

Report on the differences between national and international reporting about MDG 1

INTRODUCTION

On 7th July 2011, the latest edition of the Millennium Development Goals Report was officially released by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The information contained there is based “on a master set of data that has been compiled by an *Inter-agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators* (IAEG) led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, in response to the wishes of the General assembly for periodic assessment of progress towards the MDGs”¹. This Group comprises representatives of the international organizations involved in the preparation of one or more of the statistical indicators agreed for such monitoring. Among these organizations one can find various Departments within the United Nations Secretariat, UN agencies from within the United Nations system and outside, government agencies and national statisticians, other organizations concerned with MDG data, donors and expert advisers. IAEG is in charge of the preparation of data, their analysis, the definition and revision of methodologies, and the technical support to countries about collecting data and reporting on MDGs. In particular, the improvement of international comparability and of meaningfulness of data and indicators with respect to their context, are among IAEG’s main objectives.

The figures presented in the UNECE Statistical Database under the label “National reporting level”, instead, collect the information provided directly by the States (though often with the technical support of international organizations), either through their national MDG Reports or through the websites of their National Statistical Offices. These documents, besides being made available to the world community, usually are also meant to provide an assessment of the advancements of domestic policies.

In some cases, the information provided by the two databases coincides, but more frequently it does not. Indeed, the divergences between the resulting values can be considerably large. This may depend on differences in the primary source of data, or on the operations of data revision and adjustment that in some cases international agencies carry out in order to meet international standards, or rather on the variability in time coverage of surveying, or on some other causes.

In any case, it is important that researchers and users are aware of such discrepancies, which may remarkably affect the findings of their analysis. The aim of this report is precisely to provide a rough and synthetic account of the most significant among them, with regard to MDG 1 (eradication of extreme poverty and hunger).

¹ United Nations, *Millennium Development Goals Report 2011*.

1. International vs. national reporting: INDICATORS ACTUALLY USED

The first, obvious source of divergence between the two kinds of database is constituted by which indicators are reported. Despite the existence of an official list of goals, targets and indices issued by the United Nations², most countries provide information about only some of them. Indeed, some indicators may appear only in the international series of data, whereas others can be found only in the national one. Clearly, a good deal of them is included in both cases, but, even so – as we will see afterwards – very often differences in the definitions adopted lead to non-coinciding figures.

The following table specifies where data about the official indicators can be found (for at least one of the years from 1990 to 2009), for each country.

	1.1	1.1a	1.1a M/F	1.1a R/U	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8 (1)	1.8 (2)	1.9 (1)	1.9 (2)	YU (1)	YU (2)
Albania	I	B2	N	I	B*	B		I ¹			B	I			I	I
Armenia	B2	B2		I	B*	B	N	B ^{1,2}	B*	I ¹	B	I	I	I	B	I
Azerbaijan	I	B2	N	B	B*	B2	I	B ¹	N*	I ¹	B ³	B ³	I	I	I	I
Belarus	I	B2			I	B					I	I				
Bosnia and Herzegovina	I	B2		B	I	B	I	B ¹			B	I	N		B	I
Bulgaria	I	B			B*	I	I	B ¹		I ¹					B	I
Croatia	I	B			I	I	I	I ¹		I ¹					I	I
Czech Rep.	I	N2			I	I	I	I ¹		I ¹	I	I			I	I
FYR Maced.	I	B		I	B*	I	I	I ¹		I ¹	I	I			I	I
Georgia	B2	B		I	B2*	B	I	I ¹		I ¹	I	I	I	I	I	I
Hungary	I	B2			I	I	I	I ¹		I ¹					I	I
Kazakhstan	I	B2		B2	B*	I	I	I ¹	I	I ¹	I	I	I	I	I	I
Kyrgyzstan	B2 ³	B2		B	I	I		I ¹		I ¹	B ³	I	B		I	I
Latvia	I	B2		I	I	I	I	I ¹		I ¹					I	I
Montenegro	I	B		I	B*	B		I ¹			I	I				
Moldova	I	B2	N	N2	B*	B	I	I ¹		I ¹	B	I			B	I
Romania	I	B2		I	B*	B	B	I ¹		B ¹	I	I			I	I
Serbia	I	B2		I	I	I	I	I ¹	N*	I ¹	I	I			B	I
Slovakia	I	N2			I	I	I	I ¹		I ¹					I	I
Slovenia	I	N			I	I	I	I ¹		I ¹					I	I
Tajikistan	B ^{2,3}	B2	N	B	I	I	I	I ¹	I		I	I	I	I		
Turkey	B	B2		I	B*	B	B	B ¹	I	B ¹	B ³	B ³			I	I
Turkmenist.	I	N2		N	I	I	I				I		I	I		
Ukraine	I	B2		B	I	I	I	I ¹	N*		I	I			I	I
Uzbekistan	I	N	N	N	I	I	I				B**	I	I	I		

