

# **Indicators Child poverty and child well being in the EU: developing an indicator system to assist evidence-based policies**

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# The „Study on child poverty” project

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**Commissioned by: DG Employment of the European Commission,  
Unit E2**

**Consortium: Társi Social Research Institute Budapest  
Applica sprl Brussels**

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National Univ. of Ireland  
UNICEF  
CEPS/INSTEAD  
University of Essex  
TÁRKI**

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# The „Study on child poverty” project: contents

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**Task 1. An in-depth empirical analysis of child poverty and the related key challenges for each Member State, starting from the analytical framework developed up by the EU Task-Force report.**

**Task 2. An assessment of the effectiveness of policies for combating child poverty and promoting social inclusion among children and the identification of policy mixes that seem to be most effective in tackling the specific factors underlying child poverty.**

**Task 3. „The formulation of recommendations for a limited set of indicators and breakdowns that are most relevant from a child perspective and best reflect the multidimensional nature of child poverty and well-being in the European Union.”**

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# How does this project add to the process?

- It contributes developing tools to **monitor** child poverty and child well-being
- It aims at filling in the Social OMC „**reserved slot**” for child well being indicator(s)

## Related projects:



# Domains of child poverty and well-being

## (as set out by the EU-TF report)

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**A. Material well-being:** factors relating to the material **resources** of the household that the child has access to or lacks during his/her development, which include indicators of

- (A1) income,
- (A2) material deprivation,
- (A3) housing,
- (A4) labour market attachment.

**B. Non-material dimensions of child well-being,** which may reflect on both the resources a child has access or lacks during his/her development and **outcomes** in different stages of this development:

- (B1) education,
  - (B2) health,
  - (B3) exposure to risk and risk behaviour,
  - (B4) social participation and relationships, family environment,
  - (B5) local environment.
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## In search of additional indicators: tasks completed within the project:

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- a broad based **collection of potentially relevant indicators** in each dimensions
  - work on **indicator development** (customising the selection criteria)
  - suggestions for **breakdowns** wherever possible
  - to fill out an **indicator fiche** for each and every indicators (example)
  - **statistical validation** of all material indicators (where data allows)
  - identifying **data gaps**
  - formulating **suggestions**
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# Surveyed datasets

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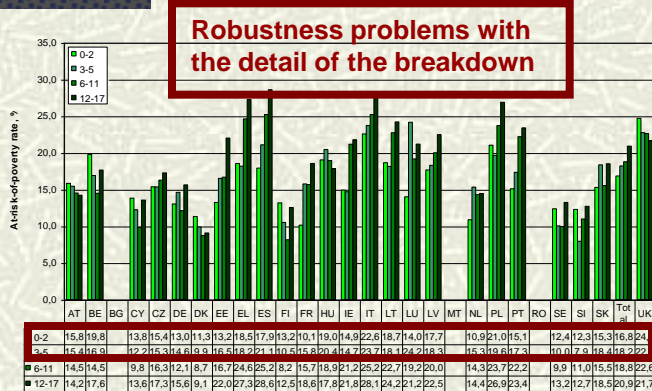
- The EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (**EU-SILC**)
  - The Labour Force Survey (**LFS**)
  - The Programme for International Student Assessment (**PISA** of OECD)
  - Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (**PIRLS**)
  - Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (**TIMSS**)
  - Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey (**HBSC** of WHO)
  - European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (**ESPAD**)
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# A sample indicator card with validation results:

