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Pathways of income protection. Ideal-typical configurations of minimum income scheme in the European Union.

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Abstract

As many studies show, the heterogeneous range of social policy schemes that falls under the label of minimum income schemes (henceforth MISs) is aimed to be the last resort support for an increasing number of European citizens, whose well-being is threatened by changes in economic, social, demographic and ethnic structure of European societies. In the recent years, policy makers have pushed minimum income schemes to different directions, pursuing different strategies and goals that have often been object of comparisons. In this paper we use the so-called function of welfare production and we build up seven ideal-types of minimum income schemes generated by the combination of the three dichotomic indicators: the extent of the input, the inclusiveness of the eligibility criteria and the generosity of the output. Hence we use the ideal-type fuzzy-set analysis in order to classify EU countries within the ideal-typical space of attributes. The results showed the relative heterogeneity of the last safety net programmes and enabled us to classify countries on the basis of their resemblance to several ideal-typical configurations: the integrated social assistance (Slovakia, Czech Republic), the selective social assistance (UK, Slovenia, Denmark, the Netherlands), the integrated residual relief (Finland, Germany, Sweden), the discretionary residual relief (Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, Austria, France, Portugal), the limited residual relief (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and rudimentary residual relief (Poland, Spain).

Keywords
Minim income schemes, fuzzy-sets, ideal-types, poverty, European Union

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1. Introduction: old goals, new strategies

As many studies show, the heterogeneous range of social policy schemes that falls under the label of minimum income schemes (henceforth MISs) is aimed to be the last resort support for an increasing number of European citizens, whose well-being is threatened by changes in economic, social, demographic and ethnic structure of European societies (Hanesh, 1999). In Central Eastern European countries such changes were mostly driven by the modest capacity of national institutions to react to transformations that the transition to market economy has brought about. In Western European countries poverty risks as well as the number of minimum income claimants has increased due to different reasons, such as the growth of unemployment and its persistence since the end of the 1970s, the flexibilization of the labour market, the subsequent spread of atypical, intermittent and poorly remunerative patterns of labour market participation and the weakening family ties (Kazepov and Sabatinelli, 2005).

Such transformations have challenged social assistance effectiveness, efficacy and sustainability all over Europe. Yet, policy makers pushed minimum income schemes to different directions, pursuing different strategies and goals. This is certainly not surprising, yet it gives a ground for the empirical aim of this paper: the comparison of the features of general MISs in the enlarged EU. Briefly, we aim to detect similarities and differences and to identify ideal-typical configurations of MIS with which each country holds, so to say, family resemblances (Wittgenstein, 1967: 46-7). When make reference to *general MISs* we explicitly narrow down the focus of our analysis, limited to a subset of the resource-tested benefits, i.e. those schemes providing cash benefits for all people finding themselves under a specified minimum income standard (Eardley et al., 1996). Therefore we exclude the categorical assistance, i.e. cash assistance for specific groups such as the elderly or people with disabilities, and the tied assistance, i.e. those schemes that offer specific cash, goods or services, often derived from the associated rights (Eardley et al., 1996).

By no means is this theoretical goal new. However, old theoretical aims can be achieved through new pathways. First of all, besides the EU15 countries that implemented general minimum income schemes, such as Great Britain, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland, Germany, France, Finland, Denmark, Belgium and Austria, we include into our analysis also the member states that entered the European Union in 2004, that is to say the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Secondly, recent information referring to the year 2005 are used. Thirdly, we compare cases along three key dimensions, namely the amount of resources on which MISs can rely, the eligibility rules

that govern the access to the benefits and their level of generosity. Such dimensions are the operationalization of the concepts of input, production and output as included in the so-called model of welfare production theorized by Hill and Bramley (1986). Fourthly, we classify countries making the use of three methodological tools: the concept of family resemblance, proposed by Wittgenstein, the concept of ideal-type formulated by Weber and the concepts of fuzzy sets more recently implemented in the field of social research by Ragin. These three tools have been already combined elsewhere, in order to classify other sociological objects. Particularly, we have in mind some of the tricks illustrated by Becker (1998) about the inductive construction of sociological concepts through generalizations and the work of Cardano (2003) who attempts to define the ideal-type of qualitative methods. The following general lesson can be drawn from those attempts: firstly, the systematic — although necessarily selective — comparison of observed cases allows us to identify families of MISs. Secondly, a one-sided accentuation of some of the features shared by the members of each family let us provide an ideal-typical characterization of such configurations of MISs. Thirdly, fuzzy membership score can be used to adequately express the degree of membership of each observed MIS to a specific ideal-type.

The paper is structured as follows. In the first part, the theoretical framework is outlined: the key definitions of MISs are reviewed, the model of welfare production is illustrated and we clarify how we measured MISs input, production and output. In the second part, the methodological issues are examined: we provide a more detailed discussion of how the concept of ideal-type, family resemblance and fuzzy membership can serve the purpose of MISs' classification. In the third part the results of the fuzzy set analysis are shown together with the interpretation of the main findings.

2. The key elements of the theoretical context: MISs in the European Union and the model of welfare production.

According to Forest (2005:2) «a minimum income provision can be defined as an income guarantee that enables people who cannot fend for themselves to live a decent life. The right to a subsistence minimum is one that all citizens have, non-contributory (it involves no payment into a fund, unlike the insurance scheme), and means-tested». Thus, minimum income schemes are understood as social benefits without an insurance character, but aimed to provide or complement income. In other words, MISs are basic safety nets through which

welfare states (should) provide everybody with sufficient resources and through which nobody (should) fall. They directly aim to prevent extreme material deprivation and, indirectly, maintain social integration by combating social exclusion and marginalisation. The first function seeks to support people by assuring a certain level of living. The second function has a positive and a negative undertone. On the one hand, some measures aim to actively integrate recipients; on the other hand, instruments exist that minimise disincentives to employment and welfare dependency (Heikkilä and Kuivalainen, 2002).

