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EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY NETWORK (ESPN)

Social protection and inclusion policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis

An analysis of policies in 35 countries

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2021

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The European Social Policy Network (ESPN) was established in July 2014 on the initiative of the European Commission to provide high-quality and timely independent information, advice, analysis and expertise on social policy issues in the European Union and neighbouring countries.

The ESPN brings together into a single network the work that used to be carried out by the European Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion, the Network for Analytical Support on the Socio-Economic Impact of Social Protection Reforms (ASISP) and the MISSOC (Mutual Information Systems on Social Protection) secretariat.

The ESPN is managed by the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER), APPLICA and the European Social Observatory (OSE).

For more information on the ESPN, see: http:ec.europa.eusocialmain.jsp?catId=1135&langId=en

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Contents

OFFICIAL COUNTRY ABBREVIATIONS

A. European Union (EU) countries

EU countries			
Austria	AT	Italy	IT
Belgium	BE	Latvia	LV
Bulgaria	BG	Lithuania	LT
Croatia	HR	Luxembourg	LU
Cyprus	CY	Malta	MT
Czechia	CZ	Netherlands	NL
Denmark	DK	Poland	PL
Estonia	EE	Portugal	PT
Finland	FI	Romania	RO
France	FR	Slovakia	SK
Germany	DE	Slovenia	SI
Greece	EL	Spain	ES
Hungary	HU	Sweden	SE
Ireland	IE	EU average (*)	EU-27

(*) In the EU-27 averages, the 27 EU Member States are weighted by their population sizes.

B. UK and other non-EU countries covered by the ESPN

UK and other non-EU countries	
United Kingdom	UK
Albania	AL
Bosnia and Herzegovina	BA
Kosovo*	XK*
Montenegro	ME
North Macedonia	MK
Serbia	RS
Turkey	TR

(*) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

PREFACE

European policy context

The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) Action Plan[1] published by the Commission on 4 March 2021 draws attention to the significant impact of COVID-19 on jobs and welfare systems across Europe. In its *Porto Declaration* issued on 8 May 2021, the European Council recognises these challenges and underlines the EU commitment to continue deepening the implementation of the EPSR at EU and national levels, establishing among its key priorities the need to reduce inequalities, defend fair wages, fight social exclusion and tackle poverty, promote equality and fairness, support young people, and address the risks of exclusion for particularly vulnerable social groups.

The social protection and inclusion systems in place in EU Member States, combined with exceptional public policy responses, ranging from macro-economic stimulus interventions to measures to help sustain employment, incomes and the economy, have succeeded in limiting the employment and social consequences of the pandemic. Extraordinary EU-level stimulus measures and coordination efforts have provided support for Member States. In addition to measures to support national healthcare systems and foster collaboration in the development of a vaccine, a package of measures has been adopted to minimise the impact of the pandemic on people/households, workers and businesses.

More concretely, the EU:

- relaxed its state aid rules and activated, for the first time ever, the general "escape clause" of the *Stability and Growth Pact* (effectively removing deficit limits to encourage Member States to increase public spending, in order to alleviate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on their national economy);
- created several financial firewalls for the Member States, including in the area of employment support and social protection, such as:
    - the *Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE)* instrument (which supports short-time work schemes and similar measures, to help protect jobs and thus employees and the self-employed against the risk of unemployment and loss of income[2]),
    - the *Emergency Support Instrument* (whose purpose is to help mitigate the immediate consequences of the pandemic and anticipate the needs related to the recovery[3]),
    - increased flexibility in the use of the Cohesion Policy funds under the *Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives (CRII and CRII+)*; and
- reached an historic agreement on *NextGenerationEU*, the temporary instrument designed to boost the EU recovery and which includes in its core the *Recovery and Resilience Facility*, as well as on an increased EU budget for the period 2021-2027. The EU's long-term budget, coupled with *NextGenerationEU,* is the largest stimulus package ever financed in Europe: €1.8 trillion, which should help rebuild a greener, more digital and more resilient post-COVID-19 Europe. (See EU Council of Ministers 2021, Vanhercke *et al.* 2021, Eurofound 2020a.)

During the pandemic, countries have extended or scaled up existing social protection and social inclusion schemes (for instance, sickness benefit schemes, short-time work schemes, unemployment benefits, pensions, minimum income, leave for parents having to care for children during the closure

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en

[2] See EU Council Press Release of 19 May 2020: COVID-19: Council adopts temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE)

[3] A significant part of the budget available under this instrument is used to secure safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19 in the EU through *Advance Purchase Agreements* with vaccine producers.

of child facilities, as well as long-term care provision), and have relaxed their eligibility conditions. While using well-known policy levers, they also rolled out a series of new, innovative emergency measures to support vulnerable groups not previously covered and to cushion the economic and social impact of the pandemic more generally. (See EU Council of Ministers 2021, Social Protection Committee 2020a.)

For instance, a number of countries have decided to support parents taking care of their children as a result of the closure of schools and childcare facilities. Measures have also often been taken to prevent employees and the self-employed being infected with COVID-19 while working or commuting. Many countries have set up emergency funds or other measures to support the self-employed. Tax breaks have been used, as well as reduction, exemption, suspension or deferral of social contributions for the self-employed, for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) or for all businesses. Recent studies show that social policy responses adopted by countries across Europe have been fundamental to the management of the crisis and that rapid action helped to mitigate its impact, although in various forms and with varying degrees of generosity (Béland *et al.* 2021, EU Council of Ministers 2021, Social Protection Committee 2020a). In this context, especially the unprecedented use of short-time work schemes (supported by the SURE mechanism) was essential "to mitigate the consequences of the shock to the labour market" (EU Council of Ministers 2021:6).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted long-standing weaknesses in social protection systems and social inclusion policies. It has shown the importance, and the challenge, of ensuring accessible and adequate income and support to all – in particular to those whose vulnerability and disadvantaged situations have been intensified by the pandemic. European social partners and European civil society organisations across Europe have also responded to the crisis, supporting and complementing the measures taken by the public authorities. They have undertaken various actions to raise awareness of, and address the socio-economic impact of the pandemic and the lockdown measures on various population groups. They have also highlighted the gendered impact of the crisis across multiple dimensions. (See, for instance, Social Protection Committee 2020b and EAPN 2020.)

The crisis has raised and will continue to raise considerable challenges related to the functioning and inclusiveness of social protection systems, partly because of the combination of increasing needs for protection/inclusion and falling social contributions and tax revenues (a process happening even before the crisis; see Spasova and Ward 2019). The crisis has thus confirmed the importance of social protection and inclusion policies, and further heightened the need to reflect on their role (including the sources of their funding) as well as on solidarity at EU level and within countries.

According to the Special Eurobarometer on social issues, released in March 2021, more than four in every ten Europeans consider that equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, access to quality healthcare and the standard of living of people in the EU are among the most important elements for the EU's economic and social development. In addition, almost three in every four respondents consider a lack of social rights to be a serious problem, and more than one in every four who have heard about the EPSR recognise that its success will depend on Member States' actions to turn social rights into reality.

Against this background, effective implementation of the EPSR is crucial, generating a strong impetus for not only job creation and economic growth but also for social justice, reducing and addressing further inequalities and promoting social mobility.

A Synthesis Report from the European Social Policy Network (ESPN)

With the aim of contributing to the ongoing policy dialogue between the European Commission, Member States and (potential) candidate countries, the European Commission asked the 35 country

teams of the European Social Policy Network (ESPN)[4] to describe and analyse the measures put in place between the beginning of February 2020 and mid-April 2021 to help address the social and financial distress created by the COVID-19 pandemic and by lockdown policies, and to assess the adequacy of the national responses.

This Synthesis Report: i) briefly analyses the extent of the demographic, economic and social impact of COVID-19 on countries, based on available indicators; ii) examines the main measures which the 35 countries have put in place in selected social protection/inclusion policy areas in response to the crisis, and the main features of their implementation; iii) assesses the specific strengths and weaknesses of the national social protection systems and social inclusion policies highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and identifies the remaining gaps, either new or pre-existing, in relation to COVID-19; iv) discusses the transformative potential, or otherwise, of the measures/reforms with regard to the future reshaping of the social protection system and social inclusion policies; and v) provides an initial estimate of the overall expenditure on crisis measures.

The Synthesis Report provides a comparative overview of the main measures and their implementation features across nine different areas of social protection and social inclusion: unemployment benefits, job protection, sickness benefits and sick pay, healthcare, minimum income schemes and other forms of social assistance, housing, essential services[5], leave for parents, and other relevant social protection and/or social inclusion support. Countries which have developed policies and measures along similar lines are listed in brackets (e.g. AT, BE, BG)[6] so that the reader interested in knowing more about these can examine the 35 reports by ESPN national experts. In producing their reports, national ESPN experts cite many different sources in support of their analysis. References to these are not included in the present report. Readers wishing to follow up the original sources should consult the national experts' reports.

The Synthesis Report draws also on other evidence provided by ESPN national experts, including the ESPN Flash Reports[7] prepared by the experts on the measures adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other available analytical work.

It was written by Isabel Baptista (an independent social policy expert), Eric Marlier (Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research [LISER]), and Slavina Spasova, Ramón Peña-Casas, Boris Fronteddu, Dalila Ghailani, Sebastiano Sabato and Pietro Regazzoni (European Social Observatory [OSE]) from the ESPN's Network Core Team. Helpful comments and suggestions from the European Commission as well as from Anne-Catherine Guio (LISER), Bart Vanhercke (OSE) and the 35 ESPN country teams are gratefully acknowledged. The authors would also like to thank Edouard Mathieu for his useful advice on the use of the "Our World in Data" (OWID) database, as well as Rachel Cowler for her editorial support and Liesbeth Haagdorens for fine-tuning the layout of the report. All errors remain strictly the authors' responsibility.

[4] The 35 countries covered by the ESPN are the 27 EU countries, the United Kingdom and the seven (potential) candidate countries – i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. For a presentation of the ESPN Network Core Team and the 35 ESPN country teams, see Annex A.

[5] The concept of "essential services", as illustrated in Principle 20 of the EPSR by a non-exhaustive list of services (water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications), is well established in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), proposed by the UN and endorsed by the EU. The concept of essential services used herein covers essentially water, energy and digital communications.

[6] Here and throughout the report, the countries in brackets are provided as examples and the lists are not necessarily exhaustive. The 35 ESPN national experts' reports can be viewed here (ESPN page on the European Commission website).

[7] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?advSearchKey=ESPNFlash&mode=advancedSubmit&catId=22&policyArea=0&policyAreaSub=0&country=0&year=0

The Synthesis Report is structured as follows:

- Section 1 examines the extent of the demographic, economic and social impact of COVID-19 on the 35 ESPN countries.
- Section 2 provides an overview of the changes made by ESPN countries to their unemployment benefit schemes, to make them more inclusive and mitigate the impact of the pandemic in the face of the strict lockdown measures adopted.
- Section 3 describes the wide range of job protection measures which were taken urgently at the beginning of the pandemic and which have been at the forefront of protecting jobs during the COVID-19 crisis.
- After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries introduced measures adjusting their paid sick leave schemes (sickness benefit and/or sick pay schemes) to the new circumstances of the pandemic. These measures are the focus of Section 4.
- Section 5 focuses on healthcare coverage, providing an overview of the relevant measures implemented during the pandemic, particularly focusing on two aspects: changes made to healthcare baskets[8] and the introduction of measures extending coverage by statutory healthcare systems to groups not covered before the pandemic.
- Section 6 examines the support measures put in place across ESPN countries aiming at strengthening existing Minimum Income Schemes (MISs) and other social assistance support, through temporary adjustments and/or the provision of additional emergency aid for the most vulnerable.
- Section 7 provides an overview of measures aimed at guaranteeing access to housing during the pandemic, in particular additional temporary support to renters and mortgage holders experiencing a substantial reduction in income as a result of the crisis, and also targeting homeless people.
- Section 8 focuses on access to essential services and describes support measures adopted by ESPN countries aimed at mitigating the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, to ensure that people living on low incomes and other vulnerable groups are not prevented from accessing these crucial services.
- Section 9 reviews the various parental leave arrangements introduced in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to support parents affected by the closure of early childhood education and care and schools.
- Section 10 describes a variety of other support measures (not included in previous sections) taken in response to the COVID-19 crisis, and the subsequent lockdown restrictions which affected the economy and large sectors of the population.
- Section 11 provides an insight into trends in expenditure (actual or expected costs) linked to the social protection and social inclusion measures adopted by ESPN countries in response to the impact of the pandemic across the different policy areas.
- Finally, Section 12 provides an overall assessment of the specific strengths and weaknesses of the national social protection systems and social inclusion policies highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasising the transformative potential, or otherwise, of the measures put in place with regard to the future reshaping of social protection systems and social inclusion policies; it also identifies the main remaining gaps, either new or existing prior to the COVID-19 crisis.

[8] The healthcare basket comprises the range of goods and services fully or partially covered by the scheme. It can be defined explicitly (that is, a list stating all the benefits available through coverage) or implicitly (based on traditions and routine).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Unemployment benefit schemes: eligibility conditions temporarily relaxed and replacement levels increased but gaps in formal access remain

Unemployment benefit schemes, together with existing or specifically developed job protection schemes, have been the main automatic stabilisers used to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. Temporary changes have been made to unemployment benefit schemes in most of the 35 countries covered by the ESPN, with the exception of nine countries (including six EU Member States).

The parameter most subject, by far, to changes is the duration of receipt of benefits, which has been adjusted in 12 ESPN countries (exclusively Member States). Other measures linked to changes in the duration of receipt include suspension of waiting periods in four Member States. The level of benefits has been increased in ten countries (including nine Member States), and gradual reduction of unemployment benefits over time has been temporarily suspended in two Member States. In nine countries (including seven Member States), the qualifying conditions have also been modified in order to improve access for workers who otherwise would not have paid (sufficient) insurance contributions.

These measures have been beneficial for people already receiving unemployment benefits but also for newcomers to the unemployment benefit scheme, and especially in some cases for non-standard workers[9]. Reducing the qualifying period may have had some positive effects on effective access for temporary and part-time workers, who generally have difficulties in meeting the eligibility conditions. As for the self-employed, in most of the countries where they have access to unemployment benefits, waiting periods and other specific conditions related to their status were modified.

Despite these improvements, unemployment benefit schemes remain the most difficult social protection schemes to access for some categories of non-standard workers and the self-employed, and there were no changes in the rules governing formal access for these groups in countries where they have no access, with very few exceptions, mostly for specific categories. Various ESPN experts emphasise that those without formal access to unemployment benefits could rely on ad hoc emergency measures in times of COVID-19 but have remained excluded from the mainstream policies.

B. Job retention schemes: at the forefront of job preservation

Job retention schemes, notably all types of short-time work (STW) schemes, and wage subsidies (WS), have been the pivotal schemes through which countries avoided potentially disastrous effects of the pandemic on labour markets. STW schemes directly subsidise hours not worked (i.e. there is a requirement for reduced working hours), while WS schemes provide a subsidy for the hours worked or can also be used to top up the earnings of workers on reduced hours.

In particular, during the COVID-19 pandemic, 17 ESPN countries (including 15 Member States) have provided a STW scheme, 12 have relied on wage subsidies (including six Member States) and six have implemented both (exclusively Member States). Most of the countries have improved existing job protection measures, by relaxing eligibility, duration and payment conditions, and some have introduced new schemes in order to better tackle the impact of COVID-19 in some specific sectors. As far as the income replacement level is concerned, the vast majority of national schemes provide an allowance based on a 60-80% replacement rate of the (mostly gross) wage, or even as much as

[9] We use the ILO definitions: Standard employment i.e. full-time permanent contracts; non-standard employment (e.g. part-time, temporary contracts, zero-hours contracts etc.); self-employment, i.e. people working for their own account (definitions based on ILO 2016).

100% (in only one Member State). Generally, the State covers the biggest share of the STW allowance (100% in the majority of the Member States).

Since the 2008/2009 economic and financial crisis, job retention schemes in most Member States have also been open to all employees, including various categories of non-standard workers, such as part-time and fixed-term employees and temporary agency workers. Some countries where gaps still persisted have extended eligibility during the pandemic to include part-time workers, temporary employment agency workers, students, domestic workers etc. The self-employed, who are not wage earners, are in general covered only in very rare cases, mostly where a fixed benefit amount is provided. Generally, they have been granted ad hoc emergency income support.

All in all, the ESPN experts highlight the great significance of STW/WS schemes for safeguarding jobs and supporting household incomes, as well as the innovative policy-making which has taken place in several countries. However, they also emphasise that some issues related to these schemes persist. As is the case with unemployment benefits, there are several gaps affecting certain categories of workers. Another issue highlighted by some experts concerned the income replacement rates of these schemes. Several of these issues have been debated in some countries, resulting in adjustments during the pandemic, and potentially leading to more comprehensive reforms.

C. Schemes for the self-employed: ad hoc (improvement of) basic social protection

The pandemic has highlighted significant gaps in social protection coverage of the self-employed in most ESPN countries. These have been filled, on a temporary basis, by emergency ad hoc benefits and measures. These measures vary a great deal across countries: the type of measures reported by ESPN experts have included tax/social contribution relief for businesses (including the self-employed), relaxation of eligibility conditions for various social protection schemes, inclusion in some job retention schemes, and ad hoc social assistance benefits targeted at the broader public, as well as income compensation packages and/or specific allowances targeted specifically at the self-employed. Most of these measures have been subject to conditions concerning reduction in turnover or inactivity, which have sometimes varied according to the period of lockdown and the sector of activity.

In many cases these allowances are lump sums, often close to the minimum/average wage of the country and/or a percentage of previous turnover. At this stage, there is only limited empirical evidence on the actual impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the appropriateness of the public subsidies made available for this group of workers.

Apart from job retention schemes and income replacement for the self-employed, countries have also used the important lever of tax and social contribution measures. The majority of ESPN experts report measures which postpone, exempt or (in some rare cases) reduce payment of taxes and/or social contributions for the self-employed and companies.

D. Sickness benefits and sick pay schemes: temporary stronger protection but gaps persist

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, 31 ESPN countries (including 26 Member States) introduced measures linked to their paid sick leave schemes (sickness benefits and/or sick pay) or activated existing provisions, adapting them to the new circumstances of the pandemic. Changes have been made to a number of parameters of national paid sick leave schemes, including: a) the qualifying conditions for access to those benefits and the circumstances covered; b) the level of the benefits provided; c) the duration of receipt; and d) funding.

Among the parameters identified above, only in five Member States did ESPN experts identify changes to the eligibility conditions for paid sick leave schemes, in terms of a required employment period or contributions. These changes, broadening access to the schemes, usually have only applied to benefits paid for circumstances directly related to COVID-19. This said, 28 ESPN countries (including 24

Member States) have opened up their schemes so as to ensure some protection to workers in mandatory quarantine and/or needing to self-isolate because they would have been particularly vulnerable in the event of COVID-19 infection.

In ten Member States, ESPN experts have reported increases in the compensation rate and amount of sickness benefits/sick pay. With the exception of two of these countries, such increases only apply to benefits for circumstances related to COVID-19, while the level of payments of sickness benefits or sick pay for reasons other than COVID-19 has remained unchanged.

When it comes to the duration of receipt of the benefits, ESPN experts have reported measures waiving existing waiting periods for access to sickness benefits and/or sick pay in nine ESPN countries (including eight Member States). These measures have mostly applied to benefits for circumstances directly related to COVID-19.

Finally, 17 ESPN countries (including 14 Member States) have lightened the financial burden on employers through measures aimed at reducing their contribution to sickness benefits. Other than in two Member States, this increased public intervention has only applied to COVID-19-related benefits.

Besides introducing measures affecting key parameters of national paid sick leave schemes, in a number of ESPN countries, COVID-19 infections contracted at the workplace or while performing work-related activities have been recognised as (or treated as) an occupational disease/accident at work. This is the case in 11 ESPN countries (including nine Member States). While, in some of these countries, these measures only apply to workers in specific sectors (typically healthcare workers or workers performing activities recognised as "essential"), in other countries, workers in all economic sectors may be eligible for occupational disease/accident at work benefits in the event of COVID-19 infection.

All in all, measures implemented by most ESPN countries during the pandemic have been aimed at improving paid sick leave schemes, by facilitating workers' access to these benefits, extending the circumstances covered, and waiving waiting periods. However, the scope of these improvements should be qualified and some shortcomings have been identified by the ESPN experts. First, the fact that the eligibility conditions, in terms of employment periods or contributions paid, for paid sick leave schemes "in times of COVID-19" have usually not changed compared to "ordinary benefits" may mean that effective access to those benefits is still limited for some categories of employees (e.g. non-standard workers) and the self-employed. Second, in some cases, procedural aspects may limit the take-up of the new provisions, thus reducing their effectiveness. Third, in a number of countries, pandemic-related measures which have applied to paid sick leave have targeted only specific segments of the working population. Fourth, most of the measures introduced during the pandemic only concern paid sick leave schemes for cases directly related to COVID-19 (infection, quarantine or self-isolation). Finally, fifth, the vast majority of the measures identified by the ESPN experts are meant to be temporary, i.e. to be in force only as long as the emergency situation due to the pandemic is ongoing.

E. Healthcare systems: improved coverage through ad hoc extension to COVID-19 treatments and vaccinations but gaps remain

The coverage of the statutory healthcare systems in the 35 ESPN countries has been extended to include COVID-19 treatments and vaccination. While the majority of ESPN national experts did not identify any significant reforms related to healthcare coverage beyond this temporary extension to COVID-19-related care, some EU national experts – notably from Member States whose statutory healthcare systems do not provide universal coverage for a defined health basket – have reported measures to ensure that treatments for COVID-19 become part of universal coverage. In addition, the pandemic has led some countries to include remote consultations and/or prescriptions in the

benefit package, to mobilise ambulatory care to meet specific needs and to extend coverage to specific groups or care services.

A few countries reported measures to temporarily extend healthcare coverage to specific groups of people, such as socio-economically vulnerable groups, refugees and migrants, or to specific care services.

All in all, the ESPN countries - whether or not they have universal coverage - still have gaps in coverage; the pandemic has not resulted in increased coverage, apart from ad hoc extensions for COVID-19 treatments and vaccination and to some vulnerable groups. The pandemic has highlighted the need to expand outpatient care and targeted in-kind benefits, especially for specific vulnerable social groups, as COVID-19 has underlined the centrality of the social determinants of health. Finally, the pandemic has also demonstrated the great flexibility and adaptability of the national healthcare systems: they have been able to include COVID-19-related services in their healthcare baskets very quickly, as well as adding to their provisions specific care services such as telemedicine. In this sense, the pandemic has highlighted that, over the longer term, essential healthcare benefits for the whole population can be achieved promptly across the EU, provided that the political will exists.

F. Minimum Income Schemes (MISs) and other social assistance support: strengthened protection through temporary adjustments or additional emergency aid[10]

In ten ESPN countries (including eight Member States), national governments introduced additional protection measures, in the form of adequate and accessible income support for those lacking sufficient resources for a dignified life. In all cases these were adjustments to already existing income support schemes - including mechanisms facilitating access to the scheme (e.g. relaxation of eligibility criteria), increases in the level of benefit or extra allowances, and extensions of the duration of receipt of the benefit. In one Member State, the implementation of a new national MIS, in May 2020, was accelerated by the COVID-19 emergency.

Overall, most governments reacted quickly in implementing MIS measures to provide additional protection to vulnerable people: nine out of the ten EU countries concerned implemented (all or some of) these measures during the first half of 2020. There is also evidence of flexibility in the duration of the extraordinary support provided: several ESPN national experts also report extensions to the duration of the support initially foreseen. In eight ESPN countries (including seven Member States), some measures were still ongoing as of April 2021.

Apart from these MIS-related measures, a considerable number of ESPN national experts also report emergency or extraordinary support measures aimed at responding to emerging needs resulting from the impact of the pandemic.

An analysis of these measures shows that in most countries this support aims to increase protection for people with no/few links to, or detached from, the labour market (e.g. children, students, social assistance beneficiaries) directly affected by the pandemic situation. These are categorised as support measures unrelated to work, and they include both means-tested and non-means-tested assistance (e.g. increased child support, increased support to students and/or young people, increased social assistance support). In more than half of the Member States, and in six of the eight non-EU countries included in the ESPN, national experts report the implementation of at least one such measure.

The provision of food and material assistance (e.g. distribution of electronic devices with an internet connection to ensure access to online education) is reported by a limited number of ESPN country

[10] For the purpose of this Synthesis Report, changes to MISs and other forms of social assistance refer to emergency or extraordinary support measures aimed at assisting households and/or persons in (increased) need as a result of the pandemic.

teams. Food distribution is the most common type of support, although the nature of the support and the target groups vary.

According to Principle 14 of the EPSR, "everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services". However, whereas this is even more important at a time of increased financial challenges, the assessment of the ESPN national experts clearly highlights the persistence of some (sometimes serious) adequacy and accessibility issues with MISs in most countries. Gaps in coverage, with vulnerable sectors of the population insufficiently protected during the pandemic (e.g. students and/or young people, single-parent families, third-country nationals), are also an issue in several EU countries.

Finally, there is evidence that in some countries the pandemic has highlighted the importance of MISs and relaunched debates around the need to ensure adequate coverage and level in order to provide appropriate support to people in need, both during the pandemic and beyond, as well as the need to reduce the old and new inequalities which continue to threaten social cohesion across Europe.

G. Housing: temporary protection of tenancies and mortgage relief

The pandemic has seen many countries across Europe take unprecedented and novel action in implementing (temporary) measures to protect tenants and mortgage holders, particularly people in more vulnerable situations, such as those experiencing a substantial reduction in income, and also people in homelessness situations[11]. In a small number of Member States, country teams report that no (or very few) additional support measures were needed, given the particularly resilient and comprehensive housing support mechanisms already in place.

In more than half of the 35 ESPN countries, national experts identify at least one measure aimed at protecting households from the risk of losing their homes, whether rented or mortgaged (e.g. bans on evictions or repossessions, lease duration flexibility arrangements, rent or mortgage payment deferrals, a rent increase freeze or rent reductions). Most governments reacted quickly in implementing temporary measures to protect tenancies and provided mortgage relief to homeowners, although there was a quicker and more comprehensive response targeting tenants.

In 15 countries (including 12 Member States), governments introduced additional support targeting both tenants and homeowners. In a smaller number of countries, the descriptions provided by ESPN country teams reveal more targeted support, i.e. directed either at tenants or at homeowners. In five countries (including four Member States), ESPN national experts only report the adoption of additional measures to support tenants, and in six ESPN countries (including four Member States), support is only available for homeowners.

Examples of measures to protect tenancies and ensuring security of tenure include bans on evictions from rental housing – the most common measure reported – followed by freezes on rent increases, or rent reductions. Rent payment deferrals and lease duration flexibility are mentioned by a small number of ESPN experts. Other forms of housing assistance introduced include subsidies and allowances to support low-income tenants facing financial difficulties in paying their rent in the context of the pandemic.

Several ESPN countries have introduced temporary measures to protect mortgage payers from the negative impact of loss of income resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the most common of which is the introduction of mortgage payment deferrals, or mortgage "holidays". The descriptions provided by ESPN national experts reveal that these are mostly imposed moratoria, i.e. they result from

[11] For a typology of different living situations which amount to forms of homelessness across Europe, please refer to the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), available at https://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2005/04/01/ethos-typology-on-homelessness-and-housing-exclusion?bcParent=27

legislation or mandatory decisions by national regulatory authorities, allowing borrowers to defer their payments.

In eight ESPN countries (including seven Member States), national experts highlight the introduction of exceptional measures to temporarily house, isolate, and protect people living in homelessness. The descriptions provided by these ESPN country teams show that a number of actions were taken, including the use of hotels or additional emergency accommodation solutions aimed at taking significant numbers of people sleeping rough off the streets. In some ESPN countries, national experts also report extra government funding for the provision of homelessness services.

The assessment provided by national experts confirms the persistence of pre-existing inequalities regarding access to adequate housing and housing support, and significant challenges that need to be addressed in the longer term. The pandemic merely revealed the urgent need to tackle such issues through strategic housing policy responses. Problems include the lack of affordable (social) housing, ineffective rental regulation mechanisms, overcrowded housing conditions among particularly vulnerable sectors of the population, lack of effective mechanisms to prevent evictions, and an urgent need to provide permanent rather than temporary solutions to homelessness.

H. Essential services: a particular focus on addressing the long-standing obstacles to access to energy services

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted gaps in people's right to access essential services such as water, energy, and digital communications (including internet and computer access).

ESPN national experts from 12 ESPN countries (including six Member States) report a range of support measures providing protection to vulnerable consumers. In some countries, governments adopted measures to ensure uninterrupted access to water, energy and digital communications, while in others, additional help was granted to increase households' ability to pay the costs of utility services.

The significant efforts of ESPN countries to adopt measures to protect access to energy during the pandemic – referred to by 11 out of the 12 ESPN country teams identifying support measures to enhance access to essential services – seem to echo reports of problems in accessing energy services which existed prior to the pandemic.

Deferral and/or reduction of the costs of utility services is the main mechanism put in place to support domestic consumers – reported by eight ESPN country teams (including four from Member States), whereas five ESPN country teams (including three from Member States) mention bans on disconnecting energy services.

Overall, all these additional support measures are targeted at people living on low incomes, either previously to the COVID-19 crisis or as a consequence of the impact of the pandemic. In four ESPN countries (including three Member States), some of the new support measures apply to all consumers of the utility service in question.

Support measures to facilitate access to essential services during the pandemic are a mix of new initiatives and adjustments to existing support. They were introduced at a relatively early stage of the pandemic – mostly between March and April 2020 – to cushion the impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable households.

These temporary measures aimed at mitigating the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, although of crucial importance, do not (yet) represent a structural response ensuring actual and effective access to essential services, particularly in those countries where this is an issue for those living on low incomes or in other vulnerable conditions.

I. Closure of schools and childcare facilities: ad hoc arrangements or extension of pre-existing measures for working parents

In order to stop the spread of COVID-19, it has been common practice in most countries to impose the closure of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services as well as schools during the various waves of the pandemic, affecting millions of children and their families across Europe. Given social distancing measures, the sharing of childcare with (extended) family members, neighbours and friends has also been limited in most countries. Most families have therefore had to take care of their children themselves. This has put a lot of pressure on those parents trying to balance work and family obligations.

In this context, 25 ESPN countries (including 21 Member States) have provided parental support arrangements when neither parent could look after their children due to both being in employment. These measures have been labelled differently in the different countries (additional days off, corona leave, special leave for childcare, care time etc.) and have taken different forms (leave, reduction of working time etc.).

The schemes reported by the national experts were either newly introduced in the context of the pandemic or were an extension or an amendment of an existing measure. Their duration generally corresponded to the lockdown period but in some cases the measures were extended until the end of 2020, or even beyond. Initially adopted in response to the closure of schools and childcare facilities, some of these measures have been extended in the event of a child being quarantined, irrespective of whether schools were closed. The measures vary considerably across the 35 countries, in terms of the eligibility conditions (e.g. age of the child), payment (e.g. unpaid, percentage of previous earnings, flat rate), inclusivity of parents' labour market statuses, and duration. In 15 of the 25 countries which implemented such measures (including 13 Member States), the self-employed are covered by these provisions. This shows a clear positive trend towards inclusion of the self-employed, as, unlike employees and with a few exceptions, they enjoy no compulsory protection against the risk of losing their income. Some specific categories of non-standard workers (for example, domestic workers) have been covered by the provisions in a few countries.

Special parental leave arrangements have in most cases been available to parents with children aged up to 12, although the age limit has varied considerably across Member States. Most of the measures reported by the ESPN experts have been explicitly targeted at parents whose work had not been suspended, or were otherwise affected, and who could work from home.

In 20 ESPN countries (including 17 Member States), the newly introduced schemes are broader in scope and are available to other groups of workers beyond employees, especially non-standard workers and the self-employed. In a few countries, they are somewhat less comprehensive in scope, being available only to employees (in both private and public sectors in two EU countries), or only to private sector employees, or only to workers in central and local public administration.

There has been considerable variation between ESPN countries in how the leave has been paid. Most of the measures have been implemented in the form of special or additional parental leave days, with several taking the form of additional or complementary income support. With only one exception, in all countries where specific leave has been implemented, parents are provided with some element of payment. Payment policies vary considerably across the countries, with the parent on leave paid either 100% of previous earnings or a flat rate, or an earnings-related rate ranging from 50% to 90% of earnings.

Only very few gaps have been reported by ESPN experts in the leave arrangements supporting working parents during the childcare and school closures, mostly for single parents and the self-employed.

J. Responding to other relevant social protection/inclusion support needs[12]

In addition to the measures relating to the previous policy areas, many of the 35 ESPN countries have introduced other support measures in response to the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent lockdown restrictions which affected the economy and large sectors of the population.

These temporary support measures have included incentives related to education and training, spending incentives, support to pensioners, and moratoria on debt repayments (i.e. schemes for the suspension of debt repayments).

Eight EU ESPN country teams report various types of education and training support aimed at mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown restrictions on education and training systems, including: the provision of cash assistance to students or trainees, financial support to parents whose children were not able to attend kindergarten facilities, the provision of school meals during school closures, and assistance to mitigate the negative effects of distance learning on the most vulnerable households.

In five ESPN countries (including four Member States), national experts report support measures related to pensions, which include the temporary suspension of contributions to mandatory funded pension schemes, extraordinary partial withdrawals from total savings, or one-off pension benefits for extraordinary health-related expenses.

Several governments have introduced new policy measures (e.g. tourist vouchers, payment cards) to try to encourage spending and to boost demand for specific services. These are intended to help sectors that are particularly struggling (e.g. tourism services), to stimulate overall spending and help those who have lost income due to the crisis.

Six ESPN country teams (including five from Member States) report the introduction of debt moratorium schemes aimed at helping debtors who have suffered a loss of income and are having difficulties meeting their debt obligations.

Finally, six ESPN country teams (including three from Member States) report a range of extraordinary measures in response to the pandemic, including support for informal carers or long-term care users, financial support to social care providers, home delivery support services, or retail price ceilings on essential goods.

[12] The information provided in this section brings together a wide and heterogeneous range of measures not covered by the other policy areas, and which were reported by national teams on a voluntary basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic swept across Europe, resulting in unprecedented disruption to social, employment and economic conditions. While there is evidence that EU Member States and the eight non-EU countries covered by this study have taken decisive action to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the crisis, most of the support measures adopted are temporary in nature; an important question to be addressed is whether or not countries should consider making some of these measures permanent (and, if not, what would be the appropriate speed of phasing out for the various measures). Additionally, the crisis has highlighted wider questions and revealed pre-existing gaps and inequalities across and within countries; these require sustained and continued efforts to pursue reform agendas, strengthening social protection systems and social inclusion policies in the longer term.

This section proposes a series of specific actions that could usefully be considered either at the national level (i.e. targeted at the 35 countries covered in this study) or at EU level. These actions build on the examination and main conclusions of the comparative analysis of the national reports prepared by the 35 ESPN country teams. They are grouped as follows:

- Horizontal recommendations (A)
- Recommendations on unemployment benefit schemes (B)
- Recommendations on job retention schemes (C)
- Recommendations on sickness benefit and sick pay schemes (D)
- Recommendations on Minimum Income Schemes and other social assistance support (E)
- Recommendations on housing support (F)
- Recommendations on access to essential services (G)
- Recommendations on special leave arrangements (H)

A. Horizontal recommendations

It is important that countries seize the opportunity created by the adoption of temporary support measures to increase the protective capacity of social protection systems and social inclusion policies, accelerating and/or deepening long-needed structural reforms, on the basis of robust evidence and in-depth impact assessments. In particular:

- Countries could usefully carry out a thorough review of the immediate and long-term impact of the pandemic and of the protective responses put in place (most often temporarily) – collecting, analysing and publishing data on COVID-19 and its impact.
- Lessons learned from the prompt response put in place by countries, as well as from long-standing weaknesses in social protection systems and social inclusion policies, could be critically reviewed, with a view to forming a solid basis for initiating, accelerating or deepening any future reforms needed.
- Where temporary extension of social protection to categories of workers who were previously not covered has proved to be effective, countries should consider following the EU commitment to implement the 2019 EU Council Recommendation on access to social protection to structurally include these categories, especially certain groups of non-standard workers, in their social protection system, to ensure that all workers have access to basic social protection as a minimum.
- Countries should consider seizing the opportunity to engage in policy reforms that directly contribute to the implementation of the EPSR Action Plan and the achievement of its targets, making full use of available EU funding, including from the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF).

- Countries could usefully use these reforms to build (or strengthen) adequate, comprehensive and resilient social protection systems and social inclusion policies that address structural deficiencies, are shock-responsive and include crisis response activation and recovery measures.
- Countries are encouraged to engage in (or build upon) a constructive dialogue with social partners, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other civil society organisations, as well as other relevant stakeholders, when designing and implementing their reform programmes.

B. Recommendations on unemployment benefit schemes

B.1 Recommendations to countries

The pandemic has highlighted some acute gaps in access to unemployment benefit for certain categories of non-standard workers and the self-employed, who frequently had to rely on ad hoc emergency measures. Without adequate social protection, people's welfare is at risk and the life-time productivity of the potential work force will be lower (Fouarge 2003). The expensive ad hoc emergency measures which were taken in the context of the pandemic and paid for from the State budget, do not benefit from the risk-sharing and solidarity which exists when a wider population is insured. In this context, taxpayers can be seen as "de-facto insurers actually subsidising unsustainable developments in specific sectors" (Schoukens 2020: 80-81).

In line with: a) the 2021 Joint Employment Report, adopted by the EU Council of Ministers (hereafter "the Council") on 9 March 2021, which recommends that, in a recovery phase, there should be on-going efforts to maintain and reinforce sustainable social protection for all, including for non-standard workers and the self-employed; as well as b) the 2019 Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed:

- Countries, according to their national situation, should consider:
    - evaluating the economic costs and social damage of lack of formal access to unemployment benefits for some categories of non-standard workers and the self-employed; and
    - providing access to unemployment benefits to all contractual workers whatever the scope and duration of their contract and to all categories of self-employed.

B.2 EU-level recommendations

- The European Commission and the Social Protection Committee should consider promoting mutual learning activities and exchanges of good practices among the Member States, looking at how to strengthen and provide better access to national unemployment benefit schemes beyond the specific context of the ongoing pandemic.
- The European Commission and the Social Protection Committee should consider continuing their activities to update and further develop the monitoring framework supporting the implementation of the 2019 Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed, strengthening the statistical and knowledge base on the relevant dimensions of national unemployment benefit schemes.

C. Recommendations on job retention schemes such as short-time work schemes and wage subsidies

C.1 Recommendations to countries

- Countries could usefully review these schemes in the light of the gaps/weaknesses highlighted during the pandemic. Such a review would have to consider *inter alia* the eligibility conditions, administrative procedures, generosity and inclusivity of these schemes – and would also have to check who actually benefitted/did not benefit in practice from these schemes.
- Countries should consider permanently integrating into their social protection system, as appropriate and according to the national circumstances, some form of job protection scheme which can be activated whenever needed in order to better protect the entire labour force (including non-standard workers and the self-employed) in times of recession and economic downturn.
- Countries in which people with certain work statuses cannot access these schemes should consider including them, in line with national circumstances.
- Countries in which workers are not protected against dismissal should consider providing them with adequate protection against this risk.

C.2 EU-level recommendations

The *Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE; see above)* temporary mechanism has played a pivotal role in supporting job retention schemes in the Member States. Further action in this area could include the following:

- SURE also targets support measures for self-employed persons. The EU should consider assessing how Member States have used this support to protect the self-employed and how adequate these measures have been.
- In its March 2021 Recommendation (EU) 2021/402 on an *Effective Active Support to Employment following the COVID-19 crisis (EASE)*[13], the European Commission outlines an approach to transitioning between emergency measures taken to preserve jobs during the pandemic and new measures required in its aftermath. The objective is to promote job creation and job-to-job transitions. Given that millions of workers have already lost their jobs and rely on unemployment benefits, and many more will be laid off, evaluation of the lessons learned from the temporary SURE programme could inform the reflection on the need for a permanent *European Unemployment Reinsurance Scheme*, as laid out in the 2019 European Commission Communication on "A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions" (COM/2020/14 final).

D. Recommendations on sickness benefit and sick pay schemes

The pandemic has underlined the crucially important role of paid sick leave schemes, not only in protecting and supporting workers in case of sickness but also in protecting society as a whole. Measures implemented in most of the 35 ESPN countries have aimed to reinforce these schemes, adapting them to the specific circumstances of the pandemic.

[13] EASE provides guidance to Member States on active labour market policies and indicates how countries could use EU funds to support EASE policies, including those available under *NextGenerationEU* and the *Recovery and Resilience Facility* (see above). (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_971)

Against this background, and in line with Principle 12 of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and with the provisions of the Council Recommendation of 8 November 2019 on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed:

D.1 Recommendations to countries

- Countries could usefully evaluate the extent to which measures taken during the pandemic related to paid sick leave schemes (sickness benefits and/or sick pay) ensure effective and adequate protection for all categories of workers, including employees in non-standard forms of employment and the self-employed.
- Countries should consider making some of these changes to their paid sick leave schemes permanent, i.e. extending some of these provisions beyond circumstances directly related to COVID-19 and beyond the duration of the emergency situation due to the pandemic. In this respect, in particular, it will be important that consideration be given to the financial adequacy of the level of benefits provided and to whether existing waiting periods for access to these benefits ought to be waived.

D.2 EU-level recommendations

- The European Commission and the Social Protection Committee should consider promoting mutual learning activities and exchanges of good practices among the Member States, looking at how to strengthen and provide better access to national paid sick leave schemes beyond the specific context of the ongoing pandemic.
- The European Commission and the Social Protection Committee are encouraged to continue their activities to update and further develop the monitoring framework supporting the implementation of the 2019 Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed, strengthening the statistical and knowledge base on the relevant dimensions of national sickness benefit and sick pay schemes.

E. Recommendations on Minimum Income Schemes (MISs) and other social assistance support

The EPSR Action Plan issued by the European Commission in March 2021 recognises the diversity of MISs in place in the Member States as regards their adequacy, coverage and take-up. The increased challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the fact that pre-crisis weaknesses of the MISs considerably undermined the position of vulnerable families (Van Lancker *et al.* 2020, Frazer and Marlier 2016), require further action to strengthen mechanisms that ensure people's right to a minimum standard of living and effective access to enabling goods and services.

E.1 Recommendations to countries

- Countries are encouraged to carefully review the gaps in adequacy of MISs and other social assistance support measures, ensuring effective protection against poverty across the whole life span.
- Countries are invited to ensure that transparent mechanisms exist to regularly uprate the value of the income component of the MIS, and that these mechanisms provide adequate and sufficient resources for this purpose.
- Countries should consider regularly reviewing and adapting (when necessary) eligibility conditions, calculation formulae and administrative procedures, ensuring that everyone lacking sufficient resources has effective access to social assistance support ensuring a life in dignity.
- To increase the coverage of people in need of support, countries should consider revising eligibility conditions (e.g. the equivalence scale used) that could exclude significant groups of

people experiencing poverty (e.g. third-country nationals, ethnic minorities, young people, large households, homeless people), and should, if necessary, improve their schemes accordingly.

- Countries in which the implementation of MISs and other social assistance support schemes suffers from fragmentation and procedural complexity could usefully address problematic discretionary and/or inconsistent features within those systems, ensuring simplification, transparency and comprehensiveness.

E.2 EU-level recommendations

- The European Commission is invited to deliver on its commitment to propose an ambitious EU Council Recommendation on minimum income. This would be fully in line with existing EU commitments, including the EPSR, the 2008 EU Recommendation on active inclusion (proposed by the European Commission and subsequently endorsed by the Council), the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the 1992 EU Council Recommendation on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems. Such a Recommendation should take account of mounting evidence of the need to strengthen the adequacy and effectiveness of MISs within an overall active inclusion approach.
- The European Commission together with the Social Protection Committee could usefully ensure that this initiative is underpinned by commonly agreed indicators and benchmarks making it possible to monitor its implementation, and by the active involvement of a wide range of relevant stakeholders, including academics, NGOs and other civil society organisations promoting social inclusion as well as people experiencing poverty or reliant on MISs.

F. Recommendations on housing support

The economic impact of COVID-19 is creating income instability, particularly for low-income people facing job losses and economic hardship. Many countries across Europe have adopted important extra support measures to protect households from the risk of losing their homes, and have provided different forms of housing assistance, particularly targeting the most vulnerable people and households. However, the pandemic has also clearly highlighted the need to address the pre-existing housing crisis in Europe, exposing the failure of housing policies to ensure access to decent and affordable housing for all.

F.1 Recommendations to countries

- Countries are encouraged to collect and publish data on COVID-19 and its impact on access to adequate housing. Such data would need to cover various indicators, including housing availability, quality and affordability, overcrowding, extent of homelessness, and detailed information in relation to security of tenure, including on the number of evictions and who is threatened and affected by them.
- It is important that temporary support measures be phased out only once conditions improve; but governments also need to develop longer-term, structural responses in order to overcome the persistent pre-existing housing inequalities and challenges which have (re)surfaced during, and/or have been exacerbated by, the pandemic. Sufficient budgetary resources will have to be made available to create the conditions needed to implement such a reform agenda.
- Countries are invited to critically assess and utilise upcoming opportunities to regulate housing prices, in close partnership between public authorities and other relevant stakeholders; this would increase the supply of affordable housing accessible to the most vulnerable on the housing market and stimulate the overall supply of (affordable) housing.

The social implications of barriers to access to affordable housing for a growing proportion of the population, and particularly for especially vulnerable groups (e.g. young people, third country nationals, ethnic minorities), could be usefully addressed.

- Countries are encouraged to regularly monitor trends in rents and (when necessary) establish or strengthen rent-control mechanisms.
- Countries are encouraged to ensure that housing allowance systems (where they exist) provide adequate compensation levels for the real housing costs of low-income households.
- Is important that countries address system inefficiencies resulting from complex administrative procedures which inhibit the access of the most vulnerable groups to existing support.
- Countries could usefully build on innovative policy responses which temporarily suspended evictions in response to COVID-19, within integrated and comprehensive preventative systems.

F.2 EU-level recommendations

- Stronger take-up of EU funding could usefully be encouraged and supported, as a means to effectively address the need for well-resourced housing strategies encompassing preventative services, social and affordable housing supply, and other effective supported housing services (e.g. "Housing First" and other housing-led services[14]).
- As housing policies will have to address economic and social challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, the European Commission could help to steer progressive national and subnational housing policies, based on a coherent and strategic EU approach, robust funding and cross-sectoral cooperation.
- The European Commission and the Social Protection Committee should consider promoting mutual learning activities and exchanges of good practices among the Member States, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of housing support mechanisms provided during the pandemic and reflecting on the appropriateness of maintaining some of these arrangements beyond the specific context of the pandemic.
- Strong support would need to be given to Member States' initiatives to find long-term solutions to homelessness, by encouraging systemic changes (e.g. moving towards demonstrable effective strategic services and policies to prevent and end homelessness).
- The *European Platform on Combating Homelessness*, launched in June 2021, aimed at helping Member States, cities and service providers to share best practices and identify efficient and innovative approaches, should be invited to also focus on mobilising the EU budget to finance and fund measures to tackle homelessness and housing exclusion.

G. Recommendations on access to essential services

The pandemic has highlighted the need for temporary measures to ensure that people living on low incomes, those affected by major loss of income or other vulnerable sectors of the population have continued access to essential services. These temporary measures aimed at mitigating the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic could usefully be followed up by a critical discussion and adoption – when necessary – of specific structural actions to ensure the implementation of effective

[14] "Housing First" refers to services providing intensive case management that supports people with experience of homelessness, who have high and complex needs, in their own independent housing. Housing-led approaches refer to services that emphasise rapid rehousing but are intended for homeless people with lower support needs and thus tend to offer less intensive support.

support mechanisms guaranteeing access to services which are considered to be essential, in line with Principle 20 of the EPSR[15].

G.1 Recommendations to countries

- Countries are encouraged to monitor the affordability, accessibility and availability of essential services, as well as their quality, on the basis of robust EU and national indicators using reliable data.
- Countries are invited to undertake specific structural actions in order to enhance exits from energy poverty, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable sections of the population. These would need to build on the assessment of recent alleviation and support solutions introduced in response to the pandemic.
- The functioning and implications of support measures/programmes to address energy poverty could usefully be examined, particularly their differential impacts on different income groups.

G.2 EU-level recommendations

- Given that an adequate income can be an important factor in ensuring people's access to essential services, the European Commission should consider closely linking the implementation of Principle 20 of the EPSR with forceful implementation of Principle 14 on minimum income and other relevant principles; Principle 14 recognises that the right to adequate income, in the form of benefits when necessary, is key to effective access to enabling services.
- The EU is invited to provide further guidance and support to Member States' interventions as well as help to enhance access to and accessibility of essential goods and services. It could do so *inter alia* by encouraging the use of EU funding to tackle barriers which hinder people living in vulnerable situations from accessing essential services.

H. Recommendations on special leave arrangements

Research has shown that women have generally been harder hit by the COVID-19 recession, as they have taken on a large part of the increased family caring responsibilities during this period (Rubery and Tavora 2021). In that respect, specific leave arrangements to support working parents during childcare and school closures proved to be of particular importance. More broadly, Member States should aim to consider more carefully the gender implications of the pandemic, as beyond a stronger decline in employment among men in the short run, women's disengagement from the labour market and the strengthening of gender stereotypes have become sources of concern.

H.1 Recommendations to countries

- In emergency situations, special attention could usefully be paid to leave provisions that help alleviate the additional childcare burden on working parents, either by offering direct support or by enabling them to adapt their working schedules sufficiently.
- Leave arrangements – when leave is unpaid, or paid at a very low level – can strengthen the gender divide, potentially causing women to withdraw from the labour market to care for their children. When designing and implementing a leave scheme, Member States should aim to consider the direct impact on the gender divide: a scheme can result in greater equity if certain incentives are granted or, conversely, can bring about or exacerbate an unequal distribution of care.
- The pressure of increased care duties in emergency situations can be especially severe for single parents. Countries are invited to better take into account the specific needs of single

[15] For a discussion of possible structural actions in this field, see Baptista and Marlier (2020).

parents by improving existing policies or adopting new policies targeted at single-parent households.

H.2 EU-level recommendations

- The European Commission and the Social Protection Committee should consider promoting mutual learning activities and exchanges of good practices among the Member States, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the special leave arrangements provided during the pandemic and reflecting on the appropriateness of maintaining some of these arrangements beyond the specific context of the pandemic.

1 TRENDS OF THE PANDEMIC AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

The main objective of this section is to provide a context for the analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social protection and social inclusion policies presented in this report. This section describes the epidemiological situation and how it has developed, and considers the impact of the pandemic on the economy, labour markets and the social dimension in the EU-27 Member States, the (potential) EU candidate countries and the United Kingdom.

Regarding the epidemiological aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, this section is mainly based on the "Our World in Data" (OWID) database[16]. This database has been used to collate daily data for the 35 countries examined in this report, for a number of indicators relating to COVID-19 infection and mortality over the period from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021 (441 days divided into 63 seven-day weeks). The effects of the pandemic on the economy and employment are assessed through the quarterly employment and unemployment rates for 2019 and 2020 available from Eurostat.

The *EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)*, the dataset which provides the bulk of comparative social indicators for all EU Member States and a number of other European countries, will not deliver results on the 2020 income reference year until the second half of 2022[17]. Therefore, the impact of the pandemic on income poverty and inequality in the EU will not be measurable on the basis of these data before then[18]. However, comparative EU analyses by Eurostat and by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) have sought to estimate this impact. The last part of this section (Subsection 1.2.3) briefly presents some of these analyses, and reports a number of observations made at national level and reflected by the ESPN experts in their reports.

The amount of information collected through the OWID database reflects considerable work done tracking various indicators related to the COVID-19 pandemic in near real time. However, these data should be viewed with some caution: there are potential biases that may affect comparability in the ways in which countries officially measure and report these various indicators[19]. The use of weekly averages (arithmetic or moving averages) in this report helps to partially reduce the effects of daily variability in the information recorded on confirmed cases and related deaths.

[16] OWID is a collaborative effort between researchers at the "Oxford Martin Programme on Global Development" of the University of Oxford (the scientific editors of the website content) and the non-profit organisation Global Change Data Lab (which publishes and maintains the website and the data tools). The data on EU countries available from OWID come from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), up to the end of October 2020. On 30 November 2020, OWID shifted its source of information on confirmed cases and deaths, from the ECDC to the data hub of Johns Hopkins University (Washington). This followed the ECDC's announcement that they were switching from daily to weekly updates. See: https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus-source-data

[17] Except in the UK (current income) and in Ireland (income received in the last 12 months), EU-SILC collects data on the income received in the calendar year prior to the survey - in order to have detailed income information on all twelve months (1 January – 31 December). So, information on income received in 2020 (the first year of the pandemic) is collected in 2021. For more information on EU-SILC, see "Investing in statistics: EU-SILC", Chapter 2 by E. Di Meglio, D. Dupré and S. Grundiza, in Guio, Marlier and Nolan (2021/forthcoming).

[18] It should be noted that this is only the case for income-based indicators. Key non-monetary social indicators, such as material and social deprivation, will be available for all EU-SILC countries in the second half of 2021.

[19] A positive test is what determines that a person has been infected with COVID-19. But complete case detection is strongly related to the extent of a country's testing capacity. There are also differences in how countries define the total number of tests officially reported. Is this the number of people tested or the total number of tests, including several for the same person? Does this figure refer to the same type of test (PCR or saliva-based)? Over what period of time is the number reported in the official statistics (daily, weekly, fortnightly)? Similar questions arise with regard to the attribution of a death to COVID-19. The way in which the number of deaths is recorded varies from country to country. For example, some countries may only include deaths that occurred in hospitals, while others may include deaths at home or outside the home. Finally, the number of deaths reported for a given day does not necessarily mean that the death actually occurred on that day, only that the death was officially recorded on that day (Source: OWID web site).

