancy.

Life expectancy

In all four Eastern voivodships, life expectancy of females has been above the country average for years. Moreover, in podlaskie and podkarpackie it has been the longest in Poland (close to 80 in 2001, table V13). In lubelskie and warmińsko-mazurskie it has been by about one year shorter, but all the time above the average. It may be noticed, that life expectancy of females in mazowieckie was similar, while in śląskie it has been significantly shorter (table V13).

As far as life expectancy of males is concerned, the situation is less clear. Two Eastern voivodships, podlaskie and podkarpackie, displaying good health indicators in general, have reported relative long life expectancy of males: longer than in mazowieckie and longer than in the country as a whole. Warmińsko-mazurskie and lubelskie, on a contrary, have reported much shorter life expectancy, one of the shortest in Poland (less than 70 in 2001, table V13). One may add that various health indicators already discussed are usually worse in the latter two voivodships.

AIDS

At present, AIDS is not a widespread disease in Poland. In terms of new cases, only 122 occurrences, or 0.32 per 100,000 of the population, were registered in 2001 (PZH 2002 and table

V15). In 1998-2000, slightly lower number of new cases was reported (117 in 1998, PZH undated), but there has been no tendency to a rapid increase of AIDS occurrence.

In terms of the number of deaths, only 34 cases caused by AIDS were reported in 2001, and the largest number so far was registered in 1999 (58 deaths – table R20).

Given these statistics, possibility of a regional analysis of AIDS dissemination is limited. However, indicators displayed in tables V14 and V15 allow concluding that Eastern voivodships are all below the country average. This refers especially to lubelskie and podkarpackie. In general, Western (dolnośląskie, lubuskie), Northern (pomorskie) or urbanized (mazowieckie, śląskie) voivodships are mostly affected.

Tuberculosis

The problem of tuberculosis is more serious in Poland. Although the total number of cases – both in absolute and in relative terms – has been declining over the last years, still almost 28 new cases per 100,000 population was registered in 2001 (table V16).

In 1998-2001, the highest number of new TB cases was found in mazowieckie, the richest voivodships of all, and in świętokrzyskie, one of the poorest (table 16, maps 7a and 7b). This may, however, reflect both the standard of living (świętokrzyskie - poor) and the standard of the public health care (mazowieckie- good). It would be difficult to measure the impact of each of this factor separately.

In the East of Poland, the situation varied from one voivodship to the other (table 16, maps 7a and 7b), but certainly it has not been the worst in the country. Podlaskie, for instance, is one the best voivodships in Poland, while three others belong to the group of more infected.

The number of newly registered TB cases in podlaskie has always been relatively low; it was lower by 20-25 percent than the average. In 1998-2000, it has also been lower than the average in warmińsko-mazurskie, but by no more than 10-15 percent. In 2001, however, registered TB increased there, amounting to over 28 cases per 100, 000 population, or 2 percent above the country average. Two other Eastern voivodships, podkarpackie and lubelskie, have reported all the time a higher number of TB cases than the average, by 10-20 percent, but it was still below the indicator for mazowieckie or świętokrzyskie.

3.6. Environment sustainability

Pollution

Eastern voivodships are relatively unpolluted, at least in terms of the volume of airpollutants and industrial waste per 1 sq km (tables V17 and V18). This finding might have been expected, given the level of development of the East of Poland.

Ranking from the lowest (rank 1) to the highest (rank 16) polluted regions puts Eastern voivodships on the top of the list: warmińsko-mazurskie and podlaskie keep the highest rank, podkarpackie and lubelskie come next (table V17). On the bottom of the list one can find śląskie which is far behind all other voivodships. This ranking is stable, and it has not changed over the second half of the nineties.

As far as the waste is concerned, the position of Eastern voivodships is almost the same. Warmińsko-mazurskie, podlaskie and podkarpackie are among the least polluted (table V18). This time lubelskie receives a rank in the lower bottom (rank 9), but the volume of waste is below the country average. Once again, śląskie is the most polluted. Moreover, the distance between this voivodship and the others is really huge. Śląskie produces 2.3 times more of the industrial waste than dolnośląskie (second worse voivodship in Poland), and almost 9.5 times more than the average.

As far as MDG#7 is concerned, other environmental indicators should be investigated as well. Waste treatment looks especially important for it indicates policy efforts made in order to improve living conditions of the population. The challenge, though, is more pronounced in more polluted and populated regions. From this point of view, Eastern voivodships are not especially challenging. Warmińsko-mazurskie is one of the best voivodships in Poland in terms of the shares of populations served by waste water treatment plants: in 2000, almost 95 percent of urban and 15 percent of rural populations were served (table V19, maps 8a and 8b). Indicators of podlaskie and lubelskie are relatively good as well, especially for the urban population (table V19). Podkarpackie looks slightly worse for urban population, not so bad for rural.

The comparison of śląskie with Eastern voivodships shows that problems encountered in śląskie is really very serious. Any indicator taken reveals a very poor performance of śląskie with respect to environment. One may add that the richest voivodship in Poland, i.e. mazowieckie, performs also very poorly.

