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IN POLAND IN THE EU
BACKGROUND IN 2004-2012**

ABSTRACT. This article aims at presenting changes in consumption of households in Poland in the background of the European Union in 2004-2012 in the context of modernising consumption. The research material stems from secondary data provided by Eurostat databases. The research employs a descriptive analysis method supported by some elements of a quantitative analysis.

In the period of 2004-2012 a process of modernising consumption was observed. This is confirmed by some decrease in the food index value, increase in free choice expenditure and some progress in equipping households with computers along with remarkable improvement in availability of the Internet. These changes show a higher level of need satisfaction in 2012 as compared to the year Poland joined the European Union. Moreover, the changes in question are made in compliance with assumptions of the knowledge and information based development. Additionally, gradual although slow closing of the consumption gap between Poland and the average European Union countries deserves appreciation.

JEL Classification: E20,
O11, O52

Keywords: consumer expenditure, consumption, household, Poland, European Union.

Introduction

On the 1st of May 2004 Poland became a legitimate member state of the European Union (EU). A fifteen-year period of application that was initiated at the beginning of the systemic transformation in Poland came to an end. However, the times of uncertainty and discussions about what that membership would offer and how that would affect particular spheres of the socio-economic life including consumption did not finish. Changes observed in consumption of averagely and highly developed countries of the European Union that we could witness in the pre-accession period were characterised by a rapid and qualitative increase in consumption and transformations in the way needs were satisfied. Then the following question could be asked: Will consumption in Poland be similar to its European Union equivalent in its level and structure? Moreover, nobody knew if new consumption in Poland was going to be modern, i.e. consumption that was sustainably improved in its volume related, qualitative and quantitative dimensions consumption that would contribute to

improvement in the way population needs were satisfied and that would comply with general assumptions of developing societies.

At present, after a decade of our EU membership, it is important to identify changes in consumption of Polish households in the background of the European Union in the context of modernising the very consumption, which is the major goal of this article. Predominantly, it is necessary not only to provide facts, information and data but also to analyse and interpret them. It is important to identify directions of evolution of consumption in Poland in the post-accession period.

The research subject scope covers a household sector in Poland and in the EU. The timespan refers to 2004-2012. This means that with reference to the latest changes that describe the tenth year of the Polish membership in the European Union, statistical data were not available.

In this work the following assumption was adopted: we would be able to discuss a process of modernising consumption if observed changes in consumption showed some improvement in the way needs were satisfied and if those changes stemmed from knowledge and information based development.

To meet the objective set, information that came from secondary sources was used. A research method applied involved a descriptive analysis with some elements of a quantitative analysis. Measures adopted in this research originate from Eurostat databases and they include the following:

- indexes of household final consumption expenditure;
- indexes of the consumer expenditure structure including a food index and a free choice expenditure index;
- indexes of equipping households with personal computers (in %); and
- indexes of households' access to the Internet and the broadband Internet (in %).

It is worth paying attention to the fact that particular points that make up this article do not address the whole group of issues discussed. These issues are of really complex and multi-layer nature. They refer to consumption in its value related, qualitative and quantitative understanding, qualitative changes in consumption, changes in systems of needs and the way such needs are satisfied, and many other problems. All such issues may also be discussed in the context of different consumption entities including a macro-entity, i.e. total population in a particular country, population of households, and population of selected groups of households or individual consumers. Taking into consideration some necessity to focus on so many different aspects, the author of this paper was somehow forced to present the phenomena discussed in the selective way, thus highlighting elements that are the best to demonstrate the very nature of changes observed in consumption in Poland in the period subject to research and in the background of the European Union countries, i.e. EU-27. Therefore, adoption of some specific examples of changes in consumption by the author was intentional.

The article consists of four parts. The first one includes basic theoretical notions that refer to the process of modernising consumption. The second part includes some analysis of changes in dynamics, relationships and structure of the final household consumption expenditure. The third part presents changes in quantitative expenditure as illustrated by a typical representative of modern goods and service, i.e. a personal computer and access to the Internet. The fourth part focuses on assessment of changes in consumption of Polish households in the context subject to research. Moreover, some premises for modernising consumption in Poland are suggested. Finally, the article concludes with general remarks resulting from the subject undertaken.

1. Modernising consumption in the theoretical approach

A process of modernising consumption means some permanent improvement and contemporisation of consumption in its all possible dimensions. This involves value, quantity and quality related changes in consumption of food and non-food products along with services. Moreover, traditional methods of satisfying needs or methods that are different than those in use at present, along with satisfying new needs that have been non-existent so far, are elements of the process in question.

Introducing and acquiring novelties in consumption may be characterised by different motives, e.g. organisational, economic and social or prestige oriented ones. Taking into account power of influence represented by these particular motives and the fact that modernisation may be of superficial or real nature (Staniszki, 2008), it is possible to distinguish modern superficial consumption or modern real consumption.