Under such a general theoretical umbrella, different uses and definitions of the term «minimum income» coexist. As a matter of fact, within the EU countries different approaches and labels can be found. Only a few countries, for instance France and Italy, explicitly use the concept of *minimum income,* while others, such as the Czech republic, Denmark, Poland and the Netherlands term the scheme as *social assistance,* others, such as Slovakia, opt for *benefit in material need* and others, as Estonia, refer to it as *subsistence benefit* (Casas, 2006). In recent years, more and more empirical studies have tried to deal with the heterogeneity of last safety net programmes and have studied the schemes that are in force in different countries in order to come up with typologies. We present four of them since they had the greatest influence within the academic community. The first relevant attempt in this direction was made by Leibfried in 1992. He classified countries according to the way in which welfare states address poverty and the different modes of the institutionalisation of social citizenship. In the same year, Lødemel and Schulte (1992) published a work that contains a classification of social assistance based on the institutional patterns of public support for the poor. As a matter of fact, both Leibfried's and Lødemel and Schulte's typologies end up tracing out welfare regimes classification proposed by Esping-Andersen (1990) with the addition of a fourth regime, the cluster of the Southern European countries. Kazepov and Sabatinelli (2005) moved more or less in the same direction (2005). In a study published in 2005, they group European countries on the basis of different equilibriums among the main welfare providers: the state, the market and the family. The main argument is that the nature of state regulation defines the roles of other agencies as well as the instruments dealing with poverty and social exclusion. While classifying different regime clusters, they firstly detected the roles of the main agencies within the welfare state influencing the overall social policy strategy and consequently the nature of last safety nets. They find out four welfare systems, relevant for Western Europe: the liberal welfare system, the social-democratic system, the corporatist system and the familistic system. Within this typology, the new EU member states from Central Eastern Europe are grouped into a residual *transition model* without defining any

clearer features. The last important research on social assistance that we mention here was carried out by Gough (2001), who provided a more original view on MISs. He built up the most complex typology as it is based on three dimensions — extent and salience, programme structure and generosity — and identified eight configurations: the selective welfare systems, the public assistance state, the welfare states with integrated safety nets, the dual assistance states, the citizenship-based but residual assistance, the rudimentary assistance, the decentralised discretionary relief, and centralised discretionary assistance (1).

When we try to merge this first wave of studies, we conclude that the Nordic countries may be grouped together, as they are generally characterised by a marginal role of social assistance, local administration, an emphasis on social work and strong work incentives. The second distinctive group is formed by the continental countries: they feature a medium division between social insurance and social assistance and separate categorical schemes. The last group, exemplified by the UK and Ireland, is connected with liberal welfare state regime principles and social assistance is unified, standardized and extensive with strong work incentives (Kuivalainen, 2005).

As we stated in the introduction, our comparison of the different MIS schemes is framed into the model of welfare production described by Hill and Bramley (1986) and adopted by several other researchers in order to evaluate different social protection systems (see Mitchell, 1991; Kuivalainen, 2005; Behrendt, 2000). It focuses on the relationship between welfare policies, policy instruments and their, let us say, social environment; as well as on the links between programme inputs and outcomes (Mitchell, 1991). When applied to the field of MISs studies, the welfare production model allows us to focus not only on the capacity of MISs to alleviate poverty, but also on their roles within the broad social security systems and their set-ups in terms of the coverage and adequacy of benefits. According to the jargon of the model, *inputs* refer to resources allocated to the schemes; *production* points to the policy instruments used to distribute these resources and to the conditions for being granted by the benefits; *outputs* are immediate services produced and delivered through particular agencies and *outcomes* measures the effect of the schemes of poverty and social exclusion (Kuivalainen, 2005). Its schematic representation is provided in Figure 1.

[Figure 1 here]

We will not focus on the whole model, but only on three out of four phases illustrated in Figure 1: input, production, and output. There are mainly two reasons lying behind the choice

to disregard the phase of outcomes. The first reason is a theoretical one. The model offers an institutionalistic analysis of the welfare production, yet we know that poverty-related outcomes cannot be explained only by the macro-level institutional configuration. Following the jargon of the so-called analytical sociology, we could say that input, production and output are macro level concepts, while poverty-related outcomes are macro-micro concepts. They are *macro* since they certainly depend on the institutional configurations of the welfare state. But they are also *micro* since they depend on individuals' courses of action and interactions within a complex socio-economic arena. In order to avoid problems of misspecification, we decided to classify MISs only according to *purely* macro-level features and therefore we cannot explain their outcomes. The second reason is a methodological one. The phases of the welfare production model will be further on translated into indicators (see Table 2) and combined to generate a space of attributes that is used to classify the MISs of the twenty countries. If we were considering four phases, (at least) four indicators would be needed. In such a situation, we would end up classifying twenty cases within a sixteen-cell space and we would certainly violate the parsimony principle.

As shown in table 1, the phases of input, production and output were measured via three indicators. The expenditure on general MISs — expressed as proportion of the total expenditure on social benefits — measures the total input allocated to MISs: the higher the input the wider the extent of the MISs, within the social protection systems. The eligibility criteria, connected with residence, nationality, age and work, measure the pattern of welfare provision, more specifically the degree of inclusiveness of the right to minimum income protection: the fewer the criteria the more inclusive the MISs. The average generosity of the benefits awarded to specific types of households measures MISs output: the higher the average benefits the more generous the MISs. The status of the twenty countries on each indicator has been estimated drawing on six different sources of information: the national legislation, the national statistical office, the Mutual Information System on Social Protection in the Member States of the European Union, the peer reviews in the field of social inclusion, the micro data of EU SILC and the EUROSTAT database accessible on the Internet.

[Table 1 here]

3. The indicators of input, production and output: extent, eligibility and generosity

Firstly let us consider the issue of the input. When the extent of the input that the countries invest in the production of well-being through a minimum income provision is calculated, we *indirectly* measure how MISs are important within the national social protection system. For this purpose Table 2 is built up, where the countries are ranked according to their expenditure on general minimum income schemes, expressed as a percentage of total social benefit expenditure. One can notice that the distribution is skewed to the right. This means that fewer countries invest on MISs more than the overall average equal to 1.35%.

