THE SOCIAL PROGRESS OF THE DISTRICTS OF BULGARIA

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ABSTRACT

The development of societies today is inequal, and the modern approach to deal with this situation is through the idea of inclusive development. Its descriptive definition emphasises the problems of inequality, poverty, growth, employment, development and social welfare, as well as the search for instruments to measure this state in order not to be a 'mirage'. The existing approaches rely on indices to evaluate the degree of inclusion, as most of them compare economic with social and ecological results. The report aims to address the problem of measuring the inclusive development of districts in Bulgaria through the evaluation of an index of social progress. The tasks include the establishment of suitable indicators to include in the index, an evaluation of the district development in accordance with the selected indicators, ranking the districts, and evaluating inclusiveness towards the average results of the state. The results show that the districts develop socially heterogeneously and not inclusively, since not all of them demonstrate the successful satisfaction of the basic social needs of citizens, which hamper their ability to reach their full potential.
KEY WORDS: *social progress, environment, development, regions, inclusion.*

Introduction

The concept of inclusive development has been used in an attempt to address problems with the fair distribution of GDP. Researchers and policy makers try to develop policies with appropriate measures to reduce the level of inequality, and to introduce an inclusive approach. Initially, inclusive development was seen as a policy mainly towards the poor. But it is something broader, aiming to help people benefit from their work. This approach provides the OECD policy of 'rapid and sustainable poverty reduction' and 'enabling people to contribute and benefit from economic growth' (Ianchovichina et al., 2009). According to Hagemann (2018), increasing income disparities in OECD countries in recent decades have led many governments to focus on policies, including tax policies, that favour inclusive growth, i.e., which minimise the adverse effects on growth, while ensuring that the benefits of growth are shared. However, the growing inequality requires a broader approach, especially in regions suffering from declining productivity and social inclusion (OECD, 2018).

The concept of inclusive development is seen as 'human-centered' (Anand, Sen, 1994), related to problems of inequality, poverty, growth, employment, development and social protection (Ranieri et al., 2013, p. 18),[2] as well as to the idea of equal access to the social, political and economic mainstream (Dörffel et al., 2020). Inclusive development provides an appropriate rate of development and a decrease in inequality (Kraay, 2004). Its descriptive definition raises the doubt whether it is a mirage (Turok, 2010). Lee (2019) considers it as not ideal, but a good solution to the problems of distribution. Equality is part of the concept, and at the same time inclusive development differs from it. We upgrade this concept definition with the idea of an improvement in human quality of life, bearing in mind the ecological limitations of the planet.

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[2] Ranieri and Ramos study 15 authors and present their main concepts, that describe inclusive growth.

The inclusive development of regions is a problem of contemporary regional policy. Most countries put the emphasis on an increase in the efficiency of economic development and production, which is at the expense of the heterogeneous development of the regions. Giving priority to economic development over regional inclusion can create complex and permanent imbalances. Despite the fact that some economists prefer development, with the resulting inqualities motivated by the Kuznets' dependence (Kuznets, 1995), it is not universal and proven for all periods. Criticisms are in the absence of statistical evidence of an inverted U-shaped relationship between inequality and income (Palma, 2011). Palma discovers that with the increase in per capita income, some regions/countries move in one direction and others in the opposite direction. The pursuit of growth first, and later solving the problems with inequality and environmental degradation, is not a wise approach in all cases.

We accept that inclusive development is development that gives everyone an opportunity to benefit from, and which fits into the understanding of a prosperous economy, combining fair distribution in society, which conforms with the environmental requirements (Totev et al., 2020). It allows regions to develop in sync with the path of national development, without significantly lagging behind in social and environmental respects.

The aim of the report is to establish an index that evaluates the social and ecological conditions of the 28 districts in Bulgaria, and to rank them in order to show the degree of their inclusive development. The use of only social and environmental indicators is an attempt to measure the availability of conditions for equal human development in the different regions, and to compare their ability to transform economic performance (through GDP per capita) into social progress.

