

180/2019 - 22 November 2019

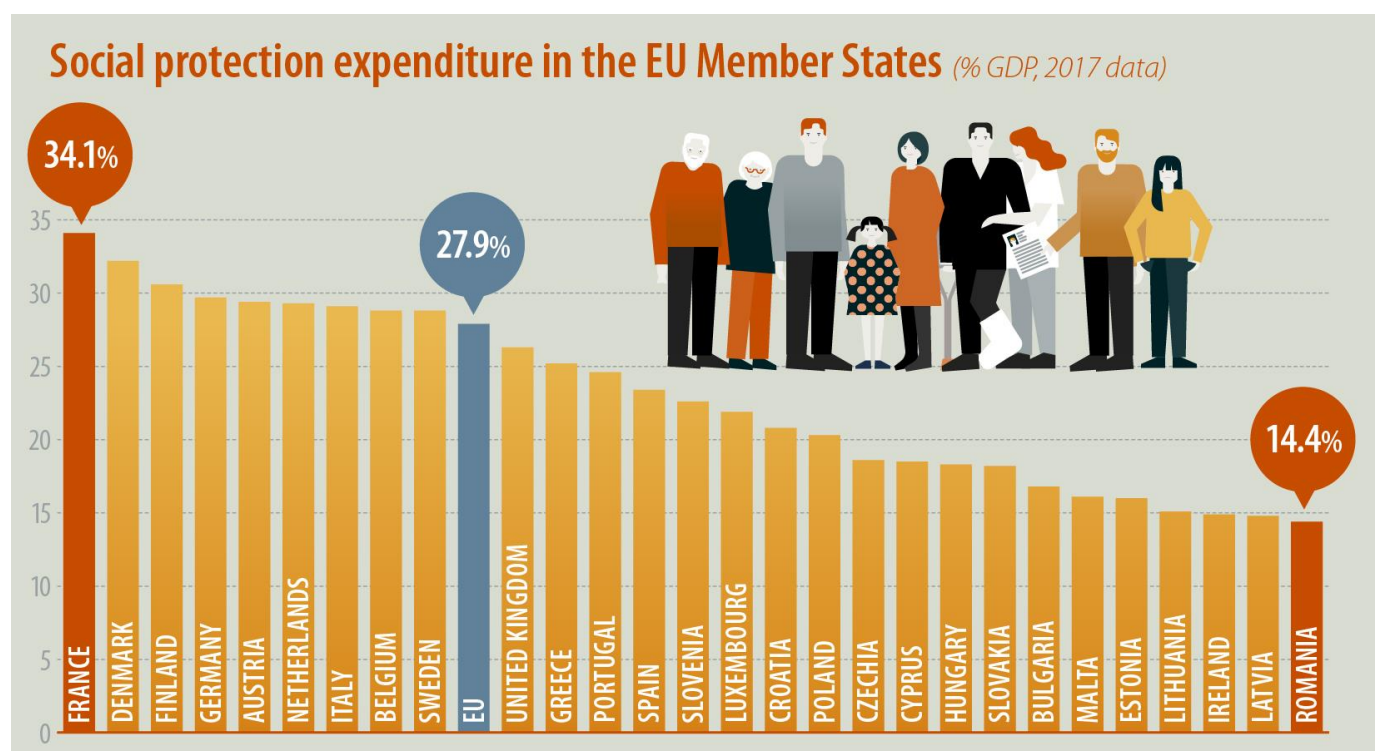
Social protection in 2017

Share of EU GDP spent on social protection slightly down

Highest ratios in France, Denmark and Finland

Social protection expenditure in the **European Union** (EU) stood at 27.9% of GDP in 2017, slightly down compared with 28.7% in 2012, according to data from **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. The two main sources of funding of social protection at **EU** level were social contributions, making up 55% of total receipts, and general government contributions from taxes at 40%.

