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Unbalanced distribution of income in the conditions of a socio-oriented economy

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Abstract. In global practice, there is a tendency towards uneven distribution of income, and therefore research on many aspects of this topic should be expanded. This study raises the pressing issues of uneven distribution of incomes, which, in turn, creates poverty and social tension among different segments of the population. The purpose of this scientific work is to consider the main reasons for the uneven distribution of income at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, which is expressed in the reduction of tax progressivity, the weakening of trade unions, the reduction of competition and monopolisation, globalisation, tax evasion, an ineffective education system, and weak corporate governance laws which allow company management to set unlimited high salaries and much more. To achieve the purpose, the following research methods were used: statistical and economic, abstract and logical, comparative analysis, typological approach, and generalisation. As a result, methods of solving the above-mentioned problems were proposed, including progressive taxation, creation of equal opportunities for obtaining higher education and high-paying work, consideration of state investments in the social sector, creation of means of social mobility, etc. The consequences that uneven income distribution can lead to include political instability, reduced social mobility, crime, low life expectancy, financial instability, economic crisis, etc. This article also includes analytical study of indicators of income distribution equality using the Gini coefficient in different countries. The study represents value for the scientific community and researchers of the issue of income distribution in the conditions of a socially oriented economy

Keywords: unemployment; state regulation; employment; wages; Gini coefficient; standard of living

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INTRODUCTION

The market-based mechanisms of the population's income distribution in society change as a result of the economic system's transformation, which creates the conditions for the population's income inequality to increase. Qualitative and structural changes occur, leading to several social issues because incomes, or rather their uneven distribution, ultimately lead to poverty, one of the most controversial social issues. Additionally, this issue is relative, therefore, there is a need to research the above-mentioned topic in the scientific works of scientists who have studied this issue.

According to K. Mehta *et al.* (2020), although at varying rates, economic inequality has risen over the past few decades in almost every nation, which suggests that institutions and policies play a role in determining disparity. Income disparity has quickly risen in North America, China, India, and Russia since 1980. In Europe, inequality has gradually increased. From a broad historical standpoint, this rise in inequality signals the collapse of a postwar egalitarian government that existed in these areas in various ways. The broad pattern is not always true. Income disparity is still at exceptionally high levels in the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and Brazil. These areas established the "inequality frontier" for the entire world because they were exempt from the postwar egalitarian system.

In the study by K.A. Dolan & C. Petherson-Withorn (2022), who have investigated the issue of wealth, it is noted that the global income distribution by quintile was depicted in a chart by the United Nations Development Programme in 1992. The resulting illustration, which resembled a "glass of champagne", came to represent the wealth gap. The income of the poorest 20% of the population is still less than 2% nearly 30 years later. While this is happening, the income of the richest 1% of the world's population has increased from 18% in 1990 to 22% in 2016, with a \$32,000 income threshold being set as the cutoff for this group.

According to T. Piketty (2022), who investigated the historical aspects of inequality, for instance, since the latter part of the 1970s, income inequality in English-speaking developed nations has once more reached the high levels noted one hundred years ago. The indicators have not increased significantly in the countries of continental Europe.

In turn, T.A. Tsalis *et al.* (2020) argue that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which consists of 17 objectives for creating more just, peaceful, and sustainable societies, was adopted by world leaders in 2015. One of the goals, Goal 10, is focused on reducing inequality, especially inequality of opportunity, income, and influence because it threatens long-term socioeconomic development, can result in violence,

cause disease, and degrade the environment. M. Serra (2022) notes that most of both America, except Canada, is a country with uneven income distribution, according to the UN Secretary general's special adviser on poverty, forgiveness of the poorest countries and control over the spread of diseases in developing countries Jeffrey Sax.

The relevance of this study lies in addressing the pressing issue of income inequality, which has been exacerbated since the 1990s and continues to impact various segments of society. Given the above facts, the purpose of the study is to investigate the main aspects of income inequality in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The study aims to examine the main factors contributing to this uneven distribution of income, such as reduced tax progressivity, weakened trade unions, limited competition, globalization, tax evasion, ineffective education systems, and weak corporate governance laws allowing excessive executive salaries.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Using the economic and statistical method of research, the processes of uneven distribution of income in the global economic sphere were investigated, and trends and patterns of their development in a socially oriented economy were identified. Using the aforementioned method, the study has identified the main aspects of the quantitative impact of the decisive factors on the unbalanced distribution of income, and has also identified the key factors that contributed to the establishment of this economic phenomenon. This method was used to determine poverty levels and income growth scenarios in countries with different economic potentials.