Modern superficial consumption results from activities undertaken by households that focus on the idea of 'to have'. This translates into some tendencies to promote a style of life that is based on needs created. However, if the activities in question are concentrated on the idea of 'to be', the categories like prestige, status and recognition (Fromm, 2011) are involved. Major creators of such a form of consumption include advertisers and advertisements or commercials that in the context of individual needs of self-expression respond with consumption packages that are ready to use. They teach a style of life that corresponds with adequate social positions. They show models of life that 'should' be aspired to (Giddens, 2002). These creators provide advice on clothing, nutrition and patterns to be followed in different aspects of life. Hence, in this kind of context that is distorted by consumption, activities undertaken by subjects of consumption are getting focused on the idea of 'to have'. Simultaneously, it is not really important that needs that are created are 'real' or 'artificial' (Kellner, 1992). As Z. Bauman notices, at present a role of the market is getting more and more important in shaping modern consumption. The market has become a major opponent of society homogenisation and pressure of the life style oriented culture has resulted in going into consumption addiction (Bauman, 2006).

Contrary to superficial consumption modern real consumption is aimed at long-lasting development of households, which consequently leads to development of the whole society. Improvement in the level and/or quality of life of consumption subjects is particularly important here. This improvement involves satisfaction of both lower and higher order needs and the satisfaction in question ought to be more complete, perfect, alternative and frequently different than the satisfaction already experienced. At the same time, real consumption complies with recommendations made by specialists of quantitative consumption (i.e. physiologists, physicians or experts who deal with commodities). Modern real consumption is also consumption that harmonises with general guidelines that describe development of societies that include – further to priorities of the Europe 2002 – intelligent development, sustainable development and social inclusion development (Europe 2020). These and other more detailed development objectives of societies should be measurable and have to be based on adequately selected and reliable data that would allow for comparison. It is necessary to add here that the consumption measures that are commonly applied are not sufficient to assess the way all development objectives of societies are realised. Therefore, in practice, wide sets of social and economic indexes that are customised for research into specific areas of socio-economic lives are employed. However, using measures of consumption, it is possible to estimate development to be observed while realising selected development guidelines including knowledge and information based development.

In Poland research into consumption has been conducted for many years (i.e. since 1918). The research involves diversified questions including methodological and analytical

ones. The very issues were and still are subject to research undertaken by numerous well recognised and respected scholars including, inter alia, Cz. Bywalec – in the context of theory and practice of economy (Bywalec, 2007) and socio-economic development (Bywalec, 2010), E. Kieźel with her research team – in the context of rationality (Kieźel, 2004) and consumer behaviour (Kieźel, 2010), T. Słaby – in the context of statistical methods to be applied (Słaby, 2006), J. Kramer along with M. Janoś-Kresło and B. Mróz – in the context of the way both market and market economy function (Kramer, 1997; Janoś-Kresło, Mróz, 2006). Furthermore, many academic bodies, research institutions and centres for socio-economic policies are constantly carrying out analyses and diagnoses of the actual situation. They also make some forecasts concerning selected elements of value-related and quantitative consumption on micro and macro-economic levels.

Research into the level and structure of consumption that has been carried out internationally enjoy much longer tradition (history of research into the structure of consumer spending dates back to the 19th century – research undertaken by E. Engel). At present, the research in question is frequently conducted being characterised by its diversity. The research refers to many problems. Much attention is paid to methodological efforts, particularly including those that support harmonisation of domestic statistics with generalised standards of statistical reporting (e.g. European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, EU-SILC). On the other hand, up-to-date analytical works usually focus on particular countries, thus referring to the level and structure of consumption and tendencies of changes in time (e.g. Blow, 2003; Blow, Leicester, Oldfield, 2004; van Deelen, Schettkat, 2004, Gardes, Starzec, 2004; Goodman, Oldfield, 2004, Aguiar, Hurst, 2005, Charles, Danziger, Pounder, Schoeni, 2006; Jappelli, Pistaferri, 2010). These results cannot or even must not be directly ‘translated into’ Polish conditions. Each society is characterised by its unique set of features and factors of social, economic, political, historical, geographical, cultural and other nature. International comparative research that is broadly conducted usually refers to selected elements of household consumption. Descriptive reports by Eurostat (e.g. Trends in households in the European Union: 1995-2025, 2003; Analysis of EU-27 household final consumption expenditure, Gerstberger, Yaneva, 2013; Living standards falling in most member states, Di Meglio, 2013) deserve some appreciation. More analytical comparative research results from an insufficient number of projects realised, e.g. within the Dempatem project (Kalwij, Machin, 2004).

Taking the above into consideration, it is necessary to highlight that the issue of modernising consumption that is undertaken in this work is characterised by its new and innovative nature in the context of the research into the structure of consumer spending and quantitative consumption of households. This issue was inter alia subject to scientific efforts undertaken from the sociological perspective (López, Dolores, 2011), although it is extremely important to analyse this in the context of economics. Economic nature of the research and its time and spatial range are both new approaches to the problem. It is worth mentioning that in spite of much timeless interest in consumption there are hardly any original works that would complete the up-to-date stream of scientific discussions about ten years of integrating the Polish economy with the European Union.

