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### **Feminized poverty**

*According to the European Anti Poverty Network poverty is being feminized, since in 2015 women were more likely to experience poverty than men by 1,4 percentage points (the rate for women was 24,4% and 23% for men).<sup>1</sup>*

The 17<sup>th</sup> e-bulletin of The Observatory of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) belongs to the thematic area of “Women and Poverty”.

The indicators of The Observatory of the GSGE concerning the at-risk-of-poverty rate that the total population is facing, are examined by gender, age and household type. The rates of the indicators are calculated both before and after the state’s social provisions. These provisions include on the one side pensions and on the other social benefits,<sup>2</sup> while the sum of these provisions is defined as “social transfers”. As a result, a variety of indicators arises that is related with the at-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers (including pensions or not) and after. The at-risk-of-poverty rate is calculated as the percentage of persons (over the total population) with an equivalised disposable income below the ‘at-risk-of-poverty threshold’ (60% of the median equivalised disposable household income).

In this e-bulletin the focus will be on the at-risk-of-poverty rate that men and women are facing in Europe and in Greece. The rates will be represented according to the main welfare regimes that are being implemented in the European countries, documenting the impact of social transfers on reducing the at-risk-of-poverty rate. While, for Greece the dimensions of the phenomenon will be nailed out by gender, age and household type.

In particular, the statistical data are being represented according to the following indicators of the Observatory of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality:

- **At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers by gender and age**

The indicator shows the percentage of persons living in households at-risk-of-poverty rate.

- **At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers by household type**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/EAPN-2017-EAPN-Briefing-Gender-and-Poverty-final.pdf> (p.4)

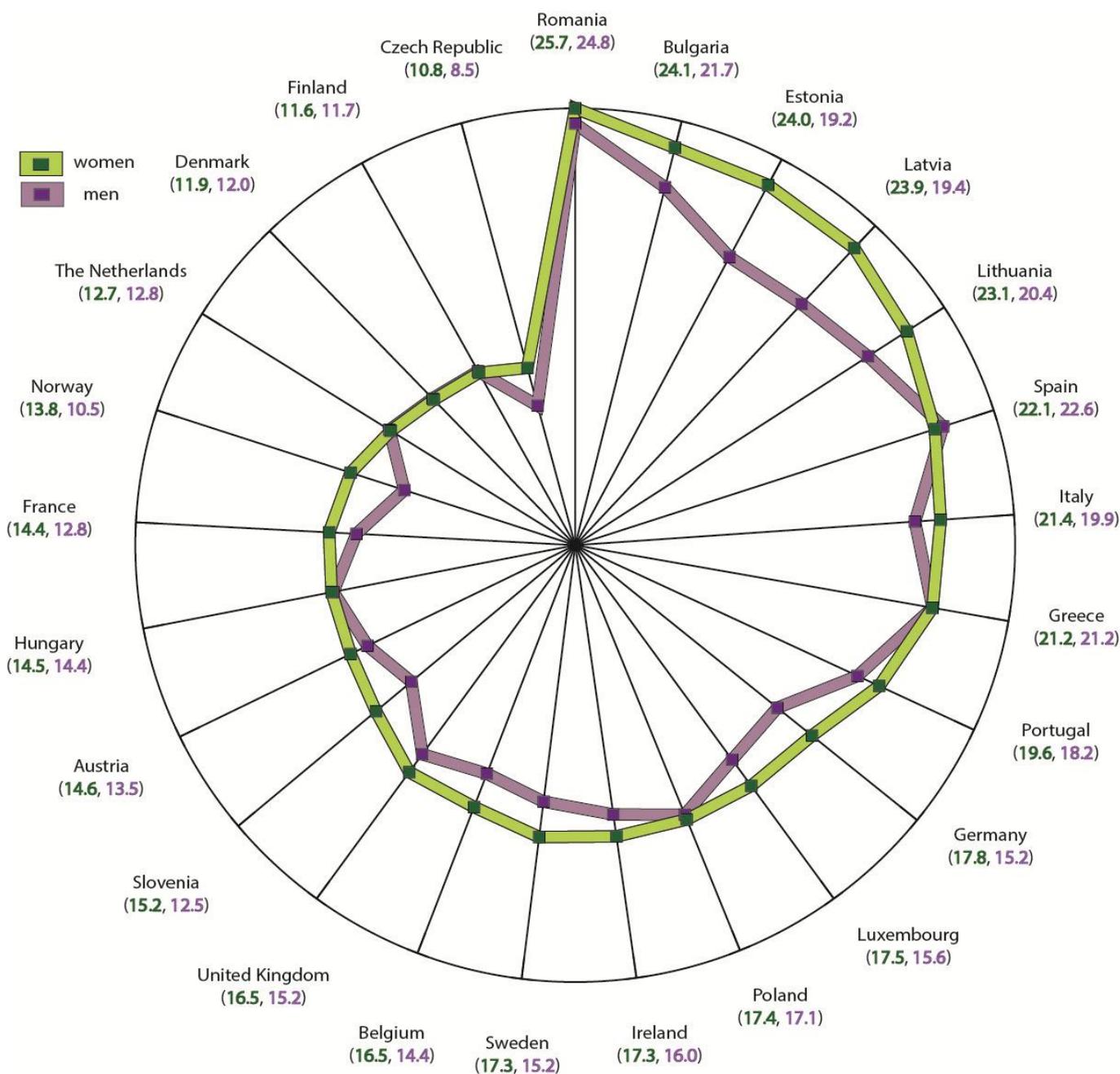
<sup>2</sup> Social benefits include: social assistance (the allowance of social solidarity for pensioners – EKAS, social dividend, a lump sum payment to poor households in mountainous and disadvantageous areas, allowances for children under 16 years old who live in poor households, allowances to repatriates, refugees, persons released from prison, drug-addicts, alcoholics, allowances to long-standing unemployed aged 45-65, benefits to households that faced an earthquake, flood etc) and allowances such as family, unemployment, sickness, disability/invalidity benefits/allowances as well as education allowances.