The abstract and logical method was used to form theoretical generalisations and conclusions about the unbalanced distribution of income in society. This method was used to summarise the findings and to find ways to address the issue of unbalanced income distribution. Using the abstract and logical method of study of the issue of unbalanced distribution of income in the framework of a socially oriented economy, the paper formulates the main concepts and conclusions on the above issue.

Using the method of comparative analysis, the countries were considered by ranking the value of the Gini coefficient. The Gini coefficient is a statistical measure used to evaluate the level of inequality in the distribution of any variable on a numerical scale from 0 to 1. The coefficient equals 0 if all values are equal (absolute equality), and equals 1 if one value is the maximum and the rest are equal to 0 (absolute inequality). In the context of household income, the Gini coefficient measures the level of inequality in the distribution of income in a given country or region: the closer to one

the coefficient is, the more unequally distributed income is. That is, if all income within the country is distributed evenly, the coefficient is zero, and if one person has everything, and the rest is nothing, the coefficient equals one. Using the method of comparative analysis, the issue of balance and non-compliance with the requirements of world income distribution was considered through the prism of socially oriented economy. In accordance with the method of comparative analysis used in this paper, a comparison of the ways of creating and interpreting the economic status of different layers of society in the period of the 20th-21st centuries was highlighted and presented. Moreover, relying on this method, the paper investigated specific features of the socially oriented economy. Using the method of comparative analysis, the nuances and main aspects of the modern economic environment and future prospects for its development were highlighted.

By using a typological approach in the study of the issue of unbalanced distribution of population income through the prism of socially-oriented economy, the basic aspects of creating the appropriate conditions for creating economic stability were revealed. In addition, using the typological approach, it was possible to determine the relative nuances of the current state of the population's income distribution in the period from the end of the 20th to the beginning of the 21st century. With the help of this approach, it was possible to observe the main aspects of this issue in the study of unbalanced income distribution in the conditions of a socially oriented economy. The method of generalisation allowed considering a number of problems of unbalanced distribution of income in society, through the prism of a socially-oriented economy, and also, based on the above-mentioned method, when studying the conditions of a socially-oriented economy.

RESULTS

The issue of unbalanced distribution of economic resources requires considerable attention and study by 21st century researchers. The modern socially oriented economy is an important aspect for shaping the balance of the economic sphere. From the 1990s to the 2020s, more than a billion people have been liberated from the chains of extreme poverty, demonstrating the significant progress the global community has made in the fight against poverty (The World Bank, 2023). The share of the poorest half of humanity's income has barely changed over this time, despite the fact that global production has more than tripled since 1990 (Purdie, 2019). Economic progress is hampered by inequality, and as a result, the social gap that results from inequality widens, therefore, this issue should be studied more thoroughly.

From the 1990s to the 2020s, inequality has increased in many nations while declining in others (United Nations, 2022). Although inequality rates are still high, there has been a sizable decline in Latin America and the Caribbean. Analyzing the relatively low indicators mentioned earlier, the level of inequality has slightly increased in many industrialized countries. Political changes have caused the level of inequality in a number of Eastern European nations to sharply increase. Even though the gap between various population segments has shrunk overall in some parts of the Middle East, it has nonetheless widened for some sections of the population.

In comparison to trends within regions, there are more parallels between emerging market economies, landlocked developing nations, and rural and urban areas in Africa and Asia. Globally, there are currently more than two thirds of the world's population who are living in increasing income and wealth inequality, which seriously jeopardizes the chances of sustainable development. Children still make up a sizable portion (roughly half) of the world's poor population, despite the fact that targeted efforts to lower child mortality and raise educational standards have produced more effective results in the majority of regions of the world. Other groups that continue to face discrimination and social exclusion include indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, and other minorities (United Nations, 2019a).

The effects of inequality go beyond just purchasing power. Access to essential services like health, education, water, and sanitation can be hampered by inequality, which can also affect a person's life expectancy. For instance, discrimination, abuse, and lack of access to the legal system can limit human rights. High inequality limits human development, impedes social and economic mobility, and slows economic growth. It also makes feelings of vulnerability, insecurity, and apprehension more entrenched, erodes confidence in institutions and the government, fuels social unrest and tension, and leads to violence and conflict (ITU, 2017).

