

EU labour market in the third quarter 2020

Total labour market slack drops slightly to 13.9%

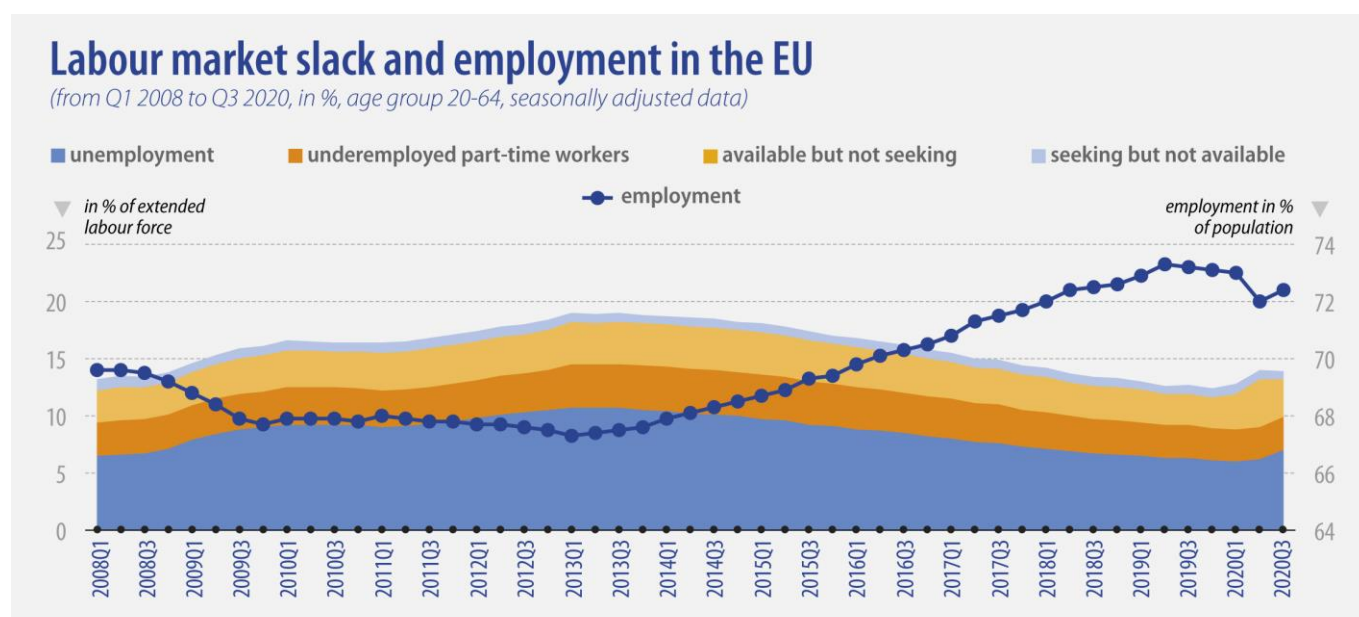
Employment up, absences from work at pre-COVID levels

Throughout the third quarter 2020, the labour market across the **European Union (EU)** recovered to some extent as COVID-19 measures taken were relaxed by most Member States. Persons who had been temporarily absent from work thus returned to work, and those who had been unable to search for a job or had been unavailable to take up a job returned to the labour force. This has contributed to an increase in both employment and unemployment, and to a slight decrease of the overall labour market slack.

In this release, **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**, is publishing a set of seasonally adjusted quarterly indicators in addition to employment and unemployment which help to capture the most recent movements on the labour market in the EU Member States. These include **total labour market slack**, which comprises all persons who have an unmet need for employment, **absences from work** as well as an index of **total actual hours worked** in the main job. More **new indicators** on recent job leavers and starters, weekly total absences, as well as transitions are available in the Eurostat database.