2. Household consumer expenditure

A pace of transformations and structure of consumer expenditure in the sector of households are indexes that allow for estimating, inter alia, a level all society’s needs are satisfied and progress in modernising society’s consumption. Data provided by Eurostat includes final household consumption expenditure that may be employed here. This category

covers all expenditures that are paid by means of available income and realised within individual consumption.

Analysis dynamics of final household consumption expenditure indexes shows that in the years of 2004-2007 in the EU-27 there was a steady and more than 2% increase in consumption. However, in the years of 2008-2012 this situation changed. Total consumption in the EU countries went down then, which resulted from the economic crisis observed in Europe at that time. The worst situation was reported in 2009. The consumption level calculated in fixed prices set on the basis of the last year average prices decreased as compared to the previous year by 1.7%. Subsequent two years witnessed slight increases. However, in the last year of this analysis a decrease by 0.7% was reported.

Contrary, in Poland the situation was different. After our accession there was some increase in final consumption by 4.7%. In subsequent years excluding 2005 the pace of growth was increasing – up to the level of 5.7% in 2008. After that period there was some decrease in the growth dynamics of final consumption – to slightly more than 2% in 2009. In the period of 2010-2011 slight improvement was reported. However, in 2012 final consumption expenditure increased by 1.2% only. A slowing pace of growth in Polish consumption resulted from detrimental conditions of both world and European economies. Nevertheless, in the context of the world crisis Poland was relatively successful since we managed to avoid negative dynamics of consumption (*Fig. 1*).

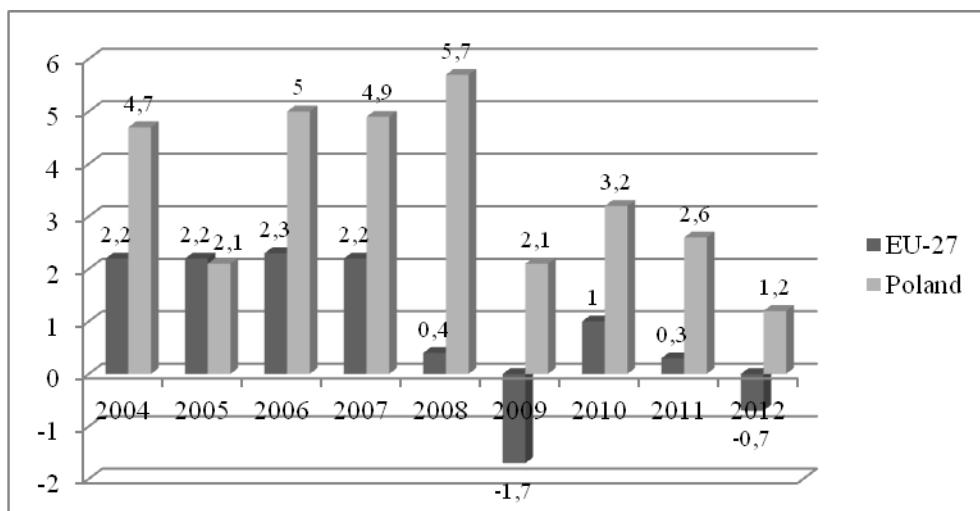


Figure 1. Changes in household final consumption expenditure in Poland and EU-27 in the years 2004-2012

Source: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do> (05.03.2014).

Analysing *Figure 2*, it is possible to conclude that the period of 2004-2012 witnessed some improvement in the level of individual consumption that is financed by means of available income of Polish households as compared to average consumption of EU-27 households (calculated in current prices in Euro per capita based on the classification of individual consumption by purpose). Since 2004 a ratio of individual consumption in Poland to the EU average value increased by 13% and reached 41% in 2012. This means reduction in the gap between the average consumption in Poland and the EU average. Unfortunately, this value is still much below the EU average. However, it is necessary to remember that purchasing powers along with level and structure of households' consumption depend on the levels of the households' incomes and the level of prices. That is why, a complete picture of the Polish households' situation in relation to the EU average requires analysing price indexes of consumer

goods and services and analysis of the households' income situation, which is not subject to these considerations. However, taking into account the actual value of consumption in the sector of households to be calculated into currency purchasing power in a given country, it is possible to reach a conclusion that the EU-27 population is statistically twice or in some cases three times wealthier than Poland (Grzega, 2013).

