

COUNTERACTING SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

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Abstract. The problems of social inequality and equality are one of the most important issues raised for several centuries by researchers related to various fields of science, and one of the main features of this world [4]. The aim of the article is to analyze the methods of reducing social inequalities and their impact on the economy.

Keywords: social inequalities; economy; social problems.

Due to the divergence of various market players' interests, the nation-state is weakened and may lose its influence, which, as a result, will be felt most by those who count on the state protection the most. Ultimately, this will contribute to the emergence of an increasing number of areas of inequality and discrimination [9]. In this state of affairs, many policies of reducing social inequalities were created. Analysis of the ways of counteracting social inequalities is the purpose of this paper.

The aim of the state is to ensure social welfare and its constant improvement [3]. Income inequalities and their negative consequences can be effectively limited only by conducting an active policy by the state. An example is the policy of the Nordic countries, the essence of which is to eliminate income differences through income redistribution and active social policy. The Japanese model is characterized by a different approach, in which inequalities are eliminated by means of a balanced pay system. The education system should also contribute to mitigating unequal opportunities.

However, in order for it to be able to fulfill this role, it is necessary to prevent unequal access to education for children at an early stage of development [8]. The state alleviates inequalities in the level of income of the society mainly by means of an appropriate income policy. It is the kind of economic

policy with which the state wants to define the limits of the annual, non-inflationary increase in the level of income of each type. In Poland, the income policy was used in the past as an instrument to counteract inflation, while at present, with single-digit price dynamics, it is used to eliminate inequalities and fair distribution of income. To achieve this goal, a progressive tax system as well as social benefits and minimum wage are used [1]. It should be added that the social transfers paid by the state alleviate, apart from the level of income distribution disproportions, also the scale of the risk of poverty. Benefits paid for the social zone in Poland reduce the risk of poverty by 26–30 percentage points. In Poland, regional policy is also used to counteract significant differences in income distribution, as poverty is to a large extent a regional problem, and the average level of disposable income is 48 % higher for an inhabitant of central Poland than for an inhabitant of the eastern part of the country. The objectives of this policy are achieved through the use of EU funds earmarked for mitigating development disproportions and infrastructure investments, ensuring a civilization leap, lowering the level of unemployment, and thus poverty [3]. On the other hand, G. Therborn classifies the elimination of distance as the most important systemic form of

alleviating social inequalities. An example of such an activity is the reservation of a certain number of places in educational institutions and public administration for members of social groups suffering from social inequalities. Another indicated form is integration, which means removing barriers and thresholds of membership and granting rights to groups that have previously been deprived of them. G. Therborn also emphasizes the importance of de-hierarchization as well as redistribution and rehabilitation of negatively privileged groups [5]. It should be added that not always policy conducted by the state contributes to eliminating inequalities. The PROFIT project showed that in Bulgaria and Lithuania the poverty level increased as a result of political decisions [6]. The example of Brazil also shows that economic growth alone is an insufficient factor for economic development, because despite economic growth, social inequalities have increased. This allows the conclusion to be drawn that social inequalities cannot be alleviated without an appropriate redistribution of income and wealth [9].

Although the idea of social equality for all of humankind is, it has never been able to achieve a state of social equality. T. Pliszka emphasizes that an individual's ego and a group are more substantial than alterocentrism, and man in every area wants to have more and have better [4]. It should also be added that no scale or type of assistance will be able to change the situation of individuals suffering from social inequalities if they do not seek to improve their situation by themselves. It is a matter of both means and resources devoted to reducing social inequalities, and the willingness of groups or individuals experienced by them [2]. Wilkinson and Pickett emphasize the importance of informed and balanced political decisions and the need to inform the public about the problem to enable its prevention. They also point out that humanity is a sustainable society, but it will not be possible to achieve this goal without deliberate action in this area [7]. In turn, sociologists emphasize that individuals create society. Therefore, when one talks about social inequalities, one talks about relations and social processes [2].

Every country should take into account the prevention of social inequalities in its policy objectives. As the analyzed examples show, there are various approaches to this problem. Nevertheless, the complete elimination of social inequalities seems unattainable. It should also be noted that an important role is played by people's very attitude in need of help, who should strive to improve their life situation. State policies should be guided by society's good and counteract social inequalities to the greatest possible extent.

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