



**ECOSOC**

**Topic:**  
**The role of education levels and job opportunities in social mobility towards development**

**Chair**

**President: Moisés Isaac Guerrero Morán**

**Moderator: María Paula Gómez Jurado**

**Conference Officer: José Eduardo López Arzamendi**

**TECMUN 2024, Campus Monterrey**

## I. A message from the Chair

Dear Esteemed Committee Members,

It is with great pleasure that we warmly welcome each of you to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Your participation in TECMUN 2024 signifies a commitment to advancing global economic and social cooperation and development, a mission at the core of ECOSOC's mandate. Your dedication to these paramount issues is truly commendable and deeply appreciated.

This document will address issues of great relevance to the role of social mobility in development. We are confident that the discussions will be fruitful and will allow us to find joint solutions to the challenges we face. I am confident that this diplomatic document will be a milestone in the history of relations. Let us work together to build a better future for our people and the whole world.

With sincere regards,

Moisés Isaac Guerrero Morán

President of ECOSOC at TECMUN 2024

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## II. Introduction to the committee

### ECOSOC's labor

The ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) is a committee in the UN structure and it is **one of the six main organs of the UN**, alongside the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. ECOSOC focuses on economic and social issues, meanwhile the other organs have other specific roles and responsibilities within the system. ECOSOC “is made up of 54 members, 18 of whom are elected each year by the General Assembly for a three-year term” (UN, n.d.).

### History of the Committee

The committee is the “UN's largest and most complex subsidiary body. ECOSOC was established by the UN Charter (1945). Its existence relies on the purpose, which is “primarily concerned with economic, social, cultural and health issues as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also plays the role of coordinator of the work of the United Nations and specialized agencies.” (UN, n.d.). In essence, it exists to serve as a platform for dialogue and coordination to advance the economic and social well-being of the nations, promoting sustainable development for all.

There has been a recurrent theme in deliberations of development over the past 70 years. This quest for improved coordination has become even more important over time as the activities of the UN have grown.

Furthermore, “the ECOSOC regional commissions have continued to work towards specific and integrated responses to regional development challenges and priorities. The Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Europe (ECE) were created in 1947, followed by the Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 1948. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia were established in later decades, respectively in 1958 and 1973. It also grew in membership. While the General Assembly originally elected 18 members of the Council, the Charter was amended in 1965 and

again in 1974 to increase ECOSOC membership first to 27 and finally to 54 current members, with membership based on geographic representation” (UN, n.d.).

Nowadays, “Paula Narvaez, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Chile to the UN, was elected President of ECOSOC for the 2024 session, succeeding Lachezara Stoeva, Permanent Representative of Bulgaria” (IISD, 2023).

### **Roles, Responsibilities, Jurisdiction and Scope**

ECOSOC is “concerned with an array of United Nations areas of action. The Council is the central mechanism for coordination of the activities of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies and overseeing the work of its subsidiary bodies in the economic, social, environmental and related fields. It is also the policy organ that promotes a coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of major international conferences and summits, guides and reviews efforts in the social, economic and related fields and oversees the majority of UN global data production. The mandates of ECOSOC originate from different sources, the most significant of which are those set out in the United Nations Charter, the outcomes of UN summits, and General Assembly resolutions. The Council has also accrued a body of practice and precedent related to the exercise of its responsibilities. The UN Charter mandates ECOSOC to promote higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social progress; solutions of international economic, social and health problems; international cultural and educational cooperation; and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion” (HLPF, 2024).

### III. Introduction to the topic

#### The concept of social mobility and its approach

Historically, society has varied widely in terms of social mobility and development. Societies that are less developed have less social mobility than the ones that are more developed and have more access to opportunities and growth.

**Social mobility** refers to “change in a person's socio-economic situation, either concerning their parents (intergenerational mobility) or throughout their lifetime (intra-generational mobility). The concept **impacts equality of opportunity**: the extent to which people have the same chances to do well in life regardless of the socio-economic background of their parents, their gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, birthplace, or other circumstances beyond their control” (OECD, n.d.) It can be measured in terms of earnings or social classes.

Nowadays, the world is suffering from **bigger gaps between social classes, harder access to education** for children, **advancement of technology and automation** that reduce job opportunities and even **migration** for a lot of foreigners.

In regards of this, the **United Nations**, by hand of the **2030 Agenda to Sustainable Development**, the **Social Development Division (SDD)** is launching a **program** called “**leave no-one behind**”, which purpose is to “provide normative support and regional dialogue, Policy advocacy, research and analysis and Technical support, advisory services and capacity-building” (ESCAP, n.d.).