There is mounting evidence that the extreme wealth and income inequality contributes to the emergence of chauvinistic and extremist-nationalist attitudes. The capacity of people and societies to support efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change is also compromised by inequality. It will become increasingly challenging to take significant action to combat climate change without addressing the underlying causes of inequality, as demonstrated by populists' response to the introduction of a carbon tax (Lawson, 2018). When it comes to communication, access to financial services, trade, and public services, technology can be a powerful equalizer. However, those who are not yet able to use it

risk experiencing even greater social exclusion, especially as progress stalls or even reverses in some areas (World Inequality Lab, 2018).

In many parts of the world, there is a growing consensus that a narrow focus on economic growth - while ignoring the effects of its distribution – entails a high level of income and wealth inequality. A tenuous relationship exists between poverty and levels of economic inequality, according to the data from the Multidimensional Poverty Index for 2019 (United Nations, 2019a). The data show that middle-income nations are currently home to two thirds of the world's poor Its goals include eliminating discriminatory laws and policies, enhancing methods for regulating international financial markets, promoting safe, orderly, and legal migration, and ensuring that all nations have a greater voice in decision-making at the national and international levels. The poorest 40% of the population's income increased more quickly than the overall population between 2010 and 2016 in 60 of 94 countries with data (United Nations, 2022). Accordingly, inequality is neither inevitable nor irreversible.

Numerous factors, including the stagnation of wages and a decline in the share of labor income, the deterioration of social conditions in developed nations, the lack of social protection in developing nations, changes in the taxation system, the deregulation of financial markets, the rapid advancement of technology, and the automation of production, all contribute to the growing income and well-being inequality.

The variety of trends seen across nations since 1980 demonstrates how different national, institutional, and political circumstances influence the dynamics of income inequality. The various paths taken by China, India, and russia – all former communist or highly regulated nations – illustrate this. As a result of the deregulation and opening-up policies implemented over the past few decades in these nations, the rise in inequality was particularly fast in russia, moderate in China, and relatively gradual in India (Sinquefield & Trump, 2022).

Uneven ownership of capital, which can be either privately or publicly owned, is a major cause of economic inequality. It can be demonstrated that, whether in affluent or developing nations, there have been very significant transfers of wealth from the public to the private sector since 1980. Public wealth in wealthy nations is currently negative or very near to zero even if national wealth has significantly expanded. This might restrict governments' ability to address inequality, and it undoubtedly has significant effects on how equally wealthy people are (Gramm *et al.*, 2022). Countries have become richer over the past few decades, but governments have gotten worse off.

The relationship between net private wealth and net national income provides information on the overall amount of wealth that individuals in a nation control relative to the public wealth that is held by governments. National wealth is equal to the total of private and public wealth. The ratio between public and private wealth is a key factor in determining the degree of inequality. Since 1980, wealth disparity between individuals has risen at varying rates depending on the nation (Biewen & Flachaire, 2018).

Individual wealth disparity is rising as a result of rising income inequality and significant transfers of public wealth to private ownership over the previous forty years. However, neither in Europe nor in the United States has wealth disparity yet reached the heights it did in the early 20th century (Gornick & Jäntti, 2013). In spite of this, wealth inequality has increased significantly in the US, where the wealth share of the top 1% increased from 22% in 1980 to 39% in 2014. The emergence of the top 0.1% of wealth owners was primarily to blame for that spike in inequality. Due in part to the middle class' expanding home wealth and France and the UK's and the United States' lower levels of income inequality, the rise in top-wealth shares in these countries over the past forty years has been more moderate (Drennan, 2019).

Following their transitions from communist to more capitalist economies, China and russia have likewise seen significant increases in top-wealth shares. Between 1995 and 2015, the wealth of the top 1% doubled in China and russia, going from 15% to 30% and 22% to 43%, respectively (Keeley, 2019). The growth in wealth disparity among people has been spurred by a mix of significant privatizations and rising income inequality within nations. The increase in wealth disparity has been more extreme in russia and the US than it has been in Europe. In wealthy nations, wealth inequality has not yet reached the exceptionally high level of the early 20th century (Alford & Reilly, 2019).

Even with relatively strong income growth projections for Africa, Latin America, and Asia over the next three decades, the level of global income disparity will rise if countries continue down the route of increasing income inequality that they have been on since 1980. If all nations adopt the high-inequality track that the United States adopted between 1980 and 2016, then global income inequality will rise even more. However, if other nations follow the EU's inequality track from 1980 to the present, worldwide inequality will only slightly decline (Green *et al.*, 2019).

