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To:	Delegations
Subject:	Review of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) and developments in social protection policies - Annual Report 2025

Delegations will find attached the Review of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) and developments in social protection policies, as finalised by the Social Protection Committee on 22 September 2025.

The key messages which are drawn from this report are contained in doc. 13348/25 REV1.

An executive summary and the SPPM Country Profiles annexed to this report are contained in doc. 13348/25 ADD 2-4.

Social Protection Committee

Annual Report 2025

*Review of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) and
developments in social protection policies*

- Key social challenges and key messages-



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Social Protection Committee

Annual Report 2025

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- Key social challenges and key messages -

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Abbreviation	Full name
EU27_2020	European Union (27 countries composition from 2020)
EA18/19	Euro area (18/19 countries)
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	Czechia
DK	Denmark
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
IE	Ireland
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FR	France
HR	Croatia
IT	Italy
CY	Cyprus
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
HU	Hungary
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
AT	Austria
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal

RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
FI	Finland
SE	Sweden

Executive Summary

The Social Protection Committee's (SPC) annual report reviews the social situation and the policy developments in the Member States and in the EU in accordance with the SPC Treaty mandate and provides input in the context of the preparation of the 2026 cycle of the European Semester.¹ The report i) monitors the social situation, including the progress towards the EU and national 2030 targets on reducing poverty and social exclusion and highlighting the most recent trends to watch, ii) identifies key structural social challenges facing individual Member States, as well as good social outcomes, and iii) reviews recent social policy developments.

The 2025 edition focuses on access to social protection, based on this year's Thematic Social Reporting that focuses on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed. Ensuring access to adequate social protection for all forms of employment is key for a well-functioning social market economy, especially in the context of a changing world of work². It is also an integral component of job quality, as underlined in the related recent EMCO opinion³.

A. Latest developments in the social situation in the EU and progress on the 2030 target on reducing poverty and social exclusion

[Economic growth, employment and progress towards the EU 2030 poverty reduction target](#)

While recent crises including the COVID pandemic, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, and the substantial rise in inflation over 2022-2023 have hindered achieving a significant improvement in the social situation in recent years, the EU has nevertheless been quite resilient, even with some improvement now showing in certain areas.

Following on to the weak economic progress of the previous year, growth in the EU picked up over the course of 2024, total employment continued to expand and the unemployment rate in the EU remained stable at a historically low level of around 6%. Showing a marked improvement compared to 2023, year-on-year growth in gross disposable household income was relatively strong over 2024, mainly reflecting a strong increase in the contribution from real compensation of employees and to a much lesser extent of the self-employed, in line with the improvements in the labour market and rising real wages.

Inflation was more subdued than in previous years, with **signs of a partial recovery in household purchasing power** and a decline in the overall share of people in the EU reporting financial distress over 2024 and into early 2025. Despite falling recently, financial distress remains historically relatively high, particularly for those on low incomes where it affects more than one in four of those in the lowest income quartile. The

(¹) The figures quoted in the report are generally based on data available around early July 2025.

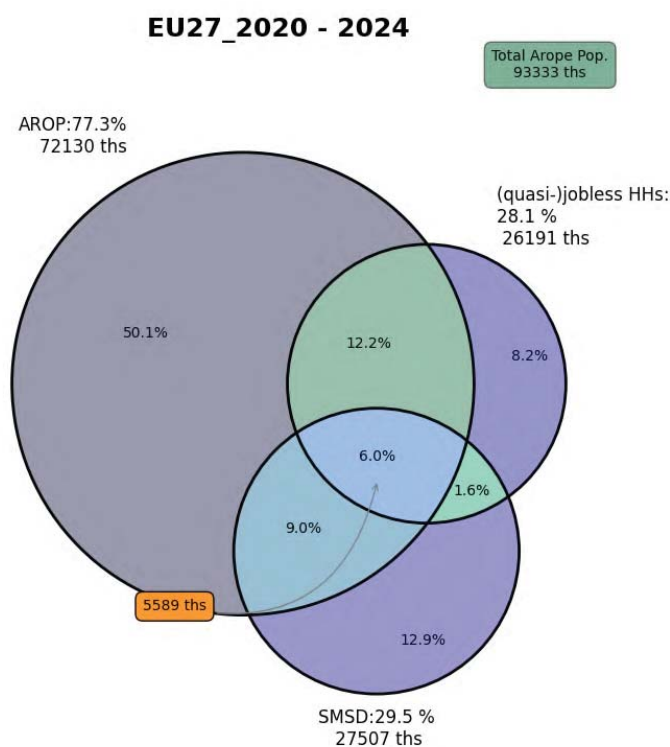
(²) See also the Report of the High-Level Group on [The future of social protection and of the welfare state in the EU - Publications Office of the EU](#), February 2023.

(³) Employment Committee, Opinion of the [Employment Committee](#) on the dimensions of job quality (June 2025).

cumulative impact of the sharp rises in prices over 2022 and 2023 continues to be felt by all income groups, but especially so by those in the lower part of the income distribution.

Figures for the EU27 aggregate suggest an overall decline (around 1.1 million) in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to the previous year. In 2024, 93.3 million people in the EU (21.0% of the population) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), with underlying decreases of around 1.8 million in the population experiencing severe material and social deprivation (SMSD) and of 0.4 million in the number of people living in (quasi-)jobless households (i.e. living in very low work intensity households), but a rise of around 0.4 million in the population at risk of poverty (AROP). The child population in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion fell by around 0.5 million between 2023 and 2024. As a result, in 2024 there were 72.1 million people in the EU at risk of poverty, 27.5 million experiencing severe material or social deprivation, and 26.2 million living in quasi-jobless households (Figure ES1). Around 29% of those at risk of poverty or social exclusion fall under at least two components of AROPE, while 6% experience all three aspects simultaneously.

Figure ES1. Composition of EU AROPE population with regard to the three components, 2024

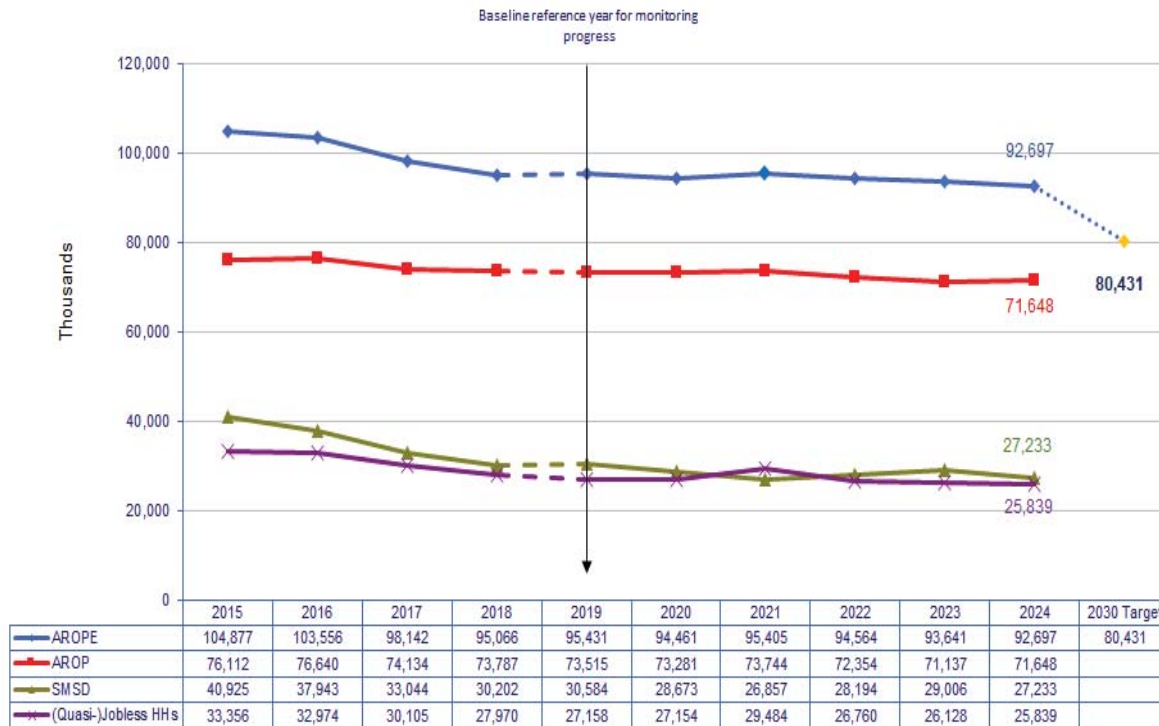


Source: Eurostat EU-SILC, DG EMPL calculations

With regard to progress on the 2030 target on poverty reduction, figures for the EU27 aggregate adjusted for breaks in series in France and Germany (Figure ES2) indicate that the EU population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024 has decreased by around 2.7 million compared to 2019. Underlying this was a fall of around 1.9 million in the population at risk of poverty, of 1.3 million in the number of people living

in (quasi-)jobless households and of close to 3.4 million in the number of people experiencing severe material or social deprivation. The gap to achieving the target is now around 12.3 million, implying that the AROPE population would need to decrease on average by at least 2 million per year until 2030 to reach the target.

Figure ES2: Evolution of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion and its components in the EU27 (1000s), 2015-2024, adjusted for major breaks in DE (in 2020) and in FR (in 2022)



Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC, table ilc_pecs01) and DG EMPL calculations. Note: Figures adjusted for major breaks in DE (in 2020) and in FR (in 2022)

With regard to the poverty and social exclusion reduction target for children, the EU child population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024 was up by 0.25 million compared to 2019, with the gap to achieving the target now at around 5.25 million. Moreover, apart from children, certain other groups still face heightened risk of poverty or social exclusion, including people with low education, people with disabilities, migrants, households consisting of a single adult, large households with three or more dependent children and above all single parent households.

In terms of individual Member States, figures for 2024 show mixed trends in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to the year before and in progress towards national targets and contributing to the overall EU target (Table ESA1). Around a third of countries saw a noticeable rise in this population in 2024, thus moving away from the poverty target, and just under half a noticeable reduction. Relative to the year 2019, there have been substantial absolute reductions in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in several Member States, but in contrast, substantial rises have occurred in a few others, as explained more in detail below. Based on the 2024 figures, two countries have already achieved their national targets for poverty reduction.

Recent common trends identified by the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM)

Compared to 2023, signs of improvement were observed in the situation for many Member States in several areas, even if in some areas the developments are mixed, as highlighted by the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) dashboard (Figure ESA2). Based on the latest annual 2024 EU-SILC data and 2024 LFS data, the following positive trends were highlighted:

- reductions in the share of the **population living at risk of poverty or social exclusion** in a third of Member States (MS), with underlying falls in the **at-risk-of-poverty rate** in 8 MS, in the share of the **population living in (quasi-)jobless households** in 8 MS and in the share of **people experiencing severe material or social deprivation** in 11 MS;
- the **housing cost overburden rate** fell in a third of MS, while the **material and social deprivation rate** fell in 11 MS;
- these positive developments reflect significant increases in **real gross household disposable income** in 10 MS along with a notable **reduction in income inequalities** in 11 MS, resulting in an improvement of household financial conditions;
- the social situation for children also improved in many MS, with reductions in the share of **children at risk of poverty or social exclusion** in 10 MS and in the **material and social deprivation rate for children** in 8 MS;
- there were continued rises in the **employment rate of older workers** in 11 MS, while the **income situation of older people** also improved in almost half of EU countries, as reflected in the median relative income ratio and aggregate replacement ratio (up in 13 MS for both indicators).

There were rather more mixed developments in some areas, most notably those concerning **in-work poverty**, the **risk of poverty or social exclusion among older people**, and the **effectiveness of social protection systems**, with a reduction in the impact of social transfers on poverty reduction in 7 MS and an increase in 9 MS and falls and rises in 7 MS respectively in the at-risk-of-poverty rate for (quasi-)jobless households.

The **area with most signs of a deterioration in the social situation** concerned the risk of poverty or social exclusion for **persons with disabilities (16+)**, where the rate worsened in 10 MS. Also of note was the very limited improvement in the situation for **young people** and in addressing the **depth and persistence of income poverty**.

In a **longer-term perspective, compared to 2019**, the reference year for the 2030 poverty and social exclusion target, the overall picture in the latest SPPM update indicates a general picture of **quite limited change for many Member States** except in a few areas.

The following **positive developments** were observed:

- **significant reductions in the at-risk-of-poverty rate** in around a third of Member States, and improvements in the **at-risk-of-poverty threshold** in half, the latter also reflecting widespread

improvements in real gross household disposable incomes in 16 MS and deterioration in no MS compared to 2019;

- significant **reductions in income inequality** in almost half of the EU countries;
- widespread success in **raising the employment rates for older workers** compared to 2019 across a large majority of Member States;
- improvements in **reducing the share of young people not in employment, education or training and in early school leaving** in several countries.

In contrast, there have been rather **mixed developments** in the following areas:

- in the situation of **older people** aged 65 and over, with a **third of countries registering improvements** in the at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rate, the median relative income ratio and the aggregate replacement ratio for this age group but a **broadly similar number of countries showing a deterioration**;
- in the **healthy life years at 65** indicators and in the at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rate for **persons with disabilities**;
- a significant number of countries have witnessed a **weakening of the effectiveness of social protection systems**, as highlighted by declines in the impact of social transfers in reducing poverty and rises in the poverty risk for persons living in (quasi-)jobless households, even if an almost similar number showed an improvement.

Near-term outlook

Looking ahead, a marginal decrease of the risk of poverty is expected for 2024 income data, according to the latest indications from Eurostat flash estimates of income developments, with the at-risk-of poverty rate expected to remain stable in most countries. EU income in 2024 is expected to have continued to increase in both nominal and real terms, signalling an overall improvement in living standards and purchasing power. In-work poverty is also expected to have declined slightly. A rather stable trend is expected in income inequalities.

GDP growth in the EU is expected to be 1.1% for 2025 as a whole and to improve to 1.5% in 2026, according to the European Commission's Spring 2025 Economic Forecast⁴. Further expansion in employment is expected, while the unemployment rate is projected to decline to a new historic low. Tight labour markets and improving productivity are set to drive further wage growth, supporting a further increase in household gross disposable income in 2025 and in 2026. Looking ahead, risks to the outlook are tilted to the downside, potentially due to an escalation of trade tensions between the EU and the US which could

⁴ [Spring 2025 Economic Forecast: Moderate growth amid global economic uncertainty - European Commission](#)

rekindle inflationary pressures and have ripple effects on the EU economy. In addition, the increasing frequency of climate-related disasters underscores a persistent downside risk.

B. Key structural social challenges facing individual Member States

The analysis of Member States' Key Social Challenges (KSCs) and Good Social Outcomes (GSOs) continues to point to a heterogeneous performance of social protection and social inclusion systems across the EU, along with broad stability overall in the social situation that has been ensured during recent years. Differences in level and intensity of the outcomes point to persistent challenges and emerging ones, as summarised below:

- All Member States (MS), except one, have at least one KSC in the area of **poverty and social exclusion**, considering the total population, children and the working age population groups, while 15 MS show GSOs. **Income inequality** appears as a challenge in more than a third of the MS (10), and the **housing** situation, notably issues related to housing deprivation and housing cost overburden is a challenge in more than half (16), while **energy poverty** was identified as a challenge in 12. Regarding non-JAF analyses, challenges were identified for the social situation of **persons with disabilities** (13), **Roma** inclusion (6) and **migrants and refugees** (7). The territorial dimension of poverty and social exclusion, or the divide between **urban and rural areas** are a challenge in 11 MS;
- Regarding the **effectiveness of social protection**, a large majority (22) of MS registered challenges indicated by the capacity of social transfers to reduce the risk of poverty for the general population, for people in working age and children, the depth of poverty for children and the working age population, as well as the incidence of in-work poverty and the rate of long-term unemployment. The **social inclusion of children** is identified challenging in 9 MS, namely as regards equal opportunities for children, especially for those from a disadvantaged socio-economic background, and also in line with the monitoring framework of the Child Guarantee Recommendation. The **adequacy or coverage of minimum income schemes** were found to remain limited in 8 MS. From the perspective of gaps in access to social protection for some categories of non-standard workers or self-employed, challenges were observed in 9 MS too, regarding formal coverage and effective access or linked to adequacy;
- Regarding **Pensions**, issues related to old age poverty and pensions adequacy, as well as gender gaps in pensions were identified, as reflected in poverty or social exclusion in people aged 65 years old or more. In terms of income replacement, more than half (14) of the MS registered challenges. Key challenges were observed in 6 MS concerning gender pension gaps;
- **Insufficient access to long-term care** services, their **lack of affordability, quality**, or the **sub-optimal design** of long-term care systems, have been identified as a challenge in almost half of the MS (12);
- The **health status** analysed by life expectancy of the population either at birth or at 65 (or both in many instances), proves to be a challenge in more than half of the MS (14). As concerns **access to health care**, challenges have been identified in unmet needs for medical care in few MS.

C. Monitoring policy developments

The activities of the Social Protection Committee focus mainly on three main interlinked areas of policy work, which also support the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan:

thematic work, the European Semester, and mutual learning. Furthermore, the Committee carried out several joint activities with the [Employment Committee](#) (EMCO), providing numerous deliverables to the Council, partially related to the European Semester. The section covers activities since September 2024 ⁽⁵⁾.

Thematic work

The SPC held thematic discussions in line with the priorities of the Hungarian and Polish presidencies and to follow up certain initiatives.

A thematic discussion was held on improving access to enabling services and employment services in order to address territorial inequalities and promote social inclusion for combatting poverty, providing input to the preparation of a set of Council Conclusions on [Improving access to enabling services and employment services in order to promote the social inclusion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including Roma, by reducing territorial inequalities](#). The exercise gathered reflections from the Member States on their challenges in this regard and, related to that, facilitated an exchange of good practices to reduce inequalities in access to services through digitalisation and monitoring tools based on social indicators to assess the accessibility and development of enabling, essential and employment services, from a territorial perspective.

A thematic discussion on integration of policies supporting older persons' economic activity aimed at gathering reflections from the Member States on their challenges concerning demographic trends and their implications on labour market and social protection systems, in the context of labour shortages. By exploring the challenges faced by older workers regarding their economic participation in the labour market, this also facilitated an exchange of practices on targeted policy interventions to facilitate longer working lives and support prolonged economic activity, including through flexible retirement pathways. The discussion provided inputs to the Presidency's corresponding [Council conclusions on supporting older people in reaching their full potential in the labour market and in society](#).

As a follow up of the Council [Conclusions of 2 December 2024 on labour and skills shortages in the EU: Mobilising untapped labour potential in the European Union](#), the SPC held a tripartite horizontal debate to support progress in the implementation of the European Commission's [Action Plan on labour and skills shortages](#), with the involvement of relevant EU social partners and civil society organisations. The discussion focused on challenges related to activating underrepresented people in the labour market in line with the Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion, and on challenges and policy responses related to labour and skills shortages in the long-term care and healthcare sectors, with a view of delivering key messages to EPSCO.

Following up on the 2023 review exercise and the adopted key messages, the SPC organised a second review in 2025 on the implementation of the [2022 Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality](#). The review followed the format of a thematic discussion, focusing on relevant

⁽⁵⁾ The closing date of the Annual Report 2024, the number of meetings covers the period of September 2024 to September 2025.

policy measures within the Committee's competence, notably adequate social protection and related aspects in the context of the green transition, with a view of delivering integrated key messages from EMCO and SPC to EPSCO.

Box 1: 2025 SPC Thematic Social Reporting – Access to social protection

The thematic social reporting of this year focused on the implementation of the **Council Recommendation of 2019 on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed**, in the context of a changing world of work, setting access to adequate social protection for all forms of employment as a key element for a well-functioning social market economy.

This exercise aims at presenting an overview of policy responses and remaining challenges in implementing the Recommendation, focusing on reforms and measures taken since mid-2021.

The report **concludes** that the changing world of work, digital transformation and population ageing require continuous adaptation in the rules and organisation of social protection schemes, to ensure that they remain transparent, accessible and adequate for all. Over the last couple of years, Member States have been actively adjusting their social protection systems in response to these challenges.

Member States' replies indicate that many of the measures taken since mid-2021 (i.e. when Member States had submitted their national plans to implement the Council Recommendation) aim to enhance the transparency of social protection schemes, particularly through digitalisation, to ensure that all users are fully aware of their rights and obligations and well equipped to navigate through the system. Simplification has also emerged as a significant trend in the reform agenda. Moreover, several countries reported on measures to improve formal and effective access mainly for specific groups, such as those in non-standard forms of work including artists and domestic workers. In contrast, measures related to enhancing adequacy are mostly often focused on improving the situation of the self-employed or all those who are economically active.

As reported by Member States, the COVID-19 and cost-of-living crises have significantly contributed to boosting already on-going digitalisation trends and to enhancing access to social protection for the self-employed and vulnerable groups of workers.

Despite encouraging developments, ensuring equitable and adequate social protection for all, especially for those in non-standard or intermittent employment, remains challenging. Practical implementation hurdles and financing issues make it often challenging to adapt social protection schemes, initially conceived for employees, to the self-employed. The complexity and fragmentation of social protection systems can, to some degree, explain the lack of awareness of rights and obligations. This also applies to those with fragmented careers, those combining several statuses or transitioning from one status to another, as rules and systems might be more complex for them. In their efforts to enhance transparency

through digitalisation, Member States report encountering challenges with ensuring data security, achieving interoperability between different systems, and addressing the issue of non-take-up. Member States highlight that the digital divide remains a barrier to access, especially for vulnerable groups, due to limited internet access, low digital literacy, and other factors affecting their ability to engage with digital services.

Finally, balancing the sustainability of social protection with effective access and benefit adequacy has emerged as a key concern. While Member States aim to adjust rules on access and benefit levels to better protect individuals, they also strive to ensure the fiscal sustainability of their social protection systems.

In 2025, the [Social Protection Committee](#) and the European Commission continued working together to assess the implementation of the **Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income, ensuring active inclusion**. In accordance with the recommendation, a **joint report of the SPC and the EC** has been prepared with a view of adopting it in September 2025 and having the key messages endorsed by the EPSCO, also providing a contribution to the broader joint anti-poverty efforts. The stand-alone report highlights that the efforts to improve minimum income schemes remain varied across Member States. While some countries have made significant strides, others need to intensify efforts to make their schemes more effective. Increasing adequacy, ensuring broader coverage including by addressing non-take-up, facilitating the integration in the labour market of minimum income recipients and improving access to quality services are critical to achieving results. The focus on individualised support further underscores the need to develop an inclusive model that works for everyone.

[*The European Semester*](#)

During the 2025 Semester cycle, the Committee contributed jointly with the [Employment Committee](#) (EMCO) to the elaboration of the Joint Employment Report and the corresponding Council conclusions. The Committee also conducted 11 **Multilateral Implementation Reviews** (MIRs) of country-specific recommendations (CSRs) in policy areas under its competence, reviewing Member States' reform implementation efforts. Additionally, based on the Social Convergence Framework (SCF) as laid out in the Joint Employment Report (JER) 2025 Key Messages, the 10 countries falling into the second stage analysis were reviewed in **joint SCF reviews** of the [Employment Committee](#) (EMCO) and the SPC, also covering for the 2024 CSRs as relevant. The conclusions of the reviews fed into the joint Opinion of the EMCO and SPC on the 2025 cycle of the European Semester, endorsed by the Council. The reviews concerned **pension, long-term care and healthcare policies, and social protection and social inclusion systems, including measures tackling energy poverty and housing challenges**. Many of the reviews assessed the implementation of CSRs carried over in past cycles of the European Semester, which indicates the long-term and structural nature of the observed challenges.

The reviews concluded that some Member States face challenges related to persistently high risks of poverty or social exclusion, especially for some groups, difficulties in setting up efficient social protection systems that effectively address poverty risks, and high income inequalities, particularly in light of the high inflation experienced in recent years, which inevitably had a greater impact on low-income and jobless

households. Other Member States continue to face challenges in improving access to affordable healthcare and long-term care services, which is particularly critical in light of population ageing. High participation in the labour market, in particular of older people, and efficiency in health care and long-term care provision, are key to reconciling adequate benefits and affordable high-quality services with sustainability of spending in an ageing society, as emphasised by the need for an overarching reform of pension, health care and long-term care systems. Ensuring access to high-quality active inclusion measures - integrated with access to essential and social services - should remain a priority in many Member States, including with a view to reducing inequalities among population groups and across regions, and to strengthening social cohesion.

[Joint EMCO-SPC deliverables to the Council.](#)

In accordance with the [Work Programmes](#) for 2024 and 2025, the Committee provided numerous documents jointly with the [Employment Committee](#) to support the Council.

- [Assessment of the Social Convergence Framework as implemented on a pilot basis in the 2024 European Semester cycle](#), prepared by the [Employment Committee](#) and the [Social Protection Committee](#) (2 December 2024);
- [Employment and social aspects of the 2025 Council Recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area](#) (10 March 2025);
- [Council Conclusions on the 2025 Joint Employment Report](#), approved by the Council (EPSCO) on 10 March 2025;
- [2025 Joint Employment Report](#);
- The employment and social aspects of the Medium-Term Fiscal-Structural Plans: [Letter from the Chairs of the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee](#);
- [Assessment of the country-specific recommendations for 2025 and implementation of the country-specific recommendations for 2024: Opinion of the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee](#);
- [Horizontal note on country-specific recommendations 2025](#), prepared by the Polish Presidency;
- [Opinion of the Employment Committee on the dimensions of job quality](#), with the input of SPC.

The joint EMCO and SPC horizontal opinion on the 2025 **European Semester recalled an integrated approach to economic, fiscal, employment and social policies** for the retention of the coordinating and monitoring role of the EPSCO filière on all matters related to labour market, skills and social policies. The committees emphasized the need for establishing an adequate and predictable timeline for the Spring Package onwards 2026 ensuring **effective cooperation and joint reflections between the EPSCO and the ECOFIN filières**.

[Mutual learning activities](#)

The **Minimum Income Network (MINET)** focused in 2025 on the topics of practices linked to activating groups furthest from the labour market, jointly with the Advisors to the European PES Affairs (AFEPA). Additionally, the meetings served to present the first draft of the joint SPC - Commission report on the implementation of the Council recommendation on minimum income ensuring active inclusion and on the upcoming Eurostat work on data collection for minimum income benefits (ESSPROS).

In order to further support the implementation of the 2019 Council recommendation on **access to social protection for workers and self-employed**, three **mutual learning** events were organised on monitoring, including data and indicators, social protection coverage for vulnerable groups of workers (precarious temporary workers and solo self-employed) with a focus on unemployment benefits, and social protection for artists.

The **meetings of the national Child Guarantee** Coordinators contributed to the exchange of good practices and monitoring of the implementation of the related Council Recommendation. The exchanges focused on early childhood education and care, provision of free healthy school meals, and progress with expansion of childcare and provision of after-school activities. In addition, dedicated meetings discussed the update of the common monitoring framework to assess implementation of the European Child Guarantee, and the progress on relevant projects under the Technical Support Instrument.

Concerning the **Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care**, mutual learning activities built on the measures reported by the Member States in their national implementation plans and subsequent policy dialogues. A high-level conference "[Affordable high-quality long-term care: Catalysing dialogue and action under the European Care Strategy](#)" (November 2024) took stock of implementation actions and discussed common long-term care challenges and ways to address them through joint actions and commitments at European and national levels. The webinar "[Towards a more coherent framework for addressing long-term care workforce challenges: from evidence to policy responses](#)" (June 2025) fostered a collaborative dialogue among key stakeholders on how to improve the long-term care workforce situation and address shortages and low attractiveness of the sector through better working conditions and enforcement of labour rights, as well as reinforced support for professionalisation of the sector.

To follow up on the Communication on better assessing the **distributional impact of Member States' policies**, stressing the importance of **Distributional Impact Assessment (DIA)** analyses, three mutual learning events were organised since mid-2024. The meetings provided opportunities for exploring country practices with a thematic focus on access to data, health in-kind benefits, and in-depth discussions between experts from employment, social and economy and finance ministries on best practices and the added value of DIA to support evidence-based policy making. The last event placed emphasis on the impact of employment and social policies (including for instance non take-up of benefits or considering data and modelling issues) and beyond on a broader range of policies (such as in-kind benefits, wealth, housing) as well as governance or dissemination issues or more broadly social impact assessment relating to the "do no significant social harm" approach.

The **European Platform on Combatting Homelessness**, bringing together Member States, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee, social partners and relevant

civil society stakeholders, carried out mutual learning activities supporting Member States to develop and improve their national homelessness strategies. The two-year project EPOCH Practice aims at supporting the Platform through knowledge and capacity building. Furthermore, four transnational social innovation projects under the ESF+ aim to pilot evidence-based innovation practices to further enhance mutual learning. Key actions related to the analytical strand of the Platform include a pilot project on a European Homelessness Count (with two city counts in the Autumn of 2024 and of 2025 in 15 and 35 cities respectively), a policy toolkit, monitoring framework and data mapping and a new project on a blueprint for integrated action plans and on homelessness policy evaluation, delivered with OECD. The working group of the Platform on access to finance is to map available funding options, build capacity and expertise of project promoters and support the development of projects to combat homelessness.

The '[Disability Platform](#)' held three meetings since mid-2024, focusing on several topics, including an exchange with civil society organisations on the thematic priorities, exchange on the input to the dialogue with the UN CRPD, as well as a presentation and a discussion on setting up national targets for employment of persons with disabilities.

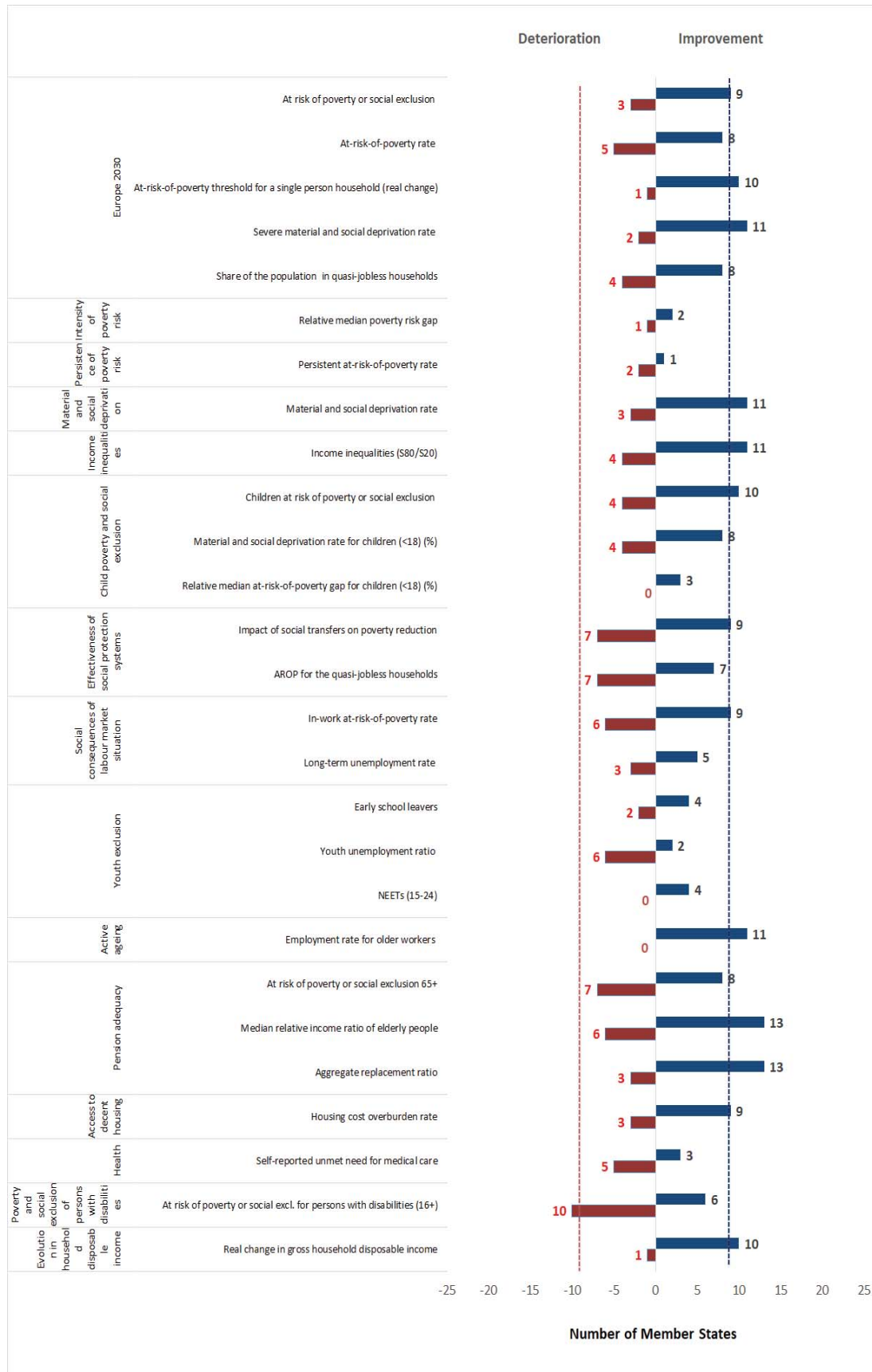
Under the **peer review program** of the SPC, three **reviews** were organised and an additional three are planned in 2025. The aim of the peer reviews was to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of given approaches and explore their potential transferability to other Member States. Topics of the peer reviews covered '[Participation of persons with disabilities in the development of social services at local level](#)', hosted by Austria, '[The Implementation of Housing First approach to tackle long-term homelessness of people with complex needs](#)', initiated by Ireland and '[Social protection and inclusion of older persons](#)' was held in Norway.

