

## Editorial

Well-being and social benefits might be the keywords of the articles in this issue of STSS. The multi-dimensionality of the well-being concept is often highlighted in relevant discussions (Land et al. 2011). It is debated whether well-being should be measured with objective or subjective measures. There have been academic debates and studies on well-being since the 1960s (Noll, 2004). The debates were mainly driven by criticism of the use of GDP and the need for alternative indicators and interpretations of well-being. The publication of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report in 2009 on the measurement of economic performance and social progress contributed to following discussions (see Stiglitz et al. 2009). Today, the common view is that objective and subjective indicators (which both have their advantages and disadvantages) should be used in combination in the measurement of well-being. Objective social indicators are indicators that reflect social facts independently of personal assessments, while subjective indicators reflect a person's individual perception and assessment of social conditions (Noll, 2004). Subjective well-being means that individuals are considered to be the best judges of what constitutes a good life (Graham 2010). Subjective well-being encompasses both the emotional aspect of beings and doings (satisfaction with the current state) and the aspect of opportunities (capability) because well-being depends on external conditions as well as internal psychological resources, such as optimism, adaptability, self-image, and so on (Dolan et al. 2011; Kahneman et al. 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2011).

However, social security systems should play an important role in increasing well-being and decreasing social inequalities in society. It is accepted within the scope of the role of the welfare state to provide a minimum income guarantee to individuals and families, to facilitate the prevention of certain social risks, and to offer good living conditions to individuals in society through social welfare. However, the importance of the role of social benefits differentiates in various welfare state regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1999).

The articles of this issue concentrate on subjective as well as objective measures of well-being as well as the role of social benefits in decreasing social inequality. The first paper by Robert (2019) investigates the impact of various demographic and social factors on subjective well-being in Hungary. The analysis confirms the previous findings of a low level of subjective well-being in Hungary in international as well as temporal comparisons. However, Hungarian society is highly divided on the basis of demographic and socio-economic factors influencing the level of subjective well-being.

The second article by Mareeva and Lezhina (2019) analyses income stratification in Russia and its dynamics in recent decades. The authors conclude that income stratification has substantially transformed over the last 20 years: the middle-income group has been increasing while the low and the high income groups have been decreasing. The article also makes a methodological contribution by suggesting a specific stratification scale.

The article by Skuciene and Lazutka (2019) analyses the impact of social benefits on income inequality and poverty over the life course in the Baltic States. Their analysis indicates that low spending on social protection only reduces income inequality and poverty in these states to a modest degree. The poverty rates are highest for children, unemployed and old people.

The last article by Kriisk (2019) concentrates on regulative structures and spending patterns of locally distributed social benefit schemes in Estonia and their impact on inter-municipal inequality. Kriisk states that centrally framed schemes are associated with stable or decreasing inter-municipal inequalities. Her results emphasise the complexity of central-local regulations and reveal considerable changes in the central-local power structure.

## References

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