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STRUCTURE OF CONSUMPTION OF SOME COUNTRIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

1. INTRODUCTION

Poland's membership in the European Union is the reason why many Poles compare their standards of living with standards of living of citizens of the European Community. One of the measures of the evaluation of market functioning is the structure of consumers' expenditures of households. Expenditures are significant factors indicating both the size and the quality of meeting needs as well as differences among the scale and the standard of the income distribution. Households, being the most common and, at the same time, one of the most important business entities, are places where the efficiency of socio-economic policy of the government is verified. The structure of expenditures and its orientation towards purchasing specific goods' categories enable to perceive similarities and differences between standards of living of populations of various countries (Grzega 2004, p. 74).

The general economic development of countries caused the increase in aspirations and development of consumer's needs of individuals. These needs stopped confining themselves to elementary goods and services and apart from the food they also include housing standards, health care, education, culture and recreation, leisure and tourism within wider and wider scope.

The paper aims at attempting to indicate similar structures of consumption of some countries of the European Union by means of Czekanowski's diagram.¹ The investigation was conducted for years 1990, 1995 and 2001. In order to analyse the problem we used published materials of the Central Statistical Office, Eurostat and other secondary sources. However, it is necessary to emphasise that both countries' selection and the period in which the investigation was conducted depended on available sources of information.

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¹ Wide description of taxonomic methods can be found among others in the paper of W. Pluta, *Wielowymiarowa analiza porównawcza w badaniach ekonomicznych*, PWE, Warsaw 1977.

2. TENDENCIES OF THE CONSUMPTION EVOLUTION

Changes that took place in the sphere of consumption of highly developed societies during the second half of the 20th century were so much significant and broad that Czesław Bywalec (Bywalec, Rudnicki 2002, p. 129) tells simply about the consumption revolution.

The most important phenomena connected with consumption observed during the second half of the 20th century were undoubtedly servicization, homogenization, de-consumption, ecologization and virtualization of consumption (Góral 2004).

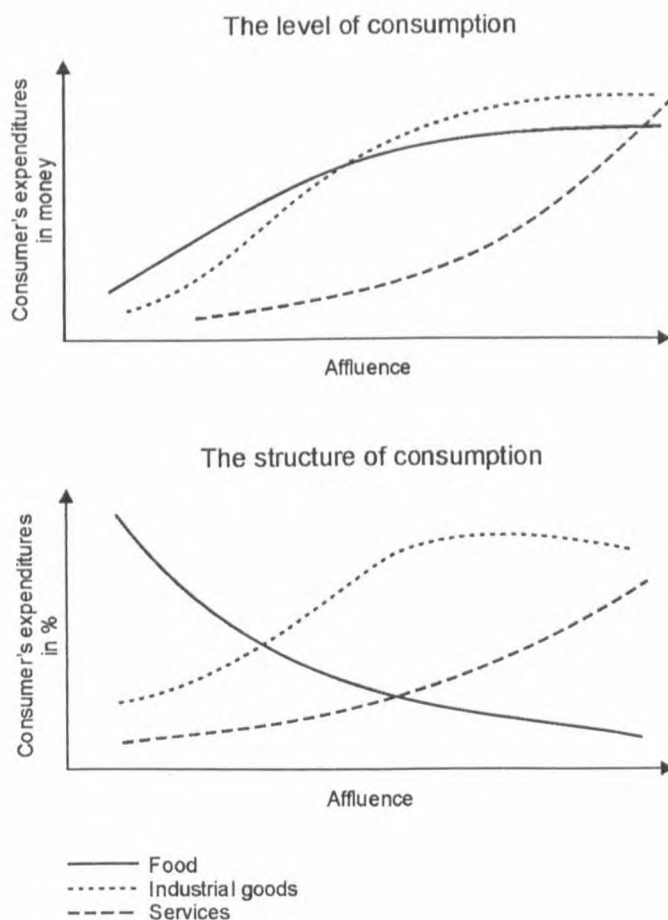


Fig. 1. Affluence of households and the level and structure of consumption

Source: Cz. Bywalec, L. Rudnicki (2002, p. 127).

