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PART 8/23

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
Accompanying the document

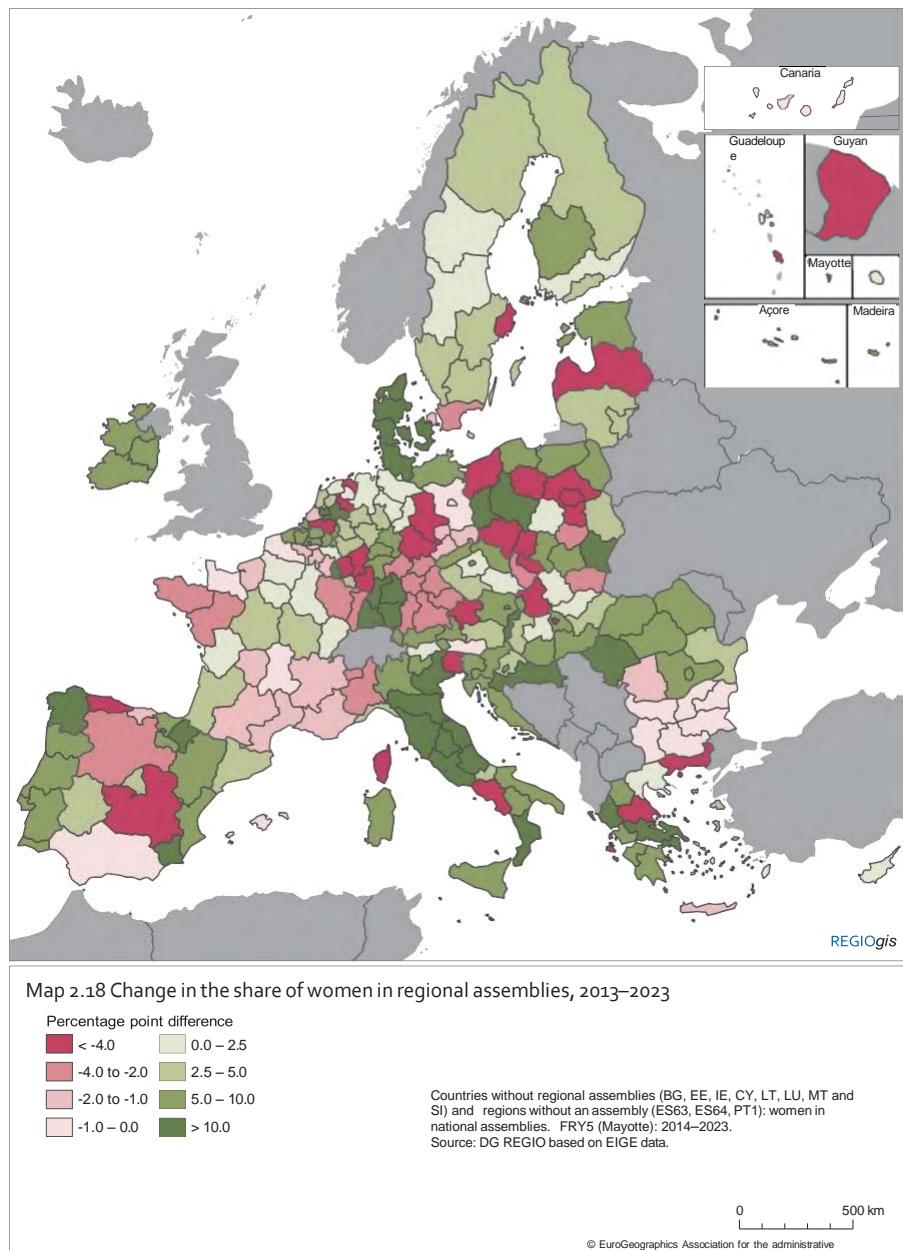
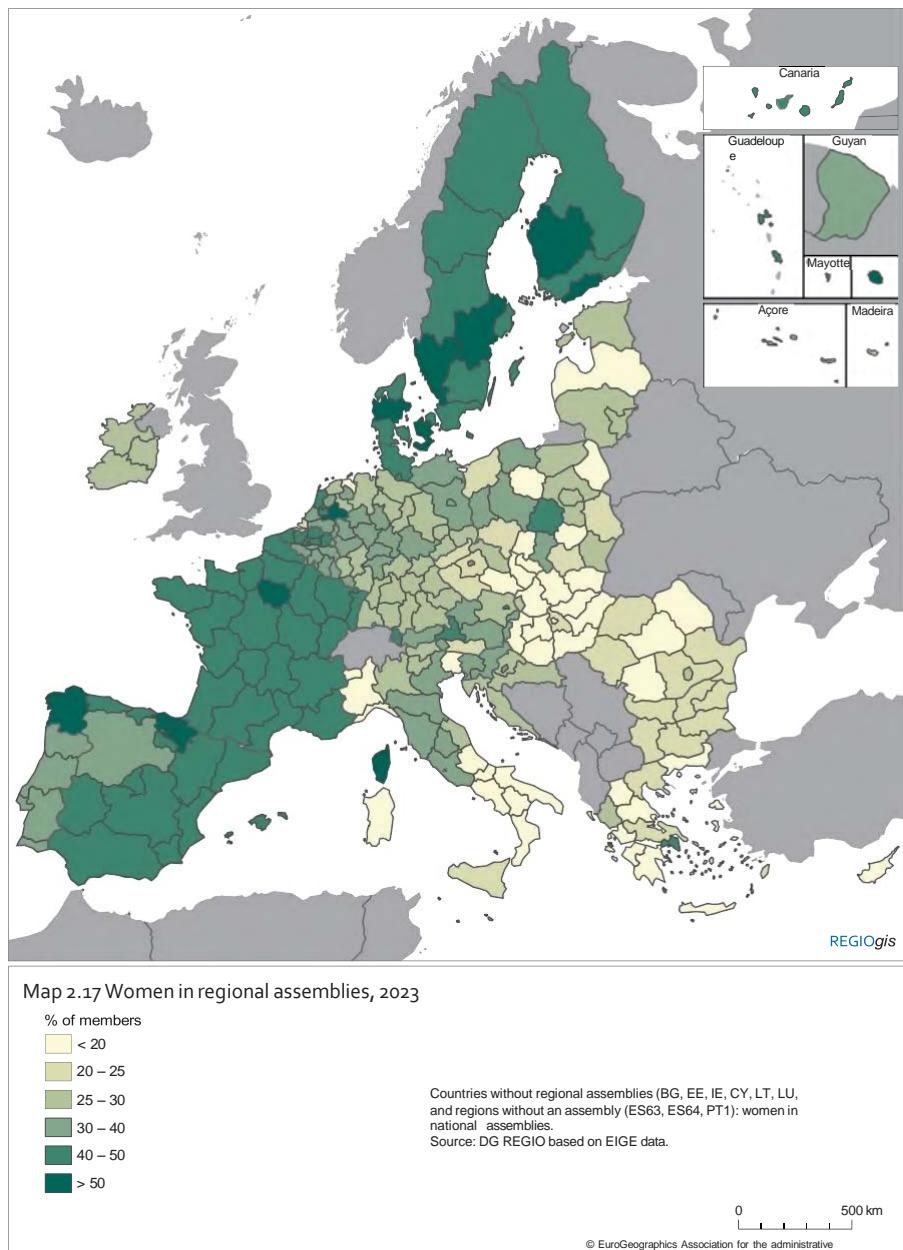
**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