Table 1 – Reporting of MDG indicators in the international and in the national database

² See : <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/OfficialList.htm>

Notes to the table: the header row reports the official MDG1 indicators, that is: **1.1** - Proportion of population below \$1 (PPP) per day; **1.1a** – Proportion of population below the national poverty line; **M/F** – Gender disaggregation; **R/U** – Rural/Urban disaggregation; **1.2** – Poverty gap ratio; **1.3** – Share of poorest quintile in national consumption; **1.4** – Growth rate of GDP per person employed; **1.5** – Employment-to-population ratio; **1.6** – Proportion of employed people living below \$1 (PPP) per day; **1.7** – Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment; **1.8** – Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age: **(1)** moderately-to-severely underweight, **(2)** severely underweight; **1.9** – Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption: **(1)** percentage, **(2)** millions; **YU** – Youth Unemployment indices: **(1)** youth unemployment rate; **(2)** other indices.

In the cells: **I** – International database, **N** – National database; **B** – Both databases; **B2, N2** – At least two definitions are used for this indicator in the national database; * - In the national data series, the index is computed on the basis of the national poverty line; ** - In the national data series, the index is computed for children under three years of age; ¹ - The international series also presents data disaggregated by gender; ² - The international series also presents data disaggregated by gender; ³ - The national series also presents data disaggregated between rural and urban areas. Empty cells indicate that the corresponding figures do not appear in either database, for any of the years taken into consideration (from 1990 to 2009).

As one can notice from the columns of our table, some indicators are present prevalently or exclusively in the international series: this is for example the case of the indices of youth unemployment (especially those different from the standard youth unemployment rate), and of indicators from 1.4 to 1.7, which gauge progresses about **Target 1.B** (achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all).

The *international (UN) database* looks therefore more comprehensive in describing the situation of each State (as can be seen from the rows of the table): indeed, it always provides measures for all the three official indicators of Target 1.A (to halve the proportion of people living below \$1 a day), and nearly always Indicator 1.1a (population below the national poverty line) is reported too. Furthermore, at least one index for **Target 1.B** is always shown here (except for Belarus), whereas in the *national database* this happens only in eight cases out of 25. *International data* about **youth unemployment** rates are available for 20 states, whereas the *national* ones only for 5. Less frequent (especially for high-income countries) is the provision of data about **Target 1.C**, concerning hunger and malnourishment: however, for Indicator 1.8 (def. 1), *international figures* are presented by 19 States and for Indicator 1.9 (def. 1) by 8 States, while their *national* correspondents are made public only by 8 and 2 countries respectively.

On the other hand, as expected, the contribution of *national sources* is particularly important when it comes to measures grounded *on the national poverty line* (especially the headcount ratios), although normally, even in this case, international estimates are also reported – with no guarantee of coincidence, as said. Moreover, for these indicators, while the disaggregation by gender is only shown in some national reports, the one between rural and urban areas more often comes from the UN database. Instead, for Indicator 1.8 (children undernourished) data are separated by rural/urban areas only in some national series, but never in the international ones.

2. International vs. national reporting: DEFINITIONS ADOPTED, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO INDICATOR 1.1a

The fact that an indicator appears in both databases does not prevent figures from differing, in some cases by large amounts. One of the reasons has to do with the *choice of the definition* used by national sources for its calculation: this is crucial especially in the case of the *national poverty line*. In the absence of a globally agreed definition, every country is set free to select the one it believes to be the most appropriate for its context. As a consequence, choices range widely, and in fact we have: *a*) absolute thresholds defined in dollars (\$2 a day, \$4.30 ...) or in food calories (2100, 2232 ...), *b*) the identification of essential food baskets, or of a combination of food basket and basic needs; *c*) relative poverty lines expressed as a certain percentage of the median income. As emerges also from our table, usually national MDG reports include more than one definition.

However, as Table 2 illustrates, by comparing international and national figures for Indicator 1.1a (share of population below the national poverty line), a clear tendency comes into sight: the international series nearly always coincides with the poverty headcount ratios computed on the basis of *basic needs*, regardless of whether this definition has been adopted by a country as its official national poverty line, or simply as a variant indicator. In fact, every time this definition is included in an MDG report, its values are identical (or very close) to those from the UN database. Examples are given by Albania³, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova, Serbia and Turkey⁴. For other countries, no firm conclusion can be reached, either because the time coverage is too different between the two databases (like for Georgia), or because the poverty line adopted in the national report is not sufficiently well described (as in Romania). The only clear exception to this general tendency seems to be Kazakhstan, whose international data apparently resemble more those based on the “food-basket” definition⁵.

