



## Editorial

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# Twenty Years of Human Security:

## Theoretical Foundations and Practical Applications

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Theoretical Foundations and Practical Applications  
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*Editorial*

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Editorial

IVICA ĐORĐEVIĆ, PhD, MARINA GLAMOTCHAK, PhD,  
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# **TWENTY YEARS OF HUMAN SECURITY: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**



2015.

Vladimir MENTUS\*

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## ECONOMIC CRISIS AND SELF-EVALUATION OF ECONOMIC SECURITY IN THE EU

**Abstract:** In this study the effects of the recent global economic crisis on the self-evaluation of economic security of the EU population were examined, by a statistical elaboration of the *European Quality of Life Survey* database. When looking at the differences between the EU member countries, in terms of the self-evaluation of ability to satisfy one's own needs, the economic crisis has left the greatest negative effect in Greece and Slovakia; in terms of self-evaluation of job security, the greatest effect was in Greece and Cyprus. The data make it possible for the states to be ranked by average self-evaluation of economic security of their populations, and by the share of the population that can be classified as economically insecure – in 2007 before the outbreak of the economic crisis and five years later. Also, the data from 2012 show that the self-evaluation of economic security is, on a country-level, positively correlated with GDP per capita, Human Development Index and Corruption Perception Index, and negatively correlated with the Gini coefficient; on an individual level, the economic security is positively correlated with the feeling of happiness, subjective general health, the mental well-being, the level of education, the satisfaction with social life and negatively correlated with the feeling of social exclusion. Finally, the self-evaluation of job security was evidenced to be a better predictor of job satisfaction than the evaluation of ability to satisfy one's own needs.

**Keywords:** *economic security, economic crisis, the European Union*

### 1. INTRODUCTION: THE IMPACT OF GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS ON THE EU – EFFECTS ON ECONOMIC SECURITY

Although the effects of the current global economic crisis are still quite conspicuous today, seven years after its outbreak, it can be said that the global financial management has returned to calmer waters (Mugge 2014). The causes of the crisis or the ways of its overcoming will not be discussed in detail here;<sup>2</sup> its global consequences, however, are

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2 Briefly, it can be said that crisis was mainly influenced by various factors “including indiscriminate capital movement, excessive financial deregulation and high concentration of income in the top distribution” (De Vogli



worth further highlighting: for example, in the period 2007-2009 the biggest drop of the global economy was noticeable since the World War II (the drop of approximately 2.2 to 1.8 percent annually of the world per capita output); the crisis was taking momentum in both the developed and less developed parts of the world, with a global increase of 30 million unemployed persons during only 2012; markets around the world experienced the huge disruptions in asset and credit markets, declines of wealth, and bankruptcies (Claessens et al. 2014).<sup>3</sup>

Expanding to the whole world, after its outbreak in the United States, the crisis has not bypassed countries of the European Union. According to the World Bank,<sup>4</sup> in 2009 there was a noticeable decline of GDP per capita in all EU countries, except Sweden and Bulgaria. During the first two years of crisis, the largest decline was registered in Latvia (20%), Lithuania (20%), Romania (19%) and Poland (19%). Observing at the level of the whole EU, in 2012 the GDP per capita declined for over 10% compared to 2007. Also, according to Eurostat,<sup>5</sup> in 2009 unemployment has soared compared with the previous year in all member states. Looking at the whole EU, it rose from 7% in 2007 to 11% in 2013 - especially in Greece (from 8% to 28%), Spain (from 8% to 26%), Cyprus (from 4% to 16%), and Portugal (from 9% to 16%).<sup>6</sup> In addition, the EU was experiencing "low levels of consumption and private investment, a bank liquidity squeeze, lack of trust and negative expectations in the financial markets and between banks and investors, and high public deficits and debts" (Tridico 2013:1).

