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Critique on the Way of Formulating European Union's Poverty and Social Exclusion Reduction Goal Introduced in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan¹

Abstract

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: The main aim of the article is to perform an evaluation of the way in which the goals of European Union's strategic documents are formulated, using the example of poverty and social exclusion (PSE) reduction goal, set out in the EPSR AP.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS: A critical evaluation of the way of formulating the PSE reduction goal included in EPSR AP, which is the key component of the article, is based on the concept of public policy goals' specification by R. Szarfenberg and the method of evaluating goals' formulation by G.T. Doran (SMART method).

THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION: First section of the article describes methods of analysis and evaluation used in the article, as well as research questions formulated. In next section the way of formulating goals related to PSE included in previous EU's strategies is analyzed. Next part is dedicated to the analysis and evaluation of the way of formulating such a goal in the EPSR AP. Final section describes the identified key issues, crucial to the critical evaluation of the above-mentioned goal and includes some recommendations regarding the way of formulating similar goals in the future.

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RESEARCH RESULTS: The evaluation of the way of formulating the PSE reduction goal of the EPSR AP, performed in this article, turned out to be critical. This goal met all the SMART method criteria, but with many reservations, resulting from the application of the concept of public policy goals' specification.

CONCLUSIONS, INNOVATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Based on the results of the evaluation, some recommendations were proposed to the way of formulating EU's PSE reduction goals in the future. These concerned: adopting precise definitions of both of these concepts, abandoning the multi-dimensional indicator, abandoning the use of national targets and replacing the absolute target with the relative one.

KEYWORDS:

poverty, social exclusion, European Union, European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 21st century, a new concept of regulating integration processes emerged in the European Union, based on strategic documents covering ten-year periods. In these documents, the Union started formulating strategic goals that the EU Member States were obliged to achieve. These goals concerned both economic and social issues. Among such goals were the goals related to combating poverty and social exclusion (hereinafter: PSE). The way they were formulated was very specific, which, according to the author, can be subject to critical analysis, in particular due to the fact that none of the EU goals regarding PSE, defined in the EU strategic documents in the 2000–2024 period, were achieved.

The aim of this article is to evaluate the way of formulating the PSE goal included in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (hereinafter: EPSR AP).

The time scope of the analysis covers the 2000–2024 period, which comes from the need to analyze the evolution of provisions concerning PSE, included in earlier EU strategic documents.

The key research methods used in the article are document analysis and content analysis. The evaluation of the formulation of the EPSR AP PSE reduction goal is based on the concept of public policy goals' specification by R. Szarfenberg and the detailed criteria of the SMART method by G.T. Doran.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ARTICLE

Due to its complexity, European integration is a phenomenon widely discussed in the literature, including its theoretical aspect (Czaputowicz, 2018). The complexity and multi-aspect nature of this phenomenon results in the interest of researchers from various scientific disciplines, who construct theoretical frameworks for its analysis based on research tools specific to their disciplines.

The key issue in the context of the aim of the article, which is defining the European Union's goals for combating PSE, is also analyzed in the literature, primarily from the perspective of public policy sciences (Copeland & Daly, 2014; Szarfenberg, 2016). In this article, the assessment of the formulation of the EU's goals related to PSE is based on two theoretical concepts:

- the concept of goal specification in the model of rational public policy by R. Szarfenberg,
- the SMART method by G.T. Doran.

R. Szarfenberg introduces the theoretical concept of public policy goals' specification, and then relates it to the practical issue of defining policy goals concerning PSE. Within the concept of specification, the author distinguishes three sequential dimensions (Szarfenberg, 2016, pp. 43–44):

- conceptualization (adopting a definition of PSE),
- operationalization (adopting a PSE measurement method, i.e. an indicator or group of indicators),
- standardization (setting a target / reference level of indicators and a deadline for achieving it).

The SMART method is a popular tool used in various scientific disciplines. It was presented by G.T. Doran in 1981 as a method for formulating management goals. Later however, scientist started using it to formulate and evaluate goals in other disciplines. In his publication, G.T. Doran defined five criteria for evaluating goals. According to these, a well-defined goal should be (Doran, 1981, pp. 35–36):

- Specific: target a specific area for improvement,
- Measureable: quantify (or at least suggest) and indicator of progress,
- Assignable: define responsibility clearly,

- Realistic: state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources,
- Time-related: specify when the results should be achieved.