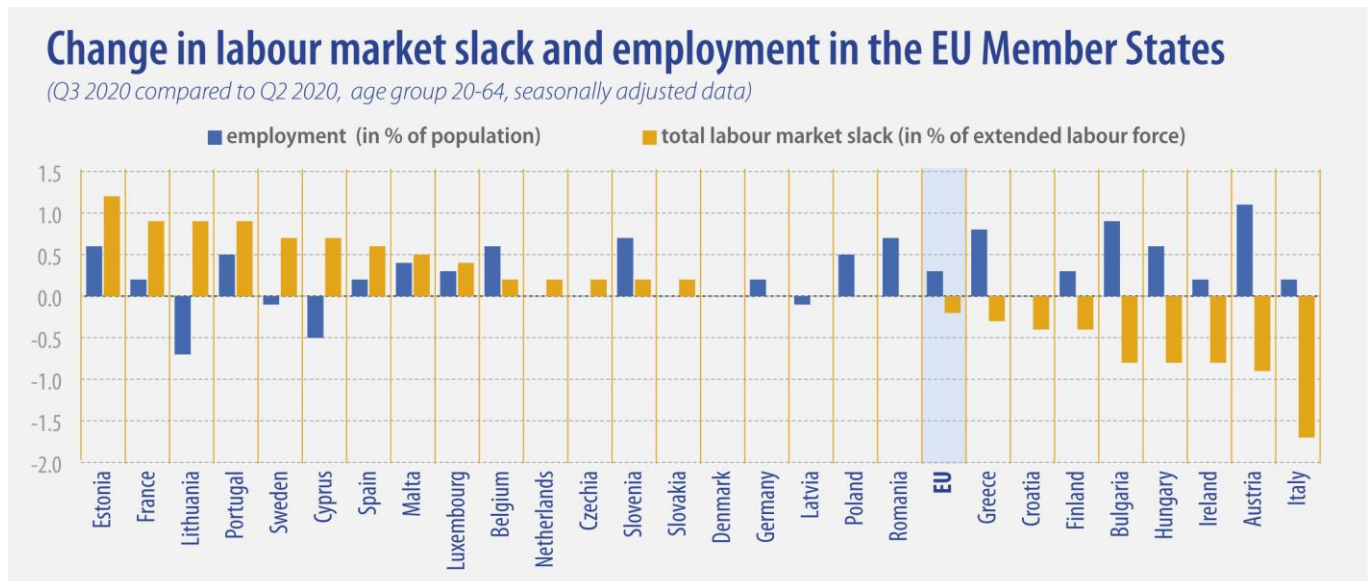
Employment up, labour market slack down

In the third quarter of 2020, 188.0 million persons in the **EU** were employed. The **EU** seasonally adjusted employment rate for people aged 20-64 stood at 72.4%, up by 0.3 pp from 72.1% in the second quarter 2020. 14.8 million persons were unemployed. The **EU** seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 7.3%, up from 6.7% in the second quarter 2020. At the same time, seasonally adjusted total labour market slack in the **EU**, consisting in unmet need for work, amounted to 29.4 million persons, which represented 13.9% of the extended labour force in the third quarter 2020, slightly down from 14.1% in the second quarter 2020.



Labour market slack increased most in Estonia, employment increased most in Austria