The index applied for the analysis is based on the EU Regional Social Progress Index (EU-RSPI). The ranking is used to study the availability of inclusive development: development that leads to an improvement in the distribution of well-being in different dimensions (Totev et al., 2019), with an emphasis on social and ecological indicators. We test the approach to study only social and ecological indicators that have a significance for the creation of equal conditions for human beings in different regions. As the World Bank points out, any growth strategy can be successful when benefiting equity, equality of opportunity and social welfare (World Bank, 2008).

The initial hypotheses are that regions develop in accordance with the national direction, as they show improvements in most indicators, which is proven. However, the regions develop quite heterogeneously, as there is an uneven distribution: most districts are in weak and underdeveloped groups, i.e., differing from the average results.

The method used for the analysis is the establishment of an index which allows for a district comparison and ranking. It helps to study the problems in the regions, and get a better understanding of the abilities of the Bulgarian districts to transform production into social progress. In general, the demand for inclusive regional development in the case of Bulgaria is not so much to strive to reach specific high levels of economic development for the country, but to ensure that development does not lead to critical social, economic and environmental regional differences (Totev et al., 2020).

1. The problem of measurement of inclusive development

Economic development, measured through GDP (GDP per capita), has been pursued by governments and international institutions. However, GDP is universal, but not comprehensive. It needs additional indicators in order to capture different aspects of development. Inclusive development tries to put the human being at the centre, and to have development that benefits all income groups, and provides equal opportunities, as well as meeting ecological limitations.

The lack of a clear definition makes some organisations construct indices to rank countries (the Legatum Prosperity Index™ 2016; the UNDP Human Development Report 2019). The human development index is broadly applied, but it is more suitable for measuring the level of development, not a comprehensive inclusiveness measurement (Dörffel et al., 2020). The main criticisms are that the existing indices include economic performance, and lack indicators that consider all aspects relevant to inclusive development. Other authors construct their own inclusive growth indices (McKinley, 2010; Anand, 2013) that define inclusive growth as the product of growth rates and equity.

There are institutions that go further, as they prefer to have a separate assessment for economic and social development. This approach is used by the Social Progress Imperative (Stern et al., 2017), which has developed the Social Progress Index (SPI), covering three dimensions: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Well-being, and Opportunity. It aims to measure social progress without the inclusion of economic indicators, and provides another approach for measuring the success of society by complementing economic measures with social and environmental ones. The SPI shows that since 2016, Bulgaria has kept its position, starting from 43rd, reaching 40th in 2018, and back to 43rd in 2020. The country demonstrates the highest position in Basic Human Needs, while lagging in Foundations of Well-being.

The EU modifies the SPI, and uses it to measure the development of 272 European regions (the EU Regional Social Progress Index 2016). Social progress is defined as the ability of society to meet the basic human needs of citizens, provide an infrastructure that enables individuals and communities to improve and maintain their quality of life, and create conditions that allow individuals to reach their full potential. The EU-RSPI uses 50 social and environmental indicators that cover the same three dimensions of social progress. The EU-RSPI evaluates all EU regions, and puts two of the Bulgarian regions in the last position: the Severozapaden statistical region is ranked 271th, and the Yugoiztochen region is in the final position, at 272nd (Kotseva-Tikova et al., 2019). The last ten positions are occupied by five Bulgarian and five Romanian regions, as regions that are located on both sides of the Bulgarian-Romanian border are in the last places, i.e., despite the fact that they are part of different countries, the regions show a similar slow development and the lowest values of living conditions.

2. Indicators for inclusive development

We base our approach on the EU-RSPI for the assessment of the regions in Bulgaria. The index of regions of Bulgaria includes 15 social and environmental indicators, which are divided into three dimensions of social progress: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Well-being, and Opportunity. Some of the indicators are in line with those of the EU-RSPI, and others are selected to contribute to a more complete assessment of social development in the three dimensions. The indicators used are social and environmental, measuring results relevant to all areas, and cover measures that can be influenced by public policies.

The evaluation is based on data for 2018, or for a period of nine years (2010 to 2018). For indicators for which there is no data for a longer period, an estimate is made using the available data published by the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria (NSI). The indicators in each dimension are selected to characterise the components quantitatively. They are representative and meaningful. However, data availability is still a major constraint on the selection of variables on a balanced range. The indicators used to assess the social progress of the districts in Bulgaria are selected after several iterations for selection and inclusion in each of the dimensions. The selection criteria are: district information availability, contribution to a higher level to the respective dimension, and degree of correlation between the indicators in each of the three dimensions. The indicators have to reveal certain aspects of the concept of inclusive development.