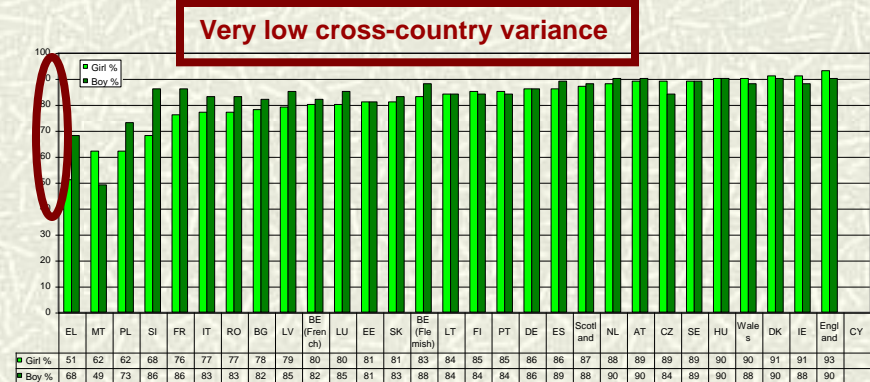
Name	Overcrowding rate among children by age group
<b>Definition</b>	<p>Percentage of children living in an overcrowded household</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All households with dependent children.</li> </ul> <p>The dwelling is considered overcrowded if one the criteria mentioned below is <u>not</u> fulfilled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- one room for the household;</li> <li>- one room for each couple;</li> <li>- one room for each single person aged 18+;</li> <li>- one room - for two single people of the same sex between 12 and 17 years of age;</li> <li>- one room - for each single person of different sex between 12 and 17 years of age;</li> <li>- one room - for two people under 12 years of age.</li> </ul>
<b>Suggested breakdown</b>	Age groups of children (yrs): 0-5 (0-2, 3-5), 6-11, 12-17
<b>Data source</b>	EU-SILC 2007 (variable name: hh070)
<b>Data coverage: time and countries</b>	Currently: 24 EU countries
<b>Data limitations</b>	Latest release (Aug 2009): BG, MT and RO are missing
<b>Comment</b>	<p>The indicator shows a considerable variation across countries.</p> <p>Number of observations:</p> <p>0-2 and 3-5 age groups: the number of observations are between 100 and 300 in a number of countries (EE, EL, CY, LT, LV, PT, SK).</p> <p>Other age groups: cell sizes are 400 or over</p> <p>Robustness of estimates:</p> <p>0-2: in 6 countries the range of the confidence interval is 10% or over (11-15%): EE, EL, LT, LV, PT, SK</p> <p>3-5: in EE, LV, LT, PT, and SK the range of the confidence interval is 10% or more. This implies e.g. that the indicator is estimated to range between 65-76% in LT and 15-26% in SK.</p> <p>0-5: the estimates are more robust than in case of the more detailed breakdown, although in some countries the confidence interval is 7-9%: EE (51-59%), EL (21-28%), LV (70-78%), LT (63-72%), HU (57-63%), PT (14-22%), SK (43-52%).</p> <p>6-11: in CZ, EE, EL, LU, LV, LT, HU, PT, SI, SK the range of the confidence interval is 5-7%.</p> <p>12-17: the estimates referring to this age groups are the most robust among all age categories. In 7 countries the range of the confidence interval is 5-6%, in other countries it is below.</p>
<b>Proposal</b>	<p>We confirm the usefulness of the indicator for children. It highlights considerable variation across countries based on statistically robust estimates.</p> <p>Suggested breakdown: 0-5, 6-11, 12-17 age groups (as estimates for the 0-2 and 3-5 groups are not statistically robust for several countries).</p> <p>The robustness of the estimates tends to be systematically weakest in all age categories in EE, EL, LT, LV, PT, SK. This calls for an exploration of sample design and data quality issues in these countries.</p>

# Sample indicator charts with some typical data problems

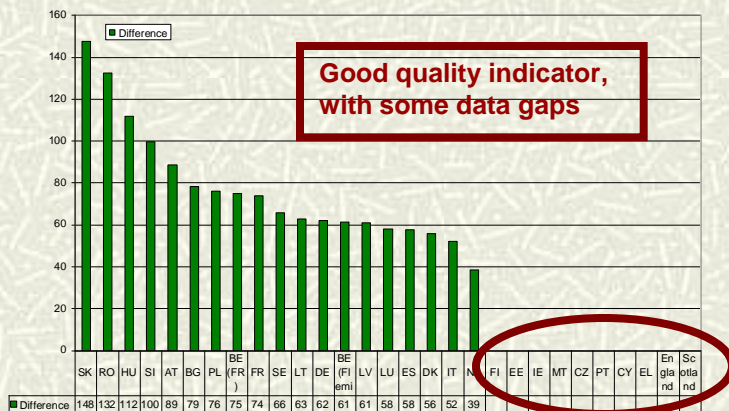
A1.1a Figure At-risk-of-poverty rate by age of child, 2007



