Overview of status and progress of EU Member States towards the SDGs

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in April 2023.
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This article is a part of a set of statistical articles , which are based on the Eurostat publication 'Sustainable development in the European Union — Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context — 2023 edition' . This report is the seventh edition of Eurostat's series of monitoring reports on sustainable development, which provide a quantitative assessment of progress of the EU towards the SDGs in an EU context.

This article presents a statistical overview of the status and progress of EU Member States towards the 17 SDGs, based on the EU SDG indicator set. The status of each SDG in a Member State is an aggregation of all the indicators of a specific goal relative to the other Member States and the EU average. The progress score of the Member State is based on the average annual growth rates of all assessed indicators in the SDG over the past five years. The same approach towards aggregating individual indicator trends into a synthesised index per SDG is used in the synopsis article for the EU[1].

Such a synthesised presentation allows for a quick and easy overview and facilitates communication. However, applied to individual Member States, it entails the risk of simplification and might obscure details about underlying phenomena. Moreover, it has to be kept in mind that a country's status depends to a certain extent on its natural conditions and historical developments. Therefore, users are invited to read the more detailed information at indicator level in the articles 1 to 17 on each SDG. Detailed data for the EU SDG indicators on a country level are also available on the Eurostat website , for example in the key findings section and in the country overview visualisation .

How is the status and progress assessed?

The status of a specific SDG is an aggregate score encompassing all indicators of that goal, based on the most recent data (mainly referring to 2021 and 2022)[2]. For each indicator, a country's status score is calculated relative to the range of values from the worst to the best performing country, whereby outliers are excluded[3]. The status

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[1]A more detailed description of the methodology used for the country status and progress calculations is available on the Eurostat website .

[2]The (comparative) status is a composite index based on the relative indicator values so for each indicator in the goal, the worst country value corresponds to 0 points and the best to 100 points. During the indexing at indicator level, outliers are excluded (see next footnote) and are manually assigned an index value of 0 or 100 (depending on which end of the distribution an outlier is situated). The country status is then the average points across all indicators.

[3]Outliers are identified by means of the interquartile range (IQR) method (see Hoaglin, D. C., Iglewicz, B., & Tukey, J. W. (1986). Performance of Some Resistant Rules for Outlier Labeling. Journal of the American Statistical Association, 81(396), 991-999 and Hoaglin, D. C., & Iglewicz, B. (1987). Fine-Tuning Some Resistant Rules for Outlier Labeling. Journal of the American Statistical Association, 82(400), 1147-1149) . This method involves calculating the first and third quartiles of the country distribution, with the IQR representing the difference between these two values. The boundaries for identifying outliers are then determined by multiplying the IQR by the factor two and by subtracting/adding these values from/to the first/third quartile, respectively. Values below/above these thresholds are considered outliers and are excluded during indexing, meaning that countries identified as outliers with this method are assigned the value of the next best/worst country for the indexing.

score calculation is based on a min-max-normalisation as described in Annex I (see the PDF version). For each country, the status scores at indicator level are aggregated at SDG level using the arithmetic mean, and this goal-level score is then put in relation to the EU aggregate status score of the same goal, to show how much (in %) a country's SDG status is above or below the EU average. Figure 1 presents an example of the calculation of the status score for SDG 16 relative to the EU for a fictitious country.

Figure 1: Example calculation of the status score for SDG 16 for a fictitious country
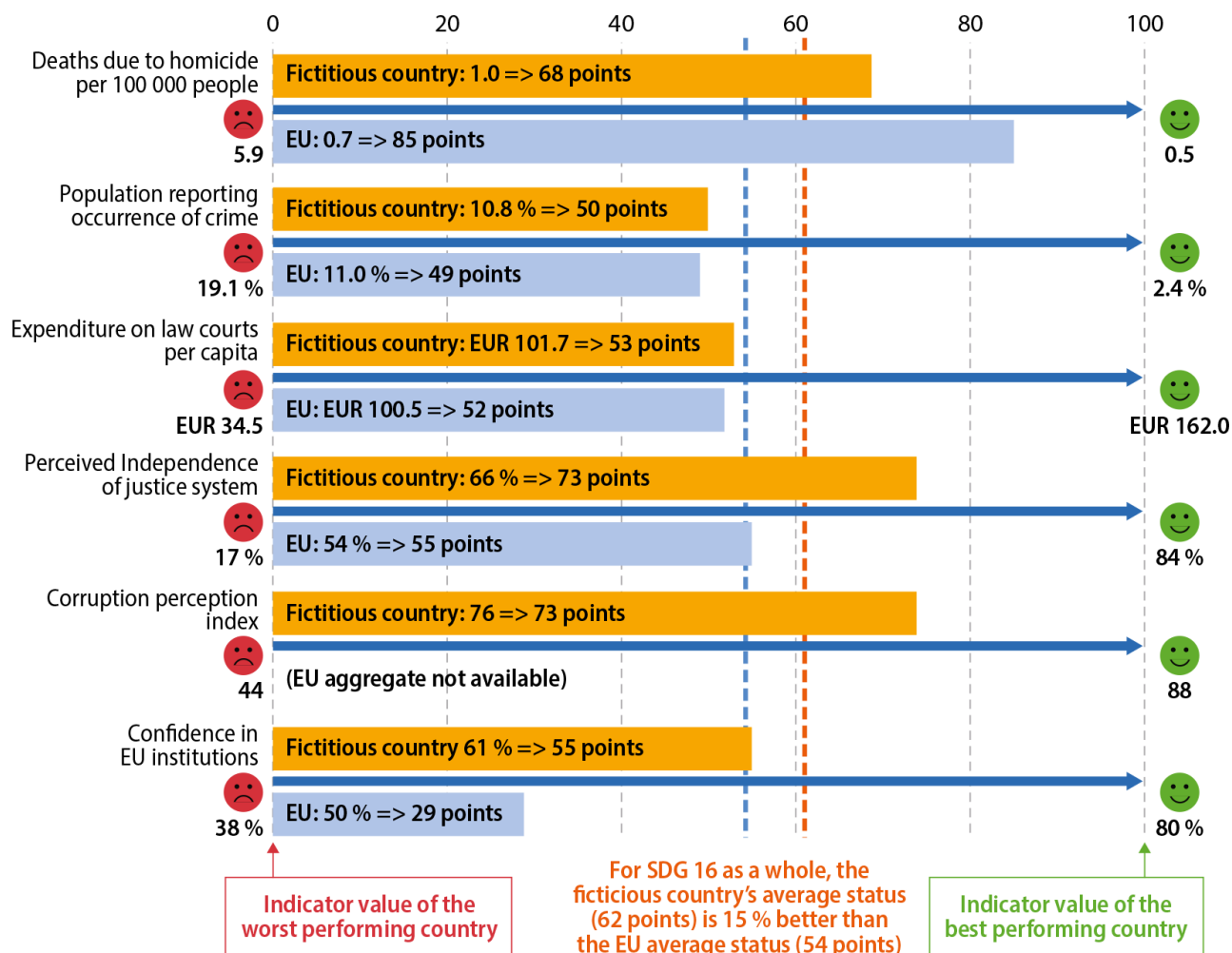
Note: the best and worst country values exclude outliers identified by means of the interquartile range (IQR) method, for example for expenditure on law courts.

Progress is an aggregate score of the short-term (five-year) growth rates for all the indicators assessed for each goal. The methodology uses a scoring function and is identical to the calculation of progress at EU level as presented in Annex I. Please note that the progress score calculation does not take into account any target values, since most EU policy targets are only valid for the aggregate EU level. Data mainly refer to the periods 2016–2021 or 2017–2022. Due to data availability issues, such as missing data for some years or breaks in time series, some countries' progress score calculations are based on shorter or longer periods. Additionally, some countries' progress scores have been manually adjusted, for example when a country has already achieved the maximum possible value (e.g. 100 % of young children participating in early childhood education) and has maintained this level over the past five-year period. In such cases, countries are assigned the best possible score (+5) instead of the calculated score for no change (0). Depending on data availability per goal, not all 17 SDGs are shown for each country. Figure 2 presents an example of the calculation of the progress score for a fictitious country and a fictitious goal containing four indicators (for all of which an increase is the desired direction). It shows how the compound annual growth rates (CAGR) of the indicators are transformed
into scores between +5 and -5 that are then averaged at SDG level to calculate a country's goal-level progress score.
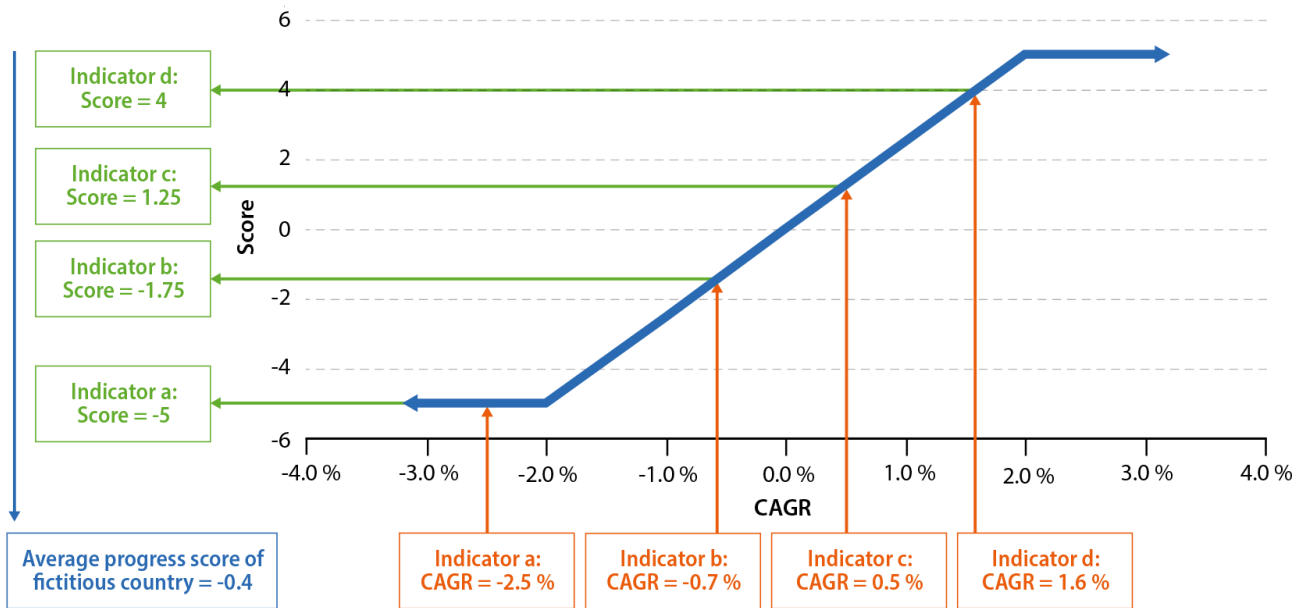
Figure 2: Example calculation of the progress score for a fictitious country

Overall, a country's status score is a relative measure, showing its position in relation to other Member States and the EU average. A high status consequently does not mean that a country is close to reaching a specific SDG, but that it has achieved a higher status than many other Member States. On the other hand, a country's progress score is an absolute measure based on the indicator trends over the past five years, and its calculation is not influenced by the progress achieved by other Member States.

How to interpret the graphs?

The vertical axis shows the status of SDGs in the depicted country within the distribution of Member States and relative to the EU average. SDGs in the upper part of the graph have a status above the EU average, and for SDGs in the lower part the status is below the EU average. The right side of the graph displays SDGs where the country has made progress whereas the left side indicates movements away from the SDGs. This results in four 'quadrants' which can be characterised as follows:
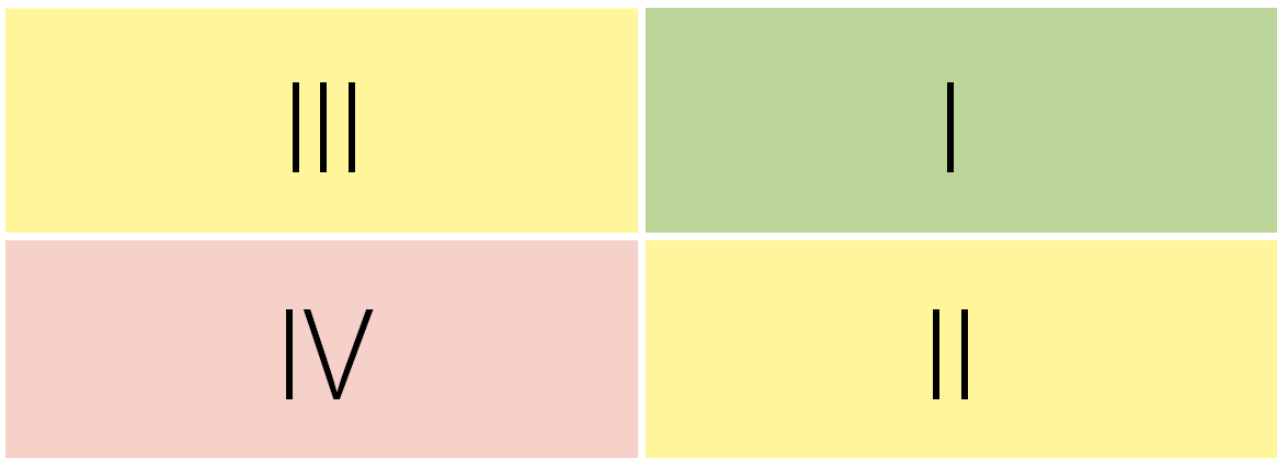
I. The country is progressing towards these SDGs, and on average the indicator values are above the EU average.
II. The country is progressing towards these SDGs, but on average the indicator values are below the EU average.
III. The country is moving away from these SDGs, but on average the indicator values are above the EU average.
IV. The country is moving away from these SDGs, and on average the indicator values are below the EU average.

