

## MANAGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION – A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MEMBER STATES (2010-2025)

Bożena SOWA<sup>1</sup>, Maria KOCOT<sup>2\*</sup>, Alina WALENIA<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lublin University of Technology; b.sowa@pollub.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-6498-4868

<sup>2</sup> University of Economics in Katowice; maria.kocot@ue.katowice.pl, ORCID: 0000-0001-5150-3765

<sup>3</sup> University of Rzeszow; alinawalenia@poczta.onet.pl, ORCID: 0000-0003-3389-9465

\* Correspondence author

**Purpose:** The aim of the article is to evaluate the level of socio-economic development of European Union Member States between 2010 and 2025 and to identify key factors influencing development management.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The study is based on secondary data analysis using Eurostat and UNDP databases, supported by comparative and descriptive analysis as well as an examination of relationships between selected socio-economic indicators.

**Findings:** The results indicate a general improvement in socio-economic development across EU Member States, reflected in higher GDP per capita and HDI values, lower unemployment rates, and a positive relationship between economic and social development.

**Research limitations/implications:** The study is limited by its reliance on secondary data and a selected set of macroeconomic and social indicators, which do not fully capture the complexity of socio-economic development.

**Practical implications:** The findings may support policymakers and public institutions in designing and evaluating development strategies aimed at strengthening socio-economic cohesion and sustainable growth.

**Social implications:** The results highlight the importance of investments in human capital, education, and social well-being as key factors contributing to improved quality of life and long-term development.

**Originality/value:** The originality of the article lies in its comprehensive comparative assessment of socio-economic development across EU Member States over a fifteen-year period from a development management perspective.

**Keywords:** socio-economic development, European Union, GDP per capita, Human Development Index, public debt, unemployment, development management.

**Category of the paper:** research paper.

## 1. Introduction

Socio-economic development constitutes one of the key objectives of public policy implemented both at the national and European Union levels. Contemporary development management requires balancing economic growth with social progress, labour market development, public finance stability and improvements in citizens' quality of life. In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the effectiveness of development management in European Union Member States, particularly in the context of economic crises, demographic changes, digital transformation and sustainable development challenges. Therefore, assessing the level of socio-economic development and identifying factors influencing development disparities among Member States has become an important research issue.

The aim of the article is to evaluate the level of socio-economic development of European Union Member States between 2010 and 2025 and to identify key factors influencing development management. The added value of the study lies in the comprehensive comparative assessment of socio-economic development across European Union Member States using selected economic and social indicators, including GDP per capita, public debt, unemployment rate and HDI.

The structure of the article has been subordinated to the achievement of the adopted research goal. The first part presents the theoretical foundations of socio-economic development and development management. Next, the methodological assumptions and analytical methods are discussed. The subsequent section presents the research results, followed by a discussion and conclusions concerning socio-economic development in the European Union.

Despite numerous studies on socio-economic development and the factors determining economic growth, there is still a lack of comprehensive comparative analyses covering all European Union Member States over a long-term time horizon. Such studies should simultaneously consider both economic and social indicators from the perspective of development management. Existing research has primarily focused on selected countries, regions, or individual aspects of development. The identified research gap provided the basis for undertaking the present study. Its added value lies in a comprehensive assessment of changes in the level of socio-economic development across European Union Member States between 2010 and 2025, as well as in the identification of relationships between selected economic and social indicators from a development management perspective.

The literature review indicates that previous studies have primarily focused on identifying the determinants of socio-economic development. These include the quality of institutions and entrepreneurship (Leitão, Capucho, 2021), regional conditions (Garina et al., 2019), human capital and education (Rahman, Hossain, 2025; Karpenko, 2025; Ali et al., 2025), as well as environmental issues and sustainable development (Madni et al., 2022; Medeu et al., 2025). The literature also emphasizes the role of digital transformation (Iryna et al., 2022),

the European Green Deal (Nagaj et al., 2024), and challenges related to development management in European Union Member States (Radchenko et al., 2024). At the same time, according to the literature review conducted, no studies were identified that provide a comprehensive comparative analysis of all European Union Member States over the period 2010-2025 while simultaneously considering both economic and social indicators from a development management perspective. This identified research gap provides the rationale for undertaking the present study and highlights its potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge on socio-economic development management within the European Union.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Theoretical determinants of the socio-economic development of countries**

Each country, undergoing socio-economic development, also undergoes a complex and multidimensional process. It includes the transformations that are taking place in both the economic and social spheres. According to the modern approach to this issue, it can be assumed that development should not be identified only with economic growth. Instead, it should also mean improving the quality of life of society, access to education, health care, increasing the level of employment and creating conditions conducive to the development of human capital. In the scientific literature, it can be emphasized that the pace and direction of development are influenced by many interrelated economic, institutional and social factors. Leitão and Capucho (2021) point to the importance of the quality of institutions and entrepreneurship as factors supporting the development of countries. In turn, Garina and co-authors (2019) draw attention to the role of territorial and regional conditions in shaping development processes. The quality of scientific and research activities is also of great importance. It affects the economy's ability to create innovations, transfer knowledge and build competitive advantages (Didenko et al., 2022). Thus, as a result, socio-economic development is now seen as the result of the interaction of many interdependent determinants. These conditions shape the development potential of countries.

Among the most important determinants of socio-economic development, the level of education, technological development and the quality of human capital are increasingly mentioned. Rahman and Hossain (2025) are of the opinion that the implementation of modern technologies and investment in education significantly increase the productivity of the economy. They will also contribute to the growth of social welfare. A similar position is presented by Karpenko (2025) and Ali, Khan and Ali (2025). They point to the importance of education. They treat it as a factor that significantly increases social mobility. It also reduces inequalities and supports long-term economic growth. In turn, Bazaluk et al. (2025) show that

stable economic growth depends on the efficient use of resources, properly conducted economic policies and the ability of the state to support investments. In addition, health and social factors are increasingly important. According to research by Yeboah, Omonaiye, and Yaya (2025), the rate of economic growth affects the health level of society. In turn, according to the findings of Atusingwize, Deane and Musoke (2025), the importance of social determinants of health for the quality of life of residents is increasing. Similar relationships are indicated by Kapatsa and co-authors (2025) and Yermukhanova and co-authors (2025). They highlight the impact of socio-economic factors on public health. They also point to the development possibilities of societies.

