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PART 1/7

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Situation of young people in the European Union**

*Accompanying the document*

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE  
REGIONS**

**Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy**

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# Introduction

The renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field <sup>(1)</sup>, also known as the EU Youth Strategy, covers the period from 2010 to 2018. It is divided into three-year work cycles. At the end of each cycle, a European Union (EU) Youth Report should be drawn up by the Commission. The Council has specified that the report 'shall consist of two parts: a joint Council-Commission report (political part), and supporting documents (statistical and analytical part). The EU Youth Report will evaluate progress made towards the overall objectives of the framework, as well as progress regarding the priorities defined for the most recent work cycle and identify good practices'.

This **statistical part of the report** presents data and information on the current situation of young people in Europe. Following an introductory chapter on demography, which presents the main trends in the youth population over recent years, separate chapters are dedicated to the eight 'fields of action' identified in the Council Resolution on the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018): Education and Training, Employment and Entrepreneurship, Health and Well-being, Participation, Voluntary Activities, Social Inclusion, Youth and the World, and Culture, Creativity and ICT.

This part of the report builds on the dashboard of EU youth indicators <sup>(2)</sup>, a selection of 41 indicators which measure the most crucial aspects of young people's lives in Europe. Wherever one of these indicators is used, it is highlighted on the relevant figure. The dashboard of EU youth indicators is presented as an annex to this report.

The period when a person is considered to be 'young' differs across Europe according to national context, the socio-economic development of society and time. Common to all countries is that the period of youth – the transition from being a child to being an adult – is marked by important life changes: from being in education to having a full-time job, from living in the parental home to setting up one's own household, and from being financially dependent to managing one's own money.

Relying on Eurostat data, Eurobarometer surveys and other available sources, the population targeted in this part of the report is primarily young people between 15 and 29 years of age. Where possible, the analysis distinguishes between subgroups aged 15 to 19, 20 to 24, and 25 to 29. In other cases, a more limited age range is used, either because of the specifications of survey data, or because the issue in question affects a particular age group (e.g. early school leaving). In addition, children (under 16 years of age) are also included when analysing indicators on poverty or social exclusion. In order to highlight specific issues affecting the youth population, for some indicators comparisons with the total population or the prime working age group (people aged 25-54) are also made.

In line with the analytical part of the EU Youth Report <sup>(3)</sup> illustrating the state of play of EU and national initiatives and actions, the information and analysis of this statistical section covers the EU Member States and, where the available data allows, the EU candidate countries (Albania, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey) as well as the EEA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway).

<sup>(1)</sup> Council resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1-11.

<sup>(2)</sup> Commission Staff Working Document on EU indicators in the field of youth, SEC(2011) 401 final.

<sup>(3)</sup> All EU Member States, EU candidate countries and EEA EFTA States were invited to submit national reports.

This part of the report focuses on the most recent data available and, where possible, illustrates the trends which have emerged since the establishment of the EU Youth Strategy in 2010.

## EUROPEAN YOUTH: MAIN TRENDS

### Young Europeans' lives are improving

**Young people are educated to an increasingly higher level.** Over the past decade, the majority of indicators have registered positive trends with respect to education and training, as described in Chapter 2. The proportion of young Europeans who have attained at least upper secondary level qualifications has risen, as has the proportion with tertiary degrees; in parallel, a general decline in the proportion of early school leavers has also occurred.

**More young people are finding employment.** Improved educational attainment not only supports young people's personal development, but it also benefits them in other areas of their lives. In particular, as illustrated in Chapter 3, the positive relationship between higher levels of education and employment is well established in most European countries. In the EU as a whole, the unemployment rate is much lower for young people graduating from tertiary education than for those with the lowest levels of education. Following the rise in youth unemployment provoked by the economic recession in the early years of the decade, the rates have been falling since 2013 in the majority of European countries. Around 1.3 million fewer jobless young people live in the EU today compared to 2013. Long-term youth unemployment has also declined.

**There has been some improvement in the social inclusion of young Europeans.** Labour market improvements have had a positive impact on the living conditions of many young people. Entering the job market often coincides with becoming independent and assuming new responsibilities in terms of sustaining the significant costs of living independently. Having better opportunities for finding gainful employment strengthens young people's ability to secure better social and living conditions. Improvements in the labour market have also meant that the proportion of NEETs (young people not in employment, education or training) has declined steadily in recent years, falling below the levels registered in 2010. Indeed, in 2016, for the first time since the start of the economic crisis, the proportion of unemployed NEETs was lower than that of inactive young people within this group. The proportion of young Europeans suffering from severe material deprivation has also decreased since 2012 and is now at a lower level than in 2010.

Significant improvements have been made in many aspects of young people's lives in recent years, marking a turning point in many European countries

**Young people appear less prone to risky health behaviours.** The difficulties young people face in their transition to adulthood and independence also reflect on their general welfare. In particular, as discussed in Chapter 4, vulnerable groups of young people such as those experiencing unemployment, poverty or social exclusion may be particularly prone to more serious problems in their physical and mental health. In this sense, better economic and living conditions positively influence the general well-being and health of individuals. Indeed, the proportion of young Europeans reported to be smoking daily has been steadily decreasing in the majority of countries. In addition, fewer episodes of alcohol abuse and intoxication have been reported amongst 16 year-olds.

**Young Europeans are demonstrating an increasing interest in politics and are taking advantage of the new methods of participation offered by modern technology.** Improved opportunities in education and employment, as well as progress in social inclusion, not only contribute to the younger generation's well-being, but can also revive their interest in political and civic issues and inspire them to re-engage with society. Chapter 5 documents the surge in the level of interest in politics expressed by young Europeans over the past decade, which has also led to a reduction in the traditional gap vis-à-vis older age groups. In addition, data show that young people feel more European than the general population, and self-identification as European citizens has grown more amongst the young than amongst older individuals. This renewed attention to political issues is also supported by the growing availability of internet applications, such as social media, blogs and online networks, which offer additional opportunities for communicating and exchanging information. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 9, the daily use of the internet is increasing rapidly amongst young people.

**Participation in voluntary activities shows an exceptional expansion.** This renewed engagement in society has also translated into a sharp increase in the proportion of young Europeans participating in voluntary organisations (as explained in Chapter 6). The figure has increased significantly since 2011. The increase in the proportion of young volunteers contributing to projects in foreign countries is even larger: since 2011, the figure has increase threefold, indicating young Europeans' strong solidarity with citizens across borders.

### However, some challenges persist...

**Some groups of young people encounter difficulties in educational achievement.** The rate of underachievement in literacy, numeracy and science is not improving. Since 2009, the proportion of students aged 15 with low levels of proficiency in those key competences has either stagnated – as in the case of reading and mathematics – or increased – as in science.

**Poverty and social exclusion still affect large sections of the youth population.** Despite a slight decline since 2014, the rate of children and young persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion is still considerable and higher than that recorded at the beginning of the decade. Concomitantly, the proportion of young people living in households with very low work intensity is still increasing, which poses serious risks to their economic and social welfare. What is more, in line with the trend in the general population, a growing proportion of young Europeans experience poverty while in employment. For this significant share of the youth population, the risk of suffering social exclusion and deprivation is very high.

Many young Europeans still face challenges in terms of their educational attainment, their health and their living conditions. Young people are also increasingly refraining from taking part in the electoral process

**Obesity and insufficient physical activity pose health risks for an increasing number of young people.** Over recent years, the proportion of obese young people has increased in almost all countries with available data. Obesity is partly linked to unhealthy eating habits, as well as to a lack of physical activity. Indeed, since 2011, the rate of participation of young Europeans in sports clubs has fallen.

**Electoral turnout amongst young Europeans continues to decline.** The most traditional form of political participation – voting – continues to lose its appeal amongst young Europeans, especially in EU elections. While other ways of expressing interest in political and civic issues (e.g. online methods) become more widespread, growing numbers of young citizens refrain from casting their ballot at elections. As discussed in Chapter 5, research suggests that rather than a lack of interest in democratic participation, the main reason for this disengagement seems to be that young people are not attracted by the choices on offer at elections.

## ... and some groups of young Europeans suffer from inequalities

**Young women and men both face disadvantages but in different areas.** Data presented across the statistical section of this report point to the existence of inequalities between genders. Despite achieving higher levels of education, women's participation in the labour market is – in some respects – less prominent than that of young men. This is often related to the fact that they leave the labour force due to family and caring responsibilities. For example, part-time work is more common amongst women than men, and fewer women become self-employed. The potential economic fragility resulting from a less conspicuous involvement in the labour market can amplify the danger of social deprivation. Indeed, the risk of poverty or social exclusion affects young women to a larger extent than men. Larger proportions of young women also report facing barriers to accessing medical examinations, although this might be also linked to their stronger tendency to seek medical care. Social and economic marginalisation is known to have negative effects on the levels of political and civic participation. As a matter of fact, women vote and take part in organisations and political parties to a lesser extent than men.

Young women suffer more from social exclusion and political disengagement than young men, who, in turn, are more susceptible to educational underachievement and health risks.

On the other hand, young men are disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment compared to women. They generally complete upper secondary and tertiary education at lower rates than women and are more at risk of leaving education early. Lower levels of participation in education contribute to the higher numbers of unemployed among young men than women. Men also suffer particular challenges in terms of health: not only are they more prone to risk behaviours and substance abuse (e.g. smoking, alcohol and cannabis), but they are also more likely than women to succeed in their attempts to commit suicide.

**Young Europeans from eastern and southern Europe face comparatively bigger challenges in terms of education, employment and inclusion.** The trends in these three areas show that inequalities are manifest across different regions of Europe. For the main indicators on education, young people from countries in the eastern and southern regions of Europe consistently have worse outcomes than the European average. Lower proportions of students from these regions attain tertiary degrees, higher proportions leave school early, and greater percentages of students have low proficiency in reading, mathematics and science.

Apart from educational attainment, there are considerable differences between European countries in young people's use of digital technologies. The rate at which young Europeans from countries in the south and east of Europe master digital skills is lower than the EU average. As these competences are increasingly important to succeed in the labour market as well as for making the most of the opportunities for civic and cultural participation offered by the internet and its applications, such a deficit poses a particularly serious risk of economic and social exclusion.

Young people from southern and eastern Europe encounter multiple threats to their educational, economic and social development.

Indeed, higher than average general and long-term rates of youth unemployment are detected in the very same regions of Europe. In the southern European countries that were severely affected by the European debt crisis, youth unemployment rates are still considerably higher than before the recession. Moreover, in these countries educational attainment seems unable to ease the path to employment: the unemployment rates of people aged 20-29 remain high among those with low-level as well as high-level qualifications.

All these disadvantages are reflected in the social and living conditions experienced by youth groups in southern and eastern parts of Europe. Not only are they confronted with a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion, but

in some countries their situation is deteriorating. While a general recovery in the economic and social prospects of young people has occurred in recent years in most areas of Europe, some Member States – particularly in the south – are still suffering the aftermath of the economic recession.



# 1. Demography

## EU youth indicators

Total number of children (0-14) on 1 January

Figure 1-A

Total number of young people (15-29) on 1 January

Figure 1-B

Proportion of young people (15-19, 20-24, 25-29) in the total population on 1 January

Figures 1-C and 1-D

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

There is no universally accepted definition of 'youth' in terms of the ages it covers. Cultural and socio-economic factors influence perceptions and determine when a person enters this period of life and how long it lasts. This is reflected in the fact that European countries' national policies on youth matters vary in the age range they take into account <sup>(4)</sup>.

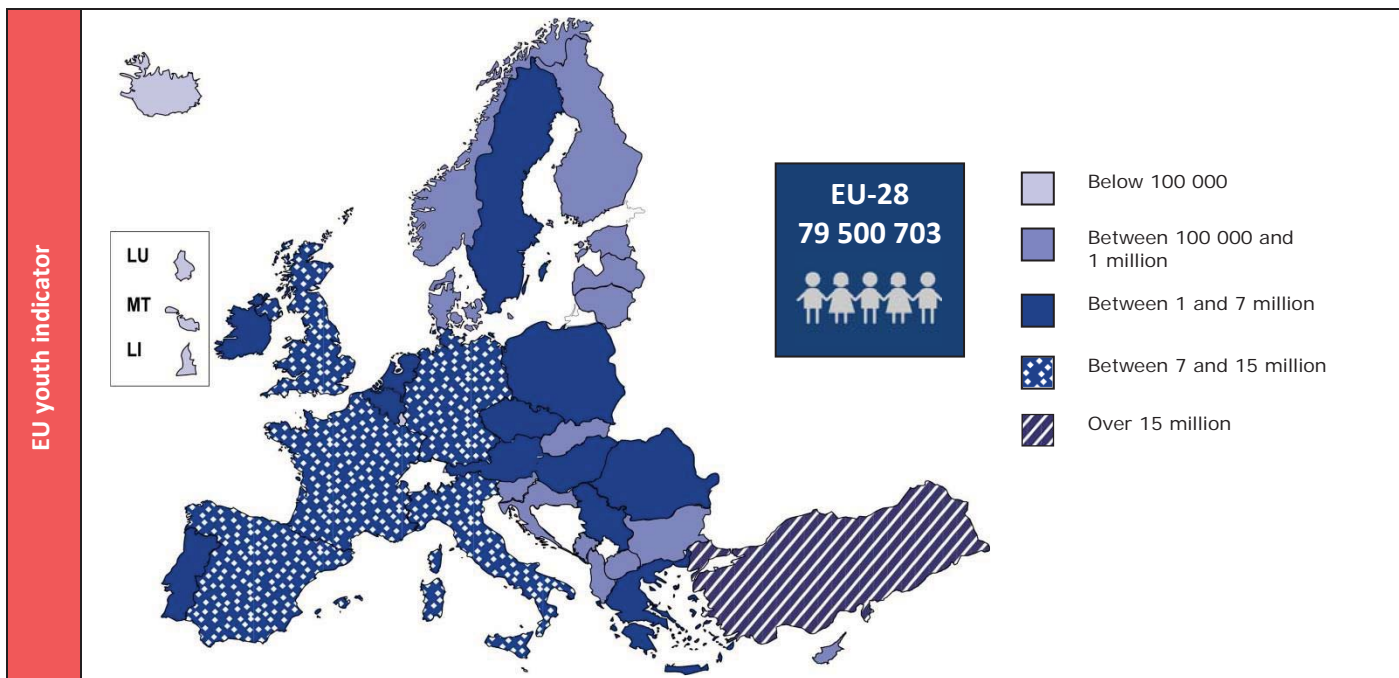
At EU level, official indicators in the field of youth set the age group as between 15 and 29 years of age <sup>(5)</sup>. This introductory chapter, therefore, sets the scene for the report as a whole by illustrating the key demographic data and trends for this age group.

The first section offers an overview of the size and geographical distribution of young people across countries, followed by an illustration of their proportion in the total population. The trend in the number and proportion of young people over recent years is then described, accompanied by a discussion of the projected changes for the years ahead. In the second section, the impact of international migration and patterns of youth mobility across the continent are presented.

## 1.2. EUROPEAN YOUTH POPULATION: PAST AND FUTURE TRENDS

On 1 January 2016, the European Union counted almost 80 million **children** and over 88 million **young people** (Figures 1-A and 1-B).

**Figure 1-A:** Number of children (aged 0-14) on 1 January, by country, 2016



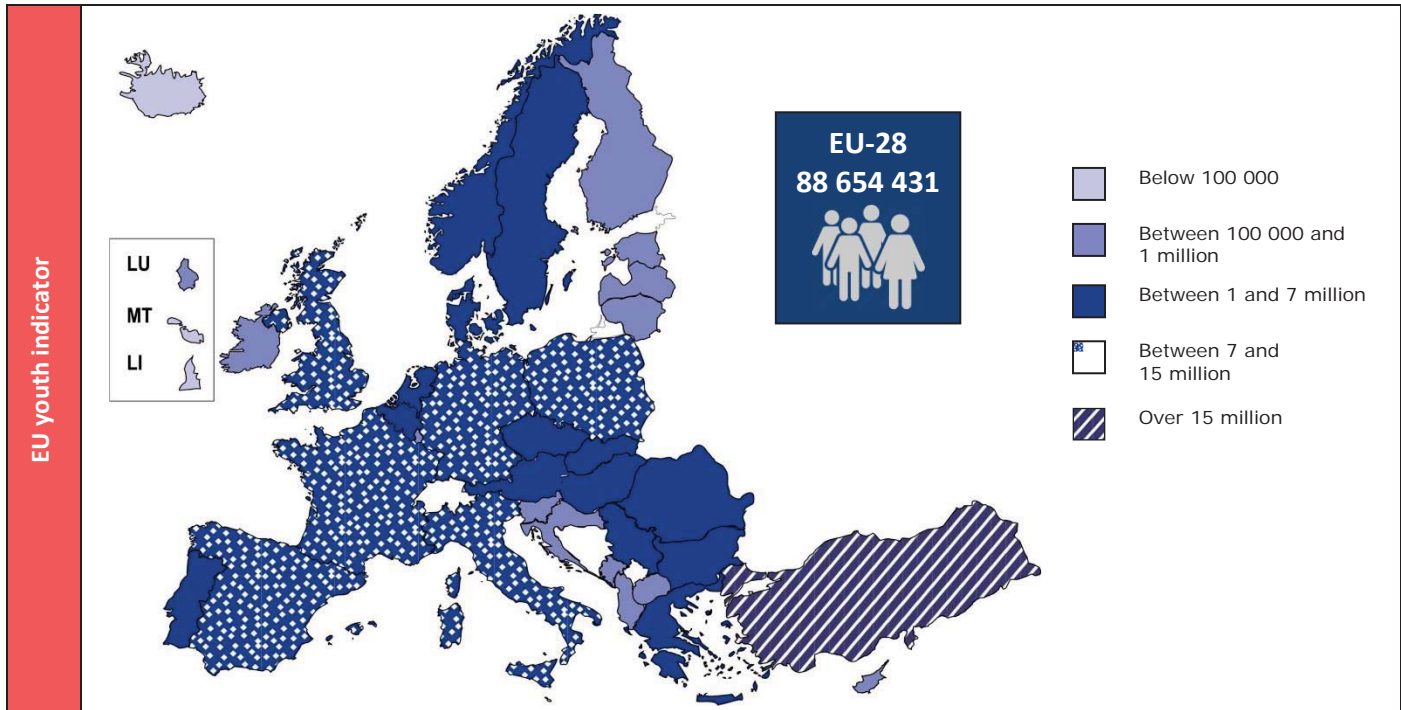
Source: Own calculation based on Eurostat [yth\_demo\_010].

<sup>(4)</sup> Official definitions of 'youth' in European countries can be found on the online pages of the Youth Wiki at <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/youthwiki>

<sup>(5)</sup> Commission Staff Working Document on EU indicators in the field of youth, SEC(2011) 401 final.

For both age groups, the areas with the highest populations of young people were western and central Europe, while eastern and northern European countries reported lower figures. This clearly relates to the geographical distribution of the general population across countries. Outside the EU, Turkey was clearly the European country with the highest numbers of children and young people.

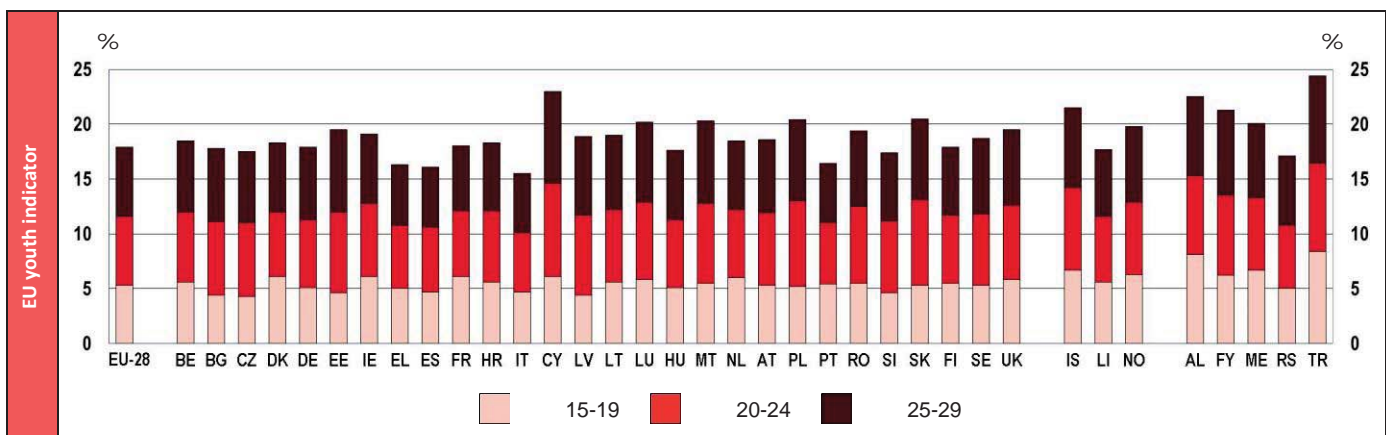
**Figure 1-B:** Number of young people (aged 15-29) on 1 January, by country, 2016



Source: Own calculation based on Eurostat [yth\_demo\_010].

Young people represent around 17 % of the total population of the European Union (Figure 1-C). This proportion varies across countries: while it is comparatively smaller in Greece, Spain, Italy, and Slovenia (below 16 %), it reaches the highest level in Cyprus, where 23.6 % of the population is under 30 years of age. Iceland, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey report the highest figures outside the EU.

**Figure 1-C:** Share of young people (aged 15-29) in the total population on 1 January, by age group and by country, 2016



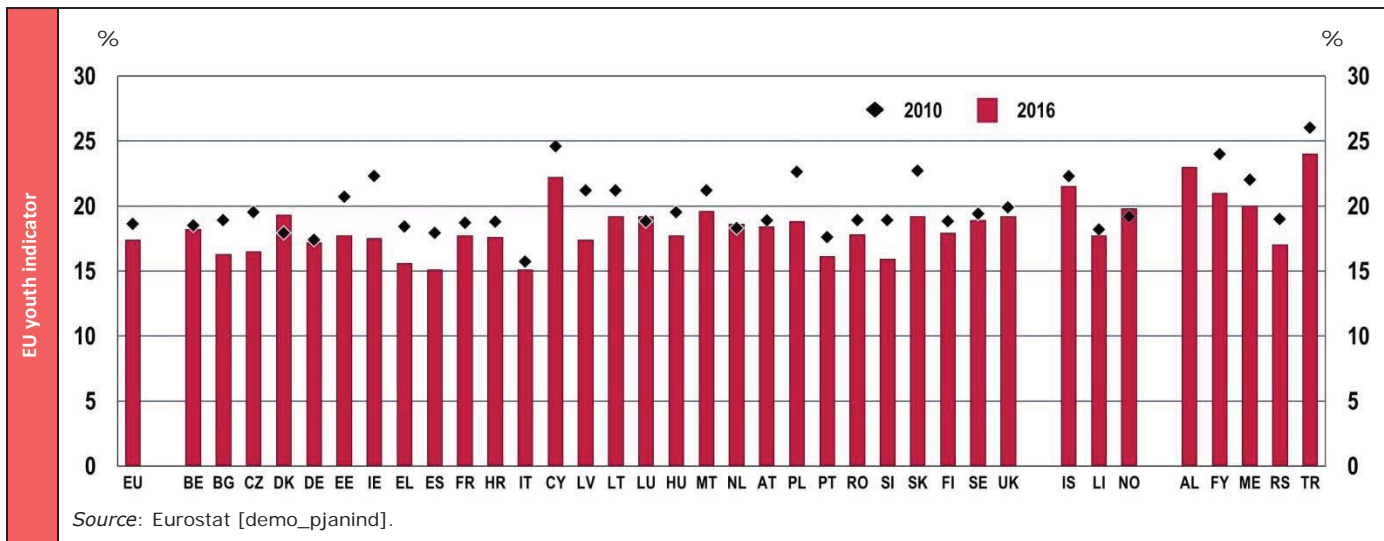
Notes: The population corresponds to the number of persons having their usual residence in the country on 1st January. When 'usual residence' cannot be established, the countries can report of the legal or registered residence.

Source: Eurostat [demo\_pjanind].

The proportion of young people in the total population has declined progressively over recent decades, from around 24 % in 1985 to 19 % in 2010<sup>(6)</sup>. Fewer births have led to a fall in the youth population and – combined with increased life expectancy – to a parallel increase in the proportion of older age groups in the total population<sup>(7)</sup>. In line with such long term trends, the proportion of young people continued to drop between 2010 and 2016 (Figure 1-D). On average, the size of the youth population decreased by 1.2 percentage points over those six years, equivalent to roughly 1 million people. This decline affected countries to a different extent.

The proportion of young people in the European Union continues to decrease and the decline is expected to carry on in the future.

**Figure 1-D:** Share of young people (aged 15-29) in the total population, by country, 2010 and 2016



Central, eastern and southern European countries have seen comparatively larger drops in their youth populations than northern ones. However, Ireland is the country recording the highest fall in percentage points since 2010 (-4.8 p.p.). On the other hand, a few countries (Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Norway) have witnessed slight increases in the proportion of young people in their population.

There are several reasons behind the decline in the youth population in the vast majority of European countries. While fertility rates rose modestly during the first decade of the century, they remained below the replacement level<sup>(8)</sup>. Since 2008, they have recorded a further decline which will affect the youth population in the future. This is partly due to the effects of the economic crisis which impacted on the level of unemployment and family income, especially in those countries most severely hit by the economic downturn<sup>(9)</sup>. In these countries, the economic crisis has also meant high rates of youth emigration (discussed in the last section of the chapter), further aggravating the demographic imbalance. In addition, a general tendency for women to give birth to fewer children and at a later age in life is observed, which further reduces the proportion of children being

<sup>(6)</sup> Time series of the proportion of younger age groups in the total population are available at the Eurostat online database [data code: demo\_pjanind].

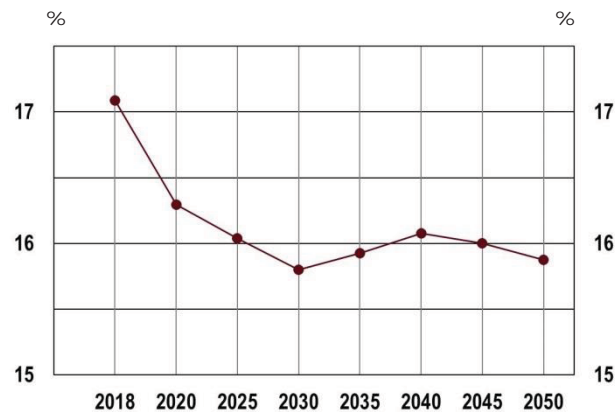
<sup>(7)</sup> Time series of total fertility rate are available at the Eurostat online database [data code: demo\_find].

<sup>(8)</sup> Eurostat, 2015.

<sup>(9)</sup> Ibid.

born<sup>(10)</sup>. These trends are expected to continue in the coming decades, leading to further reductions in the size of the EU youth population (Figure 1-E).

**Figure 1-E:** Projected proportion of the youth population (aged 15-29), EU-28 average, 2018-2050



Source: Eurostat [proj\_15npms].

According to these projections, while the total EU population is expected to grow through 2050 reaching approximately 525 million in that year, the proportion of young people will decrease from about 17 % in 2018 to below 16 % in 2050, equivalent to a reduction of over 7 million individuals. The progressive decline in the proportion of young people, in a context of gradual growth in the total population and of ever-increasing life expectancy rates, indicates that the EU population is progressively ageing. This is expected to substantially boost the old-age dependency ratio, a measure of the extent to which the working-age segment of the population has to support older age groups through, for example, sustaining public

healthcare and pension schemes<sup>(11)</sup>. As a result, younger generations will likely face an increased burden in supporting the remainder of the population as they move into work<sup>(12)</sup>.

### 1.3 THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL AND INTRA-EU MIGRATION

The steady decrease in the youth population living in the EU over the last decades has been alleviated by the growth of immigration from outside of the EU<sup>(13)</sup>. The influx of immigrants has compensated for the overall natural change in the general population and reversed an otherwise declining trend in the total population<sup>(14)</sup>. This phenomenon has been evident since 2011, although a blip occurred in 2014 (Figure 1-F).

Immigration from outside the EU has partially offset the decrease in the EU youth population.

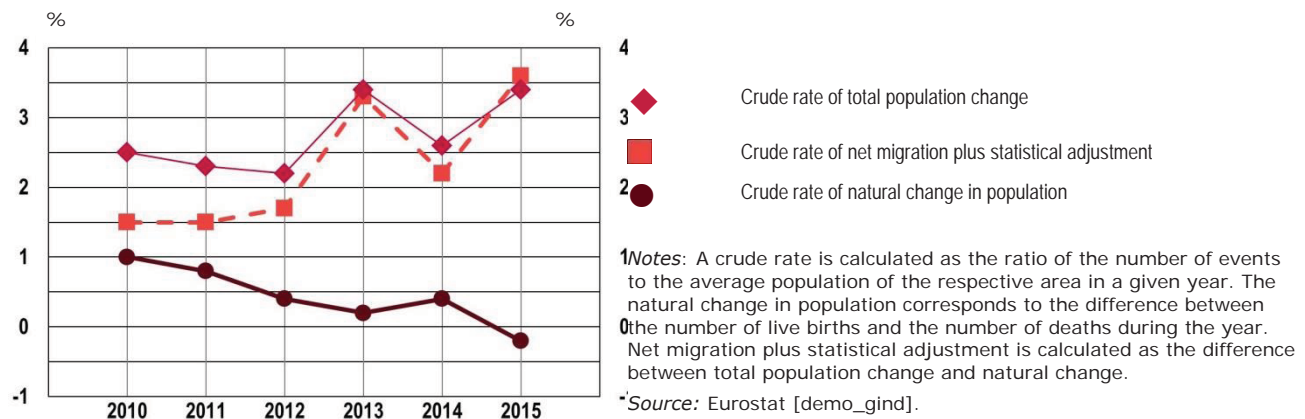
<sup>(10)</sup> Ibid. and Amin and Behrman, 2013.

<sup>(11)</sup> Eurostat's projections expect the average old-age-dependency ratio in the European Union to increase from 30.5 % in 2018 to 50.3 % in 2050 (online data code: proj\_15ndbims).

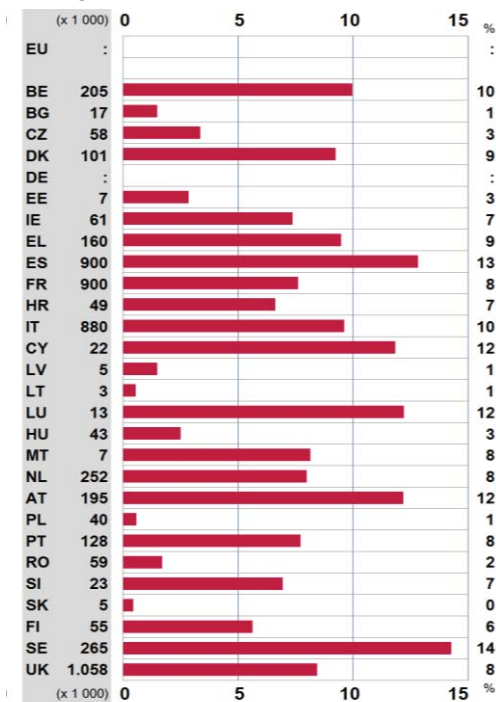
<sup>(12)</sup> For a discussion of the social and economic consequences of low fertility and demographic decline, see Bloom et al., 2008, and Hansen and Gordon, 2014.

<sup>(13)</sup> Wilson et al., 2013; Lanzieri, 2013.

<sup>(14)</sup> An illustration of trends since 1960 can be found on the Eurostat website at [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population\\_and\\_population\\_change\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_and_population_change_statistics)

**Figure 1-F:** Crude rates of population change, EU-28 average, 2010-2015

Data illustrated on the chart show how the crude rate of total population change rose owing to the growth in the crude rate of net migration plus adjustment, especially since 2012.

**Figure 1-G:** Proportion and number of young people (aged 15-29) born in a country outside the EU, by EU Member State, 2016

**Notes:** Ireland: break in series in 2016; France and Poland: provisional data; Germany: derogation to participation in data collection applies.

As data pertain to young people born outside of the European Union, EFTA countries (IS, LI and NO) and EU candidates (AL, FY, ME, RS and TR) are not included.

*Source:* Eurostat [migr\_pop3ctb].

In addition, immigrants into EU Member States are, on average, much younger than the total population already resident in their country of destination: on 1 January 2016, the median age of the total population of the EU-28 was 42.6 years while the median age of immigrants to EU-28 was 27.5 years<sup>(15)</sup>. Although the contribution of immigration from non-EU countries has not been enough to reverse the general decline in the youth population living in the EU – as illustrated in the first part of the chapter – it has nonetheless made it less sharp. Immigration has impacted on countries' youth populations at varying degrees as illustrated by the proportion of young people born outside the EU and living in EU Member States (Figure 1-G).

The highest numbers of young people born outside the EU are found in Spain, France, Italy and the United Kingdom. This is in line with statistics identifying these countries (together with Germany, for which data are not available) as among those hosting the largest numbers of international migrants from across the world<sup>(16)</sup>. Relative to the size of the resident youth population, Belgium, Spain, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Austria and Sweden present the highest figures, reporting percentages equal to or higher than 10 %.

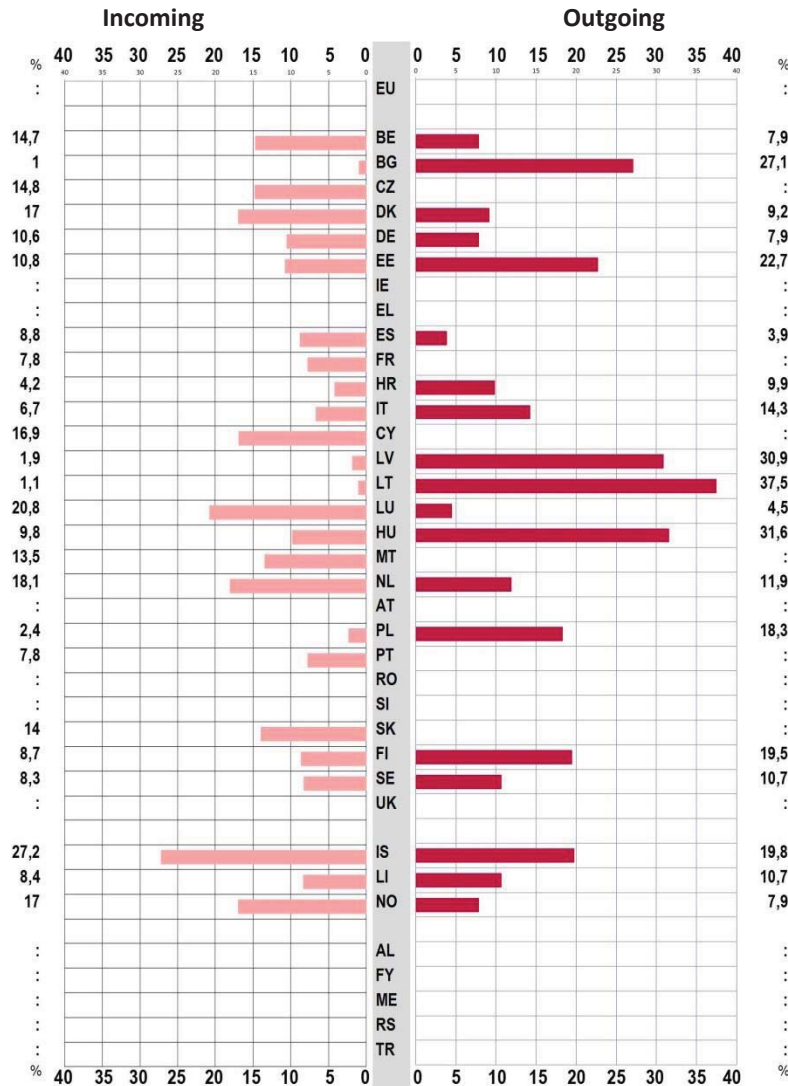
<sup>(15)</sup> Source: Eurostat, online data code [migr\_imm2ctz] and discussion of data at [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration\\_and\\_migrant\\_population\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics)

<sup>(16)</sup> United Nations, 2016.

International migration also increases the diversity of the youth population in Europe. In the EU in 2014, second-generation young immigrants (young people between 15 and 29 years of age born in an EU Member State with at least one parent from a country outside the EU) were about 2.5 million <sup>(17)</sup>.

**Figure 1-H:** Proportion of young people (aged 15-29) moving in/ from a European country, by country, 2015

In addition to international flows, intra-EU migration is an important dimension of youth demography. Thanks to the increasing opportunities for EU citizens to travel and set up residence across EU Member States, young Europeans have become increasingly mobile and likely to work or study in another European country <sup>(18)</sup>. Crossing geographical and cultural borders and gaining life and work experience in a different context is a great opportunity for a young person to acquire personal skills, learn new languages and appreciate the diversity of European culture. Comparing data by country on incoming and outgoing mobility allows for the identification of the 'net providers' and 'net receivers' of the young people moving across Europe; it also enables the mapping of the main trajectories of intra-EU youth mobility (Figure 1-H).



Source: Eurostat [yth\_demo\_070] and [yth\_demo\_080].

Notes: According to the definitions provided by Eurostat, 'Immigration' denotes the action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country. 'Emigration' denotes the action by which a person, having previously been usually resident in the territory of a Member State, ceases to have his or her usual residence in that Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months.

Percentages refer to the proportion of the population reaching the age of 15 and not surpassing the age of 29 during the reference year.

Iceland and Norway appear as destinations attracting significant proportions of young Europeans. Other countries (such as Germany, Netherlands and Sweden) show more balanced figures of outgoing and incoming

<sup>(17)</sup> Data source: Eurostat [lfs0\_14pcobp]. Data are only available for year 2014.

<sup>(18)</sup> European Commission, 2012a and 2014a.

migrants, partly due to the higher proportions of students of this age arriving for study purposes (as illustrated in Chapter 2, Section 2.4).

The lack of EU level data for many countries since 2010 hampers the scope of analysis, which is therefore limited to the countries for which data are available. Increases in the proportion of young people

emigrating to another country since 2010 have been observed in Italy and Hungary, and, outside the EU, in Iceland and Liechtenstein<sup>(19)</sup>. On the other hand, Estonia and Finland have registered slight reductions in the number of young people moving abroad over the past five years<sup>(20)</sup>.

Significant flows of young Europeans have moved from eastern and southern countries towards north-western ones over the last decade.

Research on the topic provides further insight on these trends by documenting increased flows of youth emigration from eastern European countries (especially Bulgaria, Poland and the Baltic Republics) towards western ones (in particular, the United Kingdom and Germany), also as a consequence of the economic crisis which began in 2008 and the rising levels of youth unemployment (as discussed in Chapter 3)<sup>(21)</sup>. In addition to an east-to-west trend, a south-to-north drift has also taken place, and for similar reasons: significant proportions of young people have moved in recent years from southern European countries (in particular Greece, Spain and Italy) to northern ones (again mainly Germany and the United Kingdom) in search of education opportunities (discussed in Section 2.4 of the chapter on Education and Training), improved career prospects and better economic conditions<sup>(22)</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The proportion of young people in the European Union continues to decrease and the decline is expected to carry on in the future. Eastern and southern European countries have seen comparatively larger drops in their youth populations than the average in the EU. In addition to the general decrease in fertility rates affecting the European population as a whole, in these countries, the economic crisis has also meant high rates of youth emigration, further aggravating the demographic imbalance.

The steady decrease in the youth population living in the EU over the last decades has been alleviated by the growth of immigration from outside of the EU. The influx of immigrants has compensated for the overall natural change in the general population and reversed an otherwise declining trend in the total population. In addition to international flows, intra-EU migration has also increased, young Europeans have become increasingly mobile and likely to work or study in another European country.

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<sup>(19)</sup> For the countries mentioned, data are available at Eurostat's the online database [data code: yth\_demo\_070 and yth\_demo\_080].

<sup>(20)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(21)</sup> King et al., 2016. In addition, the reports from the project 'ON-THE-MOVE –*The reality of free movement for young European citizens migrating in times of crisis*' from 2014 offer interesting insight on the motivations of young Europeans migrants. Available at: <http://euonthemove.eu/lessons-learned/> [Accessed on 9 November 2017].

<sup>(22)</sup> Glorius and Dominguez-Mujica, 2017.





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PART 2/7

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Situation of young people in the European Union**

*Accompanying the document*

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE  
REGIONS**

**Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy**

{COM(2018) 269 final} - {SWD(2018) 168 final}

## 2. Education and Training

### EU youth indicators

Young people (aged 20-24) who have completed at least upper secondary education	Figures 2-A and 2-B
Tertiary educational attainment of people aged 30-34	Figures 2-C and 2-D
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Low-achieving 15 year-old students in reading, mathematics and science	Figure 2-G
Young people in upper general secondary education learning two or more foreign languages	Figure 2-H

## 2.1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of education is unquestioned in today's world. Throughout the years spent in formal education and by means of the opportunities made available through non-formal and informal education and youth work, children and young people have the chance to develop their personal and social potential, acquire basic skills and qualifications, and become integrated into society at large. Indeed, high-quality and inclusive education for all is one of the most effective defences against the risks of social marginalisation, poverty and exclusion, especially at times of crisis <sup>(1)</sup>.

Moreover, education is not only a fundamental determinant of individual life chances and social participation, but also of economic development <sup>(2)</sup>. Accordingly, obtaining a high-quality education gives the opportunity for young people to succeed in the labour market and find meaningful employment, while spurring long-term economic growth.

This chapter discusses the provision of learning opportunities for young people in Europe in both formal and non-formal settings. Taking a brief look first at the average number of years young Europeans spend in formal education, the chapter goes on to examine attainment in terms of the educational level completed and student achievement in reading, mathematics and science. The chapter proceeds to give an insight into the participation of young people in non-formal learning, including youth work activities, and then turns to analysing how many young Europeans have had the opportunity to widen their learning experiences by going abroad during their studies.

## 2.2. FORMAL EDUCATION

Formal education refers to the structured system of education from pre-primary to tertiary level. This section considers some of the aspects most relevant to young people: the qualifications they attain – or fail to attain if they leave school prematurely – and the skills they acquire in the education system.

### 2.2.1. Participation and attainment

European children and young people on average spend 17 years in formal education <sup>(3)</sup>. Variations between countries are, however, quite significant, with the expected time spent in education ranging from 15 years in Luxembourg, to 21 years in Finland <sup>(4)</sup>. Such differences are partly due to countries setting different starting ages for compulsory education <sup>(5)</sup>; nevertheless, young people also stay longer in education beyond the compulsory school years to complete upper secondary and tertiary degrees.

Upper secondary educational attainment is considered the minimum desirable educational attainment level for EU citizens, as it is a prerequisite for better labour market integration and avoiding poverty and social exclusion <sup>(6)</sup>. In 2016, an average of 83.2 % of 20- to 24-year-olds in the EU had attained at least upper

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<sup>(1)</sup> Council of the European Union, 2017.

<sup>(2)</sup> EENEE, 2014.

<sup>(3)</sup> Source: Eurostat, 'Expected school years of pupils and students by education level', online data code: educ\_uoe\_enra07. Data extracted on 19/06/2017.

<sup>(4)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(5)</sup> European Commission, 2016a. For a detailed information on the duration of compulsory education/training in European countries, please see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017a.

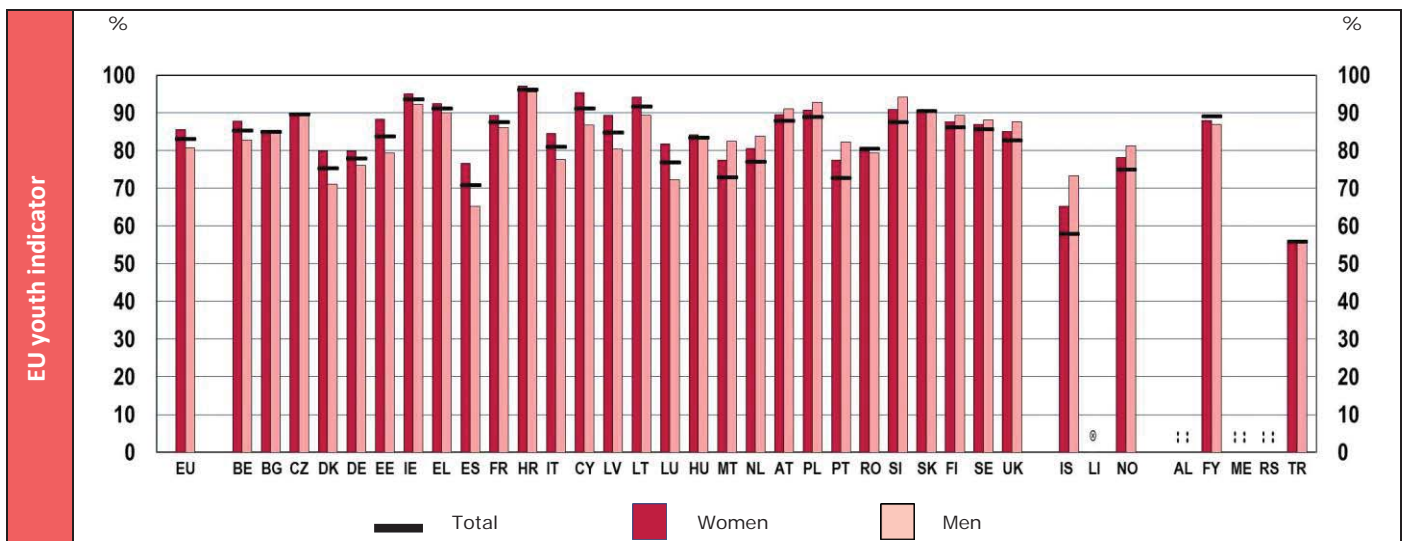
<sup>(6)</sup> European Commission, 2016a.

secondary education (Figure 2-A). Approximately one third of countries reported levels significantly higher, while in Spain, Iceland and Turkey the percentage is equal to or less than 70 %.

Women generally have higher educational attainment levels than men. As Figure 2-A shows, in the EU-28, on average 85.6 % of women completed at least upper secondary education, while the percentage of men with the same attainment level was 80.8 %. This pattern holds true for all countries, with the exception of Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey where women and men complete upper secondary education at similar rates. Men record the lowest rates of upper secondary attainment in comparison to women in Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal and Iceland, with gaps spanning from 9 to 15 percentage points.

Young people are increasingly highly educated. The proportion of young Europeans attaining upper secondary qualifications continues to increase.

**Figure 2-A:** Share of young people (aged 20-24) who have completed at least upper secondary education, by country and by sex, 2016



Source: Eurostat LFS [edat\_lfse\_03].

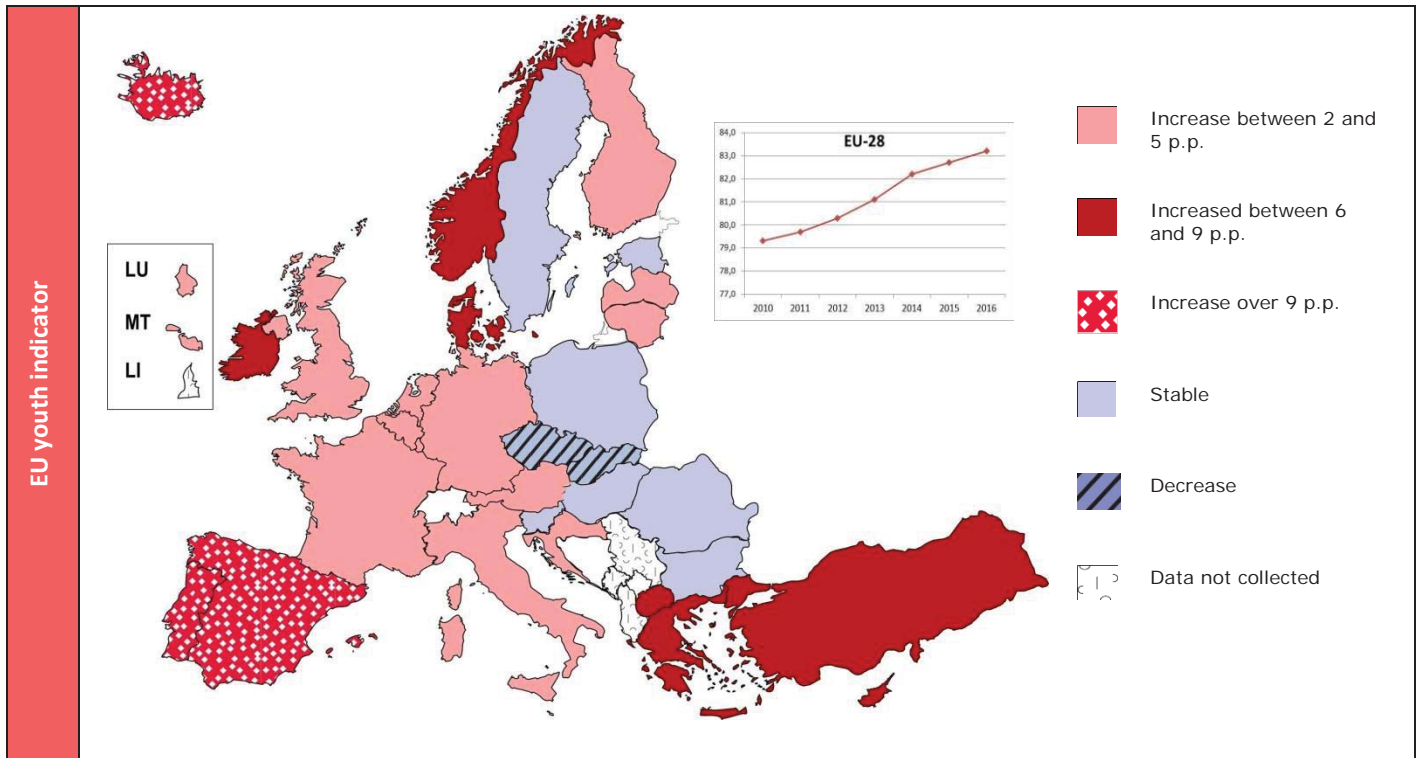
Notes: Data refer to upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education, corresponding to levels 3 and 4 of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011).

Over time, young people have become increasingly qualified: in 2016, only 69 % of people aged 55 to 64 had attained upper secondary qualifications, in comparison with over 83 % of 20-24 year-olds<sup>(7)</sup>. Progress has continued in recent years. Indeed, the proportion of young people aged 20 to 24 with upper secondary or higher educational attainment has increased continuously since 2010 (Figure 2-B). On average, an increase of almost four percentage points was registered in the European Union. Two-thirds of countries have witnessed an increase in the rates of upper secondary attainment. Among them, a few have showed impressive improvements: Spain, Iceland and Portugal have respectively seen increases of 9.4, 11.8 and 18.4 percentage points since 2010.

A few countries have remained stable over the years, while only two – Czech Republic and Slovakia – have recorded slight decreases. They remain nonetheless amongst the countries with the highest proportion of young people between 20 and 24 having completed at least upper secondary education.

<sup>(7)</sup> Source: Eurostat, 'Population by educational attainment level, sex and age', online data code: edat\_lfse\_03. Data extracted on 19/06/2017.

**Figure 2-B:** Changes in the share of young people (aged 20-24) who have completed at least upper secondary education, EU-28 average and by country, 2010-2016



*Notes:* For data on educational attainment based on the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED 2011) is applied as from 2014. Up to 2013, ISCED 1997 is used. Nevertheless, data are comparable over time for all available countries.

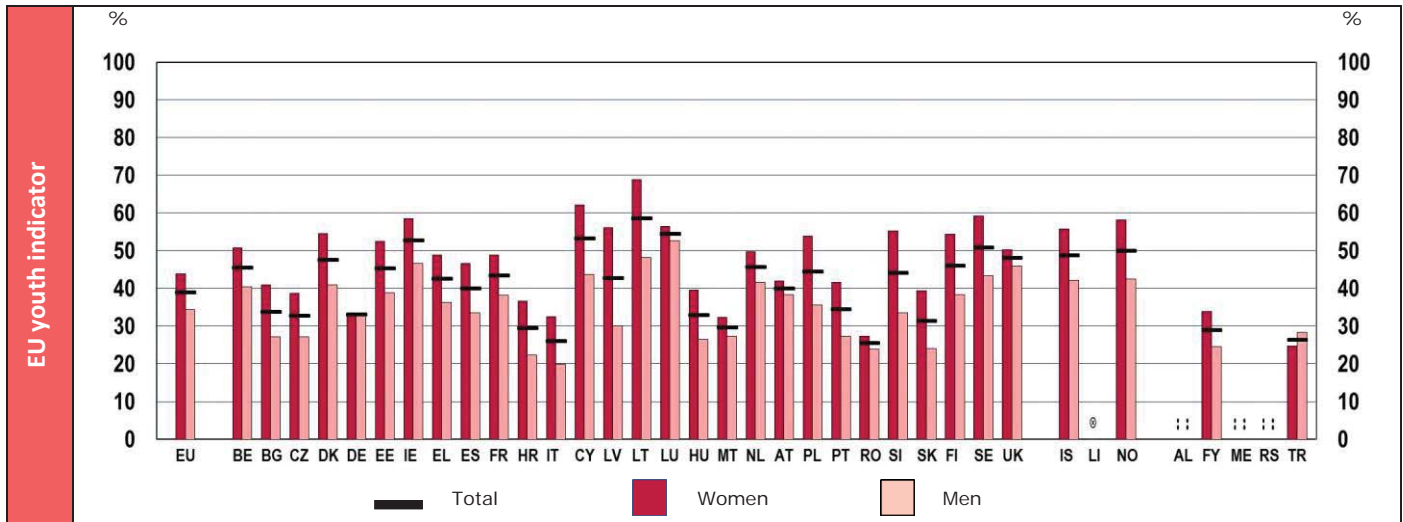
*Source:* Own calculation based on Eurostat LFS [edat\_lfse\_03].

Looking at higher qualifications than upper secondary level, a tertiary education degree helps young people the most in securing a job in a high-skilled labour market (as illustrated in the chapter on Employment and Entrepreneurship, Figure 3-I).

In 2016, an average of 4 out of 10 Europeans between 30 and 34 years of age had achieved a tertiary degree (Figure 2-C) indicating that the target set in the Europe 2020 strategy was reached earlier than expected<sup>(8)</sup>. A few countries are well above the average, with as many as half of 30- to 34-year-olds having attained a tertiary degree (Ireland, Cyprus, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Sweden, Iceland and Norway). On the other hand, this percentage is significantly lower (equal to or below 30 %) in Croatia, Italy, Malta, Romania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey. The reasons behind the country variations are multiple and stem from the cultural, historical and social circumstances of each country. Yet, several characteristics of national education systems, such as the existence of multiple secondary education pathways leading to higher studies, the extent to which tertiary institutions select students, and the availability of guidance and information on higher education options (for both prospective and tertiary students) are recognised as important factors influencing tertiary attainment<sup>(9)</sup>.

<sup>(8)</sup> The Europe 2020 strategy's target aims at raising the level of tertiary attainment amongst 30-34 year-olds to 40 % by 2020.

<sup>(9)</sup> European Commission, 2017b.

**Figure 2-C:** Share of population aged 30-34 with tertiary education attainment, by country and by sex, 2016

Notes: Data for Luxembourg have low reliability.

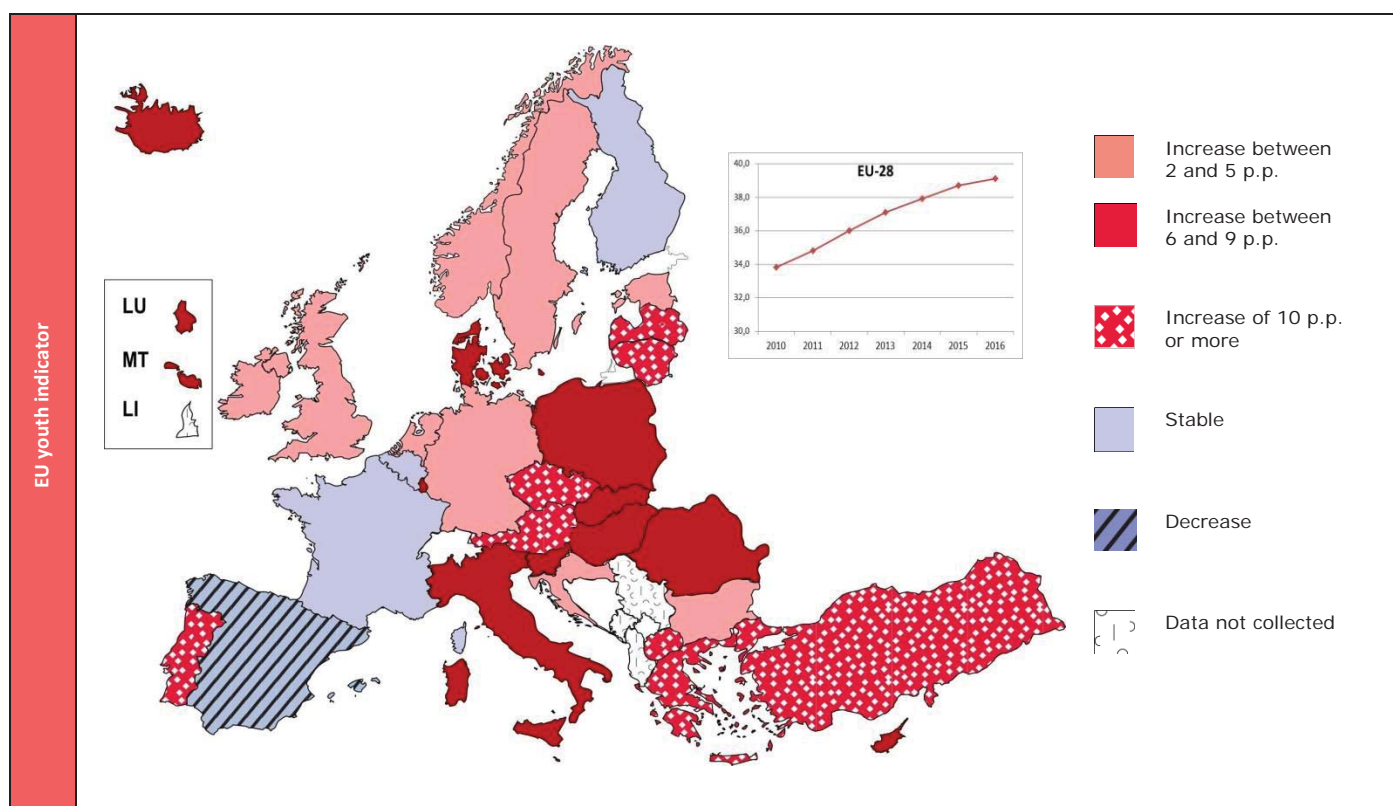
Source: Eurostat LFS [yth\_educ\_020].

In accordance with the general educational attainment trends described above, the proportion of women attaining tertiary education is higher than men. On average, the gender gap amounts to 10 percentage points in the European Union. Men are furthest behind in Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia (where the gap is twice the EU average). In Turkey the trend is the opposite as fewer women than men complete tertiary degrees.

Since 2010, tertiary attainment has increased across Europe (Figure 2-D). On average in the European Union, the proportion of people aged between 30 and 34 having a tertiary degree has augmented by five percentage points. Lithuania and Austria have seen the most significant growth, followed by Czech Republic, Greece, Latvia, Portugal, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The only decrease – although quite limited, around two percentage points – has been registered in Spain.

Increasing proportions of young Europeans gain tertiary degrees. Women complete tertiary studies at higher rates than men.

**Figure 2-D:** Changes in the share of population aged 30-34 with tertiary education attainment, by country, 2010-2016



*Notes:* For data on educational attainment based on the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED 2011) is applied as from 2014. Up to 2013 ISCED 1997 is used. Nevertheless, data are comparable over time for all available countries except Austria due to the reclassification of higher technical and vocational colleges. Data for Luxembourg for 2016 have low reliability. A break in the time series for Denmark occurred in 2016.