The indicator shows the percentage of persons living in households at-risk-of-poverty rate.

### The risk of poverty in Europe

In Figure 1 the percentages of at-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers are being represented by gender in 25 European countries for 2016 (income reference period 2015).

**Figure 1:** At-risk-of-poverty rate by country and gender (2016<sup>3</sup>)



<sup>3</sup> Income reference period 2015.

Examining the at-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers by gender, the highest percentages for women are observed in the Balkan peninsula (first is Rumania with 25,7% and second with 24,1% is Bulgaria), in the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and in South Europe (Spain, Italy, Greece with 21,2% and Portugal).

While, the lowest percentages are observed in the Scandinavian countries (Finland 11,6%, Denmark 11,9% and Norway 12,7%) and in the countries of central Europe (France 14,4%, Austria 14,6% and Belgium 16,5%).

In 2016, for the majority of the European countries, the at-risk-of-poverty rate for women was higher than men's, their difference is ranging from 0,1% (Hungary) to 4,8% (Estonia). In Greece, the last 2 years we can notice the same values between the percentages of men and women. At the same time, that specific year the at-risk-of-poverty rate for men in 4 member states of European Union was higher than that of women: the difference in Spain is 0,5%, while in the Netherlands, in Denmark and in Finland it is estimated at 0,1%.

Since the at-risk-of-poverty rate is affected by the social expenditure, the role of the state in its shaping is crucial. Therefore, we proceeded in the depiction of the percentages before and after social transfers for the countries that represent the 4 main welfare regimes in 2016. These regimes constitute the ideal types that the sociologist Gøsta Esping-Andersen<sup>4</sup> formed in order to categorize the systems of welfare state according to relations that are being developed among the state, the family and the market. We must acknowledge that this typology is schematic and might not be able to grasp the fluid nature of the never-ending transformation of societies, but it allows us to group European countries in a way that permits the extraction of useful conclusions.

More specifically, the role of the state in the **liberal** regime is limited, functioning as a safety net for those who cannot cover their needs from the market. As a result, specific social groups are being stigmatized and marginalized. The level of participation of women in the labor market is low, while the at-risk-of-poverty rate reaches the European average.

The **conservative-corporatist** regime functions in such a way that the social hierarchy is being maintained and the social provisions are covered by the state as well as the family and several non profit organizations, among which is the Church. Just as in the previous regime, the level of participation of women in the labor market is low, while the at-risk-of-poverty rate is at the European average.