Table ESA1: Developments across Member States in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and comparison to national poverty reduction targets or equivalent in terms of AROPE

	National target (reduction of AROPE in 1000s vs 2019 figures). Non-AROPE based targets shown in parentheses)	AROPE population 2019 (1000s)	AROPE population 2020 (1000s)	AROPE population 2021 (1000s)	AROPE population 2022 (1000s)	AROPE population 2023 (1000s)	AROPE population 2024 (1000s)	Mini charts of trends to latest available year	Change 2019-2020 (1000s)	Change 2020-2021 (1000s)	Change 2021-2022 (1000s)	Change 2022-2023 (1000s)	Change 2023-2024 (1000s)	Overall change 2019-2024 (1000s)
BE	-279	2,260	2,307	2,142	2,144	2,150	2,121		47	-165	2	6	-29	-139
BG	-787	2,324	2,332	2,193	2,206	1,933	1,953		8	-139	13	-273	20	-371
CZ	-120	1,264	1,205	1,132	1,209	1,247	1,183		-59	-73	77	38	-64	-81
DK*	(-30 VLWI)	994	970	1,000	997	1,056	1,065		-24	30	-3	59	9	71
DE**	(-1200 VLWI)	17,401	16,735	17,255	17,543	17,886	17,687		-666	520	288	343	-199	286
EE	-39	311	300	293	332	327	302		-11	-7	39	-5	-25	-9
IE	-90	988	932	985	1,003	988	880		-56	53	18	-15	-108	-108
EL	-860	3,059	2,880	2,971	2,722	2,658	2,744		-179	91	-249	-64	86	-315
ES	-2,815	12,169	12,642	13,040	12,189	12,552	12,458		473	398	-851	363	-94	289
FR*	-1,100	11,716	12,006	12,115	12,970	12,740	12,950		290	109	855	-230	210	1,234
HR	-298	841	806	817	752	772	810		-35	11	-65	20	38	-31
IT	-3,200	14,803	14,821	14,834	14,305	13,392	13,525		18	13	-529	-913	133	-1,278
CY	-10	162	156	154	150	153	164		-6	-2	-4	3	11	2
LV	-95	506	473	488	482	476	449		-33	15	-6	-6	-27	-57
LT	-223	712	685	661	690	695	744		-27	-24	29	5	49	32
LU	-4	119	119	126	121	139	132		0	7	-5	18	-7	13
HU*	Reduce MSD rate of families with children to 13% (AROPE by 292,000)	1,923	1,854	1,865	1,750	1,872	1,914		-69	11	-115	122	42	-9
MT*	(-3.1 AROPE p.p.)	100	100	103	103	105	108		0	3	0	2	3	8
NL	-163	2,809	2,739	2,862	2,863	2,770	2,723		-70	123	1	-93	-47	-86
AT	-204	1,434	1,460	1,519	1,555	1,592	1,529		26	59	36	37	-63	95
PL	-1,500	6,575	6,305	6,296	5,873	5,972	5,815		-270	-9	-423	99	-157	-760
PT	-765	2,173	2,056	2,312	2,084	2,104	2,095		-117	256	-228	20	-9	-78
RO	-2,532	7,032	6,897	6,572	6,525	6,033	5,294		-135	-325	-47	-492	-739	-1,738
SI	-9	279	295	275	276	287	302		16	-20	1	11	15	23
SK	-70	795	744	841	888	943	980		-51	97	47	55	37	185
FI	-100	788	810	773	891	866	927		22	-37	118	-25	61	139
SE	-15	1,879	1,832	1,790	1,941	1,932	1,843		-47	-42	151	-9	-89	-36

Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC). Note: * Countries that have expressed their national target in relation to an indicator different from the EU headline target indicator (AROPE), or in a format other than absolute population reductions.

Figure ESA1: Areas of deterioration (social trends to watch) and improvement for the period 2023-2024



Source: Social Protection Performance Monitor

I. Introduction

The SPC is an advisory policy committee to the EPSCO Council that provides a representative forum for multilateral social policy coordination, dialogue and cooperation at EU level. It brings together policy makers from all EU Member States and the Commission with the aim to identify, discuss and implement the policy mix that corresponds best to meeting the various challenges faced by Member States in the area of social protection policies. It uses the social open method of coordination (OMC) and is assisted in carrying out its tasks by the permanent Indicators Sub-Group (ISG) and the non-permanent Minimum Income Network Group (MINET) and Working Group on Adequate Social Protection in Old Age (ADAGE).

The yearly activities of the SPC are defined in the SPC work programme⁽⁶⁾, which is set at the start of each year and is presented at the spring meeting of the Employment and Social Ministers. The programme is prepared taking into consideration the most current EU policy priorities and topics of the incoming Presidencies of the EU and the Commission (more details on the deliverables are presented in chapter V). In 2025, in addition to the activities listed in its annual programme, the SPC also engaged (jointly with the Employment Committee) in various activities initiated by the Hungarian and Polish EU Presidencies.

The main objective of the present report is to deliver on the mandate of the Committee to monitor the social situation in the European Union and the development of social protection policies (Article 160 of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)), and, through its analysis, to provide input to the Council on the main social policy priorities to recommend to the Commission in the context of the preparation of the European Semester Autumn Package. This year the key messages to the Council based on the report will be published as a separate document, once endorsed by the Council at one of its autumn meetings.

On the basis of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) and Member States' social reporting, the report aims at i) **monitoring the social situation** ⁽⁷⁾, especially the progress towards the 2030 target on reducing poverty and social exclusion and highlighting the common *social trends to watch*, ii) **identifying the key structural social challenges facing individual Member States as well as their good social outcomes**, and iii) **reviewing the most recent social policy developments in Europe**. An overview is also provided, making use of the available information and some more timely, non-standard data sources ⁽⁸⁾, on the very latest evolution in developments in the social situation in the EU and its Member States. A separate annex to the report (Annex 1) contains the country profiles, which provide for each Member State a snapshot of progress towards the national 2030 poverty and social exclusion target, trends in the main social indicators for each country, and the main, priority social challenges and good social outcomes identified for each

⁽⁶⁾ Work programme of the SPC for [2025](#)

⁽⁷⁾ Figures quoted in this report are generally based on data available around 8 July 2025, unless otherwise stated.

⁽⁸⁾ These include Eurostat flash estimates of expected developments in income and poverty for the year 2024, the European Commission's Spring 2025 Economic Forecast, a "financial distress" indicator derived from harmonised EU consumer surveys and data on the number of social benefit recipients collected via ISG delegates.

country. Annex 2 provides details of the methodology for the SPPM-based assessments as well as definitions and data sources for indicators used in the report.

II. Overview of developments in the social situation in the EU

Following a scene setting on the main economic and labour market developments in the EU up to 2024, together with trends in expenditure, take-up and effectiveness of social benefit schemes, this section provides a review of the latest trends from the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) dashboard. It is mainly based on the early-July 2025 update of the SPPM dashboard, a tool that uses a set of key EU social indicators for monitoring developments in the social situation in the European Union. The latest update of the SPPM dashboard is based on the set of 2024 EU-SILC data (which refers to 2024 for deprivation indicators and 2023 for income and work intensity indicators), and the 2024 Labour Force Survey data. In addition, some indications are also provided on the more recent developments in income, based on Eurostat flash estimates, together with a summary of the economic and social outlook for 2025 as a whole.

(a) Development in the economic, labour market and social situation up to early 2025

Following on to the weak economic progress of the previous year, growth in the EU picked up over the course of 2024, with year-on-year GDP growth reaching 1.4% in the last quarter of the year and the first quarter of 2025 (Figure 1). Total employment continued to expand, although with the rate of year-on-year growth declining over the year and falling to 0.4% by the first quarter of 2025.

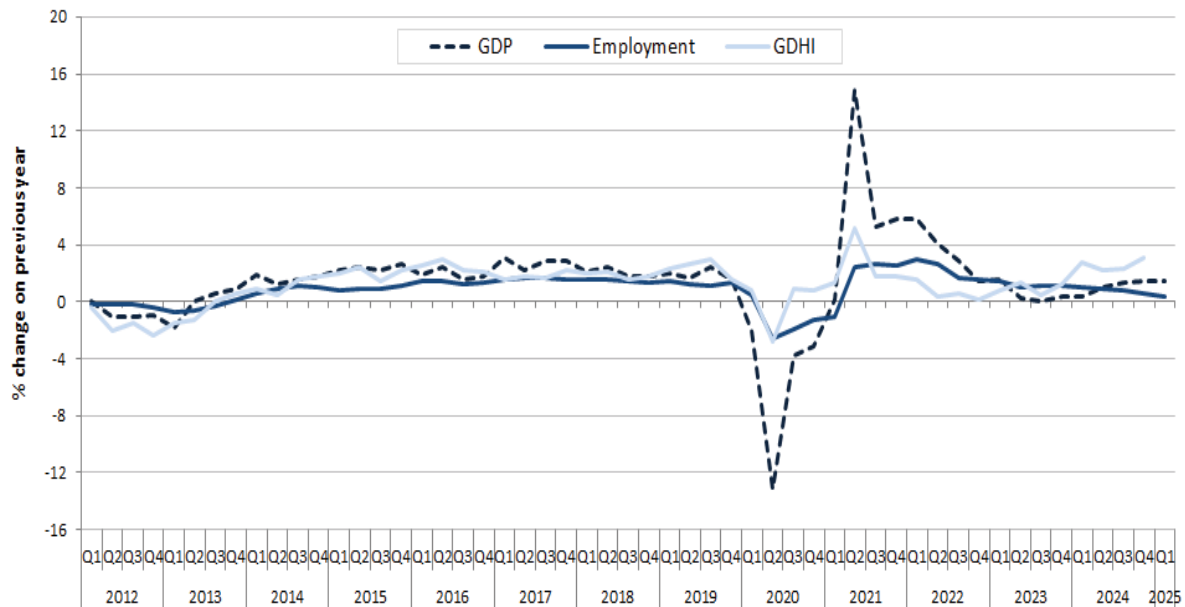
The unemployment rate in the EU fell gradually from 6.1% in January 2024 to a low of 5.8% in October and November, but then edged up slightly to hover around the 5.9% level from then on into May 2025, despite consumers' increasing expectations for unemployment to rise (Figure 2). The rate consequently remained at historically low levels over 2024 and the first half of 2025, well down on those experienced in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and during the more recent COVID crises. According to the European Commission's Spring 2025 Economic Forecast ⁽⁹⁾, despite the impact of increased tariffs and the heightened uncertainty caused by the recent abrupt changes in US trade policy, the EU unemployment rate is projected to remain broadly stable over 2025.

Showing a marked improvement compared to 2023, year-on-year growth in real aggregate household income in the EU27 (as measured through real GDHI, gross disposable household income) was relatively strong over 2024, and reached 3.1% in the last quarter. The improvement in 2024 mainly reflected strong increases in the contribution from real compensation of employees and to a much lesser extent of the self-employed, in line with the improvements in the labour market and rising real wages (Figure 3). By the last

⁽⁹⁾ [Spring 2025 Economic Forecast: Moderate growth amid global economic uncertainty - European Commission](#)

quarter of 2024, real gross household disposable income for the EU was around 7% higher compared to the same quarter of 2019, before the COVID pandemic and subsequent energy crisis hit the EU.

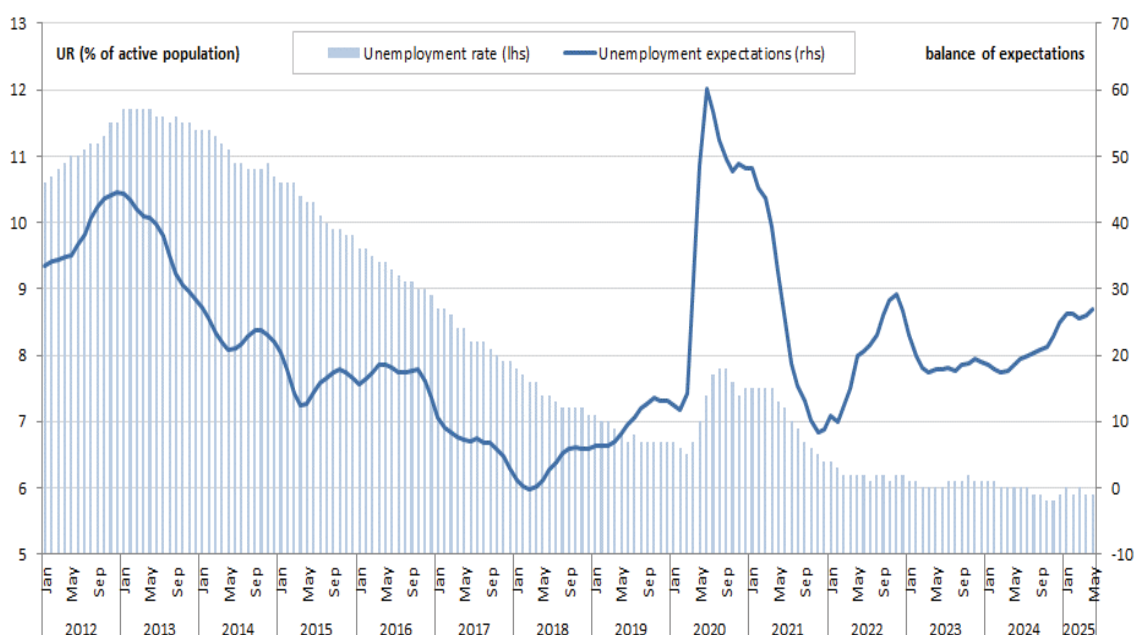
Figure 1: Real GDP, GDHI and employment growth in the EU, quarterly 2012-2025 (% change on same quarter of previous year)



Source: Eurostat, National Accounts [namq_10_gdp, namq_10_pe, nasq_10_nf_tr], DG EMPL calculations. Data not seasonally adjusted.

Note: GDHI EU aggregate for Member States for which data are available. Nominal GDHI is converted into real GDHI by deflating with the deflator (price index) of household final consumption expenditure.

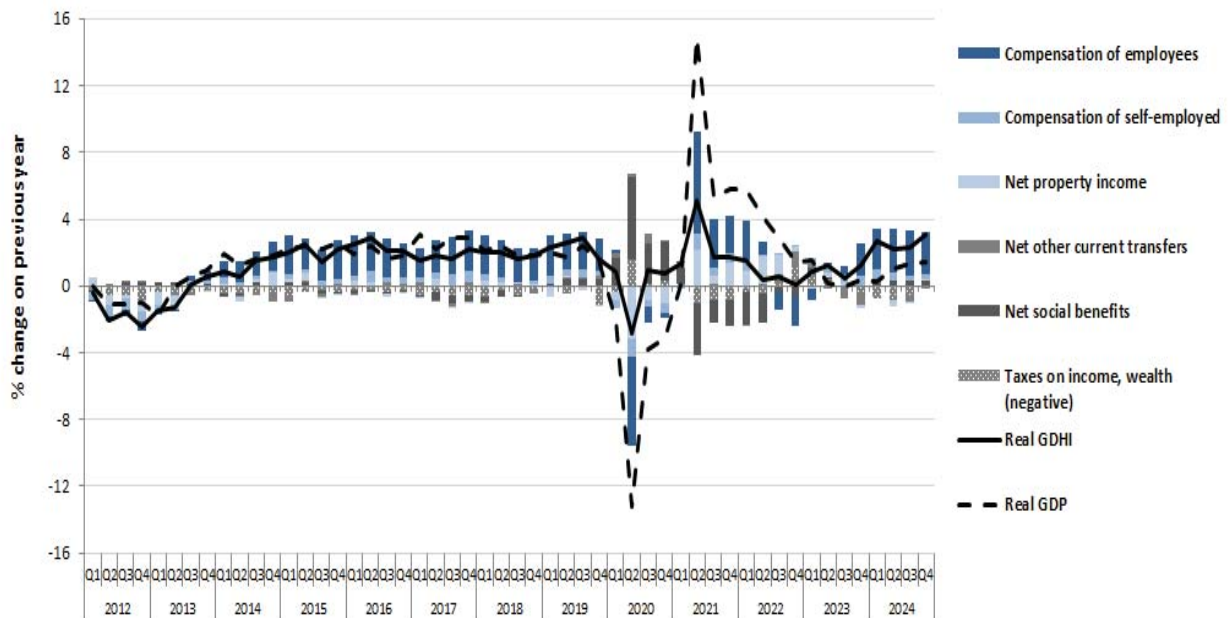
Figure 2: Unemployment rate versus unemployment expectations in the EU



Source: Eurostat, series on unemployment; European Commission, Business and Consumer Surveys [une_rt_m, ei_bsco_m]. Data seasonally adjusted

Notes: Unemployment expectations: consumers' expectations for unemployment in the country over the next 12 months, moving average over past 3 months. The right scale is the balance between the share of respondents who expect higher unemployment and those who expect a lower one.

Figure 3: Real GDP growth, real GDHI growth and its main components - EU



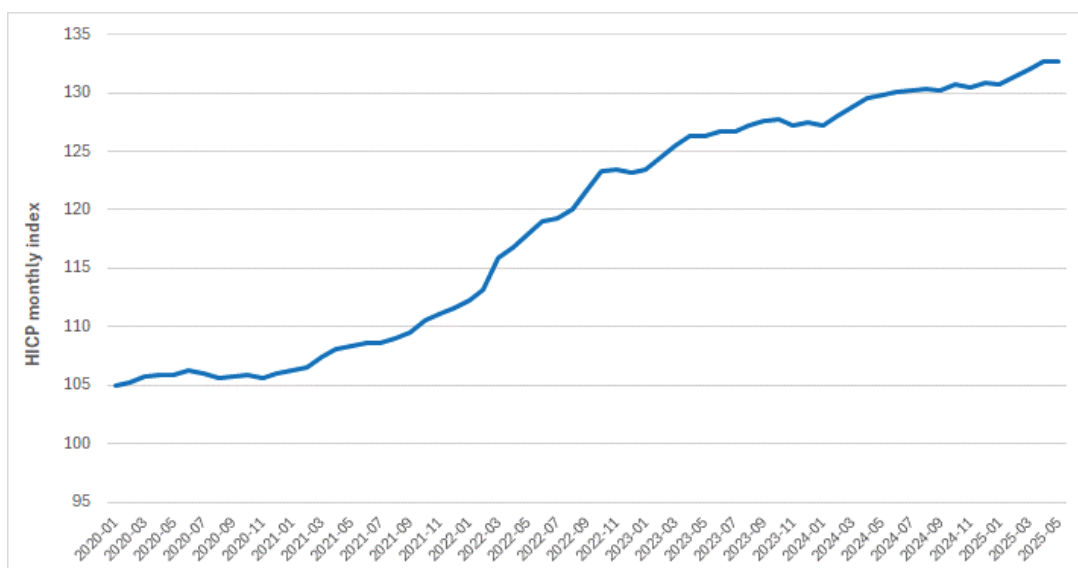
Source: Eurostat, National Accounts [nasq_10_nf_tr and namq_10_gdp]. Data non-seasonally adjusted

Notes: The nominal GDHI is converted into real GDHI by deflating with the deflator (price index) of household final consumption expenditure. DG EMPL calculations.

Inflation more subdued than in previous years and signs of a partial recovery in household purchasing power

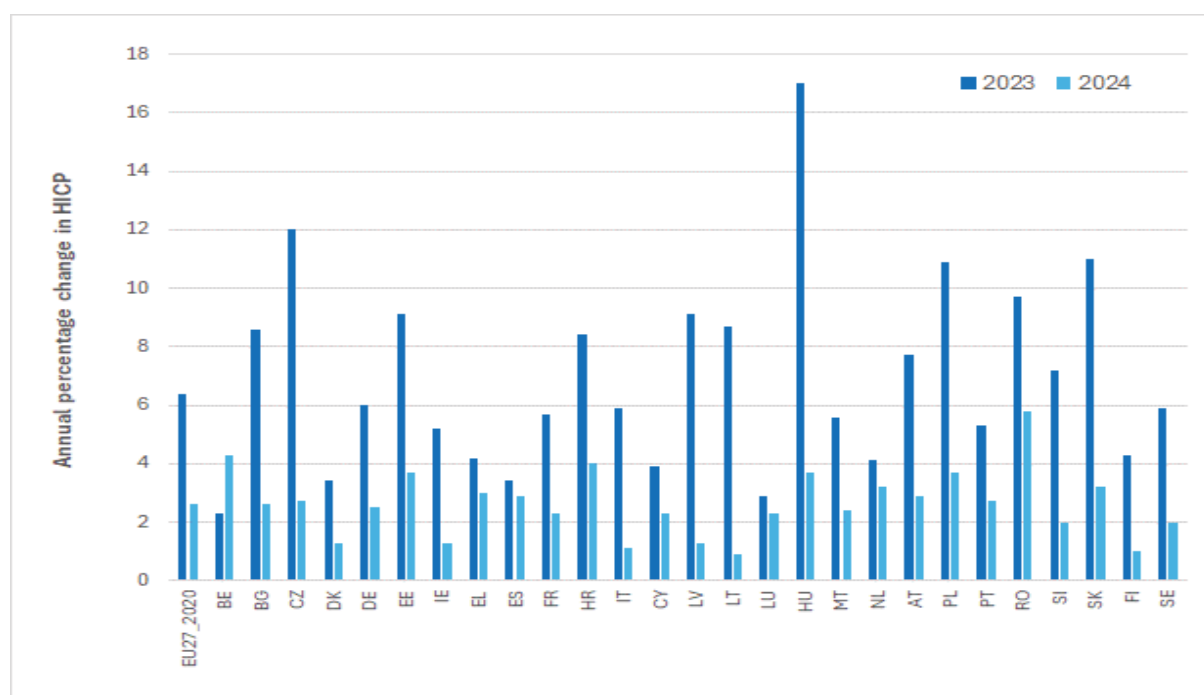
Inflation in the EU softened over most of 2024 compared to the sharp rises of the preceding years following the launching by Russia of its war of aggression against Ukraine, but showed signs of picking up again in early 2025 (Figure 4). In almost all Member States (except Belgium) inflation in 2024 was much more subdued than in 2023. This was especially the case in the Baltic and Central and Eastern European Member States (Figure 5).

Figure 4. EU27 Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices, January 2020 to May 2025



Source: Eurostat, HICP - monthly data (index) [prc_hicp_midx], 2015=100

Figure 5. Changes in Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices across Member States (Annual percentage change 2023 and 2024)



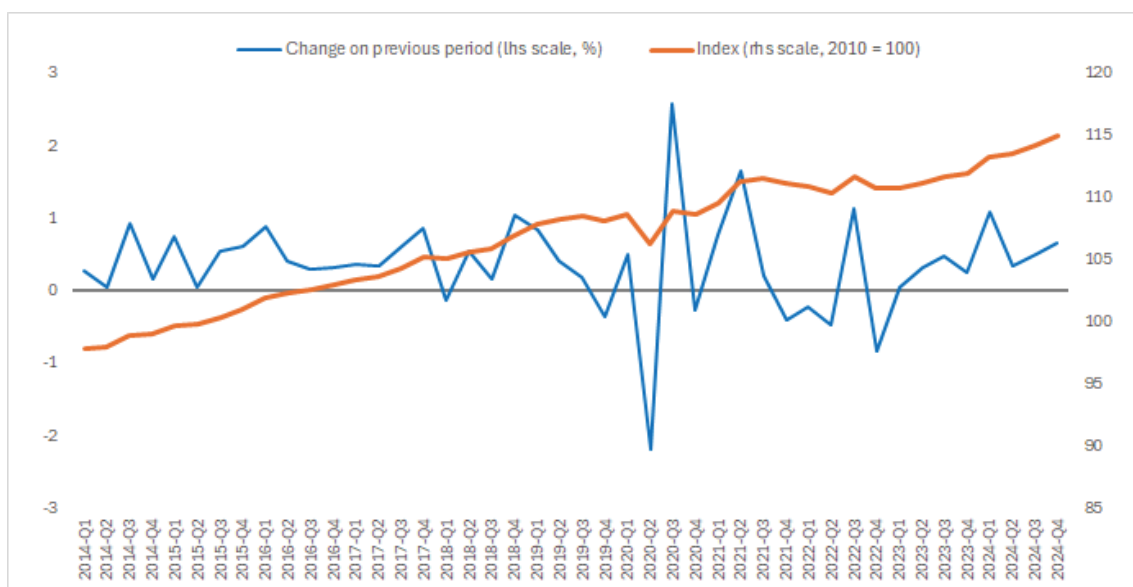
Source: Eurostat, HICP annual data (prc_hicp_aind)

The cumulative effect of price increases over recent years remains high. However, an indicator based on quarterly national accounts data - the “quarterly growth rate of the gross disposable income of households

and non-profit institutions serving households, per capita in real terms”⁽¹⁰⁾ - shows that the EU has generally seen some recovery in households’ purchasing power in real terms over the last two years, with GDHI being slightly positive over 2023 and picking up more strongly in 2024 (Figure 6). The cumulative effect over time, as shown by the index of gross disposable income of households in real terms per capita, indicates that at EU level household income has been quite resilient to recent shocks and has improved in recent years and compared to 2019.

Developments in household purchasing power over the last two years for Member States for which quarterly GDHI data is available, indicate that GDHI in real terms per capita rose in most of these countries over 2024. The exceptions were Belgium, Greece and Hungary where purchasing power fell, and Finland and the Netherlands where it did not change (Figure 7). The most notable increases were in Austria, Poland and Portugal. With regard to the overall change in purchasing power between the last quarter of 2022 and that of 2024, all countries recorded an improvement, with rises in Poland and Portugal being especially strong.

Figure 6 – Estimated quarterly growth rate (in % vs previous quarter) of the Gross disposable income of households, in real terms per capita, and evolution in index

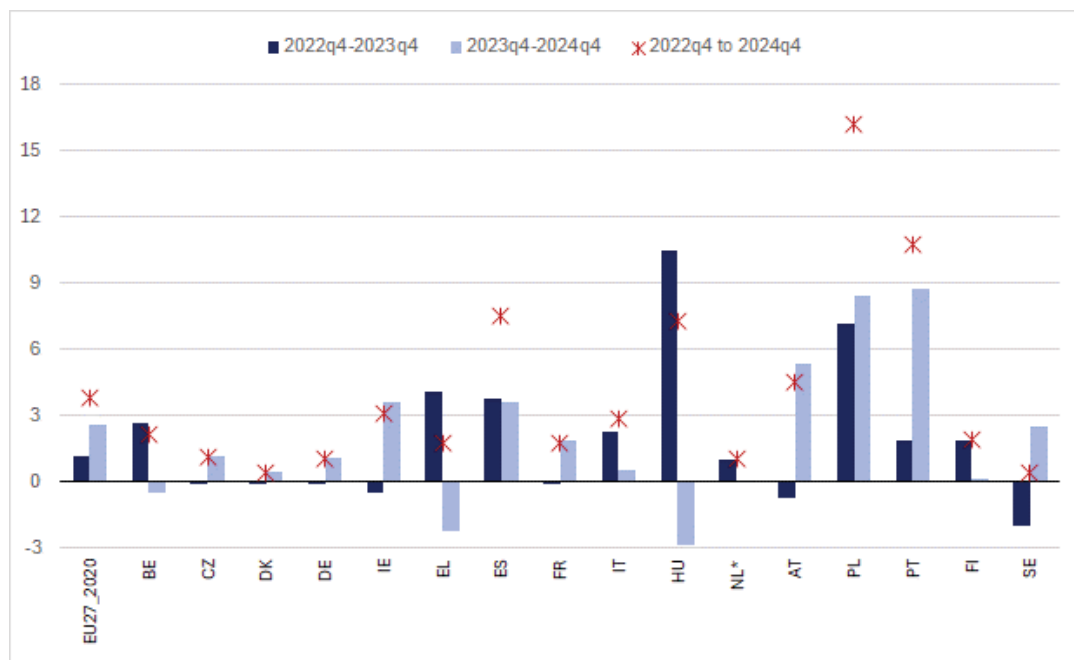


Source: Eurostat, national accounts [nasq_10_ki]

Note: Estimates obtained by dividing "(non-adjusted for social transfers in kind) GDHI for households and NPISH" (in current prices in national currency, source: ESTAT) by the price deflator index of the "final consumption expenditure for households and NPISH" (in national currency, source: ESTAT) and by the total population of a Member State (source: ESTAT) (linearly smoothing over quarters the population between year's start and year's end). GDHI and price index data used are seasonally and calendar adjusted.

⁽¹⁰⁾ The "quarterly growth rate (in %, versus the previous quarter) of the Gross (non-adjusted, i.e social transfers in-kind are not taken into account).disposable income (seasonal and calendar adjusted) of households and NPISH (Non-profit institutions serving households) per capita in real terms. This indicator allows to monitor the evolution of purchasing power on a quarterly basis, although it is only available for around half of the Member States.

Figure 7 - Growth rate in gross disposable income of households in real terms per capita, 2022Q4 to 2024Q4 in Member States where quarterly data is available



Source: Eurostat, national accounts [nasq_10_ki]

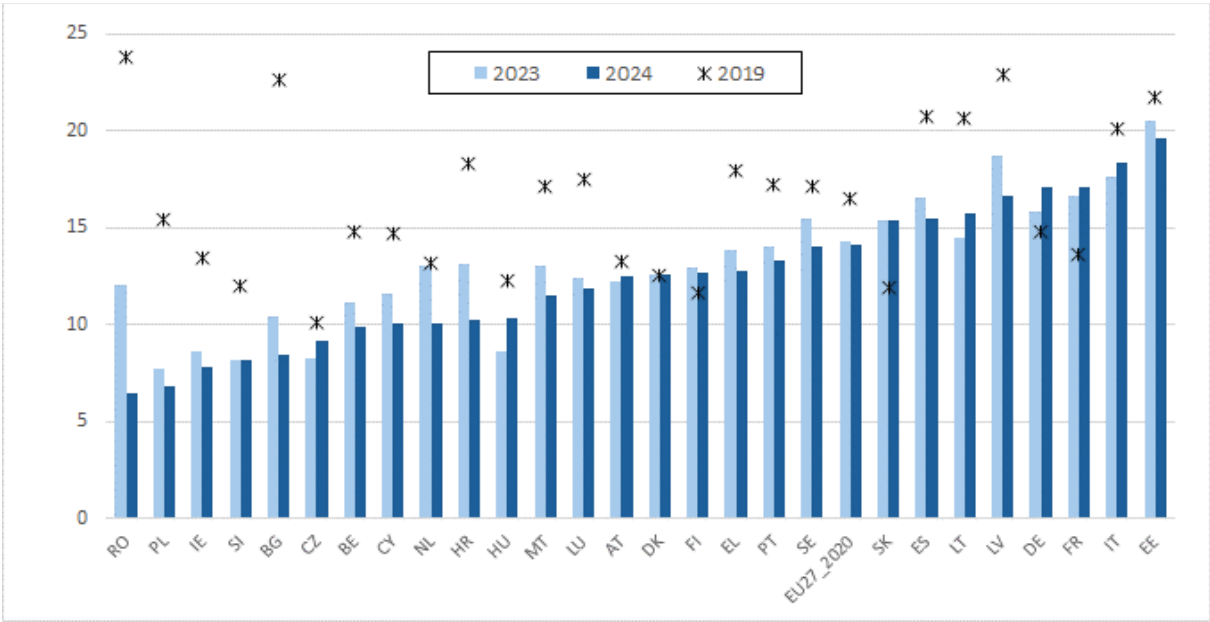
Note: Estimates have been obtained by: dividing "(non-adjusted for social transfers in kind) GDHI for households and NPISH" (in current prices in national currency, source: ESTAT) by the price deflator index of the "final consumption expenditure for households and NPISH" (in national currency, source: ESTAT) and by the total population of a Member State (source: ESTAT) (linearly smoothing over quarters the population between year's start and year's end). GDHI and price index data used are those Seasonally and calendar adjusted. The change for NL refers to changes to 2024q3.

