

General government expenditure in the EU in 2015

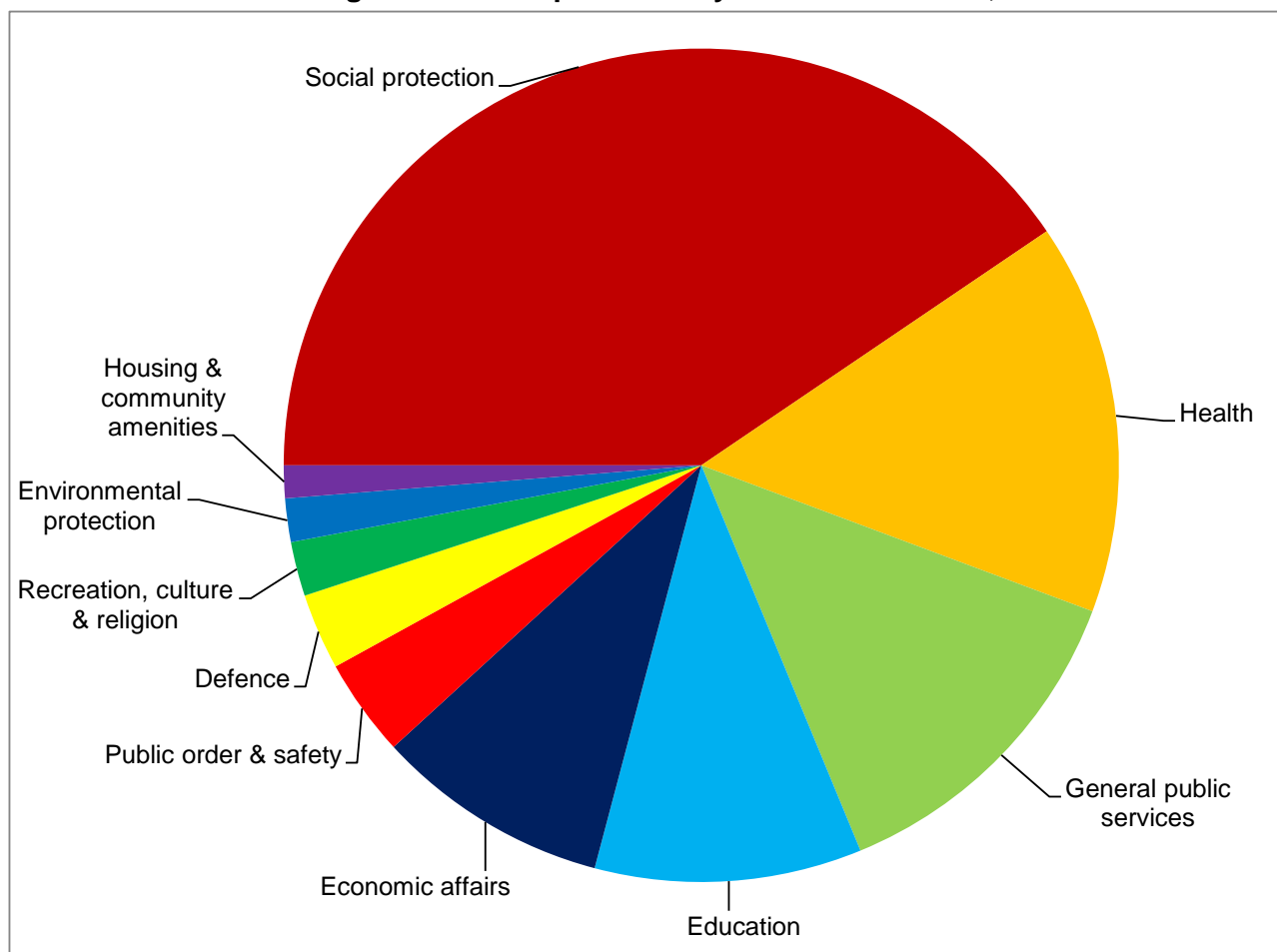
Government expenditure on social protection accounted for almost one fifth of GDP

Representing about 40% of total public expenditure

Among the main functions of general government expenditure in the **European Union** (EU), 'social protection' was by far the most important in 2015, equivalent to 19.2% of GDP. The next most important areas were 'health' (7.2%), 'general public services' such as external affairs and public debt transactions (6.2%), 'education' (4.9%) and 'economic affairs' (4.3%). The functions 'public order and safety' (1.8%), 'defence' (1.4%), 'recreation, culture and religion' (1.0%), 'environmental protection' (0.8%) and 'housing and community amenities' (0.6%) had more limited weights. These data at **EU** level mask however significant differences between the Member States in the share of GDP devoted to each function of general government expenditure.