Presentation of Member States' status and progress

SDG icon	SDG short name
	SDG 1: No poverty
	SDG 2: Zero hunger
	SDG 3: Good health and well-being
	SDG 4: Quality education
	SDG 5: Gender equality
	SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation
	SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy
	SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
	SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
	SDG 10: Reduced inequalities
	SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities
	SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production
	SDG 13: Climate action
	SDG 14: Life below water
	SDG 15: Life on land
	SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions
	SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals

Table 1: Overview of SDGs

Belgium
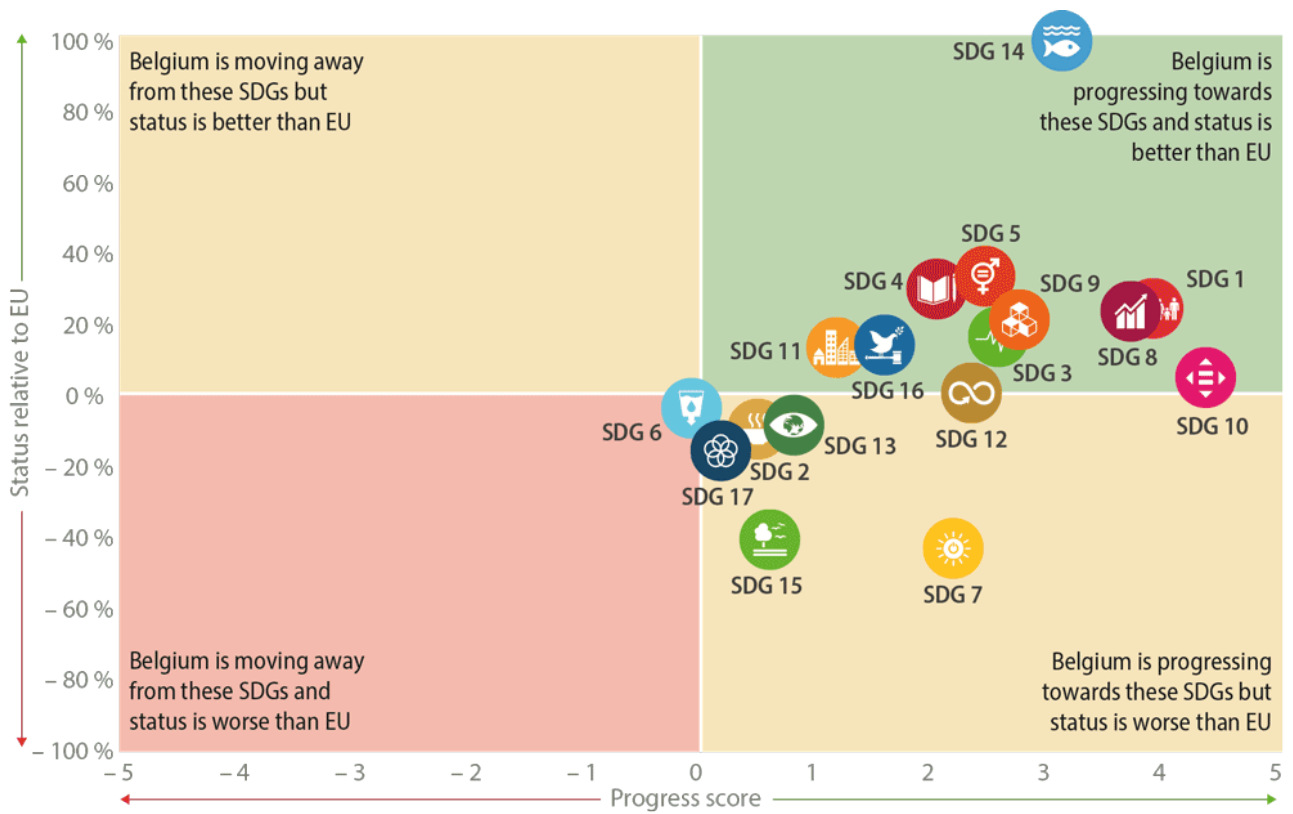
Figure 3: Belgium Source: Eurostat

Bulgaria
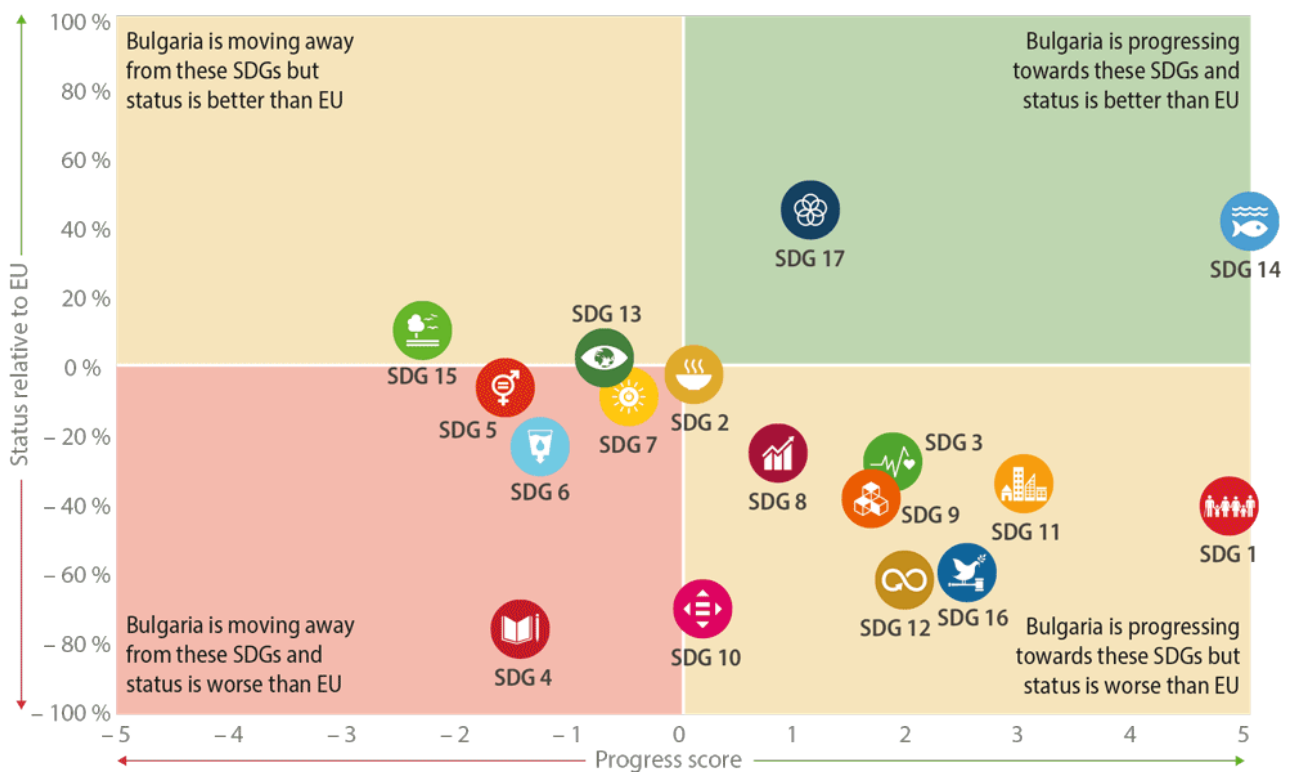
Figure 4: Bulgaria Source: Eurostat

Czechia
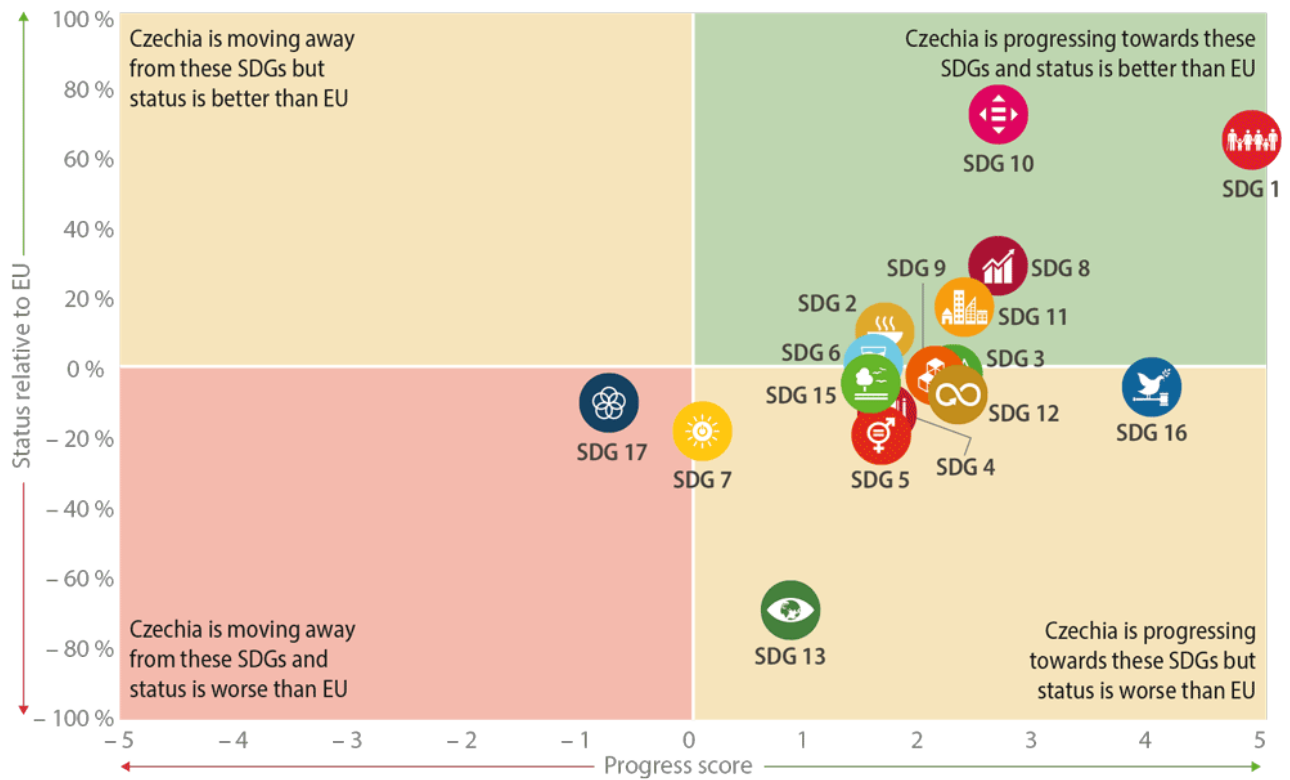
Figure 5: Czechia Source: Eurostat

Denmark
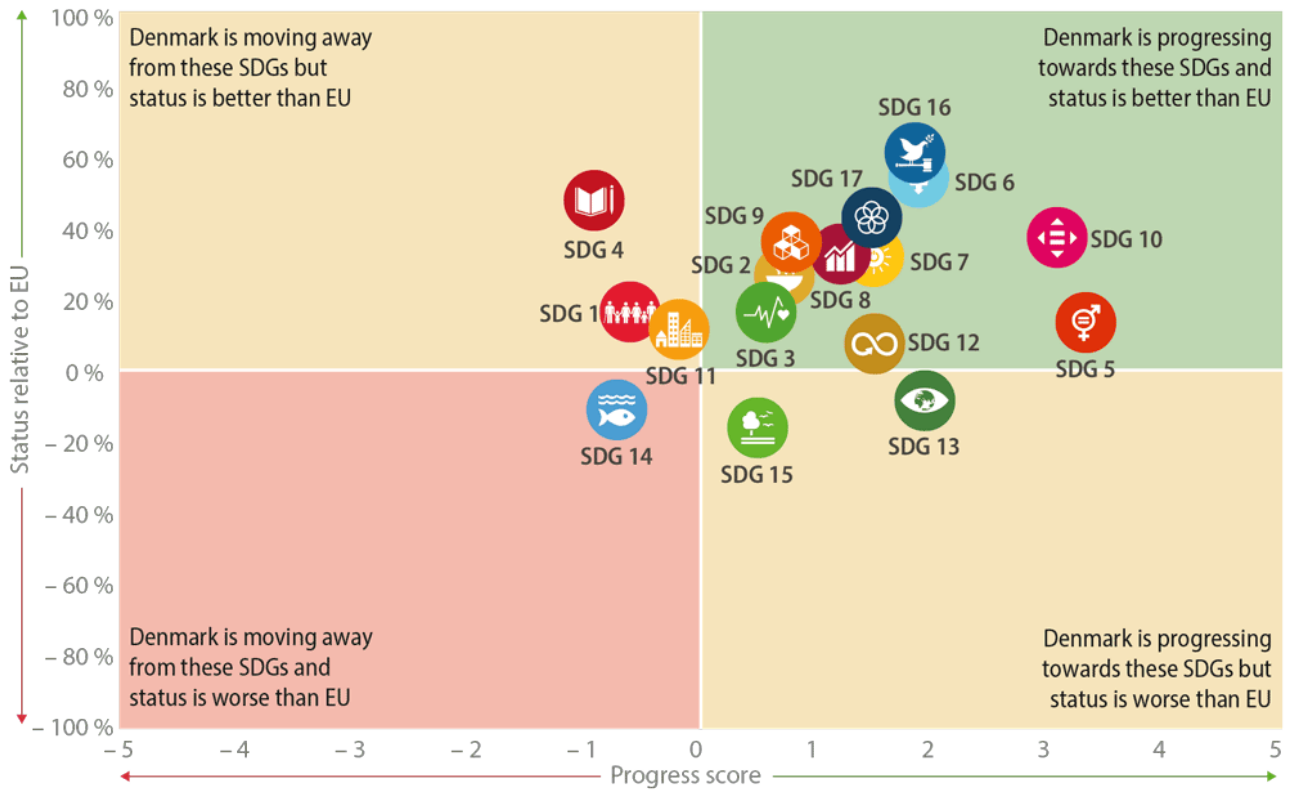
Figure 6: Denmark Source: Eurostat