The at-risk-of-poverty anchored in time is a useful complement to the standard at-risk-of-poverty rate as the effects of a moving (income) poverty threshold are controlled for in this indicator. It involves keeping the poverty threshold fixed in real terms over a longer period of time and can thus provide useful context information to the at-risk-of-poverty rate, especially in times of falling incomes or high inflation⁽¹¹⁾. The anchored poverty rate fell in around two-thirds of Member States between 2023 and 2024 (Figure 8), confirming that the financial situation for households at the bottom of the income distribution generally improved over 2024 in most countries, and only rose noticeably in Czechia, France, Germany, Italy, Hungary⁽¹²⁾ and Lithuania. For most countries the anchored poverty rate in 2024 was markedly lower than that in 2019, the main exceptions being Finland, France, Germany and Slovakia.

⁽¹¹⁾ The at risk of poverty rate at a fixed moment in time (2019) is the share of persons in the total population with a nominal equivalized disposable income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold calculated in survey year 2019 up-rated by inflation over the years (based on the annual harmonised index of consumer prices (HICP)). This operation results in the 'real' value of the threshold base year, i.e. adjusted for price increases in subsequent years.

⁽¹²⁾ Discussions are ongoing between the Hungarian Central Statistics Office and Eurostat about the possible revision of income data and corresponding indicators such as the anchored poverty rate for the data reference years 2018-23.

Figure 8 - At-risk-of-poverty rate (%) anchored at a fixed moment in time (2019), 2019, 2023 and 2024



Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC [ilc_li22]

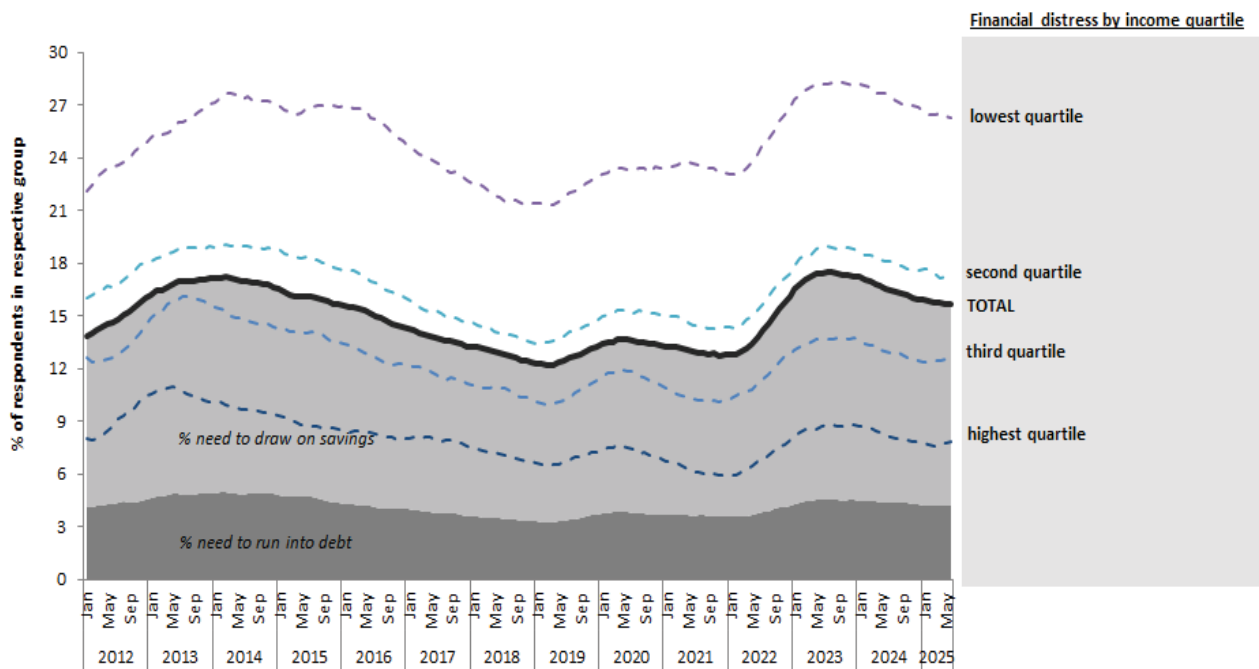
Financial distress among consumers

In line with the improvement in real gross disposable household income in 2024, the overall share of people in the EU reporting financial distress declined over 2024 and into early 2025, falling to 15.7% in June 2025 (Figure 9). (The “financial distress” indicator ⁽¹³⁾ is derived from harmonised EU consumer surveys, and provides a timely indication of trends in the share of the population whose households are facing financial difficulties and how households in the different income quartiles have been affected).

Despite the recent improvement the level of financial distress remains historically relatively high, reflecting the cumulative impact of the sharp rises in prices over 2022 and 2023. Underlying the June 2025 figure, 11.5% of respondents reported a need to draw on savings and 4.2% the need to run into debt. While these are down on the recent peaks in 2023 of 12.9% and 4.5% respectively, they indicate that many people still need to make use of their savings and that almost one in every twenty people are running into debt in order to cope.

Figure 9: Reported financial distress in the EU by income quartile – 2012 to spring 2024

⁽¹³⁾ European Commission joint harmonised EU business and consumer surveys include a question on household financial situations, which has been used to derive a “financial distress” indicator. The indicator focuses on households declaring that they had to “draw on their savings or go into debt in order to meet current expenditure”. While subjective, it can provide a timely indication of the deterioration/improvement in the financial situation of households, and help to signal expected developments in the main indicators derived from EU-SILC. Still, both its subjective nature and the limited information on sampling and data-collection issues require some caution in the interpretation of the results.



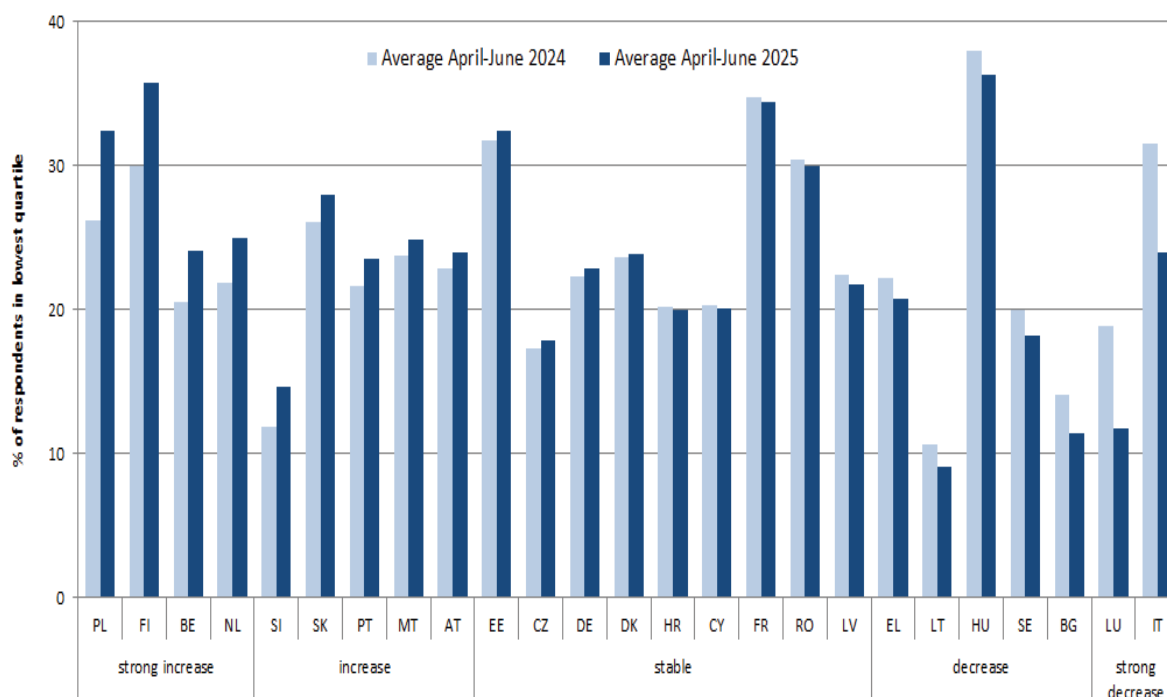
Source: European Commission, Business and Consumer Surveys. 12-month moving average (DG EMPL calculations)

Notes: Reported financial distress by income quartile, and components of reported financial distress (share of adults reporting necessity to draw on savings and share of adults reporting need to run into debt). The overall share of adults reporting having to draw on savings and having to run into debt are shown respectively by the light grey and dark grey areas, which together represent total financial distress.

Despite falling recently, financial distress remains particularly high for those on low incomes, affecting more than one in four of those in the lowest income quartile. However, it has fallen the most strongly for this group compared to the level at the start of 2024, and with those in the top quartile seeing the weakest fall, thus leading to a slight narrowing of the gap between them. In June 2025, 26.3% of those in the lowest income quartile reported being in financial distress, compared to 7.9% for those in the highest income quartile. Shares of those in financial distress in the middle-income brackets, i.e. the second and third quartiles, were 17.2% and 12.5% respectively. The sharp rise in the cost of living of previous years continues to be felt by all income groups, but especially so by those in the lower part of the income distribution.

Developments over the latest year in the level of financial distress among people in the lowest income quartile vary considerably across Member States. Financial distress decreased noticeably in 7 Member States between the second quarter of 2024 and that of 2025, and most strongly so in Luxembourg and Italy. For around a third of Member States, reported financial distress remained broadly stable. However, in a third of EU countries the share of people in financial distress in the lowest quartile increased, most notably in Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands and Poland (Figure 10). In the second quarter of 2025, the share of people in the lowest income quartile reporting financial distress was especially high (at or above 30%) in Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Romania and Poland.

Figure 10: Reported financial distress in the lowest income quartile across Member States, 2024 Q2 and 2025 Q2



Source: European Commission, Business and Consumer Surveys. 3-month moving average (DG EMPL calculations)
 Notes: No data for IE in 2024, no data for ES in 2025.

(b) Trends in expenditure, take-up and effectiveness of social benefit schemes

Social protection systems can contribute to the smooth functioning of the labour market and to inclusive growth, and act as automatic stabilisers. Moreover, to protect people from the consequences of the occurrence of social risks and to support the needs of people at risk of poverty, governments provide social security in the form of social transfers. The principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights provide support for national social protection systems that invest effectively and efficiently in people and support them through changes stemming from new and emerging challenges.

Expenditure on social protection benefits

A key element affecting the redistribution of income is transfers through social benefit payments (and the related impact on income-based variables in 2024 EU-SILC data (which relate to incomes in 2023, the year before the survey)). Early estimates ⁽¹⁴⁾ on EU expenditure on social protection benefits in 2023⁽¹⁵⁾ indicate that EU countries spent 26.8% of gross domestic product (GDP) on social protection benefits. In nominal

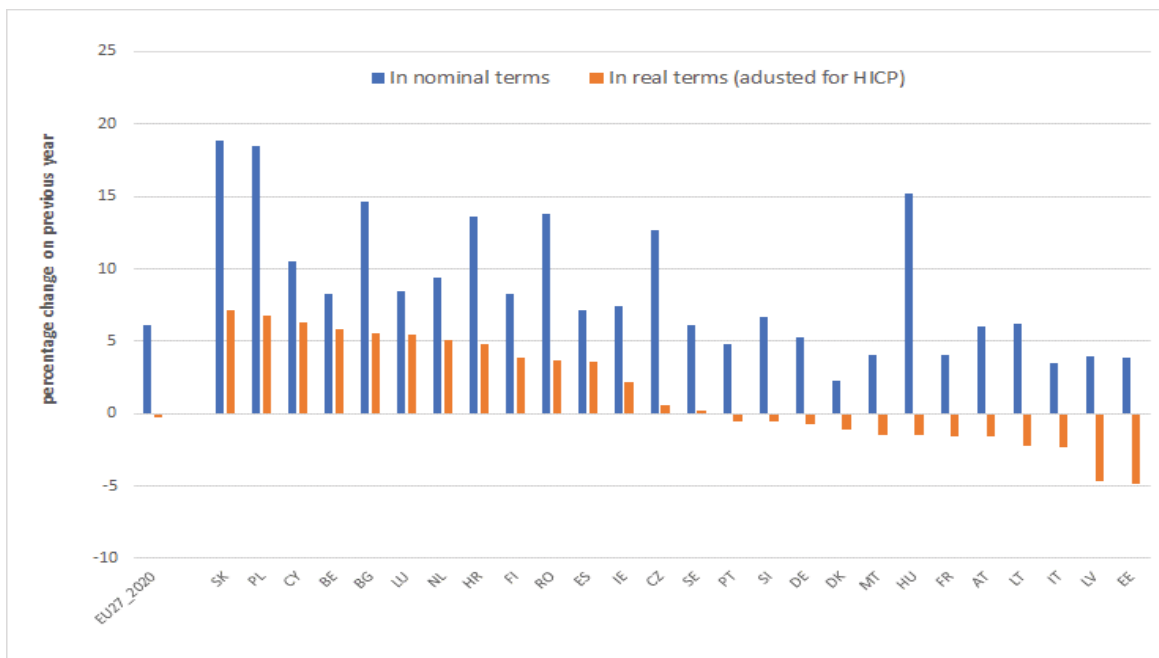
⁽¹⁴⁾ Note that this section compares early estimates with indicators based on the ESSPROS Core System (which is more robust). In addition, the early estimates do not include 'administration costs'.

⁽¹⁵⁾ See the Eurostat Statistics Explained articles on the following link for further details:
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Social_protection_statistics_-_early_estimates

terms this was an increase of 6.1% compared with 2022, but a fall of 0.3% in real terms. Relative to GDP, expenditure on social protection benefits was almost unchanged, falling from 26.9% in 2022 to 26.8%, as GDP rose at a faster pace (up 6.5% in nominal terms).

In nominal terms, the largest increases in social protection expenditure in 2023 (Figure 11) were observed in Slovakia (up 18.9% compared with 2022) and Poland (up 18.4%). In contrast, expenditure on social protection benefits rose at a relatively slow pace in 2023 in Denmark (up 2.3%), Italy (up 3.5%), Estonia (up 3.8%), Latvia (up 4.0%) and France (up 4.1%). However, when adjusted for inflation in 2023 (using the overall HICP), the change in expenditure in real terms was clearly negative in around one-third of Member States, especially in the Baltic States, Austria, France and Italy, unchanged in around 5 countries, and clearly positive, although at rates much lower than the nominal values, in just under half of Member States.

Figure 11: Annual percentage change in expenditure on social protection benefits, 2023, in nominal terms and real terms (adjusted for annual change in HICP)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: *spr_exp_func*) and Eurostat early estimates, and DG EMPL calculation of real change.

Note: for the EU aggregate and for euro area Member States, variations are based on data in euro terms. For countries not in the euro area, variations are based on data in national currencies. Greece not available. All data are preliminary. ⁽¹⁾ Eurostat estimate.

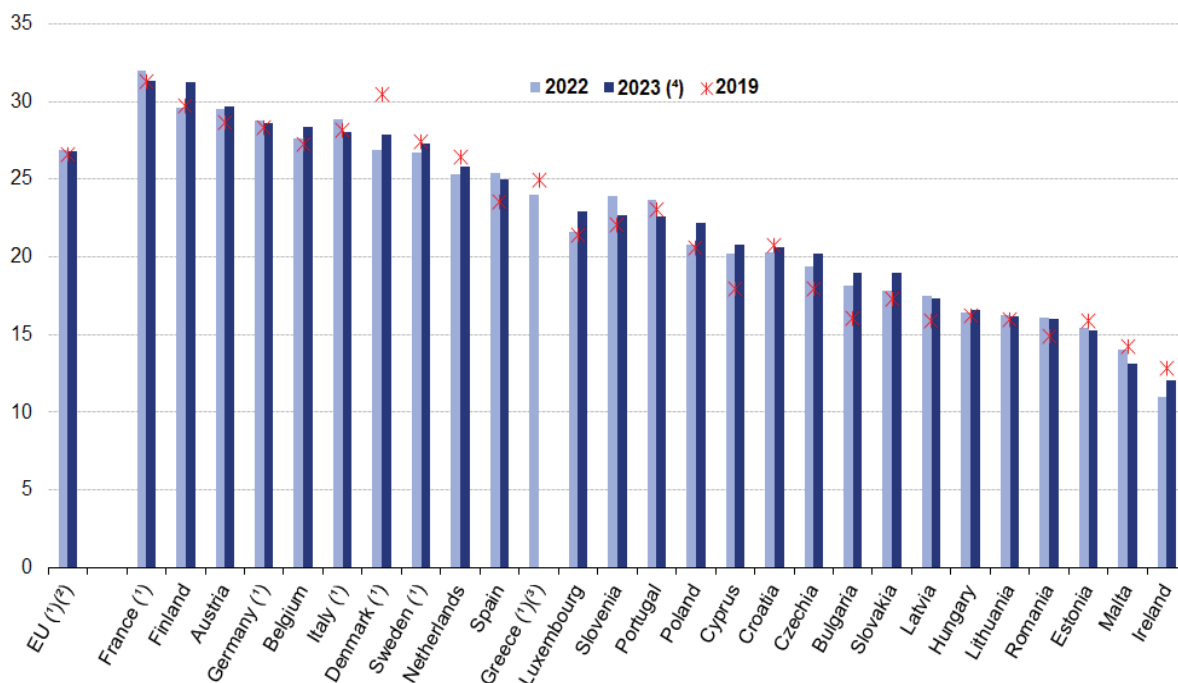
In 2023, there were considerable variations between EU countries with respect to their levels of expenditure on social protection benefits relative to GDP (Figure 12 ⁽¹⁶⁾). The highest ratios were 31.3% in France and 31.2% in Finland. These were followed by Austria, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Denmark and Sweden (with

⁽¹⁶⁾ Note that for Figs 11 and 12, only social protection expenditure is used and not total social expenditure (including administrative costs and other expenditure), as usually included in Eurostat ESSPROS figures. Data for 2023 are provisional estimates only.

ratios in the range of 27% to 30%). At the other end of the range, the lowest ratios were observed in Ireland (12.0%) and Malta ⁽¹⁷⁾ (13.2%).

With regard to changes in expenditure relative to GDP, the ratio increased in 15 Member States, most notably in Finland (up 1.6 points), Poland (up 1.4 points) and Luxembourg (up 1.3 points), and fell in the remaining 11 EU countries, most strongly in Slovenia (down 1.2 points), Portugal (down 1.0 points), Malta (down 0.9 points), Italy (down 0.8 points) and France (down 0.7 points). In a longer-term perspective, compared to 2019 expenditure as a share of GDP has increased in almost two thirds of Member States, with the largest increases in Bulgaria, Cyprus and Czechia, and fallen in just over a third, most notably in Denmark.

Figure 12: Expenditure on social protection benefits, 2019, 2022 and 2023 as percentage of GDP



Source: Eurostat (online data code: spr_exp_func) and Eurostat early estimates

Notes: (1) 2022: provisional; (2) 2023: Eurostat estimate; (3) 2023: not available; (4) Preliminary.

Within the EU, the highest expenditure on social protection benefits was recorded for the old age and survivors' function (largely composed of pensions), which accounted for close to half (46.7%) of all expenditure on social protection benefits in 2023. The next highest share was for the sickness/health care

⁽¹⁷⁾ While Malta's social protection expenditure as a share of GDP remains among the lowest in the EU, this figure alone does not capture the full scope, effectiveness, or strategic direction of the national system. Rather than focusing solely on expenditure volume, Malta's system is designed to deliver high-impact interventions that are both fiscally responsible and socially effective. Moreover, the country's robust economic growth naturally lowers the expenditure-to-GDP ratio.

function, which accounted for 29.9% of the EU's expenditure on social protection benefits, while each of the remaining 4 functions accounted for single-digit shares. Among these, the highest proportion was recorded for the family/children function (8.6% of total expenditure on social protection benefits), followed by the disability function (7.1%), the unemployment function (3.9%) and the housing and social exclusion function (3.8%).

There were 9 countries where more than half of their total expenditure on social protection benefits was directed to the old age and survivors' function, with a peak of 59.2% in Italy, followed by Portugal (54.8%), Romania (53.2%) and Poland (52.7%). In some cases, relatively high shares of expenditure on benefits for old age and survivors may be linked to population ageing and its related costs. Apart from in Ireland, where the sickness/health care function was the largest, the second highest level of expenditure on social protection benefits across the countries was for sickness/health care. Its share ranged from highs of 45.0% in Ireland and 37.8% in Cyprus down to lows of 23.1% in Finland, 22.2% in Denmark and 22.1% in Italy.

The number of social benefit recipients for different social schemes

Since the financial crisis of 2008, the SPC has been collecting data on the number of social benefit recipients for different social schemes ⁽¹⁸⁾ (generally unemployment, social assistance and disability benefits). From this data, it is possible to get a more timely picture of the level of usage and pressure on social security systems across the EU, and how these have changed over recent periods.

The unemployment rate in the EU fell gradually from 6.1% in January 2024 to 5.8% in October and November, but then edged up slightly to hover around the 5.9% level from then on into May 2025. The rates reflect historically low levels over 2024 and the first half of 2025, well down on those experienced in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and during the more recent COVID crises. However, underlying the broadly stable development at EU level are more noticeable variations in the evolution of unemployment rates in some individual Member States, even if the general picture is one of rather modest differences in evolutions. For close to half of Member States the unemployment rate declined over this period, most notably in Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Spain, and above all in Greece. In contrast, rates rose in several countries, most notably in Belgium, Finland, Luxembourg and Sweden (Figure 13).

The latest figures available, generally covering up to spring or early summer 2025 for around three-quarters of Member States, suggest the following main developments in benefit recipient numbers compared to the same month of the previous year ⁽¹⁹⁾ (Table 1):

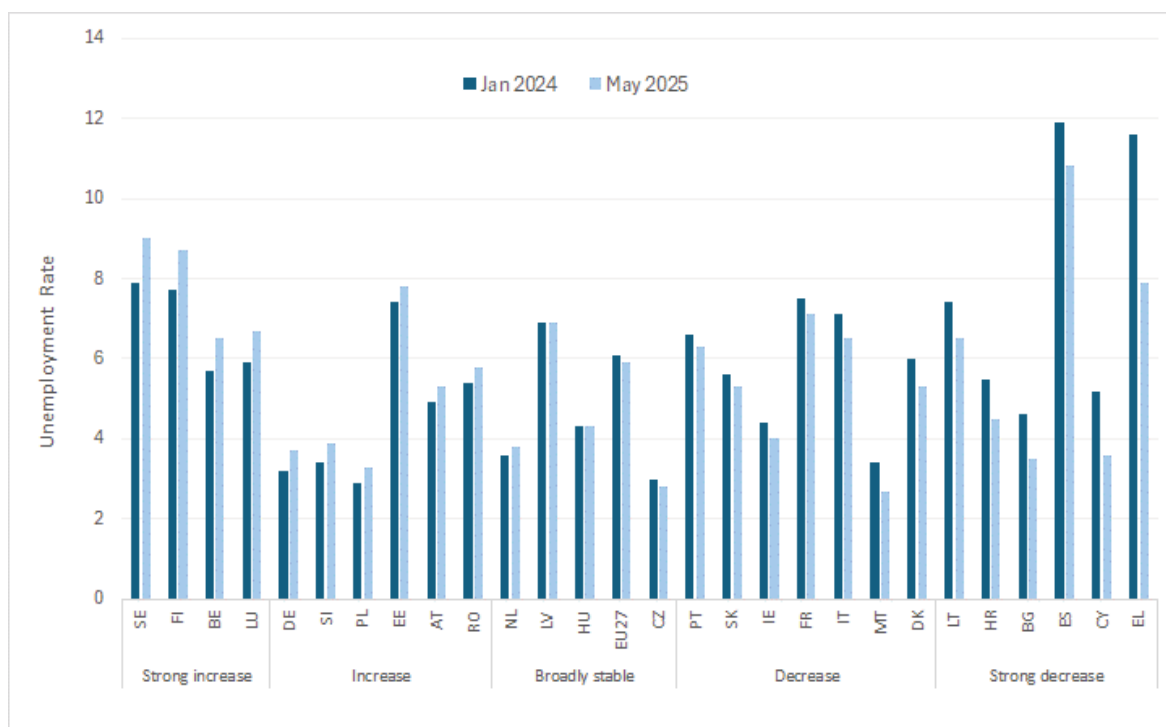
⁽¹⁸⁾ Although this information needs to be assessed with due caution (as it does not offer cross-country comparability due to the diversity of concepts and underlying definitions used) the numbers of beneficiaries are available every month in most Member States and help to observe trends and the timing of the impact of crises.)

⁽¹⁹⁾ As with unemployment, there are also seasonal patterns in the number of people receiving unemployment benefits, so the most recent observation for each Member State is compared with the same reporting month in the previous year.

- Comparing the latest available month with the same month in the previous year, the number of unemployment benefit recipients has risen for around half the Member States, and particularly so (in relative terms) in Austria, Croatia and the Netherlands. The number decreased in 7 countries, most notably in Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia and Spain, and remained broadly unchanged in 3 Member States (Table 1, left-hand columns)).
- The number of recipients of social assistance benefits has fallen in almost half the Member States, with particularly significant reductions in Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia (Table 1), right-hand columns). In contrast, there were rises in the number of social assistance benefit recipients in some countries (around a third), with particularly marked increases in Bulgaria and Spain.

Trends in individual Member States regarding the number of recipients of standard benefits can be found in the related chart in the country profiles produced as a separate annex (Annex 1) to this SPC annual report.

Figure 13: Unemployment rates in the EU and Member States in January 2024 and May 2025



Source: Eurostat, LFS - monthly data (UNE_RT_M), seasonally adjusted

Table 1: Change in unemployment benefit recipient numbers and social assistance recipient numbers from January 2024 to latest month of data available

	Change in unemployment benefit recipient numbers for latest available month of data versus same month of previous year			Change in social assistance recipient numbers for latest available month of data versus same month of previous year		
	Absolute change (1000s)	Relative change (%)	Latest month of data	Absolute change (1000s)	Relative change (%)	Month of post-February 2022 peak
BE	-7.7	-2.6	May 2025	4.1	2.5	Feb 2025
BG	0.0	0.0	April 2025	4.0	14.3	May 2025
CZ	2.4	2.9	May 2025	0.0	0.0	May 2025
DK	-1.9	-2.7	May 2025	-2.8	-6.0	May 2025
DE	29.4	0.6	June 2025	na	na	-
EE	-1.7	-10.5	May 2025	-1.0	-12.9	May 2025
IE	na	na	-	na	na	-
EL	na	na	-	-47.3	-15.8	May 2025
ES*	-169.0	-9.4	March 2025	424.0	23.9	April 2025
FR	29.9	1.1	Nov 2024	2.9	0.2	Dec 2024
HR	3.0	20.0	May 2025	-2.0	-4.3	May 2025
IT	na	na	-	na	na	-
CY	-1.0	-5.9	Mar 2025	na	na	-
LV	-2.0	-6.1	May 2025	-1.0	-8.3	May 2025
LT	3.3	4.2	May 2025	-10.3	-15.1	May 2025
LU	0.0	0.4	May 2025	0.5	4.6	Apr 2025
HU	0.0	0.0	May 2025	-6.0	-8.7	May 2025
MT	na	na	-	-0.1	-2.7	June 2025
NL	15.0	10.1	April 2025	4.0	1.0	April 2025
AT	22.0	7.8	Feb 2025	na	na	-
PL	6.0	5.1	May 2025	na	na	-
PT	6.6	3.5	Apr 2025	-5.5	-3.1	Apr 2025
RO	1.0	1.9	April 2025	15.0	6.2	June 2025
SI	0.3	2.0	March 2025	-2.0	-2.6	March 2025
SK	1.0	2.8	May 2025	-4.8	-7.5	May 2025
FI	-7.0	-2.1	Dec 2024	4.0	3.2	Dec 2024
SE	8.9	3.6	Dec 2024	4.2	5.7	Dec 2024

Source: SPC data collection on social benefits recipients

Note: For unemployment benefit: No recent monthly data for EL, IE and MT. Data for IT, only annual figures available.

For social assistance: No recent monthly data for AT, CY and IE. Data for DE, IT and PL only annual figures available. For ES, data refers only to monthly data for the IMV (Minimum Vital Income) national scheme, but there exist also regional minimum income schemes that are included in social assistance but for which data is only available annually.

Effectiveness of income support systems

The effectiveness of social benefits in addressing poverty can be examined by comparing indicators such as the at-risk-of-poverty rate before and after social transfers. The impact of social transfers (excluding pensions) on reducing income poverty varies greatly across Member States. In 2024, it ranged from under 20% in Greece and Romania to 50% or more in Belgium, Denmark and Ireland (Figure 14). These large differences highlight the potential for improvement in some Member States in the size and effectiveness of social protection expenditure. Between 2023 and 2024, a third of Member States recorded significant improvements in the capacity of social transfers to reduce the risk of poverty, while in 7 the impact was significantly reduced, most notably in Germany. In the longer term (between 2019 and 2024) only 7 countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Poland and Romania) have significantly strengthened the impact of social transfers in reducing the risk of poverty as opposed to 9 countries where the impact has significantly decreased, most notably in Austria, Finland and Slovenia. For a further third of Member States, no significant changes were observed compared to the situation in 2019.

Figure 14: Impact of social transfers (excluding pensions) on at-risk-of-poverty reduction in 2024, and evolutions 2023-2024 and 2019-2024

	EU27_2020	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY
2024	34.4	52.7	27.7	40.6	50.4	35.7	31.5	52.9	16.6	23.9	38.8	21.6	31.3	30.5
2023-2024 change in pp	~	1.9	~	~	~	-6.0	3.9	-4.9	-1.6	~	-3.0	n.a.	~	~
2019-2024 change in pp	~	10.9	4.0	~	3.2	~	3.4	-5.5	-6.2	~	n.a.	n.a.	11.0	-4.8
	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE
2024	21.5	25.9	27.0	35.0	26.0	41.0	40.7	41.5	22.4	18.8	37.7	36.7	46.4	40.6
2023-2024 change in pp	-2.0	-4.1	~	~	~	2.6	1.5	5.5	2.6	3.2	2.2	~	-2.4	3.7
2019-2024 change in pp	~	-5.7	-6.9	-3.5	~	~	-8.6	4.6	~	3.5	-7.7	~	-7.6	~

Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC)

Note: i) Only significant changes have been highlighted in green/red (positive/negative changes). "~" refers to stable performance (i.e. insignificant change). "n.a." refers to data being subject to major a break in series. Eurostat calculations on statistical significance of net change have been used where available, combined with checks for substantive significance. ii) For the at-risk-of-poverty rate, the income reference year is the calendar year prior to the survey year. iii) In 2022 there was a break in the time series for almost all Member States (with the exception of Finland) in the AROP rates before social transfers, due to [changes in the definition of disposable income before transfers](#) (excluding pensions). However, this was not a major change and longer-term comparisons are still feasible while acknowledging this change. iv) For DE the longer-term comparison is for 2020 to 2024 due to the major break in EU-SILC data series in 2020. v) Long term changes not shown for FR and HR due to major breaks in series.

One group particularly in need of support from social benefits are persons living in (quasi-)jobless households⁽²⁰⁾, but Member States differ substantially in terms of the adequacy of the income benefits they provide to such households. In 2024, the poverty risk for people living in (quasi-) jobless households

⁽²⁰⁾ Households where working-age adults (18-64) worked 20% or less of their total work potential during the year prior to the EU-SILC survey.

ranged from as much as around 75% in Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia and Slovenia, and even over 80% in Latvia and Romania, to around 50% or under in Belgium, Cyprus and Denmark.

Between 2023 and 2024, 7 Member States experienced a significant worsening of the poverty risk for people in (quasi-)jobless households, with particularly strong increases in Germany, Ireland, Hungary and Luxembourg (Figure 15). This suggests a reduction in the effectiveness of safety nets in terms of income support in these countries. In contrast, significant improvements were recorded in a similar number of Member States and most notably in Lithuania and Portugal. The longer-term trend since 2019, has also mainly been one of mixed developments across countries in income poverty among (quasi-)jobless households. In close to a third of Member States the at-risk-of-poverty rate increased significantly compared to 2019, while a further third recorded little change in the situation. In contrast, 7 EU countries managed to achieve marked improvements compared to 2019, especially Belgium, Poland and Sweden.