The EU countries had different responses to the crisis. To some of them, such as Greece, Ireland or Portugal, there have been austerity measures imposed and major cuts in public spending by the IMF, the European Commission and the European Central Bank. However, according to the IMF, these measures have proven to be extremely unfavorable for the recovery of these countries, which was the reason why it was relaxed with their implementation (World Economic Outlook report, as cited in Karanikolos 2013). On the other hand, the countries which have opted for fiscal stimulus, such as Germany, were recovering significantly faster from the effects of the crisis.<sup>7</sup> The impact of the crisis and austerity measures led to the growth of poverty and social exclusion in more than half of

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2013a:391). Vuletić (2013) agrees that the source of the crisis can be traced in large social inequalities (that reduced aggregate demand, which led to higher structural unemployment). In that sense, overcoming the crisis depends on "the struggle between the transnational capitalist class (for which the reduction in inequality is not in the interest because it would lead to the decline of its overall economic and social power) and groups representing the rest of society. [...] Preservation of the existing order is possible only by gradual establishment of some form of authoritarian regime. Changes, on the other hand, can lead to outcomes that have not been historically tested" (Vuletić 2013:29).

3 According to Stiglitz (2009), there are several ways in which crisis is affecting all the countries: the direct impact on financial markets - access to finance was becoming a problem around the world, especially in developing countries; through the unprecedented fall in exports; through remittances and labor flows, etc.

4 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

5 [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics)

6 In other words, 26.6 million of active people was unemployed (whereby youth unemployment is particularly worrying), which is historical maximum of unemployment in the EU (Leahy et al. 2014).

7 As, however, the crisis is global, response to it has also to be global, and not at the state level. However, this requires the establishment of global institutions with regulatory function that would, among other things, have a role in preventing future crises. Such institutions, however, do not exist: those that exist, rather than functioning in the interest of all, favor the interests of individual countries (and classes - V. M.), without taking into account other countries (and classes - V. M.) (Kovač 2009).

the member states, to reduce of these in just two countries, and no difference in others; there was an increase in the number of social assistance benefits, an increase in the cost of living and rising prices of basic goods, and the decline in the national median households income, especially of those of low incomes (Frazer, Marlier 2012).<sup>8</sup>

Associated with the previously exposed, there is perhaps the key issue of harm of crisis to material well-being and, in that sense, the issue of extent to which the economic crisis has left a visible effect on economic security within the EU.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the unemployment rate, a factor of crucial importance here is the changing of amount of the real wages. In Spain, Ireland, Lithuania, Denmark and Latvia, incomes of the lowest households had been declined more than 5% a year on average in both 2007 and 2012. Real household incomes, especially of the poor households, dramatically reduced due to changes to the tax and benefits systems and cuts in public sector wages (Bontout, Lokajickova 2013). In most countries, with the exceptions of Luxembourg, Portugal and the United Kingdom, the first blow of the crisis was absorbed by shorter hours, which caused substantial labour hoarding and “to the extent that shorter working hours translated into less paid hours, employees may, in any case, have suffered a decline in their real weekly salary” (Paul de Beer 2012:5).

So far the objective indicators of the effects of the crisis have been exposing. However, objective data could often overlook implicit components relevant to the variable of interest (Jahedi, Mendez 2014; Marks et al. 2006; Veenhoven 2001). Attitudes and feelings of people about their own economic security can represent a useful addition to the studies of this field. Self-evaluation of economic security, especially in the EU during the crisis context, so far has not been given enough attention in the scientific literature. That is the main focus in the following part.

## 2. METHOD

The data about the self-evaluation of economic security came from the *European Quality of Life Survey*.<sup>10</sup> They are suitable primarily because it is a periodic survey whose penultimate wave conducted in 2007 and the last in 2012, which allowed chronologically to compare the average self-evaluation of the economic security before the outbreak of the

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8 Parallel to economic crisis, there has been a global decline of trust in political elections and civic organizations (De Vogli 2013b). According to Eurofund (2012, as cited in Leahy et al. 2014) during the crisis, the EU has been characterized by the decline of trust in public institutions, especially the government and parliament, and especially in countries most affected by the crisis; besides that, there is an increased perception of rifts between racial and ethnic groups, as well as the rich and the poor. There has also been “negative health impacts accumulating in countries that have been severely affected by the economic crisis and by austerity packages that have cut health budgets, particularly in Greece, Portugal and Spain” (British Medical Journal 2013, as cited in Ibidem: 15). All these factors, understandably, have led to growth of euroscepticism (Katseli 2013).

