

1. Research project objectives/Research hypothesis

A broadly understood **research problem** studied in this project is the intergenerational relation in the socio-economic sense and its determinants in the era of ageing and often declining populations in European countries. Undertaking and conducting studies on this research problem requires realization of the following research objectives:

- **A theoretical objective:** to define an intergenerational fairness as the multidimensional phenomenon (category) in the socio-economic terms and to identify and characterize its dimensions.
- **A methodological objective:** to develop the concept of the measurement and evaluation of the dimensions of intergenerational fairness in socio-economic terms.
- **An empirical objective:** to compare selected dimensions of intergenerational fairness in socio-economic terms across different welfare state regimes.

In this project, at this initial stage of formulating theoretical, conceptual and methodological framework, we assume that intergenerational fairness is always perceived in socio-economic terms and we define it as striving for a fair distribution of the welfare (including especially income/GDP) between generations.

The realization of the objectives formulated above allows us to answer the following research questions:¹

- **Research question 1:** How does the change in the age structure of population in the European countries impact the proportion of welfare distribution between generations?
- **Research question 2:** How do the relations between state and free market or between social politics and market economy impact different dimensions of intergenerational fairness?
- **Research question 3:** What is the model of socio-economic policy that supports intergenerational fairness?

2. Research projects methodology

Answering the questions formulated above will be possible due to application of a broad comparative study of the intergenerational fairness across different welfare state regimes. First, we will group studied European countries into welfare state regimes. The grouping criteria will refer to the relation between state and free market or between social policy and market economy. Afterwards, we will compare these groups in terms of different dimensions of intergenerational fairness and assess (1) how the regimes differ in terms of this fairness and, (2) which features of them enforce this fairness, and which weaken it. The methods employed which allow us to group many countries into regimes as well as to study the relationship between the features of the regimes and the level of intergenerational fairness, will be mainly based on multivariate statistical analysis (grouping methods: hierarchical agglomerative clustering, k-means clustering) and regression models. The other methods employed in the project will be also the critical literature analysis, monographic method as well as studies on documents.

3. Expected impact of the research project on the development of science, civilization and society

The results of the project will allow to fill the methodological, empirical, theoretical and conceptual as well as cognitive gap in the field of comparative analysis of intergenerational fairness across different welfare state regimes. The results will contribute to economics, mainly to its following disciplines or sub-disciplines: pension economics, population economics, welfare economics, social policy and demographics.

The results of our project will have also important societal value and indicate possible direction of socio-economic policy enforcing intergenerational fairness. Moreover, through the popularization of the result of our project, we hope to increase the societal awareness of the issue of intergenerational conflict and the consequences of the politicians' short-term decisions improving the situation of a given generation by the deterioration of the situation of another one.

¹ Since the theory of intergenerational fairness across different models of welfare state seems to be very weakly explored and developed (see section 2), it is difficult to formulate hypotheses concerning our research problem. We either do not want to propose or suggest any answers to our research questions. Hypothesis is in fact a different grammar form of research question (see Kotarbiński 1990, Ajdukiewicz 1975, Pietera 1975, as cited in Apanowicz 2005) and constitutes only a possible answer to this question. Therefore, in the case of studies on a poorly explored field of science, we find formulating research questions more justified than formulating hypotheses.