*Source:* Own calculation based on Eurostat LFS [yth\_educ\_020].

Despite this positive trend in educational attainment, a significant share of young Europeans still face significant difficulties in the education system and feel compelled to leave prematurely without having gained relevant qualifications or a school certificate. This is the case with early leavers from education and training (also referred to as 'early school leavers') – people aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and who were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the survey. Of the factors contributing to young people leaving education early, socio-economic status proves to have significant weight<sup>(10)</sup>. Indeed, early school leavers are much more likely to come from families with a low socio-economic status (i.e. where parents are unemployed, have low incomes and low levels of education), or from vulnerable social groups such as migrants<sup>(11)</sup>. Early school leavers are exposed to a particularly high risk of deprivation and social exclusion. In addition, not only does leaving school and training early result in longer and more frequent spells of unemployment, but even when integrated into the labour market, early school leavers have fewer opportunities for personal development and to participate actively in society<sup>(12)</sup>.

<sup>(10)</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Cedefop, 2014.

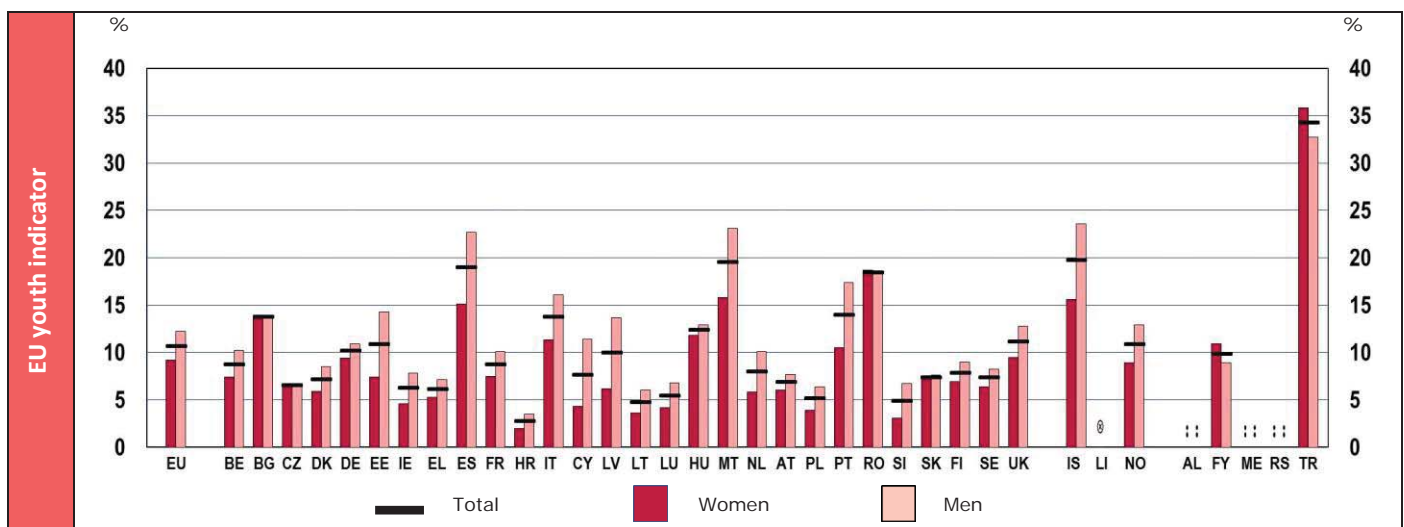
<sup>(11)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(12)</sup> European Commission, 2016a.

On average, 10.7 % of Europeans aged 18-24 in 2016 left school having completed lower secondary education at most (Figure 2-E) <sup>(13)</sup>. Several countries report much higher percentages (especially Spain, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Iceland and Turkey), while the lowest proportions are registered in Croatia, Lithuania and Slovenia, all with levels below 5 %.

The risk of leaving formal education prematurely and with low qualification levels is higher amongst men than women. This gender gap applies to most European countries, and is widest in Estonia, Spain, Cyprus, Latvia, Malta, Portugal and Iceland. Only in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and in Turkey are there more young women than men leaving formal education early.

**Figure 2-E:** Early leavers from education and training (population aged 18-24 with lower secondary education at most and not in further education or training), by country and by sex, 2016



Notes: Data for Croatia for 2016 have low reliability.  
Source: Eurostat LFS [edat\_lfse\_14].

Since 2010 – in conjunction with reforms in most countries to support young people at risk of dropping out of school and increase the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways <sup>(14)</sup> – there has been a general decline in the proportion of young people leaving school early in Europe (Figure 2-F). The most significant decrease has taken place in Portugal, where the proportion of early school leavers has fallen by about 14 percentage points. Ireland, Greece, Spain, Norway, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have also experienced a sizeable reduction. Increases have taken place in Hungary, as well as in Czech Republic and Slovakia, which nonetheless remain below the EU benchmark of 10 %.

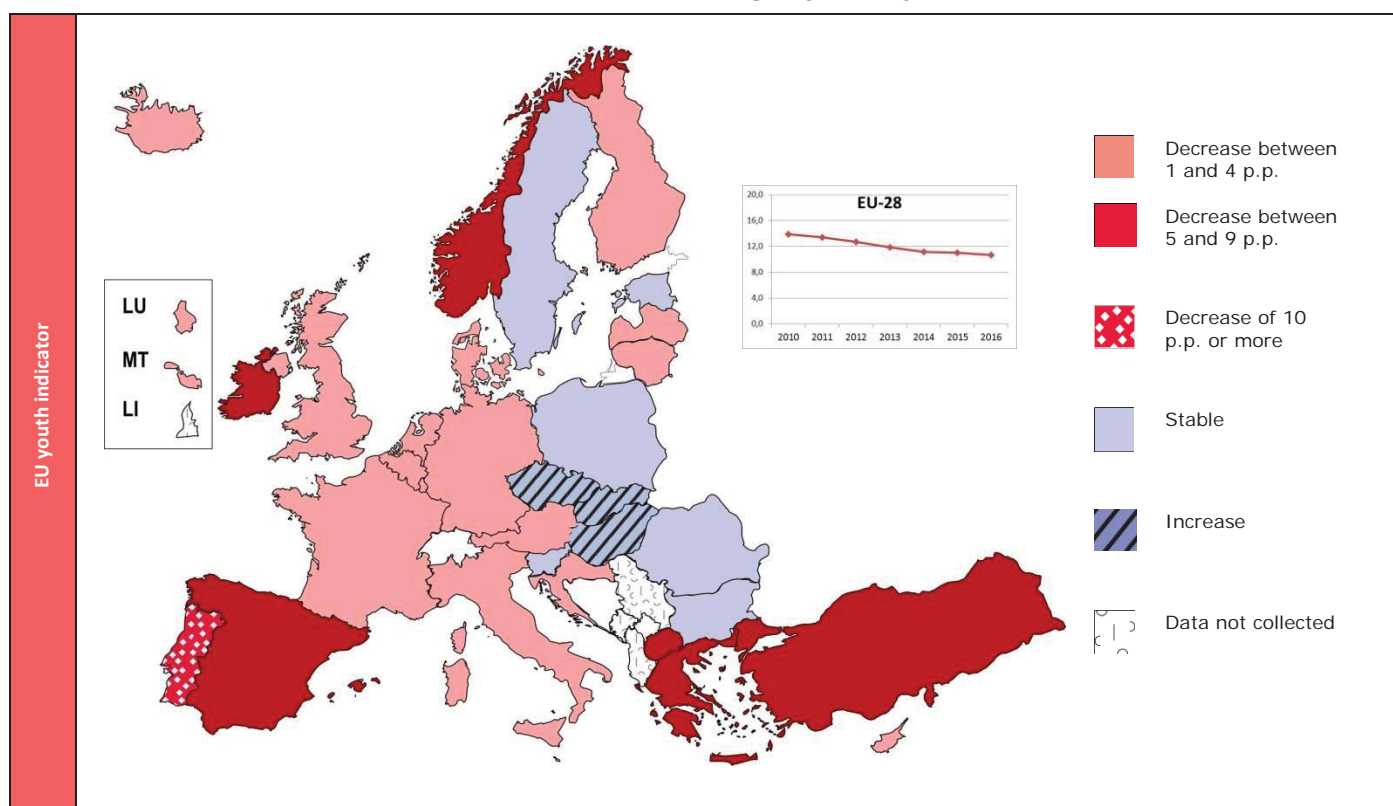
Across the EU, the proportion of early school leavers is declining.

<sup>(13)</sup> The ET 2020 Strategic framework includes a target of reducing the share of early school leavers to below 10 % by 2020.

<sup>(14)</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Cedefop, 2014; European Commission, 2017d.



**Figure 2-F:** Changes in the share of early school leavers (population aged 18-24 with lower secondary education at most and not in further education or training), by country, 2010-2016



*Notes:* For data on educational attainment based on the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS), the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED 2011) is applied as from 2014. Up to 2013, ISCED 1997 is used. Nevertheless, data are comparable over time for all available countries except Austria due to the reclassification of higher technical and vocational colleges. Data for Croatia for 2016 have low reliability. A break in the time series for Denmark occurred in 2016.

*Source:* Own calculation based on Eurostat LFS [edat\_lfse\_14].

Young people who have left school prematurely can be helped to re-enter education and subsequently to gain higher qualifications through second chance education <sup>(15)</sup> which combines learning with social and emotional support, or through the validation of learning outcomes achieved by means of non-formal and informal learning <sup>(16)</sup>.

### 2.2.2. Achievement of young people: key competences

During the years spent in formal education, young people are expected to acquire the key competences that are essential if they are to achieve their full potential and be successful in their personal and social lives as well as in their career <sup>(17)</sup>. Amongst these key competences, literacy, mathematics, science and foreign languages also figure as EU youth indicators.

<sup>(15)</sup> European Commission, 2013b.

<sup>(16)</sup> For the overview of validation mechanisms in place in European education systems, please see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015a.

<sup>(17)</sup> The Recommendation adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2006 defines key competences as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment (Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning - 2006/962/EC).

In 2015, on average, about one in five young people aged 15 demonstrated low levels of proficiency in literacy, numeracy and science (Figure 2-G).

Further effort to reduce the rate of under achievement in reading, mathematics and science is still needed.

**Figure 2-G:** Low-achieving 15 year-old students in reading, mathematics and science, by country, 2009-2015



Notes: For Malta, the change between PISA 2009 and PISA 2015 represents an effective change from 2010 because it only implemented the PISA 2009 assessment in 2010 as part of PISA 2009+.

Source: OECD, PISA.

The figures clearly indicate a similar pattern in pupil performance in all three skills: countries that show a certain level of performance in one of these basic skills tend to perform similarly in the others. Cross-country variations are noticeable. Bulgaria, Cyprus, Malta, Romania and Slovakia registered proportions of low achievers about twice as high as the EU average. Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey showed much higher percentages – between 40 % and 70 %. Conversely, Estonia and Finland reported the lowest proportions of students with low levels of proficiency in all three competences.

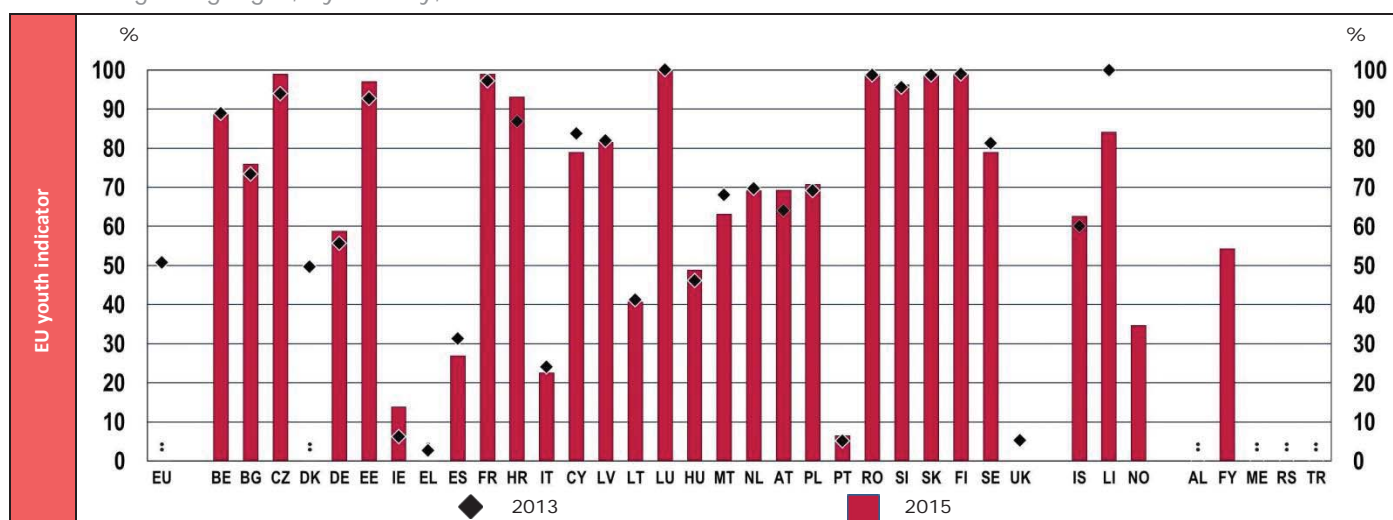
Gender differences (not shown in Figure 2-H), while negligible for mathematics and science, are pronounced in reading proficiency: on average, 10 % more boys than girls revealed low achievement, and the gap is even wider in Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia <sup>(18)</sup>.

Further effort to reduce the rate of underachievement in literacy, numeracy and science is still needed. Europe still counts a worrying number of pupils with very low basic skills and progress towards achieving the target of reducing this proportion to below 15 % has been slow <sup>(19)</sup>. Since 2009, the average proportions of low achievers have either stagnated – as in the case of reading and mathematics – or increased – as in science. In particular, Greece, Hungary, Slovakia, Iceland and Turkey have seen the proportion of pupils with poor performance in all three core competences surge upwards with percentage increases of between 6 and 15 points.

Knowledge of foreign languages is a significant advantage for young people. It enables them to discover and understand different cultures, and expand their educational and professional prospects by opening up opportunities to study and work abroad.

One in two students enrolled in general secondary education learns two or more foreign languages in the European Union (Figure 2-H). In about one third of countries, the proportion is much higher, approaching or reaching 100 %. Conversely, Ireland, the United Kingdom and some southern European Member States show particularly low proportions of young people learning at least two foreign languages.

**Figure 2-H:** Share of young people in upper general secondary education (ISCED 3gen) learning two or more foreign languages, by country, 2013 and 2015



Notes: EU-28 totals are calculated on the basis of the countries for which data are available. Where possible the previous/following year data have been used to compute the EU aggregates.

Source: Eurostat UOE [educ\_uae\_lang02].

<sup>(18)</sup> Data on gender differences are available at <https://data.oecd.org/pisa/reading-performance-pisa.htm> (last accessed on 19/06/2017).

<sup>(19)</sup> The Europe 2020 strategy includes a target to reduce the share of low achievers in reading, mathematics and science amongst 15 year-olds to below 15 % by 2020.

There has been a slightly positive trend across countries since 2013 in terms of the opportunity to learn more than one foreign language in upper secondary general education. A few countries have seen significant increases equal to or above six percentage points (Czech Republic, Ireland, Croatia and Austria). However, only a minority of the countries have introduced attainment level targets with the aim of ensuring that learners will reach the threshold of 'independent use' of the second foreign language <sup>(20)</sup>.

The level of proficiency in foreign languages acquired by young Europeans is not being systematically measured across EU countries, although most countries require students to reach level B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for their first foreign language (mostly English) by the end of upper secondary education <sup>(21)</sup>.

### 2.3. NON-FORMAL LEARNING AND YOUTH WORK

Non-formal education and training covers any organised and sustained learning activities that do not take place within the framework of the formal education system <sup>(22)</sup>. Non-formal learning is undertaken intentionally but participation in the courses or activities is voluntary <sup>(23)</sup>. As acknowledged by the Council of the European Union, non-formal learning can greatly contribute to increasing the motivation of young Europeans to undertake lifelong learning as well as improving their employability and job mobility, provided that mechanisms for recognising and validating the skills acquired are widely available <sup>(24)</sup>.

Indeed, non-formal learning can help release the potential of many young people by uncovering and developing their knowledge, skills and attitudes and by encouraging the acquisition of new kinds of capacities. While these opportunities are important for all young people, they can be particularly beneficial to those who are at an educational disadvantage <sup>(25)</sup>.

On average in the European Union, 1 in 10 young Europeans participate in non-formal learning (Figure 2-I). However, countries differ greatly in terms of the proportion of young people involved. While at least 1 in 5 young individuals participate in non-formal learning activities in Denmark, France and Sweden, other countries register much lower percentages, in particular Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, Slovakia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

One in 10 young Europeans participates in non-formal learning but countries differ widely in the level of participation.

<sup>(20)</sup> Detailed analysis of national policies can be found in a recent study on language learning in Europe (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017b).

<sup>(21)</sup> Ibid. p. 14 and pp. 121-124.

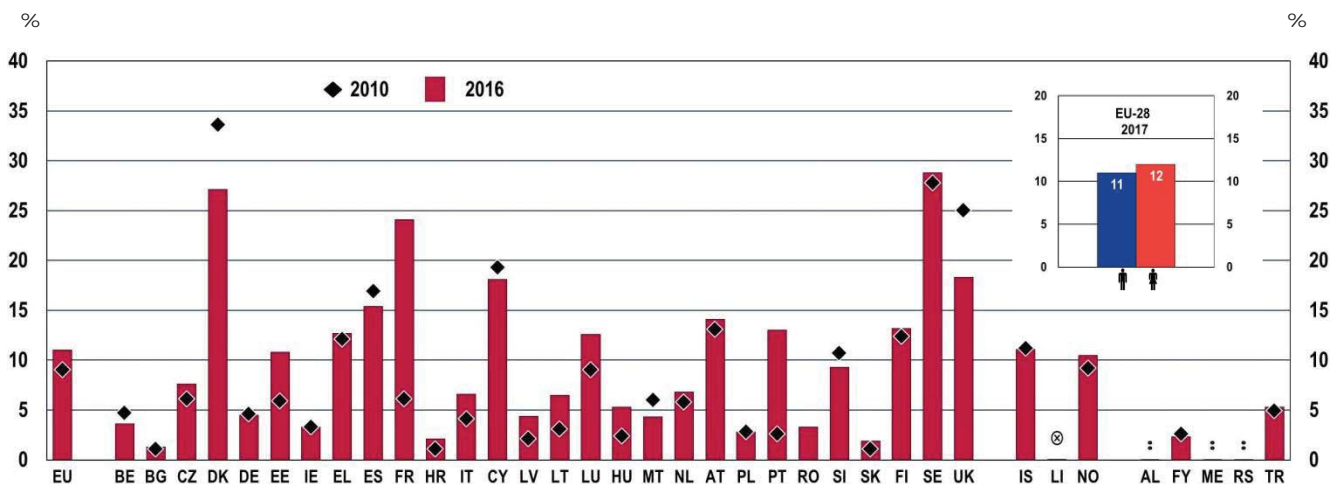
<sup>(22)</sup> This definition is provided by Eurostat in the context of its lifelong learning statistics and is also applied in the EU LFS which collects data on participation in non-formal education and training during the four weeks preceding the survey.

<sup>(23)</sup> In its online glossary, CEDEFOP defines non-formal learning as 'learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification'. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory/european-inventory-glossary> (last accessed on 20/06/2017).

<sup>(24)</sup> European Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01).

<sup>(25)</sup> Council of Europe, 2005.

**Figure 2-I:** Share of young people (aged 15-29) participating in non-formal learning and training, by country, 2010 and 2016, and by sex, 2016



Notes: Data for Croatia and Romania for 2010 have low reliability. Break in time series for data for Denmark in 2016.

Source: Eurostat LFS [trng\_lfs\_09].

As illustrated by Figure 2-I, in the EU-28 the average proportion of young women and young men engaging in non-formal learning are similar. Since 2011, the participation in non-formal learning has slightly increased in the EU. Some countries have witnessed impressive augmentations, in particular France and Portugal. In contrast, young people in Denmark and the United Kingdom have engaged to decreasing extents.

Non-formal learning may take place in the context of youth work. According to the Resolution of the Council of the European Union on youth work from 2010, youth work encompasses activities for and by young people, taking place in the extracurricular and leisure spheres, and based on voluntary participation. Such activities see the cooperation of professional and voluntary youth workers, youth leaders, and the active engagement and contribution of young participants<sup>(26)</sup>.

Youth work has been shown to exert positive influence on student achievements in education by fostering non-cognitive skills such as persistence, motivation, and self-efficacy<sup>(27)</sup>. In particular, young people at risk of dropping out prematurely from education and training may obtain support from youth workers, gaining access to learning resources and individualised assistance and becoming motivated to learn again through participation in the various activities organised for them<sup>(28)</sup>. Some youth work programmes have also proven effective in bringing young people who have left school early back into education by, for example, offering preparatory courses for re-insertion into mainstream education or second chance programmes<sup>(29)</sup>.

By providing opportunities for non-formal learning, youth work contributes to the acquisition and enhancement of key competences essential in promoting youth's education attainment.

<sup>(26)</sup> Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on youth work (2010/C 329/01).

<sup>(27)</sup> Shernoff and Lowe Vandell, 2007.

<sup>(28)</sup> European Commission, 2014c. The study offers a detailed and comprehensive assessment of the various traditions and developments of youth work in Europe. It presents both secondary analysis of previous literature and data on the topic, and first-hand evidence collected through interviews. Most of the information presented in this section draws from this study's findings.

<sup>(29)</sup> Ibid.

Providing information, advice and guidance to support young people in their decision making during their education and training is another important aspect of youth work <sup>(30)</sup>. Indeed, in some European countries, central authorities place guidance services for students under the auspices of youth work organisations, delivered by nation-wide networks independent from schools <sup>(31)</sup>.

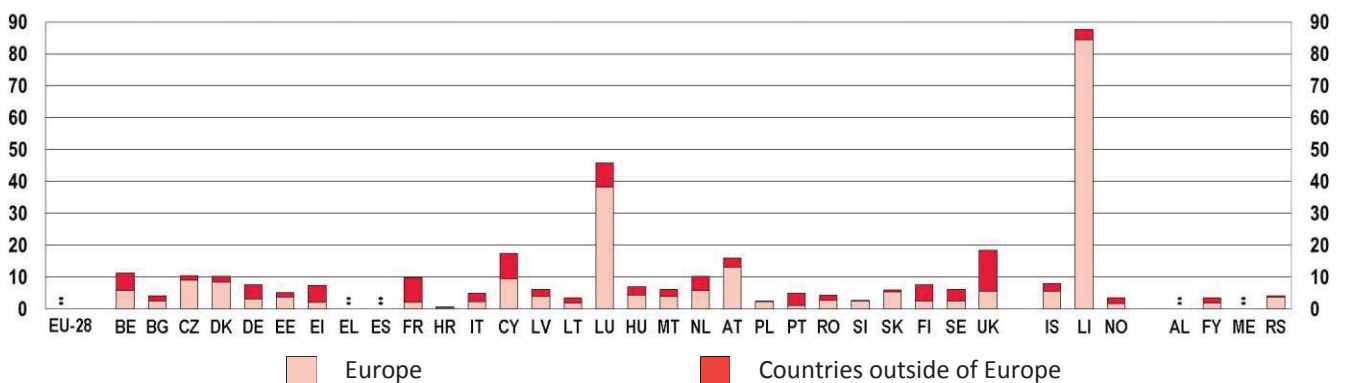
Because youth work is such a wide field encompassing voluntary leisure-time as well as extra-curricular activities, its contribution goes well beyond supporting young people in their educational experiences. Studies which have investigated the effects of young people's participation in youth work activities show that young people can acquire and reinforce personal skills such as conflict resolution, decision making, goal setting and interpersonal communication that can prove useful in all spheres of life <sup>(32)</sup>. Although data on young people's participation in activities organised by youth workers is limited, Chapter 6 of this report provides some insight into the level of participation in organised voluntary activities (Figure 6-A) while Chapter 9 examines their involvement in youth organisations, cultural organisations and sports clubs (Figure 9-C).

## 2.4. LEARNING MOBILITY

Learning mobility is generally seen as contributing to the development of a wide range of skills and competences among young people. Most importantly, transversal skills such as critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, and intercultural understanding are found to be improved by study periods abroad <sup>(33)</sup>. According to the Erasmus Impact Study, students participating in the Erasmus mobility programme improve their employability skills more than non-participants <sup>(34)</sup>. In addition, student mobility programmes also have the potential to contribute to the overall quality of education <sup>(35)</sup>.

Data are available on the flows of internationally-mobile students in tertiary education. Figure 2-J shows the proportion of students enrolled in a tertiary institution who come from abroad (inward student mobility) in 2015.

**Figure 2-J:** Share of internationally-mobile tertiary education students coming from Europe and the rest of the world, by country, 2015



Source: Eurostat UOE [educ\_uoe\_mobs03].

<sup>(30)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(31)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(32)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(33)</sup> European Commission, 2014b.

<sup>(34)</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>(35)</sup> Council of the European Union, 2011. European Commission, 2017d.

Disparities between countries are noticeable not only in terms of the total proportion of foreign students coming from abroad, but also their origin. While Luxembourg and Liechtenstein report the highest percentages of students from abroad, data show that they mainly come from other European countries rather than from areas outside of Europe. This pattern also applies to other countries with relatively high total proportions of incoming students, including Czech Republic, Denmark and Austria. Conversely, some EU Member States attract high proportions of tertiary students from areas outside of Europe – at least twice that from other European countries: this is the case of Ireland (mainly from Asia), France (in particular from African countries), Portugal (with a prevalence of central and southern American countries), Finland (with high a proportion of students from Asia including Russia) and the United Kingdom (also mostly from Asia) <sup>(36)</sup>.

Besides tertiary education programmes, spending time abroad, getting acquainted with foreign cultures and interacting with peers from other countries represents an important occasion for non-formal and informal learning for many young people in Europe <sup>(37)</sup>. Unfortunately, quantitative data collected at international level on learning mobility outside of formal education are scarce <sup>(38)</sup>. Qualitative research has nonetheless shed some light on the learning benefits for participants in international youth mobility projects in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme <sup>(39)</sup>. Participation in youth mobility projects is seen as contributing to the development of all the key competences for lifelong learning. Communication in a foreign language, sense of entrepreneurship, civic competences, cultural awareness and expression, and learning skills (learning to learn) are reportedly the areas in which students benefit the most. A positive impact has also been demonstrated on other competences such as communication in the first language (mother tongue), mathematical competences and a sense of initiative <sup>(40)</sup>. Youth workers engaged in mobility projects also report that their competences were boosted, in particular in the context of managing international youth projects <sup>(41)</sup>. In line with these general findings, a survey on young individuals taking part in mobility projects under Erasmus+ during 2015 shows that close to 94 % of the participants reported having improved their key competences and skills relevant to employability <sup>(42)</sup>.

Last but not least, international learning mobility in the context of non-formal learning can be of particular benefit for young people with fewer opportunities. Qualitative research shows that these experiences actually bring an added value to the participants in terms of increased self-esteem, social and communicative skills, as well as vocational skills <sup>(43)</sup>.

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<sup>(36)</sup> Source: Eurostat UOE [educ\_uae\_mobs03].

<sup>(37)</sup> Fennes, 2013.

<sup>(38)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(39)</sup> The aim of the Erasmus+ programme is to contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion, as well as the aims of ET2020, the EU's strategic framework for education and training. Erasmus+ also aims to promote the sustainable development of its partners in the field of higher education, and contribute to achieving the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy. Detailed information is available at [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en) (accessed 14/09/2017).

<sup>(40)</sup> Fennes, 2013.

<sup>(41)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(42)</sup> European Commission, 2017e.

<sup>(43)</sup> Kristensen, 2012.

## CONCLUSION

Young people are increasingly highly educated. The proportion of young Europeans attaining upper secondary qualifications continues to increase. Increasing proportions of young Europeans gain tertiary degrees. The proportion of early school leavers is declining.

However, significant shares of young people face challenges in completing their educational path. Europe still counts a worrying number of pupils with very low basic skills. What is worse, since 2009, the average proportions of low achievers have either stagnated – as in the case of reading and mathematics – or increased – as in science. In addition, participation in non-formal learning – which can be particularly beneficial to those who are at an educational disadvantage – is still limited.





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**Situation of young people in the European Union**

*Accompanying the document*

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE  
REGIONS**

**Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy**

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## 3. Employment and Entrepreneurship

### EU youth indicators

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### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges for young people in establishing their independence is finding a stable job and remaining in employment. The recent economic recession resulted in a reduced demand for young workers, which has hindered their chances of successfully moving from school to work <sup>(1)</sup>. Although the European economy and the opportunities in the labour markets are improving, it is important to understand how unemployment is affecting young people and what kinds of work opportunities are available to them.

This chapter sets the scene by describing the transition(s) from education to employment that young people face. The proportion of young people in education and training is an essential parameter when analysing youth employment as it affects the size of the labour force, the calculation of unemployment rates, and the prevalence of part-time or atypical hourly employment. The first part of the chapter discusses the youth unemployment phenomenon and the relevant indicators for its assessment. The second part sheds some light on the types of jobs young people have.

The chapter is built around the relevant EU youth indicators and the age groups on which they focus. At the country level, the discussion of youth unemployment mostly relates to the 15-24 age group, while the employment patterns mostly address people aged 20-29. At the EU-28 level, the youth data is generally broken down into three age groups (15-19; 20-24 and 25-29). In order to draw attention to the issues specific to the youth population, a comparison with the prime working age group (people aged 25-54) – the group with the highest labour force participation – is provided throughout the chapter.

In order to discuss the developments over time, some of the indicators show the situation in the EU-28 before the start of the economic recession (ten years ago, namely 2007) and during the height of the great recession (2013). At the country level, several indicators display the recent changes pointing to a gradual economic recovery (since 2013) <sup>(2)</sup>.

### 3.2. ENTERING THE WORLD OF WORK

The transition from education to employment is rarely a smooth and clear-cut event, it is often a rather complex and protracted process with steps forward and back, interruptions and periods of overlap between these types of activity. The traditional model of transition, when a young person finds his/her first job directly after graduation and embarks on a stable career path, is becoming far less common in our rapidly changing and global world. Many young people start working part-time or have summer jobs while still studying; many young people start on temporary or fixed-term contracts followed by some spells of job-hunting in-between. Some young people return to finish their studies after a period of employment in order to upgrade their skills or qualifications. When searching for the right job, some young people discover they want a complete change from their original field of study or career and they return to education in a different area <sup>(3)</sup>.

Figure 3-A provides a breakdown of the EU-28 15-34 year-old population by education and labour market status. The blue shades indicate those still in some form of education/training, while the pink shades indicate

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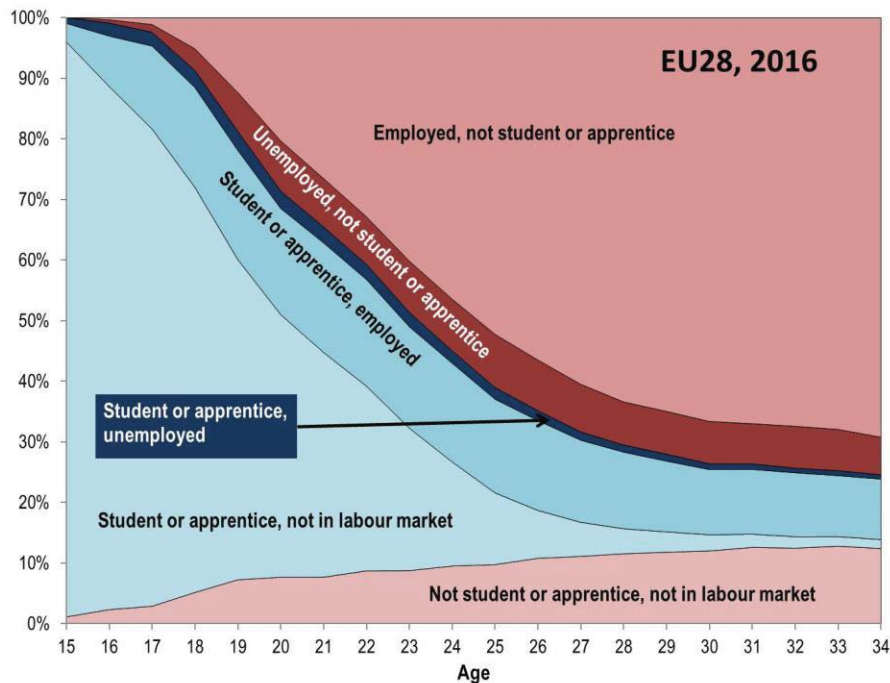
<sup>(1)</sup> Eurofound, 2014.

<sup>(2)</sup> Recent economic forecast indicate that European economies are expected to grow in 2017 and in 2018. For a detailed discussion, see European Commission (2017b).

<sup>(3)</sup> See more in: Eurofound, 2014; Kahn, 2011; Mourshed, Patel and Suder, 2014; O'Reilly 2015; STYLE, 2017.

those outside – the colour intensity distinguishes the labour market status (unemployed, employed or not in the labour market).

**Figure 3-A:** Structure of the youth population by education and labour market status, EU-28 average, 2016



*Definitions:* The Figure counts all those who state they have been in formal education or training during the previous four weeks as being in education, and does not include people who participated exclusively in non-formal training sessions such as attending a course, a seminar or taking private lessons.

An employed person is a person who during the reference week performed work – even if just for one hour a week – for pay, profit or family gain. Alternatively, the person was not at work, but had a job or business from which he or she was temporarily absent due to illness, holiday, industrial dispute or education and training.

The same activity may count as both education and employment e.g. most formal apprenticeships in secondary education, paid traineeships, or specific vocational training phases integrated into tertiary education study programmes.

*Source:* Eurostat (LFS, 2016), based on a special calculation, data extracted June 2017

In the EU, virtually all 15-year olds are still in education as full-time education/training is compulsory until the age of 15-16 in most European education systems<sup>(4)</sup>. Afterwards, many remain in upper secondary education, which usually continues until the age of 18-19<sup>(5)</sup>. The proportion of people in education gradually decreases with each year of age, while the proportion of young people in the labour market gradually increases.

Some young people may have periods when they are in education and the labour market at the same time. Some are principally students and work only for a few hours a week<sup>(6)</sup> or in the summer vacations, others are principally employees and spend only a few hours in education, for example in professional training or evening studies<sup>(7)</sup>. The proportion of people who combine work with studies is the highest (around 18 %) at age 20-22 and gradually flattens out to approximately 10 % at the age of 34<sup>(8)</sup>. The proportion of people who are studying and seeking employment is highest at ages 18-21 (around 3 %).

On average, in the EU-28, the turning point for young people is at age 22 when they move on from studying to starting work or searching for a job. At this age, for the first time there are more young people in the labour market than in education. Moreover, at the age of 22, the proportion of those employed and not studying at all is already higher than the proportion of those that combine their studies with work. With each subsequent year of age, the proportion of young people in employment

Age 22 is the turning point when more young people are in the labour market than in education.

<sup>(4)</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016a.

<sup>(5)</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016b.

<sup>(6)</sup> Hauschildt et al., 2015.

<sup>(7)</sup> Eurostat, 2017c.

<sup>(8)</sup> Similar rates of people that combine studies and work remain in adult population. Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) of employed persons aged 25 to 64 was 11.6 % in 2016 (See Eurostat, 'Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex and labour status', online data code: trng\_ifse\_02. Data extracted on 11/07/2017).

increases rapidly. At the age of 29, almost two thirds of young people are only in employment, they are not students or apprentices. Including those that are working and studying, the employment rate of 29 year-olds reaches 76.6 %. In contrast, at the age of 29, the proportion of students drops to 16.2 %, of which only 3.4 % are neither working nor actively seek employment.

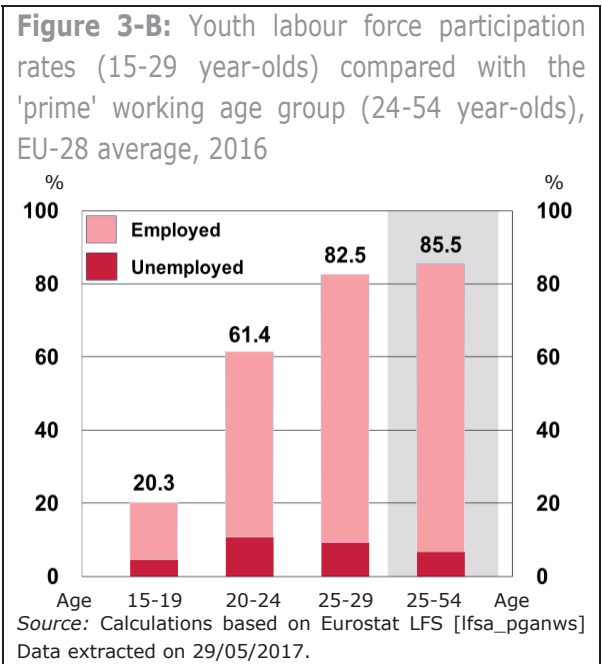
It is important to note that some young people leave education and stay outside the labour market, i.e. they are not seeking work. The proportion of young people who are 'not students or apprentices, nor in the labour market' as labelled in Figure 3-A, sharply increases at age 17-18. The proportion of those people who are out of education and out of the labour market flattens off at around 12-13 % between the ages of 30-34 <sup>(9)</sup>.

The patterns of transition from education to the labour market vary considerably between EU countries. Young people's routes into employment differ depending on the flexibility and structure of their country's labour market (e.g. the availability of part-time and student jobs, formal apprenticeship schemes, etc.), the national system of education and training as well as cultural factors <sup>(10)</sup>.

The transition from education to employment is clearly reflected in the size of the labour force by age (Figure 3-B). Labour force participation rates indicate the proportion of those available for work compared with the total population in a certain age range. It includes both the employed and the unemployed irrespective of their education status. The remaining 'economically inactive' population <sup>(11)</sup> are those who do not work because they are studying or unpaid carers (have family responsibilities); or because they are sick, disabled or retired; or because they have either become 'discouraged' job seekers <sup>(12)</sup> or do not want to work; or lastly, have not been active enough in their job-searching to qualify as unemployed.

Figure 3-B shows that only one in five people aged 15 to 19 are available for work (20.3 %). A large proportion of the youngest cohort of the working age population consists of

people who are still in school, college, university, or other higher education or training establishment. In the EU-28, the employment rate of the youngest age group (15-19) is a mere 15.7 %. Moreover, the majority of 15-19 year-olds who work also study – 11.4 % are both employed and in education <sup>(13)</sup>; half of those employed work only part-time (Figure 3-P). The proportion available for work is considerably higher amongst 20-24 year-olds: three in five are in the labour force (61.4 %). In this age group, every second person is already working. Among 20-24 year-olds, the proportion of people combining work and study reaches 13.4 % <sup>(14)</sup>. Finally, the labour force participation rates of young people aged 25 to 29 (82.5 %) come very close to the economic activity



<sup>(9)</sup> These form part of the NEET group ('not in employment, education or training') and is discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.  
<sup>(10)</sup> Eurostat, 2017c.  
<sup>(11)</sup> See Eurostat, 2017d.  
<sup>(12)</sup> Discouraged job seekers: persons who would like to find a job, but have given up looking for one because they do not believe there are any jobs available (OECD, 2017).  
<sup>(13)</sup> Eurostat, 'Participation rate of young people in formal education by sex, age and labour status', online data code: edat\_lfse\_19. Data extracted on 08/09/2017.  
<sup>(14)</sup> Ibid.

rates of those aged 25-54 (85.5 %). The employment rate of people aged 25 to 29 reaches 73.2 %. Only 6.7 % of 25-29 year olds are both employed and in education <sup>(15)</sup>.

### 3.3. FACING THE LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES: UNEMPLOYMENT

#### Youth unemployment rates and ratios

Entering the world of work after graduation poses significant challenges. Many young people encounter the gap between education and 'real life' and get caught in a vicious cycle of being unable to obtain a job due to lack of experience, and being unable to gain experience without a job <sup>(16)</sup>. Those who leave education without formal qualifications and with low-level skills have even less chance of gaining employment.

**Figure 3-C:** Unemployment rates and ratios among young people (15-29 year-olds) compared to the 'prime' working age group (24-54 year-olds), EU-28 average, 2016



Note: The numbers of unemployed in millions are indicated below the age groups.  
 Source: Eurostat LFS [yth\_empl\_090] and calculations based on Eurostat LFS [lfsa\_pganws]  
 Data extracted on 23/05/2017.

In the EU-28 in 2016, 4.2 million people between the ages of 15 and 24 were unemployed (Figure 3-C). This Figure includes all people who are available for work and actively job-seeking, irrespective of their education status. However, the numbers of those in education become very important when considering the youth unemployment rate – the most common measure of youth labour market conditions.

$$\text{Unemployment rate} = \frac{\text{Number of unemployed}}{\text{Number of employed} + \text{unemployed}} \times 100\%$$

$$\text{Unemployment ratio} = \frac{\text{Number of unemployed}}{\text{Total population}} \times 100\%$$

The **unemployment rate** is calculated as the number of unemployed individuals (i.e. those available and actively looking for work but not able find a job) divided by the number of persons in the labour force, multiplied by 100 %. The unemployment rate does not consider the economic inactive, who are not actively looking for a job,

because of different reasons as discussed above. The unemployment rate does not indicate the percentage of a certain age population that is unemployed, as not the whole age population is participating in the labour force. When considering the prime working age group (people aged 25-54), the labour force is close to the total population, and therefore the unemployment rate does not differ much from the unemployment-to-population ratio (Figure 3-C). However, as many young people are still studying in their early twenties and therefore are not yet in the labour force, the statistics differ greatly.

Relatively small numbers of unemployed people can generate high unemployment rates when divided by a small labour force. Therefore, it is sometimes useful to consider the youth **unemployment ratio** statistics: the percentage of unemployed young people compared to the total

The proportion of people that unsuccessfully search for a job is the highest among 20-24 year-olds.

<sup>(15)</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>(16)</sup> Kahn et al., 2011.

population of that age group (not only the economically active, but also the inactive such as students).

The unemployment rate and ratio are depicted side by side graphically in Figure 3-C. Both statistics reflect the same numbers of unemployed (indicated in the Figure below the age groups), but display considerably different distributions. When considering the unemployment-to-labour force indicator (unemployment rate), the younger age groups seem to be the most affected. In contrast, the unemployment-to-population indicator (unemployment ratio) shows that the problem is the worst for the 20-24 age group and, to a lesser extent, for the 25-29 age group.

In order to get a full grasp of the unemployment phenomenon, both the unemployment rate and ratio are included among the EU youth indicators. Figure 3-D shows unemployment rates and ratios in European countries. The number of unemployed in thousands is indicated in the middle. This figure largely depends on the country's youth population and varies from almost 1 million unemployed 15-24 year-olds in Turkey and 600 000-700 000 in Spain, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, to 2 000-4 000 in Malta, Luxembourg and Iceland.

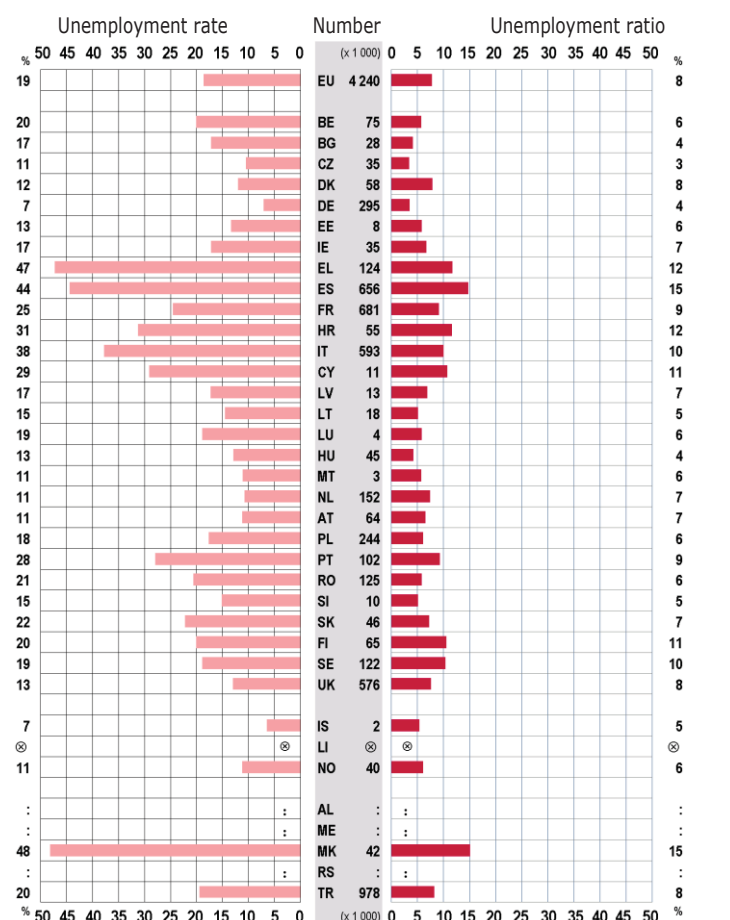
In 2016, the highest proportion (around 15 %) of young population (15-24) was searching for a job in Spain (656 100) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (41 500). The unemployment ratios were also high in Greece, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Finland and Sweden (10-12 %). In contrast, the lowest unemployment ratios (3-4 %) were in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany and Hungary.

The youth unemployment rates vary between European countries to a much greater degree than unemployment ratios as they are calculated taking into account the proportion of employed 15-24 year-olds. The labour force participation rates of this age group vary from less than 30 % in Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Romania to more than 66 % in Denmark, the Netherlands and Iceland<sup>(17)</sup>. As discussed earlier, the size of the labour force depends on the proportion of young people that are inactive, namely those in education (chapter 2), those engaged in unpaid caring activities, or the sick, disabled, or discouraged workers (chapter 5).

As discussed previously, the unemployment rate and ratio differ the least when labour force participation is high. For example, the 10.4 % youth unemployment ratio results in a 18.9 % unemployment rate in Sweden,

**EU youth indicator**

**Figure 3-D: Youth unemployment rate (15-24 year-olds) and unemployment ratio, by country, 2016**



Note: the numbers of unemployed in thousands are indicated in the middle.

Source: Eurostat LFS [yth\_empl\_090] and [yth\_empl\_140]

Data extracted on 21/07/2017.

<sup>(17)</sup> Eurostat, 'Activity rates by sex, age and citizenship (%)', online data code: Ifsa\_argan. Data extracted on 25/07/2017.

where the labour force participation of young people is relatively high (54.8 %). In contrast, a similar unemployment ratio (10.0 %) in Italy, where economic activity rates are considerably lower (26.6 %), generates a much higher unemployment rate (37.8 %) <sup>(18)</sup>.

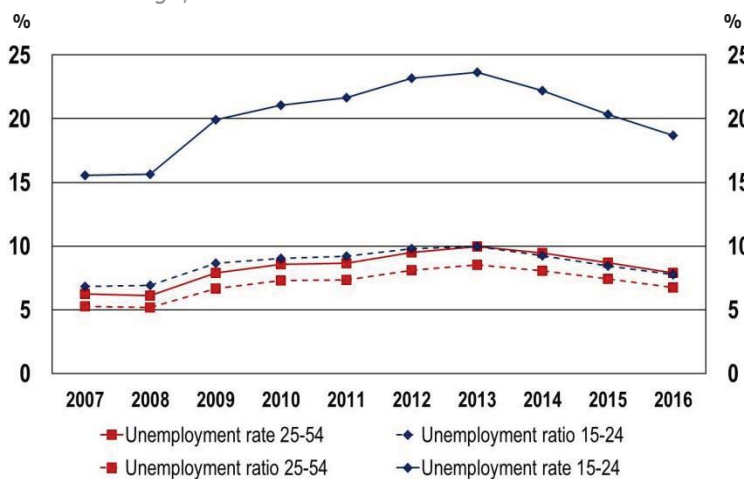
Low activity rates amongst young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are found in several countries in southern and eastern Europe (e.g. Spain, Italy, Portugal, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania) <sup>(19)</sup>. For these same countries, data presented in Chapter 2 report lower rates of participation in education and higher proportions of young people leaving formal education before having achieved an upper-secondary degree (Figures 2-A, 2-C and 2-E). This hints at the existence of large segments of young people who are not employed, not in education and not in training (NEETs), and who are particularly vulnerable to the risk of social exclusion. This will be analysed in detail in Chapter 5.

Fifteen per cent of young people (aged 15-24) are searching for a job in Spain and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The rates of young jobless among those available for work are also high in Greece and Italy.

The highest rates of young people (aged 15-24) searching for a job among those available for a work (e.g. unemployment rates) were observed in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (48.2 %) <sup>(20)</sup>, Greece (47.3 %), Spain (44.4 %) and Italy (37.8 %). The unemployment rates of people aged 15-24 were also high (25-31 %) in France, Croatia, Cyprus and Portugal. Most of these countries record high rates of jobless people in the prime working age group (25-54 year-olds). In contrast, few of the young people available for work (about 7 %) had problems finding a job in Germany and Iceland. The youth unemployment rates were also rather low (approximately 11 %) in Czech Republic, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria and Norway.

**Figure 3-E:** Youth unemployment rates (15-24 year-olds), compared with prime working age group (25-54 year-olds), EU-28 average, 2007-2016



Source: Calculations based on Eurostat LFS [Ifsa\_pganws].  
Data extracted on 29/05/2017.

The level of youth unemployment shows the state of the youth job market, but also reflects the general economic situation. When the economy is in recession, the number of jobless people rises. When the economy is growing, jobs are created and the number of people who cannot find work falls. Figure 3-E shows unemployment rates and ratios for young people aged 15-24 and the prime working age group (24-54) from 2007 to 2016. The EU-28 economies started shrinking after the 2007 economic recession and the numbers of jobless young people and adults were rising between 2009 and 2013. After economic growth resumed, the numbers of people unsuccessfully searching for jobs have been falling since 2013. The

changes in the proportion of unemployed among youth and prime working age populations (unemployment ratios) were similar (see the dashed lines in Figure 3-E that rise and fall in parallel). Between 2007 and 2013, the

<sup>(18)</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>(19)</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>(20)</sup> In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, this very high proportion of young unemployed people is actually falling after reaching its peak in 2003, when the rate was 65.8 %. See FRED, 2017.



proportion of people looking for work increased by 3.1 percentage points among young people and by 3.2 percentage points among adults of prime working age.

From 2013 to 2016, the youth unemployment ratio fell by 2.2 percentage points and the adult unemployment ratio decreased by 1.8 percentage points. In 2016, the proportions of jobless people in both youth and adult populations were even closer than they had been before the economic recession started in 2007.

However, when the number of unemployed is expressed in relation to the labour force (unemployment rates), the impact of the economic crisis seems to be more severe on the youth population than on the prime working age population. The proportion of employed people aged 15-24 is much lower than in the 25-54 age group and therefore the increase in the proportion of unemployed people among those who are available for work is much higher.

Figure 3-F shows the changes in youth unemployment rates during the last three years by country. The recent changes in youth unemployment rates follow the economic recovery in most European countries. Since 2013, when the youth unemployment rate in EU-28 reached its highest level (23.6 %), the numbers of young people unsuccessfully searching for work have been falling in most European countries. On average, in the EU-28, the youth unemployment rate in 2016 was 4.6 percentage points lower than in 2013. The decrease was especially pronounced (more than 10 percentage points) in several southern and central European countries, namely Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Portugal and Slovakia. Many eastern/central European countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia), as well as Ireland, Cyprus and the United Kingdom, have registered a 5 to 10 percentage point decrease in youth unemployment rates in recent years.

In 2016 there were **4.2 million** unemployed people aged 15-24 in the EU.

Youth unemployment rates recently decreased in the majority of European countries. Since 2013, there are **1.3 million** fewer jobless young people in the EU.

**Figure 3-F:** Changes in unemployment rates among young people aged 15-24, by country, 2013-2016



Source: Eurostat LFS [lfsa\_organ], data extracted on 26/07/2017.  
Notes: Break in time series in Denmark, France, Luxembourg and Turkey.

The numbers of jobless young people remained similar between 2013 and 2016 in Germany, France and Finland. However, of these three countries, youth unemployment rates are low only in Germany. In France and Finland, youth unemployment rates are currently higher than the EU-28 average.

Although there was a slight increase, youth unemployment rates remained low in Austria and Norway (11 %). In contrast, in Luxembourg and Turkey, the recent slight increase brought youth unemployment rates to almost 20 %.

Compared with the situation before the economic recession, in 2007, youth unemployment rates are still higher on average in the EU-28 as well as in more than a half of European countries. The proportion of young people available for work and unable to find a job returned to pre-recession figures or even less in Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Iceland. In contrast, in the Southern European countries that were severely affected by the European debt crisis (Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus and Portugal) youth unemployment rates are still more than 10 percentage points higher than before the recession <sup>(21)</sup>.

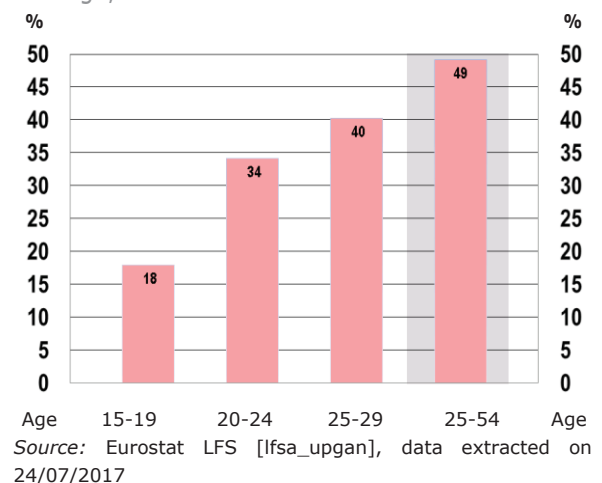
### Long-term youth unemployment

Unemployment brings serious hardships to individuals and their families. The problems and difficulties reach beyond the challenging financial situation. Long-term unemployment, especially for young people, leaves lifelong effects. Young people who have been looking for a job over long period of time are more likely to experience precarious employment, future periods of unemployment and lower job satisfaction, as well as having poorer health and sense of well-being more than 20 years later <sup>(22)</sup>.

Young persons are particularly affected by long periods of job-seeking <sup>(23)</sup>. Prolonged periods without structured daily activity lead to feelings of uselessness and hopelessness; the lack of job identification also raises identity issues <sup>(24)</sup>. Moreover, the lack of meaningful activity is associated with increased alcohol and drug addiction as well as criminal behaviour <sup>(25)</sup>. For societies, high levels of long-term youth unemployment carry significant financial costs as well as increasing the risk of social unrest <sup>(26)</sup>.

Eurostat defines the long-term unemployed as people who are out of work who have been actively seeking employment for at least a year. Figure 3-G shows that, on average, in the EU-28, the long-time unemployed as a proportion of the total unemployed grows with each age group. When young people first enter the labour market, they are less likely to be looking for a job for as long as older age groups. Only 17.9 % of unemployed

**Figure 3-G:** Long-term unemployment for young people aged 15-29 as a percentage of total unemployment, compared with the 'prime' working age (24-54 years) group, EU-28 average, 2016



<sup>(21)</sup> Eurostat, 'Unemployment rates by sex, age and nationality (%)', online data code: lfsa\_urgan. Data extracted on 25/07/2017.

<sup>(22)</sup> Bell and Blanchflower, 2011.

<sup>(23)</sup> Lahusen and Giugni, 2016.

<sup>(24)</sup> Farré, Fasani, and Mueller, 2015.

<sup>(25)</sup> European Youth Forum, 2013.

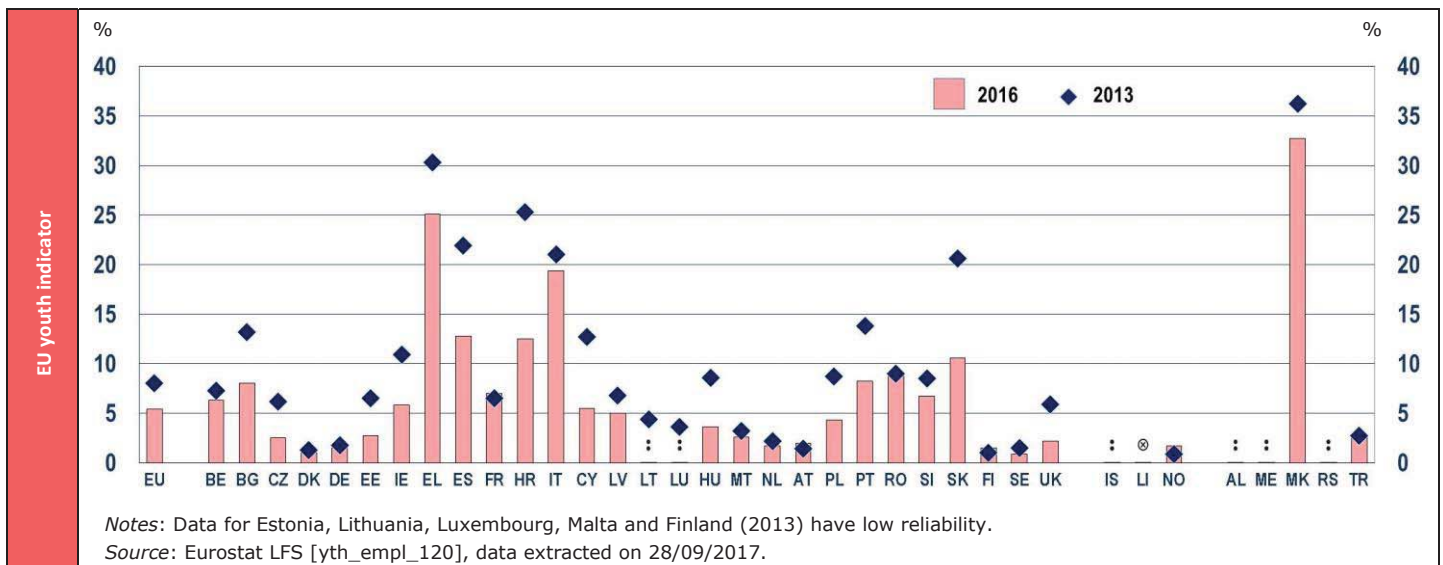
<sup>(26)</sup> Ibid.

15-19 year-olds were searching for a job for longer than a year. The proportion is higher for 20-24 year-olds, at 34.1 %, while for 25-29 year-olds, 40.2 % had no success within a year. The problem is even more pronounced in the prime working age group (25-54), where approximately every other unemployed person (49.1 %) is jobless for more than a year.

The long-term youth unemployment rate for 15-24 year-olds is included among the EU youth indicators. The long-term youth unemployment rate is expressed as the number of persons aged 15-24 unemployed for 12 months or longer as a percentage of the labour force (i.e. employed and unemployed). Figure 3-H shows that, in 2016, on average, in EU-28, the long-term unemployed constituted 5.4 % of the youth labour force. The proportion was especially high in the southern European countries that were severely affected by the recent economic crisis. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the long-term youth unemployment rate was 32.7 %, in Greece it was 25.1 %, and in Italy 19.4 %. However, it was lower in Slovakia, Croatia and Spain – between 11 and 13 %, and in Bulgaria, Portugal and Romania it was 8-9 %.

Compared with 2013, long-term youth unemployment decreased in the majority of European countries. In the EU-28, on average, it was 2.6 percentage points lower in 2016 than in 2013. The proportion of young people who took longer than 12 months to find a job fell especially sharply during these years in Cyprus, Spain, Slovakia and Croatia.