The concept is crucial for promoting economic growth and development in a way to reach equal opportunities for everyone. It is also a concern in light of the fact that the challenges keep getting harder everyday for people with less opportunities all around the world. It is not something new, but the 2020 pandemic helped to exponentially increase this topic and make it worldwide known. The issue manifests itself in each person’s income, welfare and culture. This leads to a

collaboration between nations and cooperation between governments who are most affected by this, including civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international institutions.

Before arriving at the statistics, discussing the topic **will impact one or more people** and make them want to join the cause. It is widely remarkable the fact that this type of issue is happening right now and **most people aren't aware of it**. This kind of topics are mainly addressed to by organizations such as the United Nations, which have specific committees to lessen the causes and consequences of such matters, but it must not be the case to depend on this organization's hands only, but it is also the turn of society, for everyone to make an effort and help each other as humankind.

#### IV. International Background and Data

To understand how social mobility works and the international situation regarding the subject, it is important to highlight that social mobility refers to the possibility of a person changing their socioeconomic situation, either because of a situation related to the family, especially because of a person's parents or throughout their lifetime. Social mobility, according to The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2022) is directly linked to the equality of opportunities the countries in which, each individual has the same opportunities regardless of the socioeconomic sector of the population in which the person is born, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, birthplace, or any other factor corresponding to their background that goes beyond their control.

In general terms, according to a perception survey performed by the OECD, at least 65% of citizens are concerned with the fact that they will not be as financially secure as their parents were, in addition to the previous, this same survey registered that six out of ten financially challenged children believe that they will not be able to overcome poverty in their adult life, affecting other important indexes considered in the measurement of each countries development. (OECD, 2022)

Regarding European countries it is noted by the OECD (2022) that children with the greatest socioeconomic disadvantage grow up to earn as much as 20% less in adulthood than those who grew up in a more favorable socioeconomic environment, taking at least five generations to children born in financially challenged families to earn what is considered the minimum wage in their respective countries, making it not only a moral concern but also a social and economic matter.

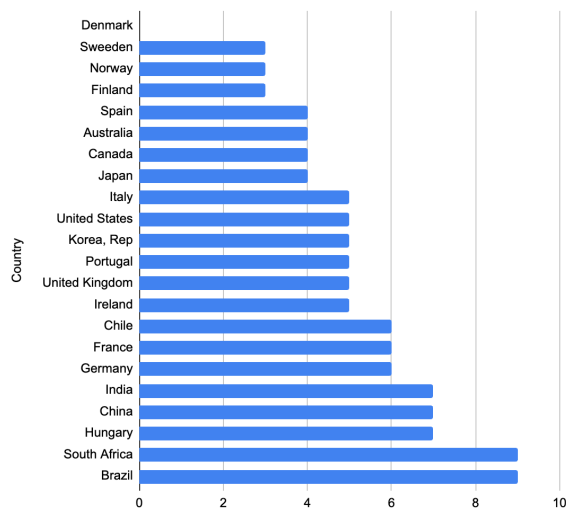
Although the general definition of social mobility was established at the beginning of the present section, it is crucial to notice that social mobility is not limited to an economic matter, since The World Economic Forum expands its definition to multiple variables such as health and educational achievements. Therefore, The World Economic Forum (2020) sectioned social mobility in six categories these being:

1. Intragenerational mobility: the ability of an individual to move from one socioeconomic level to another in their lifetime.
2. Intergenerational mobility: contemplating the possibility for a whole family to climb the socio-economic ladder.
3. Absolute educational mobility: when an individual gets to overcome their parents' educational level.
4. Absolute income mobility: meaning that a person can earn in real terms as much as their parents did.
5. Relative income mobility: which is measured by how much an individual's income is determined by their parent's income.
6. Relative educational mobility: the attainment of an individual's educational level by the one their parents achieved.

For instance, in countries such as China and India, although the levels of absolute income mobility may be heightened the relative social mobility may be low. Throughout empirical evidence, it has been noticeable that in countries with high levels of relative income mobility, there still exists an advantage to being born into a well-adjusted family. Another example of the

impact of the former type of mobility is Denmark and Finland, countries in which if a parent earns 100% more than another it will impact their child's future income by around 15%, in the United States of America this will have an impact of 50% and 60% in China. (The World Economic Forum, 2020)

Number of generations that it would take for those born in a low-income family to move onto a mean income contra Country



Note. Adapted from The Global Social Mobility Report 2020 (p. 10), by The World Economic Forum, 2020.