on the 9th Cohesion Report

{COM(2024) 149 final}

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1. Advancing equality for migrants and minorities

Migrants, Roma and other minority groups face specific challenges such as discrimination and barriers to accessing the labour market and quality education. Improving their inclusion in the labour market can help to address labour and skill shortages in the context of a declining working-age population (see Chapter 6). The EU values of equality and non-discrimination highlight the importance of having inclusive policies and practices in place so that all members of society can thrive.

1.1 Migrants support regional labour markets, while facing challenges to integrate

Migrants (in this report defined in terms of the country of birth rather than nationality), including people moving within the EU, tend to settle in regions of north-western Member States, especially in larger cities where there are more economic opportunities and support networks are well established (Maps 2.19 and 2.20).

The employment of migrants, especially non-EU migrants, increased markedly between 2015 and 2019. The 'demography toolbox'⁴⁵ and the E (Employment) and social developments in Europe (ESDE) 2023 report underline the role of migrants in meeting labour shortages, particularly in low- and medium-skilled occupations⁴⁶. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the adaptability of migrant employment to changing economic conditions. The employment rate of migrants in the EU fell substantially in 2020 (by 2.5 pp), by much more than for native-born people (just 0.6 pp), but also recovered more over the next two years to 2022 (by 4.0 pp), increasing by almost twice as much as for native-born people (2.1 pp). The extent of the fall in employment in 2020 and the subsequent rebound was particu-

larly large in southern Member States and in less developed regions.

People born in another Member State are mostly mobile EU citizens who benefit from the rights guaranteed by the free movement of workers⁴⁷. As a result, they have similar, or even slightly higher, employment rates in most types of regions (Figure 2.10a), particularly in eastern Member States. Their risk of poverty or social exclusion is also much the same as for native-born people.

In contrast, migrants from outside the EU tend to have significantly lower employment rates, some 10 pp lower than the native-born in north-western and southern Member States (Figure 2.10b). The disparity partly arises from a more substantial employment gap for women (15 pp) than for men (4 pp). A complex set of factors influences where non-EU migrants go and where they perform well in the labour market. They are most numerous in the more robust labour markets in north-western countries. Their employment rates are lowest in the less developed regions, though they appear to play an important role in meeting labour shortages, and the difference in the average rate compared with the native-born is less than in transition and more developed regions (8 pp lower as against 13–14 pp lower).

Despite the growth in their employment, migrants face social challenges⁴⁸. Their AROPE rate in 2022 was more than double that of the native-born (40 % against 19 %), as was their rate of material and social deprivation (24 % against 11 % and reaching half of the Roma population).