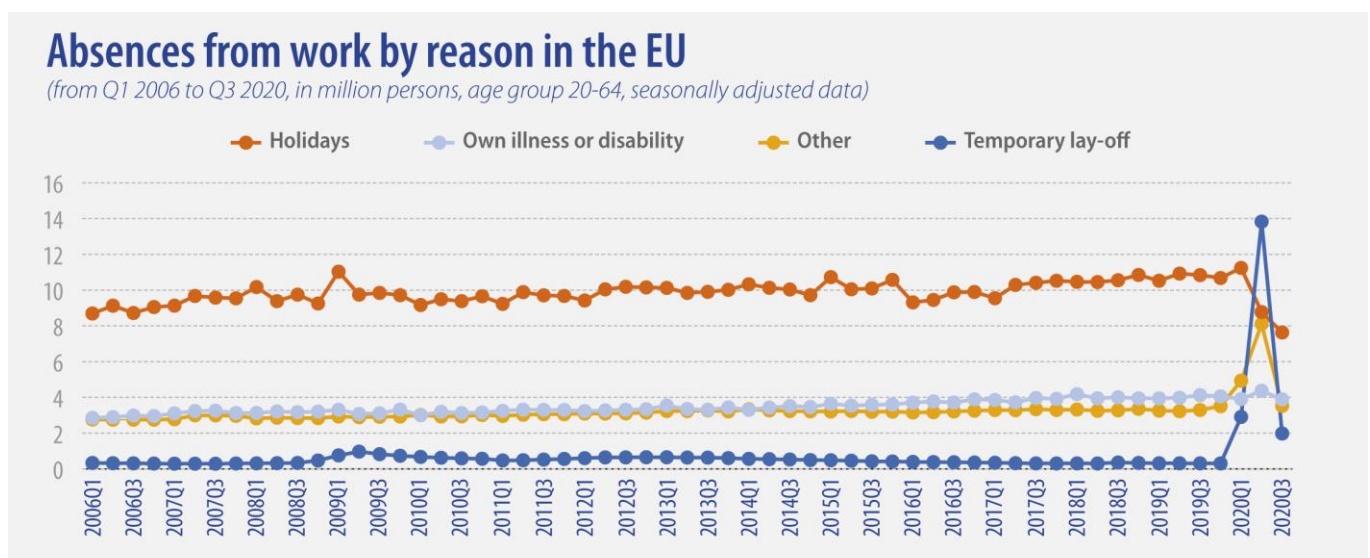
Overall labour market slack increased in 14 EU Member States in the third quarter 2020 compared with the second quarter 2020, remained stable in 5, and decreased in 8 Member States. The highest increases were reported in **Estonia (+1.2 pp)**, **France, Lithuania and Portugal (all +0.9 pp)**, and the highest decreases in **Italy (-1.7 pp)**, **Austria (-0.9 pp)**, **Ireland, Hungary and Bulgaria (all -0.8 pp)**. Employment rose in 18 countries, remained stable in 5 Member States, and fell in **Lithuania (-0.7 pp)**, **Cyprus (-0.5 pp)**, **Latvia and Sweden (both -0.1 pp)**. The highest increases in employment were recorded in **Austria (+1.1 pp)**, **Bulgaria (+0.9 pp)** and **Greece (+0.8 pp)**.



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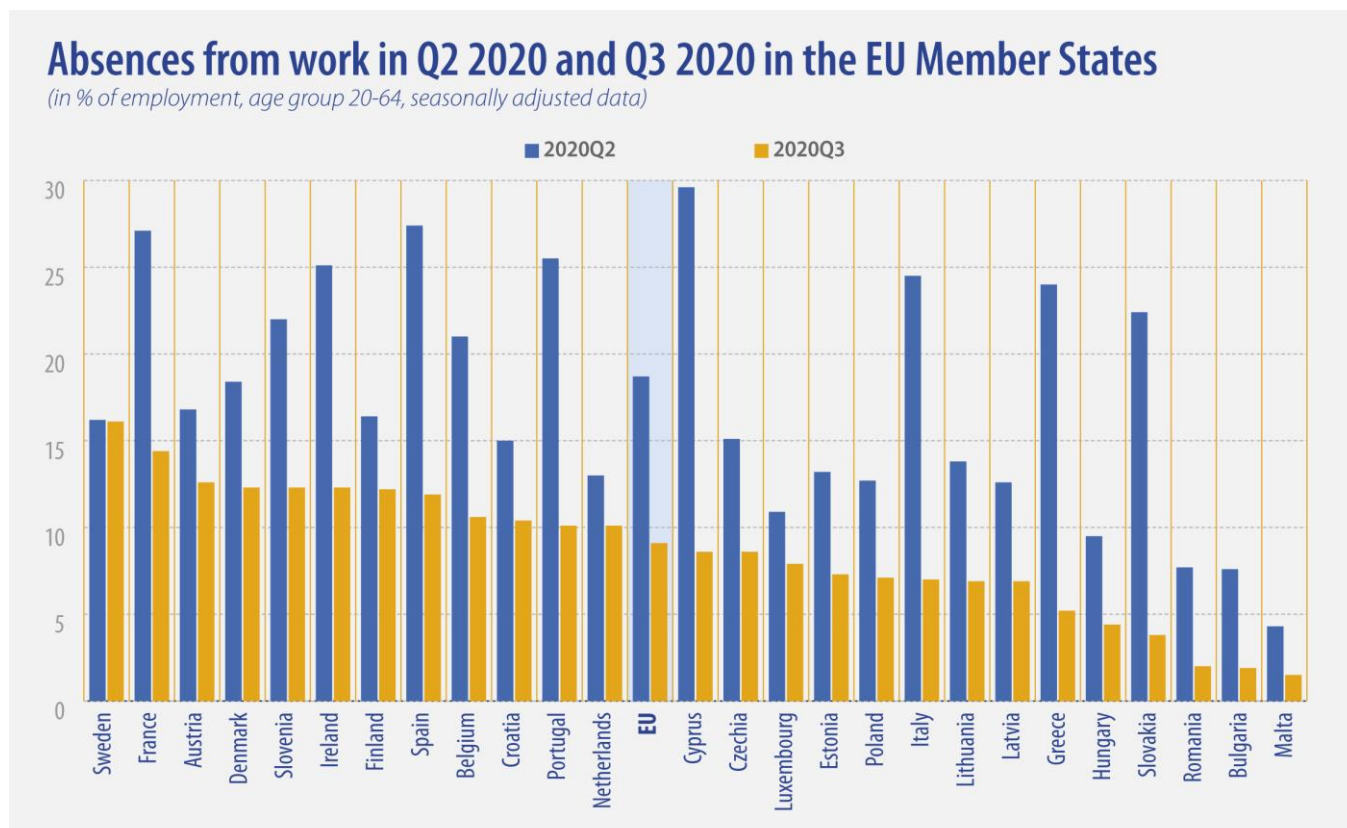
Number of employed persons temporarily absent from work returned to pre-COVID levels