[Table 2 here]

Let us now turn to the phase of production. The concept of eligibility has reached the foreground of the international debate on minimum income protection thanks to Van Parijs' claim for a «basic income», i.e. a cash transfer paid to all the members of a political community, without means test or work requirements (2004). We all know that present MISs are far from the adoption of an eligibility criterion as simple as «being a part of a political community», yet we know that, broadly speaking, general MISs are more inclusive than other schemes: it can be assumed that according to the actual political understanding of what a MIS should be, they imply no other restriction to the access besides the test of the means and the legal residence. From this bottom-line touchstone, we can identify different degrees of restriction to eligibility on the basis of the additional criteria that claimants have to satisfy. As a matter of fact, in most countries, additional restrictions are in force, since individuals can access the scheme *only if* they have legal residency in the country territory or nationality, *if* they are older than a certain age threshold, *if* they show willingness to work, *if* their life is threatened by other unlucky circumstances, and so on. Such idea of accumulation of restriction to inclusiveness may be rendered via an additive index. Our simple index includes three indicators that identify as many basic categories of restrictions. The first one combines residency and nationality and identifies three levels of intensity of the restrictions: *i)* the lowest one implies the requirement of residency but no clear specification of any necessary length of stay in the country, *ii)* the middle level implies the requirement of residency conditioned by the stay in a country for a specified period and *iii)* the highest one implies a double requirement of residency *and* nationality. The second indicator deals with claimants' age and also identifies three degrees of restrictions: *i)* the lowest coincides with the absence of

age-related requirements, *ii)* the middle one with the exclusions of the individuals aged between 0 and 18 years old and *iii)* the highest one with the exclusion of those who are younger than 25. The third indicator combines two families of residual requirements: *i)* work-related requirements, i.e. those establishing, for instance, that claimants cannot be full time workers; *ii)* social event related requirements. i.e. those establishing, for instance, that claimants must also be a long-term unemployed, a lone parent, an orphans, or alcoholics (2). Also this last indicator has three levels, identified by the fact that some countries do not apply any of this last two groups of requirements, whereas other countries apply at least one of them and others apply both. In order to calculate the index of eligibility, a discrete value from 1 to 3 was assigned to each of the three levels of restriction, where 3 identifies the most inclusive configuration. Also, an additional weight was introduced taking into account the fact that restrictions may not have the same relevance. The lowest weight, equal to 0.1, was assigned to the third residual indicator. A weight of 0.3 was given to the restrictions on residency. The highest weight, equal to 0.6, was attributed to age. In our point of view, the restrictions on age are more relevant for at least two reasons. Firstly, a low age threshold means that the MIS programmes explicitly protect the income of the young from the perverse effects of youth unemployment or of instable patterns of labour market participation, elsewhere encouraged by the rhetoric on flexible labour market contracts. Secondly, by guaranteeing a minimum level of resources, they protect young citizens' freedom by securing their capabilities, still significantly dependent on disposable income as a crucial functioning. The values of each country on the eligibility index, illustrated in Table 3, are therefore given by the weighted sum of their statuses on the three indicators discussed above.

[Table 3 here]

The last phase to be inspected is the output of the welfare production function. We are now concerned with the level of generosity that the MIS are able to generate and we measure it via the so-called model-family technique. This is «a form of simulation, where the impact of national policies is simulated on the model families […] selected so that they reflect typical family types receiving social assistance and moreover that they are reflecting families in different life situations» (Kuivalainen, 2005:1). Although we opted for this approach, we agree with those who claim that it «involves a certain degree of arbitrariness and is far from satisfactory reflecting the actual variation of household types in the real world» (Behrendt, 2000:18). Indeed, several limitations exist. According to Eardley et al. (1996:116) this method

produces a description of the way the system should work and not necessarily as it does, obscures the more complex lifecycle effects of tax/benefit systems since it is synchronic and raises concerns about the representativeness of the model families, especially when several assumptions are applied to their circumstances. Nonetheless, the following decisions were made in order to calculate the generosity of general minimum income programmes. All households are assumed to have no earnings or capital income, no other irregular income, or any disregards and no entitlements to social insurance benefits. Generosity is given by the sum of standard minimum income benefits and special supplements, universal benefits — not dependent on previous contributions and fully disregarded while calculating social assistance — and housing benefits (3). The minimum income package is computed according to the legal regulations in force in 2005 and indexed to the poverty line, calculated as the 50% of median equivalized income (4). Data are reported in Table 4.

[Table 4 here]

If we take the housing benefits are into account, Germany and Denmark are the two most generous nations. On the opposite side of the rank we find Estonia, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania. In some countries, such as the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland, Belgium, Portugal and Spain, housing benefits do not increase the generosity significantly, especially where they are counted as tested income. On the contrary, they boost the generosity by around 50 percentage points in Germany, Finland and Sweden. Generosity is also not equally sensitive to two social events that usually concern policy makers and policy analysts: the presence of children in the household and lone parenthood. Let us assume that poverty risks for the three family models can be ordered according to a theoretical gradient: they are higher for couples with two children than for single-person households; they are higher for single parents with two children than for couples with two children. Hence, we may hypothesise that, in order to compensate for the gradient, generosity should follow the inverse pattern. As a matter of fact, this is exactly the case in Germany, Finland, Sweden, the Czech Republic, UK, Slovenia and Estonia. For a second group of countries, namely Denmark, Belgium, Ireland, Slovakia, Portugal, Latvia and Lithuania, the hypothesis, is only partially confirmed: generosity is the lowest for single-person households, but single parent households are granted to a lower extent. Then, there is the group of countries that includes the Netherlands, Austria, France, Luxembourg and Poland where the hypothesis is fully disconfirmed. The last two are particularly interesting since, counter-intuitively, the generosity follows the gradient: it is

higher where the poverty risks are expected to be lower. These results have to be interpreted with caution: they may reflect actual policy intentions or simply be a numerical artefact of the simulation.

4. Family resemblance, ideal-types and fuzzy sets: methodological issues and theoretical results

As several other researchers have already shown (Kvist, 2006; Vis, 2007; Szelewa and Polakowski, 2008) we can use the three indicators of input, production and output in the framework of a fuzzy-set analysis, bridging the theory and the empirical practice with the concepts of ideal-type and family resemblances.