The issue of variability in definitions also affects Indicators 1.2 and 1.6. While their international estimates are grounded on the standard threshold of \$1 (or, more precisely, \$1.25) a day, the national ones depend on the domestic poverty line. As an obvious result, we cannot avoid wide divergence of results. For instance, in 2004 in Georgia the poverty gap was 5.5 according to the international series and 20.4 according to the national one; in 2008 the figures for Moldova were respectively 0.3 and 6.4, while for Romania they amounted to 0.2 and 18.2. Normally, national values are higher, because the national poverty line is typically less restrictive than the “\$1 a day”.

³ More precisely, in its national report, Albania uses the definition based on “basic needs and social exclusion items”: this is why in Table 2 the “Basic needs” row is empty.

⁴ Conversely, when the basic-needs based poverty indicator is *not* published in national reports/websites (considering also the data not shown in Table 2), practically no similarities can be found with the international series: see, for instance, the data of Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia and Macedonia.

⁵ Another (partial) exception may be Ukraine: this country, in its report, computes the indicator based on the (broader) definition of “basic needs and social exclusion”, but its figures (unlike the Albanian ones) do not coincide with those from the UN database.

3. International vs. national reporting: TIME COVERAGE

A third major source of discrepancy between the two reporting levels is constituted by the *years for which data are made available*. Generally speaking, even when considering the international database only, there does not seem to exist any strict regularity that could provide an account of why we have data for one particular year and not for another one.

TARGET 1.C - The only case where such regularity clearly comes into view is that of **Target 1.C**, and in particular of Indicator 1.9. Among all the States examined here, its figures – which are estimates made by FAO on the basis of various country statistics (food production and trade, household budget surveys, anthropometric data, population estimates)⁶ – refer, when available, to the same dates: 1994, 1996, 2001, 2006.

As for Indicator 1.8 – whose data are produced by the countries themselves (generally through national household surveys, including Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys) – periodicity is less homogeneous. Still, in the *international series*, while before 2000 time coverage looks patently non-systematic, afterwards, for nearly all the countries we have one figure in 2000-2001 followed by another one in 2005-2006. These years coincide exactly with the periods of the MICS Surveys. At the *national reporting level*, when this is present, usually after 2000 the coverage is the same, and also values and trends are similar or identical, which hints at the use of the same primary source. Exceptions are constituted mainly by Kyrgyzstan and Moldova, which report data for every year, while Turkish figures (both national and international) date back to 1998 and 2003.

One may, moreover, observe that the countries classified as “high income” by the World Bank (Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, and, until 2011, Latvia) do not publish any figure about Target 1.C, either at the international or at the national level, the only exception being Czech Republic in 2001.

TARGETS 1.A AND 1.B – For other indicators, periodicity is much more irregular among countries. Even in the case of Target 1.A, whose data are produced by international agencies for the specific purpose of global monitoring, international figures belong to diverse years, without a common timing. This variability is reduced only by a limited extent when countries are grouped by national income (according to World Bank classification): in principle, one may think that countries at similar levels of development might have similar needs about data frequency and timeliness, and/or similar capabilities in data collection and analysis. Some evidence for this hypothesis actually emerges, but it is far from clear-cut.

^{6 6} United Nations Development Group, *Indicators for Monitoring the Millennium Development Goals : Definitions, Rationale, Concepts and Sources*, United Nations, New York, 2003, p. 14

a) High income countries (HI) – For this group of six countries, *international data* on **Target 1.A** (population under \$1 a day, poverty gap ratio, poorest quintile's share of national consumption) are basically concentrated in the years 1993, 1996, 1998, 2002, 2004. Some of these States, in addition, used to compute these indicators every year in the past: Latvia from 1995 to 1998, Croatia from 1998 to 2001, Hungary from 1998 to 2002.

Anyway, most of them have no longer released such data after 2004: on the other hand, both the percentage of their population living below \$1 a day and their poverty gap ratio have been nil since at least 1997, and only Indicator 1.3 yielded non-zero values. Czech Republic and Slovakia constitute the most extreme example, since their latest international figures about Target 1.A date back to 1996. The situation looks similar as far as the *national series* are concerned (which, however, in all cases include exclusively Indicator 1.1a): apart from Croatia, no one of those high income countries has issued such data after 2003, and also before their frequency was sporadic. It is worth pointing out, however, that, for each country, the two series have practically no dates in common, so that a comparison between their values is impossible.