As presented in the graph, there is a variation in terms of the number of generations that it would take for those born in a low-income family to move onto a mean income highlighting the case of Brazil and South Africa, countries in which it would take up to 9 generations for children to achieve a mean income. On the other hand, as it has been pointed out, countries such as Denmark and Sweden presented better mobility since it would take only two generations for a child to jump onto a mean income.

Additionally, there are **ten established pillars by the Global Social Mobility Index** (as cited in The World Economic Forum, 2020) which have been categorized as crucial for social mobility and help countries to better understand and track the situation of the subject. The **first pillar**, already mentioned in previous paragraphs of the text is **Health** which measures the capacity of countries to provide high-quality healthcare to their populations given the fact that access to quality healthcare is a crucial factor for social mobility since it has a permanent impact on people's well-being having positive or negative live-living consequences. (The World Economic Forum, 2020)

**Secondly, the Educational pillar** is understood to be the central focus of social mobility since the early years of life are crucial for brain development and learning, quality early educational



programs can have an exceptional impact on the future of children, especially on those growing up in more disadvantaged backgrounds (The World Economic Forum, 2020). Not to leave aside the fact that technological skills are to be included in the modern world due to the lifelong endeavor of the development of human capital economies must take responsibility for preparing the workforce for the future of work by implementing measures that promote lifelong learning, especially among low- and middle-skilled workers, who are the most vulnerable to automation. (The World Economic Forum, 2020)

Linked to the education pillar, **the fifth pillar is Technology Access**, a key factor for social mobility because technology can level the playing field by providing information and learning opportunities to all, regardless of socioeconomic background (The World Economic Forum, 2020). **The sixth through eighth pillars are Work Opportunities, Fair Wages, and Working Conditions** which are summarized in general terms as Fair Work Opportunities, an indicator that measures the capability of governments to provide work opportunities with optimal conditions and fair wages regardless of the educational level and the socioeconomic background (The World Economic Forum, 2020). One of the main issues that individuals face when talking about social mobility is access to job opportunities due to factors such as ethnicity, age, gender, disability, skills, and employment history. (The World Economic Forum, 2020)

Finally, the **ninth through tenth pillars englobe Social Protection and Inclusive Institutions**, social protection is crucial to help people cope with labor market changes and career transitions, and social safety nets can reduce disparities in living standards and protect the most vulnerable from downward social mobility (The World Economic Forum, 2020). Additionally, inclusive institutions ensure that everyone has fair and equal access to the justice system, institutions, and opportunities, this reduces corruption and the accumulation of opportunities, which benefits all members of society. (The World Economic Forum, 2020)

Up to 2019, the countries that provided the most equal shared opportunities to their citizens were the Nordic countries such as Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland presenting individual scores in the state of social mobility of 85.2 for Denmark, 83.6 for Norway, Finland

presented a score of 83.6, Sweden of 83.5, Iceland of 82.7 being able to achieve the previous scores due to their capability of providing quality education, in combination with work opportunities and good work conditions while also providing social protection and inclusive institutions, covering eight out of the ten pillars that make social mobility possible, emphasizing in what most scholars consider the most important pillars being education and work opportunities. (The World Economic Forum, 2020)

Other particular cases are Australia, which scored 75.1 in the overall score of the Global Social Mobility Index highlighting its performance in the Technology Access, Health, and Inclusive Institution pillars. Regarding Brazil, it is noted that this country was ranked in the 60th place with an overall score of 52.1 due to the low rate of education enrollment and the unemployment rate, the same case as Indonesia which was ranked in the 67th place with an overall score of 49.3 due to their low preschool enrolment rate that contrast their low unemployment rate and high work opportunities. (The World Economic Forum, 2020)

Regarding the unemployment rate, according to OECD (2023) figures Spain presented the highest unemployment rate in 2023 with a score of 12 in the Unemployment rate for OECD countries, whereas Korea presented the lowest unemployment rate with a score of 2.5 at the end of October last year. Concerning European countries such as Portugal and France, it was noted that they presented an unemployment rate between 6.7 and 7.1 contrasting with the Enrollment rate in secondary and tertiary education for OECD countries given the fact that in 2020 at least 96.6 of the 17-year-old was enrolled in school. (OECD, 2020)

## **V. Current initiatives and projects**

To get into context, the UN defines *social mobility* as “an equitable increase in people's opportunities in health, education and income throughout their lives and across generations”.