Up until 2050, there are numerous possible scenarios for income and wealth disparity. Global inequality will rise higher if "business as usual" is maintained in the future. Alternatively, if in the upcoming decades all

nations follow the moderate inequality trajectory of Europe during the past few decades, then there may be a significant improvement in the eradication of global poverty and worldwide income disparity may be lowered (Postma, 2016).

As it can be concluded, there is still a trend in the world to increase the level of uneven distribution of income. This has been especially noticeable since the mid-1990s. For example, as already mentioned, over 20 years (from 1995 to 2015), the income of the richest 1% of people in China and russia has only doubled. Although such a trend has been outlined since the early 1980s. In general, over forty years, as has also been said, the incomes of the richest 1% of the world's

people have doubled compared to the total incomes of the poorest half of humanity. For the most part, this is explained by the collapse of egalitarian regimes after the end of the cold war and mass privatization. Although it is that the level of income inequality has not yet reached the level that it was at the beginning of the 20th century. An important aspect of solving the issue of balancing the distribution of income in society and ensuring social equality is the tax policy of the state, as a result of which it is even possible to achieve full employment, and spend significant accumulated funds on creating jobs and social assistance to socio-economically vulnerable sections of the population (Fig. 1).

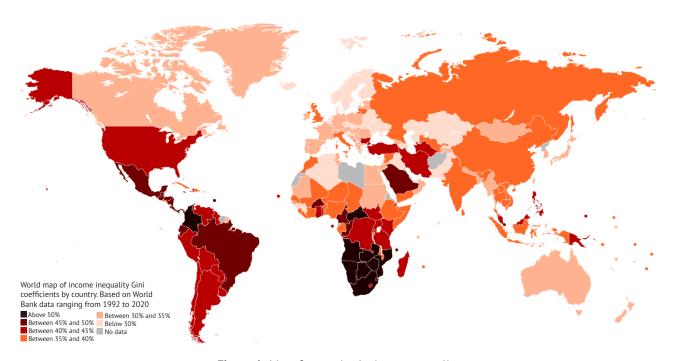


Figure 1. List of countries by income equality

Source: These countries have... (2023)

As it can be observed, among high-income nations there are some with a sizable middle class, including Western Europe and the Scandinavian nations. Western Europe and the Scandinavian nations prioritize social welfare policies and progressive taxation, leading to relatively higher levels of income equality compared to other regions. These countries have implemented comprehensive welfare systems, education, healthcare, and social services to mitigate income disparities and promote social cohesion. Despite these efforts, some disparities still exist, emphasizing the need for ongoing initiatives to ensure fair and equitable income distribution. Canada has a relatively uniform distribution of

income compared to Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. Inequality is also present in Africa and most of Southeast Asia, compared to India. 50 years ago in China, everyone was equal in their poverty. But the rapid development of the economy, the expansion of the gap between those living in urban areas, and those living in a rather poor rural area led to the fact that inequality in China has grown to a level similar to what is marked in the United States (United Nations, 2020). There are various ways of development. So, Northern Europe is on the way to preserve social equality. At the same time, there are also high-income countries with high Gini coefficients, where there is a large gap between rich and poor (Fig. 2).

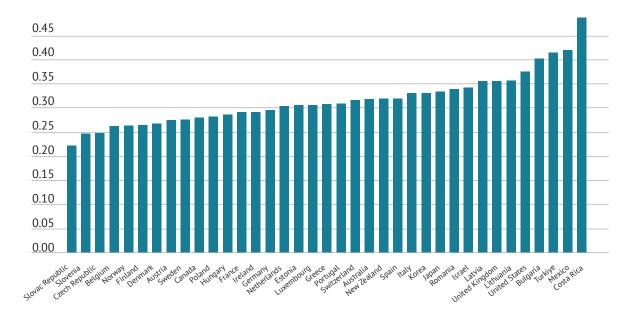


Figure 2. Gini's coefficient by countries according to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Source: OECD (2015)

Nearly every region of the world has seen an increase in income disparity in recent decades, but at varying rates. The fact that inequality levels vary so widely amongst nations, even when those nations have comparable levels of development underlines the significant roles that national institutions and policies play in determining inequality. Evidently, regional differences in income disparity are significant. Europe has the lowest levels and partly the South America has the highest.

Inequality in the distribution of income can also affect the ability of consumers to purchase goods and services, which reduces market demand and leads to a decrease in production and employment. Thus, an unbalanced distribution of income can threaten economic growth and stability.