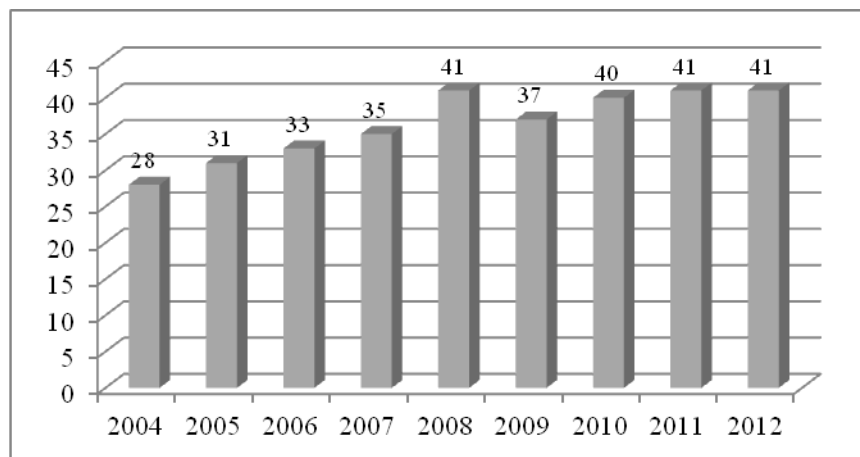


Figure 2. Household final consumption expenditure in Poland in relation to the EU average; EU-27=100

Source: compiled from the website Eurostat,

<http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do;jsessionid=9ea7d07e30e20db9dc3aeaeb46d48f20e1c02ca9e89a.e340aN8Pc3mMc40Lc3aMaNyTbh0Ne0> (25.02.2014).

Change in the level and pace of household final consumer expenditure in Poland and the EU-27 was accompanied by the change in the expenditure structure. To assess how modern consumption is, food index and free choice expenditure index are, inter alia, employed. Food index (i.e. Engel's coefficient) is an important measure to be used while assessing the level of life in any population. It shows proportion of expenditure on food in total expenditure. As early as 150 years ago Engel noticed that the poorer the society was, the higher proportion of their incomes was spent on food. According to Engel's law, an increase in incomes leads to a decrease in proportion of expenditure spent on food. Increase in the value of this index predominantly means that the level needs are satisfied deteriorates (Bywalec, 2010, p. 117).

Analysing data found in *Tab. 1* it is possible to conclude that in 2004-2012 average proportion of food expenditure in the EU-27 increased by 0.2% to the level of 13%. Additionally, an increase in proportion of expenditure on housing and energy is observed along with a slight increase in expenditure on health. On the other hand, a decrease in expenditure was reported in case of leisure and culture, equipment, communications and clothing and footwear. Expenditure on stimulants including alcohol, tobacco and drugs remained stable. Generally, although changes in the structure of household consumer expenditure are not major, they confirm free choice expenditure being reduced at the cost of basic expenditure (*Tab. 1*).

In case of changes in the structure of household final consumption expenditure to be observed at that time in Poland, it was possible to observe – similarly like in the EU-27 – an increase in proportion of expenditure on healthcare, housing and energy. However, there was an additional increase in expenditure on transportation along with housing equipment. However, there was a decrease in expenditure on food and non-alcoholic beverages, which was the largest difference – by 2.8%. There was also a decrease in percentage proportion of expenditure on clothing and footwear along with stimulants. On the other hand, expenditure

on leisure and culture remained stable. It is necessary to stress that changes in the structure of individual consumption of Polish households observed in 2004-2012 were predominantly manifested in increased consumption of non-food related goods and services. Hence, it is possible to conclude that industrialisation and servicisation of consumption were observed in case of Polish households.

Table 1. The structure of the household final consumption expenditure in Poland and the European Union in the years 2004-2012 (in % of total expenditure)

Expenditures	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
EU-27									
Food and non-alcoholic beverages	12,8	12,6	12,5	12,5	12,9	13,1	12,9	12,9	13,0
Alcoholic beverages, tobacco, narcotics	3,6	3,6	3,5	3,4	3,4	3,5	3,5	3,6	3,6
Clothing and footwear	5,7	5,6	5,6	5,5	5,4	5,4	5,3	5,3	5,2
Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels	21,3	21,7	21,9	21,9	22,6	23,6	23,8	23,8	24,2
Furnishings	6,3	6,1	6,1	6,0	5,9	5,8	5,8	5,7	5,6
Health	3,5	3,4	3,3	3,4	3,5	3,7	3,7	3,7	3,7
Transport	13,4	13,6	13,7	13,6	13,4	12,9	12,8	13,1	13,0
Communication	2,8	2,8	2,8	2,7	2,7	2,7	2,7	2,7	2,6
Recreation and culture	9,5	9,3	9,3	9,3	9,2	9,1	8,9	8,8	8,7
Education	1,0	1,0	1,0	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1
Restaurants and hotels	8,8	8,7	8,7	8,8	8,6	8,5	8,5	8,5	8,5
Miscellaneous goods and services	11,3	11,5	11,7	11,9	11,4	11,0	10,9	10,9	10,7
POLAND									
Food and non-alcoholic beverages	21,3	21,1	20,9	20,6	20,2	20,1	19,6	18,9	18,5
Alcoholic beverages, tobacco, narcotics	6,5	6,6	6,6	6,6	6,6	7,0	6,8	6,4	6,3
Clothing and footwear	4,8	4,6	4,6	4,1	4,1	3,9	1,1	4,2	4,4
Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels	22,8	23,7	23,6	23,2	23,5	24,4	24,1	24,4	23,1
Furnishings	4,3	4,4	4,4	4,4	4,4	4,4	4,5	4,5	4,5
Health	4,2	4,0	4,0	4,0	3,9	4,2	4,1	4,4	4,6
Transport	9,0	8,7	8,6	8,9	9,3	9,2	9,3	10,0	10,2
Communication	3,1	3,4	3,3	3,2	3,2	3,0	3,1	2,9	2,7
Recreation and culture	7,9	7,6	7,3	7,4	7,6	7,7	7,8	7,7	7,9
Education	1,4	1,2	1,3	1,3	1,2	1,2	1,3	1,2	1,2
Restaurants and hotels	2,9	2,8	2,8	2,9	2,8	2,9	2,8	2,8	2,9
Miscellaneous goods and services	11,8	12,5	13,4	13,3	13,3	12,0	12,5	12,5	13,7

Source: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do> (05.03.2014).

