

# Social protection in Europe

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## Statistics in focus

### POPULATION AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

THEME 3 – 2/2000

### POPULATION AND LIVING CONDITIONS

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#### Expenditure on social protection

- The 1997 results confirm the downward trend in expenditure on social protection as a percentage of GDP observed since 1993.
- There are major differences between countries:
  - as % of GDP: Ireland 17.5% - Sweden 33.7%
  - in PPS per capita: Portugal 2868 PPS - Luxembourg 8837 PPS

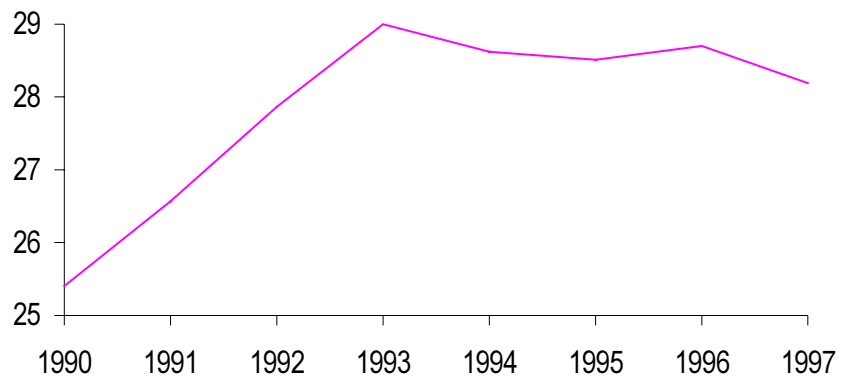
#### Social benefits

- Expenditure on old-age benefits still predominates.
- Unemployment-related expenditure is decreasing.

#### Financing of social protection

- The increase in expenditure after 1990 was financed largely by an increase in general government contributions.

**Figure 1**  
Expenditure on social protection in EU-15  
(as % of GDP)



Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS.

Between 1996 and 1997, expenditure on social protection in EU-15 as a percentage of GDP fell by 0.5 points from 28.7% to 28.2%.

In contrast, it rose by almost three points compared with 1990, when the figure was 25.4%.

The trend in expenditure on social protection was not regular during the period 1990-1997.



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Between 1990 and 1993, there was a considerable increase, which peaked at 29.0% in 1993.

This was due mainly to the slower rate of growth of GDP and the increasing unemployment level.

Between 1993 and 1996, expenditure on social protection as a percentage of GDP showed a slight downward trend, which continued in 1997 and was due partly to renewed growth in GDP but also to a slowdown in the growth of social protection expenditure (in particular a decrease in unemployment benefits).

**Table 1: Expenditure on social protection (as % of GDP)**

	1990	1993	1996	1997
B	26.7	29.4	28.8	28.5
DK	29.7	33.0	32.5	31.4
D	25.4	29.1	30.6	29.9
EL	23.2	22.3	23.1	23.6
E	19.9	24.0	21.9	21.4
F	27.7	31.0	31.0	30.8
IRL	19.1	20.7	18.5	17.5
I	24.1	26.0	25.3	25.9
L	22.6	24.5	25.2	24.8
NL	32.5	33.6	30.8	30.3
A	26.7	29.0	29.6	28.8
P	15.6	21.0	21.6	22.5
FIN	25.5	35.3	32.3	29.9
S	33.1	38.6	34.6	33.7
UK	23.2	28.9	27.7	26.8
<b>EU-15</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>28.2</b>
<b>EUR-11</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>28.3</b>
IS	:	18.9	18.6	18.3
NO	26.4	28.8	26.1	25.7
<b>EEA</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>28.1</b>

Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS

Between 1996 and 1997, the decrease was most marked in Finland (-2.4 points), Denmark (-1.1 points) and Sweden (-0.9 points), countries in which the level of expenditure was among the highest in EU-15 in 1996. Ireland also saw a noticeable reduction (about 1 point). The rate increased, however, in Portugal, Italy and Greece.

## Slowdown in growth of expenditure

Expenditure on social protection per capita increased in real terms by about 4.1% per year during the period 1990-1993 in EU-15.