The correlation (Pearson's correlation coefficient) between the coefficients in each of the three dimensions was studied, and was in any case below 0.7. The aim is to ensure the widest possible coverage of different indicators in one dimension, where there is no strong interdependence.

All the indicators are rated on a five-point scale, by determining the best and worst value for each, allowing their ranking in five groups (very good, good, average, unsatisfactory, underdeveloped) with points from one to five (one for underveloped and five for very good). For each indicator, the difference between the best and the lowest value is calculated, which is divided into five levels. Each specific indicator for each dimension falls into one of the five scales, and receives a score from one to five. After that, the points of the indicators are added for each dimention and for the final rank.

Based on the final assessments, similar problems are identified which worsen and slow down the development of the districts, as a comparison with the national average is performed. The practical aspects of the index are that this approach allows us to identify factors that are important to the individual. The emphasis

is not on the funds that are invested, but on the results achieved. This approach has been used in the development and application of the EU-RSPI to support the EU's cohesion strategy.

For the purpose of the index, the following indicators were used to characterise the demographic situation in the districts:

1. Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births).
2. Natural growth.
3. Ratio of the population aged under 15 and at 65 and over to the population aged 15 to 64.
4. Average life expectancy of the population.
5. Mechanical movement of the population (% of the population).

These indicators give a good idea of the processes that are taking place in different areas of the country in terms of population. Demographic indicators of births, deaths and natural growth are also relevant to the labour force in the regions. The recommendations for the use of birth rate indicators are that they should be related to the 'structural factor' (Sugareva, 2017). This is followed by determining demographic indicators that are sufficiently relevant and characterise the regional features in the dimensions which are subject to assessment. The demographic indicators show negative values for the country and its regions. For the present analysis, they record results and allow the evaluation of the districts against the limits of the best and the weakest performance, in order to assess the difference in social development.

Five indicators were used to characterise the achieved level of education and provision of basic services for maintaining living conditions in the districts:

1. Relative share of the population aged between 25 and 64 with a secondary education.
2. Relative share of the population aged between 25 and 64 with a higher education.
3. Physicians at medical and health facilities per 10,000 population.
4. Crimes per 10,000 people.
5. Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

In Bulgaria and its regions, there is a relatively high share of the population with or without a primary education, as people with a secondary education are almost twice as many as those with a higher education. The share of young people (aged 15 to 24 years) who are not in education or training is higher for young people living in rural areas (European Union et al., 2020). The provision of doctors is high in comparison with data for other EU countries,[3] but is unevenly distributed among districts. Welfare is improving, while the share of people at risk of poverty remains high. As Eurostat notes, 'people living in the capital regions of many eastern and some southern EU Member States were less likely to be at risk of poverty than their rural populations.' In countries with relatively low ratios of GDP per inhabitant, as in Bulgaria, the poverty rate is (considerably) higher in rural areas than in cities (European Union et al., 2020).

The following indicators have been used to characterise the state of welfare and the transport infrastructure in the districts:

1. Share of households with internet access.
2. Share of paved roads.
3. Population under water supply regime.
4. Population connected to public sewerage.
5. Population connected to wastewater treatment plants.

The selected indicators ensure comparability between the regions of the level of technical, information and environmental infrastructure provision, as a prerequisite for better living and business conditions. The individual quantitative indicators also have their drawbacks: there is no qualitative assessment of quantitative indicators. This occurs for each indicator, for example, there is no information about the application

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[3]   According to Eurostat, Bulgaria ranks fourth in terms of the number of practicing physicians per 100,000 inhabitants in 2018 after Austria, Lithuania and Germany.

of internet access, or the water supply is a function not only of the built network but also of the amount of precipitation and water management for different purposes.