The **social democratic** regime aims at the reduction of social inequalities created by the market. The expenses on social protection by the state are high. The level of women's participation in the labor market is high and the at-risk-of-poverty rate is at the lowest level among the European countries.

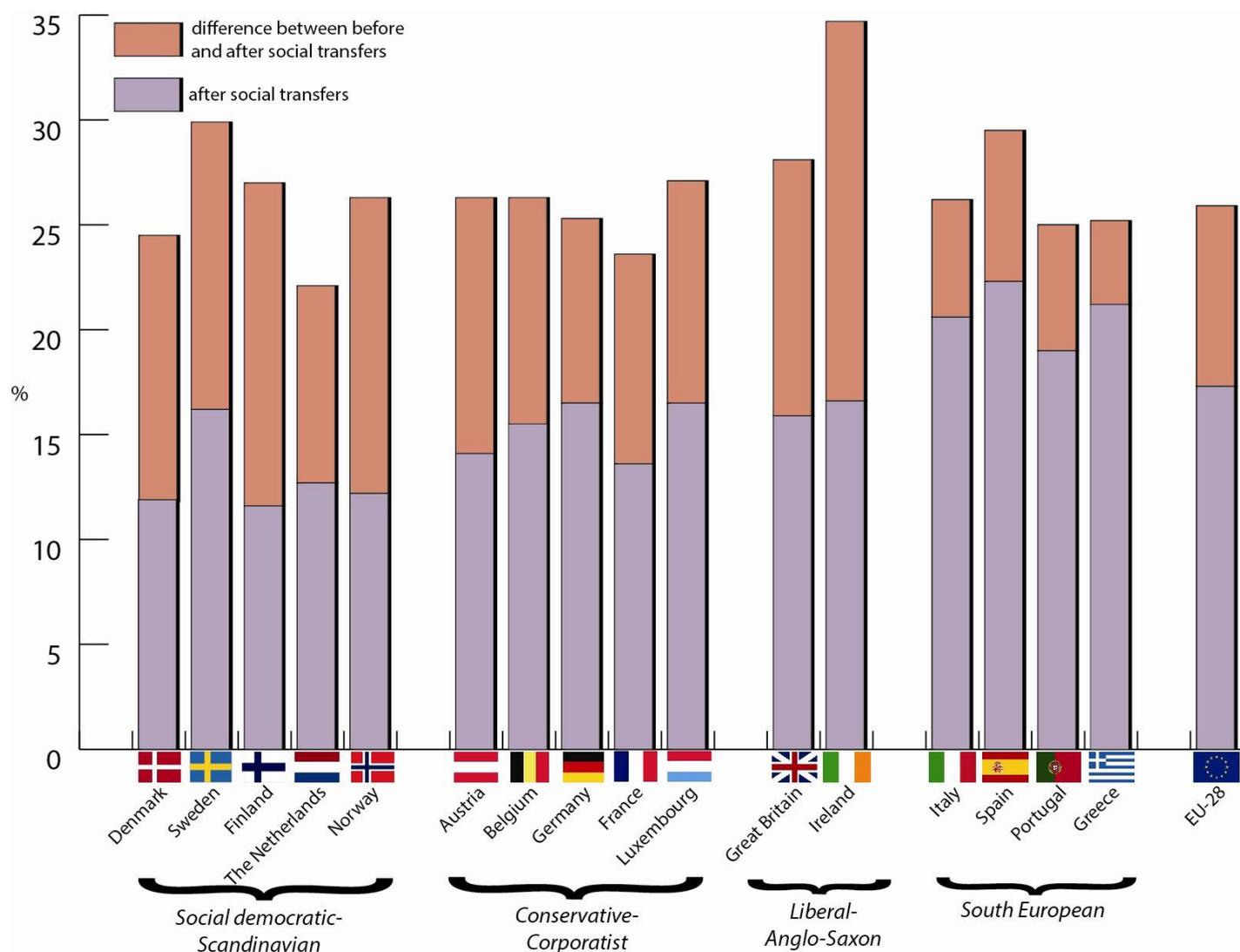
The **south European** regime is characterized by fragmentation with large gaps on social expenditure. Family networks emerge as the central inhibitory factor against poverty as a result of clientism and the incapability of the state to respond to the social needs. The level of participation of women in the labor market is low and the at-risk-of-poverty rate is at the highest level among the European countries.