Contemporary concepts of socio-economic development increasingly take into account the environmental aspect. Emphasis is also placed on the need to implement the assumptions of sustainable development. Madni, Anwar and Ahmad (2022) indicate that the level of socio-economic development affects the environmental performance of developing countries. In turn, Zeb, Shuhai and Ullah (2025) and Magazzino, Gattone and Madaleno (2025) believe that socio-economic factors play a large role in shaping the level of ecological footprint and the quality of the natural environment. A similar research stream includes the analyses of Cai and co-authors (2025), which indicate the impact of socio-economic factors on the level of carbon dioxide emissions, and the research of Dyanty and co-authors (2025), which emphasizes the importance of the adaptive capacity of societies to climate change. Maintaining a balance between economic growth and environmental protection also remains a significant challenge. This accent is highlighted by Kilgus and Shrum (2026). In addition, Najia, Taher and Elkader (2025) point to the importance of socio-cultural factors for the sustainability of developmental processes. Mbanefo and co-authors (2026), on the other hand, argue that effective public policy is needed to create conditions conducive to socio-economic development. This means that the modern development of states is the result of the impact of economic, social, institutional, technological, health and environmental factors, which together determine the level of prosperity and competitiveness of economies.

## **2.2. Contemporary challenges of socio-economic development management in the European Union**

In order for EU countries to develop harmoniously, it is necessary to manage socio-economic development accordingly. This task is currently one of the most important areas of activity of public institutions that are responsible for shaping development policy. Today's Member States operate in conditions that are characterised by high complexity of economic and social processes. And this requires an integrated approach to development management. One of the main challenges remains reducing development inequalities between countries and regions. To achieve this, it is necessary to maintain the high competitiveness of the European economy at the same time (Wilczyńska et al., 2025). As Radchenko and co-authors point out (2024), effective management of regional development requires adapting

public policies to the specifics of individual areas. It is also necessary to take into account their social and economic potential. At the same time, the need to balance economic and environmental objectives is becoming increasingly important. These determinants can be considered the foundation of contemporary development strategies (Medeu et al., 2025; Voronina et al., 2024). Institutional capacity building, which supports the achievement of common European goals and effective international cooperation, also plays an important role in this process (Sudar et al., 2024).

The ongoing digital transformation remains a significant challenge for managing socio-economic development. Hence, there is a need to adapt management processes to the requirements of the knowledge-based economy. The development of digital technologies affects the way public administration, businesses and society function. It creates new opportunities. However, at the same time, it generates new risks (Iryna et al., 2022). Particular importance is attached to the development of smart infrastructure and the use of the smart city concept. These concepts support the effective management of urban space and public services (Yermachenko et al., 2023; Kaššaj, Peráček, 2024). With the development of digitization, new challenges are constantly arising. They are related to data protection, algorithmic management and ensuring appropriate standards of work in the digital environment (Aloisi, 2024). In addition, the experience of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the need to increase the resilience of public institutions. It is necessary to shape the capacity of countries to respond to global crises (Quaglia, Verdun, 2023).

Another area of challenge is the energy and ecological transition processes, which are being implemented as part of the European Green Deal. These include the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, develop a low-carbon economy, and increase the efficiency of natural resource use (Nagaj et al., 2024; Popescu et al., 2022). Agricultural land development is an important element, which is in line with the assumptions of the European Union's environmental policy (Fayet et al., 2022). The development of the circular economy is also becoming increasingly important. It will include modern waste management systems and rational use of raw materials (Agovino et al., 2024; Rebehy et al., 2023; John, Das, 2024).

The importance of these activities is confirmed by the research of Velis and co-authors (2023). They indicate a close relationship between the level of socio-economic development and the effectiveness of waste management systems. Contemporary challenges also include the need to ensure economic security and responsible management of natural resources (Song et al., 2023), effective management of water resources under climate change (Rossi, Peres, 2023), the development of solutions enabling the safe reuse of water resources (Radini et al., 2023), and the implementation of new regulations related to sustainability reporting of enterprises and institutions public (Odobáša, Marošević, 2023). Therefore, it can be said that modern management of socio-economic development requires a systemic approach. It should integrate economic, social, technological and environmental objectives.

### 3. Methods

The aim of the article is to evaluate the level of socio-economic development of European Union Member States between 2010 and 2025 and to identify key factors influencing development management. The focus was on following the analysis of changes taking place in the area of economic growth, the situation of public finances, the labour market and social development. An attempt was made to determine the extent to which selected economic and social indicators can be tools supporting development management processes at the national and supranational level. The following research questions were subordinated to the implementation of the research objective:

- P1. How did the level of gross domestic product per capita in the Member States of the European Union change between 2010 and 2025?
- P2. What changes have occurred in the level of public debt and the ratio of public debt to GDP in the analysed countries?
- P3. What was the level of social development measured by the HDI index in the Member States of the European Union?
- P4. Is there a relationship between the level of GDP per capita and the value of the HDI index?
- P5. Is there a relationship between the level of public debt and the value of the Human Development Index (HDI)?

The study used the method of secondary data analysis. Empirical material was obtained from Eurostat statistical databases. It included data on gross domestic product per capita, public debt, public debt-to-GDP ratio, and unemployment rates in the European Union Member States. The data concerning the Human Development Index were obtained from the World Population Review database. It was developed on the basis of data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). All EU Member States for which data covering the adopted time horizon were available were analysed.

In the research process, the methods of comparative analysis, descriptive analysis and analysis of the relationship between selected socio-economic indicators were used. An effort was made to assess the effects of socio-economic development management in individual Member States. It has also become possible to identify the differences between the analysed economies. The results were presented in the form of graphical summaries. This allowed us to assess the direction of changes taking place in the years 2010-2025. The relationships between selected aspects of economic and social development have been identified.

The analysis of relationships between selected socio-economic indicators was exploratory in nature. It was primarily based on a visual assessment of data distribution and the identification of general patterns and trends occurring between the analysed variables. In the case of the relationship between the level of public debt and the Human Development

Index (HDI), the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was additionally applied. This coefficient made it possible to assess the strength of the relationship between the analysed variables. The obtained results should be interpreted as an analysis of the coexistence of phenomena rather than as a basis for drawing causal conclusions.

