

Deprivation and Social Exclusion*

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with the definition and the measurement of social exclusion, both at the individual and at the aggregate level. Social exclusion is characterized by “disintegration and fragmentation of social relations and hence a loss of social cohesion. For individuals in particular groups, social exclusion represents a progressive process of marginalization leading to economic deprivation and various forms of social and cultural disadvantage” (European commission’s programme specification for targeted socio-economic research). Measures of social exclusion have been proposed and used in empirical studies (Bradshaw, Williams, Levitas, Pantazis, Patsios, Townsend, Gordon and Middleton, 2000, Tsakloglou and Papadopoulos, 2001). However, these measures capture only some aspects of the phenomenon and, often, the theoretical presuppositions are unclear. In this paper, we focus on the idea of social exclusion as having two basic determinants: the lack of identification with other members of society and the aggregate alienation experienced by an agent with respect to those who are better off. We adopt an axiomatic approach to develop a theoretical framework for the measurement of social exclusion. Finally, we apply some of the measures suggested in the theoretical part of the paper to the relevant groups in EU member states from 1994 to 2000. *Journal of Economic Literature* Classification No.: D63.

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