First of all, we can combine the three axes of *extent*, *generosity* and *eligibility* and build up a three-dimensional space of attributes which corners identify eight ideal-types (Figure 2). They are proper «ideal types» since they are conceptual constructs that have no empirical referents: no MIS is entirely ungenerous, or inclusive, or extensive. Yet, by a one-sided theoretical accentuation of the three features, we can imagine how the eight pure and abstract types would look like.

[Figure 2 here]

Another way to qualify the eight ideal types is to construct a truth table that shows the possible logical combinations of the three dichotomic concepts, as shown in table 5 (see Becker, 1998).

[Table 5 here]

Let us interpret the eight ideal-types. Type 1 can be labelled as *integrated social assistance*. It can be found in a country *i)* that invests massive resources on the social protection system, *ii)* where MISs plays a prominent role in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, *iii)* where the right to minimum protection is guaranteed to everyone and *iv)* cash transfers are generous. When the first requirement is not met, that is to say when the state puts at stake a smaller part of its GDP, MISs can rely on fewer inputs. Therefore, even if the relative role of MISs with the social protection system remains prominent, some restrictions have to be

applied to generosity or to eligibility. This is the case of Type 2 and type 3. The former, which we call *selective social assistance*, preserves generosity and sacrifices inclusiveness: MISs provides highly generous transfers but only to a smaller portion of citizens. The latter, the *public assistance state* (Gough, 2001), preserves inclusiveness and sacrifices generosity: minimum income protection is extensively granted, but with lower social transfers since allocated resources are lower. Let us now turn to the lowest row of the Table. The crucial difference that separates the four upper types with the lower ones deals with the role of MISs within the social protection system that is, now, marginal. When it is so, generous benefits can be granted only to very few citizens. This is the case of Type 6, that we call *discretionary residual relief* (Gough, 2001). If generosity declines, eligibility can be expanded: we move to type 7, that we call *limited residual relief*. Type 8 is a suitable example of *rudimentary assistance* (Gough, 2001), potentially the worst scenario: the limited resources allocated to MISs are used to grant only few citizens and with modest transfers. Type 5, the *integrated residual relief*, may appear counterintuitive. In abstract terms, a generous coverage (with respect to the eligibility rules) cannot be granted to everyone if the MIS play a marginal role within the social protection system, *unless* the GDP of the country is very high or the number of claimants is very low. In the fist case, even a relatively modest proportion of the GDP invested in a MIS may, in absolute terms, guarantee generous benefits (especially if the poverty rates are low). In the second case, the low number of claimants makes it possible to combine two otherwise contradictory conditions: modest inputs and an inclusive approach (5). Type 4 seems inconsistent. Drawing on the work of Lazarsfeld, Becker shows that the space of attributes generated by the combination of *n* dimension can be restricted for pragmatic, functional or theoretical reasons (1998:222). Following this suggestion, we suppress Type 4: from a mere logic perspective, extensive MIS, covering few citizens should not provide modest benefits.

We now have six concepts, each of them identifying an ideal-type of MIS, that can be compared with the twenty general minimum income schemes in force in the EU countries in order to establish a correspondence between the theoretical constructs and the empirical cases. Existing MISs resemble an ideal typical MIS in the same way in which the members of a family share traits that make them similar to a common mythical ancestor. On the basis of these family resemblances (Wittgenstein, 1967) they form a family of MISs and they *inherit* the label attributed to the ideal-type they resemble. As Andersen notices, at this stage the first problem arises. The critics of Wittgenstein often object that we can easily find some similarities among complex objects and between complex objects and ideal-types. Thus,

family resemblance does not suffice to limit the extension of the concepts or produce too wide-open texture concepts (2000:314). Some authors state that this problem can be solved if we specify the pathways through which we look for similarities or, to be more precise, if we make clear on which properties we assess the resemblances. The three axis of Figure 2, i.e. extent, eligibility and generosity are the generative properties of the eight ideal-types and *also* the aspects at which we look for similarities between actual and ideal-typical MISs.

A second concern arises when we turn to the issue of objects' membership to the extension of the concepts. When we think in binary terms, we express membership allowing only two mutually exclusive states: either an object belongs or does not belong to the extension of a concept. That is to say, either a MIS belongs to, for example, the selective social assistance, or it does not. This is a problem since the membership of an object to an ideal ideal-typical set can not be one by definition. In Weber's words, the ideal-type in its conceptual purity cannot be found in reality: it is a utopia, a mythical ancestor. This problem can be solved if we think in fuzzy terms, that is to say if we allow membership to vary between the two — only abstractly reachable — meaningful extremes of full-membership and full non-membership. Thus, we acknowledge intermediate degrees of membership, expressed by a continuous function that varies between 1 and 0 (Ragin 2000:149-160).

Although, fuzzy-set logic implies a continuous measure of membership, we can *de facto* break it down into discrete levels using the five cut-off points illustrated in Table 7. Then, in order to assess the degree of membership of an object to a fuzzy set, we have to make a statement on three expected values of the indicator that correspond to three thresholds: the full membership, the cross-over point and the full non-membership (see Table 6). In practical terms, it means that we have to state, for instance, at which level of expenditure a country belongs to the set of the extensive MIS, or above which average level of transfers a country belongs to the set of the generous MIS. This process, that Ragin calls *calibration*, is, in the same time, a key point of the fuzzy set approach and also its main drawback. In his words, «substantive knowledge provides the external criteria that make it possible to calibrate measures»: such statement, reasonable in itself, is useful only when a guiding substantive knowledge exists. Indeed, any established theory could not be found that would guide us through the definition of the thresholds for the indicator of extent. The threshold of the full membership was inferred to the set of the extensive MIS using two criteria: the first one states that it has to be as close as possible to the level of the UK (the highest value of 5.7%, in Table 2); the second one states that it does not have to be too close to the level of the UK as this is an extreme case scoring far better that the average among the other countries (1.1%). On the

basis of this reasoning it was arbitrarily opted to set the full-membership threshold at the level of 3%, which is the level of expenditure of Slovakia — the country with the second highest level of expenditure on general minimum income schemes. Similarly, if the thresholds of full non-membership were too severe, scores would vary too little and the classification would be under-discriminating, simply because the 20 countries would be squeezed to the low part of the membership scale. Thus, the threshold of full non-membership was set the level of 0.2%, which is, in the same time the level of expenditure of countries with the lowest amount of resources provided for the general minimum income schemes. For sake of symmetry, then, the crossover point was set at the level of 1.5%.