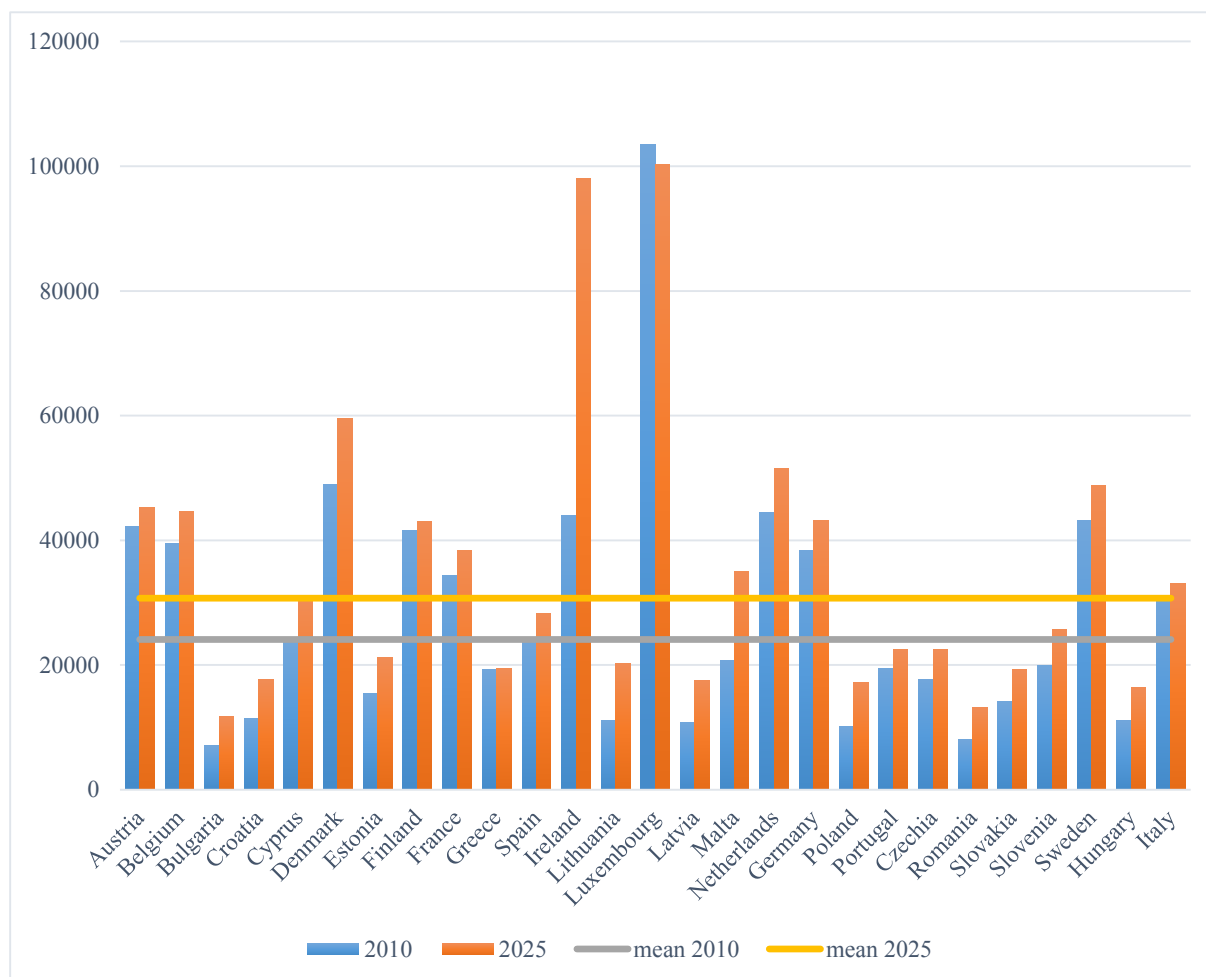
## 4. Results

The analyses were aimed at assessing the differentiation of the level of socio-economic development of the European Union Member States. Efforts were also made to identify the changes that will take place in this area over the years 2010-2025. For this purpose, selected economic and social indicators were used. They included gross domestic product per capita, the level of public debt, the ratio of public debt to GDP, the HDI human development index and the unemployment rate. The analysis made it possible to compare the situation of individual EU Member States. In addition, an attempt was made to assess the direction and scale of the changes taking place. In addition, the analysis of the relationship between the level of GDP, public debt and the HDI index made it possible to indicate the extent to which economic development translates into the level of social development and the quality of life of residents. The results made it possible to identify developmental disparities occurring within the European Union. In addition, selected conditions shaping the contemporary socio-economic development of the Member States were assessed.

Figure 1 shows the value of gross domestic product per capita in the Member States of the European Union in 2010 and 2025. The analysis of the data indicates a clear variation in the level of economic development between individual countries. The highest GDP per capita values were recorded in Luxembourg and Ireland. Here, in this case, they significantly exceeded the average for the entire European Union. The index was also high in Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria and Belgium. On the other hand, the lowest values can be observed in Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Hungary. This indicates that development differences between the countries of Western and Central and Eastern Europe persist.

A comparison of data from 2010 and 2025 allows us to notice the growth of GDP per capita in most of the analyzed countries. Particularly dynamic growth occurred in Ireland. The value of the index has risen to a level almost twice as high as in 2010. A visible improvement in the economic situation also occurred in Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Romania. This may indicate a process of gradual reduction of the development gap with the more developed economies of the EU. At the same time, despite the overall upward trend, significant income disparities between Member States persist. This indicates the uneven nature of economic development within the European Union.

The highest GDP per capita values in 2025 were recorded in Luxembourg and Ireland, while the lowest values were observed in Bulgaria and Romania. Among the largest European Union economies, such as France, Italy, and Spain, a moderate but steady increase in GDP per capita was observed compared to 2010. These results confirm the persistence of development disparities among European Union Member States despite the overall improvement in the analysed socio-economic indicators.