The increase was particularly marked in Portugal (13% per year).

Only Greece reduced its per capita expenditure in real terms during this period.

**Table 2: Expenditure on social protection per capita at constant prices (Index 1990=100)**

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
B	100	104	106	113	114	114	116	118
DK	100	105	108	113	122	122	122	121
D	100	96	103	104	106	110	114	112
EL	100	96	94	96	97	101	104	111
E	100	110	117	124	119	119	120	121
F	100	103	107	111	112	116	117	118
IRL	100	106	112	119	123	131	133	139
I	100	105	109	109	109	109	112	116
L	100	108	112	120	124	129	134	138
NL	100	101	103	104	102	101	100	102
A	100	104	107	110	115	117	118	118
P	100	112	128	143	147	151	162	176
FIN	100	108	115	116	119	119	122	121
S	100	100	105	107	108	106	106	106
UK	100	108	118	127	127	128	131	131
<b>EU-15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>EUR-11</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>118</b>
IS	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
NO	100	106	110	113	114	115	119	:
<b>EEA<sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>100</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>:</b>

(<sup>1</sup>) Data for Iceland not included.

Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS.

In contrast, during the period 1993-1996 there was an average increase of 1.6% per year for EU-15 as a whole.

The growth rate then fell to 0.6% in 1997.

In Austria, Sweden and the United Kingdom, per capita expenditure in real terms stabilised in 1997.

There was a distinct decrease in Germany, Denmark and Finland, while Portugal, Greece, Ireland and Italy had growth rates well above the average in 1997.

## Expenditure on social protection: major differences between countries

The EU average for social protection expenditure as a percentage of GDP (28.2% in 1997) conceals major differences between Member States.

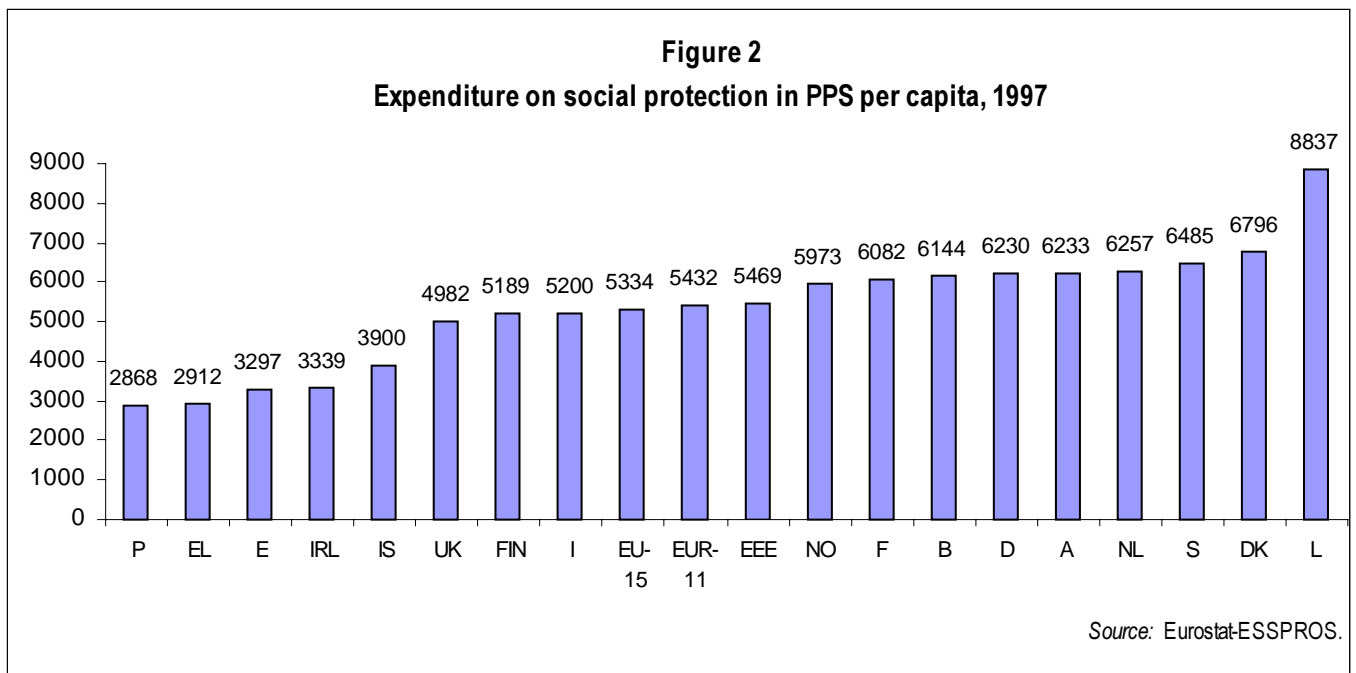
Ireland (17.5%), Spain (21.4%) and Portugal (22.5%) had the lowest rates, while Sweden (33.7%), Denmark (31.4%) and France (30.8%) had the highest.