As far as eligibility is concerned, the highest intensity of restrictions to the access is assumed to be found when all three indicators have the lowest value and, therefore, the eligibility index is equal to 1. Hence, a country scoring 1 should be logically out of the set of the inclusive MIS or fully in the set of the exclusive MIS. As a matter of fact, this would point to a situation in which restrictions are applied to nationality, residency, age, work and other residual social conditions. At the polar opposite, the highest value of the index identifies the most inclusive countries. The crossover point should indicate countries that reach the highest scores on at least two indicators and where no strong restrictions are applied to the third dimension of eligibility. To do so the distribution is broken down in-between two values (2.9 and 2.4) and the crossover point is set in the middle, at 2.65.

The thresholds for generosity are set up at the following values: 100%, 75% and 50%. The rational for the first value is rather simple: a relative level of benefits that equals the poverty line identifies those MIS that provide enough transfers to keep households with no income other than the MIS above the poverty line. A level equal to 75% is considered to be a fair crossover point since it maintains those households with no sufficient resources not too far from but not even too close to the *line of hope*. Once more, for sake of symmetry, the relative level of MIS benefits equal to 50% was chosen as the threshold for full non-membership.

[Table 6 here]

5. Results: a classification of MISs

The fuzzy set analysis generates the degrees of membership to the eight sets, derived from the dichotmoic indicators of input, production and output (see Table 7). With a few simple

calculations we can now derive the countries' memberships to the ideal types and place them within the space of attributes shown in Table 5.

[Table 7 here]

We know that, for instance, the ideal type called *integrated social assistance* is observed when there is an extensive input, an inclusive eligibility and a generous output. In the fuzzy-set language it means that this configuration is given by the intersection of three sets: the set of extensive, inclusive and generous MIS. In other words, the membership of a certain country to the *integrated social assistance* ideal-type is given by the minimum of its membership to the three sets. If we repeat this brief algorithm for each country and ideal-type, the Tables 8 and 9 are obtained.

[Table 8 and 9 here]

Slovakia and Czech Republic resemble the first ideal-type, the *integrated social assistance*. They allocate a relatively extensive amount of resources on general minimum income schemes that are rather inclusive and guarantee the right to minimum income to a wide range of citizens. The macro outcome is one of relatively low level of poverty. Poverty is kept low by the integrated effect of the MIS, on the one hand, and the second component of the social security system, on the other hand: comprehensive net of social insurance programs. The UK, Slovenia, Denmark and the Netherlands resemble the *selective social assistance* ideal-type. As for the integrated social assistance, the amount of resources and the level of benefits levels are rather high. Yet, restrictions are applied with respect to the eligibility rules. In general, it can be assumed that countries such as Slovenia, Denmark and the Netherlands, apply the restrictions with the intention of targeting those in sharp needs that falls through their well-developed social security systems. Such assumption does not hold in the case of the UK, where welfare state is residual. In this respect, the restrictions to eligibility are necessary in order to preserve adequate benefit levels under the constraint of little inputs. The fifth ideal-type, the integrated residual relief, includes Finland, Germany and Sweden. As we pointed out in the section 3, although — especially in Germany — MISs absorb a smaller proportion of the overall social protection resources than in other countries, a generous coverage is extensively granted as the GDP is very high and also the poverty level is relatively low. Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, Austria, France and Portugal resemble to the sixth type, the

discretionary residual relief. In these countries the amount of resources absorbed by the general minimum income schemes is rather low. Therefore, relatively high levels of benefits can be achieved only if several restrictions are applied. Interestingly, all three Baltic states falls under the 7th type, the *limited residual relief*. Here, since the right to minimum income support is guaranteed to a big part of the population and the resources allocated to these programs are low, benefits are less generous. Yet, even more residual and selective general minimum income schemes exist, for instance, in Poland and Spain, which are similar to the 8th ideal-type, i.e. the r*udimentary residual assistance*. In these countries MISs are poorly financed, eligibility criteria are severe and benefits are granted at a low level.

6. Conclusion: where could we go from here

The aim of the chapter was to compare the institutional features of a specific social security programme, i.e. general minimum income schemes, in the enlarged EU, to the identified ideal-typical configurations and, finally, to classify the schemes that were in force in 2005. Framed within the so-called model of welfare production, the analysis focused on three main indicators, i.e. extent, eligibility and generosity, and was carried out resorting to the ideal-type fuzzy-set approach. The results showed the relative heterogeneity of the last safety net programmes and enabled us to classify countries on the basis of their resemblance to several ideal-typical configurations: the integrated social assistance (Slovakia, Czech Republic), the selective social assistance (UK, Slovenia, Denmark, the Netherlands), the integrated residual relief (Finland, Germany, Sweden), the discretionary residual relief (Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, Austria, France, Portugal), the limited residual relief (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and rudimentary residual relief (Poland, Spain). Our parsimonious comparison of the existing practices may be relevant for the goal of defining European minimum social standards and it can be further developed in two directions. First of all, one can include micro-level indicators of outcomes in order to evaluate the performance of the families of MISs in respect to poverty and social exclusion. Secondly, the analysis can be replicated in different years in order to detect movements of the countries within the space of attributes or recursive patterns of development among the families of MISs.

Note

1 This work was further criticised by Saraceno et al. (2002), arguing that Portugal and Spain were closer to the dual assistance model than to the rudimentary model.

2 We do not call them *residual* since they are «less important». They simple include heterogeneous operational rules that are not easy to identify within the *instruction books* of the twenty MIS we are considering.