The EU average continued to mask major disparities between Member States. In 2017, social protection expenditure represented over 30% of GDP in **France** (34%), **Denmark** (32%) and **Finland** (31%). They were followed by **Germany** (close to 30%), **Austria**, the **Netherlands**, **Italy**, **Belgium** and **Sweden** (all 29%). In contrast, social protection expenditure stood below 20% of GDP in **Romania** (14%), **Latvia**, **Ireland** and **Lithuania** (all 15%), **Estonia** and **Malta** (both 16%), **Bulgaria** (17%), **Slovakia** and **Hungary** (both 18%), **Cyprus** and **Czechia** (both 19%).



Social protection expenditure per capita varies substantially across Member States

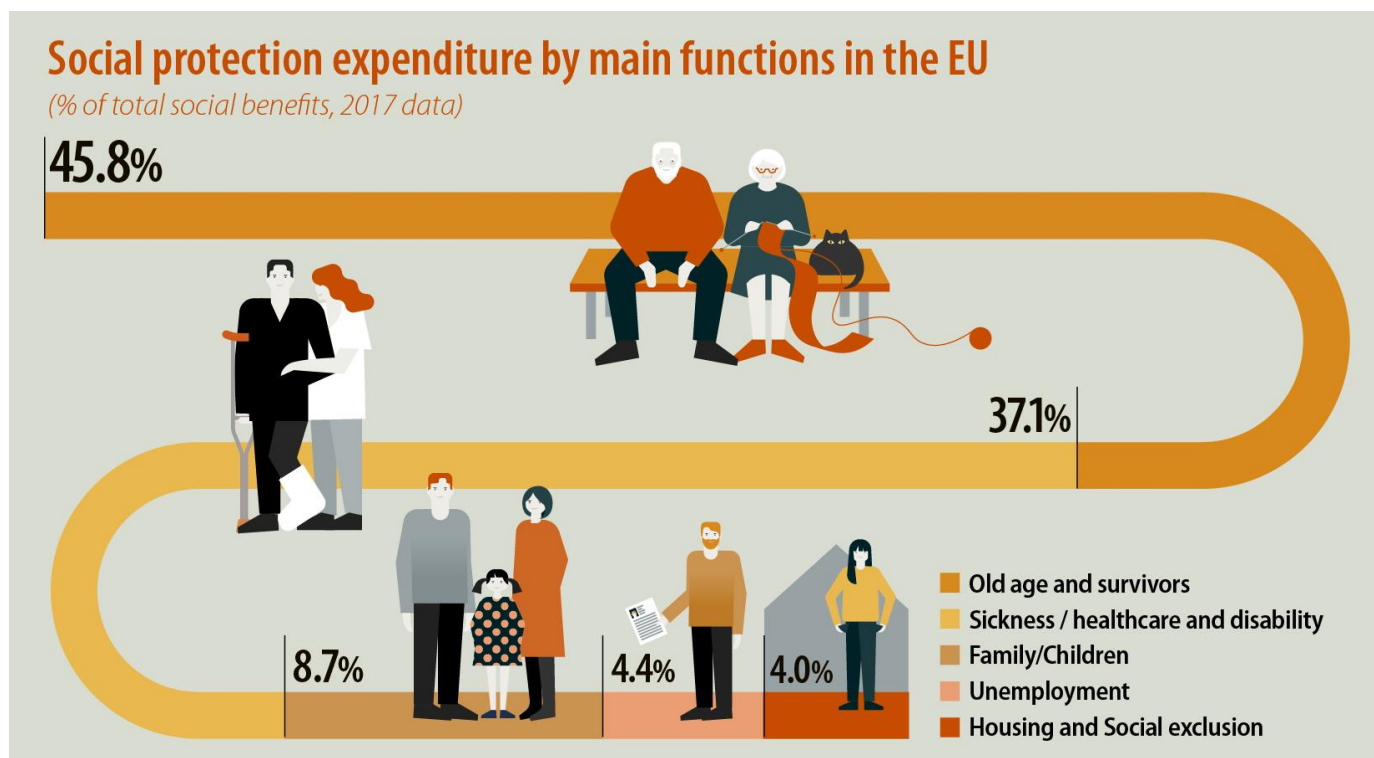
In 2017, social protection expenditure per capita in PPS (Purchasing Power Standards), which eliminates price level differences between countries, showed large differences between EU Member States. After **Luxembourg** (see country note), the highest expenditure per capita were recorded in **Denmark** (almost 12 thousand PPS), **Germany**, the **Netherlands**, **Austria** and **France** (all around 11 thousand PPS). In contrast, the lowest expenditure per capita were registered in **Bulgaria**, **Romania** and **Latvia** (3 thousand PPS or less).