In the third quarter 2020, a total of 17.0 million persons were absent from work in the **EU**, a drop of more than 50% (18.0 million) compared with the second quarter 2020. This return to pre-COVID levels is due to a sharp decrease in temporary lay-offs, while absences due to holidays dropped to a record low. At the same time, absences due to other reasons (i.e. absences not due to lay-off, holiday or illness), fell to pre-COVID levels between the two quarters.



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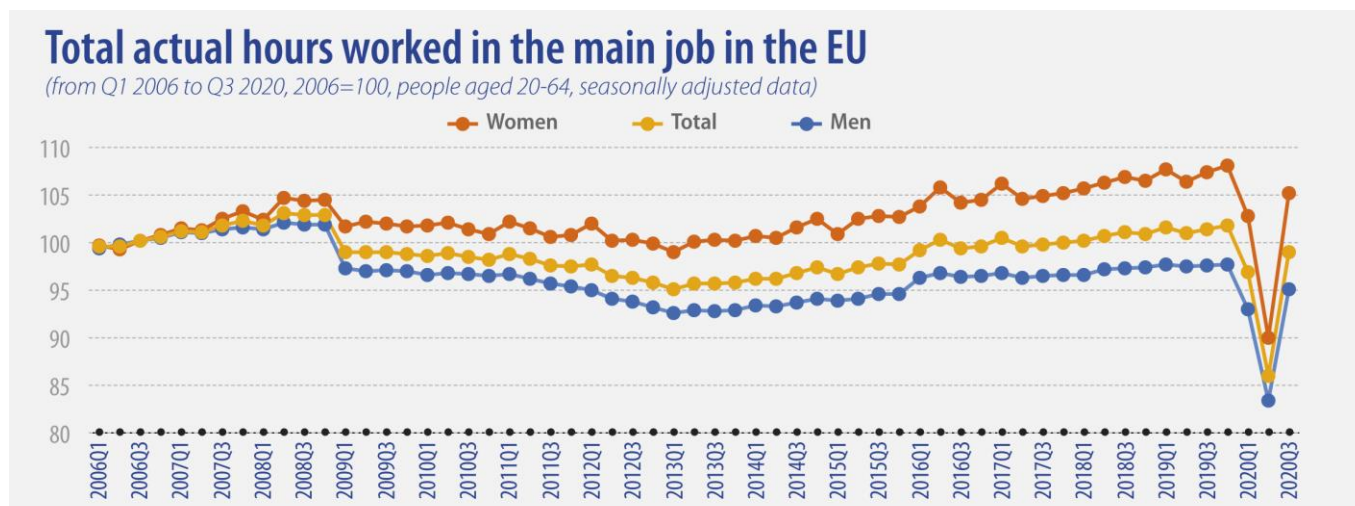
Compared with the second quarter 2020, all Member States for which data are available experienced a drop in overall absences from work in the third quarter 2020. The largest drops were registered in **Cyprus** (-21.0 pp), **Greece** (-18.8 pp) and **Slovakia** (-18.6 pp). The highest rates of absences were observed in **Sweden** (16.1%), **France** (14.4%) and **Austria** (12.6%).