Figure 15: At-risk-of-poverty rate for the population living in (quasi-)jobless households in 2024 (in %), and evolutions 2023-2024 and 2019-2024

	EU27 2020	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY
2024	64.8	50.8	75.4	74.3	45.3	62.8	75.6	58.6	67.2	63.8	70.3	72.7	65.4	48.9
2023-2024 change in pp	~	~	~	6.7	~	10.3	~	18.7	~	~	4.3	n.a.	~	-7.8
2019-2024 change in pp	~	-13.1	~	13.3	-9.2	5.9	6.7	6.8	8.9	~	n.a.	n.a.	-4.2	~
	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE
2024	81.5	69.3	64.2	69.2	69.4	60.3	66.7	54.2	62.9	83.3	75.7	70.4	66.3	72.3
2023-2024 change in pp	4.1	-10.8	11.4	12.5	~	-8.4	~	~	-10.4	~	-6.2	-9.8	~	-7.4
2019-2024 change in pp	~	-9.0	7.9	7.8	~	~	8.9	-11.1	~	~	~	-7.1	~	-12.3

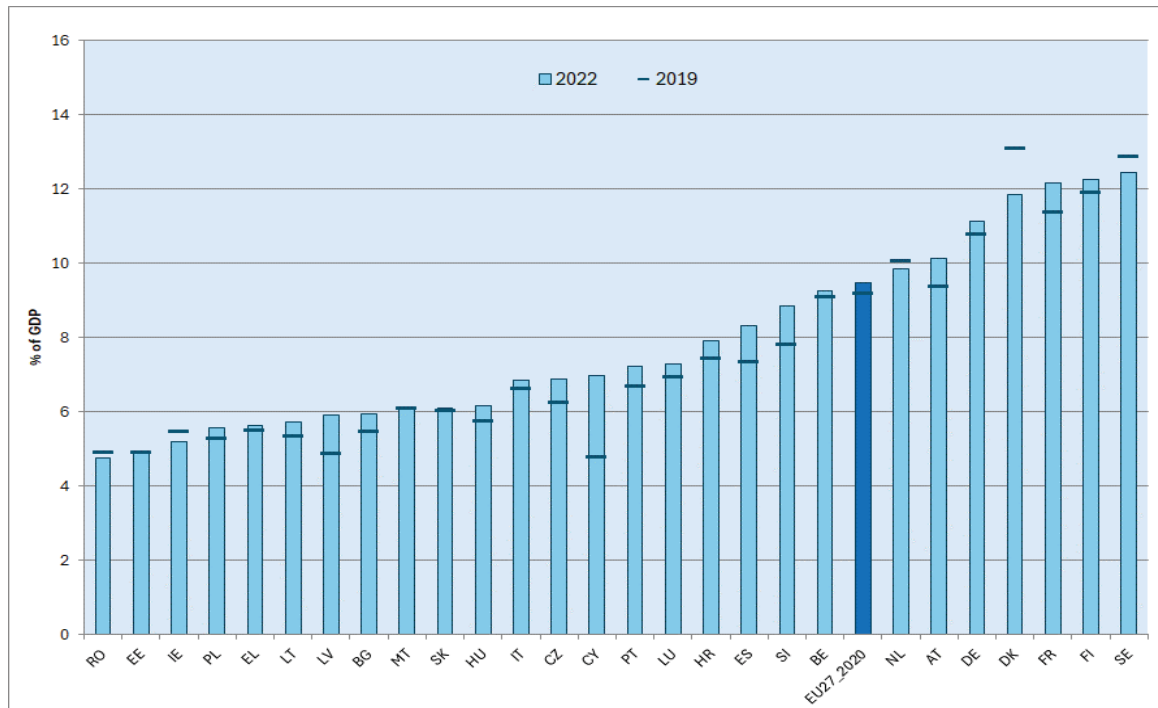
Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC)

Note: i) Only significant changes have been highlighted in green/red (positive/negative changes). "~" refers to stable performance (i.e. insignificant change). "n.a." refers to data not (yet) being available. Eurostat calculations on statistical significance of net change have been used where available, combined with checks for substantive significance. ii) For the at-risk-of-poverty rate, the income reference year is the calendar year prior to the survey year. Similarly, (quasi-)jobless households (i.e. very low work intensity) refers to the household situation in the previous calendar year. For DE the longer-term comparison is for 2020 to 2024 due to the major break in EU-SILC data series in 2020. Long term changes not shown for FR and HR due to major breaks in series.

The above assessment of the effectiveness of social transfers in reducing income poverty does not, however, consider non-cash benefits such as transfers in kind. As all Member States provide public services that contribute to the welfare of all individuals, purely income-based measures are not enough when analysing individual well-being and social protection. High-quality welfare services in the form of healthcare, education, long-term care services and childcare, etc., contribute strongly to a more equitable distribution of welfare, and have long been a feature especially of Nordic and West European welfare systems. Such support averaged around 9.5% of GDP in the EU in 2022, ranging from 4.7% of GDP in Romania to 12.4% in Sweden (Figure 16). In most countries the spending on in-kind benefits as a share of GDP has increased since 2019, with the most marked rises in Austria, Cyprus, France, Latvia, Slovenia and Spain. It declined significantly only in Denmark and Sweden. In general, the countries which achieve a low

impact of social transfers on income poverty reduction tend also to be those that spend less on in-kind services.

Figure 16: Social benefits in-kind, as % of GDP, 2019 and 2022



Source: Eurostat (Esspros)

Note: Figures refer to benefits in kind, i.e. goods and services provided in kind to beneficiaries and not only in-kind services,

(c) Main trends to watch from the SPPM dashboard update

Main latest year trends

EU-SILC 2024 data ⁽²¹⁾ point to a reduction of around 1.1 million in the overall number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU compared to 2023. In line with this overall improvement in the social situation, the update of the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) dashboard ⁽²²⁾, which is mainly based on the latest annual 2024 EU-SILC data (which refers to 2024 for deprivation indicators and 2023 for income and work intensity indicators) and 2024 LFS data ⁽²³⁾, show signs of improvement in the situation for many Member States in several areas, even if in some areas the developments are more mixed (Figure 17).

⁽²¹⁾ Figures are for data extracted from the relevant source on 8 July 2025.

⁽²²⁾ The SPPM dashboard is a tool which uses a set of key EU social indicators for monitoring developments in the social situation in the European Union (for details on the methodology see the appendix "SPPM dashboard methodology")

⁽²³⁾ Generally 2023-2024, but for healthy life years at 65 and real change in gross household disposable income the year refers to 2023 and the changes to 2022-2023, as no 2024 figures available.

Positive developments in the social situation, with significantly more Member States registering positive changes than those recording negative ones, could be observed in the following areas:

- reductions in the share of the **population living at risk of poverty or social exclusion** in a third of Member States (MS), with underlying falls in the **at-risk-of-poverty rate** in 8 MS, in the share of the **population living in (quasi-)jobless households** in 8 MS and in the share of **people experiencing severe material or social deprivation** in 11 MS;
- the **housing cost overburden** rate fell in a third of MS, while the **material and social deprivation rate** fell in 11 MS;
- these positive developments reflect significant increases in **real gross household disposable income** in 10 MS along with a notable **reduction in income inequalities** in 11 MS, resulting in an improvement of household financial conditions ⁽²⁴⁾;
- The social situation for children also improved, with reductions in the share of **children at risk of poverty or social exclusion** in 10 MS and in the **material and social deprivation rate for children** in 8 MS;
- there were continued rises in the **employment rate of older workers** in 11 MS, while the **income situation of older people** also improved in almost half of EU countries, as reflected in the median relative income ratio and aggregate replacement ratio (up in 13 MS for both indicators).

During the reference period there were rather more mixed developments in some areas, most notably those concerning **in-work poverty**, the **risk of poverty or social exclusion among older people**, and the **effectiveness of social protection systems**, with a reduction in the impact of social transfers on income poverty reduction in 7 MS and an increase in 9 MS and falls and rises in 7 MS respectively in the at-risk-of-poverty rate for (quasi-)jobless households.

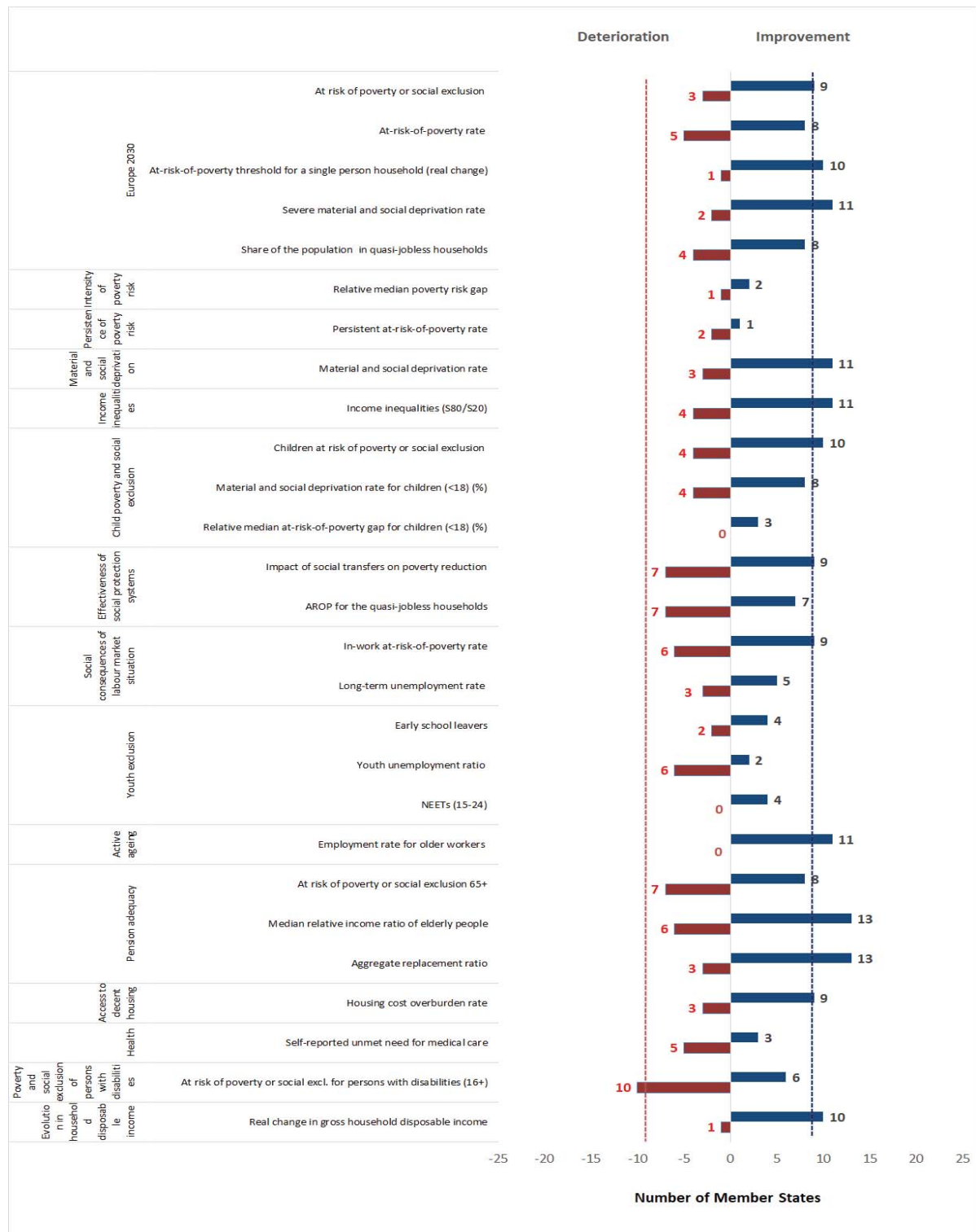
The only area with signs of a deterioration in the social situation concerned the risk of poverty or social exclusion for **persons with disabilities** (16+), where the rate worsened in 10 MS. Also of note was the very limited improvement in the situation for **young people** and in addressing the **depth and persistence of income poverty**.

Figure 18 highlights per country the number of significant improvements or deteriorations that have taken place in the social indicators in the SPPM dashboard in the latest reference period (generally between 2023 and 2024). This shows a general overall pattern of an improving social situation across EU countries, with more than two thirds of Member States recording a higher number of indicators showing an improvement rather than a deterioration. Developments were most tilted towards the positive in Poland, Spain and above all Romania, with 12, 12 and 19 indicators respectively showing improvements and very few indicators showing a decline. There were relatively few Member States with significantly more

⁽²⁴⁾ Note that the available figures for the real change in gross household disposable income actually refer to 2022-2023 and not the latest year change 2023-2024.

indicators showing a deterioration than an improvement, most notable among these being Bulgaria, France, Lithuania and above all Finland which recorded a worsening situation for 10 indicators and improvement for only one.

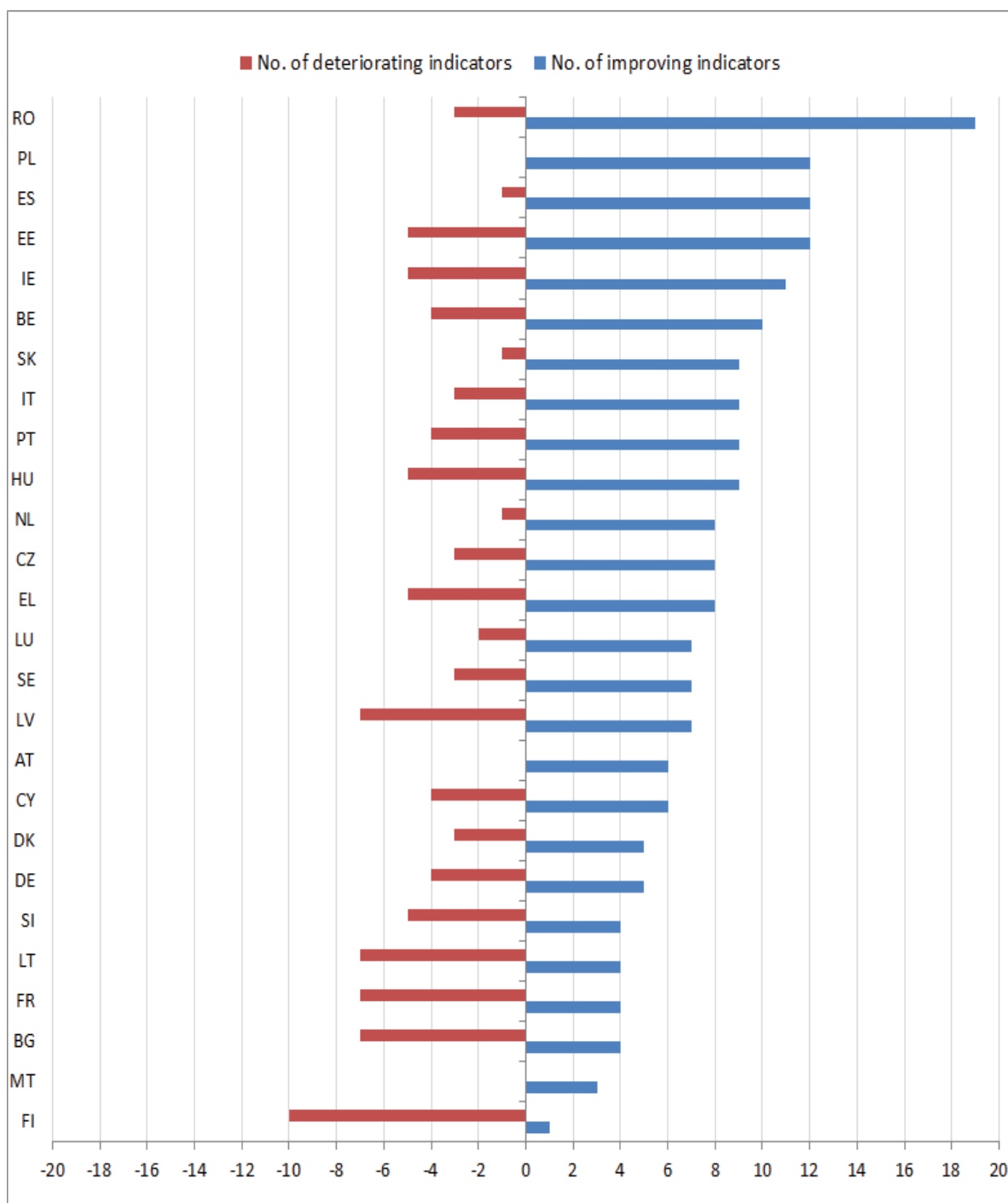
Figure 17: Areas of deterioration (social trends to watch) and improvement for the period 2023-2024 (or latest year available)+



Source: Social Protection Performance Monitor

Notes: *Changes generally refer to the period 2023-2024 (although for income and household work intensity indicators the changes actually refer to 2022-2023). At-risk-of-poverty rate (AROP), severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD) and the share of the population in (quasi-)jobless households indicators are components of the AROPE indicator. Figures for real change in gross household disposable income refer to 2022-2023 as no 2024 figures available. For CY, break in series in 2024 due to use of new population census weights but not expected to be major. For HR, major break in series in 2024 for income-based variables in SILC due to the change of source for collection of income data (income data for SILC 2024 collected from administrative sources), so changes in income-based indicators (and AROPE) compared to 2023 are not reflected. For HU, a methodological revision is planned in 2025 for EU-SILC data that will concern 2019 to 2024 data collections. The present assessment is based on the figures available in early July and do not reflect this revision.

Figure 18. Number of SPPM key social indicators per Member State with a statistically significant improvement or deterioration from 2023 to 2024⁺



Source: Social Protection Performance Monitor

Notes: (i) Bars refer to the number of SPPM indicators which have registered a statistically and substantively significant deterioration or improvement between 2023 and 2024 (or 2022-2023 where 2024 figures not available); (ii) For EU-SILC based indicators for income and household work intensity, changes actually refer to the year before the survey. (iii) Figures do not reflect latest year changes for healthy life years at 65 indicators; (iv) Real change in gross household disposable income refers to changes 2022-2023 as no 2024 figures available. (v) For HR major break in series in EU-SILC data in 2024 for income-related indicators (and also AROPE), so figures for HR not shown in the above comparison across Member States.

Main trends from the SPPM compared to 2019

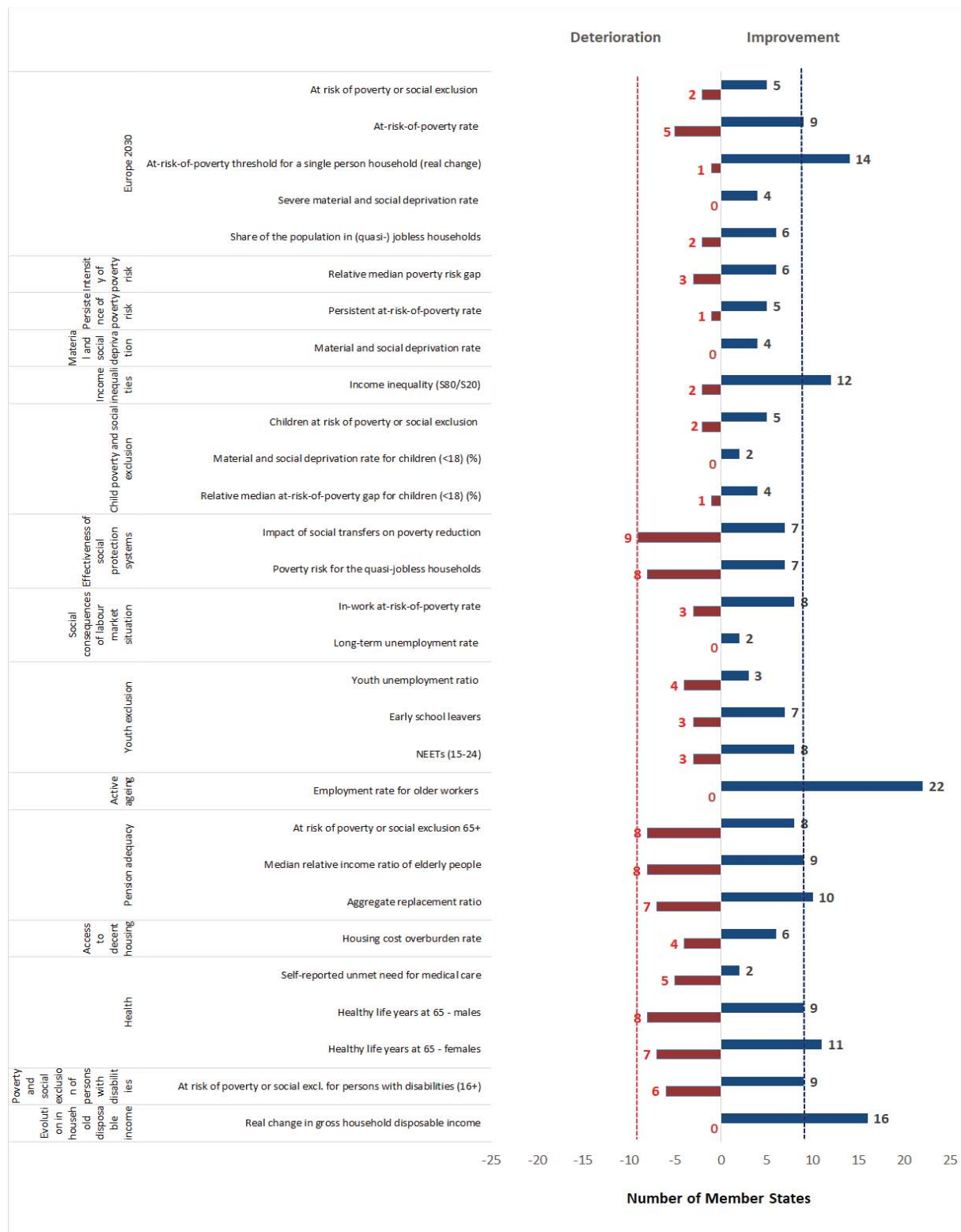
Despite the latest year developments in social indicators being tilted more to the positive for most Member States, in a longer-term perspective, developments compared to 2019, the reference year for the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan's poverty and social exclusion target for 2030, indicate a general picture of quite limited change for many Member States except in a few areas (Figure 19). This reflects the impact of recent crises including the COVID pandemic, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, and the substantial rise in inflation over recent years which have hindered the Member States in achieving a significant improvement in the social situation. This is borne out by the fact that only a few (5) Member States have experienced substantial improvements in the risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to 2019. It should also be recognised that the social situation has not deteriorated given the backdrop of the serious challenges posed by the recent crises and has been quite resilient, even with some clear improvement showing in some areas.

Results from the SPPM dashboard highlight in particular there have been significant reductions in the at-risk-of-poverty rate in around a third of Member States, and improvements in the at-risk-of-poverty threshold in half, the latter also reflecting widespread improvements in real gross household disposable incomes. This has been accompanied by a significant reduction in income inequality in almost half of the EU countries. Also of note is the widespread success in raising the employment rates for older workers compared to 2019 across a large majority of Member States (22) and improvements in reducing the share of young people not in employment, education or training and in early school leaving in several countries.

In contrast, there have been rather mixed developments across Member States in the situation of older people aged 65 and over, with a third of countries registering improvements in the at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rate, the median relative income ratio and the aggregate replacement ratio for this age group but a broadly similar number of countries showing a deterioration. This is also the case for the healthy life years at 65 indicators and AROPE for persons with disabilities. Furthermore, a significant number (around a third) of countries have witnessed a weakening of the effectiveness of social protection systems, as highlighted by declines in the impact of social transfers in reducing poverty risk and rises in the poverty risk for persons living in (quasi-)jobless households, even if an almost similar number showed an improvement.

Figure 20 shows the number of indicators in the SPPM dashboard for which a given country registered a significant deterioration or improvement over the period 2019 to 2024. For around half of Member States, there is a significantly higher number of indicators showing positive developments rather than negative ones, this being especially the case in Belgium, Italy and above all in Bulgaria and Romania. In contrast, Member States such as Austria, Denmark, Finland and Malta have few indicators showing an improvement in the situation compared to 2019, and with a higher number showing a deterioration. In addition, developments have been rather mixed in several countries, with broadly similar numbers of improving and deteriorating indicators, most notably Luxembourg and Lithuania.

Figure 19. Areas of deterioration (social trends to watch) and improvement for the period 2019-2024⁺

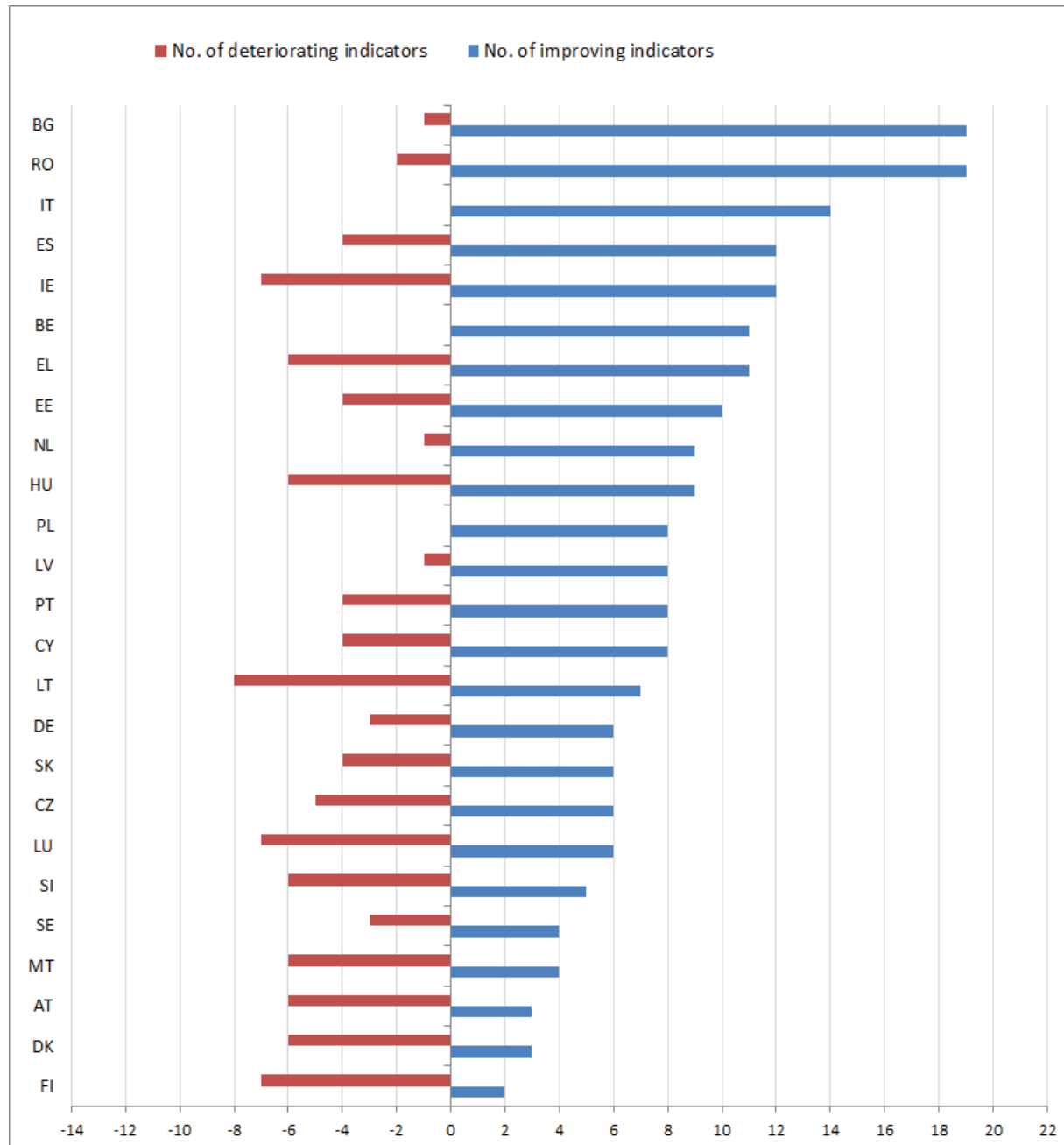


Source: Social Protection Performance Monitor

Notes: ⁺ For EU-SILC based indicators the changes generally refer to 2019-2024 (although for income and household work intensity indicators the changes actually refer to 2018-2023). AROP, SMSD and (quasi-)jobless households indicators are components of the AROPE indicator. Figures for healthy life years at 65 and real change in gross household disposable income refer to changes 2019-2023. For DE, major break in the time series in 2020 for EU-SILC, so changes for 2020-2024 are used. For IE, break in EU-SILC series in 2020, due to a change in the income reference period for Ireland and a change in the household definition. Results should therefore be interpreted with caution. For FR, major break in series in EU-SILC

data in 2022, due to the new inclusion of overseas departments and regions, which has a significant negative effect on many social indicators and may mean some changes are not significant, so comparison to 2019 does not reflect the SILC-based indicators for FR. For IE, major break in series in EU-SILC data in 2023 and 2024 for income-related indicators (and also AROPE) so these are also not reflected.

Figure 20. Number of SPPM social indicators per Member State with a significant deterioration or improvement between 2019 and 2024



Source: Social Protection Performance Monitor

Notes: The bars refer to the number of SPPM indicators which have registered a statistically and substantively significant deterioration or improvement between 2019 and 2024. For DE, major break in the time series in 2020 for EU-SILC, so figures for changes in EU-SILC based indicators are for 2020-2024. Break also in time series for LFS-based indicators, but figures for changes versus 2019 can be shown except for the early school leavers indicator. For IE, break in EU-SILC series in 2020, due to a change in the income reference period for Ireland and a change in the household definition. Results should therefore be interpreted with caution. For FR, major break in series in EU-SILC data in 2022, due to the new inclusion of overseas departments and regions, which has a significant negative

effect on many social indicators and may mean some changes are not significant, so not shown in the above comparison across Member States. For HR, major break in series in EU-SILC data in 2023 and 2024 for income-related indicators (and also AROPE), so also not shown in the comparison across MS. For LU, several breaks in EU-SILC data series (in 2020, 2021 and 2022) so there is a need to be cautious in the interpretation of evolutions. For CY, break in series in 2024 due to use of new population census weights but not expected to be major.