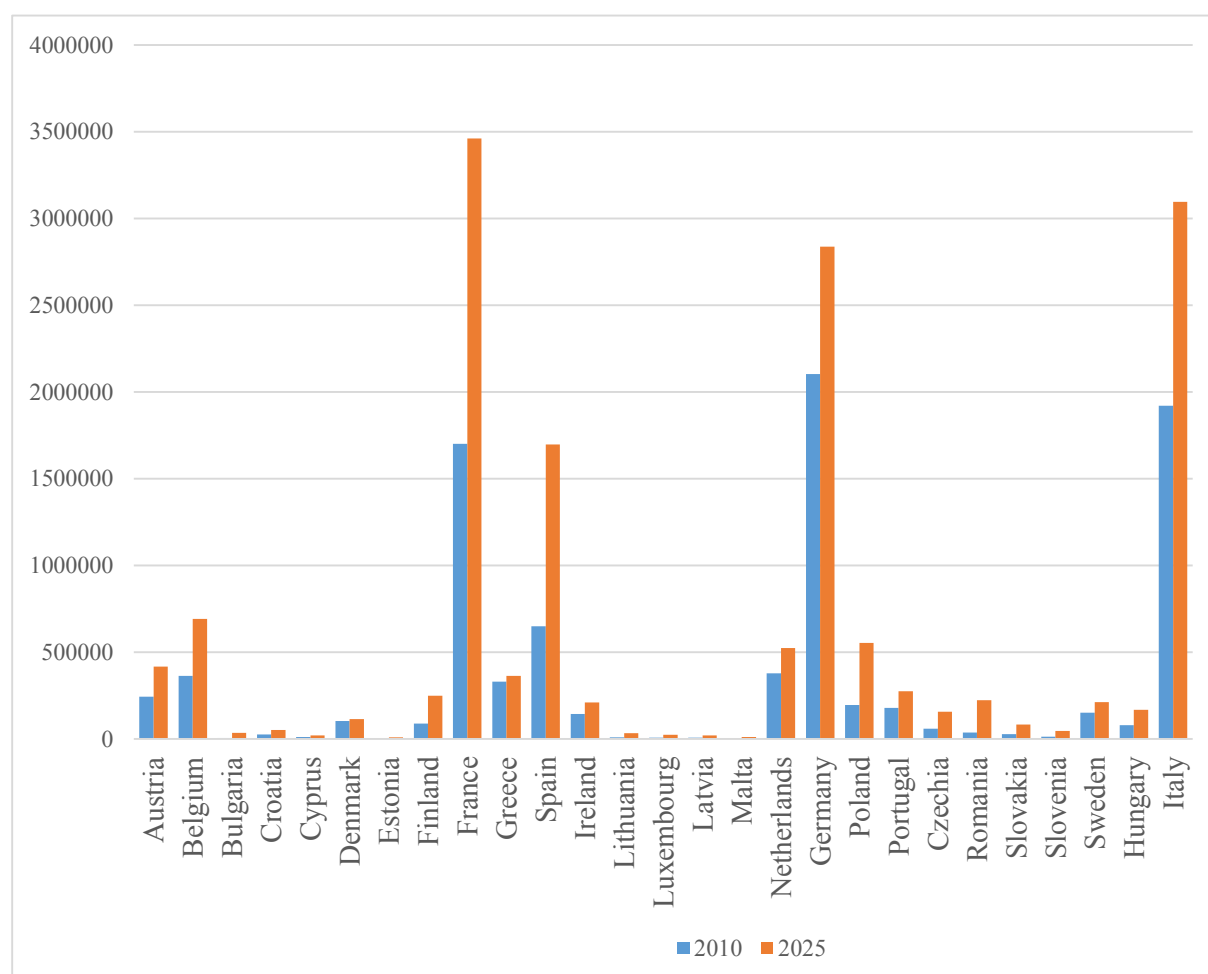


**Figure 1.** Gross domestic product in the EU Member States per capita at market prices in euros in 2010 and 2025.

Source: Own study based on Eurostat data.

Figure 2 shows the level of public debt in selected EU Member States in 2010 and 2025. It should be emphasized that presenting public debt in absolute values makes it possible to assess the scale of indebtedness of individual economies, but it does not allow for a full evaluation of the burden on public finances in countries differing in population size and economic potential. For this reason, the analysis of absolute values was supplemented with an analysis of the public debt-to-GDP ratio (Figure 3), which enables a more objective comparison of the fiscal situation of European Union Member States. In the analyzed period, an increase in debt was recorded in most countries. At the same time, the highest values were found in France, Italy and Spain. On the other hand, the relatively low level of public debt

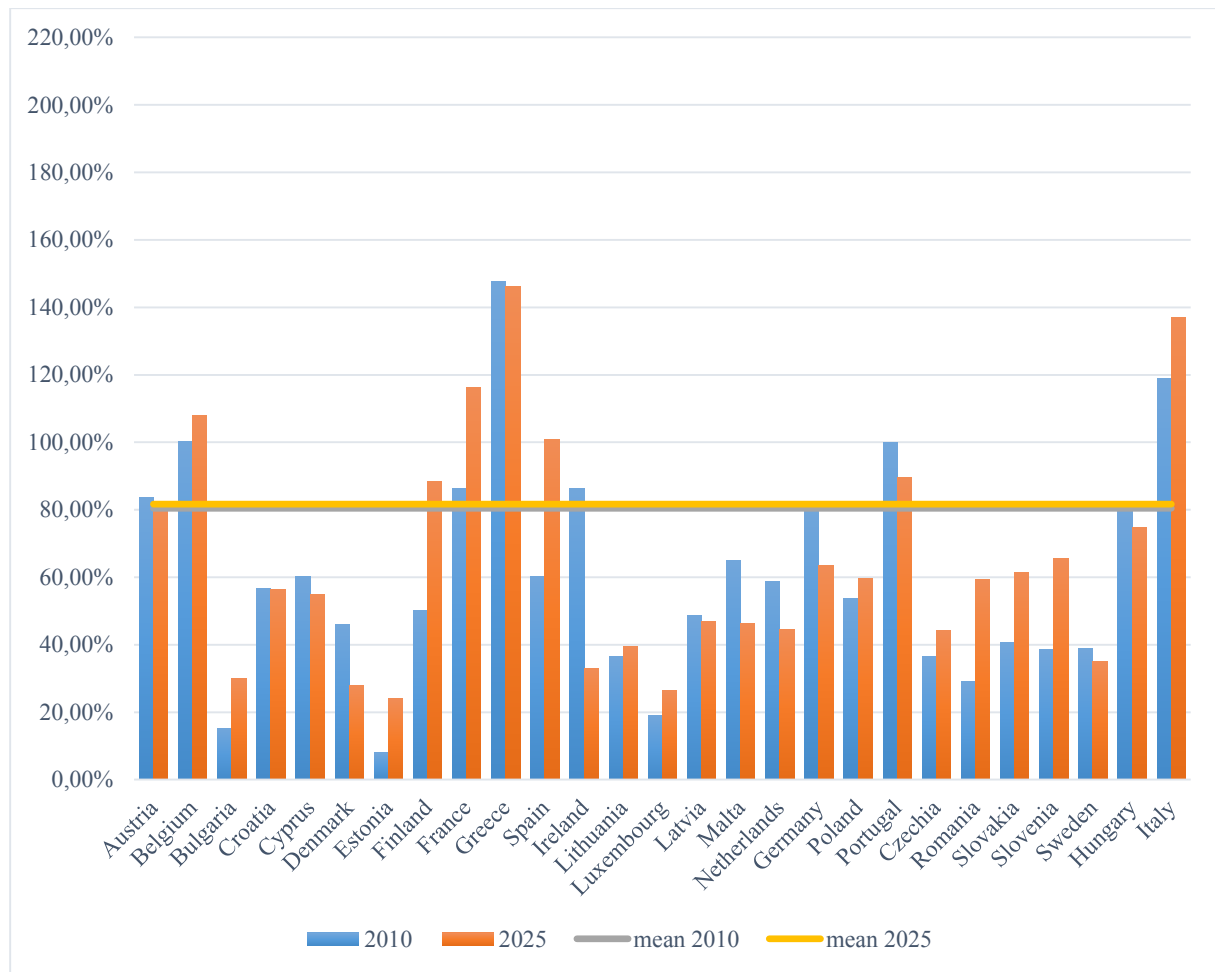
remained in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were among such countries. The results show that public finances are under increasing pressure in many EU economies.



