Sustainable development in the European Union

Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context

2026 edition

eurostat

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Foreword by Commissioner Dombrovskis

Sustainable development is the foundation of Europe’s prosperity, resilience, and global leadership. In these turbulent times marked by geopolitical uncertainty and multiple, interconnected crises, there is a clear need for a forward-looking steer rooted in resilience, solidarity, and sustainability. In this context, the European Commission remains committed to the long-term vision of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They are embedded across all Commission proposals, policies, and strategies.

In the first two years of its 2024–2029 mandate, the Commission has launched several key initiatives to strengthen Europe’s resilience and advance its inclusiveness and sustainability agenda. The Clean Industrial Deal sets out concrete steps to turn decarbonisation into a driver of innovation and competitiveness for the European industry. The Competitiveness Compass aims to enhance Europe’s economic growth through innovation and simplification of regulatory frameworks. The Affordable Housing Plan addresses the housing crisis by increasing supply, mobilising investment, and supporting the most affected populations. As a crucial step towards the long-term goal of achieving climate neutrality, the EU agreed on an ambitious 2040 target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

These initiatives underline Europe’s continued journey towards sustainability. Looking ahead, our commitment to sustainable development must remain unwavering — across policy areas, across Member States, and in our engagement with partners around the world.

In this endeavour, the SDG monitoring report published annually by Eurostat remains an indispensable tool to track progress, identify emerging sustainability challenges, and support evidence-based policymaking. In this decisive decade of action, it highlights both how far we have come and what remains ahead to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Valdis Dombrovskis

European Commissioner for Economy and Productivity and for Implementation and Simplification, responsible for Eurostat

Foreword by Eurostat's Director-General

Welcome to the 10th edition of Eurostat's monitoring report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an EU context. The SDGs, agreed by the international community in 2015, provide a global compass to address some of the world's most challenging topics — from poverty and inequality to climate change and responsible consumption. From the onset, the EU has been fully committed to achieving the SDGs, embedding sustainability in policymaking across all domains.

Eurostat plays a key role in supporting policy makers, European citizens and other stakeholders by monitoring the SDGs in the EU context. We measure sustainability with high-quality data and a robust indicator framework tailored to EU priorities.

Monitoring progress towards the SDGs means providing policy-relevant, timely, and reliable information that supports evidence-based decision-making at all levels — regional, national, and European. Eurostat's work goes beyond publishing statistics. It also entails leading and evolving the European Statistical System to reflect new developments and the growing need for integrated and multidimensional insights.

This 2026 edition of Eurostat's SDG monitoring report measures the progress achieved on the economic, social, environmental and institutional dimensions of sustainability. It also identifies the areas where additional effort is needed to reach the EU's ambitious objectives. Regional data for selected indicators show the disparities across European regions while the chapter 'EU in the world' puts the EU's progress into a global perspective. Readers interested in further details will find complementary information on the Eurostat website, such as the full datasets, methodological reports and engaging visualisations.

Mariana Kotzeva

Director-General, Eurostat

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An online data code available under each table/figure can be used to directly access to the most recent data on Eurostat's website, at:

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About this publication

This book marks the tenth edition in the series of Eurostat's annual monitoring reports on the European Union's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

This 2026 edition begins with a synopsis of the EU's overall progress towards the SDGs, followed by a chapter describing the global and EU policy background as well as explaining the monitoring process of the SDGs at EU level. The detailed monitoring results are presented in 17 chapters, one for each SDG. Subsequently, an analysis of regional disparities within countries on their journey towards achieving the SDGs is given, followed by a comparison of the EU with other major economies for a set of selected SDG indicators and an analysis of the spillover effects of EU consumption on other parts of the world. The report concludes with a new chapter presenting a cross-cutting analysis of progress based on alternative ways of categorising the EU SDG indicators. The Annexes contain a list of the policy targets monitored in this report as well as notes on methods and sources.

The report is complemented by a communication package, available on a dedicated section of Eurostat's website. Interested readers will find the full datasets there, along with additional information on the data. The website also offers visualisation tools such as the SDG EU Progress Tracker, the 'SDGs & me' visualisation tool and the SDG Country Overview with more detailed information on the EU Member States. Moreover, the package includes a brochure giving a visual overview of the development of the EU SDG indicators. In the methodology section, explanatory notes provide descriptions of the methodology used in assessing different aspects of the EU's progress towards reaching the SDGs.

Synopsis

In an era of increasing turmoil and uncertainty, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations (UN) in September 2015, remains the world's roadmap for achieving sustainable development. The European Union (EU) has fully committed itself to delivering on the 2030 Agenda, and the SDGs form an intrinsic part of the European Commission's work programme and its Political Guidelines for the period 2024 to 2029.

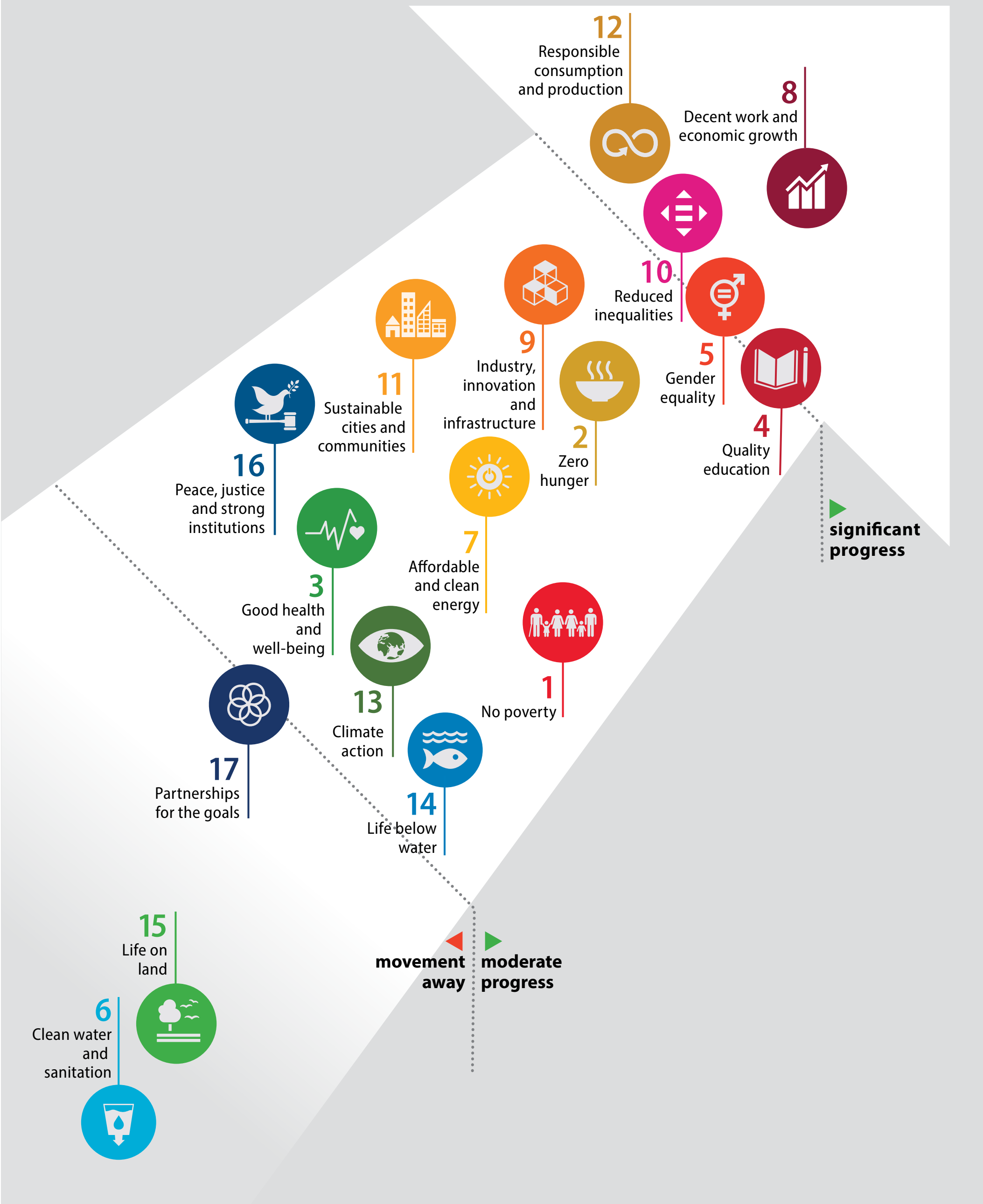
Monitoring and communicating about the progress made towards the 17 SDGs are essential to realising the 2030 Agenda's vision, both globally and in the EU. Since 2017, Eurostat has been monitoring the EU's progress based on the EU SDG indicator set and presenting an assessment of more recent and longer-term developments in annual reports. This is the tenth edition in the series, covering the most recent 5-or 6-year period of available data, avoiding 2020 as a base year due to COVID-related outliers.

How has the EU progressed towards the SDGs?

The overview arrow on page 10 visually summarises the EU's progress towards each of the 17 goals. Over the short-term period, the EU has made significant progress towards five SDGs: 'Decent work and economic growth' (SDG 8), 'Responsible consumption and production' (SDG 12), 'Reduced inequalities' (SDG 10), 'Gender equality' (SDG 5) and 'Quality education' (SDG 4). The EU has also progressed towards nine other SDGs, but at a moderate pace. Among these goals, the EU has performed best for 'Industry, innovation and infrastructure' (SDG 9) and 'Zero hunger' (SDG 2). By contrast, no progress was observed for 'Partnerships for the goals' (SDG 17). Moreover, the EU has moved away from the sustainable development objectives of 'Life on land' (SDG 15) and 'Clean water and sanitation' (SDG 6) due to biodiversity loss, water scarcity and deteriorating water quality. In summary, the EU has made progress towards most SDGs, at varying paces and despite remaining challenges, while it has stagnated on SDG 17 and fallen back on SDG 6 and SDG 15.

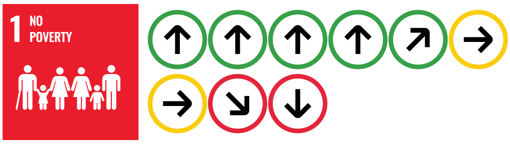
Overview of EU progress towards the SDGs over the short term

(Data mainly refer to the period 2019 to 2024 or 2025)

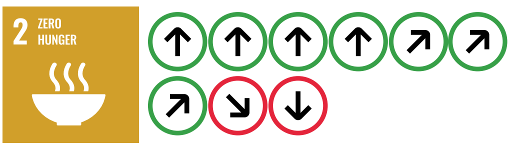


Summary at goal level

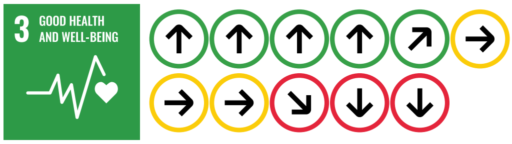
This section provides a summary of the short-term development of each goal, mainly referring to indicator developments from 2019 to 2024 or 2025. Arrow symbols show the individual indicator assessments on which the overall goal-level assessment is based. More details are found in the following chapters of this report. The method for assessing indicator progress and aggregation at goal-level is explained in Annex II on page 329.



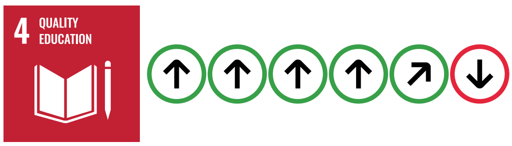
Overall, the EU has made moderate progress towards **SDG 1 'No poverty'**. Progress towards reducing poverty in its different dimensions has largely stalled since 2019, with no significant improvements regarding monetary poverty and (quasi-)jobless households. The EU is currently not on track to meet its multidimensional target of lifting at least 15 million people out of poverty or social exclusion by 2030. Developments have been favourable in other aspects, including reductions in the in-work poverty rate and in the shares of people overburdened by housing costs or facing severe housing deprivation. Still, housing affordability challenges persist, particularly for people living in low-income households and cities.



Monitoring **SDG 2 'Zero hunger'** in the EU context focuses mainly on the sustainability of agricultural production and its environmental impacts. The economic viability and sustainability of agricultural production have developed favourably. Labour productivity of the EU's agricultural sector has improved and public investments in agricultural R&D have increased. The use and risk of chemical pesticides have fallen strongly to below the target level envisaged for 2030. Ammonia emissions from agriculture and nitrate concentrations in EU groundwater bodies have also fallen. However, agricultural practices in the EU still have negative effects on nature, which are visible in the continued and dramatic decline of common farmland birds. Organic farming has grown steadily, but the conversion of farmland to organic production needs to speed up to meet the EU target of 25 % by 2030.



SDG 3 'Good health and well-being' shows a mix of positive, negative and neutral developments. Indicators based on self-perceived health show that people's perceived health levels have climbed back to pre-pandemic levels. This perception is supported by developments in avoidable mortality, which has fallen to a new low after the recent pandemic-related peak. The share of smokers continued its downward trend in 2023, but the share of obese people stabilised at a high level. Trends in health care have been unfavourable. The share of people reporting unmet needs for medical care has risen strongly, mainly because of increasingly long waiting lists. Additionally, the consumption of antibiotics in the community and hospital sectors has increased in recent years, meaning the EU is not on track to meet its 2030 target.



Significant progress has been made for **SDG 4 'Quality education'**. The EU is well on track to meet its 2030 targets for participation in early childhood education, early leavers from education and training and tertiary educational attainment. Adult learning has also increased, showing particularly strong growth since 2020. However, trends have been unfavourable for educational outcomes. The proportion of low-achieving pupils in reading, mathematics and science as measured in the OECD's PISA study increased strongly from 2018 to 2022, moving the EU further away from its target of reducing these shares to 15 % by 2030. The share of adults with at least basic digital skills has grown in recent years, but stronger growth will be needed to meet the target of 80 % by 2030.

5 GENDER EQUALITY

SDG 5 'Gender equality' is characterised by mostly favourable developments in the EU. While the gender gap for early school leaving has narrowed, men continue to lag behind women in tertiary educational attainment. Women's hourly earnings are catching up with those of men, and the gap between men and women who are outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities has narrowed. The gender employment gap has decreased, but much stronger progress will be necessary for the EU to meet its target of halving the gap by 2030. Finally, more women have obtained leadership positions, both as members of national parliaments and in director positions of the largest publicly listed companies.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

The EU is moving away from the objectives of **SDG 6 'Clean water and sanitation'**. Improvements in sanitation have taken place, but the picture is mixed for water quality and unfavourable when it comes to water scarcity. While biochemical oxygen demand in rivers and nitrate concentrations in EU groundwater bodies have decreased, phosphate concentrations in EU rivers have risen strongly, and the share of inland bathing waters with excellent quality has declined. A new indicator measuring pesticides in rivers shows that the share of waterbodies exceeding pesticide thresholds has risen strongly in recent years. Furthermore, pressure on the EU's freshwater resources is growing, which is exacerbated by an increase in the EU area impacted by drought.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

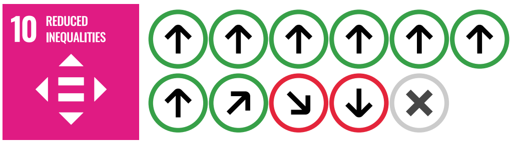
Most of the indicators used to monitor **SDG 7 'Affordable and clean energy'** have improved, but at a pace too slow in certain areas to ensure the EU meets its 2030 targets. The EU has achieved reductions in both its primary and final energy consumption, but further progress is needed to meet the respective 2030 targets. At the same time, energy productivity has increased strongly. The share of renewable energy has increased, but stronger growth is needed to meet the 2030 target. The EU has become less dependent on imports for its energy. However, affordability of energy remains a concern to many households because of continued high energy prices.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

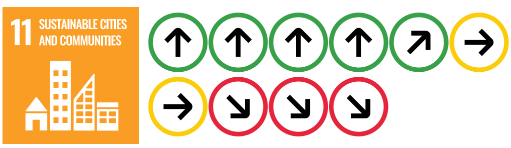
The EU has made significant progress on **SDG 8 'Decent work and economic growth'**. GDP per capita has grown. The EU's employment rate reached a new record high in 2025, and the EU is on track to meeting its 78 % target by 2030. Likewise, the EU's long-term unemployment rate and the share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) have continued their decreasing trend. In the area of decent work, both the incidence of fatal work accidents and the share of 'working poor' have continued to decline. A movement away from the goal's objectives has only been observed for the investment share of GDP, which decreased slightly.

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

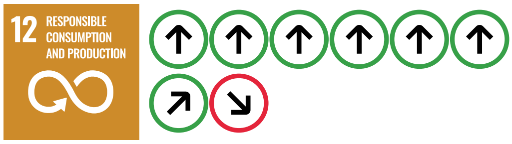
Most of the indicators of **SDG 9 'Industry, innovation and infrastructure'** have developed favourably in recent years. The air emissions intensity of the manufacturing sector has continued to decrease, and the gross value added (GVA) of the environmental goods and services sector has grown. The share of R&D personnel in the labour force has increased, and patent applications to the European Patent Office have grown slightly. By contrast, the EU's R&D expenditure has increased at a slower pace than GDP since 2020, meaning the EU is not on track to meet its 2030 target of dedicating 3 % of its GDP to R&D. Developments are mixed for sustainable infrastructure. On the positive side, the share of households enjoying high-speed internet connections has grown considerably. The use of public passenger transport modes (buses and trains) has increased back to pre-pandemic levels. However, the share of rail and waterways in inland freight transport has further decreased.



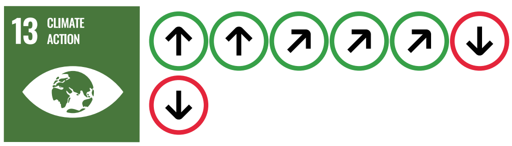
The EU has continued to make significant progress towards **SDG 10 'Reduced inequalities'**. Income inequalities within countries have decreased thanks to a continued narrowing of the income gap between richer and poorer population groups. Similarly, the depth of poverty, measured as the distance of incomes below the poverty threshold to the threshold itself, has decreased, and the poverty gap between rural and urban areas has disappeared at EU level. Data on economic disparities between EU countries show a continued convergence of Member States in terms of household income, while disparities in GDP per capita have widened slightly. The gap between non-EU citizens and EU home country nationals has narrowed for almost all the indicators monitored, suggesting improved integration of migrants.



Moderate progress has been made on **SDG 11 'Sustainable cities and communities'**. While the quality of life in cities and communities has improved, sustainable mobility patterns and impacts on the environment show unfavourable trends. The severe housing deprivation rate has decreased considerably. Likewise, the number of premature deaths due to exposure to fine particulate matter has fallen significantly. The perceived exposure to noise, however, has stagnated. Moreover, road traffic deaths are not decreasing fast enough to meet the EU's 2030 target. Soil sealing with impervious materials has increased continuously. The growth in the EU's recycling rate of municipal waste has slowed in recent years, putting the EU off track to meeting its target by 2030. The connection rate of households to secondary wastewater treatment has continued to increase slowly.



The EU has made significant progress in almost all the indicators used for monitoring **SDG 12 'Responsible consumption and production'**. Both the EU's material footprint and the consumption footprint have fallen in recent years, suggesting lower pressure on the global extraction of materials due to the consumption of goods and services in the EU. Moreover, the consumption of hazardous chemicals has decreased considerably. The environmental goods and services sector has continued to outperform other economic sectors in its growth. Total waste generation has risen since its COVID-19 related low, but it has still remained below 2018 levels. However, the increase in the EU's circular material use rate remains too slow for the EU to achieve its 2030 Clean Industrial Deal target.



The EU is making progress on **SDG 13 'Climate action'**. The EU's greenhouse gas emissions further decreased in 2024, but stronger progress is needed to meet the 55 % reduction target by 2030. The carbon removals achieved through land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF), which partly offset overall net greenhouse gas emissions, have further declined, and the EU remains far from its target. In support of the EU's climate-neutrality objective, the share of renewables in the EU's energy consumption has grown, and the average CO_2 emissions efficiency of new EU car fleets has improved. Climate change impacts have risen sharply in recent years, as shown by the increased monetary losses from climate-related disasters. On a positive note, more green bonds have been issued to finance the transition towards climate-neutrality, and climate-related expenditure for developing countries has increased strongly.

The EU has made progress towards **SDG 14 'Life below water'** in the area of sustainable fisheries, but ocean health is deteriorating. Due to the absorption of CO_2 into the world's oceans, the mean surface seawater acidity continues to increase. Likewise, a growing share of EU marine waters is affected by eutrophication and the share of coastal bathing sites with excellent water quality has stagnated. The extent of marine protected areas has grown, but the designation of new areas needs to speed up to meet the 2030 target of protecting 30 % of marine waters. Developments have been more favourable regarding sustainable fisheries, showing increases in fish stock biomass and a significant reduction in fishing pressure in EU marine waters.

The EU continues to move away from the objectives of **SDG 15 'Life on land'**. This is mainly due to continued land degradation and a decline in biodiversity. Progress is only visible regarding the extension of forest area, a reduction of biological oxygen demand in EU rivers and a slight decrease in the area at risk of severe soil erosion by water. By contrast, phosphate pollution of EU rivers continues to be on the rise. The sealing of soil with impervious materials and the area impacted by drought have grown steadily in the EU. Moreover, the EU continues to face dramatic long-term declines in common bird and grassland butterfly populations.

The designation of new terrestrial protected areas has stagnated, meaning that, at the current pace, the EU will not achieve the target of protecting at least 30 % of its land area by 2030.

The significant progress of some indicators in **SDG 16 'Peace, justice and strong institutions'** is partially outweighed by the strong increase in the number of victims of human trafficking in the EU. The EU's rating in the Corruption Perceptions Index has also worsened, even though perceived corruption levels in EU countries are still lower than in most other parts of the world. Significantly less crime, violence and vandalism has been perceived in EU neighbourhoods. At the same time, the number of deaths due to homicide or assault has decreased. Government expenditure on law courts has increased significantly, but the perceived independence of justice systems in Member States has stagnated.

SDG 17 'Partnerships for the goals' shows no overall progress, due to both favourable and unfavourable developments. EU financing to developing countries has fallen in recent years. EU trade with the world's least developed countries has grown, although imports from these countries still account for only about 2 % of total extra-EU imports. The EU's overall debt-to-GDP ratio has increased in recent years and has remained above pre-pandemic levels in 2025. Moreover, the already low share of environmental taxes in total tax revenues has declined even further, reaching yet another low in 2024. On a positive note, the share of EU households enjoying high-speed internet connection has grown considerably.

Sustainable development: policy and monitoring

The global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is commonly defined as 'development which meets the needs of the current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' ([1]). Achieving sustainable development at a global level requires coordinated action. Since the early 1990's, the UN has served as the forum to agree on respective international commitments. From 2000 to 2015, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were the blueprint for meeting the needs of the world's most vulnerable.

In 2015, the UN action plan 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' extended the social endeavour of the MDGs with economic, environmental and institutional objectives. The 2030 Agenda sets 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (see Figure I.1) and 169 related targets to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity and peace.

Figure I.1

The UN Sustainable Development Goals

([1]) The definition was introduced in 1987 through the Brundtland report.

The SDGs are unprecedented in terms of significance and scope by setting a broad range of economic, social and environmental objectives and calling for action by all countries, regardless of their level of development. Although the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for achieving the 17 goals. The UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) is the UN's central platform to follow up and review the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the global level. The HLPF also conducts regular in-depth reviews of progress on the SDGs and includes Voluntary National Reviews where countries present the findings from national reviews of progress with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

To monitor progress, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a global SDG indicator list, covering 232 indicators, in July 2017. It was designed by an Inter-Agency and Expert Group under the supervision of the UN Statistical Commission. In 2020 and 2025, comprehensive reviews resulted in a revised global SDG indicator framework consisting of 234 unique indicators.

The SDGs are monitored at various levels: global, regional, national, local and thematic. Besides the EU regional monitoring done in this report, the European Commission contributed to the UN's global SDG monitoring in 2023 through the first EU voluntary review. This reflected on the collective effort of the EU and its Member States towards implementing the SDGs.

Sustainable development in the European Union

Sustainable development is at the heart of European policymaking. It is firmly anchored in the European Treaties ([2]) and is integrated in key projects, sectorial policies and initiatives. Several major policy documents bear witness to the EU's evolving approach to implementing the SDGs. In its communication 'Next steps for a sustainable European future: European action for sustainability', the European Commission announced the integration of the SDGs into the European policy framework as early as 2016. In 2019, a reflection paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030' highlighted the challenges the EU faces and identified the competitive advantages that implementing the SDGs offers the EU. The EU's approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda is described in detail in the Commission staff working document 'Delivering on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals — A comprehensive approach'. For a complete overview of the European Commission's activities related to SDG implementation, see the Commission's website on the EU's holistic approach to sustainable development.

Commission President von der Leyen's Political Guidelines for 2024 to 2029 put forward seven key priorities designed to create a faster, simpler and more united Union — one that supports its people and businesses, takes decisive action where it can make the greatest impact, and advances shared ambitions. Sustainable development remains fully embedded in the Commissions' priorities for 2024 to 2029, as shown in Figure I.2. One key priority, '*A new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness*' aims to make business easier and faster, reach a Clean Industrial Deal, put research and innovation at the heart of the economy, and shift to a more circular and resilient economy. Another priority, '*A new era for European defence and security*' aims to ensure safety and security in Europe, which are essential pre-conditions for sustainable development. Under the priority '*Supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model*' the Commission pursues the objectives of social fairness, equality and a reunited society. The priority '*Sustaining our quality of life: Food security, water and nature*' addresses competitiveness and sustainability of the farming and fishing sector, while preserving biodiversity and natural ecosystems as well as Europe's water security. This will boost climate resilience and preparedness. The institutional dimension of sustainability is covered through '*Protecting our democracy, upholding our values*' and '*A global Europe: Leveraging our power and partnerships*'.

Throughout 2025 and 2026, the Commission has launched several initiatives to deliver on these priorities. In 2025, it presented the Competitiveness Compass, a roadmap to restore Europe's dynamism and secure sustainable prosperity. Building on the analysis in Mario Draghi's report on the future of European competitiveness, the Compass provides a strategic framework to guide the Commission's work during this mandate. It specifies the three key

([2]) Articles 3 (5) and 21 (2) of the Treaty on European Union.

Figure I.2

Alignment of the SDGs with the European Commission priorities

imperatives for enhancing EU competitiveness — closing the innovation gap, developing a joint strategy for decarbonisation and competitiveness, and increasing security while reducing excessive dependencies. It includes a timeline for key actions, featuring many initiatives which will contribute to the SDGs such as the Clean Industrial Deal, the Action Plan on Affordable Energy, the Vision for Agriculture and Food, the Union of Skills, the Water Resilience Strategy, the Sustainable Transport Investment Plan and the EU Climate law amendment.

Major SDG-related initiatives launched by the Commission in 2026 include the EU's first-ever Anti-Poverty Strategy, the European Affordable Housing Plan, the Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030 and the Clean Energy Investment Strategy. Furthermore, the Commission has launched its first Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness, following commitments set out in the Commission's 2024–2029 political guidelines pledging that the EU should ensure that 'decisions taken today do no harm to future generations, and that there is increased solidarity and engagement between people of different ages'.

Each chapter in this report provides an overview of EU policies and targets related to the respective SDGs.

Monitoring sustainable development in the EU

Regular monitoring and reporting on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context is an essential part of the Commission's continued dedication to sustainable development. It helps to coordinate SDG-related policies at both EU and Member State level and highlights their cross-cutting nature. Eurostat is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the SDGs in the EU and has published annual SDG monitoring reports to this end since 2017.

The monitoring exercise is based on the EU SDG indicator set. It is structured along the 17 SDGs and covers the social, economic, environmental and institutional dimensions of sustainability as represented by the 2030 Agenda. Progress towards each SDG is measured by six main indicators. These have been selected for their policy relevance from an EU perspective, availability, country coverage, data freshness and quality, reflecting the SDGs' broad objectives and ambitions. Preference is given to indicators which are part of a high-level scoreboard of EU policies such as the Social Scoreboard for the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan or the Monitoring Framework for the 8th Environment Action Programme, due to their relevance. Out of the 102 indicators, 34 are 'multi-purpose', meaning they are used to monitor more than one goal. This allows the link between different goals to be highlighted and enhances this report's narrative. Around two-thirds of the current EU SDG indicators are aligned with the UN SDG indicators.

The EU SDG indicator set is not static but evolves over time to reflect new policy objectives and indicator development. For this purpose, the indicator set is reviewed annually in close cooperation with the Commission services, the European Environment Agency and Member State institutes in the European Statistical System, and in consultation with the Council Committees and Working Parties.

This SDG monitoring report provides an assessment of observed progress towards SDG-related EU objectives and targets. The assessment considers whether an indicator has moved towards or away from the sustainable development objective, as well as the speed of this movement. If an explicit quantified and measurable target exists for the EU, it is used to assess the indicator's progress. Otherwise, a different method is used based on a general objective, meaning the desired direction in which an indicator should develop. The two methods are explained in Annex II (see page 328).

The indicators are assessed for the most recent 5- and 15-year periods of available data, to establish whether a development was persistent or showed a turnaround at a certain point in time. Table I.1 shows the symbols used for the progress assessment and explains their meaning for the two approaches (indicators with and without quantitative targets).

In this year's report, several indicators include data for 2025, which would require using 2020 as the base year to assess five-year trends. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns in 2020 constituted an exceptional disruption that affected several areas and associated indicators (for example, GDP growth, employment, transport and energy use). Using 2020 as the base year would show the impact of the pandemic rather than effects of EU policies, which this report aims to monitor. To address this, the pre-pandemic year 2019 is used as the base year for all indicators with available 2025 data, ensuring a clearer reflection of policy impacts.

Table I.1

Explanation of symbols for indicating progress towards SD objectives and targets

Symbol	With quantitative target	Without quantitative target
◎	Indicators marked with this 'target' symbol are assessed against an official and quantified EU policy target. In this case the arrow symbols should be interpreted according to the left-hand column below. All other indicator assessments should be interpreted according to the right-hand column below.	
↑	On track to reach the EU target	Significant progress towards SD objectives
↗	Moderate progress towards the EU target	Moderate progress towards SD objectives
→	[Category not applicable]	No progress towards nor movement away from SD objectives
↘	Insufficient progress towards the EU target	Moderate movement away from SD objectives
↓	Movement away from the EU target	Significant movement away from SD objectives
✕	Assessment not possible (for example, time series too short or break in time series)	

Other European Commission services and the European Environmental Agency also issue reports on sustainability. The assessments in those reports may differ due to a different scope and methodology, in particular when these assessments take into account planned measures or projections rather than observed developments only.

No poverty

1 NO POVERTY

End poverty in all its forms everywhere

SDG 1 calls for the eradication of poverty in all its manifestations. It envisions shared prosperity, a basic standard of living and social protection benefits for people everywhere, including the poorest and most vulnerable.

Poverty harms people's lives and hampers social cohesion and economic growth. In the EU context, SDG 1 focuses on reducing multidimensional poverty and facilitating access to housing and health care. Over the assessed short-term period, the EU has made moderate progress towards these objectives. The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion has decreased only slightly since 2019, with no significant improvements for the individual components included in the EU's multidimensional poverty measure (monetary poverty, social- and material deprivation, and very low work intensity). Thus, the EU is not on track to meet its target of lifting at least 15 million people out of poverty or social exclusion by 2030. On a positive note, in-work poverty and the depth of poverty — as measured by the risk-of-poverty gap — have decreased strongly. Regarding access to housing and health care, the picture is mixed. Fewer people are now overburdened by housing costs or living in an overcrowded household. Still, affordability challenges persist particularly for young people and people living in low-income households and cities. Finally, more people have reported an unmet need for medical care.

Table 1.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 1, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Multidimensional poverty					
Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion	93.3 million persons (2024)	Time series too short for long-term assessment			page 29
		2019–2024	Observed: – 0.5 % Required: – 1.5 %		
Persons at risk of monetary poverty after social transfers	72.1 million persons (2024)	2010–2024	0.1 %		page 31
		2019–2024	0.0 %		
Severe material and social deprivation rate	27.5 million persons (2024)	Time series too short for long-term assessment			page 32
		2019–2024	– 0.3 %		
Persons living in households with very low work intensity	26.2 million persons (2024)	Time series too short for long-term assessment			page 33
		2019–2024	– 0.1 %		
In work at-risk-of-poverty rate	8.2 % (2024)	2010–2024	– 0.3 %		page 34
		2019–2024	– 2.1 %		
Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap (*)	22.7 % (2024)	2010–2024	– 0.1 %		SDG 10, page 172
		2019–2024	– 1.6 %		
Access to housing and health care					
Housing cost overburden rate	8.2 % (2024)	2010–2024	– 1.4 %		page 35
		2019–2024	– 2.7 %		
Self-reported unmet need for medical care (*)	2.5 % (2024)	2010–2024	– 2.4 %		SDG 3, page 66
		2019–2024	8.0 %		
Severe housing deprivation rate (*)	4.0 % (2023)	2010–2023	– 3.2 %		SDG 11, page 191
		2018–2023	– 1.4 %		

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

(*) Multi-purpose indicator.

Policy context

Multidimensional poverty

The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) promotes upward convergence towards better living and working conditions in Europe. The EPSR Action Plan sets a target to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030, compared with 2019 levels, of which at least 5 million should be children.

The reinforced Youth Guarantee supports young people from vulnerable groups and will help to reduce their rates of poverty or social exclusion.

The European Child Guarantee helps to ensure that in Europe every child in need has effective and free access to quality early childhood education and care; education and school-based activities; at least one healthy meal each school day; healthcare; and effective access to adequate housing and healthy nutrition.

The Directive on adequate minimum wages in the European Union from 2022 aims to establish a framework to improve the adequacy of minimum wages and to enhance the access of workers to minimum wage protection. It thus contributes to improving living and working conditions and decreasing in-work poverty.

The Council Recommendation on minimum income ensuring active inclusion from 2023 aims to combat poverty and social exclusion and to pursue high levels of employment by promoting adequate income support, effective access to enabling and essential services, and by fostering labour market integration of those who can work.

The Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality from 2022 provides policy guidance for addressing relevant employment and social aspects in the context of the green transition.

The Commission Communication from 2022 on better assessing the distributional impact of Member States' policies calls for Member States to make the impact of planned measures and investments on the income of various groups more transparent.

The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030 aims to reduce the risk of poverty for people with disabilities through measures, for example in the field of employment, health, accessibility or education.

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) is a key financial instrument for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights. It supports, among other groups, the most deprived people and marginalised communities, addresses child poverty and supports the social integration of people at risk of poverty.

The first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy (APS) is expected in May 2026. It aims to help eradicate poverty by 2050 by, among other things, addressing the root causes of poverty and helping people to get access to the essential protections and services they need.

Access to housing and health care

In December 2025 the European Commission published the first European Affordable Housing Plan (EAHP) that presents a series of actions to help Member States, regions and cities tackle the structural causes of the housing crisis and address housing exclusion. The EAHP foresees that the European Commission will put forward a Council Recommendation on fighting housing exclusion together with the APS.

Overview and key trends

Multidimensional poverty

SDG 1 calls for the eradication of extreme poverty and for poverty in all its dimensions to be halved by 2030. The goal's focus thus goes beyond monetary poverty alone and encourages a universal approach to reducing poverty, including implementing social protection systems, ensuring equal rights to basic services, and building the resilience of the poor. The EU also employs a multidimensional measure of poverty and in its European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan has set a target to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030 compared with the 2019 level. A complementary ambition in the same action plan states that of these 15 million people, at least 5 million should be children.

To assess poverty multidimensionally, the EU's at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion (AROPE) indicator is based on three components: monetary poverty (at-risk-of-poverty rate, AROP), severe material and social deprivation, and very low work intensity. Through this approach, the indicator shows which share of the population is at risk of exclusion and marginalisation from economic and social activities.

The number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU declined further, but a faster pace is needed to meet the 2030 target

In 2024, 93.3 million persons, equalling 21.0 % of the EU population, were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The number has decreased since 2019, when 95.5 million persons (or 21.8 % of the population) were at risk. However, significant further efforts will be needed to meet the EU target of lifting at least 15 million persons out of poverty or social exclusion by 2030 compared with the situation in 2019.

The number of children (persons aged less than 18 years) who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion amounted to 19.5 million in 2024, corresponding to 24.2 % of this age group. This is an increase compared with 2019, when 19.1 million children (23.7 %) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion across the EU. Thus, the EU shows insufficient progress to meet the complementary ambition of reducing the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 5 million by 2030 compared with 2019.

93.3
million persons in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024

More than 72 million persons in the EU were at risk of monetary poverty in 2024

Of all the 93.3 million persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU in 2024, 26.9 million were affected by more than one dimension of poverty, and 5.6 million were affected by all three forms. Monetary poverty was the most prevalent component of poverty or social exclusion, affecting 72.1 million persons or 16.2 % of the population. This means that after social transfers these persons had an equivalised disposable income of less than 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income.

72.1
million persons in the EU were at risk of monetary poverty in 2024

Around 27.5 million persons (6.4 % of the EU population) were affected by severe material and social deprivation in 2024. This meant they were unable to afford seven or more items out of a list of 13 elements of material goods, services or social activities considered by most people to be desirable or necessary for an adequate life (see page 32 for the full list). Meanwhile, very low work intensity, referring to people living in (quasi) jobless households, affected 26.2 million people aged less than 65 years (7.9 % of the population from this age group).

To reduce poverty, governments provide a range of measures, such as income support though various benefits (for example, unemployment benefits, sickness and invalidity benefits, and minimum income benefits), tax policies, and provision of enabling, social and employment services. The impact of the transfers on poverty reduction can be assessed by comparing the at-risk-of-poverty rate before and after social transfers. In the EU, social transfers (other than pensions) reduced the share of people at risk of poverty in 2024 from 24.6 % to 16.2 %, a reduction of 34.2 % (1).

27.5
million persons in the EU were affected by severe material and social deprivation in 2024

Considerable differences in poverty rates and underlying components are visible within the EU

Across Member States, the risk of poverty or social exclusion differs considerably, not only in terms of the rate itself, ranging from 11.3 % in Czechia to 30.3 % in Bulgaria in 2024, but also in terms of the overlap between the three components (monetary poverty, severe material and social deprivation and very low work intensity). In Bulgaria, 35.6 % of those at risk were affected by at least two dimensions at the same time in 2024, and 9.6 % were affected by all three dimensions. Greece showed a similar pattern, with 35.3 % affected by at least two dimensions and 9.0 % affected by all three. Notably, Czechia — the country with the lowest overall rate — had a similar pattern, with 33.6 % affected by at least two and 9.6 % affected by all three dimensions. In contrast, Luxembourg, Poland and Croatia showed considerably lower degrees of overlaps. In Luxembourg, only 13.7 % of those at risk of poverty or social exclusion were affected by at least two dimensions simultaneously, and only 1.5 % were affected by all three. Poland and Croatia had only slightly higher overlaps in 2024, with 14.6 % and 16.0 % of those at risk affected by at least two dimensions at the same time, and 2.2 % and 2.5 % affected by all three, respectively (2). This shows that the composition of the overall at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rate differs strongly across countries.

26.2
million persons in the EU were living in (quasi-)jobless households in 2024

Children and young people face higher poverty and social exclusion risks, shaped by parental education and household composition

Households with children and young people are generally more affected by the risk of poverty or social exclusion than other households. In 2024, 24.2 % of children (persons aged less than 18 years) lived in households that were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, against 21.0 % of the overall population in the EU. However, young people (persons aged 18 to 14 years) reported the highest rate, with 26.3 % of this age group living in households that were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (3).

Children's risk of poverty or social exclusion is largely determined by their parents' situation. Two major factors are education and household composition. Parents with a lower level of education are likely to earn less than those who are more highly educated. In 2024, 61.2 % of children aged under 18 whose parents had at most a lower secondary education were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. On the other hand, only 28.7 % of children whose parents had a mid-level education (upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education) and 11.0 % of those with highly educated parents (tertiary education) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (4). The second major factor is household composition. Single-parent households with one or more dependent children had a much higher at-risk rate (43.2 % in 2024) than any other household type (5).

(1) *Source:* Eurostat (online data codes: ilc_li10 and tespm050).

(2) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_pees01n).
(3) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_peps01n).
(4) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_peps60n).
(5) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_peps03n).

Unemployment is the highest risk factor that makes people more vulnerable to poverty

Identifying circumstances that can make people more vulnerable to being at risk of poverty and social exclusion is important for designing sound policies that prevent and fight poverty. In addition to the case of children and young people discussed previously, other risk factors were unemployment, a migrant background, disabilities or low education levels. The group with the highest at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion rate were unemployed people aged 18 years and over, of which two-thirds (66.6 %) were in this situation. Non-EU citizens living in the EU were also vulnerable, with 43.8 % at risk of poverty and social exclusion, which is more than twice as many as EU home-country nationals (18.5 %) and considerably above the at-risk rate for EU citizens living in another EU country (26.9 %). The situation was similar when looking at country of birth, with 38.2 % of adults born in non-EU countries being at risk, compared with only 18.0 % of those born in the reporting EU countries and 24.3 % of EU adults born in another EU country. While citizenship reflects a person's legal status in the host country and may have implications for access to social security or recognition of qualifications, the country of birth captures migration background and frequently aligns with socio-economic factors such as language barriers or discrimination. More than one-third of people with severe disabilities (36.2 %) or low education levels (33.9 %) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Women (21.9 %) were more affected than men (20.0 %). However, the gap between people living in urban areas (21.3 %) and those in rural areas (21.3 %) (6) had closed in 2024.

The poverty gap was at its lowest in 2024

The poverty gap measures how far below the poverty line a person's income falls. It is calculated as the difference between the median income of those at risk of poverty and the poverty threshold, which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after accounting for social transfers. In 2024, the median income of those below the poverty threshold was 22.7 % lower than the threshold itself. This represents a 1.9 percentage point improvement compared with 2019. In fact, 2024 is the first year in which the poverty gap was lower than in 2010 (23.1 %), after a peak in 2015 and 2016 (25.4 %). However, rates vary considerably across the EU. Ireland had the lowest poverty gap with 14.9 % and Latvia the highest with 28.7 % in 2024.

The median distance from the poverty threshold for those at risk of poverty in 2024 was

22.7 %

In-work poverty has continued to fall during the past few years

Having a paid job does not necessarily prevent people from being at risk of poverty. In 2024, 8.2 % of employed people were at risk of monetary poverty — the so-called working poor (in-work poverty). This is a 0.9 percentage point improvement compared with 2019. In the long term, the trend is only slightly positive, with an improvement of 0.3 percentage points compared with 2010 (8.5 %).

8.2 %

of employed people in the EU were at risk of monetary poverty in 2024

Rates vary considerably across the EU, with the lowest share of in-work poverty recorded in Finland (2.8 %) and the highest in Luxembourg (13.4 %) in 2024. The sharp contrast between Finland and Luxembourg reflects different underlying factors in two high-income countries. Luxembourg's very high median income, income dispersion and housing costs amplifying relative in-work poverty, while Finland's redistributive system and household employment patterns mitigate it. In addition, developments in the past five years have varied considerably across countries. While the rate was 5.8 percentage points higher in Slovakia in 2024 than in 2019, the rate had improved by 4.8 percentage points in Romania.

The rate of 'working poor' also varies by type of employment contract, education level and nationality. People who work part-time or on

(6) *Source:* Eurostat (online data codes: ilc_peps02n, ilc_peps05n, ilc_peps06n, hlth_dpe010, ilc_peps04n, ilc_peps01n and ilc_peps13n). Further information on vulnerable groups particularly at risk of poverty or social exclusion can be found on Eurostat's Statistics Explained pages related to 'Poverty and social exclusion'.

temporary contracts (12.6 % for both), low-skilled workers (18.4 %) and people born outside the EU or who do not have EU citizenship (18.5 % and 22.5 %, respectively), are generally the most affected. While social protection benefits play an important role in reducing poverty risks, coverage of such benefits varies widely across Member States and for different categories of workers, as well as by employment status ([7]).

Access to housing and health care

Being at risk of poverty can have a severe impact on a person's ability to meet their basic needs such as being able to afford adequate housing or receive necessary medical treatment. The costs of housing often account for the largest component of many households' expenditure and determine what is left of a household's budget for satisfying other essential needs and expenses, such as food, medical treatment or education. Thus, access to quality social housing or housing assistance is essential for those in need. Likewise, timely access to affordable, preventive and curative health care of good quality is crucial for everyone. Broad public health care allows people at risk of poverty to have access to medical care. This in turn can help decrease inequality because health problems are a contributor to poverty ([8]).

8.2 %
of the EU population were overburdened by their housing costs in 2024

Fewer people are overburdened by their housing costs or are facing severe housing deprivation, but affordability challenges persist

Housing affordability can be analysed through the housing cost overburden rate, which is defined as the share of the population living in households where the total housing costs (net of housing allowances) represent more than 40 % of the total disposable household income. The EU's housing cost overburden rate was at 8.2 % in 2024, which represents a decrease of 1.2 percentage points compared with 2019 (9.4 %) and a decrease of 1.8 percentage points compared with 2010 (10.0 %). However, the rates vary considerably between Member States. In 2024, 28.9 % of the population in Greece and 14.6 % in Denmark were affected, while this was only the case for 2.4 % of the population in Cyprus and for 3.7 % in Croatia.

Despite the positive trend regarding the average housing cost overburden rate, the situation remains precarious for many vulnerable groups. Low-income households are particularly prone to being overburdened by their housing costs. In 2024, 31.1 % of people with an income below the poverty threshold spent 40 % or more of their household disposable income on housing, compared with only 3.8 % of the not at-risk-of-poverty population (referring to people with an income above the poverty threshold). Between 2010 and 2025, house prices increased by 61 % and rents by 29 % across the EU, with large disparities across countries and regions and between old and new rental contracts ([9]). As a consequence, people may avoid moving in spite of emerging needs, leading to unsatisfactory living conditions.

The severe housing deprivation rate is an indicator of inadequate housing, referring to people living in overcrowded households that also face poor amenities such as a leaking roof, a lack of sanitation facilities (bath, shower, indoor flushing toilet) or a dwelling considered to be too dark. In 2023, 4.0 % of the EU population faced severe housing deprivation, a 0.3 percentage point improvement compared with 2018. Among people living in monetary poverty, 9.9 % were affected by this situation in 2023, compared with only 2.8 % of the population with higher incomes ([10]).

4.0 %
of the EU population faced severe housing deprivation in 2023

([7]) European Commission (2024), *Joint Employment Report 2025*, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Brussels.
([8]) European Commission (2025), *The role of healthcare in reducing inequalities and poverty in the EU*, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety.
([9]) European Commission (2025), *Understanding the housing crisis*, SWD(2025) 1053/2, Brussels.
([10]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_mdho06a).

Average country-level numbers hide regional differences. An analysis by degree of urbanisation reveals that city dwellers are more likely to be overburdened by their housing costs or face severe housing deprivation. In 2024, 9.8 % of people living in cities spent 40 % or more of their household disposable income on housing, compared with only 7.8 % for towns and suburbs and 6.3 % for rural areas. Furthermore, the severe housing deprivation rate was also higher in cities (4.9 % in 2023) than in rural areas (3.5 %) and in towns and suburbs (3.2 %) ([11]).

More people report unmet needs for medical care due to long waiting lists

Access to health care services is important for ensuring a high quality of life. In turn, this may contribute to increased productivity and reduced costs associated with social protection systems. Barriers to accessing health services include costs, distance and waiting time. In 2024, 2.5 % of the EU population aged 16 and above reported unmet needs for medical care due to cost, distance or waiting time. Long waiting lists (1.4 %) and financial constraints (1.0 %) were the main reasons given, while only 0.1 % of the EU population reported that it was too far travel. When compared with the 2010 figure of 3.5 %, there appears to be an improvement in the rate of unmet needs for medical care due to cost, distance or waiting time. However, the short-term development shows a steady increase, and therefore the 2024 figure represents a 0.8 percentage point deterioration compared with 2019, when only 1.7 % of people had reported unmet needs for medical care due to the three reasons monitored. Long waiting lists appear to be the main driver for this negative short-term trend as the contribution of other two reasons to the total figure has remained relatively stable in the past five years.

2.5 %
of the EU population reported unmet needs for medical care in 2024

People with lower incomes have a much higher share of unmet needs for medical care. While 1.8 % of the richest 20 % of the population reported unmet care needs due to costs, distance or waiting time in 2024, 3.9 % of people in the poorest quintile reported that this was the case. Regarding differences between age groups, the prevalence of unmet needs for medical care was lowest among people aged 16 to 29 years, at 1.6 %, and it was highest for people aged 85 years or over, at 4.9 % ([12]). This is not surprising because health usually deteriorates with age. The main reasons for unmet medical care were waiting lists for younger people and costs for older people.

([11]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data codes: ilc_lvho07d and ilc_mdho06d).

([12]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: hlth_silc_08).

Main indicators

Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion

While a household's income is a key determinant of its standard of living, other aspects can prevent people from fully participating in society such as an impeded access to labour markets or material and social deprivation. To reflect these different dimensions of poverty or social exclusion, the indicator 'at risk of poverty or social exclusion' measures the number of people affected by at least one of the following three forms of poverty or social exclusion: monetary poverty (at-risk-of-poverty rate), severe material and social deprivation and very low work intensity. Data are taken from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

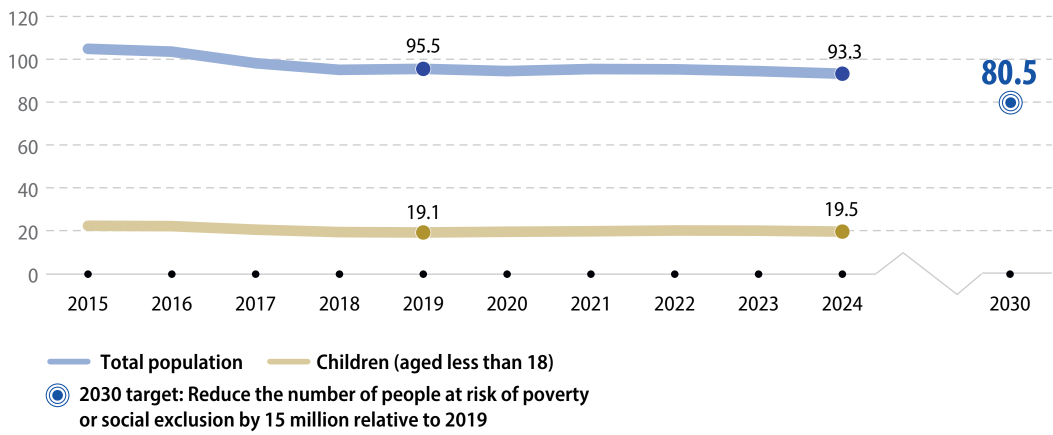
LONG TERM
Time series too short

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 1.1

Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion

(million persons, EU, 2015–2024)

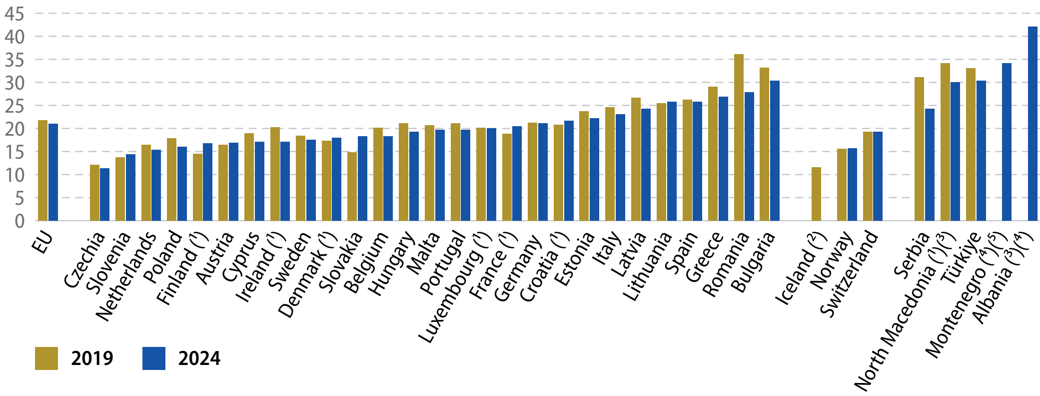


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_10)

Figure 1.2

Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion

(% of population, 2019 and 2024)



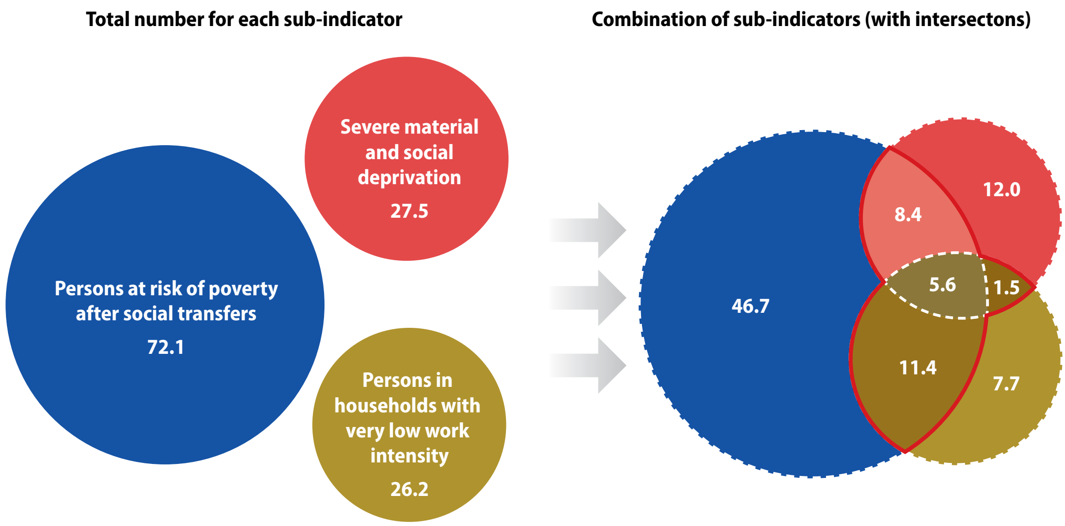
([1]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
([2]) No data for 2024.
([3]) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
([4]) No data for 2019.
([5]) 2022 data (instead of 2024).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_10)

Figure 1.3

Aggregation of components of 'Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion

(million persons, EU, 2024)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ilc_pees01n)

Persons at risk of monetary poverty after social transfers

This indicator measures the number of people with an income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. The threshold is set at 60 % of the national median after social transfers. Data are taken from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and are based on equivalised disposable income.

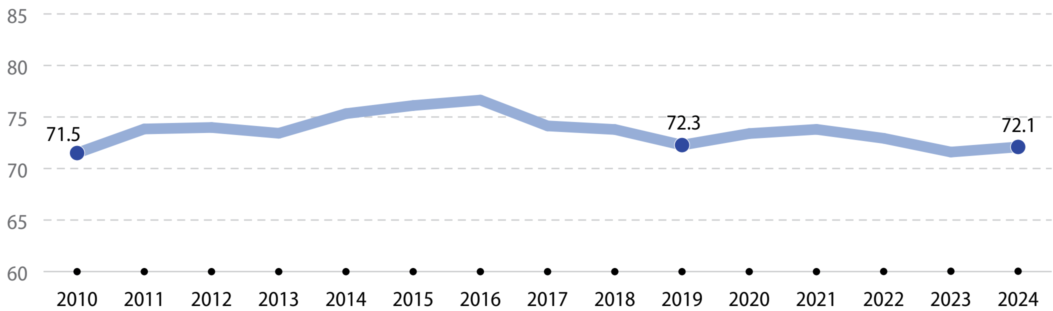
LONG TERM
2010–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 1.4

Persons at risk of monetary poverty after social transfers

(million persons, EU, 2010–2024)



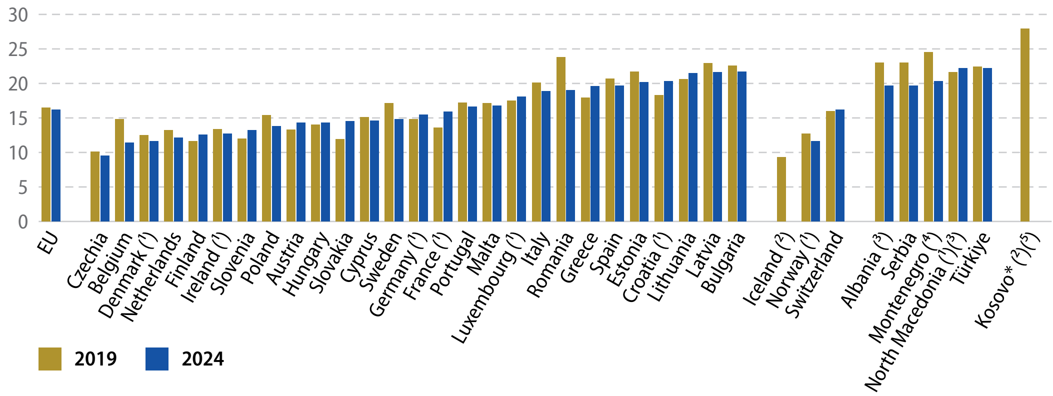
Note: Y-axis does not start at 0. 2010–2012 data are estimated. The data are presented according to the year of the data collection but refer to the income of the previous year (for example, the data for 2023 refer to the income in 2022).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_20)

Figure 1.5

Persons at risk of monetary poverty after social transfers

(% of population, 2019 and 2024)



Note: The data are presented according to the year of the data collection but refer to the income of the previous year (meaning that the data for 2024 refer to the income in the year 2023).

(1) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(2) No data for 2024.
(3) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
(4) 2022 data (instead of 2024).
(5) 2018 data (instead of 2019).
(*) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_20)

Severe material and social deprivation rate

This indicator monitors the enforced lack of items considered necessary and desirable for leading an adequate life. It is defined as the proportion of the population experiencing an enforced lack of at least 7 out of the following 13 deprivation items: (1) pay rent, utility bills, hire purchase instalments or other loan payments, (2) keep their home adequately warm, (3) face unexpected expenses, (4) eat meat, chicken, fish or vegetarian equivalent every second day, (5) a week of holiday away from home, (6) have access to a car/van for personal use, (7) replace worn-out furniture, (8) replace worn-out clothes with some new ones, (9) have two pairs of properly fitting shoes, (10) spend a small amount of money each week on themselves ('pocket money'), (11) have regular leisure activities, (12) get together with friends/family for a drink/meal at least once a month, and (13) have an internet connection. Items 1 to 7 relate to the household level, while the remaining items 8 to 13 relate to the level of the individual. Data are taken from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

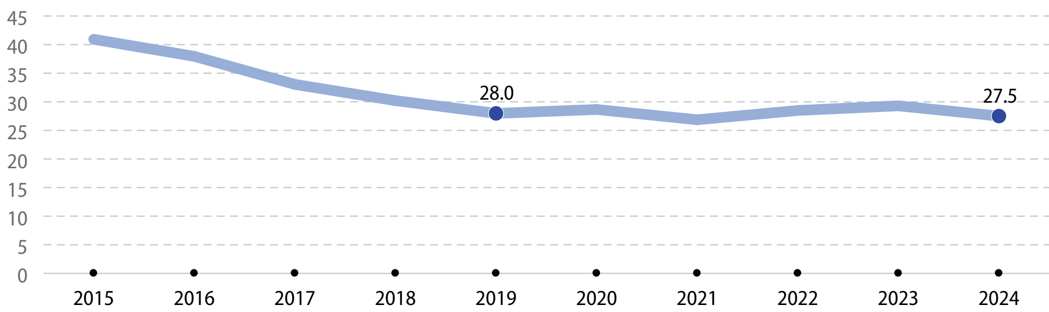
LONG TERM Time series too short

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 1.6

Severe material and social deprivation

(million persons, EU, 2015–2024)

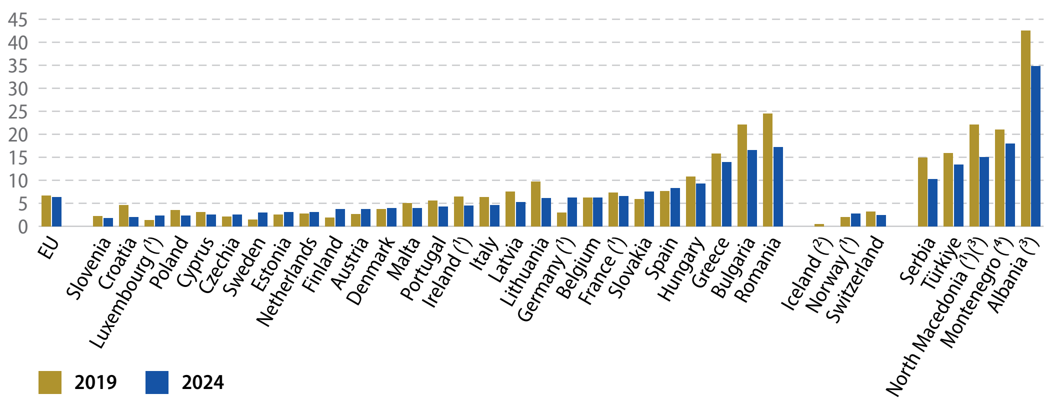


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_31)

Figure 1.7

Severe material and social deprivation rate

(% of population, 2019 and 2024)



([1]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown. ([2]) No data for 2024.
([3]) 2023 data (instead of 2024). ([4]) 2022 data (instead of 2024).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_31)

Persons living in households with very low work intensity

This indicator describes the share of people aged less than 65 living in households where the working age adults, aged 18 to 64 years, worked equal to or less than 20 % of their total combined potential work-time during the previous year. It excludes students aged 18 to 24 and people who are retired according to their self-defined current economic status or who receive any pension (except survivors' pension), as well as people aged 60 to 64 who are inactive and live in a household where the main income comes from pensions (except survivors' pension). Data are taken from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

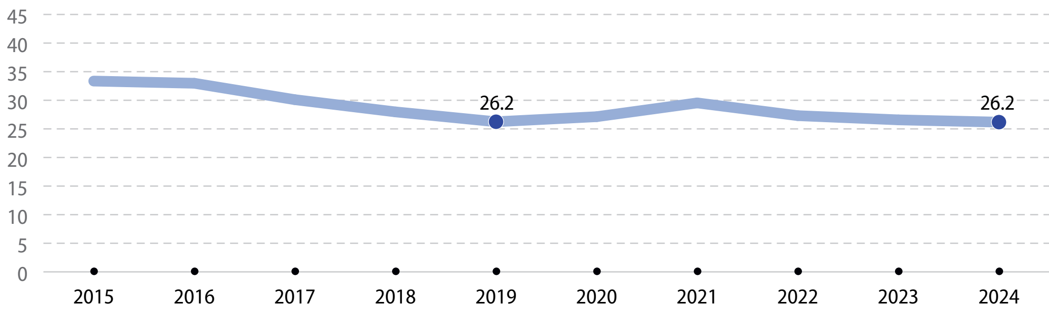
LONG TERM
Time series too short

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 1.8

Persons living in households with very low work intensity

(million persons aged less than 65, EU, 2015–2024)

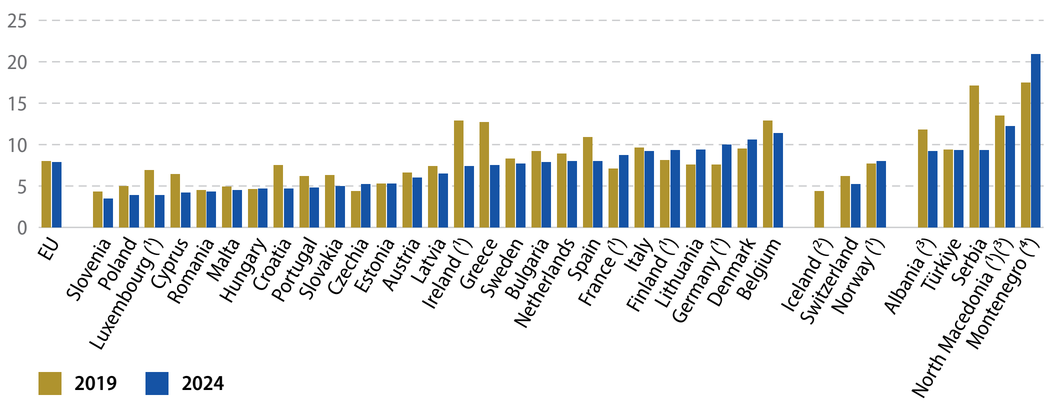


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_40)

Figure 1.9

Persons living in households with very low work intensity

(% of population aged less than 65, 2019 and 2024)



([1]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
([2]) No data for 2024.
([3]) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
([4]) 2022 data (instead of 2024).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_40)

In work at-risk-of-poverty rate

This indicator measures the share of persons who are employed and have an income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60 % of the national median income (after social transfers). For the purpose of this indicator, an individual is considered employed if he/she was employed for more than half of the reference year. Data for this indicator are taken from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and are based on equivalised disposable income.

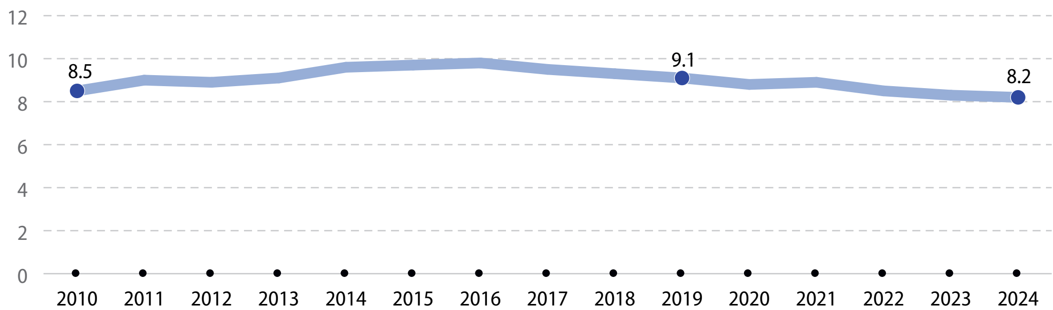
LONG TERM 2010–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 1.10

In work at-risk-of-poverty rate

(% of employed persons aged 18 or over, EU, 2010–2024)



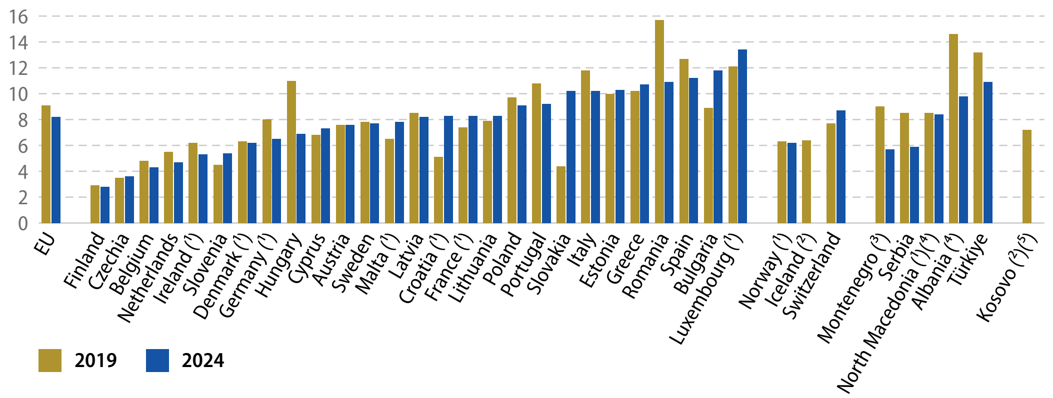
Note: 2010–2018 data are estimated.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_41)

Figure 1.11

In work at-risk-of-poverty rate

(% of employed persons aged 18 or over, 2019 and 2024)



(¹) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(²) No data for 2024.
(³) 2022 data (instead of 2024).
(⁴) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
(⁵) 2018 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_41)

Housing cost overburden rate

This indicator measures the share of population living in households that spend 40 % or more of the household disposable income on housing ('net' of housing allowances). Housing costs include rental or mortgage interest payments but also the cost of utilities such as water, electricity, gas or heating. Data for this indicator are taken from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

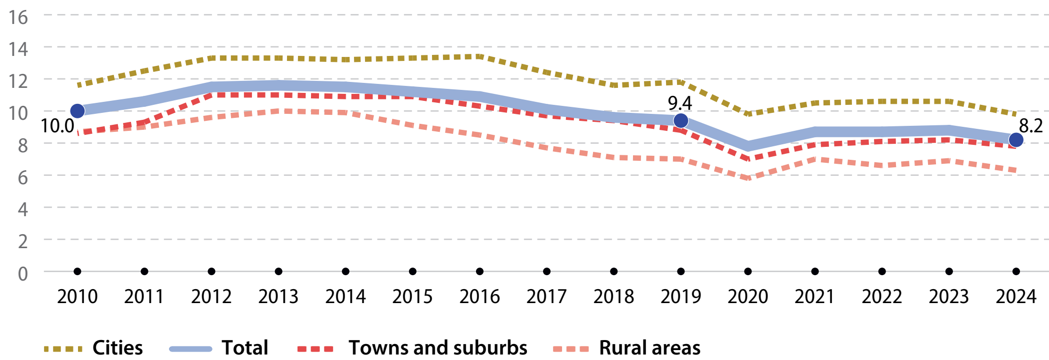
LONG TERM
2010–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 1.12

Housing cost overburden rate by degree of urbanisation

(% of population, EU, 2010–2024)



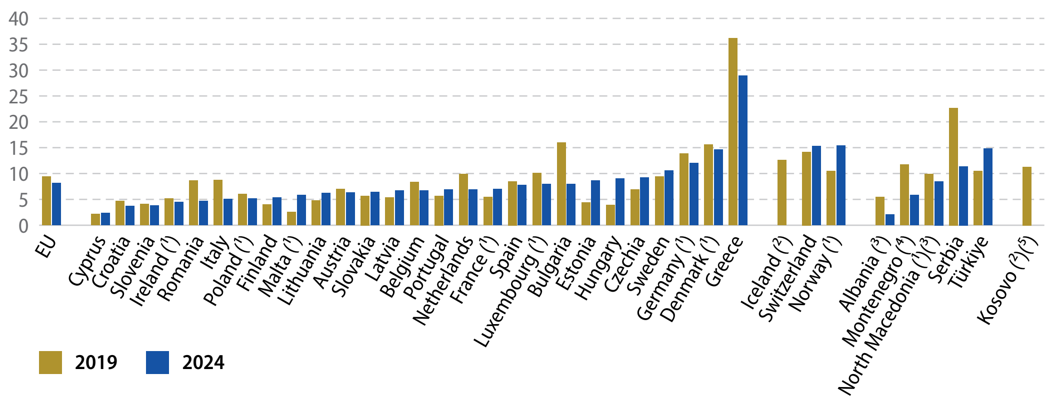
Note: 2014–2018 data are estimated.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: sdg_01_50 and ilc_lvho07d)

Figure 1.13

Housing cost overburden rate

(% of population, 2019 and 2024)



(¹) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(²) No data for 2024.
(³) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
(⁴) 2022 data (instead of 2024).
(⁵) 2018 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_50)

Zero hunger

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

SDG 2 seeks to end hunger and malnutrition, and ensure access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food. Realising this goal will largely depend on promoting sustainable production systems and increasing investment in rural infrastructure and agricultural research and development.

Achieving healthy diets and ensuring agricultural systems remain productive and sustainable are essential for achieving a healthy food system that is good for people and the planet. Monitoring SDG 2 in an EU context includes tracking developments in obesity, the sustainability of agricultural production and the environmental impacts of agricultural activities on land, water and the atmosphere. Good progress has been made towards SDG 2 over the assessed short-term period. There have been strong improvements in sustainable agricultural production practices, including labour productivity, public investment in farming, and reductions in the use and risk of pesticides. The area under organic farming has also grown in the EU, but stronger progress will be required to meet the respective target by 2030. Additionally, the share of obese people has fallen slightly in the EU. Progress has also been made in reducing ammonia emissions from agriculture and nitrate in groundwater. Intensive agriculture remains a major driver of biodiversity decline in the EU, as seen by a decline in the populations of common farmland birds.

Table 2.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 2, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Malnutrition					
Obesity rate	16.3 % (2025)	2014–2025	0.5 %	↘	page 45
		2019–2025	– 0.2 %	↗	
Sustainable agricultural production					
Agricultural real factor income per annual work unit	121.4 index 2020 = 100 (2025)	2010–2025	3.6 %	↑	page 46
		2019–2025	3.9 %	↑	
Government support to agricultural R&D	3.8 EUR billion (2024)	2009–2024	2.2 %	↑	page 47
		2019–2024	5.2 %	↑	
Area under organic farming ◎	10.9 % (2024)	2012–2024	Observed: 5.3 % Required: 8.4 %	↗	page 48
		2019–2024	Observed: 5.2 % Required: 10.3 %	↘	
Use and risk of chemical pesticides ◎	42 index 2015-2017 = 100 (2023)	2011–2023	Observed: – 8.1 % Required: – 4.3 %	↑	page 49
		2018–2023	Observed: – 15.2 % Required: – 5.3 %	↑	
Environmental impacts of agricultural production					
Ammonia emissions from agriculture	3.1 million tonnes (2023)	2008–2023	– 1.1 %	↑	page 50
		2018–2023	– 2.5 %	↑	
Nitrate in groundwater (*)	18.1 mg per litre (2023)	2008–2023	– 0.4 % (1)	↗	SDG 6, page 111
		2018–2023	– 0.6 % (1)	↗	
Area at risk of severe soil erosion by water (*)	190 087 km^2 (2023)	2010–2023	– 0.3 %	↗	SDG 15, page 258
		2016–2023	– 0.5 %	↗	
Common farmland bird index (*)	67.9 index 2000 = 100 (2024)	2009–2024	– 1.6 % (2)	↓	SDG 15, page 261
		2019–2024	– 1.7 % (2)	↓	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.
(*) Multi-purpose indicator. (1) Data refer to an EU aggregate based on 22 Member States. (2) Data refer to an EU aggregate whose composition changes over time depending on when countries joined the Pan-European Common Birds Monitoring Scheme.

Policy context

Malnutrition

The EU undertakes a number of public health initiatives related to nutrition (see this overview of EU policy initiatives in the areas of nutrition and physical activity). The EU supports healthier diets in children through the EU School Scheme; in July 2025, the Commission tabled a new proposal for a Council Regulation updating the scheme.

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan also highlights the importance of addressing obesity and diabetes from an early age.

Sustainable agricultural production

A sustainable, well-functioning and robust food system is essential for ensuring food security. The EU undertakes measures to safeguard food security and to respond effectively to crises that affect or could affect food security.

The Vision for Agriculture and Food provides a roadmap for the future of farming and food in Europe. It aims to foster a thriving EU farming and agri-food sector for current and future generations of farmers and agri-food operators.

The Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 aims to bring back at least 10 % of agricultural area under high-diversity landscape features to provide space for wild animals, plants, pollinators and natural pest regulators. The strategy also calls for at least 25 % of agricultural land to be under organic farming management by 2030.

The Zero Pollution Action Plan provides a compass to embed pollution prevention into all relevant EU policies, to step up implementation of the relevant EU legislation and to identify possible gaps. It aims to improve soil quality by reducing nutrient losses and chemical pesticides' use and risk by 50 % by 2030.

The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) provides income support, market measures and rural development measures to safeguard farmers' income and increase agricultural productivity while protecting rural landscapes, tackling climate change and fostering sustainable management of natural resources.

Environmental impacts of agricultural production

The National Emission-reduction Commitments Directive (NEC Directive) sets national emission-reduction commitments for Member States and the EU for five important air pollutants, including ammonia.

The Nitrates Directive protects water quality by preventing agricultural nitrates from polluting ground and surface waters and by promoting good farming practices.

The EU Soil Strategy for 2030 sets out a framework and concrete measures to protect and restore soils and ensure their sustainable use. The new Soil Monitoring Law aims to ensure soil is protected in the same way as water, air and the marine environment.

The EU has funded research and improved soil monitoring through projects such as LUCAS, which is a survey on land cover, land use and agri-environmental indicators run by Eurostat, and Copernicus, the EU's Earth Observation and Monitoring Programme.

Overview and key trends

Malnutrition

A healthy diet means an adequate, well-balanced diet that meets the body's dietary needs. Combined with regular physical activity and the avoidance of excessive alcohol consumption and tobacco use, a healthy diet is a cornerstone of good health. While ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition are key objectives of the 2030 Agenda, in Europe obesity is a more widespread nutrition-related health issue.

More than half of the adult EU population is overweight and every sixth person is obese

Obesity and pre-obesity are malnutrition problems related to changing consumption and activity habits and situations that favour such unhealthy habits. Combining a balanced nutritional diet with an active lifestyle is a challenge for many people. While the causes of obesity vary from person to person, the problem is generally attributed to unhealthy diets that are high in energy, fat (particularly trans and saturated fats), salt, sugar, and red and processed meat, while being low in fruit and vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts. Low physical activity and sociological and hereditary factors are also important causes. The circumstances in which lifestyle choices are made, such as the food environment, are important determinants of healthy behaviours and obesity.

16.3 %
of the EU's adult population were obese in 2025

Obesity is a significant health issue in the EU, affecting more than 15 % of the adult population in 2025. It is also a contributing factor in other diet-related non-communicable diseases, such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. Obesity also disproportionately affects people with lower levels of education and tends to increase with age until late in life. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), childhood obesity also remains an important public health problem in Europe, with one in three school-aged children classed as overweight or obese.

When considered alongside pre-obesity, the situation looks even more severe — more than half of the EU's adult population was overweight in 2025. Patterns in the pre-obesity rate follow those of obesity, though pre-obesity affected more than twice as many Europeans as obesity (35.4 % of the adult population) in 2025.

Between 2019 and 2025, the share of overweight (obese and pre-obese) people fell slightly, from 52.7 % to 51.7 %. This is largely due to a reduction in the share of pre-obese people, from 36.2 % to 35.4 % over that period, while the share of obese people fell by 0.2 percentage points only, affecting 16.3 % of EU adults in 2025.

At the Member State level, the obesity rate rose in 17 countries between 2019 and 2025. The rate in 2025 was highest in Malta, at 26.6 %, and lowest in Italy, at 7.0 %.

The obesity rate generally increases with age, peaking in the age group 65 to 74 years (20.4 % obese in 2025) and decreasing again for people aged 75 and older. Obesity and pre-obesity rates also differ by educational attainment levels, with obesity rates ranging from 12.6 % in 2025 for adults with tertiary education to 18.5 % for adults with lower secondary education or lower [1].

Sustainable agricultural production

Sustainable agricultural production is a key element in making food systems fair, healthy and environmentally friendly. A concerted effort is needed to foster a food-production system that is based on sustainable agricultural practices and produces an adequate food supply. Four indicators

(1) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_hch10).

are used to monitor the strong interlinkages between agricultural production and the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. These are: agricultural income and labour productivity; investment in agricultural research and innovation; organic farming; and pesticide use.

Labour productivity in agriculture and investment in the future of farming continue to progress favourably in the EU

To ensure its long-term viability, Europe's agricultural sector needs to achieve economic sustainability. Labour productivity is an important component of this and can be partially measured using the indicator 'agricultural real factor income per annual work unit (AWU)'.

Following a dip during the economic crisis from 2007 to 2009, agricultural real factor income per AWU has been rising in the EU. In 2025 it was 26.0 % higher than in 2019 and 70.0 % higher than in 2010. This is mainly a result of strong growth between 2016 and 2017 and again between 2021 and 2022, driven by increased output values (prices and/or yields) and reduced labour input [2]. After a slight decline from 2022 to 2024, the indicator reached a new high in 2025.

26.0 %
growth in EU agricultural factor income per annual work unit between 2019 and 2025

Agricultural real factor income per AWU varies considerably between Member States and farm types. It tends to be higher in countries with more mechanised, input-intensive production systems than in countries using more traditional, labour-intensive methods [3].

Investment in agricultural research and innovation is crucial for decoupling agricultural productivity from environmental impacts. Such investments in sustainable productivity growth in agriculture also help to keep EU farmers competitive and adaptable to challenges such as climate change and feeding a rising population. Overall national government support to agricultural research and development in the EU has risen in the short term, growing by 29.0 % since 2019 to reach EUR 3.8 billion in 2024. It must be noted that as these data are expressed in current prices, part of the observed increase may reflect general price inflation rather than real growth in government expenditure.

3.8
billion EUR in government support was spent on agricultural R&D in 2024

Organic farming is increasing across the EU, but the pace needs to quicken considerably to reach the 2030 target

Organic farming is one example of a sustainable agricultural management system. It seeks to limit environmental impacts by using agricultural practices that encourage the responsible use of energy and natural resources, maintain or enhance biodiversity, preserve regional ecological balances, increase soil fertility and water quality, encourage high animal welfare standards, and enhance the capacity to adapt to climate change.

In the EU, the share of organic farming in total agricultural area grew by 2.4 percentage points between 2019 and 2024, to an estimated 10.9 %. Growth has slowed in recent years, and the take-up of organic farming will need to accelerate considerably to achieve the 25 % target by 2030. As of 2024, Estonia leads the EU with more than 22 % of its agricultural area farmed organically, followed by Portugal with more than 20 % and Italy, Sweden, Czechia and Latvia with more than 15 %. In all other Member States, less than 15 % of agricultural land was used for organic farming in 2024.

10.9 %
of the EU's utilised agricultural area was estimated to be farmed organically in 2024

(2) *Source:* Eurostat (online data codes: aact_eaa05 and aact_ali02).
(3) Input-intensive agriculture increases agricultural productivity through consumable inputs, such as chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and capital inputs, such as highly mechanised approaches. Mechanised inputs frequently substitute labour inputs as factors of production.

The EU has reduced the sales of chemical pesticides

The Zero Pollution Action Plan aims to reduce the EU food system's dependency on pesticides and antimicrobials and sets a target to reduce chemical pesticides' use and risk by 50 % by 2030. According to a trend analysis by the European Commission, the use and risk of chemical pesticides decreased by 58 % between the baseline period of 2015–2017 and 2023, and the use of more hazardous pesticides fell by 27 % over the same period. The EU has thus already achieved the 2030 target for the use and risk of chemical pesticides. Nevertheless, the presence of pesticides in soil and water continues to be a serious concern (also see the analysis on 'Pesticides in rivers' in the chapter on SDG 6 on page 109). In its 2025 zero-pollution monitoring and outlook report on the issue, the European Environment Agency (EEA) noted that despite progress in the EU, the reduced use and risk of chemical pesticides has not yet led to improvements in environmental quality.

Between 2018 and 2023, the use and risk of chemical pesticides fell by

5.3 %

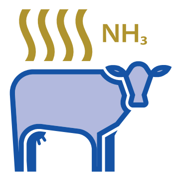
To protect human and animal health, the EU aims to reduce its overall sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and aquaculture by 50 % by 2030. The use and misuse of antimicrobials in agriculture contributes to the problem of microbes, such as bacteria and fungi, becoming resistant to antimicrobials, which reduces the effectiveness of such treatments. According to a 2025 report from the European Medicines Agency, the EU had achieved a 24.3 % reduction in sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 2024 compared with the 2018 baseline. This is the result of declining sales in almost all Member States. The EU is therefore about halfway to meeting its 2030 target, but further declines are still needed, not least because sales actually increased between 2022 and 2024. In 2024, antimicrobial sales for farmed animals and in aquaculture varied strongly across Member States. They were highest in Cyprus and Italy and lowest in Sweden and Finland.

Environmental impacts of agricultural production

Agriculture can provide environmental benefits such as maintaining specific farmland ecosystems and diverse landscapes. In addition, agricultural land can also act as a carbon sink. However, as reported by the EEA, increases in agricultural productivity and a move towards intensive agriculture practices have contributed to the degradation of environmental conditions and climate change. The environmental impacts of agriculture include nutrient-related pollution, soil erosion and loss of biodiversity.

Ammonia emissions from agriculture and nitrate concentrations in groundwater bodies have fallen in recent years

Ammonia emissions and nitrates in groundwater are linked to excessive inputs of nitrogen from agricultural sources such as mineral fertiliser and livestock manure. Manure from livestock is rich in nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen (ammonia and nitrates) and is used as a fertiliser alongside chemical fertilisers. If properly treated, its application improves soil structure and enhances soil organic matter content, which increases carbon sequestration. But when mineral fertilisers or manure are not properly handled and spread, excess nutrients that are not taken up by plants are released into the environment (as ammonia in air and as nitrates and phosphorus in water). When ammonia enters the atmosphere, it pollutes the air and can land on soil and water, where it can harm sensitive vegetation systems, biodiversity and water quality through eutrophication and acidification.



Between 2018 and 2023, ammonia emissions from agriculture in the EU fell by

11.7 %

Since the 1990s, Europe has seen a significant decrease in ammonia emissions from agriculture as a result of reductions in livestock density and nitrogen fertiliser use as well as changes in agricultural practices. In recent years, however, trends have been less clear, with ammonia emissions increasing between 2013 and 2016, falling to a new low of 3.0 million tonnes in 2022, and then rising slightly to 3.1 million tonnes in 2023. It must be noted that the national and EU totals may mask considerable variations in fertiliser application and livestock densities at regional and local levels. According to a 2025 EEA-JRC monitoring report, reducing ammonia emissions from agriculture is critical for protecting ecosystems and preserving biodiversity.

The concentration of nitrate (NO_3) in EU groundwater has shown a long-term stagnation at around 19 milligrams per litre (mg/L). However, there has been a recent downward trend since 2018, with concentrations reaching 18.1 mg/L in 2023. This is 5.5 % lower than in 2008 and 2.7 % lower than in 2018. Nevertheless, hotspots exist where nitrate concentrations are above 50 mg/L, which is the limit set for drinkable water. Some of the countries struggling the most with high nitrate levels in groundwater are also among those with the highest ammonia emissions per hectare of utilised agricultural area in Europe, such as Belgium, Germany and Austria (see Figures 2.12 and 6.8).

An average of 18.1 milligrams of nitrates were in each litre of groundwater in the EU in 2023

The agricultural sector is also responsible for significant quantities of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, accounting for 12 % of total GHG emissions in the EU in 2024 [4]. The main GHG emissions from agricultural practices are carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4) and nitrous oxide (N_2O). Agricultural emissions are generally linked to the management of agricultural soils, livestock, rice production and biomass burning. While the EU's total GHG emissions have decreased by 17 % since 2019 (see the chapter on SDG 13 'Climate action' on page 221), emissions from the agricultural sector have fallen more slowly, by 6 % over the same period. In 2024 they had reached 361 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent, which is a 26 % reduction on 1990 levels [5].

Soil erosion remains a major threat, but signs of improvement exist across the EU

Healthy soils are essential for sustainable and productive agricultural systems. Because soils take years to form, they can be considered a non-renewable resource for food production. One of the biggest threats to soil health in Europe is soil erosion, which can be caused by both wind and water. Though erosion is a natural process, inappropriate land management and other human activities can cause it to accelerate to such an extent that soil can be irreversibly lost. The area at risk of severe soil erosion by water (leading to the loss of more than 10 tonnes of soil per hectare per year) is a model-based indicator based on spatial data on rainfall erosivity, soil erodibility, topography, land cover and management practices.

In 2023, 190 087 square kilometres (km^2) of EU land were at risk of severe soil loss from water erosion — an area equal to about 1.5 times Greece's total land area. However, the risk of severe soil erosion has been decreasing in the EU, in part due to mandatory measures in the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Between 2016 and 2023, the share of the non-artificial erodible area [6] estimated to be at risk of severe soil erosion by water decreased from 5.3 % to 5.1 %. In absolute terms, this corresponds to a 3.4 % decrease in the area at risk since 2016.

5.1 % of EU land was estimated to be at risk of severe soil erosion by water in 2023

The EU's farmland bird populations continue to decline sharply

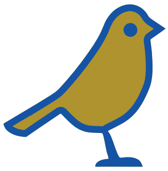
Some agricultural landscapes provide valuable and unique habitats for a host of species, both common and threatened. However, biodiversity has suffered in the race to increase productivity and where the ecosystem services that support biodiversity have been undervalued economically or given inadequate regulatory protection. Species related to agroecosystems are likely to have fared

(4) 2024 data for GHG emissions presented in this report have been calculated based on the approximated estimates for greenhouse gas emissions published by the European Environment Agency: EEA (2025), *Approximated estimates for greenhouse gas emissions*.
(5) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_air_gge).

(6) Generally, artificial, sandy, rocky and icy surfaces as well as wetlands and water bodies are not included in the land area used in calculating the soil-erosion indicator (see online metadata: sdg_15_50).

worse without the agri-environmental measures contained in EU policies — primarily the Common Agriculture Policy — but as reported by the European Commission, measures have not yet been effective enough to halt overall biodiversity loss in agricultural habitats.

Farmland bird species depend on agricultural habitats. Because they are relatively visible, they are a good indicator species for monitoring biodiversity. The common farmland bird index measures the relative abundance and diversity of 39 farmland bird species compared with the 2000 base year. Between 2009 and 2024, the EU saw a dramatic 21.7 % decline in common farmland birds, continuing a trend visible since 1990. Between 1990 and 2024, common farmland birds declined by 41.2 %. Intensive agricultural practices and the use of pesticides have contributed to the loss of wildlife habitats as well as falling populations of insects. Insects are an important food source for many farmland birds and provide important ecosystem services such as pollination (7).



Between 2009 and 2024, common farmland bird populations in the EU declined by

21.7 %

(7) European Environment Agency (2025), *Common bird index in Europe*.

Main indicators

Obesity rate

This indicator is derived from the body mass index (BMI), which is defined as the weight in kilograms divided by the square of the height in metres. People aged 18 years or over are considered obese if their BMI is equal to or greater than 30. The category 'pre-obese' refers to people with a BMI between 25 and less than 30. The category 'overweight' (BMI equal or greater than 25) combines the two categories pre-obese and obese. The data presented in this section stem from the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS) and the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

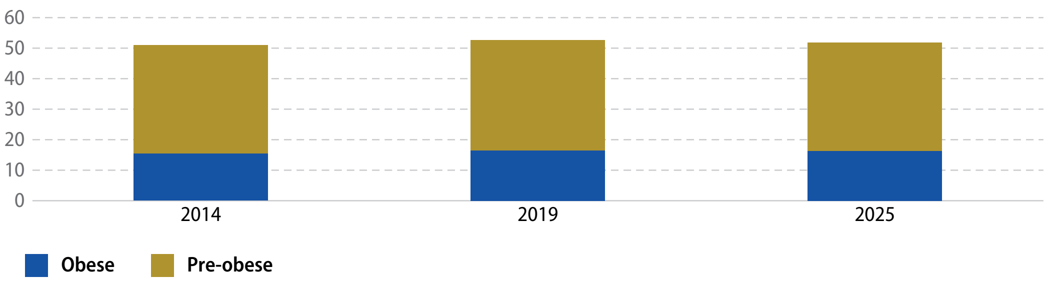
LONG TERM 2014–2025

SHORT TERM 2019–2025

Figure 2.1

Obesity rate, by body mass index (BMI)

(% of population aged 18 or over, EU, 2014, 2019 and 2025)

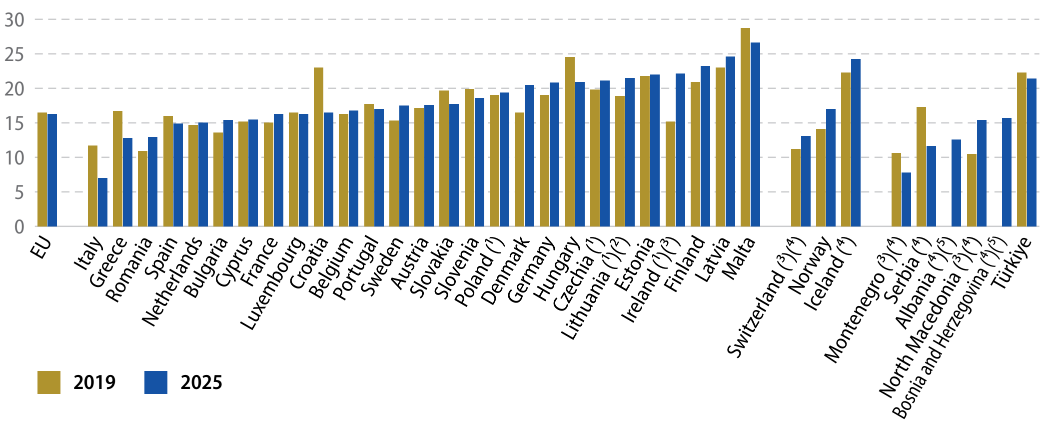


Source: Eurostat (online data codes: sdg_02_10)

Figure 2.2

Obesity rate

(% of population aged 18 or over, 2019 and 2025)



(1) 2025 data have lower reliability.
(2) 2025 data are provisional.
(3) 2017 data (instead of 2019).
(4) 2022 data (instead of 2025).
(5) No data for 2019.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_02_10)

Agricultural real factor income per annual work unit

LONG TERM 2010–2025

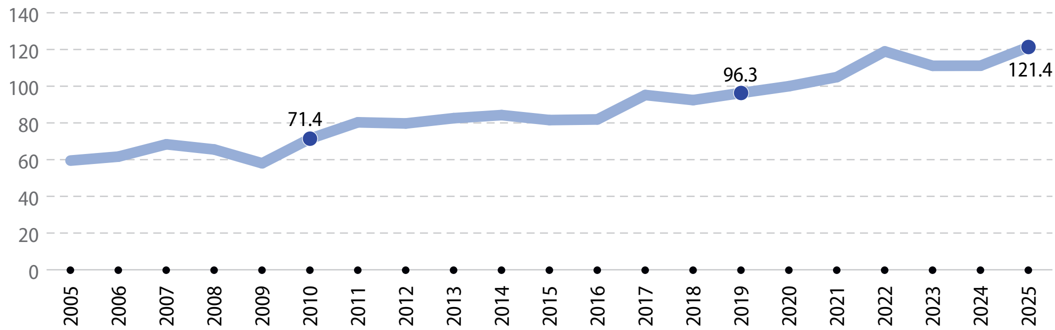
SHORT TERM 2019–2025

Agricultural real factor income measures the income generated by farming, which is used to remunerate borrowed, rented or own factors of production (capital, labour and land). Annual work units (AWUs) are defined as full-time equivalent employment (corresponding to the number of full-time equivalent jobs), which is calculated by dividing total hours worked by the average annual number of hours worked in full-time jobs within the economic territory. This can be interpreted as a measure of labour productivity in agriculture. The data stem from the Economic Accounts for Agriculture (EAA), which provide detailed information on agricultural sector income.

Figure 2.3

Agricultural real factor income per annual work unit (AWU)

(chain-linked volumes, index 2020=100, EU, 2005–2025)

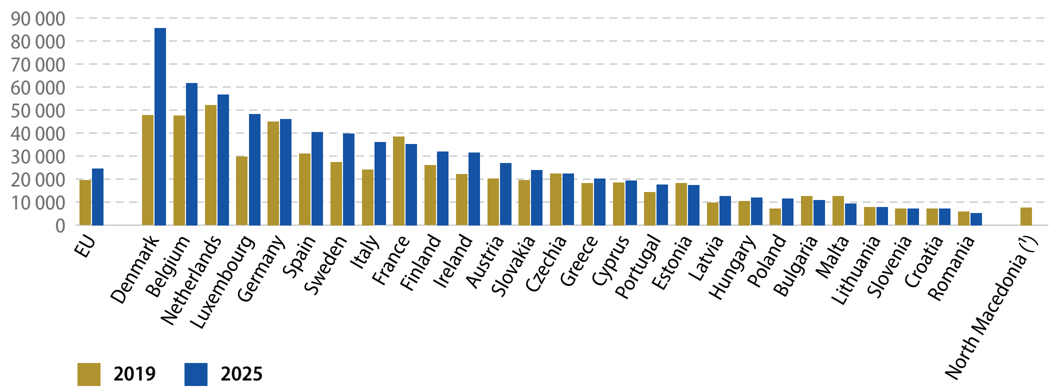


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_02_20)

Figure 2.4

Agricultural real factor income per annual work unit (AWU)

(EUR, chain linked volumes (2020), 2019 and 2025)



Note: 2025 data are estimated. Caution should be exercised when comparing absolute levels of agricultural factor income per annual work unit (AWU) because they are influenced by different national rules related to the full-time working hours comprising an AWU.

(¹) No data for 2025.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_02_20)

Government support to agricultural R&D

This indicator refers to government budget allocations for R&D (GBARD). GBARD data measure government support to research and development (R&D) activities or, in other words, the level of priority that governments place on the public funding of R&D. GBARD data are built up using the guidelines laid out in the standard practice for surveys of research and experimental development, the OECD's Frascati Manual and the European Business Statistics Methodological Manual for R&D statistics. The data are expressed in current prices, meaning that the overall development of the indicator is in part also influenced by general price inflation.

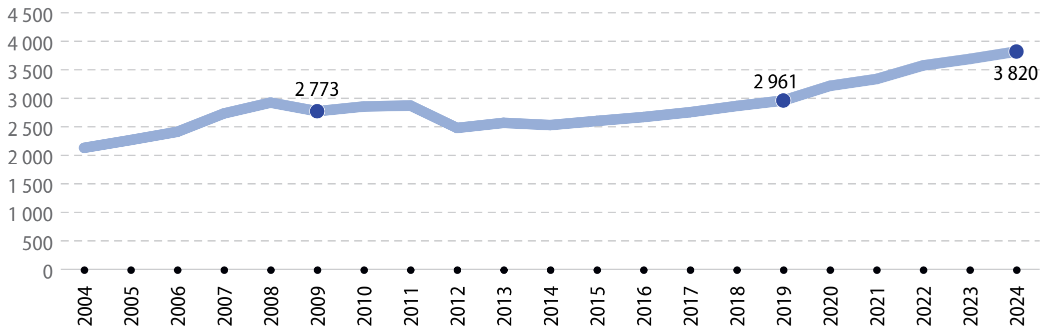
LONG TERM 2009–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 2.5

Government support to agricultural research and development

(million EUR, EU, 2004–2024)



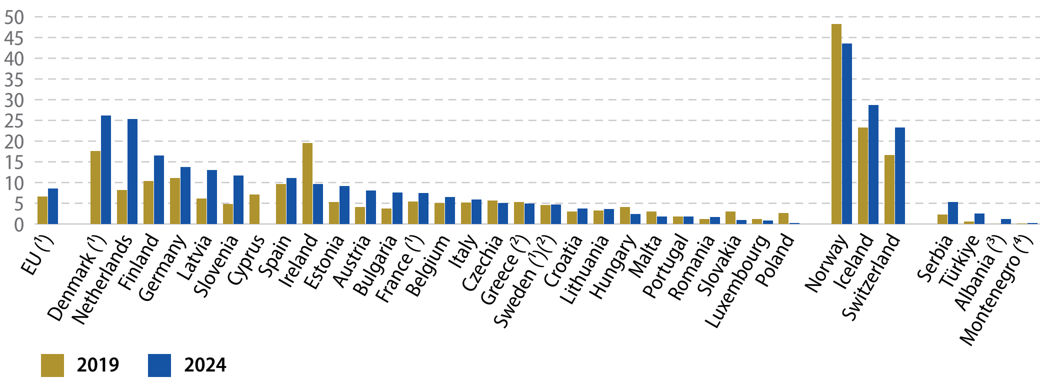
Note: Data for 2004 to 2022 are estimated.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_02_30)

Figure 2.6

Government support to agricultural research and development

(EUR per capita, 2019 and 2024)



([1]) 2019 data are estimated or provisional.
([2]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
([3]) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
([4]) 2021 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_02_30)

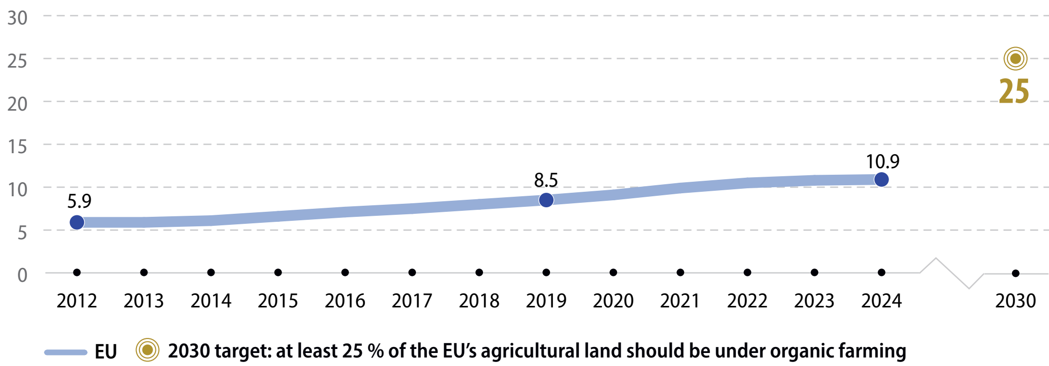
Area under organic farming

This indicator is defined as the share of total utilised agricultural area (UAA) occupied by organic farming (existing organically farmed areas and areas undergoing conversion). Organic farming is a production method that puts the highest emphasis on environmental and wildlife protection and, with regard to livestock production, on animal welfare considerations. It avoids or largely reduces the use of synthetic chemical inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides, additives and medical products.

LONG TERM 2012–2024

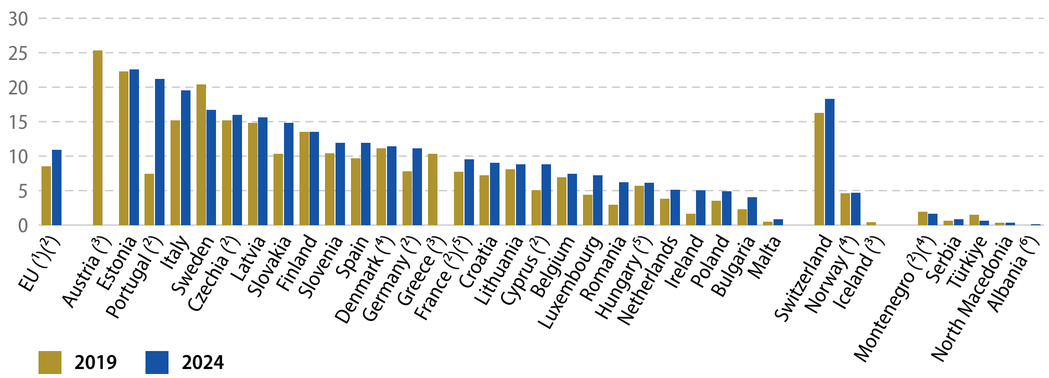
SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 2.7
Area under organic farming
(% of utilised agricultural area, EU, 2012–2024)



Note: 2018–2024 data are estimated, 2021–2024 estimates made for the purpose of this publication.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_02_40)

Figure 2.8
Area under organic farming
(% of utilised agricultural area, 2019 and 2024)



(¹) 2024 estimate made for the purpose of this publication.
(²) Provisional or estimated data.
(³) No data for 2024.
(⁴) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
(⁵) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(⁶) No data for 2019.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_02_40)

Use and risk of chemical pesticides

This indicator monitors the trends in the use and risk of chemical pesticides in the EU and its Member States. The use of pesticides entails risks and impacts on human health and the environment. The indicator is based on the quantities of active chemical substances contained in the pesticides which are placed on the market (sold), and therefore used, in each Member State, and the hazard properties of these active substances. The data are presented as an index relative to the average results for the period 2015 to 2017.

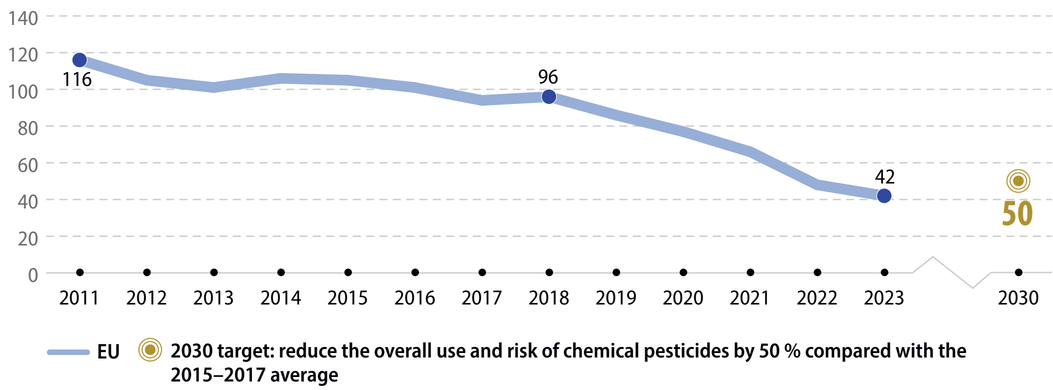
LONG TERM
2011–2023

SHORT TERM
2018–2023

Figure 2.9

Use and risk of chemical pesticides

(index 2015–2017 = 100, EU, 2011–2023)

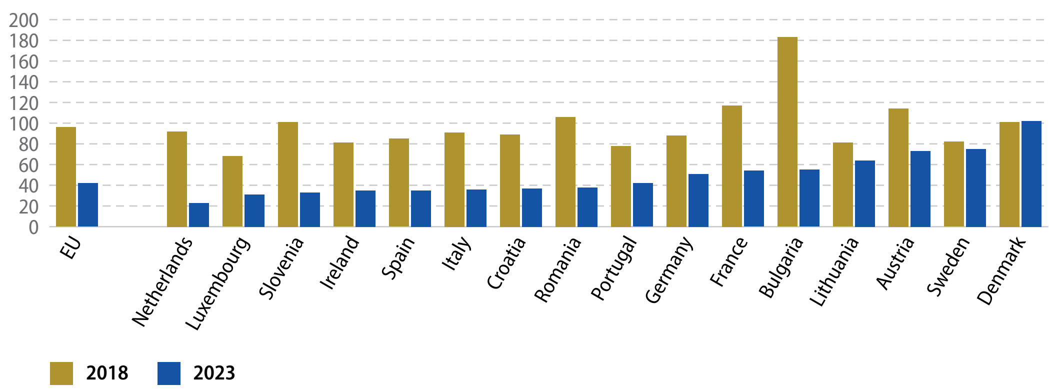


Source: DG Health and Food Safety (Eurostat online data code: sdg_02_53)

Figure 2.10

Use and risk of chemical pesticides

(index 2015–2017 = 100, 2018 and 2023)



Note: Data for all 27 Member States are included in the EU aggregate, but only 16 Member States have agreed to disclose country level data.

Source: DG Health and Food Safety (Eurostat online data code: sdg_02_53)

Ammonia emissions from agriculture

This indicator measures ammonia (NH_3) emissions as a result of agricultural production. These emissions result from manure management, applications of inorganic nitrogen fertilisers and animal manure applied to soil, as well as urine and dung deposited by grazing animals. Data for this indicator come from the EU inventory on air pollution compiled by the European Environment Agency (EEA) under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP) and are fully consistent with national air pollution inventories compiled by EU Member States. Data on the utilised agricultural area (UAA) stem from Eurostat's annual crop statistics. The definition of this indicator is based on the CAP indicator C45 Emissions from agriculture.