Figure 3-H: Long-term youth unemployment rates (15-24 year-olds), by country, 2016 and 2013



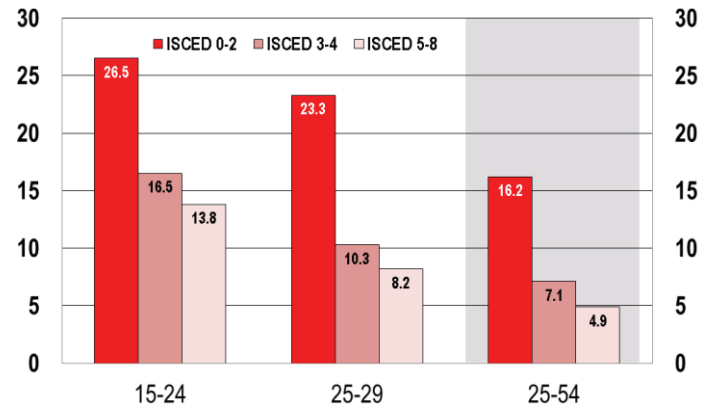
Continuous job searching requires a high level of resilience, confidence and resourcefulness. With each rejection letter, with each failure to secure an interview it is increasingly difficult to keep on looking. Therefore, many people who have struggled to get a job eventually stop looking and drop out of the labour force altogether.

### Youth unemployment and educational attainment

A good level of education and relevant qualifications are critical in finding employment as they provide young people with the appropriate skills needed in rapidly changing modern economies.

Figure 3-I shows that the higher the educational level, the lower the unemployment rates. In the EU-28, the least educated have very high unemployment rates among both the youth and adult populations. On average, in the EU-28, the unemployment rate of those with lower secondary education/qualifications or less (ISCED levels 0-2) was twice as high as that of tertiary graduates (ISCED levels 5-8) in the 15-24 age group, and three times higher than in the older age groups (25-29 and 25-54). The unemployment rates among those with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED levels 3 and 4) are closer to those of tertiary graduates, the difference between all the age groups under consideration ranges between 2 and 3 percentage points.

**Figure 3-I:** Youth unemployment rate (15-29 year-olds) by the highest educational level attained compared with the prime working age group (25-54 year-olds), EU-28 average, 2007-2016



Note: Age groups 15-19 and 20-24 were merged as data for ISCED 5-8 are unreliable in the age group 15-19.

Source: Calculations based on Eurostat LFS [lfsa\_urgaed], data extracted on 29/05/2017

In Europe, there is a considerable variation in unemployment rates by educational attainment across countries (Figure 3-J). Educational attainment is most effective in minimising the risk of unemployment in central European countries (Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Austria and Slovakia), as well as in Bulgaria, Ireland, Malta and Sweden. In these countries, the unemployment rate of those with low levels of education is four or more times higher than that of tertiary graduates. The situation is different in southern countries (Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), where the unemployment rates of people aged 20-29 are high among those with both low-level and high-level qualifications. In Denmark and Romania, the unemployment rates are similar across all educational attainment groups and vary between 8 % and 14 %. As institutional and economic features intrinsic to every country heavily impact upon the chances of young graduates entering the labour market, the positive influence of higher education appears to be somewhat diluted in those systems where structural obstacles exist in the economic and business environment <sup>(27)</sup>.

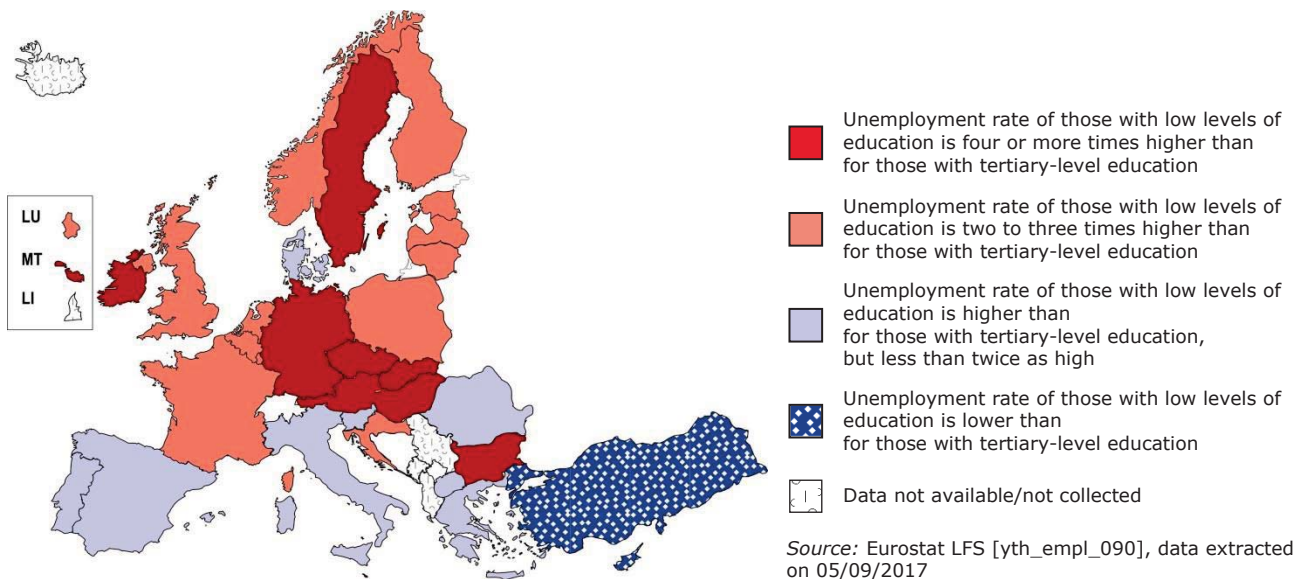
In two countries (Cyprus and Turkey), the pattern is reversed, namely the unemployment rate of those with low levels of education is lower than that of tertiary graduates. In Cyprus, where 46.9 % of young people aged 20-29 have tertiary level education, this might be an effect of over-education, namely, a discrepancy between the supply of education and the needs of the economy <sup>(28)</sup>. In Turkey, a higher incidence of unemployment among tertiary educated young people may be related to the fact that they are the ones who can afford to search for a job in the formal economy, while many unskilled young people are often employed in the informal sector in low-paid, irregular and insecure jobs <sup>(29)</sup>.

<sup>(27)</sup> Dietrich and Möller, 2015.

<sup>(28)</sup> Ioannou and Sonan, 2016.

<sup>(29)</sup> Scarpetta and Sonnet, 2012.

**Figure 3-J:** Comparison of youth unemployment rates among 20-29 year-olds with low and high levels of education, by country, 2016



Notes: 'Low levels of education' means lower secondary education or below (ISCED levels 0-2) and 'high levels of education' means tertiary education (levels 5-8).

Low reliability: Estonia, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia, Iceland and Montenegro.

### Men are more vulnerable to youth unemployment than women

On average, in the EU-28, young males seem to be more affected by unemployment than young females. In 2016, in absolute numbers, there were more men than women unsuccessfully searching for work in all the age groups shown in Figure 3-K. Considering the unemployed-to-population ratio, male unemployment was higher in all the age groups analysed, the difference being the greatest among those aged 20 to 24. In the EU-28, in 2016, there were 369 200 more jobless 20-24 year-old men than women. In this age group, males constituted 56.1 % of the unemployed. The data from the last 10 years reveals that the pattern is stable over time. Male unemployment ratios were higher than female unemployment ratios for 15-29 year-olds in every year of the last decade<sup>(30)</sup>. Looking at the absolute numbers, in the EU-28, there were more young men than women searching for a job in every year and in every youth age group analysed<sup>(31)</sup>.

The fact that men constitute the majority of young unemployed people aged 15-24 is true for most European countries<sup>(32)</sup>. The only country where, in 2016, there were more young females than males among the unemployed is Cyprus.

In the EU-28, in 2016, there were 700 000 more jobless young men than women (15-29 year-olds).

When the size of the labour force is taken into account, the situation reverses for the older age groups. Female unemployment rates are higher in the 25-29 age group as well as in the prime working age group (25-54). In both these age groups, women often leave the labour force due to family and caring responsibilities<sup>(33)</sup> and therefore the proportion of women who are available for work is reduced. Therefore, the relative proportion of women who cannot find a job among those women who are available for work becomes higher.

<sup>(30)</sup> Calculations based on Eurostat, 'Population by sex, age, citizenship and labour status (1 000)', online data code: lfsa\_pganws. Data extracted on 27/07/2017.

<sup>(31)</sup> Ibid.

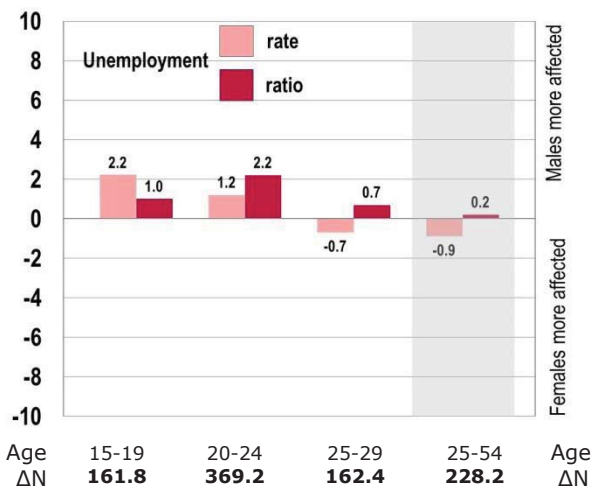
<sup>(32)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(33)</sup> Eurostat, 2017d.

When taking into account participation in the labour market, male unemployment rates are still higher in most European countries (Figure 3-L). However, unemployment rates for young women are more than one percentage point higher than for young men in eight countries (Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Turkey). In all of these countries, labour force participation among young women was lower than the EU-28 average and is often significantly below the participation rates for young men <sup>(34)</sup>.

For more information on factors influencing youth unemployment such as migrant background, health status (including disabilities), work opportunities in the area of residence, etc., see STYLE (2017).

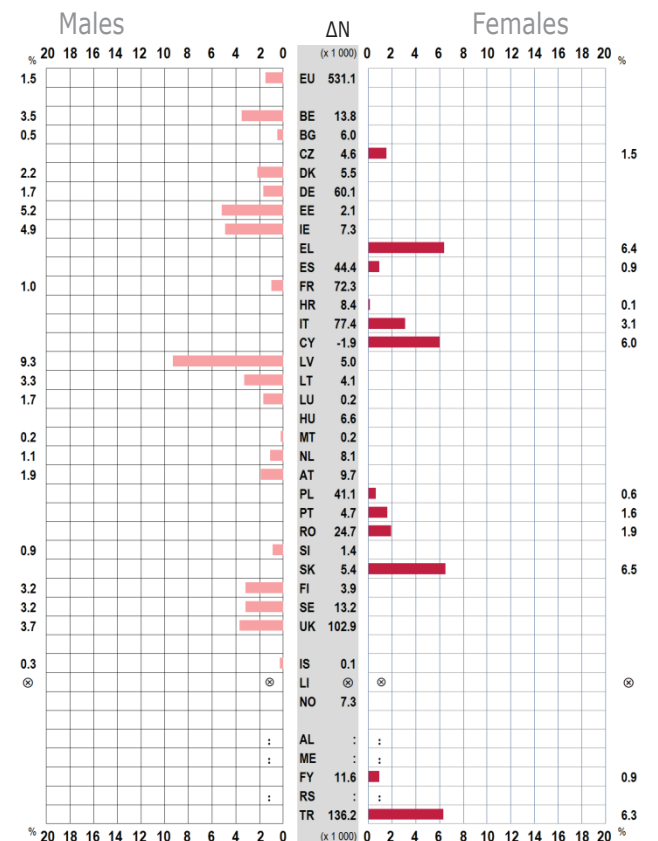
**Figure 3-K:** Differences between male and female unemployment rates and ratios for young people (15-29 year-olds) compared to the 'prime' age group (25-54 year-olds), EU-28 average, 2016



Note: ΔN: The difference in the numbers of unemployed in thousands is indicated below the age groups (positive = males more affected).

Source: Calculations based on Eurostat LFS [lfsa\_pganws], data extracted on 27/07/2017.

**Figure 3-L:** Differences between male and female unemployment rates, young people age 15-24, by country, 2016



Note: ΔN: The difference in the numbers of unemployed in thousands is indicated in the middle (positive = males more affected).

Lithuania: Female estimates low reliability.

Source: Calculations based on Eurostat LFS [yth\_empl\_100], data extracted on 04/09/2017

<sup>(34)</sup> Calculations based on Eurostat, 'Activity rates by sex, age and citizenship (%)', online data code: lfsa\_argan. Data extracted on 25/07/2017.

### 3.4. PATTERNS OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

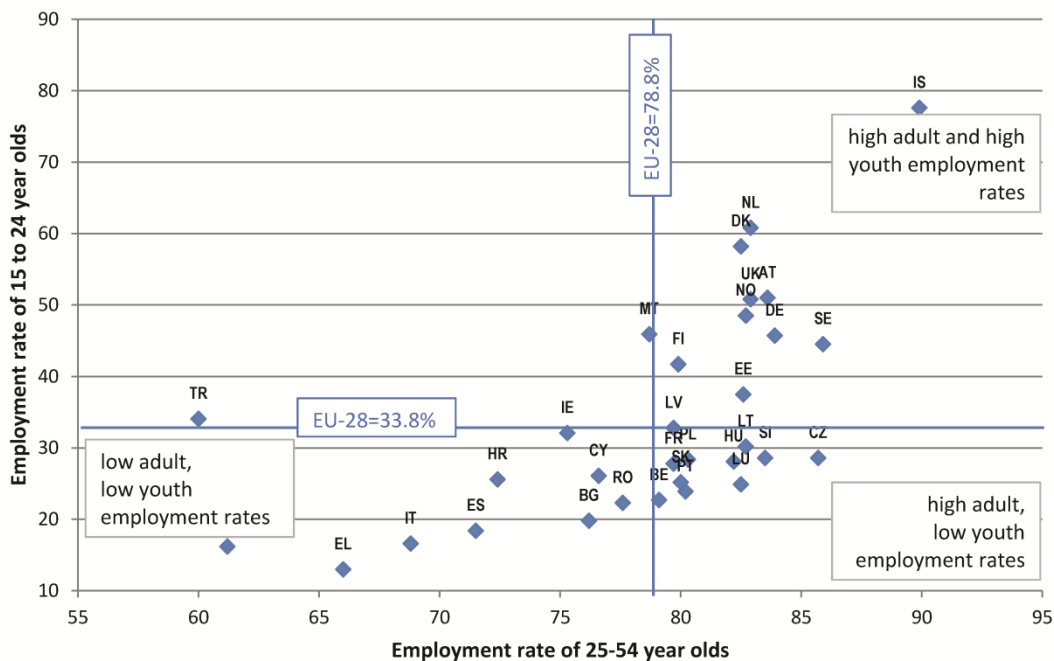
#### Employment rates

The employment rate is one of the key indicators when studying the labour markets. There is a strong relationship between the general situation in the labour market and the employment rates of young people <sup>(35)</sup>. Figure 3-M shows that the majority of European countries fall into two categories: countries where employment rates are high in both the youth and prime working age groups and countries where the rates are low in both age groups.

Employment rates of young people usually mirror those of the working age population.

The situation in the labour market is still difficult for both younger and older age groups in some of the European countries that were greatly affected by the recent recession. In Bulgaria, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Romania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the employment rates of both

**Figure 3-M:** Country distribution of employment rates for young people (15-24 years) and 'prime' working age (25-54 years) group, 2016



Source: Eurostat LFS [lfsi\_emp\_a], data extracted on 11/09/2017

the youth and prime working age populations are lower than the EU-28 average. In contrast, the proportion of both groups is high in the Scandinavian countries, as well as in Germany, Estonia, the Netherlands, Austria and the United Kingdom. Several European countries have high employment rates in the prime working age population (ranging from 79.1 % to 85.7 %), but the proportion of young people at work is lower than the EU average (ranging from 22.7 % to 32.8 %). In Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Slovakia the labour markets are considerably less favourable to young people than to the prime working age group. In most of these countries, part-time work, which attracts young people (Figure 3-R), is not widespread <sup>(36)</sup>.

<sup>(35)</sup> For the European countries analysed, the correlation between the employment rates of both the prime working age group (25-54 years) and the youth group (15-24 years) stood at 0.6. The 15-24 age group is used in the Figure 3-P in order to clearly distinguish between the youth and prime working age populations.

<sup>(36)</sup> See Eurostat, 'Part-time employment and temporary contracts – annual data', online data code: lfsi\_pt\_a. Data extracted on 11/09/2017.

Although the youth employment rates mirror those of the prime working age, there are some essential differences. Jobs for young people are not evenly spread across all sectors and occupations<sup>(37)</sup>. On average, in the EU-28, young people (aged 15-24) constitute approximately 8 % of all those employed. However, employed youth are more likely to be found in fast food restaurants, grocery stores, or hotel receptions than in public administration offices or educational institutions. In EU-28, on average, 20.1 % of the employed in the accommodation and food sectors are between 15 and 24 years old. Wholesale and retail trade, where young people constitute 12.2 % of all employed, is another youth-intensive sector. A higher proportion of young people is also found in a sector of arts, entertainment and recreation (14.5 %).

### Temporary contracts

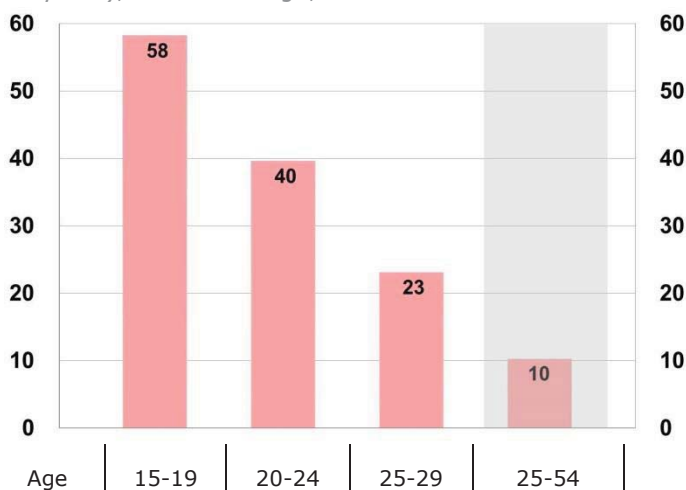
An important characteristic of the youth labour market is the high percentage of temporary contracts in comparison to other age categories. A temporary contract is a fixed-term contract which will terminate either after a period agreed in advance or, if certain objective criteria are met, such as the completion of an assignment or the return of the employee who has been temporarily replaced<sup>(38)</sup>.

Temporary employment is related to lower job security as well as poorer skills and career development.

Temporary employment can be an important step in the transition from education to the labour market. It gives young people work experience and makes it easier for them to find a job. Temporary employment also gives employers an opportunity to assess young people's suitability and capacity to perform the tasks required. Often, temporary jobs serve as stepping-stones to permanent jobs<sup>(39)</sup>.

However, temporary employment implies higher levels of insecurity both workwise and financially, as well as

**Figure 3-N:** Young temporary employees (15-29 years) as percentage of the total number of employees, compared with the 'prime' working age group (24-54 years), EU-28 average, 2016



Source: Eurostat LFS [yth\_empl\_050] and [lfsi\_pt\_a], data extracted on 11/09/2017

fewer opportunities for developing skills and longer-term careers. Young people can be trapped in a cycle of alternating periods of temporary employment and unemployment, which may adversely affect their status into their thirties and beyond. Where this is the case, young people may lack the stability needed to allow them to live independently<sup>(40)</sup>.

Figure 3-N shows that the proportion of temporary employees is very high for the youngest age group (15-19 year-olds) but it reduces rapidly with each older group. In the EU-28, 58.2 % of all 15-19 year-olds in employment have temporary work contracts<sup>(41)</sup>. The proportion drops to 39.6 % for 20-24 year-olds and even further to 23.1 % for 25-29 year olds. In contrast, only 1 in 10 of the adult employees in the prime working age group has a

<sup>(37)</sup> See Eurostat, 'Employment by sex, age and economic activity (from 2008 onwards, NACE Rev. 2) – 1 000', online data code: lfsa\_egan2. Data extracted on 21/09/2017.

<sup>(38)</sup> Eurostat, 2017b.

<sup>(39)</sup> Eurofound, 2013.

<sup>(40)</sup> Eurofound, 2010.

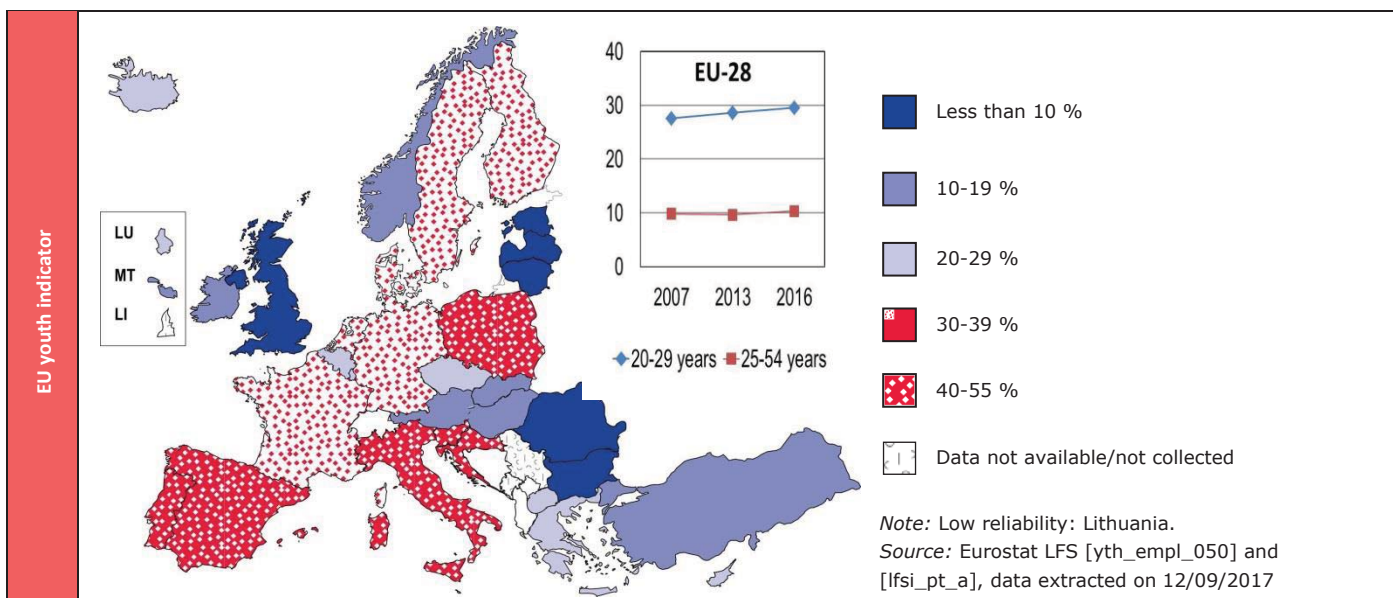
<sup>(41)</sup> This might be due to the temporary student jobs or seasonal work, especially during the summer.



fixed-term contract.

One of the EU youth indicators focuses on the proportion of young employees aged 20-29 with a temporary contract (Figure 3-O). The types of contracts that young people have vary considerably across European countries. In Bulgaria, the Baltic countries, Romania and the United Kingdom, very few young people (less than 10 % of all employees) have fixed-term contracts. In the labour markets of these countries, temporary contracts are rather rare in general <sup>(42)</sup>. In contrast, in Spain, Croatia, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia, every other young employee has a fixed-term contract (the proportion ranges from 50 to 55 %). In Italy, 40.5 % of young employees do not hold a permanent position. The proportion of young employees in temporary employment is also relatively high (between 30 % and 40 %) in Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden. In most of these countries, the proportion of prime working age employees on temporary contracts is also higher than the EU-28 average.

**Figure 3-O:** Young employees aged 20-29 with a temporary contract as a percentage of the total number of employees, by country, 2016



The trends in the EU-28 reveal that the proportion of employees with a temporary contract in the prime working age group remained rather stable during the last ten years, ranging between 9.2 and 10.3 %. The proportion of young employees on fixed-term contracts slightly increased during the recession, from 27.6 % in 2007 to 28.7 % in 2013. During the economic recovery, temporary employment for young people continued to grow and is currently 29.5 %. It is important to note that the EU-28 average encompasses divergent trends between countries that partly reflect the significance of this type of employment before the crisis. For example, fixed-term contracts increased during the recession and afterwards in most of the countries that already had a high rate of fixed-term contracts (e.g. France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Finland). In other countries, such as Ireland and some central and eastern Member States where changes in labour legislation have encouraged the use of temporary contracts, the proportion of fixed-term contracts increased during the recession <sup>(43)</sup>, but has been in decline since 2013 <sup>(44)</sup>.

<sup>(42)</sup> Less than 4 % of prime working age group employees have temporary contracts. See Eurostat, 'Part-time employment and temporary contracts - annual data', online data code: lfsi\_pt\_a. Data extracted on 11/09/2017.

<sup>(43)</sup> Eurofound, 2013.

<sup>(44)</sup> See trends in Eurostat, 'Young temporary employees as a percentage of the total number of employees, by sex, age and country of birth', online data code: yth\_empl\_050. Data extracted on 12/09/2017.

### Part-time work

The ILO defines the term 'part-time worker' as an employed person whose normal hours of work are fewer than those of comparable full-time workers<sup>(45)</sup>. This definition encompasses all forms of part-time work (half-day work, work for one, two or three days a week, etc.). This number may be established at the national, regional, industrial or unit level. For comparative statistical purposes, however, part-time work is usually considered as working fewer than 35 hours, or 30 hours, per week<sup>(46)</sup>.

Part-time employment can be beneficial depending on the quality of the part-time job and whether working part-time is a voluntary choice. The gap between the conditions of part-time and full-time employment differs significantly among European countries. On average, part-time jobs are characterised by poorer job security, lower average hourly earnings and fewer opportunities for training and promotion<sup>(47)</sup>.

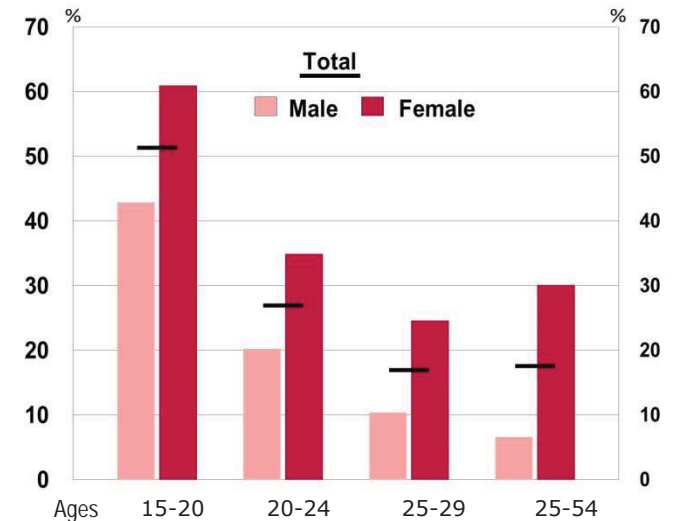
However, part-time jobs are the only way some groups of people can join or remain in the labour market. Many young people who are in education and training (Figure 3-A) are able to work only some hours per week in term-time or longer during vacations. Moreover, young people may work part-time as part of an apprenticeship in the context of either a vocational education programme or an employer-based programme. Part-time work is also often used by those with children or other care responsibilities. This becomes more important for the older age groups (Figure 3-P).

Young people in the 15-24 age group mostly work part-time in order to be able to study. In contrast, most 25-29 year-olds take part-time jobs involuntarily.

Part-time work is very common among the youngest employed people. Figure 3-P shows that every second 15-19 year-old who has a job works less than full-time. This might be because the majority (72.6 %) of those who work in this age group combine work and study (Figure 3-A). Many 20-24 year-olds also work part-time, namely 26.9 % of all employed people in this age group. This largely mirrors the proportion of people who combine work and studies (26.5 %). In contrast, only 17.5 % of employees in the prime working age group (25-54) are not employed full-time. The proportion is even lower among 25-29 year-olds, i.e. 16.9 %.

Women tend to work part-time much more than men. Among the youngest age group in employment, namely 15-19 year-olds, 61.0 % of employed women worked less than full-time compared to 42.9 % of employed men. The reasons for a part-time job in this age group do not differ by gender – most young women and men (almost 80 %) work fewer hours than full-time workers in order to study.

**Figure 3-P:** Part-time employment for young people (15-29 year-olds) as a percentage of total youth employment, compared with the 'prime' working age group (24-54 year-olds), EU-28 average, by sex, 2016



Source: Eurostat LFS [youth\_empl\_060] and [lfsi\_pt\_a], data extracted on 29/05/2017

<sup>(45)</sup> ILO, 1994.

<sup>(46)</sup> ILO, 2017. In LFS, the distinction between full-time and part-time work is generally based on a spontaneous response by the respondent (Eurostat, 2017b).

<sup>(47)</sup> Fagan et al., 2015.

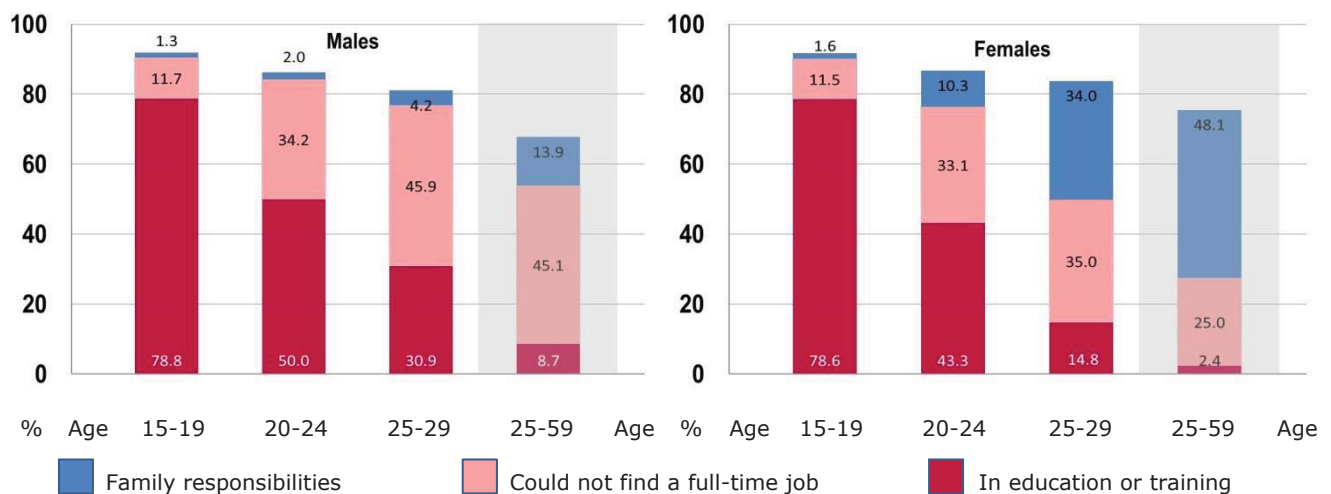
Looking at 20-24 year-olds, 34.9 % of women in employment work less than full-time, compared with 20.2 % of men. Figure 3-Q shows that in this age group, education and training was still the main reason for part-time employment. However, one in three employed males and females worked part-time because they could not find full-time work (this is defined as involuntary part-time employment and is analysed in detail in Figure 3-R).

In most of the countries where a high proportion of young people work part-time, the main reason is for study purposes.

Among 25-29 year-olds, only one in ten men works less than full-time. In contrast, in this age group, a quarter of employed females works part-time. Figure 3-Q suggests that the reasons for working less than full-time differ considerably between men and women in this age group. Among men, 45.6 % work part-time because they cannot find a full-time job, 30.9 % for educational reasons and only 4.2 % for family reasons. In contrast, 34.0 % of women aged 25-29 work part-time because of care duties – they look after children or incapacitated adults or have other family or personal responsibilities. In addition, 35.0 % of women work part-time involuntarily and only 14.8 % choose part-time jobs in order to study.

Patterns of part-time work become even more gender-oriented in the prime working age group, where 93.4 % of employed men hold full-time jobs compared to 69.9 % of women. Adult women work part-time mostly due to family duties, while the few men who work part-time primarily do so because they cannot find a full-time position.

**Figure 3-Q:** Main reasons for part-time employment among young people aged 15-29, compared to adults aged 25-59, EU-28 average, by sex, 2016



Notes: The category 'Family responsibilities' merges two categories: 'Looking after children or incapacitated adults' and 'Other family or personal responsibilities'. Omitted categories include: 'Own illness or disability' and 'Other'. For the 15-19 age group, the categories 'Looking after children or incapacitated adults' and 'Own illness or disability' are not available.

Source: Eurostat LFS [yth\_empl\_070] and [lfsa\_epgar]., data extracted on 15/09/2017

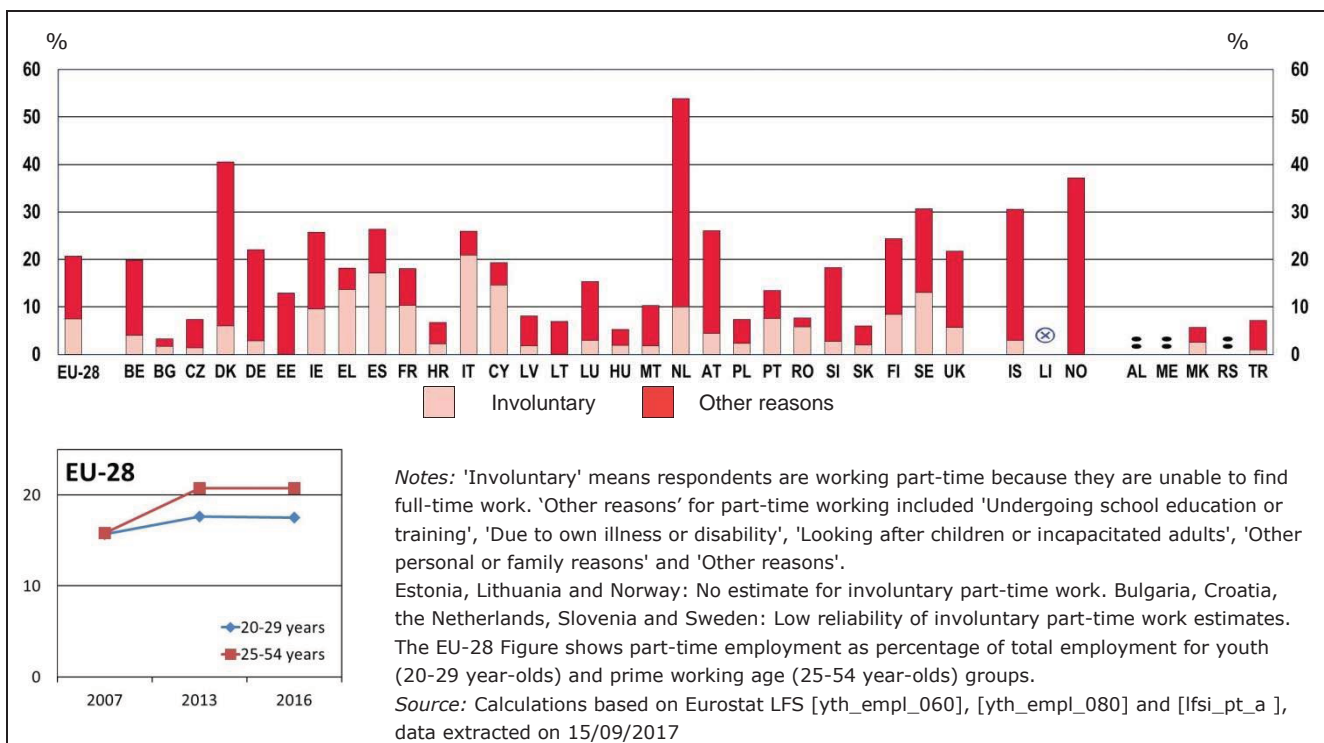
Figure 3-R shows that the level to which part-time jobs predominate in youth employment (20-29 year-olds) varies greatly in European countries. In the EU-28, on average, 20.7 % of all employed young people aged 20-29 worked less than full-time. The Netherlands stands out with a very high proportion of young people working part-time (53.9 %). Many young people are employed less than full-time in the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden and Norway) as well as Iceland (the proportion ranges from 30 % to 40 %). In contrast, part-time employment among young people is rather rare in most of the Member States that have accessed the EU

since 2004 (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), as well as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

As discussed earlier, there are various reasons for working less than full-time. Figure 3-R also indicates the proportion of involuntary part-time employment in the total employment of 20-29 year-olds. In the EU-28, 7.5 % of employed young people work part-time because they are unable to find full-time work. However, in most of the countries with a high prevalence of part-time youth employment, the percentage working part-time involuntarily is rather low. In Denmark, the Netherlands and Iceland, the majority of those who work part-time do so because of education or training commitments <sup>(48)</sup>.

The proportion of involuntary part-time employment is very high in Italy, where 20.9 % of young people in employment are working part-time because they cannot find a full-time position. In other words, in Italy, involuntary part-time work constitutes 80.8 % of all part-time positions filled by young people. The proportion is also very high in Spain: involuntary reasons account for 17.1 % of all jobs held by young people and 65.8 % of part-time jobs.

**Figure 3-R:** Part-time employment as a percentage of total employment among young people aged 20-29, including the percentage of involuntary part-time workers, by country, 2016



The proportions of youth and adult part-time employment were similar in the EU-28 in 2007 (approximately 16 %). The impact of recession was stronger on youth jobs: in 2013, 20.7 % of young employed people worked part-time, compared with 17.6 % of those aged 25-54. The proportion remained stable in both age groups during the recent years of economic recovery.

<sup>(48)</sup> Eurostat, 'Main reason for part-time employment – Distributions by sex and age (%)', online data code: lfsa\_epgar. Data extracted on 15/09/2017.

### Atypical working hours

In many sectors, for instance in retail, transport, agriculture, health-care or certain industries, specific working hours and rhythms are required: shift work, weekend work, evening work and night work. These so-called atypical working hours might be attractive for people who are trying to combine full-time studies and work. Moreover, accepting jobs during atypical working hours might serve as an entry point into employment for some young people.

However, working atypical hours for longer periods might entail negative consequences on the health and social life of employees. Working shifts has been shown to contribute to disrupted social relationships, while night work might be related to insomnia, stress, fatigue and irritability<sup>(49)</sup>. On average, in the EU-28, 38.3 % of employees work atypical working hours<sup>(50)</sup>.

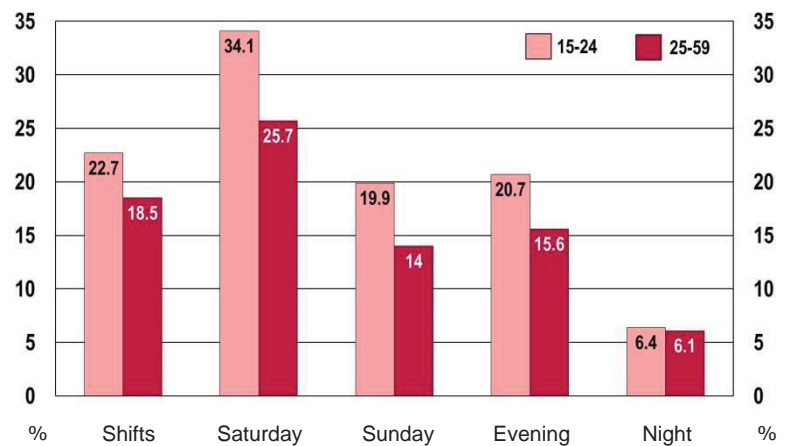
Figure 3-S indicates that the proportion of young people aged 15-24 working shifts, weekends and evenings was higher than that of older age groups (aged 25-59). One in three young employees worked on Saturdays

compared with one in four adult employees, and while around one in five young employees worked shifts, Sundays or evenings, the corresponding figure for adults was around one in six. Evening work was the least prevalent, and the difference in the proportions of youth and adult groups in this type of work was the smallest.

### Self-employment and entrepreneurship

Self-employed people work in their own business, professional practice, or on their own farm<sup>(51)</sup>. There are two main drivers for becoming self-employed: 'opportunity' entrepreneurs use self-employment in order to realise their business ideas, become their own boss or achieve a better work-life balance; 'necessity' entrepreneurs, on the other hand, start their own business because they cannot find employment elsewhere and have no other means of making a living. The first group often tend to report the higher levels of happiness and job satisfaction associated with creativity, autonomy and flexibility, while the second group tend to have levels of job satisfaction similar to or lower than regular employees<sup>(52)</sup>. A recent study shows that only one in four young self-employed people start their own business because they have no other alternative; however, they still turn to self-employment out of necessity more often than older age groups<sup>(53)</sup>.

**Figure 3-S:** Proportion of young employees aged 15-24 working atypical working hours, compared with adults aged 25-59, EU-28 average, 2016



Note: 20-29 age category is not available in Eurostat database.

Source: Eurostat LFS [lfsa\_ewpshi] [lfsa\_ewpsat] [lfsa\_ewpsun] [lfsa\_ewpeve] [lfsa\_ewpnig]. Data extracted on 17/09/2017..

<sup>(49)</sup> Boisard (1990); Boisard et al. (2002).

<sup>(50)</sup> Eurostat, 'Employment at atypical working time as a percentage of the total employment, by European socio-economic group', online data code: lfsa\_eseatyp. Data extracted on 17/09/2017.

<sup>(51)</sup> Eurostat, 2017a.

<sup>(52)</sup> Baumol, 1990; Reynold et al., 2005; Blanchflower, 2000; Binder and Coad, 2013; Fairlie and Fossen, 2017.

<sup>(53)</sup> A quarter of the self-employed people aged under 35 (24 %) say they have no other alternatives for work, compared with 18-19 % of the self-employed in older age groups. See Eurofound (2017).

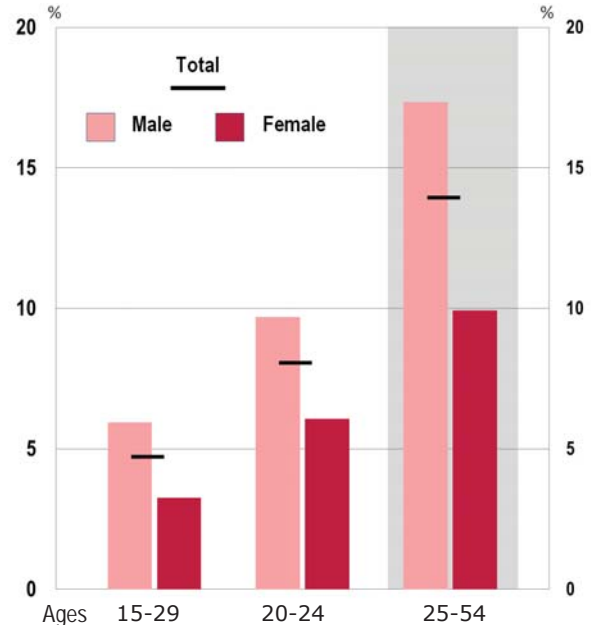
Although the self-employed population is a highly heterogeneous group, it is important to highlight that all these people share some common issues with respect to job quality<sup>(54)</sup>. On average, the self-employed generally have lower pay than the employed, especially those without employees. Furthermore, self-employment appears to provide lower levels of social security than many other forms of employment<sup>(55)</sup>. Often the self-employed work within the informal sector or become freelance when regular employment becomes scarce. Working conditions vary greatly, but most entrepreneurs tend to work longer and more atypical hours. Moreover, the potential for stress and health-related issues for the self-employed is often greater than for employees. Thus, self-employment might not be wholly beneficial for young people<sup>(56)</sup>, but unlocking the potential of youth entrepreneurship is still important so that those who have good business ideas and the right skills can set up and run successful enterprises<sup>(57)</sup>.

Younger people are far less likely than older people to be self-employed. In the EU-28, only 4.7 % of employed people in the age 20-24 group work in their own business (Figure 3-T). The proportion is higher among 25-29 year-olds (8.0 %), but it still remains considerably lower than the proportion of self-employed people in the prime working age group (13.9 %). Young people face greater barriers in starting their own business compared to other age groups: they have more difficulty in raising external finance because they lack savings and collateral; they may lack the right experience and skills to run a successful business; and they are often not sufficiently aware of entrepreneurship as an employment opportunity<sup>(58)</sup>.

There is a strong gender divide in the self-employment figures. The rate for men is almost twice that of women in the prime working age group (25-54) as well as among 20-24 year olds. There are numerous explanations for this gender gap, including differences in attitudes to risk-taking; difficulties in combining self-employment with family responsibilities; family and tax policies that discourage labour market participation and entrepreneurship; as well as negative attitudes towards female entrepreneurs<sup>(59)</sup>.

Self-employed young people do not usually employ other people. Only 10.7 % of 20-24 year-olds who own a business have at least one employee. The proportion is higher for 25-29 year-olds (17.5 %), but still lower than that of the prime working age population (28.6 %) <sup>(60)</sup>.

**Figure 3-T:** Self-employment as a percentage of total employment for young people (20-29 year-olds) compared to the prime working age group (24-54 year-olds), EU-28 average, by sex, 2016



Source: Eurydice calculations based on Eurostat LFS [lfsa\_esgan] and [lfsa\_egan], data extracted on 18/09/2017.

<sup>(54)</sup> Van Praag and Versloot, 2007; Binder and Coad, 2013; OECD/EU, 2017b.

<sup>(55)</sup> Considerable numbers of self-employed people exit before five years and many of these people do not have access to unemployment benefits. See OECD/EU, 2017b.

<sup>(56)</sup> Burchell et al., 2015; Hatfield, 2014.

<sup>(57)</sup> Eurofound, 2015.

<sup>(58)</sup> European Commission, 2017a.

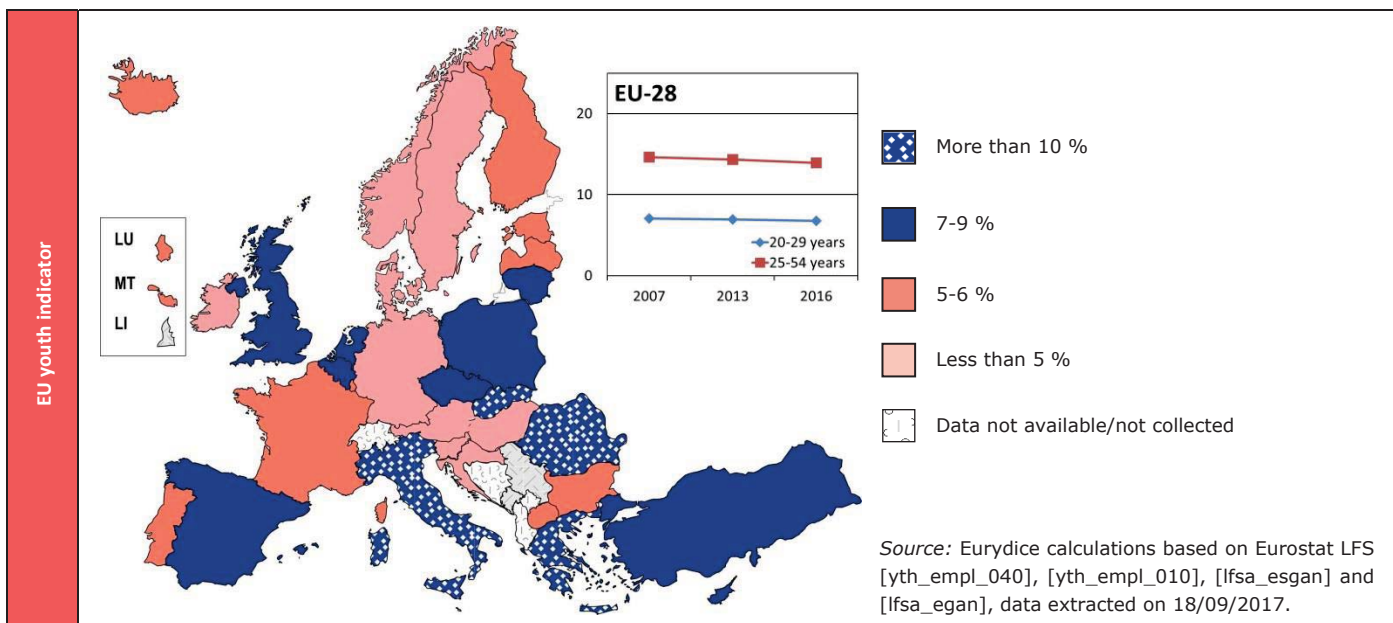
<sup>(59)</sup> Andersson Joona and Wadensjö, 2008; OECD/EU, 2017a; Wagner, 2007.

<sup>(60)</sup> Eurydice calculations based on Eurostat 'Self-employment by sex, age and citizenship (1 000)' (online data code: lfsa\_esgan) and 'Employment by sex, age and citizenship (1 000)', (online data code: lfsa\_egan), data extracted on 18/09/2017.

Young people tend to start businesses in the service sector rather than in manufacturing-oriented sectors. This is probably because the barriers to entry are lower, capital needs are less and lower levels of business skills are required<sup>(61)</sup>. In the EU-28, young self-employed people are concentrated in the agricultural, construction and trade (wholesale and retail) sectors<sup>(62)</sup>. In some of these sectors (i.e. construction), forms of ‘bogus’ or false self-employment are widespread<sup>(63)</sup>.

The proportion of self-employed young people aged 20-29 is one of the EU youth indicators (Figure 3-U). The highest rates of self-employed young people are in Italy, where 14.6 % of the 20-29 year-olds in employment have set up their own business. In Greece, the rate is 13.6 %, followed by Romania (11.4 %) and Slovakia (10.9 %). In contrast, very few young people have their own business in Denmark, where only 2.6 % of the 20-29 year-olds in employment are self-employed. The rates are also very low (around 3.0 %) in Germany, Sweden and Norway.

**Figure 3-U:** Self-employment as a percentage of total employment for young people aged 20-29, by country, 2016



In the EU-28 on average, the self-employment rates for young people have been stable during the last ten years (varying between 6.8 % and 7.0 %). Comparing 2007 with 2013, the proportion of adults who work in their own business, professional practice, or on their own farm slightly decreased (from 14.6 % to 13.9 %). This might be related to the long-term structural decline of employment in the agricultural sector<sup>(64)</sup> – the sector that provides the highest levels of self-employment.

In several countries<sup>(65)</sup>, youth self-employment rates increased during the height of the economic recession and fell afterwards. This trend might suggest that young people set up their own business in order to avoid

<sup>(61)</sup> Rosa, 2003; Parker, 2009.

<sup>(62)</sup> OECD/EU, 2014; Eurofound, 2015.

<sup>(63)</sup> Eurofound, 2015.

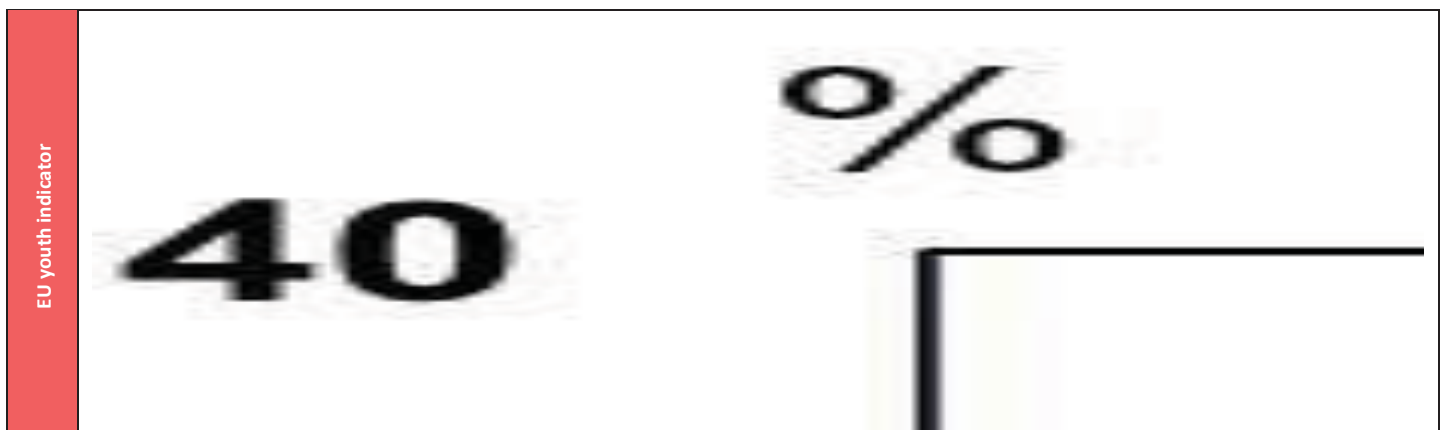
<sup>(64)</sup> European Commission, 2015

<sup>(65)</sup> Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden and Iceland.

unemployment. However, in other countries <sup>(66)</sup>, the proportion of self-employed young people fell during the years of the crisis as well as afterwards.

People's stated intentions to start a business are analysed in order to reveal the entrepreneurial potential of a population. Figure 3-V shows that young people (18-34 year-olds) tend to express more entrepreneurial intentions than the older adult population (35-64 year-olds). In almost all European countries with available data, the percentage of the youth population who are latent entrepreneurs and who intend to start a business within three years is much higher than among adults. The proportion of young people who would like to set up their own business is especially high in Estonia, France, Croatia, Latvia, Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In these countries, more than 25 % of young people (who are not yet involved in any stage of entrepreneurial activity) declare they would like to start a business within three years. The proportion is also high (between 20 and 25 %) in Cyprus, Hungary and Portugal. In contrast, few people aged between 18 and 34 (less than 10 %) express entrepreneurial intentions in Bulgaria, Spain, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.

**Figure 3-V:** Proportion of young people aged 18-34 who would like to set up their own business compared with adults aged 35-64, by country, 2017



*Notes:* The Figure shows the 'Entrepreneurial Intention' variable: the percentage of the population (individuals involved in any stage of entrepreneurial activity excluded) who are latent entrepreneurs and who intend to start a business within three years.

2016 data for Hungary, Austria, Portugal, Finland and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

*Source:* Age break down provided by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (<http://www.gemconsortium.org/data/key-aps>)

<sup>(66)</sup> Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Portugal, Norway, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.



## CONCLUSION

Young people entering the world of work usually experience multiple and often protracted transitions between education, labour market and/or inactivity. On average in Europe, the cut-off point when more people are in the labour market than in education is age 22. People aged 15-19 are rarely employed and, where they are, it is usually in part-time student jobs, combining employment and education. In Europe, every other person aged 20-24 has a job. Three quarters of them work full-time. The activity rates of people aged 25-29 are close to those of the prime working age population. However, the proportion of unemployed young people in this age group (as well as those aged 20-24) is higher than that of the prime working age group.

In the majority of European countries, youth employment rates mirror those of the adult population. High proportions of young people are in employment in those countries where adult employment rates are high and vice versa. However, the quality of jobs and job security might differ. A much higher proportion of young employees have temporary or fixed-term contracts compared to the prime working-age population. Moreover, a higher proportion of young employees also work atypical hours (shifts, evenings or weekends). In contrast, few young people have set up their own business and even fewer employ others.

On average, in Europe, unemployment in both the youth population and the prime working age population has been decreasing since the height of the economic recession. Since 2013, there are 1.3 million fewer jobless young people in the EU. Young men and people with lower levels of education are suffering more from unemployment. However, in some European countries, especially in southern Europe, educational attainment and qualifications do not give as much protection from unemployment as they do elsewhere.



Brussels, 22.5.2018  
SWD(2018) 169 final

PART 4/7

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Situation of young people in the European Union**

*Accompanying the document*

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE  
REGIONS**

**Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy**

{COM(2018) 269 final} - {SWD(2018) 168 final}

## 4. Health and Well-being

### EU youth indicators

Obesity	Figures 4-A and 4-B
Regular smokers	Figures 4-C and 4-D
Drunkenness in the past 30 days	Figures 4-E and 4-F
Self-reported cannabis use in the past year	Figures 4-G and 4-H
Injuries: self-reported road traffic accidents	Figures 4-I and 4-J
Psychological distress	Figures 4-K and 4-L
Cause of death of young people – suicide	Figures 4-M and 4-N

## 4.1. INTRODUCTION

The EU Youth Strategy supports the health and well-being of young people, 'with a focus on the promotion of mental and sexual health, sport, physical activity and healthy life styles, as well as the prevention and treatment of injury, eating disorders, addictions and substance abuse' <sup>(1)</sup>. The foundations for lifelong good health and well-being are laid in childhood and adolescence. While young people generally feel healthier than older age groups, with a large majority of them considering that they are in good or very good health <sup>(2)</sup>, young people are more prone to 'risk behaviour' than older age groups. This is partly related to the normal changes young people undergo in their physiological and social development, and partly due to the difficulties they face in their transition to adulthood and independence. Vulnerable groups of young people such as those experiencing unemployment, poverty or social exclusion may be particularly prone to more serious problems in their physical and mental health.

This chapter provides a snapshot of the main trends in areas covered by the EU Dashboard of Youth Indicators <sup>(3)</sup>. It is divided into two sub-sections: first, it looks at the main health risks (obesity, substance abuse and road traffic accidents resulting in injury); and second, it discusses two indicators related to young people's mental well-being (psychological distress and suicide).

## 4.2. HEALTH RISKS

Behaviours considered to put young people's health at risk such as smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use, unhealthy eating, physical inactivity and unsafe sexual practices often cluster together and reinforce each other <sup>(4)</sup>. They are all influenced by social factors such as deprivation and social exclusion, poor access to education, as well as problematic family, school and living environments <sup>(5)</sup>. Moreover, these behaviours do not only have a strong impact on young people's health and well-being at the time they occur, but they also have life-long effects <sup>(6)</sup>.

Young people are most vulnerable to risk behaviours when their life is in transition <sup>(7)</sup>. As they grow up, they move from childhood to adolescence, from education to work, and from living with their parents to living independently (Chapter 7). In this context, barriers to accessing higher levels of education, leaving school prematurely, long periods of unemployment or insecure housing situations all increase the probability of young people engaging in risk behaviours <sup>(8)</sup>. Moreover, these transition periods are becoming longer and more complex, thereby increasing young people's vulnerability <sup>(9)</sup>. This section therefore examines the most important health risks and looks at young people's susceptibility to 'risk behaviour'.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), 2009/C 311/01.

<sup>(2)</sup> Source: Eurostat, Statistics on income and living conditions (SILC), 'Self-perceived health' [hlth\_silc\_01]. Data extracted on 22.06.2017.

<sup>(3)</sup> European Commission, 2011.

<sup>(4)</sup> Jackson et al., 2012.

<sup>(5)</sup> Ibid.; Viner et al., 2012.

<sup>(6)</sup> Sawyer et al., 2012.

<sup>(7)</sup> Furlong et al., 2003; Jackson et al., 2012.

<sup>(8)</sup> Furlong, 2002; Jackson et al., 2012.

<sup>(9)</sup> Ibid.

### 4.2.1. Obesity

Obesity and being overweight are serious health risks. Childhood obesity has lasting consequences, often lifelong<sup>(10)</sup>. In addition to an early onset of chronic diseases and lower life expectation, obese children and young people will likely experience bullying and poor attainment at school, lower productivity and less rewarding careers<sup>(11)</sup>. This also impacts negatively on national healthcare systems, government budgets and the productivity of the European economy<sup>(12)</sup>.

There are worrying trends surrounding weight issues in Europe and around the world, as more and more people – adolescents and young adults among them – suffer from health problems related to being obese or overweight<sup>(13)</sup>. Researchers even talk about an 'obesity epidemic'<sup>(14)</sup>, which is difficult to halt and results from a combination of factors such as sedentary lifestyles with low levels of physical activity, as well as unhealthy food and eating habits<sup>(15)</sup>. Young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are especially vulnerable to becoming overweight or obese<sup>(16)</sup>.