Additionally, data provided in *Tab. 1* allows for concluding that in spite of a decrease in differences in structures of household expenditures in the EU-27 and Poland, the structures in question still differ remarkably. In the consumption expenditure structure of Polish households proportion of expenditure on food is much high. Poles spend more on stimulants, health and other consumption goods and services as well. They spend much less on restaurants and hotels,

transportation, clothing and footwear, leisure and culture. Housing along with its equipment and education are elements of individual consumption of the household sector that are the most similar to their equivalents in the EU-27.

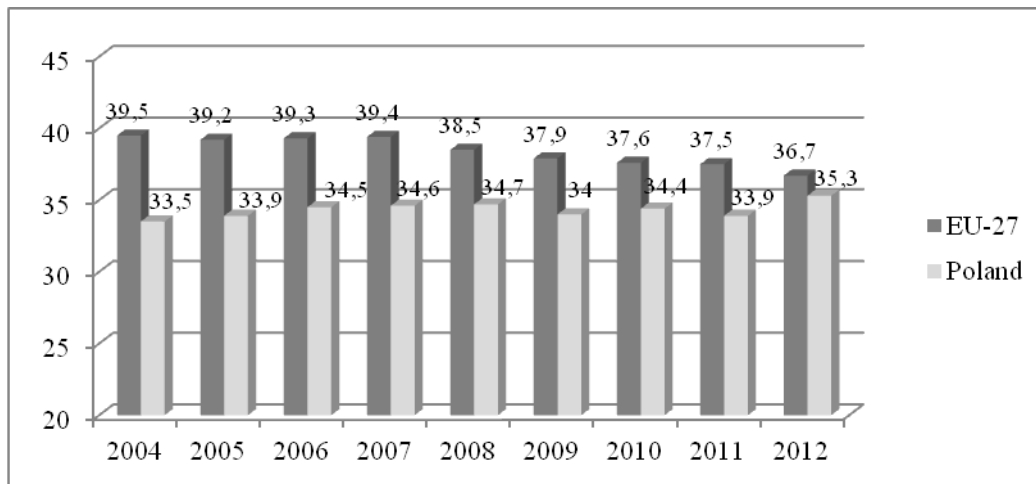


Figure 3. The free choice expenditures in Poland and EU-27 in the years 2004-2012
Source: Ibid.

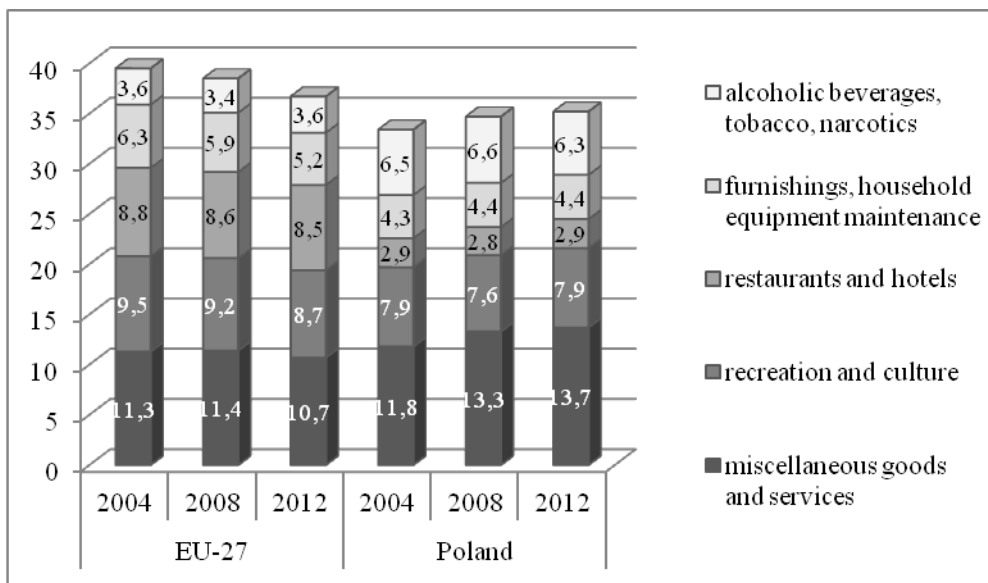


Figure 4. The structure of expenditures free choice in Poland and EU-27 in 2004, 2008 and 2012
Source: Ibid.