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Total hours worked recovered in the third quarter 2020

Total actual hours worked recovered in the **EU** between the second quarter 2020 and the third quarter 2020, but have failed to return to pre-COVID levels. The levels of total actual hours worked are influenced by the total number of persons working, as well as the number of hours worked by each of these persons. Between the second and the third quarter 2020, total actual hours worked have recovered for women more than for men, increasing to 105 index points for women and to 95 index points for men. This is an increase of 16.0% over the quarter for women, and of 15.3% for men. Compared with the third quarter 2019, however, total actual hours worked dropped for both women and men, by 2.1% and 2.6% respectively. Compared with the third quarter 2019, however, total actual hours worked dropped for both women and men, by 2.1% and 2.6% respectively.

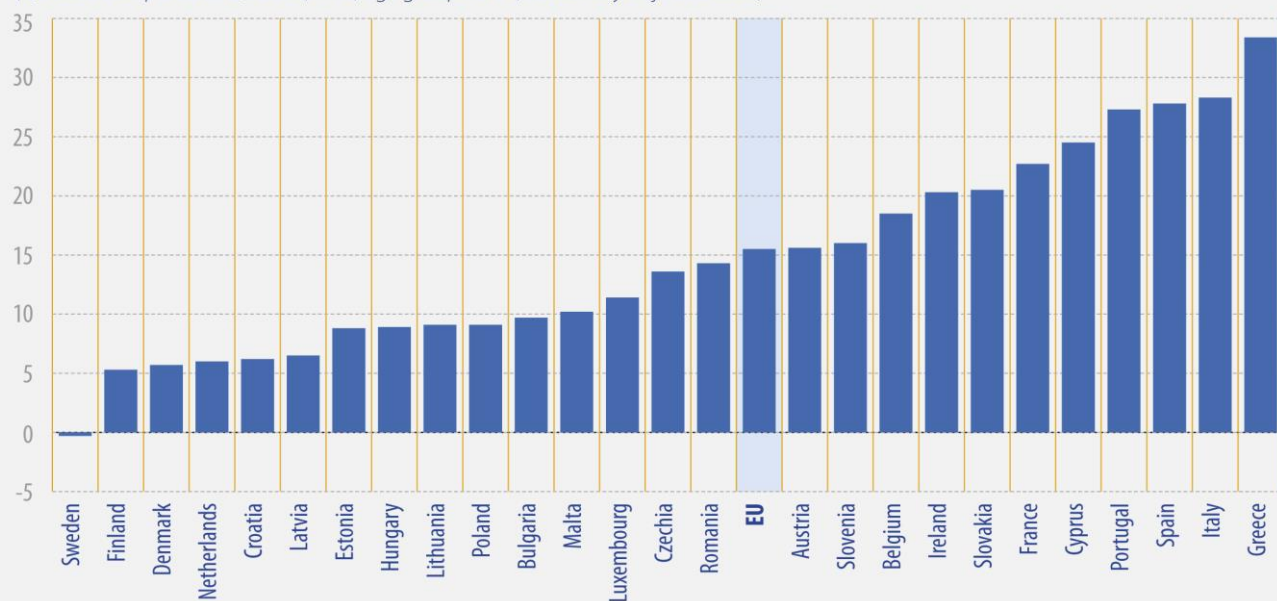


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All Member States for which data are available experienced a recovery in total actual hours worked between the second quarter 2020 and the third quarter 2020, with the exception of **Sweden** (-0.3%). The highest increases were observed in **Greece** (+33.4%), **Italy** (+28.3%), **Spain** (+27.8%), **Portugal** (+27.3%) and **Cyprus** (+24.5%). Despite these large quarter-over-quarter increases, total actual hours worked failed to return to levels observed in the third quarter of 2019.