1.1 Epidemiological situation

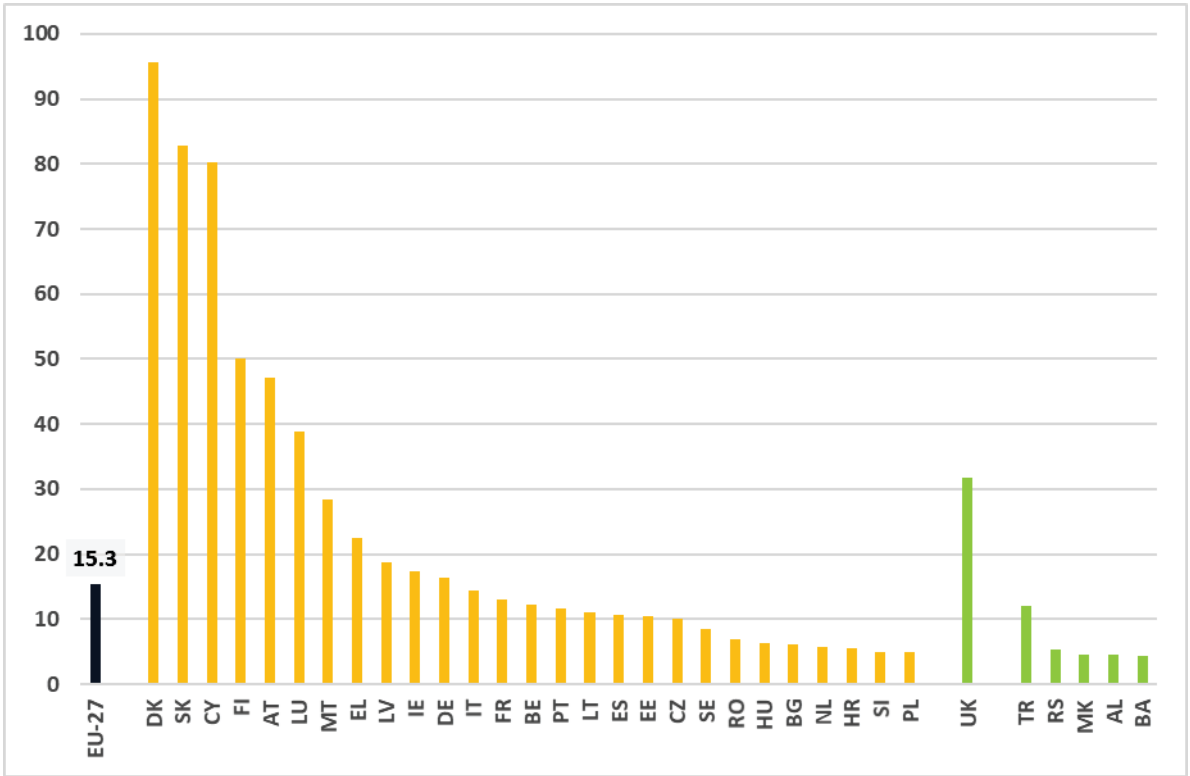
1.1.1 Infections and testing

Before turning to the incidence of the pandemic in the countries considered in this report, we should briefly review the relationship between the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and the countries' testing capacities. The evolution of the number of confirmed cases provides an imperfect picture of the true extent of the pandemic within countries. The gradual increase in the number of confirmed cases following the first wave of the pandemic also reflects the differential increase in testing among European countries. As the extent of testing increases, so does the probability of detecting a case.

Theoretically, an absolute measure of a country's COVID-19 status in terms of infection would require data from testing the entire population of that country at any given time. The number of confirmed cases therefore only approximately reflects the true extent of infection, solely in the tested population. For this reason, the indicator used in this report compares the extent of testing with the extent of confirmed cases. This indicator is the ratio of the number of tests performed in a given week to the number of reported cases of COVID-19 in the same week (Table B3.2 in Annex B). It asks the question: "How many tests does a country actually perform to find a COVID-19 case?". The higher the value, the lower the actual level of infection. Countries that test a great deal for confirmed cases are more likely to test widely enough to find all cases. Conversely, countries where this ratio is low would indicate a situation in which the extent of testing is still too weak to estimate the actual infection status.

Figure 1.1 shows the number of tests per case for the whole observation period, i.e. the total number of tests performed and the total number of cases detected.

Figure 1.1: Total number of tests per total number of cases for the whole period of observation (from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021), total population, ESPN countries



Reading note: Over the whole period of observation, 15.3 tests were needed on average in the EU-27 to detect one COVID-19 case.
Note: See Table B3.1 in Annex B.
Source: OWID, downloaded 26 April 2021, authors' own calculations. No data for ME and XK.

On average for the EU-27, the number of tests per case is 15.3. This means that just over 15 tests are required to detect one case of COVID-19 infection. Polarisation can be observed within the EU between a group of countries where many tests have to be performed before a case of COVID-19 is identified (DK, SK, CY, FI, AT and LU) and a group of countries where few tests are necessary to find a case of COVID-19 (CZ, SE, RO, HU, BG, NL, HR, SI and PL). The (potential) candidate countries fall into the latter group. The UK has a ratio closer to those observed in the first group.

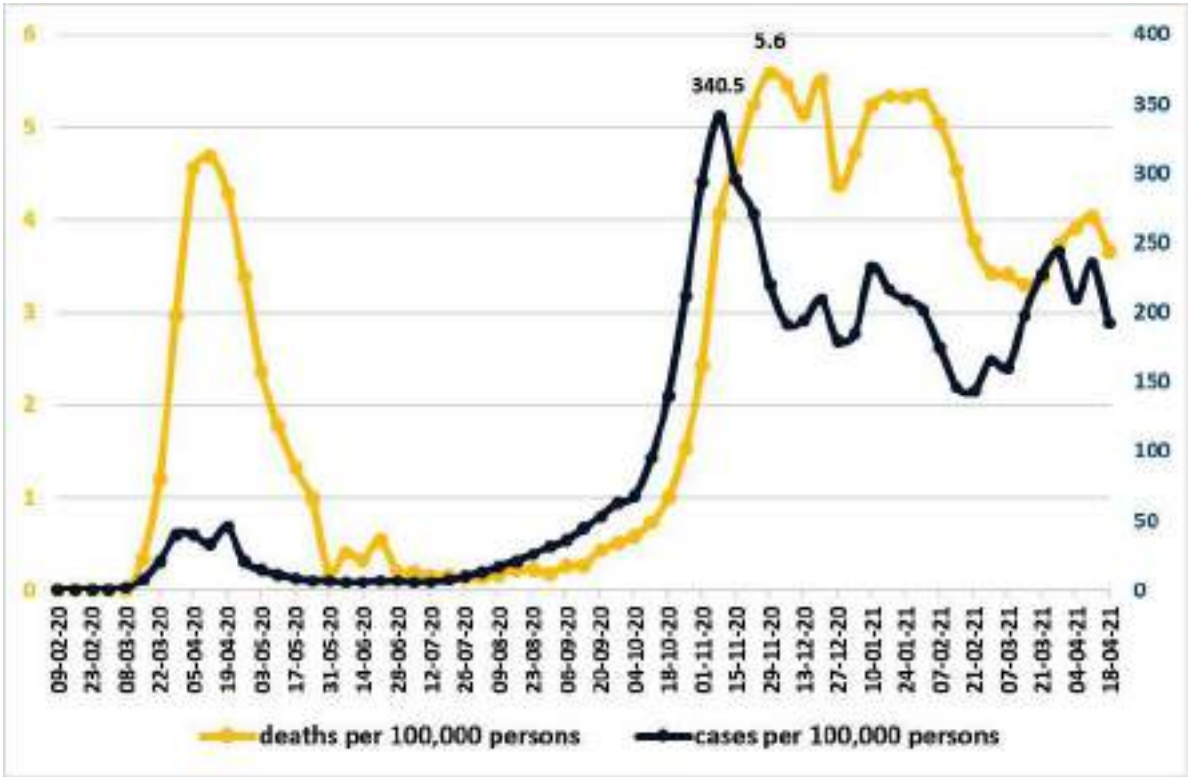
With these differences in mind, we can therefore start our analysis of the impact of the pandemic on the countries considered in this report.

1.1.2 Evolution of confirmed cases and deaths

We cannot, here, give a detailed account of the evolution of the number of cases and related deaths for the 35 ESPN countries. The country data tables showing these developments are available as Tables B1.2 and B2.2 in Annex B. We will therefore focus on the progression of the EU-27 average, in order to trace the evolution over time of the pandemic.

The following graph shows, for the same period of observation, the evolution of the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 persons, and the number of related deaths per 100,000 persons (Figure 1.2). It highlights the various phases of the pandemic in the EU.

Figure 1.2: Evolution of the total weekly numbers of confirmed cases (right axis) and COVID-19-related deaths (left axis) per 100,000 persons between 3 February 2020 and 18 April 2021, total population, EU-27 average



Reading note: On average for the EU-27, the number of new confirmed cases (340.5 per 100,000 persons) was at its peak in the week of 08-11-20, i.e. the week from Monday 2 November 2020 to Sunday 8 November 2020. The peak of mortality was in the last week of the same month (29-11-20, from Monday 23 November 2020 to Sunday 29 November 2020), with 5.6 COVID-19-related deaths per 100,000 persons.
Note: See Tables B1.2 and B2.2 in Annex B.
Source: OWID, downloaded 26 April 2021, authors' own calculations.

The first European cases of COVID-19 infection were reported in late January 2020 in France, Germany and Italy. At the beginning of March, all EU countries reported confirmed infections. The scale of this first wave of the pandemic led all European countries to implement strict or partial lockdowns during the month of March and to encourage preventative behaviour (masks, gels, physical distancing) among their populations, while gradually increasing testing capacities. As a result of these stringent measures, the progression of the pandemic had changed significantly in the EU by the end of spring 2020. As a result of this slowdown, most countries temporarily lifted or relaxed the containment measures in place. In the summer of 2020, the number of confirmed COVID-19 infections began to increase once more. This was partly due to the massive increase in testing in countries. Over this period, the incidence of COVID-19 increased progressively while the related mortality stood still.

From September 2020 onwards, the existence of a second wave of the pandemic was confirmed in all countries, in terms of both the number of infections and the number of deaths caused by the disease. The second wave was stronger than the first. In the first week of October 2020, the peak of the second wave, the average number of confirmed cases per 100,000 persons in the EU-27 reached a level more than seven times higher than that observed at the peak of the first wave in the third week of April 2020 (341 versus 45 cases) (Figure 1.2 and Table B1.2 in Annex B). As mentioned earlier, the significant rise in the number of cases observed was largely related to the increasing testing capacity in countries. However, mortality again reached a level similar to that observed at the peak of the first wave, at around five deaths per 100,000 persons, whereas it had fallen sharply during the summer of 2020.

In response, European countries re-implemented curfew or lockdown measures of varying degrees of stringency, and extended the duration of temporary support measures. Despite this, and the gradual implementation of the vaccination campaign from the beginning of 2021, the number of infections and the number of deaths did not decrease as steeply as they did after the first wave. In fact, after a brief period of decline, infection and mortality levels began to rise again in February/March 2021; in April 2021, the number of infections was above that observed during the worst days of the first wave.

As of 18 April 2021, the last day of observation covered in this report, 29,358,117 people had contracted COVID-19 in the EU-27; the related mortality was 661,284 deaths. Taking into account all 35 ESPN countries, these figures were 39,354,416 and 848,801, respectively (Tables B1.1 and B2.1 in Annex B).

1.1.3 Infection levels

In Europe, all countries have been affected by the pandemic, although there are significant disparities between countries and also between regions, particularly between rural and more urbanised areas.

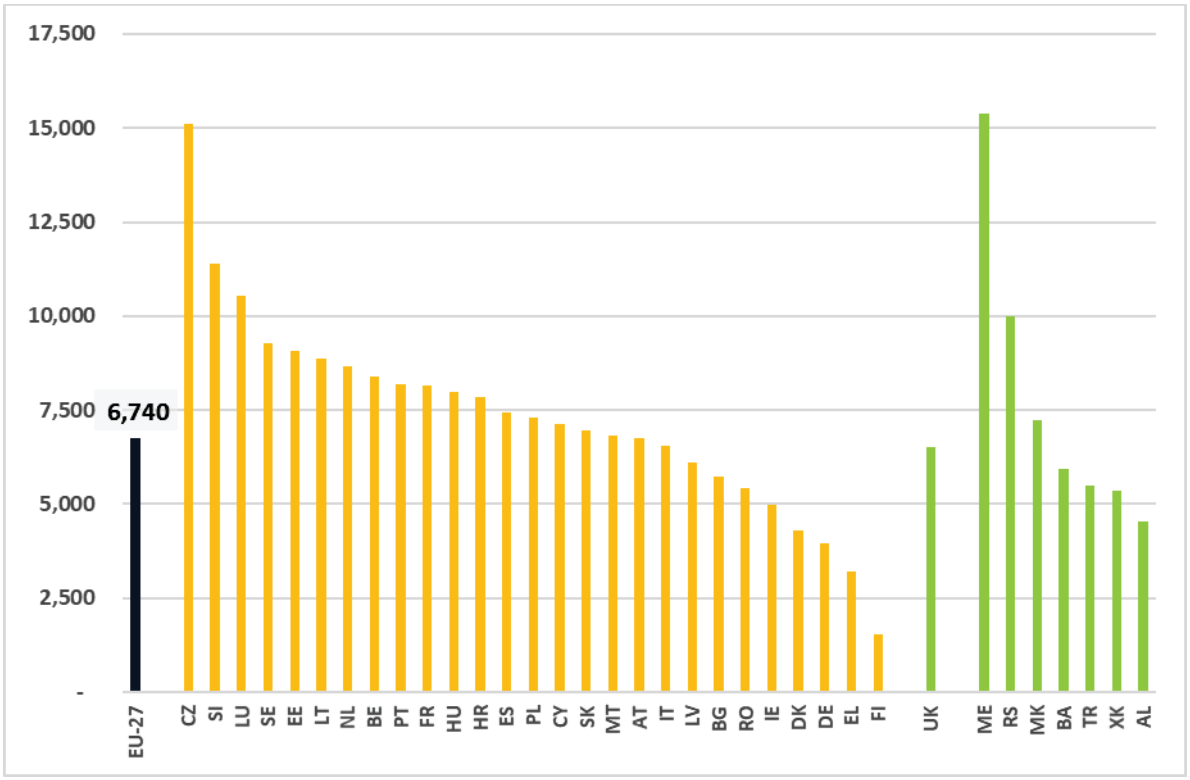
Two sets of data are presented here. The first set of data covers the situation during the entire period under observation, between 3 February 2020 and 18 April 2021. The second set sheds light on the situation at the time of writing this report, based on data from the last week of observation, from 12 to 18 April 2021.

Figure 1.3 shows the total number of confirmed cases per 100,000 persons, over the entire observation period.

Considering the whole observation period, the average number of confirmed cases per 100,000 persons in the EU-27 is 6,740. This number is significantly higher in the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Luxembourg, where it exceeds 10,000 cases. In one group of countries, infection levels also appear to be higher, ranging from 8,000 to 10,000 cases per 100,000 persons (FR, PT, BE, NL, LT, EE and SE). In contrast, the level of infection remains more limited in other countries over the whole period, with fewer than 5,000 cases per 100,000 persons (IE, DK, DE, EL and especially FI).

Among the non-EU countries, the number of cases per 100,000 persons is higher in Montenegro and Serbia than in the other countries in this group. In the United Kingdom, it is similar to the EU-27 average.

Figure 1.3: Total number of confirmed cases per 100,000 persons for the whole period of observation (3 February 2020 - 18 April 2021), total population, ESPN countries



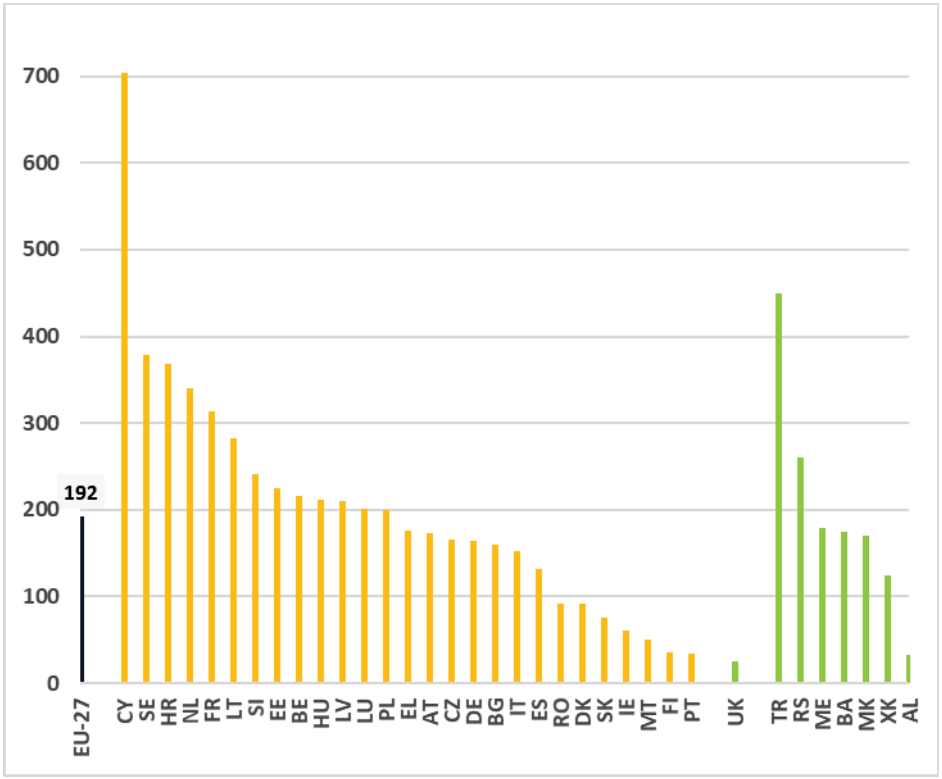
Reading note: On average for the EU-27, 6,740 COVID-19 cases were detected per 100,000 persons over the whole period of observation.
Note: See Table B1.1 in Annex B.
Source: OWID, downloaded 26 April 2021, authors' own calculations.

Moving beyond the situation over the whole observation period, Figure 1.4 depicts the situation in the ESPN countries in the last available observation week (12-18 April 2021). It shows, at EU-27 level, the number of confirmed cases per 100,000 persons during that week as being 192 per 100,000 persons. In comparison, the peak observed since the beginning of the pandemic was 341 cases per 100,000 persons in the first week of November 2020 (see Figure 1.2 above and Table B1.2 in Annex B).

The total number of confirmed cases during the week of 12-18 April 2021 is relatively high in one group of EU Member States (CY, SE, HR, NL and FR): over 300 cases per 100,000 persons. In contrast, it is significantly lower in another group of countries (RO, DK, SK, IE, MT, and especially FI and PT): less than 100.

Among the non-EU countries, Turkey stands out, with almost 450 cases per 100,000 persons, and to a lesser extent Serbia (260 cases per 100,000 persons). Albania and the United Kingdom have lower levels of infection than the other countries in this group.

Figure 1.4: Total number of confirmed cases per 100,000 persons during the last week of observation (12-18 April 2021), total population, ESPN countries



Reading note: On average for the EU-27, 192 COVID-19 cases were detected per 100,000 persons in the last week of observation.
Note: See Table B1.2 in Annex B.
Source: OWID, downloaded 26 April 2021, authors' own calculations.

1.1.4 Mortality due to COVID-19

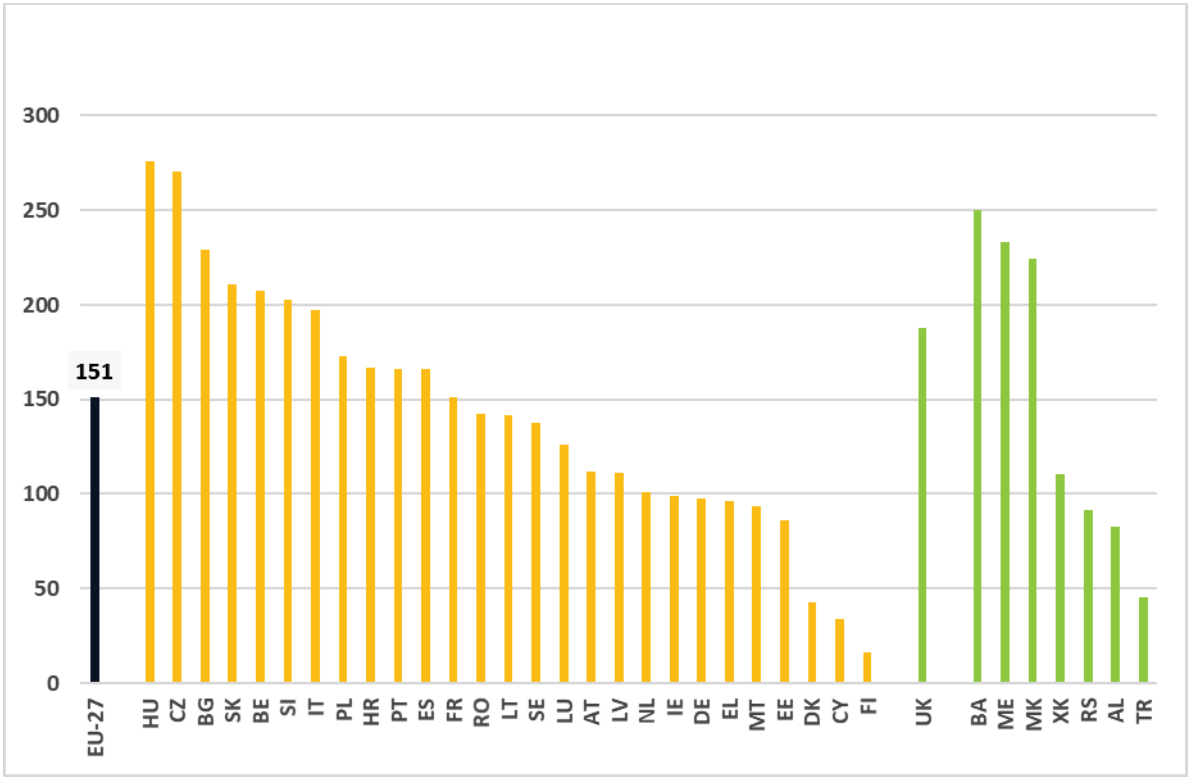
As in the previous subsection, two sets of data are presented here: the situation over the whole observation period and the situation during the last week of observation.

Figure 1.5 shows the total number of deaths related to COVID-19 per 100,000 persons over the whole observation period.

On average in the EU-27, considering the whole observation period, there were 151 deaths resulting from COVID-19 per 100,000 persons. This ratio is significantly higher (200 deaths or more) in one group of countries (HU, CZ, BG, SK, BE, SI and IT). It is also high (150 deaths or more) in another group of countries (PL, HR, PT, ES and FR). In contrast, a particularly low number of deaths can be observed in Finland and to a lesser extent in Cyprus and Denmark.

Among the non-EU countries, the number of deaths per 100,000 persons is higher in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia than in the other countries in this group. It is also high in the United Kingdom.

Figure 1.5: Total number of COVID-19-related deaths per 100,000 persons for the whole period of observation (3 February 2020 - 18 April 2021), total population, ESPN countries



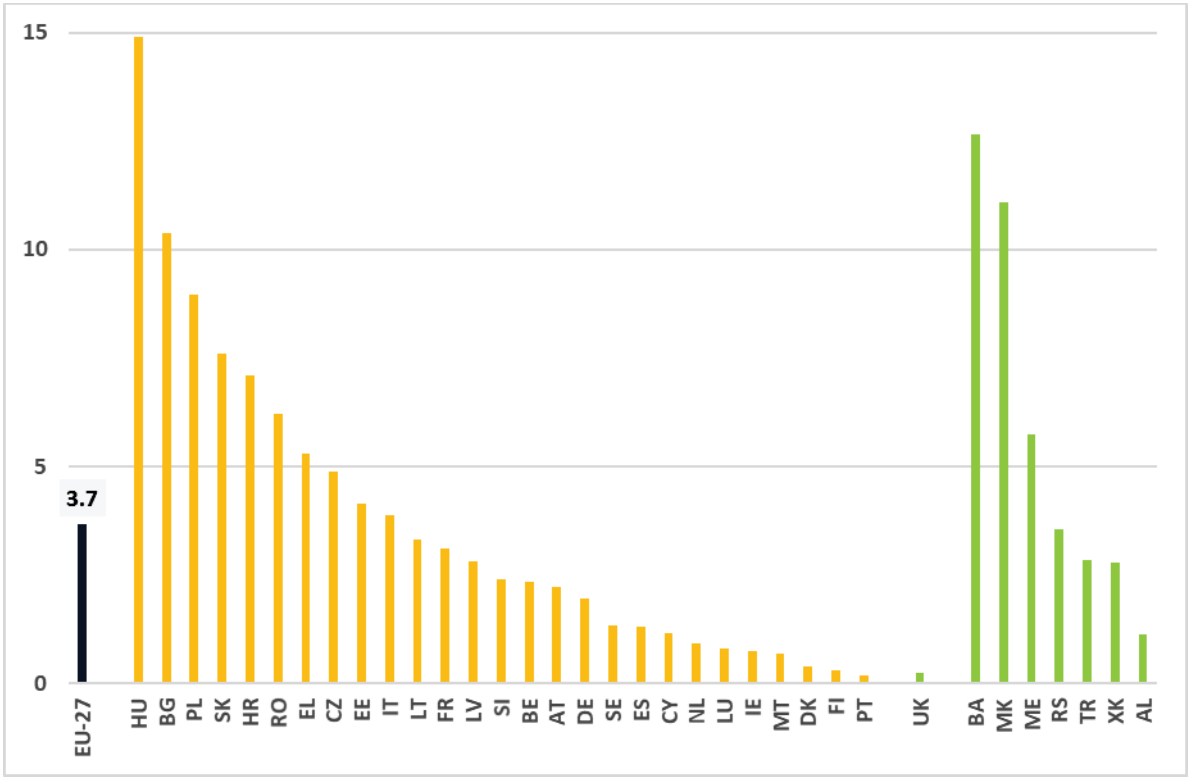
Reading note: On average for the EU-27, 151 COVID-19-related deaths per 100,000 persons were recorded over the whole period of observation.
Note: See Table B2.1 in Annex B.
Source: OWID, downloaded 26 April 2021, authors' own calculations.

Figure 1.6 describes the situation during the last week of observation. It shows that between 12 and 18 April 2021, the EU-27 average is 3.7 deaths per 100,000 persons. By way of a reference, the peak since the beginning of the pandemic was reached in the last week of November 2020, with 5.6 deaths per 100,000 persons (see Figure 1.2 above and Table B2.2 in Annex B).

This EU-27 average also masks a high degree of internal polarity. In Hungary, and to a lesser extent in Bulgaria and Poland, COVID-19-related mortality is significantly higher than in other Member States. It is also relatively high in another group of countries (SK, HR and RO). It is lowest in seven Member States (NL, LU, IE, MT, DK, and especially FI and PT): less than one recorded death per 100,000 persons.

Among the non-EU countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia show high numbers, with more than 11 COVID-19-related deaths per 100,000 persons. This is also the case, though to a lesser extent, in Montenegro. The United Kingdom has lower levels of death than the other non-EU countries.

Figure 1.6: Total number of COVID-19-related deaths per 100,000 persons during the last week of observation (12-18 April 2021), total population, ESPN countries



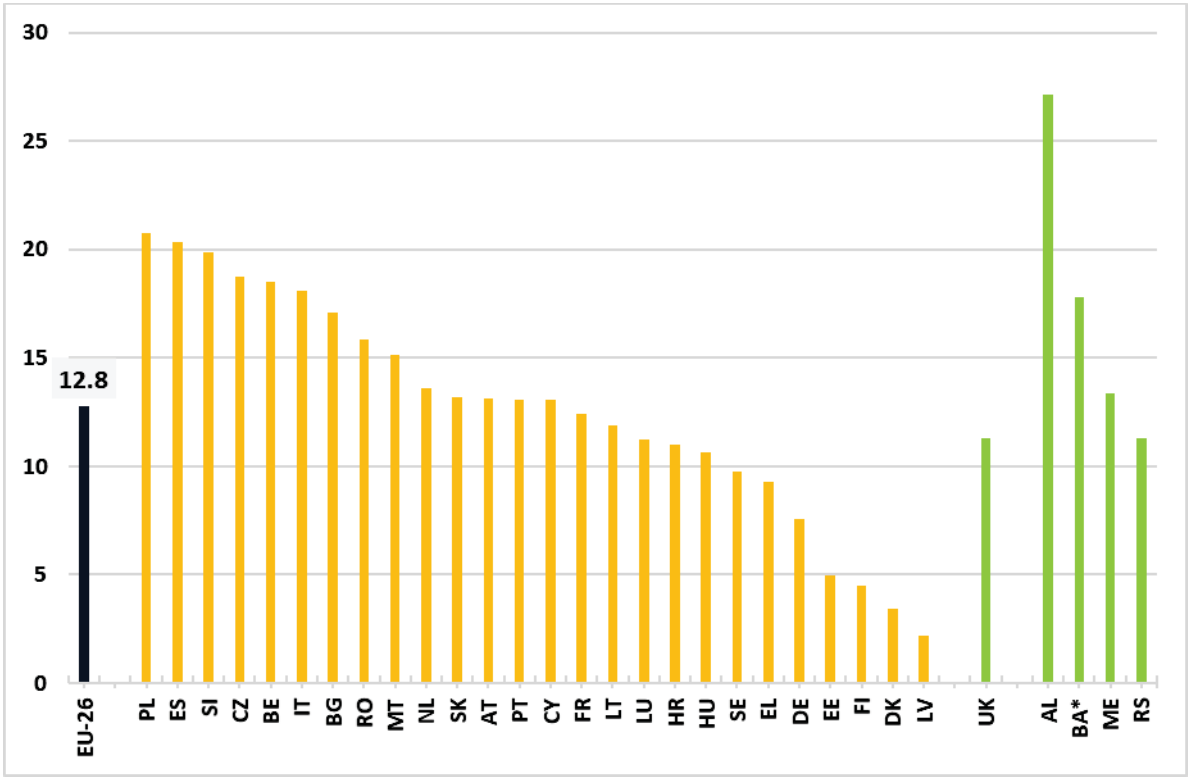
Reading note: In the last week of observation, the EU-27 average was 3.7 COVID-19-related deaths per 100,000 persons.
Note: See Table B2.2 in Annex B.
Source: OWID, downloaded 26 April 2021, authors' own calculations.

1.1.5 Excess mortality

In the introduction to Section 1 we recall that the epidemiological data discussed so far should be interpreted with caution, given the existence of potential biases that may affect comparability in the ways in which countries officially measure and report infection and COVID-19-related mortality. An analysis of excess mortality appears to be a more reliable indicator of the impact of the pandemic, because it is not linked to the method of counting COVID-19 deaths across countries. The underlying assumption is that while not all excess mortality can be attributed to COVID-19, there is a strong likelihood that the pandemic will be the major cause of excess mortality in 2020, compared to previous years.

The "excess mortality" indicator calculated by Eurostat compares the number of deaths (regardless of the causes) in 2020 to the average number of deaths in the years 2016 to 2019. This indicator is expressed as a percentage of additional deaths compared to the 2016-2019 baseline period. The higher the value, the more additional deaths occurred compared to the baseline; a negative value means that there were fewer deaths compared with the baseline period. Figure 1.7 presents this indicator for the various countries examined in this report.

Figure 1.7: Excess mortality – Comparison of 2020 number of deaths with 2016-2019 average number of deaths, total population, ESPN countries (% of additional deaths)



Reading note: On average for the EU-26 (no data for IE), the number of deaths in 2020 was 12.8% higher than the average annual number of deaths of the four previous years.
Note: See Table B4.1 in Annex B. In this table, the indicator is presented as a ratio (in %) of the number of deaths in 2020 to the average number of deaths in 2016-2019. The EU-26 average provided in this table is therefore 112.8% (i.e. 12.8% higher than the 2016-2019 baseline).
Source: For all countries except BA, Eurostat online database (downloaded 26 April 2021, authors' own calculations). For BA, Agency for statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (data received upon request on 19 April 2021). No data for IE or for MK, TR and XK.

The EU-26[20] average shows an excess mortality of 12.8% for the year 2020.

This European average conceals strong polarisation within the EU. Excess mortality is particularly high in one group of countries where it exceeds 15% (MT, RO, BG, IT, BE, CZ, SI and especially ES and PL where it is higher than 20%). In another group of countries, it is also higher than 10% (HU, HR, LU, LT, FR, CY, PT, AT, SK and NL). At the opposite end of the spectrum, it is less than 5% in four countries (LV, DK, FI and EE).

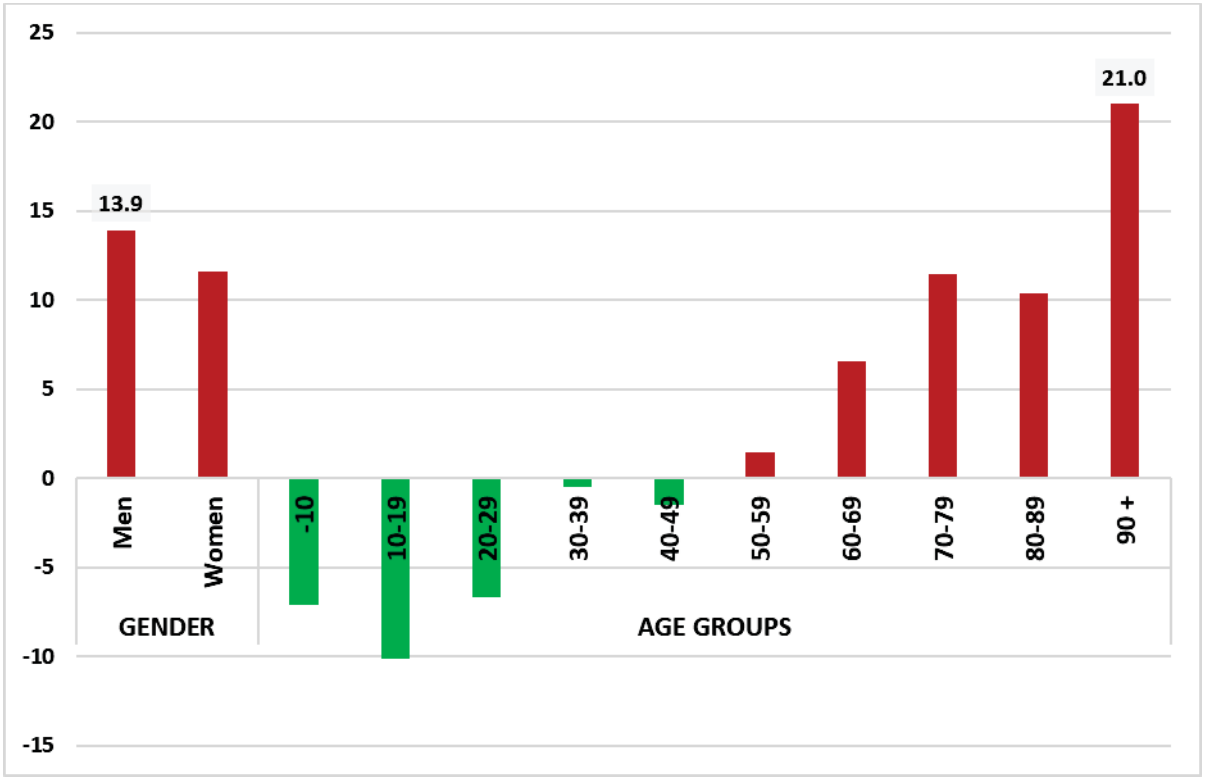
Among the non-EU countries, excess mortality appears to be particularly high in Albania, and to a lesser extent in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A Eurostat press release traces the monthly evolution of excess mortality in the EU-26 during the pandemic. Excess mortality soared at the beginning of the pandemic and reached a first peak in early summer 2020 (+25%). After a period of calm, excess mortality began to rise again, reaching a new peak in November at the height of the second wave of the pandemic (+41%). Since then, excess mortality has declined steadily, to reach its lowest level in February 2021 (+5%). (Eurostat 2021a)

Breakdowns of excess mortality by gender and age groups for all ESPN countries are available in the detailed tables in Annex B (Tables B4.2 and B4.3). Figure 1.8 presents this information for the EU-26 average.

[20] For several years now, there have been no data in the Eurostat database on the number of deaths in Ireland.

Figure 1.8: Excess mortality - Comparison of 2020 number of deaths with 2016-2019 average number of deaths, by gender and by age groups, total population, EU-26 average (% of additional deaths)



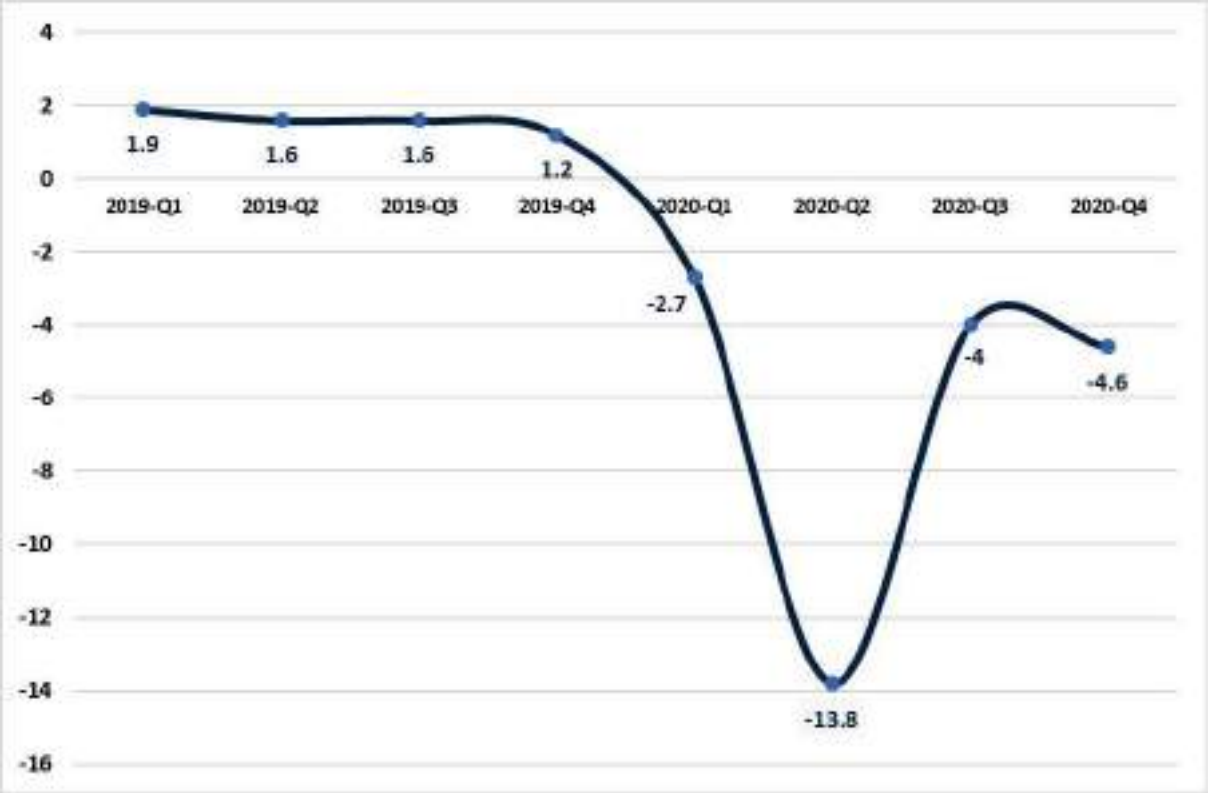
Reading note: On average for the EU-26 (no data for IE), excess mortality was higher for men (13.9%). The highest figure (21%) was in the group of persons aged 90 years or over.
Note: See Tables B4.2 and B4.3 in Annex B. In these tables, the indicator is presented as a ratio (in %) of the number of deaths in 2020 to the average number of deaths in 2016-2019.
Source: Eurostat online database, downloaded 26 April 2021, authors' own calculations. No data for IE.

On average for the EU-26, excess mortality in 2020 compared to the average of the previous four years is higher for men (+13.9%) than for women (+11.6%). With regard to excess mortality in the age groups, it can be seen that the oldest age groups show higher excess mortality levels in 2020, particularly those aged 90 years or more (+21%). Excess mortality is also higher for the 70-79 and 80-89 age groups (+11.5% and +10.4% respectively). These data also highlight an inverse phenomenon in the youngest age groups (especially among those aged 10-19), in which fewer deaths are observed than in previous years, as shown by the negative values of the indicator. This is partly explained by the side-effects of the measures implemented by countries to contain the pandemic, which particularly affected the youngest while decreasing their exposure to the risks of "normal" life (curfews, traffic restrictions, closure of educational, leisure and entertainment facilities etc.).

1.2 Economic and social impact

1.2.1 Economic situation

Figure 1.9: GDP quarterly changes in 2019 and 2020, EU-27 (in % of the same quarter of the previous year)

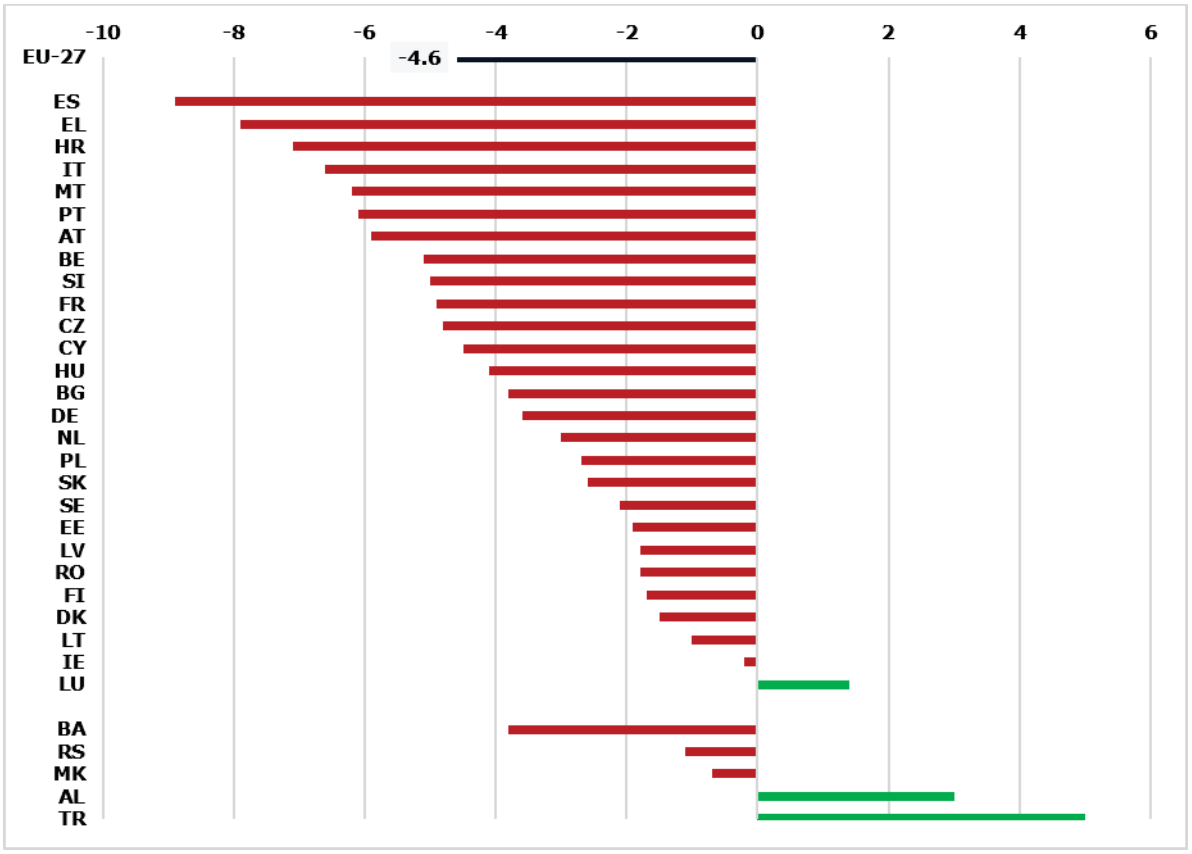


Reading note: In the second quarter of 2020 (2020-Q2) the GDP of the EU-27 fell by 4.6% compared to the second quarter of 2019 (2019-Q2).
Note: See Table B5 in Annex B.
Source: Eurostat - GDP and main components (output, expenditure and income) - indicator [NAMQ_10_GDP] - downloaded 26 April 2021.

Figure 1.9 compares, for the EU-27, aggregate quarterly values of GDP in the years 2019 and 2020 with the corresponding values for the quarters in 2018 and 2019, respectively. It shows a marked fall in GDP in all four quarters of 2020, with the fall peaking in the second quarter of 2020 (-13.8%). European countries have followed this trend to differing extents (Table B5 in Annex B). In the second quarter of 2020, all countries considered in this report experienced a pronounced decline in GDP compared to the same quarter in 2019. Indeed, the decline had already started significantly (-2% or more) in the first quarter of 2020 in a small group of countries (e.g. BE, PT, DE, SI, AT, SK, ES, FR and IT). The variability of the economic impact of the pandemic among EU Member States could be explained by factors such as the strictness of lockdown measures, the share of tourism in the economy and the quality of governance (Sapir 2020).

Figure 1.10 illustrates GDP evolution in the EU Member States in the fourth quarter of 2020 compared to the same quarter of 2019.

Figure 1.10: GDP quarterly change in 2019 and 2020 fourth quarters, ESPN countries (in % of the same quarter of the previous year)



Reading note: In the fourth quarter of 2020 the GDP of the EU-27 fell by 4.6% compared to the fourth quarter of 2019.
Notes: See Table B5 in Annex B.
Source: Eurostat - GDP and main components (output, expenditure and income) - indicator [NAMQ_10_GDP] - downloaded 26 April 2021. No data for fourth quarter 2020 in the UK. No data for ME and XK.

Compared to the fourth quarter of 2019, GDP in the EU-27 fell by 4.6% in the fourth quarter of 2020. Among the EU countries, GDP was lower in all countries (except LU, as well as AL and TR), but to a lesser extent in one group of countries (IE, LT, DK, FI, RO, LV, EE and SE).

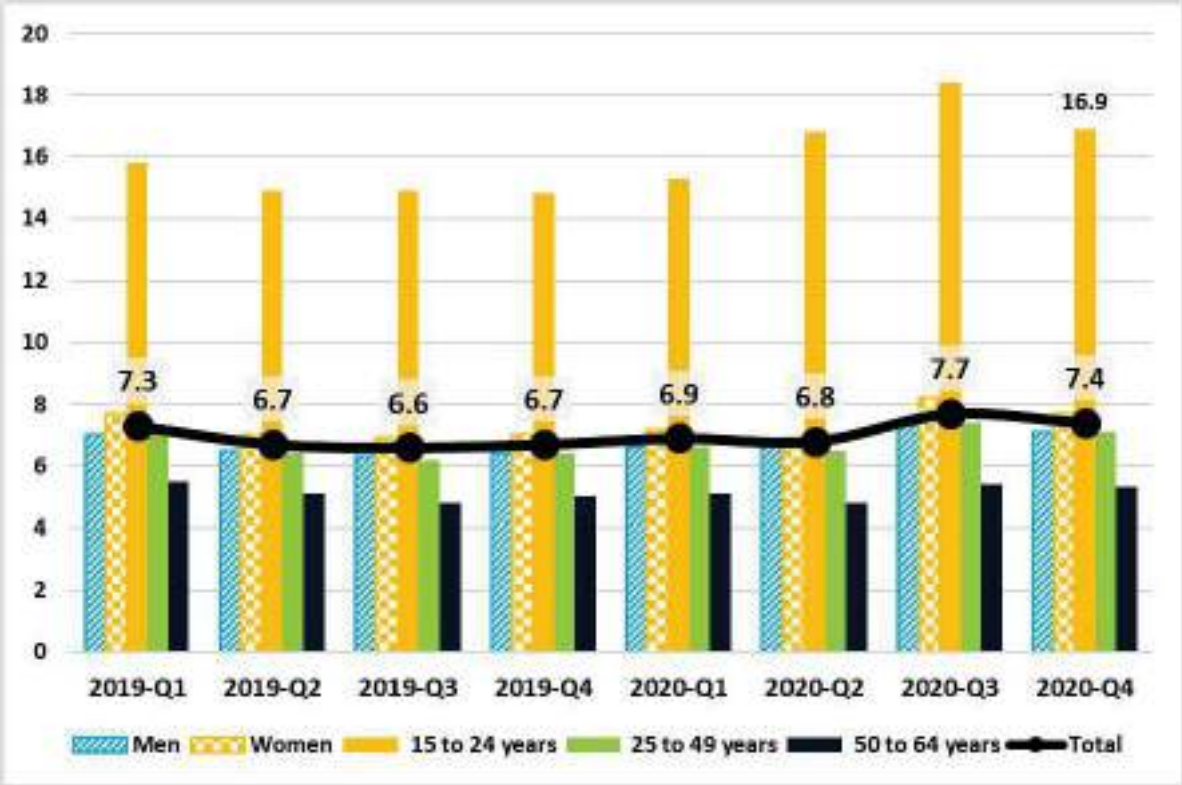
According to the European Commission winter economic forecasts of February 2021, the EU economy should return to pre-pandemic GDP levels at the end of 2022, with an estimated growth of 3.8% for the Eurozone in both 2021 and 2022. This growth forecast, more optimistic than the prediction made in the summer of 2020, is explained by the impact of widening vaccination coverage and easing of lockdowns. However, the European Commission warns that even with these forecasts, caution is still required: there is still a high degree of uncertainty, given the multiple risks associated with the evolution of the pandemic and the effects of the EU's vast post-coronavirus recovery instrument (European Commission 2021).

1.2.2 Labour market situation

1.2.2.1. Unemployment rates

The total unemployment rate (15-64 years old) changed little during the observation period, rising slightly, for the EU-27, from 7.3% in the first quarter of 2019 to 7.4% in the fourth quarter of 2020 (Figure 1.11). This stability of the unemployment rate despite the pandemic shows that social protection systems have played their role as shock absorbers in times of crisis, in conjunction with the measures taken by Member States to contain the effects of the pandemic on employment (Employment Committee and Social Protection Committee 2021 [hereafter EMCO/SPC 2021], European Commission 2020a). These measures are discussed at length in the following sections of this report.

Figure 1.11: Evolution of quarterly unemployment rates from 2019 to 2020 – Total, gender and age groups, population aged 15-64, EU-27 average (%)



Reading note: In the fourth quarter of 2020 the unemployment rate for the total working age population (15-64) was 7.4% on average for the EU-27, while it was 16.9% among the youngest age group (15-24).
Note: See Tables B6.1, B6.2 and B6.3 in Annex B.
Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) - indicator [lfsq_urgan], downloaded 26 April 2021.

However, the slight rise in unemployment since the start of the pandemic also reflects a general underlying decline in activity rates (EMCO/SPC 2021).

The EU-27 average hides a diverse situation among the EU Member States. An increase in unemployment can be observed in all EU countries, but with different intensities and different starting points (Table B6.1 in Annex B). The rise is particularly significant in Estonia (where it increased from 4.2% in the fourth quarter of 2019 to 7.6% in the fourth quarter of 2020), Lithuania (6.6% to 9.4%), Spain (13.9% to 16.3%) and Latvia (6.2% to 8.2%), but also in other countries where there has been an increase of 1.4-1.9 percentage points (e.g. FI, RO, SE, CY and HR). In contrast, unemployment has slightly decreased (FR, IT and EL) or increased relatively little (by less than one percentage point) in some countries (PL, PT, BE, NL, LU, MT, HU, DK and CZ). However, even in some of the countries where

the increase in unemployment was moderate, it nevertheless consolidated an already worrying high unemployment rate.

The gender difference in the evolution of unemployment is not very marked. At EU level, there is no difference in the unemployment rate for women and men. The gender difference is small and in favour of men or women, depending on the country (Table B6.2 in Annex B). This relative balance between women and men can be more easily understood if we consider the economic sectors that have suffered the most from slowdowns or even complete stoppages of activities as a result of the containment measures implemented in the Member States. While the 2008/2009 economic and financial crisis particularly affected the male-dominated manufacturing and construction sectors, the COVID-19 pandemic mainly damaged the female-dominated accommodation, food and beverage, cleaning, travel and tourism, and arts and entertainment sectors. This has been somewhat offset by a growing demand for workers in other female-dominated sectors (Eurofound 2021, Blasko *et al.* 2020). In countries such as Italy, Spain, Greece and, to some extent, Poland, the significantly higher prevalence of women in the sectors completely locked down has not been offset by higher numbers of key workers or teleworkers, suggesting a significant gender imbalance in the impact of the COVID decrees in those countries (Fana *et al.* 2020).

Looking at the different age groups (Table B6.3 in Annex B), the unemployment rates for the youngest age group (15-24) are the highest, and have also increased the most as a result of the pandemic, especially in Luxembourg, Spain and Estonia (more than nine percentage points of difference between the fourth quarters of 2020 and 2019), but also in a group of countries where the increase ranges from four to 6.5 percentage points (IE, CZ, FI, PT, PL, LT, BG and SI). Unemployment rates for people aged 25-49 increased very moderately in all EU countries (variations of less than two percentage points) except in the Baltic countries, Spain and Croatia (2.3 percentage points or more). A slight decrease is observed in Italy and Greece. Unemployment rates for older persons (50-64) remained relatively stable in most countries (below 1.4 percentage points) but increased more markedly in Estonia and Lithuania (more than two percentage points). In the group of non-EU countries for which data are available, the patterns are similar to those observed for the EU countries in the fourth quarter of 2020 compared to the same quarter in 2019, with an increase in unemployment for the youngest age group and relative stability for the other age groups.

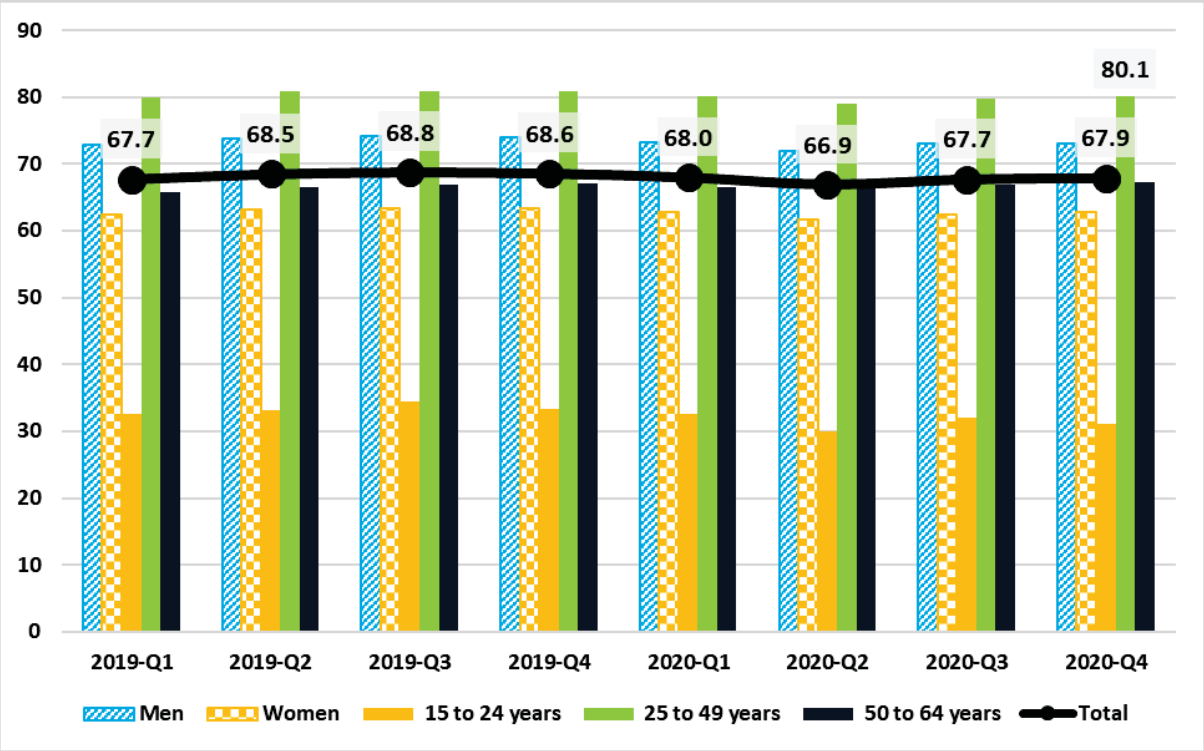
1.2.2.2. Employment rates

Comparing the situation at the end of the fourth quarter of 2020 with that at the end of the same quarter in 2019, the decline in employment rates as a consequence of the pandemic appears to be minor, with the EU-27 rate falling slightly, from 68.6% to 67.9% (Figure 1.12). As noted earlier, in relation to the relatively limited rise in unemployment rates during the COVID-19 crisis, the marginal fall in employment rates also reflects a general underlying decline in activity rates (EMCO/SPC 2021). The average number of weekly hours worked has fallen, while the share of workers employed but not working has more than doubled to reach 17% by the end of the third quarter of 2020. More workers moved from employment to inactivity than from employment to unemployment during the year 2020 and, with fewer job vacancies in the crisis period, many people did not look for work. The share of temporary contracts has also fallen significantly (Eurofound 2021). Compared to the previous year, the EU has about four million fewer people employed (EMCO/SPC 2021).