The conditions of a socially oriented economy, aimed at ensuring the well-being of all citizens, require taking measures to ensure a fair distribution of income and reduce inequality. This may include establishing a minimum wage, increasing social benefits and assistance to the poor and marginalized groups, developing a tax system that ensures a fair distribution of taxes, and supporting the development of small and medium-sized enterprises that can create jobs and provide economic growth in local communities.

DISCUSSION

Unbalanced distribution of income is a socio-economic phenomenon, which implies a discrepancy between the incomes of different strata of the population. In such a situation, some groups of people receive significantly more income than others, which can lead to increased

social differences and inequalities. Inequality is a serious problem that threatens the stability and prosperity of society. Governments and organisations must pay attention to solving this problem and take bold steps to ensure greater equality in society. One of the key measures may be to ensure access to quality education and opportunities for professional growth for all citizens. In addition, it is necessary to ensure equal working conditions and career development opportunities for women and men in order to reduce gender inequality. It is also important to pay attention to the problem of population ageing and ensuring quality care for the elderly, which may become one of the key problems in the future. Focusing on profit and wealth should not be the main goal of the economy and society, and the well-being and care of people should come first. The question of generation and distribution of resources has been investigated by a significant number of researchers all over the world. It is worth considering the views of some of them and comparing them with the results obtained in this study.

In a study by F. Alvaredo *et al.* (2018), attention is paid to the issue of inequality in 2018. Researchers claim that due to factors like income, location, gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, class, and religion, inequality still exists within and between nations and has an impact on opportunities and results as well as access to benefits. This gap is becoming more apparent in some parts of the world. The coverage of new services like the Internet and mobile technologies, however, has gaps. Comparing the research data with the findings of this study, it is worth noting that

inequality in access to opportunities and benefits is a serious problem in the modern world, as the latest digital technologies can be a powerful tool for reducing inequality, but remain inaccessible to many people due to various factors.

J. Hasell (2018) notes that inequality can have different manifestations depending on the country, region, time, and the specific aspect under consideration. Therefore, it is important to study inequality in different aspects and in different contexts to have a complete picture. The authors of this study agree with this statement, as an unbalanced approach to the distribution of economic resources is unique to each individual case.

According to C. Coffey et al. (2020), inequality takes different forms and significantly different in different countries. While the objective lay the basis for further action, the fight against inequality should be taken into account the context, economic priorities and political realities of specific countries. There is no universal approach. To eliminate the harmful effects of inequality in all forms and manifestations, the decisive importance will continue to be awareness-raising and providing greater support for policy issues, targeted use and placement of other priorities for public spending to reduce access to benefits and opportunities, reorientation of tax and fiscal systems to reduce income inequality and wealth among the representatives of one generation and between different generations and the use of rapidly changing technologies to benefit all. According to the results of this study, the wealthy stratum of society is quite often involved in the distribution of economic resources, but this situation should be changed and balanced in favour of the population in need of economic support.

E. Ortiz-Ospina & M. Roser (2018) note the fact that both societies and families exhibit inequality. Domestic inequality can account for up to 30% of income inequality. Women continue to be in a much more precarious position from an economic, legal, political, and social standpoint, despite the fact that gender inequality is decreasing – for instance, the gender pay gap has shrunk over the past few decades (United Nations, 2019b). The study agrees with this statement, as it may be related to discrimination, stereotypes about the roles of women and men in society, limited availability of support services for parents and other factors.

In turn, according to M. Van Ham *et al.* (2021) despite China's rapid expansion, inequality has increased significantly on a worldwide scale since 1980. Due to Asia's rapid growth (especially in China and India), the world's poorest half has witnessed a huge increase in income. However, since 1980, the world's top 1% richest people have enjoyed twice as much growth as the poorest 50% of people due to substantial and rising

intra-country inequality. For people whose incomes fall between the bottom 50% and top 1% of the global income distribution, income growth has been slow or perhaps non-existent. This covers all lower – and middle-income classes in North America and Europe. The authors agree with the statement, as gender pay inequality between men and women remains an important aspect of the social economy.

Based on the study by T. Piketty (2019), OXFAM estimates that if the inequality persists, it will take a 175-fold increase in global GDP for everyone to have a daily income of more than \$5. In order to achieve sustainable development, inclusive, equitable, and growth that balances the economic, social, and environmental facets of development is clearly necessary. Thus, given the globalisation of resources and the development of the digital economy, the issue of equity requires inclusiveness and equal distribution of resources.