**Figure 2.** Public debt in EU Member States in 2010 and 2025 (in euro).

Source: Own study based on Eurostat data.

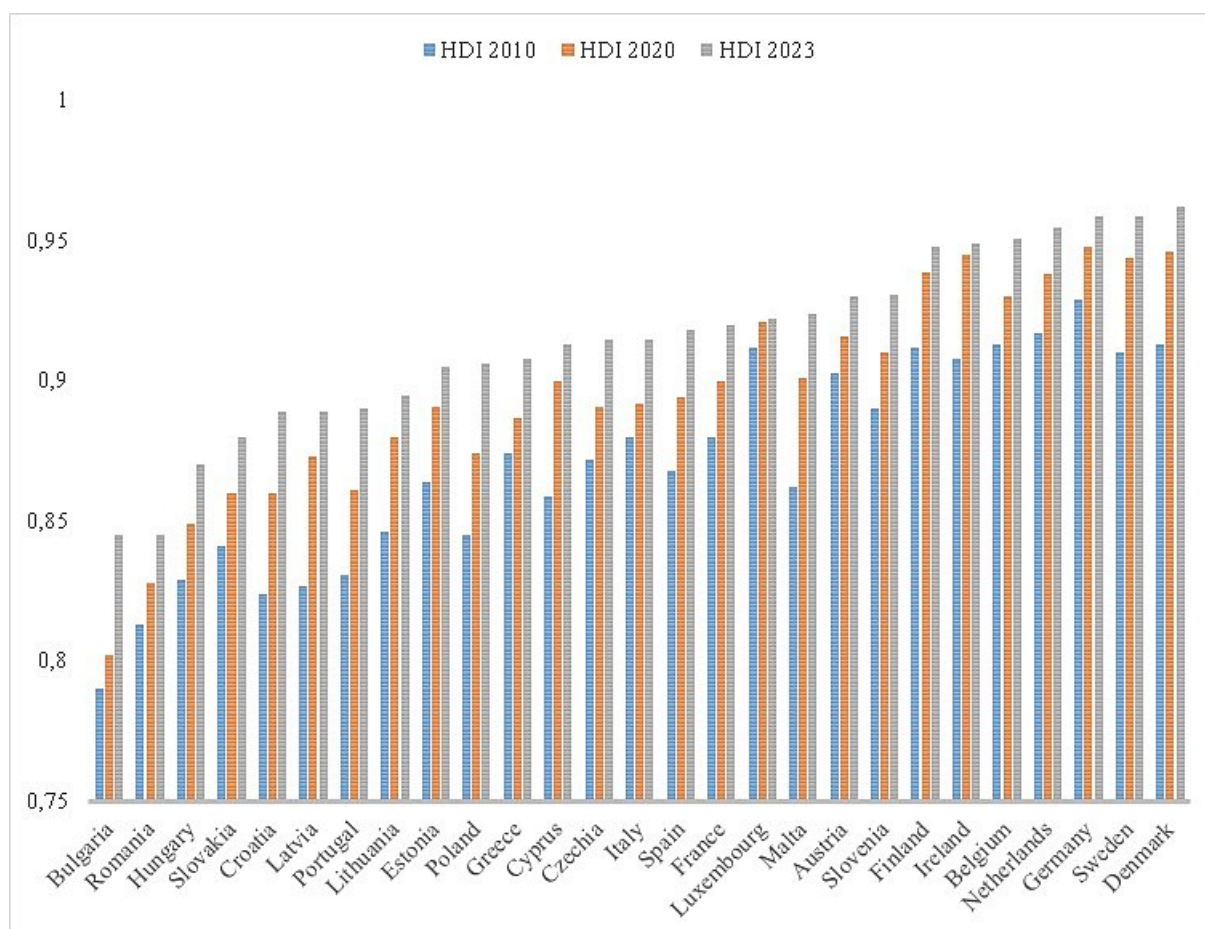
The ratio of public debt to gross domestic product in the EU Member States in 2010 and 2025 is presented in Figure 3. The highest values of the index were recorded in France, Italy and Spain. In these countries, the level of debt significantly exceeded the EU average. On the other hand, the lowest share of public debt in GDP was recorded in Estonia, Bulgaria and the Baltic States. The results show that significant differences in the sustainability of public finances persist between Member States.



**Figure 3.** Public debt-to-GDP ratio in EU Member States in 2010 and 2025 (%).

Source: Own study based on Eurostat data.