Employment rates fell in almost all EU-27 countries when comparing the last quarter of 2020 with the last quarter of 2019, but with lower intensity than in the second and third quarters (Table B7.1 in Annex B). The decline is still pronounced in the fourth quarter of 2020 in Spain and Ireland (-2.4 percentage points for both countries), in Estonia and Lithuania (-1.9 and -1.8 respectively) and slower (-1 to -1.4 percentage points) in another group of countries (SE, LV, BG, PT, CY, AT and CZ). In the other Member States, employment rates are less than one percentage point lower. In Poland and Luxembourg, the employment rates even increased slightly. Among the non-EU countries, there was

also a decrease in employment rates over the period, especially in North Macedonia, where the rate of employment fell by 5.7 and 8.5 percentage points in the second and third quarters of 2020.

Figure 1.12: Evolution of quarterly employment rates from 2019 to 2020 – Total, gender and age groups, population aged 15-64, EU-27 average (%)



Reading note: In the fourth quarter of 2020 the employment rate for the total working age population (15-64) was 67.9% on average for the EU-27, while it was 80.1% for the 25-49 year olds.
Note: See Tables B7.1, B7.2 and B7.3 in Annex B.
Source: Eurostat LFS - indicator [lfsq_ergan] - downloaded 26 April 2021.

Compared to the last quarter of 2019, a decrease in employment rates for men and women can be observed in almost all countries for the same quarter in 2020 (Table B7.2 in Annex B). In one group of countries this decrease is more marked for women than for men (e.g. CY, FI, HR, LT and SE). On the other hand, in some countries the decrease in the employment rate is higher for men than for women (e.g. EE, PT, IE, and AT). In Luxembourg and Poland in the fourth quarter of 2020, an upward trend in employment rates resumed for both men and women, but more intensely for the latter. Gender-differentiated developments can also be observed. In Greece and Malta, female employment rates are higher in the last quarter of 2020 compared to the last quarter of 2019, while for men they are lower. The opposite phenomenon is observed in Slovenia. Among the non-EU countries, the decline in both male and female employment rates remains significant in Montenegro and to a lesser extent in Turkey. In Serbia, the male employment rate has started to rise slightly again, but it has continued to fall slightly for women.

The employment rates of the youngest age group (15-24) have fallen the most across the period (Table B7.3 in Annex B). In the fourth quarter of 2020, the EU-26 employment rate (no age-specific data for Germany for 2020) for this age group fell by 2.3 percentage points compared to the last quarter of 2019. In some countries the drop in the employment rate of the youngest age group remains significant, at five percentage points and more (EE, IE, SI, MT, PT, PL and LV). However, the decline is much smaller in France, Croatia and Cyprus, while the youth employment rate is even starting to rise slightly in Romania. Employment rates for middle-aged adults (25-49) also show a downward trend, but one which is much more moderate than that observed for younger people. In

most EU countries, the declines in employment rates are below one percentage point, with the exception of Lithuania and Spain where the fall is above two percentage points. In some countries the employment rates have started to rise slightly (LU, NL, PL and MT). By contrast, employment rates of older people (50-64) are either comparable to the last quarter of 2019 or have fallen less in most countries. Employment rates have even started to slightly increase again (by at least one percentage point) in one group of countries (PT, RO, LU, EL, SI, HU and PL). In their analysis based on the sectors affected by the containment measures, Fana *et al.* underline the paradox existing for older workers: they are the most vulnerable to COVID-19 but are also strongly present in the "essential and fully active" sectors, which employ more than a third of this age group (Fana *et al.* 2020). Among the non-EU countries, similar trends are observed across age groups, Serbia being the exception, with a slight increase in employment rates for middle-aged and older workers.

1.2.3 Poverty, inequality and social exclusion

The empirical sources used to assess and compare the impact of the pandemic in terms of poverty, inequality and social exclusion across ESPN countries are still patchy and incomplete. EU-SILC-based comparative indicators on income poverty and inequality for the 2020 income reference year will only become available in the second half of 2022. However, analyses are already pointing to the expected impact of the pandemic on poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

For instance, Eurofound (2021) and the European Anti-Poverty Network (2020) highlight that some groups of people are particularly hard hit by the consequences of the pandemic. These include low-educated/ skilled people, women, the elderly, young people and children, people with disabilities, lone parents, migrants, Roma, refugees and the homeless. Various ESPN national reports also highlight the worrying situation of one or several of these groups in their country.

In August 2020, using EUROMOD[21] simulations to compute very early estimates of the impact of the pandemic on household incomes, a study issued by the JRC in August 2020 (Almeida *et al.* 2020) suggests that the EU-27 average at-risk-of-poverty (AROP) rate[22] would remain stable (+0.1 percentage point). This outcome, which may seem surprising, would in fact be driven by the substantial drop of the AROP threshold resulting from the economic crisis generated by the pandemic. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on AROP rates, originally expected to be severe, is mitigated by the automatic stabilising effect of social protection schemes designed to counter economic shocks, as well as the additional income support measures for workers and individuals put in place by Member States to address the consequences of the pandemic. The study highlights the major role played by policy interventions in cushioning the impact of the crisis on inequality and poverty. As recalled by Atkinson, Guio and Marlier (2017: 67): "Where (…) mean incomes are falling, (…) a constant (or even decreasing) AROP rate can be consistent with those below the income poverty threshold suffering a worsening in their living standards. Application of an anchored income poverty indicator can then show a rise in the poverty rate." And, indeed, when Almeida *et al.* use the EU indicator of AROP "anchored at a fixed moment in time" (anchoring the national AROP thresholds to their 2019 values), they find that the expected impact of the crisis is a 1.7 percentage point increase in income poverty.

[21] EUROMOD is a tax-benefit microsimulation model for the EU and UK which enables researchers and policy analysts to calculate, in a comparable manner, the effects of taxes and benefits on household incomes and work incentives for the population of each country and for the EU as a whole. The updating of policies is done via EUROMOD version I3.0+. EUROMOD was originally developed, maintained and managed by the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex (UK). Since 2021, it has been developed, maintained and managed by the JRC in collaboration with Eurostat and national teams from EU Member States.

[22] In line with the EU definition, the AROP rate is the share of people living in a household with a total equivalised disposable income (including social transfers) below the AROP threshold, which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income (including social transfers). It is therefore a relative income poverty indicator.

By comparison, the 2008-2009 crisis resulted in a much lower increase in the anchored AROP rate (+0.1 percentage point).

One year later, in July 2021, a Eurostat study produced new estimates of the impact of the pandemic on people/household incomes (Eurostat 2021b)[23]. While the median employment income for workers is estimated to have decreased by 7.2%, Eurostat "flash estimates" show a very slight increase in the median household income (+0.7%) – i.e. a result different from the August 2020 JRC estimates. Eurostat underlines that losses in employment income are unequally spread between countries and are particularly strong for the most vulnerable sub-groups of the working population. Both the overall losses and their skewed distribution are alleviated to a large extent by governmental measures in support of employment and, in particular, the short-term work schemes implemented by Member States' governments to address the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19. According to Eurostat flash estimates, AROP rates for the working-age population (aged 18-64) have remained stable at EU level in 2020: +0.2 percentage point. For about half of the countries, a moderate increase is estimated in AROP 18-64, with a significant increase in Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. The evolution of inequality indicators in the EU is of course not solely related to the transitions experienced in the labour market. For older people (aged 65 or more), Eurostat expects a consistent decrease in AROP, which is particularly evident in Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland and Sweden - with AROP expected to drop by more than two percentage points. This effect may be due to the relative stability, or even rising trend, of pensions, which were protected against the labour shocks created by the pandemic.

Projected changes in national AROP rates as a result of the pandemic are also mentioned by several ESPN national experts, generally on the basis of EUROMOD micro-simulation models, indicating a likely increase (IT and LT), stagnation (AT, CZ, EE and SI) or even a decrease (CY) of the AROP rate. Income inequality, as expressed by the S80/S20 coefficient or the Gini index, is expected to have remained unchanged or changed very little (AT, CY, DE, LT and SI), or to have decreased (IT). National experts in several countries also point to a decline in household disposable income for the year 2020 (AT, BG, FI and PT).

This decline in disposable income of European households is also highlighted in the spring 2021 joint EMCO/SPC monitoring report on the impact of the pandemic (EMCO/SPC 2021). Using the EU indicator of gross household disposable income (GHDI) to describe the aggregate financial situation of households across EU countries, the report looks *inter alia* at the quarterly evolution of GHDI between 2019 and 2020. It shows that the GHDI in the EU-27 recovered in the third quarter of 2020 (+1.3% compared to the same quarter in 2019) after a sharp fall in the second quarter (-3.0%), and it highlights "the strong positive contribution from social benefits, which more than offset the decline in the compensation of workers". An improvement is observed in the third quarter of 2020 in most Member States for which such data are available; only Portugal and Spain record negative developments. The report also indicates that "apart from some countries (CZ, EL, ES, FR and SI) there was not much to signal up to the end of 2020/early 2021 in terms of increases in the number of recipients of social assistance benefits, with no clear signs of a marked rise in recipient levels". This

[23] These estimates are experimental statistics produced by Eurostat as part of the advance estimates on income inequality and poverty indicators. The results refer to the yearly change 2019-2020. Employment income evolution is modelled by Eurostat on the basis of detailed distributional information on the loss of jobs and short-term work schemes; these data come from the LFS and administrative data collected by Eurostat on the number of beneficiaries of different wage compensation schemes. Government transfers are simulated with EUROMOD, which takes into account the most recent policy changes introduced during the pandemic. Eurostat highlights the uncertainty of these estimates, which is particularly evident in the current context, and insists on the need to keep in mind the following caveats: i) incomplete information and model errors for the estimation of income from work (esp. for self-employment income); ii) over-simulation of benefits related to compensation schemes and assumptions of full take-up of benefits; and iii) lack of information on the informal economy and workers who fall outside the safety net of the tax-benefit system.

outcome is largely the result of the introduction of temporary income support schemes. Yet, various ESPN experts (e.g. FR, LV, LU and PT) highlight that the number of people using food banks increased.

ESPN experts from non-EU countries describe similar trends. For instance: falling disposable household income (e.g. UK and MK), rising AROP and income inequalities (e.g. UK, MK and TR), rising numbers of people on the guaranteed minimum income (e.g. UK, ME and XK) and/or increasing child poverty (e.g. UK and MK). The Turkish country team highlights the fall in women's income.

2 UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT SCHEMES: IMPROVED ACCESS AND INCOME REPLACEMENT

In response to the sudden outbreak of the pandemic followed by strict lockdown measures, temporary changes have been made to unemployment benefit schemes, to make them more inclusive and also, in some cases, more generous. Most of the 35 countries[24] under examination in the present report have temporarily modified the main parameters of their unemployment benefit schemes[25], to provide better access, improve replacement levels and/or prolong the duration of receipt of benefits. A few ESPN countries did not make any changes to the main parameters of their schemes[26] (CY, CZ, HR, HU, NL, SI; ME, RS, TR, UK) (Figure 2.1 and Table 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Mapping of measures related to unemployment benefit schemes, ESPN countries

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

[24] Kosovo is not included in this section because it has no unemployment benefit scheme.

[25] This section refers to measures related to the unemployment benefit schemes. In some countries, these include both unemployment insurance benefit (based on previous contributions) and an unemployment assistance benefit (non-contributory). Both are covered in the section. It should also be noted that some countries (e.g. IE, CY, LV, SI) introduced extraordinary measures, which may be called "unemployment benefits", for those who are not eligible for usual unemployment benefits. These measures are a kind of ad hoc social assistance; they are not linked to the "ordinary" unemployment benefit scheme and are discussed in Section 6. We refer the reader to the national ESPN reports for more details. However, the Lithuanian temporary "Jobseekers' allowance" is included in this section as it is a "hybrid" allowance: it is not only a benefit for people who are not entitled to ordinary unemployment insurance benefit, but also, in some cases, it tops up this ordinary benefit. Moreover, beneficiaries need to register with the Employment Services and the self-employed need to have paid social insurance contributions.

[26] In this report, measures such as the suspension of job search, simplified administrative procedures, training and so on (see "Other" in Table 2.1) are not considered as main parameters of unemployment benefit schemes.

In general, the timing of the measures has followed the evolution of the pandemic: they were introduced in March 2020 in most countries and have been in place during the lockdown periods. Most of the measures involve adjustments to the parameters of the existing unemployment scheme; in only some rare cases have new benefits been created or new categories of workers included (e.g. BE, EE, FR, LT, MT). All the measures are temporary, apart from in Estonia, where the pandemic accelerated a reform of unemployment benefits which was already in the pipeline.

2.1 Extension of the duration of receipt of benefits

The parameter by far most frequently changed is the duration of receipt of benefits, which has been adjusted in 12 Member States (BE, BG, DE, DK, EL, FR, IT, LV, LU, PT, RO, SK). Other measures, including suspension of waiting periods, are specific to some Member States only (DK, FI, IE, SE). In general, countries have extended the duration of receipt during the lockdowns and even beyond the lockdowns. While in most cases this measure applies to all the unemployed, in some cases specific conditions have been set. For instance:

- In Belgium, the duration of receipt of unemployment benefits for unemployed young people (the "activation benefit", which lasts three years) has been prolonged for the duration of the crisis.
- In Romania, the duration of receipt has been extended. Depending on the work history of the unemployed person, the measure extends the duration by 25-50%.

2.2 Relaxation of qualifying conditions: better access for some employment statuses

In seven Member States (EL, ES, FI, FR, LV, PT, SE), as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina[27] and North Macedonia, the qualifying conditions have also been modified in order to improve access for workers who do not have a sufficiently long work history. A few of these countries temporarily abolished the qualifying conditions (e.g. ES, MK). Finland and Portugal have halved the qualifying period. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's two entities, has opened the scheme up to people with unpaid social contributions. Qualifying conditions have been also modified in order to improve access for some categories of non-standard workers and the self-employed (BE, ES, FR, IT, PT, SE) as explained in more detail in the following subsections.

[27] Only for beneficiaries whose employers have not paid their social insurance contributions.

Table 2.1: Measures related to unemployment benefit schemes, ESPN countries

	EU countries																												UK and other non-EU countries								
	AT	BE	BG	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	EL	ES	FI	FR	HR	HU	IE	IT	LT	LU	LV	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SE	SI	SK		UK	AL	BA	ME	MK	RS	TR	XK
Qualifying conditions																																					
Employment/insurance record									√*	√	√	√							√*				√		√						√		√				
Employment status (non-standard workers and self-employed)		√								√*	√	√				√*			√				√		√*												
*Other conditions***												√							√																		
Level of benefit																																					
Increase in compensation rate/amount	√		√					√*			√				√*		√*			√*		√			√					√							
Suspension of gradual reduction of benefits over time		√										√*																									
Duration of receipt																																					
Abolition/reduction of waiting periods							√*				√				√										√												
Extension of duration of receipt		√*	√			√	√		√			√				√*		√	√*				√	√*			√										
Other (e.g. suspension of job search, simplified admin procedures, online applications, specific training, combining work and unemployment)		√	√				√	√*	√	√	√	√							√	√		√		√					√							
	AT	BE	BG	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	EL	ES	FI	FR	HR	HU	IE	IT	LT	LU	LV	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	SE		UK	AL	BA	M	M	RS	TR	XK

*Notes: * BE: only for school-leavers, DK: the first two days financed by the employer (the so-called "G-days"); EE: permanent measures implemented as part of a previously scheduled reform; ES: includes both the general unemployment benefit scheme and the specific unemployment benefit scheme for the self-employed –"cessation of business activity benefit"; special benefits for self-employed and several arrangements for non-standard workers EL: only for specific sectors, mostly for seasonal workers; FR: Suspension of the gradual reduction of benefits over time for higher unemployment benefits; IE: applies to the spouse/partner (adult allowance); IT: includes both NASPI ("Nuova prestazione di Assicurazione Sociale per l'Impiego") and DIS-COLL ("Indennità di disoccupazione per collaborazione coordinata"); LT: introduction of a "jobseeker's allowance" (see also footnote above and Section 2.2.2) which also serves as a top-up of the unemployment insurance benefit; LV: automatic entitlement to the non-contributory scheme when the entitlement to the contributory scheme expires; MT: a new benefit was introduced which tops up the ordinary unemployment scheme; SE: People on contracts of less than 50%. ** "Other conditions" include a variety of measures. For instance "Exemption from conditions concerning a cumulation of ARE with general interest tasks" (FR) and granting of unemployment benefit to employees who have terminated their contract themselves (LV).*

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the ESPN national reports.

2.2.1 Non-standard workers

Non-standard workers are generally entitled by law to unemployment benefits, except for some specific categories such as casual and seasonal workers (e.g. in LV, PT, RO). In other countries, specific categories not entitled to unemployment benefits include, for instance: people employed on some types of "civil law contracts for a specified task" (Poland), "marginal part-timers" (Austria) and mini-jobbers (Germany) (Spasova *et al.* 2017). Previous research shows that during the pandemic, Member States almost always dealt with these specific categories by providing them with targeted ad hoc income support allowances, but not with formal access to the unemployment benefit scheme (Spasova et *al.* 2021, see also Section on social assistance 6). Examples in which some specific categories of non-standard workers were given access to the ordinary unemployment benefit scheme or have seen their access improved include the following:

- France, where employees in the performing arts, the audio-visual and film industries sector (so-called *Intermittents du spectacle*), have been granted improved entitlement to unemployment benefits.
- Spain, where several categories of non-standard workers who do not have formal access (e.g. domestic workers), or who cannot meet the eligibility conditions for the unemployment benefit scheme (e.g. artists and other occupations in the cultural sector and professional bullfighters), have received an unemployment assistance benefit.
- Sweden, where the eligibility conditions were relaxed from 80 to 60 hours of work per month during the last six months, or 420 (instead of 480) hours during a consecutive period of six months, with at least 40 (instead of 50) hours of work every month during the last 12 months. This minimum limit has been lowered during the pandemic to allow a larger number of part-time workers to become eligible.

2.2.2 Self-employed

Unemployment benefits are among the social protection schemes with least access for the self-employed. Moreover, access often varies between categories of the self-employed, and a self-employed person may only be eligible for means-tested benefits or be subject to opt-outs and exemptions. Table 2.2 compares their usual access with the situation during the pandemic, when some countries have taken specific measures targeted at the self-employed.

In those Member States where the self-employed are mandatorily included in unemployment schemes, all measures taken during the pandemic have also applied to the self-employed, as they generally have to meet the same eligibility conditions as employees (MISSOC 2020; Spasova *et al*. 2017).

Table 2.2: Formal access for the self-employed to unemployment benefit schemes, and measures taken during the pandemic, ESPN countries

Unemployment benefit scheme	Available		Not available
	Mandatory	Voluntary	
Formal access to unemployment benefits	CZ, EL**, HR, HU, MT, PL, SI RS	AT, DE***, DK, ES, FI, LU RO****, SK, SE	BE, BG, CY, EE*, FR**, IE*/***, IT**/****, LT*, LV, NL, PT** AL, BA, ME, MK, TR, UK*
Specific measures taken during the COVID-19 pandemic	None	DK, ES, FI, SE	BE, IT, LT, LV, PT** BA

*Notes: * access only to non-contributory/means-tested unemployment assistance benefits; ** access only for certain categories of SE; *** opt-in/out and exemptions; **** compulsory/voluntary access depending on the category of SE. Dependent self-employed[28] are mandatorily covered in ES, IT, RO.*
Source: Adapted from Spasova et al. (2019), Spasova et al. (2021) and European Commission (2020b).

Some Member States which provide voluntary access to the self-employed have relaxed the eligibility conditions for this category (DK, ES, FI, SE), such as waiting periods and the "cessation of activity" requirement. For instance:

- In Spain the self-employed have a specific unemployment benefit scheme called "cessation of business activity benefit" which they can choose to join. The eligibility conditions have been relaxed (e.g. the required contribution period has been abolished) and the application procedure streamlined during the pandemic.
- In Sweden, under the temporary pandemic measures, the self-employed who receive an unemployment allowance may continue with some activities related to their business operations during 2020, as long as these activities contribute to relaunching their operations when the market situation improves. In addition, the so-called five-year rule has been temporarily removed for the self-employed who became unemployed in 2020. This rule is used to reduce excessive use or fraudulent practices. It states that self-employed people are banned from receiving unemployment insurance for five years after their receipt of benefit has ended.

Finally, among Member States which do not provide formal access to the self-employed, there have been some new developments. For instance:

- Belgium has opened up eligibility for unemployment benefits to a broad professional group in the cultural sector: artists and technicians. The latter categories may apply for these benefits, which will not be reduced if they also receive copyright income during this period.
- Italy has introduced the "Extraordinary allowance to guarantee income and operational continuity" benefit (*Indennità straordinaria di continuità reddituale e operative* (ISCRO)) to protect some categories of self-employed: the so-called "para-subordinate collaborators". These are professional workers who are not members of a specific professional association, and who pay social security contributions to the special fund (*Gestione Separata*) managed by the Italian Social Security Institute (INPS). ISCRO was introduced on an experimental basis for 2021-2023.

[28] Dependent self-employed people often work the majority of their working time for one client and receive direct guidelines on the scope of the task and the work process. In some countries, they have a different level of access to social protection than the rest of the self-employed. Dependent self-employment "must be distinguished from bogus self-employment: the latter is a situation where an employer wrongfully treats a worker as an independent contractor and hides their true status as a wage employee" (ILO 2016).

- Latvia has extended the eligibility criteria for its contributory unemployment benefit to people working under certain tax regimes, such as certain categories of self-employed (including micro-entrepreneurs).
- Lithuania has established a new ad hoc "job seekers" benefit for unemployed people not eligible for insurance-based benefits, including for the self-employed (eligibility rules have become stricter in 2021 compared to 2020).

2.3 Increase in the level of benefits

The level of benefits has also been increased in nine EU countries (AT, BG, EE, FI, IE, LT[29], MT, PL, SE) and in Albania, and the gradual reduction of unemployment benefits over time was temporarily suspended in Belgium and France. Examples include the following:

- In Austria, the unemployment benefit scheme is two-tiered: a contributions-based unemployment benefit (linked to the contributory record) and unemployment assistance received after unemployment insurance runs out. During the pandemic, the level of the unemployment assistance benefit was temporarily increased to the level of the unemployment insurance benefit. Moreover, two additional one-off lump sum payments were granted to recipients of the unemployment insurance benefit and unemployment assistance benefit in September and December 2020, subject to them meeting specific criteria on minimum duration of unemployment.
- In Ireland, the payment for the spouse/partner (known as the "qualified adult") has been increased by €12.30 a week (from €134.70 to €147 a week).
- In Albania, the amount of the unemployment benefit has been doubled: from 50% to 100% of the gross minimum wage.

2.4 Other measures

Other measures include suspension of training and job search requirements in most of the 35 ESPN countries (especially during the first lockdown), facilitated administrative access in the form of on-line application for benefits, as well as other country-specific measures. The latter include the following examples:

- Previously in Estonia, an unemployed person lost their unemployment status if taking on part-time work. As of September 2020, it is possible to take on up to eight days per month of temporary work while being registered as unemployed. This is a result of a previously planned reform which was accelerated by the pandemic.
- In Latvia, employees who have terminated their employment themselves are granted unemployment benefit from the day they file the application, while previously they had to wait two months.

[29] Temporary top-up in 2020 linked to the new "Jobseeker's allowance".

3 JOB PRESERVATION: JOB RETENTION SCHEMES FOR EMPLOYEES AND BASIC SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR THE SELF-EMPLOYED

Job retention schemes, notably all types of short-time work (including "temporary unemployment") and wage subsidy schemes, have been the pivotal means through which countries avoided potentially disastrous effects of the pandemic on labour markets. This section describes the measures which were taken urgently at the beginning of the pandemic and which have been at the forefront of protecting jobs during the COVID-19 crisis. These include STW and WS schemes (Section 3.1), specific measures targeted at the self-employed (Section 3.2), and tax- and social contributions-related measures (Section 3.3) as well as other specific support measures (Section 3.4)

3.1 Short-time work and wage subsidy schemes: at the forefront of job protection

This subsection focuses specifically on job retention schemes, using the OECD (2020) categorisation of job retention schemes into short-time work (STW) and wage subsidy (WS) schemes. STW schemes aim to preserve jobs by directly subsidising hours not worked, while WS schemes provide both a wage top-up for the reduced hours and a subsidy for the hours worked.[30]

These schemes vary considerably between countries, not only regarding the type of assistance (STW/WS), but also in terms of the number of reduced working hours, conditions of payment, the benefit level and the extent to which the State/employers finance the subsidy allowance. Additional regulations, such as protection against dismissal during STW, also vary between countries (for a description of the main parameters of these schemes see Annex C).

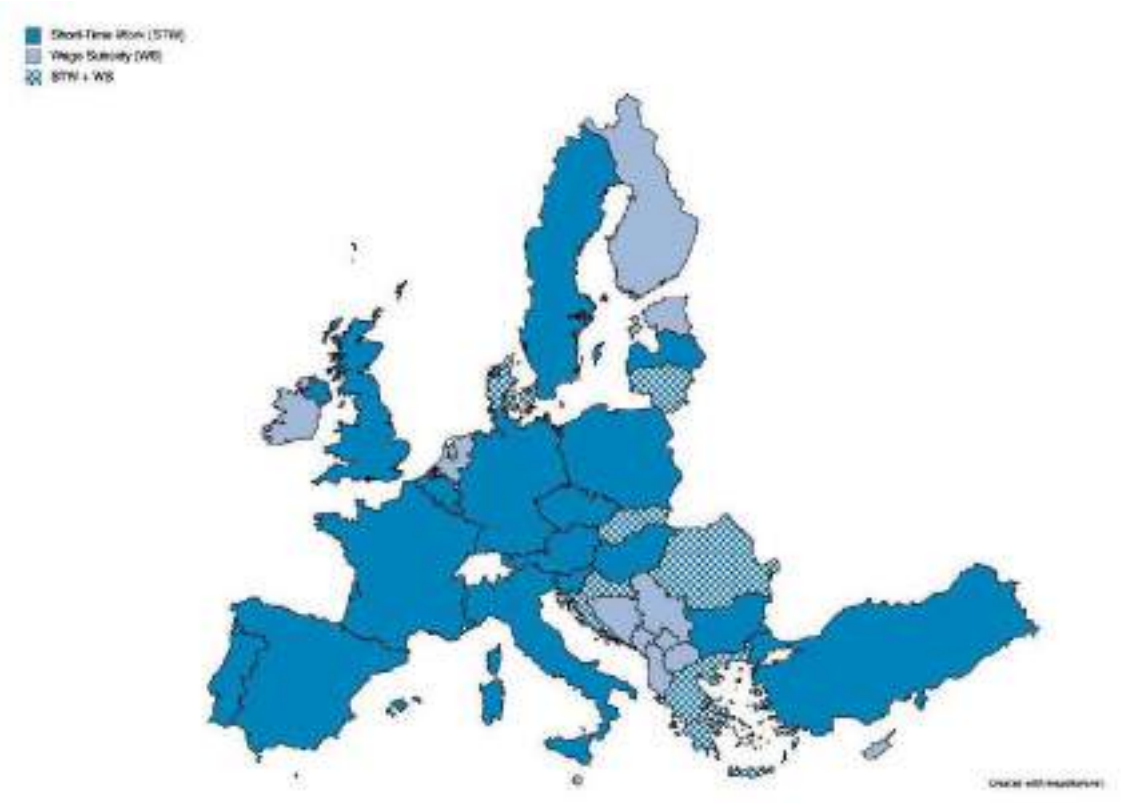
During the pandemic[31], 17 ESPN countries have used STW schemes (AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, ES, FR, HU, IT, LU, LV, PL, PT, SE, SI; TR, UK), 12 provided a WS scheme (CY, EE, FI, IE, MT, NL; AL, BA, ME, MK, RS, XK) and six provided both (DK, EL, HR, LT, RO, SK) (Figure 3.1 and Annex C). Many countries improved existing STW or WS allowances by relaxing eligibility, duration and payment conditions (also during the various stages of the pandemic) (e.g. AT, BE, DE, ES, FR, HR, IT, LU, PT, RO, SE, SI), and several introduced new schemes (e.g. BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, EL, FI, HU, IE, LT, LV, MT, PL, RO, SK; AL, UK)[32], in order to better tackle the impact of COVID-19 on the labour market. In two cases (IE, NL) there was a shift from the existing STW to temporary WS schemes after the outbreak of the pandemic (OECD 2020).

[30] It is important to highlight that there is not always a clear-cut division between these two types of scheme, as in some countries working time can be reduced to zero hours (e.g. AT, DE, LV), whilst in most of the others a minimum threshold of hours worked is necessary. Within the STW schemes, the terminology can also vary: this is a term in general limited to the German-speaking Member States (DE, AT (*Kurzarbeit*)) and Sweden. However, it has also been used in countries such as Slovakia and Slovenia. In other countries (e.g. BE, FR and LU), the term "temporary" or "partial" unemployment is used, although France has changed the name of its scheme to "partial activity" (*activité partielle*) (Müller and Schulten 2020).

[31] The duration of these schemes varies a great deal, mostly following twists and turns in the pandemic which are impossible to present in this report. We invite interested readers to look at the ESPN national reports for the precise timing of the measures.

[32] See Annex C.

Figure 3.1: Mapping of STW schemes and WS schemes, ESPN countries



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

3.1.1 Levels of benefits

The conditions of payment depend in most cases on the extent of reduction in the turnover of the enterprise and/or the cessation of activity as well as on the reduction in working hours (in the case of STW). These conditions can also be linked in some cases to age, type of household or income of the worker (e.g. AT, BE, DE, DK, IE, FI, LT, LV).

The vast majority of national schemes provide an allowance based on a replacement rate of the (mostly gross) wage (e.g. AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, ES, FR, IT, LT LU, LV, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK; UK). Others provide a lump sum payment that, for example, can be equal to €534 (EL) or €800 (MT) or to the minimum wage (BA, HR). In some countries, these features have changed during the various stages of the pandemic. In Malta, during the period between January and April 2021, the benefit provided as a wage supplement for employees of businesses not ordered to close down was no longer a fixed amount, but started to be linked to the level of losses incurred by the business as a result of COVID-19 (the year 2019 was used as the basis for the computation and losses were calculated based on the difference in VAT payments made by each business).

For those countries that calculate the benefit as a percentage of the wage, the replacement rate varies from a minimum threshold of 50% (PL) to 100% of the original (usually gross) wage (DK). In the majority of the countries (e.g. BE, BG, CY, ES, FR, IT, LU, LV, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK; UK) the replacement rates range from 60% to 80% of the worker's (usually) gross wage. In Germany, for instance, the benefit is partly calculated by considering the duration of receipt of the STW allowance: from the fourth month onwards, the STW allowance is increased from the standard rate of 60% to 70% of net wages, and from the seventh month onwards, it is increased further to 80%.

In addition to the replacement rate, ESPN experts highlight the importance of upper and lower caps in assessing the schemes' generosity. Most national schemes set an upper cap, i.e. a maximum amount to be paid (e.g. AT, BE, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK; RS,

TR, UK). In some cases, the minimum wage (MW) is taken as a reference base for calculating the upper cap (ES, FR, HU, LT, LU, PL, PT; RS, TR). The cap can range from once times the minimum wage (1 MW) (e.g. LT in 2020 (increased to 1.5 MWs in 2021); XK), 2MWs (e.g. HU)... up to 4.5 MWs (FR). In other cases, the cap is a fixed maximum amount, which can range from €800 in Estonia up to €4,400 in Sweden. Moreover, the minimum wage level is also taken as a reference for setting lower thresholds in some countries (EE, EL, HR, LU, SI), guaranteed to workers in low-wage sectors.

3.1.2 Schemes mostly financed by the State

In the majority of European countries, the State covers most of the costs. The government's participation amounts to 100% in more than half of the 35 countries under examination in this report[33] (e.g. AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, MT, RO, SE, SI; AL, BA, ME, MK, RS, XK). In other cases, the employers need to pay a part of the employees' salary (see Annex C), or the employees' social contributions.

This variety of situations is illustrated by the following examples:

- In Germany, social security contributions are fully reimbursed to employers by the federal government (until 30 June 2021); in the second half of 2021, the reimbursement rate will fall to 50%.
- In Lithuania, it is up to the employers to set the level of the subsidy, which may be 70% or 90% of the wage. If the employer contributes 10% and chooses a 90% subsidy, the State will contribute a maximum of once times the minimum monthly wage (MMW) (€607 gross); if the employer chooses a 70% subsidy, the State will be able to contribute more - up to 1.5 times the MMW or €910.5 gross in 2020. Since 2021, the full gross wage (100%) of furloughed employees has been compensated. The maximum threshold of the subsidy has been increased to 150% of the average monthly wage.
- In Malta, if the wage is higher than €1,200 per month, employers have to make a minimum top-up payment of €400 per employee per month.
- In the UK, employers have to pay national insurance and pension contributions for employees on furlough.

3.1.3 Who is entitled to benefits? Employment status arrangements

Since the 2008/2009 economic and financial crisis, STW schemes in most European countries have also included non-standard workers, such as part-time and fixed-term employees and temporary agency workers (Müller and Schulten 2020).

In most of the ESPN countries, all contractual employees are included in STW/WS schemes (e.g. AT, BE, DE, DK, EE, ES, FR, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI; RS, UK). However, there have been some exceptions. For instance, in Czechia, workers on so-called DPP ("Agreement to complete a job") and DPČ ("Agreement to perform work") non-standard working contracts are not eligible for the WS scheme. During the pandemic, some countries with gaps in access have extended eligibility beyond workers in standard forms of employment, to include temporary, temporary-agency and even certain categories of self-employed workers. For instance:

- In Belgium, temporary employment agency workers can exceptionally claim temporary unemployment benefit during their COVID-19-related break from work, if they have been employed for at least one month. However, the contractual link with the employer must be maintained.

[33] In some cases, when there are two schemes (STW and WS) the share may vary. It may also depend on the period and sectors (e.g. lockdowns, partial restriction of activity etc.).

- In Finland, the right to the temporary layoff scheme has been exceptionally extended to cover fixed-term employment contracts, under the same conditions as those which apply to the laying-off of employees on a permanent contract. Moreover, the negotiation process between the employer and employees has been shortened, to speed up negotiations on layoffs (furlough) to a maximum of five days. Normally, negotiations last for at least 14 days, often longer.
- In France, the STW scheme has been extended to new categories of workers who were previously not covered, such as employees whose working hours cannot be fixed in advance (e.g. freelancers), sales representatives, domestic workers paid on a piecework basis, and intermittent workers in the entertainment industry and models, as well as students.
- In Germany, temporary agency workers had been excluded from the STW scheme but are currently included on the basis of a crisis-related temporary rule.
- In Malta, from July 2020 the wage supplement scheme was extended to students in employment.
- In Romania, the government expanded the list of employee categories that are eligible for State allowances, to include apprentices and "day workers" as well as certain categories of self-employed.
- In Spain, all workers affected by temporary collective dismissals or reduced working time schemes now have the right to receive benefits from the temporary unemployment scheme even if they do not meet the minimum contribution period required.

The self-employed are covered only in very rare cases (e.g. EL, HR, MT, RO; BA, MK, RS), mostly in cases in which a fixed benefit amount is provided. Generally, the self-employed have been granted other types of income support (see Section 3.2).

3.1.4 Protection against dismissal

Access to job retention schemes during an economic shock or downturn is vital for firms and employers with liquidity constraints and sharply diminishing market demand. States must therefore efficiently implement these measures, aiming at temporary job retention but, at the same time, also reducing the risk of abuse of these schemes. To achieve this goal, protection against dismissal has been State-mandated in most job retention schemes, with the notable exception of Germany where it is covered by industry-level collective agreements regulating the terms and conditions of any STW schemes (see Annex C).

3.2 The self-employed: ad hoc basic social protection

The pandemic has highlighted significant gaps in social protection coverage, especially for the self-employed, in most countries. These were filled, only temporarily, by emergency ad hoc benefits and measures. Such measures were reported by all ESPN experts. Moreover, some measures do not always cover all the categories of self-employed, and sometimes one country has several schemes targeting the different categories of self-employed (e.g. CY, DK, IT).

The type of measures reported by ESPN experts include tax/social contribution relief for businesses (including the self-employed) (see Section 3.3), relaxation of eligibility conditions for other social protection schemes (Sections 2.1 and 2.3), inclusion in some job protection schemes (Section 3.1), and social assistance ad hoc benefits targeted at the broader public (Section 6). They also include income compensation packages and/or specific allowances targeted at the self-employed, which are

mentioned by many ESPN country teams (e.g. AT, BG, BE, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK; UK, AL, RS)[34].

In most cases, the measures were available during periods of inactivity and low turnover (due to national or sectoral measures restricting activity) and their duration varies widely.

Among the examples which combine several components (subsidies and income replacement) are:

- Austria, where the so-called Hardship Fund was introduced in March 2020, providing financial subsidies for different types of self-employment, as well as the Fixed Costs Subsidy (FCS), which provides income replacement for the self-employed. These subsidies are usually calculated on the basis of the last available yearly income tax assessment, but may also be granted in part as a lump-sum payment in case no income tax assessment from an earlier year is available.
- Germany: At the beginning of the first lockdown phase, the federal government introduced the "Corona Emergency Aid" (*Corona Soforthilfe*) programme. Starting in January 2021, a second programme was introduced: New Start Assistance. While the first is aimed at broad categories of microenterprises, solo self-employed persons and freelancers (covering fixed costs and so on), the latter is aimed exclusively at solo self-employed persons (a one-off lump sum to cover operating costs).

Such schemes were also subject to conditions linked to proof of a certain loss of income. Most of these are flat-rate amounts subject to several conditions, such as the following examples:

- In Belgium, the national experts underline the importance of the "bridging right" (*droit passerelle*) - a benefit specifically targeted at the self-employed which was widely used during the first wave of the pandemic. In April 2020, during the first lockdown, more than 50% of the self-employed for whom self-employment is their main source of income received this benefit.
- The national expert for Denmark highlights that freelancers with an annual income below a certain amount who experience a drop in income due to COVID-19 may be eligible for income compensation. This also applies to people who are both freelancers and wage earners, and thus combine income from work and freelancing. Another income compensation scheme has targeted the self-employed with a maximum of 25 employees.
- In Latvia, an allowance has been implemented to support some categories of self-employed who have completely interrupted their activity. In addition to conditions linked to income in the previous year, in 2020, another important condition was to have paid taxes and social contributions. The latter condition was abolished in 2021.
- Lithuania has provided a special benefit for the self-employed, paid irrespective of whether or not self-employment activities were restricted due to lockdown and irrespective of any change in income from self-employment. However, a restrictive condition was linked to their employment income, which could not exceed once times the minimum monthly wage.
- In Poland, people working under a non-standard (civil law) contract, or self-employed people who did not liquidate their companies, can claim a special lockdown allowance introduced with the "Anti-Crisis Shield" programme.

Most of these measures have been subject to eligibility conditions (reduction in turnover or inactivity, staff employed by the self-employed, solo self-employed etc.) which may have varied according to the period of lockdown and the sector of activity. For instance, the requirement for the reduction in turnover has varied significantly: 50% in Austria, 40% in Portugal, 30% in Denmark and 10% in

[34] General economic help to the self-employed and enterprises is not covered by the report.

Belgium. In other countries, there has been no such requirement, so the self-employed have been entitled to benefit regardless of whether or not their income has changed or their activity has been restricted (e.g. LV).

In many cases these allowances are lump sums, often close to the minimum income, the statutory minimum wage or the average wage of the country and/or a percentage of previous income up to certain threshold. For instance:

- In Denmark, during the first lockdown, the self-employed could receive 90% of the loss incurred up to €3,085 per month if their monthly income was at least €1,340. During the second lockdown, the scheme was made easier to access and more generous. The required monthly minimum income was reduced to €1,075. The maximum benefit was increased to €4,425 for self-employed people with staff and €4,025 for self-employed people without staff.
- In Lithuania, a flat-rate payment of €257 per month was available until the end of 2020, increased to €260 in January 2021. The benefit is payable during the period of lockdown.
- In Portugal, the income replacement rate can vary between 50% of the Social Support Index[35] and three times the MW for the specific case of self-employed people registered as sole proprietors.
- In Spain, the allowance for the self-employed is 70% of the contribution base (calculated as the average for the last 180 days of contributions).

Among the examples of highest income replacement has been the UK, where during the first period of payment the *"Self-employment Income Support Scheme"* was paid as a share (80%) of average annual profits over the past three years, in a lump sum worth up to €2,850 per month for three months.

Other measures for the self-employed in some countries included specific return-to-work measures. The expert for Ireland, for example, reported the creation of a part-time job incentive scheme, designed to encourage and enable the self-employed to return to the labour market.

3.3 Tax- and social contribution-related measures

This section focuses on the measures taken by governments with regard to tax and social contributions.

During the COVID-19 crisis, many countries decided to postpone, exempt or reduce payment of taxes and/or social contributions for the self-employed and companies. 20 ESPN experts have reported such measures. (See Table 3.1).

[35] This index is used as a reference for State support. In both 2020 and 2021, one Social Support Index is €438.81 per month.

Table 3.1: Tax- and social contribution-related measures

Deferrals	Exemptions	Possibility of reductions
AT, BE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, MT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI SK ME, RS, UK	CZ, EE, HU, PL, SI UK	AT, EL, SE UK

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

Some countries have chosen to defer payment of tax or social contributions (AT, BE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, MT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK; ME, RS, UK), whilst others (as well as some of the countries in the previous group) have opted for a temporary payment exemption (CZ, EE, HU, PL, SI). Furthermore, four countries reduced some taxes (UK) and social contributions (AT, EL, SE). These measures were also sometimes conditional on loss of income or only available to specific sectors (e.g. UK), required payment of previous social contributions (e.g. EL), and/or were subject to other country-specific conditions. For instance:

- In Greece, freelancers, self-employed persons and farmers were eligible for a 25% reduction in their social insurance contributions for four months (February, March, April and May 2020) if these were paid on time, or they could decide to postpone these payments to a later period.
- Slovakia allowed people to postpone the payment of social contributions only if employers and self-employed people were suffering a decline in revenues of more than 40%, or if they were forced to shut down for more than 15 days.

3.4 Other country-specific job retention measures

Some ESPN experts report specific measures which cannot be classified as STW/WS schemes, nor as measures targeted at the self-employed. Such measures: a) protect the jobs of specific groups of workers who otherwise would have been left without support (e.g. BG, ES, IT, RO); b) ease/foster access to the labour market for certain groups of workers (e.g. BG, RO); and c) provide subsidies to keep/hire specific groups of people, such as workers with disabilities (e.g. PL, SK). Such measures include, for instance, the following:

- Italy has implemented a flat-rate allowance to protect domestic workers and carers. This allowance targets domestic workers and carers who, in February 2020, were on a job contract with a minimum of ten working hours per week. Domestic workers and carers either living in their employer's home or entitled to other benefits are excluded from this allowance.
- The ESPN expert for Malta reports a specific measure intended to encourage the laying-off of third-country nationals (TCNs) during the crisis. Enterprises which terminate the employment of an employee were to be denied the possibility of offering such employment to a TCN. Assistance (e.g. training, counselling) has been provided to TCNs to find employment in the event of job termination.
- In Romania, to protect employees taking either child-rearing leave/indemnity (up to when the child turns 2) or a subsequent insertion stimulus (granted to parents returning to work either before the child turns two or immediately after), the legislation has been amended so as to ensure that (a) parents who returned or are about to return to work will receive the insertion stimulus in all circumstances affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and (b) parents who would have returned under normal circumstances but cannot do so due to the economic restrictions can still receive the child-rearing indemnity.
- The Spanish country team reports that employees had to take compulsory paid leave. The aim of this measure was to reduce the number of journeys made by these workers, to avoid the spread of the disease and to comply with the lockdown decreed in March 2020 without

harming employment. During the leave, the employees kept their usual pay and the employers were able to recover the hours lost before the end of 2020, following negotiations with the employees.

- The Turkish ESPN experts report that firms cannot terminate work contracts unless the employee is at fault. Employers can, however, put employees on unpaid leave. There is a high prevalence of informal work in Turkey, and those employees contracted on an informal basis are unable to benefit from this policy (April 2020 - June 2021).

Among other country-specific measures, both Bulgaria and Romania have implemented specific subsidies for enterprises which hire unemployed people who are in a vulnerable situation as a result of restrictions imposed by the pandemic. The experts for Poland and Slovenia highlight measures linked to keeping people with disabilities at work[36].

[36] In Poland, subsidies for employers of people with disabilities were increased during the pandemic (with the amounts depending on the type of disability). In Slovenia, each person with a disability working in a company employing people with disabilities was paid a crisis supplement in addition to their salary; this was then reimbursed to the employers by the State.

4 SICKNESS BENEFIT AND SICK PAY SCHEMES: OVERALL STRONGER PROTECTION

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries across Europe introduced measures linked to their paid sick leave schemes (sickness benefit and/or sick pay schemes[37]), adapting them to the new circumstances of the pandemic. Moreover, in a number of countries, COVID-19 infections contracted at the workplace or during the performance of work activities have been recognised (or treated) as occupational diseases or accidents at work.

In virtually all the countries, the measures reported are temporary and meant to be in force only as long as the pandemic is ongoing. In most cases, these measures have not affected the overall functioning of sickness benefit and sick pay schemes but have only applied to circumstances directly linked to COVID-19, such as infection, quarantine or self-isolation due to the virus[38] (see Table 4.1). On the basis of the ESPN experts' analyses, we can identify a number of key parameters of these schemes that have been affected by the measures taken, notably: a) the qualifying conditions for access to sickness benefit and/or sick pay schemes and the circumstances covered by those schemes; b) the level of the benefits provided; c) the duration of receipt; and d) funding. Measures affecting one or more of these parameters have been reported in all 35 ESPN countries, with the exception of the Netherlands (among the EU Member States) and of three non-EU countries (MK, TR, XK) (Table 4.1). In the latter group of countries, only a few changes, related to administrative procedures for access to sick leave, have been reported by the ESPN expert from North Macedonia[39].

[37] In this section we focus on paid sick leave schemes (or simply paid sick leaves), which include sick pay (i.e. benefits paid by the employers to their employees) and sickness benefits (i.e. benefits paid by social security systems to both the self-employed and employees).

[38] The terminology used to define these circumstances may vary across countries. In this section, we use the term (mandatory) "quarantine" when a worker's infection with COVID-19 has not (yet) been confirmed but he/she is requested to isolate because there is a suspicion or a high risk that he/she is infected. This may be the case, for instance, for people showing symptoms of the illness but still waiting for the results of a COVID-19 test, people who had close contacts with confirmed COVID-19 cases or people returning from high-risk areas. We use the term "self-isolation" to refer to workers who cannot work because they are considered as particularly at risk of developing severe forms of illness if infected by COVID-19 (due to their health situation or age). When referring to workers requested to isolate because they have tested positive for COVID-19, we use terms such as "infected persons" or "confirmed cases" (but not workers "quarantining" or "self-isolating").

[39] Notably, the possibility of obtaining a sick leave certificate in electronic form (without a medical examination) and an extension of the timeframe for launching the sick leave procedure. Similar changes have also been reported by ESPN experts in some EU countries (e.g. DE, EE, HU, SE, SI, SK) and in the UK. In particular, in Slovenia, a short-term sickness benefit was introduced in October 2020, allowing workers (both employees and the self-employed) to be absent from work due to sickness and receive a sickness benefit without a medical certificate for up to three consecutive days per year.

Table 4.1 Measures affecting key parameters of sickness benefit and sick pay schemes, ESPN countries

	EU countries																						Non-EU countries											
	AT	BE	BG	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	EL	ES	FI	FR	HR	HU	IE	IT	LT	LU	LV	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SE	SI	SK	UK	AL	BA	ME	MK	RS	TR	XK
Qualifying conditions and circumstances covered																																			
Reduction of employment period/contribution requirements										√		√			√	√								√											
Coverage of quarantine periods	√		√		√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√					
Coverage of particularly at risk groups				√			√		√			√				√	√			√				√	√			√					√			
Care for sick children			√			√			√				√			√		√	√						√			√								
Level of benefit																																			
Increase in compensation rate/amount		√*			√					√					√	√	√				None	√	√	√	√*							None		None	None
Duration of receipt																																			
Abolition/reduction of waiting periods							√	√*		√		√			√				√				√		√*			√							
Extension of duration of receipt of sickness benefits							√*					√					√	√*	√					√							√*				
Funding																																			
Measures aimed at reducing employers' payments for sick leave	√					√	√	√*		√			√	√		√			√	√				√	√*	√	√	√		√*	√				
	AT	BE	BG	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	EL	ES	FI	FR	HR	HU	IE	IT	LT	LU	LV	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SE	SI	SK	UK	AL	BA	ME	MK	RS	TR	XK

Note: Asterisks (*) refer to measures applying not only to circumstances directly related to COVID-19.
Source: Authors' own elaboration on ESPN national reports.

4.1 A significant extension of the circumstances covered, but few changes in qualifying conditions

The qualifying conditions for access to sickness benefits or sick pay (in terms of the employment period or contributions required) have not changed during the pandemic in most of the ESPN countries. However, there are five countries (ES, FR, IE, IT, RO) in which the ESPN experts have identified some measures entailing a relaxation of eligibility conditions related to the benefits:

- In France, eligibility conditions related to minimum employment or minimum contribution periods for receipt of the daily sickness allowance have been suspended as of February 2020 while, as of March 2020, additional sickness allowances paid by some employers are no longer conditional on employees' seniority. The latter measure applies to incapacity for work due to COVID-19-related circumstances only.
- In Ireland, eligibility conditions for the Enhanced Illness Benefit (available to both employees and the self-employed for circumstances related to COVID-19), in terms of paid social insurance contributions, are much more lenient than those attached to the ordinary Illness Benefit. Furthermore, the benefit is also available to people living in "direct provision" (e.g. asylum seekers) who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or who have been advised to self-isolate.
- In Romania, employees infected by COVID-19 are eligible for medical leave and the associated indemnities even if they have not fulfilled the minimum period of payment of contributions to the social insurance system.
- In Spain, the assimilation of COVID-19-related incapacity to work to an accident at work means that, in order to be eligible for the benefit, the workers concerned (both employees and self-employed) do not need to show a minimum period of paid contributions.

In 28 ESPN countries, besides the obvious case of workers actually infected by COVID-19, sick leave benefits are also paid for other circumstances related to the pandemic, such as periods spent in mandatory quarantine (e.g. AT, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI; UK, AL, BA) and/or in self-isolation when the individual belongs to a group of the population particularly at risk of developing severe forms of COVID-19 (e.g. CY, DK, EL, FR, IT, LT, MT, RO, SE; UK, RS). In both circumstances, access to benefits is usually limited to cases when telework is not possible[40]. Examples of measures identified by the ESPN experts as targeting workers in mandatory quarantine or in self-isolation due to belonging to a group particularly at risk include the following:

- In Denmark, sickness benefits fully funded by the State are available for workers (both employees and self-employed) who have to quarantine because they are suspected of having been infected by COVID-19 or because they had close contacts with confirmed cases. Furthermore, these benefits are also available to workers who cannot safely go to work because they (or their spouse) would be particularly at risk of developing severe forms of COVID-19 if infected. As highlighted by the ESPN national expert, the extension of sickness benefits to these circumstances is an innovative measure in Denmark.
- In Malta, a "quarantine leave" was introduced in March 2020, with a flat-rate benefit (lump sum) of €350 awarded to employers for each employee in mandatory quarantine. The benefit is also open to some categories of the self-employed. Furthermore, in the period between March and July 2020, a lump-sum allowance was provided to employees who were advised to stay at home because they belonged to particularly vulnerable categories (because of disability or health conditions).

[40] In some countries, the provision of financial support to workers in mandatory quarantine derives from the activation of existing legislation regulating epidemic situations or cases of infectious diseases (e.g. AT, BG, DE, FI, EE, HU, SE; BA).

- In Albania, COVID-19 has been included in the official list of infectious diseases, thus giving workers needing to quarantine access to sick pay (80% of their wage) for up to 14 days.

In eight EU countries (BG, DE, EL, HR, IT, LU, LV, SE) and in the UK, benefits supporting workers taking care of sick children have been adapted to the pandemic situation, or new benefits have been introduced[41]. Examples reported by the ESPN experts include:

- In Germany, the so-called "Corona children's sickness benefit" – introduced in October 2020 and amended in January 2021 – has extended the period during which parents are eligible for a children's sickness benefit to take care of ill children aged under 12, or of disabled children (with no age limit).
- In Greece, since September 2020, special leave is granted to employees in both the public and private sectors whose children have been infected with COVID-19. This special leave is in addition to other leave relating to sickness or childcare. Self-employed parents, however, are not eligible for this measure.
- In Italy, as of March 2020, there is a right to parental leave to care for children (aged less than 14 years old) either affected by COVID-19 or in quarantine, granting working parents (employees only) an allowance equal to 50% of their wage.
- In the United Kingdom, employees taking four or more days off to care for a child affected by COVID-19 are eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from the first day of absence from work (or for the Employment and Support Allowance if not eligible for SSP).

