

New directions in the measurement of social progress

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The assessment of the measure of social progress (development, well-being) and its changes has been on the agenda of science (and politics) for many decades. Despite numerous initiatives, proposals and tentatives, the concepts themselves have not been clarified yet. At the same time, the demand to measure progress is stronger than ever before.

In the past decades GDP and its value measured at purchasing power parity have played the role of the principal indicator of development. Today, as a consequence of the growing importance of environmental considerations and the sharpening of social inequalities, it has become clear for science and politics that the multidimensional notion of social progress must be examined and managed in a complex way, and its measurement requires also new initiatives.

The current initiatives aimed to measure social progress develop in four directions:

- The „correction” of GDP calculations with environmental aspects
- Establishment of indicator sets
- Development of composite indicators
- Measurement of well-being (happiness) with subjective indicators

In 2007, the OECD launched an international project to measure the progress of societies. The Hungarian Central Statistical Office has also joined the project. In September of this year, the European Commission issued a Communication on the tasks of measuring social progress. A Commission comprising prominent Nobel Prize laureates and renowned experts was set up to clarify the notion of progress and elaborate proposals for its measurement. In October, a world conference will deal with the subject.

The lecture gives an overview of the initiatives aimed at measuring social progress. It presents statistical methodological issues, dilemmas and expected tasks related to the creation and development of the measurement.