

From Growth to Sustainability in public policy to address Poverty

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Abstract (250 cuv): 154

This "policy brief" aims to provide a deep and functional understanding of the significant transformations regarding public policy to address Poverty from reduction and alleviation to poverty eradication. The path of public policy development marks the change in philosophy. It starts from growth policies approaches "Broad-Base" & "pro-poor growth" policies through "inclusion policy" to the beyond growth approach as it is the "just transition" policy.

The methodology used is a comparative and evolutionary analysis for the 2007-2014, 2015-2020, 2021-2027 European Strategical documents under the Agenda 2030 sustainability framework.

Our contribution is to formulate *some policies' characteristics*:

* The "human dignity, universal social protection, social justice, sustainable development" are perennial and continuous objectives, reshaped under the intelligent machine era.

* The factors, problems and solution design and coherence with the 1st Sustainable Development Goal are dissimilar across policies:

- The degree of novelty, governance level, and allocation mechanism *shape the specificity of factors*.
- *The problem design* focuses on space or people.
- *The solution design* is from reactive to anticipative.
- From the economic Growth, competitiveness & social protection policy toward system resilience policies with environmental sustainability, individuals, and communities' fair wellbeing outcomes are fully coherent *with the 1st Sustainable Development Goal and the entire Agenda 2030 Framework*.

Keywords:

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Public policies, Sustainable development policies, just transition, inclusion and pro-poor growth policies; place-based policies.

Introduction

Poverty affects the lives of individuals, households, and entire communities. Primary basic needs lack resources and have dramatic consequences for their existence. Poverty has a perennial character and a long history but a dynamic evolution. Different factors act simultaneously, keeping these persons stocked in the perpetual poverty trap. In short, these cumulative and highly complex problems generate significant social issues. The objective characteristics of Poverty overcome the individual "power" and strongly justify the public intervention. From the perspective of public policies, we structure the article into three parts:

In the first part, we explore the *Dominant approaches to Growth in public policies to address Poverty* under perspectives of Concepts, tools, and instruments to operationalize Growth to address Poverty and the EU Growth models' application to address Poverty.

The theoretical conceptual framework treats an evolutionary perspective from the first stage, "the Growth versus Outcome and Opportunity Inequalities", to stage two, "Growth, Poverty, and the vicious circle of inequality", and then to the stage tree represented by "the European Pillar of Social Rights 2021-2030 and its Plan for social cohesion and tackling complex challenges" and finally the fourth stage of addressing at territorial level, while "Persistent opportunities and inequalities are factors within and between countries. Countries and territories." The first part ends with the strategic treatment of Poverty by the two most recent EU Growth models: Pro-Poor Growth policy during the 2007-2014 period of economic Growth and poverty reduction through income redistribution, followed by the Inclusive Growth Model during 2015-2020 and the Europe 2020 Strategy and finally the Inclusive Growth Model. Similarities and differences characterize inclusive Growth against Pro-Poor Growth.

In the second part, we treat "The New Growth Narrative - Beyond the Growth", by four dimensions, following the 2020 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's methodology: New priorities, The new conception of economic and social progress, The new policies objectives and the people-oriented green transition policy with its concept of the just transition during the cycle 2021-2027.

The article state in the third part final conclusions and policy recommendations.

Our article aims to have a deep and functional understanding of the significant transformations regarding public policy to address Poverty from reduction and alleviation to poverty eradication.

1. Dominant approaches to Growth in public policies in the last 20 years to address Poverty.

1.1. Concepts, tools, and instruments to operationalize Growth to address Poverty.

1.1.1. Growth versus Outcome and Opportunity Inequalities

The EU Cohesion Policy remains a priority, as does the multidimensionality of inequalities. It continues to "contribute to strengthening economic, social, and territorial cohesion in the European Union. It aims to correct imbalances between countries and regions. It delivers on the Union's political priorities, especially the green and digital transition." (European Commission, 2021) Among its new actions for 2021-2027, there is "Greater empowerment of local, urban & territorial authorities in the management of the funds: dedicated policy objective implemented only through territorial and local development strategies" (European Commission, 2021)

Equality is multidimensional and drives a large spectrum of policies: labour market active policies, health and health systems, skills for the labour market, adequacy and sustainability of pensions, Poverty and Social Inclusion, Fiscal Systems and Fiscal Administration, and Salary setting systems. Two main dichotomic concepts, Opportunity and Outcome Equality could guide the design of any policy.

