



# ▶ Building universal social protection systems that contribute to equitable and inclusive societies and resilient economies

Expert Group Meeting on “Rethinking social development policies and frameworks” Organised by the Division for Inclusive Social Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)  
24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> August 2023

**Shahra Razavi**, Director, ILO Social Protection Department, Geneva

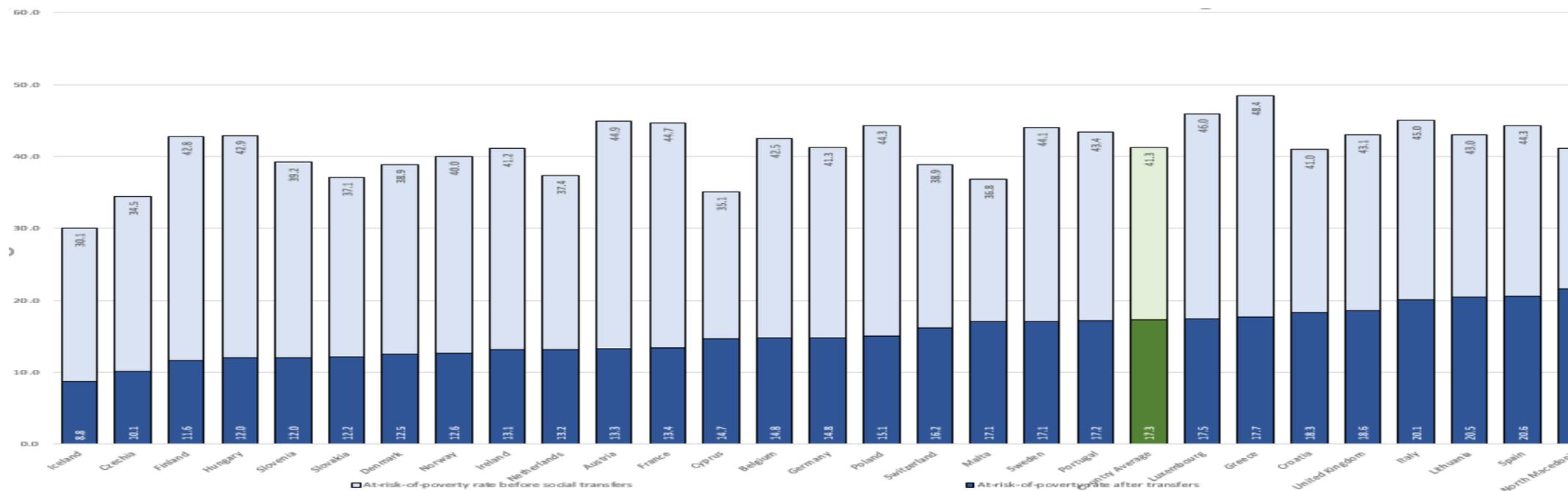
## Introduction

- ▶ Recent crises have underscored the urgent need for **UNIVERSAL** and **ADAPTIVE** social protection systems
- ▶ Social protection systems are a precondition for developing in an inclusive and sustainable manner
- ▶ **HOW** can countries build such systems?
  - ▶ One size does not fit all, but not everything goes
  - ▶ Using international social security and human rights standards as guidelines
  - ▶ Developing social protection systems alongside other social and economic policies