Germany
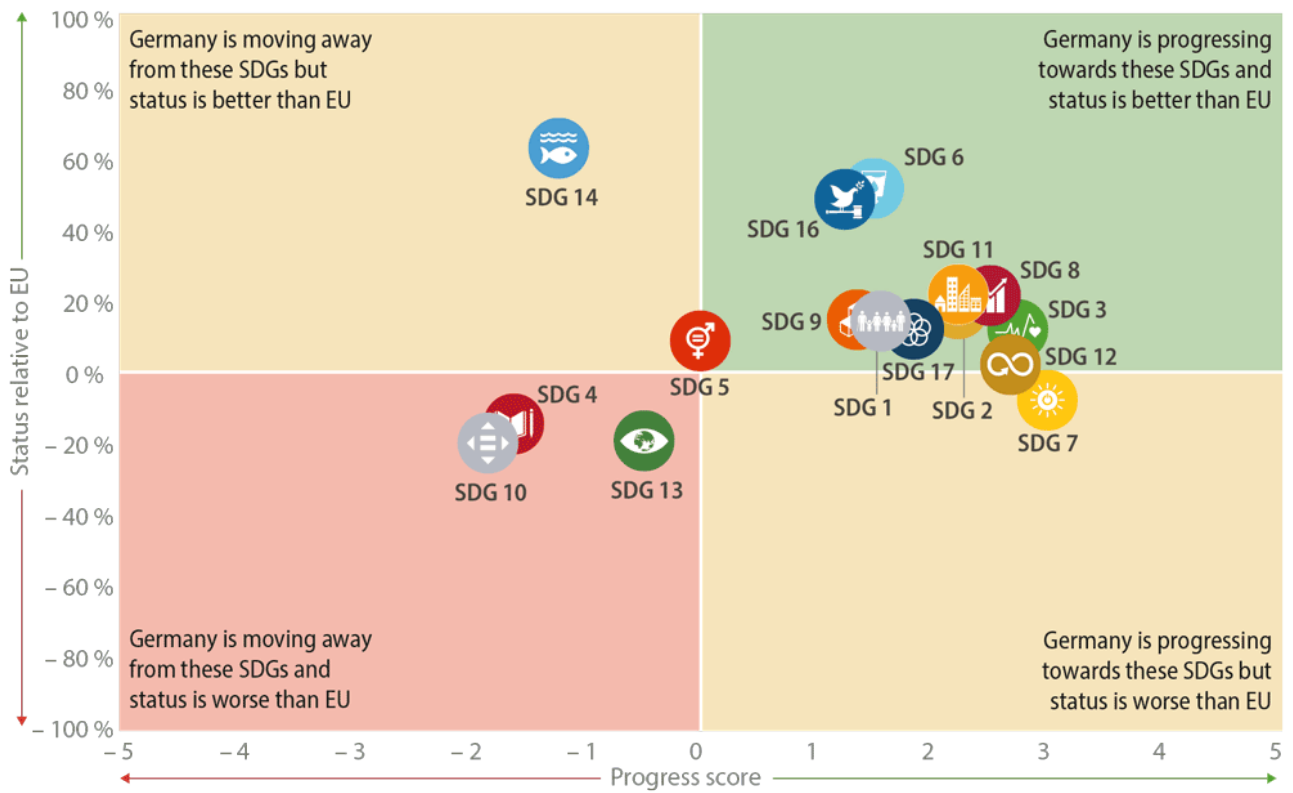
Figure 7: Germany Note: The progress assessment for SDG 1 and 10 is hampered by a methodological change in Germany's EU-SILC survey in 2020. Source: Eurostat

Estonia
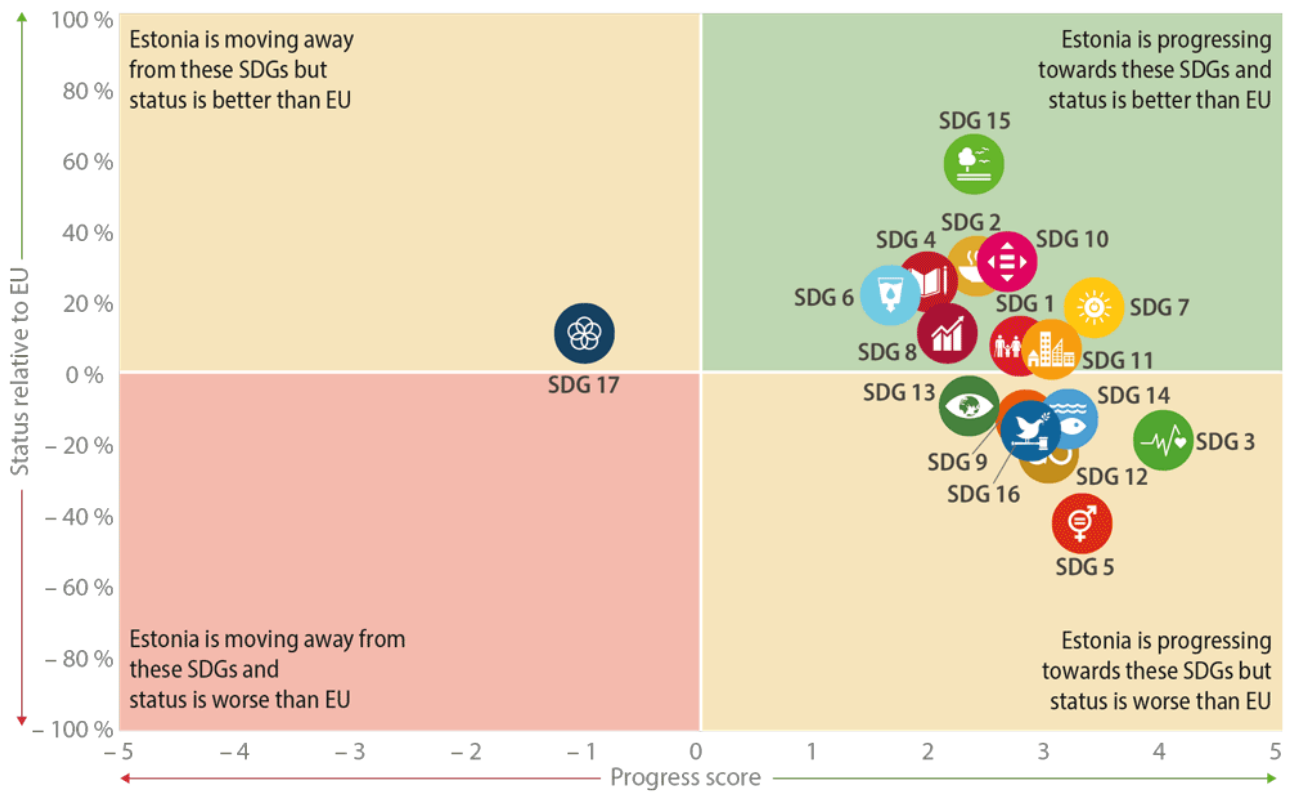
Figure 8: Estonia Source: Eurostat

Ireland
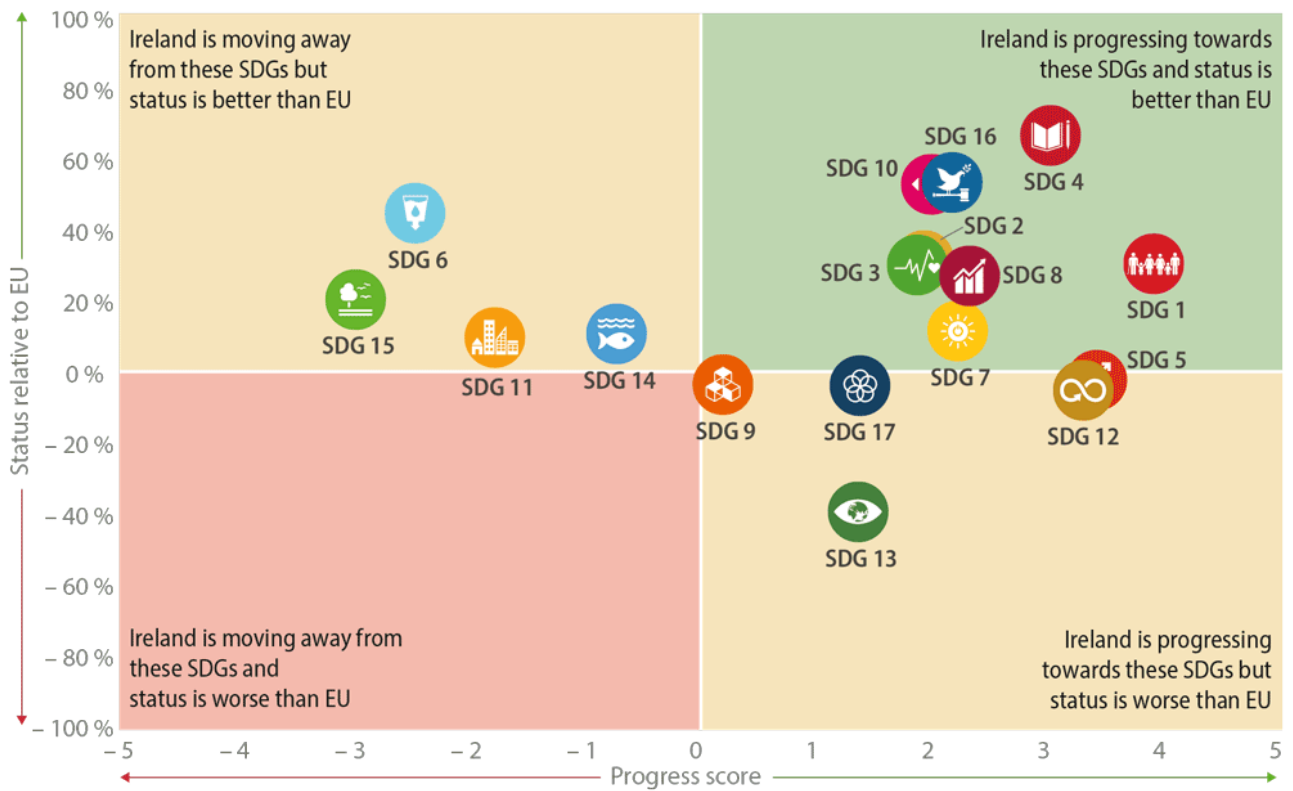
Figure 9: Ireland Source: Eurostat