SPPM dashboard update (2024 EU-SILC and LFS data)

Dimensions		SI	AT	BE	BG	CZ	DE	DK	EE	ES	FI	FR	GR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	PT	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	UK	
2030 target	At risk of poverty or social exclusion (in %)																													
	2024	21.0	21.4	18.2	30.3	11.3	18.0	21.1	22.2	16.7	26.9	25.8	20.5	21.7	23.1	17.1	24.3	25.8	20.0	20.2	19.7	15.4	16.9	16.0	19.7	27.9	14.4	18.3	16.8	17.5
	2023-2024 change in pp	"	"	"	"	-0.7	"	"	-2.0	-2.5	"	-0.7	"	n.a	"	"	-1.3	1.5	-1.4	"	"	"	-0.8	"	"	-4.1	0.7	"	1.0	-0.9
	2019-2024 change in pp	"	"	"	-2.9	"	"	"	"	-3.5	-2.1	"	n.a	n.a	"	"	-2.4	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-8.2	"	3.5	2.3	"
	At-risk-of-poverty rate (in %)																													
	2024	16.2	16.6	11.5	21.7	9.5	11.6	15.5	20.2	12.3	19.6	19.7	15.9	20.3	16.9	14.6	21.6	21.5	18.1	14.7	16.8	12.1	14.3	13.8	16.6	19.0	13.2	14.5	12.6	14.8
	2023-2024 change in pp	"	"	-0.8	1.1	"	"	1.1	-2.3	"	"	-0.5	0.5	n.a	"	"	"	"	-0.7	1.6	"	-0.9	-0.6	"	"	-2.1	0.5	"	"	-1.3
	2019-2024 change in pp	"	"	-3.3	"	"	"	"	-1.5	"	1.7	-1.0	n.a	n.a	-1.2	"	-1.3	"	"	2.4	"	-1.1	"	-1.6	"	-4.8	1.2	2.6	1.0	-2.3
	At-risk-of-poverty threshold for a single person household (levels in pps, changes as real change in national currency in %)																													
	2024	n.a.	n.a.	15789	7848	10183	14576	15115	9889	14091	7462	12490	13993	9766	12483	13690	8333	9066	22669	6974	13786	16255	17855	10836	8668	7814	12943	6860	13833	14216
	2023-2024 change in %	n.a.	n.a.	2.5	10.3	-3.3	"	"	"	3.1	3.6	"	"	n.a.	"	5.4	4.4	"	3.6	"	"	5.0	"	3.7	"	9.1	"	"	"	"
	2019-2024 change in %	n.a.	n.a.	"	41.3	"	"	-11.0	"	12.1	16.5	11.0	n.a.	n.a.	"	11.6	15.4	16.3	19.3	18.8	15.3	"	"	27.5	9.7	59.0	15.0	"	"	"
	Severe material and social deprivation rate (in %)																													
	2024	6.4	6.1	6.1	15.5	2.6	4.0	6.2	3.1	4.5	14.0	8.3	6.6	2.0	4.6	2.5	5.3	6.1	2.3	9.3	4.0	3.1	3.7	2.3	4.3	17.2	1.8	7.6	3.7	3.0
	2023-2024 change in pp	"	"	"	-1.4	"	-0.9	-0.7	0.6	-1.5	"	-0.7	"	-0.8	"	"	-0.9	"	"	-1.1	"	"	"	-0.7	-0.6	-2.6	"	"	0.9	"
2019-2024 change in pp	"	"	"	-5.5	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	n.a.	-2.6	"	"	"	-3.6	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-7.3	"	"	"	"	
Population living in (quasi-) jobless households (in %)																														
2024	7.9	8.6	11.3	7.9	5.2	10.6	10.0	5.3	7.4	7.5	8.0	8.7	4.7	9.2	4.2	6.5	9.4	3.9	5.0	4.5	8.0	6.0	3.9	4.6	4.3	3.5	5.0	9.3	7.7	
2023-2024 change in pp	"	"	0.8	0.9	"	"	"	-0.5	-1.7	-0.8	-0.4	-0.5	-0.8	"	"	"	1.4	"	"	"	"	"	"	-1.5	-0.9	"	"	0.6	"	
2019-2024 change in pp	"	"	"	"	"	"	1.7	"	-5.5	-5.2	-2.9	n.a.	-2.8	"	-2.4	"	1.8	-3.0	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	
Intensity of poverty risk	Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap (in %)																													
	2024	22.8	22.6	15.5	21.1	18.2	18.1	20.4	18.8	14.5	23.3	27.9	18.8	27.8	26.0	17.9	28.7	25.5	19.0	29.7	22.9	17.3	21.8	21.0	25.7	27.3	18.5	25.0	16.2	23.4
	2023-2024 change in pp	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-3.5	"	"	"	"	n.a	"	3.0	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-10.1	"	"	"	"
2019-2024 change in pp	-1.7	n.a.	"	-6.4	4.1	"	4.1	-3.2	"	-3.7	"	n.a.	n.a.	-4.0	"	"	"	"	"	5.8	"	"	"	3.3	-5.7	"	"	"	"	
Persistence of poverty risk	Persistent at-risk-of-poverty rate (in %)																													
	2024	9.3	9.2	7.4	15.7	5.4	5.8	6.4	12.8	4.5	12.5	13.6	10.4	21.4	13.7	8.9	14.2	14.9	6.1	5.6	14.0	7.5	9.1	7.3	7.1	13.4	7.3	8.9	8.8	9.6
	2023-2024 change in pp	n.a.	n.a.	"	"	"	n.a.	"	"	n.a.	"	"	3.3	n.a.	"	"	3.8	"	n.a.	"	"	"	"	-2.6	"	"	"	"	"	"
2019-2024 change in pp	-1.7	n.a.	3.0	"	"	"	-3.4	-3.0	-4.3	"	"	2.4	n.a.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-5.4	"	"	"	"	"	
Material and social deprivation	Material and social deprivation rate (in %)																													
	2024	12.1	11.8	11.2	27.1	6.1	8.1	11.4	8.2	9.7	29.1	16.0	12.9	5.2	8.5	6.0	10.9	12.9	5.6	16.3	9.0	6.1	7.5	5.5	11.0	26.5	4.5	12.7	7.6	6.6
	2023-2024 change in pp	-1.0	"	"	-2.3	"	-1.3	-1.3	1.7	"	"	-1.2	"	-1.0	-1.5	"	-2.6	-2.3	"	"	"	"	"	-1.3	"	-4.9	"	-1.3	1.3	1.1
2019-2024 change in pp	"	"	"	-6.5	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	n.a.	-5.1	"	"	"	-7.2	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	-12.2	"	"	"	"	

Dimensions		EU27_2020	EA20	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE
Youth exclusion	Early school leavers (in %)																													
	2024	9.4	9.7	7.0	8.2	5.4	10.4	12.9	11.0	2.8	3.0	13.0	7.7	2.0	9.8	11.3	7.9	8.4	7.8	10.3	9.6	7.0	8.1	4.1	6.6	16.8	5.0	7.5	9.6	7.2
	2023-2024 change in pp	~	~	0.8	~	~	~	~	~	-1.2	~	~	~	~	-0.7	~	~	~	~	-1.3	~	0.8	~	~	-1.5	~	~	~	~	~
	2019-2024 change in pp	~	~	~	-5.7	~	~	n.a.	~	-2.3	~	-4.3	~	~	-3.5	2.3	~	4.4	~	-1.6	-4.6	~	~	~	-3.9	~	~	~	2.3	~
	Youth unemployment ratio (15-24)																													
	2024	6.1	6.3	5.6	2.4	2.5	10.1	3.6	8.4	5.7	5.4	9.0	8.0	5.2	5.0	5.3	4.7	6.0	8.1	4.9	5.1	7.2	5.9	3.5	7.5	6.0	4.1	5.2	10.0	13.8
	2023-2024 change in pp	~	~	~	~	~	2.7	~	~	~	-1.3	~	0.7	~	-1.0	~	~	~	~	0.9	~	~	~	~	~	0.8	~	~	1.2	1.1
	2019-2024 change in pp	~	~	~	~	~	4.0	~	3.3	~	-3.5	-1.7	~	~	-2.6	~	~	~	2.2	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	3.2
	NEETs (15-24)																													
	2024	9.2	9.2	7.3	10.5	4.6	6.8	7.5	10.2	5.8	9.5	10.1	10.7	8.0	12.0	10.6	9.0	14.9	9.5	10.0	7.6	3.6	8.7	7.0	7.8	17.0	7.1	8.7	8.2	5.5
	2023-2024 change in pp	~	~	~	~	-1.7	~	~	~	~	-2.0	~	~	~	-1.8	-0.7	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
	2019-2024 change in pp	~	~	~	-3.2	~	~	~	2.5	-4.3	~	-2.0	~	~	-4.0	-7.0	-3.1	~	6.3	3.9	~	~	-1.9	~	~	~	~	-1.7	~	~
Active ageing	Employment rate of older workers (55-64) in %																													
	2024	65.2	65.3	59.4	69.9	77.0	75.0	75.2	75.7	68.1	57.3	61.1	60.4	53.9	59.0	70.4	71.9	69.1	49.4	70.4	58.3	75.3	58.8	59.0	67.6	53.4	56.3	66.0	71.7	78.1
	2023-2024 change in pp	1.3	1.3	1.6	~	3.0	~	~	~	~	3.2	1.6	2.0	2.3	1.7	3.4	~	~	~	~	~	~	1.5	~	~	2.4	2.1	~	~	~
	2019-2024 change in pp	6.6	5.6	7.3	6.4	10.3	~	~	~	6.4	14.4	7.3	5.9	10.4	4.8	9.3	4.6	~	6.3	13.5	8.2	5.8	4.3	10.8	9.4	13.0	8.1	7.2	5.8	~
Pension adequacy	At risk of poverty or social exclusion for the elderly (65+) in %																													
	2024	19.4	19.2	14.4	36.6	9.5	12.3	21.2	40.0	20.3	24.9	19.5	14.6	37.6	19.8	31.5	42.9	39.1	10.1	28.5	31.7	13.4	16.9	16.3	23.8	29.3	23.3	12.8	13.3	11.6
	2023-2024 change in pp	~	~	-3.9	1.3	-5.7	~	~	-7.0	1.6	~	-1.4	~	n.a.	~	6.7	1.3	~	~	7.2	~	~	~	-1.7	3.6	-3.0	3.1	-1.2	~	-2.7
	2019-2024 change in pp	~	~	-3.1	-10.4	-7.9	2.4	~	-4.6	8.5	4.4	~	n.a.	n.a.	~	6.6	-7.9	~	~	11.8	~	~	2.4	-2.5	3.4	-15.2	3.3	~	~	-3.7
	Median relative income of elderly people																													
	2024	0.90	0.91	0.77	0.76	0.82	0.78	0.83	0.61	0.88	0.92	1.05	0.94	0.68	1.00	0.73	0.62	0.63	1.16	0.94	0.70	0.78	0.92	0.89	0.87	0.87	0.78	1.06	0.84	0.85
	2023-2024 change in %	~	~	2.7	~	7.9	~	~	8.9	-4.3	-2.1	2.9	~	n.a.	2.0	-5.2	~	~	3.6	19.0	4.5	~	2.2	2.3	-7.4	-6.5	-2.5	5.0	5.0	3.7
	2019-2024 change in %	~	~	~	13.4	12.3	~	~	5.2	-4.3	-8.0	5.0	n.a.	n.a.	~	-5.2	n.a.	-7.4	-7.2	4.4	~	~	-6.1	~	-5.4	4.8	-6.0	24.7	3.7	4.9
	Aggregate replacement ratio																													
	2024	0.61	0.62	0.48	0.44	0.56	0.47	0.49	0.50	0.40	0.84	0.81	0.61	0.35	0.79	0.41	0.44	0.38	0.78	0.77	0.45	0.57	0.55	0.60	0.61	0.46	0.43	0.77	0.53	0.59
	2023-2024 change in %	5.2	3.3	~	-4.3	7.7	~	~	8.7	2.6	7.7	5.2	3.4	n.a.	5.3	~	-12.0	5.6	13.0	51.0	n.a.	7.5	~	5.3	~	-4.2	~	24.2	~	~
	2019-2024 change in %	7.0	5.1	~	18.9	12.0	-6.0	6.5	~	-13.0	~	19.1	n.a.	n.a.	9.7	~	7.3	-15.6	-8.2	35.1	-23.7	5.6	-8.3	~	-11.6	12.2	~	45.3	~	~

Dimensions		EU27_2020	EA20	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE		
Health	Self reported unmet need for medical care																															
	2024	2.5	2.5	1.4	1.1	0.5	3.1	0.8	8.5	2.9	12.1	1.8	4.1	1.3	1.9	0.1	8.4	4.3	1.0	1.0	0.3	0.6	1.0	3.8	2.5	2.2	3.4	1.6	8.5	2.2		
	2023-2024 change in pp	~	~	~	~	~	~	0.6	-4.4	~	0.5	~	~	~	~	~	0.6	0.5	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	-3.0	~	-1.6	0.6	~		
	2019-2024 change in pp	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	-7.0	~	4.0	1.6	n.a.	~	~	~	4.1	2.9	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	-2.7	~	~	3.9	~		
	Healthy life years at 65 - males																															
	2023	9.2	n.a.	11.3	10.4	7.4	9.5	8.4	6.9	11.6	8.1	10.3	10.5	6.1	11.0	8.5	4.5	7.0	9.7	7.1	13.1	9.2	9.3	8.2	9.1	4.3	10.6	4.6	9.2	13.5		
	2022-2023 change in %	3.4	n.a.	4.6	13.0	4.2	-5.0	n.a.	-2.8	2.7	-5.8	5.1	2.9	17.3	5.8	-3.4	9.8	12.9	n.a.	7.6	7.4	-1.1	-1.1	5.1	5.8	7.5	0.0	-2.1	3.4	0.0		
	2019-2023 change in %	-9.8	n.a.	7.6	13.0	-7.5	-11.2	n.a.	7.8	-11.5	0.0	-16.9	1.0	32.6	3.8	4.9	0.0	16.7	-4.0	6.0	-9.0	-9.8	20.8	1.2	15.2	-35.8	21.8	0.0	-1.1	-15.1		
	Healthy life years at 65 - females																															
	2023	9.6	n.a.	11.7	12.0	7.8	10.3	9.0	8.1	11.9	8.3	10.2	12.0	5.9	10.7	8.8	5.0	7.6	9.8	7.8	12.0	9.0	9.4	9.1	7.8	3.8	12.4	5.2	9.7	14.3		
	2022-2023 change in %	4.3	n.a.	8.3	10.1	1.3	-1.0	n.a.	0.0	0.0	-7.8	7.4	2.6	5.4	8.1	2.3	13.6	-1.3	n.a.	4.0	0.0	1.1	-1.1	5.8	6.8	0.0	1.6	6.1	6.6	0.0		
	2019-2023 change in %	-7.7	n.a.	9.3	15.4	-4.9	-12.7	n.a.	12.5	-15.6	7.8	-17.1	3.4	20.4	4.9	23.9	4.2	18.7	-7.5	5.4	-20.5	-6.2	22.1	1.1	13.0	-41.5	44.2	10.6	1.0	-13.9		
Poverty and social exclusion of persons with disabilities	At risk of poverty or social exclusion for persons with disabilities (% of people with disabilities above 16 years)																															
	2024	28.8	28.9	30.0	43.8	15.6	28.1	29.7	39.1	30.1	33.0	32.9	28.4	40.2	27.8	31.0	39.4	45.8	29.0	37.1	33.7	21.8	21.5	24.1	28.1	38.4	24.4	19.7	24.4	28.1		
	2023-2024 change in pp	~	~	-2.1	1.4	-3.8	1.8	~	-1.9	-2.6	2.4	1.9	1.4	n.a.	1.1	~	~	3.1	~	4.7	~	~	~	-1.4	1.4	-1.0	~	~	2.2	~		
	2019-2024 change in pp	~	~	-2.0	-7.1	-9.1	5.0	~	~	-3.9	~	-2.0	n.a.	n.a.	~	~	-2.9	5.3	~	7.9	~	-2.8	~	-3.5	~	-7.0	1.9	2.6	4.6	~		
Access to decent Housing	Housing cost overburden rate																															
	2024	8.2	8.5	6.8	8.0	9.2	14.6	12.0	8.6	4.7	28.9	7.8	7.0	3.7	5.1	2.4	6.7	6.2	8.0	8.5	5.8	6.9	6.3	5.2	6.9	4.7	3.8	6.4	5.4	10.6		
	2023-2024 change in pp	-0.6	~	-0.9	-3.1	~	-0.8	-1.0	1.0	~	~	~	~	n.a.	-0.6	~	~	1.0	-3.5	~	~	-2.4	~	-0.7	2.0	-4.4	~	~	~	~		
	2019-2024 change in pp	~	~	~	-8.0	2.3	~	n.a.	4.2	~	-7.3	~	n.a.	n.a.	-3.6	~	~	~	-2.1	4.3	3.2	-3.0	~	~	~	-3.9	~	~	~	~		
Evolution in real household disposable income	Real change in gross household disposable income (in %)																															
	2022-2023 change in %	~	~	2.3	n.a.	~	2.2	~	~	2.2	3.3	5.0	~	7.4	~	~	~	1.8	-3.8	2.7	8.8	~	~	~	3.0	~	~	~	~	~		
	2019-2023 change in %	~	~	4.9	6.1	5.4	5.5	~	~	10.9	9.5	~	5.1	18.5	~	17.4	~	11.7	4.9	15.4	20.1	5.6	~	~	6.9	~	10.5	~	~	~		

Note: i) Figures generally extracted from the relevant source on 8 July 2025; ii) Only significant changes are highlighted in green/red (positive/negative changes). "~" refers to stable performance (i.e. insignificant change), "n.a." refers to data not being available. See table at end of document for full details of significance tests; iii) The method used to estimate the statistical significance of the net changes, based on regression and developed by Net-SILC2 (an EU funded network consisting of a group of institutions and researchers conducting analysis using EU-SILC) is still under improvement; iv); Figures for healthy life years at 65 and real change in gross household disposable income refer to 2023 and the latest changes to 2022-2023 and to 2019-2023 as no 2024 figures available; v) For the LFS-based indicators Long term unemployment rate, Youth unemployment ratio, NEETs rate (15-24) and Employment rate of older workers, published recalculated data to avoid breaks in series are used. For "Early school leavers", data prior to 2021 aren't recalculated, so break in series for 2021; vi) For FR, large break in 2023 in material and social deprivation and in all linked indicators (including AROPE) and major break in EU-SILC data series in 2022, due to the new inclusion of overseas departments and regions which has a significant negative effect on many social indicators, so comparison to 2019 not shown for the SILC-based indicators. vii) For DE, major break in time series in 2020 for EU-SILC, so figures for longer term changes in EU-SILC based indicators refer to 2020 instead of 2019. Major break also in time series for LFS-based indicators, but figures for changes versus 2019 can be shown using break-adjusted series, except for early school leavers where no adjusted data available. There is a significant break in time series for the housing cost overburden rate in Germany for 2023 and for the early school leavers indicator in 2021, so longer-term changes not shown for these indicators. The reduction of "healthy life years at 65 - males" and "the reduction of healthy life years at 65 - females" in Germany is mainly attributed to methodological adjustments. Therefore, comparability to previous years is very limited and changes are not shown; viii) For HR, major break in series in EU-SILC data in 2023 and 2024 for income-related indicators (and also AROPE), so changes not shown for these indicators; .ix) For IE, there is a break in the EU-SILC based indicators in 2020, due to a change in the income reference period for Ireland and a change in the household definition, as well as due to the fact that the survey in 2020 was conducted primarily via telephone as opposed to in-person. Results should therefore be interpreted with caution; x) For LU, several breaks in series (in 2020, 2021 and 2022) so there is a need to be cautious in the interpretation of evolutions; xi) For SI, the increase of "healthy life years at 65 – males" and "healthy life years at 65 - females" indicators (comparison 2019-2023) is partially attributed to methodological adjustments (i.e. change in the EU-SILC questionnaire). Therefore, comparability to previous years is limited. xii) For CY, break in series in 2024 due to use of new population census weights but not expected to be major. xiii) Regarding the indicator on the impact of social transfers (excluding pensions) on poverty reduction, in 2022 there was a break in the time series for almost all Member States (with the exception of Finland) in the AROP rates before social transfers, due to [changes in the definition of disposable income before transfers](#) (excluding pensions). However, this was not a major change and longer-term comparisons are still feasible while acknowledging this change. xiv) In many Member States, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged during the data-collection period for the main social indicators. Although often difficult to clearly assess possible impacts on the final results, caution is warranted.

(d) Latest indications from Eurostat flash estimates of income developments in 2024

In June 2025, Eurostat published flash estimates ⁽²⁵⁾ of the expected developments in income and poverty for the income year 2024 ⁽²⁶⁾, which provide a more up to date picture ⁽²⁷⁾ of income developments than available from the latest EU-SILC results (which relate to income in 2023). These provide a general indication of the expected annual change in certain income-related indicators ⁽²⁸⁾ compared to 2023. Results are based on microsimulation and nowcasting techniques taking into account both the impact of the labour market evolution on employment income and the effect of changes in social protection schemes.

The detailed results from the flash estimates for 2024 incomes are as follows:

- The at-risk-of-poverty rate (AROP) is expected to have marginally decreased (by 0.1 pp) for 2024 incomes to 16.1% at EU level. According to the flash estimates (Table 2, with arrows indicating the estimated direction and magnitude of change), the at-risk-of-poverty rate is expected to remain broadly stable in most countries (20), decrease in 1 (Estonia), and increase in 4 (Greece, Portugal, Slovenia and Finland). Among age groups, at EU level the AROP rate is expected to have declined slightly (by 0.3 pp) for the working age population (18-64 years) and children under 18 (by 0.4 pp) and to have increased (by 0.6 pp) for older people (aged 65+). In-work poverty is also expected to have declined slightly (by 0.2 pp).
- According to the flash estimates, EU income in 2024 is expected to have continued to increase in both nominal and real terms by about 5.0% and 2.5% respectively, signalling an overall improvement in living standards and purchasing power. This reflects also that while, at the EU level, prices continued to rise in 2024, with the Harmonised Indices of Consumer prices (HICP) registering a 2.6% average annual increase, many HICP components saw much lower increases in 2024 compared to the previous years.
- Flash estimates in nominal terms show statistically significant positive changes in 2024 income for all countries. When analysed in real terms, the nowcast median disposable income is estimated to increase in 22 of the 25 countries for which estimates are available, while for the remaining three – Belgium, Estonia, and Luxembourg – the nowcast indicates stability.
- The estimates point to a rather stable trend in all countries in income inequalities based on 2024 incomes, as measured by the income quintile share ratio (S80/S20). This can be explained by the

⁽²⁵⁾ For details on the methodology see here: [Methodological note Flash Estimates 2024](#)

⁽²⁶⁾ For further details see the main document here: [Latest developments in income dynamics and poverty - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

⁽²⁷⁾ As EU-SILC income data refer to the previous year, Eurostat produces flash estimates of 2024 income to predict the evolution of AROP for the upcoming EU-SILC 2025.

⁽²⁸⁾ All figures provided are part of the experimental statistics produced by Eurostat in the frame of advanced estimates on [income inequality and poverty indicators](#). The flash estimates give a general message on the expected change, and estimates are currently produced for the at-risk-of-poverty rate and the median equivalised disposable income.

joint movement of income along the deciles, i.e., by not particularly unbalanced changes along the various parts of the income spectrum.

Table 2: Estimated changes in the at-risk-of-poverty rate between 2023 and 2024 based on estimates of 2024 incomes, by country

At-risk-of-poverty rate by country, 2023-2024 income		
Country	EU-SILC 2024 (2023 income*) % of population	Flash estimate (2024 income**) year-on-year change in pp
EU	16.2	-0.1
Belgium	11.5	→
Bulgaria	21.7	→
Czechia	9.5	→
Denmark	11.6	→
Germany	15.5	→
Estonia	20.2	↘
Ireland	12.3	→
Greece	19.6	↗
Spain	19.7	→
France	15.9	→
Croatia	20.3(b)	→
Italy	18.9	→
Cyprus	14.6(b)	→
Latvia	21.6	→
Lithuania	21.5(p)	→
Luxembourg	18.1	→
Hungary	14.7	:
Malta	16.8	→
Netherlands	12.1	→
Austria	14.3	→
Poland	13.8	:
Portugal	16.6	↗
Romania	19.0	→
Slovenia	13.2	↗
Slovakia	14.5	→
Finland	12.6	↗
Sweden	14.8	→

EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)

Flash estimates of income inequality and poverty indicators (FE)

* Information on income for year T is collected in EU-SILC survey year T+1

**Flash estimates at country level are released as intervals rather than point

↗	increase (statistically significant , <2)
→	stability (not statistically significant)
↘	decrease (statistically significant , >-2)
:	not available
b	break in series
p	provisional

Source: ilc_li02, Eurostat flash estimates

eurostat 

(e) Economic and labour market outlook setting the context for developments in the social situation over 2025

According to the European Commission's Spring 2025 Economic Forecast ⁽²⁹⁾ real GDP growth in 2025 is projected at 1.1% in the EU and 0.9% in the euro area – broadly the same rates attained in 2024. This considerable downgrade compared to the Autumn 2024 Forecast largely reflects the impact of increased tariffs and the heightened uncertainty caused by the recent abrupt changes in US trade policy and the unpredictability of the tariffs' final configuration. Despite these challenges, EU growth is expected to rise to 1.5% in 2026, supported by continued consumption growth and a rebound of investment.

With new disinflationary factors from ongoing trade tensions outweighing higher food prices and stronger short-term demand pressures, inflation in the EU is projected to continue easing to 2.3% in 2025 and 1.9% in 2026. Several factors exert downward pressure on EU inflation. First, significantly lower energy commodity prices. Second, as the trade relationship between the US and China unwinds, competitive pressures on non-energy industrial goods in the EU are intensifying, leading to a decrease in this component's inflation. Third, the appreciation of the euro and other EU currencies amplifies disinflationary pressures on imported commodities and goods. These forces are partially offset by higher inflation in food and services.

The modest GDP growth achieved in 2024 still led to further employment expansion. However, the job intensity of growth has begun to decline from high levels and is expected to normalize further over the forecast horizon, with employment expanding by about 1% cumulatively over 2025 and 2026 – slightly less than in the autumn 2024 projection, but still adding 2 million jobs. As the labour force expands more modestly, the EU unemployment rate is projected to decline to a new historic low of 5.7% in 2026.

Tight labour markets and improving productivity are set to drive further wage growth. After increasing by 5.3% in 2024, growth in nominal compensation per employee is expected to slow to 3.9% in 2025 and 3.0% in 2026. On aggregate in the EU, this year, real wages should fully recover the purchasing power losses accrued since mid-2021, though in a few Member States the recovery in real wages is still lagging behind. Continued gains in employment and wages, along with decelerating inflation and a slight decline in net interest payments, should support a further increase in household gross disposable income.

Looking ahead, risks to the outlook are tilted to the downside. These include an escalation of trade tensions between the EU and the US could depress GDP and rekindle inflationary pressures. Intensified trade tensions between the US and other major trading partners could also have ripple effects on the EU economy. In addition, the increasing frequency of climate-related disasters underscores a persistent downside risk. Without stronger climate adaptation and mitigation efforts, the economic and fiscal costs of such events are likely to rise, further undermining resilience and growth.

⁽²⁹⁾ [Spring 2025 Economic Forecast: Moderate growth amid global economic uncertainty - European Commission](#)

III. Progress on the 2030 target on reducing poverty and social exclusion

On 4 March 2021, the European Commission published its Communication on the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan ⁽³⁰⁾, outlining concrete actions to further implement the Pillar principles ⁽³¹⁾ as a joint effort by the Member States and the EU. As part of the Action Plan the Commission proposed three EU headline targets to be achieved by the end of the decade in the areas of employment, skills, and social protection ⁽³²⁾:

- At least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 should be in employment by 2030;
- At least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year;
- The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion ⁽³³⁾ should be reduced by at least 15 million by 2030 (compared to 2019).

The European Council welcomed these three targets at the Porto Summit in May 2021.

Member States have proposed national targets to support the achievement of the common EU headline targets for 2030 (Table 3). These were discussed by EU employment and social affairs ministers at the Council meeting of 15 June 2022, and reveal a strong commitment to achieving the EU target, as shown by the individual (income) poverty-reduction ambitions of the Member States summing to a figure higher than the EU level commitment to reduce poverty and social exclusion by 15 million ⁽³⁴⁾. Complementary goals were also set out by the Action Plan, which aim to support the achievement of the headline targets. With regard to the poverty and social exclusion target, out of the 15 million people to lift out of poverty or social exclusion, at least 5 million should be children. Twenty-one Member States have set complementary targets for reducing the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Table 4).

The national targets will contribute to the shared ambition of reaching the EU headline targets by 2030 in the areas of employment, skills, and poverty reduction and their implementation will be closely monitored by the Social Protection Committee and the Employment Committee, including in the context of the European Semester, the EU's coordination framework for economic and employment policies.

⁽³⁰⁾ ST 6649/21 + ADD 1-2

⁽³¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017C1213%2801%29>

⁽³²⁾ For reference, at the time starting values for the targets were 73.1% (2019), 37.4% (2016), and 92.2 million (2019) respectively.

⁽³³⁾ The definition of AROPE (and its components regarding material and social deprivation and (quasi-)jobless households)

changed in 2021 and this revised indicator is now used to monitor poverty and social exclusion. For further details see the

Eurostat [Glossary: At risk of poverty or social exclusion \(AROPE\) - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁽³⁴⁾ The national targets that are expressed in terms of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (i.e. not including those for DE, DK and MT) sum to around 15.6 million. Taking into account that the national targets for DE and DK are expressed in terms of subcomponents of AROPE and are expected to translate into similar declines in AROPE numbers, the overall ambition sums up to around 16.8 million.

Table 3: National minimum 2030 targets for the reduction of poverty and social exclusion

	National minimum 2030 target for the reduction of poverty and social exclusion (in number of persons)	Summary of AROPE reference values in 2019		
		2019 AROPE population (in thousands)	Relative reduction in AROPE population (in %)	2019 AROPE rate
EU*	Reduce the population in AROPE by at least 15 million	95,431	-15.7	21.8
BE	Reduce the population in AROPE by 279,000	2,260	-12.3	20.0
BG	Reduce the population in AROPE by 787,000	2,324	-33.9	33.2
CZ	Reduce the population in AROPE by 120,000	1,264	-9.5	12.1
DK*	Reduce the number of persons living in households with very low work intensity by 30,000	994	n.a.	17.3
DE*	Reduce the number of persons living in households with very low work intensity by 1,200,000	14,121	n.a.	17.3
EE	Reduce the population in AROPE by 39,000	311	-12.5	23.7
IE	Reduce the population in AROPE by 90,000	988	-9.1	20.2
EL	Reduce the population in AROPE by 860,000	3,059	-28.1	29.0
ES	Reduce the population in AROPE by 2,815,000	12,169	-23.1	26.2
FR	Reduce the population in AROPE by 1,100,000	11,716	-9.4	18.8
HR	Reduce the population in AROPE by 298,000	841	-35.4	20.8
IT	Reduce the population in AROPE by 3,200,000	14,803	-21.6	24.6
CY	Reduce the population in AROPE by 10,000	162	-6.2	18.6
LV	Reduce the population in AROPE by 95,000	506	-18.8	26.7
LT	Reduce the population in AROPE by 223,000	712	-31.3	25.5
LU	Reduce the population in AROPE by 4,000	119	-3.4	20.1
HU	Reduce the material and social deprivation rate of families with children to 13%, and thereby reduce the population in AROPE by 292,000	1,923	-15.2	20.0
MT*	Reduce the AROPE rate by 3.1 percentage points	100	n.a.	20.7
NL	Reduce the population in AROPE by 163,000	2,809	-5.8	16.5
AT	Reduce the population in AROPE by 204,000	1,434	-14.2	16.5
PL	Reduce the population in AROPE by 1,500,000	6,575	-22.8	17.9
PT	Reduce the population in AROPE by 765,000	2,173	-35.2	21.1
RO	Reduce the population in AROPE by 2,532,000	7,032	-36.0	36.1
SI	Reduce the population in AROPE by 9,000	279	-3.2	13.7
SK	Reduce the population in AROPE by 70,000	795	-8.8	14.8
FI	Reduce the population in AROPE by 100,000	788	-12.7	14.5
SE	Reduce the population in AROPE by 15,000	1,879	-0.8	18.4

Notes: * Countries that have expressed their national target in relation to an indicator different from the EU headline target indicator (AROPE), or in a format other than absolute population reductions. Denmark and Germany ⁽³⁵⁾ express their national poverty reduction targets as a reduction in the number of persons living in (quasi-)jobless households (i.e. households with very low work intensity) that are expected to translate into similar declines in the numbers of people in AROPE over the decade. MT expresses its national poverty reduction target as a reduction of the AROPE rate by 3.1 percentage points. HU expresses its national poverty reduction target as a reduction of the material and social deprivation rate for families with children that can be translated into AROPE reduction if current circumstances prevail. LV set both an absolute reduction and an AROPE rate reduction to better reflect

⁽³⁵⁾ The reference year for the German national target is actually 2020, when the AROPE population was 16,735,000 following a break in series in 2020.

the impact of national policy measures on public support and minimize the impact of demographic trends (the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by at least 95 thousand or by 5 percentage points).

+ EU aggregate for 2019 adjusted to account for the break in series in Germany in 2020 (see Eurostat table ilc_pecs01).

Table 4: National minimum 2030 targets for the reduction of poverty and social exclusion for children

	National minimum 2030 goal for the reduction of poverty and social exclusion (in number of persons) for children
EU	Reduce the child population in AROPE by at least 5 million
BE	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 93,000
BG	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 197,000
CZ	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 50,000
DK	
DE	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 300,000 , by decreasing children living in households with very low work intensity by 300,000
EE	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 13,000
IE	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 45,000
EL*	Reduce the child AROPE rate by 6.6 percentage points
ES	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 713,000
FR	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 300,000
HR	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 40,000
IT	
CY	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 3,000
LV	
LT	
LU	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 1,000
HU	
MT*	Reduce the child AROPE rate by 6 percentage points
NL	
AT	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 102,000
PL	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 300,000
PT	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 161,000
RO	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 500,000
SI	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 3,000
SK	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 21,000
FI	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 33,000
SE	Reduce the child population in AROPE by 5,000

Notes: * Countries that have expressed their national target in a format other than absolute population reductions. EL and MT express their national poverty reduction targets for children as a reduction of the AROPE rate for children. Germany has expressed its national goal for the EU 2030 poverty reduction target for children in the following way: The number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion shall be reduced by 300 thousand persons, by decreasing the number of children living in (quasi-)jobless

households (i.e. households with very low work intensity) by 300 thousand. No targets set for reduction of child poverty and social exclusion in DK, IT, LV, LT and NL., while for HU its headline target also considers the situation of children by focusing on families with children as a target group.