4.2 "COVID-19 sick leave": increased levels of benefit

In ten EU Member States, ESPN experts have highlighted increases in the compensation rate and amount of sickness benefits/sick pay (BE, CZ, ES, IE, IT, LT, PL, PT, RO, SE). With the exception of Belgium and Sweden, such increases only apply to benefits for circumstances related to COVID-19 (e.g. infection or quarantine), while the level of payments of sickness benefits or sick pay for reasons other than COVID-19 has remained unchanged. For instance:

- In Belgium, as of 1 March 2020, extra support has been provided to both the self-employed and employees temporarily unable to work. If the incapacity lasts at least eight days, the self-employed receive an extra crisis benefit topping up the ordinary sickness benefit, to ensure that the replacement income is at the same level as the monthly emergency bridging right for the self-employed. Similarly, the level of sickness benefits for employees (for incapacity for work lasting less than one year) has been increased to the level of temporary unemployment benefit.
- In Czechia, the Parliament legislated to introduce a supplement to standard sickness benefits for people required to quarantine. The Act on the extraordinary benefit to employees during mandatory quarantine took effect in March and April 2021 and was then extended to May and June 2021. Under this measure, a quarantined employee (or insured self-employed person) is entitled to an extraordinary benefit. The supplement is capped at €14 per day. The general rule states that the total replacement rate (sickness benefit plus supplement) should not exceed 90% of the previous gross wage.
- In Poland, sickness benefits and sick pay are available for workers in mandatory quarantine, at the same level as ordinary benefits (i.e. 80% of the monthly wage). However, in cases of quarantine, the level of benefit has been increased to 100% of the monthly wage for some

[41] This section only refers to measures ensuring access to paid sick leave to look after sick children. Other provisions concerning care of children in circumstances other than illness (e.g. in the event of school closures) can be found in Section 9.

categories of workers facing a particularly high risk of infection, such as medical staff and those working in full-time residential care facilities.

- In Portugal, the sickness benefit related to COIVD-19 (in cases of both illness and preventative isolation) corresponds to 100% of the net wage, i.e. it is higher than the ordinary sickness benefits (which range between 55% and 75% of the reference pay).

4.3 Duration of receipt: waiving of waiting days for access to the benefits and extensions of duration

In most cases, measures related to sickness benefits concern: i) waiting periods before having access to benefits; and ii) changes to the maximum duration of receipt of sickness benefits. The duration of receipt of sickness benefits related to COVID-19 varies across countries, and also depends on the specific circumstances covered by the various benefits (illness, quarantine, self-isolation, care for sick children) and on how the pandemic evolved over the period under scrutiny.

ESPN experts have reported measures waiving existing waiting periods for access to sickness benefits and/or sick pay in eight EU countries (DK, EE, ES, FR, IE, LV, PT, SE) and in the UK. With the exception of Estonia and Sweden, waiting periods have only been waived for COVID-19 circumstances. Examples include:

- In Estonia, before the COVID-19 pandemic, employees' first three days of sick leave were not compensated. This waiting period has been reduced to one day as of January 2021 (the employer then covers the sick pay from the second to the fifth day and the Health Insurance Fund pays sickness benefits as of the sixth day). The reduction of the waiting period is meant to be temporary and to be in force until December 2021.
- In Latvia, from November 2020, sickness benefits are paid from the first day of illness to both employees and self-employed workers for circumstances related to COVID-19 (confirmed infection or mandatory quarantine).
- In the United Kingdom, if COVID-19 is involved, access to both Statutory Sick Pay and the Employment and Support Allowance is granted from the first day of absence from work.

In six EU countries (DK, FR, LT, LU, LV, RO) and in Montenegro, the maximum duration of receipt of sickness benefits has been extended for benefits which would have expired during the pandemic. This prolongation of the duration of receipt is meant to be temporary (in Luxembourg, for instance, it only applied to the period between March and June 2020) and it usually also applies to workers on sick leave for reasons other than COVID-19 (except for France, Latvia and Romania). In France, the maximum duration of payment of daily allowances (usually 360 days every three years) has been abolished for workers infected by COVID-19 based on the recognition that, even if it has not been included in the list of long-term diseases, it can trigger chronic disorders.

4.4 Funding of the benefits: enhanced public intervention to reduce employers' payments for sick leave

As shown above, many of the measures implemented in relation to sickness benefits and sick pay aim to enhance the support provided to workers by broadening the circumstances covered by the benefits, increasing the level of benefits granted, reducing or abolishing waiting days or extending the duration of receipt of the benefits.

There is a risk that the cost of these measures will be borne by employers in those countries with a statutory duty to provide employees with sick pay. Therefore, during the pandemic, in some of these countries, public authorities and social security institutions have sometimes intervened in the payment of these benefits in order to relieve the financial burden on employers, by providing full or partial reimbursement of sick pay payments made by the employers or through the direct payment

of benefits (cf. OECD 2020; Spasova *et al.* 2021). Such measures are reported by ESPN experts in a number of EU countries (e.g. AT, DE, DK, EE, ES, HR, HU, IT, LV, MT, RO, SE, SI, SK), as well as in the UK, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Montenegro. Examples of these measures – that are usually limited to the payment of benefits for circumstances related to COVID-19 – include the following:

- In Austria, in line with the provisions of the "Epidemic Act", employees infected by COVID-19 or in quarantine have the right to a "refund" to be paid by the employer. As would be the case for sick pay, the refund is equal to the employee's usual wage. However, unlike sick pay, the employer can in these cases ask the government to reimburse the full cost of the "refund" paid to employees.
- In Slovakia, the "Pandemic Sickness Benefit" available to employees (and self-employed workers) infected by COVID-19 is paid by the Social Insurance Agency from the first day of temporary work incapacity.
- In Sweden, the deduction corresponding to 20% of paid sick leave applying during the first week of incapacity to work has been temporarily replaced by the State with a fixed amount (€81). This provision also applies to sick leave for circumstances not related to COVID-19.[42]
- In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, employees in mandatory quarantine because they are infected with COVID-19 (or when there is suspected infection) have the right to wage compensation paid by employers (who are then refunded by the cantonal health insurance fund). This provision, regulating cases of infectious diseases, was already in place before the COVID-19 pandemic (article 57 of the Law on Health Insurance).

4.5 Paid sick leave during the pandemic: the situation of non-standard workers and the self-employed

In their thematic reports, ESPN experts have not indicated measures specifically aimed at improving access to benefits for those workers in non-standard employment who, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, were not eligible (or barely *de facto* eligible) for paid sick leave. Qualifying conditions (notably, requirements related to the employment period) are one of the main reasons usually limiting access of this category of workers to paid sick leaves. As shown in Section 4.1, measures affecting eligibility conditions (required periods of employment or past contributions) for paid sick leave schemes have been relaxed in only five countries during the pandemic: France, Ireland, Italy, Romania, and Spain. In these countries, access to those benefits for non-standard workers previously excluded may have improved.

While many measures described in previous sections were targeted at employees, some measures have also entailed increased support for the self-employed[43]. For instance, the self-employed have access to the benefits covering periods of mandatory quarantine described in Section 4.1 in a number of EU countries (e.g. BG, CZ, DE, DK, HR, ES, FI, HU, IE, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SE) and in the UK. In several countries, the self-employed are also eligible for paid sick leaves allowing workers to take care of sick children (e.g. in BG, HR, LV, SE; UK). However, these benefits are available to contractual employees only in countries such as Greece and Italy.

Measures providing higher levels of benefit, as described in Section 4.2, do cover the self-employed in countries such as Belgium, Czechia, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Sweden, while waiting periods (see Section 4.3) have been waived for the self-employed in a number of EU countries (including DK, ES, IE, LV, PT, SE), and in the UK.

[42] The actual amount corresponding to this 20% depends on the salary level. In many cases, the €81 paid by the State is lower than the actual deduction made by the employer; for these employees, there is then no full (100%) compensation.

[43] Here again, however, no measures have been specifically targeted at the least protected categories of self-employed, such as the solo self-employed.

4.6 COVID-19 as an occupational disease/accident at work

In a number of countries, COVID-19 infections contracted at the workplace or while performing work-related activities have been recognised (or treated) as an occupational disease or accident at work. This is the case for nine EU Member States (BE, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, PT, SI) and two non-EU countries (BA, RS) (Table 4.2)[44].

Table 4.2 Countries recognising COVID-19 as (or treating it as) an occupational disease/accident at work, ESPN countries

All sectors	Specific sectors only
ES, FR, HU, IT, SI	BE, HR, LT, PT BA, RS

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

In some of these countries (BE, HR, LT, PT; BA, RS), these measures only apply to workers in specific sectors, typically healthcare workers or workers performing activities recognised as "essential". In other countries, workers in all economic sectors may be eligible for occupational disease/accident at work benefits in the event of COVID-19 infection (ES, FR, HU, IT, SI).

In some countries, only employees are eligible for occupational disease or accident at work benefits in the event of COVID-19 infection (e.g. BE, FR, HR, HU, LT). In Italy, as well as employees, some categories of self-employed workers (in particular, para-subordinate collaborators) are covered.

Examples of the recognition of COVID-19 as an occupational disease or accident at work (or treated as such) in the ESPN reports include:

- In Croatia, COVID-19 infections contracted at work can be recognised as an occupational disease for some categories of workers (e.g. healthcare staff). In this case, the corresponding benefit is paid by the Croatian Institute of Health Insurance from the first day of sick leave and is determined on the basis of the employee's net average wage of the last six months (without any upper ceiling).
- In France, COVID-19 infections contracted at the workplace or during the performance of work-related activities can be recognised as an occupational disease. The procedures for such recognition vary according to the category of workers concerned and have been simplified for healthcare workers. This measure, however, does not apply to the self-employed. The recognition of COVID-19 as an occupational disease entails higher payments from the health insurance scheme.
- In Hungary, COVID-19 infections contracted by employees while performing employment-related duties can be considered as an occupational sickness, thus giving the right to a sickness benefit equal to 100% of the employee's wage.
- In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in December 2020, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy amended the "Rulebook on Occupational Diseases", adding COVID-19 to the list of diseases that can potentially be recognised as occupational diseases for healthcare staff. In this case, the wage compensation for the workers concerned is equal to 100% of their wage.
- In Serbia, a number of special collective agreements have equated COVID-19 infections with an occupational disease in cases in which the infection or the potential exposure to the virus

[44] In most of the ESPN countries, there are no waiting periods for benefits related to occupational disease or accidents at work, and the benefits paid are higher than ordinary sickness benefits (e.g. BE, FR, HR, HU, LT, PT; BA).

is the result of occupational activities. These amendments to collective agreements have applied to civil servants employed in the central and local administration, in healthcare institutions, and in social protection institutions. In these cases, the sickness benefit provided is equal to 100% of the worker's wage.

5 HEALTHCARE COVERAGE: EXTENSION TO COVID-19 TREATMENTS AND VACCINATION

This section describes measures implemented during the pandemic concerning healthcare coverage. The ESPN experts were required to specifically focus on two questions: a) "Has the country extended coverage to some groups which were not covered before?"; and b) "Have there been changes in the healthcare baskets[45]?". The coverage of the statutory healthcare systems in the 35 countries under examination has been extended to include COVID-19 treatments and vaccination. While the majority of ESPN national experts did not identify any significant reforms related to healthcare coverage beyond this (temporary) extension to COVID-19-related care (e.g. AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, EL, IE, FI, HR, IT, LU, MT, NL, SE, SK; RS), some EU national experts – notably from Member States whose statutory healthcare system does not provide universal coverage for a defined health basket (e.g. EE, PL, RO) - have reported measures to ensure that treatments for COVID-19 become part of universal coverage Similarly, non-EU Member States (e.g. AL, BA, MK, RS, UK) also identified measures that waive eligibility criteria to ensure a wider coverage of COVID-19 treatments by the statutory healthcare system (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Grouping of countries according to the type of changes made to healthcare coverage, ESPN countries

Extension of coverage as part of universal coverage	Only temporary extension to COVID-19 treatments and vaccination
EE, PL, RO AL, BA, MK, RS, UK	AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, EL, FI, HR, IE, IT, LU, MT, NL, SE, SK RS
Extension of the benefit basket	
DE, EL, ES, FR, IT, LU, LV, RO, SI	

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

In addition, the pandemic has led some countries to include remote consultations and/or prescriptions (e.g. DE, EL, ES, FR, LU, LV, RO, SI) in the benefit package; to mobilise ambulatory care to meet specific needs (e.g. IT, RO) and to extend coverage to specific groups or care services (e.g. EL, FR, PT; TR). Finally, it should be noted that only the national expert for Romania identifies a measure to extend coverage to certain treatments, notably for infectious diseases that can lead to epidemics and pandemics, and to other non-COVID-19-related treatments.

[45] The healthcare basket comprises the range of goods and services fully or partially covered by the scheme. It can be defined explicitly (that is, a list stating all the benefits available through coverage) or implicitly (based on traditions and routine).

5.1 Coverage of COVID-19-related health services

In reaction to the pandemic, COVID-19 treatments and vaccination have been included in the services covered by the statutory healthcare system in all the 35 countries examined in this report. Some Member States that do not provide universal population coverage for a defined set of care services (e.g. EE, PL, RO[46]) have developed mechanisms to ensure that COVID-19 treatments are covered as widely as possible by their statutory health schemes. For instance:

- Estonia has included the diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19 in the list of services covered by the Social Health Insurance (SHI), regardless of any insurance record. The SHI bears the costs of any patients' contacts with medical centres, consultations with a general practitioner (GP), testing and treatment.
- In Poland, eligibility for COVID-19-related services and treatment has been extended to all residents, including uninsured people and migrants.
- Romania has waived the eligibility criteria related to insurance records to enable all Romanian inhabitants regardless of their insurance status, including refugees and migrants, to access free-of-charge COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccination.

As regards non-EU countries, some national experts (e.g. AL, BA, MK, RS, UK) also noted the introduction of universal coverage for COVID-19 treatments:

- In Albania, the compulsory insurance fund reimburses the costs of COVID-19 treatments on the basis of a prescription from a GP, regardless of the patient's insurance status.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, healthcare coverage for persons without insurance in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was ensured only until June 2020, while the *Republika Srpska* entity budget finances COVID-19 related healthcare services for all uninsured persons.
- North Macedonia, whose statutory healthcare system provides almost universal coverage for a series of care services, has implemented a measure enabling free-of-charge diagnosis and treatment related to COVID-19 for uninsured people and citizens from neighbouring countries and has exempted both the insured and uninsured from co-payments during the pandemic.
- The UK provides free-of-charge treatment and vaccination for COVID-19 through the NHS for anyone in the UK regardless of any immigration checks. This is a critical measure, as Brexit implies, among other things, that from 1 January 2021, EU citizens travelling to the UK for stays of more than six months may have to pay an immigration health surcharge as part of a visa application.

5.2 Remote consultations and/or prescriptions

In order to limit physical contacts, especially for people at risk, and to alleviate pressure on healthcare systems, some Member States have developed schemes for strengthening telemedicine and its coverage (e.g. AT, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, LU, LV, RO, SI). For instance:

- In both Austria and Germany, the procedures for proving incapacity for work, obtaining prescriptions for medicines and accessing specific benefits have been relaxed by allowing such certifications to be made by phone.
- In Luxembourg, teleconsultation and remote prescriptions for medicines in the context of the pandemic have been added to the national health fund list.

[46] Only the expert for Romania notes an extension of the treatments covered by the statutory healthcare system to non-COVID-19-related treatments. The Romanian Social Health System has extended its list of reimbursable pharmaceuticals notably to infectious diseases that can lead to epidemics and pandemics as well as to 39 new molecules to treat chronic diseases such as cancer, leukaemia or AIDS. These additions made in December 2020 to the healthcare basket are permanent, and are funded through the national programme to improve access to quality care.

- In Slovenia, care services for COVID-19 patients who have been discharged from hospital and are recovering from COVID-19 and for patients who do not require hospitalisation but have specific risk factors can be conducted using telemedicine. The costs of telemedicine are covered by the SHI. The expenses are reimbursed to the SHI by the state budget and from European funds.

5.3 Provision of ambulatory care targeting specific needs

ESPN experts for Italy and Romania mention measures setting up new outpatient services to address the healthcare needs of specific groups in the context of the pandemic:

- In March 2020, Italy set up Special Care Units to take care of patients infected by COVID-19 who do not need to be hospitalised. These units are made up of general practitioners (GPs) and the cost of their interventions is borne by the national healthcare system. This measure provides a unit for every 50,000 inhabitants.
- In Malta, the State contracted private hospitals and clinics to provide residential hospital-type care for patients infected with COVID-19, to increase the supply of available services.
- In Romania, most local authorities have set up teams of community nurses, Roma mediators and midwives in lockdown areas to address the needs of vulnerable socio-economic groups. These teams are in charge of providing support, food, medical delivery, care, and health monitoring for specific vulnerable groups, such as isolated elderly people.

5.4 Extension of coverage to specific groups or care services

In a few countries (e.g. EL, FR, PT; TR), ESPN experts reported measures to temporarily extend healthcare coverage to specific groups of people or to specific care services. For instance:

- In France, entitlement to inclusive complementary healthcare (a means-tested benefit that reduces the cost of a series of healthcare services for socio-economically vulnerable groups) and to State medical aid (a scheme that allows migrants to access a basic set of healthcare services) has been automatically extended for the period of the health crisis.
- In Greece, the coverage of hospitalisation by the statutory healthcare system has been partly and temporarily extended to private structures in order to alleviate the pressure on public hospitals. Thus, non-COVID patients who have been directed to private health structures for hospitalisation will not be charged any co-payments.
- Portugal has implemented measures allowing asylum seekers and refugees to access the national healthcare system, provided that they fill out an online document made available by the Immigration and Borders Service. The aim of this measure was, on the one hand, to allow migrants and refugees to access the benefits and coverage provided by the national health system (not only COVID-19-related) and, on the other hand, to limit in-person displacements to the offices of the services in charge of this procedure.
- In Turkey, from August 2020 until June 2021, people who have not paid their health premiums will have temporary access to public hospitals, provided that they have paid the premium for the month prior to the hospitalisation.

6 MINIMUM INCOME SCHEMES AND OTHER SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT: STRENGTHENED PROTECTION THROUGH TEMPORARY ADJUSTMENTS AND EMERGENCY AID

The COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent lockdown measures are likely to lead to unprecedented income loss, affecting in particular the most vulnerable sections of the population. This section provides an overview of national or subnational measures related to minimum income schemes (MISs) and other forms of social assistance[47]. Such measures include adjustments to countries' MISs, as well as other forms of social assistance protection which were put in place to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19. These include support measures (both means-tested and non-means-tested) targeting people with no links to the labour market, as well as means-tested provision for people with current or previous links to the labour market. Table 6.1 maps the main types of measures identified across the 35 ESPN countries.

Table 6.1: Grouping of countries according to the types of support measures implemented, ESPN countries

MIS-related measures	Work-related support measures
BE, DE, DK, EL, ES, IT, LV, PT UK, MK	AT, EL, FR, IT, NL, PT, SK
Support measures not related to work	**Food and material assistance**
AT, BE, CZ, DE, EL, FI, FR, HU, HR, IT, LT, LU, LV, PL, PT, SI AL, ME, MK, RS, TR, XK	BE, BG, EE, FR, IT, PT, RO, SI UK

Note: Several answers possible. Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

ESPN experts from eight EU countries and two non-EU countries identify various measures related to MISs. These are mostly adjustments to the existing income support schemes, aimed at strengthening their safety net character at a time when more people are at risk of falling below the minimum standard of living.

In addition to these MIS-related measures, ESPN national experts from 21 EU countries and six of the eight non-EU countries also report the introduction of emergency or extraordinary support measures aimed at responding to emerging needs resulting from the impact of the pandemic.

In most countries, these support measures aim to increase the protection of people with no/few links to, or detached from, the labour market (e.g. children, students, social assistance beneficiaries) directly affected by the pandemic situation. In more than half of the Member States – and in six of the eight non-EU countries included in the ESPN – means-tested and/or non-means-tested assistance measures have been introduced.

On the other hand, seven EU country teams report the introduction of work-related exceptional support measures aimed at providing additional financial protection – means-tested – for different categories of employed people (e.g. employees, self-employed people, non-standard workers). Other temporary exceptional support measures – not subject to means-testing – targeting these various categories of employed people are reported in Section 3.

[47] For the purpose of this Synthesis Report, changes to MISs and other forms of social assistance refer to emergency or extraordinary support measures – including new measures and adjustments to existing schemes – aimed at assisting households and/or persons in (increased) need as a result of the pandemic. Although these are typically financial aids, ESPN country teams also report significant changes introduced in the provision of kind services/support.

Finally, eight EU country teams and the UK national experts report the provision of food support and other forms of material assistance.

6.1 Enhancing the adequacy of MISs in Europe as an immediate response to COVID-19 challenges

With the exception of Spain (see Box 1), the descriptions of adjustments made to MISs illustrate countries' efforts to provide additional protection in the form of adequate and accessible income support for those lacking sufficient resources for a dignified life. Table 6.2 maps the types of adjustments made to MISs, their implementation date and the actual or foreseen end date of the support, as reported by ESPN national experts.

Table 6.2: MIS measures, showing the types of adjustment introduced and their implementation and end dates, ESPN countries

	EU countries								UK and other non-EU countries	
	BE	DE	DK	EL	ES	IT	LV	PT	UK	MK
Type of adjustment										
Extra or increased allowance	√	√		√		√			√	
Facilitated access/relaxation of eligibility criteria		√	√			√		√	√	√
Extension of benefit duration				√			√	√		
Increased pace of implementation					√					
Increased coverage					√					
Implementation date										
Q1 2020		√	√	√		√	√	√	√	
Q2 2020				√	√				√	√
Q3 2020	√							√		
Q4 2020				√						
End date of the support										
Q2 2020								√		
Q3 2020										
Q4 2020								√		√
Q1 2021										
Q2 2021	√		√			√	√			
Q3 2021									√	
Q4 2021		√								
Ongoing				√	√				√	

Note: Q1 2020 refers to the first quarter of 2020; Q4 2021 to the fourth quarter of 2021.
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

Facilitating access to MISs is the most common form of adjustment reported by ESPN national experts (from six countries), followed by the introduction of temporary mechanisms which enable the income provided to be increased, either by introducing an extra allowance or by raising the level of MISs. ESPN experts from three countries mention the introduction of mechanisms to extend the duration of receipt of the benefit. ESPN national experts from six countries mention at least two different types

of adjustments introduced in response to the pandemic. Some examples of the different types of measures are provided below:

- The ESPN national expert for Denmark reports that the requirement to work – a minimum of 225 hours of ordinary work annually – linked to the MIS was suspended temporarily – initially between 9 March 2020 and 8 July 2020, later extended until 30 April 2021.
- The ESPN country team for Greece reports two types of adjustment to MIS: (i) a one-off increase of the monthly benefit (June 2020) for beneficiaries with at least one child (€100 for the first child and €50 for each additional child, with a maximum cap of €300) and an extra one-off payment of income support, equal to their monthly benefit, granted to all Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) beneficiaries in December 2020; (ii) extension of the duration of receipt of the GMI benefit for approved beneficiaries whose allowance expired over the period February 2020 – April 2021.
- In North Macedonia, the ESPN national expert refers to the introduction of a temporary mechanism enhancing access to the MIS, by reducing the income-test period for assessing the household's income from three months to one month and by removing conditions related to both work activation and property ownership.

The ESPN national experts for Spain report, uniquely, a new national MIS – the Minimum Living Income (MLI) – implementation of which, in May 2020, did not result from but was accelerated by the COVID-19 emergency situation in Spain (see Box 1).

Box 1: "Ingreso Mínimo Vital" – *the new national guaranteed MIS in Spain*

The socio-economic emergency resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the implementation of the Minimum Living Income (MLI). Launched by the Spanish government in May 2020, the MLI was approved in June 2020. The MLI is a new non-contributory Social Security benefit which creates a state system of social protection for people living in poverty. It involves entitlement to a cash transfer and is expected to boost social and labour inclusion opportunities, recognised and checked by the National Social Security Institute. It is also a step forward in the rationalisation and management of the entire MIS system.

Source: ESPN national report

Overall, most of the governments concerned (Table 6.2) reacted quickly in implementing MIS measures to provide additional protection to vulnerable people: nine out of the ten ESPN countries implemented (all or some of) these measures during the first two quarters of 2020. In Belgium the adjustments were introduced in July 2020.

In eight ESPN countries (including seven Member States), some measures were still ongoing in April 2021 (Table 6.2). Additionally, several ESPN national experts (e.g. DE, DK, EL) also report extensions to the duration of the support as initially foreseen. For example:

- The facilitated access to MIS introduced at the beginning of March 2020 in Germany, temporarily suspending some of the eligibility criteria for new applicants (although the measure applied to all applicants during the implementation period), was initially foreseen to end at the end of December 2020, but was later extended until the end of March 2021 and, finally, until the end of December 2021.

6.2 Responding to the emerging needs of those hardest hit by the COVID-19 crisis

A considerable number of ESPN country teams report the introduction of emergency or extraordinary support measures responding to emerging needs of vulnerable sectors of the population resulting from the impact of the pandemic.

ESPN national experts from seven EU countries (Table 6.3) report work-related exceptional support measures aimed at providing additional financial protection – subject to means testing for eligibility – for different categories of employed people (e.g. employees, self-employed people, non-standard

workers). These support measures largely consist of extraordinary financial support which is usually granted on a monthly basis (i.e. allowances, bonuses), for a period of variable duration. Table 6.3 provides an overview of the main characteristics of the support measures implemented in this selected group of EU countries.

Table 6.3: Means-tested work-related support measures, showing the targeted beneficiaries, type of support provided and maximum duration of the support, ESPN countries

	ESPN countries						
	AT	EL	FR	IT	NL	PT	SK
Targeted beneficiaries							
Employees						√	√
Self-employed	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Non-standard workers			√				√
Unemployed	√		√			√	
Type of support							
Monthly benefit	√		√	√	√	√	√
One-off benefit		√				√	
Loan					√		
Maximum duration							
Less than six months	√	√	√	√			
Between six and 12 months			√			√	
More than 12 months					√		√

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

These temporary support measures are largely new measures introduced as a response to the pandemic, although in the Netherlands and in Slovakia they built on existing financial support measures.

In seven EU countries, the self-employed are covered by these extraordinary income support measures, whereas employees and non-standard workers are covered in two EU countries and the unemployed are covered in three EU countries (AT, FR, PT) (see Table 6.3). For instance:

- In Austria, the Corona Family Hardship Fund provides a financial subsidy for families with children in cases in which, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, at least one parent has become unemployed, or is on the Corona STW scheme (*Corona Kurzarbeit*), or is self-employed and has financial difficulties because of the pandemic; this transfer may be granted for a maximum of three months and is subject to means testing.
- In the Netherlands, self-employed professionals can apply for the "Temporary bridging measure for self-employed professionals" (TOZO), which is managed by municipalities; it offers a temporary monthly benefit to bridge loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, self-employed professionals can receive a loan of up to €10,157 with a 2% interest rate, to cover liquidity problems when they have suffered a turnover loss due to COVID-19.
- In Portugal, apart from the introduction of several extraordinary temporary monthly income benefits targeting different categories of people (e.g. employees, self-employed and

unemployed), a one-off benefit targeting self-employed people working in the culture sector was paid in September 2020.

- In Slovakia, an SOS subsidy provides support to employees who could not work, or self-employed people running a business and who have found themselves without any income – as a consequence of the pandemic – with no entitlement to any other benefits; it is also granted to non-standard workers who cannot perform their jobs due to the measures adopted by the government.

Non-work-related support measures, including both means-tested and non-means-tested assistance, are reported by 16 EU country teams (Table 6.4) and by six non-EU country teams (Table 6.5). These measures aim to strengthen the protection of people with no links to the labour market (e.g. children, students, social assistance beneficiaries).

Table 6.4: Non-work-related extraordinary support measures, showing the eligibility criteria, type of support and whether or not the measure is new, EU countries

	EU countries															
	AT	BE	CZ	DE	EL	FI	FR	HU	HR	IT	LT	LU	LV	PL	PT	SI
Eligibility criteria/ type of support																
Means-tested																
Facilitated access to benefits			√								√			√		√
Increased child support		√*		√					√		√	√	√		√	
Increased support to students/young people				√			√									
Increased social assistance support		√				√	√			√	√	√	√			
Not means-tested																
Facilitated access to benefits																√
Increased child support	√							√			√		√			√
Increased support to students/young people																√
Increased social assistance support																√
Economic support to the unemployed					√				√					√		√
Other				√							√			√		
Is the measure new?																
New	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	√
Adjustment of existing measures			√	√				√	√		√	√	√		√	√

*Note: *in Flanders and Brussels Region. Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.*

Different types of extraordinary support measures are reported by ESPN national experts, ranging from totally new measures (e.g. the Finnish Temporary Epidemic Compensation) - present in 14 out of the 16 EU countries - to mechanisms aimed at improving existing social assistance (e.g. the temporary reform of the child supplement benefit in Germany or the doubling of the high-cost-of-living allowance in Luxembourg).

Some countries only introduced (new or adjustments to) means-tested social assistance support (BE, CZ, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, PT). For example:

- In Czechia, in the autumn of 2020, the government introduced adjustments to the administration of several social benefits (e.g. the child allowance, caregiver's allowance), as well as new eligibility rules for the extraordinary immediate assistance benefit - a discretionary lump sum benefit for people in material need or at risk of poor health due to lack of financial means.
- In France, an extraordinary allowance of €200 was paid in June to young people under 25 years old in precarious situations, students who lost their jobs or their internship stipend, and all students from overseas French territories confined to the mainland during lockdown; a second allowance of €150 was paid in November 2020 to all young people aged under 25 who receive a personalised housing allowance, and students who receive a grant.
- In Italy, a new extraordinary social assistance means-tested benefit – the Emergency Income (*Reddito di Emergenza*) – was introduced in May 2020 to support poor households not covered by other ordinary or extraordinary benefits (e.g. unemployment benefits, STW allowances, the Citizenship Income and emergency measures introduced by the so-called "Cure Italy Decree")[48].
- In Portugal, children aged less than 17 on 1 January 2021 in the first three cohorts of the means-tested child-allowance benefit and enrolled in education received an extra one-off payment in September 2020, granted automatically.

A smaller group of countries introduced only non-means-tested support measures (AT, EL, HU) providing additional targeted protection to particular sectors of the population[49]:

- In Austria, the family allowance - a universal benefit for all children up to the age of 18 - was supplemented by a special one-off lump sum paid in September 2020.
- In Greece, temporary social assistance support was introduced in April 2020 and renewed in December 2020 for various recipients, consisting of an ad hoc payment of €400 to all registered long-term unemployed people who were not eligible for the long-term unemployment benefit.
- In Hungary, child-related benefits (GYES and GYET[50]), which were due to expire during the state of emergency, were extended until the end of that period, i.e. they were extended from 11 March 2020 until 18 June 2020.

[48] Decree No. 18, issued on 17 March 2020.

[49] These measures provide additional protection against the impact of COViD-19, targeting specific groups. In this sense they are considered as a form of social assistance even though they are not means tested.

[50] GYES (childcare leave) and GYET (child-raising support): GYES is provided from the end of GYET (child's second birthday) until the child's third birthday, for insured parents; and from birth until the child's third birthday, for parents who are not insured. GYET is available for families with at least three children during the period between the third and eighth birthday of the youngest child.

Finally, ESPN national experts from six other countries (DE, HR, LT, LV, PL, SI) report the provision of both means-tested and non-means-tested temporary support in response to the pandemic. For example:

- The ESPN experts for Croatia report the introduction – in the Split-Dalmatia County – of a non-means-tested one-off financial benefit. This benefit targeted unemployed persons registered with the Croatian Employment Service after 18 March 2020 because of COVID-19, whose labour contract was cancelled by their employer, who did not return to work and were not entitled to insurance-based unemployment benefit. Means-tested financial support for families with children in severe material deprivation due to the pandemic is also provided by "Croatia for Children", to help with the purchase of everyday clothes and footwear, basic hygiene supplies, food and dietary supplements and other items necessary for the growth and development of children.
- In Germany, three different measures targeting children and young people were introduced subject to means testing (the emergency supplementary child benefit, the child bonus and the bridging assistance for students in need); additionally, the Federal Government introduced specific financial support for single parents, consisting of an increase in the income tax relief for all single parents, aimed at compensating for the additional burdens these families faced during the pandemic.
- The ESPN national experts for Lithuania report adjustments, in June 2020, to the existing social assistance benefit, including an increase in the amount of the benefit and increased support for single people, as well as extra work incentives; additionally, the government introduced several non-means-tested payments (e.g. one-off payments for children and pensioners).
- The Slovenian government introduced, in March/April 2020, a new one-off solidarity allowance targeting selected vulnerable sectors of the population (e.g. pensioners, beneficiaries of cash social assistance or income supplements, households with children), a measure which was repeated in December 2020; additionally, a new measure has been in force since mid-March 2020 (lasting until the end of the pandemic) which grants an automatic extension of one month to all recipients of public transfers (e.g. child allowance, cash social assistance).

In six non-EU countries, ESPN national experts identify temporary support (Table 6.5) introduced in response to the negative impact of COVID-19 on household income. These measures largely consisted of means-tested support – introduced in all six non-EU countries – targeting particularly vulnerable people or households (e.g. people on the lowest pensions, victims of human trafficking, children in foster care, orphans not in institutions, or families whose applications for economic assistance had been refused the previous year). Only North Macedonia and Serbia introduced support measures not subject to means testing. Table 6.5 summarises the situation across these countries, identifying the type of support provided.

Table 6.5: Non-work-related extraordinary support measures, showing the eligibility criteria, type of support and novelty of the measure, ESPN non-EU countries

	Non-EU countries					
	AL	ME	MK	RS	TR	XK
Eligibility criteria/type of support						
Means-tested						
Facilitated access to benefits			√	√		
Increased social assistance support	√	√			√	√
Not means-tested						
Increased child support			√			
Other				√		
Is the measure new?						
New	√			√	√	√
Adjustment of existing measures	√	√	√	√	√	√

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

The introduction of extraordinary measures to increase existing forms of support is reported by four out of the six non-EU country teams. These include some new measures, but in most cases, adjustments were made to existing social support. For example:

- The ESPN national expert for Albania refers to the introduction of two measures: a new one-off financial benefit for families who had unsuccessfully applied for economic assistance between July 2019 and April 2020 and who were not receiving social assistance support from municipalities; and the doubling of the potential amount of the flat-rate supplement for all approved beneficiaries of the social assistance programme, a measure applying in February 2020 for a period of three months (later extended to six months of doubled benefit by a second decision adopted on 10 February 2021).
- In April 2020, in Turkey, a new one-off payment was made available to households in need, i.e. households receiving social assistance support or those who could demonstrate their poverty status; additionally, in the same month, the minimum retirement pension was increased to €186 per month.
- In Kosovo, the Government issued double Social Assistance Scheme (SAS) payments to all SAS beneficiaries, i.e. all dependent persons (e.g. due to illness, disability, age) and single unemployed mothers available to work with at least one child under five years old; moreover, between April and June 2020 and then in 2021, increased payments were made to beneficiaries of other tax-financed minimum social transfers tied to the food poverty threshold (e.g. basic pensions issued to all citizens above 65 years of age, disability pensions).
- In Montenegro, the Government granted one-off financial support (in March 2020, April 2020, July 2020 and January 2021) to various vulnerable categories (pensioners on the lowest pensions, the unemployed and beneficiaries of family support).

Only two ESPN country teams from non-EU countries (MK, RS) report the introduction of social support measures not subject to means testing:

- In North Macedonia, the government extended the existing rights enshrined in the Child Protection Law, e.g. the new-born and parental allowance for the third and fourth child was extended up to three months after the end of the state of emergency; and the educational allowance criterion related to regular school attendance was waived until the end of the 2019/20 school year.
- In Serbia, seven direct grants were made: three in 2020 (to all pensioners and beneficiaries of disability assistance and all adult citizens), and four in 2021 (to the same target groups as in 2020 and also to all unemployed persons registered by mid-April 2021).

The provision of food and material assistance (e.g. distribution of electronic devices with an internet connection to ensure access to online education) is reported by a limited number of national experts from EU countries (BE, BG, EE, FR, IT, PT, RO, SI) and the UK. Food distribution is the most common type of support – reported by these experts – although with differences in the nature of the support and the target groups. In several countries, the municipalities play a particularly important role in the provision of this type of support. For instance:

- In Bulgaria, the "Patronage care" service and the "Hot lunch" programme for people in need distributed hot meals to vulnerable citizens who, due to poverty and social isolation as a result of the state of emergency, are not able to provide for themselves; the programme was in place between 1 May 2020 and 19 June 2020 and is estimated to have reached over 50,000 people.
- In Italy, municipalities received additional funds aimed at supporting, through food vouchers, individuals and households in extreme poverty and severe material deprivation; the specific entitlement conditions vary according to the municipality.
- The ESPN country team from Latvia reports the provision of free lunches to children at home and the distribution of food packages and other types of food delivery options for children living in large families and families on low incomes.
- The ESPN national expert for Romania refers to the introduction of two support schemes – one permanent and one temporary – distributing, respectively, monthly electronic vouchers for hot meals to low-income elderly and homeless people, and food and personal hygiene packages to disadvantaged people.
- In January 2021, the Slovenian government allocated additional funds to the Slovenian Red Cross and Caritas Slovenia to provide additional assistance to people receiving food from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived scheme.
- In the UK, the value of the Healthy Start vouchers for pregnant women and families with children under four years old on certain means-tested benefits was increased from April 2021 (Scotland has different, more generous provision); substitutes for free school meals were also provided for those entitled, and extended into the holiday period on one occasion.

7 ACCESS TO HOUSING: TEMPORARY PROTECTION OF TENANCIES AND MORTGAGE RELIEF

The pandemic has seen many countries across Europe take unprecedented action in implementing (temporary) protective measures addressing renters and mortgage holders, particularly people in more vulnerable situations, such as those experiencing a substantial reduction in income. Measures were also taken to help people in homelessness situations.

This section begins by providing an overview of national or subnational measures related to housing support, put in place to help mitigate the financial and social distress produced by the economic downturn caused by the pandemic.

This overview (Table 7.1) covers housing support measures in general, i.e. measures put in place to protect those financially affected by the crisis (e.g. allowing rent arrears during specific periods, temporarily reducing/freezing rents, freezing mortgage payments for households/people confronted with income and/or job losses resulting from the pandemic).

Table 7.1: Grouping of countries according to the types of housing support measures implemented, ESPN countries

Support and protection for tenants	Support and protection for homeowners
AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, LU, MT, PL, PT, SE, SK UK, AL, MK, TR	AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FR, HU, IT, MT, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI UK, AL, ME, MK, XK
Measures supporting the homeless	**Other housing support measures**
BE, DK, FR, HR, LU, PL, SK UK	DE, NL

Note: Several answers possible. Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

Measures supporting and protecting tenants and homeowners are the two most common types of housing support adopted during the COVID-19 crisis. However, the measures aiming to protect tenants are significantly more numerous and more varied than those aimed at supporting homeowners.

In more than half of the ESPN countries, country teams identify at least one measure aimed at protecting households from the risk of losing their homes, whether rented or mortgaged. These measures include bans on evictions or repossessions, lease duration flexibility arrangements, rent payment deferrals, a rent increase freeze or rent reductions and mortgage payment deferrals, as well as other forms of housing assistance.

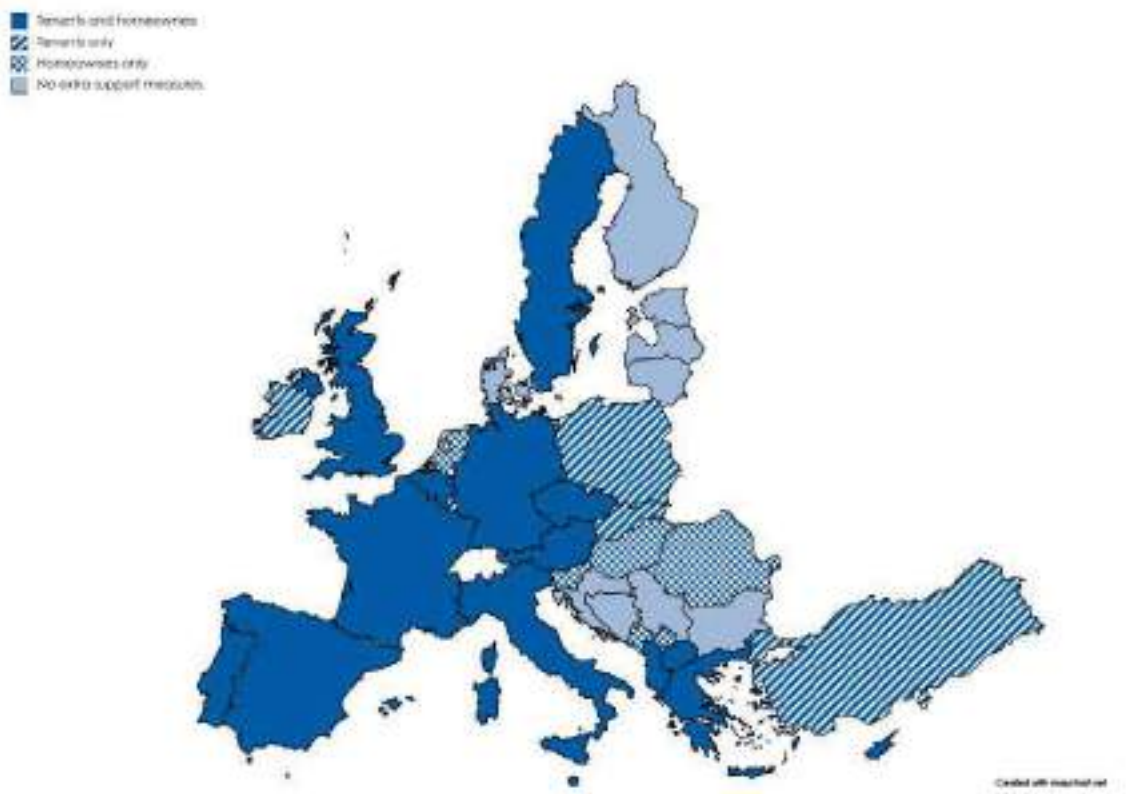
Two ESPN country teams (DE, NL) report other forms of housing assistance during the pandemic which do not necessarily fall into the four categories presented in Table 7.1. These measures aim at strengthening households' capacity to pay housing costs, either by changing the eligibility criteria (DE) for existing social benefit schemes or by introducing temporary housing cost support (NL).

The situation in Finland – not represented in Table 7.1 or in Figure 7.1 – significantly differs from that of other ESPN countries which adopted extra support measures in response to COVID-19. The ESPN Finnish country team argues that there was no need to introduce changes in the housing allowance system, which performed rather well in buffering the negative economic effects of the pandemic, providing effective and comprehensive support to both tenants and home owners. As regards support for the homeless, the Housing First policy applied in Finland was also effective during the pandemic.

7.1 Policy responses to the crisis: protecting renters' rights and providing mortgage relief

Whereas in most countries national ESPN experts report the provision of extra housing support measures targeting both tenants and homeowners as a temporary response to the impact of COVID-19, in a smaller number of countries the descriptions provided by ESPN country teams reveal more targeted support, i.e. either directed at tenants or at homeowners. ESPN national experts from 12 EU countries (AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FR, IT, MT, PT, SE), as well as those from the UK, Albania and North Macedonia, report the provision of support and protection measures targeting both tenants and homeowners. In four EU countries (IE, LU, PL, SK) and in Turkey, support was provided to tenants; and in four EU countries (HU, NL, RO, SI) and two non-EU countries (ME, XK), it was only available for homeowners. Figure 7.1 maps the ESPN countries, showing this differentiated focus.

Figure 7.1: Mapping of measures aiming to support and protect tenants, homeowners or both, ESPN countries



*Source: **Authors' own elaboration based on** ESPN national reports.*

In general, most governments reacted quickly in implementing temporary measures to protect tenants and provided mortgage relief to homeowners, although a comparative analysis of the information provided in the national reports shows a quicker and more widespread introduction of support and protection measures targeting tenants during the early stage of the pandemic, lockdown measures and restrictions, i.e. from 1 March to 30 April 2020.

7.1.1 Support for tenants

ESPN national experts identify different types of housing support measures aimed at protecting tenants and ensuring their security of tenure during a period of high eviction risk. Bans on evictions from rental housing are the most common measure reported (Table 7.2), followed by rent freezes or reductions. The category "other forms of housing assistance" groups together different types of subsidies and allowances introduced to support low-income tenants facing financial difficulties in paying their rent, or to prevent possible inability to afford housing costs in the context of the pandemic, given its negative impact on households' income.

Table 7.2: Grouping of countries according to the types of measures implemented to protect and support tenants, ESPN countries

Ban on evictions from rental housing	Lease duration flexibility
AT, BE, CY, DE, ES, FR, IE, IT, LU, PL, PT UK	DE, PT, SK
Rent payment deferrals	**Rent increase freeze/rent reduction**
AT, ES, PT AL, MK	BE, CY, CZ, EL, IE, LU
Other forms of housing assistance	
BE, FR, EL, ES, IE, IT, LU, MT, PL, SE UK, TR	

Note: Several answers possible. Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

According to ESPN experts, many governments, as well as judicial authorities, have imposed temporary bans or moratoria on evictions, which were largely new measures applied in the entire national territory. These bans were introduced typically during March 2020 and, in most cases, have subsequently been extended. In many countries, new legislation was put in place to protect households facing substantial reductions in income, vulnerable households with no other housing alternative, low-income tenants, and people who received eviction orders, among other groups at risk. Table 7.3 summarises the main features of the temporary bans or moratoria on evictions reported by ESPN national experts.

Table 7.3: Beneficiaries of eviction bans and level of implementation of the measure, ESPN countries

	EU countries											Non-EU countries
	AT	BE	CY	DE	ES	FR	IE	IT	LU	PL	PT	UK
Targeted beneficiaries												
Tenants affected by substantial reduction of income due to COVID-19	√			√	√							
Tenants facing eviction orders		√	√					√		√*		
All tenants with rent arrears						√	√					√*
Unemployed people					√							
Vulnerable people (with no proven housing alternative)					√							
All tenants									√		√	
Implementation level												
National	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Subnational		√										

*Note: *Perpetrators of domestic violence were not covered by the ban on evictions. Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.*

Eviction bans or moratoria mostly targeted tenants facing difficulties paying their rent, although the definition of the targeted population varies between countries. In all countries, these bans apply to the whole national territory, even if there are differences across regions (e.g. BE). All national experts report on the novel nature of these measures which, in all cases, have been introduced on a temporary basis (with the exception of France). The examples below illustrate some of the main features of the measures introduced:

- The national expert for Austria reports that terminations of a rental contract for a dwelling and evictions enacted by the courts are suspended until the end of June 2022; this measure applies to tenants affected by a substantial reduction of income and substantial financial difficulties due to COVID-19 who, as a consequence, are eligible for a temporary reduction or suspension of rent payments.
- In France, the existing prohibition on evicting tenants during winter time (from 1 November to 31 March originally) is extended to all tenants who stopped paying their rent during the winter months. In winter 2019-2020, it was initially extended until 31 May 2020, and later extended until 10 July 2020. In winter 2020-2021, it has been extended up to 1 June 2021.
- The "Cure Italy Decree" suspended the enforcement of eviction orders, in both residential and non-residential buildings, for all tenants; the suspension was originally in force from 17 March to 30 June 2020 and was later extended by subsequent legislative interventions until 30 June 2021.
- The Spanish ESPN country team reports on the introduction of new legislation which halted evictions for non-payment of rent until the end of the state of emergency on 9 May 2021; the ban applies to vulnerable households (and not only to people affected by COVID-19) with no proven housing alternative, on the condition that the person who is responsible for the payment of the rent is unemployed, is a beneficiary of the "Programme for Temporary Adjustment of Employment" (ERTE) or has faced a substantial loss of income.

Some ESPN national experts (e.g. AT, IE) highlight that this form of short-term protection for tenants does not imply any type of debt forgiveness. Rents in arrears will have to be paid once these temporary measures come to an end, in many cases in the near future. In other countries (e.g. PT), tenants demonstrating a loss of household income (25% or more) may require conversion of part of the loan into grant assistance - i.e. they may need to be exempted from reimbursing part of the loan.

In Germany, Portugal and Slovakia new temporary mechanisms were introduced aiming at extending the limitation period of lease contracts, in case of rent arrears, usually in conjunction with a ban on eviction (DE, PT):

- In Germany, from 27 March 2020, landlords may not terminate a lease contract – for a period of 24 months – due to rent arrears from the period 1 April to 30 June 2020; a tenant/lessee whose income was negatively affected by the pandemic can only be evicted if they have not paid off the arrears by 30 June 2022.
- The national expert for Portugal reports that the ban on the termination of lease contracts implemented in March 2020 applies to all lease contracts, unless the tenant does not object to the termination; additionally, the law foresees suspension of the effects of revocation and opposition to renewal of lease contracts by landlords, and is thus a temporary suspension of existing landlords' rights.
- The Slovak ESPN country team also reports a suspension of termination of lease contracts, on the condition that tenants declare that the delays in payment are related to the pandemic; as in Germany, this ban does not suspend the responsibility to pay financial obligations related to the rental contract.

In Austria, Portugal and Spain, as well as in Albania and North Macedonia, ESPN national experts report that governments put in place new national mechanisms enabling tenants affected by the economic downturn provoked by COVID-19 to postpone the payment of their rent, usually for a specific period of time. For example:

- In Spain, vulnerable households whose income was affected by the pandemic and with no proven housing alternative may postpone rent payment for the duration of the state of emergency, for a maximum of four months. If the rent is not paid, the contract is extended until 31 January 2021 and an additional extraordinary extension of six months may be approved if requested by the tenant and accepted by the landlord.
- In North Macedonia, the rent payment deferral was introduced only for the months of April and May 2020 for particularly vulnerable categories of tenants living in social housing (e.g. those entitled to guaranteed minimum assistance, single parents with underage children, persons belonging to the Roma community and socially vulnerable people).

In six EU countries (BE, CY, CZ, EL, IE, LU) new measures were introduced to reduce and/or freeze housing rents for a limited period of time, to alleviate the burden of housing costs. These measures apply to the whole country and may target different categories of tenants:

- In Belgium, rent reduction is limited to tenants of social housing – with differences among the regions – and has to be negotiated with the housing companies.
- In Cyprus, all tenants are eligible for a rent reduction; this protection is conditional on landlords accepting tax credits, which are granted if they agree to reduce the rent by between 30% and 50% for a specific number of months.
- In Czechia and Luxembourg, bans on rent increases apply to all tenants, and apply to 20% and 30% of all households, respectively.
- In Greece, the mandatory 40% reduction in monthly rents between March and October 2020 (later extended – with some modifications – to April 2021), applies to specific categories of

tenants (i.e. employees working in businesses which were obliged to suspend operations, employees whose labour contracts were suspended, and the children of these two categories who are students living in rented residences).

- In Ireland, the rent freeze targets low-income tenants in the large Irish private rented sector, including all forms of rental accommodation. It was initially introduced as a general rent freeze. After August 2020, it moved to a more tailored time-limited rent freeze, i.e. only tenants who are unable to pay their rent and are, or have been at any time between 9 March 2020 and 10 January 2021 (subsequently 12 July 2021), in receipt of COVID-19-specific welfare support from the state can have their rent frozen up to 10 January 2021 (subsequently extended to 12 July 2021, with some slight modifications).

Ten ESPN national experts from EU countries (BE, FR, EL, ES, IE, IT, LU, MT, PL, SE) as well as the UK and Turkey country teams report the introduction of various types of support measures aimed at helping households facing financial difficulties in paying their rent, or at preventing situations in which households cannot afford housing costs in the context of the pandemic (Table 7.4).

Table 7.4: Types of housing assistance, showing the targeted beneficiaries and level of implementation, ESPN countries

	EU countries										UK & other non-EU countries	
Types of support	BE	FR	EL	ES	IE	IT	LU	MT	PL	SE	UK	TR
Rent subsidy/ supplement/extension	√		√		√		√	√	√			
One-off housing allowance	√	√										
Adjustment to housing benefit										√	√	
Temporary loans	√			√								
Indirect support through increased funds to local authorities						√						
Social housing at subsidised rates												√
Targeted beneficiaries												
Tenants affected by substantial reduction of income due to COVID-19	√			√	√				√			
Unemployed people								√				
Low-income tenants			√	√		√	√				√	
Specific groups*										√		√
Implementation level												
National		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Subnational	√											√

*Note: * Families with children entitled to housing allowance in Sweden and newlyweds and older people in Turkey.*
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

Overall, ESPN national experts widely report the adoption of temporary rent subsidies (or extensions of existing benefits) or allowances aimed at supporting tenants negatively affected by the pandemic and facing problems paying their rent. For instance:

- In Belgium, people on a low income finding it difficult to pay their rent on the private housing market in Brussels-Capital Region may receive financial support through a rent subsidy, whereas the Walloon Region introduced an exceptional temporary zero-percent loan, covering a maximum of six months' rent, to be paid back over a maximum of 36 months.
- In March 2020, the Maltese government introduced a rent subsidy which is available to individuals who lose their job and cannot pay their rent.
- In April 2020, a microcredit programme was approved in Spain in order to finance, partially or fully, a tenant's rental costs. The financial aid may be up to a maximum monthly amount of €900 for a period of up to six months. The maximum loan to be granted is €5,400 per tenant at zero interest. This programme has been extended until the end of 2021.
- The UK national experts refer to a temporary adjustment to housing benefit for private renters on low incomes, including those affected by the pandemic, enabling increased entitlements in real terms, allowing more people to cover the full rent.

The ESPN Turkish country team refers to a different type of support measure introduced at the local level: since February 2021, the municipality of Ankara has provided social housing units, for €12 per month, to a limited number of newlyweds and the elderly.

7.1.2 Providing mortgage relief to households affected by the pandemic

Several countries have introduced temporary measures to protect mortgage payers from the negative impact of loss of income resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The most common form of support to mortgage payers is the introduction of mortgage payment deferrals, as illustrated by Table 7.5.

Table 7.5: Grouping of countries according to the types of measures implemented to protect and support homeowners, ESPN countries

Ban on repossessions	Mortgage payment deferrals
ES UK	AT, BE, CZ, HU, IT, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK UK, AL, BA, ME, MK, XK
Other forms of housing assistance	
CY, EL, FR, MT	

Note: Several answers possible. Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

ESPN experts from only two countries (ES, UK) report specific bans on repossessions, extending residents' rights and protection, although on a temporary basis. In Spain, for example, the measure consisted of an extension of the existing suspension of repossessions (now extended up to May 2024), and the introduction of less strict eligibility criteria (e.g. single parent families with only one child are now covered).

The introduction of mortgage payment deferrals is clearly the most common protection measure targeting homeowners, preventing excessive housing-related debt at a time of increased risks of financial difficulties. 11 EU countries (AT, BE, CZ, HU, IT, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK), the UK and five other non-EU countries (AL, BA, ME, MK, XK) provide examples of national-level measures (also subnational in the case of BE) introducing mortgage payment deferrals or "mortgage holidays". Table 7.6 provides an overview of the groups targeted by these deferrals and the foreseen date of termination of these temporary postponements.

