

Social protection: expenditure on pensions

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Statistics in focus

POPULATION AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

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POPULATION AND LIVING CONDITIONS

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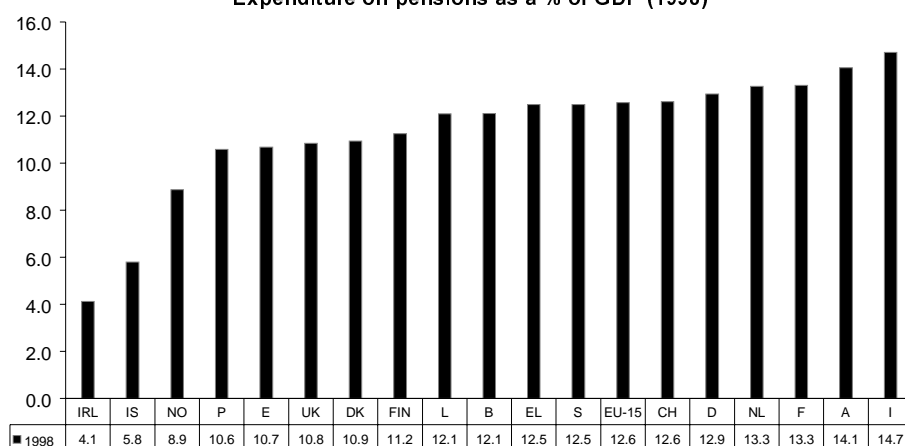
In 1998, expenditure on pensions was equivalent to 12.6% of GDP in the European Union. There are wide gaps between countries: Ireland 4.1%, Italy 14.7%.

Between 1990 and 1998, expenditure on pensions in the European Union increased by 0.9 GDP percentage points, from 11.7% to 12.6%. The trend was irregular over the period.

In most Member States in 1998, expenditure on pensions represented the most important share of social-protection expenditure, 47% of the total in the European Union was spent on pensions.

In 1998, old-age pensions accounted for three-quarters of total pensions expenditure in the European Union.

Figure 1:
Expenditure on pensions as a % of GDP (1998)



Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS

In 1998, expenditure on pensions in EU-15 was equivalent to 12.6% of GDP. In Italy it amounted to almost 15% of GDP, and in Austria to more than 14%. Ireland spends less than 5% of its GDP on pensions⁽¹⁾. In Iceland, the percentage is low (less than 6%).

The "pensions" aggregate is the sum of seven different categories of benefit, as defined in the ESSPROS Manual 1996: disability pension, early-retirement benefit due to reduced capacity to work, old-age pension, anticipated old-age pension, partial pension, survivors' pension and early-retirement benefit for labour market reasons⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ For Ireland the data concerning funded occupational pension schemes for employees in the private sector were not available.

⁽²⁾ Some of these benefits (for example disability pensions) are paid to people who have not reached the standard retirement age.

The "pensions" aggregate excludes other expenditure on pensions who are recorded under the heading other categories of the ESSPROS 1996 methodology. See box on "Methods and concepts" for more information



Slowed growth in expenditure on pensions

Figure 2:
Expenditure on pensions in EU-15 as a % of GDP



Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS

Between 1990 and 1998, expenditure on pensions in EU-15 rose by 0.9 GDP percentage points from 11.7% to 12.6%.

This trend was a generalised one in EU-15 except in the Netherlands⁽³⁾ and Ireland, both of which recorded a sharp drop due largely to the slow growth in pensions expenditure in the Netherlands and the strong growth in GDP in Ireland during this period⁽⁴⁾.

In the Netherlands, where GDP had risen by an annual average of 2.7% during the period 1990 to 1998, the growth in expenditure on pensions in real terms was the slowest in EU-15, at an annual average of approximately +0.8%, compared with +3.2% for EU-15⁽⁵⁾.

Ireland proved almost symmetrical to the Netherlands,

with expenditure on pensions up by some +3.3% in real terms as an annual average from 1990 to 1998 and the fastest growth in GDP in the EU, at an annual average of roughly +6.3%, compared with approximately +2.1% in EU-15⁽⁶⁾.