European statistics presented here confirm that obesity is becoming more and more widespread, both among young people and in the total population. The increase between 2002 and 2008 in the proportion of obese young people was highlighted in the 2012 Youth Report<sup>(17)</sup>. Figure 4-A depicts the continuation of this trend through to 2014: the proportion of obese young people aged 18-24 increased in almost all countries with available data, with the biggest increases registered in Bulgaria, Germany and France. The proportion of obese young people decreased only in four countries: in Belgium, Czech Republic, Spain and Romania. In all four of these, the proportion of obese young people is below the EU-28 average (5.8 %).

This 5.8 % average obesity rate among young people aged 18-24 in the EU-28 is around one third of the obesity rate in the total population (15.4 %) (Figure 4-A-b). However, countries vary greatly in this respect. The smallest difference between the rate for young people and that for the total population is in Ireland. Although the reliability of the data is low in this case, they indicate that the proportion of obese young people is only marginally lower than that of the total population. With roughly 1 in 6 young people who could be considered obese, Ireland is also the country registering the highest proportion of young people with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or above (Figure 4-A). Besides Ireland, the proportion of obese young people is also above 10 % in Malta (12 %) and the United Kingdom (10.8 %). On the other hand, obesity among young people aged 18-24 is below 3 % in Croatia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia.

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<sup>(10)</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2017.

<sup>(11)</sup> See for example WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2014.

<sup>(12)</sup> OECD, 2016.

<sup>(13)</sup> Ibid.

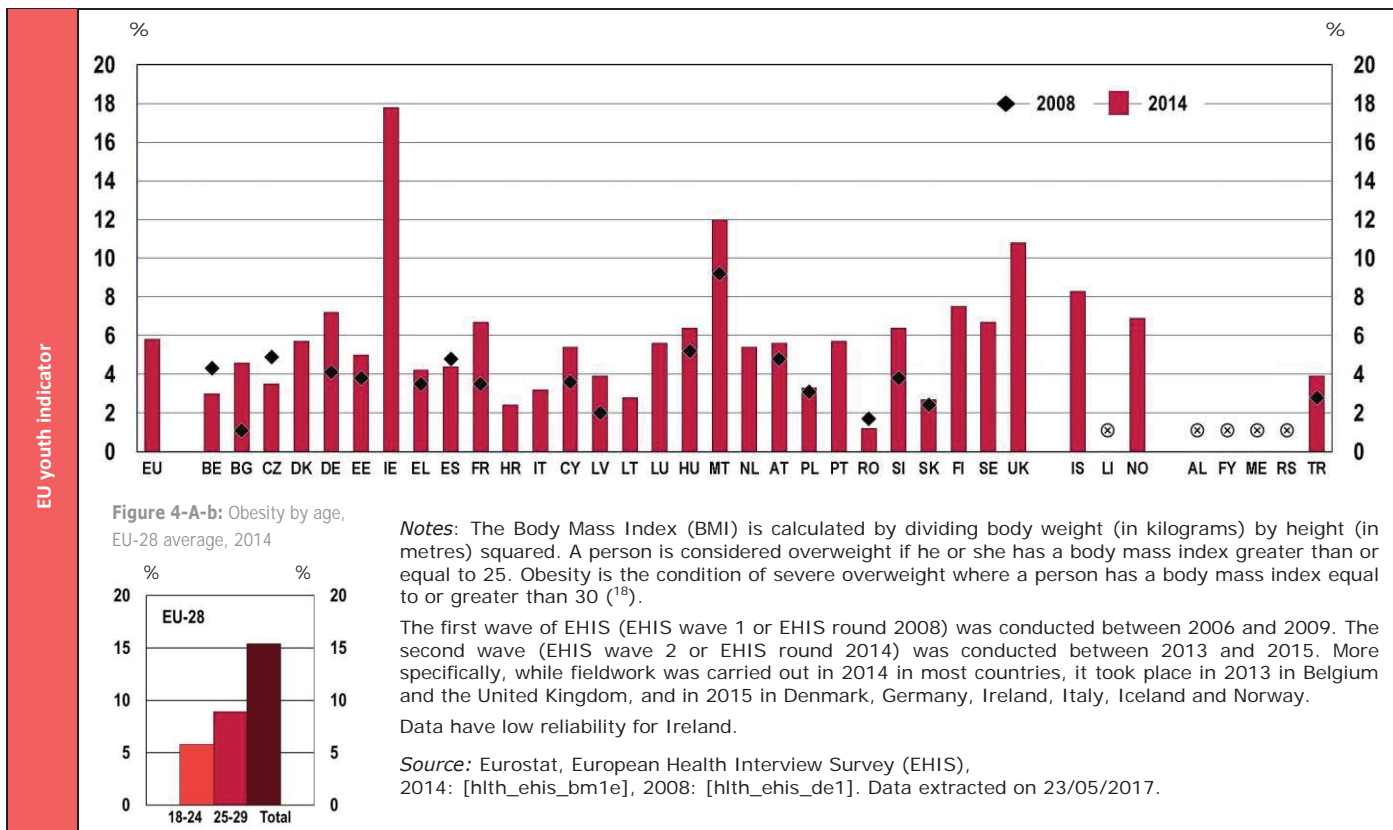
<sup>(14)</sup> See for example Roberto et al., 2015.

<sup>(15)</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2017.

<sup>(16)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(17)</sup> European Commission, 2012a.

**Figure 4-A:** Proportion of young people aged 18-24 with a Body Mass Index of 30 or above (obesity level), by country, 2008 and 2014



Obesity among 25-29 year-olds is higher than for 18-24 year-olds. In 2014, on average in the EU-28, 8.9 % of 25-29 year-olds could be considered obese (Figure 4-A-b). Countries follow roughly the same pattern in this regard: there are more obese young people in the 25-29 age group than among 18-24 year-olds, but still fewer than within the total population. In 2014, obesity within the 25-29 age group was the highest in Malta (20.2 %), Ireland (16.5 %), Iceland (14.5 %) and the United Kingdom (14 %) <sup>(19)</sup>.

As mentioned above, obesity is partly linked to unhealthy eating habits, such as excessive consumption of foods high in fat, salt and sugar as well as low consumption of fruit and vegetables <sup>(20)</sup>. Looking at the countries at the two extremes, this relationship is partly supported by data on the frequency of fruit consumption <sup>(21)</sup>. Ireland, Malta and the United Kingdom are among the countries with a relatively high percentage (above the EU-28 average of 11.1 %) of young people aged 15-24 reporting that they never or only occasionally consume fruit (though other countries are also on this list, most notably France and Belgium). At the same time, in Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia, the proportion of young people never or only occasionally consuming fruit is among the lowest in Europe, below 5.5 %.

Obesity of young people is a growing concern across Europe, partly linked to unhealthy eating habits such as low levels of fruit and vegetable consumption.

<sup>(18)</sup> Source: Eurostat Health Glossary (Eurostat, 2017d).

<sup>(19)</sup> Source: Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), 'Body mass index (BMI)' [hlth\_ehis\_bm1e]. Data extracted on 23/05/2017.

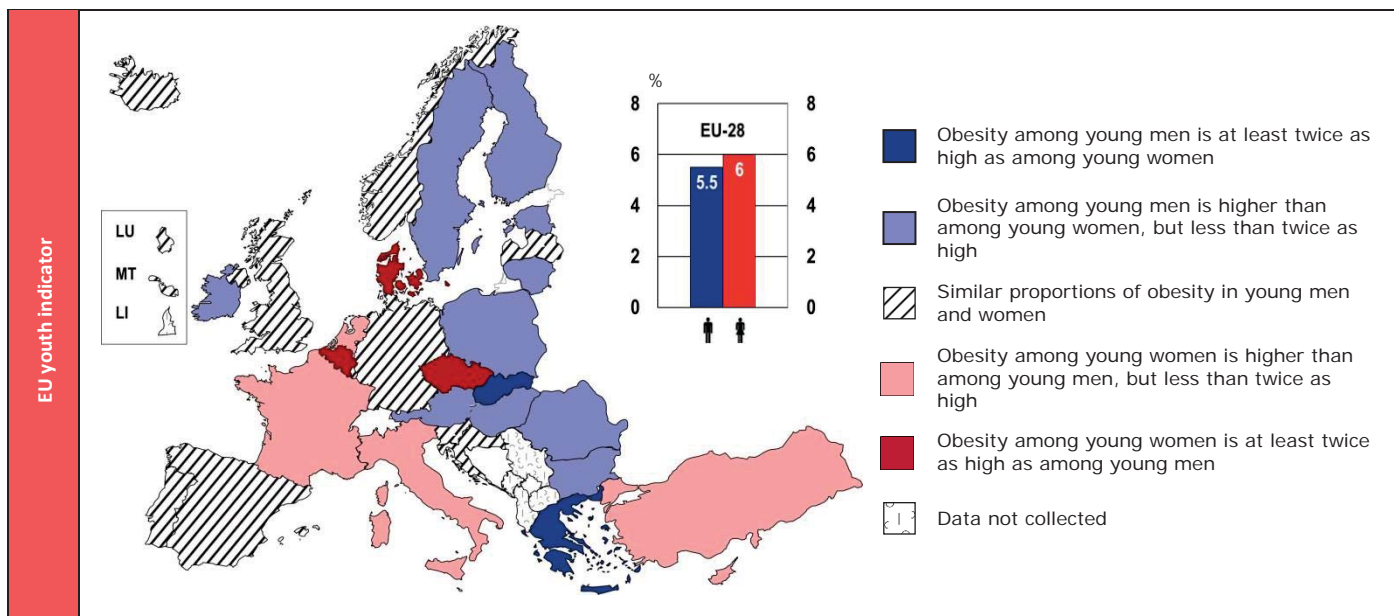
<sup>(20)</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2017.

<sup>(21)</sup> Source: Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), 'Frequency of fruit and vegetables consumption' [hlth\_ehis\_fv1e]. Data extracted on 23/05/2017. According to this dataset, in Ireland, 19.7 % of young people aged 15-24 never or only occasionally eat fruit.

Nevertheless, it also has to be noted that not every country with a high percentage of young people who never, or only occasionally consume fruit have a high obesity ratio (see, for example, Belgium), so eating habits are only one factor among many contributing to obesity in young people. However, it is still of concern that as a general pattern, the proportion of young people aged 15-24 consuming fruit or vegetables at least once a day is around 10 percentage points lower than that of the total population in the EU-28 <sup>(22)</sup>. This pattern holds true in a large majority of European countries.

Though socio-economic background is a stronger predictor of obesity than gender, gender differences in the proportion of obese young people aged 18-24 are prominent in some European countries (Figure 4-B). On average in the EU-28, young women and men have similar obesity rates, with young women being slightly more affected than men. However, countries show diverse gender patterns when it comes to obesity: while more than twice as many young women as young men are obese in Belgium, Czech Republic and Denmark, the opposite is true in Greece and Slovakia.

**Figure 4-B:** Gender differences in the proportion of obese young people aged 18-24, 2014



*Notes:* The second wave of EHIS (EHIS wave 2 or EHIS round 2014) was conducted between 2013 and 2015. More specifically, while fieldwork was carried out in 2014 in most countries, it took place in 2013 in Belgium and the United Kingdom, and in 2015 in Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Iceland and Norway.

Data have low reliability for Ireland.

Obesity in young men and women was regarded as similar if the male/female ratio was between 0.85 and 1.15.

*Source:* Own calculation based on Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), [hlth\_ehis\_bm1e]. Data extracted on 23.05.2017.

Such diverse patterns of gender difference could be partly due to multiple lifestyle differences between women and men: while women are more likely to have a healthy diet (young women consume more fruit and vegetables than young men in almost every European country <sup>(23)</sup>), they engage in less physical activity than their male peers <sup>(24)</sup>. Differences between young men and women not engaging in any physical activity are especially striking in south-eastern European countries, where young people in general tend to be less active. In Greece,

<sup>(22)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(23)</sup> Source: Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), 'Frequency of fruit and vegetables consumption' [hlth\_ehis\_fv1e]. Data extracted on 23/05/2017.

<sup>(24)</sup> Source: Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), 'Time spent on health-enhancing (non-work-related) aerobic physical activity' [hlth\_ehis\_pe2e]. Data extracted on 23/05/2017.

Spain, Romania and Turkey, the proportion of young women aged 15-24 spending no time on health-enhancing (non-work-related) aerobic physical activity is 20 percentage points or more higher than that of young men. At the other extreme, young people are engaged in physical activities to a greater extent in Nordic countries, and differences between men and women tend to be much smaller in this region. In Denmark, Estonia, Sweden and Iceland, the proportion of young women not engaging in any physical activity is even lower than that of young men <sup>(25)</sup>.

In addition to differences in diet and physical activity, studies have shown the importance of socio-cultural factors in influencing gender differences in obesity ratios. These include the cultural association between obesity and social status among men (for example in Greece), and the different cultural norms or standards of beauty that result in pressure on women to be thin <sup>(26)</sup>.

#### 4.2.2. Substance abuse

Young people – especially in adolescence – are particularly vulnerable to substance use and its related disorders. Late adolescence and young adulthood is often described as the age of 'experimentation', when young people try new substances, often without becoming addicted to them or misusing them <sup>(27)</sup>. However, as mentioned above, the insecurity experienced in this transition period, together with factors such as unemployment, deprivation, an insecure family environment or peer pressure all increase the likelihood of risk behaviour. Therefore, for some young people, experimentation might turn into excessive use, bringing physical, mental and social risks <sup>(28)</sup>.

This sub-section looks into the three main forms of substance abuse: regular smoking, excessive drinking and cannabis consumption.

##### a) Smoking

Smoking is a well-known health risk and is the leading cause of preventable death <sup>(29)</sup>. As with most risk factors, tobacco use is also influenced by socio-economic factors, with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds being more vulnerable <sup>(30)</sup>.

The proportion of people smoking daily has been steadily decreasing, though not in all countries and not for every group.

The proportion of people smoking daily has been steadily decreasing since the beginning of the 2000s in almost all European countries with available data <sup>(31)</sup>, pointing towards the effectiveness of anti-smoking campaigns and smoke-free spaces legislation <sup>(32)</sup>. This trend is confirmed by the last two rounds of the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), which is the data source used to calculate the EU youth indicator <sup>(33)</sup>. As Figure 4-C depicts, the proportion of daily smokers in the 15-24 age group decreased between 2008 and 2014 in almost all countries with available data, the only exception being Slovakia. In the 25-29 age group, increases in regular

<sup>(25)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(26)</sup> Kanter and Caballero, 2012.

<sup>(27)</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe 2016, p. 157.

<sup>(28)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(29)</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe 2016, p. 147.

<sup>(30)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(31)</sup> European Commission 2016b, p. 231.

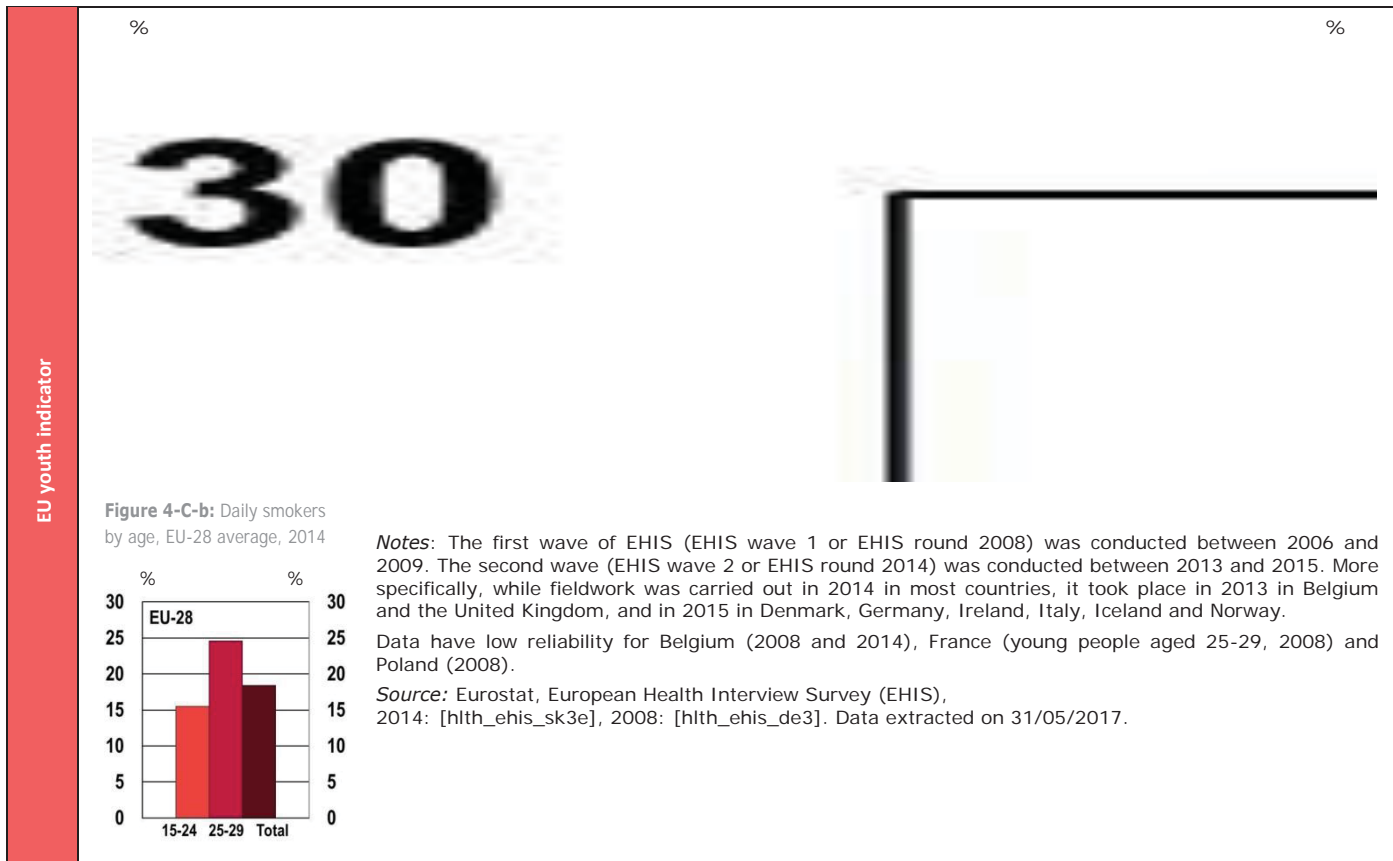
<sup>(32)</sup> See e.g. WHO, 2014a.

<sup>(33)</sup> Eurobarometer surveys (see Special Eurobarometers 429 (2015) and 458 (2017) on the Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and electronic cigarettes) show a recent rise in young smokers in the 15-24 age group. However, these surveys do not make it possible to follow changes in the proportions of daily and occasional smokers separately over time.



smoking took place only in France, Hungary, Austria and Slovakia <sup>(34)</sup>. The proportion of daily smokers among young people was the lowest in Norway, both in absolute terms and in comparison to Norway's total population.

**Figure 4-C:** Proportion of daily smokers among young people aged 15-24, by country, 2008 and 2014



However, a relatively large percentage of young people still smoke daily in (at least some) European countries. In 2014, 15.5 % of young people aged 15-24 and 24.6 % of 25-29 year-olds smoked daily in the EU-28 on average (Figure 4-C-b). As Figure 4-C also depicts, the proportion of young people aged 15-24 smoking daily was relatively high in Hungary (27.2 %), Austria (26.8 %) and France (22.2 %). In these three countries, the proportion of 15-24 year-olds smoking daily was larger than the proportion of daily smokers in the total population <sup>(35)</sup>.

The overrepresentation of young people among daily smokers is on the other hand quite clear in the 25-29 age group: in almost all European countries, a larger proportion of young people aged 25-29 smoke daily in comparison with the proportion in the total population <sup>(36)</sup>.

<sup>(34)</sup> Source: Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), 'Daily smokers of cigarettes' [hlth\_ehis\_sk3e]. Data extracted on 31/05/2017.

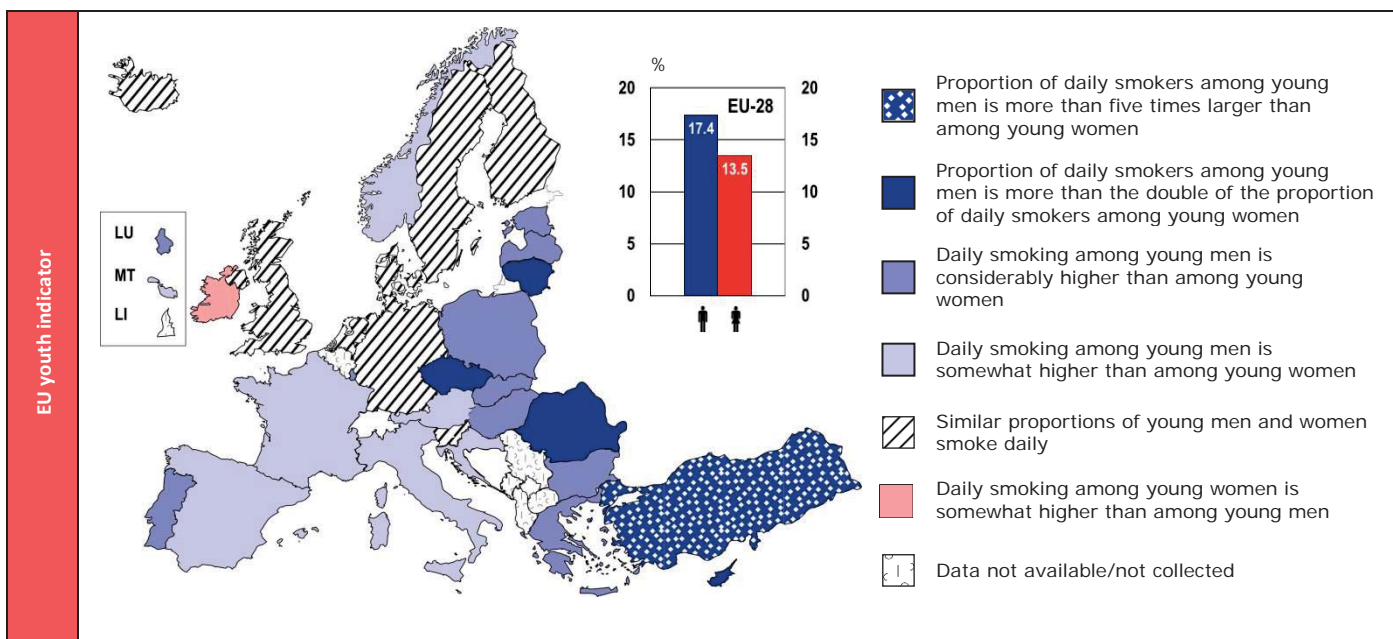
<sup>(35)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(36)</sup> Ibid.

Young men are particularly prone to daily smoking – with more of them smoking on a daily basis than young women in almost all countries with available data (Figure 4-D). On average in the EU-28, while 17.4 % of young men aged 15-24 were smoking daily in 2014, only 13.5 % of young women of the same age were doing so. The differences are especially pronounced moving from west to east and north to south (Figure 4-D). The biggest gender differences are in Czech Republic, Cyprus, Lithuania, Romania and Turkey, where young men are more than twice as likely to smoke daily as young women (in Turkey, this ratio is 5 to 1).

Young men are much more likely to be habitual smokers than young women. However, differences between women and men are narrowing in some countries, with increasing proportions of female daily smokers.

**Figure 4-D:** Gender differences in the proportion of daily smokers among young people aged 15-24, 2014



*Notes:* The second wave of EHIS (EHIS wave 2 or EHIS round 2014) was conducted between 2013 and 2015. More specifically, while fieldwork was carried out in 2014 in most countries, it took place in 2013 in Belgium and the United Kingdom, and in 2015 in Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Iceland and Norway.

Daily smoking among young men is regarded as 'considerably higher' than among young women where the male/female ratio is between 1.5 and 2; it is regarded as 'somewhat higher' if the ratio is between 1.15 and 1.5; and regarded as 'similar' if the ratio is between 0.85 and 1.15.

*Source:* Own calculation based on Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), [hlth\_ehis\_sk3e]. Data extracted on 31/05/2017.

The only country with more young female daily smokers than male is Ireland. However, while the total proportion of regular smokers aged 15-24 only increased in Slovakia between 2008 and 2014, the proportion of young female daily smokers increased in more countries: in Belgium (1.8 p.p.), Estonia (0.3 p.p.), Latvia (2.4 p.p.), Slovenia (0.8 p.p.) and Slovakia (2.6 p.p.). In contrast, the proportion of young male daily smokers only increased in Czech Republic (0.7 p.p.) and Slovakia (1.7 p.p.)<sup>(37)</sup>.

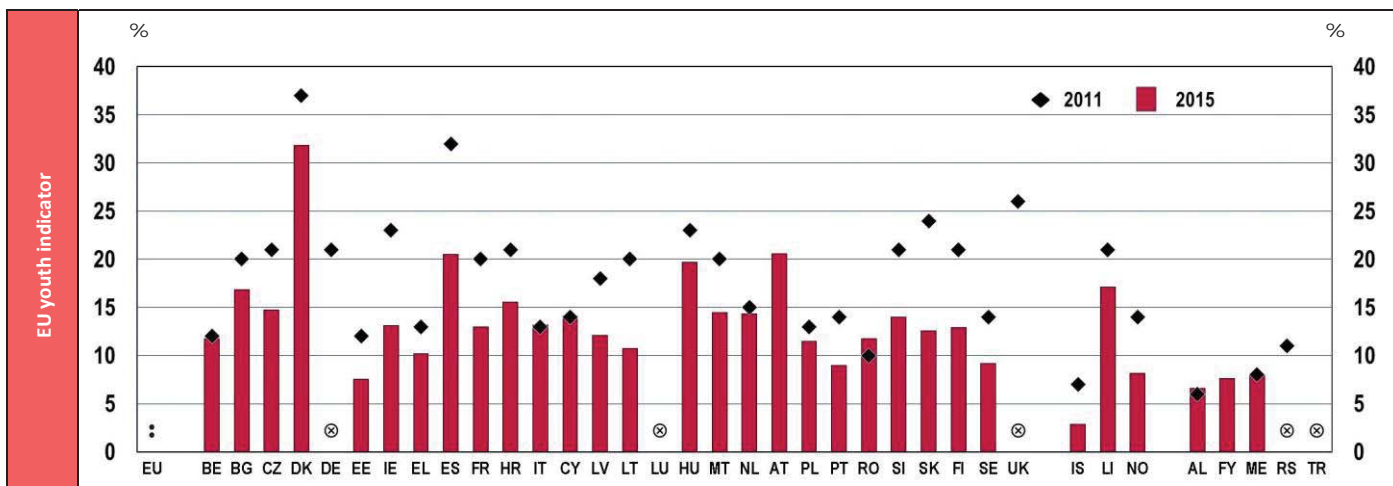
<sup>(37)</sup> Source: Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), 'Daily smokers of cigarettes' [hlth\_ehis\_sk3e] and [hlth\_ehis\_de3]. Data extracted on 31/05/2017.

## b) Alcohol consumption

Alcohol is one of the most widely available and most commonly used psychoactive substances<sup>(38)</sup>. However, drinking alcohol, especially frequent drinking and drunkenness is not without health risks. Apart from being connected to hundreds of medical conditions and diseases, it can have 'adverse psychological, social and physical health consequences, including academic failure, violence, accidents, injury, use of other substances and unprotected sexual intercourse'<sup>(39)</sup>. Not only the volume of alcohol consumed but also consumption patterns play an important role in this respect; for example, heavy episodic drinking (or 'binge drinking') is particularly risky for young people. Therefore it is important to pay attention to the drinking habits of young people, especially in the youngest age groups.

Figure 4-E depicts the proportion of students turning 16 in the year of data collection who reported having been drunk at least once during the preceding 30 days. Data is from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD).

**Figure 4-E:** Proportion of students turning 16 who reported having been drunk at least once during the past 30 days, by country, 2011 and 2015



Notes: The ESPAD target population is defined as students who turn 16 in the calendar year of the survey and are present in the classroom on the day of the survey. Students who were enrolled in regular, vocational, general or academic studies were included, excluding those who were enrolled in either special schools or special classes for students with learning disorders or severe physical disabilities.

Belgium: Data collection was limited to the Flemish Community of Belgium.

Germany (2011): Data collection was limited to five out of sixteen states (*Bundesländer*): Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Thuringia.

Spain: Data is from the Spanish national school survey. Nevertheless, since the instruments used in the Spanish survey overlap to a large degree with the ESPAD questionnaire, the methodology used allows for rough comparisons across countries.

United Kingdom (2011): Limited comparability of data due to the low school-participation rate.

Source: ESPAD Reports 2011 and 2015.

The figure shows a rather encouraging trend between 2011 and 2015: no country has registered a significant increase in the proportion of students reporting recent incidents of intoxication<sup>(40)</sup>. In addition, there have been substantial decreases in the proportion of students reporting on their recent drunkenness in several countries, especially in Ireland, Spain and Slovakia. Nevertheless, incidents of intoxication are still relatively common in Denmark, with almost one third of students experiencing drunkenness in the 30 days preceding the data

<sup>(38)</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe 2016, p 157.

<sup>(39)</sup> Ibid.

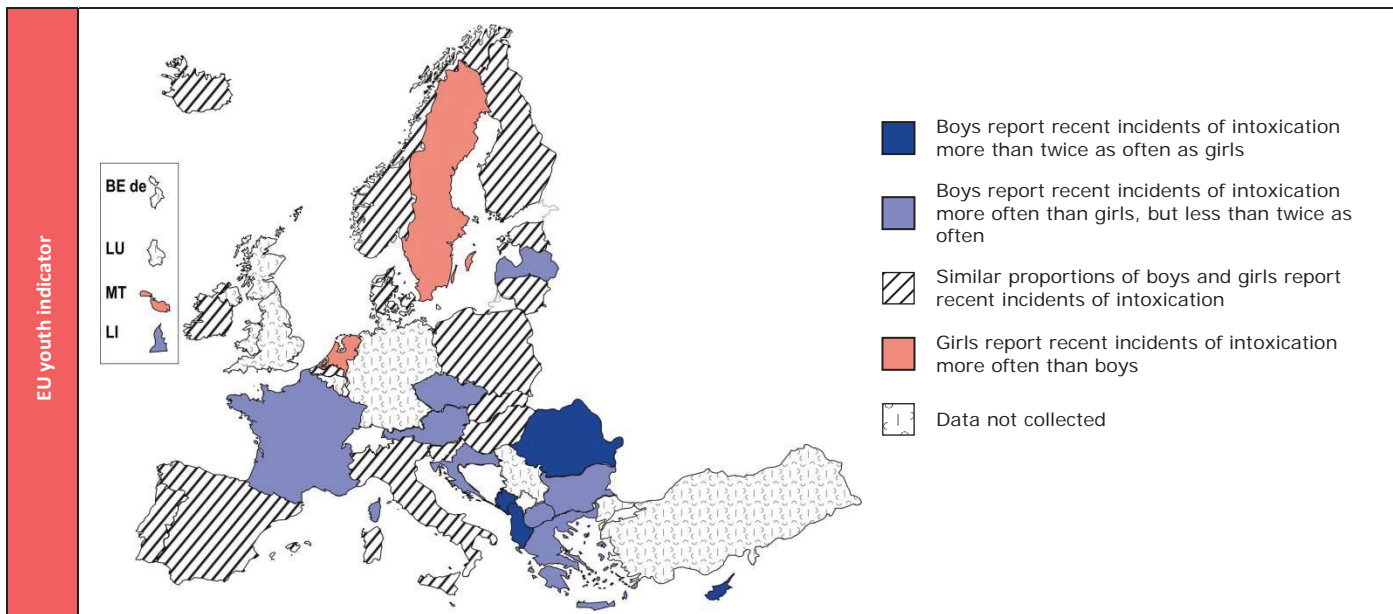
<sup>(40)</sup> According to the ESPAD report, only differences more than  $\pm 3$  percentage points should be considered as a 'real difference' (The ESPAD Group 2016, p. 27).

collection. Other countries with a relatively high proportion of students (around or over 20 %) reporting intoxication are Spain, Hungary and Austria.

Figure 4-F looks at gender differences in the reported incidence of drunkenness. As the figure depicts, in general, boys and girls report recent incidents of drunkenness in similar proportions in many of the European countries with available data. Nevertheless, there are more countries where incidents of intoxication are reported more often by boys than girls. Moreover, in Cyprus, Romania, Albania and Montenegro, boys are more than twice as likely to report drunkenness as girls (in Montenegro, this ratio is 3 to 1). As is evident from the map, the geographical patterns are similar to those for daily smoking habits (Figure 4-D), but are less pronounced.

Fewer 16 year-olds report recent incidents of intoxication than four years ago. Boys report more incidents of drunkenness than girls, though gender differences are relatively small in many countries.

**Figure 4-F:** Gender differences in the proportion of students turning 16 who reported having been drunk at least once during the past 30 days, 2015



*Notes:* The ESPAD target population is defined as students who turn 16 in the calendar year of the survey and are present in the classroom on the day of the survey. Students who were enrolled in regular, vocational, general or academic studies were included, excluding those who were enrolled in either special schools or special classes for students with learning disorders or severe physical disabilities.

Spain: Data is from the Spanish national school survey. Nevertheless, since the instruments used in the Spanish survey overlap to a large degree with the ESPAD questionnaire, the methodology used allows for rough country comparisons.

The proportions of boys and girls reporting recent incidents of intoxication were regarded as similar if the boy/girl ratio was between 0.85 and 1.15.

*Source:* Own calculation based on ESPAD Report 2015.

Besides recent incidents of intoxication, another important indicator on alcohol consumption which is highly relevant for young people is related to experiencing heavy episodic drinking. In the European Union, 15.4 % of 15-19 year-olds reported monthly experiences of heavy episodic drinking in 2014, but this proportion was over 40 % in Denmark and Norway, and over 30 % in Belgium and Austria<sup>(41)</sup>. Regarding gender differences, 15-19 year-old boys reported monthly episodes of heavy drinking more frequently than their female peers. Differences are greatest in Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Poland and Turkey. On the other hand, higher proportions of 15-19

<sup>(41)</sup> Source: Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), 'Frequency of heavy episodic drinking' [hlth\_ehis\_al3e]. Data extracted on 25/10/2017.

year-old girls than boys experience heavy episodic drinking every month in Denmark, the United Kingdom and Iceland <sup>(42)</sup>.

### c) Cannabis use

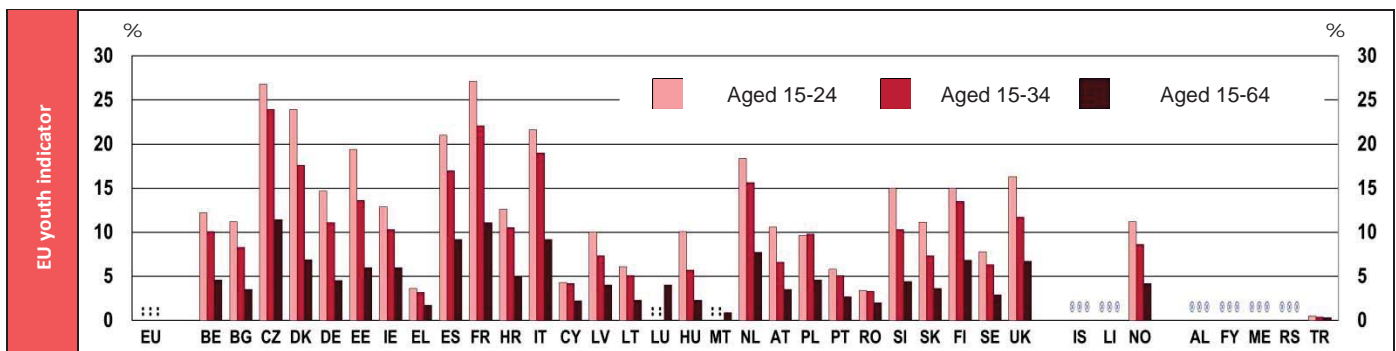
This section focuses on cannabis, the most popular drug used by young people. Though it can be harmless when consumed in moderation, cannabis use is a known risk factor for mental disorders <sup>(43)</sup>. As with other forms of substance abuse, cannabis use is also linked to experiences of insecurity in young adulthood: for example, increasing unemployment rates among young people in recent periods have been associated with increasing levels of cannabis consumption <sup>(44)</sup>.

Young people are more prone to using cannabis than older age groups: according to national surveys collected by the EMCDDA, in all countries with available data, the likelihood of using cannabis decreases with age.

Young people are more likely to use cannabis than older age groups. Young men are more prone to substance use than young women.

Thus, young people aged 15 to 24 are much more likely to use this substance than older age groups (Figure 4-G). In addition, cannabis use is associated with the other two most common forms of substance abuse: those who drink and smoke more are also more likely to use illicit drugs, mostly cannabis <sup>(45)</sup>.

**Figure 4-G:** Prevalence of cannabis use in the past 12 months, by country and by age, year of the last available national survey



Notes: LU: 1998; EL: 2004; HU: 2007; AT, EE: 2008; SK: 2010; IE, LV, TR: 2011; BG, DE, HR, CY, LT, PT, SI: 2012; BE, DK, ES, MT, RO: 2013; CZ, FR, IT, NL, PL, FI, SE, UK, NO: 2014.

United Kingdom: Data are for England and Wales only.

Source: EMCDDA.

As Figure 4-G depicts, the proportion of young people using cannabis in the past 12 months is the highest in France (27.1 %), Czech Republic (26.8 %) and Denmark (23.9 %). Data for these countries are all based on relatively recent national surveys. The greatest differences between cannabis use among young adults and that of the wider population (between 15 and 64 years of age) are in Hungary, where young adults are more than four times more likely to have used cannabis in the past year than the wider adult population. The differential is also high in Croatia and Romania at three-and-a-half times.

Given that data presented on Figure 4-G have different reference years for different countries, it is difficult to draw conclusions on recent trends in cannabis consumption. Nevertheless, ESPAD reports can provide some insight into the changes in cannabis consumption among 16 year-old students. According to ESPAD data, the

<sup>(42)</sup> Source: Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), 'Frequency of heavy episodic drinking' [hlth\_ehis\_al3e]. Data extracted on 25/10/2017.

<sup>(43)</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe 2016, p. 169.

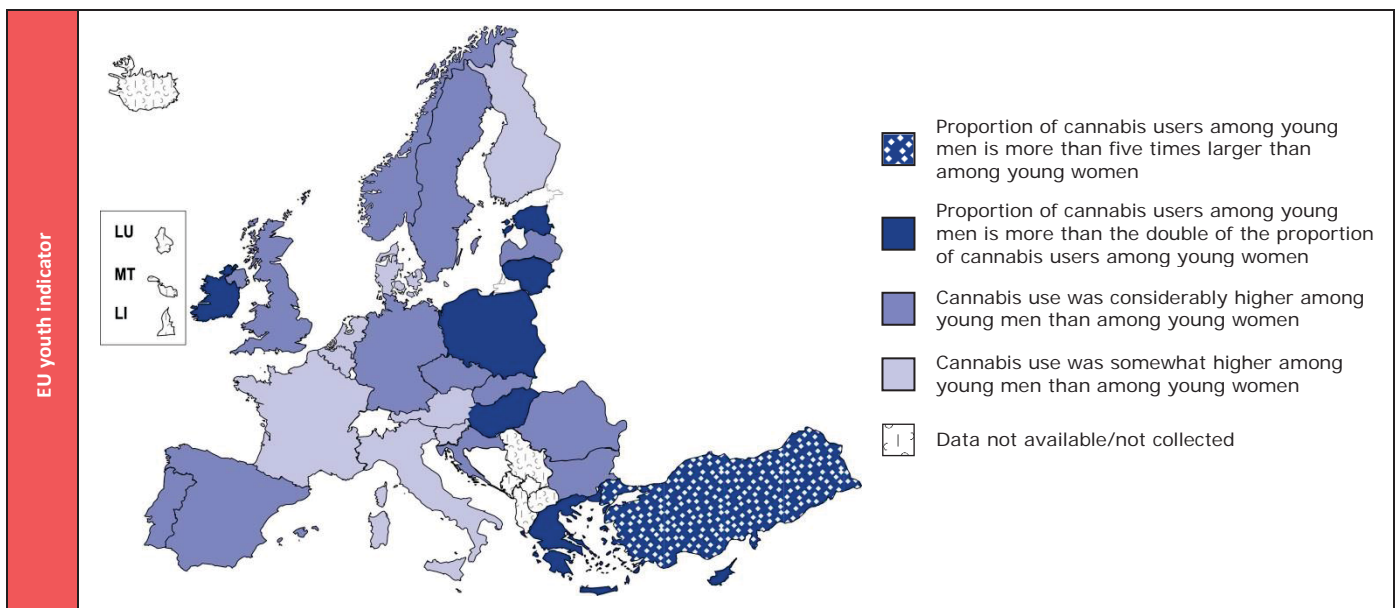
<sup>(44)</sup> Ayllón and Ferreira-Batista, 2017.

<sup>(45)</sup> See e.g. Mattick et al., 2017.

12-month prevalence of cannabis consumption increased significantly in Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy and Liechtenstein, while decreased in Belgium (Flemish Community), Denmark, France, Hungary, Latvia and Iceland<sup>(46)</sup>.

As with regular smoking, men are more prone to cannabis use than women in all countries with available data (Figure 4-H). Nevertheless, geographical patterns are less clear-cut. Gender differences are the largest again in Turkey, though cannabis consumption is very low for both men and women. Young men are more than twice as likely to use cannabis as young women in Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Cyprus, Lithuania, Hungary and Poland. Differences are the smallest in Belgium.

**Figure 4-H:** Gender differences in the prevalence of cannabis use in the past 12 months among young people aged 15-24, year of the last available national survey



Notes: LU: 1998; EL: 2004; HU: 2007; AT, EE: 2008; SK: 2010; IE, LV, TR: 2011; BG, DE, HR, CY, LT, PT, SI: 2012; BE, DK, ES, MT, RO: 2013; CZ, FR, IT, NL, PL, FI, SE, UK, NO: 2014.

The prevalence of cannabis use in the past year among young men is regarded as 'considerably higher' than among young women if the male/female ratio was between 1.5 and 2; and it is regarded as 'somewhat higher' if the ratio was between 1.15 and 1.5.

Source: EMCDDA.

<sup>(46)</sup> Source: ESPAD reports 2011 and 2015 (Hibell et al., 2012 and The ESPAD Group, 2016).

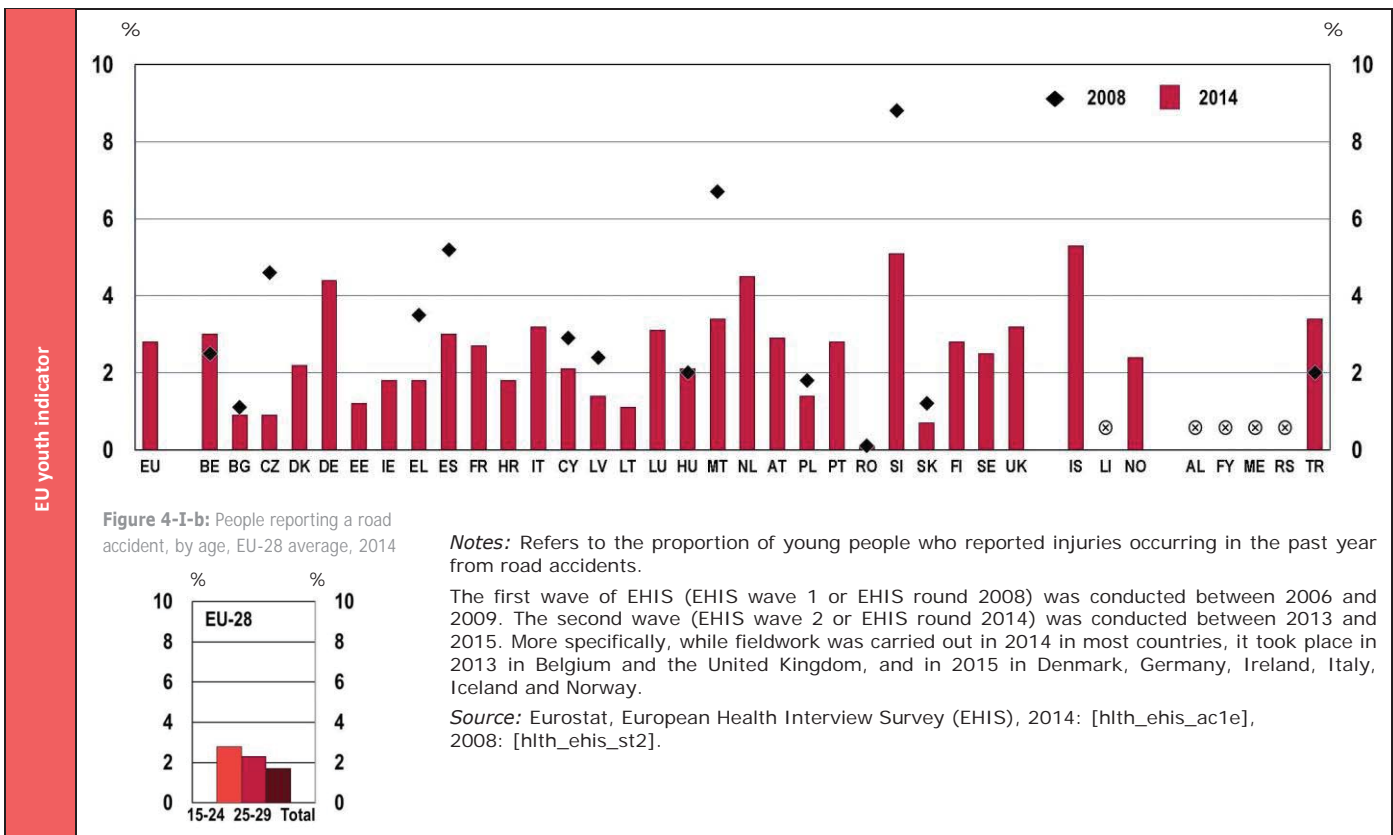
### 4.2.3. Road traffic accidents resulting in injury

Risk behaviours affecting young people include dangerous driving or driving without due care and attention. These can be operationalised by looking at road traffic accidents resulting in injury. Young people are much more prone to having such accidents than older generations, due to a mixture of different factors such as inexperience, more risk-taking, as well as having a tendency to drive at night, under the influence of drugs and alcohol, or letting themselves be distracted, for example by mobile phones<sup>(47)</sup>. In fact, injuries resulting from road accidents are the leading cause of death and disability among young people<sup>(48)</sup>. As Figure 4-I-b shows, in 2014, in the EU-28 on average, 2.8 % of young people aged 15-24 reported a road traffic accident resulting in injury, while this proportion is 2.3 % among 25 to 29 year-olds and only 1.7 % within the total population.

Though the proportion of young people involved in road traffic accidents decreased in many countries, they are still overrepresented among people reporting related injuries. Young men are more prone to risky behaviour than young women.

Young people's likelihood of being involved in road traffic accidents resulting in injury however varies quite substantially among European countries. While over 5 % of young people aged 15-24 reported such accidents in Slovenia and Iceland, this proportion remained below 1 % in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia.

**Figure 4-I:** Young people aged 15-24 reporting a road traffic accident resulting in injury, by country, 2008 and 2014



Regarding the changes in reported road traffic accidents resulting in injury between 2008 and 2014, information is relatively limited as data is available only for 14 countries. Nevertheless, as Figure 4-I depicts, existing data

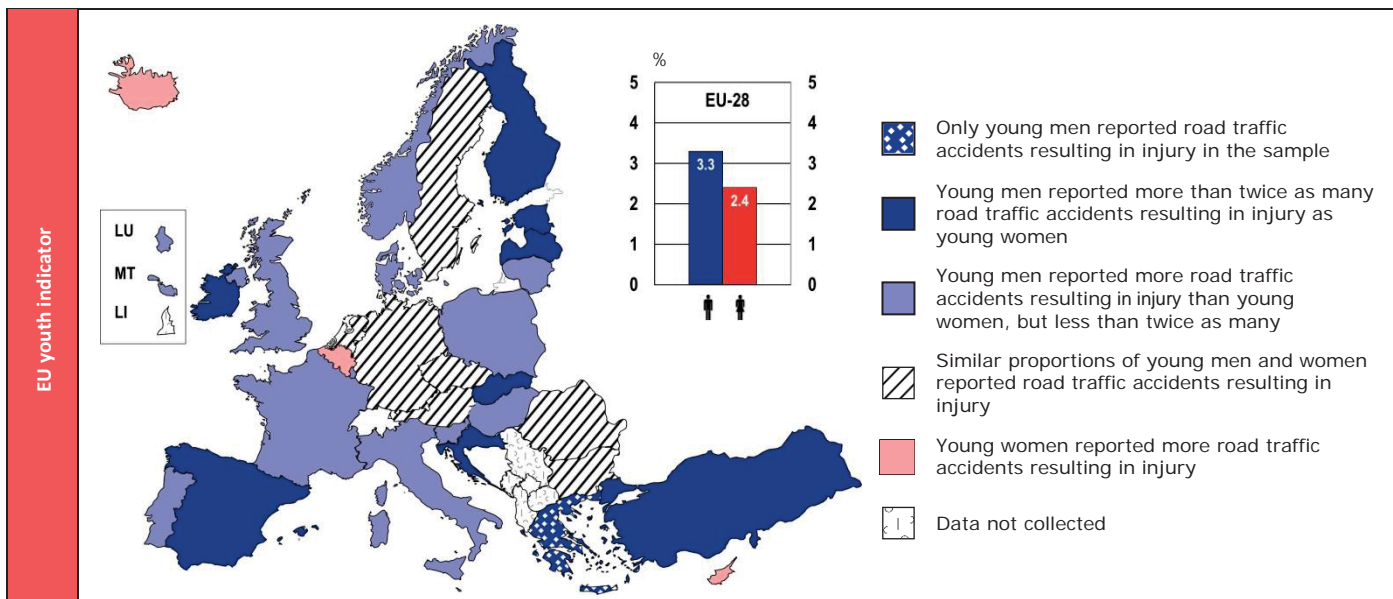
<sup>(47)</sup> European Commission, 2017i and 2017a.

<sup>(48)</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe 2009, p. 36.

shows relatively large decreases in such accidents in a number of countries. The proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 reporting these types of accidents decreased by more than 3 percentage points in Czech Republic, Malta and Slovenia. However, in Slovenia, while the involvement of young people in such accidents decreased substantially in the 20-24 age group, it increased among the younger age group, the 15-19 year-olds<sup>(49)</sup>. In addition, the proportion of road traffic accidents resulting in injury among young people aged 15-24 increased in Belgium and Turkey, mostly within the 20-24 age group.

As with substance abuse, gender patterns are relatively clear in this area (Figure 4-J). In general, young men are more involved in road traffic accidents resulting in injury than young women in European countries. In the EU-28, 3.3 % of young men aged 15-24 reported such accidents, in contrast to the 2.4 % of young women. As Figure 4-J shows, young men are twice or more likely to report road traffic accidents resulting in injury in eight countries, and no young women reported such accidents in Greece. Gender differences are the largest in Greece, Spain, Croatia, Latvia and Turkey. More young women reported these types of accidents in Belgium, Cyprus and Iceland. In fact, in Belgium and Cyprus, the gender gap reversed since 2008: in both countries, while the proportion of young men aged 15-24 decreased between 2008 and 2014, the proportion of young women reporting such accidents increased<sup>(50)</sup>.

**Figure 4-J:** Gender differences among young people aged 15-24 reporting road traffic accidents resulting in injury, 2014



*Notes:* The second wave of EHIS (EHIS wave 2 or EHIS round 2014) was conducted between 2013 and 2015. More specifically, while fieldwork was carried out in 2014 in most countries, it took place in 2013 in Belgium and the United Kingdom, and in 2015 in Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Iceland and Norway.

The proportions of young men and women reporting road traffic accidents are regarded as 'similar' if the male/female ratio was between 0.85 and 1.15.

*Source:* Own calculation based on Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), [hlth\_ehis\_ac1e].

<sup>(49)</sup> Source: Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), 'Persons reporting an accident resulting in injury' [hlth\_ehis\_ac1e] and 'People reporting having had an accident' [hlth\_ehis\_st2]. Data extracted on 07/06/2017.

<sup>(50)</sup> Source: Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), 'Persons reporting an accident resulting in injury' [hlth\_ehis\_ac1e] and 'People reporting having had an accident' [hlth\_ehis\_st2]. Data extracted on 07/06/2017.



### 4.3. MENTAL WELL-BEING

The transition from childhood to adulthood and the societal and family pressures that young people face in such contexts also influence their mental health. Though mental and psychological distress are still less prevalent among young people than older age groups, special attention has to be paid to young people and the factors which increase their vulnerability. As with risk behaviour, mental health is also influenced by the socio-economic conditions of young people's lives – their level of social exclusion and degree of poverty <sup>(51)</sup>. As this report also shows, young people can experience periods of unemployment and social exclusion in the current economic climate, which certainly influences their mental health and psychological well-being.

#### 4.3.1. Psychological distress

The EU Dashboard of Youth Indicators <sup>(52)</sup> includes an indicator on psychological distress to assess the mental health and well-being of young people. However, this indicator was not included in the 2014 round of the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS). Instead, for the first time, the EHIS survey included questions making it possible to evaluate the severity of respondents' symptoms of depression <sup>(53)</sup>. Depression is a mental illness, potentially a serious health condition. Depression is the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide; at worst, it can lead to suicide <sup>(54)</sup>. Looking at the proportion of young people experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of depression therefore provides important input into understanding the mental health conditions of young generations.

Figure 4-K shows the proportion of the population that was experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of depression. In the EU-28, 4.9 % of young people (from both the 15-24 and 25-29 age groups) show moderate to severe symptoms of depression, while this proportion is 6.3 % within the total population. However, differences between countries are enormous: while more than 10 % of young people aged 15-24 report moderate to severe symptoms of depression in Germany (11.5 %), Ireland (13 %), Luxembourg (11.3 %) and Iceland (15.6 %), the proportions are below 1 % in Czech Republic (0 %), Greece (0.8 %), Croatia (0.7 %), Cyprus (0.3 %), Lithuania (0.5 %) and Slovakia (0.5 %).

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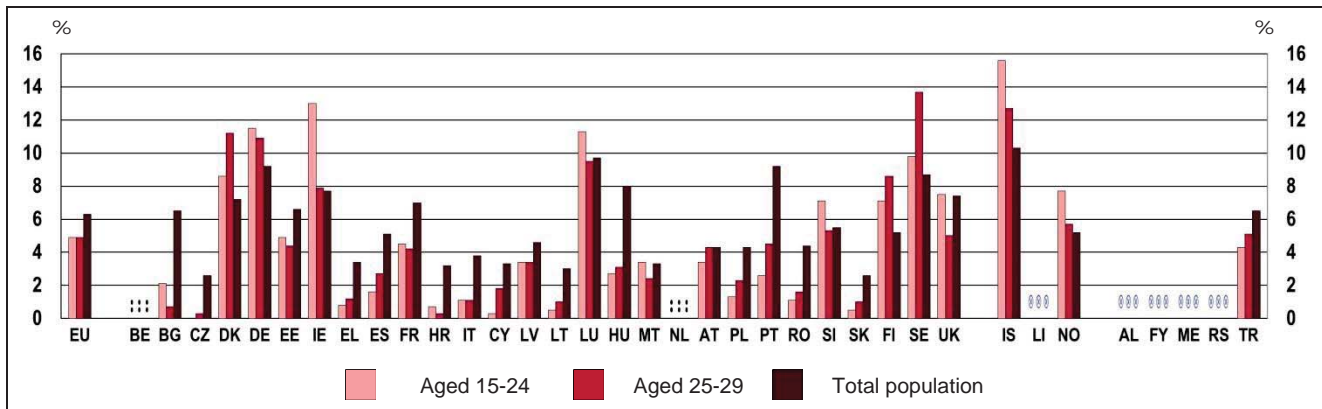
<sup>(51)</sup> WHO and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2014.

<sup>(52)</sup> European Commission, 2011.

<sup>(53)</sup> Symptoms of depression are evaluated based on eight specific questions defined on the basis of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Fourth Edition (DSM-IV). Respondents had to evaluate how frequently they experience the following feelings: A. Little interest or pleasure in doing things; B. Feeling down, depressed or hopeless; C. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much; D. Feeling tired or having little energy; E. Poor appetite or overeating; F. Feeling bad about yourself or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down; G. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television; H. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite - being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual (Eurostat 2013, pp. 51-53).

<sup>(54)</sup> WHO, 2017.

**Figure 4-K:** Proportion of population experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of depression, by country and by age, 2014



*Notes:* The second wave of EHIS (EHIS wave 2 or EHIS round 2014) was conducted between 2013 and 2015. More specifically, while fieldwork was carried out in 2014 in most countries, it took place in 2013 in Belgium and the United Kingdom, and in 2015 in Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Iceland and Norway.

The figure covers symptoms of varying degrees of severity: moderate, moderately severe and severe.

*Source:* Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), [hlth\_ehis\_mh2e].

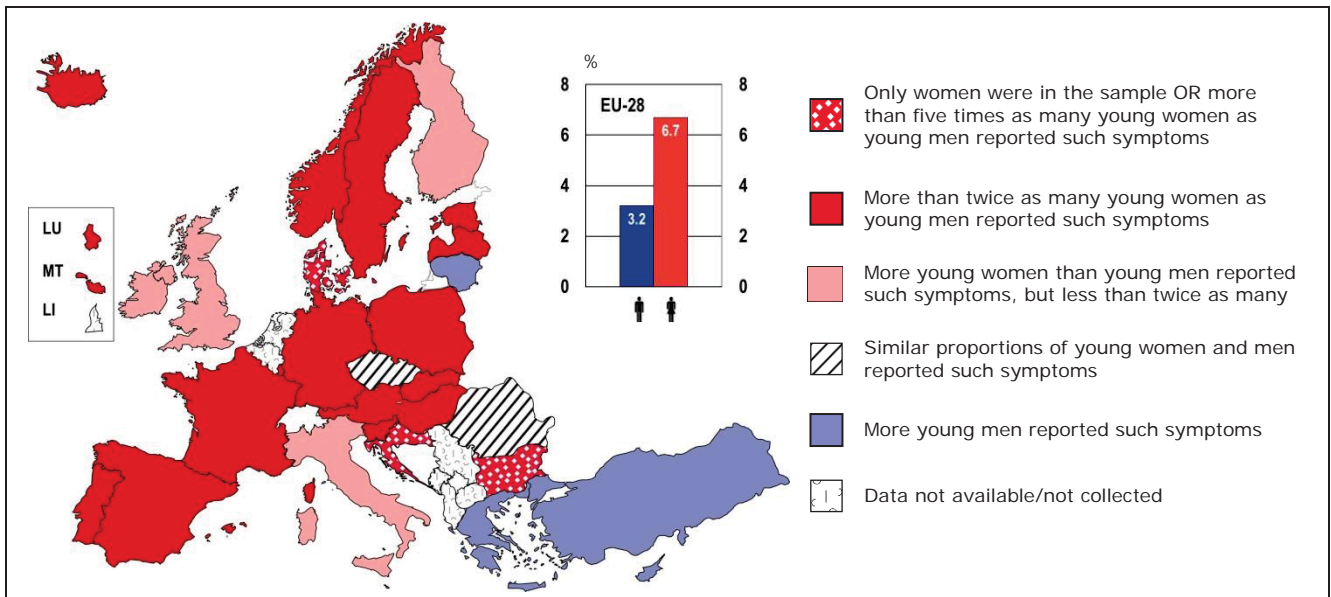
At EU level there is no difference between the younger and older youth cohorts in the proportions experiencing symptoms of depression, and both these groups suffer less in comparison to the total population. At the individual country level the picture varies, although some geographical differences do emerge: young people seem to be relatively more vulnerable than the general population in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway), as well as in Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and Slovenia. As Chapter 7 will show, in most of these countries, young people (especially women) leave the parental household and start an independent life at a relatively early age, which can make them more vulnerable (Figure 7-A). On the other hand, the proportion of young people experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of depression is relatively low in some southern and eastern European countries, both compared to the European average and to the total population within the same country.