Table 7.6: Beneficiaries of mortgage payment deferrals and end date of deferral, ESPN countries

	EU-countries											UK and other non -EU countries					
	AT	BE	CZ	HU	IT	NL	PT	RO	SE	SI	SK	UK	AL	BA	ME	MK	XK
Targeted beneficiaries																	
Borrowers affected by substantial reduction in income (due to COVID-19)	√	√				√	√	√				√	√	√	√		√
All borrowers			√	√					√	√	√a					√	
Employees/ self-employed affected by loss of income					√		√										
End date of mortgage deferral								√b			√c						
Q3 2020			√										√				
Q4 2020		√			√												√
Q1 2021	√					√										√	
Q2 2021				√													
Q3 2021							√		√			√			√		
Q4 2021					√					√				√			

Notes: (a) With the exception of debtors with delayed mortgage payments (more than 30 days). (b) No exact date foreseen. Payment may be deferred by up to nine months and deferral may be requested until 15 March 2021. (c) Until the end of the emergency measures. Q1 2020 refers to the first quarter of 2020; Q4 2021 to the fourth quarter of 2021.
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

These temporary delays in the payment of households' mortgage obligations target either borrowers in financial difficulties or all borrowers applying for a deferral. In nine of the 17 ESPN countries which introduced these measures, the moratorium has either ended or is scheduled to expire by the end of June 2021.

The descriptions provided by ESPN national experts reveal that these are mostly imposed moratoria, i.e. they result from legislation or mandatory decisions by national regulatory authorities, allowing borrowers to defer their payments (e.g. BE, CZ, HU, SI; AL, BA, MK). On the other hand, the country team for the Netherlands reports a different measure: voluntary moratoria adopted by banks with government approval, for which the maximum payment break duration may vary from bank to bank.

The initial length of mortgage payment deferrals ranges from three months (MK) to 12 months (SI). In North Macedonia, for example, the provisions related to the duration of mortgage moratoria have been revisited and extended, from 1 April to 30 June 2020 and then from 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, both entities extended the duration of mortgage moratoria and the mortgage payment deferrals twice - in the autumn of 2020 and at the beginning of 2021. The latter extension makes it possible for banks to negotiate moratoria until the end of June 2021 and to apply mortgage payment deferrals until the end of 2021.

The proportion of mortgage holders making use of these temporary moratoria[51] ranges from less than 1% in the Netherlands to more than 50% in Hungary and in Italy. The ESPN national expert for Romania reports that, by June 2020, a total of about 25% of all mortgage holders had resorted to this deferral of payments; in the UK, by November 2020, 23% of mortgage holders or 2.6 million households had made use of holidays, which mostly lasted for six months.

ESPN national experts in four EU countries (CY, FR, EL, MT) report the adoption of other types of support measures also available to mortgage holders:

- In Cyprus, financial support is granted to households with new mortgages on primary residences, by subsidising their interest rate payments up to a certain level – only for loans not exceeding €300,000 and up to a maximum of four years.
- France introduced a one-off housing allowance to facilitate mortgage repayments, for new homeowners who have undergone a drop in income of at least 15%, and for whom housing expenditure amounts to more than 33% of their income.
- In Greece, a means-tested temporary mortgage instalment subsidy – of up to 90% of their monthly instalment for up to nine months – is available for vulnerable debtors who have a mortgage on their primary residence and have been financially negatively affected by the COVID-19 crisis.
- A reduction of the taxes on the final sale and stamp duty on immovable property was introduced in Malta, for the first €400,000, on contracts published by the end of March 2021, targeting all households.

7.2 Strengthening responses to homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis

In seven EU countries (BE, DK, FR, HR, LU, PL, SK) and in the UK, ESPN national experts highlight the introduction of exceptional measures to temporarily house, isolate and protect people living in homelessness. The descriptions provided show that the pandemic led to a number of actions, including the use of hotels or additional emergency accommodation solutions aimed at taking significant numbers of people sleeping rough off the streets. In some countries, governments provided extra funding for the provision of homelessness services. For example:

- In March 2020, the federal government in Belgium provided extra funding to ensure continuity in the reception centres in Brussels beyond the normal winter operation period (from end November until 31 March), ensuring all-year round opening.
- In Denmark, in February 2021, the Parliament adopted a national homelessness support package of €1.1 million and an additional €336,000 to shelters in Copenhagen. Copenhagen Municipality also gave €403,500 to cafés and clubs providing support to homeless people.
- The ESPN Slovak national experts report increased support to social services for homeless people delivered at the central as well as local level, strengthening the operational capacity of night shelters, and also increasing municipalities' resources to provide the necessary support to homeless people affected by COVID-19.

[51] Information on the proportion of beneficiaries making use of these temporary mortgage payment deferrals is available in only a very limited number of ESPN countries, as described in this paragraph.

In March 2020, the UK Government introduced the "Everyone In" policy, which used mostly hotels (and temporary accommodation) to place around 15,000 people who were sleeping rough or who were seen as being at risk of sleeping rough. "Everyone in" has set a new standard for England, by rapidly providing a large number of self-contained homes for single rough sleepers (see Box 2).

Box 2: "Everyone in" – *a policy window for ending rough sleeping on a permanent basis in England?*

At the start of the pandemic, there was widespread concern that rough sleepers could not self-isolate - and might infect others. In March 2020, the UK Government started a programme to provide self-contained and permanent homes for rough sleepers, without any intermediate period in shared and temporary homes. By September 2020, 11,000 former rough sleepers were in emergency accommodation and 19,000 were in settled accommodation. Over February-May 2020, "Everyone in" prevented an estimated 266 COVID-19 deaths, 1,092 infections, 1,164 hospital admissions and 338 intensive care admissions. As the first lockdown eased, it was not clear whether use of shared accommodation and normal eligibility restrictions should resume. "Everyone in" was described by the NGO Shelter as "one of the most extraordinary things to have ever happened in homelessness in this country", and is seen by many as one of the strongest parts of the government's COVID-19 response. In January 2021, as a third national lockdown began in England, there were calls for "Everyone in" to be restarted.

Source: ESPN national report.

8 ESSENTIAL SERVICES: ENHANCED ACCESS

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted gaps in people's right to access essential services such as water, energy and digital communications. Several ESPN national experts emphasise the adoption of measures which aim at mitigating the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic to ensure that people living on low incomes and other vulnerable groups are not prevented from accessing these crucial services.

Table 8.1: Support measures to facilitate access to essential services and targeted beneficiaries, ESPN countries

	EU countries						UK and other non-EU countries					
	BE	CY	IE	LT	PT	SI	UK*	AL	ME	MK	RS	XK
Essential services												
Water	√				√		√				√	
Energy	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
Digital communications					√		√				√	
Type of support												
New/increased subsidy	√								√			
Extended eligibility/duration	√									√		
Payment deferral/reduction		√		√	√	√	√	√			√	√
Ban on disconnections	√		√		√		√		√			
Targeted beneficiaries											**	
People on low incomes			√	√					√			
People in arrears								√				
People affected by substantial reduction of income due to COVID-19			√		√		√					
Social assistance beneficiaries	√		√	√					√	√		
People in temporary unemployment	√											
All domestic consumers		√			√	√						√
Is the measure new?												
New			√		√	√		√			√	√
Adjustment of an existing measure	√	√		√			√		√	√		

*Note: * In the UK, most of these measures have been put in practice by the private sector. **Targeted beneficiaries varied between local communities. In some all residents were covered, in others only pensioners and people aged 65 or older.*
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

Several countries have implemented support measures in this area, targeting specific groups of people whose incomes are being particularly affected by the pandemic (e.g. people who have become temporarily unemployed as a result of COVID-19 and had a major income loss). This section examines all support measures relating to access to essential services.

ESPN national experts from six EU countries (BE, CY, IE, LT, PT, SI) as well as from the UK and five other non-EU countries (AL, ME, MK, RS, XK) identify various support measures providing protection to vulnerable consumers. In some countries, governments adopted measures to ensure uninterrupted access to water, energy and digital communications while, in others, additional help was granted to increase households' ability to pay the costs of utility services. Table 8.1 provides an overview of the measures introduced, showing the different types of service covered and the main target beneficiaries.

The strong focus in most of these ESPN countries (11 out of the 12) is on measures to protect access to energy during the pandemic, which seems to echo reports of difficulties accessing energy services which existed prior to the pandemic, particularly among people on low incomes (Baptista and Marlier 2020). For example:

- The ESPN national experts for Belgium report the introduction of new regional one-off subsidies for energy (and water) available to people who have been in temporary unemployment, as well as a (temporary[52]) extension of the status of "protected client", eligible for the lower social tariff, to all households under a certain income threshold, and not only to people on minimum income benefits.
- In Lithuania, people on low incomes had the possibility of deferring the payment of electricity and gas bills, through individual arrangements with public providers, and also to receive compensation for domestic heating costs; the latter support was also available to social assistance beneficiaries.
- The ESPN national expert for Albania refers to an amnesty on all debt interest payments owed to the Electricity Distribution Operator (OSHEE) as of December 2019, which applies to consumers in arrears, as long as they reach an agreement on debt payment with OSHEE.

Experts from Belgium and Portugal, as well as from the UK and Serbia, also report support measures facilitating access to water. In addition, experts from Portugal, the UK and Serbia mention support in the area of digital communications. For example:

- Portugal established a ban, between April and September 2020 (later repeated for the first half of 2021), on interrupting the supply of digital communications, as well as an option to cancel telecommunication contracts unilaterally without the need to compensate the supplier. These measures apply to households unable to pay due to COVID-19 infection, unemployment or a drop in household income of at least 20%.

Deferral and/or reduction of the costs of utility services is the main mechanism put in place to support domestic consumers (reported by CY, LT, PT, SI, as well as the UK, AL, RS and XK). A few experts (BE, IE, and PT, as well as the UK and ME) (also) mention bans on disconnecting energy services. For instance:

- The ESPN national expert for Ireland reports the introduction, in March 2020, of a ban on disconnections of domestic customers for non-payment to gas and electricity suppliers. This measure targets the low-income population and people who could make a case that COVID-19 affected their ability to pay for their utilities.

[52] The extension at national level is permanent.

Overall, the targeted beneficiaries of all these additional support measures were people living on low incomes, either before the COVID-19 crisis or as a consequence of the impact of the pandemic. In a few cases (CY, PT and SI, as well as XK), some of the new support measures applied to all consumers of the utility service in question. For example:

- In Cyprus, there was a 10% universal reduction in the electricity consumption billing price, which applied for four months.
- In Kosovo, the Law on Economic Recovery (Article 15) introduced an energy consumption subsidy targeting all households in the country, and applying to the share of energy consumption originating from renewable resources; the measure is in place between 1 January 2021 and 31 May 2021.

Finally, it is important to mention that, according to ESPN national experts, support measures to facilitate access to essential services during the pandemic were a mix of new initiatives and adjustments to existing support (Table 8.1). In addition, all countries were relatively quick to implement support measures to cushion the impact of COVID-19 on households with regard to access to utility services. In 10 out of the 12 ESPN countries introducing support measures in this area (Table 8.1), the measures were implemented in either March or April 2020.

9 COVID-19 LEAVE FOR WORKING PARENTS: MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO CHILDCARE AND SCHOOL CLOSURES

In order to stop the spread of COVID-19, it has been common practice in most countries to impose the closure of ECEC services as well as schools during the various waves of the pandemic, affecting millions of children and their families around Europe. Given social distancing measures, the sharing of childcare with (extended) family members, neighbours and friends has also been limited in most countries. Most families have therefore had to take care of their children themselves. This has put a lot of pressure on those parents trying to balance work and family obligations. In this context, many countries introduced special leave provisions. These measures have been labelled differently in the countries (additional days off, corona leave, special leave for childcare, care time etc.) and have taken different forms (leave, reduction of working time etc.). This section reviews the various parental leave arrangements introduced in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to support parents affected by the closure of early childhood education and care and schools. As used here, "parental leaves" is a general category, reflecting the variation in how countries responded to childcare and education needs generated for parents by lockdown of schools and ECEC facilities. The category covers countries which introduced legally constituted, new "corona leave", as well as those which adjusted existing parenting-related or sickness leave, and some which made caring for children as a result of the pandemic legitimate grounds for access to additional income support or income compensation.

At EU-27 level, 21 Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, SE) have implemented parental leave arrangements in the context of COVID-19, targeting parents unable to provide childcare as both are employed, during the closure of schools and childcare facilities. In the six remaining Member States (DK[53] EE[54], HR, IE, HU, NL), no such measures were taken (Figure 9.1).

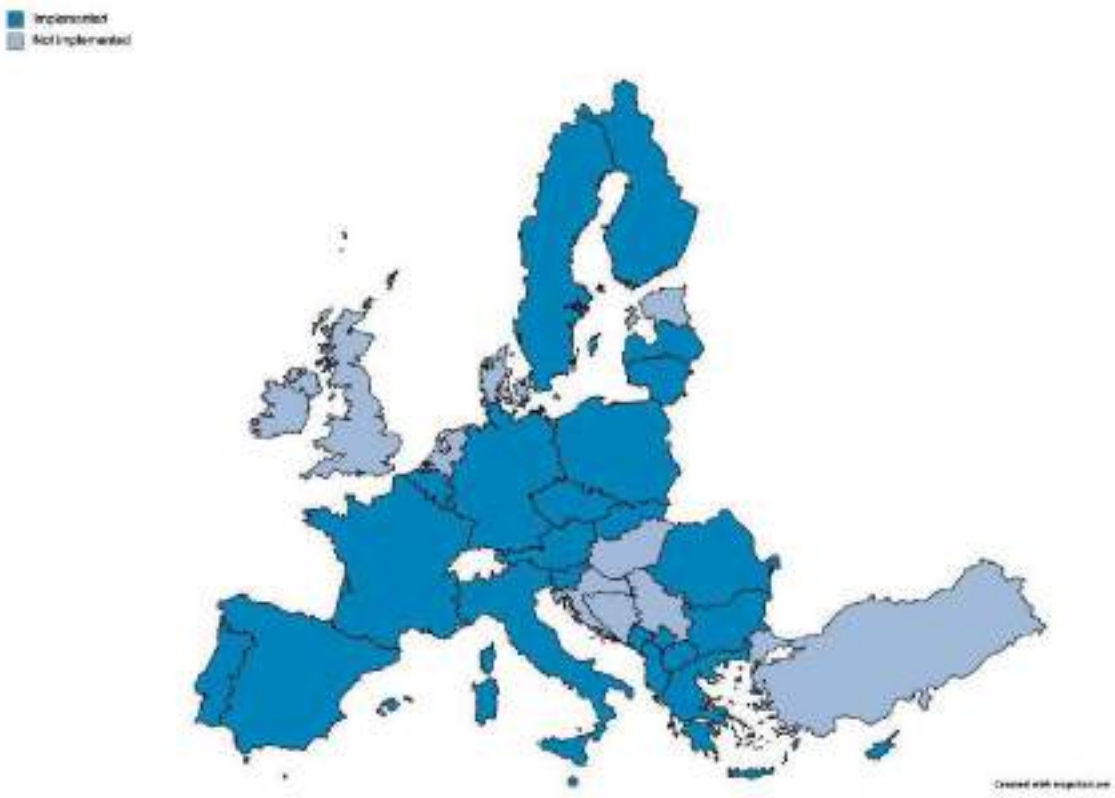
Some Member States (e.g. EL, IT) have also opted for alternative solutions to leave. For instance:

- In Greece, working parents may agree with their employer to reduce their daily working hours (by up to 25%) without a corresponding reduction in their wage. Instead, they are employed overtime on other working days at a time agreed between the parties, without overtime pay.
- In Italy, a lump-sum childminding subsidy of €1,200 was provided as an alternative to parental leave, with healthcare workers entitled to €2,000.

[53] In Denmark, the main instrument to help parents who are unable to care for their children, who are at home due to closed ECEC and schools, has not been to provide the parents with leave but to provide their children with emergency ECEC and schools.

[54] In Estonia, measures have been taken only for parents of children with special needs.

Figure 9.1: Mapping of countries which have implemented specific COVID-19 parental leave arrangements, ESPN countries



Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

In most Member States (e.g. AT, BE, CY, FI, EL, ES, MT, PT, PL, RO, SI, SK), the schemes were newly introduced in the context of the pandemic. In some other countries (e.g. CZ, DE[55], LT, LU), the leave arrangements were an extension or an amendment of an existing measure[56]. Generally, the duration of these benefits corresponded to the lockdown period, which varied from country to country, but in some cases the measures were extended until the end of 2020 (e.g. MT), or even beyond (e.g. AT, BE (also for the self-employed), CY, CZ, DE, FR, DE, ES, LT, LU, LV, RO, SI). Initially adopted in response to the closure of schools and childcare facilities, some of these measures have been extended in the event of a child being quarantined, irrespective of whether schools were closed (e.g. AT, CZ, LT, LU, LV, SI, SK).

[55] In Germany, two alternative solutions have been developed in response to the pandemic, the so-called "Corona Children's Sickness Benefit" (a modification of an existing scheme) and the "Compensation for Loss of Earnings" under Section 55 of the "Infection Protection Act" (a new scheme).

[56] In Czechia, extensions to the caregiver's allowance modified the existing and traditional social benefit, but added a new aspect by including the self-employed in the target group; in Germany, the leave and associated social benefit scheme (Compensation for loss of earnings under the Infection Protection Act) involves a temporary extension of the scope of protection of the Infection Protection Act; although parental leave to care for sick children existed before in the Luxembourg legislation and had just been reformed in 2018, other reasons for parental leave were newly included because of the pandemic.

As for non-EU countries, in the UK, no specific parental leave arrangement has been implemented in response to the pandemic. However, employees in the private sector are eligible for furlough under the Coronavirus job retention scheme if they cannot work "due to caring responsibilities resulting from coronavirus". This can include childcare when children cannot attend school or childcare provision because of COVID-19 (see Section 3 on the job retention scheme). Four candidate and potential candidate countries (AL, ME, MK, XK) have implemented leave arrangements to support working parents. In Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia, these measures were completely new, while in Kosovo working parents could already claim a day off to take care of a sick child, but the measure has been extended, adding further potential reasons for leave and extending its duration. Turkey opted for an alternative option, by providing full-time female government employees whose children are younger than ten years old with a right to work from home, while the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Government and the Brčko District Government only issued a recommendation to employers and employees to shorten working hours, organise shifts to prevent the gathering of workers, and where possible organise work from home (only implemented in the public sector).

Table 9.1 summarises the parental leave arrangements organised in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. It shows considerable variation across the 35 countries in terms of the eligibility conditions, targeted population and compensation rates.

Table 9.1 Specific COVID leave arrangements for parents in the 35 ESPN countries

		AT	BE	BG	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	EL	ES	FI	FR	HR	HU	IE	IT	LT	LU	LV	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SE	SI	SK	UK	AL	BA	ME	MK	RS	TR	XK
Eligibility conditions																																				
Child's age								None	None					None	None	None						None							None		None			None	None	
Up to 12			√		√	√a	√			√		√						√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√	√				√	√			
13 to 16		√		√	√	√				√			√				√				√															
No teleworking		√			√								√				√	√			√				√	√										
Restrictions related to individual or household income				√	√		√													√			√												
Target population*																																				
Employees	EU countries	√	√	√	√h	√	√			√	√	√	√				√	√	√	√	√h		√	√	√h	√	√	√		√d		√	√			√e
Non-standard workers		√	√		√					√	√		√				√		√	√	√		√i			√	√				√	√			
Specific non-standard workers						√	√																√	√												
Self-employed			√			√	√						√				√	√	√	√			√	√		√	√	√				√	√			
Compensation rate																																				
Fully paid		√								√			√c						√											NA		√	√			√
% of previous earnings			v		√	√	√										√	√		√			√	√	√	√	√	√		NA						
Flat rate			√			√b						√									√						√b			NA						
Unpaid				√g							√																										
		AT	BE	BG	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	EL	ES	FI	FR	HR	HU	IE	IT	LT	LU	LV	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	SE	UK	AL	BA	ME	MK	RS	TR	XK

Notes: (*) "Non-standard workers" include part-time, fixed-term and temporary agency workers. "Specific non-standard workers" include some country-specific and job-specific categories of non-standard workers such as workers on civil contracts, zero-hours workers and domestic workers. (a) In CZ the age limit is 10 for the crisis caregiver's allowance; 13 for the caregiver's allowance extension. (b) A flat rate is applied only for the self-employed. (c) 14 days of leave have been fully paid since 1 September 2020. (d) In Albania, only workers in the central and local public administration were eligible for the paid leave. (e) Except health workers and workers in the security sector. (f) For Bulgaria, information provided is related to the assistance for parents taking unpaid leave due to a state of emergency. (g) The leave is unpaid but parents are provided with a one-off allowance (approx. €200). (h) Only for private sector employees.
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the ESPN national reports. (i) If covered by sickness insurance.

9.1 Eligibility conditions

Special parental leave arrangements have in most cases been available to parents with children aged up to 12 (e.g. BE, DE, FI, PT, RO, SK, SI, SE; ME, MK), although the age limit was much lower in Czechia (up to 10), Latvia (up to 10) and Poland (up to 8) and higher (from 13 to 16) in Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg and Malta. In some cases, leave could be used to care for an older disabled child (e.g. AT, BE, CZ, DE, EL, FR, LT, LU, LV, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK). For instance, in Luxembourg, parents of children with disabilities are eligible for corona parental leave without any age limit. In Cyprus, parents of children with disabilities are entitled to special paid leave regardless of the age of their children. In Poland, the scheme covers parents of a child or young person up to 16 years old with a disability certificate, up to 18 years old with a certificate of severe or moderate disability, or up to 24 years of age with a special education certificate.

In a significant number of countries (e.g. CY, DE[57], FR, IT, LV, MT, PT), parents whose jobs allow them to work remotely were explicitly excluded from these schemes.

Several countries included restrictions based on the income status of the individual parent (or the household), to rule out "double income support"[58]. For instance:

- In Cyprus, if one parent is working and the other is not (e.g. (s)he is receiving an unemployment allowance, a special unemployment allowance, sickness allowance or an allowance for any other similar reasons), the working parent is not entitled to special leave at that time, unless the non-working parent has himself/herself been infected with COVID-19, is in mandatory quarantine, is hospitalised or is a person with a disability.
- In Finland, neither laid-off nor unemployed parents nor those who were on maternity, paternity, parental or care leave were entitled to the temporary financial assistance.
- In Latvia, the benefit is not paid if the parent receives sickness benefit, parental benefit, maternity benefit, paternity benefit and/or a downtime allowance.
- In Poland, the care allowance for parents forced to stay at home to mind (pre-)school children is not paid if the other parent is unemployed or on maternity, parental or childcare leave.

9.2 Targeted population: towards a better inclusion of non-standard workers and self-employed

In most cases the schemes are broad in scope and are available to other groups of workers beyond employees. In a few Member States (e.g. EL, MT, RO), they are somewhat less comprehensive in scope: available only to employees (in both private and public sectors in Greece), or only to private sector employees (e.g. CY, MT, RO).

In Austria and in Belgium, temporary agency workers are eligible for the leave. The same is true in a few countries for part-time workers (e.g. AT, BE (but employees working less than 75% of full-time working hours are excluded), CY, FR, LV, PL) and for fixed-term workers (e.g. AT, BE, CY). Some specific categories of non-standard workers have been included in some countries (e.g. CZ, PL, PT). For instance:

- In Czechia, employees working on the basis of a so-called "agreement to complete a job" (DPP) or an "agreement to perform a task" (DPČ) can now draw a caregiver's allowance.

[57] This applies only in the case of the "Compensation for Loss of Earnings", not the "Corona Children's Sickness Benefit".

[58] On these restrictions, see also Spasova *et al.* 2021.

- In Poland, holders of mandate contracts (freelancers) covered by the public sick leave insurance scheme are also included.
- Domestic workers are included in Portugal.

In 13 EU Member States (BE, CZ, DE[59], FR, IT, LU, LT, LV, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK), the self-employed also have access to the specific leave arrangements, subject to conditions. For instance:

- In Belgium, self-employed people paying social contributions, both those whose self-employment is their main occupation and those for whom it is a complementary activity, who have to reduce their activity to take care of their children are eligible for the corona leave.
- In Italy, the leave for the care of minors, available during the period when educational services for children and educational activities in schools are suspended, is open to self-employed workers registered with the *Istituto Nazionale Previdenza Sociale (INPS)*.
- In Poland, the additional care allowance connected to the closure of ECEC services and schools is also available to self-employed workers if they are insured for illness.
- Since September 2020, the self-employed in Slovenia have been entitled to a partial reimbursement of foregone income while unable to work due to a child's quarantine or care for a child as a consequence of quarantine or strictly restricted kindergarten or school attendance (or kindergarten or school closure) if they are not receiving a basic monthly income (another COVID-19 related measure).

In the candidate and potential candidate countries, the situation is the following:

- In Albania, only workers in the central and local public administration were eligible for the paid leave, but private employers were invited to provide their employees with the same treatment.
- In Kosovo, all public and private sector employees with children were eligible, except health workers and workers in the security sector.
- In Montenegro, all working parents, either self-employed or employees (including part-timers) in the public and private sector were eligible for the leave.
- In North Macedonia all employees and self-employed people who have paid their taxes and contributions for 2019, and who were registered in February 2020, were eligible for paid leave to take care of a child during the period of school closure.

9.3 Compensation rate

The specific leave is paid at 100% of previous earnings in Austria, France[60], Luxembourg[61], Greece[62], Kosovo, North Macedonia and Montenegro; flat rates are paid in Belgium (also for the self-employed, up to a ceiling), Finland (€723.5 per month) and Malta (€800 for full-time employees, €500 for part-time employees). In the remaining Member States, the specific leave is paid at an earnings-related rate (up to a ceiling in Cyprus, Germany, Portugal, Romania; no less than the minimum wage in

[59] This applies only in the case of the "Compensation for Loss of Earnings". In the case of "Corona Children's Sickness Benefit", the only (very few) self-employed people who have access are those who are voluntary members of the SHI, have also insured their children in the SHI and pay the highest contribution rate.

[60] Since 1 September 2020, for all types of work status, the replacement rate is 100% of wages with no mandatory waiting period. The payment is made for the following 14 days.

[61] The leave pay is capped at five times the minimum wage (*salaire social minimum (SSM)*). For workers who do not earn the same wage regularly every month, sophisticated calculations have to take place to establish the leave pay. In any case, leave pay cannot be lower than the minimum wage.

[62] The leave is provided for at least four days; two days are fully remunerated by the employer, one is subsidised by the State and one is deducted from the employee's regular annual leave.

Portugal[63] and Slovenia), ranging from 50% to 90% of earnings[64]. It is unpaid in Spain and in Bulgaria[65].

Most countries which included self-employed workers in their parental leave scheme during the COVID-19 pandemic granted the same rate of earnings to employees and the self-employed (e.g. IT, PL). Conversely, a few countries have developed specific leave arrangements, with levels of compensation which differ between employees and the self-employed, with the latter receiving a lower amount:

- In Belgium, self-employed people who have suffered a 100% reduction in activity receive €532.24 per month, €638.69 if their child is disabled, or €1,050 for single parents, while employees on full-time leave receive €1,148 if their child is disabled or if they are single parents.
- In Czechia, while employees are entitled to compensation of 80% of earnings, the self-employed receive a fixed amount (just under €510/month – €15.41 per day).
- In Portugal, leave for the self-employed is paid at one third of earnings, compared to two thirds for employees.
- In Slovenia, while employees receive 80% of their wage, the self-employed are entitled to a compensation of a maximum of €250 for ten days, €500 for 20 days and €750 per month.

In several countries, leave schemes included specific rules for single parents, in terms of either benefits or duration of leave. For instance:

- In Belgium, while the self-employed received €532.24 per month to compensate for a 100% reduction in activity, this compensation was raised to €1,050 for single parents. In addition, single parents can take full-time leave, while other parents only have access to leave of 20% or 50% of full-time work.
- In Cyprus, while the eligible parent receives an allowance of 60% of the first €1,000 of his/her wage and 40% of the other €1,000 (up to €1,000 per month), for single parents the percentages are 70% and 50%, respectively, and the maximum amount of the allowance is €1,200.
- In Czechia, single parents are provided with 16 rather than nine calendar days' leave.
- In Germany, an employed single parent is entitled to 20 weeks of income replacement instead of ten weeks[66].

[63] Only for employees. For the self-employed, the minimum is €438.81 in both 2020 and 2021 (i.e. one Social Support Index).

[64] The earnings-related rate is 50% in Italy; 55% in Slovakia; 60% in Cyprus; 65.94% in Lithuania; 66% in Portugal; 67% in Germany; 75% in Romania; 80% in Czechia, Poland and Slovenia; and 90% in Sweden.

[65] However, in Bulgaria, parents of children up to 12 years of age, who, due to the declared state of emergency, took unpaid leave of at least 20 working days for childcare at home, were entitled to a one-off lump-sum of €200.

[66] In the case of the "Compensation for Loss of Earnings". In the case of the "Corona Children's Sickness Benefit", an employed single parent is entitled to 40 working days per child; if (s)he has more than one child, (s)he is entitled to a maximum of 90 days (before the pandemic, these numbers were 20 and 45 days, respectively).

10 RESPONDING TO OTHER RELEVANT SOCIAL PROTECTION AND INCLUSION SUPPORT NEEDS[67]

In addition to the measures described in previous sections, many ESPN countries introduced a variety of other support measures in response to the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent lockdown restrictions which affected the economy and large sectors of the population. This section provides an overview of those diverse support measures as reported by the 35 ESPN national experts. Table 10.1 groups the main types of measures into different policy areas, according to the description provided.

Table 10.1: Other relevant support measures adopted by ESPN countries, by policy area, ESPN countries

Education and training	Pensions
CY, CZ, DK, FI, HU, MT, NL, SI	CZ, EE, LT, SI XK
Debt alleviation support	**Spending incentives**
CZ, HR, LT, PT, SI ME	LT, MT, PL, SI MK
Other	
LU, SI, SK UK, RS, TR	

Note: Several answers possible. Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

8 out of the 18 EU ESPN country teams (CY, CZ, DK, FI, HU, MT, NL, SI) report various types of education and training support aimed at mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown restrictions on education and training systems. The descriptions provided by the ESPN national experts include the provision of cash assistance to students or trainees, financial support to parents whose children were not able to attend kindergarten facilities, the provision of school meals during school closures, and assistance to mitigate the negative effects of distance learning on the most vulnerable households. For example:

- In Cyprus, the government introduced a special lump-sum allowance of €750 for students studying abroad who could not return to the country during the Easter 2020 period due to the suspension of flights; the measure is estimated to have reached a total of 3,000 students, i.e. 15% of the total number of students studying abroad at the beginning of April 2020.
- In Czechia – where 1.7 million children and young people were affected by school closures for over 20 weeks in 2020 – the Ministry of Education spent €50 million to secure IT resources for schools and their pupils through material support to enable distance learning.
- In Denmark, study loan extensions were granted to students prevented from supplementing their study grant with income from part-time work during the pandemic; out of the 68,000 students eligible, 38,000 students (i.e. 56%) made use of the possibility of taking out extra study loans.
- In Finland, during school closures, various alternative arrangements (e.g. provision to all students, only to children being taught in school buildings or means-tested provision) were

[67] ESPN national experts had the possibility, on a voluntary basis, to report on temporary social protection/inclusion measures adopted in the context of the pandemic which did not fall into any of the categories covered in Sections 1-9 above but which they thought were important. This section provides a short overview of such measures singled out by experts. These measures can therefore belong to a variety of areas. And they should only be seen as examples put forward by some experts although they may also have been adopted in other countries (see for instance Eurydice for measures in the field of education and training, including vocational training and adult learning.

made at the municipal level to compensate for the lack of the regular (universal) provision of free school meals to all school children.

- The "Netherlands keeps on learning" scheme provided subsidies for online career development and training support (e.g. free online classes and career advice).
- The ESPN national expert for Slovenia reports the introduction, in March 2020, of a new measure exempting parents from the payment of kindergarten fees, during the time that their children could not attend childcare services due to the closure of kindergartens.

In Czechia, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Kosovo, the ESPN national experts report support measures related to pensions:

- In Czechia, in December 2020, almost three million pensioners received a one-off pension benefit as compensation for extraordinary expenses associated with the purchase of face masks, disinfectant and other health protection items.
- The ESPN national experts for Estonia report that – between December 2020 and August 2021 - employees could suspend their contributions (2%) to the mandatory funded pension scheme; available data show that approximately 1.4% of eligible employees made use of that temporary suspension (60% of whom were women, and about a third aged 35 to 44).
- In Kosovo, the Government allowed individuals with pension savings in the Kosovo Pension Savings Trust to withdraw 10% of their total savings – with no taxes being levied on withdrawals – with a Government pledge to refinance all sums withdrawn under €999.

Five ESPN country teams from EU Member States (CZ, HR, LT, PT, SI) and Montenegro report the introduction of debt alleviation schemes aimed at helping debtors who have suffered a loss of income and are having difficulties complying with their debt obligations. For example:

- In Croatia, the Finance Agency suspended debt and loan enforcement proceedings between 18 April 2020 and 19 October 2020.
- In late March 2020, the Portuguese government introduced a moratorium on loan repayments for individuals residing in the country and meeting specific conditions (e.g. beneficiaries of COVID-19-related sickness benefit, unemployed people registered with the unemployment services, people experiencing a temporary drop in household income of at least 20% as a result of the pandemic).
- The ESPN national experts for Montenegro report the introduction of a loan repayment moratorium for individuals (and businesses) in all banks, microcredit institutions and Montenegro's Investment Development Fund (IRF) for a period of 90 days, between March and August 2021; available data show that 57,790 individuals – i.e. 50% of those with loans in 2020 – applied for this measure.

Several governments introduced new policies to try to encourage spending (see Table 10.1). The aim is to boost demand for specific services, in order to help sectors that are particularly hard hit (e.g. tourism services), to stimulate overall spending and to help those who have lost income due to the crisis. For example:

- In Lithuania, the government introduced one-off subsidy of €200 for medical staff, to be spent on tourism services between September and November 2020.
- In Malta, in May 2020, €100 cash vouchers were issued to every citizen aged 18 or more, to be spent partly in retail outlets and partly on hospitality services.
- The Polish Tourist Voucher aims to simultaneously provide support to Polish families with children up to age 18 (or older in the case of children with disabilities) and to stimulate demand for tourism-related services (e.g. hotel services or tourist events); available data

show that from 1 August 2020 until 31 December 2020, Polish families used more than 1.1 million vouchers.

- The ESPN national expert for North Macedonia reports the introduction of payment cards – in June (€146) and in December 2020 (€100) – aimed at increasing the consumption of specific goods and services among certain sectors of the population (e.g. pensioners, low-income households, unemployed people, young people, single parents, artists and other workers in cultural activities).

EU country teams from Luxembourg, Slovakia and Slovenia, the UK, Serbia and Turkey report other support measures introduced in response to the pandemic which do not fit into any of the categories identified in Table 10.1. These include support for informal carers or long-term care users and financial support to social care providers, as well as home delivery support services, or the introduction of retail price ceilings on essential goods. For example:

- On 18 March 2020, the Luxembourg government introduced a new leave scheme enabling relatives to take care of an elderly or disabled adult if the structure in charge of that person's formal care provision closed; the measure was extended several times and will be in force until 25 May 2021.
- In Slovakia, social services providers running on-site services could claim a grant aimed at supporting the provision of assistance, which could be used for several purposes, e.g. purchasing protective and hygiene equipment, vitamins and supplements for clients, providing accommodation for staff, and paying salaries to persons working in infectious environments.
- On 15 March 2020, the Serbian government introduced wholesale and retail price ceilings on a selected number of essential food items, personal hygiene products and personal protective equipment.
- In Turkey, since March 2020, essential goods (e.g. food and medicines) are being delivered to the homes of people aged 80 years or more who live alone; additionally, in April and May 2020, people aged 65 or older were given masks.

11 EXPECTED COST OF SOCIAL PROTECTION AND INCLUSION MEASURES

Whenever possible, the ESPN experts have provided data on the actual or expected cost of the measures related to social protection and inclusion covered in this report (absolute figures and/or as a share of 2019 GDP)[68]. It should be noted, however, that this information is not comparable across countries, for several reasons. It is not comparable because the nature of the measures varies a great deal between countries, and even overarching categories such as short-time work schemes, unemployment benefits or sickness protection may include very different measures, which may make accurate comparison impossible. In addition, although some experts provided costs for similar (sets of) measures, the time period over which the expenditure is calculated is not always the same. Finally, there are also differences in expenditure across countries resulting from particular factors. For instance, the share of the population covered by the measures (e.g. share of workers covered by STW and WS) varies a lot between countries and may also vary between the sectors covered, as does the intensity of the emergency measures (full/partial lockdown etc.).

Overall expenditure linked to the social protection and inclusion measures has been provided by ESPN experts for some Member States (such as: Ireland 8.7%, Cyprus 5%, Spain 4.5%, Romania 4.4%, Greece 3.9%, Slovenia 3.5%, Italy 2.7%, Croatia 2.5%, the Netherlands 2.5%, Luxembourg 1.6%, Bulgaria 1.3%, Finland 1%[69], Slovakia 1%[70]), as well as for some non-EU countries (Kosovo 7.1%, Montenegro 6.5%, North Macedonia 2.1%, Turkey 1.2%) (all figures are calculated as a share of 2019 GDP). The most significant expenditure (again as a share of 2019 GDP)[71] has been incurred by job protection measures including STW/WS, measures linked to self-employment and tax- and social contribution-related measures (deferrals, reductions, exemptions; see Table 11.1) [72].

[68] Some experts present expenditure on crisis-related measures as a share of total public or social spending (e.g. DE, RO).

[69] The cost of the ad hoc measures implemented during the pandemic was about 0.4% of 2019 GDP and the additional (direct) cost of the existing schemes about 0.6%.

[70] In summer 2021, Eurostat plans to issue first 2020 expenditure estimates based on the "European System of integrated Social Protection Statistics" (ESSPROS) for a dozen Member States.

[71] Figures on other types of measures are only rarely available and are not included in Table 11.1. We invite interested readers to check for other figures in the ESPN national reports.

[72] These figures are estimates of the direct costs of the COVID-19-related social protection and inclusion measures. There are of course also substantial "indirect costs" linked to the pandemic. For instance, Finland has estimated that these costs (which include the loss of tax revenues, subsidies paid to enterprises and to municipalities, costs caused by the closure of the Uusimaa county and grants to voluntary organisations) correspond to around 6% of 2019 GDP.

Table 11.1: Estimated expenditure related to the main job retention schemes as a share of 2019 GDP in ESPN countries

Country	Short-time work schemes (STW) and wage subsidies (WS); measures linked to self-employment (% GDP 2019)	Tax- and social contribution-related measures (reductions, deferrals, exemptions)
EU countries		
Austria	1.38% (STW) 0.23% (self-employed: Hardship Fund) 0.15% (Fixed Costs Subsidy)	0.28% (reduction of income tax prepayments) 0.62% (deferral of taxes)
Belgium	0.83% in 2020 & 0.22% in 2021 (STW) 0.70% in 2020 & 0.47% in 2021 ("Bridging right" for the self-employed)	-
Bulgaria	0.84% STW	0.02% (deferral of taxes)
Croatia	2.5% (overall job protection measures)	
Czechia	1.4% (WS and measures linked to self-employment)	1.7% (reduction in personal income tax)
Denmark	1.15% (income compensation schemes including): 0.70% (WS) Income compensation to the self-employed and freelancers (0.36%)	-
Estonia	1.56% (WS, temporary subsidy, salary grant and WS in agriculture)	-
Finland	0.5% (overall job protection measures)	0.09% (reduction in pension contributions)
France	1.4% (STW)	0.04% (exemptions from social contributions)
Germany	0.64% (STW) 0.72% (bridging assistance for the self-employed) 0.52% (Emergency programme for the solo self-employed)	-
Greece	2.63% (overall job protection measures) 0.27% (measures linked to self-employment)	0.17% (deferral of taxes) 0.08% (reduction in taxes)
Hungary	0.07% (STW) 0.19% (WS for job creation) 0.06% (WS for the catering and recreation sectors)	-
Ireland	2.7% (overall social protection measures)	0.87% (all revenue measures)
Italy	1.75% (STW)	-
Latvia	1.6% (overall job protection measures)	-

Lithuania	1.6% (WS) 0.3% (self-employed)	-
Luxembourg	0.8% (overall job protection measures)	-
Malta	2.7% in 2020 & 2.1% in 2021 (WS)	1.6% in 2020 & 1% in 2021 (deferrals of tax) 0.5% in 2020 & 04% in 2021 (Temporary reduced tax rates and tax refund (property/excise fuel))
The Netherlands	1.7% WS 0.5% (measures linked to self-employment)	-
Poland	1.5% (overall job protection measures)	-
Portugal	0.75% (overall job protection measures)	
Romania	0.41% STW (*) 0.26% (WS)	2.1%
Slovakia	0.5% (STW) 0.2% (WS)	0.1%
Slovenia	1.14% (overall job protection measures)	1.26% (deferral of taxes)
Spain	1.25% STW 0.31% (measures linked to self-employment)	0.63% (exemption of taxes)
Sweden	1.14% (STW)	0.81% (deferral of taxes) 0.67% (reduction in social contributions)
Non-EU countries		
United Kingdom	4.9% (overall job protection measures)	
Albania	0.74% (overall job protection measures)	
Bosnia and Herzegovina Feder. of Bosnia and H. *Republika Srpska*	- 0.77% (WS) 0.62% (WS)	-
Kosovo	0.7% (overall job protection measures)	-
Montenegro	1.62% (overall job protection measures)	-
North Macedonia	0.3%(WS)	
Serbia	3.75% (WS)	3.10% (deferral of taxes)
Turkey	0.7% (STW)	-

Note: (*) This figure relates to employees with an individual work contract – whether full-time or part-time, temporary or open-ended.
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the ESPN national reports.

12 SOCIAL PROTECTION AND INCLUSION RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS: OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND MAIN GAPS

This section draws on the assessments by the 35 ESPN national experts of their countries' responses to the crisis and how these responses relate to the main features of national social protection systems and social inclusion policies. The analysis focuses on the specific strengths and weaknesses of these systems and policies highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasising the transformative potential, or otherwise, of the measures put in place with regard to the future reshaping of national social protection systems and social policies, as well as identifying remaining gaps, either new or pre-existing, in relation to the COVID-19 crisis.

12.1 Triggering of rapid responses with limited transformative potential

Overall, a majority of ESPN country teams – from 18 EU Member States and two non-EU countries – highlight the short-term, temporary nature of most of the measures adopted, and the low likelihood that these measures will translate into permanent policy changes.

This likelihood varies according to the nature of pre-existing national policies. A few examples of comments given by ESPN experts provide further insights into this issue of the potential long-term impact of the policy responses adopted. In Finland and Germany, for example, the ESPN country teams point out that in most cases the measures introduced were amendments of or adaptations to existing schemes and benefits, which were put in place relatively quickly and efficiently to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. Additionally, the Finnish country team argues that the social security policies already in place largely cushioned the negative economic effects of the pandemic and that, as a result, only a limited number of extra support measures were introduced. The ESPN national expert for Germany argues that the social protection system (at least in terms of monetary transfers) has hardly changed as a result of the pandemic measures and will most likely return to its previous state once the pandemic is over.

In other countries, rather than adaptations of the existing schemes, national experts highlight the introduction of ad hoc/new measures (mostly temporary) put in place to respond to the impact of COVID-19. The ESPN national experts for Croatia highlight that the Croatian government has primarily relied on support measures for the economy and to preserve jobs, while social protection measures have remained almost unchanged. In Lithuania, COVID-19 measures are almost all temporary or even one-off measures, representing minor adjustments to the traditional social security schemes in place before the pandemic. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to the ESPN national expert, most social policy measures are also temporary in nature and their impact on the social protection system and social inclusion policies is likely to be negligible, as they did not entail any legislative changes affecting the functioning of the social protection system. And, finally, the Turkish ESPN country team argues that the adverse effects of the pandemic are likely to persist in the long term, requiring new social assistance and job protection policies, given the temporary character of the measures taken by the government which will have very little impact on permanent social protection policies.

The assessments provided by some ESPN national experts also show that the responses to the crisis, embedded in diverse national policy backgrounds and trajectories, sometimes expose (or accentuate) pre-existing weaknesses. This is the case, for instance, of the Belgian and Greek ESPN country teams. The ESPN experts for Belgium claim that the distributional impact of social transfers has decreased considerably over the last five years. And the ESPN experts for Greece argue that the COVID-19 crisis revealed certain weaknesses of the social protection system, particularly the lack of robust mechanisms able to prevent and mitigate income insecurity and vulnerability. In Portugal, the national expert argues that the introduction of a wide range of policy responses (over 30 different measures) has not only been a comprehensive reaction to the impact of the crisis, but has also

highlighted the flaws in the social protection system and social inclusion policies as well as their (in)capacity to respond adequately to the effects of the pandemic.

The low level of benefits, and obstacles to the implementation of the MIS, are highlighted by the ESPN national expert for Hungary, who argues that these issues have been an issue for years but that the crisis has turned this into a more visible and acute problem.

Nevertheless, there is also evidence that policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic may translate into significant social protection and social policy legacies and/or contributions. This is evident in the assessment made by the Cypriot country team, who considers that the support measures adopted are an important legacy for the post-COVID-19 era, providing innovative ideas, and enabling the testing of financial tools in the field of social policy which may be crucial in future pandemics or other systemic crises of similar magnitude and characteristics. The ESPN national experts for Belgium refer to the effectiveness of measures to extend the systems of temporary unemployment and the bridging right to categories of workers previously not covered (such as certain temporary workers, artists and technicians in the cultural and events sector and sex workers), to cushion the negative effects of job loss during the pandemic; however, they argue, certain groups of workers in non-standard employment did not have access to social protection and suffered serious income loss. The ESPN national experts for Latvia, albeit with some caution, describe the strengthening of social assistance in response to the pandemic; this has the potential to improve the system, possibly enabling discussion of the basic income approach, which previously had been completely unacceptable to Latvian policy makers. In the UK, the ESPN country team underlines that the pandemic may help to bring forward reforms in response to the housing system crisis already under discussion or development, namely with regard to the prevention of evictions, or to address housing affordability issues. Finally, the ESPN national expert for Kosovo argues that the measures taken in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic may have a lasting impact on the system and policies, addressing the restricted coverage of social assistance protection, its excessively targeted nature and the inadequacy of the level of benefits provided.

As the pandemic is an ongoing crisis, leading many national governments to successively extend and adjust policy responses as the situation evolves, it is not surprising that several ESPN country teams voice significant uncertainty with regard to the potential for reshaping the social protection system and affecting social inclusion policies. This perspective stands out clearly in the assessments made, for example, by national experts from Cyprus, Italy and Luxembourg. The national experts from Cyprus recall that with the pandemic still in progress, it is difficult to assess whether the measures initially announced as being (very) temporary - aiming at reducing the immediate effects of the pandemic on employment and, in general, on the economy - may reshape the social protection system in Cyprus; in fact, the experts add, some of these measures seem to have acquired more of a medium- or even long-term character due to the prolonged duration of the pandemic. The national experts for Italy consider that it is too early to assess the possible permanent impact of the pandemic on the welfare state structure in Italy, pointing out that there is only one measure - the extraordinary allowance aimed at guaranteeing income and operational continuity to a small category of the self-employed – which is likely to continue beyond the duration of the pandemic. And the national expert for Luxembourg argues that several measures existed already before the crisis but their amounts were increased during it. This is the case, for instance, of the high-cost-of-living allowance (*Allocation de vie chère*) and the rent subsidy. The former was doubled during the period May-December 2020; from 2021, it has been brought back to its pre-crisis level but increased by 10%. The increase in the rent subsidy, which was already planned, was implemented sooner because of the pandemic. However, in both cases, the expert claims, further (significant) increases are needed.

12.2 Unemployment benefit scheme: improved conditions for those already entitled; main gaps in formal access not addressed

Unemployment benefit schemes have been adapted to different extents in most of the 35 countries. Measures include changes targeted at improving access (relaxing eligibility conditions) and income level (increases in the level of benefit), as well as prolonging the duration of receipt of the benefits.

These measures have been beneficial for people already on unemployment benefits and for newcomers to the unemployment system, and especially in some cases for non-standard workers. Reducing the qualifying period may have had some positive effects on effective access for temporary and part-time workers, who generally have difficulties in meeting the eligibility conditions. As for the self-employed, in countries where they have access to unemployment benefits, waiting periods and other specific conditions related to their status were modified. According to the Slovenian expert, the pandemic has shown the importance of existing protection for the self-employed and workers on most non-standard work contracts in Slovenia, who are, in general, covered by social security insurance.

Despite these improvements, unemployment benefits remain the most difficult social protection scheme to access for some categories of non-standard workers and the self-employed, and there were no changes in the rules governing formal access for these groups, with very few exceptions. Various ESPN experts emphasise that those without formal access to unemployment benefits could rely on ad hoc emergency measures in times of COVID-19 but have remained excluded from the ordinary unemployment benefit schemes (e.g. BG, DE, EL, IT, LV, MT; MK). In this respect, the German experts underline that the pandemic has again revealed the vulnerability of employees in mini-jobs as well as the inadequacy of protection for the self-employed and the solo self-employed in particular. In addition, according to the Italian experts, the crisis highlighted the need to reform the unemployment protection system in order to better adjust it to an unusual – as well as rapidly changing – labour market, and especially to ensure some income compensation for the various categories of self-employed and atypical workers. The expert for Romania emphasised that the coverage of some non-standard workers and the self-employed has been extremely low in the case of these measures (fewer than 10% were entitled to any of the benefits). In Sweden, despite the strengthening of unemployment insurance, there is still a gap in the coverage of the benefits system: the combination of qualifying conditions and the existence of many newcomers (immigrants and youth) to the labour market are the main explanatory factors for this gap.

Other experts, while acknowledging the importance of the measures improving access to and income levels of the schemes, as well as prolonging the duration of receipt, highlighted a structural issue of inadequacy of the unemployment benefit schemes (e.g. AT, LV). In this respect, the expert for Austria highlights that the Austrian Unemployment Insurance gives rather low wage replacement rates to some groups compared to other countries. This is especially true for people who become unemployed after having received a comparatively low income from gainful employment.

Finally, the changes implemented are almost all temporary and, although the need for such measures reveals important gaps in access to, and/or adequacy problems with, these benefits, there have been no debates on this aspect. The only permanent measures were reported for Estonia, Poland and, to some extent, Italy. In Estonia, permanent changes have been implemented as the result of a reform which was already planned but which was accelerated by the pandemic. In Poland, the level of the replacement rate of unemployment benefit has been increased permanently, with a substantial rise from September 2020. In Italy, only the ISCRO – the extraordinary allowance aimed at guaranteeing income and operational continuity to a small category of self-employed people (the so- called "para-subordinate collaborators") – will last beyond the likely duration of the pandemic, since it was introduced as a pilot scheme for the period 2021-23.

12.3 Job protection measures: first aid for damaged European labour markets and economies

The ESPN experts described a large variety of job protection schemes, most of which we classified into two main categories: a) job retention schemes including mainly short-time work schemes (STW) and wage subsidies (WS); and b) specific measures targeted at the self-employed (e.g. income replacement, activity support etc.).

12.3.1 Short-time work and wage subsidy schemes: essential for preserving jobs

Among all the measures described in this report, STW and WS schemes have been essential to preserving jobs: in 2020 these schemes supported more than 42 million jobs in the EU, one quarter of the overall EU workforce, i.e. about ten times as many as during the 2008/2009 economic and financial crisis (Müller and Schulten 2020).

The ESPN experts highlight the great significance of these schemes for safeguarding jobs as well as the innovative policy-making which has taken place in several countries. For instance, the ESPN experts for France highlight that the massive use of the STW scheme is a major and genuine innovation that has proved remarkably effective throughout the months of the crisis, and in particular during the two lockdowns in 2020. The Belgian experts underline that the temporary unemployment scheme has been remarkably successful in cushioning the impact of the crisis on salaried workers' income and on jobs. Without the measures, the shock would have predominantly affected employees with low wages: in Belgium, 40% of employees in the lowest wage quintile were supported by the temporary unemployment scheme, but only 17% of employees in the highest quintile. The Irish expert underlines that the WS schemes were open to all sectors of the economy: full time and part time; employees and self-employed; permanent and temporary. Furthermore, there were no administrative or threshold requirements that had to be met in order to qualify for income support. As already discussed in section 3.1, in most cases these schemes are not new, but existed before the pandemic. Nevertheless, in several countries they have undergone changes, for the most part providing a higher level of benefits, relaxing eligibility conditions and/or improving access for certain categories of workers, including non-standard workers. Moreover, in some cases, new schemes have been created to supplement existing ones (e.g. BG, CZ, LT, LV, RO, SI, SK). Several of these schemes were also improved between the different stages of the pandemic.

Although the impact of STW/WS schemes is quite positive, several issues persist. As is the case with unemployment benefits, there are several gaps affecting certain categories of workers. For instance, in Romania, job retention measures had a significant impact on income stability and unemployment, yet their focus was more on employers and employees, and only marginally on all other categories (non-standard workers, self-employed people). The Netherlands is a frontrunner in Europe when it comes to having a workforce with flexible employment contracts. At the same time, this group turned out to be most vulnerable in the COVID-19 pandemic. The NOW scheme, which is aimed at retaining as many employees as possible, could not entirely prevent high unemployment rates among the so-called "Flex-workers" (a flexible form of employment) within a short period of time. In the sectors affected, such as the cultural sector, hospitality and (parts of) retail, many temporary contracts were terminated. In Germany, while temporary agency workers were included in the special regulations for STW in March 2020, no solution was put in place for mini-jobbers, one of the most severely affected groups of employees. The ESPN experts for Germany highlight that the employment and income risks of this marginal form of employment have been known for years and are the reason why the majority of labour market experts advocate restricting this form of employment.

Another issue highlighted by some experts concerned the income replacement rates of these schemes (e.g. DE, PL, SK). The German expert highlights that the debates on easing access to the measures were quite unproblematic. When it came to raising the benefit rates for STW, however, opposition from employers in particular was considerably stronger, although comparative studies showed that

the wage replacement rate before the reform of the STW allowance in Germany was comparatively low by European standards. As for Poland, the anti-crisis regulations allowed an employer to unilaterally halve an employee's wage, which benefits the employer but may reduce the amount received by the employee. The employer can introduce "downtime" suddenly and is not obliged to obtain the employee's consent for this decision. The priority was to support employers, who only had to meet minimum conditions in order to receive a financial subsidy.

Another issue concerns the administrative procedures to access such schemes. In Slovakia, for instance, business representatives and an opinion poll pointed out that some of the measures adopted were not only insufficient but also administratively demanding.

Some of the above-mentioned adjustments implemented during the various stages of the pandemic, have been the subject of debates in certain countries and may open the door to future reforms. In Slovakia, the ESPN experts highlight that of all the social protection and social inclusion measures implemented during the pandemic, the STW scheme supporting job retention may help to reshape the existing system. In Latvia, the scheme evolved between the first and the second lockdown: many of the shortcomings in the benefit system's response to the first wave (from 12 March to 9 June 2020) (separate regulation of allowances for employees and the self-employed, high rejection rates, inadequate allowances, the requirement for a full 100% furlough, the abolition of the one day waiting period for access to sickness benefits in COVID-19-related cases etc.) were corrected in the second-wave regulations (from 9 November 2020).