Tendencies of consumption cause solid changes in its level and structure both in a micro (households) and macro scale (the whole society). Empirical data indicate that changes in consumption take the shape of some general tendency of consumption evolution. It looks as follows: together with the increase in affluence of households and simultaneous influence of other determinants in the global volume of consumption, the share of food expenditures decreases (Engel principle), the share of industrial goods expenditures increases to some extent as well as the proportion of services expenditures (so called servicization of consumption) increases regularly. The graphical expression of these changes is the figure 1.

Analysing diagrams presented in the figure 1, we can easily notice that, according to the so called three-sector division of the economy (food, industrial goods and services manufacture), as a country reaches higher stadiums of economic and social development, the share of the sector I (food) decreases relatively. At the same time, the share of the sector II (industry) increases to some extent and then decreases, while the share of the sector III (services) increases regularly. This division of the manufacture sphere is reflected in the consumption sphere.

3. STRUCTURE OF CONSUMER'S EXPENDITURES IN POLAND IN COMPARISON TO SOME COUNTRIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN YEARS 1990–2003

Among consumer's expenditures of households, we can distinguish basic expenditures and free choice ones. Basic expenditures are: food, clothing, footwear, housing, water, fuel, electric and thermal energy, gas, hygiene and health care. Culture, education, sport, tourism and leisure, transport and communications and others expenditures are defined as free choice expenditures which satisfy secondary needs of individuals and households. The percentage share of free choice expenditures in total expenditures of households tells us, among others, about the level of affluence of these households. The bigger the share of the income allocated for free choice expenditures, the higher level of affluence of the society and contrarily.

In the period of marketising of Polish economy, the structure of consumer's expenditures of Polish households changed significantly (see Table 1).

Table 1. Structure of consumer's expenditures of households in Poland and some countries of the European Union (in % of total expenditures)

Country	Years	Food ^a	Clothing and footwear	House exploitation and energy supplies	Furnishings	Health	Transport and communications	Education, culture and recreation, restaurants and hotels
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Austria	1990	21.3	10.0	18.6	8.3	5.5	17.4	7.9
	1995	16.1	7.1	18.8	8.9	3.2	14.6	23.6
	2000	15.3	6.6	19.4	8.2	3.2	15.7	24.2
Belgium	1990	18.8	7.9	16.4	10.8	11.0	13.1	6.6
	1995	18.2	6.6	24.1	6.4	3.8	14.8	15.1
	2000	16.8	5.4	22.7	5.5	3.8	17.9	15.4
Denmark	1990	21.3	5.4	27.9	6.4	2.2	15.4	10.2
	1995	19.0	5.2	27.4	5.8	2.4	15.2	16.7
	2001	17.5	4.9	28.1	5.8	2.7	13.8	16.6
Finland	1990	22.8	5.6	18.2	6.7	4.5	16.8	9.5
	1995	20.9	4.8	25.3	4.5	3.5	14.7	18.7
	2000	18.2	4.5	25.5	4.6	3.7	17.0	18.7
France	1990	19.8	6.6	19.0	8.0	4.1	17.0	9.5
	1995	18.5	5.5	23.8	6.3	3.7	16.4	16.4
	2001	17.8	4.8	23.5	6.2	3.5	17.4	17.0
Greece	1990	35.8	7.2	17.6	3.0	3.0	16.7	5.9
	1995	22.4	10.9	17.6	6.6	5.7	10.4	21.2
	2000	21.4	11.0	17.0	6.4	5.0	11.0	22.5
Spain	1990	22.8	9.3	13.1	6.9	4.1	15.9	6.9
	1995	20.4	6.8	14.7	6.2	3.3	13.4	29.1
	2000	18.5	6.5	14.1	6.0	3.4	15.3	29.4
Ireland	1990	35.6	7.0	12.6	7.2	3.7	13.9	11.4
	1995	22.3	7.3	15.9	7.0	3.0	13.2	23.6
	2000	17.2	7.1	19.2	7.1	2.5	14.8	21.9
Netherlands	1990	15.3	7.0	17.6	7.2	12.6	12.5	10.5
	1995	16.5	6.5	21.4	7.4	3.5	14.3	17.4
	1999	14.8	6.2	20.8	7.4	4.0	15.6	17.6
Germany	1990	22.1	8.3	20.5	9.4	3.4	17.2	10.4
	1995	16.4	7.1	23.4	7.6	4.0	16.2	15.6
	2000	15.6	6.4	24.5	7.2	4.0	16.9	15.4
Portugal	1990	38.2	8.9	9.5	8.1	4.4	15.3	9.3
	1995	24.7	8.1	11.0	7.0	5.1	18.2	17.3
	1999	22.5	7.9	10.6	7.5	4.7	19.8	17.9
Sweden	1990	22.0	8.6	23.2	7.1	2.7	16.1	10.9
	1995	19.0	5.4	32.5	4.6	2.1	14.4	14.9
	2001	16.7	5.4	30.6	4.8	2.4	16.2	16.3