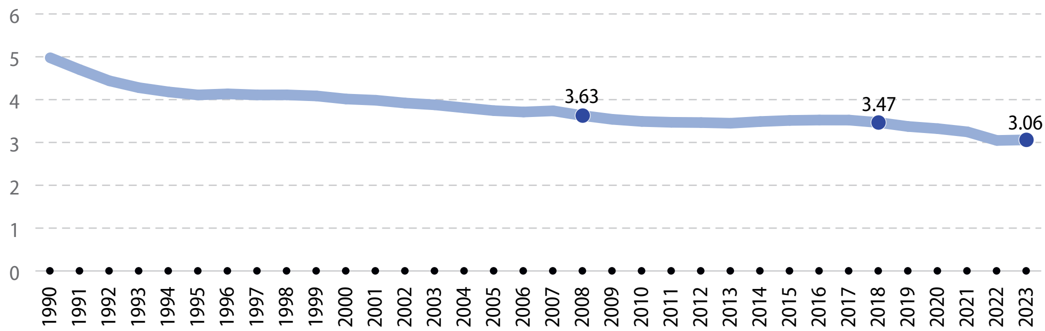
LONG TERM 2008–2023

SHORT TERM 2018–2023

Figure 2.11

Ammonia emissions from agriculture

(million tonnes, EU, 1990–2023)

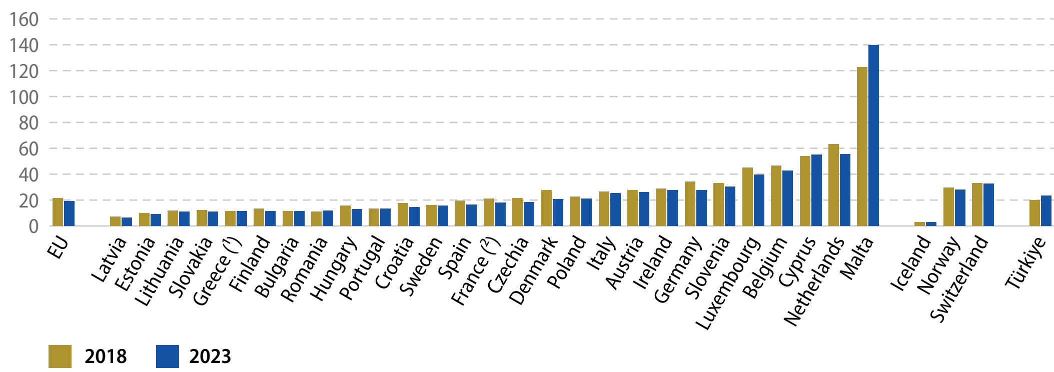


Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_02_60)

Figure 2.12

Ammonia emissions from agriculture

(kg per ha of utilised agricultural area, 2018 and 2023)



([1]) Estimated data.
([2]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
Source: EEA, Eurostat (online data code: sdg_02_60)

3

Good health and well-being

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

SDG 3 aims to ensure health and promote well-being for all at all ages by improving reproductive, maternal and child health; ending epidemics of major communicable diseases; and reducing non-communicable and mental diseases. It also calls for reducing behavioural and environmental health risk factors.

Health can be defined as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' ([1]). Good health is a major determinant of quality of life, well-being and social participation. Monitoring SDG 3 in an EU context focuses on the topics of healthy lives, determinants of health, causes of death and health care. Indicators on healthy lives show a recovery to pre-pandemic levels. Smoking rates have decreased, but other health determinants have been stagnating. Significant progress has been made on different causes of death, showing strong improvements in avoidable mortality, fatal work accidents and premature deaths due to air pollution. The death toll due to road traffic deaths has also decreased but remains far from the EU target. Indicators on health care continue to depict adverse trends such as an increase in unmet need for medical care due to long waiting lists.

([1]) World Health Organization (1946), *Constitution of the World Health Organization*.

Table 3.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 3, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Healthy lives					
Healthy life expectancy at birth based on self-perceived health	75.3 years (2023)	2008–2023	0.3 %	↗	page 62
		2018–2023	0.1 %	→	
People with good or very good self-perceived health	68.5 % (2024)	2010–2024	0.2 %	↗	page 63
		2019–2024	0.0 %	→	
Health determinants					
Smoking prevalence	24 % (2023)	2009–2023	– 1.3 %	↑	page 64
		2017–2023	– 1.9 %	↑	
Obesity rate (*)	16.3 % (2025)	2014–2025	0.5 %	↘	SDG 2, page 45
		2019–2025	– 0.2 %	↗	
Population living in households suffering from noise (*)	18.1 % (2023)	2010–2023	– 1.0 %	↑	SDG 11, page 192
		2018–2023	– 0.1 %	→	
Causes of death					
Standardised avoidable mortality	237.7 per 100 000 persons (2023)	2011–2023	– 1.4 %	↑	page 65
		2018–2023	– 1.0 %	↑	
Fatal accidents at work (*)	1.6 per 100 000 workers (2023)	2010–2023	– 2.6 %	↑	SDG 8, page 144
		2018–2023	– 1.7 %	↑	
Road traffic deaths (*) ◎	19 934 (2024)	2009–2024	Observed: – 3.3 % Required: – 4.9 %	↗	SDG 11, page 194
		2019–2024	Observed: – 2.6 % Required: – 6.1 %	↘	
Premature deaths due to exposure to fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) (*) ◎	182 399 (2023)	2008–2023	Observed: – 4.2 % Required: – 2.7 %	↑	SDG 11, page 193
		2018–2023	Observed: – 8.6 % Required: – 3.3 %	↑	

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Health care					
Self-reported unmet need for medical care	2.5 % (2024)	2010–2024	– 2.4 %	↑	page 66
		2019–2024	8.0 %	↓	
Consumption of antibiotics in the community and hospital sectors ◎	20.3 DDD per 1 000 inhabitants per day (2024)	2013–2024	Observed: – 0.6 % Required: – 1.8 %	↘	page 67
		2019–2024	Observed: 0.4 % Required: – 2.0 %	↓	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.
(*) Multi-purpose indicator.

Policy context

Healthy lives

The EU4Health programme is the main financial instrument for funding the Union's health initiatives. Part of the European Health Union aims to reduce health inequality, improve public health and boost the EU's capacity to respond to future health crises. It works in complementarity with the Horizon Europe Programme.

The HealthyLifestyle4All campaign aims to link sport and active lifestyles with health, food and other policies. The new Commission's Vision for Agriculture and Food strengthens food safety in the EU and promotes sustainable food production.

Health determinants and causes of death

The 'Healthier Together' EU non-communicable diseases initiative supports countries in reducing the burden of key non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, mental health and neurological disorders) and common lifestyle-related risk factors through a coordinated approach to prevention and care. The European Commission supports Member States in combatting communicable and other diseases through the EU4Health programme and Horizon Europe.

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan addresses cancer through prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, and improving cancer patients and survivors' quality of life. The new Safe Hearts Plan addresses cardiovascular diseases, Europe's leading cause of disability and death, by improving prevention, early detection and treatment.

Several EU Directives and Recommendations aim to protect citizens from the hazardous effects of smoking, including the Tobacco Products Directive, the Tobacco Advertising Directive, the Tobacco Taxation Directive and the Council Recommendation on smoke- and aerosol-free environments.

The Zero Pollution Action Plan sets the target to reduce premature deaths from air pollution by 55 % by 2030 compared with 2005. It also includes the target to reduce the share of people chronically disturbed by transport noise by 30 % by 2030.

The EU road safety policy framework 2021–2030 and Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy aim to reduce deaths and serious injuries on the road by 50 % by 2030.

Health care

Access to health care is one of the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Directive 2011/24/EU on patient rights in cross-border health care gives EU citizens the right to access care across EU borders and promotes cooperation between Member States on health care.

The Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe (2020) seeks to ensure access to affordable medicines for patients and to counteract the negative effects of pharmaceuticals on the environment and address possible environmental risks.

The Council Recommendation on stepping up EU actions to combat antimicrobial resistance in a One Health approach (2023) sets several targets, including the target to reduce the consumption of antibiotics in humans by 20 % by 2030. The Zero Pollution Action Plan sets a target to reduce the sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 50 % by 2030 compared with 2018.

Overview and key trends

Healthy lives

Over the past century, reduced infant mortality, higher living standards, healthier lifestyles and better education, and advances in health care and medicine have helped people live longer. With the EU's life expectancy being among the highest across the world, monitoring of 'healthy lives' focuses on whether people also live well, meaning in good physical and mental health, so they can stay active and engaged across the course of their life (2). People's assessment of their own health is a good predictor of future health care needs and mortality. The analysis here thus includes two indicators on 'self-perceived health': the 'share of people with good or very good self-perceived health' and 'healthy life expectancy based on self-perceived health'.

Self-perceived health has increased in recent years to almost pre-pandemic levels

68.5 % **of the EU population perceived themselves to be in good or very good health in 2024**

The proportion of EU citizens rating their own health as good or very good was on an upward trend overall between 2010 and 2021, reaching 69.0 % in 2021. After a 1.2 percentage point drop in 2022, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the share has increased again slowly, reaching 68.5 % in 2024. This is almost the same level as five years earlier, when 68.6 % of the EU population rated their health as good or very good. Men generally tend to perceive their health as being better than women. In 2024, 71.0 % of men and 66.1 % of women perceived their health as being good or very good. This share is much lower for people with a disability, capturing a long-standing limitation to performing usual activities. In 2024, 21.7 % of people with some disability and just 6.6 % of people with severe disability perceived their health as being good or very good, compared with 84.3 % of people without a disability (3).

The share of the population with good or very good perceived health also varied strongly across Member States in 2024, ranging from less than 50 % in Lithuania and Latvia to almost 80 % in Ireland and Malta.

Healthy life expectancy based on self-perceived health has recovered from COVID impacts

In 2023, healthy life expectancy based on self-perceived health amounted to **75.3** **years in the EU**

In 2023, a child born in the EU could expect to live 81.4 years on average (4). With a healthy life expectancy of 75.3 years, it could also expect to live most of its life in good perceived health (5). The COVID-19 pandemic has affected both indicators, cutting life expectancy by 1.2 years and healthy life expectancy by 1.0 years between 2019 and 2021. However, both indicators regained their pre-pandemic levels in 2023 and resumed the long-term trend towards healthy longevity. In 2023, healthy life expectancy at birth based on self-

(2) OECD/European Commission (2024), *Health at a Glance: Europe 2024: State of Health in the EU Cycle*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

(3) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: hlth_dh010).
(4) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: demo_mlexpec).
(5) Due to methodological reasons, the data source used for measuring healthy life expectancy has changed. Up to 2025, the indicator 'Healthy life years' was used for the SDG monitoring, combining life expectancy with data on activity limitations (online data code: hlth_hlye). As of this 2026 edition, a new indicator 'Healthy life expectancy based on self-perceived health' is used.

perceived health was 0.3 years higher than in 2018 and 3.3 years higher than in 2008.

Compared with self-perceived health, where women were less likely to perceive themselves to be in good health, the gender gap for healthy life expectancy is reversed. Women had a higher healthy life expectancy at birth, with 77.1 years in 2023, compared with 73.5 years for men. Compared with 2018, the improvement in healthy life expectancy has been slightly stronger for women than for men.

The overall EU figure masks considerable differences between Member States, with healthy life expectancy at birth varying by 12.5 years between countries in 2023. Malta had the highest healthy life expectancy, with 79.6 years, followed by Italy with 79.0 and Ireland with 78.8 years. In contrast, the lowest values were reported by Latvia and Slovakia, with 67.1 and 69.6 years, respectively.

Health determinants

Lifestyle-related risk factors, such as an unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, smoking and harmful alcohol consumption, directly affect citizens' quality of life and life expectancy. Moreover, socio-economic factors, the state of the environment, access to and use of health services, and individual characteristics can also influence the health of individuals and populations (6). Poor health has a negative impact on EU Member States' social systems, government budgets, and economic productivity and growth. The health determinants discussed in the following sections are obesity, smoking prevalence and noise pollution. In addition, further factors such as physical activity and consumption patterns may also influence the health determinants described on the following pages.

More than half of the adult EU population is obese or pre-obese

Obesity is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease and a critical driver of the global burden of noncommunicable diseases. Defined by a body mass index (BMI) of 30 kilograms per square metre (kg/m^2) or greater, obesity is associated with increased risk of cardiovascular events such as heart failure, arrhythmias, stroke and myocardial infarction. Excess weight in childhood further increases the risk of acute myocardial infarction in early adulthood. In addition, children with a high BMI are 40 % more likely to have a cardiovascular disease in midlife than those with a low BMI (7).

16.3 %
of the adult population in the EU were obese in 2025

In 2025, 16.3 % of the EU population aged 18 or above were obese (with a body mass index equal to or greater than 30) and another 35.4 % were pre-obese (with a body mass index between 25 and 30). In total, more than half of the EU population aged 18 or above were obese or pre-obese and therefore overweight in 2025. The share of overweight people has decreased slightly in recent years, from 52.7 % in 2019 to 51.7 % in 2025. Most of this improvement was due to a decline in the share of pre-obese people, while the obesity rate fell by only 0.2 percentage points during this period.

The obesity rate generally increases with age, peaking at 65 to 74 years (20.4 % obese in 2025) and decreasing again for people aged 75 and older. Young people aged 16 to 24 showed the lowest obesity rate, at 6.0 % in 2025, followed by people aged 25 to 34 with a rate of 12.4 %. Moreover, obesity and pre-obesity rates decrease with higher educational levels, with obesity rates in 2025 ranging from 12.6 % for people with tertiary education to 18.5 % for people with lower secondary education or lower (8). In 2025, there was furthermore a considerable difference between Member States, with the obesity rate for people aged 18 and over ranging from 7.0 % in Italy to 26.6 % in Malta.

The WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI) examines childhood obesity in Europe. Covering about 470 000 children aged 6 to 9 years across 37 countries of the WHO European Region, which also includes non-EU countries and some countries in the Near East and Central Asia. The findings from COSI's sixth round (2022–2024)

(6) World Health Organization (2024), *Social determinants of health*.

(7) OECD (2025), *The State of Cardiovascular Health in the European Union*.
(8) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_hch10).

indicate that 25 % of children aged 7 to 9 years were overweight (including those considered obese) and 11 % were living with obesity. Further, there are large differences in prevalence between countries. Across EU Member States, the lowest values were reported in Denmark (20 % overweight, 6 % obese) and the highest in Cyprus (42 % overweight, 20 % obese).

Smoking prevalence among people aged 15 and over has decreased since 2009

Tobacco use remains a significant global health challenge, responsible for more than 7 million deaths annually as well as disability and long-term suffering from tobacco-related diseases. Furthermore, studies estimate that over 1.6 million nonsmokers die every year from exposure to second-hand smoke. Many of the tobacco-related premature deaths result from multiple types of cancer and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. The WHO notes that progress in tobacco control has been shown to save lives but is currently insufficient to significantly reduce global tobacco-related mortality (9).

In the EU, smoking prevalence among the population aged 15 or over fell between 2009 and 2023, from 29 % to 24 %. In 2023, more men (28 %) than women (21 %) reported that they smoke. The age group with the highest prevalence of smokers were those aged 25 to 39 (32 %) followed by those aged 44 to 55 (28 %), younger people aged 15 to 24 years (22 %) and older people aged 55 or over (19 %). Lastly, the share of smokers who indicated they have trouble paying bills most of the time was higher than the share of smokers who said they (almost) never have trouble paying bills (10).

24 %
of the EU population aged 15 and over were smokers in 2023

In addition to traditional tobacco products (such as cigarettes), tobacco can also be consumed in other forms. Heated tobacco products are used regularly by 2 % of Europeans, while 4 % have tried them at least once or twice. In addition, 5 % of Europeans have tried water pipes at least once and 4 % have used oral chewing or nasal tobacco. Further, 3 % of Europeans are users of e-cigarettes, while 8 % have tried them at least once. A sociodemographic analysis shows men and women are equally likely to say they use them (3 %). However, they are clearly preferred by younger respondents, with those aged 15 to 39 more or less twice as likely (5–6 %) to use them as those aged 40 and up (2–3 %). Finally, 4 % of Europeans have used nicotine pouches, with 2 % saying they have tried them only once or twice and 1 % saying they had used them regularly but had stopped (11).

The number of people affected by noise from neighbours or the street has stagnated in the EU

Noise exposure reduces life satisfaction and perceived well-being. In addition, transport noise has been identified as one of the most significant environmental health threats, after air pollution and temperature-related factors (12). The most harmful health problems — such as those affecting the cardiometabolic system — arise because of interrelated issues including decreased sleep quality and stress reactions in the human body. These issues can also lead to premature death. In Europe, chronic exposure to transport noise is estimated to contribute to 66 000 premature deaths per year. Road traffic is the dominant source of environmental noise, but railways, airports and industry also remain important sources of localised noise pollution. The WHO Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region provide recommendations for protecting human health from exposure to environmental noise that originates from various sources.

In this publication, the perception of noise pollution is measured by the share of the population living in households who report they suffer from noise from neighbours or the street. Since this measure is derived from subjective questions, a decrease

(9) World Health Organization (2025), *WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic, 2025: warning about the dangers of tobacco*.
(10) European Commission (2024), *Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and electronic cigarettes*, Special Eurobarometer 539.
(11) European Commission (2024), *Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and electronic cigarettes*, Special Eurobarometer 539.
(12) European Environment Agency (2025), *Environmental noise in Europe 2025*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

in the value of this indicator does not necessarily indicate a reduction in actual noise-pollution health effects, which are instead calculated based on large-scale assessments and precise formulas derived by the WHO. From 2010 to 2023, the share of the EU population feeling affected by noise from neighbours or the street has fallen slightly from 20.6 % to 18.1 %. However, since 2018 the share has stagnated. The perception of noise pollution is also unevenly distributed between Member States. In 2023, the proportion of people reporting noise disturbance from neighbours or the street ranged from 6.7 % in Croatia to 31.3 % in Malta.

18.1 %
of the EU population were affected by noise from neighbours or the street in 2023

Causes of death

Causes of death are among the oldest medical statistics available and play a key role in the general assessment of health in the EU. The data can be used to determine which preventive and medical curative measures or investment in research might increase a population's life expectancy. The indicators selected for this sub-theme look at avoidable mortality, air pollution and fatal accidents on roads and at work.

Avoidable mortality fell strongly in 2022 and 2023 after the COVID-19 related peak

Avoidable mortality refers to preventable and treatable causes of death, including injuries and drug-related diseases, as well as respiratory and infectious diseases, and some types of cancer. While avoidable mortality had been decreasing until 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily reversed the trend, resulting in strong increases in preventable deaths in 2020 and 2021. In the following two years, 2022 and 2023, avoidable mortality fell strongly after the 2021 peak, reaching 237.7 deaths per 100 000 persons in the age group below 75 years in 2023. This value was 1.0 % lower than five years earlier, with a rate of 249.9 in 2018. In 2023, ischaemic heart diseases (33.2 deaths per 100 000 persons), respiratory tract cancers (30.8) and stroke and other brain vessel diseases (17.3) were the top three causes of premature avoidable mortality [13]. Across Member States, the avoidable mortality rate in 2023 was lowest in Cyprus, with 152.6 deaths per 100 000 persons aged less than 75 years, followed by Luxembourg with a rate of 157.6 and Italy with a rate of 160.3. In contrast, Latvia, Hungary and Romania reported the highest figures, with rates of 498.5, 472.7 and 463.7, respectively.

237.7
per 100 000 people died prematurely in the EU due to avoidable causes of death in 2023

The number of premature deaths due to exposure to air pollution by fine particulate matter fell below the 2030 target value in 2023

According to the WHO, air pollution is the number one environmental cause of death in Europe [14]. It can lead to or aggravate many chronic and acute respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, and has been one of the EU's main environmental policy concerns since the late 1970s. Air pollutants are emitted both naturally and as a result of human activities, with important sources being solid fuel combustion for domestic heating, industrial activities, road transport and agriculture. Urban populations are particularly exposed because of the daily flow of commuters, and the high concentration of industry and human activities causing the emission of fine particulate matter in EU cities. Children are another vulnerable group because they have higher respiratory rates than adults, which increases the negative health impact when exposed to air pollution. Their developing immune systems and organs also make children more vulnerable to air pollution [15]. Air pollution also has a significant negative impact on the

182 400
people died prematurely in the EU in 2023 due to exposure to $PM_{2.5}$

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[13] *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: hlth_cd_apr).
[14] European Environment Agency (2024), *Europe's air quality status 2024*.
[15] European Environment Agency (2018), *Unequal exposure and unequal impacts: social vulnerability to air pollution, noise and extreme temperatures in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

economy, by reducing both productivity and life expectancy, and by increasing health costs (16).

Fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) is one of air pollution's most harmful components for human health, causing an estimated 182 400 premature deaths in Europe in 2023. Premature deaths attributable to $PM_{2.5}$ exposure have been in decline, falling by 57 % between 2005 and 2023. This indicates the EU has already achieved its Zero Pollution Action Plan target to reduce the negative impact of air pollution on health by 55 % by 2030 compared with 2005. However, according to an analysis by the European Environment Agency (EEA), due to interannual variability in the number of estimated attributable deaths, the long-term achievement of the 2030 objective cannot be taken for granted. This means measures to reduce the $PM_{2.5}$ emissions and concentrations need to be maintained and enhanced.

Fatal road accidents have decreased, but further progress is necessary to meet the 2030 target

Accidents were one of the most common causes of death within the EU in 2022, leading to almost 175 000 deaths or 3.4 % of all deaths (17). These accidents may happen at different places such as at home, leisure venues or work, as well as while travelling. Improving the working environment to protect employee health and safety is an important objective set out by the EU and its Member States in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Halving the number of deaths from road-traffic crashes is not only a global target, but also a goal of EU policies. The EU road safety policy framework 2021–2030 sets a target of reducing deaths and serious injuries by 50 % by 2030 compared with 2019.

4.4 per 100 000 persons were killed in road crashes in the EU in 2024

In 2024, 19 934 people were killed in road traffic crashes, equalling 4.4 deaths per 100 000 people. This represents a 12.4 % reduction compared with the reference year 2019, meaning the EU is still far from its 2030 target of halving the total death toll on EU roads relative to 2019. Nevertheless, the EU rate of 4.4 fatalities per 100 000 people compares favourably with the global average of around 15 per 100 000 people (18). Despite this positive step, the overall pace of improvement remains too slow. For further details see the chapter on SDG 11 'Sustainable cities and communities' on page 181.

The rate of fatal work accidents has fallen in recent years

Fatal accidents, leading to a person's death within one year, may also occur at work. The EU made progress on this indicator between 2018 and 2023, reducing the number of fatal accidents at work per 100 000 employed persons from 1.78 to 1.63. There is a considerable difference between the sexes: the incidence rate for women (0.22) was negligible compared with the rate for men (2.86). This difference can be explained by more men than women working in occupations associated with a higher risk of work accidents. Mining and quarrying as well as construction have been especially prone to fatal accidents over the past decade, with the rate of fatal accidents at work amounting to 10.78 and 6.29 fatalities per 100 000 employed persons in 2023, respectively. The incidence rate for these two sectors has increased since 2018, by 2.4 % for mining and quarrying and by 0.3 % in construction. Overall, more than two-thirds (68.6 %) of deaths occurred among manual workers, especially plant and machine operators and assemblers (19).

1.63 per 100 000 persons employed had fatal accidents at work in the EU in 2023

Non-fatal work accidents can also cause considerable harm, for example by leading to a permanent disability that may force people to leave the labour market or change their job. Non-fatal accidents happen considerably more often than

(16) European Environment Agency (2022), *Air quality in Europe 2022*.
(17) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: hlth_cd_aro).
(18) WHO (2023), *Global status report on road safety 2023*, Geneva.
(19) *Source:* Eurostat (online data codes: hsw_n2_02 and hsw_mi05).

fatal accidents, with an incidence rate of 1 393 per 100 000 employed persons in 2023 ([20]).

Health care

Access to health care — the timely access to affordable, preventive and curative health care — is high on the political agenda of EU countries. It is defined as a right in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and is one of the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Limited access to health care for some population groups, especially vulnerable populations, may contribute to poorer health outcomes and greater health inequalities. Other factors such as inequalities in income and education may have a negative impact as well. Reducing health inequalities is not only important for equity reasons, but also because it contributes to higher economic and social cohesion ([21]).

Long waiting lists have driven a rise in unmet needs for medical care since 2019

In 2024, 2.5 % of the EU population aged 16 years or over reported an unmet need for medical care because of financial reasons, long waiting lists or travel distance. This represents a 0.8 percentage point increase since 2019, when the share was 1.7 %. This increase is primarily attributable to an increasing share of people facing 'long waiting lists'. On average, 1.4 % of the EU population aged 16 years or over cited 'waiting list' as the main reason for facing an unmet need for medical examination in 2024, which was twice as high as in 2019. Financial constraints ('too expensive') were cited by a further 1.0 % of the EU population as main reason in 2024, which was about the same level as in 2019 ([22]).

2.5 %
of the EU population reported unmet need for medical care in 2024

People with disabilities find it more difficult to access health care. Across the EU, 6.2 % of people with severe activity limitations and 4.5 % of people with some activity limitations reported unmet needs for medical care in 2024, compared with only 1.6 % of people without disabilities ([23]). This discrepancy indicates that access to health care remains a challenge not only in certain parts of the EU but also for certain population groups.

Differences in unmet needs for medical care also remained substantial between Member States in 2024, ranging from 0.1 % of the population in Cyprus to 12.1 % in Greece. Not all Member States named waiting lists as the main reason for unmet needs — in many countries such as Greece, France and Romania, costs were the most frequently cited reason ([24]).

The total consumption of antibiotics in the EU has increased in recent years, moving away from the 2030 target

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a serious cross-border threat to health in the EU ([25]). It led to more than 35 000 deaths in the EU and the European Economic Area each year between 2016 and 2020 ([26]). Policies that tackle AMR with a 'One-Health' approach can save lives and health care costs. Antimicrobial consumption (AMC) is one of the main drivers of the development of AMR. This is aggravated by the inappropriate use of antimicrobials in humans, animals and plants, as well as by their release into the environment. Reducing AMC by using antimicrobials prudently and only where needed lessens selective pressures on the pathogens that contribute to the development of multi-drug resistance.

Between 2019 and 2024, consumption of antimicrobials in the EU fell by
2.0 %

In humans, AMC is expressed as the number of defined daily doses (DDD) per 1 000 inhabitants per day, which provides an estimate of the proportion

([20]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: hsw_mi08).
([21]) European Council (2014), *Council conclusions on the economic crisis and healthcare*, 2014/C 217/02.
([22]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: hlth_silc_08).
([23]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: hlth_dh030).
([24]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: hlth_silc_08).
([25]) European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (2022), *Regulation 2022/2371 on serious cross-border threats to health and repealing Decision No 1082/2013/EU*.
([26]) European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) (2022), *Assessing the health burden of infections with antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the EU/EEA, 2016–2020*, ECDC, Stockholm, pp. 4–7.

of the population treated daily with antimicrobials. In 2024, the EU population-weighted mean total AMC of antibacterials for systemic use (ATC group J01) in the community and hospital sectors was 20.3 DDD per 1 000 inhabitants per day. Even though this is 6.0 % lower than in 2013, it represents a 2.0 % increase since 2019, meaning the EU has moved away from its target to reduce the total consumption of antibiotics in humans by 20 % by 2030 relative to 2019. Additionally, significant differences between Member States can be observed. In 2024, country-specific means ranged from 9.8 DDD per 1 000 inhabitants per day in the Netherlands to 29.9 in Greece, and in more than half of Member States AMC values have increased since 2019.

Antimicrobial-resistant bacteria derived from food-producing animals can spread to humans by ingestion or handling of food contaminated with zoonotic bacteria. Over time, the spread of resistant bacteria makes antimicrobials less effective, resulting in treatment failure ([27]). Thus, the EU has set an additional target to reduce overall EU sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 50 % by 2030 relative to 2018. According to a 2025 report from the European Medicines Agency, the EU has reduced sales of these antimicrobials by 24.3 % by 2024 compared with the 2018 baseline. However, despite this overall downward trend, sales have risen slightly over the past two years. While the EU is nearly halfway to the 2030 target, further declines in sales of antimicrobials are needed.

([27]) European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) (2023), *The European Union Summary Report on Antimicrobial Resistance inzoonotic and indicator bacteria from humans, animals and food in 2020/2021*, EFSA Journal 2023;21(3):7867.

Main indicators

Healthy life expectancy at birth based on self-perceived health

This indicator estimates the number of years a person is expected to live in good perceived health. It is based on mortality data combined with data on self-perceived health as reported in the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

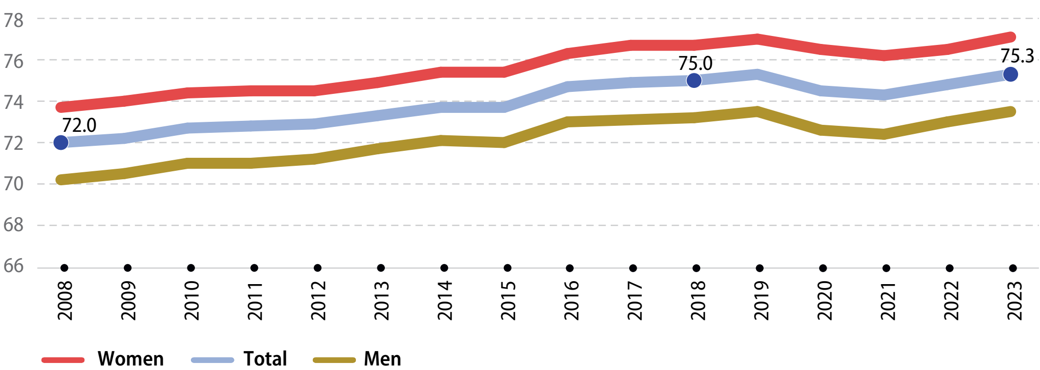
LONG TERM 2008–2023

SHORT TERM 2018–2023

Figure 3.1

Healthy life expectancy at birth based on self-perceived health

(years, EU, 2008–2023)



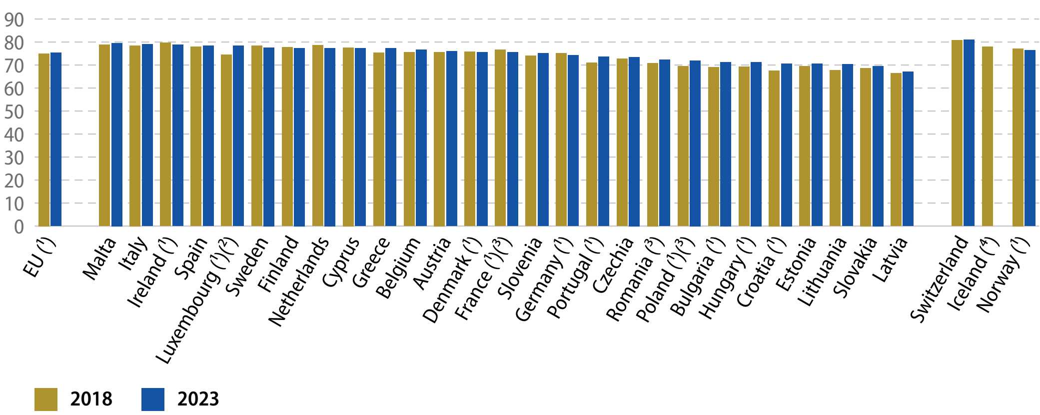
Note: y-axis does not start at 0. Break in time series in 2022.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_03_12)

Figure 3.2

Healthy life expectancy at birth based on self-perceived health

(years, 2018 and 2023)



(1) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(2) 2022 data (instead of 2023).
(3) 2023 data are provisional and/or estimated.
(4) No data for 2023.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_03_12)

People with good or very good self-perceived health

This indicator is a subjective measure of how people judge their health in general on a scale from 'very good' to 'very bad'. It is expressed as the share of the population aged 16 or over perceiving itself to be in 'good' or 'very good' health. Indicators of perceived general health have been found to be a good predictor of people's future health care use and mortality. The data stem from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

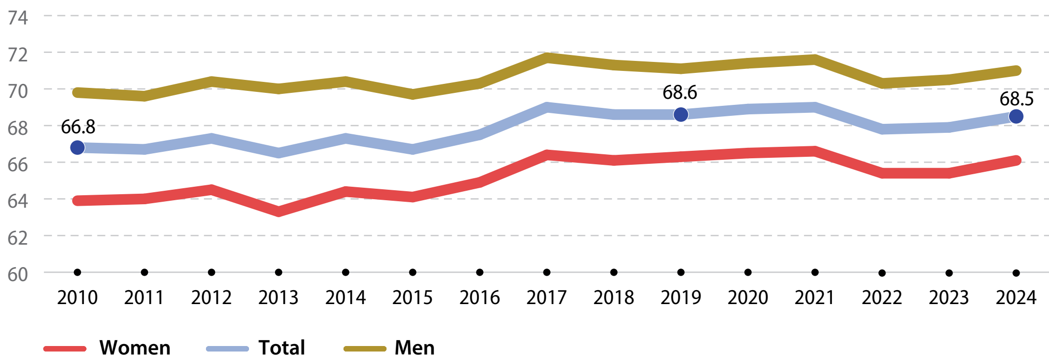
LONG TERM 2010–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 3.3

Share of people with good or very good perceived health

(% of population aged 16 or over, by sex, EU, 2010–2024)



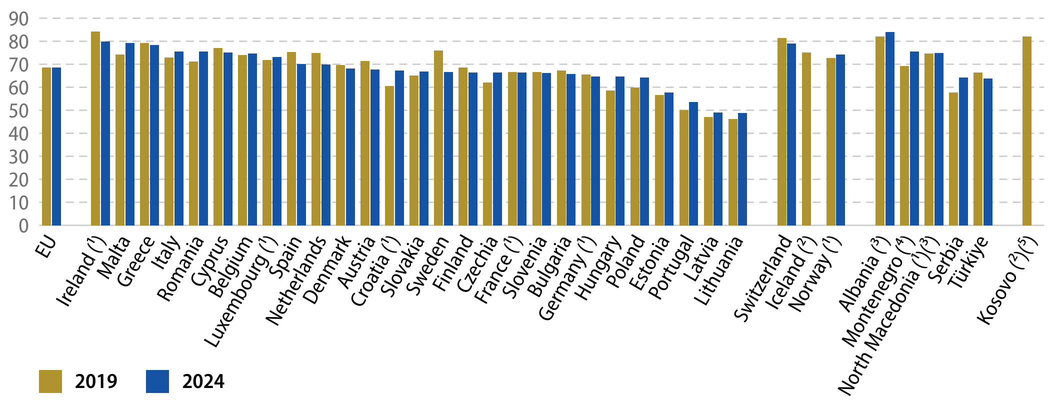
Note: y-axis does not start at 0. Data for 2010–2016 and 2020 are estimated.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_03_20)

Figure 3.4

Share of people with good or very good perceived health

(% of population aged 16 or over, 2019 and 2024)



([1]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
([2]) No data for 2024.
([3]) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
([4]) 2022 data (instead of 2024).
([5]) 2018 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_03_20)

Smoking prevalence

This indicator measures the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over who report they currently smoke boxed cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos or a pipe. It does not include the use of other tobacco and related products such as electronic cigarettes and snuff. The data are collected through a Eurobarometer survey and are based on self-reported use during face-to-face interviews in people's homes.

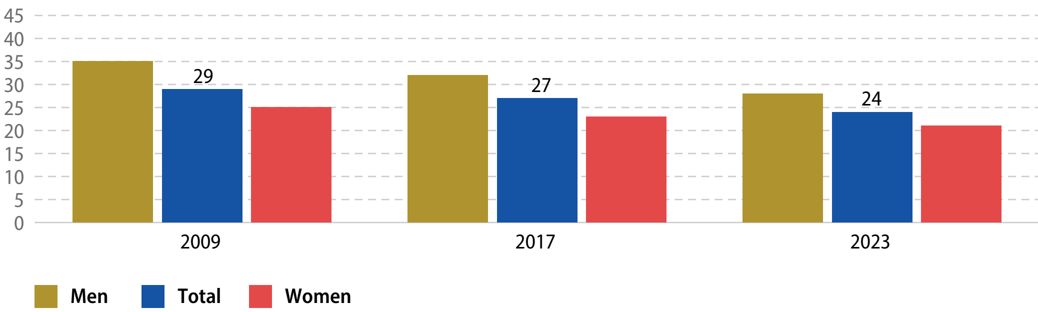
LONG TERM 2009–2023

SHORT TERM 2017–2023

Figure 3.5

Smoking prevalence

(% of population aged 15 or over, by sex, EU, 2009, 2017 and 2023)



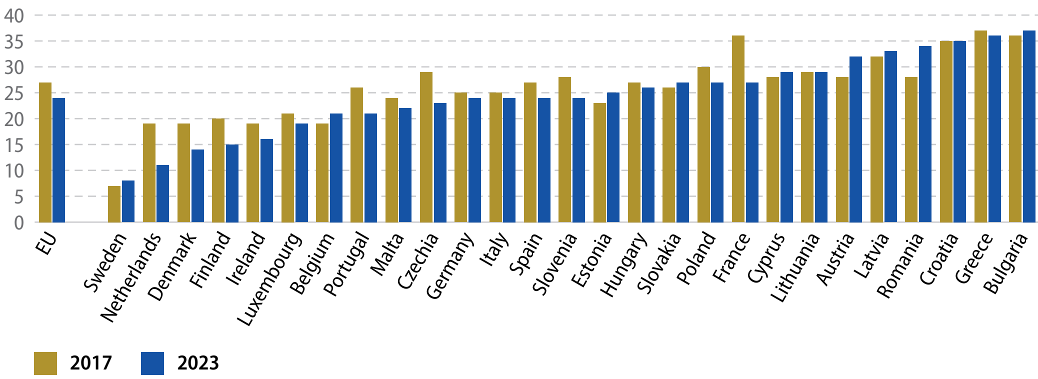
Note: Estimated data.

Source: European Commission services (Eurostat online data code: sdg_03_30)

Figure 3.6

Smoking prevalence

(% of population aged 15 or over, 2017 and 2023)



Source: European Commission services (Eurostat online data code: sdg_03_30)

Standardised avoidable mortality

Avoidable mortality covers both preventable and treatable causes of mortality. Preventable mortality refers to mortality that can mainly be avoided through effective public health and primary prevention interventions (carried out before the onset of diseases/injuries to reduce incidence). Treatable mortality can mainly be avoided through timely and effective health care interventions, including secondary prevention and treatment (after the onset of diseases to reduce case-fatality). The total avoidable mortality rate includes a number of infectious diseases, several types of cancers, endocrine and metabolic diseases, as well as some diseases of the nervous, circulatory, respiratory, digestive and genitourinary systems, some diseases related to pregnancy, childbirth and the perinatal period, a number of congenital malformations, adverse effects of medical and surgical care, a list of injuries and alcohol and drug-related disorders.

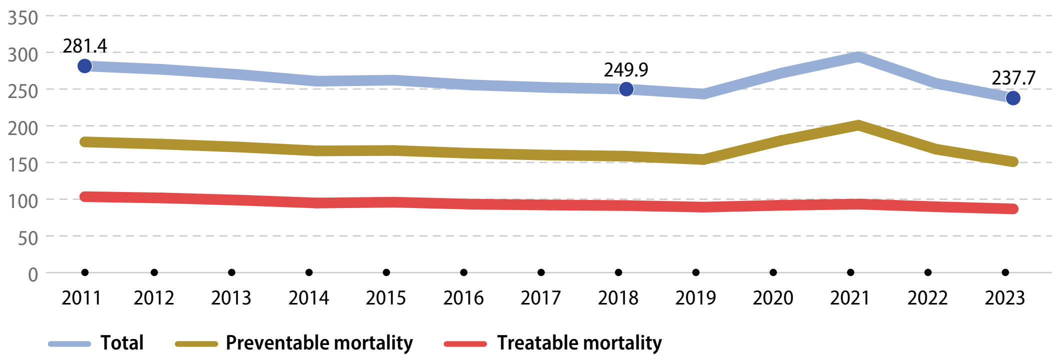
LONG TERM
2011–2023

SHORT TERM
2018–2023

Figure 3.7

Standardised avoidable mortality

(number per 100 000 persons aged less than 75 years, EU, 2011–2023)

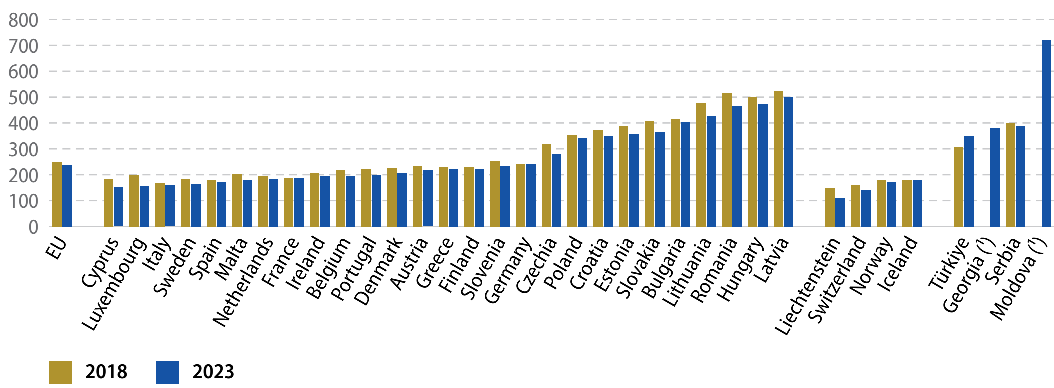


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_03_42)

Figure 3.8

Standardised avoidable mortality

(number per 100 000 persons aged less than 75 years, 2018 and 2023)



(¹) No data for 2018.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_03_42)

Self-reported unmet need for medical care

This indicator measures the share of the population aged 16 and over reporting unmet needs for medical care due to one of the following reasons: 'financial reasons', 'waiting list' and 'too far to travel'. Self-reported unmet needs concern a person's own assessment of whether they needed medical examination or treatment (dental care excluded) but did not have it or did not seek it. Since social norms and expectations may affect responses to questions about unmet care needs, caution is required when comparing differences in the reporting of unmet medical examination across countries. In addition, the different organisation of health care services is another factor to consider when analysing the data. Finally, there are also some variations in the survey questions across countries and across time ([28]). The data stem from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

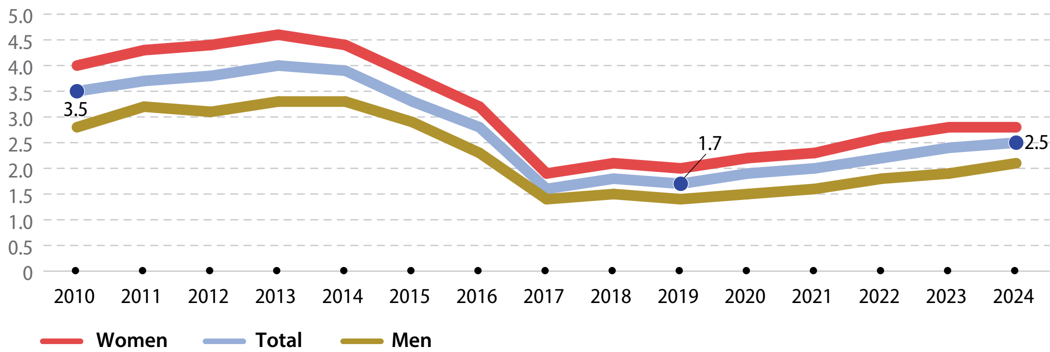
LONG TERM 2010–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 3.9

Self-reported unmet need for medical care

(% of population aged 16 and over, by sex, EU, 2010–2024)

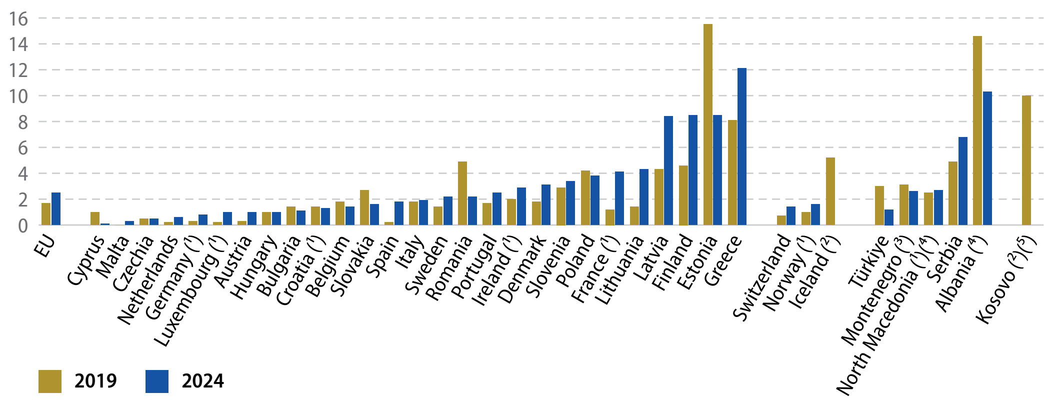


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_03_60)

Figure 3.10

Self-reported unmet need for medical care

(% of population aged 16 and over, 2019 and 2024)



([1]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
([2]) No data for 2024.
([3]) 2022 data (instead of 2024).
([4]) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
([5]) 2018 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_03_60)

([28]) OECD/EU (2018), *Health at a Glance: Europe 2018 — State of Health in the EU Cycle*, OECD Publishing, Paris, p. 170.

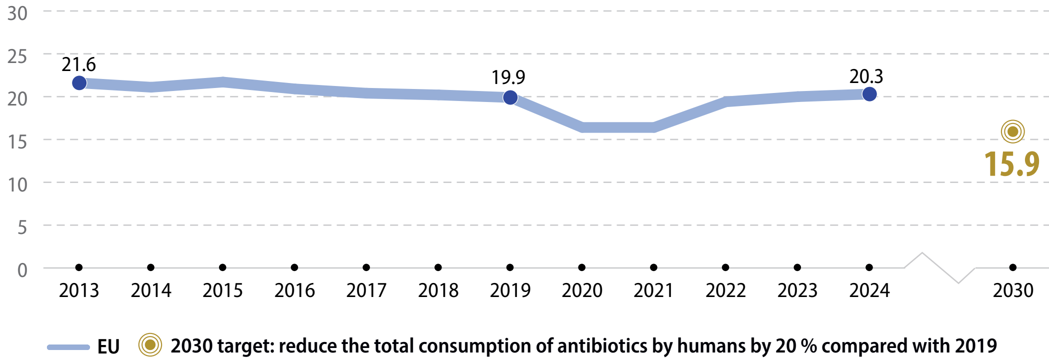
Consumption of antibiotics in the community and hospital sectors

This indicator measures the total antimicrobial consumption (AMC) in the community and hospital sectors. AMC is expressed as the number of defined daily doses (DDD) per 1 000 inhabitants per day. The data refer to the Anatomical Therapeutic Chemical (ATC) classification code J01 'Antibacterials for systemic use'. The data for the EU aggregate are presented as population-weighted mean and include imputations and adjustments ([29]).

LONG TERM
2013–2024

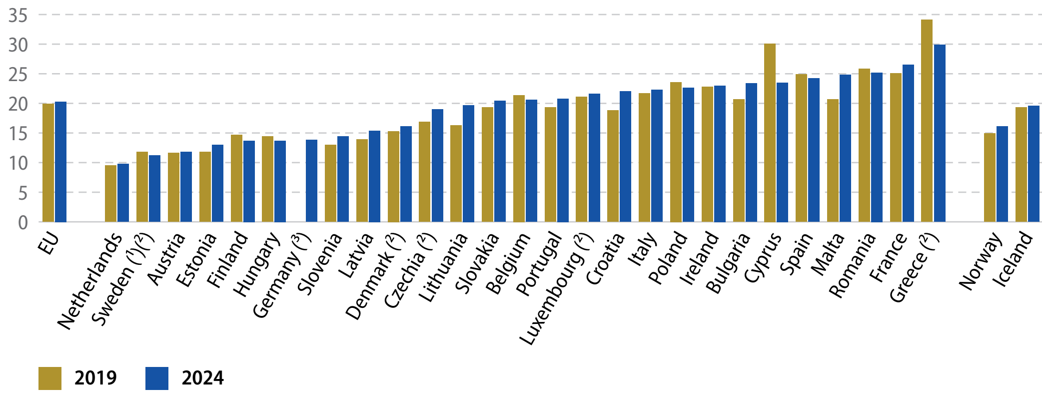
SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 3.11
Consumption of antibiotics in the community and hospital sectors
(DDD per 1 000 inhabitants per day, EU, 2013–2024)



Source: ESAC-Net, ECDC (Eurostat online data code: sdg_03_70)

Figure 3.12
Consumption of antibiotics in the community and hospital sectors
(DDD per 1 000 inhabitants per day, 2019 and 2024)



([1]) 2022 data (instead of 2024).
([2]) No data for 2019.
([3]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.

Source: ESAC-Net, ECDC (Eurostat online data code: sdg_03_70)

([29]) European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (2025), *Antimicrobial consumption in the EU/EEA (ESAC-Net) — Annual Epidemiological Report for 2024*, ECDC, Stockholm.

4 Quality education

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

SDG 4 seeks to ensure access for all to quality education through all stages of life, and to increase the number of young people and adults who have the relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Education and training are key drivers for sustainable growth and democratic societies because they help to improve employability, productivity, innovation, competitiveness, health, equality, safety and civil involvement. In the broader sense, education is a precondition for achieving many SDGs. Monitoring SDG 4 in an EU context focuses on basic education, tertiary education, adult learning and digital skills. Over the assessed short-term period, the EU has made significant progress on increasing participation in early childhood education, in tertiary education and in adult learning as well as in reducing early school leaving. In contrast, trends in educational outcomes have been less favourable. Performance in the PISA test has further deteriorated, with the percentage of low-achieving students in reading, mathematics and science rising. The share of adults with at least basic digital skills has increased but remains far below the 2030 Digital Decade target.

Table 4.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 4, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Basic education					
Low achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics or science ◎	29.5 % (1) (2022)	2009–2022	Observed: 2.0 % (1) Required: – 2.0 % (1)	↓	page 77
		2018–2022	Observed: 6.5 % (1) Required: – 3.5 % (1)	↓	
Participation in early childhood education ◎	95.0 % (2024)	2013–2024	Observed: 0.3 % Required: 0.3 %	↑	page 78
		2019–2024	Observed: 0.4 % Required: 0.3 %	↑	
Early leavers from education and training ◎	9.1 % (2025)	2010–2025	Observed: – 2.7 % Required: – 2.1 %	↑	page 79
		2019–2025	Observed: – 1.7 % Required: – 1.0 %	↑	
Tertiary education					
Tertiary educational attainment ◎	44.8% (2025)	2010–2025	Observed: 2.2 % Required: 1.7 %	↑	page 80
		2019–2025	Observed: 2.1 % Required: 1.2 %	↑	
Adult learning					
Adult participation in learning in the past four weeks	13.7 % (2025)	2013–2025	2.7 %	↑	page 81
		2019–2025	4.0 %	↑	
Digital skills					
Share of adults having at least basic digital skills ◎	60.4 % (2025)	Time series too short for long-term assessment		✕	page 82
		2021–2025	Observed: 2.9 % Required: 4.5 %	↗	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

(1) Trend refers to the worst performance among the three domains (Mathematics).

Policy context

The Union of Skills, adopted in 2025, is a comprehensive strategy designed to elevate skill levels and bridge skills gaps across the EU through improved education and training, adopting a lifelong learning approach. A key initiative under this strategy is the Action Plan on Basic Skills, which addresses gaps in reading, mathematics, science, digital and citizenship skills.

The European Education Area (EEA) promotes collaboration among EU countries for more resilient and inclusive national education and training systems. An interim evaluation was published in June 2025 in preparation for the next cycle from 2026 to 2030. The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) fosters education through funds allocation, while the Erasmus+ programme focuses on quality, inclusive education and learning mobility with a commitment of more than EUR 26 billion for 2021 to 2027.

Basic education and tertiary education

Four out of the seven EEA strategic framework targets for 2030 are used to monitor progress in basic and tertiary education in the EU: at least 96 % of children between the age of three and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education and care; less than 9 % of pupils should leave education and training early; less than 15 % of 15-year-olds should be low-achievers in reading, mathematics and science; and at least 45 % of 25–34-year-olds should have a tertiary education qualification.

The Council recommendation on high-quality early childhood education and care systems emphasises the multiple benefits of early childhood education and care both for individuals and for society. The European Child Guarantee aims to ensure that every child at risk of poverty or social exclusion has effective and free access to education from pre-school level, while the Council Recommendation on pathways to school success intends to lift performance in basic skills and reduce early leaving from education and training.

Adult learning and digital skills

The Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021–2030 highlights the need to significantly increase adult participation in learning. Adult learning is also the primary concern of the Council Recommendation on individual learning accounts. The EEA requires that by 2025 at least 47 % of adults aged 25 to 64 will have participated in learning during the past 12 months, while the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan sets a target for at least 60 % of adults to be participating in training every year by 2030.

The EEA also sets a target for there to be less than 15 % of low achievers in computer and information literacy among eighth-graders by 2030. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and the 2030 Digital Compass both set a goal for at least 80 % of people aged 16 to 74 to have basic or above-basic digital skills. Moreover, the Union of Skills recognises digital skills as a part of the basic skills set.

The Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) is an EU financial instrument designed to bring digital technology to businesses, citizens and public administrations. In addition, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, under its 'Policies for next generation' pillar, supports reforms and investments in education and digital skills. The AI Continent Action Plan intends to foster education in the area of AI via the AI Skills Academy.

Overview and key trends

Basic education

Basic education refers to the foundational stages in a child's educational pathway, ranging from early childhood education and care to primary and secondary education. Inclusive and quality education for all, which eliminates school segregation, is an essential element of sustainable development. SDG 4 thus aims to ensure that by 2030 all girls and boys will have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education to build a strong foundation in basic skills. In addition, SDG 4 intends to ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. Furthermore, SDG 4 focuses on ensuring that all young people have the literacy, numeracy and relevant skills needed for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Participation in early childhood education and care has increased steadily in recent years and is on track to meet the 2030 target

95.0 %
of young children in the EU participated in early childhood education in 2024

Early childhood education and care is usually the first formal step on a child's educational pathway. The 2019 Council Recommendation on high-quality early childhood education and care underlines that access to quality early childhood education and care for all children contributes to their social and cognitive development and educational success, ultimately enhancing their future employment prospects. Also, as highlighted in the 2022 Council Recommendation on early childhood education and care, early childhood education and care can be an effective tool for achieving educational equity for children in disadvantaged situations.

The 2021 Council Recommendation on a European child guarantee also emphasises the importance of equal access to quality and inclusive early childhood education and care for breaking the transmission of social exclusion and securing equal opportunities for children in a disadvantaged situation. Tackling disadvantage through early childhood education and care is a cost-effective investment as it fosters children's inclusion, school success and their future integration into the labour market and social life. The positive effects of early childhood education and care are on average stronger among children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. At the same time, these children are less likely to participate in early childhood education and care (1).Therefore, the 2021 Council Recommendation on a European child guarantee emphasises the importance of ensuring access to quality and inclusive early childhood education and care for children in need.

In the EU, participation in early childhood education improved from 91.8 % in 2013 to 95.0 % in 2024, albeit the trend experienced ups and downs over this period. The 2024 rate is the highest ever recorded, reflecting a clear positive trend since 2021. With a gap of 1.0 percentage points remaining, the EU will reach the target level of 96 % by 2030 if the trend observed in recent years is maintained.

Fewer young people in the EU drop out of education and training

According to the Council Recommendation on pathways to school success, school education can play a crucial role in promoting inclusive, fairer and more prosperous societies and economies.

(1) For more information see: European Commission (2022), *Employment and Social Developments in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 20.

The recommendation thus aims to ensure better educational outcomes for all learners, by lifting performance in basic skills and reducing early school leaving. Consequently, the [EEA strategic framework] has set a target to reduce the share of early leavers from education and training (ELET) to below 9 % by 2030.

Since 2002, the ELET rate has fallen continuously in the EU, albeit more slowly in recent years. In 2025, the share had reached 9.1 %, putting the EU well on track to meet the 2030 target. However, men and people with a migrant background are more likely to leave education and training early (see the chapters on SDG 5 'Gender equality' on page 83 and on SDG 10 'Reduced inequalities' on page 161 for more details). Additionally, an analysis by degree of urbanisation reveals that young people living in towns and suburbs (10.1 %) as well as in rural areas (9.6 %) were more likely to leave school early than young people living in cities (8.0%) in 2025 ([2]). The reasons for early school leaving can be complex and include both individual and socio-economic factors, as well as factors related to the education system itself ([3]).

The share of people aged 18 to 24 who had left education and training early stood at

9.1 %

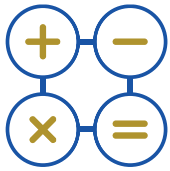
in the EU in 2025

Monitoring of the ELET target is complemented by a supplementary indicator on the completion of at least upper secondary education, which is generally considered the minimum requirement for gaining satisfactory employment in today's economy and is important for full participation in society. The indicator, which measures the share of people aged 20 to 24 with at least an upper secondary qualification, shows that 85.7 % had this attainment level in 2025. This share has increased steadily in the EU over the past few years ([4]).

Educational outcomes have continued to deteriorate, most significantly in maths

Besides educational attainment, achieving a certain level of proficiency in basic skills is a key objective of all educational systems. Basic skills, such as reading a simple text or performing simple calculations, provide the foundations for more complex tasks and are crucial for personal, academic and professional success. Low achievers in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) are those pupils who do not reach the minimum proficiency level in reading, mathematics or science. These pupils face having fewer opportunities in the future, both at the personal and the professional level ([5]).

In 2022, more than one in every four 15-year-old pupils in the EU showed insufficient abilities in one or more of the domains tested in PISA (mathematics, reading and science). Test results in that year showed 29.5 % of pupils were low achievers in mathematics, 26.2 % in reading and 24.2 % in science. Compared with 2018, these results are a significant step backward in all three domains, but most significantly in mathematics, with an increase of 6.6 percentage points in the share of low achievers. The 2022 PISA results indicate that the EU is lagging seriously behind in all three PISA domains when it comes to reaching the 2030 EU-level target of reducing the share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in basic skills to less than 15 %.



29.5 %

of 15-year-old pupils in the EU showed insufficient maths skills in 2022

Students' socio-economic background is one of the key drivers of educational underachievement and points to serious problems in terms of equality. Young people with a disadvantaged socio-economic background are almost six times more likely to underachieve in all three PISA domains

([2]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: [edat_lfse_30]).
([3]) For more information, see: European Commission, European Education Area, [Early school leaving].
([4]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: [yth_educ_030]).
([5]) European Commission (2024), *[The twin challenge of equity and excellence in basic skills in the EU. An EU comparative analysis of the PISA 2022 results]*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

at the same time than those with an advantaged socio-economic background [6].

Tertiary education

Continuing education after the secondary level is important in a knowledge-based economy: employment rates are generally higher for highly educated people, who also enjoy better wages and working conditions. Conversely, low levels of tertiary educational attainment can hinder competitiveness, innovation and productivity and undermine growth potential. Therefore, investing efficiently and effectively in education and training systems that deliver high-quality and up-to-date services lays the foundation for a country's prosperity.

The share of people with tertiary education has increased strongly since 2002

The EEA strategic framework aims to raise the share of the population aged 25 to 34 who have completed a higher education qualification (levels 5–8 in the 2011 International standard classification of education, ISCED) to at least 45 % by 2030. As a result of a 21.7 percentage point increase since 2002, the EU reached a tertiary education attainment rate of 44.8 % in 2025 and is well on track to meeting its 2030 target. However, when viewed by degree of urbanisation, tertiary attainment levels in less urbanised areas fall well short of the target. While more than half (55.0 %) of the population aged 25 to 34 living in cities had attained tertiary education by 2025, the rate was markedly lower for towns and suburbs (38.4 %) and rural areas (33.0 %) [7].

The share of the EU population aged 25 to 34 who had attained tertiary education stood at

44.8 %

in 2025

The share of 25- to 34-year-olds with tertiary education has improved compared with 2002 in all Member States. This partly reflects their investment in higher education to meet the demand for a more skilled labour force. Moreover, some countries shifted to shorter degree programmes following the implementation of the Bologna process reforms. However, while tertiary attainment rates have increased for both men and women, women maintain higher attainment rates than men. See the chapter on SDG 5 'Gender equality' on page 83 for more details.

Adult learning

Keeping skills up to date to support the ongoing quest for a high-quality labour force is one of the goals of adult learning. Adult learning covers the longest period in a person's learning lifetime. It includes improving and developing skills and adapting to technological developments, which helps to advance a person's career or aid their return to the labour market (upskilling and reskilling). Moreover, it is crucial for maintaining good health, remaining active in the community and being fully included in all aspects of society.

Adult participation in learning is growing

The indicator 'adult participation in learning' measures the share of people aged 25 to 64 who stated they received formal or non-formal education and training in the four weeks preceding the survey carried out to monitor it. This share has grown almost steadily since 2002, when it stood at 5.3 %, reaching 13.7 % in 2025. A temporary drop was observed in 2020, which might be related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the adjustments to the related contingency measures, such as lay-offs and teleworking. Similarly, for adults not in employment, participation in learning activities reduced temporarily during the beginning of the pandemic due to extended lockdown periods. Since 2020, however, the share of adults participating in learning has grown strongly, gaining 4.6 percentage points by 2025.

13.7 %

of 25- to 64-year-old adults participated in learning in the EU in 2025

Women are more likely to participate in adult learning than men. In 2025, the share of 25- to

[6] For more information, especially on the new EU-level indicator for equity in education, see: European Commission (2022), *Progress towards the achievement of the European Education Area*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, pp. 24–25.
[7] *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfs_9913).

64-year-olds in education and training was 2.5 percentage points higher for women than for men (14.9 % compared with 12.4 %, respectively). The rate for women was not only higher, it had also improved faster, gaining 9.4 percentage points between 2002 and 2025, compared with 7.4 percentage points for men. The participation rate in adult learning also differs in terms of degree of urbanisation. In 2025, adults living in cities were more likely to participate in learning (16.8 %) than those living in towns and suburbs (12.3 %) or rural areas (10.3 %) ([8]).

While the above-mentioned indicator is based on the question of whether adults participated in learning during the four weeks preceding the survey, the target defined in the EEA strategic framework and the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan refers to the share of adults participating in learning during the past 12 months. Data for this target definition are currently collected every six years through the Adult Education Survey (AES). The most recent data are from 2022 and show that the share of adults participating in learning during the past 12 months stood at 39.5 %, which is 7.5 percentage points below the EU target of 47 % for 2025 and 20.5 percentage points below the 2030 target of 60 %. Participation rates were particularly low for low-educated adults (ISCED 2011 levels 0–2), at 18.4 %. In contrast to this group, 58.9 % of adults with tertiary education (ISCED 2011 levels 5–8) participated in learning in 2022 ([9]).

Digital skills

Digitalisation is transforming the labour market and reshaping the skills demanded by the economy and society. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital skills gap widened and new inequalities in access to technology and digital workplaces emerged. In response, the Commission has integrated digital skills into the basic skills set as outlined in the Union of Skills strategy, and proposed policy measures to enhance digital education and create enabling environments for skills development.

Digital skills improve, but remain far below the 2030 target

The Action Plan on Basic Skills recognises digital skills as part of the basic skills set, alongside reading, mathematics, science and citizenship skills. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and the Digital Decade have set a target for the EU to raise the share of people aged 16 to 74 who have at least basic digital skills to 80 % in 2030. This target is measured through a survey that captures the digital skills of individuals and households. The survey follows an evolving framework, which now also includes artificial intelligence (AI) competence.

In 2025, the share of people aged 16 to 74 with at least basic digital skills stood at 60.4 %. While this is 4.8 percentage points higher than in 2023, when it was 55.6 %, it remained at a level considerably below the 80 % Digital Decade target for 2030. In contrast to most other education indicators presented in this chapter, overall fewer women (59.0% in 2025) had at least basic digital skills than men (61.8 %). However, the gap between women and men varies strongly across different age groups. In the age group under 34 years, more women than men had at least basic digital skills. The situation starts to reverse in the age group above 35 years, where men are more likely to have at least basic digital skills than women. However, the gap in the middle age group remains limited and widens only among persons aged 55 years and over.

60.4 %
of 16- to 74-year-old people in the EU had at least basic digital skills in 2025

In general, age and formal education also affect a person's level of digital skills. In 2025, 74.6 % of 16- to 24-year-olds had at least basic digital skills, compared with 68.6 % of 25- to 54-year-olds. Within the younger age group, the share was lower among 16- to 19-year-olds, at 73.0 %, than among 20- to 24-year-olds, at 75.9 %. Among people aged between 25 and 54, the share of individuals with at least basic digital skills decreased with age, with the decline beginning among 35- to 44-year-olds. The rate declined from 74.5 % for 25- to 34-year-olds, to 70.1 % for 35- to 44-year-olds, and further decreased to 62.3 % for 45- to 54-year-olds. Digital skills levels were substantially lower among older individuals,

([8]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: trng_lfs_14).
([9]) *Source:* Eurostat (Adult Education Survey, in order to reflect the definition of the target indicator: special calculation excluding guided on-the-job training as available in the public excel file).

with only 42.6 % of 55- to 74-year-olds having at least basic digital skills. Additionally, 82.3 % of people with high formal education had such digital skills, while this was only the case for 37.6 % of people with no or low formal education ([10]).

Digital competences constitute an essential skill for participating in a technology-driven world. In the EEA strategic framework, the EU sets a target for the share of low-achieving eighth-graders in computer and information literacy to be less than 15 % by 2030. This target is based on data collected through the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS) measuring the share of eighth-graders performing below the level 2 threshold on the computer and information literacy scale. Across the 22 EU Member States participating in the 2023 study, 43 % of students did not reach level 2, showing clearly that the EU faces a considerable challenge in reaching the target of less than 15 %. Disparities can be observed between and within countries, between gender groups, and between socio-economic and migrant backgrounds ([11]).

([10]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: isoc_sk_dskl_i21).

([11]) For more information see: European Commission (2024), International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS) in Europe — 2023, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Main indicators

Low achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics or science

This indicator measures the share of 15-year-old students failing to reach level 2 (minimum level of proficiency) on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scale in the three domains of reading, mathematics and science. The data stem from the PISA study, a regularly conducted international survey that aims to evaluate education systems by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students.

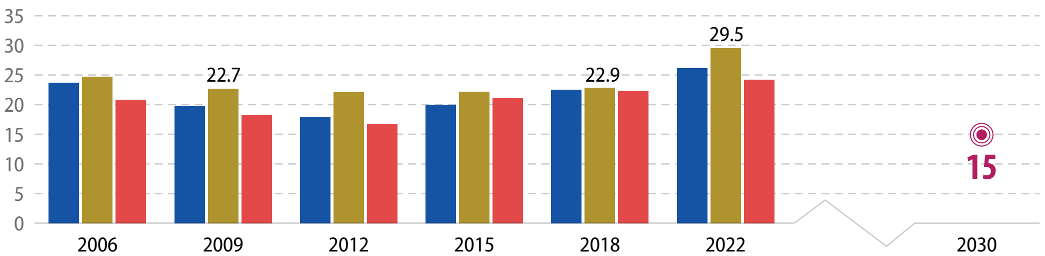
LONG TERM
2009–2022

SHORT TERM
2018–2022

Figure 4.1

Low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics or science

(% of 15-year-old students, EU, 2006–2022)



Reading Mathematics Science

2030 target: the share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15 %

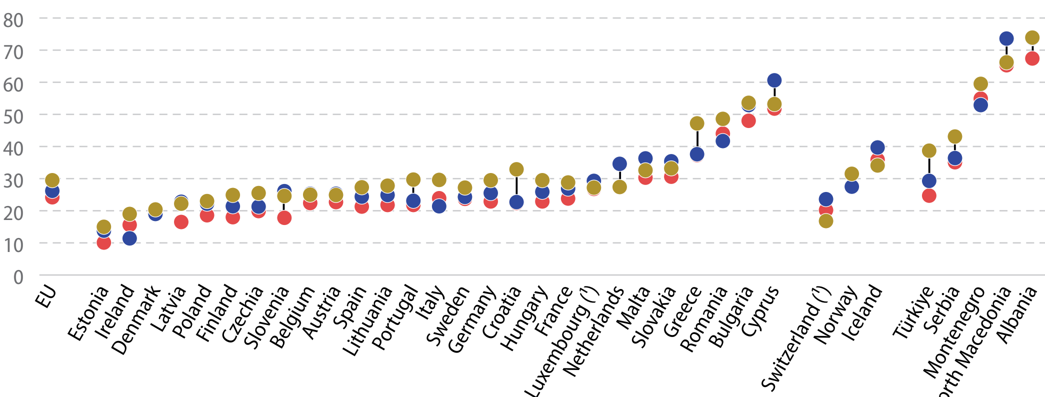
Note: Breaks in time series in 2009 and 2018 for reading.

Source: OECD (Eurostat online data code: sdg_04_40)

Figure 4.2

Low achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics or science

(% of 15-year-old students, 2022)



Reading Mathematics Science

(¹) 2018 data.

Source: OECD (Eurostat online data code: sdg_04_40)

Participation in early childhood education

This indicator measures the share of children between the age of three and the starting age of compulsory primary education who participated in early childhood education and care. Data presented here stem from the joint UIS (UNESCO Institute of Statistics)/OECD/Eurostat (UOE) questionnaires on education statistics, which constitute the core database on education.

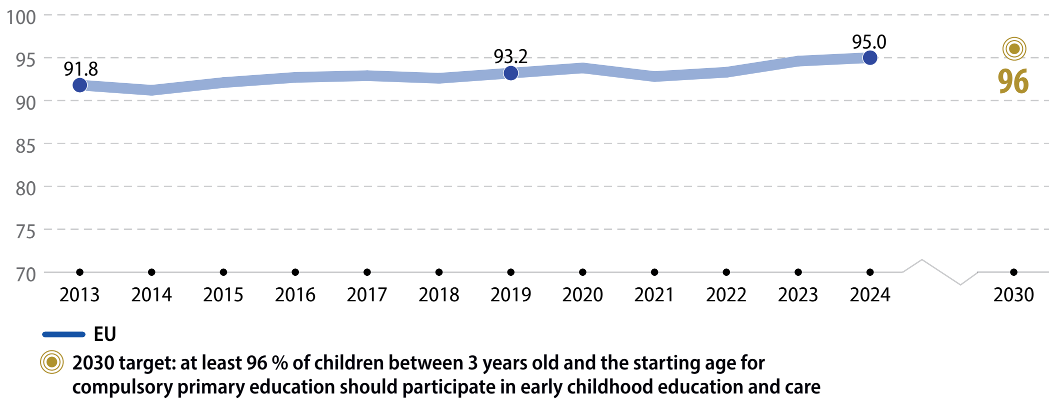
LONG TERM 2013–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 4.3

Participation in early childhood education

(% of children aged 3 and over, EU, 2013–2024)



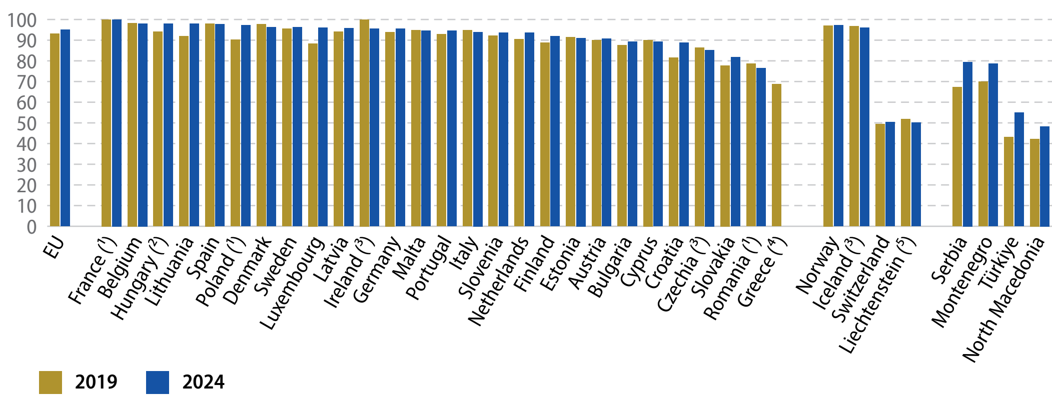
Note: Y-axis does not start at 0.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_04_31)

Figure 4.4

Participation in early childhood education

(% of children aged 3 and over, 2019 and 2024)



([1]) Provisional or estimated data.
([2]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
([3]) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
([4]) No data for 2024.
([5]) 2022 data (instead of 2023).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_04_31)

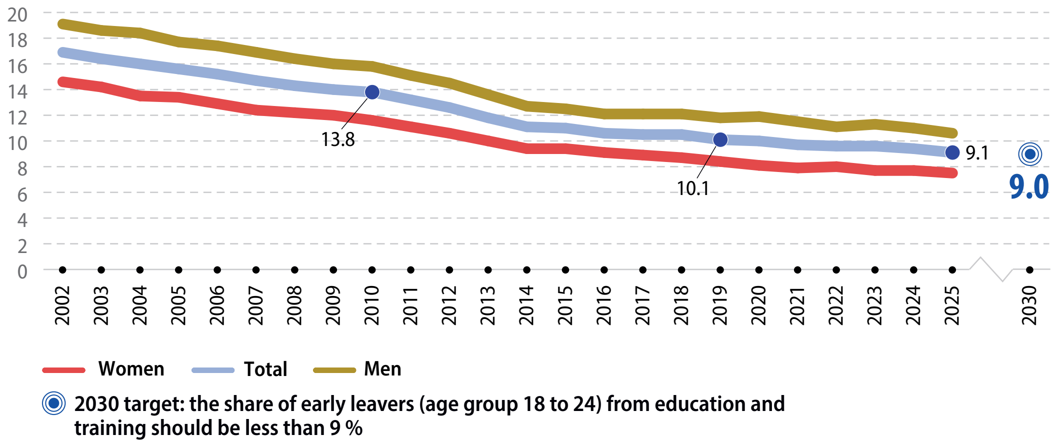
Early leavers from education and training

The indicator measures the share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education who were not involved in any education or training during the four weeks preceding the survey carried out to monitor it. The data stem from the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS).

Figure 4.5

Early leavers from education and training, by sex

(% of population aged 18 to 24, EU, 2002–2025)



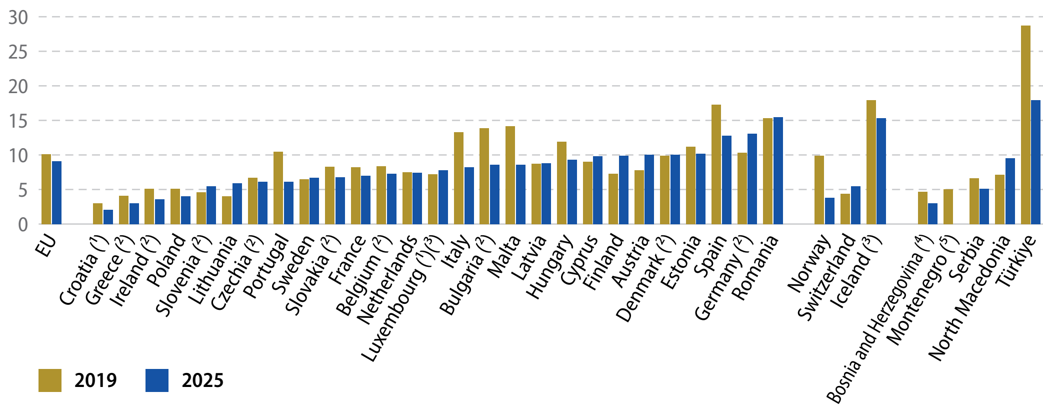
Note: Breaks in time series in 2003, 2006, 2014 and 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_04_10)

Figure 4.6

Early leavers from education and training

(% of population aged 18 to 24, 2019 and 2025)



Note: Break in time series in 2021 for all countries.
(1) 2024 data have low reliability.
(2) Further break(s) in time series after 2021.
(3) 2024 data (instead of 2025).
(4) 2021 data (instead of 2019).
(5) No data for 2025.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_04_10)

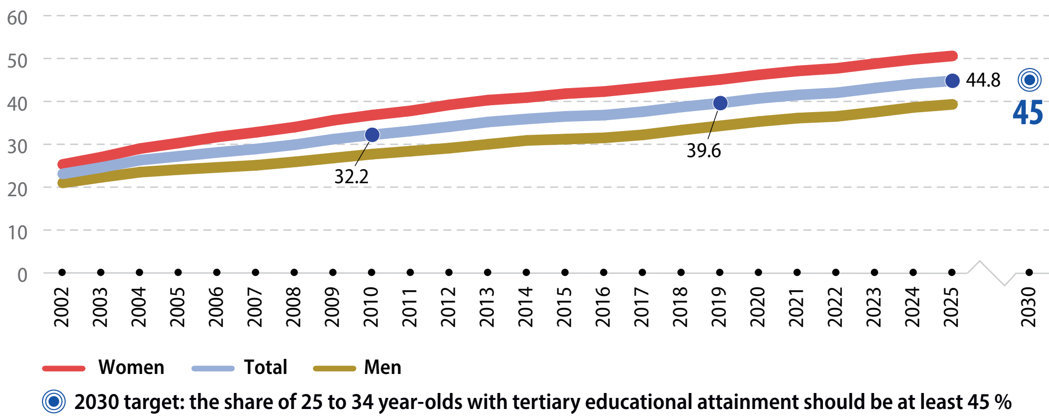
Tertiary educational attainment

This indicator measures the share of the population aged 25 to 34 who have successfully completed tertiary studies (for example, at university or a higher technical institution). Tertiary educational attainment refers to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 levels 5–8 for data from 2014 onwards and to ISCED 1997 levels 5–6 for data up to 2013. The indicator is based on the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS).

Figure 4.7

Tertiary educational attainment, by sex

(% of population aged 25 to 34, EU, 2002–2025)



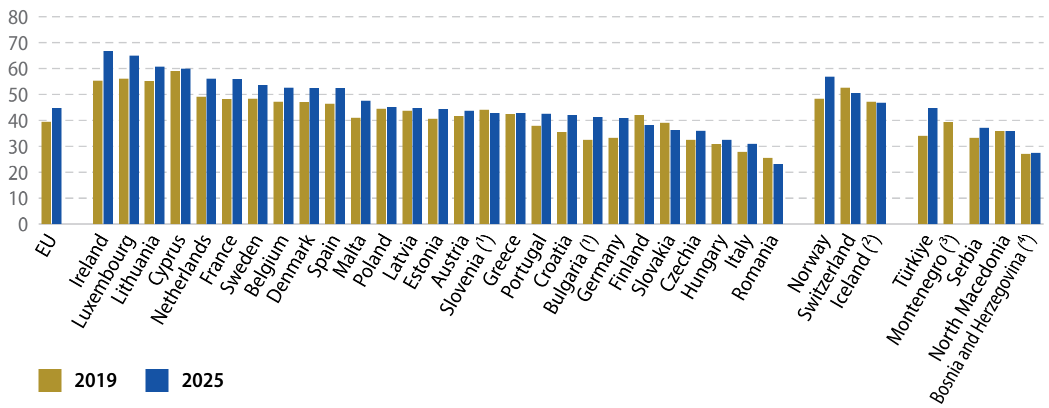
Note: Breaks in time series in 2014 and 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_04_20)

Figure 4.8

Tertiary educational attainment

(% of population aged 25 to 34, 2019 and 2025)



Note: Break in time series in 2021 for all countries.

(¹) Further break(s) in time series after 2021.
(²) 2024 data (instead of 2025).
(³) No data for 2025.
(⁴) 2021 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_04_20)

Adult participation in learning in the past four weeks

LONG TERM 2013–2025

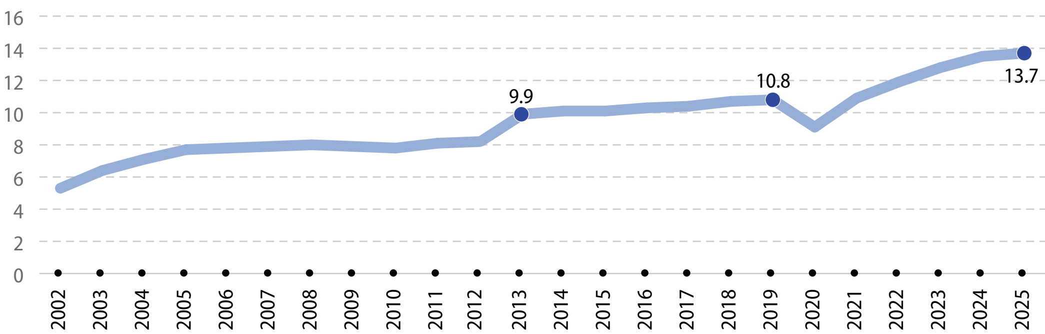
SHORT TERM 2019–2025

Adult participation in learning measures the share of people aged 25 to 64 who stated they received formal or non-formal education and training in the four weeks preceding the survey (numerator) carried out to monitor this indicator. The denominator consists of the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not answer the question 'participation in education and training'. Adult learning covers job-related and non-job-related formal and non-formal learning activities and excludes informal training and guided on-the-job training. It usually refers to learning activities after the end of initial education. Data stem from the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS).

Figure 4.9

Adult participation in learning in the past four weeks

(% of population aged 25 to 64, EU, 2002–2025)



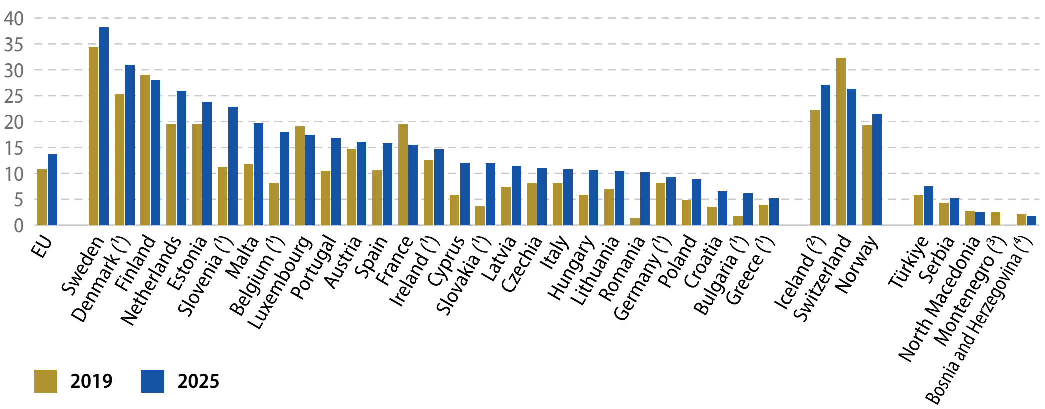
Note: Breaks in time series in 2003, 2006, 2013 and 2021. An extensive revision of the questionnaire of the French LFS (in use from 1 January 2013 onwards) resulted in a level shift break for France, which also impacted the EU aggregate.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_04_60)

Figure 4.10

Adult participation in learning in the past four weeks

(% of population aged 25 to 64, 2019 and 2025)



Note: Break in time series in 2021 for all countries.

([1]) Further break(s) in time series after 2021.
([2]) 2024 data (instead of 2025).
([3]) No data for 2025.
([4]) 2021 data (instead of 2019)

.*Source:* Eurostat (online data code: sdg_04_60)

Share of adults having at least basic digital skills

This indicator measures the share of people aged 16 to 74 who have at least basic digital skills. It is a composite indicator based on selected activities performed by individuals on the internet in specific areas: information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety and problem solving. The indicator assesses digital skills classified into six levels, of which the two highest constitute the basic or above basic level of digital skills. The indicator is based on data from the EU survey on the use of ICT in households and by individuals.

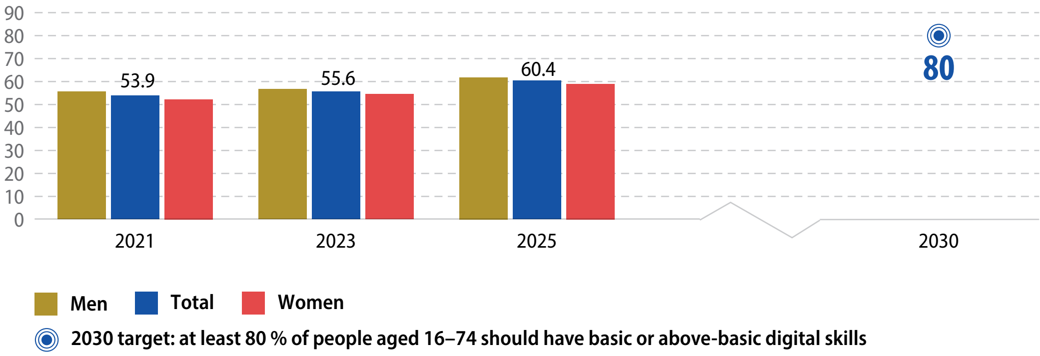
LONG TERM Time series too short for assessment

SHORT TERM 2021–2025

Figure 4.11

Share of adults having at least basic digital skills, by sex

(% of individuals aged 16 to 74, EU, 2021–2025)

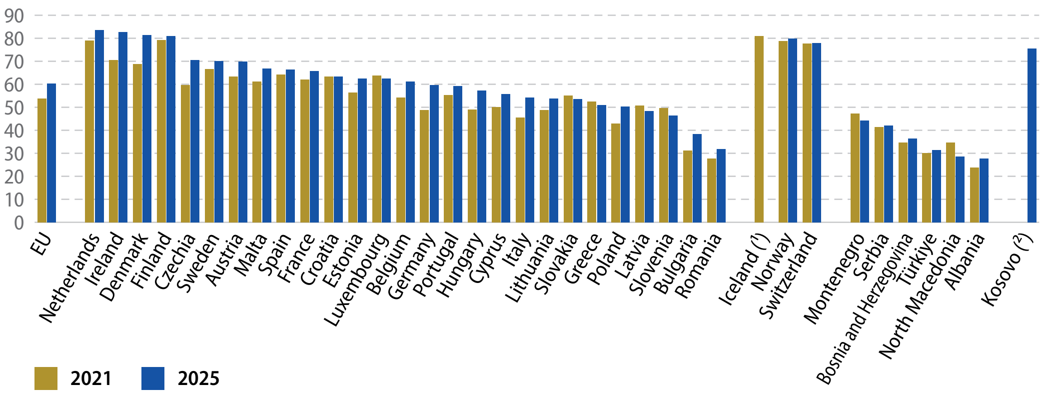


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_04_70)

Figure 4.12

Share of adults having at least basic digital skills

(% of individuals aged 16 to 74, 2021 and 2025)



(¹) No data for 2025.
(²) No data for 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_04_70)

5

Gender equality

5 GENDER EQUALITY

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality by ending all forms of discrimination, violence and any harmful practices against women and girls. It also calls for the full participation of women and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making.

Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls and empowering women are crucial to accelerating sustainable development in the EU. Monitoring SDG 5 in an EU context focuses on the topics of gender-based violence, access to quality education, participation in employment, equal payment and a balanced representation in leadership positions. Over the assessed short-term period, the EU has continued to make good progress in most of these areas. The gender gap for early school leaving has narrowed, but men continue to fall further behind women in terms of tertiary educational attainment. Gender gaps for labour market-related indicators have narrowed, even though stronger progress will be needed to reach the 2030 target of halving the gender employment gap. Moreover, the share of women occupying leadership positions has increased. Despite these improvements, significant gender gaps persist on the labour market, and women hold only roughly one-third of leadership positions in the EU.

Table 5.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 5, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Gender-based violence					
Physical and sexual violence against women	30.7 % (2021)	Assessment not possible due to lack of EU-level time series		✕	page 92
Education					
Gender gap for early leavers from education and training (*)	3.1 percentage points (2025)	2010–2025	– 2.0 %	↑	SDG 4, page 79
		2019–2025	– 1.5 %	↑	
Gender gap for tertiary educational attainment (*)	11.3 percentage points (2025)	2010–2025	1.5 % (¹)	↓	SDG 4, page 80
		2019–2025	0.8 % (¹)	↘	
Employment					
Gender employment gap ◎	9.6 percentage points (2025)	2010–2025	Observed: – 1.8 % Required: – 4.0 %	↘	page 93
		2019–2025	Observed: – 2.7 % Required: – 6.1 %	↘	
Gender pay gap in unadjusted form	11.1 % (2024)	2010–2024	– 2.5 %	↑	page 94
		2019–2024	– 4.1 %	↑	
Gender gap for being outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities	0.7 percentage points (2025)	No long-term assessment due to break in time series in 2021		✕	page 95
		2021–2025	– 8.5 %	↑	
Leadership positions					
Seats held by women in national parliaments	33.6 % (2025)	2010–2025	2.3 %	↑	page 97
		2019–2025	0.8 %	↗	
Positions held by women in senior management ◎	33.6 % (2025)	2012–2025	Observed: 6.6 % (²) Required: 5.9 % (²)	↑	page 98
		2019–2025	Observed: 3.9 % (²) Required: 3.1 % (²)	↑	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

(*) Multi-purpose indicator.

(¹) Gender gap is widening to the disadvantage of men.

(²) Assessment based on the 33 % target for all director positions (executive and non-executive) in listed companies.

Policy context

The Roadmap for Women's Rights sets out a long-term vision for gender equality including a Declaration of principles for a gender-equal society. The goal is to provide a basis for future legal and policy measures, especially the new Gender equality strategy adopted in March 2026.

Under the EU Cohesion Policy, Member States must ensure that equality between men and women, gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective are taken into account and promoted when preparing, implementing, monitoring, reporting and evaluating programmes. Under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), Member States have the obligation to promote gender equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

Gender-based violence

The EU's accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2023 was a milestone in the EU's commitment to stepping up actions against gender-based violence. The Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence provides a comprehensive framework to effectively prevent and combat violence against women. The proposal for a revised Victims' Rights Directive provides for a set of targeted measures to improve victims' ability to rely on their rights.

Education

The Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (2021–2030) prioritises improving quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education, and sets a monitoring framework via policy targets to be achieved by 2030.

Employment

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan sets the headline target of raising the overall employment rate to at least 78 % by 2030. This includes the complementary target of halving the gender employment gap by 2030 compared with 2019 levels.

The Pay Transparency Directive promotes equal pay for women and men for the same work or work of equal value. The 2022 Directive on adequate minimum wages in the European Union addresses the adequacy of minimum wages and workers' access to minimum wage protection, and aims to reduce the gender pay gap.

The Work-life Balance Directive aims to help women and men reconcile work and caring responsibilities.

The European Care Strategy aims to enhance women's labour market participation. The strategy is accompanied by two recommendations for Member States on the revision of the Barcelona targets on early childhood education and care and on access to affordable high-quality long-term care.

Leadership positions

Achieving gender balance in decision-making and in politics is a priority area for the European Commission. The Directive on gender balance in corporate boards seeks to improve the gender balance in corporate decision-making positions in the EU's largest listed companies. The Directive sets a target for the under-represented sex to make up 40 % of non-executive directors or 33 % of all directors by June 2026.

Overview and key trends

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is a severe human rights violation. It is deeply rooted in systemic power imbalances between women and men and is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. Physical and sexual violence against women affects their health and well-being. Moreover, it can hamper women's access to employment and harm their financial independence and the economy overall.

Every third woman in the EU has experienced gender-based violence during adulthood

30.7 %

of women in the EU have experienced gender-based violence in adulthood (according to data collected in 2021)

The 2021 EU survey on gender-based violence against women shows that every third woman (30.7 %) in the EU has experienced physical or sexual violence in adulthood ([1]). Gender-based violence was reported most frequently by women aged 18 to 29, with 34.9 % having had such experiences. In comparison, 31.2 % of women aged 45 to 64 and 24.2 % of those aged 65 to 74 have reported similar experiences. The prevalence of gender-based violence as reported in the survey varies from one country to another. The percentage of women who said they had experienced physical or sexual violence in adulthood was highest in Finland, Sweden and Hungary, at 57.1 %, 52.5 % and 49.1 %, respectively. Looking at the differences by degree of urbanisation, a higher share of women living in cities reported they have been affected by gender-based violence (34.0 %) than women living in towns and suburbs (28.6 %) or rural areas (27.3 %) ([2]). Women with disabilities are even more likely to experience physical and/or sexual violence, depending on the level of disability — the higher the level of disability, the higher the reported rate of physical and/or sexual violence ([3]). It is important to note that the willingness of women to disclose their experiences of violence in the survey may be influenced by how such violence is perceived and tolerated within their communities.

Data from official crime statistics on intentional homicide and sexual offences show that women are much more likely to be a victim of sexual assault or rape than men. In 2023, 67 out of 100 000 women were victims of sexual assault, and 41 out of 100 000 women were victims of rape. The rates were significantly lower for men, with 12 per 100 000 men for sexual assault and 5 out of 100 000 men for rape ([4]). It should be noted that official crime statistics reflect only incidents of violence that are reported to authorities and therefore represent only a small subset of the actual prevalence of violent acts ([5]). Moreover, women are about twice as likely as men to be victims of intentional homicide by family, relatives or intimate partners. In 2023, 0.4 out of 100 000 women were victims of such homicide, compared with only 0.2 per 100 000 men ([6]). In Western Europe this type of homicide notably increased during the pandemic ([7]).

([1]) Please note that the data were collected between September 2020 and March 2024. As most of the data were collected during 2021, it is referred as wave 2021.

([2]) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: gbv_any_du).
([3]) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: gbv_any_lim).
([4]) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: crim_hom_soff).
([5]) Eurostat (2024), EU gender-based violence survey, Main results, Publications Office of the European Union, p.7.
([6]) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: crim_hom_vrel).
([7]) United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2023), *Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide): Global estimates of female intimate partner/family-related homicides in 2022*.

The prevalence of violence varies greatly across the EU. However, caution is needed when comparing countries' official crime statistics. Their comparability can be affected, for example, by different legal and criminal justice systems or criminal law and legal definitions such as those concerning offenders, victims or prosecutable age. Also, aspects such as the organisation and efficiency of the police, prosecution and courts, and recording and reporting systems contribute to cross-country differences ([8]). The limitations of comparability also include the stigma associated with disclosing cases of violence against women in certain settings and to certain people, including interviewers. In addition, Member States that rank highest in terms of gender equality also tend to report a greater prevalence of violence against women. This may indicate a greater awareness and willingness of women in these countries to report violence to the police or an interviewer ([9]).

Education

Education is a driving force for social change and a condition for achieving fundamental human rights. Equipping people with the right skills also allows them to find quality jobs and improve their chances in life and thus combat the risks of social exclusion. Economic independence also makes it easier to leave a difficult situation, such as a violent home. In education and training, it is important to eliminate gender stereotypes and promote gender balance in traditionally 'male' or 'female' fields. In general, equal access to quality education and training is thus an important foundation for gender equality and an essential element of sustainable development.

The rate of early leavers from education and training among men in the EU was

3.1

percentage points higher than among women in 2025

Young women continue to outperform men in education, but trends in the gender gaps are mixed

Women overall tend to stay longer in the education system than men. In 2025, 10.6 % of men and 7.5 % of women aged 18 to 24 had [left education and training early](#) in the EU, having attained lower secondary education at most. This resulted in a gender gap of 3.1 percentage points in 2025. Over the short term, the gap has fluctuated between 3.1 and 3.8 percentage points since 2019. Nevertheless, the long-term trend shows the gap has narrowed compared with 2008, when it was 4.2 percentage points. The gender gap is wider for people with a migration background, amounting to 5.7 percentage points for people born outside the EU and 5.6 percentage points for non-EU citizens in 2025 ([10]).

The tertiary educational attainment rate of women in the EU was

11.3

percentage points higher than for men in 2025

A major expansion in higher education systems has taken place in the EU since the early 2000's, when the [Bologna process](#) put in motion reforms to make higher education more compatible, comparable, competitive and attractive for students. As a result, the share of the population aged 25 to 34 who completed tertiary education rose steadily between 2002 and 2025. The increase was particularly fast for women, whose tertiary educational attainment rate rose from 25.3 % in 2002 to 50.6 % in 2025. For men, the increase was slower, from 21.0 % to 39.3 %. This caused the gender gap to surge almost continuously from 4.3 percentage points to 11.3 percentage points between 2002 and 2025. Nevertheless, since 2022 tertiary attainment rates have increased almost at the same pace for women and men, and the gender gap has consequently remained between 11.3 and 11.2 percentage points since then. Looking at individual fields of study, there are more female than male graduates from tertiary education in most areas. The main

([8]) For more information see Eurostat metadata on [Crime and criminal justice (crim)](#).
([9]) European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014), *Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, Main results*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, pp. 25–26, 32.

([10]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfse_02 and edat_lfse_01).

exceptions are information and communication technologies (ICT), and engineering, manufacturing and construction studies, where men accounted for more than 70 % of graduates over the past few years ([11]).

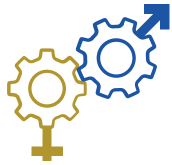
Employment

Ensuring high employment rates for both men and women is one of the EU's key targets. Reducing the wide gender employment gap, which reflects the difference between the employment rates of men and women aged 20 to 64, is important for equality and a sustainable economy. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan consequently includes the target of at least halving the gender employment gap by 2030 compared with 2019.

Women tend to be more highly educated than men in most EU countries. Despite this, women on average are still paid less, as evidenced by the persistent gender pay gap. Among other factors, the reasons for this gap include women being under-represented in senior positions and over-represented in part-time and non-permanent forms of employment. Moreover, women often adapt their work patterns to caring responsibilities. This results in lower lifetime earnings and aggravates their risk of poverty and social exclusion, especially in old age, because employment and pay gaps largely influence the gender pension gap ([12]).

The employment rate for women continues to increase, but the EU is not on track to halving its gender employment gap by 2030

In the EU, the employment rate for women grew from 60.7 % in 2010 to 71.3 % in 2025. For men, the rate started from a higher value and increased more slowly, from 73.4 % in 2010 to 80.9 % in 2025 (see the chapter on SDG 8 'Decent work and economic growth' on page 131 for more detailed analyses on employment rates). As a result, the gender employment gap narrowed by 3.1 percentage points between 2010 and 2025. Most of this decrease took place in the period leading up to 2013, with the gap then remaining at just over 11 percentage points until 2020, before decreasing further during the following years. Although the drop to 9.6 percentage points in 2025 represents a new record low, it also means the proportion of working-age men in employment still considerably exceeds that of women. Moreover, the gap is not narrowing quickly enough for the EU to meet its 2030 target of at least halving the gender employment gap compared with 2019. Meeting this target would require the difference in the employment rate between men and women to be reduced to 5.7 percentage points or lower.



The gender employment gap in the EU was

9.6

percentage points in 2025

An analysis by degree of urbanisation shows a variation in the gender employment gap between cities, towns and suburbs, and rural areas. In 2025, the gap was smallest in cities, at 8.1 percentage points, while it amounted to 10.3 percentage points in rural areas and 10.9 percentage points in towns and suburbs ([13]).

The gender employment gap is considerably higher for adults living with children, at 16.5 percentage points in 2024 for those aged 25 to 54 years. In this age group, men with children have a higher employment rate (91.9 % in 2024) than men without children (83.9 %). For women, the trend is the opposite: women with children have a lower employment rate (75.4 %) than women without children (80.2 %) ([14]).

There is also a clear difference between employed women and men aged 20 to 64 when looking at the rate of part-time working. In 2025, 27.5 % of employed women in this age group worked part-time, while for men this share was only 7.8 %. This difference resulted in a gender gap of 19.7 percentage points for part-time employment ([15]). Caring responsibilities for children or for adults with disabilities were a main reason for this gap. In 2025, 27.5 % of women working part-time reported caring responsibilities as the main reason for doing so, compared with only 7.3 % for men ([16]). Beyond

([11]) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: educ_uoe_grad10).
([12]) European Commission (2025), *Joint Employment Report 2025*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 59.
([13]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: tepsr_lm230).
([14]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: lfst_hheredty).
([15]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: lfsi_pt_a).
([16]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: lfsa_epgar).

working hours, gender differences are also observed in contract types. The gender gap for employed persons with temporary contracts was much less pronounced, at 2.4 percentage points in 2025 (11.2 % of employed women and 8.8 % of employed men) (17).

The confinement measures during the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected women in the labour market. Specifically, women saw a sharper decline in working hours compared with men, while taking on additional care responsibilities. This highlighted once again women's role as primary caregivers in society and underlined the urgent need to enhance access to early childhood education and long-term care services to increase women's labour market participation and reduce gender inequalities in employment (18).

The gender pay gap in the EU continues to narrow but remains considerable

Women do not only have lower employment rates than men, they also tend to earn less. Between 2019 and 2024, the gender pay gap narrowed by 2.6 percentage points in the EU. However, in 2024, women's gross hourly earnings in the EU were still on average 11.1 % below those of men and differences between Member States vary strongly.

Men earned
11.1 %
more per hour than women in the EU in 2024

There are various reasons for the existence and size of the gender pay gap. A part of the difference may be explained by the 'sectoral gender segregation'. This means that women tend to be concentrated in the low-paying economic sectors such as education and health, whereas men tend to work more in better paid sectors such as finance and IT sectors. Similarly, 'occupational gender segregation' may also explain part of the gender pay gap because men are more likely to be promoted to supervisory and management positions than women, often due to discrimination or self-restraints. The term 'glass ceiling' is a commonly used metaphor to describe an invisible barrier that keeps women from rising beyond a certain level in an enterprise's hierarchy. Moreover, the inequalities that women face in gaining access to work, career progression and rewards — along with the consequences of career breaks or part-time work due to caring responsibilities, labour market segregation, the parenthood penalty and stereotypes about the roles of men and women — are inevitably linked to the persistent gender pay gap (19). In some cases, women also face pay discrimination, meaning they earn less than men for equal work. However, a large part of the gender gap in the EU remains unexplained and cannot be linked to worker or workplace characteristics such as education, occupation, working time or the economic activity the person works in (20).

Caring responsibilities remain an important reason why women are out of the labour force, although the gender gap has narrowed in recent years

Women still tend to take on a larger share of caring responsibilities for children and other family members. In 2025, 0.8 % of women aged 20 to 64 were outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities while wanting to work, which was eight times higher than the 0.1 % rate for men. This resulted in a gender gap of 0.7 percentage points. Overall, 0.5 % of the total population aged 20 to 64 were outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities for adults with disability or children while wanting to work. This is likely to be related to the lack of available, accessible and quality formal care services, especially for children (21).

The gender gap for persons outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities in the EU in 2025 was
0.7
percentage points

(17) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: lfsi_pt_a).
(18) European Commission (2025), *Joint Employment Report 2025*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
(19) Eurostat (2025), *Gender pay gaps in the European Union: A statistical analysis based on Structure of Earnings Survey, 2022 data*. Denis Leythienne, Marina Pérez-Julián. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 7.
(20) European Commission (2026), *The gender pay gap situation in the EU*.
(21) European Institute for Gender Equality (2019), Gender Equality Index 2019: Work life balance, Informal care of children and childcare services.

Between 2021 and 2025, the share of the total population aged 20 to 64 that was outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities while wanting to work fell from 0.6 % to 0.5 %. For women, this share fell by 0.3 percentage points, while for men it stagnated at 0.1 %. As a result, the gender gap has narrowed by 0.3 percentage points since 2021. Nevertheless, taking care of adults with disabilities or children was one of the three most common reason for women for not seeking employment in 2025, while it was the third least cited reason for men. Both men and women most frequently cited 'other reasons' or 'own illness or disability' as the main reasons for not seeking employment ([22]).

Leadership positions

Traditional gender roles, a lack of support to allow women and men to balance care responsibilities with work, and political and corporate cultures are some of the reasons why women are underrepresented in decision-making processes. Promoting equality between women and men in this area is one of the EU's priorities for achieving gender equality.

The increase in the share of seats held by women in national parliaments has slowed in recent years

The share of seats in national parliaments in the EU held by women has increased almost steadily since 2003, reaching 33.6 % in 2025, which is the highest level recorded to date. However, the rate of increase over the past five years has slowed compared with previous years, with the share growing by only 1.5 percentage points since 2019. There are considerable variations between Member States. In 2025, national parliaments (lower house and upper house, where relevant) in Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands all had representation rates of at least 40 % for each gender. At the other end of the spectrum, women accounted for less than a fifth of the members of national parliaments in Cyprus and Hungary. Between 2019 and 2025, women's share of representation declined in one quarter of Member States, including the two best performing countries (Sweden and Finland). Consequently, no EU country has yet achieved gender parity by 2025. Looking outside the EU, Iceland almost achieved parity in 2024, with women occupying 49.2 % of seats. However, this share fell back to 46.0 % in 2025.

33.6 %
of seats in national parliaments in the EU were held by women in 2025

The share of female members of government (senior and junior ministers) in the EU was still lower than for men, at 31.9 % in 2025, although this was a 9.3 percentage point increase from 22.6 % in 2003. However, striking differences exist between Member States. Governments were gender-balanced (represented by at least 40 % of each gender) in seven countries but remained predominantly male (meaning less than 20 % of women) in six countries. The number of female heads of government in EU countries has also shown an increase, albeit at a low level. In 2025, four Member States — Denmark, Italy, Latvia and Lithuania — had a female prime minister, accounting for 14.8 % of heads of government in the EU. Over the period from 2003 to 2025, the highest share of female heads of government was observed in 2022 and 2023 with 22.2 %, meaning there were never more than six women holding this executive position at the same time ([23]). A key factor limiting women's access to these positions is the persistent under-representation of women in leadership roles within political parties, with about three-quarters of party leaders in the EU being men ([24]).

The shares of female directors of the largest listed companies have increased further and the EU is on track to meeting its 2026 targets

Women held 33.6 % of all director (executive and non-executive) positions and 38.2 % of non-executive director positions in the largest listed companies in 2025. This level of representation

([22]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: lfsa_igar).

([23]) European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender Statistics Database (National governments: presidents and prime ministers).
([24]) European Institute for Gender Equality (2024), *Gender equality in the European Parliament and in national parliaments in the European Union: 2023 state of play*.

was achieved after a steady 18.9 percentage point increase for all director positions and a 21.4 percentage point increase for non-executive director positions since 2012. The EU has thus already met its target for at least 33 % of all director positions and is on track to meet the target for 40 % of non-executive director positions in listed companies to be held by members of the underrepresented sex by 2026.

33.6%
of all director positions in the largest listed companies in the EU were held by women in 2025

However, the numbers also show that most director positions in the largest listed companies are still held by men. In 2025, the share of women in all director positions (executive and non-executive) varied strongly across the EU, from 46.5 % in France to 8.5 % in Cyprus. Eleven countries already exceeded the 33 % target.

Main indicators

Physical and sexual violence against women

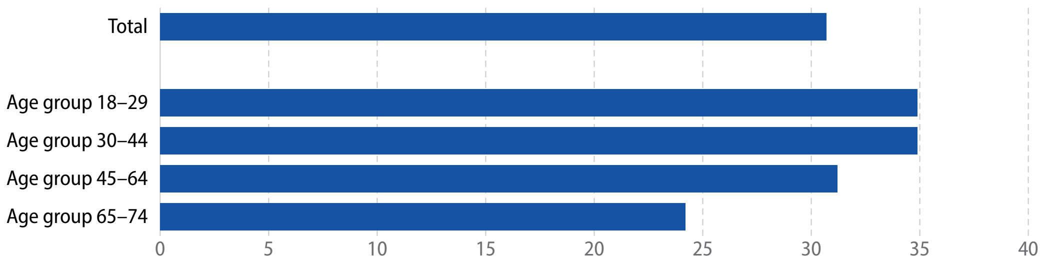
This indicator is based on the results of the 2021 EU survey on gender-based violence against women and other forms of inter-personal violence (EU-GBV). Gender-based violence against women is defined as 'violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or violence that affects women disproportionately' (Istanbul Convention, Article 3.d). This indicator covers physical (including threats) or sexual violence in adulthood.