Progress towards the 2030 EU poverty and social exclusion target

In 2024, 93.3 million people in the EU (21.0% of the population) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE). This indicates there was an overall decline in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU by 1.1 million between 2023 and 2024, driven by declines in Romania (down 0.7 mln), Germany (0.2 mln), Poland (0.16 mln), Ireland (0.1 mln) and Spain (0.1 mln). This equates to a 0.3 percentage point decrease in the overall at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rate in the EU, from 21.3% to 21.0%.

The reduction in the EU population at risk of poverty or social exclusion reflects underlying decreases of around 1.8 million in the population experiencing severe material and social deprivation (SMSD) and of 0.4 million in the number of people living in (quasi-)jobless households (i.e. living in very low work intensity households), but a rise of around 0.4 million in the population at risk of poverty (AROP) ⁽³⁶⁾.

As a result, in 2024 there were 72.1 million people in the EU at risk of poverty, 27.5 million experiencing severe material or social deprivation, and 26.2 million living in (quasi-)jobless households. Clearly the population at risk of poverty is the largest component of the AROPE population and has sizeable overlaps with the other two components (Figure 21). Around 29% of those at risk of poverty or social exclusion fall under at least two components of AROPE, while 6% experience all three aspects simultaneously.

At Member State level, 9 Member States recorded significant falls in their at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rates in 2024, with the most notable declines being around 2-2.5 percentage points in EE and IE and 4 percentage points in RO (Table 5). Around half of Member States recorded no significant change in their rates, while rates rose significantly in only 3 countries (FI, LT and SI).

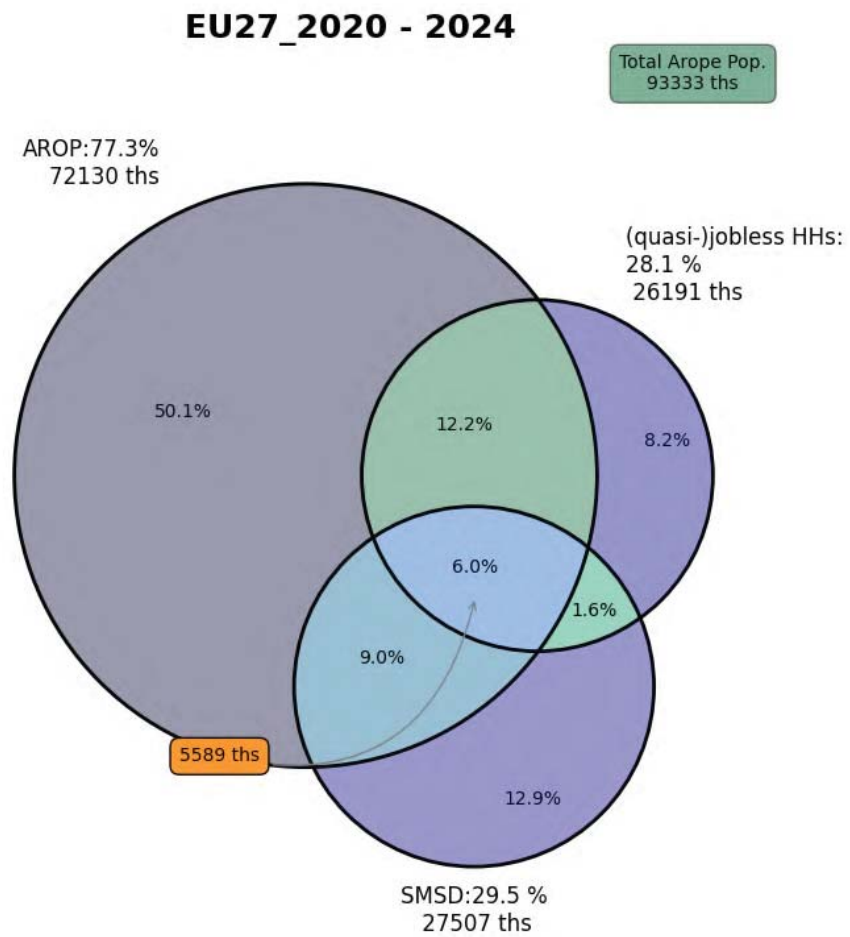
Compared to the reference year (2019) for monitoring progress towards the 2030 target of a reduction of the AROPE population by 15 million, adjusted data series for AROPE correcting for major breaks in France and Germany ⁽³⁷⁾ (see Box 1) indicate that the EU population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024 was down by around 2.7 million compared to 2019 (Figure 22). Underlying this was a fall of around 1.9 million in the population at risk of poverty, of 1.3 million in the number of people living in (quasi-)jobless households and of close to 3.4 million in the number of people experiencing severe material or social deprivation. The gap to achieving the target is now around 12.3 million, implying that the AROPE

⁽³⁶⁾ Note that despite a rise in the AROP population, the share of people AROP stagnated at 16.2% from 2023 to 2024.

⁽³⁷⁾ As there can be major breaks in the series on poverty and social exclusion, for all analysis relating to progress versus the 2030 poverty and social exclusion reduction target (i.e. comparisons to 2019), use is made of the data series published by Eurostat in table [ilc_pecs01](#) that adjusts for the major breaks in series for EU-SILC data in Germany (in 2020) and in France (in 2022).

population would need to decrease on average by slightly over 2 million per year until 2030³⁸ to reach the target.

Figure 21. Composition of EU AROPE population with regard to the three components, 2024



Source: Eurostat EU-SILC, DG EMPL calculations

Table 5. At-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rate in 2024(%), and evolution (in pp) 2023-2024

(³⁸) Based on the reference year 2030 with AROPE figures from the EU-SILC 2030 data collection available in spring 2031.

	EU27_2020	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY
2024	21.0	18.2	30.3	11.3	18.0	21.1	22.2	16.7	26.9	25.8	20.5	21.7	23.1	17.1
2023-2024 change in pp	~	~	~	-0.7	~	~	-2.0	-2.5	~	-0.7	~	n.a.	~	~
	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE
2024	24.3	25.8	20.0	20.2	19.7	15.4	16.9	16.0	19.7	27.9	14.4	18.3	16.8	17.5
2023-2024 change in pp	-1.3	1.5	-1.4	~	~	~	-0.8	~	~	-4.1	0.7	~	1.0	-0.9

Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC)

Note: i) Only significant (for the definition of this see table in the section on SPPM methodology in Annex 2) changes have been highlighted in green/red (positive/negative changes). ii) For HR, major break in series in EU-SILC data in 2024 for income-related indicators and also AROPE, so changes not shown.

Box 1: Estimates of AROPE and its components for the EU relative to 2019 accounting for major breaks in series in France and Germany

The agreed reference year against which progress is to be assessed towards meeting the EU target of a reduction of 15 million in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) by 2030, as part of the Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights, is the year 2019. For meaningful comparisons to this year, time series are required that are free from major breaks. However, the comparison to 2019 is affected by major breaks in series for EU-SILC data in Germany in 2020 and in France in 2022.

In 2020, the German EU-SILC survey, on which the AROPE indicator is based, was integrated into the newly designed German microcensus ⁽³⁹⁾, leading to a substantial break in the time series between 2019 and 2020, with income variables being the most affected by the break. Given the size of the German population in the EU aggregate, the break has important implications not only for assessing progress in Germany but also for the EU as a whole. Consequently, efforts have been made by Eurostat to produce an adjusted break-free time series for AROPE and its components both for Germany and the EU aggregate. The result gives re-based 2019 estimates more in line with the new survey figures for 2020 onwards.

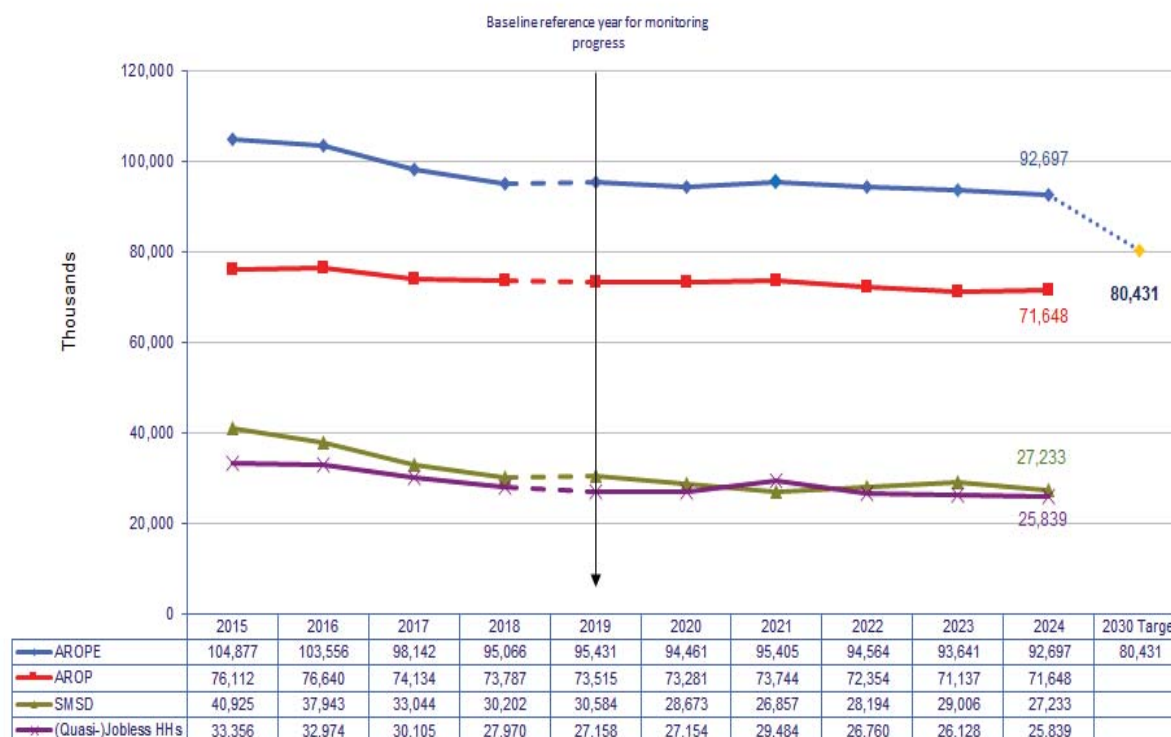
Similarly, a major break in EU-SILC data series occurred in France in 2022, due to the new inclusion of overseas departments and regions, which had a significant negative effect on many social indicators. In order to be able to make meaningful assessment of the progress since 2019, the data series not including the overseas territories (published under the reference “Metropolitan France” on the Eurostat web page) has been used to negate the effect of the break and the adjusted figures have been applied to the EU aggregate.

⁽³⁹⁾ For EU-SILC, a new rotation scheme and a full multi-mode-design were implemented along with completely new and complex IT tools for survey management and data collection.

Hence, a break-free series adjusting for the major breaks in both Germany and France has been estimated ⁽⁴⁰⁾ to provide a more appropriate basis for assessing progress since 2019 (Figure 22). On this basis, the total EU population at risk of poverty or social exclusion for the re-estimated AROPE population in 2019, taking into account the 2020 break in Germany, amounted to 95.43 million people (instead of the unadjusted total of 92.20 million), while the 2024 figure adjusted for the 2022 break in France amounted to 92.70 million (instead of the unadjusted total of 93.33 million).

⁽⁴⁰⁾ For DE, the 2019 figures as re-calculated and published in Eurostat table [ilc_pecs01](#), and explained in the information note attached to that table, are used as the basis for the EU aggregate, which is then adjusted to reflect also the values for Metropolitan France rather than the values for France in 2022 and 2023, to be in line with the 2019 figure.

Figure 22. Evolution of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion and its components in the EU27 (1000s), 2015-2024, adjusted for major breaks in DE (in 2020) and in FR (in 2022)



Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC, table ilc_pecs01) and DG EMPL calculations.

Note: AROPE – population at risk of poverty or social exclusion; AROP – population at risk of poverty; (Quasi-)jobless HHs – population living in very low work intensity households; SMSD – population in severe material and social deprivation. For the at-risk-of-poverty indicator, the income reference year is the calendar year prior to the survey year. Similarly, the (quasi-)jobless households indicator refers to the previous calendar year while for severe material and social deprivation it is the current survey year. Series adjusted for major breaks in series for AROPE and its components, due to underlying major breaks in DE in 2020 (break adjusted backwards to 2019) and in FR in 2022 (EU aggregate uses figures for "Metropolitan France" rather than "France" to be in line with the 2019 figure for France). In many Member States, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged during the data-collection period and although often difficult to clearly assess possible impacts on the final results, caution is warranted regarding the 2020, and probably to a lesser extent, the 2021 figures.

For the child population in the EU, the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion fell by around 0.5 million between 2023 and 2024, with the largest falls in Germany (0.15 mln) and Romania (0.1 mln). Underlying the fall at EU level were a drop of 0.4 million in the child population experiencing severe material and social deprivation and marginal declines in the population at risk of poverty and in the number of children living in (quasi-)jobless households. This equates to an overall decrease of 0.6 percentage points in the at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rate for children, from 24.8% to 24.2%. As a result, in 2024 there were 19.5 million children in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion, among which 15.5 million were at risk of poverty, 6.3 million experienced severe material or social deprivation, and 5.9 million were living in (quasi-)jobless households. At Member State level, the share of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion fell in 10 countries between 2023 and 2024, most notably in Hungary, Ireland and Romania

(Table 6). At the same time, 4 Member States recorded a significant increase in the share, among which Finland with a notable increase of 3.5 pps.

Table 6. At-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rate for children aged 0-17 (%) in 2024, and evolution (in pp) 2023-2024

	EU27 2020	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY
2024	24.2	20.2	35.1	15.4	15.9	22.9	16.5	20.6	27.9	34.6	26.2	19.3	27.1	14.8
2023-2024 change in pp	~	1.2	1.2	~	~	-1.0	-1.8	-3.7	~	~	~	n.a.	~	-1.9
	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE
2024	17.9	22.8	25.6	21.1	25.9	15.8	20.9	16.1	20.7	33.8	11.8	22.6	17.3	20.9
2023-2024 change in pp	-2.4	~	~	-3.3	~	~	-1.8	~	-1.9	-5.2	1.1	-2.7	3.5	~

Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC)

Note: i) Only significant (for the definition of this see table in the section on SPPM methodology in Annex 2) changes have been highlighted in green/red (positive/negative changes). ii) For HR, major break in series in EU-SILC data in 2024 for income-related indicators and also AROPE, so change not shown.

With regard to the poverty and social exclusion target, out of the 15 million people to lift out of poverty or social exclusion by 2030, at least 5 million should be children. Compared to the reference year 2019, figures adjusted for the major breaks in series for EU-SILC data in Germany and in France suggest the child population in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion was up by 0.25 million in 2024, with an underlying rise of around 0.4 million in the number of children at risk of poverty and reductions of 0.6 million in the number experiencing severe material and social deprivation, and essentially no change in the number of children living in (quasi-)jobless households (Figure 23). The gap to achieving the target for children is now around 5.25 million.

Figure 13. Evolution of the risk of poverty or social exclusion indicator for children and its components in the EU27 (1000s), 2015-2024, adjusted for major breaks in DE (in 2020) and in FR (in 2022)

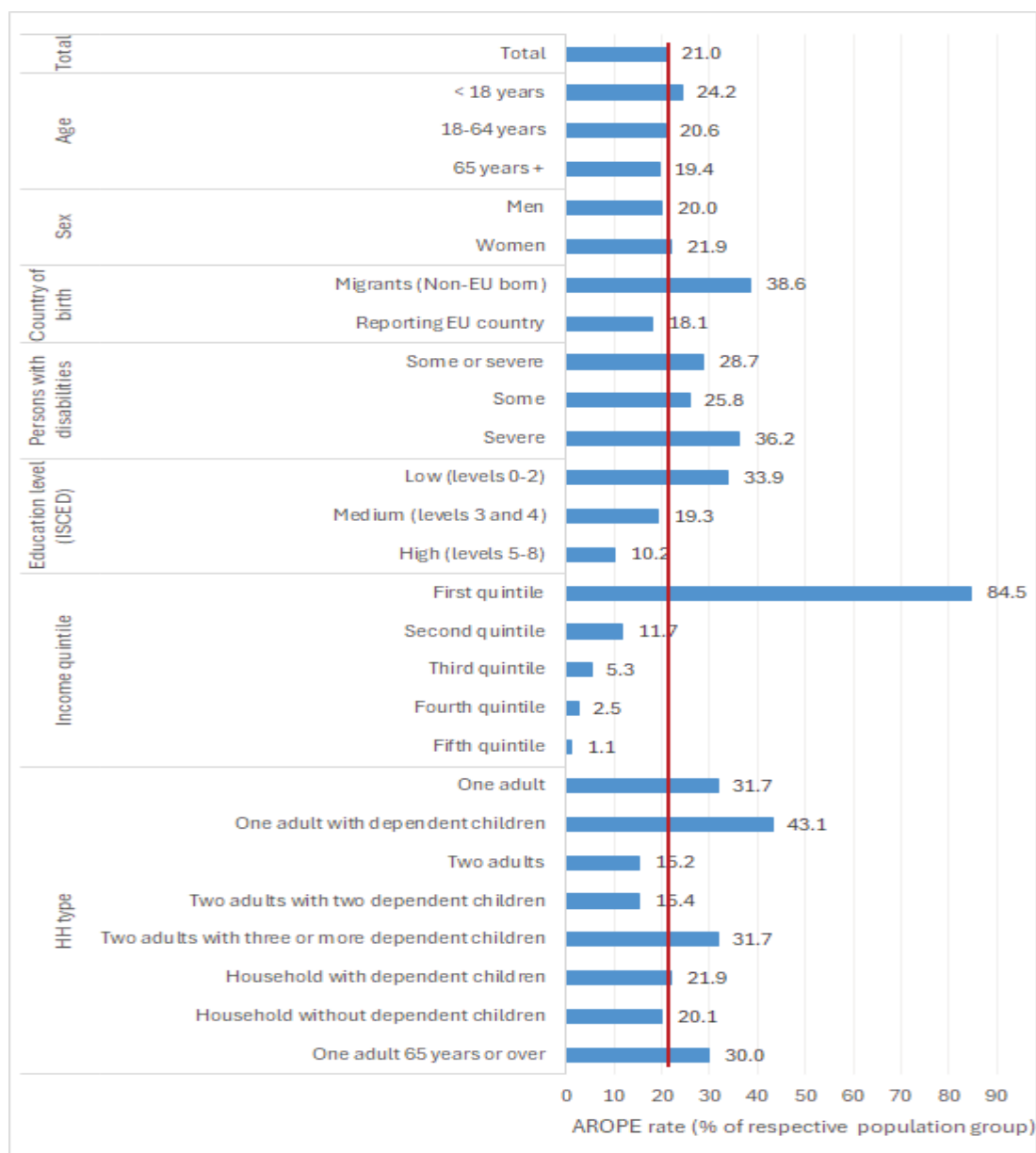


Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC). Note: Series adjusted for major breaks in series for AROPE and its components, due to underlying major breaks in DE in 2020 (break adjusted backwards to 2019) and in FR in 2022.

Overview of which population subgroups face heightened risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024

Despite recent progress, in 2024 certain groups still face heightened risk of poverty or social exclusion (Figure 24). Children have higher AROPE rates (24.2%) than working age adults (20.6%) or older people aged 65 or over (19.4%). People with low education also face considerably higher risks (33.9%, compared to only 10.2% for the highly educated), as do people with disabilities (28.7%, and especially those with severe disabilities (36.2%)) and migrants (those born outside of the EU, 38.6%). Household composition also is an important factor, with households consisting of a single adult, large households with three or more dependent children and above all single parent households facing much higher risks. As one would expect, people whose income is in the lowest income quintile face a higher risk, but the difference compared to other quintiles is enormous. Further progress in reducing the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion should take account of those subgroups that are most at risk.

Figure 24. At-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rate in the EU for given subgroups, 2024



Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC).

Note: The red line indicates the average AROPE rate for the total EU population. Education refers to the population 18 years or over. Figures for persons with disabilities and by country of birth are for those aged 16 years or over.

Overview of Member States' progress towards achieving national 2030 targets for reduction of poverty and social exclusion

In terms of progress towards the 2030 EU target for the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, individual Member States' figures for 2024 (Table 7) show mixed trends in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to the year before and in progress towards national targets and contributing to the overall EU target. Around a third of countries saw a noticeable rise in this population in 2024, thus moving away from the target, and just under half a noticeable reduction. Relative to the year 2019, there have been substantial absolute reductions in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in several Member States, most notably in Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland, Poland and above all in Italy and Romania, with declines of 1.3 and 1.7 million respectively. In contrast, substantial rises have occurred in

Finland, Germany, Slovakia, Spain, and most notably in France (up 1.2 million, based on the adjusted series). Based on the 2024 figures, Ireland and Sweden have already achieved their national targets for poverty reduction.

The developments in the child population at risk of poverty or social exclusion and with regard to progress towards national targets for the reduction of poverty and social exclusion among children is shown in Table 8. Germany and Romania recorded the largest reductions between 2023 and 2024, while Belgium, Finland and France saw notable rises. Relative to 2019, there have been substantial absolute reductions in the child population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in around a third of Member States, most notably in Italy and Romania, but the population has increased noticeably in another third of countries, with large rises in France, Germany and Spain. Based on the 2024 figures, Cyprus, Ireland and Sweden have already achieved their national targets for the reduction in the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Further information and summary charts on the progress of Member States towards their individual national 2030 targets in the domain of poverty and social exclusion are provided in Annex 1. Several Member States express their national poverty targets not in AROPE but in terms of other indicators as their main method of decreasing poverty and the annex provides details of developments in the respective indicators for the national targets.

Table 7. Developments across Member States in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and comparison to national poverty reduction targets or equivalent in terms of AROPE

	National target (reduction of AROPE in 1000s vs 2019 figures). Non-AROE based targets shown in parentheses)	AROE population 2019 (1000s)	AROE population 2020 (1000s)	AROE population 2021 (1000s)	AROE population 2022 (1000s)	AROE population 2023 (1000s)	AROE population 2024 (1000s)	Mini charts of trends to latest available year	Change 2019-2020 (1000s)	Change 2020-2021 (1000s)	Change 2021-2022 (1000s)	Change 2022-2023 (1000s)	Change 2023-2024 (1000s)	Overall change 2019-2024 (1000s)
BE	-279	2,260	2,307	2,142	2,144	2,150	2,121		47	-165	2	6	-29	-139
BG	-787	2,324	2,332	2,193	2,206	1,933	1,953		8	-139	13	-273	20	-371
CZ	-120	1,264	1,205	1,132	1,209	1,247	1,183		-59	-73	77	38	-64	-81
DK*	(-30 VLWI)	994	970	1,000	997	1,056	1,065		-24	30	-3	59	9	71
DE**	(-1200 VLWI)	17,401	16,735	17,255	17,543	17,886	17,687		-666	520	288	343	-199	286
EE	-39	311	300	293	332	327	302		-11	-7	39	-5	-25	-9
IE	-90	988	932	985	1,003	988	880		-56	53	18	-15	-108	-108
EL	-860	3,059	2,880	2,971	2,722	2,658	2,744		-179	91	-249	-64	86	-315
ES	-2,815	12,169	12,642	13,040	12,189	12,552	12,458		473	398	-851	363	-94	289
FR*	-1,100	11,716	12,006	12,115	12,970	12,740	12,950		290	109	855	-230	210	1,234
HR	-298	841	806	817	752	772	810		-35	11	-65	20	38	-31
IT	-3,200	14,803	14,821	14,834	14,305	13,392	13,525		18	13	-529	-913	133	-1,278
CY	-10	162	156	154	150	153	164		-6	-2	-4	3	11	2
LV	-95	506	473	488	482	476	449		-33	15	-6	-6	-27	-57
LT	-223	712	685	661	690	695	744		-27	-24	29	5	49	32
LU	-4	119	119	126	121	139	132		0	7	-5	18	-7	13
HU*	Reduce MSD rate of families with children to 13% (AROE by 292,000)	1,923	1,854	1,865	1,750	1,872	1,914		-69	11	-115	122	42	-9
MT*	(-3.1 AROPE p.p.)	100	100	103	103	105	108		0	3	0	2	3	8
NL	-163	2,809	2,739	2,862	2,863	2,770	2,723		-70	123	1	-93	-47	-86
AT	-204	1,434	1,460	1,519	1,555	1,592	1,529		26	59	36	37	-63	95
PL	-1,500	6,575	6,305	6,296	5,873	5,972	5,815		-270	-9	-423	99	-157	-760
PT	-765	2,173	2,056	2,312	2,084	2,104	2,095		-117	256	-228	20	-9	-78
RO	-2,532	7,032	6,897	6,572	6,525	6,033	5,294		-135	-325	-47	-492	-739	-1,738
SI	-9	279	295	275	276	287	302		16	-20	1	11	15	23
SK	-70	795	744	841	888	943	980		-51	97	47	55	37	185
FI	-100	788	810	773	891	866	927		22	-37	118	-25	61	139
SE	-15	1,879	1,832	1,790	1,941	1,932	1,843		-47	-42	151	-9	-89	-36

Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC). Notes: * Countries that have expressed their national target in relation to an indicator different from the EU headline target indicator (AROE), or in a format other than absolute population reductions. Denmark and Germany express their national poverty reduction targets as a reduction in the number of persons living in (quasi-)jobless households that are expected to translate into similar declines in the numbers of people in AROPE over the decade. HU expresses its target as reducing the material and social deprivation rate of families with children to 13% by

2030, and thereby reduce the population in AROPE by 292,000. MT expresses its national poverty reduction target as a reduction of the AROPE rate by 3.1 percentage points. + Series for DE adjusted for major break in AROPE in 2020 (break adjusted backwards to 2019) and in for FR adjusted in 2022, 2023 and 2024 due to a major break in 2022, due to the new inclusion of overseas departments and regions. Breaks in series in CY in 2024, IE in 2020, and major breaks in HR in 2023 and 2024. For LU, several breaks in EU-SILC data series (in 2020, 2021 and 2022) so there is a need to be cautious in the interpretation of evolutions.

Table 8. Developments across Member States in the child population at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and comparison to national poverty reduction targets or equivalent in terms of AROPE

	National target (reduction of AROPE in 1000s vs 2019 figures)	AROPE population 2019 (1000s)	AROPE population 2020 (1000s)	AROPE population 2021 (1000s)	AROPE population 2022 (1000s)	AROPE population 2023 (1000s)	AROPE population 2024 (1000s)	Mini charts of trends to latest available year	Change 2019-2020 (1000s)	Change 2020-2021 (1000s)	Change 2021-2022 (1000s)	Change 2022-2023 (1000s)	Change 2023-2024 (1000s)	Overall change 2019-2024 (1000s)
BE	-93	554	534	502	478	460	497		-20	-32	-24	-18	37	-57
BG	-197	434	432	400	411	377	394		-2	-32	11	-34	17	-40
CZ	-50	260	264	280	270	315	325		4	16	-10	45	10	65
DK	n.a.	158	152	158	156	171	182		-6	6	-2	15	11	24
DE*	-300	2,874	3,144	3,357	3,549	3,526	3,377		270	213	192	-23	-149	503
EE	-13	50	44	45	43	49	44		-6	1	-2	6	-5	-6
IE	-45	303	269	281	274	293	250		-34	12	-7	19	-43	-53
EL*	(-6.6 p.p. AROPE)	31.2	30.8	32.0	28.1	28.1	27.9		-0.4	1.2	-3.9	0.0	-0.2	-3.3
ES	-713	2,571	2,608	2,750	2,604	2,768	2,756		37	142	-146	164	-12	185
FR*	-300	3,194	3,182	2,962	3,543	3,320	3,421		-12	-220	581	-223	101	227
HR	-40	134	126	127	119	113	125		-8	1	-8	-6	12	-9
IT	n.a.	2,658	2,797	2,851	2,660	2,471	2,421		139	54	-191	-189	-50	-237
CY	-3	35	33	33	31	29	26		-2	0	-2	-2	-3	-9
LV	n.a.	67	72	75	73	75	65		5	3	-2	2	-10	-2
LT	n.a.	128	115	108	110	111	117		-13	-7	2	1	6	-11
LU	-1	28	30	36	31	34	33		2	6	-5	3	-1	5
HU	n.a.	411	360	399	310	416	359		-51	39	-89	106	-57	-52
MT*	(-6 p.p. AROPE)	23.7	22.3	23.2	23.1	25.2	25.9		-1.4	0.9	-0.1	2.1	0.7	2.2
NL	n.a.	519	526	493	459	526	518		7	-33	-34	67	-8	-1
AT	-102	312	345	368	353	376	344		33	23	-15	23	-32	32
PL	-300	1,089	1,096	1,140	1,138	1,136	1,070		7	44	-2	-2	-66	-19
PT	-161	380	378	388	339	379	351		-2	10	-49	40	-28	-29
RO	-500	1,426	1,483	1,508	1,496	1,360	1,255		57	25	-12	-136	-105	-171
SI	-3	45	47	43	41	43	47		2	-4	-2	2	4	2
SK	-21	207	183	202	252	259	237		-24	19	50	7	-22	30
FI	-33	147	152	138	155	144	178		5	-14	17	-11	34	31
SE	-5	510	453	437	441	481	458		-57	-16	4	40	-23	-52

Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC). Notes: * Countries that have expressed their national target in a format other than absolute population reductions. EL and MT express their national poverty and social exclusion reduction targets for children as a reduction of the AROPE rate for children. Germany has expressed its national goal for the EU 2030 poverty and social exclusion reduction target for children in the following way: The number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion shall be reduced by 300 thousand persons, by decreasing the number of children living in (quasi-)jobless households (i.e. households with very low work intensity) by 300 thousand. No targets set for reduction of child poverty and social exclusion in DK, IT, LV, LT and NL., while for HU its headline target also considers the situation of children by focusing on families with children as a target group. + Series for DE adjusted for major break in AROPE in 2020 (break adjusted backwards to 2019) and in for FR adjusted

in 2022, 2023 and 2024 due to a major break in 2022, due to the new inclusion of overseas departments and regions. Breaks in series in CY in 2024, IE in 2020, and major breaks in HR in 2023 and 2024. For LU, several breaks in EU-SILC data series (in 2020, 2021 and 2022) so there is a need to be cautious in the interpretation of evolutions.

IV. Overview of the key social challenges and good social outcomes in the EU Member States

This section presents the findings concerning the key social challenges (KSCs) and good social outcomes (GSOs) in the EU Member States ⁽⁴¹⁾ as highlighted in the SPPM vertical assessment (SPPM VA, see Box 2) tables in the Country Profiles annexed to the report.

Box 2: SPPM Vertical Assessment

The SPPM VA exercise is based on the list of the most relevant **JAF indicators** as determined by the ISG⁴² and making use of the most recently available values (mainly **EU-SILC data 2024**), as published by EUROSTAT on 30 April this year. To determine KSCs and GSOs, comparison is made between the current levels across Member States and the changes between 2021 and 2024 figures. This exercise leads to the identification of key social challenges and good social outcomes **with different degrees of relevance**, which are classified in categories (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 for KSC and 3, 7 and 8 for GSOs see annex 2 (Technical Annex) for further details) that are always specified in each country-table.

The assessment is built on a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the levels for the selected indicators, together with the changes over a three-year reference period as specified above, according to the methodology of the Joint Assessment Framework ⁽⁴³⁾. Further analysis is conducted to complement these results with other relevant findings, emerging from national sources, policy documents, reports or studies (referred to as “non-JAF analysis”).

Regarding **breaks in series** in some indicators for certain Member States, it has been clarified with the relevant Member States for which indicators sensible time comparisons can be made in the context of this exercise in spite of the break, and those indicators for which it cannot take place. In the former case, appropriate caveats/footnotes were added. In the latter case, where time comparisons may not be appropriate, the exercise was focused on an assessment of levels only as specified in footnotes to the tables.

The analysis of Member States' KSCs and GSOs continues to point to a heterogeneous performance of social protection and social inclusion systems across the European Union, along with broad stability overall in the social situation that has been ensured during the shocks of the pandemic, Russia's aggression towards Ukraine and the wave of high inflation. Differences in level and intensity of the outcomes of the

⁽⁴¹⁾ For further details on the assessment methodology see section 2 of Annex 3 (technical annex) “SPPM methodology used for the identification of Member States' key social challenges and good social outcomes”

⁽⁴²⁾ See the table “Social Policy areas covered by the assessment and subcategories” in the above section 2 of Annex 2.

⁽⁴³⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1538&langId=en>

exercise should be noted: for example, there are KSCs based on persistent challenges, and emerging KSCs due to negative developments in the indicator/s.