Table 1 (contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Great Britain	1990	21.3	6.2	17.9	6.5	1.4	17.9	10.0
	1995	15.4	6.3	18.4	5.9	1.5	16.2	24.3
	2001	14.1	5.8	18.0	6.1	1.6	16.9	25.4
Italy	1990	20.9	10.1	14.9	9.4	6.7	12.4	9.1
	1995	19.3	9.6	19.4	9.6	3.1	14.4	17.0
	2001	16.9	9.5	19.6	9.2	2.9	15.2	18.3
Poland	1990 ^a	51.3	11.3	9.6	3.5	3.3	7.1	11.1
	1993 ^b	42.0	7.5	15.3	3.8	2.7	10.1	8.7
	1994	42.6	7.1	16.5	3.8	3.5	9.2	7.1
	1995	42.6	7.0	16.9	3.7	3.5	8.8	7.3
	1996	40.9	7.0	17.4	3.9	3.6	9.9	7.2
	1997	38.8	6.9	16.5	5.3	3.8	10.0	7.3
	1998	36.8	6.7	17.6	5.3	4.2	10.5	8.0
	1999	34.3	6.1	18.4	6.3	4.3	12.1	9.4
	2000	34.7	5.7	18.2	5.3	4.5	12.5	9.4
	2001	34.0	5.3	18.8	4.9	4.5	13.1	9.4
	2002	32.5	5.3	19.9	5.0	4.5	13.1	9.7
	2003	31.2	5.2	20.5	5.0	4.7	13.4	9.8

^a Including beverages and tobacco, ^b data for households of employees.

Source: Own calculations on the basis of Statistical Yearbooks of the Central Statistical Office: 1991, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2004; *Polska-Unia Europejska*, GUS, Warszawa 2003; „Rocznik Statystyki Międzynarodowej” 2000, 2003, GUS, Warszawa. Yearbook of International Statistics, Central Statistical Office: 2000, 2003; Eurostat Yearbook 2001.

We can distinguish two stages in all areas of consumption in Poland: until the year 1993 and after it. The first stage was characterized by the collapse of all branches of consumption which resulted from a deep economic and institutional transformation. The most of behaviours of households were atypical and determined exogenously. However, tendencies characteristic of the second period of time which resulted from free market functioning, are of greater importance.

Analysing the structure of consumer's expenditures (Table 1), we notice that the main part of expenditures of Polish households in expenditures in total, is still covered by food expenditures although, in highly developed countries they are located in the second or even the third position of total expenditures (for example Austria, Finland, Great Britain, Germany). However, regular decrease in food expenditures of Polish households in total expenditures is visible. The share of food expenditures in the year 1990 ran at the level of 51,3% of expenditures in total and in the year 2003 it amounted to only 31,2%. This tendency is consistent with well-known tendencies of the consumption evolution. It is also characteristic of all investigated countries. The biggest decrease is in countries of lower level of socio-economic development, i.e. Ireland (18,4 of the basic point), Portugal (15,7 of the basic point) or Greece (14,4 of the basic point).