More than twice as many young women as young men report that they suffer from moderate to severe symptoms of depression in Europe. As Figure 4-L shows, this is also true for a large majority of European countries. In Denmark, for example, 15.6 % of young women aged 15-24 report moderate to severe symptoms of depression, while the same proportion among young men is 2 %. Yet, these differences could be partly due to men underreporting their symptoms<sup>(55)</sup>.

More than twice as many young women as young men report that they suffer from moderate to severe symptoms of depression in Europe.

<sup>(55)</sup> Dallas, M.E., 2015.

**Figure 4-L:** Gender differences in the proportion of young people aged 15-24 experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of depression, 2014



*Notes:* The second wave of EHS (EHS wave 2 or EHS round 2014) was conducted between 2013 and 2015. More specifically, while fieldwork was carried out in 2014 in most countries, it took place in 2013 in Belgium and the United Kingdom, and in 2015 in Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Iceland and Norway.

The figure covers symptoms of varying degrees of severity: moderate, moderately severe and severe.

The proportions of young women and men experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of depression are regarded as similar if the female/male ratio was between 0.85 and 1.15.

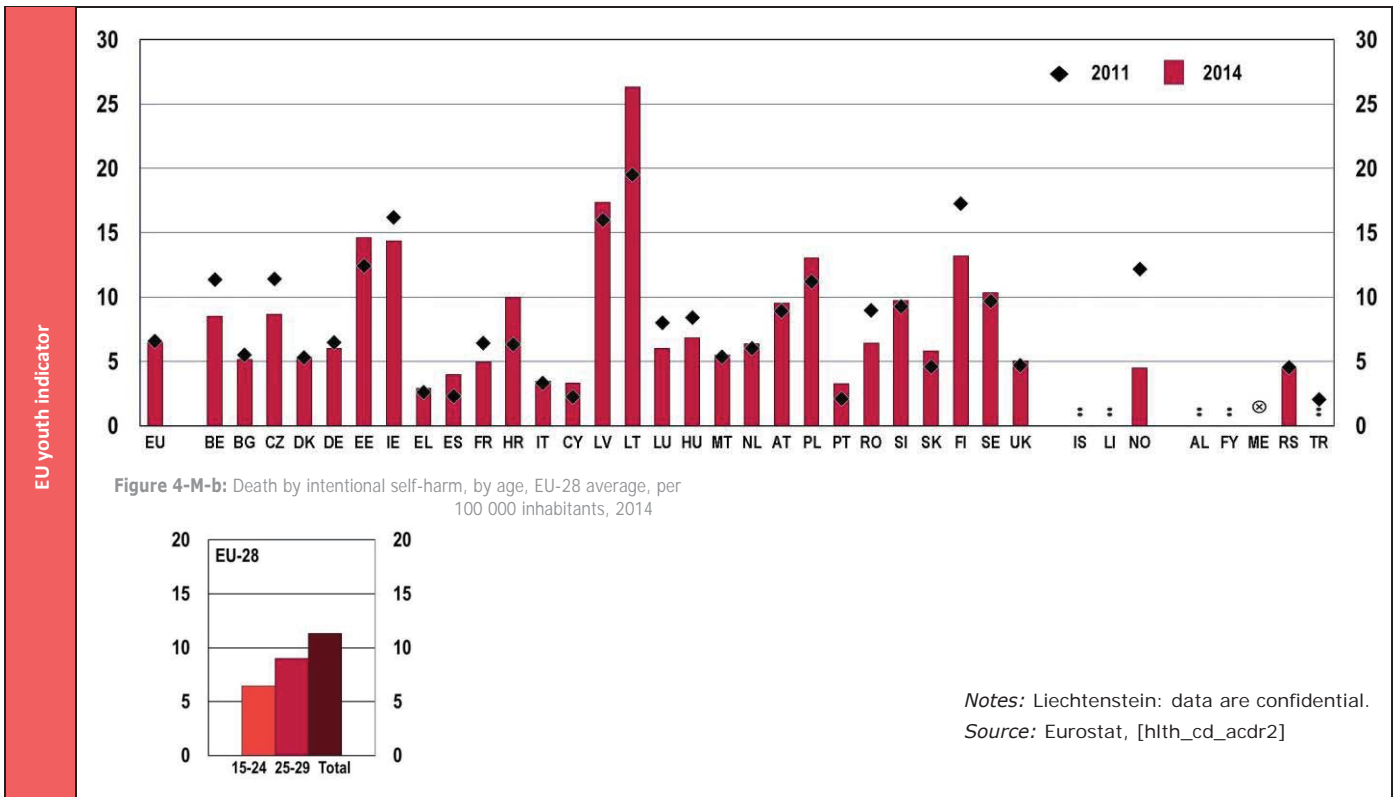
*Source:* Own calculation based on Eurostat, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), [hlth\_ehis\_mh2e].

### 4.3.2. Suicide

The most serious outcome of mental suffering is suicide. After road accidents, suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15-29 year-olds<sup>(56)</sup>. As with depression, however, the differences between countries are quite significant. Suicide rates are by far the highest in Lithuania, where every 26 in 100 000 young people aged 15 to 24 committed suicide in 2014 (Figure 4-M). Although suicide rates are more or less stable in the EU-28, with a rate around 6.5 per 100 000, Lithuania saw a relatively large increase in crude death rates by intentional self-harm among 15-24 year-olds between 2011 and 2014 (from 19.5 to 26.3 per 100 000 inhabitants). The other two Baltic States and Ireland also register comparatively high suicide rates. At the same time, suicide rates are relatively low (below 5 per 100 000 inhabitants) in southern countries such as Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus and Portugal. In addition, Norway, which was among the countries with relatively high youth suicide rates in 2011, now registers crude death rates by intentional self-harm comparable to southern Europe.

<sup>(56)</sup> WHO, 2014b.

**Figure 4-M:** Death by intentional self-harm among young people aged 15-24, crude death rate (per 100 000 inhabitants), by country, 2011 and 2014



As Figure 4-M-b illustrates, across Europe, suicide rates generally increase with age. However, there are a few exceptions. In Ireland, for example, crude death rates by suicide are higher in both the 15-24 and 25-29 age groups than within the total population; while in Estonia, Cyprus and Finland, young people aged 25-29 are more prone to commit suicide than older – or younger – groups<sup>(57)</sup>. In these three countries, suicide rates among 25-29 year-olds were higher in 2014 than in 2011; in Estonia, the rate almost doubled in this period<sup>(58)</sup>.

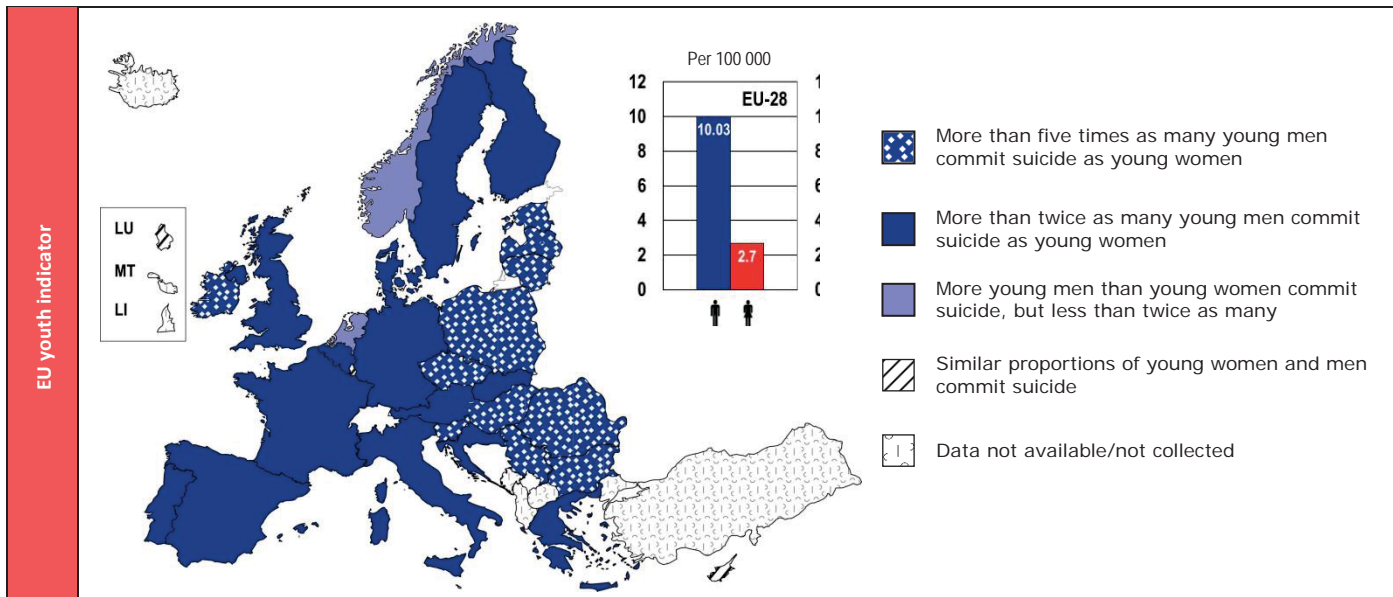
Despite depression being more commonly reported among women than among men, young men are much more likely to commit fatal suicide than young women (Figure 4-N). While only 2.7 in 100 000 women aged 15 to 24 died due to intentional self-harm in 2014, the rate is more than three times higher – 10 per 100 000 – among young men. As Figure 4-N depicts, female to male ratios are especially high in central and eastern Europe, where in many countries, young men are more than five times as likely to commit suicide as young women.

Young men commit suicide in larger proportions than young women. Suicide rates increased substantially among young men in Lithuania, while they decreased in Norway.

However, higher crude death rates by intentional self-harm among men does not mean that men are more likely than women to attempt suicide. In fact, data and estimates show the opposite: non-fatal suicide attempts are more common among women<sup>(59)</sup>. One reason for such a difference is that men tend to choose more lethal suicide methods<sup>(60)</sup>.

<sup>(57)</sup> Source: Eurostat, 'Causes of death (intentional self-harm) – Crude death rate' [hlth\_cd\_acdr2]. Data extracted on 07/06/2017.  
<sup>(58)</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>(59)</sup> See e.g. Mergl et al., 2015.  
<sup>(60)</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 4-N:** Gender differences in the proportion of young people aged 15-24 whose death is caused by intentional self-harm, 2014



Notes: Malta and Liechtenstein: data are confidential.

The proportions of young women and men committing suicide are regarded as similar if the male/female ratio was between 0.85 and 1.15.

Source: Own calculation based on Eurostat, [hlth\_cd\_acdr2].

Gender differences are not only evident in crude death rates in a given year; changes over time are also more prominent among men. In fact in the countries where bigger changes took place, these changes occurred mostly among men: suicide rates increased primarily among men in Estonia, Croatia and Lithuania (in Estonia, suicide rates even decreased among young women aged 15-24); while they decreased principally among young men in Finland and Norway <sup>(61)</sup>. Fluctuations in suicide rates of young women are less pronounced.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a snapshot of young people's health based on selected indicators of health risks and mental well-being. In many respects, it shows a reassuring picture: there is a decreasing trend in the proportions of young people smoking regularly, reporting recent incidents of intoxication or reporting road accidents resulting in injury. However, this is not true for obesity: the proportion of obese young people has increased in the majority of countries with available data. In addition, differences between countries are quite substantial for most health indicators, with some countries showing a relatively large proportion of young people at risk.

Young men are much more prone to risk-taking than young women <sup>(62)</sup>. There are more young men among regular smokers and cannabis users; more of them report recent drunkenness; and more of them are involved in road accidents resulting in injury. When they attempt to take their own life, men are more likely to choose more lethal methods. The over-representation of young men among risk-takers tends to be particularly pronounced in southern and eastern Europe. However, differences between women and men are narrowing in several countries, especially when it comes to drinking or smoking habits.

While young men are more prone to risk-taking, young women are slightly more affected by obesity, and much more affected by mental health issues. More than twice as many young women as young men report suffering

<sup>(61)</sup> Source: Eurostat, 'Causes of death (intentional self-harm) - Crude death rate' [hlth\_cd\_acdr2]. Data extracted on 07/06/2017.

<sup>(62)</sup> For potential explanations, see e.g. the meta-analysis by Byrnes, Miller and Schafer, 1999.

from at least moderate symptoms of depression in Europe. Young people are affected especially in countries where they are expected to start an independent life earlier. As Chapter 7 will show, this opens the door to vulnerability on several fronts, which in turn influences the mental well-being of young people.



Brussels, 22.5.2018  
SWD(2018) 169 final

PART 5/7

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Situation of young people in the European Union**

*Accompanying the document*

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE  
REGIONS**

**Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy**

{COM(2018) 269 final} - {SWD(2018) 168 final}

## 5. Participation

### EU youth indicators

Participation of young people in elections at the local, regional, national or EU level	Figure 5-E
Young people elected to the European Parliament	Figure 5-G
Young people's participation in political organisations/parties, or community/environmentally-oriented organisations	Figures 5-H and 5-I
Young people who use the internet for interaction with public authorities	Figure 5-J
Young people using the internet to post opinions on civic and political issues via websites	Figure 5-K



## 5.1. INTRODUCTION

Young people are often described as being more disenchanted with politics and less keen on participating in political activities in comparison with older groups in the population <sup>(1)</sup>. This chapter shows that while this might hold true for traditional modes of participation (i.e. those related to representative democracy), increasing numbers of young Europeans are exploring new routes to political engagement and expression, in particular those made available by the internet and social media. Remarkably, young people seem to have found renewed interest in political issues and identify themselves as European citizens to a greater extent than older generations.

These trends are discussed in the first section of the chapter, illustrating young people's general level of interest in politics, their perception of citizenship and their political priorities. The following sections then examine how young citizens take advantage of different opportunities to actively participate in politics, from the more traditional means such as voting and joining political parties, to the less mediated forms of political communication and engagement offered by online applications.

## 5.2. YOUNG PEOPLE'S INTEREST IN POLITICS AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF EU CITIZENSHIP

Interest in the political life of society is a stepping stone to involvement in community life, and vice versa. An interest in politics prompts an individual to become informed about how the policy-making process works, what the opinions of different stakeholders are, and what means of participation are available <sup>(2)</sup>. Ultimately, this interest can engender willingness to actively participate and address shared problems together with other members of the community, and it is therefore important to contextualise young people's political engagement <sup>(3)</sup>.

On average, over half of young Europeans aged between 15 and 24 declared themselves to be moderately or strongly interested in politics in 2016, and what is more, this share has increased since 2010 (Figure 5-A). Contrary to the claim that young people are increasingly disaffected with politics, levels of interest in political issues in Europe seem to have experienced an upturn amongst young people in recent years.

Young people have shown increasing interest in politics since 2010 and the gap vis-à-vis older age groups is reducing.

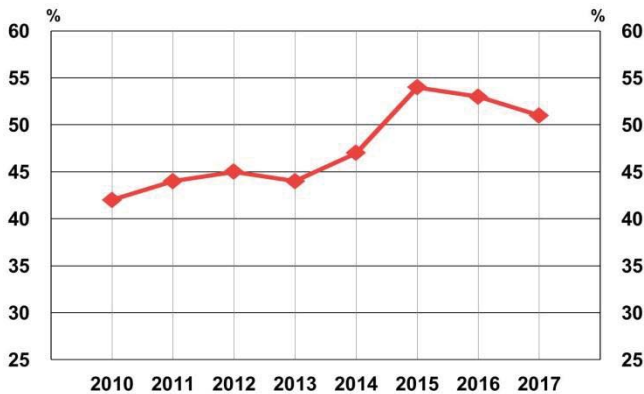
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<sup>(1)</sup> Banaji and Buckingham, 2011.

<sup>(2)</sup> Martin, 2003.

<sup>(3)</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 5-A:** Percentage of young people (aged 15-24) claiming to be 'moderately' or 'strongly' interested in politics, EU-28 average, 2010-2017



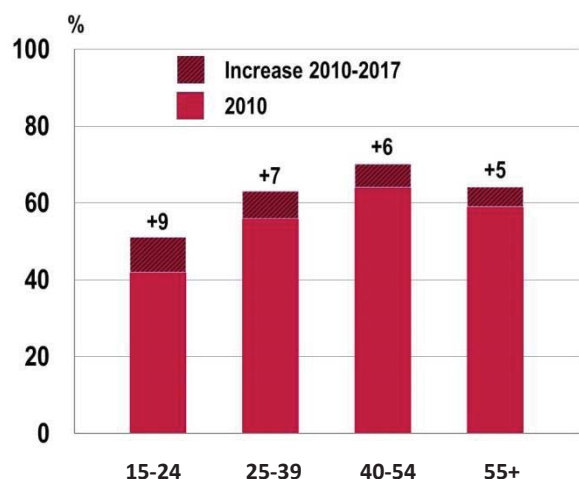
*Note:* The question was as follows: 'When you get together with friends or relatives, would you say that you discuss frequently, occasionally or never about...? National political matters/European political matters/local political matters'. A score was then attributed to each answer: 'Never' = 0; 'Occasionally' = 1; 'Frequently' = 2. An index was then constructed by adding together the scores for the three dimensions (local, national, European). Each group corresponds to a different index level: 'not at all interested in politics' = 0; 'slightly' = 1 to 2; 'moderately' = 3 to 4; 'strongly' = 5 to 6.

*Source:* Standard Eurobarometers 74 (2010), 76 (2011), 78 (2012), 79 (2013), 82 (2014), 84 (2015), 86 (2016), and 87 (2017).

The trend in the level of interest in politics amongst young people can be particularly appreciated when compared to that of older age groups over the last years (Figure 5-B).

Research has identified the main reason behind this renewed sensitivity to political issues in young people: their increasing use of new media for social and civic communication<sup>(4)</sup>. Social media such as podcasts, wikis, blogs and online networks are recognised as tools which can greatly facilitate participatory and peer-based politics, allowing individuals and groups to connect and discuss issues of public concern. Young people are at the forefront in adopting these new channels, and are making the most of these new opportunities for interacting within large-scale, online communities organised around media content<sup>(5)</sup>. The last section of the chapter will discuss these aspects in more detail.

**Figure 5-B:** Percentage of people with a moderate or strong level of interest in politics, by age group, EU-28 average, 2010 and 2017



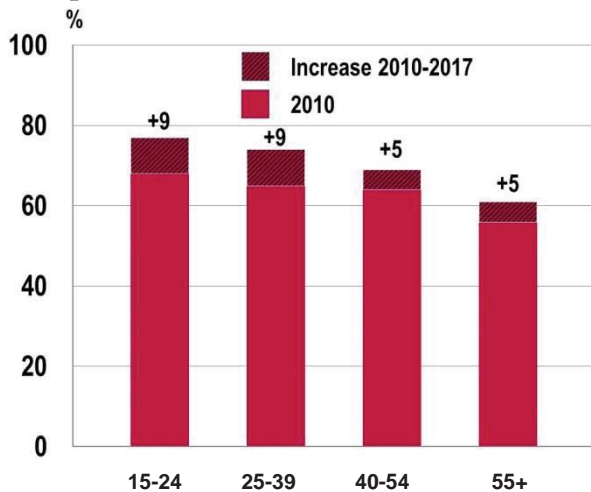
*Source:* Standard Eurobarometers 74 (2010), and 87 (2017).

<sup>(4)</sup> Khane et al., 2014; Valenzuela et al., 2014.

<sup>(5)</sup> Kushin, 2009; Banaji and Buckingham, 2011.

At first glance, the data confirm the traditional pattern according to which interest in civic and political matters increases throughout a person's life: individuals tend to become more aware of the political environment as they grow into mature adulthood, become politically socialised, and acquire a larger 'stake' in the social, political and economic life of their community<sup>(6)</sup>. This phenomenon is intrinsic to each generation, therefore the fact that the youngest age group expresses a lower level of interest in politics cannot be labelled as a specific characteristic of the current generation of young people but rather as an inherent phase in the average life trajectory<sup>(7)</sup>. What is worth noting is that this gap has reduced: since 2010, the increase in the share of 15-24 year-olds interested in politics has exceeded that of other age groups, probably as a result of their increased use of social media.

**Figure 5-C:** Percentage of people who feel they are a citizen of the EU, by age group, EU-28 average, 2010 and 2017



*Notes:* The question was: 'For each of the following statements, please tell me to what extent it corresponds or not to your own opinion – 'You feel you are a citizen of the EU'. Options included 'Yes definitely', 'Yes to some extent', 'No, not really', 'No, definitely not' and Base: all respondents. The chart does not show the share of respondents answering 'I don't know'.

*Source:* Standard Eurobarometers 74 (2010), and 87 (2017).

Besides a general interest in politics, identification with a political entity is essential in determining the degree of engagement in political life, since perceptions of citizenship are crucial in motivating people to participate<sup>(8)</sup>. Figure 5-C shows the percentage of people, by age group, who feel they are EU citizens. Interestingly, more young people feel ties of citizenship towards the European Union than older cohorts. Also noteworthy is the fact that self-identification as European citizens has grown more amongst young people than among older individuals. This might be related to the fact that young Europeans, compared to older age groups, have more opportunity to travel to other European countries for study, work or tourism; they also have a better knowledge of foreign languages and, on average, achieve higher levels of formal education – all factors recognised as positively correlated with nurturing a sense of European citizenship<sup>(9)</sup>. As citizens of the European Union, young people attach the highest importance to issues that have a tangible impact on the quality of their lives and on society: education and the acquisition of skills and the protection of the environment feature as the top priorities to be addressed at EU level, followed by employment and the integration of refugees (Figure 5-D).

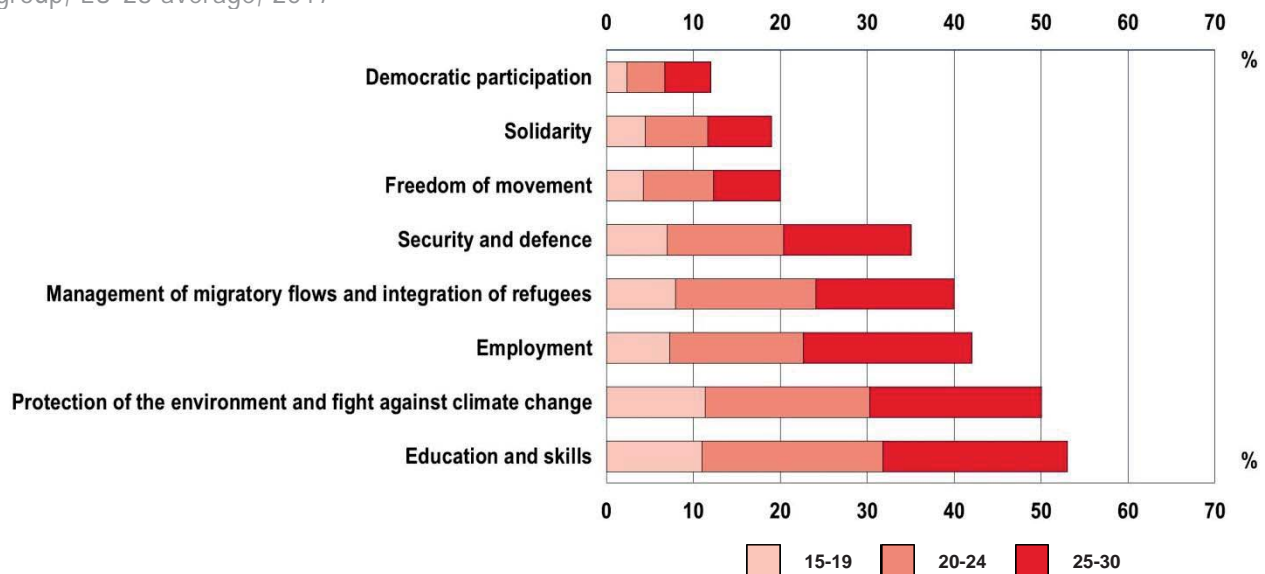
<sup>(6)</sup> Jaime-Castillo, 2008; Wass, 2008.

<sup>(7)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(8)</sup> Gaventa, J., 2009.

<sup>(9)</sup> Fligstein et al., 2011.

**Figure 5-D:** Issues young people (aged 15-30) think should be top priorities for the European Union, by age group, EU-28 average, 2017



*Notes:* The question was: 'In your opinion, which of the following topics should be a priority for the EU? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS)'. Base: All respondents. The chart does not show the share of respondents answering 'I don't know'.

*Source:* Flash Eurobarometer 455 'European Youth' (2017).

On the other hand, democratic participation is the issue considered the least important among those highlighted in the survey. Despite the fact that more young people identify themselves as European citizens, this does not seem to translate into the opinion that fostering democratic participation should be a priority for the EU. This counterintuitive result seems to be in line with what research has indicated as a predominantly 'efficiency-driven' concept of citizenship prevailing amongst the younger generations<sup>(10)</sup>. According to this notion, young people's attachment to the EU is born out of the desire to see concrete improvements in their lives (for example, receiving quality education, living in a healthy environment and finding a job), rather than on the less tangible principle of democracy and its practicalities in terms of citizenship and electoral representation.

All in all, the data described so far reveal young people's sound interest in politics and their strong European identity. These factors, paired with the low level of priority given to democratic participation, create the basis for understanding the actual forms of civic and political engagement favoured by young Europeans, which are discussed in the next sections.

<sup>(10)</sup> European Commission/EACEA, 2013.

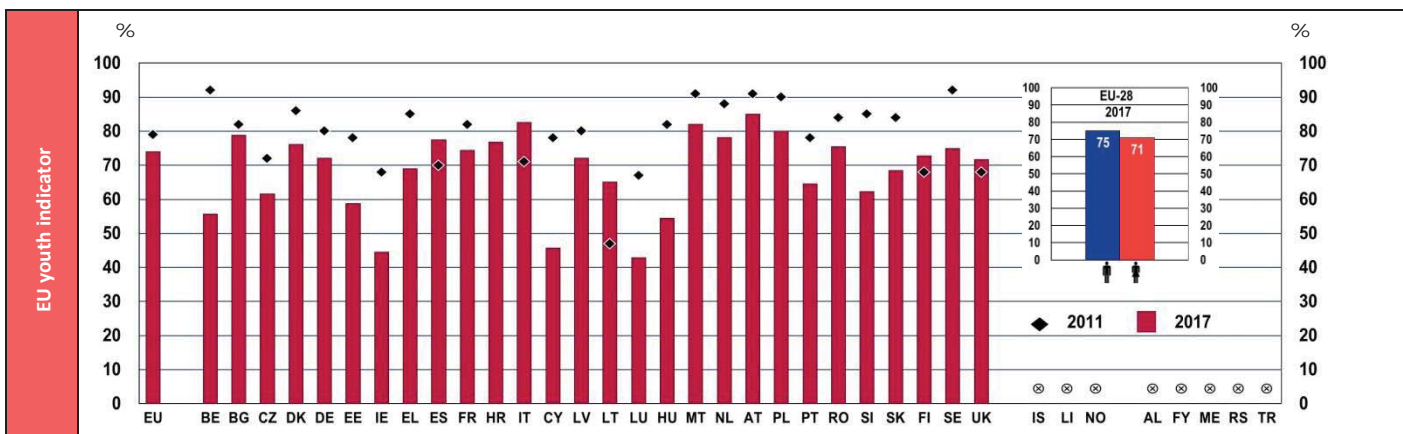
### 5.3. YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY: VOTING AND JOINING A POLITICAL PARTY

Genuine elections with political parties competing on alternative political programmes provide the basis for the functioning of representative democracy. Choosing between the programmes of various parties and candidates, and selecting representatives for public office are the basic actions through which citizens participate in the management of public affairs. This is why election turnout is usually referred to as a relevant measure of citizens' participation.

Electoral turnout amongst young Europeans continues to decline.

On average, 74 % of young Europeans report having participated in elections at the local, regional, national or European level during the three years preceding the survey – the results of which are illustrated in Figure 5-E. While in some countries the turnout is very high (at least 80 % in Italy, Malta, Austria, and Poland), in Ireland, Cyprus and Luxembourg, less than half of the youth population entitled to vote actually did so in recent elections. The case of Cyprus and Luxembourg is all the more noteworthy as they are amongst the countries in the European Union where voting is compulsory <sup>(11)</sup>.

**Figure 5-E:** Participation of young people (aged 15-30) in elections at the local, regional, national or EU level, by country, 2011 and 2017, and by sex, 2017



Notes: The question was 'During the last 3 years, did you vote in any political election at the local, regional, national or EU level? If you were, at that time, not eligible to vote, please say so'. Base: respondents who were eligible to vote at the time of the election. EU-27 (2011) and EU-28 (2017).

Source: 2011 Flash Eurobarometer 319 'Youth on the Move'; 2017 Flash Eurobarometer 455 'European Youth'.

Data also indicate a general decrease across Europe since 2011 in the electoral turnout among young people. A comparison of the EU-27 averages in 2011 and 2017 show a substantial fall from 79 % in 2011 to 68 % in 2017 (the inclusion of Croatia, which reports a high turnout in 2017, reduces the magnitude of the decline). This trend, common to the majority of EU Member States, is particularly marked in Belgium and Cyprus, where the turnout fell by over 40 %. Significant decreases of approximately 30 % were registered in Ireland, Hungary and Luxembourg. Very few countries have resisted this trend. Among these, Lithuania stands out with an increase in turnout of 36 %. Spain and Italy follow at some distance with 10% more young citizens voting in elections since 2011. On average, young men report slightly higher percentages of turnout than women (75 % and 71 % respectively), in line with similar trends in the general population <sup>(12)</sup>.

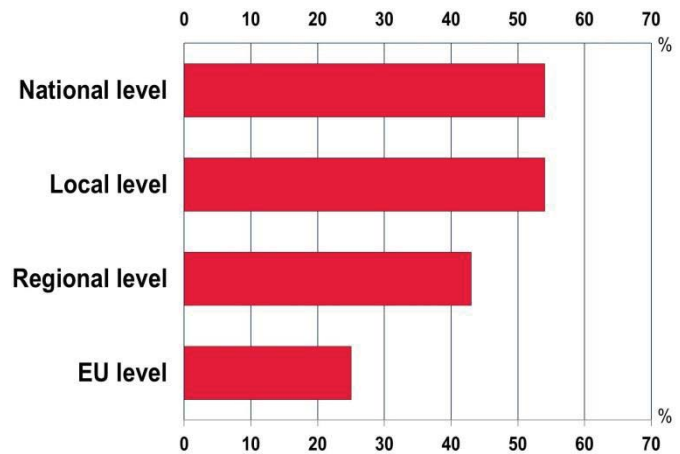
<sup>(11)</sup> An obligation for citizens to vote currently exists in Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Luxembourg, although levels of enforcement vary ([http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/residence/elections-abroad/ep-elections/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/residence/elections-abroad/ep-elections/index_en.htm)).

<sup>(12)</sup> Harrell, 2009.

Research literature has long since documented a variety of factors combining to influence voting turnout amongst younger as well as older voters (including the level of educational attainment, family income, and exposure to political conversations and exchanges)<sup>(13)</sup>. Current research being conducted on the issue of youth voting patterns is pointing towards an additional element: although young people do believe voting to be an important means of participation, they often choose to abstain because they do not think that politicians running at elections nor the issues debated during the campaigns sufficiently address their concerns<sup>(14)</sup>. Rather than lacking interest in politics, it may be that young people are not attracted by the choices on offer at elections. This might prove to be the case especially at EU level. Indeed, compared to other elections (local, regional and national), the general turnout amongst young voters is lowest at European level (Figure 5-F). In 2014, only about a quarter of young Europeans eligible to vote contributed to electing the European Parliament. A survey conducted by the Parliament just after the EU vote in May 2014 confirmed this ratio and indicated that older age groups voted in much higher proportions (for example, 51 % of citizens aged 55 years or older reported casting their vote)<sup>(15)</sup>.

At EU level, younger representatives are also few. The proportion of Members of the European Parliament aged 30 or under is indeed very small and has decreased since 2009 (Figure 5-G).

**Figure 5-F:** Participation of young people (aged 15-30) by type of election, EU-28 average, 2017



*Notes:* The question was: 'During the last 3 years, did you vote in any political election at the local, regional, national or EU level? If you were, at that time, not eligible to vote, please say so'. Base: respondents who were eligible to vote at the time of the election.

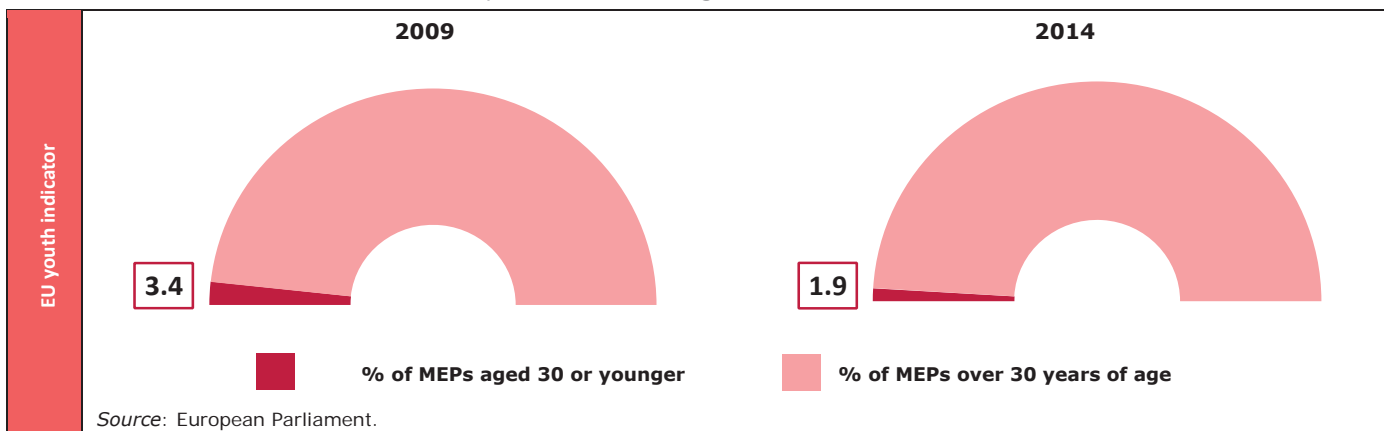
The survey was conducted in August 2017, therefore respondents' answers could in principle exclude the European elections of May 2014. However, the level of positive answers (25%) is similar to that registered by another survey conducted in the aftermath of the EU vote (28%). Data reported can therefore be considered to depict a reliable picture of youth participation.

*Source:* Flash Eurobarometer 455 'European Youth' (2017)

<sup>(13)</sup> Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998; Berinsky and Lenz, 2011.

<sup>(14)</sup> Cammaerts et al., 2016.

<sup>(15)</sup> European Parliament, 2014.

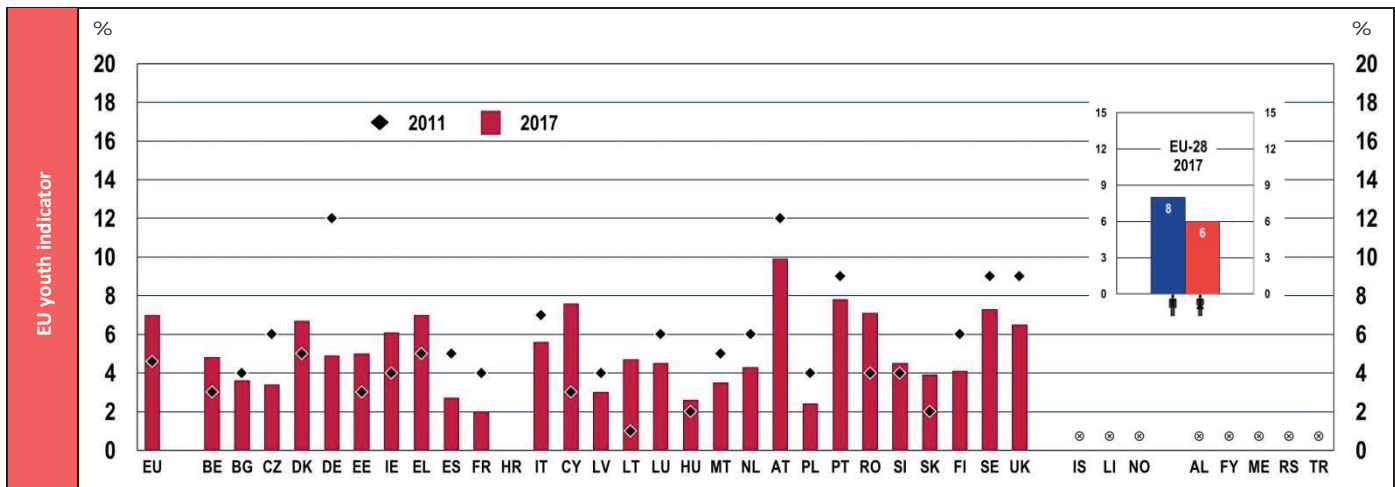
**Figure 5-G:** Members of the European Parliament aged 30 or under, 2009 and 2014

The results presented in the last three figures indicate only limited participation by young Europeans in elections, both as active (voters) and as passive electorate (candidates). This is especially evident at European level, despite the high numbers identifying themselves as EU citizens. Nevertheless, this situation is in line with the limited importance ascribed by young people to the issue of democratic participation, and a confirmation of the higher relevance of other political issues (Figure 5-D above).

Besides voting, membership of political parties is considered to be a form of political participation in a representative democracy. Parties play a central role in channelling political opinions between voters and candidates at elections and ultimately superintend the appointment of elected offices<sup>(16)</sup>. Becoming a member of a political party appeals to only a small proportion of young people. In 2017, only 7 % of young Europeans reported being affiliated to a political organisation or party, although this proportion has increased somewhat in Europe between 2011 and 2017 (particularly in Czech Republic, Germany, Spain and France) (Figure 5-H). The gender balance amongst the membership of political organisations is slightly in favour of young men.

<sup>(16)</sup> Lijphart and Aitkin, 1994.

**Figure 5-H:** Participation of young people (aged 15-30) in a political organisation or political party, by country, 2011 and 2017, and by sex, 2017



Notes: Question was 'In the last 12 months, have you participated in any activities of the following organisations: political organisation or political party?'. Base: All respondents. EU-27 (2011) and EU-28 (2017).

Source: 2011: Flash Eurobarometer 319 'Youth on the Move'; 2017: Flash Eurobarometer 455 'European Youth'.

Data presented in this section indicate a limited involvement of young people in the institutional practices of representative democracy. This is especially true for young women, who tend to participate less than men both in elections and in political organisations<sup>(17)</sup>. However, though elections and political parties have a pivotal role in democratic societies, they are not the only activities to be taken into account when evaluating political participation. Other channels are open to people to have their say and to influence political decision-makers and policies, and these may be particularly attractive to younger citizens.

#### 5.4. OTHER WAYS YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATE

Political activism has, over recent decades, become more individualised, ad-hoc, and issue-specific<sup>(18)</sup>. This trend applies to the entire population but is particularly evident amongst young people, who have come to favour more flexible and issue-based forms of participation such as contributing to the projects of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), participating in community-driven initiatives and joining social movements<sup>(19)</sup>.

Data presented in Figure 5-I confirm young people's preference for being active in NGOs and/or local organisations which address local issues, rather than in political parties (as displayed in Figure 5-H above). On average, twice as many respondents had participated in the activities of a local organisation aimed at improving their local community than were active in a political party.

Young people are more active in non-governmental organisations and/or local organisations than in political parties.

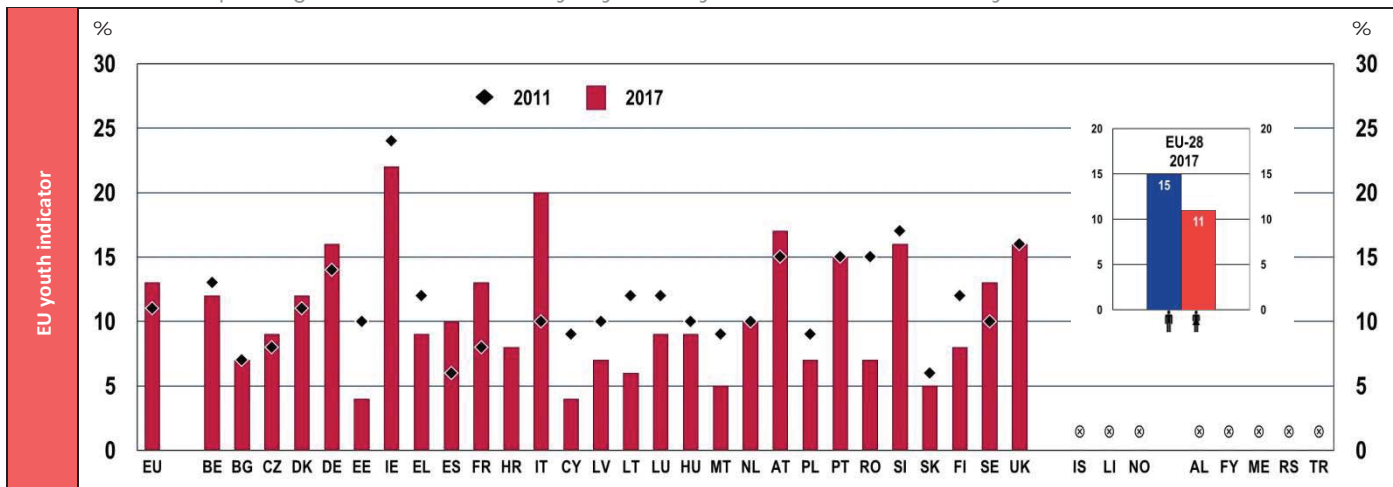
<sup>(17)</sup> The limited participation and representation of women in politics is an issue that is very well covered in the relevant research literature. For an overview, see Paxton and Hughes (2015).

<sup>(18)</sup> European Commission/EACEA, 2013.

<sup>(19)</sup> Hoikkala, 2009.



**Figure 5-I:** Proportion of young people (aged 15-30) who have participated in the activities of organisations aimed at improving their local community, by country, 2011 and 2017, and by sex, 2017



*Notes:* The question was 'In the last 12 months, have you participated in any [of the] activities of the following organisations: a local organisation aimed at improving the local community?'. Base: All respondents. EU-27 (2011) and EU-28 (2017).

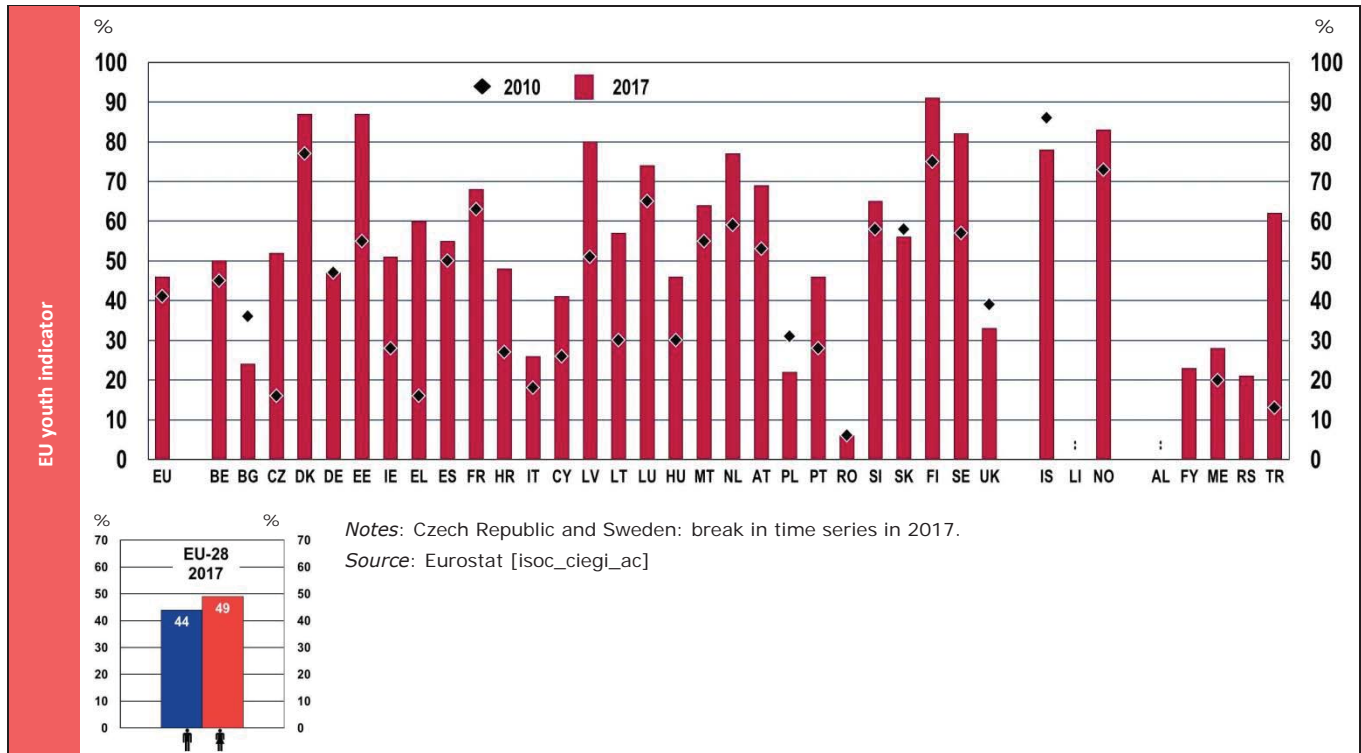
*Source:* 2011 Flash Eurobarometer 319a 'Youth on the Move', 2015 Flash Eurobarometer 408 'European Youth'.

Overall in the EU, the rates of participation in activities to improve the local community slightly increased between 2011 and 2017. The rise in participation has been significant in Italy where the rate doubled, and in France and Spain where it increased by over 50%. On the other hand, participation rates halved in Cyprus, Malta and in some Eastern European countries (Estonia, Lithuania and Romania). As with the forms of participation discussed earlier, young men tend to be involved to a greater extent than women.

Frustration with traditional and institutionalised forms of political participation can also result in people choosing to show their interest in politics or express their concerns without any (or with little) mediation by organised bodies, be they political parties or non-governmental organisations. To this end, as mentioned in the first section of the chapter, a wide array of opportunities for political communication is offered by the internet and its applications, which young people have been in the forefront of using. The virtual spaces frequented by young people such as online forums, chat rooms, social networks and blogs, may serve the same basic function as the physical ones they sometimes replace: establishing collective interaction around common interests<sup>(20)</sup>. In this sense, they constitute a great resource for political and social engagement, which young people have been the quickest to recognise and use. For example, as shown in Figure 5-J, the internet plays a significant role in facilitating interactions between young citizens' and public authorities.

<sup>(20)</sup> Montgomery et al., 2004; Kushin, 2009.

**Figure 5-J:** Proportion of young people (aged 16-24) who used the internet to interact with public authorities in the twelve months before the survey, by country, 2010 and 2017



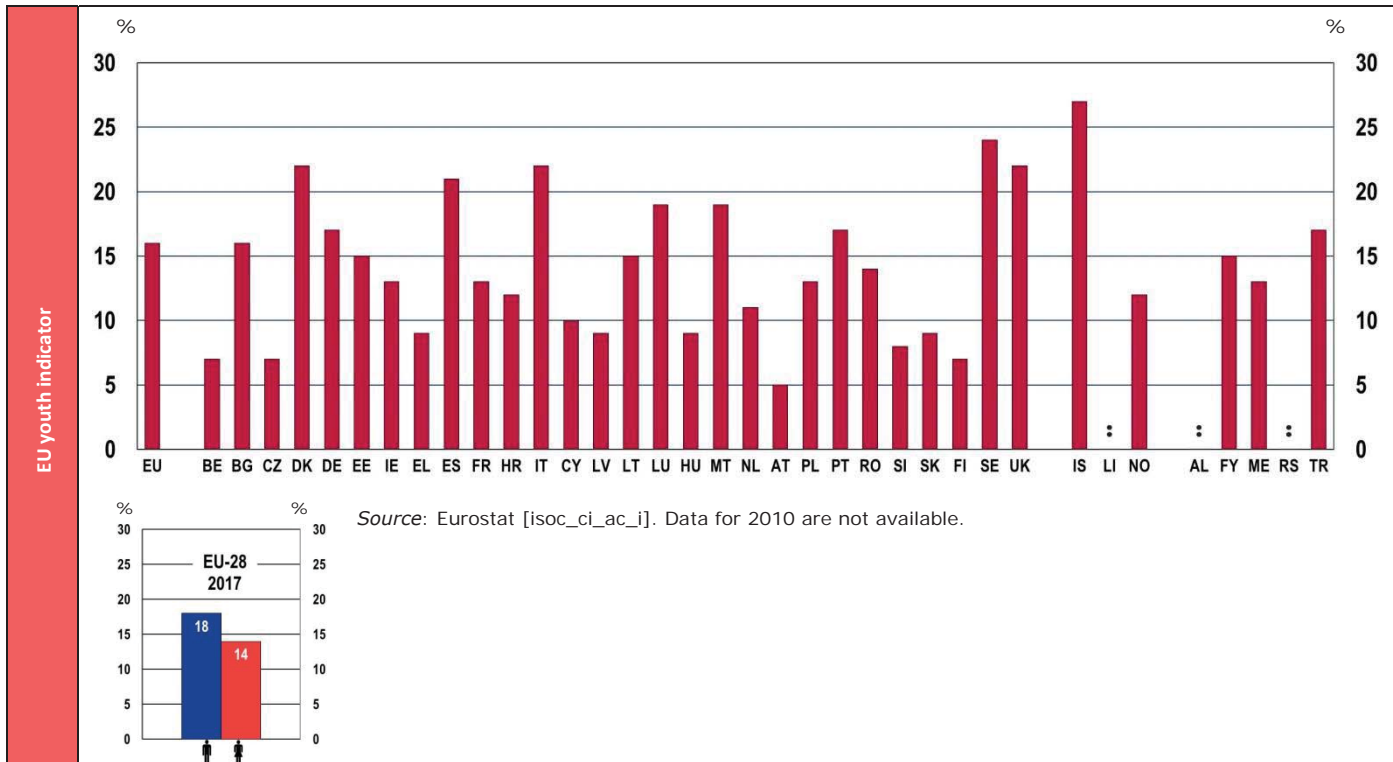
Data collected by Eurostat show that, on average, 46 % of young Europeans used the internet to contact or interact with public authorities in 2017, and this figure has increased over the last seven years, in particular in Estonia, Greece and Turkey. In the Scandinavian and Baltic countries, this percentage is extremely high, indicating a widespread use of online applications to obtain information from public authorities. On the other hand, young people in some European countries, in particular in Southern and Eastern Europe, seem less familiar with this form of interaction with public authorities. It is to be kept in mind that the propensity to use the internet to interact with public authorities is strongly influenced by the level of digitalisation reached in a country (i.e. where public administrations have established online procedures to communicate and interact with citizens, using the internet is obviously more common amongst younger as well as older individuals). In addition, cross-country differences in the use of media to reach out to public authorities clearly reflect differences in the availability of internet connections and computers in households, and the overall frequency of internet use by individuals. Countries with low scores in these areas are also those where young people have had less contact with public authorities via online channels <sup>(21)</sup>. Reversing the general trend in participation levels by gender as discussed so far, the use of internet for reaching out to public authorities is more common amongst young women than men.

On average, one in two young Europeans uses the internet and its social media to interact with public authorities.

The new media also serve as a vehicle for individuals to express their opinions on civic and political issues. On average, 16 % of young Europeans posted their views and ideas on online websites in 2017 (Figure 5-K).

<sup>(21)</sup> An illustration and analysis of data per country on the share of households with internet access are available at the Eurostat online database at [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Internet\\_access\\_and\\_use\\_statistics\\_-\\_households\\_and\\_individuals](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Internet_access_and_use_statistics_-_households_and_individuals) [accessed on 7 August 2017].

**Figure 5-K:** Proportion of young people (aged 16-24) who have used the internet in the three months before the survey and who have posted opinions on civic or political issues via websites (e.g. blogs, social networks, etc.), by country, 2017



Higher percentages (over 20 %) are recorded in Denmark, Spain, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Iceland, while levels well below the EU average are found in Belgium, Czech Republic, Austria and Finland. Comparing these data with those on interactions with public authorities (Figure 5-J), no relationship can be established between the two types of activity, despite both being based on the use of the internet: the willingness of young people to interact with public authorities online does not therefore appear to be linked to their willingness to express opinions in virtual spaces.

It might be expected that the level of education, particularly in the area of digital competences, would influence the opportunities young people have to take full advantage of the new technologies for engaging in political interaction. Research has, indeed, documented a 'digital divide', i.e. a level of inequality in the skills acquired and type of activities performed even amongst individuals who have equal access to the internet<sup>(22)</sup>. Despite this, the new media are considered to lower the threshold for young people's participation and this fact therefore needs to be taken into account in order to fully appreciate the civic and political involvement of today's youth<sup>(23)</sup>.

<sup>(22)</sup> DiMaggio and Hargittai, 2001.

<sup>(23)</sup> Khane et al., 2014.

## CONCLUSION

Young people have shown increasing interest in politics since 2010, and are those who feel the most European in the general population. Yet, electoral turnout continues to decrease amongst young Europeans, especially on occasion of EU elections. Feeling unrepresented by the options available at elections appears as the most frequent reason reported for not taking part, rather than a lack of interest in democratic participation.

However, new modes of political engagement and communication have attracted young Europeans' interest. Frustration with traditional and institutionalised forms of political participation has motivated young people to use the internet and its applications (such as social media, podcasts, wikis, blogs and online networks) as a vehicle for expressing their opinions, establishing communities of likeminded citizens and initiate organised actions.

## 6. Voluntary Activities

### EU youth indicators

Participation of young people in organised voluntary activities	Figure 6-A
Voluntary activities aimed at changing young people's local communities	Figure 6-D
Young people volunteering abroad	Figure 6-F
Young people receiving a certificate or diploma for voluntary activities	Figure 6-G

## 6.1. INTRODUCTION

Volunteering represents an important contribution to the promotion of social and economic cohesion. By engaging in projects to tackle current social problems, young volunteers become key agents of social reform and develop a sense of belonging in and ownership of their community.

In addition, participating in voluntary activities greatly contributes to a young person's human capital and personal development. The personal benefits that volunteering brings are numerous. Research has shown how it helps to discourage young people from leaving school prematurely and improves their self-confidence, sense of social responsibility, and level of psychological wellbeing <sup>(24)</sup>. More specifically, peer-mentoring (voluntary mentoring by a young person who has lived through similar experiences) has been shown to be effective in helping young people at risk of exclusion <sup>(25)</sup>. In terms of the development of human capital, volunteering provides young individuals with effective opportunities for non-formal learning which enhance their personal and professional skills and can greatly contribute to their employability. Improvements in knowledge and understanding, interpersonal and communication skills, organisational and managerial skills, fundraising, and technical and office skills are examples of the practical gains reported by young volunteers <sup>(26)</sup>.

This chapter provides an overview of young people's participation in voluntary activities. The first section examines recent trends in terms of participation rates, areas of activity and the tendency for young people to undertake voluntary work abroad. The second part of the chapter discusses the importance of the formal recognition of the competences acquired through volunteering.

## 6.2. YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

Around 30 % of young people between 15 and 30 years of age participate in voluntary activities in Europe (Figure 6-A). Cross-country variations are noticeable, with a few countries presenting rates close to 40 % (Germany, Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands) and others registering levels of participation below 20 % (Hungary, Finland and Sweden). The differing levels of youth involvement in volunteering in countries tends to reflect the more general trends in the levels of engagement in non-profit-making activities in the wider population: strong traditions of participation in voluntary networks and associations tend to be associated with higher rates of youth contribution <sup>(27)</sup>. Since 2011, the participation of young people in voluntary activities has increased by over 25 %, on average. The most remarkable increases have occurred in Greece and in Poland (71 % and 83 % respectively) and in Italy, where the share of young volunteers has more than doubled.

About 30 % of young people between 15 and 30 years of age participate in voluntary activities. This figure has increased by over 25 % since 2011.

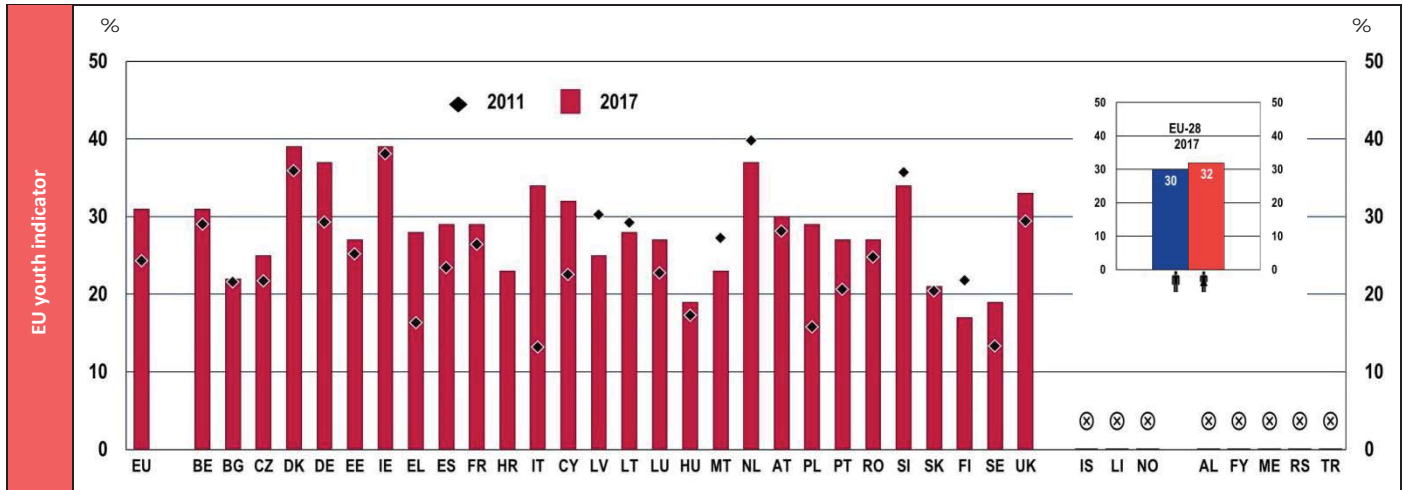
<sup>(24)</sup> Hall, 2008; Piliavin, 2003; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2008.

<sup>(25)</sup> Haski-Leventhal et al., 2008.

<sup>(26)</sup> Hall, 2008.

<sup>(27)</sup> Salamon and Wojciech, 2001. For information on the national policies and traditions of youth volunteering, please refer to the relevant pages of the Youth Wiki, an online database of national youth policies in Europe available at: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki>

**Figure 6-A:** Participation of young people (aged 15-30) in organised voluntary activities, by country, 2011 and 2017, and by sex, EU-28 average, 2017



Note: The question was: 'In the last 12 months, have you been involved in any organised voluntary activities?'

Base: All respondents. EU-27 (2011) and EU-28 (2017).

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 319, 'Youth on the Move', 2011 and Flash Eurobarometer 455, 'European Youth', 2017.

The general increase in participation rates in Europe can be at least partly explained by the progressive increase in the number of young people in education (as illustrated in the first section of Chapter 2).

Research has long since detected a positive relationship between the levels of participation in education (in particular in full-time formal education) and the propensity towards volunteering<sup>(28)</sup>. The rise in the numbers of young people enrolled in upper secondary and tertiary education over the past decade is therefore likely to have contributed to the positive trend in involvement in voluntary activities. In addition – and possibly more relevant for some of the countries where participation rates have spiked – a deterioration in labour market opportunities at times of economic crisis are recognised as powerful factors in prompting more young people to get involved in volunteering in order to acquire skills, experience and job contacts<sup>(29)</sup>.