The increase in GDP between 1990 and 1998 was particularly marked in Portugal (almost +3 points), where spending on pensions in real terms rose by some +7.3% per annum against an average increase in GDP of about +2.3% per annum.

The ratio rose faster than in any EU-15 Member State (by +3.2 points) in Switzerland, where an annual average of 4.0% more was spent on pensions, compared with an average increase in GDP of only +0.5% per annum.

⁽³⁾ In the Netherlands and Italy, the data for 1990-1994 are calculated on the basis of ESA79 while those for 1995-1998 are based on ESA95. For the period 1995-1997, for which both series are available, the expenditure on pensions/GDP ratio calculated on the basis of ESA79 is roughly 0.4 points higher than that calculated on the new ESA95 basis. This applies to both the Netherlands and Italy.

⁽⁴⁾ The trend in expenditure on pensions in real terms was derived from the national consumer price indices; the specific deflator was used to obtain the GDP. The growth rates quoted in this publication are Eurostat estimates.

⁽⁵⁾ The average annual growth rate in EU-15 pensions expenditure in 1990-1998 falls from +3.2% to +2.8% if growth between 1990 and 1991 is measured without including the new German Länder. From 1991 the calculation always includes the new Länder, of course.

⁽⁶⁾ The average annual growth rate in EU-15 GDP in 1990-1998 falls from +2.1% to +1.7% if growth between 1990 and 1991 is measured without including the new German Länder. From 1991 the calculation always includes the new Länder.

Table 1: Expenditure on pensions as a % of GDP, 1990-1998.

	1990	1993	1996	1998
EU-15	11.7	12.8	12.8	12.6
B	11.8	13.1	12.2	12.1
DK	9.6	10.1	11.5	10.9
D	12.0	12.5	12.9	12.9
EL	12.1	11.4	11.7	12.5
E	9.4	10.6	10.9	10.7
F	12.2	13.0	13.4	13.3
IRL	5.6	5.6	4.7	4.1
I ⁽³⁾	13.5	15.1	14.8	14.7
L	12.2	13.1	12.9	12.1
NL ⁽³⁾	15.3	15.6	14.0	13.3
A	13.7	14.2	14.6	14.1
P	7.7	9.6	10.3	10.6
FIN	10.4	13.8	12.8	11.2
S	:	13.7	12.9	12.5
UK	9.6	11.3	11.1	10.8
IS	4.5	5.5	5.7	5.8
NO	8.6	8.9	8.3	8.9
CH	9.4	11.0	12.0	12.6

Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS

Table 2: Expenditure on pensions at constant prices (index 1990 = 100).

	1990	1993	1996	1998
EU-15 ⁽⁸⁾	100	115	124	128
B	100	115	113	119
DK	100	109	137	138
D ⁽⁸⁾	100	125	134	138
EL	100	96	105	122
E	100	117	128	135
F	100	108	116	122
IRL	100	110	117	130
I	100	113	120	126
L	100	124	139	147
NL	100	104	105	107
A	100	109	119	122
P	100	132	157	176
FIN	100	114	122	123
S	100	:	:	:
UK	100	121	130	134
IS	100	118	135	159
NO	100	108	118	129
CH	100	114	125	136

Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS

The trend in pensions expenditure was irregular throughout the period 1990-1998.

The upturn was, in fact, substantial between 1990 and 1993: in EU-15 the rate increased by 1.1 percentage points to reach 12.8% in 1993.

This was due to a relatively small real rise in GDP (+1.6% as an annual average) coupled with a moderate rise of +4.9% per annum⁽⁷⁾ in expenditure on pensions expressed in real terms.

The increase in the ratio between 1990 and 1993 was particularly steep in Finland (+3.4 GDP percentage points). Finland was in recession during this period, and therefore spent +4.5% more in real terms per annum on pensions.

EU expenditure on pensions as a percentage of GDP stabilised (12.8%) between 1993 and 1996 as a result of upturns in both GDP and pensions expenditure.

The average rise in GDP in EU-15 from 1993 to 1996 was +2.2% per annum, compared with +2.3% per annum in pensions expenditure.