Based on the theoretical and methodological framework presented above, the following research questions were formulated in the article:

1. How, in context of the criteria used, should the formulation of the PSE goal in the EPSR AP be assessed?
2. What issues should be considered crucial when assessing the formulation of the PSE goal in the EPSR AP?

The final part of the article will include recommendations regarding the possible future modifications to the way of formulating EU's objectives related to PSE, based on the answers to the above questions.

THE ORIGINS OF EPSR AP – FROM THE LISBON STRATEGY TO THE EPSR

a) Lisbon Strategy (2000)

The first strategic document of the EU, defining its goals and actions for a period of ten years, was adopted in March 2000 at the European Council summit in Lisbon, hence its name: *Lisbon Strategy* (hereinafter: LS). This document included an EU action plan for the years 2000–2010, and its main goal was to make the EU the most competitive and fastest growing economic area in the world, while taking into account environmental protection and social policy goals. As one of the activities in the area of social policy, the Strategy mentioned “combating social exclusion” (EU, 2000). The LS also included some provisions related to the aim of this article, concerning measuring and preventing of PSE. The first stated that the number of EU citizens living “below the poverty line and in social exclusion” is “unacceptable”. According to the second, specific steps should be taken towards “the eradication of poverty”, through the establishment of “adequate targets” by the European Council (EU, 2000).

In December 2001, at the European Council summit in Laeken, a set of “common social indicators” was adopted, aimed at monitoring the progress of LS (the so-called “Laeken indicators”). This list included 18 indicators related to the issues of “low income” (i.e.

income below the threshold set at 60% of median equivalised disposable income), income distribution, unemployment and educational problems (EU, 2001, p. 3). The adoption of such a set of indicators as measures of PSE has been criticized in the literature (Peña-Casas, 2001, pp. 148–151; Frieske, 2002, p. 35) mainly due to the narrow understanding of PSE and reducing their causes to difficulties in accessing the labour market. In October 2002, the European Commission presented a list of 14 “structural indicators”, intended to measure the degree of implementation of the LS objectives in all of its areas. One of these indicators was the at-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers – AROP, which was chosen as a measure of implementation of the PSE-related LS goal. The concept of this indicator was similar to the previously mentioned low income indicator (risk of poverty = having an income below 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income) (EU, 2003, p. 11).

Relating the matters analyzed above to the concept of public policy goals specification by R. Szarfenberg, it can be stated that:

1) The conceptualization dimension of the LS PSE reduction goal raises serious doubts: no specific definitions of poverty and social exclusion were introduced within the Strategy, and what is worse, both concepts were treated as synonyms of a certain negative social phenomenon. Neglecting this (basic) dimension generates serious reservations regarding the way the LS PSE reduction goal was formulated. Especially since the problem of defining PSE is a fundamental one in PSE-related research and has a rich literature (e.g. Atkinson, 1998; Barnes et al., 2002; Frieske, 2002; Golinowska & Broda-Wysocki, 2005; Szarfenberg, 2010).

2) The operationalization dimension of the Strategy goal also raises doubts. The only method of measuring poverty mentioned in the LS is the poverty line, which should be considered extremely narrow, as there are methods of measuring poverty that are not based on threshold values. Also, the document does not refer to the issue of measuring social exclusion at all. All PSE measures introduced within the framework of the Laeken indicators (2001) and structural indicators (2003) were based on the concept of the poverty line (60% of median income). It is worth mentioning that the issue of measuring PSE also has a rich literature (e.g. Atkinson et al., 2002; Kurowska, 2010; Szarfenberg & Szewczyk, 2010; Panek, 2011).