# Why are social protection policies needed to address current challenges?

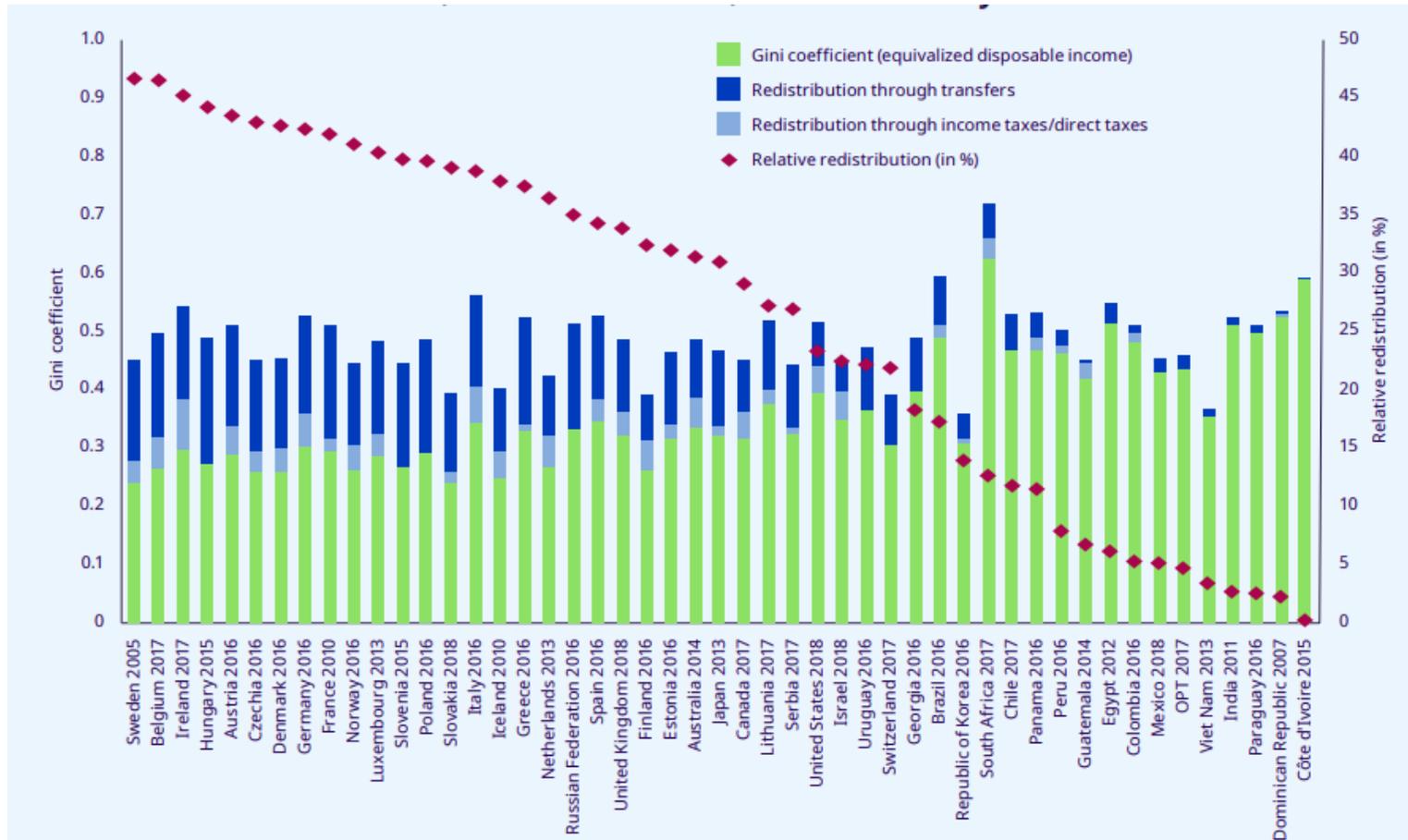
Figure 1: At-risk-of poverty rate in the total population before and after all social transfers and taxes in the European countries, circa 2019



Note: \*under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99. For Albania, Iceland, Kosovo, Slovakia, and The United Kingdom data are from 2018.

Source: Eurostat, 2021. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc\\_li09b/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_li09b/default/table?lang=en)

Figure 2: Reduction of inequality (Gini coefficient) through social security transfers and taxes, selected countries, latest available year



Source: World Social Protection Report 2020-22; ILO calculations based on Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) database (<http://www.lisdatacenter.org>), multiple countries, 2005–18. Link: <https://wspr.social-protection.org>

## ▶ Critical features of effective social protection systems

- ▶ Typically 9 branches of social protection to cover a comprehensive range of benefits across the life cycle
- ▶ Historically, most countries have focussed on certain branches first, meaning some branches are more developed
- ▶ Only 46.9% of the global population effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit – 4 billion not covered at all
- ▶ Effective social protection systems need to be adaptable to evolving contexts and demands
- ▶ Ensuring adequacy of benefits is important, as benefit levels often remain below the minimum standards of Convention 102



## ► Adequate, equitable and sustainable financing of social protection

- Widespread under-investment leads to low coverage rates
- Need to progressively increase fiscal space and develop a social protection floor
- Benefits should be financed sustainably with ‘due regard to social justice and equity’
- Spending on social protection is NOT a zero sum game
- Social security contributions play a crucial role in financing social protection systems, not to be replaced by general taxation
- Quick fire solutions and temporary safety nets are NOT optimal solutions

## ▶ Repairing the social contract and bringing the State back in

- ▶ Need to build State capacity and recover a sense of public purpose
- ▶ COVID-19 pandemic reshaped thinking about the role of the state
- ▶ How can states be held more accountable to their citizens?
- ▶ In the case of social protection, state capacity needs to go beyond the current focus on delivery systems
- ▶ This focus sidelines crucial questions about State capacity to build effective and well governed social systems and labour markets