3 One-off payments are not considered as the collection of good comparable data is not possible. No housing benefits could be included in case of Latvia and Lithuania due to non-availability of data.

4 It should be noted that the benefit entitlements referring to the situation on 1.1. 2005 are compared with the poverty line calculated with the cross-sectional data provide in EU SILC at 2005. This dataset provides a mix of information on households' income referred to the year 2004 and socio-demographic information referred to the year 2005. This is a limitation that we cannot bypass; therefore we consider the income in 2004 as the best proxy for households' economic status in 2005.

5 Our interpretation of the meaning of the integrated residual relief is supported by the results of the fuzzy set analysis presented in the following pages. Three countries belongs matches with this ideal-type: Germany, Finland and Sweden. These countries are exactly characterised by relatively high levels of GDP and/or relatively low levels of poverty incidence.

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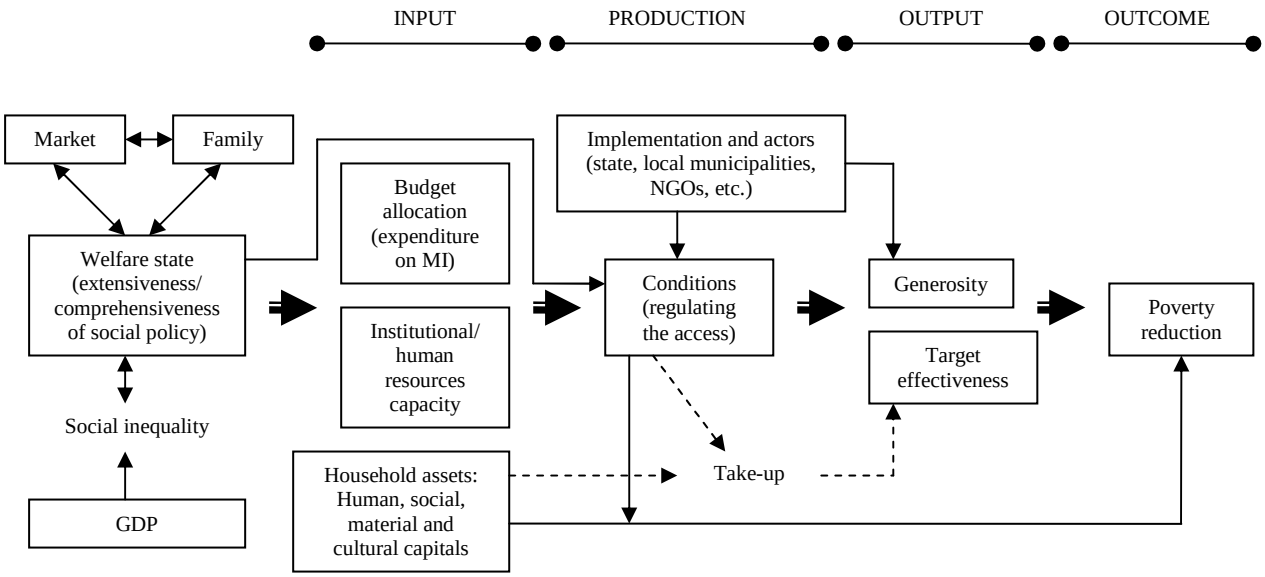
Figure 1 The model of welfare production for the analysis of the minimum income schemes



Source**:** own elaboration based on Kuivalainen (2005) and Behrendt (2000)

Table 1 The indicators of input, production and output

	Question	*Concept*	*Indicator*
Input	How important is the role of MIS within social security systems?	Extent	Expenditure on general minimum income schemes as % of the total expenditure on social benefits
Production	Do MIS provide inclusive coverage?	Eligibility	Eligibility criteria with respect to residence/nationality, minimum age, work-related, and social event related criteria
Output	How generous the MIS benefits are?	Generosity	Average generosity levels for chosen household types including households without dependent children, single parent households, and couples with dependent children

Table 2 The expenditure on general MIS in 2005

Countries	*Expenditure on general minimum income schemes as % of the total expenditure on social benefits*
United Kingdom (Income support)	5.7%
Slovakia (Dávka v hmotnej núdzi)	3.0%
Denmark (Social bistand)	2.3%
Slovenia (Denarna socialna pomoc)	2.0%
Netherlands (Algemene Bijstand)	1.7%
Czech Republic (Dávky z důvodu sociální potřebnosti)	1.6%
Ireland (Supplementary Welfare Allowance)	1.4%
Luxembourg (Revenu Minimum Garanti)	1.4%
Finland (Toimeentulotuki)	1,1%
France (Revenu Minimum d´Insertion)	1,1%
Sweden (Socialbidrag)	1.0%
Estonia (Toimetulekutoetus)	1.0%
Portugal (Rendimento social de inserção)	0.8%
Austria (Allgemene Sozialhilfe)	0.7%
Belgium (Revenu d´intégration/Leefloon)	0.6%
Lithuania (Social benefit)	0.6%
Latvia (GMI)	0.3%
Poland (Zasilek Okresowy)	0.3%
Germany (Hilfe zum Lebensunterhalt)	0.2%
Spain (Ingreso mínimo de inserción)	0.2%

Source: MPSV (2005), Dávky sociální péče (*Czech Republic*); Ministry of social affairs of Estonia (2006), Social sector in figures (*Estonia*); Ministry of welfare (2005), Social report for 2004-2005 (*Latvia*); The ministry of social security and labour (2006), Social report (*Lithuania*); Central statistical office (2006), Statistical yearbook of Poland and Eurostat, December 2008 (*Poland*); Statistical office of the Republic of Slovenia, Demography and social statistics, December 2008 (*Slovenia*); Ministry of labour and social affairs (2005), Zprava o socialnej situacii 2005 (*Slovakia*); Statistik Austria (2008), Statistisches Jahrbuch (*Austria*); Eurostat, December 2008 (*Belgium)*; Danmarks statistik, StatBank Denmark, December 2008 (*Denmark*); STAKES, Statistics by topic, December 2008 (*Finland*); Ministere du travail, des relations sociales et de la solidarite (2006) Rapport du gouvernement au parlement sur le RMI and Eurostat, December 2008 (*France*); Statistical office, Datenbank Genesis, December 2008 and Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (2008), Statistisches Taschenbuch (*Germany*); Department of Social and Family Affairs (2006), Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services (*Ireland*); Statec (2007), Annuaire statistique (*Luxembourg*); Eurostat, December 2008 (*Netherlands*); Eurostat, December 2008 (*Portugal*); Eurostat, December 2008 (*Spain*); Statistical office, Statistics by subject area, December 2008 (*Sweden*); Office for national statistics (2008), Annual abstract of statistics (*UK*)