The high share of food expenditures in Poland, in comparison to countries of the European Union, reduces the opportunity to satisfy non-food needs. In Poland, the significant increase in so called fixed expenditures including housing rent fees, water, electric and thermal energy, gas, is connected mainly with the significant increase in prices of energetic supplies and the government's resigning from subsidizing the housing economy. Currently, housing expenditures have been the biggest part of non-food expenditures in Poland what is more, they are still characterized by the upward trend. (Expenditures on that group of goods increased by 10,9 of the basis point in the investigated period of time). A similar tendency is typical of other European countries, i. e. Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Belgium, Italy, France, Germany, Austria and Denmark. Housing expenditures (rent, heating, energy and furnishings) cover for example: 35,4% (Sweden), 33,9% (Denmark), 31,7% (Germany), 30,1%² (Finland) of expenditures in total.

In years 1990–2003, the group of expenditures of Polish households which was also characterized by the upward tendency, was made of transport and communications expenditures. In that group of expenditures we can find, among others, expenditures connected with purchasing new or second-hand cars or other means of transport, means of transport exploitation, fares, postage, telecommunication charges and others. Analysing the structure of transport and communications expenditures of countries of the European Union, we can easily notice that we may expect regular increase in that group of expenditures in total ones.

Among the investigated group of countries (except for Greece and Ireland), we can observe the tendency of reducing households' expenditures on clothing and footwear. In case of affluent households, the decrease in the share of these expenditures can be a sign of qualitative transformations that take place in the consumption process. In case of indigent households, the decrease in that group of expenditures should be interpreted as a peculiar kind of saving, necessary because of the increase in the share of housing, communication, hygiene and healthcare expenditures (Grzega 2002. p. 124).

In Poland, similarly to Denmark, Greece, Germany, Great Britain and Portugal, we can observe the increase in households' expenditures on healthcare. In Poland, the increase in the share of this group of expenditures was connected mainly with the significant increase in prices, especially prices of medical services and medicines. In remaining analysed European countries, this group of expenditures was characterized by the downward tendency.

Increasing proportion of expenditures connected with satisfying higher-order needs (expenditures on culture, education, sport, leisure) is characteristic of all investigated countries. Starting the year 1994, observable increase in expenditures of Polish households on that group of goods may prove the rising

² Data for the year 2001.

standard of living of Polish society. Unfortunately, in many cases these are changes which are only statistically registered.

Moreover, it is necessary to remember that the share of expenditures of Polish households on education, culture, leisure and entertainment is the lowest in Europe. In the year 2001, expenditures on that group of goods in Poland were twice or nearly three times lower than in most countries of the European Union.

4. STRUCTURE OF CONSUMER'S EXPENDITURES IN SOME COUNTRIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Despite significant differences in structures of consumer's expenditures between European countries, we made the attempt to indicate similar consumption's structures by means of Czekanowski's diagram.

Treating data included in Table 1 as observation matrix, we determined distances matrix by means of the formula for the average of absolute differences of variable values ($c_{rs} * 100$).³ Results of these calculations for years 1990, 1995, 2001 are presented in Tables 2, 3, 4, respectively.

Table 2. Matrix of distances for data from the year 1990 ($c_{rs} * 100$)

Countries		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Austria	1	0	291	334	159	197	411	186	474	366	147	487	214	186	181	869
Belgium	2		0	509	361	223	557	323	543	217	353	587	429	397	210	974
Denmark	3			0	230	403	520	377	517	460	247	696	160	206	424	963
Finland	4				0	509	597	494	580	540	361	810	170	360	510	986
France	5					0	451	314	566	300	279	533	340	277	321	1046
Greece	6						0	377	266	617	421	310	440	374	544	617
Spain	7							0	325	429	244	344	249	251	218	731
Ireland	8								0	467	368	683	356	350	380	881
Netherlands	9									0	387	727	400	354	299	963
Germany	10										0	543	110	164	257	856
Portugal	11											0	576	584	503	519
Sweden	12												0	186	324	843
Great Britain	13													0	313	860
Italy	14														0	764
Poland	15															0

Source: Own calculations on the basis of Table 1.

³ The way of calculating a taxonomic distance was discussed in the paper of Z. Chojnicki, T. Czyż (1973).