Highest share for old age and survivors benefits in Greece, Portugal and Italy

On average in the **EU**, old age & survivors benefits accounted for nearly 46% of total social benefits in 2017 and made up the major part of social protection benefits in nearly all Member States. The share of old age and survivors benefits in the total was highest in **Greece** (63%), **Portugal** and **Italy** (both 58%), **Romania** and **Cyprus** (both 56%), while it was lowest in **Ireland** (34%), **Germany** and **Denmark** (39%) and **Luxembourg** (40%).

Sickness/health care and disability benefits accounted for 37% of total social benefits on average in the **EU** in 2017. Amongst Member States, the share of these benefits ranged from 23% in **Cyprus** and 26% in **Greece** to 45% in **Ireland**, 44% in **Croatia** and **Germany**, 43% in the **Netherlands** and 42% in **Estonia**.

Family and children benefits accounted for slightly less than 9% of total social benefits on average in the **EU** in 2017, unemployment benefits for 4%, and housing and social exclusion benefits also for 4%. The share of family benefits in the total ranged from 4% in the **Netherlands** and 5% in **Portugal** and **Spain** to over 15% in **Luxembourg** and 13% in **Poland** and **Estonia**. Unemployment benefits varied between less than 1% in **Romania** and 1% in the **United Kingdom** to 9% in **Ireland** and 8% in **Spain**. Housing and social exclusion benefits ranged from 1% or less in **Poland**, **Portugal** and **Estonia** to 9% in **Cyprus** and 7% in **Denmark**, the **Netherlands** and the **United Kingdom**.



ec.europa.eu/eurostat

Geographical information

The **European Union** (EU) includes Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, 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.

Methods and definitions

Social protection expenditure and receipts are calculated in line with the ESSPROS (European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics) methodology. Expenditure includes social benefits, administration costs and other expenditure linked to social protection schemes. Social benefits are "gross": their value represents what resident social protection schemes disburse, before any deduction of taxes on income or other obligatory levies payable on benefits by recipients. Further detail is available in the [ESSPROS Manual and user guidelines](#), available from the Eurostat website. Data on expenditure (gross) and receipts are in nominal terms, i.e. at current prices and current exchange rates. Data are provisional for a number of Member States.

The Purchasing Power Standard (PPS) is an artificial reference currency unit that eliminates price level differences between countries. Thus one PPS buys the same volume of goods and services in all countries. This unit allows meaningful volume comparisons of economic indicators across countries. The PPSs used are those corresponding to the national accounts aggregate "actual individual consumption".

Country note:

Luxembourg: The indicator "expenditure per capita" is calculated based on the resident population, therefore this value is overestimated for Luxembourg compared with other countries, since a significant proportion of benefits are paid to persons living outside the country (primarily expenditure on health care, pensions and family benefits).