9 Economic security could be defined as “the degree to which individuals are protected against hardship causing economic losses” (Hacker et al. 2014:S7), which is the definition that has been adopted by many authors. Osberg (1998:23) gives another definition: “the anxiety produced by a lack of economic safety, i.e. by an inability to obtain protection against subjectively significant potential economic losses”. Osberg also states that concept of economic security is important, among other things, because of its direct impact on individual well-being. For example, job security is found to be one of the most important sources of job satisfaction (Evans and Kelly 1995, as cited in Osberg 1998). Economic (along with food, health, environmental, personal, community and political) security is one of the main area of human security concept.

10 <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/availability/index.htm>

financial and economic crisis, on the one hand, to the advanced time phase of the crisis, on the other. The sample of the 2007 wave consisted of 31,626 respondents aged at least 18, from the then 27 EU member states, and the 2012 wave sample consisted of 35,516 respondents, aged also at least 18, from the same countries (i.e. excluding Croatia, which became a member in the meantime).

The perception of economic security is measured by two indicators. The first is a subjective assessment of respondents on the degree of difficulty of satisfying their needs through the monthly income of their households. The following question was used for its measurement: "Thinking of your household's total monthly income: is your household able to make ends meet?" The second is a subjective assessment of the security of the job. The following question was used for its measurement: "Using this card, how likely or unlikely do you think it is that you might lose your job in the next 6 months?"<sup>11</sup> Answers on both questions are given at the six-point scale.

Self-evaluation of economic security has been analyzed at a country-level in 2007 on the one hand, and in 2012 on the other. More specifically, the changes of the average values of economic security have been observed as well as changes of the share of the respondents who can be classified as economically insecure. In addition to the changes in the perception of security, the correlations of the various country-level and individual-level variables with the economic security indicators were analyzed. The former are the economic prosperity of the country, as measured by GDP per capita, income inequalities level, as measured by the Gini coefficient, Human Development Index, and finally, the level of corruption, measured by the Corruption perceptions index. This data originate from the same *EQLS 2012* database. Besides that, on an individual level, the correlations with the feeling of happiness (as measured by ten-point scale) have been measured, subjective general health (as measured by five-point scale), mental well-being (as measured by WHO-5 mental well-being scale, which is composed of five items: over the last two weeks "I have felt cheerful and in good spirits", "I have felt calm and relaxed", "I have felt active and vigorous", "I woke up feeling fresh and rested" and "My daily life has been filled with things that interest me" - where the answers are given on a six-point scale), satisfaction with social life (measured by ten-point scale) and social exclusion (measured by *EQLS* social exclusion index, which is composed of following items: "Life has become so complicated today that I almost can't find my way", "I feel left out of society", "I feel that the value of what I do is not recognized by others", "Some people look down on me because of my job situation or income" - where the answers are given on a five-point Likert scale).

In order to determine the share of the population that can be considered economically insecure, the cross-tabulations were done: the proportion of those who can be considered insecure in terms of ability to satisfy their own needs include those respondents who answered on foregoing question with "With great difficulty" and "With difficulty". The proportion of those who might be considered to have insecure job are those who answered the foregoing question with "Very likely" and "Quite likely".

11 One of the problems with the concept of economic security, among others, is how to conceive the interplay of multiple economic risks (Hacker et al. 2014). By the way, having stable job and enough income are two main aspects of economic security, at least according to a large part of the EU population: unemployment (54%) and not enough high salaries and wages (48%) are mentioned as two main explanations of poverty, while the all others are cited by less than 30% of respondents (TNS Europe 2012).