Much more complete is their provision of information about **Target 1.B** (decent employment for all), even though it entirely comes from *the international database*. In all cases apart from Croatia, all data have been updated every year since at least 1996.

b) Upper Middle Income Countries (UMC) – Elsewhere, similarities concerning time coverage are much fewer. In general, one can say that, as for **Target 1.A**, all the ten Upper Middle Income Countries in our sample present *international figures* either in 2001 or 2002 (only Montenegro does not, but at the time it was not independent yet), and most of them also show updates in 2004-2005 and/or in 2007-2008.

Parallels with the *national database* about time coverage can be found especially with regard to Indicator 1.1a: usually, when the years coincide, there is also identity in values between the international series and at least one of the national. This evidently means that the primary source is the same. This is the case, for example, of Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Romania and Turkey. Yet, Kazakhstan reports data only for 2001 and 2002 at the international level, whereas in national documents one can find the entire succession 1996-2009.

Obviously, the fact that the figures of this indicator are produced nationally makes coincidence much more likely to occur. Instead, divergence, both in terms of coverage and of values, is the rule when it comes to Indicator 1.3 (consumption share of the poorest quintile), which is computed – for the *UN database* – by international agencies: overall, the national series looks more complete for the most recent years, whereas the international one provides more information about the last decade of 20th century.

Likewise, wide discrepancies in coverage and figures emerge about Indicator 1.2 (poverty gap ratio), for which different definitions are used at the two reporting levels (see above). For its part, instead, Indicator 1.1 (population below \$1 a day) is generally present *only in the international database*.

Data about **Target 1.B** are all nationally produced, even those included in the *UN database*. Yet, this latter looks far more complete than national reports, especially for what concerns the amount of information provided (see Table 1). Time coverage, on the other hand, is also sometimes larger, but, as a matter of fact, the number of years for which data are present differs largely across countries, ranging from one or two (depending on the indicator) in Albania, to the complete series 1990-2009 in Turkey.

However, expectedly, when a *national series* exists⁷, more often than not, it equals its international correspondent, or varies only slightly. We can notice, for example, Indicator 1.4 (GDP growth rate per worker) in Romania and Turkey, Indicator 1.5 (employment-to-population rate) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indicator 1.7 (proportion of vulnerable workers) in Romania and Turkey, youth unemployment rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria. Deviant examples are instead constituted by Indicator 1.5 in Bulgaria and Turkey, whose values coming from the national MDG report are systematically and significantly different from the international ones⁸ (see also Table 5 and 6).

b) Lower Middle Income Countries (LMC) – Within this subgroup of 7 countries, only Armenia and Georgia present data about indicators 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 (for the latter Moldova joins them) at both reporting levels.

As far as the share of population below \$1 a day (i.e., Indicator 1.1) is concerned, for Armenia, the years covered do not coincide between the databases; moreover, the order of magnitude of the values looks very different in the two cases, passing from more than 10% (2001-2003, international series) to less than 0.5% (2004-2009, national series). Although coincidence should not be expected, since the agencies in charge of data gathering and analysis differ, such a huge gap is certainly anomalous (cf. also Tab. 3).

In Georgia, for the same Indicator 1.1, four are the years covered by both databases: 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003⁹. As one can notice from Table 3, in 2002 figures coincide (15.1%), while the international ones are lower in 2000 and 2001 (9.6% and 9.2% vs. 14.3% and 13.8%) but higher in 2003 (17.3% vs. 16.6%).

A similar, curious discrepancy affects the poverty gap ratio based on the \$1 threshold (Indicator 1.2): in particular, from 2000 to 2003 international values “jump” from 2.7 to 4.7 and then to 5.5, whereas national ones, meanwhile, increase from 4.6 to 5.4. Evidently, a change in methodology must have occurred in the UN database, but it is not explicitly signaled anywhere. On the other hand, the figures of Indicator 1.3 (poorest quintile’s share of national consumption) show, over the same period, different levels but similar

⁷ Here we are excluding cases where only « isolated » figures (not in a time series) are reported, like Azerbaijan and Serbia (national level).

⁸ For Bulgaria, actually, part of this discrepancy may be explained by the different definition used: the national data consider only population aged 15-64, whereas the international ones do not fix any age limit. Since employment rate is likely to be lower among the elderly, it is possible that the exclusion of this age group raises the resulting figures, thus making “national” rates higher than those from the UN database.