Expressed in PPS (purchasing power standards) per capita, the differences between countries are even more marked.

Luxembourg spends the most (8 837 PPS per capita) and Portugal and Greece the least (under 3 000 PPS per capita).

The ratio between the country which spends the most and the one which spends the least was thus 3.1:1 in 1997 (compared with 3.7:1 in 1990).

The differences between the countries reflect the differences in social protection systems, demographic changes, unemployment rates and other social, institutional and economic factors.



### Purchasing power standards (PPS)

To compare expenditure on social protection between countries, we must first express that expenditure in the same currency.

It would seem obvious to use the ecu.

This gives, for example, a 1997 figure for social protection expenditure of 4555 ecus per capita in Italy and 8577 ecus per capita in Denmark (88 % more than Italy).

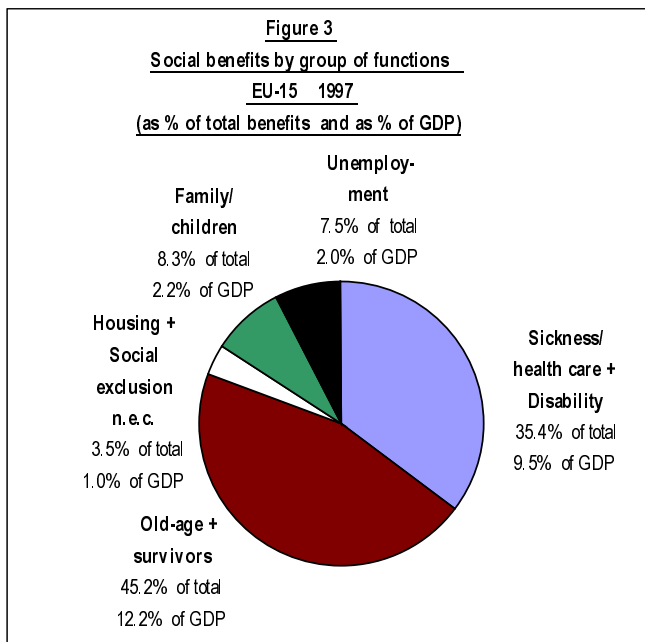
But this difference is "nominal", since it takes no account of the general level of prices (of goods and services), which in 1997 was 44% higher in Denmark than in Italy.

The difference in real terms (i.e. in terms of purchasing power) was thus only +31% ( $188 / 144 = 1.31$ ).

To allow the user to make direct, real-terms comparisons between countries, statisticians show expenditure in "purchasing power standards" (PPS):

- Italy: 5200 PPS per capita in 1997
- Denmark: 6796 PPS per capita in 1997 (31% higher than Italy)

## The old-age and survivors' functions account for the major part of total benefits



Data for Sweden not included.

Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS

In 1997, in most of the Member States, benefits under the old-age and survivors' functions took the lion's share of expenditure on social protection: 45.2% of total benefits in EU-15 as a whole, or 12.2% of GDP.

This was particularly true for Italy, where over 65% of total benefits was accounted for by these functions. One of the reasons for this was that the proportion of the population in the over-65 age group (17.3% compared with an EU-15 average of 15.8%).

In Ireland, on the other hand, benefits in respect of the old-age and survivors' functions represented well under 30%.