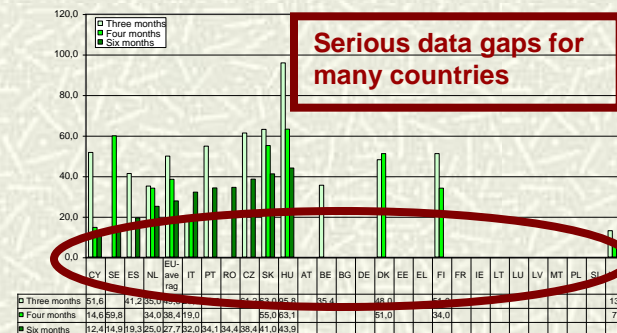
B4.5a Figure 11-year-olds who have three or more close friends of the same gender



B1.2a Figure Difference in average reading literacy between pupils whose parents have completed tertiary education and pupils whose parents have lower secondary education or below (PIRLS 2006)



B2.6 Figure Breastfeeding, EU-27, proportion of children who were exclusively breastfed at various ages



# Overview of child well-being indicators of OMC and suggested new breakdowns

Dimension	Indicator with 0-17 age breakdown	Breakdown
A1: Income	A1.1 At-risk poverty rate	Child age, work intensity, household type, migrant status
	A1.2 Relative median poverty risk gap	
	A1.3 Persistent at-risk-of-poverty rate	
	A1.4 Dispersion around the poverty threshold	
A2: Material deprivation	A2.1 Primary indicator of material deprivation	Child age, work intensity, household type, migrant status
	A2.2 Secondary indicator of material deprivation	
A3: Housing	A3.1 Housing costs	Child age
	A3.2 Overcrowding	Child age
A4: Labour market attachment	A4.1 Children living in jobless households	Child age
B1: Education	B1.1 Low reading literacy performance of pupils aged 15	Average performance by socio-economic status, migrant status
	B1.2 Early school-leavers	
B2: Health	B2.1 Life expectancy at birth	
	B2.2 Life expectancy at birth by SES	
	B2.3 Infant mortality	
	B2.4 Infant mortality by SES	
	B2.5 Perinatal mortality	
	B2.6 Vaccination in children	
B3: Exposure to risk behaviour -		
B4. Social participation and relationships, family environment -		
B5. Local environment		

# Potential new indicators for monitoring child well-being within Social OMC

Dimension	Indicator	Note
A1: Income		
A2: Material deprivation	A2.2 Child specific material (education) deprivation index	To be developed (examples: OECD and/or PIRLS)
A3: Housing		
A4: Labour market attachment	A4.2: Child care (as enabling service)	Could be broken down by Age groups: 0-2; 3-school age; school-age – 12 (A4.2a)
	A4.3 Children in low work intensity household	Could be broken down by child age categories (A4.3a)
B1: Education	B1.3 Participation of children in pre-primary education	
	B1.4 Reading literacy performance of pupils aged 10	Breakdown: average performance by education of parents (B1.4a)
B2: Health	B2.7 Low birth weight	
	B2.8 Breastfeeding	Significant data improvement needed
	B2.9 Self-perceived general health	At age 15
	B2.10 Overweight	At age 11
	B2.11 Children who eat fruit daily	At age 11
	B2.12 Children who eat breakfast every school day	At age 11
	B2.13 Physical activity	At age 13
B3: Exposure to risk behaviour	B3.1 Teenage births	
	B3.2 Smoking habits	At age 15
	B3.3 Alcohol consumption	Furhter work on definition of drunkenness, data source and age to be monitored is necessary
	B3.4 Drug consumption	At age 15
B4: Social participation and relationships, family environment	B4.1 Children living in single parent households	Age groups: 0-2; 3-5; 6-11; 12-17
	Further work on indicators of social participation („bridging” and „bonding” social links) is suggested.	
B5: Local environment	B5.1 Crime in the area is a problem	
	B5.2 Pollution or dirt is a problem in the area	