The trend intensified between 1996 and 1998 in EU-15, where the real average growth rate in pensions spending fell to +1.9% per annum while that of GDP rose to +2.6% per annum. Expenditure on pensions as a percentage of GDP fell from 12.8% to 12.6%.

In most EU-15 Member States the rate fell between 1996 and 1998. A notable exception was Greece, which showed a sharp rise in pensions expenditure in real terms (+7.6% per annum on average).

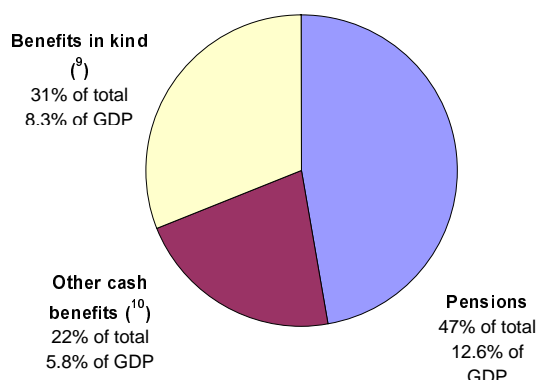
The drop in the ratio was marked (-1.6 GDP percentage points) in Finland, where there was a renewed upturn in the economy (GDP: +5.8% as an annual average) and slower growth in expenditure on pensions (+0.6% per annum) than in the other countries.

⁽⁷⁾ The average annual growth rate in expenditure on pensions for 1990-1993 in EU-15 increases from +4.9% to +3.8% if growth between 1990 and 1991 is measured without including the new German Länder. The corresponding average annual growth rate in GDP is around +0.7% instead of +1.6%. From 1991 the calculation always includes the new Länder.

⁽⁸⁾ If the growth in pensions expenditure between 1990 and 1991 is measured without including the new German Länder, the index series in Table 2 becomes 100, 111, 120, 123 for Germany and 100, 112, 120, 125 for EU-15. From 1991, of course, the calculation always includes the new Länder.

Expenditure on pensions accounts for half of social benefits

Figure 3:
Social benefits, EU-15, 1998
(as a % of total benefits and of GDP)



In most Member States, pensions were top of the list of social-protection expenditure headings in 1998; representing 47% of the EU-15 total expenditure on social benefits.

This applied particularly to Italy, where over 60% of all social benefits were pensions. In Greece, Portugal, Luxembourg, Austria and Spain, expenditure on pensions represented over 50% of the total spending on social benefits.

In Ireland and Sweden, expenditure on benefits in kind⁽⁹⁾ was higher than expenditure on pensions. This is also true of Iceland and Norway.

In Denmark, benefits in kind were equivalent to pensions, at 10.9% of GDP.

However, in Italy, benefits in kind were equivalent to only 5.5% of GDP, compared with an EU-15 average of 8.3%.

Other cash benefits, that is cash benefits excluding pensions⁽¹⁰⁾, accounted in 1998 for 22% of all EU-15 benefits, equivalent to 5.8% of GDP.

On the other hand, in Ireland and Belgium they accounted for more than 30% of the total, but in Portugal and Greece for less than 16%.

Table 3: Social benefits as a % of GDP, 1998.

	Old-age pensions	Benefits in kind ⁽⁹⁾	Other cash benefits ⁽¹⁰⁾	Total benefits
EU-15	12.6	8.3	5.8	26.6
B	12.1	6.7	8.1	26.9
DK	10.9	10.9	7.2	29.1
D	12.9	8.6	6.7	28.2
EL	12.5	7.5	3.7	23.7
E	10.7	6.1	4.3	21.0
F	13.3	9.7	5.9	28.9
IRL	4.1	6.2	5.0	15.3
I	14.7	5.5	4.1	24.3
L	12.1	6.4	4.7	23.2
NL	13.3	7.9	5.7	26.8
A	14.1	8.1	5.3	27.5
P	10.6	7.4	2.5	20.4
FIN	11.2	8.6	6.5	26.4
S	12.5	13.3	6.8	32.6
UK	10.8	9.1	6.0	26.0
IS	5.8	9.2	3.2	18.3
NO	8.9	11.8	6.7	27.3
CH	12.6	6.5	6.3	25.4

Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS

Table 4: Social benefits as a % of total, 1998.