In Portugal, the Netherlands, Ireland and Finland, the sickness/health care and disability group of functions had the largest share of total benefits. This was also true for Iceland (almost 50%) and Norway.

The family/children function accounted for 8.3% of total benefits in EU-15, or 2.2% of GDP.

The figure was over 12% in Luxembourg, Ireland, Finland and Denmark, and under 5% in Spain, Italy and the Netherlands.

In the European Economic Area, Norway was the country which spent the most in family-related benefits: 13.7% of the total.

There are considerable differences between the Member States in the share of unemployment-related benefits in the total.

They represented over 14% of total benefits in Ireland and Spain and under 2% in Italy.

It is important to note that the amount of "unemployment" benefits is not always explained by the level of unemployment in the country, since considerable differences remain regarding the cover and the amount of unemployment benefits.

**Table 3: Social benefits by group of functions 1997**

(as % of total social benefits)

	Old-age + Survivors	Sickness/Health care + Disability	Family/Children	Unemployment	Housing + Social exclusion n.e.c.
B	43.0	32.8	8.8	12.7	2.7
DK	39.4	28.9	12.6	12.6	6.5
D	41.8	36.1	10.1	9.1	2.9
EL	51.4	31.4	8.2	4.6	4.5
E	46.1	36.6	2.0	14.1	1.1
F	43.6	34.0	10.0	7.8	4.6
IRL	24.9	40.7	13.2	15.7	5.5
I	65.1	29.5	3.5	1.8	0.1
L	43.6	38.0	13.2	3.7	1.5
NL	37.7	45.9	3.7	11.0	1.7
A	48.5	34.1	10.5	5.5	1.4
P	42.8	45.9	5.3	5.0	0.9
FIN	33.8	36.6	12.6	13.3	3.7
S	39.6	34.2	10.8	9.5	5.8
UK	40.7	38.2	9.1	4.0	7.9
EU-15 <sup>(1)</sup>	45.2	35.4	8.3	7.5	3.5
EUR-11	46.2	35.1	8.0	8.1	2.6
IS	31.2	49.9	12.5	3.2	3.1
NO	34.3	44.3	13.7	4.3	3.4
EEA <sup>(2)</sup>	45.0	35.6	8.4	7.5	3.5

<sup>(1)</sup> Data for Sweden not included.

<sup>(2)</sup> Data for Sweden and Iceland not included.

Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS.

### THE FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

Sickness/health care: includes, *inter alia*, paid sick leave, medical care and the supply of pharmaceutical products.

Disability: includes, *inter alia*, disability pensions and the provision of goods and services (other than medical care) to the disabled.

Old-age: includes, *inter alia*, old-age pensions and the provision of goods and services (other than medical care) to the elderly.

Survivors: income support and support in connection with the death of a family member (e.g. survivors' pensions).

Family/children: includes support (other than medical care) in connection with pregnancy, childbirth, maternity and the care of children and other dependent family members.

Unemployment: includes, *inter alia*, unemployment benefits and vocational training financed by public agencies.

Housing: includes interventions by public authorities to help households meet the cost of housing.

Social exclusion not elsewhere classified (n.e.c.): includes income-support benefits, rehabilitation of alcoholics and drug addicts, and various other benefits (other than medical care).

## The structure of expenditure on social benefits changes over time

Between 1990 and 1997, the structure of social benefits showed different rates of growth for the various functions. The variations resulted from evolving needs and changes in social protection legislation.

**Table 4: Social benefits per capita at constant prices in EU-15 (Index 1990=100)**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Old-age + Survivors	101	107	109	112	115	117	119
Sickness/health care + Disability	103	109	110	111	114	116	116
Family/children	103	111	114	112	115	127	130
Unemployment	122	136	151	143	133	136	129
Housing + Social exclusion n.e.c.	100	111	122	127	129	129	131
<b>Total benefits</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>120</b>

Data for Sweden not included.

Source : Eurostat-ESSPROS

Between 1990 and 1997, per capita expenditure in EU-15 under the old-age and survivors' functions increased very steadily by 19% in real terms. In the same period the percentage of the population in the over-65 age group rose from 14.6% in 1990 to 15.8% in 1997.