Greece
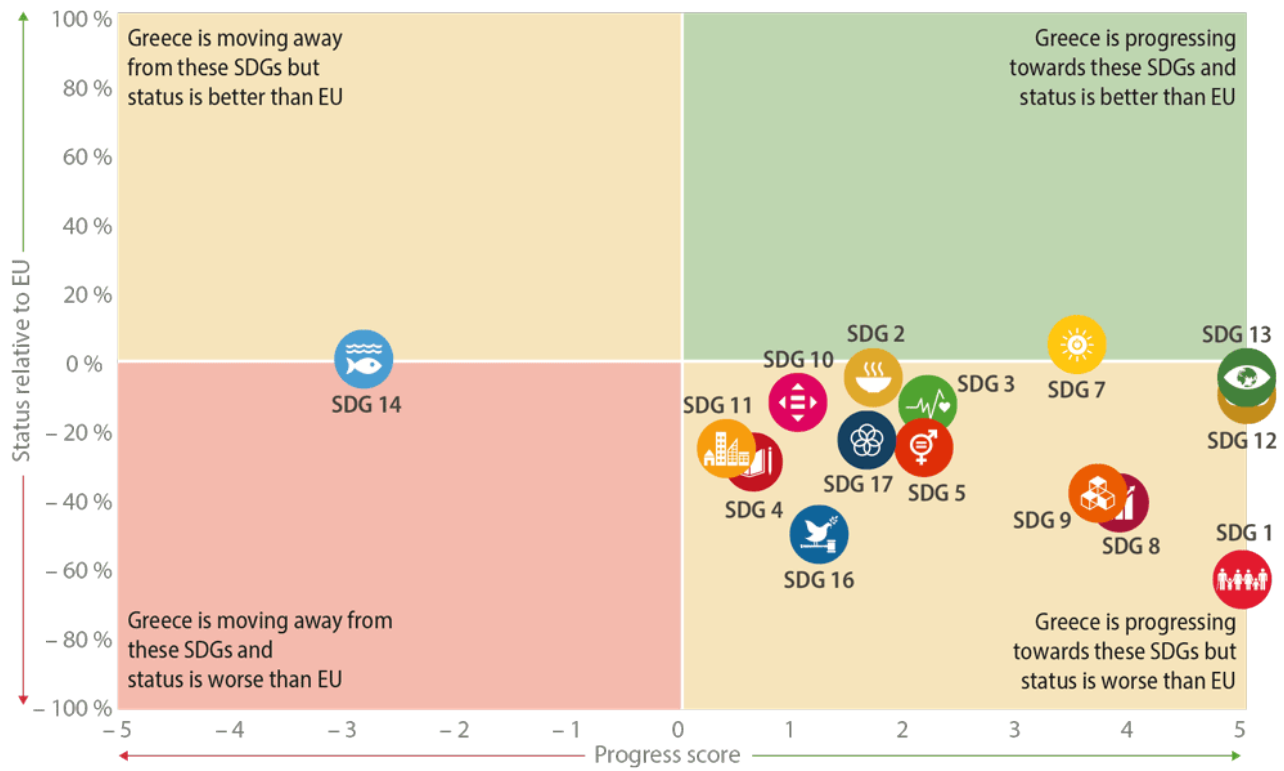
Figure 10: Greece Source: Eurostat

Spain
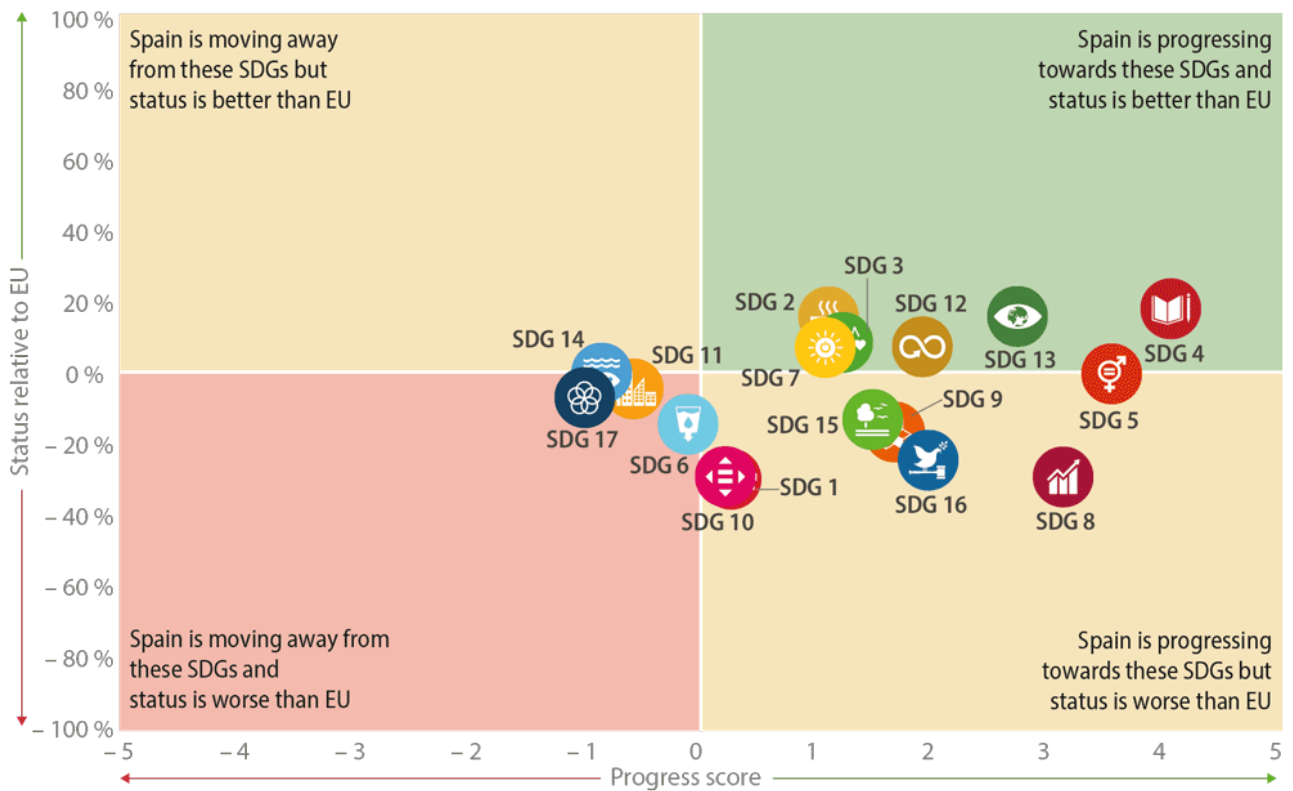
Figure 11: Spain Source: Eurostat

France
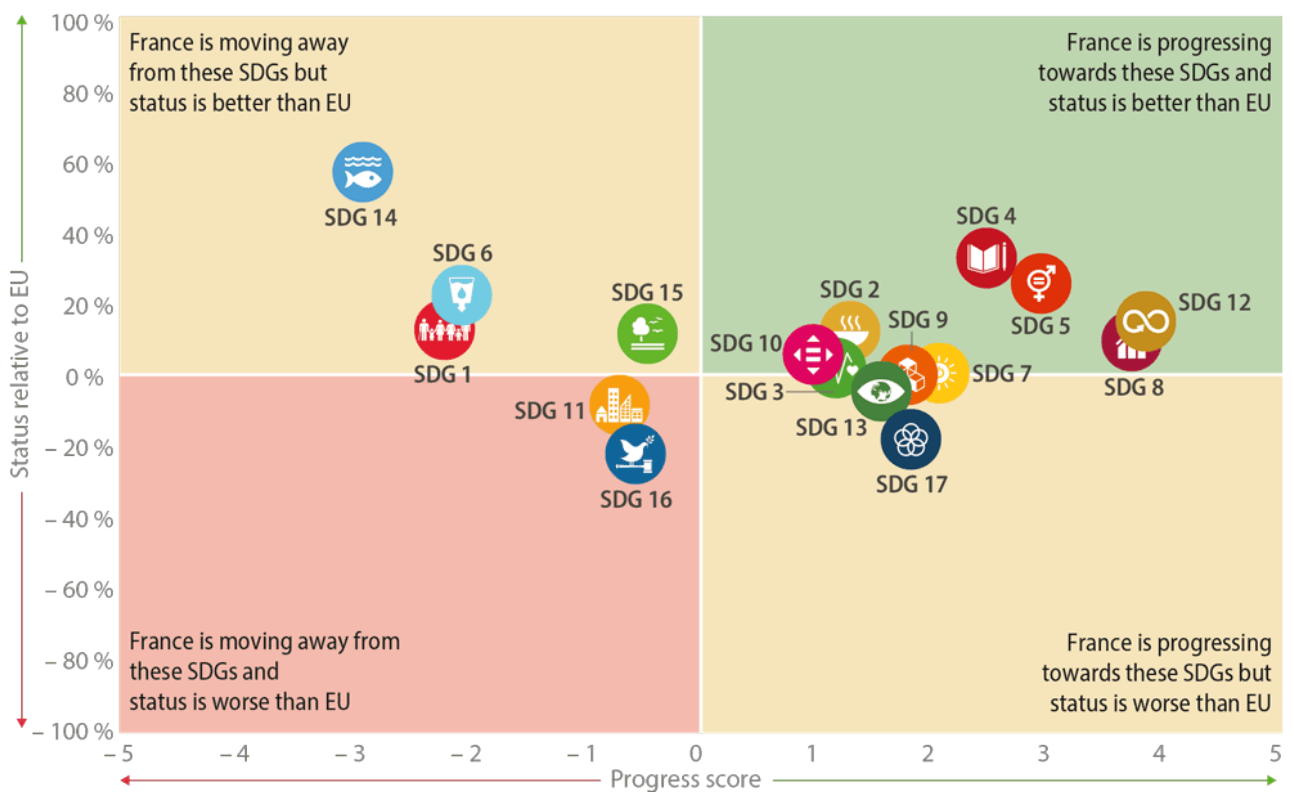
Figure 12: France Source: Eurostat

Croatia
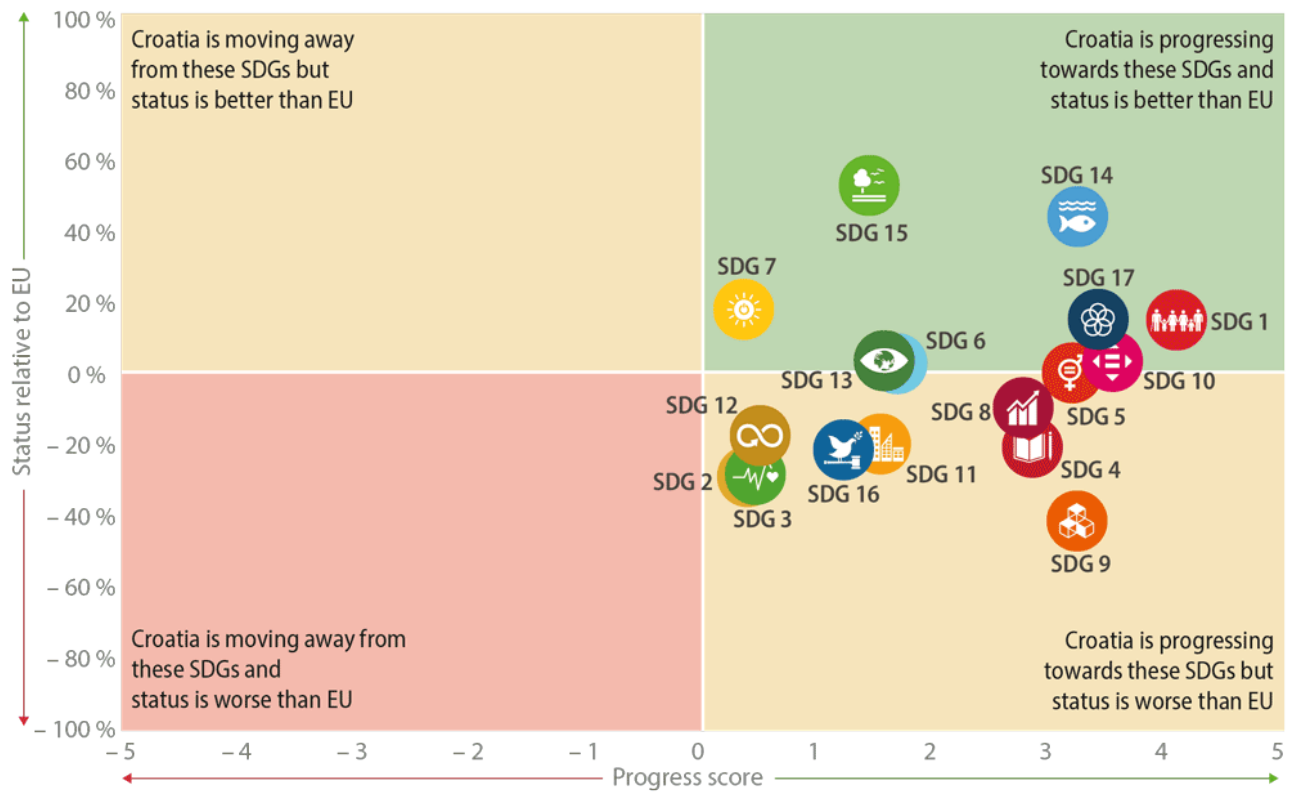
Figure 13: Croatia Source: Eurostat