Assessment of progress not possible due to lack of EU-level time series

Figure 5.1

Women who have ever experienced physical or sexual violence in adulthood, by age group

(% of women, EU, 2021)



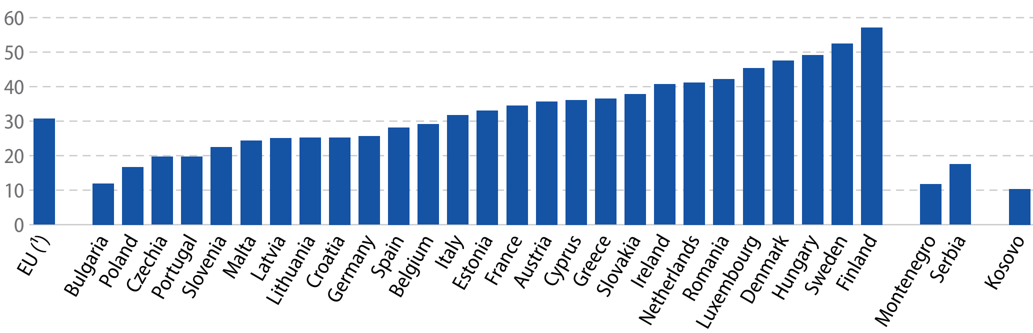
Note: Estimated data. The data were collected between September 2020 and March 2024. As most of the data were collected during 2021, it is referred as wave 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_05_11)

Figure 5.2

Women who have ever experienced physical or sexual violence in adulthood

(% of women, 2021)



Note: The data were collected between September 2020 and March 2024. As most of the data were collected during 2021, it is referred as wave 2021.

([1]) Estimated data.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_05_11)

Gender employment gap

The gender employment gap is defined as the difference between the employment rates of men and women aged 20 to 64. The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of people aged 20 to 64 in employment by the total population of the same age group. The indicator is based on the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS).

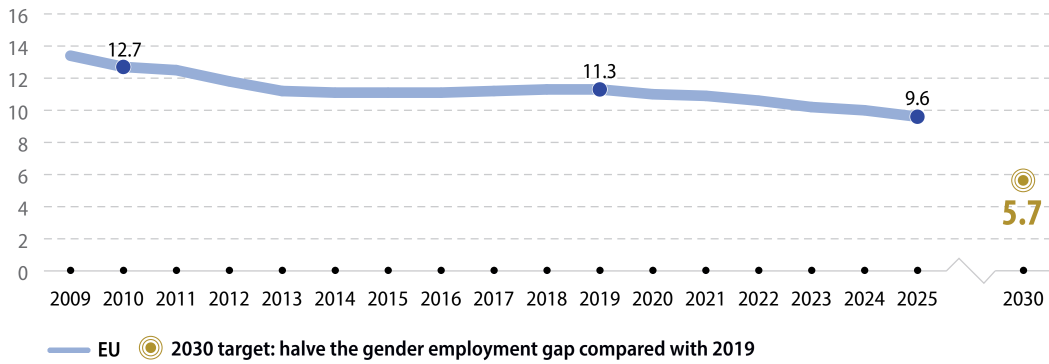
LONG TERM
2010–2025

SHORT TERM
2019–2025

Figure 5.3

Gender employment gap

(percentage points, EU, 2009–2025)

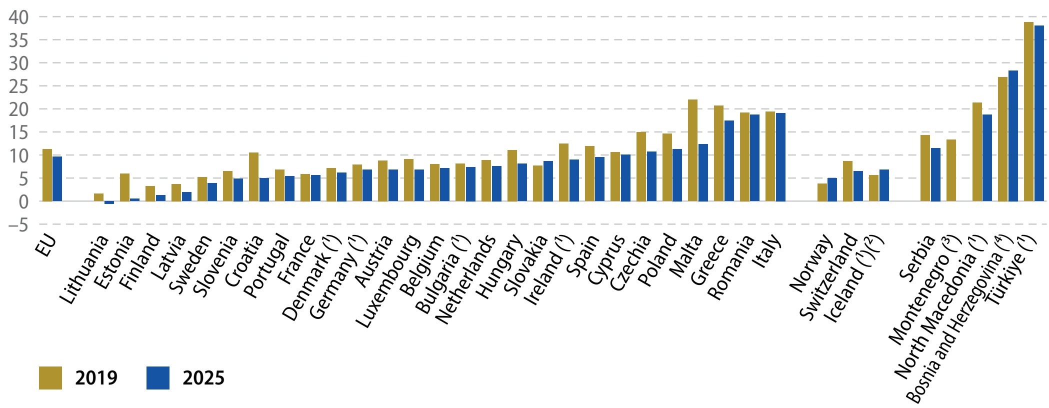


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_05_30)

Figure 5.4

Gender employment gap

(percentage points, 2019 and 2025)



(1) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(2) 2024 data instead of 2025.
(3) No data for 2025.
(4) 2021 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_05_30)

Gender pay gap in unadjusted form

The gender pay gap in unadjusted form represents the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees. The indicator has been defined as unadjusted because it gives an overall picture of gender inequalities in terms of pay and measures a concept which is broader than the concept of equal pay for equal work. The gender pay gap is based on the methodology of the structure of earnings survey (SES), which is carried out every four years.

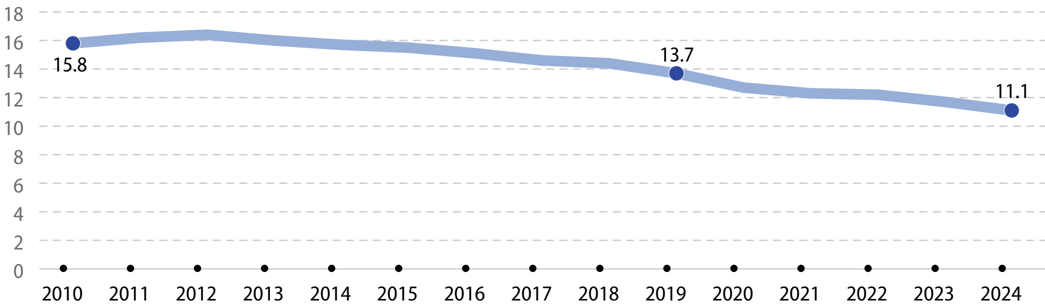
LONG TERM
2010–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 5.5

Gender pay gap in unadjusted form

(% of average gross hourly earnings of men, EU, 2010–2024)



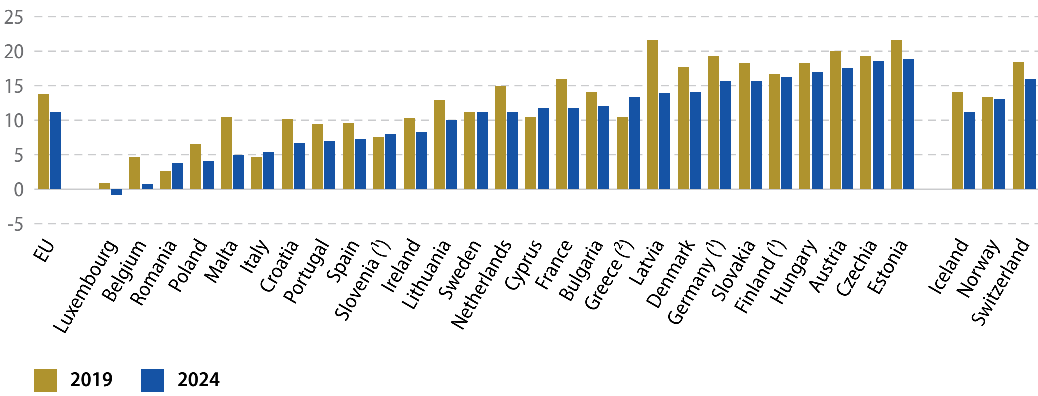
Note: 2023 and 2024 data are provisional.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_05_20)

Figure 5.6

Gender pay gap in unadjusted form

(% of average gross hourly earnings of men, 2019 and 2024)



Note: 2024 data are provisional or estimated for most countries.

(1) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(2) 2018 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_05_20)

Gender gap for being outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities

The population outside the labour force comprises individuals who are not employed and are either not actively seeking work or not available to work (even if they have found a job that will start in the future). Therefore, they are neither employed nor unemployed. This definition used in the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) is based on the resolutions of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) organised by the International Labour Organization. The reason for being outside the labour force covered by this indicator is 'care of adults with disabilities or children', which includes care for own children or spouse's children living inside or outside the household and care for adult ill/elderly/incapacitated/disables relatives (aged 15 or more), but excludes care responsibilities for friends, non-relatives or their children, care as a job, and care as a volunteer work. Only people who express willingness to work, despite being outside the labour force, are considered.

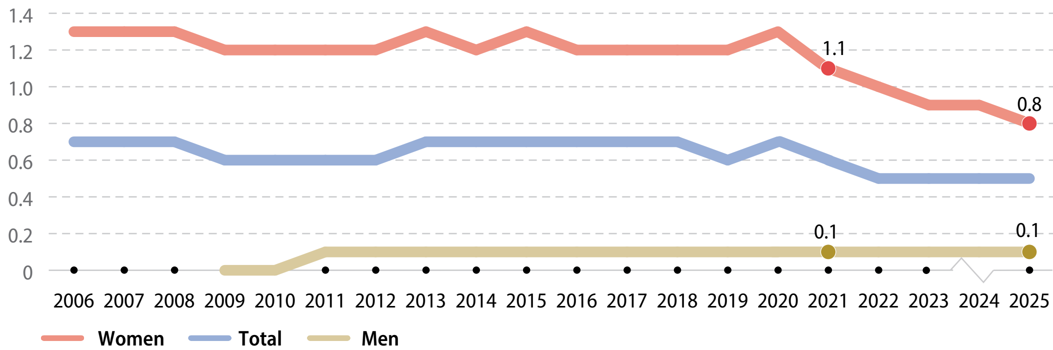
Assessment not possible due to break in time series in 2021

SHORT TERM 2021–2025

Figure 5.7

Persons outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities by sex

(% of population aged 20 to 64, EU, 2006–2025)



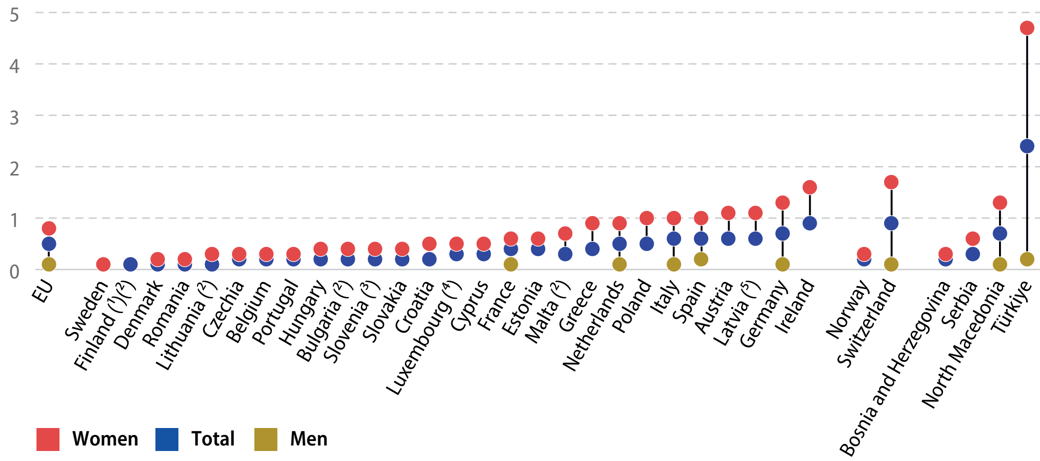
Note: Break in time series in 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_05_40)

Figure 5.8

Persons outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities by sex

(% of population aged 20 to 64, 2025)



Note: Data availability and reliability are hampered for many countries due to a small sample size. Due to this reason, data for men are missing for many countries.

(1) No data by sex.
(2) 2024 data.
(3) 2023 data.
(4) 2022 data.
(5) 2021 data.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_05_40)

Seats held by women in national parliaments

This indicator refers to the proportion of women in national parliaments in both chambers (lower house and upper house, where relevant). The data stem from the Gender Statistics Database of the European Institute for Gender Equality.

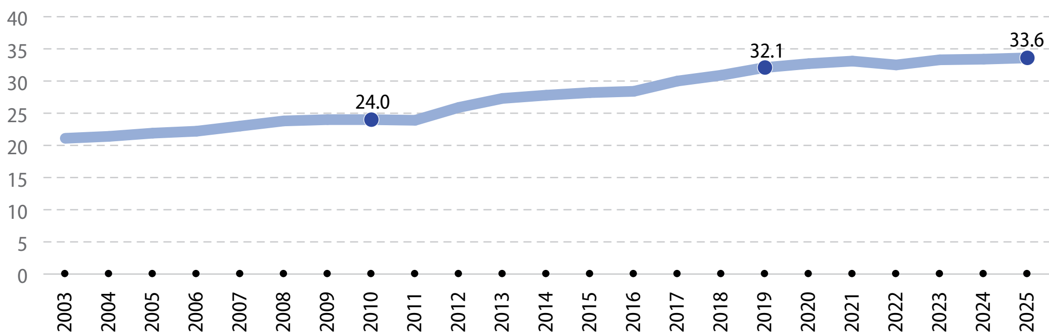
LONG TERM
2010–2025

SHORT TERM
2019–2025

Figure 5.9

Seats held by women in national parliaments

(% of seats, EU, 2003–2025)

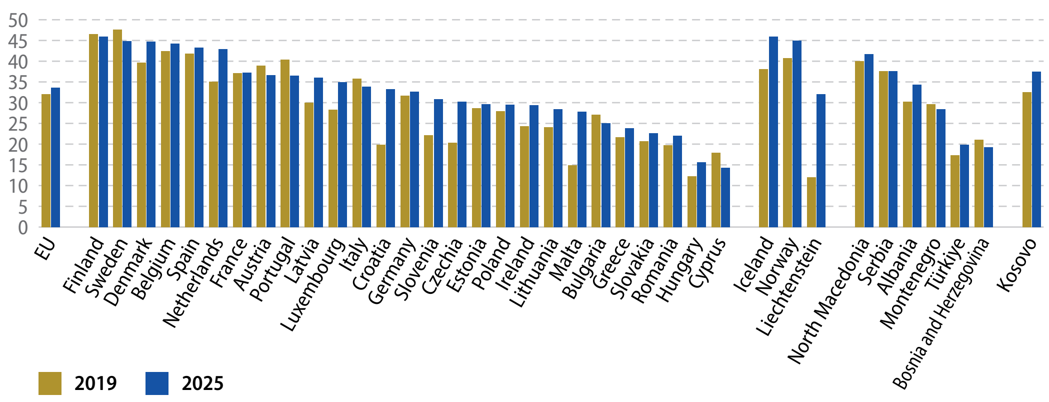


Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (Eurostat online data code: sdg_05_50)

Figure 5.10

Seats held by women in national parliaments

(% of seats, 2019 and 2025)



Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (Eurostat online data code: sdg_05_50)

Positions held by women in senior management

This indicator measures the share of female directors (executive and non-executive) and non-executive directors on formal boards in the largest publicly listed companies. The data presented in this section stem from the Gender Statistics Database of the European Institute for Gender Equality.

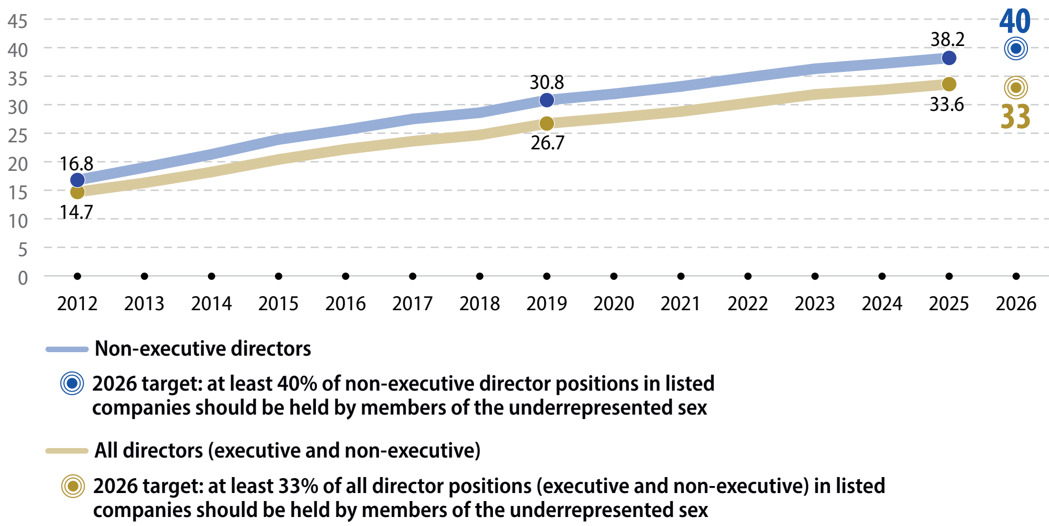
LONG TERM 2012–2025

SHORT TERM 2019–2025

Figure 5.11

Positions held by women in senior management

(% of positions, EU, 2012–2025)

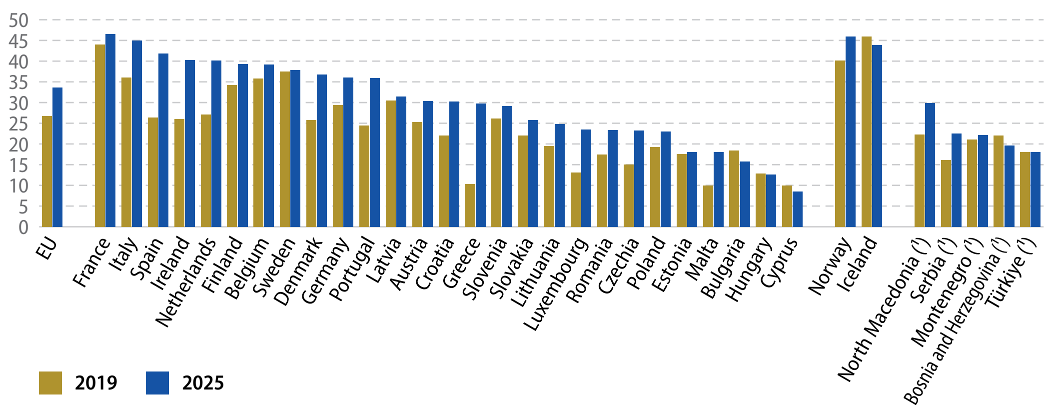


Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (Eurostat online data code: sdg_05_61)

Figure 5.12

Positions held by women in senior management

(% of executive and non-executive directors, 2019 and 2025)



(¹) 2023 data (instead of 2025).

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (Eurostat online data code: sdg_05_61)

6

Clean water and sanitation

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

SDG 6 calls for ensuring universal access to safe and affordable drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, and ending open defecation. It also aims to improve water quality and water-use efficiency and to encourage sustainable abstractions and supply of freshwater.

Access to clean water is a basic human need. Provision of drinking water and sanitation services is a matter of public and environmental health. Clean water in sufficient quantity is also crucial for agriculture — and hence for food security — as well as for industry and the environment. Monitoring SDG 6 within an EU context focuses mainly on water quality and water scarcity and shows unfavourable progress at the goal-level. EU rivers are increasingly polluted by pesticides and phosphates. Water scarcity has worsened, driven by increased water use and erratic supply. Insufficient precipitation has led to more frequent and severe drought events. In addition, the share of inland bathing waters with excellent water quality has decreased. Positive developments are observed regarding decreases in organic pollution in EU rivers and concentrations of nitrate in EU groundwater bodies. Progress was also made on sanitation, with a slow but steady increase in connection rates to secondary wastewater treatment.

Table 6.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 6, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Sanitation					
Population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment	80.7 % (2023)	2008–2023	0.6 %	↗	page 107
		2018–2023	0.2 %	↗	
Water quality					
Pesticides in rivers	23.3 % (2023)	2013–2023	– 0.7 %	↗	page 109
		2018–2023	3.4 %	↓	
Biochemical oxygen demand in rivers	2.24 mg O_2 per litre (2023)	2008–2023	– 1.2 % (1)	↑	page 110
		2018–2023	– 1.0 % (1)	↑	
Nitrate in groundwater	18.1 mg NO_3 per litre (2023)	2008–2023	– 0.4 % (2)	↗	page 111
		2018–2023	– 0.6 % (2)	↗	
Phosphate in rivers	0.081 mg PO_4 per litre (2023)	2008–2023	2.1 % (3)	↓	page 112
		2018–2023	3.6 % (3)	↓	
Inland bathing waters with excellent quality (*)	78.3 % (2024)	2011–2024	0.8 %	↗	SDG 14, page 242
		2019–2024	– 0.2 %	↘	
Water scarcity					
Water exploitation index (WEI+)	5.2 % (2023)	2008–2023	0.8 % (4)	↘	page 113
		2018–2023	3.5 % (4)	↓	
Drought impact on ecosystems (*)	156 703 km^2 (2024)	2009–2024	1.7 % (5)	↓	SDG 15, page 259
		2019–2024	3.6 % (5)	↓	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

(*) Multi-purpose indicator. (1) Data refer to an EU aggregate based on 19 Member States.
(2) Data refer to an EU aggregate based on 22 Member States. (3) Data refer to an EU aggregate based on 20 Member States.
(4) Assessment based on a four-year moving average.
(5) Assessment based on a 10-year moving average.

Policy context

Sanitation

The Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive regulates the collection, treatment and discharge of domestic and industrial urban wastewater. Its 2024 revision sets updated rules for secondary and tertiary treatment of wastewater and water reuse.

Water quality

Protection of water resources, water ecosystems, and drinking and bathing water is a cornerstone of EU water policy, as mentioned in the 8th Environment Action Programme and reflected in the respective EEA Monitoring Report.

The Water Framework Directive is the main EU legislation aimed at protecting and restoring inland water bodies, preventing or limiting deterioration by excessive abstractions or pollution, and achieving good status for surface water and groundwater. In December 2025, the Commission announced a targeted review of the Directive as part of the RESourceEU Action Plan and the Environmental Omnibus package.

The 2021 Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil action plan sets out key measures to accelerate reductions in water pollution. As part of the Zero Pollution package, the Commission proposed revisions to the lists of surface and groundwater pollutants under the Water Framework Directive and its daughter directives, including the addition of pesticides. The revisions were agreed in interinstitutional negotiations and are expected to be formally adopted in 2026. The recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive enhances nitrogen and phosphorus standards, and addresses other sources of pollution including stormwater overflows and micropollutants.

The Nitrates Directive includes measures to prevent nitrates from agriculture polluting ground and surface waters by improving the nitrogen balance.

The recast Drinking Water Directive requires Member States to improve or maintain access to drinking water for all. It also addresses improvement of the efficiency of the water supply infrastructure.

The Bathing Water Directive requires Member States to monitor and assess bathing water for at least two parameters of (faecal) bacteria.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility under its green transition pillar finances reforms and investments for a sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources.

Water scarcity

The EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change aims to reduce water use, encourage water efficiency and savings, and guarantee a stable and secure drinking water supply.

In addition, a new Regulation on minimum requirements for water reuse for agricultural irrigation has applied since June 2023.

The European Water Resilience Strategy was adopted in June 2025. The cross-sectorial strategy aims to address water scarcity by ensuring water sources are properly managed and by adopting a circular approach to water use. It also sets out measures to boost innovation and competitiveness of the European water sector.

Overview and key trends

Sanitation

Provision of drinking water and the adequate treatment of sewage are matters of public and environmental health. As a vital resource, EU policy considers water as a public good. Water utilities are subject to strict regulation regarding the quality and efficiency of services. The indicator used here to monitor sanitation is the share of the population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment.

Most EU citizens are connected to secondary wastewater treatment

80.7 %
of the EU population was connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment in 2023

Overall, connection rates and the quality of water services in the EU were already high more than 10 years ago and they have improved further over time. The share of the EU population connected to secondary wastewater treatment has increased continuously since 2000, reaching 80.7 % in 2023. This is a major increase compared with 2008, when the connection rate was 73.7 %. Between 2018 and 2023, connection rates increased in almost all reporting Member States. The lowest-scoring countries were in south-east Europe. It is important to note that connection rates are not expected to reach 100 % in most cases because connection costs can be disproportionately high in some areas, in particular in rural areas with low population density. The 2024 revision of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive lowers the threshold for mandatory secondary treatment, thereby supporting a wider connection to secondary wastewater treatment and contributing to improved water quality.

Conventional primary wastewater treatment mainly removes suspended solids and only reduces organic water pollution by 20–30 %. Secondary treatment processes, which are typically applied after primary treatment, remove about 70 % of organic pollution. Growth in the share of people connected to secondary treatment indicates that the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, which was first implemented in the 1990s, has helped to reduce pollution and to improve water quality in Europe's rivers, lakes and coastal waters. The revised Directive is expected to bring additional improvements, not only for water quality but also for access to sanitation.

Water quality

Pollution from the use of nutrients and pesticides in agriculture is the most significant pressure affecting the quality of surface and groundwater [1]. Accidental spillage of harmful substances, discharges of untreated or insufficiently treated domestic and industrial wastewater, and atmospheric deposition of pollutants such as mercury, pose additional threats to human and environmental health. These pressures, along with changes to the structure and flow of water bodies, hinder sustainable development. Water quality monitoring distinguishes between different kinds of chemical pollution such as organic pollution by nutrients, pesticides and pathogens. In this report, water quality is monitored through four indicators looking at water quality in freshwater and one looking at bathing water quality.

Pesticide pollution in EU rivers remains a persistent pressure

A new indicator on pesticide pollution in rivers has been developed by the European Environment Agency (EEA) and integrated into the SDG 6 monitoring framework. The indicator measures the share of rivers in which pesticide concentrations

[1] European Environment Agency (2024), *Europe's state of water 2024. The need for improved water resilience*, EEA Report No 07/2024, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 12.

exceed ecotoxicologically based environmental quality standards (EQS) established under EU water policy.

From 2013 to 2023, the share of rivers exceeding pesticide thresholds decreased slightly, from 24.9 % to 23.3 %. However, over the most recent five-year period from 2018 to 2023, the share increased by 3.6 percentage points, indicating a clearly negative short-term trend. These contrasting developments highlight persistent and, in recent years, increasing pollution due to agricultural pesticide use in Europe.

23.3 %
of river waterbodies in the EU exceeded pesticide thresholds in 2024

Pesticides are also detected in groundwater bodies across the EU, where their assessment is based on a fixed concentration limit of 0.1 micrograms per liter (µg/L) per individual substance under the Groundwater Directive. Over the period 2013 to 2023, exceedances of this threshold have been reported in a notable share of groundwater bodies, but no clear long-term trend has been observed [2].

Improved wastewater treatment has reduced organic pollution in EU rivers

Heavy organic pollution, caused by municipal wastewater and effluents from industry or livestock, can lead to the deoxygenation of water, killing fish and invertebrates. Thanks to improved wastewater collection and treatment, as well as manure treatment, organic pollution in EU rivers has been declining, though the trend has slowed in recent years. A proxy for organic water pollution is the amount of oxygen needed for microbes to digest organic pollution under standard conditions, expressed as biochemical oxygen demand (BOD). The BOD values in EU rivers range from less than 1 milligram per litre (mg/L) (very clean) to more than 15 mg/L (heavily polluted).

Between 2018 and 2023, the biochemical oxygen demand in EU rivers fell by
5.1 %

Available data for 19 Member States (see page 110) show a slow but steady decline in BOD in EU rivers, from 2.7 mg/L in 2008 to 2.2 mg/L in 2023. Overall, BOD levels in EU rivers have fallen by 16.4 % since 2008 and by 5.1 % since 2018. Between 2018 and 2023, 14 out of the 19 reporting Member States reported reductions in BOD in their rivers. The overall decrease in BOD values is mainly linked to a general improvement in wastewater collection and treatment throughout Europe.

Concentrations of hazardous ammonium in EU rivers have followed a similar pattern, declining since 2007 and stabilising in recent years. As ammonium is released during the decomposition of organic matter, it remains an important indicator alongside BOD for assessing organic pollution in rivers [3].

Nitrate concentrations in EU groundwater bodies have decreased slightly

An assessment of European waters published by the European Environment Agency (EEA) concludes that despite decades of legislation and the EU's target to reduce nutrient losses by 50 %, high concentrations of nitrogen and phosphorus continue to have severe ecological effects on EU waters. In some regions, pollution of rivers with nitrate/ammonia (N) and phosphorous (P) is still causing severe eutrophication in coastal waters (also see the chapter on SDG 14 'Life below water' on page 231). Eutrophication can lead to algal blooms and oxygen depletion of surface waters, which in turn can harm fish, invertebrates and ecosystems. In 2022 and 2024, such substantial toxic algal blooms caused widespread fish die-offs in the Oder River, leading to major ecological disasters [4].

The main sources of nutrient accumulation in water bodies are the use of fertilisers and animal waste in agriculture, as well as poorly treated

[2] European Environment Agency (2025), *Pesticides in rivers, lakes and groundwater in Europe*.

[3] European Environment Agency (2025), *Oxygen consuming substances in European rivers*.
[4] European Commission (2023), *Zero Pollution: New report draws lessons from the Oder River ecological disaster*; DW (2024), *Can Poland save the Oder River from toxic algae blooms?*

wastewater from industry. Nitrates (NO_3), among other chemicals, can infiltrate and contaminate groundwater bodies. This is particularly problematic because groundwater is an important source of drinking water in Europe.

Nitrates are the most common cause of poor chemical status of groundwater in EU Member States, having led to 14 % of groundwater bodies by area being in poor status ([5]). Nitrate concentrations in EU groundwaters indicate a slow but steady decrease since 2008. In 2023, average nitrate concentrations in the EU amounted to 18.1 mg/L, representing a decrease of 5.5 % compared with 2008 and 2.7 % compared with 2018.

Between 2018 and 2023, the concentration of nitrates in EU groundwater decreased by

2.7 %

Recent Joint Research Center (JRC) modelling indicates that implementing existing EU policies (including the Common Agricultural Policy and the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive) would reduce nutrient loads delivered to European seas by 2050, with nitrogen loads around 10 % lower and phosphorus loads around 8 % lower than in 2020, albeit with significant uncertainty due to climate variability ([6]). While this would represent progress, it would clearly fall short of the EU target of reducing overall nutrient losses by 50 %, suggesting that current measures alone are insufficient ([7]).

Phosphate concentrations in EU rivers have risen strongly in recent years

Data on phosphate (PO_4) concentrations in EU rivers are available for 20 Member States (see page 112). Concentrations decreased between 2008 and 2010 but have increased steadily since 2012. PO_4 concentrations rose from 0.059 mg/L in 2008 to 0.068 mg/L in 2018 and reached 0.081 mg/L in 2023, indicating a clear upward trend in recent years. Although mineral phosphorus fertiliser use in the EU peaked in 2020 ([8]), average phosphate concentrations in rivers have continued to rise. This apparent decoupling is consistent with the literature on legacy phosphorus, which highlights that historical phosphorus surpluses stored in soils and sediments can continue to leach into surface waters for years or decades, delaying water-quality improvements after inputs are reduced ([9]).

Between 2018 and 2023, the concentration of phosphates in EU rivers increased by

19.1 %

Between 2018 and 2023, Finland and Sweden on average had the lowest concentrations of phosphate in rivers among all the reporting Member States. This is likely to be due to their low population densities and high levels of wastewater collection and treatment. In contrast, relatively high concentrations were found in some Member States with high population densities and/or intensive agriculture. The higher short-term values observed, particularly in Spain, Belgium Lithuania and Bulgaria, may lead to freshwater eutrophication.

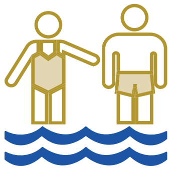
Total phosphorus concentrations in EU lakes have declined since 2007 but have stabilised since 2020. This indicates that long-term reductions in phosphorus inputs from point sources, such as wastewater and detergents, have improved lake water quality, while ongoing diffuse inputs, particularly from agriculture, limit further progress ([10]).

The share of inland bathing waters with excellent quality is declining

Contamination of water by faecal bacteria poses a risk to human health, especially at bathing water sites, where it can harm swimmers. Overall, the share of inland bathing waters with an excellent

([5]) European Environment Agency (2024), *Europe's state of water 2024. The need for improved water resilience*, EEA Report No 07/2024, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 10.
([6]) Joint Research Center (2025), *Effects of EU policy and climate change on future delivery of nutrients to European freshwater and seas*.
([7]) European Environment Agency (2025), *Nutrients in freshwater in Europe*.
([8]) Eurostat (2024), *Agri-environmental indicator — mineral fertiliser consumption*.
([9]) McDowell et al. (2020), The Ability to Reduce Soil Legacy Phosphorus at a Country Scale, *Frontiers in Environmental Science* (8).
([10]) European Environment Agency (2025), *Nutrients in freshwater in Europe*.

quality rating in the EU increased strongly between 2011 and 2017 but has generally fallen since then. The recent downward trend had been caused by a stagnation in the absolute number of bathing waters with excellent quality, while the total number of bathing waters included in the assessment rose. In 2024, 78.3 % of inland bathing waters showed excellent quality, compared with 79.1 % five years earlier. The major sources of bathing water pollution are sewage and water draining from farmland. Such pollution increases during heavy rains and floods which wash sewage overflow and polluted drainage water into rivers and seas.



78.3 %
of inland bathing waters in the EU showed excellent quality in 2024

Water scarcity

SDG 6 also addresses the sustainable use of freshwater resources and the reduction of water stress. The water exploitation index (WEI+) captures the pressure on renewable freshwater resources resulting from water demand in sectors such as agriculture, industry and public water supply. This demand is influenced by factors such as population growth, economic activity, agricultural practices and industrial development, while climate conditions determine the availability of renewable freshwater resources. In addition, the EU area affected by drought is monitored, as severe and frequent droughts can exacerbate water scarcity conditions.

Water stress has increased strongly in the EU in recent years

Water stress occurs when water demand exceeds the available water resources at a specific place and time. Water scarcity is generally considered to occur when the ratio of water abstraction to long-term average available water resources exceeds 20 %, while ratios above 40 % indicate severe water scarcity, meaning the use of freshwater resources is unsustainable.

The four-year smoothed average shows that the EU's WEI+ has increased by 0.6 index points over the past 15 years, from 4.9 % in 2008 to 5.5 % in 2023. The short-term trend since 2018 has seen a slightly stronger increase in water exploitation in the EU, by 0.9 index points. A look at the annual figures shows that the change in the EU's WEI+ has not been constant but has varied both annually and between Member States. The recent increase can be partly attributed to more frequent and severe droughts, which have affected water availability in an increasingly larger area in the EU ([11]). In 2023, Cyprus experienced severe water stress with a mean annual WEI+ of 75.3 %, followed by Romania with 47.4 % and Malta with 30.1 % ([12]). However, annual national values can mask regional and seasonal water stress, which is in fact common in many EU regions.

On average, water scarcity affects about 30 % of EU territory and 33 % of the population each year. In 2023, 28 % of the EU population and 32 % of its territory was affected by water scarcity conditions in at least one quarter of the year, with seasonal WEI+ values above 20 %. Water scarcity is more common in southern Europe, where about 30 % of the population lives in areas with permanent water stress and up to 70 % in areas with seasonal water stress during summer ([13]). Agriculture, public water supply and tourism put significant pressures on these regions, which are exacerbated by climate change ([14]). However, water scarcity also affects river basins in other parts of the EU, particularly in western Europe, where it is caused primarily by high urban population densities, combined with high levels of abstraction for public water supply, energy and industry ([15]).

Between 2018 and 2023, the EU's water exploitation index (WEI+) increased by
3.5
index points

Drought impacts on ecosystems have risen strongly in Europe

Severe and frequent droughts can increase the risks of water scarcity with detrimental effects on water supply for households, agriculture, energy and industry, as well on ecosystems and biodiversity.

([11]) European Environment Agency (2025), [Water scarcity conditions in Europe (Water exploitation index plus)](#).
([12]) Malta is experiencing permanent water scarcity conditions partly due to its natural hydro-climatic conditions.
([13]) European Environment Agency (2025), [Water scarcity conditions in Europe (Water exploitation index plus)](#).
([14]) European Environment Agency (2025), [Drought impact on ecosystems in Europe](#).
([15]) European Environment Agency (2025), [Water abstraction by source and economic sector in Europe](#).

Droughts pose challenges to achieve the objectives of the EU's Water Framework Directive and other water-related policies due to their effects on both water quality and quantity. It is therefore important for the EU to act to reduce the severity of impacts and strengthen the resilience of ecosystems and water supply to climate change-induced droughts. To support these policy actions, it is useful to monitor the impacts not only of hydrological water scarcity, but also of meteorological droughts. The latter are caused by insufficient precipitation during the growing season and thus may serve as an early warning signal for potential water scarcity, even though a direct relationship cannot be established with the current indicators.

3.7 %
of the EU area was affected by drought in 2024

The drought impact indicator monitors anomalies in vegetation productivity in areas with a soil moisture deficit during the growing season (also see chapter on SDG 15 'Life on land' on page 247). According to the Copernicus Climate Change Service, 2024 was the warmest year on record, both globally and in Europe, and the first calendar year in which the average global temperature exceeded 1.5 °C above its pre-industrial level. In this year, around 157 000 km² or 3.7 % of the EU area were affected by drought. Even though this is about the same level as in 2023 and is lower than in 2022, which had the largest drought-affected area on record, the overall extent of intense drought impacts in the EU is increasing. Persistent soil moisture deficits over several years can pose serious risks to permanent vegetation such as forests, reducing growth and increasing vulnerability to pests, fires and tree mortality ([16]). Except for 2021, the area of vegetation impacted has consistently exceeded the 2000 to 2020 baseline level of about 152 000 km² since 2017 ([17]).

Over the period from 2019 to 2024, the 10-year moving average of drought impact on ecosystems in the EU increased by 19.6 %. A look at the underlying annual data shows strong fluctuations, with the drought-affected area more than tripling in some years. There are also large variations between countries. In six Member States, the area impacted in 2024 considerably exceeded the average for the years 2000 to 2020. Malta was impacted the most, with 57.5 % of its area affected. Five further countries from southern and eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, Greece and Italy) had more than 10 % of their land area affected.

(16) Joint Research Center (2022), JRC Publications Repository — Long-term forest monitoring unravels constant mortality rise in European forests.
(17) European Environment Agency (2025), *Drought impact on ecosystems in Europe*.

Main indicators

Population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment

LONG TERM
2008–2023

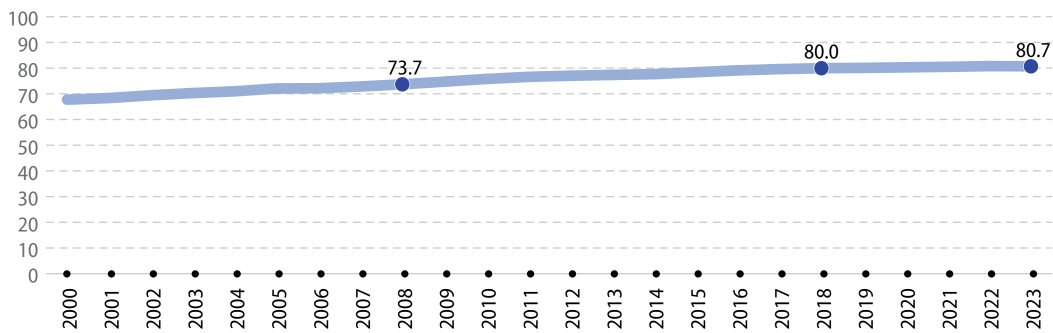
SHORT TERM
2018–2023

This indicator measures the percentage of the population connected to wastewater treatment systems with at least secondary treatment. Thereby, wastewater from urban or other sources is treated by a process generally involving biological treatment with a secondary settlement or other process that removes organic material and reduces its biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) by at least 70 % and chemical oxygen demand (COD) by at least 75 %. Data presented in this section stem from the Water Statistics of the European Statistical System (ESS).

Figure 6.1

Population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment

(% of population, EU, 2000–2023)



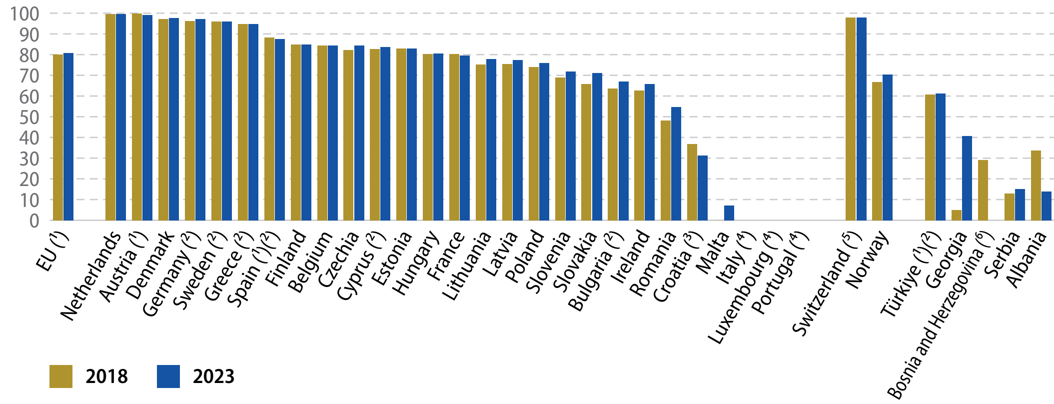
Note: Estimated data.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_06_20)

Figure 6.2

Population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment

(% of population, 2018 and 2023)



(¹) Imputed or estimated data.
(²) 2022 data (instead of 2023).
(³) 2021 data (instead of 2023).
(⁴) No data.
(⁵) 2019 data (instead of 2018).
(⁶) No data for 2023.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_06_20)

Pesticides in rivers

This indicator measures the share of reported waterbodies with pesticides exceeding thresholds based on Environmental Quality Standards (EQS) for the toxicity of the pesticides measured. Pesticides include both active substances from plant protection products and biocides as well as their relevant metabolites, thereby reflecting the substances actually present in the water and affecting aquatic life. The data used in the indicator are provided by EEA member countries, mostly on a voluntary basis. Only substances with a defined EQS are included.

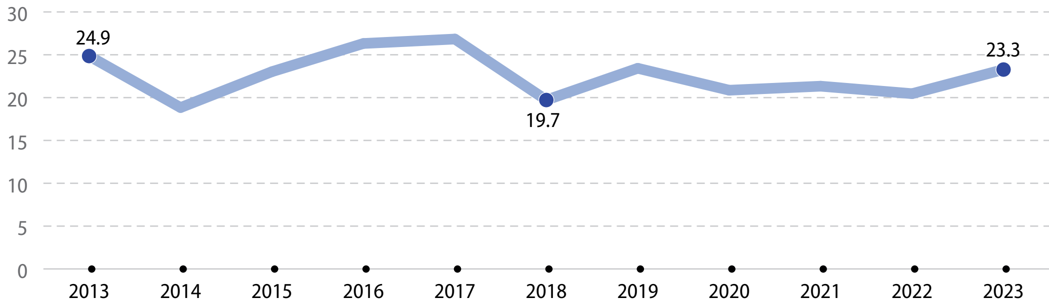
LONG TERM
2013–2023

SHORT TERM
2018–2023

Figure 6.3

Pesticides in rivers

(% of reported waterbodies with pesticides exceeding thresholds, EU, 2013–2023)

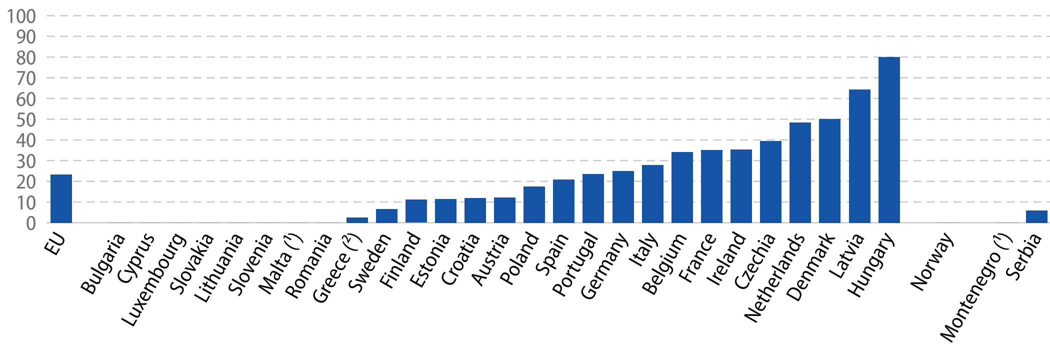


Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_06_70)

Figure 6.4

Pesticides in rivers

(% of reported waterbodies with pesticides exceeding thresholds, 2023)



(1) 2022 data (instead of 2023).
(2) 2021 data (instead of 2023).

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_06_70)

Biochemical oxygen demand in rivers

Biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) is used to measure water quality. It refers to the amount of oxygen required by aerobic microorganisms to decompose organic substances in a water sample over a period of five days in the dark at 20 °C (BOD5), measured as milligrams per litre (mg O_2/L) and weighted by the number of measuring stations. High values of BOD5 are usually a sign of organic pollution, which affects the water quality. The cleanest rivers have BOD5 values of less than 1 mg O_2/L, moderately and heavily polluted rivers show values ranging from 2 to 8 mg O_2/L. Data presented in this section stem from the EEA Waterbase database on the status and quality of Europe's rivers.

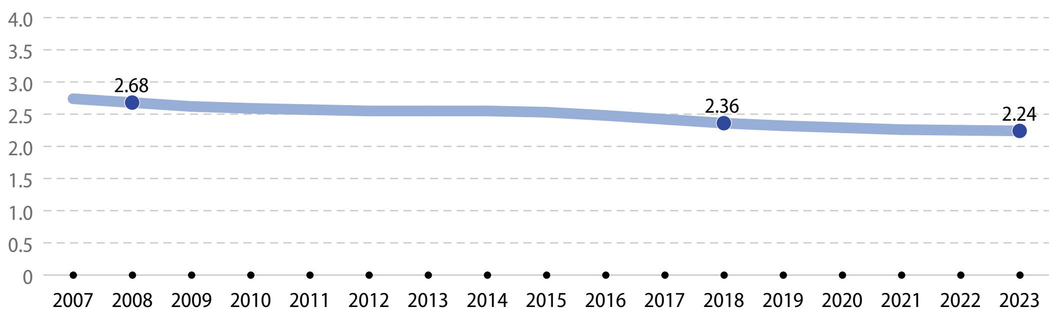
LONG TERM
2008–2023

SHORT TERM
2018–2023

Figure 6.5

Biochemical oxygen demand in rivers

(mg O_2 per litre, EU, 2007–2023)



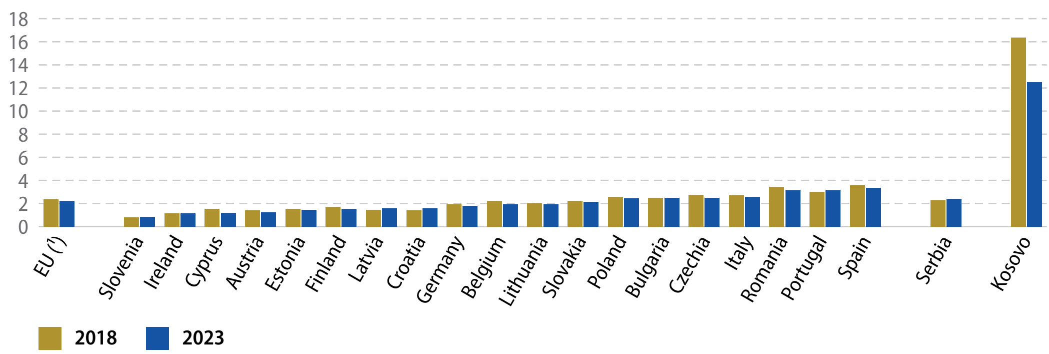
Note: 'EU' refers to an aggregate based on 19 Member States.

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_06_30)

Figure 6.6

Biochemical oxygen demand in rivers

(mg O_2 per litre, 2018 and 2023)



(1) 'EU' refers to an aggregate based on 19 Member States.

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_06_30)

Nitrate in groundwater

This indicator shows concentrations of nitrate (NO_3) in groundwater bodies measured as milligrams per litre (mg NO_3/L). The indicator can be used to illustrate geographical variations in current concentrations and temporal trends. Large inputs of nitrogen to water bodies from urban areas, industry and agricultural areas, can have negative impacts on the use of water for human consumption and other purposes. The data stem from the EEA Waterbase database on the status and quality of Europe's rivers.

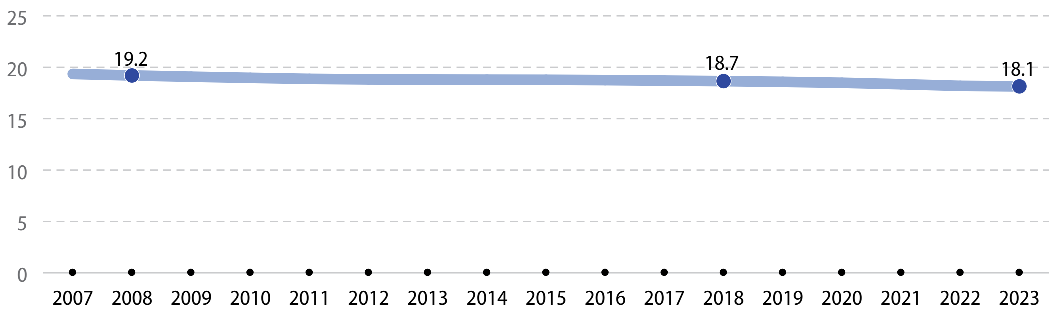
LONG TERM 2008–2023

SHORT TERM 2018–2023

Figure 6.7

Nitrate in groundwater

(mg NO_3 per litre, EU, 2007–2023)



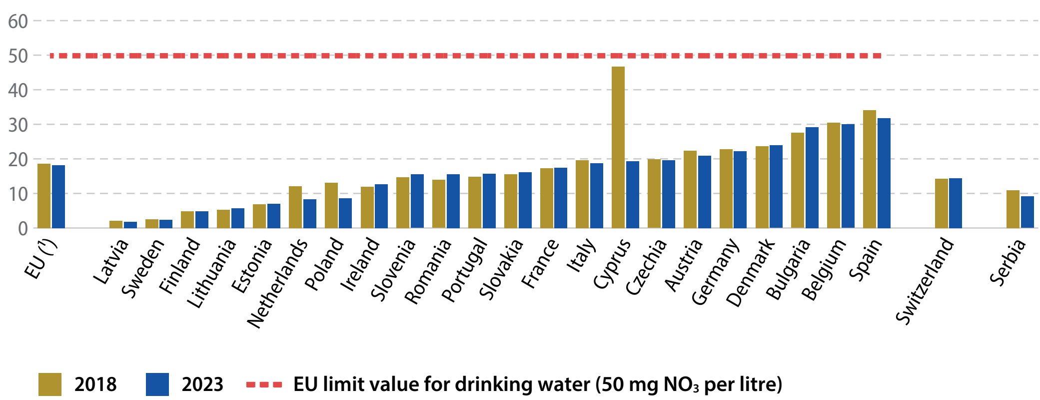
Note: 'EU' refers to an aggregate based on 22 Member States.

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_06_40)

Figure 6.8

Nitrate in groundwater

(mg NO_3 per litre, 2018 and 2023)



([1]) 'EU' refers to an aggregate based on 22 Member States.

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_06_40)

Phosphate in rivers

This indicator measures the concentration of phosphate (PO_4) per litre in the dissolved phase from water samples from river stations and aggregated to annual average values. At high concentrations phosphate can cause water quality problems, such as eutrophication, by triggering the growth of aquatic plants including algae. The data stem from the EEA Waterbase database on the status and quality of Europe's rivers.

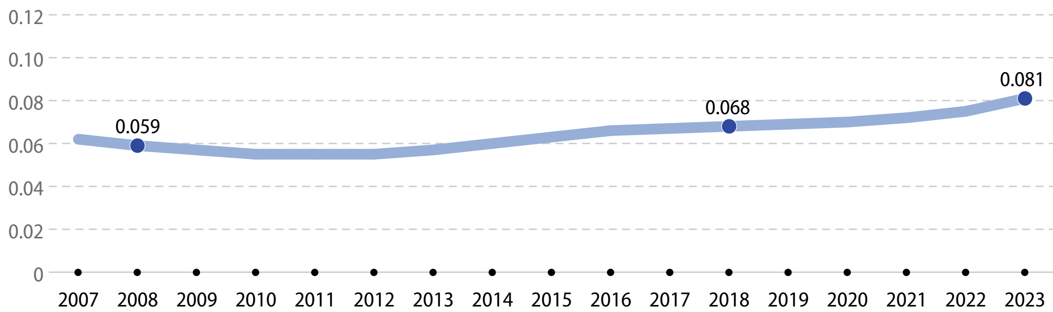
LONG TERM 2008–2023

SHORT TERM 2018–2023

Figure 6.9

Phosphate in rivers

(mg PO_4 per litre, EU, 2007–2023)



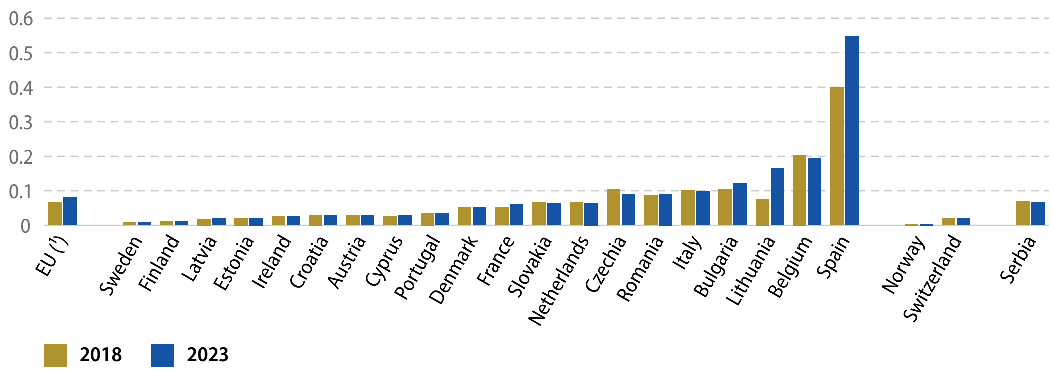
Note: 'EU' refers to an aggregate based on 20 Member States.

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_06_50)

Figure 6.10

Phosphate in rivers

(mg PO4 per litre, 2018 and 2023)



(1) 'EU' refers to an aggregate based on 20 Member States.

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_06_50)

Water exploitation index (WEI+)

The water exploitation index (WEI+) provides a measure of total water consumption as a percentage of the renewable freshwater resources available for a given territory and period. It quantifies how much water is abstracted and how much water is returned to the environment by economic sectors before or after use. The difference between water abstractions and water returns is regarded as 'water consumption'. In the absence of agreed Europe-wide formal targets, values above 20 % are generally considered to be a sign of water scarcity, while values equal to or greater than 40 % indicate situations of severe water scarcity ([18]), meaning the use of freshwater resources is unsustainable. The indicator is produced by the European Environment Agency based on data from the WISE SoE — Water Quantity database (WISE 3) and other open sources (Eurostat, OECD) and gap-filling methods.

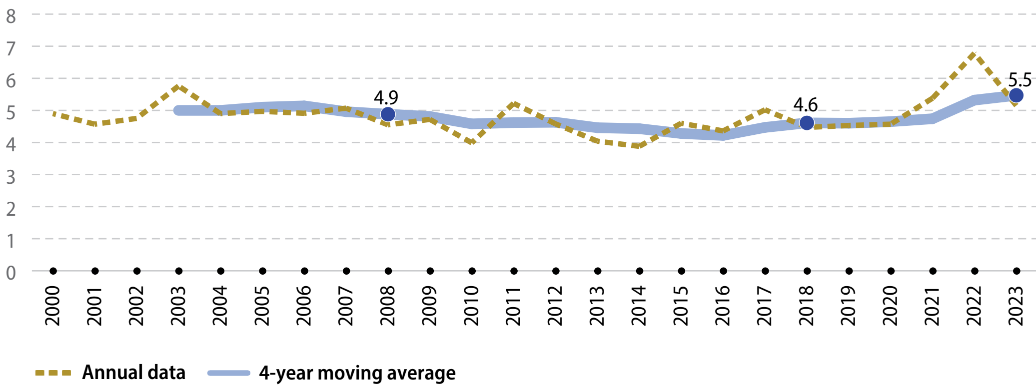

LONG TERM
2008–2023


SHORT TERM
2018–2023

Figure 6.11

Water exploitation index (WEI+)

(% of renewable water resources, EU, 2000–2023)

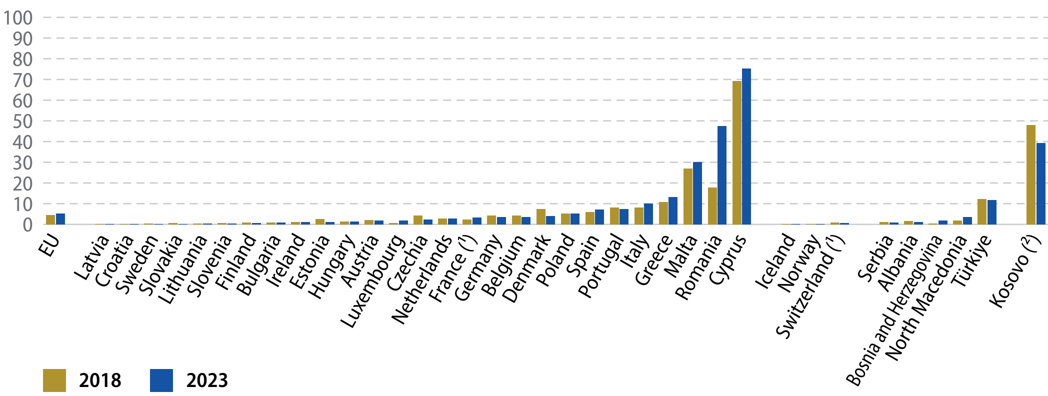


Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_06_60)

Figure 6.12

Water exploitation index (WEI+)

(% of renewable water resources, 2018 and 2023)



([1]) Estimated data.
([2]) 2022 data (instead of 2023); data have lower reliability.

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_06_60)

Affordable and clean energy

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

SDG 7 calls for ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy. This includes improving energy efficiency, increasing the share of renewables and further diversifying the energy mix while ensuring affordable energy for all.

In everyday life, well-being and economic activities depend on reliable, affordable and sustainable energy supply, such as for electricity, heating and cooling, and transport services. Monitoring SDG 7 in an EU context involves looking at trends in energy consumption, energy supply and access to affordable energy. Over the short-term period, the EU has made moderate progress towards this goal. Energy consumption has fallen, but faster progress is needed to reach the 2030 targets. However, energy productivity has increased, resulting in a further decoupling of economic growth from energy consumption. In the area of energy supply, the EU has made progress towards the 2030 target for renewable energy, but the pace needs to accelerate to reach a 42.5 % share. The EU has slightly reduced its energy import dependency, especially for solid fuels. Following a hike in energy prices that led to a sharp increase in energy poverty, access to affordable heating improved in 2024 but is still well below 2019 levels.

Table 7.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 7, EU

Indicator		Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Energy consumption						
Energy consumption ◎	Primary energy consumption	1193.7 Mtoe (2024)	2009–2024	Observed: – 1.1 % Required: – 1.6 %	↗	page 118
			2019–2024	Observed: – 2.5 % Required: – 2.8 %	↗	
	Final energy consumption	900.4 Mtoe (2024)	2009–2024	Observed: – 0.5 % Required: – 1.1 %	↘	
			2019–2024	Observed: – 1.5 % Required: – 2.1 %	↗	
Final energy consumption in households per capita		507 kgoe (2024)	2009–2024	– 1.1 %	↑	page 125
			2019–2024	– 1.9 %	↑	
Energy productivity		10.0 EUR per kgoe (2024)	2009–2024	2.4 %	↑	page 126
			2019–2024	3.5 %	↑	
Energy supply						
Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption ◎		25.2 % (2024)	2009–2024	Observed: 4.1 % Required: 5.5%	↗	page 127
			2019–2024	Observed: 4.9 % Required: 7.1 %	↗	
Energy import dependency		57.3 % (2024)	2009–2024	0.0 %	→	page 128
			2019–2024	– 1.1 %	↑	
Access to affordable energy						
Population unable to keep home adequately warm		9.2 % (2024)	2010–2024	– 0.5 %	↗	page 129
			2019–2024	5.9 %	↓	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

Policy context

The new Competitiveness Compass for the EU confirms the long-term objective to decarbonise Europe's energy systems to reach climate neutrality by 2050 while emphasising energy affordability. The Clean Industrial Deal outlines actions to support the switch to renewables, grid investments and energy efficiency to cut costs and drive industrial decarbonisation.

To reach the EU climate target for 2030, the Commission proposed an interconnected set of measures in the areas of energy, transport, taxation and climate policies, also called 'Fit for 55', most of which has been adopted. In view of shaping the path after 2030, the Commission, Parliament and Council have provisionally agreed on a 2040 climate target.

REPowerEU is a strategic plan to reduce the EU's dependence on energy imports, particularly from Russia. The EU gas and hydrogen package enables EU joint gas purchasing via a voluntary demand-aggregation mechanism, integrates renewable gas and hydrogen, and strengthens consumer protection. The Methane Regulation from 2024 aims to reduce harmful emissions from fossil fuels within and outside Europe.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility supports reforms and investments on sustainable mobility, energy efficiency, renewable energy and networks under its 'green transition' pillar.

Energy consumption

The revised Energy Efficiency Directive implements energy efficiency as a priority across all sectors and establishes a binding target for EU countries to collectively reduce energy consumption by at least 11.7 % in 2030 compared with the projections of the 2020 EU Reference Scenario so that the EU's final energy consumption amounts to no more than 763 million tonnes of oil equivalent (Mtoe). Member States shall make efforts to collectively contribute to the indicative EU primary energy consumption target amounting to no more than 992.5 Mtoe in 2030.

Energy supply

The revised Renewable Energy Directive establishes a binding EU target for renewable energy sources to reach at least a 42.5 % share of gross final energy consumption by 2030, with the aim of achieving 45 %. The Directive supports the uptake of renewable energy — including facilitating electrification, and easier and faster permitting procedures for renewable energy and necessary infrastructure projects — and aims to ensure the sustainability of biomass.

The Electricity Market Design reform aims to support renewable energy and promote the adoption of non-fossil flexibility solutions. The proposed Grids Package focuses on facilitating faster grid modernisation. The Energy Highways Initiative plans to fast-track eight strategically important energy infrastructure projects.

Access to affordable energy

The Action Plan on Affordable Energy proposes measures to stabilise energy prices, ensure supply security and drive the energy transition. The European Pillar of Social Rights lists energy among the essential services that everyone should have access to. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) assesses its state of play. The EU Energy Poverty Advisory Hub is an initiative that provides a central platform of energy poverty expertise for local authorities and other stakeholders.

Overview and key trends

Energy consumption

Increasing energy efficiency is one of the main pillars for achieving an affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy system as envisaged in SDG 7. Efficient energy systems reduce consumption and costs, may decrease energy dependencies and diminish the environmental and climate impacts linked to energy supply and use. The EU consequently aims to improve energy efficiency along the whole energy supply chain, by implementing 'energy efficiency first' as one of the guiding principles of the EU energy policy.

The decrease in the EU's energy consumption has slowed in 2024

The EU aims to reduce its energy consumption by at least 11.7 % by 2030, compared with the 2020 reference scenario projection. Translated into absolute levels, this means the EU should consume no more than 992.5 million tonnes of oil equivalent (Mtoe) of primary energy and 763 Mtoe of final energy by 2030.

The EU's primary energy consumption (PEC) has seen a general downward trend since 2009, reaching 1 193.7 Mtoe in 2024, which is a 14.9 % reduction over the past 15 years. In comparison, final energy consumption has fallen to 900.4 Mtoe or by 6.7 % over the same period. The difference in primary and final energy reductions can be mainly traced back to more efficient energy production and the switch to renewable energy (1). Long-term progress on both fronts was mainly driven by energy policies that support efficiency improvements across all sectors, particularly buildings, electric appliances and industrial installations.

The EU's energy consumption has seen an almost steady decline since 2017 (when excluding the COVID-19 related low in 2020). Overall, primary energy consumption fell by 11.8 % between 2019 and 2024, and final consumption by 7.1 %. The reductions were particularly strong in 2022 and 2023, with primary consumption falling by 4 % and final consumption by 3 % compared with the respective previous year. However, 2024 data show only a slight reduction of 1.2 % in primary energy consumption and a slight increase in final energy consumption by 0.8 % compared with 2023. Thus, additional improvements in energy efficiency and consumption patterns are necessary to ensure the EU meets both of its 2030 energy consumption targets.

1 193.7
Mtoe
of primary energy were consumed in the EU in 2024

900.4
Mtoe
of final energy were consumed in the EU in 2024

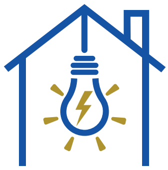
EU citizens keep reducing their energy consumption

Households account for about a quarter of final energy consumption in the EU. At home, people use energy in particular for heating, cooling, cooking, lighting, sanitation and appliances. The level of household energy consumption mainly depends on their composition, their economic status and their behavioural patterns (for example, efficiency and frequency of use of electrical appliances, and desired or affordable level of thermal comfort), but also on outdoor temperatures and building efficiency.

Household energy consumption has fallen by 9.0 % since 2019, reaching 507 kilograms of oil equivalent

(1) The substitution of fossil energy by renewable energy leads to a reduction of PEC via a statistical definition. The physical energy content method means fossil and biogenic fuel input quantities are multiplied by their calorific value. Wind, hydropower or photovoltaics produce energy with 100 % efficiency, geothermal energy with 10 % and nuclear energy with 33 %. This means that PEC decreases disproportionately with increasing substitution of fossil and nuclear fuels by renewable energy.

(kgoe) per EU inhabitant in 2024. The data show some annual variability that is mainly due to winter weather conditions, as more than 60 % of energy is used for heating ([2]).



507
kgoe
of final energy were consumed per EU inhabitant at home in 2024

When viewed over the longer term, efficiency improvements, particularly in space heating, have outweighed the effects of population growth and increases in the number and size of dwellings. Between 2009 and 2024, total energy consumption by all EU households fell by 13.1 % despite a 2.0 % or 9.0 million rise in the EU's population ([3]).

Households in southern Europe generally consume significantly less energy than those in northern Europe due to milder climatic conditions and lower winter heating demand. In 2024, household energy use ranged from 214 kgoe in Malta to 954 kgoe in Finland. Over the past five years, the largest improvements were observed in the Netherlands and Ireland.

The EU further decoupled economic growth from energy consumption

Trends in Europe point to a decoupling of economic growth from energy consumption, which is measured here using gross domestic product (GDP) and gross available energy (GAE) respectively. Between 2009 and 2024, GAE in the EU fell by 13.7 % while real GDP grew by 23.5 % ([4]). As a result, energy productivity — which measures GDP per unit of energy input — increased almost continuously from EUR 7.0 per kgoe in 2009 to EUR 10.0 per kgoe in 2024.

Between 2019 and 2024, energy productivity increased in all EU countries. Ireland experienced the strongest increase over this period and reported the highest energy productivity rate of the EU in 2024, at PPS 32.3 per kgoe. Romania, Luxembourg and Denmark follow in terms of absolute energy productivity in 2024. In contrast, Finland and Malta experienced only low productivity increases over the period and remained at comparatively low levels of PPS 7.0 and 8.2 per kgoe, respectively, in 2024.

Energy supply

To achieve a clean and secure energy system, the EU aims to increase the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption to 42.5 % by 2030, with an additional 2.5 % indicative top-up that would allow the EU to reach 45 %. Most renewable energy sources are practically inexhaustible or renewable within a human lifetime. In contrast, fossil energy sources, which are the main source of man-made greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and therefore significantly contribute to climate change, regenerate over millions of years. In addition, fossil fuels such as natural gas and crude oil are mainly imported from outside the EU. This dependence exposes consumers to significant costs and to the risk of supply shortages, as shown by the reduction in natural gas and crude oil deliveries from Russia. The stronger the dependency on a single country, the higher the risks. Therefore, the EU is seeking to increase domestic energy production, particularly from renewable energy sources, as well as to reduce its energy consumption, and to build and update infrastructure to allow clean energy to be distributed across Member States. In parallel, it aims to diversify its energy imports by expanding partnerships with multiple supplier countries, including through initiatives such as REPowerEU. The EU has also introduced legislation and sustainability criteria to address the negative impacts of certain renewable energy sources such as hydropower and biomass on, for example, health, water and marine and terrestrial ecosystems ([5]).

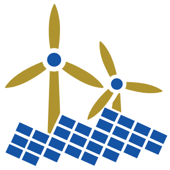
In 2024, the EU's energy productivity amounted to
10.0
EUR per kgoe

([2]) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: nrg_d_hhq).
([3]) *Source*: Eurostat (online data codes: nrg_bal_s and demo_gind).
([4]) *Source*: Eurostat (online data codes: nrg_bal_s and nama_10_gdp).

([5]) See for example Sayed, E.T. et al. (2021), *A critical review on environmental impacts of renewable energy systems and mitigation strategies: Wind, hydro, biomass and geothermal*, Science of the Total Environment, Volume 766; and Best, A. et al. (2021), *Assessment of resource nexus-related challenges and opportunities in the context of the European Green Deal*. Background report for the EEA Briefing 'Applying a 'resource nexus' lens to policy: opportunities for increasing coherence'.

More than 25 % of energy consumed in the EU now comes from renewable sources

Renewable energy use in the EU has grown steadily overall, almost doubling from 13.9 % of gross final energy consumption in 2009 to 25.2 % in 2024. Reductions in costs due to economies of scale and greater competition, more efficient technologies, supply chain improvements and renewable energy support schemes have driven this growth (6). Nevertheless, even faster growth will be needed across the EU to meet the 42.5 % target in 2030.



25.2 % of the energy consumed in the EU in 2024 came from renewable sources

The share of renewable energy grew in all three of the areas monitored here, namely electricity generation, heating and cooling, and transport. The share of renewables in electricity generation experienced the most pronounced growth, reaching 47.5 % in 2024. The shares of renewables in heating and cooling and in transport were lower, at 26.7 % and 11.2 % in 2024, respectively. Additional efforts are required across all these sectors to scale up the use of renewable energy.

Looking at specific renewable energy sources, the largest share of available renewable energy in 2024 came from solid biofuels (35.2 %), followed by wind energy (15.6 %), hydropower (11.8 %) and solar photovoltaics (9.7 %). Solar photovoltaic and wind energy made the biggest contribution to the absolute increase in renewable energy production from 2019 to 2024. Energy production from heat pumps and from liquid biofuels also increased strongly (7).

Energy import dependency in the EU has improved but remains high

Despite continuous growth in renewable energy sources within the EU over the past decade, fuel imports from non-EU countries remained an important energy source for the EU in 2024, contributing to 57.3 % of gross available energy (GAE) — as measured by net imports (imports minus exports). Net imports were highest for oil and petroleum products (96.6 % imported) and natural gas (85.0 % imported), followed by solid fuels (predominantly coal, 34.2 % imported). Net imports of renewable energy including biofuels accounted for 1.9 % of gross available renewable energy in 2024 and just 0.7 % of total net imports (8).

Net imports amounted to **57.3 %** of the gross available energy in the EU in 2024

The EU's share of net imports of energy had remained relatively stable at around 55 % until 2021, which can be explained by two opposing developments. On the one hand, the EU reduced its energy consumption and increased its use of domestic renewable energy. On the other hand, it reduced its primary production of fossil fuels because of exhausted or uneconomical domestic sources, particularly natural gas and crude oil (9). Between 2021 and 2022, however, energy import dependency increased strongly by 7.0 percentage points. This development was mainly driven by a need to increase stocks in 2022 as the amount of stored natural gas and oil had been relatively low towards the end of 2021 (10). In 2023 and 2024, energy import dependency fell back to the levels reported before 2022, reaching 57.3 % in 2024.

The EU has successfully reduced its energy dependency on Russia, which is no longer its main energy supplier. The drop was greatest for solid fossil fuel imports, for which Russia's share in total extra-EU imports fell from 46.7 % in 2019 to just 0.4 % in 2024. Similarly, the share of imports of petroleum products from Russia fell from 29.7 % to 2.5 %, and gas import dependency declined from 42.6 % to 13.6 % in 2024 (11). This follows the EU accelerating its phase out of Russian fossil fuels while increasing its diversification efforts. The EU set a ban on nearly 90 % of Russian oil imports to Europe, which took

(6) European Commission (2022), 2022 Report on the Achievement of the 2020 Renewable Energy Targets.
(7) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: nrg_bal_c).

(8) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: nrg_bal_s).
(9) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: nrg_bal_s).
(10) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: nrg_bal_s); European Council (2024), Infographic — How much gas have the EU countries stored?; Eurostat (online data code: nrg_stk_oem).
(11) *Source*: Eurostat (online data codes: nrg_ti_sff, nrg_ti_oil and nrg_ti_gas). Import shares for natural gas were calculated in cubic meters; solid fuel and oil import shares were calculated in tonnes.

effect in December 2022 for seaborne crude oil and in February 2023 for refined petroleum products. Moreover, coal sanctions were put in place in April 2022 and took effect in August 2022 ([12]).

Since 2019, the EU has reduced its consumption of imported energy carriers and has diversified its imports. In 2024, more than a third of EU gas imports came from non-EU Europe (36.6 %), with Norway being the main trade partner, followed by Africa (17.5 %) and North America (16.7 %). Around a fifth (20.1) % of oil and petroleum products were imported from non-EU Europe, mainly from Norway and the United Kingdom, followed by imports from Africa (18.0 %) and North America and the Middle East (16.6 % and 16.5 %). For solid fossil fuels, the largest source was Oceania, which accounted for 30.7 % of extra-EU imports, followed by North America (30.5 %) and Central and South America (16.0 %) ([13]). All percentages reported here refer to shares of total imports from outside the EU only, so do not account for energy traded between Member States.

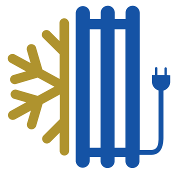
In 2024, all Member States were net importers of energy, with 15 importing more than half of their total energy consumption from other countries (EU countries and non-EU countries). Countries which imported almost all their energy in 2024 included Malta (98.4 %), Luxembourg (91.0 %) and Cyprus (87.7 %). Luxembourg's high import dependency mainly results from significant fuel sales to foreign commuters and transit traffic ([14]).

Access to affordable energy

SDG 7 emphasises the need for affordable energy for reasons of social equality and justice. Principle 20 of the European Pillar of Social Rights also places energy among the essential services everyone should have access to. The inability to keep the home adequately warm is a survey-based indicator used to monitor access to affordable energy throughout the EU. A lack of access to affordable heating is strongly associated with low levels of income in combination with high expenditure on energy and low energy performance of buildings and appliances ([15]).

The share of people reporting to be without affordable access to heating decreased in 2024

Between 2012 and 2021, access to affordable energy improved in the EU, with the share of the population unable to keep the home adequately warm falling from 11.2 % to 6.9 %. However, in 2022, cuts in Russian energy supplies led to a sharp 42.4 % rise in natural gas and electricity prices compared with the previous year ([16]) and impacted the ability of households to pay their energy bills. Consequently, the share of the EU population reporting they are unable to keep their home adequately warm rose strongly in 2022 and 2023, reaching 10.6 % in 2023. In 2024, the share decreased slightly to 9.2 %, likely because the increases in natural gas and electricity prices experienced in 2022 had largely normalised, with price growth in 2024 (2.6 %) being close to the long-term (2000 to 2024) annual average of 2.4 %.



9.2 %
of the EU population were unable to keep their home adequately warm in 2024

People with an income below the poverty threshold are more likely to be without access to basic needs (see the chapter on SDG 1 'No poverty' on page 21), including affordable heating. In 2024, 19.7 % of people in this low-income group reported having difficulty affording an adequately warm home, compared with 7.1 % of people with an income above the poverty threshold.

In 2024, EU countries with the highest share of the population unable to afford a warm home were Bulgaria and Greece (both 19.0 %), Lithuania (18.0 %), Spain (17.5 %) and Portugal (15.7 %).

([12]) European Council (2023), *Council Decision 2014/512/CFSP of 31 July 2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine* (latest amendment in 2023); and European Council (2024), EU sanctions against Russia explained.
([13]) *Source*: Eurostat (online data codes: nrg_ti_sff, nrg_ti_oil and nrg_ti_gas). Import shares for natural gas were calculated in cubic meters; solid fuel and oil import shares were calculated in tonnes.
([14]) Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Biodiversity (2023), *Eighth National Communication of Luxembourg under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Annex: Fifth Biennial Report of Luxembourg under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*.

([15]) European Commission (2025), *Energy poverty*.
([16]) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: prc_hicp_ainr).

Main indicators

Definitions of energy terms/concepts

A variety of energy indicators are used to measure energy consumption at different stages of the supply chain and progress towards the EU energy targets. The following box explains the indicators and the differences between them.

Gross available energy (GAE) represents a country's total energy demand. It is defined as: primary production + recovered/recycled products + imports – exports + stock changes.

Gross inland energy consumption (or gross inland consumption; GIC) represents energy demand including international aviation but excluding maritime bunkers. It is defined as: gross available energy – international maritime bunkers.

Total energy supply represents the total energy delivered and/or consumed in a country excluding deliveries to international aviation and international marine bunkers. It is defined as: gross inland energy consumption – international aviation.

Primary energy consumption (PEC) represents a country's total energy demand including consumption of the energy sector itself, losses during transformation and distribution, and the final consumption by end users. This means it excludes, for example, natural gas used in non-energy products, such as chemicals. It is defined as: gross inland energy consumption – non-energy use of energy carriers.

Primary energy consumption – Energy Efficiency Directive measures the progress towards the EU's 2020 and 2030 energy efficiency targets. It deviates from primary energy consumption only in that it excludes ambient heat. It is defined as: primary energy consumption – gross inland consumption of ambient heat (heat pumps).

Gross final energy consumption (or gross energy consumption) is the basis for measuring the share of renewable energy according to Directive 2018/2001 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources. It represents the energy commodities delivered for energy purposes to industry; transport; households; services including public services; agriculture, forestry and fisheries; the consumption of electricity and heat by the energy branch for electricity, heat and transport fuel production; and losses of electricity and heat in distribution and transmission.

Final energy consumption (FEC) (or final consumption – energy use) measures a country's energy use by end users, such as households, industry and transport. It excludes the energy used by the energy sector itself and losses incurred during energy transformation and distribution and any non-energy use of energy carriers. It is defined as: primary energy consumption – consumption by the energy sector – transformation/distribution losses – statistical differences.

Final energy consumption – Energy Efficiency Directive measures the progress towards the EU's 2020 and 2030 energy efficiency targets. It deviates from final energy consumption by excluding ambient heat and including international aviation. It is defined as: final energy consumption – final energy consumption of ambient heat (heat pumps) + international aviation.

Energy consumption

This indicator measures a country's total energy needs excluding all non-energy use of energy carriers (such as natural gas used for producing chemicals rather than for combustion). Primary energy consumption represents a country's total energy demand before any energy transformation, excluding energy carriers used for non-energy purposes. In comparison, final energy consumption covers the energy consumed by end users, such as industry, transport, households, services and agriculture.

* ** LONG TERM 2009–2024

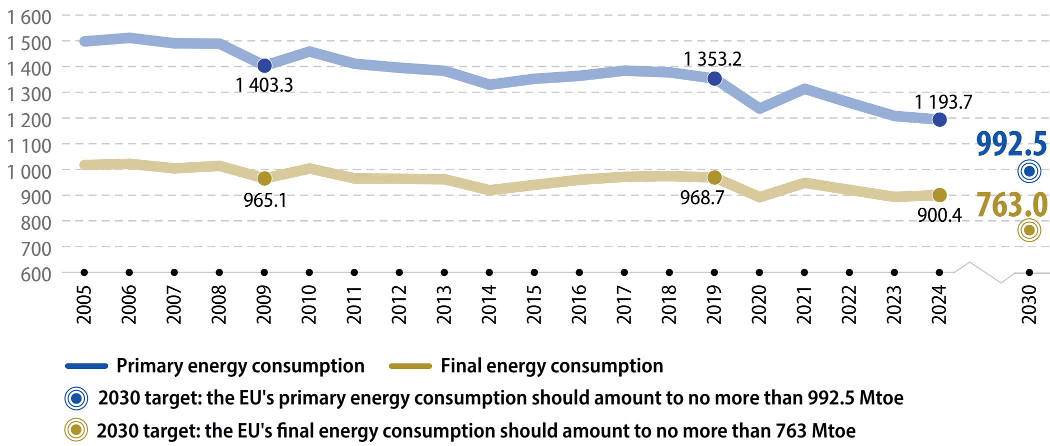
* ** SHORT TERM 2019–2024

* Primary ** Final

Figure 7.1

Primary and final energy consumption

(million tonnes of oil equivalent (Mtoe), EU, 2000-2024)

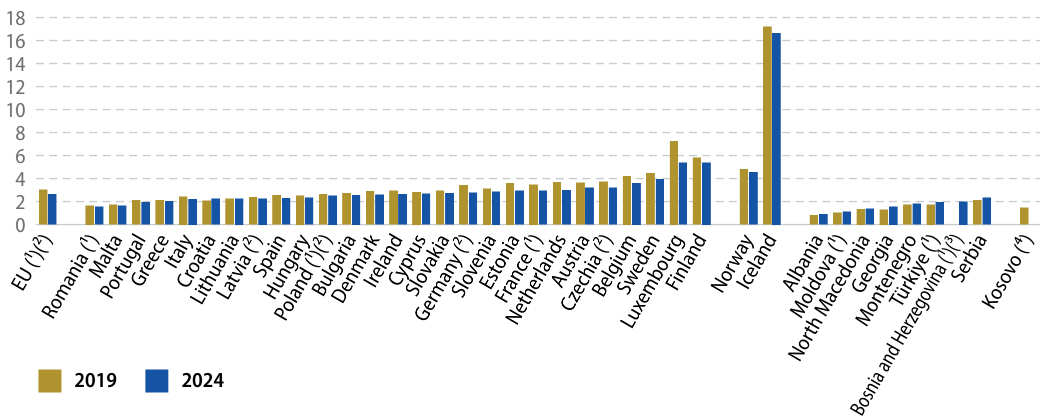


Note: y-axis does not start at 0. Definition of primary and final energy consumption (Energy Efficiency Directive) is used.
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: sdg_07_10 and sdg_07_11)

Figure 7.2

Primary energy consumption

(tonnes of oil equivalent per capita, 2019 and 2024)



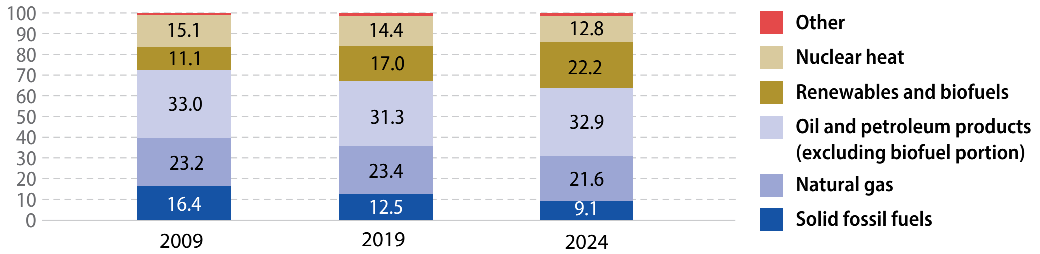
([1]) Population data are estimated and/or provisional for one or both of the years shown.
([2]) Break(s) in population data time series between the two years shown.
([3]) No data for 2019. ([4]) No data for 2024.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_07_10)

Figure 7.3

Primary energy consumption by fuel type

(%, EU, 2009, 2019 and 2024)



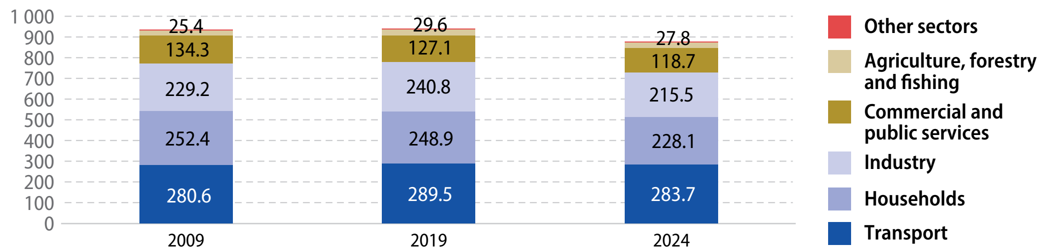
Note: Definition of primary energy consumption according to energy balances.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: nrg_bal_c)

Figure 7.4

Final energy consumption by sector

(million tonnes of oil equivalent (Mtoe), EU, 2009, 2019 and 2024)



Note: Definition of final energy consumption according to energy balances.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: nrg_bal_c)

Final energy consumption in households per capita

This indicator measures how much energy each citizen consumes at home, excluding energy used for transportation. Data are not temperature-adjusted, so variations from year to year are due in part to weather.

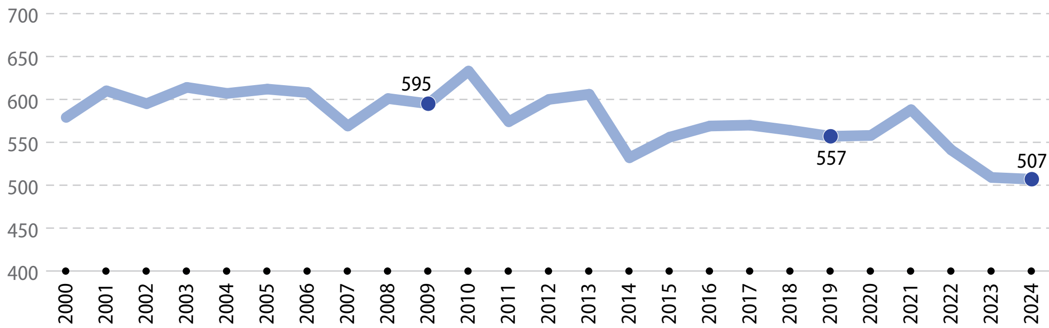
LONG TERM
2009–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 7.5

Final energy consumption in households per capita

(kgoe, EU, 2000–2024)



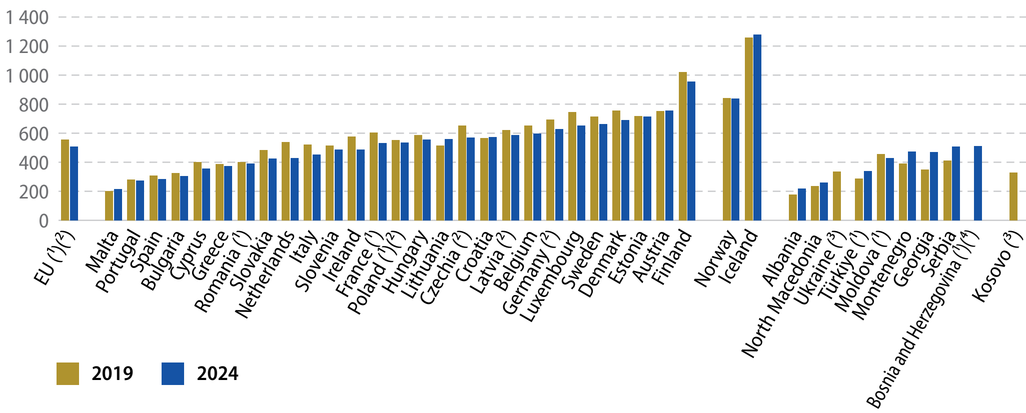
Note: y-axis does not start at 0. Multiple breaks in population data time series; 2018–2024 population data provisional and/or estimated.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_07_20)

Figure 7.6

Final energy consumption in households per capita

(kgoe, 2019 and 2024)



([1]) Population data are estimated and/or provisional for one or both of the years shown.
([2]) Break(s) in population data time series between the two years shown.
([3]) No data for 2024.
([4]) No data for 2019.

Source: Eurostat (online data ode: sdg_07_20)

Energy productivity

This indicator measures the amount of economic output produced per unit of gross available energy (GAE). Gross available energy represents the quantity of energy products needed to satisfy all demand of entities in the geographical area under consideration. Economic output is either given as euros in chain-linked volumes to the reference year 2010 at 2010 exchange rates or in the unit PPS (purchasing power standards).

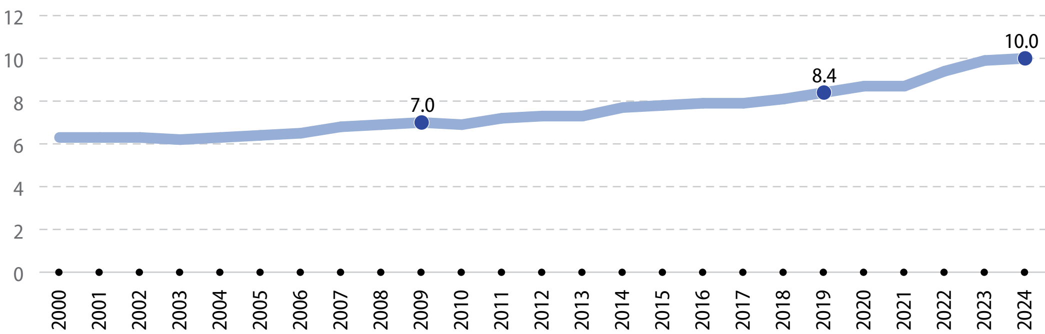
LONG TERM 2009–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 7.7

Energy productivity

(EUR per kgoe, EU, 2000–2024)

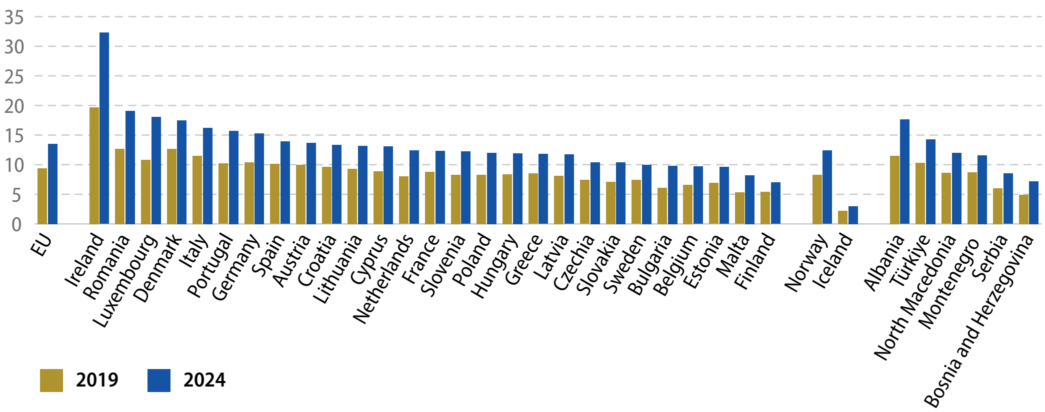


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_07_30)

Figure 7.8

Energy productivity

(PPS per kgoe, 2019 and 2024)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_07_30)

Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption

This indicator is defined as the share of renewable energy consumption in gross final energy consumption, according to the Renewable Energy Directive. The gross final energy consumption is the energy used by end consumers plus grid losses and power plants' own consumption.

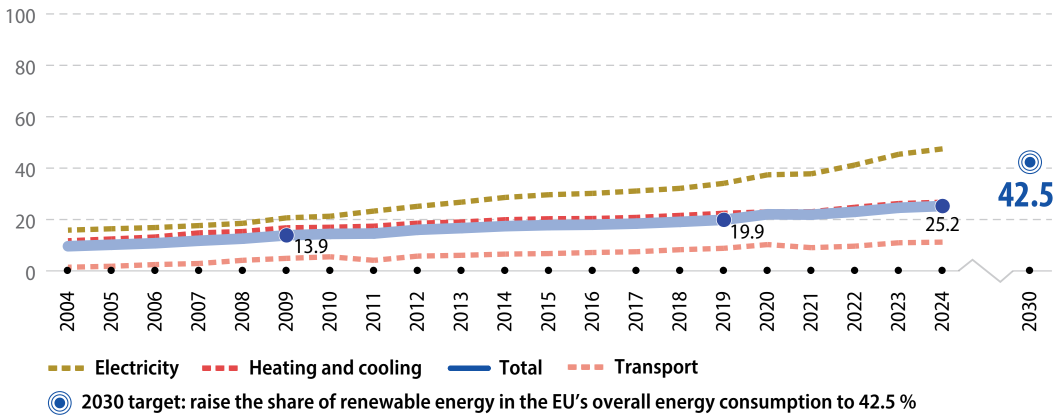
LONG TERM
2009–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 7.9

Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption by sector

(%, EU, 2004–2024)

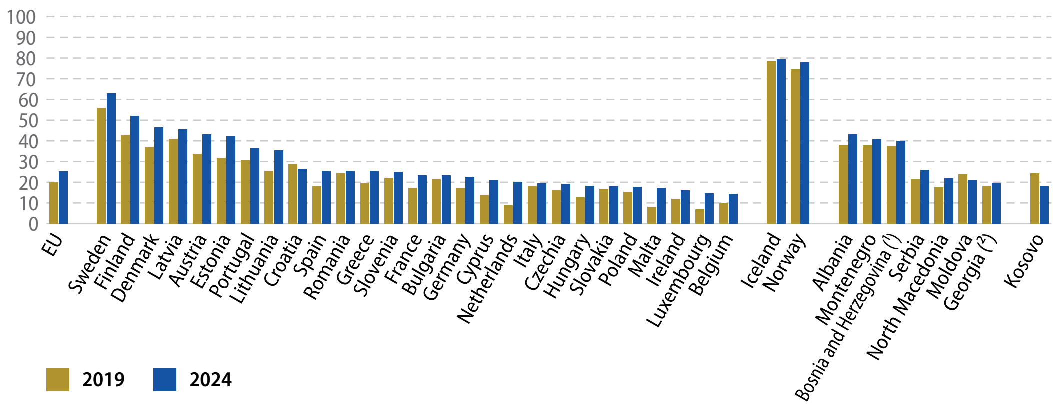


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_07_40)

Figure 7.10

Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption

(%, 2019 and 2024)



(1) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
(2) 2021 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_07_40)

Energy import dependency

Energy import dependency shows the share of a country's total energy needs that are met by imports from other countries. It is calculated as net imports divided by the gross available energy (GAE). Energy import dependency = (imports – exports) / gross available energy.

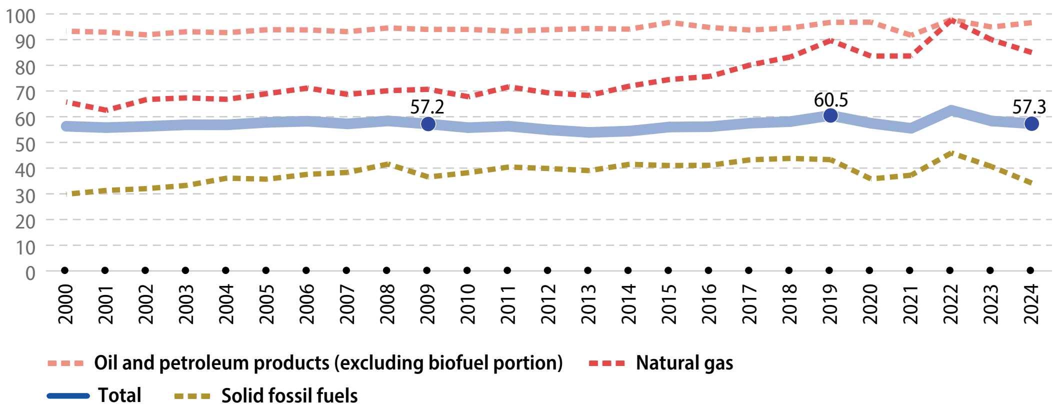
LONG TERM 2009–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 7.11

Energy import dependency by product

(% of imports in gross available energy, EU, 2000–2024)



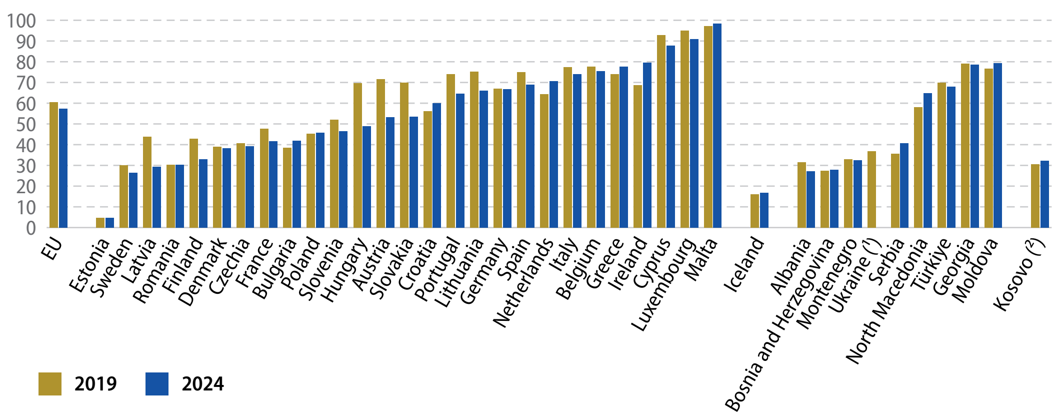
Note: 'Total' is not the average of the other three fuel categories shown. It also includes other energy sources, such as renewable energy or nuclear energy, which are treated as domestic sources.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_07_50)

Figure 7.12

Energy import dependency

(% of imports in gross available energy, 2019 and 2024)



Note: Norway not shown on the graph with an import dependency of -677 % in 2024.
([1]) No data for 2024.
([2]) 2022 data (instead of 2024).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_07_50)

Population unable to keep home adequately warm

This indicator measures the share of the population who cannot afford to keep their home adequately warm. The data are collected as part of the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) to monitor the development of poverty and social inclusion in the EU. Data collection is based on a survey, which means that indicator values are self-reported.

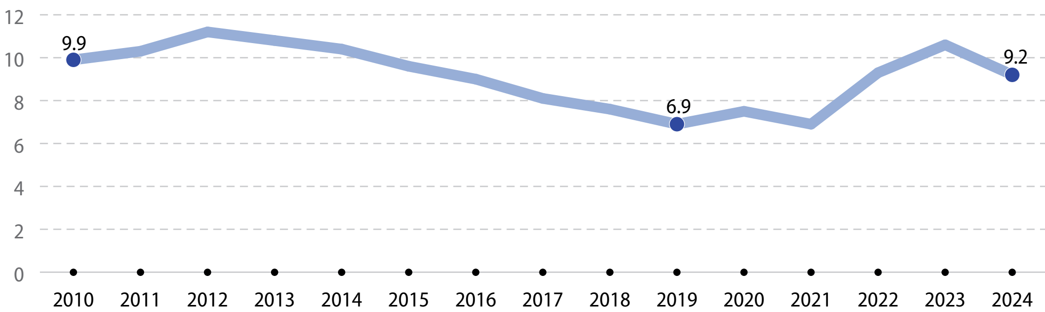
LONG TERM
2010–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 7.13

Population unable to keep home adequately warm

(% of population, EU, 2010–2024)



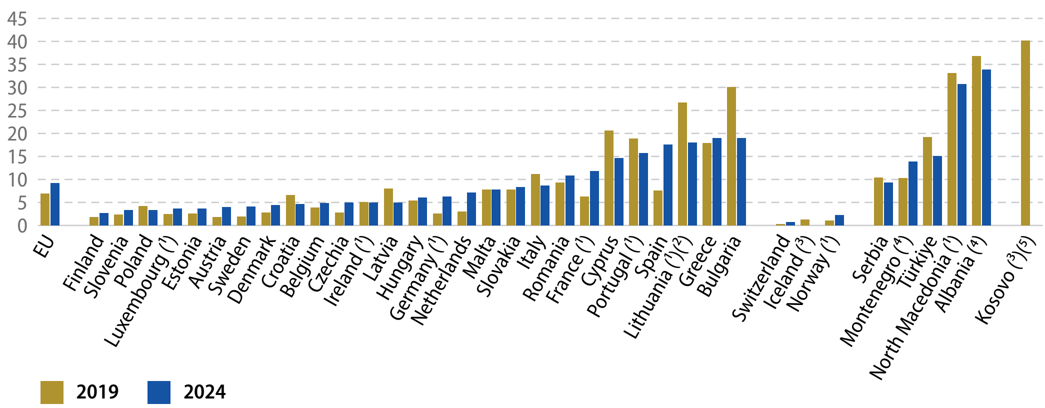
Note: 2010–2018 data are estimated.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_07_60)

Figure 7.14

Population unable to keep home adequately warm

(% of population, 2019 and 2024)



(1) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(2) 2024 data are provisional.
(3) No data for 2024.
(4) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
(5) 2018 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_07_60)

8

Decent work and economic growth

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

SDG 8 recognises the importance of sustained economic growth and high levels of economic productivity for the creation of well-paid quality jobs. It also calls for opportunities for full employment and decent work for all.

Sustainable economic growth and decent work are vital for the development and prosperity of European countries and the well-being and personal fulfilment of individuals. Monitoring SDG 8 in an EU context means looking into developments in the areas of sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work. The EU has made strong progress towards SDG 8 over the assessed short-term period. The economy has grown, and this growth has also become more sustainable as the material footprint decreased. However, the investment share of GDP has declined over the past years. At the same time, the economic growth has improved the EU's overall employment situation. The EU is thus on track to meet its 2030 target for the overall employment rate, even though progress towards the complementary target to reduce the share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training has slowed recently. Additionally, working conditions have improved further, with fewer fatal work accidents and fewer people being affected by in-work poverty.

Table 8.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 8, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Sustainable economic growth					
Real GDP per capita	34 110 EUR (2025)	2010–2025	1.2 %	↑	page 139
		2019–2025	0.9 %	↗	
Investment share of GDP	21.7 % (2025)	2010–2025	0.3 %	↗	page 140
		2019–2025	– 0.5 %	↘	
Material footprint (*)	6.2 billion tonnes (2024)	2009–2024	– 1.0 %	↑	SDG 12, page 205
		2019–2024	– 1.5 %	↑	
Employment					
Employment rate ◎	76.1 % (2025)	2010–2025	Observed: 0.9 % Required: 0.8 %	↑	page 141
		2019–2025	Observed: 0.8 % Required: 0.6 %	↑	
Long-term unemployment rate	1.9 % (2025)	2010–2025	– 4.8 %	↑	page 142
		2019–2025	– 5.7 %	↑	
Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) ◎	11.0 % (2025)	2010–2025	Observed: – 2.2 % Required: – 2.6 %	↗	page 143
		2019–2025	Observed: – 2.5 % Required: – 3.2 %	↗	
Persons outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities (*)	0.5 % (2025)	Long-term assessment not possible due to break in time series in 2021		✕	SDG 5, page 95
		2021–2025	– 4.5 %	↑	
Decent work					
Fatal accidents at work	1.63 per 100 000 workers (2023)	2010–2023	– 2.6 %	↑	page 144
		2018–2023	– 1.7 %	↑	
In work at-risk-of-poverty rate (*)	8.2 % (2024)	2010–2024	– 0.3 %	↗	SDG 1, page 34
		2019–2024	– 2.1 %	↑	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

(*) Multi-purpose indicator.

Policy context

Sustainable economic growth

The Sustainable Europe Investment Plan under the European Green Deal will mobilise at least EUR 1 trillion in sustainable investments by 2027.

As part of NextGenerationEU, the Recovery and Resilience Facility makes EUR 577 billion in loans and grants available to support reforms and investments in EU Member States. Under its social and territorial cohesion pillar, it tackles unemployment by supporting skills development.

The 8th Environment Action Programme from 2022 aims to decrease the EU's material and consumption footprints and foster a regenerative well-being economy. In December 2025, the Commission proposed measures to reduce the administrative burden for companies while maintaining strong environmental protection.

Employment

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan aims to increase the employment rate of people aged 20 to 64 to at least 78 % and to reduce the share of young people aged 15 to 29 neither in employment nor in education or training to 9 % by 2030.

The Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market aims to help long-term unemployed people re-enter the labour market.

The Youth Employment Initiative supports quality employment, further education, quality traineeships and apprenticeships. The European Social Fund Plus supports access to employment and activation measures, modernisation of labour market institutions and gender balanced labour market participation.

The European Care Strategy and the Council Recommendations on high-quality early childhood education and care systems and access to high-quality affordable long-term care aim to improve care services across the EU, including the working conditions in the care sector and the work-life balance of people with caring responsibilities.

The Social Economy Action Plan and the Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions promote Europe's social economy ecosystems to contribute to social inclusion, work integration, job creation, decent work and other societal goals.

Decent work

The Communication on decent work worldwide reaffirmed the EU's commitment to championing decent work at home and around the world. The Directive on adequate minimum wages in the European Union seeks to enhance the adequacy of minimum wages, helping to improve living and working conditions while reducing in-work poverty.

The Quality Jobs Roadmap sets out a coordinated plan to improve working conditions across the EU by promoting fair wages, secure employment, skills development, social protection and strong social dialogue. The Quality Jobs Act will update EU rules protecting workers while supporting productivity and competitiveness.

The EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021–2027 sets out key priorities for improving workers' health and safety. The Asbestos at Work Directive as well as the regularly updated Carcinogens, Mutagens or Reprotoxic Substances at Work Directive and Chemical Agents at Work Directive provide additional protection to workers.

Overview and key trends

Sustainable economic growth

While economic growth is an important driver of prosperity and society's well-being, it can also harm the environment it depends on. To ensure the well-being of future generations, the Commission has drawn up a new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness in line with the EU's strategic agenda 2024–2029. A key objective of this plan is to foster a more circular and resilient economy by promoting sustainable production and consumption. The indicators selected to monitor sustainable economic growth in the EU show that over the assessed short-term period, Europeans have enjoyed solid economic growth while managing to slightly reduce their material footprints. However, the investment share of GDP, which is an indicator of how well an economy is supporting future growth, has declined.

Real GDP per capita grew by 5.7 % between 2019 and 2025

Citizens' living standards depend on the performance of the EU economy, which can be measured using several indicators. One of these is growth in gross domestic product (GDP). Although GDP is not a measure of welfare, it gives an indication of an economy's potential to satisfy people's needs and its capacity to create jobs. It can also be used to monitor economic development.

The EU's real GDP per capita in 2025 was

EUR 34 110

Real GDP per capita (GDP adjusted for inflation) in the EU saw strong and continuous growth of 1.9 % per year on average between 2013 and 2019. In 2020, the economy was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a 5.5 % contraction of real GDP per capita compared with 2019. The economy rebounded from the recession as early as 2021, and real GDP per capita reached EUR 34 110 in 2025.