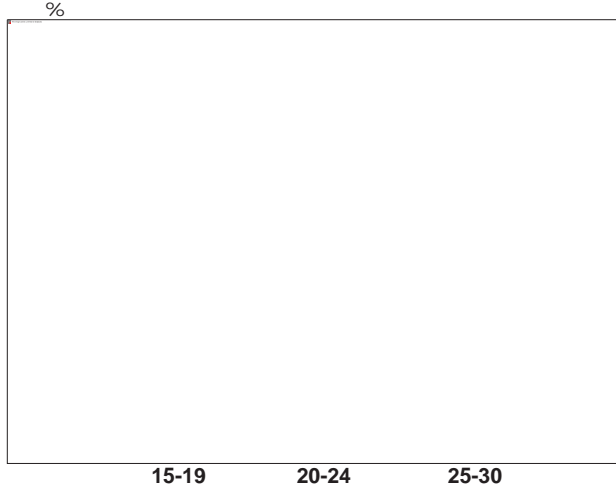
While gender does not appear to influence the propensity to volunteer, age has an impact. Indeed, 15-19 year-olds tend to be more active in voluntary activities (Figure 6-B). Moreover, the younger the cohort, the higher has been the increase in the rates of participation since 2011. This finding is probably linked to the stronger tendency demonstrated by students in full-time education to engage in volunteering mentioned above. Once young people start to combine studying with working, and even more so when they are in full-time employment, the time they have available to join non-profit initiatives tend to diminish<sup>(30)</sup>.

<sup>(28)</sup> Jones, 2000.

<sup>(29)</sup> Dean, 2014.

<sup>(30)</sup> Jones, 2000.

**Figure 6-B:** Participation of young people (aged 15-30) in organised voluntary activities, EU-28 average, by age group, 2017



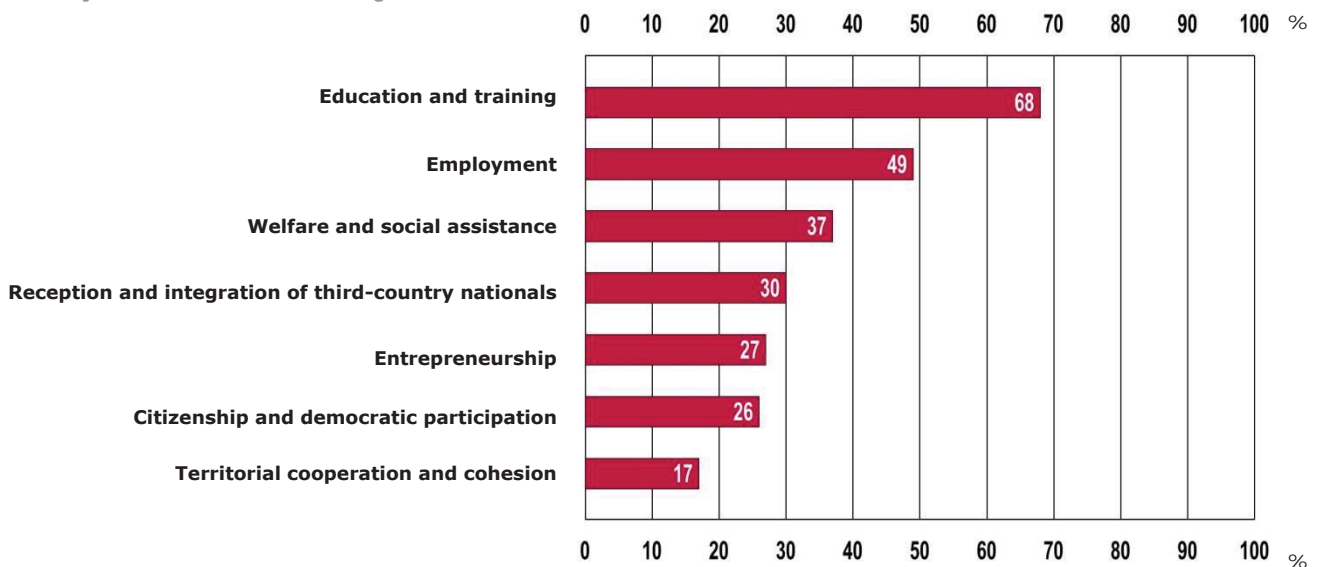
Note: The question was: 'In the last 12 months, have you been involved in any organised voluntary activities?'

Base: All respondents.

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 455, 'European Youth', 2017

The potential for youth participation in volunteering can be furthered by identifying young people's priority areas of voluntary activity. To this end, the 2017 Flash Eurobarometer asked young Europeans to identify the areas in which they would like the EU to take stronger action to promote voluntary initiatives (Figure 6-C). Education and employment came top of the list with social assistance and the integration of immigrants and refugees also appearing as high priorities. It is worth noting that these preferences are in line with those expressed in the same survey concerning the policy priorities for the European Union, discussed in Chapter 5 (Figure 5-D). For these topics, political relevance seems to go hand in hand with young people's eagerness to directly contribute through volunteering.

**Figure 6-C:** Areas in which the EU should take action to encourage young people to express solidarity through voluntary activities, EU-28 average, 2017



Note: The question was: 'The European Solidarity Corps is a new initiative from the European Commission which creates opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in projects in their own country or abroad that benefit communities and people around Europe. In which of the following areas do you think that the EU should take action to encourage young people to express solidarity? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS).'

Base: All respondents.

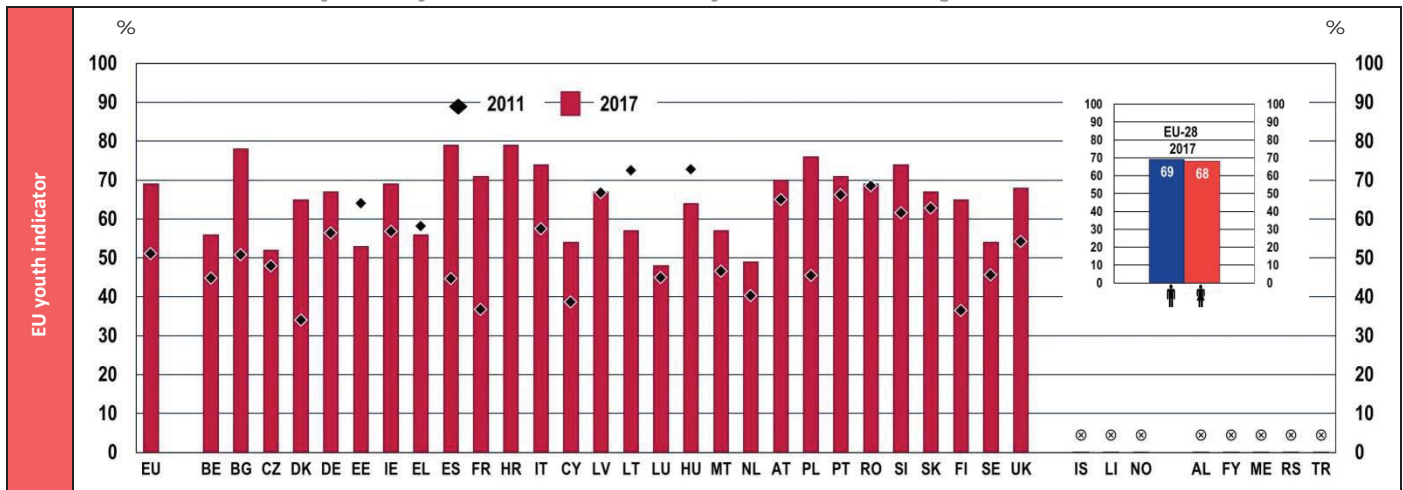
Source: Flash Eurobarometer 455, 'European Youth', 2017.

When it comes to the scope of personal engagement, the majority of young volunteers choose projects and services aimed at bringing benefits to their local community (Figure 6-D). This is particularly true for Bulgaria,



Spain and Croatia, where almost 80 % of young volunteers are active locally. On the other hand, less than half of volunteers stay in their local community in Luxembourg and in the Netherlands. The proportion of young Europeans who have undertaken these types of activity have registered an increase since 2011, especially in France, Denmark, Finland, Spain and Poland.

**Figure 6-D:** Share of young people (aged 15-30) who undertook voluntary activities aimed at changing their local communities, by country, 2011 and 2017, and by sex, EU-28 average, 2017



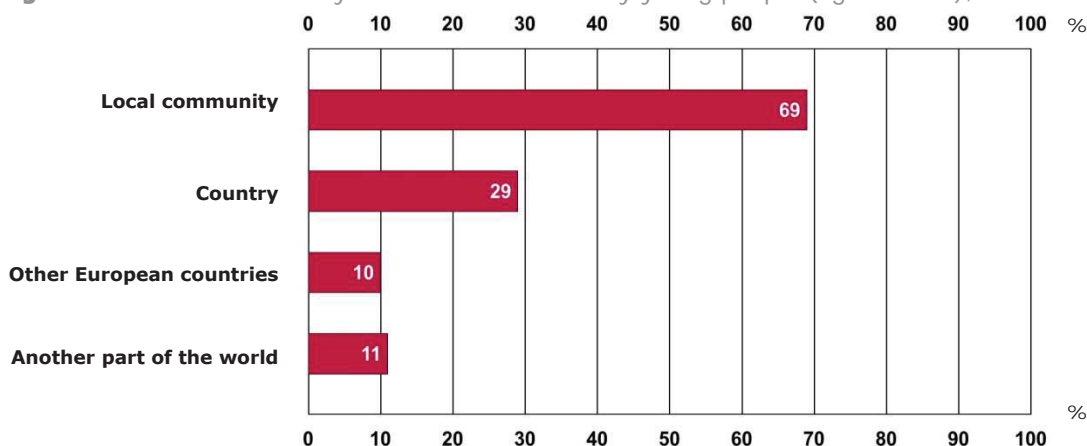
Note: The question was: 'Were these voluntary activities aimed at changing something in your local community?'

Base: All respondents. EU-27 (2011) and EU-28 (2017).

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 319, 'Youth on the Move', 2011 and Flash Eurobarometer 455, 'European Youth', 2017.

Correspondingly, few young volunteers participate in activities with an international focus. As Figure 6-E illustrates, only about 10 % of participants report having contributed to projects aimed at changing something in other European countries or in other parts of the world.

**Figure 6-E:** Aim of voluntary activities carried out by young people (aged 15-30), EU-28 average, 2017



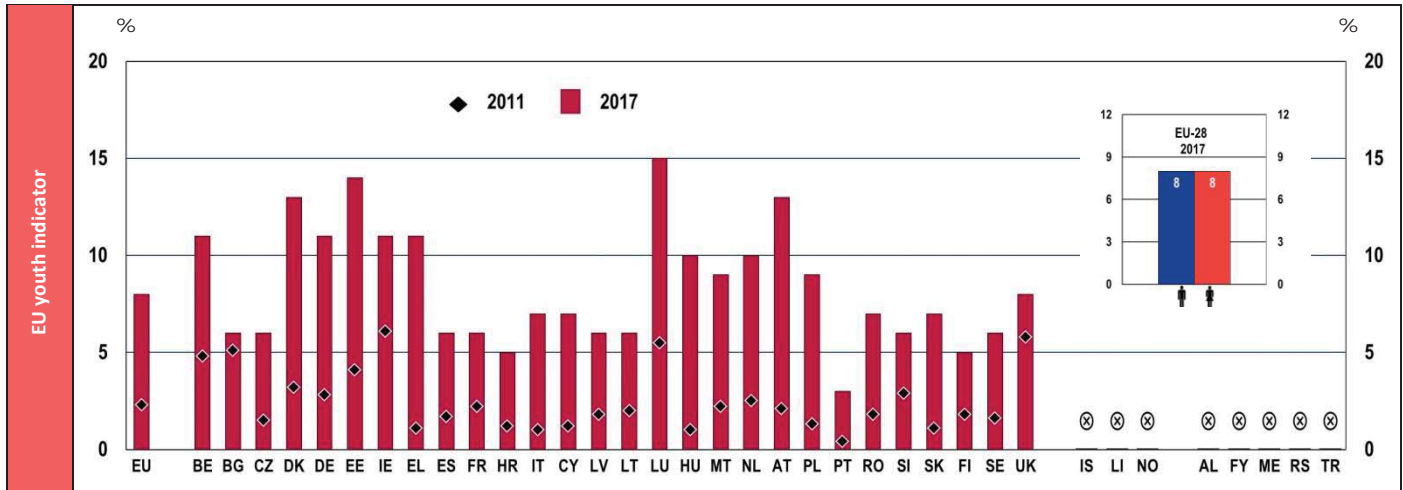
Note: The question was: 'Were these voluntary activities aimed at changing something in .....? (Multiple answers possible)'.

Base: All respondents.

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 455, 'European Youth', 2017.

In accordance with these results, few young Europeans leave their own country to carry out voluntary work: only around 8 % of young individuals in the European Union report having volunteered abroad (Figure 6-F).

**Figure 6-F:** Share of young people (aged 15-30) going abroad to do voluntary work, by country, 2011 and 2017 and by sex, EU-28 average, 2017



Note: The question was: 'Have you ever had the opportunity to stay abroad for the purpose of volunteering?'

Base: All respondents. EU-27 (2011) and EU-28 (2017).

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 319, 'Youth on the Move', 2011 and Flash Eurobarometer 455, 'European Youth', 2017.

Even in those countries with the highest percentages of young volunteers going abroad (Denmark, Estonia, Luxembourg and Austria), the figure does not exceed 15 %. The age at which most young volunteers engage in activities makes travelling abroad more difficult, as does the financial burden involved, which represents a significant limitation to cross-border volunteering<sup>(31)</sup>. Because voluntary work is by definition non-remunerated, and few programmes provide reimbursement for incurred expenses, meeting the costs of living and travelling expenses while abroad is possible only for a small minority of young Europeans<sup>(32)</sup>. Indeed, as indicated by a survey conducted in 2014, half of the young volunteers in the European Union report having incurred expenses to cover living and travel costs while doing voluntary work<sup>(33)</sup>. Yet, almost one third has not received any reimbursement of the costs linked to their participation in voluntary projects<sup>(34)</sup>.

Nonetheless, the trend registered since 2011 is extremely positive: at EU level, the percentage of young Europeans volunteering abroad has tripled. As young people's international mobility has increased over recent years bringing many young Europeans to live, study and work in other European countries (as discussed in the first and second chapters of this report), serving in cross-border voluntary organisations seems to have also become a reason for young people to leave their country of origin. The most significant increases have occurred in Greece, Italy, Hungary, Portugal and Poland. Interestingly, Greece, Italy and Poland also feature amongst the countries where the rate of participation in volunteering has increased the most over the last eight years (Figure 6-A).

Overall, data show that participation in voluntary activities has grown in recent years, both at home and abroad. While these figures are encouraging, there is still greater potential for extending the opportunities for the non-

<sup>(31)</sup> Sherraden et al., 2008.

<sup>(32)</sup> Gaskin, 2004.

<sup>(33)</sup> European Commission, 2015b.

<sup>(34)</sup> Ibid.

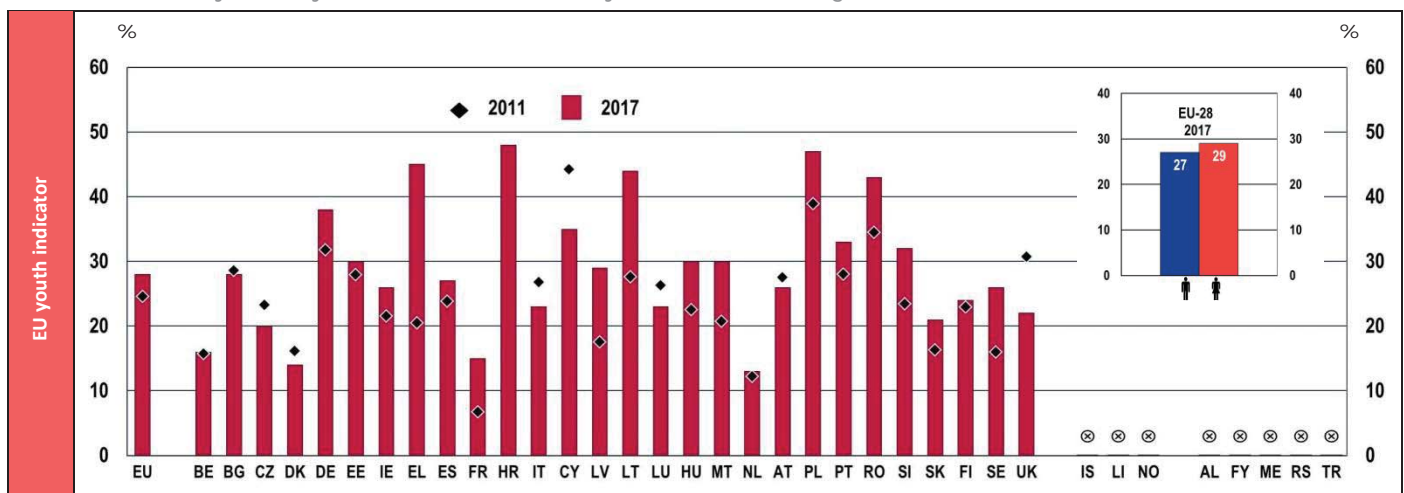
formal learning and personal growth associated with voluntary work. To this end, it is interesting to shed some light on an important factor motivating young people to volunteer, namely the possibility of receiving formal recognition of their experiences.

### 6.3. RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

By participating in voluntary activities, volunteers are able to acquire skills and enhance their personal and professional capabilities through non-formal learning. Such skills can later be useful either when returning to education or when entering the labour market; this is especially true when the skills have been formally recognised through a certificate or diploma that can enhance the volunteer's curriculum vitae<sup>(35)</sup>. The opportunity of gaining formal recognition of the personal and professional experience acquired is considered fundamental in encouraging young people to participate in voluntary activities<sup>(36)</sup>. This is particularly true for those who join voluntary projects not only because they want to make a contribution to society but also because they see it as a way to improve their employability – a consideration which is increasingly important in countries where unemployment is high – as mentioned in the first section. Consequently, obtaining a certificate attesting to the competences acquired is an increasingly important motivating factor<sup>(37)</sup>. However, on average, less than a third of young people who have participated in voluntary activities report that they have received a certificate or diploma recognising their experience and the skills they have demonstrated (Figure 6-G).

Less than a third of young people who have participated in voluntary activities have received a certificate or diploma formally recognising their experience and the skills they have demonstrated.

**Figure 6-G:** Share of young people (aged 15-30) who received a certificate or diploma for their voluntary activities, by country, 2011 and 2017, and by sex, EU-28 average, 2017



*Note:* The question was: 'Did you receive a certificate, diploma or other formal recognition for your participation in these voluntary activities?'

*Base:* All respondents. EU-27 (2011) and EU-28 (2017).

*Source:* Flash Eurobarometer 319, 'Youth on the Move', 2011 and Flash Eurobarometer 455, 'European Youth', 2017.

<sup>(35)</sup> Williamson, Hoskins and Boetzelen, 2005; Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth, 2011.

<sup>(36)</sup> Fisher and Ackerman, 1998.

<sup>(37)</sup> Moskwiak, 2005.

The countries reporting the highest percentages of young volunteers receiving certificates or diplomas are: Greece, Croatia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, with percentages above 40 %. In contrast, in Belgium, Denmark, France and the Netherlands, less than 20 % of young people receive any form of certification for their volunteering. Improvements have occurred in many European countries since 2011. The most remarkable are those registered in Greece and France, where the share of young people receiving recognition for their activities has more than doubled (albeit from a low base in France). For other countries the trend has been reversed, particularly in Cyprus and the United Kingdom, which have experienced a significant decline in the percentages of volunteers receiving official recognition.

Recognition of the skills acquired through volunteering can be particularly complicated when the voluntary activity has been carried out in a country different from the one where the individual plans to either continue his/her education or seek employment. Differences in the types of competences certified, in the guidelines for assessment and, in the case of formal recognition, in national validation systems, add multiple obstacles to the transferability of skills acquired<sup>(38)</sup>. The combination of these challenges, therefore, can make volunteering abroad all the more problematic.

## CONCLUSION

A significant increase in the level of participation of young individuals in voluntary activities has occurred since 2011. This is due in part to the progressive increase in the number of young people in education and in part to worsened labour market opportunities at times of economic crisis which prompted more young Europeans to get involved in volunteering in order to acquire skills, experience and job contacts.

However, a minority of young volunteers see their participation recognised: less than a third have received a certificate or diploma formally recognising their experience and the skills they have demonstrated.

Possibly also because of the additional difficulties in receiving recognition for activities conducted in another country, mobility of young volunteers in Europe is still very limited: despite a substantial increase since 2011, only around 8 % of young individuals in the European Union report having volunteered abroad. Europe.

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<sup>(38)</sup> Williamson, Hoskins and Boetzelen, 2005; Kiilakoski, 2015.



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PART 6/7

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Situation of young people in the European Union**

*Accompanying the document*

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE  
REGIONS**

**Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy**

{COM(2018) 269 final} - {SWD(2018) 168 final}

## 7. Social Inclusion

### EU youth indicators

Average age of young people when leaving the parental household	Figure 7-A
At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate for children and young people	Figures 7-B and 7-C
At-risk-of-poverty rate for children	Figure 7-D
Severe material deprivation rate for children and young people	Figure 7-F
Children and young people living in households with very low work intensity	Figure 7-G
Self-reported unmet needs for medical care	Figure 7-K
Share of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET rate)	Figures 7-M and 7-N

## 7.1. INTRODUCTION

The cyclical changes or booms and busts in the economic cycle lead to rises and falls in youth unemployment rates, influencing job prospects and opportunities for young entrepreneurs (Chapter 3). In turn, these cycles impact upon young people's levels of poverty and deprivation, affect their living conditions, their health and well-being (Chapter 4), and even their levels of political and cultural participation (Chapters 5 and 9).

This chapter explores the issues of poverty and social exclusion. Given the importance of living arrangements in determining poverty levels, the chapter looks first at the average age when young people leave the parental home. Subsequently, where possible, a distinction is made between young people living independently and those living with their parents. Among indicators on poverty and social exclusion, the chapter examines first the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate and its three sub-indicators: the at-risk-of poverty rate, the severe material deprivation rate and the proportion of people living in households with low work intensity. It then turns to some of the key dimensions of poverty and social exclusion, including housing conditions, access to health care and the growing phenomenon of in-work poverty. Finally, the last section focuses on the groups most at risk of poverty and social exclusion: young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), and young people from a migrant background.

Given that childhood poverty is a key determining factor for the likelihood of poverty later in life, for several indicators, the EU Dashboard covers both children and young people. The age breakdown used in the chapter for each of these groups reflects the available data provided by Eurostat. In most cases, the reference age groups are 0-16 for children and 16-29 for young people, although for a few indicators, slightly different age ranges are covered.

## 7.2. MOVING TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE: YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING THE PARENTAL HOME

Young people's lives are characterised by phases and episodes of transition towards independence: they move from education into work, and from living with and being supported by their parents towards establishing their own household. As this report also describes, this road towards independence is often bumpy, and usually takes many turns before leading to complete financial independence. As a result, young people are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion and poverty.

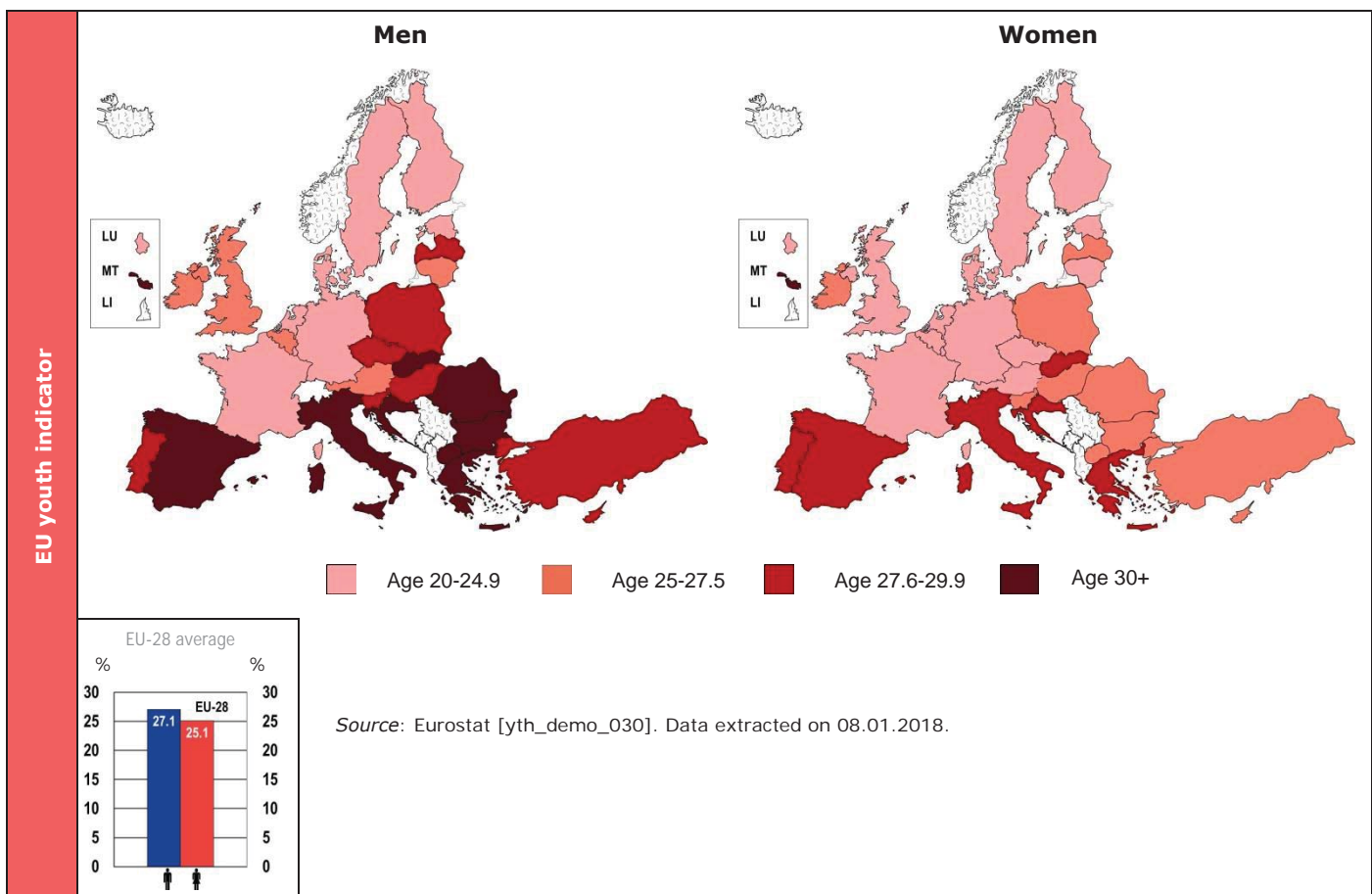
The risk of becoming poor is closely linked to a crucial move: leaving the parental home. In fact, moving out of the parental household is found to be the 'strongest predictor behind youth poverty' <sup>(1)</sup>. Though moving out of the parental home might not be definitive for many (young people often 'boomerang' back to the parental household if they cannot afford to live independently), the timing of this move differs widely in European countries, influencing poverty levels among young people.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Aassve et al. 2007, p. 331.

On average, young Europeans leave the parental home around the age of 26 <sup>(2)</sup>, and this has stayed remarkably stable since 2010 <sup>(3)</sup>. However, as Figure 7-A depicts, there are substantial differences across European countries, as well as between young men and women. Regarding country differences, there is a clear north-west vs. south-east divide in Europe: young people in northern and western Europe generally leave the parental household earlier than their peers from southern and eastern European countries. The average age of leaving the parental home ranges from 20.7 years in Sweden to 31.8 years in Malta <sup>(4)</sup>. Such differences are partly cultural and partly linked to the political and economic environment <sup>(5)</sup>. Whatever the cause, national circumstances can influence young people either to start an independent life early (e.g. through generous grants for higher education students) or to stay longer in the family home.

**Figure 7-A:** Average age of young people when leaving the parental household, by country and by sex, 2016



Common to all European countries, however, is the tendency for young women to leave their parents earlier than young men, partly due to women starting to cohabit with their partners at an earlier age than men <sup>(6)</sup>. The gender difference was two years on average in the EU-28 in 2016. Differences between men and women are

<sup>(2)</sup> EU-28 average, 2016. Source: Eurostat [yth\_demo\_030]. Data extracted on 08.01.2018.

<sup>(3)</sup> Source: Eurostat [yth\_demo\_030]. Data extracted on 08.01.2018.

<sup>(4)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(5)</sup> Aassve et al., 2007; Iacovou, 2001.

<sup>(6)</sup> Iacovou, 2011.



generally smaller in countries where young people tend to establish their own household earlier (there is almost no difference between men and women in Sweden, and also just over half a year in Denmark and Luxembourg), in part because leaving home is not necessarily connected to moving in with a partner. Conversely, gender differences are greater in countries where young people arrive at the critical point of establishing their own household later in their lives or where leaving the parental home coincides more with moving in with a partner <sup>(7)</sup>: the gender gap is four-and-a-half years in Romania, close to five years in Bulgaria and Turkey, and nearly seven-and-a-half-years in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia <sup>(8)</sup>. Moreover, in some of the countries with a large gender gap, young couples often start life together in one of the parental homes <sup>(9)</sup>.

This picture is very similar to the one shown in previous Youth Reports. Since 2010, the biggest change has been registered in Luxembourg, where the average age of leaving the parental household has fallen by almost two years (by 2.3 years for men and nearly 1.5 years for women) <sup>(10)</sup>. Significant falls have also occurred in Lithuania (1.4 years for young women, and 1.9 years for young men) and Slovenia (1.3 years, with little difference between women and men). In addition, in Estonia, men left their parents' home considerably earlier (1.6 years on average) in 2016 than in 2010. In contrast, the average age of young people leaving the parental household has increased by 1.3 years in Ireland and Cyprus, with larger increases among women than among men <sup>(11)</sup>. These tendencies suggest a slow narrowing of the gap between men and women, at least in some countries.

The average ages of leaving the parental household have remained remarkably stable in the EU-28 since 2010.

Differences between countries in the average age of leaving the parental home also influences the poverty rates shown in the indicators, as they usually combine the data for both independent young people and those living with their parents. Since moving out of the family home increases the risk of poverty for young people, where possible, the next section will make distinctions between these two groups when comparing levels of poverty and social exclusion.

### 7.3. LEVELS OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The main indicator of poverty and social exclusion is the composite indicator of 'at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion', which is based on three sub-indicators: the at-risk-of-poverty rate; the severe material deprivation rate; and the proportion of people living in households with very low work intensity. People defined as being at risk of poverty or social exclusion are therefore those who fall into at least one of these categories. While each of these sub-indicators will be defined and illustrated in the following sections, the analysis focuses first on the composite indicator.

Figure 7-B shows the percentage of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in European countries by age. As the figure illustrates, in the majority of countries, children and young people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in greater proportions than the population as a whole. Young people are especially vulnerable: in most countries, the proportion of young people at risk of poverty or social exclusion exceeds that of children

<sup>(7)</sup> Iacovou, 2011

<sup>(8)</sup> Source: Eurostat [yth\_demo\_030]. Data extracted on 08.01.2018.

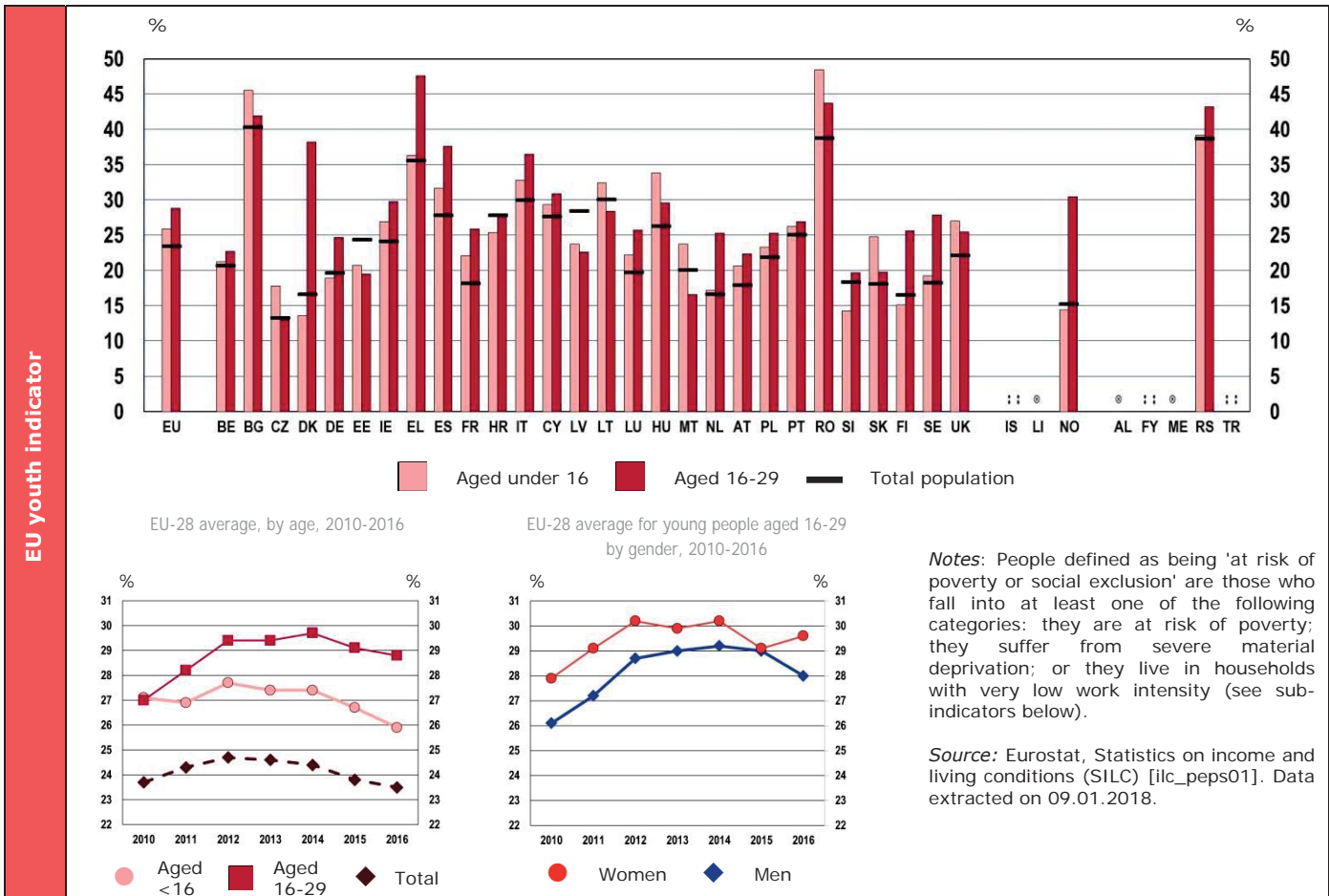
<sup>(9)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(10)</sup> Source: Eurostat [yth\_demo\_030]. Data extracted on 08.01.2018.

<sup>(11)</sup> Ibid.

and the total population. In Denmark and Norway, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate of young people is double the rate within the total population, mostly due to high at-risk-of-poverty rates (see next section). The countries with the highest proportions of young people (aged 16 to 29) at risk of poverty or social exclusion are Greece (47.6 %), Romania (43.7 %), Serbia (43.2 %) and Bulgaria (41.9 %); and those with the lowest are Czech Republic (13 %) and Malta (16.6 %).

**Figure 7-B:** Proportion of children and young people at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to the total population, by country, 2016



In the EU-28 in 2010, on average, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rates were at similar levels for children and young people (both above the rate within the total population). However, since then, while the proportion of young people at risk of poverty or social exclusion has increased by 2 percentage points, the rate for children decreased by 1 percentage point, widening the gap between the two groups (Figure 7-B). Nevertheless, even for young people aged 16 to 29, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rates started decreasing in 2015, which could be at least partly attributed to improved employment rates (Chapter 3).

However, not all countries have been experiencing the same trends. Between 2010 and 2016, young people's at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rates

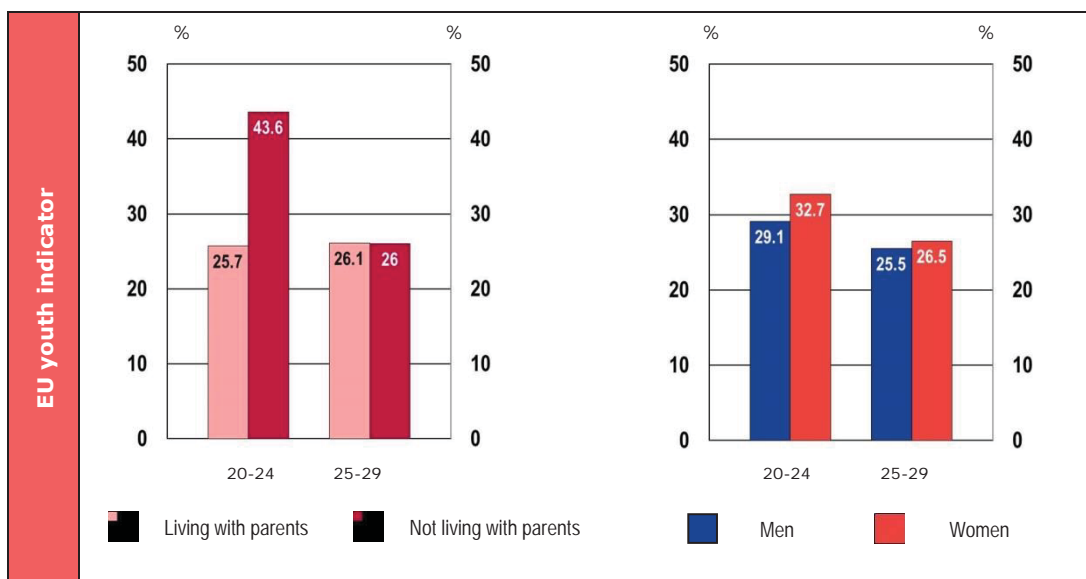
At-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion rates for children and young people have been decreasing since 2014. However, the proportion of young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion was still higher in 2016 than in 2010.

increased the most in Greece and Spain (by 15.6 and 9.8 percentage points respectively) <sup>(12)</sup>. In Greece, trends for children have been similar, with an increase of 8.5 percentage points. On the other hand, the decrease in the rate for both young people and children was the largest in Latvia, at 15 and 18.3 percentage points respectively <sup>(13)</sup>. In Latvia, this decrease followed a large increase between 2008 and 2011, among the largest increases for children and young people in the European Union (12.2 and 15.6 percentage points respectively in the two age groups) <sup>(14)</sup>. The reversal of this extreme rise was hailed as a 'success story' of crisis management already back in 2012 (European Commission, 2012).

As Figure 7-B also illustrates, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate is especially high for young women, partly due to them leaving the parental home earlier (Figure 7-A). In 2016, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate was 28 % for young men aged 16 to 29, while it was 1.6 percentage points higher for young women. In addition, despite the general decreasing trend, the proportion of young women at risk of poverty and social exclusion was higher in 2016 than in 2015.

As discussed above, moving out of the family home increases the risk of poverty for young people. Indeed, as Figure 7-C illustrates, in the 20 to 24 age group, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate is substantially higher for those living independently than for those living with their parents, with a 17.9 percentage point difference. However, these differences disappear in the older age cohort (aged 25 to 29), by which time most young people have stopped studying and have entered the labour market. In this age group, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rates of young people living independently and those living with their parents are identical. The figure also confirms that gender differences in the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rates are more pronounced among 20 to 24 year-olds than among the older group, again due to women moving out of the parental home earlier.

**Figure 7-C:** At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate for young people (aged 20-29), EU-28 average by age group, by living arrangements and by sex, 2016



Source: Eurostat, Statistics on income and living conditions (SILC), [yth\_incl\_030] and [ilc\_peps01]. Data extracted on 07.02.2018.

<sup>(12)</sup> Source: Eurostat, Statistics on income and living conditions (SILC) [ilc\_peps01]. Data extracted on 09.01.2018.

<sup>(13)</sup> Ibid.

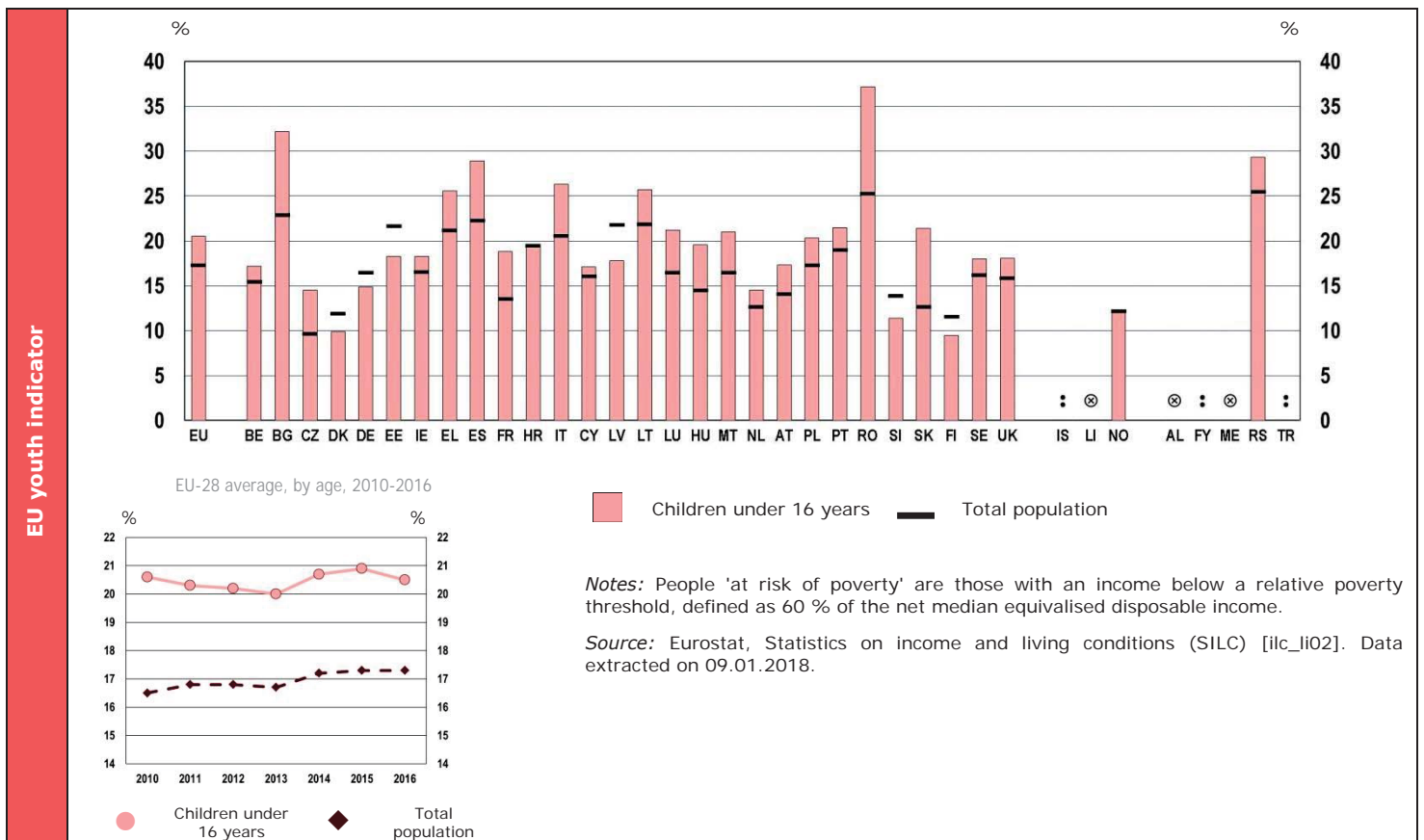
<sup>(14)</sup> Ibid.

### 7.3.1. The at-risk-of-poverty rate

The at-risk-of-poverty rate measures poverty in relative terms: people with an income below a relative poverty threshold – defined as 60 % of the net median equivalised disposable income <sup>(15)</sup> – are regarded as being at risk of poverty <sup>(16)</sup>. This is the first sub-indicator of the 'at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate' discussed in the previous section. This indicator is mostly designed for understanding within-country income distribution dynamics and should be used for international comparisons with caution: a person with an income below the poverty threshold in one country might not be regarded as being at all at risk of poverty in another.

In addition, given the differences across countries in the average age when young people leave the parental home, the at-risk-of-poverty rate can be misleading if used for international comparisons of 16-29 year-olds. A large proportion of young people are still in education, especially in the younger age groups, which means that their income will be relatively low, particularly if living independently. For this reason, the EU Dashboard of Youth Indicators only considers the at-risk-of-poverty rate for children under 16 in comparison to the total population (Figure 7-D). Nevertheless, it is still useful to look at the at-risk-of-poverty rates across Europe for young people not living with their parents (Figure 7-E).

Figure 7-D: At-risk-of-poverty rate for children in comparison with the total population, by country, 2016



<sup>(15)</sup> The equivalised disposable income is the total income of a household, after tax and other deductions, that is available for spending or saving, divided by the number of household members converted into equalised adults; household members are equalised or made equivalent by weighting each according to their age, using the so-called modified OECD equivalence scale (Eurostat, 2018d).

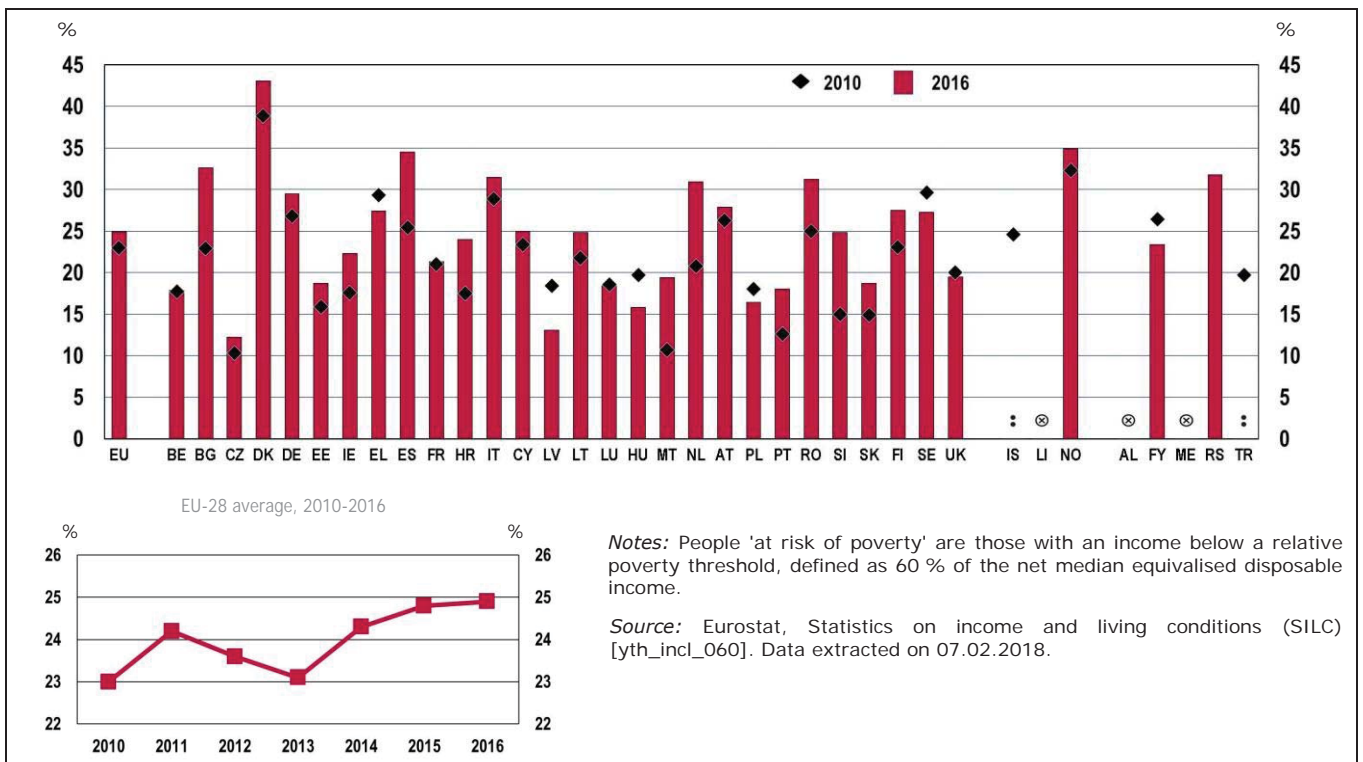
<sup>(16)</sup> Eurostat, 2018b.

In the EU-28 on average and in the majority of European countries, the average at-risk-of-poverty rate is higher for children than for the total population (Figure 7-D). The exceptions are Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Slovenia and Finland, where children have a relatively lower risk of poverty. In 2016, the at-risk-of-poverty rate for children was highest in Romania (37.2 %), followed by Bulgaria (32.2 %), Serbia (29.3 %) and Spain (28.9 %); while it was lowest in Finland (9.5 %), Denmark (9.9 %) and Slovenia (11.4 %).

On average in the EU-28, the at-risk-of-poverty rate for children was decreasing between 2010 and 2013. It then began to increase in 2014 and 2015, before starting to decrease again in 2016 (Figure 7-D). For the total population, the increasing trend was halted between 2012 and 2013, before rising again until 2015. There was no change on average in the EU-28 between 2015 and 2016.

In assessing the risk of poverty for young people, it is useful to examine the extent of the problem for those no longer living with their parents. Figure 7-E therefore includes young people aged 20 to 29 who have moved out of the parental household. This wider age group has been chosen to take into account the differences across Europe in the average age of leaving the parental home. However, it has to be kept in mind that young people aged 20 to 24 living independently are, on average, almost twice as likely to be at risk of poverty than their older peers aged 25 to 29 <sup>(17)</sup>.

**Figure 7-E:** At-risk-of-poverty rate for young people (aged 20-29) not living with parents, by country, 2010 and 2016



<sup>(17)</sup> 2016. Source: Eurostat SILC [yth\_incl\_060]. Data extracted on 07.02.2018.

In 2016, the highest risk of poverty for young people aged 20 to 29 not living with their parents was found in Denmark – 43.1 %. The rate also exceeded 30 % in Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Norway and Serbia. These countries differ greatly in the average ages that young people leave the parental household, and therefore are examples of diverse realities. In Denmark and Norway, for example, young people tend to move out of the parental home earlier, because they can afford to do so thanks to available student housing and relatively generous grants for those studying at tertiary level. In addition, average income levels are much higher in these countries than in the second group. In Bulgaria, Spain, Italy and Romania, young people tend to live with their parents longer partly due to economic necessity. Nevertheless, in both groups, the at-risk-of-poverty rates for young people living independently increased in the period in question.

The at-risk-of-poverty rates for young people not living with their parents are relatively high across the EU, and continue to increase in the majority of countries.

Data show that the proportion of young people aged 20 to 29 living independently and at risk of poverty increased between 2010 and 2016 both across the EU-28 as a whole as well as in the majority of countries. The most significant increases took place in the Netherlands (10.1 percentage points), Slovenia (9.8 percentage points) and Bulgaria (9.7 percentage points).

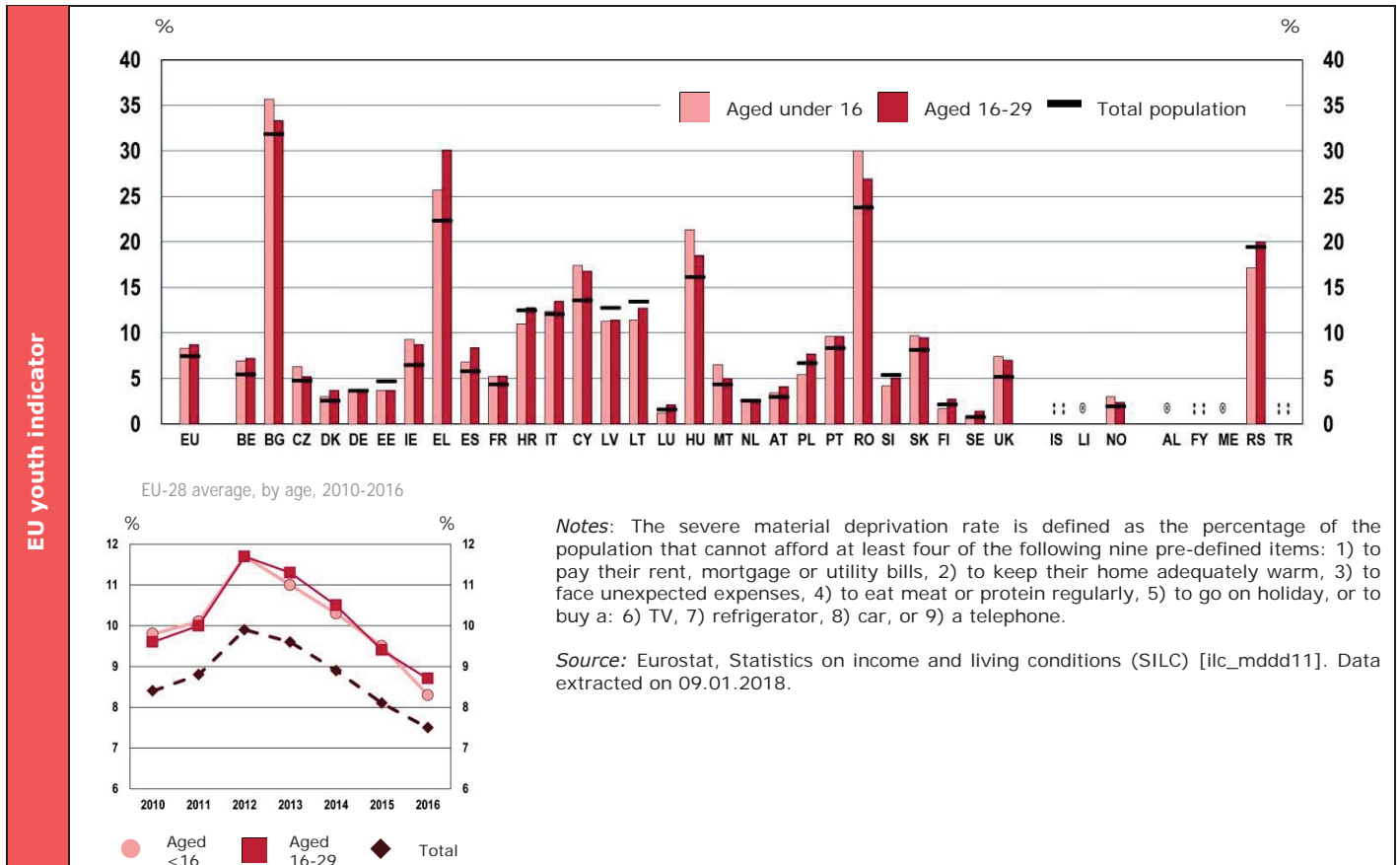
### 7.3.2. Severe material deprivation

The severe material deprivation rate<sup>(18)</sup> complements the at-risk-of-poverty rate in two important respects. First, instead of defining a poverty threshold that varies between countries, it is based on a single European threshold. For this reason, it is a more absolute measure of poverty, and can capture the differences in living standards between countries. Second, the severe material deprivation rate takes different kinds of factors into account – such as eating habits or being able to go on a holiday, while the relative poverty indicator is based solely on current income.

As Figure 7-F illustrates, the differences are quite substantial between European countries, ranging from a material deprivation rate of 0.8 % in Sweden to 31.9 % in Bulgaria for the total population. The material deprivation of children (under-16s) and young people (16-29 years) generally mirrors that of the total population, but often at a higher level. In 2016, for both children and young people, the material deprivation rates were highest in Bulgaria (35.7 % and 33.3 % respectively), Greece (25.7 % and 30.1 %) and Romania (30.0 % and 26.9 %). Children were the more deprived group in Bulgaria and Romania while young people were more deprived in Greece. In contrast, the material deprivation rate for children and young people was the lowest in Luxembourg (1.2 % and 2.1 %), the Netherlands (2.4 % and 2.7 %), Finland (1.7 % and 2.7 %), Sweden (0.6 % and 1.4 %) and Norway (3.0 % and 2.4 %).

<sup>(18)</sup> The severe material deprivation rate is defined as the percentage of the population that cannot afford at least four of the following nine pre-defined items: 1) to pay their rent, mortgage or utility bills, 2) to keep their home adequately warm, 3) to face unexpected expenses, 4) to eat meat or protein regularly, 5) to go on holiday, or to buy a: 6) TV, 7) refrigerator, 8) car, or 9) a telephone (Eurostat, 2018f).

Figure 7-F: Severe material deprivation rate, by country and by age, 2016



In the EU-28, the severe material deprivation rates for all age groups were increasing until 2012 but have been decreasing quite considerably since, pointing towards a gradual recovery after the economic crisis (see also Chapter 3). In 2016, material deprivation rates were at a lower level than in 2010, at 8.3 % for children and 8.7 % for young people (Figure 7-F-b). The decrease between 2010 and 2016 has again been the most substantial in Latvia, with a fall of 19.3 percentage points among children under 16 years of age and 15.8 percentage points among young people aged 16 to 29<sup>(19)</sup>. In addition, despite material deprivation rates still being the highest in Bulgaria, this country has also seen a relatively large decrease in material deprivation – 9.6 percentage points for children and 11 percentage points for young people<sup>(20)</sup>. In contrast, material deprivation is very high and is still increasing in Greece, indicating that the economic crisis is not yet over in this country. Between 2010 and 2016, the rates increased by 13.4 percentage points among children and 16.1 percentage points among young people<sup>(21)</sup>.

Material deprivation rates have been decreasing since 2012 in the EU and are now at a lower level than in 2010 for all age groups. However, particular regions remain vulnerable. Most notably, material deprivation rates are still increasing in Greece.

<sup>(19)</sup> Source: Eurostat, Statistics on income and living conditions (SILC) [ilc\_mddd11]. Data extracted on 09.01.2018.

<sup>(20)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(21)</sup> Ibid.

### 7.3.3. Households with very low work intensity

Since unemployment influences poverty and social exclusion levels to a great extent, this section focuses on children and young people living in households with very low work intensity <sup>(22)</sup>. This is the third sub-indicator of the main composite indicator of poverty or social exclusion. A low work-intensity household is one where working-age household members worked only 20 % or less of the total number of months they could potentially have worked within a given reference period; i.e., the work intensity of household members is equal to or below the threshold of 0.20. It is important to note that below the age of 25, students are not regarded as part of the working-age population; this means that households composed only of students aged under 25 are excluded from the indicator calculation <sup>(23)</sup>.

For this reason, the age groups analysed in this section are different from the ones examined above. Children are defined as those under the age of 18, and young people aged 18-24 and 25-29 are looked at separately. In addition, the reference group is the prime working age population (aged 25-59) instead of the total population.

In 2016 in the EU-28, 9.3 % of children, 11.0 % of young people aged 18-24 and 12.1 % of young people aged 25-29 were living in households with very low work intensity (Figure 7-G). This average figure is lower for children and higher for young people than it is for the prime working age population. As Figure 7-G depicts, in recent years, the most vulnerable group has become the oldest age group within the youth cohort: the proportion of young people aged 25-29 living in households with very low work intensity grew by 2 percentage points between 2010 and 2016. Moreover, the increasing trend is apparent for both age groups within the youth population, which is to be contrasted with recent decreases both in this rate for children and the prime working age population and in youth unemployment rates (Chapter 3).

In contrast to general trends, the proportion of young people living in households with very low work intensity is still increasing.

When looking at cross-country differences in the percentages of young people living in households with very low work intensity, it should be kept in mind that there are differences in calculating this indicator for the different age groups. In the 18-24 age group, households comprising only students are excluded from the sample; however, these households are included for the 25-29 age group. This means that in countries where students tend to stay in higher education for a longer period of time or where many start studying at a later age, the percentages of low work intensity households will be higher.