- *Equality of opportunity*

Equality of opportunity "exists when life outcomes depend only on factors for which persons can be considered responsible, and not on disadvantageous attributes outside of their control. It argues that gender, ethnicity, family background, etc. should not determine outcomes. In practical terms, it exists when individuals are compensated in some way for their disadvantageous circumstances". (Afonso et al., 2015) Examples involve unequal access to employment or education. Opportunity inequalities: education, employment, training, and gender are challenging to measure. Inequality of opportunity could threaten Growth when there is no access to opportunity for some groups (by ethnicity, religion, caste, or gender) or long-term exclusion from the fruits of the growth group. (Commission on Growth and Development, 2008)

- *Equality of outcome*

Equality of outcome "describes a state where people have similar economic conditions. While Inequality in terms of opportunity is defined on an ex-ante basis and is concerned with ensuring a common starting place, Inequality of outcomes is concerned with the finish line and depends on both circumstances beyond one's control as well as talent and effort". (Afonso et al., 2015) Typically Inequality of income, usually calculated at household level reflect earned income distribution across the population. This is measured "in various material dimensions of human wellbeing, such as the level of income, educational attainment, health status and so on." (Afonso et al., 2015) Inequalities of outcome: income inequalities, wealth inequalities (net wealth Gini Coefficient). The tendency that distribution of income is "more equal distributed" than wealth inequalities, generated by heritages and higher property growth rates. In this logic, "A growing GDP is one in which energies are better directed; resources better deployed; techniques mastered then advanced. It is not just about making money." (Commission on Growth and Development, 2008)

1.1.2. Growth, Poverty, and the vicious circle of Inequality

Growth and Poverty reflect the relationship between expansion and redistribution. Ravallion (2001) points that "some kinds of growth reduce poverty more effectively than others". The author makes a valuable distinction between Inequality and Poverty when there is Growth. Even if Inequality rises, there could be progress in Poverty as well. In an impoverished country, it is arithmetically impossible to reduce Poverty without Growth. There is no one to redistribute from." (Ravallion, 2001)

The vicious circle of Inequality reflects the natural bi-univocal causal relationship between Inequality of opportunity and income inequality. Against this background, policy action is the only way to break this vicious cycle—the balance between policies to reduce opportunities and inequalities of income requests to find an optimum. The opportunities inequalities policies could provide incentives to support Growth: invest in human capital, increase labour mobility and stimulate innovation. For these policies, the mechanism is to address the individual to support his insertion in the labour market and to participate actively. These policies are more on the competitive side of demand.

On the other hand, the objective of the Inequality of outcome policies is to look for social equity, preserve and maintain social cohesion, and maintain a shared sense of belonging. The policy mechanism is to support income/wealth distribution, especially in households with low income. The financial subsidies have a double purpose: to assure social cohesion and to stimulate consumption. Sustainable growth strategies have integrated since 2008 equity and equality of opportunity. Sustainability is the answer to the "Research question. "How can governments safeguard equality of opportunity and contain Inequality of outcomes? The latter goal may be served by redistribution. Equality of opportunity is best served by providing universal access to

public services like health and education and by meritocratic systems in government and the private sector." (Commission on Growth and Development, 2008)

1.1.3. The European Pillar of Social Rights 2021-2030 and its Plan for social cohesion and tackling complex challenges.

The Council of the EU signed the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), the European Parliament and the European Commission during the Social Summit for Growth and Fair Jobs in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017. EPSR states that "By 2030, with national targets set on 16 June 2022:

- an employment rate of at least 78% of the population aged 20-64, where Member States Commitments state 78.5%. Romania's target is 74.7% from 67.1% in 2021.
- at least 60% of all adults participate in learning every year, whereas Member States Commitments state 57.6%. Romania's target is 17.4% from 4.9% in 2021.
- At least 15 million fewer people are at risk of Poverty or social exclusion, whereas Member States Commitments state 15.6%. Romania's target is -2532 Poverty reduction (AROPE thousand persons). At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) % of the population is for Romania 34.4% in 2021".