3) The standardization dimension of the goal also raises serious concerns. LS' provisions only included a deadline for achieving the goal (2010), but not a quantitative target for indicators measuring level of its implementation. In March 2002, the Commission proposed to introduce a measurable LS goal regarding PSE reduction at EU level, which assumed a reduction by 2010 of the number of people at risk of PSE in the EU *by half*, but the Council rejected this proposal.

b) Europe 2020 Strategy (2010)

The ambitious goals of the Lisbon Strategy were not achieved, including the goal of eradication of poverty (Peña-Casas, 2011, pp. 159–160; Vanhercke, 2011, pp. 142–144). The main reason for this was the financial and economic crisis, which began in the USA in 2007, and lasted in some EU countries until 2014. In March 2010, i.e. in the middle of the crisis, the EU adopted a new multiannual strategy, called *Europe 2020* (hereinafter: EU20). It contained three priorities: smart growth, sustainable development and inclusive growth (EU, 2010a). Unlike LS, EU20 included a list of five specific goals, called “headline targets”, which were to be achieved “by 2020”. The last one was formulated as follows: “20 million less people should be at risk of poverty”. However, in a later section, dedicated to specifying the strategy’s objectives, it was formulated differently, namely: “the number of Europeans living below the national poverty lines (set by 60% of the median disposable income in each Member State) should be reduced by 25%, lifting over 20 million people out of poverty” (EU, 2010a).

The above target was to be further specified during the European Council summit in June 2010. However, the modifications introduced by the Council members resulted in a significant modification of the target. During the summit, it was established that the SE20 target of PSE reduction was to concern the reduction (EU, 2010b):

- by at least 20 million people (the previous “double” definition of the target in relative and absolute terms was clarified),
- compared to 2008 (this resulted from the limitations of the EU-SILC study, which was the basis for assessing the degree of EU20 poverty target achievement – its results appear with

a two-year delay, hence in 2010 the last available results of this study came from 2008),

- of the population of people at risk of poverty and [social] exclusion, measured by the values of three indicators: “at-risk-of-poverty, material deprivation and jobless households”.

In the context of achieving the headline target of EU20 concerning the PSE reduction, Member States were also to be free to set their own national targets “on the basis of the most appropriate indicators, taking into account their national circumstances and priorities” (EU, 2010b).

The concept presented by the Council was further developed by the Commission in a communication from December 2010. This document listed three indicators, which were to be used to assess the level of EU20 PSE reduction goal's achievement (EU, 2010c; Eurostat, 2025a):

- a) At-risk-of-poverty rate (AROP): share of people with an equivalised disposable income (after social transfers) below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers.
- b) Severe material deprivation rate (SMD): proportion of the population that cannot afford at least 4 out of 9 predefined material items (full list can be found in: Eurostat, 2025b) considered by most people to be desirable or even necessary to lead an adequate life,
- c) Low work intensity rate (LWI): share of people from 0–59 years living in households where the adults (definition in: Eurostat, 2025a) worked a working time equal to or less than 20% of their total combined work-time potential during the previous year.

The group of people at risk of any of these three phenomena was considered a population of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, while the above three indicators were considered components of the at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) indicator (Eurostat, 2025a). The adoption of the three-dimensional AROPE indicator to measure the level of PSE risk raises serious doubts in the literature. They concern:

(1) Incomparability of the situation in different Member States, due to the fact that the indicator components refer to three different populations (which may have a different structure in each country studied) (Walker, 2011, pp. 13–15).

(2) The possibility of the authorities of a given Member State focusing on one selected population, for which it would be easiest for them to reduce the rate (Peña-Casas, 2011, p. 171; Nolan & Whelan, 2011, pp. 25–28; EAPN, 2020, p. 8).

(3) Methodological limitations resulting from using a set of three indicators based on different methodology. For example, the SMD indicator refers to the situation in the year of the survey (n), while the AROP and LWI indicators refer to the situation “in the year preceding the survey” ($n-1$), the LWI indicator also describes a different population (people aged 0–59) than the others (general population) (Szarfenberg, 2016, p. 46; EU, 2019, p. 79; EAPN, 2020, p. 7; EU, 2022a, p. 7). A serious limitation of the EU-SILC study, which is used to collect the values of all three AROPE components, is the fact that it addresses households, i.e. groups of people living in apartments, and therefore omits homeless people and persons staying in institutions such as homeless shelters or social welfare homes (Schutter, 2021, p. 5; Szarfenberg, 2023, pp. 13 and 24).

(4) Doubts about whether the AROPE components actually measure PSE and, if so, which of them measures which phenomenon (Walker, 2011, pp. 13–15; Nolan & Whelan, 2011, pp. 19–24).