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<sup>4</sup> Esping-Andersen, Gøsta (1999), *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press & Esping-Andersen, Gøsta (1990), *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Following, the difference between before and after social transfers is being represented. It is worth noting that in the at-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers, pensions are calculated as part of the total disposable income.

**Figure 2:** At-risk-of-poverty rate before and after social transfers by welfare regime (2016<sup>5</sup>)



In Figure 2 we notice that the countries of South Europe do not manage to reduce the risk of poverty through social transfers in a significant way. Significantly, the at-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers for Greece is 25,2%, while after social transfers it is reduced by 4%, reaching 21,2%. For Spain, the at-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers is 29,5% and after their provision it is diminished by 7,2%, documenting the most significant reduction of the at-risk-of-poverty rate in comparison to the rest of the countries that form the South European regime.

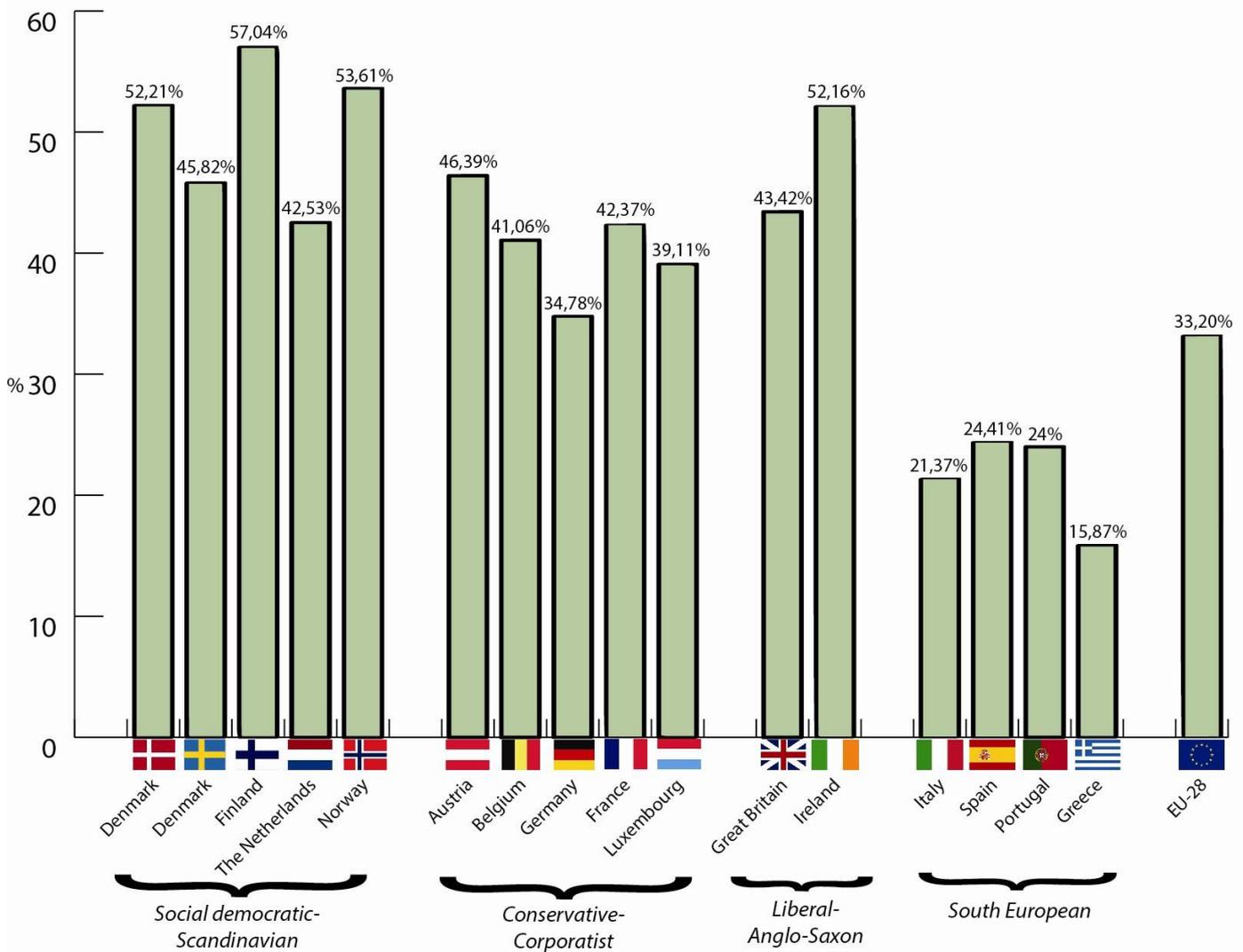
On the other side, the image of the Scandinavian countries is different. Denmark manages to reduce the at-risk-of-poverty rate by 12,7% and from 24,6% to reach 11,9%. Indicative of the different social policy that the states implement is the image of Norway, Austria and Belgium, countries that have the same percentage of at-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers,