# Conclusions (1)

## Various phases of childhood need to be reflected

	Child age groups		
Dimension	0-5 (0-2, 3-5)	6-11	12-17
A1: Income	#Poverty rate	#Poverty rate	#Poverty rate
	#Relative median poverty risk gap #Persistent at-risk-of-poverty rate #Dispersion around the poverty threshold		
A2: Material deprivation	#Primary deprivation	#Primary deprivation #Educational deprivation	#Primary deprivation #Educational deprivation
	#Secondary deprivation		
A3: Housing	#Housing costs #Overcrowding	#Housing costs #Overcrowding	#Housing costs #Overcrowding
A4: Labour market attachment	#Living in low work intensity (including jobless) households #Child care	#Living in low work intensity (including jobless) households #Child care	#Living in low work intensity (including jobless) households #Child care
B1: Education	#Participation in pre-primary education	#(Low) Reading literacy performance of pupils aged 10	#(Low) Reading literacy performance of pupils aged 10 #Early school-leavers (when 18-24)
B2: Health	#Infant mortality (by SES) #Perinatal mortality #Vaccination #Low birth weight Breastfeeding	#Overweight #Fruit daily #Breakfast every school day	#Self-perceived general health #Physical activity
	#Life expectancy at birth (by SES)		
B3: Exposure to risk and risk behaviour			#Teenage births #Smoking #Alcohol consumption #Drug consumption
B4: Social participation and relationships, family environment	#Share in single parent households	Share in single parent households	Share in single parent households
B5: Local environment	#Crime in the area is a problem #Pollution or dirt is a problem in the area		

# Conclusions (2) A slot for one or a set of child well-being indicators (S1-P11) can be filled with the followings...

	Child age groups		
Dimension	0-5 (0-2, 3-5)	6-11	12-17
A1: Income	#Poverty rate	#Poverty rate	#Poverty rate
	#Relative median poverty risk gap #Persistent at-risk-of-poverty rate #Dispersion around the poverty threshold		
A2: Material deprivation	#Primary deprivation	#Primary deprivation #Educational deprivation	#Primary deprivation #Educational deprivation
	#Secondary deprivation		
A3: Housing	#Housing costs #Overcrowding	#Housing costs #Overcrowding	#Housing costs #Overcrowding
A4: Labour market attachment	#Living in low work intensity (including jobless) households #Child care	#Living in low work intensity (including jobless) households #Child care	#Living in low work intensity (including jobless) households #Child care
B1: Education	#Participation in pre-primary education	#(Low) Reading literacy performance of pupils aged 10	#(Low) Reading literacy performance of pupils aged 10 #Early school-leavers (when 18-24)
B2: Health	#Infant mortality (by SES) #Perinatal mortality #Vaccination #Low birth weight #Breastfeeding	#Overweight #Fruit daily #Breakfast every school day	#Self-perceived general health #Physical activity
	#Life expectancy at birth (by SES)		
B3: Exposure to risk and risk behaviour			#Teenage births #Smoking #Alcohol consumption #Drug consumption
B4: Social participation and relationships, family environment	#Share in single parent households	Share in single parent households	Share in single parent households
B5: Local environment	#Crime in the area is a problem #Pollution or dirt is a problem in the area		



**... however... filling in the “reserved slot” for child well-being is impossible with only one well-being indicator...**



## Conclusions (3)

Therefore... a comprehensive set of child well being indicators could be suggested to monitor child WB

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The new set could:

- reflect most of the **child well-being dimensions** as set out in the EU-TF report
- incorporate OMC indicators already having a **0-17 age breakdown**
- include a few **new material well-being indicators** (educational deprivation and child care),
- include **new breakdowns** for the already existing indicators
- **a whole range of non-material indicators**