Italy
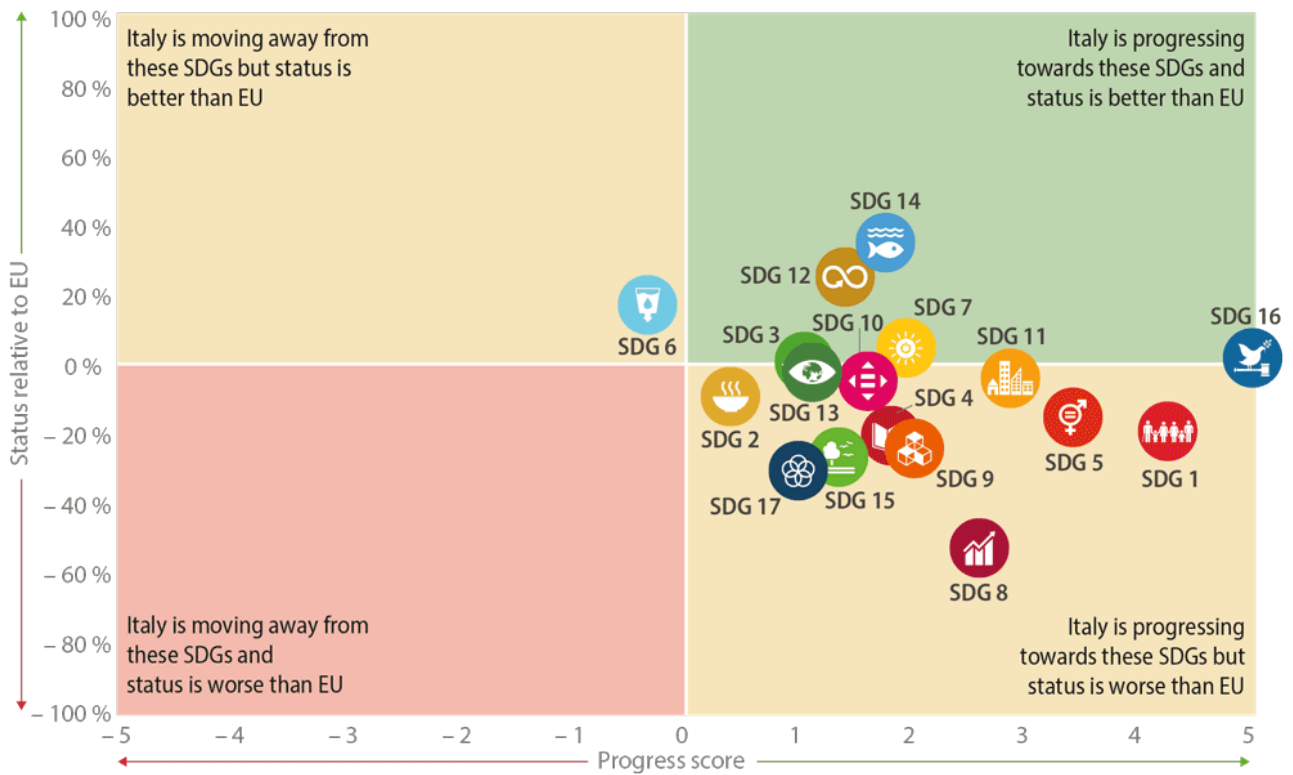
Figure 14: Italy Source: Eurostat

Cyprus
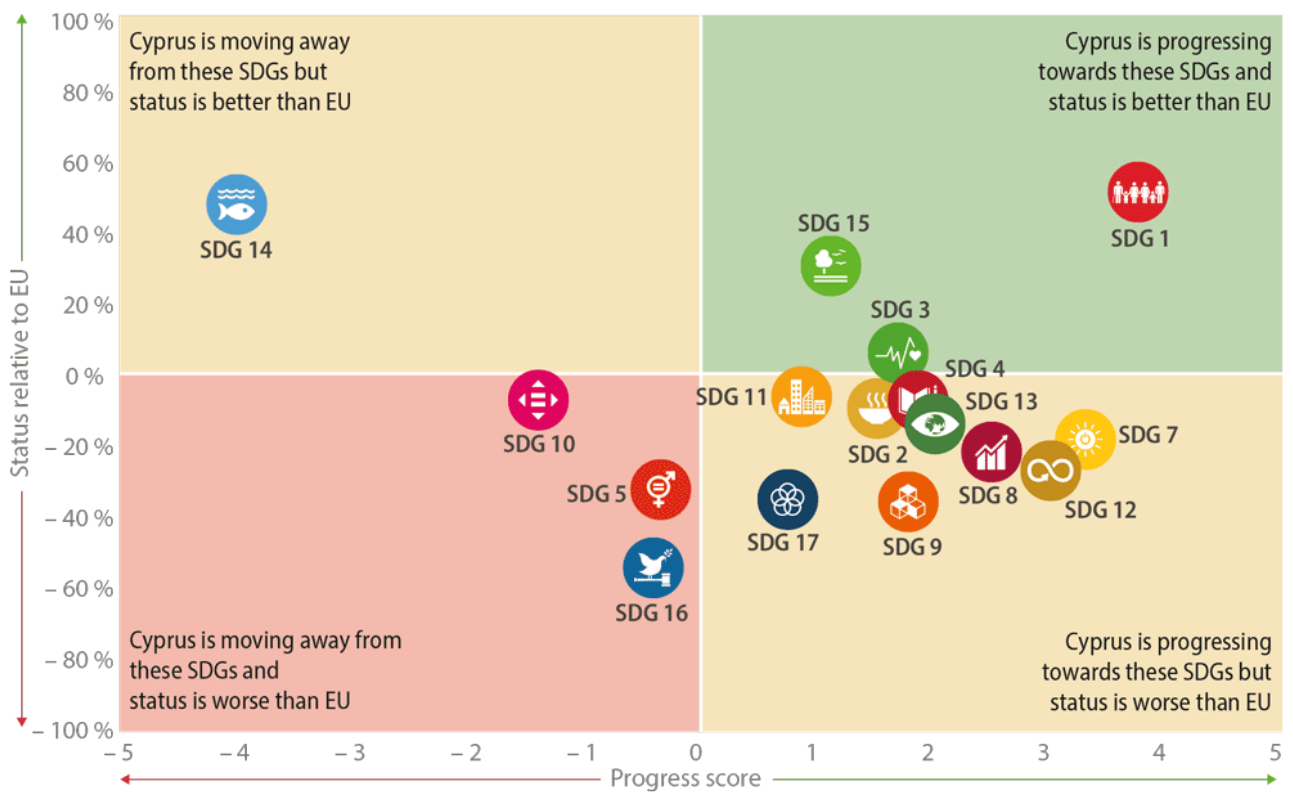
Figure 15: Cyprus Source: Eurostat

Latvia
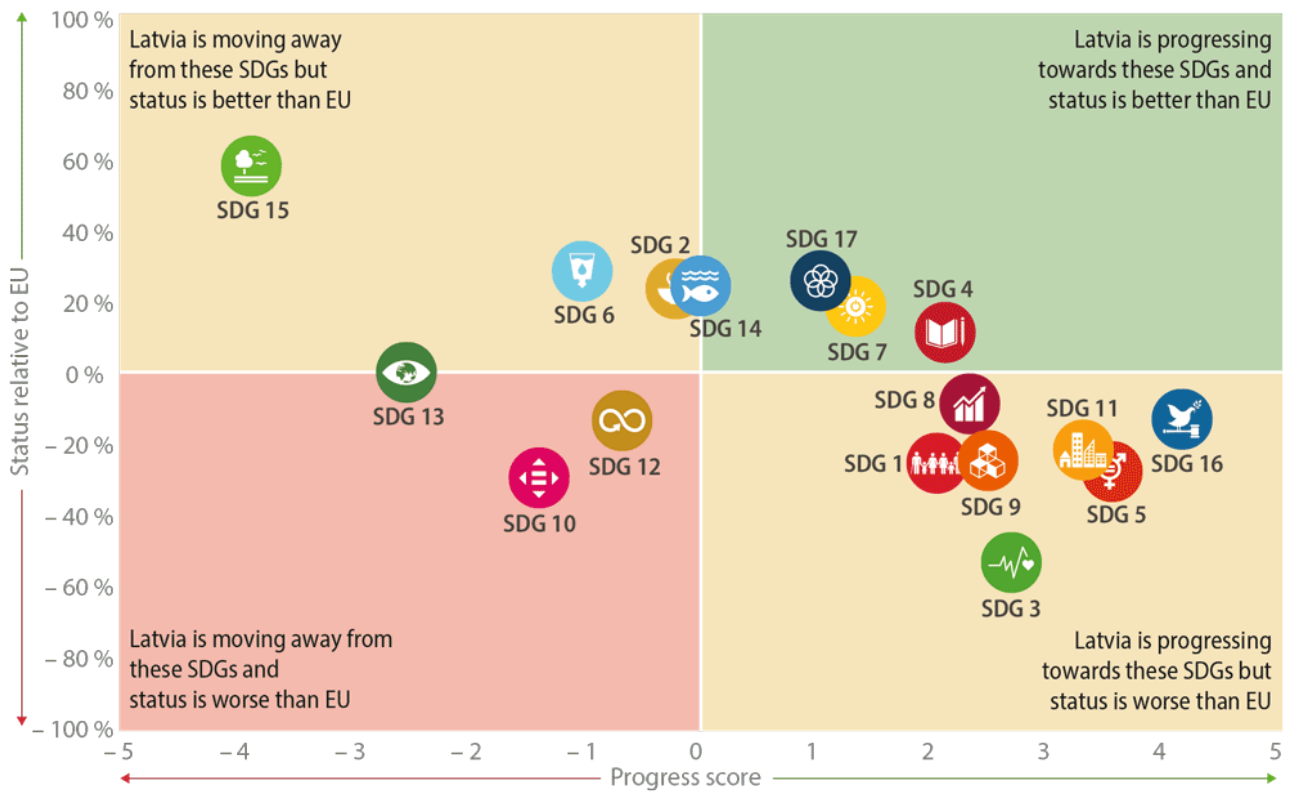
Figure 16: Latvia Source: Eurostat