Relating the issues analyzed above to the concept of public policy goals specification by R. Szarfenberg, it can be stated that:

1) The conceptualization dimension of the EU20 PSE reduction target raises serious reservations (same as in case of LS) due to the lack of specific definition of poverty and social exclusion in Strategy’s provisions, which is (once more) criticized in the literature (Peña-Casas, 2011, p. 172; Copeland & Daly, 2014, pp. 5–7; Szarfenberg, 2016, pp. 45–47).

2) The operationalization dimension of the PSE reduction target raises serious doubts as well. The first one comes from the weaknesses of the three-dimensional AROPE indicator, described above. The second one results from Member States having full freedom to set their national PSE reduction targets, based on the most appropriate (in their opinion) indicators. This resulted in the adoption of national targets based only on selected AROPE components (1 or 2 out of 3) by six Member States. Moreover, three States decided to set targets based on indicators completely unrelated to AROPE, such as long-term unemployment (Germany, Sweden) or child poverty (United Kingdom) (Walker, 2011, pp. 19–25; EU, 2019, p. 23).

3) The standardization dimension of the SE20 PSE target also raises certain concerns. On one hand, the introduction of both a quantitative target for reducing the level of adopted indicator (20 million less people) and the deadline for achieving this target (2020) should be assessed positively in comparison to LS. On the other hand, the adoption of an absolute reduction, regarding the EU as a whole (instead of a relative reduction, e.g. by 50%, regarding each Member State separately) is controversial. In practice, it meant that the achievement of the target was dependent on the occurrence of a significant reduction of PSE risk in several of the most populous Member States (Vanhercke, 2011, p. 150; Szarfenberg, 2016, p. 49). Another problem was the aforementioned freedom of EU Member States to adopt their own national PSE reduction targets. According to EC estimates, the sum of these targets could translate into a reduction in the number of people at risk of PSE of at most 12 million (i.e. 8 million less than envisaged in the headline target of the Strategy) (Peña-Casas, 2011, p. 172; EU, 2021a, p. 14).

c) UN's Sustainable Development Goals (2015)

Another issue important to the emergence of EPSR AP are the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. In 2015, the UN's General Assembly adopted a new multi-annual UN strategy, called the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2025). This strategy assumes achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The first one concerns poverty and envisages "ending poverty in all its forms", also defining two main targets in this area: (1) eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$2.15 each day; (2) reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions. The EU was one of the entities strongly lobbying for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, and the SDGs were to be taken into account when creating a new multiannual EU strategy for 2020–2030 in the form of the EPSR AP (EAPN, 2020, p. 9; Vanhercke, 2020, p. 115).

d) European Pillar of Social Rights (2017)

According to many authors, the period from 2010 to 2015 was a time of reduced interest in social policy by EU institutions and governments of EU's Member States. The occurrence of the financial and economic crisis in the 2007–2014 period resulted in them focusing on issues related to economic and fiscal balance (Pochet, 2020, p. 14; Vanhercke, 2020, pp. 110–111). This situation began to change from 2015, with the emergence of a new composition of the European Commission (under the chairmanship of J. C. Juncker). One of the key manifestations of this process was the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) at the European Council summit in November 2017, which envisaged a modification of EU economic policies to better take into account social issues (Uścińska, 2017, p. 3). The EPSR contained a list of 20 principles corresponding to the social rights of EU citizens in three main areas: (1) Equal opportunities and access to the labour market, (2) Fair working conditions, (3) Social protection and inclusion (EU, 2017). However, in the period 2017–2021, the EPSR generally had the character of a general declaration, devoid of real consequences in terms of the EU's activities (Pochet, 2020, p. 25). This situation began to change from 2021.

EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS ACTION PLAN – NEW EU'S „SOCIAL” GRAND STRATEGY?

As in the case of LS, the SE20 objectives in the area of social policy, measured by its headline targets, were not achieved, the PSE reduction goal included (EU, 2021a, p. 5; EU, 2021b, p. 7). The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the first half of 2020 and its economic consequences are considered to be the main factor responsible for this fact. However, according to the estimates of EU institutions, in 2019, i.e. before the outbreak of the pandemic, there were still more than 107 million people at risk of PSE in the EU, i.e. only about 10 million less than in 2008 (EU, 2021a, p. 14). Thus, it should be recognized that the PSE reduction goal of SE20 would most likely not have been achieved even in the absence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The preparation of the new EU's grand strategy, carried out in 2020–2021, thus again fell during a period of an economic crisis. Unlike the 2000–2020 period, however, the EU decided to implement several sectoral strategies instead of introducing a single grand strategy. Referring to the priority areas listed in SE20, these were:

- smart growth: Europe's Digital Decade,
- sustainable growth: European Green Deal,
- inclusive growth: EPSR AP.