<sup>5</sup> Income reference period 2015.

26,3%, while after social transfers the figures are: Norway 12,2%, Austria 14.1% and Belgium 15,5%.

The above are also depicted in Figure 3 that follows, where the impact of social transfers (excluding pensions) on the at-risk-of-poverty rate is represented by welfare regime.

**Figure 3: Impact of social transfers (excluding pensions) on the reduction of poverty by welfare regime (2016<sup>6</sup>)**



While comparing the at-risk-of-poverty rate before and after social transfers, the impact of social expenditure was lower for the countries of South Europe and higher for the Scandinavian countries. More thoroughly, from the 16 countries that represent the main regimes of welfare state, the greater impact can be observed in Finland (57,04%) and in Norway (53,61%), while Greece presents the lowest degree of reduction of the at-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers since the impact is 15,87%.

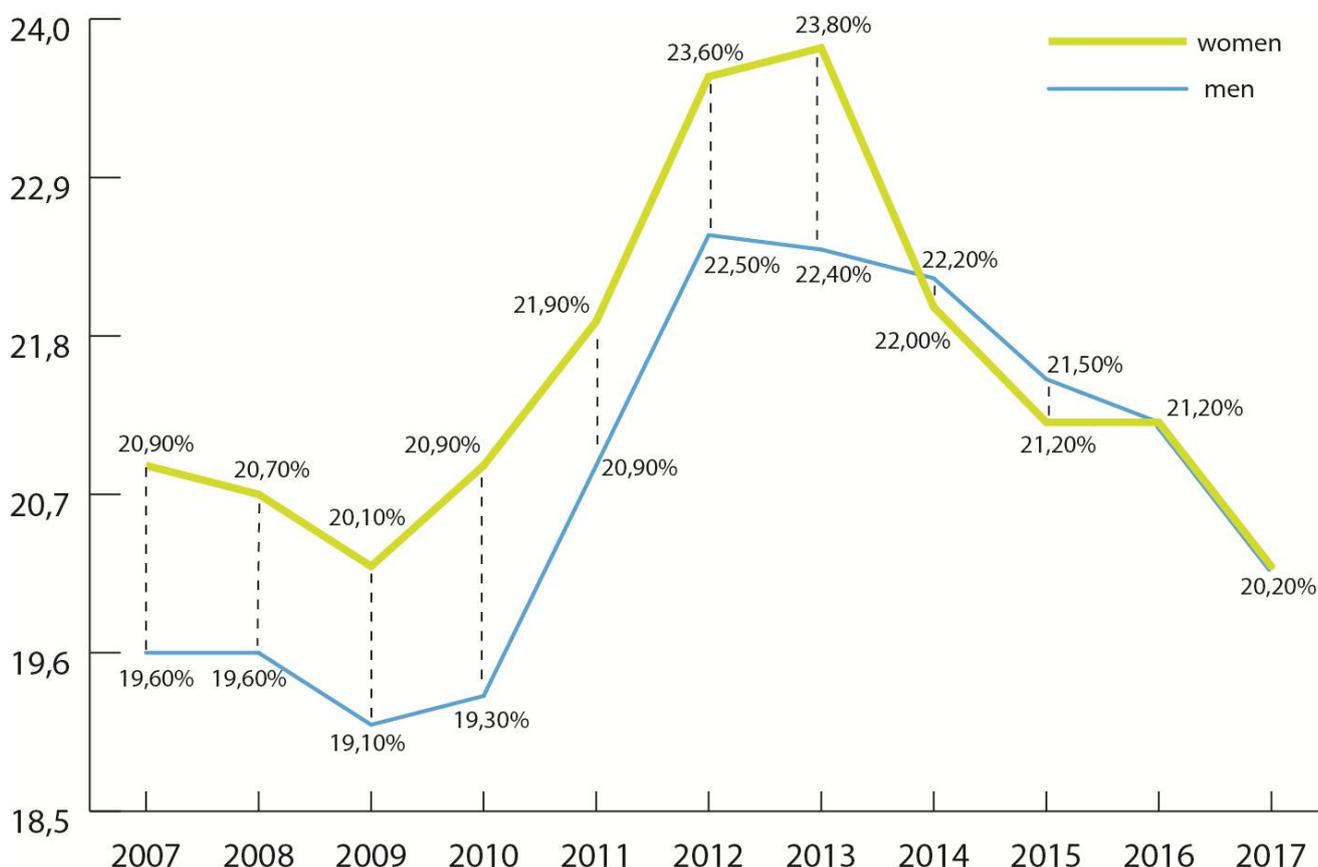
The percentages of the impact of social transfers in the corporatist regime range from 34,78% to 43,39%.