The indicators used for the purposes of SPI are separated into three dimensions, as is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Indicators of the Social Progress Index of the districts of Bulgaria

Dimension	Indicator	MU	Source	Year
1. Basic Human Needs				
1.1	Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with a secondary education	%	NSI	2018
1.2	Physicians at medical and health facilities per 10,000 people	number	NSI	2018
1.3	Crimes per 10,000 people	%	Calculation based on NSI data	2018/2010
1.4	Population with mains water supply	%	NSI	2018
1.5	Share of paved roads	%	NSI	2018
2. Foundations of Well-being				
2.1	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	‰	NSI	2018
2.2	Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with a higher education	%	NSI	2018
2.3	The ratio of population under 15 and 65 and over to population aged from 15 to 64	%	NSI	2018
2.4	Average life expectancy	years	NSI	2018
2.5	Population connected to public sewerage	%	NSI	2018
3. Opportunity				
3.1	Natural growth rate (per 1,000 population)	‰	NSI	2018
3.2	Mechanical movement (% of populion)	%	Calculation based on NSI data	2018
3.3	Population connected to wastewater treatment plants	%	NSI	2018
3.4	Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion	%	NSI	2017
3.5	Share of households with internet access	%	NSI	2018

After the evaluation of each indicator for each Bulgarian district, the results are added for every dimension. The scores allow us to rank and analyse the districts in the three dimensions, in order to identify the differences. The analysis shows that there are no regions that demonstrate only bad results with respect to the evaluated indicators. Only one district (the capital city) has good and very good indicators.

3. Social Progress Index of districts in Bulgaria

Based on the assessments in the three dimensions, Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Well-being, and Opportunity, the 28 districts in Bulgaria are ranked in Table 2.

Sofia (the capital city) has the highest result, and forms an independent group, which is characterised by an overall high level of social development despite some average indicators, such as the share of population with a secondary education and the mechanical movement of population. The level of Sofia is over twice as good compared to the last area in the ranking. In the dimensions Foundations of Well-being and Opportunity, Sofia scores three times higher than the last. The difference in the dimension Basic Human Needs, where the district is not in first place, is smaller, which demonstrates that the primary need of satisfaction has smaller differences than the other two segments of progress.

Table 2. Index of the Social Progress Assessment of the districts in Bulgaria.

District	Basic Human Needs	Foundations of Wellbeing	Opportunity	Score	Group*
Sofia - city	20	25	22	**67**	**1**
Varna	20	20	19	**59**	**2**
Blagoevgrad	17	20	16	**53**	**2**
Burgas	17	17	17	**51**	**3**
Smolian	17	18	16	**51**	**3**
Kardzali	15	16	20	**51**	**3**
Russe	17	16	17	**50**	**3**
Plovdiv	16	16	18	**50**	**3**
Stara Zagora	20	12	17	**49**	**3**
Veliko Tarnovo	18	15	14	**47**	**4**
Pazardjik	19	13	13	**45**	**4**
Shumen	17	13	15	**45**	**4**
Haskovo	17	13	14	**44**	**4**
Dobrich	14	12	17	**43**	**4**
Gabrovo	14	14	15	**43**	**4**
Silistra	17	11	15	**43**	**4**
Kustendil	16	12	14	**42**	**4**
Pleven	22	9	11	**42**	**4**
Sofia	19	12	11	**42**	**4**
Pernik	15	12	15	**42**	**4**
Targovishte	15	12	14	**41**	**4**
Montana	19	11	9	**39**	**4**
Lovech	18	10	11	**39**	**4**
Vratsa	17	11	10	**38**	**5**
Sliven	13	10	15	**38**	**5**
Yambol	17	11	10	**38**	**5**
Razgrad	14	8	12	**34**	**5**
Vidin	17	8	7	**32**	**5**

* Group 1 describes very good districts, Group 2 good, Group 3 average, Group 4 unsatisfactory, Group 5 underdeveloped.

The final positions are occupied by five small districts (Vidin, Razgrad, Yambol, Sliven and Vratsa). The last place is a result of the strong lag in the indicators in the areas of Foundations of Well-being and Opportunity, as in Basic Human Needs the results are not the lowest, but they cannot compensate for the lack of potential to integrate the districts and enable their development. The regions have a basic technical infrastructure, but the other indicators are not at a satisfactory level, as some regions with ethnic specifics show high values in the demographic indicators.