Researchers of income inequality in America S.M. Jones & R.S. Rycroft (2023) argue that massive educational disparities, along with a tax system that became less progressive despite an increase in top labour compensation since the 1980s and in top capital incomes in the 2000s, are the main causes of the income inequality trajectory seen in the United States. While wage inequality was also curbed by educational and wage-setting policies that were comparatively friendlier to low- and middle-income groups, continental Europe experienced a slower drop in tax progressivity. Income disparity between men and women has decreased in both regions, although it is still very noticeable at the top of the distribution.

The unbalanced distribution of income in a socially oriented economy in the world is a complex issue and is considered by a large number of researchers, but it is worth noting the fact that the study of the economic sphere is an important aspect of stabilising the global economy, which is oriented towards the values and requirements of the times. Important steps need to be taken to address the problems of economic and gender inequality and to protect the rights and interests of the poorest and most marginalised groups. This can only be achieved through cooperation between governments, civil society, and business.

CONCLUSIONS

Creation of a socially oriented economy that works for all citizens should be one of the top priorities of governments and corporations. This phenomenon implies doing business not only in the interests of increasing profits, but also for socially-oriented purposes, which would include the balanced development of the interests of different social groups. Such an economy involves the use of public funds to provide social services and programs aimed at improving the quality of life of the population: ensuring access to education, healthcare, housing, adequate income, and other types of social protection.

Gender inequality remains a significant issue despite progress. Women face economic, legal, political, and social disadvantages. Cooperation among governments, civil society, and business is essential to address this and protect marginalized groups. Education, equal working conditions, and career opportunities are key in reducing gender disparities.

As a result of the study, the issue of understanding the pattern of inequality and its reasons is necessary to find ways to create such societies as Western Europe and the Scandinavian, where there is a well-developed middle class and a high chance of every child born in a non-rich family, to get decent education and to ensure their lives. Moreover, the study considered important changes in national and international tax systems are necessary to address income and wealth inequality on

a global scale. As a result, it was revealed that many nations require laws relating to corporate governance, education, and pay setting need to be reviewed. Transparency of data is also crucial. Notably, unbalanced income distribution can threaten the socially oriented economy, which aims to ensure the well-being of all citizens and reduce inequality.

The paper managed to investigate the issue of unbalanced income distribution in the socially oriented economy of the late 20th and early 21st centuries from various aspects, but there is still a need to find ways to develop stabilisation of the digital sphere of economic stability and balance of society, as the digital sphere is at the stage of rapid development.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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Незбалансований розподіл доходів в умовах соціально-орієнтованої економіки

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Анотація. У світовій практиці спостерігається помітне зростання нерівномірного розподілу доходів і ця тенденція продовжує зберігатися, у зв'язку із чим дослідження багатьох аспектів цієї теми повинні розширитись. Дане дослідження порушує актуальні питання нерівномірного розподілу доходів, що, своєю чергою, породжує бідність та соціальну напругу у різних верств населення. Мета цієї наукової роботи полягає у розгляді основних причин нерівномірного розподілу доходів наприкінці 20 - початку 21 століття, що виражається у зниженні прогресивності податків, ослабленні профспілок, зниженні конкуренції та монополізації, глобалізації, ухиленні від сплати податків, неефективній системі освіти, слабких законах про корпоративне управління, що дозволяють керівництву компаній встановлювати собі необмежено високі зарплати та багато іншого. Для досягнення мети були використані наступні методи дослідження: статистико-економічний, абстрактно-логічний, порівняльного аналізу, типологічний підхід, узагальнення. У результаті було запропоновано способи розв'язання вище згаданої проблематики, серед яких прогресивне оподаткування, створення рівних можливостей здобуття вищої освіти та високооплачуваної роботи, розгляд інвестицій держави у соціальний сектор, створення соціальних ліфтів тощо. Наслідки, до яких може призвести нерівномірний розподіл доходів, включають політичну нестабільність, зниження соціальної мобільності, злочинність, низьку тривалість життя, фінансову нестабільність, економічну кризу тощо. У даній статті також виконано аналітичну роботу з дослідження показників рівномірності розподілу доходів з використанням коефіцієнта Джині у різних країнах. Робота представляє цінність для наукової спільноти та дослідників питання розподілу доходів в умовах соціально-орієнтованої економіки

Ключові слова: безробіття; державне регулювання; зайнятість; заробітна плата; коефіцієнт Джині; рівень життя суспільства