### 3. RESULTS

As for the possibilities of meeting needs, before the outbreak of the crisis, on average, the highest ranked were the populations of Denmark (4.8), Luxembourg (4.64) and Sweden (4.63) and the lowest were the populations of Bulgaria (2.6), Hungary (2.78) and Romania (3.02). In 2012, the situation was similar – the populations of Denmark (4.5), Luxembourg (4.5) and Sweden (4.5) were at the highest and the populations of Greece (2.47), Bulgaria (2.71) and Hungary (2.74) were at the lowest rank (Figure 1). Bulgaria is an interesting case

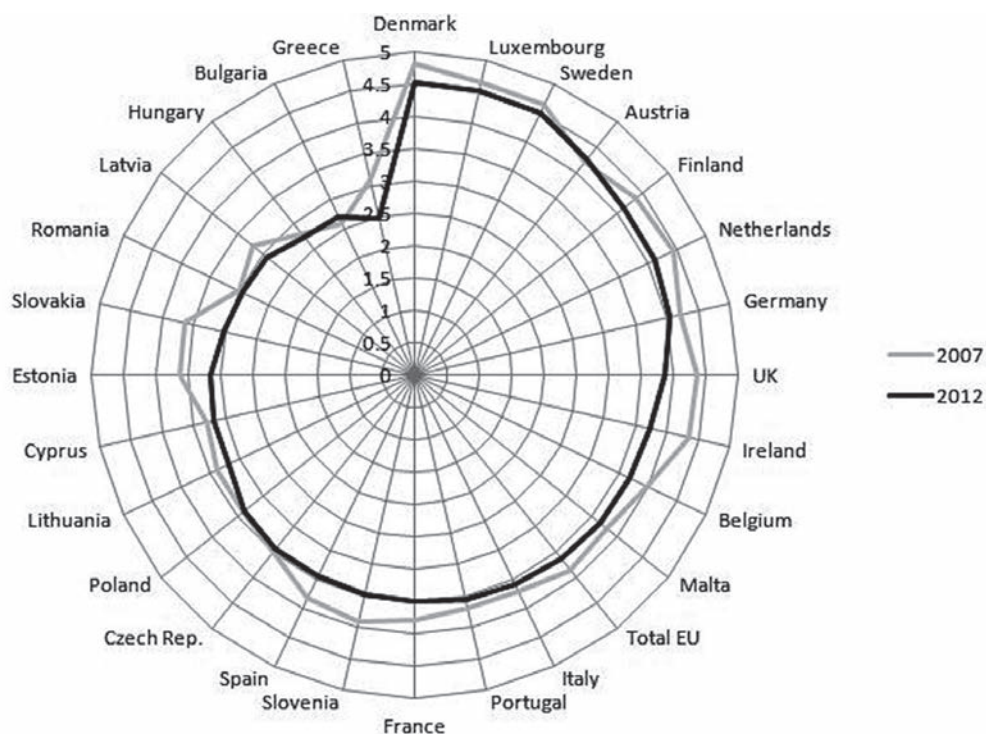


Figure 1: Self-evaluation of ability to satisfy one's own needs by country, in 2007 and 2012