Between 2019 and 2025, the EU's real GDP per capita grew by 5.7 %. At the Member State level, growth was strongest in Ireland, with 36.6 %, followed by Croatia with 25.1 % and Bulgaria with 21.3 %. With the exception of Ireland, the strongest growth rates over the period from 2019 to 2025 were generally reported by countries from eastern and southern Europe. By contrast, five countries (Austria, Germany, Estonia, Finland and Luxembourg) experienced a decline in real GDP per capita over this period, by between 1.0 % and 3.8 %. The most recent annual growth rate for the EU shows a 1.3 % increase in real GDP per capita from 2024 to 2025. In 2025, 10 Member States reported growth rates of 2 % or more compared with 2024, with Ireland in the lead with a 10.6 % increase.

Investment contributes directly to economic growth. In addition, it enhances an economy's productive capacity and, therefore, future potential output. In 2025, the total investment share of GDP in the EU was 21.7 %, which was 0.7 percentage points below the 2019 share. Businesses were the biggest investors in 2025, with an investment share in GDP of 12.6 %, followed by households with 5.2 % and governments with 3.9 %. The investment share of households, which mainly reflects the purchase and renovation of dwellings, had been slowly growing between 2015 and 2022, but has decreased by 0.9 percentage points since 2022 and remains below the levels observed before the 2008 financial crisis (close to 7 %). Government investment has followed a counter-cyclical pattern, with a tendency to increase during crisis periods to, at least in part, compensate for declines in business investment.

21.7 %

of GDP was invested in the EU in 2025

The EU has reduced its material footprint compared with 2019

Meeting peoples' material needs often increases pressure on the environment. To lower this environmental impact, the EU aims to reduce its material footprint. The material footprint, also referred to as raw material consumption (RMC), shows the amount of material extracted from nature, both inside and outside the EU, to manufacture or provide the goods and services that EU inhabitants consume. In other words, it refers to the resources needed to sustain the EU's economic and social activities.

The EU's material footprint had been growing between 2000 and 2008 before it was curtailed by the economic crisis. Following the EU's economic recovery, raw material consumption resumed its upward trend, increasing by 7.1 % between 2015 and 2019. In subsequent years, the EU's material footprint fluctuated slightly, reaching 6.17 billion tonnes in 2024. This is a 0.5 % increase compared with 2023, but a 7.1 % decrease compared with 2019. The reduction was largely driven by a 30.0 % decline in the EU's consumption of fossil energy carriers between 2019 and 2024.

6.17
billion tonnes of globally extracted raw material were consumed in the EU in 2024

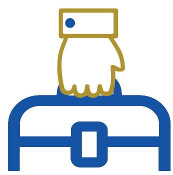
Despite the favourable short-term trend, the EU's total material footprint is still above the global average and exceeds sustainable levels of resource extraction. This means that Earth's capacity to provide resources would be exceeded if all countries in the world were to consume resources at the same rate as the EU ([1]). The EU is thus not on track to significantly reduce its material footprint, as envisioned by the European Green Deal and the 8th Environmental Action Programme. For more information on the EU's material footprint, see the chapter on SDG 12 'Responsible consumption and production' on page 197.

Employment

Decent employment for all — including for women, people with disabilities, young people, older people, those with migrant backgrounds and other disadvantaged groups — is a cornerstone of socio-economic development. Apart from generating the resources needed for decent living standards and achieving life goals, work provides opportunities for meaningful engagement in society. This in turn promotes a sense of self-worth, purpose and social inclusion. Higher employment rates are a key condition for making societies more inclusive by reducing poverty and inequality in and between regions and social groups. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan sets a target for at least 78 % of the population aged 20 to 64 to be in employment by 2030. It also envisions the complementary ambition of at least halving the gender employment gap and decreasing the rate of young people aged 15 to 29 who are neither in employment nor in education and training (NEETs) to 9 %.

The EU's employment rate reached a historic high in 2025

The EU employment rate has shown steady growth in both the long and the short term. In 2025, it reached a record high of 76.1 %, which is a 3.4 percentage point increase since 2019 when it amounted to 72.7 % and a 9.1 percentage point increase since 2010. The EU is thus well placed to reach its target of 78 % by 2030.



76.1 %
of 20- to 64-year-olds were employed in the EU in 2024

Employment rates in the EU differ significantly by sex, although the gender employment gap has narrowed in the long and short terms. The employment rate of women has been increasing in the long-term period and reached a new high of 71.3 % in 2025, while for men it was 80.9 %. Thus, the gender employment gap amounted to 9.6 percentage points in 2025, which is a 3.1 percentage point improvement compared with 2010 (see also the chapter on SDG 5 'Gender equality' on page 83).

(1) EEA (2025), *Europe's material footprint*.

In 2025, 17.0 % of all employed people in the EU worked part-time. For women this share was much higher, at 27.5 %, compared with 7.8 % for men (2).

Long-term unemployment remained at an all-time low in 2025

The EU's unemployment situation has improved almost steadily over the past decade. Between 2013 and 2025, the EU's unemployment rate for the age group 15 to 74 decreased by 5.6 percentage points, affecting 6.0 % of the population in the labour force in 2025 (3). City dwellers have tended to be more affected by unemployment than those living in rural areas. In 2025, the unemployment rate in cities was 6.8 % compared with 5.3 % for rural areas (4).

Long-term unemployment usually follows the trends in unemployment, but with a delay. Being unemployed for a year or more can have long-lasting negative implications for individuals and society by reducing employability prospects, contributing to human capital depreciation, endangering social cohesion and increasing the risk of poverty and social exclusion. Beyond negatively impacting material living standards, it can also lead to a deterioration of individual skills and health status, thus hindering future employability, productivity and earnings.

Similar to the unemployment rate, long-term unemployment in the EU has been declining since 2014. In 2024, the rate reached the lowest value on record, at 1.9 %, and remained at this level in 2025. This was 0.8 percentage points below the 2019 value of 2.7 %. The proportion of long-term unemployment in total unemployment has also decreased since 2014, reaching 31.5 % in 2025, which is 7.9 percentage points below the level observed in 2019 (5).

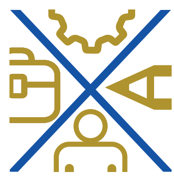
1.9%
of the population in the labour force were long-term unemployed in 2025

The situation for young people in the labour market is improving

The labour market situation of young people improved steadily between 2014 and 2023, disregarding the pandemic-related drop. In 2025, the youth employment rate, referring to people aged 20 to 24 years, was 53.5 %, which is still significantly lower than for other age groups and 0.6 percentage points below its 2023 level (6). The relatively low employment rate for people aged 20 to 24 can partly be explained by the fact that many people at this age are in education and are not part of the labour force. In addition, however, youth unemployment has been significantly higher than unemployment in older age groups. Despite a strong 9.9 percentage point decrease in youth unemployment since 2013, 13.5 % of 20- to 24-year-olds who were part of the labour force were unemployed in 2025 (7).

Young people not engaged in employment nor in education and training (NEET) are among the most vulnerable groups in the labour market. Over the long term they may fail to gain new skills and suffer from erosion of competences, which in turn might lead to a higher risk of labour market and social exclusion. To improve the labour market situation of young people, the EU set a target to decrease the NEET rate to 9 % by 2030.

The share of 15- to 29-year-olds NEET has decreased since 2013, reaching a record low of 11.0 % in 2025. However, the rate of decline has slowed since 2023, and further efforts seem necessary for the EU to reach its NEET target of 9 % by 2030. Since 2009, the NEET share in rural areas and in towns and suburbs has been higher than in cities. In 2025, it amounted to 12.2 % in rural areas and 11.0 % in towns and suburbs, compared with 10.3 % in cities (8).



11.0%
of young people aged 15 to 29 were not employed nor in education and training in the EU in 2025

(2) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: lfsa_epgaed).
(3) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: une_rt_a).
(4) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: lfst_r_urgau).
(5) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: une_ltu_a).
(6) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: lfsa_ergan).
(7) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: lfsa_urgaed).
(8) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfse_29).

The share of persons outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities has decreased slightly

Underdeveloped care services — both for childcare and long-term care of a family member — and inflexible work-life-balance options may constitute impediments to people wanting to work. In 2025, 0.5 % of the EU population aged 20 to 64 were outside the labour force because they were looking after adults requiring care (for example, due to old age or disability) or children while wanting to work. This is slightly less than in 2021, when this share stood at 0.6%.

0.5 %
of women in the EU were outside of the labour force because of caring responsibilities in 2025

The share varied between Member States. While in Denmark, Romania, Lithuania, Sweden and Finland only 0.1 % of the population indicated they were outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities but willing to work, this was the case for 0.9 % of the population in Ireland and for 0.7 % in Germany.

Caring responsibilities are more often performed by women, contributing to the gender employment gap. In 2025, 0.8 % of women in the EU aged 20 to 64 were outside the labour force because they were looking after children or adults requiring care, while for men, this share was 0.1 %.

Caring responsibilities were one of the main reasons why EU residents worked part-time in 2025, accounting for 22.6 % of all part-time employed ([9]). The share of people who cited caring responsibilities as the main reason for working part-time varied significantly across Member States, ranging from 2.1 % in Denmark to 37.3 % in the Netherlands. At the EU level, the share was considerably higher among women than men in 2025, at 27.5 % compared with 7.3 %.

The employment gap between people with and without disabilities amounted to 24.2 percentage points in 2025

People with disabilities experience difficulties with basic activities such as seeing, hearing, walking or communicating, or have a longstanding health condition. Disabilities impact people's lives in many areas, including participation in the labour market. In 2025, the employment rate of people with disabilities at the EU level was 24.2 percentage points lower than it was for people without disabilities. For women with disabilities, this gap was 20.9 percentage points, while for men with disabilities it was 27.1 percentage points. The degree of disability is also an important factor affecting the employment rate. At the EU level, the employment rate for people with a severe disability was 46.1 percentage points lower than for people without a disability, while for people with a moderate disability, the gap was 16.0 percentage points in 2025 ([10]).

Decent work

For a society's sustainable economic development and well-being it is crucial that economic growth generates not just any kind of job but 'decent', quality jobs. This means that work should deliver fair income, workplace security and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, and equality of opportunity ([11]).

Safety at EU workplaces continued to improve in 2023

A prerequisite for decent work is a safe and healthy working environment, without fatal and non-fatal accidents at work, occupational diseases and other work-related health problems, where risks of work-related hazardous events or exposures are avoided or, if not possible, minimised. Over the past few decades, the EU and its Member States have put considerable effort into ensuring minimum requirements providing a high level of protection in occupational health and safety at work. As a result, the rate of fatal accidents at work has

1.63
per 100 000 workers in the EU had a fatal accident at work in 2023

([9]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: lfsa_epgar).

([10]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: hlth_dlm200).
([11]) European Commission (2025), *Employment and Decent work*.

declined by 29.4 % since 2010 and by 8.4 % in the short-term period since 2018, amounting to 1.63 fatalities per 100 000 employed persons in 2023. This short-term decline was mostly achieved due to a 6.7 % reduction in the rate of fatal accidents at work in 2022. In 2023, the rate continued to decline, albeit at a slower pace, at 1.8 %.

Analysing data on fatal accidents across industries reveals some sharp contrasts. Mining and quarrying as well as construction have been especially prone to fatal accidents over the past decade, with the rate of fatal accidents at work amounting to 10.78 and 6.29 fatalities per 100 000 employed persons in 2023, respectively. The incidence rate for these two activities has also slightly increased since 2018, by 2.4 % for mining and quarrying and by 0.3 % in construction. In contrast, the rate of fatal accidents in agriculture, forestry and fishing, as well as in transportation and storage — two other accident-prone activities — declined between 2018 and 2023, by 7.6 % and 11.9 %, respectively ([12]).

When analysing fatal accidents at work in the long-term period, most economic sectors reduced their rates between 2010 and 2023. One notable exception is the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, where the rate increased by 31.4 %, from 4.55 in 2010 to 5.98 in 2023. While the absolute number of fatal accidents in this sector decreased by 22.4 %, this decline was offset by an even stronger reduction in employment, resulting in a higher incidence rate. However, the employment decline alone does not fully explain the rise in incidence rate, indicating persistent safety challenges in the sector.

In-work poverty in the EU decreased to 8.2 % in 2024, the lowest level on record

Besides safety at work, fair income and social protection are also important components of decent work. Poverty is often associated with the absence of a paid occupation but low wages can also push some workers below the poverty line. People working part time or on temporary contracts, self-employed workers, low-skilled workers and non-EU born workers are especially affected by in-work poverty. In the EU, the share of the so-called '[working poor](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:In-work_at-risk-of-poverty_rate)' (aged 18 and over) reached its peak in 2016 and has been decreasing since then. By 2024, this figure had fallen to 8.2 %, marking the lowest level recorded since monitoring started in 2010. For more information on in-work poverty, see the chapter on SDG 1 'No poverty' on page 21.

8.2 %
of employed people in the EU were at risk of income poverty in 2024

While a fixed-term contract, part-time employment or platform work may provide greater flexibility for both employers and workers, it is not always a personal choice for an employee and can significantly influence their well-being. In 2025, 3.3 % of European employees aged 20 to 64 reported they were involuntarily working on temporary contracts, corresponding to 29.0 % of all temporary employees. This share has decreased significantly over the short term since 2019 ([13]). Data on labour transitions from temporary to permanent contracts also shows that the share of such transitions has increased since 2015, reaching 35.2 % in 2025 (based on a three-year average) ([14]). Like involuntary temporary employment, the share of involuntary part-time employment in total employment in the EU also decreased, from 4.7 % in 2019 to 3.1 % in 2025 ([15]).

Self-employment is another non-standard form of work that offers both opportunities and challenges, particularly for solo self-employed workers (those without employees). While solo self-employment could point towards entrepreneurial initiative, it could also be used as a proxy for 'bogus' self-employment, which conceals dependent employment relationships ([16]). For the 20 to 64 age group, the share of the solo self-employed in total employment has slightly decreased from 9.4 % in 2019 to 8.9 % in 2025 ([17]).

([12]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: hsw_n2_02).

([13]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: lfsa_etgar).
([14]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_lvhl36)
([15]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data codes: lfsa_epgar and lfsa_epgaed).
([16]) European Commission (2024), *Proposal for a Joint Employment Report*, COM(2024) 701 final, Strasbourg, p.96. Dependent self-employed are those workers who worked during the last 12 months for only one or dominant client, and this client determined their working hours — see Eurostat (2018), Statistics explained: self-employment statistics.
([17]) Calculations based on Eurostat (online data code: lfsa_egaps).

Main indicators

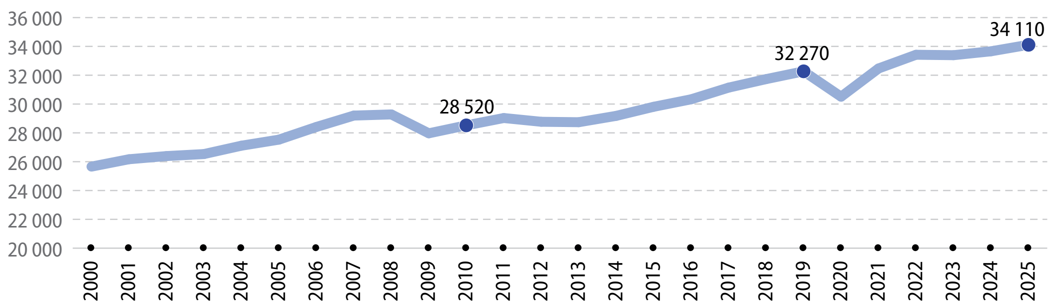
Real GDP per capita

Gross domestic product (GDP) is a measure of economic activity and is often used as a proxy for changes in a country's material living standards. It refers to the value of total final output of goods and services produced by an economy within a certain period. Real GDP per capita is calculated as the ratio of real GDP (GDP adjusted for inflation) to the average population of the same year and is based on rounded figures.

LONG TERM
2010–2025

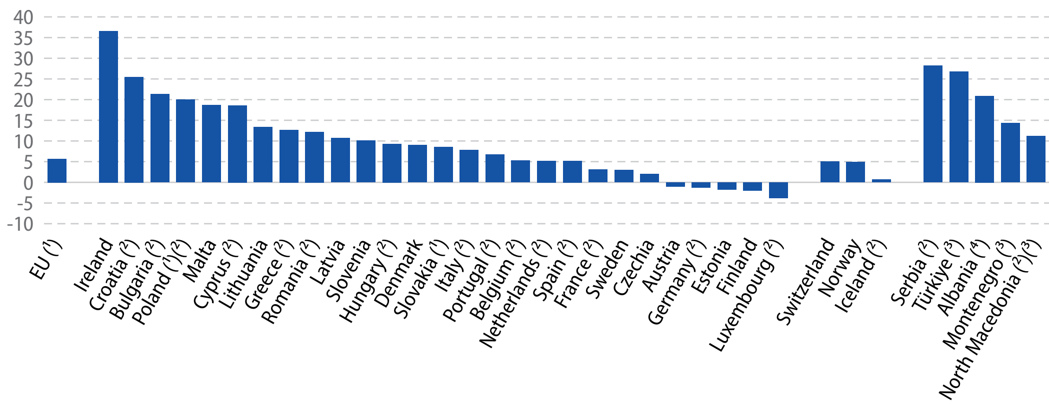
SHORT TERM
2019–2025

Figure 8.1
Real GDP per capita
(EUR per capita, chain-linked volumes (2020), EU, 2000–2025)



Note: Y-axis does not start at 0. Break in time series in 2020.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_08_10)

Figure 8.2
Change in real GDP per capita
(%, 2019–2025)



(1) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(2) Provisional or estimated data.
(3) Change 2019–2024.
(4) Change 2017–2022.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_08_10)

Investment share of GDP

The investment share of GDP measures gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) for the total economy, government and corporations, as well as household sectors as a percentage of GDP.

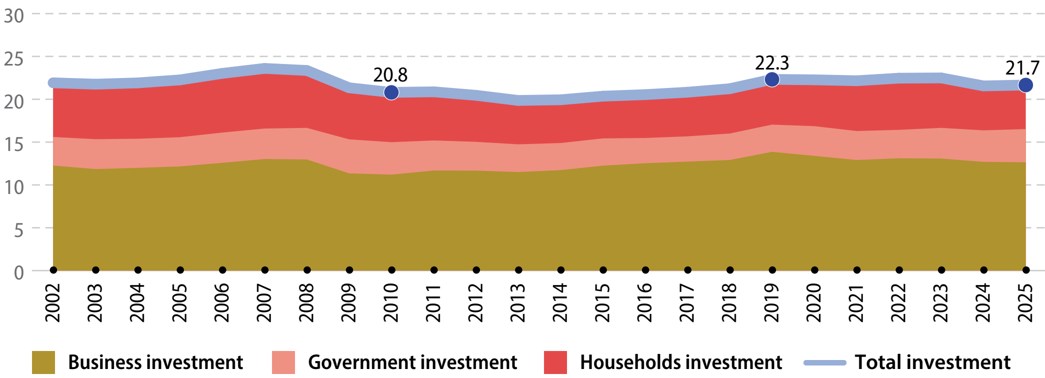
LONG TERM 2010–2025

SHORT TERM 2019–2025

Figure 8.3

Investment share of GDP by institutional sector

(% of GDP, EU, 2002–2025)

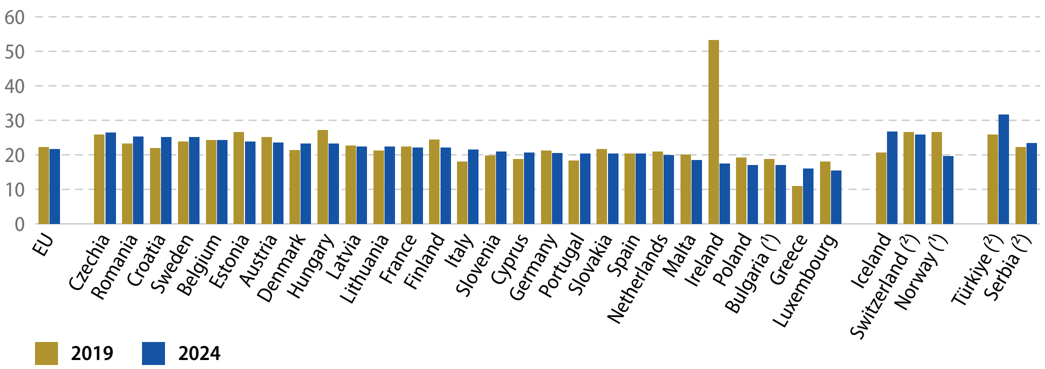


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_08_11)

Figure 8.4

Investment share of GDP

(% of GDP, 2019 and 2024)



(¹) 2022 data (instead of 2024).
(²) 2023 data (instead of 2024).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_08_11)

Employment rate

The [employment rate](#) is defined as the percentage of employed persons in relation to the total population. The data analysed here focus on the population aged 20 to 64. Employed persons are those who, during a reference week, worked at least one hour for pay or profit or were temporarily absent from such work. Data presented in this section stem from the [EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS)](#).

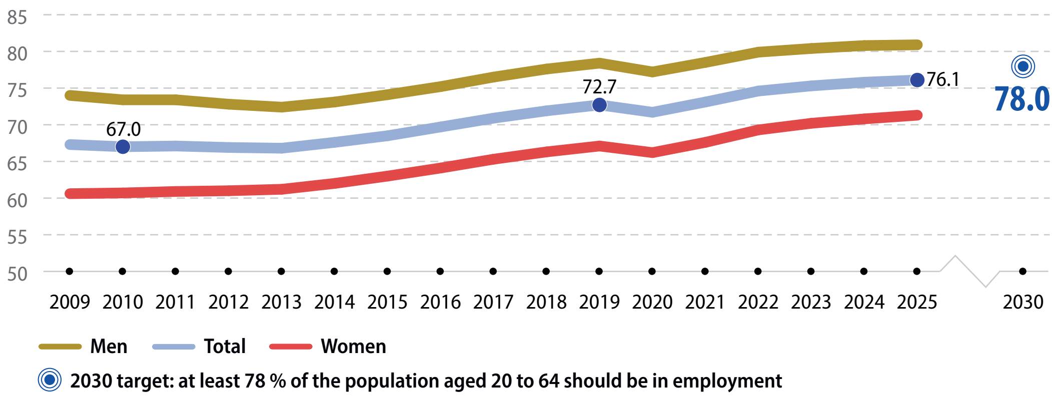
LONG TERM
2010–2025

SHORT TERM
2019–2025

Figure 8.5

Employment rate by sex

(% of population aged 20 to 64, EU, 2009–2025)



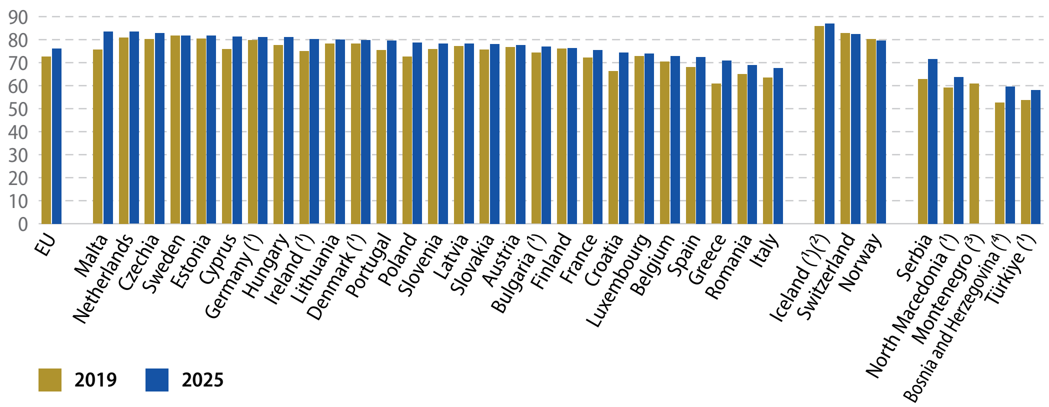
Note: Y-axis does not start at 0.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: [sdg_08_30](#))

Figure 8.6

Employment rate

(% of population aged 20 to 64, 2019 and 2025)



([1]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
([2]) 2024 data (instead of 2025).
([3]) No data for 2025.
([4]) 2021 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: [sdg_08_30](#))

Long-term unemployment rate

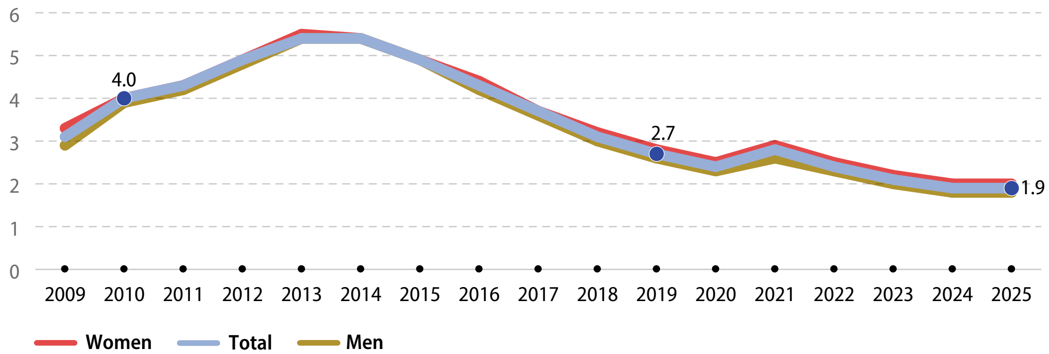
Long-term unemployment is measured as a percentage of the population in the labour force (which includes both employed and unemployed people) aged 15 to 74 who have been unemployed for 12 months or more. Unemployed persons are defined as all persons who were without work during the reference week, were currently available for work and were either actively seeking work in the past four weeks or had already found a job to start within the next three months. The unemployment period is defined as the duration of a job search, or as the length of time since the last job was held (if shorter than the time spent on a job search). Data presented in this section stem from the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS).

LONG TERM 2010–2025

SHORT TERM 2019–2025

Figure 8.7: Long-term unemployment rate by sex

(% of population in the labour force aged 15 to 74, EU, 2009–2025)

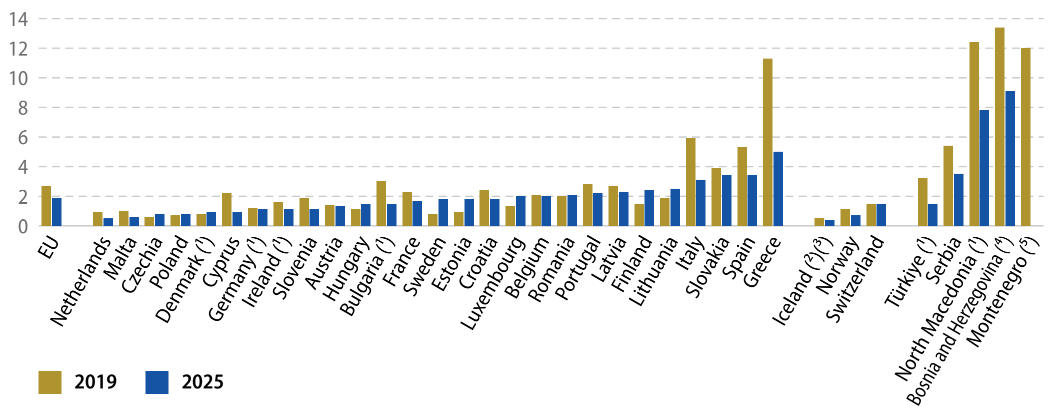


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_08_40)

Figure 8.8

Long-term unemployment rate

(% of population in the labour force aged 15 to 74, 2019 and 2025)



(1) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(2) 2020 data (instead of 2019).
(3) 2024 data (instead of 2025).
(4) 2021 data (instead of 2019).
(5) No data for 2025.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_08_40)

Young persons neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET)

A considerable proportion of young people aged 15 to 29 in the EU are not employed. For some this is due to the pursuit of education and training. However, others have withdrawn from education and training as well. Those are captured by the statistics on young people who are neither in employment (meaning they are outside of the labour force or unemployed), nor in education and training (NEET rate). Data presented in this section stem from the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS).

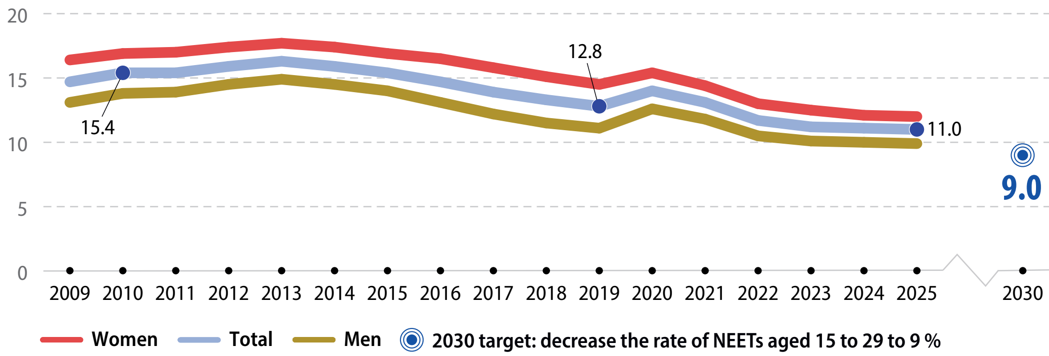
LONG TERM 2010–2025

SHORT TERM 2019–2025

Figure 8.9

Young persons neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) by sex

(% of population aged 15 to 29, EU, 2009–2025)

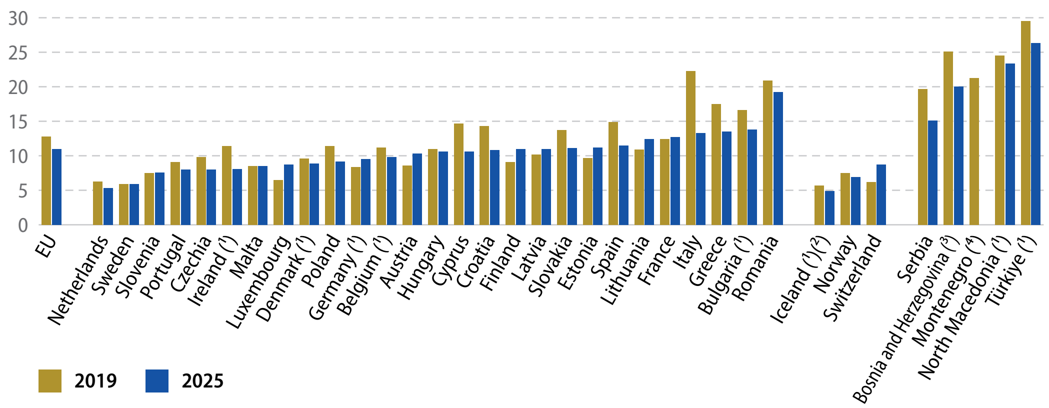


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_08_20)

Figure 8.10

Young persons neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET)

(% of population aged 15 to 29, 2019 and 2025)



([1]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
([2]) 2024 data (instead of 2025).
([3]) 2021 data (instead of 2019).
([4]) No data for 2025.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_08_20)

Fatal accidents at work

Fatal accidents at work are those occurring during the course of work and leading to the death of the victim within one year. Commuting accidents occurring between the home and the workplace are excluded from data at EU level. The incidence rate refers to the number of accidents per 100 000 persons in employment. Data presented in this section are collected in the framework of the administrative data collection 'European Statistics on Accidents at Work (ESAW)'. As an exception, fatal road traffic accidents at work are not included in the data from the Netherlands.

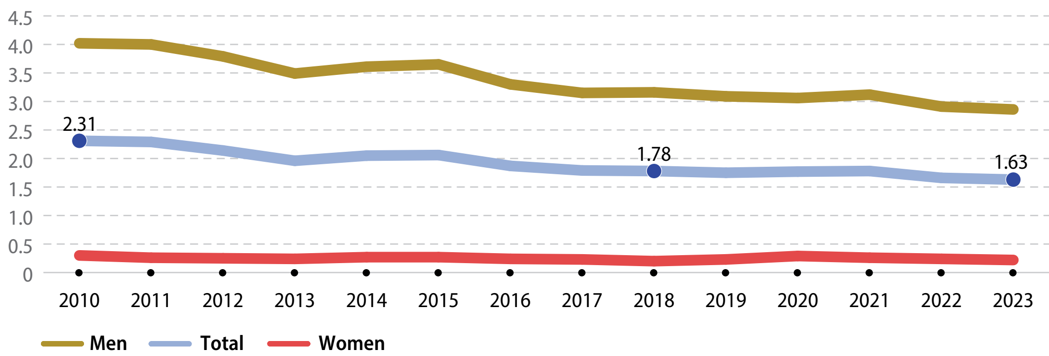
LONG TERM 2010–2023

SHORT TERM 2018–2023

Figure 8.11

Fatal accidents at work

(number per 100 000 workers, by sex, EU, 2010–2023)



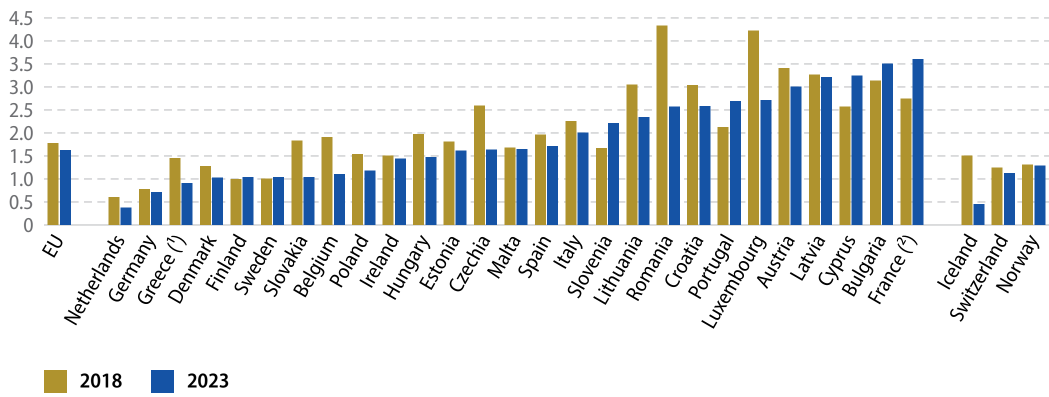
Note: Break in time series in 2020.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_08_60)

Figure 8.12

Fatal accidents at work

(number per 100 000 workers, 2018 and 2023)



Note: Break in time series in 2020 for all countries. Countries with a smaller workforce may sometimes experience larger changes in fatal accident rates from year to year due to natural fluctuations in the low number of such accidents.

(1) 2023 data are provisional

(2) Additional break(s) in time series (after 2020).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_08_60)

9

Industry, innovation and infrastructure

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation

SDG 9 calls for building resilient and sustainable infrastructure and promotes inclusive and sustainable industrialisation. It also recognises the importance of research and innovation for finding solutions to social, economic and environmental challenges.

Research and development (R&D), innovations, sustainable industries and infrastructures are key to achieving the SDGs. Monitoring SDG 9 in an EU context focuses on elements such as R&D intensity and personnel, patent applications, the air emissions intensity of industry, and the use of different transport modes by passengers and for freight. Over the short-term period, the EU has experienced strong progress in many of these indicators. Notably, the proportion of R&D personnel in the EU labour force has continued to rise, and the air emissions intensity of the EU's manufacturing sector has decreased. However, there have also been unfavourable trends. Progress on R&D intensity has been slow since 2019, and the EU is not on track to reach its respective 2030 target. Regarding environmentally friendly transport modes, the share of rail and inland waterways in freight transport has continued its downward trend. In passenger transport, the share of buses and trains has nearly reached the level observed in 2019, even though cars remain by far the dominant transport mode.

Table 9.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 9, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
R&D and innovation					
Gross domestic expenditure on R&D ◎	2.24 % (2024)	2009–2024	Observed: 0.9 % Required: 2.0 %	↘	page 153
		2019–2024	Observed: 0.3 % Required: 2.8 %	↘	
Patent applications to the European Patent Office	70 089 (2025)	2011–2025	1.1 %	↑	page 155
		2019–2025	0.5 %	↗	
R&D personnel	1.59 % (2024)	2009–2024	2.8 %	↑	page 156
		2019–2024	2.4 %	↑	
Tertiary educational attainment (*) ◎	44.8 % (2025)	2009–2025	Observed: 2.2 % Required: 1.7 %	↑	SDG 4, page 80
		2019–2025	Observed: 2.1 % Required: 1.2 %	↑	
Sustainable industry					
Air emissions intensity of manufacturing	0.05 grams per euro (2023)	2008–2023	– 4.5%	↑	page 157
		2018–2023	– 3.6 %	↑	
Gross value added in environmental goods and services sector (*)	382.6 EUR billion (2023)	Time series too short for long-term assessment		✕	SDG 12, page 210
		2018–2023	4.1 %	↑	
Sustainable infrastructure					
Share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport	16.9 % (2023)	2008–2023	– 0.2%	↘	page 158
		2018–2023	– 0.1%	→	
Share of rail and inland waterways in inland freight transport	21.8 % (2024)	2009–2024	– 0.6 %	↘	page 159
		2019–2024	– 1.9 %	↓	
Share of households with high-speed internet connection (*) ◎	82.5 % (2024)	Time series too short for long-term assessment		✕	SDG 17, page 291
		2019–2024	Observed: 10.4 % Required: 6.4 %	↑	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

(*) Multi-purpose indicator.

Policy context

R&D and innovation

The Commission has announced its plan to adopt the European Research Area (ERA) Act in 2026, which aims to address deep-rooted barriers within the EU's research and innovation ecosystem. The ERA Act reaffirms the EU's long-standing objective of increasing its R&D intensity to 3 % of GDP and builds on existing ERA Policy Agendas.

The EU research and innovation programme Horizon Europe supports researchers and innovators to drive the systemic changes needed to ensure a green, healthy and resilient Europe.

The Competitiveness Compass (2025) places innovation at the core of Europe's renewal. It outlines key flagship measures including the above-mentioned ERA Act, as well as the Startup and Scale-up Strategy, the European Innovation Act, the Life Science Strategy, the Biotech Act and the Bioeconomy Strategy.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility under its 'Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' pillar promotes entrepreneurship, competitiveness, industrialisation and reindustrialisation, digitalisation of businesses and digital connectivity. The 'Green transition' pillar contributes to the mainstreaming of climate action and environmental sustainability.

Sustainable industry

The Clean Industrial Deal (2025) is the EU's new plan for competitiveness and decarbonisation. It aims to turn decarbonisation into a driver of growth for European industries, by lowering energy prices and by creating quality jobs and the right conditions for companies to thrive.

The Green Deal Industrial Plan (2023) seeks to enhance the competitiveness of Europe's net-zero industry and support the fast transition to climate neutrality. The Net-Zero Industry Act (2023) aims to enhance the manufacturing capabilities of net-zero technologies in Europe. The Chemicals Industry Action Plan is addressing key challenges, while promoting investment in innovation and sustainability.

Sustainable infrastructure

The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy aims to make all transport modes more sustainable, smart and resilient. The Automotive Industrial Action Plan will support the entire automotive industry's transition to sustainable mobility while ensuring its international competitiveness and maintaining a strong European production base.

The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) policy, supported by the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), aims to build an effective, EU-wide and multimodal network of roads, railway lines, inland waterways, ports, airports and rail-road terminals. The initiative also seeks to mitigate the environmental and climate impacts of transport while enhancing safety and resilience. Building on TENT-T, the High-speed rail plan aims to improve connectivity within the EU by creating a well-functioning high-speed rail network by 2040.

The Digital Decade policy programme 2030 outlines Europe's digital transformation and sets the target of ensuring gigabit network coverage for all households by 2030.

The European Strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures aims to ensure that infrastructures remain world-class, more accessible, and better aligned with the needs of scientists, innovators and industry.

Overview and key trends

R&D and innovation

Research and development (R&D) expenditure is a key enabling factor for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Introducing new ideas to the market promotes job creation, labour productivity and efficient use of resources. Highly skilled human resources are imperative for keeping the EU's research and innovation capacity and competitiveness up to date and for supporting the digital and green transitions, the so-called twin transition. Innovative products and services, which are often the result of R&D activities, contribute to smart growth and sustainable industrialisation. R&D and innovation are also essential for finding solutions to societal and environmental challenges such as climate change and clean energy, public security, and health protection and promotion.

The EU's R&D intensity has stagnated since 2020 and is not on track to reach 3 % of GDP by 2030

The EU economy is facing increasing global competition. To preserve its competitiveness, it needs to strengthen its scientific and technological base. Therefore, one of the key aims of EU policy over recent decades has been to encourage greater investment in R&D. This is monitored here by looking at gross domestic expenditure on R&D as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), referred to as R&D intensity, which reflects growth in both spending on R&D and growth in GDP.

Despite the EU's long-standing 3 % target, the EU's R&D intensity has grown only modestly over the past two decades. After prolonged stagnation between 2000 and 2007, the EU's R&D intensity increased slowly, reaching 2.28 % in 2020. It declined again slightly in the following years and stood at 2.24 % in 2024. This corresponded to R&D expenditure of about EUR 403 billion (1). In absolute terms, expenditure in 2024 was higher than in previous years, suggesting that the recent decline in R&D intensity is a result of GDP growth outpacing growth in R&D expenditure. With a gap of 0.76 percentage points, the EU remains far from its ambition of raising R&D expenditure to 3 % of GDP by 2030.

2.24 %
of GDP was spent on R&D in the EU in 2024

Business expenditure accounts for two-thirds of total R&D expenditure

An analysis of gross domestic expenditure on R&D by sector of performance shows that the two contributors in 2024 remained the business enterprise sector (66.5 % of total R&D expenditure) and the higher education sector (21.4 %). The share of the government sector was 10.7 %, while the private non-profit sector accounted for just 1.3 % of total R&D expenditure (2).

The business enterprise sector has increased its R&D expenditure over the past 15 years, from 1.21 % of GDP in 2009 to 1.49 % in 2024. Simultaneously, the higher education sector increased its R&D expenditure slightly from 0.46 % of GDP in 2009 to 0.48 % in 2024. In contrast, R&D expenditure in both the government and private non-profit sectors has remained stable, accounting for 0.24 % and 0.03 % of GDP respectively in 2024.

The number of patent applications to the European Patent Office has grown

Patent applications provide a valuable measure of the creative and innovative capacity of countries, regions and companies, and how well research results are utilised. In 2025, 70 089 patent applications from within the EU were submitted to the European Patent Office. This is a 17.3 % increase compared with 2011, when 59 733 applications

(1) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: rd_e_gerdtot).
(2) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: rd_e_gerdtot).

were submitted. The number of applications has increased almost continuously since 2011. However, the pace of the development has slowed in recent years, with applications growing only by 3.1 % between 2019 and 2025. In relation to population size, the highest number of patent applications in 2025 were submitted by inventors from Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, with 484, 397 and 378 applications per million inhabitants, respectively.

70 089 patent applications from within the EU were submitted to the European Patent Office in 2025

The share of R&D personnel in the EU labour force continues to rise

The growing knowledge-based nature of the EU's economy and society, together with developments in the labour market and demographic trends, make highly skilled human capital increasingly important. Achieving the SDGs will require ambitious investments in R&D, innovation and skills development, and in lifelong learning ([3]).

R&D personnel consists of researchers engaged directly in R&D and the people providing direct services for R&D activities (such as R&D managers, administrators, technicians and clerical staff). The share of R&D personnel in the labour force has increased steadily since 2009, from 1.05 % to 1.59 % in 2024 (expressed in full-time equivalents). This trend was mainly driven by the business enterprise sector, which employed 60.5 % of the R&D workforce in 2024 ([4]).

1.59 % of the economically active population in the EU worked in R&D in 2024

An analysis by sex, however, reveals that women remain considerably underrepresented among researchers in the EU, accounting for only 34.3 % in 2023. This underrepresentation is particularly strong in the business enterprise sector, where women only made up 23.1 % of researchers in 2023. In contrast, women accounted for more than 44 % of researchers in the other three sectors (government, higher education and the non-profit sector), with the highest share reported in the private non-profit sector, at 47.6 % in 2023 ([5]).

The share of the EU population with tertiary education is well on track towards its 2030 target

Regarding skills, data show a general long-term increase in the tertiary educational attainment of the EU population. Between 2009 and 2025, the share of 25- to 34-year-olds with a university degree or similar increased from 31.2 % to 44.8 %. The EU is therefore well on track to reach its target of raising this share to at least 45 % by 2030, as set out in the Council Resolution from 2021 on the European Education Area. However, differences between the sexes remain considerable, and when compared with the situation for R&D personnel, the gender imbalance is reversed. While 50.6 % of women aged 25 to 34 years had accomplished tertiary education in 2025, only 39.3 % of men in this age group had done so. This gender gap has widened almost continuously since 2009. For further details on tertiary education and the gender gap, see the chapters on SDG 4 'Quality education' on page 69 and SDG 5 'Gender equality' on page 83.

44.8 % of the EU population aged 25 to 34 had accomplished tertiary education in 2025

Sustainable industry

Mobilising industry for a clean and circular economy is one of the key priorities of the European Green Deal, which seeks to support and accelerate the EU's industry transition to a sustainable model of inclusive growth. This requires a massive reduction in harmful air emissions from industrial production alongside increased use of greener products and services (also see the chapter on SDG 12 'Responsible consumption and production' on page 197).

([3]) International Labour Organization (2021), World Employment and Social Outlook — Trends 2021, p. 114.
([4]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: rd_p_persocc).
([5]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: rd_p_femres).

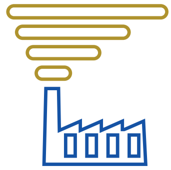
The EU's manufacturing sector has continued to reduce its air emissions intensity

Industry is vital for Europe's prosperity and future development. The EU industrial sector accounts for around 20 % of the EU economy and employs about 35 million people (6). However, industry is also a source of many environmental pressures such as material consumption and emissions of greenhouse gases and other air pollutants. This analysis focuses on air pollutants emitted by the manufacturing sector, using particulate matter emissions from manufacturing as a proxy.

Poor air quality causes premature deaths, impacts quality of life and damages ecosystems (7). Particulate matter, especially fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), is one of the most harmful components of air pollution for human health (8). Exposure to air pollution by $PM_{2.5}$ caused about 182 400 premature deaths in the EU in 2023 (see the chapters on SDG 3 'Good health and well-being' and on page 51 SDG 11 'Sustainable cities' on page 181). In 2023, the EU's manufacturing sector was responsible for a fifth (20.5 %) of total $PM_{2.5}$ emissions. In comparison, in the same year, more than a third (36.3 %) of total $PM_{2.5}$ emissions could be attributed to transportation and storage, and over a fifth (21.6 %) to agriculture, forestry and fishing (9).

Data on emissions intensity are used to monitor a sector's air emissions relative to its economic output in terms of gross value added (GVA). Between 2008 and 2023, the EU's manufacturing sector's $PM_{2.5}$ emissions intensity dropped by 50.0 %, from 0.10 grams per euro to 0.05 grams per euro. This improvement is a result of the sector's $PM_{2.5}$ emissions falling by 39.7 % between 2008 and 2023 while its GVA grew by 19.3 % (10). The decline in industrial emissions of air pollutants can be partly attributed to European regulation, advancements in energy efficiency and abatement technologies, and the relocation of heavy polluting industries outside Europe (11).

Between 2018 and 2023, $PM_{2.5}$ emissions from manufacturing decreased by 14.6 %, while the sector's GVA increased by 5.6 %. This resulted in a 16.7 % improvement in the sector's emissions intensity over this most recent five-year period. The sector's emissions intensity for the broader group of fine and coarse particulate matter (PM_{10}) experienced a similar trend over the past 15- and five-year periods, decreasing by 50.0 % between 2008 and 2023 and by 12.5 % between 2018 and 2023.



16.7 %
improvement in the manufacturing sector's emissions intensity of fine particulate matter between 2018 and 2023

Gross value added of the environmental goods and services sector has grown strongly

The EU's updated New Industrial Strategy for Europe strives for a greener industry. Products and services that, for instance, prevent or limit environmental pollution, repair and correct resource depletion or protect biodiversity may contribute to a so-called green economy. These kinds of environmental goods and services (EGSS) are gaining in importance. In 2023, they accounted for a gross value added of EUR 382.6 billion. This represents a 22 % increase compared with 2018, when the EU's GVA of environmental goods and services amounted to EUR 313.5 billion. In relation to the whole economy, the environmental goods and services sector grew from 2.2 % of GDP in 2018 to 2.9 % in 2023. This indicates the sector grew —

EUR 382.6
billion of gross value added were generated by the EU's environmental goods and services sector in 2023

(6) *Source:* Eurostat (online data codes: nama_10_a10 and nama_10_a10_e).
(7) European Commission (2024), *Air*.
(8) World Health Organization (2022), *Ambient (outdoor) air pollution*.
(9) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_ac_ainah_r2).
(10) *Source*: Eurostat (online data codes: env_ac_ainah_r2 and nama_10_a10).
(11) European Environment Agency (2024), *Industrial pollutant releases to air in Europe.* Abatement technologies, in this context pollution abatement, refer to measures taken to reduce pollution and/or its environmental impact; also see: OECD (2008), *Glossary of Statistical Terms*.

in gross value added terms — faster than other economic sectors.

Employment (in full-time equivalent) in the sector has also increased since 2017, by 44.3 %. In 2022, the sector accounted for more than 6.6 million full-time equivalent jobs in the EU ([12]). The development is related to multiple factors, including increases in green economy activities and job creation in renewable energy, energy efficiency and waste management ([13]).

Sustainable infrastructure

The European Green Deal aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. To achieve this vision, the EU needs to address the twin challenges of the green and the digital transitions. In this context, the Green Deal calls for an acceleration in the shift to sustainable and smart mobility as well as for investment in digitalisation to support the green transition. Multimodal and energy-efficient freight transport as well as automated and connected multimodal mobility will consequently need to play an increasing role, together with smart traffic management systems enabled by digitalisation.

Use of public transport has recovered since the end of the pandemic

Well-functioning and efficient transport and mobility systems are key elements for a competitive economy. Growth in transport activities puts increasing pressure on natural resources and societies. Emissions of greenhouse gases, air pollutants and noise from transport affect the climate, the environment and human health. As the transport sector is responsible for about one-quarter of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the EU (see the chapter on SDG 13 'Climate action' on page 221), sustainable transport is an essential ingredient in sustainable development strategies. Rethinking future mobility includes optimising the use of all means of transport, promoting car sharing and the integration between different modes of collective transport such as trains and buses.

The modal share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport in the EU had remained quite stable in the period 2000 to 2019 and accounted for 17.2 % of passenger-km in 2019 ([14]). With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, this share fell significantly, reaching a low of 12.8 % in 2020, and only small improvements were made in 2021. With the recovery from the pandemic, the modal share of buses and trains bounced back to almost pre-pandemic levels, reaching 16.9 % in 2023. The recovery can primarily be attributed to rail transport, which increased its share to 8.4 % in 2023, surpassing the pre-pandemic level of 7.9 % in 2019. Conversely, the share of passenger-km covered by cars — which remains by far the dominant mode for inland passenger transport — increased from 82.8 % in 2019 to 87.2 % in 2020 and dropped back to 83.1 % in 2023 ([15]).

16.9%
of passenger-km in the EU were covered by buses and trains in 2023

According to the EU-SILC ad hoc module on access to services, 22.3 % of the EU population used public transport regularly (at least once per week) in 2024, with the highest share being found in Luxembourg (42.0 %) and the lowest in Cyprus (8.8 %). Unsurprisingly, regular use of public transport was much more common in cities (37.1 %) than in towns and suburbs (14.5 %) or in rural areas (9.9 %). Unavailability of services and schedule were the reasons for not using the public transport for 10.8 % and 13.3 % of the EU population, respectively ([16]).

The share of freight transported by rail and inland waterways keeps declining

Despite the EU policy objective of shifting freight from road to rail and inland waterways, road continues to have by far the largest share in EU freight transport among the three inland transport modes analysed in this report (road, rail and inland waterways). Since 2012, the share of rail and inland waterways in total freight transport in the EU has declined almost continuously. It accounted for 21.8 % in 2024, which is a new low in the time

([12]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_ac_egss1).
([13]) European Environment Agency (2025), *Monitoring report on progress towards the 8th EAP objectives 2025.*
([14]) Tram and metro systems, as well as active modes (walking, cycling), are not included because the data collection methodology for these means of transport is not sufficiently harmonised between Member States.
([15]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: tran_hv_psmod)
([16]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data codes: ilc_atst01, ilc_atst05 and ilc_atst02).

series and corresponds to a 4.7 percentage point decrease compared with the peak of 26.5 % in 2012. In the short-term, the share of rail and inland waterways fell by 2.2 percentage points between 2019 and 2024, mainly due to declining shares of rail transport.

21.8 %
of freight tonne-km in the EU was carried out via rail and inland waterways in 2024

Considerable differences do exist at the country level. In 2024, the Netherlands and Romania were the only Member States reporting shares for rail and inland waterways above 40 %. This means that in all Member States more freight was transported by road than by rail or inland waterways. Looking at the transport modes separately, the highest shares of rail transport were reported from the Baltic countries Lithuania (37.7 %) and Latvia (35.1 %). In the Netherlands, freight transport via inland waterways still plays an important role, with a modal split of 40.4 % in 2024.

Considerable progress has been made in rolling out fixed very high capacity network connections across the EU

Digital connections are crucial for today's economies and societies. Instant communication between individuals, bank transfers, office work, public dissemination of information and data analysis are only some of the activities that depend on the internet. Especially in rural and remote areas, fast internet connection can significantly improve access to various services such as health care and education. Regions without fast internet connections have serious social and economic disadvantages in a digitalised world. The [Digital Decade policy programme] thus proposed the target that by 2030 all European households should be covered by a gigabit network, with all populated areas covered by 5G.

Data collected by the European Commission services for monitoring the [key performance indicators] of the Digital Decade show that the uptake of fixed very high capacity network (VHCN) connectivity — referring to fibre connections or other networks offering similar bandwidth — has improved considerably in the EU over the past few years. While just about half (50.3 %) of EU households had access to such connectivity in 2019, this share has risen considerably, reaching 82.5 % of households in 2024. The EU has thus made strong progress towards its target of 100 % coverage by 2030. VHCN connectivity has also improved in rural areas. Between 2019 and 2024, the share of rural households with fixed VHCN connection increased from 21.0 % to 61.9 % across the EU. Despite this positive development, VHCN connectivity in rural areas remains at some distance from the 2030 target. In addition, basic digital skills for all citizens (see the chapter on SDG 4 'Quality education' on page 69) are a general prerequisite for ensuring they benefit from digital developments ([17]).

82.5 %
of EU households had high-speed internet coverage in 2024

([17]) European Commission (2021), *2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade*, COM(2021) 118 final, p. 6.

Main indicators

Gross domestic expenditure on R&D

This indicator measures gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD) as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) — also called R&D intensity. The OECD's Frascati Manual on collecting R&D data defines research and experimental development (R&D) as creative and systematic work undertaken to increase the stock of knowledge — including knowledge of humankind, culture and society — and to devise new applications of available knowledge.

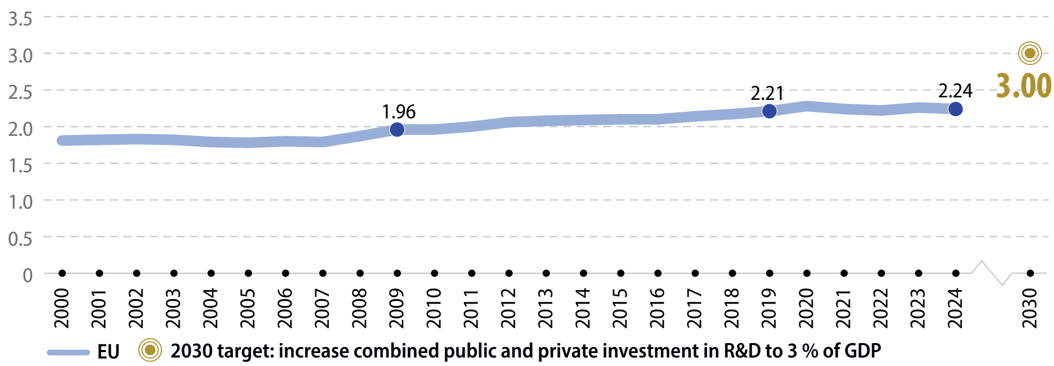
LONG TERM
2009–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 9.1

Gross domestic expenditure on R&D

(% of GDP, EU, 2000–2024)



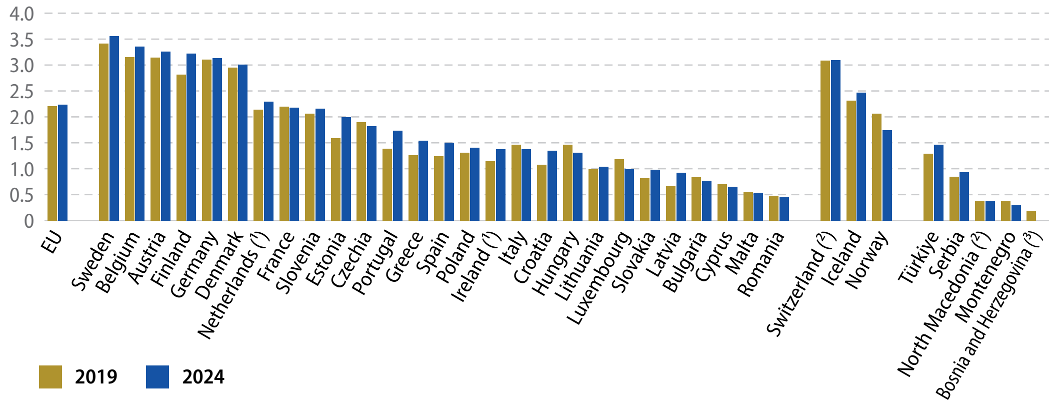
Note: Estimated data.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_09_10)

Figure 9.2

Gross domestic expenditure on R&D

(% of GDP, 2019 and 2024)



Note: 2024 data are provisional data and/or estimated for many countries.

(1) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(2) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
(3) No data for 2024.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_09_10)

Patent applications to the European Patent Office

This indicator measures requests for the protection of an invention filed with the European Patent Office (EPO) regardless of whether they are granted or not. Applications are allocated according to the country of residence of the inventor.

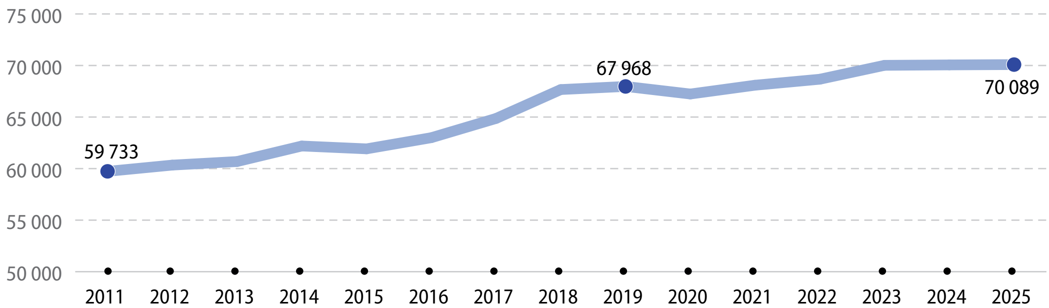
LONG TERM 2011–2025

SHORT TERM 2019–2025

Figure 9.3

Patent applications to the European Patent Office (EPO)

(number, EU, 2011–2025)



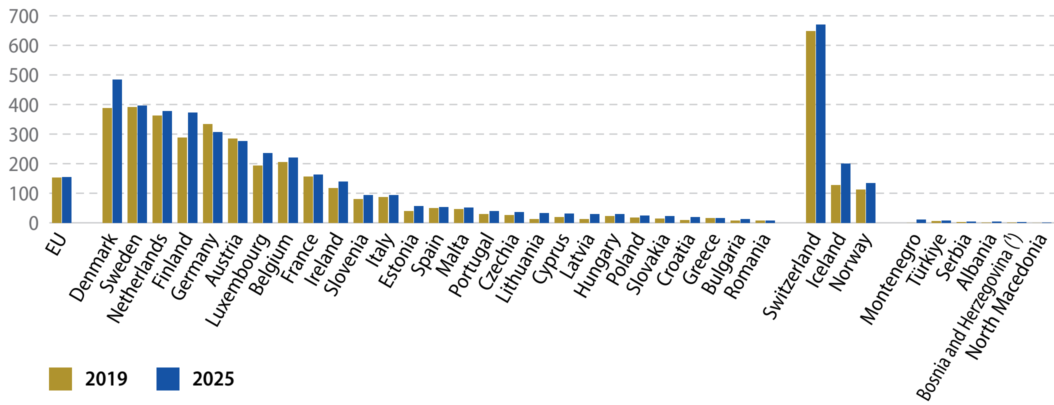
Note: Y-axis does not start at 0. 2025 data are provisional.

Source: EPO (Eurostat online data code: sdg_09_40)

Figure 9.4

Patent applications to the European Patent Office (EPO)

(per million inhabitants, 2019 and 2025)



Note: 2025 data are provisional. Liechtenstein not shown in the graph, with values of 1 270 in 2019 and 1 125 in 2025.

([1]) 2018 and 2024 data.

Source: EPO, Eurostat (online data code: sdg_09_40)

R&D personnel

This indicator measures the share of R&D personnel in the following institutional sectors: business enterprise, government, higher education and private non-profit. Data are presented in full-time equivalents as a share of the labour force. R&D personnel consist of two categories, researchers and other R&D personnel. Researchers are professionals engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge. They conduct research and improve or develop concepts, theories, models, techniques, instrumentation, software or operational methods. In addition, R&D personnel also include persons providing direct support services to R&D activities (for example, R&D managers/administrators when directly serving R&D, technicians and clerical staff assigned to R&D). Personnel providing only indirect or ancillary services are excluded.

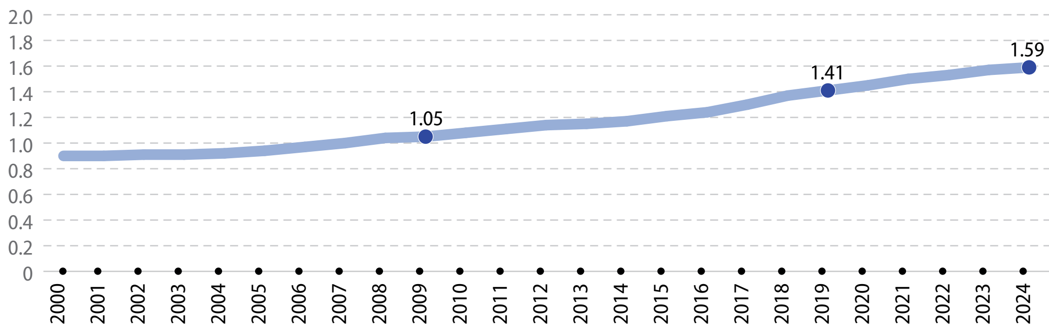
LONG TERM 2009–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 9.5

R&D personnel

(% of population in the labour force, EU, 2000–2024)



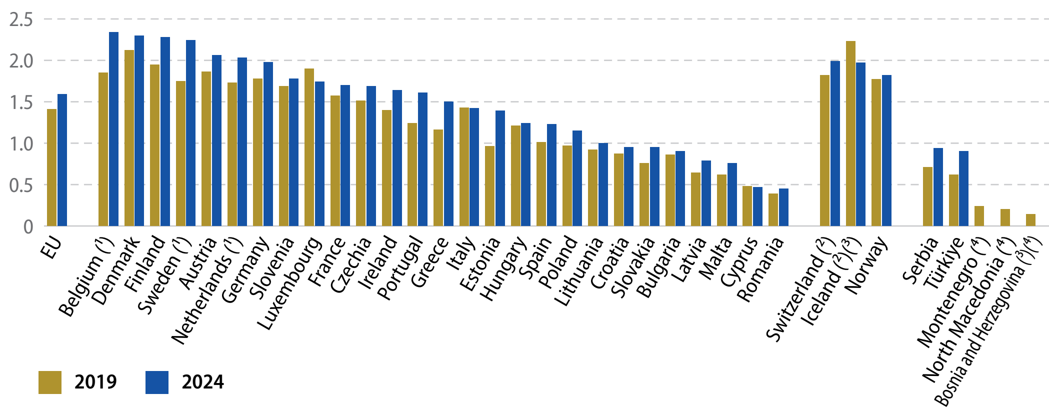
Note: Estimated data.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_09_30)

Figure 9.6

R&D personnel

(% of population in the labour force, 2019 and 2024)



Note: 2024 data are provisional and/or estimated for many countries.

([1]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
([2]) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
([3]) 2021 data (instead of 2019).
([4]) No data for 2024.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_09_30)

Air emissions intensity of manufacturing

This indicator measures the emissions intensity of particulate matter (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$) from the manufacturing sector (NACE Rev. 2 sector 'C'). Air emissions are defined as flows of gaseous and particulate materials emitted into the atmosphere. Fine and coarse particulates (PM_{10}) are less than 10 micrometres in diameter and can be carried deep into the lungs, where they can cause inflammation and exacerbate the condition of people suffering from heart and lung diseases. Fine particulates ($PM_{2.5}$) are less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter and are therefore a subset of the PM_{10} particles. Their negative health impacts are more serious than PM_{10} because they can be drawn further into the lungs and may be more toxic. Emissions intensity is calculated by dividing the sector's PM emissions by its gross value added (GVA), which is defined as output (at basic prices) minus intermediate consumption (at purchaser prices).

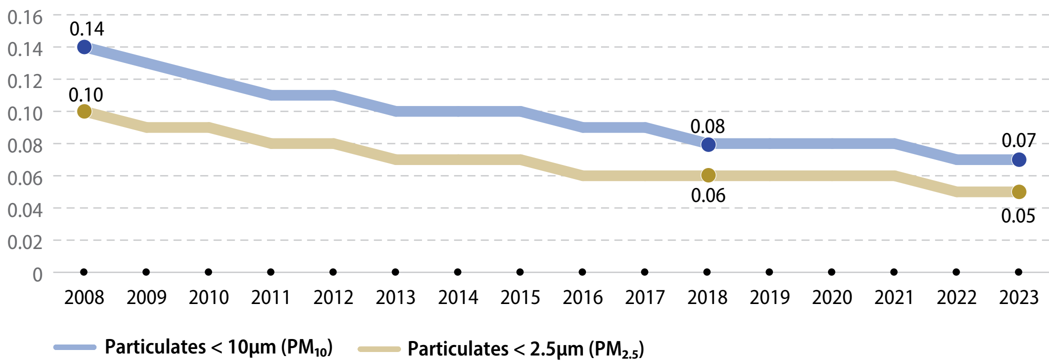
LONG TERM 2008–2023

SHORT TERM 2018–2023

Figure 9.7

Air emissions intensity of manufacturing for particulate matter

(grams per euro, chain-linked volumes (2020), EU, 2008–2023)



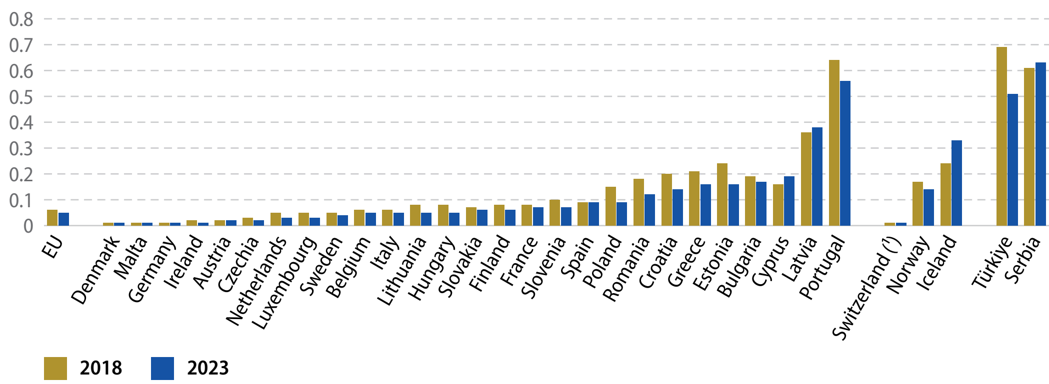
Note: 2008 data are imputed.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_09_70)

Figure 9.8

Air emissions intensity of manufacturing for fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$)

(grams per euro, chain-linked volumes (2020), 2018 and 2023)



([1]) 2022 data (instead of 2023).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_09_70)

Share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport

This indicator measures the share of buses, including coaches and trolley-buses, and trains in inland passenger transport, expressed in passenger-kilometres (pkm). Passenger transport here includes transport by passenger cars, buses and coaches, and trains, but excludes inland waterways, air and sea transport. All data are based on movements within national territories, in most cases regardless of the vehicle's nationality. Road data stem from a voluntary collection and are not fully harmonised at the EU level. Tram and metro systems are not included because the data collection methodology for these means of transport is not sufficiently harmonised between Member States.

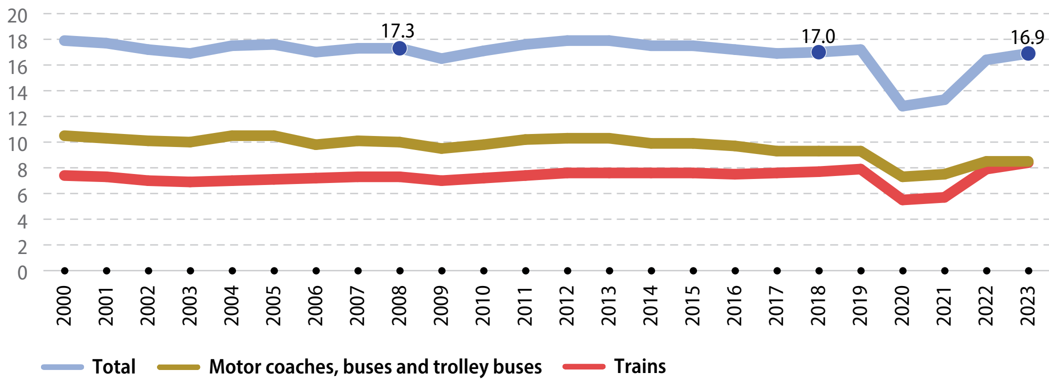
LONG TERM 2007–2023

SHORT TERM 2018–2023

Figure 9.9

Share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport

(% of passenger-km, EU, 2000–2023)



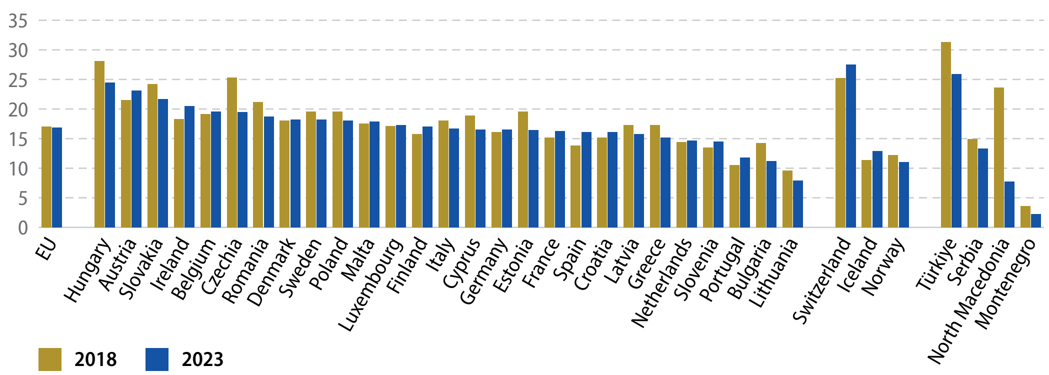
Note: Estimated data; multiple breaks in time series.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_09_50)

Figure 9.10

Share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport

(% of passenger-km, 2018 and 2023)



Note: Estimated data for EU and many countries.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_09_50)

Share of rail and inland waterways in inland freight transport

This indicator measures the share of rail and inland waterways in inland freight transport, expressed in tonne-kilometres (tkm). Inland freight transport includes road, rail and inland waterways. All data are based on movements on national territory; rail and inland waterways transport are collected based on movements on national territory, regardless of the nationality of the train or vessel. Road transport activity is collected according to the country of registration of the vehicle, regardless of the territory where the activity is performed. The activity is redistributed to the territory where the activity is actually performed by modelling the likely journey itinerary on the European road network. Neither sea nor air freight transport are currently included.

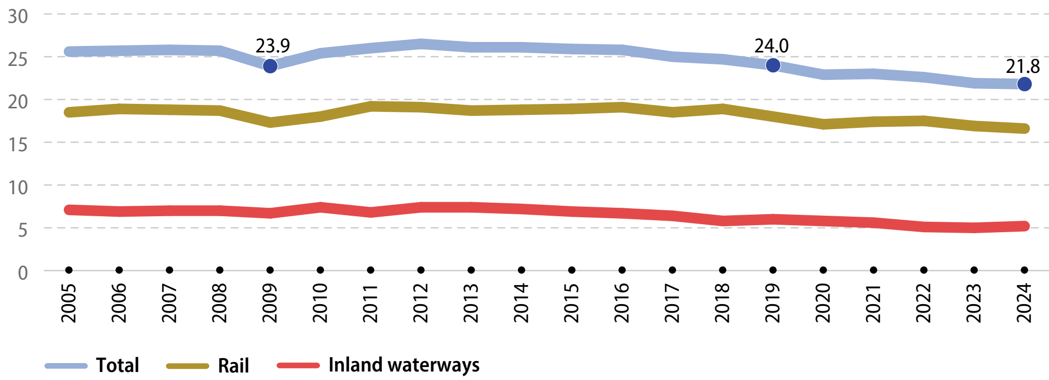

LONG TERM
2009–2024


SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 9.11

Share of rail and inland waterways in inland freight transport

(% of freight tonne-km, EU, 2005–2024)



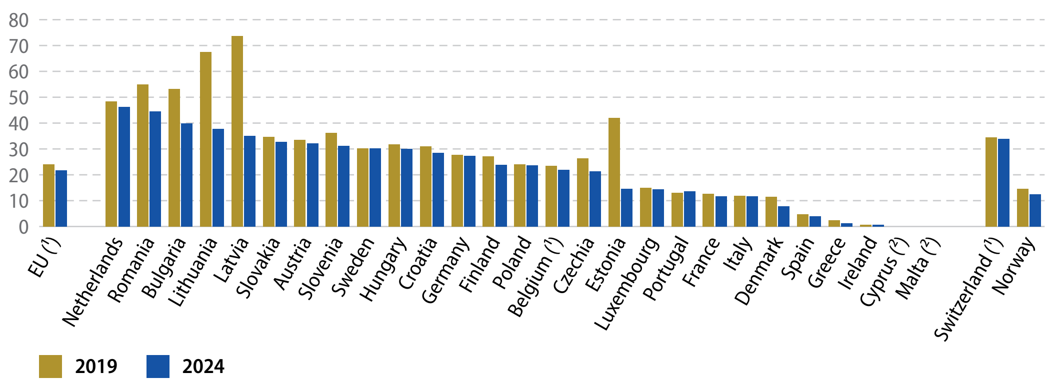
Note: Data for 2005–2008 and 2012–2024 are estimated.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_09_60)

Figure 9.12

Share of rail and inland waterways in inland freight transport

(% of freight tonne-km, 2019 and 2024)



([1]) Estimated data.
([2]) Not applicable (no rail or inland waterways).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_09_60)

10

Reduced inequalities

Reduce inequality within and among countries

SDG 10 addresses inequalities within and among countries. It calls for nations to reduce inequalities in income as well as those based on age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, and economic or other status within a country. The goal also addresses inequalities among countries and calls for support for safe migration and mobility of people.

Economic prosperity only leads to social progress if distributed fairly. High levels of inequality damage social cohesion, hinder economic activity, undermine democratic participation and risk leaving much human potential unrealised. Leaving no one behind is thus a crucial part of achieving the SDGs. Monitoring SDG 10 in an EU context focuses on inequalities within countries, inequalities between countries, and migration and social inclusion. The EU made significant progress on income inequalities within countries over the short-term period assessed. Additionally, EU countries are converging in terms of household income, even though disparities in GDP per capita have widened slightly. The EU has also made progress in reducing gaps in social and labour-market inclusion between home-country nationals and non-EU citizens. The only exception is the citizenship gap in the risk of monetary poverty, which has widened.

Table 10.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 10, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Inequalities within countries					
Income quintile share ratio	4.66 (2024)	2010–2024	– 0.3 %	↗	page 170
		2019–2024	– 1.4 %	↑	
Income share of the bottom 40 % of the population	21.8 % (2024)	2010–2024	0.1 %	→	page 171
		2019–2024	0.4 %	↗	
Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap	22.7 % (2024)	2010–2024	– 0.1 %	→	page 172
		2019–2024	– 1.6 %	↑	
Urban–rural gap for risk of poverty or social exclusion (*)	0 percentage points (2024)	Time series too short for long-term assessment		✕	page 176
		2019–2024	– 100.0 % (1)	↑	
Inequalities between countries					
Disparities in GDP per capita	40.1 (2025)	2010–2025	– 0.7 % (2)	↗	page 173
		2019–2025	0.2 % (2)	↘	
Disparities in household income per capita	20.7 (2024)	2009–2024	– 3.0 % (2)	↑	page 174
		2019–2024	– 3.2 % (2)	↑	
Migration, asylum and social inclusion					
First-time asylum applications	1 485 per million inhabitants (2025)	Assessment not applicable		✕	page 175
Citizenship gap for risk of monetary poverty after social transfers (*)	21.1 percentage points (2024)	2010–2024	– 0.6 % (3)	↗	page 178
		2019–2024	1.1 % (3)	↓	
Citizenship gap for early leavers from education and training (*)	16.8 percentage points (2025)	2010–2025	– 2.5 % (3)	↑	page 178
		2019–2025	– 1.1 % (3)	↑	

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Citizenship gap for young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) (*)	10.2 percentage points (2025)	2010–2025	– 2.3 % (3)	↑	page 179
		2019–2025	– 3.2 % (3)	↑	
Citizenship gap for employment rate (*)	11.8 percentage points (2025)	2010–2025	0.7 % (3)	↘	page 179
		2019–2025	– 2.6 % (3)	↑	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

(*) Multi-purpose indicator.
(1) Assessment based on evolution of gap between cities and rural areas.
(2) Assessment based on coefficient of variation.
(3) Assessment based on evolution of gap between citizens of reporting EU countries and non-EU citizens.

Policy context

Inequalities within countries

The European Pillar of Social Rights sets out 20 key principles to support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems and to tackle inequalities.

Under its 'social and territorial cohesion' pillar, the Recovery and Resilience Facility finances reforms and investments to support socially vulnerable groups through, for example, lifelong learning and employment support.

The Just Transition Mechanism supports those who will be most affected by the transition to a climate-neutral society. The Social Climate Fund helps vulnerable households, micro-enterprises and transport users cope with the price impacts of an emissions trading system on the road transport and building sectors.

The Communication on better assessing the distributional impact of Member States' policies calls for a more systematic assessment of the distributional impacts of planned (or existing) measures on various population groups (including income groups).

The revised European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), with a total budget of EUR 142 billion from the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027, helps to reduce inequalities. The ESF+ contributes to equal opportunities for children and young people, more inclusive labour markets, and social integration of disadvantaged groups. The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived supports the most vulnerable in society with food and basic material assistance, complemented by measures for social inclusion.

The Commission has committed to making progress towards a Union of Equality and has adopted several strategies and actions after 2020. These include the Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030, the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2026–2030, the EU anti-racism strategy 2026–2030, the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation, the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030, the Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish life (2021–2030), as well as actions to combat anti-Muslim hatred. Moreover, the Communication 'No place for hate: a Europe united against hatred' was adopted in December 2023.

Inequalities between countries

By reducing development disparities across European regions, the European Regional Development Fund strengthens economic and social cohesion. The 2021–2027 EU Cohesion Policy enables EU regions to participate in the green and digital transitions in a fair and territorially balanced way.

Migration, asylum and social inclusion

The Pact on Migration and Asylum is a set of new rules managing migration and establishing a common asylum system. The first European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy adopted in 2026 sets out the objective to simplify and accelerate the rules and to attract skilled people, removing barriers to qualifications and skills recognition, and by fighting illegal employment and exploitation of migrant workers. The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021–2027) supports migrants' inclusion in education and employment, access to health services and affordable housing.

As part of the Skills and Talent Mobility package, the EU Talent Pool will be the first EU-wide platform to facilitate international recruitment, offering job opportunities for non-EU jobseekers in shortage occupations across skill levels.

Overview and key trends

Inequalities within countries

A high level of inequality can harm society in many ways. It can hamper social cohesion, limit opportunities for many, hinder economic activity, reduce social trust in institutions and undermine democratic participation. Inequalities within countries are driven by various factors — often referred to as inequalities of opportunity — including gender, ethnicity and family background. These inequalities, in turn, can lead to inequality of outcomes, such as disparities in income and wealth, health and educational attainment (1). This section focuses primarily on income inequalities.

The income gap between high- and low-income households in the EU is decreasing slowly

Analysing the population's income distribution is one of the ways to measure inequality within EU countries. The [income quintile share ratio] compares the income received by the 20 % of the population who have the highest [equivalised disposable income] with the income of the 20 % with the lowest equivalised disposable income. The higher this ratio, the bigger the income inequality between the bottom and the top ends of the income distribution. In the EU, this ratio has decreased both in the long and the short term, reaching 4.66 in the income year 2023 (2), which is the lowest value on record. This means that on average the income of the richest 20 % of the EU households was 4.66 times as much as the income of the poorest 20 %.

In the income year 2023, the income of the richest 20 % of the population in the EU was

4.66

times higher than that of the poorest 20 %

By contrast, the share of total equivalised disposable income held by the bottom 40 % of the population stagnated around 21.2 % between the income years 2010 and 2017, followed by a slight growth in the following years, reaching 21.8 % in the income year 2023. This represents a 0.4 percentage point improvement relative to the income year 2018.

The share of total income earned by the bottom 40 % of the EU population in the income year 2023 was

21.8 %

Income inequality is often associated with other forms of inequality, such as wealth inequality, reinforcing cumulative disadvantage and entrenching disparities over time. A 2023 study shows that 80 % of income-poor individuals are also asset-poor (3). The study therefore highlights that economic inequality is multifaceted and more pronounced when income and wealth are considered jointly rather than separately.

The poverty gap reached a record low in 2024

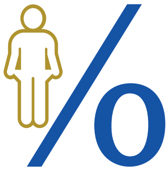
Inequality and poverty are closely interrelated. The poverty gap, defined as the distance between the median income of people at [risk of poverty] and

(1) European Commission (2023), *The evolution of inequality of opportunity in the EU*, Publications Office of the European Union.

(2) The term 'income year' is used here to emphasise that the income data collected for EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) in a given year refer to the income situation of the previous year.

(3) Balestra, C., Oehler, F. (2023), *Measuring the joint distribution of household income, consumption and wealth at the micro level — Methodological issues and experimental results — Edition 2023*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

the poverty threshold (set at 60 % of the national median income after social transfers), has decreased since 2019 ([4]), showing significant progress in the short run. In 2024, this gap amounted to 22.7 %, meaning the median income of those below the poverty threshold was 22.7 % lower than the poverty threshold itself. This is a 1.9 percentage point narrowing of the gap since 2019, representing a significant short-term improvement in the 'depth' of monetary poverty in the EU. Over the long term, the trend shows the gap widened between 2010 and 2016, before narrowing to reach a record low for the EU in 2024.



The distance from the poverty threshold for those at risk of poverty in 2024 was

22.7 %

The gap for at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion between urban and rural areas closed in 2024

In 2024, 21.0 % of the EU population were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. At the EU level, people living in rural areas used to have a higher at-risk rate than those living in cities. However, due to a strong improvement in rural areas, the urban–rural gap has narrowed in recent years and disappeared in 2024, when the rate reached 21.3 % in both areas. This compares with 2019, when the rate for rural areas was 22.9%.

The share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in rural areas was the same as in cities in 2024

However, the overall EU figures mask the broad variations in the urban–rural gaps among Member States. Rural poverty remains extremely high in some European countries, such as Bulgaria and Romania, where 40.8 % and 41.7 % of the rural population were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024. This amounted to an urban–rural gap of 18.7 and 27.4 percentage points in these two countries, respectively. While people in rural areas generally tend to be more at risk of poverty because these areas offer fewer opportunities for high-income jobs and limited access to services, infrastructure and education ([5]), this is not the case in all Member States. A total of 11 Member States reported higher income poverty rates in cities than in rural areas in 2024, with Belgium, Austria and Malta reporting gaps larger than ten percentage points.

Minorities such as Roma are at much higher risk of poverty

Certain minorities in EU Member States, such as Roma, are at a much higher risk of various forms of poverty than the overall EU population. According to a recent report by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, 70 % of Roma were at risk of monetary poverty as of 2024, which nevertheless represents a 10 percentage point improvement since 2016. In addition, 37 % of Roma were living in severe material deprivation, a reduction of 25 percentage points compared with 2016. Roma children under the age of 18 are particularly affected by poverty, with 77 % being at risk of poverty and 40 % living in households with severe material deprivation in 2024.

Inequalities between countries

We live in an interconnected world, where problems and challenges — such as poverty, climate change or migration — are rarely confined to one country or region. Therefore, reducing inequalities between countries is important, not only from a social cohesion perspective but also as a prerequisite for solving many interdependent problems. Cohesion between Member States is one of the EU's objectives, clearly stated in the Treaty on European Union (article 3.3).

Disparities in GDP per capita between EU countries have increased slightly

The coefficient of variation, expressed as the ratio of the standard deviation to the mean (in %) is a measure of disparities — or convergence — between EU countries. A lower coefficient of

([4]) The data for the at-risk of poverty gap refer to the income of the previous year, meaning data for 2019 refer to the income year 2018.

([5]) European Commission (2021), *A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas — Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040*, COM(2021) 345 final, Brussels.

variation indicates less disparity between Member States. Economic performance, incomes and living standards have improved across the EU as a whole over time, and income levels in EU countries have converged. However, in terms of GDP, differences between EU countries have increased slightly in recent years.

The coefficient of variation in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita — in purchasing power standards (PPS) — shows that economic disparities between Member States have slightly increased over the short-term period, reaching 40.1 % in 2025. The long-term trend has been more favourable, showing a 4.5 percentage point reduction in the EU coefficient of variation between 2010 and 2025.

GDP per capita between Member States varied by
40.1 %
in 2025

At Member State level, the highest GDP per capita was recorded in Luxembourg (PPS 99 300) and in Ireland (PPS 98 800) in 2025. In Luxembourg, this can be partly explained by the large share of cross-border workers, who contribute to GDP but are not counted as part of the resident population. Ireland's high level can be partly attributed to the presence of large multinational companies. These companies contribute to GDP, but a significant portion of the income is returned to owners abroad (6).

Disparities in household disposable income between Member States have declined since 2019

While GDP per capita is used to measure a country's economic performance, adjusted gross household disposable income provides an indication of the average material well-being of people. Gross household disposable income reflects households' purchasing power and ability to invest in goods and services or save for the future, by taking into account taxes, social contributions and in-kind social benefits. The coefficient of variation in gross household disposable income between Member States has fallen constantly over time, reaching 20.7 % in 2024. This figure is 3.7 percentage points lower than in 2019 and a 12.2 percentage point improvement since 2009.

However, a clear north–south and west–east divide is evident when looking at the geographical distribution of GDP per capita and household income (from national accounts) in the EU. Citizens living in northern and western European countries with above average GDP per capita levels had the highest gross disposable income per capita. At the other end of the scale were eastern and southern EU countries, which displayed gross household disposable incomes and GDP per capita levels below the EU average (also see the analysis of household income at regional NUTS 2 level in the chapter 'EU sustainable development indicators at regional level' on page 293).

Household disposable income across the EU varied by
20.7 %
in 2024

Migration, asylum and social inclusion

Over the past decade, the European Union has experienced a marked increase in migratory pressure, driven by protracted armed conflicts, state fragility and governance crises in regions including the Middle East, Afghanistan, and parts of Africa and Latin America. These structural drivers have been compounded since 2022 by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has resulted in a rapid and large-scale displacement of civilians, many of whom have sought temporary protection in EU Member States.

The successful integration of migrants is crucial for the future well-being, prosperity and cohesion of European societies. To ensure the social inclusion of immigrants and their children, it is essential to strengthen the conditions that will enable their participation in society, including their active participation in education and training and their integration into the labour market. This has the potential to slow the ongoing trend of population ageing and to address skills shortages.

(6) European Commission (2025), *Purchasing power parities and GDP per capita — preliminary estimate*.

The number of asylum applications in the EU continued to fall in 2025

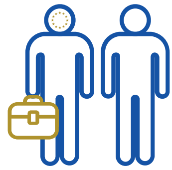
In 2025, the EU received 669 365 first-time asylum applications, which is 27 % lower than in the previous year but 6 % higher than in 2019 (7). In 2025, 832 360 people were granted protection status at first instance, which is 10 % more than in the previous year (8). In relation to population size, these numbers equal 1 485 first-time asylum applications and 723 positive first-instance decisions per million EU inhabitants in 2025. Greece and Cyprus received the highest numbers of asylum applications relative to population size across Member States, with 5 339 and 2 884 applications per million inhabitants in 2025, respectively. Of the 669 365 first-time asylum applications the EU received in 2025, around 13 % were lodged by Venezuelans, 10 % by Afghans and 6 % by Syrians (9).

1 485
first-time asylum applications per million inhabitants were submitted in the EU in 2025

In addition to asylum applications, the Council Decision of March 2022 enabled non-EU citizens fleeing Ukraine as a consequence of the Russian invasion starting in 2022 to receive immediate and temporary protection. At the end of February 2026, almost 4.4 million displaced people were beneficiaries of this temporary protection in the EU. Germany and Poland hosted the highest absolute number of beneficiaries, providing temporary protection to around half of all beneficiaries in the EU (10).

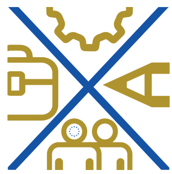
The social inclusion of non-EU citizens is improving in most cases

The social integration of migrants is monitored here by comparing the situation of non-EU citizens with citizens of EU countries that reside in their home country — referred to as 'home-country nationals' in this publication — in the areas of poverty, education and the labour market. In all these areas, people from outside the EU fare less well than home-country nationals. However, short-term trends have been mostly favourable, with the gap between home-country nationals and non-EU citizens narrowing in all areas monitored here, except for the gap in monetary poverty.



The employment rate for non-EU citizens was
11.8
percentage points lower than for EU home-country nationals in 2025

Between 2019 and 2025, the employment rate for EU home-country nationals aged 20 to 64 increased by 3.2 percentage points, while the rate for non-EU citizens grew by 5.2 percentage points. Consequently, the gap between the two groups has narrowed by 2.0 percentage points since 2019. While 77.0 % of EU home-country nationals were employed in 2025, the rate for non-EU citizens stood at 65.2 %. Thus, despite the stronger improvement for non-EU citizens since 2019, the gap remained considerable, at 11.8 percentage points in 2025.



The NEET rate for non-EU citizens was
10.2
percentage points higher than for EU home-country nationals in 2025

The gaps between home-country nationals and non-EU citizens in the area of education and training have narrowed in recent years. The shares of young people not in employment nor in education and training (NEET) decreased for both groups between 2019 and 2025. The NEET rate for 15- to 29-year-old non-EU citizens fell by 3.8 percentage points, reaching 20.3 % in 2025. For home-country nationals of the same age, the NEET rate decreased by 1.6 percentage points in the same period, amounting to 10.1 % in 2025. Thus, a narrowing of the gap by 2.2 percentage points has been visible since 2019. Despite these improvements, the citizenship gap between the two groups was still 10.2 percentage points in 2025.

In education, the most striking difference between non-EU citizens and EU home-country nationals is visible for 18- to 24-year-old early leavers from education and training. The early leaving rate

(7) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: migr_asyappctza).
(8) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: migr_asydcfsta).
(9) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: migr_asyappctza).
(10) *Source:* Eurostat (online code: migr_asytpsm) and Eurostat (2026), *Temporary protection for persons fleeing Ukraine — monthly statistics.*

of home-country nationals has fallen continuously since 2019, reaching 7.7 % in 2025. For non-EU citizens, the rate has evolved less steadily but still fell by 2.2 percentage points compared with 2019, to reach 24.5 % in 2025. As a result, the citizenship gap has narrowed by 1.1 percentage points since 2019, reaching 16.8 percentage points in 2025. Because early school leaving and unemployment both have an impact on people's future job opportunities and their lives in general, further efforts are needed to fully integrate young migrants into European societies.

The share of early school leavers among non-EU citizens was

16.8

percentage points higher than for EU home-country nationals in 2025

Trends in the citizenship gap for people at risk of monetary poverty after social transfers show that between 2019 and 2024, the poverty rate decreased by 1.0 percentage point for EU home-country nationals, while for non-EU citizens this rate increased by 0.1 percentage points. As a result, the gap between the two groups has increased by 1.1 percentage points since 2019, with 35.2 % of non-EU citizens being at risk of monetary poverty (after social transfers) in 2024, compared with 14.1 % of home-country nationals.

The monetary poverty rate for non-EU citizens was

21.1

percentage points higher than for home-country nationals in the EU in 2024

Main indicators

Income quintile share ratio

Income inequality can be measured in different ways. The income quintile share ratio divides the total income received by the 20 % of the population with the highest income (top quintile) by the income received by the 20 % of the population with the lowest income (lowest quintile). Data are taken from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and are based on equivalised disposable income.

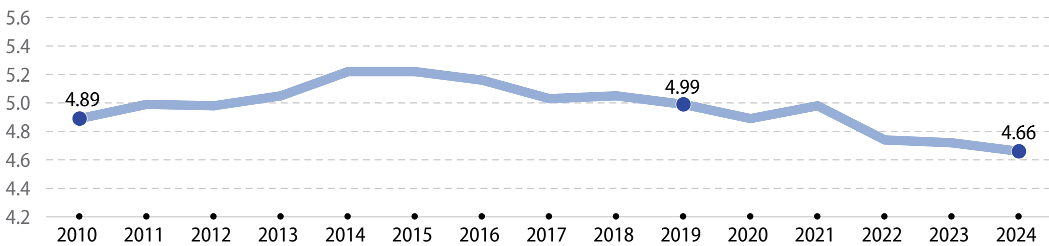
LONG TERM 2010–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 10.1

Income quintile share ratio

(ratio, EU, 2010–2024)



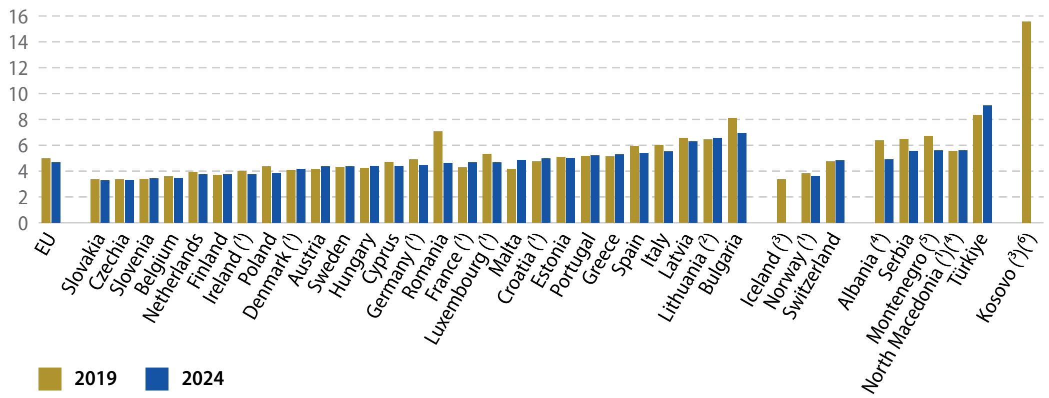
Note: y-axis does not start at 0. 2014–2018 data are estimated. The data are presented according to the year of the data collection but refer to the income of the previous year (for example, the data for 2024 refer to the income in 2023).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_10_41)

Figure 10.2

Income quintile share ratio

(ratio, 2019 and 2024)



Note: The data are presented according to the year of the data collection but refer to the income of the previous year (meaning that the data for 2024 refer to the income in 2023).

(1) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(2) 2024 data are provisional.
(3) No data for 2024.
(4) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
(5) 2022 data (instead of 2024).
(6) 2018 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_10_41)

Income share of the bottom 40 % of the population

The indicator measures the income share received by the 40 % of the population with lowest income. Data are taken from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and are based on equivalised disposable income.

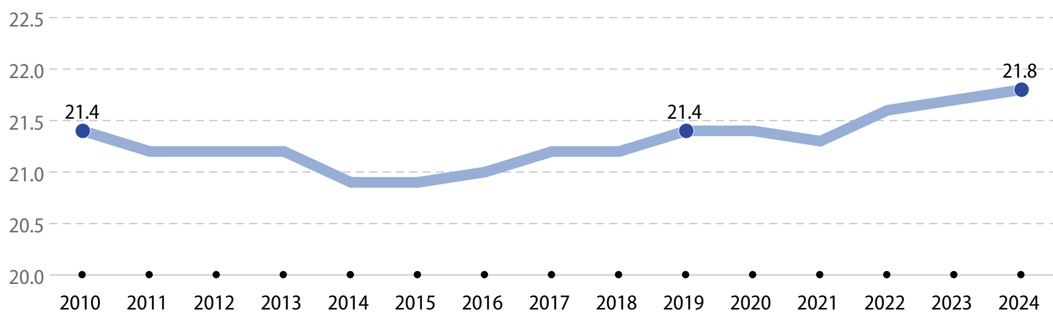
LONG TERM 2010–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 10.3

Income share of the bottom 40 % of the population

(% of income, EU, 2010–2024)



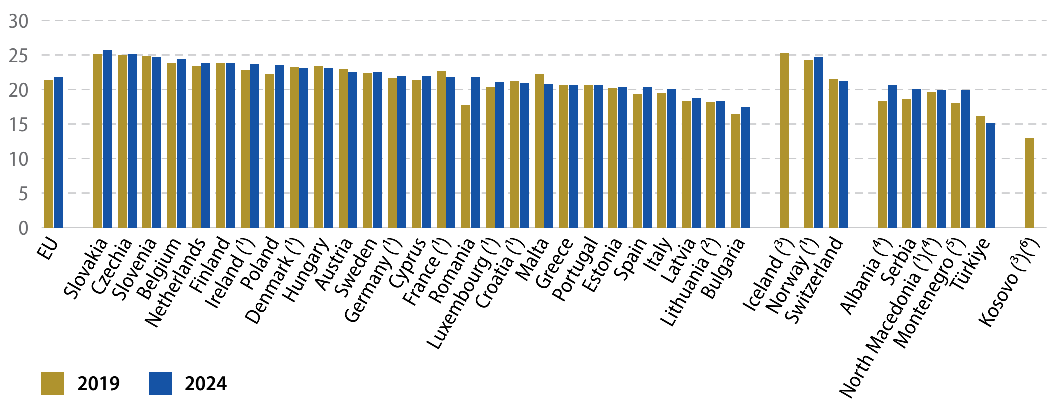
Note: Y-axis does not start at 0. Data for 2014–2018 are estimated. The data are presented according to the year of the data collection but refer to the income of the previous year (for example, the data for 2024 refer to the income in 2023).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_10_50)

Figure 10.4

Income share of the bottom 40 % of the population

(% of income, 2019 and 2024)



Note: The data are presented according to the year of the data collection but refer to the income of the previous year (meaning that the data for 2024 refer to the income in 2023).

(1) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(2) 2024 data are provisional.
(3) No data for 2024.
(4) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
(5) 2022 data (instead of 2024).
(6) 2018 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_10_50)

Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap

The relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap helps to quantify how poor the poor are by showing the distance between the median income of people living below the poverty threshold and the threshold itself. The poverty threshold is set at 60 % of the national median income of all people in a country. It is aggregated for the EU as the population-weighted arithmetic average of national values. Data are taken from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and are based on equivalised disposable income.

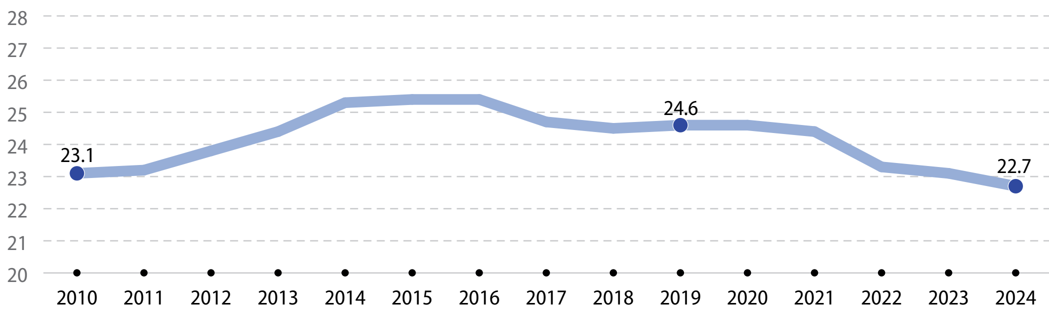
LONG TERM 2010–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 10.5

Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap

(% distance to poverty threshold, EU, 2010–2024)



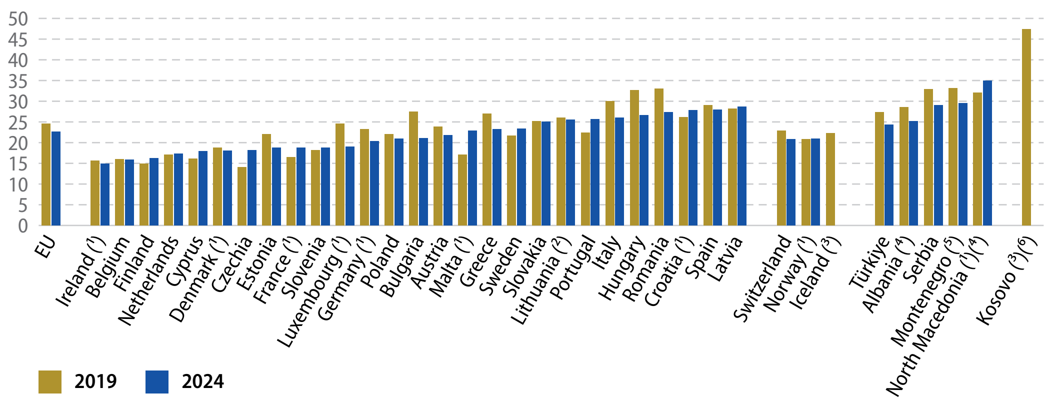
Note: Y-axis does not start at 0. Data for 2014–2018 are estimated. The data are presented according to the year of the data collection but refer to the income of the previous year (for example, the data for 2024 refer to the income in 2023).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_10_30)

Figure 10.6

Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap

(% distance to poverty threshold, 2019 and 2024)



Note: The data are presented according to the year of the data collection but refer to the income of the previous year (meaning that the data for 2024 refer to the income in 2023).

(1) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(2) 2024 data are provisional.
(3) No data for 2024.
(4) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
(5) 2022 data (instead of 2024).
(6) 2018 data (instead of 2019).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_10_30)

Disparities in GDP per capita

GDP per capita is calculated as the ratio of GDP to the average population in a specific year. It is expressed in purchasing power standards (PPS) which represent a common currency that eliminates differences in price levels between countries to allow meaningful comparisons of GDP. Disparities in GDP per capita is calculated as the coefficient of variation of the national values.

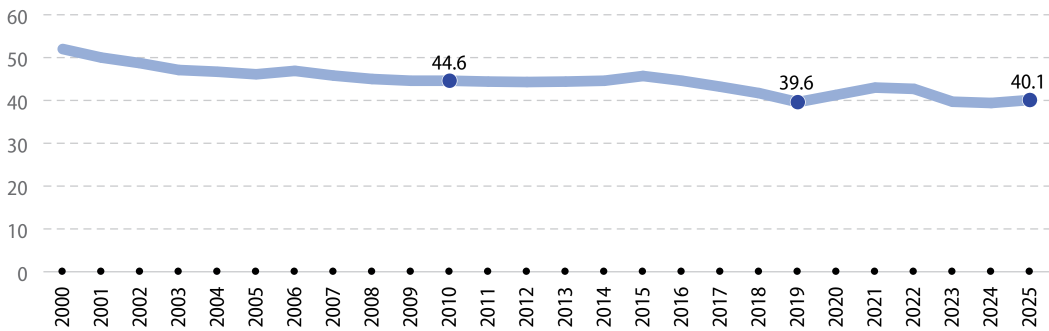
LONG TERM
2010–2025

SHORT TERM
2019–2025

Figure 10.7

Disparities in purchasing power adjusted GDP per capita

(coefficient of variation in %, EU, 2000–2025)



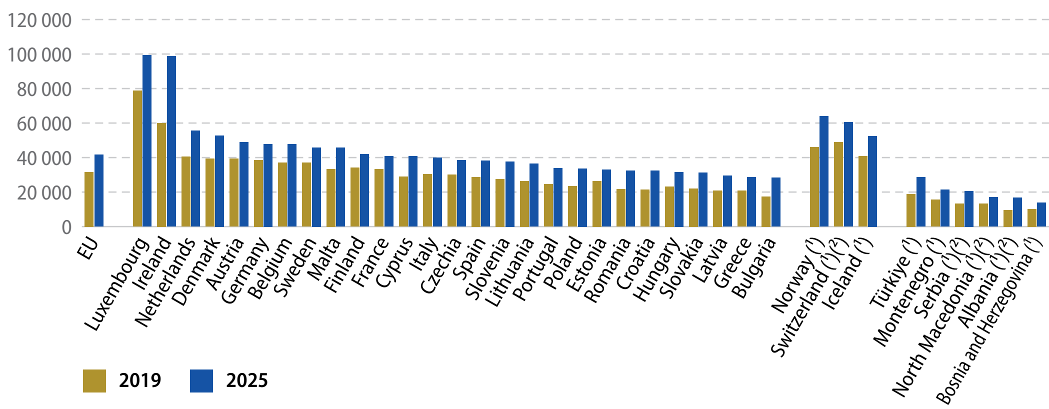
Note: 2025 data are provisional.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_10_10)

Figure 10.8

Purchasing power adjusted GDP per capita

(real expenditure per capita in PPS, 2019 and 2025)



Note: 2025 data are provisional.

(1) 2024 data (instead of 2025).

(2) 2024 data are provisional.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_10_10)

Disparities in household income per capita

The adjusted gross disposable income of households reflects the purchasing power of households, after taxes and social contributions, and including social benefits in kind. National income values are converted to purchasing power standards (PPS) to adjust for price level differences between countries and allow a meaningful comparison. The disparities indicator for the EU is calculated as the coefficient of variation of these national income data in PPS per capita. It is a measure of the variety of household income within the EU and euro area.