Lithuania
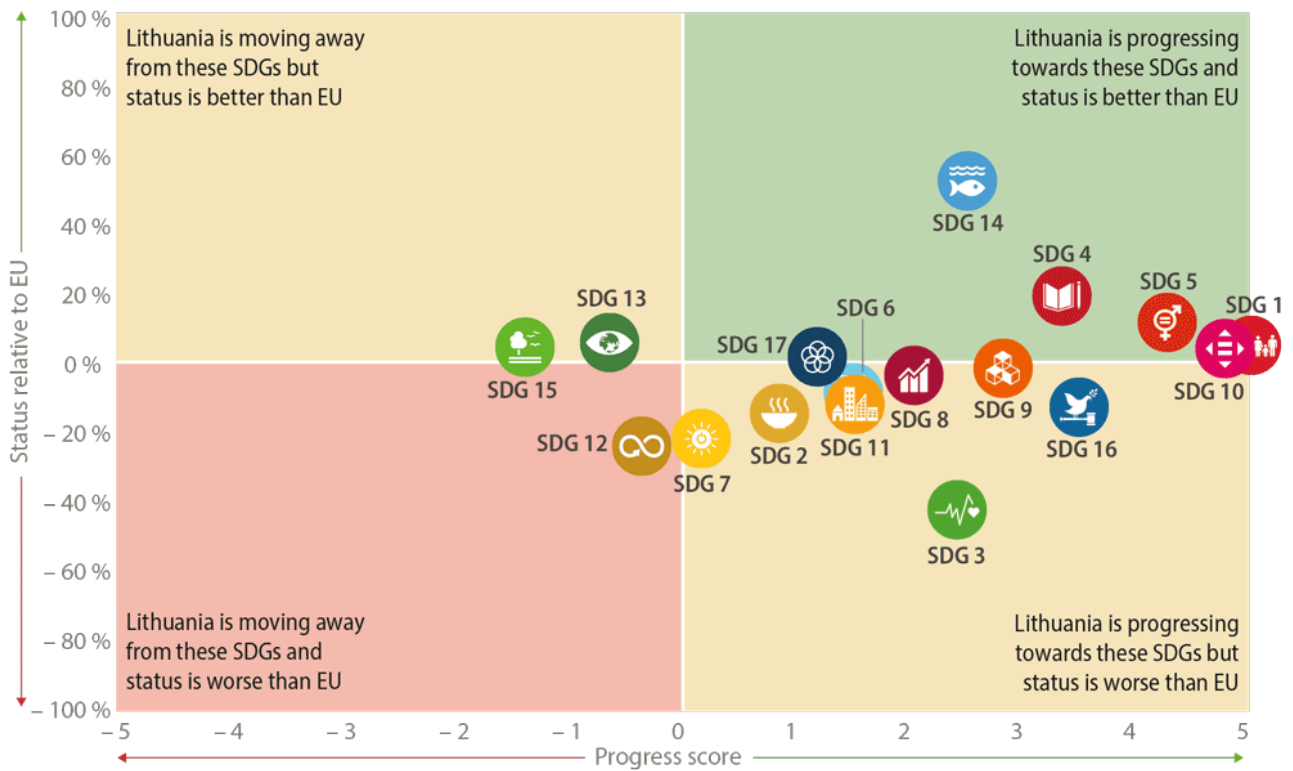
Figure 17: Lithuania Source: Eurostat
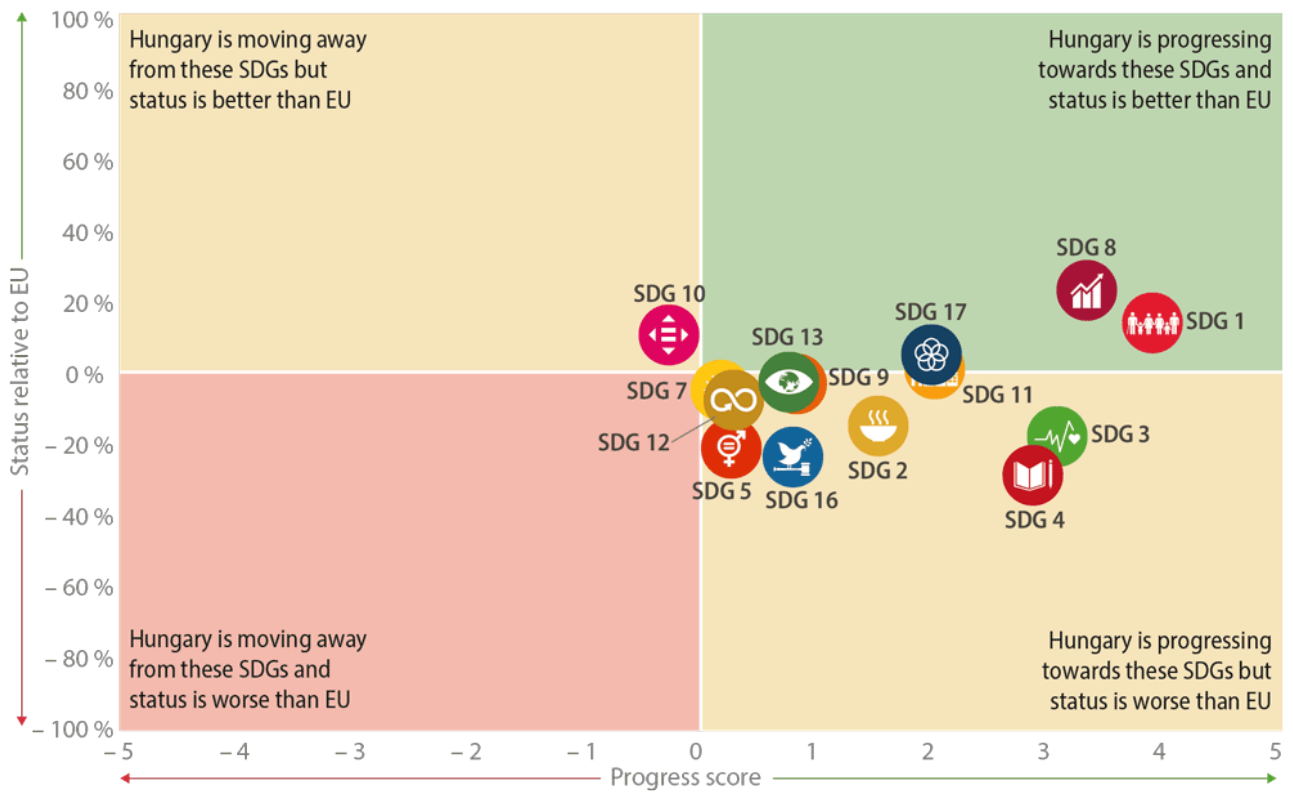
Luxembourg
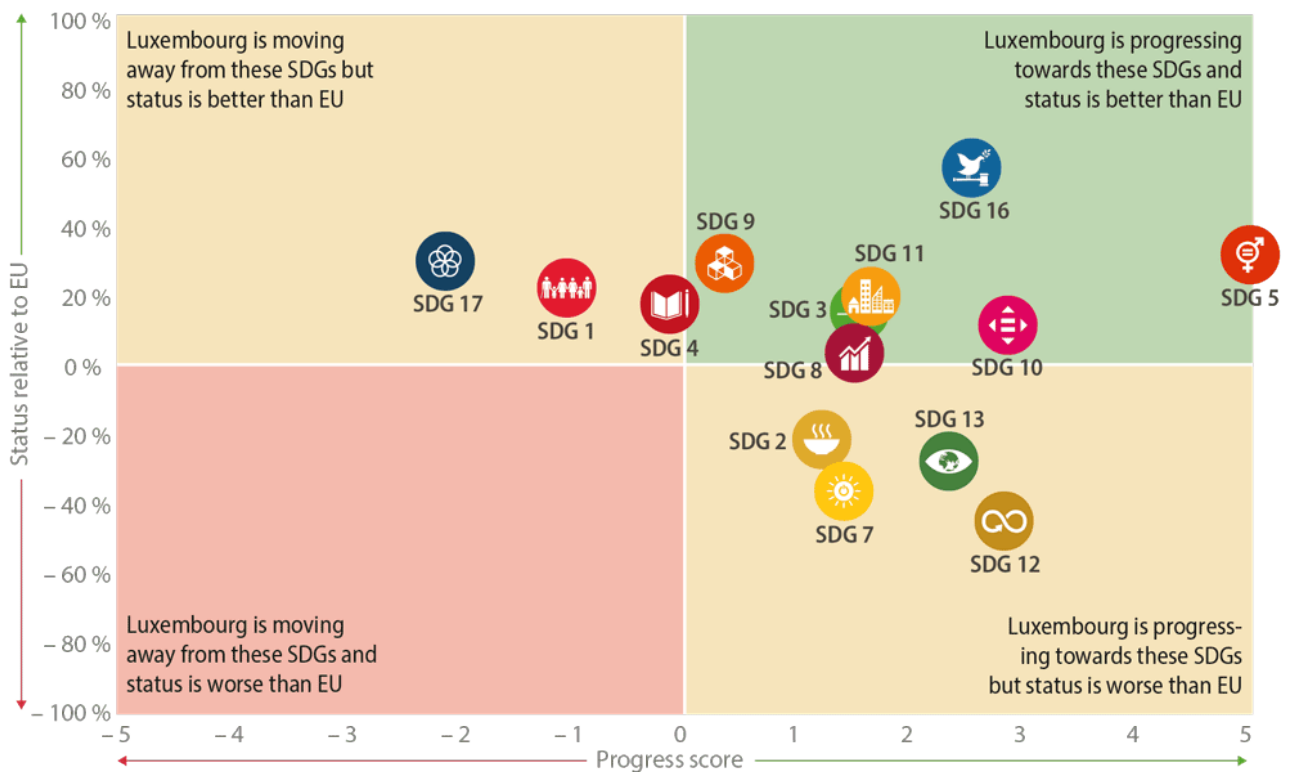
Figure 18: Luxembourg Source: Eurostat
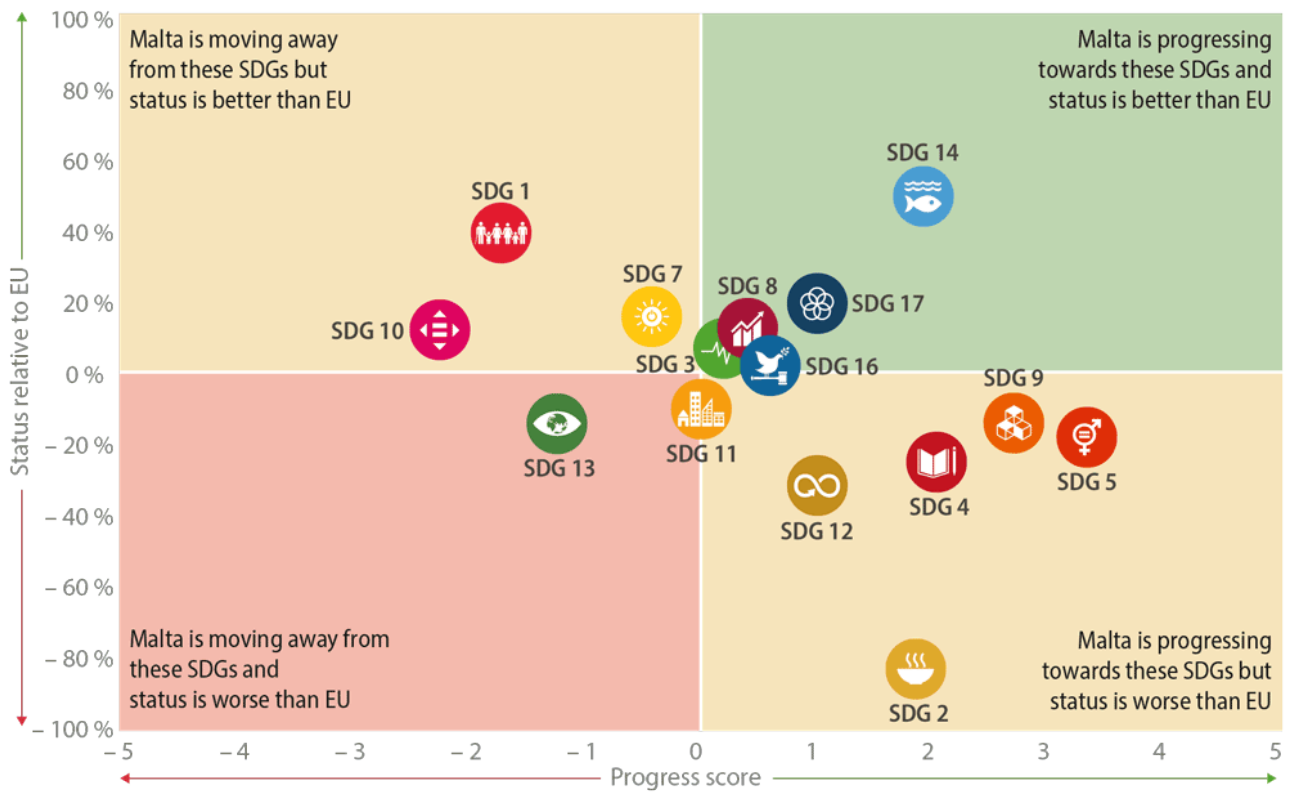
Hungary