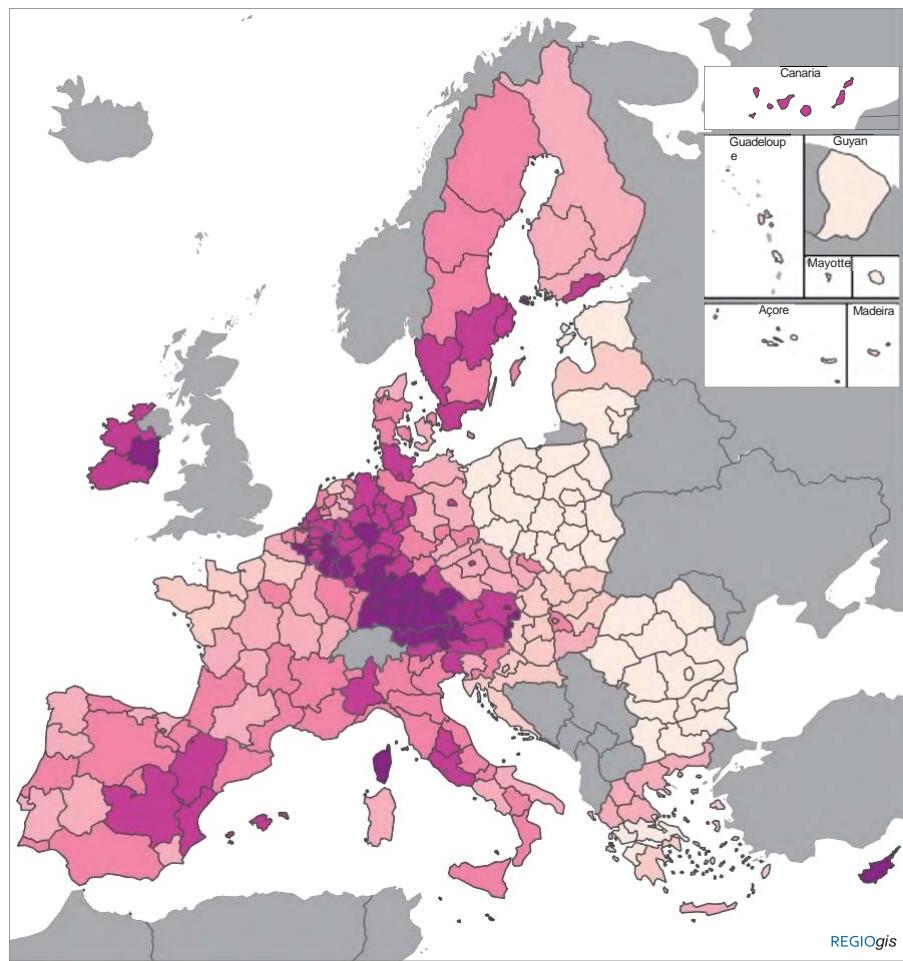
A recent OECD report⁴⁹ has assessed the uneven impact of migrants on regions and cities, pointing to their positive impact on regional development through innovation, international trade, reducing labour and skill shortages and boosting economic growth. The 'migration outlook 2023' of

⁴⁵ European Commission (2023c).

⁴⁶ The ESDE report 2023 highlighted that workers born outside the EU are more often employed in occupations facing persistent labour shortages, in particular in low-skilled occupations.

⁴⁷ European Union (2011).

⁴⁸ European Commission (2022b).



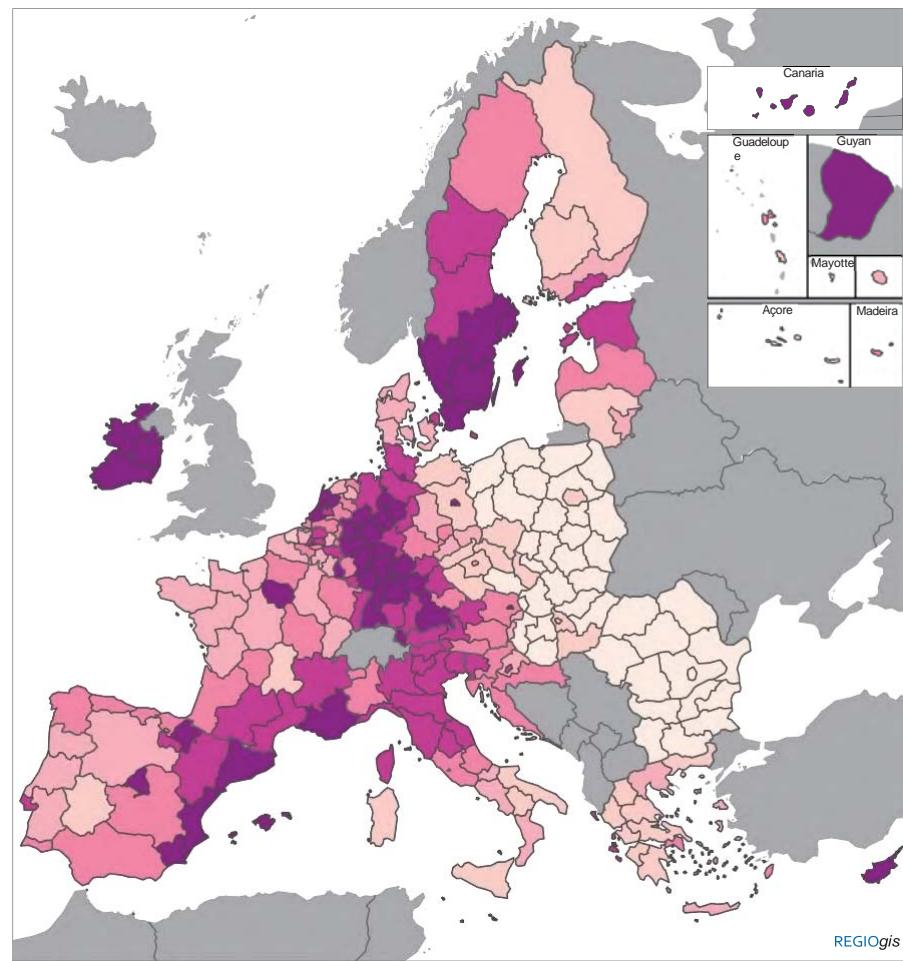
Map 2.19 People born in another EU country, 2022