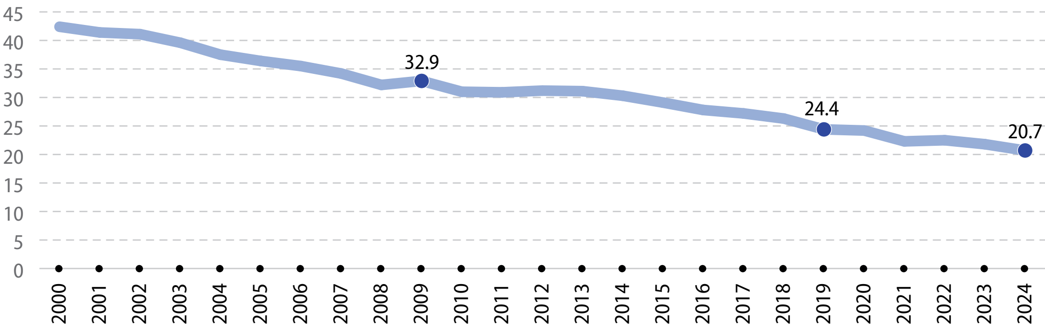
LONG TERM 2009–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 10.9

Disparities in adjusted gross disposable income of households per capita

(coefficient of variation in %, EU, 2000–2024)



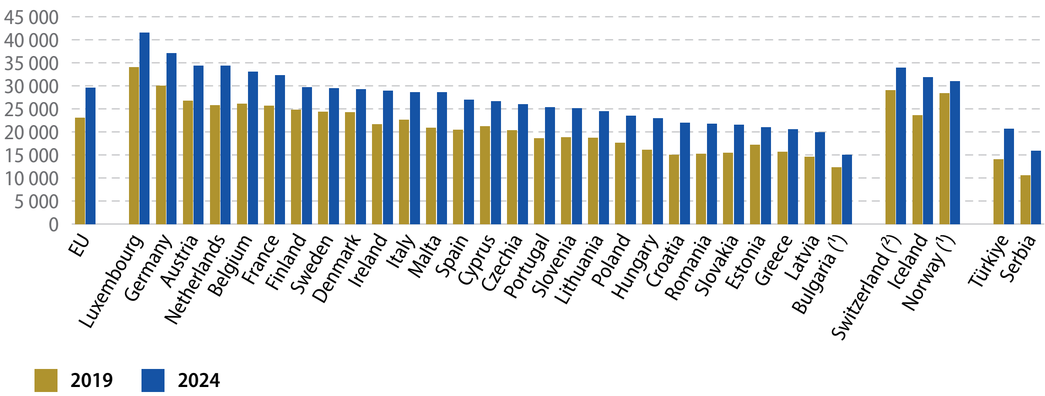
Note: 2023 and 2024 data are imputed.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_10_20)

Figure 10.10

Adjusted gross disposable income of households per capita

(PPS per inhabitant, 2019 and 2024)



Note: 2024 data are provisional or estimated for many countries.

(¹) 2022 data (instead of 2024).

(²) 2023 data (instead of 2024).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: nasa_10_nf_tr)

Asylum applications

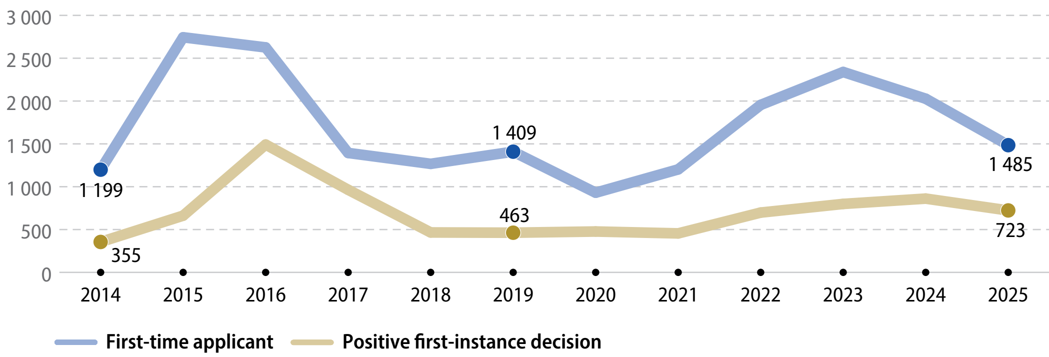
This indicator shows the number of first-time asylum applicants per million inhabitants and the number of positive first-instance decisions per million inhabitants. A first-time applicant for international protection is a person who lodged an application for asylum for the first time in a given Member State. First-instance decisions are decisions granted by the respective authority acting as a first instance of the administrative or judicial asylum procedure in the receiving country. Caution is required when comparing these two values, since applications received in a given year might not be processed until a later year. The source data are supplied to Eurostat by the national ministries of interior and related official agencies.

Assessment of progress not applicable

Figure 10.11

Asylum applications and decisions

(number per million inhabitants, EU, 2014–2025)

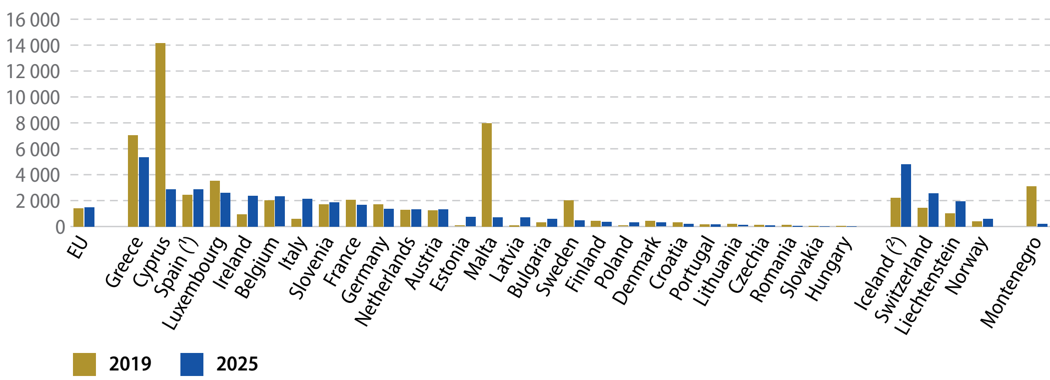


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_10_60)

Figure 10.12

First-time asylum applications

(number per million inhabitants, 2019 and 2025)



(1) 2025 data are provisional.
(2) 2024 data (instead of 2025).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_10_60)

Presentation of additional multi-purpose indicators

Urban–rural gap for risk of poverty or social exclusion

Statistics on the degree of urbanisation classify local administrative units as 'cities', 'towns and suburbs' or 'rural areas' depending on population density and the total number of inhabitants. This classification is used to determine the difference in the shares of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion between cities and rural areas. 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to people affected by at least one of the following conditions: monetary poverty, severe material and social deprivation and very low work intensity. Data are taken from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

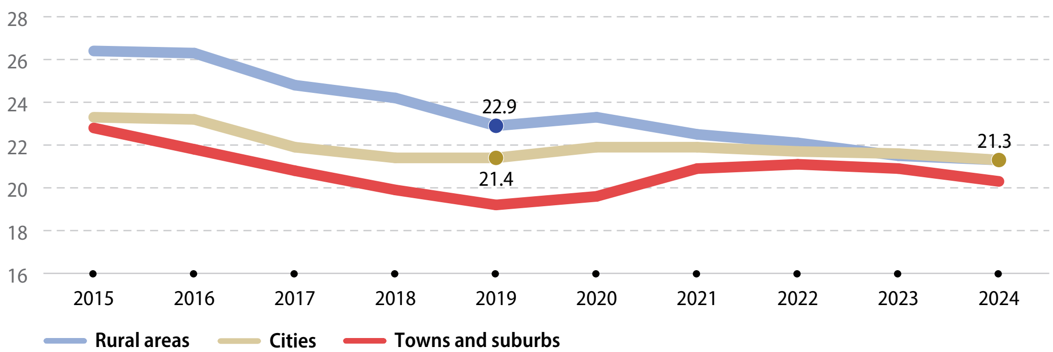
LONG TERM
Time series too short

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 10.13

People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by degree of urbanisation

(% of population, EU, 2015–2024)



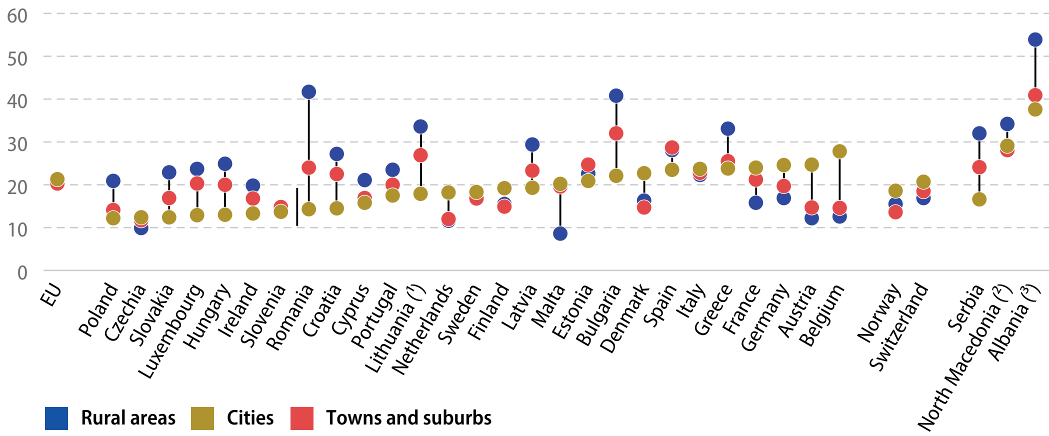
Note: Y-axis does not start at 0.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_10a)

Figure 10.14

People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by degree of urbanisation

(% of population, 2024)



Note: Countries are sorted according to the rate in cities (ascending).

(1) Provisional data.

(2) 2023 data (instead of 2024).

(3) 2022 data (instead of 2024).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_10a)

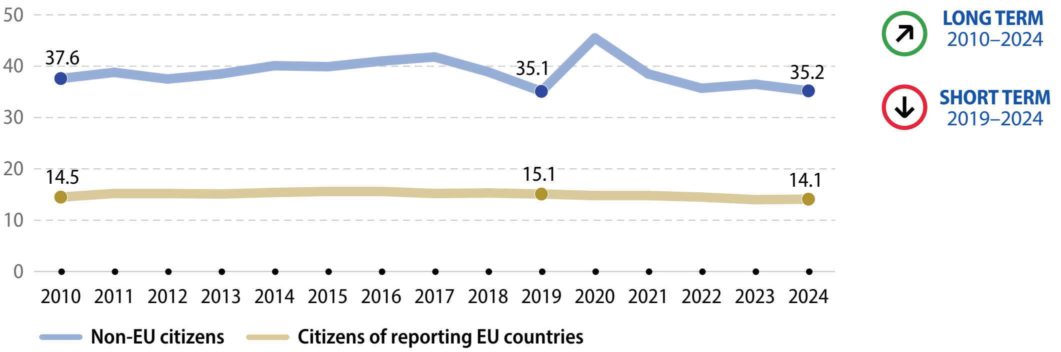
Citizenship gaps between non-EU citizens and citizens of reporting EU countries

This section provides data for different indicators by citizenship. Data are shown for non-EU citizens, referring to citizens of non-EU Member States, and for citizens of the reporting countries, referring to citizens of EU Member States that reside in their home country. Data presented in this section stem from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and from the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS).

Figure 10.15

People at risk of monetary poverty after social transfers

(% of population aged 18 or over, by citizenship, EU, 2010–2024)



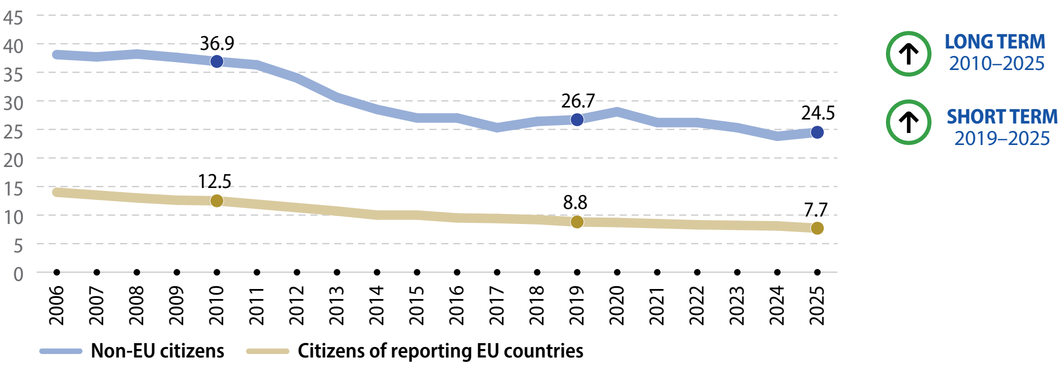
Note: 2010–2018 data are estimated; 2010–2011 data for non-EU citizens have low reliability.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_20a)

Figure 10.16

Early leavers from education and training

(% of population aged 18 to 24, by citizenship, EU, 2006–2025)



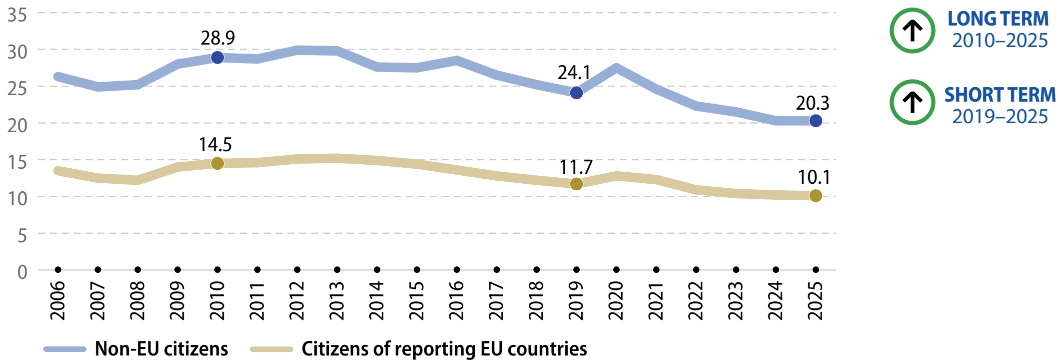
Note: Breaks in time series in 2014 and 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_04_10a)

Figure 10.17

Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET)

(% of population aged 15 to 29, by citizenship, EU, 2006–2025)



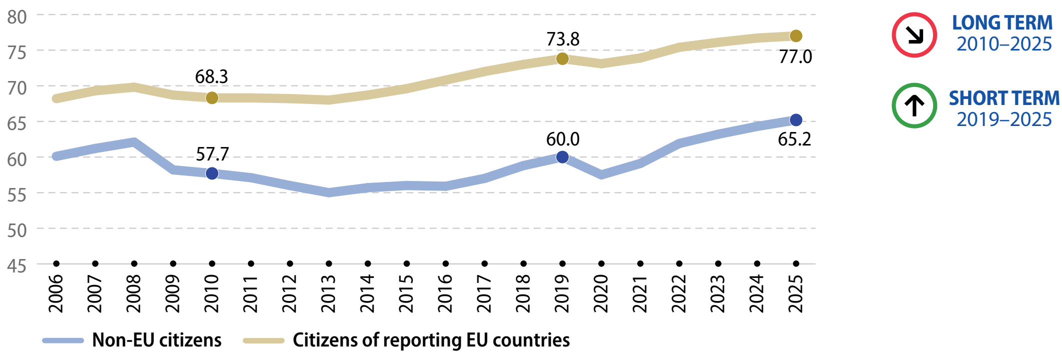
Note: Break in time series in 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_08_20a)

Figure 10.18

Employment rate

(% of population aged 20 to 64, by citizenship, EU, 2006–2025)



Note: Y-axis does not start at 0. Break in time series in 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_08_30a)

11 Sustainable cities and communities

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

SDG 11 aims to renew and plan cities and other human settlements in a way that offers opportunities for all, with access to basic services, energy, housing, transport, waste management, clean air and green public spaces, while reducing resource use and environmental impact.

Three-quarters of the EU population live in urban areas — cities, towns and suburbs — with about 39 % residing in cities alone [1]. With the share of Europe's urban population projected to rise to more than 80 % by 2050 [2], it will become increasingly important for cities, towns and suburbs to become more sustainable. Monitoring SDG 11 in an EU context means looking at trends in the quality of life in cities and communities, sustainable mobility and adverse environmental impacts. Overall, the EU has made moderate progress towards SDG 11 over the past short-term period assessed. Strong progress has been made towards increasing the quality of life in cities and communities, including in the areas of housing, air quality and safety. Trends in sustainable mobility and regarding impacts on the environment have been mixed. Road traffic deaths and the recycling rate of municipal waste have not improved fast enough to meet their respective 2030 targets, the share of buses and trains in passenger transport has been stagnating, and soil sealing has increased further. At the same time, the share of the population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment has increased slowly over the past five years.

(1) 2024 data. *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_lvho01).
(2) United Nations (2025), *World Urbanization Prospects 2025: Summary of Results*, UN DESA/POP/2025/TR/NO. 12. New York: United Nations.

Table 11.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 11, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Quality of life in cities and communities					
Severe housing deprivation rate	4.0 % (2023)	2010–2023	– 3.2 %	↑	page 191
		2018–2023	– 1.4 %	↑	
Population living in households suffering from noise	18.1 % (2023)	2010–2023	– 1.0 %	↑	page 192
		2018–2023	– 0.1 %	→	
Premature deaths due to exposure to fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$)	182 399 (2023)	2008–2023	Observed: – 4.2 % Required: – 2.7 %	↑	page 193
		2018–2023	Observed: – 8.6 % Required: – 3.3 %	↑	
Housing cost overburden rate (*)	9.8 % (1) (2024)	2010–2024	– 1.2 % (1)	↑	SDG 1, page 35
		2019–2024	– 3.6 % (1)	↑	
Population reporting crime, violence or vandalism in their area (*)	10.0 % (2023)	2010–2023	– 2.1 %	↑	SDG 16, page 272
		2018–2023	– 2.8 %	↑	
Sustainable mobility					
Road traffic deaths	19 934 (2024)	2009–2024	Observed: – 3.3 % Required: – 4.9 %	↗	page 194
		2019–2024	Observed: – 2.6 % Required: – 6.1 %	↘	
Share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport (*)	16.9 % (2023)	2008–2023	– 0.2 %	↘	SDG 9, page 158
		2018–2023	– 0.1 %	→	
Impacts on the environment					
Soil sealing	252.1 m² per inhabitant (2021)	2006–2021	0.2 %	↘	page 195
		2015–2021	0.3 %	↘	
Recycling rate of municipal waste	48.1 % (2024)	2009–2024	Observed: 1.7 % Required: 2.3 %	↗	page 196
		2019–2024	Observed: 0.4 % Required: 2.2 %	↘	

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment (*)	80.7 % (2023)	2008–2023	0.6 %	↗	SDG 6, page 107
		2018–2023	0.2 %	↗	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the trend assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

(*) Multi-purpose indicator.

([1]) Assessment refers to the housing cost overburden rate in cities.

Policy context

Quality of life in cities and communities and impacts on the environment

Under the EU Cohesion Policy, a minimum of 8 % of the European Regional Development Fund of each national envelope is dedicated to supporting sustainable urban development. It is accompanied by the European Urban Initiative supporting innovation, capacity and knowledge building in urban areas.

The Environmental Noise Directive is the main EU instrument for identifying and combating noise pollution.

The EU addresses air pollution through specific legislation on clean air as well as legislation addressing the key sources of emissions. The EU emission standards for road vehicles, for example, will help improve air quality in cities. With the Green City Accord, European Mayors can commit to improving their cities by addressing five areas of environmental management — air, water, noise, nature and biodiversity and waste.

The Action Plan 'Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil' includes the target of reducing the health impacts due to air pollution by 55 % by 2030, compared with 2005, and maximises synergies with relevant EU policies, such as limiting soil sealing and urban sprawl. The 2022 Zero Pollution package proposed stricter rules for cleaner air and water. The revised Ambient Air Quality Directive aligns EU air quality standards more closely with WHO recommendations, and improves air quality monitoring, modelling and plans.

In December 2025 the European Commission has adopted the European Affordable Housing Plan that aims to support EU Member States, regions and cities to boost the supply of affordable, sustainable and quality housing while also aiming to improve social inclusion, fighting homelessness and housing exclusion.

The EU Soil Strategy for 2030 aims to protect and restore soils and ensure their sustainable use, and sets a goal of no net land take by 2050. The new Soil Monitoring Law addresses key soil threats such as erosion, loss of soil organic matter, salinisation, contamination, compaction and sealing, and loss of soil biodiversity.

The circular economy action plan supports the transition to a stronger and more circular economy. In 2018, the legally binding targets for recycling and reuse of municipal waste entered into force. EU countries will now be required to recycle at least 55 % of their municipal waste by 2025, 60 % by 2030 and 65 % by 2035. The Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation aims to reduce packaging waste and increase recycling.

The New European Bauhaus initiative brings citizens, experts, businesses and institutions together to reimagine sustainable living in Europe and beyond, incorporating the values of sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion.

Sustainable mobility

The EU guidelines for sustainable urban mobility planning and funding for related projects, combined with the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy adopted in 2020, support the green and digital transformation of the EU transport system.

The revised TEN-T Regulation adopted in 2024 reinforced the link between transport networks and urban mobility.

The Strategic Action Plan on Road Safety and the EU road safety policy framework 2021–2030 set a 50 % reduction target for deaths and serious injuries by 2030 compared with 2019 and aims to move close to zero road deaths by 2050.

Overview and key trends

Quality of life in cities and communities

While European cities and communities provide opportunities for employment and other economic and cultural activities, many inhabitants still face considerable social challenges and inequalities. Problems affecting the quality of housing and the wider residential area, such as noise disturbance, crime and vandalism, are some of the most visible challenges that cities and communities can face and which impact quality of life.

Quality of housing in the EU has been improving since 2010, but affordability and vulnerability challenges persist

Safe and adequate homes are a foundation for living an independent, healthy and fulfilling life. Poor housing conditions, on the other hand, are associated with lower life chances, health inequalities and increased risks of poverty and environmental hazards.

The severe housing deprivation rate refers to the share of the total population living in an overcrowded household while also experiencing types of housing deprivation such as a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundations; rot in window frames or floors; lack of sanitary facilities; or a dwelling that is considered too dark. Between 2010 and 2023, the share of EU residents who lived in such conditions fell by 2.1 percentage points, indicating a significant improvement in the perceived quality of EU housing stock. In 2023, 4.0 % of the EU population faced severe housing deprivation, compared with 4.3 % in 2018 and 6.1 % in 2010.

4.0 %
of the EU population experienced severe housing deprivation in 2023

Despite these improvements, the housing situation remains precarious for many vulnerable groups, such as people living in low-income households or people with disabilities ([3]). At the same time, the EU is facing a growing housing affordability crisis, with house prices rising faster than household incomes. Across the EU, house prices increased by 62 % between 2015 and 2025, with some countries experiencing much higher changes. For example, house prices more than tripled in Hungary over this period, while they more than doubled in 11 further countries ([4]). Rising housing scarcity and declining affordability risk offsetting the gains made in housing quality, with negative implications for health, well-being and future prospects disproportionally affecting vulnerable population groups.

Perceived safety in residential areas has continued to improve, but noise disturbance levels have stagnated

Noise disturbance can cause annoyance, stress, sleep deprivation, poor mental health and well-being, as well as harm to the cardiovascular and metabolic system ([5]). Likewise, crime and vandalism can also reduce quality of life and housing satisfaction in a residential area. In 2023, 18.1 % of the EU population (more than 81 million people) said their household suffered from noise disturbance ([6]).

18.1 %
of the EU population experienced noise disturbance in 2023

([3]) European Commission (2025), *Understanding the housing crisis*, SWD(2025) 1053/2, Brussels, p. 133.
([4]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: prc_hpi_a).
([5]) European Environment Agency (2025), *Exposure of Europe's population to environmental noise*.
([6]) Figures on noise disturbance presented here include noise from different sources than those covered by the Environmental Noise Directive.

While this constitutes a long-term improvement of 2.5 percentage points since 2010, the rate has been stagnating since 2018, only improving by 0.1 percentage points. At the same time, 10.0 % of the EU population perceived there had been crime, violence and vandalism in their neighbourhoods in 2023, showing an improvement from 13.1 % in 2010. Most of this improvement has occurred since 2013, when the indicator had peaked at 14.1 %.

The EU's zero pollution action plan aims to reduce the share of people chronically disturbed by transport noise by 30 % by 2030 compared with 2017. The WHO guidelines for Europe recommend that the noise level from road traffic should be below 53 decibels (dB) during the day and below 45 dB at night. While railways and airports represent further significant sources of local noise pollution, their impact on the overall population is much lower. According to European Environment Agency (EEA) estimates on the exposure of Europe's population to environmental noise, more than 20 % of people are exposed to long-term unhealthy levels of transport noise. This figure increases to 30 % when considering the more stringent WHO regulations. According to the Zero pollution monitoring and outlook 2025 report, the EU is unlikely to meet its 2030 target for reducing the number of people chronically disturbed by transport noise by 30 %. Its most optimistic scenario estimates a 23 % reduction, while its conservative scenario estimates only a 2 % decline by 2030.

The EU achieved its target of reducing the number of premature death due to $PM_{2.5}$ exposure in 2023

Pollutants such as fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) suspended in the air reduce people's life expectancy and can lead to or aggravate many chronic and acute respiratory and cardiovascular diseases ([7]). Exposure to air pollution is of particular concern in cities because the concentration of economic activities and high population densities mean there are many potential emission sources and many people are affected.

182 400
people died prematurely in the EU in 2023 due to $PM_{2.5}$ exposure

The EU has successfully managed to reduce fine particulate matter emissions from sources such as residential heating and road transport. As a result, the number of people dying prematurely due to $PM_{2.5}$ exposure fell by 57 % between 2005 and 2023, meaning the EU has met its 2030 target from the zero pollution action plan (a 55 % reduction). The downward trend has also continued in the short term, with the number falling by 36 % between 2018 and 2023. Nevertheless, in 2023 exposure to fine particulate matter was still responsible for around 182 400 premature deaths. Almost all EU Member States reduced the number of premature deaths attributable to $PM_{2.5}$ exposure between 2018 and 2023. The biggest declines were observed in Finland (93 %), Estonia (80 %) and Sweden (77 %).

In order to reduce exposure to $PM_{2.5}$ and the related premature deaths, the revised Ambient Air Quality Directive set an annual limit of $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations of 10 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³), to be achieved by 2030 ([8]). According to data from the European Environment Agency (EEA), only six EU Member States (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden) recorded annual $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations below this limit in 2024 in all their measuring stations. The higher $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations in central and eastern Europe are mainly due to solid fuel use and an older vehicle fleet ([9]). When considering the more stringent WHO air quality guideline of 5 µg/m³, all EU Member States, except for Estonia, reported annual concentration levels that exceeded the limit in at least one or more measuring stations. Additionally, EEA estimates suggest that most of the EU's population was exposed to key air pollutants above the WHO guideline levels, especially in urban areas. Almost all EU city dwellers (94 %) were exposed to $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations above the WHO guideline level of 5 µg/m³ in 2023.

([7]) World Health Organization (2021), *WHO global air quality guidelines: particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$ and PM_{10}), ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide*; European Environment Agency (2023), *Harm to human health from air pollution in Europe: burden of disease 2023*, Briefing no. 23/2023.

([8]) For more information on EU air quality standards see: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/air/quality/standards.htm.

([9]) European Environment Agency (2024), *Europe's air quality status 2024*.

Urban residents in the EU remain the group most affected by noise pollution, crime and high housing costs

Statistics on the degree of urbanisation provide an analytical and descriptive lens through which to view urban and rural communities. Eurostat differentiates between three types of area — 'cities', 'towns and suburbs' and 'rural areas' — based on the share of the local population living in urban centres and clusters.

In 2023, the perceived occurrence of crime and vandalism in cities (15.3 %) was more than three times higher than in rural areas (4.8 %) and almost two times higher than the level observed in towns and suburbs (7.8 %) ([10]). The perceived level of noise pollution also varies greatly depending on the degree of urbanisation. People living in EU cities were more likely to report noise from neighbours or from the street (24.2 %) compared with those living in towns and suburbs (16.9 %) or in rural areas (10.5 %) ([11]). People living in cities also faced more problems with their dwelling, with a severe housing deprivation rate of 4.9 %, compared with rural areas (3.5 %) and towns and suburbs (3.2 %) ([12]).

15.3 %
of people living in EU cities reported occurrence of crime and vandalism in their area in 2023

In addition, city dwellers are more affected by the housing cost overburden rate, which is defined as the share of the population living in households where the total housing costs (net of housing allowances) represent more than 40 % of the total disposable household income. In 2024, 9.8 % of the population in cities was overburdened by housing costs, compared with 7.8 % in towns and suburbs and 6.3 % in rural areas. The situation in cities has improved by 2.0 percentage points since 2019. City dwellers in Greece and Denmark were the most affected, with housing cost overburden rates of 29.1 % and 22.7 % in 2024, respectively ([13]). Moreover, the average housing cost overburden rate hides the potential problem of households living in unsatisfactory conditions but not moving because of high prices both on the rental and real estate markets ([14]).

9.8 %
of people living in EU cities were overburdened by their housing costs in 2024

Sustainable mobility

A functioning transport system is necessary for people to reach their places of work, education, services and social activities, all of which affect quality of life and equal opportunities for everyone. In addition to availability, the accessibility, affordability, quality and safety of transport systems are also crucial when designing sustainable and inclusive cities and communities.

Use of public transport modes improved in 2023 but remained below the pre-pandemic level

The EU aims to improve citizens' quality of life and strengthen the economy by promoting sustainable urban mobility and greater use of clean and energy-efficient vehicles, together with reducing the demand for individual car transport. Public transport networks help to relieve traffic jams, reduce harmful pollution and offer more affordable and sustainable ways to commute to work, access services and travel for leisure.

16.9 %
of inland passenger-kilometres were covered by buses and trains in 2023

Since 2000, the share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport has stagnated well below 20 %, accounting for only 16.9 % of passenger-kilometres (pkm) in 2023. The total pkm travelled via these two modes increased by 3.6 % between 2000 and 2023, while the pkm travelled by cars grew by 16.7 % ([15]).

([10]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_mddw06).
([11]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_mddw04).
([12]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_mdho06d).
([13]) Source: Eurostat (online data code: ilc_lvho07d).
([14]) European Commission (2025), *Understanding the housing crisis*, SWD(2025) 1053/2, Brussels, p. 48.
([15]) European Commission (2025), *EU transport in figures — Statistical pocketbook 2025*, pp. 48.

The onset of the pandemic in 2020 drastically hit public transport modes, with the share of buses and trains falling by 4.4 percentage points compared with 2019, to 12.8 %. The precautionary measures put in place, including domestic and international travel restrictions, quarantine restrictions, introduction of remote-working policies and changing mobility habits had led to a reduction in the use of public transport [16] and passengers' perceptions about safety and comfort. The increase in the share of buses and trains in inland passenger transport in 2023 by 4.1 percentage points relative to 2020 represents a partial recovery since the pandemic. Nonetheless, the shares of public modes of mobility remain below pre-pandemic levels.

The figures presented above do not include tram and metro systems, which are common transport modes in — especially larger — cities. According to the 2023 survey on the quality of life in European cities, an average of 43 % of respondents used public transport on a typical day, with this figure increasing as cities have grown. Overall, the survey reveals that 73 % of city residents in the EU are satisfied with their public transport services.

Walking, cycling and other active modes of transport are low-cost and emission-free, while offering health benefits associated with an active lifestyle. The survey shows that in 2023, 27 % of people walked on a typical day in the city where they live. Between 2019 and 2023, the percentage of people walking increased by 15 % (or 3 percentage points).

Deaths from road crashes have decreased in recent years, but stronger progress is needed to meet the 2030 target

Road traffic injuries are a public health issue and have a huge economic cost. About 100 000 people are estimated to be seriously injured in road accidents in the EU each year [17]. In 2024, about 55 people a day lost their lives on EU roads. This corresponds to almost 20 000 people for the entire year — a loss equivalent to the size of a medium town. Nevertheless, the EU has made progress in this respect compared with 2009, when road deaths amounted to about 33 000. In recent years, however, the figures have experienced some fluctuations, in part explained by significant changes in traffic volumes because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the pandemic-related low in 2020, road traffic deaths have stagnated at around 20 000 each year. Compared with the reference year 2019, road deaths had fallen by 12.4 % by 2024, meaning the EU is still far from its 2030 target of halving road deaths relative to 2019.

19 934
people were killed in road accidents in the EU in 2024

The highest share of road-traffic fatalities in 2024 was recorded on rural roads (53 %), followed by urban roads (38 %) and motorways (8 %). Most fatalities on rural roads involve car occupants, light goods vehicles and motorcyclists, while most of the fatalities in urban areas involve vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and mopeds. Most (77 %) of the fatalities on the European roads in 2024 were men. Data by transport mode show that over the period 2019 to 2024, the reduction in road fatalities was strongest for buses and coaches, by 45 %, followed by pedestrians (23 %) and mopeds (22 %), while fatalities for motorcyclists increased by 3 % [18]. According to the European Road Safety Observatory's thematic report on alcohol and drugs, around 25 % of all road deaths in the EU are alcohol related. It is also estimated that 1.5 % to 2 % of the kilometres driven in the EU are done by drivers with an illegal blood alcohol content.

Impacts on the environment

While cities, towns and suburbs are a focal point for social and economic activity, if not managed sustainably, they risk causing considerable environmental damage. At the same time, large and densely populated cities provide opportunities for effective environmental action, indicating that urbanisation is not necessarily a threat

[16] Lozzi, G., Cré, I., Ramos, C. (2022), *Research for TRAN Committee — Relaunching transport and tourism in the EU after COVID-19 — Part VI: Public Transport*, European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels.
[17] European Commission (2025), *Facts & Figures: Serious injuries*, European Road Safety Observatory, Brussels, European Commission, Directorate General for Transport.
[18] European Commission (2026), *Annual statistical report on road safety in the EU 2026*.

but can act as a transformative force for more sustainable societies ([19]). EU progress in reducing the environmental impacts of cities and communities is monitored by three indicators on the management of municipal waste, wastewater treatment and artificial land cover.

Net land take and soil sealing are increasing slowly but constantly in the EU

Offering numerous cultural, educational and job opportunities, an urban lifestyle is attractive to many people. However, growth in the urban population has also come with increased land take. Land take is described as the process of transforming agricultural, forest and other semi-natural and natural areas into artificial areas. To preserve European natural areas and halt ecosystem degradation, the EU aims to achieve no net land take by 2050.

In 2021, the area of sealed soil reached

252 m^2

per inhabitant in the EU

Between 2018 and 2021, the net land take in cities and their commuting zones, also known as functional urban areas, amounted to 540 square kilometres (km^2) annually, which represents an increase of about 32 % in the average yearly rate compared with the period 2012 to 2018. Most of the new land take in cities and their commuting zones occurred on arable land, with an annual pace of loss rising from 219 km^2 to 270 km^2, followed by pastures (from 146 km^2 to 184 km^2 per year) and forests (from 51 km^2 to 63 km^2). The increasing net land take is a concern for food security, biodiversity and carbon stocks, and means that the EU is off track to meeting its 'no net land take by 2050' target ([20]).

Between 2018 and 2021, most EU countries increased their annual net land take in cities and commuting zones relative to their total area. The most dramatic increases compared with the period 2012 to 2018 occurred in Croatia, Spain and Latvia (267 %, 234 %, 202 % respectively). In contrast, Luxembourg achieved a 30 % decrease in yearly net land take rate, followed by France (15 %) and Italy (14 %).

Soil sealing is the most intense form of land take and is in effect an irreversible process. It destroys or covers soils with layers of partly or completely impermeable artificial material such as asphalt and concrete. Increases in the extent of sealed land can be used to estimate land-use change for human use or intensification. Since 2006, the area of sealed soil in the EU has increased by 6.5 m^2 per inhabitant and reached 252.1 m^2 per inhabitant in 2021. In absolute terms, this means that between 2006 and 2021, the total EU area covered with impervious materials grew by 5 140 km^2 or 4.8 %. By 2021, 2.7 % of area in the EU was sealed. Across Member States, the area covered with impervious materials ranged from less than 112 m^2 per inhabitant in Malta to 467 m^2 per inhabitant in Finland. In relation to country area, the share of sealed soil area ranged from below 1 % in Sweden and Finland to around 10 % in Belgium and the Netherlands, and up to almost 19 % in Malta.

The EU might miss its target for municipal waste recycling as progress slows

48.1 %

of total municipal waste generated in the EU was recycled in 2024

The 'waste hierarchy' is the overarching logic that guides EU waste policy. It prioritises waste prevention, followed by preparing for reuse, recycling, other recovery and finally disposal, including landfilling, as the last resort. Waste management activities promote recycling, which reduces the amount of waste going to landfills and leads to higher resource efficiency. Although municipal waste accounts for only about 10 % of the weight of total waste generated in the EU ([21]), it is highly visible and closely linked to consumption patterns. Sustainable management of this waste stream reduces the adverse environmental impact of cities and communities, which is why the EU has set a target to recycle or

([19]) UN-Habitat (2016), *Urbanization and Development: Emerging Futures, World Cities report 2016*, pp. 85–100.
([20]) European Environment Agency (2025), *Net land take in cities and commuting zones in Europe*.

([21]) Eurostat (2026), *Municipal waste statistics*.

prepare for reuse at least 60 % of its municipal waste by 2030.

In 2024, EU residents generated 232 million tonnes of municipal waste, corresponding to 517 kilograms (kg) of waste per capita per year [22]. Between 2019 and 2024, the annual amount of waste generated per capita grew by 12 kg, which represents an increase of 2.4 %. Although the EU has not reduced its municipal waste generation, it has clearly shifted to more recycling. Between 2000 and 2021, the recycling rate of municipal waste — covering both recycling and preparing for re-use — increased from 27.3 % to 49.7 %. However, since 2021 the recycling rate has dropped by 1.6 percentage points, reaching 48.1 % in 2024. Over the short-term period from 2019 to 2024, the share of recycled municipal waste thus only increased by 0.9 percentage points. Stronger efforts are therefore needed to put the EU back on track to meet its 2030 recycling targets.

([22]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_wasmun).

Uptake in the connection rate to wastewater treatment in the EU has slowed

80.7 %
of the EU population were connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment in 2023

Urban areas also place significant pressure on the water environment through wastewater from households and industry that contains organic matter, nutrients and hazardous substances. The share of the EU population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment plants, which decompose most of the organic material and retain some of the nutrients, has been steadily growing since 2000 and reached 80.7 % in 2023, although the pace has slowed. In six Member States, more than 90 % of the population were connected to such services according to the most recent data (which refer to 2022 or 2023, depending on the country). However, it may not be suitable to connect 100 % of the population to a sewage collection system, either because it would produce no environmental benefit or would be too costly (see chapter on SDG 6 'Clean water and sanitation' on page 99).

Main indicators

Severe housing deprivation rate

The severe housing deprivation rate is defined as the percentage of the population living in a dwelling which is considered to be overcrowded, while also exhibiting at least one of the following housing deprivation measures: i) a leaking roof, ii) no bath/shower and no indoor toilet, and iii) considered too dark. The data stem from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

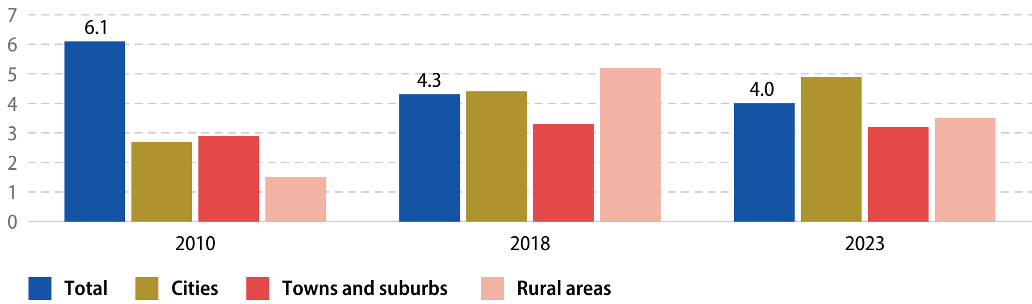
LONG TERM
2010–2023

SHORT TERM
2018–2023

Figure 11.1

Severe housing deprivation rate by degree of urbanisation

(% of population, EU, 2010, 2018 and 2023)



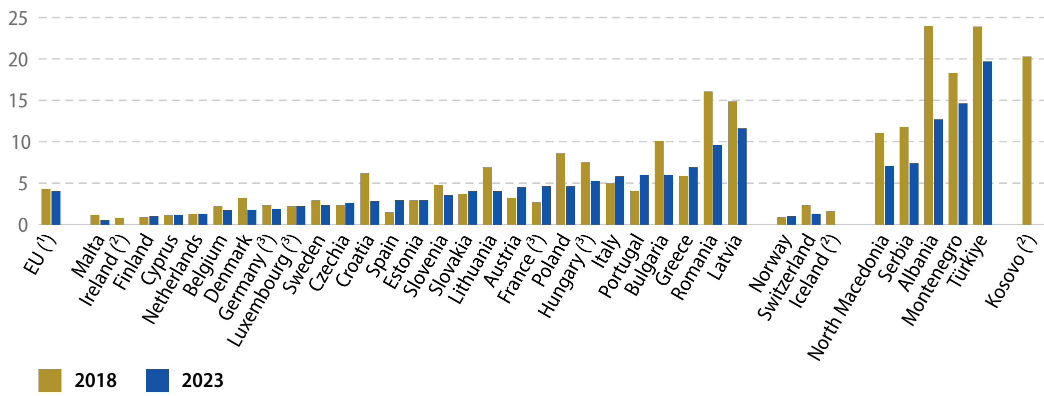
Note: Data for 2010 and 2018 are estimated. 2012 data for cities, towns and suburbs and rural areas instead of 2010.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: sdg_11_11 and ilc_mdho06d)

Figure 11.2

Severe housing deprivation rate

(% of population, 2018 and 2023)



Note: 2023 data are estimated for many countries.
(¹) 2018 data are estimated.
(²) No data for 2023.
(³) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_11_11)

Population living in households suffering from noise

LONG TERM 2010–2023

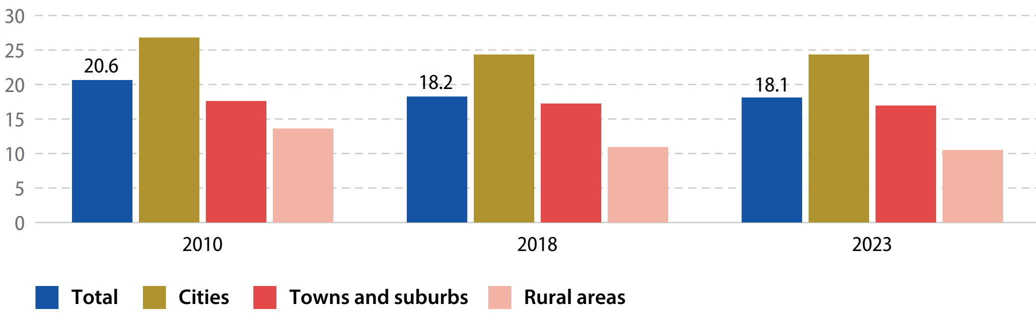
SHORT TERM 2018–2023

This indicator measures the share of the population who declare they are affected either by noise from neighbours or from the street. Because the assessment of noise pollution is subjective, it should be noted that the indicator accounts for both the levels of noise pollution as well as what people consider to be acceptable. Therefore, an increase in the value of the indicator may not necessarily indicate a similar increase in noise pollution levels; it may also indicate a decrease in the levels that European citizens are willing to tolerate and vice versa. In fact, there is empirical evidence that perceived environmental quality by individuals is not always consistent with the actual environmental quality assessed using 'objective' indicators, particularly for noise. The data stem from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

Figure 11.3

Population living in households considering that they suffer from noise by degree of urbanisation

(% of population, EU, 2010, 2018 and 2023)



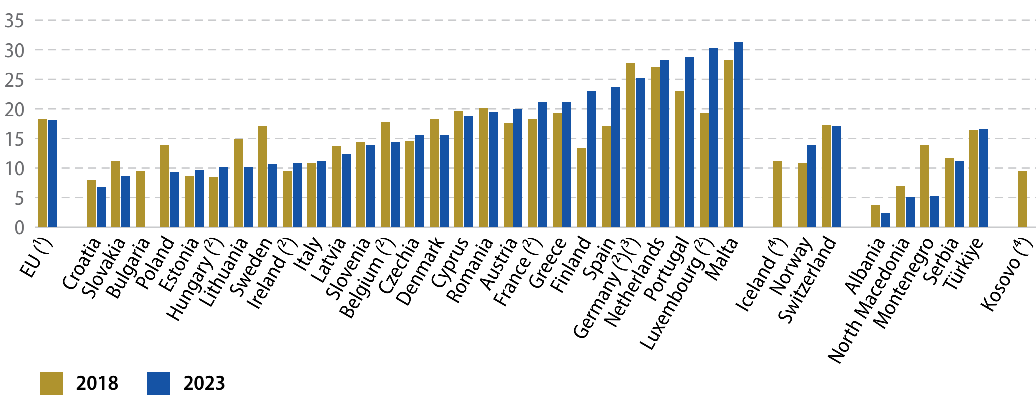
Note: Estimated data for 2010 and 2018.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: sdg_11_20 and ilc_mddw04)

Figure 11.4

Population living in households considering that they suffer from noise

(% of population, 2018 and 2023)



([1]) 2018 data are estimated.
([2]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
([3]) Data for 2023 have lower reliability.
([4]) No data for 2023.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_11_20)

Premature deaths due to exposure to fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$)

The indicator measures the number of premature deaths that can be attributed to exposure to particulate matter. Fine particulates ($PM_{2.5}$) are particulates whose diameter is less than 2.5 micrometres, meaning they can be carried deep into the lungs where they can cause inflammation and exacerbate the condition of people already suffering from heart and lung diseases. Premature deaths refer to those deaths that occur before the expected age of death. This expected age is typically defined by accounting for the life expectancy in the country, stratified by sex and age. The data stem from the European Environment Agency.

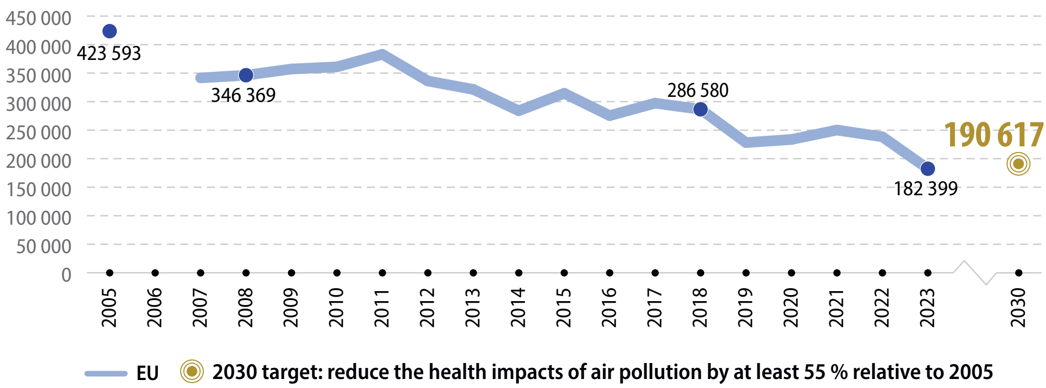
LONG TERM 2008–2023

SHORT TERM 2018–2023

Figure 11.5

Premature deaths due to exposure to fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$)

(number, EU, 2005–2023)



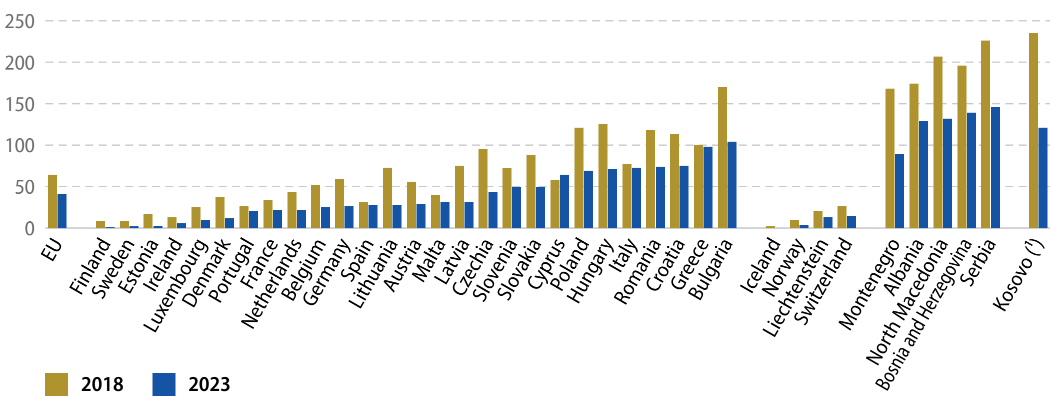
Note: No data available for 2006.

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_11_52)

Figure 11.6

Premature deaths due to exposure to fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$)

(number per 100 000 people, 2018 and 2023)



(¹) 2023 data are imputed.

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_11_52)

Road traffic deaths

This indicator measures the number of fatalities caused by road crashes, including drivers and passengers of motorised vehicles and pedal cycles, as well as pedestrians. People who die from road crashes up to 30 days after the crash occurred are counted as fatalities. The data come from the CARE database managed by DG Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE).

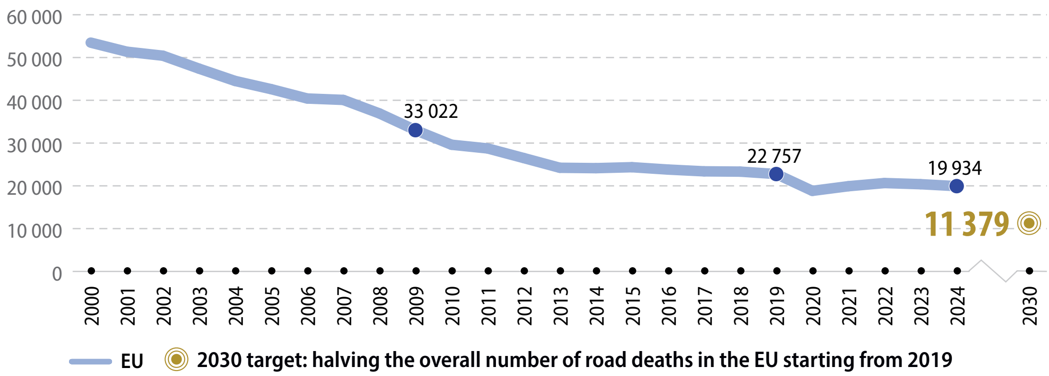
LONG TERM 2009–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 11.7

Road traffic deaths

(number, EU, 2000–2024)

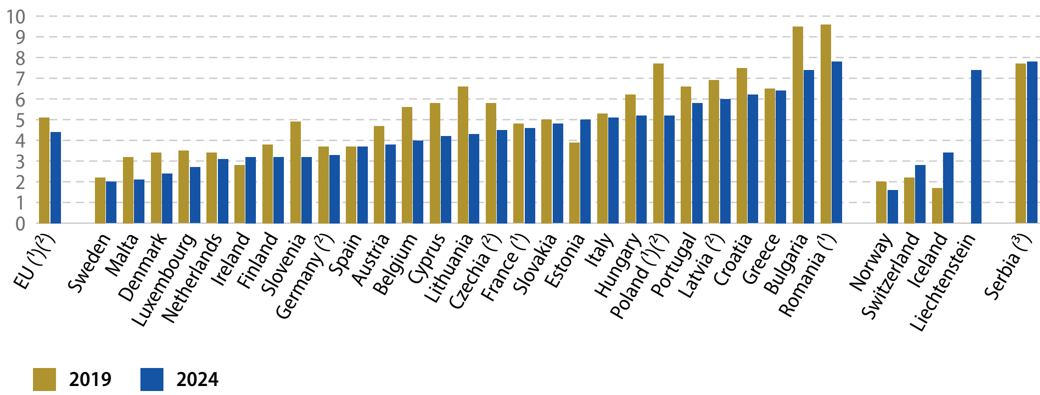


Source: European Commission services, DG Mobility and Transport (Eurostat online data code: sdg_11_40)

Figure 11.8

Road traffic deaths

(number per 100 000 people, 2018 and 2023)



(¹) 2019 and/or 2024 population data are estimated and/or provisional.
(²) Break(s) in population data time series between the two years shown.

Source: European Commission services, DG Mobility and Transport (Eurostat online data code: sdg_11_40)

Soil sealing

This indicator shows the area of soil per inhabitant that is sealed with impervious materials due to development and construction (such as buildings, constructions and laying of completely or partially impermeable artificial material such as asphalt or glass). The indicator builds on data from the Imperviousness High Resolution Layer (a product of the Copernicus Land Monitoring Service).

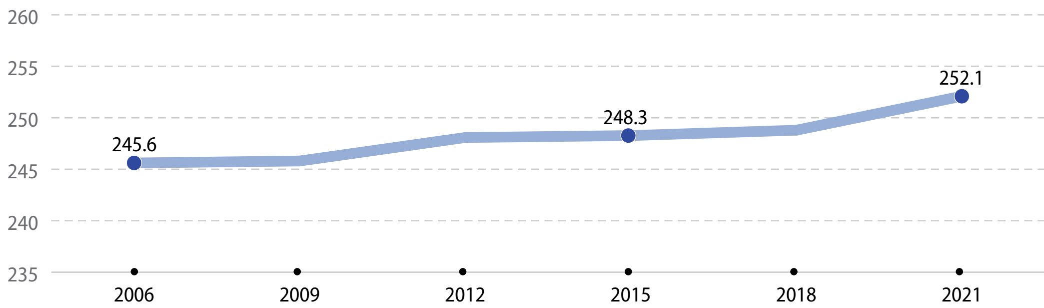
LONG TERM
2006–2021

SHORT TERM
2015–2021

Figure 11.9

Soil sealing

(m^2 per inhabitant, EU, 2006–2021)



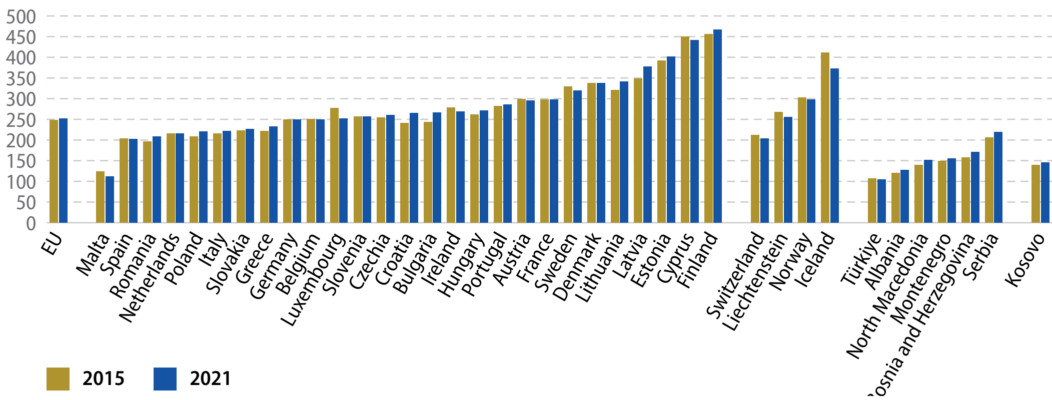
Note: Y-axis does not start at 0.

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_11_32)

Figure 11.10

Soil sealing

(m^2 per inhabitant, 2015 and 2021)



Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_11_32)

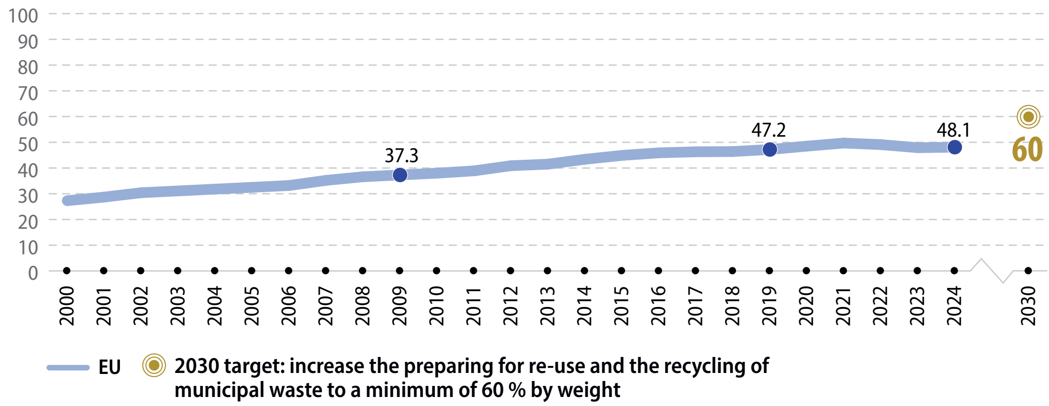
Recycling rate of municipal waste

This indicator measures the tonnage recycled or prepared for re-use from municipal waste divided by the total municipal waste generated. Recycling includes material recycling, composting and anaerobic digestion. Municipal waste primarily consists of waste generated by households but it also includes similar types of waste generated by small businesses, offices and public institutions that are collected by or on behalf of municipalities. The specific composition of municipal waste can vary from municipality to municipality and from country to country, depending on the local waste management systems in place. For areas not covered by a municipal waste collection scheme the amount of waste generated is estimated.

LONG TERM
2009–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

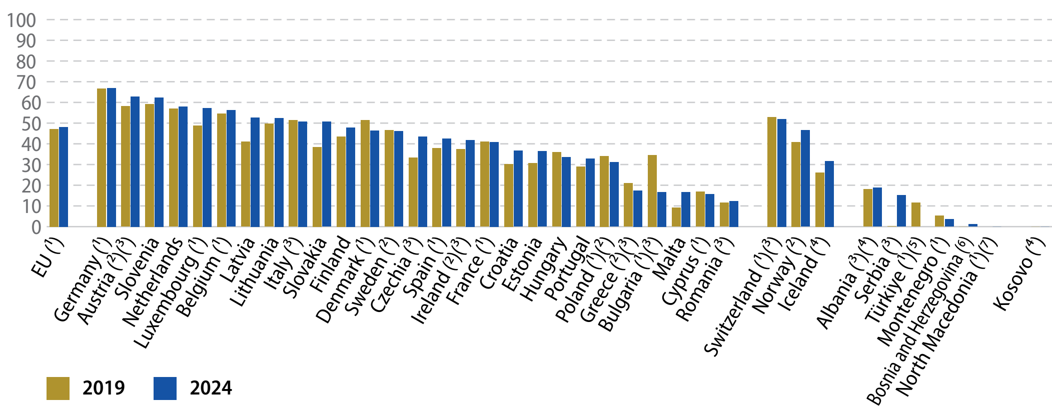
Figure 11.11
Recycling rate of municipal waste
(% of total municipal waste generated, EU, 2000–2024)



Note: Data for 2000–2006, 2019 and 2024 are imputed.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_11_60)

Figure 11.12
Recycling rate of municipal waste
(% of total municipal waste generated, 2019 and 2024)



(1) Estimated, imputed and/or provisional data.
(2) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(3) 2023 data (instead of 2024).
(4) 2020 data (instead of 2019).
(5) No data for 2024.
(6) 2017 data (instead of 2019).
(7) No data for 2019.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_11_60)

12 Responsible consumption and production

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

SDG 12 calls for a comprehensive set of actions from businesses, policymakers and consumers to adapt to sustainable practices. It envisions sustainable production and consumption based on advanced technological capacity, resource efficiency and reduced global waste.

Consumption and production patterns have wide environmental and social impacts. Monitoring SDG 12 in an EU context focuses on developments in consumption patterns, the green economy, and waste generation and management. The EU has made significant progress towards this goal over the short-term period. The EU's consumption of raw materials and of hazardous chemicals has decreased. Energy productivity has increased, showing the EU has further decoupled economic growth from energy use. CO_2 emissions from new cars have decreased, and the value added from the environmental goods and services sector has grown strongly. Total waste generation has risen since its COVID-19 related low but has remained below 2018 levels. However, the circular use of materials is not increasing fast enough to meet the EU's 24 % target by 2030.

Table 12.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 12, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Consumption patterns					
Material footprint	6.2 billion tonnes (2024)	2009–2024	– 1.0 %	↑	page 205
		2019–2024	– 1.5 %	↑	
Consumption footprint	3.2 exceedance of planetary boundaries (2024)	2010–2024	0.2 %	↘	page 207
		2019–2024	– 1.0 %	↑	
Consumption of hazardous chemicals	170.7 million tonnes (2024)	2009–2024	– 1.1 %	↑	page 209
		2019–2024	– 4.3 %	↑	
Energy productivity (*)	10.0 EUR per kgoe (2024)	2009–2024	2.4 %	↑	SDG 7, page 126
		2019–2024	3.5 %	↑	
Average CO_2 emissions per km from new passenger cars (*) ◎	107.9 g CO_2 per km (2024)	Long-term assessment not possible due to break in time series in 2017		✕	SDG 13, page 224
		2019–2024	Observed: – 6.1 % Required: – 9.5 %	↗	
Green economy					
Gross value added in the environmental goods and services sector	382.6 EUR billion (2023)	Time series too short for long-term assessment		✕	page 210
		2018–2023	4.1 %	↑	
Waste generation and management					
Circular material use rate ◎	12.2 % (2024)	2009–2024	Observed: 1.1 % Required: 4.1 %	↘	page 211
		2019–2024	Observed: 1.9 % Required: 7.3 %	↘	
Generation of waste	4 981 kg per capita (2022)	2008–2022	0.1 %	↘	page 212
		2018–2022	– 1.2 %	↑	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

(*) Multi-purpose indicator.

Policy context

Consumption patterns and green economy

The 8th Environment Action Programme (EAP) aims to accelerate the transition to a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and regenerative economy.

The Green transition pillar of the Recovery and Resilience Facility supports reforms and investments to boost sustainable consumption and production patterns, for example in the areas of sustainable mobility and the circular economy.

The 2020 EU industrial strategy and its 2021 update aim to help Europe's industry lead the twin transitions towards climate neutrality and digital leadership. The Green Deal Industrial Plan aims to enhance the competitiveness of Europe's net-zero industry and support the fast transition to climate neutrality. The 2025 Competitive Compass and the Clean Industrial Deal aim to improve competitiveness and support decarbonisation.

The 2025 Automotive Industrial Action Plan will support the automotive industry's transition to guarantee competitiveness and maintain a strong European production base. EU legislation sets mandatory CO_2 emission targets for cars and vans.

The Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability aims to improve the protection of the environment and people's health from risks posed by chemicals and to support innovation for safe and sustainable chemicals. It includes the REACH Regulation and the CLP Regulation on the classification, labelling and packaging of chemical substances and mixtures.

The 2021 Zero Pollution Action Plan calls for air, water and soil pollution to be reduced to levels no longer considered harmful to health and ecosystems, respecting planetary boundaries and creating a toxic-free environment. In 2022 the Commission adopted a Zero Pollution package proposing stricter rules for cleaner air and water, including a soil monitoring law.

Waste generation and management

The Waste Framework Directive establishes targets for the EU to prepare to re-use and recycle 60% of municipal waste by weight by 2030 and 65 % by 2035. The Revision of the Directive in 2025 introduced food waste reduction targets of 10 % in food processing and manufacturing and of 30 % in retail and consumption by 2030. It also introduced mandatory Extended Producer Responsibility schemes for textiles to make producers responsible for the full life cycle of textiles products.

The Clean Industrial Deal from 2025 aims to increase the EU's circular material use rate to 24 % by 2030. The 2025 First Circular Economy Package harmonises rules for secondary plastics materials across the single market. Building on the Action Plan, the planned Circular Economy Act will establish a Single Market for secondary raw materials. It aims to increase the supply of high-quality recycled materials, especially electronics and critical minerals and stimulate demand for these recycled materials within the EU. The Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality calls for facilitating access to sustainable consumption, especially for people and households in vulnerable situations.

The Single-Use Plastics Directive and the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation establish targets for a minimum percentage of recycled content.

Overview and key trends

Consumption patterns

Economic growth improves people's well-being but has long been associated with greater environmental impacts due to increased resource and energy consumption. Current levels of consumption of finite resources are not sustainable. The EU's long-term objective, as outlined in the 8th Environment Action Programme, is to build a well-being economy, where resource and energy efficiency are improved, and environmental and climate impacts associated with production and consumption are reduced.

The EU has reduced its material footprint by 7.1 % over the past five years

The material footprint, also referred to as raw material consumption (RMC), is the amount of materials used along the supply chains of the goods and services that are finally consumed in a country. The indicator thus measures the materials extracted (both domestically and abroad) to produce the goods and services consumed by final users inside EU borders and estimates the volume of traded products — imports and exports — in raw material equivalents.

6.2
billion tonnes of globally extracted raw material were consumed in the EU in 2024

Between 2000 and 2008, the EU's material footprint grew steadily. This trend reversed in the years following the 2008 economic crisis. As the EU's economy recovered, raw material consumption resumed its upward trajectory, increasing by 7.1 % between 2015 and 2019. From 2019 to 2024, the EU's material footprint fell again, ultimately reaching 6.17 billion tonnes in 2024 — a 0.5 % increase compared with the previous year. The EU's raw material consumption per capita (13.7 tonnes) is still above the global average, and further efforts are required to meet the objectives of the European Green Deal, which calls for a reduction in environmental pressures alongside economic growth (also see the section on spillover effects on page 307).

The EU's consumption footprint has reduced but still considerably transgresses planetary boundaries

The EU's consumption footprint transgressed planetary boundaries by
3.2
times in 2024

The consumption footprint, based on a basket of products in five consumption areas, shows that EU consumption patterns considerably exceed several planetary boundaries. This means that the impact of consumption is higher than the Earth can sustainably support over the longer term, emphasising the need for further efforts to reduce consumption and achieve the EU's policy goals. Overall, the EU's consumption footprint exceeded planetary boundaries 3.2 times in 2024. This means that if everyone in the world consumed like the average EU resident in that year, total global environmental pressures would be 3.2 times higher than the level considered environmentally sustainable within planetary boundaries. Although this represents an improvement compared with 2019 when the consumption footprint peaked, EU consumption levels remain above those observed in 2010.

Planetary boundaries that were the most affected by the average EU citizen's consumption were climate change and freshwater ecotoxicity [1]. Luxembourg, Ireland and Denmark had the highest consumption footprint in 2024, whereas Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria had the lowest.

[1] *Source:* JRC, Eurostat (online data code: cei_gsr010).

The EU's import dependency on fossil energy carriers was almost 75 % in 2024

Material import dependency captures the extent to which an economy relies on imports to meet its material needs. Material import dependency is calculated as the ratio of imports to direct material input (DMI), which is the sum of physical imports and domestic extraction. In 2024, physical imports accounted for 22.4 % of the EU's DMI. Import dependency was highest for fossil energy carriers, at 74.6 % in 2024, followed by metal ores at 49.0 %. The EU's import dependency on fossil energy carriers has increased by 13.5 percentage points over the past decade (up from 61.1 % in 2014), while dependency on metal ore imports has slightly decreased. In contrast, the EU is almost completely self-sufficient for non-metallic minerals, with an import dependency of only 3.3 % in 2024 (2).

In 2024, the EU's energy productivity amounted to
EUR 10.0
per kgoe

Critical raw materials (CRMs) are of particular importance for the EU's self-sufficiency. These are raw materials that are vital to the EU economy and have a high supply risk. To address the challenge of ensuring reliable and unhindered access to certain raw materials, the European Commission presents a list of critical raw materials that is reviewed every three years. The CRM list from 2023 contains 34 materials; data on the EU's self-sufficiency are available for eight of them. They show that in 2022, the EU was fully self-sufficient for vanadium (100 %) and was able to meet a high share of its demand for copper (52 %) and fluorspar (40 %) through domestic extraction. However, the EU economy was completely dependent on imports for borate (no domestic extraction), and most of its demand for natural graphite (1 % domestic extraction) and tantalum (1 % domestic extraction) (3). To ensure access to a secure and sustainable supply of the critical raw materials needed for the EU to meet its 2030 climate and digital objectives, the Critical Raw Materials (CRM) Act was adopted in 2024. The act sets benchmarks for how domestic demand for raw materials should be met by 2030, for example, at least 10 % from domestic extraction and at least 25 % from recycled materials.

The EU's resource and energy productivity have improved by 14 % and 19 % since 2019, respectively

Resource productivity monitors how much output an economy produces per unit of material used and can provide insights into whether the use of natural resources is being decoupled from economic growth. It is measured as the ratio of gross domestic product (GDP) to domestic material consumption (DMC).

Between 2019 and 2024, the EU economy grew in terms of GDP by 5.6 %, while DMC decreased by 8.0 %. This resulted in a 14.0 % increase in the EU's resource productivity, from EUR 2.07 per kilogram (kg) of DMC in 2019 to EUR 2.36 per kg in 2024 (4).

Energy productivity measures economic output (in terms of GDP) per unit of energy used. Observed trends for energy productivity are stronger than for resource productivity, due to larger decreases in energy consumption than in material use. Between 2019 and 2024, economic growth of 5.6 % in the EU was accompanied by a 11.3 % reduction in gross available energy (GAE) (5). This resulted in an increase in energy productivity by 19.0 %, from EUR 8.4 per kg of oil equivalent (kgoe) to EUR 10.0 per kgoe.

Consumption of hazardous chemicals increased in 2024, but was still 20 % lower than five years earlier

Many everyday products used by businesses and consumers are produced with the help of chemicals. This makes them a significant contributor to the EU economy, with chemical sales worth EUR 635 billion in 2024 (6). However, although consumption of chemicals provides benefits to

(2) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_ac_mid).
(3) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: cei_gsr020). Copper does not meet the CRM threshold but is included on the CRM list as strategic raw material in line with the Critical Raw Materials Act.
(4) *Source:* Eurostat (online data codes: nama_10_gdp, env_ac_mfa and env_ac_rp).
(5) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: nama_10_gdp and nrg_bal_s).
(6) The European Chemical Industry Council (2025), *CEFIC Facts and Figures 2025.*

society, they can also entail environmental and health risks. The level of risk depends on both the hazardous properties of chemicals and the exposure to them. The consumption volumes of industrial (manufactured) chemicals that are hazardous to human and environmental health can be used as a proxy for human exposure ([7]).

170.7
million tonnes of hazardous chemicals were consumed in the EU in 2024

Between 2010 and 2021, the consumption of toxic chemicals in the EU remained relatively stable. Despite a 2.8 % increase in 2024, a significant decline of 22.8 % between 2021 and 2023 led to an overall reduction in consumption levels over both the short- and long-term periods. In 2024, the EU consumed 170.7 million tonnes of hazardous chemicals, which was 14.8 % less than in 2009 and 19.9 % less than in 2019.

The decrease in average CO_2 emissions per km from new cars has levelled off in recent years

Road transport was responsible for almost a quarter of the EU's total GHG emissions in 2023, with passenger cars responsible for almost 60 % of road transport emissions ([8]). Reducing emissions from road transport requires a shift towards more sustainable mobility. To drive this transition, the EU has set targets for the fleet-wide average CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars and vans, and new heavy duty vehicles registered each year.

107.9
grams of CO_2 per km were emitted on average by new passenger cars in the EU in 2024

Between 2019 and 2024, average CO_2 emissions per km from new passenger cars registered in the EU fell by 27.1 %, reaching 107.9 g/km in 2024. However, the decrease has levelled off in recent years, and the 2024 value represents a 0.3 % increase compared with the previous year.

EU targets for CO_2 emissions of passenger cars are adjusted in five-year steps that could partially explain the flattening up to 2024. From 2021 to 2024, the EU target was equivalent to 118 g/km, which reduces to 93.6 g/km from 2025 to 2029 and to 49.5 g/km for the period 2030 to 2034 ([9]). From 2035 onwards, the target is 0 g/km ([10]).

Increasing the market share of zero-emission vehicles (including battery and fuel cell electric vehicles) is a key factor in achieving these targets. For cars, the share of zero-emission vehicles in total annual car registrations rose from 1.9 % in 2019 to 13.5 % in 2024 in the EU. However, this was 1.0 percentage points lower than in the previous year. The share also differs considerably between countries. Denmark reported the highest share with 51.3 % in 2024, followed by Malta with 37.7 % and Sweden with 34.9 %. In contrast, zero-emission vehicles accounted for less than 3 % of newly registered passenger cars in Croatia, Slovakia and Poland ([11]).

Green economy

An economy is considered green and fair when it is resource efficient and low in carbon emissions while maintaining social justice, and therefore contributes to the achievement of a good life for all on a healthy planet. The EU is promoting the green economy through various policies such as the European Green Deal. The environmental goods and services sector (EGSS) produces the goods and services used in environmental protection and resource-management activities, and thus helps to 'green' the economy. Such goods and services can include, for example, products to prevent, measure, control, limit, minimise or correct environmental damage

([7]) European Environment Agency (2018), *Environmental indicator report 2018 - In support to the monitoring of the 7th Environment Action Programme*, EEA Report 19/2018, p. 23.
([8]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_air_gge).

([9]) Please note that the EU targets also cover vehicles registered in Norway and Iceland, while those countries are not included in the emission values quoted, which relate to EU-27 only. Targets for the years 2021 to 2024 were set in the NEDC context, which was replaced by the WLTP test in 2017.
([10]) In December 2025, the Commission proposed to provide flexibilities to support the car industry. According to the proposal, carmakers will need to comply with a 90 % reduction target (compared with 2021) for CO_2 emissions from new vehicles, provided the remaining emissions are offset using low-carbon steel credits or sustainable renewable fuel credits.
([11]) *Source:* Eurostat and European Alternative Fuels Observatory (online data code: road_eqr_zev).

and resource depletion. Increasing the market share of green technologies in the EU can also have important socio-economic benefits in terms of value added and employment.

The environmental goods and services sector's gross value added has grown by 22 % since 2018

The EGSS gross value added in the EU has grown by 22 % over the short-term period, from EUR 313.5 billion in 2018 to EUR 382.6 billion in 2023 (all numbers here are given in 2020 chain-linked prices). Growth in the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors are among the main drivers of this development ([12]). In relation to the whole economy, the EGSS grew from 2.2 % of EU GDP in 2018 to 2.9 % in 2023. This indicates the sector grew much faster than other economic sectors. Notably, the sector's gross value added continued to grow in 2020 compared with the previous year, by 4.6 %, when the EU's GDP fell by 5.6 % as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic ([13]). Employment in the sector has also increased, in terms of full-time equivalent, by 44.3 % since 2017. In 2022, the sector provided 6.7 million full-time equivalent jobs throughout the EU ([14]).

EUR 382.6 billion of gross value added were generated by the EU's environmental goods and services sector in 2023

Waste generation and management

Production and consumption patterns characterised by products being made, used and then disposed of are not sustainable. Therefore, the EU aims to move towards a circular economy where materials and resources are kept in the economy for as long as possible (through repair, recycling and reuse) and waste is minimised or even prevented. Extracting as many high-quality resources as possible from waste through recycling allows these resources to be re-inserted into the economy and ensures they are used again to preserve the value embedded within them.

On average, EU citizens continue to produce around 5 000 kg of waste per year

In 2022, 2.2 billion tonnes of waste were generated in the EU by all economic activities and households together, corresponding to 4 981 kilograms (kg) of waste per inhabitant. Almost two-thirds (64.4 % or 3.2 tonnes per inhabitant) of this waste consisted of major mineral waste, which predominantly originates from the mining and construction sectors ([15]). This category includes dredging spoils (sand, soil and organic matter excavated from water bodies) as well as contaminated soils (for example, soils with high concentrations of toxic elements resulting from mining activities).

4 981 kg of waste were generated in the EU per inhabitant in 2022

Of the total waste generated in the EU, 5.3 % was hazardous to health or the environment, corresponding to 266 kg per resident in 2022. The total amount of waste increased between 2008 and 2018 but fell by 7.9 % in 2020, which is likely to be a result of the economic slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, by 2022, waste generation had risen again, increasing by 3.5 % compared with 2020. Over the short-term period from 2018 to 2022, the total waste generated in the EU decreased by 4.7 %, corresponding to a 4.9 % reduction in waste generated per EU inhabitant during this time.

In 2022, 791 million tonnes of waste, excluding major mineral waste, was generated in the EU. From this amount, 217 million tonnes were recorded for waste and water services, followed by households (189 million tonnes) and manufacturing activities (166 million tonnes) ([16]). In 2022, food waste accounted for 58 million tonnes in the EU. More than half (54 %) of food waste was generated by household activities, followed by the manufacture

([12]) European Environment Agency (2025), *Gross value added of the environmental goods and services sector in Europe*.
([13]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: nama_10_gdp).
([14]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_ac_egss1).
([15]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_wasgen).
([16]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_wasgen).

of food products and beverages (19 %) (17). The EU has set a target to reduce generation of food waste in processing and manufacturing by 10 % (compared with the annual average between 2021 and 2023) and by 30 % per capita in retail and consumption (restaurants, food services and households) by 2030.

The EU will need to make stronger progress to meet its goal for circular material use

When not managed sustainably, waste has a huge impact on the environment, causing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and significantly lowering the efficient use of materials (18). Recycling waste and feeding it back into the economy as secondary raw materials is crucial for reducing the EU's demand for primary raw materials, and relies heavily on improved waste management systems (19). Between 2009 and 2024, the EU circular material use (CMU) rate — the share of used materials derived from collected waste — increased only by 1.8 percentage points, from 10.4 % to 12.2 %. This means the EU will need to make stronger progress in the next few years to meet its goal of increasing the share of materials it uses from collected waste to 24 % by 2030.

12.2 %
of the materials used in the EU came from collected waste in 2024

In 2022, 56 % of waste in the EU (excluding major mineral wastes) was recycled (20). The difference between this relatively high end-of-life recycling rate and the CMU rate (12.2 % in 2024) may seem surprising. However, the comparatively low degree of circularity in the EU can be attributed to three structural barriers. First, a large fraction of the materials extracted, in particular minerals, is used to build and maintain buildings, infrastructure and other long-life goods and is not readily available for recycling. The second barrier is the large amount of materials used to generate energy. For these materials, in particular for fossil fuels, closing the loop is hardly possible and the high share of these materials keeps the degree of circularity low (21). Another barrier is that in many cases, despite the relatively high recycling rate, secondary (recycled) raw materials often are not of sufficient quality to be used in new products (for example, in construction products, packaging or transport) and therefore lack market demand.

(17) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_wasfw).
(18) European Commission (2010), *Being wise with waste: the EU's approach to waste management*, Publication Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
(19) European Commission (2026), *Circular economy*.
(20) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_wasoper).
(21) Haas, W., Krausmann, F., Wiedenhofer, D., Heinz, M. (2015), *How Circular is the Global Economy?: An Assessment of Material Flows, Waste Production, and Recycling in the European Union and the World in 2005*, Journal of Industrial Ecology 19(5), 765–777.

Main indicators

Material footprint

The material footprint, also referred to as raw material consumption (RMC), represents the demand for the extraction of materials (minerals, metal ore, biomass and fossil energy materials) induced by consumption of goods and services within a geographical reference area. Data for material footprints stem from material flow accounts, which model the flows of natural resources from the environment into the economy. They include domestic extraction of materials measured in tonnes of gross material (for example, gross ore or gross harvest) as well as estimated imports and exports of the raw material equivalents of the products traded (domestic and abroad extraction required to produce the traded products). RMC thus measures the amount of extraction needed to produce the goods demanded by final users in the geographical reference area, irrespective of where in the world the material extraction took place.

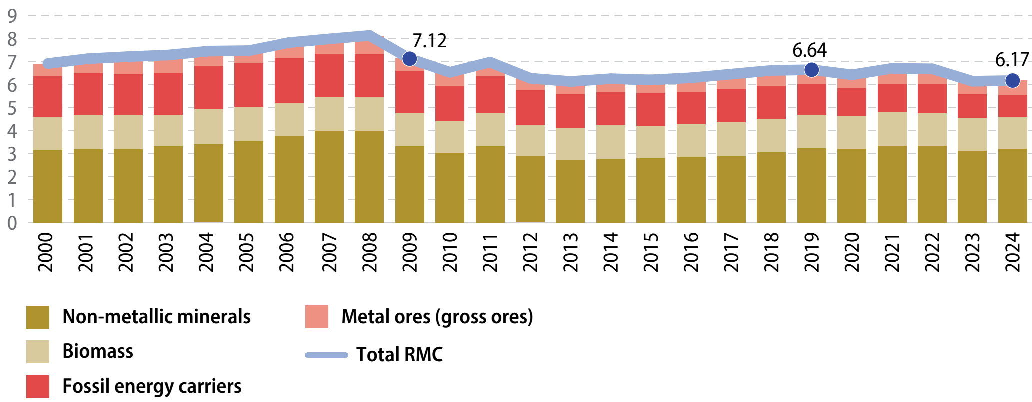
LONG TERM 2009–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 12.1

Material footprint by type of material

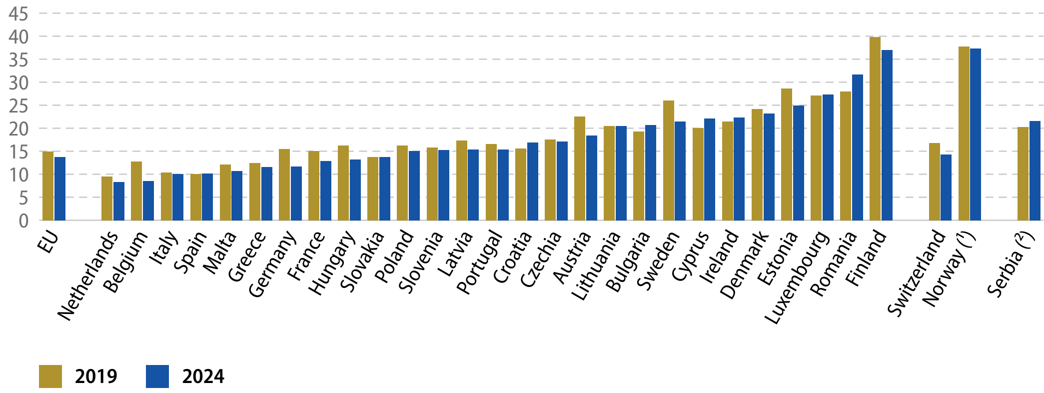
(billion tonnes, EU, 2000–2024)



Note: Imputed data.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_12_21 and env_ac_rme)

Figure 12.2
Material footprint
(tonnes per inhabitant, 2019 and 2024)



Note: Imputed or estimated data for most countries.
([1]) 2022 data (instead of 2024)
([2]) 2023 data (instead of 2024)

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_12_21)

Consumption footprint

The Consumption Footprint is a life cycle assessment-based model used to produce a set of 16 environmental indicators (that are combined into a single score) that assess the environmental impacts of EU and its Member States' consumption ([22]). It is based on the combination of: (a) the emissions to air, soil and water, as well as the resources used along the life cycle of around 165 representative products, belonging to five areas of consumption (food, mobility, housing, household goods and appliances), (b) the consumption intensities of those products, which are calculated based on consumption statistics, and (c) the Environmental Footprint (EF) impact assessment method, which translates emissions and resource consumption into 16 potential environmental impacts that can be aggregated into a single score. The EF impact indicators can be compared with a set of thresholds based on the Planetary Boundaries framework ([23]).

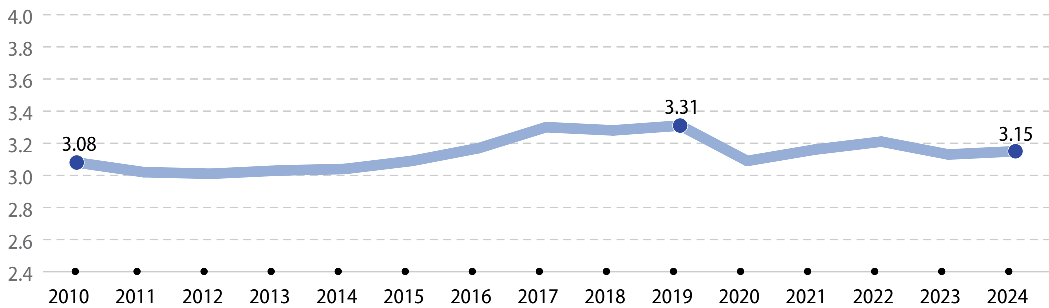
LONG TERM
2010–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 12.3

Consumption footprint

(overall transgression of planetary boundaries, EU, 2010–2024)



Note: Y-axis does not start at 0.

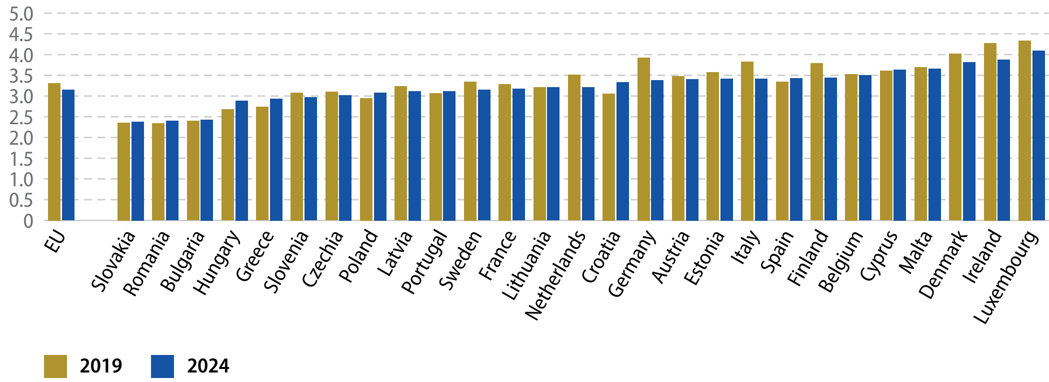
Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_12_31)

([22]) Sanyé-Mengual, E., Pasqualino, R., Omodara, L., Frankowska, A., Wierzgala, P., Chiorrini, A., Bennett, M.J., Listorti, G. and Sala, S. (2025), *Consumption Footprint and Domestic Footprint Monitoring Report 2024*, JRC138470, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
([23]) Sala, S., Crenna, E., Secchi, M., Sanyé-Mengual, E. (2020), *Environmental sustainability of European production and consumption assessed against planetary boundaries*, Journal of Environmental Management, Volume 269, 110686.

Figure 12.4

Consumption footprint

(overall transgression of planetary boundaries, 2019 and 2024)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_12_31)

Consumption of hazardous chemicals

This indicator measures the consumption of toxic chemicals, expressed in million tonnes. The consumption of chemicals is calculated as the sum of the production volumes and the net import volumes of the chemicals according to the equation: consumption = production + imports – exports. The two sub-categories of hazardous chemicals — hazardous to human health and hazardous to the environment — partially overlap by definition and as a result their sum is not equal to the total consumption of hazardous chemicals.

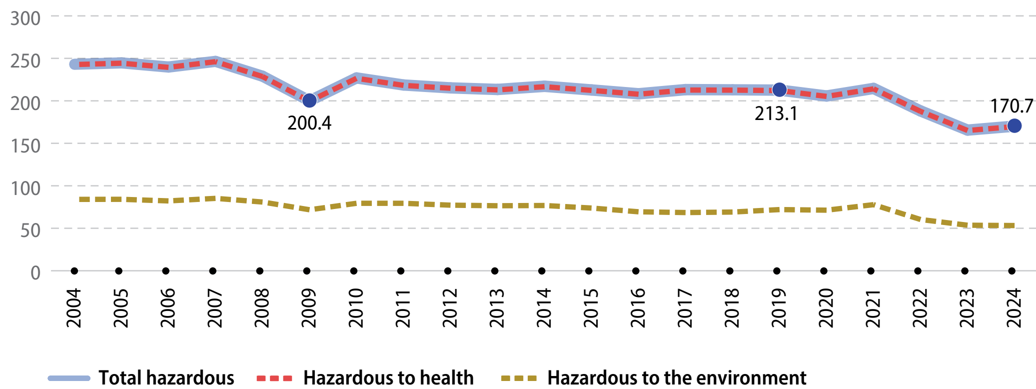
LONG TERM 2009–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 12.5

Consumption of hazardous chemicals

(million tonnes, EU, 2004–2024)



Note: The total is not equal to the sum of the two sub-categories because of overlapping definitions.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_12_10)

Gross value added in the environmental goods and services sector

The environmental goods and services sector (EGSS) is defined as that part of a country's economy that is engaged in producing the goods and services used in environmental protection and resource management activities, either domestically or abroad. Gross value added in EGSS represents the contribution of the environmental goods and services sector to GDP and is defined as the difference between the value of the sector's output and intermediate consumption.

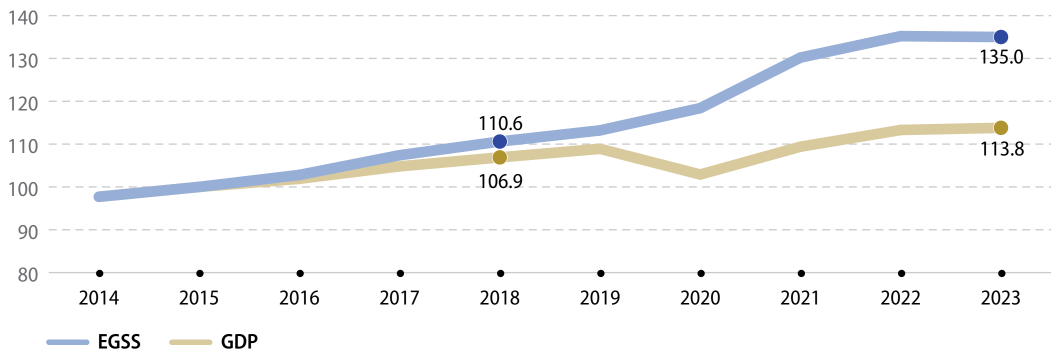
LONG TERM Time series too short

SHORT TERM 2018–2023

Figure 12.6

Gross value added in the environmental goods and services sector

(chain-linked volumes, index 2015 = 100, EU, 2014–2023)



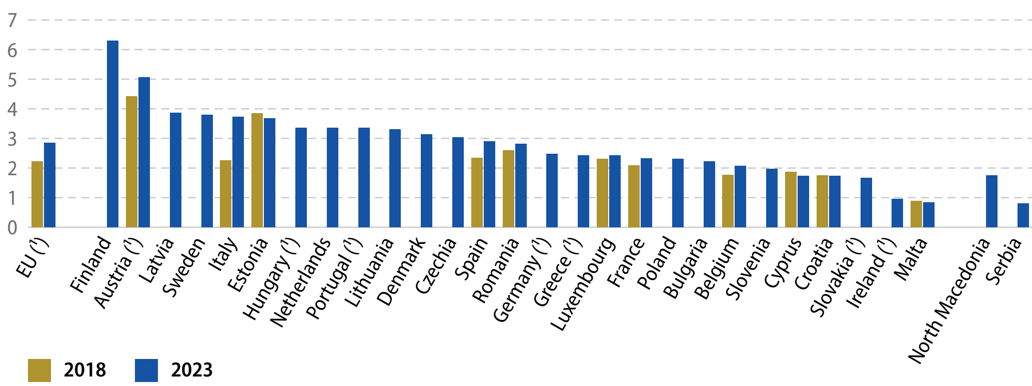
Note: Y-axis does not start at 0. EGSS data for 2014–2020 are imputed.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: sdg_12_61 and nama_10_gdp)

Figure 12.7

Gross value added in the environmental goods and services sector

(% of GDP, 2018 and 2023)



Note: No data for 2018 for many countries

([1]) Data are estimated, imputed and/or provisional for one or both years shown.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_12_61)

Circular material use rate

The circular material use rate (CMU) measures the share of material recovered and fed back into the economy in overall material use. The CMU is defined as the ratio of the circular use of materials to the overall material use. The overall material use is measured by summing up the aggregate domestic material consumption (DMC) and the circular use of materials. DMC is defined in economy-wide material flow accounts. The circular use of materials is approximated by the amount of waste recycled in domestic recovery plants minus imported waste destined for recovery plus exported waste destined for recovery abroad. A higher CMU rate value means more secondary materials are substitutes for primary raw materials, thus reducing the environmental impacts of extracting primary material.

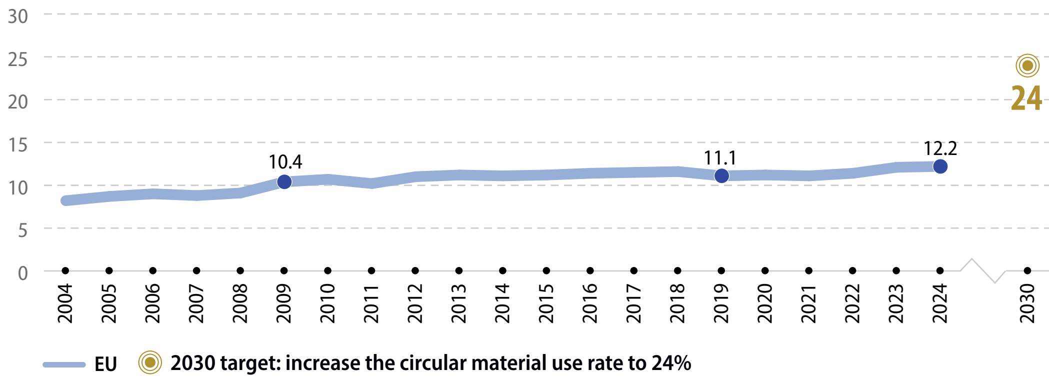
LONG TERM
2009–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 12.8

Circular material use rate

(% of material input for domestic use, EU, 2004–2024)



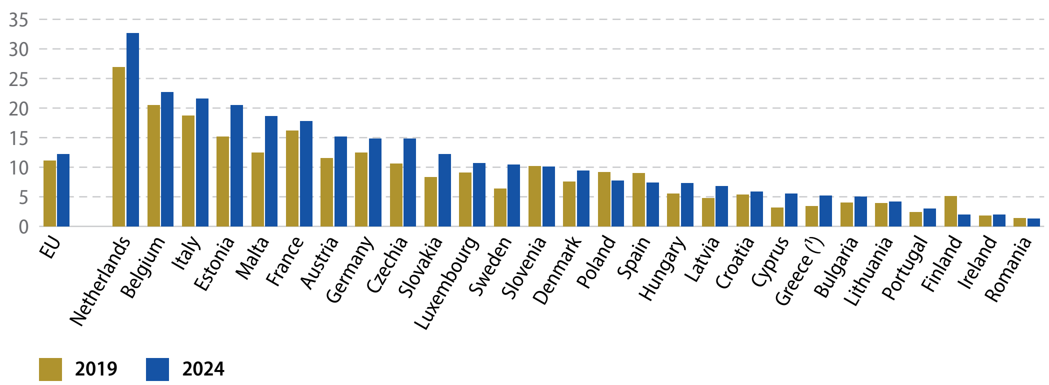
Note: Data for 2024 are imputed.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_12_41)

Figure 12.9

Circular material use rate

(% of material input for domestic use, 2019 and 2024)



Note: 2024 data are imputed for most countries.

([1]) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_12_41)

Generation of waste

This indicator is defined as all waste generated in a country. It covers waste generated by industrial production (including the waste management sector itself) and by households. Major mineral wastes, dredging spoils and soils are included. This leads to high quantities of waste in some countries with substantial economic activities such as mining and construction.

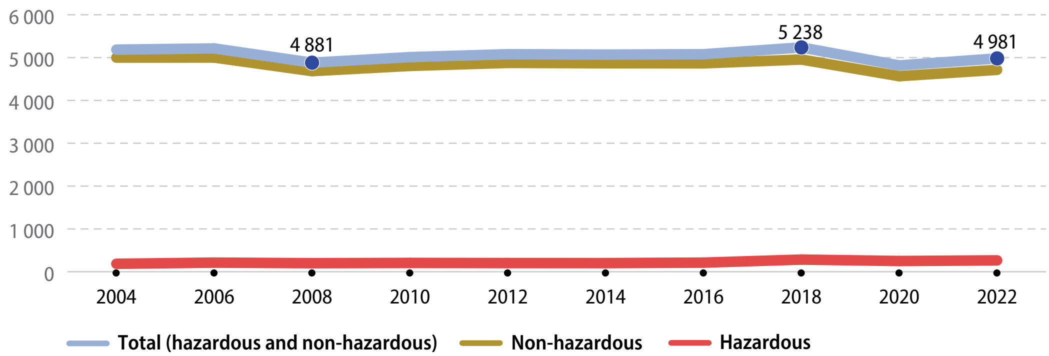
LONG TERM
2008–2022

SHORT TERM
2018–2022

Figure 12.10

Generation of waste by hazardousness

(kg per capita, EU, 2004–2022)

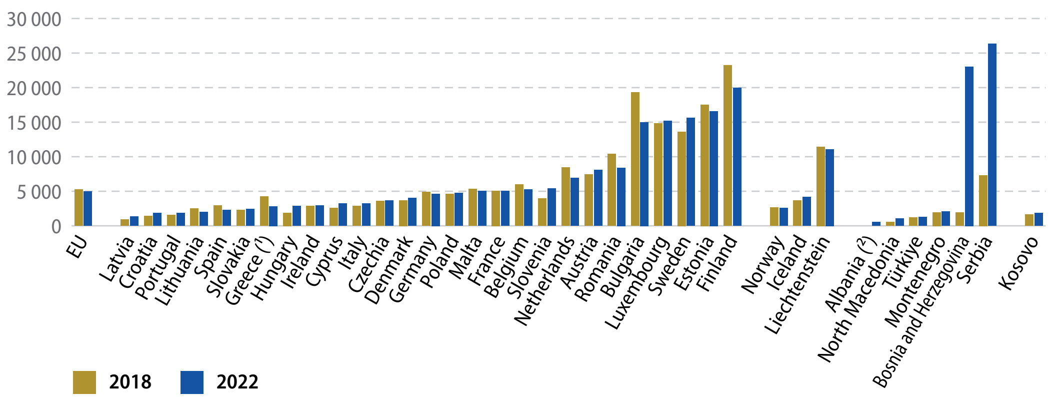


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_12_51)

Figure 12.11

Generation of waste

(kg per capita, 2018 and 2022)



(¹) 2022 data are provisional.
(²) No data for 2018.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_12_51)

13

Climate action

13 CLIMATE ACTION

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

SDG 13 seeks to achieve a climate-neutral world by mid-century and to limit global warming to well below 2 °C — with an aim of 1.5 °C — compared with pre-industrial times. It aims to strengthen countries' climate resilience and adaptive capacity, with a special focus on supporting least-developed countries.

Climate change increases global air and ocean temperatures, impacts precipitation patterns, raises the global average sea level, provokes extreme weather events, harms biodiversity and increases ocean acidity. It threatens the viability of social, environmental and economic systems and may make some regions less habitable. Monitoring SDG 13 in an EU context focuses on climate change mitigation, climate change impacts and financing climate action. As temperatures rise, the EU continues to face intensifying economic losses from climate-related events. The EU's net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions further decreased in 2024, but more efforts are needed to meet the target of reducing net GHG emissions by at least 55 % by 2030 compared with 1990. The 2030 target includes net GHG removals from land use, land use change and forestry, which have decreased further since 2019 and remain far below the levels needed. The share of renewables has been rising steadily in the EU, but stronger progress will be needed to meet the new 2030 target. New funds have been made available via green bonds issued by corporates and governments. Progress has been made on climate finance, with the amount of climate-related expenditure for developing countries increasing.

Table 13.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 13, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Climate change mitigation					
Net greenhouse gas emissions ◎	62.3 index 1990 = 100 (2024)	2009–2024	Observed: – 1.8 % Required: – 2.8 %	↗ (1)	page 221
		2019–2024	Observed: – 3.4 % Required: – 4.4 %	↗ (1)	
Net greenhouse gas emissions from land use, land use change and forestry ◎	– 231.0 million tonnes CO_2 eq. (2024)	2009–2024	Observed: 3.3 % Allowed: 1.0 % (2)	↓	page 223
		2019–2024	Observed: 0.5 % Required: – 2.5 %	↓	
Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption (*) ◎	25.2 % (2024)	2009–2024	Observed: 4.1 % Required: 5.5 %	↗	SDG 7, page 127
		2019–2024	Observed: 4.9 % Required: 7.1 %	↗	
Average CO_2 emissions per km from new passenger cars ◎	107.9 g CO_2 per km (2024)	Long-term assessment not possible due to break in time series in 2017		✕	page 224
		2019–2024	Observed: – 6.1 % Required: – 9.5 %	↗	
Climate change impacts					
Economic losses from weather- and climate-related extremes	40.5 EUR billion (2024)	2009–2024	3.4 % (3)	↓	page 226
		2019–2024	5.3 % (3)	↓	
Financing climate action					
Green bond issuance	6.9 % (2024)	2014–2024	58.4 %	↑	page 227
		2019–2024	23.4 %	↑	
Contribution to the international USD 100bn commitment on climate-related expenditure	31.7 EUR billion (2024)	2014–2024	9.4 %	↑	page 228
		2019–2024	7.7 %	↑	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.
(*) Multi-purpose indicator.
(1) Assessment based on past progress and not on projections of future emissions based on current and planned legislation and policy measures.
(2) Note that carbon removals in 2009 were already above the target value but have decreased at a higher rate than what would have been allowed to remain on top of this level.
(3) Assessment based on a 30-year moving average.

Policy context

Climate change mitigation

The European Climate Law establishes the goal of reducing net GHG emissions by at least 55 % between 1990 and 2030 to achieve climate-neutrality by 2050. For 2040, the EU institutions provisionally agreed on a legally binding climate target of a 90 % reduction compared with 1990 levels. The amendment of the EU Climate Law includes the option to cover 5 % of the 90 % target with high-quality international credits. The EU further updated its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Fit for 55 package comprises an interconnected set of EU climate and energy legislation, including carbon pricing through the proven Emission Trading System (ETS), an updated 2030 target for natural carbon sinks as well as support measures. As part of the Automotive Package, CO_2 emission standards for new vehicles have been updated to offer manufacturers greater flexibility in target achievement.

The Just Transition Mechanism supports regions that are the most carbon-intensive or with many people working in fossil fuel industries, for example, through the Just Transition Fund. The Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition provides guidance for addressing relevant employment and social aspects linked to the green transition. The Social Climate Fund will support vulnerable households and micro-enterprises in coping with rising energy and transport costs, as Europe moves towards climate neutrality.

The EU's climate policy framework was reinforced by the Competitiveness Compass and by the Clean Industrial Deal which outlines measures to make decarbonisation a catalyst for growth in European industries.

Climate change impacts

The Climate Law mandates continuous progress in enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change. The EU Adaptation Strategy urges smarter, faster and more systematic adaptation so that by 2050 the EU is a climate-resilient society. Better coherence is targeted internationally under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and at EU level under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The Communication on Managing Climate Risks responds to the EU-wide climate risk assessment, identifying paths to protecting people and prosperity.

Financing climate action

Support to climate action in the EU comes from the EU budget, the Green pillar of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, ETS revenues and its climate-related funds including the Innovation Fund, the Modernisation Fund and the Social Climate Fund.

To shift private and public investments towards sustainable activities, the EU introduced a Sustainable Finance framework, including a taxonomy for sustainable economic activities, sustainability-related disclosures to investors for financial products and climate-friendly benchmarks for investment portfolios. There is also a European Green Bond standard available. Further work is summarised in the Commission's strategy for financing the transition.

After contributing to the goal of providing USD 100 billion in climate finance per year for developing countries by 2025, the EU will also contribute to the new goal of providing USD 300 billion per year through to 2035, from a wide variety of sources, with developed countries taking the lead.

Overview and key trends

Climate change mitigation

Climate change mitigation aims to reduce emissions of climate-harming greenhouse gases (GHG) originating from human activity through measures such as promoting low-carbon technologies and practices or encouraging sustainable forest management and land uses that enhance carbon removals. The EU has set into law a target to reach climate neutrality with no net GHG emissions by 2050. This means reducing GHG emissions as much as possible while compensating for the residual and unavoidable emissions by removing carbon dioxide (CO_2), for example through natural carbon sinks and by using carbon-removal technologies. As an intermediate target on the path to climate neutrality in 2050, the EU has committed to reducing net GHG emissions by at least 55 % by 2030 compared with 1990 levels and provisionally agreed a legally binding target to reduce emissions by 90 % by 2040 compared with 1990 levels.

The EU reduced its net GHG emissions by

15.8 %

between 2019 and 2024

GHG emissions continued to fall in 2024, but they need to fall faster for the EU to meet its 2030 target

The EU reduced its net GHG emissions by 37.7 % between 1990 and 2024 (1). A large proportion of this fall occurred between 2009 and 2024 when net emissions fell by 23.7 %. The rate of reduction has accelerated in recent years, with a particularly strong drop of 8.2 % in 2023 followed by a more moderate 2.5 % decline in 2024. Over the short-term period between 2019 and 2024, emissions thus fell by 15.8 %. However, over the next six years GHG emissions will need to fall even faster for the EU to reach its net reduction target of 55 % by 2030.

Per capita GHG emissions have fallen strongly in most Member States

In 2024, the EU's net GHG emissions amounted to 6.5 tonnes of CO_2-equivalent per capita, which is 16.7 % lower than in 2019. Across Member States, domestic net GHG emissions ranged from – 0.6 tonnes per capita in Sweden to 10.5 tonnes per capita in Ireland in 2024 (2). Sweden reported negative net emissions in 2023 and 2024, meaning the country has become a net sink of GHGs when considering domestic emissions only (3). Between 2019 and 2024, domestic net GHG emissions per capita fell in all but two Member States. Apart from Sweden, the strongest reductions over this period were reported by Luxembourg and Estonia, where domestic per capita emissions fell by 39.9 % and 32.1 %, respectively. In contrast, domestic per capita emissions increased in Latvia and Croatia, with Latvia reporting a particularly strong increase of 81.1 %. The increase for Latvia is largely due to declining carbon removals from land use and forestry.

(1) The data presented here cover GHG emissions produced inside the EU territory and do not take into account those that occurred outside the EU as a result of EU consumption. At the EU level, the scope of the data used is aligned with the scope of EU climate policies and the target to reduce GHG emissions by at least 55 % by 2030 compared with 1990. Estimated emissions from international aviation and maritime transport are included and calibrated for this purpose.

(2) The data on Member States' net GHG emissions exclude international transport and international maritime transport, while these are partly included in the EU data.

(3) This mainly reflects net carbon removals from Sweden's large forest-based LULUCF sector (covering almost 70 % of land), combined with relatively low domestic emissions following sustained decarbonisation of energy supply, particularly in electricity and heating (see OECD, 2025).

Carbon removals in the EU have decreased in recent years and remain far from the target

Net GHG removals come from land use and forestry, which is also referred to as the 'land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF)' sector according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) classification. Within this sector, forests remove CO_2 from the air (as trees capture CO_2 through photosynthesis), which in most Member States overcompensates for emissions from land use and land use change (for example, when grassland is converted to cropland).

Between 2009 and 2024, GHG net removals from land use and forestry fell by 39.7 % in the EU. The strong decline in forest carbon sinks has been attributed to several trends, including slowdowns in net afforestation and forest biomass growth, and increases in tree mortality and timber harvesting ([4]). The decrease continued in the short-term period between 2019 and 2024, with the EU's net removals from land use and forestry falling by 2.2 %. Net removals compensated for around 7 % of emissions from all other sectors in 2024. In absolute numbers, net removals amounted to 231.0 million tonnes (Mt) of CO_2-equivalent in 2024. This is far below the EU's net carbon removal target for land use and forestry of at least 310 Mt of CO_2-equivalent by 2030.