12.3.2 The self-employed: a variety of emergency measures

As emphasised throughout this report, as well as in previous research (Spasova *et al.* 2021, Eurofound 2020b), the pandemic has highlighted significant gaps in social protection coverage in most Member States for self-employed people. These were filled, only temporarily, by several emergency ad hoc measures acting as a kind of non-contributory support for the self-employed.

The ESPN reports provide only limited empirical evidence on the actual impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the appropriateness of the public subsidies made available for this group of workers. Nevertheless, based on preliminary studies and surveys, several ESPN experts highlight that the protection for the self-employed, and the solo self-employed in particular, has not been sufficient (e.g. AT, DE, LV, NL). The experts for Latvia highlight that the initial rules governing the COVID-19 furlough allowance resulted in quite a high rate of rejections– thus, during the spring 2020 lockdown, 29.5% of all applications received from the self-employed were rejected. The major reason for rejections (62% of all cases) was insufficient levels of social insurance contributions, and many people who lost their earnings did not even try to apply for the allowance, knowing that they would not qualify.

The pandemic therefore underlined even more the significant gaps in the social protection of the self-employed, which triggered the need to implement emergency measures to save their income and activity. These are issues which need to be considered, especially since these measures will be stopped in the foreseeable future, and future crises may well occur. To paint a less gloomy picture, we should say that some ESPN experts underline possible future developments, such as the potential for access to social insurance-style protection based on the broad principle of labour market participation rather than employment status or social contributions history (e.g. IE).

12.4 Sickness benefits and sick pay in pandemic times: a (temporarily) strengthened protection, but not for everybody

Some of the measures related to sickness benefits and sick pay implemented during the pandemic in ESPN countries were innovative, some less so. In a number of these countries, most of the measures identified by the ESPN national experts derived from the application during the pandemic of existing

legislative provisions regulating situations of infectious diseases or epidemics. In most of these countries, those provisions (governing, for instance, mandatory quarantine) had seldom been used in the past or, in some cases, were scarcely known by workers. In other countries, new, COVID-19-specific benefits have been introduced. In the majority of ESPN countries, however, most measures have consisted in changes to "ordinary" sick pay or sickness benefit schemes to adapt them to the circumstances of the pandemic. In these cases, the magnitude and depth of the changes introduced vary across the countries, ranging from relatively limited changes to modification of several key parameters of paid sick leave schemes. An example of the latter is Denmark, where, as reported by the national ESPN expert, the measures introduced have temporarily affected the financing and duration of sickness benefits and the groups eligible for them.

While, for a variety of reasons[73], it is difficult to measure the impact of the specific provisions related to sickness benefits and sick pay introduced/implemented during the pandemic in terms of number of people potentially targeted and actual beneficiaries, some more general considerations can be put forward in relation to their impact on national social protection systems.

Most of the measures related to sickness benefits and sick pay implemented by the ESPN countries during the pandemic have been aimed at facilitating access to those benefits, not only in order to ensure workers' income in case of sickness[74] but also to reduce the risk that workers go to work while potentially being infected with COVID-19 or – in a more limited number of cases – due to a condition making them particularly vulnerable in the event of infection. To achieve this, key measures implemented in many countries have entailed an extension of the coverage of paid sick leaves to include periods of mandatory quarantine or self-isolation, waiving of waiting days prior to accessing the benefits, and increases in the level of the benefits granted. As also shown by previous studies (OECD 2020; Spasova *et al.* 2021), these measures have resulted in some improvements in the protection of workers in the event of sickness, and, in particular, the waiving of waiting days in some countries has allowed timelier protection of employees, especially of the self-employed.

However, the scope of these improvements should be qualified and further investigated. Indeed, first, the fact that the eligibility conditions, in terms of employment periods or contributions paid, for paid sick leave "in COVID-19-times" have usually not changed compared to "ordinary benefits" (other than in France, Ireland, Romania, and Spain) may mean that effective access to those benefits is still limited for some categories of employees (e.g. non-standard workers) and the self-employed (cf. Spasova *et al.* 2021). In addition to this, in some cases, procedural aspects may limit the take-up of the new provisions, thus limiting their effectiveness. For instance, in Hungary, benefits in the event of quarantine or infection in work-related circumstances need to be topped up by the public authorities in order to provide workers with a 100% replacement rate. However, as reported by the ESPN expert for Hungary, this option is not yet available in reality, since, at the time of writing (early May 2021), it is still unclear which authorities are responsible for the top-up and what procedure should be followed. In Sweden, according to the national ESPN expert, the take-up of extra amounts deriving from the temporary abolition of the standard deduction from sick pay may be limited by the fact that the compensation is not provided automatically: workers are expected to be aware of the new measure and must apply for it, a circumstance that probably creates a gap between the number of eligible people and the number of recipients. In addition to this, in a number of countries, pandemic-related measures related to paid sick leave have targeted only specific segments of the working

[73] Information on these aspects is available, for some measures, in the ESPN national reports (mostly in absolute numbers), to which we refer. In most cases, however, information is not available or is not detailed enough to identify the impact of specific measures. For instance, a number of ESPN experts have reported that data on the recipients of paid sick leave usually do not distinguish between benefits related to COVID-19 and benefit paid for inability to work due to other reasons.

[74] In a more limited number of countries, COVID-19 has been recognised (or treated) as an occupational disease or accident at work – at least for some categories of workers – a circumstance usually entailing more advantageous conditions than benefits for "ordinary" incapacity to work (e.g. in terms of compensation rates).

population. Thus in Italy, for instance, only employees have access to the measures set up to support workers quarantining or self-isolating because they belong to groups which are particularly at risk. In Serbia, the recognition of COVID-19 as an occupational disease only applies to civil servants.

Most of the measures introduced during the pandemic (including changes relaxing eligibility conditions) unsurprisingly concern aspects directly related to COVID-19 (infection, quarantine or self-isolation). Consequently, their capacity to affect national paid sick leave systems and to fill existing gaps in those systems beyond COVID-19 (e.g. in terms of adequacy and timely access to "ordinary" benefits for other kinds of illness) should not be overstated.

Third, irrespective of the newness of the measures introduced, the vast majority of these are meant to be temporary, i.e. to be in force only as long as the emergency situation due to the pandemic is ongoing. One exception in this respect is Romania where, according to the national ESPN experts, the inclusion of COVID-19 in the so-called "group A of infectious diseases" has been made on a permanent basis, with implications for the level of the benefits for the workers infected arguably even after the state of emergency. In a number of cases, however, ESPN experts have highlighted the need to make some of these measures permanent. One example is the waiving of waiting days for access to benefits. For instance, the importance of the measure introduced by the Latvian government between the first and second COVID-19 wave, abolishing the existing waiting day, has been explicitly recognised by the ESPN experts for Latvia; and the Swedish ESPN experts have noted that waiting days in paid sick leave systems might be seen as problematic even in non-pandemic times. According to the Belgian country team, the pandemic has highlighted the effects of the retrenchment of the national social security system in recent years, and a more general reflection on how to strengthen it (including discussion of sick leave benefits) is needed. The Kosovan experts have highlighted the inadequacy (not only in relation to the pandemic) of the national paid sick leave system, which does not provide workers with any protection beyond 20 days of annual sick leave paid by employers. This said, many national experts (e.g. DK, LV, SE) consider it very likely that most of the measures introduced will be discontinued after the end of the pandemic; indeed, no information relating to national debates on making these measures permanent emerges from the national reports.

12.5 Healthcare coverage: ad hoc extension to COVID-19 treatments, but gaps persist

Most of the 35 ESPN countries provide universal coverage for a defined set of healthcare benefits (Baeten *et al.* 2018). Nevertheless, certain groups of the population remain excluded from these schemes and these groups tend to vary greatly across countries, ranging from the unemployed who are not entitled to cash social protection benefits to non-standard workers, asylum seekers and other non-EU nationals. For example, in Germany, the national experts report a gap that requires a rapid policy response to *de facto* discrimination faced by asylum seekers during the first 18 months of their application process, as they are entitled only to certain basic health services during this time. In this respect, it is worth noting that, in Ireland - where, although there is universal healthcare, less than half the population is covered for the cost of GP visits (OECD/EU 2020) - a temporary measure in response to the pandemic allows non-EU citizens, irrespective of their legal status, to access healthcare and social protection benefits without having to provide personal information about their migration status to the Department of Justice and Equality. However, while all Member States have integrated COVID-19 treatment and vaccination into their compulsory insurance systems, the experts did not identify any long-term measures to extend the effective coverage of their compulsory health insurance. As it stands, the pandemic has therefore not led Member States to adopt structural measures to strengthen the universality of their healthcare coverage schemes.

Countries that do not provide universal healthcare coverage (e.g. BG, EE, PL, RO) had to temporarily develop ad hoc schemes for COVID-19-related services. The ESPN experts for Poland note, in this respect, that a continuation of these ad hoc universal coverage schemes and their extension to all types of care could be a relevant response to the increasing flexibilisation of the labour market. In

this context, since 1 January 2021, the Polish social security system requires employers to register all civil employment contracts. This is a first step towards ensuring effective coverage of all employment contracts.

At the same time, the OECD and the EU (2020) highlight the importance of primary healthcare practices, community care facilities and home-based programmes, particularly in order to maintain care services that could no longer be provided in hospital facilities due to the pressure exerted by the pandemic. However, very few Member States seem to have developed such arrangements, notably by setting up multidisciplinary teams for outpatient care. In this respect, the measures mentioned by the experts for Italy and Romania are relevant examples of how the establishment of mobile teams can help to address the needs of specific groups, especially those which are socio-economically vulnerable, or isolated elderly people. The Danish country team pointed out that the main gaps in coverage are in the provision of in-kind services to vulnerable groups in need of specific special social care and/or healthcare, such as the homeless.

In conclusion, the national reports submitted for this publication allow us to make some preliminary observations regarding the trends in healthcare coverage in the context of the pandemic. Firstly, all the countries considered in this report - whether or not they have universal coverage - still have gaps in coverage, and the pandemic has not resulted in increased universality of coverage, apart from ad hoc extensions for COVID-19 treatments and vaccination. Secondly, the pandemic has highlighted the need to expand outpatient care and targeted in-kind benefits, especially for specific vulnerable social groups, as COVID-19 has underlined the centrality of the social determinants of health[75]. Finally, the pandemic has also demonstrated the great flexibility and adaptability of the healthcare systems in all the countries considered, since they have been able to include COVID-19-related services in their healthcare baskets very quickly, as well as adding them to their lists of specific care services, as for telemedicine. In this sense, the pandemic has highlighted that, over the longer term, essential healthcare benefits for the whole population could be achieved promptly across the EU provided that the political will exists.

12.6 Current and future challenges to MISs and social assistance protection across Europe

MISs are intended to ensure a minimum standard of living for everyone lacking resources, whether in or out of work, and effective access to enabling goods and services.

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan issued by the European Commission in March 2021[76] recognises the diversity of MISs in place in the Member States as regards their adequacy, coverage, take-up and ability to provide access to enabling goods and services. In addition, it highlights the increased challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, including higher levels of financial insecurity, poverty and income inequality in the short term.

ESPN national experts report a series of policy interventions aimed at mitigating the negative effects of the crisis and at protecting people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by strengthening mechanisms that ensure people's right to an adequate income. Several ESPN national experts reflect on the changes introduced as a response to the crisis, and on their potential to trigger more permanent improvements - or, on the contrary, on the transient nature of the adjustments made to existing MISs. In Belgium, France and Spain, ESPN experts anticipate (or confirm) important improvements resulting from their countries' responses to the pandemic. The ESPN Belgian country team, for example, refers to the Government's decision – in October 2020 – to considerably improve the amounts of several "social minima", including social assistance benefits. The French ESPN country team recognises that, although the pandemic did not lead to an overhaul of social inclusion policies,

[75] For further information, see: OECD/EU 2020.

[76] https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en

there is evidence that the introduction of extraordinary social allowances had a positive impact on the income of the poorest households. In Spain, the early implementation of the national MIS – the Minimum Living Income – is an important, permanent policy intervention, and a key development in the organisation and effectiveness of the income guarantee system in Spain.[77]

Conversely, in Denmark, the ESPN national expert argues that the majority of adjustments introduced during the pandemic – including the suspension of work requirements for the MIS – are temporary in nature and were only in place for short periods of time, e.g. implemented during the first wave, withdrawn and re-applied when the second wave hit the country in the autumn/winter of 2020.

Although MISs need to ensure adequate, accessible and enabling support for all, particularly at a time of increased financial challenges, the assessment of the ESPN national experts clearly highlights the persistence of some (sometimes serious) adequacy and accessibility issues with MISs across the majority of ESPN countries. Problems in MIS administration procedures are mentioned in both Austria and the UK. In the former case, the ESPN national expert highlights issues related to the administration of the MIS by the federal provinces and the identification of accessibility and adequacy problems in all provinces, along with substantial differentiation among them. In the UK, national experts refer to the limitations arising from an excessive focus on means-tested benefits. In addition, they say that authorities have too often relied on discretionary, cash-limited sums to be given out by local authorities; although these may be in a good position, with the local community, to allocate additional help, this is no substitute for an adequate national system with benefits available as of right.

Several ESPN country teams identify problems in the coverage provided by existing MISs in relation to some particularly vulnerable sections of the population. The Italian ESPN national experts refer to the low levels of inclusiveness and effectiveness of the Citizenship Income, especially with regard to third-country nationals, who are often excluded due to tight requirements about residence in the country. The ESPN national expert for Romania points out that the measures taken in response to the crisis largely ignored the most vulnerable sections of the population, in a context in which the MIS has not been reviewed since 2014.

In addition, national experts also report the lack of specific support measures targeting current or potential beneficiaries of the MIS. The ESPN country team for Bulgaria highlights the lack of any specific support measures targeting beneficiaries of the MIS, most of whom, although not affected by loss of work-related income, had to face additional health-related costs due to the pandemic. In Greece, the ESPN national experts highlight problems with the eligibility criteria for the MIS and other social benefits; the fact that assessment is based on income from the previous year prevented many people from accessing the benefit, even though they experienced a significant income decline as a result of the pandemic. The ESPN national experts for Kosovo refer to the negative effect of the termination of the emergency support introduced during the crisis, which provided assistance to almost 29,000 households without income; currently these households are again unable to access the regular Social Assistance Scheme, since the strict eligibility requirements focus more on household structure (disability, age of youngest child) than on whether the household is living in poverty.

Other important shortcomings identified by a significant number of ESPN national experts relate to specific vulnerable groups of the population who were hit hardest by the negative impacts of the pandemic and who were not sufficiently protected by social assistance mechanisms and support. These vary but often include children (e.g. CZ, HR, HU, RO), students and/or young people (e.g. FR, LU, SI), temporary agency and platform workers (BE), single-parent families (e.g. CZ, EL), large families

[77] https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23370&langId=en

(e.g. EL, ES), third-country nationals (e.g. BE, EL, LU), asylum seekers and/or refugees (e.g. BE, DK, EL; TR), homeless people (e.g. BE, BG, FI, LU, SE; ME) and the Roma population (e.g. BG, EL), among others.

According to the evidence provided by ESPN national experts, there was little debate in the countries on MISs and other social assistance support during the pandemic.

Nevertheless, some ESPN country teams report that the issue was raised in the public arena, either by civil society organisations or by other organisations promoting social inclusion. In Austria, the ESPN national expert argues, it was only civil society organisations which repeatedly stressed that the MISs of the federal provinces do not provide sufficient benefits and that the system generally lacks nationwide coordination and/or harmonisation. In Belgium, a debate is ongoing (although fairly limited) with regard to the enhanced role and responsibility assigned to the Public Centres for Social Work in providing extra support to MIS beneficiaries; some question whether they will have the capacity to use these ad hoc funds adequately, given their proven difficulty in identifying new groups of needy people to whom additional assistance should be offered.

Governance issues in the implementation of the MIS are also highlighted by the Swedish country team, who points out that most of the debate has revolved around access to support, particularly the bureaucratic problems and long waiting times within many systems, rather than focusing on the measures themselves.

Debates around coverage and adequacy issues are identified in Italy, Latvia, Portugal and the UK, involving the mobilisation of a diverse range of actors. The ESPN national experts for Italy recall that the debate around the main weaknesses of the "Citizenship Income" (*Reddito di Cittadinanza*, the main MIS) was already ongoing before the pandemic but has been further boosted by it. The "Alliance against poverty" (including more than 30 organisations, among which are the three main trade unions) and experts, in particular, repeatedly argue that two main weaknesses of the MIS - the eligibility conditions and the calculation formula – should be addressed in order to ensure better coverage of particularly unprotected sectors of the population (e.g. third-country nationals, large households). The ESPN national experts for Latvia refer to the initiative of the Ombudsman: the Latvian Ombudsman filed three suits with the Constitutional Court on the grounds that the levels of benefit provided by the Guaranteed Minimum Income, the so-called "needy person's" income threshold, and the state social assistance allowance were insufficient; recognition of this shortcoming by the Court led to a requirement to increase the level of the thresholds which, according to the national experts, may have a significant impact on the social protection system. In Portugal, the ESPN national expert comments on the political debate between the left-wing opposition parties and the Socialist Government around the adequacy of existing financial support, which is insufficient to lift people above the poverty threshold (e.g. the MIS). A new extraordinary financial support scheme – the extraordinary support to workers' income – which uses the poverty threshold as a reference figure did not calm the debate, since the benefit is described as another time-bound extraordinary measure rather than a new social benefit, as originally announced. The ESPN national experts in the UK report a lively debate around whether the "uplift" to Universal Credit (and originally also Working Tax Credit) should be continued, and whether it should be extended to equivalent "legacy" and other benefits; additionally, there have been proposals for a (more generous) means-tested MIS, including from a Commission on Social Security of people with experience of benefits. The Fabian Society and the Child Poverty Action Group, among others, are also examining the shape of a future social security system.

In Germany, a debate seems to be taking place. The ESPN country team reports strong criticisms voiced by experts, trade unions and welfare associations regarding the lack of pandemic-induced social policy measures targeting people at risk of poverty; this lack of specific support is based on the federal government's view that the existing final safety net in Social Code Book II (Basic Security for Jobseekers) and XII (Social Assistance) offers sufficient protection and therefore there is no need for additional measures during the pandemic.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the current and future impact of the pandemic and the policy responses to address its effects have relaunched (or continued to fuel) the debate on inequalities. In France, this debate – fuelled by the increase in inequalities in recent years - remains ongoing and gained a new impetus following the pandemic; data released by the national statistical institute (INSEE) show that job losses during the first lockdown mostly affected temporary workers and the most precarious jobs, including young people aged 15 to 24; during the same period, infections were more frequent in densely populated towns and overcrowded housing. In Ireland, according to the ESPN national expert, there has been a prominent debate on inequalities associated with COVID-19, in terms of both infection rates and other consequences. Emerging evidence shows how the pandemic engaged with existing inequalities, exacerbating the situation of sections of the population which are already vulnerable; the report refers to studies showing that job losses, for example, have been concentrated among the young and those on low incomes, and the communities most affected tend to be those characterised by existing inequalities and a greater than usual share of minorities. Similarly, the ESPN national expert for Romania reports that one of the most debated issues has been the impact of the pandemic on increased inequalities in children's access to education, and the big gap between the conditions provided by rural and urban schools, and between children from higher income households and those living in low-income households. Such gaps, it has been argued, were not adequately addressed by an ill-prepared school system or by the timely introduction of support measures to those in disadvantaged conditions. And in Serbia, the national experts refer to the UNDP study, "Serbia COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment", which concludes that the social protection system did not provide a timely and adequate response to the most affected population groups and that, unlike other Western Balkan countries, the lack of legal adjustments to ensure the effective expansion of benefits or the number of beneficiaries for poverty-targeted programmes did not protect the most vulnerable, especially at local level.

The assessment provided by ESPN country teams recalls the need for Member States – and other ESPN non-EU countries – to protect vulnerable people and to reduce inequalities. The Commission Staff Working document accompanying the Communication on the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan[78] highlights that the already observed and foreseeable continued negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on inequalities is a reminder of the increased urgency of living up to the basic premises of the Pillar, notably promoting social cohesion and convergence and responding to the new opportunities and societal challenges.

12.7 Access to housing and COVID-19

The spread of COVID-19 has been a stark reminder of the pre-existing housing crisis in Europe, exposing the shortcomings of housing policies in ensuring access to decent and affordable housing for all. The economic impact of COVID-19 is creating income instability, particularly for low-income people facing job loss and economic hardship. Many households are at risk of losing their homes due to the economic impact of the pandemic. According to Eurofound, 8% of respondents in the EU were unable to pay their rent or mortgage in April 2020 – a date which was still at the beginning of the pandemic - a proportion which reached 22% for the unemployed and 16% among the self-employed (Eurofound 2020b).

For many people living in overcrowded homes, it is impossible to self-isolate. Poor living conditions contribute to the risk of infection. As millions of people have been told to stay at home, this simple preventative public health measure is impossible for homeless people. This apparently simple request has revealed how dependent the rights to life, dignity, human security and health are on people's access to adequate housing.

[78] https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23704&langId=en

The report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing (Rajagopal 2020) reminds its readers that the right to housing must be central to any response to the pandemic which calls for a rights-based response by national states. Housing as a fundamental human right demands a decisive response to protect the right to adequate housing, particularly among the most vulnerable people and households. In practice, however, as this report records, the impact of the pandemic on the right to housing has been very unequally distributed, often reflecting pre-existing inequalities.

The pandemic has seen many countries across Europe take unprecedented action in implementing protective (temporary) measures addressing renters and mortgage holders, particularly people in more vulnerable situations such as those experiencing substantial reduction in their incomes, and homeless people.

The assessment provided by ESPN national experts of the measures put in place as a response to the pandemic confirms the pre-existing inequalities regarding access to adequate housing and the significant challenges that persist on the longer term. The need for strategic responses at the level of housing policies, rather than extraordinary temporary support provided both to tenants and mortgagers during the pandemic, is often mentioned by the ESPN country teams. Experts from 11 EU countries (BE, BG, CZ, DK, ES, FR, HU, IE, IT, LV, PT) and the UK explicitly refer to major problems in the area of housing inequalities and housing exclusion. These include, for example:

- the situation of people living in poor and overcrowded housing conditions, including in informal housing (BG);
- the risk of longer-term impacts of the pandemic on rising poverty and indebtedness (CZ);
- the particularly vulnerable situation of the homeless population, whose access to services was affected by COVID-19 restrictions (DK);
- the shortage of social housing and the lack of regulation of rents, which led to an increase in substandard housing (ES);
- the sharp drop in the production of housing (in particular social housing), increased arrears, greater precarity and the damage endured by the poorest communities, which emphasise the need for consistent and integrated housing policies (FR);
- the pre-pandemic crisis in the Irish rental sector, which may re-emerge if the economy reopens without incomes recovering to pre-COVID-19 levels, given the temporary nature (even if generous) of the measures introduced (IE);
- the limited impact of the housing support measures introduced during the pandemic, which do not address any of the structural weaknesses long affecting the housing system; public intervention in this policy area remains patchy, fragmented and unable to provide adequate responses to the multiple housing needs (IT);
- the lack of any specific housing related support measures to address the negative impact of the drop in households' income (LV);
- the limited protection for mortgaged home-owners, the partial protection for private renters, the dilemma of funding the prevention of destitution for people with "No Recourse to Public Funds" as a condition of their immigration status, and the insufficiency of funding for local authorities' general homelessness prevention and relief duties, as well as the value of a greater supply of affordable and social housing, given the severity and uneven impact of the health crisis (UK).

On the other hand, the national experts for both Denmark and Finland highlight the fact that housing policies were not subject to any adjustments in response to the financial and social impact of the pandemic, which can be seen as a sign that universal policy programmes provide a wide and adequate coverage.

Overall, housing has emerged as a key defence against COVID-19. Governments' policy responses to the impact of the pandemic on access to housing mitigated the negative effects of the crisis, but did not address the underlying inequalities and pre-existing structural issues affecting housing systems across Europe.

12.8 Leave for parents: a widely implemented measure, but a few gaps still exist

Given the nature of some lockdown measures, childcare facilities and schools were forced to close, affecting millions of children around the world. This has put a lot of pressure on parents, trying to balance work and family obligations during this period. In this context, many countries introduced special leave provisions, often referred to as "corona leave". 21 Member States and four candidate and potential candidate countries (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK; AL, ME, MK, XK) have provided parental support arrangements when neither parent could provide childcare due to both being in employment. This special parental leave varied with regard to eligibility conditions (e.g. age of the child), payment (e.g. unpaid, percentage of previous earnings, flat rate), inclusivity of parents' labour market status and duration.

In 15 out of the 25 countries which provided such leave, the self-employed are covered by these provisions. This shows a clear positive trend towards inclusion of the self-employed as, unlike employees and with a few exceptions, they enjoy no compulsory protection against the risk of loss of income.

These adapted and temporary schemes tend to be top-up schemes; they do not affect regular parental leave entitlements, or can be taken up when parental leave has been exhausted. Some of them also provide compensation or benefits that are equal to or higher than those under regular parental leave schemes (e.g. AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EL, FR, IT, LU, MT, PL, PT, SE, SK).

A small number of national experts (e.g. CZ, HR, HU, LV, SK; UK, BA) reported gaps in the leave arrangements supporting working parents during the childcare and school closures. The ESPN experts from Croatia, Hungary and the UK highlighted that parents as a target group have been neglected within the package of measures directed primarily at the economy and job preservation, although some measures have had an indirect effect on families.

A small number of countries recognised the greater vulnerability of single parents and provided specific rules for them, in terms of either benefits or leave duration. This issue was raised by the Czech and the Slovakian ESPN country teams. Slovakian experts note that single parents were the group hardest hit by the crisis, were more often dependent on care allowances when schools were closed, and were more often working part time.

Where shortcomings have been identified, some governments have tried to remedy them. This is the case in Latvia, for instance, where the eligibility conditions for the lump sum sickness benefit for working parents put families with several children under 11 years of age at a disadvantage. This shortcoming was eliminated without limiting the number of times the benefit can be granted, for the whole period when the childcare, education or day-care institution cannot be attended due to quarantine. However, according to the experts for Latvia, there is a gap in terms of relevance of the measure to potential beneficiaries, as shown by the low take-up rate (only 3%).

ANNEX A: PRESENTATION OF THE ESPN NETWORK MANAGEMENT TEAM AND THE 35 ESPN COUNTRY TEAMS (June 2021)

A1. ESPN Network Management Team

The European Social Policy Network (ESPN) is managed jointly by the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER), the independent research company APPLICA and the European Social Observatory (OSE).

The ESPN Network Management Team is responsible for the overall supervision and coordination of the ESPN. It consists of six members:

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ANNEX B: Data related to trends of the pandemic and social and economic impact

Table B1.1: Total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases for 100,000 persons and cumulative total number of cases from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021 (total population), ESPN countries

Source:	"Our World in Data" (OWID) online database on COVID-19 – own calculations
Measurement:	(Total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases / population) * 100,000
Geographical coverage:	All ESPN countries
Updating:	Daily – download 26 April 2021
Time:	63 weeks: from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021
Comments:	OWID is a collaborative effort between researchers at the "Oxford Martin Programme on Global Development" of the University of Oxford (who are the scientific editors of the website content) and the non-profit organisation Global Change Data Lab (who publishes and maintains the website and the data tools). EU countries' data available from OWID come from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) till end of October 2020. On 30 November 2020, OWID transitioned from the ECDC to the data hub of the Johns Hopkins University (Washington) as source for confirmed cases and deaths. This followed the ECDC's announcement that they were switching from daily to weekly updates
	Population-weighted average for EU-27

GEO	Cases for 100,000 persons	Contextual data: Cumulative total number of cases on 18 April 2021
EU-27	6,740	29,358,117
Austria	6,762	593,423
Belgium	8,408	949,996
Bulgaria	5,721	386,381
Croatia	7,859	307,790
Cyprus	7,118	56,259
Czechia	15,122	1,601,881
Denmark	4,287	243,326
Estonia	9,062	117,554
Finland	1,549	84,131
France	8,157	5,350,521
Germany	3,947	3,155,522
Greece	3,196	315,273
Hungary	7,966	750,508
Ireland	4,995	243,508
Italy	6,554	3,870,131
Latvia	6,114	111,334
Lithuania	8,864	233,631
Luxembourg	10,545	64,746
Malta	6,834	29,966
Netherlands	8,674	1,428,440
Poland	7,290	2,688,025
Portugal	8,183	831,001
Romania	5,439	1,029,304
Slovakia	6,959	375,974
Slovenia	11,401	232,071
Spain	7,419	3,407,283
Sweden	9,291	900,138
United Kingdom	6,512	4,403,060
Albania	4,536	129,594
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5,936	188,994
Kosovo	5,362	101,191
Montenegro	15,390	95,551
North Macedonia	7,228	147,094
Serbia	9,988	662,368
Turkey	5,490	4,268,447

Table B1.2: Weekly evolution: weekly number of confirmed COVID-19 cases for 100,000 persons from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021, ESPN countries

Source:	OWID online database on COVID-19 – own calculations
Measurement:	(Total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the week / population) * 100,000
Geographical coverage:	All ESPN countries
Updating:	Daily – download 26 April 2021
Time:	63 weeks: from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021
Breakdowns	None
Comments:	See Table B1.1 for more information on the OWID database
	Population-weighted average for EU-27

WEEKS	EU-27	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE	IT	LV	LT	LU
1	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	0.0	0.0	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
2	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
3	0.0	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
4	0.3	0.1	:	:	0.1	:	:	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	:	0.0	1.8	:	0.0	0.2
5	1.7	0.8	1.4	:	0.1	:	0.2	0.4	0.7	0.2	1.2	0.9	0.4	0.0	0.3	7.9	0.1	0.0	0.2
6	7.5	6.4	4.5	0.6	0.6	3.0	1.6	14.0	7.9	3.8	5.2	4.5	1.7	0.3	2.2	25.3	1.3	0.2	7.8
7	20.8	24.0	18.3	1.8	4.1	6.6	7.5	10.1	14.4	5.4	14.6	21.0	2.9	0.8	13.3	53.6	5.2	2.3	98.9
8	40.3	60.6	54.5	2.4	11.0	10.8	15.3	16.3	25.6	11.6	34.1	42.3	5.1	2.5	33.0	64.3	9.6	9.9	185.5
9	39.6	39.0	80.2	2.5	11.4	28.2	17.2	32.9	29.7	12.9	14.2	45.8	5.9	3.5	44.3	53.2	10.8	12.6	143.5
10	33.6	22.5	82.7	2.3	9.9	21.7	12.7	33.2	20.0	18.5	15.7	34.4	3.9	6.5	87.6	45.7	6.4	8.9	86.4
11	45.1	9.6	79.1	3.1	7.3	16.6	7.2	21.5	15.7	14.0	136.2	22.0	1.5	5.4	118.1	39.1	4.3	6.1	42.7
12	20.9	5.3	70.3	5.3	4.5	5.6	7.0	20.8	9.3	14.3	15.8	15.7	2.6	6.3	77.0	32.1	4.9	7.7	27.8

WEEKS	EU-27	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE	IT	LV	LT	LU
13	14.6	4.6	36.2	5.0	1.8	6.2	3.8	16.6	4.8	12.7	12.5	10.1	1.1	5.2	53.0	23.1	3.6	3.4	16.1
14	11.5	3.1	26.6	4.7	2.1	3.2	3.2	15.7	2.6	12.7	11.7	7.6	0.9	2.8	32.1	14.8	3.1	2.4	10.4
15	8.7	4.1	20.6	3.7	1.2	2.5	3.4	9.3	2.8	7.3	5.0	5.3	1.0	2.7	26.1	10.7	3.6	2.8	8.5
16	7.1	3.2	15.7	3.4	0.5	1.5	4.1	7.4	3.8	5.1	4.6	5.1	0.5	2.5	10.8	7.6	2.6	2.8	9.6
17	6.9	2.2	11.9	1.3	0.1	1.9	3.2	6.0	3.3	4.7	8.9	3.8	0.4	1.6	7.0	5.5	1.0	1.8	4.2
18	5.4	2.4	7.6	3.1	0.0	1.8	3.1	5.0	5.0	2.5	3.3	2.7	0.6	1.3	5.1	3.5	1.1	1.4	3.0
19	6.1	2.0	7.3	8.0	0.1	2.3	4.0	3.7	3.2	2.2	5.1	2.2	1.3	0.8	2.3	3.1	0.6	2.1	4.5
20	6.4	2.7	5.5	8.7	1.2	0.6	4.3	4.4	0.6	1.0	5.4	4.1	1.4	0.2	1.6	2.7	0.7	1.2	6.7
21	6.7	2.9	5.7	10.8	7.9	1.0	7.9	4.9	0.4	1.0	5.0	4.5	1.1	0.5	1.3	3.1	0.2	0.7	17.9
22	5.8	6.5	5.4	15.1	11.4	0.9	10.7	2.7	0.5	0.9	4.6	3.3	1.4	0.4	1.5	2.1	0.4	0.7	41.4
23	6.1	6.9	5.4	21.6	14.1	1.4	6.3	2.0	1.6	0.8	5.5	3.0	2.5	0.6	2.1	2.3	2.7	1.2	58.5
24	7.2	8.8	10.7	21.1	14.2	2.6	6.9	3.9	0.5	0.5	5.6	3.2	2.0	0.9	2.8	2.3	0.8	1.8	102.4
25	10.2	8.5	17.4	24.1	13.1	1.8	12.7	4.6	0.9	1.3	8.6	4.6	1.8	1.1	2.4	2.7	0.9	3.2	112.8
26	12.9	9.7	31.7	21.9	10.5	8.1	13.9	6.6	2.9	1.0	10.7	5.6	4.0	1.1	4.9	3.3	1.7	3.3	96.5
27	17.0	7.8	34.5	21.7	7.8	12.4	14.3	12.5	5.7	2.3	14.8	7.0	8.0	1.3	10.8	3.8	2.7	5.1	60.1
28	20.8	14.0	38.6	14.2	21.4	11.3	15.5	19.3	2.8	2.7	25.8	9.1	13.8	2.3	11.1	5.5	1.4	5.7	43.1
29	25.7	20.9	31.1	11.5	36.1	9.7	17.7	13.3	6.1	3.4	33.5	11.2	14.6	2.7	14.5	7.8	1.0	7.7	51.6
30	31.2	21.4	27.0	14.9	47.8	7.5	21.5	9.8	7.4	2.6	51.2	10.7	15.3	5.5	16.4	14.4	2.5	9.0	181.6
31	36.1	23.3	27.8	12.8	45.7	2.7	34.2	16.6	9.6	3.8	66.4	9.8	13.5	23.0	16.5	15.7	2.3	7.4	43.3
32	44.1	40.1	40.1	12.1	39.7	1.8	71.4	31.5	12.4	5.3	84.0	11.6	15.8	40.7	24.2	16.5	2.1	9.4	42.0
33	53.2	53.1	71.4	13.4	33.1	7.6	120.5	49.9	16.6	6.6	99.5	14.5	18.6	52.7	36.6	17.0	2.7	13.5	89.3
34	62.5	52.6	104.0	17.0	31.2	10.7	140.0	65.7	21.9	11.8	125.6	14.4	21.6	63.7	40.9	19.1	7.4	23.2	82.3
35	67.4	57.9	127.9	21.9	34.0	14.5	161.6	53.6	31.1	14.7	116.3	17.9	22.9	68.7	62.9	24.2	19.4	28.8	76.0
36	95.4	77.6	252.9	40.3	61.7	20.0	311.9	48.1	20.3	26.3	166.7	28.0	23.6	71.2	81.9	44.2	30.6	32.3	128.6
37	139.7	96.7	484.8	68.9	117.6	67.9	511.9	49.5	15.5	26.1	219.0	49.2	27.4	85.1	141.0	87.7	42.2	47.9	152.9
38	211.9	165.4	796.4	121.7	224.1	98.5	765.4	77.3	22.5	24.5	324.1	75.4	48.5	116.8	150.5	168.7	57.0	85.5	380.2

WEEKS	EU-27	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE	IT	LV	LT	LU
39	293.5	298.6	1068.4	219.9	374.1	105.3	787.2	119.9	41.8	26.4	415.0	124.1	88.8	199.0	108.3	289.3	75.7	192.1	684.2
40	340.5	469.6	560.3	311.5	374.8	171.8	710.8	136.0	77.5	23.0	563.8	162.7	149.3	306.6	68.8	368.9	105.3	288.2	746.4
41	295.2	567.1	320.2	330.3	417.5	134.7	439.0	118.3	111.5	31.0	304.7	157.1	169.8	329.0	54.1	400.4	124.6	392.7	659.0
42	270.5	484.9	221.1	334.8	452.2	160.4	303.7	147.8	148.0	38.2	254.5	153.1	169.0	347.6	53.0	390.3	133.2	416.9	612.0
43	219.6	374.2	151.4	302.9	567.1	202.6	260.5	150.6	175.1	55.8	122.0	148.6	123.9	356.2	36.4	304.3	202.4	496.3	582.6
44	191.6	277.9	133.7	274.8	578.8	222.6	238.4	181.4	211.2	52.5	108.4	156.5	110.7	402.4	40.6	240.6	224.0	523.5	576.4
45	193.8	212.4	114.0	260.6	610.7	262.0	291.7	315.6	242.2	58.3	123.8	182.0	89.0	338.1	36.6	191.5	225.8	659.3	597.1
46	209.2	193.1	177.8	173.8	498.5	342.5	405.4	423.1	264.3	43.4	140.8	205.8	63.7	246.1	61.2	185.8	278.4	719.1	474.9
47	179.7	147.4	123.1	91.5	275.9	218.6	455.1	338.4	287.1	35.5	133.1	164.4	44.4	158.8	134.0	166.5	292.8	731.9	236.6
48	184.7	153.4	96.1	79.1	193.7	462.8	634.0	283.5	283.6	32.2	136.2	151.9	44.1	117.2	233.5	169.4	323.9	625.3	192.7
49	232.3	164.0	116.7	79.5	172.6	407.1	814.7	219.8	324.2	32.3	182.6	184.9	44.0	142.6	887.1	193.0	372.3	488.6	212.3
50	216.0	149.2	125.2	47.9	127.3	205.5	571.4	137.5	271.5	30.8	187.1	131.5	39.1	104.8	588.4	183.4	325.8	329.0	141.5
51	209.0	122.1	126.4	42.6	97.3	122.8	461.8	98.8	263.3	40.3	207.2	118.2	31.4	80.0	332.2	143.0	286.2	247.4	129.1
52	201.5	107.7	137.9	56.4	85.8	100.8	442.2	72.2	268.6	45.8	209.9	104.1	46.3	82.4	184.7	143.2	276.3	213.5	151.8
53	174.7	103.4	138.3	71.0	74.0	99.8	461.3	53.4	283.8	43.2	204.8	71.7	64.7	91.6	146.7	137.8	297.5	166.7	179.6
54	146.2	108.6	114.3	85.8	56.8	85.2	492.5	49.8	319.4	49.5	193.2	61.9	79.2	110.0	126.5	141.8	263.1	145.6	164.1
55	143.4	124.7	131.7	99.6	54.2	87.1	592.7	52.1	398.3	59.2	197.7	61.5	71.5	148.6	113.0	140.5	255.9	122.0	198.6
56	165.4	153.0	147.0	147.8	71.4	145.1	758.9	63.0	555.3	68.0	224.6	66.5	104.7	248.6	93.2	185.3	249.2	138.9	212.1
57	160.1	172.7	141.5	188.6	85.3	245.6	789.7	62.1	699.9	81.2	215.1	69.2	135.7	369.4	75.3	229.8	222.6	163.7	189.5
58	197.6	202.0	168.4	260.0	106.3	308.5	746.5	96.6	768.0	80.4	239.6	80.8	149.1	494.9	74.1	256.5	184.2	115.9	192.8
59	227.0	226.2	195.2	354.1	154.0	297.4	628.4	85.1	765.6	92.4	303.7	118.6	154.4	552.2	70.3	255.5	194.3	135.8	232.0
60	243.7	246.8	271.0	352.4	310.6	339.9	361.5	97.9	467.3	64.1	342.5	123.1	200.2	565.5	76.1	227.9	167.1	199.5	262.0
61	209.5	208.1	215.8	277.4	298.4	428.5	263.7	75.7	361.8	47.2	292.2	147.3	194.8	356.7	59.7	171.7	178.8	236.2	217.6
62	235.4	184.2	211.5	207.7	373.3	499.1	208.9	80.0	246.9	34.8	468.8	172.9	188.8	340.9	52.6	171.0	199.2	276.3	204.3
63	191.8	173.3	216.1	160.3	369.0	704.3	165.5	91.2	225.3	35.6	313.3	163.5	175.4	211.0	60.1	152.3	209.8	282.6	201.4

Table B1.2 (continued): Weekly evolution: weekly number of confirmed COVID-19 cases for 100,000 persons from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021, ESPN countries

WEEKS	EU-27	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE		UK		AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
1	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:		:		:	:	:	:	:	:	:
2	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:		:		:	:	:	:	:	:	:
3	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:		:		:	:	:	:	:	:	:
4	0.3	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	0.1	0.1		0.1		:	:	:	:	0.0	:	:
5	1.7	0.7	1.1	:	0.2	:	:	0.3	1.0	1.6		0.5		:	0.1	:	:	0.1	0.0	:
6	7.5	3.4	4.5	0.3	1.5	0.6	0.8	8.4	12.6	8.1		3.2		1.3	0.5	0.1	:	0.5	0.7	0.0
7	20.8	12.5	15.6	1.1	10.9	1.3	2.5	9.7	40.6	8.7		9.4		1.3	2.3	1.1	2.2	3.4	1.8	0.8
8	40.3	17.2	36.1	2.9	38.1	5.6	2.1	14.5	102.4	17.8		26.6		4.2	5.0	3.3	11.1	7.5	7.2	8.0
9	39.6	14.5	40.3	5.3	52.5	11.2	3.3	14.1	113.2	31.4		45.2		4.7	11.2	2.4	18.6	11.6	14.2	19.6
10	33.6	35.6	45.8	7.2	53.6	12.4	4.7	10.1	78.8	35.8		47.9		3.5	9.8	5.9	9.9	13.3	25.8	33.5
11	45.1	12.7	42.0	6.3	36.3	12.6	6.6	6.2	61.4	37.9		47.5		4.0	9.8	11.9	7.0	19.7	38.4	35.8
12	20.9	5.0	32.8	6.7	36.4	11.5	5.2	3.4	30.3	42.5		48.5		5.7	6.6	11.5	2.1	9.5	26.2	30.2
13	14.6	4.5	17.8	5.6	17.6	10.9	0.6	2.5	22.8	38.3		46.1		2.7	10.8	5.7	0.3	6.7	23.3	19.7
14	11.5	5.0	12.5	6.0	21.7	12.5	0.9	0.7	15.0	41.0		33.7		2.3	7.7	2.5	0.3	5.6	9.8	15.1
15	8.7	12.7	8.7	6.9	13.8	8.2	0.7	0.5	15.2	38.5		29.2		2.7	5.4	4.8	:	6.7	6.8	13.0
16	7.1	14.3	7.0	7.1	16.3	6.0	0.2	0.1	9.8	36.7		24.0		1.9	3.8	3.6	:	8.6	8.8	9.0
17	6.9	2.0	7.0	7.0	17.0	6.6	0.3	0.2	8.4	41.8		15.9		4.6	3.1	2.0	:	10.7	4.2	8.8
18	5.4	2.0	6.3	6.4	21.1	6.0	0.1	0.5	4.5	57.7		12.5		3.8	3.4	4.9	:	36.0	5.3	7.3
19	6.1	4.3	7.6	8.0	20.7	7.2	0.3	0.4	4.9	71.1		10.5		8.1	8.7	11.7	:	47.0	7.5	8.8
20	6.5	4.1	5.0	6.9	23.3	10.7	0.8	1.3	5.0	71.2		9.7		14.8	11.6	31.8	5.6	53.3	8.1	11.6
21	6.7	1.4	3.3	5.5	23.0	11.9	1.3	2.5	5.4	73.0		7.6		15.3	20.2	25.7	17.5	43.2	14.5	11.1

WEEKS	EU-27	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
22	5.8	0.5	2.8	5.3	23.3	13.3	1.7	5.1	4.4	43.5	3.9	17.0	31.3	35.4	40.0	49.2	29.9	10.3
23	6.1	0.5	2.2	4.8	26.0	18.2	2.6	7.1	7.2	23.8	6.0	19.2	53.6	69.0	70.7	50.1	33.0	8.7
24	7.2	0.2	3.9	5.9	21.3	24.0	1.5	5.4	13.6	16.5	7.6	22.1	44.0	57.2	144.6	50.4	35.6	8.0
25	10.2	2.5	6.9	7.6	15.3	36.3	3.0	6.1	26.0	13.7	6.8	21.9	49.0	67.3	107.5	43.6	34.6	7.7
26	12.9	36.0	11.9	9.8	13.3	43.8	3.6	5.1	34.4	15.4	7.8	26.4	64.3	84.7	71.8	45.9	44.5	7.9
27	17.0	43.0	21.6	12.7	12.0	44.2	4.2	3.7	55.3	19.6	8.7	30.5	55.2	77.9	62.1	41.4	29.1	9.2
28	20.8	70.9	30.2	13.0	14.2	45.5	5.3	7.4	60.9	20.4	11.4	34.2	64.4	62.9	59.2	43.2	23.6	10.1
29	25.7	51.9	24.3	13.5	14.4	42.5	8.4	10.4	92.5	16.8	10.8	35.3	58.3	54.9	56.2	38.6	15.8	10.6
30	31.2	61.1	23.8	13.4	19.6	43.1	9.6	10.4	113.9	8.4	12.3	34.9	55.9	45.4	65.9	40.1	10.8	11.9
31	36.1	37.8	27.9	11.0	24.5	41.7	12.5	13.9	127.7	10.2	17.1	28.6	57.6	42.0	110.7	33.8	8.3	13.2
32	44.1	58.9	45.5	8.6	33.0	44.3	17.0	23.1	144.0	15.1	31.1	37.6	51.8	27.9	176.4	33.4	6.6	13.5
33	53.2	96.3	67.4	12.4	46.2	47.6	20.0	34.0	157.7	17.1	37.2	36.2	63.4	22.6	217.8	41.4	7.9	13.9
34	62.5	58.7	100.7	20.2	48.2	50.3	37.6	42.4	163.5	26.6	57.4	32.2	48.2	21.9	366.0	44.4	6.9	13.8
35	67.4	55.7	138.2	32.1	52.1	66.7	68.2	54.8	157.1	33.3	74.9	33.5	35.9	17.2	276.6	53.7	7.8	11.9
36	95.4	108.0	214.2	62.1	71.9	95.3	118.6	92.5	152.2	41.3	163.4	38.7	72.2	19.2	271.8	93.7	12.4	13.1
37	139.7	182.3	303.9	120.5	122.4	125.1	173.5	200.3	161.4	47.0	169.0	53.6	98.0	32.3	284.4	127.0	18.5	13.8
38	211.9	200.9	357.5	197.4	177.1	152.4	229.6	426.1	234.4	73.2	219.1	72.4	188.9	51.9	191.4	153.3	43.0	16.7
39	293.5	151.5	410.9	319.1	246.8	184.8	308.9	626.9	298.5	136.3	232.4	70.1	314.9	81.3	272.6	248.5	118.8	18.5
40	340.5	225.8	312.0	419.9	316.4	289.3	293.1	479.2	306.2	218.9	235.7	98.3	339.0	186.6	642.9	346.1	201.1	19.4
41	295.2	198.8	224.1	447.8	370.0	292.1	218.0	473.9	277.5	305.9	255.0	122.6	295.3	254.4	685.8	349.4	300.5	22.9
42	270.5	205.0	217.8	402.6	438.4	309.9	177.5	488.8	209.9	306.4	219.8	172.5	256.3	296.8	631.6	363.3	514.9	35.3
43	219.6	178.2	203.2	343.8	340.7	276.4	171.7	479.7	152.9	344.9	165.0	159.6	225.6	250.6	605.2	340.4	689.4	163.1
44	191.6	184.4	222.2	213.2	274.0	220.2	198.4	505.9	120.7	354.3	149.1	186.2	215.1	202.1	545.3	316.2	746.7	260.3
45	193.8	153.6	314.6	191.4	255.6	226.4	280.8	515.0	98.2	407.8	185.0	194.4	199.3	195.6	488.6	274.3	699.4	223.7

WEEKS	EU-27	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE		UK		AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
46	209.2	117.8	429.7	178.1	255.8	187.4	338.5	458.5	142.6	465.6		256.5		166.8	159.0	132.7	439.6	236.3	515.7	230.6
47	179.7	140.4	453.2	158.1	217.8	134.2	318.2	441.1	123.4	286.4		372.2		111.6	116.0	89.1	416.8	166.8	394.4	153.1
48	184.7	171.2	352.2	155.4	302.8	122.9	358.9	488.7	156.8	409.2		507.9		112.4	85.7	56.8	402.7	113.5	272.4	117.0
49	232.3	275.2	310.4	168.1	513.1	160.1	347.9	681.8	261.1	515.8		616.9		140.5	98.6	91.2	500.4	113.3	209.0	100.9
50	216.0	279.7	240.8	140.6	620.1	121.0	320.8	482.8	431.6	336.8		501.9		145.4	49.7	96.8	499.5	124.7	221.8	75.3
51	209.0	248.0	218.9	109.0	834.1	92.0	216.5	420.3	529.1	234.5		384.0		146.8	73.4	112.9	444.7	82.7	162.7	51.8
52	201.5	267.0	181.7	99.9	848.8	92.1	249.4	413.4	520.9	196.0		264.0		201.9	63.3	120.5	521.1	98.3	170.6	55.2
53	174.7	193.6	159.9	97.4	499.1	85.4	248.8	351.8	425.3	209.0		197.8		241.9	59.0	105.7	563.2	99.9	183.0	63.9
54	146.2	243.5	141.9	100.6	217.5	87.1	264.9	286.1	243.9	201.5		143.9		270.2	60.0	109.5	595.0	109.1	193.1	65.3
55	143.4	251.6	154.4	127.1	120.2	89.3	260.5	250.3	164.9	225.3		116.1		245.8	65.1	85.1	496.3	103.6	215.0	61.6
56	165.4	330.0	188.8	172.2	73.6	113.8	289.6	253.7	118.6	258.9		95.8		248.6	104.9	155.3	595.3	165.6	328.1	72.7
57	160.1	452.3	185.7	223.2	54.6	134.3	290.1	262.6	84.6	273.8		63.5		203.7	138.2	214.7	621.8	208.8	381.3	90.2
58	197.6	464.5	211.4	285.4	42.2	157.7	258.8	229.3	74.2	273.0		60.6		164.8	202.6	179.5	625.4	253.2	435.8	114.8
59	227.0	370.7	259.8	389.3	33.0	195.0	214.5	272.0	61.2	314.3		55.7		129.3	279.7	218.6	575.9	318.2	512.1	150.2
60	243.7	86.3	309.5	512.2	30.4	197.8	139.9	355.0	97.6	328.5		41.7		88.3	348.9	357.4	396.5	379.4	481.3	315.3
61	209.5	81.3	286.6	362.8	37.1	169.7	107.2	314.1	99.6	437.8		16.9		68.5	257.5	248.7	288.7	337.1	369.0	418.9
62	235.4	85.8	314.3	324.9	35.6	125.7	89.1	271.4	127.8	423.2		27.0		45.2	215.4	229.9	213.7	267.6	306.0	491.2
63	191.8	50.3	340.1	200.2	33.4	91.9	75.8	241.5	131.2	378.3		25.8		33.1	174.9	123.7	178.6	170.0	259.7	449.1

Table B2.1: Total number of COVID-19 deaths for 100,000 persons and cumulative number of deaths from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021, ESPN countries

Source:	OWID online database on COVID-19 – own calculations
Measurement:	(Total number of COVID-19 deaths / population) * 100,000
Geographical coverage:	All ESPN countries
Updating:	Daily – download 26 April 2021
Time:	63 weeks: from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021
Breakdowns:	None
Comments:	See Table B1.1 for more information on the OWID database
	Population-weighted average for EU-27

GEO	Deaths for 100,000 persons	Contextual data : Cumulative total number of deaths on 18 April 2021
EU-27	151	661,284
Austria	112	9,898
Belgium	207	23,747
Bulgaria	229	15,195
Croatia	167	6,562
Cyprus	34	291
Czechia	270	28,426
Denmark	43	2,456
Estonia	86	1,092
Finland	16	887
France	151	100,892
Germany	97	80,052
Greece	96	9,462
Hungary	276	25,184
Ireland	99	4,836
Italy	197	116,927
Latvia	111	2,053
Lithuania	141	3,760
Luxembourg	126	785
Malta	94	409
Netherlands	101	17,127
Poland	173	62,032
Portugal	166	16,945
Romania	142	26,232
Slovakia	211	11,106
Slovenia	202	4,159
Spain	166	76,981
Sweden	138	13,788
United Kingdom	188	127,518
Albania	83	2,342
Bosnia and Herzegovina	250	7,788
Kosovo	110	2,080
Montenegro	233	1,429
North Macedonia	224	4,443
Serbia	92	5,991
Turkey	45	35,926

Table B2.2: Weekly evolution: weekly number of COVID-19 deaths for 100,000 persons from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021, ESPN countries

Source:	OWID online database on COVID-19 – own calculations
Measurement:	(Total number of new COVID-19 deaths in week / population) * 100,000
Geographical coverage:	All ESPN countries
Updating:	Daily – download 26 April 2021
Time:	63 weeks: from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021
Breakdowns	None
Comments:	See Table B1.1 for more information on the OWID database
	Population-weighted average for EU-27

WEEKS	EU-27	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE	IT	LV	LT	LU
1	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
2	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
3	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
4	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	0.04	:	:	:
5	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	0.02	:	:	:	:	0.34	:	:	:
6	0.34	0.01	0.03	0.03	:	:	:	0.02	:	:	0.11	0.01	0.03	:	0.04	2.00	:	:	0.16
7	1.21	0.08	0.54	0.01	0.02	:	:	0.21	:	0.02	0.69	0.09	0.10	0.04	0.02	5.60	0.00	:	1.12
8	2.96	0.67	2.47	0.06	0.10	0.57	0.10	0.90	0.08	0.14	2.57	0.42	0.18	0.07	0.67	8.60	0.00	0.15	1.60
9	4.55	1.31	8.02	0.14	0.17	0.69	0.45	1.66	0.90	0.29	7.70	1.21	0.35	0.22	2.05	8.83	0.05	0.11	2.08
10	4.68	1.68	17.80	0.16	0.22	0.11	0.65	1.71	0.83	0.43	9.21	1.54	0.24	0.55	3.71	6.79	0.11	0.22	4.95
11	4.29	1.18	18.18	0.19	0.44	0.23	0.49	1.48	1.06	0.74	8.03	2.06	0.16	0.90	5.08	6.22	0.11	0.33	1.60
12	3.39	1.03	12.63	0.20	0.37	0.23	0.35	1.24	0.60	1.73	4.82	1.69	0.19	0.93	9.96	5.22	0.37	0.26	2.08
13	2.35	0.67	7.32	0.24	0.56	0.11	0.25	0.98	0.53	0.61	3.19	1.12	0.12	0.76	4.52	3.85	0.21	0.15	1.12