% of the population (ages 15–74)

< 0.5	4.5 – 8
0.5 – 1.5	> 8
1.5 – 2.5	
2.5 – 4.5	

EU-27 = 3.8
Source: Eurostat data (lfs1_r_lfsd2pwc) and DG REGIO

0 500 km
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Map 2.20 People born outside the EU, 2022

% of the population (ages 15–74)

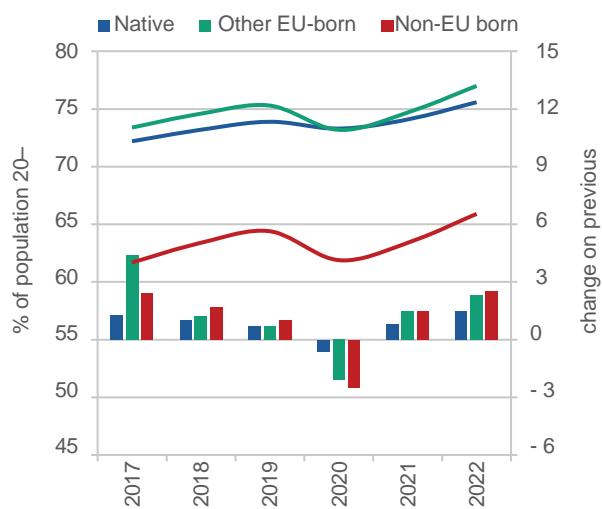
< 1	10 – 14
1 – 4.5	> 14
4.5 – 7	
7 – 10	

EU-27 = 9.6
Source: Eurostat data (lfs1_r_lfsd2pwc) and DG REGIO

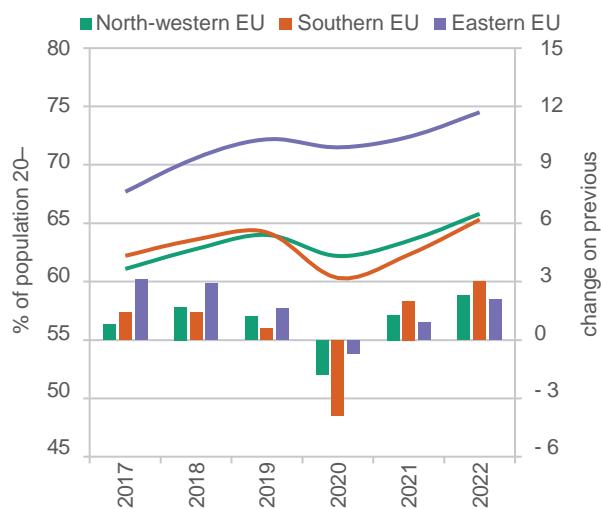
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Figure 2.10 Employment rates and changes for migrants as against native-born, and by geographical area, 2017–2022

a) Migrants versus native-born



b) By geographical area



Note: 2021 break in LFS series.