Table 3. Matrix of distances for data from the year 1995 (c_{rs} *100)

Countries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Austria	1	0	281	354	333	302	324	260	183	170	237	444	466	127	199	801
Belgium	2		0	136	166	67	394	399	350	123	90	409	207	317	214	697
Denmark	3			0	133	110	461	446	394	201	200	464	134	333	261	784
Finland	4				0	151	377	381	324	169	170	434	218	349	282	720
France	5					0	409	407	361	140	96	377	230	286	226	743
Greece	6						0	324	196	354	424	349	567	374	286	647
Spain	7							0	149	356	449	407	551	270	361	767
Ireland	8								0	290	374	307	500	239	276	658
Netherlands	9									0	101	374	307	237	157	720
Germany	10										0	387	297	281	221	756
Portugal	11											0	593	460	343	703
Sweden	12												0	453	367	804
Great Britain	13													0	323	828
Italy	14														0	714
Poland	15															0

S o u r c e: Own calculations on the basis of Table 1.

Table 4. Matrix of distances for data from the year 2001 (c_{rs} *100)

Countries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Austria	1	0	290	357	314	280	327	237	109	151	249	427	377	136	177	609
Belgium	2		0	190	147	79	457	413	259	161	99	394	181	309	250	476
Denmark	3			0	160	146	467	454	274	243	200	522	111	396	291	526
Finland	4				0	94	444	397	271	220	169	430	174	333	283	537
France	5					0	427	380	237	160	120	379	189	301	237	509
Greece	6						0	336	256	381	467	363	564	371	313	533
Spain	7							0	243	354	440	396	509	236	357	654
Ireland	8								0	169	254	376	329	187	137	534
Netherlands	9									0	120	356	226	239	151	511
Germany	10										0	410	197	316	243	540
Portugal	11											0	550	469	353	576
Sweden	12												0	393	331	591
Great Britain	13													0	304	644
Italy	14														0	557
Poland	15															0

* Data for Poland concern the year 2001.

S o u r c e: Own calculations on the basis of Table 1.

Calculated distances enabled to define the position of each object in relation to remaining ones and construct Czekanowski's diagram which, after ordering, allowed to indicate objects of similar structure. In order to do that, classes of ranges' differences were denoted by means of graphical symbols. We set four classes denoted respectively:

- # 0–170 (the class of very similar objects)
 & 171–340 (the class of similar objects)
 * 341–510 (the class of not much similar objects)
 , 511 and more (the class of totally not similar objects).

The same criterion of division was used for all of investigated years.

Ordered diagrams of differences of average structures of consumption in some countries of the European Union for years 1990, 1995, 2001 were presented in Tables 5, 6, 7, respectively.

Table 5. Ordered diagram of differences of average structures of consumption in some countries of the European Union in the year 1990

Countries	11	12	3	4	2	5	9	10	7	8	1	13	6	14	15
Portugal	11	#	,	,	,	,	,	,	*	,	*	,	&	*	,
Sweden	12	,	#	#	#	*	&	*	#	&	*	&	&	*	&
Denmark	3	,	#	#	&	*	*	*	&	*	,	&	&	,	*
Finland	4	,	#	&	#	*	*	,	*	*	,	#	*	,	*
Belgium	2	,	*	*	*	#	&	&	*	&	,	&	*	,	&
France	5	,	&	*	*	&	#	&	&	&	,	&	&	*	&
Netherlands	9	,	*	*	*	&	&	#	*	*	*	*	*	*	&
Germany	10	,	#	&	*	*	&	*	#	&	*	#	#	*	&
Spain	7	*	&	*	*	&	&	*	&	#	&	&	&	*	&
Ireland	8	,	*	,	,	,	,	*	*	&	#	*	*	&	*
Austria	1	*	&	&	#	&	&	*	#	&	*	#	&	*	&
Great Britain	13	,	&	&	*	*	&	*	#	&	*	&	#	*	&
Greece	6	&	*	,	,	,	*	,	*	*	&	*	*	#	,
Italy	14	*	&	*	*	&	&	&	&	*	&	&	,	#	,
Poland*	15	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	#

Source: Own calculations on the basis of Table 2.

