Irena Topińska, a senior expert on social policy, received her Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Warsaw (1980). Her major fields of interests include social policy (poverty alleviation, social assistance, distributional effects of social policy measures), statistics (household budget surveys, income inequality and poverty measurement) and microeconomics (family economics, intergenerational and inter-vivos transfers). Mrs. Topinska's professional experience involves social assistance in CEE and NIS countries in many international advisory projects (sponsored also by UNDP and World Bank). In 1997-1998 Mrs. Topinska participated in a CASE advisory project "Support to the Economic Reforms in Kyrgyzstan". She has advised the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of Poland (1993-1994) and consulted at the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Social Security Reform in Poland (1996-1998). A prolific author, she has been Associate Professor at the Department of Economics of the University of Warsaw since 1981.