	Old-age pensions	Benefits in kind ⁽⁹⁾	Other cash benefits ⁽¹⁰⁾	Total benefits
EU-15	47	31	22	100
B	45	25	30	100
DK	38	38	25	100
D	46	30	24	100
EL	53	32	15	100
E	51	29	20	100
F	46	34	20	100
IRL	27	40	33	100
I	61	23	17	100
L	52	28	20	100
NL	50	29	21	100
A	51	29	19	100
P	52	36	12	100
FIN	43	33	25	100
S	38	41	21	100
UK	42	35	23	100
IS	32	51	18	100
NO	32	43	24	100
CH	50	26	25	100

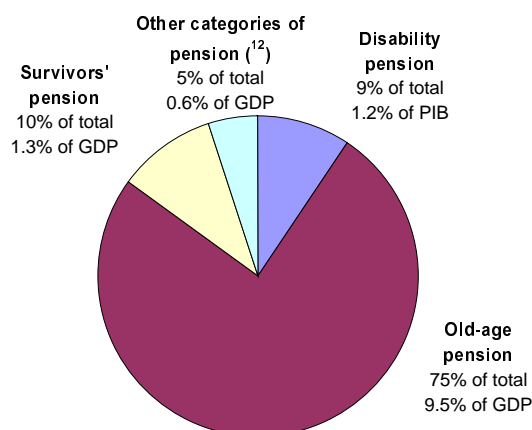
Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS

⁽⁹⁾ Benefits in kind: in-patient and out-patient care, accommodation for old or disabled people, day centres etc.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Other cash benefits: family allowances, birth grants, death grants, unemployment benefit, vocational training allowance, paid sick leave, parental leave benefit etc.

Old-age pensions dominate pensions expenditure

Figure 4:
Breakdown of pension expenditure between categories, EU-15, 1998
(as a % of total pensions and of GDP)



In 1998, expenditure on old-age pensions⁽¹¹⁾ topped the list of pensions expenditures in every country, accounting for 75% of the total (equivalent to 9.5% of EU-15 GDP), and for 80% in the United Kingdom, France and Germany. The percentage is also high in Sweden, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. Ireland records the lowest value, at 47%.

The proportion of the population aged 65 or over is the main explanation for the differences. In 1998 over 17% of the population in Sweden and Italy was aged 65 or over; in Ireland the figure was less than 12%, and the EU-15 average was 16.0%.

In the Netherlands and Portugal, over 20% of all expenditure on pensions consisted of disability pensions in 1998, compared with the European Union average of roughly 9%. The same is true of Norway and Iceland. On the other hand, France, devotes less than 5% of its expenditure on pensions to disability pensions.

The various rules on benefits linked to disability are one explanation for these figures.

Table 5: Breakdown of pension expenditure between categories (as a % of total of pensions, 1998)

	Old-age pension	Disability pension	Survivor's pension	Other categories of pension ⁽¹²⁾
EU-15	75	9	10	5
B	63	11	21	5
DK	62	15	0	23
D	79	9	3	9
EL	69	9	16	6
E	74	13	8	5
F	80	4	12	3
IRL	47	15	22	16
I	74	7	18	2
L	70	20	8	3
NL	60	22	11	7
A	59	9	20	13
P	63	21	12	3
FIN	59	20	9	12
S	75	18	6	1
UK	81	10	8	0
IS	65	25	9	0
NO	67	28	4	0
CH	75	17	8	0

Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS

In Denmark, Ireland, Austria and Finland, other pensions account for a very high proportion of pensions expenditure⁽¹²⁾: more than 12%, compared with the EU-15 average of 5% and only 1% in Sweden.

The proportion of the population aged 50 to 59 not economically active partly explains the discrepancies between countries. For example, in Ireland and Austria, more than 40% of the population aged 50 to 59 is inactive, compared with an EU-15 average of 35.6% in 1998. In Sweden the figure is less than 15%.