Valuable information about changes in consumption of households is also provided by the analysis of free choice expenditure (Fig. 3). This expenditure, as the name suggests, satisfies non-basic needs of households. Satisfaction of such needs is not indispensable for a human being to function normally and when they are given up, this does not result in negative consequences for life, health or functions in the society. Dividing expenditures into basic and free choice is always of controversial nature since each of the groups may always be additionally modified by means of some criterion that would always be subjective. Adopting this division, first of all, it would be necessary to answer the following question: Is a particular expenditure related to satisfaction of a need that is recognised to be conventionally

indispensable in given socio-economic conditions? (Grzega, 2012, p. 171). In this article such a group of expenditure includes expenditure on leisure and culture, restaurants and hotels, equipment, stimulants and other expenditure on consumption goods and services. In 2004-2012 participation of free choice expenditure of the EU-27 households went down by 1.8 percentage points. However, there was a 0.5% percentage point increase in participation of free choice expenditure in case of Polish households. Nevertheless, Poles spend less on free choice consumption as compared to the EU average. The most visible differences refer to expenditure on restaurants and hotels (*Fig. 4*).

3. Equipping households with computers and access to the Internet

In any information society access to information and skills that allow for using information are particularly important. Information is one of elements that are used to create and develop needs of households. Progress in the Internet accessibility directly contributes to better and more complete satisfaction of different needs. At present access to information influences the level and quality of education, chances of finding employment and new opportunities for organising household life including improvement in management of household finance, planning of leisure and organisation of shopping and consumption.

A personal computer is a typical representative of information and communications goods that confirm some progress in modernising consumption of households in Poland and the EU. Changes that were observed in 2004-2012 in the context of equipping households with those goods unambiguously confirm a process of modernising consumption observed. In the period subject to analysis there was remarkable improvement observed both in the EU-27 and in Poland. The average value in the Union rose as much as by 26 percentage points from 52% in 2004 to 78% in 2012. In Poland percentage of households that are equipped with personal computers was 73% in 2012 as compared to 36% in 2004 (*Fig. 5*).

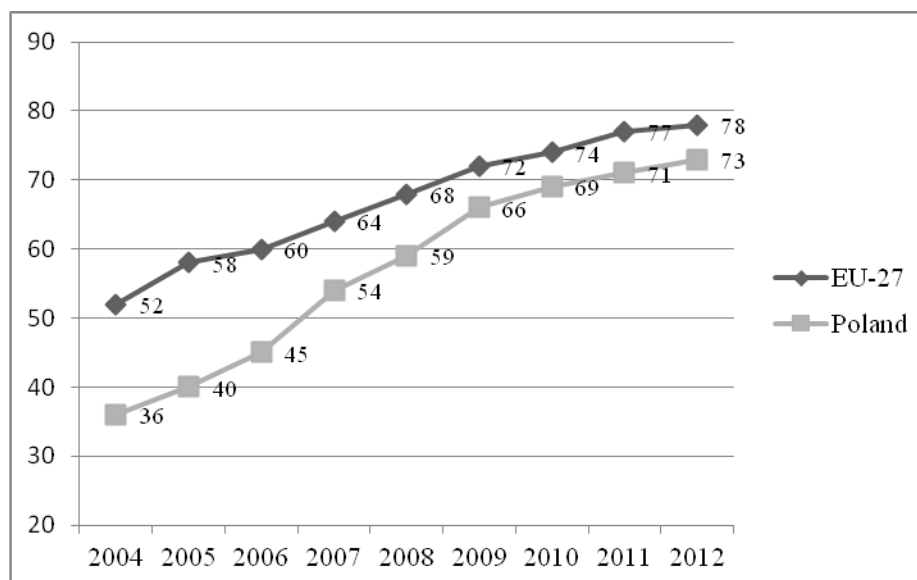


Figure 5. The availability of computers in households in Poland and EU-27 in the years 2004-2012

Source: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=isoc_ci_cm_h&lang=en (05.03.2014).

Increase in the Internet accessibility in households is one of objectives set in the society informatization adopted in documents of the European Commission. In 2004 41% of

households domiciled in the EU had their access to the Internet. In Poland this percentage was 26% then (*Fig. 6*). At the end of the period subject to research 70% of Polish households had their access to the Internet, whereas in the EU-27 this value reached 76%. Declared reasons for not having access to the Internet in Poland are diversified. In 2012 the most frequently provided reason included no need to use the Internet (57.2%) and insufficient skills (the second position in the ranking). Other reasons included no technical possibility to get connected, having the Internet access somewhere else than at home and excessively high costs of the necessary equipment (GUS – Central Statistical Office, 2012).