Basic household amenities

In the Eastern voivodships, housing equipment with basic amenities (water mains, WC, bath, grid gas and central heating) is rather poor. This is related to, both, their low level of economic development and their relatively low level of urbanization. At the end of the nineties, indicators for households living in lubelskie, podlaskie and pomorskie were below the country average (exception – grid gas in podkarpackie; table V20). Lubelskie was among the worst or the second worst voivodship in Poland with respect to all amenities analyzed. Only warmińsko-mazurskie households were relatively well equipped. Warmińsko-mazurskie may be given a medium rank in Poland, but their equipment indicators are all above the country average.

A very similar pattern may be seen if urban households are considered exclusively. In 2000, the share of houses equipped with running water was equal to 86-88 percent in podkarpackie and podlaskie, the lowest percentages in Poland (table V21). This share for lubelskie amounted to 89 percent, and it was below the country average as well. Almost the same ranking is received for sewerage. But, once again, equipment in warmińsko-mazurskie may be evaluated as satisfactory (compared to other voivodships in Poland).

As far as housing amenities are concerned, a particular position of warmińsko-mazurskie may be interpreted as resulting from its history. A large part of this voivodship belonged to Germany before the Second World War. Although this region was one of the poorest in Germany, it was at the same time richer than the neighboring regions of Poland. This may explain a relatively good equipment of houses in warmińsko-mazurskie, especially if compared with other Eastern voivodships.

3.7. MDGs and regional policies

Regional policies in a proper sense of the word, i.e. aimed especially at supporting less developed parts of a country, were absent during the communist period. On the contrary, communist regimes put much more effort in developing historically industrialized voivodships, such as śląskie (mines, heavy industry), northern regions (shipyards) or the capital city. Certainly, under communism some less developed regions benefited as well (some parts of małopolskie and łódzkie or formerly poor *powiats* of mazowieckie), but voivodships of the ‘Eastern Wall’ cannot be found among the beneficiaries.

During the first years of transition, i.e. at the beginning of the nineties, regional policy was not a government priority either. In fact, it was virtually neglected (MG 2002, p.27). At that time, subsequent governments addressed mainly the questions of the overall stabilization of the economy, managed the privatization process and the re-building of market institutions. Regional policy was developed in the second half of the decade. It has begun only in 1999-2000, pulled

up by two factors, internal reforms of 1999 and external demands - prerequisites of the EU accession (scheduled for 2004).

In 1999, a 'package' of reforms has been adopted. They covered four areas: (i) local governments, (ii) education, (iii) health care, and (iv) pension system. As far as regional policies regarding MDGs are concerned, the first two reforms are important.²³ Legislation of 1999 attributed major local responsibilities to the lowest administrative level (*gmina*), leaving considerably less to the next levels: *powiats* and voivodships. In principle, *gminas* have been made responsible for organizing and financing basic education (primary and lower-secondary), *powiats* for upper-secondary education, and both levels shared responsibilities with respect to granting support to the poor via social assistance.²⁴ The point is that various policy goals of *gminas* and *powiats*, including those relating to education and poverty alleviation, are financed largely by subventions and subsidies from the central budget and central off-budget funds. Although the rules of subsidizing do not include clear mechanisms of allocation based on a regional level of development, in most cases poorer units receive more than the richer ones. In this sense, financing selected tasks of local governments may be seen as an element of regional policy.

Revenues of *gminas*' and *powiats*' in all voivodships are displayed in tables V22 and V23. In both tables total and own revenues are shown. This allows a comparison of the scope of financial support received by each voivodships from the central budget and/or central off-budget funds. On the average, *gminas* collect ca. 50 percent of revenues themselves (through local taxes and a fixed share of corporate and income taxes), and 50 percent of their revenues come in the form of general or earmarked subventions from the central budget or funds (table V22). It is easy to notice, however, that the shares of *gminas*' own revenues in the total differ from one voivodship to another. In 2000, the largest shares of non-own revenues (over 65 percent) were found in *gminas* of three eastern voivodships, namely in podlaskie, podkarpackie and in lubelskie. *Gminas* of warmińsko-mazurskie received 57 percent of their revenues in the form of state subventions, keeping the middle rank in the country. On the other hand, mazowieckie benefited only in 34 percent, and this was the lowest indicator in the country. *Gminas* of śląskie kept the second lowest position, receiving 44 percent of their revenues in the form of subventions.

In terms of ranking, the situation was very similar with regard to *powiats*. *Powiats* of the poorest regions receive relatively higher support, ranging from 93 to 95 percent in 2000 (table V23). *Powiats* of four eastern voivodships, together with świętokrzyskie, were on the top of the list of state beneficiaries.

It should be noted that 40-50 percent of *gminas*' expenditures go for education (almost 50 percent in the eastern voivodships), and over 10 percent for social welfare (GUS 2000d, table 23). This shows to what extent the state actually intervenes in the regional performance in the areas of basic education and social protection.

Regional policies introduced during the pre-accession period seem to be much more important. During this period, Poland had to implement rules of regional policy allowing for the future use of EU structural funds. With this respect, basic adjustment of the Polish legislation was achieved in the second half of 2000. (Poniatowicz 2002)

At present, two main documents constitute the core of regional policy: (i) National Regional Development Strategy for 2001-2006, and (ii) Program of Support for 2001-2002. Both draw

²³ In general, pension reform is rather far from MDGs. Health reform of 1999, given its major goals, is only very loosely related to MDGs 4, 5 and 6.