Table 3 Eligibility index in 2005

Countries	*Restrictions based on residence/nationality criteria*		*Restrictions based on age*		*Restrictions based on work-related and social-events*		*Eligibility index*
Austria	Depending on regions	1	NR	3	NR	3	2.4
Belgium	R	2	> 18	2	NR	3	2.1
Czech Republic	PR	2	NR	3	NR	3	2.7
Denmark	R	2	> 18	2	SR	2	2
Estonia	PR	2	NR	3	NR	3	2.7
Finland	R	3	NR	3	NR	3	3
France	R	2	> 25	1	NR	3	1.5
Germany	R	3	NR	3	NR	3	3
Ireland	PR	2	> 18	2	WR	2	2
Latvia	PR	2	NR	3	NR	3	2.7
Lithuania	PR	2	NR	3	NR	3	2.7
Luxembourg	R	2	> 25	1	NR	3	1.5
Netherlands	LR	3	> 18	2	NR	3	2.4
Poland	PR	2	> 18	2	SR	2	2
Portugal	R	3	> 18	2	NR	3	2.4
Slovakia	R	3	NR	3	NR	3	3
Slovenia	PR	2	> 18	2	NR	3	2.1
Spain	R	2	> 25	1	NR	3	1.5
Sweden	R	3	NR	3	NR	3	3
United Kingdom	R	2	> 16	2	WR	2	2

Source: MISSOC and national documentation.

Legend: R stands for residency, PR stands for permanent residency, LR stands for legal residency, NR stands for no restrictions, WR stands for work-related restrictions, SR stands for social-event related restrictions

Table 4 Generosity of general MIS in 2005

	With housing benefits				*Without housing benefits*			
Countries	*Single person*	*Couple with 2 children*	*Single parent with 2 children*	*Average*	*Single person*	*Couple with 2 children*	*Single parent with 2 children*	*Average*
Germany	129.3%	132.6%	147.7%	136.6%	54.2%	77.4%	89.8%	73.8%
Denmark	128.7%	147.7%	133.2%	136.5%	98.7%	131.6%	105.5%	111.9%
Finland	122.3%	123.5%	132.4%	126.1%	55.1%	79.5%	80.2%	71.6%
Sweden	116.5%	120.1%	124.4%	120.4%	56.1%	75.3%	76.4%	69.3%
Ireland	110.9%	116.5%	112.9%	113.5%	86.8%	95.0%	88.7%	90.2%
Netherlands	116.9%	95.9%	110.3%	107.7%	108.7%	85.2%	102.1%	98.7%
Czech Republic	79.4%	105.9%	111.8%	99.0%	79.4%	105.9%	111.8%	99.0%
United Kingdom	81.9%	95.3%	104.9%	94.0%	51.6%	75.3%	81.5%	69.5%
Slovakia	88.3%	99.2%	93.1%	93.5%	67.0%	81.3%	69.6%	72.6%
Belgium	93.0%	80.9%	106.2%	93.4%	93.0%	80.9%	106.2%	93.4%
Slovenia	69.9%	93.6%	112.2%	91.9%	55.9%	86.9%	103.5%	82.1%
Luxembourg	96.3%	85.7%	83.9%	88.6%	86.1%	80.8%	77.6%	81.5%
Austria	93.3%	78.7%	82.5%	84.8%	54.1%	53.4%	54.1%	53.9%
France	82.7%	72.8%	83.2%	79.6%	58.7%	58.7%	66.0%	61.1%
Portugal	57.1%	91.7%	84.7%	77.8%	57.1%	91.7%	84.7%	77.8%
Spain	71.6%	66.9%	76.4%	71.6%	71.6%	66.9%	76.4%	71.6%
Estonia	42.1%	68.1%	75.4%	61.9%	42.1%	+68.10%	75.4%	61.9%
Poland	28.1%	24.5%	24.1%	25.6%	28.1%	24.5%	24.1%	25.6%
Latvia	-	-	-	-	37.3%	71.1%	70.0%	59.5%
Lithuania	-	-	-	-	43.5%	82.9%	81.7%	

Notes: Data are sorted according to the relative MIS levels with housing benefits.
Source: EU SILC; MISSOC, legislation and national documents for the CEE countries; Nelson, K. (2008), The social assistance and minimum income protection interim data/set, Version: 1.3.4 Beta.

Figure 2 Ideal-types space for the analysis of MISs

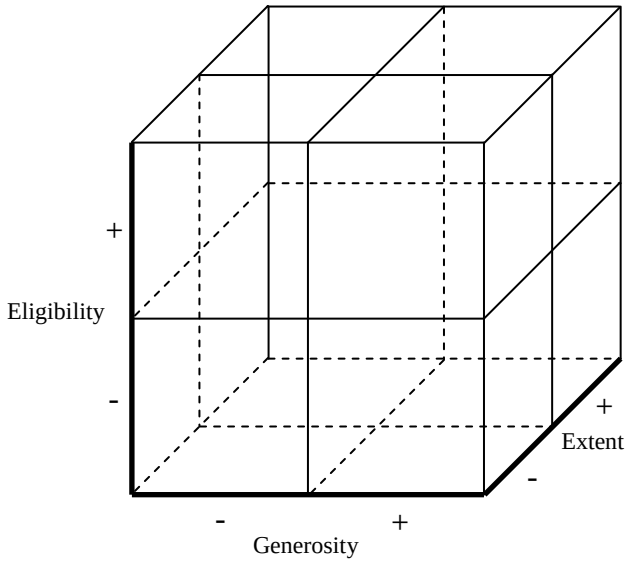


Table 5 Space of attributes suitable to classify MISs

		Generosity			
		Generous Eligibility		*Ungenerous Eligibility*	
		Inclusive	*Exclusive*	*Inclusive*	*Exclusive*
Extent	*Extensive*	Type 1 Integrated social assistance	Type 2 Selective social assistance	Type 3 Public assistance state	Type 4
	Residual	Type 5 Integrated residual relief	Type 6 Discretionary residual relief	Type 7 Limited residual relief	Type 8 Rudimentary residual assistance