<sup>6</sup> Income reference period 2015.

## The risk of poverty in Greece

Examining the percentages of the risk of poverty after social transfers in Greece by gender during the period 2007-2017 we can export several significant conclusions.

**Figure 4:** Percentage of population in risk of poverty by gender (Greece, 2007-2017<sup>7</sup>)



First of all, the tendency of the indicator, as depicted in the figure, seems to follow a similar trajectory for both genders throughout the years. More specifically, the at-risk-of-poverty rate presents a slight reduction until 2009. An augmented trajectory follows until 2012, when the percentages start to decrease until 2017 and finally reach the rates of 2007. Nevertheless, focusing on the gendered dimension of the indicator, it is worth noting that 2013 is the year that the risk of poverty for women reaches the highest level of the decade, while the percentage of men has already begun its reduction.

At the same time, the gender gap differentiates through the years. Until 2014 the percentage of the risk of poverty for women was higher than that of men and their difference ranged from 1,6% (2010) to 0,9% (2012). However, in 2014 the percentage of the risk of poverty for women seems to fall lower than that of men, reaching a difference of 0,3% in 2015 and from then on to follow a similar trajectory in 2016 (21,2% for both genders) and 2017 (20,2% for both genders).

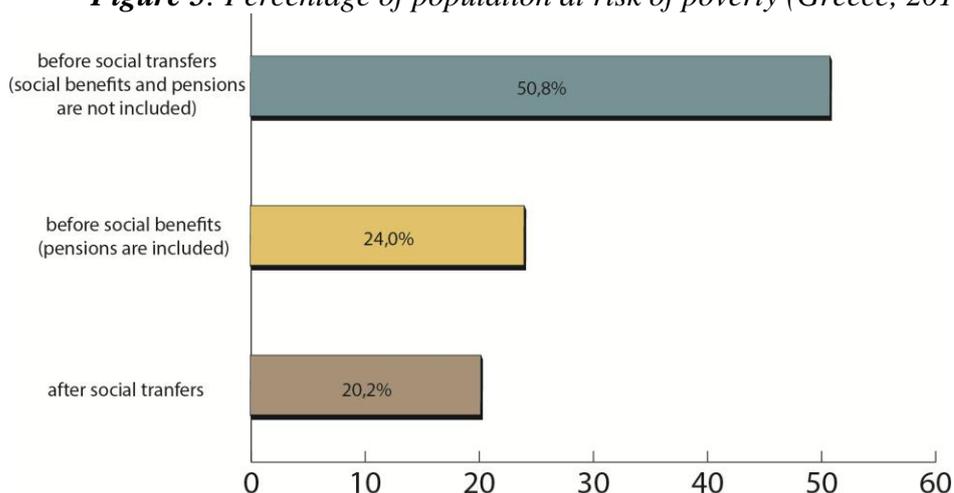
<sup>7</sup> Income reference period 2006-2016.