The European Pillar of Social Rights declares as a priority the Equal Opportunities (1) Dimension (see Table 1):

Table 1. European Pillar of Social Rights: Equal Opportunities (1) Dimension

Indicator	[2021]			
	Romania		EU	
	Latest value	Trend	Latest value	Trend
Headline indicators				
Early leavers from education and training % of population 18-24	15.3	î	9.7	î
Individuals who have basic or above basic overall digital skills % of population 16-74	27.82		53.92	
Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET)% of population 15-29	20.3	î	13.1	î

Gender employment gap Percentage points	20.1	î	10.8	î
Income inequality - quintile share ratio (S80/S20) Ratio	7.13	î	4.97	î

Secondary indicators

Adult participation in learning % of population 25-64	4.9	î	10.8	î
Tertiary education attainment % of population 30-34	24.8	î	41.6	î
Gender gap in part-time employment Percentage points	-1.1	î	20.7	î
Gender pay gap in unadjusted form % of average gross hourly earnings of men	3.6	î	12.7	î

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-pillar-of-social-rights/indicators/social-scoreboard-indicators>

The main instrument to implement EPSR is the Action Plan published by European Commission on 4 March 2021 COM(2021) 102, finally adopted in Romania through HG 90/30.06.2021. The Action Plan's role is to

a) provide the general intervention framework for achieving social cohesion and combating the complex challenges generated by Poverty and social exclusion and accentuated by the medico-social and economic crisis that can be seen in the context of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, paying particular attention to the inclusion of vulnerable groups.

b) guide political decisions in the member states, including in the context of national recovery and resilience plans.

1.1.4. Persistent opportunities and inequalities are factors within and between countries. Countries and territories.

United Nations notes that "overall, since the 1990s, total global inequality (inequality across all individuals in the world) declined for the first time since the 1820s." Even if the "income inequality

between countries decline. Yet income inequality within countries has risen, this is the form of inequality people feel daily".(United Nations, 2020)

IMF (2022) identifies the leading global and country-specific factors for Inequality. Technological progress, globalization, and commodity price cycles are the leading global factors feeding job polarization. On the other hand, financial integration, redistributive fiscal policies, and liberalization and deregulation of labour and product markets are the leading country-specific factors. The late factors relate to economic development stability and domestic policy balance.

Mançon (2021) explores the driving forces behind the Inequalities as the essential starting point for cooperation and more robust partnership solutions. Based on his work, the authors synthesize it in Table 2.

Table 2. Inequalities factors and their effects *within and among countries* by causes

Factor	Effect on		Causes
	global (inter-country) inequalities	intra-country inequalities	
Globalization and liberalization	reduce	increases	new financial arrangements aimed at avoiding taxes with negative repercussions on income distribution. Country-specific factors and policies.
Technological change	Accelerate at the global level.	Incredible income inequality between unskilled workers and skilled workers (in deficit)-skill premium Access to new skills	Global production chains exclude unskilled workers from the labour market.
The business model		Income Inequalities are generally higher in economies centred on extractive industries than in economies centred on agriculture or manufacturing	path dependency where asset concentration is rooted in the socio-institutional legacy of countries.
Demographic dynamics		Opportunities inequalities - Less investment in	High fertility rates

		human capital – especially initial education	
		Income Inequalities The absence of any universal non-contributory pension system	ageing population labour deficits
		Income & Opportunities Inequalities- High level of geographical mobility as well as critical migratory movements	difficult integration of migration / mobile workers
Social and cultural norms		Opportunities inequalities -inequalities in access to essential services	social and cultural norms,
Institutional weaknesses		High levels of wealth inequalities result from concentration of wealth and power. - Corruption	Weak institutions

Authors Selection based on (Mançon, 2021)

Among the presented factors, we pay special attention to hyperglobalisation and its opportunities and challenges for inclusive Growth.