Expenditure under the sickness/health care and disability group of functions grew at a lower rate than the average increase of 20% in total benefits. This reflects, *inter alia*, the Member States' efforts to control costs.

In contrast, family-related expenditure increased at a higher rate than the average. This increase (+30% between 1990 and 1997) was particularly marked in 1996, when Germany introduced reforms and extended the system of family benefits.

The trend in unemployment-related expenditure calls for more thorough analysis. Between 1990 and 1997, it rose by 29% in EU-15, but it was not a steady increase, since the total level of these benefits depends broadly on the trend in unemployment.

Between 1990 and 1993, these benefits increased very rapidly in EU-15. Their share of total benefits rose from 7.0% in 1990 to 9.5% in 1993, since the corresponding figures for unemployment-related expenditure during

**Table 5: Expenditure on unemployment function (as % of total social benefits)**

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
B	13.3	13.3	12.9	13.4	13.4	13.0	12.9	12.7
DK	15.4	15.9	16.8	17.9	16.3	14.7	13.8	12.6
D	5.9	8.6	9.7	10.6	9.7	9.1	9.6	9.1
EL	4.1	4.8	4.5	3.7	3.5	4.5	4.2	4.6
E	18.0	19.4	19.7	21.7	19.1	16.6	14.8	14.1
F	8.3	8.7	8.9	9.3	8.9	7.8	7.9	7.8
IRL	14.6	15.6	16.5	17.0	17.2	17.3	17.4	15.7
I	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.3	2.3	2.1	1.9	1.8
L	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.7	3.1	3.1	3.5	3.7
NL	8.3	8.3	8.4	9.3	10.3	10.0	12.0	11.0
A	4.6	5.1	5.0	5.6	5.5	5.6	5.7	5.5
P	3.0	3.3	3.9	5.3	5.7	5.7	5.9	5.0
FIN	6.1	8.8	13.2	16.0	15.7	14.4	14.0	13.3
S	:	:	:	10.8	11.0	10.4	9.8	9.5
UK	5.7	7.3	7.3	7.1	6.4	5.6	4.9	4.0
<b>EU-15 <sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>7.5</b>
<b>EUR-11</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>8.1</b>
IS	:	1.5	2.7	3.8	4.2	4.3	3.7	3.2
NO	6.9	7.0	7.7	8.6	7.9	6.7	5.7	4.3
<b>EEA <sup>(2)</sup></b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>7.5</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> Data for Sweden not included.

<sup>(2)</sup> Data for Sweden and Iceland not included.

Source : Eurostat-ESSPROS.

this period increased in all the countries except Greece. The increase was particularly marked in Finland (from 6.1% in 1990 to 16.0% in 1993), where there was a steeper rise in unemployment than elsewhere.

From 1993 on, there was a decrease in unemployment-related benefits in EU-15, resulting partly from a gradual improvement in the economic situation and partly from reforms of the payment system (e.g. limitation of the period during which benefits are payable, changes in the conditions of entitlement to benefits) in some countries.

Between 1993 and 1997, the share of unemployment-related expenditure in total benefits fell from 9.5% to 7.5% in EU-15.

The decrease was more marked in Spain (from 21.7% to 14.1%), Denmark (from 17.9% to 12.6%), the United Kingdom (from 7.1% to 4.0%) and Finland (from 16.0% to 13.3%).

There was also a significant decrease in Norway.

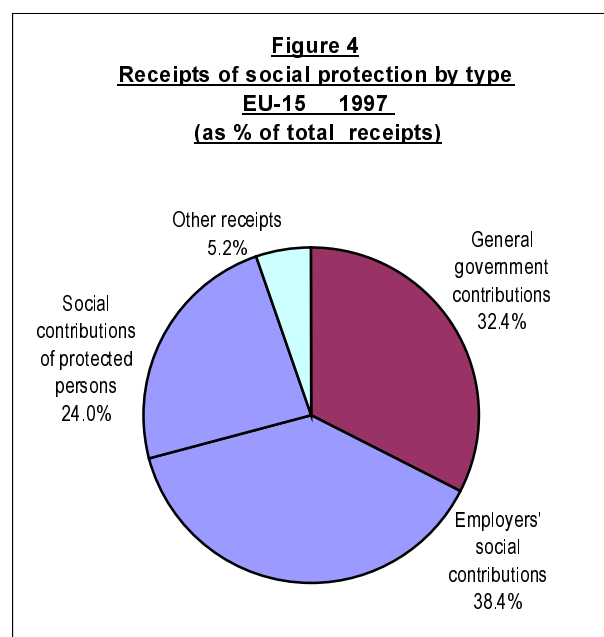
## The systems for funding social protection vary considerably between countries