⁹ The international series starts in 1996 and also includes 2005 and 2008, whereas in the national one the only additional year is 2004.

trends, with an increase from 2000 to 2001, and a return to previous values in the following two years.

For Armenia, we do not have enough commonality of coverage for either the \$1-based poverty gap or Indicator 1.3, but the order of magnitude seems to be similar between the two series. With regard to the latter indicator, Moldova shows similarities between national and international values until 2004 (when they amount to 7.2-7.3%), but in 2007-2008 the former rises to more than 8%, while the latter declines to 6.7-6.8%.

In this subgroup, even among the headcount ratios based on the national poverty line (Indicator 1.1a), correspondences (in time coverage and in amounts) are rarer than elsewhere, since the definition grounded on basic needs, which usually entails identity between the two series, is here less frequently reported than among other countries.

On the whole, the frequency of *international data* does not seem to follow any regular schedule across LMC-countries: it is practically annual in some cases – such as the indicators of **Target 1.B** for Macedonia (since 1998), Georgia (since 1999) and Moldova (since 2002) – and much more sporadic elsewhere: for example, indices of youth unemployment in Armenia were computed only in 2001 and 2007. In general, though, indicators of **Target 1.B** (about employment) are updated more often than those of **Target 1.A** (poverty). Probably, this is due to the respective primary sources, which are usually Labour Force Surveys (typically conducted every year) for the former, and Household Budget Surveys (more occasional) for the latter.

Only in three cases are *national series* for **Target 1.B** published, within this subgroup of countries. Ukraine reports on Indicator 1.6 (for which there is no international correspondent) and Moldova on youth unemployment rates (which are identical to those which appear in the UN database), while Armenia issues Indicator 1.5 (employment-to-population rates) and youth unemployment rates, both disaggregated by gender, too. In the Armenian case, *the national series* is more complete (cf. Tables 5 and 6): it has been updated every year since 2004, while the international one only covers 2001, 2004 and 2006. As for the actual figures, during the (two) years in which data are present in both databases, resemblances emerge with regard to Indicator 1.5, whereas youth unemployment rates are identical in 2007, but very different (with national data being considerably higher) in 2001.

d) Low Income Countries – Finally, both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan include Indicator 1.1 (proportion of population below \$1 a day) in their *national documents*. In the former case (Kyrgyzstan), discrepancies with the UN database are tremendous, not so much in terms of coverage (which is however yearly since 1996 for the national series and more occasional for the international one) as in terms of values: indeed, according to the national MDG website, absolute poverty rates amounted to 1.06% in 1998, 0.4% in 2002, 0.1225% in 2004 and 0.1316% in 2007; instead, figures reported by the UN database are, respectively, 31.8%, 34%, 21.8% and 1.9%!

As for Tajikistan, time coverage is scarce in both databases (the national one reports values only for two years over the period 1990-2009, the international one only for three

years); yet, again values diverge widely: the national figures are 36% in 1999 and 18% in 2003, the international ones are, respectively, 44.5% and 36.3% (cf. Tab. 2).

Indicators 1.2 and 1.3 can be found *only in the UN database*, and they are computed for the same years as Indicator 1.1. In no cases do we have international data more recent than 2005. The headcount ratio based on the national poverty line (Indicator 1.1a) is seldom reported in the *international database* (only in 2003 and 2005 for Kyrgyzstan, and in 1999, 2002, 2007 and 2009 for Tajikistan): values differ with respect to the national figures, but the orders of magnitude are not completely dissimilar¹⁰.

Target 1.B, for its part, is assessed almost exclusively through international data. The only exception is the youth unemployment rate of Kyrgyzstan, which also appears in the national report, with values identical to those from the UN database. Time coverage in Kyrgyzstan goes from 2002 to 2006, whereas in Tajikistan it is limited to 2003 and 2004.

4. International vs. national reporting: DIFFERENCES IN VALUES

The most troublesome divergences are those which cannot be explained by differences either in the definitions employed or in time coverage. In the previous pages, some examples have been mentioned, such as Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with regard to Indicator 1.1, whose figures can be seen also in Table 3. They are not the only ones.

Being frequently reported in both series, Indicator 1.3 is particularly suitable for revealing significant incongruities. As we can see from Table 4, in practically all the countries for which the two series have data in common, there are discrepancies. As far as we can judge, given the relevant variability in time coverage, in some cases (Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania to some extent) the orders of magnitude are still similar, while in some others (Romania, Turkey, Azerbaijan) far less. Even the time trend is analogous for some countries (like Albania) but not for others (like Moldova).