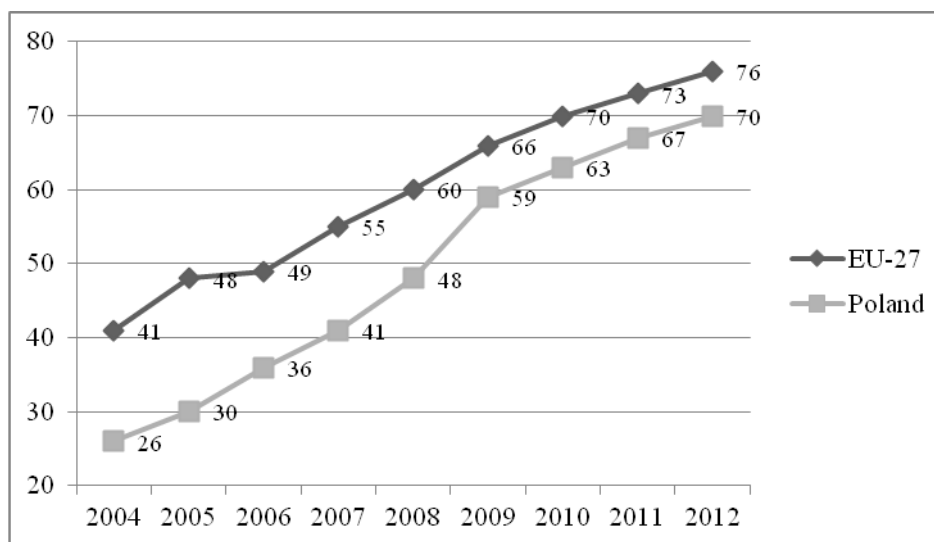


Figure 6. Internet access in households in Poland and EU-27 in the years 2004-2012
Source: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do> (05.03.2014).

At present Internet usage is one of the most visible consumer trends. This trend is related to more and more up-to-date technologies including the broadband Internet. In 2012 almost three quarters of the EU-27 households enjoyed their access to the broadband Internet. Since 2004 this index rose by 58 percentage points (from 15% in 2004 to 73% in 2012). In Poland 67% of households had their broadband connections. Since 2004 Poland reported progress by 59 percentage points (*Fig. 7*). It seems interesting that in the years of 2004- 2012 a proportion of Polish households that had their broadband connections in the total number of households with their Internet access rose faster than a proportion of households that had their Internet.

Finishing this part it is necessary to add that in 2012 in Poland percentage of regular Internet users (those who use the Internet at least once a week) was 59%, whereas in the EU this value reached 68% in 2011. The gap between Poland and the EU average remained similarly stable for some years (GUS – Central Statistical Office, 2012).

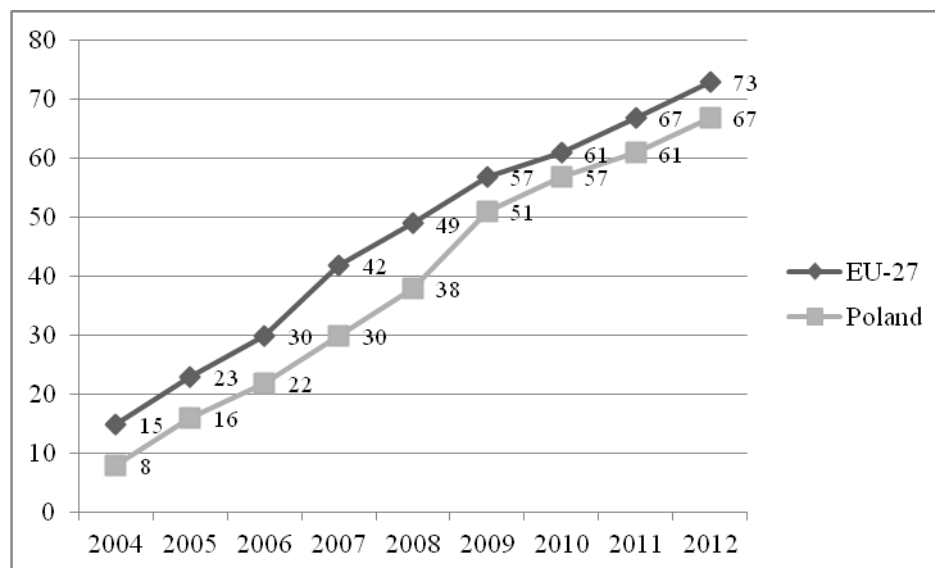


Figure 7. Broadband internet connections in households in Poland and EU-27 in the years 2004-2012

Source: Ibid.

4. Assessment of changes in consumption and premises for modernising consumption in Poland

Taking into account limitations in development of consumption in Poland that are related to structural determinants, socio-economic development levels and a crisis period in 2008-2012, it is necessary to appreciate gradual although slow decrease in the consumption gap between Poland and the EU average. This conclusion refers to both consumer expenditure and consumption expressed in natural units.

A proportion of food-related expenditure in total expenditure is one of determinants of modern consumption. From the perspective of the level of satisfying needs the lower the proportion is, the better. Therefore, a higher part of income may be spent on satisfying other needs including higher level needs. In the EU-27 countries this proportion is relatively low, i.e. 13%. In Poland the level reached 18.5% in 2012. However, it is necessary to highlight that the proportion in question was regularly going down year by year. In 2012 the proportion of indispensable expenditure including food, housing and energy was 42% of the total consumption level in Poland. The EU-27 average was 37% then. This situation is different in case of proportion of free choice expenditure although the difference was only 2 percentage points: in the EU-27 38% and in Poland 36%.