Khazhgerieva et al. (2019) point out that, under the neoliberal understanding of inclusive Growth, some individuals, communities, or even countries have been excluded from the processes of globalization and the opportunities offered by them several limits of the inclusive Growth concerning hyper globalization:

Under the neo-liberal approach, hyper-globalization is a process where (Khazhgerieva et al., 2019):

- a) Labour markets get more flexible but more precarious, and jobs are low paid, while simultaneously corporations enjoy large profits,
- b) Public services and social protection decreased by cutting austerity budgets, and corporations and high-net-worth individuals are hiding, on a large scale, their profits and wealth in tax havens. Rising indebtedness of the poorer segments of society and bailing out the "too big to fail" financial institutions engaged in risky lending and investment practices are an intrinsic part of hyperglobalization and not something alien. High market concentration and near-monopoly power in many market segments, coupled

with rentier strategies, is another consequence of deregulation and liberalization processes over the last four decades.

Inequalities still increase across the majority of EU countries. This phenomenon raises the question of the sustainability of economic Growth in the EU and the USA.

"When the income produced in a country, as measured by GDP, grows faster than the income received by households in that country, this suggests that growth is not inclusive and that all households do not feel its benefits". (VANROY, 2017)

(Saez, 2013) prove that in the last years in the USA, GDP" Growth in recent years in the United States has almost exclusively benefited households with the highest incomes".

Solow finds no conflict between equality and Growth: the more equitable the Growth, the more sustainable it's likely to be. (World Bank, 1990)

1.2. EU Growth models' application to address Poverty

1.2.1. Pro-poor growth policy during the 2007-2014 period of economic Growth and poverty reduction through income redistribution

The 2000 Lisbon Strategy, known as the "Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs", is a relatively recent illustration of the pro-poor growth model application. Next to the economic and environmental pillar is the social pillar. The social pillar distinguishes an opportunity inequality approach. So, Poverty will decrease "by investing in human resources and combating social exclusion. The Member States are expected to invest in education and training and to conduct an active policy for employment, making it easier to move to a knowledge economy". (The Lisbon Strategy)

Pro-poor Growth means the "*growth that benefits the poor*" (OECD, 2001; UN, 2000), a concept built by the DAC (Development Assistance Committee) under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). MDGs were launched in 2005 and assumed as the first objective from 8 the "eradication of extreme poverty and hunger".

The filiation of this concept springs from the "redistribution with growth" concept launched by Chenery et al. (1974), considering that this action reduces Poverty. Another related concept is the "broad-based growth", used in the 1990 World Development Report (World Bank, 1990). Based on 1990, the report assumes that reducing Poverty is possible and reasonable instead of eradicating it. Three types of pro-poor Growth have emerged. *The first one states that the poor benefit proportionally more than*

the non-poor. The second is the partial approach, valid for all poverty lines and measures. Pro-poor Growth can be partly defined using stochastic dominance curves, mathematical tools used to analyze inequalities in income distribution. In particular, pro-poor Growth respects the first-order dominance condition if it leads to income distribution that is more favourable to people

experiencing Poverty than the initial distribution. This approach helps to ensure that economic Growth is not only measured by overall increases in GDP but also by the extent to which it benefits the most vulnerable members of society. The third is the full approach based on a poverty line and a poverty measure. The growth process is judged from a rate or an index of pro-poor Growth, not from a curve

OECD (2009a, 2009b) establish two sustainable trajectories for exiting Poverty and meeting the MDGs, respectively, through employment and social protection. There are two main routes out of Poverty:

- a) Increasing equality opportunities through improving the access to Productive employment and decent work. It is crucial to have labour markets that work efficiently and create opportunities for local entrepreneurs to provide more employment prospects for impoverished individuals. Policies that acknowledge and enhance the conditions in the informal economy, which is the primary source of income for most disadvantaged men and women, play a vital role in reducing Poverty. Boosting the ability of women and young people to find work not only helps them but also unleashes their potential to contribute to economic Growth.
- b) They decreased income inequality, mainly increasing the growth distribution through income transfers and minimal working standards through Social Protection. Social protection is an effective way to reduce Poverty and directly make economic Growth more inclusive. It can increase the involvement of poor women and men in economic Growth, protect the poorest and most vulnerable during a recession, and contribute to social cohesion and stability. Additionally, it helps build human capital, manage risks, promote investment and entrepreneurship, and improve participation in labour markets. Importantly, social protection programs can be affordable, even for the poorest countries, and are highly beneficial in reducing Poverty and promoting sustainable development.