In nearly all our cases, international estimates – produced by the designated agencies – are, with respect to the national ones, remarkably higher about the share of population below \$1 (exception: Georgia) and lower about the poorest quintile's share of national consumption/income (exceptions: Romania and, partially, Moldova). Since policy efforts should be aimed at keeping the former very low and the latter rather high, do these results support the hypothesis that national data are systematically more “optimistic” than the UN database, as a consequence of any supposed attempts, on the part of national offices, to “embellish” the representation of their country?

¹⁰ At least if we consider, for Kyrgyzstan, the definition based on the unspecified « national poverty line » and not the one based on the cost of a food basket. In the former case, in fact, the figure for 2005 amounts to 49.472% (the correspondent in the UN database is 50.8%), whereas in the latter the percentage is 11.1%.

When we examine other indicators, in reality, we find mixed evidence. In the only two States where employment-to-population ratios (Indicator 1.5, Tab. 5) present significant variations between the two databases, i.e. Bulgaria and Turkey, national data are “more optimistic” (higher) in the first case and “less optimistic” (lower) in the second.

Also when it comes to underweight children (Indicator 1.8, Tab. 7), national data can equally differ for better (lower figures) or for worse (higher) from the UN database: even within a same country the national figures can look more “optimistic” in one year and more “pessimistic” afterwards (see for instance Kyrgyzstan and Albania). Anyway, time coverage is too limited to draw solid conclusions.

Even when looking at the Indicator 1.1a (Tab. 2), about which countries have a great deal of freedom in selecting their official definition of “national poverty line”, results are not clear-cut. In fact, if we compare the official indicators provided by national documents with those adjusted by international agencies, only in some cases do the former yield lower, i.e. more “optimistic”, values (Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Turkey, Ukraine), whereas elsewhere their figures can safely be higher/more pessimistic (Armenia, Macedonia).

In the light of the above, then, the discrepancies pointed out so far (with – perhaps – the partial exception of Indicators 1.1 and 1.3) seem to be due more to methodological and statistical issues (or mistakes) than to political purposes. Strong clues about the presence of measurement anomalies, on the other hand, are also given by some evident inconsistencies that emerge from the data. For instance, in at least three cases (Kyrgyzstan [1998, 2002, 2004], Turkey [2002, 2004, 2005], Uzbekistan [2003]) we obtain proportions of population below \$1 a day (Indicator 1.1, UN database) that are higher than the share under the domestic poverty line according to national reporting.

Concluding remarks

Finding the causes of discrepancies between the two reporting levels is not an unproblematic task. As we have seen, the most evident elements (different definitions, variations in time coverage), and some of the most straightforward suppositions (such as the possible role of development level) explain such variability only to a limited extent. On the other hand, this was our main objective here.

First and foremost, we aimed at highlighting the mere existence of incongruities between the two databases. Even though problems like this are all but rare when dealing with macrodata, not always analysts take adequate account of them. Instead, it is essential that, when doing research, the issue of data quality and accuracy is not disregarded. Researchers must always be aware that their results can vary considerably according to the source adopted for their data, and thus, when selecting the one to rely on, they should always justify their choices. We hope this report has made a small contribution to holding the attention on this caveat.

APPENDIX. TABLES 2 to 7

Table 2 – Indicator 1.1a – Population below the national poverty line (%) in some UNECE countries. “National” indicates the figures coming from national documents, based on the official national poverty line; “Basic needs” indicates the *population (%) below the national poverty line defined according to basic needs*: its figures come from national documents, too. “International” is the series reported in the UNSD database.

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Albania																		
National	29.6	..	..	..	25.4	..	..	18.5	..	..	12.4	..
International	25.4	..	..	18.5	..	..	12.4	..
Basic Needs
Azerbaijan																		
National	9.6	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	49.6	..	..	..	..	..	..	15.8	..
Basic Needs	49	46.7	44.7	40.2	29.3	20.8	15.8	13.2	10.9
Armenia																		
National	80	..	..	..	..	73.4	62.6	52	46.9	47.7	..
International	54.8	..	48.3	..	..	..	..	..	..	23.5	26.5
Basic Needs	56.1	..	..	..	..	34.6	29.8	26.5	25	23.5	..
Bosnia-H.																		
National
International	19.5	..	..	17.7	..	..	14	..	..
Basic Needs	19.1	..	..	17.7	..	..	14	..	..