Table 6 Fuzzy-sets calibration

		Indicator of input: extent	*Indicator of production: eligibility*	*Indicator of output: generosity*
Membership scores	*Verbal qualifier*	*Set of the extensive MIS*	*Set of the inclusive MIS*	*Set of the generous MIS*
1	Fully in			
0.99	Threshold of full membership	3%	3	100%
0.99-0.76	Mostly in			
0.75-0.51	More in than out			
0.5	Neither in nor out	1.5%	2.65	75%
0.49-0.25	More out than in			
0.24-0.01	Mostly out			
0.01	Threshold of full non-membership	0.3%	1	50%
0	Fully out			

Table 7 Membership scores to fuzzy sets

Countries	*Input*		*Production*		*Output*			
	Set of the extensive MIS	*Set of the residual MIS*	*Set of the inclusive MIS*	*Set of the exclusive MIS*	*Without housing benefits*		*With housing benefits*	
					Set of the generous MIS	*Set of the ungenerous MIS*	*Set of the generous MIS*	*Set of the ungenerous MIS*
Austria	0.12	0.88	0.39	0.61	0.07	0.93	0.76	0.24
Belgium	0.10	0.90	0.27	0.73	0.90	0.10	0.90	0.10
Czech Republic	0.55	0.45	0.61	0.39	0.95	0.05	0.95	0.05
Denmark	0.83	0.17	0.23	0.77	0.99	0.01	1.00	0.00
Estonia	0.22	0.78	0.61	0.39	0.17	0.83	0.17	0.83
Finland	0.27	0.73	0.95	0.05	0.40	0.60	1.00	0.00
France	0.27	0.73	0.11	0.89	0.16	0.84	0.63	0.37
Germany	0.04	0.96	0.95	0.05	0.46	0.54	1.00	0.00
Ireland	0.44	0.56	0.23	0.77	0.86	0.14	0.99	0.01
Latvia	0.05	0.95	0.61	0.39	0.13	0.87	-	-
Lithuania	0.10	0.90	0.61	0.39	0.34	0.66	-	-
Luxembourg	0.44	0.56	0.11	0.89	0.69	0.31	0.84	0.16
Netherlands	0.60	0.40	0.39	0.61	0.95	0.05	0.98	0.02
Poland	0.05	0.95	0.23	0.77	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00
Portugal	0.15	0.85	0.39	0.61	0.58	0.42	0.58	0.42
Slovakia	0.95	0.05	0.95	0.05	0.43	0.57	0.90	0.10
Slovenia	0.73	0.27	0.27	0.73	0.70	0.30	0.88	0.12
Spain	0.04	0.96	0.11	0.89	0.40	0.60	0.40	0.60
Sweden	0.22	0.78	0.95	0.05	0.34	0.66	1.00	0.00
UK	1.00	0.00	0.23	0.77	0.34	0.66	0.91	0.09

Table 8 Membership scores to ideal-typical MISs configurations

Countries	*Integrated social assistance*	*Selective social assistance*	*Public assistance state*	*Integrated residual relief*	*Discretionary residual relief*	*Limited residual relief*	*Rudimentary residual assistance*
	Extensive∩ Inclusive ∩Generous	*Extensive∩ Exclusive ∩Generous*	*Extensive∩ Inclusive ∩Ungenerous*	*Residual∩ Inclusive ∩Generous*	*Residual∩ Exclusive ∩Generous*	*Residual∩ Inclusive ∩Ungenerous*	*Residual∩ Exclusive ∩Ungenerous*
Slovakia	0.9	0.05	0.10	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
Denmark	0.23	0.77	0.00	0.17	0.17	0.00	0.00
Slovenia	0.27	0.73	0.12	0.27	0.27	0.12	0.12
UK	0.23	0.77	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Czech Republic	0.55	0.39	0.05	0.45	0.39	0.05	0.05
Finland	0.27	0.05	0.00	0.73	0.05	0.00	0.00
Germany	0.04	0.04	0.00	0.95	0.05	0.00	0.00
Sweden	0.22	0.05	0.00	0.78	0.05	0.00	0.00
Austria	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.39	0.61	0.24	0.24
Belgium	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.27	0.73	0.10	0.10
France	0.11	0.27	0.11	0.11	0.63	0.11	0.37
Ireland	0.23	0.44	0.01	0.23	0.56	0.01	0.01
Luxembourg	0.11	0.44	0.11	0.11	0.56	0.11	0.16
Netherlands	0.39	0.60	0.02	0.39	0.40	0.02	0.02
Portugal	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.39	0.58	0.39	0.42
Estonia	0.17	0.17	0.22	0.17	0.17	0.61	0.39
Latvia	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.13	0.13	0.61	0.39
Lithuania	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.34	0.34	0.61	0.39
Poland	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.23	0.77
Spain	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.11	0.40	0.11	0.60

Table 9 An ideal-typical classification of European MISs, in 2005

		Generosity			
		Generous		*Ungenerous*	
		Eligibility		*Eligibility*	
		Inclusive	*Exclusive*	*Inclusive*	*Exclusive*
Extent	*Extensive*	Integrated social assistance Slovakia, Czech Republic	Selective social assistance UK, Slovenia, Denmark, the Netherlands	Public assistance state -	-
	Residual	Integrated residual relief Finland, Germany, Sweden	Discretionary residual relief Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, Austria, France, Portugal	Limited residual relief Estonia, Latvia*, Lithuania*	Rudimentary residual assistance Poland, Spain