Social mobility is truly important for the development of societies, as it involves people's ability to improve their socio-economic situation, access opportunities, and contribute to the progress of their communities. Both the United Nations and the Economic and Social Council recognize this and address it from different perspectives and programs.

The UN, through various agencies, programs, and specialized bodies, promotes equal opportunities and social inclusion as key elements for development. Social mobility is an important indicator for measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially the goal of reducing inequalities. The UN advocates for policies and programs that promote social mobility, such as quality education, access to healthcare services, social protection and the creation of decent employment.

Meanwhile, the ECOSOC coordinates global economic, social, and environmental policies. Through its sessions and forums, it addresses issues related to sustainable development, including social mobility. It facilitates dialogue between governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to promote strategies and policies that foster social mobility and reduce inequalities.

Both entities recognize that social mobility is important not only as a goal in itself but also as a key driver for economic growth, social stability, and community cohesion. Therefore, they promote comprehensive approaches that address structural and systematic barriers that may damage social mobility, such as discrimination, lack of access to basic services, and concentration of wealth in few hands.

## IV. UN actions

The UN has taken various actions in the past, present, and has future plans related to promoting social mobility and addressing inequalities. Here are some of the more important:

- Establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, which aimed to reduce poverty and improve access to education and healthcare, indirectly promoting social mobility.
- Implementation of various programs and initiatives by UN agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNDP to address barriers to social mobility, such as lack of access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.
- Integration of social mobility and reducing inequalities into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework adopted in 2015. Goal 10 specifically aims to reduce inequality within and among countries, acknowledging the importance of social mobility.
- Implementation of targeted programs and policies by UN agencies and member states to address inequalities and promote social mobility, including initiatives focused on education, healthcare, social protection, and economic empowerment.

Overall, the UN remains committed to promoting social mobility as a fundamental aspect of its efforts to advance human development, foster inclusive societies, and achieve sustainable development goals globally.

## VII. Focus of the debate and desired direction of committee resolution

### 1. Indicate expected solution tools to be used

- **Policy Reform:** Implementing policies that promote equal access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, and address systemic barriers to social mobility such as discrimination and inequality.
- **Investment in Education:** Increasing investment in education systems, including early childhood education, primary, secondary, and tertiary education, to ensure quality education for all and reduce disparities in educational outcomes.

- **Skills Development:** Providing training and skill-building programs to equip individuals with the skills needed for employment in growing sectors of the economy, thus enhancing their employability and economic prospects.
- **Social Protection:** Establishing social safety nets and welfare programs to provide assistance to vulnerable populations, ensuring access to basic needs such as food, healthcare, and housing, and mitigating the impact of economic shocks on social mobility.
- **Access to Healthcare:** Strengthening healthcare systems and expanding access to affordable and quality healthcare services, particularly in underserved areas, to improve health outcomes and reduce the financial burden of healthcare expenses on households.

## 2. Main points to be attacked by the committee during the debate

- **Structural Inequalities:** Identifying and addressing systemic barriers to social mobility, including disparities in access to education, healthcare, employment, and economic opportunities based on factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Debating measures to promote economic empowerment, entrepreneurship, and job creation, including skills development programs, vocational training, and initiatives to enhance access to finance and market opportunities, especially for disadvantaged groups.
- **Education Accessibility and Quality:** Discussing policies and initiatives to ensure equal access to quality education for all, including early childhood education, primary, secondary, and tertiary education, as well as efforts to improve educational outcomes and reduce disparities in learning achievement.
- **Healthcare Access and Equity:** Examining strategies to strengthen healthcare systems and expand access to affordable and quality healthcare services, particularly for marginalized and underserved populations, to improve health outcomes and reduce health-related barriers to social mobility.

- **Policy Reforms and Governance:** Considering the need for policy reforms and governance mechanisms to address corruption, promote transparency and accountability, and ensure the effective implementation of social mobility initiatives at national and local levels.

## VIII. Key Questions for the topic

1. How does the committee plan to tackle income inequality and unequal access to education and employment to improve social mobility globally?
2. What measures will the committee take to ensure these equal opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, thereby promoting global intergenerational mobility?
3. How does the committee intend to promote gender equality and empower socially marginalized culture groups to improve social mobility and reduce incongruity in access to education, healthcare, and other socioeconomic opportunities?
4. What strategies will the committee take to support marginalized communities, including indigenous peoples and migrants, in overcoming barriers to social mobility?
5. How will the committee collaborate with civil society, the private sector and governments to implement inclusive policies for promoting social inclusion, economic growth and sustainable development worldwide?

## Suggested research resources

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