A second conclusion regards the fact that this apparent “equality” concerning the risk of poverty for both genders, constitutes a return to the pro-crisis levels for women (20,1% in 2009) and a worsening situation for men (19,1% in 2009). So the percentages under study do not allow us to discuss of an accomplishment of equality between the two genders, but of a worsening financial situation for both women and men.<sup>8</sup>

Another factor of the gender dimension of the phenomenon of poverty is the fact that women are, also, faced with the challenge to balance their personal and professional life, since until today the burden of child-care and care of sick or aged members of the family falls into women’s arms.<sup>9</sup>

In Figures 2 and 3 that are mentioned above, in which the differences in the percentages of the risk of poverty before and after social transfers for the countries of Europe in 2016 were depicted, we noticed that the rates of Greece were the lowest. If pensions are not included in the equivalent disposable income before social transfers and are calculated as part of the social transfers, as it is the common practice of European surveys, we will notice that the risk of poverty for the total population before social transfers reaches 50,8%.

**Figure 5: Percentage of population at risk of poverty (Greece, 2017<sup>10</sup>)**



In 2017 the at-risk-poverty rate after the distribution of pensions was 24%, while after the expenditure of social transfers it was reduced by 3,8%. Social transfers constitute the 32,2% of the equivalised disposable household income of the country, pensions constitute the 85,9% of social transfers whereas social benefits the 14,1% of them.

Taking into consideration all the above, we arrive at the conclusion that a large amount of the households family planning is based on the distribution of pensions, reinforcing the structure of the south European regime, where family networks function as an informal net against poverty.

Moving forward to the at-risk-of-poverty rate by age group, it is worth noting that the percentage before social transfers for people over 65 years old is 87,4%, while after the distribution of pensions and before the distribution of social benefits it decreases to 14,7%.

<sup>8</sup> Karamesini, M. (2015), *Women and Austerity*, Athens: Nisos [In Greek].

<sup>9</sup> Alipranti – Maratou, L., Katsis, A. & P. Papadimitriou (eds.) (2016), *Work-Life (Un)balance*, Athens: Family and Childcare Centre [In Greek].

<sup>10</sup> Income reference period 2016.

age groups	total	women	men
0-17	30,9%		
18-64	25,3%	25,3%	25,3%
65+	14,7%	16,2%	12,8%
total	24,0%	24,2%	23,8%

**Table 1:** At-risk-of-poverty before social transfers<sup>11</sup> by gender and age group (Greece, 2017<sup>12</sup>)

Correspondingly, the share of persons at-risk-of-poverty before social transfers aged 18-64 years amounts to 42,2%, while when only pensions are included in social transfers and not social

benefits the share amounts to 25,3%.

In Table 1 we notice that the at-risk-of-poverty rate for the age group 65 years as well as for the total population of women is higher than men per 3,4% and 0,4 percentage points respectively.

age groups	total	women	men
0-17	24,5%		
18-64	21,7%	21,7%	21,8%
65+	12,4%	13,5%	11,1%
total	20,2%	20,2%	20,2%

**Table 2:** At-risk-of-poverty after social transfers by gender and age group (Greece, 2017<sup>13</sup>)

This difference seems to mitigate after social benefits for the total population, but the at-risk-of-poverty rate for women aged 65 years and over is 2,4 percentage points higher than that of

men of the same age group.

From Tables 1 and 2 the significant contribution of pensions in the reduction of the risk of poverty for the total population over 65 years old becomes more evident, since the difference after social benefits amounts to 2,3 percentage points, while for the same age group of women amounts to 2,7% and for men to 1,7%.

<sup>11</sup> In the disposable income pensions are included, but social benefits are excluded.

<sup>12</sup> Income reference period 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Income reference period 2016.