Quarterly change in total actual hours worked in the main job in the EU Member States

(Q3 2020 compared to Q2 2020, in %, age group 20-64, seasonally adjusted data)



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Geographical information

The **European Union** (EU27) 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, and Sweden.

Methods and definitions

Eurostat produces harmonised labour market data for individual EU Member States, the euro area and the EU.

Employed persons are all persons who worked at least one hour for pay or profit during the reference week or unpaid for a business owned by a member of the family, or were temporarily absent from such work. The employment rate is the percentage of employed persons in relation to the total population.

Unemployed persons are all persons who:

- are without work;
- are available to start work within two weeks;
- and have actively sought employment at some time during the previous four weeks.

The **labour market slack** is the sum of unemployed persons, underemployed part-time workers, persons seeking work but not immediately available and persons available to work but not seeking, expressed as percentage of the extended labour force.

Underemployed part-time workers are persons working part-time who wish to work additional hours and are available to do so. Part-time work is recorded as self-reported by individuals.

Persons seeking work but not immediately available are the sum of persons neither employed nor unemployed who: (a) were actively seeking work during the last 4 weeks but are not available for work in the next 2 weeks; or (b) found a job to start in less than 3 months and are not available for work in the next 2 weeks; or (c) found a job to start in 3 months or more; or (d) were passively seeking work during the last 4 weeks and are available for work in the next 2 weeks.

Persons available to work but not seeking are persons neither employed nor unemployed who want to work, are available for work in the next 2 weeks but were not seeking work.

The **extended labour force** is the total number of people employed plus unemployed, plus those seeking work but not immediately available plus those available to work but not seeking. In this news release data cover persons aged 20 to 64.

Absences from work: persons absent from work are considered as employed if there is a formal attachment to the job. This can be for example the continued receipt of wage or salary, AND an assurance of a return to work (or an agreement as to the date of return) following the end of the contingency. Persons can be absent from work due to a number of reasons, among which **holidays**, **own illness**, and **temporary lay-offs**. **Lay-offs** are classified as employed if they have an assurance of return to work within a period of 3 months or receive $\geq 50\%$ of their wage or salary from their employer.

Total actual hours worked in the main job are the total actual hours worked by all employees and self-employed in their main occupation during the quarter. Data are indexed to be equal to 100 in 2006 for reasons of comparability between countries.

The data presented in this news release are **seasonally adjusted**. The nature of current developments may therefore lead to revisions of the data in the future. Figures on employment and on hours worked in this news release come from the **Labour Force Survey**. Employment and hours worked data are also available from **National Accounts** domains. As the two data collections are compiled for different purposes, their underlying methodologies and definitions differ to some extent. In consequence, figures should not be compared directly, and not be used interchangeably.

Country notes

Germany: due to technical issues with the introduction of the new German system of integrated household surveys, including the LFS, the figures for Germany for the first, second and third quarter 2020 are not direct estimates from LFS microdata, but based on a larger sample including additional data from other integrated household surveys. For more information, see [here](#).