⁽¹¹⁾ Old-age pensions are paid to protected persons having reached the statutory retirement age fixed by the reference scheme.

⁽¹²⁾ This category includes anticipated old-age pensions, partial pensions, early-retirement pension for reasons of reduced ability to work and early-retirement pension for labour market reasons.

Data on categories of pension

Under the functional classification in ESSPROS, benefits paid to beneficiaries having reached the statutory retirement age as fixed by the reference scheme must be reported under the old-age function (see Part II, § 53 of the ESSPROS Manual 1996). In some countries this does not happen, however.

In **France, Ireland and Portugal**, disability pensions include those paid to beneficiaries over the statutory retirement age.

In **Greece, France, Ireland, Austria and Portugal**, survivors' pensions include those paid to beneficiaries over the statutory retirement age.

In **Italy and Luxembourg**, old-age pensions include anticipated old-age pensions.

Some results for candidate countries

Slovenia and the Slovak Republic are the first candidate countries to provide Eurostat with data according to the ESSPROS methodology. In 1998, expenditure on pensions was equivalent to some 12% of GDP in Slovenia and 7-8% in Slovakia. These results, still regarded as provisional, are shown in this publication for guidance purposes. Work on improving the comparability of the data will continue in the near future. Eurostat thanks the Statistical Offices of these countries

for their valued cooperation.

Results still regarded as highly provisional (see box below) are also available for 1997 for the Czech Republic, where expenditure on pensions is equivalent to 8-9% of GDP, Poland (14-15%) and Turkey (5-6%).

Eurostat intends to extend ESSPROS data collection to all candidate countries in due course.

Observations specific to the results for the Czech Republic, Poland and Turkey - Other information

The results for the Czech Republic, Poland and Turkey were obtained from basic data supplied to Eurostat by the OECD.

According to Eurostat, the definitions on which the OECD collection is based⁽¹³⁾ are fairly close to those in the ESSPROS Manual 1996. In recent years, for the countries covered by Eurostat, the data loaded into the OECD database have been very largely ESSPROS data from Eurostat. In practice, however, fewer data on social benefits paid by private institutions in particular (and sometimes by local or regional authorities) are collected for OECD countries not covered by Eurostat than for the countries coordinated by Eurostat. Users' attention is drawn to the implications this difference in data coverage may have for the international comparability of results, bearing in mind especially the roles played by public and private social benefits in different countries. The OECD and Eurostat have established a cooperation mechanism aimed at improving the comparability of social-protection data over the next few years.

⁽¹³⁾ The OECD defines social expenditure as follows: "Social expenditure means the benefits paid to households and individuals by public (and private) institutions, with the corresponding financial contributions, intended to help beneficiaries when events occur which affect their well-being, provided that such benefits and financial contributions do not constitute direct payment of a specific good or service and do not arise from an individual contract or transfer (...)". The OECD data collection is limited to social benefits.

Methods and concepts

The expenditure on pensions presented in this publication is calculated according to the methodology of the European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics, "ESSPROS Manual 1996".

Definition of **social protection** in the ESSPROS Manual: "*Social protection encompasses interventions from public or private bodies intended to relieve households and individuals of the burden of a defined set of risks or needs, provided that there is neither a simultaneous reciprocal nor an individual arrangement involved. The list of risks or needs that may give rise to social protection is fixed by convention as follows: sickness/health care, disability, old age, survivors, family/children, unemployment, housing and social exclusion not elsewhere classified.*"

The ESSPROS methodology comprises **basic and supplementary schemes**, sometimes known as first-pillar and second-pillar schemes, with a third pillar consisting of private arrangements that are not part of social protection in the definition of the ESSPROS.

The ESSPROS methodology distinguishes between cash benefits and benefits in kind. Cash benefits may be periodic or lump-sum.