Table 6. Ordered diagram of differences of average structures of consumption in some countries of the European Union in the year 1995

Countries	11	12	3	4	2	5	9	10	7	8	1	13	6	14	15
Portugal	11	#	,	*	*	*	*	*	*	&	*	*	*	*	,
Sweden	12	,	#	#	#	&	&	&	&	,	*	*	*	*	,
Denmark	3	*	#	#	#	#	#	&	&	*	*	*	&	*	&
Finland	4	*	&	#	#	#	#	#	*	&	&	*	*	*	&
Belgium	2	*	&	#	#	#	#	#	*	*	&	&	*	*	&
France	5	*	&	#	#	#	#	#	*	*	&	&	*	*	&
Netherlands	9	*	&	&	#	#	#	#	*	&	#	&	*	#	,
Germany	10	*	&	&	#	#	#	#	*	*	&	&	*	&	,
Spain	7	*	,	*	*	*	*	*	#	#	&	&	&	*	,
Ireland	8	&	*	*	&	*	*	&	#	#	&	&	&	&	,
Austria	1	*	*	*	&	&	&	#	&	&	#	#	&	&	,
Great Britain	13	*	*	&	*	&	&	&	&	&	#	#	*	*	&
Greece	6	*	,	*	*	*	*	*	&	&	&	*	#	&	,
Italy	14	*	*	&	&	&	&	#	&	*	&	&	&	#	,
Poland*	15	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	#

Source: Own calculations on the basis of Table 3.

Table 7. Ordered diagram of differences of average structures consumption in some countries of the European Union in the year 2001

Countries		11	6	8	9	14	12	3	2	4	5	10	1	13	7	15
Portugal	11	#	*	*	*	*	,	,	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	,
Greece	6	*	#	&	*	&	,	*	*	*	*	*	&	*	&	,
Ireland	8	*	&	#	#	#	&	&	&	&	&	&	#	&	&	,
Netherlands	9	*	*	#	#	#	&	&	#	&	#	#	#	&	*	,
Italy	14	*	&	#	#	#	&	&	&	&	&	&	&	&	*	,
Sweden	12	,	,	&	&	&	#	#	&	&	&	&	*	*	*	,
Denmark	3	,	*	&	&	&	#	#	&	#	#	&	*	*	*	,
Belgium	2	*	*	&	#	&	&	&	#	#	#	#	&	&	*	*
Finland	4	*	*	&	&	&	&	#	#	#	#	#	&	&	*	,
France	5	*	*	&	#	&	&	#	#	#	#	#	&	&	*	*
Germany	10	*	*	&	#	&	&	&	#	#	#	#	&	#	*	,
Austria	1	*	&	#	#	&	*	*	&	&	&	&	#	#	&	,
Great Britain	13	#	*	&	&	&	*	*	&	&	&	&	#	#	&	,
Spain	7	*	&	#	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	&	&	#	,
Poland*	15	,	,	,	,	,	,	,	*	,	*	,	,	,	,	#

Source: Own calculations on the basis of Table 4.

Ordered Czekanowski's diagram for data from the year 1990 indicated only one group of similar structure of consumer's expenditures among investigated countries. These were Sweden and Denmark.

However, ordered Czekanowski's diagrams for years 1995, and 2001 enabled to indicate as many as four groups of similar structure of consumer's expenditures consisting of countries of the European Union. The most numerous group included structures of consumer's expenditures of the following countries:

- in the year 1995 – Belgium, Finland, France, Germany and Netherlands,
- in the year 2001 – Belgium, Finland, France and Germany.

The second group, strongly referring to the first one, included structures of expenditures on goods and services of the following countries:

- in the year 1995 – Sweden and Denmark,
- in the year 2001 – Sweden and Denmark

The third group included structures of consumption of the following countries:

- in the year 1995 – Spain and Ireland,
- in the year 2001 – Ireland, Netherlands and Italy.

Whereas the fourth group included structures consumption of the following countries:

- in the year 1995 – Austria and Great Britain,
- in the year 2001 – Austria and Great Britain.