Except for the best-developed regions, the others demonstrate different levels of satisfaction in each of the three dimensions. The population, the number and the level of education, has the strongest influence on the difference in the degree of social progress in the districts in Bulgaria. As Rangelova (Rangelova, 2017) notes, the dynamics of the labour market is strongly influenced by the country's EU membership. 'There is a growing shortage of middle and highly skilled workers, many of whom are emigrating because of low salaries in the country. The share of low-skilled or unskilled people is growing among the unemployed.' The emigration of people able to work leads to a lack of working capital, and creates difficulties in all systems in the country. Among the most vulnerable regions in terms of human potential for future development are Vidin and Vratsa. In contrast to the EU-RSPI, the last five positions in the current index are occupied by two

districts from the Severozapaden statistical region, and one from the Severen tzentralen, which was rated higher in the EU assessment.

Based on the final prosperity assessment, the districts in Bulgaria can be divided into five groups. The first group includes the very well-developed Sofia. It is significantly different from the rest, and exceeds the average prosperity score of 45 points in the country. It satisfies basic human needs, provides well-being, and has a very high level of opportunity. The region has suitable living conditions for its inhabitants. It is part of a region ranked 258/272 according to the EU-RSPI.

In the second group are the good districts (only two), which receive relatively high scores in all three areas. They do not differ significantly from Sofia and the third group. In the third group, there are six average-performing districts. This positioning is largely due to the low score for Foundations of Well-being. The group consists of large regions, which shows the balanced development of the three dimensions with strong and weak indicators.

The fourth group includes 14 unsatisfactorily prosperous districts. Here, the districts fall behind not only with respect to the Foundations of Well-being, as some of them show poor results in Basic Human Needs and others in Opportunity. In this group, two districts are distinguished: Pleven and Sofia, where there is a good level of satisfaction of basic human needs, but there are no factors for prosperity and opportunities. Pleven lags far behind other large settlements which preserve and develop their social and environmental assets. The last group comprises the five most underdeveloped areas in social and ecological terms. They have low ratings in Foundations of Well-being and Opportunity.

In general, the average score in the index for the country is low: 45 points for the index, with a maximum of 75 points. Most districts (16) have a score lower than 45 points. Basic human needs are relatively well met, at 68% compared to the maximum theoretical level. The Foundations of Well-being are on average 54% compared to the maximum level, i.e., the degree of prosperity is lower. In the Opportunity dimension, the average level is 58% compared to the maximum. Only Sofia offers excellent conditions, balancing the three dimensions favourably: the result is 89% of the maximum value. Two districts (Vidin and Razgrad) fail to reach 50% of the maximum value of the index, and 80% of the average index for the state. There is an unbalanced development between the districts: only six districts are in the group of average developing countries, with significant differences in the two opposite directions; good and very good progress is achieved by three regions, compared to 19 districts that lag behind (unsatisfactory and underdeveloped).

The correlation between the social progress of the districts with GDP per capita for 2018 is 0.66, and shows the average strength of the relationship between economic activity and factors for social and environmental development. The correlation between the assessment of Foundations of Well-being and the highest value is positive, with GDP per capita of 0.63. The correlation coefficients with the other two dimensions are 0.39 and 0.47, i.e., there is a positive, medium-strength relationship, as other factors also have an impact on socio-environmental development. Sofia has the highest GDP per capita, which is over twice the national average, and 4.8 times the production in the least performing district of Silistra. The latter lags behind the average level of production in the country, but in terms of social progress it performs slightly better.