WEEKS	EU-27	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE	IT	LV	LT	LU
14	1.78	0.21	7.04	0.26	0.24	0.00	0.29	0.88	0.53	0.81	2.27	0.88	0.08	0.72	3.24	2.79	0.11	0.07	1.44
15	1.32	0.16	3.66	0.22	0.19	0.23	0.19	0.29	0.23	0.58	1.93	0.46	0.11	0.45	1.76	2.26	0.05	0.26	0.48
16	0.98	0.11	2.00	0.30	0.10	0.00	0.17	0.31	0.08	0.16	1.21	0.39	0.09	0.35	1.44	1.61	0.16	0.18	0.80
17	0.18	0.32	1.86	0.19	0.10	0.00	0.05	0.17	0.23	0.18	0.47	0.32	0.04	0.43	0.95	1.00	0.11	0.26	0.16
18	0.41	0.04	1.10	0.30	0.02	0.11	0.07	0.28	0.15	0.11	0.54	0.17	0.05	0.22	0.55	0.84	0.05	0.04	0.00
19	0.32	0.06	0.60	0.17	0.07	0.00	0.01	0.17	0.00	0.05	0.38	0.14	0.03	0.14	0.55	0.75	0.16	0.15	0.00
20	0.54	0.12	0.40	0.39	0.00	0.11	0.07	0.05	0.00	0.02	0.35	0.12	0.07	0.11	0.20	0.51	0.11	0.04	0.00
21	0.20	0.13	0.31	0.24	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.07	0.00	0.04	0.21	0.09	0.01	0.08	0.38	0.18	0.00	0.04	0.00
22	0.20	0.06	0.34	0.36	0.15	0.00	0.02	0.03	0.00	0.02	0.17	0.06	0.01	0.11	0.14	0.23	0.00	0.04	0.00
23	0.16	0.01	0.09	0.37	0.12	0.00	0.01	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.06	0.01	0.06	0.10	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.00
24	0.15	0.06	0.16	0.46	0.05	0.00	0.06	0.03	0.00	0.02	0.21	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.14	0.16	0.05	0.04	0.16
25	0.13	0.01	0.18	0.56	0.32	0.00	0.10	0.03	0.00	0.02	0.06	0.04	0.07	0.00	0.22	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.16
26	0.14	0.07	0.21	0.68	0.29	0.00	0.13	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.04	0.05	0.01	0.02	0.07	0.05	0.00	0.64
27	0.17	0.03	0.22	0.86	0.29	0.00	0.06	0.03	0.45	0.04	0.09	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.18	0.09	0.00	0.04	0.64
28	0.23	0.08	0.56	0.72	0.19	0.11	0.06	0.07	0.00	0.04	0.12	0.04	0.14	0.05	0.04	0.31	0.00	0.00	0.48
29	0.22	0.04	0.46	0.63	0.12	0.00	0.15	0.02	0.00	0.02	0.15	0.04	0.13	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.11	0.16
30	0.18	0.01	0.84	0.95	0.32	0.00	0.09	0.03	0.08	0.02	0.14	0.03	0.19	0.03	0.00	0.07	0.05	0.07	0.00
31	0.27	0.02	0.13	0.95	0.34	0.11	0.09	0.05	0.00	0.02	0.14	0.04	0.19	0.10	0.00	0.10	0.05	0.00	0.00
32	0.27	0.21	0.15	0.66	0.51	0.11	0.21	0.05	0.00	0.02	0.32	0.03	0.21	0.09	0.12	0.11	0.00	0.04	0.00
33	0.43	0.12	0.18	0.55	0.63	0.00	0.43	0.09	0.00	0.04	0.53	0.04	0.28	0.43	0.18	0.15	0.05	0.04	0.00
34	0.51	0.24	0.26	0.49	0.61	0.00	0.86	0.22	0.00	0.07	0.63	0.08	0.43	0.57	0.20	0.21	0.00	0.11	0.00
35	0.58	0.24	0.60	0.75	0.58	0.00	1.12	0.10	0.23	0.04	0.71	0.09	0.28	0.85	0.16	0.25	0.11	0.22	0.16
36	0.73	0.48	1.13	0.72	0.58	0.34	2.21	0.22	0.08	0.02	0.72	0.11	0.30	1.25	0.28	0.28	0.11	0.26	0.96
37	1.00	0.41	1.87	1.11	0.93	0.00	3.77	0.21	0.00	0.09	1.05	0.20	0.61	1.82	0.51	0.55	0.16	0.40	0.32
38	1.54	0.84	2.98	1.67	1.80	0.00	6.77	0.36	0.38	0.04	1.87	0.30	0.61	2.91	0.67	1.22	0.58	0.66	1.28
39	2.43	1.60	7.66	2.81	2.85	0.11	10.96	0.36	0.00	0.09	3.17	0.53	0.59	3.73	0.63	2.33	0.90	1.32	1.76

WEEKS	EU-27	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE	IT	LV	LT	LU
40	4.06	2.98	11.06	5.08	5.02	1.03	13.35	0.33	0.00	0.07	4.98	0.98	1.18	6.28	0.65	4.04	1.33	1.58	4.47
41	4.63	4.10	12.05	6.61	6.19	0.46	12.86	0.29	0.53	0.13	6.00	1.44	2.74	6.55	0.67	5.99	1.33	3.16	6.23
42	5.25	6.46	10.52	10.49	7.26	0.46	9.68	0.41	0.53	0.11	6.28	1.85	4.72	7.24	0.89	7.57	1.70	4.81	6.55
43	5.58	7.66	8.10	13.37	8.55	0.57	8.96	0.73	1.66	0.32	5.31	2.53	6.68	8.56	0.57	8.44	2.12	5.84	6.39
44	5.45	8.21	6.84	14.10	10.89	1.03	7.11	0.95	1.28	0.40	4.20	3.17	6.51	12.32	0.99	8.52	3.18	7.16	7.19
45	5.13	7.31	4.64	12.91	11.21	2.06	5.93	0.98	1.66	0.69	4.10	3.65	6.12	11.16	0.49	7.48	3.76	8.04	7.51
46	5.50	8.82	6.50	13.31	13.13	1.60	7.67	1.45	1.66	0.65	3.92	5.10	5.39	11.70	0.63	7.30	5.46	10.29	6.71
47	4.38	7.04	5.29	8.23	12.47	2.51	6.34	2.31	2.56	0.63	3.17	4.51	4.33	10.73	0.93	5.25	4.67	11.24	3.83
48	4.73	4.80	4.19	7.50	9.82	2.06	8.19	3.31	2.79	0.67	3.45	5.41	3.53	8.59	1.05	5.57	8.11	11.64	5.91
49	5.24	4.57	3.40	6.52	7.94	2.06	10.75	3.42	2.79	0.45	3.94	7.30	2.94	8.00	1.70	5.64	7.95	10.51	5.11
50	5.33	4.06	3.09	5.43	5.99	2.28	11.55	3.54	3.17	0.58	3.74	7.00	2.05	7.35	5.25	5.63	7.58	9.00	3.51
51	5.33	3.73	2.85	4.85	5.14	1.83	9.85	3.83	3.62	0.47	4.02	6.46	1.74	6.63	7.13	5.56	7.21	7.79	2.08
52	5.35	3.49	2.93	3.12	4.85	1.60	8.79	2.37	3.24	0.49	4.38	6.24	1.51	5.79	6.99	5.16	4.40	5.88	2.40
53	5.04	3.23	2.47	4.07	3.56	1.60	8.57	1.88	3.39	0.31	4.31	5.31	1.65	5.83	7.74	4.51	7.79	5.00	2.08
54	4.53	2.23	2.43	4.27	3.78	1.03	8.67	1.19	2.64	0.40	4.19	4.10	1.46	6.31	5.20	3.89	6.15	4.78	2.56
55	3.77	1.92	2.18	3.32	2.95	1.03	9.70	0.85	2.79	0.29	3.63	3.45	1.62	6.38	4.13	3.52	5.04	3.86	2.56
56	3.42	1.89	1.42	4.72	2.22	0.23	10.24	0.43	4.22	0.29	3.21	2.64	1.88	6.73	3.60	3.34	4.03	2.64	2.40
57	3.40	1.73	1.62	6.13	1.80	0.11	12.74	0.33	4.52	0.45	3.14	2.22	2.27	8.93	2.15	3.43	3.87	3.20	2.40
58	3.30	1.80	1.56	9.23	2.07	0.69	14.24	0.22	4.98	0.34	2.61	1.69	3.19	10.61	2.33	3.81	3.71	2.50	4.63
59	3.39	2.18	1.98	10.53	2.02	0.46	13.51	0.16	5.28	0.34	2.82	1.60	3.67	13.23	1.03	4.57	3.39	2.76	5.27
60	3.72	2.25	2.24	12.33	3.73	1.26	10.17	0.26	5.35	0.52	2.66	1.31	4.57	18.14	1.26	5.07	2.70	2.31	1.92
61	3.91	2.53	2.57	12.15	5.94	1.26	8.10	0.19	6.71	0.40	2.60	1.66	5.09	17.67	1.38	5.32	3.34	2.53	2.08
62	4.04	2.31	2.50	11.33	6.19	1.83	6.18	0.22	4.67	0.34	3.73	1.87	5.41	18.30	1.05	4.55	3.29	2.94	3.51
63	3.66	2.22	2.35	10.38	7.11	1.14	4.89	0.38	4.15	0.29	3.11	1.96	5.31	14.92	0.75	3.88	2.81	3.31	0.80

Table B2.2 (continued): Weekly evolution: weekly number of COVID-19 deaths for 100,000 persons from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021, ESPN countries

WEEKS	EU-27	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
1	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
2	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
3	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
4	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
5	:	:	0.01	:	:	:	:	:	0.02	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
6	0.34	:	0.06	0.01	:	:	:	0.05	0.40	0.05	0.04	0.03	:	:	:	:	:	:
7	1.21	:	0.73	0.01	0.12	:	:	:	2.52	0.44	0.33	0.03	0.03	:	:	:	0.01	0.01
8	2.96	:	2.94	0.03	0.86	0.19	:	0.38	9.85	1.88	1.79	0.28	0.12	0.05	0.16	0.19	0.13	0.12
9	4.55	:	5.93	0.16	1.63	0.57	0.02	0.63	12.76	1.33	5.62	0.35	0.49	0.00	0.16	0.62	0.50	0.47
10	4.68	0.68	5.82	0.34	2.00	0.75	0.02	1.35	9.96	5.09	9.42	0.10	0.49	0.31	0.00	0.82	0.44	0.71
11	4.29	:	5.60	0.37	2.13	0.68	0.16	0.96	7.35	6.18	9.44	0.10	0.30	0.26	0.48	0.72	0.63	0.94
12	3.39	0.23	4.73	0.47	1.89	0.94	0.11	0.53	6.11	6.74	8.26	0.03	0.30	0.36	0.16	0.48	0.50	0.97
13	2.35	:	3.38	0.37	1.40	0.88	0.13	0.63	4.70	4.72	6.41	0.14	0.46	0.16	0.32	1.10	0.56	0.75
14	1.78	0.23	2.56	0.32	1.01	0.87	0.04	0.34	2.95	5.46	4.73	0.00	0.91	0.31	0.00	0.43	0.38	0.48
15	1.32	0.23	1.45	0.34	0.76	0.81	0.04	0.10	2.32	4.50	3.80	0.00	0.82	0.05	0.16	0.34	0.19	0.42
16	0.98	0.00	0.82	0.21	0.97	0.43	0.00	0.14	2.38	3.15	2.69	0.00	0.37	0.00	0.00	0.72	0.15	0.25
17	0.18	0.68	0.82	0.18	0.92	0.43	0.00	0.10	3.32	3.99	2.66	0.07	0.37	0.05	0.00	0.86	0.06	0.25
18	0.41	:	0.35	0.24	0.76	0.33	0.00	0.05	0.02	2.58	1.74	0.03	0.18	0.00	0.00	0.96	0.09	0.18
19	0.32	:	0.27	0.22	0.37	0.37	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.16	1.14	0.07	0.12	0.05	0.00	1.34	0.07	0.15
20	0.54	:	0.19	0.29	0.16	0.55	0.00	0.00	2.54	1.77	0.75	0.24	0.18	0.16	0.00	2.59	0.10	0.16
21	0.20	:	0.09	0.24	0.32	0.46	0.00	0.00	0.04	2.25	0.65	0.35	0.27	0.52	0.00	2.11	0.10	0.18
22	0.20	:	0.12	0.20	0.43	0.74	0.00	0.10	0.09	1.39	0.48	0.73	0.40	0.72	0.80	2.74	0.57	0.15
23	0.16	:	0.06	0.15	0.48	0.73	0.00	0.00	0.04	1.05	0.33	0.52	0.85	2.02	1.43	2.02	1.12	0.16

WEEKS	EU-27	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
24	0.15	:	0.01	0.13	0.29	0.72	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.92	0.22	0.76	0.82	1.71	1.11	1.82	1.16	0.16
25	0.13	:	0.02	0.12	0.31	0.81	0.00	0.24	0.03	0.77	0.18	0.80	1.04	2.02	2.07	2.21	0.84	0.14
26	0.14	:	0.05	0.15	0.21	1.11	0.02	0.14	0.03	0.46	0.15	0.94	1.80	3.47	1.11	1.58	0.94	0.14
27	0.17	:	0.06	0.21	0.13	1.46	0.04	0.34	0.12	0.20	0.10	1.11	1.68	4.14	1.91	1.44	0.73	0.14
28	0.23	:	0.08	0.18	0.25	1.53	0.00	0.14	0.24	0.20	0.13	1.11	2.35	3.83	2.07	0.77	0.56	0.15
29	0.22	0.23	0.20	0.22	0.19	1.45	0.04	0.10	0.47	0.27	0.09	0.69	1.86	3.47	1.43	1.15	0.37	0.17
30	0.18	0.00	0.16	0.21	0.24	1.59	0.00	0.10	0.37	0.11	0.11	1.04	1.89	2.64	1.43	1.58	0.22	0.22
31	0.27	0.91	0.13	0.21	0.20	1.62	0.07	0.10	0.87	0.14	0.08	1.29	1.74	2.48	2.23	0.86	0.19	0.40
32	0.27	0.23	0.09	0.18	0.22	1.44	0.02	0.00	0.70	0.11	0.11	0.63	1.19	1.71	1.75	1.54	0.12	0.45
33	0.43	0.91	0.17	0.26	0.38	1.43	0.02	0.29	1.60	0.19	0.20	0.97	2.07	1.29	2.55	2.06	0.13	0.53
34	0.51	2.72	0.55	0.38	0.44	1.48	0.09	0.24	1.58	0.15	0.31	0.59	1.89	0.26	3.82	1.58	0.09	0.57
35	0.58	1.59	0.51	0.48	0.50	1.35	0.18	0.43	1.83	0.15	0.51	0.59	1.55	0.57	2.55	1.49	0.10	0.54
36	0.73	0.68	0.71	0.97	0.71	2.14	0.13	0.58	1.80	0.01	0.65	0.83	1.71	0.78	3.82	1.54	0.13	0.47
37	1.00	0.91	1.01	1.46	0.93	2.36	0.38	0.82	1.81	0.24	1.21	1.11	1.65	0.36	5.25	1.87	0.18	0.53
38	1.54	1.13	1.66	2.19	1.32	2.63	1.41	2.45	2.09	0.15	1.72	0.87	2.87	0.47	5.10	3.50	0.22	0.60
39	2.43	2.72	2.21	3.38	2.06	3.38	1.10	4.95	2.41	0.05	2.67	1.25	4.85	0.88	6.05	4.66	0.46	0.62
40	4.06	2.72	3.32	5.30	3.34	4.29	2.42	9.28	6.32	0.83	3.44	1.67	7.80	2.79	5.10	5.57	0.88	0.65
41	4.63	4.76	2.85	6.37	4.48	5.30	2.91	11.26	4.14	1.41	4.24	1.91	11.19	3.41	8.28	8.21	1.60	0.73
42	5.25	3.62	2.51	8.57	5.09	5.73	2.45	12.55	3.96	2.40	4.22	2.54	11.86	5.48	7.80	9.89	2.63	0.95
43	5.58	4.76	2.67	9.14	5.29	5.87	2.82	14.91	4.38	2.72	5.02	3.54	10.06	4.40	7.48	10.18	4.64	1.37
44	5.45	3.85	1.98	8.23	5.03	5.93	3.35	17.51	3.39	3.82	4.40	3.54	10.55	5.07	7.80	9.70	5.98	1.58
45	5.13	3.85	2.11	7.44	5.74	5.60	3.06	16.40	2.93	4.43	4.44	3.47	11.46	5.12	7.64	9.36	5.64	1.77
46	5.50	4.76	2.58	6.81	5.90	5.36	6.63	13.13	2.78	4.74	4.50	2.95	9.97	3.21	7.32	8.54	5.25	1.96
47	4.38	4.30	3.01	4.77	4.83	4.22	4.07	10.49	1.92	2.83	4.91	2.40	9.08	2.95	5.41	7.34	5.16	2.10
48	4.73	3.17	3.49	5.28	4.80	4.22	9.49	11.64	2.17	4.44	6.14	1.63	4.97	1.60	4.14	4.56	4.48	1.98

WEEKS	EU-27	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
49	5.24	2.72	4.35	5.16	6.43	3.50	10.73	9.57	2.22	6.99	9.31	1.49	6.68	1.66	5.89	4.42	3.31	1.58
50	5.33	1.36	3.85	5.82	9.89	2.97	10.64	8.03	3.08	8.81	11.41	1.29	3.23	1.60	3.50	3.94	3.19	1.42
51	5.33	2.72	3.21	5.39	14.56	2.90	10.04	9.09	4.55	6.75	12.92	1.39	4.39	2.48	3.66	3.98	2.03	1.31
52	5.35	3.40	2.64	4.83	19.47	2.82	10.99	7.74	6.16	5.80	12.17	2.05	3.78	2.07	5.73	3.31	1.94	1.11
53	5.04	3.17	2.33	5.05	17.41	2.83	10.44	5.87	6.56	5.19	9.62	2.68	2.93	1.66	5.41	3.26	1.65	0.97
54	4.53	2.49	2.60	4.53	12.05	2.68	12.40	4.47	7.19	3.10	7.10	3.37	3.23	1.09	7.32	2.88	1.50	0.82
55	3.77	2.94	2.39	3.61	7.00	2.44	11.21	3.08	5.03	2.19	5.10	3.82	2.99	0.93	9.08	3.41	1.57	0.72
56	3.42	2.26	2.01	4.17	3.72	2.56	11.92	3.22	4.37	1.75	3.46	4.24	2.80	1.76	9.55	3.79	1.59	0.62
57	3.40	3.62	1.53	3.97	2.31	2.95	12.16	2.50	4.27	1.75	2.53	4.97	4.79	2.48	9.55	2.83	1.66	0.55
58	3.30	4.76	1.43	5.04	1.54	3.04	12.84	1.97	2.40	1.42	1.54	3.89	6.64	2.48	10.03	5.52	2.23	0.54
59	3.39	4.30	1.28	5.52	0.91	3.60	9.85	1.83	1.39	1.15	0.97	3.58	9.97	3.31	11.46	7.10	3.03	0.64
60	3.72	2.72	1.02	7.88	0.47	5.07	9.56	2.74	1.47	0.95	0.38	1.81	16.55	4.19	9.87	12.62	3.98	1.37
61	3.91	1.13	1.01	9.09	0.34	5.37	9.87	2.12	1.35	1.22	0.38	1.88	16.31	3.93	9.87	13.30	4.09	1.93
62	4.04	1.59	1.02	9.64	0.31	5.54	10.18	1.97	1.40	1.65	0.27	1.04	14.94	4.81	9.87	11.38	3.73	2.26
63	3.66	0.68	0.90	8.98	0.17	6.21	7.60	2.41	1.30	1.34	0.24	1.11	12.65	2.79	5.73	11.09	3.56	2.85

Table B3.1: Ratio of number of tests conducted to number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021, ESPN countries

Source:	OWID online database on COVID-19 – own calculations
Measurement:	Total cumulated number of tests in the period / total cumulated number of cases in the period
Geographical coverage:	EU-27 countries, UK, AL, BA, MK, RS and TR
Updating:	Daily – download 26 April 2021
Time:	63 weeks: from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021
Breakdowns	None
Comments:	See Table B1.1 for more information on the OWID database
	Population-weighted average for EU-27 No data for the tests per cases ratio for ME and XK in the OWID database
	For AT, OWID has stopped computing the test per case ratio since January 2021 due to comparability issues regarding the new method of counting used by Austrian authorities that is no longer comparable to the case definition that it uses to report confirmed cases for the year 2020

GEO	Ratio total No. of tests to total No. of cases
EU-27	15.3
Austria	47.2
Belgium	12.3
Bulgaria	6.1
Croatia	5.5
Cyprus	80.2
Czechia	10.0
Denmark	95.7
Estonia	10.5
Finland	50.2
France	13.1
Germany	16.3
Greece	22.4
Hungary	6.3
Ireland	17.3
Italy	14.4
Latvia	18.8
Lithuania	11.0
Luxembourg	38.9
Malta	28.5
Netherlands	5.8
Poland	4.8
Portugal	11.7
Romania	6.9
Slovakia	82.8
Slovenia	4.9
Spain	11.1
Sweden	8.5
United Kingdom	31.7
Albania	4.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4.4
Kosovo	:
Montenegro	:
North Macedonia	4.6
Serbia	5.4
Turkey	12.0

Table B3.2: Weekly 7-day rolling averages of the ratio of number of tests conducted to number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021, ESPN countries

Source:	OWID online database on COVID-19 – own calculations
Measurement:	The OWID "tests per confirmed case" variable provides the "smoothed" daily number of tests for each new confirmed case. Under the assumption that testing changed equally on a daily basis over any periods in which no data were reported, OWID produces a complete series of daily figures, which is then averaged over a rolling 7-day window. For most countries, it is available for each day. For two countries (DE and NL), it is only provided for Sundays. Therefore, for all countries, data shown are 7-day rolling averages computed on Sundays. For example, the information provided for the last week of observation is the 7-day rolling average calculated on Sunday 18 April 2021 - i.e. the 7-day rolling average for the period from Monday 12 April 2021 to Sunday 18 April 2021.
Geographical coverage:	EU-27 countries, UK, AL, BA, MK, RS and TR
Updating:	Daily – download 26 April 2021
Time:	63 weeks: from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021
Breakdowns	None
Comments:	See Table B1.1 for more information on the OWID database
	No data for the tests per cases ratio for ME and XK in the OWID database
	Population-weighted average for EU-27
	For AT, OWID has stopped computing the test per case ratio since January 2021 due to comparability issues regarding the new method of counting used by Austrian authorities that is no longer comparable to the case definition that it uses to report confirmed cases for the year 2020.

WEEKS	EU-27	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE	IT	LV	LT	LU
1	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
2	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
3	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
4	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
5	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
6	2.8	:	14.7	:	:	:	:	24.4	27.2	22.2	:	:	:	:	:	5.1	108.4	:	14.0
7	7.0	:	10.5	:	11.4	:	:	5.9	7.5	10.9	:	17.2	9.8	35.0	:	4.3	36.0	:	9.4
8	7.0	:	4.5	:	8.1	:	:	11.5	17.3	20.3	:	14.5	13.7	32.4	:	3.9	47.9	:	5.6
9	5.9	:	3.1	:	7.6	:	:	9.5	21.0	16.9	:	11.4	13.4	27.8	9.4	5.1	34.8	21.7	8.4
10	6.8	:	3.5	:	10.6	19.3	:	14.1	26.7	18.5	:	11.1	17.8	28.0	5.8	7.6	37.0	35.7	8.3
11	9.0	19.3	4.6	:	13.2	37.3	:	15.3	45.5	15.5	:	12.5	44.3	18.1	7.9	11.6	63.8	43.5	10.6
12	13.6	42.7	6.7	31.6	28.8	119.9	:	23.2	50.9	20.9	:	14.9	95.5	25.3	5.0	15.3	100.9	62.5	18.6
13	21.2	101.6	14.1	27.1	46.8	286.7	:	65.3	74.8	29.3	:	20.0	38.3	29.4	8.8	21.4	138.1	142.9	32.7
14	42.9	125.6	34.5	35.3	97.9	287.5	:	105.7	152.2	31.5	:	26.3	135.1	37.2	25.4	30.4	248.1	166.7	85.7
15	50.8	153.8	35.7	24.8	74.8	458.0	:	95.0	247.0	29.8	:	38.5	217.2	99.1	32.7	49.3	205.8	200.0	118.0
16	67.1	124.0	41.7	33.9	230.5	634.0	:	173.4	219.0	63.1	:	58.8	251.2	109.3	36.6	69.0	171.2	250.0	124.9
17	98.8	150.8	38.5	39.4	422.4	744.3	:	191.0	160.4	87.8	52.6	66.7	578.1	119.8	57.8	99.9	273.0	166.7	146.0
18	144.0	204.7	52.6	84.3	2458.0	1746.5	:	286.5	199.2	62.1	66.7	90.9	681.0	170.8	72.8	137.5	527.6	200.0	380.5
19	135.6	240.1	62.5	40.0	2335.7	707.7	:	268.7	113.9	127.4	66.7	111.1	501.3	183.5	89.4	178.8	390.4	250.0	505.7
20	122.4	170.3	83.3	23.4	274.5	490.8	:	392.1	230.0	126.8	71.4	111.1	244.4	385.9	190.8	193.0	1087.9	250.0	753.0
21	136.5	154.1	100.0	21.8	36.4	1993.0	:	571.7	997.4	322.2	66.7	66.7	222.2	903.4	245.4	240.8	743.5	250.0	694.4
22	126.5	134.0	111.1	20.4	13.3	1008.7	:	401.3	605.6	253.8	71.4	125.0	199.9	309.8	337.9	182.4	2011.2	500.0	235.5
23	153.6	72.3	111.1	20.0	17.3	1056.8	:	653.9	730.5	332.3	83.3	166.7	223.9	351.2	450.4	248.8	1238.8	333.3	203.0
24	138.1	79.3	90.9	14.3	14.3	526.3	:	855.8	172.3	636.2	100.0	166.7	129.5	173.2	474.9	207.3	227.0	250.0	146.9

WEEKS	EU-27	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE	IT	LV	LT	LU
25	125.2	68.5	55.6	19.1	15.3	594.1	:	445.3	419.0	737.4	90.9	142.9	180.6	135.5	380.0	217.9	630.8	166.7	116.6
26	107.8	121.5	38.5	21.3	17.4	563.0	:	374.9	231.0	518.5	76.9	125.0	198.5	183.4	410.4	191.5	375.7	100.0	98.1
27	93.6	69.0	33.3	21.6	23.1	165.4	:	363.1	88.8	577.4	71.4	100.0	208.4	184.4	107.4	182.5	426.7	125.0	93.4
28	72.3	77.6	27.8	21.5	19.8	249.6	:	231.6	105.4	372.4	50.0	100.0	109.8	98.0	50.2	133.4	260.1	125.0	123.0
29	64.0	42.4	29.4	31.0	9.9	237.6	:	174.0	254.6	493.4	37.0	100.0	47.0	81.1	97.5	91.8	378.3	100.0	129.5
30	68.7	40.6	32.3	37.9	8.0	297.6	:	340.5	90.7	521.8	30.3	111.1	81.2	77.4	74.1	82.9	789.5	83.3	116.1
31	72.4	40.3	38.5	40.1	8.3	316.0	:	405.5	89.1	690.1	26.3	142.9	62.9	33.7	72.9	65.2	236.2	90.9	:
32	65.8	39.8	37.0	40.6	13.4	742.9	:	258.1	105.3	478.8	21.7	125.0	62.6	18.9	76.5	67.2	387.2	71.4	147.2
33	56.3	22.2	32.3	27.8	19.4	1046.1	12.3	164.3	103.0	275.9	20.8	111.1	57.1	17.3	54.2	59.2	313.2	71.4	243.4
34	44.7	20.8	24.4	29.9	26.7	238.8	9.9	116.9	84.1	244.4	18.2	83.3	40.1	13.7	44.1	59.1	325.0	43.5	72.5
35	39.0	23.2	18.9	19.1	26.7	220.1	8.9	93.6	89.9	130.4	15.9	83.3	37.2	12.4	42.7	55.9	103.2	35.7	71.4
36	29.9	24.8	12.7	17.4	22.7	154.8	6.8	100.9	52.4	99.3	13.7	55.6	31.8	10.5	28.9	45.1	58.5	37.0	80.9
37	21.9	17.1	8.4	10.7	11.6	124.2	4.3	108.8	70.2	70.9	10.3	40.0	33.5	9.4	21.0	26.4	46.3	31.2	39.0
38	17.0	13.6	6.1	7.0	7.5	37.9	3.7	80.8	78.8	70.1	9.2	27.8	42.9	8.0	15.1	16.5	37.3	25.0	40.6
39	12.3	9.4	4.2	6.2	4.5	28.8	3.2	68.1	47.9	68.7	6.8	18.2	26.1	6.6	16.1	10.0	26.9	15.2	30.8
40	9.9	5.8	3.5	3.9	3.7	22.6	3.2	64.1	34.1	61.7	6.3	14.1	14.3	5.2	18.7	7.2	23.4	10.1	17.9
41	9.2	4.5	4.2	3.4	3.6	17.4	3.4	60.6	24.3	59.2	7.0	12.7	10.8	4.1	23.5	6.2	20.3	7.8	14.7
42	9.4	4.2	5.1	2.6	3.6	19.3	5.3	70.7	22.4	60.3	9.3	11.4	9.8	4.6	29.8	6.2	16.6	7.4	16.4
43	9.8	4.9	7.6	2.5	2.9	52.5	6.8	60.9	18.6	44.9	12.3	10.6	10.5	4.4	30.9	6.6	14.7	6.1	18.2
44	11.2	6.2	10.4	2.5	2.9	46.7	8.8	57.4	15.4	44.4	15.6	10.8	14.8	3.7	42.9	8.1	11.9	5.9	19.1
45	11.3	6.9	11.5	2.7	2.8	31.0	8.6	48.9	12.2	44.0	15.9	10.1	15.0	3.1	37.7	9.1	11.6	5.1	19.4
46	11.5	8.4	12.2	2.6	2.8	30.9	6.8	36.7	11.1	37.9	16.4	8.9	20.2	5.8	41.8	9.5	12.9	4.5	18.8
47	12.4	11.3	13.2	3.2	3.4	29.0	6.8	36.2	10.0	52.6	23.3	8.8	30.0	6.3	26.5	8.3	11.0	4.4	26.3
48	14.4	12.6	14.1	4.1	4.7	30.1	6.8	34.9	8.7	49.9	35.7	7.7	34.9	8.1	16.2	9.7	9.4	4.0	33.7

WEEKS	EU-27	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE	IT	LV	LT	LU
49	10.2	:	14.1	6.1	4.7	20.6	4.5	35.5	7.9	40.5	18.5	6.5	31.9	6.8	9.1	8.2	8.5	4.4	28.1
50	10.4	:	18.5	11.1	6.5	24.5	4.9	44.9	8.0	41.3	15.6	7.8	37.1	8.9	3.9	8.0	10.7	6.6	47.5
51	12.7	:	18.9	14.4	8.2	46.9	6.6	79.9	8.9	41.9	15.2	9.6	52.2	11.9	6.5	12.6	11.8	8.5	57.9
52	15.0	:	17.9	15.7	9.0	61.3	6.8	135.2	9.4	42.3	14.1	10.1	51.9	12.7	10.1	20.2	13.1	9.3	55.0
53	16.3	:	18.2	18.8	10.6	139.2	7.6	206.7	9.9	40.0	14.9	11.8	41.8	13.3	15.2	20.1	12.7	10.1	54.0
54	17.7	:	19.2	11.9	11.9	248.7	7.9	258.4	9.1	48.9	15.9	13.3	35.2	12.1	17.8	20.3	12.4	11.9	54.6
55	19.7	:	19.6	12.0	17.6	278.1	7.8	302.7	7.9	43.2	16.9	15.6	35.0	10.2	19.1	21.2	13.9	14.1	68.4
56	18.9	:	15.2	9.4	16.7	289.8	7.4	266.3	8.3	37.2	15.4	16.4	29.8	8.1	19.2	21.6	13.7	13.5	48.5
57	18.2	:	15.2	7.4	13.3	170.7	7.1	272.2	5.5	35.3	13.7	16.4	26.0	6.1	24.5	17.9	15.1	14.3	47.8
58	16.6	:	16.4	5.9	11.6	135.3	8.5	292.5	5.2	33.3	13.9	16.1	23.0	5.1	26.8	15.5	19.6	16.9	51.1
59	19.5	:	14.7	4.9	9.0	122.4	18.5	230.0	5.2	30.9	13.0	14.9	18.6	4.5	28.9	14.8	26.4	15.9	51.8
60	20.3	:	13.0	4.6	5.8	118.4	25.0	459.8	5.1	31.1	12.2	10.8	16.5	3.7	31.7	14.1	25.7	13.0	44.4
61	17.3	:	12.3	4.6	4.3	113.6	31.2	212.2	5.7	36.7	13.3	9.2	15.6	4.6	32.9	15.5	26.8	14.3	48.7
62	19.6	:	10.5	5.3	4.5	96.5	43.5	276.1	7.0	45.1	10.9	8.3	17.8	5.3	39.0	18.3	27.5	14.3	40.1
63	15.2	:	10.3	6.0	3.8	83.3	58.8	236.2	10.5	54.6	10.1	8.1	19.2	6.3	39.9	20.3	25.9	16.1	47.2

Table B3.2 (continued): Weekly 7-day rolling averages of the ratio of number of tests conducted to number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 from 3 February 2020 to 18 April 2021, ESPN countries

WEEKS	EU-27	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
1	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
2	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
3	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
4	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
5	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
6	2.8	:	:	:	15.6	:	:	50.0	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
7	7.0	51.7	11.1	:	26.8	:	16.4	23.8	:	:	:	11.3	:	:	:	:	4.0	:
8	7.0	25.3	5.4	:	12.4	22.4	18.2	37.0	:	:	:	6.0	:	:	:	:	2.7	:
9	5.9	55.9	3.4	:	9.4	8.3	29.4	23.8	:	:	:	4.1	:	:	:	:	3.3	:
10	6.8	59.8	3.9	:	11.1	8.4	43.5	25.6	:	:	:	6.4	:	:	:	:	4.2	6.5
11	9.0	46.2	4.7	:	12.9	9.7	52.6	37.0	:	:	3.5	17.5	14.5	:	:	10.2	6.4	6.5
12	13.6	133.6	5.6	:	23.5	12.8	45.5	52.6	:	:	4.1	14.4	24.8	:	:	10.1	7.6	8.8
13	21.2	220.7	7.8	:	25.5	18.7	125.0	125.0	19.8	:	6.1	10.6	34.7	:	:	18.1	14.8	11.1
14	42.9	259.0	10.0	:	63.9	27.7	1000.0	200.0	30.3	:	14.1	23.0	23.8	:	:	17.0	26.4	14.9
15	50.8	402.0	14.1	40.8	41.9	27.9	500.0	333.3	41.1	:	23.7	21.6	28.3	:	:	14.1	68.1	18.7
16	67.1	163.8	19.6	51.5	76.6	35.6	500.0	1000.0	46.9	:	29.9	20.4	49.4	:	:	15.6	70.4	23.6
17	98.8	173.8	18.2	48.2	57.3	48.4	1000.0	1000.0	60.6	:	36.9	24.1	87.4	:	:	20.6	66.6	28.0
18	144.0	1009.6	26.3	54.6	51.4	59.6	1000.0	1000.0	81.7	:	66.2	10.4	52.2	:	:	17.4	109.0	29.1
19	135.6	557.6	47.6	45.0	43.4	52.4		333.3	128.5	:	79.8	14.1	61.3	:	:	8.4	65.8	48.4
20	122.4	347.2	62.5	40.6	30.5	37.8	333.3	333.3	98.6	:	93.7	7.3	19.6	:	:	6.5	62.5	36.2
21	136.5	367.5	111.1	52.1	34.9	32.1	142.9	250.0	88.6	:	88.5	5.2	15.9	:	:	7.7	63.2	33.1

WEEKS	EU-27	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
22	126.5	1175.1	125.0	61.8	35.0	30.2	90.9	100.0	71.0	:	136.6	5.4	12.0	:	:	7.7	39.8	35.1
23	153.6	2891.6	166.7	59.7	42.3	25.6	90.9	58.8	105.7	:	294.4	5.1	9.2	:	:	8.8	25.8	41.1
24	138.1	2611.9	142.9	73.1	36.7	23.8	83.3	58.8	63.4	:	190.8	5.2	5.3	:	:	9.4	23.3	47.7
25	125.2	2062.9	100.0	54.6	46.8	22.6	125.0	62.5	38.6	41.7	175.1	4.9	7.3	:	:	8.3	23.1	44.8
26	107.8	311.9	100.0	40.1	62.8	19.7	66.7	41.7	23.6	44.9	195.0	4.6	7.3	:	:	10.0	25.3	46.3
27	93.6	66.3	50.0	35.4	74.2	17.3	71.4	55.6	19.7	34.0	193.4	4.6	3.9	:	:	10.5	26.3	46.4
28	72.3	51.4	30.3	31.5	80.9	15.2	55.6	66.7	13.7	26.7	180.5	4.2	6.9	:	:	12.0	31.9	47.5
29	64.0	71.6	31.2	30.5	67.1	15.5	50.0	33.3	15.0	27.6	151.1	4.4	5.2	:	:	12.7	36.2	54.3
30	68.7	54.0	47.6	31.0	66.1	17.2	35.7	29.4	12.0	38.9	162.1	5.4	6.0	:	:	12.0	66.8	67.4
31	72.4	60.5	55.6	30.8	46.1	17.3	43.5	37.0	11.1	108.1	145.0	6.3	5.6	:	:	13.5	78.4	68.1
32	65.8	74.5	41.7	38.9	44.5	17.4	31.2	32.3	12.1	122.9	104.8	6.7	7.0	:	:	12.8	98.9	66.7
33	56.3	42.3	29.4	36.7	34.7	16.9	30.3	27.8	11.6	93.9	75.1	5.5	5.7	:	:	11.9	98.3	65.2
34	44.7	42.8	18.2	25.9	30.1	15.3	23.8	25.6	9.7	80.5	65.6	5.6	7.6	:	:	10.2	89.5	64.0
35	39.0	66.2	14.3	17.4	28.0	14.4	13.0	18.5	10.0	48.0	43.2	6.7	8.3	:	:	10.8	88.9	66.5
36	29.9	54.9	11.2	13.5	27.4	10.9	11.6	15.2	10.8	38.7	26.6	6.5	8.5	:	:	8.5	76.1	77.8
37	21.9	32.5	8.3	8.3	20.7	8.4	8.2	10.0	11.0	33.4	19.1	5.8	5.8	:	:	6.1	45.2	72.1
38	17.0	21.4	7.8	5.9	14.3	7.2	6.9	6.3	11.5	31.8	17.3	5.3	4.3	:	:	4.9	30.3	66.3
39	12.3	23.4	6.2	4.5	10.9	7.0	5.8	3.8	9.9	22.7	14.5	4.6	2.8	:	:	4.8	14.1	56.6
40	9.9	33.0	6.4	3.3	9.0	5.6	14.9	3.4	8.4	14.0	12.9	4.7	2.2	:	:	3.2	7.0	57.9
41	9.2	21.9	7.2	2.8	7.3	3.4	13.3	3.7	8.2	10.6	13.5	4.1	2.4	:	:	2.7	5.3	59.7
42	9.4	24.7	7.6	2.2	7.1	4.1	8.4	3.7	8.7	8.4	13.1	3.7	3.0	:	:	2.9	4.0	51.4
43	9.8	23.5	8.6	2.2	6.6	3.6	9.0	3.6	10.4	8.7	16.5	2.9	3.0	:	:	2.5	3.2	33.5
44	11.2	25.0	9.4	2.1	7.8	3.7	12.5	4.0	13.2	8.1	20.2	2.7	2.7	:	:	2.8	2.8	7.3
45	11.3	26.8	9.3	3.0	8.1	3.8	12.7	3.7	15.0	7.5	21.7	2.5	3.0	:	:	2.7	2.8	5.8

WEEKS	EU-27	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
46	11.5	29.7	8.4	3.0	8.5	4.0	9.7	3.5	18.4	6.7	18.6	3.2	4.1	:	:	2.8	2.8	7.5
47	12.4	37.6	7.6	3.1	10.0	4.8	10.2	3.6	14.8	6.5	13.7	3.8	4.6	:	:	3.3	3.3	7.2
48	14.4	28.7	7.6	3.0	11.4	4.9	10.2	3.7	15.9	8.3	11.6	4.6	4.4	:	:	3.8	3.9	10.9
49	10.2	24.0	7.5	3.7	7.0	4.4	8.1	3.3	11.1	4.9	7.9	4.5	5.4	:	:	4.7	4.4	12.4
50	10.4	17.2	8.3	5.0	6.0	6.2	10.2	3.3	8.5	4.1	9.4	5.7	7.4	:	:	5.3	5.0	14.8
51	12.7	19.5	8.8	8.2	5.6	6.2	14.9	4.0	7.2	6.1	12.4	5.2	15.9	:	:	5.8	6.0	19.3
52	15.0	18.2	9.2	7.2	5.2	8.3	55.6	4.1	6.9	8.4	16.2	4.7	6.5	:	:	6.4	6.1	26.5
53	16.3	18.5	9.3	7.3	4.9	8.1	45.5	4.3	7.2	10.0	26.3	4.0	7.8	:	:	6.7	6.3	23.7
54	17.7	27.0	9.6	7.3	6.8	7.9	47.6	5.5	8.0	9.6	36.5	3.5	8.9	:	:	6.8	6.0	18.2
55	19.7	18.4	9.7	7.7	10.9	8.7	55.6	5.9	10.9	10.6	46.3	3.4	8.3	:	:	7.2	5.9	16.5
56	18.9	18.5	10.6	6.3	17.0	8.8	55.6	5.0	12.0	10.0	48.0	3.3	7.8	:	:	7.1	4.8	15.3
57	18.2	15.0	11.9	4.9	27.0	6.6	55.6	5.1	15.0	9.3	72.4	3.8	3.8	:	:	5.8	4.2	13.6
58	16.6	14.0	13.7	4.2	31.0	5.7	66.7	5.9	19.9	9.2	135.9	3.9	6.1	:	:	4.8	3.9	12.0
59	19.5	18.0	13.7	3.8	81.3	4.5	90.9	6.5	26.2	10.1	256.3	5.8	4.1	:	:	4.1	3.5	10.1
60	20.3	26.0	12.5	3.2	63.0	4.3	111.1	5.6	17.3	9.5	230.0	6.3	3.0	:	:	3.3	3.2	7.8
61	17.3	42.3	11.9	3.3	57.1	4.4	125.0	4.5	16.0	9.8	226.1	8.1	2.8	:	:	3.3	3.4	6.1
62	19.6	37.9	10.5	4.3	83.9	5.0	166.7	4.2	16.9	7.1	577.9	10.2	4.0	:	:	3.9	4.3	5.6
63	15.2	37.7	10.2	4.9	73.2	6.0	200.0	4.9	15.5	8.0	385.4	15.1	3.7	:	:	4.1	4.7	5.2

Table B4.1: Excess mortality - total population (%), ESPN countries

Source:	Eurostat - indicator [DEMO_R_MWK_10] Deaths by week, sex and 10-year age groups
Measurement:	Total number of all deaths (without distinction of causes) in 2020, expressed as a % of the previous 4-year (2016-2019) annual average
Geographical coverage:	EU-27 countries, UK, AL, BA, ME and RS (NB: See comment related to Ireland)
Updating:	Ad hoc – download 26 April 2021
Time:	Weekly from week 1-2016 to week 53-2020, except in some countries (see comments below)
Breakdowns	None (see Tables B4.2 and B4.3)
Comments:	Special ad hoc series from Eurostat on COVID-19
	All the data for the 2020 weeks are tagged as "provisional" by Eurostat. The EU average is population-weighted and calculated on 26 countries, as there are no data for IE from 2016 to 2020 in the Eurostat database No data for MK, TR and XK
	On 26 April 2021, the data for the 53 calendar weeks of the year 2020 are available for all countries except for AL (week 53) and UK (week 51). For these countries, the annual totals for the period 2016-2020 are calculated using the respective numbers of weeks of data available in 2020

GEO	Total excess mortality
EU-26	112.8
Austria	113.1
Belgium	118.5
Bulgaria	117.1
Croatia	111.0
Cyprus	113.1
Czechia	118.7
Denmark	103.4
Estonia	104.9
Finland	104.5
France	112.4
Germany	107.6
Greece	109.3
Hungary	110.6
Ireland	:
Italy	118.1
Latvia	102.2
Lithuania	111.9
Luxembourg	111.2
Malta	115.1
Netherlands	113.6
Poland	120.8
Portugal	113.1
Romania	115.9
Slovakia	113.2
Slovenia	119.9
Spain	120.3
Sweden	109.8
United Kingdom	111.3
Albania	127.1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	117.8
Kosovo	:
Montenegro	113.4
North Macedonia	:
Serbia	111.3
Turkey	:

Table B4.2: Excess mortality by gender (%), ESPN countries

Source:	Eurostat - indicator [DEMO_R_MWK_10] Deaths by week, sex and 10-year age groups
Measurement:	Total number of all deaths (without distinction of causes) in 2020, expressed as a % of the previous 4-year (2016-2019) annual average
Geographical coverage:	EU-27 countries, UK, AL, BA, ME and RS (NB: See comment related to Ireland)
Updating:	Ad hoc – download 26 April 2021
Time:	Weekly from week 1-2016 to week 53-2020, except in some countries (see comments below)
Breakdowns	Men and women
Comments:	Special ad hoc series from Eurostat on COVID-19
	All the data for the 2020 weeks are tagged as "provisional" by Eurostat. The EU average is population-weighted and calculated on 26 countries, as there are no data for IE from 2016 to 2020 in the Eurostat database No data for MK, TR and XK
	On 26 April 2021, the data for the 53 calendar weeks of the year 2020 are available for all countries except for AL (week 53) and UK (week 51). For these countries, the annual totals for the period 2016-2020 are calculated using the respective numbers of weeks of data available in 2020

GEO	Men	Women
EU-26	113.9	111.6
Austria	115.7	110.7
Belgium	118.5	118.4
Bulgaria	119.3	114.7
Croatia	111.8	110.2
Cyprus	113.1	113.0
Czechia	120.4	117.0
Denmark	104.9	101.9
Estonia	104.5	105.3
Finland	105.2	103.8
France	113.1	111.8
Germany	109.2	106.0
Greece	108.7	109.9
Hungary	110.3	110.9
Ireland	:	:
Italy	119.8	116.5
Latvia	101.0	103.2
Lithuania	112.9	110.9
Luxembourg	113.0	109.4
Malta	116.3	113.9
Netherlands	116.8	110.6
Poland	122.3	119.1
Portugal	112.2	114.0
Romania	118.1	113.5
Slovakia	113.9	112.4
Slovenia	118.8	121.0
Spain	120.3	120.4
Sweden	112.4	107.2
United Kingdom	113.9	108.7
Albania	134.6	118.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	120.0	115.5
Kosovo	:	:
Montenegro	116.3	110.2
North Macedonia	:	:
Serbia	114.7	107.9
Turkey	:	:

Table B4.3: Excess mortality by age groups (%), ESPN countries

Source:	Eurostat - indicator [DEMO_R_MWK_10] Deaths by week, sex and 10-year age groups
Measurement:	Total number of all deaths (without distinction of causes) in 2020, expressed as a % of the previous 4-year (2016-2019) annual average
Geographical coverage:	EU-27 countries, UK, AL, ME and RS (NB: See comment related to Ireland)
Updating:	Ad hoc – download 26 April 2021
Time:	Weekly from week 1-2016 to week 53-2020, except in some countries (see comments below)
Breakdowns	10-year age groups: 0-9, 10-19... 90+
Comments:	Special ad hoc series from Eurostat on COVID-19
	All the data for the 2020 weeks are tagged as "provisional" by Eurostat. The EU average is population-weighted and calculated on 26 countries, as there are no data for IE from 2016 to 2020 in the Eurostat database No data for BA, MK, TR and XK
	On 26 April 2021, the data for the 53 calendar weeks of the year 2020 are available for all countries except for AL (week 53) and UK (week 51). For these countries, the annual totals for the period 2016-2020 are calculated using the respective numbers of weeks of data available in 2020

GEO	< 10	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90+
EU-26	92.9	89.9	93.3	99.5	98.5	101.4	106.6	111.5	110.4	121.0
Austria	97.8	101.8	92.1	110.5	95.7	104.6	107.6	112.3	116.3	116.7
Belgium	62.5	101.5	92.8	104.0	102.3	104.9	110.3	119.1	118.4	130.7
Bulgaria	78.5	93.7	88.4	107.0	116.5	116.2	116.4	127.6	111.0	116.8
Croatia	96.1	96.9	95.6	98.6	98.3	96.9	109.6	111.5	111.0	124.4
Cyprus	95.7	51.6	116.9	95.1	121.7	111.2	108.2	112.8	115.2	114.4
Czechia	85.3	90.4	88.8	102.7	113.3	108.7	103.4	128.7	118.7	128.3
Denmark	91.7	96.1	115.6	100.2	92.0	92.4	97.4	107.3	106.2	102.7
Estonia	78.7	81.8	73.2	102.3	106.4	108.0	104.9	96.5	103.2	123.7
Finland	80.7	110.2	107.6	101.0	107.3	96.5	94.6	109.4	102.5	111.3
France	89.5	101.3	96.2	100.6	98.5	100.7	104.2	120.1	108.4	118.7
Germany	96.9	88.4	95.7	107.4	94.1	100.6	107.6	97.0	112.9	114.0
Greece	83.9	86.2	94.8	92.7	102.6	103.7	110.1	105.7	106.2	122.4
Hungary	93.0	82.8	109.1	100.0	104.0	100.1	108.2	116.9	110.7	112.5
Ireland	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Italy	80.9	88.5	89.4	95.2	98.4	110.5	112.1	116.9	119.1	123.8
Latvia	90.1	83.5	66.4	81.6	96.6	88.8	102.0	98.6	105.5	118.2
Lithuania	76.7	86.0	75.9	94.9	105.7	109.8	116.0	112.9	109.7	120.0
Luxembourg	110.0	173.3	83.2	109.9	101.8	103.4	103.1	109.5	107.8	130.0
Malta	54.7	156.5	98.7	109.5	130.1	101.9	98.3	123.3	115.5	123.6
Netherlands	103.5	99.8	99.0	112.4	98.9	99.1	104.9	118.8	116.0	115.2
Poland	85.5	86.1	97.7	108.2	112.7	96.6	115.0	131.9	117.3	144.1
Portugal	83.8	98.4	113.3	99.9	102.0	104.6	110.5	110.7	112.6	122.4
Romania	85.3	87.7	90.5	104.7	100.1	111.7	119.2	117.5	115.2	123.7
Slovakia	103.4	106.7	85.4	102.9	107.0	99.7	109.5	123.9	112.5	116.0
Slovenia	93.8	64.8	86.6	88.2	116.2	97.3	103.9	118.0	122.1	144.6
Spain	94.1	99.2	103.7	101.3	103.8	109.4	119.1	126.0	116.4	128.1
Sweden	99.9	122.9	90.7	98.4	92.8	103.1	97.6	114.3	112.0	110.4
UK	86.8	90.4	93.2	107.4	104.8	112.6	106.9	114.5	111.6	112.0
Albania	98.9	54.5	75.7	115.1	109.8	120.2	139.6	127.4	131.8	117.9
Bosnia and H.	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Kosovo	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Montenegro	107.4	95.8	96.4	105.0	99.0	103.9	115.1	113.8	116.2	115.6
North Macedonia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Serbia	92.1	90.0	98.0	100.2	112.6	108.4	113.8	115.4	106.5	120.0
Turkey	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:

Table B5: GDP quarterly changes in 2019 and 2020 (in % of the same quarter of the previous year), ESPN countries

Source:	Eurostat indicator [NAMQ_10_GDP] GDP and main components (output, expenditure and income)
Measurement:	Gross domestic product at market prices (chain linked volumes prices adjusted) - percentage changes in quarters compared to same quarters in previous year
Geographical coverage:	EU-27 countries, UK, AL, RS and TR
Updating:	Quarterly – download 26 April 2021
Time:	First quarter 2019 to fourth quarter 2020
Breakdown:	None
Comments:	Special ad hoc series from Eurostat on COVID-19
	ME and XK: No data in the Eurostat database
	Calendar and seasonally adjusted data for all countries, except BA and MK (unadjusted data) and AL (only seasonally adjusted)
	ES, HR, NL, RO and AL: Provisional data from 2019-Q1 to 2020-Q4
	BE, BG, DE and RS: Provisional data from 2020-Q1 to 2020-Q4
	PT and MK: Provisional data from 2019-Q1 to 2019-Q4, estimated data from 2020-Q1 to 2020-Q4
	EL: Provisional data from 2019-Q1 to 2020-Q3, estimated data for 2020-Q4
	SK: Estimated data from 2020-Q2 to 2020-Q4
	No data for 2020-Q4 in the UK