²⁴ Notice that neither *gmina* nor *powiat* has any major tasks within the system of the public health care.

upon legislation founding the general rules of regional policy (Rozporządzenie...of December 28, 2000; Uchwała.. of December 28, 2000; Ustawa...of May 12, 2000).

These documents do not formulate goals matching exactly MDGs. But they put forward five priorities of regional policy, of which two have a direct impact on the achievement of MDGs, namely: priority # III, concerning development of human resources (through active labor market measures and education), and priority # IV which concerns support for the regions at risk of marginalization (through the development of rural areas, among others). It may also be noticed that since priorities are loosely defined, they allow for opening and financing environmental and health care projects as well. The latter, however, are not prioritized.

Contrary to the already discussed objectives of local policies supported by the government, priorities and goals of regional policy stated by the appropriate pre-accession documents involve investment but not current expenditures. As for financing, two major sources are indicated, Polish and EU funds. At present, financing looks as follows.

National regional strategy and the Programme of Support have required fixing the total amount scheduled for regional policy in the budget. It was done for 2001 and 2002. The amount scheduled was PLN 1.451 bn for 2001, and PLN 1.100 bn for 2002 (compared to the total state budget of ca. PLN 151 bn in 2001, and PLN ca. 173 bn in 2002). The Programme envisages 12 percent of the total amount for the financing of priority #III, and 18 percent for the priority #IV. From the point of view of four Eastern voivodships, the distribution of the total resources among various regions is more important.

According to the National Regional Development Strategy for years 2001-2006, the allocation rate for implementing state regional policy in particular voivodships looks as follows:

- 80% of resources are divided proportionally among all voivodships according to their population;
- 10% of resources are divided proportionally among voivodships according to their population where average GDP per capita for the last three years has been less than 80% of average GDP per capita in Poland;
- 10% of resources are divided proportionally among the population number in *powiats* where average unemployment rate for the last three years exceeded 150% of national average.

In principle, such model favours voivodships with poor socio-economic indicators, providing there is an appropriate administrative capability and good technical readiness of local projects. Detail goals of spending allocated amounts are specified in so called 'voivodship contracts', i.e. local programmes submitted by voivodships, and – after the negotiations - approved by the government.

Table V23 shows the final rates for all voivodships accepted in the Program of Support for 2001-2002. Quite surprisingly, the highest rates are set for the two most developed voivodships, mazowieckie and śląskie: over 10 percent of the total in each case. Eastern voivodships may receive from 4 percent (podlaskie) up to 7.3 percent (lubelskie) of the total, that is – relatively low amounts.

The implementation period for the new rules of regional policy is relatively short, and therefore their full evaluation is not possible yet. It seems, however, that they induce too high weights to the population of each region/voivodship. (Góralaska 2002) This is the main reason of a certain 'bias' of the allocation of regional policy funds towards populated and not necessarily underdeveloped voivodships.

4. WOMEN STATUS

As far as MDG#3 is concerned, women in Poland are not discriminated against in education system. In fact, they are better educated than men (table W1 and UNDP 2002). There are, however, inequalities, with respect to the labor market and to the political representation. The relevant issues are discussed below.

4.1. Women at the labor market

In Poland, women are discriminated at the labor market with regard to all critical aspects: participation and unemployment rates, employment patterns and wages. Moreover, over the last years, there are no evident signs of improvement of the women's position in any of the labor market dimensions.

During communist period, the policy of full employment was effective. At that time, all adults were encouraged to work, and finding a job was not a problem at all, either for men or for women. Nevertheless, women experienced discrimination in terms of the employment structure and the wage level. The later is shown by the ratio of female to male average monthly wage, equal to 63.2 percent in 1985 (Atkinson and Micklewright 1992 from table PE3, based on GUS data) or – often quoted – ratio of medians, equal to 73.4 percent in 1985 (Atkinson and Micklewright 1992, table 4.2, UNICEF 1999, table 2.2). Comprehensive data on the structure of employment by gender for pre-transition period are not available, but anecdotal information prove that women had mostly low paid job as, for instance, seamstresses, teachers or nurses.

Transition brought about radical changes into the labor market. Closing down inefficient enterprises, privatization process and green-field investment affected labor market in various ways. They caused a sharp increase of unemployment, changed the employment structure, pushed up wage differentiation and modified factors underlying wage differentials. In general, all this had a negative effect on the situation of the labor force, but not necessarily worsened the relative position of women (Paci 2002a, p.xi and 2002b).

In 2001, male participation rate was close to 64 percent, and it was higher than the female rate by 14 percentage points (table W2). This difference was mostly stable during the transition, with a slight tendency to decline. In the pre-transition period the participation rates for both sexes was considerably higher. In 1988, it was equal to 74 percent for men and 57 percent for women (Kotowska 2001). It should be noticed that the male-female gap decreased over time, it was lower at the end of the nineties than in the eighties.

Unemployment rate is very high in Poland. In 1999-2001, unemployment rate was over 16 percent, and for years it has not fallen below 10 percent (table W2). All over the time, unemployment rate for women was higher than for men: by less than 3 percentage points during the first half of the decade, by more than 3 percentage points during the second half. So as far as unemployment is concerned, the situation of women is visibly worse than that of men. Moreover, recently, it has relatively worsened.