Poverty, social exclusion and inequality

All Member States except PL have at least one KSC in the area of **poverty and social exclusion**, considering the total population, children and the working age population groups, while 15 Member States show GSOs (BE, CY, CZ, DK, EE, EL, HR, IE, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SI, SK) in this area. This set of challenges encompasses various specific challenges, ranging from the risk-of-poverty or social exclusion, the at-risk-of-poverty rate, the share of people living in (quasi)-jobless households, the severe material and social deprivation rate, the persistent at-risk-of-poverty rate, and the relative median poverty risk gap. **Income inequality** appears as a KSC in 10 Member States (AT, BG, DK, ES, FR, IT, LT, LU, LV, SE), while 1 Member State (CZ) has a GSO in this area. Regarding the **housing** situation, notably issues related to housing cost overburden and housing deprivation, for various age groups, there are KSCs in 16 Member States (CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HU, IE, LU, LV, MT, PT, SE, SI), with 7 Member States (EE, HR, IE, LT, RO, SE, SK) registering GSOs in this area. The analysis on **energy poverty** highlighted KSCs in 12 Member States (AT, BG, CY, CZ, EL, ES, FR, IE, LT, NL, PT, SK) and GSOs in 4 Member States (DK, HR, LV, PL). Regarding non-JAF analyses, KSCs concerning the social situation of **persons with disabilities** were identified in 13 Member States (BE, BG, CY, EE, ES, HR, IE, LT, MT, PT, RO, HU, LV), notably in relation to their risk of poverty and social exclusion and their poverty gap compared to people without disability. **Roma** inclusion features as a KSC in 6 Member States (BG, CZ, IE, HU, RO, SK). The social situation of **migrants and refugees** is a KSC in 7 Member States (BE, DE, EL, ES, FR, AT, SE), according to the gap in AROPE between native people and non-EU born people and the gap in their risk of monetary poverty when at work. The territorial dimension of poverty and social exclusion, in relation to its **regional dimension** or the divide between **urban and rural areas**, is flagged as a KSC for 11 Member States (IT, FR, ES, RO, BG, BE, LT, EL, HR, SK, HU).

Effectiveness of social protection

Under this area, effectiveness of social protection has been analysed from the perspective of the **capacity of social transfers** to reduce the risk of poverty for the general population, people in working age and children, the **depth of poverty** for children and in the working age population, as well as the incidence of **in-work poverty** and the long-term unemployment rate. Overall, in these areas, a large majority (22) of Member States (BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, RO, PT, FI, SI, SK) registered some kind of KSC, with 9 (DK, HR, IE, LU, LV, NL, PL, FI, SK) showing GSOs. In addition, a non-JAF analysis on **social inclusion of children**, identified a KSC in 9 Member States (BE, BG, CZ, FR, HU, MT, PL, RO and SK) on equal opportunities for children, especially for those from a disadvantaged socio-economic background, also in line with the monitoring framework of the Child Guarantee Recommendation. The adequacy or coverage of **minimum income** schemes, according to the SPC benchmarking exercise in this area, was found to remain limited in 8 Member States (ES, RO, HU, BG, SK, PL, HR, PT). From the perspective of **gaps in access to social protection** for some categories of non-standard workers or self-employed, challenges were observed in 9 Member States (EL, PL, RO, PT, SK, IT, LT, NL and MT) regarding effective access or linked to adequacy.

Pensions

In the area of pensions, the analysis encompassed issues related to old age poverty and pension adequacy, including gender gaps in pensions. Poverty or social exclusion in people aged 65 years old or more is a KSC in 12 Member States (BG, CY, DE, EE, EL, HR, HU, LT, LU, LV, MT, RO), while 2 registered a GSO (CZ, FI). In terms of income replacement, 14 Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, HR, IE, LT, LV, MT, PT, RO, SI) registered KSCs in their aggregate replacement ratio and 3 showed GSOs (EL, ES, SK). Key challenges were observed in 6 Member States (BE, IE, LU, MT, NL, AT) concerning gender pension gap issues.

Long-term care

Insufficient access to long-term care services, their lack of affordability, quality, or the sub-optimal design of long-term care systems, has been identified as a KSC in 12 Member States (BG, CY, CZ, EE, EL, HR, LT, LV, PL, PT, RO, SK), while GSOs have been flagged for 3 Member States (DE, DK, SE).

Healthcare

The health status analysed by life expectancy of the population either at birth or at 65 (or both in many instances), proves to be a KSC in 14 Member States (AT, BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, HR, HU, IE, LV, NL, PL, RO, SK), while 3 Member States (ES, IT, LU) display good social outcomes. As concerns **access to health care**, challenges have been identified in unmet needs for medical care in 6 Member States (DK, EE, EL, FR, FI, LV).

V. Monitoring social policy developments in the EU Member States

The activities of the [Social Protection Committee](#) focus on three main interlinked areas of policy work, which also support the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan. The first area focuses on thematic work, the second is related to the European Semester, while the third is related to the Committee's monitoring and reporting activities. In delivering on these areas, the Committee applied the social open method of coordination, including thematic and peer reviews and other mutual learning activities (sections V.i and V.iii). The Committee also fulfilled its commitments under the European Semester by delivering on the respective activities within its field of competence and providing support through various opinions and reports to the Council (section V.ii).

In accordance with the [Work Programmes](#) for 2024 and 2025, the Committee has held 15 meetings since September 2024 ⁽⁴⁴⁾, out of which 11 meetings were organised jointly with the [Employment Committee](#). The meetings were held either physically (9) or virtually (6). Many of the joint meetings were dedicated to the deliverables related to the European Semester, including the assessment of the implementation of the Social Convergence Framework in 2024. The Committees provided numerous deliverables to the Council, namely:

- [Assessment of the Social Convergence Framework as implemented on a pilot basis in the 2024 European Semester cycle](#), prepared by the [Employment Committee](#) and the [Social Protection Committee](#) (2 December 2024);
- [Employment and social aspects of the 2025 Council Recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area](#) (10 March 2025);
- [Council Conclusions on the 2025 Joint Employment Report](#), approved by the Council (EPSCO) on 10 March 2025;
- [2025 Joint Employment Report](#);
- The employment and social aspects of the Medium-Term Fiscal-Structural Plans: [Letter from the Chairs of the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee](#);
- [Assessment of the country-specific recommendations for 2025 and implementation of the country-specific recommendations for 2024: Opinion of the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee](#);
- [Horizontal note on country-specific recommendations 2025](#), prepared by the Polish Presidency;
- [Opinion of the Employment Committee on the dimensions of job quality](#), with the input of SPC.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ The closing date of the Annual Report 2024, the number of meetings covers the period of September 2024 to September 2025.

V.i Thematic work

a) Thematic discussion on improving access to enabling services and employment services in order to address territorial inequalities and promote social inclusion ⁽⁴⁵⁾

The SPC held a thematic discussion on improving access to enabling services and employment services in order to address territorial inequalities and promote social inclusion for combatting poverty. It aimed at providing input from the SPC to the preparation of a set of Council Conclusions on [Improving access to enabling services and employment services in order to promote the social inclusion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including Roma, by reducing territorial inequalities](#) through gathering reflections from the Member States on their challenges in this regard and, related to that, exchanging information about good practices on initiatives to reduce inequalities in access to services through digitalisation and monitoring tools based on social indicators to assess the accessibility and development of enabling, essential and employment services from a territorial perspective.

The conclusions of the thematic discussion were the following:

- Member States welcomed the discussion and acknowledged the relationship between territorial divergencies and social inclusion as a policy framework for combating poverty. There are several good practices for territorial planning, for programmes aimed at reducing territorial inequalities, and measuring their effectiveness. These good practices provide a good basis for initiating mutual policy development in this area, which can be beneficial for all Member States.
- Although there are significant differences between Member States regarding territorial policies, the organization of public administration and statistical systems, there are many similarities in policy approaches. These would be, for example, the issue of the optimal level of territorial planning, including the right balance taking into account the needs of local communities with the involvement of stakeholders. Both the availability and quality of a wide range of enabling, essential and employment services are other important elements of these policies aimed at territorial equalization and combating poverty.
- Regarding digitalization, while the reliance on digital services is inevitable, close attention should be paid to the needs of population groups that still require physical or offline access. Digital developments should not generate additional social disparities and disadvantages.
- The continuous work and mutual learning on monitoring the situation of territorial inequalities at EU and national levels are key, in particular concerning exploring the possibilities of mapping 'pockets of poverty' in the Member States. Equally, improving available indicators is important, while taking into account suitability and validity concerns, the SPC-ISG's current workload, and the need to avoid increasing the administrative burden.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ The review was held at the meeting on 17-18 September 2024.

- The discussion confirmed that structural challenges still exist in many Member States and, since new challenges are also foreseen, the continuous exchange about practices at EU-level can support the Member States in their preparatory work on reforms or policy measures.
- The Commission stands ready to keep the issue of reducing territorial inequalities on the EU agenda for combating poverty, as well as to facilitate mutual learning, among others by collecting ideas of common interest for topics for future events.
- EU funds (including the Technical Support Instrument) are available, and Member States are encouraged to continue using them for combating poverty, including for preparing policy reforms.

b) Thematic discussion on integration of policies supporting older persons' economic activity ⁽⁴⁶⁾

The SPC held a thematic discussion on integration of policies supporting older persons' economic activity. The discussion aimed at gathering reflections from the Member States on their challenges concerning demographic trends and their implications on labour market and social protection systems, in the context of labour shortages. By exploring the challenges faced by older workers regarding their economic participation in the labour market, the debate also facilitated an exchange on practices on targeted policy interventions to facilitate longer working lives and support prolonged economic activity. The debate provided inputs to the Presidency's corresponding [Council conclusions on supporting older people in reaching their full potential in the labour market and in society](#).

The conclusions of the thematic discussion were the following:

- Changing the narrative and mindset concerning the ageing population is fundamental — both for individual decisions and for effective policy measures. Older persons, given their better health and higher life expectancy compared to the past, should be perceived as valuable assets rather than a burden to society.
- The mindset should be changed both for individual decisions and for effective policy measures. At the individual level, older people's self-awareness and self-perception of capabilities should be strengthened, via tailor-made upskilling and reskilling policies to better adapt to the changing labour market and digital environment.
- Concerning the especially highlighted health-related challenges, prevention of work incapacity, workplace adaptations, and policies ensuring successful return to work after prolonged illness are essential.
- Individual circumstances need to be considered - incentives to extend working life should take into account the varied capabilities of different occupational groups. That implies the perception of retirement as a process and the necessity to adjust retirement pathways for different career profiles ⁽⁴⁷⁾.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ The review was held at the meeting on 4-5 March 2025.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ For more information about flexible retirement pathways in the EU, see [ESPAN report](#) published at the beginning of 2025.

- To exploit the untapped potential for people in the age group 60-64 to increase their employment, especially among women, measures should address needs concerning care responsibilities, such as flexible working hours, partial pension arrangements, and facilitating reintegration following caregiving breaks.
- The 'policy package' that has been identified should integrate pension, targeted active labour market, social and gender equality policies, tailor-made company policies and practices, including workplace-based age and preventive health management, social partner activities, and provision of health and care services.

c) Tripartite review on the implementation of the Action Plan addressing labour and skills shortages in the EU ⁽⁴⁸⁾

Labour and skills shortages are a major challenge facing the EU labour market, with negative economic and social consequences. Despite a slight decline since the peak observed in 2022, these shortages remain at historically high levels in most Member States and are reported by companies of all sizes and across sectors. In its [Conclusions of 2 December 2024 on labour and skills shortages in the EU: Mobilising untapped labour potential in the European Union](#), the Council of the European Union invites the Social Protection Committee (SPC) to *"continue monitoring labour and skills shortages and related challenges in the EU in the context of the European Semester, including by carrying out thematic discussions, with the involvement of social partners, in order to promote the sharing of knowledge and good practices among Member States on the issue of addressing labour and skills shortages"*.

The European Commission's [Action Plan on labour and skills shortages](#) provides a comprehensive policy framework to tackle this challenge. It outlines short- and medium-term actions that the EU, Member States and social partners should take in five policy areas: activating underrepresented people in the labour market, supporting skills, training and education, improving working conditions, enhancing fair intra-EU mobility, and attracting talent from outside the EU.

The SPC held a tripartite horizontal debate to support progress in the implementation of the Action Plan on labour and skills shortages and fulfil the Council's invitation. On one hand the discussion focused on the aspects of the Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion, based on the responses to the questionnaire circulated to Member States and social partners on 20 December 2024. The other scope of the discussion focused on the challenges and policy responses to the labour and skills shortages in the long-term care and healthcare sectors. Relevant EU social partners and civil society organisations contributed to the discussion, including representatives of Business Europe, SME United, SGI Europe and the European Trade Union Confederation accompanied by sectoral social partners, including the Federation of European Social Employers and the European Federation of Public Service Unions. On behalf of civil society organisations, the European Anti-Poverty Network, Caritas Europe, the European Social Network (ESN), the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities

⁽⁴⁸⁾The review was held at the meeting on 10-11 April 2025.

(EASPD) and European Patients Forum shared their views. Key messages are planned to be adopted at the September meeting and be presented at the December EPSCO meeting.

d) Thematic Review: Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality ⁽⁴⁹⁾

The [2022 Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality](#) (adopted as an integral part of the 'Fit for 55 package'), aims to ensure that the Union's transition towards a climate-neutral and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050 is fair and leaves nobody behind. In this context, Member States agreed to adopt and implement, in close cooperation with social partners, comprehensive and coherent policy packages that address the employment, skills and social aspects of the green transition. The Recommendation refers to the role of the EMCO and SPC to examine in their respective area of competence the implementation, on the basis of adequate reporting and multilateral surveillance tools. In the SPC, the review followed the established format of a thematic discussion, focusing on relevant policy measures within the Committee's competence, notably adequate social protection and related aspects in the context of the green transition. Following up on the 2023 review exercise and the adopted key messages ⁽⁵⁰⁾, the SPC organised a second review in 2025. Integrated key messages from EMCO and SPC are planned to be adopted at the December meeting of EPSCO.

e) Thematic social reporting: Implementation of the Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed

Ensuring access to adequate social protection for all forms of employment is key for a well-functioning social market economy, especially in the context of a changing world of work ⁽⁵¹⁾. It is also an integral component of job quality, as underlined in the recent EMCO opinion ⁽⁵²⁾. The Competitiveness Compass ⁽⁵³⁾ emphasises that ensuring access to adequate, efficient and effective social protection for all, and modernising social protection systems, is key to supporting the EU's competitiveness, and forms part of the EU reform agenda under the Semester.

Principle 12 of the European Pillar of Social Rights ("*Regardless of the type and duration of their employment relationship, workers and, under comparable conditions, the self-employed have the right to adequate social protection*") has been translated into the Council Recommendation of 2019 on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed. The Recommendation invites Member States to provide formal access to social protection for all, to ensure that the rules regarding contributions and entitlements do not prevent

⁽⁴⁹⁾ The review was held at the meeting on 25-26 June 2025.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ The EPSCO Council endorsed the [Key messages from EMCO and SPC on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality](#) at its meeting in November, 2023.

⁽⁵¹⁾ See also the Report of the High-Level Group on [The future of social protection and of the welfare state in the EU](#) - Publications Office of the EU, February 2023.

⁽⁵²⁾ Employment Committee, Opinion of the Employment Committee on the dimensions of job quality (June 2025).

⁽⁵³⁾ See COM(2025)30 final, [A competitiveness Compass for the EU](#)

individuals from accruing or accessing their rights (effective access) and to provide for adequate and transparent social protection schemes.

While acknowledging progress, the 2023 Commission Report to the Council on the implementation of the Recommendation ⁽⁵⁴⁾, based on the national plans submitted in 2021-2022, pointed to persistent gaps and remaining challenges in ensuring access to and adequacy of social protection for all.

The Namur Informal EPSCO meeting of January 2024 marked a renewed commitment to closing existing gaps in access to social protection. This was followed up by the SPC informal meeting in February 2024 ⁽⁵⁵⁾, where Member States stressed the importance of regular reporting on the implementation of the Recommendation, including through thematic social reporting as part of the SPC Annual Report. Similar calls for regular monitoring were made in the Council Conclusions on social protection for the self-employed of October 2023 ⁽⁵⁶⁾ and in the La Hulpe Declaration on the Future of the European Pillar of Social Rights ⁽⁵⁷⁾ of April 2024.

In light of the above, this section presents an overview of policy responses and remaining challenges in implementing the Recommendation, based on the replies by SPC members to a dedicated questionnaire circulated in Spring 2025, along with other relevant data sources. The focus is on reforms and measures taken since mid-2021, i.e. when most national implementation plans were prepared.

Sub-section 1 addresses transparency, an area where information gaps persisted in the 2021-22 national implementation plans despite evidence of various measures being taken by Member States. The following three sub-sections focus on formal access, effective access, and adequacy. Finally, three thematic boxes delve into the issues of the digital divide, the transferability of social protection rights, and strategies for data collection and monitoring.

1. Transparency and simplification

Transparency is a key dimension for effective access to social protection. As spelled out in the Recommendation, ensuring transparency in the organisation and provision of social protection involves providing updated, comprehensive, user-friendly and clear information about individual entitlements, and simplifying the administrative requirements for workers, the self-employed and employers to access and benefit from social protection. The growing role of digitalisation in the management and delivery of social protection schemes is also raising the policy attention on this specific dimension.

Steered by the rapid evolution of technology, and accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis, digitalisation has emerged as a primary tool for enhancing transparency and indirectly contributing, via automation, to the simplification of the procedural requirements to access social protection benefits in most Member States

⁽⁵⁴⁾ See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023DC0043>

⁽⁵⁵⁾ See <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=27583&langId=en>

⁽⁵⁶⁾ See [Council conclusions on Social protection for the self-employed](#)

⁽⁵⁷⁾ As stated in the [Declaration](#), "labour market transformations reinforce the need for a continuous improvement of the adequacy of national social protection systems". Note that the Declaration was signed by the Kingdom of Belgium on behalf of 25 Member States.

(⁵⁸). As also reported in the 2023 Commission Report, reforms to improve the transparency of social protection systems have primarily focused on leveraging digital technology, by digitalising access to general and personalised information and the application processes to benefits.

However, national strategies vary. Some Member States have adopted a 'digital by default' approach, while others (e.g., AT, BG, CZ, FI, LT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK) offer digital services as a supplementary option and maintain traditional channels for non-digital users, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups. Some other countries pay particular attention to ensuring that non-digital users are not left behind. This is, for instance, the case in Denmark, where citizens have the option to apply for an exemption from using mandatory digital public services.

Often Member States employ multi-channel communication strategies combining advanced digital tools with strong offline support. These efforts include physical service centres and networks, citizen-to-citizen assistance, dedicated helplines, community engagement, and information campaigns across multiple media. Common accessibility initiatives involve the use of plain language, free interpreting services (e.g., ES, FI, IE, NL), and digital literacy training (e.g., EE, EL, FI, FR, LV, MT, PL).

Another key practice is the development of integrated digital ecosystems that support automatic entitlement recognition. In Slovenia, for example, the "once-only" principle allows data to be shared seamlessly across government and administrative agencies. Other Member States have developed comprehensive e-portals featuring online simulators and extensive information on benefits, eligibility and application processes, often in multiple languages and with a strong emphasis on better user experience (BE, BG, ES, EE, FR, CZ, PT, SE), to provide citizens with clear and comprehensive information about their entitlements. Some recently introduced digital services face, however, low usage rates as reported by Germany or usability issues, as reported by Hungary and Slovakia. In other cases, valuable online resources lack visibility and require renewed communication efforts, as in the case of a dedicated website in France.

Automation of benefit processing is another key trend, with countries like Estonia and Belgium automatically granting certain benefits to reduce administrative burden and prevent non-take-up. These measures, whether part of broader e-government strategies or specific to social protection, prioritise user-centric design, accessibility, interoperability and efficiency (⁵⁹).

Transparency in the design of social protection rules has been in the focus of policy measures to clarify rights and obligations since 2021, **but progress is uneven.** Nine Member States have introduced measures to inform the public on the implications of voluntary social protection schemes (⁶⁰), and ten Member States did so regarding the obligations and risks associated with various work statuses(⁶¹). Legislative reforms in countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia aim to foster transparency and proactive information

(⁵⁸) [Mutual learning on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed: transparency and simplification - European Commission.](#)

(⁵⁹) For more in-depth analysis, see Eurofound (2025, forthcoming) [Digitalisation in social protection: Trends, risks and opportunities | European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.](#)

(⁶⁰) BE, CZ, EL, FR, HU, MT, PT, RO, SI.

(⁶¹) BE, CZ, EL, FR, HU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI.

sharing by the competent administrations by strengthening citizens' legal rights to information and improving the way in which changes to social protection schemes are communicated.

Simplification efforts are more widespread and significant, with seventeen Member States ⁽⁶²⁾ having streamlined rules governing contributions and entitlements and/or administrative procedures, especially for unemployment, old-age/invalidity, maternity/paternity/family and sickness benefits. However, ten Member States ⁽⁶³⁾ report challenges with the implementation of measures fostering transparency and simplification, including in reaching out to vulnerable groups or managing the inherent complexity of social protection schemes, or encounter issues with implementation or with ensuring data security, achieving interoperability between different systems, and tackling the non-take-up of benefits.

Looking ahead, eleven ⁽⁶⁴⁾ Member States plan to introduce new digital tools or expand their digital infrastructures, with some, like Greece, exploring the use of AI for citizen support, and others considering legislative changes to mandate proactive communication by competent administrations.

Issues nevertheless remain regarding the complexity of design of some social protection systems - and their reforms - as well as their fragmentation (including differing eligibility rules), especially for people with interrupted careers, combining several statuses or transitioning from one status to another, as rules and systems might be more complex for them, or for people lacking digital skills or access to digital devices. In decentralised countries, ensuring consistent quality of information across national, regional, and local levels could represent a challenge as reported by Belgium, Italy as well as Spain, in the latter case in the context of the Digital Social Card unifies all social benefits into a single digital system, simplifying access for citizens while also reducing administrative burden and improving data oversight for public administrations. In their replies, Member States also highlighted the dynamic nature of social protection legislation, which requires continuous efforts to keep all information channels accurate and up to date.

Together with the **digital divide** (see Box 3 below), **non-take-up of benefits** continues to be a prominent challenge. Targeted outreach and automatic processes can help address this challenge, as highlighted by Belgium, where eligible individuals are proactively identified in certain situations, and some rights linked to social assistance benefits granted automatically. In the Netherlands, the government has launched the 'Proactive Services programme' focusing on simplification, service delivery and reducing the risk of non-take-up through proactive government intervention from the perspective of citizens and entrepreneurs.

Data protection and cybersecurity challenges are also highlighted. The increasing digitalisation of sensitive personal data makes robust data security a critical and ongoing concern for some Member States (AT, EL). Questions also arise regarding the capacity of public administrations to design, deploy and manage ICT tools that ensure adequate data protection and cybersecurity.

⁽⁶²⁾ AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, MT, NL, PT, SI, SK.

⁽⁶³⁾ BE, DE, EL, FI, FR, HU, IT, MT, PT, SK.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ BE, BG, CZ, DE, EL, HR, IT, LV, PT, RO, SK.

Box 3: Digital divide and policies to address and prevent it ⁽⁶⁵⁾

Member States overall highlight persistent challenges in reaching out to vulnerable groups, including older people, lower-income populations, rural residents, persons with disabilities⁽⁶⁶⁾, homeless people and migrants. These groups may face various barriers, such as limited internet access, low digital literacy, and other factors affecting their ability to engage with digital services. Acknowledging that digitalisation alone is not sufficient, Member States report on a wide and diverse range of measures that complement digital services with strong offline support:

Multi-channel communication: A commonly reported (good) practice is the combination of digital tools with physical service networks, community centres, dedicated helplines, printed leaflets, and public information campaigns. Initiatives promoting plain language, free interpreting services (e.g., ES, FI, IE, NL), and assisted digital access points are also used to reach diverse population groups.

Digital literacy and training: Several Member States actively provide dedicated digital support and training. Notable examples include Latvia's RRF-funded digital literacy initiative, Greece's "Digital Skills for All" programme, and Poland's "Accessibility Plus" Programme (2018-2025).

User-centric research: Cyprus, through its "Digital Service Factory", conducts research to better understand and respond to the specific digital needs of various user groups.

Integrated approach: Belgium's "*Digital by Default*" strategy offers a comprehensive example of how to address the digital divide. While advancing digital services through platforms like Mypension.be, its e-Gov 3.0 programme embeds inclusivity by design, providing a variety of support channels and staff training to assist less digitally skilled individuals. Furthermore, the "TAKE" research project examined the root causes of non-take-up of social rights – sometimes linked to the digital divide – to inform evidence-based solutions.

2. Formal coverage

Ensuring formal coverage involves guaranteeing that workers and the self-employed are legally entitled to participate in social protection schemes. It is the first necessary condition for achieving access for all and therefore a key area for monitoring progress. As part of their national implementation plans in 2021-2022, fifteen Member States had taken or announced measures to enhance formal coverage ⁽⁶⁷⁾. These initiatives mainly targeted the self-employed, often building on measures introduced to mitigate the risks posed by the COVID-19 crisis.

Less than half of Member States reported having taken measures to extend formal coverage since mid-2023. Where such measures exist, they typically aim to include all economically active persons or specifically

⁽⁶⁵⁾ For more in-depth analysis, see Eurofound (2025), [Narrowing the digital divide: Economic and social convergence in Europe's digital transformation](#) | [European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions](#)

⁽⁶⁶⁾ DK, EL, ES, FI, IT, PL, SI.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ See the Commission's [Report](#) on the implementation of the Recommendation.

focus on the self-employed, and few address the situation of workers in non-standard form of employment.

Some initiatives aim to enhance social protection for all economically active individuals. For instance, Denmark introduced a new benefits scheme for accidents resulting from violence at the workplace, covering employees in certain care roles ⁽⁶⁸⁾. Estonia is transitioning to a residence-based survivor's benefit, replacing the current contribution-based system. Additionally, several Member States (e.g., BG, HR, MT, SK) have introduced or extended (RO) the duration of paternity leave rights, aligning with the EU Work-Life Balance Directive ⁽⁶⁹⁾.

Other measures specifically target workers in certain sectors. For example, Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus have improved the status and/or social protection coverage of **artists and other cultural sector professionals** ⁽⁷⁰⁾. Poland is preparing legislation to allow professional artists to enter the social security system, with public funding to support their contributions. **Domestic workers** have also seen improvements in their social protection coverage notably in Romania (for old-age and health insurance, with RRP support) and Spain (for unemployment benefits) ⁽⁷¹⁾.

Few measures target specific precarious workers in non-standard forms of employment ⁽⁷²⁾. In Austria, individuals with multiple marginal part-time jobs became subject to compulsory unemployment insurance while Spain, Italy and Portugal have enhanced social protection coverage for students and trainees. Member States have taken steps to enhance protection for platform workers. For instance, Belgium set criteria for a rebuttable presumption of employment, thereby granting them access to benefits typically available to employees. In the Netherlands, the government is drafting a bill to provide job security for flexible and temporary-agency workers.

Regarding the self-employed, several recent measures extending formal coverage have focused on family-related leaves. The right to maternity leave for self-employed women was granted by Greece and Germany, following Italy's precedent in 2022. Meanwhile, Malta extended the right to paternity leave to the self-employed ⁽⁷³⁾. Other significant reforms include extending benefits related to accidents at work and occupational diseases to the self-employed in Cyprus, and to self-employed platform workers in Belgium, where platforms will have to insure them against workplace accidents.

Planned measures to improve formal coverage mainly target the self-employed. Estonia seeks to include all self-employed in the unemployment benefits system. Germany's coalition agreement aims to enrol all

⁽⁶⁸⁾ Self-employed earners and assisting spouses (also engaged in certain care roles) may choose to participate in the scheme to provide coverage for themselves.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ In all of these Member States except Romania, the right to paternity leave is also available to the self-employed - although in Slovakia, only to those who are voluntarily insured under the sickness insurance system.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ For more details, see the recent [mutual learning event](#) on social protection for artists (May 2025) – and in particular the latest reforms described in the [thematic discussion paper](#).

⁽⁷¹⁾ For more information about gaps affecting domestic workers, see [ESPAN report](#) published at the end of 2024.

⁽⁷²⁾ For more details, see the recent [mutual learning event](#) on social protection for vulnerable groups of workers (February 2025) – and in particular the [thematic discussion paper](#) on access to unemployment insurance.

⁽⁷³⁾ Also done by Luxembourg (2023) and Italy (2022).

new self-employed in the statutory pension insurance. In Ireland, the government is examining the extension of short-term sickness benefits to the self-employed on a voluntary basis. The Netherlands is considering mandatory disability insurance for the self-employed, as per the Dutch RRP. Austria intends to enhance employee's coverage with mandatory health insurance for low wage earners.

Looking ahead, one-fifth of Member States plan additional measures to improve formal coverage. This partly reflects the fact that several Member States have already achieved full or near-full formal coverage across social protection branches. However, in other Member States gaps persist, particularly for the self-employed ⁽⁷⁴⁾. Finally, some measures announced in the past, notably in the context of the RRP, have been delayed. For instance, Cyprus decided not to extend, at this stage, unemployment benefits to the self-employed, while Poland has not yet adopted its planned reform to provide comprehensive social protection for all workers under civil law contracts.

3. Effective coverage

Beyond formal coverage, the Recommendation invited Member States to ensure effective coverage, i.e. the capacity of individuals with a given employment relationship or labour market status to accrue and access benefits if a given risk materialises. The rules governing contributions (such as qualifying periods, minimum working periods) and entitlements (such as waiting periods, calculation methods and benefits duration) have a decisive impact in this respect ⁽⁷⁵⁾.

Overall, effective and equal access to social protection remains a challenge. Data stemming from the EU monitoring framework in this area ⁽⁷⁶⁾ show that people do not necessarily qualify for benefits when a certain risk occurs, even when they are covered by a corresponding social protection scheme. For instance, in 2024, around 42% of unemployed persons (for less than 12 months) were not receiving unemployment benefits/assistance. Moreover, only 11.5% of self-employed individuals at risk of poverty before social transfers were receiving social benefits, much lower than the rate among all types of employees (30.4% in 2024).

In its 2023 implementation report, the Commission pointed out that *since 2019 “only a limited number of national measures have addressed the issue of effective access”*. In their replies to the 2025 questionnaire, about a dozen Member States ⁽⁷⁷⁾ reported having adopted measures since 2023 to improve effective coverage, focusing mainly on unemployment and old-age benefits, while about one-third have planned measures for the future ⁽⁷⁸⁾.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ See the [Council Conclusions on Social protection for the self-employed](#) adopted in October 2023.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ In the context of the Recommendation, the effective coverage dimension also encompasses the objectives of preservation, accumulation and transferability of rights, which are addressed in Box 4.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ See EC-SPC, 2025 update of the monitoring framework on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed (*forthcoming*), available at: https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/social-protection/access-social-protection_en

⁽⁷⁷⁾ BE, CZ, EE, EL, ES, HR, IE, MT, PL, PT and SE.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ AT, BE, DE, EE, FI, IE, LT and PL.

The measures reported since 2023 mainly concern unemployment and old-age pension schemes. The Spanish reform to streamline unemployment benefits mainly targeted those with insufficient contribution periods and those having exhausted their contributory benefits. In France, access to unemployment benefits was facilitated for workers with discontinuous employment histories, notably by reducing the qualifying period for seasonal workers. In Poland, unemployed individuals with a short entitlement period are no longer subject to a reduction in benefits.

In some countries, self-employed individuals gained easier access to unemployment benefits, as some anti-crisis measures addressing COVID-19-induced income losses became structural. Belgium, for example, simplified the conditions to access the 'bridging right' (financial support during business interruptions) and allowed individuals to cumulate the benefit with a professional activity. Italy made permanent its (initially only pilot) scheme to protect freelance professionals from significant drops in labour income while both Spain and France relaxed the conditions to access the benefit in case of cessation of activity.

Some reforms are expected to improve effective access for specific groups of vulnerable workers. For instance, Czechia revised the conditions for working under an 'agreement to complete a job'. Spain improved the treatment of part-time workers for calculating various social benefits and also improved access to pensions for permanent seasonal (permanent-discontinuous) workers. Italy facilitated access to various groups: rules were eased for freelancers to receive income support, expanded access for self-employed to sickness and parental leave benefits, and relaxed the conditions for persons from disadvantaged groups to access contributory schemes. In Malta, employees with multiple part-time jobs can pay contributions on more than one part-time job, improving their future pension entitlements. Another group benefiting from important adjustments of entitlement rules are the **artists and cultural sectors workers**. Reforms passed notably in Portugal, Belgium and Spain aim to acknowledge their intermittent work patterns.