The "**pensions**" aggregate comprises only part of periodic cash benefits under the disability, old age, survivors and unemployment functions. It is defined in this publication as the sum of the following social benefits (followed by the function to which the category of benefits belongs):

- 1) **Disability pension** (disability function)
- 2) **Early-retirement benefit due to reduced capacity to work** (disability function)
- 3) **Old-age pension** (old-age function)
- 4) **Anticipated old-age pension** (old-age function)
- 5) **Partial pension** (old-age function)
- 6) **Survivors' pension** (survivors function)
- 7) **Early-retirement benefit for labour-market reasons** (unemployment function).

These benefits may be means-tested or non-means-tested.

The value of the "pensions" aggregate has been calculated for all countries according to the above definition, regardless of differences between countries in the institutional organisation of social-protection schemes.

Some benefits classed as "pensions" (such as disability pension) may be paid to persons not yet having reached the statutory retirement age.

The various categories of social protection are defined in the ESSPROS Manual 1996.

Under ESSPROS, **pensions are recorded without deduction of tax or other compulsory contributions payable by beneficiaries on benefits**. They do not, on the other hand, **include the social contributions paid by pension schemes on behalf of their pensioners to other social-protection schemes** (such as health schemes). ESSPROS records such payments under the heading of "re-routed social contributions". See the comments on Germany, the Netherlands and Austria below.

Notes on the data

Eurostat has estimated EU-15 values where necessary (missing data for Sweden for 1990-1992).

Data on pensions are taken from the publication "European Social Statistics – Social Protection - Expenditure and Receipts 1980-1998" with the exception of those for Belgium (revised 1997 and 1998 data), France (revised 1990-1994 data) and Luxembourg (more detailed data).

More recent GDP estimates were used for B, DK, I, FIN, S, IS.

Denmark: the value of the "pensions" aggregate excludes the single benefits which precede or accompany the payment of early-retirement benefit due to reduced capacity to work and survivors' pension. These benefits were equivalent to 0.1% of GDP in 1998.

Germany: the value of the "pensions" aggregate excludes the social contributions paid by pension schemes on behalf of their pensioners to other social-protection schemes (particularly health schemes). An initial estimate of these "re-routed social contributions" makes them roughly equivalent to 0.7% of GDP in 1998.

Ireland: no data are available on occupational pension schemes for private-sector employees with constituted reserves.

Italy: the value of the "pensions" aggregate excludes the lump-sum benefits "liquidazioni in capitale" and "liquidazioni per fine rapporto di lavoro", equivalent to some 1.9% of GDP in 1998. Eurostat estimated the disability pension for 1990-1994 (deduction of "assegni di accompagnamento", to be recorded under the ESSPROS heading "care allowance").

Netherlands: the value of the "pensions" aggregate excludes the social contributions paid by pension schemes on behalf of their pensioners to other social-protection schemes. An initial estimate of these "re-routed social contributions" makes them roughly equivalent to 0.3% of GDP in 1998.

Austria: the value of the "pensions" aggregate excludes the social contributions paid by pension schemes on behalf of their pensioners to other social-protection schemes (particularly health schemes). An initial estimate of these "re-routed social contributions" makes them roughly equivalent to 0.5% of GDP in 1998. Other expenditure on pensions (some 0.1% of GDP in 1998) is recorded under the heading "other periodic cash benefits" of the old-age function.

Finland: Other expenditure on pensions is recorded under the heading "other periodic cash benefits" of the old-age function (approximately 0.1% of GDP in 1998) and disability (approximately 0.2% of GDP in 1998).

United Kingdom: the value of the "pensions" aggregate excludes lump-sum benefits payable on retirement (approximately 0.6% of GDP in 1998). Other expenditure on pensions is recorded under "other means-tested cash benefits" in the old-age function (approximately 0.4% of GDP in 1998). For information, private pensions ("personal pension plans"), which do not fit the social-protection definition, were equivalent to some 1.5% of GDP in 1998.

Switzerland: other expenditure on pensions is recorded under "other lump-sum cash benefits" in the disability, old-age and survivors' functions (2.3% of GDP in 1998).

Further information:

➤ Reference publications

Title Social European statistics : Social protection – Expenditure and Receipts 1980-1998
 Catalogue No KS-33-00-590-EN-C Price EUR 44

➤ Databases

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