For more information

Eurostat [Statistics Explained](#) article on social benefits

Eurostat [website section](#) dedicated to the European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS)

Eurostat [database](#) on social protection

Eurostat [metadata](#) on social protection

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Social protection expenditure, 2017

	Expenditure				Benefits by function, in % of total social benefits, 2017				
	in % of GDP			Thousand PPS per capita, 2017	Family & children	Unemployment	Sickness / healthcare & disability	Old age & survivors	Housing & social exclusion
	2012	2016	2017						
EU	28.7	28.0	27.9	8.4	8.7	4.4	37.1	45.8	4.0
Belgium	29.7	29.2	28.8	10.0	7.6	6.9	35.5	46.5	3.4
Bulgaria	16.5	17.3	16.8	2.8	10.7	3.1	35.7	49.3	1.2
Czechia	20.4	18.9	18.6	5.4	8.8	2.6	39.1	47.2	2.4
Denmark	32.0	31.0	32.2	11.7	11.1	4.5	37.8	39.2	7.4
Germany	28.9	29.7	29.7	11.3	11.5	3.4	43.5	38.6	3.0
Estonia	14.9	16.6	16.0	3.9	13.1	2.7	41.6	41.7	1.0
Ireland	23.6	15.9	14.9	7.2	8.5	8.8	44.8	33.6	4.3
Greece	28.1	26.1	25.2	5.1	5.7	3.7	26.3	62.8	1.6
Spain	25.7	23.8	23.4	6.2	5.4	7.7	33.8	51.6	1.4
France	33.8	34.3	34.1	10.9	7.6	6.1	35.1	45.5	5.7
Croatia	21.6	21.3	20.8	3.9	8.6	2.1	44.4	43.5	1.4
Italy	29.1	29.4	29.1	8.2	6.3	5.8	28.8	57.8	1.2
Cyprus	20.9	19.4	18.5	4.7	6.7	5.6	22.8	55.9	9.1
Latvia	14.3	15.1	14.8	3.0	10.9	4.5	34.5	49.0	1.2
Lithuania	16.3	15.4	15.1	3.8	8.3	3.8	40.6	45.2	2.1
Luxembourg	22.7	21.3	21.9	14.9	15.3	5.4	35.7	39.6	4.0
Hungary	21.2	18.9	18.3	4.0	12.1	1.7	33.7	49.7	2.8
Malta	19.2	16.6	16.1	4.8	5.5	2.2	37.8	52.6	1.9
Netherlands	30.6	29.5	29.3	11.0	4.2	4.0	42.8	42.1	6.9
Austria	29.2	29.8	29.4	11.0	9.5	5.8	32.2	50.0	2.5
Poland	18.9	21.0	20.3	4.7	13.4	1.6	30.1	54.1	0.8
Portugal	26.4	25.1	24.6	5.6	4.9	3.2	32.6	58.3	0.9
Romania	15.4	14.6	14.4	2.9	7.7	0.5	34.5	56.3	1.1
Slovenia	24.7	23.3	22.6	5.7	8.3	2.4	38.8	47.4	3.1
Slovakia	17.8	18.4	18.2	4.3	9.1	2.9	40.5	45.8	1.7
Finland	29.9	31.6	30.6	10.2	9.8	7.3	32.1	45.1	5.8
Sweden	29.1	29.4	28.8	10.2	10.2	3.5	37.0	44.2	5.2
United Kingdom	28.6	25.8	26.3	8.0	9.4	1.3	39.3	43.4	6.7
Iceland	22.9	22.3	23.4	8.6	10.2	2.1	52.6	30.6	4.5
Norway	24.6	29.2	28.4	12.1	11.6	2.4	45.7	36.6	3.7
Switzerland	26.6	28.0	28.3	12.1	6.0	3.6	39.8	47.1	3.5
Serbia	22.6	20.3	19.5	2.4	6.5	3.2	31.4	55.7	3.2
Turkey	12.5	12.9	12.3	2.5	4.0	2.3	31.0	61.2	1.6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	:	19.4	18.8	1.8	2.6	2.5	45.3	48.2	1.5

: Data not available

The source datasets can be found [here](#) (expenditure) and [here](#) (benefits by function).