This information on general government total expenditure by function comes from an online [publication](#) issued by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union.

General government expenditure by function in the EU, 2015



Share of social protection expenditure related to old age highest in Greece and lowest in Ireland

Social protection represented the most important area of general government expenditure in 2015 in all EU Member States. The ratio of government social protection expenditure to GDP varied across EU Member States from less than 10% in **Ireland** (9.6%) to over a quarter in **Finland** (25.6%). Eight Member States – **Finland, France, Denmark, Austria, Italy, Sweden, Greece** and **Belgium** - devoted at least 20% of GDP to social protection, while **Ireland**, the three **Baltic Member States, Romania, Cyprus, Malta** and the **Czech Republic** each spent less than 13% of GDP on social protection.

Social protection expenditure can be further broken down into a number of detailed groups. The group 'old age', which includes pensions, made up the largest part of social protection expenditure in all Member States. Government expenditure on 'old age' as a share of GDP was highest in 2015 in **Greece** (15.7%), followed by **Italy** (13.8%), **France** (13.6%), **Finland** (13.4%) and **Austria** (13.1%). In contrast, **Ireland** (2.4%), **Cyprus** and **Lithuania** (both 5.8%) recorded the lowest shares. General government expenditure on 'old age' accounted for 10.3% of GDP in the **EU**.

Government expenditure on health and education varied significantly across Member States

With shares of at least 8% of GDP in 2015, **Denmark** (8.6%), **France** (8.2%), the **Netherlands** and **Austria** (both 8.0%) recorded the highest proportions devoted to health among Member States.

The highest shares of government expenditure on general public services in 2015 were observed in **Cyprus** (10.2% of GDP) and **Greece** (9.9%).

Denmark (7.0% of GDP), **Sweden** (6.5%) and **Belgium** (6.4%) registered the highest shares of government expenditure on education in 2015. For government expenditure on economic affairs, the highest percentages in 2015 were recorded in **Greece** (8.9% of GDP) and **Hungary** (8.6%).

In 2015, more than 2% of GDP was devoted to defence in **Greece** (2.7%) and the **United Kingdom** (2.1%). The highest share of government expenditure on public order & safety was observed in **Bulgaria** (2.8%), on environmental protection in **Malta** (2.0%), on housing & community amenities in **Bulgaria** (2.1%) and on recreation, culture & religion in **Hungary** (2.1%) and **Estonia** (2.0%).

Geographical information

The **European Union** (EU) includes Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The **euro area** consists of Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland.

Methods and definitions

The Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG) classifies government expenditure into ten main divisions (known as the 'COFOG I level' breakdown): general public services; defence; public order and safety; economic affairs; environmental protection; housing and community affairs; health; recreation, culture and religion; education; social protection. These divisions are further broken down into 69 groups (COFOG II level).

For more information

Eurostat [database](#) on government finance

Eurostat [metadata](#) on general government expenditure by function.

Eurostat [set of Statistics Explained articles](#) on government expenditure by function.

Eurostat [interactive infographic](#) on government expenditure by function.