The social progress of the districts in relation to GDP per capita is presented graphically in Figure 1, and illustrates the possible progress for each level of production and the risk of less. Sofia manages to achieve a high economic result, by realising the best level of social progress. Regions below the regression line do not actually achieve high GDP and social progress (below the line on the left), or do not benefit from it socially (below the line on the right). For example, the districts of Sofia and Gabrovo occupy an average position of social development and a high level of GDP per capita. In Vratsa, there is a clear weak social development, and a high level of GDP. At the other extreme is the district of Silistra, which has the lowest GDP, but manages to achieve better living conditions and prosperity, i.e., it turns production into social progress better. It is facing the necessity of increasing GDP and turning it into a factor for improving living conditions.
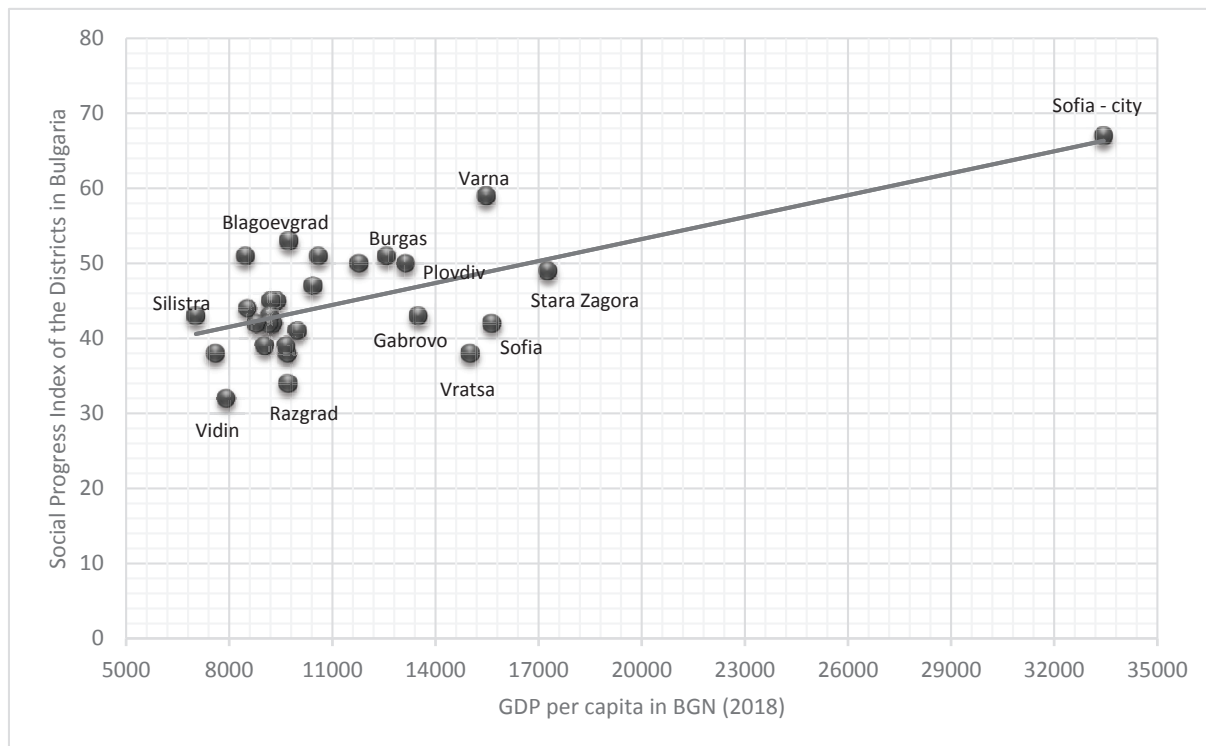
Figure 1. Social progress of the districts in Bulgaria in relation to GDP per capita

Sources: author's calculations and NSI data.

Vidin has the lowest social development index, and takes second place in terms of production per capita, which shows an insufficient degree of transformation of low GDP into social benefits for the population.

Conclusions

The present analysis supports the necessity to search for approaches to turn inclusive development into a measurable concept, which helps the identification of crucial differences between regions. The problems of inequality, poverty, growth, employment, development and social protection which stand behind the understanding of the concept show the need to take a complex approach, evaluating the different economic, social and ecological dimensions of inclusiveness. The most common approach to measuring development in different respects is through indices, which give attention mostly to economic performance, and lack indicators that consider all aspects relevant to inclusive development.

A suitable instrument for appraisal, describing a three-dimensional evaluation and including only social and environmental indicators, is the Social Progress Index. We adapt this approach here in such a way that it ranks the 28 districts of Bulgaria according to 15 indicators. This approach tries to operationalise the concept of the inclusive development of regions, and allows for a comparison of the social results with economic performance separately, in order to have a better picture of the abilitites of regions to transform production into social well-being. Its construction is based on the EU-RSPI, and at the same time gives a new approach: different indicators, arranged in the three dimensions, and not only ranking, but also grouping, districts.