In 1997 for EU-15 as a whole, the main sources of funding for the social protection system were social contributions, which accounted for 62.4% of total receipts (68.2% for the euro zone: EUR-11), followed by tax-funded general government contributions (32.4% for EU-15 and 28.2% for EUR-11). Social contributions are paid partly by employers and partly by the protected persons (employees, self-employed, pensioners and others).

The European average conceals considerable differences between the countries in the structure of social protection funding (Table 7). The proportion derived from social contributions is greater in France, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy, where this type of funding accounts for over 65% of total receipts.

In contrast, Denmark, Ireland and Norway finance their social protection systems mainly through taxes, which account for over 60% of total receipts.

The United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Sweden and Iceland are also heavily dependent on general government contributions.



Data for Sweden not included.

Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS

## Financing social protection: during the 1990s the proportion of general government contributions increased while that of employers' social contributions decreased

During the economic slowdown from 1990 to 1993, general government contributions per capita increased in real terms (+24%) in EU-15 more rapidly than the other sources of funding (+9% for total receipts).

In contrast, employers' social contributions showed very little increase (+2%).

Between 1993 and 1997, when GDP recovered, general government contributions increased at a lower rate and employers' contributions began to rise again.

Overall, between 1990 and 1997 general government contributions as a proportion of total receipts increased by 3.6 points in EU-15 (Table 7).

Particularly in Portugal and the United Kingdom, these contributions increased more rapidly than in the other countries.

On the other hand, they accounted for considerably less of the total receipts in Denmark and the Netherlands. In 1997, only 15.6% of social protection in the Netherlands was funded by general government contributions.

Between 1990 and 1997, the share of employers' social contributions fell by 3.6 points in EU-15, decreasing in all the countries except Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark.

There were particularly large reductions in Portugal and Finland.

Table 6: Receipts of social protection per capita at constant prices in EU-15 (Index 1990=100)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
General government contributions	106	114	124	127	125	130	131
Social contributions	101	104	104	107	108	111	112
- by employers	100	102	102	103	105	107	108
- by protected persons <sup>(1)</sup>	103	106	109	113	115	118	120
Other receipts	93	93	93	90	92	95	94
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>117</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> Employees, self-employed, pensioners and others.

Data for Sweden not included.

Source: Eurostat-ESSPROS.

In contrast, the share of social contributions by protected persons increased by about one point in EU-15 as a whole.

In Denmark, in particular, a new contribution called the "labour market contribution" was introduced in 1994 to finance sickness, unemployment and vocational training insurance.

France, Belgium, Ireland, Portugal and the United Kingdom, on the other hand, saw a decrease in their share of social contributions by protected persons.