Figure 19: Hungary Source: Eurostat

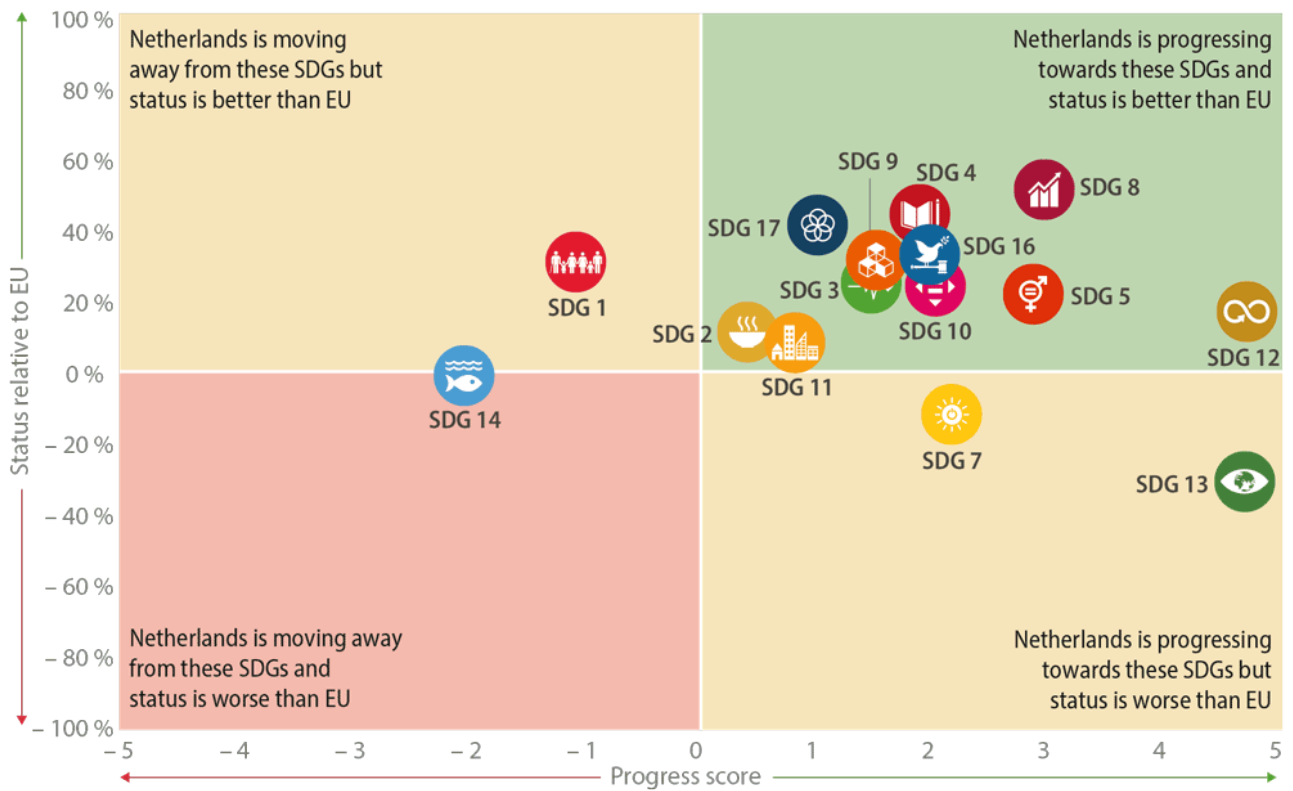*Malta*

Figure 20: Malta Source: Eurostat

Netherlands

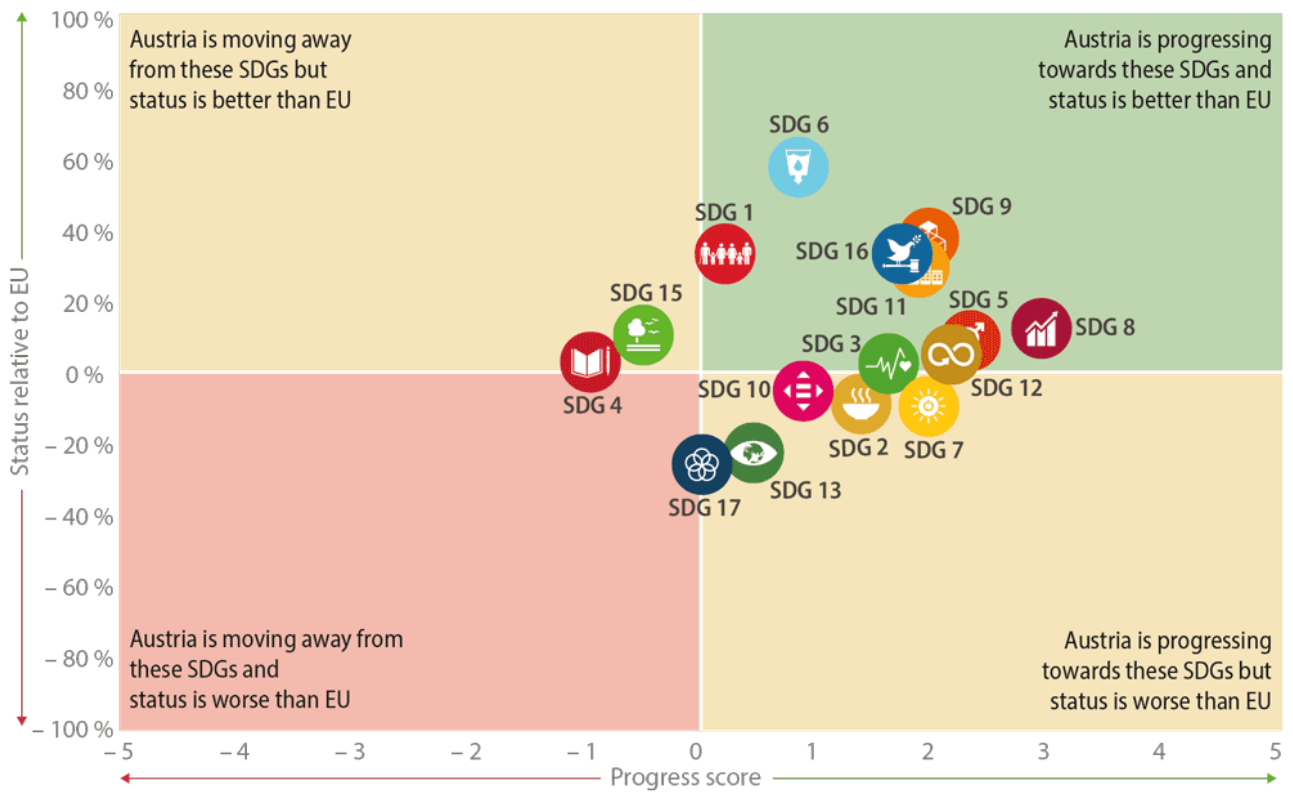**Figure 21: Netherlands Source: Eurostat**

Austria

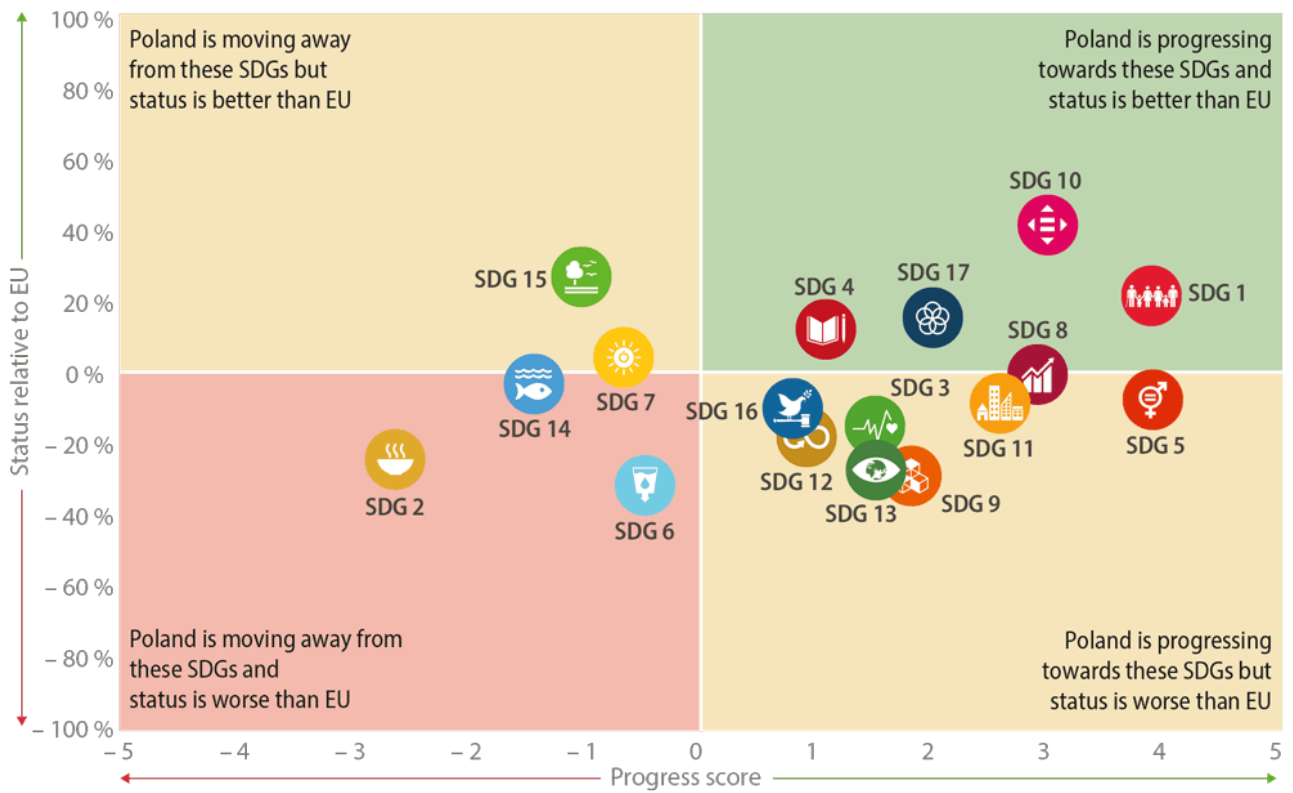**Figure 22: Austria Source: Eurostat**

Poland

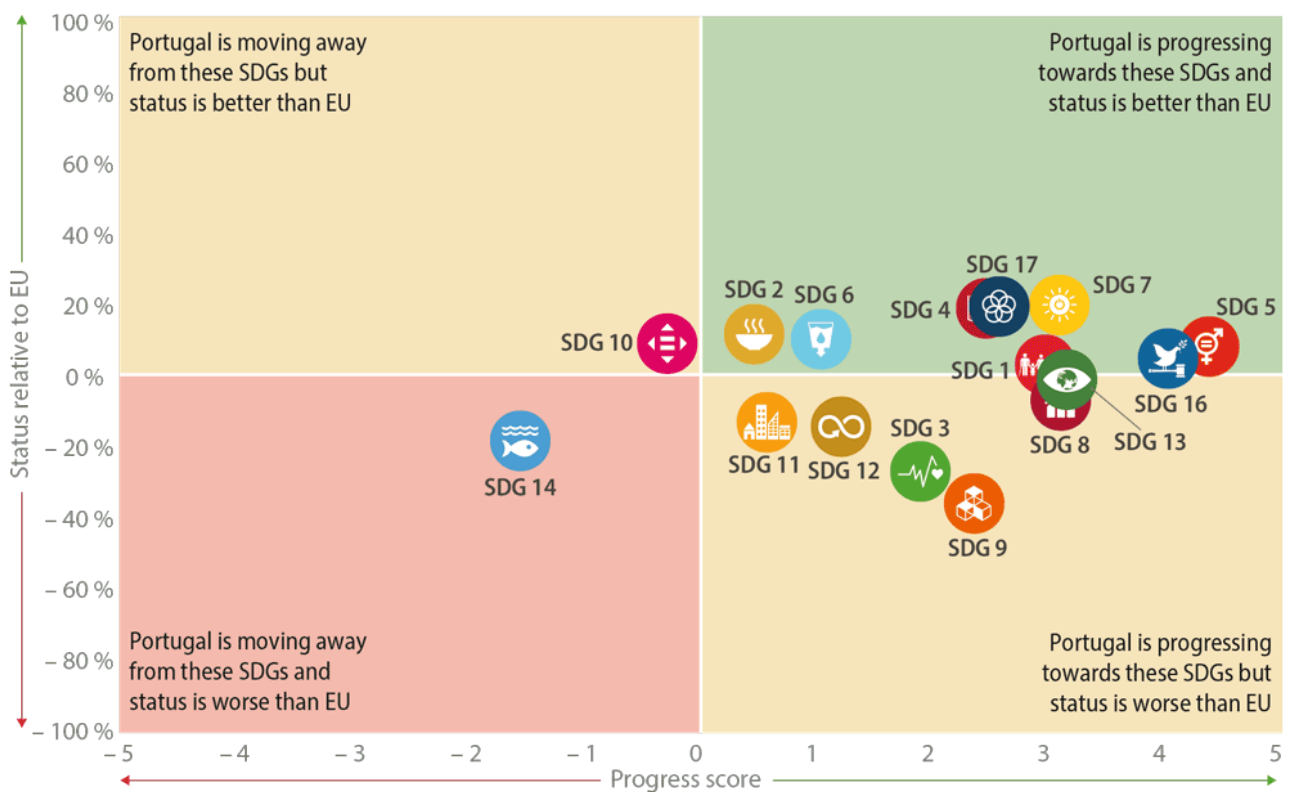**Figure 23: Poland Source: Eurostat**

Portugal

Figure 24: Portugal Source: Eurostat
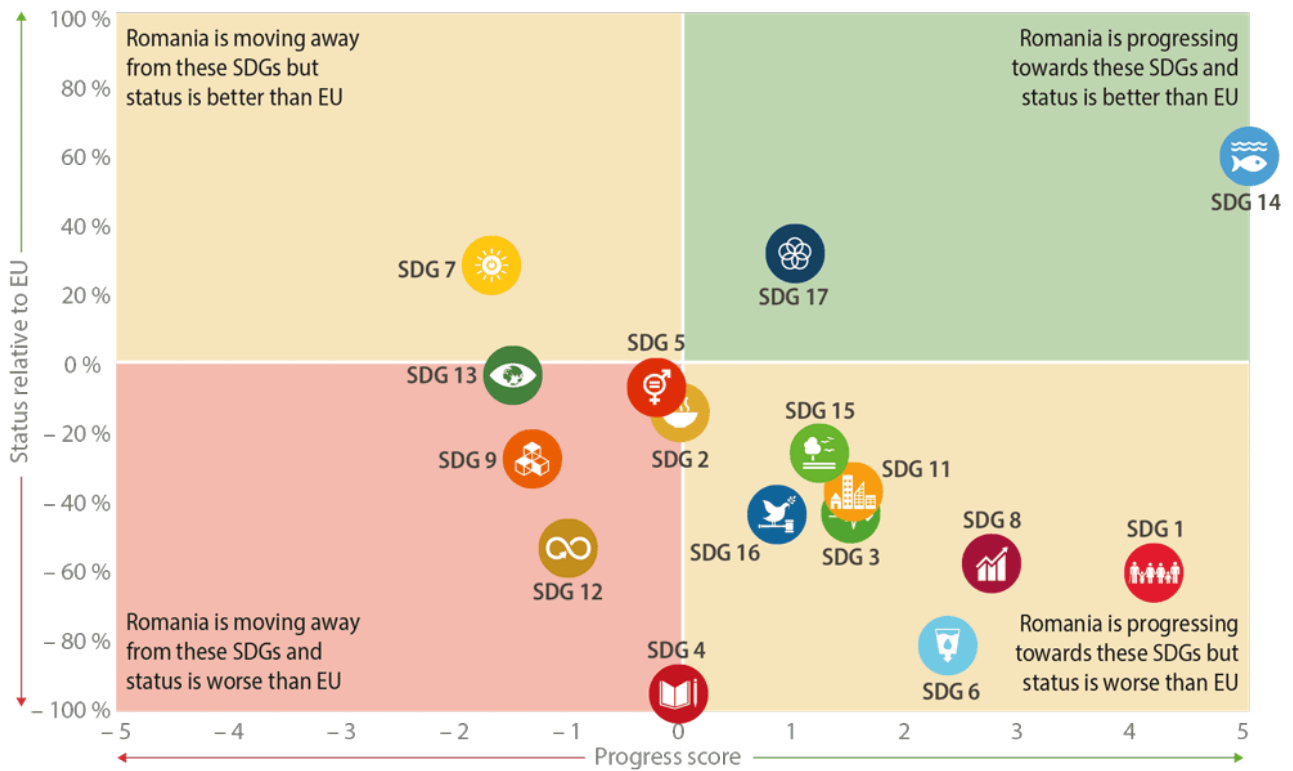
Romania