Source: Eurostat [lfst_r_lfsd2pwc], DG REGIO calculation.

the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)⁵⁰ and the recent Frontex report⁵¹ highlighted the pressure of a significant rise in irregular migration in 2022 and 2023, the highest since 2016. As regards Ukrainian refugees, the statistical evidence on their impact is not yet clear or consistent across EU regions. As of December 2023, more than 4.2 million displaced people from Ukraine had received protection under the Temporary Protection Directive, which provides the right to enter the EU labour market. Cohesion funds have provided support to Member States to ensure Ukrainian refugees can access their rights under temporary protection, for example through language teaching, childcare, the certification of skills and on-the-job training.

1.2 Most EU regions are friendly places for minorities to live in, though progress is needed in eastern and southern parts

Several factors can affect the labour market prospects of different groups and create a more inclusive environment for them to contribute to the economy and society. These include the extent of discrimination, ease of access to education and training, and social attitudes.

Though carried out some time ago, the EU LGBT survey⁵² showed that lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender people (LGBTQ+) face obstacles to enjoying their fundamental rights, particularly in employment and education.

The European Agency for Fundamental Rights 2021 Roma survey⁵³ indicates that 25 % of Roma across the EU have experienced discrimination over the last 12 months.

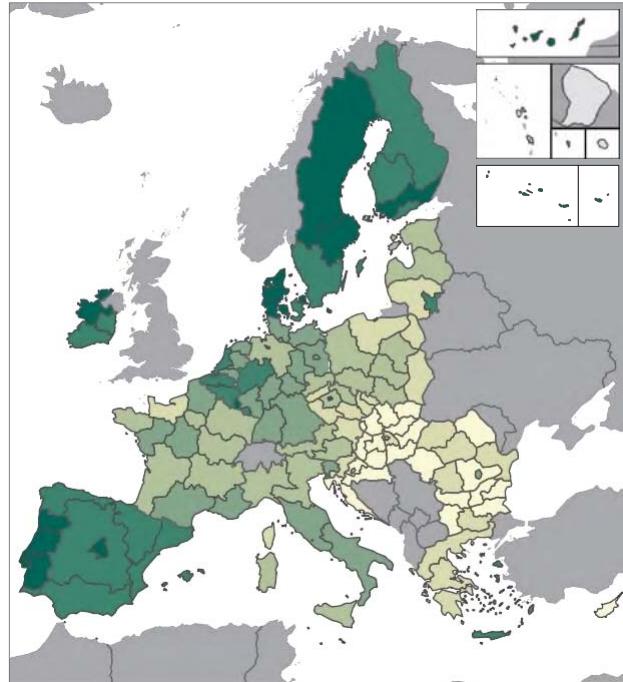
50 ICMPD (2023).

51 Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (2023).

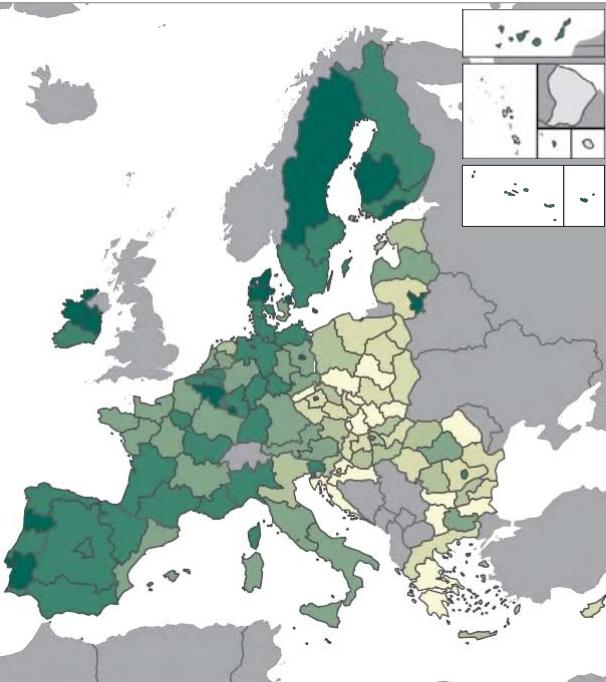
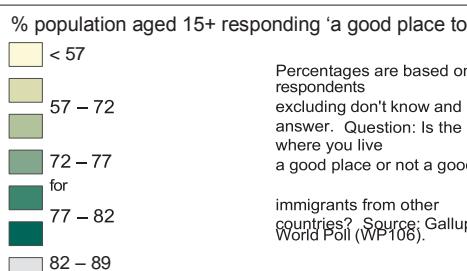
52 European Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014).