Net carbon removals from land use and forestry in the EU in 2024 amounted to

231.0

CO_2-eq

([4]) See for example: ESABCC (2024), *Towards EU climate neutrality—Progress, policy gaps and opportunities*, European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change; and Hyyrynen, M., Ollikainen, M., & Seppälä, J. (2023), *European forest sinks and climate targets: Past trends, main drivers, and future forecasts*, European Journal of Forest Research, 142(5), 1207–1224.

Emissions associated with energy consumption have fallen thanks to reduced energy use and increased use of renewables

A breakdown of GHG emissions by sector for 2024 shows that two — energy industries (which covers electricity and central heat generation) and transport — were responsible for about half of total EU emissions, accounting for 22.8 % and 26.7 % of emissions, respectively. Industry and other energy consumers were the third and fourth largest emitters of GHGs in the EU, accounting for 20.3 % and 14.3 % of total emissions in 2024, respectively. Between 2019 and 2024, energy industries showed the strongest reduction in emissions (28.5 %). Emissions from industry and from other energy consumers fell by 18.5 % and 17.2 %, respectively, while transport emissions decreased by 3.6 % over the same period ([5]).

Emissions arise mainly from fossil energy consumption, whereby related reductions result from the general drop in energy consumption and an increasing share of renewable energies (see the chapter on SDG 7 'Affordable and clean energy' on page 115). In total, renewable energy contributed to 25.2 % of the EU's gross final energy consumption in 2024. While this was an increase of 5.4 percentage points between 2019 and 2024, stronger progress is required for renewable sources to reach a 42.5 % share of energy consumption by 2030. A sectoral breakdown shows that the share of renewables was largest in electricity generation, reaching 47.5 % in 2024. The shares of renewables in heating and cooling and in transport were lower, at 26.7 % and 11.2 %, respectively, in 2024.

25.2 %

of energy consumed in the EU in 2024 came from renewable sources

Falls in average CO_2 emissions per km from new cars have levelled off in recent years

Road transport was responsible for almost a quarter of the EU's total GHG emissions in 2023,

([5]) *Source:* EEA (greenhouse gases — data viewer).

and more than half of road transport emissions came from passenger cars (6). To reduce those emissions, the EU has set targets for the fleet-wide average CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars, vans and heavy duty vehicles. The targets for average CO_2 emissions per kilometre (km) from new passenger cars have been set to 93.6 grams per km (g/km) for the period 2025 to 2029 and to 49.5 g/km for 2030 to 2034 (7), while from 2035 onwards the target is 0 g/km (8).

107.6
grams of CO_2 per km were emitted on average by new passenger cars in the EU in 2024

Between 2019 and 2024, average CO_2 emissions per km from new passenger cars registered in the EU fell by 27.1 %, with most of this reduction taking place between 2019 and 2021. The decline largely levelled off between 2022 and 2024, with average CO_2 emissions reaching 107.9 g/km in 2024, which is still far from the EU's 2025 and 2030 targets.

After growing continuously, the uptake of zero-emission cars fell in 2024

Accelerating the market uptake of new zero-emission vehicles (ZEV) is a crucial step to achieving the EU's CO_2 emission targets. The share of zero-emission cars — mostly battery electric cars — in newly registered cars in the EU rose from 1.9 % in 2019 to 13.5 % in 2024 (9). Even though this is a 11.6 percentage point increase over a five-year period, the 2024 value represents a 1.0 percentage point drop compared with 2023, and an interruption of the so far continuous increase in the share of new zero-emission cars. This development is largely attributable to lower or discontinued purchase incentives for zero-emission cars in some Member States. Uptake of zero-emission cars increased again in 2025, with 1.9 million new battery-electric vehicles registered in that year (a 17.4 % market share) (10).

The share of zero-emission car registrations differs considerably between countries. Denmark reported the highest share with 51.3 % in 2024, followed by Malta with 37.7 % and Sweden with 34.9 %. In contrast, zero-emission vehicles accounted for less than 3 % of newly registered passenger cars in Croatia, Slovakia and Poland.

Climate change impacts

Rising concentrations of CO_2 emissions and other GHGs lead to global warming and increased ocean acidity. As a consequence of global anthropogenic GHG emissions, the decade 2015 to 2024 was the warmest on record, with a global mean near-surface temperature increase of 1.24–1.28 °C compared with the pre-industrial level. This means that more than half of the warming allowed under the Paris Agreement has already occurred. This agreement aims to keep the rise in global temperature well below 2 °C and to continue efforts to limit warming to 1.5 °C. However, the average annual temperature over the European continent has already increased by 2.19–2.26 °C during this decade (11).

In 2024, weather- and climate-related economic losses in EU countries amounted to
EUR 40.5 billion

Climate impacts are a consequence of rising temperatures and the related intensity and quantity of extreme events which affect environmental, social and economic systems. The EU's SDG monitoring focuses on the economic costs that arise from weather- and climate-related extreme events. To minimise the impacts, countries are taking action to adapt to climate change by introducing measures such as flood protection, adapted agricultural practices and forest management, and sustainable urban drainage systems. However, adaptation is lagging far behind the impacts.

(6) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_air_gge).
(7) The targets also cover vehicles registered in Norway and Iceland, while those countries are not included in the emission values presented, which relate to the EU only.
(8) In December 2025, the Commission proposed to provide flexibilities to support the car industry. According to the proposal, carmakers will need to comply with a 90 % reduction target (compared with 2021) for CO_2 emissions from new vehicles, provided that the remaining emissions are compensated by the use of low-carbon steel credits or sustainable renewable fuel credits.
(9) *Source:* Eurostat and European Alternative Fuels Observatory (online data code: road_eqr_zev).
(10) *Source*: European Alternative Fuels Observatory.
(11) European Environment Agency (2024), *Global and European temperatures*.

Economic losses from weather- and climate-related extreme events have continued to rise significantly

Studies have shown that various weather- and climate-related extreme events in Europe and beyond have become more severe and frequent due to global climate change. The resulting impact on people and ecosystems has led to measurable losses to nature, economies and people's livelihoods (12). Reported economic losses generally include monetised direct damages to certain assets, but not productivity losses, increased mortality and worsened health, damages to cultural heritage or reduced ecosystems services, which would considerably raise the estimate (13). Therefore, they don't capture the full scope of the damages.

Over the period 1980 to 2024, weather- and climate-related losses accounted for a total of EUR 822.6 billion. Hydrological events such as floods were the major cause of climate-related losses in 2024, contributing to EUR 31.1 billion of the EUR 40.5 billion total for the year. This marks the fourth year in a row with economic losses well above the long-term trend.

Recorded losses can vary substantially over time. About 59 % of the total losses have been caused by just 5 % of unique extreme events (14). This variability makes the analysis of historical trends difficult. A closer look at a 30-year moving average shows an almost continuous increase in annual climate-related economic losses, from EUR 13.4 billion in 2009 to EUR 22.0 billion in 2024 (15), corresponding to a 65.0 % increase. Over the period from 1980 to 2024, hydrological hazards (floods) accounted for 47 % of economic losses in the EU, followed by meteorological hazards (storms, including lightning and hail) with 27 % and heat waves with 18 %. The remaining 8 % was caused by droughts, forest fires and cold waves.

Financing climate action

As part of the transition towards climate neutrality and climate resilience, the EU is endeavouring to redirect public and private investments to areas where they will support this objective. For this reason, the EU has adopted the EU taxonomy as a classification system for sustainable economic activities and a European green bond standard as a voluntary 'gold' standard for the green bond market. At the EU level, climate change mitigation and adaptation has been integrated into all major spending programmes (16) and the EU has also committed to support international climate action.

Green bonds reached a share of

6.9 %

in total bonds in the EU in 2024

Green bond issuance has rebounded after temporarily falling in 2023

Investments into clean technologies and supportive infrastructure are key for the transition to climate neutrality. Such investments often rely on funds, which can be raised for example by issuing bonds. There are different issuers active in the green bond market such as the EU, with its NextGenerationEU Green Bonds to finance climate action in the EU (17).

The share of green bonds in total bond issuance increased sharply from 2.4 % to 7.2 % between 2019 and 2022 before dropping to 5.3 % in 2023. The share has partially recovered to 6.9 % in 2024. In 2024, green bonds made up 12.8 % and 4.2 % of total bond issuance by corporates and governments respectively, compared with 5.0 % and 1.2 % in 2019. While for corporates the share of green bonds in 2024 was the highest on record, for governments the share fell in 2024 compared with the peak of 6.1 % in 2022.

The issuance of green bonds by corporates and governments increased significantly in most EU

(12) IPCC (2023), *Climate change 2023 — Synthesis Report — Summary for Policymakers*, Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 1–34.
(13) IPBES (2019), *Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, Bonn; and European Environment Agency (2016), *Climate change impacts and vulnerability in Europe: An indicator-based report*, Report No. 1/2017, Copenhagen.
14() European Environment Agency (2024), *Economic losses from weather- and climate-related extremes in Europe*.
(15) A 30-year moving average shows the average over the past 30 years for a given year. For example, for 2017, the data point shows the average from 1988 to 2017.

(16) European Commission, *The EU long-term budget*.
(17) European Commission (2024), *NGEU green bonds allocation and impact report 2024*.

Member States between 2019 and 2024. Sweden, Denmark and France saw substantial growth in green bond issuance, with these bonds accounting for more than 15 % of total bonds issuance in 2024. In contrast, several countries from eastern and southern Europe issued few or no green bonds in this period.

The EU's contribution to climate finance for developing countries has been increasing since 2014

In addition to investing in climate action within its borders, the EU and its Member States have also committed to raising money to help developing countries combat climate change and adapt to climate impacts. They take part in a commitment made by the world's developed countries to jointly mobilise USD 100 billion per year by 2025 ([18]). They are also committed to helping fulfil the New Collective Quantified Goal to secure at least USD 300 billion per year by 2035 for developing countries, from a wide variety of sources, instruments and channels, with developed countries taking the lead ([19]).

In 2024, the EU contribution to the international USD 100 billion commitment amounted to

EUR 31.7 billion

Total EU public finance contributions (including all 27 Member States as well as the EU institutions) increased from about EUR 12.9 billion in 2014 to EUR 31.7 billion in 2024. This equals roughly USD 34.3 billion contribution to the global target. The two largest EU contributors in the period were Germany and France. The European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) were the third and fourth largest donors in 2024, respectively. In 2024, the EU, its Member States and the EIB together were the biggest contributors of public climate finance to developing countries worldwide ([20]).

([18]) European Commission (2018), [A modern budget for a Union that protects, empowers and defends: The Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021–2027]().
([19]) UNFCCC (2024), [COP29 UN Climate Conference Agrees to Triple Finance to Developing Countries, Protecting Lives and Livelihoods]().
([20]) European Council (2025), [Europe's contribution to climate finance (in €bn)]().

The effective carbon rate shows the price put on emissions

Carbon pricing is an important policy instrument used by the EU and its Member States to meet the Union's long-term targets for reducing GHG emissions and limiting global warming in line with the Paris Agreement. Carbon pricing in the EU is implemented primarily through the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), and indirectly through energy taxation. Explicit carbon taxes are applied in a few Member States.

Carbon pricing ultimately aims to reduce carbon emissions by making environmentally undesirable behaviour more expensive. Putting a price (expressed in euros) on emissions (expressed in tonnes) allows the monitoring of how expensive emissions actually are. The [effective carbon rate]() (ECR) is a prominent metric in this regard, showing the price per tonne of carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions arising from the sum of related taxes and tradeable permits. The ECR allows carbon prices to be compared across countries and economic sectors. The [OECD]() suggests carbon prices should be in the range of €60 and €120 per tonne of CO_2 by 2030 ([21]).

Preliminary Eurostat data on EU ECR focuses on households and the most relevant economic sectors — manufacturing, electricity and gas supply, transportation and storage. It shows that ECR values are higher for households than for corporations, and this picture has been constant in the past few years. In the manufacturing and the electricity and gas supply sectors, effective carbon rates across EU countries were largely below the OECD's €60 per tonne of CO_2 benchmark. In transportation and storage, ECR values were mostly in between the €60 and €120 per tonne CO_2 benchmarks. In contrast, effective carbon rates in the household sector were usually above the €60 benchmark, with most countries exceeding the €120 benchmark and many countries even having ECR values above the €140 benchmark used in the ECB analyses.

([21])The World Bank's High-Level Commission on Carbon Pricing and Competitiveness concluded that to meet the Paris Agreement, carbon prices would need to reach between $50 and $100 per tonne of CO_2 equivalent by 2030. The OECD refers to these 2030 benchmarks in its reports on effective carbon rates, converted to real 2023 EUR and rounded. In comparison, the European Central Bank (ECB) suggests the average ECR in the euro area to increase to €140 per tonne of CO_2 in 2030.

Main indicators

Net greenhouse gas emissions

This indicator measures man-made greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as well as carbon removals on EU territory. The 'Kyoto basket' of GHGs includes carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), nitrous oxide (N_2O) and the so-called F-gases, which include hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, nitrogen trifluoride (NF_3) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF_6). Emissions and removals are integrated into a single indicator — net GHG emissions — expressed in units of CO_2 equivalents based on the global warming potential (GWP) of each gas. At present, carbon removals are accounted for only in the land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector. At EU level, the scope of the data used is aligned with the scope of EU climate policies and the target to reduce GHG emissions by at least 55 % by 2030 compared with 1990. Estimated emissions from international aviation and maritime transport are included and calibrated for this purpose. At country level, emissions from international transport are excluded.

LONG TERM 2009–2024

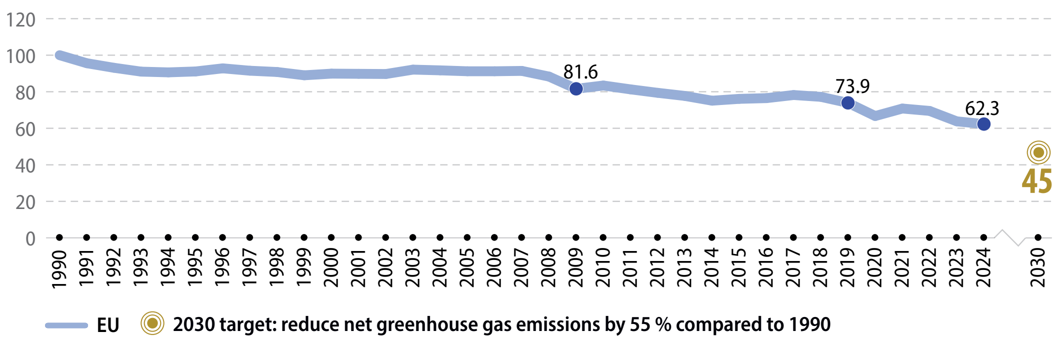
SHORT TERM 2019–2024

The indicator refers to GHG emissions in the EU territory. GHG emissions derived from the production of goods imported and consumed in the EU are counted in the export country, following the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) rules. Emissions and removals data, known as GHG inventories, are submitted annually by Member States to the EU and the UNFCCC. The European Environment Agency (EEA) compiles the EU aggregate data and publishes data for the EU and all Member States. Eurostat republishes the EEA data.

Figure 13.1

EU net greenhouse gas emissions (according to EU climate policies and targets)

(index 1990 = 100, 1990–2024)



Note: The EU target scope, as defined in the European Climate Law, includes:

— for international aviation: intra-EU flights, departing flights from the EU to Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom;

— for International maritime transport: emissions from voyages between two EU Member States, 50 % of emissions from voyages between an EU Member State and Norway, Iceland or any third country [22].

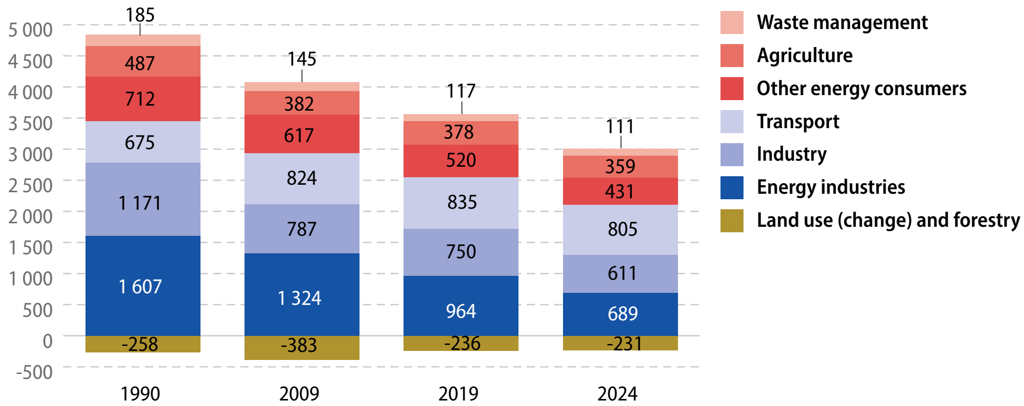
Source: EEA, Joint Research Centre, Eurostat (online data code: sdg_13_11)

[22] European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Jaxa-Rozen, M., Rozsai, M. and Neuwahl, F., *Aligning historical international aviation and maritime transport data to the scope of EU climate policies*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, JRC139028.

Figure 13.2

Greenhouse gas emissions and removals by sector

(million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent, EU, 1990, 2009, 2019 and 2024)



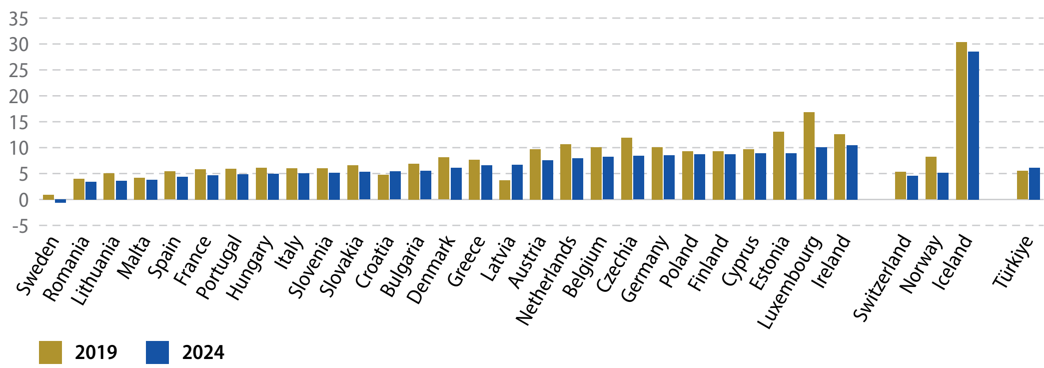
Note: Emissions from transport do not include international aviation or international maritime transport.

Source: EEA (greenhouse gases — data viewer)

Figure 13.3

Domestic net greenhouse gas emissions per capita

(tonnes per capita, 2019 and 2024)



Source: EEA, Eurostat (online data code: sdg_13_10)

Net greenhouse gas emissions from land use, land use change and forestry

This indicator measures net carbon removals from the land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector, considering both emissions and removals from the sector. The indicator is expressed as CO_2 equivalents using the global warming potential (GWP) of each gas. Emissions and removals data, known as greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories, are submitted annually by Member States to the EU and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The European Environment Agency (EEA) compiles the EU aggregate data and publishes data for the EU and all Member States. Eurostat republishes the EEA data.

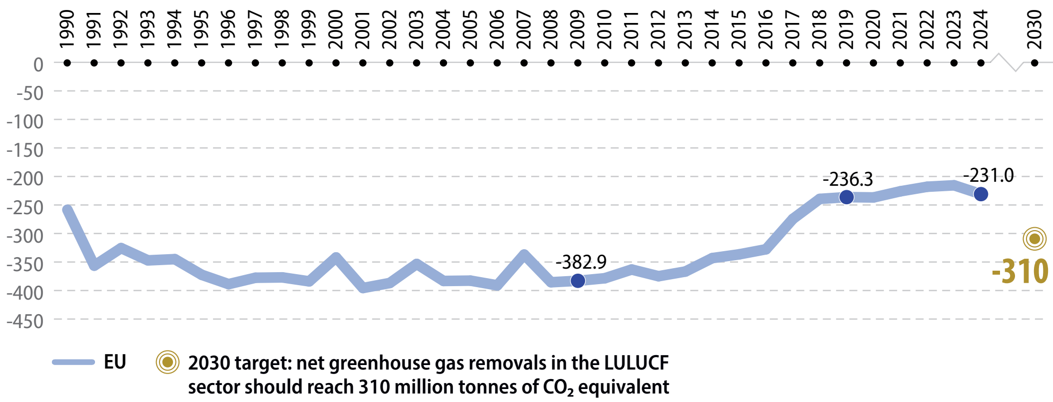
LONG TERM 2009–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 13.4

Net greenhouse gas emissions from land use, land use change and forestry

(million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent, EU, 1990–2024)

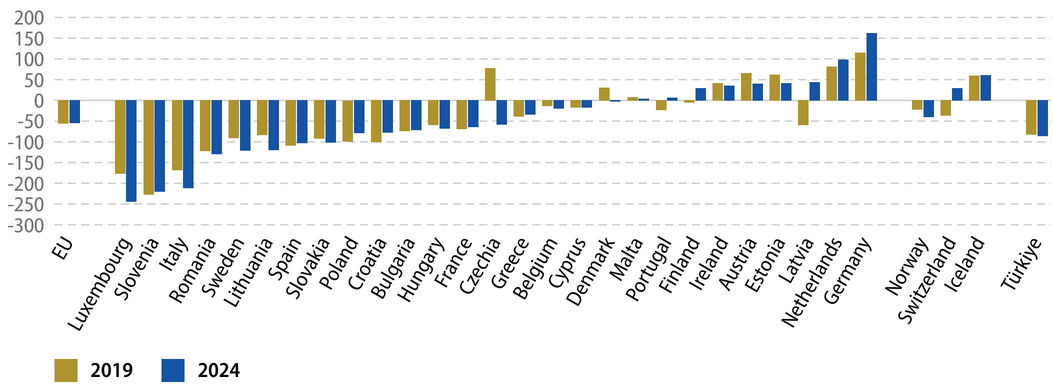


Source: EEA, Eurostat (online data code: sdg_13_21)

Figure 13.5

Net greenhouse gas emissions from land use, land use change and forestry

(tonnes of CO_2 equivalent per km^2, 2019 and 2024)



Source: EEA, Eurostat (online data code: sdg_13_21)

Average CO_2 emissions per km from new passenger cars

This indicator is defined as the average carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions per km from new passenger cars registered in the EU in a given year. The reported emissions are based on emission tests during type-approval and can deviate from the actual CO_2 emissions of those cars on the road. Data up to (and including) 2019 were determined according to the New European Driving Cycle (NEDC) procedure, while data collected from 2021 onwards are based on the World Harmonised Light-vehicle Test Procedure (WLTP). For 2020, data were collected for both test procedures. To monitor progress in this report, emission data for 2017 to 2019 are presented according to WLTP based on a conversion factor, which was calculated from the 2020 data in NEDC and WLTP. Data before 2017 are presented according to NEDC. Data presented in this section are provided by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Climate Action and the European Environment Agency (EEA).

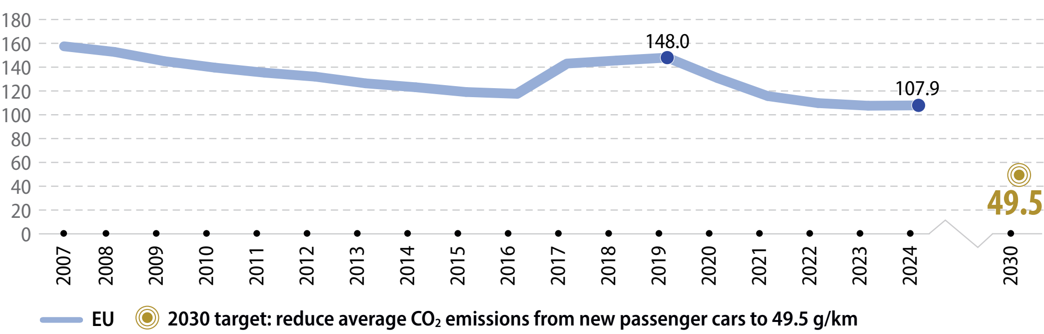
LONG TERM Assessment not possible due to break in time series in 2017

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 13.6

Average CO_2 emissions per km from new passenger cars

(g CO_2 per km, EU, 2007–2024)



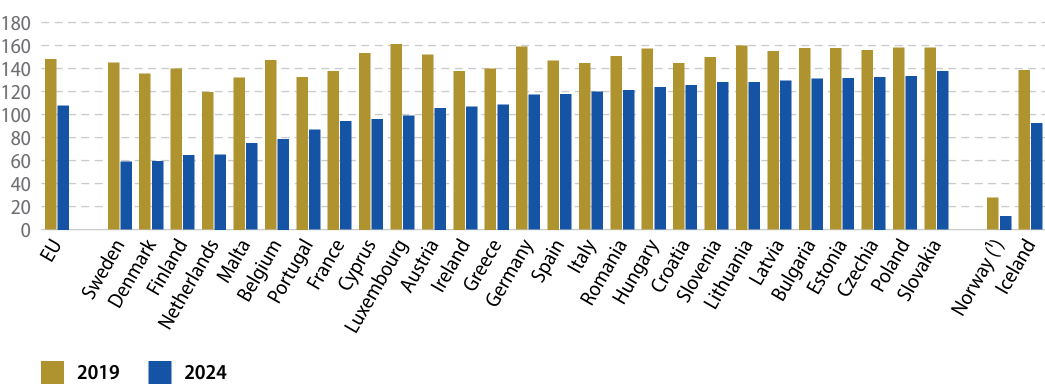
Note: 2017–2019 data are estimated, 2024 data are provisional; break in time series in 2017 (see indicator description above). The target also covers vehicles registered in Norway and Iceland, while those countries are not included in the emission values presented, which relate to the EU only.

Source: EEA, European Commission services (Eurostat online data code: sdg_13_31)

Figure 13.7

Average CO_2 emissions per km from new passenger cars

(g CO_2 per km, 2019 and 2024)

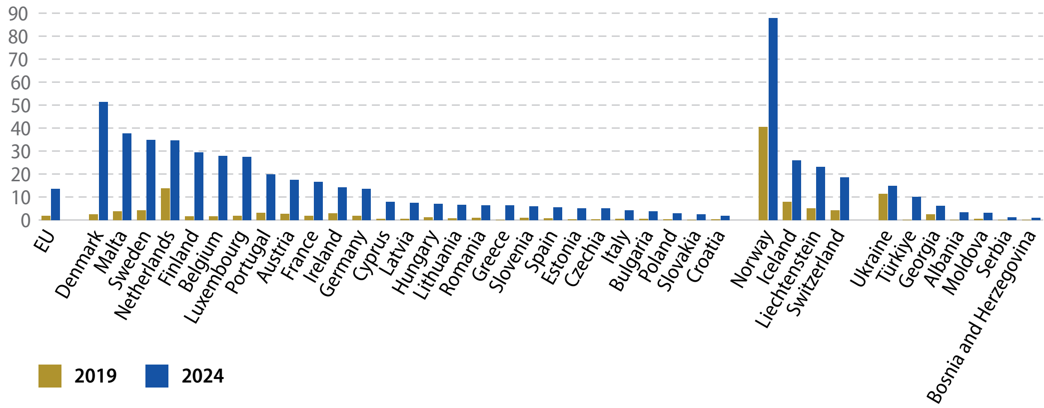


Note: 2019 data are estimated, 2024 data are provisional.

(¹) 2021 data (instead of 2019).

Source: EEA, European Commission services (Eurostat online data code: sdg_13_31)

Figure 13.8
Share of zero emissions vehicles
(% of newly registered passenger cars, 2019 and 2024)



Note: Eurostat estimates based on European Alternative Fuels Observatory (EAFO) data, in particular the number of vehicles fuelled by hydrogen and fuel cells.

Source: Eurostat, EAFO (online data code: road_eqr_zev)

Economic losses from weather- and climate-related extremes

This indicator includes the overall monetary losses from weather- and climate-related events. The European Environment Agency (EEA) compiles the EU aggregate data from CATDAT of RiskLayer. Eurostat republishes the EEA data. Due to the variability of the annual figures, data are also presented as a 30-year moving average to show the underlying trend.

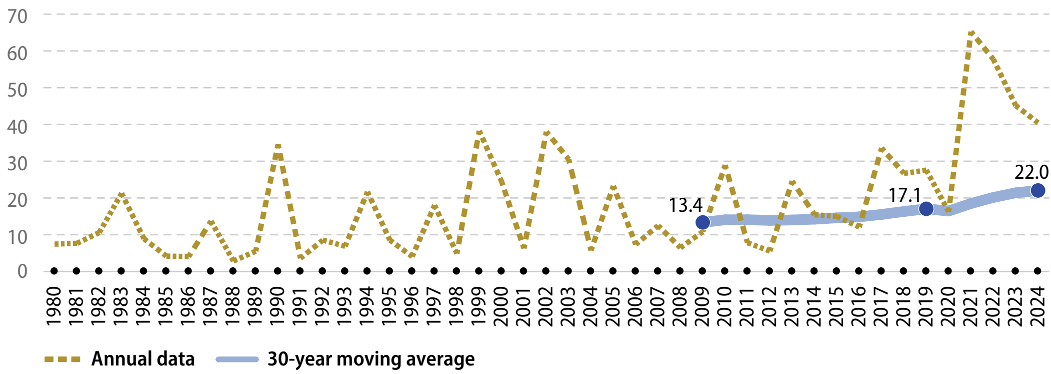
LONG TERM 2009–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 13.9

Economic losses from weather- and climate-related extremes

(EUR billion, constant prices, EU, 1980–2024)



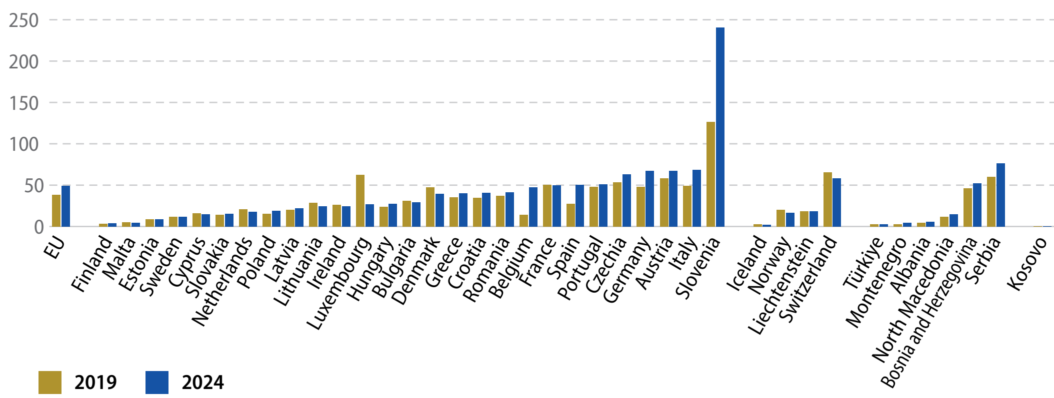
Note: The annual data points for the 30-year moving average refer to the average over the 30-year period up to and including these years.

Source: EEA, Eurostat (online data code: sdg_13_40)

Figure 13.10

Economic losses from weather- and climate-related extremes (30-year moving average)

(EUR per capita, constant prices, 2019 and 2024)



Note: Data are shown as 30-year moving average (annual data points refer to the 30-year period up to and including that year).

Source: EEA, Eurostat (online data code: sdg_13_40)

Green bond issuance

Green bonds are loans provided by an investor to a borrower which are used to fund projects or activities that promote climate change mitigation or adaptation or other environmental objectives. While the green bond definition can vary, this indicator includes bonds that are aligned with the four core components of the International Capital Market Association (ICMA) green bond principles or are certified by the Climate Bond Initiative (CBI). Issuers include corporates such as a company or financial corporation and sovereign bond issuers which are national governments.

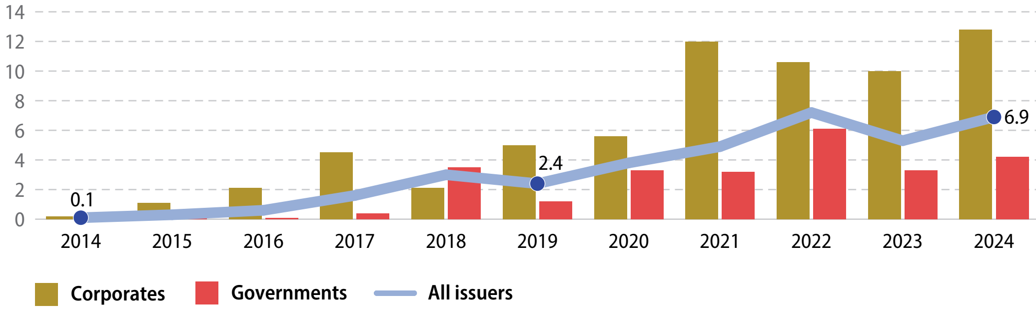
LONG TERM
2014–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 13.11

Green bond issuance, by type of issuer

(% of total bond issuance, EU, 2014–2024)

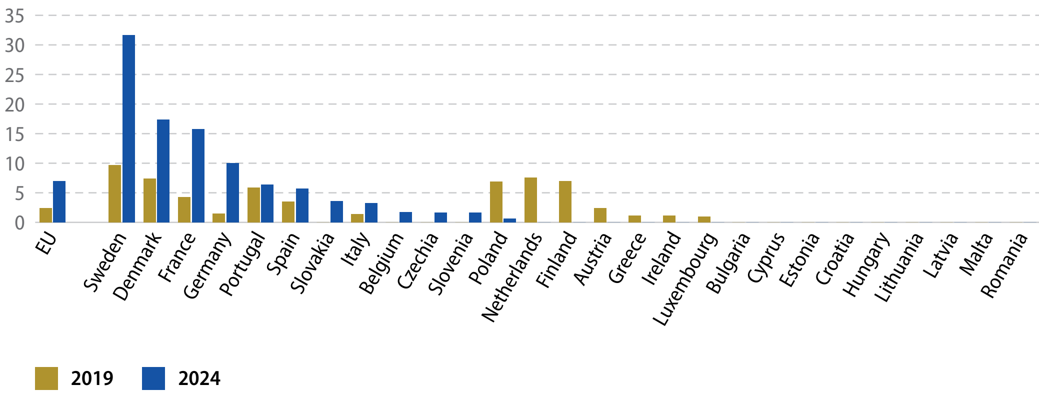


Source: EEA (Eurostat data code: sdg_13_70)

Figure 13.12

Green bond issuance by corporates and governments

(% of total bond issuance, 2019 and 2024)



Source: EEA (Eurostat data code: sdg_13_70a)

Contribution to the international USD 100bn commitment on climate-related expenditure

The intention of the international commitment on climate finance under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is to enable and support enhanced action by developing countries to advance low-emission and climate-resilient development. Data presented in this section are reported to the European Commission under the Monitoring Mechanism Regulation (Regulation (EU) 525/2013) for the period up to 2019 and under the Governance Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2018/1999) for subsequent years. Data from 2020 onwards thus cover *commitments* for both multilateral and bilateral public finance and are not fully comparable with earlier years. In addition, since 2022, the methodology is based on *commitments* for bilateral finance and *disbursements* of multilateral finance made in the same year. Data refer to public finance only and do not include private finance.

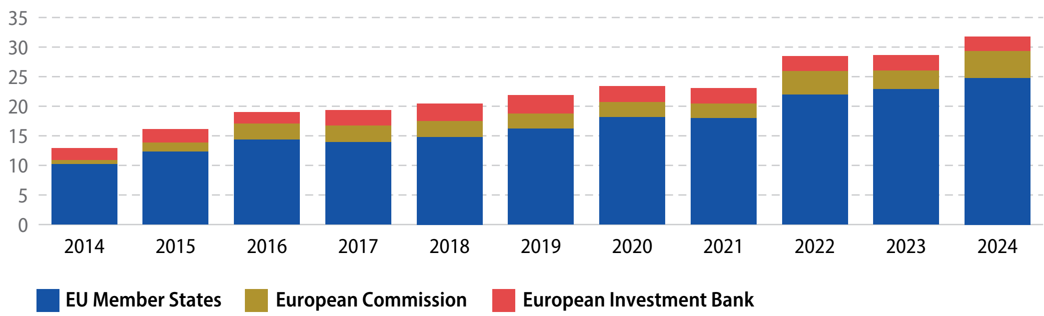
LONG TERM
2014–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 13.13

Contribution to the international USD 100bn commitment on climate-related expenditure

(EUR billion, current prices, EU, 2014–2024)



Note: Breaks in time series in 2020 and 2022.

Source: EEA, European Commission services (Eurostat online data code: sdg_13_50)

Table 13.2

Contribution to the international USD 100bn commitment on climate-related expenditure

(EUR million, current prices, 2019 and 2024)

Country	2019	2024
EU Member States	16 205.8	24 767.7
European Commission	2 534.8	4 560.1
European Investment Bank	3 184.3	2 402.1
Belgium	99.7	160.0
Bulgaria	0.0	0.0
Czechia	7.5	18.0
Denmark	246.9	756.8
Germany	6 811.8	10 686.6
Estonia	0.5	1.9
Ireland	70.2	209.2
Greece	0.7	1.0
Spain	740.1	1 727.0
France	5 958.8	7 220.9
Croatia	0.0	5.0
Italy	417.6	1 667.9
Cyprus	0.0	0.0
Latvia	0.0	4.5
Lithuania	2.0	1.6
Luxembourg	51.4	65.5
Hungary	3.4	20.7
Malta	0.1	0.7
Netherlands	580.8	845.3
Austria	332.8	373.1
Poland	12.9	9.8
Portugal	0.9	5.9
Romania	0.2	2.2
Slovenia	5.8	7.9
Slovakia	5.9	9.0
Finland	146.8	172.6
Sweden	708.9	794.9

Note: Breaks in time series in 2020 and 2022.

Source: EEA, European Commission services (Eurostat online data code: sdg_13_50)

14 Life below water

14 LIFE BELOW WATER

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

SDG 14 aims to protect and ensure the sustainable use of oceans. This includes reducing marine pollution and ocean acidification, ending overfishing and conserving marine and coastal ecosystems. SDG 14 is strongly related to other SDGs because oceans sustain coastal economies and livelihoods, contribute to food production and function as a carbon sink.

The health and productivity of marine ecosystems are of paramount importance for coastal livelihoods, food security, biodiversity and the regulation of Earth's climate. At the same time, marine and coastal environments are heavily affected by climate change, habitat destruction, degradation and alteration, biodiversity loss, over-exploitation of marine resources and pollution. Monitoring SDG 14 in an EU context thus involves analysing developments in the areas of ocean health, marine conservation and sustainable fisheries. Over the short-term period, the EU has made only slow progress towards the goal. On the positive side, fish stocks in EU marine waters (especially in the North-East Atlantic) seem to be recovering as a result of more sustainable fishing practices. However, ocean acidification and eutrophication increase continuously. Additionally, the designation of new marine protected areas needs to speed up to achieve the target of protecting at least 30 % of EU seas by 2030.

Table 14.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 14, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Ocean health					
Mean surface seawater acidity	8.76 nmol/l (2025)	2009–2025	0.5 %	↘	page 240
		2019–2025	0.5 %	↘	
Marine waters affected by eutrophication	8 605 km² (2025)	2010–2025	– 2.0 % (1)	↑	page 241
		2019–2025	1.8 % (1)	↓	
Coastal bathing waters with excellent quality	88.8 % (2024)	2011–2024	0.7 %	↗	page 242
		2019–2024	0.1 %	→	
Marine conservation					
Marine protected areas ◎	13.7 % (2023)	2012–2023	Observed: 11.3 % Required: 11.5 %	↑	page 243
		2019–2023	Observed: 5.9 % Required: 9.6 %	↗	
Sustainable fisheries					
Estimated trends in fish stock biomass	123 index 2003 = 100 (2023)	2008–2023	1.3 %	↑	page 244
		2018–2023	1.2 %	↑	
Estimated trends in fishing pressure	0.85 model-based median value of fishing pressure (2023)	2008–2023	– 3.1 %	↑	page 245
		2018–2023	– 8.3 %	↑	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

(1) Assessment based on a four-year moving average.

Policy context

Ocean health and marine conservation

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) aims for good environmental status in EU waters and promotes marine protected areas, while the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD) supports the integration of ocean health and marine conservation objectives into maritime spatial planning.

The EU Mission 'Restore our Ocean and Waters', launched in September 2021, aims to protect and restore the health of our ocean and waters by 2030 through research and innovation, citizen engagement, the development of a Digital Twin Ocean, and investments in the sustainable blue economy.

The European Ocean Pact adopted in June 2025 aims at bringing together EU ocean policies under one single and coordinated framework. The Water Framework Directive requires Member States to draw up management plans to ensure good ecological status of coastal waters. The EU Bathing Water Directive lays down provisions for monitoring bathing water quality at designated bathing sites.

The UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) in 2022 adopted a global biodiversity framework to protect at least 30 % of the global sea areas by 2030. The BBNJ Agreement establishes a global framework for protecting marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The European Commission has adopted a proposal to transpose the agreement into Union law in 2025. The 3rd UN Ocean Conference in 2025 called for ambitious, united and urgent actions to protect, conserve, sustainably use and restore the ocean and its ecosystems.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 aims to achieve good environmental status for marine ecosystems and introduces the target of protecting at least 30 % of EU seas by 2030. Additionally, the Nature Restoration Regulation sets binding targets to restore European habitats in poor condition, including marine and coastal ecosystems. The EU Habitats Directive contributes to the conservation of marine habitat types and species. Making ocean sustainability a reality by 2030 is one of the four pillars of the EU's updated International Ocean Governance Agenda.

The EU combats marine pollution through a wide set of legal instruments on waste management, port reception facilities and single-use plastics. The Zero Pollution Action Plan for Air, Water and Soil sets out key actions to improve water quality by reducing emissions of waste, plastic litter at sea and microplastics. The EU Ship-Source Pollution Directive strengthens measures to prevent and respond to marine pollution caused by illegal discharges from ships.

The EU strategy on adaptation to climate change aims to tackle ocean acidification and encourage nature-based solutions for sustaining Europe's seas.

Sustainable fisheries

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) aims at ensuring that fishing and aquaculture activities are environmentally and socio-economically sustainable in the long-term.

The EU IUU Regulation aims to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The Action plan on protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries contributes to the delivery of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

Overview and key trends

Ocean health

Accomplishing the goal of a clean, healthy and productive ocean requires an integrated approach that addresses multiple pressures on marine ecosystems. To monitor progress towards SDG 14 in the EU context, indicators focus on ocean acidification, eutrophication and bathing water quality. To improve water quality in marine waters and coastal areas across its sea basins, the EU has put in place a range of land-based and marine policies, strengthened its engagement in Regional Sea Conventions, sea-basin and macro-regional strategies, and support for its outermost regions. Over the past five years, bathing water quality has largely stabilised at a high level, while eutrophication remains an unsatisfactory pressure in several sea basins. Progress has been made in reducing nutrient inputs contributing to eutrophication and pathogens from point sources, notably through improved urban wastewater treatment. However, ocean acidification has continued due to global climate change.

Seawater acidification remains on an upward trajectory

Seawater acidification occurs when increased levels of carbon dioxide (CO_2) from the atmosphere are absorbed by the sea. Dissolved atmospheric CO_2 reacts with water molecules and increases the hydrogen ion concentration in the ocean, thus increasing ocean acidity. Data on the global yearly ocean carbon uptake show that the sea has absorbed more carbon as atmospheric concentrations of CO_2 have risen (1). While the ocean helps to mitigate atmospheric warming by absorbing this greenhouse gas, its capacity to do so is limited and the added CO_2 fundamentally changes the ocean's chemistry. Acidification reduces calcification and affects biochemical processes such as photosynthesis, with knock-on effects for entire ecosystems. Because cold water absorbs more CO_2, polar regions are disproportionately affected by acidification. Research has shown that organisms relying on calcification (for example, mussels, corals and plankton) and photosynthesis (plankton and algae) are particularly vulnerable to increased acidity (2). A decline in the extent of coral reefs not only leads to habitat loss for many species and impacts on the food web, it also increases flood risk due to coastal erosion.

Between 2019 and 2025, the mean concentration of hydrogen ions in European surface waters increased by

3.0 %

The Copernicus Marine Services has been monitoring ocean acidification since 1985. Over the whole period from 1985 to 2025, the mean concentration of hydrogen ions in surface seawater in the Northeast Atlantic and the Mediterranean and Black Sea increased by 17.0 %, reaching 8.76 nanomoles per litre (nmol/l). This corresponds to a pH value of 8.06, which is considerably below the pre-industrialisation surface seawater pH range of 8.3 to 8.2 (3). Ocean acidification in EU marine areas has risen slightly in recent years, with the hydrogen ion concentration increasing by 8.0 % since 2010 and by 3.0 % since 2019. Unless CO_2 emissions are significantly reduced, ocean acidity measured as hydrogen ion concentration is projected to double or triple by 2100 (4). Mitigating climate change (SDG 13) is thus vital for reaching SDG target 14.3 on minimising seawater acidification.

(1) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2019), *IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA.

(2) European Environment Agency (2017), *Climate change, impacts and vulnerability in Europe 2016 — An indicator-based report*, EEA Report No 1/2017, Copenhagen.

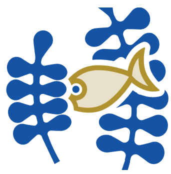
(3) European Environment Agency (2025), *Ocean acidification*.

(4) Canadell, J. G. et al. (2021), "Global Carbon and other Biogeochemical Cycles and Feedbacks", in: IPCC, *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*.

Pollution continues to threaten the marine environment

In addition to acidification, Europe's marine ecosystems are still under threat from organic and chemical pollutants from human activities, as well as marine litter and noise pollution. Excessive nutrient loads from agriculture and municipal wastewater — in particular phosphorus and nitrogen compounds — cause eutrophication, which can lead to problematic algal blooms and oxygen depletion, with severe consequences for the marine ecosystem's health and biodiversity.

The Copernicus Marine Service monitors all EU sea basins for oxygen depletion and measures anomalies in chlorophyll-a levels as an indicator of eutrophication. The chlorophyll data show strong annual fluctuations in the area of EU marine waters affected. Since 2003, eutrophication has affected between around 2 000 and 50 000 square kilometres (km^2) of EU marine waters, corresponding to between 0.04 % and 0.9 % of the EU's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). In 2025, about 8 600 km^2 of EU marine waters were affected by eutrophication, corresponding to 0.15 % of the EU's EEZ. A smoothed four-year moving average for the trend assessment reveals that while the area affected by eutrophication has declined by 26 % since 2010, the short-term trend has been unfavourable, showing a 11 % increase since 2019.



0.2 %
of marine waters in the EU's exclusive economic zones were classified as eutrophic in 2025

An analysis from the European Environment Agency (EEA) covering the period 1980 to 2023 shows that while some locations demonstrated a decline in chlorophyll-a levels, indicating an improvement in the water quality, most areas have seen no significant trend. Areas with higher chlorophyll-a concentrations — especially during summer — are located in the Baltic Sea and along coastal areas in the North Sea and Mediterranean Sea. The findings on chlorophyll-a concentrations largely align with trends on nutrient and oxygen concentrations in Europe's seas, suggesting that further efforts are necessary to maintain and improve water quality, particularly in problem areas.

Chemical pollution from hazardous substances, marine plastic litter and microplastics is another relevant threat to the marine environment. Chemical pollution stems from land-based and marine sources, including agriculture (through the application of pesticides and veterinary medicines), industry, households and the transport sector. Of particular concern are persistent organic pollutants (POPs), which degrade slowly and can bioaccumulate in the food chain. Marine litter, such as plastic bottles and packaging, can also break down into smaller particles through photodegradation, releasing chemicals such as bisphenol A (BPA) and phthalates into the water. All in all, the transfer of toxic chemicals from the litter into the food web is already taking place on a large scale and ultimately poses combined risks to marine life and human health such as organ failure, reduced fertility and increased cancer (5).

Estimates of plastic litter entering the ocean are highly tentative, due to a lack of data. However, the European Commission estimates that 150 000 to 500 000 tonnes of plastic enter the EU's marine waters every year, with most of it being carried to the sea by rivers. Accordingly, 75 % of the marine areas assessed by the EEA are classified as polluted. Plastic pollution has many harmful effects on the marine environment, for example it traps and strangles marine animals or is ingested by them. Marine litter can come from both sea- and land-based sources, with the latter accounting for 80 %. The top 10 most commonly found single-use plastics account for about 43 % of all marine litter on European beaches (6).

Noise, caused by ships and offshore activities such as oil and gas exploration, is one of the most widespread human-induced pressures in the marine environment (7). Noise pollution can negatively affect marine life, causing increased

(5) Sameh S. Ali, Mohammed Hussein M. Alsharbaty, Rania Al-Tohamy, Michael Schagerl, Majid Al-Zahrani, Michael Kornaros and Jianzhong Sun (2025), Microplastics as persistent and vectors of other threats in the marine environment: Toxicological impacts, management and strategical roadmap to end plastic pollution, *Environmental Chemistry and Ecotoxicology 7*, 229–251.
(6) European Environment Agency (2025), *Litter found on European sea beaches*.
(7) European Environment Agency (2019), *Marine Messages II: navigating the course towards clean, healthy and productive seas through implementation of an ecosystembased approach*, EEA Report No 17/2019, Copenhagen.

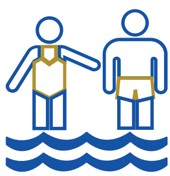
stress and resulting in behavioural changes that can impact animals' foraging and reproductive abilities. Furthermore, the constant noise frequencies released by ships potentially obscure the sounds that various marine species, such as whales and dolphins, make to communicate, hunt, navigate and protect themselves. According to the European Maritime Transport Environmental Report 2025, underwater radiated noise from ships in EU waters increased steadily between 2014 and 2019, with a slight decrease in 2020 that was likely due to reduced maritime traffic during the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2020 and 2023, noise levels rose again, but they have not yet returned to 2019 levels.

Human-induced eutrophication, contaminant concentrations, marine litter and noise pollution are common multiple pressures that must be minimised for marine waters to achieve good environmental status under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and good ecological status for coastal waters under the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

The share of European coastal bathing waters with excellent quality has stagnated in recent years

Coastal water quality is affected by land-based pollution from sewage, agricultural run-off and surface run-off from coastal cities, which can carry pathogens, hazardous chemicals, nutrients, plastic litter and microplastics. This pollution puts significant pressure on aquatic ecosystems and underwater life as well as on blue economy activities and the livelihoods of coastal communities.

The quality of the EU's coastal bathing waters improved between 2011 and 2019, but progress has slowed since then. In 2024, 88.8 % of the EU's coastal bathing waters had 'excellent' quality. While this reflects a notable increase compared with 81.3 % in 2011, it is only marginally above the share of 88.4 % reported in 2019. Across Member States, bathing water quality was highest in Lithuania, Slovenia and Cyprus, with virtually all coastal bathing waters having excellent quality in 2024.



88.8 %
of EU coastal bathing waters had excellent quality in 2024

Marine conservation

The lives of European citizens depend in many ways on the services marine ecosystems provide, including climate regulation, fish and seafood provision, coastal protection, cultural value, recreation and tourism. Against this backdrop, the European Commission and Member States have taken multiple steps to combat the destruction and degradation of aquatic and coastal habitats and biodiversity, which poses a serious threat to human livelihoods, food security and climate stability [8].

A crucial step has been the designation of a network of marine protected areas (MPAs), in which some human activities are subject to stricter regulation. The degree of protection and hence the effectiveness of MPAs depends on the management plan regulating each protected area. Management measures may range from a total ban on fishing, mining or wind power generation, to a more moderate protection regime where economic activity is restricted, for example, allowing only certain types of fishing methods. However, many MPAs still lack comprehensive management plans, or permit some level of commercial or recreational exploitation of fisheries [9].

One of the commitments made by the international community at the 2022 One Ocean summit and the UN COP15 on Biodiversity was to set a goal for new MPAs to have 30 % of marine space under protection, including 10 % under strict protection, by 20230 [10]. This goal is also supported by the BBNJ Agreement and is included in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. With the ambition to accelerate the implementation of SDG 14 globally, the EU and its Member States pledged voluntary

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[8] European Commission (2021), *Assessment of the existing EU policy tools in the field of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 and other ocean-related Agenda 2030*.
[9] European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (2025), *Mapping of Marine Protected Areas and their associated fishing activities: Baltic and North Seas, Atlantic EU Western Waters and Outermost Regions (MAPAFISH)*, Final Report, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg; and European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (2025), *Mapping of Marine Protected Areas and their associated fishing activities: Mediterranean and Black Seas (MAPAFISH–MED)*, Final Report, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
[10] Strict protection does not necessarily mean the area is not accessible to humans, but it leaves natural processes essentially undisturbed to respect the areas' ecological requirements.

commitments amounting to EUR 1 billion at the third UN Ocean Conference. Commitments cover a wide range of topics and regions around the world.

The extent of marine protected areas has been growing slowly in the EU and remains far below the 2030 target

An EU assessment of measures to protect coastal and marine environments from 2025 shows that good environmental status has not been achieved across marine regions, and that marine biodiversity continues to decline while pollution still harms marine life ([11]). A high proportion of marine species and habitats across Europe's seas are still in 'unfavourable conservation status' and the marine ecosystem condition is generally not 'good' ([12]). One approach to protecting the state of marine ecosystems is the designation of MPAs and the subsequent implementation of management measures.

13.7 %
of the EU's marine area was protected in 2023

Between 2012 and 2023, the extent of marine protected areas more than tripled from 216 972 square kilometres (km^2) to 689 211 km^2, with most of this growth taking place between 2012 and 2019. While the designation of additional MPAs has since slowed, between 2022 and 2023 the extent of marine protected areas increased by 9.6 %. In 2023, MPAs represented 13.7 % of overall EU marine area (with only around 1 % strictly protected ([13])), meaning efforts will need to accelerate for the EU to meet its 30 % target by 2030. In 2023, the highest shares of marine protected areas were reported by Germany (45.5 % of national marine area), France (45.4 %) and Belgium (38.1 %). Since 2019, MPA coverage has increased in most EU Member States that have a sea border, with particularly notable relative increases recorded in Italy (from 5.4 % to 10.0 %) and Spain (from 12.0 % to 18.4 %), alongside further gains in France, the Netherlands and Denmark.

Growth in the extent of protected areas alone does not necessarily provide a reliable indication of how effectively species and habitats are protected, because the conservation outcomes of MPAs depend largely on the management measures and levels of protection applied. At the EU level, there is still no harmonised overview of the level of protection and implementation of management measures across MPAs in Europe's regional seas. Recent research assessing the regulation of human activities in EU MPAs indicates that around 86 % of MPA areas are subject to low levels of protection ([14]), meaning that potentially harmful activities may still be permitted. This finding is consistent with earlier assessments, including a European Court of Auditors report, which concluded that EU MPAs often provide limited protection in practice.

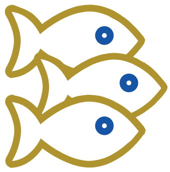
Research suggests that MPAs may help increase fish populations inside their borders. The benefit for nearby fisheries depends on the MPA's age, local conditions and if it is part of a larger MPA network ([15]). The Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 requires the Commission, in cooperation with Member States and the EEA, to advance criteria and guidelines for the identification and designation of new protected areas, as well as for coherent management planning. In 2023, the European Commission adopted an action plan for protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries. This action plan calls on EU Member States to, among other things, improve fishing selectivity and reduce the impact of fishing on sensitive species and the seabed. This objective is flanked by the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters and the EU Blue Parks Community Initiative.

(11) European Commission (2025), *Assessment of the Member States' programmes of measures as updated under Article 17 of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC)*.
(12) European Environment Agency (2020), *State of nature in the EU. Results from reporting under the nature directives 2013–2018*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
(13) European Commission (2020), EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives.
(14) Aminian-Biquet, J., Gorjanc, S., Sletten, J., Vincent, T., Laznya, A., Vaidianu, N., Claudet, J., Young, J., & Horta e Costa, B. (2024), Over 80% of the European Union's marine protected areas only marginally regulate human activities, *One Earth*, 7(9): 1614–1629.
(15) European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (2024), *Assessing spillover from marine protected areas to adjacent fisheries — Baltic and North Seas, Atlantic EU Western Waters and Outermost Regions*, Final report, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Sustainable fisheries

Besides pollution, the unsustainable use of living resources is the main threat to marine habitats and species in the EU. An ecosystem-based approach to managing Europe's fishing fleets is provided for under the EU's Common Fishing Policy (CFP) and is required for biodiversity conservation.

Governance of fisheries in EU waters mainly focuses on fair access and sustainable supply. The CFP aims to ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities are environmentally sustainable in the long term and are managed in a way that achieves economic, social and employment benefits, and contributes to the availability of seafood supplies. The CFP limits the total amount of fish catches and controls who is allowed to fish — including how, when and where — to prevent damage to vulnerable marine ecosystems and preserve fish stocks. Thus, the CFP's ambition and implementation will directly affect whether SDG 14 is achieved, in particular its aim of ending overfishing, destructive and/or illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing practices, and subsidies that encourage these activities. In addition, unsustainable fisheries are a major threat to marine ecosystems through seabed degradation and the bycatch of non-target species (such as birds and cetaceans). The CFP empowers Members States and the Commission to regulate fisheries so they comply with the obligations of the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).



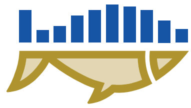
Between 2008 and 2023, fishing pressure in EU marine waters decreased by

38 %

Fisheries in EU marine waters have become more sustainable

European fisheries affect fish stock productivity and stock size through catches. However, because stock size also varies naturally, managing fisheries is a complex exercise. Controlling fishing mortality is one way of managing fisheries. Fishing mortality (F) reflects the proportion of fish of a given age that is caught during one year. For fisheries to be sustainable, fishing mortality should not exceed the maximum sustainable yield (F_{MSY}), which is the largest catch that can be taken from a fish stock over an indefinite period without harming it.

The model-based median value of all F/F_{MSY} stock assessments can be used to estimate fishing pressures on fish stocks. Values above 1.0 mean the current fishing mortality (F) exceeds the estimated maximum sustainable yield (F_{MSY}). The results for EU marine waters show a 38 % reduction in fishing pressure, from 1.37 in 2008 to 0.85 in 2023. This overall figure aligns with the fact that fish stocks both in the North-East Atlantic (including the Baltic Sea) and in the Mediterranean and Black Sea were on average fished sustainably (F/F_{MSY} median of 0.78 in 2023 in the North-East Atlantic and F/F_{MSY} median of 0.92 in 2023 in the Mediterranean and Black Sea). These results are complemented by the share of sustainably exploited stocks: while in the North-East Atlantic 71 % of fish stocks were exploited sustainably in 2023, this share was 53 % in the Mediterranean and Black Sea [16]. In this context, it is important to mention the harm that decreased freshwater flow has caused to marine ecosystems in the Mediterranean Sea, affecting the biomass of commercial fish and invertebrate species, with the lowest flows observed in 2022 [17]. Amid this background and despite an improving trend, the EU needs to further increase efforts in these sea regions to meet its own targets for sustainable fisheries.



Between 2008 and 2023, fish stock biomass in EU marine waters increased by

22 %

The EU's approach to sustainable fisheries is not limited to respecting MSY. The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSDFD) requires commercially exploited fish and shellfish populations to have a healthy distribution of age and size. The status of stocks and their reproductive capacity can be measured and described by fish stock biomass as well as by spawning stock biomass (SSB). Biomass estimates are, however, associated with high levels of uncertainty due to the high annual variability

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([16]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: env_bio5).
([17]) Macias, D., Bisselink, B., Carmona-Moreno, C., Druon, J.-N., Duteil, O., Garcia-Gorriz, E., Grizzetti, B., Guillen, J., Miladinova, S., Pistocchi, A., Piroddi, C., Polimene, L., Serpetti, N., Stips, A., Trichakis, I., Udias, A., & Vigiak, O. (2025), *The overlooked impacts of freshwater scarcity on oceans as evidenced by the Mediterranean Sea*, Nature Communications, 16: 998.

of stock biomass. Fish stocks can also take time to respond to changes in management measures, and results can be masked by other factors, such as environmental conditions and predation ([18]). For this reason, analyses of stock biomass trends should always focus on longer term patterns. Model-based estimates show a 22 % increase in fish stock biomass in EU marine waters between 2008 and 2023. In the short term, between 2018 and 2023, growth in fish stock biomass amounted to 6 %.

([18]) Measuring the Effect of Catch Shares (2018), *Has the status of fish stocks changed? Biological indicators: Biomass*.

Main indicators

Mean surface seawater acidity

This indicator shows the yearly mean concentration of hydrogen ions in surface seawater in the Northeast Atlantic and the Mediterranean and Black Sea, expressed in nanomoles per litre (nmol/l). An increase in the concentration of hydrogen ions corresponds to a decline in pH values and an increase in seawater acidity. This trend is caused by an increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO_2) concentrations, which increases the uptake of CO_2 by the ocean. The Copernicus Marine Service has reconstructed the trends in global ocean acidification from 1985 onwards.

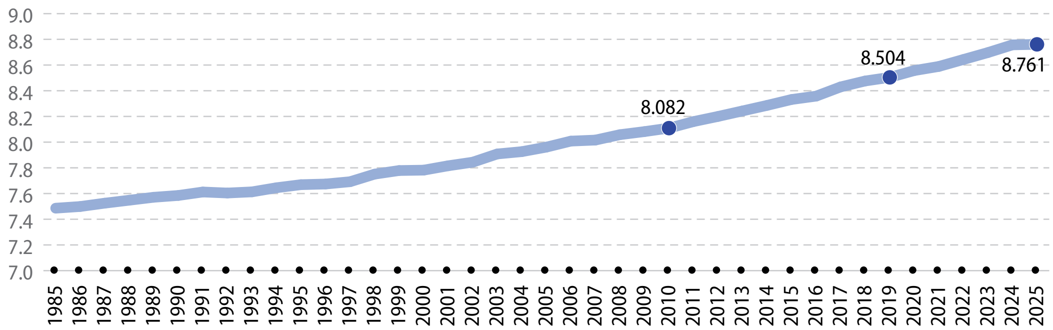
LONG TERM
2010–2025

SHORT TERM
2019–2025

Figure 14.1

Mean surface seawater acidity in the Northeast Atlantic and the Mediterranean and Black Sea

(nmol/l, 1985–2025)



Note: Y-axis does not start at 0.

Source: Mercator Ocean International, Copernicus Marine Service (Eurostat online data code: sdg_14_51)

Marine waters affected by eutrophication

Eutrophication is the process by which an excess of nutrients — mainly phosphorus and nitrogen — leads to increased growth of plant material, particularly planktonic algae, in an aquatic body, resulting in a decrease in water quality. This can, in turn, cause death by hypoxia of aquatic organisms. Anthropogenic activities, such as farming, agriculture, aquaculture, industry and sewage, are the main source of nutrient input in problem areas. This indicator shows the extent of eutrophic marine waters in the EU's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). An area is classified as eutrophic if chlorophyll-a concentrations, as a proxy, are above the 90th percentile of the 1998 to 2017 reference base line for more than 25 % of the observation days in a given year. The Copernicus Marine Service calculates the indicator from satellite imagery.

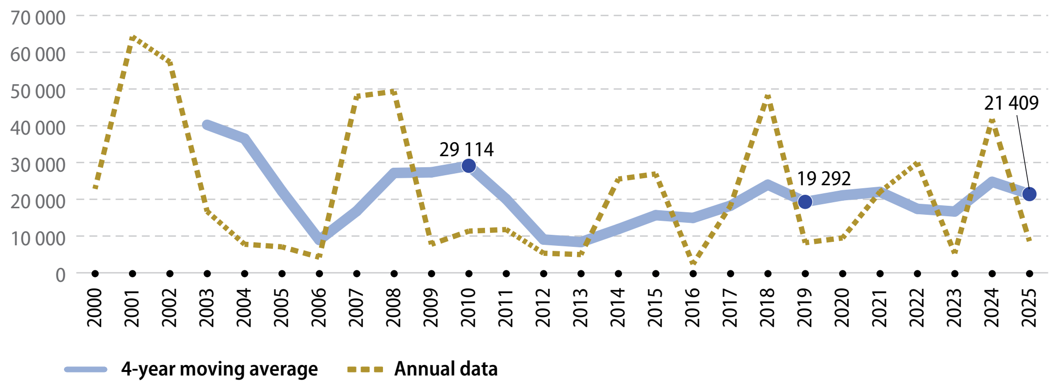
LONG TERM
2010–2025

SHORT TERM
2019–2025

Figure 14.2

Marine waters affected by eutrophication

(km^2, EU, 2000–2025)

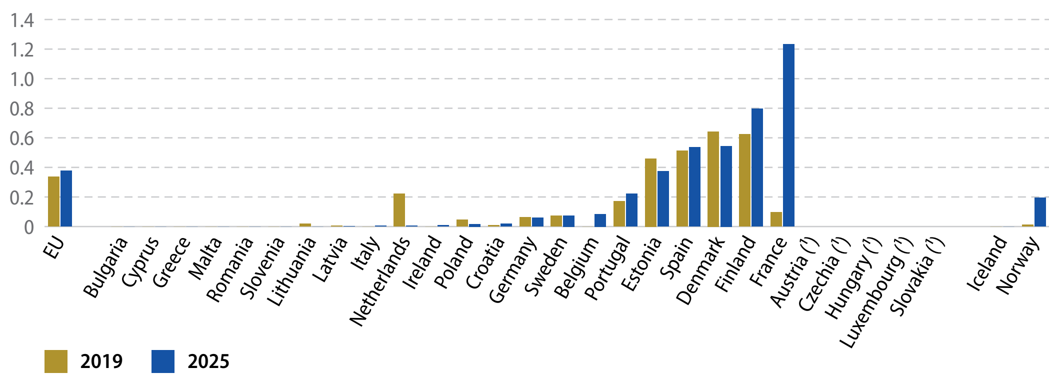


Source: Mercator Ocean International, Copernicus Marine Service (Eurostat online data code: sdg_14_60)

Figure 14.3

Marine waters affected by eutrophication

(% of exclusive economic zone (EEZ), 2019 and 2025)



Note: Data are presented as four-year moving average.
(¹) Not applicable (landlocked country).

Source: Mercator Ocean International, Copernicus Marine Service (Eurostat online data code: sdg_14_60)

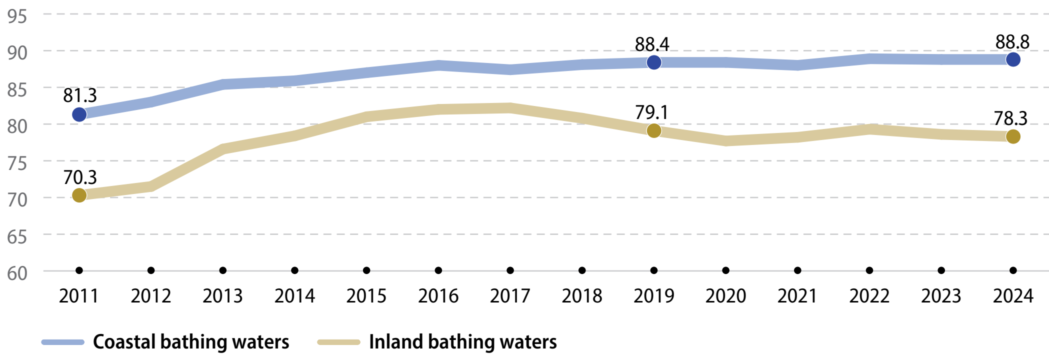
Bathing waters with excellent quality

This indicator shows the share of inland and coastal bathing waters with excellent quality in the EU. It is calculated based on the moving average of 16 sampling events in four years to be sure that most weather events are covered. Bathing water quality is assessed according to standards for microbiological parameters (intestinal *Enterococci* and *Escherichia coli*). The Bathing Water Directive (BWD) requires Member States to identify and assess the quality of all inland and marine bathing waters and to classify these waters as 'poor', 'sufficient', 'good' or 'excellent' depending on the levels of faecal bacteria detected. The data presented in this section stem from the European Environment Agency (EEA) and are based on Member States reporting under the BWD.

Figure 14.4

Bathing waters with excellent quality, by location

(% of bathing waters, EU, 2011–2024)



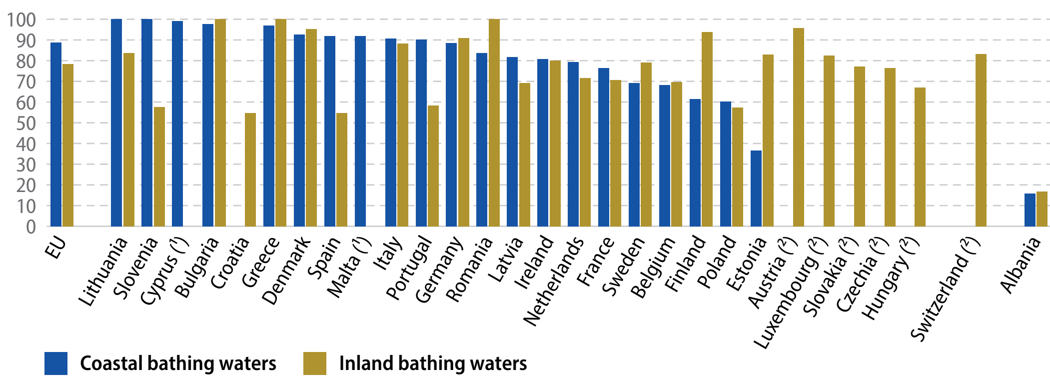
Note: Y-axis does not start at 0. EU aggregate refers to 22 Member States for coastal bathing waters (no data for landlocked countries) and 25 Member States for inland bathing waters (no data for Cyprus and Malta).

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_14_40)

Figure 14.5

Bathing waters with excellent quality, by location

(% of bathing waters, 2024)



(1) No measurements of inland bathing waters.
(2) No coastal bathing waters (landlocked country).

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_14_40)

Marine protected areas

This indicator measures the proportion of EU marine waters designated as marine protected areas (MPAs). MPAs are biodiversity 'hotspots' and can serve various objectives including species and habitats protection, biodiversity conservation and restoration, but also resource use within defined ecological boundaries. MPAs may also benefit neighbouring areas. The indicator comprises nationally designated protected areas and Natura 2000 sites. A nationally designated area is an area protected by national legislation. The Natura 2000 network comprises both marine and terrestrial protected areas designated under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives with the goal to maintain or restore a favourable conservation status for habitat types and species of EU interest. The EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 aims to protect at least 30 % of land and sea in Europe, including both nationally designated sites and Natura 2000 sites. Data provided by the Member States to the Commission are consolidated by the European Environment Agency and collected by European Commission Directorate-General for the Environment.

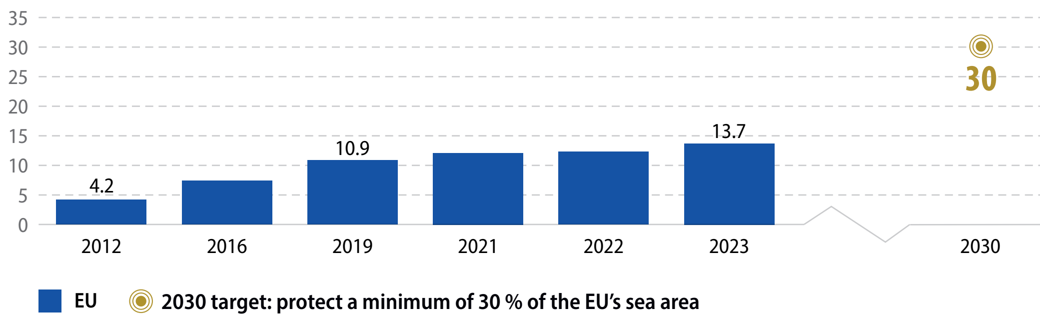
LONG TERM 2012–2023

SHORT TERM 2019–2023

Figure 14.6

Marine protected areas

(% of marine area, EU, 2012–2023)



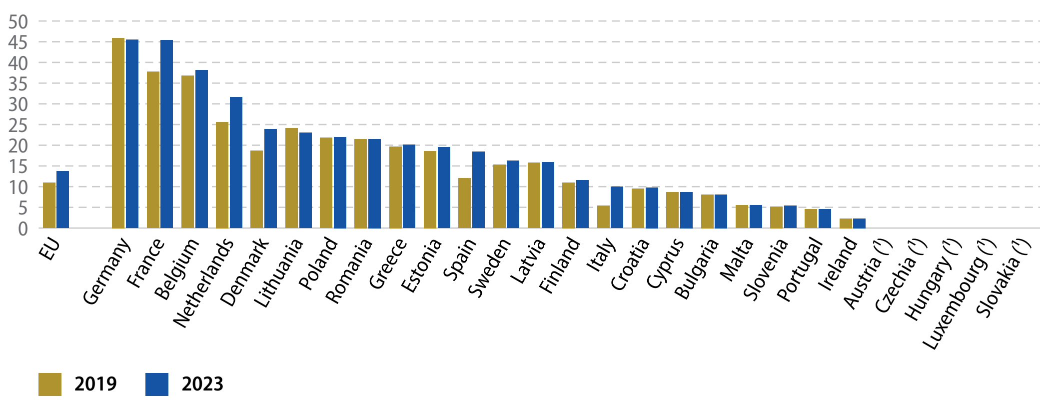
Note: Break in time series in 2022.

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_14_10)

Figure 14.7

Marine protected areas

(% of marine area, 2019 and 2023)



Note: Break in time series in 2022.

(1) Not applicable (landlocked country).

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_14_10)

Estimated trends in fish stock biomass

Fish stock biomass is a function of biological characteristics such as abundance and weight, and can indicate the status of a fish stock when measured against reference values. This is a model-based indicator that is computed using results from single-species quantitative stock assessments. It shows the median value of fish stock biomass relative to 2003. The full time series is updated every year, sometimes including new stocks due to newly available quantitative assessments which can result in small differences from one release year to the next.

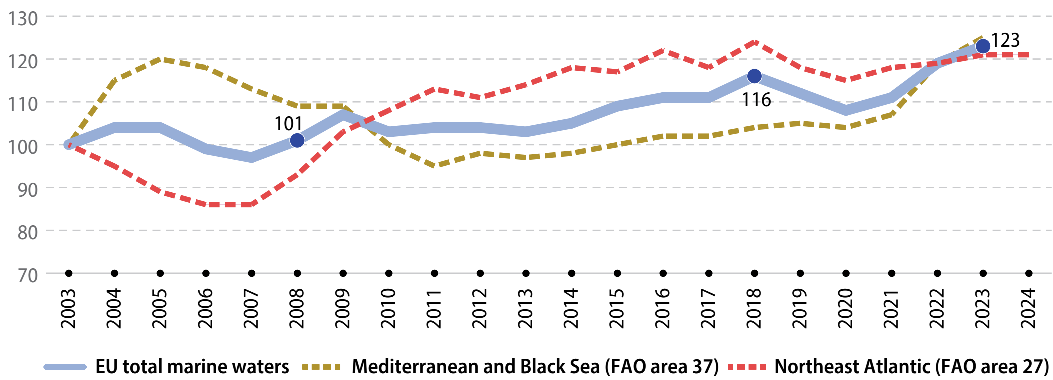
LONG TERM 2008–2023

SHORT TERM 2018–2023

Figure 14.8

Estimated trends in fish stock biomass, by fishing area

(index 2003 = 100, 2003–2024)



Note: Y-axis does not start at 0. Data for Mediterranean and Black Sea (FAO area 37) are only available until 2023. Breaks in the time series for the years 2003–2009 and 2015 due to the introduction of new fish populations in the estimated trends for the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

Source: Joint Research Centre (JRC) — Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) (Eurostat online data code: sdg_14_21)

Estimated trends in fishing pressure

The indicator presents the model-based median value of fishing pressure (F/F_{MSY}) in EU marine waters of the North-East Atlantic and adjacent seas (FAO area 27) and the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (FAO area 37), for which current fishing mortality (F) exceeds the estimated fishing mortality consistent with achieving maximum sustainable yield (F_{MSY}). Fishing mortality is a measure for death or removal of fish from a population due to fishing. The fishing mortality rate consistent with achieving maximum sustainable yield is determined by the long-term average stock size that allows fishing at this level. For fisheries to be sustainable, F should not exceed F_{MSY} — the point at which the largest catch can be taken from a fish stock over an indefinite period without harming it. The model-based median value of fishing pressure (F/F_{MSY}) indicates the trend of exploitation: values below 1 indicate sustainable fishing levels ($F \leq F_{MSY}$).

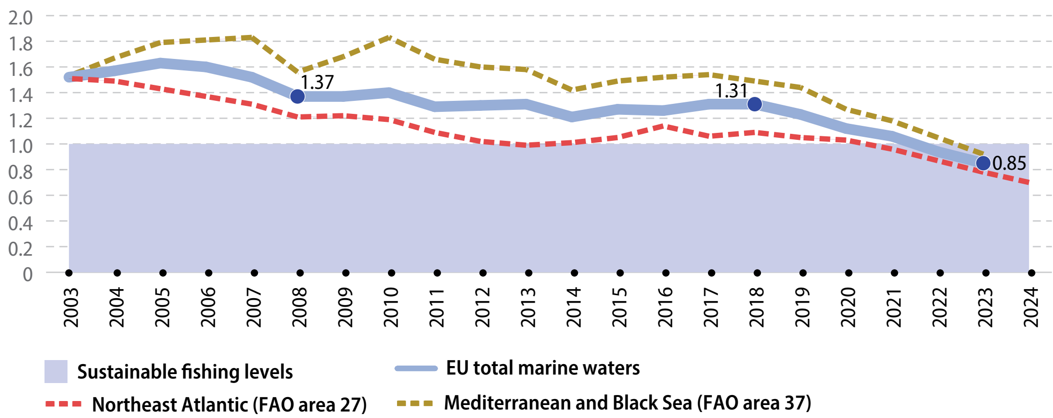
LONG TERM 2008–2023

SHORT TERM 2018–2023

Figure 14.9

Estimated trends in fishing pressure, by fishing area

(model-based median value of fishing pressure (F/F_{MSY}), 2003–2024)



Note: Data for Mediterranean and Black Sea (FAO area 37) are only available until 2023.

Source: Joint Research Centre (JRC) — Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) (Eurostat online data code: sdg_14_30)

15

Life on land

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

SDG 15 seeks to protect, restore and promote the conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. This includes efforts to sustainably manage forests and halt deforestation, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, halt biodiversity loss and protect threatened species.

Healthy terrestrial ecosystems underpin human well-being, economic stability and climate resilience by providing climate regulation, fertile soils, clean water, pollination, food and protection against extreme events. In the EU, these ecosystem services are increasingly threatened by climate change, urban expansion, pollution and overexploitation of natural resources. This drives biodiversity loss, land degradation and reduced ecosystem resilience, with direct impacts on food security, public health and adaptation capacity. Monitoring SDG 15 in an EU context focuses on alterations in ecosystem status, land degradation and biodiversity. Over the short-term period, the EU has moved away from the sustainable development objectives in SDG 15. While the EU's forest area has grown slightly and the biochemical oxygen demand in rivers has improved, phosphate pollution of EU rivers has worsened. At the same time, the sealing of soil with impervious materials and the EU area impacted by drought have grown steadily. Biodiversity indicators show a long-term and continued decline in common birds and grassland butterflies in the EU. Moreover, the designation of new terrestrial protected areas advances too slowly for the EU to achieve its 2030 target.

Table 15.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 15, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Ecosystem status					
Share of forest area	39.0 % (2023)	Time series too short for long-term assessment		✕	page 257
		2018–2023	0.3 %	↗	
Biochemical oxygen demand in rivers (*)	2.24 mg per litre (2023)	2008–2023	– 1.2 % (1)	↑	SDG 6, page 110
		2018–2023	– 1.0 % (1)	↑	
Phosphate in rivers (*)	0.081 mg per litre (2023)	2008–2023	2.1 % (2)	↓	SDG 6, page 112
		2018–2023	3.6 % (2)	↓	
Land degradation					
Area at risk of severe soil erosion by water	190 087 km^2 (2023)	2010–2023	– 0.3 %	↗	page 258
		2016–2023	– 0.5 %	↗	
Drought impact on ecosystems	232 416 km^2 (2024)	2009–2024	1.7 % (3)	↓	page 259
		2019–2024	3.6 % (3)	↓	
Soil sealing (*)	252.1 m^2 per inhabitant (2021)	2006–2021	0.2 %	↘	SDG 11, page 195
		2015–2021	0.3 %	↘	
Biodiversity					
Terrestrial protected areas ◎	26.4 % (2023)	2011-2023	Observed: 0.6 % Required: 1.0 %	↘	page 260
		2018–2023	Observed: 0.6 % Required: 1.3 %	↘	
Common bird index	84.9 index 2000 = 100 (2024)	2009–2024	– 0.6 % (4)	↘	page 261
		2019–2024	– 0.6 % (4)	↘	
Grassland butterfly index	52.7 index 1991 = 100 (2024)	2009–2024	– 1.8 %	↓	page 262
		2019–2024	– 3.2 %	↓	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.
(*) Multi-purpose indicator. (1) Data refer to an EU aggregate based on 19 Member States. (2) Data refer to an EU aggregate based on 20 Member States. (3) Assessment based on a 10-year moving average. (4) Data refer to an EU aggregate that changes over time depending on when countries joined the Pan-European Common Birds Monitoring Scheme.

Policy context

Ecosystem status

The Nature Restoration Regulation entered into force in August 2024. It calls for legally binding targets to restore degraded ecosystems, in particular those that can best capture and store carbon as well as prevent and reduce the impact of natural disasters.

The EU Forest Strategy for 2030 aims to enhance forest quantity, quality and resilience. Its roadmap outlines key actions such as afforestation, reforestation, forest restoration and sustainable management practices, including a commitment to plant three billion additional trees.

The Regulation on deforestation-free products aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss by ensuring that key commodities placed on the EU market do not contribute to deforestation or forest degradation.

The Water Framework Directive restricts activities polluting and harming Europe's freshwater resources, complemented by the EU Drinking Water Directive and Nitrates Directive, which limit chemical and mineral levels.

The Strategy for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy aims to boost innovation and support European companies in the green transition.

Under its 'green transition pillar', the Recovery and Resilience Facility contributes to the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Biodiversity

The 'Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework' sets four long-term goals for the 2050 vision for biodiversity and 23 global targets for 2030, and adopted a global monitoring framework.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 aims to restore Europe's biodiversity by 2030 by expanding the EU-wide network of protected areas, implementing a nature restoration plan, and promoting transformative measures to tackle biodiversity loss and meet global commitments.

The Birds Directive protects all wild bird species and their habitats, while the Habitats Directive aims to conserve more than 1 300 rare, threatened or endemic species of wild animals and plants, and 233 types of natural habitats, primarily as part of the EU-wide Natura 2000 network.

The revised EU Pollinators Initiative sets a framework to tackle pollinator decline across sectors. In 2025, the European Commission launched a science-based EU Pollinator Monitoring Scheme to support the Nature Restoration Regulation.

Land degradation

The EU Soil Strategy for 2030 sets out a framework and concrete measures to protect, restore and sustainably use soils. Building on this approach, the new Soil Monitoring Law establishes a common framework for the systematic monitoring and assessment of soil health across EU Member States, aligning soil protection with that of water, air and the marine environment.

The Common Agricultural Policy requires farms receiving income support to protect the climate and the environment. It sets standards to prevent soil erosion and to protect biodiversity and the landscape. Climate and environmental sustainability in agriculture remains a core priority for the period 2028 to 2034.

Overview and key trends

Ecosystem status

Humans depend on many ecosystem services, such as clean air, purified water and food provision. In addition, terrestrial ecosystems provide natural resources used in industrial processes and cultural services such as outdoor recreation. Functioning terrestrial ecosystems also mitigate the negative effects of climate change, including protection from natural disasters, such as flooding, landslides, droughts and heatwaves. Human activities that degrade ecosystems, including the emissions of air, water and soil pollutants, and lead to the overuse of resources, threaten animals and plants and, as a result, the provision of ecosystem services and their benefits to human well-being ([1]).

In 2019, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) released a Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The report's key findings indicate that negative trends in biodiversity and ecosystem services are expected to hinder progress towards the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. As such, current global conservation and sustainability goals will not be met unless transformative change is implemented. In 2021, the European Commission published the report Accounting for ecosystems and their services in the European Union (INCA), which delivered an integrated system of ecosystem accounts for the EU. The report's key findings suggest that between 2000 and 2018, changes in the extent of most ecosystem types have been small in relative terms. However, urban ecosystems have seen a significant increase in their extent, indicating a continued expansion of urbanised areas at the expense of semi-natural ecosystems and farmland. The report also suggests that sites in the Natura 2000 network tend to have a higher degree of ecosystem stability than those outside the network ([2]).

Some types of terrestrial ecosystems (for example, wetlands, heathlands and scrub) and the pressures placed on them (such as invasive species, habitat fragmentation, and noise and light pollution) are not monitored in this report due to data shortcomings. It is therefore important to recognise the limitations in presenting a full and complete picture of Europe's terrestrial ecosystems, the status of which cannot be fully assessed with the long-term datasets that are currently available.

The share of forest area in the EU is stabilising just below 40 %

39.0 %
of the EU area was covered by forests in 2023

Europe's forests play a vital role for the well-being of humans, animals and plants. Notably, they deliver a wide range of ecosystem services, including soil protection and water regulation, carbon sequestration and storage, and biodiversity conservation, alongside socio-economic benefits such as employment and value creation in rural areas. In 2023, forests covered 39.0 % of the EU's total area. Between 2018 and 2023, the proportion increased slightly, by 0.6 percentage points.

European forests face increasing pressure from climate-related disturbances such as droughts, heatwaves, storms, bark beetle outbreaks and forest fires, leading to declining forest health. These impacts are intensified by air pollution and excessive nutrient loads, particularly nitrogen

([1]) Díaz et al. (2019), *Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*.

([2]) Vysna et al. (2021), *Accounting for ecosystems and their services in the European Union (INCA)*, Final report from phase II of the INCA project aiming to develop a pilot for an integrated system of ecosystem accounts for the EU, Statistical report, Publications office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

deposition and ozone, as well as by biotic damage, including insects and harmful organisms. At the same time, competing demands for carbon sequestration, biomass production and recreation create management trade-offs that further challenge forest resilience (3). This means that EU efforts to preserve and sustainably manage its forested areas remain critical and will become even more so in the future. According to the 2020 State of Nature in the EU assessment, forests covered by the Habitats Directive account for about 27 % of the total forest area in the EU. Only 14 % of these forests are in good conservation status, while the rest are in a poor or bad condition. Nevertheless, the report highlights that forest habitats show the highest proportion of improving trends compared with the assessments of other habitat types.

Pollution in EU rivers shows a mixed picture, with accelerating phosphate pollution and a slowing reduction in organic pollution

The ecological status of European water bodies gives an important indication of how Europe's natural environment is faring in the face of pressures from human use. Two indicators monitor progress in this area: biochemical oxygen demand in rivers and phosphate in rivers. While biochemical oxygen demand pollution levels indicate progress in improving river water quality in the EU over the past 20 years, phosphate pollution shows the opposite pattern. Short-term developments largely mirror long-term trends, but with increasingly negative tendencies.

Between 2018 and 2023, the biochemical oxygen demand in EU rivers fell by

5.1 %

Biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) in rivers is an indicator of organic water pollution and the effectiveness of water treatment. When a high level of oxygen (O_2) is required for the microbiological decomposition of organic compounds in water, less O_2 is available for other river species. As such, biochemical oxygen demand provides an indication of a river system's overall health. Available data for 19 Member States show an overall decline in BOD in EU rivers, from 2.7 milligrams per litre (mg/L) in 2008 to 2.2 mg/L in 2023. Overall, BOD levels in EU rivers have fallen by 16.4 % since 2008 and by 5.1 % since 2018. Between 2018 and 2023, 14 out of 19 reporting Member States saw reductions in BOD in their rivers. The overall decrease in BOD values is mainly linked to a general improvement in wastewater collection and treatment throughout Europe.

Phosphate (PO_4) in rivers can originate from agricultural production, urban wastewater and industrial discharges. Heavy loads of phosphate in rivers can harm the environment by causing biodiversity loss and water eutrophication. Data on phosphate concentrations in EU rivers are available for 20 Member States. They show a marked improvement between 2007 and 2010, after which, however, the trend levelled off and even started increasing again from 2013. Thus, the phosphate concentration of 0.081 mg/L recorded in 2023 is the highest value reported since 2007. Overall, phosphate concentrations in EU rivers have increased by 37.3 % since 2008 and by 19.1 % since 2018, indicating an accelerated rate of increase in recent years.

Between 2018 and 2023, the concentration of phosphates in EU rivers increased by

19.1%

Recent revisions to the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive addressed the steady increase in phosphate concentrations in recent years through stricter wastewater treatment standards, expanded coverage, enhanced monitoring and reporting, the polluter-pays principle, and digital reporting requirements. Member States are expected to adapt their national laws to comply with the new requirements by mid-2027. Of all reporting Member States, rivers in Sweden and Finland on average had the lowest phosphate concentrations between 2018 and 2023. This is likely to be a result of their low population densities and/or high levels of wastewater collection and treatment. In contrast, between 2018 and 2023, half of the reporting Member States showed increases in river phosphate concentrations. Relatively high concentrations were found in some Member States

(3) Forest Europe (2020), *State of Europe's Forests 2020*, Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, 2020.

with intensive agriculture. The high and increasing short-term values observed, particularly in Spain, Lithuania and Bulgaria, may lead to freshwater eutrophication (4).

The observed increases in phosphate concentrations may be linked to the slower decline in phosphorus emissions from agriculture. Although phosphorus fertiliser use at the EU level has decreased since 2020, this reduction was partly driven by external factors that reduced fertiliser applications, such as prolonged droughts (for example, in 2012 and 2019) and rising fertiliser prices in 2022 following the war in Ukraine, rather than by structural emission reductions (5).

Land degradation

Land degradation is linked to the long-term functionality and biological productivity of land or land-based ecosystems. It is a complex phenomenon bringing together several elements, including soil degradation and the capacity of land to sustain water resources, biodiversity and primary productivity (6). Soil degradation by itself covers many aspects such as soil sealing and contamination, water and wind erosion, soil biodiversity loss, compaction and decline in organic matter, along with desertification, acidification and salination (7). The analysis in this report has been limited to change in imperviousness, the area impacted by drought and the risk of soil erosion by water.

The EU area sealed with impervious materials has grown in recent years

Land take is described as the process of transforming agricultural, forest and other semi-natural and natural areas into artificial areas. It often means an increase in settlement area over time, usually at the expense of agricultural areas. This process exerts significant pressure on ecosystems by fragmenting landscapes, reducing biodiversity and carbon storage capacity, increasing surface run-off and flood risk, and intensifying urban heat effects.

Soil sealing represents the most intensive and largely irreversible form of land take, highlighting the extent to which increasing land conversion translates into long-term losses of soil functions and ecosystem services. The Soil Monitoring Law therefore establishes a monitoring framework targeting the most visible impacts of land take, in particular 'soil sealing and soil removal'. Under the Law, 'soil sealing' is defined as the alteration of the soil surface through coverage with completely or partially impermeable materials. It is thus understood as a process that reduces soil permeability and impairs soil functions, occurring primarily within artificial land cover types.

In 2021, the area of sealed soil surface in the EU was

252.1 m²

per inhabitant

Increases in sealed land can be used to estimate land-use change for human use or intensification. In 2021, more than 112 000 square kilometres (km^2), corresponding to 2.7 % of the EU area, was covered with impervious materials. This translates into 252.1 square metres (m^2) per inhabitant. Between 2006 and 2021, the area of sealed soil in the EU grew by 6.5 m^2 per inhabitant or 2.6 %. Around half of this increase occurred between 2018 and 2021, when the area of sealed soil grew by 3.3 m^2 per inhabitant, corresponding to an increase of 1.3 %. Across Member States, the share of sealed soil area ranged from below 1 % in Sweden and Finland to around 10 % in Belgium and the Netherlands, and up to 19 % in Malta. The picture is turned around when putting soil sealing in relation to population figures. Malta had the lowest value of sealed soil per capita across the EU, with 112 m^2 per inhabitant, while Finland had the highest value, with 467 m^2 per inhabitant.

(4) European Environment Agency (2025), *Nutrients in freshwater in Europe.*
(5) Eurostat (2025), *Agri-environmental indicator — mineral fertiliser consumption*.
(6) European Environment Agency (2016), *The direct and indirect impacts of EU policies on land*, EEA Report No 8/2016, Copenhagen; European Environment Agency (2019), *Land degradation knowledge base: policy, concepts and data*, European Topic Centre on Urban, Land and Soil Systems (ETC/ULS) Report No 1/2019, Vienna.
(7) European Commission (2012), *The implementation of the Soil Thematic Strategy and ongoing activities*, COM(2012) 46 final; FAO (2015), *Status of the World's Soil Resources*, Food and Drug Administration, Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

The proportion of EU land at risk of severe soil erosion by water has fallen marginally

Healthy soils play a crucial role in supporting agricultural productivity, enhancing plant pest resistance, and ensuring food quality and safety (8). They provide key ecosystem services, including the storage, filtration and transformation of substances such as water, carbon and nitrogen. Maintaining soil health is therefore critical to ensuring the continued provision of these functions. While soil erosion by water remains the most significant threat to soils in the EU, other processes, including erosion from tillage, wind and crop harvesting, also contribute to soil degradation. These processes often occur simultaneously or sequentially and may interact, reinforcing each other and amplifying overall degradation impacts.

About 5 % of the EU's non-artificial erodible land area is affected by severe soil erosion by water, defined as soil loss exceeding 10 tonnes per hectare per year (9). Water erosion remains the dominant driver of soil displacement in Europe, accounting for around 51 % of total soil loss and affecting about 57 % of the impacted area) (10). Hotspots are primarily located in Mediterranean and Alpine regions, where steep topography and high rainfall erosivity significantly increase erosion risk. Erosion rates vary substantially across Member States, reflecting differences in climate, topography and land management, with generally higher risks in southern Europe. Higher rates are observed in Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal due to intense rainfall, steep slopes and periods of low vegetation cover, whereas northern and parts of central Europe such as Finland, Sweden and Germany experience lower rates under less erosive precipitation and more stable land cover (11). Projections indicate that soil loss from water erosion could increase by up to 23 % by 2050 compared with current levels, primarily driven by climate change and increasing rainfall erosivity (12).

Other erosion processes are tillage erosion (36 % of the total displacement), wind erosion (10 %) and crop harvesting (2.7 %) (13). These processes often occur almost unnoticed without leaving substantial geomorphic evidence but may act as a trigger and enhance soil degradation. Accordingly, evidence suggests that countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands, which are relatively unaffected by water erosion, are prone to wind erosion risks.

Between 2016 and 2023, the area at risk of severe soil erosion by water in the EU fell by

3.4 %

Efforts to address and mitigate soil erosion by water have helped to reduce the estimated EU land area at risk of severe soil erosion by water, from 196 853 km^2 in 2016 to 190 087 km^2 in 2023, equalling a decrease of 3.4 %. This represents a considerable slowdown compared with the period 2000 to 2016, when the estimated area at risk fell by 13.4 %.

Between 2010 and 2016, arable land experienced the greatest reduction in area at risk of soil erosion compared with other land types. Overall, a slight decrease in soil loss rates (– 0.4 %) took place between 2010 and 2016, which can be attributed to the implementation of agri-environmental measures under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the uptake of soil conservation practices such as reduced tillage, soil cover, contour farming and maintenance of terraces (14). However, these improvements have been relatively limited. More recent assessments indicate that future soil erosion by water in the EU is likely to increase, primarily driven by climate change and rising rainfall erosivity, which are expected to outweigh the mitigating effects of

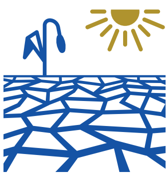
(8) European Commission (2025), *Directive (EU) 2025/2360 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 November 2025 on soil monitoring and resilience (Soil Monitoring Law)*.
(9) Panagos et al. (2021), *Projections of soil loss by water erosion in Europe by 2050*, Environmental Science and Policy, 124: 380–392.
(10) Borrelli et al. (2023), *Policy implications of multiple concurrent soil erosion processes in European farmland*, Nature Sustainability, Volume 6, January 2023, 103–112.
(11) Panagos et al. (2015), *The new assessment of soil loss by water erosion in Europe*, Environmental Science and Policy, 54, 438–447.
(12) Panagos et al. (2021), *Projections of soil loss by water erosion in Europe by 2050*, Environmental Science and Policy, 124: 380–392.
(13) Borrelli et al. (2023), *Policy implications of multiple concurrent soil erosion processes in European farmland*, Nature Sustainability, Volume 6, January 2023, 103–112.
(14) Panagos et al. (2020), *A soil erosion indicator for supporting agricultural, environmental and climate policies in the European Union*, Remote Sensing 12 (9), p. 1365.

land management practices [15]. Despite these efforts, the economic impacts of soil erosion remain significant: the cost of lost agricultural productivity is estimated at around EUR 1.3 billion annually, while the removal of about 135 million cubic metres (m^3) of accumulated sediment is estimated to cost around EUR 2.3 billion annually [16].

Drought remains a growing long-term concern in the EU

Drought impacts in Europe are increasing in both extent and severity, with around 600 000 km^2 of EU territory exposed to below-average soil moisture in 2024 and vegetation productivity failing to recover in nearly 160 000 km^2, particularly in south-eastern Europe and the Mediterranean [17]. These impacts affect croplands, forests, grasslands and shrublands. They reduce food production, carbon sequestration and ecosystem resilience, while increasing exposure to heatwaves and wildfires. Since 2017, drought-affected areas have consistently exceeded long-term baselines, and projections indicate that drought frequency and intensity will keep rising. This underscores the need for effective implementation of EU and national climate adaptation measures alongside stronger global mitigation efforts.

The impact of drought on EU ecosystems eased in 2023 and 2024, after the devastating effects experienced in 2022. In 2022, the hottest summer, the second-warmest year, and the largest drought-affected area were recorded in Europe. In 2024, drought conditions affected 3.7 % of the total EU area. Even though this is about the same level as in 2023 and considerably lower than in 2022, when 13.3 % of the EU area was impacted, the overall extent of intense drought impacts in the EU is increasing. The 10-year moving average shows a 19.6 % increase in the EU area affected by drought from 2019 to 2024. Annual data show strong fluctuations, with the drought-affected area almost tripling in some years. In 2024, six Member States exceeded their 2020–2024 average drought extent. Malta was the most affected (57.5 % of its territory), and five further countries from southern and eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, Greece and Italy) each had more than 10 % of their land area impacted.



3.7 %
of the EU area was affected by drought in 2024

Biodiversity

The Birds and Habitats Directives have protected terrestrial ecosystems in the EU since 1979 and 1992, respectively, forming the foundation for biodiversity and ecosystems conservation. These Directives require EU Member States to designate and manage Special Protection Areas (SPAs; Birds Directive) and Sites of Community Importance/Special Areas of Conservation (SCIs/SACs; Habitats Directive), collectively making up the Natura 2000 network that should enable protected habitats and species to reach favourable conservation status in the EU. The Natura 2000 network is complemented by nationally designated terrestrial protected areas that are established under each Member State's national framework. In addition, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 includes a target to protect at least 30 % of EU land. The ongoing restoration and protection efforts are further supported by the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, which aims to strengthen and accelerate ecosystem restoration across Europe. This law provides a vital framework for restoring degraded ecosystems and halting biodiversity decline, ensuring the achievement of the targets outlined in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and contributing to sustaining quality of life in the EU.

The EU risks missing its 2030 target for terrestrial protected areas

In 2023, there were 1 089 885 km^2 of protected terrestrial habitats in the EU, covering 26.4 % of the EU's land area. This is an increase of 7.3 % compared with 2011, when 1 016 136 km^2 were protected. Despite this improvement, the pace of designating new protected areas is currently too slow for the EU to achieve its 30 % target by 2030. The Member States with the largest protected areas relative to

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[15] Panagos et al. (2021), *Projections of soil loss by water erosion in Europe by 2050*, Environmental Science and Policy, 124: 380–392; and Borrelli et al. (2026), *A data-driven indicator for assessing the evolving impact of the EU Common Agricultural Policy on soil erosion mitigation*, Data in Brief, Volume 64, February 2026, 112390.
[16] Panagos at al. (2024), *Understanding the cost of soil erosion: An assessment of the sediment removal costs from the reservoirs of the European Union*, Journal of Cleaner Production, Volume 434, 2024, 140183, ISSN 0959–6526.
[17] European Environment Agency (2025), *Drought impact on ecosystems in Europe*.

country size in 2023 included Bulgaria (44.2 %), Slovenia (40.5 %) and Poland (39.6 %). In contrast, the shares of protected areas were smallest in Finland (13.4 %) and Ireland (13.9 %).

The latest assessment of the [State of Nature in the EU](#) reveals that many species and habitats of European interest are still in unfavourable conservation status. The conservation status of habitats did not improve over the reporting period (2013–2018), but for species other than birds a slight improvement can be stated. Across the EU, about a quarter (27 %) of species assessments and 15 % of the habitat assessments show a good conservation status. Most of the assessments considered, however, highlight a poor or bad conservation status at EU level (63 % for species and 81 % for habitats). Moreover, a look at the trends reveals that only 6 % of species assessments and 9 % of habitat assessments showed improving trends in the reporting period, while 35 % and 36 % indicated a deteriorating trend at EU level, respectively.

26.4 %
of the EU land area were protected in 2023

The State of Nature report also shows that fish and molluscs continue to have a particularly high proportion of species (around 30 % each) with a bad conservation status, while reptiles and vascular plant species have the highest proportion of good conservation status (36 % and 40 % respectively). Habitats in dunes, bogs, mires and fens have the highest share of assessments showing a bad conservation status (around 50 % each). Grasslands, which contain some species-rich habitats that are particularly suitable for pollinator species, also have one of the highest proportions of bad conservation status assessments (49 %).

Common birds have continued their long-term decline in the EU

Birds are sensitive to both human-induced and natural environmental change, making them good indicators of wider ecosystem health. Their widespread and diverse habitats also make them ideal for monitoring the results of conservation efforts.

The EU [common bird index](#) tracks the population abundance and diversity of a selection of common bird species in the EU, further typified by common forest and common farmland bird species. The index shows a 17.2 % decline in all common birds and a dramatic 41.2 % fall in the abundance of common farmland birds between 1990 and 2024. Common forest birds have declined slightly, with their index falling 7.5 % over the whole period.

The decline in common farmland birds has largely been attributed to agricultural intensification, which has reduced natural nesting habitats such as hedges, wetlands, meadows and fallow fields. Agro-chemicals, such as pesticides, and changes in ploughing times for cereals have also affected common farmland birds, disrupting their breeding and reducing available food sources, in particular insect populations ([18]). Other factors hindering population recovery include habitat loss from land use change, fragmentation, intensive forestry, urbanisation, climate change, competition for land (for example, biofuels, renewables) and illegal killing ([19]).

Between 2009 and 2024, common bird populations in the EU declined by
8.5 %

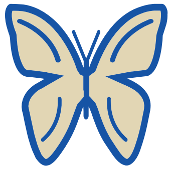
Shorter term trends show a continued decline for all common birds and common farmland bird populations. For all common birds there has been an 8.5 % decline since 2009 and a 2.8 % decline since 2019, while common farmland birds have showed an even stronger decline, by 21.7 % since 2009 and 8.1 % since 2019.

Grassland butterfly populations in the EU have declined by nearly 50 % since 1991

Butterflies, which are among the most common plant pollinators, are well suited to acting as signals of environmental and habitat health. They occur in a wide range of habitat types and are sensitive to environmental change. The grassland butterfly index measures the population trends of 17 butterfly species within the national Butterfly Monitoring Schemes. According to estimates from

([18]) Greshko (2018), *Around the World, Farmland Birds Are in Steep Decline*, National Geographic.
([19]) European Environment Agency (2024), *Common bird index in Europe*.

these monitoring efforts, butterfly populations declined by 47.4 % between 1991 and 2024, signifying a dramatic loss of grassland biodiversity. Most of this decline took place in the period up to 2009. Nevertheless, grassland butterfly populations still fell by 23.3 % between 2009 and 2024 and by 15.0 % between 2019 and 2024, indicating a higher average annual rate of decline in the most recent period.



Between 2009 and 2024, grassland butterfly populations in Europe shrank by

23.3 %

The trend is primarily driven by substantial and diverging land-use transformations across rural landscapes. In north-western Europe, these declines are largely attributed to the intensification of agricultural grasslands, which is frequently coupled with nitrogen deposition and pesticide drift that impacts even protected nature areas. Conversely, in northern, eastern and southern Europe, as well as the Alpine regions, the abandonment of grasslands poses a critical threat. In these areas, the resulting encroachment by shrubs and secondary forests leads to a significant net loss of suitable butterfly habitats. These anthropogenic pressures are further exacerbated by climate change, specifically through the increased duration, frequency and intensity of heatwaves and droughts. While moderate climate warming initially facilitated a temporary population increase between 2002 and 2012, the subsequent rise in extreme temperature events has triggered even more pronounced declines in the subsequent years. The observed 34-year trend is likely to underestimate the total ecological loss, as many butterfly populations were already extirpated from the landscape before systematic monitoring began in 1990 ([20]).

([20]) Van Swaay et al. (2024), *EU Grassland Butterfly Index 1991–2024 Technical report*, Butterfly Conservation Europe & EMBRACE/eBMS (www.butterfly-monitoring.net) & Vlinderstichting report VS2025.023.

Main indicators

Share of forest area

This indicator measures the proportion of forest areas in comparison to the total surface area of the country. Data used for this indicator come from the European Forest Accounts (EFA) and are consistent with the FAO definition of forest.