For more information

Eurostat [website section](#) on employment and unemployment

Eurostat [database section](#), including non-seasonally adjusted and trend data

Eurostat "Statistics Explained" articles on quarterly data on [labour market slack](#), on [absences from work](#) and on [hours of work](#)

Eurostat [metadata](#) on LFS Main Indicators

European Statistics [Code of Practice](#)

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Employment, unemployment and labour market slack in third quarter 2020

(age group 20 to 64, seasonally adjusted data)

	Employment (as % of population)			Unemployment (as % of labour force)			Labour market slack (as % of extended labour force)		
	Q3 2019	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q3 2019	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q3 2019	Q2 2020	Q3 2020
EU	73.1	72.1	72.4	6.4	6.7	7.3	12.6	14.1	13.9
Belgium	70.7	69.6	70.2	5.1	5.0	6.0	10.8	11.7	11.9
Bulgaria	75.1	72.6	73.5	4.0	5.4	4.9	7.4	9.6	8.8
Czechia	80.4	79.6	79.6	2.0	2.5	2.8	3.1	3.5	3.7
Denmark	78.3	77.5	77.5	4.7	5.0	5.8	9.3	10.9	10.9
Germany	80.6	80.2pu	80.4pu	3.0	3.4pu	3.5pu	7.3	8.3pu	8.3pu
Estonia	80.3	77.4	78.0	4.1	7.1	7.6	8.1	10.9	12.1
Ireland	74.9	73.0	73.2	4.4	4.7	6.0	11.5	15.4	14.6
Greece	61.2	60.4	61.2	17.0	16.8	16.7	24.3	24.4	24.1
Spain	67.9	65.4	65.6	13.8	15.1	15.8	22.2	24.9	25.5
France	71.4	71.1	71.3	7.9	7.1	8.3	15.5	15.2	16.1
Croatia	66.9	66.9	66.9	6.1	6.5	7.6	12.6	13.7	13.3
Italy	63.6	62.0	62.2	9.4	8.5	10.0	21.0	23.8	22.1
Cyprus	75.5	75.0	74.5	6.7	7.5	8.1	13.4	14.5	15.2
Latvia	77.6	77.2	77.1	6.2	8.5	8.6	12.0	13.5	13.5
Lithuania	77.9	76.5	75.8	6.6	8.9	9.9	8.3	11.3	12.2
Luxembourg	72.9	71.7	72.0	5.5	6.2	7.5	10.3	12.2	12.6
Hungary	75.2	74.5	75.1	3.3	4.4	4.3	6.1	8.5	7.7
Malta	76.5	77.1	77.5	3.4	4.2	4.5	5.4	6.4	6.9
Netherlands	80.2	79.7	79.7	3.0	3.2	3.8	9.1	10.2	10.4
Austria	76.7	74.6	75.7	4.2	5.5	5.6	10.1	13.4	12.5
Poland	73.1	73.1	73.6	3.1	3.1	3.2	6.1	6.1	6.1
Portugal	76.4	73.8	74.3	6.1	6.1	7.8	11.9	13.8	14.7
Romania	71.1	69.9	70.6	3.6	5.2	5.2	6.7	8.3	8.3
Slovenia	76.3	74.6	75.3	4.8	5.2	5.2	7.1	7.8	8.0
Slovakia	73.3	72.4	72.4	5.6	6.4	6.8	7.9	9.0	9.2
Finland	77.4	76.2	76.5	6.2	7.0	7.9	13.1	15.4	15.0
Sweden	82.0	80.5	80.4	6.2	7.4	8.1	11.6	13.6	14.3
Iceland	84.8	81.3	84.0	3.5	4.7	5.6	8.1	11.8	11.8
Norway	79.8	78.5	78.3	3.2	3.9	4.2	8.2	9.9	10.3
Switzerland	82.9	81.9	82.3	4.2	4.7	5.0	14.0	15.3	15.5
United Kingdom	79.1	79.0	78.6	3.4	3.4	4.2	9.2	9.7	10.5
Montenegro	60.8	55.7	:	15.6	15.4	:	24.1	29.6	:
North Macedonia	59.1	58.9	58.3	17.2	16.8	16.3	23.7	24.4	24.0
Serbia	65.1	65.7	66.4	10.1	8.5	9.1	19.4	20.7	18.7
Turkey	53.4	50.0	51.3	13.9	13.9	13.2	19.0	25.2	23.8

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: data not available

Source datasets: [lfsi_emp_q](#) (employment rate), [une_rt_q](#) (unemployment rate) and [lfsi_sla_q](#) (labour market slack)

Absences from work and total actual hours worked in third quarter 2020
(age group 20 to 64, seasonally adjusted data)