GEO	2019-Q1	2019-Q2	2019-Q3	2019-Q4	2020-Q1	2020-Q2	2020-Q3	2020-Q4
EU-27	1.9	1.6	1.6	1.2	-2.7	-13.8	-4.0	-4.6
Austria	2.3	1.6	1.6	0.2	-3.6	-13.6	-3.8	-5.9
Belgium	1.9	1.7	1.9	1.6	-2.0	-14.0	-4.3	-4.9
Bulgaria	4.2	3.8	3.3	3.1	2.3	-8.6	-5.2	-3.8
Croatia	4.1	2.5	2.6	2.4	1.1	-14.5	-10.2	-7.1
Cyprus	3.6	3.0	2.4	3.3	1.4	-12.6	-4.7	-4.5
Czechia	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.0	-1.8	-10.8	-5.1	-4.8
Denmark	2.7	3.4	3.0	2.4	0.2	-7.5	-2.2	-1.5
Estonia	5.7	4.9	4.6	3.8	0.2	-5.5	-3.5	-1.9
Finland	0.9	1.8	1.6	0.8	-0.6	-6.1	-2.7	-1.7
France	1.8	1.8	1.6	0.8	-5.6	-18.6	-3.7	-4.9
Germany	1.1	0.1	0.8	0.4	-2.2	-11.3	-4.0	-3.6
Greece	1.9	2.3	1.5	0.8	0.1	-13.8	-10.5	-7.9
Hungary	5.2	4.8	4.5	4.0	1.8	-13.4	-4.8	-4.1
Ireland	4.3	6.0	5.7	7.6	4.1	-2.7	8.9	-0.2
Italy	0.4	0.5	0.5	-0.2	-5.8	-18.2	-5.2	-6.6
Latvia	3.6	2.4	1.5	0.6	-1.2	-8.6	-2.8	-1.8
Lithuania	4.4	4.1	4.7	4.1	2.5	-4.7	0.1	-1.0
Luxembourg	0.2	3.0	3.0	3.0	1.3	-7.9	0.0	1.4
Malta	6.6	5.9	4.2	5.7	2.1	-14.6	-8.6	-6.2
Netherlands	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.7	-0.4	-9.1	-2.4	-3.0
Poland	5.5	4.9	4.6	4.0	2.0	-7.9	-2.0	-2.7
Portugal	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.6	-2.2	-16.4	-5.6	-6.1
Romania	5.2	4.2	3.3	3.9	2.7	-10.0	-5.4	-1.8
Slovakia	3.1	2.4	1.8	2.0	-3.8	-12.1	-2.3	-2.6
Slovenia	4.6	3.1	2.6	2.4	-3.3	-13.0	-3.0	-5.0
Spain	2.2	2.1	1.8	1.7	-4.3	-21.6	-8.6	-8.9
Sweden	1.8	1.2	2.0	0.6	0.1	-7.7	-2.2	-2.1
UK	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.2	-2.4	-20.8	-8.6	:
Albania	2.3	2.3	4.2	0.0	-2.3	-10.6	-2.8	3.0
Bosnia and H.	2.7	3.2	3.4	1.9	2.3	-9.0	-6.3	-3.8
Kosovo	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Montenegro	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
North Macedonia	1.4	4.3	3.6	3.3	0.9	-14.9	-3.3	-0.7
Serbia	2.5	3.0	4.9	6.6	5.0	-6.2	-1.5	-1.1
Turkey	-2.4	-0.9	1.1	6.3	4.6	-8.7	5.4	5.0

Table B6.1: Quarterly unemployment rates -15-64 years old - Total (%), ESPN countries

Source:	Eurostat LFS - indicator [lfsq_urgan] Quarterly unemployment rates by sex and age groups
Measurement:	Number of persons unemployed as a percentage of the labour force
Geographical coverage:	EU-27 countries, UK, ME, MK, RS and TR
Updating:	Quarterly – download 26 April 2021
Time:	First quarter 2019 to fourth quarter 2020
Breakdown:	None (see Tables B6.2 and B6.3)
Comments:	Special ad hoc series from Eurostat on COVID-19
	Seasonally-adjusted data
	No data for fourth quarter 2020 for the UK and ME
	No data for first to fourth 2020 quarters for DE
	No data for AL, BA and XK

GEO	2019-Q1	2019-Q2	2019-Q3	2019-Q4	2020-Q1	2020-Q2	2020-Q3	2020-Q4
EU-27	7.3	6.7	6.6	6.7	6.9	6.8	7.7	7.4
Austria	5.0	4.5	4.5	4.2	4.7	5.7	5.8	5.5
Belgium	5.7	5.4	5.4	5.2	5.1	4.9	6.5	5.8
Bulgaria	5.1	4.2	3.7	4.1	4.6	6.0	4.9	5.3
Croatia	7.6	6.2	5.8	7.3	7.1	6.5	7.5	9.2
Cyprus	9.0	6.6	6.9	6.5	7.4	7.0	8.5	8.2
Czechia	2.1	1.9	2.2	2.1	2.0	2.4	2.9	3.1
Denmark	5.6	4.8	5.1	5.1	5.3	5.3	6.5	5.9
Estonia	4.8	5.3	4.0	4.2	5.1	7.5	7.8	7.6
Finland	7.2	7.8	6.2	6.2	7.3	9.1	7.9	7.6
France	9.1	8.1	8.3	8.5	8.2	6.8	9.0	8.3
Germany	3.4	3.1	3.2	3.1	:	:	:	:
Greece	19.4	17.0	16.5	16.9	16.4	16.8	16.3	16.4
Hungary	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.8	4.7	4.5	4.2
Ireland	4.9	5.5	5.4	4.6	4.7	5.2	7.3	5.9
Italy	11.3	10.0	9.3	10.1	9.6	7.9	10.2	9.7
Latvia	7.1	6.6	6.2	6.2	7.9	8.9	8.6	8.2
Lithuania	6.7	6.3	6.3	6.6	7.4	8.9	9.6	9.4
Luxembourg	5.4	5.3	5.9	5.8	6.3	6.4	7.9	6.6
Malta	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.6	3.7	4.5	4.7	4.4
Netherlands	3.7	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.8	4.3	4.0
Poland	4.0	3.3	3.2	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.2
Portugal	7.0	6.5	6.4	6.9	6.9	5.8	8.1	7.5
Romania	4.2	3.9	4.0	4.0	4.4	5.5	5.4	5.4
Slovakia	5.9	5.8	5.9	5.7	6.0	6.7	7.3	7.0
Slovenia	4.9	4.3	4.8	4.0	4.6	5.2	5.2	5.1
Spain	14.8	14.1	14.0	13.9	14.5	15.4	16.4	16.3
Sweden	7.5	7.3	6.7	6.5	7.8	9.4	8.9	8.1
United Kingdom	3.8	3.8	4.0	3.7	3.9	3.9	5.0	:
Albania	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Bosnia and H.	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Kosovo	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Montenegro	15.2	14.7	15.6	16.1	16.6	15.7	19.6	:
North Macedonia	18.1	17.6	17.3	16.8	16.4	16.9	16.7	16.3
Serbia	12.7	10.8	10.0	10.2	10.2	7.7	9.5	10.5
Turkey	15.0	13.1	14.3	13.5	13.9	13.1	13.4	13.0

Table B6.2: Quarterly unemployment rates by gender (%), ESPN countries

Source:	Eurostat LFS - indicator [lfsq_urgan] Quarterly unemployment rates by sex and age groups
Measurement:	Number of persons unemployed as a percentage of the labour force
Geographical coverage:	EU-27 countries, UK, ME, MK, RS and TR
Updating:	Quarterly – download 26 April 2021
Time:	First quarter 2019 to fourth quarter 2020
Breakdown:	Men and women
Comments:	Special ad hoc series from Eurostat on COVID-19
	Seasonally-adjusted data
	No data for fourth quarter 2020 for the UK and ME
	No data for first to fourth 2020 quarters for DE
	No data for AL, BA and XK

GEO	MEN								WOMEN							
	2019 -Q1	2019 -Q2	2019 -Q3	2019 -Q4	2020 -Q1	2020 -Q2	2020 -Q3	2020 -Q4	2019 -Q1	2019 -Q2	2019 -Q3	2019 -Q4	2020 -Q1	2020 -Q2	2020 -Q3	2020 -Q4
EU-27	7.0	6.5	6.3	6.4	6.6	6.7	7.3	7.1	7.7	7.0	6.9	7.0	7.2	6.9	8.2	7.7
Austria	5.3	4.6	4.5	4.3	5.0	5.9	5.8	5.6	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.1	4.4	5.5	5.8	5.5
Belgium	6.3	5.7	5.5	5.7	5.3	5.2	6.6	6.1	5.0	5.0	5.2	4.6	4.9	4.7	6.4	5.5
Bulgaria	5.4	4.6	3.9	4.4	5.0	6.3	5.4	5.4	4.6	3.8	3.5	3.8	4.2	5.6	4.3	5.2
Croatia	6.3	5.3	5.9	7.4	6.6	6.2	7.6	9.8	9.2	7.1	5.6	7.1	7.7	6.9	7.5	8.6
Cyprus	8.0	6.5	5.5	6.0	7.3	7.2	8.2	8.6	10.0	6.8	8.5	7.1	7.6	6.7	8.7	7.8
Czechia	1.9	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.4	2.1	2.7	3.5	3.8
Denmark	5.2	4.9	4.9	4.8	5.1	4.9	6.3	5.7	6.0	4.7	5.4	5.3	5.5	5.8	6.9	6.1
Estonia	4.6	4.9	3.3	3.8	5.7	7.1	7.6	7.9	4.9	5.7	4.9	4.7	4.4	7.9	8.0	7.3
Finland	8.0	8.4	6.3	6.7	7.9	9.3	8.0	7.9	6.4	7.2	5.9	5.6	6.7	8.9	7.7	7.2
France	9.1	8.3	8.4	8.6	8.0	7.2	9.0	8.4	9.1	8.0	8.3	8.3	8.3	6.4	9.0	8.2
Germany	3.8	3.4	3.6	3.5	:	:	:	:	3.0	2.8	2.6	2.7	:	:	:	:
Greece	15.5	13.8	13.1	14.0	13.9	14.3	13.2	13.4	24.2	21.1	20.7	20.7	19.5	20.0	20.2	20.1
Hungary	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.2	3.6	4.5	4.3	4.0	3.6	3.3	3.7	3.5	3.9	5.0	4.7	4.5
Ireland	5.2	5.7	5.6	4.8	4.9	5.3	6.9	6.1	4.4	5.3	5.0	4.3	4.6	5.1	7.7	5.6
Italy	10.6	9.3	8.5	8.9	8.8	7.4	9.2	9.1	12.3	10.9	10.3	11.7	10.7	8.6	11.6	10.5
Latvia	7.9	8.2	6.7	6.5	9.1	10.6	9.3	8.8	6.3	4.9	5.7	5.8	6.8	7.2	8.0	7.6
Lithuania	7.2	7.1	7.2	7.6	8.3	10.1	10.2	10.0	6.2	5.6	5.4	5.6	6.5	7.6	9.1	8.7
Luxembourg	5.7	5.3	6.1	5.7	6.6	6.7	7.5	5.8	5.2	5.4	5.7	5.9	6.0	6.0	8.5	7.5
Malta	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.9	4.3	4.6	4.4	4.1	4.0	4.3	3.9	3.4	4.9	4.8	4.5
Netherlands	3.6	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.8	4.1	3.9	3.8	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.8	4.6	4.3
Poland	3.5	3.2	2.9	2.7	3.0	3.2	3.1	3.1	4.6	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.7	3.2
Portugal	6.3	6.2	5.7	6.2	6.4	5.8	8.0	7.3	7.8	6.8	7.1	7.7	7.4	5.7	8.2	7.6

Romania	4.7	4.2	4.2	4.6	5.0	5.7	5.5	5.5		3.6	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.6	5.3	5.2	5.3
Slovakia	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.4	5.8	6.7	6.9	6.4		6.0	5.8	6.2	6.1	6.3	6.7	7.8	7.8
Slovenia	4.3	3.8	4.6	3.6	4.2	4.6	4.5	4.6		5.6	4.7	5.1	4.6	5.1	6.0	6.0	5.7
Spain	13.0	12.6	12.3	12.3	12.9	14.2	14.5	14.3		16.8	15.8	16.0	15.6	16.3	16.8	18.5	18.5
Sweden	7.5	7.2	6.5	6.5	7.9	9.4	8.9	8.2		7.5	7.4	7.0	6.5	7.6	9.3	8.9	8.1
United Kingdom	4.0	4.1	4.2	3.8	4.2	4.1	5.4	:		3.7	3.5	3.8	3.5	3.7	3.7	4.5	:
Albania	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Bosnia and Herzegovina	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Kosovo	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Montenegro	13.8	13.4	15.9	16.8	15.8	15.6	19.3	:		16.9	16.3	15.2	15.4	17.6	15.9	19.9	:
North Macedonia	18.7	15.7	15.6	16.6	16.8	17	17.2	16.8		17	20.5	19.6	17.1	15.8	16.9	16	15.7
Serbia	12.8	10.2	9	9.7	9.9	7.4	9.2	10.1		12.6	11.5	11.3	10.7	10.6	8	9.9	10.8
Turkey	13.9	12.0	12.5	11.9	13.0	13.0	12.1	12.1		17	15.2	17.8	16.8	15.8	13.5	16.2	15.0

Table B6.3: Quarterly unemployment rates by age groups (%), ESPN countries

Source:	Eurostat LFS - indicator [lfsq_urgan] Quarterly unemployment rates by sex and age groups
Measurement:	Number of persons unemployed as a percentage of the labour force
Geographical coverage:	EU-27 countries, UK, ME, MK, RS and TR
Updating:	Quarterly – download 26 April 2021
Time:	First quarter 2019 to fourth quarter 2020
Breakdown:	Age groups: 15-24, 25-49 and 50-64
Comments:	Special ad hoc series from Eurostat on COVID-19
	Seasonally-adjusted data
	No data for fourth quarter 2020 for the UK and ME
	No data for first to fourth 2020 quarters for DE
	No data for AL, BA and XK

GEO	AGE GROUPS	2019-Q1	2019-Q2	2019-Q3	2019-Q4	2020-Q1	2020-Q2	2020-Q3	2020-Q4
EU-27	*15 to 24 years*	15.8	14.9	14.9	14.8	15.3	16.8	18.4	16.9
	25 to 49 years	7.1	6.4	6.2	6.4	6.6	6.5	7.4	7.1
	50 to 64 years	5.5	5.1	4.8	5.0	5.1	4.8	5.4	5.3
Austria	*15 to 24 years*	7.7	8.4	9.7	8.3	9.9	11.7	11.0	9.4
	25 to 49 years	5.2	4.5	4.2	4.2	4.4	5.7	5.6	5.5
	50 to 64 years	3.4	3.0	2.9	2.8	3.5	3.5	4.1	4.2
Belgium	*15 to 24 years*	15.7	13.6	13.2	14.6	12.4	15.3	17.7	15.9
	25 to 49 years	5.2	5.1	5.1	4.7	4.9	4.4	6.2	5.3
	50 to 64 years	4.1	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.7	4.1	4.6
Bulgaria	*15 to 24 years*	9.8	9.5	7.5	9.1	12.5	17.0	13.2	14.1
	25 to 49 years	5.3	4.3	3.7	4.2	4.5	6.0	4.7	5.3
	50 to 64 years	4.0	3.4	3.1	3.4	4.0	4.5	4.1	4.3
Croatia	*15 to 24 years*	20.4	9.7	14.1	21.6	19.4	19.8	23.0	22.0
	25 to 49 years	7.8	6.9	5.8	6.7	7.1	6.0	6.9	9.1
	50 to 64 years	3.3	3.4	3.0	4.1	3.4	4.2	4.4	5.5
Cyprus	*15 to 24 years*	19.8	14.9	15.6	16.0	14.5	17.8	20.4	19.9
	25 to 49 years	7.8	6.5	6.6	5.8	6.9	6.3	7.8	7.7
	50 to 64 years	8.5	4.4	5.0	5.2	6.7	5.5	6.5	5.6
Czechia	*15 to 24 years*	5.4	5.7	6.1	5.3	5.4	7.2	9.6	9.6
	25 to 49 years	1.9	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.9	2.4	2.8	3.0
	50 to 64 years	1.8	1.6	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.8	2.2	2.1
Denmark	*15 to 24 years*	11.3	8.2	11.0	9.6	10.4	10.8	13.3	11.8
	25 to 49 years	5.3	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.7	4.9	6.2	5.4
	50 to 64 years	3.2	3.2	3.0	3.8	3.9	3.5	3.8	4.1
Estonia	*15 to 24 years*	:	14.1	13.5	8.5	9.8	18.4	21.7	21.6
	25 to 49 years	4.3	4.0	3.0	3.8	4.9	6.3	6.5	6.3
	50 to 64 years	5.0	5.3	3.3	4.0	4.3	7.0	6.6	6.7

GEO	AGE GROUPS	2019-Q1	2019-Q2	2019-Q3	2019-Q4	2020-Q1	2020-Q2	2020-Q3	2020-Q4
Finland	*15 to 24 years*	18.9	22.5	12.3	13.9	21.4	28.2	16.1	18.4
	25 to 49 years	5.6	5.2	4.9	4.8	5.2	6.2	6.5	6.1
	50 to 64 years	5.9	5.9	5.9	6.1	6.1	6.0	7.2	6.8
France	*15 to 24 years*	19.8	17.9	19.2	21.1	19.2	19.6	22.0	19.6
	25 to 49 years	8.4	7.5	7.5	7.6	7.5	6.2	8.3	7.7
	50 to 64 years	7.1	6.3	6.3	6.1	5.9	4.3	6.1	6.0
Germany	*15 to 24 years*	5.8	5.4	6.8	5.1	:	:	:	:
	25 to 49 years	3.4	3.2	3.0	3.2	:	:	:	:
	50 to 64 years	2.8	2.5	2.3	2.4	:	:	:	:
Greece	*15 to 24 years*	40.9	33.6	32.4	34.0	34.4	36.0	34.2	35.3
	25 to 49 years	20.0	17.6	17.1	17.5	16.7	17.3	16.8	17.3
	50 to 64 years	14.1	12.8	12.6	12.9	12.7	12.8	12.4	11.6
Hungary	*15 to 24 years*	11.2	10.8	11.4	12.2	11.4	14.7	13.4	11.5
	25 to 49 years	3.2	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.6	4.4	4.2	4.0
	50 to 64 years	2.5	2.2	2.4	2.1	2.3	3.1	3.0	3.2
Ireland	*15 to 24 years*	10.9	15.7	13.5	9.6	10.5	16.6	20.0	13.8
	25 to 49 years	4.1	4.2	4.5	4.1	4.2	4.0	5.8	5.1
	50 to 64 years	3.9	3.8	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.4	4.5	4.4
Italy	*15 to 24 years*	33.2	28.4	25.7	29.4	30.2	24.7	30.9	31.0
	25 to 49 years	11.6	10.5	9.8	10.5	9.8	8.4	10.7	10.1
	50 to 64 years	6.7	5.8	5.4	6.1	5.8	4.6	5.9	5.6
Latvia	*15 to 24 years*	13.5	15.1	11.3	10.1	14.8	18.2	14.8	11.3
	25 to 49 years	6.5	6.1	6.1	5.3	7.7	8.4	7.8	8.0
	50 to 64 years	6.8	5.8	5.3	6.9	7.1	7.9	8.9	7.9
Lithuania	*15 to 24 years*	12.5	10.2	10.5	14.3	15.0	21.1	23.1	19.2
	25 to 49 years	5.8	6.0	5.4	5.7	6.3	6.4	8.1	8.6
	50 to 64 years	6.9	6.2	6.7	6.4	7.6	10.5	9.4	8.6
Luxembourg	*15 to 24 years*	13.1	17.5	20.5	16.4	16.5	23.3	26.0	25.7
	25 to 49 years	5.1	4.1	5.0	5.5	6.1	5.5	7.2	5.7
	50 to 64 years	3.9	4.7	3.1	3.3	4.2	3.9	3.9	3.0
Malta	*15 to 24 years*	9.9	9.1	9.4	8.9	10.3	10.8	11.1	10.7
	25 to 49 years	3.6	3.2	3.3	3.0	3.0	3.4	4.2	3.7
	50 to 64 years	:	:	:	:	:	5.1	:	3.9
Netherlands	*15 to 24 years*	7.0	6.3	6.8	6.9	6.8	9.5	10.8	9.4
	25 to 49 years	2.9	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.9	3.3	3.2
	50 to 64 years	3.3	2.9	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.8	2.7
Poland	*15 to 24 years*	10.4	10.4	10.8	7.9	8.7	9.5	12.5	12.8
	25 to 49 years	3.7	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.8	3.0	3.0	2.6
	50 to 64 years	2.9	2.3	2.0	2.3	2.5	2.1	2.0	2.2
Portugal	*15 to 24 years*	17.6	18.1	17.9	19.5	19.7	19.9	26.4	24.3
	25 to 49 years	6.2	5.3	5.2	5.7	5.9	5.1	7.1	6.8
	50 to 64 years	6.2	6.2	5.8	6.2	5.9	4.2	6.3	5.3
Romania	*15 to 24 years*	15.6	15.0	17.9	18.5	17.6	15.4	19.2	17.1
	25 to 49 years	3.7	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.7	5.3	4.8	5.0
	50 to 64 years	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.6	2.9	3.6	3.2	3.3

GEO	AGE GROUPS	2019-Q1	2019-Q2	2019-Q3	2019-Q4	2020-Q1	2020-Q2	2020-Q3	2020-Q4
Slovakia	*15 to 24 years*	14.2	14.6	18.4	17.1	16.0	18.5	22.0	20.8
	25 to 49 years	5.7	5.4	5.3	5.3	5.7	6.6	7.0	6.9
	50 to 64 years	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.2	4.7	4.5	4.9	4.6
Slovenia	*15 to 24 years*	9.8	6.5	7.6	8.7	11.4	15.6	14.9	15.2
	25 to 49 years	4.5	3.9	4.8	4.0	4.3	4.9	4.8	5.0
	50 to 64 years	4.7	4.5	4.1	3.0	3.8	3.9	3.7	3.4
Spain	*15 to 24 years*	35.0	33.1	31.7	30.5	33.0	39.6	40.4	40.1
	25 to 49 years	13.5	12.7	12.8	12.9	13.6	15.0	15.7	15.5
	50 to 64 years	13.1	12.7	12.2	12.3	12.4	11.8	12.4	13.0
Sweden	*15 to 24 years*	23.3	23.5	16.6	17.1	22.4	30.0	22.3	20.4
	25 to 49 years	6.0	5.3	5.7	5.4	6.4	7.2	7.8	7.3
	50 to 64 years	4.3	4.3	4.6	4.6	5.1	5.2	5.8	5.6
United Kingdom	*15 to 24 years*	10.1	10.8	12.8	10.8	11.2	12.0	15.6	:
	25 to 49 years	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.9	2.9	3.4	:
	50 to 64 years	2.9	2.6	2.7	2.6	3.0	2.6	3.5	:
Albania	*15 to 24 years*	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	25 to 49 years	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	50 to 64 years	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Bosnia and Herzegovina	*15 to 24 years*	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	25 to 49 years	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	50 to 64 years	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Kosovo	*15 to 24 years*	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	25 to 49 years	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	50 to 64 years	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Montenegro	*15 to 24 years*	28.4	20.7	22.0	31.7	32.2	30.2	35.8	:
	25 to 49 years	15.0	15.7	16.8	16.5	16.9	16.1	19.6	:
	50 to 64 years	10.6	9.8	9.9	9.3	9.2	9.6	13.0	:
North Macedonia	*15 to 24 years*	37.0	34.9	35.3	35.1	34.9	33.8	34.8	39.2
	25 to 49 years	17.2	17.2	16.9	16.4	15.5	16.4	16.1	15.5
	50 to 64 years	14.1	12.8	12.1	11.6	12.7	13.4	12.6	11.5
Serbia	*15 to 24 years*	30.7	24.4	26.0	29.1	25.5	20.7	26.5	32.4
	25 to 49 years	12.7	10.9	10.2	9.9	10.6	7.9	9.6	9.6
	50 to 64 years	8.5	7.4	5.6	6.1	5.8	4.8	5.6	7.0
Turkey	*15 to 24 years*	25.9	23.2	27.3	24.4	24.3	24.8	26.0	25.1
	25 to 49 years	13.5	12.0	12.4	12.2	12.8	12.1	11.9	11.6
	50 to 64 years	10.3	7.8	8.6	8.6	8.9	7.6	7.8	7.9

Table B7.1: Quarterly employment rates - 15-64 years old - Total (%), ESPN countries

Source:	Eurostat LFS - indicator [lfsq_ergan] Quarterly employment rates by sex and age groups
Measurement:	Number of persons employed as a percentage of the labour force
Geographical coverage:	EU-27 countries, UK, ME, MK, RS and TR
Updating:	Quarterly – download 26 April 2021
Time:	First quarter 2019 to fourth quarter 2020
Breakdown:	None (see Tables B7.2 and B7.3)
Comments:	Special ad hoc series from Eurostat on COVID-19
	Seasonally-adjusted data
	No data for first to fourth 2020 quarters for DE
	No data for AL, BA and XK
	No data for fourth quarter 2020 for the UK and MK

GEO	2019-Q1	2019-Q2	2019-Q3	2019-Q4	2020-Q1	2020-Q2	2020-Q3	2020-Q4
EU-27	67.7	68.5	68.8	68.6	68.0	66.9	67.7	67.9
Austria	72.7	73.4	74.2	73.8	72.3	71.0	73.5	72.8
Belgium	64.5	65.6	65.8	65.3	65.1	64.2	65.1	64.5
Bulgaria	68.3	70.7	71.4	70.0	68.1	67.4	69.6	68.8
Croatia	61.2	61.8	63.0	62.2	61.4	62.2	63.0	61.5
Cyprus	69.1	71.2	70.8	71.0	70.0	69.9	69.7	69.9
Czechia	75.0	75.0	75.2	75.3	74.8	74.1	74.4	74.3
Denmark	74.1	75.0	75.5	75.4	74.7	73.9	74.4	74.7
Estonia	74.1	74.8	76.2	76.1	75.0	72.1	73.5	74.2
Finland	71.4	73.7	74.0	72.7	72.0	71.7	72.7	71.8
France	65.2	65.7	65.5	65.9	65.7	64.6	65.3	65.6
Germany	76.3	76.5	77.0	77.0	:	:	:	:
Greece	55.0	57.1	57.4	56.5	55.9	55.8	57.0	56.4
Hungary	69.9	70.0	70.3	70.3	69.7	68.7	70.2	70.2
Ireland	69.3	69.1	69.6	70.2	69.8	65.7	67.7	67.8
Italy	58.2	59.4	59.4	59.2	58.4	57.5	58.0	58.4
Latvia	71.4	72.0	73.1	72.7	71.8	71.6	71.6	71.5
Lithuania	72.5	73.0	73.2	73.2	73.0	71.4	70.7	71.4
Luxembourg	67.6	68.4	67.9	67.9	66.7	66.9	66.9	68.5
Malta	72.5	72.8	73.3	73.9	74.7	73.0	73.6	73.8
Netherlands	77.7	78.1	78.4	78.4	78.4	77.3	77.6	77.9
Poland	67.2	68.2	68.9	68.5	68.4	67.9	69.0	69.4
Portugal	69.9	70.4	71.0	70.6	69.8	67.9	68.8	69.5
Romania	64.2	66.4	66.7	66.0	65.4	65.2	66.0	65.8
Slovakia	68.6	68.1	68.5	68.5	68.0	66.8	67.5	67.8
Slovenia	71.3	72.5	72.1	71.6	71.5	70.0	70.8	71.1
Spain	62.5	63.5	63.5	63.7	62.6	59.1	60.8	61.3
Sweden	76.2	77.5	78.1	76.7	75.4	75.3	76.0	75.3
UK	75.0	75.0	75.1	75.6	75.3	74.7	74.2	:
Albania	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Bosnia and H.	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Kosovo	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
North Macedonia	54.5	56.9	57.8	54.8	54.4	51.2	49.3	:
Montenegro	53.9	54.4	54.8	55.7	55.6	54.5	54.1	54.4
Serbia	58.7	60.9	61.5	61.7	60.7	60.2	62.2	62.1
Turkey	49.3	50.7	51.0	50.2	47.6	45.9	48.8	47.7

Table B7.2: Quarterly employment rates by gender - 15-64 years old (%), ESPN countries

Source:	Eurostat LFS - indicator [lfsq_ergan] Quarterly employment rates by sex and age groups
Measurement:	Number of persons employed as a percentage of the labour force
Geographical coverage:	EU-27 countries, UK, ME, MK, RS and TR
Updating:	Quarterly – download 26 April 2021
Time:	First quarter 2019 to fourth quarter 2020
Breakdown:	Men and women)
Comments:	Special ad hoc series from Eurostat on COVID-19
	Seasonally-adjusted data
	No data for first to fourth 2020 quarters for DE
	No data for AL, BA and XK
	No data for fourth quarter 2020 for the UK and MK

GEO	MEN								WOMEN							
	2019 -Q1	2019 -Q2	2019 -Q3	2019 -Q4	2020 -Q1	2020 -Q2	2020 -Q3	2020 -Q4	2019 -Q1	2019 -Q2	2019 -Q3	2019 -Q4	2020 -Q1	2020 -Q2	2020 -Q3	2020 -Q4
EU-27	72.9	73.8	74.2	74.0	73.2	72.0	73.0	73.0	62.4	63.2	63.3	63.3	62.8	61.7	62.4	62.8
Austria	76.5	78.0	78.9	78.4	76.1	75.1	77.7	76.9	68.9	68.8	69.6	69.3	68.5	67.0	69.2	68.7
Belgium	68.0	69.2	69.5	68.7	69.0	67.9	68.7	68.	60.9	61.9	62.1	61.8	61.2	60.6	61.4	61.
Bulgaria	71.9	74.0	75.7	74.7	72.2	70.9	73.6	73.4	64.5	67.3	67.1	65.2	63.9	63.8	65.6	64.1
Croatia	66.7	67.8	67.3	66.4	66.3	67.8	68.4	66.1	55.8	55.8	58.8	58.1	56.6	56.5	57.5	56.9
Cyprus	74.4	76.1	77.9	76.4	75.2	75.5	76.6	76	64.1	66.6	64.3	65.8	65.1	64.7	63.2	64
Czechia	81.7	82.0	82.0	82.1	81.6	81.0	81.7	81.3	68.1	67.8	68.2	68.2	67.8	66.8	66.7	67.
Denmark	77.2	77.8	78.5	78.4	77.7	76.9	77.3	77.5	71.0	72.2	72.5	72.3	71.6	70.7	71.3	71.9
Estonia	77.1	78.2	80.4	79.0	76.9	75.4	76.8	76.6	71.2	71.3	72.0	73.3	73.1	68.7	70.3	71.9
Finland	72.3	75.0	75.4	73.6	72.6	73.2	74.3	73.3	70.5	72.4	72.5	71.7	71.3	70.2	71.1	70.2
France	68.4	69.0	68.9	69.0	69.1	67.6	68.7	68.5	62.0	62.6	62.3	62.9	62.4	61.7	62.0	62.8
Germany	80.0	80.4	80.6	80.9	:	:	:	:	72.4	72.4	73.3	73.1	:	:	:	:
Greece	64.4	66.4	66.9	65.8	64.7	64.6	66.2	65.3	45.7	48.0	48.1	47.3	47.2	47.1	48.0	47.7
Hungary	77.2	77.1	77.4	77.6	76.9	76.0	77.6	77.7	62.6	63.0	63.1	63.1	62.5	61.4	62.8	62.7
Ireland	74.3	74.6	75.3	75.6	75.4	71.1	73.3	72.9	64.3	63.7	63.9	64.8	64.4	60.4	62.1	62.8
Italy	66.8	68.2	68.7	68.3	67.3	66.6	67.5	67.3	49.6	50.7	50.1	50.1	49.6	48.4	48.5	49.4
Latvia	73.3	73.1	74.9	74.6	73.3	72.7	73.2	73.3	69.7	70.9	71.4	70.9	70.4	70.4	70.1	69.8
Lithuania	73.1	74.0	73.4	73.4	74.1	72.1	70.9	71.9	72.0	72.1	73.0	73.0	72.0	70.7	70.4	70.9
Luxembourg	72.0	72.6	71.9	71.8	70.6	69.3	69.9	71.9	63.1	64.0	63.7	63.8	62.6	64.4	63.8	65.
Malta	81.8	80.9	83.1	83.6	82.9	81.2	80.8	82.4	62.3	63.7	62.3	63.1	65.5	63.6	65.5	64.2
Netherlands	81.9	82.2	82.5	82.3	82.3	81.2	81.4	81.6	73.5	74.0	74.4	74.3	74.4	73.3	73.7	74.2
Poland	74.1	75.0	76.1	76.1	75.6	75.2	76.2	76.5	60.3	61.4	61.7	60.9	61.2	60.5	61.8	62.3
Portugal	73.1	73.1	74.5	73.6	72.8	70.4	71.0	72.2	66.8	67.9	67.7	67.8	67.1	65.5	66.7	67.1

Romania	72.4	75.1	75.7	75.2	74.3	73.6	74.9	75.0		55.7	57.5	57.4	56.6	56.2	56.4	56.9	56.3
Slovakia	74.5	74.1	74.4	74.5	73.8	72.5	73.2	73.6		62.5	61.9	62.5	62.5	62.2	61.0	61.6	61.8
Slovenia	74.9	75.8	75.1	73.6	73.8	73.1	73.7	74.1		67.5	68.9	68.8	69.4	69.0	66.7	67.8	67.7
Spain	68.0	68.8	69.1	68.9	67.7	64.3	66.2	66.3		57.1	58.1	58.0	58.5	57.4	53.9	55.4	56.3
Sweden	77.8	79.0	80.1	78.2	77.5	77.2	77.5	77.2		74.6	75.9	76.0	75.2	73.2	73.2	74.3	73.3
United Kingdom	79.1	78.8	79.4	79.6	78.9	78.2	77.5	:		70.9	71.1	70.9	71.5	71.8	71.1	70.9	:
Albania	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Bosnia and Herzegovina	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Kosovo	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Montenegro	61	64.5	64.1	59.6	59.6	56.4	55.9	:		48	49.3	51.4	50	49.1	46	42.6	:
North Macedonia	63.2	64.9	64.7	64.9	64.9	63.3	62.7	63.9		44.4	43.6	44.6	46.1	46.1	45.4	45.2	44.6
Serbia	64.0	67.5	68.9	68.3	66.1	66.6	69.2	69.2		53.4	54.3	54.1	55.2	55.3	53.7	55.2	55.0
Turkey	66.6	68.4	69.5	68.6	65.4	62.6	66.9	65.8		31.8	32.9	32.4	31.7	29.7	29.1	30.4	29.5

Table B7.3: Quarterly employment rates by age groups (%), ESPN countries

Source:	Eurostat LFS - indicator [lfsq_ergan] Quarterly employment rates by sex and age groups
Measurement:	Number of persons employed as a percentage of the labour force
Geographical coverage:	EU-27 countries, UK, ME, MK, RS and TR
Updating:	Quarterly – download 26 April 2021
Time:	First quarter 2019 to fourth quarter 2020
Breakdown:	Age groups: 15-24, 25-49 and 50-64
Comments:	Special ad hoc series from Eurostat on COVID-19
	Seasonally-adjusted data
	No data for first to fourth 2020 quarters for DE
	No data for AL, BA and XK
	No data for fourth quarter 2020 for the UK and MK

GEO	AGE GROUPS	2019-Q1	2019-Q2	2019-Q3	2019-Q4	2020-Q1	2020-Q2	2020-Q3	2020-Q4
EU-27	*15 to 24 years*	32.5	33.2	34.4	33.4	32.5	30.0	32.0	31.1
	25 to 49 years	80.0	80.9	80.9	80.9	80.2	79.0	79.7	80.1
	50 to 64 years	65.7	66.5	66.8	67.0	66.6	66.3	66.8	67.3
Austria	*15 to 24 years*	51.5	49.8	52.9	52.3	50.0	47.3	52.7	51.0
	25 to 49 years	83.8	85.5	86.0	85.6	83.8	82.4	84.9	84.0
	50 to 64 years	65.7	65.9	66.2	65.9	65.2	64.7	65.7	65.8
Belgium	*15 to 24 years*	24.6	25.7	29.2	26.8	25.7	22.0	26.1	22.5
	25 to 49 years	80.9	81.9	81.0	81.2	80.9	80.4	80.8	80.9
	50 to 64 years	60.3	61.6	61.8	61.3	61.7	62.0	61.6	61.6
Bulgaria	*15 to 24 years*	19.0	21.2	24.8	22.2	17.0	17.8	20.4	19.9
	25 to 49 years	80.6	83.1	83.3	81.9	80.5	78.7	81.3	80.1
	50 to 64 years	68.5	71.0	71.4	70.4	69.2	69.7	71.3	71.2
Croatia	*15 to 24 years*	26.8	27.0	30.3	26.6	25.2	24.4	26.4	26.5
	25 to 49 years	79.1	79.3	80.9	80.6	79.2	80.3	80.8	79.1
	50 to 64 years	51.7	53.0	52.9	52.8	53.0	54.1	54.7	52.7
Cyprus	*15 to 24 years*	31.2	32.9	32.6	32.8	31.9	29.5	31.0	32.8
	25 to 49 years	82.2	84.0	83.4	84.1	83.1	83.0	81.6	82.2
	50 to 64 years	65.4	68.1	67.2	66.9	65.2	66.6	66.7	66.3
Czechia	*15 to 24 years*	28.4	27.4	28.5	27.9	26.2	24.1	25.3	24.9
	25 to 49 years	86.7	86.4	86.5	86.6	86.3	85.3	85.4	85.3
	50 to 64 years	74.8	75.6	75.8	76.0	75.7	76.3	76.5	76.9
Denmark	*15 to 24 years*	53.5	55.1	55.9	55.5	53.2	52.9	53.9	52.9
	25 to 49 years	81.8	82.3	82.3	82.7	82.6	80.9	81.0	82.0
	50 to 64 years	74.9	76.0	76.7	76.1	75.3	75.6	76.3	76.5
Estonia	*15 to 24 years*	37.5	39.8	41.6	39.9	39.1	33.8	34.9	33.5
	25 to 49 years	83.7	83.5	84.3	85.1	84.0	81.0	81.9	83.6
	50 to 64 years	74.7	76.0	78.1	77.3	76.3	74.8	77.1	76.9

GEO	AGE GROUPS	2019-Q1	2019-Q2	2019-Q3	2019-Q4	2020-Q1	2020-Q2	2020-Q3	2020-Q4
Finland	*15 to 24 years*	40.3	49.3	48.3	40.6	38.5	43.5	44.8	37.5
	25 to 49 years	82.0	82.9	83.3	83.3	82.6	81.2	82.1	82.1
	50 to 64 years	71.8	72.5	73.2	73.2	73.3	72.0	72.8	73.9
France	*15 to 24 years*	29.3	29.7	30.4	29.0	29.0	26.5	29.6	28.7
	25 to 49 years	80.5	81.2	80.7	81.4	81.1	80.0	80.3	80.9
	50 to 64 years	62.1	62.7	62.4	63.4	63.3	63.2	63.1	63.8
Germany	*15 to 24 years*	48.3	47.8	48.3	49.4	:	:	:	:
	25 to 49 years	84.9	84.9	85.4	85.1	:	:	:	:
	50 to 64 years	77.0	77.5	78.0	78.3	:	:	:	:
Greece	*15 to 24 years*	13.2	14.9	15.4	14.7	13.8	13.5	14.7	13.2
	25 to 49 years	69.3	72.0	72.4	71.2	70.7	70.2	71.2	70.2
	50 to 64 years	51.7	53.3	53.5	52.9	52.5	53.3	54.9	55.5
Hungary	*15 to 24 years*	28.2	28.2	29.2	28.5	28.2	25.7	28.1	26.8
	25 to 49 years	84.1	84.2	84.3	84.1	82.6	81.3	82.4	82.6
	50 to 64 years	66.3	66.4	66.5	67.5	68.1	68.4	70.1	70.6
Ireland	*15 to 24 years*	39.4	40.2	43.0	42.2	41.1	32.6	38.4	35.9
	25 to 49 years	81.0	80.5	80.3	81.2	81.0	77.4	78.4	79.4
	50 to 64 years	66.7	66.6	67.0	68.2	68.2	65.9	67.1	67.6
Italy	*15 to 24 years*	17.5	18.6	19.4	18.4	17.5	16.1	17.5	16.2
	25 to 49 years	69.1	70.4	70.3	70.2	69.3	68.1	68.8	69.3
	50 to 64 years	60.1	61.4	61.2	61.2	60.8	60.7	60.5	61.4
Latvia	*15 to 24 years*	32.4	28.2	33.0	33.6	30.5	29.9	29.7	28.5
	25 to 49 years	82.4	84.3	83.8	83.8	82.6	81.8	81.9	82.7
	50 to 64 years	70.7	71.0	73.1	71.7	72.4	73.2	73.4	72.5
Lithuania	*15 to 24 years*	32.0	32.1	35.4	32.1	31.1	28.2	28.2	30.3
	25 to 49 years	85.2	85.1	85.7	85.7	85.9	85.0	82.5	83.5
	50 to 64 years	73.0	74.4	72.3	73.7	73.3	70.9	72.3	72.0
Luxembourg	*15 to 24 years*	29.2	29.4	29.5	26.7	23.8	23.3	26.7	25.6
	25 to 49 years	85.3	86.4	85.5	85.7	84.2	84.4	83.3	85.8
	50 to 64 years	55.6	56.1	56.2	57.4	57.5	58.2	58.3	59.6
Malta	*15 to 24 years*	47.9	47.1	55.0	52.7	47.1	47.7	51.1	47.3
	25 to 49 years	85.4	86.0	84.6	85.3	87.3	84.8	84.6	85.9
	50 to 64 years	59.7	59.4	58.9	60.9	62.5	61.0	61.5	61.4
Netherlands	*15 to 24 years*	63.9	65.6	66.2	65.5	64.7	60.6	62.1	62.5
	25 to 49 years	85.4	85.5	85.7	85.6	85.6	85.3	85.2	85.8
	50 to 64 years	74.2	74.4	74.8	75.0	75.5	75.1	75.4	75.3
Poland	*15 to 24 years*	30.6	31.3	32.8	32.1	31.1	27.9	27.8	26.8
	25 to 49 years	82.8	83.7	83.9	83.9	83.7	83.2	84.1	84.5
	50 to 64 years	57.2	58.4	59.2	58.2	58.5	59.2	61.1	62.3
Portugal	*15 to 24 years*	27.7	27.1	29.4	27.9	26.5	22.0	22.4	22.5
	25 to 49 years	85.6	86.6	86.3	86.1	85.4	83.6	84.1	85.2
	50 to 64 years	66.5	67.1	68.1	68.1	67.6	66.8	68.8	69.4
Romania	*15 to 24 years*	23.0	25.6	25.6	24.4	23.9	24.4	24.7	25.2
	25 to 49 years	80.7	82.9	82.6	82.3	81.4	80.6	81.3	81.0
	50 to 64 years	56.6	59.0	60.2	59.2	59.3	59.8	61.3	60.8

GEO	AGE GROUPS	2019-Q1	2019-Q2	2019-Q3	2019-Q4	2020-Q1	2020-Q2	2020-Q3	2020-Q4
Slovakia	*15 to 24 years*	25.6	24.7	24.6	24.7	24.1	21.8	22.5	22.3
	25 to 49 years	81.7	81.0	81.7	81.4	81.0	79.4	79.9	80.2
	50 to 64 years	65.9	65.9	66.1	66.9	65.7	65.9	66.7	67.3
Slovenia	*15 to 24 years*	32.2	33.8	36.2	30.8	30.4	23.3	29.5	25.0
	25 to 49 years	88.6	89.5	88.9	89.2	89.1	88.0	88.3	88.6
	50 to 64 years	60.3	62.2	61.5	61.3	61.1	62.7	61.5	63.9
Spain	*15 to 24 years*	20.4	22.0	24.3	22.4	20.8	16.3	19.1	17.7
	25 to 49 years	75.8	76.8	76.3	76.7	75.3	71.0	73.0	74.2
	50 to 64 years	60.1	60.8	60.8	61.8	61.6	60.1	60.9	61.3
Sweden	*15 to 24 years*	40.6	44.3	48.8	42.0	39.0	39.3	42.2	37.9
	25 to 49 years	85.1	86.3	86.3	86.1	84.9	84.3	84.2	84.3
	50 to 64 years	82.2	81.9	81.4	81.3	80.7	81.1	81.7	82.0
United Kingdom	*15 to 24 years*	50.3	49.7	50.2	51.1	50.4	48.4	47.1	:
	25 to 49 years	84.9	84.9	85.2	85.5	85.4	85.1	85.0	:
	50 to 64 years	72.4	72.5	72.4	72.7	72.5	72.0	71.5	:
Albania	*15 to 24 years*	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	25 to 49 years	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	50 to 64 years	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Bosnia and Herzegovina	*15 to 24 years*	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	25 to 49 years	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	50 to 64 years	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Kosovo	*15 to 24 years*	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	25 to 49 years	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	50 to 64 years	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Montenegro	*15 to 24 years*	22.7	31.2	33.0	22.3	23.6	20.8	19.4	:
	25 to 49 years	68.7	67.1	67.6	67.0	66.7	62.1	62.2	:
	50 to 64 years	51.6	57.0	57.8	55.4	53.4	52.7	47.6	:
North Macedonia	*15 to 24 years*	19.8	21.2	21.0	21.0	20.8	19.6	20.3	18.6
	25 to 49 years	66.7	66.9	67.0	68.2	68.8	67.2	65.8	66.7
	50 to 64 years	50.9	51.2	52.5	53.0	51.7	51.3	52.1	52.2
Serbia	*15 to 24 years*	19.0	22.0	22.6	22.4	21.6	18.7	21.7	21.0
	25 to 49 years	73.3	75.6	75.8	75.4	74.8	74.1	75.8	75.9
	50 to 64 years	54.7	56.4	57.6	59.0	57.2	58.0	60.1	59.9
Turkey	*15 to 24 years*	32.0	33.4	34.5	32.6	29.5	26.5	31.1	29.6
	25 to 49 years	60.4	61.8	61.7	61.5	59.0	57.4	59.8	59.2
	50 to 64 years	38.6	40.1	40.5	39.3	36.9	36.2	38.4	36.9

ANNEX C: Job retention schemes during COVID-19, ESPN countries

Country	Short time work scheme (STW)	Wage subsidy (WS) scheme	Level of the benefit	State participation	Employer's participation	Protection against dismissal	Non-standard workers	Self-employed	New measures/ Improvements to previous schemes
EU countries									
AT	√	N/A	80-90% of previous net wage	100%	Payment of hours worked	√	√	No	Increase in benefit level; relaxation of eligibility conditions
BE	√ (the so called-temporary unemployment benefit)	N/A	70% of average capped wage (€2,754.76 per month)	100%	N/A	√	√	No	Increase in benefit level; relaxation of eligibility conditions
BG	√	N/A	60% of GW	60-80% (in some industries)	40-20% (in some industries)	√	No (only part-time workers included)	No	New measure
CY	N/A	√	60% of GW (min €360 & max €1,214)	100%	N/A	√	√	No	New measure
CZ	√ (antivirus employment retention programme)	N/A	60-100% of average earnings	60-100% of wage costs reimbursed to the employer	0-40% of wage costs	√	√	No	New measure
DE	√	N/A	60% of net wage (67% for employees with at least one child), 70% (77%) after the 3th month and;	100% reimbursed to the employer	50% of social insurance contributions	Not State mandated; depends on collective agreements	√	No	Relaxation of eligibility conditions; increased benefit level; temporary

Country	Short time work scheme (STW)	Wage subsidy (WS) scheme	Level of the benefit	State participation	Employer's participation	Protection against dismissal	Non-standard workers	Self-employed	New measures/ Improvements to previous schemes
			80% (87%) after the 6th month						agency workers included
DK	√a (temporary work sharing scheme)	√b (temporary wage compensation scheme)	√a 120% of unemployment benefit up to €310 monthly √b 100%	√a 100% √b 90% of GW for blue-collar workers and 75% for white collar workers, up to €4,035 monthly	√a N/A √b paid 10-25% of wage, except for employees with high wages	√a, b	√a, b	√a No √b Yes (separate scheme)	New measures
EE	N/A	√a (temporary subsidy programme) √b	√a 70% GW between March and May 2020. In June 2020, 50% of GW √b 60% GW between March and May 2020	√a 50-70% √b 60%	√a Must pay at least €150 √b Must pay at least €200	√a, √b	√a, √b	√a No √b covers solo proprietors	New measures
EL	√a	√b	√a 60% reduction in employees' net wage for hours not worked √b €534 compensation from May 2020 to April 2021 [€800 for the period 15 March 2020 – 30 April 2020 and for November 2020	√a State covered 60% of net wage reduction and 100% of social contributions for hours not worked √b 100% (State covers both the amount of the compensation and employees'	√a Cannot proceed to any change in the employment contract (including employees' nominal wage) √b N/A	√a, √b	√b	√b	New measures

Country	Short time work scheme (STW)	Wage subsidy (WS) scheme	Level of the benefit	State participation	Employer's participation	Protection against dismissal	Non-standard workers	Self-employed	New measures/ Improvements to previous schemes
				social insurance contributions)					
ES	√ (temporary unemployment benefit)	N/A	70% of GW for the first 180 days, thereafter 50%	100%	N/A	√	√	No	Simplified procedure; relaxation of eligibility conditions
FI	N/A	√	√ fixed sum of €2,000	√ 100%	N/A	√	√	√	Relaxation of eligibility conditions
FR	√	N/A	At least 70% of previous GW	85%, up to a maximum of 4.5 times the MW	70% of GW with a minimum of €8.03 per hour	√	√	No	Extended duration of receipt; relaxation of eligibility conditions
HR	√a	√b	√a From January 2021, €480 per month √b €630 in March raised to €730 in April 2020	√a, √b 100%	N/A	√a, √b	Fixed-term and part-time workers included	√b	New measure
HU	√	N/A	70% of GW that was lost due to worktime reduction	100%	N/A	√	No	No	New measure
IE	N/A	√ (COVID-19 temporary WS scheme)	Up to 70% of an employees' wage or 85% if the	100%	Employers can make an additional	√	√	No	New measure

Country	Short time work scheme (STW)	Wage subsidy (WS) scheme	Level of the benefit	State participation	Employer's participation	Protection against dismissal	Non-standard workers	Self-employed	New measures/ Improvements to previous schemes
			employees' wage is less than €412 per week		payment to eligible employees				
IT	√	N/A	80% of last wage up to maximum (in 2020) of €998.18 or €1,199.72 – in case of wages respectively below and above €2,159.48)	100%	N/A	√	√	No	Relaxation of eligibility conditions.
LT	√a	√b	√a (2020) 70-100% of GW capped at 100-150% of MW; (2021) 100% of GW capped at 150% of average wage in the economy √b 100% (or 200% for some sectors) of MW paid in the first two months after the first lockdown in 2020 and gradually decreased in the	√a (2020) if the employer chooses 90% subsidy (100% for aged 60+), the State contributes up to 1 MW. If they choose the 70% subsidy, it contributes 1.5 MW; (2021) The State contributed up to 1.5 average wage. √b 100%	√a depends on the type of subsidy chosen (see previous column) √b N/A	√a, √b	√a, √b	No	New measures

Country	Short time work scheme (STW)	Wage subsidy (WS) scheme	Level of the benefit	State participation	Employer's participation	Protection against dismissal	Non-standard workers	Self-employed	New measures/ Improvements to previous schemes
			subsequent months (i.e. 50% MW per month for the third-fourth months and 30% MW per month for the fifth-sixth months)						
LU	√	N/A	80% of GW capped at 250% of MW	If the 80% cap is lower than the minimum social wage for unskilled workers, the difference is covered by the Employment Fund	Employers received subsidies	√	√	No	Extension of eligibility conditions and the introduction of a minimum amount in the form of the minimum social wage for unskilled workers
LV	√	N/A	75% of GW (cannot be lower than MW)	75% (cannot exceed €1,000)	No	√	√	No	New measure
MT	N/A	√	Between €100 and €800 per employee or self-employed person	100%	Top up if GW higher than €800 per month. If GW higher than €1,200 a minimum top-up of €400	√	√	√	New measure

Country	Short time work scheme (STW)	Wage subsidy (WS) scheme	Level of the benefit	State participation	Employer's participation	Protection against dismissal	Non-standard workers	Self-employed	New measures/ Improvements to previous schemes
NL	N/A	√	90% from March to May 2020 and 80% from June 2020 depending on the lost revenue. In January 2021 increased to 85%	80-90%	N/A	√	√	No	Increase in the level of benefit; relaxation of eligibility conditions
PL	√	N/A	At least 50% of GW up to 90% without exceeding respectively 50% and 90% of MW	50-90% of MW depending on the reduction in turnover	N/A	√	√	No	New measure
PT	√	N/A	From March to June 2020, 70% of 2/3 of GW From January 2021, 100% of GW	70% of 2/3 or 100% of GW, always up to a limit of three times the MW	N/A	√	√	No	Increase in duration and benefit level; relaxation of eligibility conditions
RO	√a	√b	√a 75% of the difference between hours of work and effectively worked hours √b 41.5% of the GW without exceeding 41.5% of national average GW	√a, √b 100%	N/A	√a	√a, √b	√a, √b	Relaxation of eligibility conditions; improvement in the procedure

Country	Short time work scheme (STW)	Wage subsidy (WS) scheme	Level of the benefit	State participation	Employer's participation	Protection against dismissal	Non-standard workers	Self-employed	New measures/ Improvements to previous schemes
SE	√	N/A	75% of wage costs for STW up to 80% of the normal working hours with an upper cap at €4,400 per month	100%	N/A	√	√	No	Increase in the replacement rate from 33 % to 60% of the normal working hours
SI	√	N/A	80-100% of GW (cannot fall below the MW upon some conditions)	100% up to a ceiling per employee (for employees on hold); flat-rate (per employee per month), depending on the duration of part-time work (for shortened full-time working hours)	Payment of hours worked; payment of salary compensations above the ceiling or exceeding the flat-rate refund	√	√	No	New measure
SK	√a	√b	√a 80% of GW capped at €880 (then increased to €1,100) or a fixed sum based on rate of reduction in income up to 80% of GW √b 80% of GW, capped at	√a, √b 50%	√a, √b 50%	√a, √b	√	√a, √b	New measures

Country	Short time work scheme (STW)	Wage subsidy (WS) scheme	Level of the benefit	State participation	Employer's participation	Protection against dismissal	Non-standard workers	Self-employed	New measures/ Improvements to previous schemes
			€1,100 per month						
Non-EU countries									
UK	√	N/A	Employers receive a subsidy benefit equal to 80% of employees' GW up to a maximum of €2,850	100%	Employers can top up the wage not covered by the State and they pay national insurance and pension contributions	√	√	No	New measure
AL	N/A	√	€210-323 depending on firms' annual turnover	100%	N/A	N/A	No information	No information	New measure
BA*	N/A	√ √a √b	√ €125 or MW √a MW √b MW or 30% of the GW	100%	In the Federation of Bosnia and H. net wage (in cases where the government paid social insurance contributions (€125)	√	No	√, √a, √b	New measures
ME	N/A	√	50 to 100% of both the MW and of the taxes and contributions	100%	N/A	No information	No information	No	New measure

Country	Short time work scheme (STW)	Wage subsidy (WS) scheme	Level of the benefit	State participation	Employer's participation	Protection against dismissal	Non-standard workers	Self-employed	New measures/ Improvements to previous schemes
MK	N/A	√	Flat-rate benefit corresponding to €235 from April to June 2020. From October 2020, the benefit depends on the company's income losses, and ranges from €235 to €353	100% of net wage	Payment of social contributions	√	√	√	Increase in benefit; relaxation of eligibility conditions.
RS	N/A	√	50% for May-July 2020 and 60% of monthly net MW for August and September 2020 (€310)	Fixed benefit equal to €258 for May-July 2020 and €310 for the period August-September 2020	N/A	√ (fixed-term contracts not protected)	√	√	New measure
TR	√	N/A	60% of GW	60% of GW up to 1.5 times MW	N/A	√	No	No	Relaxation of eligibility conditions
XK	N/A	√	Flat-rate benefit equal to MW (€170)	100%	N/A	No information	No information	No	New measure

Note: GW means gross wage. MW means minimum wage.
**Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into √, √a, and √b corresponding respectively to Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and Brčko District.*
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on ESPN national reports.

ANNEX D: References

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