While comparing structures of consumption expenditure, it is visible that Poland is still lagging behind the EU average. However, in case of quantitative consumption including computers and the Internet accessibility (including the broadband Internet) the comparison seems to look better. Due to some progress in the level of information technology equipment and telecommunications services, contemporary households in Poland have more and more extensive access to information. As a result, their level of education and development of contacts between network users grows. This, on the other hand, contributes to better organisation of consumption and search for new methods of needs satisfaction. Having some knowledge and an adequate and customised to contemporary needs resource of durable goods frequently facilitates households' efforts related to financial management or leisure planning. What is more, modern solutions also liquidate barriers in public life, facilitate contacts with culture and improve general 'comfort' of life in case of household members.

While evaluating changes that are observed in consumption of Polish households in the context of its modernisation it is necessary to highlight that in Poland the very process is still indirectly connected with transition from the centrally planned economy to the market one. As a society we entered a different economic reality. We live in the world of relatively new (at least for us) capitalism in which consumption and high standard of living have not only been recognised as a basic determinant of human status and achievements but also they are a legitimate goal for functioning of the economy and a basic force that drives its development. This all is relatively new for Poles. Consumption aspirations still in many cases exceed realised levels of consumption. Therefore, consumption will be growing and changing as long as we can see differences in levels of our need satisfaction as compared to households' needs satisfied in other more developed countries. In new capitalism, i.e. the reality to be experienced by Poles right now creating individual systems of needs and preferences and creating new styles of life by consumption has become a very important feature and condition of for the existence of the whole system. Almost 25 years of transformations have demonstrated that consumption is a major factor that transforms the whole social system and stabilises Polish economy (Appadurai, 2005, p. 125). Consumption has also become a 'recession buffer' of Polish economy in the period of crisis. On the one hand, modernisation of consumption structure influenced economic development in Poland and on the other hand it was the result of this development.

'New' determinants of consumption are really important while creating modern consumption. These determinants particularly include ongoing globalisation processes along with technical and technological progress. On the one hand, they lead to homogenisation of consumers' needs and aspirations. Consumption structures are getting more and more similar and homogenous. On the other hand, they contribute to creating better conditions to satisfy needs by improving a supply offer. A large amount and diversity of goods that are available on the market facilitates generation of new needs and creates opportunities for satisfaction of current needs by means of different, new and unique variants of sets of goods and services. Globalisation of consumption and development of modern techniques and technologies facilitate access to modern styles of life and promote looking for comfortable products that save time and are characterised by high quality. Levels and scopes of modern consumption also depend on many other determinants including those that are shaped under the influence of decisions made by members of households. Particularly, this case applies to income situations of households, sizes of households and age of household members, levels of their education, professions and levels of consumer awareness in the context of generating economic, ecological and social costs.

Present level and structure of consumption in Poland also result from new behaviours and changes in household mentalities that stem from openness to the world and acquisition of consumption patterns that are observed in more developed countries. It is necessary to highlight that in the era of the sophisticated supply offer modernising consumption was easier. Hence, there was visible improvement in equipping households with modern consumer durable goods. Improvement in equipping households with information technology hardware and access to the Internet is a positive phenomenon that simultaneously reflects better satisfaction of consumer needs voiced by Polish households in the context of education, culture, security and property.

Adopting a real variant of consumption development in Poland and taking up-to-date determinants of consumption into account and considering experiences of more developed countries, one may anticipate further gradual modernisation of consumption. However, it is necessary to stress firmly that this process may be limited in Poland by different factors including, inter alia, income situation, insufficient savings, educational gaps, no leisure or aging processes that affect societies.

Conclusions

Changes that were observed in Polish household consumer expenditure since Polish accession to the European Union show a higher level of need satisfaction in 2012 as compared to 2004 and they are made in compliance with assumptions of the knowledge and information based development. Further to the assumption adopted at the beginning of this article, we can therefore confirm that at that time in Poland a process of modernising consumption was observed.

Analyses of household expenditure indexes shows that in the EU-27 background a situation in Poland is relatively good as far as modernisation of consumption is concerned. In the years of 2004-2012 there were some positive transformations in the level, dynamics and structure of Poles' consumption. A developing process of modernising Polish household consumption seems to be particularly confirmed by some decrease in the food index value, an increase in the free choice expenditure index and positive changes in the scope of quantitative consumption of non-food products with particular attention paid to information and communications technology goods. A detailed analysis of indexes additionally shows that the economic crisis did not contribute to hampering a process of modernising consumption in Poland in its value-related and quantitative dimensions. However, the crisis in question did affect the process of modernising the structure of the EU household consumer expenditure in general. In the EU-27 household sector years of 2004-2012 witnessed some increase in proportion of indispensable expenditure including housing and energy along with food. There was also some decrease in free choice expenditure. This situation may have adversely influenced the level of selected groups of the EU citizens' consumer needs were satisfied.

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