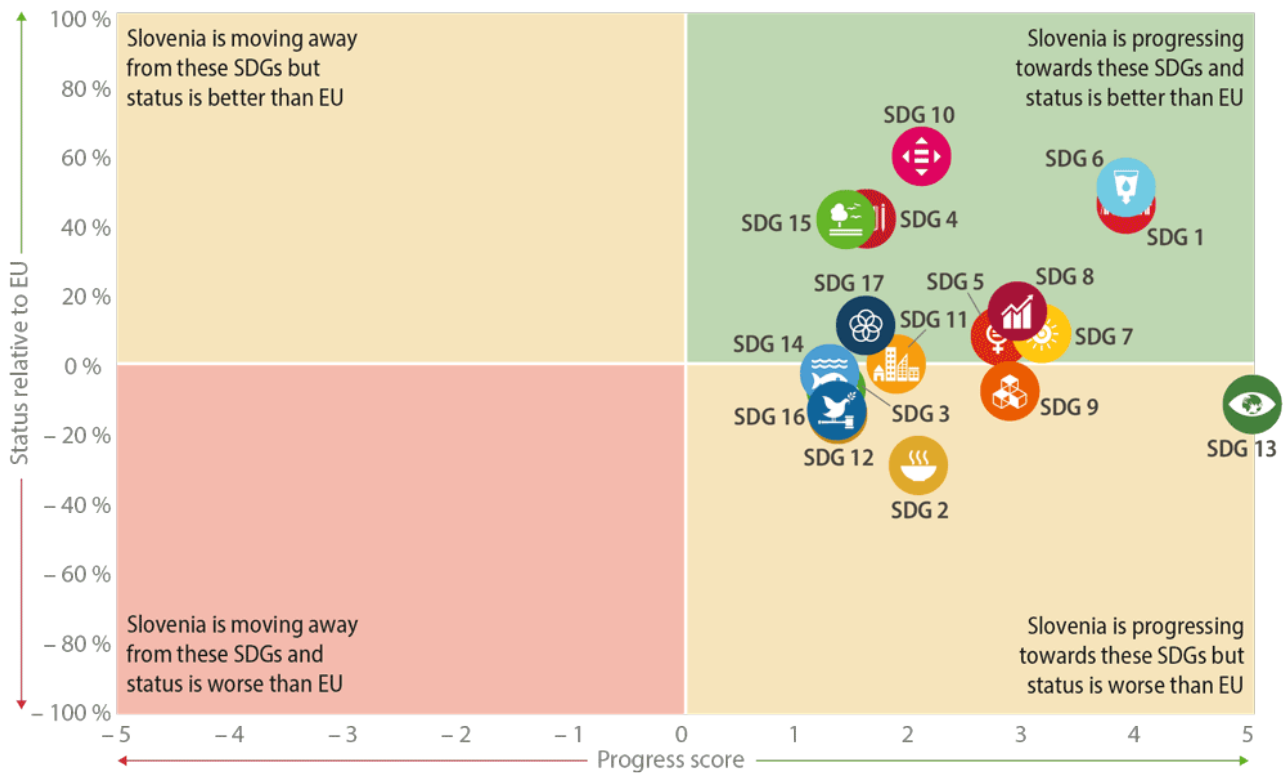**Figure 25: Romania Source: Eurostat**

Slovenia

Figure 26: Slovenia Source: Eurostat
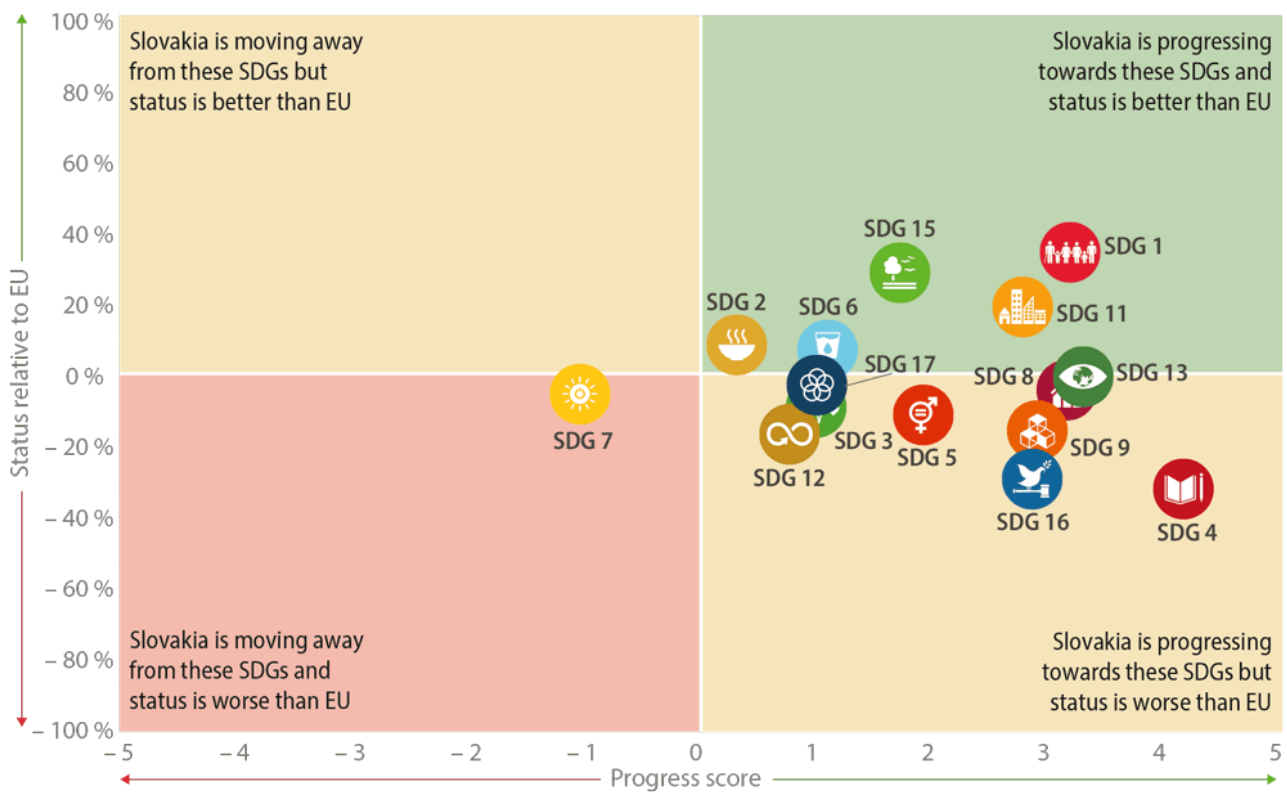
Slovakia

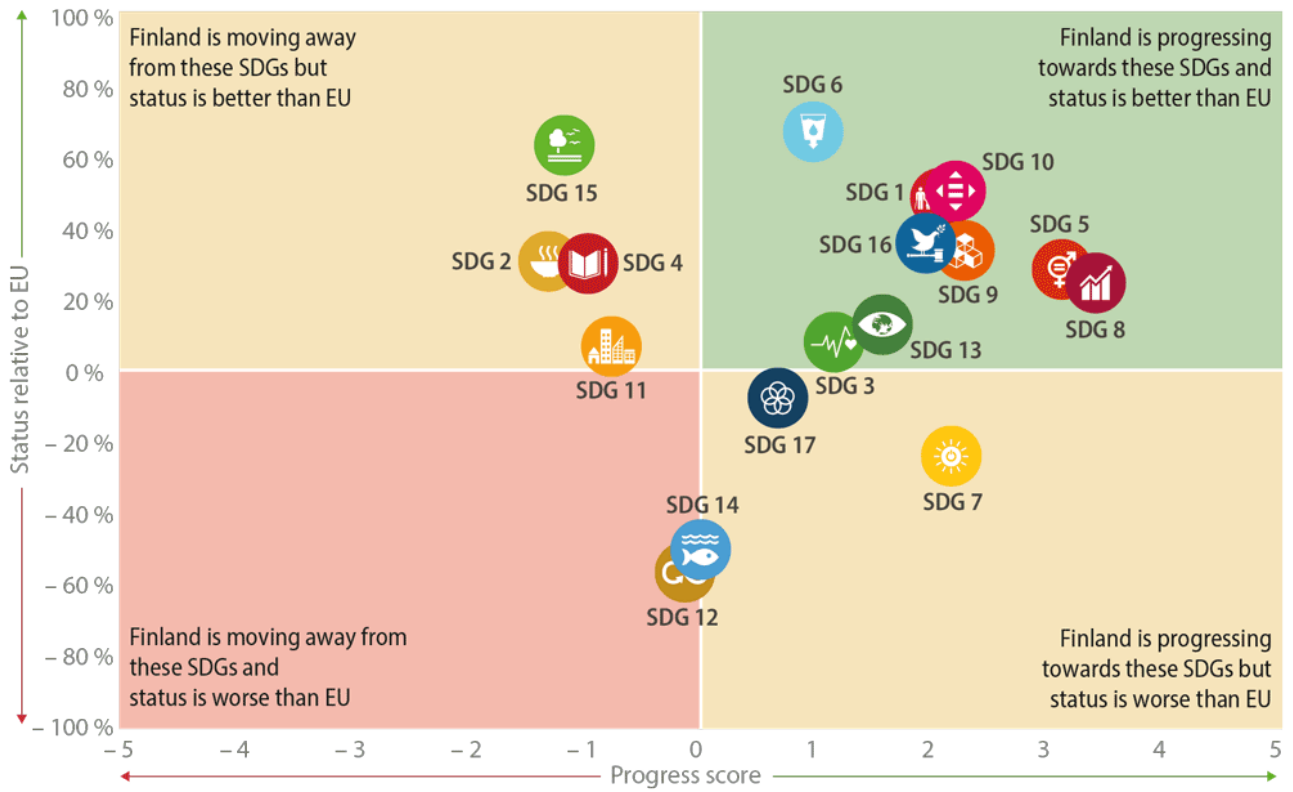**Figure 27: Slovakia Source: Eurostat**

Finland

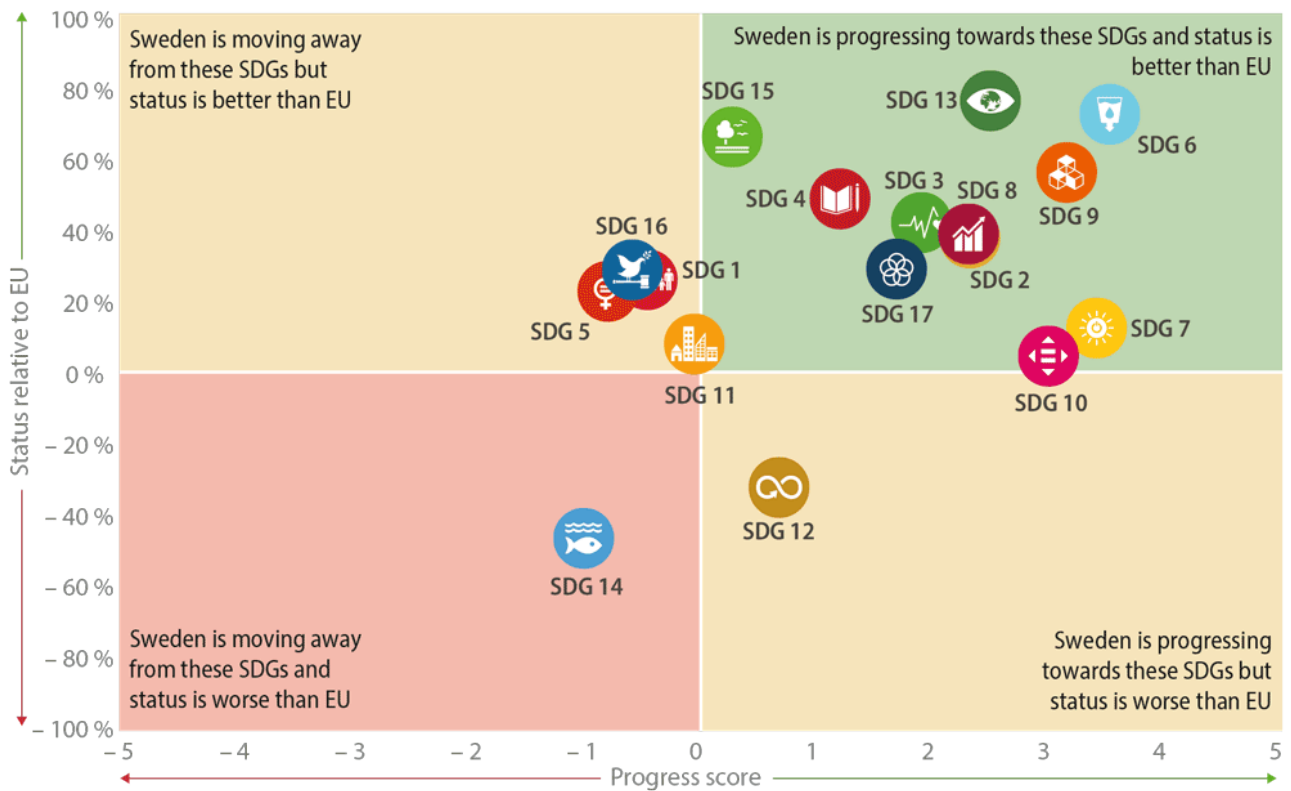**Figure 28: Finland Source: Eurostat**

Sweden

Figure 29: Sweden Source: Eurostat

See also

- All articles on sustainable development goals

Database

- Sustainable development indicators

Dedicated section

- Sustainable Development Indicators

Methodology

More detailed information on EU SDG indicators for monitoring of progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as indicator relevance, definitions, methodological notes, background and potential linkages, can be found in the introduction of the publication 'Sustainable development in the European Union — Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context — 2023 edition'.