The employment pattern in Poland is rather “traditional”. Women more often than men work as clerks, service workers, skilled and unskilled staff, while men – as machine operators or craft and trade workers (table W4). But from the point of view of women discrimination at the labor market, women under-representation among senior officials and managers is even more important. In 2001, almost 6 percent of the employed men, but only 4.2 percent of women kept the highest managerial posts. Virtually nothing has changed with this respect at the end of the nineties.

There are some changes, however, in the male-female wage gap. During transition, this gap has slightly diminished over time. In 1996, an average woman's pay was by almost 21 percent lower than man, in 2001 it was lower by less than 20 percent (table W3 and W5). It should also be noticed that this difference was more pronounced under communism (see figures reported at the beginning of this section).

There are, however, negative tendencies with respect to the gender wage gap. For instance, this gap is higher than the average among employees with university degree (table W3) and among managers, professionals etc (table W5). Higher education or higher level posts rewards less in the case of women than men, and there are no positive changes with this respect in the most recent years.

4.2. Women participation in political life

Polish women are underrepresented in the decision making process both at the national and at the local level (see also table W1 for share in the total number of administrators and managers). However, as a result of the last elections (2001), proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament has increased from 13 to 20 percent in Sejm (the Lower Chamber of Parliament) and from 12 to 23 percent in the Senate (see table W6). Likewise, as a result of the last municipal elections (2002) women's representation has increased at all existing levels of local councils: from 15.85 to 17.93 percent in *gmina* councils, from 14.88 to 15.94 percent in *powiat* councils, and from 10.88 to 14.44 percent in voivodships' councils (see table W7). When the last two municipal elections (1998, 2002) are taken into account with regard to all types of councils, then podkarpackie, podlaskie, and świętokrzyskie voivodships stay consistently below national average (see table W8). Significantly, these are the regions of Poland with economic indicators at the lowest level (see maps 3ab and 4ab), and high participation in religious life (in podkarpackie voivodship the rate of regular Church goers is the highest in the country, i.e. 83 percent; CBOS 2002b). On the contrary, in łódzkie, mazowieckie, śląskie, and zachodniopomorskie voivodships women's representation has consistently been above the national average. In zachodniopomorskie and łódzkie the participation in religious life is the lowest in the country (40 percent of regular Church goers; CBOS 2002b).

There is no unilateral explanation of women's unequal representation in the Polish public sphere. While tradition and strong position of the Catholic Church may play certain role, various authors point to other factors, such as overburden with household duties (Duch 2002), legacies of the communist past (Titkow 2002), or reluctance among politicians to introduce the measures for the political advancement of women (Kurczewski 2002). In general, opinions on women's representation in decision-making bodies depend on the respondents' education and gender (Fuszara 2002). Women more frequently than men admit that women's share of power in the Parliament, State Administration, the Supreme Court, local councils, and firms' supervisory boards should be equal or exceed 50 percent (see table W8). Only 33 percent of Poles (of which 38 females and 26 percent males) is for introducing the quota system in the main decision-making bodies compared to 55 percent against (CBOS 2002). However, 63 percent of Poles (of which 68 females and 57 percent males) considers the quota system in making the political parties' lists of candidates to run in elections "as a good idea", when only 27 percent (of which 22 females and 31 percent males) is against (CBOS 1999, cited in Fuszara 2000: 26).

4.3. Policies against gender discrimination

Government mechanisms for the promotion of women are not advanced. Policies, powers and naming of the relevant offices have undergone several changes (see Nowakowska 2000). Most recently (2001) the government created the office of the Plenipotentiary for the Equal Status of

Women and Men. It is too early to assess the Plenipotentiary's achievements. In the past, several initiatives were rejected either by the council of ministers or the Parliament. Among the others, the former government suspended the National Plan of Action prepared in accordance with the recommendations of the Platform of Action and the Beijing Declaration and works on the Bill of the Equal Status of Women and Men. Moreover, the proposal of establishing the parliamentary Committee for Equal Status of Women and Men was voted against by the Parliament (1999). The situation may change in the face of accession with EU.

There have been several non-governmental projects supporting advancement of women in public life. For instance, in 1997 two projects were initiated by the Center for Russian, Central and East European Studies at Rutgers University in co-operation with Polish NGOs: "The Participation of Women in Local Life" and "Participation of Women Public Life". The aim of these programs was to improve the knowledge of the Polish NGOs' activists on women's advocacy (Martynowicz 2000). In 2001, the Women's Information Center and UNIFEM introduced a new project entitled „The question of equal rights of both sexes in elections for the Parliament”. Also Electoral Coalition of Women supported by women's NGOs in Poland was active before the last parliamentary and municipal elections.

Policies against women discrimination in the labor market have been undertaken as well, although they proved to be insufficient so far. In 2001 a law was passed amending the Labor Code. This amendment introduced rules aimed to prevent both indirect and direct discrimination on the job. Also, the EU accession will contribute to the anti-discrimination policy, for counteracting labor market discrimination against women is one of the key elements of the common European policy. At the pre-accession stage, Poland has already aligned its legislation with European Union requirements and implemented programs providing for equal opportunities in the labor market (UNDP 2002 and MG 2002 IV.1.4).