	Absences from work (% of persons employed)			Total actual hours worked in the main job (2020 Q3 % change compared to the previous quarter and to the same quarter of the previous year)					
	Q3 2019	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	% change/Q3 2019			% change/Q2 2020		
				Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
EU	9.7	18.7	9.1	-2.1	-2.6	-2.4	16.0	15.3	15.5
Belgium	11.3	21.0	10.6	-0.2	-1.4	-0.9	15.6	20.4	18.5
Bulgaria	2.8	7.6	1.9	-2.0	-2.4	-2.2	11.7	8.0	9.7
Czechia	8.8	15.1	8.6	-1.5	0.4	-0.4	13.5	13.9	13.6
Denmark	12.6	18.4	12.3	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	6.4	5.0	5.7
Germany	12.0	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Estonia	9.8	13.2	7.3	-0.6	-0.7	-0.6	11.5	6.3	8.8
Ireland	7.5	25.1	12.3	-6.0	-4.6	-5.2	18.2	21.5	20.3
Greece	3.8	24.0	5.2	-2.1	-1.2	-1.7	39.1	30.4	33.4
Spain	9.0	27.4	11.9	-5.2	-5.9	-5.6	29.7	26.5	27.8
France	14.2	27.1	14.4	-2.8	-1.8	-2.3	21.0	24.1	22.7
Croatia	9.5	15.0	10.4	-5.5	0.7	-2.0	5.2	6.8	6.2
Italy	7.6	24.5	7.0	-3.3	-3.1	-3.2	28.1	28.5	28.3
Cyprus	7.3	29.6	8.6	-3.5	-1.9	-2.7	25.0	24.2	24.5
Latvia	6.3	12.6	6.9	-5.4	-2.9	-4.1	4.5	8.5	6.5
Lithuania	6.3	13.8	6.9	-5.1	-2.8	-3.9	10.7	7.8	9.1
Luxembourg	8.9	10.8	7.9	3.7	-1.1	0.8	11.1	11.8	11.4
Hungary	4.4	9.5	4.4	-1.2	-1.3	-1.3	12.2	6.5	8.9
Malta	0.9	4.3	1.5	0.5	-4.9	-3.0	12.5	8.8	10.2
Netherlands	11.2	13.0	10.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	6.6	5.7	6.0
Austria	12.1	16.8	12.6	-3.0	-4.0	-3.6	16.4	15.2	15.6
Poland	7.1	12.7	7.1	-0.9	0.0	-0.4	12.0	7.1	9.1
Portugal	8.8	25.5	10.1	-4.2	-8.1	-6.3	37.2	19.2	27.3
Romania	1.6	7.7	2.0	-3.9	-2.5	-3.2	15.4	13.6	14.3
Slovenia	10.4	22.0	12.3	-2.3	-2.6	-2.5	18.3	14.5	16.0
Slovakia	6.9	22.4	3.8	-2.5	-1.6	-1.9	22.2	19.1	20.5
Finland	14.3	16.4	12.2	-0.4	-0.9	-0.7	6.2	4.5	5.3
Sweden	15.9	16.2	16.1	-1.5	-6.4	-4.4	0.6	-0.9	-0.3
Iceland	12.2	9.2	10.6	0.8	-3.8	-2.0	8.1	5.6	6.7
Norway	17.7	20.4	17.0	-0.4	-1.7	-1.1	1.5	2.9	2.4
Switzerland	12.3	16.5	13.3	-1.5	-3.5	-2.8	13.9	7.3	9.8
United Kingdom	10.2	25.6	19.1	-7.7	-11.9	-10.1	12.7	10.4	11.4
North Macedonia	3.9	20.5	7.9	-6.9	-10.7	-9.2	17.7	18.4	18.1
Serbia	6.7	11.0	5.3	:	:	:	:	:	:
Turkey	4.1	20.0	6.3	-7.8	-2.9	-4.3	45.1	40.6	41.8

: data not available

Source datasets: [lfsi_abs_q](#) (absences from work) and [lfsi_ahw_q](#) (total actual hours worked)