Bulgaria																			
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	36	..	..	..	12.8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Belarus																			
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	38.6	32.1	33	46.7	41.9	28.9	30.5	27.1	17.8	12.7	11.1	7.7	6.1	5.4	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	41.9	28.9	30.5	27.1	17.8	12.7	11.1	7.7	6.1	5.4	..
Croatia																			
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11.2	..	11.1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Czech Rep.																			
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4.3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Georgia																			
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	51.8	51.1	52.1	54.5	52.7	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	23.6	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Hungary																			
National	..	..	..	..	18	..	..	..	6	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	9.7	14.5	20.3	9.4	14.7	17.3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Kazakhstan																			
National	..	..	..	..	..	12.7	16.2	14.5	11.7	16.1	13.8	9.1	6.3	5.2	2.7	1.4	1.2	0.6	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	17.6	15.4	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	34.6	38.3	39	34.5	31.8	46.7	44.5	37.5	33.9	31.6	18.2	12.7	12.1	8.2	..
Kyrgyzstan																			
National	..	..	..	..	19.1	14.9	23	23.3	17.8	13.5	13.8	17.2	13.4	11.1	9.1	6.6	6.1	3.1	..

International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	49.9	..	43.1	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	62.6	56.4	54.8	49.9	45.9	43.1	39.9	35	31.7	31.7
Latvia																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	6	..	5	5	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	7.5	..	5.9	..	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Moldova																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	34.5	29.9	30.4	29.5
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	73	67.8	54.6	40.4	29	26.5	29	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	67.8	54.6	40.4	29	26.5	29.1	30.2	25.8	26.4	26.3
Montenegro																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11.2	11.3	8	4.9	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11.2	11.3	8	4.9	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11.2	11.3	8	4.9	..
Romania																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	30.6	28.9	25.1	18.8	15.1	13.8	9.8	5.7	4.4
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	35.9	30.6	28.9	25.1	18.8	15.1	13.8	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Serbia																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14	..	..	..	8.8	6.6	7.9	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14	..	14.6	..	9	6.6	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14	..	..	..	8.8	6.6	7.9	..
Slovakia																		
National	..	..	..	..	11.3	..	..	..	..	..	..	4.9	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Slovenia																		
National	..	13	..	..	..	..	13.8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

Tajikistan																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	83.4	..	..	..	..	65	..	..	..	..	46.7
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	92.3	..	..	..	72.4	..	..	..	53.1	..	47.2
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Turkey																		
National	..	..	2.9	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1.4	1.3	1.3	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.5	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	27	28.1	25.6	20.5	17.8	17.8	17.1	18.1
Basic Needs	..	..	28.3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	27	28.1	25.6	20.5	17.8	17.8	17.1	..
Turkmenistan																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	15	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Ukraine																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11.9	11	3	4	2	9	6	6.6	3.8	4.5
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	18.8	14	7.9	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Macedonia																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	19	20.7	21	22.3	22.7	30.2	30.2	29.6	30	29.8	29.4	28.7	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	19.1	19.2	18.5	20.4	19	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Uzbekistan																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	27.5	..	26.2	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Basic Needs	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

Table 3 – Indicator 1.1 – Population below \$1 (PPP) per day (%) in some selected UNECE countries. Data from UNECE database (“national”) and UNSD MDG database (“international”).

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Armenia																	
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.40	0.30	0.10	..	0.10	0.20
International	..	..	..	17.5	..	..	18.0	..	11.0	15.0	10.6	..	..	..	..	1.30	..
Georgia																	
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14.3	13.8	15.1	16.6	16.9	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	4.50	4.60	6.90	8.70	9.60	9.20	15.1	17.3	..	13.4	..	..	14.7	..
Kyrgyzstan																	
National	..	..	..	0.97	1.02	1.07	1.73	0.27	0.12	0.40	0.10	0.12	0.39	0.35	0.13	0.09	..
International	18.6	..	..	..	..	31.8	..	..	..	34.0	..	21.8	..	..	1.90	..	..
Tajikistan																	
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	36.0	..	..	..	18.0	..	..	..	..	..	17.1
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	44.5	..	..	..	36.3	21.5	..	..	..	..	..
Turkey																	
National	..	1.10	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	..
International	..	2.10	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2.00	..	3.50	2.70	..	..	..	..

Table 4 (in the following page) - Indicator 1.3 – Poorest quintile’s share of national consumption (or income) (%) in some selected UNECE countries. Data from UNECE database (“national”) and UNSD MDG database (“international”).