5. "EXCLUDED" GROUPS

5.1. Ethnic minorities: Polish Roma

Ethnic and national minorities in Poland: general information

For political reasons, until 1989 Poland had been considered as an ethnically homogeneous country. The contemporary data concerning ethnic and national minorities' population are based on estimates only.²⁵ Generally, it is assumed that minorities constitute a modest proportion of Poland's population, i.e. 2 up to 4 percent of country's total population. Germans, Ukrainians and Belarussians are Poland's largest national minorities (see table M1).

Simultaneously, there is no precise data indicating social or economic status of the minorities. The visible differences in economic situation are usually explained on the regional and not on ethnic grounds (Łodziński 1998; MSWiA 2002). Most of the minority groups stay at the rural territories of the Eastern Poland with the high unemployment rate and the low level of GDP (podlaskie, warmińsko-mazurskie, and podkarpackie voivodships). Moreover, in a particularly difficult economic situation are those Ukrainians and Ruthenians who stay in zachodniopomorskie and lubuskie voivodships at the territories of former state farms (*Państwowe Gospodarstwa Rolne, PGR*). Good economic results are observed for opolskie voivodship inhabited by German minority (MSWiA 2002).

The situation of national and ethnic minorities has never been a focal point in Poland's transformation's policies. Still, Poland has signed major international documents outlining

²⁵ The census of 2002 has been the first since World War II to collect information on ethnicity and spoken language. The results will be accessible in 2003.

minority rights and prohibiting racial and ethnic discrimination, including the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe which entered into force in April 2001. All minorities in the country have the right to the development of their culture and to the education of their native languages (see table M2). Minorities' electoral committees are exempted from 5 percent threshold requirement in parliamentary election.²⁶ Belarussian, Ukrainian and especially German minorities have their representation among local authorities.

There is no special body dealing with the protection of minority rights; the minority protection falls into general competence of the Ombudsman (*Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich*). Among governmental bodies which act in favor of minorities are: Sejm Committee on National and Ethnic Minorities (*Sejmowa Komisja Mniejszości Narodowych i Etnicznych*), Interdepartmental Group for National Minorities (*Międzyresortowy Zespół ds. Mniejszości Narodowych*), Department of National Minorities within Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Department of National Minorities Culture in the Ministry of Culture.

Polish Roma

Although the Polish Roma constitute a small minority group, amounting to 20-30,000 (table M1) their social, economic and cultural standing deserves attention as significantly worse than the situation of any other minority group and of the ethnic majority. According to public opinion polls, Roma are the most disfavored minority group (see table M3). Roma suffer racially motivated violent and non-violent discrimination (ERRC 2002; OSI 2001). In the Ombudsman office's opinion, the living conditions of Roma groups in małopolskie and podkarpackie voivodships "defy human dignity" (BRPO 2001). In these regions, accommodations of the majority of Roma families do not meet even the lowest acceptable standards. In addition, serious problems with hygiene and nutrition are often reported. The precise statistics concerning Roma's living conditions are unavailable, but - as many observers have noticed - a significant part of the families lives in shacks, or in old train wagons, often without plumbing and running water. The rates of inhabitants per space unit exceed sanitary norms (ERRC 2002; OSI 2001).

Educational level among the Polish Roma is low. In the 2000/2001, 30 percent (878 out of 2,923) of Roma children of school age did not attend either primary or secondary education (estimates of Ministry of Education, cited in OSI 2001). A substantial number of Roma children are directed to the segregated classes for Roma only, with the low level of teaching. No more than 0.1 percent of the Roma population completed tertiary education (OSI 2001) as to 11 percent of Poles (OECD 2001: table A2.1a, p. 43).

Health level and personal hygiene is low. Roma are vulnerable to diseases that are rare among the majority population, such as viral hepatitis B, asthma, pneumonia, bronchitis, tuberculosis, anaemia, mental handicaps and hyperthyroidism. The Roma average life expectancy in the małopolskie voivodship is 55 years (*Małopolska Program* 2001; OSI 2001) compared to 70,2 years for males and 78,4 for females at the country level (see table R16). The general poverty results in the lack of the right to health insurance, so Roma access to the medical treatment is limited and depended on social assistance (children included).

Unemployment rate is alarmingly high. According to National Labor Office's study, in 1999, only 43 percent of surveyed Roma indicated employment as a source of family income, and only 30 percent had ever contacted Labor Office (cited in *Małopolska Program* 2001). Roma leaders put rates of unemployment between 90 and 99 percent for the cities of Kraków, Tarnów and Nowy Sącz (OSI 2001). Most of adults have already lost their right to the unemployment benefit. Although some of them receive small pensions or disability payment (a positive side effect of obligatory employment under the communist regime), the majority is on social welfare.

²⁶ As the result of last election (2001), 2 German and 3 Belarussian minorities' representatives stay in parliament.

Polish Roma have no political representation either on national or on local level. Only in Nowy Sącz, the Roma are represented by an assistant to the plenipotentiary for Roma Affairs. No data is available as to the number of Roma at any level of the civil service, the judiciary or other public employment. There are eleven main Roma non-governmental organizations. However, they are poorly funded and often in conflict with each other.