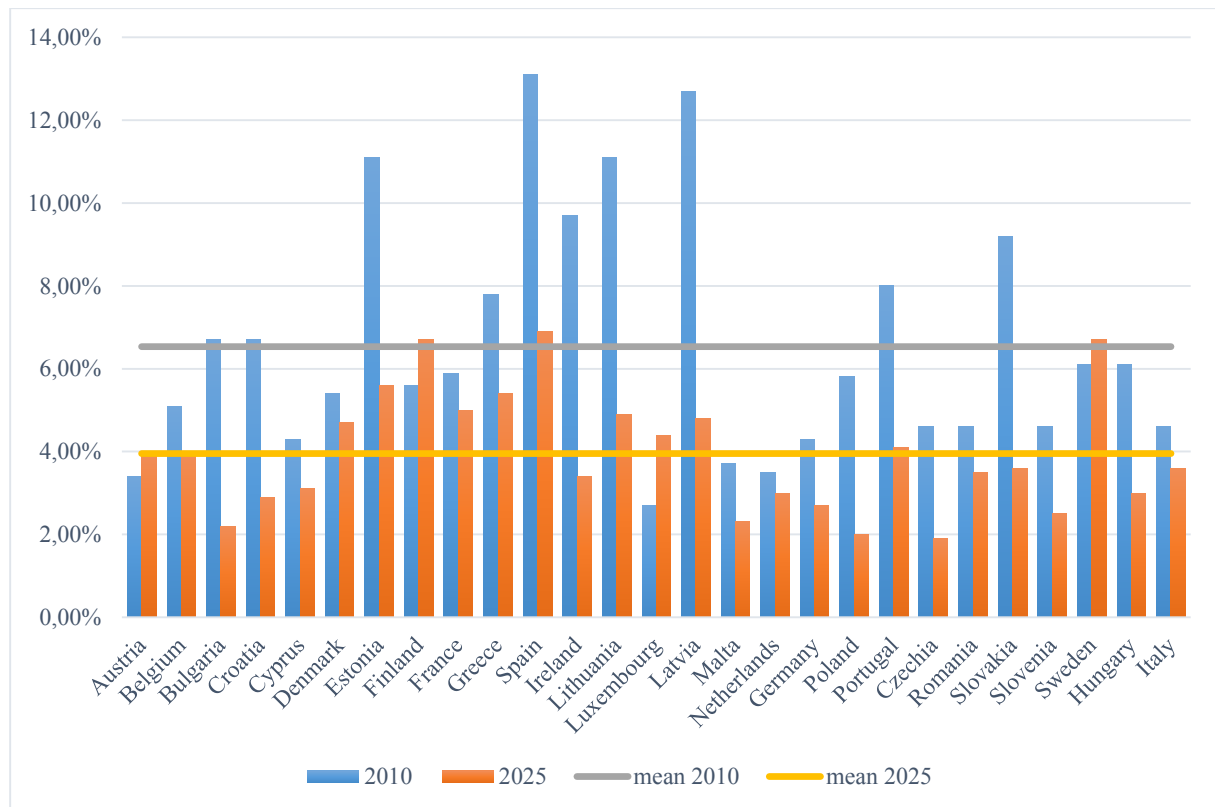
Figure 4 presents the ranking of the European Union Member States according to the HDI Human Development Index in 2010, 2020 and 2023. In all analysed countries, an increase in the value of the indicator was observed. This proves the improvement of living conditions of residents, the level of education and health. Denmark, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands achieved the highest HDI values, while Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary achieved the lowest, confirming the persistence of development differences between EU countries.



**Figure 4.** Human Development Index (HDI) – ranking 2010, 2020 and 2023 for EU Member States.

Source: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/hdi-by-country>

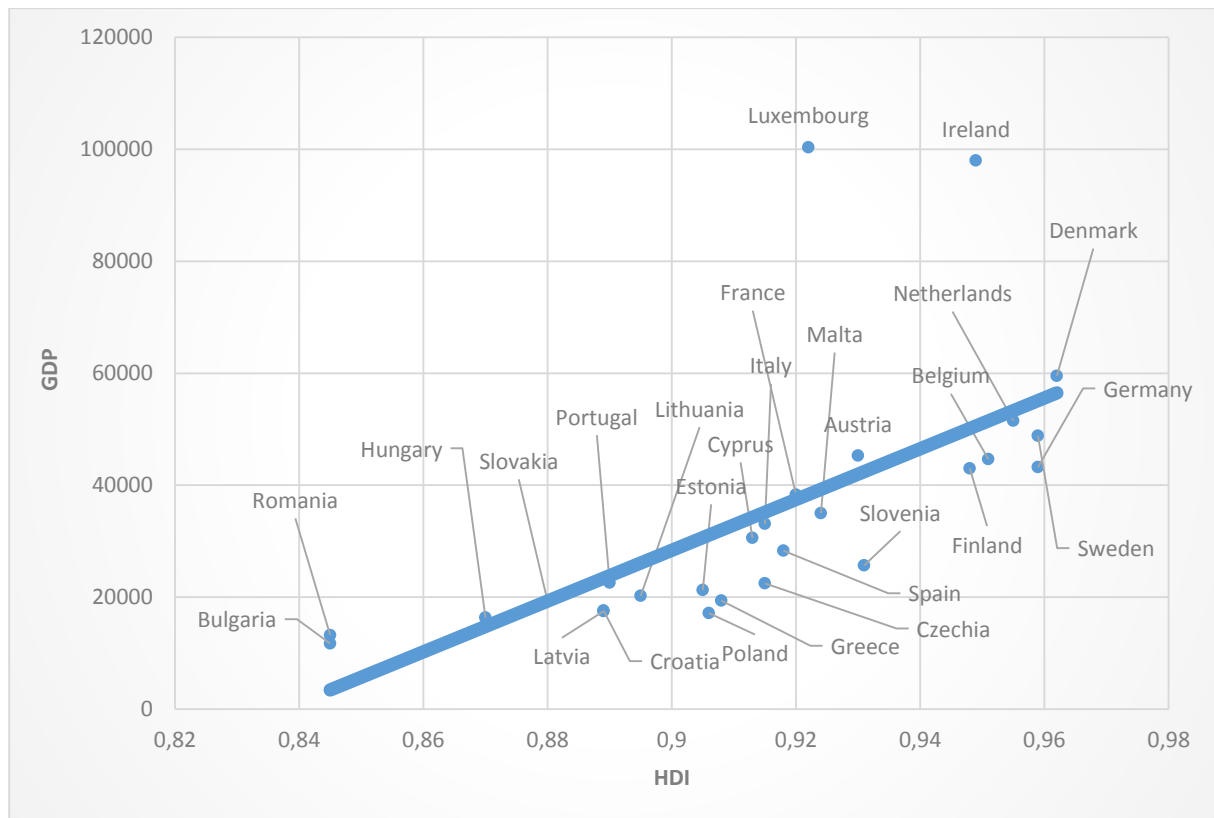
Figure 5 presents the level of unemployment in the European Union Member States in 2010 and 2025. In most countries, a decrease in the unemployment rate can be observed. It is particularly visible in Spain, Greece and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In 2025, the values of the indicator were more balanced than in 2010. This indicates an improvement in the situation on European labour markets and greater resilience of economies to crisis phenomena.