The largest percentages of young people aged 18 to 24 living in households with very low work intensity can be found in Greece (21.9 %) and Serbia (20.5 %), while the smallest percentages are in Estonia (5.6 %), Malta (5.7 %), Poland (5.5 %) and Slovakia (5.8 %). In this age group, students do not count as being part of the working-age population, so they are only included in the sample if they still live with their parents.

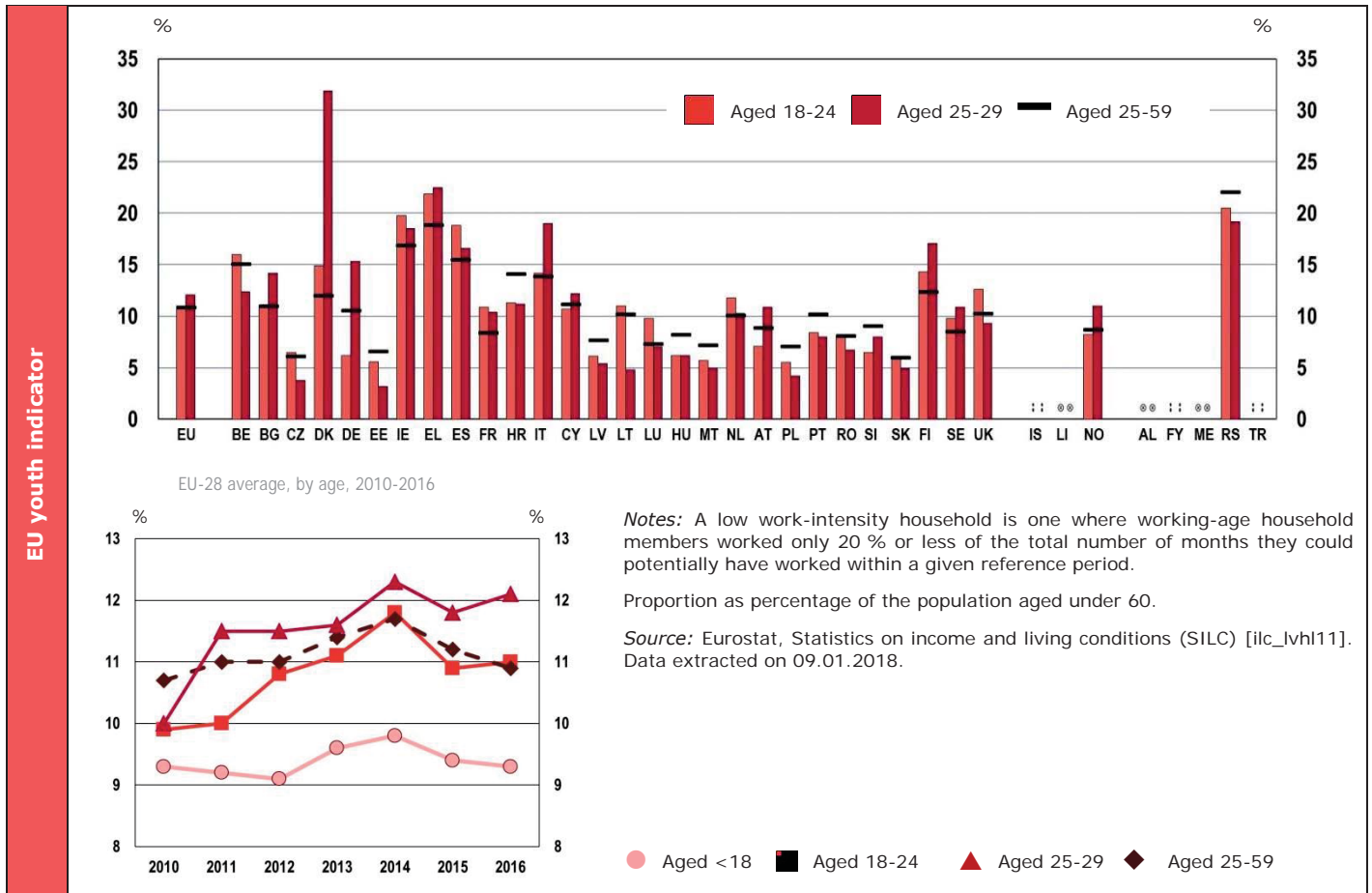
In the 25 to 29 age group, the highest proportions of young people living in households with very low work intensity can be found in Denmark (31.9 %), Greece (22.5 %), Serbia (19.2 %) and Italy (19.0 %). The lowest proportions are in Czech Republic (3.8 %) and Estonia (3.2 %).

<sup>(22)</sup> The work intensity of a household is the ratio of the total number of months that all working-age household members have worked during the income reference year and the total number of months the same household members theoretically could have worked in the same period (Eurostat, 2018h).

<sup>(23)</sup> Eurostat, 2018g.



Figure 7-G: Proportion of people living in households with very low work intensity, by country and age, 2016



Interestingly, there is no straightforward relationship between living in a household with very low work intensity and the average age of leaving the parental household: in some of the countries with high proportions of young people living in households with very low work intensity, young people become independent relatively early, while in others they are dependent on their parents for much longer. An interesting example is Denmark, where young people tend to leave the parental household relatively early, and the proportion of those aged 25-29 living in households with very low work intensity is more than the double that of the prime working age population; possibly due to the relatively high proportion of students in this age group <sup>(24)</sup>.

Regarding changes over time, as with earlier indicators, Latvia and Greece have experienced the most extreme fluctuations. Between 2010 and 2016, Latvia was the country with the largest decrease in the proportion of young people living in households with very low work intensity (4.3 percentage points for young people aged 18-24 and 5.0 percentage points for 25-29-year-olds), while the largest increases occurred in Greece and some other countries hardest hit by the economic crisis. The largest increases were 10.7 percentage points for the 18-24 age group and 14.7 percentage points for those aged 25-29 in Greece, 8.6 percentage points for 18-24 year-olds in Spain and 9.1 percentage points for the 25-29 age group in Cyprus <sup>(25)</sup>.

<sup>(24)</sup> Source: Eurostat [educ\_uae\_enrt02] and [educ\_uae\_enrt07].

<sup>(25)</sup> Source: Statistics on income and living conditions (SILC) [ilc\_lvhl11]. Data extracted on 09.01.2018.

## 7.4. LIVING CONDITIONS

Poverty and social exclusion are multi-dimensional phenomena which cannot be understood solely in terms of people's income. The other dimensions that should be taken into account include access not only to basic services such as housing and healthcare, but also to good education, and good, well-paid jobs. Limited access to these basic necessities contributes to the root causes of poverty and help to explain how individuals and families become socially excluded.

Homelessness and housing exclusion represents one of the most extreme forms of poverty and deprivation. In a resolution on a European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Parliament calls on the Member States 'to deliver on the right to adequate housing by ensuring access to quality and affordable housing of adequate size for all' <sup>(26)</sup>. Given the significance of moving out of the parental home in a young person's life, the cost and quality of housing are important contributing factors in ensuring young people's well-being.

A second important aspect of social inclusion is access to health care. Barriers to accessing care contribute to the deterioration of people's health and can have repercussions on their ability to work. The relatively high cost of medical examinations and treatments represents a barrier to individuals on low incomes and, as such, becomes an important driver of social exclusion.

Finally, when assessing poverty and social exclusion, it must be remembered that these phenomena do not only affect those who are economically inactive or unemployed. Indeed, employment does not necessarily make the risk of poverty disappear. 'In-work poverty' is poverty among employed people, often resulting from adverse employment conditions; it is particularly pertinent to young people who often work on temporary or part-time contracts (Chapter 3).

### 7.4.1. Housing conditions and homelessness

The cost and quality of housing are important for living standards and well-being. Having access to decent housing and being part of a community is crucial for people to feel they are integrated into society. However, most European countries continue to have some shortages of adequate housing. This section explores the levels of inadequate housing through indicators on 'severe housing deprivation', 'overcrowding' and the 'housing cost overburden rate'.

Severe housing deprivation is a useful indicator of inadequate housing. It is defined as living in a dwelling which, as well as being overcrowded, also has at least one of the following shortcomings: a leaking roof, no bath/shower or indoor toilet, or is considered too dark <sup>(27)</sup>.

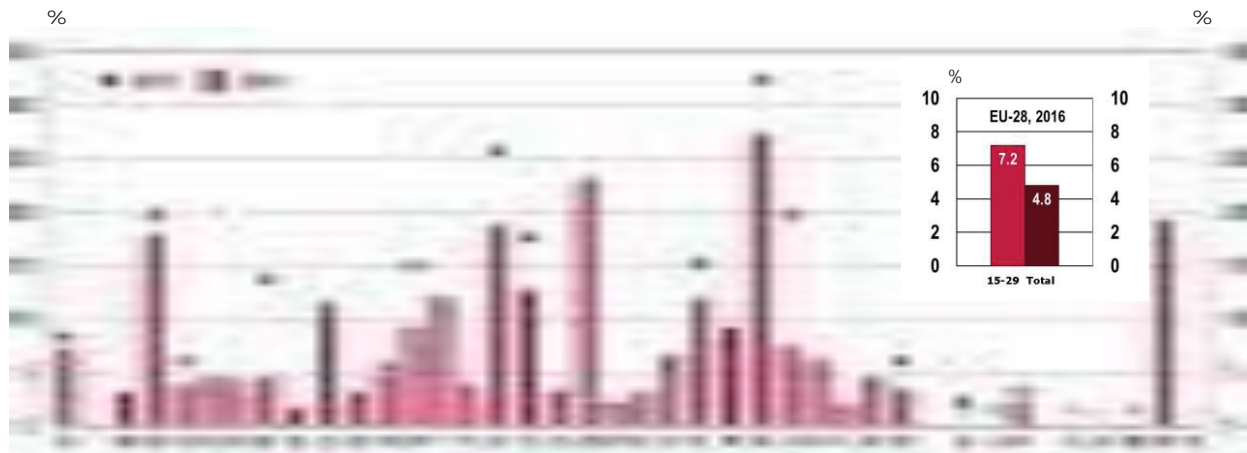
In the EU-28, the severe housing deprivation rate for young people is 7.2 %, which is 1.5 times higher than for the total population (Figure 7-H). The countries most seriously affected are Romania (with a 27.3 % severe housing deprivation rate for young people), Hungary (with 22.6 %), Latvia (with 18.8 %) and Bulgaria (with 17.9 %). Nevertheless, there has been a significant decrease since 2010 in the proportion of young people experiencing severe housing deprivation in three out of these four countries (Romania, Latvia and Bulgaria). Between 2010 and 2016, the severe housing deprivation rate for young people decreased the most in Slovenia (12.3 percentage points) and Estonia (9.2 percentage points).

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<sup>(26)</sup> European Parliament resolution of 19 January 2017 on a European Pillar of Social Rights (2016/2095(INI)).

<sup>(27)</sup> Eurostat, 2018i.

**Figure 7-H:** Severe housing deprivation rate for young people (aged 15-29), by country, 2010 and 2016



*Notes:* Severe housing deprivation is defined as living in a dwelling which, as well as being overcrowded, has one of the following shortcomings: a leaking roof, no bath/shower or indoor toilet, or is considered too dark.

Bulgaria, Luxembourg and the Netherlands: break in time series (2016).

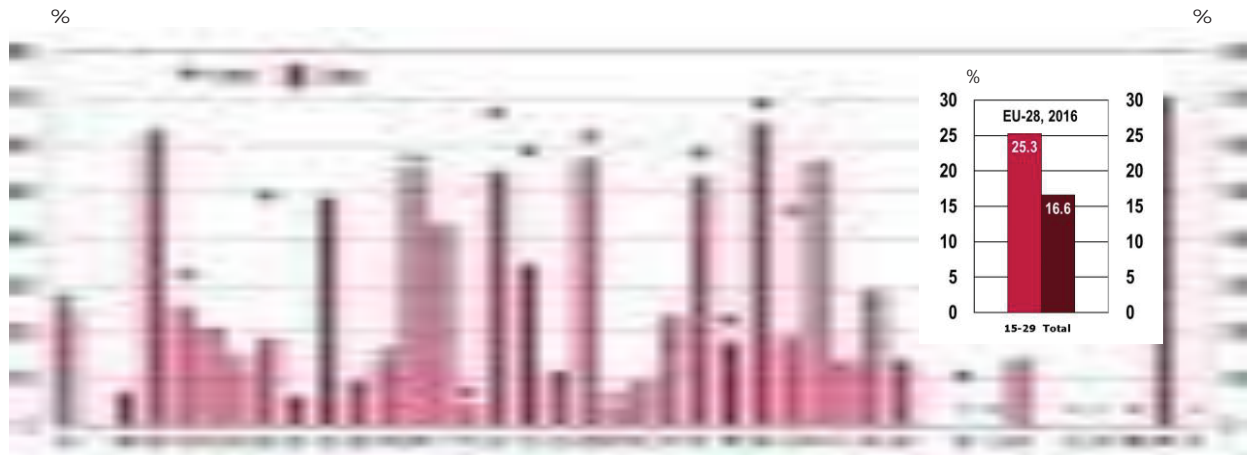
*Source:* Eurostat, Statistics on income and living conditions (SILC) [ilc\_mdho06a]. Data extracted on 09.01.2018.

The overcrowding rate, which focuses on the availability of sufficient space in the dwelling, can shed further light on the housing conditions of young people. The overcrowding rate is based on the number of rooms available in the household, the household's size, as well as its members' ages and family situation<sup>(28)</sup>. As Figure 7-I shows, the overcrowding rate among young people is considerably higher than for the total population. One explanation is that many young people live in a transitional phase between leaving the parental household and establishing their own home. They may be living in student housing or in accommodation shared by peers to reduce housing costs. Nevertheless, differences between countries in this respect are enormous. In eight eastern European countries with available data (Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Serbia) more than 50 % of young people live in overcrowded households. In contrast, in Belgium, Ireland, Spain, Cyprus and Malta, the proportion of young people living in such households is below 10 %.

The overcrowding rate for young people decreased in the majority of countries between 2010 and 2016. Countries registering the most significant decreases are the Baltic States (Estonia: 30.4 percentage points, Latvia: 12.5 percentage points and Lithuania: 24.4 percentage points) and Slovenia (26.7 percentage points). In contrast, the overcrowding rate increased the most in Greece (by 9.6 percentage points).

While in the EU-28 there has been little change, on average, regarding young people's access to adequate housing, there have been important improvements in the quality of housing in many countries.

<sup>(28)</sup> Eurostat, 2018g.

**Figure 7-I:** Overcrowding rate for young people (aged 15-29), by country, 2010 and 2016

*Notes:* A person is considered to be living in an overcrowded household if it does not have a minimum number of rooms including: one room for the household; one room per couple in the household; one room for each single person aged 18 or more; one room per pair of single people of the same gender between 12 and 17 years of age; one room for each single person between 12 and 17 years of age not of the same gender; one room per pair of children under 12 years of age.

Bulgaria, Luxembourg and the Netherlands: break in time series (2016).

*Source:* Eurostat, Statistics on income and living conditions (SILC) [ilc\_lvho05a]. Data extracted on 10.01.2018.

As explained in earlier sections, leaving the parental home and establishing a separate household is a crucial moment in young people's lives and has a strong influence on their risk of poverty (see section 7.3.2). In this respect, housing costs have a significant impact on young people's living conditions. Given that young people have to face many hurdles in their transition from education to work (Chapters 2 and 3), the question of affordable housing is becoming even more important.

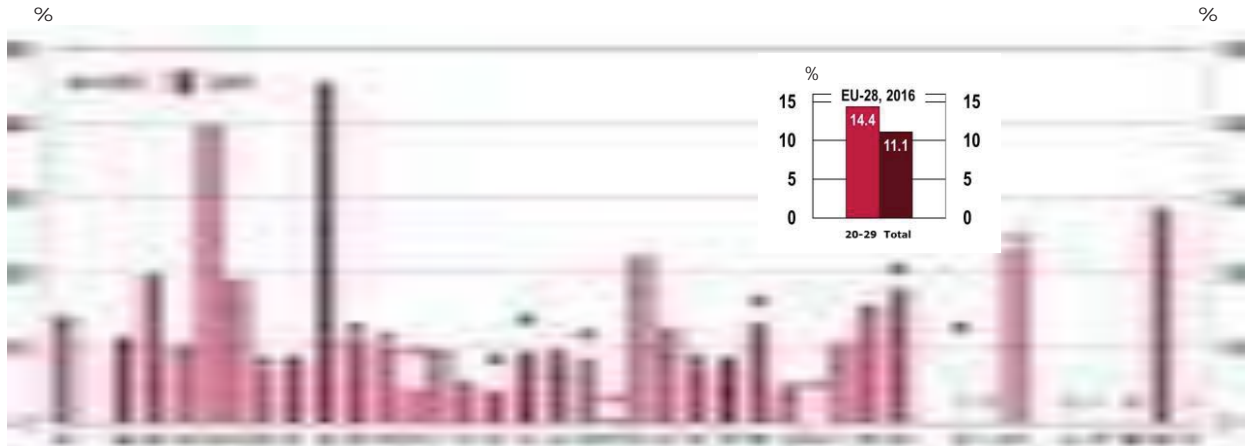
The proportion of young people facing excessive housing costs is shown in Eurostat's 'housing cost overburden rate'; it is the percentage of the population living in households where the total housing costs represent more than 40 % of disposable income<sup>(29)</sup>. In 2016, this rate for young people aged 20-29 was 3.3 percentage points higher than for the total population (14.4 % vs. 11.1 %) (Figure 7-J).

Housing costs place an excessive burden on more young people in Greece than in any other country, with almost 50 % of 20-29 year-olds having to spend more than 40 % of their disposable income on accommodation (Figure 7-J). This rate has almost doubled since 2010. The rate is also high in Denmark (39.6 %), Serbia (28.9 %), Norway (23.5 %) and the Netherlands (22.5 %). In addition, it has increased significantly in Bulgaria since 2010 (by 15.1 percentage points), but from a lower level. In contrast, young people suffer least from excessive housing costs in Malta where the proportion spending more than 40 % of their income is only 0.8 %. The rates are also low in Latvia (4.2 %), Cyprus (4.5 %) and Croatia (4.6 %).

In several Member States, young people had to spend much more on housing in 2016 than they did in 2010.

<sup>(29)</sup> Eurostat, 2018e.

**Figure 7-J:** Proportion of young people (aged 20-29) facing excessive housing costs (housing cost overburden rate), by country, 2010 and 2016



*Notes:* The housing cost overburden rate is the percentage of the population living in households where the total housing costs represent more than 40 % of disposable income.

Bulgaria, Luxembourg and the Netherlands: break in time series (2016). Austria: low reliability (2010). European Union (EU-28): Estimate for 2010.

*Source:* Eurostat, Statistics on income and living conditions (SILC) [ilc\_lvho07a]. Data extracted on 10.01.2018.

#### 7.4.2. Access to health care

Another important aspect of social inclusion for young people is their access to health care. The self-reported unmet need for a medical examination is a good indicator by which to assess this and was therefore included among the EU youth indicators. The barriers to accessing medical care are various, including the expense, the distance needed to travel to receive care and the length of the waiting list.

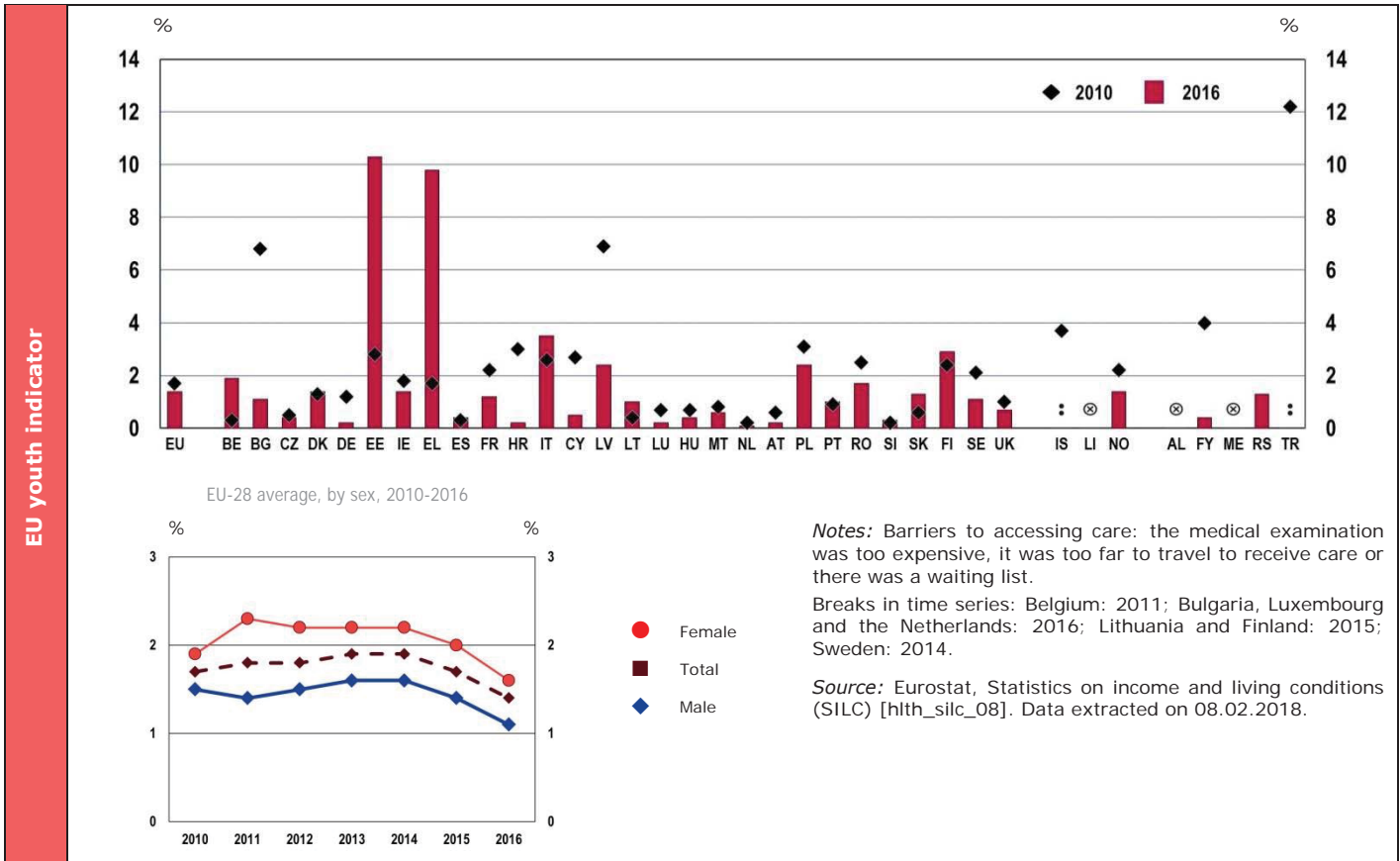
Figure 7-K depicts the proportion of young people aged 16 to 29 who reported having unmet needs for a medical examination in 2010 and 2016. In 2016, in the EU-28, on average, the proportion of young people who faced barriers to accessing medical care was relatively low, 1.4 %. In most countries with available data, the proportion of the youth population with this problem was also low – below 2 %. However, most remarkably, in Estonia and Greece, the proportion of young people who could not get medical care when needed due to these barriers was around 10 %, which is significantly above the European average.

As the figure shows, these two countries experienced a large increase in the proportion of young people reporting unmet needs for medical care between 2010 and 2016. The increase was 7.5 percentage points in Estonia and 8.1 percentage points in Greece, at a time when the proportion of young people facing such barriers was decreasing in most other countries. As Figure 7-K also illustrates, in the EU-28 on average, the proportion of young people with unmet needs for medical care had been increasing until 2013, but has been falling since 2014. The decreases have been the most significant in Bulgaria (5.7 percentage points), Latvia (4.5 percentage points) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (3.6 percentage points). In this context, the situation of Estonia and Greece is a source of concern.

Figure 7-K also depicts gender differences in healthcare access in the EU-28 in the period between 2010 and 2016. As the figure shows, larger proportions of young women than young men report facing barriers when in

need of a medical examination. This also reflects the tendency that, in general, women seek medical care more often than men (see also Chapter 4).

**Figure 7-K:** Self-reported unmet needs for a medical examination due to barriers in accessing care, young people aged 16-29, by country, 2010 and 2016



### 7.4.3. In-work poverty

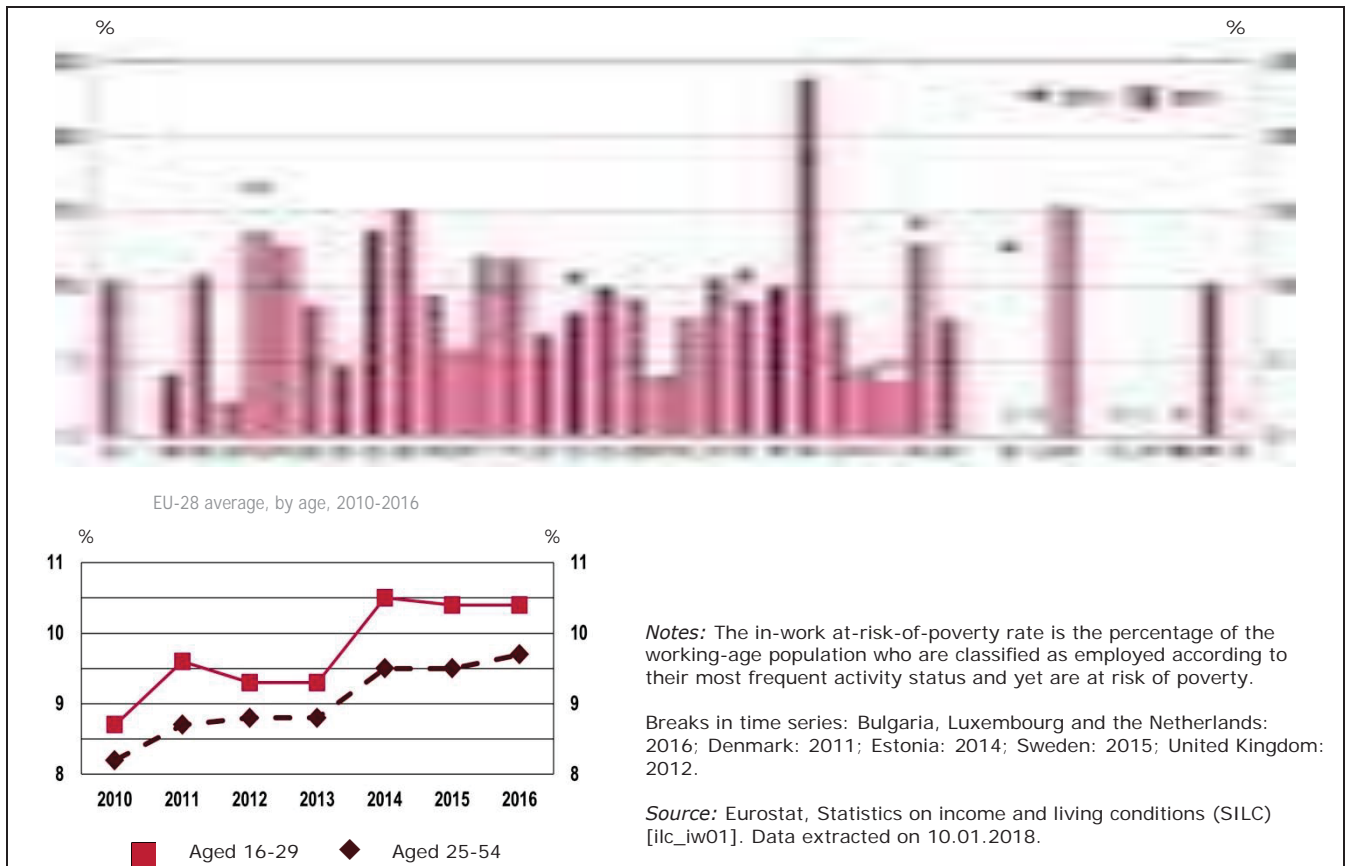
Poverty among those of working age can be rooted in either unemployment or in-work poverty. In-work poverty means being in employment, but not earning enough to make a living, for example, while working in low-paid temporary, part-time or hourly paid jobs. The in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate is the percentage of the working-age population (aged 18-64) who are classified as employed according to their most frequent activity status and yet are at risk of poverty (see also section 7.3.1). Given the difficulties that young people face in entering the labour market (Chapter 3), it is particularly important to examine the effect this transition has on their risk of poverty.

In-work poverty affects 10.4 % of young people aged 16 to 29 in the European Union on average, while the rate in the prime working-age population aged 25 to 54 is 9.7 % (Figure 7-L). This type of poverty is mostly a concern in Romania, where almost 24 % of employed young people are at risk of poverty. However, between 2010 and 2016, in-work poverty rates increased in the large majority of countries with available data (both for young people and the prime working-age population), so this phenomenon is of growing concern in the European Union and beyond.

In-work poverty is a growing concern in the European Union.

Increases of over 4 percentage points in the youth cohort took place in Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Hungary, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia.

**Figure 7-L:** In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate for young people aged 16-29, by country, 2010 and 2016



## 7.5. GROUPS AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

After discussing the main poverty and social exclusion indicators as well as some specific dimensions of poverty and young people's living conditions, the last section of this chapter turns to specific groups of young people who are more vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion than others. Two groups of young people were selected for this section: young people who are neither in education and training nor in employment (NEETs) and young people from a migrant background.

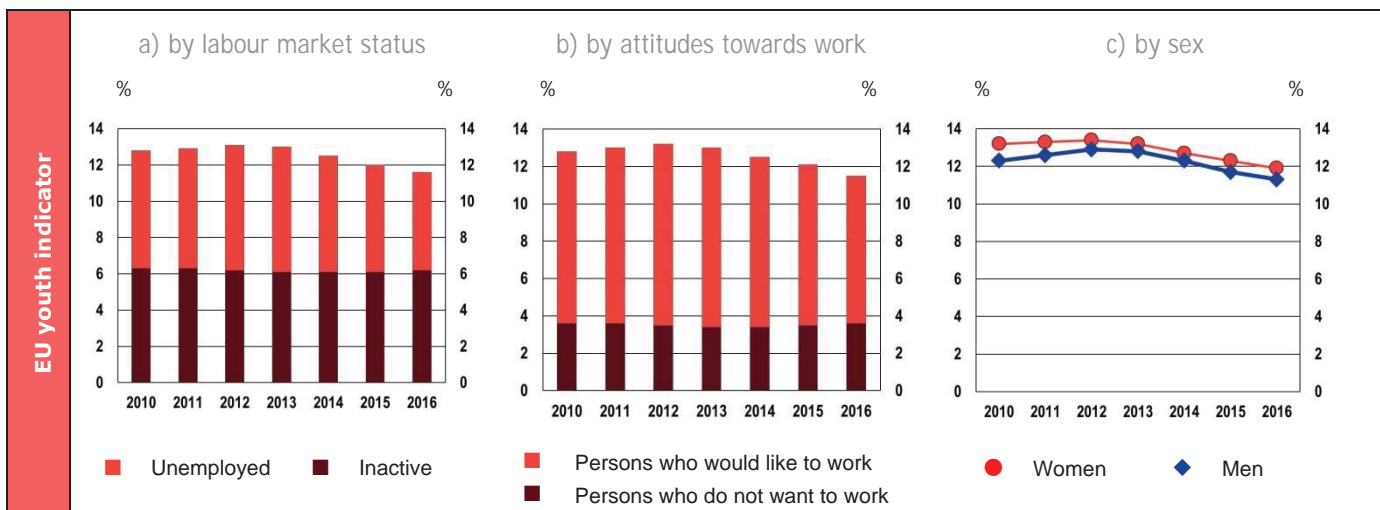
### 7.5.1. Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)

'NEETs' is the term used to describe young people who are neither in employment, nor in education and training. The indicator on NEETs aims to capture the situation of young people in transition between education and the labour market. This transition between school and work is increasingly complex and individualised for today's young people (Chapters 2 and 3). While being 'NEET' can also be just a temporary status, facing difficulties in entering and gaining a solid foothold in the labour market can lead to young people's disengagement from the world of work, making them vulnerable to social exclusion.

The NEET group includes not only the conventional unemployed job-seekers, but also those who are disengaged from both education and work and are therefore not looking for a job<sup>(30)</sup>. Being economically inactive, nevertheless, does not always imply disengagement: NEETs also include those unavailable for work (e.g. young carers or those who are sick or disabled), the 'opportunity-seekers' (those who are waiting for better opportunities), and the 'voluntary NEETs' (those who choose to be inactive while travelling or engaging in activities such as the arts or self-directed learning)<sup>(31)</sup>. However, attention must be drawn to the fact that if young people are not accumulating the human capital needed for work, even those in these last three subgroups may be at risk of future social exclusion<sup>(32)</sup>.

After a steady rise in the NEET rates of 15-24 year-olds in the EU-28 from 2009 due to the economic crisis<sup>(33)</sup>, the NEET rate reached its peak of 13.2 % in 2012 and then started to decline (Figure 7-M). In 2016, the NEET rate was 11.6 %. This rate is still above the 2008, pre-crisis level of 10.9 %<sup>(34)</sup>, but the difference is now only 0.7 percentage points.

**Figure 7-M:** Proportion of young people (aged 15-24) not in employment, education or training (NEET rate), EU-28 average, 2010-2016



Notes: The first two figures depict the overall NEET rate by labour market status and by attitudes towards work.

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (LFS), [youth\_empl\_150]. Data extracted on 11.01.2018.

Looking at Figure 7-M-a which breaks down the NEET rates into unemployed and inactive groups, it is evident that the annual decrease of around 0.5 percentage points is due to a drop in the share of unemployed NEETs since 2014. In fact, the proportion of unemployed NEETs declined to such an extent that in 2016, for the first time since the start of the economic crisis, it was lower (at 5.4 %) than the proportion of inactive young people within this group (6.2 %). At the same time, the inactive NEET rate stayed remarkably stable in the same period.

Following increases until 2012, the NEET rate started to decrease in 2013, mainly due to the decline in the proportion of unemployed NEETs after 2013.

<sup>(30)</sup> Eurofound 2012, p. 23.

<sup>(31)</sup> Ibid, pp. 24-25.

<sup>(32)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(33)</sup> European Commission 2012c, p. 212.

<sup>(34)</sup> Ibid.



Figure 7-M-b shows similar patterns – a declining share of NEETs who would like to work but cannot, and a stable ratio for those who do not want to work – while revealing that around half of inactive young people would ideally like to return to the world of work.

In general in the EU-28, NEET rates are higher for women than for men, though the gender gap is only 0.7 percentage points (Figure 7-M-c). However, when looking at the different sub-groups within NEETs, gender differences become more pronounced. There are almost twice as many young women as young men among the NEETs that do not want to work; and the majority of inactive NEETs are also female (most likely caring for family members full time). As a consequence, men are over-represented among the unemployed and among those who would like to work but are not necessarily searching for a job <sup>(35)</sup>.

In addition, there are significant variations between countries with regard to gender differences: NEET rates are actually higher for men in almost half of the European countries with available data. However, differences between women and men are often larger where the female NEET rate is higher. Within the EU-28, the gender gap exceeds three percentage points in Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Malta and Romania, with higher rates for women, and only in Croatia with higher rates among men <sup>(36)</sup>. Outside the EU-28, gender differences are the largest in Turkey, where NEET rates for women are exceptionally high (33.5 %, in contrast to the 14.5 % rate for men), due to their very high inactivity rate <sup>(37)</sup>.

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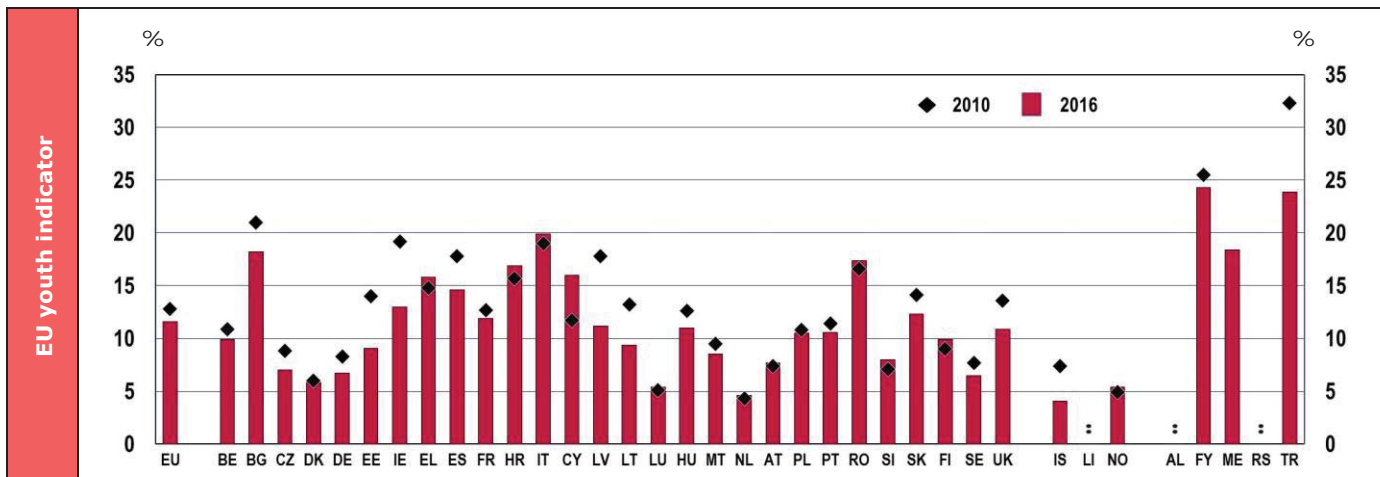
<sup>(35)</sup> Source: Eurostat LFS [yth\_empl\_150]. Data extracted on 16.06.2017.

<sup>(36)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(37)</sup> Source: Eurostat LFS [edat\_lfse\_20]. Data extracted on 16.06.2017.

Regarding the differences between countries in the total NEET rate, Figure 7-N reveals that in 2016, NEET rates were the highest in Bulgaria (18.2 %), Italy (19.9 %), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (24.3 %) and Turkey (23.9 %). At the other end of the scale, the rates were below 6 % in Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Iceland and Norway.

**Figure 7-N:** Proportion of young people (aged 15 to 24) not in employment, education or training (NEET rate), by country, 2010 and 2016



Notes: Break in time series: Denmark (2016).

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (LFS), [yth\_empl\_150]. Data extracted on 11.01.2018.

Between 2010 and 2016, many more countries registered decreases than increases in NEET rates (Figure 7-N). Decreases were most notable in Estonia (4.9 percentage points), Ireland (6.2 percentage points), Latvia (6.6 percentage points) and Turkey (8.4 percentage points). At the same time, NEET rates increased substantially in this period in Cyprus (4.3 percentage points).

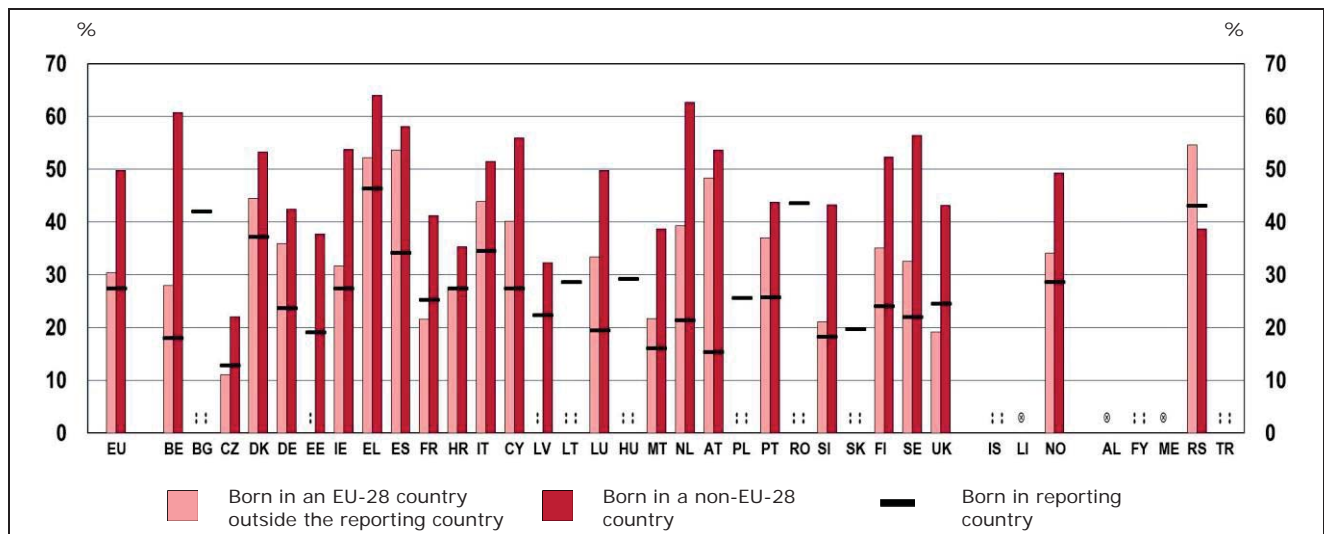
### 5.5.2. Young people from a migrant background

Migrants and ethnic minorities are among the groups most vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. They usually face multiple disadvantages leading to persistent poverty and a marginalised position in society. Immigrants often lack the social capital (networks and information) needed to become fully included into society<sup>(38)</sup>. As a result, migrants tend to be more at risk of poverty and social exclusion than the native-born population.

Figure 7-O depicts the 'at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion' rate for young people aged 16 to 29 by place of birth. While data have low reliability for many countries, the picture presented by the figure is quite clear: young people not born in the country in which they live face a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion, especially if they come from a non-EU-28 country.

<sup>(38)</sup> See e.g. Sime and Fox, 2014.

**Figure 7-0:** At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate for young people (aged 16 to 29) by place of birth and by country, 2016



*Notes:* Born in an EU-28 country outside the reporting country: Data have low reliability for the European Union average, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Croatia, Malta and Slovenia. Data are not reliable and not publishable for Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

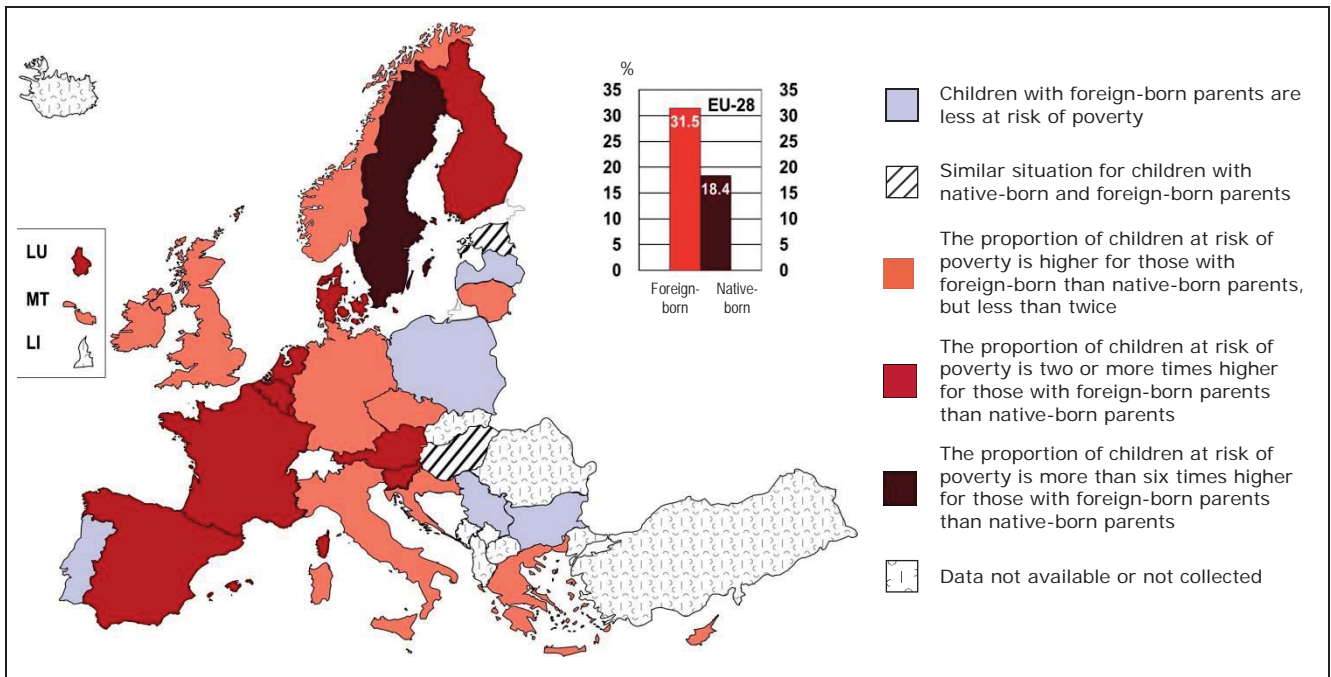
Born in a non-EU-28 country: Data have low reliability for the European Union average, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Malta and Serbia. Data are not reliable and not publishable for Bulgaria, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

*Source:* Eurostat, Statistics on income and living conditions (SILC) [ilc\_peps06]. Data extracted on 29.01.2018.

In 2016, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate of young people born outside the European Union was above 60 % in Greece (64 %), the Netherlands (62.6 %) and Belgium (60.7 %); and above 55 % in Spain (58.1 %), Sweden (56.4 %) and Cyprus (55.9 %). This means that in these countries, the majority of young people from an immigrant background face the risk of poverty or social exclusion. Differences between the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rates of the native-born and the foreign-born in general are highest in Austria (where the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate of foreign-born young people is more than three times the rate for the native-born), Belgium and the Netherlands.

The at-risk-of-poverty rates for second generation immigrants – the children of foreign-born parents (EU and non-EU) – still show a strong disparity with those of the native-born population (Figure 7-P), but the figures are less extreme. As this figure shows, the children of foreign-born parents are almost twice as likely to be at risk of poverty as the children of native-born parents in the EU-28 (31.5 % vs. 18.4 %). The relative risk of poverty for immigrant children compared to their native-born peers is greatest in Sweden, where the proportion of children from foreign-born families who are at risk of poverty is more than six times higher than children of native-born parents. Differences are also relatively substantial in Belgium, Denmark, France, Austria and Slovenia, with a foreign-born/native-born ratio above 2.8. Conversely, among the countries with reliable data, children from foreign-born families are at a similar or lower level of risk of poverty than children from native-born families in Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Portugal and Serbia. This is the case partly because there are relatively fewer children of foreign-born parents, and partly because children in these countries have, in general, relatively higher at-risk-of-poverty rates.

**Figure 7-P:** At-risk-of-poverty rate for children (aged 0 to 17) by the country of birth of their parents, by country, 2016



*Notes:* Data on children with foreign-born parents: EU-28 average: estimate. Data are not reliable and not publishable for Romania and Slovakia. Data are not reliable for Bulgaria and Poland.

At-risk-of-poverty rates of children of native-born and foreign-born parents were regarded as similar if the foreign-born/native-born ratio was between 0.85 and 1.15.

*Source:* Eurostat, Statistics on income and living conditions (SILC) [ilc\_li34]. Data extracted on 11.01.2018.

The at-risk-of-poverty rates of immigrant children are the highest in Spain (50 %), Italy (40.3 %) and France (40.1 %), while they are the lowest in Latvia (8.8 %). Between 2010 and 2016, the at-risk-of-poverty rates of children of foreign-born parents increased the most in Lithuania and Sweden (with 23.1 and 13.0 percentage points respectively). At the same time, the largest decreases were registered in Germany (12.1 percentage points), Latvia (13.5 percentage points) and Finland (15 percentage points) <sup>(39)</sup>.

Given the trans-generational transmission of poverty, children from poor families are also more likely to stay in poverty when they become adults <sup>(40)</sup>. Immigrant children and those from poorer families are more likely to leave school early and have fewer chances of attaining higher education qualifications <sup>(41)</sup>, leading to further disadvantages in their working lives. Therefore, special attention must be paid to the issue of educational integration for young people from immigrant families.

<sup>(39)</sup> Source: Eurostat, Statistics on income and living conditions (SILC) [ilc\_li34]. Data extracted on 11.01.2018.

<sup>(40)</sup> See e.g. Bellani and Bia, 2013.

<sup>(41)</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015b.

## CONCLUSION

There have been many positive developments regarding the social inclusion of young people in the last three years. In the EU-28, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rates are decreasing, mostly due to significant decreases in material deprivation rates. At the European level, the material deprivation rate of young people is lower than it was in 2010, at the peak of the economic crisis. NEET rates (young people not in employment, education or training) are also falling, mostly due to declining youth unemployment rates. Regarding access to good quality housing, there has been little change across the EU-28, between 2010 and 2016 on average, but there have been important improvements in the quality of housing in many countries, most notably in the Baltic States. In addition, in most countries, fewer young people face barriers to accessing medical care.

However, several indicators still point towards an increasing risk of poverty and social exclusion for some young people in Europe. At-risk-of-poverty rates for young people living independently are still increasing. The proportions of young people living in households with very low work intensity are also growing. Furthermore, while fewer young people live in inadequate housing than in the recent past, in several Member States they had to spend relatively more on housing in 2016 than they did in 2010. And while more young people found jobs in 2016 than in 2010, the proportion of young people working and still being at risk of poverty has been increasing Europe-wide, in line with the general trends for the whole working-age population.

Moreover, certain groups of young people and those living in certain regions of Europe are more vulnerable than others. Young people born outside the country they live in, or who have parents not born in that country have significantly higher chances of being at risk of poverty or social exclusion than their native-born peers. Most poverty indicators also show higher proportions of women at risk.

In the countries most affected by the economic crisis, most notably in Greece and to a lesser extent in Spain, young people's risks of poverty or social exclusion have been increasing considerably and these trends have not yet been reversed. At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rates and material deprivation rates increased the most and are still increasing in Greece, together with deteriorating housing conditions and exponential growth in the proportions of young people who cannot access appropriate health care. This is certainly a source of growing inequalities between European young people.



Brussels, 22.5.2018  
SWD(2018) 169 final

PART 7/7

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Situation of young people in the European Union**

*Accompanying the document*

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE  
REGIONS**

**Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy**

{COM(2018) 269 final} - {SWD(2018) 168 final}

## 8. Youth and the World

### EU youth indicators

Participation of young people in non-governmental organisations active in the domain of climate change/environmental issues Figures 8-C and 8-E

Participation of young people in non-governmental organisations promoting human rights or global development Figure 8-D and 8-E

Participation of young people in activities or projects aimed at fostering cooperation with youth from other continents Figures 8-F and 8-G

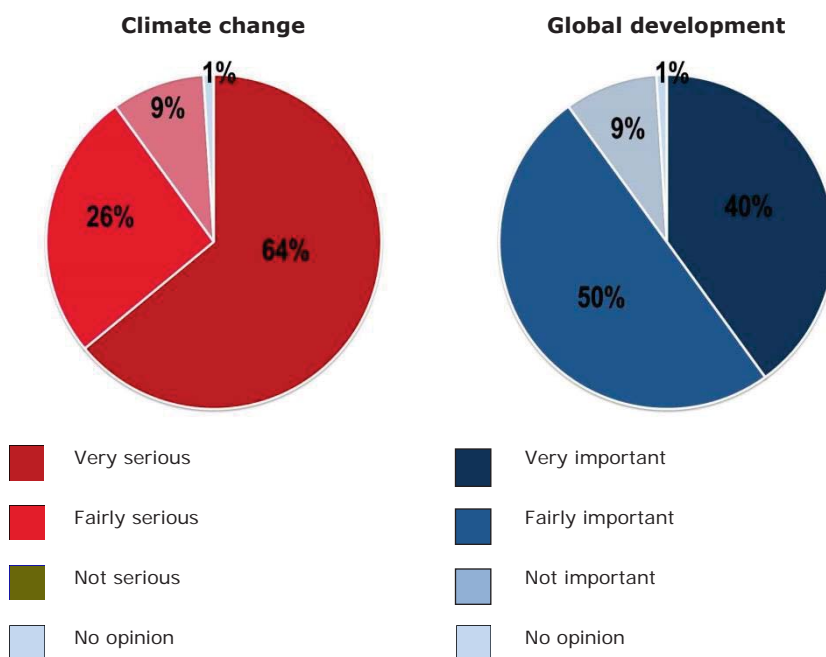
## 8.1. INTRODUCTION

Today’s young people are growing up in a world substantially different from the one in which their parents were raised. Globalisation shapes all aspects of their lives: they live in increasingly diverse societies, consume goods from around the world, are impacted by global culture, and have jobs in globally integrated economies. Globalisation affects not only young people’s work prospects, but also their identity, sense of citizenship and patterns of political engagement <sup>(1)</sup> (see also Chapter 5). In this respect, their experiences have the potential to make them more prone to engage with global issues such as human rights, climate change or environmental protection <sup>(2)</sup>.

Based on Eurobarometer surveys, this chapter therefore looks at the extent to which young Europeans are actually engaged with global issues, as well as at how much they participate in activities designed to foster cooperation between young people from different continents.

## 8.2. YOUNG PEOPLE'S ENGAGEMENT WITH GLOBAL ISSUES

**Figure 8-A:** Young people's opinions regarding climate change and support for global development, ages 15-24, EU-28 average, 2015



*Notes:* Question: 'How serious a problem do you think climate change is at this moment?'

*Source:* Special Eurobarometer 83.4 'Climate Change', 2015.

*Notes:* Question: 'In your opinion, is it very important, fairly important, not very important or not at all important to help people in developing countries?'

*Source:* Special Eurobarometer 441 'EU Development Cooperation and Aid', 2015

Eurobarometer surveys exploring Europeans' opinions on global topics focus on two main challenges: on the one hand, climate change and its consequences for the environment; on the other, poverty and under-development affecting extensive regions of the world. Young Europeans report high levels of awareness of these issues, as indicated by the results displayed in Figure 8-A. Around 90 % of respondents see climate change as a serious problem, and attach great importance to aiding the development of poorer countries.

Against this background, the same surveys explored the inclination of young people to

take action on these issues, in the form of small-scale, individual and everyday activities (Figure 8-B). Results show that a large proportion of young people are personally taking action to improve the environment and

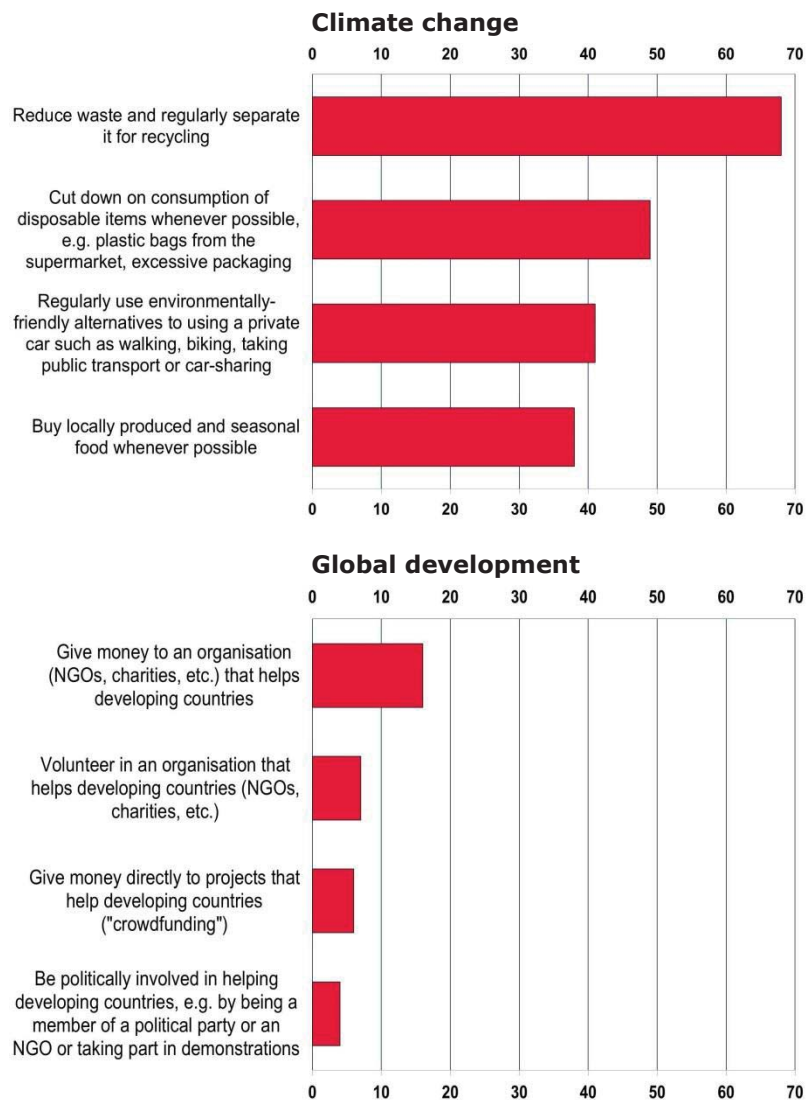
<sup>(1)</sup> Bourn, 2008.

<sup>(2)</sup> European Commission/EACEA, 2013.



combat climate change. The most common actions taken include reducing waste and recycling systematically, cutting down on disposable items (e.g. plastic bags and packaging), regularly opting for environmentally friendly ways of transport, and buying locally produced foods.

**Figure 8-B:** Specific actions by young people (aged 15-24) to combat climate change and support global development, EU-28, 2015



*Notes:* Data on climate change – Question: 'Have you personally taken any action to fight climate change over the past six months? Which of the following actions, if any, apply to you?' (Multiple answers possible)' Source: Special Eurobarometer 83.4 'Climate Change', 2015.

Data on global development – Question: 'Regarding your personal involvement in helping developing countries, please let me know which of the following apply to you?' (Multiple answers possible). Source: Special Eurobarometer 441 'EU Development Cooperation and Aid', 2015.

On the other hand, much smaller percentages of young respondents report committing to individual actions to foster global development. The highest proportion of young people (15 %) reported giving money to organisations and charities that provide help and relief to developing countries. However, when comparing the results from the two charts it has to be considered that lifestyle changes to protect the environment such as those covered by the survey on climate change are much easier – and less costly – to implement in daily life than committing time, energy and money to projects usually taking place in other parts of the world.

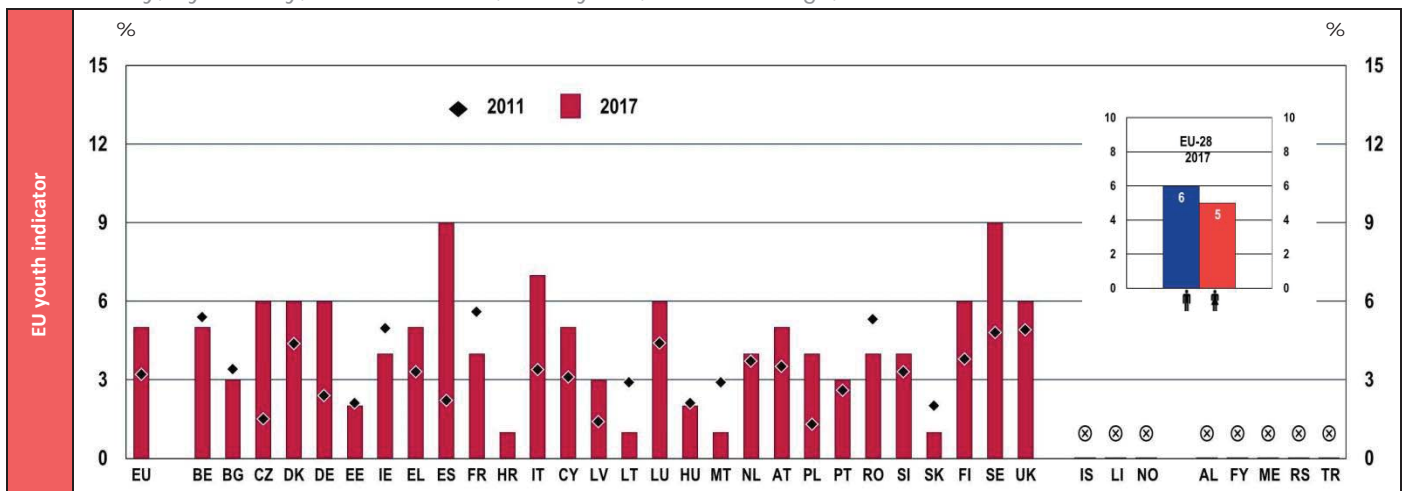
In line with these findings, when it comes to young Europeans' active engagement with more organised activities such as supporting or joining non-governmental organisations (NGOs) addressing global issues, their level of commitment is limited. Indeed, a recent Eurobarometer survey finds that only 5 % participate in NGOs active in the area of climate change or the environment, while 7 % do so in the areas of promoting human rights or global development (Figures 8-C and 8-D below). In contrast, according to the same survey, 13 % of young people in the EU-28 participate in NGOs aimed at improving their local community <sup>(3)</sup>.