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Albania																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14	..	..	8.2	..	..	9.2	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	8.7	..	..	..	..	9	..	8.2	7.8	..	..	8.1	..
Azerbaijan																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	13.2	12.2	..	..	..	..	17.3	13.5
International	..	..	..	6.9	..	..	..	..	..	7.4	..	..	..	..	..	..	8	..
Armenia																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	10.6	10.1
International	..	..	..	..	5.4	..	..	7.6	..	7.6	7.9	8.6	..	..	..	8.6	8.8	..
Bosnia-H.																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9.5	..	..	..	..	..	..	7.2	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9.1	..	..	6.9	..	..	6.7	..	..
Belarus																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9.3	9.1	9.3	9.8	9.9	9.6	9.5	9.3	9.2	9.6
International	..	10.8	..	8.5	..	9.5	8.4	..	8.5	8.2	8.5	..	..	8.8	..	8.8	9.2	..
Georgia																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	7.6	8.2	7.9	7.8	7.8	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	6.1	6.4	6.1	6	5.9	6.3	5.6	5.5	..	5.4	..	..	5.3	..
Moldova																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	6.8	6.5	6.8	7.5	7.2	6.7	8.2	8.8	9.4	7.9
International	6.9	..	..	..	..	6.5	..	6.8	..	7.1	6.7	..	7.3	..	..	6.7	6.8	..
Montenegro																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8.9	9.5	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	6.5	8.5	..
Romania																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7
International	9.3	..	8.9	..	..	..	8.7	..	8.2	8.1	7.9	..	..	8.2	..	7.9	8.1	..
Turkey																		
National	..	..	8.5	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9.3	8.8	9.1	9.2	9.2	9.1	9.1	..
International	..	..	5.8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5.6	..	..	5.2	5.4	..	5.7	..

Table 5 – Indicator 1.5 – Employment-to-population ratio (% , both sexes), in some selected UNECE countries. Data from UNECE database (“national”) and UNSD MDG database (“international”).

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Bosnia-H.																		
National	35	..	..	..	..	..	..	58	47.5	48.7
International	62	59	47.3	..
Bulgaria																		
National	39	37	28.2	26	22	20	15	..	..
International	33	39	35.6	27.1	25	22	20	15	12.7	16.1
Kyrgyzstan																		
National	20.1	15.4	15	15	15	..	14.8	..
International	20.1	..	15	15	15	..	..	..
Moldova																		
National	16	16	15.2	18.1	20	19	17	14	11.2	15.4
International	15.2	18.1	20	19	17	15	11.2	15.4
Serbia																		
National	48	..	..	..	40.7
International	48	44	35.2	42.5

Table 6 – Youth Unemployment – Youth unemployment rates (% , aged 15-24, both sexes), in some selected UNECE countries. Data from UNECE database (“national”) and UNSD MDG database (“international”).

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Azerbaijan																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	56.2	..	..	..	..	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	45.4	45.3	46	46	61	61	60.1	..
Armenia																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	52	..	..	..	..	45	44	43	43	42	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	42	..	..	43	..	43	..	..	..
Bosnia-H.																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	36	..	..	..	..	30	31	33.6	33.1
International	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	30	31	33.6	..
Bulgaria																		
National	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	50	50.6	52.5	54	56	59	62	..	..
International	..	..	..	..	..	44	44	42	42	41	41.6	43.1	45	45	47	49	50.8	49.4
Turkey																		
National	34	32	34	34	35	34	35	35	34	33	32	32	29	29	29	30	30	29
International	51	47.5	50	50	50	49	49	49	47	46	44.4	43.2	41	42	42	42	41.7	41.2

Table 7 – Indicator 1.8 – Children under 5 moderately or severely underweight (%) in some selected UNECE countries. Data from UNECE database (“national”) and UNSD MDG database (“international”).

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Albania																		
National	14	..	..	..	..	8	..	..	..	5
International	7	..	..	..	17	..	..	..	..	7	..	..	..	..
Azerbaijan																		
National	8	..	..	..
International	9	..	..	..	14	6	..	..	..	..	8	..	..	..
Armenia																		
National	3	..	..	..	..	4	..	..	..	..
International	3	..	3	..	..	..	..	4	..	..	..	..
Bosnia-H.																		
National	4	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	..	..
International	4	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	..	..
Kyrgyzstan																		
National	7	5	8	6	7	7	12	7.8	7	6	6	5	6.5	4.6
International	8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3	..	..	..	..
Moldova																		
National	21	20	19	19	17	17	14	13	11	11
International	3	..	..	..	..
Turkey																		
National	8	..	..	..	..	3.9	..	..	..	..	2.8	..
International	..	8.7	..	9	..	..	7	..	..	..	..	3.5	..	..	..	..	..	..