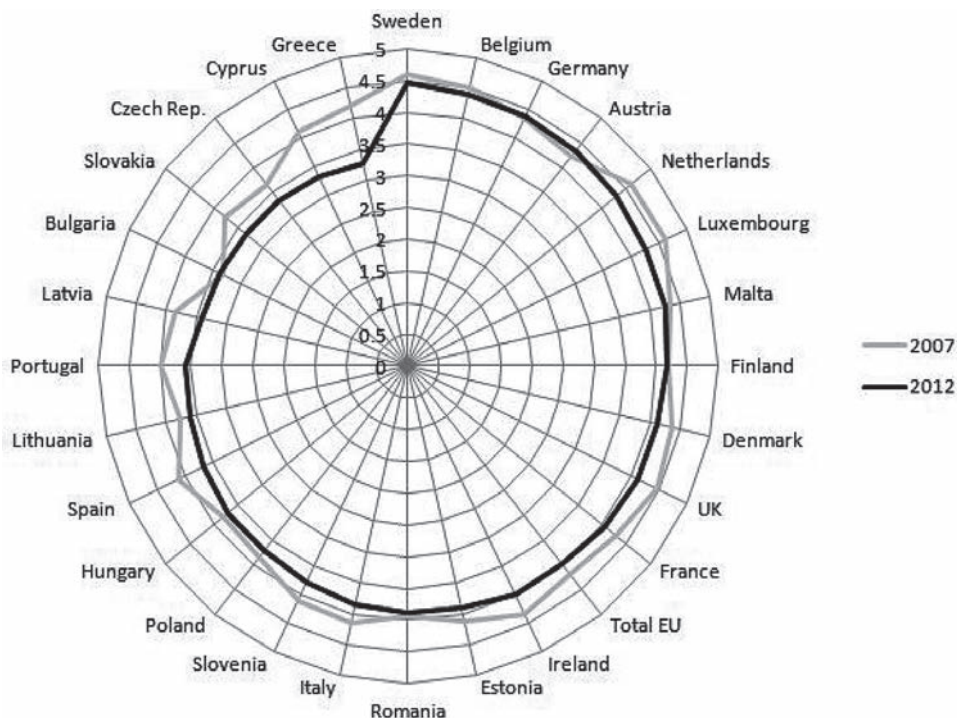


Figure 2: Self-evaluation of job security by country, in 2007 and 2012

because it is the only country (along with Austria), where a crisis, observing in this way, had not left visible negative effect (households more easily meet their needs), but it still belongs to the group of the most vulnerable countries. Also, the greatest decrease ratio compared to pre-crisis period was in Greece, Slovakia and Ireland. Finally, looking at the entire EU, an overall negative impact of the crisis on the self-evaluation of ability to satisfy own needs can be seen (average value drop from 3.86 to 3.63).

Before the crisis, subjectively the biggest likelihood of losing their own jobs had the populations of Bulgaria (3.31), of the Czech Republic (3.66) and Slovakia and Lithuania (3.77), and the smallest the populations of Netherlands and Sweden (4.61) and Luxembourg (4.6) (Figure 2). Five years later, the most insecure about having the job felt the residents of Greece (3.28), Cyprus (3.3) and the Czech Republic (3.33), and the most secure populations of Sweden (4.47), Belgium (4.4), and Germany (4.38). Austria, Germany and Bulgaria are the only EU countries where, during the observed period, there was no drop of the self-evaluation of their own job security. On the other hand, of the remaining countries, the largest average decline has occurred in Greece and Cyprus. Finally, looking at the whole EU, during the same five-year period, there was a conspicuous decline of the subjective job security (from 4.20 to 3.99).<sup>12</sup> As for the share of the population that may be considered

12 At the end of 2012. 41% of EU population have difficulties in paying their bills at the end of the month, but there were huge differences between the countries: in Sweden it was 10%, while in Greece it was 89%; by the way, in