Measures related to old-age benefits were taken in a few countries, though with varying objectives. For instance, Czechia relaxed the age requirement for workers with short contribution periods to qualify for old-age pensions, while Ireland and Belgium adapted the rules to incentivise longer working careers.

Few other branch-specific adaptations were introduced, for instance relaxation of qualifying periods for maternity and parental benefits in Croatia. Slovenia replaced voluntary by statutory health insurance, including for self-employed, while Sweden now allows self-employed aged 55+ to choose waiting periods for sickness benefits.

Looking ahead, around one-third of Member States have planned measures to improve effective coverage, mostly related to old-age benefits. Austria plans to recognise work in the care sector as a heavy occupation, therefore allowing early retirement, while in Germany the coalition agreement plans to improve recognition of child-raising periods. In contrast, Belgium's coalition agreement provides for a cap on the assimilation of non-working periods for pension calculation purposes.

Overall, ensuring that the rules governing entitlements and contributions allow for equal access to social protection across contracts and employment statuses remains a challenge. This mainly relates to adapting

social protection systems to diverse forms of non-standard work, to ensuring consistency in the rules across employment statuses while preserving the coherence of the legal framework, and to balancing the cost implications faced by governments when improving effective access while guaranteeing fiscal sustainability. The continuity of social protection rights when changing and combining employment statuses also enhances adequacy and efficiency (see Box 4).

Box 4: Preservation, accumulation and transferability of rights

Effective coverage also entails ensuring that entitlements are preserved, accumulated, and/or transferable across different types of employment and self-employment statuses over time and between schemes within a given branch ⁽⁷⁹⁾. These mechanisms are essential for protecting the rights acquired in past work experiences, and retaining, accumulating, and easily transferring them across social protection schemes, as individuals increasingly move between jobs, employment statuses and schemes ⁽⁸⁰⁾. At the same time, transferability is intrinsically linked to the principle of transparency. While general information is often readily available, this is not always the case for more complex or specific situations.

The 2023 Commission Report on the implementation of the Recommendation highlighted the limited attention in national plans to improving the transferability of entitlements. Some Member States operate a general, one-size-fits-(almost)-all scheme, and the universal character of the social protection system inherently ensures the preservation and transferability of rights. For example, in Estonia the system does not differentiate between employment statuses, thus guaranteeing the protection and transferability of rights across employment types without the need for special 'internal coordination' rules. Similarly, in Czechia, the system ensures that rights are preserved and transferable, thus simplifying employment transitions. Other countries are beginning to transition from a (highly) fragmented system of specific protection schemes towards a more integrated framework.

In many Member States, measures are in place to ensure the preservation, accumulation, and transferability of social security rights. The Belgian legal framework offers solutions for **preserving rights** when transitioning between schemes. For instance, self-employed individuals who were previously employees can, if needed, "return" to unemployment benefits while preserving their acquired rights. In Austria, all contribution periods, regardless of employment type, are accumulated in a unified pension account. In Italy, specific provisions are in place to ensure the preservation and accumulation of old-age pension rights when transitioning between employee and self-employed status and between pension schemes.

Accumulation of rights is also well-illustrated by Finland's social security system, which allows individuals to combine incomes from employment and self-employment when calculating benefits like sickness

⁽⁷⁹⁾ More information available here: [Mutual learning on access to social protection for vulnerable groups of workers - European Commission](#) including a specific thematic [discussion paper on Labour status neutral social protection](#) that covers (see section 3) challenges related to transferability and the transition between employment statuses.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ The focus in this box is restricted to transitions between statuses or social protection schemes *within* a single Member State. It does not cover intra-EU mobility, which falls under the scope of EU-level coordination of social security systems.

benefits, while Malta, as for many other Member States, considers both employment and self-employment in pension calculations.

Portugal exemplifies the **transferability** of rights through its legal provisions that unify disability, old-age, and survivor pensions for individuals covered by both general social security and civil servant pension schemes.

4. Adequacy

The Council Recommendation invites Member States to ensure an adequate level of social protection benefits in a timely manner, maintaining a decent standard of living and providing appropriate income replacement, while always preventing falling into poverty and better aligning social security contributions of workers and self-employed with their contributory capacities.

Many Member States have been enhancing the overall adequacy of social protection benefits since 2021, with a strong emphasis on keeping pace with inflation and cost-of-living increases. Nineteen Member States have reported measures to index or increase benefits to maintain or improve their adequacy. Austria and Bulgaria have implemented annual pension adjustments to align with inflation and preserve pensioners' purchasing power. Belgium has increased minimum pensions, expanded incapacity-to-work benefits, and taken measures to address the gender pension gap, such as better recognition of part-time work in pension calculations. Other countries, like Finland, have adapted social security contributions to better align with the contributory capacity of the self-employed while ensuring adequate replacement rates.

Beyond old-age pensions, several Member States have introduced reforms to improve the adequacy of other benefits. For instance, Belgium has increased minimum unemployment benefits, school leaver allowances, and social assistance benefits to strengthen the safety net. Sweden has made permanent a previously temporary increase in unemployment benefits. Cyprus has extended maternity benefits and significantly raised birth grants to better support families. Portugal has enhanced parental protection for both employees and self-employed and applies annual increases to the Index for Social Supports to improve support to families and individuals in need. Estonia has amended its Health Insurance Act to allow work under adapted conditions during long-term sick leave, helping to ensure income maintenance. In Italy, the reformed Inclusion Allowance offers longer benefit duration than before and several contributions were adjusted to better align with the contributory capacity of self-employed individuals. These measures reflect a broader trend among Member States to improve benefit adequacy across branches, adapting to changing economic circumstances and evolving societal needs.

Indicators from the EU monitoring framework shows that adequacy remains an issue. For instance, temporary contract employees and part-timers face significantly higher income poverty and material and social deprivation rates compared to those in standard employment. In 2024, the unemployed remained the group with the highest levels of material and social deprivation, at 36.9% in the EU-27, and were most at risk of poverty, at 48.8%. These statistics underscore the crucial role of social protection in supporting the incomes of vulnerable groups.

Looking forward, **twelve Member States plan to take measures to improve the adequacy of their social protection systems**, through reforming pension eligibility, adjusting unemployment benefits, improving job security for flexible workers and extending healthcare benefits.

Box 5: Monitoring systems at national level

Accurate and comprehensive data strategies are crucial for understanding and addressing gaps in social protection. This is spelled out in provision 17 of the Recommendation, which calls for data and monitoring efforts at national at EU level. Integrated data systems and digital solutions also play an important role in improving data accuracy and facilitating real-time monitoring of social protection. ⁽⁸¹⁾

In its 2023 implementation Report, the Commission highlighted that only a few Member States had reported, in their national plans, measures related to the production and gathering of statistical data and that several Member States lacked strategies or tools for comprehensive monitoring of access to social protection.

More recently, several Member States have reported initiatives to enhance data collection and monitoring practices, including new evaluation tools like impact assessments and micro-modelling. Austria has enacted laws making impact assessment standard for legislative changes. Ireland evaluates schemes and services, including reforms, and is building longitudinal data to support these evaluations. Belgium uses the BELMOD-model, built on EUROMOD, to simulate social security changes and assess their impact. Latvia is developing a new IT solution for macro-simulation models, co-financed under its RRP. The Netherlands conducts in-depth impact assessments before major reforms and uses econometric models to evaluate various social protection scenarios and their socio-economic effects. Finally, Slovakia is working with Social Insurance Agency datasets to better monitor duplications, switches between statuses and trends.

The establishment of specialised institutions and cross-sectoral cooperation is also crucial for systematically monitoring access to social protection and has become a reform trend. In Estonia, all social security benefits are managed with real-life data from various registries, facilitated by the 'X-road Data System' for data exchange. Statistics Estonia uses this integrated data for register-based analysis. Greece is connecting existing databases and developing a Single Portal for Digital Access to Social Protection.

In Belgium, the Crossroads Bank for Social Security enables secure data exchange between institutions, while the Labour Market and Social Protection Data Warehouse collects administrative data for research. Poland's ZUS has modernised its systems, including a new Cybersecurity Management Platform, as part of broader digital reforms. In 2021, Portugal created the Public Administration Planning and Foresight Services Network (REPLAN) to ensure inter-ministerial cooperation, share knowledge and resources, and jointly plan, monitor and evaluate public policies. Finally, in Spain the Social Security Data Access Platform

⁽⁸¹⁾ See documents from the mutual learning event on 'Access to social protection: data, indicators and monitoring systems' of 26-27 November 2024, available at: https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/mutual-learning-monitoring-access-social-protection-2024-11-26_en. Discussions at the event highlighted that administrative data may be unavailable or fragmented across different institutions or lack comparability and interoperability, and that the use of microdata can improve inter-connection with other data sources. Adopting a longitudinal perspective also presents significant advantages, to better understand the occurrence of social risks and the capacity of social protection systems to effectively reach those in need.

provides, since 2020, access to social security data for research, and it has been complemented since 2024 by a multi-institutional platform that allows researchers to request matched data from five institutions.

Conclusions

The changing world of work and other megatrends such as the digital transformation and population ageing require **continuous adaptation of the rules and organisation of social protection schemes**, to ensure that they remain transparent, accessible and adequate for all.

As reported in their replies to the SPC questionnaire of spring 2025, over the last couple of years, Member States have been **actively adjusting their social protection systems in response to these challenges**, building upon achievements since the adoption of the Council Recommendation, as also evidenced in the 2023 Commission implementation report.

Member States' replies indicate that many of the measures taken aim to enhance the transparency of social protection schemes, particularly through digitalisation, to ensure that all users are fully aware of their rights and obligations and well equipped to navigate through the system. **Simplification has also emerged as a significant trend in the reform agenda**. Moreover, several countries took measures to improve formal and effective access mainly for specific groups, such as those in non-standard forms of work including artists and domestic workers. In contrast, measures related to enhancing adequacy are most often focused on improving the situation of the self-employed or all those who are economically active.

As reported by Member States, **the COVID-19 and cost-of-living crises have significantly contributed to boosting already on-going digitalisation trends and to enhancing access to social protection for the self-employed and vulnerable workers**. The COVID-19 crisis, in particular, highlighted the importance of an integrated digital infrastructure and inter-institutional cooperation (e.g., DK, IT) and revealed the vulnerabilities of certain groups. As a result, it triggered an acceleration of digitalisation of public administration in some countries (e.g., CZ, EE, EL, IT, PL) and prompted reforms in the access to social protection for vulnerable groups of workers and the self-employed (e.g., BE, BG, ES, FR, IT, LT).

Despite encouraging developments, **ensuring equitable and adequate social protection for all, especially for those in non-standard or intermittent employment, remains challenging**. As noted by some Member States (e.g. EE, IT and SI), self-employed and non-standard workers, including platform workers, often do not qualify for benefits and providing them with an adequate amount of compensation is difficult due to low or irregular contributions or complex legislation. Practical implementation hurdles and financing issues make it often challenging to adapt social protection schemes, initially conceived for workers, to the self-employed (BG, DE, LT, LV, SI).

The fragmentation of social protection systems and the complexity of rules and administrative procedures can, to some degree, explain the lack of awareness of rights and obligations (e.g., as reported by CY, EL, IT, PT), especially among vulnerable individuals, including people with impairment or disability, migrants and informal workers. These groups often face additional barriers like lack of digital skills or access to digital infrastructure as well as legal or administrative barriers that limit their access to information and services. This also applies to those with fragmented careers, those combining several statuses or transitioning from

one status to another, as rules and systems might be more complex for them. In their efforts to enhance transparency through digitalisation, Member States report encountering challenges with ensuring data security, achieving interoperability between different systems, and addressing the issue of non-take-up. Regional disparities in service delivery may also hamper benefit access (IT).

Finally, balancing the sustainability of social protection with effective access and benefit adequacy has emerged as a key concern. While Member States aim to adjust rules on access and benefit levels to better protect individuals, they also strive to ensure the fiscal sustainability of their social protection systems (e.g., as reported by IE and SK). Addressing this trade-off requires innovative approaches to funding and in the design of social protection to meet both current and future needs effectively. Securing an appropriate social security contribution base, notably as concerns the self-employed, remains key to ensure both adequate financing and access to benefits. In some Member States, this also relates to efforts to further regulate the use of atypical contracts (e.g., ES, SI) and tackle undeclared work (EL, LV, RO, SK).

Based on the thematic social reporting exercise, a thematic discussion is planned at the October 2025 SPC meeting.

V.ii Multilateral reviews of the implementation of Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) under the European Semester (MIRs)

As part of its treaty-based mandate, the [Social Protection Committee](#) (SPC) systematically monitors Member States' reform activities. One of the key instruments used in this task are the Multilateral Implementation Reviews (MIR), which entail reviewing Member States' reform implementation efforts in the context of the European Semester. Such reviews provide a shared understanding of interrelated challenges and support Member States' reform efforts through exchanges of policy knowledge and best practices.

During the 2025 Semester cycle, the Committee conducted 11 reviews of country-specific recommendations (CSRs) in policy areas under its competence, issued by the Council in 2024. The CSRs addressed specific challenges in the fields of pensions, healthcare, long-term care and social protection and social inclusion. Additionally, based on the Social Convergence Framework (SCF) as laid out in the Joint Employment Report (JER) 2025 Key Messages, the 10 countries falling into the second stage analysis were reviewed in joint SCF reviews of the [Employment Committee](#) (EMCO) and the SPC, also covering for the 2024 CSRs if relevant (8 out of 10 countries), including the ones related to housing affordability and energy poverty challenges. All country-specific reviews were based on Member States' reporting on the most recent measures taken, followed by assessments of those measures by other Member States and the Commission.

The country specific reviews were complemented by various horizontal elements of the multilateral surveillance exercise, benefitting from the corresponding thematic discussions organized in the SPC meetings, namely the in-depth thematic discussion on "integration of policies supporting older persons' economic activity", in relation with pension policy and the tripartite discussion for reviewing the implementation of the 2024 Action Plan on Labour and Skills Shortages in the EU. The conclusions of the reviews fed into the joint [Opinion of the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee on the 2025 cycle of the European Semester](#), endorsed by the Council.

Horizontal findings

The majority of the 2024 country specific recommendations focused on fiscal sustainability issues with elements related to adequacy and efficiency of public spending, including through better targeting or streamlining of social benefits and improved adequacy or incentives to work. High participation in the labour market, in particular of older people, and efficiency in health care and long-term care provision are key to reconciling adequate benefits and affordable high-quality services with sustainability of spending in an ageing society, as emphasised by the need for overarching reform of pension, health care and long-term care systems.

Many of the reviews assessed implementation of CSRs, carried over in past cycles of the European Semester, which indicates the long-term and structural nature of the observed challenges. The discussions have demonstrated that the reviewed Member States acknowledge the identified challenges and are taking specific actions to explore the issues and to prepare appropriate policy responses. The SPC welcomed the

reported measures and views positively the efforts made by the Member States. At the same time, the discussions in the Committee have shown that further actions will be needed to fully address the requirements of the country specific recommendations, as in many instances the reported measures are still to be implemented, while in others the legislative process is at an early stage.

The 2025 second-stage analysis of the Social Convergence Framework highlighted challenges in particular in the areas of social protection and inclusion due to some deteriorating patterns, in a context of strong and resilient labour markets. However, labour market challenges also persist, notably related to gaps in the participation and employment rates of specific groups (women, young people, persons with disabilities, third-country nationals), sizeable skills and labour shortages, as well as regional disparities affecting some Member States. Overall, belonging to a population group in a vulnerable situation too often remains a strong predictor of educational and labour market outcomes and social exclusion.

Some Member States face challenges related to persistently high risks of poverty or social exclusion, especially for some groups, difficulties in setting up efficient social protection systems that effectively address poverty risks, and high income inequalities, particularly in light of the high inflation experienced in recent years, which has inevitably had a greater impact on low-income and (quasi-)jobless households. The shares of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion also remain generally high, making it crucial to fully implement the European Child Guarantee. Other Member States continue to face challenges in improving access to affordable healthcare and long-term care services, which is particularly critical in light of population ageing. Ensuring access to high-quality active inclusion measures - integrated with access to essential and social services - should remain a priority in many Member States, including with a view to reducing inequalities among population groups and across regions, and to strengthening social cohesion. In recent years, reforms and investments have been planned or implemented, especially with the aims of increasing labour market activation and the adequacy of social benefits and pensions, as well as expanding access to affordable healthcare and long-term care systems. Potential trade-offs between adequate financing and the sustainability of social protection and social security systems remain highly relevant in this context, pointing to the need for effective and efficient tax and benefit system design.

The findings of the relevant thematic discussions are presented above.

V.iii Thematic Mutual learning activities

Mutual learning and exchange of best practices in the policy areas covered by the Social Protection Committee (SPC) are key instruments under the social open method of coordination⁸². This supports the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights at national level and contributes to the process of upward social convergence in the EU.

⁽⁸²⁾ The SPC uses the social open method of coordination (social OMC) as its main policy framework. The social OMC is the voluntary process for political cooperation based on agreeing common objectives and measuring progress towards these goals using common indicators. The process also involves close co-operation with stakeholders, including social partners and civil society.

Mutual learning provides a common space to reflect, share, consolidate and transfer information, experiences and lessons learnt on implementing policy reforms, programmes or measures relevant to various policy areas. This offers the opportunity to officials, experts and stakeholders to **discuss various thematic challenges and exchange best practices based on robust evidence**.

The related workshops are attended by participants from some or all countries (as appropriate, from national, regional and/or local administration level), by representatives of relevant stakeholders and/or international organisations. They may be supported by independent national experts and thematic experts to provide their insights and knowledge on the issue discussed from national and EU-wide perspectives. Where appropriate, the event may also include a study visit to organisations involved in the development and delivery of policies, whereby participants can see the direct application and impact of policy on the ground. The workshops can be organised in on-line or on-site format.

Thematic mutual learning events have been organised in the following thematic areas.

Thematic mutual learning related to Council Recommendations

Minimum income - MINET

Since 2019, regular thematic meetings have been organised in the field of minimum income to support mutual learning by involving experts from all Member States. The network has been formalised as a working group of the SPC in 2021, contributing to the preparation of the joint SPC-COM report on minimum income in 2022 by providing inputs and support to this process with relevant exchange of practices and information. The mandate of the working group lasts until the end of 2025 and the group holds at least two meetings per year.

The following meetings were held in the second half of 2024 and so far in 2025:

- September 2024, on-line meeting organised to share with MINET the outcomes of a peer review held in Latvia on the topic of adequacy of minimum income support, and in particular on how to define and operationalise concepts such as 'basic needs' and 'life in dignity'.
- October 2024, in-person meeting in Berlin organised by MINET to discuss and exchange experiences linked to the non-take-up of minimum income schemes. Academic experts and civil society organisations provided insights on the root causes of non-take-up, while Member States presented their best practice projects to improve coverage of minimum income support.
- December 2024, on-line meeting to share a presentation of the OECD new database, developed under a joint project with the European Commission, which collects information on asset-test rules for minimum income benefits in the EU. Furthermore, the outline and the timeline as well as country fiche examples were presented and discussed.
- March 2025, a joint in-person meeting between MINET and the Advisors to the European PES Affairs (AFEPA). Participants discussed and exchanged practices linked to activating groups

furthest from the labour market. The outcomes of the Commission thematic review “Hidden potential - People outside of the labour force in the context of labour and skill shortages in the EU” were also presented.

- April 2025, virtual meeting served as an opportunity for the Commission to present the first draft of the joint SPC - Commission report on the implementation of the Council recommendation on minimum income ensuring active inclusion. In addition, Eurostat debriefed on the upcoming work on data collection for minimum income benefits (ESSPROS).

In 2025, the **Social Protection Committee** and the European Commission continued working together to assess the implementation of the **Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income, ensuring active inclusion**. In accordance with the recommendation call, a **joint report of the SPC and the EC** has been prepared with a view of adopting it in September 2025 and having the key messages endorsed by the EPSCO, also providing a contribution to the broader joint anti-poverty efforts. MINET has been actively contributed to the preparation of the report, providing country specific information on the national schemes.

The stand-alone report highlights that the efforts to improve minimum income schemes remain varied across Member States. While some countries have made significant strides, others need to intensify efforts to make their schemes more effective. Increasing adequacy, ensuring broader coverage including by addressing non-take-up, facilitating the integration in the labour market of minimum income recipients and improving access to quality services are critical to reach results. The focus on individualised support further underscores the need to develop an inclusive model that works for everyone.

Access to social protection for non-standard workers and self-employed

In order to further support the implementation of the 2019 Council recommendation on access to social protection for workers and self-employed, the Commission facilitates regular mutual learning events.

Three recent mutual learning events took place in the reporting period:

- Mutual learning workshop on “Monitoring Access to Social Protection – Data, Indicators, and Monitoring System” on 26-27 November 2024. Both SPC and ISG delegates participated, as well as experts from ILO, ISSA, OECD, Eurostat, etc. The aim was to support the improvement of the dedicated EU monitoring framework, as well identify relevant practices and actions taken by Member States to improve data and indicators as well as monitoring systems.
- Mutual learning workshop on “Social protection coverage for vulnerable groups of workers (precarious temporary workers and solo self-employed) with a focus on unemployment benefits” (20-21 February 2025). The workshop was mostly attended by SPC delegates but also social security institutions, the EESC and social partners. The aim of the workshop was to take stock of recent reforms and innovative approaches to extend formal coverage, improve effective coverage and promote the adequacy of unemployment benefit. Moreover, participants to the workshop

also discussed, beyond unemployment benefits, how to apply the principle of “labour status neutrality” and to promote the preservation and transferability of rights when workers change (or combine) statuses.

- Mutual learning workshop on “Social protection for artists” (6-7 May 2025). The workshop was attended by national representatives from both the social affairs and the cultural policy sides. The objective of the workshop was to facilitate the exchange of experience, explore the advantages and disadvantages of establishing specific schemes or sets of rules for artists, and inspire further policy reforms at national level. It also served as a follow-up to the European Parliament resolution of November 2023 which included recommendations for an EU framework addressing the social and professional situation of artists.

European Child Guarantee Coordinators network

The Council Recommendation of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee (ECG) requests Member States *inter alia* to nominate national Child Guarantee Coordinators (CGCs). On top of their main mandate, which is to ensure effective coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Recommendation in their country, the CGCs contribute to facilitate mutual learning, share experiences, exchange good practices and follow up on the actions taken in response to the Recommendation as set out in the relevant national action plans.

Since October 2021, the Commission has organised numerous meetings of Child Guarantee Coordinators aimed at exchange of information, mutual learning, topical discussions and interaction with researchers and civil society. Those included regular annual meetings in Brussels, taking stock of the overall progress with implementation of ECG and related policy initiatives. Meetings have taken place in cooperation with the EU Presidencies (respectively in Spain, Belgium and most recently in Poland on 16-17 June 2025).

Additional mutual learning events were organized on:

- 15 November 2024, focusing on early childhood education and care;
- 10-11 December 2024 focusing on provision of free healthy school meals;
- 19 March 2025 on update of the common monitoring framework to assess implementation of the European Child Guarantee, and presentation of progress on projects under the Technical Support Instrument;
- 16-17 June 2025 on progress with expansion of childcare and provision of after-school activities.

Access to affordable high-quality long-term care

As set out in the European Care Strategy, the Commission facilitates mutual learning concerning the implementation of the Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care. The objective is to support Member States in designing reforms and investments in the areas of social

protection for long-term care (LTC), availability and accessibility, quality, LTC workforce ⁽⁸³⁾ and support for informal carers. The mutual learning activities build also on the measures reported by the Member States related to the implementation of the Council Recommendation and results will also inform the Commission report on the implementation to be delivered to the Council by 2027.

Mutual learning events are attended by the LTC coordinators who also meet in relation to the reporting arrangements on the implementation at national level.

The following mutual learning seminars and meetings were organised since mid-2024:

- Stocktaking event on the implementation of the European Care Strategy, 12 November 2024
- Webinar on LTC workforce, 18 June 2025.

Thematic mutual learning activities steered by the Commission

Addressing economic inequalities - Distributional Impact Assessment (DIA)

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan puts emphasis on the importance of reducing inequalities. A mutual learning conference on addressing economic inequalities was organised on 25 October 2021, which paved the way for mutual learning events on various aspects relevant to addressing inequality. In September 2022, the European Commission published a Communication on Better [assessing the distributional impact of Member States' policies](#) and a related [Staff Working Document](#) that stress the importance of Distributional Impact Assessment (DIA) analyses to assess and maximise the impact of reforms and investment on income poverty and inequality reduction across the EU.

To support Member States and promote the exchange of good practices on DIA, the Commission has initiated a series of Mutual Learning Events (MLE), involving mainly representatives from Member States' Ministries of economy and finance and of employment and social affairs, as well as national budgetary institutions, independent fiscal institutions, and related national bodies.

The following mutual learning events were organised since mid-2024:

- 26 September 2024, with thematic presentations on access to data. Hungary and Germany presented their experiences in using DIA.
- 23 March 2025, with a thematic presentation on health in-kind benefits (JRC study) and national practices by Finland and Portugal.
- 12/13 May 2025, the 13th Mutual Learning Event on Distributional Impact Assessment (DIA) took

⁽⁸³⁾ For more information on addressing knowledge gaps in relation to the LTC workforce, see [Policy Brief](#) published at the end of 2024.

place in Brussels allowing in depth discussions between colleagues from employment, social and economy and finance ministries on best practices and the added value of DIA to support evidence-based policy making. A few Member States presented extensively on their national experience (Lithuania, Finland and Ireland). The emphasis was on looking into the impact of employment and social policies (including for instance non take-up of benefits or considering data and modelling issues) and beyond on a broader range of policies (such as in-kind benefits, wealth, housing) as well as governance or dissemination issues or more broadly social impact assessment relating to the “do no significant social harm” approach. Participants underlined the usefulness of mutual learning and emphasised the possibilities to discuss about further reliance on distributional impact assessments within the work of the Committees (SPC, EMCO and EPC).

Effective policies to end homelessness

The work at the EU level to tackle and reduce homelessness takes place under the umbrella of the **European Platform on Combatting Homelessness**. The Platform was launched through the signature of the Lisbon Declaration in June 2021, and brings together Member States, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee, the OECD, the Council of Europe Development Bank, social partners and relevant civil society stakeholders, in a commitment to fight homelessness. Since its launch, the Platform has become a focal point in the fight against homelessness, by: (1) promoting mutual learning, (2) supporting the development of better statistical evidence and knowledge on homelessness and (3) promoting the use of EU funds.

In 2024 and 2025, the two-year project EPOCH Practice, coordinated by FEANTSA and financed by an EU action grant, aims at supporting the Platform through knowledge and capacity building, including through mutual learning activities. Furthermore, four transnational social innovation projects on homelessness under the ESF+ aim to pilot evidence-based innovation practices to further enhance mutual learning.

Key actions related to the analytical strand of the Platform include: 1/ the pilot project coordinated by KU Leuven on a European Homelessness Count (two city counts in the Autumn of 2024 and of 2025 in 15 and 35 cities respectively); 2/ the OECD Policy toolkit, monitoring framework and data mapping (closing conference on 13 December 2024); 3/ a new project with the OECD on a blueprint for integrated action plans and on homelessness policy evaluation.

The working group of the Platform on access to finance, co-chaired by the European Commission and the Council of Europe Development Bank, is the main forum to implement the third work strand of the Platform. The aim of the working group is to map available funding options, build capacity and expertise of project promoters and support the development of projects to combat homelessness. The last Plenary meeting of the Platform took place on 13 June 2025.

Persons with disabilities

The Commission expert group ‘**Disability Platform**’ was set up in October 2021, as one of the flagship initiatives of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (SRPD) 2021-2030, to support the implementation of this Strategy as well as national disability strategies. It brings together national focal points, in charge of the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), EU-level civil society organisations representing persons with disabilities, as well as service providers and the Commission.

The Platform is used as a forum to discuss policies and practices on disability. The group also exchanges on the implementation of the actions of the Disability Strategy, and on the UN’s assessments of Member States’ implementation of the UNCRPD. The Disability platform meets three times a year and works based on an annual work programme, drafted in consultation with the members of the platform.

The following meetings of the Disability Platform were held since mid-2024:

- 3 October 2024 focusing on an exchange with civil society organisations on the thematic priorities, exchange on the input to the dialogue with the UN CRPD, as well as a presentation and a discussion on setting up national targets for employment of persons with disabilities.
- 27-28 March 2025 focusing on the EU dialogue with the UN CRPD committee, social economy, and also serving as an exchange with the civil society organisations on thematic priorities. The need of legislative, economic and social changes to promote the employment, media representation and independent living of persons with disabilities as concrete policies and increased public awareness were emphasized.
- 18-19 June 2025, focusing on accessibility, independent living and promoting of the rights of persons with disabilities globally. The discussion concluded that despite significant progress in recent years, major challenges still remain regarding the social and economic integration of persons with disabilities, and that joint action is necessary to promote legislative change, accessibility, and inclusive employment. Cooperation and developing concrete action plans can ensure tangible changes in the lives of those affected.

V.iv Peer reviews

While thematic mutual learning activities aim at discussing policy developments focusing on specific thematic areas, peer reviews represent an **in-depth exploration, assessment and discussion of a given national policy of a given country (the host country) by other countries** (the reviewing and other guest countries), based on the initiative of the host country.

The peer review focuses on specific areas of the policy assessed to support the authorities in the design, implementation and the evaluation of the programmes, policies or reforms.

Each peer review is attended by national or regional officials from peer countries, and, where appropriate, by relevant stakeholders. National experts from each host and guest countries and a thematic expert support the participants by providing their insights and knowledge on the issue discussed based on the host/guest countries experiences, and from national and EU-wide perspectives.

Where appropriate, the peer review may also include, or be implemented in the form of, a study visit to organisations involved in the development and delivery of policies, allowing participants to see the direct application and impact of policy on the ground.

During the last year, 3 peer reviews were organised and an additional 3 are planned at the time of the Annual Report's preparation.

A Peer Review on ['Participation of persons with disabilities in the development of social services at local level'](#) was held in Vienna on 3-4 October 2024. The host country, Austria, presented and discussed three concrete initiatives to the peer countries (Cyprus, Belgium, Germany and Croatia). The initiatives were launched by the Vienna Social Fund, which aim to empower persons with disabilities, as they are convinced that services should be shaped according to their needs and preferences, in line with the motto "Nothing about us without us". The measures presented are flagship projects to implement ideas on an equal and cooperative basis with the widest possible involvement of persons with disabilities. Participating countries discussed success factors, challenges and good practices related to the participation of persons with disabilities in the development of social services at local level.

['The Implementation of Housing First approach to tackle long-term homelessness of people with complex needs'](#) was the subject of the peer review in Dublin, on 10-11 October 2024. It offered the opportunity to discuss key elements of the national Housing First programme implemented in Ireland, aiming to provide long-term housing and support to homeless persons with complex needs, and share different approaches and good practices among participating peer countries (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Latvia, Slovenia, and Poland). NGOs involved in the implementation also participated. The host country presented the development and implementation of their Housing First national approach, which started from a small pilot project in Dublin and is now an integrated nationwide strategy.

The peer review on ['Social protection and inclusion of older persons'](#) was held Oslo on 3-4 December 2024. Against the background of demographic change resulting in a rising proportion of older people in society, as well as increased life expectancy, the Peer Review focused on improvements in social protection and inclusion of older persons, with a view to developing age-friendly societies and improving the social participation of older people beyond working life. It discussed challenges, policy responses and local measures to promote sustainable welfare services through active ageing, active care and prevention. Active care is used in the Norwegian context to describe a holistic approach to long-term care and social services, including the provision of cultural and physical activities, also contributing to older people's inclusion and active engagement in their own wellbeing and social life.

Three peer reviews will be organised in 2025:

- Elaborating, coordinating and monitoring a national strategy against poverty, proposed by Belgium, to be held in early October 2025 in Brussels.
- Social inclusion for families and children, proposed by Lithuania, to be held in mid-October 2025 in Vilnius.
- Access for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others: European exchange on national implementation of reasonable accommodation and accessibility in access to services, proposed by Germany, to be held in Berlin in early November 2025.

Another peer review proposed by Greece will be organised in Athens, in January 2026, focusing on regional disparities in access to long-term care in Greece and participatory strategies for equitable service delivery.

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The report is prepared by the Secretariats of the Committee and its Indicators Sub-Group. The Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion provided the SPPM dashboard calculations used in the report with the extensive assistance and data provision of Eurostat. The principal authors are Paul Minty and Katalin Szatmari, with specific support from Maria Baroni, Helena Van Langenhove, Fabiana Pierini and Laurent Aujean. The members of the SPC and its Indicators Sub-Group contributed extensively to the drafting of the report and its key messages. The report was approved by the SPC on 22-23 September 2025.