Pro-Poor Growth policy is people-oriented, not location-oriented. We note the problematic approach to lagging regions, regions "where the poor are concentrated...", as faster developing regions tend to capture economies of scale and concentration" is acknowledged.(Son, 2007)

1.2.2. Inclusive Growth 2015-2020 and the Europe 2020 Strategy

UN launched in 2015 The 2030 Agenda, and the 17 SDGs succeeded the 8 MDGs. There is no explicit link between The 2030 Agenda and the 2020 Strategy for 2015-2021. Inclusive Growth is the 3rd priority of the EU 2020 Strategy, aiming to *promote an economy with a high degree of employment, which ensures social and territorial cohesion*. This model of growth targets increasing employment and education to decrease the inequalities of opportunities and decrease

Poverty relative to a national threshold level. ¹McKinley (2010) states that "faster growth is clearly not enough. The impact of growth on the workforce should also be a priority policy concern".

OECD defined 2015 inclusive growth as "the economic growth that creates opportunities for all population segments and distributes the dividends of increased prosperity, both in monetary and non-monetary terms, fairly across society".

Not the last, the European Commission stated in 2010 that there is inclusive Growth when empowering people "through high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting Poverty and modernizing labour markets, training and social protection systems to help people anticipate and manage change, and build a cohesive society.". (Europe 2020. A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth., 2010)

The European growth model is added under the Inclusiveness Agenda, next to equal individual distribution, the criteria to distribute the Growth equally in space across all EU territories, including the ultra-peripheral regions. This model indirectly addresses the Poverty decreases in conditions of the ageing population and increases global competitiveness by stimulating the opportunities for equality through improving public institution services in creating new jobs, improving employment, human capital investing through skills development, and gender equal opportunities. Also, this model keeps the income outcome dimension of decreasing income inequality through social transfers to decrease Poverty due to income distribution.

1.2.3. *Inclusive Growth and Pro-Poor Growth similarities and differences*

Klasen (2010) identifies two types of inclusive Growth: based on process and outcome.

Inclusive growth "can be characterized as broad-based growth that includes nondiscriminatory participation" as a non-income dimension of wellbeing (education, health). Here, the Growth is the result of nondiscriminatory participation in education. In this case, the question is "Did improved education and health benefit all, particularly the most disadvantaged?" The outcome inclusive growth of the growth process is closely related to pro-poor Growth. The second type of inclusive Growth uses the absolute fuzzy pro-poor Growth and the relative one. The outcome of Inclusive Growth is

- a) similar to the ProPoor growth by it is different:
 - a1) Absolute definition means to "increase income for the poor";

¹ The number of Europeans living below the national poverty line should be reduced by 25%, lifting more than 20 million people out of poverty

- a2) Relative definition refers to Growth that leads to disproportionate income increases among the poor (i.e., it is accompanied by declining Inequality)".
- b) Is dissimilar with Pro-Poor Growth by the criteria of selection to act on outcome:
 - b1) Inclusive Growth uses selection criteria to identify the disadvantaged characteristics of the person (including the poor, the near-poor, middle-income groups, and even the rich) and applies "disadvantage-reducing" Growth.
 - b2) Pro-poor Growth is used as selection criteria for people with income below the poverty line.

2. The New Growth Narrative - Beyond the Growth.

2.1. New priorities – OECD 2020 synthesis

(OECD, 2020) identifies the 2019 Covid crisis as a set of 4 factors that act simultaneously and shape a radical change in the economic system: the accelerated environmental crises, the rapid technological change, the new patterns of globalization and the demographic shift.

Profound economic, environmental, and social challenges result from the simultaneous processes like:

While the surface temperature rises to 1.5C, the accelerating environmental crisis urgent requests to cut half the greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by around 2050. This is an enormous and transformative task, made all the more challenging by the need to address biodiversity loss, soil degradation, and pollution simultaneously.

Rapid technological advancements are transforming digital economies, leading to job numbers, types, and organizational changes. Multinational companies, including digital platforms, have become dominant in the market in ways unparalleled in modern times.

We are also witnessing new patterns of globalization and global trade. Investment and trade are shifting to the South and East as large transnational corporations create complex international production networks and supply chains.

Demographic changes are driving these trends, with ageing populations raising questions about the ability of working-age individuals to support non-working-age populations. Intergenerational inequalities are exacerbating pre-existing disparities in income, wealth, gender, and race.