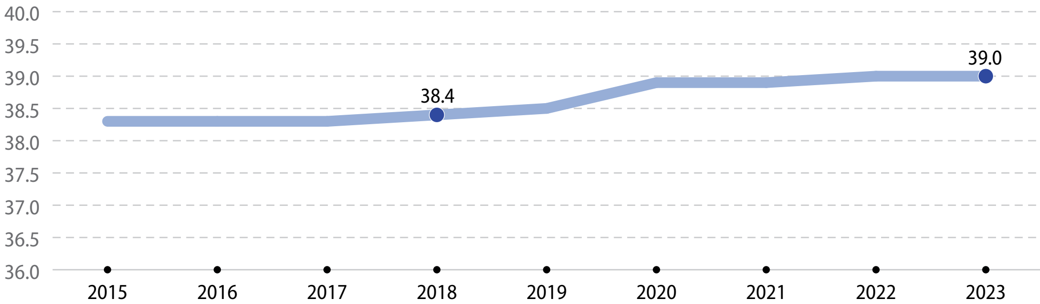
LONG TERM
Time series too short

SHORT TERM
2018–2023

Figure 15.1

Share of forest area

(% of total area, EU, 2015–2023)

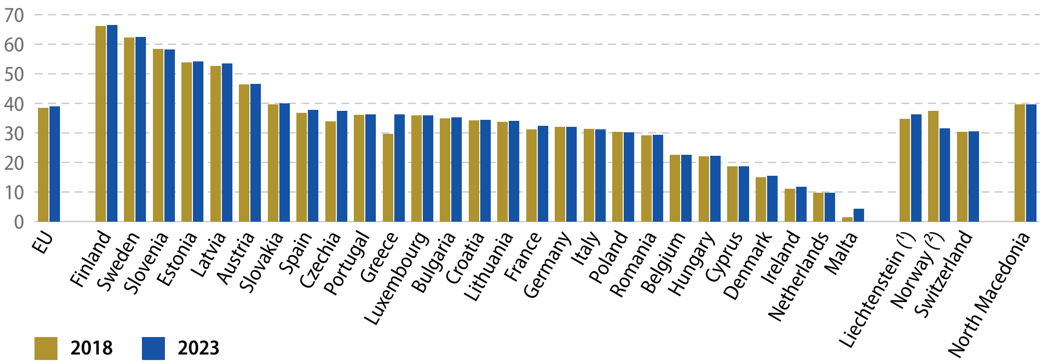


Note: Y-axis does not start at 0. Imputed data.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_15_11)

Figure 15.2

Share of forest area

(% of total area, 2018 and 2023)



Note: Estimated, imputed and/or provisional data for many countries.
(¹) 2020 data (instead of 2018). (²) 2019 data (instead of 2018).
Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_15_11)

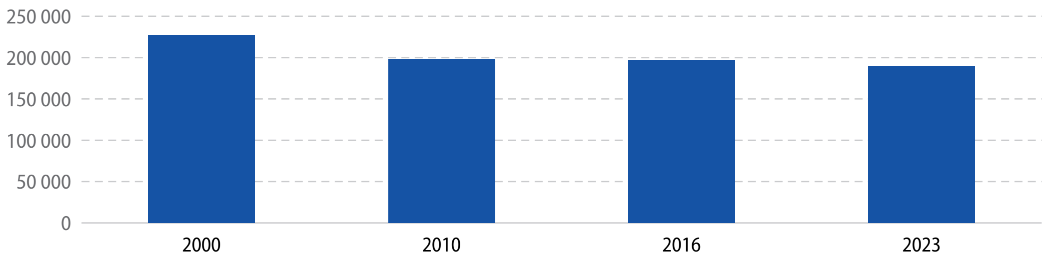
Area at risk of severe soil erosion by water

This indicator estimates the area at risk of severe erosion by water such as rain splash, sheet-wash and rills (soil loss greater than 10 tonnes per hectare and year). This area is expressed in square kilometres (km²) and as a percentage of the total non-artificial, erodible area in the country. The numbers are [estimated using soil erosion susceptibility models](). Data presented in this section stem from the JRC's soil erosion database.

LONG TERM 2010–2023

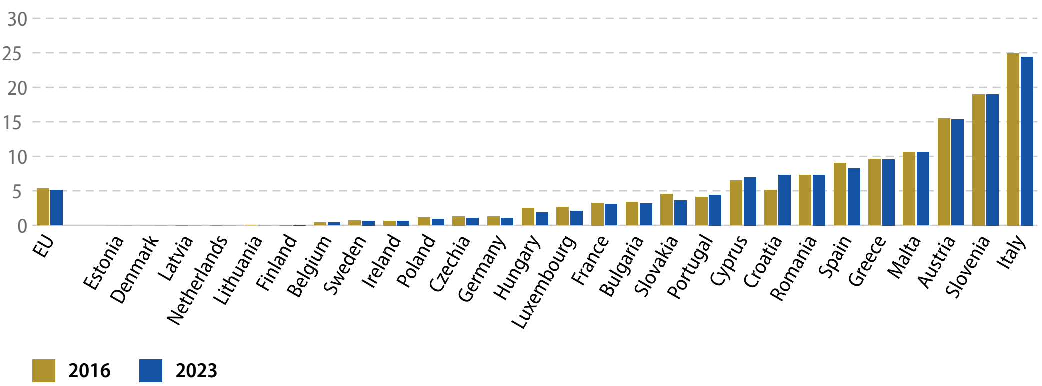
SHORT TERM 2016–2023

Figure 15.3
Area at risk of severe soil erosion by water
(km², EU, 2000, 2010, 2016 and 2023)



Source: Joint Research Centre (Eurostat online data code: sdg_15_50)

Figure 15.4
Area at risk of severe soil erosion by water
(% of the non-artificial erodible area, 2016 and 2023)



Source: Joint Research Centre (Eurostat online data code: sdg_15_50)

Drought impact on ecosystems

This indicator shows the area impacted by drought by monitoring negative anomalies in vegetation productivity in areas with a severe soil moisture deficit during the growing season (more than one standard deviation from the long-term average, observed through remote-sensing data collected at 500×500 meters resolution by the Copernicus EMS European Drought Observatory of the European Commission Joint Research Centre ([21]). The indicator covers only agricultural droughts with soil moisture deficits causing reduced vegetation productivity due to insufficient precipitation, as opposed to hydrological droughts, which occur when low water supplies become apparent in streams, reservoirs, and groundwater levels, usually after many months of meteorological drought.

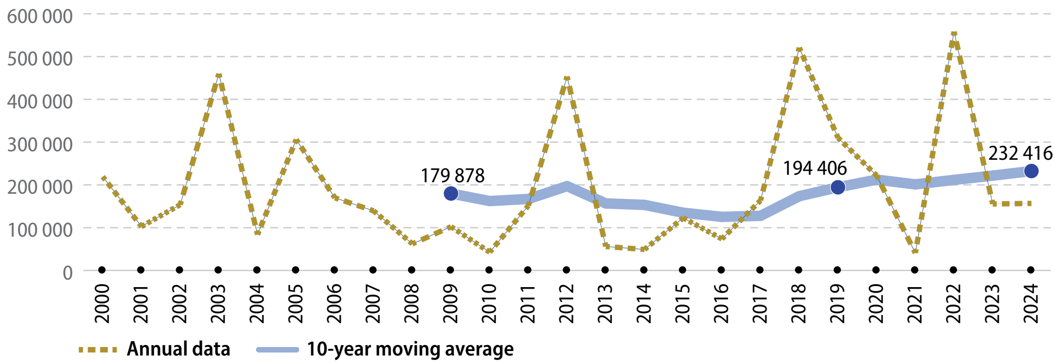
LONG TERM 2009-2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 15.5

Area impacted by drought

(km^2, EU, 2000–2024)

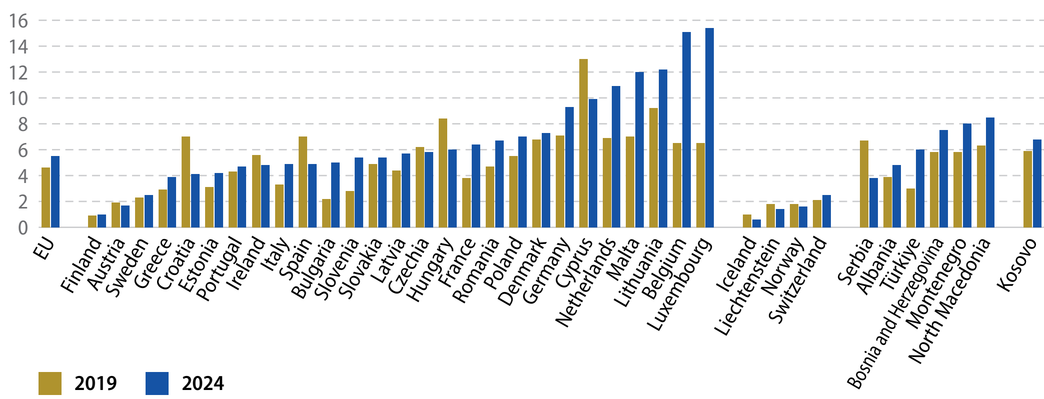


Note: The annual data points for the 10-year moving average refer to the 10-year period up to and including these years.
Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_15_42)

Figure 15.6

Area impacted by drought

(% of country area, 2019 and 2024)



Note: Data are shown as 10-year moving average and refer to the 10-year period up to and including the years specified.
Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_15_42)

([21]) EDO (2019), *Soil Moisture Anomaly (SMA)*, EDO Indicator Factsheet, Copernicus European Drought Observatory.

Terrestrial protected areas

This indicator measures the extent of terrestrial protected areas, comprising nationally designated protected areas and Natura 2000 sites. A nationally designated area is an area protected by national legislation. The Natura 2000 network comprises both marine and terrestrial protected areas designated under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives with the goal to maintain or restore a favourable conservation status for habitat types and species of EU interest. The EU biodiversity strategy aims to protect at least 30 % of land and sea in Europe including both nationally designated sites and Natura 2000 sites. Data provided by the Member States to the European Commission — Directorate General for the Environment (Natura 2000) and the European Environment Agency (nationally designated areas) are consolidated at least yearly by the EEA.

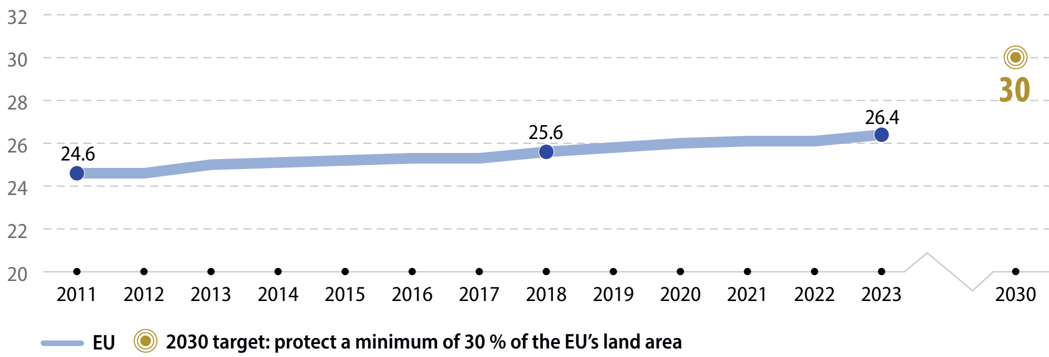
LONG TERM 2011–2023

SHORT TERM 2018–2023

Figure 15.7

Terrestrial protected areas

(% of total area, EU, 2011–2023)



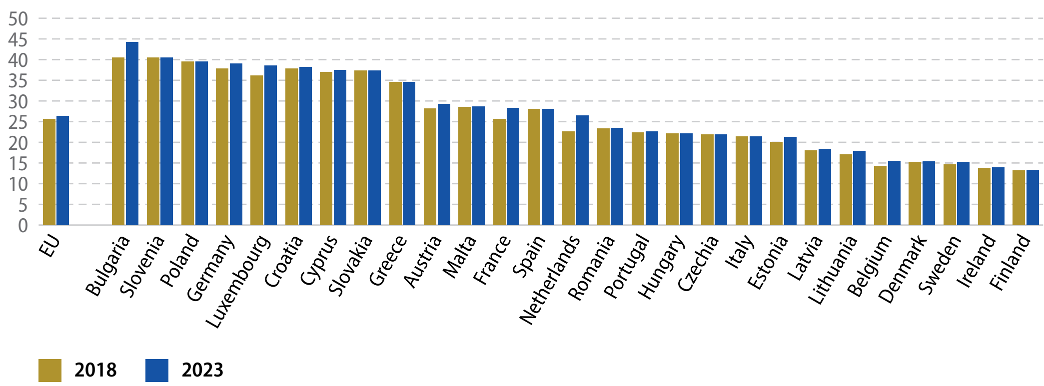
Note: Y-axis does not start at 0.

Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_15_20)

Figure 15.8

Terrestrial protected areas

(% of total area, 2018 and 2023)



Source: EEA (Eurostat online data code: sdg_15_20)

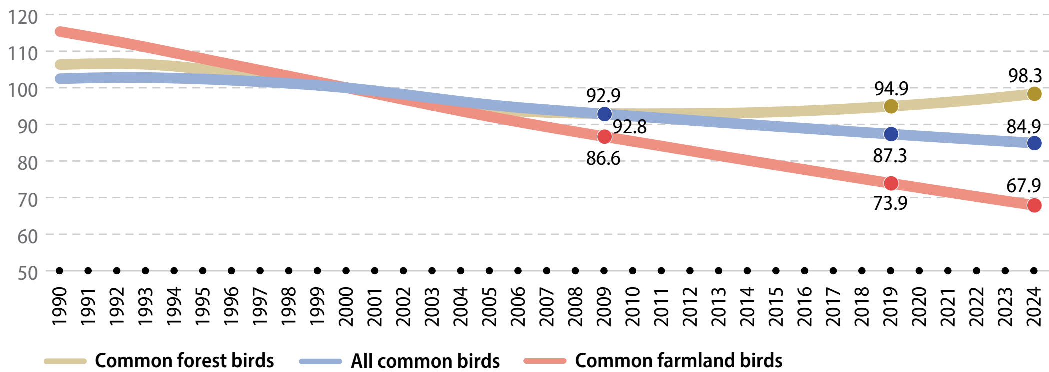
Common bird index

This indicator is an index integrating the abundance and diversity of a selection of common bird species associated with specific habitats for feeding and nesting. Rare species are excluded, although some species common in certain Member States may be considered rare in others. Three groups of bird species are represented: common farmland species (39 species), common forest species (34 species) and all common bird species (168 species; including farmland species, forest species and common generalists' species). The indices are presented for EU-aggregates only and with smoothed values. The index draws from data produced by the European Bird Census Council and its Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme programme. Data coverage has increased from nine to 25 EU Member States over the period 1990 to 2014, with 26 countries covered as of the reference year 2015.

Figure 15.9

Common bird index, by type of species

(index 2000 = 100, EU, 1990–2024)



Note: Y-axis does not start at 0. The EU aggregate changes depending on when countries joined the Pan-European Common Birds Monitoring Scheme.

Source: European Bird Census Council (EBCC), National BirdLife organisations, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Czech Society for Ornithology (CSO) (Eurostat online data code: sdg_15_60)

Grassland butterfly index

The EU grassland butterfly index integrates the population trends of 17 butterfly species monitored across the EU. The index is presented as an EU-aggregate with smoothed values. Data are processed and provided by the Butterfly Conservation Europe, European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme partnership, EMBRACE project. For technical details see the EU Grassland Butterfly Index 1991–2024 technical report.

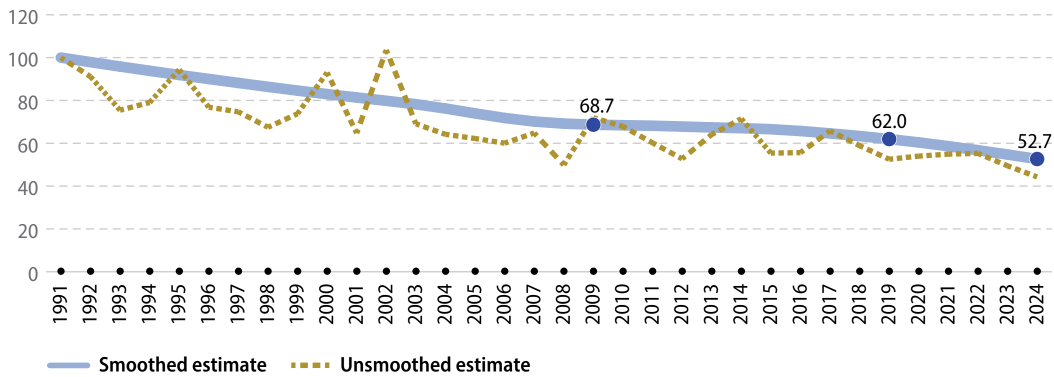
LONG TERM 2009–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 15.10

Grassland butterfly index

(index 1991 = 100, EU, 1991–2024)



Source: Butterfly Conservation Europe, European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme partnership, EMBRACE project (Eurostat online data code: sdg_15_61)

16

Peace, justice and strong institutions

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

SDG 16 calls for peaceful and inclusive societies based on respect for human rights, protection of the most vulnerable, the rule of law and good governance at all levels. It also envisions transparent, effective and accountable institutions.

Peace and security are prerequisites for sustainable development, in line with the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda. Peace, security, democracy, the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights are also founding values of the EU. Monitoring SDG 16 in an EU context focuses on personal security, access to justice and trust in institutions within the EU. The EU's progress over the short-term period has been mixed in all these areas. While the rate of deaths due to homicide and the perceived occurrence of crime, violence and vandalism have fallen, the number of victims of trafficking in human beings in the EU has increased. Government expenditure on law courts has grown strongly and the share of Europeans that consider their justice system to be independent remained the same. The perceived level of corruption in the EU has worsened slightly in recent years.

Table 16.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 16, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Peace and personal security					
Standardised death rate due to homicide	0.65 per 100 000 persons (2023)	2008–2023	– 3.4 %	↑	page 271
		2018–2023	– 0.6 %	↗	
Population reporting crime, violence or vandalism in their area	10.0 % (2023)	2010–2023	– 2.1 %	↑	page 272
		2018–2023	– 2.8 %	↑	
Victims of trafficking in human beings	9 678 persons (2024)	2009–2024	1.7 %	↓	page 273
		2019–2024	4.5 %	↓	
Access to justice					
General government total expenditure on law courts	59.3 EUR billion (2024)	2010–2024	3.4 %	↑	page 274
		2019–2024	5.5 %	↑	
Perceived independence of the justice system: very or fairly good	54 % (2025)	Time series too short for long-term assessment		✕	page 275
		2019–2025	0.0 %	→	
Trust in institutions					
Corruption Perceptions Index	62 score (2025)	2012–2025	– 0.1 %	→	page 276
		2019–2025	– 0.5 %	↘	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the trend assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

Policy context

Peace and personal security

In 2025, the European Commission adopted ProtectEU, the European Internal Security Strategy to strengthen the EU's response to security threats such as terrorism, organised crime, rising cybercrime and attacks on critical infrastructure. It includes actions to boost capabilities for law enforcement. The European Internal Security Strategy complements the Preparedness Union Strategy and the European Defence White Paper. To set out clear objectives and milestones for achieving defence readiness by 2030, as outlined in the White Paper, the Commission also proposed the Preserving Peace — Defence Readiness Roadmap 2030 in October 2025. This roadmap is a comprehensive plan to strengthen European defence capabilities. Together with the European Democracy Shield, they form a comprehensive framework for a safe, secure and resilient EU.

The revised EU Anti-trafficking Directive, adopted in 2024, includes new rules reinforcing the fight against trafficking in human beings. These rules provide stronger tools for law enforcement and judicial authorities to investigate and prosecute new forms of exploitation, including those that take place online, and ensure a higher level of assistance and support to victims. In June 2025, the European Commission launched the EU Anti-Trafficking Hub, a platform that brings together expertise to further improve combatting and preventing trafficking in human beings through research, analysis and advice. Every two years, the European Commission adopts a report on the progress made in the fight against human trafficking.

Access to justice

Improving the effectiveness of justice systems in Member States has been identified as a key component for structural reforms in the European Semester. The Rule of Law Report assesses the situation of Member States' justice systems and the EU Justice Scoreboard complements it by monitoring the efficiency, quality and independence of Member States' justice systems.

The European Democracy Action Plan from 2020 aims to empower citizens and build more resilient democracies across the EU. The action plan was complemented by a Defence Democracy Package in 2023 to empower strong and resilient democracies, to strengthen free and independent media, to safeguard the integrity of the information space, to promote free, fair and resilient elections and to foster the participation of citizens and civil society organisations in policy-making.

Trust in institutions

The Commission strengthens the EU's response to corruption by actively monitoring anti-corruption developments at national level as part of the Rule of Law Report cycle.

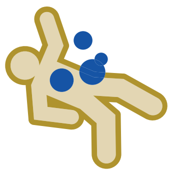
In EU legislation, the fight against corruption is covered by the 1997 Convention on fighting corruption involving officials of the EU or officials of Member States and the 2003 Framework Decision on combating corruption in the private sector. The Directive on combating corruption will replace the Convention and Framework Decision and will update and strengthen the EU legal framework to combat corruption.

Overview and key trends

Peace and personal security

Safety is a crucial aspect of a person's life. Insecurity is a common source of fear and worry, and negatively affects quality of life. Physical insecurity includes all the external factors that could potentially put an individual's physical integrity in danger. Crime is one of the most obvious causes of insecurity. Analyses of physical insecurity usually combine two aspects: the subjective perception of insecurity and the objective lack of safety. In this chapter, subjective perception of insecurity is monitored by perception of crime, while objective safety is measured by two indicators: homicide death rate and victims of human trafficking.

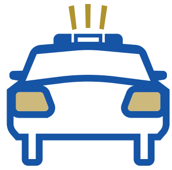
The rate of death due to homicide has fallen slightly over the past five years in the EU



0.7
deaths per 100 000 people in the EU in 2023 were caused by homicides

In the EU, the rate of death due to homicide fell steadily between 2008 and 2023, reaching 0.7 deaths per 100 000 people. This corresponds to a 41 % reduction over the assessed 15-year period. In the short term, between 2018 and 2023, the rate of decline was more moderate, at 3 %, indicating it has stagnated at a low level. The long-term decrease in homicides in the EU has gone hand in hand with improvements in people's perception of crime, violence or vandalism. Since 2010, the share of people reporting the occurrence of such problems in their area has fallen in the EU. In 2023, 10.0 % of the population felt affected by these issues, which is 3.1 percentage points less than in 2010 and the lowest value recorded.

The perception of being affected by crime, violence or vandalism differs across socio-demographic subgroups of the EU population and by degrees of urbanisation. In 2023, 12.2 % of the population living in households with an equivalised disposable income below the poverty threshold — set at 60 % of the national median equivalised income — felt affected by such problems. However, this was the case for only 9.6 % of the population living in households above the poverty threshold in that year. Similarly, in 2023 the perceived occurrence of crime, violence or vandalism in cities (15.3 %) was more than three times higher than in rural areas (4.8 %) and almost twice as high as in towns and suburbs (7.8 %) (1).



10.0%
of the EU population reported crime, violence or vandalism in their area in 2023

Perceived exposure to crime does not always match observed crime rates

In 2023, perception of exposure to crime, violence or vandalism differed sharply across countries, with Greece reporting levels 15 times higher (20.9 % of the population) than Croatia (1.4 %). However, country differences in this subjective indicator need to be treated with caution. Research suggests that crime rates from police registers and the subjective exposure to crime may differ, as population groups with low victimisation rates may be particularly afraid of crime (the so-called 'fear of victimisation paradox') (2).

Men and women face different risks of experiencing crime, depending on the type of crime

Deaths due to homicide in the EU show a significant gender gap. While death rates due to homicide have fallen for both sexes, they remain about twice

(1) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: ilc_mddw06).
(2) See for example: Rader, N. (2017), *Fear of Crime*, Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology.

as high for men (0.9 deaths per 100 000 persons in 2023, compared with 0.4 deaths per 100 000 persons for women). A joint study by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UN Women shows that the gap is even more pronounced worldwide, with 80 % of all homicides committed against men and boys in 2024 ([3]).

However, while men have a higher overall risk of being killed, women have a significantly higher risk of being killed by their intimate partners or family members. Globally, 60 % of women intentionally killed in 2024 were victims of intimate partner- or family-related homicides, compared with just 11 % of male homicides. At the EU level, women are about twice as likely as men to be victims of intentional homicide by family and relatives or their intimate partner. In 2023, 0.4 out of 100 000 women were victims of such homicide, compared with only 0.2 per 100 000 men ([4]). This is an issue of concern when considering the broader concept of violence against women, encompassing all forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence.

Data from Eurostat's official crime statistics on intentional homicide and sexual offences show women are much more likely to be victims of sexual offences than men. In 2023, 67 out of 100 000 women were victims of sexual assault, and 41 out of 100 000 women were victims of rape. For men, the rates were significantly lower, with 12 per 100 000 for sexual assault and 5 out of 100 000 for rape ([5]).

The prevalence of homicide and other types of violence varies greatly across the EU. However, cross-country comparisons of the crime statistics should be approached with caution due to differences in legal definitions of offenders and victims, police efficiency and the stigma associated with disclosing cases of violence against women ([6]). For more information on gender-based violence, see the chapter on SDG 5 'Gender equality' on page 83.

The number of detected victims of trafficking in human beings has increased by 24 % over the past five years

9 678
people were victims of trafficking in human beings in the EU in 2024

Human trafficking is a global crime that degrades people to commodities and exploits them for profit. It destroys lives by depriving people of their dignity, freedom and fundamental rights. Sexual and labour exploitation are the most common purposes of trafficking but forced begging, forced criminality and organ trafficking are also prevalent forms of exploitation ([7]). In the EU, the number of victims of human trafficking has increased by 24 % over the past five years, reaching 9 678 registered victims in 2024. This was 10 % less than in 2023. The actual number is likely to be significantly higher because many victims remain undetected ([8]). The strongest increase in the number of victims of human trafficking happened in 2022, by 41 %, and can be attributed to armed conflicts, natural and man-made disasters, and displacement, which increase the number of victims exploited within and outside crisis areas ([9]). Several Member States indicated that an increase in the detection of victims over the past few years partly reflects heightened attention and improved detection by authorities and agencies combating trafficking in human beings ([10]).

Women in the EU are more likely to be victims of human trafficking than men, with 5 814 women identified as victims in 2024, as opposed to 3 442 men. This gap has significantly narrowed over the years, with the number of women who were victims of human trafficking increasing by 56 % since 2009 and the number of men rising by 270 %. This is also in line with global figures that show the share of women and girls in detected victims of human trafficking in the world decreased from

([3]) UNODC and UN Women (2025), *Femicides in 2024: Global Estimates of Intimate Partner/Family Member Femicides*, United Nations publications, p. 8.
([4]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: crim_hom_vrel).
([5]) *Source:* Eurostat (online data code: crim_hom_soff).
([6]) For more information see Eurostat metadata on Crime and criminal justice (crim) and European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014), *Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, Main results*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, pp. 25–26.

([7]) UNODC, *Human Trafficking FAQs*.
([8]) European Commission (2021), *EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings*, COM(2021) 171 final.
([9]) UNODC (2022), *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*, p. 18.
([10]) Eurostat (2026), *Trafficking in human beings statistics*.

84 % in 2004 to 60 % in 2020 ([11]). In the EU, 63 % of registered victims of trafficking in human beings were women or girls in 2024 ([12]).

In 2024, sexual exploitation remained the most common form of exploitation in EU Member States, representing 46 % of all recorded cases of trafficking, although this share has fallen since 2009. Meanwhile, the share of labour exploitation has been increasing, reaching 37 % of cases in 2024. Other forms of exploitation, including organ removal, benefit fraud, criminal activities and forced begging, accounted for 16 % of cases in the same year ([13]).

Access to justice

Well-functioning justice systems are an important structural condition on which EU Member States base their sustainable growth and social stability policies. Whatever the model of the national justice system or the legal tradition in which it is anchored, quality, independence and efficiency are among the essential pillars of an effective justice system. As there is no single agreed way of measuring the quality of justice systems, the budget spent on courts is used as a proxy. Moreover, judges need to be able to make decisions without interference or pressure from governments, politicians or economic actors, to ensure that individuals and businesses can fully enjoy their rights. The perceived independence of the justice system is used to monitor this aspect.

59
billion euro were spent by governments on law courts across the EU in 2024

EU expenditure on law courts has continued to grow

In the EU, general government expenditure on law courts has risen by 59 % since 2010, reaching EUR 59.3 billion in 2024. In per capita terms, this corresponds to a 56 % increase from EUR 84.4 per inhabitant in 2010 to EUR 131.4 per inhabitant in 2024. However, when viewed as a share of total government expenditure, spending on law courts remained stable at 0.7 % between 2010 and 2019. In 2020, the share decreased to 0.6 % of total expenditure, largely due to increases in other government expenditure to mitigate the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and remained at this level for 2021 to 2023. In 2024, it increased to 0.7 % again.

Perceived independence of the justice system has improved slightly and is now back to the 2019 level

In 2025, 54 % of EU inhabitants rated the independence of the courts and judges in their country as 'very good' or 'fairly good'. This is an improvement of 2 percentage points compared with 2024, and the same share as in 2019. Still, 36 % perceived the independence of the justice system as 'very bad' or 'fairly bad' in 2025. Interference or pressure from government and politicians was the reason most frequently given for a bad rating of perceived independence of courts and judges ([14]). The opinion about the independence of courts and judges varied significantly across Member States. While in Finland, Austria and Denmark most respondents (89 %, 87 % and 81 %, respectively) rated the independence of their courts and judges as 'very good' or 'fairly good', this was only the case for 24 % of respondents in Poland and 27 % in both Bulgaria and Croatia ([15]).

54 %
of the EU population rated the independence of courts and judges in their country as very or fairly good in 2025

Employment status, education and experience with the justice system seem to have a notable effect on the perception of the independence of the justice system. In 2025, employees (56 %) were more likely to give a good rating than manual workers (53 %)

([11]) UNODC (2022), *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*, p. xi.
([12]) Eurostat (2026), *Trafficking in human beings statistics*.
([13]) Calculations based on Eurostat (online data code: crim_thb_vexp).
([14]) European Commission (2025), *Flash Eurobarometer 554, Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries*, p. 18.
([15]) European Commission (2025), *Flash Eurobarometer 554, Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries*, p. 4.

and people who were not employed (52 %) or were self-employed (49 %). The longer people remained in education, the more likely they were to rate the independence of courts and judges as good: 57 % of those who completed their education aged 20 or above gave a good rating, compared with 45 % of those who completed education aged 15 or younger. Notably, only 48 % of respondents who had been involved in a dispute that had gone to court rated their system as good, while this was the case for 54 % of those who had not been to court ([16]).

Trust in institutions

Effective justice systems are a prerequisite for the fight against corruption. Corruption causes social harm, especially when it is orchestrated by organised crime groups to commit other serious crimes, such as trafficking in drugs and humans. Corruption can undermine trust in democratic institutions and weaken the accountability of political leadership. It also inflicts financial damage by lowering investment levels, hampering the fair operation of the internal market and reducing public finances.

Perceptions of corruption increased across the EU between 2019 and 2025

62
out of 100 was the EU countries' average score in the Corruption Perceptions Index in 2025

Because there is no meaningful way to assess absolute levels of corruption in countries or territories based on hard empirical evidence, capturing the perception of corruption of those in a position to assess public-sector corruption is currently the most reliable method of comparing relative corruption levels across countries. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), EU countries scored on average 62 on a scale from 0 ('highly corrupt') to 100 ('very clean') in 2025. While this is the same score as in 2024, it represents a two-point decline compared with the period from 2016 to 2023, during which the EU average had remained stable at 64. At the same time, the 2024 and 2025 values mark the lowest recorded scores, indicating a perception of higher corruption.

Despite the decline, the EU's score was still 20 points above the world average score of 42 in 2025. On a country level, EU countries continued to rank among the least-corrupt globally in 2025 and made up more than a half of the global top 10 least-corrupt countries. Within the EU, northern European countries achieved the best scores, with Denmark, Finland and Sweden leading the ranking. At the other end of the scale, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania showed the highest levels of perceived corruption across the EU, ranking at positions 84, 84 and 70, respectively, on the global list (comprising 181 countries) ([17]). Compared with 2019, nine EU Member States improved their scores, 16 lowered them and in two countries the perception of corruption did not change.

Country rankings in the CPI largely align with similar responses collected in 2025 through a Eurobarometer survey ([18]). Although the CPI and the Eurobarometer survey are based on different methodologies and focus on different aspects of corruption, Finland and Denmark stand out in both as countries where corruption is perceived to be rare. However, the Eurobarometer results present a more pessimistic view of corruption levels across the EU compared with the CPI. In all but three countries, at least half of respondents considered corruption a widespread national problem. For the EU as a whole, this translates into an average of 69 % of respondents sharing this perception in 2025. The proportion of the population who thinks corruption in their country is rare was 26 % in 2025.

There is a notable relationship between the CPI and the perceived independence of the justice system. Countries with a high CPI ranking, such as Denmark, Finland, Sweden or Luxembourg, also show a high share of the population rating the independence of the justice system as 'good' (see Figures 16.10 and 16.12). Conversely, countries with less optimistic ratings of the justice system's independence also tend to have lower CPI scores, for example Bulgaria and Croatia. As both indicators are based on

([16]) European Commission (2025), *Flash Eurobarometer 554, Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries*, p. 7.

([17]) Transparency International (2026), *Corruption Perceptions Index 2025*.

([18]) European Commission (2025), *Special Eurobarometer 561 on Citizens' attitudes towards corruption in the EU in 2025*, pp. 12.

people's perceptions, however, a causal relationship between the effectiveness of the justice system and the occurrence of corruption cannot be inferred based on these data. Effective justice systems are nevertheless considered to be a prerequisite for fighting corruption ([19]).

Trust in EU institutions has fluctuated over the past few years

Confidence in political institutions is key for effective democracies. On the one hand, citizens' confidence increases the probability that they will vote in democratic elections. On the other hand, it provides politicians and political parties with the necessary mandate to take decisions that are accepted in society.

Trust in three of the EU's main institutions — the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Central Bank — has fluctuated over the past two decades. Following a decline in trust across all three institutions in 2020, data from autumn 2025 show a resurgence, with 52 % of the population expressing confidence in both the European Central Bank and European Parliament, and 50 % in the European Commission ([20]). Throughout the years, the European Parliament has consistently been the most trusted of the three institutions surveyed. Notably, trust in national governments of the EU Member States remains significantly lower than trust in the EU and trust in the EU institutions ([21]).

([19]) Also see European Commission (2017), *European Semester Thematic Factsheet on Effective Justice Systems*.

([20]) European Commission (2025), *Standard Eurobarometer 104, Public Opinion in the European Union, Data Annex*, pp. 75–77.

([21]) European Commission (2025), *Standard Eurobarometer 104, Public Opinion in the European Union, First Results Report*, p. 11.

Main indicators

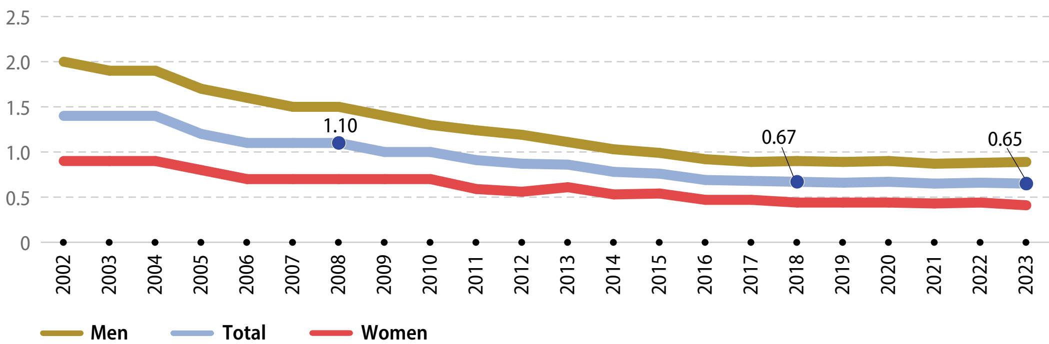
Standardised death rate due to homicide

This indicator tracks deaths due to homicide and injuries inflicted by another person with the intent to injure or kill by any means, including 'late effects' from assault (International Classification of Diseases (ICD) codes X85 to Y09 and Y87.1). It does not include deaths due to legal interventions or war (ICD codes Y35 and Y36). The data are presented as standardised death rates, meaning they are adjusted to a standard age distribution to measure death rates independently of the population's age structure.

LONG TERM
2008–2023

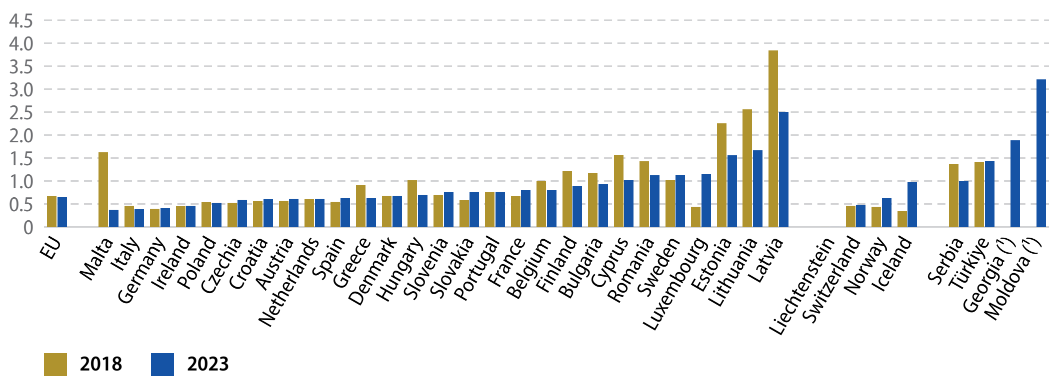
SHORT TERM
2018–2023

Figure 16.1
Standardised death rate due to homicide by sex
(number per 100 000 persons, EU, 2002–2023)



Note: Data for 2002–2010 are estimated.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_16_10)

Figure 16.2
Standardised death rate due to homicide
(number per 100 000 persons, 2018 and 2023)



(¹) No data for 2018.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_16_10)

Population reporting crime, violence or vandalism in their area

This indicator shows the share of the population who reported a problem with crime, violence or vandalism in their local area. This describes the situation where the respondent feels crime, violence or vandalism in the area to be a problem for the household, although this perception is not necessarily based on personal experience. The data stem from the [EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions](#) (EU-SILC).

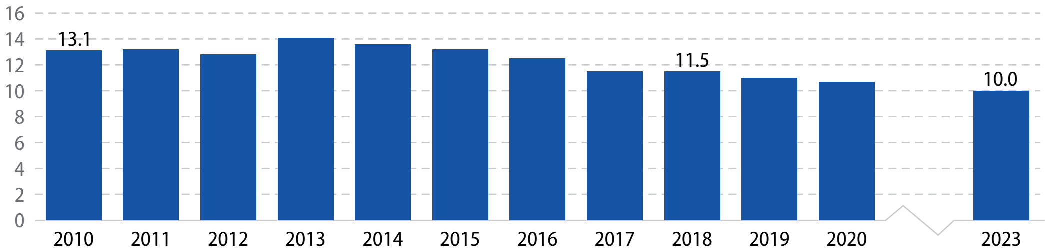
LONG TERM
2010–2023

SHORT TERM
2018–2023

Figure 16.3

Population reporting occurrence of crime, violence or vandalism in their area

(% of population, EU, 2010–2023)



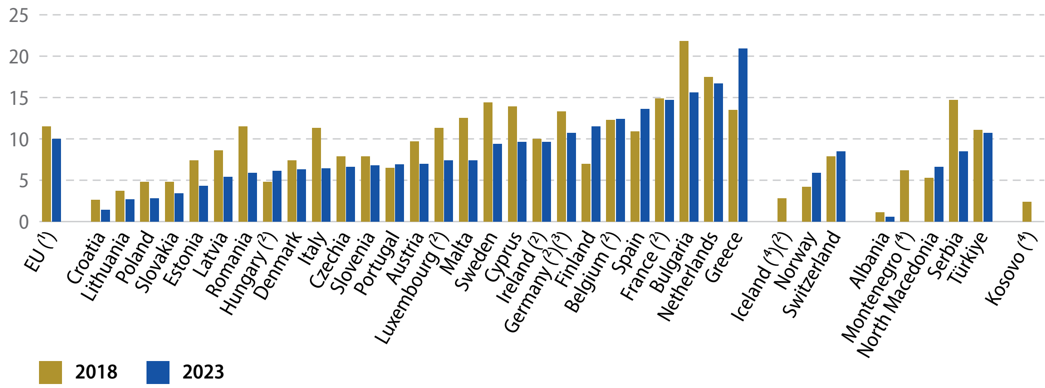
Note: Data for 2010–2020 are estimated. Due to a change in the frequency of the data collection, no data were collected for 2021 and 2022.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_16_20)

Figure 16.4

Population reporting occurrence of crime, violence or vandalism in their area

(% of population, 2018 and 2023)



(1) 2018 data are estimated.
(2) Break(s) in time series between the two years shown.
(3) 2023 data have lower reliability.
(4) No data for 2023.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_16_20)

Victims of trafficking in human beings

This indicator refers to victims of trafficking in human beings as defined under Article 2 of the Directive 2011/36/EU. A registered victim can be a person who has been formally identified as a victim of trafficking in human beings by the relevant formal authority in a Member State or a person who has met the criteria of the EU Directive but has not been formally identified by the relevant formal authority as a trafficking victim or who has declined to be formally or legally identified as trafficked.

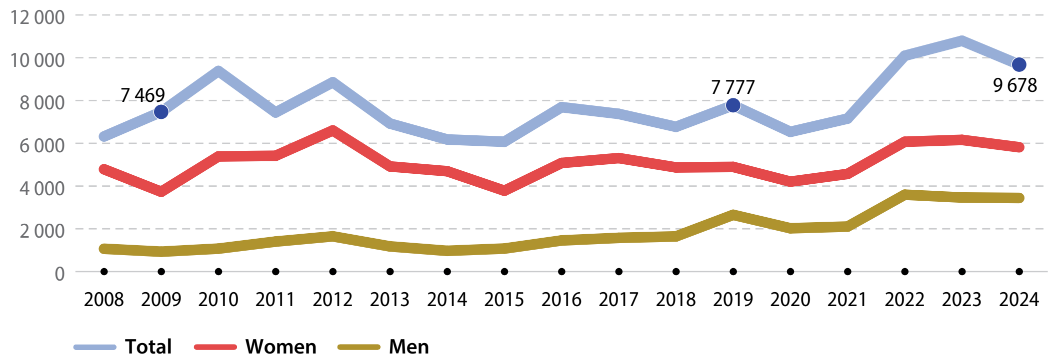
LONG TERM 2009–2024

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 16.5

Victims of trafficking in human beings by sex

(number, EU, 2008–2024)



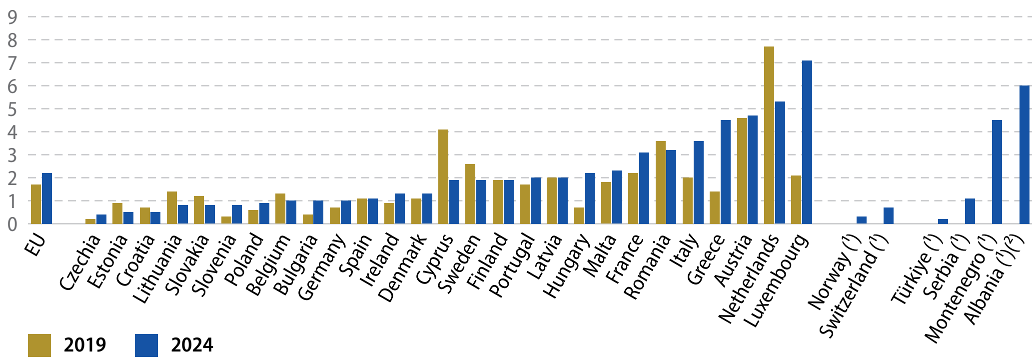
Note: The total is not always the sum of men and women because not all countries provide data by sex.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_16_70)

Figure 16.6

Victims of trafficking in human beings

(number per 100 000 inhabitants, 2019 and 2024)



(1) No data for 2019.
(2) 2023 data (instead of 2024).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_16_70)

General government total expenditure on law courts

This indicator refers to the general government total expenditure on law courts. It includes expenditure on the administration, operation or support of civil and criminal law courts and the judicial system, including enforcement of fines and legal settlements imposed by the courts. The operation of parole and probation systems, legal representation and advice on behalf of government or others provided by government in cash or in services are also taken into account. Law courts include administrative tribunals, ombudsmen and the like, but excludes prison administrations.

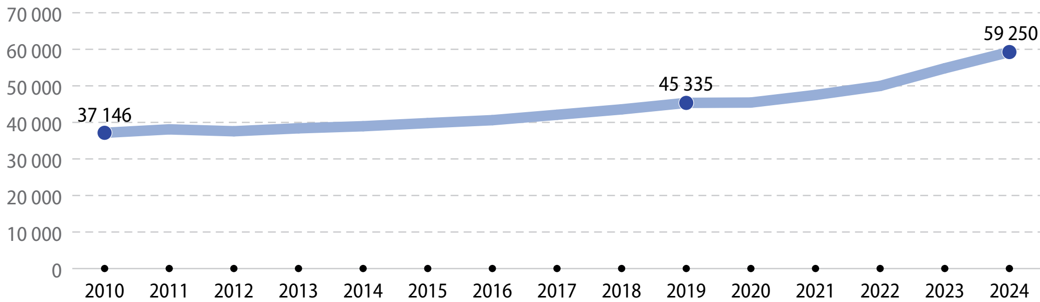
LONG TERM
2010–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 16.7

General government total expenditure on law courts

(million EUR, EU, 2010–2024)

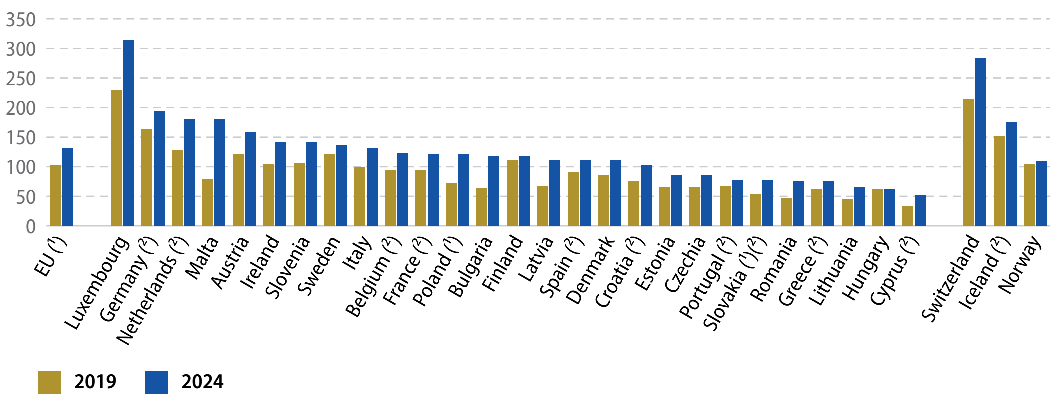


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_16_30)

Figure 16.8

General government total expenditure on law courts

(EUR per inhabitant, 2019 and 2024)



(1) Break(s) in population data time series between the two years shown.
(2) 2019 and/or 2024 data are provisional.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_16_30)

Perceived independence of the justice system: very or fairly good

This indicator is designed to explore respondents' perceptions about the independence of the judiciary across EU Member States, looking specifically at the perceived independence of the courts and judges in a country. Data on the perceived independence of the justice system stem from annual Flash Eurobarometer surveys, which started in 2016 on behalf of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers.

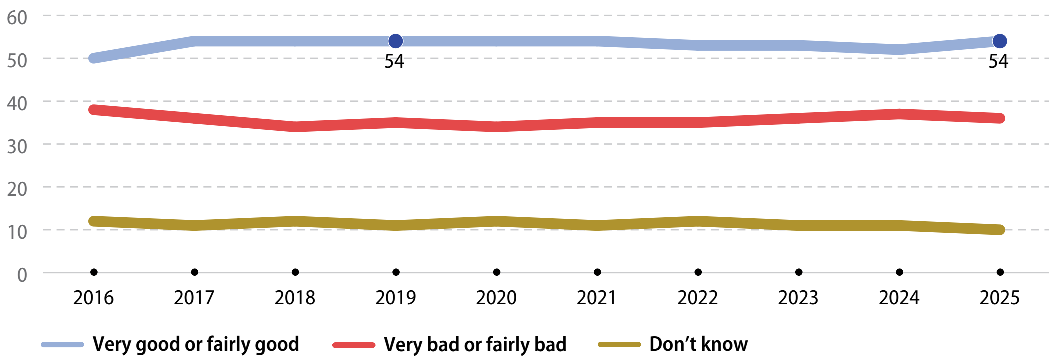
LONG TERM Time series too short

SHORT TERM 2019–2025

Figure 16.9

Perceived independence of the justice system

(% of population, EU, 2016–2025)



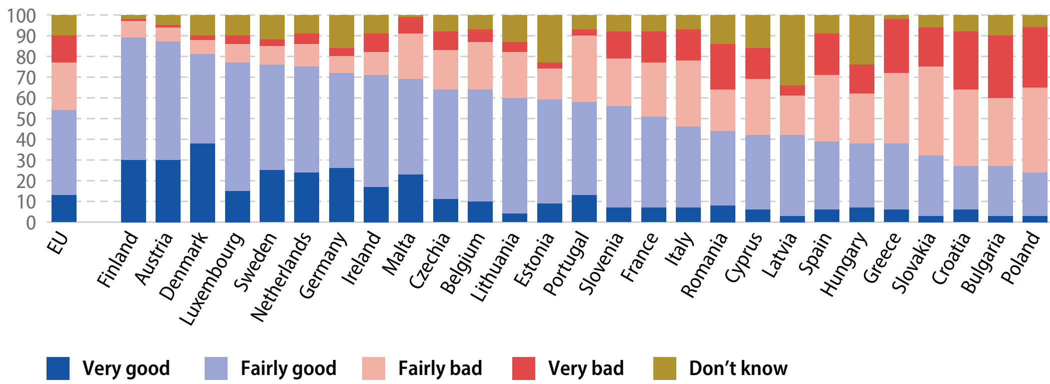
Note: 2016–2020 data are estimated; break in time series in 2021.

Source: European Commission services, Eurobarometer (Eurostat online data code: sdg_16_40)

Figure 16.10

Perceived independence of the justice system

(% of population, 2025)



Source: European Commission services, Eurobarometer (Eurostat online data code: sdg_16_40)

Corruption Perceptions Index

This indicator is a composite index based on a combination of surveys and assessments of corruption from 13 different sources and scores. It ranks countries based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be, with a score of 0 representing a very high level of corruption and 100 representing a very clean country. The sources of information used for the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) are based on data gathered in the 24 months preceding the publication of the index. The CPI includes only sources that provide a score for a set of countries or territories and that measure perceptions of corruption in the public sector. For a country or territory to be included in the ranking, it must be included in a minimum of three of the CPI's data sources. The CPI is published by Transparency International.

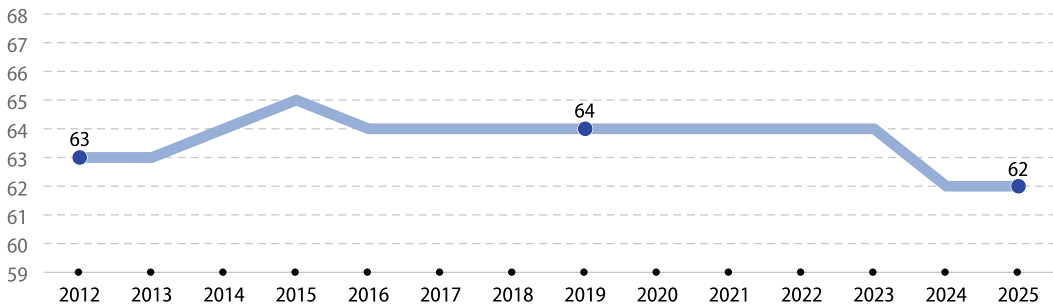
LONG TERM 2012–2025

SHORT TERM 2019–2025

Figure 16.11

Corruption Perceptions Index

(score scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), EU, 2012–2025)



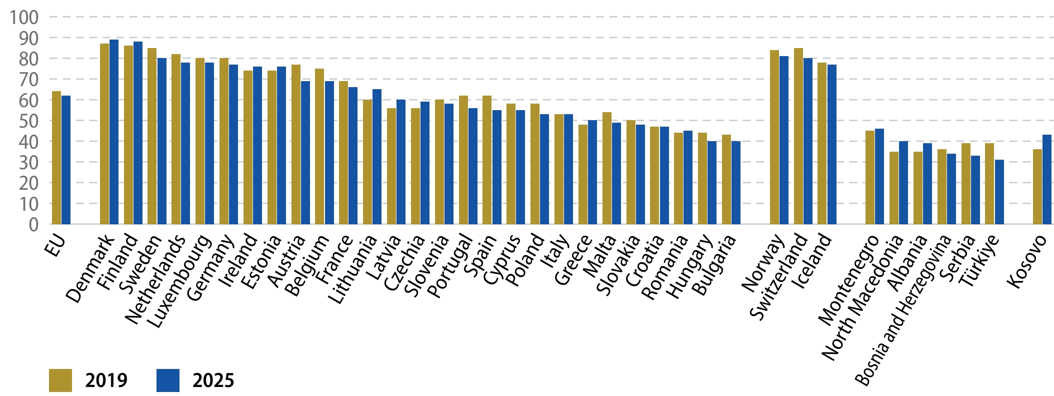
Note: Y-axis does not start at 0.

Source: Transparency International (Eurostat online data code: sdg_16_50)

Figure 16.12

Corruption Perceptions Index

(score scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), 2019 and 2025)



Source: Transparency International (Eurostat online data code: sdg_16_50)

17 Partnerships for the goals

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

SDG 17 calls for a global partnership for sustainable development. It emphasises the importance of macroeconomic stability and of mobilising financial resources for developing countries. It also stresses the importance of trade and equitable rules for governing it. The goal also emphasises the importance of access to science and technology, in particular internet-based information and communications technology.

Partnership is at the essence of the EU and an overarching principle to approach the SDGs within and beyond the EU boundaries. Monitoring SDG 17 in an EU context focuses on global partnership, financial governance and access to technology. Over the short-term period, the EU's progress in the area of global partnerships has been moderately unfavourable. EU financing to developing countries has fallen in recent years, despite the support to Ukraine. The EU has increased the share of imports from least developed countries, but trade with these countries remains marginal. The picture is unfavourable for financial governance within the EU, as exemplified by a falling share of environmental taxes in total tax revenues and increasing levels of general government gross debt. Meanwhile, access to technology in the EU has progressed, with a significant increase in the share of households connected to high-speed internet.

Table 17.1: Indicators measuring progress towards SDG 17, EU

Indicator	Latest value	Period	Annual growth rate	Assessment	More info
Global partnership					
EU official development assistance as share of GNI ◎	0.50 % (2024)	2009–2024	Observed: 1.0 % Required: 2.3 %	↘	page 285
		2019–2024	Observed: 4.0 % Required: 5.0 %	↗	
EU financing to developing countries	120.6 EUR billion (2024)	2009–2024	0.6 %	↗	page 287
		2019–2024	– 4.8 %	↓	
Share of imports from least developed countries	2.3 % (2025)	2010–2025	4.3 %	↑	page 288
		2019–2025	2.6 %	↑	
Financial governance within the EU					
General government gross debt	81.7 % (2025)	2010–2025	0.1 %	→	page 289
		2019–2025	0.9 %	↘	
Share of environmental taxes in total tax revenues	5.3 % (2024)	2009–2024	– 1.5 %	↓	page 290
		2019–2024	– 3.9 %	↓	
Access to technology					
Share of households with high-speed internet connection ◎	82.5 % (2024)	Time series too short for long-term assessment		✕	page 291
		2019–2024	Observed: 10.4 % Required: 6.4 %	↑	

Note: See Annex II for a description of the methodology used for the compound annual growth rate calculation and the progress assessment. For indicators without a target, the growth rates observed over the specified periods are given. For indicators with a quantified EU target (marked with a target sign ◎), both the observed growth rates and the growth rates that would have been required in the specified periods for meeting the target are given. See Table A.1 in Annex I for the full list of EU policy targets considered for monitoring in this report.

Policy context

Global partnership

In its European Consensus on Development, the EU collectively committed to provide 0.7 % of gross national income (GNI) as official development assistance (ODA) by 2030. To target resources to where the need is greatest, especially least developed countries (LDCs) and countries in states of fragility and conflict, the EU also undertakes to meet collectively the target of 0.20 % of ODA/GNI to LDCs by 2030.

The Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument NDICI-Global Europe, including the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), helps mobilise private-sector financing. Building on the Sevilla Commitment and its predecessor, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), efforts are undertaken to align all financing streams — public, private, domestic and international — with the SDGs in the context of the Financing for Development (FfD) process. The Samoa agreement is the overarching framework for EU relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. It is complemented by non-binding strategic frameworks such as the 2021 EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and the 2025 EU political strategy on Latin America, which guide the EU's engagement with Asia and Latin America. Furthermore, the EU-Mercosur Partnership Agreement (EMPA) and the EU-India Free Trade Agreement were both signed in January 2026.

The EU's 'Generalised Scheme of Preferences' allows developing countries to pay less or no duties on their exports to the EU, while linking preferential access to compliance with international social and environmental standards. The Everything But Arms arrangement grants duty-free and quota-free access for all LDC products except arms and ammunition. The EU is the world's largest donor of 'aid for trade' (excluding multilateral development banks), with the aim of supporting trade, policy adjustments, trade-related infrastructure and building productive capacity.

Global Gateway is the EU strategy to support partner countries to boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors, and to strengthen health, education and research systems and to advance the SDGs together with partner countries. Global Gateway implementation has strongly benefitted from the Team Europe approach and reached the EUR 300 billion investment target between 2021 and 2024, two years ahead of time.

The EU has also been actively involved in negotiating, adopting and implementing the UN Pact for the Future.

Financial governance within the EU

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union requires a Member State's annual deficit-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio not to exceed 3 %, and that government debt as a ratio of GDP should be limited to 60 %. In 2024, the ambitious reform of the EU's economic governance framework, aimed at strengthening Member States debt sustainability and promoting sustainable and inclusive growth in all Member States, entered into force.

Access to technology

In the 2020 Digital Strategy, the EU committed to developing a Global Digital Cooperation Strategy that will reflect the SDGs. The 2030 Digital Compass presents a vision for Europe's digital transformation and sets the target of all European households to be covered by a gigabit network by 2030.

Overview and key trends

Global partnership

To achieve the SDGs, partnerships are necessary between governments, the private sector, civil society and other parties. Developed economies such as the EU can support partner countries in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda by mobilising public and private, domestic and international resources. These resources can be both financial and non-financial ([1]). This chapter focuses on the former. Overall, the global partnership indicators show a mixed picture for the EU over the past few years.

EU financing to developing countries has fallen in recent years

In 2025, the Sevilla Commitment reiterated that international public finance plays an important role in complementing countries' domestic efforts to mobilise public resources, especially in the poorest and most vulnerable countries. Official development assistance (ODA), other official flows (OOFs), private flows such as foreign direct investment (FDI), grants by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and officially supported export credits are some of the financial flows from the EU and its Member States to developing countries.

120.6
billion EUR were spent by the EU on financing to developing countries in 2024

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that total public and private EU financing to developing countries amounted to EUR 120.6 billion in 2024. When accounting for inflation, financial flows from the EU have slightly fallen in recent years and are — in part substantially — lower than the amounts provided between 2014 and 2019. ODA has been the most reliable and steady financial flow from the EU to developing countries, while private flows have varied strongly over the years. The decrease in EU financing to developing countries over the past five-year period is mainly due to a 67 % reduction in private flows, while ODA has grown by 19 % since 2019.

Official development assistance: a long struggle to meet targets

The idea that donor countries should contribute 0.7 % of their gross national income (GNI) to ODA has been on the international agenda for half a century. The EU is collectively committed to providing 0.7 % of GNI as ODA within the timeframe of the 2030 Agenda, as affirmed in the European Consensus on Development. Member States that joined the EU after 2002 have committed to providing 0.33 % of their GNI for ODA. As a whole, in 2024, the EU spent 0.50 % of its GNI on ODA, marking a decline for the second consecutive year since reaching a peak of 0.59 % in 2022. The 2022 and 2023 figures include support to Ukraine, which resulted in the EU moving closer to its ODA target. However, only three EU countries — Luxembourg, Sweden and Denmark — achieved the 0.7 % target in 2024, meaning additional efforts will be needed to meet the collective EU target by 2030.

0.50 %
of the EU's gross national income was spent on ODA in 2024

([1]) Non-financial resources include domestic policy frameworks, effective institutions and support for good governance, democracy, rule of law, human rights, transparency and accountability; see also the Sevilla Commitment and its predecessor the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA).

The EU remains the world's biggest ODA donor

In 2024, the EU maintained its position as the biggest ODA donor globally, providing EUR 89.5 billion. This figure refers to the combined ODA provided by the 27 EU Member States and EU institutions. Moreover, with 0.50 % in 2024, the EU's overall ODA/GNI ratio was significantly higher than for most other Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) donors such as Canada, Japan and the United States.

The EU seeks to support least developed countries in particular

To direct resources where they are most needed — least developed countries (LDCs) and fragile and conflict-affected countries — the EU has a target to collectively provide 0.15–0.20 % of GNI to LDCs in the short term, reaching 0.20 % within the timeframe of the 2030 Agenda. In 2024, the EU's collective official development assistance to LDCs accounted for 0.08 % of GNI. The EU has thus not progressed towards its 0.20 % target over the past few years. In 2024, two Member States — Luxembourg and Sweden — exceeded the 2030 target for the GNI ratio of ODA to LDCs.

ODA is only a part of several financing mechanisms

The EU seeks to ensure that developing countries can combine development cooperation, investment and trade with domestic resources and policies to build capacity and become self-reliant. ODA, for example, can be used as a catalyst to mobilise other financial resources such as domestic tax revenues or resources from the private sector. Other innovative instruments have been developed, such as blending grants with loans, guarantees or equity from public and private financiers, public-private fund structures, and using capital market instruments such as green bonds. Since 2019, a comprehensive view of the official flows from EU institutions to developing countries has been available under the Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD) framework, which also tracks Team Europe support to international public goods and private finance mobilised. Between 2019 and 2024, the average annual TOSSD from EU institutions amounted to EUR 48.8 billion. Total TOSSD from EU and Member States in 2024 amounted to EUR 131 billion, including EUR 3 billion of private finance mobilised. EU financial support, combined with domestic and private revenues, can provide a basis for achieving the 2030 Agenda's goals, allowing for investment in social services, clean energy, infrastructure, transport and information and communications technologies. In the best case, developing countries could leapfrog some of the unsustainable modes of production and consumption that industrialised countries use.

Around 2 % of all extra-EU imports come from least developed countries

Trade's potential contribution to sustainable development has long been acknowledged. This is reflected in the EU's 2021 Trade Policy Review and the Communication on the power of trade partnerships along with the European Green Deal, which stresses the contribution that trade policy can make to achieving the EU's ambition on sustainable development.

Exports can create domestic jobs, results in transfers of technologies and allow developing countries to obtain foreign currency, which they can use to import necessary goods. Better integration of developing countries into world markets may reduce the need for external public flows. Several of the SDGs refer to the importance of trade for sustainable development. However, it needs to be noted that the EU's trade-related indicators do not provide insights on whether the products in question are produced in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner.

2.3 %
of all extra-EU imports came from least developed countries in 2025

Between 2010 and 2025, the value of EU imports from developing countries (including China) increased strongly from EUR 648 billion to EUR 1 373 billion. Around 4 % of these imports came from countries classified as least developed by the UN. EU imports from these least developed countries have more than tripled over the past 15 years, from EUR 17.8 billion in 2010 to EUR 57.4 billion in 2025. In relation to imports from all countries outside the EU, the share of imports from least developed countries increased from 1.2 % in 2010 to 2.3 % in 2025. This upward trend also persists in the short term, with imports increasing by 51 % between 2019 and 2025 and gaining an extra 0.3 percentage points of the share of imports from all extra-EU countries. It should be noted that trade performance for a particular group of countries, and its proportion compared to other groups, depends not only on their competitiveness but primarily on external factors such as world demand, economic fluctuations, global market prices and currency fluctuations.

Imports from all developing countries to the EU as a share of imports from all countries outside the EU increased from 44.1 % in 2010 to 54.7 % in 2025. Since 2021, developing countries (including China) have accounted for slightly more than half of all extra-EU imports. China (excluding Hong Kong) alone accounted for 22.3 % of EU imports in 2025. This is remarkably higher than the share of imports from the United States, which accounted for 14.1 % ([2]).

'Aid for trade' is a part of ODA that is targeted at trade-related projects and programmes. It aims to build trade capacity, trade-related infrastructure and productive capacity in developing countries. The EU and its Member States were the leading global providers of aid for trade in 2022, providing EUR 22 billion, or 36 % of global aid for trade. Just three donors — the EU institutions as well as Germany and France — provided 91 % of this overall sum. The share of aid for trade to LDCs was 12 % of overall aid for trade commitments in 2022 ([3]).

Financial governance within the EU

To help other countries to advance their economies, the EU's own economies must also remain on a sustainable development path. Macroeconomic stability in the EU is therefore one pillar of the Union's contribution to implementing the SDGs. In addition, the EU seeks to make its economy greener. In a global context, where consumption patterns in one region can severely impact production patterns elsewhere, it is particularly important that prices reflect the real costs of consumption and production. They should include payments for negative externalities caused by polluting activities or other activities that damage human health and the environment. Moreover, the EU has pointed out that environmental taxes may offer opportunities to reduce taxes in other areas, for example on labour.

The EU's government debt-to-GDP ratio has increased recently

According to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, government debt should not exceed 60 % of GDP in EU Member States. As a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis and related public spending, the EU's overall debt-to-GDP ratio rose sharply in 2020 to reach 89.5 %, which is a 12.0 percentage point increase compared with 2019. While the EU's debt-to-GDP ratio fell strongly in the next few years, it started growing again after 2023 and reached 81.7 % in 2025. This is 7.8 percentage points lower than the 2020 peak but 4.2 percentage points higher than the 2019 value of 77.5 %.

In 2025, general government gross debt in the EU as a ratio to GDP was

81.7 %

In 2025, Member States' debt-to-GDP ratios ranged from 24.1 % in Estonia to 146.1 % in Greece. Twelve EU countries exceeded the 60 % threshold in 2025, including five Member States with debt-to-GDP ratios above 100 %. Between 2019 and 2025, the strongest reductions in debt-to-GDP ratios were reported by Cyprus (– 37.3 percentage points), Greece (– 37.1 percentage points) and Portugal (– 26.4 percentage points). In contrast, the ratios rose strongest in Romania (+ 24.1 percentage points), Finland (+ 23.2 percentage points) and France (+ 17.4 percentage points).

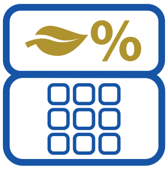
The share of environmental taxes has remained marginal

Environmental taxes help to provide the right price signals and incentives to producers, users and consumers to encourage less polluting consumption and to contribute to sustainable growth. They may also provide opportunities to reduce taxes in other areas, for example on labour, and if revenue for adequate social protection is protected, they can offer a win–win option for addressing both environmental and employment

([2]) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: ext_lt_maineu).
([3]) European Commission (2025), *EU Aid for Trade Progress Report 2024*.

issues, as laid out in the EU's [Action Plan for Fair and Simple Taxation](). Environmental taxes support the transition to a climate-neutral economy. As indicated in the Communication on Business taxation for the 21st century as regards the EU tax mix, behavioural taxes, such as environmental and health taxes, continue to be of growing importance for EU tax policies. Well-designed environmental taxes help to support the green transition by sending the right price signals, as well as implementing the polluter pays principle. They also generate revenue that could compensate some of the needed labour tax cuts.

In 2024, environmental taxes accounted for only 5.3 % of total tax revenues in the EU, marking the third consecutive year of stagnation. In comparison, revenues from labour taxes were about ten times higher and accounted for 51.5 % (4). Energy taxes constituted the main part of environmental taxes, accounting for 4.2 % of tax revenues in 2024, followed by transport taxes with a share of 0.9 %. In comparison, taxes on pollution and resources — the third component of environmental taxes — remained negligible, accounting for only 0.2 % of total tax revenues in 2024 (5). The share of total environmental taxes has fallen considerably since 2019, when they accounted for 6.4 % of tax revenues. Across Member States, the share of environmental taxes in total tax revenues ranged from 2.9 % in Luxembourg to 9.7 % in Bulgaria in 2024. Compared with 2019, their share has decreased in almost all EU countries. Only two countries — Poland and Romania — reported increases in the share of environmental taxes over this period.



In 2024, the share of environmental taxes in total tax revenues in the EU was

5.3 %

The ratio of labour to environmental taxes shows how much higher a country's share of labour tax revenues is than its share of environmental taxes. In 2024, this ratio ranged from 3.8 in Bulgaria to 16.3 in Luxembourg. The ratio has increased in almost all Member States since 2019, indicating a relative shift in taxation from environment to labour across the EU (6).

EU Member States spend around 2 % of their GDP to protect the natural environment

The decline in the prioritisation of environmental taxation is partly reflected in national environmental expenditures. National expenditure on environmental protection measures the amount of resources a country uses to protect the natural environment. It includes current expenditure on environmental protection activities, investments in these activities and net transfers to other parts of the world. At EU level, environmental protection expenditure amounted to EUR 360 billion in 2024, corresponding to 2.0 % of GDP (7).

Access to technology

In today's economies and societies, digital connections are crucial. Instant communication between individuals, bank transfers, office work, public dissemination of information and data analysis are only some of the activities that depend on the internet. Regions without fast internet connections have serious social and economic disadvantages in a digitalised world. Therefore, the EU has the ambition to have all European households covered by high-speed internet by 2030.

High-speed internet coverage has expanded substantially across the EU

High-speed internet coverage — referring to fibre connections or other networks offering similar bandwidth — has improved considerably over the past few years across the EU. While just about half (50.3 %) of EU households enjoyed such connectivity in 2019, this share has risen considerably, reaching 82.5 % in 2024. The EU has thus made strong

82.5 %

of EU households had high-speed internet coverage in 2024

(4) Taxes on labour are generally defined as all personal income taxes, payroll taxes and social contributions of employees and employers that are levied on labour income (both employed and non-employed). Data on labour taxes stem from the DG Taxation and Customs Union ('Data on Taxation' webpage).
(5) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: env_ac_tax).
(6) *Source*: Calculations based on data from DG Taxation and Customs Union ('Data on Taxation' webpage) and Eurostat (online data code: env_ac_tax).
(7) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: ten00135).

progress towards its Digital Decade target of 100 % coverage by 2030. Connectivity has also improved in rural areas. Between 2019 and 2024, the share of rural households with a fixed high-speed internet connection increased from 21.0 % to 61.9 % across the EU.

At Member State level, Malta has already achieved a 100 % fixed high-speed internet connectivity for all households since 2019. In 2024, it was followed by the Netherlands (98.4 %), Denmark (96.8 %) and Romania (95.9 %). In contrast, fixed high-speed internet connections were the least widespread in Greece, with only 46.1 % of households enjoying such connectivity. All remaining Member States had connection to high-speed internet rates above 50 % in 2024, and in 25 of the 27 Member States more than two-thirds of households were covered.

Main indicators

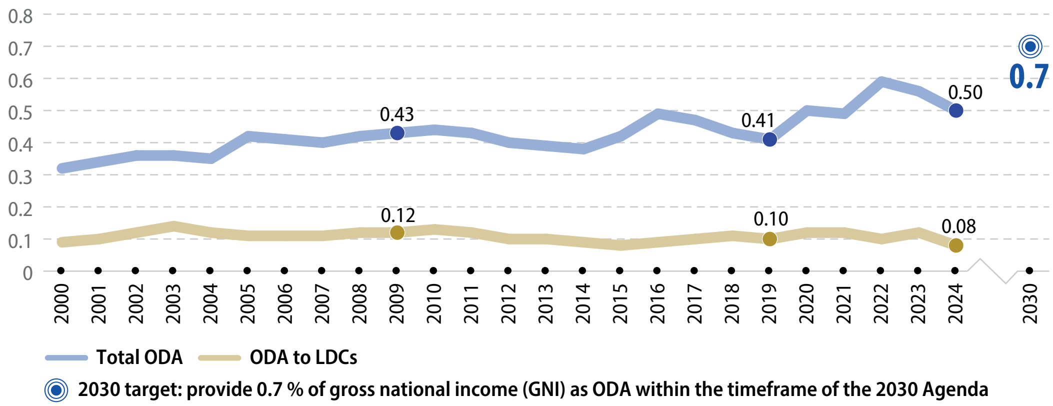
EU official development assistance as share of GNI

LONG TERM
2009–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Official development assistance (ODA) is provided by governments and their executive agencies to support economic development and welfare in developing countries. ODA must be concessional in character, having a grant element that varies in proportion depending on the recipient. Eligible countries are included in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) official list of ODA recipients. ODA disbursements and their purpose are reported by donors to the OECD. A new methodology to calculate the ODA value of concessional loans is applied from 2018 data onwards (grant equivalent basis) and affects the comparability of data with previous years (net disbursement basis). Additionally, a new methodology for calculating total ODA to LDCs is applied from 2020 data onwards, by including regional net ODA known to benefit LDCs (on top of the bilateral net ODA to LDCs and imputed multilateral ODA to LDCs). The EU collectively commits to achieving the target of providing 0.7 % of gross national income (GNI) for ODA within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda in the European Consensus on Development. The same target applies to Member States that joined the EU before 2002, taking into consideration budgetary circumstances. Member States that joined the EU after 2002 strive to increase their ODA/GNI to 0.33 %.

Figure 17.1
Official development assistance
(% of GNI, EU, 2000–2024)



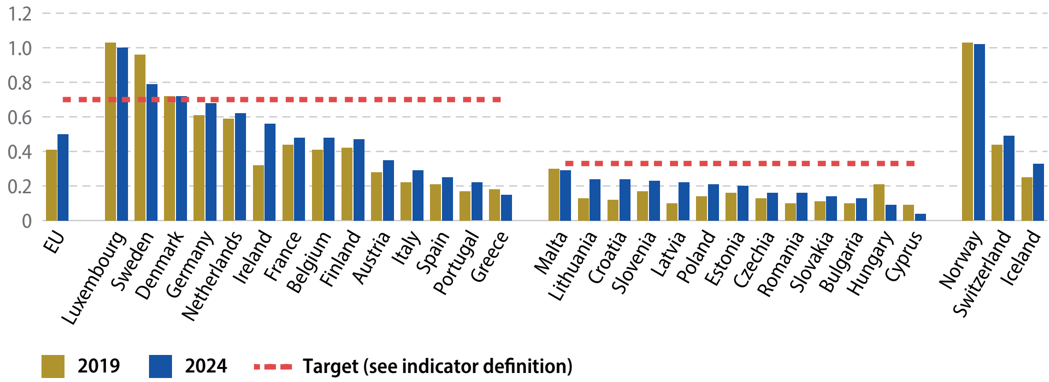
Note: Break in time series for total ODA in 2018 and for ODA to LDCs in 2020. Data for total ODA include the 27 Member States' ODA and EU institutions' ODA not imputed to Member States or other donors on a grant equivalent basis as of 2018. Data for ODA to LDCs include the 27 Member States' ODA to LDCs and EU institutions' regional ODA known to benefit LDCs (excluding the component of the latter that could be imputed back to non-EU donors), as of 2020.

Source: European Commission services calculations based on OECD data (Eurostat online data code: sdg_17_10)

Figure 17.2

Official development assistance

(% of GNI, 2019 and 2024)



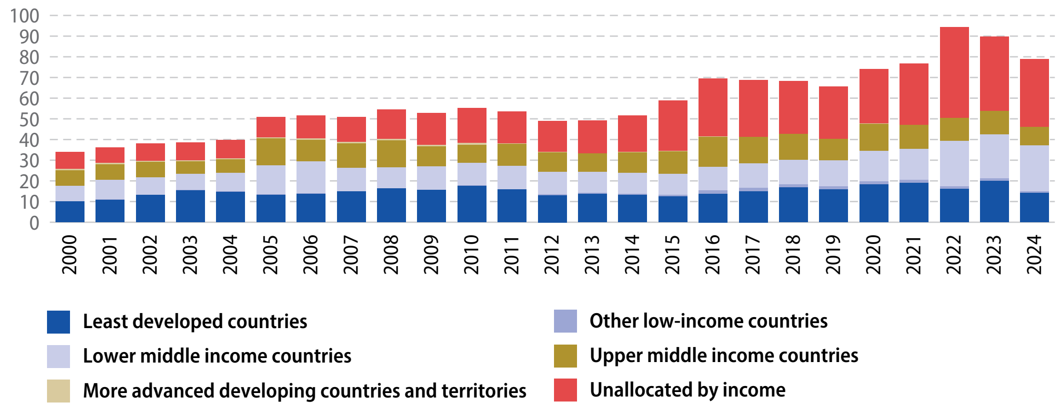
Note: Data for 'EU' include the 27 Member States' ODA and EU institutions' ODA not imputed to Member States or other donors.

Source: European Commission services calculations based on OECD data (Eurostat online data code: sdg_17_10)

Figure 17.3

Official development assistance by recipient income group

(EUR billion, constant prices, EU, 2000–2024)



Note: Break in time series for ODA to LDCs and to the unallocated category in 2020; data include the 27 Member States' bilateral net ODA and imputed multilateral ODA as well as, starting from 2020, Member States' and EU institutions' regional net ODA known to benefit LDCs (excluding the component of the latter that could be imputed back to non-EU donors), while deducting this regional amount from the unallocated category.

Source: European Commission services calculations based on OECD data.

EU financing to developing countries

EU financing to developing countries takes a number of forms. These, as documented by the OECD, include: official development assistance (ODA) (public grants or concessional loans with the aim of supporting economic development and welfare); other official flows (OOFs) (public flows that are not focused on development or with a grant element of less than 25 %); private flows (direct investment, bonds, export credits and multilateral flows); grants by non-governmental organisations (from funds raised for development assistance and disaster relief); and officially supported export credits. Data stem from the OECD (DAC).

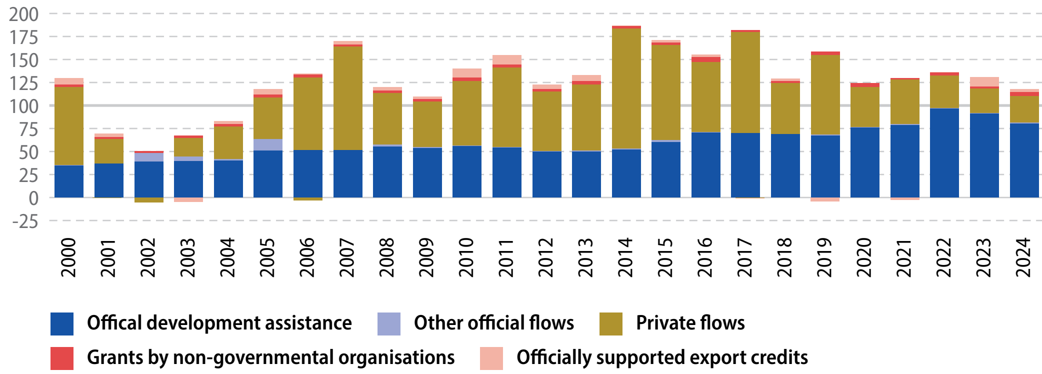
LONG TERM
2009–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 17.4

EU financing to developing countries, by financing source

(EUR billion, constant prices, EU, 2000–2024)



Source: OECD (Eurostat online data code: sdg_17_20)

Share of imports from least developed countries

This indicator is defined as the share of all extra-EU imports coming from the countries classified by the UN as least developed. It indicates to what extent products from these countries access the EU market. Information for this indicator is provided by enterprises with a trade volume above a set threshold and is collected on the basis of customs declarations. This information is then adjusted by Member States to account for the impact of trade under this threshold.

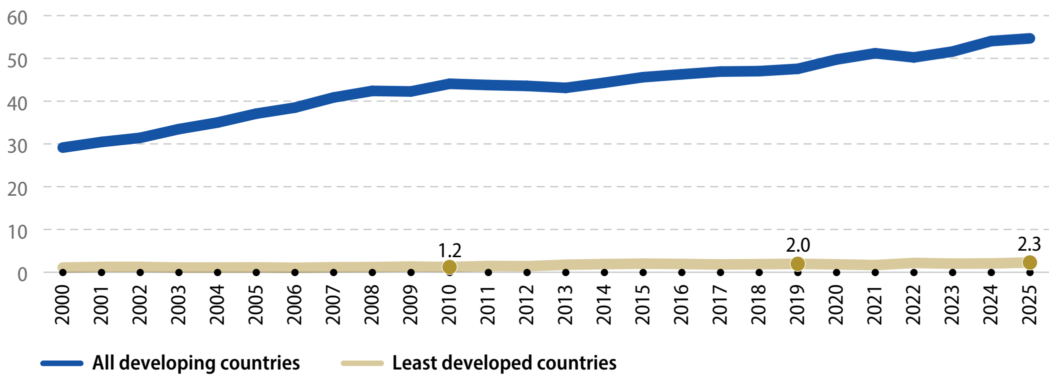
LONG TERM 2010–2025

SHORT TERM 2019–2025

Figure 17.5

Imports from developing countries, by country income group

(% of total extra-EU imports, EU, 2000–2025)

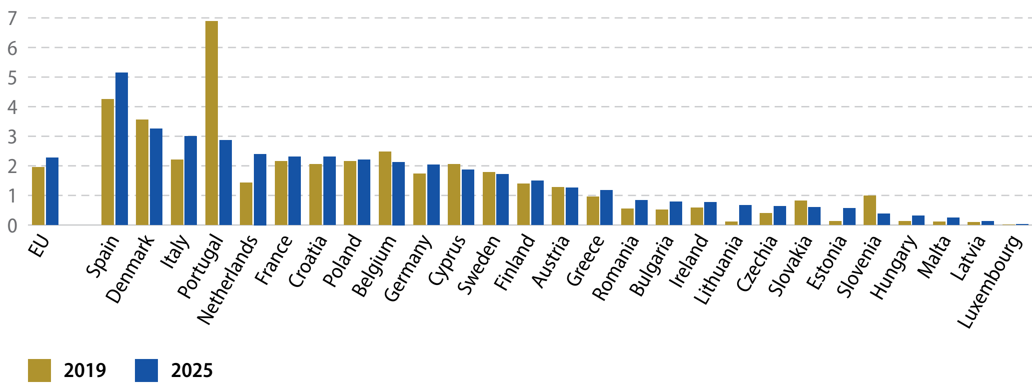


Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_17_31)

Figure 17.6

Imports from least developed countries

(% of total extra-EU imports, 2019 and 2025)



Source: Eurostat (online data codes: sdg_17_31)

General government gross debt

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) defines this indicator as the ratio of general government gross debt at the end of the year to gross domestic product at current market prices. For this calculation, general government gross debt is defined as the total consolidated gross debt at nominal (face) value in the following categories of government liabilities, as defined in ESA 2010: currency and deposits, debt securities and loans. The general government sector comprises central government, state government, local government and social security funds. The TFEU states that a Member State's government debt-to-GDP ratio should be limited to 60 %.

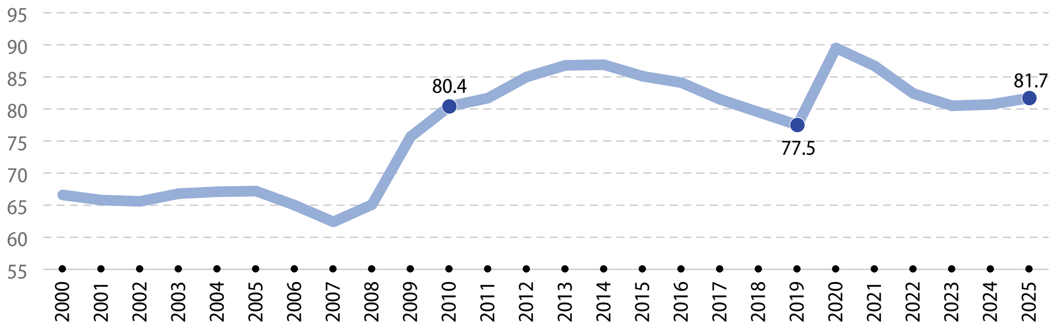
LONG TERM
2010–2025

SHORT TERM
2019–2025

Figure 17.7

General government gross debt

(% of GDP, EU, 2000–2025)



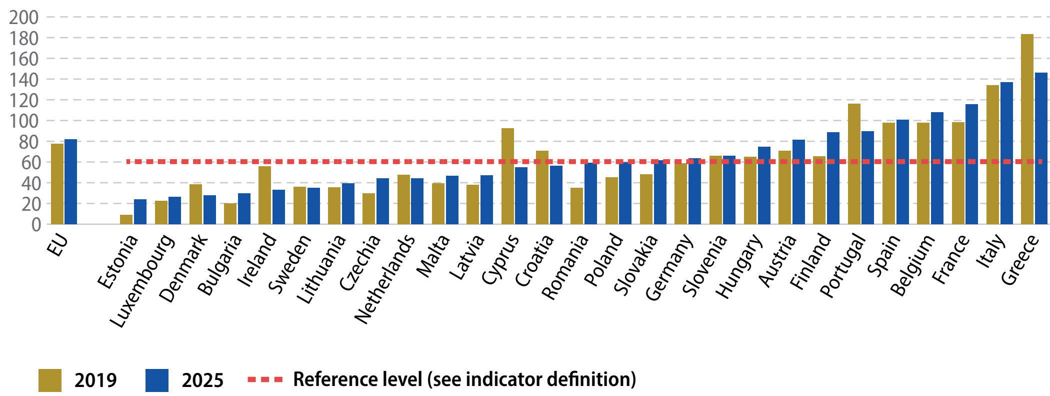
Note: y-axis does not start at 0.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_17_40)

Figure 17.8

General government gross debt

(% of GDP, 2019 and 2025)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_17_40)

Share of environmental taxes in total tax revenues

Environmental taxes are defined as taxes based on a physical unit (or proxy of it) of something that has a proven, specific negative impact on the environment. There are four types of environmental taxes: energy taxes, transport taxes, pollution taxes and resource taxes.

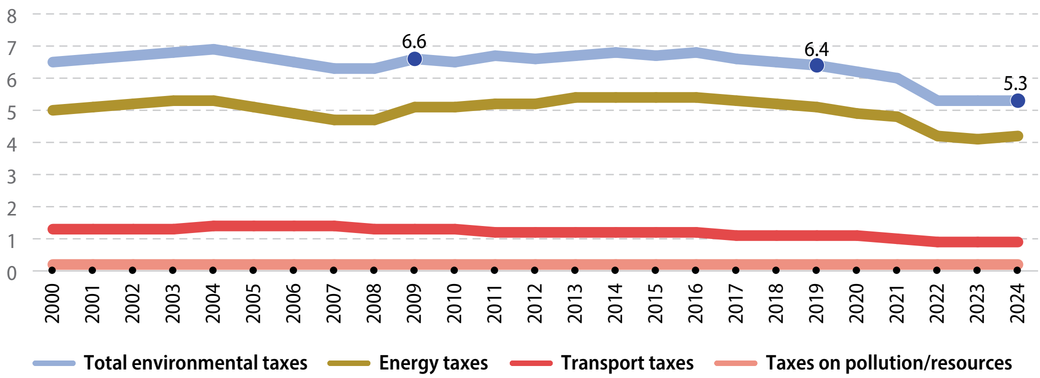
LONG TERM
2009–2024

SHORT TERM
2019–2024

Figure 17.9

Share of environmental taxes in total tax revenues

(%, EU, 2000–2024)

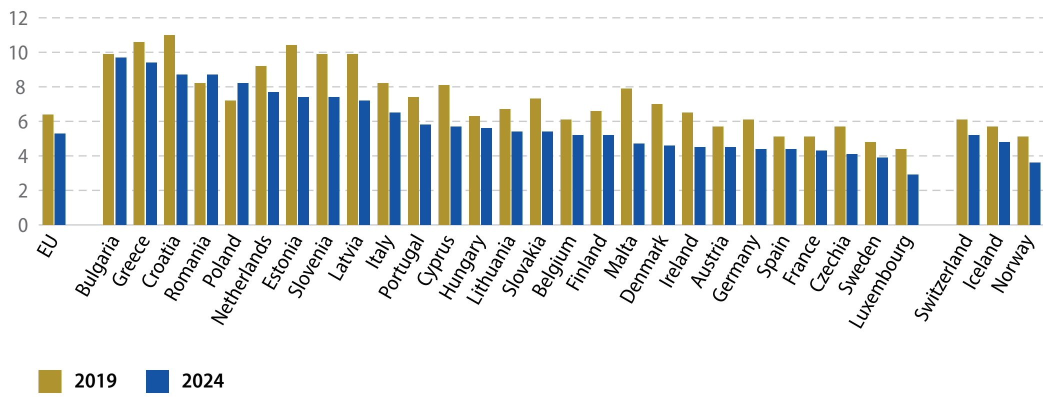


Source: Eurostat (online data codes: sdg_17_50 and env_ac_tax)

Figure 17.10

Share of environmental taxes in total tax revenues

(%, 2019 and 2024)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_17_50)

Share of households with high-speed internet connection

This indicator measures the share of households with a fixed very high capacity network (VHCN) connection. A VHCN is either an electronic communications network that consists entirely of optical fibre elements, at least up to the distribution point at the serving location; or an electronic communications network capable of delivering, under usual peak-time conditions, similar network performance in terms of available downlink and uplink bandwidth, resilience, error-related parameters, and latency and its variation. The data are collected for the Broadband Coverage in Europe studies published by the European Commission and refer to both fibre to the premises (FTTP) and Data Over Cable Service Interface Specification (DOCSIS) 3.1. DOCSIS allows adding high-bandwidth data transfer to existing cable television systems.

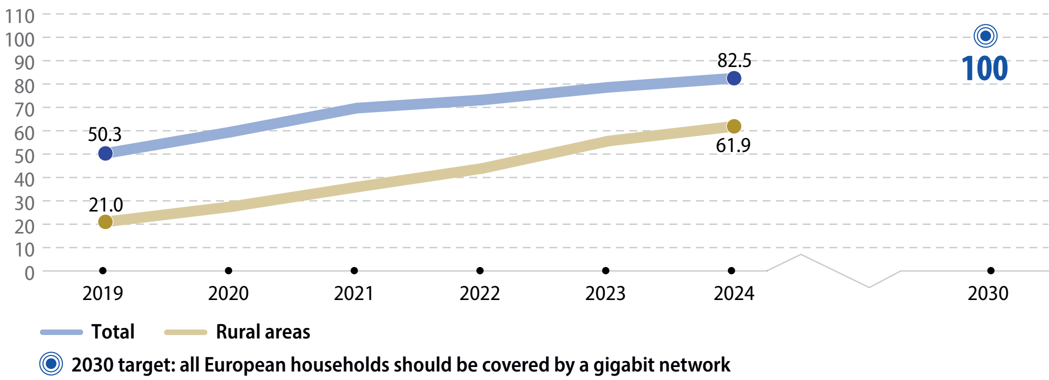
LONG TERM Time series too short

SHORT TERM 2019–2024

Figure 17.11

High-speed internet coverage, by type of area

(% of households, EU, 2019–2024)



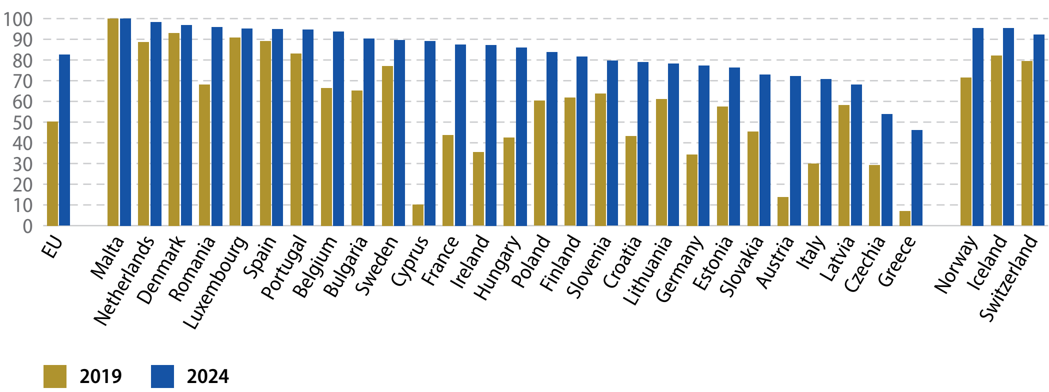
Note: In the context of the EU's digital agenda scoreboard indicators, rural areas are defined as those with less than 100 people per square kilometre.

Source: European Commission services, Eurostat (online data code: sdg_17_60)

Figure 17.12

High-speed internet coverage

(% of households, 2019 and 2024)



Source: European Commission services, Eurostat (online data code: sdg_17_60)

EU SDG indicators at regional level

[Leave no one behind](#) is one of the core principles of the 2030 Agenda. It emphasises the need to reduce the various forms of inequalities that exist within and among countries. Inequalities undermine the potential of specific regions, population groups and individuals and their connection to the sustainable development goals (SDGs). As such, while comparing EU countries with each other yields interesting insights, such comparisons sometimes mask differences at the smaller, regional, scale. Moreover, regions play a crucial role in delivering the SDGs because they can tailor implementation actions to local needs, contexts and challenges.

This section takes an in-depth look at disparities across European regions for six selected indicators from the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. It does so by showcasing differences at the NUTS 2 or NUTS 3 regional level within and across countries ([1]). More data and analyses at the regional level can be found in Eurostat's regional yearbook, in the Regions in Europe interactive publication as well as in Eurostat's statistical atlas.

([1]) NUTS (nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) is a geographical nomenclature dividing countries into regions at three different levels (NUTS 1, 2 and 3 respectively, moving from larger to smaller territorial units in terms of population). For more information about the NUTS classification, see the respective metadata.

Tertiary educational attainment

In 2025, 44.8 % of the EU population aged 25 to 34 had attained tertiary education, which means the EU had almost reached its 2030 target of raising the share to at least 45 %. Across the EU, tertiary educational attainment rates for this age group ranged from around 66 % in Ireland and Luxembourg to less than 25 % in Romania (see the analysis in the chapter on SDG 4 'Quality education' on page 69).

More than a third of EU regions had tertiary educational attainment rates above the 45 % EU target in 2025

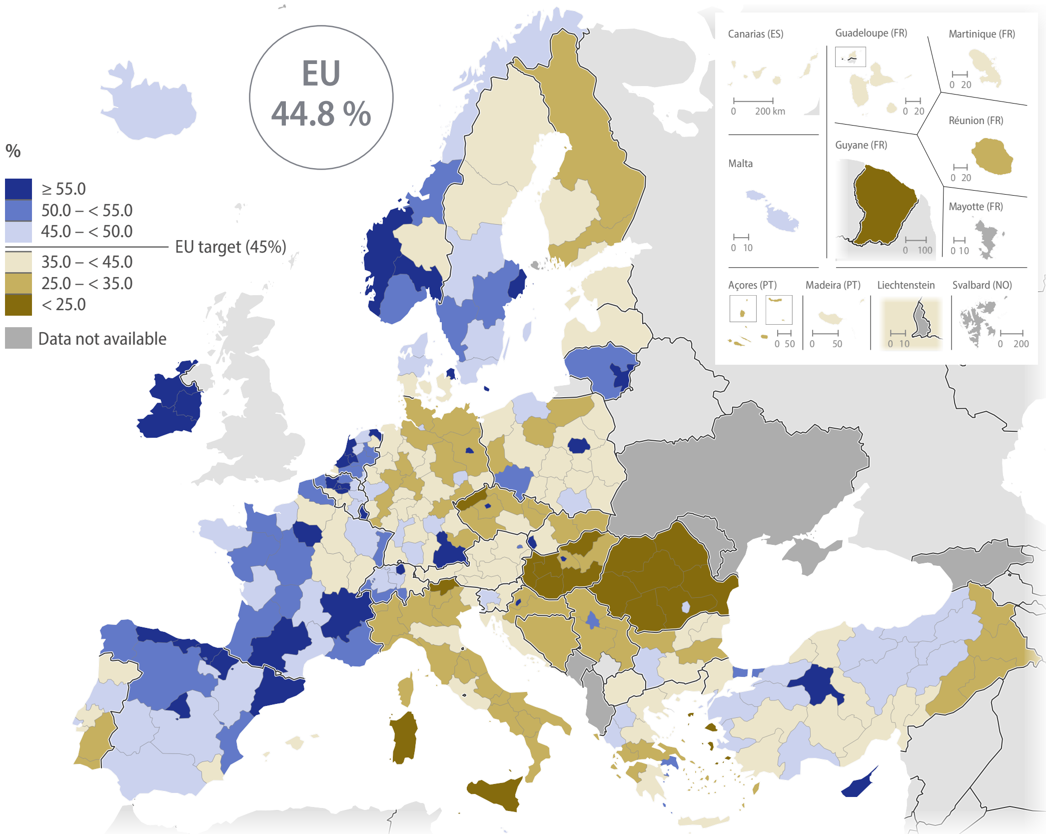
Across the EU, 38.4 % of NUTS2 regions had tertiary educational attainment rates above 45 %. The highest tertiary educational attainment rate in 2025 was reported in the Lithuanian capital region 'Sostinės regionas' with 77.4 %, followed by the French capital region 'Ile de France' with 72.7 % and the Irish 'Eastern and Midland' region with 70.4 %. Also at the top of the list, with more than two-thirds of the population aged 25 to 34 having attained tertiary education, were 'Warszawski stołeczny' (Poland), 'País Vasco' (Spain), 'Prov. Brabant wallon' (Belgium) and 'Utrecht' (Netherlands).

At the bottom end of the distribution were 18 NUTS 2 regions in which only a quarter or less of the population aged 25 to 34 had attained tertiary education by 2025. These regions were primarily rural, or geographically remote or isolated, often characterised by relatively large agricultural sectors and limited opportunities for higher education

Map II.1

Tertiary educational attainment

(% of population aged 25 to 34, by NUTS 2 regions, 2025)



Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 04/2026

Note: 2024 data for Iceland.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfse_04)

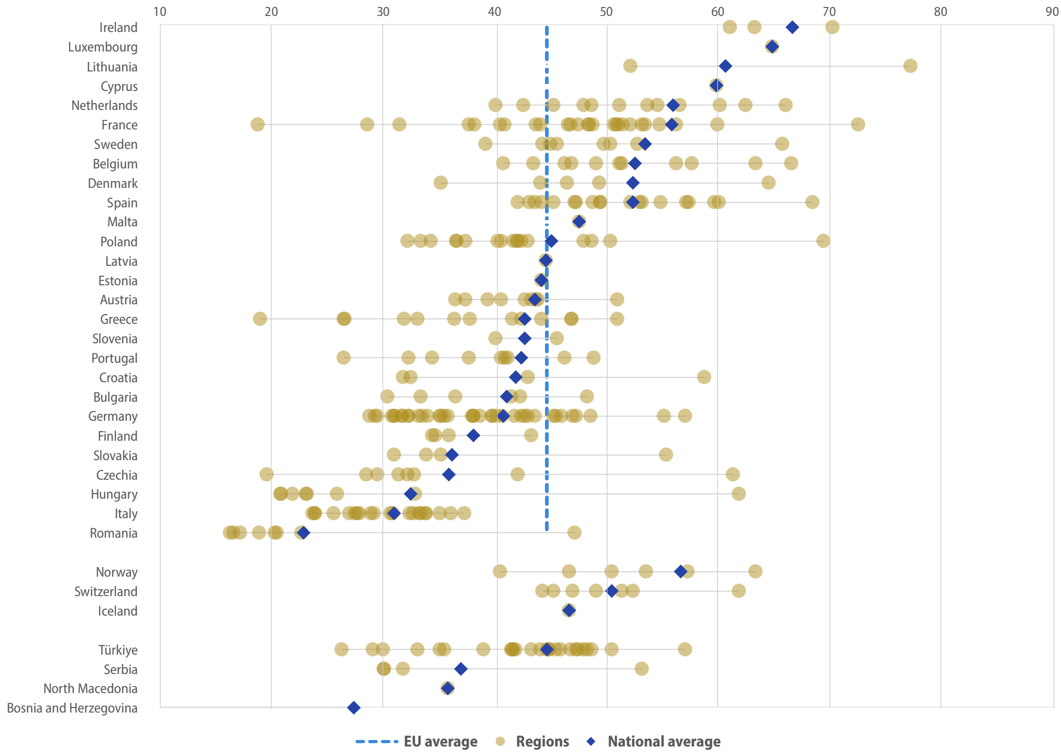
and highly skilled employment. These regions were mainly located in eastern and southern EU countries such as Romania (7 regions), Hungary (5 regions) and Italy (3 regions). With the exception of the capital region 'Bucureşti-Ilfov', all NUTS 2 regions in Romania had tertiary educational attainment rates below 25 % in 2025 (see Map II.1).

Within-country disparities across NUTS 2 regions are displayed in Figure II.1. France and Greece showed the largest differences between the worst-performing regions and the national average. For France, this was mainly due to 'Guyane', with a tertiary education attainment rate of less than 20 % in 2025, being almost three times below the national average of 56.0 %. In Greece, 'Voreio Aigaio', with a rate of 19.1 % in 2025, was more than two times below the national average of 42.8 %. In all other Member States, the ratio of the worst-performing region to the national average was below 1.9 in 2025.

Figure II.1

Tertiary educational attainment

(% of population aged 25 to 34, by NUTS 2 regions, 2025)



Note: 2024 data for Iceland.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfse_04)

Gender employment gap

Women tend to be more highly educated than men in most EU countries. When looking at participation in the labour market, however, the proportion of working-age men in employment still considerably exceeds that of women. In the EU, 71.3 % of women in the age group 20 to 64 years were employed in 2025, compared with a rate of 80.9 % for men, resulting in a gender employment gap of 9.6 percentage points. Although this is the lowest value on record, it is still far from the EU target of halving the gender employment gap by 2030 compared with 2019, which would mean reducing it to less than 5.7 percentage points (see the analysis in the chapter on SDG 5 'Gender equality' on page 83).

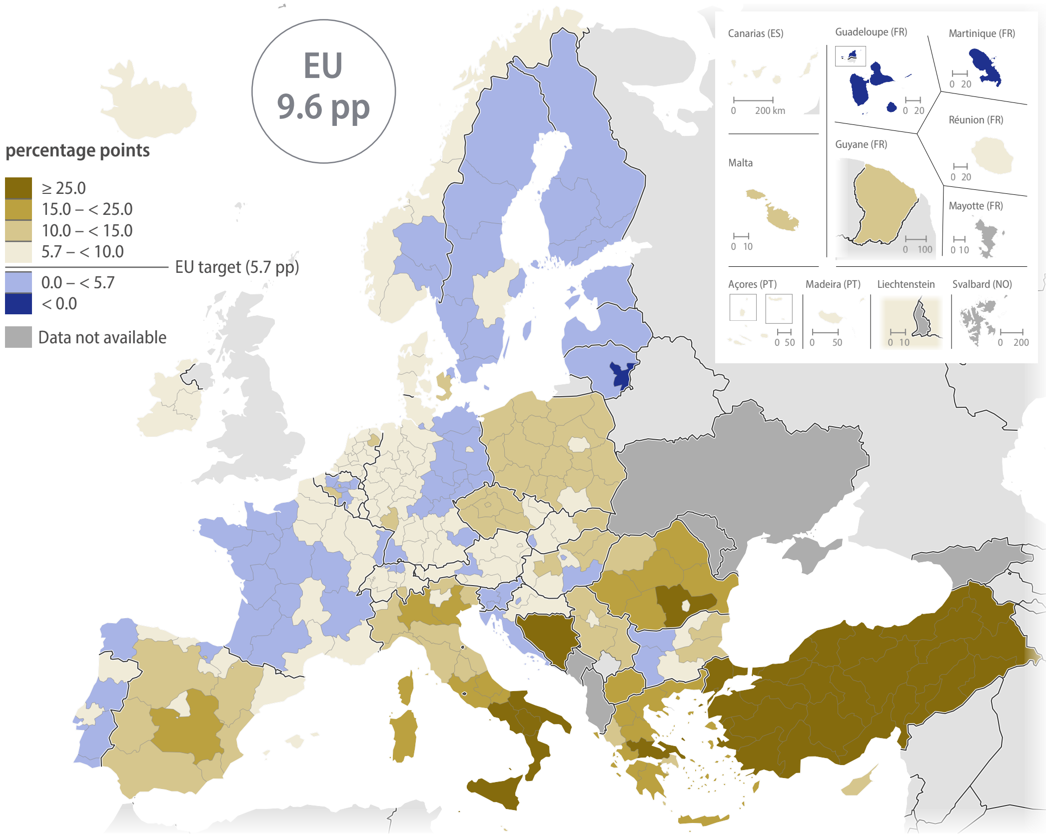
The highest gender employment gaps were reported in regions in south-eastern Europe

Across EU countries, the gender employment gap ranged from –0.6 percentage points in Lithuania to 19.1 percentage points in Italy in 2025. The gap was generally highest in southern and eastern Member States and lowest in central and northern Europe (see Map II.2). At NUTS 2 level, there were three regions with negative gaps, meaning women on average had higher employment rates than men. These regions comprised 'Sostinės regionas' in Lithuania and the French overseas regions 'Guadeloupe' and 'Martinique', with gender employment gaps between –1.0 and –5.0 percentage points. Further regions with gaps close to zero included the Finnish regions

Map II.2

Gender employment gap

(percentage points, population aged 20 to 64, by NUTS 2 regions, 2025)



Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 04/2026

Note: 2024 data for Iceland. The EU target for 2030 is to halve the gender employment gap compared with 2019, which means reducing the gap to below 5.7 percentage points.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: tepsr_lm220)

'Länsi-Suomi' and 'Etelä-Suomi', with gaps of 0.1 percentage points. Overall, 65 of the 243 regions with available data (26.7 %) had gender employment gaps below the EU target value of 5.7 percentage points in 2025.

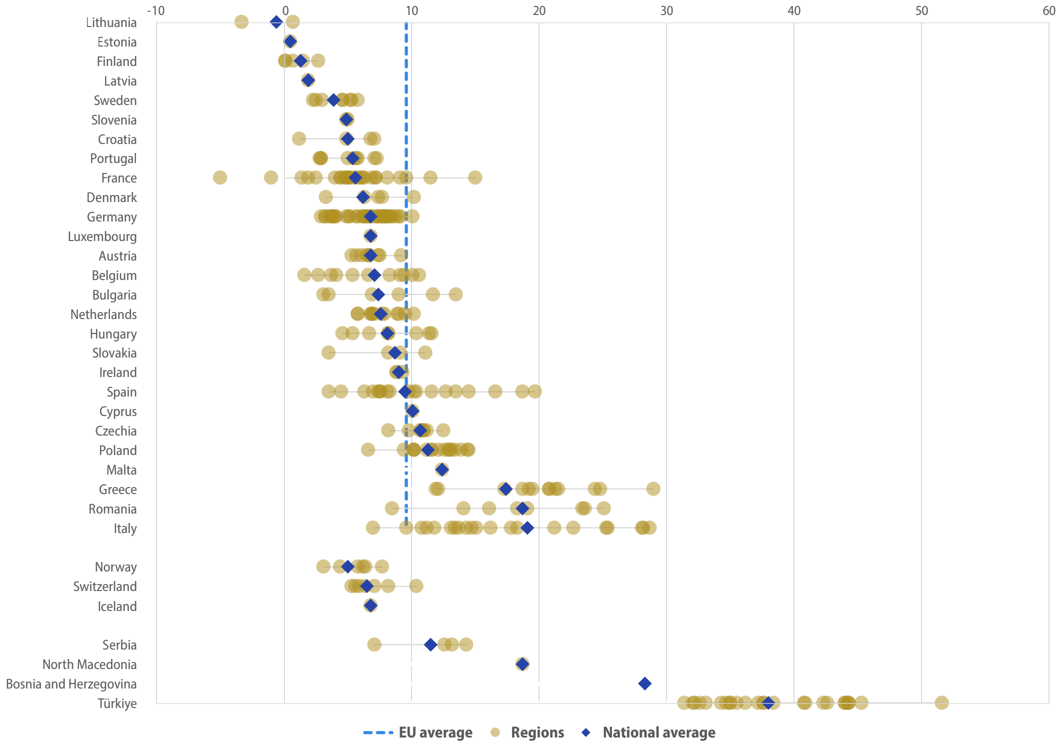
At the other end of the spectrum were 17 regions in which the employment rates of men were more than 20 percentage points higher than those of women. These regions were in Greece and Italy (7 regions each) and Romania (3 regions). The highest gap was reported in the Greek region 'Sterea Elláda' (29.0 percentage points in 2025), followed by the Italian regions 'Puglia' (28.7 percentage points) and 'Campania' (28.2 percentage points).