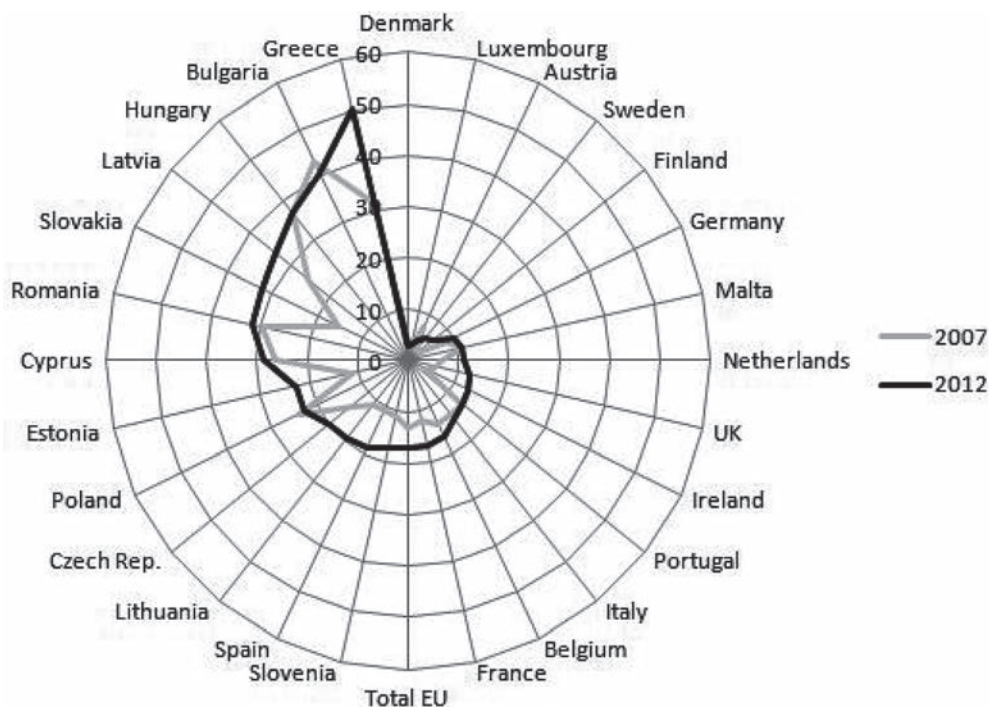


Figure 3: The percentages of insecurity by self-evaluation of ability to satisfy one's own needs by country, in 2007 and 2012

insecure in terms of the ability to satisfy their own needs, before the crisis the standing of Bulgaria (42.9%), Hungary (36.7%) and Greece (31.7%) was the worst (Figure 3). On the other hand, the smallest proportion of insecurity was in Luxembourg (3%), Finland (3.5%) and Sweden (3.7%). In 2012, the most insecure were the populations of Greece (50.5%), Bulgaria (40.3%) and Hungary (36.9%), and the most secure were the populations of Denmark (3.0%), Luxembourg (3.3%) and Austria (4.5%). Looking at the whole EU, the percentage of economically insecure households has increased during the crisis, from 13.3% to 17.1%.

11 member states there was more than half of respondents that have difficulties to pay their bills at the end of the month (TNS Europe, 2012).

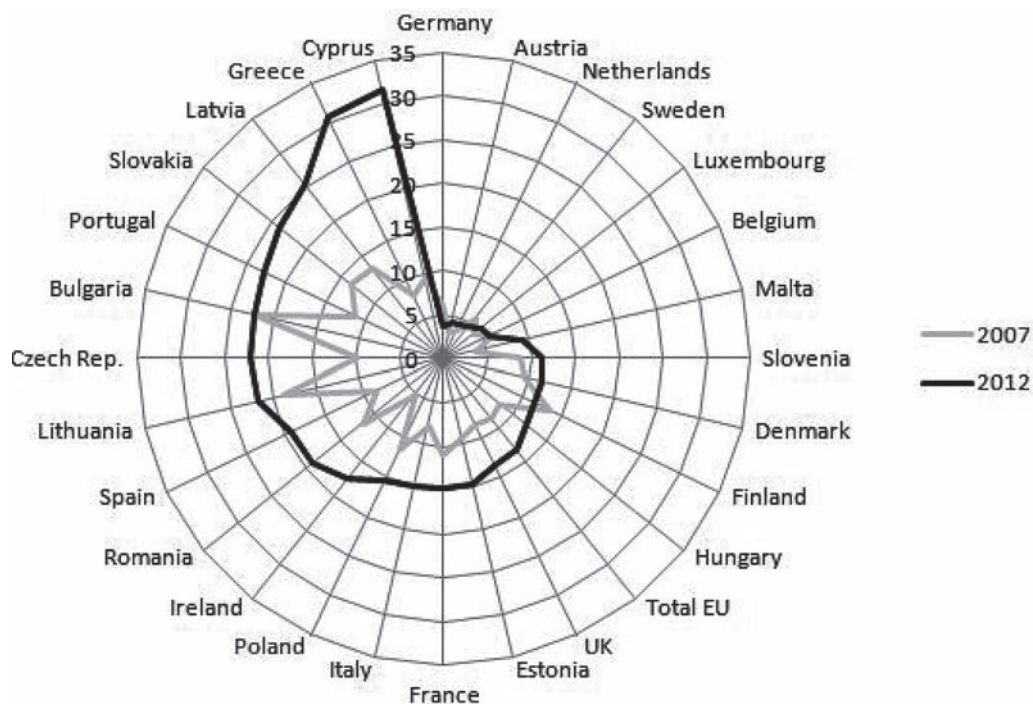


Figure 4: The percentages of insecurity by self-evaluation of their own job security by country, in 2007 and 2012