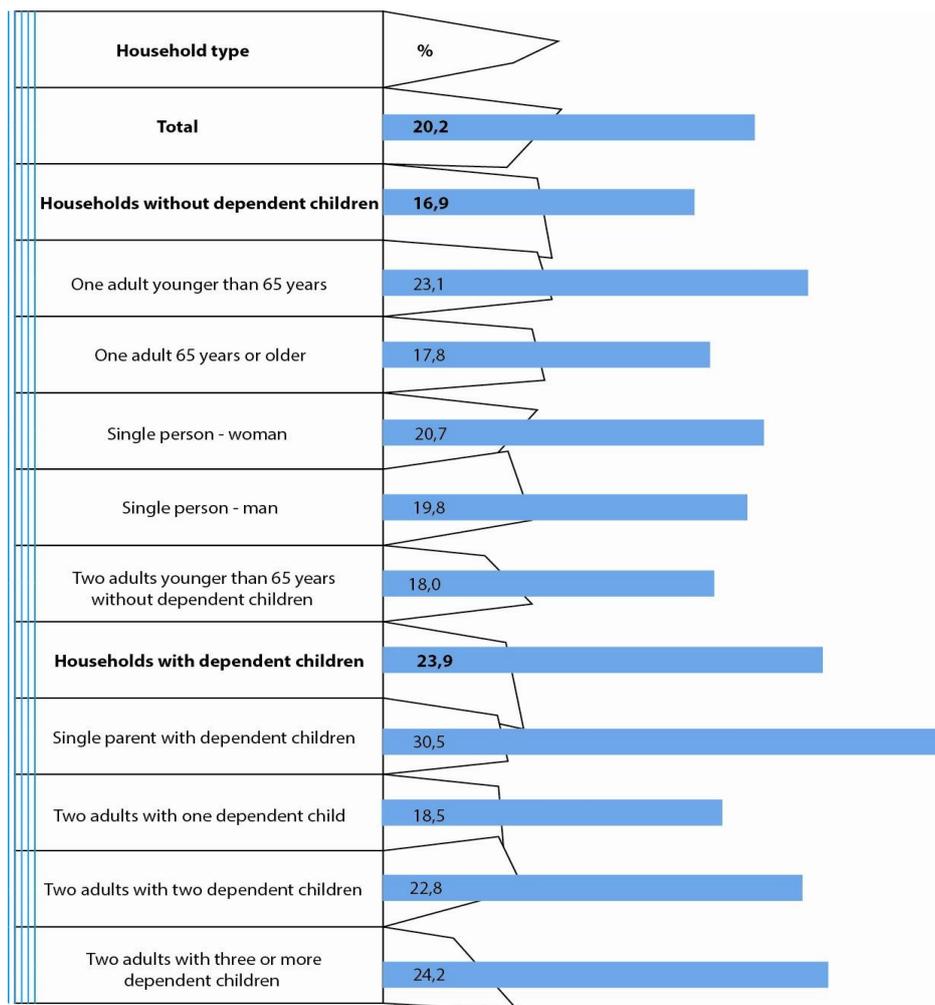
age groups	total	women	men
60+	13,6%	14,2%	12,9%
75+	12,7%	15,2%	9,5%
0-59	22,7%	22,6%	22,8%
0-74	21,1%	20,8%	21,3%

**Table 3:** At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers for aged persons by gender and age group (Greece, 2017<sup>14</sup>)

The gender gap over 75 years old seems to double in comparison to the one found between women and men over 65 years old that we noticed in Table 2. The at-risk-of-poverty rate after

social transfers for persons aged 75 years and over amounts to 15,2% for women and to 9,5% for men, noting a 5,7 percentage points difference.

Below are presented the at-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers per household type.



**Table 4:** At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers by household type (Greece, 2017<sup>15</sup>)

The at-risk-of-poverty rate that households without dependent children are facing amounts to 16,9% and is lower than the one that households with dependent children are facing (23,9%).

Single parent households with dependent children are facing the greatest risk of poverty, since almost 1/3 of them are at the risk of poverty (30,5%).

<sup>14</sup> Income reference period 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Income reference period 2016.



*The sources used are: Greek Statistical Authority, Eurostat, European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN).*

**paratiritirio.isotita.gr** is a special website of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality designed to include, analyze, process and diffuse statistical data and indicators for gender equality policies.

Its goal is mapping gender differentiations in 12 basic policy areas and the monitoring of any relevant trends and advances in Greece. Moreover, it includes 82 gender indicators based either on the Beijing Platform for Action or on specific national priorities and is followed by metadata.

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