Between 2019 and 2025, the gender employment gap decreased in around 83 % of the EU's NUTS 2 regions. The strongest improvements were reported in the French overseas region 'Guadeloupe' (–11.2 percentage points), followed by the Hungarian regions 'Budapest' (–9.9 percentage points) and 'Dél-Alföld' (–9.8 percentage points). In contrast, the strongest increases in the gender employment gap over this period (of 3.7 percentage points and more) were reported by the Romanian

Figure II.2

Gender employment gap

(percentage points, population aged 20 to 64, by NUTS 2 regions, 2025)



Note: 2024 data for Iceland.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: tepsr_lm220 and sdg_05_30)

regions 'Nord-Est' and 'Sud-Muntenia', 'Mellersta Norrland' in Sweden and 'Prov. Hainaut' in Belgium.

Disparities in the gender employment gap within countries were particularly pronounced in Greece, Spain, France and Italy. In these countries, the worst performing regions had gender employment gaps that were more than 9 percentage points higher than the national average in 2025.

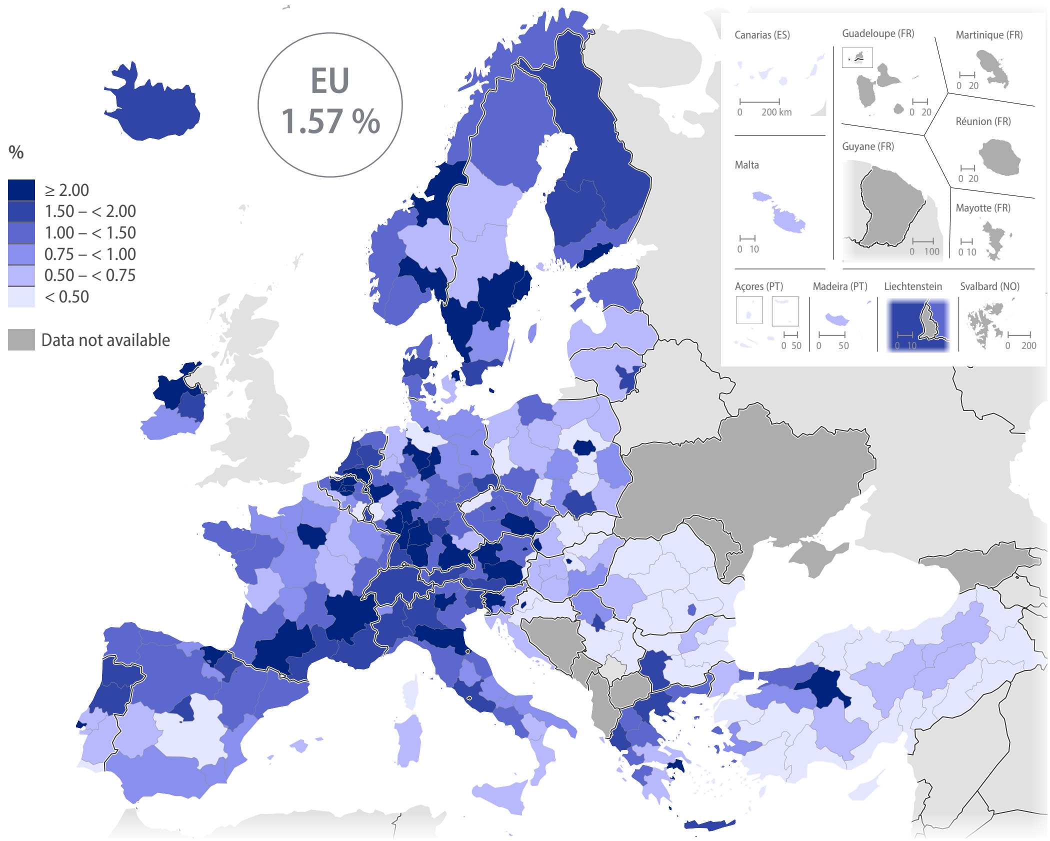
Research and development personnel

Research and development (R&D) personnel consists of all individuals employed directly in the field of research and development (R&D), including those providing direct services, such as managers, administrators and clerical staff. In the EU, the share of R&D personnel in the labour force (measured in full-time equivalents) has increased continuously since 2000, reaching 1.57 % in 2023. Across the EU, this share ranged from about 2.3 % in Belgium and Denmark to less than 0.5 % in Cyprus and Romania (see the analysis in the chapter on SDG 9 'Industry, innovation and infrastructure' on page 145).

Large differences in the share of R&D personnel between EU regions

Like many other science and technology indicators, the pattern of R&D personnel at regional level (see Map II.3) reveals a skewed picture, as R&D activities tend to be concentrated in clusters. Research-intensive regions are often situated around academic institutions, science parks, high-technology industrial activities and/or knowledge-based services. The concentration of competitive and cooperative enterprises in related activities attracts start-ups, other market players and highly qualified personnel, which, in turn, drives the

Map II.3
R&D personnel
(% of population in the labour force, by NUTS 2 regions, 2023)



Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 04/2026

Note: NUTS 1 data for the Netherlands, national data for Switzerland.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: rd_p_persreg)

creation of new technologies and innovative output. In contrast, R&D activities tend to be lowest in remote or predominantly rural regions.

In 2023, 68 of the 231 EU's NUTS 2 regions with available data ([2]) (29.4 %) had a share of R&D personnel in the labour force that exceeded the EU average of 1.57 %. The German region 'Stuttgart' had the highest share (4.88 %), followed by the Czech capital 'Praha' (4.65 %) and the Belgian regions 'Prov. Brabant wallon' (4.46 %) and Prov. Vlaams-Brabant (4.39 %). Overall, there were 14 regions in which R&D personnel accounted for more than 3 % of the labour force in 2023. Half of the top 20 regions with the highest shares of R&D personnel across the EU (see Figure II.3) were in Germany (4 regions), Belgium (4 regions) and Austria (2 regions).

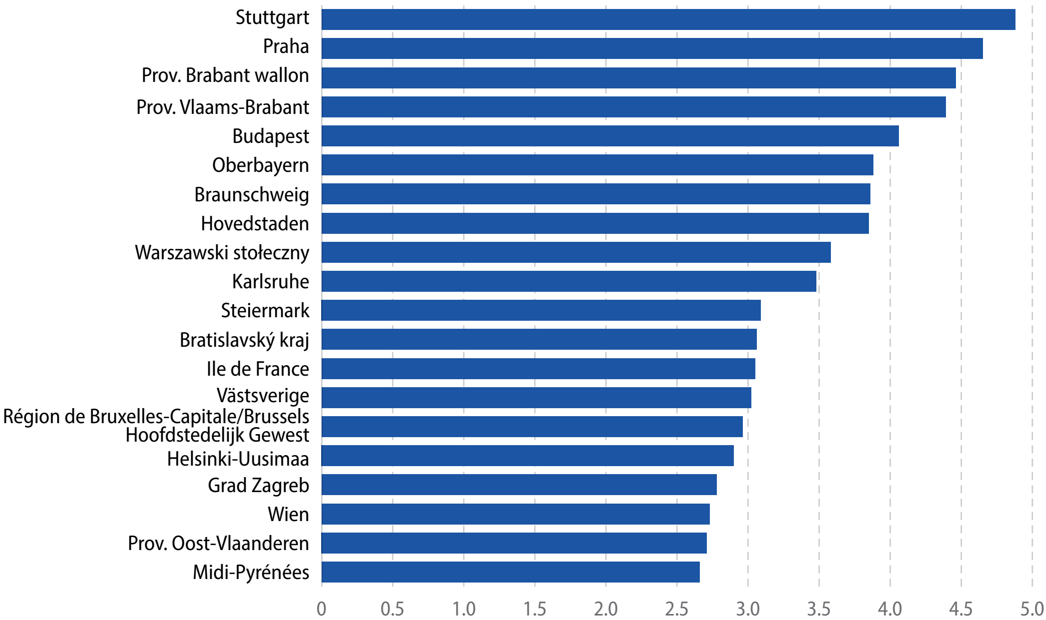
At the bottom end of the distribution were 34 regions in which the share of R&D personnel in the labour force was lower than 0.5 %, mainly in eastern and southern Member States such as Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Spain.

([2]) Netherlands: NUTS 1 data instead of NUTS 2.

Figure II.3

Regions with the highest shares of R&D personnel in the EU

(% of population in the labour force, by NUTS 2 regions, 2023)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: rd_p_persreg)

Household income

Household disposable income is the total amount of money households have available for spending and saving after subtracting income taxes and pension contributions ([3]). Wealth creation in the EU is often concentrated in economic hubs, where part of the output generated may be attributed to commuters living in surrounding regions. As a result, income per inhabitant in these surrounding regions tends to be relatively high when contrasted with their economic output (as measured by GDP per inhabitant). This is also because within regional accounts, GDP is recorded where it is generated (a person's place of work), whereas income is recorded at their residence (where people live).

In 2023, net disposable household income amounted to 21 000 purchasing power standards (PPS) per inhabitant in the EU ([4]). At the Member State level, Luxembourg recorded the highest income levels, with 30 100 PPS per inhabitant, followed by Germany with 25 800 PPS per inhabitant and Austria with 25 400 PPS per inhabitant. Estonia, Bulgaria and Latvia reported the lowest income levels, with values below 15 000 PPS per inhabitant (also see the analysis of disparities in household income in the chapter on SDG 10 'Reduced inequalities' on page 161).

([3]) The income data analysed here differ from the income data analysed in the chapter on SDG 10 'Reduced inequalities', which refer to adjusted gross disposable income. Net disposable household income is household disposable income after deducting consumption of fixed capital (depreciation), whereas adjusted gross disposable household income is gross disposable income plus social transfers in kind (for example, publicly provided health and education services).

([4]) PPS is an artificial currency unit that allows comparing countries and regions by adjusting for price level differences, so that — theoretically — one PPS can buy the same amount of goods and services in each country. The use of data in PPS, rather than in euro (€), takes price level differences between countries into account; the conversion to PPS also reflects the fact that household expenditure is predominantly related to consumption.

Household income is highest in central European regions

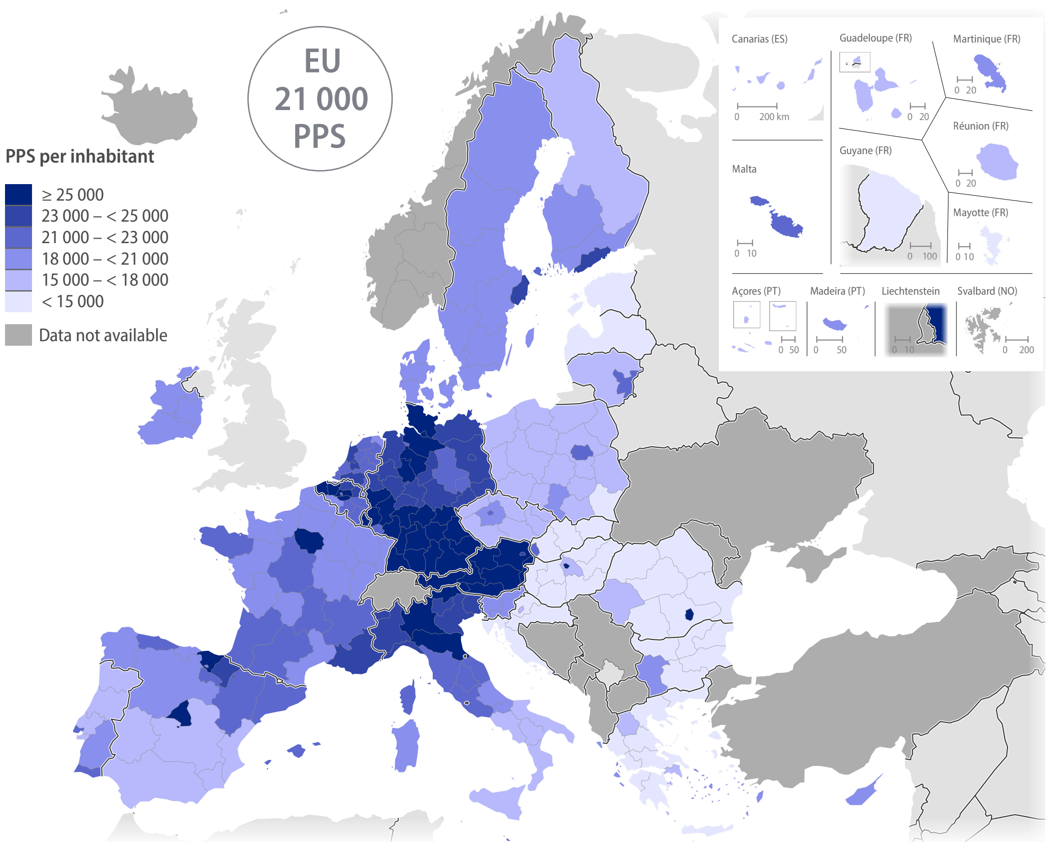
At the NUTS 2 level, the German region 'Oberbayern' reported the highest net disposable household income with 31 800 PPS per inhabitant in 2023, followed by Luxembourg with 30 100 PPS per inhabitant and the Italian region 'Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano/Bozen' with 30 000 PPS per inhabitant. Regions in central Europe generally had the highest income levels across the EU in 2023, covering Austria and Luxembourg, the southern half of Germany and the northern parts of Belgium and Italy (see Map II.4). The Romanian capital region 'Bucureşti-Ilfov' was a notable exception from this regional cluster, having the fourth highest per capita household income in 2023 with 28 500 PPS per inhabitant.

In contrast, income levels were lowest in regions in south-eastern Europe and some French overseas regions. There were 16 regions where net disposable household income was below 13 000 PPS per inhabitant in 2023. Most of these were in Bulgaria (5 regions), Romania and Hungary (4 regions each) and France (2 regions). The lowest values were reported in the French overseas region 'Mayotte', with 7 600 PPS per inhabitant in 2023.

Map II.4

Net disposable household income

(PPS per inhabitant, by NUTS 2 regions, 2023)



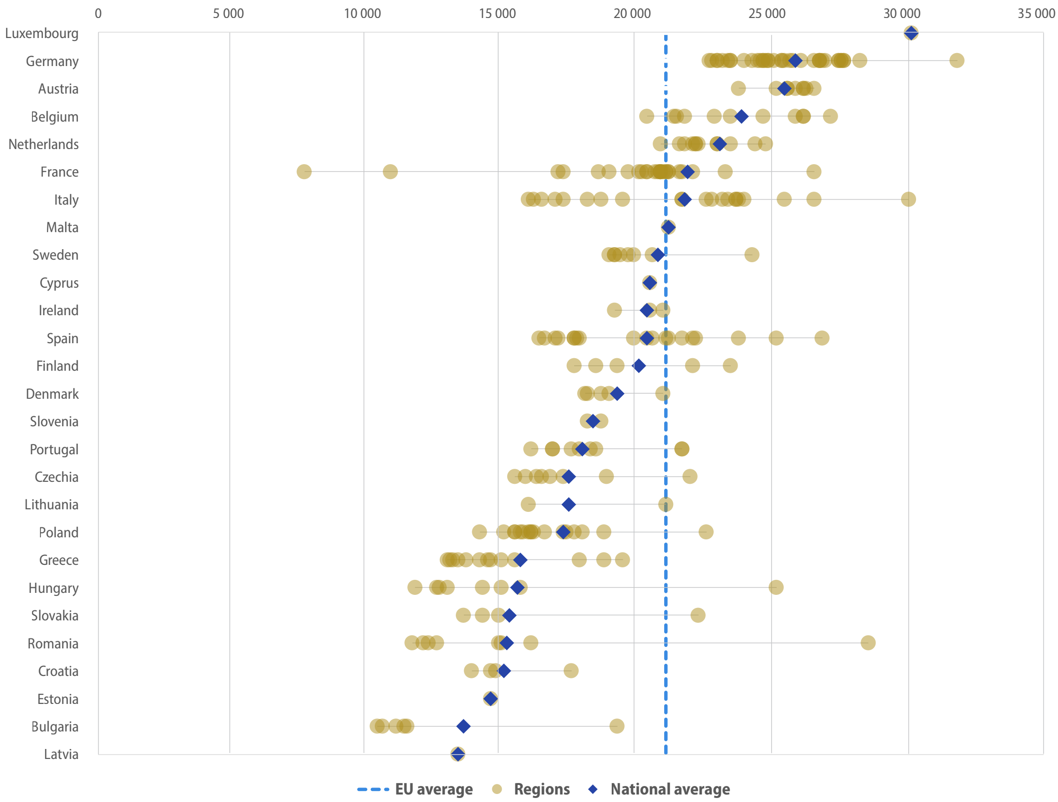
Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 04/2026

Source: Eurostat (online data code: nama_10r_2hhinc)

Figure II.4

Net disposable household income

(PPS per inhabitant, by NUTS 2 regions, 2023)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: nama_10r_2hhinc)

Regarding within-country disparities, France had the largest difference between the national average and the region with the lowest per-capita household income ('Mayotte' and 'Guyane '), with a ratio of 2.9 and 2.0 respectively (see Figure II.4). In all other Member States this ratio was below 1.4. From the remaining countries, Italy, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria had the largest differences between the national average and the region with the lowest income levels, with ratios of around 1.35.

Organic farming

Organic farming is a way of agricultural production that seeks to limit environmental impacts through practices that encourage the responsible use of energy and natural resources, maintain or enhance biodiversity, preserve regional ecological balances, increase soil fertility and water quality, encourage high animal welfare standards, and enhance the capacity to adapt to climate change.

In 2023, organic farming was practiced on 10.8 % of the utilised agricultural area (UAA) in the EU [5]. While the area under organic farming has spread continuously over the past decade, it is still far from the EU's target to reach 25 % by 2030.

Across Member States, the share of utilised agricultural area under organic farming ranged from almost 27 % in Austria to less than 5 % in the Netherlands, Poland, Ireland and Bulgaria, with Malta reporting the lowest share of only 0.8 % in

[5] The data on organic farming reported here encompass both fully converted land and land currently under conversion to organic farming.

2023 (see the analysis in the chapter on SDG 2 'Zero hunger' on page 37).

Organic farming varies strongly across EU regions

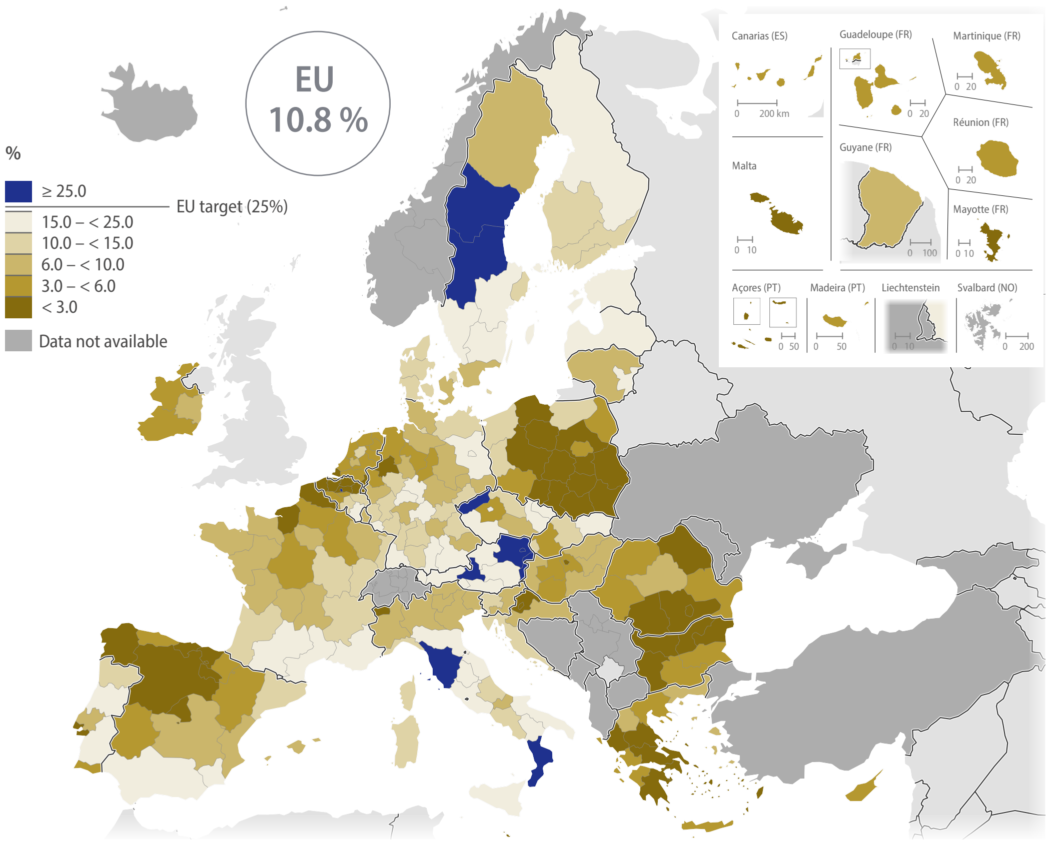
In 2023, the top 3 regions with the highest shares of organic farming were all in Austria: 'Salzburg' (51.2 %), 'Burgenland' (41.4 %) and the capital region 'Wien' (39.0 %) (see Figure II.5). Only 10 of the 242 NUTS 2 regions with available data (4.1 %) exceeded the EU target value of 25 % in 2023, including 'Calabria' and 'Toscana' in Italy, 'Severozápad' in Czechia, 'Norra Mellansverige' and 'Mellersta Norrland' in Sweden, 'Niederösterreich' in Austria (in addition to the three regions already mentioned before) and the Belgian capital region 'Région de Bruxelles-Capitale/Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest'. Only 31 regions reported shares of above 20 % (see Map II.5), which were mostly located in Austria (seven regions), Italy (five regions), Czechia and Sweden (four regions each).

At the other end of the spectrum were 46 regions where organic farming was practiced on less than 3 % of the utilised agricultural area, mainly in Poland (11 regions), Spain (six regions), Belgium (five

Map II.5

Area under organic farming

(% of utilised agricultural area, by NUTS 2 regions, 2023)



Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 04/2026

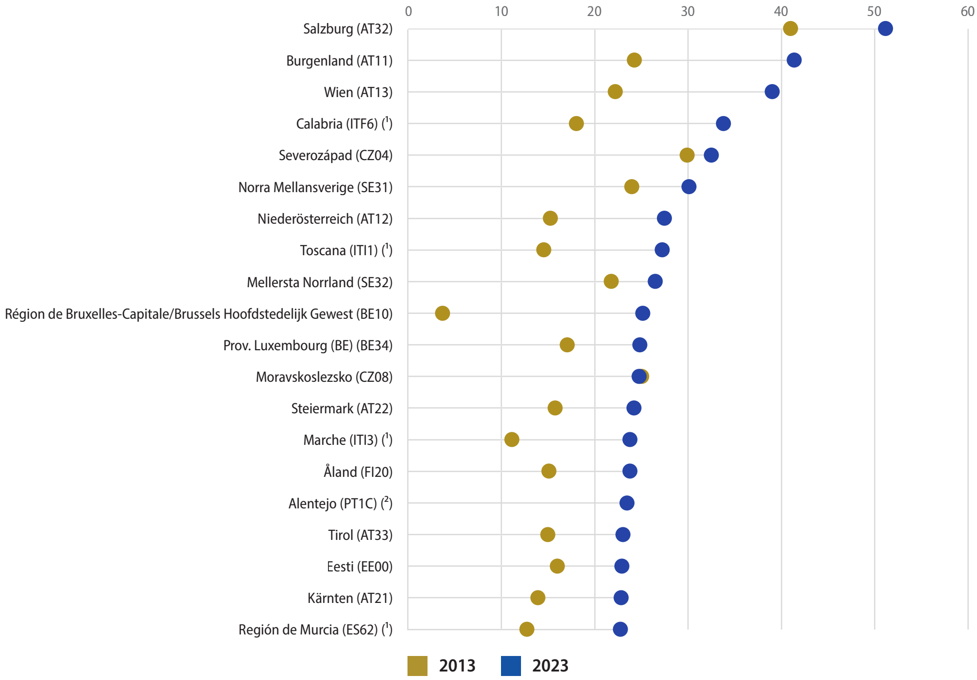
Note: 2020 data for all regions in Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Slovenia as well as for 'Berlin', 'Bremen' and 'Sachsen-Anhalt' (Germany), 'Mayotte' (France), 'Zeeland' and 'Limburg' (Netherlands), 'Bucureşti-Ilfov' (Romania), 'Bratislavský kraj' and 'Stredné Slovensko' (Slovakia); EU estimate made for the purpose of this publication.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ef_lus_main)

Figure II.5

EU regions with the highest shares of organic farming

(% of utilised agricultural area, by NUTS 2 regions, 2013 and 2023)



(¹) 2020 data (instead of 2023)

(²) No data for 2013.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ef_lus_main)

regions) and Bulgaria and Romania (four regions each). The Hungarian capital 'Budapest' was the only region reporting zero organic farming practices in 2023.

Over the past decade, the share of utilised agricultural area under organic farming has increased in almost all regions for which data is available over a sufficiently long time period. The increases were strongest in the capital regions of Belgium ('Région de Bruxelles-Capitale/Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest') and Czechia ('Praha'), with the share of organic farming growing by more than 20 percentage points between 2013 and 2023. This indicates that organic farming practices are generally on the rise throughout the EU.

Terrestrial protected areas

Terrestrial ecosystems in the EU have been protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives since 1979 and 1992, respectively, forming the foundation for biodiversity and ecosystems conservation. The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 has set the target to protect at least 30 % of EU land, with specific commitments to protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems. In 2023, 26.4 % of the EU land area was under protection as part of Natura 2000 sites and nationally designated protected areas. This share has grown only marginally since 2011, when 24.6 % were protected. Across Member States, Bulgaria and Slovenia had the largest extent of protected areas, covering more than 40 % of these countries' land area, while in Ireland and Finland less than 14 % of the territory were designated as protected areas (see the analysis in the chapter on SDG 15 'Life on land' on page 247).

Protected areas covered more than half of the territory in around 14 % of EU regions

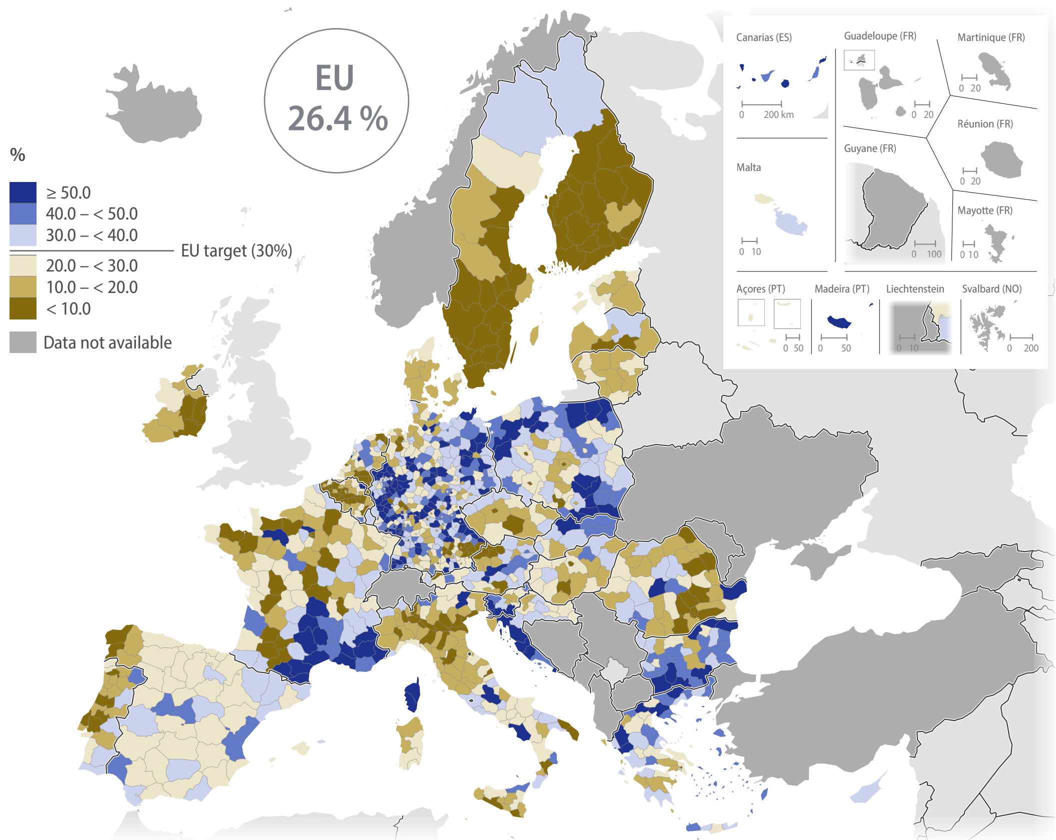
At regional NUTS 3 level, 12 out of the 1 160 regions with available data had more than 80 % of their land area covered by protected areas in 2023, including 10 regions in Germany. 'Berchtesgadener Land' in Germany and 'Lungau' in Austria had virtually all their territory covered by protected areas (see Figure II.6), followed by 'Ahrweiler' (Germany) with 94.8 %. Across the EU, 164 regions (14.1 %) had more than half of their territory protected, with the vast majority (96 regions) in Germany, followed by France (17 regions) and Poland (13 regions). In 502 of the 1 160 NUTS 3 regions (43.3 %) the extent of protected areas was above the 30 % target of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

At the other end of the scale were 57 regions in which protected areas covered less than 5 % of the territory, mainly in Finland (12 regions), Belgium (10 regions) and France (8 regions). The three regions with the lowest extent of protected areas in 2023 were all in France, including 'Paris', 'Hauts-de-Seine' and 'Val-de-Marne'.

Map II.6

Terrestrial protected areas

(% of land area, by NUTS 3 regions, 2023)

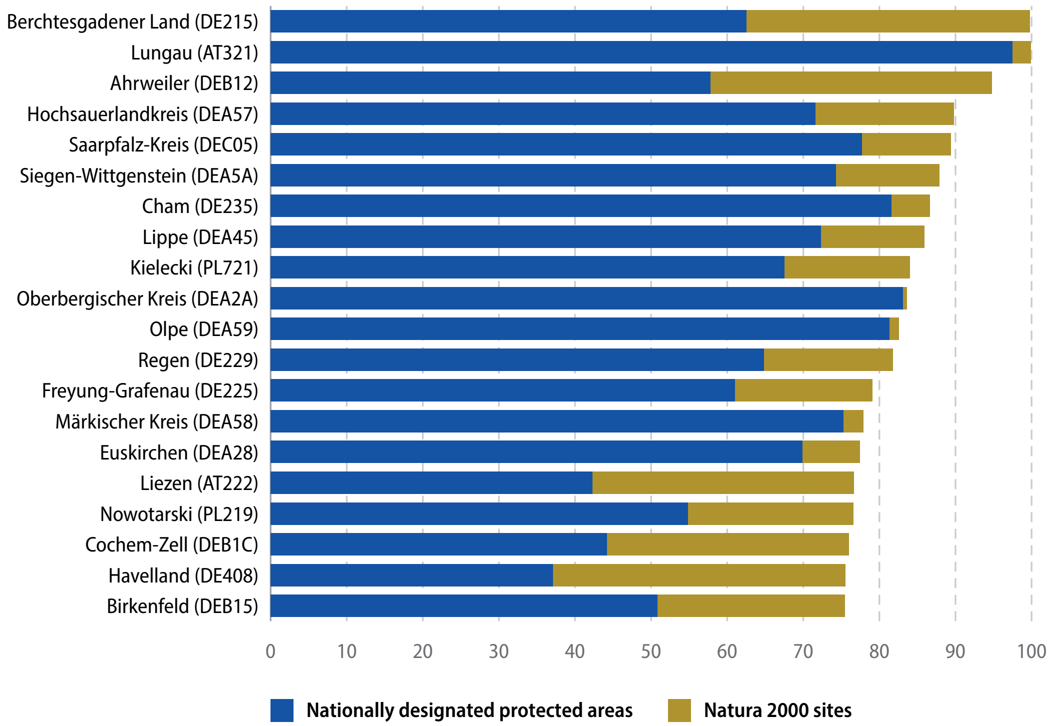


Source: European Environment Agency (EEA)

Figure II.6

EU regions with the largest shares of terrestrial protected areas

(% of land area, by NUTS 3 regions, 2023)



Source: European Environment Agency (EEA)

Even though the total area covered by Natura 2000 sites (76.8 million ha) at EU level was more than twice as large as that of nationally designated protected areas (31.1 million ha), the latter still play an important role at the regional level. As shown in Figure II.6, nationally designated areas made up a large proportion of the protected areas in all but one of the top 20 regions with the largest extent of protected areas. Moreover, in almost two-thirds of the 164 regions which had more than half of their territory covered by protected areas, the extent of nationally designated areas exceeded that of Natura 2000 sites. Nevertheless, in a further 20 % of regions, protected areas were almost exclusively made up of Natura 2000 areas, showing that both approaches are needed to safeguard ecosystems and biodiversity across the EU. However, it must be noted that the designation of protected areas alone is not a guarantee of biodiversity protection. The management of these areas is a crucial factor in achieving conservation aims, but a respective assessment is hampered by a lack of comprehensive information on how effectively these areas are managed ([6]).

([6]) European Environment Agency (2025), [Designated terrestrial protected areas in Europe].

The EU in the world and spillover effects of EU consumption

Developments of selected SDG indicators in the EU and other major World economies

Eradicating poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030 requires collective action in the EU and beyond. However, the 2025 UN SDG progress report reveals that globally only 18 % of the SDG targets are on track to be achieved by 2030, 17 % are making moderate progress, nearly half show minimal or no progress, and 18 % have regressed below 2015 levels.

This section compares developments in the EU and other major world economies, based on six indicators from the EU SDG indicator set. Table III.1 lists the countries selected for comparison in this chapter and illustrates their shares of global GDP, population and land area. Together, these economies accounted for 75 % of global GDP, 56 % of the global population and 54 % of the global land area in 2024. The graphs include those countries for which data are available.

Table III.1

GDP, population and land area of selected countries

(global share in %, 2024)

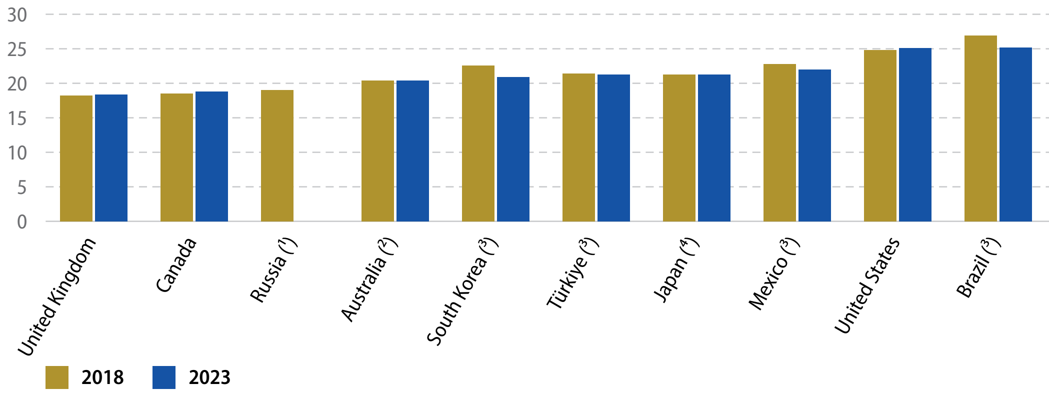
	GDP	Population	Land area
EU	14.3 %	5.5 %	3.1 %
Australia	1.0 %	0.3 %	5.9 %
Brazil	2.4 %	2.6 %	6.4 %
Canada	1.3 %	0.5 %	6.8 %
China	19.1 %	17.4 %	7.2 %
India	8.1 %	17.8 %	2.3 %
Japan	3.2 %	1.5 %	0.3 %
Mexico	1.7 %	1.6 %	1.5 %
Russia	3.5 %	1.8 %	12.6 %
South Korea	1.6 %	0.6 %	0.1 %
Türkiye	2.0 %	1.1 %	0.6 %
United Kingdom	2.1 %	0.8 %	0.2 %
United States	14.6 %	4.2 %	7.0 %
Total	75.0 %	55.8 %	54.0 %

Source: World Bank ('GDP, purchasing power parity (PPP), current international $'), Eurostat (online data code: demo_gind), United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division ('Total population by sex') and FAOSTAT, Land use ('Land area').

Figure III.1

Persons at risk of monetary poverty after social transfers

(% of population, 2018 and 2023)



Note: The years specified are the income years referred to in the surveys for collecting the data and not the years in which the surveys were conducted.

(1) 2017 data instead of 2018; no data for 2023.
(2) 2020 data instead of 2023.
(3) 2022 data instead of 2023.
(4) 2021 data instead of 2023.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_01_20; also see page 31) and OECD ('Poverty rate based on disposable income, 60% of the national median disposable income')

Monetary poverty (SDG 1)

Poverty harms people's lives and can undermine social cohesion and economic growth. Monetary poverty refers to the share of people with an equivalised disposable income below 60 % of the national median, after accounting for social transfers. Policy measures such as unemployment benefits, sickness benefits, progressive taxation, and social and employment services, have contributed significantly to reduce monetary poverty in the EU. With a monetary poverty rate of 16.2 % in the income year 2023 (1) — 0.3 percentage points lower than in the 2018 income year — the EU had the lowest poverty rate among the major world economies. For comparison, the at-risk-of-poverty rates in Brazil and the United States were slightly above 25 % in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

(1) The term 'income year' is used to emphasise that the data refer to the year for which survey respondents provide their income data, which might differ from the year in which the data are collected. For the EU, data are collected through the survey on European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and are labelled according to the year of the data collection, meaning that data labelled as 2024 refer to people's incomes in 2023.

Education (SDG 4)

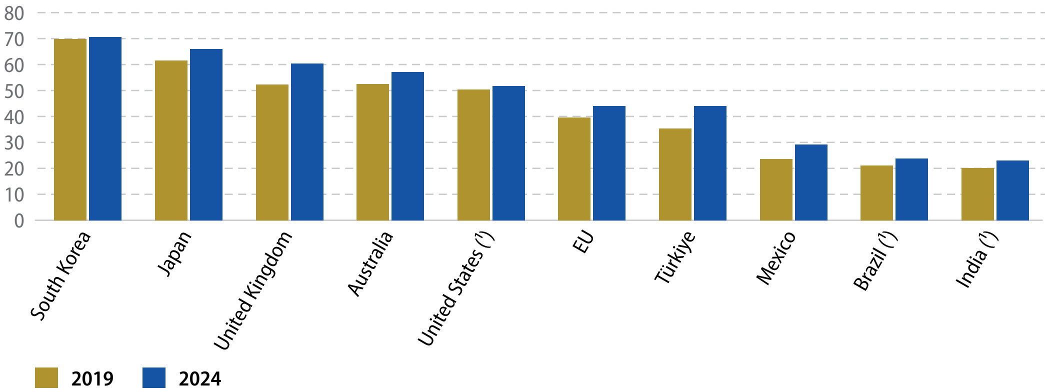
Tertiary education is crucial for a knowledge-based economy, as higher attainment tends to improve employment prospects and job quality while supporting competitiveness, innovation and productivity. In 2024, 44.1 % of the EU population aged 25 to 34 had attained tertiary education, an improvement of 4.5 percentage points compared with 2019. The EU's tertiary educational attainment rate was lower than in other major world economies, such as South Korea (70.6 %), Japan (66.0 %), the United Kingdom (60.3 %) or Australia (57.2 %). At the other end of the spectrum, in Mexico, Brazil and India less than 30 % of the age cohort had completed tertiary qualifications by 2023 or 2024.

During the most recent five-year period, all countries monitored here increased their shares of highly educated adults in their populations.

Figure III.2

Tertiary educational attainment

(% of population aged 25 to 34, 2019 and 2024)



(¹) 2023 data instead of 2024.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: sdg_04_20; also see page 80) and OECD ('Adults' educational attainment distribution, by age group and gender'))

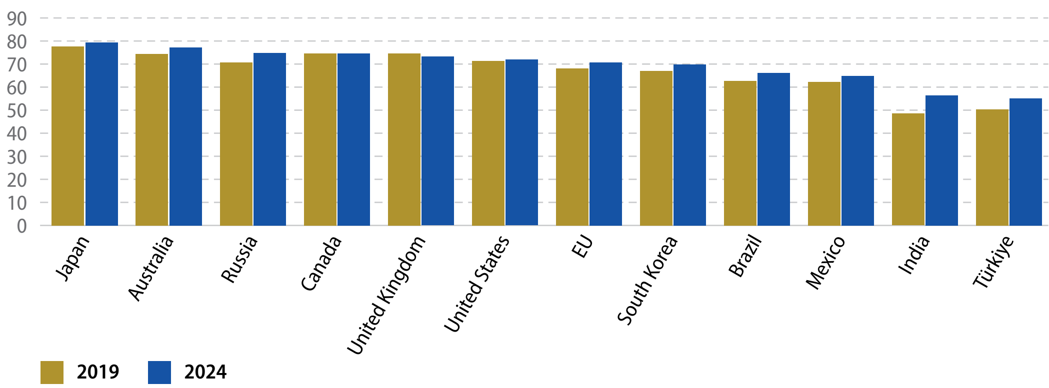
Employment (SDG 8)

Employment is central to socio-economic development and social cohesion, because it provides the income and inclusion needed for decent living standards while helping to reduce poverty and inequality. In 2024, the EU's employment rate for people aged 15 to 64 years was 70.8 %, which is higher than in many major economies of the world, such as South Korea, Brazil or India, but lower than in Japan (79.4 %), Canada (74.7 %) or the United States (71.9 %) (see Figure III.3). All economies shown in Figure III.3 saw an increase in their employment rate between 2019 and 2024, except Canada and the United Kingdom. While in the EU the employment rate is mainly monitored for people aged 20 to 64 years (see

Figure III.3

Employment rate

(% of population aged 15 to 64, 2019 and 2024)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfsi_emp_a; also see page 141) and ILOSTAT ('Employment-to-population ratio by sex and age (%)')

Figure 8.8), global data for this indicator are only available for the 15 to 64-year-old age group (2).

Patent applications (SDG 9)

Patent applications are a measure for innovation, reflecting the creative capacity to develop new technologies and the economic exploitation of research results that underpin competitiveness and productivity. In 2024, 747 patent applications per million inhabitants were recorded in the EU. This was comparable to the United States, but significantly less than in some other major world economies, such as Japan (1 913 patent applications per million inhabitants) and China (1 187). South Korea recorded by far the highest number of patent applications in that year, with 3 783 per million inhabitants.

Over the past decade, trends in patent applications per million inhabitants have developed unevenly across major world economies. While some countries, such as China and South Korea, saw an increase in the number of patent applications, others, including the United States and the United Kingdom, experienced a decline between 2015 and 2024. Over the same period, the EU recorded a modest increase of 2.8 % in the number of patent applications per million inhabitants.

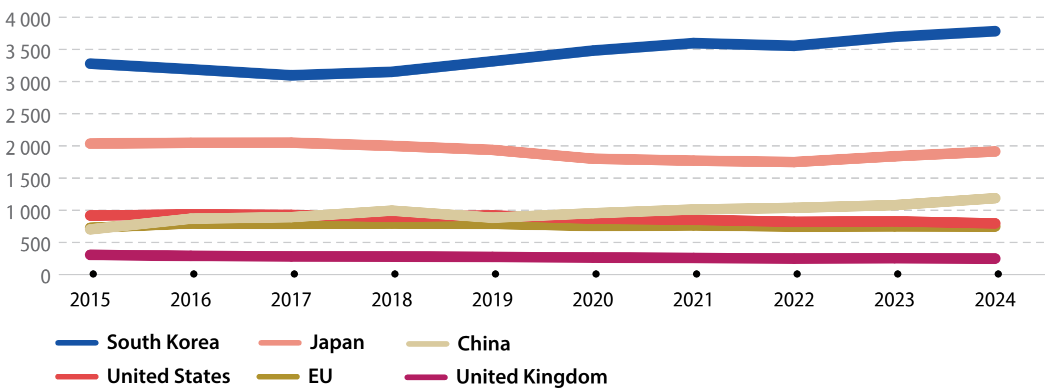
Zero emission cars (SDG 12 & SDG 13)

Currently, passenger cars generate more than half of road-transport emissions. Accelerating the uptake of zero-emission vehicles reduces greenhouse gas emissions and helps to meet climate targets. In 2024, sales of zero emission cars — including both battery electric vehicles (BEV) and fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEV) — accounted for 14 % of all sales of new cars in the EU. This marks a sevenfold increase since 2019, when their share was just 2 %. However, in 2024 the share decreased by 1 percentage point compared with 2023. Among major global economies, only China and the United Kingdom surpassed the EU's sales share of new zero emission cars in 2024, reaching 27 % and 19 %, respectively. Over the past five years, the share of zero emission car sales rose significantly in all major world economies for which data are available (see Figure III.5). Globally, more than 11 million new zero emission cars were registered in 2024, representing 14 % of all new cars sold that year (3).

Figure III.4

Patent applications

(per million inhabitants, 2015–2024)



Source: WIPO statistics database

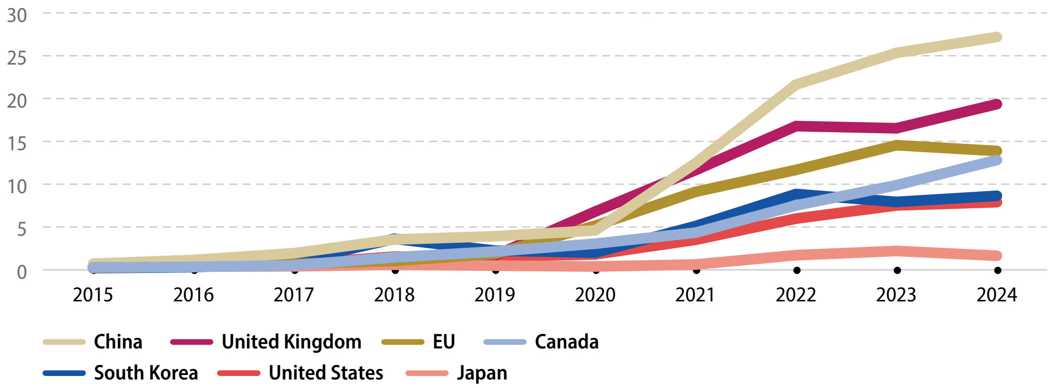
(2) Setting a lower boundary for the age group at 15 years results in higher employment rates in countries where compulsory education for young people ends at 15 years or earlier. This is the case for Brazil, Japan, Russia, South Korea and for 7 out of the 27 Members States in the EU; see European Education and Culture Executive Agency (2023), Compulsory education in Europe 2023/2024.

(3) Source: calculations based on data from IEA (2025), Global EV Data Explorer.

Figure III.5

Sales share of new zero-emission cars

(%, 2015–2024)



Note: The data include battery electric vehicles (BEV) and fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEV).

Source: International Energy Agency

Greenhouse gas emissions (SDG 13)

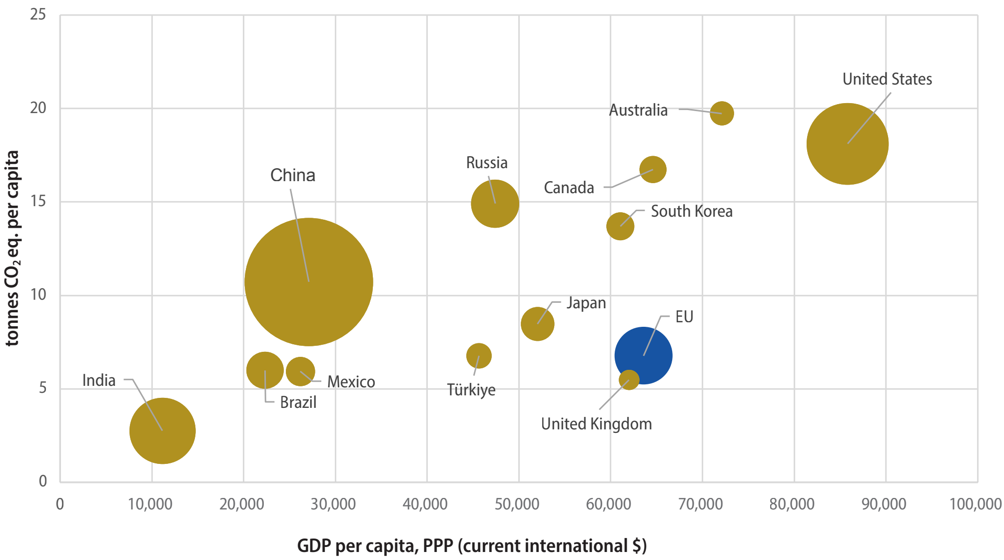
Greenhouse (GHG) gas emissions from human activities trap heat in the atmosphere, thereby driving global warming and increasing the risk of more frequent and severe extreme weather, sea-level rise and ecosystem disruption. The EU (6.8 tonnes per capita) and the United Kingdom (5.5 tonnes per capita) were the lowest per-capita emitters of GHGs among high-income economies in 2024 [4]. The EU's per-capita emissions were around three times less than in Australia (19.7 tonnes per capita) and the United States (18.1 tonnes per capita). Nevertheless, the EU's per-capita emissions were higher than in several other major economies, such as India, Brazil and Mexico. Countries with higher GDP per capita generally cause higher GHG emissions per capita (see Figure III.6). The EU's emissions were also higher than the world average (6.2 tonnes per capita).

When comparing GHG emissions in absolute terms, China's emissions were by far the highest in 2024, with 15.1 gigatonnes (Gt), followed by the United States (6.2 Gt), India (4.0 Gt) and the EU (3.1 Gt).

(4) Emissions from land-use and forestry (LULUCF) and from international aviation and shipping are not included in the data.

Figure III.6

Greenhouse gas emissions per capita and GDP per capita, 2024



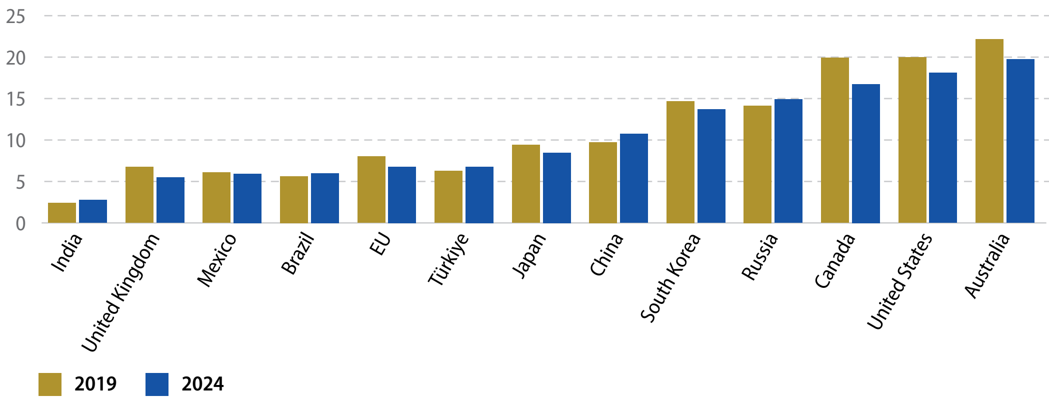
Note: The size of the bubbles corresponds to the total GHG emissions of each country in thousand tonnes of CO_2 equivalents in 2024. Emissions from land-use and forestry (LULUCF) and from international aviation and shipping are not included in the data.

Source: Climate watch ('PIK-PRIMAP historical emissions' (5)); World Bank ('GDP per capita, purchasing power parity (PPP), current international $') also see page 221.

Figure III.7

Greenhouse gas emissions per capita

(tonnes of CO_2 equivalent per capita, 2019 and 2024)



Note: Emissions from land-use and forestry (LULUCF) and from international aviation and shipping are not included in the data.

Source: Climate watch ('PIK-PRIMAP historical emissions' (6))

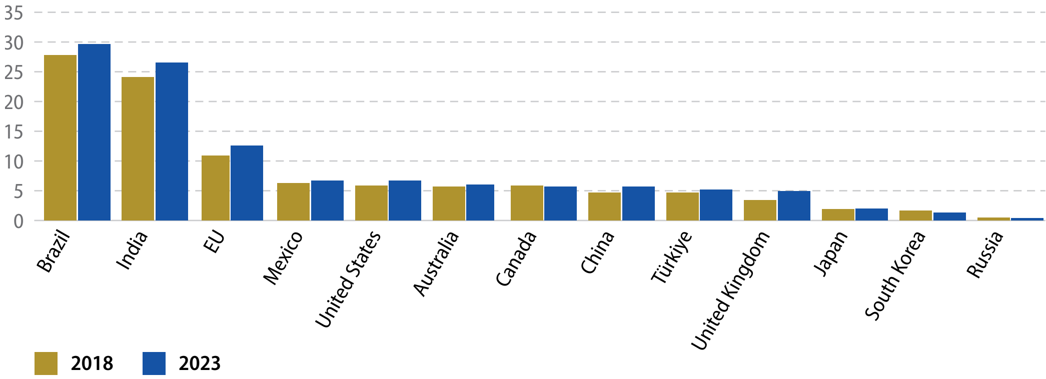
(5) Gütschow, J., Jeffery, M. L., Gieseke, R., Gebel, R., Stevens, D., Krapp, M., and Rocha, M. (2016), The PRIMAP-hist national historical emissions time series, Earth Syst. Sci. Data, 8, 571–603

(6) Gütschow, J., Jeffery, M. L., Gieseke, R., Gebel, R., Stevens, D., Krapp, M., and Rocha, M. (2016), The PRIMAP-hist national historical emissions time series, Earth Syst. Sci. Data, 8, 571–603.

Figure III.8

Renewables as a share of final energy consumption

(%, 2018 and 2023)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: nrg_bal_s) and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division (Energy Balances)

Between 2019 and 2024, many major economies reduced their per-capita emissions, as shown in Figure III.7. The United Kingdom recorded the largest decrease (19.0 %), followed by Canada (15.9 %) and the EU (15.7 %). In contrast, India increased its per-capita emissions by 14.6 %, while China's emissions increased by 10.2 %.

Share of renewables in total energy supply (SDG 7 & SDG 13)

Renewable energies are crucial for cutting greenhouse gas emissions while reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels and exposure to supply shocks and high energy costs. In 2023, the share of renewable energy in final energy consumption ([7]) in the EU stood at 12.6 %. Brazil and India recorded higher shares of renewables, at 29.6 % and 26.5 %, respectively. At the other end of the spectrum, the shares in South Korea and Russia were below 2 %. Between 2018 and 2023, most major world economies increased their shares of renewable energy. The largest gains were observed in India (2.4 percentage points), Brazil (1.8 percentage points) and the EU (1.6 percentage points).

Spillover effects of EU consumption

In a globalised world, countries' actions towards sustainable development may positively or negatively influence other countries and their capacity to achieve the SDGs. Therefore, domestic policies and behaviours may have an impact beyond national borders. The impacts that activities in one sector, region or country have on other sectors, regions or countries are called spillover effects (or simply 'spillovers').

([7]) Final energy consumption (FEC) measures a country's energy use by end users, such as households, industry and transport. It excludes the energy used by the energy sector itself and losses incurred during energy transformation and distribution and any non-energy use of energy carriers. This measure should not be confused with gross final energy consumption, which is the basis for measuring the share of renewable energies in chapters on SDG 7 and SDG 13.

Policy context

The EU's trade policy review aims to make supply chains more sustainable by addressing the impacts of the EU's consumption and trade on the rest of the world, in particular by promoting sustainability standards.

The carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) entered into force in May 2023 and has been implemented in phases: after a transitional reporting period (October 2023 to December 2025), its definitive regime applies from January 2026. The CBAM addresses the risk of carbon leakage, which occurs when industries transfer polluting production to other countries with less stringent climate policies, or when EU products are replaced by more carbon-intensive imports. Under the definitive regime, authorised importers of selected carbon-intensive goods must declare embedded emissions and surrender CBAM certificates linked to the carbon price under the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS).

The Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) establishes a framework to improve the sustainability of products placed on the EU market by setting ecodesign requirements that can cover aspects such as durability, reparability, energy and resource efficiency, and recyclability. It also provides for a Digital Product Passport (DPP) to make key product information available along value chains, supporting more transparent supply chains and enabling circular economy strategies that can help reduce the material impacts of EU consumption.

The Directive on corporate sustainability due diligence (CSDDD) aims to foster sustainable and responsible corporate behaviour in companies' operations and across their global value chains. The rules are meant to ensure businesses address any adverse human rights and environmental impacts of their actions, inside and outside Europe. The Commission has recently proposed to simplify the duties and reduce regulatory burden, while preserving the original policy objectives.

The Regulation on deforestation-free products (EUDR) promotes the consumption of 'deforestation-free' products to decrease the EU's impact on global deforestation embodied in imported agricultural products. It is intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss. Recent simplification measures will reduce administrative costs and burden for companies covered by the Regulation.

This chapter measures spillover effects using four indicators: gross value added (GVA), greenhouse gas (GHG) footprint, material footprint and cropland footprint. These indicators differ from those analysed in the 17 SDG chapters of this report by following a consumption-based perspective.

In this context, 'consumption-based' refers to the use of resources associated with the final consumption of goods and services in the EU, regardless of where this resource use occurs along the global production chain. In contrast, 'production-based' refers to the use of resources at the place of production, regardless of where resulting goods and services are ultimately consumed.

A sole focus on production-based accounting can create incentives to shift production to other countries, as this may lead to an apparent reduction in domestic resource use — often referred to as 'leakage'. A consumption-based perspective, by contrast, captures global resource use driven by a country's demand.

Measuring consumption-induced spillover effects is a complex and data-intensive exercise, requiring data on direct cross-border flows (imports and exports) and indirect cross-border flows (socio-economic and environmental impacts of specific products and sectors throughout the entire supply chain). Many of these indirect impacts are difficult to measure and, therefore, quantifying them requires making assumptions and using model-

Table III.2

EU's population and footprints, 2018 and 2023

	2018	2023	Change 2018–2023 (%)	EU global share in 2023
Population	445.6 million	448.6 million	0.7 %	5.5 %
GVA	EUR 11 716 billion	EUR 14 999 billion	28.0 %	16.4 %
GHG footprint	4.6 Gt	4.0 Gt	– 12.0 %	7.8 %
Material footprint	6.6 Gt	6.1 Gt	– 7.0 %	5.9 %
Cropland footprint (1)	122 million ha (2)	124 million ha (3)	1.5 % (4)	8.4 % (3)

(1) The data refer to 'harvested area for primary crops'.
(2) 2019 data.
(3) 2024 data.
(4) Change 2019–2024.

based estimates (8). For more information on the methodology behind the indicators presented here, please see the explanatory note on the Eurostat website.

To understand the relative impact of the EU's consumption patterns, it helps to compare the EU's footprints with its global population share (see Table III.2). In 2023, the EU was home to 5.5 % of the world population (9). The table shows that the EU's footprints were disproportionally higher, with the EU accounting for 16.4 % of global GVA, 7.8 % of global GHG emissions, 5.9 % of the global material footprint and around 8.4 % of the global cropland footprint (10). Despite the slight increase in the EU's population over the past five years, its GHG and material footprints decreased over the same period.

Gross value added (GVA)

GVA measures the economic value created in a country and constitutes the main part of the gross domestic product (GDP). It is calculated as the total value of all goods and services produced minus the cost of materials and services used in production (excluding taxes and subsidies on products). GVA is a widely available indicator, showing how much economic value is generated both inside and outside the EU through EU consumption.

GVA generated outside the EU as a result of EU consumption rose by 31 % between 2018 and 2023

Between 2018 and 2023, GVA generated by EU consumption (11) grew by 28 %, rising from EUR 11 716 billion to EUR 14 999 billion. This includes GVA generated both within and outside the EU. The GVA generated within the EU also increased by 28 % during this period, making up the largest share (EUR 12 838 billion in 2023). Meanwhile, the GVA generated outside the EU as a result of EU consumption rose by 31 %, from EUR 1 653 billion in 2018 to EUR 2 160 billion in 2023.

For comparison, consumption outside the EU generated EUR 2 697 billion in value added within the EU. This was 25 % more than what EU consumption generated abroad, reflecting the trade surplus of the EU economy. In total, 16 % of the global GVA is linked to the EU's consumption, which is almost three times the EU's share of the global population.

Greenhouse gas emissions footprint

While the previous section shows that the EU consumption generates positive external economic effects, it also causes emissions within and outside the EU. The greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions footprint estimates the emissions associated with

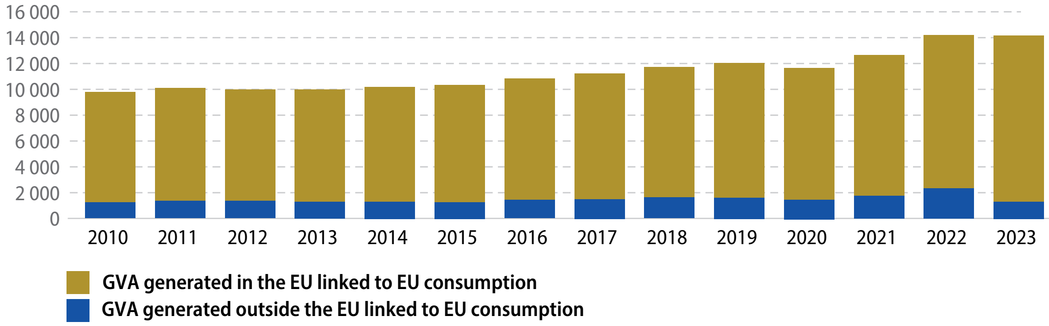
(8) In this case, the FIGARO multi-regional input–output model has been used. FIGARO stands for 'Full International and Global Accounts for Research in input–Output analysis' and comprises the EU inter-country supply, use and input–output tables (EU IC-SUIOTs). FIGARO tables link national accounts with data on business, trade and jobs for EU Member States and 18 main EU trading partners; a 'rest of the world' region completes the FIGARO tables. For more information on FIGARO, see European Commission, *FIGARO tables: EU inter-country supply, use, and input-output tables*.
(9) *Source:* calculations based on Eurostat (online data code: demo_gind) and UN World Population Prospects.
(10) Cropland data refer to 2024, all other data refer to 2023.

(11) In the context of GVA, consumption also includes investment in goods produced in other countries.

Figure III.9

Gross value added as a result of EU consumption

(EUR billion, 2010–2023)

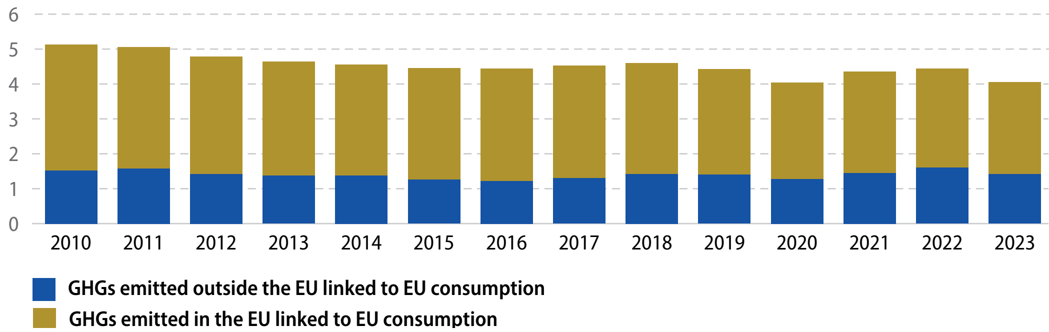


Source: Eurostat, JRC (estimates based on FIGARO data)

Figure III.10

Greenhouse gas emission footprint

(billion tonnes of CO_2 equivalents, EU, 2010–2023)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: env_ac_ghgfp)

the final demand for goods and services in the EU. It includes all emissions generated at any stage of a product's life cycle before its final use, regardless of whether the greenhouse gases are emitted within or outside the EU borders.

In 2023, only 65 % of GHG emissions induced by EU consumption were generated in the EU

As shown in Figure III.10, the EU's GHG emissions footprint decreased by 12.0 % between 2018 and 2023, reaching 4.0 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO_2) equivalents in 2023. This was close to the lowest recorded value observed during the pandemic in 2020.

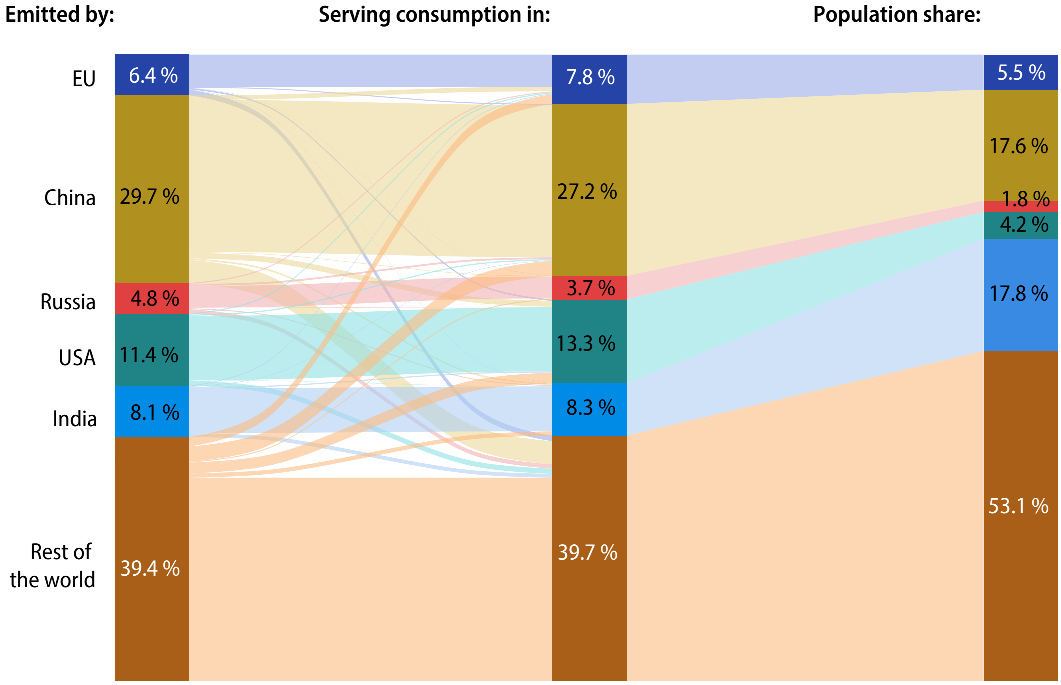
In 2023, 2.6 billion tonnes of GHG emissions — equivalent to 65 % of the total emissions serving the EU's consumption — were generated in the EU. The remaining 1.4 billion tonnes of GHGs (35 %) were emitted in non-EU countries. Among these, China had the largest share with 0.4 billion tonnes or around 26 % of the non-EU total. This reflects that China is one of the EU's main trading partners, with 20.6 % of the EU's total imports (in value) originating from China in 2023 ([12]).

The United States accounted for 0.10 Gt of GHG emissions serving the EU's consumption, followed by Russia (0.09 Gt) and India (0.07 Gt) in 2023.

([12]) *Source*: Eurostat (online data code: ext_lt_maineu).

Figure III.11

Comparison of GHG emissions from a production and consumption perspective with world population, 2023



Source: Eurostat (online data codes: env_ac_ghgfp and demo_gind) and UN World Population Prospects

Compared with 2022, the share of emissions from Russia in the EU's footprint declined by 57%, while the emissions from China and the United States decreased by 8% and 4%, respectively.

GHG emissions resulting from EU consumption go down, but the EU's share of global emissions remains larger than its share of world population

In 2023, 6.4 % of the global GHG emissions (in CO_2 equivalents) were emitted in the EU. The same year, 7.8 % of the global GHG emissions could be traced back to the EU's consumption. This indicates that EU consumption generated a disproportionally high share of the world's emissions when compared with its share of the global population (5.5 %). However, other main economies of the world share the same pattern.

With a population of 1.42 billion, China's share of the world population was 17.6 % in 2023, while its consumption accounted for more than a quarter (27.2 %) of the world's GHG emissions in that year.

The United States had an even larger discrepancy between the share in population and the share in consumption-linked GHG emissions. While the country was home to 4.2 % of the world's population, its share in global emissions was more than three times higher, at 13.3 %. India, on the other hand, hosted 17.8 % of the global population, but its consumption caused only 8.3 % of global GHG emissions. The rest of the world (excluding China, EU, the United States, India and Russia) accounted for more than half (53.1 %) of the world population, while only 39.7 % of global GHG emissions could be attributed to consumption in these countries in 2023.

Figure III.11 presents the shares of GHG emissions both produced and consumed by several major world economies, alongside their respective shares of the global population. The left side of the diagram illustrates GHG emissions from the production perspective, showing the share of global emissions generated within the selected countries.

The middle section depicts emissions from a consumption perspective, indicating the origins of the emissions associated with consumption in these countries. The right side of the diagram represents each country's share of the global population, showing whether their contribution to the global GHG footprint is proportional to their population size.

Material footprint

The material footprint, also referred to as raw material consumption, shows the amount of materials required along the supply chains of the goods and services finally consumed in a country. These materials refer to the broad categories of biomass, metal ores, non-metallic minerals and fossil energy carriers. Eurostat estimates the material footprint by converting the actual weight of the goods traded internationally into the weight of materials extracted to produce these goods — the so-called raw material equivalents of imports and exports. These raw material equivalents can be several times larger than the weight of the imported or exported goods.

The material footprint highlights the increasing spatial separation of production and consumption and the relocation of environmental impacts associated with material extraction. All raw materials extracted and used worldwide are allocated to domestic final consumption.

Raw material extraction outside the EU serving EU consumption decreased by 16.2 % between 2018 and 2023

In the past 13 years, the EU's material footprint experienced ups and downs, fluctuating between 6.1 billion tonnes (recorded in 2013) and 7.0 billion tonnes (recorded in 2011), as Figure III.12 illustrates. The EU's material footprint has decreased by 7.0 % since 2018, reaching 6.1 billion tonnes in 2023. This corresponds to 5.9 % of the raw materials consumed globally. The EU's share of global raw material consumption was thus around 0.4 percentage point above its population share. Of all the raw materials serving the EU's consumption, 4.0 billion tonnes or around 65 % were extracted in the EU, while 2.2 billion tonnes were extracted outside the EU's borders. This means that around one-third of the raw materials needed for EU consumption were imported. The decrease in the EU's material footprint was mainly due to a reduction in raw material extraction outside the EU (by 16.2 %), while extraction in the EU serving EU consumption only fell by 1.2 % between 2018 and 2023.

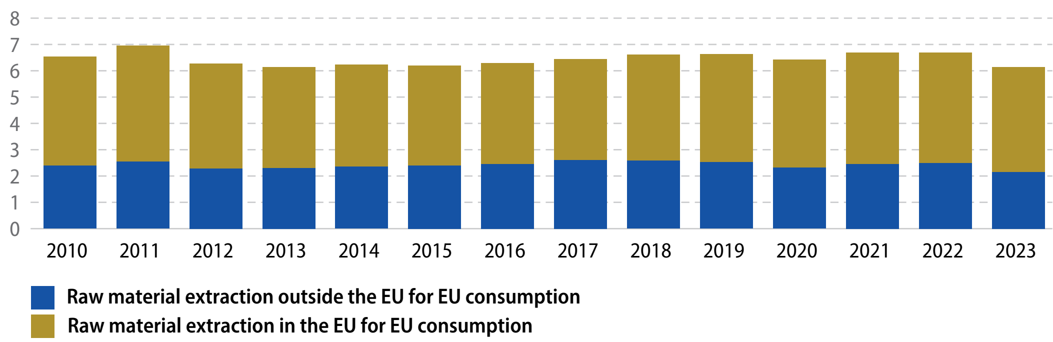
In 2023, the EU remained a net importer of raw materials, largely due to imports of fossil energy materials

In 2023, the EU imported about 2.3 times more fossil energy materials and more than 1.5 times more metal ores than it exported, as Figure III.13 illustrates. The large difference between imports and exports of fossil energy materials highlights the EU's strong energy dependency on other countries.

Figure III.12

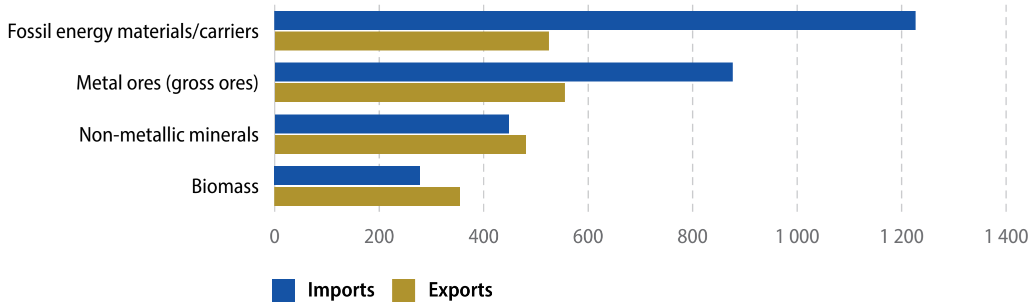
Material footprint

(billion tonnes, EU, 2010–2023)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: env_ac_rme) and materialflows.net

Figure III.13
EU imports and exports in raw material equivalents
(million tonnes, 2023)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: env_ac_rme)

Overall, the EU imported more goods (in raw material equivalents) than it exported.

Cropland footprint

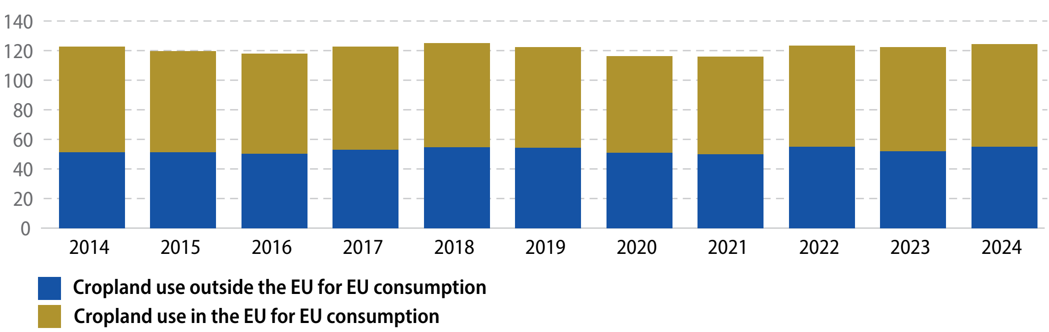
Land use footprints estimate the total land area, both domestically and abroad, that is required to serve EU consumption. While land use itself does not show concrete and direct environmental impacts, it is a proxy for the pressure on ecosystems and biodiversity stemming from production and consumption systems. This chapter focuses on land that is used to cultivate crops. The data are modelled based on land use coefficients of traded agricultural products.

The EU's cropland footprint increased by 1.5 % between 2019 and 2024

Between 2019 and 2024, the EU's cropland footprint increased by 1.5 %. As Figure III.14 illustrates, this increase was driven by a 1.5 % rise in both the land used for crop production outside the EU for EU consumption and the land used within the EU for the same purpose.

In 2024, the EU consumed crops cultivated on 124 million hectares (ha) of cropland located both inside and outside the EU, representing about 8.4 % of the world's cropland. This indicates that the EU's consumption used a disproportionally high share of the global cropland, compared with its share of the world's population (5.5 %). This highlights the

Figure III.14
Cropland footprint
(million ha, EU, 2014–2024)



Source: JRC, Eurostat, FAOSTAT (Land use)

EU's dependency on foreign land to serve domestic consumption.

Out of the 124 million ha of the cropland footprint, 69 million ha of land were located within the EU and 55 million ha were outside the EU. The main countries in which cropland served EU consumption were Argentina, Brazil and Ukraine. The main traded goods produced on these croplands were vegetable oils, oil seed crops and residues of food industries (such as oilcakes, mostly used as animal feed) ([13]). At the same time, 24 million ha of EU cropland served consumption abroad. The main exported products were cereals, followed by meat of ruminant livestock and vegetable oils ([14]).

([13]) European Commission (2024), EU Science Hub, EU land use footprint: modelling the land needed for EU consumption.
([14]) De Laurentiis, V., Orza, V. and Sala, S., (2024), Modelling the land footprint of EU consumption, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Sustainable development in the EU: an alternative cross-cutting analysis

SDG monitoring typically follows the structure of the 2030 Agenda, with indicators grouped under the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This goal-based structure has clear advantages: it aligns monitoring with the political framework, supports communication and makes it easier to link indicator developments to thematic policy areas.

At the same time, a purely goal-based structure can hide cross-cutting patterns. Indicators selected to inform separate SDGs may well belong to the same sustainable development dimension (social, economic, environmental or institutional) and thus shed light on similar phenomena (social cohesion, economic development, environmental pressures). Likewise, indicators from different SDGs may be linked to the same type of sustainability challenge, for example distributional or intergenerational fairness. Looking at indicators from alternative angles can therefore reveal insights that are hidden in a goal-by-goal presentation.

This chapter presents an alternative cross-cutting analysis, using the same EU SDG indicators as in the 17 thematic chapters but classifying them according to the four dimensions of sustainability: society, economy, environment and institutions. In addition, each indicator is categorised according to different types of sustainable development processes ([1]).

([1]) See the EU SDG indicator set 2026 for the dimension and type of sustainable development attributed to each indicator. Multi-purpose indicators are included more than once in the analysis, sometimes with a different dimension and type attributed to them.

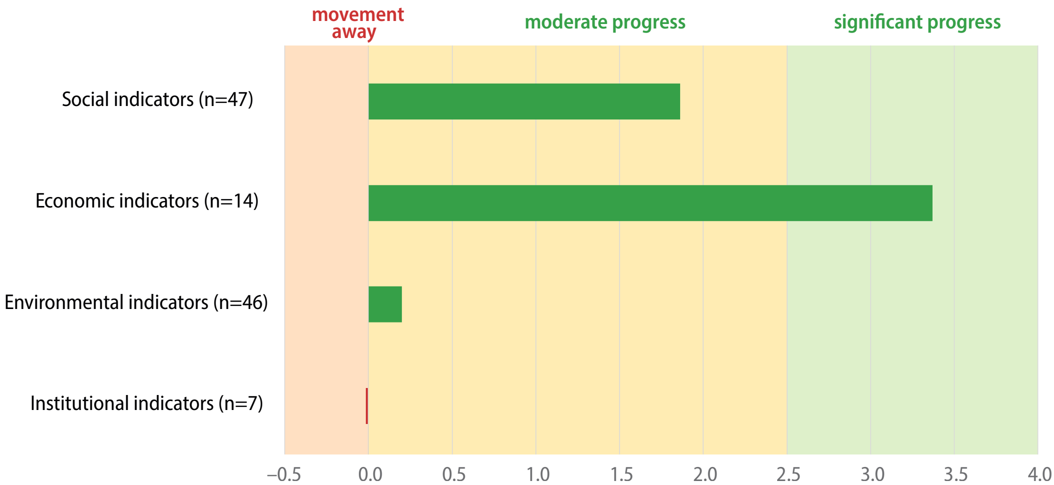
How has the EU progressed towards the four dimensions of sustainable development?

Sustainable development is needed across the society, the economy, the environment and institutions — the latter acting as drivers for change across the other three dimensions. A sustainable society is reflected in people's living conditions (for example, health, education, poverty and equality). Economic sustainability builds on factors enabling performance, competitiveness and growth (for example, employment, innovation, productivity and infrastructure). The use of the environment is sustainable if pressures (for example, pollution, climate impacts, and use of energy and ecosystem services) are within safe limits that allow nature to recover from impacts within a reasonable time. The institutional dimension addresses the governance and implementation capacity needed to enable sustainable development (for example, institutions, partnerships, policy frameworks).

Classifying the EU SDG indicators according to their sustainability dimension allows EU progress to be summarised in terms of the core pillars of the 2030 Agenda. Figure IV.1 shows the progress achieved for each of the four dimensions over the most recent five- or six-year period of available data (mainly 2019–2024 or 2019–2025), avoiding 2020 as a base year due to COVID-related outliers. It is based on the average progress score of indicators in each dimension, ranging between –5 (worst score) and +5 (best score) (see Annex II on page

Figure IV.1

EU progress towards the four sustainable development dimensions



328 for a description of the progress assessment methodology).

Favourable labour-market trends and improved economic performance in sectors such as agriculture and environmental goods and services are indicative of significant economic progress in the EU. Improvements in areas such as educational participation and income and gender equality suggest progress on social sustainability. In contrast, reaching environmental sustainability remains challenging. Modest progress has been made, but climate pressures increase and the protection of ecosystems lag behind. No progress has been observed in institutional sustainability, signalling that governance and implementation capacity need to speed up.

How balanced is the EU's progress towards sustainable development?

The Swiss MONET indicator typology offers another complementary perspective providing insights beyond the goal-by-goal presentation of progress. The MONET typology [2] classifies indicators by the type of sustainable development process they capture [3]:

- Capital (preserving resources for future generations)
- Distribution (fairness)
- Efficiency (decoupling growth from environmental impacts)
- Input/output (resource use and investments today)
- Level (meeting current needs)
- Response (societal and policy action)

The MONET-type grouping of indicators makes it possible to answer more fundamental questions related to sustainable development.

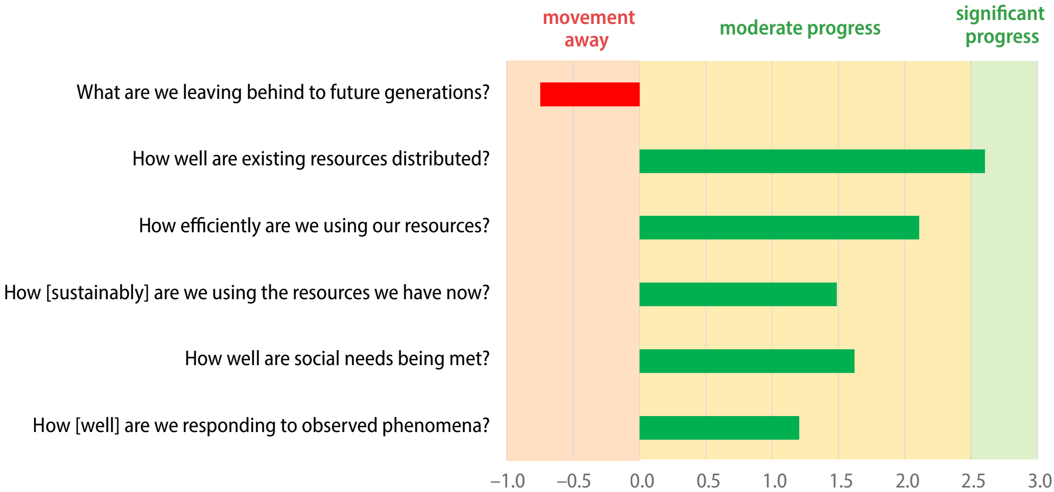
Figure IV.2 depicts EU progress in each of the six MONET categories over the short-term period. Again, progress of each MONET category reflects the average progress score of the underlying individual indicators, ranging between –5 (worst score) and +5 (best score).

[2] De Montmollin, André & Scheller, Andrea (2007), MONET indicator system: The Swiss road to measuring sustainable development, International Journal of Sustainable Development (10) 61–72.

[3] For the purpose of this report, the MONET typology has been slightly adapted, with one of the categories split into two distinct perspectives.

Figure IV.2

EU progress over the short-term period by MONET type



What are we leaving behind to future generations?

Capital stocks are natural, economic and human resources that are the basis of present and future opportunities or limitations. The EU SDG indicator set includes 21 indicators showing the state of capital stocks, for example the quantity and quality of freshwater, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, but also education and skills. Capital stocks can also be negative, for example debt or pollution.

The capital indicators depict largely unfavourable developments as evidenced by increases in pollutants and pesticides in EU rivers, extended marine areas affected by eutrophication, dramatic declines in farmland birds and grassland butterflies, and increasing drought impacts. Positive developments are visible for participation rates in secondary and tertiary education. Overall, the short-term development of capital indicators hints at a depletion of natural capital that is left behind for future EU generations.

How fair are existing resources distributed?

Distribution indicators capture disparities or convergence between countries or population groups as well as equal opportunities. The EU SDG indicator set covers 16 indicators of this type that measure inequalities in labour market participation and in education, between men and women and between EU nationals and non-EU citizens, as well as economic inequalities within and between countries.

Significant progress for these types of indicators is evidenced by narrowing gender gaps in labour market participation and pay, improved labour market integration of migrants, and continued convergence of Member States regarding household income. These developments indicate increased fairness in the distribution of resources in the EU.

How efficiently are we using our resources?

Efficiency indicators describe whether economic growth is becoming less resource- and emission-intensive. It is about doing the same (or more) with less labour, energy, materials and pollution. Six such indicators are included in the EU SDG set.

Progress has been made for most of these indicators, showing advances in agricultural labour productivity, energy productivity and the air emission intensity of the EU's manufacturing sector. In contrast, the EU is not on track to meet its target for circular material use, albeit progress is slowly being made. Altogether these developments indicate that the EU is improving the efficiency of its resource use.

How (sustainably) are we using the resources we have now?

Input/output indicators focus on the flows associated with use, depletion, investment in or degradation of resources. The EU SDG indicator set includes 17 indicators of this type, which monitor aspects related to the consumption of materials, energy and water, as well as the emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants.

There has been moderate progress for this type of indicator due to improvements in the use of pesticides and chemicals, reductions in energy and material use, and less fishing pressure in EU-managed waters. At the same time, however, the use of available freshwater is becoming increasingly unsustainable, and climate extremes are causing growing economic losses. Overall, this shows that advances in the sustainable use of resources are offset by increasing environmental pressures.

How well are social needs met?

So-called level indicators describe the extent to which the current generation's individual and societal needs are being met. The EU SDG indicator set captures this with 34 indicators covering a broad range of topics such as poverty, health and quality of life in cities.

Moderate progress has been observed on average for this indicator type. The drivers of strongest progress are increased participation in the labour market (higher employment and lower unemployment) and improved living conditions. Nevertheless, unmet needs for medical care, energy affordability and the number of victims of human trafficking are moving into the wrong direction. This shows that the EU is meeting core social needs of its citizens but needs to improve the situation in specific areas.

How are we responding to observed phenomena?

Response indicators track measures taken to counter undesired developments, including fiscal, regulatory, behavioural or market responses. The EU SDG indicator set includes 20 indicators of this type, encompassing government and private investment and expenditure such as on R&D or global partnership.

On average, the indicators of this type show moderate progress. Strong progress has been made regarding government expenditure on agricultural R&D and on law courts, as well as on climate financing for developing countries and through green bonds. Trade relationships with least-developed countries have also improved. However, responses to certain phenomena are in decline, for example in overall support to developing countries and in environmental taxation. This shows that while the EU does act on undesired phenomena, it does not excel in overall responsiveness.

The MONET typology offers an alternative way of analysing the information provided through the SDG indicators that helps to connect with the 2030 Agenda's core values of aligning intragenerational justice (reducing inequalities within the current generation) and intergenerational justice (preservation of capital for future generations). The analysis points to an erosion of (mainly environmental) capital that is left behind for future generations, suggesting that intergenerational justice in the EU may currently be undermined in favour of short-term socio-economic progress.

Annexes

Annex I: Policy targets

Eurostat's SDG monitoring includes an assessment of progress towards SDG-related EU policy targets (see Annex II for a detailed description of the assessment approach). In this 2026 edition, 27 policy targets are used. 15 targets refer to socio-economic objectives such as reducing poverty and increasing education and labour market participation. The other 12 targets are linked to environmental objectives in areas such as climate and energy. Table A.1 lists the targets together with the EU policy documents in which these targets were set. In the tables at the beginning of each of the 17 thematic chapters of this report, the indicators assessed against an EU policy target are marked with a 'target' symbol (◎).

Table A.1: EU policy targets used for the indicator assessment

Indicator	Target	Policy reference
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (SDG 1)	Reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 15 million by 2030 compared with 2019.	European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan
Area under organic farming (SDG 2)	Reach a share of the EU's agricultural land under organic farming of at least 25 % by 2030	EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
Use and risk of chemical pesticides (SDG 2)	Reduce the use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50 % by 2030 compared with a three-year baseline (average for the period 2015 to 2017)	Zero Pollution Action Plan
Road traffic deaths (SDG 3, SDG 11)	Halve the overall number of road deaths in the EU by 2030 compared with 2019	EU road safety policy framework 2021–2030
Premature deaths due to exposure to fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) (SDG 3, SDG 11)	Reduce the health impacts (premature deaths) of air pollution by at least 55 % by 2030 compared with 2005	Zero Pollution Action Plan
Consumption of antibiotics in the community and hospital sectors (SDG 3)	Reduce the total consumption of antibiotics in humans by 20 % by 2030 compared with 2019	Council Recommendation on stepping up EU actions to combat antimicrobial resistance in a One Health approach
Low achievers in reading, mathematics and science (SDG 4)	Reach a share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science of less than 15 % by 2030	European Education Area
Participation in early childhood education (SDG 4)	Increase the share of children between 3 years old and the starting age for compulsory primary education that participate in early childhood education and care to at least 96 % by 2030	European Education Area
Early leavers from education and training (SDG 4)	Reduce the share of early leavers from education and training to less than 9 % by 2030	European Education Area
Tertiary educational attainment (SDG 4, SDG 9)	Increase the share of 25- to 34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment to at least 45 % by 2030	European Education Area
Adults having at least basic digital skills (SDG 4)	Increase the share of people aged 16–74 with at least basic digital skills to at least 80 % by 2030	European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and 2030 Digital Compass
Gender employment gap (SDG 5)	At least halve the gender employment gap by 2030 compared with 2019	European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan
Positions held by women in senior management (SDG 5)	Staff at least 33 % of all director positions (executive and non-executive) or at least 40 % of non-executive director positions on boards of listed companies by members of the underrepresented sex by 2026	Directive (EU) 2022/2381

Indicator	Target	Policy reference
Primary and final energy consumption (SDG 7)	Reduce energy consumption by at least 11.7 % in 2030 compared with the projections of the 2020 EU Reference Scenario, so that the EU's final and primary energy consumption amount to no more than 763 Mtoe and 992.5 Mtoe in 2030	Directive (EU) 2023/1791
Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption (SDG 7, SDG 13)	Raise the share of renewable sources in the EU's gross final consumption of energy to at least 42.5 % by 2030	Directive (EU) 2023/2413
Employment rate (SDG 8)	Increase the employment rate of the population aged 20 to 64 to at least 78 % by 2030	European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan
Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) (SDG 8)	Decrease the rate of young people aged 15 to 29 neither in employment, nor in education or training (NEETs) to 9 % by 2030	European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan
Gross domestic expenditure on R&D (SDG 9)	Increase combined public and private investment in R&D to 3 % of GDP	Council Recommendation on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe
Share of households with high-speed internet connection (SDG 9, SDG 17)	Provide all European households with gigabit network coverage by 2030	2030 Digital Compass
Recycling rate of municipal waste (SDG 11)	Increase the share of municipal waste that is recycled or prepared for re-use to at least 60 % (by weight) by 2030	Directive (EU) 2018/851
Average CO_2 emissions per km from new passenger cars (SDG 12, SDG 13)	Reduce average CO_2 emissions from new passenger cars to 49.5 g CO_2/km by 2030	Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/1623
Circular material use rate (SDG 12)	Increase the EU's circular material use rate to 24 % by 2030	Clean Industrial Deal
Net greenhouse gas emissions (SDG 13)	Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 % by 2030 compared with 1990	European Climate Law
Net greenhouse gas emissions from land use, land use change and forestry (LULUFC) (SDG 13)	Increase net greenhouse gas removals in the LULUCF sector to 310 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent by 2030	Regulation (EU) 2023/839
Marine protected areas (SDG 14)	Protect a minimum of 30 % of the EU's sea area by 2030	EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
Terrestrial protected areas (SDG 15)	Protect a minimum of 30 % of the EU's land area by 2030	EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
Official development assistance (SDG 17)	Provide 0.7 % of gross national income (GNI) as ODA by 2030	The new European Consensus on Development

Annex II: Methodological notes

Data coverage and sources

Data in this report are mainly presented for the EU and its 27 Member States (see Annex III). In addition, data for the EU candidate countries and potential candidates as well as the countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) are included in the country-level comparisons throughout the report when available, complementing the EU-level analysis. In the chapter 'The EU in the world and spillover effects of EU consumption', global comparisons of the EU with other large economies in the world (such as the United States, Japan and China) are presented.

The data presented in this report were extracted in late April 2026. Most of the data used to compile the indicators stem from the standard Eurostat collection of statistics through the European Statistical System (ESS), but a number of other data sources have also been used, including other European Commission services, the European Environment Agency (EEA), the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the OECD.

The Eurostat website contains a section dedicated to the EU SDG monitoring, which features the full SDG indicators database and provides useful information on the data. The data codes given below the graphs in this report, such as sdg_01_10, allow easy access to the most recent data and metadata on the Eurostat website. Explanatory notes on the assessment of EU Member State data and the measurement of spillover effects are available in a methodology section.

Treatment of breaks in time series

Breaks in time series occur when the underlying methodology of the data collection changes. Depending on the change, such breaks can be negligible or significantly affect the comparability of data over time. A case-by-case assessment is conducted to determine the extent to which a break affects the assessment of an indicator over time. In cases where a break is considered significant enough to affect the assessment, the length of the assessed time series is adjusted to exclude the break. Breaks in times series are indicated throughout the report in footnotes below the graphs.

Indicator assessment

This publication provides an assessment of how indicators developed over time and against SDG-related EU objectives and targets. The assessment method considers whether an indicator has moved towards or away from the sustainable development objective, as well as the speed of this movement. The method focuses on progress over time and not on the 'sustainability' of the status.

Ideally, the development observed for each indicator would be compared against the progress needed to reach either a quantitative target set within the political process or a scientifically established and accepted threshold. However, this approach is only possible for a limited number of indicators, where an explicit quantified and measurable target exists for the EU (see Table A.1). In the remaining cases, a transparent and simple approach across the indicators is applied. The two approaches are explained in more detail below.

The assessment results are visualised in the form of coloured arrows (see Table A.2). The direction of the arrows shows whether the indicators are moving in a sustainable direction or not. This direction does not necessarily correspond to the numerical direction in which an indicator is moving. For example, a reduction in the long-term unemployment rate or the ammonia emissions from agriculture would be represented with a green upward arrow, as reductions in these areas mean progress towards the sustainable development objectives.

Depending on whether there is a quantitative EU policy target, two cases are distinguished (see Table A.2). For indicators with a quantitative target, the arrows show if the EU is on track to reach the target based on past progress. For indicators without a quantitative target, the arrows show the direction and speed of the indicator towards or away from the sustainable development objective. The assessment method therefore differs slightly for these two types of indicators, as explained further below.

Table A.2

Assessment categories and associated symbols

Symbol	With quantitative target	Without quantitative target
↑	On track to reach the EU target	Significant progress towards SD objectives
↗	Moderate progress towards the EU target	Moderate progress towards SD objectives
→	[Category not applicable]	No progress towards nor movement away from SD objectives
↘	Insufficient progress towards the EU target	Moderate movement away from SD objectives
↓	Movement away from the EU target	Significant movement away from SD objectives
✕	Assessment not possible (for example, time series too short or break in time series)	

As far as possible, indicators are assessed over two periods:

- **Long term**, which is based on the evolution of the indicator over the past 15-year period, if available. If not available, a period of at least 10 years is used. In exceptional cases, for example when data are not available in an annual time series, longer periods are used (see for example the long-term assessment for soil erosion).
- **Short term**, which is based on the evolution of the indicator over the past five-year period (see the box below for an explanation for the use of 2019 instead of 2020 for the short-term assessment). In a few exceptional cases, the short-term trend is calculated for shorter time periods, as long as the available data cover a period of at least three years.

Two arrows — one for the long-term and one for the short-term assessment — are therefore usually shown for each indicator, providing an indication of whether the underlying trend has been persistent or has shown a turnaround at a certain point in time.

Exception for short-term assessment related to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 had a significant impact on multiple domains monitored in this report (labour market, economic growth, energy use, etc.). The pandemic also led to disruptions in data collection in that year (especially for survey data such as EU-SILC). As a result, many indicators show an exceptional one-time effect in 2020 that can be considered an outlier. Using 2020 as base year for the short-term assessment might therefore give a misleading picture of progress (either too positive or too negative). As a consequence, for indicators with 2025 as the most recent reference year, the pre-pandemic year 2019 is used instead of 2020 as the base year for the short-term assessment. This rule is applied consistently for all indicators presented in this report, since an objective case-by-case assessment of the COVID-19 related impact to the 2020 data is not feasible.

Method 1: Indicators without quantitative targets

In case there is no quantified target, it is only possible to assess whether the indicator develops in the desired direction. An indicator is making progress towards the SD objectives if it moves in the desired direction. It is moving away from the SD objectives if it develops in the opposite direction. The assessment is based on the ‘compound annual growth rate’ (CAGR) formula, which assesses the pace and direction of an indicator. The CAGR formula uses the data from the first and the last years of the analysed time span and calculates the annualised rate of growth of an indicator (given in % per year) between these two data points:

(1) $$CAGR = \left(\frac{y_t}{y_{t_0}}\right)^{\frac{1}{t-t_0}} - 1$$

where: t_0 = base year, t = most recent year, y_{t0} = indicator value in base year, y_t = indicator value in most recent year.

To ensure a consistent approach throughout the report, the CAGR formula is applied to all indicators irrespective of their unit, meaning that it is also used for indicators already given as percentages (such as employment or poverty rates).

The assessment is based on comparing the calculated growth rate (CAGR) of an indicator (rounded to one decimal) with a certain threshold, which is set at 1 % growth per year. The 1 % threshold is chosen as it is easy to communicate, and Eurostat has used it in its monitoring reports for more than 15 years. It is discerning enough to ensure there is a significant movement in the desired direction. Furthermore, the chosen threshold allows a nuanced picture to be presented, with a sufficient number of indicators falling into all categories. The threshold should not be confused with the level of EU ambition on a given topic. It should also be noted that for some indicators, such as loss of biodiversity, any movement away from the SD objectives might be irreversible. The development of indicators with growth rates between 0.1 % and – 0.1 % (after rounding) is considered neutral and depicted with a horizontal arrow. Table A.3 shows the applied thresholds and the associated symbols.

Table A.3

Thresholds for assessing indicators without quantitative targets

Growth rate (CAGR) in relation to desired direction	Symbol
≥ 1 %	↑
< 1 % and > 0.1 %	↗
≤ 0.1 % and ≥ – 0.1 %	→
< – 0.1 % and > – 1 %	↘
≤ – 1 %	↓

Note: The thresholds are applied after rounding the growth rates (CAGR) to one decimal.

Method 2: Indicators with quantitative targets

The assessment for indicators with targets is based on the CAGR calculation described above and takes into account concrete targets set in relevant EU policies and strategies (see Table A.1). In this case, the observed growth rate is compared with the (theoretical) growth rate that would have been required up to the most recent year for which data are available to meet the target in the target year. This comparison is done for both the long-term (past 15 years) and short-term (past 5 years) periods and does not take into account projections of possible future developments of an indicator. The calculation of observed and required growth rates is based on the CAGR formula and includes the following three steps:

1) Compute the observed growth rate using formula (1) above

2) Compute the required (theoretical) growth rate to meet the target

(2) $$CAGR_r = \left(\frac{x_{t_1}}{y_{t_0}}\right)^{\frac{1}{t_1 - t_0}} - 1$$

where: t_0 = base year, t_1 = target year, y_{t0} = indicator value in base year, x_{t1} = target value in target year.

3) Compare the ratio of observed and required growth rate

$$(3)\ R_{a/r} = \frac{CAGR_a}{CAGR_r}$$

Table A.4 shows the thresholds applied for the $R_{a/r}$ ratio and the resulting symbols. As the assessment is based on the comparison of the observed to the required growth rate, a neutral category (as included in Table A.3 above) is not applicable in this case.

Table A.4

Thresholds for assessing indicators with quantitative targets

Ratio of observed to required growth rate	Symbol
≥ 95 %	↑
< 95 % and ≥ 60 %	↗
< 60 % and ≥ 0 %	↘
< 0 %	↓

The growth rates (CAGR) upon which the arrow symbols are based are provided in the overview tables at the beginning of each chapter. For indicators with quantitative targets, the table gives the compound annual growth rates observed for the two assessment periods as well as the growth rates that would have been required to meet the target in the target year. For indicators without quantitative targets, only the observed compound annual growth rates are presented.

Method for calculating average scores at the goal level

In the synopsis chapter of this report, average goal-level scores are used to rank the 17 SDGs according to their level of progress over the short-term period. The calculation of average scores at the goal level is based on the calculations described above for the indicators that have been selected to monitor the respective SDG. For indicators without a quantitative target, the CAGR (see formula (1) above) is used. For indicators with a quantitative target, the ratio of observed to required growth (see formula (3) above) is used.

To account for the variability of growth rates within the assessment categories used in this report (see Tables A.3 and A.4 above), scoring functions are used to convert the growth rates and ratios into a progress score ranging from + 5 (best score) to – 5 (worst score) for each indicator. The average score at the goal level is then calculated as the arithmetic mean of the individual scores of the indicators selected for monitoring the respective goal (including both main and multi-purpose indicators). Consequently, these goal-level scores can also range from + 5 (best score) to – 5 (worst score).

The scoring functions differ for indicators with and without quantitative target, but the scores at the threshold points in Tables A.3 and A.4 are harmonised to ensure that indicators with and without quantitative targets have the same 'weight' when calculating the average score at the goal level. As such, the threshold values shown in Tables A.3 and A.4 result in scores of + 2.5, 0 and – 2.5, respectively. These score values are also used in the synopsis and the chapter 'Sustainable development in the EU: an alternative cross-cutting analysis' of this report for distinguishing between 'significant' and 'moderate' progress at an aggregated level. Goals with average scores above + 2.5 or below – 2.5 are considered to have made significant progress or significant movement away, respectively. Goals with average scores between + 2.5 and 0 are referred to as having made moderate progress, while goals with scores between 0 and – 2.5 have seen moderate movement away from SDG objectives.

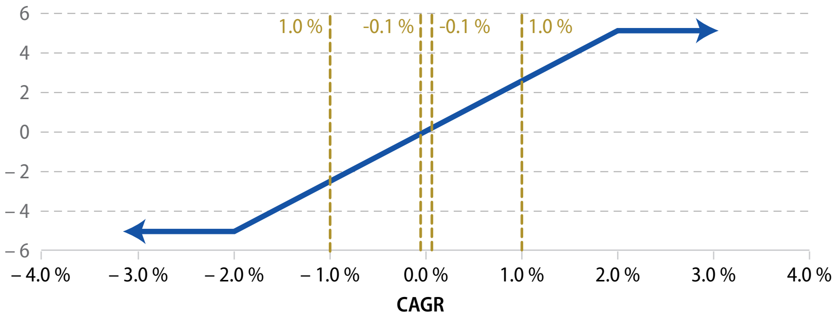
Indicators for which trends cannot be assessed (for example due to insufficient time series) are not considered for the average score on the goal level. Note that the scoring functions use broader cut-off points than the thresholds shown in Tables A.3 and A.4 in order to allow for larger variability in the scores (an indicator with a CAGR of, for example, 1.1 % per year receives a different score than an indicator with a CAGR of, for example, 5.0 % per year, although they both fall into the same assessment category of Table A.3).

Scoring function for indicators without quantitative targets

Figure A.1 below shows the scoring function for indicators without quantitative targets. In this case, the scoring function is a linear transformation, with cut-off points set at growth rates (CAGR) of 2.0 % and – 2.0 %. Indicators with a growth rate of exactly 0.0 % receive a score of 0. Indicators with growth rates of 2.0 % or above in the desired direction receive a score of + 5, indicators with growth rates of 2.0 % or above in the wrong direction receive a score of – 5.

Figure A.1

Scoring function for indicators without quantitative target



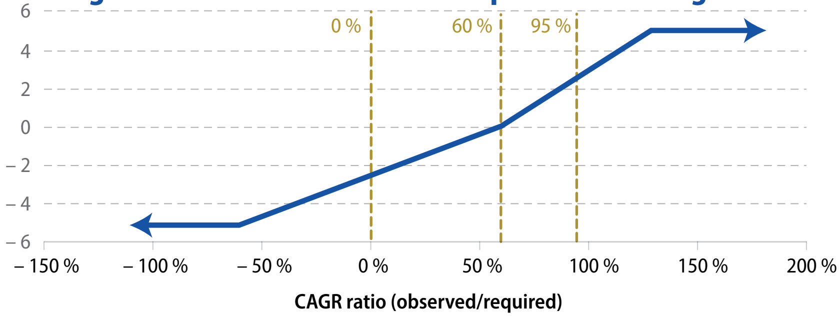
Note: The gold dotted lines represent the thresholds used for defining the assessment category of the indicator, as shown in Table A.3. The resulting scores are harmonised between indicators with and without targets (see Figure A.2).

Scoring function for indicators with quantitative targets

Figure A.2 below shows the scoring function for indicators with quantitative targets. The scoring function is not linear in this case, with cut-off points set at CAGR ratios (observed to required growth) of 130 % and – 60 % (ratios below zero indicate a movement away from the target). Indicators with a CAGR ratio of 60 % receive a score of 0. Indicators with CAGR ratios of 130 % or above receive a score of + 5, indicators with CAGR ratios of – 60 % or below receive a score of – 5. The nonlinear slope of the scoring function for indicators with targets is a result of the harmonisation of the two scoring functions with respect to the threshold levels shown in Tables A.3 and A.4, which has been done to ensure that indicators with and without quantitative targets have the same 'weight' when calculating the average score at the goal level.

Figure A.2

Scoring function for indicators with quantitative target



Note: The gold dotted lines represent the thresholds used for defining the assessment category of the indicator, as shown in Table A.4. The resulting scores are harmonised between indicators with and without targets (see Figure A.1).

Annex III: Geographical aggregates and countries

Geographical aggregates

EU	The 27 Member States of the European Union (see below). Unless specified otherwise, the EU time series presented in this report are consistently based on the 27 Member States ([1]).

Countries

European Union Member States

Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden

European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland

EU candidate countries

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia, Georgia, Albania, Serbia, Türkiye, Ukraine

Potential candidate

Kosovo ([2])

([1]) Note that EU aggregates are back-calculated and therefore do not necessarily represent the composition of the EU in a given year.
([2]) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

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Sustainable development in the European Union

Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context

2026 edition

The EU is fully committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in September 2015. Eurostat monitors the EU's progress towards the SDGs along a set of 102 indicators. The EU indicator set has been carefully selected in cooperation with a large number of stakeholders based on criteria of statistical quality and relevance in an EU policy context. The indicators are assessed annually over a short-term (past five or six years of available data) and over a long-term (15 years) period. This report is the tenth in the series. It includes a chapter on the EU in the world and spillover effects of EU consumption. Regional differences within countries are presented for a selection of SDG indicators. In addition, a new chapter analyses the EU SDG indicator set using alternative classifications that reveal additional, cross-cutting patterns of sustainable development.

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