Policies against Roma discrimination

In March 2001 the government adopted the “Pilot Government Programme for the Roma Community in the Małopolska Province for the years 2001-2003” (*Małopolska Program 2001*). The Program targets 3-3.5 thousand of the Polish Roma, focusing on a region where Roma living conditions are especially difficult. It concentrates mainly on the sphere of education and employment and it promises government funding for the joint initiatives of local governments and the Roma groups. According to the OSI report, the program has two shortcomings. First, it does not incorporate steps to reduce racial discrimination of Roma. Second, its implementation is depended on local authorities who may be reluctant to carry on the project for fear of losing popular support (OSI 2001). In the Ombudsman’s office’s opinion, its main shortcoming has to do with the insufficient funding devoted to the improvement of the living conditions (BRPO 2001).

Most of the experts highlight the following steps as necessary to remedy the Roma situation: to design pre-schooling programs for Roma children to ensure a better start in the first grade of primary school (1); to develop adult education and counteract unemployment (2); to improve hygiene, and health conditions by, among the others, hiring specialized social workers (3); to undertake effective measures against racist discrimination against Roma by general public, local administration and police (4); to develop curricula for teaching Romani language, culture, and history (5) (ERRC 2002; *Małopolska Program 2001*).

5.2. Former state farms’ laborers and their families

Background information

In the communist system the state owned and run farms, *Państwowe Gospodarstwa Rolne* (PGR) had been mainly created at the former German territories (currently zachodniopomorskie and warmińsko-mazurskie voivodships). Considered as unprofitable, at the beginning of transformation the PGRs were closed down. At the starting point, the process concerned 1666 farms, 3758 thousand hectares of land, over 6 thousand housing projects, and 450 thousand of workers, mostly low skilled farm laborers (Dzun 2002: 152). In 1991, the state agency, *Agencja Własności Rolnej Skarbu Państwa* (AWRSP), has been established and put in charge of both property and reforms. According to AWRSP, in this year the number of PGRs’ employees ranged to 330 thousand. Unfortunately, no exact data are available on how many of the former farms’ laborers are currently unemployed or how many of them and their family members still live in the former farms’ neighborhoods. The estimates, however, are high. In 1997/1998, according to AWRSP, 41 thousand of former PGRs’ workers still did not have a job. Some authors claim that AWRSP’s figures are underestimated as they do not include those PGRs’ workers who found and lost short-term employment in non-agricultural sector (Zabłocki et al. 1999: 48). Currently, the unemployment rate in voivodships with the high concentration of the former state farms, is among the highest in the country (see table V5 for zachodniopomorskie and warmińsko-mazurskie).

The post-PGR syndrome

As far as MDGs are concerned, there are no precise data on the situation of the former PGRs’ workers and their families. According to one of the unique sample quantitative surveys, in 1993,

56 percent of former PGRs' workers completed their education at the primary level and further 24 percent at the basic vocational level, compared to respectively 22 and 24 percent of total population. Only 15 percent held diplomas of more advanced secondary education and 3 percent diplomas of higher education, compared respectively to 43 and 11 percent of total population (data for PGR quoted in Ławryniak 2001; for total population in OECD 2001; please note that OECD data concerns the second half of nineties). According to another survey, 62% of post-PGRs' families in *warمیńsko-mazurskie* do not gain social minimum income, and one third of those families does not gain half of the social minimum income (Kawczyńska-Butrym 2001: 26). The quality of housing amenities is relatively good. In *warمیńsko-mazurskie* almost 100 percent of surveyed families admitted to have running water at home, over 90 percent bath and water closet, and 82 percent central heating (Kawczyńska-Butrym 2001a: 16). Most probably, this situation results from the fact that in the communist period PGRs' workers had mainly been accommodated in housing projects typical for that period, with the basic facilities, although often of low quality. There are no data on children and maternal health; only general information on the incidence of children diseases which are the effect of malnutrition - such as orthopedic and sight problems (Remisiewicz 2000).

Additional and important information is included in sociological qualitative studies and picture drawn by media. The living conditions of former state farms' laborers allow sociologists to speak of the formation of a new underclass in Poland and of *post-PGR* syndrome (e.g. Poławski 1997; Tarkowska 1999). The syndrome is based on cumulating of various spheres of deprivation such as reproduction and feminization of poverty, family violence, unemployment, low level of education, lack of basic knowledge on family planning, alcoholism, and dependence on social welfare (Tarkowska, ed. 2000).

Historical and current reasons of post-PGR syndrome

Sociologists and social policy analysts indicate two main sources of the current deprivation of post-PGRs' workers. The first one is related to the specific history and culture of this group, the other to the impact of the transformation policies. As far as the first cause is concerned, sociologists point out that the former workers were recruited mostly from among the poor and uneducated rural population resettled from the Eastern territories, annexed by the USSR during the World War II. The employment in PGRs was to certain extent attractive, as it did not require any particular skills. Moreover, it offered comprehensive system of social protection (free housing, garden allotments, nurseries, etc) and possibilities of gaining extra-income either in cash or in kind. Children of PGRs' laborers found jobs most often on the farms as well (Tarkowska 2001; UNDP 2000: 53).