**Figure 5.** Unemployment rate in the EU Member States in 2010 and 2025 (%).

Source: Eurostat; <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00203/default/table?lang=en>, 23.04.2026.

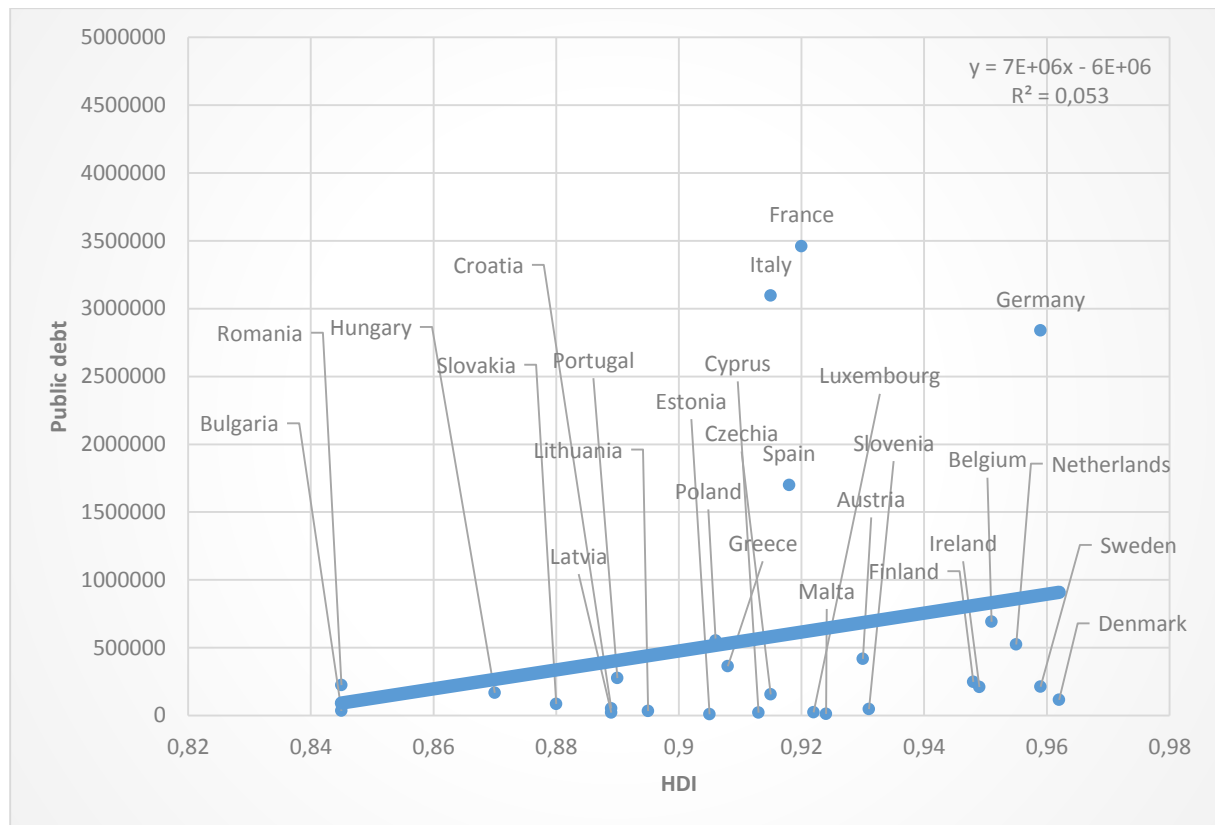
Figure 6 shows the relationship between the level of gross domestic product per capita and the HDI in the European Union Member States in 2025. A positive relationship between the analyzed variables was observed. This means that countries with higher levels of economic development tended to also achieve higher HDI values. A particularly favourable situation was recorded in Luxembourg, Ireland and Denmark. In turn, the lowest values of both indicators were recorded in Bulgaria and Romania.



**Figure 6.** Relationship between GDP and HDI for individual EU Member States (2025).

Source: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/hdi-by-country>

Figure 7 presents the relationship between the level of public debt and the HDI in the Member States of the European Union in 2025. By analysing the results, it is possible to indicate a very weak relationship between the analysed variables. This is confirmed by the low coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.053$ ). Therefore, it can be pointed out that a high level of social development does not have to be directly related to the size of public debt. In turn, the level of HDI is shaped by a much broader set of social, economic and institutional factors.



**Figure 7.** Relationship between public debt and HDI for individual EU Member States (2025).

Source: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/hdi-by-country>

The findings suggest, it can be indicated that in the years 2010–2025, in most of the Member States of the European Union, there was an improvement in basic socio-economic indicators. An increase in gross domestic product per capita and HDI values can be observed. In addition, there is a decrease in the level of unemployment in many countries. At the same time, an increase in public debt and its relationship to GDP can be observed in some countries. This is particularly evident in the largest economies of the EU. On the basis of the results obtained, it can be indicated that there is a positive relationship between the level of economic development and social development. However, no significant relationship has been demonstrated. Despite the observed positive changes, significant development differences between the countries of Western Europe and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe can still be noticed. This indicates the continuing variation in the level of socio-economic development in the European Union.