This suggestion

- could be **well based** on the existing indicator development work,
  - would be **timely in 2010** (The European year against social exclusion)
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## Conclusions (4-6)

### There is a need to develop data infrastructure

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- Context information is needed **on child and family related social expenditures**, within the OMC reporting routines
  - Further work on statistical validation necessitates **opening up microdata access** to some core datasets on non-material dimensions
  - Incentives to support **substitute or alternative datasets** in national contexts is needed
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# Conclusions (7-11)

## Further attempts to improve data situation are needed ...

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- to monitor the social situation of the children of
    - **migrants**
    - **Roma**
  - to further investigate the potential for utilising national **administrative datasets**
  - to invest in **panel surveys** (national or EU level) to facilitate exploring causal relationships
  - to **involve researchers** in questionnaire development
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**Seminar on the final draft:  
26 November 2009.**





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## **Annex tables and charts**

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# The EU policy context of the project

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- 2005: March EU Presidency Conclusions and Luxembourg Presidency initiative on “Taking forward the EU Social Inclusion Process”
  - 2006: Commission’s Communication ‘Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, Communication from the Commission’
  - Since 2006: streamlining of Social OMC, more systematic attention to children and reports and recommendations on tackling child poverty and social exclusion produced under PROGRESS by independent experts and anti-poverty networks
  - 2007: EU Task-Force on Child poverty and Child Well-Being
  - 2008: formal adoption of the report and their incorporation into the EU *acquis*, National Strategy Reports of child poverty
  - 2009: „Study on child poverty and child well-being”
  - 2010: planned publication of a Commission staff working paper on child poverty.
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# The EU Task-Force Recommendations adopted in January 2008