<sup>(3)</sup> European Commission, 2018.

Looking at participation on a regional basis, Figures 8-C and 8-D show the Scandinavian countries to have the highest percentages of young people involved in NGOs addressing climate change/environmental issues and global development/human rights. Eastern European and Baltic Member States score much lower, while in Southern Europe the situation is mixed, with a few countries (Spain, Italy and, for human rights, Portugal) reporting very high rates of engagement.

Although a limited proportion of young Europeans are actively engaged in organisations pursuing global goals, a positive trend is apparent since 2011.

**Figure 8-C:** Participation of young people (aged 15-30) in non-governmental organisations active in the domain of climate change/environmental issues, self-reported participation in the 12 months preceding the survey, by country, 2011 and 2017, and by sex, EU-28 average, 2017

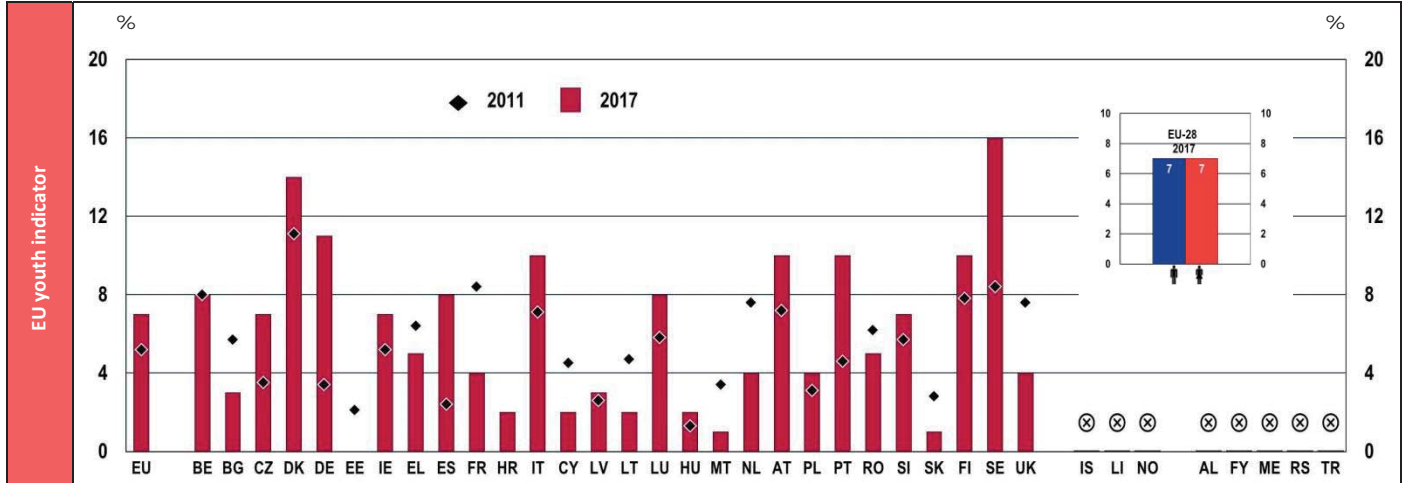


Notes: Question: 'Have you in the past year participated in any activities of the following organisations?'  
 Answers: 'An organisation active in the domains of global climate change/global warming' (2011), 'An organisation active in the domain of climate change/environmental issues' (2017) (multiple answers possible).  
 Base: all respondents, % of 'yes' answers by country, EU-27 (2011) and EU-28 (2017).  
 Source: Flash Eurobarometer 319a, 'Youth on the Move', 2011 and Flash Eurobarometer 455, 'European Youth', 2017.

Specifically for climate change/environmental issues (Figure 8-C above), Spain and Sweden report the highest percentages of young people active in organisations. At the other end of the spectrum, Croatia, Lithuania, Malta and Slovakia show the lowest rates with only 1 % of young people active in these areas. Overall figures have risen since 2011, especially in Czech Republic and Spain, where rates increased fivefold. In contrast, in a few countries (France, Lithuania, and Malta) participation fell by a few percentage points during the period in question.

As with climate change, a positive trend is evident in the rates of participation of young people in NGOs devoted to human rights and global development, which have increased during the past seven years (Figure 8-D).

**Figure 8-D:** Participation of young people (aged 15-30) in non-governmental organisations promoting human rights or global development, self-reported participation in the 12 months preceding the survey, by country, 2011 and 2017, and by sex, EU-28 average, 2017



Notes: Question: 'Have you in the past year participated in any activities of the following organisations?

Answer: An organisation promoting human rights or global development' (multiple answers possible).

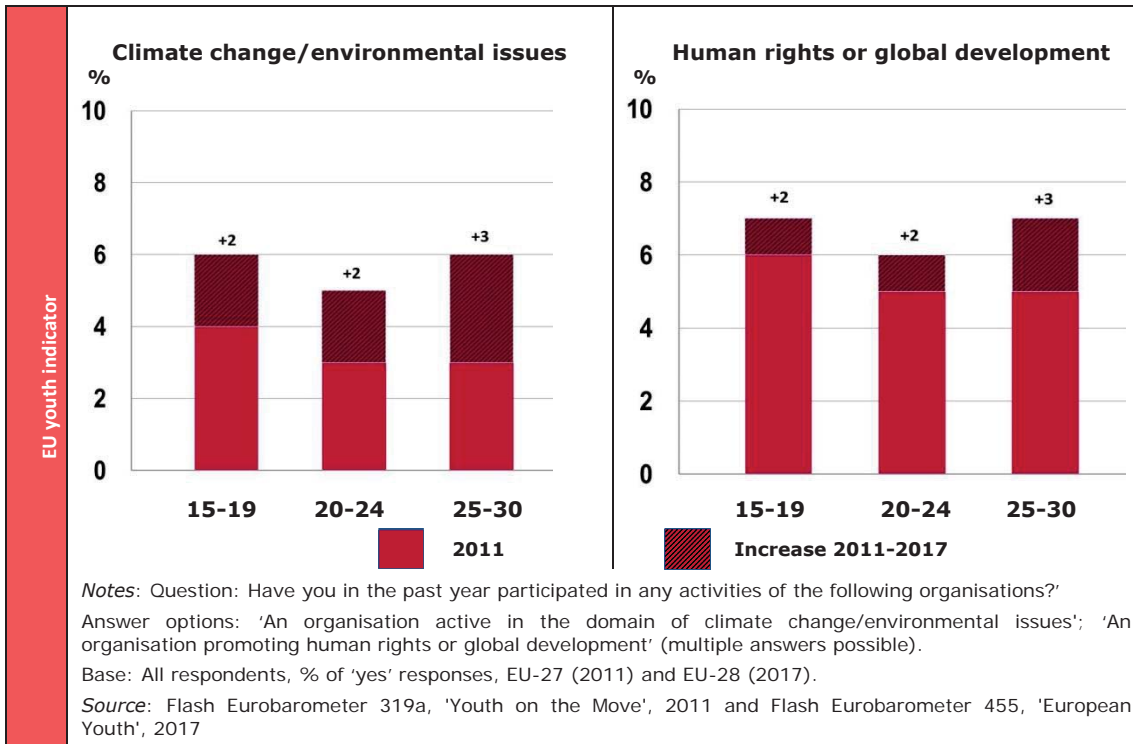
Base: All respondents, % of 'yes' answers by country, EU-27 (2011) and EU-28 (2017).

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 319a, 'Youth on the Move', 2011 and Flash Eurobarometer 455, 'European Youth', 2017.

The highest increases have taken place in Germany and Spain, where rates in 2017 were about four times higher than in 2011. A very significant rise has also occurred in Sweden, which has doubled its share of young people active in NGOs defending human rights and supporting global development – giving it the highest score of all EU Member States in 2017. In contrast, significant falls in young people's participation in NGOs in these areas occurred in France, Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Data for the EU-28 indicate that young women and men are equally active in NGOs dealing with human rights and global issues.

Figure 8-E shows the percentage increase in participation between 2011 and 2017 for climate change/environmental issues and human rights/global development. The increase for each field is the same in each age group but participation levels remain slightly lower for organisations dedicated to climate change/environmental issues.

**Figure 8-E:** Percentage increase in young people (aged 15-30) participating in non-governmental organisations active in the domains of climate change/environmental issues and human rights or global development in the 12 months preceding the survey, by age group, EU-28 average, 2017



### 8.3. COOPERATION BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT CONTINENTS

Collaborating with peers from across the world on projects and activities addressing global issues is a valuable opportunity for young people to develop their critical thinking, enhance their intercultural competences, and cultivate open-mindedness<sup>(4)</sup>. Furthermore, by interacting with people from different cultures and backgrounds, young people can acquire greater knowledge and understanding of social, economic, and political issues in a global context<sup>(5)</sup>, which are becoming increasingly valuable in today's world.

In 2017, 8 % of the young people interviewed reported having taken part in projects which involved cooperation with peers from other continents (Figure 8-F). While this is, admittedly, a small proportion of the whole youth population, it is important to note that it has doubled since 2011, indicating a significant increase in the level of engagement in these activities. The biggest increase occurred in Poland, where the rate went from 1 % in 2011 to 12 % in 2017. Notable rises also occurred in Czech Republic, Greece and Romania.

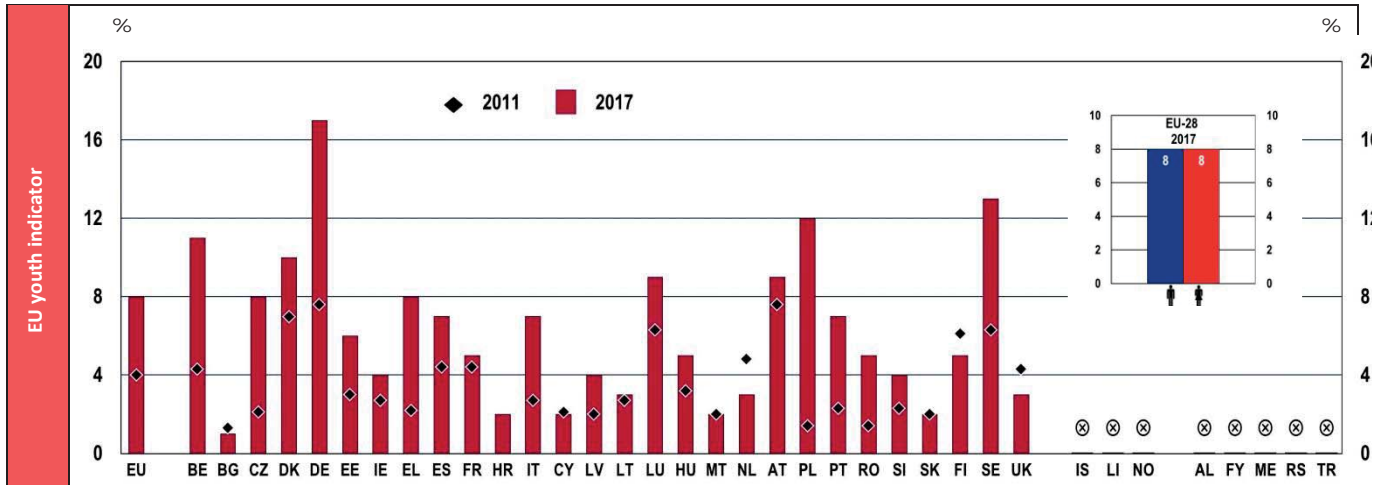
Between 2011 and 2017, the proportion of young people working on projects with peers from other continents has doubled.

Currently, in 2017, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Poland and Sweden display the highest participation rates. On the other hand, the Baltic republics, some central European countries (Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia) as well as Croatia and Malta report the lowest figures. No gender differences are apparent in this data.

<sup>(4)</sup> Sherraden et al., 2008.

<sup>(5)</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 8-F:** Participation of young people (aged 15-30) in activities or projects aimed at fostering cooperation with young people from other continents, self-reported participation in the 12 months preceding the survey, by country, 2011 and 2017, and by sex, EU-28 average, 2017

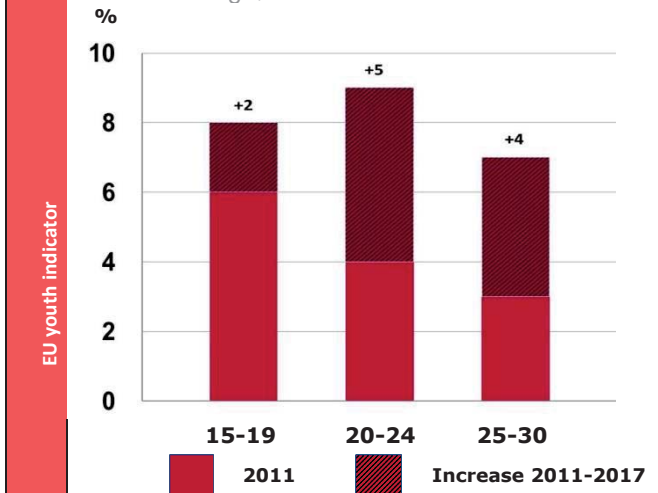


Notes: Question: 'Have you participated in any activities or projects during the past year aimed at fostering cooperation with youth from other countries? Answer: Yes, in activities or projects with young people from other continents' (multiple answers possible).

Base: All respondents, % of 'yes' answers by country, EU-27 (2011) and EU-28 (2017).

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 319a, 'Youth on the Move', 2011 and Flash Eurobarometer 455, 'European Youth', 2017

**Figure 8-G:** Percentage increase in young people (aged 15-30) participating in activities or projects aimed at fostering cooperation with young people from other continents in the 12 months preceding the survey, EU-28 average, 2014



Notes: Question: 'Have you in the past year participated in any activities of the following organisations?' 'An organisation active in the domain of climate change/environmental issues'; 'An organisation promoting human rights or global development' (multiple answers possible).

Base: all respondents, % of 'yes' answers, EU-27 (2011) and EU-28 (2017).

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 319a, 'Youth on the Move', 2011 and Flash Eurobarometer 455, 'European Youth', 2017.

Breaking the data down by age group shows that young people between the ages of 20 and 24 appear to be the most likely to be engaged in projects involving participants from different continents (Figure 8-G). This is also the age cohort for which the biggest increase in the levels of participation has occurred over the past seven years. As most of the young people in this age group are still in education (as illustrated for example in Chapter 3, Figure 3-A), the results suggest that many of these cooperation activities might be linked to higher education studies and exchanges.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the data discussed in this chapter portray a positive trend in the levels of participation in and cooperation between young Europeans in organisations and projects with a global remit – in both areas – climate change/environment and human rights/development. Between 2011 and 2017, the proportion of young Europeans actively engaged in organisations pursuing global goals and those working on projects with peers from other continents have increased.

However, the pattern of young people's engagement is not homogeneous throughout Europe. In some areas of the European Union – particularly some countries in the Eastern and Baltic regions – young people have not had as many experiences of global activism as their counterparts elsewhere.

## 9. Culture, Creativity and ICT

### EU youth indicators

Young people (aged 16-29) participating in cultural or sporting activities

Figure 9-A

Young people (aged 16-29) engaged in arts and craft activities

Figure 9-B

Young people (aged 15-30) active in a sports club, youth organisation/club or cultural organisation

Figure 9-C

## 9.1. INTRODUCTION

Participation in cultural, artistic and recreational activities is a vital part of young people's lives. Besides providing an opportunity for enjoyment and stimulating creativity, involvement in these activities is an important way for young people to develop their personal, social and professional skills. Cultural engagement can provide them with the opportunities to acquire competencies through non-formal and informal learning that can be used in further education and vocational training as well as in professional development. In addition, involvement in cultural and artistic activities facilitates socialisation and integration into the community <sup>(6)</sup>.

The development and increased use of new technologies applied to social communication and cultural enjoyment is rapidly transforming the way young people experience culture and the arts. Information and communication technologies are therefore becoming increasingly important to access cultural life, as well as to engage in artistic activities and creative processes.

The chapter firstly presents data on youth participation in a variety of cultural, sporting and recreational activities. The second part focuses on young people's ICT skills and their use of ICT technologies for accessing cultural goods and services. The proportion of young people who use a computer or the internet on a daily basis is presented, as is data on the level of young people's digital skills. The chapter also explores the ways that young people use information and communications technologies for cultural purposes.

## 9.2. CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Cultural activities take various forms: sightseeing, travelling, listening to a concert, singing in a choir, playing in a rock band, creating digital videos, writing blogs, attending a sports club or youth organisation, to name just a few. Data on participation in various types of cultural activity is included in the EU youth indicators. Two ad-hoc modules of the EU-SILC survey show how people in Europe think and behave in the area of culture and allow comparisons over time (between 2006 and 2015).

Figure 9-A shows the proportion of young people (aged 16-29) who have participated in cultural or sporting activities such as visiting museums, art galleries and sites of historical interest; visiting the cinema; attending live performances (theatre, concerts, ballet); or sporting events. Survey results indicate that in the EU, going to the cinema is the most common form of cultural activity among young people: 75.1 % of people aged 16-29 indicated that they went to the cinema at least once during 2015. Moreover, 36.4 % visited the cinema frequently (at least four times in the course of the year). Live performances (theatre, concerts and ballet) attracted 52.4 % of young people, while 47.9 % reported visiting cultural sites at least once. Of the four types of activities surveyed, sports events were the least frequented. Still, 44.8 % of young Europeans reported attending a sport event.

*Going to the cinema is the most popular cultural activity among young people.*

In only a few countries did young people attend other types of cultural events more often than the cinema. In Lithuania, 76.3 % of young people had been to a live performance compared with 66.3 % who had been to the cinema. In Latvia, similar proportions of young people visited the cinema and went to live performances

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<sup>(6)</sup> Sacco, 2011.

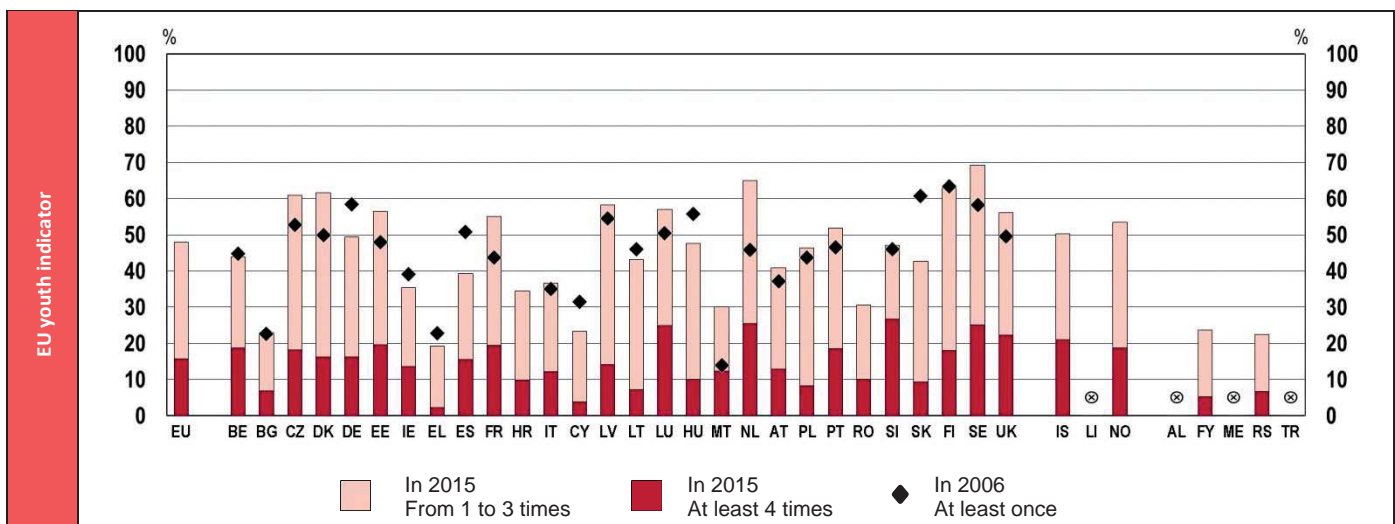


(64.5 % and 64.9 % respectively). In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, live performances (39.1 %) and sports events (37.5 %) were more popular than the cinema (28.3 %).

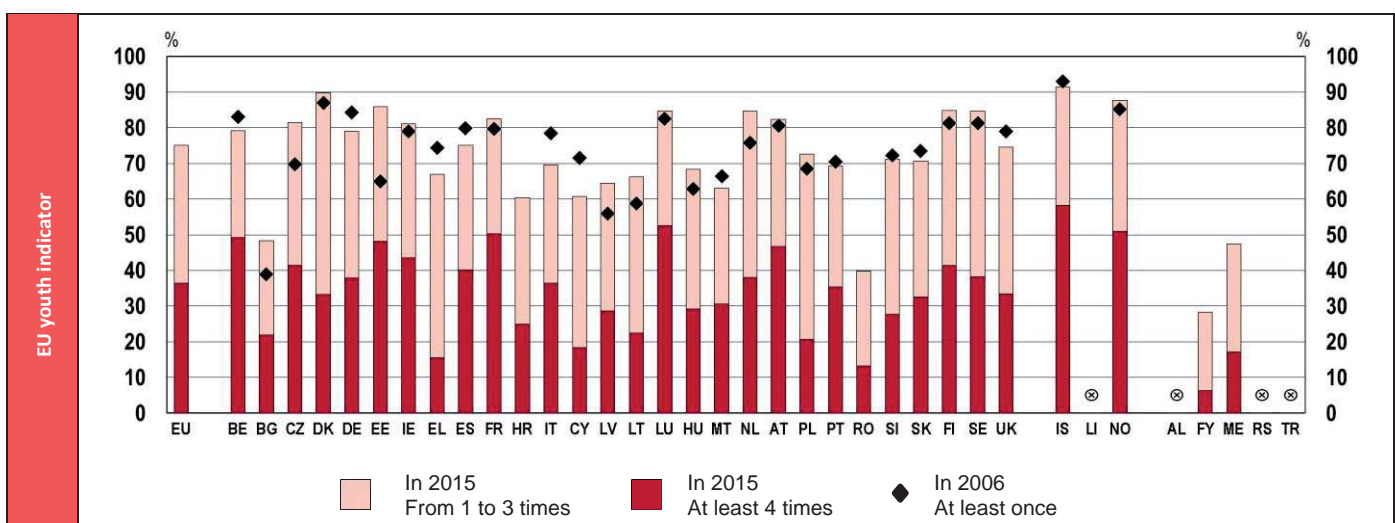
In the Scandinavian countries, as well as Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, young people were actively participating in all types of cultural and sports activities. In these countries, people aged 16-29 had higher participation rates than the EU average. In contrast, participation was low in Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, Malta and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – in these countries, people in this age group took part in the four types of cultural and sports activities under discussion less often than the EU average.

**Figure 9-A:** Proportion of young people (aged 16-29) who participated in cultural or sports activities in the last 12 months, by frequency and country, 2015 and 2006

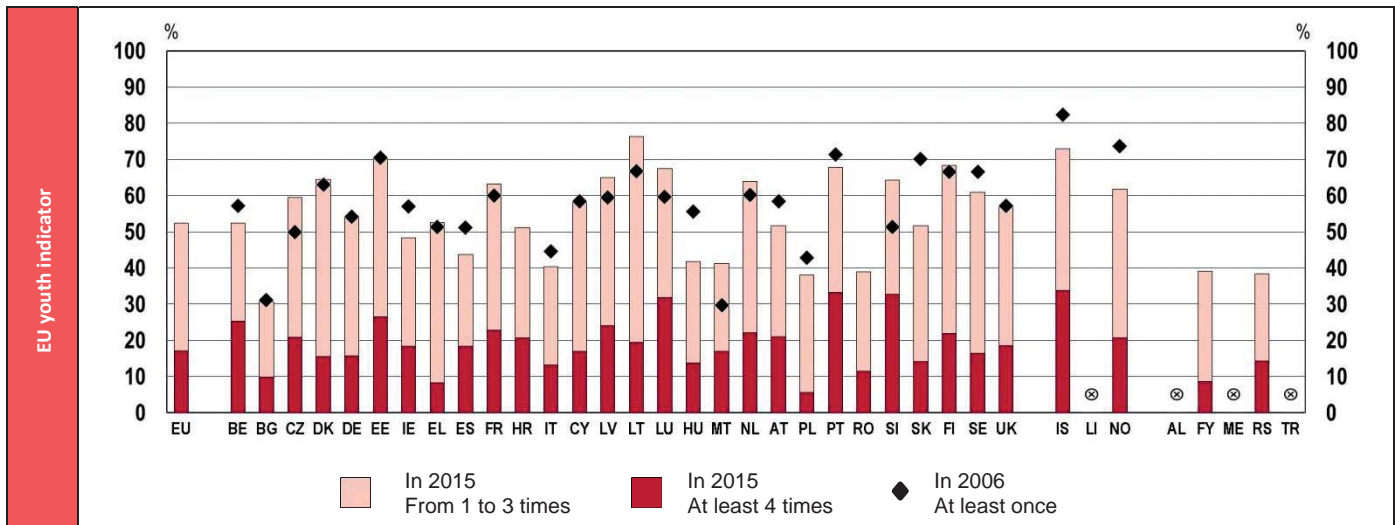
a) Visited cultural sites (historical monuments, museums, art galleries or archaeological sites)



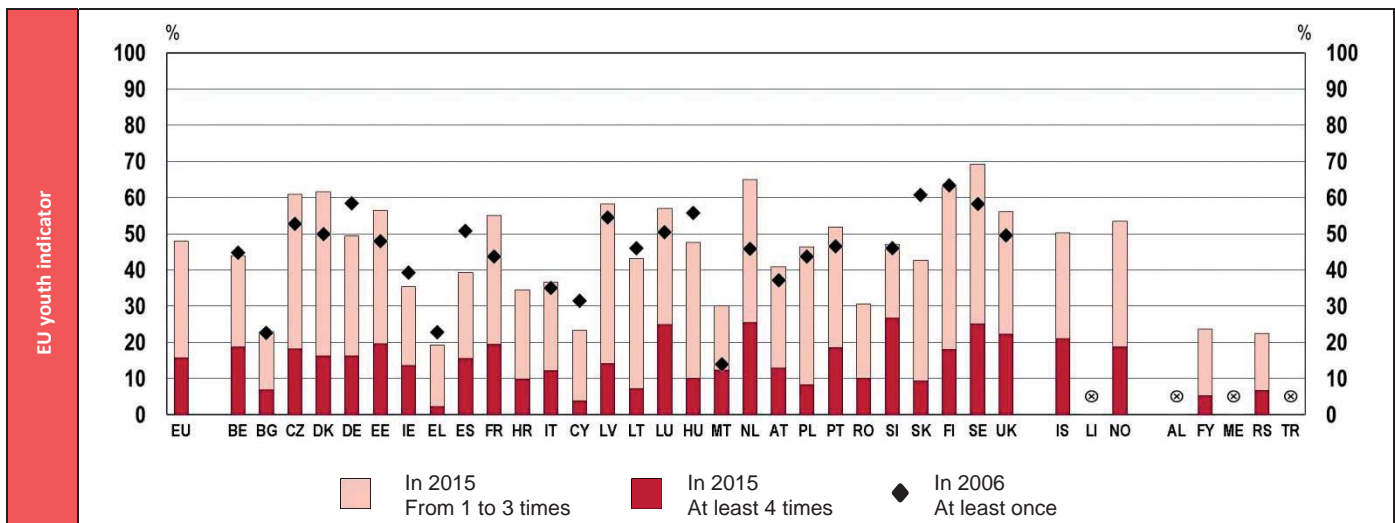
b) Visited the cinema



c) Attended live performances (theatre, concerts, ballet)



d) Attended sports events

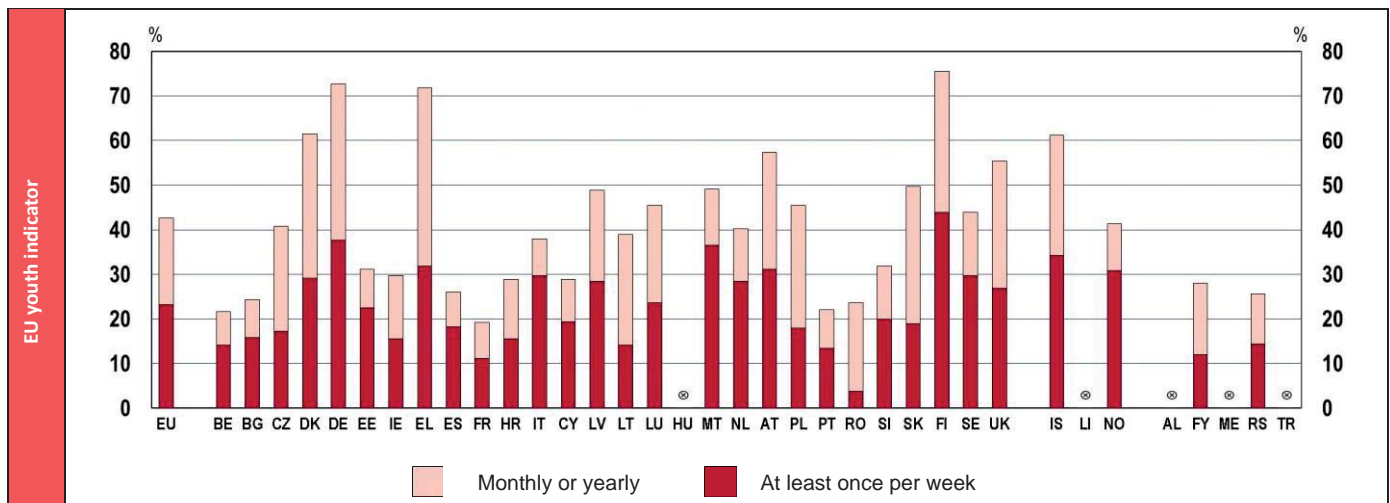


Note: EU-28: estimated. 2015: IE, PL, UK: low reliability. 2006: IE, NL, NO: low reliability. The reference year 2015 and 2006 are the only data points available. The value for 2006 should be compared with the total bar length in 2015.

Source: Eurostat EU-SILC [ilc\_scp03], data extracted on 25/10/2017.

Back in 2006, cinema was already the most popular cultural activity among young people in almost all European countries. Unfortunately, the EU average is not available for 2006 and this hampers the ability to analyse overall change over time. At the country level, a clear pattern of change over time does not emerge. In Czech Republic, Latvia, Luxembourg and the Netherlands the proportion of young people attending all four types of cultural activity increased in 2015 compared with 2006. In contrast, the proportions of young people attending cultural and sports events decreased in Slovakia (from 3 to 18 percentage points).

**Figure 9-B:** Proportion of young people (aged 16-29) practising artistic activities, by country and frequency, 2015



*Notes:* The Figure reports the frequency with which the respondent usually practises artistic activities such as play an instrument, compose music, sing, dance, act, photograph, make video, draw, paint, carve or do other visual arts, handcraft, write poems, short stories, fiction, etc. Only activities performed as a hobby are included. It is not important if the activities are organised or not. If the respondent performs more than one activity, the time spent on all of them is counted. All activities performed as respondent's professional activity are excluded.

EU-28: estimated. Ireland, Poland, United Kingdom: low reliability.

*Source:* Eurostat [ilc\_scp07], data extracted on 26/10/2017.

Practising an art or craft on an amateur basis is another important aspect of youth culture and creativity. Figure 9-B indicates that 23.2 % of people aged 16-29 engage in such activities at least once a week in the EU; an additional 19.4 % report that they have done so at least once during the last 12 months.

The proportion of young people practising amateur artistic activities is especially high (more than 60 %) in Denmark, Germany, Greece, Finland and Iceland. Finland stands out with the highest proportion of young people who have creative hobbies (75.5 %), as well as the highest proportion frequently engaging in artistic activities: 43.9 % reported practising these activities at least once a week. In contrast, less than 25 % of people aged 15-29 reported participating in creative hobbies at least once a year in Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Portugal and Romania. The proportion of young people involved in artistic activities weekly was especially low in Romania (3.8 %).

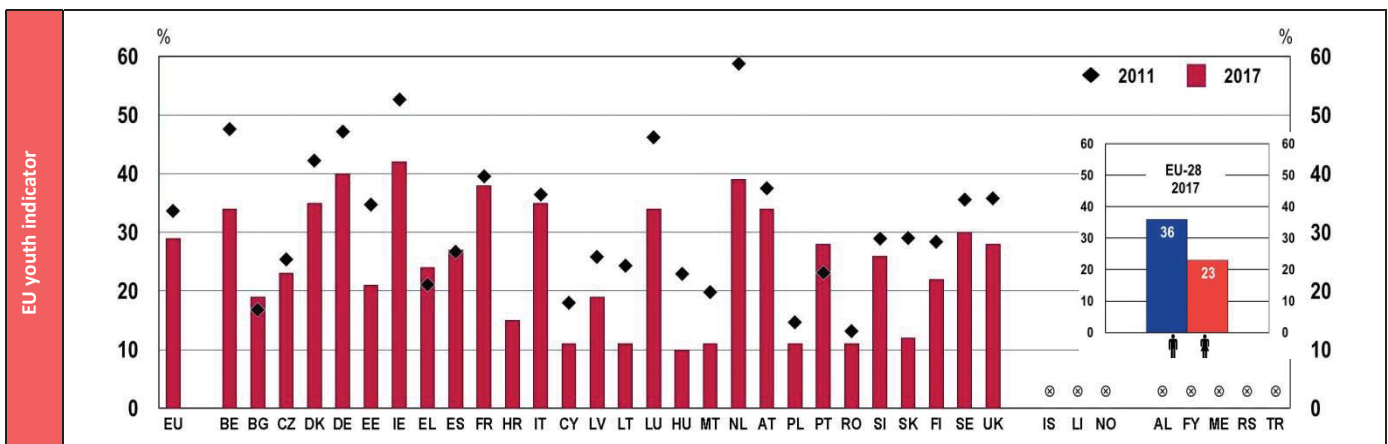
Cultural engagement also takes place collectively through participation in groups, clubs and other organisations. The latest Flash Eurobarometer data shows the proportion of young people who are active in a sports club, a youth organisation or club, or a cultural organisation (Figure 9-C). In most European countries, the sports club is the most common type of organisation to which young people belong. In the EU, 29 % of people aged 15 to 30 years reported being active in a sports club. The proportion of young people who belong to a sports club is higher (more than 35 %) in Germany, Ireland, France and the Netherlands. Across the EU, however, compared with the situation in 2011, young people's participation in sports clubs had fallen by 5 percentage points in 2017. The fall was particularly severe in the Netherlands (from 59 % to 39 %) and Slovakia (from 29 % to 12 %). The proportion of young people engaged in a sports club slightly increased (2-5 percentage points) in Bulgaria, Greece and Portugal.

*In 2017, fewer young people attend a sports club than in 2011.*

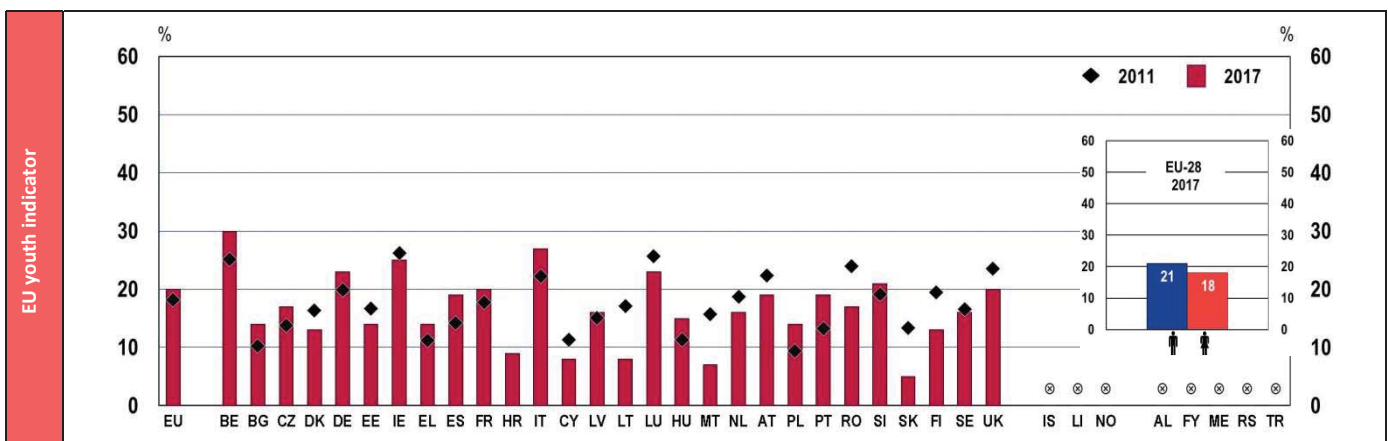
Every fifth young European participates in some kind of youth club or youth organisation. The proportion is considerably higher (more than 25 %) in Belgium, Ireland and Italy. In contrast, the proportion is considerably lower than the EU average (ranging from 5 % to 9 %) in Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta and Slovakia. On average in the EU, the proportion of young people participating in such clubs and organisations increased by 2 percentage points (p.p.) from 2011 to 2017. The rise was especially noticeable (6 p.p.) in Portugal. In contrast, participation decreased considerably (8-9 p.p.) in Lithuania, Malta and Slovakia.

**Figure 9-C:** Proportion of young people (aged 15-30) who have been active in a sports club, youth club/organisation or a cultural organisation at least once in the last 12 months, by country, 2017 and 2011

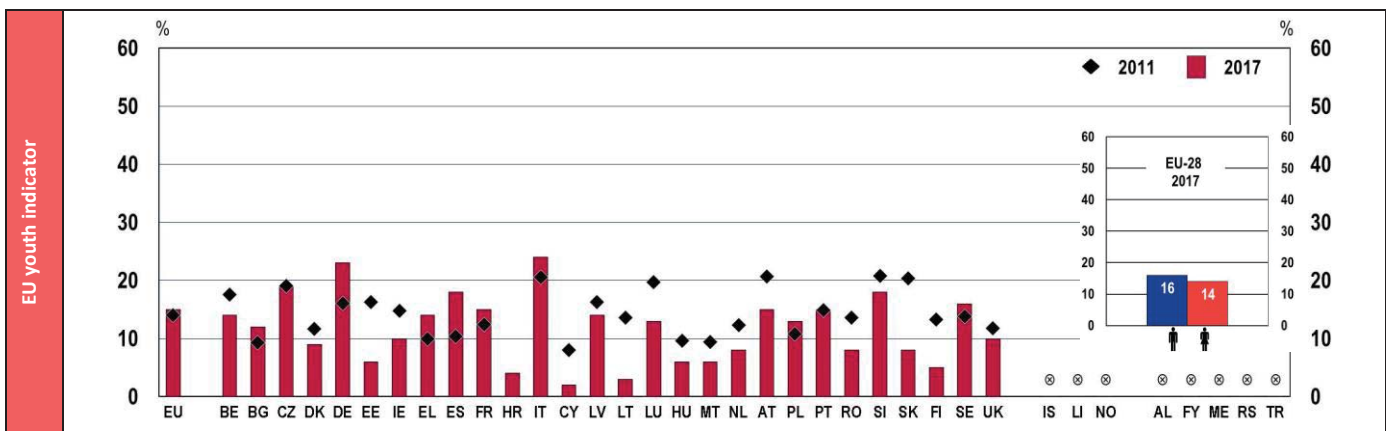
a) A sports club



b) A youth club, leisure-time club or any kind of youth organisation



## c) A cultural organisation



Note: The question was 'In the last 12 months, have you participated in any activities of the following organisations?'

Base: All respondents.

Source: Flash Eurobarometer 'European Youth' 455 and Flash Eurobarometer 'Youth on the move' 319a.

Young people's participation is lowest in cultural organisations. Across the EU, only 15 % of people aged 15-30 reported being active in a cultural organisation. This proportion remains approximately the same as in 2011. Of the countries examined, the most active young people in cultural organisations are German and Italian.

*Every fifth young German and Italian is a member of a cultural organisation.*

In terms of gender, being active in a sports club is the activity where differences between young men and women are most apparent. According to Eurobarometer data, men tend to participate more than women, a result in line with men's higher propensity to engage in physical activities, as illustrated in the chapter on health and well-being (Chapter 4).

So far the effects of the new developments in information and communications technology on young people's cultural life have not been addressed. However, these technologies play an ever increasing role in shaping the way people access and enjoy cultural experiences, especially young people who are the most receptive to the opportunities provided by the new media. The next section will therefore look at the extent to which young Europeans use the new digital technologies in general, and as a medium for accessing cultural experiences. Particular attention will be paid to the levels of digital skills young people have and how this relates to their level of formal education.

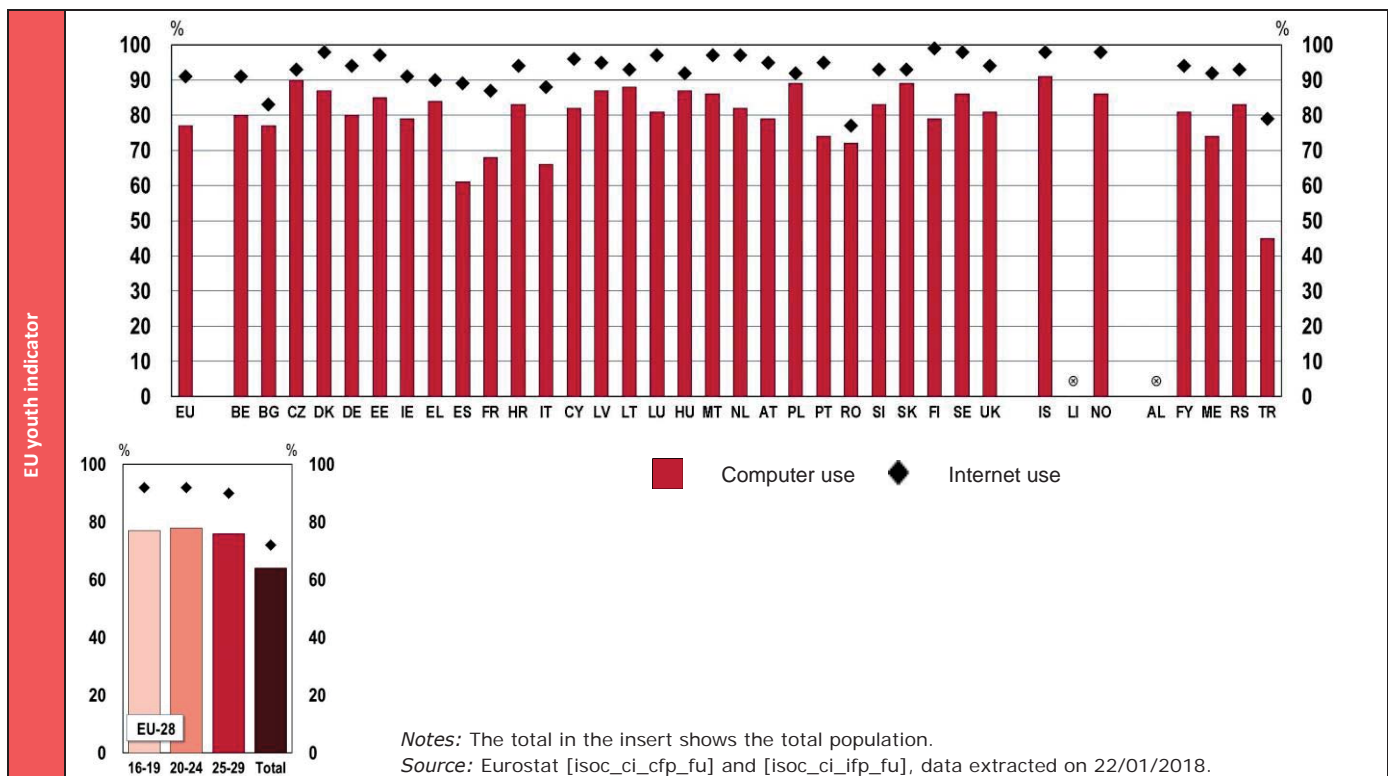
### 9.3. YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR USE OF ICT

As with political participation (discussed in Chapter 5), young people have been the first to apply communication technologies to their social interactions. This also impacts on the way they access, enjoy and initiate cultural experiences. To this end, access to and proficiency in the use of computers and the internet are essential. According to data collected by Eurostat, 77 % of people aged 16-29 reported daily computer use in the EU (Figure 9-D). The proportion of young people who use the internet daily is even higher (91 %). Compared with the total population, young people use both computer and the internet more frequently. In EU-28, 64 % of the total population reported daily computer use and 72 % indicated that they use the internet every day.

*In the EU, 91 % of young people use the internet daily; 77 % use a computer every day.*

Daily computer use is especially widespread among young people in Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Iceland. In these countries, the difference between young people accessing the internet daily and using a computer daily was rather small. Almost every young person (98-99 %) accesses the internet daily in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway). In contrast, considerably lower proportions of young people reported daily computer and internet use in Romania and Turkey (both indicators show less than 80 %). In Turkey, the difference between the proportion of young people that use a computer daily and those that access the internet daily is very high (34 percentage points) suggesting that many young people access the internet through mobile devices. The difference is also pronounced in Spain, Italy, Portugal and Norway.

**Figure 9-D:** Daily computer and internet use among young people (aged 16-29), by country, 2017



There is not much difference between the general data on the frequency of ICT use among all young people and that of particular age groups. The proportion of people in all age groups (16-19, 20-24 and 25-29) using a computer and the internet daily is similar (ranging between 76-78 % and 90-92 % respectively).

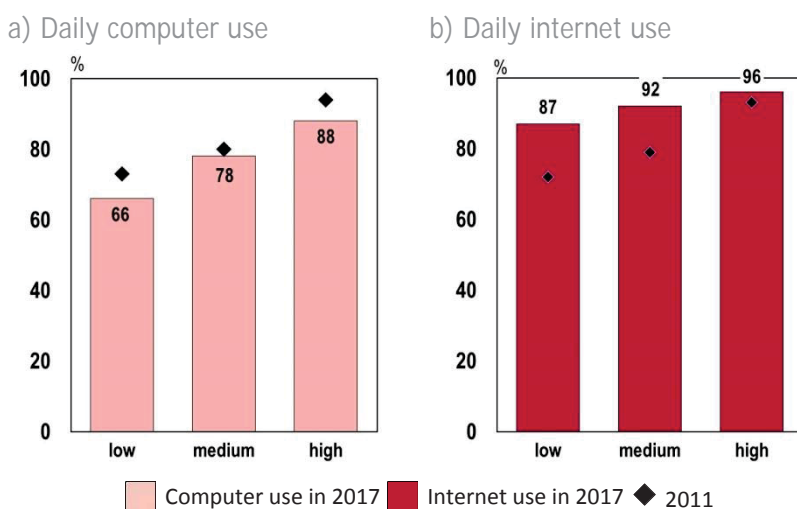
However, Eurostat data (Figure 9-E) show that there is a considerable difference between young people's daily computer use depending on their level of formal education regarding their daily use of computer. 90 % of highly educated people aged 16 to 29 use a computer every day compared with 68 % of those who have low levels of formal education. However, daily internet use is less affected by education level. Although more educated young people use the internet more often, the difference is less pronounced: 96 % of young people with a high level of formal education reported daily use of the internet compared with 92 % of those with a medium level and 87 % of those with a low level of education.

The developments over time indicate that the daily computer use is in decline while the daily internet use is increasing, especially among young people with lower levels of education. This data reflects the trend that computing is rapidly shifting to mobile devices. Currently, 8 out of 10 EU internet users go online with a mobile phone <sup>(7)</sup>.

*Fewer young people now use a computer daily compared with 2011. In contrast, the daily use of the internet is increasing rapidly.*

The proportion of young people with a low level of formal education who use a computer daily decreased from 73 % in 2011 to 66 % in 2017. Similarly, during this time period the proportion of highly educated young people who use computer every day declined from 94 % to 88 %. In contrast, the proportion of young people with low and medium levels of education that use the internet daily increased by 13-15 percentage points between 2011 and 2017. Internet use among young people with a high level of formal education was already very high in 2011 (93 %). Nevertheless, it increased by 3 percentage points during the recent six years and now reaches 96 %.

**Figure 9-E:** Daily computer and internet use among young people (aged 16-29) by level of education, EU-28 average, 2011 and 2017



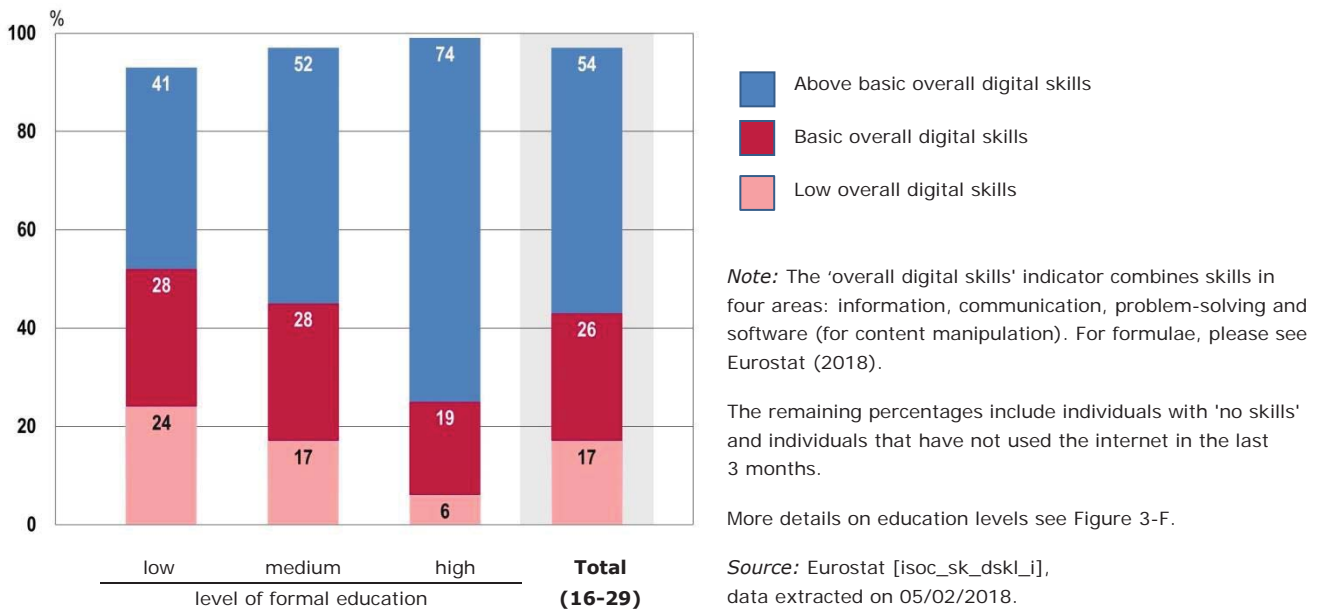
*Note:* According to Eurostat's Statistics Manual, a low level of formal education corresponds to those with no formal education at all, or those who have only completed primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 0, 1 or 2); a medium level of formal education corresponds to those who have completed upper secondary education (ISCED 3 and 4); and a high level of formal education corresponds to those who have completed tertiary education (ISCED 5, 6, 7 or 8). The International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED 2011) is applied for 2015/16. ISCED 1997 classification is used for the year 2011.

Year 2010 not available.

*Source:* Eurostat [isoc\_ci\_cfp\_fu] and [isoc\_ci\_ifp\_fu], data extracted on 02/02/2018.

<sup>(7)</sup> In 2016, mobile/smart phones were the most frequently used device as reported by 79 % of internet users in the EU, 64 % said they used a laptop/netbook, 54 % a desktop computer and 44 % a tablet. See Eurostat (2017b).

**Figure 9-F:** Overall digital skills level of young people (aged 16-29), by level of education, EU-28 average, 2017



Digital skills are becoming increasingly important in modern workplaces. Nearly all professions use ICT for carrying out certain tasks. Jobs in engineering, accountancy, nursing, medicine, art, architecture, and many more require increasing levels of digital skills<sup>(8)</sup>. The use of digital technologies is beginning to have a profound effect on the tasks carried out and the skills required for many jobs outside the traditional office<sup>(9)</sup>. Moreover, digital awareness is essential in order to avoid online dangers, protect privacy and assess the validity of information. The Eurostat survey on ICT usage by households and individuals (Figure 9-F) indicates that on average, in the EU-28, 17 % of young people have low overall digital skills levels (i.e. information, communication, problem-solving and software skills), 26 % have basic levels and 54 % of young people have above basic level skills.

Similarly, as with the daily use of ICT technologies, the overall digital skills level is largely influenced by the level of formal education. 74 % of young people with a high level of formal education have above basic level skills compared with 52 % of those with a medium level of formal education, and 41 % of those with a low level of formal education. The proportion of young people with a low overall digital skills level was the highest among those with low level of formal education (24 %). The proportion of young people with a high level of formal education that demonstrated low overall digital skills was only 6 %.

There is a considerable variation between European countries in young people's abilities in using digital technologies (Figure 9-G). A very high proportion (more than 70 %) of people aged 16-29 are above the basic level in information, communication, problem-solving and software skills in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the Nordic countries. Many young people (60-69 %) demonstrate above basic level digital skills in Germany, Estonia, Malta, Austria, Portugal and the United Kingdom. In contrast, only every fourth or fifth young person

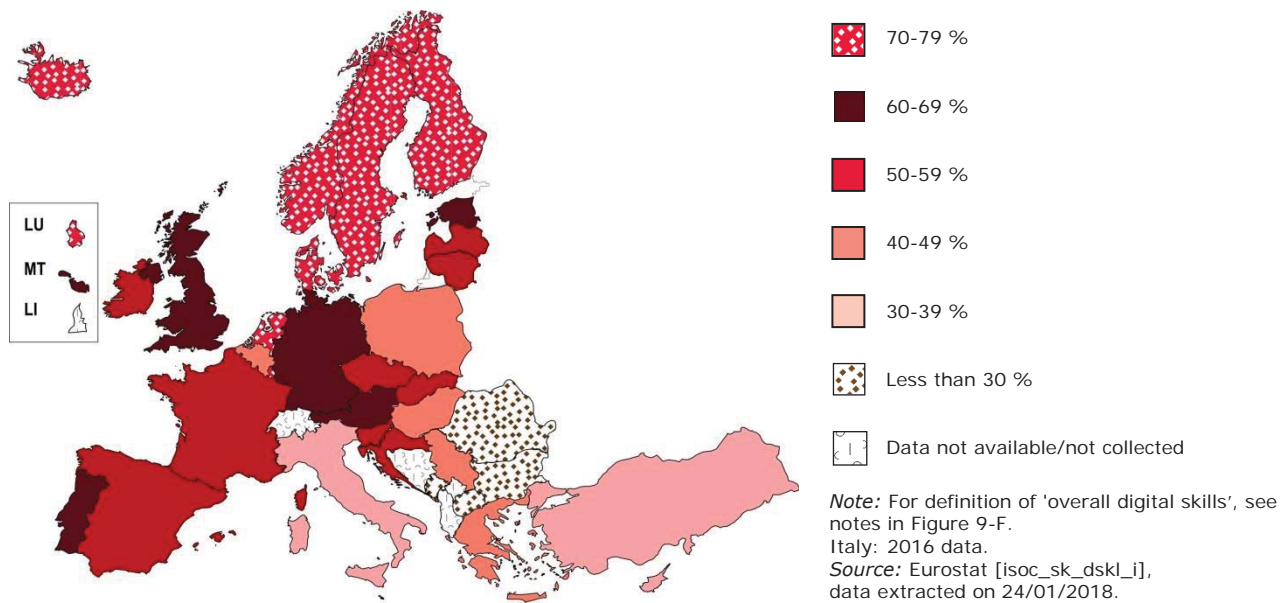
<sup>(8)</sup> European Commission, 2017c.

<sup>(9)</sup> European Union, 2016.



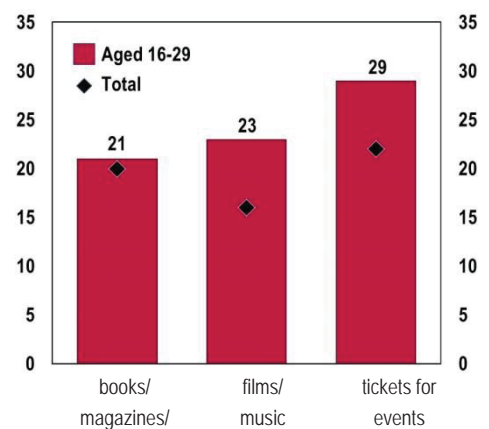
has high overall digital competency in Bulgaria, Romania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The proportions vary between 31 and 34 % in Italy, Cyprus and Turkey.

**Figure 9-G:** Proportion of young (16-29) people with above basic overall digital skills, by country, 2017



The proportion of young people with above basic overall digital skills seems to be related to the proportion of young people that use the internet on a daily basis (Figure 9-D). At the country level <sup>(10)</sup>, there is a strong positive correlation between these two variables ( $r=0.73$ ).

**Figure 9-H:** Proportion of young people (aged 16-29) buying cultural goods and services online (books/magazines/ newspapers, films/music, tickets for events) compared to the total population, EU-28 average, 2017



<sup>(10)</sup> Using 2016 data for Italy.

Information and communications technology is becoming an increasingly important instrument for participating in cultural life <sup>(11)</sup>. The internet currently allows people immediate and easy access to various types of media; they may download films, stream live concerts, listen to the radio and podcasts, watch videos, etc. ICT provides endless possibilities to improve audience engagement and participation, as well as offers simple ways for young people to present their own ideas, be creative and engage in digital dialogue <sup>(12)</sup>. Moreover, it is increasingly easy to buy all types of goods and services online, including those relating to culture.

newspapers

Source: Eurostat [isoc\_ec\_ibuy],  
data extracted on 22/01/2018.

Eurostat data indicates (Figure 9-H) that young people are somewhat more active in buying cultural goods online than the total population. 29 % of young people buy tickets for events online, compared to 22 % in the total population. The proportion of young people who purchase films or music online is also higher than the total population: 23 % compared to 16 %. Online purchases of books, magazines and newspapers attract similar proportions of young people as the general population (20-21 %).

## CONCLUSIONS

This brief overview reveals that many young people across Europe are involved in various cultural and creative activities. Going to the cinema is the most popular cultural activity among young people. Three out of four people aged 16 to 29 indicate they have been to the cinema at least once in the past year, while more than a third visit the cinema frequently. Live performances (theatre, concerts and ballet), and museums, galleries and historical sites attracted approximately 50 % of young people (16-29). Every fourth young person in the EU practises artistic activities – Finland stands out with the highest proportion of young people who have creative hobbies.

45 % of young Europeans reported attending a sport event. Moreover, in most European countries, a sports club is the most common type of organisation that young people belong to. In the EU, 29 % of people aged 15 to 30 years reported being active in a sports club. Compared with the situation in 2011, however, young people's membership of sports clubs had decreased by 5 percentage points across the EU by 2017.

Increasing numbers of young people access the internet every day, and more and more of them use mobile devices. Daily computer use, although still high (77 % of people aged 16-29), is decreasing. This trend is especially strong among young people with lower levels of formal education.

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<sup>(11)</sup> Eurostat, 2017a.

<sup>(12)</sup> Kutchinsky, 2014.



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