Although, the investigation concerns such a long period of time, on the basis of data presented in Tables 5, 6, 7, we can come to the conclusion that the most

similar structures of consumer's expenditures appeared in Sweden and Denmark; Belgium and Finland; France and Germany and Austria and Great Britain.

Polish consumer's structure, similarly to Greek and Portuguese did not fit any group in any of investigated period of time. However, it is necessary to notice that in investigated group of European countries these are ones of lower level of economic development.

Therefore, the attempt to compare presented results with data concerning discussed issues in the year 2004 or 2005 seems to be justified. Such an analysis would reveal changes that took place in investigated countries in that regard.

5. FINAL REMARKS

The evaluation of the state and pace of changes of the scene and the way they affect Polish consumers' behaviours undoubtedly requires us to set some point of reference. There are many factors to suggest that these should be developed countries of the European Union which, nowadays, become the source of information and inspirations nearly in every aspect of Poles' lives, performing, at the same time, educational function. Uniting in groups of countries of higher level of civilization, economic, social or cultural development, Poland for certain is going to try to keep up with them, which in practice means some kind of imitation and making use of these trends, consumption models, lifestyles, ways of spending free time, etc. Heading Europe and more affluent countries, some part of society set its hopes on improvement in the quality and standards of living. Poland's integration with the European Union and all accompanying circumstances are undoubtedly a driving force of significant changes occurring in the whole consumption sphere (Malysa-Kaletka 2004, p. 37).

It is necessary to notice that integration processes are long-lasting and have a specific dynamics. Therefore, they are going to be modified and determined by factors which cannot be fully identified and predicted now.

Increasing significance of consumption in lives of modern societies confirms richness of new trends appearing in the sphere of consumption in highly developed countries. This opinion seems to be proven by the analysis of the structure of consumer's expenditures of Polish households. Although food expenditures are still the main group of expenditures in total expenditures of Polish households, the downward trend in their share in households' budgets lasting since the year 1993 is characteristic. Polish structure of consumer's expenditures is also characterized by relatively high and still increasing share of "fixed" expenditures as well as expenditures on healthcare, culture, education, sport and leisure, transport and communications. The share of expenditures on

clothing and footwear has been decreasing regularly. Moreover, the direction of these changes, which are visible in all economically developed countries of the world, is compatible with tendencies of the consumption development resulting in the income increase.

As it results from conducted investigations, the most similar structures of consumer's expenditures in investigated period of time were characteristic of: Sweden and Denmark; Belgium and Finland; France and Germany and Austria and Great Britain.

Polish structure of consumption differed much from structures of many European countries, especially those of higher level of economic development.

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**STRUKTURA KONSUMPCJI WYBRANYCH KRAJÓW UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ
– ANALIZA PORÓWNAWCZA**

Członkostwo Polski w UE sprawia, że wielu Polaków porównuje swój poziom życia z poziomem życia obywateli krajów Wspólnoty. Jednym z mierników oceny funkcjonowania rynku jest struktura wydatków konsumpcyjnych gospodarstw domowych. Struktura wydatków i jej ukierunkowanie na zakup określonych grup towarów pozwala uchwycić podobieństwa i różnice w poziomie życia ludności z różnych krajów.

W artykule podjęto próbę, przy wykorzystaniu diagramu Czekanowskiego, wyodrębnienia podobnych struktur konsumpcji wybranych krajów Unii Europejskiej. Badanie przeprowadzono dla lat 1990, 1995 i 2001.

Okazuje się, że kierunek zmian w polskiej strukturze konsumpcji jest zgodny ze znanymi prawidłowościami ewolucji konsumpcji pod wpływem wzrostu dochodów, obserwowanymi we wszystkich rozwiniętych krajach świata. Jednak struktura konsumpcji w Polsce różni się bardzo od struktur konsumpcji wielu krajów europejskich, szczególnie tych o wyższym poziomie rozwoju gospodarczego.

Jak wynika z przeprowadzonych badań, najbardziej podobnymi strukturami wydatków konsumpcyjnych charakteryzowały się w badanym okresie: Szwecja i Dania; Belgia, Finlandia, Francja i Niemcy; oraz Austria i Wielka Brytania.