Secondly, transformation policies aimed at dissolution of unprofitable state farming sector are the direct cause of the present situation of former PGRs' workers. These former PGR laborers have been suddenly hit by massive unemployment. Aside of low level of education and lack of qualification, the reason of their unemployment lies in the lack of any alternative employer in the neighborhood of former state farms. The difficulty lies in the spatial isolation of housing projects, and poor transportation to potential employers. The unemployment, therefore, becomes chronic and also pathological when parallel with a high consumption of alcohol. This is accompanied by the reproduction of unemployment as children from former PGRs also often complete their education at the primary level due to financial and cultural difficulties (UNDP 2000: 53). At present, there are no signs that AWRSP, the institution in charge of reform process in the former PGR sector, would have enough of competence and sufficient means to deal with the situation.

Concluding remarks

Several points can be made with regard to the realization of MDGs and conscious policies to that effect.

First, groups that are in extremely critical situation with respect to these goals are not numerous. Certainly, the Roma belong to them, to an extent also the former state farms laborers. Data are scarce, as ethnic minorities were hardly recognized under state socialism and even now there is no systematic official data gathering on the excluded groups.

Second, there are several large groups which are underprivileged in some respect, but are not in extreme situation. Here, one has to mention three categories: the poor, the rural population, and the population of the East of the country. Poverty is a special problem. Before 1990 it was hardly studied, but did not seem acute. With the advance of market reforms, it quickly increased and after ten years of transformation is substantial, although not very deep. It tends to transform into permanent social exclusion, which – by the way – is typical for most of the European countries.

Third, women in general are being discriminate against in the labor market. Despite legally equal status, and despite a relatively high participation of the women in the labor market, this discrimination is clearly reflected by statistics. Although on average women are better educated, their pay is lower and career advance slower. In other ways, the reward for education is lower in case of women. This discrimination has deep cultural reasons, as it is formed at the early stages of socialization and education. It is probably even not noticed by many women, accepting traditional social and professional roles.

Looking from the point of view of access to important social services, it is possible to say that the access to education is satisfactory only on the primary level, where coverage is practically complete (if one does not take into account a tiny Roma minority). With respect to the preschool level, secondary and tertiary levels, there are visible inequalities, showing in different enrollment rates for various social groups. Rural population is also affected by generally poorer quality of education. Some research shows that there is a slight closing of education gap after 1990.

Maternal health and child mortality do not cause any particular problems; outpatient clinics and hospital care for pregnant and birth giving women as well as for infants is a rule. There are no striking differences between the regions or between town and country, in some cases the indices for poor or rural regions tend to be above the average.

As far as clean environment (measured by the levels of pollution and by access to sewage systems, running water and gas) is concerned, gaps between regions as well as between town and country have been diminishing over the last decade, due to substantial investment and modernization. Some rich, but heavy industrialized regions sometimes have pollution levels higher than poorer parts of the country. There is one social group – namely the Roma – whose lack of access to households' amenities put them much below any other community.

Finally, the policies. The policies targeted at ethnic minorities do not seem to be effective in the Roma case. The Roma minority – which lives in abysmal conditions – is tiny, and neither has its own political strength to pressure for programs, nor is visible enough to attract government interest. There are some attempts to improve education opportunities of farm laborers' children, but it is difficult to asses their results.

The attitude towards poverty is ambiguous. For a time being it has been accepted as allegedly inevitable under the market transformation. Poverty eradicating polices were, however, introduced and the instruments are well designed, if perhaps over-targeted. Successes of these programs are limited, however, due to the simple fact of the extension of poverty and the size of

unemployment, its chief reason. More generally, poverty is often regarded as resulting in a large measure from unemployment; discussing the policies towards the labor market and economic development in general clearly falls beyond the scope of this paper.

Not much has been done with respect to the urban-rural differences, as well as to the regional differences, although there was much talk about these problems. Only recently the prospect of the accession to the European Union forced the government to introduce some measures, it is too early to assess their impact. The grounds for optimism are limited, however, as there are deep structural reasons for the rural poverty and backwardness of certain regions.

There are certain attempts to improve women's position on the labor market. On one hand, there is the activity of women's advocacy groups and some media, sympathetic to this cause. On the other, there is some government activity, related also to the prospective accession with the EU. As the reasons are mostly cultural, however, it is difficult to expect quick results.

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List of Abbreviations

Polish institutions and organizations

| | |
|----------|--|
| AWRSP | Agencja Własności Rolnej Skarbu Państwa [Agricultural Property Agency of the State Treasury] |
| BRPO | Biuro Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich [Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection /Ombudsman Office] |
| CASE | Centrum Analiz Społeczno-Ekonomicznych [Center for Social and Economic Research] |
| CBOS | Centrum badania Opinii Społecznej [Public Opinion Research Center] |
| CKE | Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna [National Examination Board] |
| CSO | Central Statistical Office [Główny Urząd Statystyczny, GUS] |
| IFiS PAN | Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk [Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences] |
| IPiSS | Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych [Institute of Labor and Social Affairs] |
| ISP | Instytut Spraw Publicznych [Institute of Public Affairs] |
| GUS | Główny Urząd Statystyczny [Central Statistical Office, CSO] |
| MENiS | Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu [Ministry of National Education and Sport] |
| MG | Ministerstwo Gospodarki [Ministry of Economy] - merged with MPiPS at the beginning of 2003 |
| MPiPS | Ministerstwo Pracy i Polityki Społecznej [Ministry of Labor and Social Policy] - merged with MG at the beginning of 2003 |
| MRiRW | Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi [Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development] |
| MSWiA | Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji [Ministry of Interiors] |
| PKW | Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza [National Election Office] |
| PZH | Państwowy Zakład Higieny [National Institute of Hygiene] |
| WRC | Centrum Praw Kobiet [Women's Rights Center] |