Issued by: **Eurostat Press Office**

Vincent BOURGEAIS
Tel: +352-4301-33 444
eurostat-pressoffice@ec.europa.eu


Production of data:

Raquel DIAS / Pavel DVORAK / Elvira GOEBEL
Lukas RUCKA / Laura WAHRIG
Tel: +352-4301-37 687
estat-gfs@ec.europa.eu

 [EurostatStatistics](#)

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 ec.europa.eu/eurostat/

 **Media requests:** Eurostat media support / Tel: +352-4301-33 408 / eurostat-mediasupport@ec.europa.eu

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General government total expenditure by function in the EU Member States, 2015
(as % of GDP)

	Total	General public services	Defence	Public order & safety	Economic affairs	Environmental protection	Housing & community amenities	Health	Recreation culture & religion	Education	Social protection	Social protection, of which:					
												Sickness & disability	Old age	Survivors	Family & children	Unemployment	Others
EU	47.2	6.2	1.4	1.8	4.3	0.8	0.6	7.2	1.0	4.9	19.2	2.8	10.3	1.4	1.7	1.4	1.7
Euro area	48.5	6.6	1.2	1.7	4.5	0.8	0.6	7.2	1.1	4.7	20.1	2.7	10.8	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.4
Belgium	53.9	8.1	0.8	1.8	6.5	0.9	0.3	7.7	1.2	6.4	20.2	3.5	9.1	1.8	2.4	2.0	1.4
Bulgaria	40.7	3.2	1.4	2.8	6.1	0.8	2.1	5.5	1.7	4.0	13.3	0.2	9.9	:	2.4	0.1	0.7
Czech Rep.	42.0	4.3	0.9	1.8	6.6	1.1	0.7	7.6	1.3	4.9	12.7	2.2	7.7	0.6	1.1	0.2	0.9
Denmark	54.8	7.4	1.1	1.0	3.7	0.4	0.2	8.6	1.8	7.0	23.6	4.8	8.3	0.0	4.6	2.7	3.2
Germany	44.0	5.9	1.0	1.6	3.1	0.6	0.4	7.2	1.0	4.2	19.0	3.1	9.2	1.9	1.6	1.7	1.6
Estonia	40.3	4.3	1.9	1.8	4.8	0.7	0.4	5.5	2.0	6.1	12.9	2.1	7.0	0.1	2.3	1.1	0.3
Ireland	29.4	4.1	0.4	1.1	3.4	0.4	0.6	5.7	0.6	3.7	9.6	1.7	2.4	0.6	2.0	1.8	1.1
Greece	55.4	9.9	2.7	2.1	8.9	1.5	0.2	4.5	0.7	4.3	20.5	1.6	15.7	1.7	0.6	0.7	0.2