We shall further point out some new economic narrative elements in this dynamic global ecosystem. The radical transformation springs a new conception of economic and social progress and its associated policies and objectives.

2.2. The New Conception of economic and social progress

Recently, OECD (2020) synthesized the transformative shaping at the conceptual level for three interconnected areas: a new conception of economic and social progress, new economic theory and analysis frameworks, and new approaches to economic policy.

A new concept of economic and social progress has emerged, which involves a deeper understanding of the relationship between Growth, human wellbeing, reduced inequalities and environmental sustainability. This concept can provide insights into economic policymaking and politics.

New economic theory and analysis frameworks provide a more rich basis for understanding how economies work. Additionally, there are new tools and techniques to help policymakers develop policies in real-time this understanding and evidence.

Moreover, new approaches to economic policy include a more comprehensive range of policy and institutional reforms. These reforms target to achieve the latest social and financial goals in the new brand world.

2.3. The new policy objectives that replace the growth objective

Public policy reforms mark the formulation and adoption of new policy objectives that replace the growth objectives. OECD (2020) iterate four objectives: Environmental sustainability, Rising wellbeing, Falling Inequality and System resilience.

Environmental sustainability is critical in ensuring a healthy planet for ourselves and future generations. It requires a rapid decline in greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation while achieving a stable and healthy level of ecosystem services.

Rising wellbeing is something we all aspire to achieve. It means that the quality of life and condition of society as a whole is improving. When individuals have a high level of life satisfaction, it positively impacts the wellbeing of society.

Falling inequality is a vital component of creating a fair and just society. It means reducing the income and wealth gap between the richest and poorest groups, decreasing poverty rates, and improving the wellbeing, incomes, and opportunities of those experiencing systematic disadvantage. We must strive for a society where everyone has access to equal opportunities.

System resilience is crucial in ensuring the stability of the economy. It means the ability to withstand financial, environmental, or other shocks without catastrophic and system-wide

effects. Creating a resilient system can protect the economy and ensure its sustainability for future generations.

2.4. The people-oriented green transition: the just transition 2021-2027

EU will implement this new growth narrative through a radical, innovative policy – the people-oriented green transition: the just transition 2021-2027. Under the Green Deal framework, subordinated to sustainability and green jobs creation, the Just transition has the following remarkable characteristics:

- Policy based on location – place policy-based and not on people, solutions developed by the region
- The adoption of radical innovation – development of sectoral diversification solutions in unrelated sectors – the case of mono-industrial mining areas.

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, approved the REGULATION (EU) 2021/1056 of 24 June 2021, establishing the Just Transition Fund (JTF) with its objectives to ensure a fair and inclusive transition. It is essential to mention that JTF is complemented by a Just Transition Mechanism for the actual programming period, aiming to address the social, economic and environmental consequences, particularly for vulnerable workers.

3. Final remarks

The socio-economic policies suffer a significant and irreversible transformation, with four complex systemic objectives. This change in objectives marks a turning point for new thinking in the sustainability paradigm. The new economic and social progress focuses on serving people and the planet rather than just aiming for economic Growth. The latest digital tools, such as big data, AI, IoT, and blockchain, allow real-time and anticipative public policy implementation. The new well-being must be accessible to all individuals and communities regarding income and opportunities, including those in disadvantaged locations while ensuring environmental sustainability and system resilience. The Just Transition policy package is an example of a preventive approach to poverty eradication, which is more effective than a reactive one. By using the latest digital transformation tools, we can ensure functional policy coordination, focus and complex coherence. The adverse consequences and long-term perspectives increase the complexity of public policies under the Agenda 2030 sustainability framework. In this People & Planet sustainable framework, we define *Poverty* as a multidimensional cumulative process of

adverse consequences. The vicious poverty cycle changes into equally distributed well-being in the new sustainability paradigm for all humans in the intelligent machine era.



Acknowledgements

The Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation supports through a grant this work from the NUCLEU Programme, 2022–2026, *Spatio-temporal forecasting of local labour markets through GIS modelling [P5]/ Previziuni spațio-temporal pentru piețele muncii locale prin modelare în GIS [P5] PN 22_10_0105*

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