The analysis confirms the hypothesis that the districts in Bulgaria develop according to the national trends, with differences in social and ecological respects. There are areas in which regions show very good results, and others in which they do not. The demographic picture of Bulgaria reveals an uneven distribution

of the population in terms of number and age: large cities attract the majority of the population of working age, while small and rural areas suffer from a declining and migrating population. The distribution of medical staff is uneven: it is concentrated in large settlements with medical universities, while small settlements have limited provision of health care, below the national average. The levels of education achieved are problematic in areas with minority groups, where people without or with a primary education predominate. The districts are provided differently with technical infrastructure, roads, mains water supply and internet access, as mainly the large settlements have it. Providing equal access to public transport is not seen as an opportunity to achieve inclusion through the impact on the labour market. First development, and subsequently dealing with social and environmental problems, is a characteristic of the development of Bulgaria, which amplifies the differences at a regional level. The country is at high risk of poverty and social exclusion, and ranks last but one in the EU.

Sofia (the capital of Bulgaria) drains the resources of the other regions, which supports its rapid growth, while the other districts need particular measures for adjustment. The district grouping reveals that a number of regions lag behind the idea of inclusive development in important areas, which does not attract people to work and live in them, and slows down their growth. There is an unbalanced development between the districts: only six districts are in the group of average developing countries, with significant differences in the two opposite directions; good and very good progress is achieved by three regions, compared to 19 districts that lag behind (unsatisfactory and underdeveloped).

The SPI helps to compare the social and environmental development of districts. It is a useful instrument to investigate the level of development and analyse obstacles in order to influence them. The index can be used as an indicator assessing the conditions for a particular year, as well as to see the dynamic over the years. It is a suitable approach for an annual assessment to observe the degree of inclusive regional development, and to indicate the necessity for policy change.

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SOCIALINĖS PROGRAMOS PAŽANGA BULGARIJOS APSKRITYSE

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Santrauka

Visuomenės vystosi skirtingai. Šiandien Bulgarijoje siekiama paspartinti socialinę pažangą darnaus vystymosi kontekste, nes šalyje stebimos socialinės nelygybės, nedarbo, ekonominio vystymosi ir socialinės apsaugos problemos. Nors esamos socialinės problemos nenaujos, mokslininkai vis dar diskutuoja, kokiais rodikliais jas matuoti. Paprastai raida vertinama pasitelkus indeksus, ypač ekonominės veiklos, trūksta rodiklių, kurie apimtų visus darnumo aspektus, ypač daug neapibrėžtumo vertinant socialines problemas, neaišku, kokiais rodikliais jas vertinti. Vertinant socialinę pažangą straipsnyje skiriami ir analizuojami 15 rodiklių, analizuojami 28 Bulgarijos regionai, siekiant apimti visą teritoriją ir įvertinti visus šalies regionus.

Tyrimu nustatyta, kad Sofijos miestas (Bulgarijos sostinė) išnaudoja beveik visų regionų išteklius, tai lemia spartų šio regiono augimą, o likusiems regionams, kad sėkmingai vystytųsi, būtinos papildomos priemonės. Regionų grupavimas leido atskleisti, kad nemažai regionų, imant svarbiausias sritis, atsilieka

nuo darnaus vystymosi idėjos, ypač turint galvoje socialinę pažangą. Nesukūrus socialinės gerovės, žmonės bus linkę tuos regionus palikti, taip regiono augimas lėtinamas, mažėja gyventojų. Regionų raida nėra darni. Tik trys šalies regionai vystosi tolygiai, kiti – gerokai atsilieka. Regionas lyderis augimo aspektu – tas, kuriame yra sostinė Sofija. Retam regionui pavyksta pasiekti gerą ekonominį rezultatą, kartu ir aukštą socialinės pažangos lygį, nes daugelis jų žlunga. Tarp regionų akivaizdžiai trūkstant darnos, tad būtina valstybinė regioninė politika, kuri numatytų priemones visose srityse: švietimo, sveikatos, aplinkosaugos, transporto infrastruktūros.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *socialinė pažanga*, *aplinka*, *plėtra*, *regionai*, *įtraukimas*.

JEL KLASIFIKACIJA: O29, O52.