The share of those who can be considered subjectively job-insecure before the crisis was the biggest in Bulgaria (22%), Lithuania (19%) and Slovakia (14%), and the smallest in Austria and the Netherlands (3%) and Malta (4%) (Figure 4). At an advanced stage of the crisis that picture has changed: the most subjectively job-insecure were among the populations of Cyprus (32%), Greece (31%) and Latvia (25%) and the least in Germany, Austria and Netherlands (4%). Thus, in Greece and Cyprus, in 2012 almost a third of respondents could be classified as subjectively job insecure, although in the pre-crisis period there were less than one-tenth of them. At the level of the whole EU, the proportion of subjectively job insecure during the crisis has increased from 8.7% to 13.2%.

As one can see in Table 1, there are positive correlations with the GDP per capita of the EU countries and two indicators of self-evaluation of economic security<sup>13</sup>. Also, the Human Development Index, which is also a common measure of the states' development, is positively correlated with subjective economic security. The same is for Corruption perception index (which is higher as the perception of corruption declines). At a country-

<sup>13</sup> Two things should be mentioned here. The first one is about the shortcomings of GDP as a measure of not only economic but also any other kind of welfare - see for example Fischer (2008) or Ura & Galay (2004). The second one is about the principle of declining marginal utility of GDP, because of which we should expect that at its higher levels, there is no difference in the average self-evaluation of economic security. In other words, we should not expect that in the economically more developed countries declining of GDP per capita necessarily leads to a decline of economic security.



level, Gini coefficient is also correlated with the indicators of self-evaluation of economic security, but negative. The correlation remained significant at the 0.01 level even when the GDP per capita and Human Development Index were kept under control.

On an individual level, two indicators of subjective economic security are positively correlated with the feeling of happiness, subjective general health, the mental well-being and the satisfaction with social life. Also two indicators are negatively correlated with the feeling of social exclusion.

Table 1: The results of correlation analyses

	GDP per capita in PPS	Gini coefficient	Human development index	Corruption perceptions index	Feeling of happiness	Subjective general health	Mental well being	Level of education	Satisfaction with social life	Feeling of social exclusion
Ability to satisfy own needs	.259**	-.149**	.241**	.264**	.326**	.215**	.298**	.210**	.288**	-.340**
Job security	.197**	-.115**	.181**	.215**	.192**	.081**	.140**	.091**	.175**	-.238**

In order to determine which one is a better predictor variable of satisfaction with present job, linear regression was done. The self-evaluation of own job security was evidenced to be a better predictor of job satisfaction than the evaluation of ability to satisfy own needs ( $R^2=.121$ ,  $F(2/219)=15.072$ ;  $p<.01$ ) (Table 2).

Table 2: The results of linear regression analyses for satisfaction with present job (criteria) prediction by ability to satisfy own needs and own job security (predictors)

	$\beta$	t
Ability to satisfy own needs	-0.205	-3.114*
Job security	0.230	3.497*

\*Marks:  $\beta$ : standardized regression coefficient; t: value of t-test ratio,  $p<.05$ .

#### 4. CONSLUSIONS

By a statistical elaboration of the *European Quality of Life Survey* database, the effects of the recent global economic crisis on the self-evaluation of economic security of the EU population were examined, whereof the following conclusions were derived: the global economic crisis has left a visible mark on the economic security of the European Union population, both in terms of self-evaluation of ability to satisfy their own needs by monthly income, and in terms of self-evaluation of their own job security; drops of these aspects of economic security after 2007 however, have not been evenly distributed across the EU; in certain countries, mainly in the North and the West, it can be concluded that

the crisis has not left any significant effects in this sense (in some of them, insecurity have even declined), while certain countries have experienced significant rise of insecurity; by 2012, Greece was fared the worst, with the consequences that are still unpredictable and still with unsolved way of recovery; the self-evaluation of (both indicators of ) economic security, on a country level, was found to be positively correlated with GDP per capita, Human Development Index and Corruption Perception Index and negatively correlated with the Gini coefficient; on an individual level, the economic security (of both indicators again) is positively correlated with the feeling of happiness, subjective general health, the mental well-being, the level of education, the satisfaction with social life and negatively correlated with the feeling of social exclusion; finally, the self-evaluation of job security was evidenced to be a better predictor of job satisfaction than the evaluation of ability to satisfy one's own needs.