**Table 7: Receipts of social protection by type**  
(as % of total receipts)

	General government contributions		Social contributions						Other receipts	
			Total		Employers		Protected persons <sup>(1)</sup>			
	1990	1997	1990	1997	1990	1997	1990	1997	1990	1997
B	24.7	24.9	66.0	72.3	40.9	49.2	25.2	23.1	9.3	2.8
DK	80.1	67.8	13.1	26.0	7.8	8.5	5.3	17.5	6.8	6.2
D	25.3	30.1	72.0	67.5	43.6	38.6	28.4	28.9	2.8	2.4
EL	33.0	29.6	59.0	60.8	39.4	37.6	19.6	23.2	8.0	9.6
E	26.2	27.1	71.3	69.7	54.4	52.2	16.9	17.5	2.5	3.3
F	16.7	24.0	80.8	72.8	52.0	46.4	28.8	26.4	2.5	3.2
IRL	59.0	63.9	40.0	35.3	24.4	21.4	15.6	13.8	1.0	0.9
I	29.0	30.5	67.9	67.4	52.9	50.3	15.0	17.1	3.1	2.1
L	40.6	47.2	51.5	48.7	28.9	25.1	22.6	23.6	7.9	4.1
NL	25.0	15.6	59.0	69.1	20.0	22.6	39.1	46.4	15.9	15.3
A	35.9	34.6	63.1	64.8	38.1	37.7	25.1	27.1	0.9	0.6
P	33.7	43.3	57.1	46.7	37.1	28.6	20.0	18.1	9.2	10.1
FIN	40.6	44.8	52.1	48.4	44.1	35.1	8.0	13.3	7.3	6.8
S	:	46.2	:	47.0	:	39.2	:	7.8	:	6.8
UK	39.9	47.3	43.5	40.4	27.2	25.2	16.3	15.3	16.6	12.3
<b>EU-15<sup>(2)</sup></b>	<b>28.8</b>	<b>32.4</b>	<b>65.0</b>	<b>62.4</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>38.4</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>5.2</b>
<b>EUR-11</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>70.8</b>	<b>68.1</b>	<b>46.0</b>	<b>42.2</b>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>3.6</b>
IS	:	56.2	:	43.8	:	35.4	:	8.4	:	0.0
NO	63.0	60.8	36.4	38.3	24.0	23.9	12.4	14.4	0.5	1.0
<b>EEA<sup>(3)</sup></b>	<b>29.4</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>64.5</b>	<b>62.0</b>	<b>41.7</b>	<b>38.2</b>	<b>22.8</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>5.1</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> Employees, self-employed, pensioners and others.

Source : Eurostat-ESSPROS.

<sup>(2)</sup> Data for Sweden not included.

<sup>(3)</sup> Data for Sweden and Iceland not included.

#### **Methods and concepts**

The data on social protection expenditure and receipts have been calculated in accordance with the revised methodology for the European System of integrated Social PROtection Statistics (ESSPROS), the "ESSPROS Manual 1996".

Expenditure includes social benefits, administration costs and other expenditure by social protection schemes.

Social benefits are classified in the ESSPROS Manual 1996 in the following eight functions: Sickness/health care, Disability, Old age, Survivors, Family/children, Unemployment, Housing, Social exclusion not elsewhere classified (n.e.c).

Social benefits are recorded without any deduction of taxes or other compulsory levies payable on them by beneficiaries. "Tax benefits" (tax reductions granted to households for social protection purposes) are generally excluded.

#### **Abbreviations**

The euro zone (EUR-11) comprises Belgium (B), Germany (D), Spain (E), France (F), Ireland (IRL), Italy (I), Luxembourg (L), the Netherlands (NL), Austria (A), Portugal (P) and Finland (FIN).

The European Union (EU-15) comprises the euro zone countries plus Denmark (DK), Greece (EL), Sweden (S) and the United Kingdom (UK).

The European Economic Area (EEA) comprises the countries of the European Union plus Iceland (IS), Norway (NO) and Liechtenstein. No data are available for Liechtenstein.

#### **Notes on the data**

Data on benefits and receipts are not available for Sweden for the period 1990-1992. Data for Iceland are not available for 1990. The figures for EU-15 and the EEA have been calculated, wherever necessary, without Sweden and Iceland either to enable the results to be compared over time or to maintain consistency with other results presented in this publication.

France and Ireland record disability pensions paid to persons of retirement age as benefits under the disability function (instead of the old-age function).

For France (from 1995) and Sweden (from 1993), the figures are calculated according to the new national accounts methodology ESA95.

The 1997 data are provisional for B, D, E, I, NL, P, FIN and UK.

#### **Eurostat reference publications**

Methodology: "ESSPROS Manual 1996", 1996.

Data: "Social protection expenditure and receipts 1980-97", 2000.

#### **Eurostat reference database**

"New Cronos" database, "SESPPROS" domain.

Please contact Eurostat's Data Shop network (see last page).

# Further information:

## ➤ Reference publications

Title Social protection expenditure and receipts 1980-97  
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## ➤ Data bases

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