## 5. Discussion

On the basis of the presented data, several important conclusions can be drawn concerning the methods of managing the socio-economic development of the European Union Member States. In the analyzed period, it is possible to point to a systematic increase in the Gross Domestic Product per capita and an improvement in the value of the HDI in most of the surveyed countries. At the same time, a decrease in the level of unemployment was recorded. This means the effectiveness of the implemented development policies and indicates the ability of countries to create conditions that are conducive to the growth of economic and social activity. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that despite numerous economic, social and geopolitical challenges, the countries of the European Union maintained the ability to achieve development goals and improve the quality of life of their residents. This can be seen as an important manifestation of effective development management at national and supranational level.

On the basis of the analysis carried out, it can also be concluded that the increase in the level of economic development was accompanied by an increase in public debt in many Member States. Particularly high values of public debt and its relation to GDP were recorded in the largest European economies. These included France, Italy and Spain. On the basis of the cited data, it can be indicated that the implementation of development strategies and counteracting the effects of crises required the involvement of significant financial resources, which remained at the disposal of the public sector. At the same time, there was no clear relationship between the level of debt and the level of social development. Therefore, it can be said that the effectiveness of development management is determined not only by the scale of the financial resources used. The efficiency of their allocation is important here. The ability of public institutions to achieve the assumed social and economic goals is not without significance.

After tracing the results of the research, it is possible to observe a positive relationship between the level of economic development and the social development of the European Union Member States. At the same time, the countries that achieve the highest GDP per capita values belonged to the group of countries characterized by the highest HDI values. This can indicate the existence of a long-term and integrated approach to development management. Despite the observed economic convergence, the differences between the countries of Western Europe and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are still visible. This means the emergence of a management challenge facing the institutions of the European Union. This challenge is undoubtedly the strengthening of socio-economic cohesion. In addition, it is crucial to create mechanisms to support more sustainable and inclusive development for all Member States.

The obtained results are generally consistent with the research directions presented in the literature. The observed increase in the level of socio-economic development across most European Union Member States is in line with studies highlighting the importance of institutional, social, and economic factors for national development (Leitão, Capucho, 2021; Garina et al., 2019). The identified positive relationship between GDP per capita and the Human Development Index (HDI) may also be considered consistent with previous research emphasizing the coexistence of economic growth and improvements in social well-being (Rahman, Hossain, 2025; Ali et al., 2025). At the same time, the persistent disparities in development levels among European Union Member States confirm that the process of socio-economic convergence has not yet been fully completed. The findings also align with a stream of research emphasizing the importance of sustainable development and contemporary development challenges for the functioning of European economies (Madni et al., 2022; Medeu et al., 2025).

The obtained results may also be interpreted in the light of convergence theory, according to which countries with lower levels of economic development should gradually reduce their development gap in relation to more advanced economies. The observed increase in GDP per capita and the improvement in HDI values in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe may indicate an ongoing convergence process. At the same time, the persistent disparities among European Union Member States suggest that this process has not yet been fully completed. In this context, the European Union's cohesion policy plays an important role. Its objective is to reduce development disparities by supporting infrastructure, social, and economic investments in less-developed regions.

## 6. Conclusions

On the basis of the presented proposals, recommendations can be made addressed to entities that remain responsible for managing socio-economic development at the level of the European Union and individual Member States. In particular, governance mechanisms aimed at reducing development disparities between countries and regions should be strengthened. It seems reasonable to implement long-term development strategies. They should be based on the monitoring of key social and economic indicators. These include GDP per capita, employment level and HDI. This approach can support more effective management decisions. It also strengthens the effectiveness of implemented public policies.

Recommendations can also be addressed to institutions that are responsible for managing public finances and economic policy. Thanks to the results obtained, it is possible to indicate the need to use an integrated approach to development management. It should take into account both economic and social objectives. Particular importance should be attached to increasing the

efficiency of the use of public resources, developing systems for evaluating the results of public policies and supporting investments that generate long-term social and economic value. Carrying out such activities will lead to an improvement in the quality of public governance. It will also strengthen the ability of countries to respond to contemporary development challenges.

It is certainly possible to point to the need to further strengthen activities related to the management of human capital and the development of society's competences. It is worth investing in education, developing digital competences, supporting innovation and building conditions conducive to professional activity. These activities can be considered an important instrument for increasing the competitiveness of countries, improving the quality of life of the population and building sustainable foundations for sustainable development in the long term. Such moves are necessary from the perspective of managing socio-economic development.

While conducting this analysis, some limitations were encountered. One of them is certainly the use of only secondary data that come from publicly available statistical databases. This limits the possibility of in-depth identification of the causes of the observed socio-economic phenomena. In addition, the analysis was based solely on selected macroeconomic and social indicators, such as GDP per capita, public debt, unemployment rate, and HDI. They did not capture all aspects of the development of the European Union Member States. In addition, the study was cross-sectional and comparative, not allowing for a full determination of cause-and-effect relationships between the analyzed variables. In future research, it would be interesting to expand the scope of analyses to include additional indicators that are related to innovation, quality of institutions, the level of digitization and sustainable development. It would also be reasonable to use more advanced statistical methods. They would allow to identify the direction and strength of the relationship between the phenomena studied.

The analyses carried out may become an inspiration for future research. It will certainly be interesting to identify the factors that affect the pace of socio-economic convergence of the European Union Member States. It is also worth focusing on the analysis of the long-term effects of public policies. It seems reasonable to expand the scope of analyses to include variables related to the level of innovation, digitization of the economy, energy transition, quality of public institutions and the level of human capital. It would certainly be valuable to conduct a study using advanced econometric methods. They will allow for a more precise determination of the strength and direction of the relationship between economic development, social development and the stability of public finances. A particularly interesting research area may be the assessment of the impact of contemporary challenges, such as digital transformation, geopolitical crises or demographic processes, on the future level of socio-economic development of the European Union countries.

It should be emphasized, however, that the research methods applied were descriptive and comparative in nature. Therefore, the obtained results make it possible to identify changes occurring in the level of socio-economic development of European Union Member States,

as well as the relationships observed between them. However – and this should be clearly stressed – they cannot serve as a basis for drawing unequivocal causal conclusions regarding the impact of specific policy measures on increases in GDP per capita, improvements in HDI values, or changes in unemployment levels.

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