EPSR AP has been adopted in May 2021 as part of the EU's Social Summit in Porto. Its key elements are the three headline targets to be achieved by the EU by 2030, which relate to (1) employment, (2) education and training and (3) poverty and social exclusion. The main target related to PSE states, that "the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by at least 15 million by 2030". An additional target in this area has been set as well, stating: "out of 15 million people to lift out of poverty or social exclusion, at least 5 million should be children" (EU, 2021a, p. 19; EU, 2021b, p. 7). In contrast to SE20, the base year for the reduction was specified in the strategic document itself as year 2019, when the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU was 92.2 million (EU, 2021a, p. 19). The basis for assessing the degree of achievement of the EPSR AP PSE headline target is to be the modified AROPE indicator. Similarly to SE20, member states also have the option to set their own national targets in the areas covered by EPSR AP (EU, 2021b, p. 8).

The modification of AROPE was introduced in 2021 (EU, 2022a, p. 8). The modified indicator (AROPE_21) is based on three component indicators (EU, 2021a, p. 21; Eurostat, 2025a):

- a) At-risk-of poverty rate (AROP) – unchanged from the 2010 version,
- b) Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD): Proportion of the population experiencing an enforced lack of at least 7 out of 13 deprivation items (full list of these can be found in: Eurostat, 2025a).
- c) Low work intensity (LWI_21): People from 0–64 years living in households where the adults (definition in: Eurostat, 2025a) worked a working time equal to or less than 20% of their total combined work-time potential during the previous year.

Comparing the components of the AROPE_21 indicator with the components of the AROPE indicator, it can be noticed that the AROP indicator has not been modified, the LWI indicator has been slightly modified (extension of the productive age, clarification of the populations analyzed), while the SMD indicator has been de facto replaced by a new indicator, measuring severe material and *social* deprivation. The majority of the 13 components of this index can be considered measures of poverty / material deprivation. But at least 2 components (#12 and #13) refer exclusively to social deprivation / social exclusion. Such a major modification of the AROPE indicator can be evaluated ambiguously in the context of measuring PSE. On one hand, the expansion of the material scope of the studied phenomena to include issues clearly related to social exclusion can be considered a positive. On the other hand, the relative weakening of the importance of poverty, especially extreme poverty, within the indicator, can be considered a weakness of this modification.

Relating the matters analyzed above to the concept of public policy goals specification by R. Szarfenberg, it can be acknowledged that:

1) The conceptualization dimension of the EPSR AP PSE reduction target raises serious concerns. Similarly to LS and SE20, EPSR AP does not adopt a specific definition of poverty and social exclusion. This fact is (once again) criticized in the literature (Schutter, 2021, p. 9).

2) The operationalization dimension of the target also raises doubts. These result from the same issues as in the case of SE20: the weaknesses of the three-dimensional AROPE_21 indicator (exacerbated in comparison to SE20 by the adoption of the SMSD indicator) and the possibility for member states to set their own national targets, based on indicators of their choice (which has been again assessed negatively in the literature (Schutter, 2021, p. 9)). With regard to the latter, however, it is worth noting that within EPSR AP as many as 25 countries have adopted national targets based on the AROPE_21 indicator, whereas only two EU countries (Denmark and Germany) have adopted targets based on a different indicator, namely the LWI_21 component indicator (EU, 2022b; EU, 2022c, p. 16). Equally important, unlike SE20, the sum of national targets (16.6 million people) exceeds the value of the EPSR AP headline target (15 million people) (EU, 2022c, p. 15).