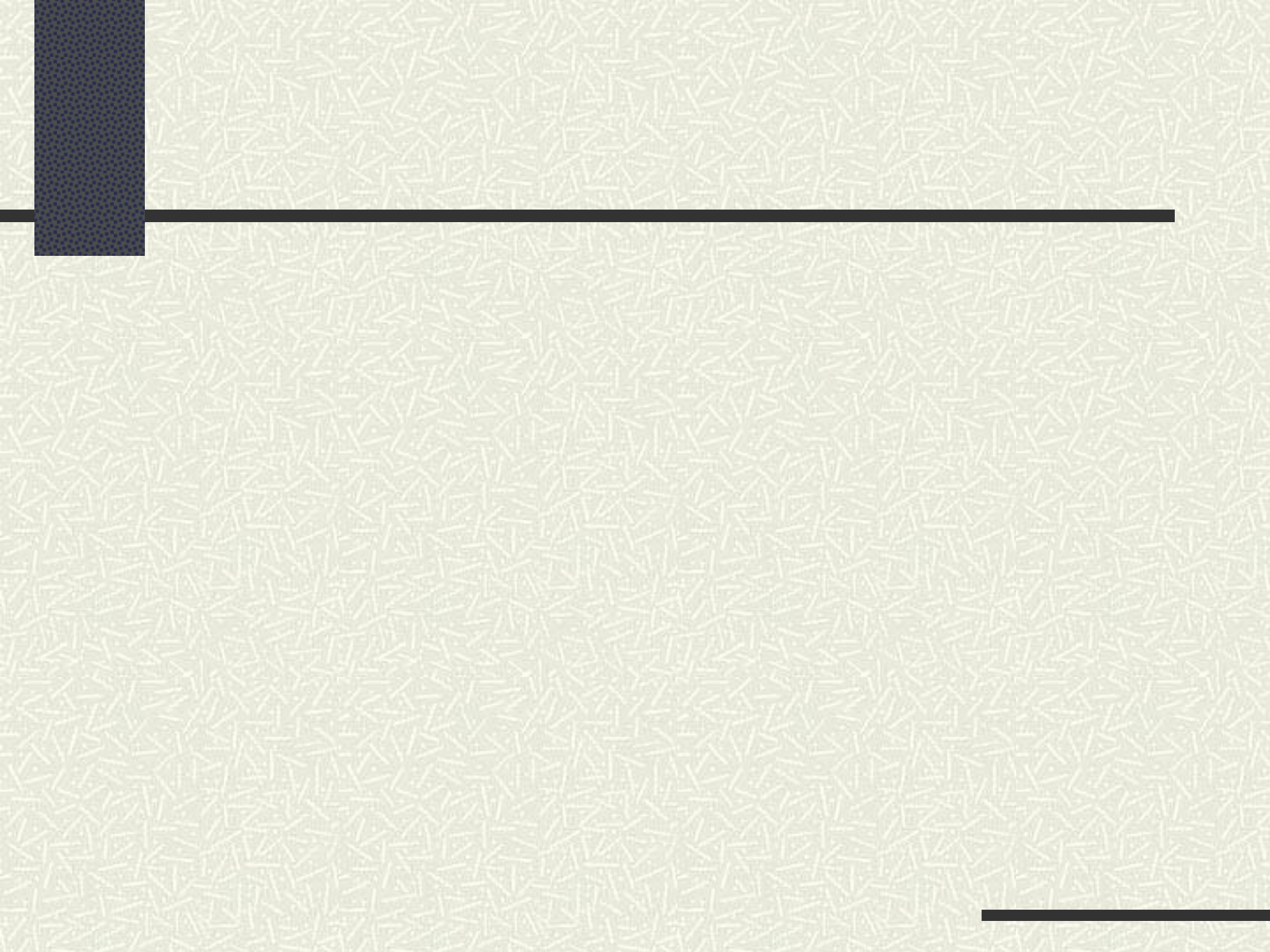


- 1) Setting **quantified objectives**;
- 2) Assessing the **impact of policies** on child poverty and social exclusion;
- 3) **Monitoring** child poverty and well-being;
- 4) Developing a **common framework** for analysing child poverty and social inclusion;
- 5) **Reinforcing statistical capacity** and improving governance and monitoring arrangements at all relevant policy levels;
- 6) Improving **governance and monitoring** arrangements at all relevant policy levels

# Supporting multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral policy mixes: specific issues

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- Distinctions between **resource based** measures of the risk of child poverty (like income poverty and material or housing deprivation) and forward-looking indicators of **child outcomes** (like education and health status)
  - To reflect the policy need of breaking the **intergenerational transmission** of poverty, life cycle and poverty persistence are important aspects
  - Children: 0-17 (broad) age group. However, **internal age breakdowns** are necessitated by mixture of theoretical (developmental, child psychology) and practical considerations (related to institutional arrangements or to data availability)
  - Special attention to be paid to **migrant status** or belonging to an **ethnic minority**
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# Selecting child well being indicators

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- (a) To **capture the essence of the problem**, we need indicators reflecting
  - well-being, predicting future prospects
  - attention to life cycle elements and intergenerational aspects
  - the level and **distribution** of well-being (**social gap** between the poorer and the more well-off)
- (b) be **robust and statistically validated**
  - assessment of the statistical reliability (level of measurement error)
  - cross country variance
- (c) provide a sufficient level of **cross countries comparability**,
  - with use of internationally applied definitions and data collection standards
- (d) be built on **available underlying data, and be timely** and susceptible to revision
- (e) should be **responsive to policy interventions** but not subject to manipulation

# Applied criteria for the selection of indicators

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## **Statistical robustness:**

- 5: highly robust,
- 4: caution is warranted, confidence intervals to be published,
- 3: for majority of countries caution is warranted and conf intervals to be published, for other the data cannot be published,
- 2: for majority of countries a significant data improvement/sample size increase is needed, and
- 1: to have reliable data a new dataset is to be designed.

## **Level of cross country comparability:**

- 3: no comparability problems,
- 2: unclear institutional or cultural specificities prevail,
- 1: either institutional or cross/cultural problems or both hinder comparability across countries or there are or major data harmonisation problems.

**Responsiveness to policy change** (the length of the causal chain between policy interventions and measured outcomes): high ( short), medium (medium) and low (long).

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