Measuring Social Rights and Upward Social Convergence at the NUTS2 level: a composite index approach

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This paper presents an attempt to develop a composite index based on the Social Scoreboard Indicators and disaggregated both at the NUTS2 level and by gender. The objective of the indicator (European Social Rights Indicator - ESRI) is to analyse the current level of enjoyment of social rights across the European Union by going beyond the national level and by providing a gender-sensitive analytical perspective. Moreover the use of a panel dataset will allow to conduct an longitudinal assessment of the evoulution of the level of social rights. Finally, the use of GIS-based data visualisation techniques and of standard analitycal indexes (e.g. sigma and beta convergence) shed light on the dynamics of upward social convergence (or the lack of) as well as on the existence of significant clusters of over/under performing NUTS2 regions.

Interestingly, the approach used to aggregate the Social Scoreboard indicators dasboard (i.e. the Muldimensional Sythesis Indicator or MSI) was originally developped by researchers from the University of Florence. MSI is an approach used to aggregate multidimensional phenomena and to rank units performances (countries, households, enterprises etc.). Mauro, Biggeri and Maggino have introduced this method in their 2018 paper on Social Indicators Research journal (Mauro, Biggeri and Maggino, 2018). The MSI is coherent with a formative approach to the synthesis of indicators: basic indicators are thus conceived as components contributing to define a phenomenon summarized by the composite indicator (Maggino, 2017).

The most striking evidence presented in this paper is the enduring crisis experienced by

Southern Europe even if the Iberian Peninsula is performing better than Italy and Greece.

Within this subregion, using NUTS2 it is possible to identify areas that are particularly

problematic, with southern Italy a clear example. Southern Europe is characterised by lower

ESRI levels and by weak if not negative ESRI growth rates for the duration of the analysed

period. The gender gap is significantly stronger than in Northern Europe, even though recent

years have shown a clearly detectable convergence of M- and F-ESRI. The comparative analysis of the ESRI trends shows a double-level social divergence of Southern Europe. Southern Europe is significantly diverging from the rest of Europe (while we have a substantial convergence between Eastern and Northern Europe). At the same time, while Eastern and Northern Europe are experiencing a moderate internal convergence (i.e., convergence among the regions within each macro-region), Southern Europe presents a marked internal divergence in the considered period: this makes a strong case for a carefully place-based analysis particularly for the regions presenting the most problematic performances