53 European Agency for Fundamental Rights (2022).

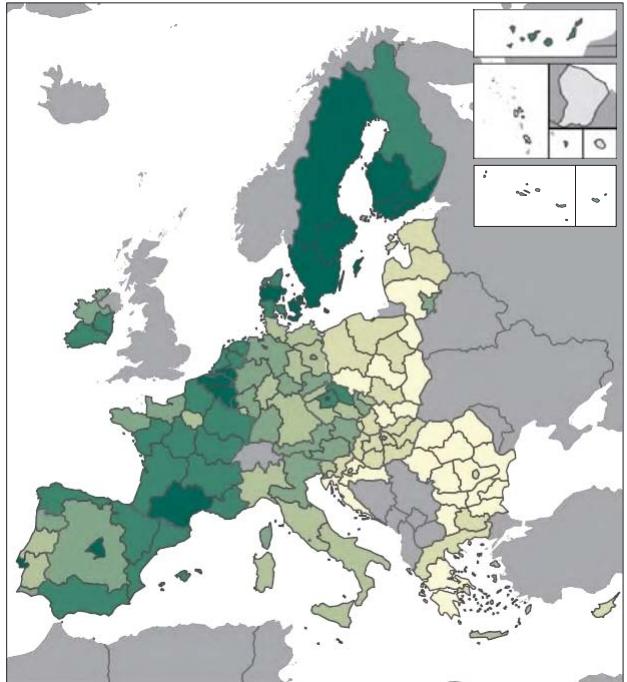
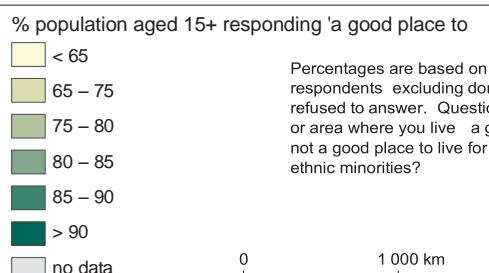
Map 2.21 Living conditions for minorities, 2022



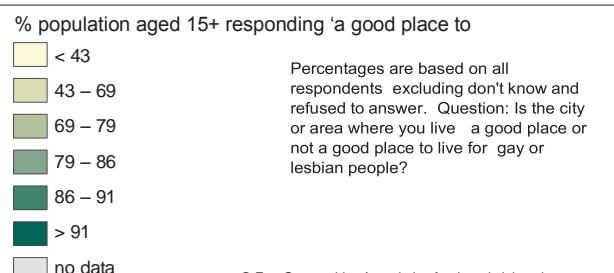
Immigrants from outside the EU



Racial and ethnic minorities



Gay and lesbian people



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The more recent Gallup survey in 2022 provided insights into attitudes towards migrants, ethnic and racial minorities and the LGBTQ+ community in 140 EU regions (Map 2.21). It revealed that regions in north-western Member States are generally seen, by all respondents and not only migrants or minorities, as more friendly places for minority groups than those in eastern and southern countries.