International institutions and organizations

| | |
|------|-----------------------------|
| ERRC | European Roma Rights Center |
| OSI | Open Society Institute |

Annex **Methodological notes to the HBS figures**

These notes are intended to give grounds for the evaluation of reliability and accuracy of indices based on Households Budgets Surveys (HBSs) which are displayed in many tables and discussed in the text. Almost all indices which concern the poor, Gini coefficients, as well as enrollment rates and some figures on housing equipment are based on these surveys. Since it happens that they differ from other published statistics (example - headcounts), it is important to discuss main methods and concepts used, in order to realize where some discrepancies might have come from.

HBS samples and their representativeness

Household budget surveys are conducted by the Central Statistical Office for over 30 years. Each year, the HBS sample differs from the previous one²⁷ but it keeps an acceptable level of representativeness. It is representative for virtually whole population, excluding those who live with foreigners or outside 'standard' households (in dormitories, for instance). As usual, 'extreme' groups of the population (the richest, the poorest) are under-represented, and some of them (marginalized, abused, etc) are not included at all.

Each year, the HBS sample contains over 30,000 households (in fact, from about 32,000 to 36,000 households) or over 100,000 individuals. Every household is surveyed for one month; so in fact, the sample consists of 12 monthly sub-samples of fairly equal size (over 2,500 each). It should be noticed that monthly rotation makes some problems for the data analysis (seasonality, inflation etc). In this study, inflation problems have been handled in part, while those of seasonality have been neglected.

Since 1993, the methodology of sampling households, collecting and processing data remains virtually unchanged. Some corrections of the household categorization have been introduced in 1997, and of income-expenditure concepts in 1998. Minor changes – such as modifications of questionnaires – are introduced each year, with no impact on the comparability of results.

Weighting

In order to avoid estimation errors resulting from households drop outs, weights are used. In most cases, HBS samples have been weighted with the weights submitted by the Central Statistical Office. Sometimes, these weights have been adjusted allowing to keep the sample size unchanged. In this study, weighting schedule looks as follows:

Weights

1994 - unweighted data

1995 - weights are adjusting the sample composition to the 1995 Microcensus.

1996 - CSO weights have been standardized; means over a year have been used.

1997 - CSO weights have been standardized

1998 - CSO weights have been standardized; means over a year have been used.

1999 - CSO weights have been standardized

2000 - CSO weights have been standardized

Notice however that all Gini coefficients are based on unweighted samples.

²⁷ So called 'partial rotation' method of the sample is adopted.

Major concepts for ‘poverty’ indices

A simple concept of consumption poverty has been applied: all people consuming less than a certain threshold (poverty line) are treated as poor.

Poverty line. The base line has been set for 1999, according the official threshold of the Polish social assistance (average over the year). It has been kept constant in real terms for the whole period under investigation with the use of annual CPIs. The lines used look as follows.

1994 - PLN 159.08 (1999 line in 1994 prices)

1995 - PLN 203.31 (1999 line in 1995 prices)

1996 - PLN 243.77 (1999 line in 1996 prices)

1997 - PLN 280.09 (1999 line in 1997 prices)

1998 - PLN 313.14 (1999 line in 1998 prices)

1999 - PLN 336.00 (base line, current prices)

2000 - PLN 369.94 (1999 line in 2000 prices)

It should be noticed that these thresholds delimit “medium”, but certainly not “very soft” – poverty. In 1999, the line was equal to USD 2.59 a day (with the market exchange rate), or – in other words – about PPP\$ 5.

Individual consumption has been expressed in terms of net equivalent consumption, with the use of OECD scales, i.e. household head = 1, children up to 14 = 0.5, other household member = 0.7. Household expenditure (including in cash and in kind parts) reflecting the CSO concept has been taken as a consumption proxy.

Adjusting for the inflation

In case of poverty indices, each year inflation (December to January) has been handled in the following way:

1994 – expenditure data have been expressed in the middle of the year 1994 prices;

1995 - expenditure data have been expressed in June 1995 prices;

1996 - expenditure data have been expressed in September 1996 prices;

1997 - expenditure data have been expressed in June 1997 prices;

1998 - expenditure data have been expressed in June 1998 prices;

1999 - expenditure data have been kept in current prices;

2000 - expenditure data have been kept in current prices.

Monthly CPI have been used for changing expenditure figures from current PLN into June or middle of the year prices.

Notice that Gini coefficients for socio-economic groups of households are all based on deflated income or expenditure data (expressed in June prices).

Additional remarks

In HBS, negative household incomes are registered in some cases. In general, this problem has not been handled for poverty indices (exception: 1995, households with negative incomes have been excluded).