Spain*	43.8	6.5	1.0	2.0	4.4	0.9	0.5	6.2	1.1	4.1	17.1	2.4	9.2	2.3	0.6	2.0	0.6
France	57.0	6.3	1.8	1.6	5.7	1.0	1.1	8.2	1.3	5.5	24.6	2.8	13.6	1.6	2.5	2.0	2.2
Croatia*	46.9	9.1	1.3	2.2	5.0	0.5	0.8	6.6	1.5	4.7	15.1	4.9	6.7	1.4	1.3	0.5	0.4
Italy	50.4	8.4	1.2	1.9	4.1	1.0	0.6	7.1	0.7	4.0	21.5	1.9	13.8	2.8	1.5	1.2	0.3
Cyprus	40.1	10.2	1.4	1.7	3.5	0.4	1.8	2.6	0.9	5.7	12.0	0.5	5.8	1.4	2.4	0.8	1.0
Latvia	37.1	5.2	1.0	2.0	4.2	0.7	1.0	3.8	1.6	6.0	11.5	2.1	7.3	0.2	0.7	0.5	0.7
Lithuania	35.1	4.4	1.3	1.6	3.6	0.5	0.3	5.8	0.9	5.4	11.1	2.8	5.8	0.3	1.0	0.6	0.7
Luxembourg	42.1	4.4	0.3	1.0	5.0	1.1	0.5	4.6	1.2	5.2	18.9	1.5	10.5	0.0	4.1	2.0	0.8
Hungary	50.0	8.9	0.5	2.1	8.6	1.2	1.1	5.3	2.1	5.2	15.0	3.0	7.2	1.1	2.0	0.4	1.3
Malta	41.2	6.8	0.8	1.2	5.1	2.0	0.4	5.8	1.2	5.5	12.4	1.2	7.3	1.4	1.2	0.5	0.9
Netherlands*	45.1	5.0	1.1	1.8	4.0	1.4	0.3	8.0	1.4	5.4	16.6	4.5	6.8	0.1	1.1	1.7	2.4
Austria	51.6	6.9	0.6	1.4	6.2	0.4	0.4	8.0	1.2	5.0	21.7	1.9	13.1	1.5	2.3	1.5	1.3
Poland	41.5	4.9	1.6	2.2	4.6	0.6	0.7	4.7	1.1	5.2	15.9	2.6	9.1	1.8	1.4	0.6	0.4
Portugal	48.4	8.1	1.1	2.1	5.1	0.4	0.5	6.2	0.8	6.0	18.3	1.2	12.2	1.8	1.1	1.2	0.8
Romania	35.7	4.8	1.0	2.3	5.3	1.0	1.4	4.2	1.2	3.1	11.5	1.0	8.5	0.1	1.1	0.1	0.6
Slovenia	47.8	6.5	0.8	1.6	6.0	1.0	0.6	6.7	1.6	5.6	17.4	2.3	9.9	1.4	2.0	0.6	1.2
Slovakia*	45.6	6.5	1.1	2.4	6.3	1.0	0.8	7.2	1.0	4.2	15.0	2.8	7.9	0.9	1.3	0.2	1.9
Finland	57.0	8.5	1.3	1.2	4.8	0.2	0.4	7.2	1.5	6.2	25.6	3.5	13.4	0.8	3.2	2.7	2.0
Sweden	50.2	7.1	1.1	1.3	4.2	0.3	0.7	6.9	1.1	6.5	20.9	4.5	10.7	0.3	2.5	1.3	1.7
UK	42.8	4.5	2.1	2.0	3.1	0.8	0.5	7.6	0.7	5.1	16.4	2.6	8.8	0.1	1.5	0.2	3.3
Iceland*	42.9	7.7	0.0	1.5	5.0	0.6	0.5	7.4	3.2	7.5	9.5	2.9	2.5	0.0	2.1	0.6	1.4
Norway	48.8	4.7	1.5	1.1	5.1	0.9	0.8	8.4	1.5	5.5	19.4	6.7	7.0	0.2	3.5	0.5	1.5
Switzerland*	33.9	4.3	0.9	1.7	3.7	0.7	0.2	2.2	0.8	5.8	13.5	:	:	:	:	:	:

: Data not available

* Data are provisional

Figures may not add up due to rounding.

The source dataset is available [here](#).

General government expenditure by function in the EU Member States, 2015
(as % of total government expenditure)

	General public services	Defence	Public order & safety	Economic affairs	Environmental protection	Housing & community amenities	Health	Recreation culture & religion	Education	Social protection	Social protection, of which:					
											Sickness & disability	Old age	Survivors	Family & children	Unemployment	Others
EU	13.1	2.9	3.7	9.0	1.7	1.2	15.2	2.2	10.3	40.6	5.9	21.7	2.9	3.7	2.9	3.6
Euro area	13.6	2.5	3.5	9.2	1.7	1.2	14.9	2.2	9.7	41.5	5.6	22.3	3.7	3.5	3.5	2.8
Belgium	15.1	1.6	3.3	12.0	1.6	0.6	14.2	2.2	11.9	37.5	6.5	16.9	3.4	4.5	3.7	2.6
Bulgaria	7.8	3.4	6.8	14.9	1.9	5.2	13.4	4.2	9.8	32.6	0.6	24.3	:	6.0	0.2	1.6
Czech Rep.	10.3	2.2	4.4	15.6	2.6	1.6	18.2	3.2	11.8	30.1	5.2	18.2	1.5	2.6	0.5	2.2
Denmark	13.5	2.0	1.8	6.7	0.8	0.4	15.6	3.2	12.8	43.0	8.7	15.2	0.0	8.3	4.9	5.8
Germany	13.5	2.3	3.6	7.1	1.4	0.9	16.3	2.3	9.6	43.1	6.9	20.8	4.2	3.6	4.0	3.5
Estonia	10.6	4.7	4.5	11.8	1.7	0.9	13.7	4.9	15.1	32.1	5.3	17.5	0.2	5.7	2.7	0.8
Ireland	13.9	1.2	3.7	11.5	1.4	2.0	19.3	2.0	12.4	32.7	5.6	8.2	2.2	6.6	6.3	3.8
Greece	17.8	4.9	3.8	16.0	2.7	0.4	8.2	1.3	7.8	37.0	2.9	28.4	3.0	1.1	1.2	0.4
Spain*	14.9	2.2	4.6	10.0	2.0	1.1	14.2	2.6	9.3	39.1	5.4	20.9	5.4	1.5	4.6	1.3
France	11.0	3.1	2.9	10.0	1.8	1.9	14.3	2.3	9.6	43.1	4.9	23.8	2.8	4.4	3.5	3.8
Croatia*	19.5	2.9	4.7	10.6	1.0	1.8	14.1	3.1	10.1	32.3	10.5	14.2	2.9	2.8	1.0	0.9
Italy	16.6	2.4	3.7	8.1	1.9	1.2	14.1	1.5	7.9	42.6	3.7	27.4	5.5	3.0	2.4	0.6
Cyprus	25.5	3.5	4.2	8.7	0.9	4.5	6.4	2.3	14.2	29.9	1.2	14.4	3.5	6.0	2.1	2.6
Latvia	14.0	2.7	5.4	11.5	1.9	2.6	10.3	4.4	16.2	31.0	5.7	19.7	0.5	1.8	1.3	2.0
Lithuania	12.5	3.8	4.5	10.4	1.5	0.9	16.5	2.7	15.4	31.7	7.9	16.5	1.0	2.8	1.6	2.0
Luxembourg	10.5	0.7	2.4	11.9	2.6	1.2	10.9	2.8	12.4	44.8	3.5	24.8	0.0	9.7	4.8	1.9
Hungary	17.8	1.1	4.1	17.3	2.5	2.2	10.6	4.3	10.3	29.9	6.1	14.5	2.2	3.9	0.7	2.5
Malta	16.4	2.0	3.0	12.4	4.9	0.9	14.2	2.8	13.3	30.1	2.8	17.7	3.5	2.8	1.1	2.1
Netherlands*	11.1	2.5	4.0	8.8	3.2	0.7	17.7	3.1	12.0	36.8	10.0	15.1	0.2	2.4	3.8	5.3
Austria	13.3	1.1	2.7	11.9	0.9	0.7	15.5	2.4	9.6	42.0	3.8	25.3	2.9	4.5	2.8	2.6
Poland	11.8	3.8	5.3	11.1	1.5	1.7	11.2	2.7	12.6	38.3	6.3	21.9	4.3	3.4	1.3	1.0
Portugal	16.8	2.2	4.3	10.5	0.8	1.0	12.7	1.6	12.4	37.8	2.5	25.3	3.6	2.2	2.5	1.6
Romania	13.5	2.7	6.3	14.9	2.8	3.9	11.8	3.4	8.6	32.1	2.8	23.9	0.2	3.2	0.3	1.7
Slovenia	13.6	1.8	3.3	12.5	2.1	1.3	14.0	3.4	11.6	36.4	4.7	20.7	2.9	4.1	1.3	2.6
Slovakia*	14.2	2.3	5.2	13.9	2.3	1.9	15.7	2.3	9.3	33.0	6.2	17.4	1.9	2.9	0.5	4.2
Finland	14.9	2.4	2.2	8.3	0.4	0.7	12.6	2.6	11.0	44.9	6.2	23.5	1.4	5.7	4.7	3.4
Sweden	14.1	2.3	2.6	8.4	0.6	1.5	13.8	2.2	13.0	41.6	8.9	21.2	0.6	4.9	2.6	3.4
UK	10.6	5.0	4.7	7.1	1.8	1.1	17.8	1.5	12.0	38.4	6.2	20.6	0.1	3.5	0.4	7.6
Iceland*	18.0	0.0	3.6	11.6	1.3	1.1	17.4	7.5	17.4	22.1	6.7	5.8	0.0	5.0	1.3	3.3
Norway	9.6	3.1	2.2	10.5	1.8	1.5	17.2	3.0	11.2	39.8	13.7	14.3	0.4	7.2	1.0	3.1
Switzerland*	12.6	2.8	5.0	11.0	2.1	0.6	6.5	2.4	17.2	39.9	:	:	:	:	:	:

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