- A significant majority of all respondents reported that their city or area was a 'good place' for racial and ethnic minorities to live, the proportion varying (from 50 % to 95 % across regions and being over 80 % in 80 regions). On the other hand, it was less than 60 % in 10 regions in southern and eastern countries.
- Around two thirds of all respondents believed their city or area was a 'good place' for migrants to live, the proportion varying from 30 % to 97 % across regions. The figure was over 80 % in nearly 50 regions, though under 50 % in 15 regions, mainly in Hungary and Bulgaria.
- The smallest proportion of respondents considered their city or area was a 'good place' for gay and lesbian people to live, though again the figure varied widely across EU regions, from 10 % to 95 %. It was over 80 % in around 60 regions, but under 40 % in 20 regions, primarily in Bulgaria and Romania.

Generally, regional differences were less pronounced (less than 10 pp) in countries where the overall perception of minority groups was positive, and more pronounced where the reverse was the case, with capital city regions showing the widest differences with the rest of the country.

The Gallup results are in line with the distribution of migrants across regions, most concentrating in the north-western parts of the EU, where economic conditions and social support, but also attitudes to migrants, are more favourable. Attitudes to migrants, therefore, tend to be most favourable where they are most numerous.

2. Summary of spatial developments

More developed regions

As indicated above, there has been a continuing increase in employment rates in more developed regions over the past decade, although less than in other parts of the EU. The average employment rate exceeded 78 % in 2022, with unemployment of only 5 %. Though youth unemployment was still 12 % and 9 % of 15–29 year-olds were classified as NEETs, these figures remained less than in other regions. Several factors have contributed to this relatively favourable situation. Many 25–64 year-olds have tertiary education (38 %) or upper-secondary or post-secondary vocational education (32 %). There seems to have been progress in upskilling and reskilling, essential for the green and digital transitions, with increased participation of adults in training. The situation of women has been constantly improving, while more women have tertiary education than men (40 % against 37 %), the gap in employment rates persists (74 % against 83 %). Continuing improvements in access to childcare (93 % of children aged 3 to compulsory school age being in ECEC) has helped to narrow this.

Transition regions

The employment rate in transition regions increased markedly over the period 2013 to 2022, from 67 % to 75 %, while the unemployment rate almost halved to 7 %. Nevertheless, youth unemployment still stood at 16 % in 2022, and 11 % of 15–29 year-olds were classified as NEETs. The factors underlying the general improvement over the past decade include the relatively large proportion of 25–64 year-olds with either tertiary education (36 %) or with upper-secondary vocational qualifications (35 %). There has been some rise in adult participation in education and training after the significant fall in 2020 and the situation of women has constantly improved. However, although even more women than men have tertiary education as compared with more developed regions (40 % against 32 %), the gap in the employment rate remains almost as large (71 % against 79 %), despite 95 % of children between 3 and compulsory school age attending pre-school education.

Less developed regions

Employment rates in less developed regions (NUTS 2) increased more than in others between 2013 and 2022, from 58 % to 69 %, and the average difference with more developed regions narrowed from 15 pp to 10 pp. The unemployment rate halved to 8 % over the period, still higher than in other regions, and though the youth unemployment rate fell by 16 pp, it remained at

22 %; and while the proportion of those aged 15–29 who were NEET also declined, it was still 16 % in 2022. Several factors underlie the worse labour market situation than elsewhere. Tertiary education rates for those aged 25 to 64 remain relatively low (26 % in 2022), though the proportion with upper-secondary vocational education is slightly higher (40 %). While adult participation in education and training has increased lately, it was still only 8 % in 2022. The situation of women improved consistently, but although the gap in tertiary education rates with men is wide (30 % against 21 %), the employment rate of women remains much lower than for men (61 % against 76 %). While some 87 % of children between 3 and compulsory school age attend pre-school education, this is less than in other regions. A larger proportion of people were also AROPE than in other regions (28 % in 2022 as against 19 % in more developed regions and 22 % in transition ones), though this is less than in 2016 (34 %) and the gap with more developed regions narrowed appreciably over these six years (from 14 pp to 9 pp).

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