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- <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

## APPENDIX

Table 3: Self-evaluation of one's own job security and self-evaluation of ability to satisfy one's own needs by country

Country	One's own job security 2007	One's own job security 2012	Ability to satisfy one's own needs 2007	Ability to satisfy one's own needs 2012	Job insecure 2007 (%)	Job insecure 2012 (%)	Ability to satisfy one's own needs insecure 2007 (%)	Ability to satisfy one's own needs insecure 2012 (%)	Job security 2012/Job security 2007	Ability to satisfy one's own needs 2012/ Ability to satisfy one's needs 2007
Austria	4.23	4.34	4.21	4.27	3.0	4.2	7.4	4.5	1.03	1.02
Belgium	4.49	4.4	3.98	3.69	6.2	5.7	13.6	16.4	0.98	0.93
Bulgaria	3.31	3.38	2.6	2.71	22.2	22.2	42.9	40.3	1.02	1.04
Cyprus	4.09	3.3	3.29	3.17	9.4	31.6	26.4	28.7	0.81	0.96
Czech Rep.	3.66	3.33	3.5	3.44	9.9	22.0	14.3	20.1	0.91	0.98
Denmark	4.36	4.12	4.8	4.53	9.5	11.5	3.6	3.0	0.94	0.94
Estonia	4.13	3.9	3.64	3.15	9.3	14.8	11.4	22.9	0.95	0.86
Finland	4.21	4.18	4.37	4.15	13.4	11.5	2.9	6.6	0.99	0.95
France	4.28	4.06	3.79	3.51	11.1	14.8	11.9	17.1	0.95	0.93
Germany	4.33	4.38	4.2	4.04	6.1	3.7	8.3	10.1	1.01	0.96
Greece	4.21	3.28	3.1	2.47	8.1	30.6	31.7	50.5	0.78	0.8
Hungary	3.81	3.7	2.78	2.73	8.2	12.1	36.7	36.9	0.97	0.98
Ireland	4.33	3.98	4.34	3.73	5.3	17.6	3.9	13.3	0.92	0.86
Italy	4.14	3.84	3.71	3.6	7.8	14.9	13.3	14.6	0.93	0.97
Latvia	3.84	3.4	3.2	2.91	13.1	25.3	25.3	33.5	0.89	0.91
Lithuania	3.77	3.59	3.39	3.19	18.7	21.7	10.9	19.4	0.95	0.94
Luxembourg	4.6	4.26	4.64	4.5	4.4	5.6	2.9	3.3	0.93	0.97
Malta	4.34	4.26	3.79	3.67	3.7	9.3	11.1	10.8	0.98	0.97
Netherlands	4.61	4.3	4.45	4.11	3.5	4.4	6.9	11.0	0.93	0.92
Poland	3.85	3.72	3.39	3.38	11.4	15.5	24.1	22.8	0.97	0.99
Portugal	3.99	3.59	3.69	3.56	11.2	22.7	13.7	13.6	0.9	0.96
Romania	3.93	3.89	3.02	2.95	11.9	19.1	29.7	31.8	0.99	0.97
Slovakia	3.77	3.35	3.63	3.02	13.6	24.1	15.1	32.0	0.89	0.83

Slovenia	4.09	3.77	3.9	3.48	8.7	11.2	11.0	17.5	0.92	0.89
Spain	4.11	3.65	3.83	3.45	8.4	19.3	10.6	18.7	0.89	0.9
Sweden	4.61	4.47	4.63	4.5	5.8	4.6	3.0	5.5	0.97	0.97
UK	4.45	4.11	4.36	3.87	8.3	13.4	5.6	12.7	0.93	0.89
Total EU	4.2	3.99	3.86	3.63	8.7	13.2	13.3	17.1	0.95	0.94

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