3) The standardization dimension of the EPSR AP PSE target also raises some concerns. The adoption of a specific, measurable

reduction target for the applied indicator (reduction by at least 15 million people) and the deadline for achieving it (2030) should be assessed positively, similarly to SE20. However, three issues raise reservations. Firstly, the re-adoption of the absolute reduction concept for the EU as a whole, which is in contradiction with the concept included in the UN's SDGs (percentage reduction, in each country separately). The second issue is the re-enabling of Member States to freely set their national targets (see above). As the third problematic issue, not present before, can be considered the formulation of the additional PSE reduction target concerning children. Namely, the question arises, whether the headline target of EPSR AP can be considered achieved if the "main" target (reduction by at least 15 million people) is achieved, but the additional target (of which at least 5 million should be children) is not.

All the considerations carried out above were used as the base for evaluating the formulation of the EPSR AP PSE reduction goal, based on the SMART method criteria. Such an evaluation is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Evaluation of the formulation of the EPSR AP PSE reduction goal

Criterion	Met (Yes / No)	Justification for evaluation	Reservations
Specific	Y	a target has been set for a specific issue (PSE)	no specific definitions of PSE were adopted; an additional target for children was introduced
Measureable	Y	a specific indicator (ARO-PE_21) and a target value for its reduction (15 million people) were introduced	limitations of the ARO-PE_21 indicator; absolute reduction inconsistent with the SDGs objective of a relative one
Assignable	Y	the issue of achieving the target entirely within the competence of the Member States	the possibility for Member States to introduce national targets
Realistic	Y	target lower (15 million) than in case of SE20 (20 million), which was not achieved	target less ambitious than the SDGs goal (relative reduction of poverty by half, eradication of extreme poverty) (Schutter, 2021, p. 9)
Time-related	Y	a specific deadline has been set (2030)	no mid-term targets / pathway to the main target were set (EAPN, 2020, p. 13)

Source: own elaboration.

The above evaluation of the formulation of the EPSR AP PSE goal allows us to conclude, that this goal met all the evaluation criteria used (5/5), but with numerous reservations.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to evaluate the way of formulating the PSE reduction goal included in the EPSR AP. The evaluation turned out to be positive, as the goal met all five of the evaluation criteria used. Unfortunately, for each of these criteria, serious reservations were raised concerning the formulation of the goal.

As a result of the analysis conducted in the article, it was possible to identify four key issues affecting the evaluation of the way this goal was formulated.

(1) In the area of the goal's conceptualization, strongest concern rises the lack of specific definitions of poverty and social exclusion. Such a situation results in narrowing the understanding of PSE phenomena to issues measured by the indicator used, and consequently, in limiting actions dedicated to reaching the goal to activities aimed at achieving the required level of indicator (Frieske, 2002, p. 35).

(2) In terms of the operationalization of the goal, the adoption of the three-dimensional AROPE_21 indicator raises numerous concerns, related to its adequacy as a measure of PSE.

(3) In terms of the goal's parameterization, the use of the absolute target value for reducing the number of people at risk of PSE in relation to the EU as a whole (15 million people less) raises concerns.

(4) In terms of operationalization and parameterization of the goal, doubts are raised by the possibility for Member States to define national targets based on any indicators of their choice (although this problem occurred to a much lesser extent than in the case of SE20).

Based on the four issues outlined above, four practical recommendations have been prepared on how to formulate goals concerning PSE in the future EU strategies.

(1) The basis for formulating such goals should be the adoption of specific definitions of poverty and social exclusion.

(2) The assessment of the degree of achievement of such objectives should be based not on a multidimensional (synthetic) indicator, but

on a set of one-dimensional indicators, that should also measure issues not measured by AROPE, such as in-work poverty, the depth of poverty, homelessness, energy poverty, etc. Similar suggestions can be found in (Zeitlin, 2009, p. 20; EAPN, 2020, p. 8; EU, 2021a, p. 14; Schutter, 2021, p. 5).

(3) The EU target should be based on a group of the above indicators, be common to all Member States (no national targets) and assume a reduction in the level of each of these indicators in each Member State by at least half (relative reduction in each country, instead of absolute reduction in the EU as a whole). Similar suggestions in (EU, 2021a, p. 17; Szarfenberg, 2022, p. 4).

According to the author, the implementation of the above recommendations could contribute to a better way of formulating the goals of EU's strategies in the future, which is an important issue in the context of persistent problems with achieving such goals in the past.

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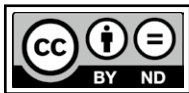
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