

Alan Krueger, a former main economic advisor to President Obama, once said “The rise in inequality in the United States over the last three decades has reached the point that inequality in incomes is causing an unhealthy division in opportunities, and is a threat to our economic growth” (Center for American Progress, 12.01.2012). Indeed, rising inequalities is one of the most important phenomenon of the last decades in modern economies. Krueger, however, does not point to inequalities per se, but to inequalities of *opportunities*. Equality of opportunity, as opposed to pure equality of outcomes, takes into account the element of individual responsibility. Individuals should have equal opportunities in the sense that factors beyond their control, such as parental background, parents’ socio-economic status and education, initial health, have no impact on their well-being. Against this background condition, it is then the choice of the individual to exercise sufficient effort to obtain a specific level of well-being. It is widely acknowledged in the literature and more so in practical decision-making that well-being is a multidimensional concept and cannot be reduced to a single proxy such as income. If the goal of public policy is to reduce inequalities in opportunities, then a multidimensional view of opportunities must be taken. Individuals value various things, health, education, environment, security. It could be that someone excels on the income dimension but has poor health. All well-being dimensions have to be analyzed jointly in order for us to be able to have a real understanding of the division of opportunities in a society. Theorists and applied researchers on equality of opportunity have made only little progress so far to develop a multidimensional theory of equality of opportunity and produce knowledge on multidimensional opportunities – a shortcoming that will be addressed by this research project which is its main goal.

The Beethoven call facilitates the integration of research experience in the theory of the measurement of well-being and inequality (Poland) with the analytical capacities of an empirically oriented research group that has a strong track-record of empirical estimations of equality of opportunity (Germany). Furthermore, the project will benefit greatly from excellent collaborators (Italy, UK) who are established experts in the field. This increases greatly the feasibility of the project.